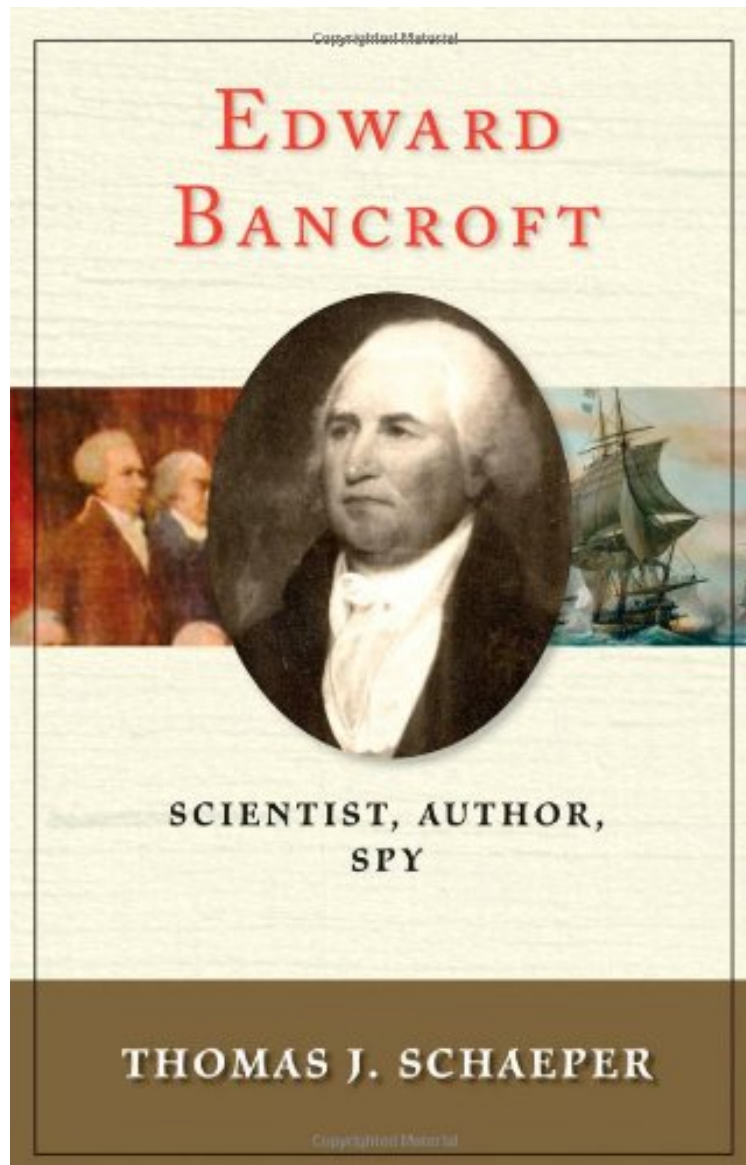


(Ebook free) Edward Bancroft: Scientist, Author, Spy

Edward Bancroft: Scientist, Author, Spy

Thomas J. Schaeper

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Thomas J. Schaeper : Edward Bancroft: Scientist, Author, Spy before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Edward Bancroft: Scientist, Author, Spy:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An interesting character in American historyBy A. J. HartmanProvides much information on an interesting man, as well as a concise overview of British/American/French diplomatic relations during the Revolt. Includes intriguing reading concerning the capabilities of contemporary

