

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

The Popular Politics of Loyalism During the American Revolution, 1774-1790

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS

for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Field of History

By

Christopher James Macintosh Sparshott

EVANSTON, ILLNOIS

June 2007

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ABSTRACT

The Popular Politics of Loyalism During the American Revolution, 1774-1790

Christopher James Macintosh Sparshott

A spokesman for the American Revolution, John Adams, famously claimed that a third of colonists supported independence, a third supported Britain, and a third remained neutral. Since then historians have struggled to understand the mixed loyalties of the Revolutionary generation.

“The Popular Politics of Loyalism During the American Revolution, 1774-1790,” seeks to explain the widespread appeal of Loyalism. Predictably, the first and loudest champions of the British Empire came from the ranks of crown officials. Harder to explain are the thousands of colonists who had no special ties to the British, but who still supported Britain. I argue that for most colonists Loyalism was not the legacy of the eighteenth-century British Empire, but a new politics created out of the Revolutionary moment.

I capture the ongoing debate about Loyalism through micro-studies of four moments when colonists confronted their allegiances and supported Britain. The first two examine Loyalism during the war years (1774-1782) in Connecticut and New Jersey. The last two examine the Loyalism during the first years of peace (1782-1790) in Nova Scotia and Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York. Chapter one focuses on Western Connecticut between 1774-1776 and the first Loyalists and Patriots appeared as colonists had to decide whether to support the initial call for independence or start a counter-revolution. Chapter two moves to the

opening campaign of the War of Independence in New Jersey between 1776-1777 and demonstrates how the realities of warfare soon complicated earlier allegiances. Chapter three turns to Loyalism at the end of the Revolution and the thousands of Loyalists who fled the United States to the British colony of Nova Scotia. Chapter four examines the refugees in Nova Scotia who realized the ties to their old life remained stronger than their new ties to the British Empire and returned to the United States. Through these studies, I demonstrate the unpredictable course of popular politics can take in any revolution.

Acknowledgements

I have accumulated many debts in the years that I have worked on my dissertation. First, I want to thank my teachers. My advisor T. H. Breen has directed this project from start. His combination of discipline and encouragement has shown me how to think and write about history. The other members of my dissertation committee members have provided invaluable help. Ethan Shagan's insightful analysis has helped me think about the theoretical framework of my work by challenging me to look at popular politics in new ways. Sarah Pearsall, who arrived at Northwestern in the last years of my research, provided an insightful analysis and reminded me of Atlantic context of the American Revolution.

A number of institutions provided support for this project. The Northwestern Graduate School and the History Department awarded several travel and research grants which made my work easier. Outside funding came from the National Society of Colonial Dames of America in the State of Illinois, the Fort Dearborn Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. A number of librarians and archivist have assisted me in searching for Loyalists sources in the Trinity College Library, the Connecticut Historical Society, Connecticut State Archives, the New Jersey State Archives, The New York Public Library and the Public Archives of Nova Scotia. Finally, I would like to thank the tireless staff of the interlibrary lone department at Northwestern University who helped me hunt down many obscure texts.

Many other people at Northwestern University and beyond have helped me think about my work and made my dissertation incalculably better. I am indebted to my graduate colleagues who have read and discussed my project. Nicholas Baker and Brian Maxson have generously

given their time and helped me understand my project. In particular, Sarah Ross provided a role model for the successful graduate student. I presented sections of my dissertation to scholarly audiences at Northwestern University, the Newberry Library seminar on Early American History, and the New England Historical Association. In each case, I benefited greatly from observations of fellow panelists and audience members.

My greatest debts are to my family. My parents, Edward and Andrea Sparshott, have always supported my academic career and have provided encouragement throughout my dissertation. I also enlisted my brother – himself studying history – to read large portions of my manuscript. No doubt Jonathan will see where I have ignored his comments. My sister's delightfully blunt outlook has done more than anyone else to keep me grounded throughout my graduate career. Finally I want to thank my wife-to-be, Maiken Jakobsson for her love and support. Although we only met in the final stages of my writing, Maiken's enthusiasm for my project has helped me over the finishing line. I will be eternally grateful.

Dedication

For my parents

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Introduction

Popular Loyalism and the Fluid Politics of the American Revolution

The study of Popular Loyalism during the American Revolution has much to teach students of colonial rebellions. Viewed within the framework of the eighteenth-century British Empire, American's efforts to overthrow metropolitan rule was one of the first wars of colonial liberation fought against a European Imperial power.¹ Studying the large numbers of Americans who supported Britain provides important insights into those often forgotten participants in colonial rebellions: those who remained loyal to empire. Most literature on colonial struggles has focused on individuals who resisted metropolitan rule, while explaining away unpatriotic upholders of imperialism as people who had personal ties to the colonial system. In these studies, Loyalists already know what it means to be loyal whereas rebels face the challenge of creating a nationalist movement.² A study of ordinary men and women uncovers a group of colonist who had no reason to be conscious of an imperial identity in any meaningful way before the Revolution but found their political horizons enlarged once embroiled in the conflict. Their experiences reveal that at the moment of independence those who came to support imperialism faced the task of creating an imagined community of empire just as revolutionaries attempted to forge a new nation. During the American Revolution people who remained loyal to the British Empire had their own revolutions in political consciousness.

¹Over the last twenty-five years historians of British Colonial America have resurrected the older interests of the so-called Imperialist School in viewing the thirteen colonies within the context of the seventeenth and eighteenth-century British Empire. Using the insights provided by cultural studies, these scholars have mapped out an Atlantic World that revolved around the flow of ideas, goods and people as the proper context for understanding colonial America. For a good introduction to this literature, see J. P. Marshall's ed., of *The History of the British Empire in the Eighteenth-century* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

² For a good overview of the literature on colonial resistance in Africa and Asia, see: Bernard A. Nkemdirim, "Reflections on Political Conflict, Rebellion, and Revolution in Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* Vol.15, No. 1 (March, 1977): pp.75-90, Frederick Cooper, "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History," *The American Historical Review*, Vol.99, No. 5 (Dec., 1994): pp. 1516-1545. There are a number of parallels that can be usefully drawn between the American Revolution as a war of colonial liberation and more recent struggles for self-rule in nineteenth and twentieth-century Africa, Asia and South America. For an overview of the potential and pitfalls of such comparisons see, Thomas C. Barrow, "The American Revolution as a Colonial War of Independence," *The William and Mary Quarterly* Vol.25, No.3 (Jul., 1968): pp.452-264.

Popular Loyalism was the unexpected politics of the Revolutionary moment. The American Revolution forced colonists to choose between an independent United States and remaining part of the British Empire. Most Americans decided to support independence. A sizable minority, about one fifth of the colonial population, decided to support Britain.³ The widespread appeal of Loyalism during the American Revolution lacks an obvious explanation. Predictably, the first and loudest champions of the British Empire came from the ranks of crown officials. Much harder to explain are the thousands of farmers, traders, and artisan who had no special ties to the British Empire, but still became Loyalists. The claim offered here is that this popular Loyalism cannot be explained as the legacy of two centuries of living within the British Empire. Instead, popular Loyalism was the product of the Revolution.

The thirteen colonies did not have a long history of Loyalism. In the seventeenth century, Englishmen and women traveled to the New World with personal goals. First, in Virginia, settlers hoped to make money and go home. Later others traveled to New England in search of religious freedom. Other groups followed and founded colonies according to their own personal visions. Settlers turned New York into a commercial hub for Atlantic trade, Pennsylvania into an asylum for Quakers, and South Carolina into a land of rice plantations. By 1700, British America was a patchwork of different frontier experiments. Settlers valued their ties to England, but did consider themselves in any meaningful way part of an “English Empire.”

³ John Adams is often quoted by studies of the American Revolution as estimating that one third of the colonial population supported independence, a third opposed separation and a third remained neutral. Since the 1960's, historians of Loyalism have challenged Adams' assessment. Combining a range of sources, including Loyalist militia lists, records of exiles and the best guesses of local historians, Loyalist historians have estimated approximately a fifth of Americans did one or more act to support the British cause. While this estimate can not be viewed as any more definitive than Adams' calculation it does appear to account better for the number of Americans who became Loyalists and will be used in this paper. For a good summary of the Loyalist numbers debate see, Paul U. Smith, “The American Loyalists: Notes on Their Organization and Numerical Strength,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol.25, No. 2 (Apr., 1968): pp. 259-277.

During the first half of the eighteenth-century, settlers accepted a greater connection with Britain. A combination of guns and goods gradually convinced colonists of the benefits of close ties with the mother country. In 1689, political upheaval in England unleashed the imperial rivalry between Protestant England and Catholic France. The first battles occurred in Europe, but soon the fighting spread to British and French colonies in the New World. In a succession of wars, British Redcoats and colonial militiamen fought a common enemy. At the same time, the colonial economy grew and colonists now had the money to import ever larger quantities of goods from British merchants. The growth in Atlantic trade allowed colonists to follow the fashions of the mother country and to feel English. Together, defeating a common enemy and buying the same goods turned frontier experiments into colonies in an integrated empire and encouraged a new sense of imperial patriotism.

American colonists, however, never unquestioningly accepted British authority. Over the eighteenth-century, the British government developed a doctrine of colonial subservience to the mother country. According to a succession of British leaders, the British government and its imperial bureaucracy could govern all parts of the British Empire. Had colonists accepted the idea of a centralized empire, a politics of Loyalism might have appeared before the Revolution. Instead, colonists developed a very different idea of imperial politics. Involvement in a half century of imperial wars and Atlantic commerce led colonists to believe they were equal partners in the British Empire with the same rights as Britons for self determination. Along with the guns and goods, colonists had also adopted the English political tradition of challenging authority in the name of individual rights. This idea percolated down through all levels of colonial society and shaped colonists everyday interaction with the authority of the British Empire. As long as

British officials did not interfere with colonial society, colonists were happy to be part of the British Empire. Therefore, on the eve of the American Revolution, the imperial politics of the thirteen colonies contained the seeds for Revolutionary outcry against British legislation, but no signs of widespread Loyalism.

There could be no Loyalists until there were Revolutionaries. And, there could be no Revolutionaries before Britain attempted to impose legislation on the thirteen colonies.⁴ In 1763, Britain finally defeated the French in North America, but had a colossal national debt from fighting the French in the Seven Year's War. As much of the fighting occurred in America, British officials thought it reasonable for Americans to pay for their own defense. In 1765, Parliament passed a new stamp tax on all paper in the colonies. Although only a small tax, colonial protests – including riots in Boston, Charleston and Kingston – convinced British ministers to repeal the tax. Further British taxes in 1767 and 1773 inflamed tensions and led colonists to suspect the British government was broken and needed reforming. During this decade of growing imperial tensions there were no signs of Revolution and, therefore, no signs of popular Loyalism. Only a handful of men spoke out in defense of British legislative supremacy. The thirteen colonies appeared united behind a common defense of colonial equality within the British Empire.

The widespread Loyalism that divided Revolutionary America only appeared as colonists started talking about independence. From 1774, calls for Revolution became widespread. In 1776, the thirteen colonies declared their independence and over the next eight years fought to make it a reality. As soon as independence became likely and colonists were forced to take sides,

⁴ Mary Beth Norton, *The British-Americans; the Loyalist Exiles in England, 1774-1789*, [1st] ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972), pp.6-7.

popular politics went in unpredictable directions. Throughout the struggle, revolutionaries had the loudest voices and the better thought out arguments. However, by 1783 nearly a fifth of the colonial population had become Loyalists. For some this choice was a matter of principle. They could not accept breaking away from the British Empire. For many more their Loyalism came as a surprise. In the Revolutionary whirlwind, colonists found themselves caught by events and becoming Loyalists in response to local events. With little chance to clear their names, colonists reluctantly accepted their new identity. The result was a Loyalism that had less to do with over a century of imperial politics and more to do with the fluid politics of revolution.

A Revolutionary spokesman and second president of the United States, John Adams famously claimed that a third of colonists supported independence, a third of colonists opposed independence and a third remained neutral.⁵ Since then historians have struggled to understand the mixed loyalties of the Revolutionary generation. The politics of Loyalism has proved particular difficult to explain. The more historians learn about the ordinary men and women who became Loyalist the harder it has become to explain what motivated popular Loyalism.

The first historians of the American Revolution thought they understood the politics of Loyalism. Accounts written on both sides of the Atlantic argued that Loyalists were a conservative elite defined by their dependence on the British Empire. In this analysis, the typical Loyalist was an Atlantic merchant, an Anglican clergyman or royal governor with a strong

⁵ Charles Francis Adams ed., *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States: With a Life of the Author, Notes and Illustrations* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1850), p.110.

personal attachment to Britain. Their Loyalism could be explained by tracing the special ties a group of colonial elites created with the metropolis over the eighteenth-century.⁶ As the self-proclaimed champions of the status quo, they naturally opposed the Revolution and, with little soul searching, became Loyalists.

Subsequent generations of historians have looked beyond the stereotype of elite Loyalists and focused on the ordinary men and women who opposed the Revolution and supported Britain. Starting in the middle of the nineteenth-century, a new wave scholarship argued that Loyalists came from every social background. Through biographical records of individual colonists, these studies demonstrated that the typical Loyalist was not an Atlantic merchant, an Anglican clergyman or royal governor with strong ties to the British Empire, but a farmer, local trader or artisan with no obvious reason to support the British Empire. These studies became standard reading for subsequent generations of students interested in Loyalism.⁷

In the twentieth century, historians have delved deeper into the archives and constructed a very detailed picture of the ordinary men and women who opposed the Revolution and supported Britain. A diverse body of scholarship has reconstructed every aspect of the Loyalism. Many historians have written detailed biographical accounts of individual or individual groups of Loyalists.⁸ Another approach has focused on political ideology of popular Loyalism.⁹ A further

⁶ For an example of this older view of Loyalism see, Egerton Ryerson, *The Loyalists of America and Their Times: From 1620 to 1816*, 2d ed. (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1970).

⁷ The first study to take a serious second look at Loyalism was Lorenzo Sabine's *The American Loyalists, or Biographical Sketches of Adherents To The British Crown in the War of the Revolution; Alphabetically Arranged; With A Preliminary Historical Essay*. (Boston: 1847). Sabine spent years collecting information about anybody accused of Loyalism during the Revolution. From the records of over 4,000 individuals, Lorenzo discovered that most Loyalists were farmers, small traders and artisans not royal officials, Anglican clergymen and Atlantic merchants proved the point. Sabine's study became essential reading for a new Loyalists historiography.

⁸ For examples of biographical accounts of Loyalism, see: Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Cambridge: Mass., Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1974), Carol Berkin, *Jonathan Sewall; Odyssey of an American Loyalist* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), Jacob Ernest Cooke, *Tench Coxe and the*

body of work has speculated about the particular psychology of Loyalism.¹⁰ The interpretations of historians turned psychologists have met challenges from studies interested in combining a range of cultural considerations to explain popular Loyalism.¹¹ The largest single body of work has attempted to understand the socio-economic background of Loyalism.¹² Today the challenge has become to make sense of all of this information.

Early Republic (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Va., by the University of North Carolina Press, 1978), John E. Ferling, *The Loyalist Mind : Joseph Galloway and the American Revolution* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977), Eugene R. Fingerhut, *Survivor, Cadwallader Colden II in Revolutionary America* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1983), James Thomas Flexner, *States Dyckman, American Loyalist*, 1st ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), Lawrence Henry Gipson, *American Loyalist: Jared Ingersoll*. Uniform Title: *Jared Ingersoll*, *Yale Historical Publications* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), Lawrence Shaw Mayo, *John Wentworth, Governor of New Hampshire, 1767-1775* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921).

⁹ The best monographs on Loyalist ideology are William Allen Benton, *Whig-Loyalism; an Aspect of Political Ideology in the American Revolutionary Era* (Rutherford [N.J.] Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1969), Robert M. Calhoun, *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America, 1760-1781*, [1st] ed., *The Founding of the American Republic*; (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), Janice Potter-MacKinnon, *The Liberty We Seek : Loyalist Ideology in Colonial New York and Massachusetts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983). A number of articles have looked at specifics aspects of Loyalists ideology. For examples see, Rodney K. Miller, "The Political Ideology of the Anglican Clergy," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* (1976), James C. Spaulding, "Loyalist as Royalist, Patriot as Puritan: The American Revolution as a Repetition of the English Civil Wars," *Church History* (1976), and John Ferling, "The American Revolution and American Security: Whig and Loyalist Views," *Historian* (1978).

¹⁰ Historians have uncovered a number of personality traits that led colonists to oppose the Revolution and become Loyalists, including unfulfilling relationships with fathers, esteem of power, hostility towards dissenters and a stronger need for community acceptance. For examples of this literature see, K. S. Lynn, *A Divided People* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977), Edwin G. Burrows and Michael Wallace, "The American Revolution: The Ideology and Psychology of National Liberation," *Perspectives in American History* (1972), and N. E. H. Hull, Peter C. Hoffer, and Steven L. Allen, "Choosing Sides: A quantitative study of the Personality Determinants of Loyalist and Revolutionary Political Affiliation in New York," *Journal of American History* (1978).

¹¹ These studies have argued that Loyalism was an outgrowth of colonial society. William Penack in *War Politics & Revolution in Provincial Massachusetts* (Boston: Northeastern University Press), concluded that Loyalists tended to be inductive thinkers, materialists and individualists" while patriots thought deductively and acted idealistically and communally." A different study by T. S. Martin, *Minds and Hearts: The American Revolution as a Philosophical Crisis* (Lanham, MD, 1984), reached the opposite conclusion. In his study, *Minds and Hearts: The American Revolution as a Philosophical Crisis*, Martin argued that Patriots were typically individualistic whereas Loyalists tended to be community orientated.

¹² For the best general study of the socio-economic background of Loyalism see: Wallace Brown, *The King's Friends; the Composition and Motives of the American Loyalist Claimants* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1965), Wallace Brown, *The Good Americans: The Loyalists in the American Revolution* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1969). The majority of studies have focused on individual states, regions or specific communities. For state studies see, Robert Stansburg Lambert, "The Flight of the Georgia Loyalists," (1963), Robert Abraham East, *Connecticut's Loyalists, Connecticut Bicentennial Series ; No. 6*; (Chester, Conn.: Pequot Press, 1974), Ronald Hoffman and Thad W. Albert Peter J. Tate, *An Uncivil War : The Southern Backcountry During the American Revolution, Perspectives on the American Revolution*; (Charlottesville: Published for the U.S.

Few historians would deny that these studies have made our understanding of Loyalism during the Revolution more sophisticated, persuasive and human. The conclusion that Loyalists and Patriots did not constitute distinct sections of colonial society, however, has dramatically demonstrated the interpretative problems facing the historian of the political culture of the American Revolution. Since the discover of popular Loyalism, historians have searched for the factor or factors that separated Loyalists from Patriots. Behind this analysis rest the assumption that Revolutionary allegiances can be understood in dialectic terms as a choice between two opposing political cultures: Loyalism and Patriotism. In part, they are right: the Revolution was a time of rival allegiances. However, historians' inability to find a formula to explain popular Loyalism has highlighted the limits of such an approach. Loyalist politics cannot be understood as a universalizing ideology and Loyalists as a homogenous group. The pervasive nature of allegiance makes the Revolution hard to explain through Patriot and Loyalist labels. At the height of abstraction, it makes sense to treat allegiances as hard categories, yet, as we zoom in this analysis obviously ignores the complex social reality and becomes misleading. What

Capitol Historical Society by the University Press of Virginia, 1985), Joseph Barton Starr, *Tories, Dons, and Rebels: The American Revolution in British West Florida* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1976), Adele Hast, *Loyalism in Revolutionary Virginia: The Norfolk Area and the Eastern Shore*, *Studies in American History and Culture* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1982), Robert Stansbury Lambert, *South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution*, 1st ed. (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), Anne M. Ousterhout, *A State Divided: Opposition in Pennsylvania to the American Revolution*, *Contributions in American History*, No. 123; (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), Phillip Papas, *"That Ever Loyal Island": Loyalism and the Coming of the American Revolution on Staten Island*, New York (2003), Judith L. Van Buskirk, *Generous Enemies: Patriots and Loyalists in Revolutionary New York*, 1st pbk. ed., *Early American Studies*; (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). Linda Kay Williams, *Loyalism in East Florida, 1763-1785* ([Tallahassee, Fla.]: Williams, 1975). For examples of regional studies see: Richard T. Irwin, *American Loyalists in Morris County: Persons Defending Government from the Protest, Revolution, and War Leading toward an American Independence in Colonial New Jersey* (Madison, N.J.: Morris County Chapter, Historiographers of New Jersey, 1996), Ruth M. Keesey, "Loyalism in Bergen County, New Jersey," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 18, No. 4 (1961). For studies of the Loyalist communities see: Ronald Hoffman and Thad W. Albert Peter J. Tate, *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry During the American Revolution*, *Perspectives on the American Revolution*; (Charlottesville: Published for the U.S. Capitol Historical Society by the University Press of Virginia, 1985), Robert M. Calhoon, Timothy M. Barnes, and George A. Rawlyk, *Loyalists and Community in North America*, *Contributions in American History*, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994).

historians need is a better sense of the ways in which ordinary colonists thought about political behavior during the Revolution.¹³

If Loyalists studies are to move forward, historians need to revise their model of Revolutionary politics. If interrogating Loyalist backgrounds offers few insights into their politics, historians should focus on understanding what they did during the Revolution. To uncover the meaning of popular allegiances requires grounding a discussion of Loyalism in the different contexts in which Americans interpreted what constituted political behavior during the Revolution. Acts of Loyalism need examining in three contexts. First, an act labeled as “Loyalist” needs to be situated in the immediate course of events to understand exactly why it happened. Second, the meaning of the action needs to be interpreted in the complex local context of economic, social, religious and political networks and the impact upon these structures of changes caused by the Revolutionary War – that is to defocus the larger allegiances and concentrate on the other ways in which colonists understood the war. Colonists viewed the war as about issues other than the place of the thirteen colonies in the British Empire. For example, the conflict exacerbated existing division between colonists that had no bearing on the issue of independence, but had tremendous local significance. Finally, a full understanding of the act can only be recovered within the process of politicization that occurred during the war. The Revolution infused every action with political significance. As such, colonists fused local issues that meant little to outsiders with an inter-colonial discussion about independence. Colonists

¹³ This sentence is a paraphrase of an argument taken from Ethan Shagan’s *Popular Politics and the English Reformation*, *Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History*; (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 7.

translated local issues into Loyalists and Patriot behavior.¹⁴ In this way the strength of Loyalism can be explained when there was no single, overwhelming cause for it.

A research agenda for recovering popular Loyalism approaches the creation of Revolutionary identity as a process, changing throughout the war. A study of Loyalism should be organized along thematic and chronological lines. General studies cannot capture the many different faces of Loyalism and individual local studies cannot speak with confidence about the bigger questions. The fluid nature of Loyalism becomes recoverable by focusing on sites of social friction. Moments of contestation brought Americans into contact with each other in ways that revealed how colonists discussed divisions during the Revolution. By exploring how questions of allegiance figured in these situations opens a window onto the way issues of loyalty operated in the context of everyday lives. Micro-studies of these moments of tension should focus on the key points when the course of the Revolutionary War changed the larger context that shaped Americans discussions of allegiances. In this way, a series of tightly focused micro-studies structured around changes in the War of Independence tests the thesis that Loyalism was an identity that changed in different situations and at different points during the war.

This dissertation claims that popular Loyalism was the unintended consequence of a fluid, contingent and ultimately unpredictable Revolutionary political culture. To understand why thousands of ordinary men and women became Loyalists requires viewing Revolutionary allegiances as the product of a fast moving political culture in which colonists continually renegotiated the meaning of political behavior. To be sure, there were colonists who took sides

¹⁴ Two books have been central to my thinking about popular allegiances, Shagan's *Popular Politics and the English Reformation*, and John Walter's *Understanding Popular Violence in the English revolution: The Colchester plunderers*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

based on long held principles. Examples can be found in every colony of farmers, small traders and artisans who had a long held attachment to the British Empire and actively opposed independence. Yet, they were a minority compared to the thousands who had no intention of supporting Britain, but ended up Loyalists solely because of the events that occurred between 1774-1787. Over the course of the Revolution, Patriots developed a vision of an independent republic and fought to turn it into a reality. In contrast, Loyalists were reacting to events.

Taking this approach has revealed a popular Loyalism defined by three elements. The arena in which the debate about popular Loyalism took place was created by a dynamic interaction between the local and Revolutionary stages. Instead of looking for the origins of popular Loyalism in the legacy of the eighteenth-century Anglo-American Atlantic World, I demonstrate that for most colonists Loyalism was the product of a fast moving political culture in which individuals continually renegotiated what counted as Loyalist behavior out of a fusion of local priorities and Revolutionary events. At one level, all colonists participated in the larger discussion about Patriotism and Loyalism taking shape on the Revolutionary stage. At the same time, all colonists continued to value local politics remote from abstract partisan rhetoric. Over the course of the Revolution, numerous events brought these worlds into collision. At these moments of contact, local politics became suddenly and violently intertwined with Revolutionary politics. The immediate everyday world became the lens through which colonists thought about larger allegiances to king or colony. Out this dialectic of lived experience and Revolutionary rhetoric emerged a popular politics in which colonists found themselves assuming allegiances for *new* and very different reasons.

When local and imperial events collided, two types of Loyalist appeared. In communities across Colonial America, a clear divide occurred between a small group of radical Loyalists and a larger group of reluctant Loyalists. A small group of men and women chose sides with little soul searching and declared their support for the British Empire. They made a disproportional impact on the Revolution. The appearance of vocal champions of the British Empire encouraged Patriots to overestimate the threat of Loyalism and have since occupied the attention of historians. This study focuses on the majority of future Loyalists who tried to avoid taking sides before being forced by events to adopt a Loyalist identity. These colonists left a smaller footprint, but are more important for understanding the widespread appeal of Loyalism. For this group of would-be neutrals, allegiances were not based on principle, but developed as strategies to negotiate the fast changing Revolutionary landscape.

The power of larger events to create widespread Loyalism highlights the lack of agency as the defining feature of popular Loyalism. At no point during the Revolution did colonists have complete control over their political choices. Historians have tended to portray the American Revolution as a moment when colonists chose their politics. This was, to an extent, true for committed Loyalists. However, for the large numbers of undecided colonists the Revolution became a confusing experience with unpredictable outcomes. Without strong political convictions to guide them, most apolitical colonists found themselves adrift in Revolution politics. Colonists in this situation were liable to be outpaced by events and find their political choices severely limited or made for them by larger events over which they had no control. At these moments, colonists had to learn to live with their fate. In this way, colonists who never wanted to become Loyalists found themselves trapped into becoming Loyalists.

This dissertation explores popular Loyalism through four moments during the Revolution when colonists confronted what Loyalism meant to them. Each chapter is arranged chronologically between 1774-1790 and focuses on one type of experience common to the Revolutionary generation. Taken together these snapshots provide a way to trace the overarching narrative of Loyalism while obtaining the detail necessary to study popular politics.

The first micro-study concentrates on Western Connecticut between 1774-1776. During these years, the first Loyalists and Patriots appeared as colonists had to decide whether to support the initial call for independence or start a counter-revolution. I demonstrate that colonists did not make one definitive choice to become a Loyalists or Revolutionary. Instead, over two years colonists made a series of often contradictory choices as the Revolutionary struggle shaped and then reshaped the contours of local politics. Western Connecticut experienced three outbreaks of Loyalism as different segments of the regional population discovered personal reasons to oppose the Revolution. In total, between 2,000-3,000 colonists displayed pro-British sympathies. Through this analysis, I establish the main argument that organizes later chapters: colonists treated the choice of allegiances as an ongoing debate structured by the impact of larger events on the local stage.

The second part of the investigation moves to the opening campaign of the War of Independence in New Jersey between 1776-1777 and demonstrates how the harsh realities of living in a war zone soon complicated earlier allegiances. In this chapter, I combine the

approaches of political and military historians to understand how the fighting collapsed the distinction between the frontline and home front and forced civilians to negotiate new allegiances with the British Army. In November 1776, a large British force based in New York marched south and conquered New Jersey. The British occupation tested political sympathies. Across New Jersey, colonists had to decide whether they would resist or collaborate. For declared Loyalists the occupation confirmed their politics, and they aided the British soldiers. In an important example, about 3,000 wavering Patriots interpreted the arrival of British soldiers as the end of the Revolution and swore an oath to king George III. Within a month of the invasion, however, British troops withdrew and forced colonists to choose between a vengeful Continental Army and following the British Army. Most wanted to live out the war in their homes but found they had to live with the consequences of their collaboration. The British invasion had therefore created a distinctive culture of occupation and collaboration that irrevocably redrew the political map of Revolutionary America. As the war moved away from New Jersey, colonists in every other colony experienced the same political uncertainty of living within a war zone.

Third, my research turns to Loyalism at the end of the Revolution and the thousands of Loyalists who fled the United States to the British colony of Nova Scotia at the close of the Revolutionary War. In this chapter, I focus the development of a third type of allegiance that was shaped by the experiences of exile. Of the many thousands of colonists who had collaborated with the British Army, most reconciled themselves to defeat and remained in the United States. Between 60,000-80,000, however, chose exile in England, the West Indies and British Canada. I focus on 25,000 refugees who left New York for the Crown Colony of Nova Scotia in 1783. In light of the number of Loyalists who remained, the act of going into exile seemingly marked the

exiles as a distinct group within the larger Loyalist population. I demonstrate, however, that these men and women did not have a common identity. Their scramble to leave New York and re-establish their lives in the Canadian wilderness turned the exiles against each other. Rival communities formed as they competed over the most support from British officials. These disputes focused colonists' efforts to discover a new role for themselves in the ruins of the British Empire and reconcile themselves with an independent United States. The result was a patchwork mentality where Loyalists talked about common sacrifices and shared suffering, but pursued an aggressively individualistic search for compensation that would give them a corner of the British Empire to call their own.

In a final twist, I examine the refugees in Nova Scotia who realized the ties to their old lives were still stronger than their ties to the British Empire and returned to the United States. No accurate figure can be given for the number of Loyalists who returned. However, anecdotal records suggest a figure between 5,000-10,000. In the concluding phase of their Revolutionary experience, many Loyalists found the pull of their old homes stronger than their new ties to Nova Scotia. The first exiles left shortly after arriving and others followed throughout the 1780's. Upon reaching the United States, most former Loyalists found a friendly reception from their old neighbors. As such, in this final chapter, I argue that the debate over Revolutionary allegiances ceased to function as a meaningful point of reference for Americans eager to move on with their lives. In the 1780's and 1790's, for example, former Loyalists took an active role in the debates surrounding the ratification of the Federal Constitution in New York.

Together these four micro-studies reveal the fluid, contingent, and ultimately unpredictable political culture of Loyalism.

A Note on Terms: “Loyalist” and “Loyalism”

This study will use the terms “Loyalist” and “Loyalism” throughout the manuscript only to refer to “acts that are loyal”. Over the centuries, historians have used a variety of terms to describe the inhabitants of the thirteen colonies who opposed the American Revolution and supported Great Britain. They have been known as “friends of governments,” “the king’s friends,” “royalists,” “the disaffected,” and so on. The most common terms have been “Tories” or “Loyalists”. The term Tories was used first by their enemies as a pejorative term to link opponents of the Revolution with the British Tory politicians who supported royal prerogative in the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89. Since then many historians have unthinkingly adopted the term Tory without interrogating its partisan origins. The term “Loyalists” is equally problematic. The term became widespread at the end of the Revolution when colonists in New York began petition the British Government for aid. Used in this situation, “Loyalist” was a propaganda tool that hid the complicated realities of Revolutionary allegiances. Before then opponents of the Revolution did not use a single term to describe themselves. Subsequent generations of historians, however, have largely ignored the historical context and unthinkingly used the terms Tory and Loyalist to refer to a single ideological camp. This study seeks to avoid these unhelpful generalizations by using “Loyalist” and “Loyalism” *only* to refer to individuals who committed acts that they or outside observers considered “Loyal”.

Chapter Two

The First Loyalists: The Politicization of Fairfield County, Connecticut 1774-1776

Looking back after the Revolution, Loyalists from Fairfield County in Western Connecticut explained they had supported Britain from the earliest days of the imperial crisis. David Burt, from the coastal town of Ridgefield, told British officials “[t]hat at the commencement of the late Dissentions he took the side of Government.”¹ Munson Jarvis of Danbury stated his uniform attachment to the British Constitution from an “early period of the Rebellion.”² Isaac Bell of Stamford went further and claimed to be “the first Person advertised as an Enemy to the State, and he left the Country early and joined the British on account of his Loyalty”.³ From these accounts, Loyalism to Britain appeared to be the result of a straightforward choice between the British Empire and American Independence.

A closer examination of the politicization of Western Connecticut uncovers a more complicated story. Every Loyalist in the colony gave a different date for the start of active Loyalism. Ephraim Deforest of Redding explained he had first taken a stand in 1774 over Congress’s radical censure of Britain, the Continental Association.⁴ Gideon Lounsbury of Stamford found himself in prison in 1775 for opposing military action against British troops in Boston.⁵ Silias Raymond of Norwalk had first shown his colors in the autumn of 1776 when the British Army invaded neighboring New York.⁶ Comfort Benedict of Danbury told officials he became a Loyalist in April 1777 when the British Army raided Connecticut.⁷ Others pointed to

¹*American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790, Variation: Loyalist Transcripts; V. 1-60.* (1960), Audit Office 12, Vol.11, "Memorial of David Burt".

² *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.12, "Memorial of Munson Jarvis".

³ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.11, "Memorial of Isaac Bell".

⁴ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.12, "Memorial of Ephraim Deforest".

⁵ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.12, "Memorial of Gideon Lounsbury".

⁶ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.12, "Memorial of Silias Raymond".

⁷ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.12, "Memorial of Comfort Benedict".

other dates. What emerges from these accounts is a complicated narrative of one colony's immersion in Revolutionary politics.

This chapter explains the circumstances under which the first colonists who came to oppose independence and became Loyalists between 1774-1776. During the first years of colonial protest from 1765-1773, virtually all colonists opposed British attempts to tax the colonies.⁸ The only debate occurred over the best way to challenge British policy. From 1774, these early protests slowly evolved into calls for independence. This radical development divided Americans. The majority of colonists welcomed the prospect of self-government. A substantial minority, however, began voicing doubts about the direction of the Revolution. Over the next two years, the popular debate about independence developed into an unforgiving partisan politics that trapped thousands of colonists with the label of Loyalists.

A few colonists chose sides and declared their support for Britain. In every colony, examples exist of individuals who took stock of events and decided to become Loyalists with little soul searching. Often these men and women had obvious reasons to side with Britain. The first and loudest opposition came from imperial officials who owed their position to the metropolitan government in London. Other colonists who had strong personal, religious or economic links to the British Empire followed them.

⁸Norton, *The British-Americans; the Loyalist Exiles in England, 1774-1789*, pp.143-144.

Many other colonists embraced Loyalism more hesitantly as part of a larger debate about Revolutionary allegiances. These colonists lacked special ties to the British Empire. To understand their politics requires viewing Loyalism as the product of a fast moving political culture in which individuals continually renegotiated at the local level what counted as political behavior. Caught up in the escalating imperial crisis colonists refused to make a definitive choice. Instead, they treated Revolutionary politics as an ongoing debate. As the imperial crisis escalated between 1774-1776, these colonists made a series of open ended choices in support of both empire and independence. Each choice represented a separate local conversation in which individuals tried to impose their own definitions on the events of the day. As the meaning of Loyalism changed during these discussions, different colonists at different moments found different reasons to support Britain. For some this Loyalism proved short lived and without further consequence while others became tied to their politics by events beyond their control and by 1776 turned into committed opponents of the Revolution.

The dilemma of choosing sides led to widespread Loyalism in Fairfield County, in Western Connecticut. The Revolution came faster and with more intensity to New England in the years leading up to independence. The activities of Boston radicals since the Stamp Act in 1765 had thrust Massachusetts and its neighboring colonies into the spotlight. By 1774, British officials believed that controlling the Bay Colony would stop the American rebellion. In this assessment, London underestimated the extent of discontent throughout the thirteen colonies, but imperial officials were right to point to the intensity of the political climate in New England. Being so close to the center of the Revolution, political tempers ran high throughout the area. Most New Englanders became staunch patriots, suppressing the isolated pockets of Loyalism.

Historians have often noted that the American Revolution took on the character of a civil war everywhere except in New England. There were two major exceptions to this picture. A substantial Loyalist community developed in Boston under the protection of the British garrison. For the most part, these Loyalists had strong ties to Britain: crown officials and their families seeking sanctuary.⁹ Beyond the safety of the British army, Loyalism appeared only in Fairfield County, where between 1774-1776, approximately 3,000 colonists identified themselves as Loyalists.

Before 1774 the region had supported the Revolution. In 1765, Britain imposed the Stamp Act on the thirteen colonies. The Governor of Connecticut, Thomas Fitch, upheld the tax and tried to rally support in Fairfield County. Throughout the eighteenth century, a series of disputes had led the western towns to view the eastern towns as trouble. Now Fitch wanted to exploit this history to support British taxation. The Governor's gamble failed. All of Connecticut, including Fairfield County, opposed the Stamp Act. The next year, the towns organized by the Sons of Liberty, a radical group of colonists, ousted Governor Fitch. While many westerners remained suspicious of easterners, they feared the British ministry more. A vote for Fitch would have endorsed British legislation. Over the next decade, Fairfield County continued to support colonial protests.¹⁰ In 1767, the County rejected the Townsend Duties, a second British tax. This time the new governor led Connecticut's protests with almost unanimous support.¹¹ As late

⁹ Bruce G. Merritt, *Loyalism and Social Conflict in Revolutionary Deerfield, Massachusetts (Reprinted from the Journal of American History, Vol.57, No. 2, Sept. 1970, Pgs. 227-289.)* ([Bloomington: Ind., 1970), Jean F. Hankins, "A Different Type of Loyalism: The Sandemanians of New England during the Revolutionary War," *The New England Quarterly*, Vol.60, No. 2 (Jun., 1987), pp.223-249.

¹⁰ Richard Buel, *Dear Liberty: Connecticut's Mobilization for the Revolutionary War*, 1st ed. (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press: Irvington, NY, 1980), pp.15-16.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.18-20.

as January 1774 there were no signs of the partisan politics that would soon engulf Fairfield County.¹²

Loyalism developed in Fairfield County only between 1774-1776. As colonial protests became more radical, three Revolutionary events forced colonists to confront their politics and choose sides. A few individuals became stalwart Loyalists. For the majority, Loyalism functioned as one option in a larger debate. At each moment, different colonists divided in support or opposition of the Revolution. Many made contradictory choices as the local definitions of Revolutionary politics changed. Between 1774-1776 the meaning of Loyalism and Patriotism changed each time colonists confronted their allegiances. The most visible part of this discussion was the transformation of a debate between uncommitted colonists over the limit of colonial protests into a partisan struggle between supporters and opponents of American independence. By the time news of the Declaration of Independence reached Connecticut, many of the features of a civil war already existed in Fairfield County. Colonists who chose Loyalism early in 1774 could avoid persecution, however, colonists who chose Loyalism in 1776 suddenly found themselves trapped in a longer term political struggle with Revolutionaries for the future of America. Taken together these three moments uncover the story of the politicization of one county during the opening years of the Revolution.

Stage One - The Continental Association

¹² Oscar Zeichner, *Connecticut's Years of Controversy, 1750-1776* ([Chapel Hill] Pub. for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg: Va., by the Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1949), pp.143-158.

Fairfield County entered the Revolution with the passage of the Continental Association in 1774. A clumsy attempt by British officials to punish Boston rebels who had thrown tea into the harbor escalated tensions. The Coercive Acts closed Boston harbor and overturned Massachusetts' longstanding government. On 5 September 1774, delegates to the First Continental Congress met in Philadelphia to coordinate an inter-colonial response to this latest example of British tyranny. Angered by the latest British legislation delegates had radical intentions. First, they approved the Suffolk Resolves, an inflammatory statement of American rights drafted by Boston radicals. Then Congress decided upon a plan of non-importation, non-consumption, and non-exportation of British goods. The first part of the strategy, non-importation would go into effect on 1 December 1774, with the other parts to be phased in during the following year. Drawing upon the lessons learned from earlier economic embargoes, delegates knew the key to success lay in enforcement. Voluntary appeals had failed. Colonists had a taste for British goods. To solve the problem, this time, Congress created the Continental Association. The eleventh article called for a series of local committees "in every county, city, and town." Americans would elect representatives to these committees whose job it would-be to "observe the conduct of all people" and police their behavior. The article gave committees the power to punish violators of the embargo by publishing their names in the local paper, instructing all good Americans to "break off all dealings with him or her."¹³ With these measures, Congress overnight transformed the imperial crisis into local politics. Fairfield County, along with the rest of Colonial America, was now at the center the Revolutionary struggle.

¹³ T. H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp.325-326.

The election of committees outlined in the Continental Association gave each town a vote on the direction of the Revolution. For the first time, individual colonists had to make clear political choices in front of their communities. The Association did not make independence inevitable. In calling for non-importation, non-consumption, and non-exportation, Congress hoped to pressure British leaders into addressing American grievances. Yet, at the same time, Congress had raised the stakes through their unprecedented critique of Britain. In doing so, Congress had begun to shape the partisan politics of Revolution. The Association functioned as a test of loyalty. The process of setting up the committee system through public elections, at the local level, called for a conspicuous display of political convictions. In the face-to-face world of town politics, the Association left little room for individuals to escape making a decision or take a middle position. As one colonist explained, “I take it for granted, that the design of this Association is to make a discrimination between friends of America and its liberties, and the enemies of both.”¹⁴ Many other colonists realized the larger significance of electing committees of inspection.

Across Connecticut, towns endorsed the Congressional plan, passing resolutions implementing the Continental Association and establishing committees of inspections. Town meetings passed forceful resolutions articulating a powerful language of American rights that stopped just short of declaring independence. Towns pledge their continued allegiance to George

¹⁴ Peter Force and comp, *American Archives: Consisting of a Collection of Authentick Records, State Papers, Debates, and Letters and Other Notices of Publick Affairs, the Whole Forming a Documentary History of the Origin and Progress of the North American Colonies; of the Causes and Accomplishment of the American Revolution; and of the Constitution of Government for the United States, to the Final Ratification Thereof. In Six Ser.* ([Washington, 1837), Ser. 4, Vol.1, pp.827-828.

III, but also called for fundamental change.¹⁵ In Coventry, for example, the town meeting met to consider “the gloomy aspect which threatens the subversion of American liberty, from the late attempts of the British Parliament, to tax the Americans without their voice or consent” and to “cordially acquiesce in the general sentiment of a non-importation, non-exportation and non-consumption agreement, until our right shall be restored.”¹⁶ Other towns lacked Coventry’s eloquence but articulated the same message. In a final step, Patriots arranged a convention of three counties, Hartford, New London and Windsor, to meet in January to set up county level committees of inspection.¹⁷

At first, Fairfield County seemed to be following the rest of Connecticut. In quick succession, towns adopted the Association and elected committees of inspection. On 7 October, Stamford voted to adopt the Association.¹⁸ By December the county seat, Fairfield Town, Stratford, Greenwich, New Fairfield, Redding and Danbury had followed suit. The resolves published by these town meetings echoed the politics of the rest of Connecticut.¹⁹ Finally, towns made plans for a county convention to meet on 23 February to coordinate Fairfield’s efforts with the rest of Connecticut.²⁰ By the end of 1774 the Association had widespread support and

¹⁵ R. R. Hinman, *A Historical Collection from Official Records, Files, &C., of the Part Sustained by Connecticut, During the War of the Revolution: With an Appendix, Containing Important Letters, Depositions, &C., Written During the War* (Hartford: Printed by E. Gleason, 1842), pp.76-78.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.74-75.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.76-78.

¹⁸ Force and comp, *American Archives: Consisting of a Collection of Authentick Records, State Papers, Debates, and Letters and Other Notices of Publick Affairs, the Whole Forming a Documentary History of the Origin and Progress of the North American Colonies; of the Causes and Accomplishment of the American Revolution; and of the Constitution of Government for the United States, to the Final Ratification Thereof. In Six Ser.*, Ser. 4, Vol.2, pp.1236-1238.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Hubbell Mrs Schenck, *The History of Fairfield, Fairfield County, Connecticut, from the Settlement of the Town in 1639 to 1818* (New York: The author, 1889), Vol.2, p.284.

²⁰ Force and comp, *American Archives: Consisting of a Collection of Authentick Records, State Papers, Debates, and Letters and Other Notices of Publick Affairs, the Whole Forming a Documentary History of the Origin and Progress of the North American Colonies; of the Causes and Accomplishment of the American Revolution; and of*

Patriots were hopeful that Connecticut would enter the days ahead united. One Patriot, William Williams, wrote with obvious glee to the firebrand radical Samuel Adams, “the scales seem to fall from the eyes of our western brethren.”²¹

Williams had spoken too soon. In the space of a month between the end of January and the beginning of February four towns suddenly voted to reject the Association. Ridgefield led the way. In a packed town hall on 30 January, two hundred townsmen voted to reject Congress’ plan and reaffirmed their allegiance to George III and the British Empire. Only nine men wanted to ratify the Association.²² Taking confidence from Ridgefield’s bold stand, one hundred and forty one men in the eastern half of Redding with a smaller number from the western half of Fairfield Town, challenged the earlier adoption of the Association by the Redding town meeting. Unable to force the official meeting to vote again, they took matters into their own hands and held an extra-legal meeting to pass a new set of resolves.²³ A week later, Newtown joined Ridgefield and Redding. The town clerk note that “the meeting was the fullest that ever was known in this town house.” There was only one dissenting vote.²⁴ Next, residents in Danbury revoked the appointment of their committee of inspection and refused to send delegates to the proposed county convention. “Since many...have not been afraid of disputing the doings of that sacred body [Congress],” they explained Danbury had been “emboldened to shew” themselves in a

the Constitution of Government for the United States, to the Final Ratification Thereof. In Six Ser., Ser. 4, Vol.2, pp.1236-1238.

²¹ Zeichner, *Connecticut's Years of Controversy, 1750-1776*, p.182.

²² Force and comp, *American Archives: Consisting of a Collection of Authentick Records, State Papers, Debates, and Letters and Other Notices of Publick Affairs, the Whole Forming a Documentary History of the Origin and Progress of the North American Colonies; of the Causes and Accomplishment of the American Revolution; and of the Constitution of Government for the United States, to the Final Ratification Thereof. In Six Ser., Ser. 4, Vol.1, p.1215.*

²³ *Ibid.*, Ser. 4, Vol.1, pp.1258-1260.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, Ser. 4, Vol.1, p.1215.

“very full town meeting.”²⁵ Finally, on 27 February one hundred and twenty men from New Milford held their own extra-legal meeting criticizing the town authorities for adopting the Association. Although in Litchfield County, New Milford bordered both Newtown and Danbury and followed Fairfield County politics.²⁶ The rejection of the Association by these five towns represented the most serious challenge to the Continental Congress in New England.

All five towns published their resolves in local newspapers so the rest of Connecticut would know why they had rejected the Association.²⁷ Each town criticized the assertive position taken by Congress. Making similar arguments, the different townsmen worried about the consequences of threatening the imperial connection. Ridgefield believed, “that it would-be dangerous and hurtful to the inhabitants of this town to adopt said Congress’ measures.”²⁸ New Milford’s resolves stressed their present “good order and government” and the “horrible prospect of anarchy and confusion” that would come from change.²⁹ The men of Redding agreed. The townsmen claimed that instead of protecting American liberties from British tyranny, Congress “appear[s] to us immediately calculated to widen the present unhappy breach [with Britain].”

²⁵*Ibid.*, Ser. 4, Vol.1, pp.1038-1039, 1215-1216, *New York Gazetteer*, February 23 1775.

²⁶*Ibid.*, Ser. 4, Vol.1, p.1270.

²⁷ *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Vol.12, "Memorial of William Lyon". And, William Edgar Grumman, *The Revolutionary Soldiers of Redding, Connecticut, and the Record of Their Services: With Mention of Others Who Rendered Service or Suffered Loss at the Hands of the Enemy During the Struggle for Independence, 1775-1783: Together with Some Account of the Loyalists of the Town and Vicinity, Their Organization, Their Efforts, and Sacrifices in Behalf of the Cause of Their King, and Their Ultimate Fate* ([Hartford, Conn.]: Hartford Press, 1904), pp.197-198.

²⁸ Force and comp, *American Archives: Consisting of a Collection of Authentick Records, State Papers, Debates, and Letters and Other Notices of Publick Affairs, the Whole Forming a Documentary History of the Origin and Progress of the North American Colonies; of the Causes and Accomplishment of the American Revolution; and of the Constitution of Government for the United States, to the Final Ratification Thereof. In Six Ser.*, Ser. 4, Vol.1, pp.1202-1203.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Ser. 4, Vol.1, p.1270.

Moreover, both towns believed Congress to be an illegal gathering.³⁰ The residents of Newtown reached the same conclusion. The town meeting voted that Congress and the Association were “unconstitutional, subversive of our real liberties, and as lending to licentiousness.”³¹ Fairfield’s towns believed they had legitimate reasons to reject the Continental Association and, in doing so, they were acting in the best interests of America.

Danbury, New Milford, Newtown, Ridgefield, and Redding based their rejection of the Continental Association on an understanding of the benefits of the British Empire. Each town followed their rejection of the Association by declaring their allegiance to George III and his government. The Newtown resolves recognized “his most sacred Majesty King George The Third to be our rightful sovereign.”³² New Milford “acknowledged his most sacred Majesty, King George the Third, to be our rightful Sovereign.”³³ The Danbury town meeting affirmed their “Attachment to the Gracious King and their present happy constitution.”³⁴ Explaining what this meant, the different resolves offered a common view of the British Constitution. Three complementary assumptions underpinned the declarations of loyalty. First, the resolves stated that British Constitution gave the King and Parliament the right to govern all of the British Empire. The New Milford resolves stated “that we acknowledge that the King and Parliament have a Constitutional right of Government over every part of the British Empire.”³⁵ Second, the resolves explained the benefits of living under the British Constitution. Ridgefield justified the idea of parliamentary supremacy by arguing that the checks and balances of the British

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Ser. 4, Vol.1, pp.1202-1203.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Ser. 4, Vol.1, p.1205.

³² *Ibid.*, Ser. 4, Vol.1, p.1205.

³³ *Ibid.*, Ser. 4, Vol.1, p.1270.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Ser. 4, Vol.1, pp.1215-1216.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Ser. 4, Vol.1, p.1270.

Government ensured the safety of individual liberty for everyone in the Empire. No one branch of government, King, Lords or Commons, could abuse its power because the other two remained vigilant. As long as this system remained in place, colonial authorities had no right to overrule parliamentary legislation.³⁶ Newtown echoed this reasoning. “The three branches of legislation to wit the King, Lords & Commons governing and acting together have a Constitutional right of government over the Whole & Every part of the British empire.” Finally, applying the logic of the first two arguments, the resolves concluded that all assemblies in America had a “subordinate legislative power...in & over this Colony.”³⁷ Anybody that tried to claim a greater authority was, therefore, illegal and had no power. New Milford explained they would not be “bound by any unconstitutional assemblies of men whatsoever; such as are not warranted by the laws of the land.”³⁸ Following this reasoning colonists had to oppose the Continental Congress and reject the Continental Association.

By championing the British Constitution, Danbury, New Milford, Newtown, Ridgefield, and Redding located themselves in the mainstream of eighteenth-century political theory. These five towns did not have special ties to the British Empire. Instead, their opposition to the Continental Association came from a set of long standing and widely accepted arguments that had recently held sway throughout the thirteen colonies. Until the mid-1760’s virtually all Americans believed the British Constitution was the best defense of personal liberties in history. Historians have shown that as Parliament attempted to increase its control over the American colonies, after the Seven Years War, colonists came to believe that the British Constitution was

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Ser. 4, Vol.1, pp.1201-1203.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Ser. 4, Vol.1, pp.1202-1203.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Ser. 4, Vol.1, p.1270.

broken. New imperial taxes led many colonists to believe Britain wanted to enslave Americans.³⁹ Others, however, continued to have faith in the British system even as they shared doubts about the current British government. Throughout the 1760's and 1770's, these Americans constantly balanced British legislation against the constitution underpinning it. Before 1774, all agreed on reform. After 1774, the choice changed from reform to independence. The colonists in Danbury, New Milford, Newtown, Ridgefield, and Redding who had agreed that the system needed fixing before 1774, but did not think it needed overthrowing after 1774.⁴⁰ In this way, the first signs of opposition to the Revolution in Fairfield County were based on a conservative reading of common American political heritage.

