

THE  
HUDSON  
RIVER  
VALLEY  
REVIEW

*A Journal of Regional Studies*

**MARIST**

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## From the Editors

It's been eight years since *The Hudson River Valley Review* has devoted an issue to the American Revolution, arguably the most pivotal event ever to occur in the region. Since there has been a wealth of intriguing new scholarship about the war's impact on the valley, the time seems ripe to revisit the topic.

The articles in this issue illustrate that no one living in the Hudson Valley between 1775 and 1783 escaped the Revolution. Every aspect of life—governance, the economy, even neighborly relations—was thrown into chaos by the conflict. Indeed, all that was certain was uncertainty. It held sway over everyone, from the privates in George Washington's Continental Army to the drafters of New York's Constitution to the farmers tending the region's fertile fields.

Perhaps most important, this issue adds a strong human dimension to the history of the war, giving names to many of the people who fought its battles or suffered on the homefront. Some, like Israel Putnam and Beverley Robinson, already are well known. But many others have been too long forgotten. Patriot or Loyalist, hero or scoundrel, they finally get their due in these pages.

**On the Cover:** *Soissonnais Regiment, July 16, 1781*, by David R. Wagner,  
from The Hudson River Valley Institute's Dr. Frank T. Bumpus Collection

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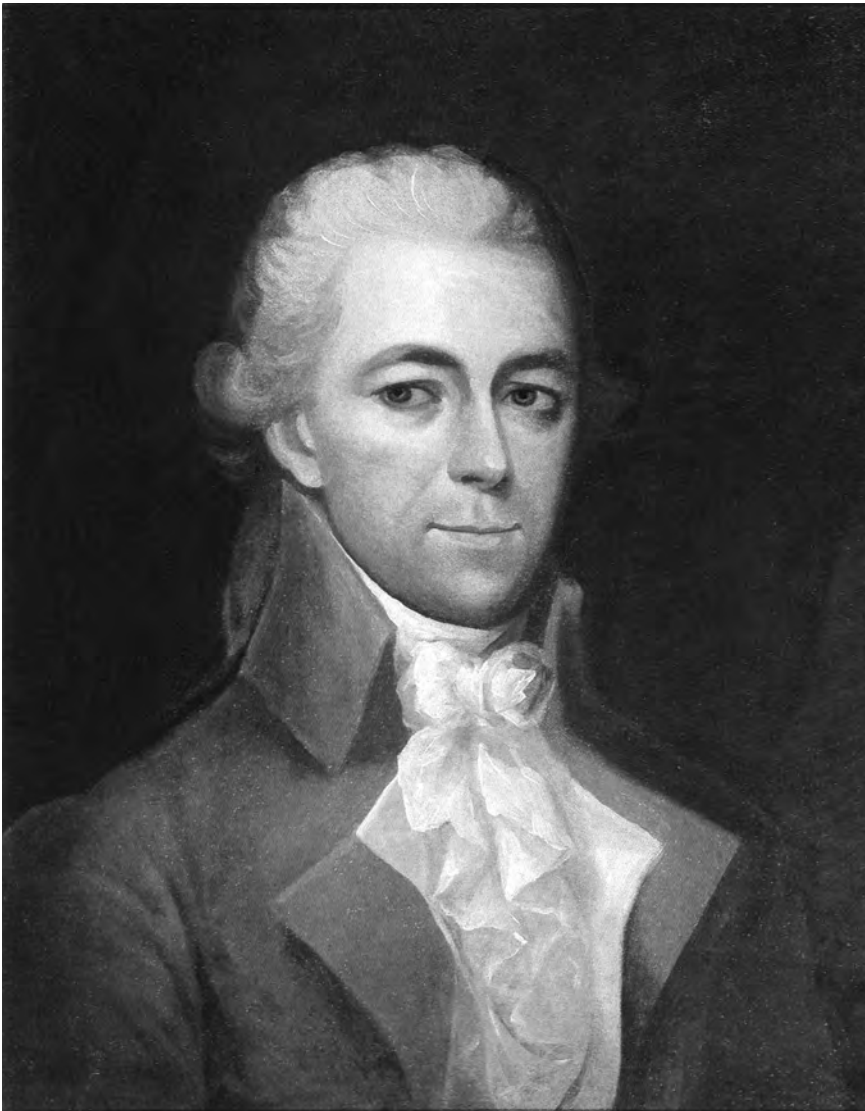
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*“Can you on such principles think of quitting a Country?”*

# Family, Faith, Law, Property, and the Loyalists of the Hudson Valley During the American Revolution

*Michael Diaz*

Much has been said of the importance of New York’s Hudson Valley during the war of the American Revolution. As both a natural invasion corridor and the nexus of the Continental Army’s primary supply routes, the American and British commands spent much of the war vying for control of the region. However, these campaigns were waged primarily by people from outside the colony, be they garrisoning New England rebels or invading British troops. To native New Yorkers, the battle for control of the Hudson Valley merely accented a far more local and personal struggle. As the Revolution swept through the colonies, long-standing political divisions in New York merged into the greater conflict between rebellion and loyalty to the crown. The result was the creation of a relatively large, diverse, and powerful Loyalist population within the colony. The American Revolution, for many residents of the Hudson Valley, was thus first and foremost a civil war.

The enormity and bitterness of the ensuing struggles inevitably leads one to ask “Why?” What motivated so many of the region’s residents to choose a distant government over their friends and neighbors? An examination of the Loyalists’ own words yields an answer. The loyal population of the Hudson Valley was not simply “deluded” or “disaffected,” as they are often described in period accounts; rather, their politics were often determined by strong social forces such as family ties, religious conviction, and a respect for civil obedience, law, and order. Woven through all of these forces was often an interest in the defense or pursuit of profit and property. These forces guided the behavior of the Hudson Valley’s Loyalists, and also greatly informed their treatment by their more numerous, and ultimately victorious, Rebel neighbors.

The term “Loyalist” describes an American who broke with the sentiments of his or her countrymen and believed that submitting to British rule was the best way to ensure peace and prosperity for the Thirteen Colonies. It is worth noting that many of these reviled “Tories” had taken part in the anti-tax protests of the 1760s and early 1770s, as there were few Americans who supported Parliament’s efforts to raise revenue-generating taxes on the colonies. However, as the anti-tax movement grew more radical, people began questioning not just whether or not Parliament had the right to tax Americans, but whether Britain should rule America in the first place.<sup>1</sup> For the Loyalists, such talk pushed matters too far, and they began to view themselves as politically separate from those advocating outright rebellion. Almost immediately, they were viewed with suspicion and loathing by self-styled “Patriots” calling for Revolution.

Years before the Declaration of Independence proclaimed a final break with Britain, the more rebellious Americans began taking steps to ferret out those who did not show appropriate umbrage at Parliament or, even worse, voiced support of the British government. The most widespread and (to the Loyalists) threatening of these measures was the Continental Association. Drafted by the First Continental Congress in 1774, the Association was a formal protest of Britain’s policies in America, and announced a universal boycott on British goods. In a draft of the Association adopted in the Orange County town of New Windsor, which paraphrases the original version approved by the Congress, the Parliament is accused of conceiving “a plan adopted and invariably pursued for a number of years past, by the *British* Parliament, for enslaving us, by levying taxes on us without our consent, and declaring they [the Parliament] are fully vested with power to make laws obligatory on us, in all cases whatsoever.”<sup>2</sup> The Congress also asked that committees to oversee the adoption of the Association be formed “in every county, city, and town” in New York.<sup>3</sup> In addition to drafting their own versions of the Association, these committees were to take note of those who refused to sign it, and jail them if they stood to be dangerous or disruptive to the protest movement.<sup>4</sup> These non-signers were the first to be legally identified, and thus persecuted, as Loyalists. As protest gave way to open rebellion, independence, and revolution, an increasing number of Americans felt that their disgruntled countrymen were pushing the matter too far. Their number eventually included as much as twenty to thirty percent of the Hudson River Valley’s population,<sup>5</sup> and fractured the region so deeply that it took decades for the political and emotional scars to fade.

Of these forces that guided the Loyalists, the most powerful and prevalent were family ties. In his *History of Westchester County*, historian J. Thomas Scharf

notes the importance of family to New York politics in this way: “In no other American colony did there exist such great kinship... no one can write the history of New York under the English without first making himself, or herself, the master, or the mistress, of at least the leading facts of this kinship of the different governing families of New York.”<sup>6</sup> As such, it is not surprising that the most significant Loyalists and Rebels in the Hudson Valley belonged to well-established clans that had a tradition of being politically opposed to each other. Outside of these large clans, families often were divided in their loyalties. How these families’ political positions informed their actions is a large part of the Loyalists’ story.

The largest and most influential of the region’s families were the DeLanceys, the Livingstons, the Philipses, and the Van Cortlandts. The latter three had been granted extensive land holdings in the Hudson Valley by the crown, and as such enjoyed tremendous wealth and political influence.<sup>7</sup> The DeLanceys were minor French Huguenot nobility that married into the Van Cortlandts and enjoyed a meteoric rise to prominence in the colony.<sup>8</sup> While all held property in New York City, the DeLanceys and Philipses owned much of present-day Westchester, Putnam, and Dutchess counties, whereas the Livingstons held much of modern Columbia County.<sup>9</sup> Of these great clans, the DeLanceys were the most successful in gaining government and religious office, holding both civil service positions (including the Lieutenant-Governorship of James DeLancey II from 1753-55, and again from 1757-1760<sup>10</sup>) and serving as wardens and vestrymen in Westchester’s Anglican churches.<sup>11</sup> The Philipses filled much the same role for their holdings in upper Westchester and lower Dutchess (now Putnam). The Livingstons, by contrast, were largely Presbyterian and headed a political party in opposition to the DeLanceys.<sup>12</sup>

When the Revolution began, there was little doubt as to which side the DeLanceys would support. Fortunately for them, much of the family lived in New York City, where a strong British presence and the authority vested in their civil positions kept them safe. However, there were family members scattered throughout the colony, and these had to be more careful in their politics. When asked about the various committees’ harassment of suspected Loyalists, Stephen DeLancey of Westchester answered that his family “regard not anything the Committee does with them, so long as they have their liberty.” He was left largely unmolested prior to the signing of the Declaration of Independence.<sup>13</sup> James DeLancey, also of Westchester, was more vocal in his loyalty to the king, and as such faced attacks on his home.<sup>14</sup>

When the British occupied New York City in the summer of 1776, the DeLancey family was well-poised to take up leadership positions among the

Loyalist refugees streaming into the city. Oliver DeLancey, one of the clan patriarchs who had served with distinction during the French and Indian Wars, was made a brigadier general by General Sir William Howe.<sup>15</sup> In doing so, he became one of the only Americans to reach flag rank in the British Army during the Revolution. General DeLancey was authorized to form a brigade of Loyalist troops, and quickly raised some 1,500 men.<sup>16</sup> This unit served with distinction throughout the war, with the 1st Battalion distinguishing itself at the defense of Savannah in 1779.<sup>17</sup> General DeLancey also was able to assist his nephew, James, in raising his own unit, officially called the Westchester Chasseurs, but better known by their nickname “DeLancey’s Cowboys.”<sup>18</sup> This band of cavalry raiders helped turn Westchester County into a dangerous no-man’s-land between British-held New York City and the rebel-held Hudson Highlands.<sup>19</sup> The peculiar nickname was earned by their habit of stealing the cattle of any suspected Rebel sympathizers they could find in Westchester.<sup>20</sup> At its peak, the unit mustered 500 men, all raised from Westchester and Dutchess counties.<sup>21</sup> James DeLancey had no military experience prior to raising the Chasseurs, and thus relied on his family connections to secure this vital commission.

Other family members also benefited from Oliver DeLancey’s influence. His eldest son, Stephen, served as a lieutenant colonel in the 1st Battalion of DeLancey’s Brigade.<sup>22</sup> Oliver’s second son, Oliver Jr., had already been a lieutenant in the prestigious 17th Light Dragoons when the war began, but was transferred to a series of positions on the British command staff. After the death of Major John André, Oliver Jr. became adjutant general to the British Army in North America, and as such head of espionage operations in the Hudson Valley.<sup>23</sup> Again, if not for the influence of his relations, it is extremely doubtful that an American who began the war as a junior officer would have achieved such a position on the British command staff.

Despite the power and influence the DeLanceys enjoyed, their family was not without political division. The Westchester branch, cousins to General DeLancey’s family, was split over whether or not to support the king. The family’s eldest son, Stephen, served as the recorder of Albany before the war, and was arrested with other Loyalists (among them States Dyckman) in Albany in 1775.<sup>24</sup> The family’s eldest daughter, Alice, married Ralph Izard, one of South Carolina’s representatives to the Continental Congress. While this is not in and of itself a direct statement of her political leanings, the fact that she never joined her family in New York City or British forces in South Carolina can be taken as such. There is no such ambiguity, however, in the politics of the family’s seventh son, James DeLancey, of the aforementioned Chasseurs, or of the family’s youngest sibling,

Oliver. At the start of the war, Oliver was an officer in the British Navy. However, after American blood was shed in Massachusetts in 1775, he resigned his commission, refusing to fight his fellow Americans.<sup>25</sup> Thus, even the most powerful and influential of the Hudson Valley's Loyalist families faced the same internal strife and discord that sundered many of the region's families.

The DeLanceys were not the only high-profile Hudson Valley family to face hardship and division during the Revolution. On June 24, 1776, Cadwallader Colden Jr., the son of New York's lieutenant governor, was arrested at his house in Orange County by committeemen from Newburgh and New Windsor. The militia was dispatched to Colden's house when it was decided that he was under "suspicion of being an enemy to the liberties of *America*."<sup>26</sup> This suspicion was borne of two factors: his highly recognizable family name, which already brought him under intense scrutiny, and his refusal to accept Continental currency in the payment of a debt owed to him by John Hill of New Windsor.<sup>27</sup> Hill, who described himself as "a friend to my country," wrote to the Provincial Congress, the colony's revolutionary government, to inform them of Colden's refusal of American money in February 1776.<sup>28</sup>

Escorted under guard before the joint Newburgh-New Windsor Committee, Colden was outraged to find he had been arrested on "nothing but a grand suspicion of my being inimical to the *American* cause."<sup>29</sup> In his defense, Colden pointed out that the Newburgh-New Windsor Committee had no right to bring charges against him, as he lived under the jurisdiction of the committee of the town of Hanover. However, the Newburgh-New Windsor group felt that the committeemen of Hanover were "too remiss in their duty, and under some undue influence."<sup>30</sup> In an attempt to receive some manner of fair trial, Colden appealed for a public hearing before the Committee of Ulster County. In the resultant proceedings, Colden admitted that he was opposed to independence (he had previously opposed the election of officials to the Provincial Congress and "had made no secret of my principles and opinions on these matters"<sup>31</sup>), but agreed to sign the Association and maintain his public silence on political dealings. Unconvinced, the committee also demanded that he swear to take up arms to oppose any British invasion of the region. This Colden refused to do; as such, he was condemned as a Loyalist and remained in custody.<sup>32</sup>

While men like Colden were made targets due to their names, others loudly proclaimed their loyalty and thus received similar treatment. For example, Peter Corne of Westchester County is described by several sources as "an obstinate Tory."<sup>33</sup> A retired merchant and privateer, Corne ran a farm and mill near Peekskill when the Revolutionary crisis began.<sup>34</sup> As was common for those who

had fought for king and country in previous wars (the aforementioned privateering took place during the War of Austrian Succession, 1743-48), Corne made his loyalty to the British government clear from an early stage.<sup>35</sup> He was signatory of an early Loyalist protest published in the Westchester County town of Rye in April 1775.<sup>36</sup> As the Rebels sought to weed out Loyalists in the summer of 1776, he was named on a list of suspected persons published by the Provincial Congress.<sup>37</sup> As a result, he was issued a summons to appear before either the Provincial Congress or a local committee on July 5.<sup>38</sup> The arrival of the British invasion force in the area may have proved enough of a distraction for Corne to ignore the summons. Sources reveal that he did spend part of the war in England.<sup>39</sup> However, he did so only after attempting to remain on his Westchester property.

In both cases, Corne and Colden turned to their families in an attempt to retain their property. After Colden was arrested, his son, Cadwallader Colden III, moved into the family mansion in Ulster (now Orange) County. From there, he was able to maintain both the Coldens' extensive land holdings and lobby for his father's release. Despite sharing his father's name, Cadwallader III was considered a "decent young man" by the Rebel authorities.<sup>40</sup> Though no direct statements of his politics survive, both this appraisal by the Ulster County Committee and his marriage to Elizabeth Fell, a daughter of a prominent Rebel family, speak of his acceptance among the Whigs.<sup>41</sup> Following a petition written by him in the summer of 1776, the Ulster County Committee released the elder Colden from jail. However, suspicion of his loyalties continued to dog Cadwallader II throughout the war, and he was jailed once more in November 1776, and again in March 1777, a stay that may have extended into 1780.<sup>42</sup> Cadwallader III spent these years securing his father's property and doing his utmost to obtain his release. Through these efforts, the Colden family's holdings in Ulster County remained in the family's hands, unlike so many other Loyalists' farms. Remarkably, Cadwallader II was allowed to return to the farm unmolested after the war. He died there in February 1797.<sup>43</sup>

Likewise, Peter Corne turned to Rebel family members to defend his property. After initial Rebel scrutiny, he signed his farm over to his son-in-law, Dennis Kennedy. Kennedy was, at least on the surface, more attached to the Rebel cause, holding a commission in the local militia.<sup>44</sup> However, either because of Corne's clear displays of loyalism or of the favorable placement of his farm<sup>45</sup>, the property eventually was seized.<sup>46</sup> Peter Corne was banished from the colony, and Dennis Kennedy fled to Canada following accusations of being "strongly connected with the enemy."<sup>47</sup> In this instance, the Cornes/Kennedys had neither the political connections nor the Rebel "credentials" to escape scrutiny, and they suffered for it.

While Loyalists with the most prominent family names were the first to be targeted by Rebel committees, those belonging to fringes or branches of some of the bigger Loyalist families were approached in a somewhat more circumspect manner. The Rebel committeemen often hoped to lure those with power and influence to their cause, as the Revolution was always in need of money and capable leadership. An example of the gentler hand the committees showed the seemingly neutral can be seen in case of another of the Hudson Valley's prominent Loyalists, Beverly Robinson. The interactions between Robinson and the revolutionary committees again bring out the importance of family to the thinking of many Loyalists.

Beverly Robinson was born in Virginia in 1732. He enlisted in the king's service to fight in the War of Austrian Succession. In this capacity, he came to New York near the war's end in 1748, and became associated with the Philipse and DeLancey families. He married Susannah Philipse in July 1748, and entered into the merchant trade. His marriage brought him a 60,000-acre plot of land on the eastern side of the Hudson River, encompassing much of what are now the towns of Garrison, Philipstown, Kent, and Patterson.<sup>48</sup> In the early 1760s (possibly 1763), Robinson retired to his estate, assuming direct control of the property. It included extensive forests, comprising as much as half of the property, and 146 tenants.<sup>49</sup> Many of these tenants were Presbyterians, but there was a notable Anglican minority, to which Robinson belonged.<sup>50</sup>

In the Highlands, Robinson rose to local prominence, holding office as the supervisor of Dutchess County's Southern Precinct from 1763 to 1765, and of the Philipse Precinct from 1772 to 1774, and Judge of the Inferior Court during 1775.<sup>51</sup> He also was an important force in the region socially, donating land and funds for the construction of St. Philip's Chapel in Garrison to serve his Anglican tenants.<sup>52</sup> As a public servant of the British crown, he attempted to discharge his duties faithfully, including traveling to Poughkeepsie to aid Sheriff Philip Livingston in tearing down a liberty pole.<sup>53</sup> However, there were those who hoped that he would take the side of the Rebels as the political crisis worsened. He was offered a colonelcy in command of the Dutchess County Militia in September 1775, but chose to decline the commission.<sup>54</sup> Being that Robinson later raised and commanded a Loyalist regiment, one can assume that his objection was not based on distaste for military service. Rather, the decision appears to have been a political one. Even in 1775, the militias of the Hudson Valley were firmly in control of the Rebels<sup>55</sup>, and to accept a command in them would have made a clear political statement in opposition to the royal government. This was one of the few clear political gestures Robinson gave prior to 1777.

However committed to British rule as he may have been, Robinson was not as “obstinate” as others during the early days of the crisis. The historical record reveals little of his activities prior to 1776, while many more vociferous Loyalists came under persecution. As late as October 1775, well after blood had been shed on both sides at Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill, he did not object to the Rebel authorities building fortifications on his property.<sup>56</sup> By being so agreeable, it appears that Robinson was able to avoid any major scrutiny until 1777. At that point, with the British preparing to invade the Hudson Valley from their newly taken base in New York City, the Provincial Congress began forming committees specifically to ferret out Loyalists, eventually brought together as the Committee to Detect and Defeat Conspiracies. When the Congress relocated to Fishkill after the fall of New York City in 1776, they felt they had to be sure where Robinson’s loyalties lay. As such, they issued a summons for him on February 20, 1777.<sup>57</sup>

In his appearance before the Committee to Detect and Defeat Conspiracies, both Beverly Robinson and John Jay, the committee’s chair, made frequent mention of the importance of family. Early in the questioning, Robinson’s politics were probed through the behavior of his son, Beverly Jr., who had fled to New York City to join the British.<sup>58</sup> Robinson points out that his son’s treatment at the hands of the local committees, which was apparently rough<sup>59</sup>, drove him into the British camp, “as it is natural when a man is hurt to kick.”<sup>60</sup> As such, he showed no approbation at the young man’s actions. Seeing that separating the elder Robinson’s politics from his son’s was not working, Chairman Jay tried a different tack. He stated directly that America had “passed the Rubicon and it is now necessary every man Take his part, Cast off all allegiance to the King of Great Britain and take an oath of Allegiance [an updated version of the aforementioned Continental Association] to the States of America or Go over to the Enemy for we have declared ourselves Independent.”<sup>61</sup> Robinson replies that he is hesitant to take such a drastic step, and explains his reasoning for wishing to stay out of the conflict:

Sir, I cannot take the Oath but should be exceeding Glad to Stay in the Country, to Inable me to Stay in the Country, and Expecting that there would be a great Deal of Trouble about the forts [Montgomery and Clinton] in the Spring have already Sent Some of my Goods farther back in the Country to Patersons [now the Town of Patterson] and I should be extremely unhappy to go over to the enemy, for I have no way to maintain my family there, but I have here. If I go to the enemy, can I carry with me any of my effects? It is very uncertain who will Rule yet, for the matter is not Determined.<sup>62</sup>



Once again, note how central family is to Robinson's thinking. His reply to a direct statement about American independence and adherence to the crown makes no mention of higher legal concepts or ideology. Rather, Robinson is chiefly concerned with ensuring the peace and comfort of his family. Despite his offer to move away from the strategically important riverfront where he lived, Robinson was never sufficiently assured of his family's security if he did not take the oath. As such, he chose to cast his lot with the British.

Shortly after this hearing, Robinson fled to New York City, leaving his wife and remaining children at their estate.<sup>63</sup> From there he sent a letter to John Jay, informing him of his decision. While that letter does not survive, Jay's response does. Interestingly, Jay writes not to Beverly, but to his wife, Susannah.<sup>64</sup> In this letter, he appeals to her sense of family, invoking some very strong imagery of the suffering her children might endure if her husband did not reverse his decision and join the rebellion:

When your Friends reflect, that not only Mr. Robinson's Estate, but the reputation and Influence he has just acquired; would become the Inheritance of children who promise to do honor to their parents; they can entertain few Ideas more painful, than those which Arise from the Danger of your family's being deprived of Expectations so well founded & so valuable; and of a Lady's being subjected to all the anguish and misfortune &... Mr. Robinson has put his own, and the happiness of his family at hazard, and for what? For the sake of a fanciful regard to an Ideal Obligation to a prince, who on his part disdains to be fettered by any obligation, a prince who with his Parliament, arrogating the attributes of Omnipotence, claims a right to bind you and your children in all cases whatsoever...

Can you on such principles think of quitting a people who respect you, a Habitation and a Country which afford you every Convenience? Remember that should you carry your numerous Family to New York, Famine may meet you and incessant anxiety banish your peace... Picture to your imagination a city besieged, yourself and your children mixt with contending armies—Should it be evacuated, where and with whom and in what manner are you next to fly—can you think of living under the restless wings of an army—Should heaven determine that America should be free, in what country are you prepared to spend the remainder of your days and provide for your children. These things it is true may not happen, but don't forget that they may—admit they should not—suppose heaven unjust—Britain Victorious, and the Americans bound in all cases whatsoever, will you ever Madam be

able to reconcile yourself to the mortifying Reflection of being the Mother of Slaves...

For the sake of everything dear to you Madam be persuaded to prevail on Mr. Robinson to return, and advise him to take an open, decisive part with his Country... Be pleased to assure him that I shall always think myself happy in being useful to him in every occasion consistent with the Duties I owe to that important cause to which after the most mature consideration, I have cheerfully devoted myself, Family, and Fortune.<sup>65</sup>

Clearly, Jay's intent was to use familial obligations to overcome the Robinsons' political convictions. Unfortunately for all parties involved, this method failed, and Beverly Robinson went on to become an extremely useful asset to the British. Twice his actions put the rebel cause in great danger: once by helping plan and lead the British attacks on Forts Clinton and Montgomery in 1777,<sup>66</sup> and again by acting as the main contact between Benedict Arnold and John André during the former's defection to the British in 1780.<sup>67</sup>

By the end of 1777, much of the Hudson Valley's Loyalist population had joined the Robinsons in their exile in British-held New York City. After the expulsion of the Rebel army, the area effectively became British territory once again (though one under military control). As could be expected, there were many families who had members on either side of this new border. Interestingly, these families continued the pattern of helping each other, even when communication could be difficult or dangerous.

The Dyckmans of the lower Hudson Valley offer an interesting take on such a relationship for two reasons. First, it was unusual to have two brothers, Samson and States, well-placed on either side of the political divide. The elder brother, Samson, was a wealthy and influential Rebel in southern Dutchess County. He was recommended to General Washington as a person who was "well affected" to the American cause in 1780, when Washington was in the area investigating the Benedict Arnold affair.<sup>68</sup> He frequently acted as a messenger for local Committees of Safety<sup>69</sup>, and seemed to enjoy the trust of the influential body.<sup>70</sup>

States Dyckman chose a different path during the American Revolution. On June 4, 1776, he was arrested with a group of other Loyalists in Albany.<sup>71</sup> Mostly civil servants and officials,<sup>72</sup> these men had gathered in force to celebrate the king's birthday at the King's Arms Tavern.<sup>73</sup> Such a numerous gathering of Loyalists was a tempting target for Albany's Committee of Safety. A Rebel mob descended on the gathering, arresting all involved.<sup>74</sup> Dyckman, a minor catch compared to the mayor of Albany and other high-ranking officials present, was released shortly afterward on the condition that he stay in the city and promise

not to carry arms for the British.<sup>75</sup> The latter was an easy promise to keep, as Dyckman never showed any inclination for military service. His confinement in Albany, however, was at some point broken, as he fled to New York City in January 1777.<sup>76</sup> There he was one of the few Americans to find gainful employment in the British army, working as an accountant for the corrupt Quartermasters Department. In this capacity, Dyckman was tasked with hiding the full extent of the department's corruption.<sup>77</sup>

At the direction of department officials, Dyckman and the other accountants were to maintain a "clean" set of books, that masked the fact that the quartermasters were lining their own pockets with the crown's funds. The sensitive nature of this work necessitated that the accountants were well-compensated for their discretion. On paper, Dyckman was paid two shillings sixpence a day (at a time when the common British soldier made only eight pence a day), but off-the-books supplements hugely increased his earnings.<sup>78</sup> In this capacity, he certainly made substantially more than his brother.<sup>79</sup> Such was States' newfound prosperity that his sister, Catalina, was sent to live with him, though she herself seemed to have more rebellious leanings.<sup>80</sup> States' duties with the Quartermasters Department necessitated that he travel to London in 1779 and 1781<sup>81</sup>, but even this did not deter him from aiding his family. He made sure that, should anything befall him on his travels across the Atlantic, his Rebel family would have a handsome share of his British profits.<sup>82</sup> In a seemingly unparalleled move, States actually met Samson in Westchester's no man's land between the two armies in 1780, hand-delivering a £100 loan.<sup>83</sup> States contributed so much to his family that he had to request a raise from one of his employers, Quartermaster General William Erskine. In a letter written in May 1788 (five years after the war's end), he asked Erskine to consider that "I have reduced [my earnings] considerably by assisting a Mother and Brother who suffered as much [by] the American War as I benefited."<sup>84</sup> It should be noted that Dyckman was far from completely "reduced" by his charity, as he still managed to find money to buy several hundred pounds' worth of English fineries to wear or resell in America every time he crossed the Atlantic.<sup>85</sup> Still, this is an unusual and informative statement, as there were few Loyalists who would have gone so far to help those who had rebelled against the crown, and even fewer who had "benefited" enough to offer help.

The date on Dyckman's letter shows that States' actions during the war continued to affect the Dyckman family for years afterwards. States was in London when the Revolutionary War ended in 1783, and remained there until 1788.<sup>86</sup> However, even before the war's end, he turned his eyes towards resettling in America. In 1782, States wrote to Samson and asked that he purchase a small

farm for States' retirement.<sup>87</sup> By the end of 1783, Samson was "well pleased" by the property he had secured for his brother.<sup>88</sup> Britain's defeat, and America's subsequent independence, slowed States' return by years. Also slowing his return was the increased scrutiny the Quartermasters Department was subject to, as the angry British public was eager to use the corrupt and costly department as a scapegoat for Britain's defeat.<sup>89</sup> States and the other accountants were called to defend the quartermasters from a Parliamentary Commission appointed to investigate their business dealings. In this capacity, the exiled Loyalist was instrumental in ensuring that his employers avoided disgrace, and as such secured from them a substantial annuity.<sup>90</sup>

Dyckman's success in obtaining his annuity highlights another reason some Americans chose to side with the British government: profit. The British Army was a vital organ of one of the wealthiest empires on the planet; the Continental Army barely subsisted on whatever scraps the perennially bankrupt Continental Congress could send its way. Obviously, working for the crown appeared to offer Americans opportunities for economic and social advancement that seemed flatly impossible under the ill-funded Rebels. While the vast majority of Loyalists had their hopes of riches dashed at the end of the war, States Dyckman provides one of the only examples of an American who made a fortune working for the British who was then able to enjoy that bounty in the colony of his birth. Dyckman's pension funded not only his eventual return to America in 1788, but also bankrolled the construction of a lavish mansion, named Boscobel,<sup>91</sup> where he hoped to live out his days. Built on a small plot of land at Montrose Point on the Hudson, the house was finely built and elaborately furnished with luxuries Dyckman shipped back from London.<sup>92</sup> While he kept largely to himself for the last few years of his life at Boscobel, States Dyckman was able to enjoy the comfort and luxury his loyalty to Britain had bought him.

Knowing that their wayward relation was now the wealthiest man in the family, States Dyckman's Rebel family members took an active role in his eventual return to the newly United States. In addition to procuring States the aforementioned farm in Westchester, his family kept him informed of the political climate of the Hudson Valley, and how likely he was to face persecution if he returned. Interestingly, one of the most helpful of States' relations in this regard was his new brother-in-law, Daniel Hale. The husband of States' younger sister, Catalina, Hale had sided with the Rebels and supposedly been an officer in the Continental Army during the war.<sup>93</sup> In a letter written to States on January 17, 1784—less than two months after the last British troops left New York City—the Rebel Hale describes himself as the Loyalist States' "Friend and Brother."<sup>94</sup> In another



COURTESY OF BOSCOBEL HOUSE AND GARDENS, GARRISON, NY & DS BLANEY

Front façade of Boscobel Mansion

letter, written several months later, he informs States of a recent election for the state Legislature in which “men of prudence and moderation” were elected that would surely overturn the “unconstitutional or unjust” anti-Loyalist laws passed by revolutionary “firebrands.”<sup>95</sup> Hale gave States his assurances that the exiled Loyalist soon could safely return to America.<sup>96</sup> Later still, he informed States that “it would give me real pleasure to see you at home in my little family.”<sup>97</sup> It is surprising to hear such language directed at a Loyalist from one who had taken up arms against the king. Hale’s enthusiasm for his brother-in-law’s return makes more sense when one remembers that Hale hoped to rely upon Dyckman to finance several business ventures.<sup>98</sup> Dyckman apparently was forthcoming as ever with lending money, and as such helped the ex-Rebel start a new business in Albany.<sup>99</sup> Tempered by economic interest, family once again superseded political differences.

States Dyckman’s habit of spending his annuity on family members was not limited to Hale or the years after the war. In fact, Dyckman spent lavishly on his family both before and after his return to the United States in 1788. Such was his generosity that Dyckman had to request an increase in pay from his clients to adjust for the amount of money he was giving to his family while he was still in London. Back in America, he noted that “On my return to this country, I found

numerous sets of relations all ruined and beggared by the war. It was natural for me to assist them, but probably imprudent to the extent that I did.”<sup>100</sup> Following the Revolution, the success of the Dyckman family, which had sided so prominently with the Rebels during the war, was funded in large part by British money. Political disagreements could not break family ties, and money helped a “black sheep” like States return to the fold.

The intermixing of money, family, and politics also can be seen in the story of Samuel and Judith Verplanck. Wealthy landlords of a nearly 40,000-acre tract around Fishkill Landing<sup>101</sup> in Dutchess County and owners of a fine mansion on Wall Street in New York City, the Verplancks had much to lose by picking the wrong side in the Revolution. However, with the British holding New York City and the American Rebels the Hudson Valley, the Verplancks were trapped in a position that forced them to support one side or the other, giving the offended side an excuse to seize the “traitors’ ” property. However, the Verplancks found a way to keep possession of both properties while maintaining their social prominence: separation. In early 1776, Samuel Verplanck moved to the family’s Fishkill holdings, splitting his time between his own home, Mount Gulian, and his recently deceased brother’s. While in the valley, Samuel took several measures to ingratiate himself with the Rebels’ military and social hierarchy, including becoming a member of the local Committee of Safety and allowing Baron Friedrich von Steuben, inspector general of the Continental Army, to use Mount Gulian as his headquarters. Judith, on the other hand, stayed with the couple’s children at their Wall Street house and became one of occupied New York’s most famous hostesses. General Howe, British commander in chief during the first phase of the war, was a frequent guest at Mrs. Verplanck’s balls. Despite the fact that Judith Verplanck had entertained much of the British high command, the family was allowed to retain all of their property during and after the war due to Samuel’s political connections, making the Verplancks one of the very few moderate or Loyalist families to make it through the Revolution unscathed.<sup>102</sup>

While family played a huge and important role in the lives of many Loyalists, it was not the only societal institution to factor into the Loyalist community. Religion, namely in the form of the Anglican faith, informed the politics of many of the Hudson Valley’s Loyalists. Likewise, the Anglican Church itself was a center for loyal protest and support for the crown. However, while the majority of the church hierarchy remained strongly loyal, many Anglicans sided with the Revolution. Internally divided and viewed with suspicion by their neighbors, most of the region’s Anglican churches closed their doors during the Revolutionary crisis.<sup>103</sup>

It was only natural for the Anglican Church to be a rallying point for support of the British government. George III's many titles included his positions as Defender of the Faith and head of the Church of England. As such, loyalty and submission to the king was more than a matter of civic responsibility; it was an act of faith.<sup>104</sup> In addition to this, the Anglican community in New York was led by those with strong civil and economic ties to Great Britain, men who were ill-disposed toward thoughts of rebellion and separation. The political party that powerful Anglicans like the DeLanceys, Philipses, and others led in the Provincial Assembly, which opposed the rebellion up until the assembly's dissolution in 1776, was frequently called "the Episcopalian Party."<sup>105</sup> The Anglican Church, then, was a center for loyal thought and conduct, as well as a forum for voices within the Loyalist community.

Anglicans were particularly powerful in Westchester, which had more Anglicans per capita than the rest of the colony.<sup>106</sup> Correspondingly, it was one of the more loyal areas of the Hudson Valley, and its inhabitants noisily protested the Revolution from its earliest days. In 1775, Anglicans in Rye gathered at a church to sign a protest against Rebel activities in nearby White Plains.<sup>107</sup> One Anglican minister, Epenetus Townsend of Salem, testified that he used his pulpit for "reading Homilies against the Rebellion, and... to give my Parishioners and others a Just Idea of the Sacred Obligation laid upon us by Christianity to be good and peaceable Subjects..."<sup>108</sup> Perhaps more so than anywhere else in the colony, the Anglican Church in Westchester was the focal point of the county's Loyalist movement.

Beverly Robinson was also a loyal Anglican, and acted to spread the faith into the Hudson Highlands. The area in general, and Robinson's patent in particular, did not have a numerous Anglican population.<sup>109</sup> To give himself and his few Anglican tenants a place to worship, Robinson sponsored the construction of St. Philip's, a small chapel in the Highlands that was affiliated with St. Peter's Church in Westchester.<sup>110</sup> The church minutes of St. Philip's from the period survive and illustrate just how divided the Anglican Church could be.

With such fundamental ties to the King of England and the clear loyalty of the chapel's first warden, Beverly Robinson, it is surprising that the vestry and, in all probability, the membership of St. Philip's was so deeply divided by the war. The chapel's second warden, Charles Moore, elected in 1772, was a Loyalist. While he never took up arms for the king like his predecessor, he was obnoxious enough to his Rebel neighbors that he had to relocate to North Carolina after the war.<sup>111</sup> The other four wardens of the Revolutionary generation, all elected well after the war when the chapel reopened, were Rebels, some prominently so. Two



of them, William Denning and Pierre Van Cortlandt, served in the Provincial Congress. (The latter was named lieutenant governor after the war.)<sup>112</sup> A third, Jeremiah Drake, served in the Rebel militia.<sup>113</sup>

The vestry was likewise divided. Of these, eight were Loyalists and six were Rebels.<sup>114</sup> Two of the vestry's Loyalist members served in the military.<sup>115</sup> Fredrick Philips, one of the more militant vestrymen, joined the King's American Dragoons. He was elected to the vestry in 1812, well after Revolutionary passions had cooled.<sup>116</sup> Francis Pemart initially served in the Rebel army but defected to the British for unknown reasons. He served as a spy and boat pilot until the war's end. Convicted of treason *in absentia*, Pemart had his property confiscated. After the war he relocated to Canada.<sup>117</sup> Two other vestrymen, Henry Purdy and Peter Corne (the grandfather of States Dyckman's wife), also had their properties confiscated.<sup>118</sup> The remaining two suspected Loyalist vestrymen, Pierre Van Cortlandt (a different person from the lieutenant governor) and Silvanus Haight, show little cause or consequence of being branded Loyalists, besides being noted as such in the church records. Neither had their property confiscated nor appear to have been forced into exile after the war.<sup>119</sup> It is possible, then, that these men were moderates who had been falsely accused of being Tories, or at the very least were not sufficiently attached to the royal cause to sever their ties with the land of their birth after the Rebels' victory. This general passivity on the part of St. Philip's loyal members demonstrates a sharp contrast to the Rebel vestrymen, several of whom served in the local militia and the Continental Army.<sup>120</sup>

While the case of St. Philip's shows that the members of the Anglican Church were somewhat divided, there was no such dissension in the ranks of the Anglican clergy. Almost to a man, Anglican ministers in the Hudson Valley consistently preached a message of loyalty until their parishes were closed. Of the 250 Anglican ministers in America prior to the war, ninety percent remained loyal to the crown.<sup>121</sup> In the Hudson Valley, the Anglican ministry was particularly supportive of the loyal cause. Anglican ministers in the Highlands Patent, Fishkill, Poughkeepsie, and Westchester closed their churches and left the area after their congregations either turned against them or faced persecution by their non-Anglican neighbors.<sup>122</sup> Two ministers from Dutchess County, John Doty of Robinson's Highland Patent and John Beardsley of Poughkeepsie, joined the Loyalist military as chaplains of the King's Royal Regiment and the Loyal American Regiment, respectively.<sup>123</sup> All of these men felt that the oaths that consecrated them as ministers bound them to the king, even in the face of enormous popular pressure.

The region's most outspoken Anglican minister made his voice heard not only from the pulpit but also in print. Rev. Samuel Seabury, from Westchester,



was one of the few Loyalists who put pen to paper to answer the flood of Rebel propaganda.<sup>124</sup> Taking the pen name A. W. Farmer [A Westchester Farmer] in 1774, he laid out a series of logical arguments against the rising tide of resistance and separation from the British government. One of these, 1774's *The Congress Canvassed*, was a scathing attack on the extra-legal Congress, the concept of boycotting British goods, and the hypocrisies of the Rebel leadership. Seabury phrases his argument as a common farmer might, and thus sheds light on the doubts and concerns that many average New Yorkers felt during this period.<sup>125</sup>

Seabury appeals to the good nature, humanity, and reason of New Yorkers in his writings. When arguing against the boycott proposed by the Continental Association of 1774, he asked his neighbors to consider the human cost of their actions:

The manufacturers of Great-Britain, the inhabitants of Ireland, and of the West-Indies, have done us no injury. They have been no ways instrumental in bringing our distresses upon us. Shall we then revenge ourselves upon them? Shall we endeavour to starve them into a compliance with our humours? Shall we, without any provocation, tempt or force them into riots and insurrections, which must be attended with the ruin of many—probably with the death of some of them? Shall we attempt to unsettle the whole British Government—to throw all into confusion, because our self-will is not complied with? . . . Good God! Can we look forward to the ruin, destruction, and desolation of the whole British Empire, without one relenting thought? Can we contemplate it with pleasure; and promote it with all our might and vigour, and at the same time call ourselves his Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects [as the Continental Association did]?<sup>126</sup>

Seabury also reminded New Yorkers that Britons do not respond well to threats, and that damaging their economy will only further anger the British government, and he states the common wisdom about America's military prospects, should the conflict between colony and parent come to blows. The British army could with "[a] single campaign . . . ruin us effectually," while the mighty Royal Navy could easily "embarrass our trade in the Mediterranean with Spain, Holland &c."—nations with which the nascent independence movement hoped to trade.<sup>127</sup> Further defiance of Parliamentary authority thus risked not only the financial well-being of Hudson Valley farmers, but quite possibly their lives as well.

The pamphlet goes on to list reasons to distrust the powers behind the Association. Many of the Congressmen were merchants who stood to make huge profits as scarcity drove up the price of goods during the boycott. Moreover, how

could a people trust an extra-legal body that was doing its best to stifle dissent and close the courts of law? Such actions stood to leave all New Yorkers at the mercy of radicals and “Rascal[s] from New England,”<sup>128</sup> who had long laid claim to New York lands, though they had “no more right to it than the Pope of Rome.”<sup>129</sup> With no legal recourse, even Americans who supported the Congress could find themselves victimized and taken advantage of.

However logical Seabury’s complaints were, his comments were not well-received by the rebel majority of New Yorkers. His writings, and ultimately his person, were attacked by Rebel committees. Revolutionary committees in Westchester, Orange, and Ulster counties acted to confiscate and burn the reverend’s writings. At a Committee meeting in Wallkill, Ulster County, the pamphlet was read aloud, found to be “replete with falsehoods, artfully calculated to impose upon the illiterate and unthinking, to frustrate the Resolves of the Congress, and to destroy the union so necessary for the preservation of our constitutional liberty.” The committee then resolved, “[t]hat the said Pamphlet, in abhorrence and detestation of such infamous publications, be now burnt, and that the authors, publishers, and circulators of such performances be henceforth deemed enemies to their country.” The pamphlet was then tossed into the fire.<sup>130</sup>

Reverend Seabury himself fared little better. On November 22, 1775, he was seized by a party of armed men at a house in Westchester where he taught a grammar school. They eventually met up with another party of militia, the whole commanded by Isaac Spears, a hot-headed leader of the Sons of Liberty from New York City. These militia men escorted Seabury to New Haven, some seventy miles from his home, and out of “Loyalist” New York.<sup>131</sup> There he stood trial for being “against the liberties of America.”<sup>132</sup> Despite his protest to the contrary, he was found guilty and was held in Connecticut for seven weeks.<sup>133</sup> Seabury went on to become the chaplain for the King’s American Regiment. After the War, he became the first American named a bishop of the Episcopal Church.

Finally, a sense of civic duty and a respect for law and order motivated many to turn against the Rebel committees, which often seemed to skirt the edge of anarchy and lawlessness. Most notable among these were the Hudson Valley’s numerous civil servants and lawyers. In a very immediate and practical way, these men relied upon the crown for their livelihoods and social position. For them, supporting the British government was more than a philosophical argument: it was the only way to secure their future in what they hoped would be a British America. A high percentage of civil servants were active Loyalists during the Revolution and took leadership roles both during and after the war. Likewise, many lawyers, who had spent years of their lives (and no small amount of money) learning their

trade, felt that English law was the best and fairest on the planet, and that the loosely organized Rebel mobs trying to separate America from Britain could not possibly protect a man's rights and property as well as the British legal system.

Civil servants were one of the most unanimously loyal segments of the population. As such, they were held under careful scrutiny by their more numerous Rebel neighbors. This lesson was learned all too well by the small but influential body of Loyalists arrested at the tavern in Albany with States Dyckman on the night of June 4, 1775. Among these was Royal Mayor Abraham Cuyler, Albany County Clerk Stephen DeLancey, and county Postmaster John Moiner.<sup>134</sup> One of the many toasts raised that night was for "damnation to the enemies of the King," whose birthday the men were celebrating. Even this relatively mild gesture drew an immediate and harsh response from the city's enraged populace. A mob quickly descended on the pub. The partygoers were arrested and promptly brought before Albany's Committee of Safety.<sup>135</sup> At the subsequent trials, the Albany Committee provided a lengthy list of charges against Cuyler and DeLancey, the night's two biggest arrests. Both men were ultimately banished to Hartford, Connecticut.<sup>136</sup> The order of banishment, sent to Hartford's Committee of Safety, included quotes made by the men, as well as a careful accounting of their social activities. For example, Abraham Cuyler was charged with "openly and avowedly countenancing of, and associating with, such persons as were suspected of being unfriendly to the *American* cause, without having regard to the rank or character of such persons, and frequently speaking in the most violent terms against the cause of *America*." His apparent treason was based mainly upon his statements that "he was a friend to the Constitution of *Great Britain*, and good order and Government; and that *England* never meant to distress *America*, and that we brought the war upon ourselves; and that the *Americans* were acting in open rebellion; and that many of the Congress had sinister views, and meant only to make their fortunes..." Even speaking against the Congress was now a crime for someone in his position, a frightful prospect for those dedicated to enforcing British law in the colonies. Stephen DeLancey was similarly charged with making "free and indecent speeches against the Congress, our Army, and *America*." The charges against him also included meeting "more frequently than previously" with Sir William Johnson, an influential Loyalist of the Mohawk Valley.<sup>137</sup> The fact that civil servants like Cuyler and DeLancey were so carefully monitored showed they were regarded as particularly dangerous by the Rebel authorities.

Both men were eventually released into British-held New York City. While Stephen DeLancey apparently did his best to stay out of any future trouble, retiring either to London or New York City,<sup>138</sup> Abraham Cuyler took the opposite

tack and tried to raise a regiment, the Loyal Refugee Volunteers, to fight for the king.<sup>139</sup> This unit, which never recruited its full complement of men,<sup>140</sup> guarded British supply bases in New York and New Jersey, thus freeing British regulars to fight elsewhere.<sup>141</sup> Cuyler is only one of many civil servants who remained in British service and attempted to restore British rule to the Hudson Valley.

One of the Hudson Valley's foremost legal minds also felt that British rule was the best course for the Thirteen Colonies. Peter Van Schaack of Kinderhook, a King's College (later Columbia University) schoolmate of John Jay, was one of the many Americans who protested Parliament's actions but found the movement toward independence a step too far. Early on, he supported protesting Parliamentary taxation and sat on several committees in Kinderhook and New York City.<sup>142</sup> However, as the crisis between Britain and American worsened, Van Schaack became increasingly worried about the violent and lawless turn the Revolution was taking. In 1775, militia men from Claverack, New York, and Western Massachusetts raided Kinderhook, where they "disarmed, dragooned, and generally ill-treated" anyone suspected of being a Loyalist, including moderates like Van Schaack.<sup>143</sup> Such behavior played on Van Schaack's fears of anarchy and rule by the mob. As such, he eventually fled to England.

While he had been driven to England by necessity and conviction, Van Schaack still considered himself first and foremost an American. He returned to the United States after the war, and written records exist of both the scrutiny he faced upon his return and his own personal thoughts on life in a newly independent nation. When asked to explain his actions during the war, he responded that, "I repent not what I have done... my Heart condemns me not for any Part of my political Conduct."<sup>144</sup> However, he later added, "My attachment to her [Great Britain] (great indeed as it was) was founded in the relation she stood in to America, and the happiness I conceived America derived from it."<sup>145</sup>

Van Schaack also voices a rather surprising opinion of the newly United States in a letter to his friend States Dyckman. Writing in 1785, shortly after his return to America, Van Schaack describes the country and its situation:

I really see no change in the country—or if there is any, it is no more than there is in the same man in a change of clothes—the stuff is the same and the cut is the same, nor is there less embroidery, I assure. Society has indeed lost many valuable members, but let us consider this subject upon a large scale and free from prejudice, and how many will there be found who are ornaments to the community and have become so by means of this very Revolution, without which they would perhaps have languished into obscu-

city? Believe me there is no dearth of merit here. I have now had time to look about me and though the idea of England excites many a tender thought and recalls many a fond remembrance, yet nothing but dire necessity could persuade me to quit my native country again. I have been treated with great attention by all descriptions and I may say without vanity by all ranks of people here. My time has been spent in one continuous Round of Social Easures, my Friends are numerous, my circumstances better than I expected, and to crown all, my Children!—blessed be God for this the greatest of all his mercies—are good, amiable, and promising.”<sup>146</sup>

Van Schaack’s glowing account of the postwar United States speaks for many Loyalists who still wished to call America home. As this paper has argued, a great number of Loyalists were concerned not with subjugation to the king but to practical and moral concerns about their families, their faith, and their protection under law. Once these vital rights were secured in the United States, many of these Loyalists sought nothing more than to be left in peace. Men like Peter Van Schaack, States Dyckman, and Peter Corne gladly returned to America after the violence ended. Others, like the Colden family, fought to ensure that they never had to endure the pain of exile. Unfortunately, there were those, like the Robinsons and the DeLanceys, who sided too strongly with Britain and thus were lost to the United States forever. While these men chose different paths in their attempts to remain loyal to the British government, they were moved and motivated by the same factors. Family, faith, and law shaped their worlds, and the Loyalists supported a government they felt best served these interests. The actions taken by the Loyalists made up the heart of the civil war in the Hudson Valley. As such, they were a vital chapter in the greater story of the American Revolution.

## Endnotes

1. Edward Countryman, *The American Revolution* (New York: Hill and Wang 1985) 35-42.
2. *American Archives Series 4, Volume 2, Page 0131*, “Meeting of Freeholders and other Inhabitants of New-Windsor, in Ulster County, New-York Declare their attachment to the King, to whom they would be deficient in duty if they submit to the power assumed by the Parliament. Approve and will abide by the Association of the Continental Congress. Condemn sundry Publications by James Rivington, a Ministerial hiring, and an enemy to his Country.” <http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/AmArch>; Countryman, 100
3. Countryman, 100; Philip Ranlet, *The New York Loyalists* (Lanham, Maryland: University of America Press 2002) 40
4. Ranlet, 41
5. There is significant debate over the how loyal New York remained during the American Revolution. Alexander Flick, one of the first historians to examine the question, boldly states that half of all New Yorkers were loyal. While this is still a commonly cited figure, later historians, such as Bernard Mason and Philip Ranlet, have more conclusively shown the number

to be substantially lower. The figure cited above is the most commonly accepted by current researchers.