espionage. Unfortunately, the narrative is repetitive in places. And when mentioning other research the author is often somewhat snippy rather than scholarly. Bancroft's place in history generally is as the greatest spy against, and diplomatic traitor to, America. The author attempts to, if not "clear his name", than at least to rehabilitate it. Main arguments include: 1- Bancroft was not a traitor, because at the outset and throughout the American revolt all free whites were British citizens. The United States did not exist as a recognized nation until the end of hostilities. Therefore, while Bancroft could betray the Cause, he could not be a "traitor" to the United States, as there was yet no such country. - Since virtually all but the author accord either the Declaration of Independence (in spirit) or the 1st Continental Congress (in affairs) as the "birth date" of the United States, this argument is nonsensical. 2- Bancroft believed it would be of greater benefit for America to remain part of the British empire than to be independent. He did not feed information to the English for either venal purposes or because he wanted to hurt America, but because he wanted to help America. So, again, he was not a traitor, merely a patriot with different politics. - By this definition, all Loyalists were Patriots. Another nonsensical argument. 3a- Bancroft did much to help the American cause. 3b- Bancroft's intelligence did very, very little to help the English. Combined, these points at least mitigate or possibly even negate his espionage against the Americans. - Here, the argument has merit. Would that the author had stuck to this last reasoning. The pages spent propping up the two former (particularly the second) are many. Their tone is often cloyingly defensive, sometimes straying into insistent aggression. Still, Bancroft was an interesting man. His story, even draped uncomfortably in the author's "set the record straight" type meanderings, does make for a good, average read. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A nicely written biography that changed my mind. By Anson Cassel Mills. In a 2005 article published by the *Journal of American History* (91: 1415), Daniel J. Cohen, estimated that 2.3% of all college U.S. history survey courses used the popular text Davidson Lytle, *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection*, as a course supplement, making that book the third most adopted supplement in American history survey courses nationwide. Presumably, then, countless thousands of American college students have read of Edward Bancroft (1744-1821) through the well-written, but deliberately one-sided, account that Davidson Lytle present in the "Prologue" of their book, a chapter based on the three long articles by Julian Boyd (*William and Mary Quarterly*, 1959) arguing that Bancroft likely murdered American diplomat Silas Deane (1737-1789), perhaps by poisoning his supply of laudanum. Schaeper has done us great service by demonstrating the overwhelming unlikelihood of Boyd's scholarly speculation while in the process providing us with the first rounded portrait of Bancroft, whom he considers "a first-rate scientist who also happened to be a first-rate spy." My own judgment is that Bancroft was a second-rate scientist whose spying unintentionally aided the American Revolution; but that belief does not detract from Schaeper's careful and lucid account of Bancroft's life and times. I still believe Bancroft a scoundrel, just not as great a scoundrel as I once thought. A curious question is whether, in their next textbook edition, Davidson Lytle will recognize Schaeper's new evidence, evidence they claim to "eagerly await" in their bibliography, or whether they will continue to purvey the entertaining Boyd thesis on the grounds that "limitations of space" prevent them from doing otherwise. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. bigger than Arnold. By David I. Poremba. For those who are conversant with the American Revolution and its participants, the name Edward Bancroft will be familiar; for those who are not as well read in the time period, the above mentioned luminary and his secret activities will come as somewhat of a surprise, if not a shock, as most know Benedict Arnold as the most famous, if not the only American spy caught during the conflict. Bancroft was born in Massachusetts in 1745 and moved to England in the late 1760's to pursue a career as a scientist, researcher and man of letters. In recognition of his work in natural history, he was unanimously elected to the Royal Society in 1773. As a rising star, Bancroft associated with to others of like stature and became close to Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane and John Adams, to name just three. As the crisis with Great Britain grew, Bancroft was determined to fight for the preservation of the British Empire while at the same time defending American rights. When push came to shove, he sided with the mother country and while still believing in those principles, began his career as a secret agent. His success as an agent can be attested to by the fact that he was known at the time as a staunch American patriot; it wasn't until the late nineteenth century, when the British diplomatic archives were opened, that his secret life as a British agent was revealed. It is perhaps fortunate for America and French interests that his information could not or would not be aced upon throughout the course of the war. Thomas Schaeper has crafted an excellent spy story analyzing both Bancroft's correspondence and diplomatic records, leaving it to the reader to decide if Edward Bancroft was a British patriot or an American traitor.

A man of as many names as motives, Edward Bancroft is a singular figure in the history of Revolutionary America. Born in Massachusetts in 1745, Bancroft moved to England as a young man in the 1760s and began building a respectable rsum as both a scientist and a man of letters. In recognition of his works in natural history, Bancroft was unanimously elected to the Royal Society, and while working to secure French aid for the American Revolution, he became a close associate of such luminaries as Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane, and John Adams. Though lauded in his time as a staunch American patriot, when the British diplomatic archives were opened in the late nineteenth century, it was revealed that Bancroft led a secret life as a British agent acting against French and American interests. In this book, the first complete biography of Bancroft, historian Thomas J. Schaeper reveals the full extent of the

agent's deception during the crucial years of the American Revolution. Operating under aliases, working in ciphers, and leaving coded messages in the trees of Paris's Tuileries Gardens, Bancroft filtered information from unsuspecting figures including Franklin and Deane back to his contacts in Britain, navigating a complicated web of political allegiances. Through Schaeper's keen analysis of Bancroft's correspondence and diplomatic records, this biography reveals whether Bancroft should ultimately be considered a traitor to America or a patriot to Britain.

[E]ngaging . . . By providing a wealth of detail about the life and times of this much-execrated man, Schaeper balances and softens what has conventionally been seen as Bancroft's harsh character. Edmund S. Morgan, *The New York Times* Books