To understand the continued support for the British Constitution in Fairfield County requires focusing on the structure of town politics and, in particular, the role played by local leaders who opposed the radical direction taken by the Revolution. Recent studies of the community influences that encouraged Loyalism have discovered that local community ties, neighbors and family far out weighed ideological, religious or broad socio-economic trends in creating pro-British sympathies. The findings of H. Tillson's study on the New River Valley in Virginia, Rachel N. Kein's work on the South Carolina backcountry and Joseph Tiedemann's exhaustive research on Queens County, New York, have established the role played by local

³⁹James T. Kloppenberg, *The Virtues of Liberalism* (Oxford University Press, 1998), Daniel T. Rodgers, "Republicanism: the Career of a Concept" *The Journal of American History* Vol.79 issue 1. (June 1992): pp. 11-38.

⁴⁰ Benton, *Whig-Loyalism; an Aspect of Political Ideology in the American Revolutionary Era*. For a more recent and more sophisticated analysis of Loyalist thought see, Potter-MacKinnon, *The Liberty We Seek: Loyalist Ideology in Colonial New York and Massachusetts*. Potter-MacKinnon advances the argument first hinted at by the Imperial School in the first half of the twentieth-century that Loyalists were as much patriotic Americans as Revolutionaries, but had different vision of the future of America. They envisaged the colonies developing within the safety of the British Empire, thought to be in its day the best guarantee of individual rights in the world. Potter therefore sums-up Loyalists as the conservative defenders of American liberty. For a broader, study of Loyalist political culture in general see, Robert M. Calhoon, *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America, 1760-1781*.

connections and, especially, “men of influence.” These same factors shaped Loyalism in Fairfield County between 1774-1776.⁴¹

In Ridgefield the influence of the pastor of the First Congregation Church, the Reverend Jonathan Ingersoll, steered the people towards Loyalism.⁴² Most Congregational ministers supported independence, but in Ridgefield Ingersoll used his influence to organize opposition to the Continental Association. The Congregational Church was the major social institution in Ridgefield. Unlike other towns in Fairfield County, Anglican missionaries working for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel had made few inroads by 1774. The Church of England only accounted for 25% of the inhabitants. Moreover, Ingersoll had a long history in Ridgefield. In 1736, he graduated from Yale and became pastor of Ridgefield where he remained up to 1775. Over these years, Ingersoll had plenty of time to use the pulpit to become an influential voice in Ridgefield society.⁴³

The source of Jonathan Ingersoll’s Loyalism lay in the politics of his younger brother. Jared Ingersoll had attempted to collect the hated Stamp Tax passed by Britain in 1765.⁴⁴ Like his elder brother, Jared attended Yale, but set his sights on a worldlier career in New Haven. He started a law firm, which soon propelled him into local politics. In 1764 the chance came,

⁴¹ Rachel N. Klein, “Frontier Planters and the American Revolution: The South Carolina Backcountry, 1775-1782,” in Hoffman et al, *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry During the American Revolution, Perspectives on the American Revolution*, Joseph S. Tiedemann, “Communities in the Midst of the American Revolution: Queens County, New York, 1774-1775,” *Journal of Social History* Vol.18, No. 1 (1984), Joseph S. Tiedemann, “Patriots by Default: Queens County, New York, and the British Army, 1776-1783,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* Vol.43, No. 1 (1986), Albert H. Tillson, Jr., “The Localist Roots of Backcountry Loyalism: An Examination of Popular Political Culture in Virginia’s New River Valley,” *The Journal of Southern History* Vol.54, No. 3 (1988).

⁴² Studies have demonstrated that Congregational ministers directed the political as well as spiritual life of their parish during the Revolution. See, for example, Alice M. Baldwin, *The New England Clergy and the American Revolution* (New York: F. Ungar Pub. Co., 1958), p.19.

⁴³ Lambert ed. Perry William Stevens Lilly, *Documentary History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America Containing Numerous Hitherto Unpublished Documents Concerning the Church in Connecticut, Variation* (New York: J. Pott, 1863), p.19.

⁴⁴ Zeichner, *Connecticut's Years of Controversy, 1750-1776*, p.52.

through contacts in England, to become a collector for a proposed colonial tax. As an aspiring politician, Jared seized the opportunity without realizing the consequences of his actions. In this, he was much like Benjamin Franklin who was first a tax collector in Philadelphia before he became a founding father. What at first seemed a good opportunity soured as Americans turned against the tax and anyone associated with it. Despite widespread opposition to the Stamp Act in Connecticut, Jared refused to give up his commission and so on 17th September 1765 a mob of hundreds forced him to resign at gun point. To make the point clear the crowd then made him shout their chosen slogan, “liberty and property.”⁴⁵ While Jared had saved himself from further abuse and controversy, the experience scared him. From 1765 onward, Jared became a firm supporter of Parliamentary authority in America. In 1774, he led the opposition to the Association in New Haven, coming within a handful of votes gaining control of the town meeting. This last display of Loyalism proved too much for New Haven’s Patriots who forced Ingersoll to flee Connecticut in 1775.⁴⁶

Jonathan Ingersoll had a close relationship with his controversial brother. The minister sent his son, Jonathan Jr., to New Haven to work in Jared’s law firm. When Jared left New Haven, his nephew took over the business. Both brothers also kept up a correspondence over the short distance between New Haven and Ridgefield. Jared wrote to his brother a week and a half after the town rejected the Association. He was not surprised the townsmen had acted as they did: people in “Ridgefield, I find, speak their mind plainly and not in parables.”⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Thomas C. Barrow, *Connecticut Joins the Revolution, Connecticut Bicentennial Ser. 1* (Chester: Conn., Pequot Press, 1973), p.23.

⁴⁶ Gipson, *American Loyalist: Jared Ingersoll. Uniform Title: Jared Ingersoll.*

⁴⁷ Jared Ingersoll to Jonathan Ingersoll, February 11 1775, *Papers of the New Haven Colony Historical Society* (New Haven: Printed for the Society), Vol.9, p.435.

In Redding and Newtown another minister, the Anglican Reverend John Beach, encouraged opposition to the Continental Association in his congregation. Like a number of Anglicans ministers in Fairfield County, John Beach administered to two neighboring parishes in eastern Redding and Newtown. In both towns, Beach's situation mirrored that of Jonathan Ingersoll. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel had appointed Beach to the twin parishes in 1732. In selecting Beach, the Society had made a good choice. John Beach proved an energetic minister who worked hard to increase the size of his congregations. By the eve of the Revolution, his parishioners made up a significant portion of the population in both towns.⁴⁸ In Newtown, members of the Church of England made up 55% of the town's population. In Redding, Anglicans only accounted for 40% of the total inhabitants of the town, but made up a clear majority in the eastern part of the town where the Anglican Church was located.⁴⁹ John Beach's long history in Redding and Newtown gave him a powerful position to shape the politics of these towns.

Beach became a Loyalist with little soul searching. Beach had started as a Congregational minister, but experienced a crisis of faith and turned to the Church of England in 1732. From this point onwards he acted with the conviction of the converted. In 1738 and 1745, he played a leading role in getting official recognition for the Church of England from the General Assembly. Up until mid-century Congregationalism remained the only sanctioned religion in

⁴⁸ Kenneth Walter Cameron, *The Church of England in Pre-Revolutionary Connecticut: New Documents and Letters Concerning the Loyalist Clergy and the Plight of Their Surviving Church* (Hartford: Transcendental Books, 1976), pp.46-51.

⁴⁹ Stephen P. McGrath, "Connecticut's Tory Towns: The Loyalty Struggle in Newtown, Redding and Ridgefield, 1774-1783," *Connecticut Historical Society* Vol.44, (July, 1979): 90-92.

Connecticut.⁵⁰ Between the 1740's and 1760's he published a series of pamphlets defending the Church of England.⁵¹ As tensions mounted with Parliament, Beach had no reservations in upholding the imperial connection.

Beach became a hold out refusing to modify his services to the new political reality. In 1774 the convocation of Anglican ministers met in Connecticut and decided to remain neutral and in 1776 they voted to drop prayers for the royal family from the service.⁵² As the convocation demonstrated, Anglicanism did not automatically turn its adherents into Loyalists. The political science of Anglicanism taught obedience to lawfully ordained authority, and the idea of an Anglican Communion brought to its adherents a special sense of connection with the mother country and its institutions. Yet, while many Loyalists were Anglicans, not all Anglicans became Loyalists. Most ministers changed their services in line with the ruling of the Convocation.⁵³ Beach, however, refused. Praying for the King every Sunday had turned him into

⁵⁰ Cameron, *The Church of England in Pre-Revolutionary Connecticut: New Documents and Letters Concerning the Loyalist Clergy and the Plight of Their Surviving Church*, pp. 46-51.

⁵¹ John Fitch Thomas Beach and dedicatee, "A Friendly Expostulation, with All Persons Concern'd in Publishing a Late Pamphlet, Entitled, the Real Advantages Which Ministers and People May Enjoy, Especially in the Colonies, by Conforming to the Church of England [Two Lines from Ovid]," in *Variation: Early American imprints.; 1st Ser.; No. 9336. References: Evans; 9336* (Printed by John Holt, in Broad Street, opposite the Exchange, Place: United States; New York; New York., 1763).

⁵² In the 1774 convocation the clergy were acutely aware that many in Connecticut looked upon them with suspicion. They published a statement explaining their allegiance to Connecticut first and Britain second. "Our known Attachment to Government, and Principles, that it is our Duty to honor and obey those that are necessary to declare, that we are Friends to government in its general Idea: As we avow this, so we are equally ready unreservedly to asset, that we bear good Affection , and real Attachment , to the Government , as it is settled in , and administered according to, the charter Rights and privileges of this Colony; that we warmly wish its Preservation and hope interruptedly to enjoy it." By 1776 when this was no longer possible, the next convention of Anglican clergy decided discretion was the better part of valour and decided to await the outcome of the Revolution. The Convention met on 5th July 1776, just after news of the Declaration of Independence spread through Connecticut. Kenneth Walter Cameron, *Anglican Experience in Revolutionary Connecticut and Areas Adjacent* (Hartford: Transcendental Books, 1987), pp.67-68.

⁵³ For example, the September 5th 1774 Convention of the Anglican Church in Fairfield County estimated that a third of the counties inhabitants attended Anglican services. The survey had missed a couple of towns, but this would not dramatically alter its finding. The total population of Connecticut, according to the 1774 census was 33,000, making roughly 11,000 Anglicans. At their height there were only 2-3,000 Loyalists. E. Edwards Beardsley,

a staunch Loyalist. As late as 1778, Beach continued to pray, “the King of Great-Britain may be strengthened to vanquish and overcome all his Enemies.” The bemused selectmen of Redding, who by this time had silenced the Loyalist opposition, wrote a letter suggesting to the old minister “that for the future your would omit praying in Public that King George y^e third, or any other foreign Prince or Power may Vanquish &c. the People of this Land”⁵⁴

Around the zealous John Beach political factions formed in both Redding and Newtown that in 1774 turned into opposition to the Continental Association. Beach’s efforts to expand his congregation created self-conscious groups in Newtown and Redding.⁵⁵ In a report to the Society in London, Beach noted with pride that the Church of England people had a growing voice in town politics. “It is of some satisfaction to me to observe,” Beach wrote the Society 1767, “that in this town [Newtown] of late, in our elections the Church People make ye Major Vote which is the first instance of this kind in this Colony if not in all New England.” This factional politics did not create animosity before the Revolution.⁵⁶ In 1774, the loyalty test imposed by the Association, however, ran along these pre-existing fault lines. Reverend Mansfield, the Tory Rector of Derby, explained that John Beach had “better success” than other ministers did in keeping his congregation loyal. Scarcely a single person could be found in his congregations, Mansfield wrote, “but what hath preserved steadfastly in their duty and loyalty.” Beach would have agreed. In 1781, looking back on the early years of the Revolution, he wrote that “New

The History of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut (New York: Hurd and Houghton; Boston, E.P. Dutton, 1973), p.6.

⁵⁴ Connecticut State Library, Manuscript Collection, Main Vault, 974. 62 R24. (Hereafter CSL)

⁵⁵ March Alred Mappen, “Anatomy of a Schism: Anglican Dissent in the New England Community of Newtown, Connecticut, 1708-1765” (Rutger’s University, 1976), p.122.

⁵⁶ Beach could write in 1772 that both Churches, Anglican and Congregational “live in harmony and peace with each other.” May 5 1772 Newtown John Beach to the Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Lilly, *Documentary History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America Containing Numerous Hitherto Unpublished Documents Concerning the Church in Connecticut*, p.182.

Town and the Church of England-part of Reading are, I believe, the only parts of New England that have refused to comply with the doings of the Congress, and for that reason have been the butt of general hatred.”⁵⁷

The political leadership behind the Loyalist resolves in Redding and Newtown were third generation Anglicans whose grandfathers had been the founding members of Beach’s congregation. The Lyon family played an important role in the eastern half of Redding. Richard Lyon had arrived from Ireland at the beginning of the eighteenth-century and become one of the founding members of the Anglican community.⁵⁸ Over the next two generations, the Lyon family remained with the Church and became important figures in the eastern part of town. One sign of this was their constant presence as officers in the local militia. In the decade and half before the Revolution, three Lyons were elected as officers of the East Redding militia company. In 1774, the Lyon family used their position to organize opposition to the Association. John Lyon, the family patriarch in 1774, collected the signatures for the resolves and then personally carried the list to New York to be printed.⁵⁹ In addition, eleven members of the extended family signed the resolves, including the then current lieutenant in the local militia, Peter Lyon.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.209. The rabid New York tory Reverend Charles Inglis, supported this assessment in a letter to the SPG in October 31 1776. Inglis attacked the decision of the Connecticut Convention for halting prayers to the King and praised Beach for his continued efforts. “Beach of Connecticut is to be excepted, if my information is right, who was officiated as usual after independence was declared...” Cameron, *Anglican Experience in Revolutionary Connecticut and Areas Adjacent*, p.70.

⁵⁸ Reverend Dr. Burhams, *Churchman’s Magazine*, (1823).

⁵⁹ *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Vol.11, "Memorial of John Lyon".

⁶⁰ Grumman, *The Revolutionary Soldiers of Redding, Connecticut, and the Record of Their Services: With Mention of Others Who Rendered Service or Suffered Loss at the Hands of the Enemy During the Struggle for Independence, 1775-1783: Together with Some Account of the Loyalists of the Town and Vicinity, Their Organization, Their Efforts, and Sacrifices in Behalf of the Cause of Their King, and Their Ultimate Fate*, pp.31-33.

In Newtown, the Glover family played a similar role. Seven members signed that towns resolves. The key figure in this family was Henry Glover the popular son of one of the first Anglicans, John Glover. From 1747, Henry Glover held the highest political offices in Newtown, alternatively representing the town at the General Assembly or as a selectman in the town meeting.⁶¹ In 1774, he moderated the discussion of the Continental Association. One account suggested that Glover controlled the vote to reject the Association: “Capt. Glover their Moderator, proceeded to business, the result of which was, *That they would not adopt the proceedings of the Continental Congress.*”⁶² A second version reported that Glover had the “boldness to set up at Vendue and sell a pint of *flip* for one or more copies of the Address and Association...and burn or suppress the rest.” The same source also accused the Newtown selectmen of making use of “every artifice to prevent a union in support of their [Newtown’s] liberty.”⁶³

Having vigorously opposed the Continental Association, Fairfield County’s Loyalists made no further attempts to challenge the majority rule that winter. The direction of the Revolution remained a matter of much debate in Fairfield County. The election of committees of inspection had started colonists talking about their politics, but had not irreconcilably divided them. At the time the future remained very uncertain. In 1774-1775 many still talked openly of reconciliation with Britain. Most of Fairfield County had chosen to pressure Britain into resolving American grievances. In contrast, residents in Danbury, New Milford, Newtown, Redding and Ridgefield had articulated a reactionary politics in favor of keeping imperial status

⁶¹ Mappen, "Anatomy of a Schism: Anglican Dissent in the New England Community of Newtown, Connecticut, 1708-1765", p.20.

⁶² *New York Gazetteer*, March 16 1775.

⁶³ *Connecticut Journal*, March 8 1775.

quo. These were not the makings of a civil war between Patriots and Loyalists, but two positions in the same conversation over the political structure of the British Empire.

Having made their point, opponents of the Association conformed under mounting pressure from their neighbors. With little resistance supporters of the Continental Association solidified their control of the county. On 23 February the planned county convention met at Fairfield town to coordinate countywide support for the Association. The delegates from seven towns voted to establish a county level committee of inspection and observation. Signaling their unity with their neighboring counties, the meeting adopted “sentiments and proposals with respect to the mode of trying offenders” agreed by Hartford and New Haven Counties in January. Anybody “[a]ccused of any wishful breach of said Association” would-be tried by their local committee and if found guilty would have their names published in the local paper. Once again, Fairfield County appeared to be falling into line with the rest of Connecticut.⁶⁴

Two of the five towns to protest the Association sent delegates to the county convention. With little sign of the divisions from the beginning of the month, Redding attended. The Danbury town meeting changed its mind for a second time as the convention drew closer and again voted to send delegates. Only Ridgefield and Newtown failed to send representatives. “We are deeply affected to hear,” the Convention resolved, “to hear of the defection of two considerable towns in this county, viz. Ridgefield and Newtown.”⁶⁵ The pressure proved decisive.

⁶⁴ *New York Journal*, February 23 1775.

⁶⁵ *New York Gazetteer*, February 2 1775, Force and comp, *American Archives: Consisting of a Collection of Authentick Records, State Papers, Debates, and Letters and Other Notices of Publick Affairs, the Whole Forming a Documentary History of the Origin and Progress of the North American Colonies; of the Causes and Accomplishment of the American Revolution; and of the Constitution of Government for the United States, to the Final Ratification Thereof. In Six Ser., Ser. 4, Vol.1, pp.1202-1203.*

Soon after the convention dissolved, however, the residents of Newtown began to reconsider their earlier opposition to the Association. In March Newtown modified its earlier strident tone. In a petition to the General Assembly, the townsmen again explained their reasons for rejecting the Association and pleaded for moderation. In these resolves, Newtown continued to challenge the authority of the Continental Congress. The townsmen added a restrained plea to the Connecticut General Assembly to “petition the King and Parliament.” The town finally appeared ready to follow Patriot authorities instead of standing alone. Predictably, the petition had no effect on the General Assembly increasingly committed to following the lead of the Continental Association.⁶⁶ With no hope of challenging the Assembly, a growing number of townsmen abandoned their opposition to the Continental Association. By April 12, seventy men from Newtown signed a statement disowning their earlier behavior.⁶⁷ The rest of the town meeting decided to remain silent and offered no further signs of resistance.

Watching events in Fairfield County, colonists in New Milford also decided to recant their former opposition to the Continental Association. The responsibility of restoring unity in New Milford fell to the local committee of inspection. The majority of the 120 signers changed their politics, casting blame on a group of “ringleaders” who had misrepresented their opinions.⁶⁸ In May, the committee tried six men, identified as leaders, and found them guilty in absentia.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Ezra Levan Johnson Jane Eliza Johnson, *Newtown's History and Historian*, Ezra Levan Johnson (Newtown: Conn., 1917), pp.130-131.

⁶⁷ Force and comp, *American Archives: Consisting of a Collection of Authentick Records, State Papers, Debates, and Letters and Other Notices of Publick Affairs, the Whole Forming a Documentary History of the Origin and Progress of the North American Colonies; of the Causes and Accomplishment of the American Revolution; and of the Constitution of Government for the United States, to the Final Ratification Thereof. In Six Ser., Ser. 4, Vol.1*, pp.1236-1238.

⁶⁸ *Connecticut Courant*, May 8 1775.

⁶⁹ Force and comp, *American Archives: Consisting of a Collection of Authentick Records, State Papers, Debates, and Letters and Other Notices of Publick Affairs, the Whole Forming a Documentary History of the Origin and Progress of the North American Colonies; of the Causes and Accomplishment of the American Revolution; and of*

The trial precipitated the final collapse of opposition. A month later, on 19 June, three of the convicted men publicly confessed in a local newspaper, the *Connecticut Courant*. The three men declared that they would “hereby heartily and fully adopt the doings of the continental congress...and do promise with out lives and fortunes, to defend our country, against late oppressive and unconstitutional acts of the British Parliament.”⁷⁰

Only Ridgefield remained divided as part of the town proved unwilling to compromise its earlier opposition to the Continental Association. The pressure from the county convention did, however, splinter the town. On 22 March fifty five inhabitants accepted the Convention’s invitation to repent and pledged their support for the Association “as we think it of importance to the cause of America’s freedom.”⁷¹ The majority of the town, however, refused to modify their earlier opposition to the Continental Association. The fifty men only managed to seize control of the town meeting in early December after a militia from the neighboring town of Stratford disarmed all suspected Loyalists. On 7 December Ridgefield finally established a committee of inspection and approved the Continental Congress and its measures “for Securing and Defending the Rights and Liberties of the Untied American Colonies.”⁷²

the Constitution of Government for the United States, to the Final Ratification Thereof. In Six Ser., Ser. 4, Vol.2, p.730, *Connecticut Courant*, June 12 1775. On May 29 1775 the committee of inspection for New Milford was acting against a group of citizen: Zechariah Ferris, Joseph Ferris jr. , James Osborn, Daniel Taylor, Nathaniel Taylor and Hezekiah Stevens jr. ordered to appear before the committee.

⁷⁰ *Connecticut Courant*, July 3 1775. The apology was dated New Milford June 19 1775. The three men who confessed were James Osburn, Hezekiah Stevens Jrs., Daniel Taylor. The remaining men disappear from the historical record.

⁷¹ Force and comp, *American Archives: Consisting of a Collection of Authentick Records, State Papers, Debates, and Letters and Other Notices of Publick Affairs, the Whole Forming a Documentary History of the Origin and Progress of the North American Colonies; of the Causes and Accomplishment of the American Revolution; and of the Constitution of Government for the United States, to the Final Ratification Thereof. In Six Ser.*, Ser. 4, Vol.1, pp.1210, 1238-1239.

⁷² CSL, “Non-military service in the Revolutionary War From Extracts of Connecticut Town Council Minutes, 1774-1784,” compiled by Mrs. Chester E. Hathaway, Chairman Genealogical Records Committee, Connecticut Daughters of the American Revolution (1962-1965), Ridgefield Revolutionary Records, Vols. 3-4, transcripts.

The collapse of Loyalism in Fairfield County revealed the fluid, contingent and unpredictable political culture of Western Connecticut. Having rejected the Continental Association, colonists did not know what to do next. This early Loyalism in Danbury, New Milford, Newtown, Redding and Ridgefield, did not extend beyond criticism of the Continental Association. The men of these five towns were not committed opponents of a future revolution. They were not taking sides in a colonial war for independence. They opposed the Continental Association because they believed challenging imperial authority would have dire consequences for Connecticut.⁷³ For their part, the Fairfield County authorities recognized the limits of this initial opposition. Once towns accepted the Continental Association, Patriots made no effort to police colonists' politics at the town or county level. In Danbury, Newtown, Redding and Ridgefield, town life returned to normal as opponents and supporters of the Association continued to live and work together.⁷⁴

⁷³ Opposition to the Association did linger on in isolated cases. During the spring and summer, vigilant Patriots dragged number men before committees of inspection for violating the terms of the Association. Colonists continued to break the Association for personal gain. Most men were caught trying to trade with British merchants. As such they were not in any meaningful sense Loyalists. For examples, see: *Connecticut Journal*, February 22 1775, March 8 1775, April 17 1775, April 24 1775, June 21 1775, September 20 1775, *Connecticut Courant*, April 3 1775.

⁷⁴ Throughout the spring and summer there were reports isolated cases of violence directed towards Loyalists. The tough treatment of Loyalists may have helped maintain Patriot authority in Fairfield County, but did not amount to an organized campaign of terror. Instead, town personal politics led Patriots to attack or intimidate individual Loyalists. For examples of violence in Redding, see: *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Vol.11, "Memorial of John Lyon; Audit Office 12, Vol.11, "John Lyon"; Audit Office, Vol.12, "Memorial of Ephraim Deforest", Audit Office 12, Vol.12, "Memorial John Patchen". And, Grumman, *The Revolutionary Soldiers of Redding, Connecticut, and the Record of Their Services: With Mention of Others Who Rendered Service or Suffered Loss at the Hands of the Enemy During the Struggle for Independence, 1775-1783: Together with Some Account of the Loyalists of the Town and Vicinity, Their Organization, Their Efforts, and Sacrifices in Behalf of the Cause of Their King, and Their Ultimate Fate*, p.199. For similar incidents of violence involving Ridgefield men, see Constance McLaughlin Green, *History of Naugatuck, Connecticut* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1948), pp.46-48. And, Connecticut Archives, Revolutionary War Archives, 1st Ser. ,Vol.I. pp. 420-27, 413-419, Vol.14, p. 145, Vol.26, p. 276, Vol.23, pp. 343-345, Vol.29, pp. 344, 345, *New Haven Post Boy*, February 22 1775; *Connecticut Courant*, March 2 1775. (Hereafter CARW).

Stage Two – The Lexington Alarm

As the protests of the Continental Association began to fade, a second, outside event forced colonists to confront their political sympathies. Three months after the Fairfield county convention, British Regulars marched out of Boston to destroy gunpowder at Lexington. News of the raid reached Massachusetts militiamen who confronted the Redcoats on the morning of 19 April. In nervous hands a musket accidentally discharged and started the Revolutionary War. A second battle occurred at nearby Concord. News of the fighting spread throughout America. Within a few days, accounts of the fighting had crossed Connecticut and reached Fairfield Town. Reeling from the information, colonists began discussing the proper response. During these dramatic days there was great pressure for colonists to show immediate support for Massachusetts. Yet, at the same time, others remained reluctant to fight the British Army. This new division lay in how colonists interpreted the Battle of Lexington. The right to make paper protests had a long tradition as a legitimate form of registering grievances. In contrast, taking up arms marked the line between acceptable protest and open rebellion. How colonists resolved this dilemma in the days after Lexington reshaped the political boundaries of Fairfield County.

Across Eastern Connecticut, towns responded to the Battle of Lexington by sending their own militias to fight the Redcoats. The popular response to news of the Battle of Lexington was swift and decisive. Without orders, towns mustered the militia and made hasty plans to march to Massachusetts. On 21 April, the Connecticut Committee of Correspondence assured its

Massachusetts counterpart, “The ardour of our people is such, that they can’t be kept back.”⁷⁵

Two days later a boy caught up in the excitement of the moment wrote “[w]e are all in motion here...[m]y brother has gone with others of the first property. Our neighboring towns are all arming and moving...we shall by night have several thousand from this Colony on the March.”⁷⁶

His prediction proved accurate. With a week, forty six of the colony’s seventy two towns sent 3,716 to Boston and 139 men to New York in the mistaken belief that the British were about to attack their other neighbor.⁷⁷ With only two exceptions, Groton and Somers, every town east of the Connecticut River participated in the spontaneous mobilization.⁷⁸

In Western Connecticut, colonists were more reluctant to send troops to Massachusetts. From New Haven, Fairfield and Litchfield counties only seven towns responded while twenty seven did nothing.⁷⁹ In Litchfield and New Haven Counties, the decision to do nothing reflected geography and the pressures of the agricultural calendar, not politics.⁸⁰ Militias from west of the Connecticut River could not respond fast enough to the Lexington Alarm. The long march to Boston made it unlikely troops would reach Boston in time to be of assistance. In the most remote county of Litchfield, only Norfolk responded. Closer to the action, three towns from New Haven sent troops. Moreover, the communities in Litchfield were amongst the newest and

⁷⁵ Quoted in, Buel, *Dear Liberty: Connecticut's Mobilization for the Revolutionary War*, p.35.

⁷⁶ Henry Phelps Johnston, *The Record of Connecticut Men in the Military and Naval Service During the War of the Revolution, 1775-1783* (Baltimore, Md.: Clearfield Company, 1997), p.56.

⁷⁷ J. Hammond Trumbull and Charles J. Hoadly, ed., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut [1636-1776]* (Hartford: Press of the Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co. [etc.], 1850), Vol.14, p.439.

⁷⁸ Buel, *Dear Liberty: Connecticut's Mobilization for the Revolutionary War*, p.36.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.36.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.36.

poorest in Connecticut and could scarcely afford to send men away from the fields. Lexington and Concord occurred during a period of spring work when the first crops were planted.⁸¹

In Fairfield County the Battles of Lexington and Concord created a new round of debates about colonial opposition to British authority that divided the region along new lines. Only three towns Stamford, Stratford and Fairfield Town sent troops to Massachusetts and New York. In Stamford and Fairfield Town, however, the use of the militia produced significant opposition that divided the communities. Anxious colonists had enough influence to prevent the militia mustering in seven other towns, Danbury, Greenwich, New Fairfield, Newtown, Norwalk, Redding and Ridgefield. To this core group can be added Waterbury on the border of Fairfield County. Although part of New Haven County, in the weeks after Lexington, the internal politics of Waterbury are better understood as an extension of the debate taking place within Fairfield County. (New Milford, which had opposed the Continental Association, did not send troops, but also left no evidence of its internal politics, making an analysis impossible.)⁸²

Just looking at a map showed, the Lexington alarm had produced a significant reconfiguration of politics in Fairfield County. The sources of earlier protests, in Danbury, Newtown, Redding and Ridgefield had spread to six towns, including Stamford and Fairfield. This growing opposition to the Revolution revealed the fast moving political culture that shaped sympathies in Fairfield County. The impromptu mobilization of Connecticut signaled an unmistakable escalation in the imperial crisis. Whereas a minority of colonists had drawn the line at ratifying the Continental Association, many more now appeared unwilling to countenance open rebellion. Enough evidence survives to trace the complicated local politics in three

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.36.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.36, Zeichner, *Connecticut's Years of Controversy, 1750-1776*, p.188.

communities: Redding which opposed the Association and refused to send troops; Waterbury which supported the Association and refused to send troops; and Stamford which supported the Association, sent troops and still divided.

The five towns that had rejected the Continental Association opposed the mobilisation of the Connecticut militia after the Battle of Lexington. This political continuity appears in Redding where the men who opposed the Association and signed the Redding Resolves filled the ranks of the same militia company that stayed at home. Redding had two companies, the east and west companies. The majority of the signers lived in the eastern part of town called Redding Ridge. The East Company Militia, therefore, existed as an extension of the same community politics that had organized opposition to the Association. For example, current and former officers of the militia were heavily represented in the signatories of the Association. Daniel Lyon became ensign in May 1754 and was promoted to lieutenant in 1765.⁸³ Captain Joshua Hall took charge of the company in 1754.⁸⁴ He held the position until May 1762 when James Morgan replaced him, serving until 1770.⁸⁵ Peter Lyon, who became an ensign in 1770, and lieutenant in 1772, and Samuel Hawley, who became an ensign 1773, were the two serving officers who also opposed the Association.⁸⁶ Between these men they had continuously commanded the East Company since the mid-1750's and now provided Revolutionary leadership. Their influence is seen on the Redding Resolves where officers' signatures appear above the rest of the town. As the town considered how to respond to events in Massachusetts, they were perfectly placed to prevent the East Company marching.

⁸³ Donald Lines comp Jacobus, *History and Genealogy of the Families of Old Fairfield* ([New Haven: Conn., The Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Co.], 1930), Vol.2, p.595.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, pp. 426-7.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, pp.685-6, 463.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol.2, pp. 438-9.

For the residents of Waterbury firing on British troops marked the end of acceptable protests of British rule in America. The Waterbury town meeting had ratified the Continental Association without dissent. After the Battle of Lexington, however, this political consensus disappeared under the pressure to raise troops to fight the Redcoats. The only militia company in Waterbury, located in the Northrup Parish, refused to muster despite the efforts of a determined faction in the town. In late December, Waterbury had voted to adopt the Association with only a few dissenting voices.⁸⁷ The reasons for the sudden change became known as worried residents petitioned the General Assembly nine days after Lexington. The townsmen explained “that the majority of the militia had Discovered themselves to be inimical to the Constitution of this Colony, and openly and Publicly declare themselves against the Resolves of the Continental Congress and openly plead[ed] in Vindication of the late [actions] of his Majesties Troops Near Boston in Commencing open and publick Hostilities.” To balance the power of the militia, members of the Northrup Parish wanted to create a second militia company. These plans predated Lexington as the petition made a point of emphasizing their previous training. However, the timing of the request points to a new escalation in tensions.⁸⁸

The source of Waterbury’s division lay with the militia officers who exercised their authority to prevent men in their command going to Massachusetts. According to the evidence in the petition, on the Saturday after Lexington the Captain Amos Bronson received “special orders from Colonel Forthwestte to muster his company.” However, Bronson refused to raise his men until Wednesday and then did not march. At the same time, the petition claimed Bronson

⁸⁷ *Connecticut Courant*, 22 December 1774.

⁸⁸ Memorial to the Honorable General Assembly of the Colony of Connecticut, Connecticut Archives, Revolutionary War (hereafter CTRW), Ser., Vol.1, p. 413, Trumbull and Hoadly ed., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut [1636-1776]*, Vol.14, pp.438-439.

threatened a Captain Porter who was attempting to muster a company of men in secret on the outskirts of town. This may have been the proposed company outlined in the petition. In attempting to dominate the Waterbury's response to the Lexington, Bronson had the support of his junior officers, Ensign James Scovill and Lieutenant Hezekiah Brown. All three men had powerful voices in the community and used their position to shape public opinion around them.⁸⁹

For Bronson and his officers, the popular response to Lexington represented a turning point in their thinking about the Revolution. The disobedience of the Waterbury militia convinced the General Assembly to appoint a two man team to discover how far the disaffection went. The commission collected information against the officers. The most damning involved Ensign Scovill. He had supported the Intolerable Act, which closed Boston Port after the tea party, voted against the Continental Association at the town meeting, and called the Continental Congress a "pack of fools." Yet, until April 1775 he had remained otherwise inactive. The orders to muster proved too much. Scovill reportedly claimed "he should not help Boston neither would he take up Arms in favor of the Colony, nor against the Kings Troops and that he would shoot any man if he saw him going to help the people in Boston." Finally in an argument for parliamentary supremacy, Scovill thought "that the Parliament have done right in doing as they have with America." For Scovill, therefore, Lexington not the Continental Association functioned as the key moment when he confronted his allegiances and took a decisive step in support of Britain. The commission showed Hezekiah Brown took a more moderate position, but

⁸⁹ CTRW, Ser. 1, Vol.1, p. 413.

still refused to aid Boston. Brown declared that he would only march to the town boundary and no further.⁹⁰

In Stamford, a third debate occurred over the proper response to the Battle of Lexington. Just like Waterbury, Stamford had ratified the Continental Association. However, with a larger population than Waterbury, Stamford had two militia companies. The result was that the first company, under Captain Joseph Hoyt, marched while the second company, under Captain Fyler Dibble, took no action. When news of Lexington reached town the different responses of the militia revealed the division that had developed in the community. Led by Captain Hoyt, the majority of the town responded with enthusiasm to the alarm. Hoyt immediately mustered the men of the first company and marched to Boston. He returned a few weeks later and raised a second company of 75 men who reported for duty in July and served until the end of the year.⁹¹ At the same time, however, the men under Captain Dibble remained quiet at home. In the weeks following, Fyler began organizing a petition to circulate through Stamford and the neighboring town of Norwalk “to stand by his Majesty’s Law and Government”.⁹² No copy of the resolves

⁹⁰ CTRW, Ser. 1, Vol.1, pp. 413-417. Further information about the incident came out in a trial of Hezekiah Brown in October see CTRW, Ser. 1, Vol.1, pp.420-427. See, also Memorial from the Inhabitants of Waterbury to the General Assembly about the militia under Hezekiah Brown. 2nd Thursday October 1775. Hinman, *A Historical Collection from Official Records, Files, &C., of the Part Sustained by Connecticut, During the War of the Revolution: With an Appendix, Containing Important Letters, Depositions, &C., Written During the War*, pp.547-548.

⁹¹ E. B. Huntington, *History of Stamford, Connecticut: From Its Settlement in 1641, to the Present Time, Including Darien, Which Was One of Its Parishes until 1820* (Stamford: The author, 1868), pp.205, 208-209.

⁹² *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Volume12, "Memorial of Seth Seely".

survives, but anecdotal evidence suggests it had at least eighteen signatures from Stamford and Norwalk.⁹³

Again, the source of the new opposition politics came from dynamic local leadership. Captain Fyler Dibble provided a logical leader for resistance in the town. Fyler's father, Anglican minister Reverend Ebenezer Dibble, harbored pro-British sympathies and seems to have passed them on to his son. By the time fighting started in Massachusetts, Fyler Dibble had already made one attempt to derail Connecticut's mobilization efforts. At the end of January, the General Assembly ordered several new barrels of gunpowder. On their way to Hartford, the barrels spent the night at Stamford where Fyler, with the help of Isaac Quintard, attempted to hide them. The authority for their actions may have come from the Earl of Dartmouth who communicated to the colonies an order of the King in Council from Oct. 19 1774, prohibiting the exportation from Britain of gunpowder or any kind of arms or ammunition.⁹⁴ In the investigation that followed, the General Assembly did not find any evidence of a link with the British troops in Boston, but did take action. At first Committee of inspection and observation in Stamford saw

⁹³ A confession by 3 Norwalk men in September 1775 claimed 6 men "signed up to a certain paper said to be drawn up by Captain Fyler Dibble." This would seem to be the same association Seth Seely signed and attracted the suspicion of the Stamford Committee of Inspection in May 1776. Seely told British officials after the Revolution that he circulated the paper around Fairfield County and managed to get "about 18 to subscribe." One of Seely's neighbours Nathaniel Hubbard explained to the same officials, that "in 1775 [he] associated with a Number of his Loyal Neighbours, signed an Agreement in writing to Support His Majesty and his Government against all Innovations & Mobs and privately engaged to join the Kings troops whenever they should arrive at New York." Huntington, *History of Stamford, Connecticut: From Its Settlement in 1641, to the Present Time, Including Darien, Which Was One of Its Parishes until 1820*, pp.253-254. *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Vol.17 "Memorial of Seth Seely" and Audit Office 13, Vol.17 "Memorial of Seth Seely". See also Audit Office 12, Vol.12, "Memorial of David Pickett" and Audit Office 12, Vol.12, "Memorial of Nathaniel Hubbard".

⁹⁴ Force and comp, *American Archives: Consisting of a Collection of Authentick Records, State Papers, Debates, and Letters and Other Notices of Publick Affairs, the Whole Forming a Documentary History of the Origin and Progress of the North American Colonies; of the Causes and Accomplishment of the American Revolution; and of the Constitution of Government for the United States, to the Final Ratification Thereof. In Six Ser., Ser. 4, Vol.1*, p.1881.

Quintard as the ring leader until after Lexington when Fyler fell increasingly under suspicion.⁹⁵

The gunpowder plot in Stamford marked Dibble as one of the most radical opponents of the Revolution in New England.

In the months after the Lexington Alarm, it became clear that most colonists did not equate the refusal to muster with long term support for Britain. Fyler Dibble failed to mobilize Loyalist sympathies after Lexington. In other communities, the decision not to send men to Massachusetts marked the limit of their resistance to the Revolution. Dibble wanted to turn colonists doubts about fighting Britain into a larger struggle against Patriot control in Fairfield County. The outbreak of fighting between Americans and Redcoats constituted a serious escalation in the imperial crisis, but for a significant number in Western Connecticut it did not mark the end of the debate. Echoing earlier thinking about the Continental Association, the decision to stay at home represented a conservative protest not an agenda for future action. The limit of this second wave of opposition became clear as April turned in May and there were no further signs of Loyalism.

Fairfield Towns did not impede the rapid mobilization of men and resources during the spring and summer. After Lexington, speculation was rife that a full-scale war lay only days away. The Battle of Bunker Hill in May only seemed to confirm the growing fear. The General Assembly rushed to prepare the colony for the expected war with Britain. The Assembly made plans for an army of 6,000 almost a quarter of the 26,260 militiamen reported by the colony in

⁹⁵ For the Fyler-Quintard incident see: Trumbull and Hoadly ed., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut [1636-1776]*, p.392. Force and comp, *American Archives: Consisting of a Collection of Authentick Records, State Papers, Debates, and Letters and Other Notices of Publick Affairs, the Whole Forming a Documentary History of the Origin and Progress of the North American Colonies; of the Causes and Accomplishment of the American Revolution; and of the Constitution of Government for the United States, to the Final Ratification Thereof. In Six Ser., Ser. 4, Vol.1, p. 1236, 1881; Vol.1232, p.1812. And, Connecticut Journal, March 1 1775, p. 4.*

1774.⁹⁶ These troops would provide long term replacements for the Connecticut men who rushed to Massachusetts and New York in April. The proposed army would serve for seven month at public expense. In assigning troop quotas, the Assembly paid no attention to the recent tensions in Fairfield County and expected the towns to provide their share of men. If the events of April had laid the foundations for a counter-revolutionary movement in Connecticut it would have become clear as towns received formal orders to muster. Instead, colonists who had refused to pick up arms after the Battle of Lexington looked on passively as their neighbors began raising troops.⁹⁷

The ease of Western Connecticut's mobilization dissuaded the authorities in Connecticut from taking punitive actions against Loyalists. In the first days after Lexington, bellicose colonists wanted to round up, disarm and imprison suspected Loyalists. Nathaniel Shaw Jr., for example, was convinced that the shedding of American blood made it "high time that all the Tory Party should be made to be Silent."⁹⁸ As the weeks wore on, however, tempers cooled. Patriot authorities chose to take no action against towns that failed to muster. In a sign of toleration, suspected Loyalists could even keep their firearms. Despite the start of the fighting, the authorities in Fairfield County did not yet regard the opponents of the Continental Association or the mobilization after Lexington as an internal enemy. In this atmosphere, a second period of political quiet descended on Western Connecticut.

⁹⁶ Buel, *Dear Liberty: Connecticut's Mobilization for the Revolutionary War*, pp.36-37, Zeichner, *Connecticut's Years of Controversy, 1750-1776*, pp.194-195.

⁹⁷ The lone incident of organized opposition came from Waterbury where Captain Hezekiah Brown kept opposition politics alive in the west militia company. After Lexington the Assembly had cashiered two of the three of the officers in the company, Captain Amos Bronson and Ensign Scovill and promoted the third, then Lieutenant Hezekiah Brown. During the investigation Brown had expressed a desire to follow orders even if he had doubts about fighting the British.. See: The records of the trial of Hezekiah Brown in CTRW, Ser. I, Vol.1, pp.420-427.

⁹⁸ Zeichner, *Connecticut's Years of Controversy, 1750-1776*, p.193.

Stage Three – British Invasion of New York?

As the mobilization of the Connecticut neared completion in late 1775, the larger events of the Revolution again disrupted local politics in Western Connecticut. This marked the final phase of Fairfield County's politicization. The growing local tensions after the Continental Association and the Lexington Alarm crystallized over the winter of 1775-1776 into an unforgiving partisan rhetoric that threatened to plunge Western Connecticut into civil war. A growing certainty that tensions with Britain would lead to independence and a full-scale war destroyed the remaining room for debate. This realization invested political choices with a new significance. For the first time colonists began labeling their neighbors as allies or enemies. Individuals continued to stop short of making a firm stand for king or colony, but their neighbors judged them against a new factional political culture. In colonists' minds, negotiable sympathies had turned into more fixed allegiances. The remaining part of this chapter focuses on the harsh political climate that produced a third wave of Loyalism in Fairfield County in 1776.

The uncompromising polarization of Fairfield County began amidst speculation that Britain would soon invade New York and then attack Connecticut. Since Massachusetts's militiamen had fired at British Soldiers in April 1775, Americans everywhere had waited for Britain's response. Most colonists realized the outcome of the Revolution would-be decided on the battlefield. In late summer, the Continental Congress had tried to seize the initiative by invading British controlled Canada. The failure of the expedition discouraged any more campaigning and left colonists waiting for Britain's counter attack. By the autumn rumors

abounded of a British armada sailing for America. Many observers suspected that New York would-be the first target of an attack: occupying New York would give the British a base from which to control the northern colonies. This talk was given credence by the presence of British warships in New York harbor, including the impressive four-six gun HMS *Asia*.⁹⁹ Reading the situation, the first residents began to flee New York City as early as August 1775. Just a few miles away in Fairfield County, colonists believed that after the British conquered New York they would invade Connecticut and turn the region into a war zone. This growing uncertainty created a new political certainty amongst colonists who wanted to identify friends and enemies before the shooting started.

Across the county, the lack of facts fuelled rumors of Loyalist plots to rise up and aid the British invasion. As fears grew, Patriot toleration for suspected British sympathizers disappeared. Earlier in the year, confident Patriots had viewed similar conspiracies as relatively harmless. With war looming, any opposition took on a more sinister character and scared colonists demanded immediate action. The absence of a large part of the local militia only encouraged talk of conspiracies. Under this pressure, a new type of violent politics emerged. Patriots finally disarmed and imprisoned anyone suspected of supporting a British invasion. Between 27 November and 7 December, Colonel Ichabod Lewis raised two hundred militiamen and searched the county for signs of disaffection.¹⁰⁰ The small army of militiamen descended upon

⁹⁹ Philip Ranlet, *The New York Loyalists*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2002), pp.70-71.

¹⁰⁰ David H. Viller, "King Mob" and Rule of Law: Revolutionary Justice and the Suppression of Loyalism in Connecticut, 1774-1778," in Robert M. Calhoon, Timothy M. Barnes, and George A. Rawlyk, *Loyalists and Community in North America, Contributions in American History* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994). Ichabod Lewis's raid is surprisingly well documented from both a Loyalist and a Patriot perspective. For the Patriot view see: Force and comp, *American Archives: Consisting of a Collection of Authentick Records, State Papers, Debates, and Letters and Other Notices of Publick Affairs, the Whole Forming a Documentary History of the Origin and Progress of the North American Colonies; of the Causes and Accomplishment of the American Revolution; and*

communities, searching homes, confiscating weapons and arresting the men. They started in Newtown where the job took two days. Derby's Tory Rector, Reverend Mansfield, recorded that as soon as the "Whig army" arrived it placed Reverend John Beach, the Selectmen, including Henry Glover Esq., and several prominent citizens under guard." Ichabod Lewis's men demanded they sign the Continental Association, something that the County Convention had only encouraged in February. At first, the Newtown men resisted, but according to Mansfield, they eventually pledged that they would not take up arms against the United Colonies or persuade others to do so. This compromise satisfied Lewis who moved on. After completing their mission in Newtown, the militia repeated the exercise in Redding, Ridgefield and Danbury, as well as Woodbury in neighboring New Haven County.¹⁰¹ In Redding, Captain Isaac Sears led men to join Lewis's hunt, to remove what the *Connecticut Courant* called a town "famous for harboring a swarm of those detestable animals called Tories, every one of whom he disarmed."¹⁰² In Danbury, the militia held an impromptu court martial to find suspected Tories. They repeated the practice in Ridgefield and Woodbury. The week and a half it took Ichabod Lewis's mob to travel around the county constituted the largest and most direct challenge to local Loyalism in Fairfield County before the Declaration of Independence.¹⁰³

Days after the disarming of Fairfield County, the General Assembly legitimized the actions of Ichabod Lewis's men by passing the first anti-Loyalist legislation. The Continental

of the Constitution of Government for the United States, to the Final Ratification Thereof. In Six Ser., Ser. 4, Vol.3, pp.851-852, Holt's *New York Journal* October 5 1775. For the Loyalists version see the report of the Reverend Mr. Mansfield of Derby to the SPG, dated New York, December 29th 1775, Lilly, *Documentary History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America Containing Numerous Hitherto Unpublished Documents Concerning the Church in Connecticut*, pp.193-203.

¹⁰¹ Lilly, *Documentary History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America Containing Numerous Hitherto Unpublished Documents Concerning the Church in Connecticut*, pp.193-203.

¹⁰² *Connecticut Courant*, Hartford 27 November 1775.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp.193-203.

Congress had twice urged Patriots assemblies earlier that year to enact legislation to prevent Loyalist uprisings. In June 1775, Congress had defined treason for the first time as levying war against the “United Colonies”, adhering to George III or “giving aid or comfort” to the enemy. General George Washington had also studied the military situation and warned Connecticut’s governor, Jonathan Trumbull, of the dangers of leaving those “preying upon the vitals of their country...at large.”¹⁰⁴ Despite these warnings, the Connecticut General Assembly only acted in December as the British invasion of New York appeared imminent. The legislation reflected the anxiety of the moment. The provisions of the act had a conscious military overtone. It discouraged contact with royal military and naval forces under pain of imprisonment and made provisions for the internal defense of the State. With this new legislation, the General Assembly signaled the end to toleration.¹⁰⁵

Patriots found, however, they could not impose political uniformity 1776. Their efforts to wipe out Loyalism through force and legislation failed. The widespread speculation about a British invasion undermined the power of Ichabod Lewis and the General Assembly. The idea of Redcoats occupying *their* town led colonists to once again discuss the merits of Loyalism. A range of considerations from the ideological to the pragmatic occupied colonists’ thinking. Starting in January 1776 and continuing throughout the spring and summer colonists debated the best course of action. In July, the British Army finally arrived and further increased the pressure on colonists to choose sides. In the end, several hundred colonists decided to risk the dangers of opposing Patriot authority and support Britain by taking up arms outside Connecticut.

¹⁰⁴ W.H. Siebert, “George Washington and the Loyalists,” *American Antiquarian Proceedings* 43 (1933), pp. 37-38.

¹⁰⁵ David H. Viller, “‘King Mob’ and Rule of Law: Revolutionary Justice and the Suppression of Loyalism in Connecticut, 1774-1778” in Calhoon, Barnes, and Rawlyk, *Loyalists and Community in North America*.

Throughout 1776 it became an open secret that hundreds of men were making their way to Long Island to become refugees or to join the newly created Loyalist regiments. The events of late November meant colonists could not openly champion Loyalism in Fairfield County. A number of colonists played a waiting game and remained hidden until the Redcoats arrived. Several hundred men took more decisive action. Fairfield men joined at least five regiments. The most important of these was The Prince of Wales American Volunteers. By January 1777, the Volunteers had a paper strength of 470 officers and men. Nearly all the men came from Fairfield County.¹⁰⁶ Apart from the home grown Volunteers, Fairfield men enlisted alongside New Yorkers in the King's American Regiment, Queens Rangers, Butler's Rangers and one of the two battalions of Oliver Delancy's corps.¹⁰⁷ A small number of Fairfield men also joined one other regiment, the Royal American Regiment.¹⁰⁸ Each corps had a paper strength of between 300 and 450 men. In total, between 1,500-2,000 left Fairfield County and over half of these took up arms.¹⁰⁹

The decision to fight against the Revolution or become political exiles represented a major departure from past politics. The new active Loyalism split men who opposed Continental Association and refused to muster after the Battle of Lexington. By 1776, only two towns in Fairfield County had consistently supported the Revolution with few signs of opposition. The first was the county seat of Fairfield Town, and the second was Stratford, the home of Colonel Ichabod Lewis and most of 200 militiamen who took part in the disarming of 1775. In the seven

¹⁰⁶ Robert Abraham East, *Connecticut's Loyalists, Connecticut Bicentennial Ser. No. 6* (Chester, Conn.: Pequot Press, 1974), p.23.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.23

¹⁰⁸ Confession of John McKee of Norwalk 16th May 1776, in CSL, RG3 Judicial Dept. Fairfield County, Superior Court Papers by Subject, 1711-1799, Confiscated Estates and Loyalists, Box 3. (Hereafter, Fairfield County, Superior Court Papers.)

¹⁰⁹ East, *Connecticut's Loyalists*, p.23.

other towns that made up the county, a significant portion of the community had opposed Patriot authority by 1775. Four towns, Danbury, Newtown, Redding and Ridgefield, voted down the Association and seven towns, Danbury, Greenwich, New Fairfield, Newtown, Norwalk, Redding and Ridgefield, refused to send men to Massachusetts. To these seven should be added the bordering towns of New Milford and Waterbury, which became part of Fairfield County's partisan politics. In each of these nine towns, the prospect of fighting for Britain caused new divisions that split former Loyalists and Patriots along new lines. By 1776, a number of colonists had completely changed their opinions and now supported Revolution. These reconsiderations defined the third wave of Loyalism in Fairfield County.

Serious tensions appeared between former opponents of the Continental Association. Out of the one hundred and forty one men who signed the Redding Resolves, fragmentary evidence suggests only twenty five attempted to reach Long Island. A group of fourteen left on January 1 1776. Smaller groups followed them during the spring and summer.¹¹⁰ In Newtown, at least seventy five men voted to reject the Association, but records show only ten men left town to fight.¹¹¹ From the neighboring town of Danbury most early opponents of the Revolution also chose to remain at home. Only eighteen men from Danbury made the Journey to Long Island.¹¹² Even fewer men decided to leave Ridgefield and fight.¹¹³ The reluctance of so many men to fight or become exiles should not be surprising. Everyone who signed the Loyalist resolves in January

¹¹⁰ See trials Documents between January and December 1776, relating to Jabez Adams, Barnabas Cane, Denis Casey, Ephraim Deforest, Peter Fairchild, Nathaniel Guyer, Samuel Hawley, Andrew King, Daniel Lyon, Joshua Lyon, John Mackay, Charles McNeil, David Munroe in Fairfield County, Superior Court Papers.

