

Decision Activity: Joel Fithian

I was born on September 29, 1748 and was the eldest son of Samuel and Priscilla Fithian. I was well educated growing up and with my father's guidance and encouragement I pursued a career in public service. I would serve as an officer through much of the American Revolution and settled in Greenwich, N.J. permanently when my military service had concluded. Most, if not all of the Fithians, were huge supporters of the revolutionary cause. Philip and I both participated in the Greenwich Tea Burning that took place in December of 1774. Duty to one's family, public service, the belief in American independence, and a strong religious fervor were very important ideals to both of us.

The death of my second cousin Philip affected me deeply. We were very close. He named me as the co-executor of his will. I would suffer another terrible loss when my first wife Rachel Holmes died prematurely in 1779 at the age of 28.

I would go on to marry Philip's widow Elizabeth Beatty Fithian on February 2, 1780. We would have nine children together. We also named our third child after my second cousin, Philip. My public service continued in the state legislature for several years and as the sheriff in Cumberland County.

What action should Joel Fithian take following his participation in the Greenwich Tea Burning on December 22, 1774? Select one option and explain your answer in 4 to 6 sentences.

- Flee the area in an effort to avoid civil and criminal charges and possible imprisonment.
- Immediately enlist in the Continental Army.
- Continue to live in Greenwich, confess and face the consequences for the damage to property.
- Continue to live in Greenwich and deny any involvement.

Interview Joel Fithian at the end of the Revolutionary War in 1781. Select one question below and explain what might have been his answer in 4 to 6 sentences.

- Would you put your family before your country?
- Would you put your faith before your family?
- Would you risk your life in support of the revolutionary cause?

Below is a passage from a journal entry by Philip Fithian describing the Greenwich Tea Burning. Read and analyze the journal entry and answer the following guided questions:

1. Write one sentence summarizing the journal entry.
2. What was happening at the time in history this journal entry was written?
3. What did you find out from this journal entry that you might not learn anywhere else?

1 "Last night the tea was, by a number of persons in disguise, taken out of the house & consumed with
2 fire. Violent, & different are the words about this uncommon Manoeuvre, among the inhabitants.
3 Some rave, some curse & condemn, some try to reason; many are glad the tea is destroyed, but almost
4 all disapprove the manner of the destruction."

- Philip Vickers Fithian

December 23, 1774