New Jersey: Thomas Lowrey

Thomas Lowrey was born in Ireland, on September 3, 1737, thus making him one of two immigrants to join the first “class” of the U.S. Marshal Service. At the age of ten, Lowrey and his family settled in Flemington, New Jersey. At 13-years-old, he became a landowner after buying 650 square feet from his future father-in-law, on which he eventually built a shop. Prior to the American Revolution, Lowrey worked as a shopkeeper, landowner, and local businessman. As Lowrey’s various enterprises began to thrive, he became a prominent citizen in his local community, where he and his wife donated the land for the first church in Flemington.

When American Revolution began in 1775, Lowrey was a member of the first provincial Congress for New Jersey and also received a lieutenant colonel’s commission in his local militia unit. Despite being an officer in the New Jersey militia, Lowrey never participated in combat. Instead, Lowrey served as a commissary officer, who was responsible for supplying forces of the Continental Army during the war. Additionally, Lowrey met George Washington at least once during the war, because he asked Washington for the appointment of U.S. marshal for the state of New Jersey later in his career. Washington granted Lowrey’s request in the fall of 1789.

Like his other 15 colleagues, Lowrey was responsible for overseeing his deputies as they counted the population of New Jersey for the 1790 census. According to available records, it appears New Jersey was the first state to complete the 1790 census, and counted 184,139 people. Lowrey completed New Jersey’s census return on April 2, 1791. However, the British destroyed the 1790 census schedules—the documents containing the detailed information about the enumeration—for New Jersey during the War of 1812. As a result, all

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81 Sometimes also spelled Lowry and Lowery
84 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
information about Lowrey’s conduct of the census comes from other documents in the state archives and private collections.

After completing the census, Lowrey continued to perform his other duties as a marshal. He also served as member of both the New Jersey Assembly in 1791 and 1792 and the Hunterdon County Board of Chosen Freeholders (1791-1794). Shortly after taking office in 1801, President Thomas Jefferson removed many of the remaining U.S. marshals, who were appointed under Presidents Washington and Adam because of their affiliation with the Federalist political party. So, after almost a decade of serving his community and nation, Lowrey retired to his home in Flemington where he passed away on November 11, 1806.  

88 “History - The First Generation of United States Marshals/The First Marshal of New Jersey: Thomas Lowrey”.