

Acts and Laws, May 8th 1777

Made and passed by the General Court or Assembly of the State of Connecticut, in New England, in America; holden at Hartford, in said State, on the second Thursday [8th] of May, Anno Dom. 1777.

An act to prevent traitorous conspiracies against this and the United States of America.

Whereas many persons inimical to this and the United States of America, do wander from place to place with intent to spy out the state of the Colonies, form traitorous conspiracies against the State, and give intelligence to the enemies thereof, to the great danger and prejudice of the inhabitants of said state. Therefore,

Be it enacted by the Governor, Council, and representatives, in general court assembled, and by the authority of the same, that no person or persons in any character or capacity whatever (except persons well known and esteemed to be friendly to said states, military commission[d] officers on their march to or from the army, or in defense of this or the said United States, and soldiers in company with, and under the command of such officers) shall be allowed to travel or pass from town to town without a proper permit, signed by some assistant or justice of the peace, general or field officer, selectman or committee of inspection, certifying where the bearer belongs, the place to which he is to travel, and that he is reputed friendly to the United States.

And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, that it shall be the duty of every assistant and justice of the peace, and they are hereby authorized to examine and seize every suspected person traveling within this state. And all general and field officers, and all other military officers of the army or militia, of every rank and order within this state; and every selectman, committee of inspection, constable and grand-juryman, are hereby authorized and directed to examine every suspected person traveling in this state, that shall come to their knowledge; and if such person shall not produce a proper certificate, or otherwise satisfy such officer, that he or she is friendly to this and the other United States, such officer is hereby authorized and directed with or without a warrant to apprehend such suspected person, and cause him or her to appear before the next assistant or justice of the peace.

And all persons are hereby required to assist all necessary assistance therein, (if required by such officer) under the same penalties as by law is provided for refusing to assist sheriffs and constables in the execution of their office. And if such suspected person apprehended by any assistant or other officer, shall not produce a proper certificate or satisfy such authority that he is friendly to this and the United States of America, such authority is hereby authorized to bind him or her to his or her good behaviour, [*sic.*] or to commit him or her to goal, there to remain until delivered by due order of law, as the nature of the case may require. And such assistant or justice of the peace are hereby authorized to tax all necessary cost occasioned by such examination, and grant execution thereon.