

Trying Men's Souls: A Study on What Motivated Eight New England Soldiers to Join the
American Revolution

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A Thesis

Submitted to

The Graduate Faculty of

Salisbury University

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Degree of

Master of Arts

Salisbury, Maryland

April, 2012

Abstract

In this comparative social history of the American Revolution, the stories of eight men are recounted through the use of their biographies, journals, and memoirs. The lives of four enlisted soldiers and four officers are depicted to gain an understanding of how they became involved in the revolution. In order to do so, their early lives are scrutinized, as well as their post-war lives as they transitioned to peacetime. The main purpose, however, is to examine how each man became motivated to join the war for independence, whether socially, economically, and/or politically. As each man had different aspirations for their expectations before and after the war, one thing is certain: the enlisted soldiers were motivated for different reasons compared to the officers.

By examining their early lives, as well as post-war lives, one can gain a better understanding of whether their motivations came to fruition, in the end. The intention is not to disprove their patriotism or zeal for joining the war, but instead to prove there were other motivational factors that contributed to their decision. Their patriotism is undeniable, which was a crucial reason why they were able to win the war after eight long years. Even though they experienced deprivation for eight years, due to the lack of resources, the spirit of the men could not be deterred. Despite harrowing circumstances, the revolutionary soldiers were able to prevail over a superior enemy. With that, their motivations and expectations must be examined to shed light on how these men were able to win the war.

Acknowledgments

From the moment I began the research process for my thesis, I knew the task at hand would be long and arduous. Colonial and Revolutionary America has long been an interest of mine and this thesis gave me a way to explore this topic independently. I would like to thank Dr. Creston Long for his support and guidance throughout this process. His seminars on Early American history helped pique my interest on this topic even further.

I would also like to thank Dr. Bart Talbert for being the second committee member to read my thesis and offer suggestions on how to improve my writing. Both Dr. Long and Dr. Talbert helped to transform my writing capabilities with their sharp and critical feedback. It would have been difficult to complete this thesis without their unwavering support.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family for putting up with all my complaints on what seemed to be a never-ending process. My parents, Ann and Donnie, gave me this opportunity to further my education and were always supportive of my goals. For that, I am deeply grateful. My grandmother, Joyce, particularly deserves thanks for helping to proofread various sections of my thesis.

There are also many professors, classmates, and friends who have helped me along the way. To all those people, too many to name, I am deeply thankful for and appreciative of your support.

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Introduction

The American Revolution united a group of people who were striving for independence against Great Britain and no longer felt no need to be dependent upon the “mother-country.” Dependence was an option no more for the group of ordinary men who sought to formulate their own government based on their own principles. For a revolution to succeed there must be substantial grievances that are felt by many people. It takes shared ideas as to what is wrong, what needs to be done, and what a better future may look like. There also must be coalitions that require different sorts of people who have organization, direction, and discipline. The task was to get ordinary Americans to generate a new social and political consciousness. The revolution was able to emerge from confrontation politics in which ordinary citizens began joining popular movements. The American people knew what was at stake: power, just ideas, interest, property, and the course of the future.

Ordinary people began envisioning the benefits of independence and no longer being “loyal subjects to the King.” This process inadvertently created a class system where the upper echelon gained a sense of entitlement. The lower echelon, on the other hand, constantly battled “to influence, not dominate, politics,” as historian Gary Nash poignantly suggests.¹ The lower classes began to search for an opportunity to alleviate their socioeconomic struggles. New England, however, dealt with what Nash refers to as the “narrowing of opportunities and the rise of poverty.”² This led to New England becoming the epicenter for revolt in America.

Lower class individuals were losing the battle to be involved politically in America. The American Revolution, however, provided them with a new sense of opportunity to prove they were equal to the upper class. The historian Eric Robson notes “the Revolution was the work of an active minority which persuaded a hesitant majority to a cause for which that majority had

very little real enthusiasm.”³ The revolution created opportunities socially, politically, and economically for the lower class, while the upper class pondered their involvement in the war. In short, the lower class became radicals and their ideology won over the masses with the goal being independence.

In this comparative study, the focus will be on how both classes became involved in the revolutionary conflict. How ordinary men were motivated for such a conflict that must have seemed impossible is a significant aspect to the revolution. Both classes were influenced socially, politically, and economically, but in different ways. Exploring the motivations between why private soldiers-generally lower class-and officers-generally upper class-joined the war effort is just the beginning. These men took full advantage of the revolution to forge paths that would contribute to their own self-interests. Next, examining their expectations before and after the war will become essential to this study. By exploring their motivations and expectations, it will become clearer as to how the revolutionary soldiers and officers perceived the War for Independence. Their sense of mission and national identity will also become clearer. The different driving motivational forces for each class will help one to understand the revolution and how the contemporaries viewed their positions within society.

There were several motivational forces that enabled the colonists to gain a sense of national identity. Americans were serving what historian Charles Royster calls a “godly purpose” as they were fighting for self-preservation.⁴ If self-preservation became a failure, there would be nothing left for the Americans to fight for. The Americans had an innate desire to stay alive and the acceptance of death enabled the soldiers to stand up to tyranny. Religion had become a major factor in motivating the colonists to declare independence.

The Great Awakening had enlightened the revolutionaries as they believed their permanent independence rested with God because he would ensure their virtue and destiny. The revolutionaries believed that “death in obedience to God and in service to the public meant a soul at peace.”⁵ They feared being enslaved by the British, and they sacrificed their lives to ensure that was not an option. Essentially, Americans believed it was their duty to gain redemption for the world and become what Royster calls “God’s instruments to smash tyranny.”⁶ Their sense of mission was to create a perfect utopian world and an “uncorrupted promise land.”⁷

The religious revival motivated and invited many revolutionaries to seek a better opportunity to become socially mobile in a growing society. The colonists wanted to be free and independent without being oppressed by British control. That sentiment alone was enough motivation for most men to join the revolutionary cause.

The revolutionaries also could not envision their lives, as well as their families and estates being regularly controlled by British parliamentary taxes. Royster notes that “Americans needed reason to believe that resistance could succeed” and that success was inevitable.⁸ Throughout the war, there was a sentiment among these soldiers and officers that their faith in American destiny would prevail. “The survival of the Continental Army,” Royster contends, “would depend not only on American soldiers’ public spirit and combat prowess, but also on the army’s routine ability to keep men healthy, to keep them from killing each other, and to cheat them no more than they would tolerate.”⁹ It was the duty of the officer to keep the men under control, but many officers were just as young and naïve as the private soldiers. The private soldiers often realized they were equal to the officers, but were forced to defer to their leadership.

This study will also focus on what motivated both, the common soldier and the officers, to join the revolution - each for different reasons - with one common theme emerging between them. These revolutionaries joined the army based on their own personal circumstances, such as advancement in society and economic growth. For the most part, these soldiers were opportunistic in their approach when joining the army. Of course, they wanted to defend their country, but more importantly they saw an opportunity to manipulate the army to better their own social standing within society. These “urban people,” writes Gary Nash, “upset the equilibrium of an older system of social relations and turned the seaport towns into crucibles of revolutionary agitation.”¹⁰ The motivation for the lowest ranking groups wanted to prove they were equal to the upper ranks of colonial society.

By 1775, the New England colonies became vastly transformed. The people were no longer “working harmoniously for the mutual good of the whole society.”¹¹ Instead, a political consciousness had emerged among the ordinary people in colonial New England that was based on competing for their own self-interests. A complex class structure developed, which was shaped by economic and social struggle. Gary Nash describes this struggle as when “urban people gradually came to think of themselves as belonging to economic groups that did not share common goals, began to behave in class specific ways in response to events that impinged upon their well-being, and manifested ideological points of view and cultural characteristics peculiar to their rank.”¹² The lowest ranks of society began developing a political consciousness as they struggled to get ahead. The highest ranks of society believed their standing was justified by wealth and education. They believed it was their duty to lead and those at the bottom should defer to their superior wisdom and wealth. It was believed widely by those at the top that those at the bottom should accept their lowly positions which were divinely willed.

The problems only persisted after the war for the common soldier. The transition to peacetime became a struggle for most as the war had claimed their youthful days. It became apparent that the army had manipulated the individuals who participated, which disappointed the soldiers after the war. The officers appeared to fare better in their social and political standing than the common soldier. The officers had known men of high rank and used those connections to obtain positions within society and the government. Private soldiers had a difficult time preparing for their future because most were young and saw the army as their place of employment. When the dissolution of the army occurred shortly after the war, it left those men contemplating their next moves.

By examining the highest and lowest ranks of society as they joined the war for independence, one can understand their motives and expectations with more clarity. The lowest members of society generally enlisted for the war effort to get off the bottom of society. They were motivated socially and economically to attain their own self-interests. Joseph Plumb Martin, John Greenwood, George Robert Twelves Hewes, and Jeremiah Greenman were men who manipulated the revolution for their own self-preservation.¹³ These men joined the war for various reasons, but one common occurrence emerged between these revolutionaries. Each man joined with the notion that they were searching for opportunity in a country that offered little. Essentially, these men viewed the war as an opportunity to elevate their status within society.

Other men, such as Colonel Benjamin Tallmadge, Lt. Benjamin Gilbert, General William Barton, and Captain Stephen Olney had a choice as to whether they would join the war.¹⁴ Their elevated social status allowed them to contemplate whether they would fight for independence. Each of these men had various opportunities in America that did not involve risking their own lives. These men were motivated for different reasons than the lowest ranks of society, but

joined based off their own self-interests. The army offered them the opportunity to lead men into battle based on their own education and superior wisdom. In short, the army essentially became the scapegoat for the revolutionaries of both ranks of society to achieve their own interests.

Each of these men provides significant information towards their motives for joining the army, their hardships, and the transition to peacetime. It is imperative to gain a complete understanding of how these men with their conflicting motives were able to coexist and win the war. These men were simply inspired to create a new world based on opportunity. This comparative study will begin by examining the social standing of each person's family. In the first chapter, these types of questions need to be addressed: What type of childhood did they have? Did they get an education? Did they learn any type of trade? Was there an opportunity, outside of war, for them? What were they leaving behind? What was the standard of living in their respective New England colonies? The answers to these questions will solidify their motivations and expectations after the war.

The second and third chapters will focus on the private soldiers and the officers. These chapters will examine their motivations for joining the war and how their wartime experiences changed their way of thinking. It is also imperative to examine if there is any type of national identity or sense of mission that developed as they joined the war. The motives for these men will be scrutinized as it was not a necessity for some to join the war. It can be argued that the soldiers often experienced more deprivation than the officers during the war. This appears to have become an underlying motivational factor for the soldiers as they were constantly in a state of proving they were equal to the officers. The fourth chapter will consist of describing their transition to peacetime and how they differed.

Some questions that need to be answered throughout this study are as follows: Were they expecting any type of recognition for fighting in the war? Were they expecting to obtain social or political standing within society? Were they disappointed with the government? Were their motives of the highest and noblest kind (mostly referring to the officers)? The latter question is referring to individualism amongst the selected officers for this study. In short, these questions will help to substantiate how they perceived the War for Independence and how they were able to coexist in a competitive society.

This study will expound upon Gary Nash's *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (1979)¹⁵ and Charles Royster's *A Revolutionary People at War: the Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783* (1979).¹⁶ The intention of this study is largely to show how each social class was able to win the war, despite their different motivations for joining the war. Comprehending how men of different classes contributed to the war is vital to understanding the revolution to its fullest.

The different classes that emerged with various personalities and motives can explain how the revolutionaries viewed the Revolution. The success of the revolution would come from the desire of each class, who were seeking their own self-interests. This study will provide a glimpse into the lives of various soldiers who were faced with life altering decisions. It can be argued that the early eighteenth century theory of "working harmoniously together for the mutual good of society" could have thwarted American success. America needed a competitive society to push one another towards its highest goal: liberty.

¹ Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 264.

² *Ibid.*, ix.

³ Eric Robson, *In It's Political and Military Aspects, 1763-1783* (New York: De Capo Press, 1972), 41.

⁴ Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: the Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 154.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁰ Nash, *The Urban Crucible*, viii.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 384.

¹² *Ibid.*, x.

¹³ These four common soldiers were chosen for this study because they dealt with narrowing opportunities that caused them to join a war that had the potential to offer socioeconomic standing within the New England colonies.

¹⁴ These four officers were chosen for this study because they were not forced to join the American cause in the Revolution. They were afforded opportunity outside of joining a war that threatened their lives. However, each of these men joined with carefully articulated goals of advancement within society. These men were seeking political and economic standing in their respective New England colonies. Their standing would only be enhanced as distinguished military officers of the American Revolution.

¹⁵ Nash analyzes how people in the eighteenth century developed a growing political consciousness and how class relationships shifted to a competitive society.

¹⁶ Royster examines what Americans believed the war would create for their future and why they felt they could succeed against a superior opponent.

Chapter 1

Pre-Revolution: Early Life and Standard of Living for Eight Men

Social standing in colonial America transformed from the pursuit of the common good to a competitively social and economically based society. By the 1770s, the revolution was beginning to take shape and many had to make a decision that would impact their lives forever. The revolution in New England offered ordinary men an opportunity to develop a social and political consciousness. This new type of consciousness enabled these men to influence society in a revolutionary way, and contributed to a mass social upheaval that provided new opportunity for the lower class individuals.

One member of the lowest rank was Joseph Plumb Martin. Martin's story begins in Berkshire County, Massachusetts where he was born on November 21, 1760 (supposedly Thanksgiving). His father, Ebenezer Martin, was the son of a "substantial New England farmer."¹⁷ When Martin's father realized that he could not endure manual labor for an occupation he enrolled at Yale College between 1750 and 1755. Martin's father was able to get an education as he searched for opportunity. He eventually became a Gospel Minister of the Congressional Order, but was constantly at odds with various parishes because of his unorthodox opinions. His mother was a farmer's daughter, born in New Haven County, Connecticut. His father's lifestyle and opinions led Martin to moving to Milford, Connecticut, at age seven, with his maternal grandparents.

Connecticut was a large agricultural center unlike the urban cities of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. It was not an urban-dominated society, but provided opportunity for those seeking employment outside of farming, such as being an artisan or merchant. However, like

most colonies, those opportunities were dwindling for many. Connecticut suffered from a constant shortage of currency as there was an “unfavorable balance of trade with England, newcomers’ bringing with them goods rather than money, and the laws of Parliament, which forbade export of coin to the colonies and coinage of money there.”¹⁸ However, by the eve of the Revolution, Connecticut’s economy had improved. The colony was able to benefit from increased trade as more people produced an increasing amount of goods, enabling Connecticut and its people to have increased flexibility in choosing their way of life.

Before the 1760s, Connecticut was virtually self-governing, which enabled them to have rights that other colonies did not. They had always been loyal to the king, but the king had not appointed a governor for Connecticut and royal patronage did not operate within the colony. Essentially, Connecticut had the right to make its own laws, which was unlike most other colonies. Connecticut also felt no obligation to become involved in a war or separate from the mother country until it felt threatened. This threat became a reality with the revenue acts of the 1760s and 1770s that forced Connecticut to “preserve its ancient rights.”¹⁹ The Sugar Act and Stamp Act of 1765 came at an inopportune time. The people were still emerging from postwar depression. As author Robert J. Taylor acknowledges, “money was scarce, trade was stagnant, and land values were sinking.”²⁰ George Grenville, Chancellor of the Exchequer, sought to secure revenue for Great Britain for it to run its empire, which became an economic threat for the colonists.

The Stamp Act of 1765 had a direct effect on men of influence, such as lawyers, merchants, tavern keepers, and printers. The upper ranks of society were affected by Parliament’s taxation, which helped perpetuate the Revolution. These men of influence used their positions to create upheaval within colonial society. This upheaval consisted of non-

consumption and non-importation. Connecticut, like other colonies, did not want to see their rights infringed upon, which gradually caused separation from the empire. Connecticut was a highly self-interested colony that supported American liberty, but never took more than a verbal stand until the news of bloodshed in Lexington and Concord.

There were various methods Connecticut used to prove its seriousness within the war effort. Although Connecticut enjoyed more liberties than other colonies they began calling up its militia to provide defense for their colony as a precaution. Connecticut urged its ministers to preach unity to their congregations and to guide their leaders as they sought to protect their liberties. The colony offered bounties for rifles, gun-locks, sulfur, and saltpeter that were locally manufactured. People soon realized that British supremacy and American liberty were “not compatible with each other.”²¹ The people of Connecticut appeared to be both, economically and ideologically motivated to join the war effort. Their reluctance to join only proves why Joseph Plumb Martin, his parents, and grandparents were all under the assumption that independence was their natural right. Independent and free was how Connecticut leaders had thought of their colony. It would take Parliamentary taxation and desertions of superiority for them to realize that their standard of living was decreasing.

Martin was fortunate to have grandparents who were wealthy and able to provide the stability he needed at such a young age. When he was a young boy, he remembered the Stamp Act, which caused problems within the country, but at the time he did not understand the magnitude of it. It was not until he was around 13 or 14 when he began understanding the movement after the repeal of the Stamp Act and the destruction of the tea in Boston. His grandfather, whom he was close to, piqued his curiosity by explaining the “French War.” His grandfather’s intriguing stories stirred Martin’s youthful zeal, but he was reluctant to give

consent for Martin to join the war. It also made Joseph realize he did not want to go to war because as he stated, "I am well, so I'll keep."²² He felt cowardly, but did not want to take his "carcass where bullets fly."²³ His knowledge of war was limited, but he remained open-minded to the possibility. When he heard the rumors that the British were advancing from Boston, he became paranoid and frightened as they were spreading desolation and death along their route.

