

8-2012

## The Image of The American Revolutionary Soldier and The Problem of Historical Memory

Stephanie N. Powelson  
*University of Texas-Pan American*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/leg\\_etd](https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/leg_etd)



Part of the [History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Powelson, Stephanie N., "The Image of The American Revolutionary Soldier and The Problem of Historical Memory" (2012). *Theses and Dissertations - UTB/UTPA*. 457.  
[https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/leg\\_etd/457](https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/leg_etd/457)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations - UTB/UTPA by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. For more information, please contact [justin.white@utrgv.edu](mailto:justin.white@utrgv.edu), [william.flores01@utrgv.edu](mailto:william.flores01@utrgv.edu).

THE IMAGE OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY SOLDIER  
AND THE PROBLEM OF HISTORICAL MEMORY

A Thesis

by

STEPHANIE N. POWELSON

Submitted to the Graduate School of  
The University of Texas-Pan American  
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

August 2012

Major Subject: History



THE IMAGE OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTIONARY SOLDIER  
AND THE PROBLEM OF HISTORICAL MEMORY

A Thesis  
by  
STEPHANIE N. POWELSON

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dr. Christopher Miller  
Chair of Committee

Dr. Thomas Knight  
Committee Member

Dr. Keith Erikson  
Committee Member

August 2012



Copyright 2012 Stephanie N. Powelson

All Rights Reserved



## ABSTRACT

Powelson, Stephanie N., The Image of the American Revolutionary Soldier and the Problem of Historical Memory. Master of Arts (MA), August 2012, 111 pp., 2 tables, 4 figures, 76 references, 8 titles.

Public memories of the American Revolution have played a central role in the creation of an American national identity. As a result of the importance of these military memories in creating a sense of social cohesion, images of the men who fought in the Revolution have often been systematically created and propagated, thus leading to myths and stereotypes in popular culture.

This thesis analyzes the images of the soldiers of the American Revolution in public memory and in professional historiography. There is a perplexing gap between popular memory and the modern day professional historiography of the American Revolutionary soldiers. Although there is a large body of knowledge available that disproves much of the mythical images of the soldiers, the stereotypes have persisted in public memory as a result of the political, psychological and sociological processes involved in the creation and maintenance of memories.





## DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my son, *Francisco Javier Medrano III*; until you came into my life I had no real concept of pure and unconditional love. Everything I do is for your benefit and without you in my world I probably would have given up a long time ago. It is my goal to instill in you the importance and value of education and I hope that this work will serve as a reminder of that importance. You are everything to me and by far my greatest accomplishment.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I will always be grateful to Dr. Christopher Miller, chair of my thesis committee, for all his patience, mentoring, advice, and most importantly for believing in me when I didn't believe in myself. My thanks also go to my thesis committee members: Dr. Thomas Knight and Dr. Keith Erikson of the University of Texas El Paso. Their advice, input, and detailed feedback on my thesis challenged me and helped to ensure the quality of my intellectual work.

Throughout my education there have been three highly influential professors that inspired me to pursue my education in history and without these individuals this thesis would have never been completed. First and foremost, I must acknowledge *Dr. Michael Weaver*. When I entered his 1301 American History course as a freshman at UTPA, I had no idea what subjects I liked or what I wanted to major in. Through his class, I learned about and began to love history. I took every history course I could with Dr. Weaver as both an undergraduate and graduate student and can honestly say that most of my knowledge of history was learned from him.

As a graduate student, *Dr. Christopher Miller* and the late *Dr. Paul Henggeler* instilled in me the love of historical research and writing. By sharing with me your personal stories of writing projects and historical research methods, I came to have an appreciation for the art of historical writing and the importance of that influence on the creation of this thesis is immeasurable.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	viii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER I. NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE ROLE OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION IN DEFINING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN AMERICAN.....	4
CHAPTER II. THE PROFESSIONAL HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION: BREAKING THE STEREOTYPES OR PERPETUATING MYTHS?.....	18
CHAPTER III. THE ORIGIN OF THE FEAR OF STANDING ARMIES AND THE ROMANTICIZED MILITIA .....	35
CHAPTER IV. THE REALITIES OF THE MILITIA SYSTEM AND THE SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY SOLDIERS.....	51

CHAPTER V. STEREOTYPES SURROUNDING THE RANK AND FILE SOLDIER OF THE REVOLUTION IN PUBLIC MEMORY .....	67
CHAPTER VI. SCHEMA THEORY OF MEMORY AND COGNITIVE DISSONANCE.....	85
CONCLUSION.....	103
REFERENCES.....	105
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.....	111

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Age of Enlisted Soldiers of General Smallwood.....	56
Table 2: Place of Birth of General Smallwood's Recruits.....	57





## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: The Boston Massacre as Portrayed by Paul Revere.....	69
Figure 2: Minuteman Statue.....	72
Figure 3: Cincinnatus Statue.....	72
Figure 4: George Washington, by Horatio Greenough.....	100



## INTRODUCTION

The American Revolution is a historical subject that has served as a source of patriotism and interest for many Americans, in that it is this conflict which marks the beginning of our independence and the creation of our national identity. Surprisingly, despite the fascination with the war, the men who fought in the American Revolution have not received a thorough examination or consistently accurate representation in popular memory or professional historiography. The image of the soldiers of the American Revolution is one in which a wide variety of stereotypes exist. In researching the image of the rank and file soldiers, a perplexing gap between popular memory and the modern day professional historiography arose. Within the professional historiography, much of the work dating from the 1970s onward, has been fairly accurate in its representations of the soldiers. The historical record proves that the majority of the men who fought in the Revolution were not minutemen or state militia but were actually young, poor, propertyless men who enlisted primarily for economic reasons. Popular memories along with some patriotic historical literature on the other hand, consistently portray the soldiery of the Revolution as being comprised of a virtuous citizenry who were defending their right to liberty. As I began peeling away the layers behind this paradox, I was in awe of how many questions had to be answered in order to fully explain who these soldiers were and how and why these two polar opposite images exist. This thesis attempts to answer the questions as to how and why this contradiction exists and this answer is a multifaceted one which includes the historical,

sociological, and psychological processes involved in the creation of national identities as well as official, private, and popular or public memories.