6. J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Westchester County vol I.* (Philadelphia: L. E. Preston and Co. 1886/ reprint Camden, ME: Picton Press 1992) 130
7. Scharf, 26
8. Scharf, 864
9. Sung Bok Kim, *Landlord and Tenant in Colonial New York: Manorial Society 1664-1775* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1978); 39 Scharf 26, 91
10. Scharf, 864
11. Scharf, 91, 130, 169, 864-869
12. Alexander Flick, *Loyalism in New York During the American Revolution* (New York: AMS Press 1901) 18-20
13. Scharf, 352
14. George DeLancey Hanger, "The Life of Loyalist Colonel James DeLancey" *Nova Scotia Historical Review* #3:2 (1983), p.40
15. Scharf, 868
16. Ranlet, 100
17. Robert S. Allen, "The Loyalist Provincial Corps," printed in Robert S. Allen, ed., *The Loyal Americans* (Canada: National Museum of Man/National Museums of Canada 1984) 42
18. Allen, 42; Scharf, 868
19. Ranlet, 135
20. Ranlet, 135; It should be noted that many of the outlaws and bandits wreaking havoc in Westchester during the war would claim to belong to DeLancey's Cowboys when robbing Rebels, despite the fact they had no real connection to the unit.
21. Ranlet, 135
22. Lorenzo Sabine, *The American Loyalists* (Boston: Little and Brown 1847) 255
23. Scharf, 869
24. Albany Committee of Correspondence: Tory Friends and Associates, "Minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence 1775-1778, Proceedings June 6th 1776" Institutional Records, Boscobel Restoration Inc., Garrison, NY
25. Scharf, 868
26. *American Archives Series 4, Volume 6, Page 1111*, "June 27, Letter from Colonel Clinton to General Washington, requesting his instructions about the arrest of some suspected persons." <http://colet.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/amarch/getdoc.pl?/projects/artflb/databases/efts/AmArch/IMAGE/17561>
27. *American Archives Series 4, Volume 4, Page 1532* "Letter from John Hill to New-York Congress, complaining of Cadwallader Colden, son of the Lieutenant Governour." <http://colet.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/amarch/getdoc.pl?/projects/artflb/databases/efts/AmArch/IMAGE/12294>
28. *Ibid.*
29. *American Archives Series 4, Volume 6, Page 1112*, "Letter from Cadwallader Colden, Jr., to the Committee for Ulster County, New-York, complaining of the treatment he had received from the Committee of Newburgh and New-Windsor, and asking for an immediate hearing before the County Committee." <http://colet.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/amarch/getdsoc.pl?/projects/artflb/databases/efts/AmArch/IMAGE/17562>
30. *American Archives Series 4, Volume 6, Page 1112*
31. *American Archives Series 4, Volume 6, Page 1112*

32. Edwin R. Purple, *Genealogical Notes of the Colden Family in America* (New York: Privately Printed 1873); Ranlet 145
33. Chorley, 168; Flexner, 132
34. Chorely, 394
35. Thomas Flexner, *States Dyckman: American Loyalist* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), 130
36. *American Archives Series 4, Volume 2, Page 0321*, "Protest of the Inhabitants and Freeholders of Westchester County, New-York, against the Proceedings of the Meeting held at the White Plains, on the 11th instant, for the appointment of Deputies to the Provincial Congress, Subscribers to the Protest from Westchester County." <http://colet.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/amarch/getdoc.pl/projects/artflb/databases/efts/AmArch/IMAGE/2321>
37. *American Archives Series 4, Volume 6, Page 1152*, "Committee met in the Assembly Chamber, Philip Livingston chosen President, List of suspected persons." <http://colet.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/amarch/getdoc.pl/projects/artflb/databases/efts/AmArch/IMAGE/17668>
38. *American Archives Series 4, Volume 6, Page 1179*, "Summons issued to Charles Nicoll Donald McClean, Peter Graham, Richard Morris, Solomon Fowler, and William Smith, as persons of equivocal character, Summons issued against Theophylact Bache, Charles Arden, John Moore, Sen., Benjamin Williams, Nathaniel Underhill, James Horton, Jun., William Sutton, Peter Corne, Peter Huggeford, William Barker, Joshua Purdy, and Absalom Gidney, persons inimical to the cause and rights of America." <http://colet.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/amarch/getdoc.pl/projects/artflb/databases/efts/AmArch/IMAGE/17716>
39. Flexner, 130
40. Purple, 19
41. Purple, 19
42. Purple, 17-18
43. Purple, 18; "Elizabeth Fell Colden," *Eighteenth Century Personnel Files*, New Windsor Cantonment State Historic Site, Vails Gate, NY
44. Flexner, 132
45. The Rebels were able to make significant confiscations in Westchester County, as the DeLancey and Philipse clans remained loyal to the crown. Having a suspected Loyalist island in a newly Rebel sea would do little to serve the local committees in charge of the confiscation. Thus they may have been unusually committed to seizing the Corne property.
46. Flexner, 132
47. "Stephen Ward to Governor George Clinton," Dyckman Ancestors, Descendants, Relatives Re: Dennis Kennedy, Institutional Records, Boscobel Restoration Inc.; Flexner 130, 132; Barbara Glassman, *The Dyckman Family in America*. Institutional Archives, Boscobel Restoration Inc., Garrison, NY. Pg 18
48. Chorely, 120
49. Chorely, 182-4
50. Chorely, 188-122; Ranlet 130
51. Chorely, 118-122, 126
52. Chorely, 118-122
53. Chorely, 126
54. Chorely, 120-126
55. This is evidenced most clearly by the fact that none of the region's militias did anything to impede Rebel activity during this period or aid the British when they landed in 1775.

56. *American Archives Series 4, Volume 3, Page 1274*, "Letter from Beverly Robinson, dated Highlands, October 2. The point of land on which the Fort is erecting belongs to Mrs. Ogilvie, and not to him, were it his, the publick should be welcome to it." <http://colet.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/amarch/getdoc.pl/projects/artflb/databases/efts/AmArch/IMAGE/8155>
57. Chorely, 130
58. Catherine S. Crary, *The Price of Loyalty* (New York: McGraw-Hill 1973) 148
59. A Mr. Robinson had been arrested in Ulster County in the fall of 1776 for trying to organize a band of Loyalists to march down to New York City and enlist in the king's service. It is unclear if this figure is Beverly Robinson Jr., or even if he is of the same Robinson family. Ms. Crary believes this Robinson to be Beverly Jr.; however, one wonders why the committee makes no specific mention of the man's arrest and capture. For more on this arrest, and a fascinating look at the works of Jay's Committee to Detect and Defeat conspiracies, see the account of Enoch Crosby in John C. Dann, ed., *The Revolution Remembered: Eyewitness Accounts of the War for Independence* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1980). Crosby's account begins on page 340, and the part of it specifically concerning the Robinson affair begins on page 343.
60. Crary, 148
61. Crary, 148
62. Crary, 149
63. Chorely, 130
64. Most likely, this was simply because Susannah still lived in Rebel-held territory. One could hardly expect a postman from a Rebel committee to simply walk into New York City.
65. Chorley, 130-133
66. For a more complete examination of Robinson's role in the campaign's planning and his brave personal leadership at the Battle of Fort Montgomery, see Dave Richard Palmer, *The River and the Rock: The History of Fortress West Point* (New York; Hippocrone Books 1991) 101-116
67. Robinson's role in the André-Arnold affair is often passed over. Arnold was staying in the Robinson house, across the Hudson from West Point, at the time, and Robinson hid letters from André in his own letters to Arnold inquiring after the state of his property. For more, see Richard J. Koke, *Accomplice in Treason: Joshua Hett Smith and the Arnold Conspiracy* (New York: New York Historical Society 1973)
68. States Morris Dyckman Papers, B1.MD1780.11 Boscobel Restoration Inc., Garrison, NY
69. *American Archives Series 4, Volume 4, Page 1025*, "Congress having refused to make the Loan requested by this Colony an emission of Paper Money to be prepared immediately. Committee directed to despatch three Vessels for Ammunition and Medicines. Artillery Company ordered to be raised for the defence of the Colony." <http://colet.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/amarch/getdoc.pl/projects/artflb/databases/efts/AmArch/IMAGE/11523>; "Samson Dyckman," Institutional Archives, Boscobel Restoration Inc., Garrison, NY
70. One of the first messages that Samson delivered was a Summons to Oliver DeLancey and his wife calling them before the Committee to Detect and Defeat Conspiracies; "Samson Dyckman," Institutional Records, Boscobel Restoration Inc., Garrison, NY
71. The aforementioned Stephen DeLancey was arrested at the same time.; Albany Committee of Correspondence: Tory Friends and Associates, "Minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence 1775-1778, Proceedings June 6th 1776" Institutional Records, Boscobel Restoration Inc., Garrison, NY
72. It is unclear exactly what Dyckman was doing with this group. There is no conclusive evidence to States' occupation during this time, or why a man whose family lived in lower Westchester was in Albany. However, States' later employment as an accountant for the British Quartermasters Department may give a hint to his occupation during this time.



73. Albany Committee of Correspondence: Tory Friends and Associates, "Minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence 1775-1778, Proceedings June 6th 1776" Institutional Records, Boscobel Restoration Inc., Garrison, NY; Ranlet, 110
74. Flexner, 19; Ranlet, 110
75. Albany Committee of Correspondence: Tory Friends and Associates, "Minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence 1775-1778, Proceedings June 18th, 1776" Institutional Records, Boscobel Restoration Inc., Garrison, NY
76. Calendar of Historical Manuscripts relating to the War of the Revolution in the office of the Secretary of State, Albany, NY, Vol. 1 (Albany, 1868) 674
77. Specifically, the Quartermasters Department would secretly buy wagon companies, then contract with themselves to carry supplies. The number of wagons contracted for bore only a passing resemblance to the number of wagons that were actually sent out, allowing the quartermasters to pocket the rest of the money. Thomas Flexner describes the scam, and the ensuing scandals, much more completely in chapters 3-7 of his *States Dyckman: American Loyalist*.
78. Flexner, 50, 63
79. Flexner, 30
80. As indicated by the fact that she left New York City shortly after States moved to London, and later married a Rebel officer. Flexner, 40, 87; Dyckman Papers, B1.MD.1780.7
81. Both times, to defend his employers from governmental inquires into the conduct of the quartermasters.
82. Flexner, 64
83. Flexner, 71
84. "States Dyckman to William Erskine," *Erskine, Bruen, Quartermaster Accounts & Misc. Correspondence*, Intuitional Files, Boscobel Restoration Inc., Garrison, NY
85. Flexner, 72, 80, 103-4
86. Flexner, 84, 108
87. Flexner, 82
88. States Morris Dyckman Papers, B2.1783.43, Boscobel Restoration Inc., Garrison, NY
89. Flexner, 58-61
90. Flexner, 102-103
91. After the Boscobel Oak, a large tree in which the future Charles II hid himself from the armies of Oliver Cromwell during the English Revolution.
92. Flexner, 208
93. Hale claimed, and was referred to as such by one of States' Loyalist friends, the rank of major in the Continental Army. However, his name does not appear on any lists of New York regular army officers. It is possible that Hale served only in the militia, or in a regiment from another colony. Flexner, 118
94. Daniel Hale to States Morris Dyckman, Jan 17, 1784. States Morris Dyckman Papers, B3.JA1784.8. Boscobel Restoration Inc., Garrison, NY
95. Daniel Hale to States Morris Dyckman, May 5, 1784. States Morris Dyckman Papers, B3.JA.1784.18. Boscobel Restoration Inc., Garrison, NY
96. Hale to Dyckman, May 5 1784. B3.JA.1784.18
97. Daniel Hale to States Morris Dyckman, July 3, 1786. States Morris Dyckman Papers, B3.1786.29. Boscobel Restoration Inc., Garrison, NY
98. Hale to Dyckman, Jan. 17, 1784 B3.JA1784.8; Flexner 89-91

99. Flexner, 89-90
100. Flexner, 116-117
101. Modern-day Beacon, New York
102. Visit to Mount Gulian Historic Site, Beacon, NY, 6/29/11; Robert W. July, *The Essential New Yorker: Gulian Crommelin Verplanck* (Durham: Duke University Press 1951) 4-6
103. Chorely, 210
104. Flick, 1
105. Flick, 18
106. Ranlet, 131-2
107. *American Archives Series 4, Volume 2, Page 0321*, "Protest of the Inhabitants and Freeholders of Westchester County, New-York, against the Proceedings of the Meeting held at the White Plains, on the 11th instant, for the appointment of Deputies to the Provincial Congress, Subscribers to the Protest from Westchester County." <http://colet.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/amarch/getdoc.pl/projects/artflb/databases/efts/AmArch/IMAGE/2321>
108. Ranlet, 132
109. Chorely, 36
110. Chorely, 115
111. Chorely, 155
112. Chorely, 156, 158
113. Chorely, 156
114. Chorely, 140-173
115. Chorely, 167, 173
116. Chorely, 173
117. Chorely, 167
118. Chorely, 166. I would be remiss in not pointing out that, as most of these vestrymen were tenants, not landowners, they may not have had property to seize. However, the fact that only two men were singled out and subsequently disappeared from the church records points towards this being a special case.
119. Chorely, 161-173
120. Chorely, 163
121. Crary, 89
122. Chorely 39, 80-81, 86
123. Chorely, 81; Frank Hasbrouck, ed., *The History of Dutchess County* (Poughkeepsie, NY: S.A. Matthieu, 1909) 211
124. Ranlet, 43
125. Otto Hufeland, *Westchester County During the American Revolution* (Privately Printed, 1926), Chapter 2.
126. Samuel Seabury, "The Congress Canvassed" <http://anglicanhistory.org/usa/seabury/farmer/01.html>
127. Seabury, "The Congress Canvassed"
128. Philip Ranlet speaks extensively of the longstanding feuds between New Yorkers and New Englanders. See his already much-cited *The New York Loyalists* for more.
129. Seabury, "The Congress Canvassed"

130. *American Archives Series 4, Volume 1, Page 1201*, "Meeting of Freeholders in the Precinct of Wallkill, Ulster County, New-York. Approve of the Association of the General Congress. 'Free Thoughts on the Resolves of the Congress,' burnt." <http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/AmArch>
131. Crary, 100-101
132. Crary, 102
133. Janice Potter, *The Liberty We Seek: Loyalist Ideology in Colonial New York and Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1983) 30
134. Stefan Bielinski, "The Beginning of the End" <http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/albany/or/or-be.html>; Flexner, 19; Ranlet, 110
135. Albany Committee of Correspondence: Tory Friends and Associates, "Minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence 1775-1778, Proceedings June 6th 1776" Institutional Records, Boscobel Restoration Inc.,
136. *American Archives Series 4, Volume 6, Page 1072*, "List of charges against the person sent this city to Hartford, in Connecticut." <http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/AmArch>
137. *American Archives*, "List of charges against the person sent this city to Hartford, in Connecticut."
138. Catherine Williams to States Morris Dyckman, 1781. States Morris Dyckman Papers, B1.1781.28
139. "Loyal Refugee Volunteers Recruiting Notice," <http://www.royalprovincial.com/military/rhist/lrv/lrvrecruit.htm>
140. Cuyler to Ward, January 9, 1780. <http://www.royalprovincial.com/military/rhist/lrv/lrvlet1.htm>
141. "Attack on Refugee Post," <http://www.royalprovincial.com/history/battles/lrvrepr.shtml>
142. Ranlet, 36, 112
143. Ranlet, 112-113
144. Mary Beth Norton, *The British Americans: The Loyalist Exiles in England 1774-1789* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company 1972) 128
145. Norton, 128
146. Peter Van Schaack to States Morris Dyckman, States Morris Dyckman Papers, B3.1785.34

Congress 16 July 1776

**Resolved** Unanimously that all persons who  
 - being within the state of New York and deriving pro-  
 - fit from the Laws of the same are allegiance  
 the said Laws and are members of the state, and  
 all persons passing thro' visiting or making a tempo-  
 - rary stay in the said state, being entitled to the protection  
 of the Laws during the time of such passage, sojourn  
 or temporary stay are during the said time allegiance  
 thence

That all persons members of or owing allegiance to  
 this state, as before described who shall levy war  
 against the said state within the same or be adherent  
 to the King of Great Britain or other the Enemies  
 the said state within the same, giving to them  
 their aid and comfort are guilty of treason  
 against the state and being thereof convicted  
 shall suffer the Penalties of Death & etc

Robt. Munroe

Oath of Allegiance all New York citizens were required to sign

# New York State's Committees in the American Revolution

*Colin Williams*

On 21 March 1775, “Friends to Liberty” outside of Poughkeepsie, New York, wanting to protest Britain’s invasive colonial policies, raised a flag with THE CONGRESS AND LIBERTY on one face and THE KING on the other. By proclaiming the not-yet-convened Second Continental Congress instead of Parliament, these Hudson River Valley agitators were not just exercising their rights as British citizens: they were declaring their allegiance to local government instead of transoceanic rule. When royal officials learned about the display, they decried it as “a public nuisance” and instructed the Dutchess County Sheriff to cut it down.<sup>1</sup> Although the flag was removed peacefully, tensions between the colonists and British troops remained high. Less than a month after the incident, Massachusetts minutemen clashed with British regulars at Lexington and Concord. As resistance across the continent escalated into armed conflict, political legitimacy in New York came to be determined, in part, on how communities fought the war.

Since English warships took the Dutch trading post of New Amsterdam in 1664, threats both outside and inside the colony had challenged the legitimacy of New York’s established government. The province’s external hazards emerged from England’s struggles with other European monarchies. In 1673, the Netherlands recaptured its old settlement on Manhattan Island, only to be forced to return it a year later when the Treaty of Westminster ended the Third Anglo-Dutch War. In a more persistent struggle, France fought a series of wars against England from 1688 until 1783 in, among other places, New York.<sup>2</sup>

Like its external threats, the first serious internal challenge to New York’s legitimacy originated from European politics. When news of England’s Glorious Revolution crossed the Atlantic in 1689, Lieutenant Governor Francis Nicholson fled the colony, allowing Jacob Leisler, a local merchant, militia captain, and Calvinist minister, to assume control of the province. For over a year, Leisler attempted to solve New York’s myriad problems by taking bold action. Most significantly, he called for the continent’s first intercolonial conference to discuss defense against common threats and opposed the Dominion of New England, a

corporate polity designed to tighten the Great Britain's control over its colonies. Proclaiming to govern the colony in the name of William of Orange, the Dutch stadtholder who had invaded England, Leisler refused to surrender the city fort to Major Richard Ingoldsby, an English officer who had arrived in advance of Henry Sloughter, the new provincial governor. When Sloughter, bearing credentials signed by King William, disembarked several days later, Leisler submitted to his authority. The new governor, viewing the militia captain's lack of immediate deference as an assault on his authority, repaid the ambitious merchant by executing him for treason.<sup>3</sup>

With the threat from Leisler suppressed, Sloughter and subsequent royal governors, when not directing military action against the French, concentrated on solidifying their control over the province and securing personal wealth. To achieve these aims, they granted large expanses of land to English noblemen in exchange for yearly quitrents. Hoping that new property holders would recruit numerous immigrants to work their land, governors also looked to enlarge the colony's population, increase tax revenue, and bolster their influence with London. With Leisler's Rebellion demonstrating their need for power and control, governors granted manors as a way of beholding the powerful to them. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, manors dominated New York's agricultural system, dividing society into those who owned land and those who worked it.<sup>4</sup>

The geography of upstate New York supported the creation of manors and neo-manorial social practices.<sup>5</sup> The Hudson River enabled grain to be transported profitably to New York City from as far north as Albany, but only if milled and shipped in mass quantities. Milling, transportation, and selling grain were the responsibilities of the manor lord. For the privilege of working a farm on their lord's land, tenants paid a yearly rent and rendered respect to their social superiors. This homage was based on more than just economic position. In order to gain direct control of the area north of New York City, upstate gentry were invested with the authority to exercise court leet and baron—jurisdictional and civil law—over their tenants. Although landlords and tenants usually interacted peacefully, contracts governing their relationships often indebted farmers for as long as ninety-nine years, creating obligations that were passed from generation to generation.<sup>6</sup>

Tensions inherent in the manorial system devolved into land riots during the 1750s and 1760s that, in addition to challenging the established social order, pitted New York's possession of the east bank of the Hudson River against Massachusetts' jurisdictional claim to the land. On certain manors, confrontations between landlords and tenants became violent and deadly. Incursions by

armed bands from both sides of the ill-defined border between New York and Massachusetts likewise resulted in the deaths of tenants and squatters. When, in 1766, a large mob led by disenfranchised farmer William Prendergast began to evict tenants loyal to their manor lord, Governor Henry Moore deployed the 28th Regiment to Dutchess County and detachments from the 46th, 19th, and 26th Regiments to Albany County.<sup>7</sup>

Why did Moore use British regulars to staunch the unrest? Riots and uprisings were commonplace in mid-eighteenth-century Britain, often the only method in which the disenfranchised could voice their disgruntlement.<sup>8</sup> Although jurisdictional problems between landlords and tenants were persistent and violent, the two groups targeted each other, not the provincial government.<sup>9</sup> What Moore probably realized, however, was that class-based agrarian unrest threatened the province's order and stability. New York's social structure was based on hierarchy. Rank was paramount among a people that had no police to enforce the will of the governor (disseminated via sheriffs) or the rights of property owners. Correspondingly, its jurisdictional issue with Massachusetts also had a hierarchical component to it. Both colonies were corporate bodies in competition with each other over economic power at home and influence with the home office. More importantly, Moore believed that he was protecting the province's hierarchical social organization. At bottom, Moore used troops to keep the peace because, according to his understanding, anarchy and its economic and political consequences could result if he did not.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time that upstate New York was erupting in violence, Parliament enacted the 1764 Sugar and 1765 Stamp Acts. The Sugar Act mandated that the royal navy and admiralty courts enforce a three-pence per gallon tax on molasses, a levy that merchants in New York City believed would ruin them. The Stamp Act affected even more people. According to the broad-ranging regulation, colonists would have to pay a surcharge on everything from commercial and legal documents to cards and dice.<sup>11</sup>

In New York, resistance to the Stamp Act gave rise to new political actors who radicalized the lawyer-based Livingston faction and enervated support for the merchant-based DeLancey clan.<sup>12</sup> Agitators such as Isaac Sears, John Lamb, Alexander McDougall, and the Sons of Liberty allied with the Livingstons to form committees of observation and inspection that enforced the colony's adherence to the non-importation movement, a continent-wide protest against duties on imported items of everyday use.<sup>13</sup> After Parliament repealed most of these levies in 1770, committees focused on tea, the one commodity still taxed. On 18 April 1773, despite attempts by conservative colonists to prevent an incident,



unknown radicals associated with the committee of observation dumped tea from the British merchant vessel *Nancy* when it hove to the waters off Sandy Hook.<sup>14</sup>

During the Stamp Act crisis, a series of extralegal political bodies directed committees of observation and inspection, spoke for the resistance movement, corresponded with similar organizations in other provinces, and chose members to attend an intercolonial congress. In April 1775, after the Battles of Lexington and Concord, New York City's Committee of Sixty allied with Rebels in eastern Massachusetts and invited representatives from New York's other jurisdictions to join it in representing the province.<sup>15</sup> Later that year, when Governor William Tryon left his factious colony to govern from a ship in New York Harbor, the committee proclaimed that, since the king's representative had vacated New York without disbanding or proroguing the (by now defunct) Provincial Assembly, it was justified in exercising the authority that the colonial legislature had once held.<sup>16</sup>

New Yorkers' long history of questioning the legitimacy of established authority suggests that the Rebellion was merely a point along a continuum of political unrest. This assumption is both true and misleading: resistance to authority did not abate with the codification of legal authority in 1777; instead, it became institutionalized in political expression. The pressures that war brought to upstate New York during these two years created a caldron in which local leaders of middling backgrounds faced dramatic events and responded to them in ways that relied as much on expediency as precedent. Between April 1775 and April 1777, with the success of the Rebellion in doubt, reactions instead of policies characterized how upstate New York's committees addressed the unpredictability of war.

Scholars have not neglected the contentious nature of New York politics during the late colonial period. Since Carl Becker famously divided the Rebellion into domestic and imperial conflicts, historians have studied how the committee system arose and what it meant to the nascent republic.<sup>17</sup> Using the existence of these powerful boards as empirical evidence, they have investigated subjects as disparate as social change resulting from military conflict and General George Washington's partisan war.<sup>18</sup> Yet, except for Hugh M. Flick's 1933 *The Rise of the Revolutionary Committee System* and Bernard Mason's *The Road to Independence*, no historical work has addressed how committees exercised power or controlled the populace. Even Flick's and Mason's monographs, although valuable, have a serious shortcoming: they rely on provincial (rather than county or local) records, a decision that led them to overly simplistic theses.<sup>19</sup>

Most works on local governance during the Rebellion underestimate the pressures that war placed on leaders. During its first two years of conflict, the col-



ony experienced British penetration from three directions. The most permanent incursion followed the Battles of Long Island and New York in the summer of 1776 and lasted until British forces evacuated Manhattan Island on 25 November 1783. The proximity of Westchester County to these troops, commanded until May 1778 by Major General William Howe, as well as to the province's Loyalist coastal areas, would torment its residents throughout the war. In a second operation, Lieutenant Colonel Barry St. Leger moved eastward through the Mohawk Valley in the summer of 1777 with a force of Tories and Indians, devastating many Tryon County residents in the costly Battle of Oriskany. At the same time, Charlotte County, Albany County's recently established northern neighbor, experienced invasion when Major General John Burgoyne led an army south from Montreal headed for the City of Albany and union with St. Leger and General Sir Henry Clinton moving up from New York City. Thus, by 1777 counties in the Hudson Valley constituted a no man's land between British encroachments and Rebel strongholds. It was at these places of friction where the conflict's military and political outcomes were determined.

As the most populous urban area in upstate New York and the seat of the most populous upstate county, Albany was *primus inter pares* among the colony's northern political jurisdictions. Over 100 miles up the Hudson River from Manhattan, the city was uniquely situated. Close to British Canada and closer still to the powerful Iroquois Confederacy, Albany and its environs would be the central theater for the northern Continental Army throughout much of the war.<sup>20</sup> Shortly before conflict began in 1775, two new jurisdictions had been formed from territory previously in Albany County. Governor Tryon, the eponymous founder of Tryon County, established the new county out of Albany's western lands in 1772. At the same time, he partitioned off the county's Lake Champlain region and named it for Britain's Queen Charlotte.<sup>21</sup> Ulster, Orange, Dutchess, and Westchester counties, on the other hand, could all trace their histories back to the late seventeenth century.<sup>22</sup>

This essay examines the committee system that ran local governance in the colony's upstate counties and attempts to explain how they achieved, solidified, and used legitimacy to wage war against the British. It begins with the outbreak of war on 19 April 1775 and concludes with the enactment of the state Constitution on 20 April 1777.<sup>23</sup> Its first section, "Committee Formation: Initial Attempts at Establishing Legitimacy," describes how these legislative bodies organized themselves, established loose hierarchical relationships with the Provincial Council, and defined their purpose and scope. This section also traces the proactive measures such as Association-signing and election-holding that committees took

to justify their existence. The second section, “Wartime Governance: Securing Legitimacy by Addressing Domestic Issues,” explains how the winter of 1775/1776 challenged committees. Surviving the difficulties inherent in a wartime economy strengthened their claims of authority. In the second year of the war, proactive attempts to forge legitimacy combined with aggressive reactions to local problems to enable committees to deal with upstate New York’s large disaffected population. Always a goal of committee governance, eliminating the Tory problem became feasible only after the boards had won a degree of legitimacy. By the end of the conflict’s second year, the authority of the committee system had been accepted by politically-active upstate New Yorkers. The legacy of committee governance would affect how this segment of the population would react to the 1777 state Constitution, the rise of a popular governor from its own ranks, and the structuring of politics in postwar society.

## Committee Formation: Initial Attempts at Establishing Legitimacy

After Lexington and Concord, Rebels in New York’s northern counties found themselves in a precarious position. Alexander White, Tryon County’s sheriff, vigorously supported King George III and Governor William Tryon’s supremacy over the colony. An opponent of the non-importation movement, the sheriff had affixed his name to a 16 March 1775 declaration censuring the “violent and designing men” in Boston who “had committed an outrageous and unjustifiable act on the private property of the [East] *India* Company” a year and a half earlier.<sup>24</sup> Published in the *New-York Gazetteer* by James Rivington, a newspaper editor suspected of having Tory sympathies, the proclamation became public shortly before violence erupted in eastern Massachusetts. White, whose political sentiments were now widely known, “repeatedly insulted” residents who supported rebellion.<sup>25</sup> Unsure of their legitimacy in an area dominated by ardent Tories such as Sir John Johnson and his clan, members of the nascent Tryon County Committee refrained from acting against White.<sup>26</sup> In addition to wanting to avoid a confrontation, they had another reason for reticence: Guy Johnson, Sir John Johnson’s brother-in-law and Britain’s superintendent for Indian Affairs, held good relationships with the Iroquois tribes surrounding the county’s western communities. According to him, challenging the Johnsons subjected residents to the threat of Indian attacks, a potential tragedy that would result not only in death and destruction but also the loss of residents’ tentative support for the committee.<sup>27</sup>

Committee members need not have worried. On 20 July 1775, a month after White had arrested John Fonda for assaulting a constable, 100 vigilantes broke

into the county jail (located on the Johnsons' property) and freed the prisoner. The mob then searched for the sheriff but, fearing an attack by Johnson retainers, it disbanded before locating him. Recognizing that he was a marked man, White fled to Johnson Hall, a fortified Tory stronghold in Johnstown, Tryon County.<sup>28</sup>

After consulting with the Albany Committee and Major General Philip Schuyler, commander of Continental forces in the Northern Department, the Tryon Committee decided to arrest the wayward sheriff.<sup>29</sup> Hoping that the display of Rebel fervor on the twentieth had attenuated Johnson's allegiance to the Crown, the committee sent messengers to Johnson Hall demanding White's surrender. Rebuffed by Sir John Johnson, the envoys returned to the board, which then considered organizing an assault on the house.<sup>30</sup> Rejecting the idea due to lack of firepower, it instead apprised Schuyler that armed Tories had massed at Johnson Hall. At Crown Point and busy directing an invasion of Canada, the general could not afford to send Continentals to Tryon County.<sup>31</sup>

Deciding that he could no longer live in the county, White attempted to escape to Canada. Apprehended on 13 August 1775 by William Gilliland, a Rebellion-friendly manor lord in Charlotte County, the captured sheriff challenged the committee in several ways. First—and most basic—the board had to decide where to hold the prisoner. It could not lodge him in the county jail. Second, the legitimacy of the arrest was questionable. Not only was the committee's authority assumed, but White, who had broken no law, was still the only individual legally responsible for enforcing order in the county. Although the sheriff's apprehenders had found letters from Sir John Johnson on his person, no mittimus existed authorizing them to imprison him.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, Gilliland held no jurisdiction over Tryon County residents and could not legally execute a warrant even if he possessed one. The committee resolved the first problem by asking its Albany counterpart for assistance. The Albany Committee agreed to help, dispatching a detail to escort the sheriff back to its own jail.<sup>33</sup> Tryon's board never addressed the second problem, trusting that Albany's more Whig-friendly population would be less disturbed over White's questionable imprisonment.

Schuyler shared the committees' concern for the lack of due process in White's arrest. Writing a letter to the Albany board, he informed them that he "would not wish to give the least shadow of appearance to any that are unfriendly to the Cause of America to alledge that we forceably set aside the Laws which can never be the intention of true friends."<sup>34</sup> The general requested that the committee keep the sheriff "closely confined" and suggested that it ask the Provincial Council for a retroactive writ justifying the arrest. The committee dashed off a missive the same day, recommending that the province take responsibility for

the prisoner.<sup>35</sup>

Over the next few weeks, the Albany Committee took steps to legalize White's arrest. On 1 September 1775, it decided to remind the county jailer that he was not to release the prisoner before his proper disposition had been determined.<sup>36</sup> After learning that the Provincial Council would accept White after he had paid a proper bail, the committee wrote its Tryon counterpart, suggesting that it replace the sheriff "in the usual manner by way of Petition to the Governor"—a disingenuous course of action that, because it claimed the executive power previously exercised by the royal governor, redounded the responsibility for filling the office back upon the board.<sup>37</sup> Tryon County followed its neighbor's advice, deposing White from office, electing a new sheriff, and justifying its actions in a long letter to the Provincial Council.<sup>38</sup> On 20 September, the Albany Committee resolved to furnish its prisoner "with Copies of every thing in the Possession of this Board with which he is charged," a decision that allowed it to claim that it had followed due process in handling the former sheriff's case.<sup>39</sup>

At the bottom of the problem of what to do with White were the committees' perceived need for legality and their desire to win the approbation of their residents. Committeemen acted only in the wake of popular sentiment, as when the uprising of 20 July sanctioned their decision to accost the sheriff. Ironically, the vigilantes' release of Fonda made White's arrest impossible: by fleeing to Johnson Hall, the sheriff ensured that the Tryon Committee could not apprehend him forcibly. It is also possible that the board had held off demanding that Sir John Johnson surrender his fellow Tory until they knew it would be impossible to assault the stronghold. Once the futility of taking action was apparent, it could increase the rhetoric against Tories and solidify its leadership of the county's rebel-minded residents without risking the loss of life or image. When Gilliland captured White escaping to Canada, the committee had both opportunity and cause to incarcerate the sheriff; however, it had concerns whether it had the legal justification to do so. Procedural and jurisdictional questions mattered to the committeemen who, especially at this point of the conflict, worried about the legality of their governance.

Concern over how the public interpreted its actions impelled the Albany Committee to free White from imprisonment. When the sheriff's wife pleaded for her husband's release in October 1775, she reminded the board of what had precipitated her husband's apprehension: his lawful arrest of one county resident for physically assaulting another.<sup>40</sup> Implicit in Elizabeth White's entreaty was not only the legitimacy of her husband's actions but the illegality of his imprisonment. Less than a month later, committeemen interviewed the former sheriff and treated

him with respect. The board voted his parole after he assured it “that he will bare no part against America in its present struggle for Liberty.”<sup>41</sup>

The gentlemen’s agreement between the Albany Committee and White did not last throughout the war. Imprisoning the Tory twice more over the next few years, the board forced him to submit a £500 bond for good behavior on 19 December 1776, when the Rebel military campaign was at its nadir, and move to Kingston on 27 August 1777, when British forces threatened Tryon and Albany counties from several directions.<sup>42</sup> Eventually, White managed to escape to Canada, a relocation that received no protest from upstate New York’s Rebel leadership.<sup>43</sup>

The manner in which Tryon and Albany counties handled White and the threat that he posed typified how local committees grew in influence and importance. Residents in upstate New York first organized committees during the Stamp Act crisis to oppose—but not replace—royal authority. These inchoate assemblies became crucial to the success of the non-importation movement, facilitating collective action, developing a cadre of leadership, and publicizing the atrocities of British troops.<sup>44</sup> In addition to helping a neighboring colony, these initial efforts at organization enabled Rebels to form local governance before Tory-minded opponents had the chance to do so. After Lexington and Concord, the goals of these boards became more political. With military conflict a reality, blocking voices of moderation and loyalty became the *sine qua non* of committee existence.<sup>45</sup>

The two battles initiated a *rage militaire* that spread across the colonies and increased the committees’ legitimacy and confidence.<sup>46</sup> “A Tryon-County Freeholder,” the author of a handbill posted in May 1775, asked his countrymen to “sleep no longer in a State of Supineness and Inattention... Behold Rapine and Murder, Blood and Slaughter, have already entered into the Bowels of a neighboring Province... Necessity urges us to Battle, we cannot escape it.”<sup>47</sup> Yet this enthusiasm expressed itself mostly at the county level. When the Albany Committee received a request to provision colonists who were voluntarily guarding Fort Ticonderoga in sparsely populated Charlotte County, it decided instead to concentrate on the situation within its borders.<sup>48</sup> *Rage militaire*’s unifying effect in Tryon County was local in nature. After four attempts, geographically dispersed Rebel leaders in Tryon County assembled in one place for the first time on 24 May in Canajoharie.<sup>49</sup> A Provincial Council, centered in New York City and growing out of that municipality’s Committee of Sixty, began corresponding with local leaders during this period of heightened concern, asking, in a circular dated 29 May, for all counties, districts, and precincts to establish committees “in order to carry into execution the resolutions of the Continental and this Provincial

Congress.”<sup>50</sup>

Tryon County Rebels were in no position to carry out the Provincial Council’s resolution. Because the Johnsons had begun mobilizing residents before an anti-British faction could assemble, efforts to organize resistance were immediately challenged. After Guy Johnson fortified his home in Johnstown, he had his armed servants intercept travelers along the nearby King’s Road. Not having the force to handle this threat militarily, the committee chose a diplomatic approach, sending the Indian commissioner a letter asking why he was harassing the people of the county.<sup>51</sup> After receiving an evasive response in which Johnson claimed only honest intentions, the committee decided not to engage him in a debate and dropped the issue.<sup>52</sup>

The Provincial Council helped local communities in the Hudson River Valley by standardizing a method for determining the political sentiment of every adult male in their communities. Well thought out, the plan involved local committees presenting each denizen with a petition onto which he could sign his commitment to the Rebellion. If an individual would not pledge his fidelity to republican government, his name would go on a list of disaffected residents. Known as Association-signing, this procedure took a great deal of time, causing many local boards to miss the deadline of 15 July set by the Provincial Council.<sup>53</sup> Henry Van Schaack of Kinderhook (Albany County), for instance, had to request an extension of the deadline because of difficulties in getting people to sign.<sup>54</sup> Other districts in the county had little trouble in obtaining names of signers (and non-signers). Lists from Cossackie, Schaghticoke, Little Hoosick, Claverack, Kinderhook, and the Township of Schenectady arrived in Albany on 29 June, two weeks before the Provincial Council wanted them.<sup>55</sup>

The Tryon Committee, like other county-level organizations, tried to have people sign “voluntarily” instead of “by Motives of Force or Fear.”<sup>56</sup> More often than not, however, committeemen had to take measures—such as restricting commercial interactions with recalcitrant citizens—to obtain signatures.<sup>57</sup> Because applying pressure to individual residents took time, the Albany Committee downplayed the subversive nature of the Association. In a response to Cambridge and Quasakoke residents who had inquired if signing meant repudiating “the Execution of Law and Administration of Justice in his Majesty’s Name,” for example, it replied on 29 June that “the course of Justice ought . . . [to] continue in the usual Course and in the King’s Name.”<sup>58</sup>

Attempting to put every man on one of their lists, district committeemen not only helped the council proportion resources but also, by applying face-to-face pressure to neighbors, drew support from many who otherwise would not

have opposed British rule. Once a resident—whether persuaded, pressured, or deceived—had signed the Association, evidence existed that professed his allegiance to the rebellion. Since signatories had no control over this potentially incriminating document, self-interest induced them to support the fight against Great Britain.<sup>59</sup>

Although Association-signing helped legitimize the Rebellion, propagating lists did not necessarily legitimize committees. Instead, committeemen rested their authority on a more republican mechanism for securing legitimacy: elections. All boards feared the “oligarch” label and looked to increase, or at least maintain, the size of their organizations. In September 1775, after some members of the Saratoga Committee had left to serve in military units, the Albany Committee permitted the town to elect five more persons.<sup>60</sup> The next year, Albany expanded the number of representatives sitting on its Cambridge and Livingston Manor boards by six and five seats, respectively.<sup>61</sup> On 12 August, the Tryon Committee decided to increase the membership of its Palatine Committee by two members, most likely to replace men currently sitting in its own body.<sup>62</sup>

Frequent elections helped validate claims of disinterested service. An opinion piece published in the 20 June edition of *The New-York Journal* expressed the common sentiment that, “If elections are free and regular, it will be impossible to shake a popular government.”<sup>63</sup> Albany, like most counties in upstate New York, held an election every six months, asking people to re-legitimize its authority (and the authority of its district committees and Provincial Council representatives) in November 1775, March 1776, and November 1776.<sup>64</sup>

Committees used printed broadsides to announce an election’s time and place, as well as the names of gentlemen eligible for office, while sheriffs and constables—putatively disinterested because they did not normally stand for election—tallied votes. Despite attempts to make elections as open and conspicuous as possible, committees still experienced criticism, as when a disagreement over when to cast votes caused the “Contraverted Election in Kinderhook District [Albany County].” In a sign that the people in the district cared as much about electoral legitimacy as their committeemen did, 270 out of the 278 men who did vote signed a petition requesting that the county accept the elected slate, a recommendation that the committee readily followed.<sup>65</sup> Ulster County residents shared their northern neighbors’ sensitivity to election legitimacy. A letter dated 2 December 1777 written to the Provincial Council by Daniel Graham, the Ulster County committee chairman, related that it was “very disagreeable for many of the present members to serve in committees when at the same time the people tell them they have no right to act in that station on the footing they now stand.”<sup>66</sup>

The people in Graham's county, having heard about the new state Constitution, no longer felt that the war empowered the committee to tell them what to do. Without being led to do so, the people of Ulster had included themselves in the democratic process of establishing legitimate government.

Understanding the importance of inclusion, upstate New York's committees tried to gain legitimacy by giving as many residents as possible a role in fighting the rebellion. For example, in November 1776, the Albany Committee placed a number of the county's citizens under its control by creating fire master posts for the town of Albany. Appointing six middling individuals (none of whose names had an "Esq" behind it or a "Mr." in front of it) to these important positions widened the committee's ambit.<sup>67</sup> The Schenectady Committee also used local governance to expand its control over people. Holding an election on 1 April 1777, it vested twenty townsmen—two assessors, one collector, four overseers of highways, two fire masters, four constables, two "fense vewers," two poor masters, one town clerk, and two pound masters—with interest in the outcome of the contest.<sup>68</sup> On 6 November 1777, the Albany Committee appointed two chimney viewers for each ward of the city, established the frequency of their inspections, and authorized them to fine residents twelve shilling for each deficient fireplace.<sup>69</sup> Later in the year, it assumed purview over the city's Fire Engine Company.<sup>70</sup>

Civic assignments bound only a few townsmen to the Rebellion. On the other hand, the Albany Committee's establishment of a "Strong Watch well Armed and under proper Discipline" involved many more upstate New Yorkers in a "we-are-all-in-this-together" mindset.<sup>71</sup> Regimented by this vaguely defined duty in late May 1775, it appointed John Ostrander as "Town Serjeant" in charge of managing the rotation and armament of the nightly officer of the watch.<sup>72</sup> Codifying watch participation on 12 June, the committee mandated periodic service, declaring "That if any Person willfully neglect or refuse to Watch agreeable to the Resolves . . . he shall be deemed an Enemy to his Country, Peace and good order unworthy the Protection of this Committee, and that his Name be held up to the public in Hand Bills to be dispersed through the different Parts of this City and County."<sup>73</sup> By issuing this statement, the committee was deciding who should serve, what they should protect, how they should be armed, and the responsibilities of the officer of the watch and town sergeant.<sup>74</sup>

Although the Albany Committee had instituted a night watch just weeks after Lexington and Concord, the Schenectady Committee did not follow suit until enjoined to do so in early April 1777.<sup>75</sup> Following standard procedure, it included all men over sixteen years of age on this duty and set clear standards for the conduct of the watch, including the frequency of inspection rounds and the



oath sworn before assuming duty. Instigated for practical reasons, the duty also must have increased the cohesiveness of the Rebellion. Although the committee authorized the watch to levy fines on fellow townsmen for unruly or dangerous behavior, no record of this happening ever appeared in the county's minutes.<sup>76</sup>

By the end of 1775, committees across upstate New York had corralled enough legitimacy to quiet their opponents in all places except Tory safe havens like Queens County.<sup>77</sup> When Loyalists attempted to win the Albany people's hearts and minds by distributing printed flyers proclaiming loyalty to the Crown and Lord Howe's regiments, residents did not react.<sup>78</sup> After the marginalization of the Johnson party in Tryon County, opposition could only manifest itself in destructive ways. For Loyalist-minded residents in upstate New York, this meant joining units attached to British regulars.

As town, district, and county committees used local issues to establish themselves in their communities, the Provincial Council used the necessity of collective action to establish its tentative superiority over the counties.<sup>79</sup> On 9 August 1775, it disseminated standards for militia establishment and command—a necessity clearly illustrated by events in eastern Massachusetts—and recommended a committee organizational structure for counties yet to form boards. These instructions arrived in Albany on 15 August and directed committees to oversee each militia company's election of ensigns, lieutenants, and commander. The same missive authorized counties to select field officers and form companies into regiments.<sup>80</sup> Several weeks later, the council authorized counties to tax citizens.<sup>81</sup> Collecting money was not a groundbreaking precedent; nevertheless, doing so at the behest of the council signified the degree to which the province was moving away from royal control.<sup>82</sup>

The Provincial Council's relationship with its county committees entailed more than passing down authorizations to collect weapons, form militias, and tax citizens. Although ostensibly hierarchical, relationships among committee levels varied in complexity and degree of dependency. After the council had established itself at Kingston in the spring of 1777, the Ulster Committee adopted a noticeably subordinate role. Permitting the council to direct the town's night watch and use its manpower to guard provincial prisoners, the committee relinquished control over its own county's citizens.<sup>83</sup> During this stage of the conflict, when the nearness of British troops caused increasing unrest, the council deployed the militia of one county to a neighboring county to quell Tory activity.<sup>84</sup> In one inter-county police action, the council moved two Ulster regiments to Dutchess County's Rhinebeck precinct to suppress a Tory uprising. Six days later, it directed the regimental colonels via commissioners to subdue Paulding's Precinct before head-

ing home.<sup>85</sup> In September 1775, the council had to resolve a jurisdictional dispute between its Committee for Detecting Conspiracies and the Ulster Committee over the guilt of one Abraham Brinckerhoff. Embarrassed by this quarrel, the council sided with its commissioners, probably because they had advocated treating the suspected Tory more leniently.<sup>86</sup>

By the end of 1775, after each county had established a viable committee, the Provincial Council began to address specific issues instead of issuing generalized directives.<sup>87</sup> On 12 December, it authorized county committees to come to each other's aid without first requesting provincial-level permission to do so. In the same session, it allowed the Dutchess Committee to arrest and detain residents who refused to cooperate with investigations.<sup>88</sup> Although it did not normally intercede in intra-county issues, in October 1775 the council resolved a dispute in Orange County by directing the New Windsor board to reimburse Newburgh's committee for the latter's help in apprehending Stephen Wiggins and David Purdy, two confessed Tories.<sup>89</sup>

The working relationship that emerged between local committees and the Provincial Council grew as each defined its purpose, established its scope, and standardized its procedures. After Lexington and Concord, Committees of Correspondence renamed themselves Committees of Safety and assumed governmental as well as political roles.<sup>90</sup> Although elected leaders organized the fight against British incursions and Tory insurrections, electors did not know to what degree their ballot was empowering the gentlemen they chose to represent them. Because they acted in an ever-changing political landscape, without a written constitution to guide them, representatives did not know themselves. Ad hoc wartime decisions (made because somebody needed to decide something—and quickly) characterized committees' exercise of power.<sup>91</sup>

Originally, committees existed for two reasons: to gather intelligence on the movement of British troops and armed Tories, and (when possible) police their jurisdiction for Tory activity.<sup>92</sup> Sometimes, the Provincial Council received word of potential unrest before local committees did, as when, on 25 October 1775, several members reported "a conspiracy of a great number of people from Haverstraw [Orange County] to [go to] Hackensack [NJ], to join the King's troops." The council immediately notified the town, requesting that it inquire about the threat with "as little violence as the nature of it will permit."<sup>93</sup>

As the war progressed, New York's committees grew to exercise extensive legislative and judicial powers.<sup>94</sup> Even before Lexington and Concord, the Albany Committee had argued that it needed "full Power to transact all such matters" that it "shall conceive may tend to promote the Weal of the American Cause."<sup>95</sup>

A couple of months later, Tryon committeemen voted regulations defining their jurisdiction and responsibilities.<sup>96</sup> Because Tryon County began the war with a large number of Tory-minded residents, citizens sometimes ignored writs demanding that they appear before the committee.<sup>97</sup> In such divided localities, committees needed to confront the British with tools more effective than legislative statutes and judicial decisions. In order to compel people to comply with their edicts, committees needed to command the militia—the one institution capable of controlling recalcitrants. Committees established their authority over militias by organization—forming units, offering commissions to officers, and paying soldiers a per diem for time served.<sup>98</sup>

Sometimes boards frustrated Continental Army leaders, such as when the Albany Committee halted four companies of New York's Second Continental Regiment from moving north from Fort George to Fort Ticonderoga.<sup>99</sup> Although the commanders—John Visscher, Joel Pratt, Hezekiah Baldwin, and George White—understood that they were officers in the Continental Line, they were all from Albany County and had recruited their soldiers from there. Upon receiving word from the committee, they dutifully turned their units around and retraced their route of march back to Fort George. Distressed by the committee's jurisdictional myopia, the commander of Fort Ticonderoga sent a letter to Albany complaining that the “departure [of the line] leaves us in a very defenceless situation.”<sup>100</sup> At other times, civilian control of the militia had a more salubrious effect, such as when the Provincial Council, concerned that soldiers were abusing civilians and turning sentiment against the Rebel cause, restrained enlisted soldiers from appropriating goods or articles from residents. Attempting either to sway or comfort the populace, the council published this decision in the 22 April 1776 edition of *The New-York Gazette; and Weekly Mercury*.<sup>101</sup>

When Continental commanders stationed units in the Hudson River Valley, local committees were responsible for feeding the soldiers—a duty that increased the scope of their power. Setting this precedent early in the war, John Hancock, president of the Continental Congress, wrote a letter to the Albany Committee dated 1 June 1775, directing that upstate New York provision Connecticut troops stationed at Fort Ticonderoga.<sup>102</sup> Logistical concerns were the reason why the intercolonial body had appointed Philip Schuyler, a merchant and native of Albany, as commander of the Continental Army's Northern Department. Throughout his time in command, Schuyler involved himself in committee business, exerting influence, requesting support, and passing along information.<sup>103</sup>

Schuyler was one of the few individuals outside of the committees to be privy to their deliberations.<sup>104</sup> Members from each board met, discussed, and

voted regulations in sessions that were closed to the public. To ensure privacy and enable the free expression of ideas, they all swore oaths of secrecy to God and each other.<sup>105</sup> These oaths were taken seriously. In Albany County, when a contrite Peter W. Yates confessed that he had announced Schuyler's arrival to a friend outside the committee, fellow board members expelled him from the organization.<sup>106</sup> Even though committees elected chairs to their meetings and appointed individuals to correspond with each other, decisions were arrived at equitably, with all members present voting on every issue.<sup>107</sup> When James Gordon informed Albany's committee that the people of Balls Town had chosen him to handle all of their correspondence, Albany replied that it would recognize only egalitarian committees, not individuals.<sup>108</sup>

One of the reasons why committeemen kept their meetings secret had to do with the sensitive nature of some of the information they handled. The Tryon Committee, in addition to mobilizing and supplying militia units, also deployed scouts to gather intelligence on Indians and the Johnson clan.<sup>109</sup> On 6 November 1775, it expanded this reconnaissance by adding a two- to three-man "Spyguard" to announce the enemy's approach in time for Whig residents to mobilize.<sup>110</sup>

In addition to obtaining intelligence on known and potential enemies, committees appropriated private arms for the common defense. Taking the lead in carrying out this policy, the Albany Committee appointed a subcommittee of three men to take a census of all arms, ammunition, and other accouterments owned by county residents. By 25 May 1776, it had learned the whereabouts of approximately 400 firearms and had started to redistribute weapons owned by Rebels who were exempt from militia service.<sup>111</sup> At the same time, the Provincial Council decided to equip volunteers for New York's Continental regiments with weapons appropriated from those who refused to sign the Association.<sup>112</sup>

Security concerns forced Hudson River Valley committees to use travel passes to control movement across county lines. The Albany Committee first implemented this procedure on 17 July 1776 by charging a four-man commission with inquiring into the reasons why every visitor was in the city.<sup>113</sup> Soon, however, requesting and receiving travel passes became routine and the procedure no longer effectively checked the transmission of information and counterfeit money by Tories. Fearing not just the printing of false currency but also the forging of passes themselves, the Provincial Council, resolved on 7 November 1776 to crack down on these "great abuses" by standardizing the forms and procedures county committeemen used to permit residents to travel.<sup>114</sup> Unlike the rest of upstate New York, Tryon County never issued *pro forma* passes. When James Cameron wanted to travel outside of the county in November 1775, for example, he first had

to appear before the committee and defend his Association with Guy Johnson.<sup>115</sup>

*Rage militaire* allowed precincts and counties to establish committees and begin organizing a defense against British forces. Taking advantage of this short-lived enthusiasm, committees conducted Association-signing campaigns to increase the number of residents who had a stake in the Rebellion's success. At the same time, they validated their mandate by subjecting themselves to scrutiny from above (the Provincial Council) and below (elections), and made decisions only when the needs of war required them to do so. During the first winter of the conflict, food shortages and economic distress tested the committees' newly forged strength. Not only did New York's committee government need to combat the British and gain prepotency over the Tories, it had to appease distraught supporters so they would not return to a state of disaffection.