By 1774, Martin realized that the potential for war was growing each and every day, but was determined not to become a part of it. Once he heard the army was offering \$1 for joining, his courage grew instantly and he decided to enlist. Martin was busily employed on his grandparent's farm and living a fortunate lifestyle, which he later realized he should have never left, but stated that children are "full of notions."²⁴ Farming in Connecticut was difficult by any standard. "The work day," contends Robert J. Taylor, "was from sun-up to sun-down, or approximately fourteen hours, during the growing season, six days a week."²⁵ Hard work was necessary every day of the year, but somehow the colonists found time for recreational activities.

His grandfather gave him "play days" where he could fish, go gunning, or any other type of recreational activity. Fishing was considered one of the main staples of recreation. The plentiful population of shad and salmon enabled the colonists to have an excuse for "merrymaking and feasting."²⁶ Despite the standard of living in Connecticut, the notions of gaining money and feeling cowardly while many of Martin's "young associates" were joining the war gave him reason to be proactive.²⁷ Martin then decided to sacrifice his youth for the good of the country.

The war was a frightening prospect for the young Martin who was only 15 years old in 1775. He had the luxury of harboring some troops from Boston and New York at his grandparent's home along their route. The troops enabled him to gain more courage from their

company and conversation. Martin's grandfather told him he would never give consent for him to join the army unless he had consent from his parents. As Martin's courage grew, so did his desire to be called a soldier, and he began forming plans to get consent to join. When war began in 1775, he started understanding the differences between "this country" and "the mother country."²⁸ He found himself to no longer be frightened and called himself as "warm a patriot" as the best of them.²⁹

He was eager to defend his country, but had to figure a way to get his grandfather's approval. He decided to enlist for six months without getting the approval of his grandparents. He chose six months, instead of a year, because he wanted to give himself the opportunity to understand the complexities of war. Martin was now a soldier and was looking forward to proving his worth.

Throughout Martin's childhood, he appeared to have plenty of opportunities to alienate himself from the war in order to ensure his survival. However, Martin developed a passion to serve his country as he believed Americans were "invincible."³⁰ He was leaving behind his youthful days in which he could have acquired an education or learned a trade. Instead, Martin decided to put his life in danger by defending his country. The standard of living for Martin offered many possibilities for his life, but he made the conscious decision to subject himself to the revolutionary cause. Despite having a good life at his grandparents, he was never taught grammar and was only able to acquire knowledge of the rules and articles of war. Martin's early life presented many opportunities for him to achieve elevated status within society. Instead, he chose to fight for the revolutionary cause from the lowest rank: a private soldier.

Another revolutionary born the same year as Joseph Plumb Martin (1760) was John Greenwood. He was born in Boston, Massachusetts on May 17, 1760, but moved to Maine by the age of 13 to live with his father's only brother who was a wealthy man. Before he relocated to Maine, he was able to acquire a limited education. He was educated in the North School where he did not learn grammar or spelling.³¹ According to Greenwood, there were two masters who had the arduous task of overlooking 300 to 400 boys.³² Greenwood mentions that "all that we learned was acquired by the mere dint of having it thumped in," as the two masters could afford them little attention.³³ Therefore, he was not taught anything of significance while attending school.

The war was beginning to take shape while Greenwood was in school. He had heard many stories from the young boys which pointed to the war being imminent. Many of the boys eventually came to the conclusion that these events must come in the course of nature. Greenwood, on the other hand, became dismayed by the rumors. "For my part," Greenwood recalls, "all I wished was that church which stood by the side of my father's garden would fall on me at the time these terrible things happened, and crush me to death at once, so as to be out of pain quick."³⁴ Like Joseph Plumb Martin, it would take time for Greenwood to develop the courage and ardor necessary to become a revolutionary.

Opportunities, such as a trade or apprenticeship were limited for Greenwood, especially since he was only 15 years old at the beginning of the war. He was forced to leave behind a good opportunity with his uncle who could have provided him with an education. He also left the relative safety of Maine and put himself in a dangerous situation at an early age. The war had claimed his youthful days, and made it difficult for him to pursue a trade. Socially, it was

difficult for Greenwood to not perceive himself as a coward. Before the revolution began, the rumors of war had caused great confusion for Greenwood as he felt his future was insecure.

Boston also produced another ordinary man, who did not claim the luxury of having wealthy grandparents. His name was George Robert Twelves Hewes, born on August 25, 1742 in Boston, Massachusetts.³⁵ Hewes was the sixth out of nine children and was the son of a poor tanner and chandler.³⁶ Despite not being from a well-to-do family, his parents were able to afford early schooling for him.³⁷ In 1756, at the age of 14, Hewes was able to procure an apprenticeship as a shoemaker.³⁸ The Hewes family had limited connections in Boston, which was required for obtaining a good trade. George became a shoemaker because that was the only opportunity for him.

In 1763, after being denied his enlistment by the British army for being too short, he was able to open his own shoemaking shop. During the colonial period, shoemaking was not an ideal trade and Hewes was constantly looking for a way to escape this trade. The military provided an opportunity for what Hewes called his "depressed condition" as a shoemaker.³⁹ In the late 1760s, Hewes ended up in debtors' jail for not being financially able to pay his debt.⁴⁰ Hewes was clearly seeking more from life and he had "resolved to engage in the military service of my country, should an opportunity present."⁴¹

Another ordinary New England man facing insecurity was Jeremiah Greenman. He was born in Newport, Rhode Island on May 7, 1758. Greenman's family came from "a long line of plain people."⁴² His family seemed to have appeared in Massachusetts in the middle of the seventeenth century. The only source to list his family's arrival is a family Bible register page. One name on the list was "Wm Greenman," who was born "at Plimoth Mass" in 1652.⁴³

William Greenman settled in Swansea, Massachusetts in the early eighteenth century, when he soon became married and began to raise a family. Jeremiah's father, Jeremiah senior, was born on February 11, 1719/20 and when he became of age, moved to Newport, Rhode Island. In 1749, he married Amy Wiles. It is not known why he moved, but one can only imagine that he was attracted to the maritime industry that was thriving in Newport. Jeremiah junior was the only child that records suggest.

In Newport, Jeremiah was able to receive "in his native town such an education as the Common Schools afforded."⁴⁴ This education was more or less elementary, as Rhode Island had limited free public education for its children compared to the rest of New England. Newport was mainly comprised of tuition schools with limited free education for poor children.

Greenman did not learn how to write in the common school, it was not until during the war that he learned.

Rhode Island was also the birthplace of a prominent officer, General William Barton. Barton was born in the small village of Warren on May 26, 1748. Warren was on the east side of the Narragansett Bay and nearly twenty miles from Newport, the birthplace of Jeremiah Greenman. Barton's father, Benjamin, was considered "an honest and respectable man."⁴⁵ Barton had the luxury of obtaining a common school education, which enabled him to acquire a trade when he became of age.

Once he served his apprenticeship, he became a shop owner dealing in the hatter's business. By the age of 22, he was united in marriage to Rhoda Carver, the daughter of Joseph Carver, of Bridgewater, Massachusetts. By 1773, the young couple quickly produced two children. Life for William was comfortable and pleasant as his business was doing well. When

the mother country began influencing Rhode Island, he grew deep feelings of resentment. However, William had a family to console during those difficult times, which prevented him from joining in the discontent. The battle of Bunker-Hill ignited William's decision to join the American forces. Many people in Rhode-Island feared that if Boston succumbed to the British, Providence would be the next target of attack.

Barton eventually offered his service as a volunteer on June 19, 1775 in Boston. The battle of Bunker-Hill was fought two days earlier and the British would not evacuate Boston until the March of 1776. By December of 1775, Barton had his third child, whom he named George Washington. Barton then decided to join the army and sacrifice himself for his country. He gave control of his business to a Mr. Lathrop and entered the army as a corporal. He rapidly ascended through the ranks before earning the promotion of Captain. As he fought the British, he was able to become knowledgeable on military tactics. He worked under George Washington, which enabled him to pick up on the nuances of danger, military discipline, and cleanliness within the military.

While in Boston, Barton began hearing rumors of the British taking over Rhode Island. Threatening messages, such as "that the town would be burnt at such as hour next day" were consistently being directed towards Newport.⁴⁶ Newport did not have the means to resist the enemy as the people were considered to be "peaceable and unarmed inhabitants."⁴⁷ England had not yet regarded Rhode Island as traitorous and was "seeking by every means to conciliate her rebellious subjects."⁴⁸ These "paternal chastisements" only created more dissension for Rhode Island since they were seeking full independence.

The indignant Barton returned home to Providence to settle his business and made arrangements to protect his family. Afterwards, his intention was to return to the army, but Newport needed protection. Barton received orders to take his men to Tiverton, Rhode Island to create a defense. The people of Newport praised Barton for his “social qualities, his politeness, constant good humor, and patriotic sentiments.”⁴⁹ Clearly, William Barton was a well-respected man within his community and someone that people looked up to.

Another Rhode Islander was Stephen Olney who became an officer in the Continental Army. Olney was born in the town of North Providence (*Colony*, as it was then called) on September 17, 1756. The farm in which he was born made him the fifth generation to occupy the same land. It was the first settlement of the state that was purchased by Thomas Olney who was a joint proprietor in the “Providence Purchase.”⁵⁰ The Olney family believed in Puritanical views. Stephen Olney intended to spend his life “in the peaceful pursuits of agriculture; having no wishes beyond the boundaries of his farm, in plenty and rural quiet; the sound of war, and indeed of contention of any kind had never disturbed his habitation.”⁵¹ Olney was not expecting to be involved in a war that would change his lifestyle.

At the age of 20, he married and was planning to cultivate his farm and create a family of his own. It was his dream to follow in his father’s footsteps without being disturbed by outside forces, such as a war. When war seemed inevitable, Olney felt compelled to serve his country. By joining a chartered military company called the North-Providence Rangers as a private in 1774, Olney displayed his sense of national identity. His livelihood was threatened by the British, which caused him to fight for not only his freedom, but also the freedom of his family. There was a growing fear in the American colonies that the British intended to enslave the colonists and make them dependent on the British. According to Olney, the object of the North-

Providence Rangers was “to learn military tactics, and to be prepared to act in defence of our country’s rights.”⁵² The duty of protecting his country had become clear, especially as the threat of a revolution was becoming imminent.

By May of 1775, Olney writes that “Rhode Island ordered three regiments to be raised for the protection of the colony.”⁵³ Olney continues that he “was honored with an Ensign’s commission in Captain John Angell’s company, second Rhode-Island regiment, commanded by Colonel Hitchcock.”⁵⁴ Olney added he was unsure of how he obtained the commission, but he did not try to perpetuate the decision. He reached the conclusion that Rhode Island could get no better men than himself. Olney appeared to be a modest man with no intentions of self-aggrandizement. Although he accepted his commission, Olney writes he did so “with much diffidence as to my qualifications; my education was but common for that day, and worst of all, what I had learned was mostly wrong.”⁵⁵ Despite having a limited education, Olney was able to secure a commission from the military. The circumstances in Rhode Island were different from those in Massachusetts.

Rhode Island was a colony that enjoyed relative autonomy from the mother country, similar to Connecticut. This meant Rhode Island was already enjoying independence from Britain, unlike Massachusetts. “Many” (in Rhode Island), wrote Stephen Olney, “were deterred from embarking in the cause for fear they might be hanged up for rebels by order of our then gracious sovereign, George III.”⁵⁶ It became clear that Massachusetts had an abundance of men who wanted to fight for their rights. Rhode Island, on the other hand, did not endure the same threats until later. In short, Massachusetts faced a dilemma while the opposite was true for Rhode Island.

Colonial Rhode Island was largely isolated from the rest of the colonies, freeing them to make their own decisions. The towns of Rhode Island “were all founded so that their inhabitants would not have to live with other people.”⁵⁷ They were already living an independent lifestyle compared to the inhabitants of Massachusetts. The people were also able to practice their own religious beliefs as they were mostly considered outcasts from other colonies. Sydney James also notes that Rhode Island was able to deal with the royal government as with a “fairy tale court.”⁵⁸ British politics heavily influenced Rhode Islanders who viewed their colony as being a province in the British Empire.

Socially, Rhode Islanders were able to enjoy prosperity in trade, agricultural expansion, and unfamiliar religions. Providence and Newport became the commercial centers for Rhode Island. Providence was constantly challenging the dominance of Newport commerce, which inspired an increase in population in the eighteenth century. Most of Rhode Island’s population consisted of “farm families living on a simple scale and practicing many trades part-time in a rudimentary way.”⁵⁹ William Barton and Stephen Olney were able to prove that there was opportunity in Rhode Island. The colony consisted of wealthy merchants, military heroes, shopkeepers, full-time artisans, and leisured dilettantes. During the eighteenth century, Rhode Island was a peculiar colony as it offered a variety of opportunities, even for those of the lower class. Few Newport men attended college, as a limited education often sufficed when it came to finding employment.

Since there was limited education for many in Rhode Island, there had to be opportunity elsewhere. Young men often went to help in shops and stores at an early age. By the age of 12, many had learned the ways of seafaring. Apprenticeships became a way of teaching skills early to teenagers, as well as keeping young men well-disciplined. Living was generally easy for

many in Rhode Island, taxes were low or virtually nonexistent and any type of agricultural product could achieve a good price.

For most of rural Rhode Island, it was a land of small farms producing livestock and small amounts of grain or dairy products for market. Most men were yeoman farmers who worked according to the seasons, which often left them with a modest lifestyle and little work for their children. This modest lifestyle was how Stephen Olney envisioned living his life. He wanted to enjoy working the land peacefully away from any potential disturbances.

Like every colonial town, Rhode Island had its share of disparity in wealth. There were paupers and families bordering on edge of poverty with little opportunity to advance in society. There were also wealthy men who owned large estates. According to Sydney James, however, the most common of people was “an assortment of go-getters.”⁶⁰ These men enabled Rhode Island to thrive under its semi-autonomous position in the British Empire.

On the eve of the Revolution, Rhode Island was forced to change its peaceable and autonomous lifestyle. Britain had increased its power within the colonies, particularly in New England, which soon left Rhode Island to defend its liberties along with the twelve other colonies. Much of Rhode Island was in position, however, to continue thriving after the revolution, especially Providence with its urban prosperity and substantial middle class. Its closest competitor, Newport, never was able to reclaim its prosperity after the war left it crippled.

North of Rhode Island was Massachusetts, the apex of the war effort, which produced high ranking members of society for inclusion in the army with different intentions. Before the revolution occurred, Massachusetts was forced into protecting its liberties, especially since opportunity was lacking. On May 31, 1755, Benjamin Gilbert was born in Brookfield,

Massachusetts.⁶¹ His father, Daniel, was a selectman who served in the French Wars of the 1740s and 1750s.⁶² Daniel eventually became an officer during these wars as an ensign, lieutenant, and captain.⁶³ Benjamin's uncle, Joseph was also a captain of a minuteman group.⁶⁴ Clearly, Benjamin came from a military family, which enabled him to have connections with lower ranking men did not have such connections.

Benjamin Gilbert was the eldest child and attended school in Brookfield, but beyond that he was self-taught, and self-made. Brookfield would play an aggressive role in the revolutionary cause, which influenced Gilbert to become involved in the military. Brookfield was a place with radical thoughts and the community opposed the tea taxes vowing not to import or consume tea. Anyone who did consume the tea would be "held in utmost contempt, and be deemed enemies to the well-being of this country."⁶⁵ War had become the only opportunity for Benjamin as his birth date (1755) left him in a vulnerable position. He also had to live up to the family name as they were heavily involved in the military, and he was deprived of the advantages of his first cousins who graduated from Yale and Dartmouth going on to have successful legal careers.⁶⁶ The army became the only opportunity for Benjamin when he enlisted as a "fifer" in a Brookfield company of minutemen in 1775.⁶⁷ He was only nineteen years old when he joined the military. The war came at an inopportune moment in his life, causing him to acquire only a limited education.

Another member of the upper class was Benjamin Tallmadge. He was from a wealthy family in Long Island, New York. Though New York was not considered New England, author Charles Swain Hall eloquently states "its environment was largely conditioned by Puritan institutions."⁶⁸ Since 1655, New England settlers were migrating to western Long Island, in particular the town of Setauket. This town was provincially governed by New York, but as

Swain states “its inhabitants clung tenaciously to the independent New England form of local supervision – the town meeting.”⁶⁹ Long Island also enjoyed coastal trading with New England and closer relations with Connecticut than with New York. Hence, Long Island resembled a New England colony more so than its own province. Benjamin Tallmadge identifies more closely with a New Englander than a New Yorker.

Benjamin’s father became acquainted with Setauket in 1752 where he was hired to be a minister for the Congregational Church of Setauket, Long Island. His father graduated from Yale College in 1747 and taught in the Hopkins Grammar School in New Haven, Connecticut before switching to ministry. It was 1750 when he married Susanna Smith, the daughter of John Smith, who was a minister for the White Plains Congregational Church. Benjamin continued ministry for 41 years before retiring. Although Benjamin and Susanna were originally from Connecticut, their five children grew up in Setauket. Their second son, Benjamin, was born on February 25, 1754.⁷⁰ Benjamin wrote that his father had the luxury of “preparing a number of boys (five sons) for college” and believed Benjamin was the best suited for college.