My overall thesis is that the image of the rank and file soldier of the Revolution has been subject to stereotypes and myths as a result of 'American Exceptionalist' mental schemas that have been imbedded in the minds of most Americans beginning in youth and reinforced throughout adulthood. The origins of these schemas can be traced back to the official memories of the Revolution; memories and images that were created and disseminated to the public systematically because the founding fathers and others who shared their vision knew the importance that the event would play in the creation of our national identity. As a result of the psychological processes involved in the schema theory of memory, once a schema has been formed, information which does not fit is either ignored and forgotten or distorted in such a way that the new information fits within the frame of the current schema. This process, also known as the cognitive dissonance theory, explains why the new social history of the Revolution, which an unbiased review of primary documents demonstrates actually depicts the soldiers fairly accurately, has not found its way into mainstream public consciousness. The contradictions in how the soldiers have been depicted can be explained by the fact that the entire concept of an army, including the Continental Army of the Revolution and our modern day army, stands in complete contrast to the concept of American Exceptionalism, a concept that I argue is at the core of our national identity; an identity that was carefully planned and systematically created. In order to prove this thesis, I knew that I would have to address a wide variety of topics including, how national identities are formed, the basic concepts behind American national identity, the crucial role that the American Revolution plays in our national identity, the stereotypical images of the rank and file soldiers of the Revolution and why those stereotypes

were necessary to reinforce our identity and how the images have been depicted in popular memory and professional historiography. I felt that once this information was established, I could then go on to describe the psychological aspects of memory and where the romanticized militia schema originated from and why it has not changed despite the amount of conflicting evidence available.

## CHAPTER I

### NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE ROLE OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION IN DEFINING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AMERICAN

A country's history is a vital element in the formation of its national identity. However, there is a problematic relationship that exists between tradition and history and myth and memory.<sup>1</sup> In a historical context, myths have been defined as stories about the past which have the function of justifying the present and therefore contributing to social stability.<sup>2</sup> The complex relationship between tradition and history and myth and memory has manifested itself throughout the history of the United States in the form of historical literature, propaganda, and public commemorations. Many scholars believe that nations, in particular, make use of—and often reinvent—the past to construct national identities. Claude Levi-Strauss, a leading scholar in anthropology, once argued that “mythic history, purged and socially purposeful may be mobilized to bolster a traditional order on the basis of a distant past, but may also use a purged past as the foundation for a future that is just beginning to take shape.”<sup>3</sup> In the highly influential work, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson proposes a definition of a nation and states that it is an “imagined political community” and that all communities “are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.”<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1991).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>3</sup> Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 268.

<sup>4</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed. (London: Verso Books, 1991), 6.

The term public memory refers to what society remembers collectively about an event after individual private memories have faded and is based upon the way people construct the past from many sources.<sup>5</sup> In his book, *Framing Public Memory*, Kendall Phillips points out that in approaching the “memory of publics” one will encounter various complex factors which he describes as the “oscillation between horizons of remembrance and forgetting; the contrast between the capacity of publics to authorize memories and the struggle of other publics to contest them; and the willingness of a public to accept responsibility for its remembrance or to absolve itself of responsibility.”<sup>6</sup>

Many scholars acknowledge that public memory can take on many forms ranging from public monuments, popular films, books, pictures, museums, and eulogies. In her study of renovating national imaginaries, Barbara Biesecker analyzes recent memories of World War II in American culture. Like many other scholars, in her analysis she studies the various ways in which memories are crafted or created into a national identity. However, one aspect that has not been addressed by Biesecker and other individuals who have studied the public memory of different events is the psychological processes involved in memory in general and the correlation between private and public memory.

Public memory generally flows from private memory and official memory; i.e., memories that are promoted by “keepers of the past.” According to Alfred Young, who in his work *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party* looks at the role that memory played after the American Revolution, “keepers of the past” are those individuals who, depending upon their political values, decide who wins their place in history. Young states that these individuals decide “whose

---

<sup>5</sup> Alfred Young, “George Robert Twelves Hewes (1742-1840): A Boston Shoemaker and the Memory of the American Revolution” *William and Mary Quarterly* (October, 1981): 561-623.

<sup>6</sup> Kendall Phillips, *Framing Public Memory* (Alabama, University of Alabama Press), 6.



heroes and heroines school children will learn about, what statues and monuments are erected, what historic buildings are saved, and what events are commemorated.”<sup>7</sup> Keepers of the past can include a variety of individuals, including historians, film makers, songwriters, poets, government officials (on both the local and national levels), textbook authors, teachers, and private interest groups that organize mass public commemorations such as monuments or parades. It is clearly these individuals who decide what historical memories are going to be remembered; whether it is through books, film, songs, poetry, laws, classroom assignments, or public commemorations. Other historians who have also looked at how these keepers of the past have contributed to the formation of a public or official memory note the variety of people that actually contribute to a country’s national narrative. Alan Gordon makes an excellent observation that it is not only professional historians who help shape national narratives,

historians both amateur and professional, produce history in more than textbooks and learned articles. History is found in public plaques, in monuments, and in festivals and pageants. History is told in song and verse. Taken together, these recollections combine with the more formally written history to create a popular historiography or perhaps even a popular memory<sup>8</sup>

While it may be agreed upon that various individuals contribute to popular historiography, the question arises, however, which type of history has the greatest impact on public or popular memory. Is it the version which is found in film, public plaques, monuments, and festivals or is it the professional historiography found in learned articles and scholarly monographs?

In the past few decades, more and more historians are beginning to analyze the role that memory plays in the creation of national myths and how those myths turn into tradition and how that tradition becomes the core of a national identity. Michael Kammen believes that this phenomenon within the historiography of the Revolution began in the 1980s when the French,

---

<sup>7</sup> Alfred Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), vii.

<sup>8</sup> Alan Gordon, *The Hero and the Historians* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 9.