## Wartime Governance: Securing Legitimacy by Addressing Domestic Issues

By the summer of 1776, a shortage of tea began to unsettle upstate New Yorkers. Understanding its importance in people's daily lives and the difficulty of importing quality Bohea tea leaves from China, the Albany Committee appointed a commission "to discover and bring to an [end the] Indiscriminate Sale of Tea in this City and County."<sup>116</sup> Within a week and a half, this subcommittee had begun seizing incoming shipments in order to distribute leaves among county residents equally.<sup>117</sup> The New Windsor Committee (Orange County) took similar action when it found out that a Mrs. Jonathan Lawrence had sold tea for profit and, along with her husband, was manipulating its supply. After receiving an inquiry on how to handle the situation, the Provincial Council advocated acting "spiritedly against all such as shall be convicted of that offence [pricing tea in excess of regulation]."<sup>118</sup>

As summer turned to fall, the Provincial Council took a more stringent stance, directing county committees to expropriate all quantities of Bohea tea in excess of twenty-five pounds (from both merchants and households) and to appoint a respected citizen to sell allotments of no more than twelve pounds per household at the regulated price of six shillings per pound.<sup>119</sup> Unfortunately for the committees, this measure did not satiate the thirst of upstate New Yorkers. When word spread that the Provincial Council was storing tea in Kingston (Ulster County), mobs descended on the town, broke down doors of public buildings, and forcibly entered private residences until they had found the precious commodity. As reported by Johannis Sleght, the Kingston Committee chairman, rioters had taken "that detestable article called tea" and "divided or distributed [it]

in such manner as they think fit.”<sup>120</sup>

Domestic crises such as tea shortages became intertwined with efforts to rid the colonies of British forces within six months from the outbreak of hostilities. Residents suffering from the inconveniences of war looked to committees for solutions partly because they represented the war effort and partly because by the end of 1775 they were the only decision-making bodies extant in the region. How these extralegal organizations addressed and handled the challenges of local security, commodity distribution, military provisioning, and collecting the money needed to pay for the war would determine if the tentative legitimacy won at the beginning of the conflict would last.

Paying for the war was perhaps the most challenging duty undertaken by the committee system, requiring tough decisions on priorities and reviving persistent fears of losing legitimacy. Assembling for their first sessions, committeemen had to decide how to reimburse themselves. In a move that increased the number of citizens who could serve in the Provincial Council, the Tryon Committee voted to pay each member it sent to New York City a *per diem*. To fund this cost, the committee established “the first raising [of] Taxes for our county’s Expences,” although it did not elaborate on how they planned to collect revenue.<sup>121</sup> The Albany Committee, without any specie or hard currency in the summer of 1775, began to purchase items “on the credit of this colony.”<sup>122</sup> On 12 July 1775, it sent Jeremiah Van Rensselaer to Lake George, Ticonderoga, and Crown Point “with the sum of £332—out of the Paper Emission of this Committee” to compensate county militia for their services.<sup>123</sup> These promissory notes delayed the need to reimburse soldiers immediately and helped give everyone receiving “payments” a stake in the Rebellion’s success.

Residents who violated price controls attenuated the Albany Committee’s ability to manipulate the county’s commerce for war purposes. To prevent merchants from selling goods for more than set prices, the board posted handbills on 8 March 1776 listing rates dictated by the Continental Congress.<sup>124</sup> A month later, it published its own prices, a move that not only reflected “the Rise of West India produce and Bohea Tea” but also established a degree of autonomy from higher echelons of colonial governance.<sup>125</sup> In addition, the committee determined the price of meat in the county, regulating costs per quantity as well as mandating that butchers slaughter all the animals in their shops.<sup>126</sup>

Complaints of price gouging dominated much of the Albany Committee’s meeting time during the stressful summer of 1776.<sup>127</sup> Despite declaring that manipulators John Boyd Sr. and Absalom Woodworth Jr. “ought to be considered as [enemies] ... to the American Cause,” recommending “that all Persons break

off all commercial intercourse” with them, and resolving that John Roff “be immediately apprehended and confined in Tory Goal till farther ordered by this Board” for illegally raising the price on Bohea tea, it could only regulate foodstuff distribution, not increase supply.<sup>128</sup>

In addition to creating food shortages, the war forced New York’s upstate committees to handle one of the most perilous exertions of power: collecting taxes. Simple revenue-raising ploys like the Albany Committee’s decision to fine members for non-attendance did not provide much income.<sup>129</sup> Hoping to have other locations help defray its costs, the committee learned on 10 August 1776 that it could charge to Congress no more than \$175,000. Less than committee members had hoped for, this figure provoked a debate over whether or not to lay a tax to fund the balance of the county’s expenses.<sup>130</sup> Perhaps due to concerns over its legitimacy, they decided not to burden residents.<sup>131</sup>

Committees could most readily buttress local currencies by extorting money from Tories and the disaffected. Adopting this method, the Albany Committee attempted to bolster the tender used in the county by resolving “That every person [who] . . . shall sell anything for a less Sum in Gold or Silver Money that in Continental or other Paper Money now passing Currently in this county shall be considered as a Depreciator of the Paper Currency and treated accordingly.”<sup>132</sup> In March 1777, the Provincial Council enacted fifteen resolves that used the indebtedness of New Yorkers to bind their interests to the Rebellion’s success. In the third resolve, the council declared that all debts owed to Britain’s colonial government were payable to a newly appointed treasurer. The fifth article absolved New Yorkers from paying debts to creditors who could not be reached (such as Tories who had fled). Instead, the province would collect those private debts. Citizens who could not immediately “reimburse” the council, according to the eighth resolve, would pay when they could—at one-half percent interest on the principal. The thirteenth resolve increased the difficulty for individuals to collect money owed them by the colony. The Provincial Council published this legislative leg-  
erdemain in a broadside printed by Samuel Loudon of Fishkill on 1 May 1777.<sup>133</sup>

Tea shortages—especially of the Bohea variety—excited people living in upstate New York because the drink bespoke a minimum level of comfort, civility, and gastronomic pleasure. Salt, however, figured decisively in the diet of revolutionary New Yorkers’, being essential in making food edible and preparing meats for winter. Rochester (Ulster County) fell precariously short of this commodity during the hard winter of 1776. In November of that year, Jacob Hornbeck, the Rochester Committee chairman, wrote the Provincial Council beseeching any amount of salt it could spare for his community. In the request, Hornbeck remind-

ed council members that “the season of the year is now for killing their [Rochester residents’] winter provision and pork for next summer.” The council received his plea at the same time it recorded a note from Orange County reminding it that the survival of a great number of poor people from the lower west side of the Hudson River depended on receiving food from the colony during the winter.<sup>134</sup> The elimination of New York City as a market and a port made many upstate residents dependent on committees for sustenance and, *ipso facto*, political leadership.

Counties began to experience a shortage of salt as early as the summer of 1776, when decreasing supply tempted some merchants in Albany County to raise prices above the congressionally mandated rate.<sup>135</sup> Responding to economic pressures, the committee adjusted the cost, lowered the maximum quantity one buyer could purchase, and appropriated a large quantity from Joshua Watson, a resident who had hoarded salt at his residence. The committee then appointed Anthony A. Bratt to parcel out the salt, allowing him a cut of the proceeds but not reimbursing Watson.<sup>136</sup> The committee pursued a similar course of action when, on 15 November 1777, members learned that Teunis Swart, a disaffected resident, had purchased fifty-seven quarts of salt in Schoharie. Immediately authorizing the town to seize it, the committee then distributed the salt “among the well-affected agreeable to the Resolutions of the Convention.”<sup>137</sup>

Whether effective or not, committees’ strident attempts to resolve shortages of critical commodities such as salt and tea reflected an exercise of power that many found acceptable. Committee representatives energized themselves over these problems not just because they wanted to curry favor with the electorate but because they viewed supporting people as their *raison d’être*. The survival of the populace was more dependent on the leadership of local committeemen than it was on the actions of delegates to the Continental Congress or decisions made by officers in the Continental Army. Whether duty or altruism motivated board members, the fact that they lived through the same conditions as those they represented made them empathetic toward their communities. As the war continued, the number of impoverished dependents increased in every community, widening the committees’ scope of power. Authorizing counties to appoint commissioners of the poor, the Provincial Council allowed local leaders to draft up to £500 of state currency to alleviate the sufferings of the destitute.<sup>138</sup> Later, it agreed to provide for families of those slain and imprisoned at the Battle of Fort Montgomery.<sup>139</sup> Because many hardscrabble citizens in the Hudson River Valley had spent time in debtors’ prisons at least once in their lives, committees did not vigorously prosecute indebtedness during the conflict. Instead, when the fight against Tories heated up, committees released prisoners charged with insolvency to make room



for the disaffected.<sup>140</sup>

Just as salt was critical to the survival of upstate New York's communities, gunpowder was indispensable to the forces that committees formed to protect their localities. On 27 May 1775, the Albany Committee replied to a letter from Governor Jonathan Trumbull of Connecticut, apologizing to him for not being able to send any gunpowder. According to the authors of the missive, all but a small reserve had already been sold to residents of Massachusetts and his own colony.<sup>141</sup> When 1,247 pounds of powder was "brought in" on 14 June of the following year, the committee decided to parcel out quantities to each of the county's communities.<sup>142</sup> Despite the importance of gunpowder to the county's defense and the Rebel cause at large, the Albany Committee always gave quantities to visiting Indians in an attempt to buy their friendship. Leaders in the county did not unanimously agree upon this policy and, in June 1775, the committee had to investigate whether Rebels from outside the organization had attempted to stop a transaction.<sup>143</sup> Even though most tribes of the Iroquois Confederacy never seriously considered aligning with the Rebels, the Albany Committee was still giving them gunpowder as late as January 1777.<sup>144</sup> The supply was so critical that when Albany served as a depot for the Northern Army's movement into Canada, the transportation of 1,400 pounds of gunpowder up the Hudson and its storage in Albany were kept secret from those outside the committee.<sup>145</sup>

Attempting to remedy the gunpowder shortage, the Provincial Council tried to persuade mill owners to produce it locally. In one of its largest printing projects, it hired Samuel Loundon in January 1776 to engross copies of "Essays Upon the Making of Salt-Petre and Gun-Powder." Although most of the techniques described in this compendium required burying toxic offal and then waiting years for the nitrate content to build, Henry Wisner's testimonial claimed that he had created two tons of excellent-grade saltpeter in just a couple of months.<sup>146</sup> Although probably more braggadocio than fact (high-quality gunpowder was very difficult to make), Wisner's account prompted others to mimic his "success." Even with a proper site, such as at the Livingstons' mill in Claremont (Westchester County), an inadequate supply of the necessary components (saltpeter in this case) prevented large-scale production.<sup>147</sup>

Still, projects to build powder mills along the Hudson River received the Provincial Council's repeated attention. After requesting that counties identify ideal construction locations, it received a petition on 18 April 1776 from John Carpenter and Henry Wisner to construct a mill in Cornwall. Three months later, after moving the site to a different location along the Wallkill River, the Orange County Committee reported that the mill had produced 200 pounds of

good powder in one day of operation. On 11 September 1776, the county bragged that that it had milled 1,459 pounds of good powder in seven consecutive days.<sup>148</sup> At the same time that Wisner was exercising his entrepreneurial spirit, Matthew Adgate, the Kingston Committee chairman, sent the council a proposal to “erect works to manufacture sulpher.” The council approved the petition on 16 September and, without even acquainting itself with the plan’s details, allocated \$100 for the project.

The committee system’s promotion and support of entrepreneurial efforts indicate how desperate it was to supply its soldiers with what they needed to combat the British. When these ad hoc governments did have quantities of powder on hand, militia units guarded them closely. On 31 July 1776, the Provincial Council detached Captain Melancton Smith and seven of his men from the Dutchess County militia to guard a powder mill and magazine in Orange County.<sup>149</sup>

Since committees met in secret, they needed ways to disseminate regulations on issues such as salt rationing and gunpowder storage to the communities they represented. The quickest way to inform the public was to have printers publish handbills or broadsides for posting in public gathering places, a procedure frequently used by New York City’s non-Association committees before the war.<sup>150</sup> When armed rebellion forced Governor Tryon out of the colony, for instance, the Provincial Council issued a broadside stating that since he had not prorogued or dissolved the assembly before “quitting” the province, it had a legal right to assume its governing responsibilities.<sup>151</sup> Even before this declaration of empowerment, the council employed a broadside to announce that it was assuming control over extant militia units and asking “every County, City, manor, Town, Precinct, and District, within this colony” to form militias if they had not done so already.<sup>152</sup>

The council also used newspapers to publicize standards for dealing with disaffection. On 4 September 1775, it released minutes from its 28 August meeting to the *New-York Gazette; and Weekly Mercury* to inform the colony that residents who abetted British forces “shall be punished at the Discretion of the Committee before whom he or they shall be found guilty... not [to] exceed three Months Imprisonment.” Those arrested for a second offense of aiding the enemy “shall be banished from this colony for the term of seven Years.” Speaking ill of any level of committee government would merit the same punishment as taking up arms against the united colonies: an indefinite jail sentence.<sup>153</sup> The Provincial Council also felt it necessary to broadcast its travel restrictions in a Samuel Loudon broadside.<sup>154</sup>

The Provincial Council was not the only committee to advance its interests through the medium of print. When the Hanover Committee won Sheriff

Thomas Colden's support for the Rebellion, the Ulster Committee published his confession for acting "in such a manner as to draw the resentment of all those that have appeared friends to the true interest of the United Colonies."<sup>155</sup> Although less than a full-throated support of independence, Colden's volte-face showed the people of New York that a relative of former lieutenant governor Cadwallader Colden had acceded to the legitimacy of committee rule.

A broadside could announce a policy but could not enforce people's compliance with it. Similarly, although taxes and price controls could unite residents, they could also turn sentiment against committee rule. Despite efforts to suppress opposition at all levels of colonial governance, some New Yorkers remained disaffected or outright Tories. To frustrate its enemies' schemes, the colony's committee system needed to go beyond the exercise of legitimate power: it needed to use that power to enforce its rule over the region.

## Dealing with the Disaffected: Employing Power to Solidify Legitimacy

Counterfeiting schemes posed one of the most difficult Tory subterfuges for committee governments to unearth, even though revolutionary delegates universally despised their pernicious effect on the war effort. Replying to a letter from Saratoga asking "How is the Person to be dealt with, that counterfeits or forges the Albany committee Currency, or the Continental Currency, or the Boston Notes [?]" the Albany Committee answered that a "Magistrate" needed to determine the accused's guilt or innocence and then, if the former, send him to the "gaol."<sup>156</sup> Although clear and reasonable, this procedure was not easily followed: counterfeiters evaded Rebels by running printing presses in Tory-controlled New York City and then smuggling the faux bills up the Hudson River.<sup>157</sup>

Despite challenges, committees sometimes foiled counterfeiting plots. On 19 April 1776, Colonel Gilbert Drake notified the Provincial Council that counterfeited Continental currency was circulating in Westchester County, although he could not implicate anyone in its production.<sup>158</sup> Several weeks later, the council learned from Charles Friend of Westbury (Queens County) that several men were secretly printing Continental currency in Cold Springs, on Long Island. Sending Captain Wool and a guard to uncover the scheme, it then proceeded to spend two days hearing testimony from the four men caught red-handed.<sup>159</sup> Reviewing the evidence a couple of weeks later, a newly elected committee decided by a nineteen to ten vote to charge a fifth man, Philip Youngs, even though a search of his house had found no evidence that he had supported his relative, Issac.<sup>160</sup> Although the board quelled this plot, James Rivington, the Loyalist printer who

likely instigated and oversaw the operation, remained under British protection in New York City.<sup>161</sup> Counterfeiting plots continued, whether independent or under Rivington's aegis.<sup>162</sup>

Although committees responded quickly when Tories challenged their authority, rarely would board members personally accost or apprehend a Tory. Instead, they relied on sheriffs, militia, or rangers, a special police force in the employ of the Rebel government, to keep order, control the supply of food, ferret out Tories, pressure the disaffected, and guard critical sites. As the fight against counterfeiters illustrated, only force or the threat of force could make some Loyalists submit.

Committees used different forms of law enforcement, depending on what they needed to accomplish. For civil issues not directly related to the war, they often employed sheriffs and constables who, because they had once been functionaries of the imperial government, did not need to legitimate their authority. Sheriffs and constables acted as they had previously, except they now took orders from a different hierarchy. The need to maintain continuity with the past was why Tryon's committee spent so much time worrying about Sheriff Alexander White and Dutchess County concentrated on pressuring Sheriff Thomas Colden. For larger threats, committees mobilized militias for set periods of time. Eventually, they formed rangers, quickly mustered, select militia units capable of handling a variety of tasks. These three branches of police power—sheriffs, militia, and rangers—gave committees the tools with which to pressure the disaffected, combat armed Tories, and resist incursions by the British.

Although the offices of sheriff and constable were legacies of the imperial system, residents in upstate New York were familiar with them; correspondingly, county committees kept men in the positions, expecting them to execute writs, mittimus, and warrants: duties that required little independent decision making. Except in special circumstances, as when John Frey replaced White in Tryon County, these law enforcers did not stand for election.<sup>163</sup> Instead, they provided continuity in communities, usually also managing polling sites on election day.<sup>164</sup>

When a county committee needed the sheriff of another county to arrest one of its citizens, it maintained jurisdictional integrity by routing communication through the Provincial Council. For example, the Newburgh Committee (Orange County) sent a request to the council asking it to direct the Ulster Committee to have Egbert Dumon, Ulster's sheriff, arrest Elnathan Foster, "a person notoriously disaffected to the liberties of America."<sup>165</sup>

When apprehending Tories required more force than a sheriff could provide, committeemen relied on militias to make arrests. Most of the time, these units

followed committee instructions since the boards paid—and had formed—them. In May 1775, however, two non-board members in Albany County formed their own militia companies. As the committee began to centralize all civil and military power over the next couple of months, it tried to persuade the two individuals to subordinate their units to committee oversight. The commander of the Association Company of the City of Albany agreed, marching his unit to Ticonderoga when asked to do so by the county board.<sup>166</sup> Also recognizing the committee's legitimacy, Benjamin Hicks, the commander of the second formation, consented to disband his company on the condition that, if ever mobilized by the board, "he would rely upon the Credit of the colony for his Pay."<sup>167</sup> Fortunately for the Albany Committee, officers and soldiers from both of these units accepted committee legitimacy. Once clearly in charge of the county's Rebellion-minded population, the committee required prospective militia commanders, such as Elisha Benedict of Balls Town, to obtain its approval before they organized companies.<sup>168</sup>

In Tryon County, where Tory and Rebellion-minded residents lived side by side, militia formation was more decentralized. The county committee immediately set about finding arms and ammunition so it could organize its residents into military units.<sup>169</sup> Soon, communities were petitioning the board for permission to form their own units.<sup>170</sup> Despite the willingness of some to align their fortunes with the Rebellion, others proved intractable. Declaring that it would hear any dispute that a militia commander did not think himself authorized to handle, the Tryon Committee established itself as the final judicial authority over those it had enlisted. In units, order depended on the ability of militia commanders to apply pressure on malcontents in their formations. Captain Jacob Seeber learned that he held the responsibility for instilling this discipline when he took Charles Gordon and Lawrence Zimmermann, two of his citizen-soldiers, before the committee after they had refused to drill. To Seeber's embarrassment, the committee sided with the soldiers. The commander never brought another problem to the board's attention.<sup>171</sup>

Since Commander in Chief Washington rarely detached Continental soldiers to protect individual communities from British activity, counties needed to marshal as much of their population for defense as they possibly could.<sup>172</sup> Save for residents in a few clearly defined professions, committees assumed control over all men of military age. Provincial-level exemptions existed only for judges and sheriffs, although it did allow those chosen to serve to hire a substitute and pay the council a monthly fine.<sup>173</sup> Local exemptions covered only those considered too valuable to fight.<sup>174</sup> The Albany Committee, for example, decided "that Thomas

Holliday who is employed in making Coals for the use of the Blacksmiths who are employed in making spades &c for the use of the Continental Army remain at home.”<sup>175</sup>

Even with mandatory service and popularly elected officers, disputes arose over which commander residents were supposed to serve. John Salsbury, an Albany County militia captain, created several jurisdictional issues for his committee to settle. First, on 2 February 1776, he and another company commander argued over who was authorized to recruit one Ephraim Kidder Jr.<sup>176</sup> Two weeks later, Claverack’s board complained that Salsbury was enlisting recruits from within its district, an act that prompted the Albany Committee to request that he appear before it and explain his actions.<sup>177</sup> In investigating the captain’s character, it learned that when Peter Wiesman had asked the county sheriff to force Nicholas Grott to pay a debt owed to him, Salsbury and friends had physically prevented the law officer from discharging his duty. Taking matters into his own hands, Wiesman then seized a mare and colt from his debtor to hold as collateral. Salsbury responded by forcibly returning the animals to Grott, saying that “People there [in Spenser Town and Noble Town] would not be sued for they must go to war.”<sup>178</sup> In a similar complaint, Christiaen Smith related an incident where he had tried to execute a warrant on one Jacob Lottewall, who proceeded to escape into the captain’s protection. Salsbury then threatened to tar and feather Smith if he ever accosted Lottewall again.<sup>179</sup> Coenraedt Peterson reported a similar story to the board. According to Peterson, Salsbury had refused to accept that he already belonged to a militia company. When he shared news of this encounter with Louranc[e] Hogeboom, Salsbury called Peterson a liar, “tied him with a Rope, and Carried him about a Mile” before releasing and forcing Peterson to confess that he, not Salsbury, was telling untruths.<sup>180</sup> When the committee heard Salsbury testify on his recruiting methods, it learned that the captain’s commission to raise a minute company conflicted geographically with regular militia enlistment. Instructing Salsbury to stop recruiting soldiers, it then wrote the Provincial Council, requesting permission to disband its minute companies.<sup>181</sup>

Neither the Albany Committee nor the Provincial Council recorded a resolution to this matter, but Salsbury was mentioned in the Albany Committee minutes a few months later, having returned to his strong-armed recruiting tactics. According to Colonel Stephen Hogeboom and a Major Ford, “Mr. Salsbury of Kings District was extremely busy in recruiting from that and some adjoining Districts a Company of Minute Men, and thereby kept the Militia Officers in those Districts in Continual Confusion.”<sup>182</sup> During the war, Salsbury activated his company “to attend the Kinderhook Election,” for “apprehending disaffected

Persons,” for “apprehending certain dangerous Persons,” and for unknown service, but never for engaging the enemy in combat.<sup>183</sup>

After the distressing experience of handling Salsbury’s imbroglios, the Albany Committee formed ranger companies, which were easier to control because they were activated to perform specific tasks.<sup>184</sup> For example, when the committee felt that a military supply depot needed protecting, it formed two ranger companies on 9 August 1776 “to Guard the Stores of this City.”<sup>185</sup> The next month, it sent Captain Baldwin’s rangers to Coxsackie to apprehend persons “turbulent and Dangerous to Safety” who were terrorizing “the good People of that District.”<sup>186</sup> As the war progressed, these companies effectively became the committee’s private armed police force, used most often to hunt down elusive Tories.

Albany County employed rangers prudently but frequently. When the county committee learned that Gerrit Seeger, Staats Bratt, and Gerrit Slingerlandt might have Loyalist sympathies, it detailed a ranger unit to bring the three gentlemen before it. After questioning, all three men “Voluntarily Swore allegiance to the free and Independent States of America” and were released.<sup>187</sup> On 5 February 1777, the committee resolved to send ranger companies to guard Fort Ticonderoga. Whether they did not see the necessity of guarding a distant fort in another county, worried that a long posting would cause them to miss the spring harvest, were concerned about an Indian or British attack on their homes, or feared performing a duty so dangerous, twenty-four soldiers in Captain Alexander Baldwin’s company refused to go. Perhaps a little fearful of such a large number of irate fellow Rebels, the board compromised and deployed fewer men, kept them within the county, and rotated their service.<sup>188</sup>

Dealing with upset Rebels caused less of a problem for the committees than the Tory question did. One of the biggest questions committees faced between April 1775 and April 1777 was what to do with those who did not support the Rebellion. Sometimes a resident clearly proclaimed his disaffection by his actions or speech. More often, disaffection expressed itself in halfheartedly signing the Association or attempting to avoid the oath altogether.

Throughout the war, the Albany Committee vigorously attempted to unearth disloyal behavior. On 4 September 1775, it received a letter from Daniel B. Bratt of the Hoosick Committee recounting his efforts to verify the Monro family’s suspected Toryism. Bratt and others approached John and Daniel Monro’s residence, entered their house, searched trunks of paperwork for a rumored royal commission, asked the Monros some questions, and then left. According to Bratt, “During the whole [of the] Transactions, Mr. Monro’s behavior was very manly, & we cannot think he is in the least Guilty & have entirely discharge him on that

Account.”<sup>189</sup>

Investigations that ascertained no evidence of sympathy toward Tories, like the search on the Monro house, did not solve the problem of what to do with the disaffected. Even though the Albany Committee decided to jail Peter Everat for refusing to sign the Association, the county had too many disaffected residents for it to establish a precedent from Everat’s sentencing.<sup>190</sup> On 2 May 1777, the committee, in a frustrated burst of anti-Tory fervor, ordered subordinate boards to inquire about residents currently out of their districts, reaffirmed the Manor of Rensselaerwyck’s authority to use militias to arrest and suppress suspected Tories, and targeted named antagonists (such as Jacob Van Aernam) and distinct populations (such as “disaffected Persons [who] skulk in and about Hellebergh”).<sup>191</sup> A couple of days later, it clarified its position on the disaffection by resolving to disarm “Persons within this county Inimical to the Liberties of America, or who have not associated and refuse to associate.” Acting on this legislation, the committee directed the Cambridge District to disarm Peter Miller after he had taken an oath “to join the Kings Troops when called upon by any of his Officers, and to kill his best Friends if they were in opposition to him.”<sup>192</sup>

The Provincial Council played an inconsistent role in directing the fight against Tories, sometimes advocating action and sometimes recommending restraint. When the Westchester Committee wrote the colonial body to ask what it should do with two equivocating Loyalists who had tried to instigate a peaceful, weaponless protest against its rule, the council never officially replied.<sup>193</sup> A year later, with British troops occupying New York City, disaffection grew in Dutchess and Westchester counties. As in northern and western New York, Rebels had organized citizens into militias, actions that imperiled the committees’ safety when those formations began to agitate against committee rule. Hearing that the militia in Dutchess County’s Rhinebeck Precinct not only refused orders to defend the Highlands but also “most contumaciously prevent[ed] those who were well affected, from obeying the said resolutions,” the Provincial Council responded with force. Apologizing to the county committee for infringing on its jurisdiction, it sent two regiments of Ulster militia into Dutchess County, along with an advisory board of seven commissioners, any four of whom could direct the outside force first to fire on any resistance and then “to take such ways and means, as they [the commissioners], in their discretion, shall think proper to discover, arrest and secure the principals in the said riot and disaffection.” Residents who were not killed or arrested would be forced to declare their loyalty to the Rebellion. In order to prevent conflicts of interest, the council sent units from northern Ulster County precincts and gave the commissioners the power to fine malingerers. To



fund the operation, the council voted the militia a payment of £300.<sup>194</sup>

As committee rule became more stable and legitimate, but before constitutionally elected bodies began representing the people, incidents of disaffection received increasingly harsh legal action. For example, on 12 May 1777 William Young, chairman of the Hanover Precinct Committee (Ulster County), reported Hugh Doughardy's arrest for speaking out against committee government.<sup>195</sup> Also, on 1 April 1778 the Albany County Committee began disarming all "who have been with the Enemy, and not taken the Oath of Allegiance to this state, or other ways evinced their Sincerity to the Cause of America."<sup>196</sup>

When royal forces were close by, as they permanently were in Westchester County, disruptions of the civilian population rarely abated. Washington's decision to store supplies for the Continental Army in the county made the situation all the more volatile. When the commander in chief sent Major General Charles Lee to New York to call up local militias and prepare to defend the city, the new arrival worked with the Provincial Council to assemble 1,850 bushels of peas, 1,200 barrels of "good salted pork," and other foodstuffs in the county.<sup>197</sup> In the winter of 1776, after Washington had lost New York City, the Westchester Committee wrote the Provincial Council relating three ways that the nearness of the British plagued the county. First, a Tory raiding party (approximately 700 men) led by Robert Rogers of French and Indian War fame destroyed farm produce, took livestock, and injured people. Second, the Continental Army had appropriated all of the militia commanders' troops in its defense of New York City, and third, Continentals would not defend residents from Tory incursions.<sup>198</sup> After the British had settled in New York City, Westchester County turned into a true no-man's-land.<sup>199</sup> Early in May 1777, the Provincial Council sent three-man commissions into the county, authorizing them to issue writs and judge defendants.<sup>200</sup> Without the ability to assure the protection of residents, however, these commissions did little to help the Rebels' cause.<sup>201</sup>

From the summer of 1776, when British ships began arriving in New York Harbor, to the spring of 1777, when Major General John Burgoyne started advancing south from Montreal, the Orange and Dutchess committees were constantly suppressing Loyalist unrest in their counties. In June 1776, the Provincial Council received word that the majority of Captain Avery Blauvelt's Haverstraw precinct militia (Orange County) had "refused to suffer drafts to be made from said company for reinforcing the army at New-York." Fearing pre-battle disaffection and disloyalty, the council, meeting in an unusual Sunday afternoon session, instructed Colonel A.H. Hay to arrest "seven of the most refractory men of said company" and officially authorized Continental commanders to impress New York

militia whenever they deemed it necessary “for the defense of this Colony.”<sup>202</sup> Due to concerns raised in Newburgh about farmers planning to sell wheat to the British Army, the Provincial Council, in a clever move, sent assistant commissioner Henry Scherck to purchase the “wheat and flour in any public or private store” in the county.<sup>203</sup> By purchasing excess foodstuffs, the council had provided an assured and immediate market for disaffected farmers and, by paying them in Continental currency, had wedded their financial interests to the Rebellion’s success. At the same time, Loyalists in Dutchess County, learning of Burgoyne’s southward-advancing army, began to show their true colors. To combat these “conspirators,” landowner Robert R. Livingston and others wrote the Provincial Council to suggest that both militia officers and General Thomas Gage hold courts-martial to identify, disarm, and displace the local enemy.<sup>204</sup>

British army movements during the summer of 1777 imperiled Albany County residents to a greater degree than it endangered its neighbors in Orange and Dutchess counties. In Albany, the committee lowered the standard for disloyalty as the county prepared to receive two of Britain’s three-pronged New York advances. According to committee resolution of 16 July 1777, “every Person in this County who has not publicly exerted himself in aiding the defense of this much injured Country, and purchasing any more Provisions than he or they were formerly used to do for their Families, shall [be] ... sent to the Fleet Prison, and all such provision so found as aforesaid be seized & appropriated to public use.”<sup>205</sup> On 7 August 1777, one day after the Battle of Oriskany, the committee ordered a portion of its militia to the eastern part of the Manor of Rensselaer to “apprehend and destroy all such Persons who shall be found in Arms against the State.”<sup>206</sup>

Public opinion provided the only check on the committees’ ability to arrest disaffected persons during the first two years of the war. Most imprisoned Loyalists had found their way into jail either by denouncing revolutionary government or proclaiming the king. Committees arrested other Loyalists for passing messages for the British or, more detrimental, counterfeiting state or Continental currencies. A few prisoners, however, earned their sentences by attempting to foment rebellion against committee government. When the Tryon Committee learned that Abram C. Cuyler, Albany’s Loyalist-leaning mayor, had escaped north out of the city—possibly carrying military stores, arms, and ammunition—it began to mount offensive military action to hunt him down.<sup>207</sup> The Tryon Committee jailed prisoners at the incarcerated individual’s expense.<sup>208</sup> Tryon County had reason to treat the disaffected harshly: of New York’s upstate counties, its residents suffered the most during the war, with neighbor fighting neighbor and British-instigated Indian raids depopulating the county. As many as two-thirds of the county’s

residents died in the Battle of Oriskany, the destruction of German Flats, and the Cherry Valley Massacre.<sup>209</sup>

In the property-conscious enlightened thinking of the day, seizing Tory land reflected an expansive exercise of power. As in other measures, the Albany Committee took the lead. In a 27 November 1776 letter to the Provincial Council on frauds committed by flour manufactures, it requested guidance on how to handle wives who prevented Rebels from seizing their Loyalist husbands' property.<sup>210</sup> Not able to wait for an answer, it decided the next day to have representatives from each of its districts inventory all abandoned Loyalist property and "secure the same till the farther order and directions therein from the Convention of this State shall be known."<sup>211</sup> Perhaps because it was operating without a Constitution, the Provincial Council favored inventorying property as opposed to outright seizures and redistributions, as evidenced by correspondence that instructed the Kingston Committee to "make an inventory of all personal property in the town... belonging to any person or persons gone over to the enemy" but not to dispose or dispense any of it until told to do so by the Providence.<sup>212</sup>

The Provincial Council did not officially permit the confiscation of vacated Tory property until 6 March 1777, and the State Assembly did not sanction the seizure of occupied Tory property until 22 October 1779.<sup>213</sup> Arrogating privately owned property was so antithetical to the spirit of the Rebellion, however, that counties did not immediately act on these authorizations. The Albany Committee, for example, did not affirm its right to seize vacated Tory property until 15 May 1777, after a Constitution existed to legalize the action. Even then, debate ensued over whose property was to be taken and what was to be done with it.<sup>214</sup>

Because committeemen understood that winning disaffected support solidified their rule, they tried to exercise power in ways that would win the politically lethargic to the Rebellion. On 10 May 1777, the newly elected State Assembly issued an ordinance pardoning any Tory who renounced his prior ways and pledged allegiance to New York's new government.<sup>215</sup> In at least one instance, the Albany Committee commuted a prisoner's sentence after he decided to enlist in the Continental Army.<sup>216</sup>

Although several areas of provincial life reflected the progression of committee power over the two years covered in this survey, its development is most visible in how communities handled the disaffected. Starting with Association-signing efforts, committees worked hard to discern who was and who was not friendly to the Rebellion. As boards grew in confidence and power, they began to restrict peoples' travel, a control that, when enforced, significantly reduced the ability of Tories to organize. Social pressure, in the guise of neighborly visits to disaf-

fects houses or inquisitions before the local committee, won over the politically apathetic who sought the easiest response to the question of whether or not to support the fight against the British. Because militia and night-watch duty banded residents together, one risked alienating the rest of his community if he decided to oppose the Rebellion. As some communities and counties became more inclusive, non-Association signers found themselves facing greater ostracization. Although Toryism became a jailable offense, more often than not the application of social and economic pressures reduced the need for incarceration. With the war limiting farming, hurting commerce, and creating shortages of salt, tea, and meat, the committees' control over distribution gave them power with which to pressure the disaffected. Filling quotas for Continental enlistments and the need to tax residents further empowered New York's committee system.

## The 1777 Constitution: Codifying Legitimacy

On 20 April 1777, the Provincial Council enacted a Constitution establishing New York as a political entity separate from the British crown. Drafted mostly by John Jay, James Duane, and other conservative lawyers from New York City, the document created a powerful executive who served three-year terms and exercised significant influence over the state's politics, laws, and militia.<sup>217</sup> Although it included an Assembly, the Constitution did not institutionalize county or local committees. Furthermore, in a spirit contrary to the democratic principles that many Rebels were fighting for, it restricted franchise only to those residents who rented or possessed land.<sup>218</sup>

After two years of fighting a war against authoritarian rule, why did New York's committees agree to such a conservative government? The foremost reason is that the Provincial Council left them out of the ratifying process. Determining that it was in its purview both to compose and enact a Constitution, the council presented the document to committees as a *fait accompli*. Committeemen accepted the new plan of government partly because they had no viable alternative and partly because they had always conceived their service as based on the necessity of war and, therefore, temporary. Whereas committees had not been a permanent governmental structure in colonial times, the Provincial Council was, in effect, the colonial assembly with changed membership. In addition, upstate boards readily identified New York as their dominant political identity.<sup>219</sup> With the 1777 campaigning season already begun, committeemen had more pressing issues on which to focus. By summer, when the state held its first gubernatorial election, British forces occupied New York's northern, western, and southern regions. Geographically restricted, the election was decided by only 4,000 residents.

The election did not have the result that many in the Provincial Council had predicted. Instead of Philip Schuyler, George Clinton, an Ulster County native of middling antecedents who had achieved success as a militia and Continental general, won the majority of votes. Presented with a conservative government, Hudson River Valley voters reacted by choosing a representative of their own social class to head it.<sup>220</sup>

Clinton's rise from local to state importance occurred *pari passu* with the increasing effectiveness of local boards and the men who served on them. Establishing itself in 1775 when *rage militaire* pervaded the colony, the committee system claimed broad authorizations because, if it had not, the Rebellion would have failed. Sensitive to public opinion, local boards acted tentatively where the legitimacy of their governance was challenged—such as in Tryon County—and took proactive measures where it had less competition. Spurred by the Provincial Council, committees pursued an Association-signing campaign to determine who supported the fight against Britain and who did not. When the first winter of the war created hardships for upstate communities, they were the only governmental bodies that could address issues of food supply and military provisioning. Efforts to remedy these problems, if not actually solving them, secured their position in society. Even the food shortage-induced riots in front of meeting sites and raids on warehouses legitimated committee governance: protestors only agitate against organizations they think can better their lives. By the end of the war's first year, a combination of proactive and reactive measures had solidified committees' rule of their communities. With their legitimacy less in doubt, these ad hoc organizations could now exercise their new-found power in purging the colony of its Tories.

Committees conducted their campaigns against Loyalists by employing sheriffs, militia, and rangers in accordance with the situation, capabilities of each force, and jurisdictions involved. Sheriffs quelled riots and public disturbances while rangers guarded sensitive sites and roused counterfeiters from safe havens. In the neutral ground of Westchester and Orange counties, militias from neighboring counties deracinated and suppressed Tories. When the military situation reached its nadir in the summer of 1777, these local forces helped to oppose General John Burgoyne's movement along Lake Champlain; to keep General William Howe tied to his lines of communication and supply in New York City; and, in the Oriskany campaign, to stop the eastward march of Lieutenant Colonel Barry St. Leger's armed Tories and Indians through Tryon County.

At this propitious time, the Provincial Council foisted statehood on New York, a move that, whether it was intended or not, intensified the fight against Tories. Facing threats from all directions, the new state Assembly relied on the

legitimacy forged by two years of local assertiveness to revive committees for detecting and defeating conspiracies. Consisting of fewer representatives than its predecessors, these commissions—organized at both the state and county levels—became the government’s most powerful instrument in prosecuting New York’s civil war. Once Tories began to depart the state en masse, the Whig government used its Constitution-imbued legality to pass a series of laws—the Confiscation Act of 1779, Citation Act of 1782, and Trespass Act of 1783—that robbed Tories of their citizenship and redistributed their lands among those with strong Rebel credentials.<sup>221</sup> Many former tenants received legal title to their farms after their landlords fled to Canada, a development that historians such as Edward Countryman view as significant.<sup>222</sup>

Social change resulting from the diminution of the manor system was not the only legacy of upstate New York’s committee system, however. Large landholders continued to dominate life in the Hudson River Valley and, although an increase in the number of freeholders resulted in a larger electorate, restrictions in the 1777 Constitution prevented this change from being sizable.<sup>223</sup> More important to the future of the state, committees had bequeathed a spirit of political freedom to the Hudson River Valley. Unlike Jacob Leisler in 1689, upstate New Yorkers would favor the reality, as well as the appearance, of republicanism.

## Endnotes

1. “Extract of a Letter from Canada, Dated Montreal 24th March, 1775,” *The New-York Gazette; and Weekly Mercury*, America’s Historical Newspapers, American Antiquarian Society (10 April 1777).
2. The town of Schenectady was attacked in both King William’s War (1689-1697) and King George’s War (1740-1748). Fighting also occurred on New York’s northern border during Queen Anne’s War (1702-1713) and around Lake George during the French and Indian War (1754-1763).
3. Parliament later exculpated Leisler. David William Voorhees believes that the minister was motivated by religion. According to him, New York’s Voetian Calvinists, lead by Leisler, were incapable of secularizing their response to the Glorious Revolution. Once in a position of power, these Reformed Congregationalists initiated a crusade against non-believers, upsetting the crown’s wishes for peace and moderation in the province. See David William Voorhees, “In Behalf of the true Protestant religion: the Glorious Revolution in New York,” Ph D. diss., New York University, 1988. Jerome R. Reich, on the other hand, views Jacob Leisler’s actions as more ethnically than religiously motivated. He credits the Rebellion with initiating party politics in New York City. Jerome R. Reich, *Leisler’s Rebellion: A Study of Democracy in New York, 1664-1720* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953).
4. In neighboring New England provinces, individual farmers owned most of the arable land. The best work on the growth of social and economic systems in colonial New York is Michael Kammen, *Colonial New York: A History* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1975). Kammen posits that economic stagnation kept wealth away from New York during its formative years, giving the colony a secular and authoritarian culture. The arrival of a lawyer and newspaper class altered social dynamics in New York City but not in the upstate region, creating differences

between the two localities.

5. I use “upstate” to refer to Tryon, Albany, Orange, Ulster, Dutchess, and Westchester counties. Although the term does not appear in committee journals, it is less cumbersome than listing counties. I use “Hudson River Valley” to refer to Orange, Ulster, Dutchess, and Westchester counties.
6. I have relied on Sung Bok Kim’s *Landlord and Tenant in Colonial New York: Manorial Society, 1664-1775* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978) for my understanding of New York’s manor system.
7. Patricia U. Bonomi offers a detailed account of New York’s agrarian riots in “New York’s Land System: Problems and Opportunities,” her sixth chapter in *A Factious People: Politics and Society in Colonial New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971). In addition to Bonomi, three other authors have written authoritative works on the Hudson Valley uprisings: Kim’s *Landlord and Tenant in Colonial New York*; Irving Mark’s *Agrarian Conflicts in Colonial New York, 1711-1775* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940); and Thomas J. Humphrey’s *Land and Liberty: Hudson Valley Riots in the Age of Revolution* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004). Mark’s study of personal correspondence and newspaper articles leads him to blame the unrest on manor lords’ attempts to establish absolute power and control over their tenants. Kim views the riots through political and economic lenses, blaming the violence on conflicts with Massachusetts residents. Humphrey interprets the same evidence as Kim does but posits that land riots were too complex to be attributed just to a border dispute between two colonies. According to him, prospective tenants did not care which colony granted them a title, as long as they could demonstrate proof of ownership.
8. Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*, Norton Paperback edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991), 5. According to Maier, “in certain circumstances, it was understood, the people would rise up almost as a natural force, much as night follows day, and this phenomenon often contributed to the public welfare,” *ibid.*, 3. Pauline Maier sees a natural progression from disillusionment over the British representative system to the formation of an American one, as symbolized by the “institutionalizing” of extralegal institutions such as New York’s wartime committees. I believe that the existence of armed conflict after April 1775 accelerated this process, making for a less-than-perfect lineage between protest movements in Britain and unrest in America.
9. Before deploying British troops, Moore had ordered Albany Sheriff Harmanus Schuyler to recruit 105 men and suppress an uprising on the Van Rensselaer manor. Schuyler and his posse engaged sixty rioters in an inconclusive firefight that left four dead and many wounded. Bonomi, 222-223.
10. In colonial America, upsetting the social order was seen as a violation of a jurisdiction’s law and order. According to Gordon S. Wood, “county courts were the places where the local communities reaffirmed their hierarchical relationships and reconciled their various obligations,” *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, (New York: Vintage Books, a division of Random House, Inc., 1991), 72. The existence of courts leet and baron made class imbalance in upstate New York greater than in other colonies. Although the gentry served as judges in other colonies (like in New York, often without any formal law training), they did not necessarily own the property worked by the defendant.
11. “The New-York Pocket Almanack For the Year 1766,” Early American Imprints, Series I, Evans Digital Library, 1775. See also Edmund S. and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution*, 2d ed. (New York: Collier Books, 1962), especially chapters three and five.
12. Carl Lotus Becker, *The History of Political Parties in the Province of New York*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1960; reprint, No. 286 of the Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin History Series, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1909), 49-51. According to Roger James Champagne, local victories mattered more to the Livingstons and DeLanceys than resisting the British. See



- Roger James Champagne, "The Sons of Liberty and the Aristocracy in New York Politics, 1765-1790," Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1961.
13. See Becker, chapter three.
  14. Bernard Mason, *The Road to Independence: The Revolutionary Movement in New York, 1773-1777* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), 19.
  15. *The Road to Independence*, 44.
  16. Daniel L. Hulsebosch, *Constituting Empire: New York and the Transformation of Constitutionalism in the Atlantic World, 1664-1830*, Studies in Legal History (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 182.
  17. According to Becker, colonists in New York took up arms to answer "the question of home rule" as well as to determine "who should rule at home," Becker, 22. For a comprehensive—if dated—bibliographic essay on revolutionary New York scholarship, see Bernard Mason, "The Heritage of Carl Becker: The Historiography of the Revolution in New York," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly* Vol. 53, No. 2 (1969): 127-147.
  18. See Edward Countryman, *A People in Revolution: The American Revolution and Political Society in New York, 1760-1790* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1981) and Mark V. Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War, 1775-1783* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1966).
  19. See Hugh M. Flick, *The Rise of the Revolutionary Committee System*, History of the State of New York (New York: New York State Historical Association, 1933) and Mason, *The Road to Independence*. Several local histories have addressed the committee system as a secondary thesis, including Michelle P. Figliomeni, *The Flickering Flame: Treachery and Loyalty in the mid-Hudson During the American Revolution* (Washingtonville, New York: Spear Printing, 1946) and chapters five through eight of *The Other New York: The American Revolution Beyond New York City, 1763-1787*, ed. Joseph S. Tiedemann and Eugene R. Fingerhut, SUNY series, An American Region: Studies in the Hudson Valley, ed. Thomas S. Wermuth (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005). Jacob Judd wrote chapter five "Westchester County." Thomas S. Wermuth wrote chapter six "The Central Hudson Valley: Dutchess, Orange, and Ulster Counties." Stefan Bielinski wrote chapter seven "Albany County." Robert W. Venables wrote chapter eight "Tryon County."
  20. Demographically, Albany County held more people than any other upstate New York polity, with almost 43,000 non-Indian residents by the beginning of the conflict. Bielinski, in Tiedemann and Fingerhut, 155.
  21. I do not consider sparsely populated Charlotte County or the New Hampshire Grants in this study.
  22. According to Daniel L. Hulsebosch, governors created counties in New York to act as "ballast" against proprietary rule. Hulsebosch, 50.
  23. The Provincial Council voted the constitution into effect on 20 April 1777. James Sullivan, ed., *Minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence, 1775-1778, Volume I*, The University of the State of New York (Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, General Printers, 1923), 898 (20 April 1777). Appointments and elections occurred over the next two months. Walter Stahr, *John Jay: Founding Father* (New York: Hambledon and London, 2005), 80. The new government was supposed to convene on 1 August but George Clinton, the newly elected governor, prorogued the Assembly until later that month. Kwasny, 154.
  24. "Declaration of the Grand-Jury and Magistrates, Etc. at the Court of Quarter-Sessions, at Johnstown, Tryon County, New-York March 16, 1775," in Peter Force, ed., *American Archives*, 4th Ser., II, 151. All citations from this collection were obtained by using Northern Illinois University's on-line database at <http://dig.lib.niu.edu/amarch/>; *Rivington's New-York Gazetteer*, America's Historical Newspapers (American Antiquarian Society), 6 April 1775.
  25. "Schenectady (New-York) Committee to General Schuyler," *ibid.*, 4th Ser., II, 1730 (14 September 1775). I use "Rebellion" instead of "revolution" because colonists who were opposed



- to British rule wanted London to withdraw its soldiers from the continent. They did not necessarily want a radical change in the colonial government.
26. Committees titled themselves “Committees of Safety,” “Councils,” “Congresses,” and “Commissions.” Oftentimes the same assembly would go by several names, depending on the quorum it voted in effect. In this paper, I use “committee” or “board” for all town, district, and county organizations and “Provincial Council” for the colonial organization. I reserve the term “congress” for the intercolonial Continental Congress.
  27. “Letter from Colonel Guy Johnson to New-York Congress: opened and read by the Albany Committee, and a copy sent to General Schuyler,” 8 July 1775, Force, 4th Series, II, 1669.
  28. James F. Morrison, *A History of Fulton County in the Revolution*, Bicentennial Project of the County of Fulton (Gloversville, New York: Fulton County Bicentennial History Committee, 1977), 1.
  29. Journals, Volume I, 166-167 (22 July 1775). Tryon committeemen often consulted their brethren in Albany during the war’s early months, perhaps because the county had been part of Albany before 1772.
  - 30.. Morrison, 1.
  31. “Extract of a Letter dated Crown Point, August 14, 1775,” Force, 4th Series, III, 135.
  32. “Letter from Sir John Johnson to Alexander White” *ibid.*, 4th Series, II, 1726 (25 July 1775); “Letter from Sir John Johnson to Alexander White, Sheriff of Tryon County,” *ibid.*, 4th Series, III, 223 (unknown date).
  33. *Ibid.*; Albany, Volume I, 196-197 (15 August 1775), 199 (16 August 1775).
  34. *Ibid.*, 204 (20 August 1775); “Letter from the Albany Committee to the New-York Congress,” Force, 4th Series, III, 223 (21 August 1775).
  35. *Ibid.*
  36. Albany, Volume I, 220 (1 September 1775).
  37. Proper bail: *Ibid.*, 229 (5 September 1775); petition: *Ibid.*, 242 (13 September 1775).
  38. John Frey, a committee member from Palatine (Tryon County) and one of the two men who approached Johnson Hall to demand that Sir John Johnson surrender White, won election as sheriff. “Tryon County Committee to New-York Congress,” Force, 4th Series, III, 660 (7 September 1775).
  39. Albany, Volume I, 247 (20 September 1775).
  40. *Ibid.*, 273 (19 October 1775); “Petition of Elizabeth White,” Force, 4th Series, III, 923 (3 October 1775).
  41. Albany, Volume I, 292 (11 November 1775).
  42. *Ibid.*, 643 (19 December 1776); 836 (27 August 1777).
  43. Morrison, p1.
  44. Counties also formed committees to stay informed on events occurring in other colonies. In its second meeting, the Albany Committee altruistically resolved to collect donations to support the “Poor at Boston.” Albany, Volume I, 9 (21 March 1775).
  45. Alexander Clarence Flick, *Loyalism in New York During the American Revolution*, Studies in History, Economics and Public Law, ed., the Faculty of Political Science of Columbia University, Volume XIV, No. 13 (London: P.S. King & Son, 1901), 102.
  46. *Rage Militaire* was first applied to the American Revolution by Charles Royster in *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1793*, Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Virginia (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1979).
  47. A Tryon-County Freeholder, “To the Freeholders and Inhabitants of the County of Tryon,” Early

American Imprints, Series I, Evan's Digital Library (20 May 1775).