Benjamin was deemed eligible for college at 12 or 13 years old, but his father said it was improper because he was so young. By 1769, he was admitted into Yale College where he could obtain a liberal education. At the time, according to Swain, the tuition for Yale College was twelve shillings. It was an education that most could not afford and left many ordinary men constantly deferring to educated men, such as Tallmadge.

At Yale College he obtained a wealth of knowledge as he became fluent in Latin and Greek and studied natural philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, and metaphysics. There were also courses on logic and rhetoric, but mostly the subjects involved training for the ministry. He

graduated in 1773 as a promising young leader full of opportunity. Upon graduating, he received “an application to superintend the High School in Weathersfield.”⁷¹ He accepted the offer and stated he was “very much gratified and pleased, both with my employment and the people.”⁷² Benjamin had the luxury of having an opportunity to advance in society because of his parents’ social standing.

When it was first heard American blood was shed at Lexington, it “electrified” the whole country. Benjamin went to Boston where he found his friend, Captain Chester, who had served at Bunker Hill. Chester offered the idea of joining the army, but at the time the military did not interest Benjamin. Eventually, he decided it was best to call the military his new profession as he believed he was influenced by the most patriotic principles. Benjamin made it known that he was “full of zeal in the cause of my country.”⁷³ His father, a Whig of Revolution, was surprised to see his son dressed in a military uniform, and was reluctant to have him enter the army because of the opportunity he had outside of the military. Benjamin, however, stuck to his decision and there was no turning back.

Olney and Barton, both officers from Rhode Island, joined the war because of their passion for defending their country. However, officers such as, Gilbert and Tallmadge, both from Massachusetts, joined the war to obtain commissions and to promote their own self-interests. The officers and private soldiers joined the war for different reasons, but there were also differences of opinion in each region or colony as the revolution had separate implications for each.

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- ¹⁷ Joseph Plumb Martin, *A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier: Some of the Adventures, Dangers, and Sufferings of Joseph Plumb Martin* (New York: Signet Classic, 2001), 5.
- ¹⁸ Robert J. Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut: A History* (New York: KTO Press, 1979), 101.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 246.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 221.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 239.
- ²² Martin, *A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 7.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 7.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.
- ²⁵ Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut*, 180-181.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 182.
- ²⁷ Martin, *A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 9.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.
- ³¹ John Greenwood, *The Wartime Services of John Greenwood: A Young Patriot in the American Revolution, 1775-1783* (Tyrone, Pa: Westvaco, 1981), 39.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 39.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 39.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.
- ³⁵ Alfred F. Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party*, Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1999, 11.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 11-12.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 12-13.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 22.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 17.
- ⁴² Jeremiah Greenman, *Diary of a Common Soldier in the American Revolution, 1775-1783: an Annotated Edition of the Military Journal of Jeremiah Greenman* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1978), xiii.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, xiii.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, xiv.
- ⁴⁵ Catharine R. Williams, *Biography of Revolutionary Heroes; Containing the Life of Brigadier Gen. William Barton, and also, of Captain Stephen Olney* (New York: Wiley & Putnam, 1839), 27.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 145.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 148.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, 150.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, 150.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 150.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 150.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 150.
- ⁵⁷ Sydney V. James, *Colonial Rhode Island: a History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), 13.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 229.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 232.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 259.
- ⁶¹ John Shy, *Winding Down: the Revolutionary War letters of Lieutenant Benjamin Gilbert of Massachusetts, 1780-1783: from his original manuscript letterbook* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989), 109.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, 11.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 100.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 11.

⁶⁸ Charles Swain Hall, *Benjamin Tallmadge: Revolutionary Soldier and American Businessman* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 3.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 4.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 3.

⁷¹ Benjamin Tallmadge, *Memoir of Col. Benjamin Tallmadge* (New York: Arno Press, 1968), 6.

⁷² Ibid., 6.

⁷³ Ibid., 7.

Chapter 2

Revolution: Private Soldiers and Their Motivations

Before the revolution, poverty in parts of New England was increasing as opportunities were dwindling. The revolution came at an opportune time for many lower class individuals as they were seeking a better life. These lower class men did not have the same security and options as the upper class. However, it would be up to these men to join the army in order for America to succeed against British advancement. They joined for various reasons, including social, economic, and political factors. In reality, the army would afford them little opportunity, but they would prove their worth during the war.

When the destruction of the tea occurred in Boston he knew it was going to spark bad occurrences. By 1773, there was a devotion to nothing but war, liberty, or death. The first year of the war marked a time period when colonists were becoming involved in the military service to display their patriotism. It was, as Charles Royster notes, a “rage militaire.”⁷⁴ Ordinary people wanted to contribute to their country’s cause with pride being a major factor. By 1776, the military decided to raise a more distinct group of soldiers,.

The number of ardent volunteers for regular military services began to decrease, as people began expecting an economic incentive for their services. The war became an opportunity for youths who wanted to become gentlemen. After the first year, Royster contends that the “army’s survival, discipline, and patriotism helped to sustain the revolutionaries’ perseverance.”⁷⁵ There appeared to be less patriotism, however, as the war progressed. American soldiers were encouraged by the battles they had won, but recruiting and enlistments became a constant struggle for officers and Congress. It would take an economic incentive to

increase the number of men to display their patriotism. Congress was forced to make ill-advised promises to entice men into the military. Individuals were not willing to sacrifice their lives until they were offered economic security.

Defending their country in its time of need was significant to the men, but was not their only motive for joining the war effort. It would take a plethora of motivational factors that inspired the private soldier to prove his worth in tumultuous times. As historian Charles Knowles Bolton suggests, “these men had clung to army life for its few bright spots, but also its many days of privation.”⁷⁶ This statement speaks volumes to the various motivational forces that plagued the lower class before the revolution. They were willing to subject themselves through various hardships and privations while also securing freedom for America. If the lower class in New England did not face limited opportunity and poverty then America may not have succeeded in the war effort. It was men, such as Joseph Plumb Martin, George Robert Twelves Hewes, John Greenwood, and Jeremiah Greenman who forced the issue while also proving they were valuable commodities to America.

These men would go on to endure numerous hardships and privations while also not having a firm grasp on their future. As William Hunting Howell makes known, these men would “starve to death in the service of a nation that does not yet exist.”⁷⁷ Although Martin’s life before the revolution was not one of narrowing opportunity and poverty, he enlisted in the army as a private soldier. Being a private soldier meant being of the lowest rank while putting their lives in danger without adequate supplies to combat the enemy. Martin, enlisting as a private soldier, saw value in fighting for his country to secure liberties he felt the country deserved. This only begins to depict his motivational forces that drew him into a war, which may have cost him his life. Martin’s story becomes interesting as his home life before the

revolution occurred was comfortable and secure. Other motivational factors played underlying roles in Martin's decision process as he was well aware of the ramifications that war could bring.

For Martin, joining the war effort was enhanced by the potential economic incentive offered by the Continental Congress. For colonists who had no other prospects and limited education, the war offered several economic opportunities. Martin's attitude shifted from being frightened to immediate support of the revolutionary cause when he heard the Congress was offering one dollar to any private soldier willing to join the military ranks. Charles Royster makes known that on September 6, 1776, "Congress offered twenty dollars and one hundred acres of land to men who enlisted for the duration."⁷⁸ Martin enlisted for six months, instead of the duration of the war, because he wanted to grasp the complexities of war. Listening to his grandfather's stories of war gave Martin a sense of fear. War meant he would live the life of a soldier that often meant dealing with starvation, fatigue, and survival. Martin felt it was best to enlist for a short period of time rather than committing himself for the duration.

It was widely rumored that "many Americans feared that by long and indefinite enlistments they would lose their freedom."⁷⁹ Perhaps, Martin also feared enslavement by the British if the war was lost. Soldiers relied heavily on other men's attitudes to protect their own self-interests. The people who enlisted expected and wanted to be paid for their service. For many soldiers, fighting for one's country became perilous without having confidence in a secure future. Many motivational forces factored into the decision making for each soldier as they grappled with the idea of fighting for their country.

The colonies quickly realized that if no bounty was offered then their regiments would not be full. Royster contends that "bounties inspired some soldiers to enlist several times with

several units within a few days.”⁸⁰ It was a bold attempt to gather soldiers as volunteers, but many of the men needed work to fulfill their obligations at home. By June 26, 1776, Congress voted “to grant ten dollars to men who enlisted for three years.”⁸¹ Congress was hoping to inspire the men with incentives to serve their country. Patriotism, while noble, also came at a price.

The colonists seemingly were not going to volunteer for a war just to fight for their country. Of course, this reasoning (defending one’s country) appeared to become the mechanism in which the general populace used politics to their advantage. Many lower class New Englanders had limited opportunity and were enduring poverty on the eve of the revolution. If they were to fight for their country, they would have to be motivated economically.

During the war, soldiers began to realize how bad the situation was in America. The government had few resources, including money and food to compensate the soldiers for their efforts. Common soldiers became aggravated because they felt as if their efforts were not appreciated. The officers, however, had more advantages and did not suffer as greatly as the ordinary soldier. Suffering became consistent for the soldiers however, this only inspired them. They received little help from Congress during the war, but used what they were given to show the country they can be relied upon.

Pride became a major underlying factor towards gaining independence. The soldiers were in a state of proving to themselves and their counterparts that despite the lack of support they would not give up the cause. Desertion was viewed as a disgraceful act as many wanted to maintain their self-respect and pride. Being considered a coward would be harmful to their reputation. Under this reasoning many decided it was better to endure hardships and deprivation,

rather than disgrace their country. There was an understanding that if they lost the war, the British would induce far greater consequences upon them than their own government was doing during the war. In short, the government had inadvertently inspired the revolutionaries to gain independence from the ill-advised promises by Congress.

In 1775, the prospect of independence also served as a motivational tool to encourage men to join the war effort. Soon after, however, Joseph Plumb Martin and his comrades realized the war had become a fight for their own survival. Facing limited resources, including food, clothing, blankets, tents, and arms, the soldiers became entrenched in a battle against themselves. The suffering became severe enough that many soldiers had to steal from their own countryman. Suffering would soon become a motivational weapon against the officers. From the beginning of the war, political motives became commonplace among both, the upper and lower classes.

The lower class, or private soldiers, used politics to their advantage during their battle for survival. Congress was forced to economically persuade these men because many felt an incentive was needed to join the war effort. If the soldiers were going to endure privation throughout the war, Congress needed to make their experience worthwhile. Enduring privation motivated the soldiers to prove they were equal to the officers. During the war, many private soldiers used their suffering as a political weapon to show they would not falter under harrowing circumstances.

During the winter of 1775-1776, Martin felt as anxious as ever to defend his country, especially since he gathered the full understanding of war. As a private soldier, he was ready to prove himself worthy enough to protect his country with the best of them. Martin, at his young age, believed the Americans were “invincible,” which shows his youthful side.⁸² The suffering was just beginning for Martin and his fellow soldiers as the search for food increased daily.

The “Kip’s Bay Affair” became a vulnerable spot for the American troops.⁸³ Not only did Martin and his comrades have to fight off a British attack with mainly Hessians involved, but he had to help out his sick friend who was overcome by the heat, fatigue, and hunger. At one point, he was forced to leave his friend for a short time to help fight off the British. He had to conceal himself in the bushes and weeds in order to survive. He stated the British were so close that he “could see the buttons on their clothes.”⁸⁴ Once the British withdrew, he went back to his sick comrade where he realized he had to deal with his own concerns first. Martin was sleep deprived and had not eaten in 24 hours, but still had the courage to help this friend. He approached an officer from a different regiment to seek help for his friend, but the officer showed little compassion. He told Martin, “well, if he dies the country will be rid of one who can do it no good.”⁸⁵ That was an unforgettable statement, which angered Martin and showed the differences between the highest and lowest ranks.

The next day they found themselves fighting the British again, but this time was different. The men were fatigued and suffered with hunger for 48 hours. One soldier complained of being hungry next to the Lieutenant Colonel. He gave the soldier a burnt piece of Indian corn and told him to “eat this and learn how to be a soldier.”⁸⁶ Martin was learning how to be a soldier at a rapid pace as it was a humbling experience for him. After the battle, the men went back to camp where they were able to eat a meal. Even this was not a pleasant experience for Martin, but he had no reason to complain about not having salt or bread at that point since he was starving. They were able to eat beef that was burnt “as black as a coal” on the outside and raw on the inside.⁸⁷ Martin describes the men as not having anything to eat for “forty-eight hours,” which caused much fatigue and faintness.⁸⁸ The private soldiers were often deprived of the necessities, but when they were offered food, they did not complain. Martin recollected that through the

deprivation often faced, a wise man said “a full belly loatheth a honeycomb: but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.”⁸⁹

Suffering with starvation was difficult, but that eventually became a secondary matter because they also had to face hard duty and near nakedness in cold weather. The soldiers had lost all their clothes in the “Kip’s Bay Affair” and were not adequately supplied. That meant the soldiers would be forced to sleep on the cold, and often wet, ground with no blankets. Dealing with starvation became a daily occurrence within the Continental Army for most. Martin would attempt to find anything possible to put in his stomach. He would forage in the woods to take advantage of nature’s offerings, such as chestnuts and animals.

At the beginning of the war, Martin was reluctant to ask for food, but he soon began stealing and gathering as much as he could. It was widely known that America was a poor country at the time so it became survival of the fittest for the soldiers and even the officers, who fared better than the soldiers. Those first six months taught him that “Uncle Sam” was more than willing to provide arms and ammunition for the troops, but never enough to eat, drink, or wear.⁹⁰

When Thanksgiving arrived in 1777, Congress announced they wanted the army to celebrate the occasion and to close out the “year of high living.”⁹¹ For all their previous sufferings, each man was awarded a gill of rice and a tablespoon of vinegar. This was a demoralizing situation for the army, who had suffered enough throughout the war and to be awarded virtually nothing for defending their country, angered many. Most men had to march barefoot over rough and frozen terrain which caused their feet to be frostbitten. Congress was not making their jobs any easier and if anything made it worse for the soldiers.

Word quickly spread throughout the colonies of the misfortunes of the many soldiers they were encountering and made them reluctant to enlist. One of the greatest misfortunes throughout the war was not being adequately supplied. Many soldiers were being ruled unfit for service because of sickness as they were not outfitted properly to deal with harsh weather conditions. Approximately 2,000 men were ruled unfit for duty in November 1777 and by December the number rose to 2,898.⁹² Nearly 3,000 men in 1777 could not defend their country because they mainly lacked shoes or shirts. With limited provisions, this not only created bad morale, but also the efficiency of the army decreased dramatically. Martin and his comrades were constantly dealing with the lack of supplies, which made it nearly impossible for the men to perform their duty to the best of their ability.

The men were true patriots, that can never be questioned, but they had suffered for four long years at this point. Martin makes it known that they constantly complained to the officers and showed their dissatisfaction, but it was to no avail. The officers ignored their complaints for far too long and the soldiers finally seized the opportunity to mutiny during the campaign of 1780 around Westfield, New Jersey. Each regiment unified, disobeying all orders, and took up arms against the officers to make their point known. Martin and the private soldiers mutinied because they felt their services were not being recognized by the officers. This mutiny did prove to be righteous as the men obtained better provisions and they were able to diminish their complaints for some time. Martin and his comrades were not seeking to desert the revolutionary cause because they were well aware that whatever happened to the country would involve them.

On December 25, 1776, Martin was honorably discharged from the army after serving his enlistment time. It was now his decision to re-enlist or begin a new life outside of the war. He was being recruited heavily to rejoin the war effort, but after suffering throughout the war, he

had no desire to return. Men were enlisting as soon as the weather turned warm again, which made his decision even more difficult. Martin stated “the general opinion of the people was, that the war would not continue three years longer; what reasons they had for making such conjectures I cannot imagine.”⁹³ As he watched various men enlist, he did not want to be thought a coward, even though many thought the war would not last much longer. That notion may have contributed to Martin’s - as well as many others - motivations.

His “most familiar associate” enlisted for the duration of the war as a sergeant.⁹⁴ That man constantly pressured Martin to rejoin the war effort. Martin mentioned how “that little insignificant monosyllable-No-was the hardest word in the language for me to pronounce.”⁹⁵ Not only was watching his fellow comrades enlist and re-enlist difficult, but the pressures of friends urging him to rejoin served as motivational factors. Martin made the decision to join again at the urging of his friend, but soon realized he made the wrong choice. At that point, he “began sorely to repent” his decision.⁹⁶ He requested permission to be relieved of duty as he was not ready to rejoin the war. The request was granted by the Captain and Martin would not join again unless it was on his terms.

Soon after, as squads were being formed within the town based on “their rateable property,” Martin realized he could become acquainted with a dignified squad.⁹⁷ He had an “elbow relation, a sort of cousin-in-law” who had obtained a Lieutenants commission.⁹⁸ His cousin-in-law had constantly urged his grandparents to give their consent for Martin to join him in his squad. He eventually obtained consent to rejoin the army. His cousin-in-law also helped him by persuading a squad to hire him. The squad offered him a position, however, Martin thought he “might as well endeavour to get as much for my skin as I could.”⁹⁹ He had rejoined the army, and once again his motivation was economic. He stated “the men gave me what they

agreed to, I forget the sum, perhaps enough to keep the blood circulating.”¹⁰⁰ Martin was well-aware of the dangers and suffering he would again face, but in order for him to join he made sure to procure a financial settlement. Being a soldier during the revolution was difficult for the lowest ranking men and they would need motivation to continue the fight.