British, and Brazilian governments each dedicated a year to the commemoration of their national heritage.<sup>9</sup> Trans-nationally we see that countries have recognized the importance of tradition in creating a sense of social cohesion. Although individuals who have studied this phenomenon disagree as to whether these commemorations of heritage appear to be “business as usual” or something new; most observers are in agreement that the past is “vital rather than dead.”<sup>10</sup> Another point of agreement is that tradition is absolutely a political phenomenon and that “the political and social structure, including the principal political values of a people, directly shapes the notions of time and of history that prevail among them.”<sup>11</sup> Kammen also notes that explorations of “traditions in a particular cultural context may help us to determine the underlying basis of a community or a nation’s sense of identity.”<sup>12</sup>

If tradition, in addition to memory, is a key component of national identity, it is important to define the word tradition. In the 1975 work, *The Use and Abuse of History*, Moses Finley does just that:

There is the tradition which shapes the larger part of our lives, perpetuating customs, habits of behavior, rites, ethical norms and beliefs. There is nothing mysterious about tradition in this sense; it is transmitted from one generation to the next, partly by the ordinary process of living in society, without making any conscious effort on anyone’s part, partly by men whose function it is to do so: priests, schoolmasters, parents, judges, party leaders, censors, neighbours. There is also nothing reliable about this sort of tradition; that is to say, its explanations and narrations are, as anyone can judge by a minimum of observation, rarely quite accurate, and sometimes altogether false. Reliability is, of course, irrelevant; so long as the tradition is accepted, it works, and it must work if the society is not to fall apart.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 5.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Moses Finley, *The Use and Abuse of History* (New York: Chatto and Windus, 1975), 26-27.

One of the most crucial points Finley makes in his definition of tradition is when he states that the tradition must be accepted and also must work if the society is not to fall apart. In this statement he is highlighting the importance of commonly accepted traditions or national narratives in creating a sense of social cohesion. In order for a people to feel a sense of cohesiveness they must have some form of a common past to draw from.<sup>14</sup>

One of the best works describing what the American national identity entails is Seymour Martin Lipset's *American Exceptionalism: A Double Edged Sword*. In this book, Lipset describes how the idea of "American Exceptionalism" originated and the implications of its true meaning. Lipset states, "The American Creed can be described in five terms: liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire."<sup>15</sup> In its classic forms, American exceptionalism refers to the special character of the United States as a uniquely free nation based on democratic ideals and personal liberty. Sometimes this special character is inferred from the nature of American political institutions founded in the period between 1776 and 1789: the Declaration of Independence (1776), the Revolution (1776-83), the Constitution (1787), and the Bill of Rights (1791). In this sense, the American Revolution and its subsequent freeing of the United States from British control are important in ideas of American exceptionalism. Lipset maintains that this identity, or becoming American, was an ideological act, just like converting to a new religion.<sup>16</sup>

The United States is exceptional in starting from a revolutionary event, in being the "first new nation," the first colony, other than Iceland, to become independent. It has defined its *raison d'être* ideologically. As historian Richard Hofstadter noted, "It has been our fate as a nation not to have ideologies, but to be one." In saying this, Hofstadter reiterated Ralph Waldo Emerson and Abraham Lincoln's emphases on the country's "political religion," alluding in effect to the former's

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double Edged Sword*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 4.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

statement that becoming American was a religious, that is, ideological act. The ex-Soviet Union apart, other countries define themselves by a common history as birthright communities, not by ideology.<sup>17</sup>

This form of ideology has been termed civil religion. Civil religion can be defined as is the set of “beliefs, rites, and symbols which relates a man's role as citizen and his society's place in space, time, and history to the conditions of ultimate existence and meaning.”<sup>18</sup>

In 1967, Robert Bellah published an article titled “Civil Religion in America” which dealt with the similar notion that becoming American was an ideological, religious act. In the article Bellah defines American civil religion as “an institutionalized collection of sacred beliefs about the American nation.”<sup>19</sup> Bellah argued that these sacred beliefs are expressed through the founding documents and the Presidential inaugural addresses.<sup>20</sup> Bellah and other scholars who have studied civil religion in America, such as Sidney Mead, have found that most Americans share common religious characteristics expressed through civil religious beliefs, symbols, and rituals that provide a religious dimension to the entirety of American life.<sup>21</sup> In an article titled, “The Nation with the Soul of a Church,” Mead explores a statement made by English writer, G.K. Chesterton, in reference to the question, “what is America?” Chesterton’s response was “a nation with a soul.”<sup>22</sup> In his book, *What I saw in America*, Chesterton describes what he saw as being unique about America.<sup>23</sup> Chesterton argues that America is unique simply because it is the only nation to be founded upon a creed:

America is the only nation in the world that is founded on a creed. That creed is set forth with dogmatic and even theological lucidity in The Declaration of

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> John Coleman, “Civil Religion” *Sociological Analysis* (1970), 70.

<sup>19</sup> R. N. Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus* 96 (1967): 1-21.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> William Swatos, ed. “Civil Religion,” *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society*, (California: Alta Mira Press, 1998): 2. and Martin Marty, “Two Kinds of Civil Religion.” Pp. 139-157 in Russell E. Richey and Donald G. Jones (eds.), *American Civil Religion*, (New York: Harper and Row) and Sidney Mead, “The Nation with the Soul of a Church.” *Church History* 36:262-283.

<sup>22</sup> Sidney Mead “The Nation with the Soul of a Church.” *Church History* (1967), 262-283.

<sup>23</sup> G.K., Chesterton *What I Saw in America* (New York: Mead and Company, 1922).