¹¹¹ See trials Documents between January and December 1776, William Allen, Daniel Baldwin, Isaac Bummel, Samuel Camp, Mathew Sherman, in Fairfield County, Superior Court Papers.

¹¹² See trials Documents between January and December 1776, Comfort Barnum, Thaddeus Bennet, Jabez Benedict, Thomas Hoyt, Moses Osborn, in Fairfield County, Superior Court Papers.

¹¹³ See trials Documents between January and December 1776, Theophilus Stebbins, in Fairfield County, Superior Court Papers.

and February 1775 did so with their own reservations about what their actions meant. Statements supporting George III did not automatically translate into a desire to actively support the British Empire. The decision to enlist represented a giant leap in perspective from a passive endorsement of the status quo to risking death crushing a rebellion. Only a few of the men in Fairfield County could manage to make this transition.

The same divisions appeared between colonists whose Loyalism first appeared after the Lexington Alarm. The widespread refusal to send men to Massachusetts produced very few signatures making it difficult to trace the political trajectory of most of those involved. Enough evidence survives for two towns, Stamford and Waterbury. The petition drawn up by Captain Fyler Dibble in Stamford provides a rare opportunity to study one group. According to Seth Seely who saw the petition, eighteen men had signed the document when it reached him. Of these twelve can be identified by name with enough information to follow the politics of nine of them. The petition made the important leap between declaring support for the king and expressing a willingness to fight. One man explained he signed “to Support His Majesty and his Government against all Innovations & Mobs and privately engaged to join the Kings troops whenever they should arrive at New York.” The pledge did not survive the test of time. Over the course of 1776, only three of the nine men left. These included the author of the petition, Fyler Dibble, the distributor, Seth Seely and one signer Nathaniel Hubbard. One other, Prince Hawes, may also have traveled to New York.¹¹⁴ The rest stayed and appeared to have taken no further

¹¹⁴ Two Prince Hawes appear in the records. One is linked with Redding and the other with Stamford. Individual reference often do not give a place of origin. The records of the Fairfield Superior Court show that a Prince Hawes left the county in January 1776 in company of men from Redding and Fairfield town. For Stamford, see: Huntington, *History of Stamford, Connecticut: From Its Settlement in 1641, to the Present Time, Including Darien, Which Was One of Its Parishes until 1820*, pp.253-254. And, see: *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under*

part in the Revolution. Two towns away in Waterbury, more men chose to fight than stay. After refusing to muster in April 1776, sixty seven men can be identified as Loyalists. Most were part of the militia company in Northrup Parish. Nearly two thirds left, forty nine men, and records show that at least twenty joined the British Army. Out of the remaining eighteen men, the whereabouts of eleven remain unknown. Only six definitely stayed, including two boys who changed their minds after being caught leaving the town.¹¹⁵ The different responses in Stamford and Waterbury demonstrate the ongoing debate surrounding Loyalism. As argued above, early opposition to the Revolution did not prepare colonists to become committed Loyalists. The refusal to fight *against* the British in 1775 nor did not make colonists ready to fight *for* the British in the 1776.

During this political reshuffle, a third group of Loyalists emerged from men who had no previous history of pro-British sympathies. Stephen Jarvis had gone with the Connecticut militia to defend New York from possible British attack after the Battle of Lexington. Within six months, Stephen had changed his mind and was attempting to reach Long Island. He eventually became a quartermaster for the Queen's Rangers, a light dragoons regiment.¹¹⁶ Samuel Whitney of Norwalk went to "New York as a militia man in the rebel army but after a week he got a discharge because of his health."¹¹⁷ In 1776, he became a wagon driver for British troops on

Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790, Audit Office 12, Vol.12, "Memorial of Seth Seely"; Audit Office 12, Vol.12, "Memorial of Nathaniel Hubbard"; Audit Office 12, Vol.12, "Memorial of David Picket"; Audit Office 13, Vol.17, "Memorial of Seth Seely".

¹¹⁵Joseph ed. Prichard Sarah J. Anderson, *The Town and City of Waterbury, Connecticut, from the Aboriginal Period to the Year Eighteen Hundred and Ninety-Five* (New Haven: Price, 1896), pp.418-419.

¹¹⁶Stephen Jarvis, "Autobiography of Stephen Jarvis: Typescript, [19--]."

¹¹⁷*American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office, 12, Vol.12, "Memorial of Samuel Whitney".

Long Island. Peter Fairchild of Redding had taken the bold step of resigning his commission in the West Redding Militia Company.¹¹⁸ Yet, despite being seemingly sympathetic to Britain, Fairchild did not hesitate to help Ichabod Lewis's men disarm the towns' Loyalists in December. As the owner of a public house, Fairchild made a handsome profit providing food and drink for the militiamen.¹¹⁹ The exact number of men, like Peter Fairchild, who changed sides remains unknown. The exodus to Long Island included between 1,500-2,000 men. Approximately 500 opposed the Continental Association and roughly twice as many refused to muster; yet, as the above examples demonstrate many of these early Loyalists chose to stay in Fairfield County. In light of this, late Loyalism probably accounted for a significant portion of the men who joined British regiments. The conclusion that colonists were still choosing between empire and independence highlights the fluid, contingent and ultimately unpredictable politicization of Fairfield County. Accommodating to the changing balance of power in Western Connecticut, colonists such as Stephen Jarvis, Samuel Whitney and Peter Fairchild suddenly found Loyalism an attractive alternative to Patriotism as the political winds changed.

This diverse group of men formed the basis of a new political community defined by the decision to reject Patriot control and fight for Britain. The men who joined Loyalist regiments left few statements that shed light on their motivation. No doubt, a range of considerations promoted men to leave, from ideology to pragmatic calculations. To understand the Loyalism of 1776 requires looking at the context in which they made the choice to go. The rumors of a British invasion brought these men together in an extensive network of overlapping communities

¹¹⁸ CTRW, Ser. 1, Vol.I, p.157d.

¹¹⁹ "Voted that the wn would pay by way of Town Rate to Peter Fairchild Thirteen Pounds lawful money for vituals drinks and horses keeping when Col. Icabod Lewis &c &c &c came to Redding and Disarmed the Tories"; CSL, Extracts of Connecticut Town Council Minutes, 1774-1784," compiled by Hathaway, Redding Town Meeting Records, 1774-1784, p.5.

built upon personal contacts that spread across the county. Few colonists left as individuals or did not receive help before reaching Long Island. Instead, kinship networks, friendship networks and local leadership became the building blocks of a new popular political culture of active Loyalism. After Ichabod Lewis's raid on suspected Loyalists, colonists began to question their neighbors and only rely on trusted contacts. As groups met in secret away from Patriot eyes they created the beginning of a counter Revolutionary movement. By the end of 1776, the sum of these personal connections formed something close to a political underground across Fairfield County that recruited men, secreted them to the coast and then across to Long Island. Fragments of these connections survive in the records allowing several to be reconstructed.

A trial in the Fairfield County Superior Court uncovered a small network in Danbury with links to Redding, Fairfield Town and Norwalk. In late 1776, eight men tried to reach Long Island, but fell into Patriot hands just before leaving. Under questioning, one the conspirator, Thaddeus Bennet, broke and provided a partial account of the incident. The majority of men came from Danbury and had links with the towns leading figures, Captain Coley and Reverend Mr. Sherwood. The group of eight also carried four slaves belonging to the captain and minister with them to Long Island. One man, Daniel Moorhouse, had closer political links to Redding, where he had signed resolves protesting the Continental Association in 1774. Two years later, his place of residence appears to have been more important. A second person lived in Fairfield Town where he had come to the attention of the town committee of inspection in 1775 for refusing to muster with the militia. He had a relative amongst the other passengers, Gilead Grey, which might explain the reason he went to Danbury. In his testimony, Thaddeus Bennet explained the network of connections extended further. As a landlocked town, Danbury had no

access to the Long Island Sound and so Bennet had arranged with a merchant captain in Norwalk, Stephen Hoyt, to transport them.¹²⁰ By the end of 1776, Hoyt had gained a reputation throughout the county for taking Loyalists to Long Island. He held a commission in the Prince of Wales American Volunteers and after the war claimed to have transported eight hundred men.¹²¹ The widespread connections of this one case underscore the fact that the new Loyalist underground spread across Fairfield County in 1776.

Another network of Loyalists emerges from the papers of John Cable linking Greenwich, Norwalk and Stamford. Cable was a middle aged man who had developed extensive business connections as a local merchant in Greenwich, had a network of friends throughout the county and was a senior member in a large family that looked to him for guidance. In 1776, Cable's local status allowed him to exercise his political convictions. According to evidence presented to British officials after the war, Cable devoted himself to "opposing Rebellion and Loyalty by encouraging some, assisting others and finally carrying others to the King's Standard" on Long Island. In these roles, Cable's numerous contacts open a window onto the social forces that brought Loyalists together in 1776.¹²²

One set of connections developed from John Cable's ownership of the sloop *Sally*. Cable bought the *Sally* from George Peck and Joseph Ferris in 1776. This exchange brought Cable into

¹²⁰ The trial of Thaddeus Bennet, April 14 1777, CSL, Fairfield County, Superior Court Papers.

¹²¹ In his memorial, he claimed 300 of the men he brought across joined the Prince of Wales Regiment, "as he had agreed with them to come in before he left home" Browne verified the fact for the commission claiming that Hoyt had raised a company in Connecticut for the regiment July 2 1776. Hoyt's actual company consisted of 53 men in October 1777. In total Hoyt claimed to have enlisted and transported about 800 men to join the army from March 1776. "The Memorial of Jesse Hoyt, late of Norwalk in the late Colony of Connecticut now in London" March 28 1786. Public Record Office, Foreign Office, Class 4, Volume 1, folios 302-303.

¹²² *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Vol.12, "Memorial of John Cable".

contact with other active Loyalists. Peck and Ferris had both decided to join the British Army and had taken steps to encourage others to leave. George Peck had made the decision to leave with a relative William Peck and sailed on his old boat commanded by Cable in the autumn of 1776. In turn, Ferris tried to recruit a band of soldiers for a new unit, Colonel Butler's Rangers, before also taking passage on the *Sally*.

A second set of connections emerged from John Cable's appearance before the Fairfield Town Committee of Inspection in October 1776. The Committee became aware of Cable's attempts to smuggle Loyalists out of the County and seized the *Sally*. As part of the investigation, the Committee also interrogated Joseph Ketchum from the neighboring town of Norwalk. Ketchum had traded with Cable before the Revolution and took part in the ferrying conspiracy. This personal relationship with Ketchum put Cable in touch with another set of Loyalists, including four other members of the Ketchum family in Norwalk and their uncle, John Ketchum, in Stratford.¹²³

Finally, a third set of connections involved John Cable and his immediate and extended family. John retained close links with a cousin in Stamford, Jabez Cable who appeared before the Supreme Court in May 1776 charged with "supply[ing] the ministerial army and Navy with Provisions" and acting as a pilot in the Long Island Sound.¹²⁴ Jabez's knowledge of the local waters ran in the family. John persuaded the Fairfield Committee of Inspection to release him and then he escaped with his brother, James, to Long Island. Once there, the brothers followed Jabez in piloting British ships. John also decided to take his wife and seven children, including

¹²³ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.11, "Memorial of Benjamin Jarvis"; Audit Office 12, Vol 12, "Memorial of Jarvis Ketchum"; Audit Office 12, Vol.12, "Memorial of Jonathan Ketchum"; Audit Office 12, Vol.12, "Memorial of Samuel Ketchum".

¹²⁴ Complaint made Thad Burr Sheriff of Fairfield County on 1st May 1776, Fairfield Superior Court.

three boys over twenty who remained in British occupied New York throughout the rest of the War.

The most complete picture of a recruitment network comes from the court records surrounding Charles McNeil of Redding. Charles McNeil signed the Redding Resolves against the Continental Association. After February 1775, McNeil disappears from the record until January 1 1776 when he joined, along with his brother Neil McNeil, a group of twenty six Redding men trying to escape to Long Island. McNeil reached Long Island and returned to recruit. On April 15,¹²⁵ a Colonel Grant of the British Army approached McNeil with two lieutenants commissions for a new regiment the Royal Americans “to be made up of about 4,000 Loyalists.” The court records noted that a British officer had traveled in disguise threatening locals that a large number of Redcoats planned to invade and they had better get on the right side. Whatever McNeil’s motivation, he accepted the commissions and started to make plans.¹²⁵

McNeil made good use of his personal contacts to find recruits. He turned first to his neighbors in Redding. Amongst those who had not already left, McNeil found four men willing to join him. These included Nathaniel Guyer, Denis Casey, Barnabas Lane, and Samuel Hawley.¹²⁶ Guyer and Hawley and had both signed the Association and so were marked men. (Nathaniel Guyer had four relatives who signed the Association.) Barnabas Lane and McNeil probably had a prior relationship, as McNeil trusted him as a messenger. Next, McNeil turned his attention outward. He sent Lane to Norwalk to offer the second commission to John McKee. It seems likely that these two men knew each other. McKee and McNeil both shared common Irish roots.

¹²⁵ The examination of John McKee dated 16th May 1776, Fairfield Superior Court; CTRW Ser. 1, Vol.8, p.144, a,b,c.

¹²⁶ See footnote 127 and trial of Nathaniel Guyer May 25th 1776; the trial of Denis Casey 24th May 1776, trial of Barnabas Lane and others 1st January 1776, trials of Samuel Hawley May 25th 1776 and 4th June 1776 all in CSL, Fairfield County Superior Court.

Not content, McNeil also made contact with Daniel Baldwin of Newtown and offered him a third commission (which he did not have) to raise a company of Royal Americans in his hometown. Baldwin had protested the Association. On January 1 he had passed information onto the same Colonel Campbell and then tried to recruit McNeil, “and many other Persons” in the first failed attempt to reach Long Island. He therefore became the perfect person for whom McNeil could turn to when he had his own commission. McNeil established links with two other men to raise companies, Abel Hall of Stratford and Alexander Fairchild of New Fairfield. McNeil’s connection to Abel Hall is unknown, but he had close relations with the first cousin of Alexander Fairchild, who lived in Redding.¹²⁷ Peter Fairchild, mentioned above, had shown his Loyalist colors by fleeing to Long Island in February.¹²⁸

Unfortunately for Charles McNeil, his planning attracted the attention of the committee of inspection in Redding. Before McNeil could complete his companies, the committee uncovered his plans. Instead of risking a confrontation, McNeil made new plans to escape to Long Island.¹²⁹ On 11 May, McNeil left Redding, with his four recruits and went to “M^cKee’s house at Norwalk on the County Road about three miles last East of Norwalk Old Society”. To avoid detection they arrived at three in the morning. At first McKee was angry that McNeil had jeopardized his safety by bringing everyone, but eventually agreed to hide the men. McKee then set about arranging a ship in Norwalk to transport them to Long Island. He turned to Jonathan

¹²⁷ Jacobus, *History and Genealogy of the Families of Old Fairfield*, Vol.2, p.331. For the involvement of Abel Hall and Alexander Fairchild see trials on 24 and 25th May 1776, CSL, Fairfield County Superior Court.

¹²⁸ See Harding to Jon. Trumbull May 15 1776 in J. H. J. Howard, *Seth Harding, Mariner; a Naval Picture of the Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press; London, H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1930), pp.16-17, 20. Mentioned in, Buel, *Dear Liberty: Connecticut's Mobilization for the Revolutionary War*, p.70.

¹²⁹ Howard, *Seth Harding, Mariner; a Naval Picture of the Revolution*, pp.32-24.

Jarvis, the cousin of Munson and Stephen Jarvis of Stamford and Danbury. The Jarvis family seems to have had a reputation as stalwart Loyalists.¹³⁰

The sloop set sail from Norwalk on 12 May for Long Island. It had only a partial crew: John McKee, Abel Hall and Alexander Fairchild. Presumably, the sudden rush had thrown their plans.¹³¹ McNeil did have the comfort that they were going to meet Peter Fairchild of Redding who was preparing for their arrival.¹³²

The men got half way to Long Island when one of the few ships in the Connecticut Navy captured the sloop. The captain of the naval vessel Seth Harding reported he had “espied A small Sloop attempting to Cross the Sound which I brought along Side and on Examination found Eight Persons on board who pretended they were going to New York for Shad but on more strict Enquiry found to my Satisfaction they were Tories from the Town of Redding in Fairfield Country bound to long Island to join Peter Fairchild.”¹³³ Harding took control of the sloop and took McNeil’s men to Fairfield Town for questioning.¹³⁴ Under interrogation, the men broke and gave up all they knew. On the 16th, the authorities raided Norwalk based on the information

¹³⁰ Jonathan Jarvis was most likely related to the Loyalist Jarvis’s of Norwalk, Stamford and Danbury. See: Huntington, *History of Stamford, Connecticut: From Its Settlement in 1641, to the Present Time, Including Darien, Which Was One of Its Parishes until 1820*, pp.252-253, John W. Tyler, *Connecticut Loyalists: An Analysis of Loyalist Land Confiscations in Greenwich, Stamford, and Norwalk* (New Orleans: Polyanthos, 1977), p.90, *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 13, Vol.76, "Memorial of Munson Jarvis", Audit Office 13, Vol.114, "Memorial of Samuel Jarvis", CTRW Ser. 1, Vol.34: 459a-461a, Force and comp, *American Archives: Consisting of a Collection of Authentick Records, State Papers, Debates, and Letters and Other Notices of Publick Affairs, the Whole Forming a Documentary History of the Origin and Progress of the North American Colonies; of the Causes and Accomplishment of the American Revolution; and of the Constitution of Government for the United States, to the Final Ratification Thereof. In Six Ser., Ser. 4, Vol.3*, pp.827-828.

¹³¹ See footnote 127.

¹³² Howard, *Seth Harding, Mariner; a Naval Picture of the Revolution*, pp.23-24.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-4.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.25-6.

they had received and arrested McKee. Alexander Fairchild and Abel Hall soon followed.¹³⁵

Finally, a special session of the Fairfield Superior Court tried all the men between May 23 and June 4. All the men received goal time. McKee got a year, the others got between two and three.

¹³⁶ The success of Patriot authorities in shutting down one recruitment network did not halt the flow of men leaving Fairfield County. In fact, the numbers increased shortly after the trial of Charles McNeil.

The three networks linked to Thaddeus Bennett, John Cable and Charles McNeill demonstrate the extent to which Loyalism had spread throughout Fairfield County in 1776. Numerous other records testify to similar groups that attempted to flee Connecticut, but did not leave sufficient evidence to trace their web of connections. Here it is enough to note that in the space of a few months Fairfield had gone from a peaceful county to the site of a brewing civil war.

Patriot authorities struggled to break up the networks of British sympathies. After failing to wipe out opposition by intimidation, Patriots had only slightly more success in catching self-declared Loyalists during 1776. The weight of responsibility continued to fall on town and county authorities to police their own populations. Committees of inspection interrogated suspicious individuals and then passed their cases onto the county court to be tried according to the General Assembly's new treason legislation. Patriots also had the support of the Connecticut militia regiments that had taken up position along the coastline in anticipation of an invasion and

¹³⁵ See footnote 127.

¹³⁶ McNeil's efforts to get to Long Island did not end in June. He escaped from Fairfield goal and began plotting anew. He made contact with Alexander Fairchild again and fell in with three men from Danbury, Isaac Read, Daniel Dibble and Nathan Barnum. They came under the influence of a British spy Robert Simmons working in Connecticut. On December 3rd McNeal made his third attempt to escape. Unfortunately, his luck had not improved. Fairfield Superior Court tried him a second time and found him guilty. No recorded of a sentence survives. The trial was held on May 24, 25, 26, CLS, Fairfield Superior Court.

a number of privateers patrolling the coastal waters. With these advantages, the authorities could capture individual Loyalists, but could not prevent the larger exodus. The risk of punishment failed to convince men to stay at home.

Finally, Patriot authorities panicked and demanded the toughest action to date against suspected Loyalists. In October 1776, Stamford and Norwalk sent petitions to the General Assembly calling for help controlling the growing Loyalist threat. In dramatic language, the committee of inspection for Stamford informed the General Assembly, “our dearest privileges are threatened in so imminent a manner...[by]...a formidable Army of our Adversaries is in the Neighborhood, at not very considerable distance.” In particular, they pointed to “a great danger from those persons, in the Town who are disaffected to the Cause in which America is engaged.” Further on in the petition, they put a number to their fears. The short distance to the British Army had encouraged “about an 100 persons part of them belonging to this place had engaged to go from hence to Long Island and join the British Army.” The committee men finished by calling for a new policy of interrogating all suspected Loyalists and sending them to prisons in the eastern counties.”¹³⁷ Norwalk sent a similar petition days later. The committee explained it had taken into custody a number of their inhabitants as Loyalist and were apprehending others constantly. Like, Stamford, Norwalk disapproved of the current legal proceedings. They explained, “the law could only disarm the tories not stop their planning.” Given the danger the

¹³⁷ Stamford, Comm. Of Inspection Complain of Loyalists in town and ask that they may be removed to some inland town October 1776, CTRW, Ser. 1, Vol.5, p.434.

memorialists advised the General Assembly they would hold all suspected persons until the Assembly sent a committee to examine the individuals.¹³⁸

The petitions from Stamford and Norwalk reveal a further evolution in Patriot thinking about Loyalists. The disarming of all suspected individuals in November 1775 marked the end to Patriot toleration of opposition. The General Assembly underscored the end to moderation with treason legislation. However, Patriots had continued to view Loyalists as deluded colonists who could be convinced to support the Revolution. This became evident in their efforts to treat Loyalists as criminals. After convicted Loyalists had received their punishment, Patriots envisioned accepting them back into the community. By the end of 1776, this attitude had change. Their inability to contain support for the British Army in the county pushed Patriots to see Loyalists as the enemy. Behind this shift lay the assumption that Loyalists had crossed over from redeemable neighbors to inveterate foes. In other words, in Patriot minds, a hard line had come into existence in autumn of 1776 separating Loyalists and Patriots.

The General Assembly responded to the panic in Fairfield County and introduced a more aggressive policy that treated Loyalists akin to prisoners of war. The Assembly ordered suspicious individuals tried before a court marshal consisting of local committees of inspection and a special committee appointed by the Assembly. Those found guilty would-be sent to inland Counties and “kept there at their own expense, under proper guards, and to converse with no person except in the presence of the officer or officers of the guard.” The General Assembly also gave town selectmen “power to confine within certain limits, or to remove all tories within their

¹³⁸ Hinman, *A Historical Collection from Official Records, Files, &C., of the Part Sustained by Connecticut, During the War of the Revolution: With an Appendix, Containing Important Letters, Depositions, &C., Written During the War*, pp.565-566.

towns, and they should judge to be inimical and dangerous.” The governor would then decide where they should be imprisoned.¹³⁹

Special trials of suspected Loyalists identified groups deemed suspicious by the panic-stricken courts. Few people who had tried to get to Long Island appeared in court for the simple reason they could not catch most of them. Local militias would have problems stopping one hundred men. The committees instead focused their investigations upon suspected sympathizers who had chosen to remain. For the most part these included men, and increasingly women who wanted to remain neutral, but had some connection to an active Loyalist. The General Assemblies rulings had expanded the definition of Loyalism to include passive as well as active support for Britain. For example, in Redding the men and women tended to be either parents of sons who had gone to soldier or had signed the Redding Resolves two years earlier. Andrew Fairchild, Sarah Burr, Abigail Lyon, James Grey, Enos Lee, David Knap, James Morgan and Sarah Phinny all had “a Son or Sons, or a Son or Sons in Law gone over to the Enemy of the United States.”¹⁴⁰ During December, Newtown, Ridgefield, Stamford and Norwalk held similar trials, convicting 31 men. Ridgefield tried 10 men, but there is no record of a verdict.¹⁴¹

In a final confirmation of the new political climate, the guilty served their prison terms outside of Fairfield County. The Governor, Jonathan, Trumbull decided to confine the western Loyalists in Windham County far from the social networks that made Loyalism possible in

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.573.

¹⁴⁰ Grumman, *The Revolutionary Soldiers of Redding, Connecticut, and the Record of Their Services: With Mention of Others Who Rendered Service or Suffered Loss at the Hands of the Enemy During the Struggle for Independence, 1775-1783: Together with Some Account of the Loyalists of the Town and Vicinity, Their Organization, Their Efforts, and Sacrifices in Behalf of the Cause of Their King, and Their Ultimate Fate*, p.99.

¹⁴¹ Dated Ridgefield September 19 1777. Committee of Inspection in the town order bill to be drawn up for Tories that were brought before the Committee “for Trial...as persons inimical to the United States of America...” CTRW Ser. 1, Vol.14, p.56.

Fairfield. A number spent time in the Windham Goal “to prevent any mischievous practices of theirs”. Others got parole in Mansfield, Coventry and Trumbull’s hometown, Lebanon.¹⁴² The strong-armed tactics of Patriot authorities worked well. The steady flow of Loyalist enlistments dried up as the new year opened. Most colonists who wanted to leave had already seized the chance or now sat in Patriot prisons. The rest accepted the reality of Patriot control of the County, which they would retain throughout the Revolutionary War.

By January 1777, the initial phase of politicization had ended. Fairfield County and the rest of the thirteen colonies had divided and the line between Patriots and Loyalists had hardened to the point that allegiance to the King was treason. The end of this story should not come as a surprise. Historians have long argued that the American Revolution was a civil war within the British Empire and between colonists.¹⁴³ What often gets lost in this observation, however, is the uncertainty that surrounded individuals’ allegiances. Colonists did not make one abstract choice between an independent America and remaining part of the British Empire. They made a series of choices in an ongoing debate shaped by the confluence of events on the Revolutionary stage and local circumstances. Loyalism was central to the way colonists understood this dialectic. Ordinary men and women, who had no special ties to empire, saw Loyalism as a genuine alternative to Patriotism because they constantly reinterpreted what constituted Loyalist behavior in the context of their immediate surroundings.

¹⁴² Council meetings January 25 1777, January 28 1777, February 11 1777. And see, Hoadling, *Records of the State of Connecticut*, Vol.1, pp.161, 163, 171.

¹⁴³ For a good introduction to this material see: John Shy, “The Military Conflict Considered as a Revolutionary War,” in *A People Numerous and Armed* (Ann Arbor, 1990), p.217. This essay first appeared in Stephen G. Kurtz, James H. ed. Hutson, and ed., *Essays on the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Va., by the University of North Carolina Press, 1973).

Americans continued to think about their allegiances after 1776, but the nature of the debate changed. The War of Independence soon complicated earlier choices in favor of king or colony. As British and American troops campaigned across the thirteen colonies, the distinction between the home front and battlefield collapsed. With little warning, civilians could find themselves surrounded by thousands of troops. At these moments, individuals renegotiated their loyalties. John Shy, a military historian, has argued that the war was not merely the “instrument” of independence, but a “process, which entangled large numbers of people for a long period of time in experiences of remarkable intensity.”¹⁴⁴ As Shy points out, the Revolutionary war brought the issues of allegiance into new relief. Armies as much political Associations or mobilizing for war reshaped local political culture giving new meaning to previous political behavior. In this climate the firm distinction between Patriot and Loyalists blurred.¹⁴⁵

The War of Independence came to Fairfield County in the spring of 1777. On the April 25, British vessels appeared off the coast of Norwalk. They contained 1,800 soldiers under the command General William Tyron, the former Loyalists Governor of New York. The force consisted of a mixture of 1,500 British regulars and 300 of Monfort Browne’s Prince of Wales

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.217.

¹⁴⁵ In most mainstream histories of the Revolution, scholars have treated the War of Independence as of secondary importance to the intellectual debates of the 1760s leading to the Declaration of Independence and in 1780’s the writing of state and federal constitutions. To a large degree, this remains the case in most textbook accounts of the founding of the United States. The so-called “new” military history has attempted to move military studies beyond their traditional interest in bayonet charges and bugle calls to an investigation of the social side of warfare. For a good Historiographical essays on recent studies of the Revolutionary war, see: For other reviews on the same topic see, Don Higgenbotham, “The Early American Way of War: Reconnaissance and Appraisal,” *William & Mary Quarterly* Vol.44, No. 2 (April, 1987) 230-273.

American Volunteers. General Tryon hoped to take advantage of their local knowledge.¹⁴⁶ The target of the raid was Danbury, where British planners had recently received information that Patriot authorities had formed a magazine of munitions. On April 24 the column marched inland towards its target, passing through Fairfield town and Redding before reaching Danbury in the afternoon of April 27. Tryon's men left Danbury late that night after destroying the munitions and made a wide sweep, to avoid the gathering American forces, through Ridgefield and Wilton back to their ships. The fleet set sail on April 29 towards New York. In total, the raid only lasted five days, but during that time the political debate in Fairfield County changed.¹⁴⁷

The Danbury raid once again made Loyalism an attractive alternative to Patriotism. As the Tryon's army passed through the region it received support from the population. In Redding and Danbury, where the troops spent a several hours they received aid and comfort from the inhabitants. During the halt at Redding Tryon, and his two of senior officers were invited into Esquire Heron's, who lived in the first house south of the church. Here they were hospitably entertained with cake and wine.¹⁴⁸ In Danbury, Tryon made himself comfortable in the house of a known Loyalist sympathizer. Others in the Loyalist Volunteers rested with relatives during the

¹⁴⁶ Robert F. McDevitt, *Connecticut Attacked, a British Viewpoint: Tryon's Raid on Danbury, Connecticut Bicentennial Ser. 10* (Chester, Conn.: Pequot Press, 1974), pp.20-21.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p.64

¹⁴⁸ At the same time, the party took two prisoners, including Stephen Betts who had signed the Redding Resolves before becoming a member of the committee of inspection. The Redding men in the Volunteers would have known about Bett's change of politics. Stephen Betts political rehabilitation took him to the heights of local politics. Before the Revolution, Betts was a respected man in local politics. He had played a central role in the parish government before Redding officially became a town.¹⁴⁸ As late as December 30th 1774, after the creation of the Redding committee of observation, Betts still held town office. His support of the Resolves only caused a temporary side step in his political advancement. By January 1777, Betts's neighbors had sufficient confidence in him to make him a selectmen. By December 1777, his political transformation was complete as he was voted onto the Committee of Inspection he had opposed in the Resolves. The soldiers took two other prisoners, James Rogers and Jeremiah Sanford, who later died in a New York prison. Charles Burr Todd, *The History of Redding, Conn., from Its First Settlement to the Present Time. With Notes on the Adams, Banks ... Stow Families* (New York: J.A. Gray Press, 1880), Vol.12, Chapter 12.

short stay. Stephen Jarvis recorded that two of his cousins, Munson Jarvis and William Jarvis, “slept at my father’s house the night they were in Danbury.”¹⁴⁹ The presence of Tryon’s army also led to stronger displays of Loyalism.

New recruits joined the raid and sailed with Tryon back to New York. David Burt of Ridgefield, for example, told British officials after the Revolution “on the first movement of British troops into the Colony of Connecticut (which was at Danbury) he joined them and joined the Queens Rangers.”¹⁵⁰ Mary Hoyt explained to Patriot authorities that her husband, Isaac Hoyt of Danbury, “when the enemy made their late incursion into Danbury, being an enemy to his country, went off and joined them.” Mary was hoping to prevent the committee of inspection confiscating her property.¹⁵¹ David Cooley Junior of Fairfield appeared before the County Superior Court in February 1778, “for inimical conduct against the State for joining the enemy when on their return from Danbury April 1777, and giving them intelligence.”¹⁵² The largest single number of recruits came from outside of Fairfield County. Vigilant Patriots in Farmington in New Haven discovered a conspiracy by 17 men in the local militia to join the raid.¹⁵³

For these men, the presence of Tryon’s men made them rethink their commitment to the Revolution. John Morehouse of Redding simply explained, “that when the British troops marched to Danbury he, through inconsideration and surprise, joined to and went off with

¹⁴⁹ “An Americans Experience of the British Army by Col.. Stephen Jarvis,” *Journal of American History* Vol.1, No. 3 (1907).

¹⁵⁰ *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Vol.12, “Memorial of David Burt of Ridgefield.” David’s wife, Rebecca Burt confirmed his story. Rebecca told British officials that her husband joined “a detachment of the British Army on an Expedition to Danbury under the Command of Major General Tryon” after which he served 9 months in the Queens Rangers.

¹⁵¹ Trumbull and Hoadly, ed., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut [1636-1776]*, Vol.1, pp.299-300.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, Vol.2 pp.81-2.

¹⁵³ Catherine S. comp Crary, *The Price of Loyalty; Tory Writings from the Revolutionary Era, Bicentennial of the American Revolution*; (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973), p.187.

them.”¹⁵⁴ David Munroe interpreted the shock of troops as a sign that the Revolutionary War was lost. David had a brother who signed the Redding Resolves, but showed no signs of Loyalism himself until 1777. “On or about the 25 day of April at the arrival of the ministerial army at s^d Redding on their way to Danbury,” according to Munroe” he was “ordered by then to join & go with then and believing the Country was conquered you Petitioner did join.”¹⁵⁵ Samuel Hawley offered a similar reason for his Loyalism. Unlike Munroe, Hawley had enlisted before as part of the group Charles McNeil tried to Long Island in May 1776. Hawley had apologized for his mistake and received only a short sentence.¹⁵⁶ Several other men who had tried to reach Long Island, but had given up seized this new opportunity. The presence of several hundred local men in the Prince of Wales Volunteers must have helped them reconsider whether they were on right side. Stephen Jarvis had served in the Connecticut militia in 1775, but when his cousin came to Danbury he decided to leave with the. Stephen Jarvis would rise to the rank of colonel in the Queens Rangers.¹⁵⁷

The Danbury Raid was not the last time the Revolutionary War came to Fairfield County. In 1779, General Tryon led a second raid this time on Norwalk and produced a new group of

¹⁵⁴ Trumbull and Hoadly, and ed., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut [1636-1776]*, Vol.1, p.562.

¹⁵⁵ The Petition of David Munrow of Redding April 1778, CTRW Ser. 1, Vol.13, p. 279a,b.

¹⁵⁶ CTRW Ser. I, Vol.13, pp. 201-203, Trumbull and Hoadly, ed., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut [1636-1776]*, Vol.1 p. 508.

¹⁵⁷ See for example, *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Vol.12, "Memorial of Joseph Lyon", Audit Office 12, Vol.12, "Memorial of Joseph Lyon". And, Grumman, *The Revolutionary Soldiers of Redding, Connecticut, and the Record of Their Services: With Mention of Others Who Rendered Service or Suffered Loss at the Hands of the Enemy During the Struggle for Independence, 1775-1783: Together with Some Account of the Loyalists of the Town and Vicinity, Their Organization, Their Efforts, and Sacrifices in Behalf of the Cause of Their King, and Their Ultimate Fate*, p.199.

Loyalists.¹⁵⁸ For the inhabitants of Fairfield County, as for colonists throughout the thirteen colonies, the dilemma of choosing sides continued throughout the eight years of the War of Independence.

¹⁵⁸ For examples of men who joined Tryon during his second raid, see *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Vol.12, "Memorial of Seth Squire"; Audit Office 12, Vol.12, "Memorial of James Sayres".

Chapter Three

Wartime Loyalists: Collaboration in Occupied New Jersey, November 1776-January 1777

Uncovering the dynamics of wartime politics helps explain the sudden increase in Loyalism during the Revolutionary War. Between 1774-1776, a small group of radical Loyalists emerged as part of larger debate about the merits of independence. By the end of the War, roughly one in five Americans had committed one or more acts in support of the British Army.¹ To be sure, some of these colonists acted out of political convictions. However, the widespread appeal of Loyalism can only be explained by understanding how short term decisions to collaborate with victorious British Army were transformed into a longer commitment to a defeated British Army. This was the case when the Revolutionary War came to New Jersey between November 1776 and January 1777 and forced the population to choose sides.²

In the middle of November 1776, a large British Army invaded New Jersey and thousands of colonists came forward and collaborated with the British Army. David White became an active collaborator and immediately swore an oath of allegiance to George III. Peter Browne also took the oath of allegiance to George III. Daniel Griggs signed his name to document circulating through northern New Jersey in support of the British occupation.

¹ Paul U. Smith, "The American Loyalists: Notes on Their Organization and Numerical Strength," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol.25, No. 2 (Apr., 1968), 259-277; Wallace Brown, *The Good Americans: The Loyalists in the American Revolution* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1969), p.277.

² My formulation of wartime Loyalism as the product of collaboration with the British Army draws upon a model of popular politics developed by John Shy in "The Military Conflict Considered as a Revolutionary War," in *A People Numerous and Armed*, p.217. Shy offered a new framework for integrating the older focus on the battlefields and armies of the War with the social history of the home front. Shy approached the Revolutionary War not just as a fight between British redcoats and George Washington's Continental line, but a civil war between neighbors that brought the fighting into communities.² Yet, in an important move, Shy argued the Loyalist-Patriot dichotomy imposed an artificial simplicity on very complex events. Influenced by the recent Vietnam War, Shy viewed the Revolutionary War as a triangular struggle in which two "armed forces contend less with each other than for the support and control of the civilian population" that had its own ideas about the Revolution. Shy's "triangular thesis" offers an important complication of the more traditional "civil war" and better explains the otherwise confusing array of loyalties in war torn New Jersey.

Every colonist had personal motivations for collaborating with the British Army. David White acted out of a strong belief in the British cause and went on to become one of the most radical Loyalists in New Jersey. White first spied for the British and then accepted a commission to recruit men for a new Loyalist regiment, the New Jersey Volunteers. Peter Browne collaborated to protect his property. Unlike David White, after swearing allegiance to George III, Browne returned home and tried to ignore the British troops. Daniel Griggs only collaborated at the wrong end of a gun. A month into the British occupation, a group of men broke into his house and demanded he sign an association supporting Britain. Fearing for his life, Griggs added his name to save his life and property. Far from a common display of Loyalism, the British occupation of New Jersey had created a wide range of different types of collaboration as individual colonists decided how far they would go in supporting the invading Army.

By January 1777, however, the military situation had changed, and all collaborators found themselves treated as Loyalists and traitors by vengeful American soldiers. In a series of decisive battles, the Continental Army, led by George Washington, ended the British occupation. David White retreated with the British soldiers and continued work as a spy and recruiter until the end of the War. Peter Brown and Daniel Griggs both wanted to remain in New Jersey, but found themselves grouped with David White as Loyalist traitors by the American troops who had no interest in the nuanced politics of collaboration and had to flee to escape capture and imprisonment. Both Brown and Griggs eventually reached the British lines where they remained for the rest of the War alongside radicals like White. For all three men events beyond their

control on the battlefield had transformed the short term decision to collaborate into a long term, unintended commitment to Loyalism.³

Throughout the War of Independence, the same scene kept repeating: British victories encouraged widespread collaboration amongst the colonial population. These collaborators included a mixture of Loyalists hoping to crush the Revolution, opportunists hoping to protect their property, and scared colonists who just wanted to escape with their lives. British losses, however, saddled all colonists with the reputations as “Loyalists”. In this way, events on the battlefield trapped a large number of colonists and turned them into Loyalists against their will. This was the case when the fighting came to New Jersey in the winter 1776-1777.

The Revolutionary War was the next key stage in the popular debate about allegiances. Through a series of choices, the first Loyalists had gradually appeared between 1774-1776. The onset of the fighting tested these early decisions for empire or independence. As the British and Continental Armies moved from New England in 1775 to South Carolina in 1781, they briefly turned colonies into war zones. At these moments colonists had to choose whether to resist with the losers or collaborate with the winners. As they did, a unique political culture emerged that complicated earlier pre-war allegiances.

Often overlooked by Revolutionary historians, thousands of colonists decided to collaborate instead of resist. Studies of the popular politics of the war have largely focused on

³*American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Vol.14, "Memorial of Peter Browne", Audit Office 12, Vol.14, "Memorial of Daniel Griggs", Audit Office 12, Vol.14, "Memorial of David White".

colonial resistance to the British Army.⁴ A smaller body of work has explored Loyalist resistance to the Revolution within the larger model of an American civil war.⁵ These studies have revealed the importance of approaching the war years as a separate phase in the Revolutionary debate distinct from the 1760's and the 1780's.⁶ However, alongside colonists who resisted were large numbers of colonists who collaborated with the Continental or the British Army. Collaboration represented a second strain in wartime politics characterized by a *lack* of agency as colonists were forced to adapt to the fast changing military fortunes of the war. The spread of Loyalism after the crumbling of the British Empire between 1776-1783 can only be understood in this context.

⁴ Important examples of the literature on resistance during the Revolutionary War, see Sylvia R. Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), Don Higginbotham, *War and Society in Revolutionary America: The Wider Dimensions of Conflict, American Military History* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), Holly A. Mayer, *Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and Community During the American Revolution* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Va., by the University of North Carolina Press, 1979), John W. Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

⁵ The best monograph length study is still Peter S. Onuf, *Patriots, Redcoats, and Loyalists, New American Nation, 1775-1820* (New York: Garland Pub., 1991). The majority of scholarship has focused on the experiences of specific communities for a specific moment during the Revolutionary War. The best examples of this much larger body of work include: Calhoun, Barnes, and Rawlyk, *Loyalists and Community in North America*, Hoffman and Tate, *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry During the American Revolution*. For individual articles see: Joseph Tiedemann, "Communities in the Midst of the American Revolution: Queens County, New York, 1774-1775," *Journal of Social History* (Sept. 1984); Joseph S Tiedemann, *Patriots by Default William & Mary Quarterly* (1986). Wayne Bodle, "This Tory Labyrinth: community, conflict and military strategy during the Valley Forge Winter," in Zuckerman et al ed. *Of friends and neighbors group life in America's first plural society* (1982), Culture in Virginia's River Valley," *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol.54 No. 3 (Aug., 1988), Bruce Merritt Loyalism and social conflict in Revolutionary Deerfield, Massachusetts *The Journal of American History* Vol.57 No. 2 (sep., 1970), 277-289, Jean F. Hankins, "A Different Type of Loyalism: The Sandemanians of New England during the Revolutionary War," *The New England Quarterly*, Vol.60, No. 2 (Jun., 1987), 223-249.

⁶ In most mainstream histories of the Revolution before the 1970's, scholars treated the War of Independence as of secondary importance to the intellectual debates of the 1760s leading to the Declaration of Independence and in 1780's the writing of state and federal constitutions. To a large degree, this remains the case in most textbook accounts of the founding of the United States. The so-called "new" military history has attempted to move military studies beyond their traditional interest in bayonet charges and bugle calls to an investigation of the social side of warfare. For a good Historiographical essays on recent studies of the Revolutionary war, see: For other reviews on the same topic see, Don Higgenbotham, "The Early American Way of War: Reconnaissance and Appraisal," *William & Mary Quarterly* Vol.44, No. 2 (April, 1987) 230-273.

Over the course of the Revolutionary War, thousands of colonists collaborated with the British Army. Wherever the British Army fought in America, they tested civilian politics. Many fled from the Redcoats and resisted. A significant minority stayed and supported the British occupation. The first and most active collaborators were committed Loyalists who had opposed independence since 1774. The majority of colonists, however, had no history of Loyalism. These men had no strong politics, but instead preferred to follow the status quo. They made a short-term decision to support the British Army on a range of personal calculations from intimidation by more radical neighbors to protecting their property to making a profit by selling supplies. This was a continuation of the early politics of changing sides seen between 1774-1776. In this way, a range of colonists besides ardent Loyalists considered collaborating with the British Army.

Short term collaboration with the British Army, however, often had unexpectedly long-term consequences. Wherever the British lost battles, they retreated and abandoned territory to the advancing American troops. The committed Loyalists retreated with the troops and continued to oppose the Revolution. Predictably, the majority of collaborators wanted to stay and, if necessary, collaborate with the approaching American troops. They discovered that the victorious Americans ignored the subtleties of occupation politics and labeled all collaborators as Loyalists and, therefore, traitors. To avoid punishment, these unfortunate men and women had no choice but to flee to the protection of the British Army. After reaching British lines, few collaborators managed to return home until the end of the war. The fast pace of the Revolution had trapped these colonists and forced them to live with the consequences of their collaboration.

This chapter explores wartime Loyalism in New Jersey by following the changes in popular politics during the winter campaign 1776-1777. The first half will focus on the short-

lived British occupation between the arrival of the first troops on 19 November to the battles of Trenton and Princeton on 26 December 1776 and 3 January 1777. The second half will focus on the Continental Army's attempt to regain control New Jersey until the end of January 1777. The sudden reverse in the fighting in one of the most populous regions of Colonial America makes the New Jersey Campaign of 1776-1777 an important opportunity to explore how the Revolutionary War trapped colonists in Loyalism.⁷

I – Collaborators During the British Occupation of New Jersey, November - December 1776

When the British troops invaded New Jersey in November 1776, every colonist had to decide how to react. Many left their homes and fled to Pennsylvania with the retreating Continental Army. Many others, however, stayed and collaborated with the British. Each of these men and women had to decide how far they would support the occupiers. For the next six weeks that the British controlled New Jersey, soldiers and civilians negotiated a range of different meanings of collaboration from political Loyalism, pragmatic Loyalism and coerced

⁷ For good overviews of the Revolutionary War see Bernard Berkowitz, "Loyalism in New Jersey, 1775-1783", David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing, Pivotal Moments in American History* (Oxford University Press, 2004), Leonard Lundin, *Cockpit of the Revolution; the War for Independence in New Jersey, The Princeton History of New Jersey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press; London, H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1940), Esther Frances Royster, "Loyalism in New Jersey During the American Revolution", Dennis P. Ryan, *New Jersey's Loyalists, New Jersey's Revolutionary Experience* (Trenton: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1975). For individual chapters on the war in New Jersey see, Wallace Brown, *The King's Friends; the Composition and Motives of the American Loyalist Claimants* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1965), Chapt. 9. For accounts of Loyalism in specific regions of New Jersey see: Jonathan Clark, "The problem of allegiance in revolutionary Poughkeepsie", in David D. Hall, John Murrin, and Thad Tate ed., *Saints & Revolutionaries: Essays on Early American History*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 1984), Theodore Thayer, *Colonial and Revolutionary Morris County* (Morris County Heritage Commission, 1975), Ruth M. Keeseey, "Loyalism in Bergen County, New Jersey," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser. Vol.18, No. 4 (October, 1961), 558-576. For a more detailed account of just military events see Samuel Stelle Smith, *The Battle of Trenton*, (Monmouth Beach: N.J., Philip Freneau Press, 1965).

Loyalism. The decision to first stay in New Jersey and second to collaborate continued the popular debate about Loyalism during the Revolutionary War.

The British invasion began shortly after winning the battle for New York. On 4 June 1776, a large British Army, commanded by General William Howe, appeared off the coast of Staten Island. In August the fight for control of New York began. The British Army successfully gained control of the colony, but failed to destroy the Continental Army commanded by George Washington. On 13 November Washington's 4,000 surviving troops crossed the Hudson River and took up new positions in northern New Jersey. The lull in the fighting only lasted a few days. Between 19 and 25 November, General Howe ordered 10,000 soldiers to invade New Jersey and finish off the smaller Continental Army. Instead of fighting Washington retreated again and abandoned New Jersey to the British.⁸ With the winter closing in, General Howe decided to end the campaign and wait for the warmer weather in the spring. In the space of three weeks the British Army had conquered New Jersey.⁹

Having defeated the Continental Army, the British Army wanted to win over the civilian population and secure its control of New Jersey. General Howe, along with other British commanders, viewed the Revolutionary war as a contest for public opinion. Most British strategists rejected plans to put American to the sword and break the colonists' will. The army and navy had burnt towns to the ground in New England in 1775 and had only succeeded in inciting hatred. Instead, General Howe proposed to combine military action with overtures of reconciliation. He wanted to fight the campaign on two fronts: the army would attempt to engage and destroy the American troops while winning over the hearts and minds of the American

⁸ Smith, *The Battle of Trenton*, pp.7-9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.9.

population. The plan called for a series of decisive actions that would catch the Americans off balance and allow British troops to take control of large swathes of territory. On the back of military success colonists would-be offered amnesty if they swore allegiance to the crown and then granted protection.¹⁰ General Howe had twice used this tactic in Staten Island and New York with success.¹¹ As the British Army settled down to winter quarters in New Jersey, General Howe turned this strategy into the cornerstone of his occupation policy.

To win over the civilian population, the British Army offered an unconditional amnesty to everyone in New Jersey. On 30 November, General Howe issued a proclamation explaining that anyone who had supported the Revolution could avoid punishment by swearing an oath not to challenge British authority. The text of the oath read:

I, A. B., do promise and declare, that I will remain in a peaceable obedience to his Majesty, and will not take up arms, nor encourage others to take up arms in opposition to this authority.”

Once people had taken the oath, they would receive the protection of the British Army. Anyone who refused to take the oath would-be treated as a rebel. This was an attempt to encourage widespread support. The November 30th Proclamation became the official British standard of

¹⁰ Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*, pp.74-78.

¹¹ On 6 July, four days after landing on Staten Island Howe gathered the local population and required them to sign an oath of allegiance to the crown. On 14 July a more official policy followed. General Howe issued a Proclamation stating that anybody who swore an oath of allegiance to the Britain before a crown official would receive a “full and free pardon.” The offer of amnesty extended to all thirteen colonies. Coming just days after the arrival of the fleet, the Proclamation told Americans now was the time to support Britain. On 19th September after the capture of New York City, the General Howe issued a second Proclamation repeating the offer of the first. Both Proclamation’s met with success and provide the blueprint for the invasion of New Jersey. See: Force For evidence of the impact of the first two British proclamations see Force and comp, *American Archives: Consisting of a Collection of Authentick Records, State Papers, Debates, and Letters and Other Notices of Publick Affairs, the Whole Forming a Documentary History of the Origin and Progress of the North American Colonies; of the Causes and Accomplishment of the American Revolution; and of the Constitution of Government for the United States, to the Final Ratification Thereof. In Six Ser., Ser. 5, Vol.1*, pp.38, 106, 139, 587-588, 602, 603, 829, 1534.

Loyalism during the occupation. In the last weeks of November and the first weeks of December General Howe returned to the comfort of New York and waited to see how the population of New Jersey would respond.¹²

The British invasion divided the civilian population. As 10,000 British troops advanced and the 4,000 American troops retreated, confusion gripped New Jersey. Thousands of colonists packed up their belongings and fled south towards the Delaware River and the relative safety of Pennsylvania. Thousands more decided to stay and take advantage of the British amnesty and collaborate. “We find Sir,” Washington wrote to the President of Congress, “that the Enemy are daily gathering strength from the disaffected.” Looking across the Delaware at New Jersey, Washington spoke from experience: “this Strength grows like a Snow ball by rolling, will Increase, unless some means can be devised to check, effectually, the progress of the Enemy’s Arms.”¹³ Major General Nathaniel Greene commanded Washington’s flank. Watching the main battle, he reached the same conclusion as his commander. From Coryell’s Ferry he wrote “Altho I am far from thinking the American Cause desperate, yet I conceive it to be a critical situation. The Enemy is the Heart of our Country; the disaffected dayly increasing.”¹⁴ Loyalism in New Jersey functioned as a projection of British military power.

¹²*Ibid.*, Ser. 5, Vol.3, pp.297-298.

¹³ George Fitzpatrick John Clement Washington and David Maydole ed. Matteson, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1931), Vol.6, p.402.

¹⁴ Nathanael Showman Richard K. Conrad Dennis Michael Greene and Roger N. Parks ed., *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Rhode Island Historical Society [by] the University of North Carolina Press, 1976), pp.371-372, 375.

Contemporary accounts trace the flow of troops into British camps as the Army moved south from the Hudson River down the Delaware River.¹⁵ Town by town, British and American observers noted the transformation. A doctor with the Continental Army found, “The precipitate Retreat of our Troops from Hackensack has made thousands of Tories.”¹⁶ One of these men was Abraham Van Buskirk. He joined the British Army “when they came into his House.”¹⁷ At New Brunswick, Israel Carver wrote, that since “the rebels abandoned Fort Lee, they have been hurrying through the Jerseys and that “most of the people here” were looking forward to the defeat of the “arch-rebel Washington” and the arrival of General Cornwallis. Waiting anxiously for their arrival, Carver added to the letter, “Ned has just come in from Bonum [East Brunswick] by the back road and says that the British troops are now passed through the town and will soon be here.”¹⁸ Ned was right. They were only five miles off. A Hessian officer who marched into town found that “so many Loyalists arrived at headquarters from the country who assured the Commanding General that Washington and his Army were in a wretched condition, that if the campaign were continued the enemy Army would disperse and break up.”¹⁹ A few days later

¹⁵ The impact of the Proclamation extended as far as British military control. Few Loyalists traveled more than one or two days to reach the Army. Without the nearby presence or expectation of Regulars challenging patriot control, Americans continued to support the Revolution or at least not help the British. The British Army created a channel of Loyalism from the Hudson River to Burlington leaving the counties at the far edges of the State unaffected. To the west in Sussex County and to the south in Burlington County, Gloucester, Salem and Cumberland saw isolated incidents of Loyalism in 1776, but nothing significant. In Cape May County, the furthest from the British Army, inhabitants appear to have ignored the campaign. See for example the case of colonists in Sussex County who expressed pro-British sympathies, but did not engage in active. Deposition of Thomas Clarke in New Jersey State Archives New Jersey Council of Safety Ser. Records 1776-1781, Box 2-3 depositions. (Hereafter NJSA).