In 1780, Martin was transferred to the Sappers and Miners regiment, where he was promoted to sergeant. Martin knew he could never be accused of not fulfilling his duty to his country and that the country had failed in its duty to him because of the suffering he and others had to endure. He states that the men “absolutely, literally starved” and the suffering “tried men’s souls.”¹⁰¹ His suffering did not go unrecognized by his Lieutenant while they were at Newburgh obtaining provisions for the army. The Lieutenant hinted to Martin that he should look after his own interest by picking out the better articles of clothing that he was allowed for himself. Other sergeants gave Martin a hard time for this, but the Lieutenant quickly intervened and told the men that he deserved it for all the suffering he had been through while they were in the safety of their homes. As the war progressed, Martin realized there was no time for bashfulness and he had to take advantage of every opportunity to further his survival.

The campaign of 1782 occurred when Martin, along with numerous others, were diagnosed with yellow fever. Martin suffered an attack of it in February and struggled greatly until March. It caused him to bleed profusely from his nose, and his body strength was reduced substantially within the first few days. Martin said he was “as helpless as an infant.”¹⁰² It became so bad the officers built a room for a hospital where Martin was transferred to recover. During his stay in the hospital, he was forced to watch people die from diseases. As much as he suffered from his previous war encounters, this became a nearly unbearable experience as he prepared himself for death. He would go on to survive the disease, but that experience put the

war in perspective. For Martin, the American army soon became the enemy as they helped perpetuate his near death experience by not providing adequate supplies. Martin and his comrades would go on to suffer until the end of the war in 1783.

One of the biggest problems was supply. The country was young and poor, which made it difficult for them to supply shoes, clothing, food, firearms, ammunition, tents, and cooking equipment. For the most part, these items had to be found on a massive scale. The French were able to provide substantial help, especially after Louis XVI signed the Treaty of Amity and Commerce in February of 1778. The French provided much needed help, but the supplies had to come mainly from the Americans. This ultimately became a problem for several reasons. The enthusiasm for the war waned greatly in 1777 through 1779. Another reason was American farmers and artisans were producing goods for all three armies (Americans, British, and the French) in order to profit. The third reason is the two foreign armies could pay in hard coin, gold and silver, which the Americans lacked. Finally, the armies' demands and the British blockade created shortages of meat, grain, salt, clothes, shoes, gunpowder, and imported goods, such as tea, spices, and rum. The private soldiers had to deal with these shortages on a daily basis. They were forced to adapt to starvation and coldness in order to ensure their survival.

Before the revolution, Martin acknowledged patriotism, personal sacrifice, bravery, and confidence in winning the war, but those items began to fade as the war seemed never ending to the soldiers. He was intrigued by various war stories, adventure, and most of all the money offered for enlisted men. From his perspective, he had already acknowledged that America was its own country and they were fighting against "the mother country."¹⁰³ He dispels the typical military glory and heroism often told by the upper class, as he believed and reinforces his idea

that war should not be glorified. Martin and his comrades joined the war for various reasons, but he considered nationalism as an afterthought as many soldiers suffered along the way.

Martin describes America as being “young and poor,” but was still able to triumph over a far superior enemy.¹⁰⁴ Despite the harrowing conditions, America was formed through brave, heroic, and self-sacrificing men, such as Martin. Martin was at the bottom of the ranks where he experienced danger and suffering that was unlike those in the higher ranks. The soldiers experienced hunger, coldness, fatigue, and not being adequately supplied. It is crucial to understand how unknown soldiers, such as Martin, Hewes, Greenman, and Greenwood significantly transformed America by gaining its independence with their sheer determination and devotion to the cause.

Martin’s revolution was no different than most other private soldiers. George Robert Twelves Hewes saw the revolution as an opportunity, socially, politically, and economically. He was a man who did not appreciate deference within society and believed no man should be subjected to social classes. The arrival of the Revolution provided him and others with the opportunity to simply be somebody in society. Hewes and Joseph Plumb Martin were similar as both men were ideologically independent before the war occurred.

When the war occurred they seized the opportunity to prove not only their independent nature, but also that no social class should defer to the other. Essentially, these men of lower social standing and no future prospects realized the war was an opportunity to prove their worth in a society that generally overlooked their abilities. There was limited opportunity for Hewes in Boston, but the revolution offered an opportunity to gain respect and recognition by being

virtuous and independent. He was an ordinary, poor citizen who relied on his honesty and zeal to make himself known to the elites of society.

Hewes did not become politically active until around 1770 when the Boston Massacre occurred. Hewes led a poverty-stricken life, which made it difficult for him to elevate his status, even though he was an artisan. Hewes became the epitome of how lower class individuals were “more likely to resort to collective actions to seek their goals.” Poverty and limited opportunity forced Hewes into “political deference,” by becoming dependent upon the upper class. In search of modest opportunity, many lower class individuals used collective action as a political weapon. Hewes, like many others, only wanted to have a voice in society without being dependent upon the upper class. They were not only fighting for independence against Britain, but also against the upper class.

Hewes was willing to sacrifice his life in the revolutionary cause by declaring himself a patriot. However, there were other motives that perpetuated his patriotism. There was a sense of national identity with Hewes, but other factors contributed to his nationalism. Hewes’ main motivational force for joining in the war effort was enhancing his social and economic standing in order to provide for his family. Inequality in society prevailed before the outbreak of war and Hewes, like other lower class individuals sought to destroy that notion. When war arrived, Hewes and others took advantage by declaring themselves patriots in the cause for American independence. However, Hewes’ mission was to gain a sense of citizenship and personal worth that enabled them to denounce deference. He also wanted to create a national identity for the lower ranks of society. Hewes became embattled as the lower class was constantly deferring to the upper class. In short, it was his mission to create an opportunity for not only himself, but for those that led poverty-stricken lives as well.

When Boston was put under martial law in 1775, he was forced to flee the city with his family. After sending his family to a safe location, his father's hometown of Wrentham, Massachusetts, Hewes was able to serve in the Boston militia and occasionally as a privateer for a few months out of the year.¹⁰⁵ He could only serve a limited amount of time during the war because he also had to provide for his family.¹⁰⁶ Hewes' standard of living within Boston was of the lowest ranking as he searched for an opportunity to prove himself within society. There can be no denying his ardent patriotism, but Hewes also joined the war with notions of eliminating his poverty-stricken lifestyle by searching for such an opportunity.

The resistance movements of the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party became events that would win Hewes recognition within the Boston community. Before the Revolution began, Hewes witnessed ordinary men being victimized by soldiers. The cruelty that was displayed by the British soldiers served as a motivational factor for Hewes because he perceived the rights of the colonists were being trampled.

National identity for Hewes meant defending his "rights," actively supporting his countryman, and becoming a citizen within the American colonies. The personal experiences of Hewes left him "continually reflecting upon the unwarrantable sufferings inflicted on the citizens of Boston by the usurpation and tyranny of Great Britain, and my mind was excited with an unextinguishable desire to aid in chastising them."¹⁰⁷ Like many others, the Revolution gave Hewes a sense of citizenship and personal worth through his traumatic experiences. Hewes used the revolution to advance within society and to provide for his family.

Another soldier to take advantage of the Revolution was John Greenwood. Greenwood's uncle lived in the town of Falmouth (Portland), Maine that was 150 miles from Boston. His

uncle was a cabinet-maker and also dealt with the shipping business. Greenwood had an opportunity to learn a trade from his uncle, but the war quickly intervened. His uncle was the lieutenant of an independent company called “the Cadets,” where Greenwood was employed to play the fife while the company marched.¹⁰⁸ He was the only person in that area who knew how to play the fife and was treated favorably by the men.

Being thrown into a society of men who “imbibed the ardor of a military spirit” was difficult for Greenwood to comprehend, but he soon found the zeal to fight for his country.¹⁰⁹ His peers had garnished a strong sense of nationalism that had a profound effect on Greenwood. That nationalism gave him a sense of pride for his country. He continued to stay with his uncle until 1775 as it marked the beginning of the war. He then returned to Boston since he feared his family may be killed by the British. Greenwood was cautious as he wanted to fight for his country, but naturally also feared he may be killed. He decided it was best to enlist for eight months to gain perspective on the operations of war. He also recalled that “to call it living was out of the question.”¹¹⁰ War had caused him to rethink his position in the military. He had lost the courage to fight because as he states “everywhere the greatest terror and confusion seemed to prevail.”¹¹¹

He was frightened by the sheer chaos and terror that ensued between the Americans and the British. He began developing courage to fight when he stumbled upon a black man who was wounded in the neck. He asked the man if it hurt to which his response was “no” and he was only going to “get a plaster put on it,” and planned to return.¹¹² The will of that man inspired Greenwood with immediate encouragement and pride for America. Fear never troubled him again as he felt brave, and like a soldier.

The will of that man inspired Greenwood with immediate encouragement and pride for America. Fear never troubled him again as he felt brave, and like a soldier. Greenman did not gather a strong national identity until those personal experiences shaped his way of thinking.

Jeremiah Greenman, another revolutionary who enlisted as a private soldier, had different motivations for joining the war effort. Greenman served in the Revolution for all eight years. At the time, Greenman felt the war occurred at an inopportune moment in his life as he was at the age when he had to prepare for a trade or career. There was little indication, however, that he was actively pursuing a trade or career. Therefore, the revolution may have occurred at the most opportune moment for Greenman.

Motivated by the lure of the military, which offered economic and social opportunity, he joined the army. The army offered the opportunity of patriotic service and also a livelihood. His service would be temporary and dangerous, but it gave him the opportunity “to make a man of himself.”¹¹³ He was motivated for several reasons, mainly socially. He manipulated the military to gain a sense of perspective in his life. When the revolution began, he was only seventeen years old and decided the army would give him the most opportunity in life. He was willing to sacrifice his life while attempting to figure out his future endeavors. He also wanted to play a role in the birth of a nation.

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- ⁷⁴ Royster, *A Revolutionary People*, 25.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., 96-97.
- ⁷⁶ Charles Knowles Bolton, *The Private Soldier under Washington* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1902),
- ⁷⁷ William Hunting Howell, "Starving Memory: Joseph Plumb Martin Un-Tells the Story of the American Revolution," *www.common-place.org* 10, no. 2 (2010), <http://www.common-place.org/vol-10/no-02/howell> (accessed March 14, 2010)
- ⁷⁸ Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War*, 65.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., 49.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., 71-72.
- ⁸¹ Ibid., 64.
- ⁸² Martin, *A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 16.
- ⁸³ Ibid., 30.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., 33.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid., 35.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid., 38.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid., 39.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid., 38.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid., 59.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid., 55.
- ⁹¹ Ibid., 87.
- ⁹² Bolton, *The Private Soldier under Washington*, 100.
- ⁹³ Martin, *A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 52.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid., 52.
- ⁹⁵ Ibid., 52.
- ⁹⁶ Ibid., 53.
- ⁹⁷ Ibid., 53.
- ⁹⁸ Ibid., 53.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid., 53.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 54.
- ¹⁰¹ Ibid., 148.
- ¹⁰² Ibid., 219.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid., 15.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 245.
- ¹⁰⁵ Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party*, 52-53.
- ¹⁰⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 48.
- ¹⁰⁸ Greenwood, *The Wartime Services of John Greenwood*, 41.
- ¹⁰⁹ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁰ Ibid., 46.
- ¹¹¹ Ibid., 49.
- ¹¹² Ibid., 49.
- ¹¹³ Greenman, *Diary of a Common Soldier*, xv.

Chapter Three

Revolution: Officers and Their Motivations

The Revolution for officers, as opposed to the private soldiers, presented a different type of opportunity. The officers viewed the Revolution as an opportunity to not only gain economic standing, but also social and political standing within society. Many gave up the opportunity for an education in hopes that the military would provide them with a sense of nobleness and greatness. Officers generally came from wealthier families giving them an option on whether or not they wanted to join the military and fight for their freedom.

This chapter will focus on the following officers, Colonel Benjamin Tallmadge, Colonel William Barton, Captain Stephen Olney, and Lieutenant Benjamin Gilbert. Each of these men joined the American army for their own distinct reasons. However, one underlying theme emerges between these four men, which was they sought social and political greatness through the military. These men can be considered patriots to the cause as they were willing and able to join the military. Of course, they had a sense of national identity when they joined the war, but there were other factors that played a role in their decision to join the military. This section will examine their various motivations for joining the war and how their war experiences transformed their thought process.

There is no question that Benjamin Tallmadge was full of zeal for his country, but he also viewed the pending revolution as an opportunity to present his qualities. When he first realized that war was inevitable, he was reluctant to join the war effort. It was not until he talked to Captain Chester that he realized the military offered an opportunity. He was influenced by

patriotic principles and a desire to move up in the military ranks. He had a strong sense of national identity and was willing to prove that by taking on Great Britain.

The beginning of the war, while in New York, he witnessed his first battle scene in which he described as “awful.”¹¹⁴ He also mentioned that he could hardly bring his mind “to be willing to attempt the life of a fellow-creature.”¹¹⁵ The campaign of 1776 marked a tumultuous period for Tallmadge as enlistments were expiring and recruits were decreasing with an enemy defeating them. Tallmadge goes on to state the enemy was “insolent and cruel both to the inhabitants and to their prisoners. In fact, all was confusion and dismay, and it seemed as if we were on the eve of despair and ruin.”¹¹⁶ Perhaps, the most glaring part of his commentary is the enemy displayed cruelty towards the inhabitants and prisoners. The soldiers became highly motivated to end the cruelty among their people as this gave them a sense of national identity. The enemy had inadvertently inspired the revolutionaries with pride to protect America.

In the fall of 1776, Congress passed a quota to raise battalions of infantry in each state in the Union, according to Tallmadge. They also authorized General George Washington to appoint officers for each regiment, which changed the military system. It became a plea to show a national identity and defend the country against Great Britain. Tallmadge states he was offered “the first troop, in the 2d regiment of the light dragoons, commanded by Elisha Sheldon.”¹¹⁷ He eventually enlisted the quota for his troops and obtained his “commission as captain bore date the 14th of December, 1776.”¹¹⁸ Tallmadge was rising in the military ranks, while also serving his country. He was envisioning that this would be his “new career, both as to the nature and duration of my military service.”¹¹⁹ Tallmadge felt the dragoon service was “so honorable and so desirable, it became an object of primary importance to obtain an appointment in this corps.”

¹²⁰ Throughout Tallmadge’s account of the war, one underlying theme emerges: the Americans

parlayed victories into hope. Tallmadge describes the Battle of Trenton as being one “where gloom and dismay prevailed, zeal and courage began to appear.”¹²¹ Their victory at Trenton inspired the troops to continue persevering, despite the enormous obstacle they faced with Great Britain.

The campaign of 1777 was described by Tallmadge as “my military duties by day, and the pleasant intercourse with the inhabitants in the evening, made the time pass rapidly away.”¹²² “Military ambition,” stated Tallmadge, and “panting for glory” served as motivational factors during his service.¹²³ Throughout Tallmadge’s memoir, it is clear that he envisioned himself as any other soldier, but had to instill the motivation and hope into his troops. It was the officer’s duty to provide inspiration for his troops and Tallmadge excelled at providing hope. On April 7, 1777, Tallmadge acquired the rank of Major in the 2nd Regiment Light Dragoons. He had earned his commission as a field officer.

The entire American military faced severe circumstances while at Valley Forge during their winter quarters in 1778. Tallmadge viewed the suffering first hand as men were without adequate provisions, clothing, shoes, and blankets. Despite their suffering, the soldiers’ will to survive prevailed.

During the war, Tallmadge and others were motivated by the French army, “about 6,000 strong, under the command of the Count Rochambeau.”¹²⁴ Now the rumors of the French army affording aid to the American cause became a realization that independence “of our country was absolutely sure.”¹²⁵ They were also expecting a large fleet of reinforcements as well. Many soldiers believed the next campaign (1780) would be a decisive one for the American cause.

Just as Benjamin Tallmadge, another highly motivated officer was Colonel William Barton. During the beginning of the war, he was stationed at Tiverton, Rhode Island. It was his military duty to protect the channel on the east side of Howland's ferry and to maintain correspondence with Newport, after the British came into possession. The British allowed them to depart with their families, but they only were given twenty four hours. They had capitulated honorably, although the defenselessness and exposure only motivated the troops. Despite the capitulation, Barton had no sense of idleness as he was prepared to be more useful to his country.

Barton constantly contemplated ways in which to defeat the British. On several occasions he employed spies on the island to gather an exact location of the British in Newport. He had planned to surprise General Prescott in 1777. Barton was willing to go in alone as he prepared to "strike one blow for my country, if fate never permits me to strike another."¹²⁶ His determination was contagious among his troops who were motivated to strike the final blow to Great Britain.