Independence. . It enunciates that all men are equal in their claim to justice, and that governments exist to give them that justice, and that their authority is for that reason just. It certainly does condemn anarchism, and it does also by inference condemn atheism, since it clearly names the Creator as the ultimate authority from whom these equal rights are derived.<sup>24</sup>

In his analysis of this statement, Mead points to the fact that this creed Chesterton describes was something deeply rooted in American thought and that it goes far beyond the superficialities of flag symbolism and showed how American civil religion offered depths that appear in continuity with those of prophetic religion.<sup>25</sup>

Although the civil religion thesis claims that civil religion exists *symbolically* in American culture, such symbols must be perceived and believed by actual people if the symbols are to be said to have meaning. In order to determine whether civil religion had actual meaning in American society, Ronald Wimberley tested the hypothesis in the 1970s by creating a series of civil religious statements and then questioning people about them. In 1972, Wimberley selected 574 persons from various backgrounds in North Carolina. The following ten statements were given to these individuals followed by a set of five-point agreement categories:

1. It is a mistake to think that America is God's chosen nation today.
2. I consider holidays like the fourth of July, religious as well as patriotic.
3. We need more laws on morals.
4. We should respect a President's authority since his authority is from God.
5. National leaders should affirm their belief in God.
6. Good patriots are not necessarily religious people.
7. Social justice cannot only be based on laws; it must also come from religion.
8. To me, the flag of the United States is sacred.
9. God can be known through the experiences of the American people.
10. If the American government does not support religion, the government cannot uphold morality.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ronald C. Wimberley, "Testing the Civil Religion Hypothesis," *Sociological Analysis* (1976), 343.

Wimberley's findings, using factor and cluster analysis, demonstrated the existence of a "civil religion" variable separate from either denominational religious belief, on the one hand, or political commitment, on the other. Wimberley writes,

Not only does this study provide a measurement of civil religion; it extends support for the civil religion hypothesis. Bellah's contention that civil religion "exists alongside of and rather clearly differentiated from the churches" gains support. Civil religion factored away from church religious belief, behavior and experience in a sample of revival attenders; it does the same for a purposively heterogeneous sampling of metropolitan residents. In the latter instance, civil religion remains separate but displays a closer relation to these three church dimensions than in the earlier research. This implies that civil religion is not as readily distinguished from church religion in the general population as it is among the religiously active.<sup>27</sup>

Scholars like Wimberley and Bellah have demonstrated that national identity, in this case American identity, creates deeply rooted attachments to one's country that mimic individuals' religious beliefs.

One device for cementing civil religion is the manipulation of images of the heroes of the American Revolution which has frequently been utilized by politicians and writers to depict what they think America means. Historian Alan Gordon recently wrote a book, *The Hero and Historians*, in which he looks at public memory and the creation of national identities through the veneration of historical heroes. Although the historical hero Gordon was looking at was Jacques Cartier, Gordon effectively demonstrates that the "celebration of national heroes, then, was a crucial dimension in the construction of a national consciousness."<sup>28</sup> Ernest Renan seconds this idea when he stated in his famous essay, "What is a Nation", "a heroic past, great men, glory (by which I understand genuine glory), this is the social capital upon which one bases a national

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 349-350.

<sup>28</sup> Alan Gordon, *The Hero and the Historians* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 4.

idea.”<sup>29</sup> Gordon maintains that historical heroes are “conscripted to the service of nationalist historiography.”<sup>30</sup>

In terms of the foundation of a national identity for the United States, the history of the American Revolution has played the most significant role. In *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice and Memory in Revolutionary America*, Sarah Purcell looks at the military commemorations that took place during the Revolution and immediately after. Purcell argues that

military memory, especially memory of the Revolutionary War, is really at the heart of American national identity. Between 1775 and 1825, public memories of the Revolutionary War contributed to the formation of American nationalism and helped to shape the character of an expanding political culture in the early republic.<sup>31</sup>

Jill Lepore echoed this sentiment in *The Whites of their Eyes*, when she states that in terms of the American political tradition, “nothing trumps the Revolution.”<sup>32</sup> In his look at the founding myths of the United States, another scholar, Ray Raphael, succinctly explains why the American Revolution plays such an important role in the creation of our national identity. Raphael states,

For more than two centuries, the often-repeated story of how the United States achieved its independence has bound Americans together. All nations like to celebrate their origins, but the birth of our nation makes a particularly compelling story. The United States has a clearly defined “founding,” the work of a single generation. Most nations are not so fortunate. The story of Britain’s founding would have to cover centuries and include the Norman invasion (1066), the Magna Charta (1215), the Glorious Revolution (1688), and the Act of Union (1707). China’s founding would include the rise of ancient dynasties, the nationalist Revolution in 1911, and the Communist Revolution in 1949 — too much to tell in a simple story. Mexico has only two founding moments, independence in 1821 and the Revolution in the early twentieth century, but these were separated by ninety years. Canada eased into nationhood so gracefully that it hardly has a story to tell. Our story, by contrast, is simple yet grand. Its plot line is

---

<sup>29</sup> Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?” in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor, ed. 1996. *Becoming National: A Reader* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 41.

<sup>30</sup> Alan Gordon, *The Hero and the Historians* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 7.

<sup>31</sup> Sarah Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice and Memory in Revolutionary America*, (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>32</sup> Jill Lepore, *The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party’s Revolution and the Battle over American History* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010), 14.

easy to follow: American colonist's resisted British oppression, fought a war, achieved independence, and established their own government.<sup>33</sup>

It is for this reason that even today we see politicians as well as others frequently invoke the words of our “founding fathers” and reference Revolutionary events as a means to legitimize the present political agenda. It is clear that people understand the power that resonates with the American Revolution in our identity as a nation. In her look at the modern day “Tea Party,” Jill Lepore discusses this phenomenon.

Americans have drawn Revolutionary analogies before. They have drawn them for a very long time. When in doubt, in American politics, left, right, or center, deploy the Founding Fathers.<sup>34</sup>

The public memory of the Revolutionary War, specifically memories regarding the soldiers of the revolution, have undoubtedly contributed to the formation of a national identity by allowing early Americans to imagine a shared history of common sacrifice.

Through military commemorations between 1775 and 1825, Americans created a set of stories that sought to give meaning to the real violence of war and even before the fighting had ended the public memory of the war focused on a narrow group of “heroes and martyrs” around whom an American nation might unite in grateful praise.<sup>35</sup> Not only were these stories created to give meaning to the war, but also as a way to justify, in their own minds, the reasons for the Revolution. By imagining the Revolution as a fight between good vs. evil, the colonists created a mythic foundation based on republican virtues rather than political disobedience. According to Sarah Purcell, Revolutionary war memories began as a culture of republicanism created during and after the Revolution. Purcell maintains that this republicanism came to encompass an entire

---

<sup>33</sup> Ray Raphael, *Founding Myths*, (New York: The New Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>34</sup> Jill Lepore, *The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party's Revolution and the Battle over American History* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010), 14.