¹⁶ Lee Papers in *Proceedings of the New York Historical Society*, 1871-1872, Vol.2. 1, p.327.

¹⁷ *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Vol.15, "Memorial of Abraham Van Buskirk".

¹⁸ William M. Dwyer, *The Day Is Ours!: November 1776-January 1777: An inside View of the Battles of Trenton and Princeton* (New York: Viking Press, 1983), p.52.

¹⁹ Johann von Ewald, *Diary of the American War: A Hessian Journal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), pp.24-25.

when the advance reached Princeton Richard Cochran joined General Howe. He later told British officials “That immediately on General Howe’s arrival at Princeton, your Memorialist joined the King’s Army and rendered them every service in his power.” True to his word, Cochran sent his “own Negroes & such of the County People I could to repair the Bridge for the Army to pass.” The retreating troops had destroyed the bridge to cover their escape.²⁰

When the Redcoats arrived on December 6, Trenton became the next center of Loyalism. As the troops approached the town the now familiar scene unfolded: local men came forward and took General Howe’s oath. David White, for example claimed he was the first person to join the British when he entered the town.²¹ As it became clear that the Army would pause for several days, John Leonard brought about 100 of his “Friends in a Body Armed [and] joined His Majesty’s Troops at Trenton.” This proved the largest group to reach Trenton, but others came in ones and twos. These included, for example, Christopher and John Vought, brothers from Hunterdon County. In all, much of General Howe’s time spent between the 6 and 9 administering the oath of allegiance to men in Trenton.²²

When the Army halted at the Delaware River the last group of men decided to join up. Bordentown, just a few miles from the river, became a rallying point. From the surrounding area colonists made their way to the house of Joseph Borden to take advantage of the British

²⁰ *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office, 12, Vol.14, "Memorial of Richard Cochran".

²¹ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.13, "Memorial of David White".

²² Smith, *The Battle of Trenton*, p.8.

amnesty.²³ A few miles away in Burlington, one British officer notice that “Almost every house along the road had a red rag nailed up on the door” as a sign they supported the Redcoats.²⁴

The response to the British amnesty was one of the largest examples of group Loyalism during the first years of the Revolutionary War. According to General Howe, 2,700 took the British oath over the winter.²⁵ Historians have accepted Howe’s estimate as an acceptable figure.²⁶ The New Jersey Volunteers, a Loyalist regiment raised during the British occupation, recruited 2, 450 men between September 1776 and September 1777.²⁷ Patriot authorities in late 1777 estimated that over 2,000 joined the British.²⁸ It seemed that General Howe had read the colonial situation correctly and had managed to win over the hearts and minds of the civilian population by issuing an unconditional amnesty.

Only the most astute observers realized that not everyone who stayed in New Jersey was a committed Loyalist. The large scale response to the British amnesty masked a complicated range of conflicting motivations. In the weeks after the invasion as the Redcoats and colonists settled into their assigned role of occupiers and occupied, a number of different types of collaboration appeared. Just because colonists swore not to challenge British authority in accordance to General Howe’s Proclamation, did not make them supporters of the crown. Instead the group of 2,500 collaborators contained men with very different motivations from radical

²³ Deposition of Joseph Borden at NJSA, New Jersey Council of Safety Ser. Records 1776-1781 Box 2-3

²⁴ Dwyer, *The Day Is Ours!: November 1776-January 1777: An inside View of the Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p.283.

²⁵ General Howe to George Germain March 25th 1777: MSS. Colonial Office, London: Class 5 Vol.177, p. 127.

²⁶ Lundin, *Cockpit of the Revolution; the War for Independence in New Jersey*, pp.158-161, Calhoun, Barnes, and Rawlyk, *Loyalists and Community in North America*, p.362.

²⁷ Calhoun, *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America, 1760-1781*, p.362, Paul Smith “New Jersey Loyalists and the British “Provincial Corps in the War of Independence,” *New Jersey Journal*, Vol.87 (Summer 1969): 69-78.

²⁸ This number comes from the minutes of the Council of Safety, a committee established in May 1777 to prosecute anyone who had collaborated with the British. They collected information on over 2,000. See, Richard S. Hutchinson, *Abstracts of the Council of Safety Minutes, State of New Jersey, 1777-1778* (Westminster, Md.: Heritage Books, 2005).

Loyalists, to pragmatic farmers to coerced Revolutionaries afraid for their lives. People had to decide what collaboration meant to them. These divisions amongst collaborators reveal civilians attempts to negotiate the uniform standard of Loyalism created by General Howe. Recognizing the existence of these groups and understanding how they interacted with each other and the British Army holds the key to the negotiated reality of wartime collaboration. The most significant relationships between the British Army and the civilian population would-be constructed during the next weeks as a politics of occupation developed between the soldiers and civilians.

1. Active Collaborators:

At one end of the spectrum of responses, a small number of men distinguished themselves from the general population by their active support for the British cause. Several characteristics distinguished their collaboration from the majority of colonists who took the oath of allegiance: they held positions of local influence in the colonial government, developed pro-British sympathies between 1774-1776, and in December 1776 thought of themselves as leaders of a Loyalist community. When the Redcoats arrived they immediately seized the opportunity to take control of the political debate by becoming the British Armies connection to the local community. A number of men formed a civilian administration for the Army. Others supported the Army by rounding up supplies and searching for any signs of resistance. A third group recruited colonists for the newly formed colonial regiments to fight alongside the British Army.

In total these men never numbered more than a few hundred, but under the protection of the British Army they enjoyed a disproportional influence on the local political debate.²⁹

The attempt by a self-proclaimed Loyalist elite to take control of occupied New Jersey took the form of a rushed seizure of power instead of a coordinated usurpation of the former Revolutionary consensus. Despite nearly a year of speculation Loyalists had not prepared for the British invasion. Patriots had successfully clamped down on all suspicious activity in the fall of 1776.³⁰ The few Loyalists who managed to escape detection saw their only option as going into exile. Therefore, when General Howe crossed the Hudson River, individuals faced the dilemma of how to take advantage of their new power. The British Army offered only minimal help. Howe and his commanders hoped the November Proclamation would bring New Jersey under control and had no comprehensive strategy for reconstituting civil authority. Without guidance, local structures of power became important guidelines for occupational politics. community

²⁹ The British Army did not attempt to create a civilian government in New Jersey. Instead, they made extensive use of civilians to encourage and police popular support. Throughout the Revolutionary War, the British Army preferred to rule occupied territories through martial law. The only attempts at civilian rule occurred in New York and the Southern Colonies towards the end of the Revolution. For further information about the importance of local leadership in shaping revolutionary allegiances see: Rachel N. Klein, "Frontier Planters and the American Revolution: The South Carolina Backcountry, 1775-1782," in Ronald Hoffman, et al eds. *An Uncivil War: The Southern Backcountry during the American Revolution* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1985); Albert H. Tillson, Jr., "the Localist Roots of Backcountry Loyalism: An Examination of Popular Political Culture of Virginia's New River Valley," *Journal of Southern History* 54 (1988); Joseph S. Tiedemann, "Communities in the Midst of the American Revolution: Queens County, New York, 1774-1775," *Journal of Social History* (Sept. 1984); Joseph S. Tiedemann, "Patriots by Default: Queens County, New York, and the British Army, 1776-1783," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., Vol.43, No. 1 (Jan., 1986). For further information about the British Army and civilian rule see: Frederick Bernays Wiener, *Civilians under Military Justice; the British Practice since 1689, Especially in North America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), Milton M. Klein, "An Experiment that Failed: General James Robertson and Civil Government in British New York, 1779-1783, *New York Journal*, Vol.61, no 3 (July, 1980).

³⁰ For details of the Revolutionary ascendancy in 1776, see: Lundin, *Cockpit of the Revolution; the War for Independence in New Jersey*, p.119, Force and comp, *American Archives: Consisting of a Collection of Authentick Records, State Papers, Debates, and Letters and Other Notices of Publick Affairs, the Whole Forming a Documentary History of the Origin and Progress of the North American Colonies; of the Causes and Accomplishment of the American Revolution; and of the Constitution of Government for the United States, to the Final Ratification Thereof. In Six Ser.*, Ser. 5, Vol.1, pp.38, 139, 200, 489, 602, 1534, Hutchinson, *Abstracts of the Council of Safety Minutes, State of New Jersey, 1777-1778*, pp.335, 336-337, 428, 539.

leaders who relied upon community ties attempted to exercise their own ideas of a Loyalist regime. The result was a variety of coordinated and uncoordinated tactics adopted by a mixture of former crown officials and local leaders.

Amongst the earliest and most high profile collaborators were a group of former crown officials who received commissions to administer the British amnesty.³¹ Between November and December at least thirteen men volunteered to oversee General Howe's Proclamation between November and December. These men shared a common background as prominent local officials who had suffered for their pro-British sympathies and welcomed the opportunity to assert their authority. In their capacity to approve or reject everyone's application for amnesty, this small group became the one of the most visible faces of collaboration in New Jersey. Together they formed the skeleton of an occupation regime working for the British Army. Sufficient information remains to reconstruct the backgrounds of six of the thirteen men.³²

In Monmouth County three men worked loosely together to administer the British amnesty. John Taylor of Middleton, John Lawrence of Upper Freehold and John Wardell from Shrewsbury were well known for their strong opposition to independence. Taylor earned a living as a local magistrate³³, Lawrence was a minor official³⁴ and Wardell was a crown appointed

³¹ Material on reconstitution of civil government. The Army was, however, aware of the benefit of using local civilians to aid their administration. These men, were completely dependent on military authority.

³² See also *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Vol.14, "Memorial of Henry Wardell", Hutchinson, *Abstracts of the Council of Safety Minutes, State of New Jersey, 1777-1778*, p.3, William Prince Carl E. Livingston, *The Papers of William Livingston*, 5 Vols. (Trenton: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1979), Vol.1, p.356, E. Alfred Jones, *The Loyalists of New Jersey; Their Memorials, Petitions, Claims, Etc., from English Records, The American Revolutionary*. (Boston: Gregg Press, 1972), p.241.

³³ *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III*

judge sitting on the county court of common pleas and author of a widely circulated petition against independence early in 1776.³⁵ No exact record survives of when the men joined the British Army, but by mid-November, Taylor and Lawrence attempted to muster the Monmouth County militia and by early December Taylor, Lawrence and Wardell were working together to administer General Howe's oath.³⁶

Across the county line in Middlesex, three men regulated the British amnesty to the local population. Ebenezer Foster, a judge of the inferior court from Woodbridge and John Smyth a clerk of the court of common pleas from Perth Amboy also had a shared history of Loyalist activity going back to 1774. Foster became one of the most vocal supporters for moderation in 1775, and, by January 1776, his opposition to American independence had landed him in jail. In the confusion of the British advance, Foster was released three days after Howe's Proclamation appeared on November 30. Upon returning home, Foster immediately volunteered to administer the oath in Woodbridge.³⁷ Smyth had a very similar road to collaboration. As a crown employee in the old colonial capital, Smyth was exposed to a strong current of Loyalism. Like Foster he was arrested for opposing the Revolution and imprisoned before being released at the beginning of the British invasion. When first columns of Redcoats arrived in his hometown, Smyth applied for a common "taking the Oaths of Allegiance prescribed to the inhabitants in Perth Amboy."³⁸

Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790, Audit Office, 12, Vol.14, "Memorial of John Taylor".

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.14, "Memorial of John Lawrence".

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.14, "Memorial of John Wardell".

³⁶ NJSA, Department of Defence Adjunct-General's Office Revolutionary War, Numbered Manuscripts, 1770-1890, Box 9, item 1141.

³⁷ *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office, 12, Vol.16, "Memorial of Ebenezer Foster".

³⁸ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.14, "Memorial of John Smyth".

A third man, Bernardus LaGrange had made himself one of the most hated Loyalists in Middlesex County. LaGrange opposed the Revolution from the start of 1774 and gained a reputation for his politics. In June 1775 the residents of New Brunswick carted an effigy of LaGrange through the streets of the town. A year later in June 1776 an anonymous author posted a public letter warning LaGrange to conform or suffer the consequences.³⁹ When the British arrived in Brunswick LeGrange successfully applied to administer the pardon to his neighbors. He reveled in his new status. After being persecuted for two years he was, in his own words, “honoured...in being appointed to administer the oaths of allegiance, and to deliver protections to such persons as came in.” He also noted that he was carrying out his duties with “unwearied assiduity”.⁴⁰ Disgruntled men, like Bernardus LaGrange, who had been intimidated into silence now had the freedom to come forward.

Further south at the other end of occupied New Jersey, the Mayor of Burlington volunteered to administer the British oath and distribute protections. John Lawrence – a cousin of his namesake in Monmouth County – left few records of his politics between 1774-1776. However, by the British invasion he was in contact with many of the most prominent collaborator throughout New Jersey.⁴¹ In November 1776 as the Redcoats approached he moved from Burlington, which was still in the reach of American guns on the Delaware River, to the safety of nearby Bordentown and began interviewing men hoping to take advantage of the

³⁹ The notice began: “...at a time when every true friend for Liberty is roused with an honest indignation of avenging his Country’s wrongs, you have, B. Legrange, from the beginning of the present Contest for Liberty, and do still by the whole of your conduct heartily agree with the destructive measures pursued against us.” Larry R. Gerlach, *New Jersey in the American Revolution, 1763-1783: A Documentary History* (Trenton: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1975), pp.240-242.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.76-77.

⁴¹ Deposition of Gilbert Barton against John Lawrence April 5th 1777 Monmouth County, NJSA, R.Group, New Jersey Council of Safety Ser. Records 1776-1781 Contents Loose Papers 1776-1781. Box 1 minutes, Box 2-3 depositions.

amnesty. One witness remembered that “John Lawrence of Burlington City...did qualify sundry Persons to the Effect of Declaration contained in the Proclamation issued by General Howe.”⁴²

While one group of local leaders with administrative experience distributed the British amnesty, a second group set about weeding out any Patriot sympathizers who remained in occupied New Jersey. With the tacit backing of the British Army, groups of men organized themselves into informal militias. They also shared a history of suspicion, persecution or imprisonment for their Loyalism. In the winter of 1776-1777, these gangs terrorized anyone who still supported the Revolution, using a mixture of violence and intimidation to enforce an imagined political consensus on their neighbors. As this sort of vigilantism underpinned the occupation, the British Army made no attempt to interfere and in practice gave over day-to-day authority over a large swath of New Jersey.

The most active group came from Monmouth County. Jesse Woodward and Richard Robins waged their own campaign against suspected rebels in the region around Upper Freehold. In June 1776 as the British Army landed in New York, both men had participated in a failed uprising in Monmouth County against the Revolutionary government of New Jersey. Following the revolt, the New Jersey authorities issued warrants for Woodward, Robins and their associates.⁴³ Both men managed to escape and spent their time on the run until the British invasion.⁴⁴ Their families, however, were not as lucky. The residents of Upper Freehold

⁴² Livingston, *The Papers of William Livingston*, Vol.1, pp.2880289. See also the deposition of Thomas Farr in NJSA, New Jersey Council of Safety Ser. Records 1776-1781, Box 2-3.

⁴³The minutes of the Provincial Council of New Jersey records: “Whereas it appear, from undoubted intelligence , that there are several insurgents in the County of Monmouth, who take every measures in their power to contravene the regulations of Congress, and to oppose the cause of American freedom; and , as it is highly necessary that an immediate check be given to so daring a spirit of disaffection.” *Minutes of the Provincial Congress and the Council of Safety of the State of New Jersey [1775-1776]*, (Trenton: Printed by Naar, Day & Naar, 1879), p.476.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p.477.

threatened Antony Woodward's family and forced his wife and children to flee the state.⁴⁵ When the chance came to support the British occupation, Woodward and Robins wasted no time in targeting their former neighbors.

The first evidence of Jesse Woodward and Richard Robbins rounding up suspected rebels comes from mid-December. On 11 December Woodward led a "Party of armed men" terrorizing local inhabitants. With Robins he singled out members of the community he suspected of supporting the Revolution and subjected them to an on the spot inquisition. William Imlay became one of their targets. Robins entered his house and questioned him. He then took "two Guns and some Powder, which he delivered into the hands of Jesses Woodward." According to Imlay, Woodward then remarked, "now the Staff is in our Hands", adding that he came by order of General How[e]." The men were disarming rebels while arming themselves. Robins lived in Upper Freehold and knew just where to look. Not yet finished ransacking the town, Woodward and Robins with three associates paid Lewis Bestedo a visit. All of them were armed. They took Bestedo prisoner and "compelled him to go to Trenton" to appear before the British troops. During the journey, Bestedo heard Robin's declare that the "Rebels...would have to answer for the lives of all the regular Troops that should be killed..." Jesse Woodward and Richard Robins returned to Upper Freehold on December 12 to finish the business of disarming suspected rebels. Thomas Forman saw them at the house of William Hendrickson with seven armed men, including Woodward's cousin Anthony. They asked Hendrickson "whether he had any arms and ammunition". Woodward and his men had their suspicions. They had already taken a musket out of Hendrickson's barn belonging to Christopher Longstreet "whom they called a Rebel, and had

⁴⁵ The petition of George Woodward, setting forth the distressed situation of the wife and children of Anthony Woodward Minutes, *Ibid.*, p.507.

been very active against the King.” Not satisfied with Hendrickson’s answers they searched his house and then asked him to go to Trenton and take the oath of allegiance. Unfortunately for him, Hendrickson chose this moment to make a stand and refused. Woodward therefore took him prisoner and added him to the list being taken to Trenton. By the time Woodward arrived at Trenton, one witness claimed he had disarmed sixteen or seventeen men.⁴⁶

From collecting arms, Woodward and Robins hatched a larger plan to dominate the whole of Monmouth County. Leaving Hendrickson’s house on 13 December they headed for the local tavern to plan their next move. Meeting six other men, Anthony questioned the barman, William Taylor, about rebels living somewhere near the Freehold County Court House. With liquid courage the company “expressed a desire to go and get them.” Warming to his customers Taylor cast a professional eye over the company and told them “You are not strong enough; go and collect more Strength, and I will join you; for damn them I want to be revenged of them.” Taylor had traveled to the British camp on Long Island in September and received a lieutenant commission in the New Jersey Volunteers.⁴⁷ Leaving the tavern, the gang began preparing to collect more men and arms the men split into parties. One group went to the house of Nathaniel Cook and “disarmed him,” while the other found more men. Taylor stayed at the tavern and found six muskets that he distributed when the men returned. Now with the men and the means, the party deputized John Leonard and Anthony Woodward to “procure Aid & Assistance from the British Army, for the Purpose of going to Freehold, and attacking the Militia...who were

⁴⁶ A detailed account of the activities of Jesse Woodward, Richard Robins and their associates survives in the depositions of their victims. See the depositions of Alexander Montgomery, William Imlay, an anonymous William, Lewis Bestedo, John Andrews and Thomas Forman, in NJSA, New Jersey Council of Safety Ser. Records 1776-1781 Box 2-3.

⁴⁷ New Jersey Volunteers Roster of Officers 1776-1783, from the Online Institute of Advanced Loyalist Studies. See: <http://www.royalprovincial.com/military/rhist/njv/njvofficers.htm>.

then in the Service of the State.” While waiting for the men to return, the rest of the company set about disarming more suspicious locals.⁴⁸

Jesse Woodward and Richard Robins did not attack the Monmouth County Court House, but they did change the political culture of Upper Freehold and the surrounding area. They managed to create a late wave of Loyalism in Upper Freehold. On December 20th, Thomas Farr, “with sundry other persons, went to Bordentown and applied for protections [from] John Lawrence Esq. of the City of Burlington.”⁴⁹

Another group of local leaders attempted to encourage collaboration by recruiting local men into the British Army. Even before the invasion of New Jersey, General Howe began issuing warrants to volunteers to recruit a fixed number of men in exchange for an officer’s commission. This was the standard policy of the British Army during the Revolutionary War. British commanders hoped to offset the difficulties of transporting replacements from Europe by raising colonial regiments to fight in support of the regular army. In different colonies and at different times during the fighting, the British troops had mixed success. In New Jersey a

⁴⁸ Nearby, two associates of Jesse Woodward were not above threatening a young girl to find her father’s gun. Ann Farr was looking through window on 13th December when she saw a party of horsemen on the road. Two of the group broke off and headed towards her father’s house. She knew one of the men, William Thorpe. The one she did not know asked her if Thomas Farr was at home. The man pressed the point and she said her father had gone to a neighbor’s house. The man then asked whether there were any arms or ammunition in the house. She said that her father had not owned a gun for a while and that when he served with the militia near Perth Amboy they had to find him one. The man then threatened that the Hessians and light horse would arrive soon and not be so forgiving. She finally asked the man his name and discovered he was Thomas Woodward, son of Anthony, Jesse Woodward’s cousin.⁴⁸ Ann escaped the incident unharmed, but the experience demonstrated how northern New Jersey had descended into civil war. See the deposition of Ann Farr, NJSA, New Jersey Council of Safety Ser. Records 1776-1781 Box 2-3.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Deposition of Ann Farr.

network of local recruiters came forward and managed to enlist several hundred men during the occupation.⁵⁰

Some colonists took an early stand and acted as guides attached to the British regiments. John Aldington became a guide for the British Army when they landed in Bergen County. After the War General Cornwallis testified that Aldington “was a zealous Loyalist and that he guided the troops under my command when I landed in the province of New Jersey in the Year 1776.”⁵¹ Cavalier Jouet from Elizabeth town gave to directions to British troops and pointed out noted patriots in town. In the words of Governor William Livingston, Jouet was “by general reputation a malignant Tory, and having taken great pains to prejudice people under his influence against the American cause.” Taking action the town had banished him in July 1776 and Jouet had gone to the relative safety of Bergen County to wait for the British arrival.⁵² Samuel Smith joined this exclusive group in Monmouth in 1776. He was a Quaker and therefore could not bear arms, but was able to help British cause by providing intelligence and acting as a guide in 1776 and the beginning of 1777 and other later occasions.⁵³ A number went the next step and decided to join Loyalist regiments.

Shortly after the arrival of the Army, General Howe and his subordinates began issuing warrants to men to raise companies for the New Jersey Volunteers commanded by Brigadier-General Cortlandt Skinner. Cortlandt had sat on the Royal Council in New Jersey before fleeing

⁵⁰ For an overview of the attempts to raise Loyalist regiments see: Paul Hubert Smith, *Loyalists and Redcoats: A Study in British Revolutionary Policy* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Va., by the University of North Carolina Press, 1964).

⁵¹ Dwyer, *The Day Is Ours!: November 1776-January 1777: An inside View of the Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, pp.24-25.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.44.

⁵³ *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office, 12, Vol.16, "The Memorial of Samuel Smith".

to a British warship off the coast. From then he had taken an active role in promoting Loyalist sentiment in his home colony. The Volunteers would consist of six battalions, numbering about 450 men. The muster rolls show that in total 2,450 men served in the regiment's battalions from 1776 to disbandment in 1783. In 1777 the actual strength of the Volunteers was close to 700. The regiment started recruiting in Long Island and continued in occupied Jersey. Most of the 700 men joined during this period.⁵⁴

The largest concentration of recruits came from Bergen and Monmouth Counties where Jesse Woodward and his men were most active. Jacob Nobel from Bergen County encouraged a number of men to join the Volunteers and later served as major in the fourth battalion, commanded by a neighbor, Abraham Van Buskirk. Two relatives John and Jacob served under him as lieutenants. All three Buskirk family members recruited in Bergen. Six other men from Bergen County also held warrants for Bergen County. John Throckmorton from Monmouth County joined the British in December and raised a company (normally around 30 men) for a lieutenant's commission in the first battalion. Robert Drummond from Essex County received one of the first commissions on 20 November to raise men. He proved a capable recruiter, managing to find one hundred and twenty men for the Volunteers in return for the rank of major. In total, 66 men received warrants for commission, from ensign to lieutenant colonel between November and December. Only three men failed to reach their quota of men.⁵⁵

Taken together, these were the most radical acts in support of the British occupation of New Jersey. Men like John Lawrence who administered the British amnesty Anthony Woodward

⁵⁴ Ryan, *New Jersey's Loyalists*, p.4. For a history of the New Jersey Volunteers see: William S. Stryker, *"The New Jersey Volunteers" (Loyalists) in the Revolutionary War* ([Trenton, N.J.?], Naar, Day & Naar], 1887).

⁵⁵ New Jersey Volunteers Roster of Officers 1776-1783, from the Online Institute of Advanced Loyalist Studies. See: <http://www.royalprovincial.com/military/rhist/njv/njvofficers.htm>

who rounded up suspected Patriots, and Cortlandt Skinner who commanded the New Jersey Volunteers had each negotiated a high standard of collaboration that set the benchmark for other civilians. They had acted from a strong commitment to the British Empire and treated the Revolutionary War as a civil war between Loyalists and Revolutionaries. However, this was not the only type of collaboration. Other colonists without the same history of Loyalism still took advantage of General Howe's amnesty.

2. Pragmatic Collaborators:

A different configuration of local and imperial politics appeared amongst another group of colonists who took a pragmatic approach to collaboration. The majority of colonists who took advantage of General Howe's amnesty in the first weeks of December, did not consider themselves Loyalists. Previously they had supported the Patriot status quo and now they just wanted to support the new rulers of New Jersey. For these men, collaboration was less a political issue and more a tactic to keep their property and families intact. After swearing allegiance to the Britain and receiving their certificate of protection from British soldiers, this group of colonists made no further efforts to support the British occupation. For as long as the British stayed in New Jersey, this type of pragmatic collaboration represented a second strand in the popular politics of wartime Loyalism.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ The idea of pragmatic collaborators has started to receive sustained attention from studies of the Revolutionary War. A number of historians have found evidence of opportunistic men and women who supported the British Army or Continental Army for personal benefit. Where these studies stop short is in explaining how these individuals fit into our larger understanding of the Revolutionary debate. For an provocative example of studies examining the grey areas of Revolutionary politics see: Sung Bok Kim, "The Limits of Politicization in the American Revolution: The Experience of Westchester County, New York," *The Journal of American History* 80, No. 3 (1993).

These men and women had no history of Loyalism. Earlier in 1776, the government of New Jersey had arrested or exiled anybody suspected of British sympathies. Only a few tenacious individuals had managed to remain hidden. The majority had shown support for the Revolution before the arrival of the British Army. Jonathan Sayre, for example, was described by his friends as “not very zealous for Britain” and being “pretty warm in his Principles in favor of the Rebels.” However, “when the British came in 1776 he joined them and remained with them in Newark.”⁵⁷ One Nathaniel Richards, mustered with the Middlesex County militia and guarded New York in expectation of a British attack, before also taking the oath in Newark.⁵⁸ Ellis Barron served in the local Woodbridge town militia right up to the moment when the British marched through. At this point, he switched sides.⁵⁹ Edward Bowlby signed a Revolutionary association in 1774 and mustered with Morris County militia.⁶⁰ John Brown served as a commissary for the Continental Army in his hometown of New Brunswick before switching sides when the British Army arrived.⁶¹ And so on. It seemed to one high ranking member of the New Jersey Assembly that men who only a few weeks ago clamored to raise a regiment and burn down the houses of every opponent of independence “were the first to join the enemy as soon as they appeared in force.”⁶²

⁵⁷ *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Vol.15, "Memorial of Jonathan Sayre".

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.15, "Memorial of Nathaniel Richards".

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.15, "Memorial of Ellis Barron".

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.15, "Memorial of Edward Bowlby".

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.15, "Memorial of John Brown".

⁶² Dwyer, *The Day Is Ours!: November 1776-January 1777: An inside View of the Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, pp.60-61, William Bamford, “Bamford’s Diary: The Revolutionary Diary of a British Officer”, *Maryland Historical Magazine*, Vol., 27 (Dec., 1932), pp. 240-249, Vol., 28 (Mar., 1933), pp. 9-26.

Instead of Loyalist politics, collaborating with the British represented a gamble over the safety of their families and property. At the time of the Revolution, New Jersey was a colony of farmers, artisans and small merchants. The common experience of owning property shaped how the majority of colonists approached the dilemma of collaboration or resistance in war torn New Jersey. Stories fueled by Patriot propaganda had already begun circulating about the conduct of British soldiers across the boarder in occupied New York.⁶³ General Howe had issued general orders to punish looting, but civilians had no way of knowing this. Instead, the arrival of the Army in New Jersey sparked a debate over the best way to protect home and hearth in which taking the British amnesty was only one option.

Many colonists had refused to trust the British Army and fled with their valuables loaded in carts. As British and Hessian soldiers entered towns, they discovered many empty houses with bare shelves. After exploring Trenton, for example, one Hessian officer concluded, “The inhabitants, like those at Princeton are almost all fled, so that we occupy bare walls.”⁶⁴ In Princeton, Mr. Johnson and his student lodger packed up their possessions “[K]nowing [that] unless we got off our things while we had our wagon’s they must necessarily fall into the enemy’s hands.” The pair had just seen Washington’s retreating Army pass through Princeton and feared that the British were close behind.⁶⁵ A Hessian patrol stumbled upon a similar scene near Morristown. The soldiers had orders to find the owner of a local house and force him to act

⁶³Christopher Duane and William Marshall ed., *Extracts from the Diary of Christopher Marshall, 1774-1781, Eyewitness Accounts of the American Revolution* ([New York] New York times, 1969), p.103.

⁶⁴ Extract from a Hessian journal , translated in the July 26th 1777 edition of the *Pennsylvanian Evening Post*.

⁶⁵ Dwyer, *The Day Is Ours!: November 1776-January 1777: An inside View of the Battles of Trenton and Princeton*, p.188.

as a guide. However, when they arrived “the courtyard was full of wagons and people preparing to flee.”⁶⁶

Others refused to take the oath but remained in New Jersey. Staying was not a sign of trust. Most hoped to live through the British occupation unnoticed, but when the troops arrived they turned to short-term solutions to protect their property. In Newark, when the troops appeared enterprising homeowners employed men to guard the front door and warn off the potential plunderers.⁶⁷ According to an anonymous diarist in Princeton, townsmen relied on friends in the surrounding countryside to hide possession.⁶⁸ In Burlington, Margaret Morris wrote in her diary that the appearance of the Hessians sparked a discussion with the neighbors over the best place to leave family silver.⁶⁹

In contrast, colonists who took advantage of the British amnesty hoped the Redcoats would extend special treatment to collaborators and only plunder rebels. The key part of the British amnesty for this group was the offer of protection, not the oath of allegiance. The proclamation explained that the protection of the British Army would only extend to people who took the oath, when they would receive a certificate signed by a crown official. These receipts became colloquially known amongst collaborators and soldiers as “protections”. With a protection in hand, individuals could go on enjoying their property without being treated as rebels by the British troops. Colonists swore allegiance, received their promised protections and then went home without engaging in any other Loyalist act.

⁶⁶ Ewald, *Diary of the American War: A Hessian Journal*, p.64.

⁶⁷ Gerlach, *New Jersey in the American Revolution, 1763-1783: A Documentary History*, pp.296-298.

⁶⁸ Robert B Lawrence, *A Brief Narrative of the Ravages of the British and Hessians at Princeton: [by Robert Lawrence] Ca. 1776-1777. Manuscript*, pp.9-10.

⁶⁹ Margaret Morris Margaret Morris, *Private Journal Kept During a Portion of the Revolutionary War, for the Amusement of a Sister* (Philadelphia: Privately printed, 1836), p.13.

Small land and large landowners alike gambled that collaboration was the best way to protect their property. The President of the Provincial Legislature, Samuel Tucker, changed sides to save his estate in Trenton. In July, he had helped write the first oath of allegiance to the state of New Jersey. As late as September he could write of his resolute commitment to the Revolutionary cause.⁷⁰ Yet, when the British reached Trenton, he changed sides. At first, as the Redcoats approached, Tucker was unsure about the proper course of actions. A mixture of personal and material concerns soon put the matter in context for him. He left Trenton the day before the British arrived. He remained away for several days before concern for his sick wife led him to home. On the way, he was captured by a band of Loyalists and confined for three days. During his imprisonment, Tucker learnt that most of real and personal estate had been confiscated. In an effort to get the return of his property, Tucker took a protection from Howe.⁷¹

Small farmers also took Protections. Typical of many was John Bray, an unremarkable Middlesex farmer. He took the oath and received a protection as soon General Cornwallis entered Raritan Landing. Like most farmers, Bray did not have strong views on the Revolution. He did know, however, that he wanted to keep his land. When the Redcoats appeared, Bray assumed the Revolution had failed and collaborated. He was so convinced that he wrote to his uncles to persuade him to follow him. "You are acquainted that the British Troop have Possession of this Place," Bray wrote his uncle "and you may depend that they will go through the Country whenever they attempt it and great destruction follows wherever they go that I would recommend it to all my doubt you have heard of is free to all during its limitation." If his uncle worried about being singled out as a Loyalist, Bray offered reassurance: "Great numbers

⁷⁰ New Jersey Archives, Ser. 1 (Trenton), Vol.1 p.11.

⁷¹ Beatty, "The Tory Civilians of New Jersey During and after the American Revolution," pp.36-37.

flock in daily to head Quarters” at Raritan Landing. Collaborating had no stigma if everyone was doing it. Therefore, Bray went on, “You can come down & receive Protection & return home without molestation on the Part of the Kings Troops and you best know the Situation of the Provincial Army.” As the family patriarch, Bray finished by asking his uncle to convince the rest of the family to take Protections soon. There was a danger in waiting too long. “Do advice Couzin Johny & Th[om]s & Couzin Th[om]s Jones for if they do stay out to the last they will undoubtedly fair the Worst. I Expect to see you here shortly In the Interim Remain, my Wife Joining me in Self & family.” Having made his argument for taking the British oath, Bray finished by passing on the best wishes of himself, wife and children. This last touch underscored that John Bray's motives for taking the oath were local, not imperial.⁷²

Another small farmer, Daniel Bancroft, took a protection when the army arrived to protect his property. As a prisoner in a Philadelphia jail in 1777, Bancroft petitioned Congress for relief. He explained that he had been taken by a party of Hessians at Mount Holly and held. It was during this time he signed a “Declaration “not to take up arms, &c., in the present War.” Going on, however, Bancroft reveals that he wanted to do more than satisfy the Hessian soldiers. He was obliged to take a protection because the Army was marching towards his home at Mount Holly and he wanted to “prevent himself & property from being plundered, he was obliged to take a protection.” Bancroft explained he was part of a group of twenty at the time; presumably, others followed his lead.⁷³

Having received their protections, men like John Bray and Daniel Bancroft returned home and made no further attempt to support the British occupation. Unlike their radical

⁷² Gerlach, *New Jersey in the American Revolution, 1763-1783: A Documentary History*, pp.364-365.

⁷³ Pennsylvania Archives, Ser. 2, Vol.1. pp. 686-7, 692-3.

neighbors who acted to strengthen British rule, they disappear from the historical record during the occupation. Once they had returned to their pre-war lives as farmers, artisan and traders, they had no cause to leave a lasting record of their day to day lives filled with the mundane routine.

This type of collaboration was not a political identity, but a pragmatic gamble. With hindsight, historians know the British occupation only lasted two months. Yet, in November and December most observers thought the British Army had won a decisive victory and the Revolution stood on the brink of collapse. The British offer of amnesty only received such a large response because a large segment of the New Jersey population reached this conclusion. This was a second way in which ordinary men and women negotiated with the British Army to shape a unique political culture of wartime collaboration.

3. Coerced Collaborators:

A third group of New Jersey colonists were encouraged to collaborate. This persuasion was not always sinister. Colonists, such as John Bray, who believed in the success of the British Army wanted to convince those they knew. Much of the persuasion that went on, however, involved intimidation by more motivated men. This third route to collaboration revealed in extreme contrast the way in which wartime politics reduced individuals' ability to choose allegiances and forced them into positions that they would not otherwise have taken.

A large number of colonists who stayed in New Jersey hoped to remain neutral during the British occupation. Their choice represented a different type of gamble. Instead of creating a formal relationship with either side to protect their family and property, these colonists hoped the war would simply pass them by. At a time when everyday brought news of fresh troop

movements and new battles, there was a good chance that the fighting would take place in the next county or the troops would only stay a few days before marching away. For a lucky few this strategy worked. Many more would-be neutrals, however, were forced to choose between collaborating or resisting by British soldiers and radical Loyalists who wanted to divide everyone into Loyalists or Revolutionaries.

In Monmouth County, Colonel John Morris took advantage of his position as the commander of the Morris Town militia to pressure his neighbors into supporting General Howe. Colonel Morris used his officers to persuade townsmen to sign a declaration of their support for Britain. On 27 December two of Morris's men paid Isaac Potter a visit. Potter had served as a lieutenant in the militia, but had not fallen into line with the other officers. The two men came to his house and changed his politics. They ordered him to go immediately to the house of Colonel John Morris. Once there, Morris showed Potter a petition rejecting the Declaration of Independence and told him to sign. After an initial reluctance he did, adding his signatures to those already on the document. He later explained he had "signed the...Paper at the request of some of the Company present, & thinks that he should not have signed it had it now been for the said latter and his Persuasions." Potter was then told to take the British Oath. Again after initially refusing, he complied when Colonel Morris told him "that unless he did he [would] strip him of everything he had" and confine him in the town Guard House. That day Daniel Griggs also added his name to the list. A friend, Joseph Saltor, who had been the first to sign the declaration

reassured him. Saltor “clapt his Hand” on Griggs and said, “the Times are very much altered as [we] always expected they would-be.”⁷⁴

Other colonists were forced to hand over supplies to the British Army. A butcher working for the Recoats saw a bullock in a field near in Burlington County and forced the owner to hand it over. In December, John Blackwell entered the house of John Right and demanded the animal be given to the “Army part of which was then stationed in the neighborhood.” In case Right refused, Blackwell threatened that a “File of Soldiers” would come and take it by force. Deciding to avoid a confrontation, Right took the bull to the soldiers’ camp the next day.⁷⁵ Throughout the occupation, the British Army lived off the land and many colonists lost their animals and stored food to foraging troops.⁷⁶

For Robert Ireland, collaboration was more about circumstances than commitment to George III. Artisans were also forced to support the British Army. A large Army needed a range of skills to keep it functioning, from washerwomen to carpenters. Robert Ireland earned a living as a blacksmith in Trenton Falls in 1776. When the British troops arrived he chose to stay. He did not own any livestock, but was still forced to collaborate. During the occupation, the local troops “Implied him as a shoer to the British Horse.” Ireland may have looked after the detachment of the 16th Queens Dragoon stationed in Trenton. The dragoons found themselves

⁷⁴ Deposition of Daniel Griggs and examination of Richard Margeson, NJSA, New Jersey Council of Safety Ser. Records 1776-1781, Box 2-3.

⁷⁵ Deposition of Joseph Campion, NJSA, New Jersey Council of Safety Ser. Records 1776-1781 Box 2-3.

⁷⁶ For other examples see: Gerlach, *New Jersey in the American Revolution, 1763-1783: A Documentary History*, pp.296-298, Lawrence, *"A Brief Narrative of the Ravages of the British and Hessians at Princeton: [by Robert Lawrence] Ca. 1776-1777. Manuscript,"* pp.9-10, 16.

constantly on patrol along the Delaware and their horses would have need new shoes. Ireland later explained that he always had work and had gained a reputation as a “horse shoer”.⁷⁷

By the end of 1776, the British occupation had created an extremely fluid political culture with a spectrum of different types of collaboration. To different degrees, colonists had succeeded or failed to negotiate with the British Army and their neighbors to shape the most favorable position for them in the chaos and confusion of a war-zone. Under the offer of collaboration by General Howe, three broad groups had emerged: radical Loyalists, pragmatic Loyalists and would-be neutrals forced into collaboration. Each position was a short term reaction to a sudden change in local circumstances. What no one in New Jersey could know was how long the British occupation would last and if they could renegotiate their position with the Continental Army.

II – Loyalists and Traitors During the American Occupation of New Jersey, January 1777

When the American occupation of New Jersey began in January 1777, everyone who had collaborated with the British Army suddenly found themselves labelled Loyalists and, therefore, traitors. As the British troops withdrew, only the most radical collaborators wanted to continue to fight for the British Empire. The majority of collaborators who had just wanted to protect their property or escape group violence planned to remain in New Jersey and, if necessary, support the new occupiers. However, unlike the British Army, the Continental Army was not interested in

⁷⁷ John Hammond Otis Grant Sullivan and ed., *Letters and Papers of Major-General John Sullivan, Continental Army, New Hampshire Historical Society. Collections*,; V. 13-15 (Concord: N.H., New Hampshire Historical Society, 1930), Vol.1, pp.367-368.

winning over the civilian population. Instead, they wanted to find and punish anyone suspected of collaborating regardless of their motives. As traitors, collaborators had to decide whether to risk punishment or go into political exile behind the British lines. Many reluctantly left, accepting the title of traitors and tying their future to the Loyalists cause.

In New Jersey the military situation suddenly changed in the week after Christmas 1776. On December 25 Washington crossed the Delaware River with 2,400 men and marched overnight to Trenton. In a snowstorm he surprised the 1,500 Hessian soldiers at 8am on morning 26th. In the space of two hours 22 Hessians were killed 83 wounded and 891 captured with the loss of only one American killed and two wounded. The captured soldiers were marched back across the Delaware to Pennsylvania, while the victorious American troops marched north. Washington told those close to him “I think a fair Opportunity is offered of driving the Enemy entirely from, or at least to, the extremity of the province of New Jersey.” The prediction proved prophetic. On 3 January, Washington won another victory at Princeton over a larger British force.

Defeated by the Continental Army, the British decided to abandon New Jersey. To prevent further losses, General Howe and his commanders withdraw the Army to the more defensible Hudson River. British garrisons would-be kept at New Brunswick and Perth Amboy to control the New Jersey side of the river. By 6 January the retreat was complete and a new frontline appeared. The British occupation had lasted just under six weeks.

The sudden American advance and British retreat left the hundreds of collaborators to choose sides for the second time in two months. Only the most radical collaborators wanted to continue to support the British. Predictably, the mixture of opportunistic and coerced motives

that characterized most colonists was not a long term commitment to the British Army. Instead, they wanted to now collaborate with the American occupiers. In the first days of the American occupation this sharp divide amongst the former collaborators became clear as everybody had to come to their own conclusions about which side of the new frontline they now belonged.

1. From Active Collaborators to Willing Exiles

Soon after the Battles of Trenton and Princeton, the radical collaborators decided to leave New Jersey and go into exile with the retreating British troops. The men who had supplied recruits, intelligence or provisions to the British received news of the retreat with a mixture of disbelief in the American victory and acknowledgement that their future was now irrevocably tied to crushing the Revolution. A few of the better organized radicals attempted to fight back and stop the American advance.⁷⁸ Most, however, just attempted to avoid the Continental soldiers long enough to reach the British lines and fight another day.

Amongst the first to leave were the thirteen men who administered General Howe's amnesty. Ebenezer Foster who had overseen the oath taking in Middlesex County described leaving New Jersey after the Battle of Trenton. Foster explained that he had remained in his hometown of Woodbridge for the "purpose of taking the Subscriptions of such of the Inhabitants of his Neighborhood as wished for British Protection until the surprise of the foreign Troops at Trenton when for the safety of his person he was obliged to retire to the British Lines." By 2 January, Foster had reached the British camp on Long Island, but only after escaping a company

⁷⁸ At Monmouth Court House on 4th January the 200 men from the second battalion of the New Jersey Volunteers skirmished with 120 militiamen. The NJV lost the engagement and retreated. This was the largest act of Loyalists resistance during the American advance. A full account appeared in the *Pennsylvania Post* on 30th January 1777. New Jersey Archives Ser. 2., Extracts from American Newspapers. Vol.1. 1776-1777, edited by William S. Stryker, *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton, New Jersey Heritage Ser.* ([Spartanburg: S.C., Reprint Co., 1967), p.277.

of the New Jersey militia sent to take him in prisoner.⁷⁹ In total, ten of the thirteen men who administered the oath managed to escape New Jersey.⁸⁰ The remaining three were captured and imprisoned for the duration of the American occupation.⁸¹

Many of the gangs who had become the unofficial militia of the British occupation also fled before their victims could inform the Continental Army. The group that had terrorized Monmouth County led by Anthony Woodward and Richard Robins went to ground after they heard about the Battle of Trenton. Over the next month Woodward, Robins and their associations made their way to the British Lines at New Brunswick and Perth Amboy. John Leonard had close ties to Jesse Woodward and Richard Robins, had provided provisions for the British Army and search for potential rebels in December 1776.⁸² Immediately after the Battle of Trenton, John Leonard left New Jersey with the retreating troops. Daniel Van Mater had a similar experience. He lived in the same town as Jesse Woodward and worked with him to supply the British Army and “apprehending and disarming notorious Rebels...and encouraging the

⁷⁹ *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Vol.16, "Memorial of Ebenezer Foster".

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* Audit Office, Vol.16, "Memorial of Ebenezer Foster." For the account of John Lawrence see John Cox Jr. of Upper Freehold sworn April 1st 1777 Burlington, NJSA R. Group: New Jersey Council of Safety Ser. Records 1776-1781 Contents Loose Papers 1776-1781. Box 1 minutes, Box 2-3 depositions p.2. For John Taylor and John Wardell NJSA R. Group: New Jersey Council of Safety Ser. Records 1776-1781, Contents Loose Papers 1776-1781, Box 1 minutes, Box 2-3 depositions.

⁸¹ The three oath administrators caught in New Jersey were John Lawrence the former mayor of Burlington, John Taylor a magistrate in Monmouth County and John Wardell the judge of the Court of Common Pleas in Monmouth County. Case for John Lawrence, Hutchinson, see *Hutchinson, Abstracts of the Council of Safety Minutes, State of New Jersey, 1777-1778*, p.3. For, John Wardell, *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁸² Leonard wrote that with about 100 of his “Friends in a Body and Armed joined His Majestys Troops at Trenton when he was employed by General Howe in procuring Provisions, Forgae, Waggons, House for the use of the Army - and actually produced considerable Quantities of those necessary supplies and carried them to be delivered a the Posts of Trenton and Bordenton.” See, *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Vol.15, “Memorial of John Leonard.”

inhabitants of that Province to contrive their Allegiance to his Majesty.”⁸³ Van Mater also fled after the Battle of Trenton and was forced to seek refuge behind the British lines. The next time the records mention Jesse Woodward, Richard Robins or their associations they appear in New York City working for the British Army.⁸⁴

Close behind them were the men who had taken commissions from the British Army. A father and son from Hunterdon County who had both accepted commissions to raise troops for the British abandoned their homes after the retreat. Christopher Vaught and his son John joined the Redcoats soon after their arrival in New Jersey. Being wealthy landowners, they both received commissions and began using their connections to raise men.⁸⁵ They were successful and became known as notorious Loyalists during the weeks of the British occupation. However, when the British retreated, Christopher and John Vaught concluded that they were no longer safe and made plans to go into exile. According to the testimony of Christopher Vaught, they decided to go to the British outpost at New Brunswick and lead “a large body of Refugees and Tories from Lebanon in Hunterdon, said to be from 500 to 6 to 700, attempting to make their way to the headquarters of the Army then [at] Brunswick.”⁸⁶ No other record survives of the actual number of refugees the Vaught family led to safety of British lines, but anecdotal evidence supports the

⁸³ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.14, "Memorial of Daniel Van Mater".

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.14, "Memorial of Daniel Van Mater", Audit Office 12, Vol.15, "Memorial of John Leonard".

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.14, "Memorial of Christopher Vaught". According to his memorial, he owned a plantation of 2,000 acres in Lebanon Township in Hunterdon County, New Jersey with three houses in Albany County New York.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.63, "Memorial of Christopher Vaught", Audit Office 13, Vol.19, "Memorials of Christopher Vaught".

fact that Christopher and John Vaught were responsible for leading a sizable number of men.⁸⁷

For the rest of the War both men fought in Loyalist regiments.⁸⁸

For these men joining the British retreat was an unthinking decision of committed radicals. Before General Howe's invasion, they had held Loyalists sympathies, but had failed to challenge the Patriot control of New Jersey. The arrival of the British Army had given them the opportunity to become active Loyalists. When the Redcoats left, they did not want to return their former passive politics. The experience of issuing oaths of allegiance, recruiting soldiers and policing their neighbors' politics had provided a significant, if albeit brief, education in active Loyalism that proved hard to forget. This was one route by which the unpredictable course of the Revolutionary war transformed colonists with pro-British sympathies into long-term, committed Loyalists.

2. From Pragmatic and Coerced Collaborators to Unwilling Exiles

The majority of colonists who collaborated with the British Army, however, wanted to stay in New Jersey after the British retreat. A letter in the *Pennsylvania Post* declared a few days after the battle of Princeton, "I almost think the author of the Crisis a prophet [Thomas Paine] where he says the Tories will curse the day that Howe arrived upon the Delaware. I verily believe the observation is coming true. The two late actions at Trenton and Princeton have put a

⁸⁷ Deposition of Timothy Lake, NJSA, New Jersey Council of Safety Ser. Records 1776-1781, Box 2-3, Hutchinson, *Abstracts of the Council of Safety Minutes, State of New Jersey, 1777-1778*, p.3.

⁸⁸ See for example, William Luce from Elizabeth Town in Middlesex County. William Luce also raised troops and fled as soon as the military situation changed. Originally a merchant from Boston, he had fled his hometown in 1775 for the relative anonymity of Elizabethtown. When the British Army arrived he took advantage of General Howe's proclamation and "was glad to put himself under the protection of the British Army in [British headquarters at] New York" on 29th November 1776. With the official support, Luce then began recruiting men in New Jersey for the newly formed New Jersey Volunteers. He fled when the military situation turned again. He took what few troops he did manage to raise to the safety of Staten Island where he continued to dream of raising force. *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.13, "Memorial of William Luce".

very different face upon affairs.”⁸⁹ A letter dated 30 January from Bordentown, near Trenton, claimed “We are informed, from good authority, that many of the inhabitants of Monmouth County, in New-Jersey, who received protections, are now determined to return them to his Britannic Majesty’s Commissioners in CATRIDGES.”⁹⁰ Another account from 5 February explained how General Howe’s Proclamation caused “numbers” to take protections, “but General Washington taking Trenton put a stop to the people going in.”⁹¹

The decision to change sides once again was a pragmatic attempt to protect their property and families from the American troops after they had just saved it from the British troops. This willingness to forget their collaboration when the frontline changed did not represent a sudden political conversion or a lack of political principles. Instead, the majority of men and women who collaborated had their own priorities that did not fit neatly into Revolutionary categories. Their over-whelming goal was to survive in a war-zone with as much of their previous lives intact as possible.

Therefore, as radical collaborators made plans to go into political exile with the British Army, the majority of collaborators remained at home and waited for the Continental Army to arrive. Jonathan Sayre from Newark had collaborated with the British Army to save his property and now wanted to collaborate with the advancing American troop. Sayre took General Howe’s’ oath of allegiance in November 1776, but had not supported Britain before then. Indeed, according to friends Sayre was “not very zealous for Britain” and being “pretty warm in his Principles in favor of the Rebels.” Sayre had only collaborated to protect his farm and

⁸⁹ New Jersey Archives, Ser. 2, Extracts from American Newspapers, p.207.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.277.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 567-9.

unsurprisingly after the Battle of Trenton wanted to remain in New Jersey. In this house in Newark, Sayre waited with his family for the first American troops who arrived in the first week of January.⁹² Just down the road, Peter Browne had also collaborated to protect his property and now wanted to stay in Newark. In December Browne had joined the queues of colonists taking General Howe's oath. Afterwards with his livelihood safe he returned home and did nothing else to support the British occupation. In first days of January, he watched the Redcoats of the 71st Regiment break camp and retreat north and then went home. Soon after the vanguard of the Continental Army appeared and Peter Browne, along with Jonathan Sayre, hoped he could escape punishment for his collaboration.⁹³ After the British retreat, Isaac Donham of Woodbridge also revealed the limits of his Loyalism. Before the British invasion, Donham had mustered with the Patriot controlled militia to defend New Jersey against attack. However, "when the [British] troops came into the Jerseys in 1776...[he]...went within the Lines at Amboy, stayed within the Lines while the British Troops continued." A witness reported that Isaac first hid for a few days to avoid serving with the British Army. This was as far as his commitment took him. "When the [British] Troops went away he staid at Home." Donham had no intention of becoming a Loyalist. He instead wanted to support whichever side could control life in Woodbridge.⁹⁴

⁹²*American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Vol.64, "Determination of Jonathan Sayre".

⁹³ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.14, "Memorial of Peter Browne".

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.14, "Memorial of Isaac Donham". For further examples who wanted to changed sides after the Battles of Trenton and Princeton, see a petition from 26 men Bergen County to General Washington in January 1777, NJSA, Department of Defense Records, Document No. 21.