Wartime experiences played an integral role in shaping the motivational factors in which the soldiers used to defeat the British. When the American forces saw their land decimated by foraging parties, it reinvigorated their passion to defend their country. Barton, like many officers and soldiers, viewed that as a lack of respect. He was determined to take only volunteers because they were "willing to risk their lives with him to advance two paces in front."¹²⁷ Barton viewed himself as an ordinary soldier as he pledged "to share every danger, whatever it might be, equally with his soldiers."¹²⁸ After contriving plans to surprise General Prescott, he eventually pursued that plan successfully. Barton had captured General Prescott, and although the British were stunned, their officers and privates "rejoiced to get rid of him" because he was "arbitrary and tyrannical," as well as "universally hated."¹²⁹ Just as Benjamin Tallmadge had

witnessed the atrocities the British wrought on the American prisoners, Barton witnessed it as well. On February 22, 1777, Barton witnessed the harsh treatment the British were inflicting upon American prisoners. Captain John Lee, a fatal victim of the cruel treatment was one of seven men that Barton witnessed being brought to the hospital “in the most deplorable situation.”

¹³⁰ As the troops witnessed the cruelty, it provided extra motivation for them to succeed in defeating the British. Barton mentioned that many officers, privates, and negroes were confined within a vessel where “they were half starved, and denied even light for a number of days.” ¹³¹ That type of treatment inspired the American cause to defeat the British.

Although Barton perceived himself as being a common soldier and sharing equally with the privates, there were times when he took advantage of being an officer. He had the luxury of staying within quarters that were out of the elements, whereas privates were forced to camp on the ground in the most deplorable of conditions. Barton was also able to secure a farm-house nearby where he housed his wife and children. Once he acquired his commission as Brevet Colonel from Congress in the winter of 1777-1778, he was effectively removed from his situation and was not immediately needed for actual military service. His troops were seemingly demoralized by this situation as they respected Barton and had been useful during his service. Barton returned to Providence where he had the fortunate opportunity of tending to his family affairs. Despite having time with his family and working in his hatter’s shop, he was interested in being called back to service for his country.

The hometown of Colonel Barton, Warren, had come into the possession of the British. As Barton traveled from Providence to Warren, there were eager inhabitants that were ready to join him. He was now General of the Rhode-Island militia, and Brevet Colonel in the United

States Army. Barton and his men arrived at Warren to find a retreating enemy and they heard a large army coming in the distance.

A story from the author, Mrs. Williams that she states has been confirmed by Barton himself reflects his character and devotion to the cause. He chased the enemy yelling “I am the man who took Prescott, and by ---, if you will just step out of your lurking place, I’ll hack you to pieces in less time than it took to take him.”¹³² Barton chased the British to Bristol, where he was shot in his right thigh, just above the knee, and lodged in his hip. Mrs. Williams mentions the bullet was taken from his hip and preserved in the family. She also mentions that “a long and tedious illness was the consequence of this wound. For three months the Colonel kept his bed. A lingering fever, occasioned by his sufferings, set in, and for some time his life was in imminent danger.”¹³³

During his time recuperating, another son, named Daniel, was born to him. While recuperating, the enemy had threatened to possess the town. However, the Barton family was not able to relocate. Because of Barton’s rank, General John Sullivan sent a message to not relocate as he would send a wagon to carry them to safety if they were in danger and that his family would be cared for first.¹³⁴ As a ranking officer, Barton was afforded the luxury of having the army take care of not only his family, but him as well. Private soldiers did not enjoy the luxury of seeing their families and they certainly did not have offers to help save their families from an enemy threatening to invade their town.

After receiving his injury, Colonel Barton was unable to return to active duty as he contracted a long illness as well. It was with much regret that he could not return to duty with his fellow troops. However, he was appointed to sundry offices of honor and profit. He was also

a member of the Legislature from Providence and the government appointed him to the office of inspector in the custom-house. Despite, carrying these various jobs, he was also a member of the Rhode Island House of Representatives. During the war, Barton's popularity was displayed when he had a brig named after him called the "William Barton."¹³⁵ Barton staunchly believed that America deserved its independence and he went to great lengths to see peace restored within the "bleeding country."¹³⁶ Since, he was unable to participate in active duty he was still able to exert himself in the relief of the distressed inhabitants of captured towns, as well as those who had property destroyed.

Barton was unlike many officers who joined the war based on their own self-interests and advancement within society. He had a knack for inspiring his troops with his great sense of national identity and was rewarded for his patriotism, during and after the war. Barton had a prideful sense of nationalism and felt America was ready for independence from Great Britain.

Similar in character, was his Rhode Island comrade, Stephen Olney. Olney's primary motivation to join the war was his duty to country. He arose when his country needed him and was rewarded for his efforts. After joining the military in 1774, Olney wrote in his manuscript, that he sought "to learn military tactics, and to be prepared to act in defence of our country's rights."¹³⁷ It appears his motivation was based strongly on national identity and dedication to the cause. His devotion was quickly recognized as Olney stated "in May, 1775, the Colony of Rhode Island ordered three regiments to be raised for the protection of the Colony, and as part of an army of observation, and I, was honored with an Ensign's commission in Captain John Angell's company, second Rhode-Island regiment, commanded by Colonel Hitchcock."¹³⁸

Just as Colonel William Barton, Stephen Olney displayed his modesty in his manuscript. In response to his Ensign's commission, he modestly states "who recommended me I do not know; but it was not by my own intercession." ¹³⁹ But perhaps they chose me because they could get no better, so many were deterred from embarking in the cause for fear they might be hanged up for rebels by order of our then gracious sovereign, George III." ¹⁴⁰ Despite being in dissent to his qualifications, he accepted his commission. Olney was the first to admit his education was "common for that day, and worst of all, what I had learned was mostly wrong." ¹⁴¹ It was clear, Olney was not expecting a commission, and he misconceived his own achievements. His initiative in seeking an understanding to proper military tactics and strategy is most likely what other officers saw in him.

Through sheer motivation is how Olney envisioned the country defeating the British. The spirit of liberty had reached new heights, so much that the country would be "reduced to hopeless and unconditional submission" before they would be defeated. ¹⁴² Olney admits as they marched towards Roxbury and prepared for battle at any point the regiments were in "high spirits, though with rather quivering apprehension, on first sight of the British." ¹⁴³ Olney provided an anecdote of the war in his manuscript that displays the difficulty of keeping the men motivated. "The Rhode-Island troops," writes Olney, "were for some time drawn up just within reach of their shells, and not being acquainted with those sort of missiles, it was with great difficulty the men could be kept in the ranks, especially when they imagined a shell was about to light on their heads." ¹⁴⁴ Olney animates the situation further stating "fear always makes danger, and in order to prevent fear from warping my judgment, I held up my gun by the muzzle as a perpendicular, and kept my post, as did also our company." ¹⁴⁵ He had successfully motivated his troops by leading by example in what must have been a chaotic situation.

The Americans used what motivation they could in order to keep spirits high within the ranks. As documented in numerous historical documents, the winters of 1775-1776 were brutal. Many soldiers suffered from cold and famine, but if the Americans suffered, then surely the British were suffering from the elements, too. The Americans used that suffering to motivate them as they understood the British had a large number of their wounded die from fatigue, climate, and starvation. Olney felt “that a people coming from one country to fight another, have on the whole much the worst of it.”¹⁴⁶ Occurrences such as this often motivated the American cause and kept the soldiers in high spirits.

Despite the suffering of British troops acting as a motivational factor, soldiers such as Joseph Plumb Martin and George Robert Twelves Hewes felt the Americans suffered just as, if not worse than the British with the lack of provisions the country could not afford to provide. Throughout their memoirs, there were often complaints of the suffering and hardships. As an officer, perhaps Stephen Olney fared better than his soldiers. It is reasonable to conceive that officers generally fared better than their soldiers as provisions needed to be adequately dispersed, even at the cost of the private soldiers.

During the war, several occurrences were depicted by Captain Olney that illuminated the motivations for not only his interests, but other soldiers as well. These motivations were both based on self-interests and a strong national identity emerging through desolation. Both the Americans and British were known to hold prisoners of war. However, the treatment of these soldiers was often scrutinized by both sides.

Captain Olney reiterates that his British prisoners were of “mature age, good sense, and very considerable information.”¹⁴⁷ However, he was also astonished that “such persons should

doubt the justice of the patriot cause, and still more astonishing that they avowed their belief that the States had not the means of supporting their independence.”¹⁴⁸ Pride was a clear factor for Olney as he desperately wanted to show them they could be independent.

The American prisoners were known to have not fared as well, as mentioned by Colonel William Barton. Olney describes a situation when intelligence reached an American camp that American prisoners in New York were cruelly treated. It enraged the Americans when they heard their fellow comrades were “exposed to the inclemency of the weather, not allowed sufficient nourishment, even of the most sordid and repulsive kind, exposed to the insults of the soldiers, a shocking want of cleanliness.”¹⁴⁹ Within a few weeks, around 1500 American troops perished from disease. The Royal officers were attempted to convince the soldiers to join the British military, but they refused – showing their national identity. Those soldiers preferred death before joining the British military.

The imprisoned American officers fared no better as they “were escorted about street to be the sport of royal mob, and even beaten for daring to solicit some relief for their suffering soldiers, who were perishing for food and in the infected dungeons.”¹⁵⁰ General Howe of the British military denied the allegations, but when Washington suggested sending an agent to provide for the men, Howe refused. Needless to say, the awful allegations caused the Americans to go from sheer patriotism and love of country to utter hatred of the British. Motivated to save their comrades from a desperate situation and to ensure they would not find the same fate, the American cause was bolstered.

The revolutionary cause was also motivated by the reading of the Declaration of Independence around 1776 because it inspired men with the words “never to lay down her arms

until these United States should be free, sovereign, and independent!”¹⁵¹ There were times, however, during the war that hope had faded. Olney recalled an anecdote between two Captains who felt the country’s probability of success was limited and decided it was impossible to win the war. Olney quickly offered his opinion to the contrary despite their experience. This was an instance in which Olney had to persuade fellow officers that independence was near, instead of providing inspiration to his troops. He often provided motivation for his soldiers, despite the lowly situations there were often faced with. The soldiers were often without adequate armament during the war, but Olney would not let his troops be dissuaded. Olney had his first child during the war on October 19, 1776 and he had a great desire to return home, but he would not be deterred from the war effort.¹⁵²

When the campaign in New Jersey had ended, the troops were given the opportunity to rest at Morristown. Towards the end of 1777, he was finally able to return home to visit family, as were many other Rhode Island troops as well. The task of getting home was long and arduous, but Olney was energized with the desire to see his family. The group proceeded on foot through part of the state of Massachusetts and Connecticut before entering Rhode Island.

Once he returned home, Olney recalled that he thought he “was clear of the army, but found I had been appointed a Captain in the second Rhode Island regiment, commanded by Colonel Israel Angell.”¹⁵³ Olney described his pay as a subaltern was not nearly sufficient enough to pay his expenses. “I was in hopes,” wrote Olney, “that a Captain’s pay of 40 dollars per month, would yield me some remuneration, and as the American cause had become more desperate, it seemed like cowardice, and dishonorable to forsake my country now in distress, though many officers that had been brought up more delicately, had by the service already performed, become satisfied, and found their patriotism expended, and declined serving any

longer.”¹⁵⁴ Olney’s statement clearly marks an underlying theme that many officers sought economic incentive before displaying their patriotism. Olney sought remuneration for his services, but he did not appear to be satisfied with losing the war. His strong sense of national identity played an integral role in motivating his fellow troops throughout the war. The author, Mrs. Williams, writes “an appeal to a man’s pocket, excites more sensation than any thing else. Public spirit, patriotism, all fall before it.”¹⁵⁵

In June of 1778, Olney returned to camp at Peekskill, where he witnessed that thousands had been added to the army. This reinvigorated the troops and gave them a new sense of hope and energy. Another motivational factor occurred when rumors of France reaching the country and fighting on behalf of the Americans provided a latent hope that they could defeat the British. The enemy also used techniques such as, burning houses and ravaging the land to dissuade the Americans, but that strategy only motivated the American cause.

Captain Olney provides a small anecdote to the winter at Valley Forge, but according to the author, Mrs. Williams, he “says nothing of any suffering.”¹⁵⁶ The winter at Valley Forge can be considered nothing short of a miracle the Americans survived. They suffered without adequate clothing, food, medicine, and nothing to keep them out of the elements. Olney simply mentions that “we drew a ration of salt pork and hard bread, and for the first time, I relished such food without the process of cooking, and even thought it delicious.”¹⁵⁷ This statement provides insight into the destitute situation the men were facing as they struggled with hunger. He mentioned that “for several days we had no rations at all, only parts of rations.”¹⁵⁸ The horrors that many soldiers described at Valley Forge were not described in detail by Captain Olney.

Perhaps, Olney's situation was not as destitute as the private soldiers. Or it could be the fact he left on furlough, about the first of January. His reasoning for leaving on furlough provides some insight. He left because there were numerous mouths to feed, and there were a large proportion of officers to the men. That rationale suggests the officers were getting more rations than the private soldiers and he felt that he could be spared. The campaigns of 1777 and 1778 can be considered a disgrace to our country, for the soldiers with all their hardships and privations, had to battle both American merchants and farmers because of economic value.

During the war, Captain Olney was wounded twice, and after each time, he recovered and returned to the war. At the Battle of Springfield, he ordered his men to take possession of a small hill covered with wood and at that time he was shot in the left arm with a rifle ball. After tying the wound off with a handkerchief, he thought it was best to retreat. He eventually made it to a hospital at Bearskin Ridge where he remained for eight to ten weeks for the wound to heal properly.

In 1779, Captain Olney had the luxury of returning home to visit his family. He returned home because his second child, Joseph Olney, was born in 1779. The duty to his country prevailed over his familial duties and he soon left to rejoin his company in Yorktown, Virginia. He was fortunate enough to partake in the capitulation of Cornwallis in 1781.

Captain Olney stayed in the military for nearly the duration of the war, ending with the siege of Yorktown. He did not immediately end his commission after the siege of Yorktown as he waited until March 1782 to relinquish it. Once Cornwallis was captured, the fate of the British was conceded. After impeccable service to his country, Captain Olney left the army with distasteful feelings. An unhappy Olney stated "as I had suffered from the enemy's guns in front

of battle, they (his brother officers) considered it as an imposition.”¹⁵⁹ It was Olney’s belief that “there are some who make it their business to pull down the character of others so much easier than to build up their own.”¹⁶⁰ He was upset that some of his fellow officers were manipulating the army to better their own self-interests as they were careerists. It was not Olney’s duty to be inclined to a military profession and he felt that Congress could not reasonably begin to remunerate their service time.

Olney refused to be part of that particular group as he was more than satisfied not being dependent on the British any longer. He was satisfied with his performance in defending his country through the adversity and also to the satisfaction of his superiors was all he had expected from the war. He was “expecting no reward but the Independence and liberty of my country.”¹⁶¹ Being 27 years old, he sought to find another calling to support his growing family and old age. Based on principle, he resigned his commission before the war had officially ended.

It was in 1780 that Benjamin Gilbert received his commission as an officer. Shortly before he had spent six months at home in Brookfield, Massachusetts. He began his military career as a private and sergeant for nearly four years before gaining his commission as an officer. Around 1780, it was his prerogative to be discharged and returned home in order “to indulge his sociable impulses.”¹⁶² While home, he enjoyed a time of leisure, instead of working. It appeared as though Gilbert was satisfied with not returning to the war. However, when he received orders to report back as a commissioned officer he took advantage of the opportunity.

Throughout the war, he was not particularly enthralled about being in the military. He often dealt with personal depression while in the military and seemed to have enjoyed a life of leisure. He had little motivation to participate in a war that appeared throughout his letters as if

it were intruding on his life. He had dealt with the hardships and deprivation after serving four years as a private and sergeant, which appears in his letters to have demoralized his revolutionary principles.

According to his pension application, Benjamin Gilbert who applied under the 1818 pension law was approved and enjoyed, along with his widow for years after, the first Federal welfare program. His pension application provides significant information as to where he served and for whom he served. On April 19, 1775, he marched for Lexington and enlisted in Captain Peter Harwood's Company in Colonel Leonard's Regiment, serving in that regiment for two years.¹⁶³ In January 1777, he enlisted in Captain Daniel Shays Company as a sergeant in the 5th Massachusetts Regiment commanded by Colonel Rufus Putnam, serving for two years.¹⁶⁴ In the Campaign of 1779, he was then promoted to Ensign in Colonel Rufus Putnam's regiment. Finally, he was commissioned Lieutenant for the remainder of the war in 1782.¹⁶⁵ His pension application tracks his ranking throughout the military and enables him to earn the pay he deservedly earned.

From 1780 until the end of the war, Benjamin Gilbert corresponded with his family and friends. These letters provide a significant amount of information as it pertained to his service as an officer in the American army. In 1780, his letters primarily consist of letters that depict his personal depression, even though the war effort was in the process of making a decisive turn for the Americans. However, he does not mention that throughout his letters.

In a letter to his father and stepmother on October 8, 1780 he states that even with their disagreeable situation with limited rations and supplies, the men were inspired by the treason of Benedict Arnold. For Gilbert, this gave reason to "the most convincing proof that the liberties

of America is the object of divine protection.”¹⁶⁶ Although some soldiers had deserted the American cause to receive a bounty from Benedict Arnold to join the British, it still did not deter the Americans. Gilbert wrote that he feared the consequences if they succeeded as “we should at once ben deprived of all communications with the New England State and must have perished or distressed the Inhabitants.”¹⁶⁷ Essentially, Gilbert directly states that the American cause was hindered by this situation with many fearing the consequences of their dissent. Ultimately, this situation would inspire many Americans as they believed in sovereignty from the British.