<sup>35</sup> Sarah Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice and Memory in Revolutionary America* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 3.



set of values in American life, “self-sacrifice, military heroism, love of liberty, benevolence, fear of centralized power, and reverence for the common good.”<sup>36</sup> In the process, Americans created a national mythology for themselves that often excluded women, African Americans, and poorer white men who as a consequence are not seen as possessing those values, or at least not to the same extent as white, property-holding militiamen.

It must be noted, however, that this interest in military heroes focused primarily on the individuals who possessed the qualities Purcell describes and considers them in the aggregate only in such abstractions as Minutemen, yet as will be demonstrated later in this study, such abstractions are generally couched in the language of individualism and voluntarism. This is perfectly in keeping with the general suspicion that Revolutionary era people held toward military power. Again, this will be discussed more fully later in this study, but for the moment it is worth noting that the apparent contradiction between the celebration of military men and denigration of military power lay at the heart of republican ideology and is one reason why the memories of the Revolutionary War became so important during the period of the early republic. By creating glorious and romanticized images of the Revolution, government officials and the people themselves were able to create ideological rallying points for a cohesive nation without having to resort to military power to ensure that cohesiveness.<sup>37</sup> Historian Bernard Bailyn has also noted the central role that the principles of republicanism have played in the formation of American national identity. Bailyn notes that republicanism represented,

a faith...that a better world than any that had ever been known could be built where authority was distrusted and held in constant scrutiny; where the status of men flowed from their achievements and from their personal qualities, not from

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 3.

distinctions ascribed to them at birth; and where the use of power over the lives of men was jealously guarded and severely restricted.<sup>38</sup>

Bailyn's perception of eighteenth century republicanism and what it represented to the colonists is a mirror image of the popular perceptions of American national identity. Eighteenth century Americans as well as modern day Americans understood the significance of the memories of the Revolutionary War in creating a sense of cohesion and have helped organize American thought and action.

In America's quest for self-recognition and our desire to explain the United States' origins, motives, and actions to those who may criticize the Revolutionary generation or question their motives, there has been a consistent effort to espouse republican ideals in almost all aspects of American life. National collectivity for the post-revolutionary era among such a diverse population proved to be difficult, thus leading to the creation of a mythic heritage of heroism, bravery, and love of liberty. In an attempt to justify the Revolution in both the hearts and minds of American citizens, the new republic had to be not just different, but the antithesis of those against whom they were fighting during the Revolution. At the heart of this mythic heritage and national identity was the ideal Republican citizen.

The question then becomes what was, and continues to be that ideal Republican citizen? Richard Kohn believes that throughout much of the history of the United States, Americans have deeply believed that how they behaved in battle reflected their national character and virtue as a nation; as a result, beginning with the period leading up to the American Revolution, there was a systematic effort on the part of colonial leaders to produce an image of the common soldier, both American and British as a way of establishing the identity of the ideal Republican citizen in

---

<sup>38</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 319.

opposition to those against whom they were fighting.<sup>39</sup> In his look at the American military, Kohn notes,

the American soldier has been a symbol, a political and cultural artifact for a nation diverse in culture, uncertain in unity, and concerned through much of its history with proving its superiority to the rest of the world. Of necessity has been anonymity, which has further muddied the truth and contributed to the making of myths.”<sup>40</sup>

The earliest acts of creation in making this image must be understood in the political context in which they occurred. In his work, *The Revolutionary Histories*, Lester Cohen states, “accompanying the American Revolution was a historical revolution, a radical transformation of assumptions and ideas about the nature and meaning of history and about man’s location in the historical process both as participants in events and as interpreter and shaper of them.”<sup>41</sup> This historical revolution required not only logical legitimation—legitimation provided by both Whig and Enlightenment political theorists—but also emotional legitimation that could only be provided by carefully crafting sentimental images of the forces involved, by personifying the abstractions of political conflict into images that could soothe troubled consciences.

The historical record clearly indicates that the Continental Army “drew its soldiers from the poorest third of society and contained disproportionate numbers of drifters, servants, British deserters, captured loyalists, convicts, and drafted substitutes.”<sup>42</sup> It is undoubtedly true that rank and file soldiers have more often than not been drawn from the lowest ranks in the social hierarchy; however, in the initial writing of the history of the Revolutionary War it was necessary to craft something else if the emotional legitimation process was to be effective.

---

<sup>39</sup> Richard Kohn, “The Social History of the American Soldier: A Review and Prospectus for Research” *The American Historical Review* (1981), 553-567.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 556.

<sup>41</sup> Lester Cohen, *The Revolutionary Histories* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 15.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 557.

Depicting the soldiers of the Revolution as the dregs of society would have been detrimental to the creation of a national identity which is based upon the ideology of American 'exceptionalism'. Richard Kohn acknowledges the role that the romanticized image of the American soldier plays in our national consciousness: "As many historians have long known, the record casts grave doubt on some of our most cherished folklore."<sup>43</sup> Yet he tempers his rejection of the myth, going on to say: "But to portray the American soldier as a self-interested, blue-collar scoundrel motivated solely by money and survival, interested primarily in drink and in the pleasures of the flesh, liable to desert or succumb to his captor at the first opportunity, and kept in check only by the threat of army punishment would be as gross a distortion as the myth of the virtuous patriot."<sup>44</sup> Consequently, Kohn and others accept that much of what we know about the common soldier of the Revolution is inaccurate, but not absolutely fixed.

It has been noted by numerous scholars that in the formation of national identities, there are formative periods in a nation's history that are critical to the crafting of that identity. Undoubtedly, the Revolutionary Era serves as that formative period for the United States. Unlike other countries, the United States' identity is based upon an ideology as opposed to a common lineage, language, or religion. This ideology was based on the principles of Republicanism, which for the purposes of this study will be defined as a political ideology that is a blend of Roman, Renaissance, and English models and ideas which emphasizes civic duty, liberty, and unalienable rights.