By remaining in New Jersey, each of these men hoped to negotiate a new relationship with the Continental Army to replace their old arrangement with the defeated British Army. These attempts represented a very different understanding of the workings of Revolutionary politics from the radical collaborators. Instead of choosing a clear side in a friend or foe political culture, this group of colonists treated larger allegiances to king or colony as a matter of local debate where opponents recognized subtle political distinctions and tolerated a wide variation past loyalties. It made a great deal of sense that residents in New Jersey treated allegiances as fluid and unpredictable. Since 1774, colonists throughout the thirteen colonies had been engaged in an extended conversation about the meaning of Revolutionary allegiances. The willingness of the British Army to tolerate such a wide range of behaviors as acceptable Loyalism had continued this model of flexible politics. As these moderate collaborators waited for the American troops they could only hope that they would-be able to negotiate a new relationship with the Continental Army.⁹⁵

However, they soon discovered there was no going back to pre-war politics. The Continental Army treated everyone who had collaborated as Loyalists and traitors. Whereas the British Army had tried to win over the civilian population, the Continental Army wanted to destroy a Loyalist insurgency. In its attempt to root out civilian opposition, the Continental Army was acting as an Army of occupation and treating New Jersey as enemy soil. In their efforts to let no-one escape, the soldiers imposed a new definition of Loyalism on the population of New Jersey. Fresh from their recent victories and laden with memories of fallen comrades, the

⁹⁵ For further examples who wanted to changed sides after the Battles of Trenton and Princeton see a petition from 26 men Bergen County to General Washington in January 1777, NJSA, Department of Defense Records, Document No. 21. And, Daniel Bancroft to the Committee of Congress, dated State Prison January 10th 1777, Penn. Archives Ser. 2, Vol.1, pp.692-693.

American soldiers were not interested in the subtle differences between radical, opportunistic or coerced collaborators. Instead, they treated every oath taker as a committed opponent to the Revolution. In this sense, the Continental Army wanted to creating a localized political culture that drew a sharp distinction between allies and enemies and left no room for the nuisances of collaboration allowed during the British occupation.

As the Continental Army advanced across New Jersey it seized and imprisoned anyone suspected of collaborating. It did not take much to fall under its suspicions. The American soldiers did not have time to conduct formal investigations as they rapidly advanced across New Jersey. Instead, the troops relied on a mixture of rumors, testimony from witnesses and confessions to identify Loyalists in every community. All suspects were denied a trial and instead sent under guard to distant prisons to await their fate.

The diary of one Continental soldier described a steady stream of captured collaborators on the road from Burlington to Trenton. Sergeant William Young kept a tally as his company advanced. On the 5th of January, just days after the victories at Trenton and Princeton, sergeant William Young noted, “seeing 26 Tories Brought into town [Burlington], and 7 wagon loads of goods they had taken from their Neighbors. About an hour after another party were brought in, in number between 30 or 40.”⁹⁶ March to his next post in Crosswick, Young commented “[t]he Tories of this part are very numerous and they [are] taken Daily,” after he was passed by “a wagon load of Tories and one Hessian to the jail at this place.” Arriving at Allentown, four miles further on, Young came across six Tories captured in a house. The body of one Tory, Isaac Pearson, lay nearby. Young reported he had tried to run and after ignoring the first two warning

⁹⁶ “Journal of Sergeant William Young,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (Philadelphia, 1884), p.266.

shots the second two hit him, one in the arm and the other in the heart. Young noted, “he fell dead on the spot.”⁹⁷

Once captured the prisoners noted by Sergeant Young were transported to jails outside of New Jersey and held without trial. A Quaker, Christopher Marshall, kept a record in Philadelphia of the arrival of new shiploads of prisoners. On January 7 a boat from Burlington “brought some Tory prisoners with them, taken in the Jersey.” On the January 21 he noted, “Several more Tories are brought in this day from the Jerseys”. Two days later “near sixty-six Tories were brought from the Jersey into this City, under a strong guard.” A number of the prisoner in the “New Jail” suffered “in irons.”⁹⁸ Soon the jails in Philadelphia were full and the Army sent new prisoners to Frederick’s Town in Maryland. Most of these men spent months in crowded cells with no chance to explain their reasons for collaboration.⁹⁹

The indiscriminate rounding up and imprisonment of anyone suspected of supporting the British convinced those who wanted to stay in New Jersey to escape to the safety of the British controlled New Jersey New York border. Without the possibility of another amnesty, colonists had to decided whether to risk being caught by Continental Army or abandon their homes and go into exile with the British Army. With no good options, some colonists decided to stay and take their chances. No doubt, they still entertained hopes of explaining the reasons for their recent “Loyalism”. Many others, however, made the painful decision to turn their backs on New Jersey and once again collaborated with the British.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.268.

⁹⁸ Marshall ed., *Extracts from the Diary of Christopher Marshall, 1774-1781*, p.117.

⁹⁹ For accounts of the crowded conditions Loyalists were held in 1777, see: Governor Livingston to John Hancock dated Princeton October 3 1776, Rowland Chambers to L. dated Bridgewater in Somerset County October 14 Governor Livingston’s response to a petition from British Prisoners from WL dated Elizabeth Town October 22 1776, Livingston, *The Papers of William Livingston*, pp.156-157, 165-166, 169-170, 285-286.

In the second half of January, hundreds of men and women had bundled up their possessions and made the dangerous journey through the American patrols to the British front line on the New Jersey-New York border. Jonathan Sayre, Peter Browne and Issac Donham all abandoned their homes and headed for New York.¹⁰⁰ Samuel Moore who similarly had collaborated with the British to continue farming in Woodbridge joined them. However, after the Battle of Trenton he was forced to spend “Weeks in the Woods” hiding from the local militia.¹⁰¹ His family followed shortly “with only what they could carry.” One son who remained behind was executed by one of Washington’s commanders. In Elizabethtown a group of “young men” rumored to have foraged and spied for the British attracted the attention of General Maxwell who forced them out of town. James McCallough from Hackensack Town had done nothing to support the British occupation, but was still “obliged to fly for protection” with his brothers to New York City.¹⁰² Thomas Hooper took the British oath in Princeton and then returned to running his tavern in Windsor, Middlesex County. Over the next weeks he served his regulars and British soldiers. After the Battle of Trenton, Hooper had to make sudden plans to leave. He had made the mistake of serving beer to the losing side.¹⁰³ Edward Bowlby swore allegiance before the British Army at Hackensack and then returned to his family. In 1777, he had to escape from his neighbors and headed for New York.¹⁰⁴ These men were joined by hundreds more

¹⁰⁰ See footnote 3.

¹⁰¹ *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Vol.15, "Memorial of Samuel Moore".

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.15, "Memorial of James McCallough".

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.15, "Memorial of Thomas Hooper".

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.15, "Memorial of Edward Bowlby".

who had reached the conclusion that they were no longer safe in a Patriot controlled New Jersey.¹⁰⁵

General Washington and the Continental Army determined that the refugees would not return to New Jersey. On January 25, General Washington issued a proclamation giving all collaborators thirty days to leave New Jersey or turn themselves in, swear an oath to the United States and await their punishment. Afterwards, anyone suspected of supporting the British occupation would-be treated as “adherents to the King of Great Britain and treated as common enemies to the United States.”¹⁰⁶ In a letter ten days later to Congress, Washington explained that the purpose of the deadline was to impose order on the chaotic politics of New Jersey by creating a clear division between “friends” and “foes”.¹⁰⁷ In accordance with the Proclamation, the Continental Army stopped rounding up suspects and allowed colonists to leave the state until the end of the thirty day amnesty when they returned to searching collaborators. For the refugees Washington’s Proclamation came as a harsh confirmation of their new, but unwanted status as Loyalists.¹⁰⁸

The experience of colonists in New Jersey uncovers the importance of collaboration in shaping a distinct wartime political culture. The refugees had become trapped by their

¹⁰⁵ For further references to colonists leaving New Jersey in the first months of 1777 see Matteson ed., *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, Vol.6, pp.61-62, 110, 189-190. And, Deposition of John Bray against Benjamin Pound, Cornelius Boice, Daniel Runyan, Leonard Boice and George Boice, NJSA, New Jersey Council of Safety Ser. Records 1776-1781, Box 2-3.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol.7, pp.61-62.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol.7, pp.105-106.

¹⁰⁸ For examples of the Proclamation in action see: *Ibid.*, Vol.7, pp.61-62. Sullivan ed., *Letters and Papers of Major-General John Sullivan, Continental Army*, Vol.1, p.315, Greene and Parks ed., *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, Vol.2, p.23.

collaboration. In the act of becoming political exiles, colonists came to realize that their initial short term decisions about the British occupation had transformed into a long term choice about their place in the American Revolution. There was still a considerable difference between the motives of the forced, pragmatic and radical collaborators. However, the unsympathetic policy of the American occupation had now tied both groups to the success of the British Army regardless of their original motivations. As the refugees started to rebuild their lives in exile, they would slowly come to realize that they now had more in common with radical Loyalists than anyone else in Revolutionary America. Their experiences demonstrated how the War complicated Revolutionary allegiances in unexpected way and made Loyalism widespread throughout the thirteen colonies.

Chapter Four

Loyalists in Exile: Political Culture of Refugees in the British Colony of Nova Scotia, 1781-1785

British defeat during the American Revolution convinced many Loyalists to flee the United States and go into exile. Between the summer of 1783 and fall of 1784, 2,000 colonists sailed to Chedabucto Bay in Nova Scotia.¹ Before the exiles left they made declarations of their common commitment to the British Empire. However, establishing a new settlement in the Canadian wilderness proved difficult. Despite their shared history of Loyalism, the business of building a town divided the new exiles. Turning their backs on their shared Loyalism rival factions developed and threatened to destroy the new community before it appeared on the map.

The first Loyalists arrived in Chedabucto Bay as part of the evacuation of New York City in the spring and summer of 1783. Most observers were optimistic about the settlement.² Situated on good farmland and close to the cod fisheries of Newfoundland, colonists leaving New York hoped to recoup the losses and build new fortunes. The popularity of Chedabucto, however, proved disastrous. The influx of colonists strained the ability of the crown surveyor to lay out enough town lots to meet the demand.³ Many colonists who had hoped to build houses and start planting crops were still sleeping in tents as the winter approached. At this critical moment as tempers worsened and tensions rose, a group of prominent settlers led by John McPherson attempted to claim all the best town lots and the limited supply of building supplies. Not content, John McPherson then assumed control of the town government. According to one witness he “married two couples,” without a license, “stiles himself our Surgeon” and appointed himself as a “senior justice.” Another resident suspected that McPherson also wanted to replace the surveyor with his own man and, in short, “seems to wish to become Dictator to the

¹ Governor Parr to the Secretary of State, December 27 1784, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, C.O. 217. (Hereafter PANS).

² Public Archives of Canada, MG 3 D1 (1) Vol.72, No. 10. (Hereafter PAC).

³ John McPherson to Gideon White, May 16 1784, Chedabucto, PANS, Gideon White Papers.

inhabitants of Chedabucto.” The factionalism of these early months set the tone of town politics for the next years.

The takeover of Chedabucto Bay by John McPherson did not go unopposed. In spring 1784, a second group of colonists landed and altered the local balance of power. The new arrivals were veterans of the disbanded Loyalist Company, the Duke of Cumberland’s Regiment. As compensation for their service, the Crown had promised the soldiers land in the Bay area. One officer, captain J.F. Brownrigg, was alarmed to see all the best land taken and became a vocal opponent of McPherson. “Don’t misconstrue me,” Brownrigg wrote, “we mean to live in perfect harmony – but act with spirit.” It soon became apparent that Brownrigg and his friends, however, did not have enough influence to overthrow the well established McPherson. By July 1784, Brownrigg was in Halifax and writing that “they are very troublesome and have drove me hither.”⁴ With Brownrigg defeated and McPherson victorious, out of towns, tensions finally cooled. The factionalism seen in Chedabucto Bay characterized the Loyalists settlement of Nova Scotia.

At the end of the American Revolution thousands of Loyalists fled to the remaining parts of the British Empire. In May 1782 another defeat, convinced the British government to end the war and give up the thirteen colonies. The start of formal peace negotiations between British and American delegates dismayed Loyalists. Having gambled everything on a British victory,

⁴ Neil Mackinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia, 1783-1791* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), pp.80-81.

through either design or accident, Loyalists now faced the losers choice: they could be traitors in America or political exiles in the British Empire. Most colonists found ways to bury their Loyalism and decided to stay in the new republic. A significant number, however, discovered they could not escape their past and reluctantly decided to flee instead of being treated as traitors. Nearly all of these colonists were living in areas controlled by the British Army in Georgia, South Carolina and New York. The victorious Revolutionaries vilified these Loyalists, as most heinous traitors. Unable to return home, they had no choice but to carry on being subjects of the British Empire. In one of the largest exoduses in American history, between 60,000 and 80,000 men, women and children went to Britain, the West Indies and Canada. These colonists continued the popular debate about Loyalism long after the end the Revolution. Going into exile forced Loyalists to clarify their relationship with the British Empire.⁵

Before the would-be exiles fled the thirteen colonies, they began by rewriting their pasts to demonstrate a history of committed Loyalism. It did not matter that Revolutionaries had declared them traitors. Colonists had to convince the British officials in American that they were stalwart Loyalists. At stake was continued British material support after the Revolution. Living within British lines had bankrupted most colonists. Having lost everything for the British cause, they now wanted British compensation and did everything to get it. The idea of rewarding Loyalism required colonists to first prove their loyalty and, then, that they had suffered for it. For nearly everyone, this proved difficult. Most colonists had a long and complicated Revolutionary

⁵ Phineas Bond, a Pennsylvania Loyalist estimated that 100,000 of them left the United States. Robert R. Palmer estimated 60,000 as a conservative estimate and Wallace Brown gave a range of 80,000 to 100,000 exiles. *G.N.D Evans, ed., Allegiance in America: The Case of the Loyalists (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1969), Editors Appendix, p.190. Robert Roswell Palmer, The Age of Democratic Revolution Vol.I (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), Vol.1, p.181. Wallace Brown Brown, The Good Americans: The Loyalists in the American Revolution, p.192.*

past that had seen them change side at least once. To claim to be a staunch Loyalist at the end of the Revolution required a convenient re-imagining of nearly ten years of debate to omit anything that would damage their pro-British credentials. This strategic reassessment of Revolutionary politics filled numerous petitions between 1782-1783 as frantic colonists began planning their lives in exile. As the exiles set sail, their petitions created an image of devout Loyalists going out to people a revived British Empire.

However, after the self-declared Loyalists fled the thirteen colonies they divided into factions and fought over the rewards of their Loyalism. Once colonists arrived in Britain, the West Indies or Canada and received money or land they stopped talking about themselves as ardent Loyalists and concentrated on building new lives. This transition marked a new “frontier” Loyalism that saw exiles fight over the rewards of Loyalism. Analyzing these moments of tension reveals that colonists continually reinterpreted their place in the larger imperial community as their personal priorities changed. From this perspective, Loyalism at the end of the American Revolution becomes intelligible not as a cohesive movement, but again as a fast moving political culture in which every Loyalist had a flexible, personal vision of their place in the British Empire.

This chapter will focus on the 25,000-30,000 colonists who left British controlled New York and sailed to the British colony of Nova Scotia. The mass emigration took place over a year between the fall of 1782 and fall of 1783. By the end, Nova Scotia was transformed from a frontier backwater of the British Empire into a thriving Loyalist colony. Over the next decade, Nova Scotia became the test for what type of colony Loyalists wanted to create after the Revolution. As the example of Chedabucto demonstrated, the exiles did not think of themselves

as a Loyalist community or radical supporters of the British Empire. Despite the development of a shared language of Loyalism, the exiles that reached Nova Scotia were more interested in pursuing personal agendas than a new vision of the British Empire in North America.⁶

To uncover the political culture of Loyalist exiles in Nova Scotia, this chapter will focus on three overlapping moments during the evacuation of New York and the settlement of Nova Scotia. First, I will focus on the debate that followed news of the peace and the decision to leave New York. Second, I will focus on the early planning that took place before the evacuation. In the streets of New York City, colonists formed rival associations to lobby imperial officials for the best land and support in Nova Scotia. Third, I will focus on the first years of settlement between 1783-1785. Once the Loyalists arrived in Nova Scotia they found it difficult to establish the settlements planned in New York. At this point, a second scramble for land and resources began, which divided the exiles along new lines.

I – The Outbreak of Peace, 1781-1783

The end of the Revolution proved as traumatic as the beginning of the war for American Colonists. For the 25,000 refugees living under British protection around New York City, the outbreak of peace was a disaster. In 1776, a large British Army conquered New York and occupied the city for the rest of the war. The presence of the British soldiers encouraged a

⁶ There is much more contemporary evidence that points to the number of Loyalists who went to Nova Scotia. Governor Parr reported to London in December 1783 that the number of refugees “did not fall far short of 30,00.” A general census conducted in January 1784 showed 27,000 “new settlers.” Governor Parr to Secretary of State, dated Halifax, 16th December, in PANS, C.O. 217, Vol.56, p.134, PANS, C.O., Vol.15, p.465.

groundswell of support from New York City and the surrounding counties.⁷ In the following years, hundreds of Loyalists from neighboring colonies traveled to British lines in search of protection.⁸ Chapters two and three have already followed two groups who left from Connecticut in 1776 and New Jersey in 1777. In total between 20,000-30,000 crowded into New York City and the surrounding countryside. Not all of these colonists were committed Loyalists. However, after living within British lines they could not return home and had tied their fate to a British victory. When news of the British defeat and the beginning of peace negotiations reached New York, colonists realized they had little choice but to go into exile. Once more these men and women were trapped by circumstances beyond their control.

The surrender of the British Army at the Battle of Yorktown in May 1781 marked the end of the Revolutionary War. In one last effort to crush the American Rebellion, the British Army invaded the Southern Colonies in 1780. After initial victories over two American armies in Georgia and South Carolina, the campaign stalled and faltered. In May 1781 the commanding British general, Earl Cornwallis, allowed his army of 7,000 to be cornered on the Yorktown peninsula by a larger force of 20,000 American and French troops. Following a brief siege and a failed counterattack Cornwallis surrendered. This act ended the fighting in North America. The Battle of Yorktown brought down the British Government and convinced the new administration to negotiate for peace. In April 1782, the British Parliament formally decided to no longer use

⁷According to one estimate by February 1777, fifty six hundred men in Westchester, Suffolk, Queens, Kings, Staten Island and New York City had sworn allegiance to George III. General Tryon to Lord Germain, February 11 1777 in John Romeyn Brodhead et al., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York; Procured in Holland, England, and France* (Albany: Weed, Parsons, Printers, 1969), Vol.8, p.697.

⁸ A list drawn up in New York City showed the majority of refugees come from New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. New York Public Library, British Headquarters Papers, No.7258, , "List of Sundry distressed Loyalists who have taken Refuge within the British Lines at New York, January 1-March 31 1783." (Hereafter NYPL).

military force and proposed a ceasefire. Soon after the first peace negotiations began in Paris. These early talks produced the Preliminary Peace Treaty on November 20 1782, which appeared in America the following month. Building on this early document, British and American delegates signed the final version of the treaty on September 3 recognizing the independence of the thirteen colonies. Official news of the end of the Revolution reached America at the end of December.

After the British defeat at Yorktown and the peace negotiations in Paris, Loyalists had no choice but to accept the end of the Revolution. Colonists in New York had plenty of time to speculate about the end of the Revolution. However, before 1781 no one could guess who would win or when or where. News of Yorktown and then the beginning of peace negotiations reached New York at the same time as the rest of the thirteen colonies.⁹ The outbreak of peace was a traumatic moment for the refugees. According to one observer, news of the of peace caused a “great dejection among the people here.”¹⁰ Suddenly colonists had to decide what peace meant for them. They could not change events, but only decide how best to survive them.

The vast majority of refugees decided they could not stay in the thirteen colonies. For a vocal minority this choice was a matter of principle. Vermonter Justice Sherwood wrote, “no Loyalists of principle and spirit can ever endure the thought of going back to live under the imperious laws of Washington and his minions.”¹¹ Another stalwart Loyalists stated that he

⁹ News of the peace treaty finally reached Carleton on 19th march 1783, Mackinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia, 1783-1791*, p.82.

¹⁰ Extract from the Diary of Benjamin Marston, February 14th 1783, W. O. Raymond, *Benjamin Marston of Marblehead, Loyalist: His Trials and Tribulations During the American Revolution* (1907), p.209.

¹¹ Mackinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia, 1783-1791*, p.82.

“would rather go to Japan than go among the Americans where they could never live in Peace.”¹²

These men found it impossible to reconcile themselves with the Revolution. While this type of talk might have pleased British officials, it did not reflect the popular opinion.

Most colonists decided to leave because of a lack of options. After eight years of warfare many of the refugees in New York were tired and wanted to return to their homes, but reluctantly decided upon exile.¹³ Many had ended up in New York City because of circumstances beyond their control more than Loyalist sentiment.¹⁴ When British defeat became inevitable, a small stream of refugees left New York for their old towns in Western New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Only a few of the refugees were legally banished by the state legislatures and even fewer permanently. Now the Revolution was over, they hoped their neighbors would be magnanimous in victory. However, instead of finding a forgiving reception, nearly all returned to New York with stories of beatings and warnings not to return. One colonist considering exile wrote: “The violence and malice of the Rebel Government against the Loyalists render it impossible ever to think of joining them again.”¹⁵ Another put the matter more succinctly: “The unhappy termination of the war has induced many of us to seek an Asylum in the Province of Nova Scotia”¹⁶ Far from calm tempers, the outbreak of peace had encouraged a new wave of partisan politics amongst Revolutionaries keen to prevent traitors enjoying the benefits of an

¹² Raymond, *Benjamin Marston of Marblehead, Loyalist: His Trials and Tribulations During the American Revolution*, p.209.

¹³ For further information on Loyalists who tried to return home instead of going into exile see chapter 4.

¹⁴ See earlier chapters.

¹⁵ W. O. Raymond and Edward Winslow, *Winslow Papers, A.D. 1776-1826*, (St. John, N.B.: Sun Print. Co., 1901), p.90. See also Ward Chipman to Hodgson & C.O., dated New York May 31 1783, PANS, Ward Chipman Papers, Vol. 7.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.79. See, also, Abijah Willard to Samuel Peters, dated New York August 23 1783, PANS, Samuel Peters Papers, MG1 Vol.23.

independent America. In this climate of fear, refugees realized exile was the best alternative in a bad situation.¹⁷

For all but the most radical Loyalists, the decision to go into exile proved as traumatic as choosing sides at the beginning of the war. At stake was not the future of British North American, but the rest of their lives. It is as important to study how Revolutions end as well as how they begin. The winners had the responsibility of defining a new nation. The losers just had to survive the consequences of their Loyalism. Resigned to leaving the thirteen colonies, the refugees in New York turned their attention to getting the maximum rewards for their Loyalism from the British Government.

II –Planning the Settlement of Nova Scotia, 1781- 1783

Having made the decision to leave, the Loyalists in New York began making plans for a life in exile. Amongst the confusion and uncertainty, a new language of Loyalism appeared as colonists began petitioning the British Army for support in Nova Scotia. Loyalists treated exile as an opportunity to get back what they had lost during the war. Everybody agreed that the British Government had a responsibility to look after the Loyalists in exile. In practical terms, this meant transportation to Nova Scotia, provisions, and most importantly land on which to settle. Over the next months, these high expectations created a competitive political culture.

¹⁷ For examples of popular violence against Loyalists in Connecticut, see: the records of the town meeting quotes in Schenck, *The History of Fairfield, Fairfield County, Connecticut, from the Settlement of the Town in 1639 to 1818*, Vol.2, pp.423-425. NYPL, British Headquarters Papers, 8036, 8089 and 9584. For examples from New Jersey, see: Jones, *The Loyalists of New Jersey; Their Memorials, Petitions, Claims, Etc., from English Records*, pp.24, 44, 91-92, 108-112, 241. NJSA, Manuscript Collections, 1680's - 1970's, Revolutionary Document Collection, Document No. 125, 127, 128, 129, 132, 155. For examples in New York, see: NYPL, British Headquarters Papers, 7727, 7728, 7732, 7733, 7735, 7738, 7741, 8801, 8393, 8734, 8690, 8735, 8736, 9367, 7796, 9047, 9047.

Loyalism became a commodity as would-be exiles reinvented their past politics to secure the best possible compensation deal from the imperial bureaucracy. The result was the beginning of a new round of negotiations between colonists and the British Army over the meaning of Loyalism.

After eight years of warfare, most colonists had no property and little money left to support themselves in exile. A few of the most notorious Loyalists had had their estates confiscated by the Revolutionary authorities. Many more lost their homes when they fled to New York and put themselves under the protection of the British Army. Life in New York did nothing to improve their fortunes. The influx of thousands of colonists created runaway inflation on basic expenses from food to rent. By 1782, every colonist without a large fortune was living on credit and small handouts from British commissary. The only comfort colonists had to get them through these hard times was that a British victory would allow them to reclaim their property. When news of the peace treaty reached New York, colonists realized they would need British aid for many more years.

Colonists expected that the British government would now provide for them in exile. Nova Scotia became the preferred destination for the simple reason that it was closer than England, Florida, or the West Indies. To ensure they received the best land and provisions in exile, colonists organized themselves into groups to lobby British officials in New York and Nova Scotia. The British government had failed to provide guidelines for the resettlement of the Loyalists. Officials in Whitehall were more concerned about withdrawing the army without incident than the plight of the Loyalists. Clinton and his counterpart in Nova Scotia, Governor William Parr, sympathized with the Loyalists' dilemma but could not formulate a comprehensive

plan without officials in London. In the absence of assurances, Loyalists made their own arrangements. In an unprecedented display of political skills, civilians began holding meetings across New York to coordinate the evacuation. The new groups evolved into sophisticated associations run by elected officers, levying membership dues, kept detailed membership records, and meeting minutes. Together these associations gave Loyalists exiles a louder voice in the settlement of Nova Scotia.¹⁸

Colonists had a clear understanding of the rewards for their past Loyalism. For over a year between 1782-1783, General Clinton and Governor Parr found their days taken up with petitions and delegations from exile associations seeking British support for the settlement of Nova Scotia.¹⁹ Colonists wanted transportation to Nova Scotia on crown ships, provisions for the voyage, building supplies of settlement, and most importantly a surveyed allotment of crown land. By their own logic, transportation, provisions and land should only be given to proven Loyalists with a long history of pro-British acts who could prove they had suffered for it. This set the stage for a new debate about the definition of Loyalism.

To support their petitions, would-be exiles portrayed everyone in New York as stalwart defenders of the British Empire. Ignoring the more complicated reality of Revolutionary

¹⁸ General Sir Henry Clinton, the senior British officer in New York, had instructions first to oversee the evacuation of the regular army, second to disband the provincial regiments and only then help the Loyalists. The British government prescribed a general scale of land allotment to Loyalists which in broad outline approximated what actually happened: 100 acres per head of family and 50 acres for each member. Disbanded soldiers above the rank of private got more: NCO's 200, subalterns 500, captains 700, field officers 1000. the land was given free and the costs of surveying were born by the crown. Whitehall's instruction to Wallace Brown and Hereward Senior, *Victorious in Defeat: The American Loyalists in Exile* (New York, N.Y.: Facts on File, 1984), p.55. Sir Guy Carleton to Governor William Parr, dated New York, 22 September 1782; Carleton to Parr 22 December 1783 Carleton to Parr [1784], NYPL, British Headquarters Papers, No. 5662, 6110, 7557.

¹⁹ Meeting of the Port Roseway Associates, New York, November 16 1782, Port Roseway Association petition to General Carleton, November 23 1782, Port Roseway Association petition to Governor Parr, December 20 1782, Port Roseway Association letter to Richard Buckley Esq., Secretary of State in Nova Scotia, December 20 1782, Port Roseway Association letter to Carleton, dated New York, February 17 1782, Port Roseway Association letter to Carleton dated New York, April 12 1783, PANS, Minutes of the Port Roseway Associates, MG4, Vol.294.

allegiances, one group of exiles, the Port Roseway Association, claimed its members had “the most zealous loyalty to our most gracious and much beloved sovereign.” A second group of colonists agreed. They wrote, “that during the war in America they served the Sovereign” and acted on their “attachment to the British Constitution.” A third group known by contemporaries as the Fifty Five Gentlemen similarly declared they had “been steady in their Loyalty to the best of sovereigns and the British Constitution.” These statements were a convenient re-writing of the Revolution. By 1782-1783 every colonist had a complicated political history that undermined their claims of stalwart Loyalism. This re-imagination of Revolutionary politics as a clear choice between Patriotism and Loyalism was necessary to distinguish the would-be exiles from the rest of the colonial population.

The petitions explained what they had sacrificed for their Loyalism. One group who wanted to go to St. John’s River, wrote that “[t]he unhappy Termination of the War obliges us who have been steady in our Distress as Loyal Subjects to leave our homes. The Port Roseway Associates informed General Carleton that the “Associates are chiefly of the number of those whose property has been confiscated and lost in the Royal Cause.” Another group represented by George Leonard simply stated that “there having been at New York and Rhode Island great numbers of Loyalists, who had left them all to follow the Royal Standard.” This proof of suffering for Britain more than opposing the Revolution became the meaning of Loyalism during the evacuation of New York.

Having detailed their losses, the petitioners now wanted the rewards of their past Loyalism. The Fifty Five Gentlemen explained that they had “reasonable views and expectations” of getting support in Nova Scotia and asked for “a Tract or Tracts of vacant

Land...in the Proportion of five thousand acres.” The Part Roseway Associates used similar language of rewards and demands. “We can assure Your Excellency,” the Associates wrote, “[that] the Associates all appear engaged and happy at the expectation of Settling in that Province, where they are encouraged with the prospect of so happy an Administration.” Together these statements of allegiance, accounts of sacrifice and expectations of rewards created a common language of Loyalism amongst the exiles.

The task of evacuating New York and settling Nova Scotia seemed to have crystallized the colonists into a self-consciously and highly-organized Loyalist community. The would-be exiles had successfully responded to the challenge of defining their place at the end of the Revolution by setting themselves up as the natural heirs of British North America. As the victorious rebels became the founding fathers of the United States, the exiles were positioning themselves to be the founding fathers of Canada. The language the exiles created during the evacuation was not a reliable guide to their past conduct, but contained a vision of a new society in the Canadian wilderness based upon a compensation culture.

The would-be exiles succeeded in getting most of what they wanted from British officials. In New York General Carleton promised the exiles six months of provisions and free transportations escorted by the Royal Navy. Once in Nova Scotia, the colonists had promises of crown land, surveying equipment and building supplies. There was no fixed amount of land, but most colonists could expect to receive a home lot, farm lot and, if located on the coast, a waterfront lot. Most colonists hoped for more – especially provisions and building supplies – but had good reason to believe they had succeeded in getting compensation for their Loyalism.

III –The Settlement of Nova Scotia, 1782-1785

Once in exile, colonists turned their attention from an exaggerated rhetoric of Loyalism to enjoying the rewards of Loyalism. A competitive political culture emerged during the first three years of the settlement of Nova Scotia. The common experience of leaving the United States and settling in an alien land did not lay the foundation for a cohesive community. The opportunities and difficulties of resettling in Nova Scotia made Loyalists ambitious and unscrupulous. In an important observation, a crown official noted, “They cannot comprehend it, that others should have everything and they nothing.”²⁰ A junior official in Quebec agreed. He wrote: “The truth is there is no satisfying those people, if you give them provisions they would have you put [it] in their mouths.”²¹ This potent mentality plunged Loyalists in a series of disputes over the settlement of Nova Scotia that revealed the limits of their newly proclaimed Loyalism.

The evacuation of New York took place in stages between October 1782 and September 1783. About 600 Loyalists had left with the agents. The main evacuation occurred between the spring and fall of 1783 in a series of fleets organized by the Royal Navy. A large flotilla, known as the Spring Fleet or First Fleet sailed in March with 44 ships for St. John and Port Roseway.²² A second fleet of similar size left in June. A third fleet of 19 vessels sailed at the end of July and a final fleet of 12 vessels, also known as the Fall Fleet, left New York in August. Stragglers made their own way to Nova Scotia for the next several months.²³ At the end of November, Sir

²⁰ Amos Botsford to Charles Morris, dated Digby, September 3 1783, PAC, MC 23 D4 Vol.1.

²¹ Brown and Senior, *Victorious in Defeat: The American Loyalists in Exile*, p.73.

²² Wright Esther Clark Wright, *The Loyalists of New Brunswick*, 1st ed. (Fredericton, New Brunswick: E.C. Wright, 1955), pp.80-85.

²³ Most Loyalists came to Nova Scotia in fleets organized by British authorities, numbers continued to come in smaller vessels at their own expense. From the summer to the end of the year adverts appeared in two New York

Guy Carleton handed over control of New York to General Washington and the last British troops left.²⁴ Having finally turned their backs on the United States, the exiles set about the business of settling the Canadian wilderness. Life in Nova Scotia would prove to be a traumatic experience for the Loyalists.

The settlement of Nova Scotia started immediately with little direction from British authorities. As the fleets approached Nova Scotia smaller groups of ships headed for unsettled spots along the coast. Over the next months each groups of exiles built settlements in the wilderness with little oversight from the colonial government in Halifax. As soon as the exiles landed, they began work felling trees and surveying the land for distribution amongst the passengers and later arrivals. Each town decided the exact division of land. Every settler expected to receive a share of land. As the first the exiles lived in tents, but built rough houses and the other signs of a new towns. This independence combined with the unsettled terrain meant the first Loyalist towns are best understood as frontier communities.

The rough and tumble business of setting up new communities revealed that exiles first priority continued to be personal advancement. Throughout the 1780's, exiles continued to petition imperial officials for aid using the same language of Loyalism that appeared in New York. However, with the rewards of Loyalism in sight, colonist abandoned Revolutionary politics in favor of personal gain. A significant number, however, used the chaos of the early years of settlement to grab as much land they as could while others were left starving in the streets.

newspapers, the New York Morning Post and Rivington's Gazette, offering to transport individuals and families to Nova Scotia for a fee. See Rivington's Gazette, June 12 1783, July 31 1783, August 5 1783, October 10 1783.

²⁴ Raymond ed., *Winslow Papers, A.D. 1776-1826*, pp.152-153. And, Parr's correspondence with Shelburne, PANS, RG1, Vol.147.

The lack of community amongst the exiles reflected their mixed backgrounds. Despite fleeing New York together, the exiles had little in common with each other beyond the experience of exile. Over 20,000 individuals traveled to Nova Scotia with a complete spectrum of backgrounds and Revolutionary experiences. There were ex-governors, landless farmers and the urban poor. There were those who had supported Britain for pragmatic reasons and those who supported Britain out of abstract notions of loyalty and law. There were those who came to New York early in the Revolution and those who left home only when compelled by necessity. There were Loyalists who lived out the war in the safety of the British lines and those who risked their lives in campaigns fighting with the provincial regiments. They were all Loyalists, yet it would-be naïve to assume they viewed themselves in anything but the most abstract sense as a community.²⁵

The constant fighting amongst the exiles over the rewards of Loyalism brought Nova Scotia to the brink of anarchy by 1784. In Annapolis Royal, Thomas Barclay found that there are “all tenor of people there...some are intolerably Malthy some have seen better days...More especially as there is not Civil Authority as yet established to prevent any one from doing what he thinks best in his Owne eyes - upon the whole they appear at present to be in a state of Anarchy, and will Continue so until there is the Civil Law put in force ...²⁶ Governor Parr agreed in 1784. “Civil orders is everywhere not established,” Parr wrote back to England.

²⁵ Neil MacKinnon, “The Nova Scotia Loyalists: A Traumatic Community,” in Calhoon, Barnes, and Rawlyk, *Loyalists and Community in North America*.

²⁶ PANS, Wentworth Papers, MG1 Vol.939.

The first signs of exiles moving beyond wartime Loyalists politics occurred in New York as colonists jockeyed for imperial favor. The most well publicized schism arose from a petition by fifty-five self-styled “gentlemen” for a large amount of land. In July 1783, a group of fifty-five prominent Loyalists petitioned Sir Guy Carleton for 275,000 acres in Nova Scotia. This worked out to over 5,000 per person or the same amount of land given to field officers reduced from the regular army. They also requested that the land be chosen by their agents, surveyed at the government’s expense and deeds delivered to them as soon as possible. Once on the land, the gentlemen wanted an exemption from land taxes. Their claim to the land rested first upon the fact that they were no longer living in the manner to which they were accustomed and second “that the settling [of] such a Number of Loyalists, of the most respectable Characters, who have constantly had a great influence in His Majesty’s American Dominions – will be highly Advantageous in diffusing and supporting a Spirit of Attachment to the British Constitution as well as His Majesty’s Royal Person and Family.” The fifty-five gentlemen included an assortment of lawyers, Anglican clergy and former crown officials. The petition impressed General Carleton who recommended it to Governor Parr.²⁷

News of Carleton’s support soon spread and led to a counter-petition signed by 642 persons. They explained that they had hoped to find protection in the British Empire “little suspecting there could be found amongst their Fellow sufferers Persons ungenerous enough to attempt ingrossing to themselves so disproportionate a share of what Government had allotted for their common benefit – and so different from the original proposals.” Granting such a large area of land, they argued, would exclude their families and force them to settle on “barren and

²⁷ Petition of the fifty-five gentlemen, New York July 22nd 1783, PANS, RG1 Vol.369.

remote Lands, or submit to be tenants to those most of whom they consider as their superiors in nothing but deeper Art and keener Policy." ²⁸ General Carleton forwarded the objections to Governor Parr, who refused to grant the land when the agents for the fifty-five gentlemen appeared in Nova Scotia. ²⁹

This exchange uncovered a division between the elite and ordinary Loyalists. It also revealed the extent to which past Loyalism had become a commodity to exchange for imperial support. The fifty-five gentlemen believed their compensation should be greater than their actions. With no guarantees, these well-positioned Loyalists were using the only tool available to them to get the assurance of support: their former positions. They had their own vision of life in exile with them at the top of the imperial bureaucracy, receiving the grateful thanks of Whitehall and the King for their services. In turn, the 642 counter petitioners offered their own interpretation of what exile meant. Lacking special status, they emphasized the common sacrifices incurred by everyone who supported Great Britain. They saw a British Empire that would reward their actions and not their background. The fifty-five gentlemen and their opponents had used a common language of loyalism to articulate two antithetical views of exile and forced imperial officials to act as umpires.

Once the Loyalists reached Nova Scotia and saw the land promised to them by the British Empire the disputes worsened. The temptation of free land and provisions encouraged self-identified factions to attempt to monopolize the best land and provisions. Throughout the early

²⁸ Public Archives of Nova Scotia Publication No.4, "Loyalists and Land Settlement in Nova Scotia," compiled by Marion Gilroy (Halifax: 1937), pp.147-153.

²⁹ Governor Parr to Nepean (Secretary of State) dated Halifax, March 16 1784, PANS, C.O. 217, Vol.154, Parr to Nepean, dated Halifax April 10 1784, PANS, C.O. 217, Vol.54, Parr to Nepean, dated Halifax April 29 1784, PANS, C.O. 217, Vol.56, Parr to Nepean, dated Halifax, May 1 1784, PANS, C.O. 217, Vol.54, Whitehall to Parr, dated London, June 7 1784, PANS C.O. 217, Vol.56.

settlement period, most colonists believed they were entitled to a greater share of property than allocated to them. At the same time, colonists being deprived of land claimed that their shared Revolutionary experience made all exiles equal between 1783-1785. This hypocrisy fueled disputes in every settlement over the distribution of land. In Nova Scotia, colonists were on frontiers of the empire and had few constraints from the British Officials. The exiles treated British officials in Halifax and London as distant arbiters when local actors could no longer control local corruption. Following these disputes uncovers how colonists thought about their place in the British Empire after they left New York and arrived in Nova Scotia.

Enough evidence survives to follow the disputes at the three largest Loyalist settlements in Nova Scotia: Parrtown, which later became the city of St. John; Shelburne; and Digby. By April 1784, according to one report, there were “already 1500 Houses put up at Shelburne, and as many at Digby, a new settlement below Annapolis Royal; and I suppose as many at St. John’s River.”³⁰ By this time, however, the residents of Parrtown, Shelburne and Digby had split into contending parties. In each case factions formed around the allocation of land and resources and forced the colonial government in Halifax to intervene and restore order, by dispatching the chief justice to Parrtown, then by deploying troops and a warship in Shelburne and putting the town leaders of Digby on trial.

1. Digby

³⁰ Letter to Samuel Peters, dated Halifax April 29 1784, PANS, Samuel Peter Papers.

In Digby tensions over the distribution of land became mixed up in a dispute over the allocations of building supplies. Located below Annapolis Royal, Digby was a new settlement founded in 1783 and named in honor of the Admiral Lord Digby who had overseen the evacuation of New York. A strong Loyalist name did not create a united town. By 1784, the town had grown to over 700 houses.³¹ The shared hardships of establishing a new town turned Digby's substantial population against each other.

The arrival of a shipment of ironmongery and tools in May 1784 first sparked a power struggle for control of the town. Like Loyalists across Nova Scotia, the settlers at Digby were reliant on the colonial government in Halifax for all types of supplies. At the beginning of 1784, distressed townsmen petitioned the governor for building supplies.³² Governor Parr's response was to send iron and tools from the military stores via the care of Amos Botsford, the deputy land surveyor at Digby.³³ Parr's decision to entrust the deputy survey with the distribution of the supplies made sense in Halifax, but in Digby this ultimately caused the town to split into factions. Botsford's role as surveyor had made him the focus of criticism. Complaints circulated about the slow pace of surveying and just before the arrival of the iron, the movement of lots to

³¹ March 2 1784 Reverend Jacob Bailey to Rev. Mr. Samuel Parker at Boston, PANS, Jacob Bailey Papers, MG1 Vol.104. Samuel Peters puts the number higher at 1,500 houses built by 1784. See, Halifax 29 April 1784 brother to Samuel Peters, PANS, Samuel Peter Papers, MG 1, Vol.23.

³² March 25 1784 memorial of Richard Hill, Capt. No. 5 Digby militia to Governor John Parr concerning supplies needed by his companies of Loyalists and the Governor's response dated on March 27. PANS, Samuel Peter Papers MG 1 Volume 23.

³³ April 21 1784 letter from Lt. J. H. Henkelmann to Amos Botsford concerning the supplies arranged for Capt. Hill for the Loyalists of Annapolis, Digby, Passamaquoddy and Bear River. Amos Botsford Memorial in *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Vol.1, "Memorial of Amos Botsford."

make way for a new road through the center of town.³⁴ A popular faction in the town, led by Major Tenpenny who felt wronged by Botsford accused him of mishandling the iron as a pretext for replacing him and from this platform taking over the town government from Botsford's allies.

The details of the power struggle at Digby came out in an investigation launched by Halifax in the wake of the riot at Shelburne. Depositions given under oath by settlers involved in the dispute revealed that Botsford had problems distributing the iron and tools. Instead of immediately dividing the material he waited, a decision that sparked criticism. Botsford called a meeting of town leaders in August 1785 to explain the delay and managed to win them over. He explained the articles had to be moved twice to prevent theft.³⁵ After hearing this, James Wilmot, who attended the meeting, testified "About Thirty Captains and Lieut. of Classes mett him at Birkets tavern, where he gave them his reasons for the said Donation not being Divided before with which they were all seemingly satisfied."³⁶ At this point the meeting still had faith in Botsford.³⁷

At the same time, however, a mob was gathering outside with the aim of subverting the town meeting and taking over the distribution of provisions. A disaffected rabble led by the justice of the peace, Major Tenpenny, and Col. Bardon broke into the meeting and insisted that an inquiry be launched into Botsford's conduct. Tenpenny proposed a four-man board led by himself take charge of the articles by moving them to a safe house. With the backing of part of

³⁴ Charles Morris to Amos Botsford, dated Halifax, July 21 1783, July 4 1783, August 30 1783, PANS, Charles Morris Papers, RG1 Vol.394. And, Certificate of Jacob Bailey at Annapolis that complaints against Amos Botsford arose from prejudice and discontent, [1784?] in PANS, Amos Botsford Papers.

³⁵ Deposition of John Stretch, October 1 and 6 1784, deposition of James Wilmot, deposition of Robert Ray, October 4 1784, deposition Isaac Bonnel, October 6 1784, PANS, Botsford Papers.

³⁶ Deposition of James Wilmot, October 6 1784, PANS, Botsford Papers.

³⁷ Deposition of John Hooton, October 6 1784, PANS, Botsford Papers.

the town, the newly created board went beyond its mandate, seized control of the provisions and then acting on its own initiative assumed the powers of a permanent committee while investigating Botsford's accounts.³⁸

As the struggle dragged on into 1785 Botsford and the town meeting found themselves competing with the board for control of the community. Tenpenny went to great lengths to secure popular support and take over the local government. One witness claimed that Tenpenny offered a member of the town meeting, Captain Crozie, a house and 100 acres "if he would sign a paper he then had in his hand for he would soon have it in his power to serve his friends." Given Botsford's role as the deputy surveyor, the offer of land in return for support constituted a direct challenge to his authority. As tensions increased, the situation came close to exploding into violence. In early October 1784 Thomas Osborn, an influential ally of Tenpenny, threatened to "head a Mob and Parade the Streets of Digby" if Botsford remained in town.³⁹

Fearing a riot, Governor Parr intervened. The Governor ordered an investigation of both parties. The Council decided to support the established government and voted to remove Major Tenpenny as a Justice of the Peace because he appeared "in a Variety of Instances, Violent, Turbulent and unjustifiable of opinion that he is in a great Degree the Mischievous Instrument of the Disorder & Unhappy Dissentions at Digby."⁴⁰ The Loyalists at Digby, just like Parrtown and Shelburne, were incapable of resolving their own disputes. Digby, however, was far from the most divided town in Nova Scotia

³⁸ Deposition of Benjamin String, October 7 1784, PANS, Botsford Papers.

³⁹ Deposition of Benjamin String, October 7 1784, PANS, Botsford Papers.

⁴⁰ Council Records, June 16 1785, PANS, RG1, Vol.190.

2. Shelburne

In Shelburne, infighting between exiles during the first two years of settlement almost destroyed the town. The first settlers came as part of the Port Roseway Association in the Spring Fleet. Thousands soon joined them who had heard favorable reports of the region.⁴¹ A little over a year after the first transport ships arrived, Port Roseway was renamed Shelburne and had a population of 10,000 people.⁴² From nothing Shelburne became the biggest town in Nova Scotia and the fourth largest town in North America, after Philadelphia, New York and Boston. Watching this rapid growth, British officials briefly saw Shelburne as the future of the British Empire in North America. However, the thousands of exiles who crowded Shelburne's new streets brought with them many rival interests. From 1783, different factions emerged and attempted to monopolize the best plots of land in the bay area. By 1785, Shelburne civil law had collapsed the town had descended into anarchy.

The signs of discord appeared three days after the first transport ships anchored at Port Roseway. After arriving in Nova Scotia, the rank and file exiles had successfully overthrown the rule of the Port Roseway Association. On 5 May over 30 vessels appeared on the horizon carrying 3,000 exiles looking forward to claiming their new land. Agents for the Port Roseway Association had already surveyed the area and fixed the location of the town on the northeastern side of the Bay.⁴³ If they had followed the agents report, the exiles could have allocated allocating lots with a minimum of confusion. On 6 and 7 May, captains pre-elected in New York

⁴¹ Mackinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia, 1783-1791*, p.64.

⁴² Raymond, *Benjamin Marston of Marblehead, Loyalist: His Trials and Tribulations During the American Revolution*, p.253.

⁴³ Joseph Pynchon made the choice of a town site. Mackinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia, 1783-1791*, p.210.

followed the agents' plans, but on 8 the exiles began complaining about the quality of the soil and took over the business of finding a new location of the town. According to diary entry of the land surveyor, Benjamin Marston on the 8 May:

The multitude object to the place which the Captains and Chief men have chosen for the situation of their town because, say they, 'tis a rough uneven piece of land – so they propose to mend the matter by choosing three men from every company to do the matter over again.

The new survey went ahead with sixty popularly elected colonists accompanying twenty captains and other senior figures.⁴⁴ After looking over the terrain, the new surveyors decided to move the town to the eastern side of the bay. The captains decided not to object and work began immediately.

The strength of the popular voice in Shelburne revealed a widespread willingness to challenge authority figures in Nova Scotia. The popular challenge scared Marston and the captains who thought the Revolution had followed them to Nova Scotia. Feeling threatened, Marston blamed the “cursed republican, town-meeting spirits [that] has been the ruin of us already.”⁴⁵ Within just days of arriving in Nova Scotia, the lure of land had crippled the Association created in New York. Everyone was determined to get the best share of land possible and refused to tolerate any intervention.

The popular unrest continued over the next weeks as the captains oversaw the allocation of individual lots to the exiles. Everyone who arrived in Shelburne could put their name in box

⁴⁴ Benjamin Marston identifies twenty captains in his diary. The first census of the town in 1784 recorded the names of more than 50. Each captain had a company of between 30 and 150.

⁴⁵ Raymond, *Benjamin Marston of Marblehead, Loyalist: His Trials and Tribulations During the American Revolution*, p.212.

for a town lot, a water lot in the harbor and a 50 acre farming lot on outskirts of the settlement. Lots would then be awarded using a lottery system to fairly distribute the best land.⁴⁶ To prevent the arguments between early and later settlers sufficient land would-be kept in reserve for future lotteries.⁴⁷ The lottery system, however, failed to stop individuals trying to claim a disproportional part of the land around in Shelburne. One resident commented: “many unfair things have been practiced towards one another, in the Business of locating Lotts.”⁴⁸ Different interest groups in the town succeeded in sidestepping the lottery. The most audacious scheme involved a plan by the recently defeated Captains to ignore the lottery and grant themselves the supplies and largest lots. On May 16, Benjamin Marston recorded in his diary that rumors of the captains’ land had turned the people “mutinous.”

In a repeat of the case of the fifty-five gentlemen, the prominent members of the town believed that they were entitled to a greater share of land than the lowly masses who clogged the streets. The leading members of the Port Roseway Associates, who in turn became the town magistrates, applied for separate grants of 500 acres. In an extension of the argument used by the fifty-five gentlemen, they objected to the “leveling principle” contained in the idea of a lottery. A person who owned 200 pounds worth of property before the Revolution was not as “deserving” as a person who had owned 10,000 pounds worth of property.⁴⁹ First, they tried to bribe Benjamin Marston the deputy land surveyor and fellow magistrate. Marston wrote in February

⁴⁶ Charles Morris to Benjamin Marston, dated Halifax [?] May 1784, PANS, Charles Morris Papers, RG1 Vol.394.

⁴⁷ Just before leaving in New York, the Port Roseway Associates had voted to distribute equally all amongst their members. At a meeting held on February 22 1783 a majority voted that all the land granted will be “Equitably distributed among such Associators, as have signed at New York, without favour or affections” and the same applies for any future bounties. Minutes of the Port Roseway Associates, PANS, MG4 Vol.294.

⁴⁸ Rev. Mongan’s Remarks on Nova Scotia March 10 1784, PANS, C.O. 217 Vol.56.

⁴⁹ “Notes on the early settlement” by The Board set up to investigate land disputes in Shelburne dated Shelburne 28 August 1784, PANS, Gideon White Papers.

1784 that he was “almost dinn’d to death for Town lots & Water lots, for 50 acre and 500 Acre Lots.”⁵⁰ There was little Marston could do to manipulate the lottery on this scale and so the “influential men” turned to his superiors in Halifax.⁵¹ Governor Parr, who had rejected the petition of the fifty-five gentlemen, decided to change his policy and approve the grant.⁵² Parr had just given himself two miles of prime land near Shelburne and may have found common cause with the magistrates.⁵³

The reappearance of an elitist Loyalism sparked the same opposition in Shelburne that it had in New York. The majority of residents were still waiting for their share of land and saw the awarding of 500 acre grants as a threat. According to one assessment of the tensions, “These Loyalists feel their rights have been infringed upon until the original plans of a lottery is restored or until adequate compensation is awarded.” No evidence of a counter-petition survives, but news of the unrest did reach Halifax. In late 1783 Governor Parr sent a report to Whitehall and mentioned, “At Shelburne...the People are Inimical to the Magistrates.”⁵⁴

The politics at Shelburne, however, were more complicated than a simple split between the elite and masses. Throughout the rest of 1783 the captains continued to try to defeat the lottery system by bribing the Benjamin Marston, as the land surveyor, or registering their

⁵⁰ Benjamin Marston to Edward Winslow, dated Shelburne February 6 1784, Raymond, *Winslow Papers, A.D. 1776-1826*, p.64.

