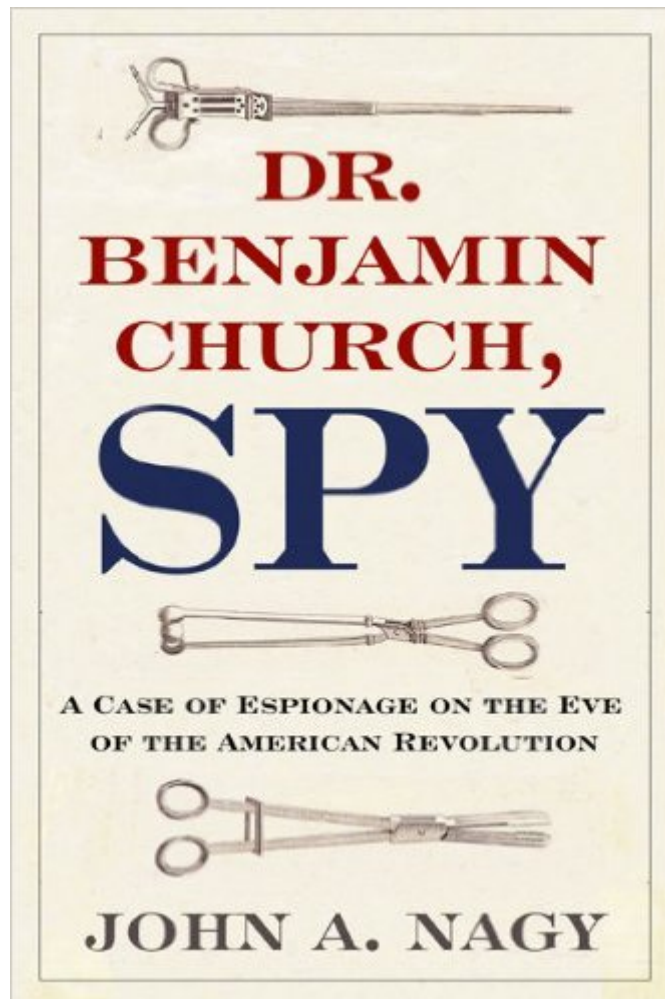


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Dr. Benjamin Church, Spy: A Case Of Espionage On The Eve Of The American Revolution



Synopsis

Newly Discovered Evidence Against a Man Who Has Long Been Suspected as Being a British Agent and America's First Traitor — John Nagy has devoted his astonishing research skills to unearthing the truth about the least known and most dangerous spy in American history. — Thomas Fleming, author of *Liberty! The American Revolution*

Dr. Benjamin Church, Jr. (1734–1778) was a respected medical man and civic leader in colonial Boston who was accused of being an agent for the British in the 1770s, providing compromising intelligence about the plans of the provincial leadership in Massachusetts as well as important information from the meetings of the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Despite his eminence as a surgeon — he conducted an autopsy on one of the victims of the Boston Massacre — and his own correspondence and the numbers of references to him from contemporaries, no known image of him exists and many aspects of his life remain obscure. What we do know is that George Washington accused him of being a traitor to the colonial cause and had him arrested and tried; after first being jailed in Connecticut and then Massachusetts, during which he continued to profess his innocence, he was allowed to leave America on a British vessel in 1778, but it foundered in the Atlantic with all hands lost. The question of whether Dr. Benjamin Church was working for the British has never been conclusively demonstrated, and remains among the mysteries of the American Revolution. In *Dr. Benjamin Church, Spy: A Case of Espionage on the Eve of the American Revolution*, noted authority John A. Nagy has scoured original documents to establish the best case against Church, identifying previously unacknowledged correspondence and reports as containing references to the doctor and his activities, and noting an incriminating letter in the possession of the Library of Congress that is a coded communication composed by Church to his British contact. Nagy shows that at the cusp of the revolution, when the possibility — let alone the outcome — of an American colonial rebellion was far from assured, Church sought to align himself with the side he thought would emerge victorious — the British crown — and thus line his pockets with money that he desperately needed. A fascinating investigation into a centuries-old intrigue, this well-researched volume is an important contribution to American Revolution scholarship.

Book Information

Hardcover: 211 pages

Publisher: Westholme Publishing; 1 edition (October 1, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1594161844

ISBN-13: 978-1594161841

Product Dimensions: 9.2 x 6.4 x 0.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (8 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #739,105 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #126 in Â Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Regional U.S. > New England #564 in Â Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > United States > American Revolution #611 in Â Books > Biographies & Memoirs > True Crime > Espionage

Customer Reviews

In the course of the late Colonial and early Revolutionary eras, the Boston Sons and Daughters of Liberty included the likes of Samuel Adams, Joseph Warren, John Hancock, John Adams, Thomas Young, Josiah Quincy, Dr. Benjamin Church, Elbridge Gerry, Paul Revere, Abigail Adams, Mercy Otis Warren, Phyllis Wheatley, and Mercy Scollay. Regardless of their individual strengths and weaknesses, acting in fluidly changing groupings, these patriots comprise one of the highest functioning and enduringly influential teams in American history. They include American Founders, whose signatures appear on the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, as well as others who could have been formal Founders if they lived long enough or had been politically enfranchised. Historical biographies have spotlighted a number of these individuals, and interest in one or another has waxed and waned over centuries. Surprisingly, the Judas Iscariot among them, Dr. Benjamin Church, Jr., has never been the subject of a comprehensive biography. John Nagy, building upon his unique mastery of historical spy-craft and subterfuge, has corrected this omission by giving us "Dr. Benjamin Church, Spy." Dr. Church has always fascinated fans of the American Revolutionary experience. Prior to incriminating letters made public among General Thomas Gage's papers in the 1920s and 1930s, some antiquarians bought into Church's innocence and defended his legacy. Dr. Church's most recent appearance in pop culture historical fiction is as a sleazy character in Assassin's Creed III, a gratuitously violent video game popular with the younger set. Benjamin Church's true story, as revealed by John Nagy, is far more nuanced, compelling, and historically accurate than the Dr. Church of fiction and legend. E.J.

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