---

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 560.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 560.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PROFESSIONAL HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION: BREAKING THE STEREOTYPES OR PERPETUATING MYTHS?

In order to analyze the image of the soldiers in the American Revolution and reasons as to why the popular images have not changed over time, one must look at the overall trends in the professional historiography of the Revolution and determine whether there is any correlation between the professional historical literature and the image of the soldiers in popular or collective memory. In analyzing the transformations in the historiography of the American Revolution it is seen that some historians have contributed to Revolutionary mythologies while others have deconstructed many of our national tales.

In general, the historiography of the American Revolution can be broken into six distinct schools of thought; the “Whigs” of the nineteenth century, the “Progressives” in the early twentieth century and the “Imperial” school which co-existed with the Progressives, the “Consensus” school of the mid-twentieth century, the “Neo-Whigs” of the later twentieth century to the present day and the “Left” of the later twentieth century to today. In each of these schools of thought, it is clear that the historians’ writings were influenced not only by contemporary historians, but also their own views and political ideologies as well as the prevailing *zeitgeist* of their times.

The first histories of the American Revolution written during the late 1700s and early 1800s were told as grand narratives; a struggle between the forces of liberty (America) and those

of corruption and greed (Britain). Scholars have noted the importance of formative periods to "collective memory," the body of beliefs about a nation's past that informs its present and future.<sup>45</sup> Sociologist Barry Schwartz argued in 1982 that the most significant moment in any society's past is its beginning, a period marked by "the magic, attraction and prestige of origins."<sup>46</sup> The first written histories of the Revolution were written by those who lived through the years of the conflict and were sometimes witnesses to the events described in their writings. There were two types of writings that emerged during this time: those written by loyalists and those (which receive most of the attention) written by individuals referred to as patriot historians.

Although they do not usually get included in the early Revolutionary history category, there were a number of Loyalist histories that were produced, and although each was distinct and often times written for self-serving purposes, all of these works centered on the idea that the Revolution was nothing more than a conspiracy among the colonists to obtain independence at any cost. Thomas Hutchinson's, *The History of the Province of Massachusetts Bay from 1749-1774 Comprising a Detailed Narrative of the Origin and Early Stages of the American Revolution* differed from both of these groups and provided a somewhat balanced history of the colonies.<sup>47</sup> Although he was clearly a loyalist and never critical of the British crown in public, Hutchinson did not write a one-sided account of the events that occurred leading up to the war. He did not subscribe to the belief that there was a systematic plan to overthrow the British government nor did he believe that the British were without fault. It can be argued that of all the early histories told of the Revolutionary era, Hutchinson's provided the most historically accurate, despite the fact it is often overshadowed by those written by the "patriot historians." It

---

<sup>45</sup> Janice Hume, "Building an American Story: How Early American Historians Used Press Sources to Remember the Revolution," *Journalism History* 37:3 (Fall 2011), 172.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas Hutchinson, *The History of the Province of Massachusetts Bay*, 3 Vols (Cambridge, MA; 1936).

is for this reason that scholars such as Bernard Bailyn have referred to Hutchinson as “America’s most accomplished historian.”<sup>48</sup>

Contrary to either loyalist or neutral assessments, the patriot interpretation portrays the American Revolution as a movement for liberty in opposition to British tyranny. The first proper histories of the Revolution were, William Gordon’s *History of the Rise, Progress and Establishment of the Independence of the United States of America* in 1788, David Ramsay’s *History of the American Revolution* in 1789, and Mercy Otis Warren’s *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the Revolution* in 1805. Although there were other works prior to these, such as James Murray’s *Impartial History of the Present War in America* and John Andrew’s *History of the Late War*, these authors were condemned for their excessive bias and questionable facts and are thus dismissed from the official historiography, a point that is quite ironic inasmuch as modern scholars view all of the early histories as being based upon erroneous documents. Despite the fact that Gordon and Ramsay were highly respected during their time, and even by some modern nationalist historians, their works also lacked true objective and factual analysis. In *Causes and Consequences of the American Revolution*, Esmond Wright notes that Ramsay and Gordon, “drew heavily from the Annual Register, without acknowledgment and changed indirect speech to direct.” He furthers his argument by claiming that both writers’ purposes were frankly “partisan and patriotic.”<sup>49</sup> And while each of these individuals claimed to have based their historical narratives on the “best materials, whether oral, written, or printed,”<sup>50</sup> it must be noted that the *Annual Register*, first written in 1758 and edited by Edmund Burke for

---

<sup>48</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), xii.

<sup>49</sup> Esmond Wright, *Causes and Consequences of the American Revolution*, (Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1966), 16.

<sup>50</sup> William Gordon, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Establishment of the Independent United States of America: including an account of the late war, vol. 1* (London, 1788).

over thirty years, has been criticized for its biased, Whig-oriented view on historical events.<sup>51</sup>

Therefore, the reliance on this source for primary materials has led some scholars to question the legitimacy of their narratives. For Ramsay and Gordon and many of the other historians of this time, writing about the Revolution was a chance to address the many ‘sins of the crown’ and how those sins lead to the fall of empires.

These works proved to be significant in helping to cement national unity during the time when the United States Constitution was just being implemented. By reminding Americans of the hardships they shared during the Revolution, they were contributing—in essence creating—a sense of social cohesion. Mercy Otis Warren, who was an active Revolutionary, differed from Ramsay and Gordon in that she wrote from an anti-federalist point of view; her work has also been criticized as being written with a distinct agenda which sought to revive public virtue in the post-Revolutionary generation. As Ray Raphael points out in the conclusion of *Founding Myths*,

The prominent early historians of the Revolution were similar in three respects. First, while professing to seek only the “truth,” they consciously promulgated civic values, promoting “America” as the embodiment” of republican ideals. Second, they all borrowed liberally from the Annual Register and Third, none of the early historians was as successful as he or she had hoped, for every person who read their ponderous works, scores of others heard about the glorious deeds of the original patriots by word of mouth.<sup>52</sup>

Indeed Raphael is correct in his assertion that the people were much more influenced by orations delivered at public commemorations such as the popular July 4<sup>th</sup> celebrations than by the written history of the time. In a book titled, *Knowledge is Power: The diffusion of Information in Early America*, Richard Brown analyzes the types of information that the diverse population of the

---

<sup>51</sup> Mark Boatner, “The Revolution: Some Misconceptions” *American History Illustrated* 3(4) (1968): 18.