⁵¹ For further evidence of bribes offered to Benjamin Marston see: attempts to bribe him: “A Capt. McLean has this evening sent me a green turtle , about seven lbs. I am obliged to him. He is to have a house lot, but his must not blind my eyes. He must run the same chance as his neighbours who have no turtle to send” Raymond, *Benjamin Marston of Marblehead, Loyalist: His Trials and Tribulations During the American Revolution*, p.262.

⁵² “Notes on the early settlement” by The Board set up to investigate land disputes in Shelburne dated Shelburne, August 28 1784, PANS, Gideon White Papers.

⁵³ Governor Parr to Lord Shelburne, January 24 1784, PANS, RG1, Vol.147.

⁵⁴ Mackinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia, 1783-1791*, p.93.

children as adults to defeat the lottery system.⁵⁵ While continuing to oppose elitist Loyalism, the rest of Shelburne found their own ways to gain more land or provisions. Following these attempts reveals the other factions that brought Shelburne to the brink of anarchy within two years. Together they reveal that the exiles held multiple allegiances at once.

The first exiles to arrive in Port Roseway as part of the Association wanted to prevent rival groups of Loyalists settling in the region by withholding land. Later comers to the settlement were excluded from the division of land. On May 21 a second group of uninvited settlers arrived from Cape Perceu, near Yarmouth in Nova Scotia. Presumably, their initial settlement had failed and they now wanted “to be admitted as settlers.” The Port Roseway associates predictably tried to protect their land and questioned the new arrivals’ Loyalism. “The Association from New York are, a curious set,” Marston wrote, “they take upon them to determine who are the proper subjects of the King’s grant.” In one of the clearest examples of Loyalism being used as strategy, the Associates created a committee of sixteen men who decided each settler’s eligibility. The use of a committee to investigate the backgrounds of new arrivals failed to resolve the problem. On June 29, a third group arrived and small groups followed throughout July and August. Some received lands. Others had to sleep in the open. As the number of have-nots increased, the tension in Shelburne increased.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Raymond, *Benjamin Marston of Marblehead, Loyalist: His Trials and Tribulations During the American Revolution*, p.235.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.213-14, 217, 220, 226. Benjamin Marston recorded in his diary, June 29 – mentions laying out town lots for the “new comers.” August 7 “Today located 183 new comers from New York and other places upon house lots.” August 2, “Much of the discussion is about laying out lots. Mentions” I find I must keep a good look out against speculators – people who get house lots in order to make money out of them – there are one or two whom I suspect, and one whom I suspect has already drawn a lot and sold it.” August 7 “Today located 183 new comers from New York and other places upon house lots.” August 8, “erases the names of three adventurers from the list, recommended by Captain of Refugees Moffat. August 27 mentions measuring off lots for the “last arrivals”. apricot

Another rift involved rival merchants trying to get the best water lots in the harbor. Shelburne had attracted so many Loyalists because the large harbor could accommodate fishing boats and merchant vessels.⁵⁷ The high expectations made water lots in the harbor especially valuable because they controlled access to the sea. Recognizing the importance of the land, Governor Parr recommended building a public wharf to provide common access to the sea.⁵⁸ The Loyalists who had come to Shelburne to fish and trade were more interested in securing the best lots for themselves. In an effort to subvert the lottery, residents exchanged water lots for another kind of lot. Others turned to more dubious methods to get access to the sea. Exploiting a legal technicality, unidentified individuals began buying up the rights to the water in the bay. They had found a loophole in the grants for water lots. Unless the terms of the grant specifically stated that the land ran down to the water's edge, the actual water was not included. Unsurprisingly, this tactic caused outrage amongst the owners who complained that they would not have built wharfs and other improvements "unless they believed the water came with the grant."⁵⁹

Loyalists who planned to grow crops or raise livestock had little interest in water lots; instead would-be farmers fought over prime farmland on the coast. They wanted to expand the fifty acre farm lots on the edge of town and claim a greater share of the hinterland. On the December 5 and 6, Benjamin Marston spent his time arranging lots for farmers who "want all to

⁵⁷ Jacob Bailey description of Nova Scotia PAC, MG 3 D1 (1), Vol.72, Governor Parr to Lord Shelburne (Secretary of State), dated Halifax of June 16 1784 PANS, MG 1, Vol.2683; Andrew Brown *History of North America* pp.106-107.

⁵⁸ Governor Parr to James McEwen, James Robertson, Joseph Durfee, Joseph Pyncheon, Benjamin Marston [Magistrates of Shelburne] dated Halifax October 3 1783, PANS, MG 1, Vol.263.

⁵⁹ "Notes on Water and Town Lotts" by The Board set up to investigate land disputes in Shelburne dated Shelburne August 1 28 1784, PANS, Gideon White Papers.

go first to be nearest the town and have the best land.”⁶⁰ This competitiveness became a source of tension in Shelburne when a group of forty nine settlers, calling themselves the “distressed farmers of Shelburne,” petitioned the Surveyor General, Charles Morris, for half a million acres to the east of Shelburne. Conscious of the incendiary nature of the grant, the farmers reassured Morris that “no other Claimers than a few Straggling Settlers on the Sea Coast” lived on the land. Displacing a small number of rival settlers appeared acceptable. In fact, the farmers suggested they would-be doing a public service by turning “this stretch of land...known for being rocky” into a useful territory. The petition importantly shows that Loyalists could claim large tracts of land on grounds other than elitism. The farmers had made a vocational argument for the land, emphasizing their ability to use the land most effectively.⁶¹ Shelburne, therefore, had become the site for at least three contending visions of the British Empire: one elitist, one mercantile and one agricultural.

Halifax did not intervene in Shelburne until the situation had erupted into violence. On July 26, a riot occurred involving an attack by disbanded soldiers on the free black population at nearby Birchtown. The soldiers believed the former slaves had undercut their wages.⁶² What started with a race riot soon triggered a larger show of frustration with the progress of the settlement. On August 4, the Governor’s Council concluded “Several discontents and disturbances having arisen at Shelburne respecting the Allotment of Land in that Township.”⁶³ Parr gave a similar assessment at the end of August, concluding “Many Contests frequently

⁶⁰ Raymond, *Benjamin Marston of Marblehead, Loyalist: His Trials and Tribulations During the American Revolution*, p.241.

⁶¹ Charles Morris to James Clarke (deputy surveyor) July [?] 1784, PANS, Charles Morris Papers, RG1 Vol.394.

⁶² The Diary of Simeon Perkins MG 1 Vol.750 1786- 1790; *The Diary of Simeon Perkins*, edited with an introduction and notes by Harold A. Innis (Toronto: 1948-78), Vol.2, p. 241.

⁶³ PANS, Council Records, RG1, Vol.190.

arising amongst the Numerous Inhabitants of Shelburne on Account of their different Interests which [have] greatly disturb[ed] the Public Peace and the Civil Authority.”⁶⁴ The disorder continued for the next month.

The unrest, like that in Parrrtown, could only be resolved by the intervention of the colonial authorities. First Governor Parr dispatched the 17th Regiment to Shelburne to keep the peace, then four companies of reinforcements and finally requested the Royal Navy station a frigate in the harbor.⁶⁵ With order temporarily restored, Governor Parr dismissed the deputy land surveyor, Benjamin Marston and appointed a board of locals to investigate the complaints about land allotment and report.⁶⁶

The Governor’s Board produced a nineteen-point plan to resolve existing disputes and peacefully divide the remaining land.⁶⁷ The Board ordered that all disputes concerning 50 acre, town and water lots should be heard by a board of arbitration. On the sensitive issue of the townsmen who received 500 acre grants, the Board suggested a compromise. In lieu of land within the town limits the grants would-be moved to an island a short way up the Port Roseway River. This solution would avoid alienating an influential group within the town, while freeing up lots for the still landless residents. To dispose of the remaining unclaimed land the Board ordered a “great lottery” to be held under their supervision. Anyone who remained without land

⁶⁴ Governor Parr to Sir Charles Douglass Baronet dated Halifax August 31 1784, PANS, RG 1, Vol.37.

⁶⁵ Governor Parr to Sir Charles Douglass Baronet dated Halifax August 31 1784 and September 2 1784, PANS, RG 1, Vol.37.

⁶⁶ The Board where given instructions that “when any Controversy or dispute shall have arisen in Respect to the Assignment of Land heretofore, that the said persons shall hear the Allegations of the parties and having found their opinion thereon shall that they do report the same to the Governor for his final determination & decision thereof...” see: August 5 1784 Council records PANS, RG1, Vol.190.

⁶⁷ “Preliminary Steps to be taken in order to quiet the Minds and Apprehensions of the Settlers in the Town and District of Shelburne,” PANS, Gideon White Papers. It was something of a debate at the time whether Marston was a scapegoat or not. See Charles Morris to Richard Gray August 13 1787, PANS, C.O. 217, Vol.395, Governor Parr to Lord Sydney April 29 1785, PANS, C.O. 217, Vol.57.

afterwards would-be compensated with a larger estate outside of town. The thirty nine farmers eventually received 200 acre lots away from the town.⁶⁸ Finally, the board underscored its own authority: all those who ignored its rulings would face legal punishment.⁶⁹

The tensions at Shelburne could not be solved that easily, even with a nineteen point plan. The rival views of the town's future continued to smolder in the months after the riot. By 1784, the distrust and suspicion in Shelburne had irrevocably divided the town. Nothing had changed to cause settlers to place the community above their own private interests. In 1785, a second riot occurred involving a large number of the town.⁷⁰ This time the Governor privileged order over fairness and threw his support behind town government regardless of the arguments. The second riot marked Shelburne as the most unruly town in Nova Scotia. It was no coincidence that Shelburne also had the largest population. With approximately 10,000 Loyalists, all following their own agendas the patches of calm were more remarkable than the moments of unrest.

3. Parrtown, St. John's Island

After Shelburne, the second largest Loyalist settlement was Parrtown located at the mouth of the St. John's River. In 1783, approximately 10,000 refugees traveled from New York City to St. John's, then part of the Crown Colony of Nova Scotia. Disembarking they found a few huts belonging to a small English-speaking community and a vast untamed wilderness. With

⁶⁸ Charles Morris to James Clarke (deputy surveyor) July [?] 1784, PANS, Charles Morris Papers, RG1 Vol.394.

⁶⁹ "Preliminary Steps to be taken in order to quiet the Minds and Apprehensions of the Settlers in the Town and District of Shelburne" August 28 1784. The only surviving copy of this important Document can be founding the PANS, Gideon White Papers, pp.308-313.

⁷⁰ Governor Parr dated Halifax, April 29 1785, PANS, RG1, Vol.47.

the exception of several thousand refugees crowding the streets of Halifax, most of the new arrivals headed for charted, but undeveloped land. With understandable eagerness, the refugees looked around at this unspoiled country and began planning their future. Over the next eighteen months, the isolated refugees at St. John began the business of establishing their new settlement on the Canadian frontier.

The tricky process of forming a government and distributing land revealed an activist streak in the majority of rank and file refugees. Almost immediately, the refugees divided into two factions. A self-proclaimed elite allied themselves with the Royal Governor in Halifax and became the local government at St. John's. This influential group consisted of former crown officials, provincial officers and wealthy merchants who had first met in New York and now in Canada saw themselves as the natural leaders amongst the refugees. They had every reason to think this way. To a large extent, they did represent the traditional source of political authority in eighteenth-century America. Yet, it took the new government over a year to solidify their control over the region. Despite being dependent on the imperial administration for food, shelter and land the rank and file settlers refused to accept their would-be governors. A loose coalition of soldiers, artisans and farmers constituted this second faction at St. John's. Many issues shaped their confrontation with the elite, but none was more important than the subject of tenancy. The elite wanted to establish great estates in the Bay of Fundy as the cornerstone of their power. The majority of refugees, however, believed land granted political rights. To them it seemed the elite wanted to enslave the masses by denying them ownership of land. Faced with this threat to their

liberty, the refugees tried to overthrow the local government and impose a more egalitarian distribution of land.⁷¹

The political disputes at Parrtown started with the unequal division of political power. The elite took control of St. John's and established a local government with the backing of the imperial administration in Halifax. From amongst their own number the elite chose a Board of Agents and Directors to organize the allotment of land and the distribution of provisions. The Board then provided all the crown officials in the region. The most visible men during these early months were connected with the refugee's settlement, the land surveyor Major Gilfred Studholme of the Royal Fencible Corps stationed at Fort Howe and the chief commissary William Tyng a refugee from Falmouth Massachusetts. Together these men oversaw the distribution of house lots, building supplies and provisions to the refugees.⁷²

The ad hoc government of the Board of Agents and Directors, however, failed to command the respect of the refugees. The rank and file settlers refused to follow orders. The first signs of unrest occurred shortly after the first Loyalists arrived in April 1783. Much to the surprise of Commissioner Tyng, the refugees refused to unload the transport ships containing provisions for the settlement. They then refused to build storehouses to prevent the provisions from rotting during the summer. It appeared the refugees wanted unusually high wages before they would act. Tyng believed they were trying to "pick the pockets of Government" and thought

⁷¹ For the early settlement of St. John's the best work by far is David Graham Bell, *Early Loyalist Saint John: The Origin of New Brunswick Politics, 1783-1786* (Fredericton, N.B.: New Ireland Press, 1983), Mackinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia, 1783-1791*, Wright, *The Loyalists of New Brunswick*.

⁷² The "directors" chosen were Reverend John Sayre, one of the agents, George Leonard of Mass, on the Board of the Associated Loyalists, William Tyng of Falmouth MA, who had been connected with the Commissary-General's Department in NY and picked to replace William Hazen as Assistance Commissary at Fort Howe, Major Gilfred Studholme of the Royal Fencible Americans who had been in charge of the detachment of that regiment stationed at Fort Howe. Oliver Arnold secretary. See, Wright, *The Loyalists of New Brunswick*, p.75.

“it a pity that those extravagant mechanics should be deprived of their provisions until they agree to work for moderate wages.” Tyng’s comments revealed the growing class antagonism between the elite and the masses. Unwilling to back down, Tyne threatened the refugees at Fort Howe with a denial of food unless they formed working parties. At about the same time, the refugees also refused to help Major Studholme survey the land. Again, the refugees wanted wages to carry the measuring chains and cut down trees.⁷³

The virtual collapse of authority brought St. John’s to the brink of anarchy. John Cochran, who arrived in June 1783 found, “[T]here is no Civil Authority as yet Established to prevent any One from doing what he thinks best in his Owne eyes. Upon the whole they appear at present to be in a State of anarchy and will continue so until there is the Civil law put in force.”⁷⁴ Edward Winslow reached a similar assessment. He also argued that without good local leadership the settlement was in trouble. Winslow pointed out, that Major Studholme was “incompetent to the performance of the task assigned as a spider would-be to regulate the manufacturers of Manchester.” As a result, “[t]he common people beginning to indulge themselves in all manner of excesses and (uncontrolled by the fear of punishments) they are becoming insolent & rude.” It seemed to both Cochran and Winslow that a showdown was brewing between the would-be rulers of St. John’s and the uncooperative masses.⁷⁵

With all trust between the Loyalists gone, the tenancy issue now exploded. From the autumn rumors spreads that the Agents and Directors had mishandled the allocation of land and

⁷³ The crown had refused to provide all deputy surveyors with assistants making the refugee’s help crucial to the surveying effort. See, Charles Morris to Major Studholme, June 20 1784, PANS, Charles Morris Papers, RG1 Vol.394. See also, Charles Morris to Major Freehold, May 7 1783, Charles Morris to Paul Croker, August 5 1783, Charles Morris to Charles Mather, December 6 1783, Charles Morris to Major Studholme, June 20 1784 in PANS, Charles Morris Papers, RG1 Vol.394.

⁷⁴ Cochran to Wentworth, December 14 1783, PANS, John Wentworth Papers, MG1 Vol.939.

⁷⁵ Parr to Shelburne, January 24 1784, PAC, Shelburne Transcripts.

resources at Parrtown, one of the main settlements at St. John's. The refugees believed the Board wanted to reserve the best land for its supporters. All the available evidence seemed to support this view. By the end of 1783, most of the Board members had amassed large estates while many of the refugees were still living in tents waiting for land. For those not connected to the Board, the choice of being homeless or becoming tenants to Loyalist landlords was unacceptable.⁷⁶

The first organized protest against the Board appeared in October 1783. On 28 October, members of Company 22 held a meeting to protest the distribution of land at Parrtown. The Company was one of many bands of civilian refugees organized at New York for emigrating to St. John's River. At least 28 heads of household arrived from the company arrived with the July fleet.⁷⁷ They intended to settle at Parrtown, but discovered that five men with connections to the Board held all the land. Now homeless, the men immediately held a meeting and decided upon a course of action. A copy of their resolves traveled around St. John's and eventually reached the Governor as a formal petition. The document contained a strong criticism of the Board and an eloquent account of the far-reaching dangers of tenancy.

The Company passed four resolutions.⁷⁸ The last resolution listed Company 22's specific complaints against the Board. It outlined six grievances that amounted to a conspiracy by "Averitious men" to turn the "poorer sort of Emigrants" into tenants on their great estates. Here

⁷⁶ As late as July 1784 the chief land surveyor believed few refugees yet had permanent homes. Charles Morris to Amos Botsford, Amos Botsford Papers, July 1 1784, PANS, Amos Botsford Papers. See also: Letter of Richard Buckley to Amos Botsford July 1 1783, PANS, Amos Botsford Papers; Governor Parr to Col. Delaney August 1 1784 PANS, Vol.37.

⁷⁷ Bell, *Early Loyalist Saint John: The Origin of New Brunswick Politics, 1783-1786*, p.66.

⁷⁸ The first resolution contained a request to establish the Church of Scotland in the town. The second took aim at the Board. The Company authorized Captain Horton to request from Major Studholme, the land surveyor, and Reverend John's Sayre, a Director, "true copy of their instructions in all respects whatever affecting them may be communicated to him for their information so as every Individual may be satisfied." In no uncertain terms, this request questioned the legitimacy of the government at St. John's. By asking to examine the Board's instruction Company 22 were challenging their authority to direct the settlement.

again was the language of class tensions first identified by Commission Tyne. The first four charges made by Company 22 built up the evidence of a plot to keep the emigrants in poverty.⁷⁹ The last two dealt with the concentration of large estates in a few hands.⁸⁰ This worried the Company because it threatened to reduce their children to the status of tenants thereby excluding them from voting and other public rights. They wrote:

Our Heirs and Successors of that Valuable privilege the choosing a Representative or Representatives for us to make Laws to raise Taxes, &c, And Vest that Precious Right freely graciously given us by the Crown in five men only which may in the Sequel prove dangerous to the community and in its nature is unjust.⁸¹

This statement constituted a sophisticated statement of dissent against the Agents and Directors. Although Company 22 reaffirmed their loyalty to the crown they wanted the same political independence within the empire. Other refugees, for example, sought similar assurances that they would not be subject to imperial taxation. A group of Loyalists in Shelburne refused to sign a declaration acknowledging Parliamentary Supremacy until the local crown official explained it did not “extend to taxation.”⁸² This aggressive articulation of individual rights would-become more familiar in the following months.

⁷⁹ They alleged Blankets, building supplies and money had not been distributed to the “poorer sort of Emigrants.” At the same time, up to 60,000 pounds raised to support refugees had been “appropriated to the use of Avaricious men.”

⁸⁰ Company 22 noted that “Town Lotts and the best lands in Nova Scotia have been reserved for “particular persons” and, in particular, five men in Parrtown now controlled the land.

⁸¹ “Proceedings of the 22nd Company of St. John’s Militia,” October 28 1783, enclosed in Parr to Carleton, December 31 1783, PANS, C.O. 217, Vol.56.

⁸² The local land surveyor, Benjamin Marston recorded in his diary that “The settlers were all called upon to take an oath of allegiance to the King and subscribe a declaration acknowledging the supremacy of the British Parliament over the whole Empire, but this was explained as not to extend to taxation.” Raymond, *Benjamin Marston of Marblehead, Loyalist: His Trials and Tribulations During the American Revolution*, p.118..

In the short term, however, the petition from Company 22 only succeeded in worrying crown officials who did not understand the situation at Parrtown. Governor Parr in distant Halifax ignored their grievances and decided to back the Board of Agents and Directors. The Governor was already concerned by examples of politics amongst the refugees and saw in the petition the potential for another rebellion against colonial authority. He was troubled enough to include the petition in a report to the Secretary of State that questioned the worrying activism of the newly arrived refugees.⁸³ This early report marked the beginning of Governor Parr's growing suspicion about his new colonists and determination to limit popular politics in his colony.⁸⁴ The Board it appeared had found a powerful support in the conservative imperialism of the Governor and the colonial government had once again acted as the arbiter in another inter-Loyalist dispute.

Without the assistance of the administration in Halifax, the refugees looked to other means to challenge the Board of Agents and Directors. The campaign to reveal the Board's conspiracy received new impetus with the publication of the settlements first newspaper in December 1783.⁸⁵ The *Saint John's Gazette*, under editors William Lewis and John Ryan,

⁸³ Writing to London in 1784 he warned: "Some of the Refugees Settled on the Banks of the River St. John's having excited Discontent among many of those people and managed their proceedings by forming Committees for Obtaining redress of Grievances." Governor Parr to the Secretary of State (Lord North) July 2 1784, PANS, RG1, Vol.47.

⁸⁴ Governor Parr's reluctance to endorse popular protest would soon become the enshrined position of the imperial establishment as it rethought policy after the Revolution. For literature on a conservative imperialism, see: Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, 116-121. See also P.J. Marshall, "Empire and Authority in the Later Eighteenth-century," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 15 (1987), pp.105-22, David Milobar, "Conservative Ideology, Metropolitan Government and the Reform of Quebec, 1782-1791," *International Historical Review* 12 (1990), 45-64, P.J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, Vol.1: *Innovation and Expansion, 1688-1914* (London, 1993), pp. 96-98.

⁸⁵ The first edition of the paper appeared on December 18 1783.

became the unofficial mouthpiece for the tenant issue at Parrrtown.⁸⁶ Many of the early issues are lost, but every surviving number criticized the administration.

On 29 January 1784, *A Spectator* wrote a sixty line poem from the perspective of the dissatisfied refugees. The poem compared the Board to the Pharaoh who enslaved the Israelites and the tyrannical reign of the Roman Emperor Nero. The crucial stanza read:

The main design that they're upon,
 To keep us easy at St. John's,
 Till we have eat our bread and pork,
 And then the D___l goes to work;
 To them we'll go instead to Pharow,
 But we shall soon behold a Nero;
 To them we'll make our cries and moan,
 Instead of bread they'll give us stone,
 Except you'll give them all your living,
 And everything that's worth a giving;
 Like slaves you cannot then resist,
 Your lands likewise, except the Priests

Overlooking the poor rhyme, the author argued that the only way “To save our lives and liberty” was to appeal to the imperial authorities in England who clearly did not know the situation at St. John's.⁸⁷

The likening of the refugees relationship with the Board to slavery pointed to an escalation in the political rhetoric used against the Board. Today, the comparison between tenancy and slavery seems overblown. However, for the *Gazette's* readers' slavery carried two significances. Slavery had a racial meaning at St. John's. A number of Loyalists owned black

⁸⁶ Many of the early issues are lost, but every surviving number criticized the administration.

⁸⁷ The poem finished with the couplet: “Send home what you do labour under, / The British Lion soon will thunder.” *Saint John's Gazette* January 29 1784.

slaves. On 13 May 1784, for example, an advert appeared in the *Gazette* advertising the escape of six slaves belonging to one man.⁸⁸ Slavery, however, also had a political meaning in eighteenth-century America. In the years before the Revolution, no argument had appeared more often than that Parliament had a conspiracy to enslave America through unconstitutional taxes.⁸⁹ This claim had been implicit in Company 22's fears about landlords and now became explicit in *A Spectator's* attack on the Board of Agents and Directors. From this point on, political slavery would-become the defining feature of the popular criticism of the governing elite.

The next surviving issue of the *Gazette*, on 26 February continued the attack against the Board. It devoted an entire page to an article by *Plain Dealer*. This piece again took up the theme of slavery. Without the use of verse, *Plain Dealer* accused the Agents and Directors of deliberately sabotaging the quick settlement of farm lands as part of their master plan to reduce the ranks and file Loyalists to penury and force them to become to become tenants. Again, they appealed to England where "if such impositions were known in England, it would set the nation in a ferment."⁹⁰

The final attack came on 4 March 1784 when *A Soldier* called for a popular uprising against the Board. The article started with the by now standard comparison between tenancy and slavery. The new militancy came in the second paragraph. *A Soldier* addressed the many disbanded provincial troops in a call to arms against tenancy. He wrote:

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, May 13 1784.

⁸⁹ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), p.183.

⁹⁰ *Saint Johns Gazette*, February 26 1784. The Board wanted, the article concluded, "to establish the doctrines of PASSIVE OBEDIANCE AND NON RESISTANCE."

*I would not wish you to think I mean to cause discontent or excite discord among you. I mean to warn you of your impending inevitable ruin should government withdraw her bounty; leaving you inhabitants of the barren rocks or tenants to a fortunate few that either by bribery or fraud possess all the habitable lands expressly contrary to the King's order. No feeling men whose hearts are warm with loyalty could wish to rob you of you just rights, and those miserly wretches... must feel the force of a justly enraged soldiery...should they succeed in their mercenary attempt.*⁹¹
[Emphasis added]

It appeared that the creation of a rival government in Digby and a riot in Shelburne would-be followed by an armed coup in Parrtown.

The growing radicalism of the opposition faction finally forced the Board of Agents and Directors to take action against the *St. John's Gazette*. Up until this point, they had relied upon a sympathetic administration in Halifax. Governor Parr, however, was not going to shut down the press and further inflame popular tensions. Therefore, the Board resorted to the local courts. James White, a former crown official, and Commissioner Tyng, a current Board member, acting as justices of the peace, forced the editors of the *Gazette* to hand over the original copy of the letter published on the 4th March and the name of the author. Over the next couple of days, they arrested the author, who turned out to be a lieutenant from the disbanded Prince of Wales American Regiment, an accomplice and the two editors of the *Gazette*. With all the suspects in custody by 10 March, the County Court charged them with seditious libel. A grand jury stacked with Board men then found all three guilty.⁹² The Soldier affair revealed that the Board's willingness to crush dissent at St. John's using all the resources of the colonial administration.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, March 4 1784.

⁹² Bell, *Early Loyalist Saint John: The Origin of New Brunswick Politics, 1783-1786*, pp.78-79.

The final phase of the dispute came shortly after the guilty verdict. Building on the momentum generated by the *Gazette*, the residents of Parrtown sent a second petition to Governor Parr. This time, the petition came from the pen of a barrack room lawyer, Elias Hardy.⁹³ Hardy had made his political debut a year earlier in New York. There he had organized a petition condemning the plan of 55 self styled gentlemen to acquire a total of 275,000 acres in Nova Scotia. Hardy warned that if the 55 men succeeded many other refugees would-be forced to settle on “barren and remote Lands, or submit to be tenants.”⁹⁴ In St. John, Hardy continued his brand of popular politics. Arriving in November 1783, he became the leader of the popular faction at Parrtown. By the end of the year, one man with close ties to the Board could denounce Hardy as “now pursuing the same turbulent measures, and plaguing the poor Loyalists in Nova Scotia, as formerly in New York.”⁹⁵ From then on, the anti-Board party in Parrtown became known the Hardy Faction.

With this support, Hardy petitioned Governor Parr in April 1784 hoping to seize Parrtown from the Board. He targeted 29 large landowners who held multiple town lots and in three cases already had tenants.⁹⁶ Almost all of these men had connections with the Board of Agents and Directors or an interest in supporting the status quo. Six of the men sat on the Board, including Commissioner Tyng. Four others were peripheral agents overseeing aspects of the

⁹³ For more Elias Hardy see, W. O. Raymond, *The London Lawyer, a Biographical Sketch of Elias Hardy (St. John's: 1894)*.

⁹⁴ Public Archives of Nova Scotia Publication No.4, “Loyalists and Land Settlement in Nova Scotia,” compiled by Marion Gilroy (Halifax: 1937), pp. 147-153.

⁹⁵ Samuel Peters, *Reply to Remarks on a Late Pamphlet Entitled a Vindication of Governor Parr and His Council, &C, Variation* (London: Printed for John Stockdale ... 1784), p.32.

⁹⁶ George Leonard, for example, had a lot of 600 by 100 feet on which he collected rent from four refugees. One, a baker, paid \$18 rent and another paid \$20. James Peters, had a lot 400 by 100 feet and one tenant, a Mr. Norroway. Colonel Allen had two lots each 400 by 100 feet and two tenants, Mr. Pammila and Mr. Beane. “List of Persons, supposed to possess Lots in Parrtown, larger or more in number than their just Proportion.”Wright, *The Loyalists of New Brunswick*, pp.181-182.

settlement.⁹⁷ Five more were captains of refugee companies in Parrtown.⁹⁸ Of the remaining thirteen at least five were military officers in charge of the disbanded Loyalist regiments.⁹⁹ Together these men represented a significant part of the St. John's political and social elite. It was no coincidence, for example, that five of the men accused by Hardy sat on the Grand Jury that tried the *Soldier* affair.¹⁰⁰ The only major figure missing from the list was the land surveyor, Major Studholme, who did not own land in Parrtown.

At first Hardy had some success in winning over the hostile administration in Halifax. In a clever move, he accompanied the petition to Halifax and presented it in person to Governor Parr. This time the Governor decided to intervene and sent the chief justice to investigate the allegations. Hardy returned with the chief justice and used his influence to bias the investigation. One of the 29 men, George Leonard, noted: "Mr. Hardy...has returned here with him and has scarcely left his elbow since he arrived to the exclusion of a number of gentlemen...who would have readily advised with him."¹⁰¹ As Leonard predicted, the chief justice decided in favor of the popular party and left to deliver his report to the Governor.

Hardy's victory, however, proved short lived. For some unknown reason, the chief justice took a month traveling back to Halifax. This gave the Board plenty of time to go on the attack. While the Chief Justice dawdled, they sent two petitions to Halifax requesting a full hearing before the provincial executive council. Both documents overlooked the uneven distribution of

⁹⁷ Fyler Dibblee, Thomas Hosfield, Bartholomew Crannel S.D. Street

⁹⁸ Thomas Elms, John's Menzies, Nathaniel Horton, William Wright, Bartholomew Crannel John's Bell has suggested a sixth person, Robert Campbell, should be added.

⁹⁹ Joshua Upham, Isaac Allen, Daneil Murray, Thomas Menzies

¹⁰⁰ The men sitting on the grand jury were Justice White, Tyne, Leonard, Peters, Deveber and Coffin. Of these only White did not own land in Parrtown.

¹⁰¹ George Leonard to Edward Winslow, April 30 1784, Raymond ed., *Winslow Papers, A.D. 1776-1826*, pp.203, 206.

land and blamed the problems at Parrtown solely on Hardy and his divisive politics. With convenient forgetfulness, the Board claimed that before Hardy arrived “unanimity and general exertion for the good of the whole, had strongly marked the conduct of the loyalists.” Order could only now be restored if the administration rejected the chief justices’ findings. If, however, the Governor continued to support “Hardy and “men of low birth”, then, the petitioners as “gentlemen” and as “men of honor”, would-be compelled to resign. With this last claim, the Board hoped to align themselves with the imperial hierarchy against popular politics. Parr already concerned about unrest at St. John’s, granted the petition, and no redistribution of land occurred.

This represented the last round in a popular uprising that had gripped St. John’s since the arrival of the Spring Fleet a year earlier. Soon after the chief justice finished his investigation, the region became the colony of New Brunswick and the political dynamic at Parrtown changed. The elite gained the support of the new governor and all received powerful positions in the new assembly, enabling them to finally solidify their control over the majority of the refugees.¹⁰²

In their scramble for land and resources, the Loyalists at Parrtown, Shelburne and Digby had created an individualistic society on the frontier of the British Empire. These early years of the settlement in Nova Scotia cannot be understood as a legacy of Revolutionary politics. The common experience of rejecting the United States and settling in the Canadian wilderness did not create a Loyalist community in exile. In a similar way to other frontier societies in North America, the desire to secure unclaimed land and resources created a fluid political culture based

¹⁰² Tensions did rumbled on. As late as 1786, for example, a piece appeared in the *St. John’s Gazette* accusing Local officials of “enslaving us”. Yet for the most part under the watchful eye of the new governor of New Brunswick politics at St. John’s River became more stable.

on the competitive acquisition of land. Every Loyalist interpreted the creation of a second empire in Nova Scotia through his own agenda. This was personal politics taking place not on the imperial stage, but at the local level.

By 1785 the initial settlement process had ended. In 1790 the granting of free land in North America officially finished. Yet individuals continued to petition for land. One of the first tasks the Loyalists tackled after disembarking was to distribute the crown land set aside for them and build settlements. The work began immediately and lasted for the next two years. In a flurry of activity new towns appeared across the landscape. After the last settlers had arrived, Governor Parr reported to Whitehall that over 20,000 Loyalists had established seven settlements between Halifax and the Bay of Fundy, in modern day New Brunswick.¹⁰³

The conclusion that every Loyalist acted upon personal priorities in exile offers a new way to think about the Loyalist Diaspora. Historians of the early Republic have long argued that after the Revolution Americans struggled to work out what it meant to be a member of the United States. Over the 1780's and 1790's, this conversation took shape in constitutional debates *and* the more mundane issues of local politics. Nobody could agree on what the United States should be because everyone had their own agenda in the years after the Revolution.¹⁰⁴ By moving beyond the argument that the Loyalists formed a cohesive community, we can begin

¹⁰³ Governor Parr to Lord Shelburne (Secretary of State) dated Halifax December 27 1784, PANS, C.O. 217 Vol.56 List of settlements with population in each. Total population 20,400.

In and about Halifax 1200, To eastwards as far as Chedabucto 2000, Then to the Isthmus of Cumberland 900, At Cumberland and Partridge Island 700, In and about Windsor 800, County of Annapolis 4000, On coast west of Halifax 800, District of Shelburne 10000. Parr sent frequent report to his superiors in Whitehall. The overnight growth of the Loyalist towns can be followed in dated December 27 1784, PANS, RG1, Vol.47.

¹⁰⁴ For examples of the popular debate of the Revolutionary legacy, see: Leonard L. Richards, *Shays's Rebellion: The American Revolution's Final Battle* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), Thomas P. Slaughter, *The Whiskey Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

to understand how 80,000-100,000 exiles were part of a larger post-revolutionary debate that included both the United States and the British Empire. At the same time as Americans debated the meaning of independence, the example of Nova Scotia demonstrates that Loyalists were engaged in the complicated task of working out what it meant to be members of the British Empire.

It might be presumed that Loyalists could divide amongst themselves and still present a united front to the non-Loyalist world.¹⁰⁵ Nova Scotia had a population of roughly 15,000 of English-speaking colonists.¹⁰⁶ During the American Revolution, Nova Scotians had ostensibly remained loyal, but harbored considerable sympathy for the Patriot cause. Many had emigrated from New England in the 1760's and felt a natural affinity with the radical politics coming from Boston.¹⁰⁷ The influx of Loyalists had more than doubled the population and made them potentially the most powerful interest group in the colony. The exiles, however, did not develop a distinct voice in Nova Scotian politics. Instead, the Loyalists continued to divide amongst themselves and began finding common interest with the non-Loyalist population. What emerged

¹⁰⁵ Neil MacKinnon, "The Nova Scotia Loyalists: A Traumatic Community," in Calhoun et al, *Loyalists and Community in North America*.

¹⁰⁶ The Census of 1784 put the population of English-speaking "old residents" at 14,000 and remaining French-speaking Arcadians at 400. PANS, C.O. 217, Vol.56.

¹⁰⁷ It seemed to one Loyalist that "7/8ths of the people are Bigotted to the America Cause...The people in this country don't deny their principles and are in general like the same class of N[ew] England." Diary of an unnamed Loyalist September 5 1783, PANS, Gideon White Collection; Joseph Grey to Richard Buckeley, dated Halifax October 31 1785, PANS, MG1 Vol.223. The best account of Nova Scotia during the Revolutionary War is old, but well researched John Bartlet Brebner, *The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia; a Marginal Colony During the Revolutionary Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937).

was a new politics that had less to do with the American Revolution and more to do with the situation in Nova Scotia.

The election of a new general assembly two years after the evacuation of New York provided the first test of the Loyalists' solidarity. In October 1785, Governor Parr dissolved the long standing Fifth Assembly and ordered elections for the Sixth Assembly to begin the following month. The new Loyalist communities were included in the election. In 1784, the outgoing Assembly passed an act creating six additional seats in Loyalist areas. Combined with the existing seats, Loyalists had an opportunity to elect a sizable bloc to the Sixth Assembly. When polls opened on 8 November, however, Loyalists showed no consistency in their voting habits.¹⁰⁸

In a number of communities, the election appeared to crystallize a Loyalist identity. A split between Loyalists and older settlers, for instance, occurred in the contested election of Annapolis County. The Reverend Jacob Bailey believed the old settlers who "formerly governed in these parts have exerted themselves to procure three members out of four" for the county.¹⁰⁹ In one of these seats, the Loyalists David Seabury and native Nova Scotian Captain Alexander Howe competed for one of the county seats recently created by the Assembly. After an election "conducted with unexampled temper and decency, considering the struggle between the former inhabitants and the new adventurers," David Seabury won.¹¹⁰ Captain Howe, however, challenged the results on the grounds that the sheriff of Annapolis County had rigged the

¹⁰⁸ For the best and only account of the election of the Sixth Assembly, Mackinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia, 1783-1791*, pp.118-136.

¹⁰⁹ Rev. John Bailey to Thomas Brown, dated Annapolis Royal, November 27 1785, PANS, Jacob Bailey Papers, MG1 Vol.104.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Mackinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia, 1783-1791*, p.120. See also: Rev. Jacob Bailey to John Wiswall Cornwallis dated Annapolis Royal, December 27 1785, PANS, Jacob Bailey Papers, MG1 Vol.104.

elections.¹¹¹ The dispute went before the Assembly, which on 6 December declared the election null and void because the sheriff had kept the polling station open longer than allowed.¹¹² A new election was called that galvanized both parties. Thomas Barclay, an elected Loyalist from Annapolis Royal, appealed to leading Loyalists in the valley “to support our Interests,...[or] we shall deserve our fate if we permit Capt. Howe to carry the Election.”¹¹³ The appeal worked because Seabury was elected a second time, but the Assembly once again annulled the result and Howe finally took the seat.¹¹⁴

The argument for Loyalist solidarity in Annapolis County, however, can be taken too far. It cannot be automatically assumed that Seabury won Loyalist support because he had been one of the fifty-five gentlemen who had attracted so much criticism in New York. A close reading of the records reveals that Seabury drew support from a broad-based coalition, including local Catholics, Scottish Presbyterians and Yankees. One observer of the election noted that some Nova Scotians who were “formerly great friends to the American Revolution have given their interest very warmly for Mr. Seabury.”¹¹⁵ In turn, Captain Howe did not represent the typical Nova Scotian. He was born in Annapolis, but spent most of his life abroad serving in the 36 and 104 Regiments of the British Army.¹¹⁶ Upon his return, he did not suddenly take up the interests

¹¹¹ Journal of the House of Assembly 12 December 1785, the petition of Robert Tucker Sheriff of Annapolis County, PANS, RG 5 Ser. A 1B 1777-1785.

¹¹² Minutes of the Committee of the whole House about the controverted elections of Annapolis County, 6th December 1785, PANS, RG 5 Ser. A 1B 1777-1785.

¹¹³ Journal of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, June 23 1786, PANS, RG 5 Ser. A 1B 1777-1785.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, June 23 1786.

¹¹⁵ Reverend Jacob Bailey, Thomas Brown, dated Annapolis Royal, November 27 1785; Reverend Jacob Bailey to Peter Fry, January 5 1786, PANS, Jacob Bailey Papers, MG1 Vol.104.

¹¹⁶ Mackinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia, 1783-1791*, p.122.

of his fellow natives. The same observer thought that Howe was driven by the personal goal of getting power.¹¹⁷

Elsewhere the election turned rival Loyalist candidates against each other. All the representatives for Shelburne County were Loyalists. The earlier tensions in the Loyalist metropolis had fragmented the electorate and produced several candidates claiming victory. The matter went before the Assembly where a committee examined the poll books. The investigation uncovered another power struggle between the leading members of the new town. As the first recount showed, Charles McNeil and Alexander Leckie had won a comfortable victory. Both men occupied a leading position in the town government. Isaac Willson challenged the result. He was also a member of the town government, but one of the fifty-five gentlemen.¹¹⁸ In a petition to the Assembly, Wilson declared the election result null and void on the grounds that the sheriff had orders to close the polls by 10pm on 1 December, but kept the “poll open so long afterwards.” If the committee counted the votes cast before ten, Wilkin’s argued, they would find he had the majority. The emphasis placed on the time points to the fractured nature of politics in Shelburne. Both sets of candidates had managed to alienate and attract a significant part of the electorate. McNeil and Leckie, for example, had petitioned to receive the extra 500 acres. The Assembly paid no attention to the internal dynamics of Shelburne politics and duly appointed Wilson as the representative of Shelburne County.¹¹⁹

In other communities, for example, Loyalists put up non-Loyalist candidates in preference to their fellow exiles. In Guysborough, Loyalists chose two men from Halifax: James

¹¹⁷ Reverend Jacob Bailey to Peter Fry, dated Annapolis Royal January 5 1786, PANS, Jacob Baily Papers, MG 1 Vol.104.

¹¹⁸ Petition of the fifty-five gentlemen, New York July 22 1783, PANS, RG1, Vol.369, Doc. 135.

¹¹⁹ Journal of the House of Assembly of Nova Scotia, 16 December 1785, PANS, RG 5 Ser. A 1B 1777-1785.

Putnam, a commissary for the Loyalists, and J.M. Freke Bulkeley, the son of the provincial secretary.¹²⁰ By choosing well-connected candidates the residents of Guysborough were engaging in a classical game of patronage politics. Influential representatives could always be useful. Other Loyalists made similar decisions. The election of local candidates regardless of their Revolutionary history did more to shape the Sixth Assembly than the disputed elections. In total only 13 of the 39 new members could be counted as Loyalists.¹²¹

The election of the Sixth Assembly marked an important turning point in the Loyalist settlement of Nova Scotia. For the first time since the evacuation of New York, the business of nominating candidates gave Loyalists the chance to exercise a collective voice. The exiles could have seen the Sixth Assembly as a tool to shape a distinctly Loyalist visions of a second empire in Nova Scotia. However, after two years of bitter disputes over land and resources, Loyalists had no interest in overcoming their differences. Instead, they used the hustings to express local political concerns remote from the fading partisan politics of Loyalists and Patriots. In this way, the election of the Sixth Assembly points to an important transition: in New York, Loyalists had used Loyalism to buy a more comfortable exile, but just two years later the same colonists focused on a new priorities shaped in Nova Scotia. It seemed that memories of the Revolutionary struggle had dimmed as Loyalists replaced old allegiances with fresh concerns that in the following years would once again send them in new directions.

¹²⁰ McKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil*, p.121.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p.122.

Chapter Five

Returning Loyalists: The Rehabilitation of the Nova Scotia Refugees in Connecticut, New Jersey
and New York, 1783-1790

In April 1784, a surprising scheme surfaced to invite rich and respected Loyalists to live in New Jersey. Merchants from around Perth argued that the economy of New Jersey was controlled by New York and Philadelphia. Now having won independence from Britain, New Jersey wanted economic independence from its neighbors. Wealthy Loyalists fleeing oppression in New York offered one way to do this. Loyalists of “property and commercial ability” would bring investment capital and trading connections that would give New Jersey the economic clout to become a major Atlantic trading hub. The only qualification Loyalists needed to become citizens of New Jersey besides wealth was a good character. At the same time hundreds of Loyalists who had gone into exile wanted to return and resume their old lives. Few fitted the profile of the rich investor. Yet, schemes such as plan that appeared in New Jersey gradually opened the way for many more Loyalists to return. The rehabilitation of the Loyalists exiles in the 1780’s revealed that Loyalism was only a politics of the Revolutionary moment.

No sooner had thousands of Loyalists fled the United States at the end of the Revolution than hundreds wanted to return to their old homes. At the end of the Revolution, Loyalists had faced a dilemma: they could either go into exile or remain in the United States. Most of the Loyalists who had gathered in New York during the War emigrated to Nova Scotia.¹ Others, however, went home to family and friends in Connecticut, New Jersey and New York. They were soon joined by hundreds of disillusioned Loyalists returning from Nova Scotia. Together

¹ See chapter 3.

these men and women had given up on Loyalism and turned their backs on the British Empire. In the region of 5,000 thousand men and women decided to stay in the United States. The first left New York in 1783 instead of joining the British evacuation. Thousands who sailed to Nova Scotia and changed their minds soon joined them. Between 1783-1790, a steady trickle of Loyalists began returning to the United States. Most went to their old homes in the north eastern states. These men and women had abandoned Revolutionary politics and wanted to live quiet live as American citizens.

Loyalists returning to Connecticut, New Jersey and New York, however, were not masters of their own fate. After eight years of partisan warfare, Loyalists could only hope they would-be allowed to live in the United States. What they found was a dynamic political landscape that redefined Loyalism around them. The prospect of thousands of returning Loyalists started a debate over who could become citizens of the United States. The appearance of Loyalists encouraged Americans to decide who would-be excluded from the former colonies. Patriots divided into hardliners who wanted to expel all Loyalists as and conciliators who wanted to rehabilitate former Loyalists. The factions struggled to control the public imagination by reinventing Loyalism according their agenda. This divided ultimately revealed a larger division between radical and conservative interpretations of the Revolution. Individual Loyalists had to negotiate these rival interpretations if they hoped to return.

The immediate and overwhelming response of Americans at the end of the Revolution was to banish all Loyalists refugees. Threats and intimidation revealed a popular stereotype of Loyalists as a dangerous enemy. In this analysis, all Loyalists became the inveterate enemies of the United States. These men and women were committed to monarchical principles and,

therefore, harmful to the young republic. They could not be converted and if allowed to return would-become British spies. The only safe place for this fifth column was exile outside the United States. The fact that few Loyalists fitted this profile did not matter. Consumed by thoughts of vengeance and determined to consolidate their victory, Patriots turned Loyalists into the bogymen of the United States. The particular circumstances of individual Loyalism did not matter. A wave of violence against suspected Loyalists between 1782-1785 became the testament of these sentiments.

As anti-Loyalists sentiment peaked, however, a growing number of voices began calling for toleration. Commercially minded men from port towns across the Northeast, argued that Loyalists with wealth and connections could play a valuable role in rebuilding the economy of the north eastern states. Instead of personal vengeance, they encouraged Americans to think of the public good and welcome back rich Loyalists exiles. In a nod to the widespread fears, they proposed excluding known murderers or plunderers. All other Loyalists would become good citizens as their personal interests became intertwined with local interests. With these arguments, the pro-Loyalist camp created a rival stereotype of the good Loyalist as a man of wealth and character. Again, only a few Loyalists fitted this profile. Most of the refugees were small farmers, not large landowners or merchants. The advocates for the good Loyalist ignored the limits of their argument and pushed for popular support. By 1784, they managed to make significant inroads as passions cooled, and they created a space for former Loyalists of all backgrounds to return. This represented the final stage of the debate over Loyalism. By the end of the 1780's, returning Loyalists found it much easier to return and build new lives for themselves.

To understand the return of the Nova Scotia exiles and the return of popular Loyalism, this chapter will follow the exiles from Nova Scotia to the United States. First, I will explore the push and pull factors that encouraged Loyalists to leave Nova Scotia shortly after arriving. Second, I will follow the debate that met Loyalists when they reached the Connecticut, New Jersey and New York and follow its evolution from unrestrained hatred to grudging acceptance.

I – Returning Loyalists

The first Loyalist refugees tried to return left New York City instead of going Nova Scotia. The exodus began in 1782 and continued throughout 1783. These men and women were gambling that exile would not be necessary and decided to throw themselves on the mercy of their former neighbors. Traveling home, they shared a common hope of picking up their old lives and putting the unpleasantness of Revolution behind them. The politics of the previous years played no role in their decision. With the onset of peace, they gave up their Loyalism. Neither did returning signal a sudden support for American Independence. Instead, watching fellow Loyalists leave for foreign lands, the first returnees found their private ties to America to be more important than political sympathies for the British Empire. When Loyalists explained their reasons for remaining in the United States, they all discussed family, friends and local communities.

An Anglican minister went home to marry his fiancé and live with her family. Reverend Jonathan Ingersoll had lived in Norwalk Connecticut and fled to New York in 1779. At end of the war, he considered moving to Halifax, Nova Scotia, but decided to return to his former

parish. Confiding to a friend already in Canada, Ingersoll gave a very personal reason for his decision. “Give nay thought what I say about removal to Halifax,” Ingersoll wrote, “when I tell you that a young lady of your acquaintance has won my heart, and I have obtained her hand...” His bride was a member of a well respected family in New Haven. Ingersoll had probably met his fiancé before the Revolution when his brother, Jared Ingersoll, worked as a lawyer in New Haven. Wherever she decided to live at the end of the war so would he: “you will think me in earnest when I say that she and her family will share my fortune at New Haven or I share theirs at Halifax or in any other part of the world.” Believing the Revolution over, Ingersoll had clearly rearranged his priorities. After three years as away from his fiancé, Ingersoll wanted to put Loyalism behind him and continue with his life.²

A cavalry officer from the British Legion wanted to return in New Jersey to claim his property from two brothers. Captain William Robbins had lived in Quibbletown, Monmouth County, served with the British army in several major battles until the Yorktown. Amongst the troops who surrendered with General Cornwallis, Robbins went first to Lancaster, Pennsylvania as a prisoner of war and then in 1784 returned to New Jersey. After his traumatic experience, Robbins wanted to reclaim part of his father’s property. During the war, two half-brothers had seized Robin’s share of the property. Having read the peace treaty, Robbins now wanted to reclaim his part of the estate.³

A New York farmer wanted to return to his property and friends. Daniel Babbet left a refugee settlement on Long Island in 1783 to his return to his farm near Fredericksburg in

² Jonathan Ingersoll to Amos Botsford July 31 1783, PANS, Amos Botsford Papers.

³ Family rivalry, however, had survived the war. Returning to Quibbletown, Robbins expected a warm welcome, but “instead of meeting with any protection he was seized, tied to a tree and severely flogged.” E. Alfred Jones, *The Loyalists of New Jersey: Their Memorials, Petitions, Claims Etc. From English Records* (Newark, NJ: 1927), p.179.

Dutchess County. However, he was arrested by local Patriots and appeared before justice of the peace. In court, Babbet explained why he had chosen this moment to return. “[A]s it was now peace,” Babbet told the court, “he thought he might go to the place of his former residence to see his friends and to look after his property.”⁴ These reasons had nothing to do with the Revolutionary conflict. Babbet had tried to avoid taking a political stand during the War. According to the family history, he was drafted three times by the Revolutionists. The first time he paid a fine, the second time he hired a replacement and finally the third time he fled to British lines in 1779 and took an oath of allegiance to George III. For the rest of the war he served as a blacksmith to British troops on Long Island. After living as a refugee for three year, Babbet found it difficult to leave behind the farm he worked to build up and travel to Nova Scotia. According to an inventory drawn up several years later, Babbet had a workshop and a larger farm of fourteen acres on which he had one hundred fruit trees, twenty eight sheep, twelve cows and a team of oxen. The chance to take up the threads of this prosperous life proved stronger than his oath.⁵

Many others in New York would have preferred to return home, but believed that it was too dangerous to stay in the thirteen colonies. Between 1782-1783, thousands of colonists reluctantly went into exile in Nova Scotia and began the business of creating new lives on the frontier of the British Empire in North America. They rose to the challenge and within a matter of months new towns sprang up in the Canadian wilderness. All the features of well developed

⁴ NYPL, British Headquarters Papers, No. 7623.

⁵ *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Vol.13, “Memorial of Daniel Babbett”. And see, Sarah Winslow to Benjamin Marston, New York April 10 1783, Raymond ed., *Winslow Papers AD 1776-1826 New Brunswick Historical Society*, p.79.

communities soon followed. The symbol of this success story was Shelburne. In the space of year from 1782-1783, Shelburne had gone from a collection of fisherman's huts to bustling city of 10,000. This made Shelburne the fourth largest city in North America and the capital of a rejuvenated British Empire.⁶ By 1784, the Governor of Nova Scotia, John Parr, could report to his superiors that 20,000 in eight large towns, including Shelburne spread across Nova Scotia.⁷ In a short period, Loyalists seemed to have replaced what they had lost in the Revolutionary War. The rapid development of Nova Scotia, however, obscured the problems of maintaining a long term settlement.