48. Albany, Volume I, 31 (11 May 1775).
49. Larry R. Gerlach, ed., *The American Revolution: New York as a Case Study*, The American History Research Series (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1972), 12.
50. Journals, Volume I, 18 (29 May 1775).
51. Tyron, 18-23 (2 June 1775).
52. The committee's decision to ignore Johnson's response shows his dominance on the New York frontier. *Ibid.*, 81-82 (26 October 1775), 83-84 (27 October 1775).
53. Journals, Volume I, 18 (29 May 1775). The Provincial Council's decision to request lists of non-signers as well as signers eliminated ambiguity: every resident contacted had to declare for either the Rebels or the Tories.
54. Albany, Volume I, 85-86 (11 June 1775).
55. *Ibid.*, 113-114 (29 June 1775).
56. Samuel Ludlow Frey, ed., *The Minute Book of the Committee of Safety of Tryon County, the Old New York Frontier, Now Printed Verbatim for the First Time, With an Introduction by J. Howard Hanson* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1905), 31 (14 June 1775).
57. According to the minutes of the Canajoharie District (Tryon Country) for 29 May 1775, "Resolved unanimously by this Committee, that [affected citizens should not]...from this Day have any Dealings or other Connections in the Way of trade with any person or persons whatsoever, who have not signed the Association entered into by this District." *Ibid.*, 16 (29 May 1775).
58. *Ibid.*, 115 (29 June 1775).
59. According to Charles Royster, "...the main purpose of an oath was to compromise people in the eyes of the British and deter them from fighting for the British. A man who swore loyalty to Congress and his state would be a documented rebel if he fell into British hands." Royster, 105.
60. *Ibid.*, 230 (5 September 1775), 231 (7 September 1775).
61. *Ibid.*, 413 (22 May 1776), 418 (28 May 1776).
62. Tyron, 47 (12 August 1775).
63. Spartanus, "The Interest of America," *The New-York Journal; or, The General Advertiser*, America's Historical Newspapers (American Antiquarian Society), 20 June 1775.
64. Albany, Volume I, 281 (30 October 1775), 446 (30 March 1776), 601-602 (8 November, 1776). Representatives were often reelected, with the same individual and family names appearing in each session.
65. *Ibid.*, 304 (5 January 1776).
66. *Journals of the Provincial Congress, Provincial Convention, Committee of Safety and Council of Safety of the State of New-York, 1775-1776-1777, Vol. I* (Albany: Thurlow Weed, Printer to the State, 1842), 1,096 (10 December 1777).
67. Albany, Volume I, 617 (25 November 1776).
68. Alexander C. Flick, ed., *Minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence, 1775-1778, Volume II and Minutes of the Schenectady Committee, 1775-1779*, The University of the State of New York (Albany: J.B. Lyon Company, General Printers, 1925), 1085-86 (28 March 1777).
69. Albany, Volume I, 861-862 (6 November 1777).
70. *Ibid.*, 883 (11 December, 1777).
71. *Ibid.*, 24 (3 May 1775).
72. County minutes do not stipulate if the rest of the watch rotated with the officer or if some other method existed for sharing the duty. *Ibid.*, 56 (30 May 1775).

73. *Ibid.*, 75 (12 June 1775).
74. *Ibid.*, 241 (13 September 1775). The town sergeant's duties grew over time. On 22 April 1777, the committee instructed Jacob Kidney, the serving town sergeant, to order butcher Anthony Vain "to desist from killing any Cattle &c in his present Slaughter House and that he also remove filth with the greatest dispatch." Whether the committee decided upon this measure for health reasons, because of a malodorous smell, or to punish Vain is not clear. Still, the restriction reflected the board's strength after two years in existence. *Ibid.*, 729 (22 April, 1777).
75. The Albany Committee had instigated a night watch early in the conflict more out of fear that "Negroes" would act wildly at the thought of war than to defend against the British Army or armed Tories. *Ibid.*, 24 (3 May 1775).
76. Albany, Volume II, 1089-1091 (13 and 19 April 1777).
77. According to Charles Royster, *rage militaire* gave committee governments "instant legitimacy." Royster, 43. The *Constitutional Gazette* published an article against revolutionary committees on 6 December 1775, stating that "there is not a more cruel tyranny, than that which is exercised under the shadow of laws, and with the colour of justice, when the unfortunate sufferers, are drowned, as it were on the very plank, then had taken to save themselves." Few writings express the disaffected opinion better than this. "To the Inhabitants of Queen's County," *The Constitutional Gazette*, America's Historical Newspapers (American Antiquarian Society), 6 December 1775.
78. The committee questioned the city's printers but failed to discover who published the tracts. Albany, Volume I, 672. Most likely, Tories printed the handbills in New York City and smuggled them up the Hudson River.
79. I use "superiority" as opposed to "authority" because the first term suggests a natural geographic hierarchy while the second implies a degree of subordination that was not always present.
80. Journals, Volume I, 104 (9 August 1775); Albany, Volume I, 193-194 (15 August 1775).
81. Approving resolutions proposed by its Ways and Means subcommittee, the Provincial Council mandated "that the county committees be considered as supervisors" and that "they, with the assessors, under oath, and collectors, do proceed to asses, raise and collect their respective quotas." Journals, Volume I, 134 (2 September 1775).
82. Dutchess County had a long history of taxing its citizens, for example. See Ellen A. Sellingsloh, "A More Equal Proportion: Public Finance and the Social Order in Rumbout Precinct and the Town of Fishkill, N.Y., 1737-1800," Ph. D. diss., State University of New York at Albany, 1984.
83. *Journals of the Provincial Congress, Provincial Convention, Committee of Safety and Council of Safety of the State of New-York, 1775-1776-1777, Vol. II* (Albany: Thurlow Weed, Printer to the State, 1842), 424 (25 April 1777).
84. Loyalism, 62.
85. The Paulding's Precinct Committee likely welcomed the presence of Ulster troops. Only three days earlier, Committee Chairman Nathan Pearce had requested a ten-man guard from outside the county to protect meetings. Journals, Volume I, 766 (9 January 1777).
86. *Ibid.*, 839. Several months into the war, events and personal experience made county committeemen less sensitive to legitimacy issues than the council and conspiracy commission, which could afford to be more dispassionate.
87. The tone of the Provincial Council also began to sound less authoritarian. Although the reason for this change is not clear, it may have been a result of new leadership or more upstate representation.
88. *Ibid.*, 214, 215 (12 December 1775).
89. The Newburgh Committee most likely appealed directly to the Provincial Council because it thought that the Orange Committee was either feckless or not Whig enough. Journals, Volume II, 97 (27 October 1775); "Newburgh (New-York) Committee to the Provincial Congress,"

- Force, 4th Series, III, 1206 (27 October 1775). Although the minutes do not explicitly state why Wiggins and Purdy were arrested, it might have been because both had twice refused to sign the Association. "Signers in Newburg, Orange County," Force, 4th Series, III, 595 (14 July 1775).
90. In Albany County, for example, Abraham Yates Jr., chairman of the county committee, declared on 29 April 1775 that "it [is] absolutely necessary that there should be a meeting of the Committee of this County" and that, until it sat, "a Committee of Safety, Protection & correspondence should be appointed" from the existing body. Albany, Volume I, 14-15 (29 April 1775).
  91. I am indebted to Professor Harold E. Selesky for this analysis.
  92. Journals, Volume I, 131-132 (1 September 1775).
  93. *Ibid.*, 185 (25 October 1775). Although the conspiracy included a plan to "take up the Committees and Congress men, and deliver them [to British officers]," no challenge to the committee system arose at this time. Force, 4th Series, III, 1305 (25 October 1775).
  94. In *The People's Welfare*, William J. Novak argues that, despite their label, state (police) powers were exercised mostly at the local level. Although he focuses his research on post-conflict America, Novak reads his observations back to cover the fight against the British. *The People's Welfare: Law & Regulation in Nineteenth-Century America*, Studies in Legal History (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 3-13. For the most part, New York's upstate communities support this extrapolation: although boards lacked the permanence or legal standing to merit the term "police powers," they did relay on regulatory measures to prosecute the war. In this essay, I use "police powers" to refer to the enforcement of regulations, not the committee decisions which authorized them.
  95. Albany, Volume I, 18 (1 May 1775).
  96. Tryon, 51-52 (26 August 1775).
  97. Roger Baxton, Thomas Baxton, Charels Gordon, and Christian House never appeared for questioning. *Ibid.*, 63-66.
  98. A complete record of militia payments was included in Volume 40 of *Manuscripts of the Colony and State of New York in the Revolutionary War, 1775-1800*. Along with the other fifty-one volumes in the series, however, Volume 40 burned in the Capitol fire of 1911. Note by James Sullivan, Albany, Volume I, 965.
  99. *Ibid.*, 88 (12 June 1775).
  100. Benedict Arnold to the Albany Committee, received on 12 June 1775. *Ibid.*, 88.
  101. A soldier or non-commissioned officer had to have written permission from his commanding officer to take civilian property. The *Gazette* was published in New York City; editions would not have made their way up the Hudson River for some time after publication. *New-York Gazette; and Weekly Mercury*, America's Historical Newspapers (American Antiquarian Society) 22 April 1776.
  102. Albany I, 77 (1 June 1775).
  103. *Ibid.*, 127 (6 July 1775).
  104. When in the province, Washington and Major General Charles Lee were also kept well-informed. Of course, the Provincial Council was in constant communication with the Continental Congress.
  105. The members of the Tryon Committee, in particular, thrice swore oaths of secrecy in the first year of the war. Tryon, 40 (13 July 1775), 49 (August 1775), 72, 75 (13 September 1775). With enemies closer than in other counties, the Tryon Committee probably feared that security leaks would incite Tories and the disaffected to retaliate.
  106. Albany, Volume I, 159 (17 July 1775). From a prominent Albany family, Yates regained his political standing after the war, serving in the state Assembly and Continental Congress. At

- least three other members from the Yates clan were in politics after the war: one as mayor of Albany, one as governor of New York, and one as a delegate to the constitutional convention.
107. Journal minutes rarely included “yea” and “nay” counts.
  108. *Ibid.*, 68 (7 June 1775).
  109. On 13 July 1775, the assembled representatives voted to have all routes leading into the county watched by residents loyal to the committee. Tryon, 41 (13 July 1775).
  110. *Ibid.*, 92 (6 November 1775).
  111. The subcommittee—Henry Wendell, Col. Goose Van Schaick, and Jeremiah Van Rensselaer—reported that a fourth of all arms needed major repair and instructed owners to take each weapon to a gunsmith. The gentlemen judged the remaining weapons to be in poor shape but salvageable with a bit of at-home maintenance. Albany, Volume I, 32 (18 May 1775), 33 (25 May 1775).
  112. The Provincial Council mandated that “the person or persons, who shall have the charge of the carrying this resolution into execution in each county” furnish the owners with a written receipt for the appropriation. The council directed that Captain Dutcher’s militia accomplish this task in the Tory stronghold of Westchester County. Journals, Volume I, 149, 150 (16 September 1775).
  113. The commission consisted of Jeremiah Van Rensselaer, Gerit Langingh Jr., Jacob Roseboom Jr., and Rutger Bleecker. Albany, Volume I, 493 (17 July 1776). It is not clear why the Albany Committee—which had fewer threats to its existence than other Hudson Valley committees—waited until the fifteenth month of the war to gather this information. Perhaps the influx of new faces due to dislocations from other communities influenced the decision.
  114. Journals, Volume I, 706 (7 November 1776). Although the council offered no evidence of illegal inter-county travel, the date of the resolution—7 November 1776—suggests that it was a consequence of Britain’s occupation of New York City.
  115. Tryon, 101 (24 November 1775).
  116. *Ibid.*, 521 (10 August 1776).
  117. *Ibid.*, 527 (21 August 1776).
  118. It is not clear if communication between the district and the council skipped the Ulster Committee or not. Journals, Volume I, 494-495 (14 June 1776).
  119. The authorized merchant would receive 3d. per pound for his responsibilities; the original owner would receive no compensation. *Ibid.*, 682 (17 October 1776).
  120. Journals, Volume II, 229-230 (18 November 1776); Journals, Volume I, 714 (23 November 1776). According to Barbara Clark Smith, upstate New Yorkers rioted on ten occasions between the start of the war and the end of 1777. Barbara Clark Smith, “Food Rioters and the American Revolution,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Ser., Vol. 51, No. 1 (January 1994): 35-36.
  121. Tryon, 80 (26 October 1775). More-established communities in upstate New York, such as Dutchess County’s Rombout Precinct, had taxed residents before the war. See Sellingsloh.
  122. Albany, Volume I, 51 (28 May 1775); “on the public Credit of this Colony”: *Ibid.*, 61 (2 June 1775).
  123. *Ibid.*, 142 (12 July 1775).
  124. It is not clear what was put on the handbills, but reason suggests that it was aimed at the purchaser—either a list of prices or a *caveat emptor* warning. *Ibid.*, 353 (8 March 1776).
  125. The county-published handbills listed prices for West India rum, Jamaica spirits, molasses, New York rum, coffee, loaf sugar, chocolate, sugar (1st quality), good coarse salt, pepper, and Bohea tea. *Ibid.*, 385 (20 April 1776).
  126. *Ibid.*, 496 (18 July 1776).

127. *Ibid.*, 351 (6 March 1776), 387 (24 April 1776), 400 (8 May 1776), 483 (10 July 1776), 493 (17 July 1776).
128. *Ibid.*, 400 (8 May 1776), 483 (10 July 1776).
129. *Ibid.*, 18 (1 May 1775). Fining for non-attendance also helped maintain quorums.
130. The Continental Congress, with no income source of its own, either had to authorize expenditures against its credit or use foreign loans to back that credit. *Ibid.*, 185 (10 August 1776).
131. This observation is based on negative evidence.
132. *Ibid.*, 661 (21 January 1777).
133. "In Committee of Safety for the State of New York," Fishkill, New York: Printed by Samuel Loudon, Early American Imprints, Series I, Evans Digital Library, 1 March 1777. The eighth resolve did not state when the one-half percent interest would compound.
134. *Journals*, Volume II, 316 (November 1776).
135. In my research, I did not come across the source of upstate residents' salt, other than indications that it was an imported commodity.
136. *Albany*, Volume I, 512 (3 August 1776). Joshua Watson could have been a Tory or a profiteer.
137. *Ibid.*, 868 (15 November 1777).
138. *Journals*, Volume I, 916 (8 May 1777). Most of upstate New York had long been supporting the poor. Referring to Dutchess County's Rumbout Precinct, Ellen A. Sellingsloh writes, "While growing pressure to provide a sufficient amount to support the poor reached a high point during the Revolution, it is important to note that there was a long time of increasing need for poor relief revenues." Sellingsloh, 48.
139. *Ibid.*, 1096 (10 December 1777).
140. In one example, the Provincial Council ordered the sheriff of Orange County to release Andrew Bostwick after he spent eighteen months in jail, despite the fact that he could not repay his debtors. *Ibid.*, Volume I, 688 (23 October 1776).
141. The authors were Peter W. Yates, Peter Van Ness, Jeremiah Van Rensselaer, and Leonard Gansevoort. *Albany*, Volume I, 50 (27 May 1775), 58 (1 June 1775).
142. It is unclear from the journal entry where the powder came from. East Camp received 10 pounds, the Manor of Livingston 50, Claverack 50, Kinderhook 20, Kings District 32, East Manor of Rensselaerwyck 50, Hoosick 30, Cambridge 50, Schaghticoke 20, Balls Town 60, Half Moon 50, Schenectady 250, West Manor of Rensselaerwyck 100, Schohary 250, Coxsackie 50, Groat Imbocht 15, the three wards of the City of Albany 60 (total), Saratoga 100. *Ibid.*, 451 (14 June 1776).
143. The investigation revealed that Indians could not have received any gunpowder because there was none in the county stores to give them. According to those investigated, "We wish them [the Indians] well and would gladly supply them with Powder if we had any to spare." *Ibid.*, 58-59 (1 June 1775).
144. *Ibid.*, 656 (9 January 1777). The journal entry does not specify which tribe received the powder.
145. *Ibid.*, 267-268 (9 October 1775).
146. "Essays Upon the Making of Salt-Petre and Gun-Powder," compiled by Thomas Tredwell, printed by Samuel Loudon in New York, Early American Imprints, Series I; Evans Digital Library (17 January 1776).
147. Letter to the Provincial Council from John R. Livingston. *Journals*, Volume I, 287 (27 January 1776).
148. *Journals*, Volume II, 167 (18 April 1776), 302 (16 July 1776), 322 (11 September 1776).
149. *Journals*, Volume I, 551 (31 July 1776). Melancton Smith became one of New York's leading anti-

- Federalists after the war. See Staughton Lynd, *Anti-Federalism in Dutchess County, New York: A Study of Democracy and Class Conflict in the Revolutionary Era* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1962).
150. Whig newsprint—whether in article or broadside form—may have accomplished more than just disseminate communications, analyze the war effort, and define Continental events. By unifying opinion, it may have helped upstate New Yorkers form an identity separate from Britain, easing the psychological burden of separation. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (New York: Verso, 1991), especially page 35.
  151. A Free Citizen, “Petition to the Honourable the Committee of Safety for the Colony of New York,” New York: printed by John Holt, Early American Imprints, Series I, Evans Digital Library, 1775.
  152. William Walton, “Resolves from the Committee Chamber,” Early American Imprints, Volume I, Evans Digital Library, 22 August 1775.
  153. Robert Benson, “A True Copy from the Minutes,” *New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury*, America’s Historical Newspapers, 4 September 1775. The council had the resolution reprinted in *The New-York Journal* on 14 September 1775, America’s Historical Newspapers, American Antiquarian Society.
  154. Robert Benson, “Extract from the Minutes,” Fishkill, Dutchess County: printed by Samuel London, Early American Imprints, Volume I, Evans Digital Library, 7 November 1776.
  155. *The New-York Gazette*, America’s Historical Newspapers, 11 December 1775.
  156. Albany, Volume I, 291 (11 November 1775).
  157. For a detailed exposition of counterfeiting schemes, see Kenneth, Scott, *Counterfeiting in Colonial New York*, New York: The American Numismatic Society, 1953.
  158. Journals, Volume I, 414 (19 April 1776).
  159. *Ibid.*, 413-417 (14-15 May 1776). The four men were Israel Youngs, Issac Youngs, Issac Ketcham, and Henry Dawkins (names appear as spelled in the council minutes).
  160. *Ibid.*, 471 (3 June 1776).
  161. Although Rivington printed tracts for the British in New York City, I have come across no definitive proof that he was involved in counterfeiting plots.
  162. Efforts to capture falsifiers continued as well. For example, a Captain Slawsen led troops into Thomas Heden’s house to seize illegal currency in early April 1777. From Calendar of Historical Manuscripts relating to the War... Secretary of State, Albany, N.Y., II, page 91, Scott, 157 (5 April 1777).
  163. John Frey received 89 out of 134 votes cast. Tryon, 55-59 (26 August 1777), 67 (7 September 1775); committee member from the Palatine District: “List of the Committees for the several Districts in Tryon County, New-York,” Force, 4th Series, II, 878 (2 June 1775); delivered the demand: Fulton, 1.
  164. Journals, Volume I, 917 (8 May 1777).
  165. Journals, Volume II, 444 (29 May 1777).
  166. Albany, Volume I, 41 (26 May 1775).
  167. *Ibid.*, 61 (2 June 1775).
  168. *Ibid.*, 56 (30 May 1775).
  169. Tryon, 35 (3 July 1775).
  170. Tryon County’s Conajoharie District recorded that it needed to review its newly enlisted citizen-soldiers on 15 June 1775 to ensure the formation was “agreeable to the Regulations of our Provincial Congress.” *Ibid.*, 29 (15 June 1775).
  171. *Ibid.*, 72 (26 October 1775).

172. Flick, *Loyalism*, 70.
173. John M'Kesson, "By Order of the Council," Kingston, New York, printed by John Holt, Early American Imprints, Series I, Evans Digital Library (31 July 1777).
174. For a detailed investigation of service exemptions, see Arthur J. Alexander, "Exemption From Militia Service in New York State During the Revolutionary War," *New York History*, New York State Historical Association Volume 27, No. 2 (April 1946): 204-212. In *Washington's Partisan War*, Kwasny argues that "better" laws would have fielded New York more soldiers, Kwasny, 168. I believe that *different* laws might have increased the number of men serving in the militia but that such a policy would come at an unacceptable cost to communities and their committees. Kwasny's failure to research local sources biases his interpretation. Kwasny, 168,193.
175. Albany, Volume I, 586 (24 October 1776).
176. *Ibid.*, 325 (2 February 1776).
177. *Ibid.*, 339 (18 February 1776).
178. *Ibid.*, 344 (1 March 1776).
179. *Ibid.*
180. *Ibid.*, 345 (1 March 1776).
181. *Ibid.*, 485-486 (12 July 1776).
182. *Ibid.*, 549 (11 September 1775).
183. Salsbury's company received a total of £25-12-3 for these four mobilizations. *Ibid.*, 487 (12 July 1776), 774 (31 May 1777), 794 (14 June 1777), 883 (11[12] December 1777).
184. Few secondary works analyze rangers in upstate New York. My understanding of how provinces used these forces comes from James M. Johnson's *Militiamen, Rangers, and Redcoats: The Military in Georgia, 1754-1776* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1992).
185. *Ibid.*, 519 (9 August 1776).
186. *Ibid.*, 551-225 (14 September 1776).
187. Since the committee's proceeding made no mention of a connection between the two apprehended Bratts and John A. Bratt, a ranger commander, any familial relationship must not have been too direct. *Ibid.*, 599 (6 November 1776).
188. *Ibid.*, 677, 681-682 (11 February 1777).
189. Bratt dated his letter 29 August 1775. Albany, Volume I, 227-228 (4 September 1775).
190. *Ibid.*, 435 (6 June 1776). The Albany Committee did not imprison every resident that refused to sign the Association. Most non-signers probably would have temporized when questioned about their motives. When Everat did not, the committee had little choice but to make an example of him.
191. *Ibid.*, 741 (2 May 1777).
192. John Younglove informed the committee of Miller's oath to the king. The board did not consider any other evidence before taking action. *Ibid.*, 403, 413 (10 May 1777).
193. Journals, Volume II, 95 (22 November 1775). The White Plains Committee (Westchester County) charged Jeremiah Travis and Jeremiah Travis Jr. with "warning a number of people to appear at Peekskill, and with appearing and embodying in arms to oppose the Congress and Committee." "Letter from the Committee of White-Plains," Force, 4th Series, III, 1763 (22 November 1775). Both father and son ended up spending time in the Westchester County Jail. "Letter from the Committee for Westchester County," Force, 5th Series, I, 1145 (24 August 1776).
194. Journals, Volume I, 757-758 (30 December 1776).
195. Journals, Volume II, 447 (12 May 1777).



196. Albany, Volume I, 956 (1 April 1778).
197. Letter of the Provincial Council replying to Major General Lee, Journals, Volume I, 336 (4 March 1776), *Ibid.*, 350 (12 March 1776).
198. Journals, Volume II, 259 (23 December 1776).
199. Michelle P. Figliomeni covers this civil, internecine fighting in *The Flickering Flame: Treachery and Loyalty in the mid-Hudson during the American Revolution*, Washingtonville, New York: Spear Printing, 1976).
200. Flick, *Loyalism*, 125.
201. Thomas Smith, a former member of the County of New York's Committee who had moved to Haverstraw after the British had occupied his home, wrote to Brigadier General George Clinton on 27 April 1777, reporting that "The people from Tappen and Clarks Town have applied to General M'Dougal for Troops to protect them from the Enemy in the English neighbourhood and Hackensack, but have received for answer that he could give them no assistance; this I fear will Induce many of them to make the best Terms they can to protect their Persons and Property." Tomas Smith to George Clinton, *Public Papers of George Clinton, First Governor of New York, 1777-1795—1801—1804*, Volume I, with an introduction by Hugh Hastings, state historian (Albany: State of New York, 1899).
202. Journals, Volume I, 512 (30 June 1776).
203. Journals, Volume II, 409.
204. Journals, Volume I, 918-920, (Spring, 1777). Livingston was probably acting in his own interest as much as out of loyalty to the rebellion.
205. Albany, Volume I, 812 (16 July 1777).
206. *Ibid.*, 822 (7 August 1777).
207. Tryon, 35-36 (3 July 1775).
208. *Ibid.*, 75 (13 September 1775).
209. J. Howard Hanson in the introduction to *Ibid.*, xviii.
210. Albany, Volume I, 626 (27 November 1776).
211. *Ibid.*, 627-628 (28 November 1776).
212. Journals, Volume I, 821 (1 March 1777).
213. Harry B. Yoshpe, *The Disposition of Loyalist Estates in the Southern District of the State of New York* (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1967), 113.
214. Committee minutes did not clarify to whom Loyalist property would go. Albany, Volume I, 755 (15 May 1777). In her 1984 dissertation, Ellen A. Sellingsloh argues that the Rebellion necessitated an expansion of tax revenue and, therefore, a widening of taxable properties. Sellingsloh, 95.
215. Journals, Volume II, 446-447, 449 (10 May 1777).
216. Albany, Volume I, 954 (30 March 1778).
217. Forrest McDonald remarks that, in general, America's first state constitutions reflected a fear of centralized executive power. New York was an exception, with a governor who was not elected annually and who—through an awkward formation called the Council of Revision—possessed limited veto powers. *Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1985), 85-86. The authoritarianism of New York's first state Constitution has traditionally been imputed to John Jay, one of America's most conservative founding fathers. According to Walter Stahr, however, most of the thirteen other Provincial Council delegates who helped author the document shared Jay's understanding of the type of government that the new state needed. Stahr, 74, 76.
218. According to Chilton Williamson, the authors of the Constitution thought that, "without

residence and property tests, Tories, Hessians, and other undesirables would have made more difficult the election of safe and sound Whigs." *American Suffrage from Property to Democracy, 1760-1860* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 198.

219. Residents considered themselves to be citizens of New York, not of their county (or, after 1776, country). See James H. Kettner, *The Development of American Citizenship, 1608-1870*, The Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978), especially chapter five, "Naturalization and the Colonies." Daniel L. Hulsebosch sees a provincial identity emerging in New York during the middle of the eighteenth century due to a local constitution, or a "shared political vocabulary and grammar." Hulsebosch, 75.
220. Stahr, 81.
221. Hulsebosch, 192; McDonald, 155.
222. Countryman, 288. Countryman sees the rise of a new political and social class as being the most radical change that the war brought to New York. *Ibid.*, 289-292.
223. Williamson, 197.

*Soldier of '76:*

# The Revolutionary War Service of a Connecticut Private in the Campaign for New York

*William Sullivan*

Connecticut furnished over a third of the men who fought the British Army for control of New York in 1776. Militiamen and short-term enlistees known as “levies” made up the majority of these troops. During this campaign, General George Washington came to the conclusion that these temporary soldiers would never win the Revolution. “To place any dependence upon Militia, is, assuredly, resting upon a broken staff,” he asserted.<sup>1</sup> Washington penned this disparaging assessment just nine days after the first sounds of British cannon at the Battle of Kips Bay had led to the panic and flight of the Connecticut levies. Among those who ran that day was Private Moses Tuttle. His experience as a soldier during the campaign of 1776 demonstrates that while the performance of temporary troops proved dismal at times, their willingness to enter the field of battle against great odds and in spite of hunger, poverty, and disease helped sustain the Revolution through its early stages. In addition, his regiment’s valiant effort at the Battle of White Plains helped to blunt a British thrust at the Hudson River Valley.

Government documents preserve the story of Tuttle’s service to our country. In 1832, at the age of seventy-eight, he appeared at the Court of Probate in Cheshire, Connecticut, and gave a full account of his military experience in order to obtain a federal pension. At this time, the government granted such pensions to Revolutionary War veterans who offered proof by sworn affidavit of at least six months of service.<sup>2</sup> The approval of the pension application of Moses Tuttle confirms the overall validity of his claim.<sup>3</sup>

A second source corroborates and gives further detail to the statement given by Tuttle. Joseph Plumb Martin served in Tuttle’s regiment during the 1776 campaign. In 1830, Martin published one of the few memoirs of the American Revolution written from the viewpoint of an ordinary soldier. This book, *Private*

*Yankee Doodle: A Narrative of Some of the Adventures, Dangers and Sufferings of a Revolutionary Soldier, Interspersed with Anecdotes of Incidents that Occurred Within His Own Observation*, generated little interest beyond Martin's neighbors in Maine at the time. However, historians now consider it the most complete and accurate account of a soldier's life in the American Revolution.<sup>4</sup> Martin's narrative, along with the deposition of Tuttle, provides a fascinating account of the experience of a soldier of 1776.

Moses Tuttle was born on November 15, 1753, one of ten children raised by Moses and Sybil (Thomas) Tuttle in Wallingford, Connecticut.<sup>5</sup> His military career most certainly began before the outbreak of hostilities with the British in 1775. The law compelled all able-bodied males to own a firearm and drill with their neighbors in militia units. During the War for Independence, these units served as a police force to quell domestic unrest, enforce loyalty to the Patriot cause, and, when needed, respond to local incursions of the British army.<sup>6</sup>

At times the rebellious colonies called forth volunteer militia units to reinforce the regular "continental" regiments of General Washington's army or to perform a mission outside of the state when the need arose. Connecticut issued such a request during the winter of 1775/1776. At this time, the siege of Boston occupied much of Washington's army. Many suspected that the next British assault would be aimed at capturing the harbor facilities of New York City. Therefore, Washington ordered his second in command, Major General Charles Lee, to obtain volunteers from the Connecticut militia and prepare defensive works in New York City. The Connecticut Council of Safety enlisted approximately 1,500 men for a three-month term to help in "The York affair for Genl. Lee."<sup>7</sup>

Moses Tuttle enlisted for this mission in the early part of December 1775—eight months after the first shots had been fired at Lexington and seven months before the colonies declared their independence from Great Britain. Tuttle explains that his "company of volunteers formed in Cheshire," Connecticut, with Captain Stephen Rowe Bradley commanding. As few as twenty-five to as many as 104 men generally constituted a company, the basic building block of an eighteenth-century army.<sup>8</sup> Tuttle states in his affidavit: "I do not know if I belonged to any particular regiment" (a unit of eight to ten companies). He did have a clear recollection of the pay, however: forty shillings a month and no bounty (a bonus for signing up).<sup>9</sup>

Tuttle's pension application does not include any explanation as to why he took up arms against the British. The lack of bounty money largely discounts financial considerations as a prime motivation. Young men volunteering for service at this time generally did so out of idealism, the longing for adventure,

and pressure from their fellow townspeople. Of all these factors, devotion to the revolutionary cause may have been the most important to Tuttle. According to Don Higginbotham's study, "The Patriotic response early in the war tended to be enthusiastic, especially that of the New England militia."<sup>10</sup>

The twenty-two-year-old Tuttle fits the description of a typical recruit for the time and place of his enlistment. As a young, single man without property, New England society considered him expendable in times of war. His enrollment into a state company of militia instead of the Continental Line also matches an expected pattern. Since Continental soldiers signed on for long terms and could expect to march far from home, they tended to come from the lower classes of society. States generally manned units with those persons who had the most to lose from a long leave of absence: propertied farmers, artisans, or men like Tuttle who were about to attain such middle-class status.<sup>11</sup>

Tuttle most likely reported for duty with his own clothing as a uniform and a musket. The best models available were British Army "Brown Bess" flintlocks that had been issued during the Seven Years War (1754-1763) to colonial militia. Some men carried flintlocks inherited from conflicts fought as many as sixty years prior to the Revolution. Still others relied upon locally manufactured "Committee of Safety" muskets patterned after the "Brown Bess" or crudely designed hunting flintlocks known as "fowling pieces." In addition to his musket, Moses needed to provide his own knapsack, blanket, canteen, flint, pouch or cartridge box, priming brush and pick, and a tomahawk. When he joined a Connecticut regiment, Joseph Martin reports that his grandparents provided him with "arms, and accouterments, clothing, cake, and cheese aplenty...and a pocket bible." Unfortunately, like most American soldiers of the day, both Tuttle and Martin probably lacked the most important weapon of the eighteenth century—a bayonet.<sup>12</sup>

Once enrolled, the authorities had trouble deciding what to do with Bradley's company of volunteers. General Lee and his force of Connecticut militia departed for New York in late January. However, as Tuttle points out, they were soon "Ordered to return to Milford." They "Again marched to New York" and "Crossed the Kingsbridge," but were "Again ordered back but the order was countermanded and marched to New York."<sup>13</sup>

This frustrating series of marches and countermarches up and down the Boston Post Road is explained by a dispute between General Lee and New York's governing Committee of Safety. Lee wanted to secure the city from British attack as quickly as possible. However, the committee worried about the consequences of such an action. A large number of Loyalist citizens lived in New York who would most likely perceive Lee's force as an invading army. This would probably lead to

many families fleeing the city in the dead of winter and might provoke a violent reaction from those Loyalists who remained or a bombardment of the harbor by the small squadron of British ships stationed nearby. Therefore, the Committee of Safety demanded that the command of the incoming soldiers be turned over to them to dispel the perception that New York was about to be invaded by Connecticut. Eventually, the Continental Congress intervened in the dispute on Lee's behalf, and the Connecticut militia began entering the city on February 4, 1776.<sup>14</sup>

New York City in 1776 clung to the southernmost tip of Manhattan Island and crowded some 25,000 inhabitants into a one-mile-square radius. By the time Captain Bradley's company arrived, many families already had boarded up their homes and fled. A local reported that the newly arriving soldiers would "break open and quarter themselves in any houses they" found "shut up."<sup>15</sup>

While in New York, Tuttle states, "we engaged in cutting post lines" and "Barricaded some of the streets." He also remembers that "there were some other troops in the city at the time, though not many," including a company from Hartford, Connecticut.<sup>16</sup> The work described by Tuttle indicates that his unit most likely took part in carrying out General Lee's order to barricade every street that led to the Hudson River.<sup>17</sup>

The need to complete the task of readying New York for battle intensified during the spring. The British army departed from Boston on Saint Patrick's Day, 1776. Sensing their next move, Washington began transferring his army to New York. On March 28, the first troops of Washington's regular army appeared, and Major General Israel Putnam dismissed the Connecticut militia. Tuttle remembers being "verbally discharged" on "the first of April."<sup>18</sup>

He remained at home for only a brief respite before volunteering to serve again. With the attack on New York City appearing imminent, Connecticut responded to a desperate request to provide reinforcements to Washington's army by authorizing the formation of seven battalions of "New Levies" to serve until December 25, 1776.<sup>19</sup> Levies were state troops who would sign up for a short, specified period of time. Organized into state companies and regiments, this "state line" acted as a reserve force to the more permanent regular army regiments that formed the Continental Line. Moses Tuttle became a levy on June 24, 1776, when he enlisted as a private in Captain Nathaniel Bunnell's Seventh Company of Volunteers of the Fifth Connecticut Battalion.<sup>20</sup>

A group of highly regarded officers commanded this regiment. Colonel William Douglas, a New Haven merchant and farmer, used his own funds to help raise the force. The thirty-four-year-old veteran of the French and Indian

Wars placed his family fortune in jeopardy and would eventually give his life to the cause of liberty.<sup>21</sup> The other two field officers clearly earned the respect of the men. The often critical Private Joseph Plumb Martin describes Lieutenant Colonel James Arnold as a “fine officer and a brave soldier.”<sup>22</sup> When the British captured Major Phineas Porter in the subsequent campaign, “his loss was much regretted by the men of the regiment.”<sup>23</sup> These commanders earned such praise despite their reputation for toughness. At the close of the Battle of Harlem Heights, an enlisted man who had not eaten for two days grumbled about his hunger within earshot of the Lieutenant Colonel. Arnold reached “into his coat pocket, took out a piece of an ear of Indian corn burnt as black as a coal. ‘Here,’ said he to the man complaining, ‘eat this and learn to be a soldier.’”<sup>24</sup>

To show their rank, the officers affixed epaulettes to the shoulders of their jackets and colored, rosette-shaped badges known as cockades to their hats. Field officers like Douglas wore red, the captains white, and officers below this rank green. However, upon entering their first battle, Arnold and Porter removed their cockades. When asked why, Arnold “replied that he was willing to risk his life in the cause of his country, but unwilling to stand a particular mark for the enemy to fire at.”<sup>25</sup> The historic record yields no precise description of what uniforms, if any, the enlisted men wore as they marched into battle.

In total, 614 officers and enlisted men joined Douglas’s regiment. Although the state filled out the officer corps completely, the recruitment drive failed to meet the goal of manning each company with eighty-three “rank and file” soldiers. The actual number of corporals and privates varied between fifty-eight and seventy-one per company. Connecticut came up 138 enlistments short of the full 752-man regiment that it had hoped to field.<sup>26</sup>

Rarely did any of the colonies succeed in fully manning their regiments. Drawing men away from their farms for any extended period of time to face the hardships of military service proved a challenge as the war dragged on. Connecticut anticipated having difficulty in recruiting for the 1776 campaign. In addition to the going rate of forty shillings per month, each man enrolling as a private in Douglas’s regiment received a bounty of three pounds as an inducement to enlist. Furthermore, the authorities compensated volunteers with money for providing their own muskets, blankets, knapsacks, bayonets, and “cartouch-boxes.” The state even promised to pay one penny per mile marched to and from the campaign in lieu of rations, and “one days pay for every twenty miles between home and the general rendezvous, going and returning.”<sup>27</sup>

Under these terms, Tuttle earned at least thirteen pounds (\$43.36). His five months of service would come to ten pounds. In addition he earned the three-

pound bounty for signing on and gained a small sum for fifty-two miles of marching. Without a surviving payroll record for Captain Bunnell's company, it cannot be determined whether or not Tuttle received money for bringing his own equipment into camp. However, other scattered accounting records from the regiment show that most men did furnish themselves with weapons and other items that entitled them to compensation.<sup>28</sup>

Even with the bounty money, Tuttle's earnings were minimal. If he had served a full six months, his wages and signing bonus would have totaled fifteen pounds—the approximate figure an unskilled laborer could expect to earn over the same period of time. A skilled artisan in Connecticut would command at least twice this income for six months' work.<sup>29</sup> Clearly, Tuttle did not risk his life for riches.

Regrettably, as was all too common in the Revolution, Connecticut fell well behind in actually paying what they promised to the soldiers. A payroll record from one of Douglas's companies shows that the state still owed every pence of the wages earned by the privates at the end of their six-month term. Another accounting book demonstrates that Connecticut did not distribute back pay until the following year.<sup>30</sup>

The issue of back pay created lingering bitterness among the soldiers. Decades later, Joseph Martin still remembered, "We were...promised six dollars and two thirds a month, to be paid us monthly." But he did not receive the money until "August, 1777 when paying ceased." To add to the seriousness of the injury inflicted, Connecticut paid him in the form of "Continental currency." This paper money quickly lost value. The holder of a Continental dollar received only twenty cents of actual goods from merchants in 1777, down from fifty cents per dollar in 1776. This extraordinary rate of inflation made the shameful act of not paying the soldiers on time particularly cruel. In his memoir, Martin presents a stinging commentary on the injustice of the matter. He explains that by the time he got his hands on the wages owed, six dollars and sixty-seven cents "was scarcely enough to procure a man a dinner." He points out that "Had I been paid as I was promised...I needed not to have suffered as I did... there was enough" food "in the country and money would have procured it if I had had it." This state of affairs led Martin to regret that he ever joined the army for:

It is provoking to think of it. The country was rigorous in exacting my compliance to *my* engagements to a punctilio, but equally careless in performing her contracts with me, and why so? One reason was because she had all the power in her own hands and I had none. Such things ought not to be.<sup>31</sup>



While Moses Tuttle surely also grumbled about his pay falling in arrears, he at least could share his unhappiness with familiar company. Since recruitment happened at the local level, neighbors and usually family welcomed the men who joined the Patriot army. Of the seventy-four men who joined Captain Bunnell's company, seventy came from Tuttle's hometown of Wallingford and the other four hailed from New Haven, Connecticut. Ties of kinship also bound these soldiers. Six members of the Hotchkiss family joined the company, as did four Hitchcocks, three Merrimans, and two Meriams. While Moses is the only Tuttle to appear on Bunnell's roll, it is of interest to note that he would soon marry into the Hitchcock clan. In addition, the rolls of the other companies in the regiment list the name Tuttle six times.<sup>32</sup>

Moses Tuttle began his second tour of duty on a lonely mission. He states, "I went down to New York previous to the rest of the company as a guard to the baggage—the only soldier on this duty. I was quartered in New York near the North River, just above what was called Tea Water Point."<sup>33</sup> Besides the baggage, the Connecticut Assembly also allowed "four hogsheads of rum, two hogsheads of molasses and two barrels of sugar" to make the trip in spite of its embargo on "West Indies goods."<sup>34</sup> Eventually, the entire regiment joined up with their supplies and quartered "near the East River" to await the anticipated British attack.

Beginning in late June, the British Navy and Army began to arrive in great numbers on Staten Island. From their positions on Manhattan Island, the Americans watched as the invasion force swelled to nearly 32,000 men—the largest British expeditionary body of the century. To help create this army, King George III "rented" around 8,000 soldiers from four German princes. The most numerous of these blue-coated troops came from Hesse-Cassel, and thus the Americans came to call all of these mercenaries "Hessians."<sup>35</sup>

Washington lacked the strength to meet this threat. His army would eventually grow to nearly 30,000 men. However, outbreaks of dysentery and other debilitating illnesses throughout that summer left nearly a quarter of these troops unfit for combat. To defend New York he never counted more than 21,000 "effectives" in his army, many of whom were untested militia. The complete absence of a navy to oppose the thirty warships deployed by the British also dimmed any hope of defending Manhattan Island and its approaches. Military wisdom dictated that Washington abandon New York City. Politically, however, he could not yield such a prize without a fight.<sup>36</sup>

For two months while the British forces assembled and prepared, Tuttle and his unit trained in New York City. Martin recounts being "called out every morning at reveille beating, which was at daybreak, to go to our regimental parade in

Broad Street.” Broad Street was east of and parallel to Broadway and ran from the Exchange on Dock Street to Wall Street. On the parade grounds the regiment practiced “the manual exercise, which was the most that was known in our levies, if they even knew that.”<sup>37</sup>

Martin’s reference to the “manual exercise” indicates that the men practiced drilling, loading, and firing their weapons in formation, although the shortage of powder prevented them from actually discharging the musket. Today we generally view drilling as a way for the military to instill discipline and make a good show. However, in 1776, soldiers used the maneuvers learned while drilling in battle. Due to the tremendous inaccuracy of the smoothbore musket, eighteenth-century tactics called for officers to mass the men in lines ranked two or three deep. Soldiers needed to maintain this formation as they marched forward and closed to within 100 yards or less of their enemy. Since few would bet a shilling that they could hit a man-sized target at fifty yards, the combatants fired a simultaneous volley with the hopes that the wall of lead bullets they produced would strike and thin the enemy ranks. The unit would then reload, following a series of practiced commands so as not to get in each other’s way, and fire again. A well-trained regiment could reload and fire three times a minute, enough perhaps to hold off the much-feared bayonet charge of the British. Unfortunately, despite the constant drill practice endured during the summer of 1776, Tuttle and the other levies remained woefully unprepared for battle when compared with their peers in the king’s service.<sup>38</sup>

After the morning drill, the soldiers would get their provisions for the day. The menu never varied. Day after day the men consumed salted meats and hard bread.<sup>39</sup> While it did not compare to what they ate at home, Martin felt the food “was not bad; if there was any deficiency it could in some measure be supplied by procuring some kind of sauce.”<sup>40</sup>

After preparing and eating their meals, the men of Washington’s army spent most of their time during the summer of 1776 on guard duty or building forts and entrenchments. Tuttle probably endured long periods of labor and many tedious hours on sentry before turning in for the night. He most likely retired to sleep in a house abandoned by a Loyalist family in the vicinity of Stone Street in lower Manhattan. Shortages compelled most men to sleep two to a blanket.<sup>41</sup>

Efforts to instill discipline over the men during their idle hours failed. Lectures from ministers and officers did little to curtail the spread of venereal diseases from the thriving New York prostitution trade. The stealing of property by enlisted men became rampant despite the threat of punishment. Farmers, angered at the theft of their produce, stopped traveling to the city to sell their crops and

livestock. This denied the army the vegetables and fresh foods needed to provide a proper diet to the men. With only bread and meat to eat, many soldiers suffered from malnutrition.<sup>42</sup>

To Washington, the most serious breakdown in discipline came on July 9, 1776. The day ended with a solemn reading of the new Declaration of Independence to each assembled brigade. Once dismissed, the men joined the locals in a riotous celebration that resulted in the destruction of property. The incident left the commander in chief both shocked and angered.<sup>43</sup>

Washington's injured sense of good order aside, the worst threat posed by the lack of discipline came in the area of sanitation. Many soldiers ignored the pleas of their officers to dispose of their waste properly. A horrified General Nathanael Greene found that the most ignorant made it a practice to relieve themselves into the ditches before their entrenchments. The men suffered for such insolence. The tainted water and soil created an overpowering stench and led to the frightful proliferation of disease that laid waste to a large portion of the army.<sup>44</sup>

Washington could ill afford such losses with the threat of British attack increasing. Throughout the summer, the men frequently found their tasks interrupted by calls to prepare for battle. Without adequate intelligence of the intentions of British General William Howe, Washington oftentimes responded to rumors of enemy movements and sounded the general alarm for all men to get to their posts. Inevitably, they would wait for an assault that never came. The one exception to this pattern came on July 12 when two British warships, the HMS *Rose* and HMS *Phoenix*, sailed up the Hudson River and then back down again, exchanging cannon fire with the rebel gunners that lined both shorelines. The ships emerged intact from the engagement, and the city suffered only light damage.<sup>45</sup>

The real hammer did not fall on New York until late in the summer. On August 21, the ever-cautious Howe moved a large portion of his army to Long Island to begin his long-awaited conquest of New York. The onset of real action generated tremendous excitement in the American camps. Tuttle's commanding officer, Colonel Douglas, wrote to his wife that "our troops are in...high spirits and it is a general voice, Let them come on us as soon as they can or dare!"<sup>46</sup>

Howe dared to challenge the American army. He moved his troops into position on Long Island with the intention of dislodging the Americans from their fortifications on Brooklyn Heights. Should this high ground fall to the British, they could easily bombard the city from the east. Fearing this outcome, Washington reinforced his lines on Brooklyn Heights by ordering several regiments, including Douglas's men, to cross the East River and join the Americans



THE LIONEL PINCUS AND PRINCESS FIRVAL MAP DIVISION, THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, ASTOR, LENOX AND TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

Detail showing New York City and Harlem, from Faden, William, “A plan of the operations of the King’s army: under the command of General Sr. William Howe, K.B. in New York and East New Jersey, against the American forces commanded by General Washington, from the 12th of October, to the 28th,” Feb. 25, 1777

defending Long Island. Tuttle, “being in charge of the sick,” remained behind in the city and avoided the “American disaster” that followed.<sup>47</sup> In the Battle of Long Island, Howe outmaneuvered and routed the poorly deployed Rebel army on August 27. General Putnam held Douglas’s regiment in reserve until the closing stages of this engagement.<sup>48</sup>

Tuttle missed the battle that cost the American army 1,100 men. He explains that:

I was ordered to go on to the Island the same morning that Washington’s army was floated back to New York on a makeshift fleet of vessels to save themselves from total destruction. I and others would have gone over sooner, had it not been for the dreadful rain which lasted three or four days.<sup>49</sup>

With Brooklyn Heights firmly in Howe’s hands and the Royal Navy free to roam the East River, New York lay vulnerable to attack. The British paused to discuss peace terms with a delegation from the Continental Congress. While nothing came of these talks, debates within the Connecticut militia produced disappointing results. During open meetings, many discouraged soldiers voted to go home. Approximately 6,000 of the 8,000 Connecticut militiamen in New York



DRAWING BY H. A. OGDEN, PRINTED 1905 BY JOHN D. MORRIS & COMPANY

The retreat of Continental forces from Long Island

wound up returning to their farms for the fall harvest.<sup>50</sup>

Tuttle, however, remained. He and his regiment lingered in the city until September 3, when they marched up to the military stores at Turtle Bay, north of the city. “Here, the flour and cannon balls were carted off as fast as possible—we did not get much of the cannon balls off—but did considerable of the flour. The rest of the flour we dashed and threw into the river. Into this service we pressed all the wagons we could raise.”<sup>51</sup>

At this point, General Washington found himself in the midst of a difficult situation. The closest defensible ground lay to the north of New York City in the densely wooded area of upper Manhattan Island. Prudent military strategy suggested an immediate withdrawal of his 9,000 soldiers to Harlem Heights. However, Washington needed time to transport supplies out of the city and wait for the Continental Congress to confirm his opinion that New York should not be set ablaze. Thus, 5,000 men remained in the city while the rest, including Tuttle, formed a thin line along the eastern shore of Manhattan Island. One decisive landing by the British along this coast and a dash across the island would trap much of Washington’s army.<sup>52</sup>



The British Fleet in the Lower Bay

General Howe eventually seized upon the opportunity presented and selected Kips Bay, a cove located between present-day Thirty Second and Thirty Eighth Streets, as the perfect landing area for his troops. Tuttle lay directly in this line of attack, “in the entrenchment thrown up by the army south of the stores” at Kips Bay. Martin asserts that the entrenchments “were nothing more than a ditch dug along on the bank of the river with dirt thrown out towards the water.”<sup>53</sup> From this position on Sunday morning, September 15, 1776, Tuttle observed:

[T]he enemy’s boats from the Island put off for our shore... As soon as the boats came within the British shipping [five warships, including the *HMS Rose*] and our entrenchments, the shipping opened a tremendous fire upon us, likewise with the boats. We were commanded to retreat and did not stop until we got to Harlem Heights. This retreat was made in great confusion, people huddling out of the city, the flying army, wagons with the sick, etc...<sup>54</sup>

And so, Tuttle saw his first action in the embarrassing Battle of Kips Bay. British and Hessian troops landed unopposed following the bombardment that sent the Americans to flight. Witnessing Connecticut soldiers run that morning, an exasperated General Washington shouted to “take to the wall” and form a defensive position. With no response, he ordered them to “take the cornfield.” With men still fleeing and the British about to capture the commander, Washington exclaimed, “are these the men with which I am to defend America? Good God! Have I got such troops as these?”<sup>55</sup>





Detail of “Chart and plan of the harbour of New York & the county adjacent, from Sandy Hook to Kingsbridge, comprehending the whole of New York and Staten Islands, and part of Long Island & the Jersey shore and shewing the defences of New York both by land and sea,” 1781

“Such troops as these” would have a second chance to prove themselves the next day. The American army slipped out of the trap that the British had set, abandoned New York City, and reformed itself on Harlem Heights, where the men dug in. In the early morning hours of September 16, a scouting party of 120 riflemen under the direction of Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Knowlton moved a mile south of Harlem Heights and probed the British lines. At dawn, a skirmish between Knowlton’s Rangers and Howe’s advanced sentries broke out. Knowlton ordered his men to stand. They fired eight rounds into the ranks of the advancing British. Finding themselves outnumbered three to one and nearly outflanked, Knowlton withdrew in good order. When the Americans fell back, the British unwisely followed and came dangerously close to Washington’s main lines. From the top of Claremont Hill, the bugler of the British troops sounded the “fox chase”—a tune intended to insult the once-again retreating Americans as trapped quarry.

