

KC Narrative #6

King's College Students

The first point to make about the students of King's College is that there were so **few** of them. In 22 years of operation King's College enrolled only 225 students, with fewer than half of these -- 107 -- eventually graduating. At no time did total enrollments exceed 50 students; more often they fluctuated between the low forties and the high teens. The largest graduating class numbered 16; in 1764, a decade after opening, the College graduated no one.

The second point is that King's College students were very **young**, both at matriculation and graduation. Whereas all colonial colleges occasionally accepted some students as young as thirteen, King's regularly did so. And unlike its competitors, who admitted students into their twenties, King's seems never to have admitted a student out of his teens. The median age of a King's College undergraduate was fifteen, two years younger than college students elsewhere in the colonies.

The third point about them is that they were **strikingly alike in social circumstances**. Most came from homes within a mile of the College, nearly all from within three miles. Many were related to one another or to one of the College's governors. With the exception of a single identifiable Jew and a handful of Presbyterian medical students, nearly all were Anglicans. A few students experienced difficulties paying the College's relatively high tuition, and some objected to the post-1764 requirement that all students lodge in the college (and pay room and board), but most easily handled the cost. No students received financial assistance from the College, although a few, Alexander Hamilton among them, received help from personal benefactors outside the College.

The fourth point to be made about King's College students is that a majority followed the lead of their King's College governors and teachers in **siding with the Crown** at the time of the American Revolution. Though a few notably took up arms or became diplomats in the Revolutionary cause -- Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, Gouverneur Morris, Robert Livingston -- many more fought beside the British. And while several of those who sided with the Revolution went on to distinguished political careers in post-Revolutionary America, many more King's College graduates emigrated to England or Canada. Most of the graduates of King's College went into law or medicine, somewhat fewer into business, fewer still into the ministry.

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