

Abraham Bancker

Richmond County

Born: 1760

You are Abraham Bancker, born in 1760 to Adriaan Bancker and Anna Boelen Bancker. You were christened May 15 of that year in the Reformed Dutch Church in New York City.

Little is known of your upbringing, except that your family was of sufficient means to send you to King's College (later renamed Columbia College). You probably arrived just as Alexander Hamilton was leaving, because, like you, his studies were interrupted by the war, and, like you, he took no degree. But his military career was bathed in the bright lights of glory, at Washington's side and in the thick of battle. Yours, by contrast, occurred in the dark shadows of espionage. For despite your youth, you were a Washington spy!

You corresponded with patriot sympathizers ensconced inside British lines who conveyed political intelligence and plans of fortifications useful to the operations of the Continental Army; and under the pseudonym "Amicus Republicae," you relayed like information to Washington's headquarters. You were most active as a spy and most at risk during the campaigns of 1780. After the war, and when apprised of your services, Washington awarded you a ceremonial sword.

Your peacetime offices have included county clerk of Richmond County (1781–84), membership on the board of regents, and election to the state assembly. While sitting as an assemblyman, you were further honored with election to the New York State Ratifying Convention, representing Richmond County.

You were a patriot and are now a Federalist because in the first days of enemy occupation, your uncle was detained on a British warship in New York harbor, while his home was commandeered by General William Howe for use as his own headquarters. During his confinement (imprisonment), your uncle, you wrote, conducted himself with an admirable "degree of virtue and steadfastness in his country's cause."

You wish to do the same on behalf of American nationhood, and so you will give hearty support to Chancellor Robert Livingston (Federalist party leader) and Alexander Hamilton (party lieutenant), as they, and others of your party, endeavor to ensure that New York votes to ratify the Constitution.