This time the quarry decided to become the hunter. Washington sensed an opportunity. The British force lay just south of the American army on the other side of a valley known as the Hollow Way. His staff believed that the enemy consisted of no more than 350 men, and they stood one mile in advance of any sup-

port that Howe could send. Given this situation, Washington hatched a scheme to encircle and trap the British. He ordered a small body of troops into the Hollow Way to bait the enemy into the valley. At around 11 a.m. the British moved forward to engage these troops. Meanwhile, Knowlton's Rangers, reinforced by three companies of Virginia riflemen under a Major Leitch, attempted to make their way behind the British troops without being detected. The encirclement failed. Knowlton turned right too soon and struck the Redcoats at their right flank instead of their rear. Both Knowlton and Leitch fell fatally wounded in this assault. Nonetheless, the surprise attack shocked the British, who fell back a distance before rallying in a buckwheat field.

For the next hour and a half, the two forces exchanged fire in a deadly contest for farmer Vandewater's field. The British hurried reinforcements to the battle. Washington also began committing his reserves. Eventually, he turned to Douglas's men. Tuttle recalls that his

Regiment engaged and we drove them [the British] back and up a long hill. While we were pursuing them up the hill they took off the drag ropes from one of their cannon and let it roll back upon us. We opened to the right and left, and let it roll without doing any damage, and we took the cannon.<sup>56</sup>

The British retreated to their main lines. Tuttle and his fellow levies—the same men who had run the day before—now stood victorious and gave a cheer. Fearing that they could be cut off and destroyed, Washington called his troops back to Harlem Heights. Tactically, therefore, the Battle of Harlem Heights was nothing more than an extended skirmish. The two sides did not permanently exchange ground. However, the first defeat Washington inflicted on the British gave his men an enormous boost of morale.

Victory did not come without cost. Washington's army suffered between sixty and 130 casualties. Of these, Martin believed that the regiment lost "eight or ten killed and a number wounded."<sup>57</sup> Documentary evidence supports Martin's rough calculation. The only surviving muster roll of the regiment lists four dead and two missing on September 16, including Private William Merriams of Captain Bunnell's company. Three more died over the next ten days, presumably from wounds suffered in battle. In addition, the regiment reported three missing and Major Porter as captured at Kips Bay the previous day.<sup>58</sup> Estimates of British losses at the Battle of Harlem Heights vary, but the best source—a letter from one of its officers—reveals that fourteen British soldiers died and 157 fell wounded.<sup>59</sup>

For nearly a month after the battle, Tuttle and the rest of the American army remained on Harlem Heights while General Howe plotted his next move. During



this time, conditions worsened considerably. While Tuttle says nothing of the deprivation in his affidavit, Martin describes a miserable existence in his memoir:

We remained here till sometime in the month of October without anything very material transpiring, excepting starvation and *that* by this time became quite a secondary matter; hard duty and nakedness were considered the prime evil, for the reader will recollect that we lost all our clothing in the Kip's Bay affair...It now began to be cool weather, especially the nights. To lie as I did almost every night (for our duty required it) on the cold and often wet ground without a blanket and with nothing but a thin summer clothing was tedious.<sup>60</sup>

Inadequate food, clothing, and shelter took a tremendous toll on the men of Tuttle's unit. Colonel Douglas designated an average of 219 men as "sick" when filling out his weekly strength reports. This left only sixty percent of the unit available for duty. The number of "rank and file" sent out of camp to recover in makeshift hospitals rose from just nineteen on September 21 to 160 on October 20. The army also discharged a growing number of Douglas's regiment, as many fell gravely ill or needed to recover from battle wounds. A total of ninety-two soldiers obtained permission for early dismissal from the service.<sup>61</sup>

Moses Tuttle leaves us a disturbing line from his account of the time he spent on Harlem Heights: "A man was brought up to be shot." Martin recalled the same event, but with much more detail. According to his account, Sergeant Ebenezer Leffingwell from Connecticut had been ordered to the rear during the Battle of Harlem Heights to secure more ammunition. When Colonel Joseph Reed found Leffingwell running away from the action he took him for a deserter and demanded he return to the lines. When the sergeant insisted on completing his assigned mission, Reed drew his sword. Leffingwell responded by cocking his musket. This incident resulted in Leffingwell being charged and convicted of mutiny. Martin reports that the announcement that the man was to be executed caused much discontent among the common soldiers who felt that a grave injustice had been done. A tense drama unfolded as the "Connecticut troops were drawn out and formed in a square and the prisoner brought forth. After being blindfolded and pinioned, he knelt upon the ground" and watched the executioner's squad come forward. At the last moment, a chaplain read a reprieve that saved the man's life, but only after "repeatedly using this sentence, 'crimes for which men ought to die,' which did much to further the resentment of the troops already raised to a high pitch."<sup>62</sup> This near execution occurred on September 22—the same day the British hanged Nathan Hale as a spy.



THE LIONEL PINCUS AND PRINCESS FIRVAL MAP DIVISION, THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, ASTOR, LENOX AND TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

Detail showing the distance and terrain between Harlem and White Plains, from Faden, William, "A plan of the operations of the King's army: under the command of General Sr. William Howe, K.B. in New York and East New Jersey, against the American forces commanded by General Washington, from the 12th of October, to the 28th," Feb. 25, 1777

Besides this event, much of the month at Harlem Heights passed without any further comment from Tuttle beyond "Here, we stayed for some time." The stalemate between Washington and Howe finally broke on October 12, when the British loaded a portion of their army on ships and leapfrogged past the American positions, landing at Throgs Neck and then Pell's Point. Once again, the British threatened to trap the American army on Manhattan Island. Once again, the deliberative Howe moved too slowly to tighten the noose. Despite a critical shortage of horses and wagons, Washington escaped the snare by moving the main part of his army from Harlem Heights to White Plains, a strategic village that controlled the roads coming from New England and going up the Hudson River Valley. Tuttle recollected making "a few halts" on his way to White Plains, where the record indicates he arrived on October 21.<sup>63</sup>

The regiment that Colonel Douglas offered to assist in the defense of White Plains was hardly ready for the battle that would soon ensue. On October 25, only 200 of the rank and file reported for duty "present and fit"; 160 of the enlisted and a quarter of the officers lay sick. The need to look after the ill, post sentries, and attend to other duties out of camp occupied another eighty-seven of the enlisted. In total, Douglas could call upon only around 270 men to fight in the impend-



THE LIONEL PINCUS AND PRINCESS FRIVAL MAP DIVISION, THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, ASTOR, LENOX AND TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.

Detail of White Plains from Faden, William, “A plan of the operations of the King’s army: under the command of General Sr. William Howe, K.B. in New York and East New Jersey, against the American forces commanded by General Washington, from the 12th of October, to the 28th,” Feb. 25, 1777

ing Battle of White Plains. Disease, death, and discharge had cut the strength of his unit by more than fifty percent since the regiment’s formation in July.<sup>64</sup>

Washington prepared his defenses at White Plains for a week while the British army gathered its strength for an attack. The depleted, tired, and hungry Continental Army threw up makeshift entrenchments made of cornstalks and dirt. To substitute for bayonets they attached iron pikes to long poles. As the 14,000 British and Hessian troops assembled before them, Washington informed his officers: “Gentlemen... do the best you can.”<sup>65</sup>

On October 28, 1776, the British made their move. Howe made Chatterton’s Hill, which lay on Washington’s extreme right, the objective of an offensive designed to seize high ground and place artillery on the Americans’ flank. To counter this threat, Washington called upon Joseph Spencer, an inept sixty-two-year-old Connecticut Major General nicknamed “Granny” by his troops. Spencer commanded 2,500 soldiers, including Tuttle and his regiment. Washington ordered this detachment to move forward of the American lines and delay the Hessian troops advancing on Chatterton’s Hill. Spencer’s men crossed the Bronx River and took up a defensive position behind a low stone wall.<sup>66</sup>

Tuttle remembers the enemy “came upon us from eastward.” The initial volley from the Connecticut troops “broke and scattered them at once.”<sup>67</sup> One participant vividly recalled that Douglas’s regiment fired a volley at the Hessian

grenadiers from a distance of “20 rods” (about 110 yards). The shots “scattered them like leaves in a whirlwind; and they ran so far off that some of the regiment ran out to the ground” and collected weapons, ammunition, and rum from the fallen Germans. The Americans had enough time to drink a round of captured rum before the enemy “came on again.”<sup>68</sup>

Martin states that his regiment remained behind the protective stone wall for some time exchanging fire with a party of Hessian troops who used the slope of an apple orchard to shield themselves. Located fifty yards away, the enemy advanced just far enough above the rise to get a round off and then fell back below the ridge to reload. The Americans did their best to fire “as soon as they showed themselves above level ground, or when” the Hessians “fired, to aim at the flashes of their guns.” The regiment engaged in this manner “for some time” and lost relatively few men.<sup>69</sup>

Unfortunately, while the Connecticut men held these troops at bay, the Americans noted that other enemy soldiers “would run from our front and get round our wings to flank us.”<sup>70</sup> Martin laments that:

When finding ourselves flanked and in danger of being surrounded, we were compelled to make a hasty retreat from the stone wall....when forced to retreat we lost in killed and wounded, a considerable number....We fell back a little distance and made a stand, detached parties engaged in almost every direction.<sup>71</sup>

Spencer’s men continued to fight a furious action. Major Benjamin Tallmadge reports:

As stone walls were frequent, our troops occasionally formed behind them and poured a destructive fire into the Hessian ranks. It, however, became necessary to retreat wholly before such an overwhelming force.<sup>72</sup>

Tuttle remembers that when “repulsed...a part of our men” were “driven through to the river, and among the rest the chaplain of our regiment, Dr. Trumbel, lost his wig in the river and never afterward wore one.”<sup>73</sup> The memoir of Major Benjamin Tallmadge corroborates the story of the chaplain’s fall into the Bronx River. He states:

When I reached the bank of the river, and was about to enter it, our Chaplain, the Rev. Dr. Trumbull, sprang up behind me on my horse, and came with such force (as) to carry me with my accoutrements, together with himself, headlong into the river.<sup>74</sup>

The two men barely avoided capture by the advancing Hessians. Following

the retreat, Tuttle saw no further action that day. He “got back to camp a little after noon.”<sup>75</sup>

Now in his third and final battle, Tuttle had enough confidence in his knowledge of military affairs to offer his own analysis of the tactics employed that morning. He surmised:

[T]he Americans would have been more successful here if the reserve came on to the assistance of that part of the Army engaged. But, they hung back until there was such confusion that the men could not be reformed.<sup>76</sup>

Tuttle raises a valid point in his critique. However, it must be stressed that the Connecticut troops displayed tremendous courage and fulfilled their mission. Spencer’s men held the wall as long as they could and then continued to inflict casualties as they withdrew.<sup>77</sup> This delayed the British onslaught long enough for Washington to prepare a defense of Chatterton’s Hill.

In the end, Chatterton’s Hill fell to the British. However, to dislodge the reinforced Patriots from this position, the King’s troops needed to carry on a prolonged artillery bombardment and launch a massive assault by infantry and eventually cavalry units. In total, Spencer’s delaying action and the struggle on Chatterton’s Hill cost the British well over 200 troops and the Americans nearly 175.<sup>78</sup> Five or more of Douglas’s regiment fell in the battle.<sup>79</sup> Martin remembered the death of one of these soldiers. Just before the battle, he relates that:

[O]ne man who belonged to our company said ‘Now I am going out to the field to be killed,’ and said more than once afterwards that he should be killed, and he was. He was shot dead on the field. I never saw a man so pre-possessed with the idea of any mishap as he.<sup>80</sup>

Despite such bloodshed at the Battle of White Plains and having gained strategic ground, Howe failed to press his advantage. Another opportunity to finish off the Rebels passed as Howe bombarded the endangered American lines but held back his troops from another offensive.<sup>81</sup> Martin states that the artillery on Chatterton’s Hill lay “not more than half or three fourths of a mile” from Douglas’s regiment. “As might be expected,” the cannons “entertained” the men “with their music all the evening.” However, the anticipated attack by the British infantry never came. Martin feels that:

The British were very civil, and indeed they were after they had received a check from Brother Jonathon for any of their rude actions. They seldom repeated them, at least not till the affair that caused the reprimand had ceased in some measure to be remembered.<sup>82</sup>

This insight best explains why Howe moved so cautiously throughout the New York campaign. Perhaps he still had not forgotten a day he had spent in Massachusetts the previous year. As a field commander at the Battle of Bunker Hill, he had watched in horror as entrenched American troops gunned down 1,126 British soldiers in just ninety minutes.<sup>83</sup> Since that time, he attempted to avoid direct assaults upon the enemy when it occupied any type of earthen work.

Washington's army thus stood somewhat unmolested after retiring to a new defensive position north of White Plains where it could block any enemy movement up the Hudson River Valley. Martin found the ground there to be "springy," and after three days of severe wind and rain "the water . . . was nearly over shoes, which caused many of us to take violent colds by being exposed upon the wet ground after a profuse perspiration."<sup>84</sup>

Following the damp conditions near White Plains, Tuttle counted himself among those who fell ill. His final march took place on October 31, when Washington withdrew to North Castle, New York. Here, Tuttle

was taken sick and was in the hospital. My father came after me and got written permission to take me home. I cannot say whether I had verbal or written discharge as my father managed all of the business. It was about the last of November.<sup>85</sup>

His father's intervention may have saved the life of Moses Tuttle. The "hospital" to which he refers was a breeding ground of disease. Men afflicted with dysentery, tuberculosis, pleurisy, and smallpox crowded head to toe in such institutions. The cries of men recovering from bullet extractions and amputations added to the misery. The best cure for one's illness in such a situation consisted of getting as far away from the hospital as possible.<sup>86</sup>

Tuttle returned to Connecticut and recovered. In his pension application, he remembered: "The other men" of his company "got home a month later, said they were discharged Christmas day." Not all of the regiment returned. At least twenty-two had died, five remained missing, and Major Porter languished in captivity. Captain Bunnel's company marked the names of four dead on its muster roll.<sup>87</sup>

In the months that followed the homecoming of Douglas's regiment, Connecticut conducted another recruiting drive. The state wished to fulfill the request of the Congress for eight Connecticut battalions to become a part of Washington's Continental Line. It abandoned the practice of short-term enlistments. Instead, men had to sign on for either three years or the duration of the war.<sup>88</sup> Having barely survived his previous five months of service and perhaps still recovering from illness, Tuttle understandably passed on the offer.



We cannot make definite conclusions as to what Moses Tuttle felt about the part he played in the American Revolution. His pension application is silent on that matter. Whatever thoughts he shared with his wife Thankful, whom he married in 1778, or their seven children have been lost.<sup>89</sup> However, the record of his service suggests that he must have felt considerable pride. He had volunteered twice, faced death on the battlefield three times, and almost lost his life to sickness. Yes, his unit had run at the first sound of cannon at the Battle of Kips Bay. However, they redeemed themselves at Harlem Heights and White Plains, where they fought the British regulars and their German mercenaries with valor and competence. Furthermore, despite the cold, hunger, poverty, and maladies the regiment endured, their muster roll chronicles only one official desertion. While maligned by many, the militia and levies had performed a valuable role in the New York campaign. The revolution lived only so long as Washington's army remained in the field, and that army endured only because thousands of temporary soldiers like Tuttle agreed to fill out its ranks. As he told his story in court to obtain his deserved pension, Moses Tuttle must have looked back upon this record and felt a high degree of satisfaction for having served as a soldier of 1776 in New York.

## Endnotes

1. George Washington to John Hancock, President of Congress, September 24, 1776, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick, vol. 6, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931-1944), 110.
2. Initially, enlisted men had received pensions only if they were disabled in the war. In 1818, Congress extended eligibility to those veterans of the Continental forces who demonstrated a financial need. Congress dropped the financial need requirement in 1828; in 1832 it allowed nondisabled veterans of state line and militia units (such as Tuttle) to apply for a pension for the first time. The 1832 law—"An act in addition to an act to provide for certain persons, engaged in the land and naval service of the United States in the revolutionary war, approved March 18, 1818"—allowed veterans with at least two years of service to receive the full monthly wage they had earned during the war for the rest of their lives. Those with between six months and two years of service received a portion of their former wage. For a discussion of pension records and other Revolutionary War narratives see Alfred F. Young, "George Robert Twelves Hewes (1742-1840): A Boston Shoemaker and the Memory of the American Revolution," in *The New England Working Class and the New Labor History*, eds. Herbert G. Gutman and Donald H. Bell, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987).
3. Revolutionary War Pension File of Moses Tuttle, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Moses Tuttle is listed on the "Roll of a Regiment of New Levies from Connecticut Commanded by William Douglas," 1776, Record Group 93, War Department Collection of Revolutionary War Records, M246-27. He also appears on a "Travel Roll" of the 7th Company in the same collection of records.
4. George F. Scheer, Editor's Introduction to Joseph Plumb Martin's *Private Yankee Doodle: Being a Narrative of some of the Adventures, Dangers and Sufferings of a Revolutionary Soldier*, (New York: Little Brown and Co., 1963), 5-6.

5. Date of birth from Pension file of Moses Tuttle; Other family records from George Tuttle, *The Descendants of William Tuttle*, (Rutland VT: Tuttle and Co., 1883). Moses was from the village of Cheshire, which was part of Wallingford at the time.
6. Connecticut Colony, *The Public Records of Connecticut from April, 1636 to October, 1776*, (Hartford: Brown and Parsons, 1850-1890), vol. 12, 248-249; vol. 14, 3-4; Don Higginbotham, "The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Militia," reprinted in *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution*, Richard Brown, Editor, (D.C. Heath, Co., 1992), 239-250; James B. Whisker, *The Colonial Militia: The New England Militia 1606-1785*, (Edwin Mellen Press, 1997).
7. Connecticut Colony, *The Public Records of Connecticut*, Vol. 15, 225; Barnet Schecter, *The Battle For New York*, (Walker Publishing, 2002), 67-69, 78, 80.
8. Bradley eventually became a U.S. Senator from Vermont. See "Descendants of Danyell Broadley de West Morton," [www.bradleyfoundation.org](http://www.bradleyfoundation.org). Connecticut raised unusually large companies of 100 enlisted men and four officers (a captain, two lieutenants, and one ensign) at the war's outset. They soon reduced this to sixty-five enlisted men per company and four officers. Keith C. Wilbur, *The Revolutionary Soldier*, (Globe Pequot Press, 1969), 64; Brendan Morrissey, *Boston: 1775*, (U.K., 1993), 27, 32, 44; Harold Peterson, *The Book of the Continental Soldier*, (Stackpole Co., 1968), 253-254.
9. Tuttle Pension File. Forty shillings = two pounds which came to \$6.67 according to Martin, 237.
10. Higginbotham, "Strengths and Weaknesses of the Militia," 241.
11. Jackson Turner Main, *Connecticut Society in the Era of the American Revolution*, (The American Revolution Bicentennial Commission of Connecticut, 1977), 18; Higginbotham, "Strengths and Weakness of the Militia," 241.
12. Martin, *A Narrative*, 33. Some Connecticut soldiers had an official brown or red uniform coat in the opening stages of the war. However, many militiamen wore their civilian clothes. By the summer of 1776, a simple homespun or linen "hunting shirt" became a common "uniform" that a soldier might dye a particular color to match that of his regiment. Wilbur, *The Revolutionary Soldier*, 8, 10; Schecter, *Battle for New York*, 143-145; Harold L. Peterson, *The Continental Soldier* (Stackpole Co., 1968), 23-35. 74.
13. Tuttle, Pension Application.
14. Correspondences between General Lee and the New York Committee of Safety, Papers of Charles Lee, New York Historical Society, 1871.
15. George F. Scheer, and Hugh R. Rankin, *Rebels and Redcoats*, (World Publishing, 1957), 195.
16. Tuttle, Pension Application.
17. Schecter, *Battle for New York*, 80.
18. Tuttle, Pension Application.
19. Connecticut Colony, *The Public Records of Connecticut*, vol. 15, 417.
20. Moses Tuttle remembered joining in May. The Muster roll of Captain Bunnell's company pinpoints his date of enlistment as June 24 (Roll 246-27). We can forgive Tuttle for perhaps being mistaken on this small detail since over fifty years had elapsed. The terms "battalion" and "regiment" were used interchangeably during the Revolution. Technically, a battalion at that time referred to a regiment that had eight instead of the standard ten companies, either because two companies had been detached as the British often did, or because the unit was raised with only eight companies as was the case with Douglas's regiment. Peterson, *The Book of the Continental Soldier*, 253-254.
21. Schecter, *Battle for New York*, 98-99.
22. Martin, *A Narrative*, 40.
23. *Ibid.*, 51.
24. *Ibid.*, 53.



25. Ibid., 53, 24.
26. Connecticut Colony, *Public Records of Connecticut*, vol. 15, 417; Muster Rolls from Colonel Douglas's Regiment of Levies, M246-27.
27. Connecticut Colony, *Public Records of Connecticut*, Vol. 15, 418; Pay Roll Record of Captain Prentices Company. Pay Roll record of Captain Peck's company, Travel Log of Captain Bunnell's Company, M246-27. A cartouche box held the soldier's ammunition.
28. Martin tells us that the two pound monthly salary came to \$6.67, so one pound equals \$3.34.
29. Robert A. Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 60. Gross reports that a common laborer earned two shillings per day. Assuming a six-day work week, he would earn 312 shillings in six months, slightly more than fifteen pounds. Main, *Connecticut Society in the Era of the American Revolution*, 35-36. Main establishes that skilled wage earners brought in four or five shillings per day.
30. Payroll Records of Captain Peck's and Captain Prentice's Companies, M246-27.
31. Martin, *A Narrative*, 237-238. Inflation rate discussed in Parker, Wyman W., *Connecticut's Colonial and Continental Money*, (The American Revolution Bicentennial Commission of Connecticut, 1976), 41.
32. Muster Roll of Captain Bunnell's Company, M246-27.
33. Tuttle, Pension Application.
34. *Public Records of Connecticut*, Vol. 15, 436.
35. Schecter, *Battle for New York*, 92-93.
36. Flexner, Thomas, *Washington: The Indispensable Man*, (New York: Little Brown and Company, 1969), pgs. 77-79; Schecter, *Battle for New York*, 121.
37. Martin, *Narrative*, 34. Martin belonged to Captain Samuel Peck's 3rd Company of the 5th Connecticut Battalion.
38. Middlekauff, Robert, *The Glorious Cause*, (New York: Oxford Press, 1982), 298-301.
39. Fischer, David Hackett, *Washington's Crossing*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 86.
40. Martin, *Narrative*, 34.
41. Schecter, *Battle for New York*, 90. Martin, *Narrative*, 36, identifies Stone Street as his quarters. We can assume the regiment was stationed together in the same vicinity.
42. Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*, 86.
43. Middlekauff, *Glorious Cause*, 328, Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*, 29.
44. Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*, 87.
45. Ibid. 83-89; 88-89.
46. Douglas quoted in Fleming, Thomas, *Liberty*, (New York: Viking, 1997) 187.
47. Tuttle, Pension Application.
48. Martin, *Narrative*, 39-42; Flexner, *Indispensable Man*, 80-82, Fleming, *Liberty*, 186-194.
49. Tuttle, Pension Application. The record supports Tuttle's claim of a driving rain. See McDowell, Bart, *The Revolutionary War*, (National Geographic, 1976), 93.
50. Higginbotham, Don, *The War of American Independence*, (Northeastern University Press, 1983), 159.
51. Tuttle, Pension Application.
52. Flexner, *Indispensable Man*, 80.
53. Martin, 45. This cove has been filled in.
54. Tuttle, Pension Application. The order to withdraw was nothing more than a rumor.

55. Higginbotham, *War of Independence*, 160; Flexner *Indispensable Man*, 83-84; Middlekauf, *Glorious Cause*, 348.
56. Tuttle, Pension Application.
57. Johnston, Henry P., *The Battle of Harlem Heights*, (New York: 1897), 56-91; Martin, *Narrative*, 53; Flexner, *Indispensable Man*, 84; Middlekauff, *Glorious Cause*, 349.
58. Muster Rolls of Colonel William Douglas's Regiment. Undated, but apparently from December 1776. M246-27. In the Revolution, being marked as "wounded" on a return of strength record indicated that a man was very severely injured. Thus, Martin's claim that a number were wounded probably indicates that they were only slightly wounded by eighteenth-century standards.
59. Johnston, *Harlem Heights*, 193.
60. Martin, *Narrative*, 56.
61. "Strength Returns from Colonel Douglas's Regiment of Foot," September 13—October 20, M246-27.
62. Martin, *Narrative*, 54-55; Colonel Reed, Washington's adjutant, told a very different story in court. He twice found Leffingwell running and hiding from action and struck him in the hand and face with his sword. He afterwards found him cowering in a ditch and claimed that Leffingwell confessed to his desertion. See Schecter, *Battle for New York*, 216.
63. Martin, *Narrative*, 60, Higginbotham, *War for Independence*, 161. Middlekauf, *Glorious Cause*, 351.
64. "Weekly Return of Strength," October 26, 1776, M246-27.
65. Schecter, *Battle for New York*, 235-237.
66. Middlekauf, pgs. 351-352; Potts, Louis, *American National Biography*, Edited by Garraty and Carnes, (Oxford, 1999) 451-452; Snow, Richard, "Stand-off at White Plains," *American Heritage*, (April, 1973), 41.
67. Tuttle, Pension Application.
68. "An unknown American participant in the battle" quoted in "They Were There," *American Heritage Magazine*, (April, 1973), 44.
69. Martin, *Narrative*, 61.
70. "An unknown American participant in the battle," *American Heritage*, 44.
71. Martin, *Narrative*, 60-61.
72. Tallmadge, Benjamin, quoted in Scheer and Rankin, *Rebels and Redcoats*, 195.
73. Tuttle, Pension Application.
74. Tallmadge, Benjamin, *Memoir of Colonel Benjamin Tallmadge*, (New York Times and Arno Press, 1968, originally published 1858), 14.
75. Tuttle, Pension Application.
76. *Ibid.*
77. Snow, "Stand-off at White Plains," 41.
78. *Ibid.*
79. Pinpointing casualty figures in the American Revolution can be a daunting task, with incomplete and conflicting evidence. In this instance, the weekly "Return of Strength" for November 1 places the number of wounded over the previous seven days at one and the dead at four. However, the Muster Roll of Douglas's Regiment notes October 28 as the date that four of the men listed were wounded and the death of one man. The roll has no one dying between October 29 and November 1.
80. Martin, *Narrative*, 61.
81. Schecter, *Battle for New York*, 240.

82. Martin, *Narrative*, 61.
83. Casualty figure from Morrissey, *Boston*, 66.
84. Martin, *Narrative*, 62.
85. Tuttle, Pension Application. The Regiment's Muster Roll identifies the date of his discharge as November 24, 1776. Over the course of six months, eighteen of Captain Bunnel's company were similarly discharged. Fifteen of them left between October and December.
86. Wilbur, *The Revolutionary Soldier*, 74-75.
87. Muster Roll, M256-27. These figures must be considered absolute minimums as the Muster Roll seems to understate the actual losses. The only existing "Returns of Strength" records from the regiment number seventeen as having died between September 13 and November 1. The Muster Roll finds only fifteen dead between such dates.
88. Martin, *Narrative*, 67.
89. Tuttle Pension Application; Prospect, Connecticut, Vital Records.



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Prisoners aboard the prison ship *Jersey* in New York Harbor

# The Revolutionary War Fleet Prison at Esopus

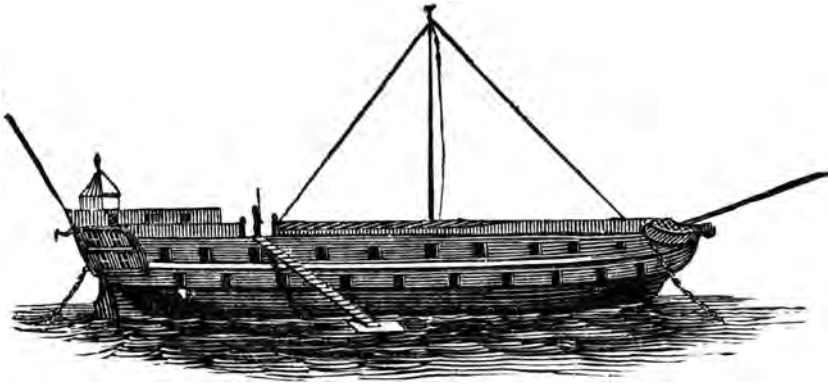
*F. Doherty*

Prisoners of war have always been problematic, and during the Revolutionary War both the British and the Patriots found their land-based prisons inadequate. As a result, they maintained “Fleet Prisons” to house those captured in battle or imprisoned for questionable loyalty.

The British had prisons on ships in Wallabout Bay, a small body of water in Upper New York Bay along the Brooklyn shore. These ships, including the *Jersey* and the *Judith*,<sup>1</sup> are well-known and deservedly detested. Less is known of similar prisons established by the New York Provincial Convention in May 1777.<sup>2</sup> Our main subject is the Fleet Prison on Rondout Creek at Esopus established by the Patriots, but a brief overview of the British prison ships offers perspective on the great suffering these hulks caused both sides in the conflict.

The Americans were taken prisoner during the Battle of Long Island, the retreat from New York, and especially at the fall of Fort Washington. Others were captured on ships. With the available buildings on land overflowing with prisoners, the British anchored old ships in the bay to serve as prisons. The *Jersey*, the most notorious ship, housed up to 1,000 men, and as many as 8,000 at one time or another.<sup>3</sup> The starving and freezing men suffered from smallpox and many other diseases. Estimates of the dead from the prison ships exceed 11,000—nearly triple the 4,400 Americans who died in all the battles of the Revolution.<sup>4</sup> As late as 1782 General Washington, trying to improve the conditions of the prisoners, complained to British Admiral Robert Digby:

I am informed that the principal complaint is that of their being crowded, especially at this season [July] in great numbers on board of foul and infectious Prison ships, where disease and death are almost inevitable...; it is preposterously cruel to confine 800 men in one ship at this sultry season. We have the means of retaliation in our hands, which we should not hesitate to use, by confining the land prisoners with as much severity as our seamen are held.



The *Jersey*, one of the prisons used by the British at New York during the American Revolutionary War, from Benson Lossing in *Harper's Encyclopedia of United States History* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1912)

Prominent merchant Lewis Pintard was appointed to look after the welfare of the prisoners, Congress furnishing him with some funds to which he added money of his own. Eventually, his work was continued by his nephew, John Pintard. The British blamed some of the deaths on the Americans themselves: Loyalist author Judge Thomas Jones blames Joshua Loring, the American commissary of prisoners, for the deaths of many American prisoners, saying that he appropriated two-thirds of the rations, actually starving 300 men before an exchange took place in February 1777. Hundreds were so enfeebled that many died shortly after their release.<sup>5</sup>

The Patriots were wary of many “disaffected” residents, who were either willing to support the crown or unwilling to support the American cause. As early as 21 December 1775, the Provincial Congress of New York “Resolved that Ulster County jail, or such part thereof as may be necessary, be used and taken as the jail of this Congress, and or the confinement of any such prisoners as may be ordered to be confined by this Congress, or their Committee of Safety.” The prisoners were to pay all of their expenses while in jail, unless they were indigent; in that case, the colony would foot the expense. John Blackner was the first prisoner sent to the jail, on the same day it was established. By 18 March 1777, the jail in Kingston was so full that the Provincial Convention passed a resolution to permit smoking in the convention chamber, which was above the jail, because “the same is supposed to have become unwholesome, and very nauseous and disagreeable effluvia arises, which may endanger the health of the members of the Convention.”

However, John Jay insisted that some other remedy had to be devised. As a partial solution, fourteen prisoners were discharged four days later on taking the Oath of Allegiance, but the rest were kept in the prison. A final solution was

reached by a resolution of the Provincial Convention on 2 May 1777:

*Whereas*, A number of artful and designing persons in every county within this State are daily endeavoring by exaggerating accounts of the power of the enemy, and other wicked and criminal practices, to work upon the fears of weak and timid persons, and to betray the liberty of this country; therefore:

*Resolved*, That a committee be appointed to prepare any two or more of the vessels now lying in Hudson's River, for the reception of such persons as may be sent thereto, and that Captains Benson and Castle, or either of them, be directed to see the said vessels properly guarded by the privateers, of which they have the command, and that they suffer no person to go on board said vessels who is not properly authorized thereto.

*Resolved*, That the Commissioners for detecting and defeating conspiracies, etc., be directed to cause to be apprehended such of the persons in each county whose characters are suspicious, and who, by their influence in the county in which they reside, may be supposed dangerous to this State, and send them on board the said vessels, appointing a commissary to supply them with provisions at their own expense.

*Resolved*, That every person who shall be found on shore, after having been confined on board of the said vessels, or either of them, without being properly discharged, shall be deemed guilty of felony without benefit of clergy, and on conviction before the said commissioners, who are hereby directed and empowered to issue a summons to the sheriff or other officer to empanel a jury for their trial, shall be *immediately executed*."

Several days later the Albany Committee of Correspondence reported to the Provincial Convention that its jails were full. On 12 May 1777, John Jay and Gouverneur Morris authorized the committee to "Prepare any two or more vessel[s] in Hudson's River, near the said city, for the reception of all such persons as they may think proper to confine on board the same." No other records on this subject have been found. It is doubtful ships were ever used as prisons at Albany, although the Albany Committee did eventually send prisoners to Esopus.

The Fleet Prison was originally anchored along Rondout Creek in Esopus, near the creek's mouth. It consisted of several ships, one of which was the *Camden*. This ship had seen service as a privateer, but its munitions had been removed when it entered prison service. Other vessels like the *Hudson*, the flagship of the Fleet Prison's warden, Captain Robert Benson, were armed and served to police the prison ships.

Once established, the Fleet Prison received many men in a short period of time. On 19 May 1777, less than three weeks after authorization, Ulster County Sheriff Egbert Dumond reported that 175 persons were on board the vessels. Like their American counterparts, the Loyalist prisoners complained loudly about their poor conditions. On 21 June 1777, a committee of the Provincial Convention drafted a set of rules for the care and custody of the prisoners, set their rations, and appointed Captain Henry Benson as warden. Captain Charles Giles was appointed victualler at £9 per month, Cornelius Elmendorph commissary of provisions at £18 per month, and Henry Benson clerk. (He was to be paid a fee of six shillings sixpence from each prisoner when released.) Daily rations were fixed at three-quarters of a pound of beef, pork, or mutton, and one pound of bread, with a reasonable allowance of salt and vinegar to be served out three times a week in summer and twice in winter, all to be paid for by the prisoners. On 27 August this was deemed too great and the allowance was reduced to a quarter-pound of meat, a quarter-pound of fish, and 1.5 pounds of flour daily, one ounce of salt and two quarts of peas every two days, and half a pint of vinegar every ten days. On 1 September the commissary was ordered to supply the jail in Kingston with 1.5 pounds of bread per day, and Dr. Luke Kiersted was authorized and requested by the Provincial Convention to visit the Fleet Prison and Kingston jail at least twice a week, as well as whenever called on by the warden or the jailer. On 3 September, Elmendorph:<sup>6</sup>

Having neglected to supply the State prisoners in jail with bread, agreeable to the order of the 1st instant, was peremptorily ordered to do so and informed that he could not resign his office until a replacement was found.

Many, if not most, of the prisoners on the ships in Rondout Creek were sent there by the Committee and of the First Commission for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies in the State of New York,<sup>7</sup> which met in Dutchess, Ulster, and Columbia counties. The names of the majority of the men sent to the ships by this committee can be found on the tax rolls for Dutchess County. Other committees, including Albany County's, also sent prisoners; on 6 July 1777, the Albany Committee of Correspondence ordered that all 80 prisoners in the Albany jail be sent to the Fleet Prison. Prisoners also were brought from out of state. The minutes of the committee meeting held 28 June 1777 include:

A Resolution from the Council of Safety directing this Board to send for all the Prisoners of this State now confined in the Gaols of the New England States, and cause them to be transported thence to the Fleet Prison at Esopus Landing in such manner as this Board shall think proper.<sup>8</sup>



The minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence meeting held 13 June 1777 include the following:

Sir, Capt Swits sails this Day with a number of prisoners for Esopus, we would request you to proceed with your Privateer as a Convoy to said Sloop and afford him such assistance as he may want in order effectually to Guard & Secure the Prisoners on Board his Vessell.

*Resolved*, That the following Instructions be given to the Officer Guarding the Prisoners to Esopus Vizt

Sir, You will receive in your Custody the Persons whose Names are here-with delivered you, with whom on Board of Capt Cornelius Swit's Sloop you will proceed to Esopus Landing. You are to wait on the Council of Safety at Kingston and delivered the inclosed Letter and receive their farther directions, you are to keep William Pemberton in Irons while in your custody we have to recommend to you to be extremely Vigilant to prevent any of the Prisoners making their escape.<sup>9</sup>

The Albany Committee of Correspondence at their meeting of 8 July 1777:

Ordered that the Sheriff be requested to deliver immediately to the Secretary a list of the Names of the Prisoners confined in his Custody and that he make out the Crimes alledged against them. Resolved That two sloops be prepared to carry said Prisoners to the Fleet Prison.<sup>10</sup>

On Tuesday 7 Oct. 1777, the Commission for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies, meeting on board the *Hudson* at Kingston, ordered

that Cornelius C. Elmendorph, late Commissary to the Prisoners confined on Board the Fleet Prison, Deliver unto Harman Knicker-Baker, Commissary appointed by this Board, all such quantity of Flour, Salt & other provisions purchased by him for the use of Prisoners, as remains now in his possession.

The commission also ordered:

that Capt Henry Benson be directed to Issue One Pound of Bread, Three Quarters of a pound of Beef per Day, one Pint of Peas per Week, with such proportion of Salt as he shall think necessary, to Each Prisoner on Board the Fleet.<sup>11</sup>

These provisions never reached the prisoners because after General Sir Henry Clinton captured Forts Montgomery and Clinton on 8 October, the Provincial Convention ordered the fleet prisoners to march to Hartford, Connecticut.

Peter Cantine led about 150 prisoners on the trip; they arrived in Hartford on 20 October, minus a few who managed to escape. On 16 October, Kingston was burned by British General John Vaughan and the Fleet Prison ships were run up Rondout Creek and burned. It is unknown if any prisoners remained in the vessels at the time.<sup>12</sup> *The New York Journal and General Advertiser* newspaper, last published in Esopus on 13 Oct. 1777 by John Holt, was printed prior to the prisoners' transport and the burning of the Fleet Prison's vessels, so it made no mention of either. Holt moved to Poughkeepsie and didn't resume publication until the following year. The *New York Packet and American Advertiser*, published at Fishkill by Samuel Loudon, contained an article about the burning of Kingston, but nothing about the prisoners.

The vast majority of information available on the prisoners sent to the Fleet Prison is found in the "Minutes" of the Committee and of the First Commission for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies in the State of New York,<sup>13</sup> which was charged with monitoring and suppressing all Loyalist activity in the state. A large part of that effort was keeping the disaffected away from enemy lines, particularly after the British captured New York City in August 1776.<sup>14</sup> In addition to the commission minutes, which were later published by the New-York Historical Society, we have found information in the *Public Papers of George Clinton*.<sup>15</sup> Many men were ambivalent in their feelings about the war; accounts of their dealings with various committees and commissions are helpful in understanding the conflict in the Hudson Valley.

The reader will note the several times Esopus Creek is named in the minutes when Rondout Creek is where the prison ships were anchored. Apparently, the British never correctly identified the creek in their records. Rondout Creek empties into the Hudson River in the present town of Esopus, more specifically at the hamlet of Port Ewen, site of the Fleet Prison. Esopus Creek, which empties into the Hudson River at Saugerties, is about a dozen miles north of Port Ewen.

The following extracts from the commission's minutes from May through October 1777, as well as related correspondence, provide an excellent account of who was confined to the Fleet Prison and why. They also illustrate the research process whereby historic inaccuracies, such as the location of these prisons on the Rondout Creek, are corrected.

Minutes 15 May:

Resolved that the following persons be sent up to Esopus, to be confined on Board the Vessells Station'd there for that purpose, Vizt <sup>16</sup>

Samuel Wood	Robert McEndew
Nathaniel Akerley	Charles Traver
George Aims	Jacob Bush
Benjamin Burrows	Thomas Lawrence
William Yates	Anthony Breamer
Elisha Powell	John Medlar
Edward Howard	Dominicus Montfort
John Cummins	Johannis Laroy
John White	William Wilsey
Philip Sisco	Barent A. Van kleeck
James Goslin	Enoch Lester
Jonathan Thorne <sup>17</sup>	Jacob Backer
Michael Vincent	Francis Laroy
Griffin Corey	Coonradt Smith
Simon Knoxon	Lewis Shear
James Smith Esq	Stephen Thorne”

Minutes 16 May:

Resolved that Philip Sisco be permitted to Inlist into the Continental Forces, & inlisted with Lieut Mott accordingly. James Smith Esqr, (one of the prisoners sent to Esopus), & John Cook are permitted to go home on their parole, to deliver themselves in five days from this Date, to the officer having the Charge & Custody of the prisoners at Esopus Creek.” The committee also resolved “that Josiah Disbrow and Edward Henderson be “sent to Kingston to be delivered to John McKesson & Robert Benson Esqr Commissaries of Prisoners of War in this State.<sup>18</sup>

Minutes 21 May:

The Committee: Permitted Roeliff J. Ellinge [*sic*] to go to his place of abode in the New Paltz to deliver himself in six days from this date to the officer having the charge and custody of the Prisoners confined on board the Vessels at Esopus Creek. John Cook appeared at this meeting and was permitted to return to his place of abode. The committee further resolved: that Hendrick Younkchance be permitted to pass from this to his place of abode in the little Nine Partners on his parole to surrender himself within Ten Days from the date hereof to Capt Castles to be confined on Board the Vessels in Esopus Creek, unless he shall previously appear before Major Landon, or Mr. James Winchell (either of whom are hereby authorized to administer the same to him) and take the Oath of Allegiance to this State.<sup>19</sup>

Minutes 9 June:

Resolved, that the Committee of Orange County be authorized to send such Prisoners as now are, or hereafter shall be committed to the Goal [jail] at Goshen, according to their discretion to be confined on board the Vessels at Esopus Landing, there to remain during the pleasure of the Legislature of this State, of this Board, or of the said Committee or until they shall be otherwise delivered by Due Course of Law, And the person having Charge & Custody of Prisoners on Board the said Vessels, is hereby required to receive the said Persons that shall be so sent, and confine them accordingly.<sup>20</sup>

Minutes 10 June:

The Board ordered Henry S. Peltz to deliver to Simon Noxon all the Wheat & Flour & Flour casks in his possession & lately seized by order of this Board, as belonging to the said Simon Noxon.<sup>21</sup>

Elisha Powell (one of the persons confined on Board the Ships at Esopus) by this Board, having appear'd before Mr. Cantine one of the members of this Board and taken the Oath . . . he was thereupon discharged.<sup>22</sup>

Minutes 19 June:

William Bishop, Jacob Funck & Peter Showerman all of the Manor of Livingston, & were confin'd on Board the Ships at Esopus Creek, & since Employ'd on Board the Ship *Montgomery*, appeared, & having Voluntarily taken the Oath of Allegiance to this State. Ordered, that they be discharged.<sup>23</sup>

Minutes 23 June:

Doctr Nathaniel Worden [of Pawling] one of the Persons confined on Board the fleet prison, appearing before this Board and having Voluntarily taken the Oath of Allegiance to this State—Ordered that he be discharged.<sup>24</sup>

Minutes 29 June:

Griffin Cory & William Yates (two of the persons who were confined on board the fleet prison) appeared & having Voluntarily taken the Oath of Allegiance—Ordered that they be discharged.<sup>25</sup>

Minutes 1 July:

Resolved, that Henry Vanderburgh Esqr & Obadiah Griffin be conveyed to Esopus to be confined on Board the Fleet Prison there 'till the further Order of this Board or until they shall be thence otherwise delivered by due Course of Law. Johannis Shear, appeared, and having Voluntarily taken the Oath of Allegiance—Ordered that he be discharged.<sup>26</sup>

Minutes 9 July:

Resolved, that Capt Henry Benson deliver Paul Upton, now confined on Board the Fleet Prison at Esopus Creek, to Mr. Increase Carpenter in order to be conducted before this Board.<sup>27</sup>

Minutes 17 July:

Johannis Medlar and Thomas Lawrence having returned to this place by permission of this Board, from on Board the Fleet Prison at Esopus. Resolved that they be permitted to go and remain at home upon their finding Sureties, Each in the Sum of One Hundred fifty Pounds, so that they will appear again and Surrender themselves to this Board in three Weeks from this date. Messrs Gilyon Ackerman & Matthew Van Bunschoten appeared, and became sureties for the said Thomas Lawrence & Johannis Medlar agreeable to the terms of the above resolution...<sup>28</sup>

Minutes 23 July:

Resolved, that the sum of Three Pounds four Shillings be paid to Gerardus Smith, for his Services in Transporting Prisoners twice to Esopus Creek.<sup>29</sup>

Minutes 26 July:

Resolved, that Capt Henry Benson deliver Silas Deuel now confined on Board the Fleet Prison, to John Macomber, who has stipulated to bring him before this Board within One Week from Monday next.<sup>30</sup>

Minutes 9 August:

Resolved that George Hughson, John Casewell, Elisha Hoag, Peleg Scissell, Thomas Williamson, Thomas Butler, Jacob Straat Jun., Peter De Pew 3rd & Corns John Blau Velt & John Mosher, & Joseph Holloway be sent to Esopus to be confined on Board the Fleet Prison there and Capt Henry Benson, Warden thereof, be required to receive & detain them in Custody 'till the further Order of this Board, or otherwise delivered by a due Course of Law.<sup>31</sup>

Minutes 12 August:

Two persons of known Integrity and approved attachment to the American Cause, appeared before the Board & Informed, that a Certain Henning Nichols Kister, Clerk to the Lutheran Church at Rhinebeck was a person of a very dangerous & suspicious Character Violently opposed to the Measures pursuing by these States, and therefore advised, that he ought to be apprehended at this Critical Time, and that in their opinion, the safety and security of the State require it. Ordered that the said Kister be apprehended.<sup>32</sup>

Minutes 13 August:

Henning Nicks Kister, having been apprehended and brot before this Board, & Examined. Resolved, that he be sent on board the fleet prison at Esopus Creek.<sup>33</sup>

Minutes 18 August:

Samuel Titus appearing before the Board, and being Examined touching the Matters charged against him & offering in Excuse for his calling the Militia Officers Robbers, that he alluded to their not having returned to him the overplus of the Money which remain'd in their hands upon Sale of Cattle that were some time since taken from him & Sold in Order to Levy a fine, and refusing to affirm his allegiance to this State.

Ordered that he be committed to the Fleet Prison at Esopus Creek, till the further order of this Board.

Silas Deuel (a Prisoner on board the Fleet Prison) who had been permitted to return home for a few Days, to Visit his Son, appearing again before the Board, and still persisting in his refusal to affirm his Allegiance to this State, Ordered that he be recommitted to the Fleet Prison till the further order of this Board.

Resolved, that Lieut Reyher Heermanse provide two Men as a Guard to conduct Silas Deuel and Samuel Titus on board the Fleet Prison, and that this Board will defray the expence thereof.<sup>34</sup>

Minutes 22 August:

Whereas this Board has great reason to believe that Isaac Diamond, Absalom Creamer, Henry Dusenberry, Joseph Marks & Corn: McHagg, now prisoners at this place had Inlisted under a certain Andrew Palmerton in the Service of the Enemy.

Resolved that the said Prisoners be conveyed to Esopus, to be confined on Board the Fleet Prison there. Whereas it appears to this Board from the Best Information and Evidence that can now be obtained, that the following Persons, Prisoners at this place, to wit,

James Lester	Abra: Filkins
Henry Filkins	Ebenezer Marks
John O Niel	John Backus Junr
Luke Schermerhorne	Jacob Diamond
John Filkins	Caleb White
Frederick Rous	Joseph Marks [Jun.]
Hugh O Niel	John Bain
John Marks	Ebenezer Knapp

Are Dangerous Enemies to the American Cause, and that the Safety and Security of these States required that the said Persons be closely confined, Resolved therefore that they be Committed to the Fleet Prison at Esopus.<sup>35</sup>

Minutes 23 August:

Capt. George White appeared before the Board and informed that he had apprehended and brought Prisoners to this Place, the following persons, Vizt.

Elisha Rogers	David H Wyatt	John Drott
Isaac Austin	John Bratt	
David Pearce	Peter I. Lampman	
Timothy Biggs	Jacob Litcher	
Caleb Carr	Daniel Munrow	
Zebulon Jones	John Munrow	
Samuel Brittan	Samuel Munrow	
Amos Sweet	Elisha Sly	
John Moon	Mills Sly	
Cary Clark	Richard Turner	
Abra: Bovee	Frederick Kalder	
[Isaac Rogers]	William Kalder	

That the said persons were taken in and about Hoosick, and that some of them had been with the Enemy when they were taken in that Quarter, & that the rest had very probably, either been with the Enemy, or had undoubtedly neglected or refused to turn out & oppose them.<sup>36</sup>

Resolved, that they be sent to Esopus to be confined on Board the Fleet Prison there.

Resolved, that Samuel Ingerson, & John Riley apprehended with Forged Passes from General Schuyler be sent to Esopus, to be confined on board the fleet Prison there.<sup>37</sup>

Minutes 3 September:

The Board with the assistance of Robert Harpur & Peter Van Zandt Esqrs Two of the Members of the Council of Safety, who attended for that purpose, proceeded to the Examination of the several cases of the following Seventeen Persons, now Prisoners on Board the Fleet Prison by order of this Board, whereupon, with the approbation of the above Two Gentn it was Resolved that,

William Kelder	David Pearce
Frederick Kelder	Timothy Biggs

Henry Filkins	Abraham Bovee
Frederick Rous	Jacob Letcher
John Marks	Zebulon Jones
Joseph Marks	Amos Sweet
Ebenezer Marks	John Moon
Isaac Austin	Cary Clark
Caleb Carr	
Be discharged. <sup>38</sup>	

Minutes 12 September:

Ordered, that Luke Schermerhorne be discharged from his Confinement on Board the Fleet Prison, & permitted to return to his place of abode, on his paying the Expenses attending his Imprisonment.

David Wyatt, having voluntarily taken the Oath of Allegiance to this State. Ordered that he be discharged.

Mills Sly having voluntarily taken the Oath of Allegiance to this State. Ordered that he be discharged.<sup>39</sup>

Minutes 4 October:

Haning Nicholas Keister appeared, & having Voluntarily taken the Oath of Allegiance to this State, Ordered that he be discharged,

John Mosher, having Voluntarily taken the Oath of Allegiance to this State, Ordered that he be discharged,

Edward Bumpas appeared before the Board, & stipulated with them upon Oath, that he will proceed from this forthwith to the House of Major Robert Hoffman near Poughkeepsie, and there remain within the limits of his Farm & not depart thence without the leave of the said Robt Hoffman or this board. Ordered that he be dismissed from his Confinement on Board the Fleet Prison accordingly.