<sup>52</sup> Ray Raphael, *Founding Myths*, (New York: The New Press, 2004), 252-253.



colonies craved as well as how they acquired this knowledge.<sup>53</sup> Through his study of the intersections between personal and social experiences, Brown demonstrates that the political mobilization that occurred before and during the American Revolution was dependent upon the circulation of printed material, but more importantly on face to face interactions and public oratory.<sup>54</sup> In fact Brown states that, “in the eighteenth century, printed matter seemed to be an imported luxury only available to a wealthy few.”<sup>55</sup> Although the exact percentages of “literacy” in the colonies remain ambiguous due to the fact that statistics are based purely on counting written signatures and marks on documents, most scholars agree that it was not until the early nineteenth century that the majority of Anglo-Americans were able to both read and write.<sup>56</sup> Brown also highlights the regional differences that existed among the percentages of those who were literate. Specifically, he found that the colonies north of Chesapeake Bay were more literate than the southern colonies although in the years leading up to the Revolution, both regions seemed to show patterns of increasing literacy over time.<sup>57</sup> The fact that literacy was on the rise in the colonies in the years leading up to the Revolution can be seen in the profusion of printed matter. Brown contends that the increase in printed material was not merely the result of increased literacy, but more so the cultural demands of the time.<sup>58</sup> Brown’s thesis is supported by the rapid emergence of secular oratory as well as printed material. Before the Revolutionary era, public oratory was used primarily for religious purposes, however, the discontent with British authority served as a catalyst for increasing numbers of public orations that became as

---

<sup>53</sup> Richard Brown, *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Power in Early America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 272.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

widespread as printed material.<sup>59</sup> Thus in the period during which memory of the American Revolution was being formed, oral transmission largely trumped the printed transmission of memory-shaping impressions, though these early written histories would have a significant impact later in the nineteenth century when literacy became more widespread.

Despite the best efforts of patriotic historians and orators, the American population viewed the Revolutionary War veterans with as much suspicion as they did the British Army in the period immediately after the Revolution. The reason for this suspicion was twofold. On one hand, the anti-army ideology transferred from England still permeated American's perceptions of the soldiers. On the other hand, and more immediately, an incident known as the Newburgh Conspiracy, which occurred in the years immediately following the revolution, enhanced the already popular distrust of standing armies. The Newburgh Conspiracy occurred in 1783, nearly two years after the fighting had ended at Yorktown. The conspiracy consisted of a group of officers within the Continental Army who were angered at Congress' repeatedly broken promise of addressing issues involving back pay for the soldiers and threatening to conduct a military coup. The conspiracy was put down by commander in chief, George Washington, after a moving speech given to the group of officers who were contemplating the coup. Although a military takeover was stopped through Washington's efforts, the event did pressure Congress to take measures to address the grievances of the soldiers such as giving officers who were eligible for half pay for life, five years of full pay and enlisted men four months of pay upon separation.<sup>60</sup> Nonetheless, despite the positive outcome of the conspiracy, men in Congress and even Washington himself became increasingly aware of the possible threat posed by standing armies,

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Richard Kohn, "The Inside History of the Newburgh Conspiracy: America and the Coup d' Etat," *William and Mary Quarterly* 27, no. 2, Third Series (April, 1970), 218.

and this view can be seen in the debates over the ratification of the Constitution which shall be discussed later in this study.

By the time the War of 1812 began, this suspicion of the Continental soldiers and of armies in general had changed as a result of political motivations and writings. Between 1800 and 1812 both Republicans and Federalists glorified veterans to arouse patriotism. And when Warren and Ramsay died in 1814 and 1815 respectively, it marked the end of an era in terms of the professional historiography of the Revolution. Speaking of Ramsay's death, Gwenda Morgan states that "the world was changing: romanticism and sectionalism were replacing Enlightenment ideals and the nationalists of his generation. Despite continuities, independence necessitated a new political and intellectual agenda: to define American identity, culture, political ideology and institutions within the framework of something new—an American nation-state."<sup>61</sup>

During the 1830s in the midst of American expansionism, many scholars chose to write a version of our history that celebrated democratic values born out of the Revolution and, during this formative period in our nation's history, actually create the idea of American 'exceptionalism.' One of the prime examples of these writings, also known as the 'later Whig' writings, can be seen in the multi-volume work by George Bancroft.<sup>62</sup> Bancroft, a Jacksonian democrat who adhered to the ideas of manifest destiny and laissez-faire government, is referred to by some as the "father of American history" as he set new standards for research and writing in American history.<sup>63</sup> In her biography of George Bancroft titled, *George Bancroft: The Intellectual as a Democrat*, Lilian Handlin describes how he was one of the few historians to be

---

<sup>61</sup> Gwenda Morgan, *Debate on the American Revolution* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2007), 39.

<sup>62</sup> George Bancroft, *History of the United States of America, from the discovery of the American continent*. (Boston: Little, Brown, and company, 1874-78).

<sup>63</sup> Harvey Wish, *The American Historian: A Social-Intellectual History of the Writing of the American Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 70.

actively involved in partisan activities during his lifetime while most other historians consistently spoke of their disdain toward party politics.<sup>64</sup> The central theme that runs throughout Bancroft's works is that the United States of America was the product of divine providence and that the Revolution was a search for national liberty. This has been termed the nationalist interpretation. To him and others who came of age during the patriotic fervor that followed the War of 1812, the Revolution and its foundations, including the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, marked the height of Western civilization. According to Handlin, Bancroft summed up the exceptionalist vision of America:

A nation that was exempt from the normal processes of historical change and decay. In this vision, by virtue of its closeness to nature, the United States could remain in a state of perpetual innocence and simplicity, untouched by the social forces that had corrupted the Old World.<sup>65</sup>

It is acknowledged by many that it is Bancroft's fervent nationalism that still dominates popular memory today, despite changes in the professional historiography that began in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>66</sup>

There were a small number of individuals, however, who took issue with Bancroft's nationalist interpretation. Individuals such as Richard Hildreth maintained that,

Of centennial sermons and Fourth-of-July orations, whether professedly such or in the guise of history, there are more than enough. It is due to our fathers and ourselves, it is due to truth and philosophy, to present for once, on the historic stage, the founders of our American nation unbedaubed with patriotic rouge, wrapped up in no fine-spun cloaks of excuses and apology...The result of their labors is eulogy enough; their best apology is to tell their story exactly as it was.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> Lilian Handlin, *George Bancroft: The Intellectual as a Democrat* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984).

