

**GEORGE CLINTON: SOME OF
HIS COLONIAL
REVOLUTIONARY AND POST-
REVOLUTIONARY SERVICES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649277803

George Clinton: Some of His Colonial Revolutionary and Post-revolutionary Services by Ralph Earl Prime

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RALPH EARL PRIME

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Law Clinton

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An Address by
COLONEL RALPH EARL PRIME
delivered before
THE EMPIRE STATE SOCIETY
OF THE
SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
March 17, 1903

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SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

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NOTE.

BY invitation of the Empire State Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, the following address was delivered by Colonel Ralph E. Prime before the Annual meeting of the Society held in New York City. Tuesday evening, March 17, 1903. It was regarded as a valuable contribution to the biographical and political history of the State of New York, and is published by the Empire State Society in accordance with a vote unanimously passed at the close of its reading.

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"Libertas et Patria."

GEORGE CLINTON

SOME OF HIS
COLONIAL, REVOLUTIONARY AND
POST-REVOLUTIONARY SERVICES

BY

COL. RALPH EARL PRIME

IN presenting any part of the life or doings of any great man, it is difficult, nay impossible, to avoid presenting also other men and other things. What a man thinks and does, what his opinions and impulses are, what his relation to coincident events and affairs, his heredity, his environment, the effect upon him of the opinions and the personality of other men, the influence of all these varied things that happen, and of which he is a part, all these things are so interwoven with the man himself, that in order to get a just appreciation of him, it is necessary to consider them as well. This is peculiarly true in the story of George Clinton, as we shall see. The people among whom he lived, the locality where he lived, the great Hudson River Valley so intimately connected with him in his career, the events and the sufferings of the people, of whom he was a part, during the period that preceded the Revolution, the events of that Revolution itself, all these necessarily have much to do with the life of George Clinton.

It hence will be impossible to the present task, to omit a large consideration of all of these, in attempting to set out something of the place which George Clinton occupied in history, and in order to enable us to judge of his character and of what he did. Therefore, although much will be said about the events of the Revolutionary War and of other men, yet are we in fact dealing with George Clinton.

Many of the events that happened then, though inconspicuous when compared with others, were in fact momentous to us. The

men who acted their part then, have their place in history, though we do not often dwell upon their story. Among them were many who, out of real native worth, wrought great things, and they have come to be historic and to be inseparable from the story of our country and the State. Some of them were specially fitted by nature and by heredity, for their work, and were called of God to it, and of none can this be more truly said than of George Clinton.

This country of ours gives equal opportunity to all, and God forbid the time when the worship of wealth shall so take possession of it that it shall make wealth the symbol of personal worth. Notwithstanding any of our fears, I believe it will never come. But although we endorse the abstract sentiment of our fathers that all men are born free and equal, yet there is an heredity of fitness, which cannot be counted out, and men become trained in long lines of blood and development for the work God has for them to do.

George Clinton came of a line of soldiers and true men. His great-grandfather, William Clinton,¹ was a soldier in the royalist army and he fought for Charles I., in those days that produced the Cavaliers and the Roundheads. Irving gives his name as Gen. Charles Clinton.² The King fell and the great Protector came to be the fountain-head of English liberty, at least of that period, and of the freedom which we enjoy with its development, which includes religious liberty. In the fall of that King, the blood was spilled that flowing in his veins meant oppression and repression, but spilled upon the ground it enriched England and fertilized it and gave a new start and an impulse to the growth of constitutional liberty. The triumph of the Roundheads drove out the followers of the King, and William Clinton found refuge in France for a time, but later he went to Scotland.³ There he married. We know nothing of his religious tendencies, prejudices or opinions before Charles I. fell, but presumptively from his official rank in the army of the King they were toward the establishment. I have before this wondered if by breathing the Scotch Presbyterian air, or perhaps by the influence of a good Scotch wife, there was planted in him, and through him in the line of his descendants, some of the

1. Clinton Papers; vol. 1, p. 15. 2. Irving's Washington; book 2, p. 70.
3. Clinton Papers; vol. 1, p. 15.