Richard Turner appeared, & having Voluntarily taken the Oath of Allegiance to this State, Ordered that he be discharged."<sup>40</sup>

Abraham Miller appearing before the Board produced a Pass from Daniel Drummond, Aid De Camp to Lieut Genl Clinton purporting that he is permitted on his Parol to return from New York to Rye to be Exchanged for Thomas Butler now a Prisoner on Board the Fleet at Esopus Creek [*sic*], or otherwise to return immediately.<sup>41</sup> Ordered that the said Thomas Butler be discharged accordingly.

Moses Wooster, Asa Beebe & Benj Ingrum having Voluntarily taken the Oath of Allegiance to this State, Ordered that they be discharged.



Josiah Dean, & Daniel Dean, Voluntarily taken the Oath of Allegiance to this State, Ordered that they be discharged.

James Mather, Voluntarily taken the Oath of Allegiance to this State, Ordered that he be discharged.

William Mash [Marsh?] appeared before the Board, and engaged with them upon Oath that he will proceed forthwith to the House of Melancton Smith in Charlotte Precinct and to remain there until the further order of this Board, or permission of the said Melancton Smith<sup>42</sup> Ordered that he be discharged accordingly.

Nehemiah Gates, appeared before the Board, & engaged with them upon Oath that he will immediately proceed to the House of Henry Den Mark at Esopus, & be under his direction until further Order of this Board, or other proper Authority of this State. Ordered that he be discharged accordingly.<sup>43</sup>

The commission discharged twenty-nine prisoners between 4 and 6 October. These include Benjamin Spendelow, who was permitted to go to Rhinebeck and was recommended to the care of Dr. Annanias Cooper<sup>44</sup> to act in the capacity of a schoolmaster on his parole. John Caswell was released to return home. He had been accused of murdering Captain Ephraim Nichols of Pawling in late June 1777 and was imprisoned after being brought before the commission on 3 July.<sup>45</sup>

Minutes 6 October:

Resolved, That Harmen Knickerbocker be appointed Commissary to provide Capt Cooper's Compy of Rangers and the Prisoners Confined on Board the Fleet, with provisions & Necessaries (Beef Excepted) That he be allowed Twelve Shillings per Day for his Services: and that he observe such Directions & Instructions as he shall from Time to Time receive from Capt Henry Benson. Resolved that Capt Henry Benson be authorized to permit Robert Burdick, Joseph Holloway, Ebenezer Hurd and Joseph Mabbett to return home on their Parol.<sup>46</sup>

Ebenezer Washburn is permitted to repair to the house of his father Simeon Washburn living in Keen, in the State of New Hampshire.

Ephraim Mallery, (one of the People called Quakers) affirmed his allegiance to the State and is discharged. William Lewis is released from prison on the condition that he remain in Kingston in the service of Mr. Holt, the Printer.<sup>47</sup>

On 7 Oct. 1777, Smith Simmons appeared before the committee and posted an appearance bond of £100 in favor of his brother Edward Simmons.<sup>48</sup>

The Provincial Convention became concerned as early as 8 October about keeping prisoners near or on the Hudson River because of the advancing British Navy. On that date, William Floyd, president pro tem of the Provincial Convention, issued an order, which is reflected in the commission minutes:

Resolved that the Commissioners for Detecting & Defeating all Conspiracies formed in this State or any one of them be Authorized and required to Superintend the removal of the Prisoners from this place to Hartford in Connecticut, to call out Detachments of the Militia of this State to Guard the said Prisoners; to impress such teams and Provisions as may be necessary for the said Prisoners and the Guard conducting them.

In Consequence of the above Resolution, the Superintendence of the Removal of the Prisoners of this State was committed unto Peter Cantine, Esqr with full Power from this Board to Act therein as he should think most prudent & conductive to the safety of this State, & whose Proceedings are as follows, Vizt.<sup>49</sup>

William Floyd sent a letter to Governor Jonathan Trumbull of Connecticut on 8 October:<sup>50</sup>

To His Excellency Governor Trumbull;  
[First few lines are illegible] Forts Montgomery & Clinton & Constitution. While assiduously employed in strengthening General Gates and the Northern Army from an opinion that the Fate of America would greatly depend upon our Exertions in that Quarter, the bases in the Highlands have been of necessity neglected. Add to this that General Washington hath called away almost all the continental troops which were in these Posts and you will readily perceive that we are entirely exposed. In this situation it would be impudent to keep a number of prisoners in the State[;] We have therefore sent by the bearer hereof, Peter Cantine Esquire, to your care the several persons mentioned in the list that Gentleman will deliver you and we pray your Excellency to take the most effectual Measures for securing them until this State can receive them with safety or make further Order for their safe Custody.

I have the honor to be your most obedt servt  
Wlm Floyd, President Pro Tem

Governor Trumbull replied from Hartford on 20 October:<sup>51</sup>

Sir, Your Letter of the 8th instant by Peter Contine, Esq. was duly received,

who hath brought hither the prisoners therein mentioned, Excepting such as made their escape by the way. It seems there is a diversity of Circumstances among these people as to their criminality, some are said to be under sentence of death, the Case of others more or less aggravated & which may require different treatment and care in their confinement, which makes a further determination of their circumstances necessary, which you are desired to communicate to Ezekiel Williams, Esq. of Wethersfield, Commissary of Prisoners, a correspondence with him on the Subject of those prisoners will be sufficient.

There are such numbers of prisoners in this state, as renders the reception and security of those you have now sent difficult, am therefore to desire your state would take further order for their safe custody as soon as circumstances will permit.

It is said by the Commissary of prisoners that he cannot obtain provisions of Commissary for state prisoners, a distinction being made between them and prisoners of war, and that he might be under a necessity of sending to your state for the article of flour which he cannot otherwise obtain. I presume his Request for that purpose will be complied with.

A subsequent letter to Governor Trumbull from members of the New York Committee, who were appointed to move the Fleet prisoners to Hartford, is dated 22 January 1778:

Sir, We the Subscribers being appointed by the Commissioners & the Council of Safety of the State of New York, Commissioners to Superintend the return of the Prisoners removed from said state to this place soon after the reduction of the Fortresses in the Highlands on Hudsons River, upon application to Ezekiel Williams, Esqr Commissary of Prisoners for this State, into whose care they were delivered, Understand, that numbers of said Prisoners are confined in the gaols and in the Towns of Windham and Norwich and as our guard are exceedingly fatigued by the length of the Journey hither, We beg your Excellency will be pleased to order that a guard consisting of a Sergeant and Eight privates may be furnished from each of said Towns to conduct the prisoners to this place with all convenient speed, the necessary charges of which we will readily defray, we have the honor to be

Your Excellenceys Most Obedt & very Hmble Servts  
Jer VRenselaer  
Melancton Smith  
Peter Cantine, Jr.

Meeting of the Council of Safety, 11 October 1777:

Resolved that the Commissioner for Conspiracies &c Superintending the Removal of the Prisoners from this Place to Hartford in Connecticut is authorized to discharge such Individuals of the said Prisoners as he may think proper.

Resolved that it is inexpedient that the said Commissioner should exercise such Power in future.

Resolved that the said Commissioner be authorized to discharge such of the said Prisoners only as have been Confined upon a General Charge of Disaffection,

Extract from the Minutes

Robert Benson, Secy<sup>52</sup>

Extracts from the log of the British galley *Dependence*, commanded by Lieutenant James Clark, detail military action that took place at Poughkeepsie and Esopus shortly after the prisoners were evacuated:

Wednesday 15 [Oct. 1777] Pokeepsy Landg NNE 3 or 4 miles,  
Mod. and Hazy Weather these 24 Hours at 4 p.m. Cast off from the Hulk and made Sail in Compy 13 Transports at 10 p. m. Anch'd with the small Bower in 6 Fm Water in Cmpy His Majesties Brig DILIGENT SPITFIRE and CRANE Galley and 13 Transports Polleppers Isld NW Butter hill south 1 mile at 9 a. m. Weigh'd per signal in Compy as before at ½ past Passed the Chiveoux de frize brought too to wait for the Transports at 11 made sail at Pokeepsy Landg NNE 3 or 4 miles in Compy the Fleet.

Thursday 16 Esopus Creek W b. S. 1 Mile  
Mod. Beezes and fair Weather these 24 Hours in Compy the Fleet at 4 p. m. burnt 3 Reble sloops at 8 p. m. Anchor'd per signal in 16 Fm Water Esopas Meadow North 2 Miles at 9 a. m. Weigh'd per Signal in Company the Fleet at ½ past 10 a. m. the Rebles begun to Cannonade us from their Battery at the mouth of Esopas Creek fired 9 twenty four lbs round shot at the Battery and Reble Galley that were playing on us at 11 Pass'd the Enemies Batters brought too for the Transports at Noon the Enemies Batteries at the Entrance of Esopus Creek W. b S. 1 Miles Fir'd 24 four pounders with Round and Grape to scour the Woods.

After the prisoners were marched off to Hartford, the first information about them locally appears in the commission minutes of 8 November 1777:

Peter Cantine paid into the Board, the Sum of One hundred Pounds, which he drew from the Treasury of this State, by an Order from the Council of Safety for the Sum, which Order he filed with the Treasurer.

Peter Cantine, Jun. Esqr having returned from Hartford, reported to the Board, that agreeable to the foregoing Resolutions of the Council of Safety he had delivered into the Care of His Excellency Governor Trumbull, the Residue of such of the Prisoners as were not by him discharged, or Escaped, & delivered into the Board a List of their Names with a Rect for the same, and Ezekiel Williams Esqr Commr of Prisoners for the State of Connecticut, also a receipt from said Commissary for the remainder of such provisions which remained on hand at his arrival at that place, Vizt 385 lb. hard Bread, 357 lb. Loaf do & 50 lb. Boiled Beef. Also another rect from Lynde Lord, Esqr Sheriff of the County of Litchfield in said State, for Augur Hawley, a Prisoner confined at his own expense in the Goal of said County.<sup>53</sup>

Harman Knickerbaker produced his Accot & Vouchers for his Services & Money expended as Commissary to the Prisoners & Guard in removing them to Hartford, amountg to £166, the same being Examined & audited, was paid as per his rect of the 25th Oct. last.

Mr. Peter Cantine also produced the following Accots & Receipts, for Money Expended in Removing the Prisoners, &c.

To Smith Simmonds for 1,175 lb. Beef	£44	1	3
To Joel Sutherland, as per rect	3	11	-
To Lieut. Samuel Crandle as per Acct	9	15	-
To John Pinnier Jun. as per rect	1	8	-
To Lieut Halstead as per Acct	8	9	-
To John Marsh 3rd as per rect	6	16	-
Carried Forward	£74	0	3
Brought Forward	£74	0	3
To Lieut Barce as per rect	5	11	4
To Joshua Pierce Jun. per do	6	13	4
To Peter Cantine Jun. Esqr per Acct & rect	32	0	9
	£118	5	8 (sic) <sup>54</sup>

We have not been able to locate the receipts containing the names of the prisoners who arrived in Hartford, nor when they were released. There are several articles that discuss the subject but they do not include names of Dutchess County men, as far as we have been able to determine. At least two prisoners escaped on the march, as recorded at the 2 Oct. 1778 meeting of the Albany Committee of

Correspondence:

Daniel Dobs was ordered to be apprehended and brought before Col. (Cornelius) Humphrey, who on examining him he found that he was last year a Prisoner on Board the Fleet Prison and that he made his escape from the Guard who conducted him to Hartford last fall.<sup>55</sup>

Ezekiel Bishop also escaped on the march to Hartford, per an account in the *Clinton Papers*.<sup>56</sup>

The minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence meeting on 4 November 1777 also note:

Rec'd a letter from Jesse Root Esqr Chairman of Prisoners at Hartford informing that Abraham C. Cuyler Esqr and Mr. Benjamin Hilton had broke their paroles and were run away inclosing a copy of their paroles.<sup>57</sup>

Several prisoners died at Hartford, including Jonathan Thorne, who passed away about 12 November 1777 and was buried two days later in Hartford's Center Church Burying Ground. On 5 Nov. 1777 there was another death: "Cannon, the prisoner; Internment Charg'd William Hosmer, aged 32."<sup>58</sup>

The prison fleet at Esopus served its purpose, but for a relatively short period of time—just under six months. The ships relieved the crowded jails in surrounding counties and reduced the Loyalist threat. Many, if not most, of the prisoners were not punished severely, other than having to suffer the uncomfortable life aboard the ships. They were released after signing the Oath of Allegiance or put on parole to a known Patriot. A number of them joined Patriot militia companies, including at least eighteen of the first thirty-two prisoners sent to the ships on 15 May.<sup>59</sup> The records of the local committee show that it sent ninety-six men to the Fleet prison and the Albany Committee of Correspondence sent eighty men, for a total of 176. Twenty-one men took the Oath of Allegiance, twenty-eight were placed on parole, and twenty-nine were discharged and free to go home. At least one of these men enlisted in the militia as a reason for discharge. Since seventy-nine were released, leaving a balance of ninety-three men, and 150 men marched to Hartford, there were at least another fifty-seven men who were in the prison at that time.

## Endnotes

1. *The Public Papers of George Clinton, First Governor of New York, 1777-1795, 1801-1804*, published by State of New York, 1902, 10 volumes, 1133. Hereinafter GCP.
2. Journal New York Provincial Congress I, 908.
3. Danske Dandridge, *American Prisoners of the Revolution*.
4. Eugene L. Armbruster, *The Wallabout Prison Ships, 1776-1783*. Other writers estimate 7,000 died in the British prison ships in the Hudson. See Henry S. Commager and Richard B. Morris, *The Spirit of Seventy Six*, 1958.
5. Jones, *New York During the Revolution*, Vol. I, p. 351. See *The Settlers of the Beekman Patent*, vol. I, p. 558-561, for a Dutchess County soldier who came down with smallpox on the ship and died soon after returning to the county.
6. *Journal of the Council of Safety*, Pierre Van Cortlandt, President.
7. *Minutes of the Committee and of the First Commission for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies in the State of New York*, New-York Historical Society Collections of 1924 and 1925. Hereinafter ConC.
8. ConC, 325.
9. *Albany Committee of Correspondence, 1775-1778*, University of the State of New York, 1923, p. 793. Hereinafter AConC.
10. AConC 809.
11. ConC, p. 396.
12. Jones, *History of New York*, 710.
13. It is interesting to note that the first meeting of the Commission for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies was held 17 Oct. 1776 in Fishkill, Dutchess County, and the first name in the minutes is Col. Henry Ludington of the present town of Kent, then in Dutchess County but now part of Putnam County. Col. Ludington's daughter, Sybil Ludington, the "Paul Revere of New York State," is almost as well known as her father, and is remembered with a statue on the shore of Lake Gleneida in Carmel, NY.
14. As much as possible we have copied the exact minutes of the meetings, including the odd capitalization, abbreviations, etc.
15. Published in ten volumes by the State of New York in 1911.
16. ConC 291. It would appear that a number of prisoners currently in jails were moved to the Fleet Prison at this time. They accounted for the 175 prisoners on the vessels as of 19 May 1777.
17. Jonathan Thorne lived on the farm adjacent to that of the compiler of these records and was married to Catherine Livingston, daughter of Gilbert and Cornelia (Beekman) Livingston. Because of his marriage, he was one of the very few living in the Beekman Patent who owned his farm. Like the rest of the Fleet prisoners, he was sent to Hartford, CT, in October 1777, where he died. Almost all these prisoners were living in Dutchess County and about half in Beekman Precinct.
18. ConC 293
19. ConC 299. Many of the prisoners sent to the Fleet Prison spent very little time there—some as little as a day—before they agreed to sign the Oath of Allegiance. Some enlisted in the militia and were probably able to spend time on their farms, while others deserted and joined the British. Still others, like Jonathan Thorne, remained on the vessels from the first day to the last, and then marched to Hartford.
20. Id 316-17.
21. ConC 317. Simon Noxon was the son of Bartholomew Noxon, who operated a grist mill in Poughquag, Dutchess County.

22. ConC 318.
23. Id 321.
24. Id 322.
25. Id 326.
26. Id 327.
27. Id 331.
28. Id. 337.
29. Id. 341.
30. Id, 342.
31. Id 354.
32. Id 357.
33. Id 357. At least two members of the clergy were sent to the Fleet Prison: Kister and Rev. John Beardsley, the pastor of Christ Church in Poughkeepsie. Rev. Beardsley is first mentioned at the meeting of the commission held 2 June 1777: "John Beardsley, is permitted to return to his place of abode, & to remain there on Parol, to appear before this Board in five Days from this date. Resolved, that this Board doth consent that there be a Meeting of the Vestry of Christs Church held at the Revd Mr Beardsley on any Day during the course of this week." On 7 June, after Beardsley refused to take the oath, the commission "Ordered that he return home & remain on his farm until the further order of this Board, with permission to go and Visit the sick & Baptize Infants where requested." On 22 June a resolution of the Council of Safety required the commission "to cause the Rev. Mr. Beardsley and all those of the People called Quakers, who have lately been to Long Island and are returned to be apprehended, and sent under guard to the fleet prison at Esopus Creek." Yet two days later, the minutes record: "Resolved that the 9 Dollars in Silver taken from John Miller be transmitted by the Revd Mr. Beardsley to New York to be delivered to Major Paine in order to be distributed among the Prisoners of this State in the hands of the enemy." On 3 July John Miller enlisted in the Continental Service and the commission "Resolved that the residue of the money detained from John Miller, (being 9 dollars in specie sent down to New York by M. Beardsley to be distributed to the prisoners there), be repaid to the said John Miller in paper currency." On 5 September 1777 the commission was informed that Rev. Beardsley had returned from New York and they "resolved that he appear before this Board at this place on Monday next. Resolved, that if the said Revd Mr. Beardsley should in any wise appear reluctant to obey the above Summons, that Mr. Stephen Hendrickson be authorized to take him into Custody, and convey him on Board the Fleet Prison at this Place, and that this Board will defray the Expence thereof." Eventually Rev. Beardsley was considered a Loyalist and ordered to New York City with his family. He was denied his request to take any personal property, including items that had been gifted to his children. [ConC 313, 315, 321-3, 328-9, 373-4, 441, 444-5, 447-8].
34. Id 359.
35. Id 364.
36. About half of these men were from Beekman or Pawling, Dutchess County.
37. Id 364-5.
38. Id 373. This is another instance where most of these men spent only a little more than a week on the ships.
39. Id 386.
40. Id 390.
41. ConC 391. In this instance, the commission again erred about the location of the prison ships.
42. Melancton Smith of Dutchess County is credited by many with being a primary force behind



the inclusion of a Bill of Rights in the U.S. Constitution. See *New York History*, vol. 72, October 1991, 407-420, *New York State's Role in the Creation and Adoption of the Bill of Rights*, Betsey L. Rosenblatt.

43. ConC 391.
44. Dr. Annanias Cooper had been of Fishkill and married into the Palmatier family.
45. See *Settlers of the Beekman Patent* Vol. IX, 485-7 for this event.
46. These men, except for Mabbett, were all of Pawling.
47. Holt printed his last edition 13 October 1777 and left Kingston soon after it was burned by the British. He set up shop in Poughkeepsie, where he resumed printing *The New-York Journal and General Advertiser* on 25 May 1778.
48. Id. 393.
49. ConC 397. The "Proceedings" are not given.
50. *Governor Trumbull Papers*, Connecticut State Library, Vol. VII, 99a.
51. *Trumbull Papers*, Vol. VII, 99ab.
52. Id. 401.
53. Id 401.
54. Id 402.
55. AConC 249.
56. GCP #881.
57. *Albany Committee of Correspondence, Proceedings*, 1776, 597.
58. See White, Herbert H. *British Prisoners of War in Hartford During the Revolution*. Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin, 19 (July 1954), pp. 65-81. Also *The Connecticut Quarterly*, Vol. IV, #4, (1898), 417-418 for burials.
59. From research in *New York in the Revolution*. It's possible some of the more common names may be for a different soldier, but many served in local companies.



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Putnam's Escape at Horse Neck, engraving after Chappel,  
Johnson and Myles Publishers, New York, 1877

# Incident on Gallows Hill

*Thomas C. O'Keefe*

In the late summer of 1778, George Washington, commander in chief of the Continental Army, was very keen to protect the Hudson River Valley and the work-in-progress garrison that would eventually become the United State Military Academy at West Point. At the same time, Washington and his staff were making plans for the army's winter quarters.

Washington wanted to have his troops positioned within striking distance of Long Island Sound, from whence the British had previously attacked the Continental Army's supply depot in Danbury, Connecticut. Additionally, he was expecting the French fleet, which was coming into the Revolutionary War on the side of the Americans, to be in the waters off the Atlantic Coast, near either Boston or New York. The commander took all of these factors into account when deciding upon the location for the encampment of the Eastern Wing of the Continental Army.

In locating an area that would fit these imperatives, Washington relied on Major General Israel Putnam, who was his senior officer in the Hudson Highlands and a native of Connecticut. Dr. James Thacher, an American surgeon who met Putnam in the Hudson Highlands in the summer of 1778, described his impressions of "Old Put":

This is my first interview with this celebrated hero. In his person he is corpulent and clumsy but carries a bold, undaunted front. He exhibits little of the refinements of a well-educated gentleman, but much of the character of the veteran soldier.<sup>1</sup>

As a veteran soldier, Putnam knew how to delegate; in deciding upon winter quarters, Putnam looked for advice from another famous Revolutionary War military figure, Lieutenant-Colonel Aaron Burr, who had been an aide-de-camp to Putnam earlier in the war.

Burr was familiar with western Connecticut and the surrounding area from prior service in Norwalk and Fairfield, Connecticut, and in skirmishes on Long Island Sound. Burr also had an uncle in Redding, Connecticut, Stephen Burr.

“Colonel Aaron Burr, one of General Putnam’s aides and a frequent visitor to Redding, had suggested that Putnam look over the area for a future winter encampment during a Summer visit to General Heath’s Brigade in Danbury. Putnam found the topography and location ideal.”<sup>2</sup>

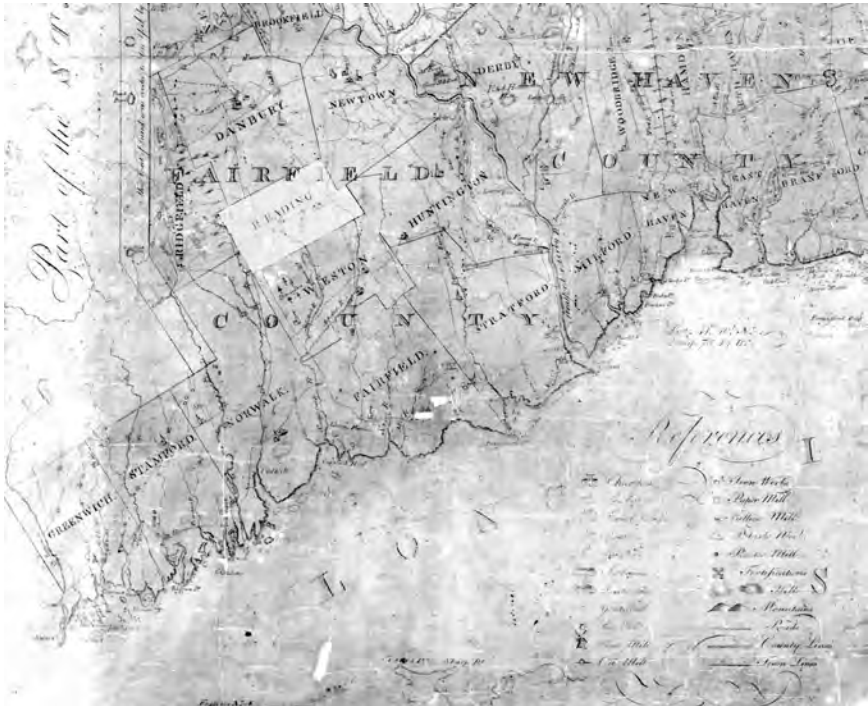
Major David Humphreys, another aide to General Putnam and also from Connecticut, set forth the rationale for Putnam’s recommendation that the Eastern Wing encampments be centered around Redding, which is located north of Norwalk and south of Danbury:

It was thought advisable by Washington to extend the winter quarters from Redding in Connecticut to Middlebrook in New Jersey nearly upon a line with West Point. The central body was stationed at Middlebrook where Washington, Greene, Knox and Baron Steuben had their headquarters. General McDougall still commanded in the Highlands. General Putnam with the two Brigades of Connecticut, General Poor’s New Hampshire Brigade, Col. Sheldon’s cavalry and Col. Hazen’s Infantry Corps were stationed at Redding Ridge near Danbury, Connecticut . . . The campground is located about 17 miles north of Long Island Sound, twelve miles easterly from the New York State line and twenty-seven miles southeasterly from West Point.<sup>3</sup>

Surprisingly, despite its strategic location—and although there were to be thousands of troops stationed in Redding during the Revolutionary War—the town was spared from becoming the scene of any major battles.

But there was much action in the environs of Redding prior to these encampments. On April 26, 1777, the British had burned warehouses and barns in a brilliantly executed surprise raid on nearby Danbury, where munitions and military stores for the Continental Army were located. En route to the raid, the British Army—2,000 soldiers strong—passed through Redding in the course of a twenty-three-mile forced march from Compo Beach on the coast (near present-day Westport) to Danbury. When the British paused for a break in Redding, they rounded up a few Rebel hostages to hold for ransom and fired a shot or two at the gilded weathercock on the spire of the Episcopal Church.

After the British left town, Brigadier General Benedict Arnold (still a Patriot at the time), turned up in hot pursuit of the British, briefly pausing near Redding Ridge during a miserable April rain storm to get his bearings before heading off to participate in the feckless rear-guard action by the Continental Army and Connecticut militia known as the Battle of Ridgefield. This action on April 27, 1777, was an attempt to block the retreat of the British from Danbury to the ships



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“A new and correct map of Connecticut: one of the United States of North America from actual survey, humbly dedicated by permission to his Excellency Samuel Huntington esquire Governor and Commander in Chief of said state,” 1792

awaiting them in Long Island Sound.

But there was bloodshed on Redding soil during the war involving two young soldiers. One of them, a butcher from nearby Ridgefield who had joined the British Army, was hanged as a spy. The other soldier, barely seventeen years old and in the Continental Army’s 1st Connecticut Regiment, was shot as deserter. Both were executed on the same day atop the highest point of the road in Redding known today as Gallows Hill. Their deaths were meant to serve as examples to the other soldiers who served with them in the Redding encampments, just in case any of them were thinking of spying or deserting.

The question this article will address is whether this double execution on Gallows Hill was justified or was instead an expedient that would not have been approved by Commander in Chief Washington had he been advised of all the facts and circumstances.

## George Washington and the Redding Encampments

Based on the history books, George Washington never slept in Redding, but a study of his Revolutionary War correspondence and General Orders issued by him reveals that he spent a lot of time worrying about what was going on with the troops stationed there.

Major General Putnam was Connecticut's most famous military man, who had achieved heroic stature in the nascent Continental Army for his bravery and exploits at the battles of Bunker Hill and Breed's Hill in June 1775. There Putnam had famously urged his troops to keep their powder dry until the British were well within range, uttering (according to legend) the famous phrase, "Don't fire 'til you see the whites of their eyes."

By the winter of 1778/1779, General Putnam served under Washington as the head of the Eastern Wing of the Continental Army—approximately 3,000 men strong—responsible for protecting not only the Danbury supply depot north of Redding but the areas east of the Hudson River and from Long Island Sound in the south to Connecticut, Westchester County, and West Point in the north. It was in that context that Putnam came to command troops in Redding.

The three Redding encampments were located near one another in the same general area of north Redding nearest to Danbury, just south of the Bethel border. The easternmost and main camp was in the Lonetown section, where Putnam Park now stands at the intersection of Connecticut Routes 58 and 107. Many artifacts remain in Putnam Park to permit visitors to imagine what these Revolutionary War encampments looked like, including the topography and size of these sites as well as the remains of firebacks, which were stone chimneys incorporated into the design of the soldiers' huts.

The huts were made of logs hewn from nearby woodlands. They measured fourteen by sixteen feet, and six feet high, with a door at the front facing toward the stream and a chimney at the rear. Each hut, spaced eight feet apart, accommodated twelve soldiers. Over 1,300 men occupied the huts. The evidence of how they were laid out can be seen in the exhibits in Putnam Park. There is also a reconstruction of what is thought to be officers' quarters, slightly more spacious than the troops' huts but rudimentary housing nonetheless. Officers' huts were spaced sixteen feet apart and located higher up the hill behind the huts of their subordinates.

The middle Redding encampment was located off Limekiln Road in woodlands on the side of a hill that sloped down to a stream, in the general area defined by present-day Whortleberry Road, Costa Lane, Gallows Hill Road, and Limekiln



Road. This site remains undisturbed, preserved as open space by the Redding Land Trust.

The westernmost camp, which has been developed, apparently was located in the general vicinity of present-day Deer Spring Road and Old Lantern Road, about a quarter of a mile north of the West Redding railroad station.

As of 1790, Redding had a population of only 1,503 people, so we can assume that the influx of troops probably tripled the local population during the winter of 1778/1779.

## Fallen Forts in the Hudson Highlands

It is significant to note that Putnam, notwithstanding his stellar reputation for bravery and resourcefulness in battle, was under a cloud and had become a bit of an embarrassment to Washington. In October 1777, on Putnam's watch, the British Army had captured Forts Montgomery and Clinton, located near each other on the Hudson River. Afterward, the Continental Congress, by a resolution dated November 28, 1777, had ordered a Court of Inquiry to investigate the affair.

Forts Montgomery and Clinton were twin forts, complete with redoubts and cannon emplacements that were built on rocky outcroppings on the west side of the Hudson River, located south of West Point and near the present-day Bear Mountain Bridge. These fortifications were part of the Continental Army's attempt to control the Hudson River and prevent the British Army in New York City from connecting with British forces under General Sir John Burgoyne that were gradually making their way south from Canada toward Albany and the North River (as the Hudson was then known).

As the officer in charge of the Hudson Highlands, it was up to General Putnam to decide how to allocate the troops at his disposal given the lay of the land along both sides of the river. One consideration was that there were steep and narrow mountain passes on the river's west side in the vicinity of the two forts. Taken together with the forts' resources in terms of cannons and redoubts, that side of the river was arguably easier to defend than the opposite shore, which was less mountainous and populated with towns and villages, including Putnam's headquarters at Peekskill, Continental Village, and further north the Continental Army's main regional depot at Fishkill. The shortage of troops available to Putnam meant he had to hedge his bets. He hedged in favor of protecting the east side of the river.

On September 29, 1777, the level of his troop strength shrank sharply when Putnam was ordered to transfer 2,500 soldiers to Washington's other commanders in the Upper Hudson and Pennsylvania. This left him with only 1,100

Continental troops and 2,000 of the less-well-trained local militia to cover both sides of the river.

Meanwhile, British troops headquartered in New York City under the command of General Sir Henry Clinton were making their way by some fifty transport vessels upriver in Putnam's direction in an effort to relieve and reinforce Burgoyne's British forces, which were approaching Saratoga, north of Albany. Despite General Putnam's attempts to obtain local intelligence from sources on the river, no one in the Continental Army command structure could predict with certainty which side of river the northbound British forces would attack.

On the morning of October 6, 1777, the British seized upon this confusion and feigned an attack on Peekskill as a diversion to draw 500 of Putnam's troops to the east bank of the Hudson. At the same time, under cover of fog the main elements of the British forces constituting in excess of 2,100 (and perhaps more) soldiers—Hessians, Loyalists, and British regulars—were ferried across the river to Stony Point. From there they began a difficult march through the mountain passes to surprise the Americans and capture Forts Montgomery and Clinton.

Where was Israel Putnam while this legerdemain was going on? He and the troops under his immediate command were in the vicinity of the general's Peekskill headquarters, south and east of the twin forts. On the west side of the Hudson, two brigadier generals who happened to be brothers were in charge of the twin forts: George Clinton (who was also governor of New York State) commanded Fort Montgomery and James Clinton Fort Clinton. The two forts were connected by a pontoon bridge over Popolopen Creek that allowed communication and exchange of ammunition between them.

When it became apparent that the Americans were substantially outnumbered, the Clinton brothers sent desperate messages to Putnam for reinforcements. The first message was written by Governor Clinton at eight in the morning; it arrived at the Peekskill headquarters by late morning. Unfortunately, Putnam and his aides were already on a reconnoitering trip five miles south of Peekskill to Verplanck's Point, one of the spots where the British transports had landed a day earlier. By the time Putnam received the messages requesting reinforcements, it was late in the afternoon—too late to help the Clintons. Putnam had guessed the wrong side of the river to protect with the bulk of his forces.

In the evidence submitted at the Court of Inquiry conducted at the direction of the Continental Congress, several officers echoed the evidence of Lieutenant Colonel Marvin of the militia, who was at Fort Clinton, that none of the soldiers in the forts left their posts "until the enemy were within our walls and up on their backs, then everyone made his escape in the manner he could." Another partici-



pant in the battle testified that it would have taken as many as 2,000 soldiers to defend both forts properly.

The battle raged all day but the heroic Americans defending the forts were outnumbered three to one—the Clintons had perhaps 700 soldiers. With heavy artillery fire from the forts and eventually hand-to-hand combat, the losses on both sides were significant. The Americans suffered 350 killed, wounded, or captured. On the British side, forty were killed and 150 wounded. Although many Americans (including both Clintons) escaped the forts though the smoky haze and falling darkness, as many as 275 of their defenders were taken by the British as prisoners of war to New York City.

Putnam's aides at Peekskill had sent what reinforcements they could to the Clintons even before Putnam arrived back in Peekskill, but once it became apparent that the forts were lost, in an effort to deny the British even more trophies Putnam directed his troops to burn Fort Constitution, on the east side of the Hudson River, and head north to protect the Continental Army depot at Fishkill. Even so, British raiding parties pursuing the Americans by land and sea up the river found much to destroy, including the shipyards at Poughkeepsie, a number of small villages, and, as a final insult, the riverside manor house of the Livingston family.

Luckily for Putnam and the Continental Army, the embarrassment of the losses in the Hudson Highlands was leavened by the success of General Horatio Gates, commander of the Northern branch of the Continental Army. Following the second Battle of Saratoga on October 17, 1777, he had accepted the surrender of Burgoyne and his army of 5,871 British regulars and German mercenaries.

In a letter from George Washington to George Clinton dated October 25, 1777, Washington commiserated with Clinton, characterizing the situation after the burning of Kingston, on the west side of the Hudson River, in the aftermath of the collapse of Forts Montgomery and Clinton:

I... feel much for the Havoc and devastation committed by the Enemy employed on the North River. Their maxim seems to be, to destroy where they cannot conquer and they hesitate not, to pursue a conduct that do dishonour to the Arms of Barbarians.<sup>4</sup>

The fall of these two Hudson River forts and the losses of men and material associated with the installations were of sufficient magnitude to convene a Court of Inquiry to examine what went wrong. But New York officials, who naturally were most affected by the forts' capture, were furious with Putnam for not managing to reinforce their defenders in time. The New Yorkers were so incensed

that official letters were dispatched to Washington by prominent citizens like Chancellor Robert Livingston, the chief judicial officer of New York. In a letter to Washington dated January 14, 1778, Livingston states that Putman, at the age of sixty, is too old and, further, New Yorkers do not want to be commanded by the Connecticut general:

Your Excellency is not ignorant of the extent of Genl Putnams capacity, & diligence, & how well soever these may qualify him for the management of this work & most important command—the prejudices to which his imprudent Lenity to the disaffected, & too great intercourse with the enemy have given rise have greatly injured his influence—How far the loss of fort Montgomery and the subsequent ravages of the enemy are to be imputed to him, I will not venture to say, as this will necessarily be determined by a court of inquiry whose determinations I would not anticipate—Unfortunately for him the current of popular opinions is this, & the neighbouring States, & as far as I can learn in the troops under his command, runs strongly against him. For my own part I respect his bravery, & former services, & sincerely lament that his patriotism, will not suffer him to take that repose to which his advanced age & past services, justly entitle him.<sup>5</sup>

Washington was uncharacteristically slow in responding to this letter, but when he did write back to Livingston on March 12, 1778, he seemed to agree with him. In explaining the problem of dealing with the aging Putnam, Washington wrote that “[Putnam] cannot see his own defects and make an honorable retreat from a station in which he exposes his own weakness.”<sup>6</sup>

On March 16, 1778, Washington in effect took the action requested by Livingston and demoted Putnam, in substance if not in rank. In a letter to Putnam, Washington wrote that it was best for the general to stand down his command until the inquiry into the fall of Forts Montgomery and Clinton was concluded. Washington told Putnam he took this action “owing to the prejudices of the people, which, whether well or ill grounded, must be indulged, and I should think myself wanting in justice to the public and candor towards you, were I to continue you in a command, after I have been almost in direct terms informed that the people of the State of New York will not render support and assistance while you remain Head of that Department”<sup>7</sup> (To make things worse for Putnam, his second wife died in October 1777.)

Because of the press of military business and out of deference to Putnam’s personal loss, Washington had not pushed completion of the Court of Inquiry ordered by the Continental Congress, but by February 1778, he sent Major

General Alexander McDougall with a request to tend to the matter. On March 21, 1778, Washington also formally appointed McDougall to take command of the Highlands until the Putnam matter had been concluded.

Based upon a review of Alexander McDougall's diary, he met with the main protagonists—Governor Clinton and General Putnam—before the Court of Inquiry convened. The three men (as well as John Jay, then chief justice of the New York Supreme Court) all dined together at McDougall's quarters in the Colonel Derek Brinkerhoff house in Fishkill. The Court of Inquiry also was held in the Brinkerhoff house, which is located on New York Route 52, north of the intersection of present-day Interstate 84 and New York Route 9.

After these preliminaries with the principals, General McDougall met with the other members of the Court of Inquiry—Brigadier General Jedediah Huntington and Colonel Edward Wigglesworth—and opened the proceedings on March 30, 1778. According to McDougall's diary, by April 4, 1778 the Court of Inquiry had completed its work, having heard from Putnam himself as well as twenty witnesses from among the officers on both sides of the Hudson that fateful day.<sup>8</sup>

In response to the specific questions put to the Court of Inquiry by Washington, the members of the panel concluded as follows: the forts “were carried by Storm”; the British had about 3,000 soldiers and the Americans 700 in the forts during the daylong battle; although there were no regular returns of the day, seventy-five American soldiers were killed, forty were wounded, and 240 were taken prisoner by the British, totaling about 350 casualties, including 30 officers; Governor Clinton had made two requests by letter to General Putnam for reinforcements beginning at eight a.m. but not received by Putnam until five p.m.; no particular number of men had been requested by Clinton and “no succours were received.”

It is clear from McDougall's papers that part of Putnam's defense was that he had been left with insufficient manpower following the loss of 2,500 troops sent away in late September 1777 pursuant to Washington's orders. And like the veteran soldier he was, Putnam had advised Congress even before the attack on the forts that “I would not be answerable for the safety of the forts” given the drawing away of these troops.

Putnam also noted in his evidence that the first of two messages sent by Governor Clinton asking for reinforcements was carried by a man who went over to the British the very next day. Since the messenger was not far away geographically from where Putnam was on his reconnaissance mission at Verplanck's Point, the suggestion is that treachery played its part in delaying Clinton's earliest request.<sup>9</sup>

The Court of Inquiry completed its substantive work promptly after hearing the witnesses and taking in the documentary proof. A point-by-point written response to the questions put to the court by Washington was drafted as of April 5, 1778, by Huntington and Wiggelsworth, and submitted to McDougall for his review and approval. McDougall temporized a bit, apparently feeling that the junior officers had not fully responded to Washington's pointed queries and perhaps had gone a bit easy on General Putnam.

On May 21, 1778, General McDougall drafted his own report, a kind of mild dissenting opinion for Washington's benefit, although McDougall did not disagree with the conclusions of his fellow court members. In the end, the court exonerated Putnam from all blame in the Hudson Highlands disaster, concluding that the forts were lost "not from any fault, misconduct, or negligence of the commanding officers, but solely through the want of adequate force under their command to maintain and defend them."<sup>10</sup>

Although the Court of Inquiry had completed its work and transmitted its report to Washington by the end of May 1778, by late July Congress had not acted one way or the other on the Putnam matter. Putnam was chafing at being in a kind of professional limbo while the Congressional inquiry hung over him. He was apparently making a nuisance of himself, prodding Washington for an answer. In an extraordinary letter from Washington to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia on July 28, 1778,—hand-delivered by Putnam—the commander in chief, basically passes the buck to them:

This [letter] will be presented to Congress by Genl. Putnam. He arrived from Connecticut the day after I came into the Neighbourhood of this Camp [White Plains, NY]. As I have not received any Resolution of Congress, respecting the Court of Inquiry, which they directed and which was transmitted them, on the subject of the posts in the Highlands, taken last year, I am at a loss in what point of view to consider him. He wishes some decision in this instance and his journey to Philadelphia is for the purpose.<sup>11</sup>

Putting in a personal appearance seemed to work. On August 17, 1778, Congress accepted the findings of the report, and by September Putnam was given responsibilities by Washington in and around Connecticut and the Hudson River Valley. By November, Washington had appointed him to command the brigades of Generals Enoch Poor, Samuel Parsons and Jedediah Huntington in Redding.

## Making Camp

But it is clear from the letters and orders of Washington in 1778/1779 that the commander in chief planned to keep “Old Put” on a short leash after the debacle at Forts Montgomery and Clinton. Leaving nothing to chance, Washington worked hand-in-hand with Putnam in organizing the encampment at Redding based upon lessons learned during Washington’s experience with the Continental Army during the bitter winter of 1777/1778 in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania.

When it came to the construction of Redding encampments, Washington turned into a field architect, a one-man Army Corps of Engineers. This was not surprising since he had been a land surveyor and mapmaker in civilian life, so he knew the importance of the lay of the land.

In a letter to General Putnam dated November 25, 1778, just as the camps in Redding were being established, Washington notes that Putnam, in his prior letter, had not mentioned how his three brigades would be quartered. So Washington, unsolicited, proceeds to offer his advice as to how the camps should be situated so as to not unduly burden Redding’s residents and promote military security:

[W]ishing the Army to be as little burdensome as possible to the Inhabitants of the Country, and that the troops composing its several divisions may lie compactly together, in order to their greater security, and better discipline and government. It is my desire that they should hut themselves as they did last Winter at Valley Forge, wherever they can ... with ... proper attention to the manner of constructing the Huts. There were several last Winter at Valley Forge, which by the care of the officers were not only comfortable but commodious, and in which the men lived exceedingly well and preserved their health. These are considerations very important ... the sooner the Troops can be fixed the better.<sup>12</sup>

No detail was too small for Washington who, as his letters and orders reveal, was a very precise man, and concerned about the welfare of his troops. In one of his letters to Congress about blankets, written in early September 1778, he seems keenly aware of what it would be like to be in one of those rude little huts, crammed together and shivering at night. He writes: “Not a night will pass from this time [Sept. 7], without the Soldiers feeling the want.”<sup>13</sup>

In a follow-up General Order on hut construction dated December 14, 1778, Washington warns his officers against building the huts in a way that could lead to sickness: “Much of the sickness among the Troops seems to have been occasioned by the improper method adopted in forming many of the Huts last Winter, some being sunk in the ground and others covered with Earth ... [the Huts are] to

be roofed with boards, slabs or large shingles, that the men be not suffered to dig into the ground (except so far as to level the surface) or to cover the huts with earth or turf. The officers will likewise see that their men erect bunks or births to keep them off the ground and proper conveniences in their huts for the purpose of preserving their arms and accoutrements from being damaged.”<sup>14</sup>

Still worried about construction of the huts and conditions in the encampments, Washington issued a further General Order, dated December 24, 1778, recommending engineering changes that the commanding officers should adopt to see to it “that ditches are made upon the upper side of every row of huts where on descending ground at about three feet distance from [the huts], and at every convenient place to make other ditches so as to carry off the water in front; this [it will be] observed, will secure the troops from any inundation of water and much contribute to the health and convenience of the whole camp.”<sup>15</sup>

Ever sensitive to minimizing the impact of the Continental Army’s encampments on the surrounding communities, the Christmas Eve General Order directed “[n]o firing or discharging of pieces, on any pretence whatever is to be suffered except at particular hours, which will be made known to the Army.” It was to be a quiet Christmas in Redding in 1778.

Washington also was an early environmentalist, directing that “[t]he troops after having provided themselves with sufficient timber for hutting are to cut down no more green standing timber for firewood, until the logs, tops and old fallen timber be first used for that purpose.”

In addition, Washington was almost like a quartermaster in Chief, keeping tabs on those responsible for the care and feeding of his troops during the lean winter months when Congressional funding was insufficient and delayed, when boots and uniforms and blankets were scarce, and the army was sometimes reduced to eating horseflesh.

In a letter to General Putman dated January 8, 1779, Washington was furious at reports that the Connecticut troops “had not fared so well as others, in the late distribution of clothing to the army.” In the course of a discussion about the shortage of uniforms, Washington reveals that he was surprised to learn that procurement of uniforms locally through Connecticut sources had gone completely awry, all to the troops’ detriment. Apparently, the uniforms of the Americans’ French allies were of better quality and piling up in inventory at the Fishkill depot, while uniforms procured locally were not up to snuff and had been delayed, much to the chagrin and discomfort of the freezing, ill-clad Connecticut troops.

Washington knew that “the troops in general have had orders for a shirt and a pair of stockings per man for the hole, and a pair of shoes, for each that wanted

it.” The commander in chief was even alert to the shortcomings of the skimpy blankets being provided, obviously a crucial item for a soldier enduring a severe Northeast winter:

The complaint, among other things, extends to Blankets . . . If I mistake not, I remember two [orders] successively given to General Parsons and for those of the largest and best quality, the latter parcels being of so small a kind, that it took two of one sort, and four of another to make one of full size, and besides this a deficiency of two or three thousand was found upon the whole quantity short of the Invoices . . . . If the Connecticut troops are in a worst predicament . . . they shall be put in the same situation as the other parts of the army . . . It could not have been my intention to deprive the Connecticut troops of their proper share.<sup>16</sup>

In perusing the various letters of Washington and his General Orders during the Winter of 1778/1779, you cannot help but be struck by his mastery and detailed knowledge of how to run an army and his sincere concern for the welfare of the men who served under him in what he knew were very difficult conditions. On occasion he even stood up for the common soldier while chastising his sometimes ineffectual generals.

In sum, there can be no question that from the relative comfort of his own headquarters in Philadelphia during the winter of 1778/1779, Washington was determined to try to avoid the privations of Valley Forge a year earlier, ensuring that the Continental Army would be as comfortable as possible during the bad weather and healthy for the spring 1779 campaign.

## Mutiny at Redding

Unfortunately, notwithstanding Washington’s best intentions and plans, the harsh conditions in Redding that winter were as bad or worse than at Valley Forge (some of the troops with General Putnam had been at both encampments). For all of Washington’s planning, the troops suffered from shortages of everything, except bad weather.

Among the soldiers and officers in the Redding encampments were several diarists. In the main camp located at present-day Putnam Park, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Dearborn, 3rd New Hampshire Regiment, kept track of the weather, noting several severe snowstorms in December. Summing it up, on December 27, 1778, he wrote, “the weather seems more like Canada than Connecticut.”<sup>17</sup>

On that same day, a mile and a half or so west of the Putnam Park encampment in the so-called middle camp, the brigade of General Parsons was running

out of food. In a message to his troops on December 27, 1778, Parsons explains to his men that the flour and bread they need is stockpiled in nearby Danbury, but “the weather had been so extreme (mixture of rain and snow) that it is impossible for the teams to pass to that place. Every measure is being taken to supply flour, rum, salt and every necessary tomorrow.”

The most famous of the Redding encampment diarists, Joseph Plumb Martin, a private in the 8th Connecticut Regiment in the middle camp (who was to write about many battles in the Revolutionary War), endured all of these conditions, noting that “we now and then got a little bad bread and salt beef (I believe chiefly horse-beef for it was generally thought to be such at the time). The month of January was very stormy, a good deal of snow fell, and in such weather it was mere chance if we got anything at all to eat.”

Additionally, the regimental paymasters of the Continental Army were historically slow in paying these troops. When they were paid it was in Continental script that was depreciating so fast that by the time the soldiers’ past-due pay reached their families, its purchasing power was already diminished.

In light of these appalling conditions—and despite the horrendous weather—a movement within Brigadier General Huntington’s brigade in the westernmost camp began to gather steam for a march on Hartford, the seat of the government some sixty miles away, to petition the legislature to improve the situation for the troops in the Redding encampments. When notified on December 30, 1778, of the foment among the troops, Putnam rushed to the encampment from his headquarters elsewhere in Redding near Umpawaug Hill and gave a speech to the troops that calmed things down for the time being. The ringleader of the march on Hartford was imprisoned in a guardhouse. When he tried to escape, he was killed by one of the guards.

## Death, Pardons, and the Lash

Experienced soldier that he was, Washington had also previously communicated his views on camp discipline to his officers and was clearly not pleased when he heard of the nascent rebellion in Redding. Interestingly, and appropriately, Washington put a lot of the burden of enforcing military discipline on the line officers in charge of the camps and the field generals responsible for those line officers, emphasizing to his generals the importance literally of “being there amongst their troops.”

In General Putnam’s letter to Washington dated January 5, 1779, reporting on the rebellion he had nipped in the bud with his stirring speech to the troops, Putnam recommended the pardon of the ringleaders, plainly trying not to



make things worse. The mutineers under arrest had sent a petition for pardon to Putnam, which the general was passing on to his commander in chief.

In his reply dated January 18, 1779, Washington gave Putnam his general principles as to dealing with the ringleaders of a mutiny. In the end, however, Washington left the decision to General Putnam:

The mutiny of the Soldiers in Huntington's brigade was on its first appearance of a very alarming nature, but I am in hopes from the success with which your spirited exertions were attended in dispersing them, that there is no danger of further commotion.

The Conduct which a Commanding Officer is to observe, in cases of this kind in general, is to use every means for discovering the Authors of the mischief, to inflict instant punishment on them, and reclaim the rest by Clemency. The impression made on the minds of the multitude by the terror of the example, and their inability to take any resolution when deprived of their Ringleaders, are a sufficient Security against farther attempts. Humanity and Policy unite in prescribing such limits to Capital Punishments, when the Crime has been so general. With respect to the application in the present instance, and the doubt which arises from the foundation of Complaints which the men have, it is to be observed that their mode of pursuing Redress, is of so dangerous a tendency as to call for the exercise of wholesome Severity; and though the circumstances may require it, to be tempered with more lenity than in ordinary cases, such a subversion of discipline and Subordination cannot be passed unpunished. You will be best able to judge, from the degree of culpability of those in confinement, what measure ought to be taken respecting them, if there are any proper subject for execution among them, it is to be regretted that the matter has suffered any delay.

If the same causes should unluckily give birth to any future mutiny, the conduct abovementioned must be pursued; the severest and most summary example must be made of the Leaders, while a representation is made to the rest, in firm and at the same time conciliatory Language: That no measure compatible with our present circumstances is omitted for providing them, the Mutiny will not only be ineffectual in procuring a Remedy, but involve consequences infinitely worse than the evil complain'd of.<sup>18</sup>

Upon receipt of this letter, Putnam was plainly conflicted as to how to mete out a proportionate punishment for the mutiny in Huntington's brigade. Quite frankly, Washington's letter was not very helpful since it was couched in such

ambiguous terms.