On January 2, 1781, he writes to his brother in law Charles Bruce while at West Point describing the current situation within the American army. He writes they were in winter quarters, but “still many Embarrassments occur which render our situation disagreeable.”¹⁶⁸ He continues “our men are naked and not like to be clothed. Some have Received no money since December 1779, the others not since March 1780. Our wood is four miles to fetch by warter and then a bad hill which is equill to one mile more. Now I leave you Judg whether I am happy or not.”¹⁶⁹ It was clear that he was demoralized and figured the Americans had little hope of winning the war given their destitute situation. Congress could not financially afford to provide for their army and many soldiers became agitated with their situation.

Gilbert clearly had no desire to fight in the war. As evidence, he wrote to his brother in law, “and in addition to my troubles, I have not received a letter from you since I left Brookfield,” as he desired to hear what his “Domestick Buisness” was like at home.¹⁷⁰ Gilbert was focused not on the war, but on life back home and wished he could partake instead of being obligated to the American army.

In another letter to his father and stepmother on April 11, 1781 while stationed at Elkton, Maryland he further describes the current situation of the army more than a year later. "If I servive this Campain in this unhealthy country," writes Gilbert, "I shall not Expect to see you under two or three years. Our situation is pecularly unhappy as the troops that are with us have not drawn one half of their winter Cloths and received but one month pay for more than a year, and the People in this part of the Continent are not given to acts of Hospitallity. Therefore I think I shall be very unhappy in the Comand, and how I shall furnish myself with Cloths I know not." ¹⁷¹ Not only was Congress not helping with their situation, the people in the country could ill-afford to help as well. As demoralizing as their situation must have been, how they were able to win the war remains a miracle. Gilbert, as an officer, appears to have been experiencing the same situation as the private soldiers. This could also have been his lack of interest in the war and hoping to return to civilian life as soon as possible.

For many American soldiers, the French fleet arriving to help the American cause was a major motivational factor in their succeeding to win the war. Gilbert was no different as he wrote a letter home to his father from a camp near Williamsburg, Virginia on September 19, 1781 displaying his happiness. As the French fleet had surrounded Lord Cornwallis around the York River, the French and the Americans had successfully trapped Cornwallis' army in Yorktown. Gilbert writes "nothing but the warmest Expectations of capturing Cornwallis keeps my spirits hight, my Cloths being almost worne out, and no money to get new ones, having Received but 25 Dollars since March Eighty which passed six for one and no expectations of getting any sone." ¹⁷² With the arrival of the French army, it was clear that Gilbert had a new sense of revival and motivation to see the war out. He had few expectations for Congress to resupply the American army, but he did expect an American victory with the newfound help of

the French. He had worn the same clothes to the point they were completely worn out, but his spirits reached their highest point as he saw an end to the war.

In a letter dated August 23, 1782, he writes to his cousin Daniel Gould displaying his happiness for the American cause. He was happy that peace negotiations appeared likely and that he would soon be relieved from his duties in the army. In this letter he also writes “I have received a Lieutenant’s appointment in the 5th Massachusetts Regiment and am annexed to the Light Infantry Company.”¹⁷³ Receiving a Lieutenant’s commission seemed to have given Gilbert a higher spirit as the tone of his letters drastically changed from 1780. In a letter to his father on August 24, 1782, he writes that “in consequence of the armies being kept without pay this summer a great number of Officers have resigned which has made a Vacancy for Lieutenancy for me.”¹⁷⁴ By writing this, Gilbert outlines that many officers were unhappy with Congress as they felt they were underappreciated and felt they deserved pay for their efforts. Gilbert, however, was happy to receive a commission as a Lieutenant, which motivated him because he felt his efforts were paying off.

Throughout his letters, he had little expectation of winning the war, until the Siege of Yorktown in 1781. His spirits and tone in many letters displayed his personal depression as the war had taken his civilian life away from him. In a letter to his Sister Esther on October 19, 1780, he writes “the fortune War that has caused our separation had rendered me Infinitely unhappy.”¹⁷⁵ The revolution for Gilbert was one in which the war had intruded on his life and he appeared to have little desire to fight for his country. Like many officers however, he was drawn into the war for economic reasons when he received an officer’s commission in 1780. If not for receiving an officer’s commission in 1780, it appeared unlikely that he would rejoin the army after serving as a private and sergeant for four years. The American war experience for

Gilbert often showed him as being demoralized by the lack of supplies. Clearly, he would have been more motivated to fight if Congress could have adequately fulfilled his expectations.

Like many of the private soldiers, these men joined the army to defend their country and display their patriotism while earning a monetary reward. However, unlike the private soldiers, after the war many officers used their high rank within the military to secure political standing. Each officer was motivated to join the war for his own reasons, but it appears many were politically motivated. These four men were able to secure social, economic, and political prominence in their respective post-revolution environments.

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- ¹¹⁴ Benjamin Tallmadge, *Memoir*, 9.
¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 9-10.
¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.
¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 16-17.
¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*
¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*
¹²⁰ *Ibid.*
¹²¹ *Ibid.*
¹²² *Ibid.*, 19.
¹²³ *Ibid.*
¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.
¹²⁵ *Ibid.*
¹²⁶ Williams, *Biography of Revolutionary Heroes*, 43.
¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.
¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.
¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 54-55.
¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 63.
¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 64.
¹³² *Ibid.*, 77.
¹³³ *Ibid.*, 79.
¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 79-80.
¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 90.
¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 97.
¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 149-150.
¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 150.
¹³⁹ *Ibid.*
¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*
¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*
¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 153.
¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 158.
¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 159.
¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*
¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 161.
¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 163.
¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*
¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 186-187.
¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 187.
¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 164.
¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 185.
¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 202.
¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 202-203.
¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 236.
¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 233.
¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 232.
¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*
¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 284.
¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 285.
¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 286.
¹⁶² Shy, *Winding Down: the Revolutionary War letters of Lieutenant Benjamin Gilbert of Massachusetts*, 19.
¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 110.
¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*
¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*
¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.
¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.
¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 40-41.

¹⁷² Ibid., 49.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 62.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 63.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 27.

Chapter Four

Post-Revolution: Soldiers and Their Transition to Peacetime

The peace settlement with the British in 1783, created a struggle that was remarkably similar to the circumstances that occurred between the lowest and highest ranks of the military during the war. Transitioning to peacetime brought increased expectations for both, the lowest and highest ranks of the military. These high expectations were soon met with dissent and deception. The newly formed American government could not provide for the needs of each soldier who fought for their country. They made ill-advised promises to entice all able-bodied men to join the war effort. These promises were mainly economic, which the government had limited resources to fulfill for the soldiers.

After sacrificing their lives, the private soldiers soon realized the government had exploited them to achieve victory. The private soldiers sacrificed their lives during the war, and after the war they were forced to sacrifice an opportunity to obtain a higher social standing. Many soldiers would come to resent and disapprove of the government as they realized their leaders were ineffective. Regardless, various attitudes and expectations were displayed by the soldiers after the war. Transitioning after the war became difficult as many realized the government could not satisfy their needs.

On April 19, 1783, Martin and his fellow soldiers received word that the war was over and the Americans had gained independence. This would have been joyful news to anyone, but the soldiers. Martin recalls that the soldiers “were more closely fixed upon their situation as it respected the figure they were to exhibit upon their leaving the army and becoming citizens.”¹⁷⁶ The men were as Martin observed “starved, ragged, and meagre” as the war closed.¹⁷⁷ They

expressed deep apprehension at the thought of becoming citizens as they had no money to help themselves in starting a new life. Martin slowly came to realize that it was time for their brotherhood to come to an end, and they would have to face life with the same virtue of necessity that enabled them to withstand the sufferings of war. The soldiers were discharged and to the chagrin of Martin, the government had let them go in their “pitiful forlorn condition.”¹⁷⁸

Some of the men were able to get final settlement certificates, which they sold to get clothing and money to begin their new lives. Others just went back home with nothing. Martin was offered sixteen dollars in specie by another soldier who desperately wanted out of the regiment and he agreed. He would spend a short time more in the army to get an honorable discharge and his final settlement certificates. With that Martin hastily stated, “I now bid a farewell to the service.”¹⁷⁹ It was as if he reluctantly did not want to part with the army and his comrades. Thoughts of transitioning from the army to civilian life must have seemed terrifying. Outside of working on his grandfather’s farm as a young boy, the army was all he knew for eight years.

When traveling back to his home, he came across an army friend. Martin stopped and worked in the farming business for what was supposed to be a few days. However, winter was approaching and he agreed to stay to teach a school. He taught a class of around twenty to thirty students and mentioned “I knew but little and they less, if possible.”¹⁸⁰ Much like being in the army, Martin adapted to his surroundings and did something he never imagined doing. After teaching throughout the winter, he decided it was time to move on. Martin eventually made his way to Maine in 1784 and would spend the rest of his life there until he died in 1850.

The American Revolution caused severe hardships during and after the war. Martin believes the government had too much power and caused even more suffering for the soldiers after the war. The government promised the enlisted soldiers one hundred acres of land each, in their own state, but they were quickly shunned at the prospect of this. The government also promised them ample supplies - clothing, food, and pay for joining the service - but they received little to none of those items. As much as the army suffered for their country, the government did little to accommodate or recognize their efforts. Martin noted that “the truth was, none cared for them; the country was served, and faithfully served, and that was all that was deemed necessary.”¹⁸¹ Martin suggests the least the government could have done was provide food for the demoralized soldiers.

The government did virtually nothing to help those in need, which turned Martin into an anti-Federalist because there was no reason to support a government who did not support the people. Martin received little to no pay during the course of the war, which further enraged him. He stated “had I been paid as I was promised to be at my engaging in the service, I needed not to have suffered as I did, nor would I have done it.”¹⁸² Money was a main motivational factor for Martin remaining in the army, but perhaps even more influential were the promises of a better future. Martin sought out the army to obtain a better future for himself. He had a limited education and the war had consumed his youthful days. After the war, attempting to make a living without being given anything in return for his services was demoralizing. His hatred for the government becomes evident throughout his memoir. They served him with promises that were never fulfilled. Martin’s conclusion is the government “had all the power in her hands, and I had none. Such things ought not to be.”¹⁸³

With his feelings made known, it was time for him to rest his “warworn weary limbs” in Maine.¹⁸⁴ Martin would go on to become a respected farmer on Maine’s frontier. Throughout the years, he also served as selectman, justice of the peace, and town clerk. Clearly, Martin was a man of the people and sought to protect their interests.

Transitioning to peacetime became a difficult experience for Hewes and his family. He had entered the war poor and left poor. His hopes of striking it rich through the war were shattered. After what Hewes deemed a "long and expensive process," in the fall of 1832 he was granted his pension, which at that point in his life did little.¹⁸⁵ It does not seem he had a hatred for the government, but was hoping for more of an economic recognition.

Hewes, like many others in New England, moved west in search of opportunity. The government, did little to recognize the private soldiers, and forced many to leave their New England homes in search of an opportunity. The revolution was supposed to give these men a new opportunity in life to acquire higher social standing and respect. However, for men, such as Hewes, moving west was the only opportunity and hope they had left.

Hewes died a hero to many around the New England area on November 5, 1840.¹⁸⁶ Hewes' memory lived on through various histories of the nation, the Revolution, and descendants naming their children and grandchildren after him. Hewes’ patriotism was displayed by his personal experiences as he dispelled the notion of deference within society. For Hewes, the Revolution was an opportunity to show that lower class individuals could have the same effect in determining the outcome of the war as the upper class.

The transition to peacetime for John Greenwood was not difficult as he relocated to New York City. He realized that after the war he would have to acquire a trade or career. Although

Greenwood never went beyond an elementary education, he did have “a zest for doing things that he enjoyed.”¹⁸⁷ It was this determination that enabled him to succeed in his post-war life. He would go on to repair watches, compasses, barometers, and complicated types of mathematical instruments. He also became a merchant, as well as trying his skill as a wood turner, in which he produced hickory walking canes. As early as 1784, Greenwood had acquired “a rudimentary knowledge of dentistry” from his father, John Greenwood, who began a practice in New York.¹⁸⁸ Before the war, he was apprehensive about joining, and during the war it became a life altering experience for him.

Greenwood was the rare example of not being compelled to ask the government for economic relief because of his struggles during the war. Once the war was over, he became determined to live his life to the fullest. Pride was a major factor for Greenwood because he could not ask his newly formed country to support him after the ultimate goal of independence was achieved. He was only compelled to experience what life had to offer.

As one of the most respected dentists among his contemporaries, Greenwood served George Washington’s dental needs. He obtained Washington’s faith because he was able to build dentures for him through his mechanical skills after other Dentists’ failed. In 1806, he sailed to Paris, where he acquired knowledge on recent dental innovations that were unheard of in America. He was able to pioneer “the use of foot-power drills” and “adaptable springs for dentures.”¹⁸⁹ He also began using hippopotamus ivory to formulate porcelain teeth.

Among other endeavors, he was a proponent of transplants from one human to another. He used this theory to replace decaying teeth with replacement teeth that he would purchase from other people who would sell theirs for a price. Greenwood can also be credited as one of

the first Dentists to expose the theory of good dental hygiene. As a leading dentist, his practice flourished after he advertised in the New York Gazette that he was the “Dentist to His Excellency George Washington.”¹⁹⁰ After the war, it was obvious that Greenwood was not prepared to sit idly and recollect the harsh memories he experienced from the war. He was the epitome of a soldier transitioning to peacetime with great success.

When he reached the age of sixty, his health began to fail as he suffered from a stroke of apoplexy. Dr. John Greenwood would die at his residence in November 16, 1819. His two sons, Isaac John and Clark, would continue to operate the successful business that he commenced. The Dean of the Baltimore College of Dental Surgery, W.R. Handy described John Greenwood as being “the Father of American Dentistry as well as the Dentist of the Illustrious Father of our glorious Republic.”¹⁹¹ John Greenwood did not expect the war to propel him socially in post-war America. Transitioning to peacetime was difficult, but Greenwood was successful under harrowing circumstances.

The transition after the war for the twenty five year old Jeremiah Greenman was filled with high expectations. He came out of the war hopeful and invigorated because he was an established officer. He believed with his high ranking in the military that he deserved a distinguishable position within America’s newly founded democracy. Much to his chagrin, the army was in the process of downsizing which left him contemplating his next move. Having his expectations deflated, Greenman saw his hard-work in the army as a waste. After the war, Greenman claimed that “having Devoted my youthful days to the service of my country I was deprived of the opportunity which young men generally possess of acquiring any mechanical art of perfecting my self in any profession.”¹⁹² He believed, like many other officers after the war, that they deserved the republican virtue of having land and other property awaiting them. As

many soldiers were still young, they fully expected to finish “growing up with the country.”¹⁹³ This type of thinking only complicated matters, as the country was still young itself.

Greenman had worked his way through the military ranks, but only to be denied of his high expectations. He possessed limited skills before he entered the Continental Army, but the military provided him with a structural basis for the future. In the military, he learned how to keep accurate rolls and accounts, as well as analyzing and leading men. In other words, he was well-disciplined and that experience would help in his future endeavors. He quickly realized those skills would enable him to attempt transitioning from the military without government help. Many Revolutionary veterans took advantage of the congressional promises of bounty lands in the West.

Greenman, however, decided to challenge himself to make a living without the assistance of the government and he settled in Providence, Rhode Island. Providence was rapidly growing and full of promise in the 1780s. Newport, that was once the metropolitan center of trade, saw half the population leave after British occupation in 1776. Providence’s thriving commerce attracted Greenman and Joseph Masury, who were friends that had risen through the military ranks together. Masury was a “2nd lieutenant in the Second Rhode Island Regiment and a member of Olney’s Rhode Island Battalion from its formation in May 1781 until November 3, 1783.”¹⁹⁴ In April of 1784, Greenman “entered into a contract with Mr. Masury to put our small Interest togeth[er], (which we had been fighting, bleeding, and all most dying for, - for the Space of 8 long years in the Army of the United States,) in order for to trade and try for a livelyhood.”¹⁹⁵ The “small interest” that Greenman refers to “consisted of the five years’ full pay that Congress had authorized for officers in lieu of half pay for life.”¹⁹⁶ Greenman was fortunate enough to receive pay during the war for his services. Many soldiers received limited or no pay

at all. Since, Greenman was receiving pay he could afford to challenge himself without having to worry about monetary subsidies from the government.

He ended the war as a first lieutenant serving as regimental adjutant, and receiving thirty-nine dollars a month. The sum of money that Greenman was receiving was significant enough to have his expectations raised by the end of the war. The military was all he knew and he had made the most of that opportunity. Greenman must have known it would be difficult to receive that kind of pay regularly.

By opening a retail shop, Greenman and Masury attempted to create a livelihood for themselves. Once they reached an agreement on the shop, Greenman went back to Swansea, Massachusetts as he was “fixing for to move my mother and Go[o]ds to Providenc.”¹⁹⁷ Greenman appeared to be happy with his decision to move to Providence because at that time it offered the most opportunity for the future. By the sixth day of April, the two men had begun their shop and “whent into traid” as Jeremiah became an inhabitant of Providence.¹⁹⁸ After a short time, their retail shop did not prosper as they envisioned. By September, Greenman realized that retail was not for him, especially when “business grow’d very dull.”¹⁹⁹ He tried to make a livelihood with his friend, but soon came to the realization it would not work. Greenman states, “parted and trid a Shop and took my part of the stock and continued in the Mercantile line till Septr. 1785.”²⁰⁰ He would continue to make a living in the mercantile business for another year, but his mind was preoccupied with something else.