Loyalists found that settling Nova Scotia proved a drawn-out, chaotic and disheartening experience. The influxes of settlers far exceeded the abilities of the Royal government to settle them on land. In 1783 most of Nova Scotia was still un-surveyed wilderness. Despite the best efforts of crown land surveyors many Loyalists still had no land a year after reaching Nova Scotia. The problem was exacerbated by rivalries between the exiles that saw different factions attempt to monopolies the best land and resources. In the short term, tent communities provided the only shelter. The large numbers of homeless Loyalists exacerbated a growing food shortage. The delays in surveying land prevented many Loyalists from planting crops in time for the first winter. To make up for the dearth of provisions, officials issued massive quantities of military supplies to hungry exiles. At best crown supplies provided only a short term solution to larger

⁶ Raymond, *Benjamin Marston of Marblehead, Loyalist: His Trials and Tribulations During the American Revolution*, p.253. See, also: Governor Parr to the Secretary of State (Lord Sydney) April 10 1784, PANS, C.O. 217, Vol.54.

⁷ Governor Parr to the Secretary of State (Lord Sydney) December 27 1784, PANS, C.O. 217, Vol.54.

shortage. The problems with land and food continued over the next couple of years and became the defining experience of exile.⁸

These difficulties became the source of growing despair amongst Loyalists who had hoped Nova Scotia would be their reward. Early descriptions had praised Nova Scotia as a land of opportunity.⁹ The early optimism was replaced by a more dismal assessment of Nova Scotia as the numbers of homeless and hungry exiles increased. One Loyalist gave a miserable report of life in exile: “All our golden promises have vanished...It is the most inhospitable climate that ever mortal set foot on. The winter is of insupportable length and coldness, only a few spots fit to cultivate, and the land is covered with a cold, spongy moss, instead of grass and the entire country is wrapt in the gloom of perpetual fog.”¹⁰ In the midst of the troubles, a Philadelphia paper reported that: “many of the refugees who have settled at Port Roseway have wrote their friends in New York by no means to come to that place.”¹¹ Although internal factionalism amongst Loyalists was responsible for the problems, restless exiles found it easier to blame the British authorities for the difficulties of settling Nova Scotia.

Settlers leveled the first criticism at the local officials overseeing the settlement. The most common complaint was that surveyors were taking advantage of their public offices by charging fees to allocate land.¹² At Shelburne, Captain Booth commented after the town lots were laid out that “none but those who tipp’d Mr. M_____ [Benjamin Marston] were allowed to

⁸ See chapter 2, section 2.

⁹ George Leonard to Major DeLancey, Adjunct General, Brooklyn April 15 1783, Sarah Winslow to Benjamin Marston, New York April 10 1783, Raymond, *Winslow Papers, A.D. 1776-1826*, pp.83-84.

¹⁰ Mackinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia, 1783-1791*, p.69.

¹¹ Raymond, *Benjamin Marston of Marblehead, Loyalist: His Trials and Tribulations During the American Revolution*, p.250.

¹² Surveyors, in particular, became the easiest scapegoats for all the difficulties. At the height of the settlement in 1784, the chief surveyor warned his deputy’s that “the Surveyor must learn to follow St. Paul’s advice & be come all things to all men.” Charles Morris to Robert Morris 16th November 1784, PANS, Charles Morris Papers, RG1 Vol.394.

the [choice] of Ground.” Two Loyalists claimed that the chief surveyor, Charles Morris charged them 18 pounds as fees for land. Morris vigorously denied receiving anything from Loyalists: “I can declare I have not received a Fee from a Loyal Emigrant or Disbanded Troops.” However, he also wrote letter to Colonel Glasier informing him of his grant of 1,000 acres and thanking him for the “gift” of the saddle.”¹³ The growing case against surveyors led Loyalists to complain to General Carleton in New York. In a letter to Governor Parr, Carleton expressed popular concern that officials:

are said to expect presents for the performance of their duty, which many of the settlers are not able to afford, but without which I am credibly informed, their applications are nevertheless neglected. Partialities in the general distribution of lands are also much complained of & attributed to the same unwarrantable conduct.¹⁴

The letter revealed Loyalist concerns, but did not solve the problem. Looking back on these first years of settlement, one Loyalist concluded “that hitherto in this province public money was considered as a kind of plunder, of which people wished to take as much as possible, & do as little for it as possible.”¹⁵ Alongside surveyors, tax collectors, custom inspectors and justices of peace all became targets of Loyalists’ complaints.¹⁶ Together these amounted to a serious distrust of the local officials spread to other areas of imperial administration.

The widespread criticism of land surveyors soon evolved into larger criticism of the distant colonial administration in Halifax. A growing number of voices accused Governor Parr

¹³ Mackinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia, 1783-1791*, p.113.

¹⁴ General Clinton to Governor Parr, October 23 1783, PANS, C.O. 5, Vol.111.

¹⁵ Journal of Charles Inglis, October 15 1790, PAC, Reel a.709 C4. See also John Breyton to Samuel Peters, May 3 1785, PANS, Samuel Samuel Peters Papers, MG1 Vol.23, and Complaints of Loyalists and Soldiers, November 25 1785, PANS, Wentworth Papers, MG1 Vol.939, No. 54.

¹⁶ For more complaints against deputy surveyors see: *Wright, The Loyalists of New Brunswick*, p.97. And, Charles Morris to Robert Morris November 16 1784, Charles Morris to John Homesford (no date), PANS, Charles Morris Papers, RG1 Vol.394.

and a cadre of old settlers in the General Assembly of deliberately sabotaging the allocation of land and resources. One refugee, Edward Winslow, in 1784 complained that there were “ 37,000 people crying for provisions...& no provisions at Market.” He blamed the current situation of the country on “a Governor without abilities, a Council of Republics, combating every weapon in their reach the whole corps of Loyalists, & embarrassing them by every possible impediment.” The charge of republicanism first leveled against Revolutionaries became a standard political insult in Nova Scotia.¹⁷

In the final evolution of this criticism, Loyalists began articulated more general criticisms of the British Empire. One Loyalist complained, “who are obliged to live under the arbitrary, cruel & unjust Government as at present administer’d in Nova Scotia.”¹⁸ Another Loyalist, William Clarke declared the following years “This is an ungrateful place.” Thinking back to his past in Massachusetts Clarke concluded, “The People of New England never treated me with that Barbarity the Government of Old England has, all thing considered.” This reasoning had nothing to do with the Revolution. Instead, the exiles were finding their own complaints with the British Empire. As Loyalists began criticizing the British Empire and praising the United States their commitment to Nova Scotia faded.

The failures of the imperial administration to make Nova Scotia a Loyalist asylum undermined previous criticism of the United States. After they could not return home, in 1783 Loyalists reconciled themselves to exile in Nova Scotia clinging to the belief that the British Empire would prosper while an independent United States would descend into anarchy. “Boston

¹⁷ Edward Winslow to Ward Chipman, Halifax, May 12 1784, Raymond ed., *Winslow Papers, A.D. 1776-1826*, pp.204-205.

¹⁸ William Clark to Samuel Peters June 23 1789, PANS, Peter’s Papers Vol.4 and John Peter to Samuel Peters November 17 1788, PANS, Samuel Peters Papers, MG1 Vol.23.

in general, I am weaned from,” the Reverend Byles wrote from Annapolis Royal, “as it appears to me no longer Boston. I wish my Country Men joy of the Attainment of their wishes: but if ever they are so happy again as they have been, I am much mistaken.”¹⁹ Brook Watson believed Loyalists would make Nova Scotia rich and populous while “Their neighbors, like vinegar fretting on their lees will soon curs the day which made them independent.”²⁰ The newspapers played an important role in establishing the theme of NS rise to greatness and America’s decline. They carried stories from the “rebel” press showing unrest in America. They were also very sensitive to any implied attack on progress of the Loyalist settlements. The Newspapers recently established in the Loyalist boomtown of Shelburne were especially prickly. As the problems with the land and provisions continued in Nova Scotia and the United States did not collapse, boastful comparisons started sounding hollow.

With the erosion faith in the British Empire, many Loyalists decided to stop complaining and return to the United States. Between 1784-1790, hundreds of men and women decided to abandon the Nova Scotia in a second wave of emigration. A number decided that the British Empire could still offer them a future. The largest movement of Loyalists was back to the United States.²¹ The exact number who left remains unclear. Unlike the settlement of Nova Scotia, which left a considerable paper trail, little is known about those who decided to leave. Most of the evidence is anecdotal and not suited to statistical analysis. Various historians have examined passenger manifests, tax records and census information to a working number. These studies have suggested few Loyalists returned to the United States. These attempts to arrive at a total

¹⁹ Reverend Mather Byles, February 20 1784, PANS, Mather Byles Family Papers.

²⁰ Raymond, *Winslow Papers, A.D. 1776-1826*, p.338.

²¹ Wright, *The Loyalists of New Brunswick*, pp.210-211.

number have major flaws and only reveal a partial picture.²² The anecdotal evidence supports a larger exodus to the United States. Perhaps as many as 5,000-10,000 exiles left or 20% to 25% of the 25,000 refugees who initially went into exile. But, these numbers cannot be considered more than a reasonable guess.²³

The exodus began after the first winter in 1783 and continued throughout the decade as colonists sold their land and left. As early as 1784, Governor Parr warned London that refugees were selling their land and returning to New England.²⁴ In 1786, officials collecting compensation claims for property lost during the Revolutionary war noted, “that many claimants have removed into the United States.”²⁵ They singled out one man; John Polls “is returned into

²² See for example, Margaret Ells and D. C. Harvey, *A Study of Early of Early Provincial Taxation: Being a Tabular Statement of Fiscal Legislation in Nova Scotia between 1751 and 1815*, *Bulletin of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia*, Vol.1, No. 2 (Halifax: Public Archives, 1937). Margaret Ells estimated the number of Loyalists leaving by measuring the number of escheats and found that very few left. Total number of grantees was 6,220 and the number of escheats was 724. from this number get 18, 424 white permanent settlers, 14271 civilians, 111 squatters, 4,042 soldiers. Counting 938 blacks, total becomes 19,362. The problem with this method is that it contradicts with the many contemporary references to the departing Loyalist.

²³ Many traveled into the Canadian interior and settled in Ontario and Upper Canada. See, for example, *Jane Errington, The Lion, the Eagle and Upper Canada: A Developing Colonial Ideology* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987). Others turned settled on the Atlantic Islands. *Nova Scotia Gazette & Weekly Chronicle*, August 22 1784. The advert was dated Halifax, August 11 1784. A few even sailed to Bahamas. many of the exiles from the Southern Colonies in Nova Scotia had contacts with Loyalists who had sailed for the Bahamas at the end of the Revolution. In 1785, for example, one group of North Carolinians who had ended up in New York at the end of the Revolution used these contacts to leave Nova Scotia and secure a better arrangement in the Bahamas. The settlers in the Bahamas had become locked in a struggle with the Governor, James Maxwell. At the height of the confrontation, the governor was summoned to London, and at this point, Colonel John Hamilton of the Royal North Carolina Regiment made a bid for the governorship of the Bahamas. On his behalf, 72 southern Loyalists in Nova Scotia petitioned Whitehall asking for transportation to the Bahamas and recommending Hamilton for Governor. Hamilton and his supporters were unsuccessful, but still sailed for the Bahamas between 1787-1792. Few of the exiles, however, had special ties to keep them in the British Empire. The petitioners explained that they went to Nova Scotia with a view of settling in that country, but found it altogether impossible in the present state of their finances, to clear the ground, and raise the necessarys of life, in a Climate to Southern Constitutions inhospitable, and severe.” PANS, Foreign Office 4 Vol.1, Memorial to Lord Sydney by North Carolina Loyalists, [1785].

²⁴ Governor Parr to Nepean, Halifax, September 8 1784, PANS, C.O. 217 Vol.59.

²⁵ Letter book of the Commissioners, Commissioners to the Office of American Claims, Halifax 20th 1785. *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12,

the United States of America, after selling all the lands that were allowed him.”²⁶ In 1787, the Reverend Jacob Baily noted that many of the “respectable people” living in Annapolis Royal had sold up and left.²⁷ The following year, in 1788, John Wentworth informed the Governor of Nova Scotia that soldiers from the disbanded Loyalist company, the Duke of Cumberland Regiment, had abandoned their settlement. Wentworth explained, “[t]here are not thirty of the privates living within one hundred miles of Chedabucto.” Keen to leave soldiers gave up their land for anything at hand. “Privates sold their lotts,” Wentworth went on, “for a dollar, or a pair of hoes, or a few pounds of Tobacco, but most [a] Gallon on New England rum and quit the country.”²⁸ By 1790, everyone who wanted to leave already had and the exodus slowed.

The scale of the exile can be best seen by looking at the decline of the Loyalist towns. Digby, the site of so many disputes, lost most of this population. The numbers leaving spiked in 1787 when the issuing of Royal provisions ceased.²⁹ Roger Viets, a prominent Loyalist in Digby wrote:

Thus with the utmost Grief and Indignation that I mention to you, the great Emigration from this Province to the States...Ever since the King’s Allowance ceased they have been running back to the States and more now than ever. Some hundred more seen to be preparing for Removal...they have gone to the State in a most Necessitous and starving Condition.³⁰

Vol.122. See also Commissioners to the Office of American Claims, Halifax, December 20 1785, Audit Office12, Vol.122, p.340

²⁶ Commissioners to the Office of American Claims, Halifax, January 15 1786, Commissioners to Governor Mascwell, New Providence, Halifax, March 16 1786, Commissioners to Governor Mascwell, New Providence, Halifax, June 5 1786, Commissioners to Office of American Claims, Halifax, June 5 1786, Commissioners to Office of American Claims, Halifax, June 10 1786, Commissioners to Office of American Claims, Halifax, August 8 1786. *Ibid.*, Audit Office 12, Vol.122, pp. 345, 413, 416, 424-425.

²⁷ Jacob Baily to [?], Annapolis Royal, November 12 1787, PANS, Jacob Bailey Papers, MG1 Vol.104.

²⁸ John Wentworth, Halifax, March 5 1788, PANS, Wentworth Papers, MG1 Vol.939.

²⁹ Wright, *The Loyalists of New Brunswick*, p.192.

³⁰ Roger Viets to Samuel Peters, Digby, PANS, Samuel Peter’s Papers Vol.3,.

In another account, Viets estimated that Digby had lost two thirds of its population, and half of those leaving “gone back to Egypt after living so long in Idleness on the King’s Provisions.”³¹ The numbers leaving after 1787 threatened the future of Nova Scotia. The General Assembly attempted to slow the exodus in 1789 by passing an act preventing people from traveling to the United States without a pass. Potential returnees had to advertise their names at the provincial secretary’s office for seven days before receiving a pass.³² The effort achieved little.³³

The rapid decline of Shelburne, the Loyalist boomtown, also reveals the scale of the exodus. In the space of a decade the thriving town disappeared. In 1783, the population of Shelburne reached a peak of 10,000.³⁴ The failure to create a stable community took there toll on the town. By 1785 townsmen claimed, “the Settlement has diminished to one half of the original Number.”³⁵ In 1786 the general sessions of Shelburne had to prohibit the issuing of passes to anyone leaving the province before their taxes were paid. The measure, however, failed to slow the exodus.³⁶ When William Dyott visited Shelburne in 1788 he found the town “as poor an appearance as I ever saw.” He estimated that only 3,000 habitants were left and 360 empty houses. In 1789, another traveler noted “Every vessel that touched at the harbor carried out openly or by stealth whole swarms of the inhabitants. Houses were gutted and abandoned and streets left without occupant or claimant.” By 1792, another estimate put the population at 2,000. Looking back on the turbulent of Shelburne, the chief land surveyor, Charles Morris wrote

³¹ Mackinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia, 1783-1791*, p.177.

³² *Royal Gazette*, October 20 1789, December 1 1789.

³³ Yet, as late as 1791 a group at Pictou threatened to return to the United States unless their promised land was forthcoming. Governor Parr to the Secretary of State (Henry Dundas) August 13 1781, PANS, C.O. 217, Vol.63.

³⁴ W. O. Raymond, "Benjamin Marston of Marblehead, Loyalist: His Trials and Tribulations During the American Revolution," *Collections of the New Brunswick Historical Society. No. 7 (1909)*: p.253.

³⁵ Wardens and Vestry of the Church of England, Shelburne, to Dr. Morice, June 28 1785, PAC, MG 17, A170, SPG, CII.

³⁶ General Meeting of St. Patrick’s and St. George’s in Christ Church, October 1 1790, PANS, Shelburne Records.

that of 12,000 inhabitants in 1784 only 374 remained in 1816. “Most of them returned to the United States,” Morris wrote, “or settled in other parts of the country.”³⁷

For the Loyalists leaving Digby, Shelburne, and the rest of Nova Scotia returning to America was a personal choice. Disillusioned with the British Empire, colonists leaving Nova Scotia wanted to put the Revolution behind them. Returning was motivated by a range of personal concerns. Foremost amongst these was Loyalist desire to return to their families and pick up the remains of their old lives. The Revolution had split many families. Most Loyalist had surviving family and other community ties to the United States. In exile, a flurry of letters had kept families in contact and encouraged Loyalist to believe that they still had ties to the former thirteen colonies.

The Reverend Mather Byles who had fled to Halifax kept in close contact with his elderly father, Mather Sr. and his sisters, Mary and Catherine who lived in Boston.³⁸ An acquaintance of Mather, Reverend John Bailey maintained a range of professional, personal and family contacts in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut and New Jersey.³⁹ “I cannot forbear writing to my former friends,” Bailey wrote, “expressing my anxiety for their welfare.”⁴⁰

Gideon White, a former New York merchant, kept close contact with his business associates in

³⁷ Raymond, "Benjamin Marston of Marblehead, Loyalist: His Trials and Tribulations During the American Revolution," p.255.

³⁸ Following the siege of Boston Mather Byles Jr. removed his family to Halifax, leaving his Loyalist father Mather Byles Sr. and his equally Loyalists sisters Mary and Catherine behind in Boston where they remained until their deaths. Most of the letter came from Ann Byles 1768-1830, Elizabeth Byles 1767-1808, Byles Jr. and Mather Byles III (1764-1802). See PANS, Mather Byles Family Papers.

³⁹ Jacob Bailey to Mr. Nathaniel Bailey, Kennebeck, May 1 1784, September 25 1784, November 10 1784, Jacob Bailey to Mrs. Abigail Johnson May 1 1784, Jacob Bailey to Rev. Mr. Edward Bass, Newbury April 22 1784, July 28 1784, Jacob Bailey to Reverend Mr. Samuel Parker, Boston, March 2 1784, April 30 1784, Jacob Bailey to John Weeks Esq.Greenland, New Hampshire, July 26 1784, Jacob Bailey to Major Sameul Goodwin, Pownalborough, Kennebeck, October 23 1784, Jacob Bailey to Abigail Johnson at Pownalborough, Kennebeck, October 29 1784; Jacob Bailey to Reverend Jeremiah Dibble, Hartford, Connecticut, March 1 1785, August 15 1786, Jacob Bailey to John Perrot, at Greenwich Connecticut, March 11 1787, PANS, Jacob Bailey Papers, MG1 Vol. 13, 104.

⁴⁰ Jacob Bailey to Peter Pochard, Pownalborough, May 4 1784, PANS, Jacob Bailey Papers, MG1 Vol. 13, 104.

New York and Massachusetts. One, Michael Roberts wrote, “I rejoice exceedingly to find by several letters from my friends in your quarter that your prospects are so pleasing.”⁴¹ Other merchants including John Graham and James Duncan at Shelburne and Henry Lloyd and George McCree Halifax kept in contact with a former creditor in New York, John McKenzie, and through him established new contacts in United States after they had left. James Duncan, for example became a trading partner of Collin McGregor, a New York merchant who shipped provisions from Shelburne to the West Indies and ran a general store in Montreal.⁴² Most exile left fewer traces of their contacts in the United States, yet few exiles made a clean break with their former homes. When they began to consider returning, these surviving connections must have remained prominent in their minds.

The majority of the Loyalists came from New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Others came from New England. As they arrived back in the United States a number moved to new regions, but most tried to return to their old homes. Once back in their former thirteen colonies, the re-emigrants could only hope that their old neighbors would allow them to return. The moment the exiles left Nova Scotia, they lost control over their fate. To understand how former

⁴¹ Michael Roberts to Gideon White, New York, March 30 1785, PANS, Gideon White Papers. See also N. Ford to Gideon White, Morristown, Massachusetts, August 23 1786. Other networks of traders also appear in Gideon White’s papers. See for example the correspondence from Samuel Gould in Boston to Charles Whitworth and William Rigby in New York to Thomas Brain: Samuel Gould to Charles Whitworth, Boston, Massachusetts, October 6 1786, William Rigby to Thomas Brain, New York, July 13 1786 and July 20 1786, PANS, Gideon White Papers.

⁴² Collin McGregor, a New York Loyalist himself, became the agent for John McKenzie in New York and spent much of 1783-1785 trying to collect debts from Loyalists in Nova Scotia. McGregor ultimately had plans to settle in Shelburne and even had a plot selected. However, his business in the United States picked up and he decided to stay after the peace. For the web of creditors and debtors, see: McGregor to George McCree in Halifax, December 11 1783, McGregor to John Graham at Shelburne, Halifax, December 1 1783, McGregor to Henry Lloyd, Halifax, December 12 1783, McGregor to James Duncan, Shelburne, January 20 1784 and May 10 1784, NYPL, McGregor Letter book.

Loyalists became citizens of the United States requires exploring how Patriots thought about Revolutionary allegiance after the Revolution.

II – Loyalists as Dangerous Enemies

When Loyalists returned from New York City between 1782-1783 and Nova Scotia between 1783-90 they encountered a new political landscape that had redefined Loyalism in their absence. While Loyalists went into exile and turned their back on the British Empire, Patriots were debating if Loyalists still had any ties to the United States. Between 1782-1790, this debate went through two stages. Pro and anti-Loyalist camps formed in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Each faction created stereotypes of the "typical" Loyalist to support their arguments. Those opposed to reconciliation at first held sway. They portrayed all Loyalists as dangerous enemies who murdered and plundered during the Revolutionary War. This was an attempt to define the peacetime allegiances with an exaggerated account of wartime partisanship. Fresh memories of the conflict made this fiction plausible and led the majority of Americans to adopt a radical opposition to returning Loyalists immediately after the war. More conservative voices would soon put forward a rival stereotype of the good Loyalists who opposed the Revolution but would support the United States. Yet, the first Loyalists to venture home found themselves unwelcome.

News of peace negotiations in 1782 unleashed a storm of anti-Loyalist sentiments. In town and county meetings across the northeastern states, Americans made it clear they would not allow any more Loyalists who had lived in British New York to return and live amongst them.

“The Spirit of the People in the Country is high,” one New Jersey resident wrote in May 1783, “they seem determined not to suffer any of the Refugees to return and live amongst them – a few of them came over but they were immediately hunted back.”⁴³ Their victory had given Patriots a new sense of purpose: they were determined not to allow traitors to share the benefits of the American Republic. Another Loyalist, Stephen Skinner believed the “Giddy Multitude” rule and “Anarchy and confusion must be so for some years to come.” “In short,” a third Loyalist wrote, “the Mob now reigns as fully and uncontrolled as in the Beginnings of the Troubles.”⁴⁴ The new intensity of hatred dominated the political landscape from 1782 as Loyalists tried to return to Connecticut, New Jersey and New York.⁴⁵

Across Connecticut, town meetings became the centers of anti-Loyalists sentiment. With news of the peace negotiations arrived, towns created committees and regulations to keep Loyalists out of their limits and expel those who had already returned. Predictably, the greatest activity came from Fairfield County where most Loyalists had fled earlier in the Revolution. Norwalk created a committee of eight to watch for known Loyalists.⁴⁶ In Stratford, the residents reacted with alarms at seeing “whole shoals” of Tories crossing the Sound from Long Island to reside in the towns of Connecticut, and pledged themselves to expel any who returned to Stratford. They set up their own committee, which soon had its hands full. A matter of days later Fairfield Town decided to ban all those who had gone over to the British from returning and

⁴³ William Patterson to Tom Patterson, Perth Amboy, May 12 1783, NYPL, Paterson Papers (Bancroft Papers).

⁴⁴ Ranlet, *The New York Loyalists*, p.152.

⁴⁵ Other historians who have noticed the wave of anti-Loyalists sentiment include Robert M. Calhoon, *The Loyalist Perception and Other Essays* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), Calhoon, Barnes, and Rawlyk, *Loyalists and Community in North America*, David E. Maas, *The Return of the Massachusetts Loyalists, Outstanding Studies in Early American History* (New York: Garland, 1989), Jackson Turner Main, *Connecticut Society in the Era of the American Revolution, Connecticut Bicentennial Ser.; 21*; (Hartford: American Revolution Bicentennial Commission of Connecticut, 1977).

⁴⁶ Edwin Hall, *The Ancient Historical Records of Norwalk, Connecticut: With a Plan of the Ancient Settlement, and of the Town in 1847* (Norwalk CT: J. Mallory & Co.: New York, 1847), pp.144-145.

established a committee to remove any Loyalists who were already in Fairfield or might arrive in the future.⁴⁷ Stamford, Danbury and Redding took similar actions.⁴⁸ Outside of Fairfield County, where the problem was much smaller towns responded as the need arose. At the end of January 1783, the New London town meeting voted against the settlement of a known Loyalist in the town limits.⁴⁹ In July 1784, the New Haven town meeting responded to similar fears and banned all Loyalists.⁵⁰ The Boston *Continental Journal* complained that a proscribed Loyalist clergyman had taken refuge in Middletown. The Committee of inspection for the town reassured the paper's readers that they "had been very vigilant in taking up that class of gentry." In Windham, returning individuals led that town to establish a committee as late as 1785 to stop Loyalists staying.⁵¹

When news of the peace treaty reached New Jersey hostile denunciations made it clear that returning Loyalists would not be tolerated. In quick succession, committees from across the State passed resolutions against returning Loyalists. In 1782, residents from Essex County petitioned the New Jersey Assembly for legislation "to barr the return of all such into this State that have made their Election preferring the British York to America Freedom."⁵² Before the

⁴⁷ The records of the town meeting quotes in Schenck, *The History of Fairfield, Fairfield County, Connecticut, from the Settlement of the Town in 1639 to 1818*, Vol.2, pp.423-424.

⁴⁸ Oscar Zeichner, "The Rehabilitation of Loyalists in Connecticut," p.233, Grumman, *The Revolutionary Soldiers of Redding, Connecticut, and the Record of Their Services: With Mention of Others Who Rendered Service or Suffered Loss at the Hands of the Enemy During the Struggle for Independence, 1775-1783: Together with Some Account of the Loyalists of the Town and Vicinity, Their Organization, Their Efforts, and Sacrifices in Behalf of the Cause of Their King, and Their Ultimate Fate*, p.104, and NYPL, British Headquarters Papers No. 8036.

⁴⁹ Buel, *Dear Liberty: Connecticut's Mobilization for the Revolutionary War*, p.92.

⁵⁰ Zeichner, "The Rehabilitation of Loyalists in Connecticut," p.325.

⁵¹ Ellen D. Larned, *History of Windham County, Connecticut*, 2 Vols. (Worcester, Mass.: Published by the author, Printed by C. Hamilton). 1874), Vol.2, pp.205-206.

⁵² NJSA, Manuscript Collections, 1680's - 1970's, Revolutionary Document Collection, Document No. 25, 127 and 128

year's end, Essex County sent two further petitions.⁵³ In 1783, the residents of Hunterdon County sent a similar petition to the General Assembly that "refugees many not be allowed to return."⁵⁴ An identical petition followed this from Middlesex County.⁵⁵ Both Hunterdon and Middlesex sent another petition within the year.⁵⁶ In Monmouth County, three towns led the anti-Loyalist sentiment. In Middletown the town meeting joined the growing demand for a law against "Inhabitants of this County [who] during the last war with Great Britain Deserted their County and joined the Enemies and Now on the Return of the peace will in all Probability attempt to Return back to the Country."⁵⁷ Nearby, a local magistrate and militia general, David Forman organized a committee of retaliation in Upper Freehold. With the powers of the committee, Forman scoured northern New Jersey and gained a reputation as ruthless.⁵⁸ In Woodbridge, another militia general, Nathaniel Heard established a second committee of retaliation and mustered the local militia to patrol the countryside. Like Forman, he ruled the township as a fiefdom chasing away Loyalists.⁵⁹ Finally, Morris County sent its own petition calling for new powers to confiscate all remaining Loyalist property in New Jersey.⁶⁰ By 1784 every county with a significant Loyalist population, except Burlington and Bergen Counties had taken action against returning Loyalists.

The widespread hostility towards Loyalists was greatest in New York where colonists had lived within the shadow of the British occupation since 1776. With peace in sight, General

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Documents No. 127 and 128.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Document No. 132.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Document No. 136.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Documents No. 137 and 138.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Document No. 132.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Document No. 397-399.

⁵⁹ Jones, *The Loyalists of New Jersey; Their Memorials, Petitions, Claims, Etc., from English Records*, p.111.

⁶⁰ NJSA, Manuscript Collections, 1680's - 1970's, Revolutionary Document Collection, Document No. 155.

Carleton opened New York City to Patriots. The worst abuses occurred in Westchester County following the British evacuation of the southern part of the county. Immediately after the British troops left and before American soldiers could arrive anarchy descended on southern Westchester County. Captain Israel Honeywell, Jr. led about thirty men to punish suspected Loyalists who returned from New York.⁶¹ Other parts of the state also saw violence. Loyalists in Albany and Tryon counties petitioned British authorities for relief from Patriots.⁶² In Dutchess County town meetings at Rombout Precinct and Poughkeepsie ordered all Loyalists to leave.⁶³ One Dutchess County Loyalist concluded, “there is undoubtedly a particular Set in the County...that are promoting Measures to intimidate as many Loyalists as they can to force the to leave this Country...”⁶⁴ Similar incidents occurred in Orange County and Charlottes Precinct.⁶⁵ Beyond the British lines, Loyalists had no protection. Reading intelligence reports from the Counties, a helpless Carleton concluded: “The spirit of doing equal justice seems to prevail in the country; from tarring and feathering Tories, the remedial administration are now turned to the officers who have retired from our service, of which some are *beat*, others mob’d and other compelled to fly from the rage of an ungrateful race of miscreants.”⁶⁶

The widespread anti-Loyalism in the northeast developed from the sudden need at the end of the war to define who could become members of the United States. At the center of Patriots analysis, laid a sharp distinction between Loyalists within and those outside British lines at the end of the war. Patriots largely ignored colonists who had supported the British Army, but

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 7727, 7728, 7732, 7733, 7735, 7738, 7741. For more on Honeywell see Ranlet, *The New York Loyalists*, p.153.

⁶² NYPL British Headquarters Papers, No. 8734, 8735, 8736.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, No. 9367, 7796, 8801, 9047.

⁶⁴ Crary, *The Price of Loyalty; Tory Writings from the Revolutionary Era*, p.359.

⁶⁵ NYPL, British Headquarters Papers, No. 8393, 9047.

⁶⁶ NYPL, British Headquarters Papers, No. 9047.

lived outside British lines as political converts who had rejected their Loyalism. In most cases, these former Loyalists escaped harsh treatment. In contrast, Patriots viewed Loyalists returning from British lines as radicals in terms of ideology and actions who were beyond saving. In this thinking, the war years were re-imagined as a window of opportunity when Loyalists could change sides with few long term penalties. The peace, however, had suddenly frozen allegiances and trapped people with the consequence of their political choices. Men and women within the British lines who wanted to return now became inveterate enemies who could never be citizens of the United States. This definition of Loyalism emerged between 1783-1784 in the petitions written in New Jersey.

A widespread consensus existed across the Northeast that men who had voluntarily joined the British Army had made a conscious and, therefore, permanent choice to reject the Revolution and had no rights in an independent America. “Because they left us, and Joined the Enemy,” Hunterdon wrote with simple logic, “They Choos’d it otherwise they would not have done it.” This choice was binding because it revealed their true political sympathies. Hunterdon explained that Loyalist “left their Country from Real Principles to the Cause” and have “Done all in their Power to Subjugate us to the Tyranny of Britain.” Therefore, the petition concluded they were “Unworthy of the Liberty we Contend for.”⁶⁷

Enemies had no claim to the spoils of the victors. Essex County petitioners expressed their “pain at seeing return of those offenders into this State, who disregarding every tie of Country, Friend and Connection, have not only withdrawn their Aid and Support from us, but

⁶⁷ NJSA, Manuscript Collections, 1680’s - 1970’s, Revolutionary Document Collection, Document No. 129.

have Aided our Enemies in the Prosecution of this unnatural war against us.”⁶⁸ Hunterdon County made the same point. Their petition argued that no true friend of the country could have “Privileges and Liberties under that Government they have used every Art in their Power to Destroy.”⁶⁹ In Connecticut, Patriots at Stratford had internalized the argument, declaring simply they would “drive off and expel all such persons who shall make the attempt” to return.⁷⁰

In the course of taking up arms against the Revolution, Loyalists had committed atrocities against American citizens. Essex County accused Loyalists of murder, plundering and taking captives.⁷¹ In similar language, Hunterdon residents accused Loyalists of “Shedding the Blood of their Countrymen.” Morris County focused on the plundering. Loyalists had frequently returned to New Jersey, the petition argued “in a secret & clandestine manner for the purpose of Plundering and taking away Stores and other property of the good inhabitants.” This talk came from the bitter experiences of living through eight years of partisan warfare. Whether or not individuals had plundered or murdered all returning Loyalists were tarred with these crimes.

Men who killed and plundered for Britain had broken whatever bonds they had with their old lives. Patriots found they could not forgive or forget after the war. Returning Loyalists could take oaths of abjuration and allegiance and undo their political past. However, they could not undo the past. With the war still a fresh memory, all Loyalists represented the worst of the fratricidal conflict. Hunterdon residents ended their petition:

Because they have been guilty of the greatest cruelty and devastation. Can those who wish their return either placate or Defend the Actions of an Arnold? No. Can they Give to the murderer his former state of innocence. No. Can they raise from

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, Document No. 125.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Document No. 132. See also Document No.129.

⁷⁰ Schenck, *The History of Fairfield, Fairfield County, Connecticut, from the Settlement of the Town in 1639 to 1818*, Vol.2, pp.423-424.

⁷¹ NJSA, Manuscript Collections, 1680's - 1970's, Revolutionary Document Collection, Document No. 125.

the dead the mother or the helpless infants who have been cruelly murdered by the Indians thro this Perfidy? No. Can nature forgive such enemies. No. She must cease to be nature if she did. We wish not to call on the names of those who have been barbarously murdered by them, but to show that reason and justice forbids their return.⁷²

Bitter sentiments like these left no room for reconciliation. The reference to Benedict Arnold, the American General who defected to the Britain in 1781, revealed their thinking.⁷³ All Loyalists who came from British lines were traitors.

Such “snakes in the grass,” as one petition termed Loyalists, who voluntarily joined the enemy and fought with such cruel abandon, could never change.⁷⁴ Loyalists had revealed a strong aversion to the Revolution. Patriots were skeptical that returning Loyalists had changed their politics. A New York pamphlet identified an indelible “Tory Principle” in Loyalists. This consisted of a support for monarchy. Supporters of monarchical governments and republican governments are “irreconcilable.” “The tory principle,” the author argued, “contains in it a mortal and irreconcilable hatred to our government.”⁷⁵ With this conviction, many believed returning Loyalists would-become a fifth column in the American Republic.

Patriots feared that Loyalists would continue to oppose the American independence in peacetime. The residents of Middletown in Monmouth County argued that Loyalists would “be a Pest and Disturbance and Perhaps Destroy the Blessings which are usually Consequent on

⁷² *Ibid.*, Document No. 129.

⁷³ The defection of Benedict Arnold became a cause celebre throughout North America. See, *James Thomas Flexner, The Traitor and the Spy: Benedict Arnold and John André, [1st] ed.* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1953), *Willard Mosher Wallace, Connecticut's Dark Star of the Revolution, General Benedict Arnold*, Connecticut Bicentennial Ser.; 26; (Hartford: American Revolution Bicentennial Commission of Connecticut, 1978), *Jean Fritz, Traitor, the Case of Benedict Arnold* (New York: Putnam & Grosset Group, 1997), *Dave Richard Palmer, George Washington and Benedict Arnold: A Tale of Two Patriots* (National Book Network, 2006).

⁷⁴ NJSA, Manuscript Collections, 1680's - 1970's, Revolutionary Document Collection, Document No. 155.

⁷⁵ Mentor's reply to phocion's letter with some observations on Trade addressed to the Citizens of New York (New York, 1784) pp. 10-11.

Peace.”⁷⁶ Essex County residents went further and predicted that allowing Loyalists to return would create generations of conflicts between their decedents. “Their Disappointments,” Essex County warned, “will keep alive their Disgust and Resentment, their Prejudices against our Government will be impressed on the minds of their Children.” In this situation, “no Cordiality can ever subsist between them and the well affected Citizens of the State, whose Friends or Relations have suffered at the hands or through their means.” Society would descend into feuding clans shaped by “Discontents, Quarrels and Murders.” To underscore the point, the petition explained that Essex County was a “Frontier County” just miles from New York and was therefore “more sensible of the Last Conduct of these Parricides, and better informed of their Intentions to return.” The only way the United States would succeed, they argued, was if Americans were aware of the dangerous Loyalists.⁷⁷

In the culmination of these arguments, Patriots concluded that returning Loyalists could never become good citizens. The Essex County petition state simply that Loyalists “can never become useful Members of Society.”⁷⁸ This represented a significant shift in earlier views of the Loyalists. It imposed a black and white rhetoric on past conduct. The outbreak of peace had frozen allegiances in place. It did not accurately reflect the complex political landscape of post-war America. Many moderates, for example, had remained in British lines out of fear of persecution. However, it did make sense of the confusing array of personal histories by delineating the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in the United States. Soon, other Patriots would challenge this uncompromising definition of Revolutionary politics with a second

⁷⁶ NJSA, Manuscript Collections, 1680’s - 1970’s, Revolutionary Document Collection, Document No. 132.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, No. 125.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, No. 125.

stereotype of the good Loyalist who could contribute to American society. In the meantime, however, all Loyalists would-be judged by the same yardstick as traitors.

The first Loyalists to venture back rather than go into exile had first hand experience of Patriot hostility. Regardless of their political past returning Loyalists fell victim to Patriots political fiction and were branded as enemies, threatened and, in most cases, banished. The experiences of William Foshay, Reverend Jouet and Stephen Jarvis represented the culture of violence that seized unforgiving Patriots. Each returned home and then faced ritualized expulsions that served as clear message that they no longer belonged.

In Fairfield County, Connecticut, Stephen Jarvis experienced first hand Patriots' new intolerance for enemies. Jarvis spent the Revolution fighting in Loyalist regiments, first as a lieutenant in the Queen's Rangers and later as a lieutenant colonel in the South Carolina Royalists.⁷⁹ In 1783, he decided to return to his family home in Danbury. Soon after reaching his father's house, Jarvis confronted a mob that told him to leave that night. "[T]hey had come to inform me that I must immediately retire," Jarvis later wrote, "that at present they did not intend to hurt me, but if I was seen within thirty miles of Danbury after sunset... I must stand the consequences, for they would not answer for my safety." Jarvis tried to placate the townsmen and managed to buy a night's rest, but had to leave in the morning under the protection of the Lieutenant-Colonel Jimmerson of the Continental Army.⁸⁰ Unfortunately for Jarvis, the Revolutionary War had made him the enemy to former neighbors. Back in New York, Jarvis

⁷⁹ James John edition Talman, *Loyalist Narratives from Upper Canada, The Publications of the Champlain Society*. 27 (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1946), pp.80-85.

⁸⁰ For bonds between officers in the Continental Army see Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783*, pp.196-227.

bitterly reported to his superiors that many people were falling foul of the violence in Connecticut.⁸¹

A New Jersey man who returned to his adopted home met a similar fate. Reverend Cavalier Jouet spent the three years as a prisoner of war in Woodbridge Town. As a captive, Jouet had received good treatment. “I received much civility,” he wrote, “from the particular party who captured me as from the inhabitants in general.” Indeed, Jouet believed he had developed a special relationship with his guards: “They frequently grant[ed] me real indulgences that were not common to every one in a like predicament with myself.” In 1782, Jouet was released and went to New York. At the end of the war, he remembered his kind treatment and went back to Woodbridge. However, instead of the welcome he expect Jouet was shocked by the sudden hostility. “I received the most outrageous insults,” he fumed, “and narrowly escaped the most shameful and degrading abuse.” Reflecting, Jouet found the sudden change troubling:

The case was altered now; that, when a prisoner of war, they thought it incumbent to be civil to me, but the Peace had dissolved all paroles, and I had not right or title to come there, and they were determined to give (as they insultingly called it) a Continental Jacket...I have proved a traitor to my county and had joined the enemy, and they were determined that no such d-d rascal should every enjoy the benefits of their country again.

A Continental Jacket was a coat of tar and feathers. This particularly harsh punishment first appeared before 1776 and then vanished during the war years. Tarring and feathering had

⁸¹ NYPL, British Headquarters Papers, No. 8036. For other examples of Connecticut Loyalists being threatened see British Headquarters Papers, No. 8089 and 9584.

only reappeared with news of the peace treaty.⁸² Unable to rekindle his former relationship with local leaders, Reverend Jouet returned to British lines.⁸³

Across the border, in New York, William Foshay found a similar hostile reception awaiting him. Foshay had entered British lines just a year and a half before the peace. When news of the treaty appeared in the papers, William assumed he could return to his farm in Philipsborough, which had remained in the hands of a Patriot son. Having ties to a loyal son did not clear the father in the eyes of the local authorities. Within two or three days of arriving home, a party of thirty or forty men assembled under Captain Israel Honeyman to bring Foshay before an impromptu court “dead or alive.” Foshay was a sick man and could not walk or ride. The men therefore dragged him on “slide” before the court. The presiding self-styled “commissioner,” Honeywell made no show of trying the case, but instead ordered an elaborate punishment that would very publicly remove Foshay from the community. Honeywell ordered the patriot son to drag his father in the slide to the next town while a second person “shaking his Sword over sd. Wm. [the son] head to make him drive faster telling him to drive his corps to Nova Scotia.” The theatrical banishment of Foshay made an unambiguous statement that he was no longer part of the polity. Making his own son

⁸² For example in Orange County New York Patriots shaved the head and eyebrows of a Loyalist, then tarred and feathered him. They hang a sign around his neck: “Look ye Tory Crew, and see What George you King can do.” Finally he was expelled to New York City. British Headquarters Papers, No. .8393. For the importance of tarring and feathering in the early years of the Revolution see the flawed but very useful work of Peter Shaw, *American Patriots and the Rituals of Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).

⁸³ Jones, *The Loyalists of New Jersey; Their Memorials, Petitions, Claims, Etc., from English Records*, pp.108-112. For other Loyalists who returned to New Jersey and received a similar rough treatment see Jones, *The Loyalists of New Jersey; Their Memorials, Petitions, Claims, Etc., from English Records*, pp.44, 91-92, 241.

complicit in the act underscored the dramatic split between the pre-revolution community.

Three days later Foshay died.⁸⁴

The influence of men like Israel Honeywell revealed the ascendancy of anti-Loyalist sentiment. In numerous town meetings, colonists who had lived within the shadow of the British occupation in New York or had experiences of British Army fighting refused to allow traitors to share their victory. They sharpened a stereotype, which first appeared during the war, that portrayed every Loyalist as a committed enemy of the Revolution. Patriots had reinterpreted the complicated politics of the Revolution and imposed an artificial partisanship on events. Against this rhetoric, returning Loyalists found it difficult to fight back. Yet, by the end of the 1780's, however, a growing number of Loyalists had managed to find a welcome in the United States.

III – The Rehabilitation of the Loyalists

The harsh treatment of Loyalists continued throughout the 1780's.⁸⁵ However, in the midst of the threats and violence, a growing number of Americans called for toleration and reconciliation. Some of those who had adopted a conciliatory position to hide Loyalist sympathies. Others acted from material motives that had little to do with the Revolution. They argued that Loyalists could revive the war-torn economies of the northeastern states. Commercially minded men in Connecticut, New Jersey and New York believed rich Loyalists could inject much needed wealth into the local economy. Between 1783-1784, attracting rich

⁸⁴ NYPL, British Headquarters Papers, No. 7623.

⁸⁵ Jones, *The Loyalists of New Jersey; Their Memorials, Petitions, Claims, Etc., from English Records*, pp.44, 90-91.

Loyalists became a priority as different states competed to secure the lion's share of post-war trade. Driven by state rivalry, pockets of merchants set about changing the public perception of Loyalists. A brief but sustained propaganda campaign challenged hardliner's definition of Loyalists as the inveterate enemy. In courtrooms, committees and newspapers, conciliators created a second stereotype of the good Loyalist. They suggested that merchants or landowners who had good characters would always benefit any society. Anyone who supported Britain could have a good character if they stopped short of committing the worst crimes of plundering or murder. This broad definition suggested that any Loyalist of independent means could not be bad citizens. In constructing this rival fiction, conciliators ultimately aimed to replace the continuation of wartime partisan politics with the outlines of a new debate about peacetime reconstruction.

The model of good Loyalists first appeared after a former merchant from Massachusetts applied for permission to settle in Connecticut. Richard Smith had taken a strong stand early in the Revolution. In July 1775 he sailed from Boston to Great Britain and stayed there. In 1778, the Massachusetts legislature confiscated his property and proscribed him as a Tory, and forbade his return. In 1781, the Connecticut Assembly appointed a committee to investigate him because he owned extensive property in the state. The committee found that Smith had "Voluntarily gone over to and put himself under the protection of the enemy."⁸⁶ The committee ordered Smith to appear by May 1782 to defend his estate or it would-be confiscated. Smith failed to appear, and his land became public property. Up to this point Smith's case looked identical to that of

⁸⁶ Trumbull and Hoadly ed., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut [1636-1776]*, Vol.3, p.325.

hundreds of other Loyalists who had estates confiscated during the Revolution.⁸⁷ Then suddenly Smith appeared to reclaim his land and settle permanently in Connecticut. The handling of Smith's case became the basis for arguments on the Loyalist question in Connecticut.

Connecticut's State authorities heard Smith's case over the winter of 1782-1783 and eventually allowed him to return to the state. Smith first pleaded his case before the Council of Safety on 25 November 1782. He explained his stay in Britain as a business trip to liquidate assets in Britain and the West Indies. Originally, he had planned to return before 1776 and then settled in Connecticut. However, he was delayed by circumstances beyond his control. Now, he asked permission to finally settle in the state and bring with him all his possessions.⁸⁸ The Council handed the issue to the General Assembly, which met on January 1783. Not put off, Smith petitioned the Assembly to hear him speak. The request was granted, and he again testified. In the questioning that followed, Smith managed to convince the Assembly to readmit him. Next, Smith had to face the more hostile Governor's Council. He overcame this challenge by writing a new memorial that waived all claims against the state for use of his property during the War. Smith had owned a foundry at Salisbury that the state had used and extensive timber lands that the state had cut down.⁸⁹ This attempt to buy support convinced the Council, but in the meantime newly elected members of the house insisted on rehearing the case. Smith now produced a third memorial offering to pay whatever sum the legislature thought he should pay to the war effort, to lend the government 1,000 pounds from the sale of his goods, and avoid Britain and British troops in New York. Smith ended by reminding the Assembly that he had thrown his

⁸⁷ Tyler, *Connecticut Loyalists: An Analysis of Loyalist Land Confiscations in Greenwich, Stamford, and Norwalk*, pp. 20-31.

⁸⁸ Trumbull and Hoadly ed., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut [1636-1776]*, Vol.4, pp.337-338.

⁸⁹ CARW 1st Ser., Vol.24, p.102.

lot in with Connecticut and could not return to Britain again.⁹⁰ Faced with these reassurances the Assembly finally gave in. By a large majority they voted to accept Smith with his goods if he took the oath of allegiance, made no claims against the state and only brought his personal property with him.

The Assembly's ruling aroused suspicion and resentment amongst the wider population. Nothing about Smith's case suggested it was more than a one-off ruling. Yet, while the Assemblymen debated rumors of bribery spread. A Hartford merchant suggested, "that His Excellency Governor Trumbull has during the Session of this Assembly received a Bribe of One Hundred Guineas from one Mr. Richard Smith a Petitioner."⁹¹ The allegations came from New London where merchants were concerned about competition from returning Loyalists like Smith. The Assembly silenced the first protest.

But the larger controversy kept going. Towards the end of January, the Hartford Town meeting appointed a committee to draft a memorial protesting Smith's right to live in Connecticut. The memorial combined demands for protection from rival merchants with attacks on returning Loyalists. It accused the legislature of giving "an exclusive claim to all the Emoluments of the British trade" on a man who had contributed nothing to the Revolution "at a time, when the Legislature of this State have used every exersion [sic], & imposed the severest penalties to prevent the importation of a single article of British Goods into the Country." The Hartford men believed that Smith would bring British goods with his personal property. "We cannot but Be surprised to find liberty granted to Men," they continued, "who have nothing to

⁹⁰ CARW 1st Ser., Vol.24, p.103.

⁹¹ The man was Moses Seymour. The Assembly changed Seymour with scandalous insinuations. Confronted with the full weight of the state Seymour gave in. Trumbull and Hoadly ed., *The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut [1636-1776]*, Vol.5, p.29.

plead in their favor, to double at once the whole amount of their property by bringing into the State, any quantity of British goods they may think proper to call their own.” In this way, the memorial suggested the Assembly had broken its own legislation and created a dangerous precedent for other Loyalist merchants. “The inconsistency between such Grants & the laws in force against Illicit Trade, are so manifest, that we beg leave to offer it as our Opinion, that those laws can never, without the utmost difficulty, be supported & inforced against our own Subjects, if such privileges are granted to those, who have never risked any thing in our favour, ‘till our Independence established.”⁹²

In response to the Hartford memorial, twenty-two prominent residents petitioned the General Assembly and apologized for the leniency towards returning Loyalists. They assured the Assembly that the town meeting did not speak for Hartford. Instead, men with “intemperate zeal” and “inspired by design & ambition” had taken over the town meeting. They suggested that the radical cadre did not want to surrender their monopoly on local trade to returning Loyalists. The twenty-two residents ended their petition with a declaration of support for the General Assembly. Citizens had a right to protest, they argued, but first needed all the facts. The town meeting did not and therefore was wrong. With cooler better informed heads, the twenty two residents decided not to protest Richard Smith’s case.⁹³ The General Assembly chose to listen to the second petition and took no action against the Hartford town meeting.

The debate surrounding Smith was coming to define the whole issue of returning Loyalists in Connecticut. By linking the Smith’s case with the resumption of Atlantic trade, the Hartford Committee had started a debate that would see

⁹² Buel, *Dear Liberty: Connecticut's Mobilization for the Revolutionary War*, p.92.

⁹³ Zeichner, “The Rehabilitation of Loyalists in Connecticut,” p.312.

Loyalism increasingly defined in economic not political terms across the northeastern states.

The case of Richard Smith continued to polarize Connecticut throughout 1782. For the next couple of weeks tensions cooled until 1st February when a privateer *Hampton Packet* seized the sloop *Polly* as it brought Richard Smith's belongings from Long Island to New London and escorted it to Rhode Island. The owners of the *Hampton Packet* believed Smith was transporting British goods and, following the reasoning of the Hartford town meeting, had decided to stop him. The four co-owners lived in Norwich, another aspiring port town and the source of earlier rumors against Governor Trumbull. Richard Buel has also shown that at least one of co-owners, Thomas Mumford, had strong personal reasons to prevent Loyalists returning and opposed the policies of the General Assembly. In September 1781 the arch-traitor Benedict Arnold had burnt his house as part of British raid on the Connecticut coastlines. At least that year, Mumford still held a seat in the Council of Safety. The Assembly had named him to the Council in 1780, but refused to nominate him a second time in May 1782. Mumford had good reasons to resent both Loyalists and the Assembly. The *Packet* therefore sailed with a mixture of motives.⁹⁴

Thomas Mumford's machinations once again turned Smith's case into a matter of public debate. Authorities in New London issued orders for another privateer to retake the *Polly*, which it did in off Narragansett Bay. Mumford then applied to the civil authorities of Rhode Island for return of the sloop. The commander of the second privateer threatened to fight anyone who tried to retake the *Sally* and successfully brought it back to New London with Smiths' possessions. Now the Smith case became an interstate affair as the Governor of Rhode Island demanded

⁹⁴ Buel, *Dear Liberty: Connecticut's Mobilization for the Revolutionary War*, p.294.