On the other hand, other letters of Washington showed a kinder and gentler commander in chief when he was faced with judging actual cases of military discipline. A letter to Congress dated August 31, 1778, just before the Redding encampments were laid out, reflects Washington's frustration that the range of disciplinary punishments used in the Continental Army was such—either 100 lashes at one extreme or capital punishment on the other—that he found himself frequently granting pardons for soldiers condemned to capital punishment in order to do justice to the circumstances as Washington saw them. Washington notified the Congress that he had asked his Board of Officers “to consider whether some mode might not be devised of equal or greater efficacy for preventing crimes and punishing Delinquents when they had happened less shocking to humanity and more advantageous to the States, than that of Capital execution.”

To illustrate the quandary Washington was dealing with in trying to temper justice with mercy, he gave the Congress a current statistic that faced him at headquarters: “there were eleven prisoners under sentence of death, and probably many more for trial.” A General Order dated May 6, 1778, was typical of the way he dealt with pardons, including a recital of the rationale for showing mercy in the particular cases before him.

The Commander in Chief being more desirous to reclaim than punish Offenders and willing to shew Mercy to those who have been misled by designing Traytors and that as many as can may participate the pleasures of the truly joyful day is pleased to pardon William McMarth of the Artillery and John Morrel of Colo. Henry Jackson's Regiment now under sentence of death and orders their immediate Release from Confinement, hoping that Gratitude to his Clemency will induce them in future to behave like good soldiers.<sup>19</sup>

With Washington's advice in the January 18th letter on his desk at Umpawaug Hill, Putnam temporized as to how to accommodate and reconcile Washington's General Orders—which were addressed to dealing with the ringleaders of the December mutiny and any future mutiny—with the facts on the ground, i.e., keeping peace among the troops in the Redding camps.

## Smith and Jones: Sacrificial Lambs?

And then the answer to his quandary presented itself to Putnam: not a mutiny but a possible spy situation where harsh punishment could be meted out as an example to the troops. Putnam's scouts in an outpost across the Connecticut bor-

der in Westchester County, New York, captured a man who was not supposed to be within their lines. They brought him to Putnam to be interviewed.

The prisoner was Edward Jones, originally from Wales, who had been a resident of nearby Ridgefield, Connecticut, before the Revolutionary War broke out. When war came, Jones, a Tory, joined with soldiers from his native country and became a butcher in the British Army. Like everyone else in charge of purveying goods for an army that winter, Jones was sent out to look for beef to feed the troops. He was captured by Putnam's scouts while on one of these procurement missions.

According to Brigadier General Parsons, Putnam interrogated Jones. After that, he was imprisoned in the guardhouse near Putnam's headquarters and court-martialed "for going to and serving the enemy as a guide and coming out as a spy." On February 4, 1779, Jones was found guilty of each and every charge. Putnam approved the sentence imposed on him by the court martial: "execution . . . by hanging him by the neck till he is dead, dead, dead."<sup>20</sup>

Simultaneously, within the Redding camps a case of desertion arose. John Smith, a sixteen- or seventeen-year-old with the 1st Connecticut Regiment was tried two days after Jones on February 6, 1779, at a General Court Martial "for desertion and attempting to go to the enemy." Smith, too, was found guilty and given the death penalty. However, he was to be "shot to death."<sup>21</sup>

Accordingly, Putnam had a spy and a deserter on his hands. Hanging one and shooting the other, he believed would, in the words of Washington's January 18 letter, make an "impression on the minds of the multitude by the terror of the example."

## Blood Stains in The Snow

The manner in which the executions were carried out by Putnam was certainly calculated to make an impression on those who witnessed the sad and violent scene. Jones was originally scheduled to be executed on Friday, February 12. It was postponed so that both executions could be held on the same day, Tuesday, February 16. One historian said that Putman decided to "make a double job of it" and at the same time "make the spectacle as terrible and impressive as the circumstances demanded."<sup>22</sup>

On Sunday, February 14, the two prisoners were taken under guard to the Redding Meeting House, where a sermon was preached. The following day, the order was given to the brigade commanders that General Putnam "desires that the troops may appear clean and neat at the execution."<sup>23</sup>

Other lesser punishments also were meted out to various miscreant soldiers

during this period, with one deserter sentenced to receive “one hundred lashes on his bare back” and reduced in rank, and another soldier, a horse thief, sentenced to sixty lashes. Both punishments were carried out in front of their respective regiments.

Having orchestrated a somewhat bloodthirsty atmosphere in the days before the executions, Putnam issued an order for calm intended to protect the prisoners in their final hours. He forbid the troops and local Redding residents from coming to the guardhouse on Umpawaug Hill to taunt and jeer the prisoners.

Charles Burr Todd was a Redding resident and historian whose family had a house on Limekiln Road, not too far from the middle camp. The house was used by some of the officers during the encampment. Writing in the late 1880s and piecing together various and somewhat conflicting accounts, Todd reported the details of the executions, which were carried out on what is now known as Gallows Hill, not far from the middle encampment. In some accounts, the spy was hanged first; in other accounts, the deserter was shot first. In any case, General Parsons described the circumstances as “revolting in the extreme.”<sup>24</sup>

According to historian Todd, Putnam had assembled all the troops to bear witness to the executions. Edward Jones, the spy from Ridgefield by way of Wales, was hanged from a makeshift gallows erected about twenty feet off the ground. Before he was killed, Jones let it be known that “I am innocent of the crime laid to my charge.”<sup>25</sup> He would not cooperate in his own undoing. The rope firmly around his neck, he refused to jump off the ladder/gallows, as Putnam had ordered him. Instead, some local youths were directed by Putnam to kick the ladder out from under Jones’s feet.

The execution of deserter John Smith also was bungled. Smith was led to a spot about 200 yards from the gallows site; Putnam gave the order and three balls were shot through Smith’s breast, causing him to fall to the ground. There, Smith’s body twitched and convulsed until a soldier came forward to finish the job. He fired a round into Smith’s forehead at such close range that the bullet set the boy’s clothing on fire. Smith’s body was placed in a coffin and every soldier under Putnam’s command was forced to march past to review the teenager’s smoldering remains. It was a grisly day’s work for all concerned.<sup>26</sup>

## Did the Punishment Fit the Crime?

But the question raised in light of the deteriorating relationship between Generals Washington and Putnam in the winter of 1778/1779 is whether executing the Welsh butcher and the Connecticut teenager was the kind of punishment Washington had in mind when he gave Putnam his January 18th directive, which

addressed dealing with ringleaders of mutinies, not the more garden variety cases of spies and deserters, which had plagued the Continental Army from its earliest days given the often horrible conditions endured by these young soldiers.

As usual, the punctilious Washington—apparently unaware of the capture of Smith and Jones—followed up with Putnam after a decent interval in a letter dated February 5, 1779, to see if the general had dealt with the December mutiny. Washington’s persistence in keeping Putnam on his toes was, in part, plainly self-protective, since Washington did not want to deal with any more embarrassments from Putnam, to whom he had given a new lease on life with the Redding command.

In his February 5th letter to Putnam, written from his headquarters in Middlebrook, New Jersey, Washington noted the intervening letters he had received from Putnam on various subjects, apparently none of which reported on how he had dealt with the mutineers. “I have your January [letters]. In one of my late letters I desired that you might take such steps with the mutineers in General Huntington’s Brigade, as you, upon consultation with the principal Officers, should judge the most proper.”<sup>27</sup>

With this letter from Washington in hand, Putnam could no longer dither. It would seem that as yet Putnam had not advised Washington about the spy from Westchester and the camp deserter, nor had he dealt conclusively with the mutineers. So the pressure was on Putnam to show his mettle to the commander in chief.

## Not Present and Accounted For

Significantly, at just this critical moment, Washington also was pressuring Putnam and the principal field generals serving under him—Generals Parsons and Huntington—for taking too much time off during the winter encampment, embarrassingly at the very time when discontent and a breakdown of discipline among the troops was manifesting itself across the board, whether by threats of mutiny or individual desertions.

Nothing infuriated the mild-mannered Washington more than the unpleasant discovery that his generals were not at their posts. Washington’s standing orders were that at least two field generals must be in place at all times for each regiment except for extraordinary cases.

On February 10, 1779, Washington wrote another letter to Putnam, responding to correspondence from Putnam dated January 25th and 26th, one of which apparently contained a request by Putnam to take a leave of absence for personal reasons. Washington clearly did not tolerate fools gladly and expressed disappoint-

ment and genuine surprise that Putnam and, as it turned out, his field generals were taking leave simultaneously.

With a sternness that must have struck General Putnam to the core, Washington lectured and second-guessed the veteran general as to his supervision of the field generals under him and, in turn, the troops under them.

The absence at this time of Gen. Parsons and Genl. Huntington, is a matter of some surprise. The intervals which the former in particular has already enjoyed and lately too, one would have thought sufficient for the purpose of settling every thing of a private or domestic nature. We should not suffer ourselves to be led from the line of our service by a mere desire to see our friends, or to arrange affairs not really of the last importance.

You need not be told of the disadvantages attending leaving a post of importance, even at a time, when we may suppose the season and other causes would check or prevent any operations of the enemy. But there are other considerations, which respect the discipline, the order, and, particular government of the command, and which require the constant attention of a superior officer.

However, as you think it advisable to throw out a sheet anchor I could wish to accommodate matter to your request. You will therefore on Genl. Parsons and General Huntingtons return, (which you think will be some time in March) if you find the service will then admit of your going home, use that opportunity. But you will make your stay as short as possible, as it is altogether uncertain when you may be wanted.<sup>28</sup>

In early March, Washington returned to the subject of excessive leave time, commenting offhand in a letter to Putnam dated March 6, 1779, "I hope Generals Parsons and Huntington are with their Brigades."<sup>29</sup>

But Washington's final comment to Putnam on military discipline in the February 10th letter should have taken root in Putnam's soul as reflecting the core values of Washington's military jurisprudence, which blended justice with mercy, while leaving the ultimate punishment to officers on the ground. Commenting on an unrelated affair of military discipline that had presented itself, Washington put it much more simply to Putnam than he had in his letter of January 18th: "It appears to me a mixed case, and such a one as may be better decided by... those on the spot."<sup>30</sup>

## A Request for Clemency

With all this as background, on February 16, 1779, Putnam made the decision to adhere to the results of the courts martial earlier in February and execute Smith and Jones, apparently without ever seeking Washington's further views on the individual cases and whether they should be handled with the pardon mechanism Washington so often employed as "less shocking to humanity and more advantageous to the States, than that of Capital execution." By imposing capital punishment on Smith and Jones, General Putnam had taken the hardest possible line, treating the men as if they were ringleaders of a mutiny—which they were not—and punishing them accordingly.

Reverend Nathaniel Bartlett, who was the longtime pastor of the Congregational Church in Redding and ministered to the Redding camps, tried to intercede with General Putnam on behalf of Smith, a local boy, to obtain a stay of execution for the teenager until General Washington could be consulted. Putnam ruled out clemency, apparently without ever presenting it to Washington.<sup>31</sup>

It is clear from a letter to Brigadier General Parsons from Washington dated April 30, 1779, that requests for leniency in death penalty cases did go to Washington directly on occasion from the Redding camps. And when faced squarely with capital punishment for one of his soldiers, Washington tended toward leniency. In the case of a Sergeant Gray, discussed in the April 30th letter to General Parsons, Washington advised Parsons that "it appears by testimony to the Court that there may have been a temporary insanity which led to the commission of the crime, and for the other considerations alleged, I have thought proper to remit the sentence of death."<sup>32</sup>

And as Washington had written to Congress in August 1778, his custom was to frequently grant pardons since he regarded capital punishment a waste of a good soldier who might otherwise be reclaimed if given a reprieve.

Did Putnam do the right thing in hanging the spy and shooting the deserter, and in not submitting the cases to Washington for his consideration? Or was Putnam unduly influenced in imposing these extreme sanctions—which Washington had prescribed for ringleaders of mutinies—by the thinly veiled criticism of his performance by Washington that had been coming through loud and clear from the time of the fall of Forts Montgomery and Clinton in October 1777, through the organization of the Redding encampments, and continuing in the somewhat patronizing January and February 1779 letters from Washington questioning Putnam's mettle and his leadership skills in managing his troops?

What would Washington have done if Reverend Bartlett's request for a stay of execution had been granted and a request for clemency formally presented to him

by Putnam? Obviously, we do not know because, it seems, General Putnam was simply too proud to ask, not willing to further burden the superior who, Putnam probably sensed by then, had already put up with quite enough from him.

What we do know is that just a few days after the executions in Redding, Putnam continued to embellish the heroic legend of “Old Put.” On February 26, 1779, he barely avoided capture by an enemy raiding party in present-day Greenwich, Connecticut, at a place called Horseneck Heights, by saddling up his horse and descending down the edge of a rocky cliff to the valley below. A sculpture memorializing Putnam’s daring escape is located outside Putnam Park. Had General Putnam not eluded capture, he might have found himself on the sharp end of military justice.

As it was, command of the three camps at Redding in the terrible winter of 1778/1779 was General Putnam’s last hurrah. Washington and Putnam continued to communicate, but Washington’s tone continued to be one of vague disappointment, chastising Putnam on occasion for failure to get his troops in readiness for the spring 1779 offensive and expressing alarm at the diminished number of rank-and-file soldiers from Connecticut available to secure the Hudson River. Putnam had a paralytic stroke in December 1779, which forced his retirement from active duty. He died on May 29, 1790, at seventy-two years old.

There are statues and monuments all over Connecticut dedicated to General Putnam, from Hartford to his hometown of Pomfret. Counties all over America are named after him. Putnam Park in Redding is a permanent memorial to the folk hero general.

There are no historic markers for the bloodstains in the snow on Gallows Hill.

*The author wishes to thank Redding’s Historian, Charley Couch, for the enthusiasm and invaluable assistance he provided during the research for this article.*

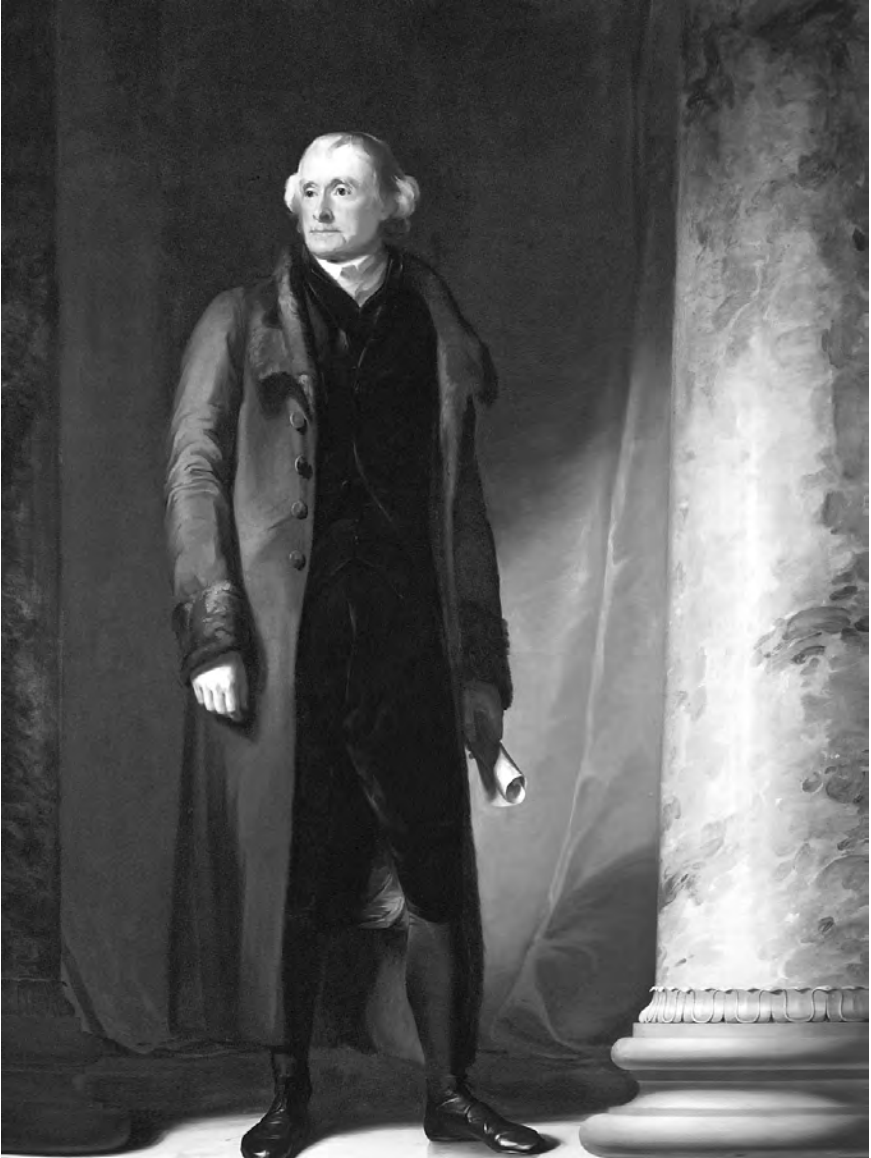
## Endnotes

1. Livingston, William Farrand, *Israel Putnam, Pioneer, Ranger and Major-General, 1718-1790*. G.P. Putnam’s Sons 1901, 380.
2. See generally the “Park History” portion of Putnam Memorial State Park, [putnampark.org](http://putnampark.org) website, which is devoted to Putnam Memorial State Park, the oldest state park in Connecticut.
3. Humphreys, Frank Landon, *Life and Times of David Humphreys: Soldier - Statesman—Poet*, G.P. Putnam’s Sons 1917, Vol. 1, 120-121.
4. George Washington to George Clinton dated October 25, 1777, George Washington Papers, Series 3, The Continental Army Papers. All references in this article to letters and General Orders from and to George Washington and his fellow officers can be found within this archive,



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. <http://memory.loc.gov/ammen/gwhtml/gwhome.html>.

5. Robert Livingston to George Washington dated January 14, 1778.
6. George Washington to Robert Livingston dated March 12, 1778.
7. George Washington to Israel Putnam dated March 16, 1778.
8. The following quotations and remarks are taken from the evidence offered in the Court of Inquiry; see "Report of the Court of Inquiry on the Loss of Fort Montgomery" to Washington, April 5, 1778, McDougall Papers, United States Military Philosophical Society Records, 1789-1813, microfilmed by the New-York Historical Society, Reel 2, USMA Library, West Point, N.Y. (hereinafter cited as "Court of Inquiry").
9. Major General Putnam's Evidence, No. 25, the written evidence given by General Putnam before the Court of Inquiry.
10. Journal of the Continental Congress, August 17, 1778, 803-04; see also Livingston, William Farrand, *Israel Putnam, Pioneer, Ranger and Major-General 1718-1790*. G.P. Putnam's Sons 1901, 375.
11. George Washington to the Continental Congress dated July 28, 1778.
12. George Washington to Israel Putnam dated November 25, 1778.
13. George Washington to the Continental Congress dated September 7, 1778.
14. General Order dated December 14, 1778.
15. General Order dated December 24, 1778.
16. George Washington to Israel Putnam dated January 8, 1779.
17. These quotations from the diaries of soldiers in the Redding encampment, and many more such entries, can be found on the Putnam Memorial State Park, [putnampark.org/website](http://putnampark.org/website) in the "Winter Encampment" portion of the website.
18. George Washington to Israel Putnam dated January 18, 1779.
19. General Order dated May 6, 1778.
20. Hall, Charles S., *Life and Letters of Samuel Holden Parsons; Major General in the Continental Army and Chief Judge of the Northwestern Territory, 1737-1789*, Otsenigo Publishing Co., 1905 (hereinafter "Parsons"), 213.
21. *Id.* at 214.
22. Todd, Charles Burr, *The History of Redding, Conn.*, The John A. Gray Press and Steam Type Setting Office 1880 (hereinafter "Todd"), 60.
23. *Parsons* at 214.
24. *Id.* 214.
25. Todd at 60-61.
26. Todd at 58-64; see also Grumman, William Edgar, *The Revolutionary Soldiers of Redding*, Hartford Press, 1904 82-84, for an alternative account of the Court Martials and Executions of Smith and Jones.
27. George Washington to Israel Putnam dated February 5, 1779.
28. George Washington to Israel Putnam dated February 10, 1779.
29. George Washington to Israel Putnam dated March 6, 1779.
30. George Washington to Israel Putnam dated February 10, 1779.
31. Todd at 61-62.
32. George Washington to Samuel Holden Parsons dated April 30, 1779.



*Thomas Jefferson* by Thomas Sully, 1822, oil on canvas, 102 x 66 in.  
West Point Museum Art Collection, United States Military Academy,  
West Point, New York

*Recording History:*

# The Thomas Sully Portrait of Thomas Jefferson

*Gaye Wilson*

In early February 1821 Thomas Jefferson received a letter posted from the United States Military Academy at West Point. The letter, penned by mathematics professor Jared Mansfield, was written on behalf of the academy's officers, cadets, and faculty and requested that Jefferson pose for a portrait that would be displayed in the academic library. His image would hang beside that of the "great" Washington and that of Colonel Jonathan Williams, the school's first superintendent, and would serve posterity as an "appropriate memorial of your person." Feeling confident of Jefferson's consent, they had commissioned Thomas Sully, one of America's leading portrait artists. The letter noted the former president's services to the nation and his patronage of the academy, which he signed into law on March 16, 1802. Professor Mansfield concluded by suggesting that he supply dates on which it would be convenient for Mr. Sully to call upon him at his Virginia home.<sup>1</sup>

When Jefferson read this letter he must have realized the potential such a portrait offered as a lasting visual contribution to his legacy. Not only would it be executed by an accomplished artist, it would hang in the academy's library and so be available to visiting public as well as West Point cadets and faculty. He demurred only slightly by responding that Sully's fine pencil would be "illegally bestowed on an ottomy of 78" but then suggested convenient dates for the artist's visit. The following month Sully spent over a week at Monticello taking a bust portrait from life and making studies for the full-length that would be installed at West Point the next year.<sup>2</sup>

The request from West Point came at a time when the aging Jefferson felt anxious about the future of the American republic, the great "experiment" in which he had invested so much of his life. In the previous year he had become extremely agitated by the Missouri question, as he received accounts of the highly charged congressional debates that surrounded Missouri's petition to enter the union as a

slave state. For Jefferson this became a “fire bell in the night” that roused him in his retirement at Monticello. In the geographical lines being drawn between the slave-and nonslave-holding states, he saw what could become the death knell of the Union and caused him to question whether a state should not have the right to enter the nation on a parity with the existing states without federal restrictions. The alarm had been “hushed” by a tenuous compromise, but Jefferson feared this was only a temporary reprieve. Were the sacrifices of “the generation of 1776” to be thrown away by “the unwise and unworthy passions of their sons”?<sup>3</sup>

Jefferson’s fears for the future of the republic connected directly with his insistence that its history be correctly remembered and recorded. He believed that a true understanding of the events of the Revolution and the principles on which the American republic was founded would influence the future direction of the nation and ultimately the destiny of representative government throughout the world. It was important that subsequent generations fully comprehend the character of the founders, their motives, their actions, and their concept of republican virtue. The future was irrevocably linked to the past; a correct understanding of history was, therefore, imperative.<sup>4</sup>

Jefferson’s fears had been aroused by contemporary histories that cast doubts upon his own role in the American Revolution and early formation of the nation. The first edition of John Marshall’s five-volume *The Life of George Washington* had been completed in 1807. This work extended beyond just a biography of Washington and outlined American history from colonial settlement through the Revolution and the founding of the republic. The final volume dealt with the rise of the partisan politics of the 1790s and unfavorably compared Jefferson and his political allies, the Jeffersonian Republicans, with the Federalists and their initial leader, Alexander Hamilton. Jefferson’s perceived pro-French sympathies were questioned as well. Equally unsettling was an 1812 publication by fellow Virginian Henry Lee III. In his *Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department*, Lee criticized Jefferson as an incompetent wartime governor who reacted with cowardice during the British invasion of Virginia.<sup>5</sup>

To Jefferson these histories were dangerous, not just to his own reputation but also to American republicanism in general. Their retelling of early American history gave a more favorable impression of those who supported the Federalists and their ambitions for a more powerful, more centralized government. Even though the Federalists had been in decline since his election to the presidency in 1801, Jefferson continued to fear his old enemies’ monarchical leanings and the influence of their ideas on future generations of Americans.

Early in his political career Jefferson had stated that “the first object of my

heart is my own country. In that is embarked my family, my fortune, & my own existence.” Now, in January 1821, at seventy-eight years of age, he not only faced ever-increasing debts that could leave his family destitute but also felt ever-increasing anxiety that the experiment in representative government to which he had devoted so much of his life was headed toward irrevocable scission. Succeeding generations would need to understand the character and the aims of the founders and their concept of republican virtue. Thus the West Point commission arrived at a time when Jefferson’s thoughts revolved around preserving his own legacy in order to exemplify the virtue and character that could strengthen the republic. As a gentleman he could not be seen promoting his own reputation without compromising the selflessness on which it was based. He could, however, support the efforts of a talented artist and collaborate on a portrait that could potentially capture for posterity a sense of character that suggested civic virtue and an enlightened worldview, a character befitting a founder of the new republican nation. He could justify this portrait as not just a contribution to his own legacy but as a record of early American history as well.<sup>6</sup>

Jefferson understood the power of art to capture history and to educate the populace. “I am an enthusiast on the subject of the arts,” he informed his good friend and colleague, James Madison, in no small part because art possessed the potential “to improve the taste of my countrymen, to increase their reputation, to reconcile to them the respect of the world & procure them its praise.” For Jefferson there was a purpose to art beyond just enjoyment of the art itself. It could be a means of informing and cultivating the public taste, perhaps eventually removing the stigma of provincialism in the view of Europe.<sup>7</sup>

Over his lifetime Jefferson collected art in its many forms, including an impressive number of portraits, both painted and sculpted. The subjects of these portraits were men who had in some way contributed to the culture and formation of the United States, whether through politics, philosophy, or exploration. He described his “Collection of American Worthies” as “public records” worthy of study, duplication, and preservation.<sup>8</sup>

He was following a long tradition, as portraits had been used in western art and culture for several centuries as a testament to those who were notable in history. Since classical times, sculpted or painted works of art aimed to instruct or inspire the viewer. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Europe’s pantheons of worthies began to expand beyond the traditional portraits of aristocratic rulers and military leaders to include those who had made intellectual or moral contributions to society. With the Revolution, American collections of worthies began to appear that honored the idea of a natural aristocracy of virtu-

ous and capable leaders of the new United States. Their purpose was not only to praise specific individuals but also to inspire virtue within contemporary society.<sup>9</sup>

As he prepared to join Benjamin Franklin and John Adams in Paris in 1784, Jefferson began his own collection of “Worthies” with a hurriedly commissioned portrait of George Washington by the American artist Joseph Wright. Once in Europe, he quickly began to add images of other notable Americans such as Franklin, Adams, and John Paul Jones. His own portrait, taken by young American artist Mather Brown during a trip to London in 1786, may have joined the growing collection at his Paris residence, the Hôtel de Langeac. While in France, he continued to expand the parameter of his collection with both painted and sculptured portraits of Europeans favorable to the American cause, such as the French nobles Turgot and Lafayette. From the Uffizi in Florence he requested copies of explorers who had first opened the New World: Columbus, Americus Vesputius, Cortez, and Magellan, and then added the noted English explorer Sir Walter Raleigh. When he commissioned copies of the portraits of Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, and John Locke that hung in the Royal Society in London, he reasoned that “I consider them the three greatest men who had ever lived, without any exception.” Jefferson’s collection was semiprivate, available first to those who had business at the American ministry in Paris, and then after his return to the United States to those who might be invited to his residences at the seats of the government in New York, Philadelphia, and Washington. After his retirement, his collection was on display at Monticello.<sup>10</sup>

The West Point portrait, however, was intended for a public space, the library at the academy. As far back as the fifteenth century, European libraries had been selected to display portraits of notables, especially writers and scholars. The intended placement of the West Point commission should have pleased Jefferson, as a library would be an appropriate location for a portrait of a statesman-scholar and principal author of the Declaration of Independence. It was significant that it was to hang alongside the portrait of George Washington, already the most identifiable of the founders and described in Jared Mansfield’s letter as “the great Washington” and the “Founder of the Republic.”<sup>11</sup>

Jefferson had not met Sully personally prior to the artist’s visit to Monticello in March 1821, but certainly Jefferson knew of his reputation as one of the country’s leading portrait artists and proponents of the fine arts in the United States. In a May 1811 letter, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, a Philadelphia and Washington architect who had worked with Jefferson on the Capitol and the President’s House, gave the retired president an assessment of the current art scene and noted that “a Young artist, Tho[mas] Sully, is certainly the first on the list of our portrait

painters.”<sup>12</sup>

Shortly after Latrobe’s report, Sully and Jefferson had a brief, formal correspondence when Jefferson was elected an honorary member of the newly formed Society of Artists of the United States and Sully was acting as secretary of the organization. Jefferson must have agreed with the stated purpose of this new organization, as it echoed closely what he had written to Madison many years before. Sully’s letter proposed that the society would have “a tendency to form a correct taste in this Country” and that, “by calling into Action Native genius, many prejudices will be removed with respect to foreign productions.” Sully began his letter stating “your love for the arts and sciences, and your long & unremitted exertions to promote the Independence & prosperity of our Country are known to the world.”<sup>13</sup>

Needless to say, Jefferson’s response was positive. He had just sent his letter of thanks for the offer of honorary membership, which expressed his good wishes for the society, when he received a second letter from Sully announcing that he had been elected president of the organization. Sully’s letter was candid in the hope that the infant society might benefit from its association with Jefferson’s name. Jefferson graciously declined the appointment, expressing “uneasiness of unmerited distinction.” However, as the society included architecture along with painting, sculpture, and engraving, Jefferson’s inclusion was not totally “unmerited” even though it would be several years before his finest public buildings for the University of Virginia would be realized.<sup>14</sup>

Sully had some knowledge of Jefferson’s architectural work; in his “Recollections of an Old Painter,” he wrote of visiting the Virginia Capitol in Richmond. He had admired Jefferson’s model, on view in the capitol’s library, but found many faults in the execution of the building itself. Even so, he maintained that “Mr. Jefferson was a very good judge of architecture.” Jefferson was aware of the shortcomings of the capitol and that the plan he had sent from Paris in 1786 had been executed “with some variations, not for the better.”<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps this contributed to his eagerness to have the artist view his latest architectural designs for the University of Virginia, at that time under construction in the neighboring village of Charlottesville. Jefferson made arrangements for Sully to tour the building site but did not accompany him due to the unusually cold weather and instead sent a note stating, “The bearer Mr. Sully, a celebrated Portrait painter of Philadelphia calls to see the University, and as he is a judge, and will be questioned about it on his return, I will request you to shew it to him advantageously.”<sup>16</sup>

Conversations about architecture must have ensued. Upon Sully’s return to

Baltimore, where he was maintaining a studio at the time, he apologized for his inability to locate a copy of a book he had promised to send his host, a French architectural work by J. N. L. Durand titled *Recueil et parallèle des édifices de tout genre, anciens et modernes*. Jefferson assured Sully not to worry; he would add this title to a book order that he was preparing to send to Paris. He must have approved of Sully's recommendation, for he included Durand's study in his list of books for the library at the University of Virginia.<sup>17</sup>

Jefferson may have had some idea of the merits of Sully's abilities as a portrait artist other than Latrobe's recommendation. Sully had painted a small, full-length portrait of James Madison in 1809, during his first year as president, specifically for reproduction by engraver David Edwin. Though Jefferson would not have the advantage of seeing Sully's original, as the intent of this commission was a print of the new president intended for public sale, it is possible he could have seen one of the resulting prints. James and Dolley Madison visited Monticello regularly, and if they did not have a print in-hand, some mention might have been made of Madison's experience with the well-known artist. For sure, Jefferson had another reassurance of Sully's merits prior to his arrival at Monticello from good friend, John Vaughn. He had "learnt with pleasure that the Establishment of West Point is to possess a full length portrait of yourself executed by Mr. Sully... I am gratified that it has fallen to Mr. Sully's lot to be the artist employed and beg leave to recommend him."<sup>18</sup>

Given their mutual interest in the arts in America as well as their respect for each other's work, it is not unreasonable to speculate that artist and subject worked closely in creating the portrait for West Point. The reputation of each would be invested in the portrait's success. It was up to Sully to capture a truthful likeness that suggested an elevated character. Jefferson could make recommendations as the artist considered the appropriate pose, the choice of props and clothing, and the background that would surround the figure. All elements working together should reflect Jefferson's role as a founder of both the nation and the military academy.

In the final painting, Sully's Jefferson stands erect, confident, and with an air of composure (see page 148). In the pose of the figure, the portrait adheres to some elements of the traditional grand manner style with the head turned to the right and the gaze directed into the distance and away from the viewer; the stance adheres to the requirement that the weight of the body rest on the right foot with the left foot slightly advanced. But rather than portray the right hand extended in the usual oratorical gesture or as an alternative, resting in the waistcoat, Sully leaves the arms at the sides with a document in the left hand. This rolled piece



of paper serves as the only prop within the painting. As such it becomes notable, especially with Sully's subtle placement of light along the leading edge of the paper. A close examination of the document gives no clue as to its identity. The absence of visible writing leaves open the possibility that it could represent the bill signed by Jefferson in 1802 creating the military academy.<sup>19</sup>

The positioning of Jefferson between two columns with the arms relaxed alongside the body gives a very linear aspect to the figure that is enhanced by the long, unbroken line of the handsome fur-lined greatcoat. Such a coat with fur lining was often referred to as a "pelisse." The coat could be presumed to have come from Jefferson's wardrobe or at least to have been a part of the original study, as Sully preferred to sketch in drapery at the first sitting and advised beginning painters that "if it is a large picture where more of the person is seen, the drapery must be painted from an exact study made from the person." Possibly this garment was encouraged by Sully as it adds compositionally and makes the figure far more substantial than it would have appeared otherwise.<sup>20</sup>

Aside from its artistic contributions, there is a tradition attached to the coat that could imply its choice came from reasons of provenance as well. There has been some thought that this must be the coat presented to Jefferson by Thaddeus Kosciuszko, the Polish patriot and American Revolutionary War hero. Considering the commission, a link with Kosciuszko would be appropriate. After he joined the American cause in 1776, Kosciuszko served in the Continental Army as a military engineer and was responsible for the enhanced fortification of West Point, important to the defense of the Hudson River. His name remained a part of West Point tradition.

A friendship developed between Kosciuszko and Jefferson upon Kosciuszko's return to the United States in 1797 following his liberation from a Russian prison, where he had been incarcerated since his failed attempt at the liberation of his native Poland. His stay was brief. When he returned to Europe in the spring of 1798, he gave Jefferson his power of attorney to manage his business affairs, and as a parting gift he requested, "Give me leave to present you a Fur." His note did not specify the type of fur or whether it was a pelt or a garment, but over the years Jefferson, family members, and friends mentioned a "pelisse" or "cloak," and some references connected this garment to General Kosciuszko.<sup>21</sup>

The term "pelisse" was used throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century to identify an outer garment that could be cut as a coat or simply as a cloak, worn by either men or women, with a fur lining usually the distinguishing characteristic. This was especially true for a man's pelisse, and the term often appeared in reference to European military uniforms.

Jefferson first mentioned his pelisse in December 1798, several months after Kosciuszko's departure from the United States. He reported to his daughter Martha that the weather was extremely cold on his return to Philadelphia from Monticello, yet he assured her that he stayed as comfortable as if he had been in a "warm bed"—"thanks to my pelisse." Years later, well into his retirement, he made another reference to his pelisse. He had suffered from the cold on the three-day trip from Monticello to his retreat home, Poplar Forest, in southern Virginia. He requested that Martha send "my wolf-skin pelisse and fur-boots." She would find the items in the closet over his bed, and he was specific as to how the items should be packed. "The pelisse had better be sowed up in a striped blanket to keep it clean and uninjured," he suggested, but it would suffice to package "the boots in any course wrapper." Jefferson obviously regarded the wolf-skin pelisse as valuable.<sup>22</sup>

The following year he loaned his fur to his grandchildren, Ellen and Jeff, as well as Jeff's wife Jane for a trip to Richmond. Ellen informed her mother that "we found Grand Papa's fur delightful. I do not know what we should have done without it, for we were out until past eight Wednesday evening, and off again an hour before day the next morning." If the three had benefited from the fur, then it is probable that this pelisse was in the form of a cloak rather than cut as a coat.<sup>23</sup>

It was an anecdote written by a family friend that defined Jefferson's fur as a "cloak" and linked it to Kosciuszko. "The Fur Cloak, A Reminesence," written by Margaret Bayard Smith, began on a winter evening in 1805, when she was a dinner guest at the President's House in Washington. Following dinner, she began to feel ill with chills and a fever. Smith, whose husband, Samuel Harrison Smith, edited the Jeffersonian Republican *National Intelligencer*, described how Jefferson wrapped her in his fur cloak as protection from the winter air. On her way home she reflected on the legend she knew attached to this cloak and thought, "Strange! ...that I, an obscure individual in America, should be wrapped in the same mantle that once enveloped the Czar of Russia—that was afterwards long worn by the Palust Hero, of Poland, and now belongs to one of the greatest men alive!" As a young woman, she had met Kosciuszko and had listened to his account of his release from a Russian prison. Czar Paul had taken off his own cloak and impulsively wrapped it around Kosciuszko as he left his cell. Her "Reminesence" concluded with Kosciuszko's final departure from the United States, when "Kosciuszko, left his cloak, with his revered friend Jefferson."<sup>24</sup>

This still does not establish that the fur Jefferson referred to as "my wolf skin pelisse" was the cloak that Smith described as descending from Czar Paul I to Kosciuszko and then to Jefferson. But the cloak that she viewed with such awe came into her care again after Jefferson's death. In January 1837, as his grandchild-

dren took an inventory of furniture items, probably in relation to their mother's death the previous October, it was mentioned that "Mary says Kosciuszko's wolf skin pelisse is at Mrs. H[arrison] Smith's who suggested it would be well to give it to some society which she named (but Mary had forgotten). She thought they would go to the expense of having a glass case made for it to preserve it from the moths." Was this idea carried forward? At this point it is not known what happened to the Kosciuszko-Jefferson wolf-skin pelisse, but obviously friends and family members believed it possessed enough historical importance to merit preservation.<sup>25</sup>

Since the evidence points toward the conclusion that the fur presented to Jefferson by Kosciuszko upon his departure was wolf-skin and shaped into a cloak, it is obviously not the coat worn by Jefferson in Sully's portrait. More likely this Kosciuszko fur is the one in which Jefferson wrapped himself for the 1805 presidential portrait by Rembrandt Peale. Yet there exists one other possible connection between Kosciuszko and the coat that Jefferson wore for the portrait commissioned by West Point.

After he sailed from America, another of Kosciuszko's furs came into Jefferson's possession. Jefferson inventoried the items that Kosciuszko had left behind when he returned to Europe. He listed among them "a pelisse of fine fur." Due to its value, he decided to store it at his own apartments rather than placing it in the warehouse with the remainder of his friend's property. Jefferson reported to Kosciuszko that "your fur was valued by an honest furrier here at 25 Doll. according to the price of Martins [sic] here." The marten, the North American equivalent of the Russian sable, was considered a very fine fur, and thus Jefferson thought that the pelisse should be sold privately rather than at auction. No additional information about this marten-skin pelisse appears in the known Kosciuszko-Jefferson correspondence.<sup>26</sup>

Many years later, in May 1907, one of Jefferson's great-granddaughters was making a written inventory of "Monticello relics" that had remained within the family. Among these was listed "the splendid 'Golden Sables' over coat, very large & long, which 'Kosiosko' [sic] wore during his 'Russian Campaign', this garment was cut up into *Muffs & Tippets*."<sup>27</sup>

Did the fine pelisse left behind by Kosciuszko remain with Jefferson, and if so, was this the coat selected for Sully's portrait? Certainly Sully's rendering implies a fur such as marten or sable, and as the commission came from West Point, it could have brought up recollections of Kosciuszko's fortification of that Hudson River stronghold during the War for American Independence. Jefferson was revisiting that time in American history and his own history as well; he had begun the writ-

ing of his autobiography two months prior to Sully's March visit to Monticello. This review of the past together with the anxieties provoked by the Missouri Crisis and the republic's future could have generated thoughts of the Poland that Kosciuszko had defended. On the eve of another crisis, the War of 1812, Jefferson contemplated the hard lesson that Poland provided: "a lesson which all our countrymen should study; the example of a country erased from the map of the world by the dissensions of its own citizens."<sup>28</sup>

A garment with a Kosciuszko connection would seem a logical choice for the West Point commission. Yet Sully did not choose the cloak that can be given a convincing provenance as the parting gift to Jefferson, perhaps because it had been used earlier by artist Rembrandt Peale. If another Kosciuszko garment remained in Jefferson's closet, certainly it could have captured the artist's attention. In his *Register of Portraits* Sully does not elaborate upon any of his paintings of Jefferson that came from the initial study taken at Monticello but simply lists them with dates and the amounts paid for each. Some mystery still surrounds the elegant fur-lined topcoat but the family tradition referenced by a great-granddaughter makes a possible connection between Jefferson, Kosciuszko, and the West Point portrait.<sup>29</sup>

The other garments and accessories selected for the portrait reflect Jefferson's years as president. Beneath the topcoat Jefferson wears a three-piece black suit that Sully's skillful rendering implies to be velvet. There are references to Jefferson in a black suit during his presidency. After attending a dinner at the Executive Mansion, Federalist Senator William Plummer noted in his journal that his host had worn "a new suit of black—silk hose—shoes—clean linen and his hair highly powdered." On the day of Jefferson's second inauguration another observer described him "in high spirits, dressed in black and even in black silk stockings."<sup>30</sup>

Jefferson was not unique in his preference for black, which by the beginning of the nineteenth century was becoming a frequent choice in a gentleman's wardrobe. Black had represented modesty, stability, and sobriety in western clothing for hundreds of years. It had moved from medieval clergy and Renaissance scholars to the professional and commercial classes. Before Jefferson left Paris in the fall of 1789, he would have seen the black suit at the center of the crisis that would evolve into revolution.<sup>31</sup>

On May 5, 1789, he attended the opening of the assembly of the Estates General at Versailles and continued to go frequently to hear the debates. There he could have observed the clothing prescribed by the Grand-Master of Ceremonies, the Marquis de Brezé, for the delegates representing the three estates: the First Estate, the clergy, was to wear ecclesiastical dress appropriate to their position in the church; the Second Estate, the aristocracy, was expected to appear in black

silk suits with lavish gold trim, white stockings, lace jabots, hats with plumes and dress swords; the Third Estate, one-half the delegates representing the middle to lower classes, was instructed to wear simple suits of black wool, black stockings, plain muslin cravats, and untrimmed hats. As they were not representing members of the aristocracy, they were not to carry a gentleman's dress sword. Through these dictates of attire, the plain, untrimmed black suit came to signal an empathy with the Third Estate, the deputies of the people, and for a short while became an emblem of political position.<sup>32</sup>

Outside the dramatic events in Paris, the popularity of the black suit steadily advanced during the final quarter of the eighteenth century. Black clothing for men served as the great leveler. Associated with democracy, first in France during its revolution but then even more pervasively in nineteenth-century America, black came to signify simplification and uniformity in men's dress. It gained such currency that some lamented the passing of more colorful and individualistic attire and derided the continual appearance of men in their "black uniforms."<sup>33</sup>

Black would remain the color of choice among well-dressed men, both in Europe and the United States, even though the cut of the suit would change. In Sully's portrait Jefferson wears a suit coat with long sloping sides over a waistcoat cut in a wide "V." This paired with knee-breeches definitely ties the suit to the beginning of the century and a style fashionable during Jefferson's presidency. As comparison, the more fashionable cut for the 1820s is well illustrated in another of Sully's portraits, that of Revolutionary War hero the Marquis de Lafayette, taken just four years after that of Jefferson. During Lafayette's celebratory return visit to the United States in 1824-25, a committee from Philadelphia commissioned a portrait of the Marquis to be presented to the city. Sully details Lafayette's fash-



*The Marquis de Lafayette* by Thomas Sully.  
Independence National Historical Park

ionable suit coat with its high rolled collar joining the “M-Notch” lapel and the higher, rounded waist of the coat revealing a small portion of the horizontal line of the waistcoat. Knee breeches have been replaced with ankle-length pantaloons. Obviously the clothing choices for Jefferson’s portrait were intended to place him in an earlier time. His suit, even though in the prevailing black, is recognizable as a style fashionable during his presidential years.

The shoes that Jefferson wears in the portrait identify him with his presidential years as well. A number of contemporaries noted that rather than displaying elegant buckles, Jefferson wore shoes that laced. Often infused with a tone of sarcasm when made by a member of the political opposition, one Federalist remarked that Jefferson’s shoes “closed tight round his ankles, laced up with neat leather strings and absolutely without buckles.” For this viewer Jefferson’s footwear made the statement that buckles were “superfluous and anti-republican especially when he has strings.” Another Federalist attributed this style preference to Jefferson’s deliberate attempt at “singularity.” A brief editorial in the *New York Commercial Advertiser* in 1802 claimed that “in every age of the world, rulers and philosophers have made themselves remarkable for the affectation of some singularity.” The writer also speculated that “our philosophic president chooses to have his singularities as well as European kings—He prefers shoestrings, when other folks wear buckles.”<sup>34</sup>

Jefferson may have bristled at being compared to a European king, especially since shoes laced with strings were considered by many as another sign of republican leveling and became popular especially during the French Revolution. In his *Memoirs*, Sir William Wraxall reflected that dress totally “fell” in the “era of Jacobinism and equality in 1793 and 1794.” In Wraxall’s eyes “it was then that pantaloons, cropped hair, and shoe-strings, as well as the total abolition of buckles and ruffles, together with the disuse of hair-powder, characterized the men.”<sup>35</sup>

Apparently Jefferson continued to wear laced, ankle-high boots whether due to ideological leanings, practicality, or simply comfort. When Congressman Daniel Webster visited Monticello in 1824, he described Jefferson as wearing “shoes of the kind that bear his name.” Although they may have remained his favored footwear, in Sully’s portrait the shoes recall a fashion that distinguished him as president.<sup>36</sup>

In the final portrait Sully creates a setting for the figure that reflects western portrait traditions and yet is unique. Through his skilled use of light he guides the eye across the space within the painting and creates an impression that Jefferson has just stepped before his audience, the viewer. The face is illuminated as though by a spotlight, and the slight dash of red provided by the collar of Jefferson’s

under-waistcoat draws further focus to the face. Sully followed his own advice offered in his *Hints to Young Painters and the Process of Portrait Painting* that “in a portrait every part may be exactly rendered, but should be kept subordinate in regard to the face.”<sup>37</sup>

The setting of the figure, just like the pose, also borrows some elements of the grand manner style. Jefferson is flanked by impressive columns and backed by a swag of red drapery, but to this tradition that is often found in European state portraits Sully added detail that makes the space specific to the United States. From the face the lighting guides the eye downward, tipping



**Thomas Sully, *Thomas Jefferson* (1743-1826), LL.D. 1786, Yale University Art Gallery, Leila A. and John Hill Morgan, B.A. 1893, LL.B. 1896, M.A. (Hon.) 1929, Collection**

the rolled document in Jefferson’s hand but then strongly illuminating the lower shaft of the column to the right in the painting. The lower shaft and base of the column catch almost as much light as the face and become a secondary area of focus. Sully’s careful rendering of the base’s carved water leaf design and his painterly indication that the shaft is breccia marble identify the column as belonging in the Hall of the House of Representatives (known, after 1857, as National Statuary Hall). When Capitol architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe rebuilt the House chamber after the Capitol was burned during the War of 1812, he replaced the sandstone columns with the breccia marble and added the unique water leaf pattern to the base. William Allen, architectural historian for the Washington Capitol, has explained that the unpredictable nature of breccia marble made it problematic to attempt a cincture at the bottom of the shaft. To compensate for the lack of a cincture, Latrobe devised the water leaf design, resulting in the unique and



identifiable base. He created a very grand room, the pride of the country at the time, but one that Jefferson never saw.<sup>38</sup>

A small study for the portrait indicates that at some point Sully had thoughts of placing Jefferson in a more complex setting with a background narrative, not unlike what he created for his *Lafayette*. The study is very loosely painted, but the figure of Jefferson is recognizable and comparable to the final West Point version. The pose is similar, and the long coat, although closed, is essentially the same. Here a sheaf of papers replaces the rolled document, and they are moved from the left to the right hand. The most notable difference is the setting, busy with other figures. Men stand behind Jefferson, and a crowd is gathered in front of what appears to be an outdoor portico. It seems likely that this may have been Sully's initial idea for the composition, perhaps executed at Monticello but then rejected.

How Sully came to select the House chamber as the appropriate setting can only be surmised. Certainly many links existed between Jefferson's presidency and the House of Representatives, including the vote for the funding of the United States Military Academy in 1802. The new Hall of the House of Representatives had been reopened in 1819, and at the time Sully was completing his *Jefferson* in 1822, interest was being generated in the new House chamber by the work of a fellow artist, Samuel F. B. Morse. It was the subject of a large and complex painting by Morse that depicted a nighttime session of the House and included miniature but recognizable portraits of many of the congressmen. Morse had been given studio space in the Capitol itself; he wrote to his wife in January 1822 that "I find the picture becoming the subject of much conversation, and every day gives me greater encouragement to believe that it will be more popular than any picture heretofore exhibited." A few weeks later, Samuel Harrison Smith's *National Intelligencer* described Morse's rendering of the chamber interior "mathematically correct."<sup>39</sup>

It is probable that Sully would have been aware of the attention being given Morse's work. This could have influenced his decision to use the new House chamber as the setting for his commission, or it is equally possible that he and Jefferson discussed various settings. The two men seem to have enjoyed discussions about architecture during Sully's stay at Monticello, and the newly completed House chamber would have been of interest to Jefferson. Sully's obvious familiarity with the detail and placement of the columns and the drapery of the room suggest that he had visited the site. The final portrait, with its simplified composition and classical setting, became a much stronger work. The focus rests completely upon Jefferson.