Jeremiah was involved with a woman named Mary Eddy. The Eddy family came to Providence during the postwar years and dominated the shipwright’s craft.²⁰¹ Jeremiah and Mary were married on October 23, 1784. Now that Greenman was married, the pressure of

making a livelihood became more transparent. In late 1785, Greenman undertook a life at sea. He had studied navigation during the war, but having the connection of the Eddy family only helped him. At 26 years old, Greenman planned on earning a captain's or master's position in the merchant business. To achieve that he would need to sail and learn from the bottom up. His first voyage came as a seaman aboard the *Active* for Boston, which was bound for the West Indies.²⁰² After traveling "to the Caneries & Cape Verd[e] Islands" and then dropping their cargo off in New York, he went back to Boston where he returned home to Providence for a month.²⁰³ The year at sea afforded little time for him to spend with his family. His first daughter, Mary Eddy Greenman, was born on November 26, 1785.²⁰⁴ Being home for only one month cost him precious time with his wife and daughter, but he had to support his family.

The next voyage for Greenman would come aboard the *America*, which was bound "for the coast of Guin[e]a."²⁰⁵ This voyage would last for nearly two years and between that time he would earn a master's certificate. His certificate allowed him to begin captaining the vessels which he sailed. When he arrived back at Providence in May of 1788, his career was beginning to succeed. Socially, this was a job that Greenman enjoyed because "American shipmasters [were] received into the upper bourgeois society of the seaports where they traded."²⁰⁶ Greenman would begin what became a fifteen year career as a sea captain in the merchant marine business. During that fifteen year period, Greenman's family grew, he had to complete a period of government service, and he became part-owner of a vessel.

Greenman was able to transition to peacetime successfully, but he still had goals to complete. He wanted to obtain a position in the United States Army when it decided to form new companies in each state. He would use his connection, Jeremiah Olney, who was his regimental commander to help achieve a position. Greenman wanted to become a captain in the

army and leave the seas behind. The position was denied to Greenman, as there were hundreds of other hopeful veterans competing for a government appointment. Greenman, then desired to become a first mate “on a revenue cutter” that would be bound for duty in Long Island Sound.

²⁰⁷ Of course, he used Olney again to help influence a decision for him. Greenman viewed Olney with high esteem and clearly expected him to help achieve a public position.

The first mate position was denied to Greenman, but Olney was able to obtain “the Station of Second Mate.” Greenman reluctantly accepted this position as it was an economic necessity. Greenman had high expectations after the war, but despite being denied several times for governmental positions, he did not falter. The seafaring merchant business enabled Greenman and his family of five, and expecting a sixth, to become proprietors. They bought a lot and house for the “sum of one hundred and thirty five pounds Silver Lawful Money.”²⁰⁸ The Greenman family would remain at the estate for thirteen years. In 1799, Jeremiah was busier than ever as a shipmaster. So busy, that he became half-owner of the schooner *Jerushia*. This ownership did not last long as he sold his portion of the ship, but continued as its master for nearly all of 1800.

By 1806, a new opportunity emerged in the life of Jeremiah Greenman. The sea had taken its toll since his health was deteriorating, from a wound associated with the war. It was time to think about his family and their futures. Greenman made a tough decision to leave his New England roots behind with the West in his sights. His sons were not interested in the sea and American shipping was deteriorating with the European wars taking place. Ships were beginning to deal with British impressment and French letters of marque. Since American shipping became challenged, he decided to make use of his Revolutionary war land bounty, even though his family had a limited knowledge of farming. His sons had urged him to use the claim

as they wanted to attempt farming. Farming would present a formidable challenge for the Greenmans, but they appeared ready to accept the challenge. Greenman had successfully established a career, produced a family, but was not satisfied. He was disappointed he could not achieve more than being a shipmaster and even more so that he could not obtain a governmental position. His high expectations led to disappointment, but never being complacent led him to being successful. The Greenmans would sell their home in Providence for “1,000 Spanish milled dollars,” which was a significant amount of money to take westward.²⁰⁹

By making the decision to move westward with a new set of expectations led the Greenman family to Marietta, Ohio. By 1806, Ohio had reached the sixty thousand inhabitants that were required under the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 to allow statehood. Greenman, then, began his search for land as he was entitled to two hundred acres of land for his lieutenancy. Soon after, he bought a small farm about fifteen miles north of Marietta, in a village called Waterford. He called his property an “upland hilly farm,” as it was not considered desirable farm land.²¹⁰ Here Greenman spent his days in what was a lonely wilderness atmosphere, while he left the farm duties to his son Jeremiah. He would pass time by reading and taking walks, and occasionally riding by horse to Waterford to interact with the townspeople. Greenman also was elected the justice of the peace a few times and he held an official public position between 1812 and 1816. With that position, he was able to marry couples, witness lesser legal documents, and keep an “estray book” of lost and wandering horses.²¹¹ Through these various activities, the Greenman family increasingly dealt with poverty and loneliness. Greenman was not antisocial which helped to keep his family from being severely impoverished. As evidence, he was well-respected in the community and helped found the Freemasons in Waterford.

The year of 1818 was a breakthrough for many Revolutionary veterans as the Pension Act was approved by Congress. The bill called for those who needed assistance from their country. It was a life pension that granted officers twenty dollars monthly (eight dollars for private soldiers) “who served in the War of the Revolution until the end thereof, or for the term of nine months...on the continental establishment.”²¹² All veterans were required to go to court to give a statement summarizing their service and their necessity. Greenman did this on April 16, 1818 and was granted his pension. Congress, however, by 1820 believed some were taking advantage of the system. The amendatory act of May 1820 forced those pensioners to prove their reduced circumstances by providing a list of personal property and income.

It became clear that Greenman and his wife were living in reduced circumstances, as he recalls only having sixty dollars to their names. That money was gained from the two years of being on the pension roll. Now Greenman was forced to defend his impoverished state in order to continue to receive a pension. In a letter written to the Secretary of War, Greenman states “in my old age and inabilities to pursue my occupation as a farmer, will afford me some degree of support, without throwing myself on the charity of my Children, which has been the case for five years before I received the bounty of my country.”²¹³ Greenman had too much pride to consider leaning on his family for support. He believed, and rightfully so, that after “Eight years & Seven Months service together with three wounds received whilst in that service” deserved compensation from the government.²¹⁴ The government had relied on him to provide a service and now he was fighting the government to provide a service for him.

In his last appeal to Congress on September 20, 1821, after being denied several times before, Greenman was able to persuade the War Department to re-establish his pension. Jeremiah was not to be denied as he was able to succeed without the help of Congress after the

war. Being sixty three years old, his health was declining and he was unable to work hard labor on the farm, especially after being wounded three times during the war. He made sure to make these points throughout a well-drawn letter to the War Department. He also reiterated the fact that some veterans were receiving a pension after only participating in the war for a limited time, which he believed was unfair. He mentioned how his neighbor only served for a “short duration, but long enough to come under the period of time allowed of by Law to intitle him to a pension, but he hath frequently told Me that, he was tired of the Service & that he had hired a substitute, & for all I know both receive the bounty of their country.”²¹⁵ These words spoke volumes for the indescribable feeling that he was forced to defend his honor and righteousness after defending his country for the duration of the war. This was his final plea to Washington and he wanted to make himself heard.

He continued his plea by stating “there is many more circumstance I could insert which in my humble opinion puts me on a par with many that have been continued on the pension list & receives the bounty of their Country.”²¹⁶ His voice and clear discontent can be heard through the use of his pen, and he was prideful enough to not ask Congress for help if not for his reduced circumstances. Never more evident by this statement, “in this my last stage of life, being neither Mechanick or farmer my Cituation is truly distressing.”²¹⁷ He even argues that he may have been wealthy in the shipping business, but that was quickly eroded as his debts increased. It was clear that Greenman was too prideful to ask the government for help, but in his dire circumstances, he had no other choice.

After winning the long battle with Washington over his pension, he was now content to live the remainder of his life without regret. Politically in 1828, he voted for John Quincy Adams which brought back his New England roots. His roots were predicated upon the virtue of

self-reliance. Nearing the end of his life, he claimed his bounty after earning it through his wartime experiences. He passed away at his home on November 15, 1828, one month after he voted for Adams, but he was not forgotten. The citizenry of Waterford came to his funeral in large numbers, as he was buried on his “upland hilly farm” where his grave still sits.

Soon after his death, the Greenman family decided to sell the land and move westward again. Their journey led them to Illinois where they became true farmers with much better land than the hills of Ohio. Jeremiah, the youngest son, was considered their ablest farmer and enabled the Greenman family to transition successfully to Illinois. The widow Greenman continued to receive Jeremiah’s pension until her passing in 1839. The war had clearly taken a toll on the Greenman family, but their efforts to continue forward would not be deterred.

The obituary of Jeremiah Greenman adds another twist to his active life. He was “an orphan boy, and had no influential connexions.”²¹⁸ This just adds to the dedication and ardor that Greenman constantly displayed. He was relentless in his pursuit for happiness, whether it was writing numerous letters to Congress to prove he was worthy of a pension or uprooting his New England family for the western frontier. Being an orphan boy with no influential connections, he proved that it was possible to move up the social ladder in society. He began the war as a private soldier and worked his way up to Adjutant of the Regiment by the end of the war. He withstood three wounds and became a prisoner of war twice from his time in the service. After withstanding much distress, his character never wavered as he remained a loyal supporter of the government.

The transition to peacetime for officers presented different opportunities as they were able to acquire social standing in the army. Although some officers, such as Lt. Benjamin

Gilbert conceded it would be difficult to find their place in society, it would prove easier for them than the private soldiers. Gilbert feared the worst when the war came to a close because he was unsure of the opportunities available. However, unlike the private soldier, officers generally could use their military standing to manipulate their future – socially, politically, and economically.

Gilbert's uncertainty for his future was displayed in a letter to his cousin Daniel Gould on November 16, 1782. He concluded "as a Military calling is my present support, I think it more Eligible to persue it than to submit to a Political Death."²¹⁹ Gilbert clearly thought his future was to rest in a military capacity as he envisioned it offering social and economic standing. In another letter to his cousin on May 6, 1783, he was elated to hear that peace had been negotiated. He wrote "the prospect of speedily returning to the walks of private life fills my heart with raptures."²²⁰ However, he also writes to his father in June of 1783 displaying his state of uncertainty when the war closes. He writes "as I am about to retire from the Military Theatre to walks of private life, without any cash, or the means of obtaining any, I find it necessary to make some arrangements for my future support."²²¹ Despite being elated the war was ending, a sense of despair set in as the military could no longer provide for him. He was fortunate to have a father whom he could rely on for financial stability unlike many other soldiers. Like many soldiers, however, transitioning back to peacetime was often a difficult experience.

In a letter to his father on January 30, 1783, Gilbert writes of a most deplorable situation that he was accused of fathering a child to a Miss Patience Converse and he felt it was not his. Having illegitimate children during this time period was an occurrence that rarely happened and if it did, the character of that person was diminished. Gilbert writes "scandal is such a prevalent evil in Brookfield, that while I have so many enemies in that place who wish to destroy my

character, Interest, and Life.”²²² Gilbert vigorously denied the situation and wrote a letter to Colonel James Converse (Patience’s father) on March 24, 1783 offering to resolve the situation. He writes letters to both Patience and her father trying to persuade them both that he is not the father of the child. He writes to her father that he felt he “would have sufficiently satisfied you on the subject, and convinced you that I as a military Man who considers nothing relative to this life so binding as my Honor that (when ever Circumstances would admit), nothing should be wanting on my part to do your Daughter that Justice which she has a right to expect from me.”²²³

After returning home when the war had ended, Gilbert wrote of the situation in his diary. He wrote that on December 9, 1783, he “rode to Colonel Converse, Settled with him and his Daughter, Gave them Thirty pounds, fifteen of which I paid down, the other fifteen to be paid twelve months from the Settlement. I then took a full acquittal from the father and Daughter.”

²²⁴ After resolving the situation, Gilbert must have felt relieved to absolve that unique circumstance. Colonel Converse clearly wanted Gilbert to marry his daughter to provide a strong economic standing for Patience, but Benjamin lacked interest in marrying her. He had fallen in love with another woman named Molly Cornwall, the daughter of Captain John Cornwall of Danbury, Connecticut. Molly Cornwall was born in 1764 and she would marry Benjamin in 1786. The two would eventually have eleven children together.

The war had taken away any opportunity for Benjamin Gilbert to receive an education like many of his family members. Likewise, the town of Brookfield offered limited opportunities, which caused him to relocate to a more vibrant town. Brookfield was described as “rural beyond almost any other town in the region.”²²⁵ With that, Gilbert relocated to Albany, New York and then to Newtown Martin, which was renamed to Middlefield, just east of Ostego Lake. He began his new life as a teacher and soon purchased a farm near Cherry Valley. In

October 1786, Colonel Cannon had commissioned him adjutant of his regiment of New York militia. In 1792, he was able to secure the job as Sheriff of Ostego County, New York. He also served three terms as assemblyman in the New York State legislature, as well as holding numerous local and county offices. Gilbert made a wise decision moving from Brookfield to New York where opportunities were more prevalent.

Gilbert was a staunch supporter of Federalist principles as he supported a strong government. Despite not wanting to submit to a “political death,” Gilbert was interested in politics.²²⁶ His primary interests outside of his family and farming were politics and his membership in the Masonic Lodge. The life of Benjamin Gilbert was highly interesting as he provided candid letters about his Revolutionary War experiences as well as his personal life. It appeared that Gilbert saw the war as an opportunity to improve his standing within society and he took advantage after the war by being actively involved within the community. At 72 years old, the life of Benjamin Gilbert came to an end on January 18, 1828.

After the war, Tallmadge transitioned into peacetime with relative ease. While in Long Island, New York, Benjamin married Mary Floyd, the daughter of William Floyd who was a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a member of the Continental Congress for nine years. Benjamin and Mary were joined in matrimony on March 16, 1784 at her home in Mastic, Long Island. She was just twenty years old, while Benjamin was thirty. Soon after, the couple moved to Litchfield, Connecticut.

Their new home in Litchfield was more than Mary could handle alone. Benjamin “purchased two Negro boys in 1784 and 1785” to assist with duties around the house.²²⁷ It became a necessity for Benjamin to acquire servants, but it also displayed his social standing

within the community. With the extra help, Mary was able to settle in comfortably and began creating a home worthy of not only her ambitions, but also her husband's. After the couple's first child, William Smith Tallmadge on October 20, 1785, the need for female help became apparent.²²⁸ Benjamin convinced his friend in Long Island, Ezra L'Hommedieu to sell a Negro slave girl named Jane to him for 36 pounds lawful money. The thirteen year old slave girl was acquired on "March 10, 1787, shortly before the birth of Henry Floyd Tallmadge."²²⁹ As the Tallmadge family grew, so did their social standing in Litchfield.

Socially, Benjamin Tallmadge was forging a strong reputation in Litchfield. However, he sought to become more politically involved, not just in Litchfield, but nationally. After the war had ended, he began a prosperous mercantile business called "B. Tallmadge & Company."²³⁰ In April of 1797, Benjamin and Mary welcomed another daughter into their family, and being their sixth child. With the increased pressures of Mary to take care of six children, Benjamin brokered an agreement with a couple from Holland. Benjamin had paid \$157 for their passage and they would work for three years during their indenture and for each additional child born during their term an additional six months more. On September 13, 1800 (at the end of their three year term), Benjamin and Mary welcomed their seventh child, George Washington Tallmadge causing the indenture to remain for an additional six months. Benjamin was fortunate to have the means economically of securing help within the household.

The transition to peacetime proved less difficult for Benjamin Tallmadge. He was involved in numerous activities and investments after the war. He was an ambitious man who not only sought political advancement, but also business. It was not long after the war that he began developing connections that consisted of his military comrades and friends within the town of Litchfield. He joined the Connecticut Society of the Cincinnati in 1783 and was one of

the original members. The society enabled him to gain political strength as it played a significant role within state politics.

In 1785, he was elected assistant treasurer and four years later he was made treasurer. While he served as treasurer, his friend and prominent figure, Jeremiah Wadsworth, was president. Wadsworth was a prominent member of the House of Representatives and supported a strong federal government. Having this type of political connection was a great source for Tallmadge to develop his career. He also served as treasurer for the Ohio Company of Associates, which enabled to him to branch out his financial ability. In 1790, while in Litchfield, Connecticut he became a “lister or assessor” for the town.²³¹ By 1791, he was “made claim commissioner for Litchfield County.”²³² Then, once Congress voted to extend mail service into western Connecticut in 1792, Tallmadge was named postmaster of Litchfield. He was also named a county commissioner and sought a position in the federal government.