Governor Trumbull give up the vessel on the grounds it was captured in Rhode Island waters. At the same time, Mumford petitioned the Council of Safety to give up the *Sally*. As they had done in January, the Council passed the issue to the Assembly to decide whether the capture was legal or not. With Smith's case again before the Assembly new factions formed around the intertwined issues of returning Loyalists, Atlantic trade, and Connecticut politics.⁹⁵

At first the dispute centered on the narrow legal problem of whether Connecticut's laws applied to its citizens in Rhode Island waters. Encouraged by the popular dissent in Hartford, Mumford attempted to influence the upcoming freeman elections in April and remove the governor. To this end, Mumford along with a group of prominent men published a statement in the *Connecticut Gazette* on 28 March defending their actions and attacking the response of the Governor and Council of Safety. The piece first made the point that the *Sally* had carried 200 pounds of unlicensed goods. This revelation appeared to confirm the suspicions of the Hartford town meeting that Smith was attempting to out-manuever honest Patriot merchants. Next, the article rightly argued that the *Packet* had seized the *Sally* in Rhode Island waters. Therefore, Smith's possessions were under Rhode Island authority where he was still viewed as an enemy. "Thus while the authority of this state, vested in the hands of Governor Trumbull, is improved as a protection to Mr. Smith, even where it cannot be supposed to extend...we apply to that authority, and apply in vain for our undoubted right."⁹⁶ The explicit comparison between the treatment of Smith in Rhode Island and Connecticut carried an implicit attack on Governor Trumbull's lenient position on the Loyalist problem.

⁹⁵ Zeichner, "The Rehabilitation of Loyalists in Connecticut," p.295.

⁹⁶ *Connecticut Gazette*, April 4 1783 and April 18 1783.

As factions formed around Mumford and the Governor, the narrow legal particulars of Smith's case became the basis for a larger political debate between hardliners favoring a protectionist market who wanted to prevent Loyalist competition and conciliators who wanted to encourage Loyalist competition. Both sides battled to control the public debate and influence the policy of the General Assembly.

Mumford's supporters struck first. On 4 April, an article appeared in the *Connecticut Gazette* warning the state "although the tories had lost the War, they would soon achieve by innuendo what they had failed to achieve by force." This call to arms was followed on 25 April by a second article in the *Gazette* that defended the seizure of Smith's good upon the grounds of his broader political sympathies and affiliations. The "Constitutional Whig" argued that Smith was banished by Massachusetts had proscribed and banished Smith. As proof, he quoted the Massachusetts Law. He then made a direct appeal to anti-Loyalist sentiment in Connecticut. "Here you see the light in which Mr. Smith was viewed in the State where he had been and inhabitant," the Constitutional Whig began, "and where his character must be supposed to be better known than it could be in this State." Yet, despite this the authorities in Connecticut wanted to admit him. Here was the beginning of a politics that linked Smith with identifiable Loyalists and argued that they should be treated as unwelcome enemies.⁹⁷

The Governor's supporters soon responded. On 9 May, a "Spectator" made an appeal to the citizens of Connecticut to forgive past differences and warned against copying the extreme sentiment in Massachusetts. He described the Massachusetts acts of proscription and banishment as "impolitic, unjust and cruel." The large numbers of banished had already suffered enough and

⁹⁷ *Connecticut Gazette*, April 25 1783.

did not deserve further punishment. This argument had no legal basis, but attempted to engage the sympathies of his audience. Reaching his stride the author then made his most powerful argument. Returning Loyalists would contribute to the public welfare of Connecticut. Richard Smith had started to inspire the profile of the good Loyalist: a wealthy and reputable character who could bring trade into Connecticut. In a final interesting move, Spectator made the extraordinary claim that anyone who opposed returning Loyalists put self-interest before the United States. In order to forestall any future criticism of his reasoning as unjust or selfish the author identified his motives as “that of the wise and good in all ages.”⁹⁸ The Spectator’s arguments laid the foundations for future pro-Loyalists arguments.

The hardliners in Connecticut attempted to counter the growing support for the pro-Loyalist camp by drawing on traders’ fear of competition. On May 16, an article appeared by “Anonymous” parodying the arguments for Loyalists’ inclusion. The piece explained that “America now wants none but rich Inhabitants” who could revive the economy. “Admit therefore the Loyalists who will come *heavy laden* with Money,” Anonymous argued, “into some of our Sea-Ports and you will see a City raised up by their Hands now the *Ashes* of a small Town.” With their help, Connecticut would-become a “Phoenix”: “they that destroy by Fire can build again as soon.” After all, if Loyalists were allowed to leave “would not such countless Millions be carried away from our Land when by opening your Arms for their Reception *their Money would-be all your own.*” With this argument, Anonymous wanted to play on traders’ fears

⁹⁸ *Connecticut Gazette*, May 9 1783.

of Loyalists competition seen in the Smith case. The anti-Loyalist piece met with stiff resistance.⁹⁹

As the debate continued through May and June, the pro-Loyalist camp gained momentum and finally seized control of the public debate. On May 30, “A Friend of Prudence” mimicked the sarcastic tone of Anonymous to argue for Loyalists inclusion. A Friend emphasized that Loyalists would-benefit the state. First, Loyalist merchants would increase trade through their European connections and turn Connecticut into a major hub of Atlantic trade. Second, A Friend stressed that this would not hurt existing trade. The influx of wealth would only contribute to the wealth of the community. This was a powerful argument that Loyalists, regardless of their political past, would-be good citizens just by following their private interests. Third, A Friend suggested that farmers in the hinterland would also benefit from returning Loyalists by getting access to new markets and better prices. This represented a significant extension of the argument. Up until this point, the pro-Loyalist camp had focused on commercial interests and ignored the towns, such as those in Fairfield County, which had voted to banish all Loyalists who returned. In a final move, A Friend offered the general reassurance that only Loyalists who could prove a good character during the Revolutionary War would-be allowed to live in Connecticut.

¹⁰⁰ With claims like these, conciliators seized control of the popular debate and opened the way for Loyalists to live in Connecticut.

⁹⁹ *Connecticut Gazette*, May 16 1783.

¹⁰⁰ The same day, another spokesmen made a similar case bolding stating that Connecticut should take advantage of wealthy Loyalists driven out of other states. In the clearest statement to date, he wrote: ““the Massachusetts State have a sovereign right to proscribe for disobedience or dislike 1,000 of their most opulent inhabitants, Connecticut has the same sovereign right to declare the same person free citizens of this State.” *Connecticut Gazette*, May 30 1783 and June 6 1783.

The first tangible success of the pro-Loyalist camp came when the General Assembly rejected a plan to introduce harsh legislation against returning Loyalists. While Smith's case gripped public attention, the Assembly had appointed a committee to review all anti-Loyalist legislation and recommend a new policy. Dominated by the same radicals who opposed Smith, the committee proposed a new set of laws to exclude all Loyalists from living in Connecticut. The committee declared that every citizen who had joined or assisted the British or voluntarily remained within British lines during the war had lost all rights in the State and could not return. Anyone who did should be sent back on pain of being whipped.¹⁰¹ The committee's report marked the high point of anti-Loyalist sentiment in the Connecticut government. In the wake of the Smith case, the Assembly took no action and deferred the matter until May. When the Assembly revisited the issue, the pro-Loyalist camp had already seized control of the public debate. In this new climate of toleration, the Assembly rejected the radical recommendations put forward in January. Instead, the Assembly adopted the findings of a second committee that had been considering what laws ought to be repealed. Under the control of conservatives, this second committee recommended abolishing most of the wartime Loyalist legislation. The same month the Assembly repealed the most important acts and removed the major obstacles to Loyalists becoming Connecticut citizens. The merchant party had won the legislative fight.¹⁰²

It now remained for individual towns to decide how to respond to the public debate about Loyalism. Town meetings remained the ultimate arbiters of citizenship in Connecticut. Returning

¹⁰¹ The Committee only allowed for the return of those Loyalists who managed to secure the permission of the civil authorities and could provide satisfactory assurances of their good behavior could remain in the state until the General Assembly had considered their case. Those who received permission, however, would-be prohibited from voting or holding any public office for seven years. They could only regain their political rights after seven years if three fourths of their town agreed.

¹⁰² Zeichner, "The Rehabilitation of Loyalists in Connecticut," pp.314-315, 319-320.

Loyalist would only have a future in the State if they found local acceptance. The source of the pro-Loyalist sentiment came from factions in coastal towns that had visions of using Loyalist capital to transform Connecticut into a major trading power in the post-war economy.

Between March 1783 and March 1784, the debate became hottest in New Haven. In March 1783, the New Haven town meeting instructed its representative to prevent the return of Loyalists. This decision was consistent with the politics of rural Connecticut. Immediately after a movement began to raise the ban. To gather support they circulated a petition inviting New York Loyalists to New Haven. One resident recorded seeing, “a subscription Paper to invite about 120 Tory Families of the City of New York, of which 40 are Merchants of Property, to come and settle in New Haven.”¹⁰³ Each of these merchants, just like Richard Smith, could bring wealth to Connecticut. The president of Yale explained these Loyalists merchants could “bring Two-Thirds of the Mercantile property of the whole City [of New York]” into New Haven.¹⁰⁴ Returning Loyalists could turn New Haven into a major commercial city.

Without the support of the town meeting, a delegation from New Haven traveled to New York to recruit wealthy Loyalists. One man they approached was Joshua Chandler, a merchant who fled New Haven at the beginning of the Revolution. Chandler recorded that Dr. Johnson, Mr. Michel and Thaddeus Burr, the justice of the peace, had visited New York and convinced him to return. The delegation did such a good job that they recruited Chandler to persuade Amos

¹⁰³ Ezra Dexter Franklin Bowditch Stiles and ed., *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, Ed. Under the Authority of the Corporation of Yale University* (New York: C. Scribner's sons, 1901), Vol.3, p.70.

¹⁰⁴ Oscar Zeichner, "The Rehabilitation of Loyalists in Connecticut," *The New England Quarterly* 11, No. 2 (1938): p.325.

Botsford already in Nova Scotia to return. Botsford, like Chandler had lived in New Haven before the war as one of the town's most prominent citizens.¹⁰⁵

Chandler's letters to Amos Botsford reveals that the town leaders of New Haven wanted to offer Loyalists a clean slate. After meeting with the delegation, Chandler wrote to Botsford. He reassured his old friend that "I have no Doubt but that the People in General Can Return." Indeed, he noted "It fills me with Resentment to see the similar measures that are used to induce the Loyalists to leave the country." Chandler then outlined his own set of inducements to return. First, he argued, "I hope to see you all here," because, "Nova Scotia is not the place for Happiness, or I am greatly denied." Next he emphasized that "there is no Danger" of insult in New Haven. The community wanted Botsford to return. Dr. Johnson and Colonel Dyer, Chandler wrote had told him that they "desire that Mr. Botsford would return by all means." Finally, Chandler tried to tempt him with a picture of his old life before Revolutionary politics. He explained that Botsford could return with his wife and children tour the delights of "home life and family" and having "the House full of company."¹⁰⁶ Altogether, Chandler was trying to convince Botsford that he could take up his old life with the blessing of his former neighbors and again contribute to the prosperity of the community.

The commercial element in New Haven saw Loyalism as one part of a larger plan to turn Connecticut into a major trading hub. Throughout the eighteenth-century, the rapid growth of Boston and New York City had stunted the growth of coastal towns in Connecticut. On the eve

¹⁰⁵ *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Vol.12, "Memorial of Amos Botsford".

¹⁰⁶ Joshua Chandler to Amos Botsford, New York, June 29 1783[?], PANS, Amos Botsford Papers. See also: Joshua Chandler to Amos Botsford, New York, May 2 1783, PANS, Botsford Papers.

of the Revolution, Hartford, New London and New Haven played a secondary role in the colonial economy. Traders mainly shipped local goods, but could not break into the larger import trade from Britain or the export trade to the West Indies. All foreign goods were imported through Boston and New York. The eight years of the Revolutionary War, however, had disrupted the America economy. Many merchants had gone bankrupted and there was much confusion surrounding old commercial networks. As towns scrambled to recover, Connecticut's coastal towns hoped to overtake their old rivals.¹⁰⁷ The residents of New Haven were determined to be at the forefront of change. One man noted that much of the town was "Determined to depend no longer on other states for the exportation of their staples...and to strain every nerve and exert every laudable industry to render their new city happy, free and commercial."¹⁰⁸ Extending an invitation to rich Loyalists formed one part of this plan.

New Haven embarked on two other schemes to stimulate the local economy in the first two years of peace. First, New Haven, along with Hartford, New London, Norwich Wethersfield and Middleton, petitioned the General Assembly to be incorporated as cities. Independent cities had greater control on their commerce and would allow New Haven to introduce necessary reforms to stimulate trade.¹⁰⁹ In a second move, the Merchants and Retailers, a county level committee, led a movement to reduce Connecticut's import duties and make the smaller coastal towns competitive with New York and Boston. On July 22 1784, a notice appeared in the *Connecticut Courant* that merchants and retailers of Hartford had met "in order to consider the situation of the trade of this State, of the Excise Act". "The proposal and Invitation made by the

¹⁰⁷ For an example of the general climate of economic optimism see: *Connecticut Gazette* "Policy of Connecticut" No. VI, February 18 1784.

¹⁰⁸ *Connecticut Gazette*, February 18 1784.

¹⁰⁹ *Norwich Packet*, January 29 1784.

Gentlemen of New-Haven,” Hartford resolved, “is timely and allg’ble, and may, in its consequences and to promote Agriculture, Commerce and Manufacturers within the State, objects of the great Importance at this present period.”¹¹⁰ From this meeting, Hartford agreed to attend a statewide convention planned for August in Middletown New Haven.¹¹¹ In this last endeavor New Haven failed. The August Convention did not turn Connecticut into a free-trade state. However, on March 8 1784 New Haven became a city along with New London.¹¹² The commercially minded in the city were determined that their Loyalist plan would also succeed.

Following the circulation of a petition and the delegation to New York, the next step for pro-Loyalists in New Haven was a newspaper campaign to win over the hostile elements of the town meeting. In the sympathetic *Connecticut Gazette* and *Connecticut Journal*, they attempted to show the injustice of the policy against former Loyalists and to expose the base motives that caused other states to adopt harsh anti-Loyalist legislation. In September 1783, the *Gazette* explained that Patriots in New York banished Loyalists to profit from their confiscated estates.¹¹³ Two weeks later, the *Journal* described the “barbarous spirit of persecution” in Dutchess County New York and gave specific examples of brutal treatment. The article described a Loyalist who was “permitted to return to his family and plantation,” but after the peace was “taken from his house by a number of armed men who bound him with rope and dragged him to a public house in the neighborhood, where they kept him as a aspect of sport to the humane and generous spectators.” Finally, the man was lashed and banished. The article commented that “this unfortunate man formerly bore a good character and was well respected by his neighbors...yet he

¹¹⁰ *Connecticut Gazette*, July 11 1783.

¹¹¹ *Connecticut Courant*, July 22 1784.

¹¹² Rollin G. Osterweis, *Three Centuries of New Haven, 1638-1938* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), p.157.

¹¹³ *Connecticut Gazette*, August 8 1783.

found no mercy on this occasion but has been compelled to abandon a good farm and had now no other prospect but to seek his fortune in Nova Scotia.” The author implied that Connecticut should not follow the example of New York and keep Loyalists of “good character” and “good farms”. Further pieces appeared over the next six months increasing the pressure of the New Haven town meeting to accept Loyalists.¹¹⁴

The arguments for leniency convinced the skeptical New Haven town meeting to think again about the benefit of having more residents like Richard Smith. The town meeting set up a committee to reconsider the propriety of admitting former Loyalists who would-be desirable additions to the community. After months of newspaper articles, the committee members had no problems in reaching a decision. The same day the committee reported and recommended the admission of individuals who had not “committed unauthorized and lawless plundering and murder.” This set the bar very low and allowed almost every Loyalist to return. The committee justified the decision to ignore nearly a decade of partisan politics in terms of the economic future of New Haven. They reasoned:

As this town is most advantageously situated for commerce, having a spacious harbor surrounded by extensive and fertile country, which is inhabited by an industrious and enterprising people fully sensible of the advantage of trade, and as the relative and essential importance and consequence of this State depend on the prosperity and extent of its agriculture and commerce...in point of real honor and permanent utility the measure proposed will be highly expedient.

¹¹⁴ For example, *Connecticut Journal*, March 24 1784, *Connecticut Gazette*, June 5 1784. In January 1784 the *Journal* printed an extract from a letter by John Adams, Benjamin Franklin and John Jay America’s peace negotiators in Paris. The letter severely criticized the way towns had dealt with the Loyalists and declared their unfair treatment had put the United State in a bad light. “The violent measures that states have adopted respecting the Loyalists,” they argued had persuaded British officials “to exclude us from the carrying trade...” The peace commissioners recommended that towns uphold the treaty and allow Loyalists to return. *Connecticut Journal*, January 7 1784.

They had put aside Revolutionary politics because it no longer made sense in light of the peace treaty. To forestall criticism, the committee wrapped their pragmatism in a humane language of mercy and justice for all. Their priorities, however, were in little doubt. The Town meeting found the committee's recommendations persuasive and approved the motion.¹¹⁵

New Haven's leniency encouraged Loyalists to return and allowed them to take a part in the town economy. Joshua Chandler arrived in New Haven in the summer of 1784 followed by several New York merchants. In October 1784 Samuel Broome and Jeremiah Platt, recently arrived from New York, requested the Assembly's permission to bring 8,000 pounds worth of merchandise tax free into the state. The Assembly agreed and over the next sixteen years Bloom and Platt became the leading mercantile house in the city offering a variety of textiles.¹¹⁶ Their return met no further opposition from the town meeting. Instead, with their sympathies former Loyalists found a larger place in town government. Ezra Stiles claimed two aldermen and eight members of the Common Council were former Loyalists. The president of Yale concluded "The City Politics are founded in an endeavor silently to bring the Tories into an equality and Supremacy among the Whigs." One of the candidates in the 1784 mayoral election, Thomas Darling, apparently had strong sympathies and ties with Loyalist elements.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Zeichner, "The Rehabilitation of Loyalists in Connecticut," p.129. And, Osterweis, *Three Centuries of New Haven, 1638-1938*, p.129.

¹¹⁶ *New Haven Gazette*, October 7 1784.

¹¹⁷ Stiles ed., *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles, Ed. Under the Authority of the Corporation of Yale University*, p.392. The return of the Loyalists in 1784 coincided with a period rapid economic growth as New Haven successfully seized a larger share of the post-war economy. Along with the merchant house of Bloom and Platt 54 other shops flourished in New Haven selling a range of imported goods. in 1784, for example, 36 vessels sailed into port. All came from American cities except for one British and one Danish ship. The same year 33 vessels sailed from the port owned by townsmen. A few sailed for the Britain, others to the West Indies and most were engaged in the coastal trade. This represented an expansion of New Haven's old trading routes not the hoped for break into the Atlantic shipping that continued to go New York and Boston. Nevertheless, the prosperity brought by the peace made it easier to accept returning Loyalists who ceased to be controversial and faded from public attention in Connecticut. *New Haven Gazette* 30th September 1784. Between 1784-1800 there was also sudden growth in local

The creation of the good Loyalist in Connecticut attracted the attention of commercially minded men in New Jersey who wanted to exploit the same the confusion in the post-war economy. Before the Revolution New Jersey imported foreign goods from New York and Philadelphia. Throughout the eighteenth-century, towns in New Jersey had failed to develop substantial port towns because all the trade went to its larger rivals. Towns, such as Perth Amboy in the north and Burlington in the south had to limit themselves to local trade.¹¹⁸ After 1783, merchants across New Jersey showed a new determination to break free and establish New Jersey as an Atlantic trading hub. Following the example of Connecticut, a growing number of men saw in Loyalist capital and trading connections a way to achieve economic independence. “The opportunity is now offered to New Jersey,” one pro-Loyalist wrote, “if she will take the advantage of the heat and violence of opinion, and draw over to herself the rich and wealthy of other places that this state, which has been in point of commercial consequence insignificance, may lift her head equal with any.”¹¹⁹ With this goal, they set about changing public opinion and building a reconciliation movement that based on the familiar tried and tested the argument that men of wealth and character could not be bad citizens.

The calls for toleration at first failed to attract support in New Jersey. In May 1783, a proposal appeared in the *New Jersey Gazette* to readmit wealthy Loyalist merchants who could help spur economic growth. The authors John Rutherford and James Parker came from Perth Amboy, in Middlesex County, an ambitious, but second rate port town similar to New Haven.

industries. 174. start of its own newspaper, *The New Haven Gazette* (1784-1786) and second *The New Haven Gazette* and *Connecticut Magazine* (1786-1789) when the first folded. The first paper had only 4 pages, but the later expanded to 8 pages.

¹¹⁸ Richard Patrick McCormick, *Experiment in Independence: New Jersey in the Critical Period, 1781-1789*, *Rutgers Studies in History*, No. 6 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1950), chapters 5-7.

¹¹⁹ *Political Intelligencer*, April 24 1784.

Both men pointed out that Connecticut had adopted a similar policy and urged their fellow New Jersey residents to pass a general act of pardon. As in Connecticut, this plan proved controversial and required a sustained propaganda campaign before it received widespread approval.¹²⁰

Without a high profile case similar to Richard Smith's, Rutherford and Parker found it difficult to attract public support in 1783. Instead, the suggestion of a pardon produced a flood of petitions demanding the banishment of all Loyalists. On May 10, Middletown in Monmouth County sent a petition protesting any law that would allow Loyalists to return to New Jersey. On 15 May 1783, 125 men from Middlesex County petitioned the General Assembly. They were concerned that the Assembly would pass an "Act of Grace" and demanded Loyalists be excluded from citizenship. A second petition followed this from Hunterdon County on 21 May. In the next weeks, several other petitions addressed to the General Assembly challenged the idea of a pardon. As discussed above they argued that all Loyalists should be treated as the enemy of the United States and banished without exception. The storm of criticism created by idea of a pardon made the subject to controversial to touch for the rest of 1783.¹²¹

Then, in the spring 1784, the campaign suddenly gained new momentum. In April 1784, a series of newspaper articles appeared in the New Brunswick *Political Intelligencer* promoting a pardon. The editors, Killock and Arnett, founded the *Intelligencer* in 1783 as the first Loyalists were returning. In 1784, they converted their paper into the mouthpiece for pro-Loyalist sympathies. The title banner of the paper carried the message:

¹²⁰ *The New Jersey Gazette*, May 16 1783.

¹²¹ NJSA, Manuscript Collections, 1680's - 1970's, Revolutionary Document Collection, Document No. 136.

WHEN ANGREY NATIONS PART IN LEAGUES OF PEACE,
LET PRIVATE FUEDS AND CIVIL DISCORD CEASE.

The printers explained their political sympathies at the end of April, “This paper will always be open for the reception of every species of matter which may tend to soften the minds of the citizens of America toward their unhappy brethren, who have, from a contrary principle, or in the heat of passion been so unfortunate as to vary from them in point of opinion.”¹²² True to their word, throughout April, the paper carried a series of articles that made the case for a general pardon of Loyalists in economic terms used in Connecticut.

On 6 April, “The Son of Liberty” argued that the rich Loyalists fleeing to Canada would damage the regional economy. New Jersey should seize the opportunity, he suggested, and invite the Loyalists into the States. “Can the citizens of New Jersey hesitate one moment,” the author asked, “whether to invite the rich and oppressed of the world, to come and settle among them, or let them fly to explore new parts.” To answer fears that Loyalists would corrupt New Jersey, he reassured his readers that only “peaceable and inoffensive citizens, who have not born arms against us” would-be allowed into the State. Here was the Connecticut stereotype of the Loyalists as a wealthy citizen of good character. “The state of Connecticut,” the author concluded, “I am informed, has and still is soliciting them to partake of their soil, and I hope the state of New-Jersey will not be less political.”¹²³

In the next issue of the *Political Intelligencer* on 13 April, “Candidus” argued that Loyalists would provide a much needed commercial link with Britain. “A political and commercial connection with the English will be more our interest than with any other nation...”

¹²² *Political Intelligencer*, April 24 1784.

¹²³ *Political Intelligencer*, April 6 1784.

As part of this reconciliation he suggested it would-be in America's interest "to pass an act of amnesty and oblivion in favour of some of the most peaceable subjects." Or, would New Jersey prefer English trade to go to other colonies that in time "would-become our most dangerous and inveterate rivals" because "we could not receive them when they [Loyalists] were humble." This last argument stoked the popular fear that truculent Loyalists would threaten the United States unless ameliorated. By giving Loyalists a stake in the economy, generations of conflict would-be avoided.

As an addition to Candidus' arguments, the same edition also carried a piece showing how New Jersey's current trade dependence on its neighbors took money out of everyone's pockets. The article explained that New York and Pennsylvania had recently laid duties on their merchandise of 2 ½ cents that would-be paid by the consumer in New Jersey. After giving a few examples of how the cost could build up, the piece asked:

Would it not be meritorious action to relieve the state of this burthen? And would not a set of merchants who would settle among us take the oaths to state, bring trade and affluence along with them, deserve all manner of protection and countenance from government and inhabitants?

In a final move, the edition ended with the editors calling for future contributions on the theme of peace, reconciliation and commerce.¹²⁴

The campaign reached a conclusion when Candidus linked rich merchants, state commerce and republic government. Reappearing on 21 April, Candidus gave a lecture that in a remarkable move tied Loyalist merchants to the success of republicanism in America. Many Americans, Candidus suggested, opposed reconciliation because Loyalists had "too much money" and "regal principles." Answering these objections he concluded, "the first is the worst

¹²⁴ *Political Intelligencer*, April 13 1784.

reason in the world because it is the very thing we want.” To explain this, Candidus argued that Loyalists merchants would create commerce and commerce created republicanism. “Commerce is the system of republicanism opposed to arbitrary government,” Candidus explained, “Its very spirit depends upon its ease, freedom and equality. By discovering mutual dependence, it levees down all distinctions and puts men in a hundred instances on a footing.” In this way, Loyalists would-be good citizens as soon as they realized their private interests coincided with the public good. When this happened they would abandon any regal principles.¹²⁵ Candidus claimed that former Loyalists could become a bulwark of republican government had little impact on the popular debate. However, it did reveal the many creative ways in which Americans were looking beyond wartime partisanship and reinventing Loyalism to suit the new demands of peacetime reconstruction.

Following the articles in the *Political Intelligencer*, merchants in the northern section of the state incorporated rich Loyalists into a larger plan to encourage trade by establishing a series of free ports along the New Jersey coast. Merchants in the northern section of the state had established a committee for the promotion of trade. The evolution of the free port plan followed the chronology of the Loyalist debate. The first talk of free ports came in May 1783, but only got support a year later in January.¹²⁶ The spark to revitalize New Jersey’s ports came from a circular written by the Philadelphia Merchants Committee to its counterpart in Massachusetts. The letter discussed the plans to invigorate trade.¹²⁷ This letter proved the catalyst for a group of merchants linked to Smith and Rutherford to gather support for a New Jersey Committee of

¹²⁵ *Political Intelligencer*, April 21 1784.

¹²⁶ Philadelphia Merchants’ Committee to The Merchants in Massachusetts, January 3 1784. McCormick, *Experiment in Independence: New Jersey in the Critical Period, 1781-1789*, p.116.

¹²⁷ *New Jersey Gazette*, May 17 1784.

Merchants.¹²⁸ By the summer they had called merchants together from all over the state to create a comprehensive plan for encouraging foreign commerce, which included a role for returning Loyalists merchants. The scheme proposed creating a new class of open ports free from import duties. All other ports would have extra duties imposed. In this way, they hoped to concentrate trade in a few cities that could rival New York City or Philadelphia. To make sure these ports would attract foreign trade, the merchants recommended all traders could become residents regardless of their Revolutionary politics.

To make free ports a reality, the New Jersey Committee began lobbying the hostile General Assembly. The pro-Loyalist merchants recruited the help of Robert Morris, a well respected lawyer and the former chief justice of New Jersey. Morris brought pressure to bear on the legislature by winning over the Bergen County Assembly. He stressed the need to develop international commerce and outlined the main features of the free port plan. “To effect the concentrating Trade,” Morris began, “it is proposed to lay duties on all imports not made into a few specified ports with some other privileges of a trifling nature when compared with the first.” If this plan was adopted, it would take trade away from “New York & Pennsylvania [that] have laid duties for us to pay.”¹²⁹ By choosing the Bergen Assembly, however, Smith was not relying just on economic pragmatism. Bergen County had no obvious port town that would-benefit from the proposal. It did have a long history of Loyalism. Throughout the War the presence of the British Army in New York had turned Bergen County a hotbed of British sympathizers. At the end of the war many had chosen to stay while others left and now wanted to return. Bergen

¹²⁸ Robert Morris to John Rutherford May 23rd 1784. Morris to John Parker, John Neilson and the committee for promotion of trade, August 1784. McCormick, *Experiment in Independence: New Jersey in the Critical Period, 1781-1789*, p.31.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.117.

County alone had refused to condemn Loyalists along with Counties in 1783. The free port plan offered a solution to this problem.¹³⁰ Morris had judged his audience well.

Under growing pressure, the New Jersey Assembly met in a special session at New Brunswick, and, four days later, representatives of the merchants of Morris County and a group of major towns, Woodbridge, Perth Amboy, New Brunswick, Piscataway, Elizabeth Town, Princeton, Trenton and Lambertton came together “for the purpose of considering measures to be submitted to the Legislature on the subject of commerce.” The convention drew up a petition to be presented to the current session of the Assembly. First, as New Jersey was situated between powerful neighbors the state could only attract foreign trade by offering unusual inducements to merchants. From this assessment, the other points followed. The Convention recommended that two free ports should be established for 25 years. Merchants would be granted exemptions from the usual state tariffs on their vessels and goods. In turn, duties should be levied on all foreign products not imported directly through the free ports. Otherwise, the petition, explained, “if the duty be not laid on all merchandise not immediately imported into this state, our neighbors will take advantage of his neglect and become our carriers.” This would once again make New Jersey dependent on New York City and Philadelphia.

The petition tied the growing pro-Loyalist sentiment with the economic plan. The convention agreed that in the free ports, New Jersey citizenship should be granted on liberal terms. They emphasized that “even former Tories should be eligible.” The justification for this tolerance came straight out of the pages of *The Political Intelligencer*: “In order to give the speediest growth to these cities in property, in arts, and population, we hope that the terms of

¹³⁰ Ruth M. Keeseey, "Loyalism in Bergen County, New Jersey," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 18, No. 4 (1961): pp.558-576.

citizenship will be made as easy as possible, and that the privileges of incorporation will be extended to persons of all description, and to the natives of all nations, excepting those only who during the late war, have been guilty of licentious cruelties in plundering and murder, contrary to the usage of civilized nations.” This was the standard exemption of bad character that defined good citizens. All other Loyalists who had aided the British were welcome. “If, by the liberality of these terms, a few men who have formerly entertained inimical wishes and intentions towards us should gain admission, we doubt not your honour and spirit will remember, that conquerors only can forgive; and your wisdom will derive an accession to the publick wealth from the wealth and industry of individuals....”

Finally, the Convention warned that their recommendations should be adopted or New Jersey would lose its initiative. “As trade, since the last revolution, seems to be in a degree of fluctuation, and has not yet determined itself to any permanent and exclusive marts, it appears to be the only remaining moment in which New Jersey can lay in her claim and exert her natural resources with success, to obtain her just proportion of general wealth and commerce of the continent.” Former Loyalists would-be carried back into New Jersey on this search for a great share of America’s trade. Everyday the legislature waited to act would “conform the title and possession of our neighbors, will also afford them a better opportunity to counteract our designs.”¹³¹

With these resolves the archetype of the good Loyalist became a matter of State policy. The Convention presented the petition to the Legislature and within a few days introduced a free

¹³¹ *New Jersey Gazette*, November 22 1784.

port bill, which included the Loyalist provision.¹³² The act made Burlington, on the Delaware River, and Perth Amboy, on the Long Island Sound, free ports for 25 years and granted citizenship to any merchants who became residents for one month more. Only those found guilty of “licentious Cruelties” would-be banned. As in Connecticut, this set the bar very low and allowed virtually everyone to return. The Act differed from the recommendations in one important way. It made no provisions for imposing imposts on any other port. This made Burlington and Perth Amboy no more free ports than any other town in the state. As such, Smith, Rutherford and Morris did not get free ports but did succeed in creating two political havens and in the process shifting popular opinion about former Loyalists.¹³³

The number of Loyalists who took advantage of free port scheme remains unclear. Fragmentary records reveal the names of several individuals who returned to Perth Amboy and the surrounding area after 1784. One family of two sons and their father took advantage of the amnesty in Perth Amboy. Joseph Taylor, for example, traveled from Nova Scotia to Perth Amboy in 1787. Before the Revolution, Joseph had practiced law in Trenton. He joined the British Army in 1776 during the invasion of New Jersey and served throughout the rest of the war. In 1777 Joseph was tried and convicted in absentia of high treason for aiding the British. Later he served with the army in Virginia and South Carolina and surrendered with General Cornwallis at Yorktown in 1782. With this past, Joseph chose exile rather than return to Trenton

¹³² One historian has suggested this might have been the same free port bill drawn up and circulated by Robert Morris in the Summer 1784. McCormick, *Experiment in Independence: New Jersey in the Critical Period, 1781-1789*, p.119.

¹³³ *Votes and Proceedings of the Ninth General Assembly of the State of New-Jersey at a Session Begun at Trenton, on the 26th Day of October, 1784, and Continued by Adjournment.* (Printed by Isaac Collins, printer to the State., Place: United States; New Jersey; Trenton., 1784), Vol.8, pp.103-110.

which was still rebuilding after the British invasion six years earlier.¹³⁴ At the same time, Joseph returned with his brother William Taylor and his father John Taylor who also had a Loyalist history. Both men lived in Upper Freehold in Monmouth County and joined the British Army in 1776. They then went on to have distinguished careers as Loyalists. William and John had administered the oath of allegiance to George III during the British occupation of New Jersey and charged with high treason. As an elderly man, John then went to New York while William became an officer in a Loyalist regiment, the New Jersey Volunteers.¹³⁵ It would seem that all three men took advantage of the pardon in Perth Amboy. Outside of the free port Joseph, William and John would have been arrested and imprisoned for high treason. In Perth Amboy, records suggest they lived quiet lives.¹³⁶

The naked ambition of Connecticut and New Jersey worried many in New York who launched their own campaign to keep Loyalists. The arguments used echoed their pragmatic toleration: wealthy Loyalists of good character could never be bad citizens. As their efforts began to change the political debate, they further strengthened the stereotype of the good Loyalist as an important figure in the first of the United States.

Soon after the Richard Smith case in Connecticut, growing criticism appeared in the New York papers that the state's harsh Loyalist legislation was damaging the local economy. Since

¹³⁴ Jones, *The Loyalists of New Jersey; Their Memorials, Petitions, Claims, Etc., from English Records*, pp.214-215. And, *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Vol.13, "Memorial of Joseph Taylor".

¹³⁵ Jones, *The Loyalists of New Jersey; Their Memorials, Petitions, Claims, Etc., from English Records*, pp.214-215. And, *American Loyalists: Transcript of the Manuscript Books and Papers of the Commission of Enquiry into the Losses and Services of the American Loyalists Held under Acts of Parliament of 23, 25, 26, 28 and 29 of George III Preserved Amongst the Audit Office Records in the Public Record Office of England, 1783-1790*, Audit Office 12, Vol.13, "Memorial of William Taylor and John Taylor".

¹³⁶ For other examples of Loyalists who returned to Perth Amboy after its designation as a free port see: Jacob Bailey to Mr. John Clarke dated November 2 1785, Halifax, PANS, Jacob Bailey Papers, MG1 Vol.104.

1781, the New York Legislature had introduced some of the harshest measures of any State. With the growing toleration for Loyalists amongst their neighbors, New Yorkers feared that the state's anti-Loyalist bias would drive wealthy merchants from its towns. In May 1783 "Brutus" explained that state would lose its most prosperous merchants by banishing Loyalists. The article noted that their neighbors in Connecticut had attracted many wealthy Loyalists.¹³⁷ A year later, the fears persisted. In April 1784, residents of New York City still thought legislation was harming the State's interest. As proof of their fears they printed the resolutions of a group of New Jersey residents trying to use their "influence and endeavors to secure peaceable settlements and trade to any merchant or body of merchants, who will retire from New York or any other place and settle in the Jersies."¹³⁸

The calls of toleration came as part of a conservative backlash against radicals who had seized control of New York politics in the last years of the Revolutionary War and stirred up anti-Loyalist feeling. After the British invasion of New York in 1776, patriots had united around the common cause of driving out the invaders. This involved a common treatment of Loyalists as internal enemies. By 1781 a contest for power between radicals and conservatives had replaced this politics of coalition. With the war ending, rival factions formed around different visions of an independent New York. After the campaigning of Connecticut and New Jersey, the issue of returning Loyalists became a central part of this debate. As in Connecticut and New Jersey lines formed around radical hardliners and conservative conciliators. Radicals in New York championed the popular hostility towards Loyalists. In the last years of the War radicals seized control of New York as new political leaders emerged from the Revolution and pushed

¹³⁷ *Connecticut Courant*, May 27 1783.

¹³⁸ *Connecticut Courant*, April 20 1784, *The Massachusetts Centinel and Republic Journal*, April 24 1784.

the more established cadre of conservative politicians from power. They retained control of the state Assembly until 1786. In this time they introduced harsh legislation. The radical ascendancy, however, continued to face criticism from conservatives that wanted to bring moderation to New York government. For the Loyalist issue they began echoing the arguments made by neighboring states that the right kind of Loyalist could make a positive contribution to the new republic. They viewed rich merchants as essential to rebuilding New York after the British occupation. Between 1784-1788, these calls for toleration became a common part of New York politics.¹³⁹

The argument for toleration found its most sophisticated champion in Alexander Hamilton. During the Revolution, Hamilton had risen from an obscure New York politician to one of leading architects of the American Republic. On the way, he served as a captain of artillery in the Continental Army and George Washington's aid-de-camp. His experiences in the front ranks of the Revolution created a pragmatic man who focused on the larger picture. At the end of the war, Hamilton brought this level headedness to the Loyalist question.

In a series of letters written to New York political leaders between June and August 1783, Hamilton gathered support for his pro-Loyalist position. Like others in Connecticut and New Jersey, he was keenly aware of the challenges created by independence from Britain, he saw the Loyalists as an untapped resource that could help the United States through its first years. In particular, in the New York context, this meant keeping Loyalist capital in the local trade. As debate raged in Connecticut and New Jersey, Hamilton wrote to John Livingston, a fellow New Yorker and statesman, about the damage caused by the Tory emigration from New York. "Many

¹³⁹ Edward Countryman, *A People in Revolution: The American Revolution and Political Society in New York, 1760-1790*, *The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science*; 99th Ser., 2; (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), Chapters 8 and 9.

merchants of the second class,” he began, “may carry away eight or ten thousand guineas.” Continuing, he squarely placed the blame on the “popular phrenzy” and warned that New York would feel their loss for “twenty years.” In a second letter to Governor Clinton, Hamilton again bemoaned the loss of merchants: “nothing can be more unwise than to contribute as we are doing to people the shores and wilderness of Nova Scotia.” Harsh measures were creating future competition for New York merchants. The situation was especially deplorable, according to Hamilton, because harsh legislature had forced out many who might have stayed. In a third letter to James Duane, another influential politician, Hamilton wrote, “many who have all along talked of staying now talk of going. We have already lost too large a number of valuable citizens.” ¹⁴⁰

Hamilton tried to reach a broader audience in a series of pamphlets calling for toleration. As the debate in Connecticut and New Jersey appeared in New York’s press, Hamilton wrote a pamphlet under the pseudonym of “Phocion” warning against persecution of Loyalists. As Phocion, Hamilton singled out radicals who wanted to manipulate public opinion to expel large numbers of Loyalists from New York. These men threatened to undermine the principles of the Revolution. Arbitrary expulsions trampled on individuals rights to trial by jury and revealed the motives of a corrupt government. According to the terms of the Peace Treaty, Phocion argued that all Loyalists in the state were New York citizens and were therefore entitled to the legal protections of the state. ¹⁴¹ As such, any legislation that ignored these rights would threaten the rights of everyone in the state. “Nothing is more common,” Phocion wrote, “than a free people,

¹⁴⁰ Hamilton to Livingston, August 13 1783, J. E. Cooke ed., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), Vol.3, pp.331. Hamilton to Clinton, June 1 1783, *Ibid*, Vol.3, pp.367-72. Hamilton to Duane, August 5 1783, *Ibid.*, pp. 430-31.

¹⁴¹ Alexander Hamilton, Robert Bell, and printer, *A Letter from Phocion, to the Considerate Citizens of New-York: On the Politics of the Times, in Consequence of the Peace* (Philadelphia: Printed and sold by Robert Bell, 1784), pp.4-15.

in times of heat and violence, to gratify their passions, by letting into government, principles and precedents, which afterwards prove fatal to themselves.” Exactly this had happened with the “disqualification, disenfranchisement, and banishment by the acts of legislature.”¹⁴² With these arguments, Hamilton wanted to set the Loyalist question within the larger framework of securing the principles of the Revolution. In this regard, accepting former Loyalists became a test.

Hamilton, however, was also keen to stress the positive good Loyalists would have on the state. The second half of the pamphlet argued that rich Loyalists in New York would increase trade. The large amounts of capital held by Loyalist merchants fulfilled a vital role in the city’s economy. “A man, the least acquainted with trade,” Hamilton argued, “know[s] that every merchant or trader has an interest in the aggregate mass of capital or stock in trade.” Those without capital would need credit from those who did possess capital. Without the existence of credit, “commerce will decline, and...prospects of profit will diminish.”¹⁴³ To stress the point, Hamilton quoted at length from another writer, “Mechanic” who predicted the expulsion of the Loyalists would create a vacuum that attracted less generous creditors from other states to move to New York. These new residents would not invest their money in the local economy: he would “wear his old cloaths so much longer before he gets a new suit,” he would “buy imported shoes rather than those made here” and only build “little huts upon the vacant lots, instead of having profitable and durable employment in erecting large and elegant edifices.” The effect of these circumstances would “give you less employment,” Mechanic claimed, “and in a very little time bring back your wages to what they now are, and even sink them lower.”¹⁴⁴ Hamilton wanted his

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.17.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.18. Hamilton also tackled the fears that Loyalists would-become economic rivals. Radicals claimed that traders would-be “overborne by the large capitals of the tory merchants” and the laborers wages would-be undercut

audience to believe that former Loyalists would-be better than non-New Yorkers. This revealed the extent to which interstate rivalries defined the context of the Loyalist rehabilitation in the northeast.

Once Loyalists became part of the New York economy, Hamilton claimed they would-become good citizens. He realized that many thought Loyalists would try to overthrow the state legislature. To counter these fears, Hamilton, echoed the argument that had gathered momentum in Connecticut and New Jersey: “The safest reliance of every government is on men’s interests.” Continuing, Hamilton laid out a politics in which private interests and the public good were inseparable. “Make it the interest of those citizens who during the revolution, were opposed to us to be friends to the new government,” he claimed “by offering them not only protection, but a participation in its privileges, and they will undoubtedly become its friends.” For merchants therefore, the only concern ought to be that they bring “money in the community, and a brisk commerce to give it circulation and activity.”¹⁴⁵ Partisan politics had no place in this vision of New York: “Viewing the subject in every possible light, there is not a single interest of the community but dictates moderation rather than violence.”¹⁴⁶

Hamilton’s attempt to introduce the concept of the good Loyalist as a wealthy merchant met resistance. A second pamphlet appeared in New York challenging Phocion’s account of Loyalists. The author, the anonymous “Mentor,” offered to teach Phocion about the true nature of Loyalists. “In establishing a young empire,” Mentor asked, “should we leave the principle of

by the “interferences of Tory workmen.” With these claims, radicals had “endeavored to enlist a number of people on their side by holding our motives of private advantage.” Hamilton tried to show that Loyalists private interests as merchants and laborers would coincide with the public good. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.18-19.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.21.

sedition in its foundation?”¹⁴⁷ Loyalists, he believed, could never be good citizens. “Where it [Loyalists principles] has been long entertained, and where it has long beat union with the passions, is more fixed and immoveable than the best established government.” In this way, Mentor argued that the supporters of monarchial and republican government were “irreconcilable.” As such the Loyalists in New York needed to be expelled before they could corrupt the current regime. Because republican governments, Mentor explained, are reflections of society, Patriots needed to remove the corrupt part.¹⁴⁸ He argued that all Loyalists represented a threat to the young republic. “The tory principle,” Mentor assured his readers, “contains in it a mortal and irreconcilable hatred to our government.”¹⁴⁹ With this argument, Mentor, was attempting to rally support for the legislatures plan to expel all Loyalists from the state.¹⁵⁰

Mentor argued that the expulsion of New York’s Loyalists would not damage the State's commerce. Countering Hamilton’s economic analysis dismissed the importance of Loyalist credit. “Money is a conveniency,” he argued, “not an article of trade; being such, wherever trade centers, money will.” As long as New York remained a trading center it would continue to have credit.¹⁵¹ Instead of saving the economy, in Mentor’s account, Loyalist merchants threatened to ruin the state. Mentor wanted to stabilize the economy by reducing imports and increase exports. In 1784, the American economy was too dependent on foreign trade and was ignoring domestic development. Mentor concluded, “That the riches of a nation are derived from the cultivation of

¹⁴⁷ Isaac Ledyard, *Mentor's Reply to Phocion's Letter with Some Observations on Trade, Addressed to the Citizens of New-York, Variation: Selected Americana from Sabin's Dictionary of Books Relating to America, from Its Discovery to the Present Time; 13957. References: Sabin; 29963* (New-York: Printed by Shepard Kollock, 1784), p.10.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.10-11.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.11.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.10.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.14.

its land, and its manufacturers.”¹⁵² He, therefore, wanted to “encourage husbandmen and manufacturer to come to the country, and discourage traders.”¹⁵³ In this alternative economic vision of a protectionist America, Hamilton’s wealthy Loyalists had no role.

This assault on toleration provoked Hamilton to show how former Loyalists were already assuming a valuable place in an independent New York as he had predicted. In a second pamphlet *Phocion* focused on the recent participation of Loyalists in state elections. Many of the inhabitants of the Southern District – Long Island – had collaborated with the British Army during the war. However, since the peace, Hamilton noted many had sworn allegiance to New York and then elected representatives to the 1784 State Legislature.¹⁵⁴ No one had challenged these election results even when they produced candidates with Loyalist pasts. For Hamilton, these elections served as proof of “how easy it is for men to challenge their principles with their situations.”¹⁵⁵ Unlike Mentor, he saw no evidence of a permanent “tory principle” that would exclude former Loyalists from political participation. Instead, Hamilton believed Loyalists had weak convictions. “The great majority of those who took part against us,” he explained, “did it from accident, from the dread of the British power, and from the influence of others to whom they had been accustomed to look up.”¹⁵⁶ The few radicals had already left for Nova Scotia. With this generous reading of Loyalism, Hamilton accused Mentor of distorting reality by creating a stereotype of the dangerous Loyalists. Hamilton called upon his readers to look past rhetoric and distinguish “between doctrines invented to serve the turn of a revolution, and those

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p.16.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.15.

¹⁵⁴ Alexander Hamilton, *A Second Letter from Phocion to the Considerate Citizens of New-York*, (New York: published by Samuel Loudon, 1784), pp.19-20.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.21.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.34.

that much give permanent prosperity to the state.”¹⁵⁷ By this he had in mind the wealthy Loyalists singled out in the first pamphlet. Hamilton reminded his audience that if Mentor’s sentiments won out, New York would loose Loyalists to neighboring states that “seem to be in a disposition to benefit from our mistakes.”¹⁵⁸ On this note of warning, the pamphlet debate ended in New York. The exchange between Phocion and Mentor was the most visible sign of debate that gradually shifted in favor of reintegration. Hamilton’s discussion of the 1784 State Elections astutely captured the direction of New York politics. The radicals retained control of the New York Legislature until 1786 and the harsh legislation remained on the books until 1787. However, by that time, the Loyalists who had remained and those who returned had gained acceptance.¹⁵⁹

For the next decade after the debate in Connecticut, New Jersey and New York, returning Loyalists continued to be threatened and attacked. However, a growing number found a more welcome reception. The majority did not fit the profile of the wealthy Loyalists with sufficient capital to invest in the local economy. The political debate sparked by the return of high profile men, such as Richard Smith in Connecticut, undermined the radicals’ rhetoric and created a limited space for Loyalists to return from New York City in 1782 or from Nova Scotia in 1785-1790.

The return of the Loyalists and their begrudging acceptance by the population of the Northeast marked the end of the popular debate about Loyalism in the former thirteen colonies.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.5.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁵⁹ A number of studies have explored the surprising speed of the reintegration of Loyalists in New York. See: Jonathan Clarke, “The Problem of Allegiance in Revolutionary Poughkeepsie,” in Hall, *Saints & Revolutionaries: Essays on Early American History*.

The term Loyalists would-be synonymous with traitors in the popular imagination for next century. In the chaos following the end of the Revolution colonists were interested in building a new nation than continuing out of date partisan politics. Loyalism had no place in creating the New Republic. Therefore, just as the popular debate about Loyalism was the product of the Revolution moment, it ended as soon as the former colonists began turning their attention to the future and became caught up in new issues that refocused the popular debate.

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S. P. McGrath. 'Loyalism in Five Fairfield County, Connecticut, Towns: M.A. Thesis, Trinity College, 1976.

Christopher J. M. Sparshott

Northwestern University
 Department of History
 1881 Sheridan Road
 Evanston, IL 60208
 USA
 Email: c-sparshott@northwestern.edu

Education

2002-2006 Ph.D. in progress, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL.
 Dissertation Title: *Popular Loyalism: Clinging to Empire During a Colonial War of Independence*. Expected date of completion: June 2007.
 Committee: T. H. Breen (chair), Ethan Shagan, Sarah Pearsall.
 Specialist Field: British Colonial North America.
 General Field: History of the United States to the present.
 Minor Field: Eighteenth Century Britain and Early Modern Europe.

2001-2002 MA in History, Northwestern University, Evanston IL.
 Thesis Title: *Codfish, Local Identity and Nationalism in Revolutionary America*.
 Advisor: T. H. Breen.

1998-2001 BA in History Oxford University, Hertford College, Oxford, Great Britain.

Teaching Experience

Adjutant Professor, Department of History, North Park University

“United States History to 1877,” Fall 2006.

Graduate Instructor, Department of History, Northwestern University.

“Blood, Guns and Donuts: The War of Independence, 1775-1783,” Winter 2006.
 “Empire or Independence? The American Revolution, 1763-1787,” Spring 2006.
 “American in 1960’s”, Summer 2006 with Professor J. Rice, Department of History, Northwestern University.
 “African in the 20th Century”, Summer 2006 with Professor J. Rice, Department of History, Northwestern University.

Teaching Assistant, Department of History, Northwestern University.

- “History of the United States to 1865,” Steven Hahn, Fall 2002.
 “History of the United States: Reconstruction to the Present,” Nancy MacLean, Winter 2003.
 “History of the United States to 1865,” Frank Rzeczkowski, Fall 2003.
 “History of the Holocaust,” Peter Hayes, Spring 2004.
 “Legal and Constitutional History of the United States: Colonial to 1857,” Stephen Presser, Fall 2004.
 “The United States from First Contact to The Civil War,” Christopher Hodson, Winter 2005.

Guest Lecturer, Northwestern University:

Guest lecturer for “History of the United States 1865,” Fall 2003, lectured on
 “Revolution, Rebellion *and* Civil War: The Loyalist Experience of the American Revolution.”
 Guest lecturer for “The United States from First Contact to The Civil War, 1774-1790” Winter
 2005, lectured on “The Loyalists: Choosing Empire.”

Awards and Fellowships

Northwestern University Travel Grant 2003.
 American History Graduate Scholarship from the National Society of Colonial Dames of
 America in the State of Illinois for 2005.
 Northwestern Graduate Student Research Grant 2005.
 Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History Fellowship to study at the New York Public
 Library 2005.
 Frankel Foundation Fellowship Fall 2005.
 Grant from the Fort Dearborn Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution in the State
 of Illinois 2006.

Papers Given:

“Choosing Empire: Popular Loyalism in Fairfield County,” paper delivered at the Northwestern
 Colonial American Group in Evanston 2005.

 “A Connecticut Loyalist: The Political Journey of Samuel Hawley, 1774-1778” paper
 delivered at the annual meeting of the National Society of Colonial Dames of America in the
 State of Illinois for 2005.

 “Personal Visions of the British Empire: Re-examining the Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia,”
 at the Newberry Library Seminar in Early American History and Culture in Chicago in
 November 2005.

Conferences:

Alice Berline Kaplan Center for the Humanities Dissertation Forum held at Northwestern

University May 2005. Paper given, "Ninety Days in the American Revolution: Shifting Allegiances in War Torn New Jersey between November 1776 and January 1777."

New England Historical Association Conference at the University of Rhode Island, Kingston Rhode Island October 2005. Paper given: "Contractual Loyalties: The Popular Politics of Oath Taking in Revolutionary New Jersey, 1776-1777."

"Genius of the People: Beyond the Founding Fathers: New Perspectives of the American Revolution," Northwestern University, April 2006. Paper given: "Exporting the American Revolution: Political Culture in the Loyalist Diaspora, 1783-1790."

Relevant Work Experience:

Coordinator of the Preparing Future Faculties Program, 2006-2007, The Graduate School, Northwestern University.

Coordinator of the *NU* Directions Professional Development Conference Series, 2006-2007, The Graduate School, Northwestern University.