Jefferson never saw the completed full-length portrait. Sully finished the West Point commission in May 1822, but the earliest known engraving was not produced until 1834. Would it have fulfilled Jefferson's hopes for an appropriate and enduring likeness? He never mentioned the portrait, but his granddaughter Ellen expressed her views in a letter to her cousin shortly after Sully left Monticello. She believed that he had "succeeded admirably." The area around Jefferson's mouth and chin constituted the only shortcoming, "but the painter seems to be aware of this defect, and will endeavor to correct it." She predicted that the finished full-length portrait "will probably be the best representation existing of one to whom future ages must look back with gratitude and admiration."<sup>40</sup>

Approximately 120 people paid to see the completed full-length portrait during the ten days that Sully displayed it in his Philadelphia gallery. In his journal he noted that he made about \$30 from the showing, and as the usual price of admission to the gallery was twenty-five cents per person, over 100 Philadelphians must have had the means and the desire to see the portrait of the former president. Sully's matter-of-fact records give no indication whether he considered the showing successful, but on May 20, 1822, he packaged portrait and frame for the trip to West Point.<sup>41</sup>

The reaction of one contemporary viewer provides a better gauge of the success of the Sully-Jefferson collaboration. In 1823, when James Fenimore Cooper visited West Point, this son of a staunch Federalist opponent of Jefferson's was not particularly eager to see the newly installed painting. "I would have gone twice as far," Cooper wrote, "to see the picture of almost any other man." Nevertheless, he was assured by men whom he respected that the merits of the painting made a visit to the West Point library worthwhile. A member of Cooper's traveling party, British theatre comedian Charles Matthews, described the painting as "one of the finest portraits he had ever beheld." While the assessment of Matthews, an avid art collector, focused on the execution of the work, Cooper reacted more to the image of Jefferson and his memories of bitter partisan politics. For him the name of Jefferson had always been associated with "political heresy," but after viewing the portrait he conceded to a change of opinion. Cooper admitted, "I saw nothing but Jefferson, standing before me ... a gentleman, appearing in all republican simplicity, with a grace and ease on the canvas, that to me seemed unrivalled." The Sully-Jefferson collaboration proved in at least this one instance to have overcome political biases and presented a figure appropriate to the legacy of a founder of the American republic. In Cooper's assessment, Jefferson had been positioned for posterity "appearing in all republican simplicity."<sup>42</sup>

## Notes

1. Jared Mansfield to TJ, 26 January 1821, Special Collections, U.S. Military Academy Library, West Point, N.Y.
2. TJ to Mansfield, 26 January 1821, *ibid.*
3. TJ to John Holmes, 22 April 1820, *ibid.* See also TJ to Albert Gallatin, 26 December 1820, *TJW*, 1447-50; TJ to James Breckinridge, 15 February 1821, *ibid.*, 1452-54; Peter S. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville, Va., 2000), esp. chap. 4.
4. For an excellent discussion of Jefferson's views on history and his personal legacy, see Frank D. Cogliano, *Thomas Jefferson: Reputation and Legacy* (Charlottesville, Va., 2006).
5. Cogliano, *Thomas Jefferson*, 50-52; John Marshall, *The Life of George Washington*, ed. Robert Faulkner and Paul Carrese (Indianapolis, Ind., 2000), xii, xv, 366; Henry Lee III, *Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia, 1812), as cited in Cogliano, *Thomas Jefferson*, 62.
6. TJ to Elbridge Gerry, 26 January 1799, *TJP*, 30:647.
7. TJ to James Madison, 20 September 1787, *ibid.*, 8:535.
8. TJ to Joseph Delaplaine, 3 May 1814, TJ Papers, Lib. Cong.
9. Brandon Brame Fortune, "Portraits of Virtue and Genius: Pantheons of Worthies and Public Portraiture in the Early American Republic, 1780-1820" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1987), 1-14, 34; David Hackett Fischer, *Liberty and Freedom: A Visual History of America's Founding Ideas* (New York, 2005), 178.
10. Susan R. Stein, *The Worlds of Thomas Jefferson at Monticello* (New York, 1993), 122-37 and 221-23; TJ to John Trumbull, 15 February 1788, *TJP* 14:561.
11. Fortune, "Portraits of Virtue and Genius," 15.
12. Benjamin Henry Latrobe to TJ, 19 May 1811, *TJP:RS*, 3:625.
13. Thomas Sully (for the Society of Artists of the United States) to TJ, 22 December 1811, *ibid.*, 4:355-56.
14. TJ to Thomas Sully, 8 January 1812, *ibid.*, 407; Thomas Sully to TJ, 6 January 1812, *ibid.*, 398-400; TJ to Thomas Sully, 25 January 1812, *ibid.*, 459-60.
15. Thomas Sully, "Recollections of an Old Painter," in *Hours at Home: A Popular Monthly of Instruction and Recreation*, No. 10 (November 1869): 69-74; Thomas Jefferson, *Autobiography*, 1821, *TJW*, 41.
16. TJ to Arthur Brockenbrough, 28 March 1821, TJ Papers, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library.
17. Sully to TJ, 6 April 1821, TJ Papers, Lib. Cong.; TJ to Sully, 17 April 1821, *ibid.*; William B. O'Neal, *Jefferson's Fine Arts Library: His Selections for the University of Virginia Together with His Own Architectural Books* (Charlottesville, Va., 1976), 106-8.
18. Thomas Sully, *A Register of Portraits Painted by Thomas Sully, 1801-1871*, ed. Charles Henry Hart (Philadelphia, 1909), 114; John Vaughn to TJ, 14 March 1821, TJ Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.
19. F. Nivelon, "Rudiments of Genteel Behavior" (1737), as quoted in Robin Simon, *The Portrait in Britain and America* (Oxford, England, 1987), 76.
20. Thomas Sully, *Hints to Young Painters and the Process of Portrait Painting* (Philadelphia, 1873; reprint, New York, 1965), 15.
21. T. Kosciuszko to TJ, before 5 May 1798, *TJP*, 30:331.

22. TJ to Martha Jefferson Randolph, 27 December 1798, *ibid.*, 605; TJ to Martha Jefferson Randolph, 4 November 1815, *Family Letters of Thomas Jefferson*, eds. Edwin M. Betts and James A. Bear Jr. (Charlottesville, 1986), 411.
23. Ellen Wayles Randolph to Martha Jefferson Randolph, 5 January 1816, Ellen Wayles Randolph Coolidge Correspondence, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library.
24. Margaret Bayard Smith, "The Fur Cloak, A Reminesence," Margaret Bayard Smith Papers, Lib. Cong.
25. Jane Hollins Randolph to Thomas Jefferson Randolph, [?] January 1837, Edgehill-Randolph Papers, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library.
26. TJ to Kosciuszko, 21 February 1799, *TJP*, 31:52.
27. Martha Burke, *List of Monticello Relics, 1907-08*, Trist-Burke Family Papers 1825-1936, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library.
28. TJ to William Duane, 25 July 1811, *TJP:RS*, 4:56.
29. Thomas Sully, *A Register of Portraits*, 91-92.
30. William Plumer, *William Plumer's Proceedings in the United States Senate, 1803-1807*, ed. Everett Somerville Brown (New York, 1923), 211; Augustus John Foster, *Jeffersonian America*, ed. Richard Beale Davis (San Marino, Calif., 1954), 15.
31. For the history of the color black in men's clothing see John Harvey, *Men in Black* (Chicago, 1995), 41-71, and Diane de Marly, *Fashion for Men: An Illustrated History* (New York, 1985), 49-53, 77-91.
32. Aileen Ribeiro, *Fashion in the French Revolution* (London, 1988), 45-46.
33. Harvey, *Men in Black*, 26-28; reference to men in their "black uniforms" is from William Irving, James Kirke Paulding, and Washington Irving, *Salmagundi*, No. 1, 24 January 1807 (printed as a collection, New York, 1860), 28.
34. Bernard Mayo, "A Peppercorn for Mr. Jefferson," *Virginia Quarterly Review* (Spring 1943): 224; *Commercial Advertiser* (New York), 21 July 1802.
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37. Sully, *Hints to Young Painters*, 31.
38. Verification of the column as from the Hall of the House of Representatives obtained from the Architect of the Capitol, William Allen, 5 July 2006. For further discussion of Latrobe's design of the Capitol, see William C. Allen, *History of the United States Capitol: A Chronicle of Design, Construction, and Politics* (Washington, D.C., 2001).
39. Samuel F.B. Morse to Lucretia Pickering Walker Morse, 5 January 1822, Samuel F.B. Morse Papers, Lib. Cong., Bound Vol. 24 January 1821 - 8 December 1823, 129-31; *National Intelligencer*, 16 February 1822, as quoted in William Kloss, *Samuel F.B. Morse* (New York, 1988), 69-70.
40. Ellen Wayles Randolph to Francis Eppes, 5 April 1821, Eppes Collection, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library.
41. Thomas Sully, "Thomas Sully's Journal," microfilm copy of the transcription held at the New York Public Library.
42. James Fenimore Cooper to Charles Kitchel Gardner, c. 24 April-17 June 1823, in *The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper*, ed. James Franklin Beard, 6 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1960-68), 1:95-97.

## Regional History Forum

*Each issue of The Hudson River Valley Review includes the Regional History Forum. This section highlights historic sites in the Valley, exploring their historical significance as well as information for visitors today. Although due attention is paid to sites of national visibility, HRVR also highlights sites of regional significance. Please write us with suggestions for future Forum sections.*



Temple of Virtue

# The New Windsor Cantonment and National Purple Heart Hall of Honor

In 1782, the Continental Army remained fully immersed in the Revolutionary War. That April, Commander in Chief George Washington established his headquarters at the Jonathan Hasbrouck house (today known as Washington's Headquarters State Historic Site) in Newburgh. In October, he assembled his troops in New Windsor, where some 7,000 soldiers and 500 women and children began erecting a cantonment, or military enclave.

Although the defeat of General Cornwallis's British army in the Battle of Yorktown had occurred in 1781, a year prior to establishment of the New Windsor Cantonment, the war would drag on for two more years. Thus it was necessary to set up camp in preparation for a possible spring campaign in the event that peace negotiations taking place in France proved unsuccessful. Since the British were still in control of New York City, it was imperative that Washington maintain his hold on the Hudson River. The Hudson Valley provided a prime location for the generals, their troops, and their families. The proximity of the river made obtaining military supplies and other necessities much easier. Also, the nearby mountains provided a sufficient degree of seclusion, should that be necessary.

The cantonment site needed to accommodate the New Hampshire, New York, and New Jersey troops along with the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Massachusetts Brigades. Beyond all of the soldiers, space was needed to house several officers and military families, plus buildings like a hospital and stables. Overall, it is estimated that there were about 700 well-constructed huts on the 1,600-acre site. In fact, the huts were extremely well-built. In a letter, General Horatio Gates wrote about the soldiers, "...I think they will be more comfortable and better Lodged, in the Quarters they built for themselves than in Those any City in the Continent would afford them." By the end of November 1782, the troops were settled in and well-stocked with necessary items such as food and clothing.



DOUG KERR

The Mountainville Hut

Despite the comfortable living conditions at New Windsor, the army was not entirely pleased. They had just suffered through two very severe winters, with shortages in every area: food, fuel, forage, and clothing. During that time, many men became disgruntled. Washington remarked upon the condition of his troops in his letters to other generals: "It is with the utmost regret I am compelled to represent to you the distressed situation of the Troops on this River for want of bread... unless some spirited exertions, or coercive means are immediately made use of for obtaining a supply, I can see nothing but ruin stares us in the face." Even though Washington knew his army was struggling, he maintained a strict regimen and went so far as to encourage officers to enforce more rules, like rationing alcohol and conducting frequent inspections of clothing and equipment.

It also did not help that the men were now inactive, without the excitement of battle, and weren't being paid or promoted in any way. The ongoing and still uncertain peace talks contributed to the troops' dissatisfaction, leaving them restless about what was to come. On top of this, they were still doing physical labor (cutting firewood, undertaking building maintenance, etc.) in preparation for another winter. Again, Washington addressed the poor state of his men in a letter, "... but you may rely upon it, the patience and long sufferance of this Army are almost exhausted, and... there never was so great a spirit of Discontent as at this instant..."

Still, both Washington and the men pressed on with the conditions at hand. However, the troops began to formulate their complaints. On November 16, 1782, a meeting was held between members of the Massachusetts regiments at which the representatives decided it would be best to invite others to join them in making a list of grievances. These ranged from the need to force officers to retire when regiments combined to the fact that the soldiers had to build their own cantonment yet received nothing in return. At this same time, a peace was being finalized, but the men would get no word of the treaty until March, 1783. As they waited, their spirits remained low.

By January of 1783, residents of the New Windsor Cantonment were primarily concerned with their mundane daily routine, until Reverend Israel Evans (a chaplain for the New Hampshire Regiment) suggested that Washington have the men build a large public building. The "Temple of Virtue," as the structure came to be known, was meant to hold Sunday services as well as other public meetings. While the building of the temple kept the men busy, the list of grievances had been finished and formally delivered to Congress on January 6, 1783.

By February, Congress began to express concern over the army's letter, which it referred to as a "memorial." On the 27th, Congressman Joseph Jones wrote

to Commander in Chief Washington, stressing to him the unstable situation of the army and its growing unhappiness with lack of pay and insufficient treatment. So it came to be that, in the very Temple of Virtue the men had just built, Washington addressed his army's complaints.

On March 15, 1783, Washington ordered that the officers meet in the temple so he could address their letter to Congress. It was at this meeting (now known as the Newburgh Address) where the commander in chief won over residents of the Cantonment. In a vulnerable moment during his remarks, Washington revealed the toll the war had exacted on him: "Gentlemen, you will permit me to put on my spectacles, for I have not only grown gray, but almost blind, in the service of my country."

With this small gesture, many of the men were brought to tears, and the army's complaints were quickly resolved. Morale was restored at the Cantonment, and just weeks later, on March 28, the soldiers were informed of the signing of the peace treaty that had occurred on January 21. Washington ordered an official cease fire effective on April 19. For these men, as well as the rest of the Continental Army, independence had been achieved and their years of unflinching service had prevailed.

Two months later, the first two Military Badges of Merit were awarded to Sergeant Elijah Churchill and Sergeant William Brown at Washington's Newburgh headquarters. In June, a third badge was conferred upon Sergeant Daniel Bissel. The Badge of Military Merit is now known as the Purple Heart. Established by Washington in August 1782, it was meant to be a means of recognizing soldiers and non-commissioned officers. This was a tremendous honor: at the time, only officers were eligible to receive such recognition. The original design was a heart cut from purple cloth with a lace border. Presently, the Purple Heart honors those who have been wounded in battle. Since the award's revival in 1932, approximately 1.7 million men and women have been awarded it.

Today, the place where the 7,000 troops built the New Windsor Cantonment is a State Historic Site. Visitors may walk around the grounds and enter a reconstruction of the Temple of Virtue and the "Mountainville Hut," one of the few surviving examples of the Continental Army's timber work. Exhibits describe the daily routine of the men and women who built the cantonment and lived there. Military reenactments, including musket drills and blacksmithing demonstrations, also are offered frequently.

The grounds also are home to the National Purple Heart Hall of Honor. In addition to exhibiting artifacts from every American War, recounting soldiers' contributions on land, sea, and air, it offers a database of nearly 168,000 Purple





COURTESY OF NATIONAL PURPLE HEART HALL OF HONOR

National Purple Heart Hall of Honor



COURTESY OF NATIONAL PURPLE HEART HALL OF HONOR

National Purple Heart Hall of Honor, Main Exhibit Gallery



Heart recipients. (Those not in the database who wish to be included need only provide proof of having received the award.) It also contains a theater and video interviews with nearly 150 veterans from every conflict from World War II on.

Both sites celebrate tremendous moments in the nation's history and honor the sacrifices made by so many to achieve them.

*Located at 374 Temple Hill Road (Route 300) in New Windsor, New Windsor Cantonment is open from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday from April-October. It is closed Monday-Tuesday and holidays except Memorial Day, Independence Day, Veterans Day, and Presidents Day.*

*Visitor Center exhibits are open year round from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Saturday, and 1-5 p.m. on Sunday. Based on staff availability, from November through March costumed interpreters will demonstrate 18th-century medical and surgical practices in the visitor center galleries and do musket firings. For more information, call 845-561-1765, ext. 22, or visit <http://nysparks.state.ny.us/historic-sites/22/details.aspx>.*

*The National Purple Heart Hall of Honor is open seven days a week. It can be reached at 845-561-1765 or online at [www.thepurpleheart.com](http://www.thepurpleheart.com).*

*Gabrielle Albino, Marist '11*

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COURTESY OF NATIONAL PURPLE HEART HALL OF HONOR

**National Purple Heart Hall of Honor,  
Main Exhibit Gallery**



Charles Loring Elliott, *Matthew Vassar*, 1861, Oil on canvas, 96 x 63 in.,  
The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York,  
Gift of the Board of Trustees, 1861.1

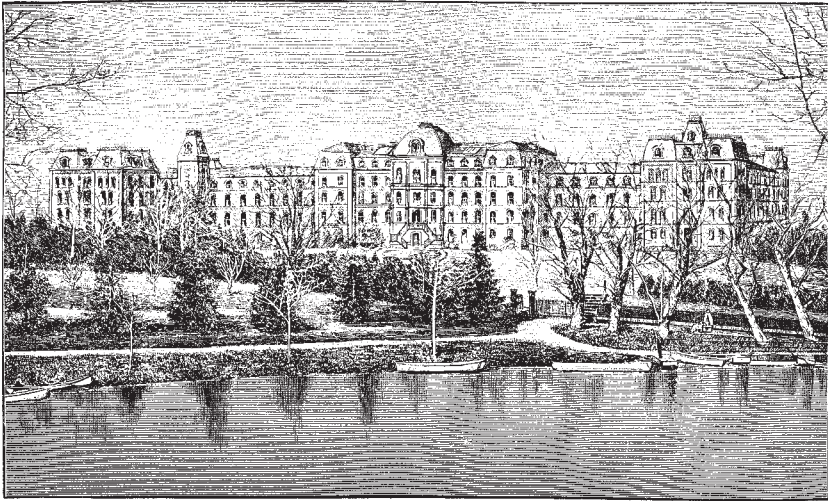


Engraving of Main Building with Carriage, c.1865

## James Renwick Jr.'s Main Building at Vassar College Turns 150

This year Vassar College celebrates the sesquicentennial of its founding in 1861. It would be Poughkeepsie brewer Matthew Vassar's (1792-1868) grandest enterprise. Vassar devoted his remarkable energies and considerable fortune to found a college where women could obtain an education equal to that of the men's colleges such as Harvard and Yale.

Although Vassar had little formal education, his thirst for knowledge was insatiable. Books on history, literature, religion, and travel filled his library; he had traveled with his wife throughout Europe. Born in England, his family immigrated to the Hudson Valley when he was four years old. He became a lifelong resident of Poughkeepsie, and in 1851 purchased his summer estate, Springside, along Academy Street. (Initially planned as a rural cemetery, the landscape had been designed by renowned landscape designer Andrew Jackson Downing.) Among his intimates were Hudson River historian Benson Lossing and artist inventor Samuel F. B. Morse, Vassar's neighbor on the Hudson. Both served on the college's first Board of Trustees. College presidents, Baptist ministers, editors, publishers, and important residents of Poughkeepsie completed the board. Oddly enough, there



SPECIAL COLLECTIONS, VASSAR COLLEGE LIBRARIES

Engraving of Main Building with Vassar Lake in foreground

were no women. Also notable is the fact that Vassar, a Baptist, wished his board, and his college, to be nonsectarian.

Shrewd, energetic, and successful, Matthew Vassar was president of The Hudson Valley Railroad by 1860. He was undeterred by skeptics who were uncertain about education for women, as he was by challenges to his investments caused by the onset of the Civil War. By April 1861 he had contracts with New York architect James Renwick, Jr. (1818-1895), and Poughkeepsie builder William Harloe to design and build the grand and imposing Main Building at the college. He chose the site of the former Mill Cove Farm, known from his childhood, in Arlington, two miles east of the Hudson River.

From the start, Matthew Vassar was in close contact with his architect, insisting that Renwick be at the site at least once a fortnight, and that the building be completed in four years. Having decided to house all campus activities—classrooms, dormitories, faculty apartments, dining hall, chapel, and laboratories—under one roof, the size of the building would necessarily be grand. Earlier plans by Providence architect Thomas Tefft show one exceedingly long building, using the Italianate round-arched style. However, when Tefft died in 1859 on a European trip, Renwick was quickly chosen as his replacement.

An admirable eclectic, Renwick was celebrated for his 1846 Gothic-revival Grace Church on Broadway in New York, his 1847 Lombard-style Smithsonian Institution on the Mall in Washington, for the plans of New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral (then beginning to rise on Fifth Avenue), a small church in Albany, banks, hotels, hospitals, and a courthouse in Fredericksburg, Virginia. Renwick



had traveled to Paris in 1854 and 1855, where he was impressed by the Palace of the Tuileries and emperor Napoléon Bonaparte's building schemes for the New Louvre. The architect modeled his new building on these many-pavilioned, elaborately ornamented, and mansarded royal French monuments.

Renderings now in the archive of the Loeb Art Center at Vassar show a U-shaped plan, projecting pavilions at either end of a central axis dominated by a larger, more important central pavilion. This central pavilion, whose main entrance was reached by an elegant divided stair anticipating the interior divided staircase, contained reception rooms on the principal floor, the library on the second floor (third story), and the art gallery on the third floor under the central mansard. Faculty apartments occupied the north and south projecting pavilions, while suites for students filled the connecting ranges. A rear



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Engraving of original Main Building entrance, c.1893



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Above, Lodge Building with attendant, 1873  
 Right, Main Building Exterior, Pach Brothers, 1878



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SPECIAL COLLECTIONS VASSAR COLLEGE LIBRARIES

Observatory Apartment

projection housed a two-story chapel, dining room, and kitchens below.

The exterior of the building is composed entirely of brick save the blue free-stone accents of the capstones. Paired pilasters emphasize the pavilion corners and a variety of dormers enliven the steep pitched roof. Renwick's use of French Renaissance/Second Empire forms well served his intention to make the mass of the building, 500 feet in width, intelligible and commanding. He did this through recessing and projecting the wall planes, and by relieving them at the angle of the main horizontal core with matching towers that are nearly as tall as the central mansard.

The war, however, dictated changes and substitutions, including pine instead of walnut for the chapel pews. (Walnut was needed for gun stocks.) Other changes created even greater expense, such the use of galvanized iron, which was new on the market, and enthusiastically encouraged by Vassar. Glass for windows was imported from France throughout.

In June 1865 Matthew Vassar wrote to his trustees that the erection of the college edifice was about to be completed and its interior life as a great educational establishment to begin. In Charles Loring's portrait, Matthew Vassar points with justifiable pride to Renwick's Main Building. It stands today as a tribute to the college's founder.

*Bannon McHenry, Fordham University*

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# Eleanor Roosevelt and the Rooster

## *Heart of the Great Depression*

My grandmother sits on the front steps, a little girl,  
under the proud black sign for the Dutchess Tea Room.  
Elbows to knees, chin in her hands, she watches her father  
pump gas for a customer. She has just skipped out the door,  
left her mother to scrape together a hot ham sandwich for the man  
waiting at the counter. Soon she will head out past the beanfields  
to a bit of woods where she can play. She glances at the woman  
coming in with her daughter, notices her peering at the apple pie,  
still steaming. The mother checks her pockets.  
Route 9 is still the best way between Albany

and New York, and my grandma is watching when  
the car crunches gravel and brings Eleanor Roosevelt,  
on her way to speeches, conferences, other important things.  
Her brown wool suit is a little baggy; her skirt  
ripples in a small breeze. She doesn't want any pies  
or sandwiches, only the outhouse in the corner  
of the yard, neat and whitewashed. Her oxford shoes,  
one-and-a-half inch heels, fall quiet when they reach the grass.  
Her pearls swing as she walks. She takes in the apple trees,  
the sweep of Concord grapevines, how they soften the yard.

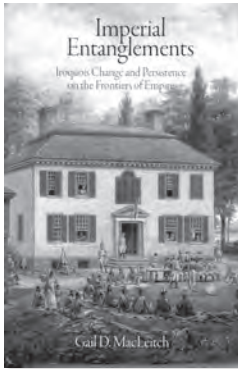
My grandma's parents keep chickens. Watching  
Eleanor Roosevelt, my grandma worries about the rooster  
who always torments her: running, hopping, flapping  
at her heels, chasing her as she runs for the house.  
This rooster sees the tall figure closing the white door  
of the outhouse behind her, doesn't know  
she is Eleanor Roosevelt. He eyes the impertinent  
sway of her skirt from across the yard.  
The lazy afternoon sun feels especially warm  
on his black plumage. He considers not moving at all.

But she is too good a target to resist. He cocks his head, gathers his strength. She laughs to hear the raspy squawks behind her, the angry rush of wings. She pushes her hair back, laughs harder; notices how his shiny black feathers smolder in autumn's crystal sun, how the heavy scent of grapes encumbers her steps even as she hurries to the car. She leaves the window down; my grandma listens to her laugh linger as she drives away. The rooster retreats to his shrinking patch of sun, not entirely disappointed. He has done his duty.

*Kateri Kosek*



# Book Reviews



***Imperial Entanglements: Iroquois Change and Persistence on the Frontiers of Empire,***

**Gail D. MacLeitch. Philadelphia, PA:**

**University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011. 352 pp.**

For ages before any historical record and up through the end of the seventeenth century, the Five Nations of the Iroquois were sovereign over the territory they called their own in what is now New York State. By the end of the eighteenth century, the United States of America, representing the white European immigrants and their descendants who were its citizens, were sovereign. This much most of us know. But in the roughly 100 years between, the Iroquois engaged the rising British—soon to be American—Empire in a complex dance of economic, political, and cultural accommodation, in which neither side had the power to dictate terms to the other, and modes of existence and exchange were alternately shared, tolerated, and resisted in ways that were just as often cooperative as conflicted. This is the much less well-known story that Gail MacLeitch illuminates in *Imperial Entanglements*. Central to this story is the Seven Years War (1756-1763), which precipitated a change in Britain's orientation toward its North American colonies and therefore toward their Iroquois allies, and the person of William Johnson, who served as the primary liaison between the British and the Iroquois for almost thirty years.

MacLeitch's efforts mark an important contribution to the regional history of New York. Additionally, while the pattern of cooperation giving way to conquest through years of increasing demand for land and resources will be familiar to anyone acquainted with Native American history, the Iroquois experience in the late colonial period is unique and deserving of wider interest as a comparative study. In the Southern colonies and New England in the seventeenth century, Anglo-Indian relations turned overwhelmingly violent soon after white settlement—witness the wars with the Powhatan (1622) and Wampanoag (1675) confederacies, respectively. By the nineteenth century, racial attitudes and imperial ideologies had crystallized into the policies of Indian Removal in the East and the reservation system in the West; for many Americans, peaceful coexistence was no longer considered a live possibility. But in the eighteenth century, the Iroquois' cultural flexibility, martial prowess, and geographic and geopolitical situation allowed them

to maintain a degree of autonomy and a culture that, while not unchanged, was at least changing on terms that they could negotiate for themselves. MacLeitch's subject matter should net a large audience.

But her writing style will limit that audience considerably. This work is decidedly academic in tone, rife with such jargon as *othering*, *commodification*, and *gender*, a noun used as both past and present participle. Though the processes she describes encompass many remarkable stories and truly fascinating characters, the book is not narrative or even chronological in structure. Instead, the organizing principles are the social history lenses of race, class, and gender.

For the first century and a half of the colonial era, "Iroquoia" was what MacLeitch calls a "culturally ambiguous human landscape" (150). It was not entirely harmonious, but the Iroquois had a group identity based on flexible and inclusive notions of kinship and they were desirous of European trade goods. And while many English thought of the Iroquois as primitive and heathen, they had not yet developed a racial ideology to account for these shortcomings and they needed Indian allies for their economic and military aspirations. In this environment, intercultural exchange and cooperation were more common than violence and exploitation. But MacLeitch convincingly demonstrates that as the British expulsion of the French in the Seven Years War and the decline of the eastern fur trade led to more competitive relationships, both sides quickly began to develop racialized discourses to conceive of the other as inherently separate and incompatible.

While class makes its appearance throughout the book, the excellent economic chapters focus more broadly on the Iroquois absorption into a monetized, transatlantic commercial network. Gradually through the century, the Iroquois transitioned from subsistence farming and hunting on communally held lands to hunting furs for market, selling and renting land, laboring for wages, and purchasing imported goods with cash. For the most part, they did this voluntarily and shrewdly, making the most of the changing economic opportunities around them. But it led inevitably to cultural turbulence and ultimately to a loss of their autonomy as they became dependent on foreign currencies and markets while the markets were simultaneously becoming less dependent on them for furs, labor, and land. MacLeitch makes clear that the fundamental reasons for the Iroquois loss of sovereignty were economic.

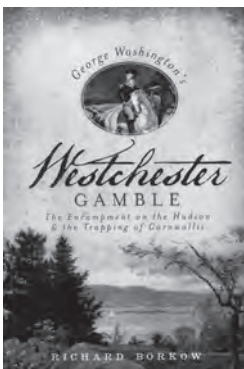
Her sections on gender, however, are not nearly so clear. It is easy enough to understand that the traditional Iroquois kinship system was matrilineal and that Iroquois women did all of the farming and child-rearing while men were usually away hunting and making war, and that clan matrons traditionally had a large

voice in diplomacy and politics. And it is clear enough that this traditional balance changed as the Iroquois adapted to the imperial system and the market economy. But the author wants to stretch her gender theory to include all hierarchical arrangements, discussing the “gendered” nature of the relationships between the British and the Iroquois, between the Iroquois and other native peoples, and even between older and younger Iroquois males. She even seems willing to contradict herself to try to make her gender model work: First she argues that British soldiers tolerated female camp followers as laundresses or consorts, while for Iroquois warriors battle was a strictly male pursuit that the presence of women could only contaminate; later, she argues that Johnson transgressed Iroquois gender traditions by barring Indian women from the camps which he considered a wholly masculine terrain (144). All of this might be comprehensible enough to readers with a deep background in gender theory, but anyone else will find it confusing.

The Iroquois experience of the eighteenth century is an incredible story of persistence and accommodation in the face of cataclysmic change. It is also a story of great importance, both regionally and comparatively. It is somewhat unfortunate that MacLeitch chose not to present it simply as a story, letting the interpretive lessons rise naturally from the evidence. By choosing instead to adhere so rigidly to an interpretive framework, she might lose some otherwise interested readers. Nevertheless, her book is a meticulously researched and extremely valuable contribution to understanding the history of a people and their place.

Maj. Ryan L. Shaw,

United States Military Academy at West Point



**George Washington's Westchester Gamble: The Encampment on the Hudson & the Trapping of Cornwallis, Richard Borkow. Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2011. (189 pp.)**

For six weeks in July and August 1781, the center of gravity in America's bid for independence from Great Britain was in Philipsburg (present-day Greenburgh) in Westchester County, New York. Here General George Washington and the Main Continental Army and General Jean Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, Comte de Rochambeau, and his French Expeditionary Corps—the *Expédition Particulière*—encamped while contemplating besieging General Sir Henry Clinton's British army in New York City and awaiting news of the strategic intentions of French

Admiral Francois Joseph Paul, Comte de Grasse, and his Caribbean fleet. In his book, *George Washington's Westchester Gamble: The Encampment on the Hudson & the Trapping of Cornwallis*, Dr. Richard Borkow has demonstrated the significance of this part of the Hudson River Valley in the decisions by these generals and admirals (including Admiral Jacques-Melchior Saint-Laurent, Comte de Barras, who delivered the critical siege guns from Rhode Island) to meet in Virginia.

For Dr. Borkow, the true center is his beloved Dobbs Ferry, for which he is village historian. His account demonstrates the tug he felt between the Dobbs family's ferry and its few associated buildings and the present-day village of Dobbs Ferry. To give the village added weight within the Philipse patent, he even coined a new name, the "Lower Hudson Encampment." It is unfortunate that Borkow chose to abandon the use of the historical Philipsburg for his own ahistorical label, since Frederick Philipse's patent extended from Spuyten Duyvil in the Bronx to the Croton River, and encompassed the camps of both armies up to the Bronx River. While the focus of Borkow's interest is Dobbs Ferry and its vicinity, the bulk of his book is the military history of the American Revolution through the lens of America's longest ally, France. Interspersed in this macro-narrative of events from 1776 to 1783 are vignettes relating to happenings and personalities in Westchester from the submarine *Turtle* to Westchester Guide John Odell's miraculous escape from DeLancey's Refugees on the ice of the Hudson.

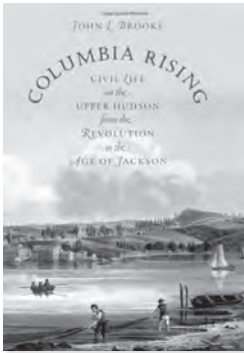
Since Borkow's study is for the general reader, he chose to rely on secondary sources for his building blocks. His narrative flow unfortunately is disrupted by the sub-chapter headings and the Westchester vignettes. Only Chapters 7 and 8 focus on the "Encampment by the Hudson." Since Borkow poses no overarching historical question nor argues a thesis, in a sense the majority of the book is the context for these penultimate chapters. The reader is led to wonder if this survey of the entire war in so much detail is necessary to the Westchester story, since even it slights the details of the French presence. Borkow's failure to flesh out the French march may simply be because Rochambeau's four regiments neither camped in nor crossed at Dobbs Ferry. Borkow also missed some nuances of the military campaigns. For example, Lieutenant General John Burgoyne was the architect of the Saratoga campaign of 1777, and two battles were fought near Stillwater—Freeman's Farm on 19 September and Bemis Heights on 7 October. General Washington did not lose the battle of White Plains but checked Lieutenant General William Howe, forcing him to abandon an aggressive strategy that might have destroyed Washington's army and led him into New England and the upper reaches of New York. Stony Point was in Orange County at the time of the battle there in 1779 and the crossing of both armies in August 1781.

For Dr. Borkow, the parading and routes of march of the American regiments encamped at or near Ardsley are critical to Dobbs Ferry's role in the American Revolution. While it is clear that Brigadier General Moses Hazen's Canadians and the New Jersey Line crossed the Hudson at Dobbs Ferry, the author chose to portray the entire Main Army as marching down Dobbs Ferry's Broadway. Until someone discovers Washington's detailed order of march for the American army comparable to that for Rochambeau's army given on 17 August, scholars are forced to piece it together from the commander in chief's diary—"Passed Singing with the American column"—and the actual commanders who executed the movements. The maps of the period offer their own insights, as the road networks would have dictated which regiments marched where. In fact, the map opposite page 126 in Dr. Robert Selig's *The Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route in the State of New York, 1781-1782*, shows the axes of advance for elements of Washington's army. French Colonel Louis-Alexander Berthier's map of the encampments indicates that a number of the regiments would have moved in formation (paraded) right onto the Tarrytown Road. This would have jibed with Washington's desire for operational security and lessened the exposure of his force of some 2,500 soldiers to observation and a possible attack by British naval forces. It also would have made the forces from Dobbs Ferry sent across the Hudson early on 19 August a flank guard. Major General William Heath, the commander of the Hudson Highlands for the operation, would have been a more reliable source upon which to anchor his account than Surgeon James Thacher, whose description of the route he traveled is a bit ambiguous. In his journal, Heath reported that on 21 August, "a little after noon, our General ordered off the baggage to the strong ground near Young's, which at about 6 o'clock was followed by the army, marching by the left in one column, which took a strong position during the night." On the 21st, according to Heath, "Col. [Rufus] Putnam, with 320 infantry, Col. Sheldon's horse, and two companies of the New York levies, were ordered to form an advance for the army.... About 12 o'clock at noon, the army took up its line of march, and halted at night on the lower parts of North Castle. Two regiments had been detached on the march to Sing-Sing church, to cover a quantity of baggage belonging to the French army...." On the 22nd, "the army marched from North Castle, and encamped at Crom Pond...." Because of his deception plan and the roads available, Washington sent his units on multiple routes to cross at Kings Ferry.

Dr. Richard Borkow has given readers interested in the American Revolution another short survey of its major events and the French role in them. Westchester County rightfully deserves the central role that he gives it because Generals

Washington and Rochambeau made a decision at Philipsburg that ultimately led to the capture of the main southern British army under General Charles Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown, Virginia. The allies' successful siege there was the last decisive battle of the war, which changed the political and military landscape forever. The new Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail will benefit from the attention this study will bring to it. As is the case with history, readers will have to wait for a more balanced and detailed published work of the experiences of the two armies that met in Philipsburg that summer 230 years ago. I applaud Dr. Borkow for continuing the historical debate with his Westchester gamble.

COL (Ret.) James M. Johnson, *Military Historian, Hudson River Valley Institute*



***Columbia Rising: Civil Life on the Upper Hudson from the Revolution to the Age of Jackson*, John L. Brooke. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press (2010). 656 pp.**

John Brooke has produced a comprehensive study of the tumultuous struggle to define the meaning of the Revolution and discern the boundaries of civil life in the early republic. *Columbia Rising* not only places Columbia County within a broader national context but also puts the Upper Hudson on the national stage. For Brooke, the roots of the democratic Jacksonian—or Van Burenite—revolution of the antebellum period are to be found not in western frontier regions or in urban working-class neighborhoods but in Columbia. According to Brooke, the first county to be organized in post-Revolutionary New York provides an extraordinary perspective into the “critical fault lines” in post-Revolutionary society—ethnicity, race, gender, and class. The deeply rooted political conflicts among conservative landed elites, fiercely independent freeholders, frustrated tenants, and dependent laborers in the Upper Hudson provide unique insights into the contested meanings of citizenship and democracy during and after the Revolution.

Although the residents of the Upper Hudson were originally slow to embrace the Whig cause during the imperial crisis, the War for Independence and the subsequent popularization of politics challenged the oligarchic rule of the region's landed elite. Through militia service and participation in popular committees, aspiring men from the middling sort usurped political power traditionally wielded by the landed gentry. Although notably weakened during the Revolutionary

crisis, however, the region's traditional oligarchy remained powerful. Divided and equivocal allegiances, ethnic pluralism, the political influence of conservative Whig leaders, and the persistence of tenancy undermined the popular tide of radical committee politics in the Upper Hudson. While a radical "leveling spirit" predominated in eastern hill towns along the Massachusetts border, the Van Rensselaers and Livingstons continued to wield political control elsewhere in the county.

In the years after the Revolution, a new political culture and civic life of bourgeois sensibility served to mediate the unresolved conflict between popular Revolutionary politics ("Demo") and traditional politics of deference and condescension ("Aristo"). New institutions such as benevolent organizations, schools, libraries, improvement societies, churches—and especially Masonic lodges and newspapers—shaped a new civil landscape defined by respectability and improvement. Nonetheless, there were clear limits to the politics of sentiment in Columbia; the fires of religious revival and reform burned less brightly in the Upper Hudson than in New England and in the "Burned-Over-District" along the Erie Canal. Moreover, the post-Revolutionary political settlement in Columbia County remained tenuous. The unresolved conflict between popular politics and oligarchic rule intensified in the decades after the ratification of the Constitution. Indeed, Martin Van Buren's early political battles against Columbia's Federalist Junto and the landed oligarchy in the Upper Hudson directly informed his later campaigns against the nation's "money power—as Andrew Jackson's vice president and then president. Forever a "plain man of plain purposes," Van Buren personified the "new middling culture" of the post-Revolutionary era. Having experienced the corrosive factionalism, vindictive partisanship, and corruption of politics in Columbia and New York, Van Buren came to champion a negative liberal state of limited government and an organized party system as safeguards of the common good from selfish private interest.

Nevertheless, there were clear limits to the democratic Van-Burenite insurgency in Columbia. The defense of the people against a landed oligarchy and the capitalist "money power" never questioned the fundamental right to private property. Moreover, the boundaries of post-Revolutionary public life in the Upper Hudson were increasingly circumscribed by sex, class, and race.

Constrained by law, women remained largely silent. Literate women gained access to a burgeoning print culture, but post-Revolutionary literature cast female characters as passive victims and confirmed women's powerlessness. Moreover, newspapers, almanacs, magazines, and novels excluded illiterate and non-English speakers and further isolated rural women of Dutch and German descent from



the emerging public realm. A few “insurgent” women who nurtured an individual consciousness (such as Catherine Livingston) did so privately, while two notable women who did express a public voice—Shaker Lucy Wright and Quaker Hannah Barnard—by definition occupied the social fringe.

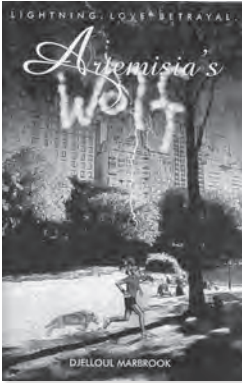
Tenants remained poor and dependent. Access to land contributed to the principal source of political conflict in Columbia for decades after the Revolution. Although Clintonians abolished primogeniture and entail in the wake of the Revolution, landlords retained life-leases that restricted tenure to the last surviving name on a lease. Landlords’ control of local politics stunted civic and associational life in manor towns, where the leasehold system discouraged economic improvement. Denied access to post-Revolutionary civil society, tenants resorted to violence on multiple occasions in the decades following the war.

Only black Columbians occupied a more inferior social and political space. Opposition to emancipation was strong in the Upper Hudson, where slaves provided valuable labor on farms, in workshops, and in the homes of the region’s slaveholding elite. African Americans in the Upper Hudson remained a degraded and dependent caste during the long transitional period from slavery to freedom prescribed by the state’s gradual abolition statute. The 1821 state Constitution codified the increasing racialization of democracy in New York; while providing for virtual white male suffrage, it imposed a hefty property requirement on African American voters that effectively disqualified the overwhelming majority of black New Yorkers. The triumph of Van Buren’s democratic Regency over old Clintonians, Federalists, entrepreneurial Republicans, and Whigs came at the expense of former slaves.

Characterizing his study as ethnography, Brooke skillfully weaves theory and political, economic, social, and cultural, religious history into a rich narrative. *Columbia Rising* is not for the faint of heart; more casual readers might find Brooke’s book dense, unwieldy, and repetitive. However, his sophisticated interpretive scope provides the historian with an extraordinary perspective into the contested struggle to define citizenship and chart a new “civil geography” for a new nation. *Columbia Rising* is essential reading not only for students of Hudson Valley and New York State history but also for any serious scholar of the early republic.

Michael E. Groth, Wells College





**Artemisia's Wolf**, Djelloul Marbrook.  
New Delhi: Prakash Books (2011) 136 pp.

Young artist Artemisia Cavelli wakes up in a hospital in Kingston, New York; parts of her memory are missing but her sense of humor is still very much intact. She's been struck by lightning, but that may be the least of her problems. As she tries to piece both her memory and career back together, there's no shortage of people standing in her way, namely the insidious Nuala Gwilt, a New York art dealer described as the "terrorist in chief of postmodern art" who seems almost programmed to ruin the lives of people like Artemisia. And then there are the boys: Artemisia is a beautiful girl, and she is never without male admirers, even in recovery.

So begins Djelloul Marbrook's impressive novel *Artemisia's Wolf*, a book that successfully blends humor and satire (and perhaps even a touch of magical realism) into its short length. It's an engrossing story, but what might strike the reader most throughout the book is its infusion of breathtaking poetry. This refreshing emphasis on language and description should come as no surprise, since Marbrook is already the author of two award-winning books of poems, including *Far From Algiers*, winner of the 2010 International Book Award for poetry.

The Hudson Valley depicted in *Artemisia's Wolf* is rich with both austere natural beauty and obtuse loneliness. Marbrook, born in Algiers but a longtime resident of the valley, perfectly captures the region's unique charm. Consider the following passage where Artemisia playfully offers her reply to Redmond Hazard, a vain doctor who calls her on the telephone, to find out where she is:

Okay, just this once. I'm thirty-two-hundred feet up on Slide Mountain. There's three inches of snow disguising an ice slick on the ground, so I'm still wearing my instep crampons. The sun looks like a cooling ember, but I can still see the Esopus Valley. The wind bonsais the balsams up there, so the ledge looks like a Japanese stone garden. There's a hundred-and-eighty-foot drop off the ledge onto the forest. The plastic windows of my octagonal blue tent are blood-red. The wind is rising behind me and when I turn into it I see a snow squall. It looks like a whirling dervish, stepping from one rise to another. Night is dropping around it like a stone ... So that's where I am, Doctor Hazard, up there on Slide Mountain thinking I'll never again have to think anything anticlimactic like this. (77)

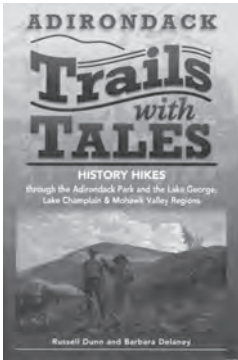
But this novella is more than simply a poetic exercise. *Artemisia's Wolf* takes us deep into the ugly underbelly of the art world in New York and the Hudson Valley, a world where jealousy, not talent, often decides the lives of budding artists like Artemisia. The book also serves as a stunning rebuke to notoriously misogynist subcultures like the New York art scene, showing us just how hard it is for a young woman to be judged on her creative talent alone.

The character of Artemisia is brilliantly drawn: she's funny and smart, and the reader empathizes with her plight throughout. Her razored sense of humor rubs other characters the wrong way, and we absolutely love her for it. But perhaps the book's most stunning achievement is the sharply drawn character of Nuala Gwilt. She is a woman who has somehow survived for decades in the male-dominated art world, and she certainly has the battle scars to prove it. More than merely a one-dimensional villain, she displays her flesh wounds along with her fangs, so her contempt and jealousy of Artemisia come as no surprise. This is no Cruella de Ville: by the end of the story Nuala rises above stereotype, even though she spends so much of her life trying to be seen (and feared) as just that.

Rich with layers of mythology and symbolism, *Artemisia's Wolf* is Marbrook's first novel, although readers may already recall his name from a long and illustrious career as a reporter and editor at such places as *The Baltimore Sun* and *Washington Star*. *Artemisia's Wolf* is published by Prakash Books in India, which speaks to Marbrook's worldwide reputation as a painstakingly precise wordsmith.

*Tommy Zurhellen, Marist College*

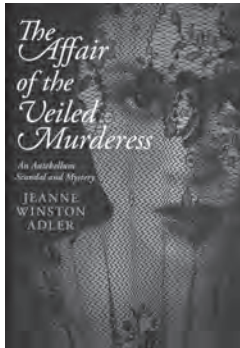
# New & Noteworthy Books Received



## **Adirondack Trails with Tales**

By Russell Dunn and Barbara Delaney  
(Hensonville, NY: Black Dome Press, 2009).  
296 pp. \$17.95 (softcover). [www.blackdomepress.com](http://www.blackdomepress.com)

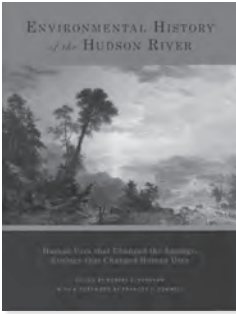
A follow-up to Dunn and Delaney's first *Trails with Tales* from 2006, *Adirondack Trails with Tales* expands the geographic scope of history hikes to include Adirondack Park, the Mohawk Valley, and the Lake George and Lake Champlain regions. The guide categorizes the hikes by difficulty as well as into nineteen themes, allowing hikers to choose from battle sites to lighthouses to mines, and everything in between. Complete with photographs, maps, and highlights for each hike, this guide provides everything necessary for hikers of all skill levels and interests.



## **The Affair of the Veiled Murderess: An Antebellum Scandal and Mystery**

By Jeanne Winston Adler  
(Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2011).  
313 pp. \$24.95 (hardcover). [www.sunypress.edu](http://www.sunypress.edu)

Based on the true story of two mysterious deaths in 1853 Troy, this book tells the tale of possible murder and the complex situation surrounding it. Adler uses a variety of historical records from the time period to build her case and set the social and political scene for the deaths and the trial that followed. This is a must-read for mystery fans or anyone who enjoys the culture of mid-nineteenth-century New York.

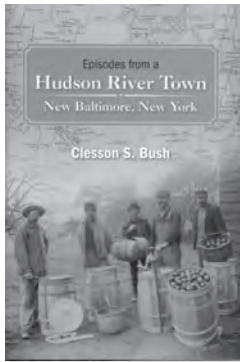


### **Environmental History of the Hudson River**

Edited by Robert E. Henshaw  
(Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2011).  
376pp. \$29.95 (softcover). [www.sunypress.edu](http://www.sunypress.edu)

A collection of over twenty essays, *Environmental History of the Hudson River* examines the river from a number of perspectives. Editor Henshaw divides the essays into history and biology, the resources of the river, the river as a key component to commerce, and the river as inspiration.

Featuring articles by researchers and educators throughout the region (including Marist College's Geoffrey L. Brackett), the collection captures the Hudson's complex identity and defines the importance of the river both as its own entity and to the region it supports.

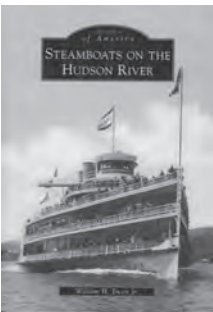


### **Episodes from a Hudson River Town: New Baltimore, New York**

By Clesson S. Bush (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2011).  
268 pp. \$24.95 (hardcover). [www.sunypress.edu](http://www.sunypress.edu)

New Baltimore's town historian, Bush captures the charm and character of this Hudson River town from pre-history up through the modern day. Through agriculture and numerous industries (including ship building and ice harvesting), New Baltimore has had its share of successes and failures. Using a wide variety of primary documents,

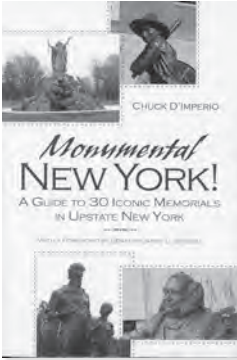
Bush captures the town's history through multiple wars, booms, and busts, and eventual inclusion as a key part of the New York State Thruway project.



### **Images of America: Steamboats on the Hudson River**

By William H. Ewen Jr.  
(Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2011).  
128 pp. \$21.99 (softcover). [www.arcadiapublishing.com](http://www.arcadiapublishing.com)

Another in the ever-growing Images of America series, *Steamboats on the Hudson River* documents a period when travel on the Hudson River was at its peak. From majestic day liners carrying over 5,000 passengers to night boats and freight haulers, Ewen presents an array of historic photographs and other images. Combined with detailed text captions, these images succeed in depicting the various steamboats that helped to make the Hudson River into the corridor of commerce that it continues to be today.



**Monumental New York:  
A Guide to 30 Iconic Memorials in Upstate New York**

By Chuck D'Imperio  
(Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011).  
189 pp. \$19.95 (softcover). [www.syracuseuniversitypress.syr.edu](http://www.syracuseuniversitypress.syr.edu)

More than just a guide to monuments, *Monumental New York* presents the selected statues and memorials in detail, paying special attention to both the context in which the monuments were built and the importance of place. D'Imperio includes valuable information about the surrounding area of each monument and even offers suggested reading material to maximize a visit. Complete with images of each monument, this book sheds light on some overlooked stops throughout New York State, and captures all of the local character that makes them special.



**Six Weeks in Saratoga:  
How Three-Year-Old Filly Rachel Alexandra  
Beat the Boys and Became Horse of the Year**

By Brendan O'Meara (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2011).  
267 pp. \$24.95 (hardcover). [www.sunypress.edu](http://www.sunypress.edu)

*Six Weeks in Saratoga* is the story of Rachel Alexandra, the three-year-old filly and Preakness winner who strived to cement her claim as Horse of the Year through a victory at Saratoga Race Course. O'Meara narrates the drama-filled story with behind-the-scenes details that will grab the interest of racing enthusiasts and non-fans alike. Over the course of a six-week period, trainers, owners, and riders all play a part in the unfolding of Rachel Alexandra's story and the evolution of her legacy in horse racing.

*Andrew Villani*

## Call for Essays

*The Hudson River Valley Review* is anxious to consider essays on all aspects of the Hudson Valley—its intellectual, political, economic, social, and cultural history, its prehistory, architecture, literature, art, and music—as well as essays on the ideas and ideologies of regionalism itself. All articles in *The Hudson River Valley Review* undergo peer analysis.

## Submission of Essays and Other Materials

HRVR prefers that essays and other written materials be submitted as two double-spaced typescripts, generally no more than thirty pages long with endnotes, along with a computer disk with a clear indication of the operating system, the name and version of the word-processing program, and the names of documents on the disk. Illustrations or photographs that are germane to the writing should accompany the hard copy. Otherwise, the submission of visual materials should be cleared with the editors beforehand. Illustrations and photographs are the responsibility of the authors. Scanned photos or digital art must be 300 pixels per inch (or greater) at 8 in. x 10 in. (between 7 and 20 mb). No responsibility is assumed for the loss of materials. An e-mail address should be included whenever possible.

HRVR will accept materials submitted as an e-mail attachment (*hrvi@marist.edu*) once they have been announced and cleared beforehand.

Since HRVR is interdisciplinary in its approach to the region and to regionalism, it will honor the forms of citation appropriate to a particular discipline, provided these are applied consistently and supply full information. Endnotes rather than footnotes are preferred. In matters of style and form, HRVR follows *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

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The Hudson River Valley Institute at Marist College is the academic arm of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. Its mission is to study and to promote the Hudson River Valley and to provide educational resources for heritage tourists, scholars, elementary school educators, environmental organizations, the business community, and the general public. Its many projects include publication of the *Hudson River Valley Review* and the management of a dynamic digital library and leading regional portal site.

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