Tallmadge was a highly motivated man that took advantage of opportunities that presented themselves. It became necessary for Tallmadge to express his devotion to the new Constitution because during that period Connecticut Congressman supported it. Essentially, it was a requirement if Tallmadge wanted to achieve any federal office. When the election of the town treasurer emerged in 1794, he was elected based on his financial ability. Eventually, he was named president of the Connecticut Society of the Cincinnati. However, by 1801, the State Assembly declined to facilitate the society based on their “aristocratic and political complexion.”²³³ As the acting president of the society, it enabled Tallmadge to use his position to launch his political preferment. His name was known nationally through this position.

Tallmadge was gaining support politically by 1800. He was a supporter of John Adams, not Thomas Jefferson because he was unsure of Virginia's intentions. He also supported the Alien and Sedition Acts and opposed the Democrats. After years of building his reputation, he finally secured a position in the House of Representatives (defeating his opponent by over three thousand votes) in the fall of 1801. This meant that he would have to relinquish his town duties and head for the national capital. From 1801-1807, his political career was increasing, despite the Federalist future in New England decreasing because of Thomas Jefferson being elected. In 1805, his wife had passed away (she was only 41 years old) and his relationship with his children became stronger. He often wrote his favorite daughter, Maria and continuously encouraged all of his children to correspond with him. In 1807, he became a member of the Ways and Means Committee, after being defeated for House Speaker. Tallmadge was active and prominent in political matters for the Federalist Party. After numerous years on the Ways and Means Committee, he soon decided to become a member of the Committee of Commerce and Manufacturers.

Despite Tallmadge's active political career, he married for a second time to Maria Hallett, who was the daughter of a prominent merchant. She was twenty two years younger than Tallmadge, but she blended well into the Litchfield home and secured the respect of his children. Congress needed to raise money by taxation because of the War of 1812 and Tallmadge with his financial successes was appointed to the Committee on the Military Establishment. The committee "tried to bring some order out of the chaotic condition of the war effort."²³⁴ By 1816, Tallmadge decided to leave his name off the Federalist ticket because his age was increasing (62 years old) and his health was declining. And being the politician he was, he feared "that his political success was questionable" with several of his friends being elected by a slim margin.²³⁵

By 1819, the new constitution was rejected in Litchfield and Tallmadge ended his political career with democracy being inevitable. Tallmadge became a highly influential businessman, as well as respected political figure after the revolution.

The post-war life for Colonel William Barton was one of social prominence. Once the war had ended, he had become the father of seven sons and two daughters who were all educated “in good moral principles and industrious habits.”²³⁶ Barton sought to keep his children sober, industrious, and useful citizens. After fighting for independence, Barton had little desire to see nobility established, as he often referred to them as “trash,” according to the author, Mrs. Williams.²³⁷ Barton proved to be a peculiar officer of the revolution as he was not seeking opportunistic advancement in society. He shunned those of the gentry who were seeking to rule the newly formed American society. Barton displayed his republican principles throughout the remainder of his life earning him prominence.

Despite earning social prominence, Barton, unlike many officers, was not considered wealthy at any time. About fifteen years before his death he was involved in a lawsuit in Vermont. It was in consequence of his purchase of the township within the state called “Barton,” in the county of Orleans. This town was then purchased by the state of Vermont, instead of being a gift of the United States to Barton. His title to the piece of land was disputed in the court of law and he was ordered to pay, but he found the demand to be unconstitutional and refused to pay it. “With him,” according to the author, “his word was final.”²³⁸ For his actions, he was sued, and detained in the town of Danville, in Caledonia County, for fourteen years. He had resigned himself to the town and seemingly enjoyed life at a hotel where he was boarded.

When he was detained, he never imagined seeing home again, especially since he had lived to the common age of man. That all changed in 1824, when Lafayette, a friend from the revolution heard of his predicament and desired to help. Lafayette did not appreciate that a man of the revolution was being forced to suffer with indignation after his great devotion to country. Upon receiving notice, Lafayette sent a messenger to pay the debt and Barton was free. As we have learned from Joseph Plumb Martin, the revolution was a “time that tried men’s souls.”²³⁹ Lafayette and other veterans greatly anticipated his return home and upon arriving he was congratulated by them.

After Lafayette secured his freedom, Barton quickly realized that his self-devotion and patriotism had not been forgotten. Barton’s character would not allow for him to be angry with anyone, with the exception of the British. He never forgave for their cruelty towards American prisoners. A few years after returning home, Colonel William Barton died at the age of 85 on October 22, 1831. “The immediate cause of death,” writes Mrs. Williams, “was a fit of apoplexy, which he survived only a few days, and from which his mind never recovered, as he was perfectly insensible to all around him, from the moment of attack, to that of his death.”²⁴⁰ It was clear the author held William Barton in high regard, as he was unlike most officers as he was a man of principles. Barton was able to prove that, despite a lack of education, success could be driven with sheer determination and devotion to the cause. The author, Mrs. Williams sums it up best, “he was a person of old fashioned notions, and old fashioned politeness.”²⁴¹

Barton promoted social intercourse and a harmonious society, an unwavering republican of his time. He repudiated the aristocracy because it opposed the revolutionary ideal of republicanism. According to the author, he would say, “to get rid of these paltry things (aristocratic notions), we took up arms, and shall we after shedding our blood to be free, bow

down our necks again to the yoke of bondage.”²⁴² For his devotion, the Secretary of War, Hon. Mr. J. Knox, sent a letter to Barton on August 1, 1786 stating that he would receive a sword (one of “very fine workmanship; the blade of tempered steel, silver hilted, chased with gold, in emblematical devices, and the words, “Gift of Congress to Colonel Barton 25th July, 1777”) for making prisoners of Prescott and Major Barrington, his aide de camp.²⁴³ The sword, worth \$100 at the time, was still being preserved in the Barton family when this book was written. Barton responded on August 10, 1786 by deflecting any accomplishment by him, instead praised his soldiers’ bravery and “unshaken firmness.”²⁴⁴ Many viewed Barton as benevolent and determined, according to the author. Barton’s character appears to be the epitome of modesty, as he never felt worthy of the kindness and honors granted to him. Although not a wealthy family, the Bartons were considered highly respectable with their residence being two miles from the village of Warren, at a place called Barton’s Point.

The transition to peacetime for Captain Stephen Olney was similar to that of Colonel William Barton. Olney displayed the same character as Barton, as they both exuded modesty and benevolence toward others. Olney, unhappy with the military, chose to settle into relative obscurity on his farm in Rhode Island. The townsmen, however, had other plans for their war hero. They elected him their Representative for numerous years in the State Legislature, and President of the Town-Council. It was Olney’s honor to serve in both offices and he did so with the acceptance of the townspeople. When he gave up his commission in 1782, his third child, a daughter, was born. Then, in 1784, his son, Alfred was born and another daughter was born three years later in 1787. He had three more children in the following years, one of which was born on April 25, 1789, and he affectionately named him “George Washington.”²⁴⁵ He had two more children, John being born on October 12, 1791 and his last child, David Adams, was born

in 1798. After eight children, Olney was able to use his military standing to achieve political success. The military acted as a source for Captain Olney to propel himself forward within the colonial society he had helped create.

His first wife and the mother of his children died on December 13, 1813. After 13 years, he married a widow in Johnston, Rhode Island and she insisted that he stay with her on her farm in Johnston for the remaining years of his life. Throughout this time period, Captain Olney was persistently attempting to acquire a pension as he wrote in a letter “I was about 6 years and ten month in the army.”²⁴⁶ He rightly felt he deserved compensation as a soldier and officer, like many others were able to get. After the war, he modestly spoke in terms of not receiving any compensation, as independence and liberty were enough for him. However, in May of 1828 when the pension act passed, intended “for the relief of those who served until the end of the war, not extending to his case,” he sought to petition for a pension.²⁴⁷ Olney writes “my petition enumerates the principal causes that induced me to leave the army.”²⁴⁸ He left the army because of anger toward “a set of miscreants who if they cannot build up themselves, will be seeking to pull down all above them.”²⁴⁹ It was clear Olney did not want to be perceived that way and felt other officers were taking advantage of the military in order to boost their own self-interests. With that he resigned his commission.

In another letter, Olney wrote “my case being singular, and my services so near similar to those officers who served till peace, that I could not help entertaining the pleasing hopes that Congress, in their liberality, would grant me the like remuneration, the pay to commence when theirs did.”²⁵⁰ Olney’s fight to gain a pension, that he deserved, ended with him receiving a pension on May 28, 1830 (two years after the pension act passed). A reason for Olney fighting desperately for obtaining a pension was that he had eight children and twenty six grandchildren

to help provide for. His health was declining by the time he reached 75 years old, especially with a cancer tumor growing and felt he owed his family the benefit of reaping the rewards of his services to the country. Olney made the argument of other officers receiving pension and being provided for when his services were just as great.

On May 28, 1830, Captain Olney had his pension approved by Congress as his situation “complied with all the requisitions of the fourth section.”²⁵¹ He had successfully gained his pension, but two years later on November 23, 1832, aged 77, he departed this life. A short time before his death, Olney traveled back to his farm, by his own request, where he remained until his death. He was buried on his own farm in North-Providence where a slate stone records his name and a brief history of his services during the revolution. Olney was extremely proud to fight for his country and expected nothing from the country in return. It was not until his later life that he sought to be remunerated for his services, but he did so with his family in mind.

Part of Olney’s obituary read “Another Hero and Patriot of the Revolution departed! He was in the best and highest sense of the words, a Patriot and a Republican, devotedly attached to our national institutions and interests, for which in his younger days, he had so often been ready to make the sacrifice of his life. He constantly toiled with his own hands, and the testimony of his untiring industry and perseverance, and sterling integrity, is fresh in the remembrance of all who knew him.”²⁵²

After being twice wounded in the Revolution, Olney still maintained his modesty and leadership abilities for the remainder of his life. His patriotism clearly influenced those under his command as they followed him into battle on numerous occasions while persistently fighting for their independence. After being severely wounded in the abdomen at Yorktown he merely

mentioned “the wound was judged to be mortal, as a small part of the caul protruded.”²⁵³ Like his Rhode-Island comrade, Colonel William Barton, both had won the respect of their peers through modesty and disinterestedness.

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- ¹⁷⁶ Martin, *A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 239-240.
¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 240.
¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 240.
¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 242.
¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 243.
¹⁸¹ Ibid., 244.
¹⁸² Ibid., 247.
¹⁸³ Ibid., 247.
¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 243.
¹⁸⁵ Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party*, 67-68.
¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 76.
¹⁸⁷ Greenwood, *The Wartime Services of John Greenwood*, 149.
¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 149.
¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 150.
¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 150.
¹⁹¹ Ibid., 151.
¹⁹² Greenman, *Diary of a Common Soldier*, xiv.
¹⁹³ Ibid., xv-xvi.
¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 285.
¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 273.
¹⁹⁶ Ibid., xvii.
¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 273.
¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 273.
¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 273.
²⁰⁰ Ibid., 273.
²⁰¹ Ibid., xviii.
²⁰² Ibid., 273.
²⁰³ Ibid., 273.
²⁰⁴ Ibid., xix.
²⁰⁵ Ibid., 273.
²⁰⁶ Ibid., xx.
²⁰⁷ Ibid., xxi.
²⁰⁸ Ibid., xxii.
²⁰⁹ Ibid., xxiv.
²¹⁰ Ibid., 293.
²¹¹ Ibid., xxvii.
²¹² Ibid., xxix.
²¹³ Ibid., 296.
²¹⁴ Ibid., 296.
²¹⁵ Ibid., 298.
²¹⁶ Ibid., 300.
²¹⁷ Ibid., 301.
²¹⁸ Ibid., 306.
²¹⁹ Shy, ed., *Winding Down: the Revolutionary War letters of Lieutenant Benjamin Gilbert*, 72.
²²⁰ Ibid., 72.
²²¹ Ibid., 106.
²²² Ibid., 81.
²²³ Ibid., 92.
²²⁴ Ibid., 95.
²²⁵ Ibid., 100.
²²⁶ Ibid., 72.
²²⁷ Hall, *Benjamin Tallmadge: Revolutionary Soldier and American Businessman*, 95.
²²⁸ Ibid.
²²⁹ Ibid.
²³⁰ Ibid., 96.

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- ²³¹ Ibid., 162.
²³² Ibid., 165.
²³³ Ibid., 167.
²³⁴ Ibid., 224.
²³⁵ Ibid., 233.
²³⁶ Williams, *Biography of Revolutionary Heroes*, 97.
²³⁷ Ibid., 98.
²³⁸ Ibid.
²³⁹ Ibid., 99.
²⁴⁰ Ibid., 102.
²⁴¹ Ibid., 105.
²⁴² Ibid., 107-108.
²⁴³ Ibid., 111.
²⁴⁴ Ibid., 112.
²⁴⁵ Ibid., 287.
²⁴⁶ Ibid., 290.
²⁴⁷ Ibid.
²⁴⁸ Ibid., 291.
²⁴⁹ Ibid.
²⁵⁰ Ibid., 293.
²⁵¹ Ibid., 295.
²⁵² Ibid., 297.
²⁵³ Ibid., 299.

Conclusion

The idea of meeting another set of challenges as the American Revolution soldiers transitioned to peacetime was met with much discontent and fear. After all, according to many, they had suffered enough during the war without receiving much compensation. For many, the transitions were difficult, but most were able to find some semblance within their lives. Some became prosperous, others ended the war the same way they started, in poverty. The war for many meant an opportunity to prove their capabilities as they sought to impress their superiors. Opportunity became a lasting motivational factor for many soldiers because they viewed the American Revolution as a way to improve their social standing in society.

Throughout this comparative study, it becomes evident that each of these men were motivated to join and stay in the war for their own reasons. New England was faced with a unique situation as many soldiers were essentially forced into the military because of dwindling opportunities and poverty. John Shy argues “the ranks were being filled with lower class individuals who were joining the war for the wrong reasons; money, escape, and assurance of easy discipline and this caused the more respectable men to shy away from joining as they felt not so impelled by a sense of duty.”²⁵⁴ These men were also attracted to the Continental Army by the affluence, comfort, security, and prestige that came with being in the military.

Congress promised to each soldier bounties for enlisting in the war, which was enough for many to take advantage, especially lower class individuals. Another factor was lower class individuals envisioned the military as an opportunity to influence politics, but not dominate them. This would ultimately lead to a democracy in America being created. While the lower

class individuals were attempting to influence politics, upper class men began to develop a political consciousness, which became prevalent during and after the revolution.

Many officers of the revolution went on to further their political consciousness by competing for positions locally and nationally as they transitioned to peacetime. For many officers, winning the war meant securing positions that were based on their own self-interests. On the other hand, the private soldiers were fighting to destroy inequality within their society. Once they joined the war, it gave them a new sense of citizenship and personal worth that enabled them to denounce deference.

The main goal of the Revolution for both private soldiers and officers was to win the war. If winning the war was to become attainable, then both groups could reap the benefits. Through this research, it appears that each side had reason to be motivated to win the war. Each side had separate self-interests, but they were both motivated to secure their own interests.

During the war, the soldiers experienced numerous hardships and deprivation, as they not only had the enemy to worry about, but also their own government. In a war that must have seemed would never end, the only way to win “required the willingness of thousands of very ordinary men in the ranks to put up with disease, danger, physical conditions that often were horrifying.”²⁵⁵ John Shy argues that Americans won the war due to the gradual decline of American support after 1775 because they kept the people engaged long enough to discourage the British. Shy argued “that support declined over the next six years and people seemed to be getting tired of the long war, which inadvertently and ironically benefited them in obtaining independence because they were able to hang on long enough to discourage the British

Government and people.”²⁵⁶ Both arguments by Countryman and Shy coincide with the eight men and their motivations for joining, as well as staying in the war.

After winning the war, both sides appeared to express disappointment in the government. Their expectations were not immediately met by Congress because of an American economy that was experiencing rapid inflation. Many were seeking economic value for their services, particularly the private soldiers as they had a limited means to support themselves. Despite their differing motivations, “American morale was high in one aspect,” argues Allan Bowman, “which was their devotion to the cause as they were able to maintain fortitude through long periods of hardships.”²⁵⁷ It is undeniable the American Revolution was considered “a time that tried men’s souls,” but both the private soldiers and officers were able to coexist to win the war.

The motivations and experiences of both the private soldiers and officers in New England helped to upset the equilibrium in revolutionary society. It went from working harmoniously together to a competing society based on one’s own self-interests. This becomes evident in the stories of these eight men. Their motivations and experiences would ultimately help create the society as America knows today.

²⁵⁴ John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 30-31.

²⁵⁵ Edward Countryman, *The American Revolution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), 136.

²⁵⁶ John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed*, 13-14.

²⁵⁷ Allan Bowman, *The Morale of the American Revolutionary Army* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1964), 57.

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APPROVAL SHEET

Title of Thesis: Trying Men's Souls: A Study on What Motivated Eight New England Soldiers to Join the American Revolution

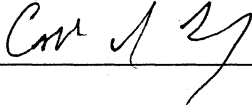
Name of Candidate: Wesley Tanner Sparks

A Thesis Submitted to The Graduate Faculty of Salisbury University in Partial Fulfillment of the Degree of Master of Arts

Salisbury University
May 2013

This project for the M.A. degree in History has been approved for the History Department by:

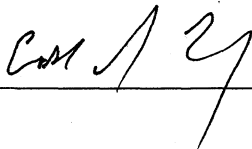
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Dr. Bart Talbert, Second Reader



Dr. Creston Long, Department Chair



Date Approved: ___ May 18, 2013 _____