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 398.

<sup>67</sup> Richard Hildreth, *The History of the United States of America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1880; first published in 1849) in Ray Raphael, *Founding Myths* (New York: The New Press, 2004), 45.

It is at this point in time in which there appears to have been a parting of ways between the popular and academic histories. Although Hildreth's work was not successful financially or popularly supported, the historical community that was just beginning to take shape viewed the work differently. Ray Raphael states that "the American Historical Association, founded in 1884, saw no need for "Fourth-of-July orations...in the guise of history." The history profession tried to remove itself from the peddling of patriotism."<sup>68</sup> This is the first point in time in which a true gulf develops between the Revolution in popular history/memory and the professional history.

Historiographically speaking, beginning in the early twentieth century, the Whig view began to lose ground. From 1909-1920, a new type of historian challenged the view that the revolution was all about benevolence and progress. As the United States became a great industrial power in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, concerns arose that the Revolutionary ideas of equality and liberty were failing. Political and corporate corruption as well as unsafe working and living conditions in overcrowded cities which were characteristic of the Gilded Age in the United States, influenced various segments of the population to push for reform. American historians were also influenced by this movement. These historians, referred to as Progressives, argued that the revolution was driven much more by economic factors than patriotism. The historical literature was characterized not by war and personalities but by social and economic development and class divisions. One of the earliest and most influential of the Progressives was Fredrick Jackson Turner. In his work "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," initially presented at the 1893 meeting of the American Historical Association, Turner put forth what has been termed the "frontier thesis."<sup>69</sup> This thesis challenged

---

<sup>68</sup> Ray Raphael, *Founding Myths* (New York: The New Press, 2004),17.

<sup>69</sup> Fredrick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" in *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1921).

the providential character of American history and stated that American exceptionalism, which includes American individualism, perseverance, and notions of liberty, were directly related to geographic factors, specifically, the frontier experience. He maintained that it was the presence of virtually free land and desire for westward expansion that influenced the American spirit. He also noted that by 1890, the frontier in America had ceased to exist and that the democratic inclinations fostered by it would face significant challenges, especially by the growth of a capitalist oligarchy or the rise of socialism.<sup>70</sup>

Charles Beard, another of the most influential historians in the first half of the twentieth century, was heavily influenced by Turner's insights and went on to describe the economic implications of the Constitution and the American Revolution as a social revolution.. His *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution* (1913) was one of the first pieces of literature to challenge the Whig interpretation of American history. For almost forty years, Beard's economic interpretation dominated the historical literature. It became accepted that the Founding Fathers acted out of "selfish class interests" when drafting the Constitution.<sup>71</sup> Another Progressive historian, Arthur M. Schlesinger, also argued in *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution* (1918) that the economic interests of merchants were what pushed the colonies toward revolution. Other Progressive historians such as Carl Becker, who studied history under Turner, and John Franklin Jameson noted that the war assumed the dimensions of an American civil war, pitting the conservative sections of society against the radical, and that

---

<sup>70</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, "Contributions of the West to American Democracy," *Atlantic Monthly Magazine*, January 1903 <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/turner/chapter9.html> (accessed 5/2/2012).

<sup>71</sup> Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York, 1913).

the victory of the radicals opened the door for changes and led to the democratization of the country.<sup>72</sup>

It would not be until the 1950s that the economic and historical academic communities rushed to critique Beard's and the Progressives' analysis and offer their own; each claiming a more developed understanding and interpretation. In the last fifty years, some of the more outspoken academics on the subject have included scholars such as Gordon Wood, Forrest McDonald, Shlomo Slonim, and Robert McGuire, who have each rejected the idea of a class-based Revolution and have instead projected a Revolution preoccupied with political questions and ideas.<sup>73</sup> Writing during the Cold War in the period immediately following World War II, this new group of historians, referred to as conservatives, neo-Whigs, or the Consensus school, reasserted the colonists' emphasis on liberty and constitutional rights. During this period in our nation's history it seems as though many historians felt the need to articulate American history in a new and distinctive way, and any questioning of the motives of the founding fathers became almost un-American.<sup>74</sup> In his look at the historiography of the revolution Jack Greene notes,

The neo-Whig emphasis has been upon immediate issues and individual actions rather than upon long-range determinants or underlying conditions. They have sought not to write an epic of the American Revolution but to define issues, fix responsibilities, and measure the impact of events and policies. It is their contention that the Revolution was essentially a conservative movement, a defense of American rights and liberties against provocations by the mother country.<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>72</sup> Carl L. Becker, *Everyman His Own Historian*, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 37, No. 2, (Jan. 1932) and John Franklin Jameson, *The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement* (New Jersey, 1926 reprinted Princeton, 1967).

<sup>73</sup> Joseph Silvia, "The Debate over an Economic Interpretation of the Constitution: Where has Beard taken us and where are we after McGuire's "New" Interpretation?" 2007 Available at: [http://works.bepress.com/joseph\\_silvia/2](http://works.bepress.com/joseph_silvia/2).

<sup>74</sup> Alfred Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party*, (Boston; Beacon Press, 1999), ix.

<sup>75</sup> Jack Greene, "The Flight from Determinism: A Review of the Recent Literature on the Coming of the American Revolution," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, LXI (1962), 237.

Some of the most well-known historians of the time are Edmund Morgan, who wrote *The Stamp Act Crisis* (1953) and *The Birth of the Republic* (1956), and Bernard Knollenberg, who is best known for *Origin of the American Revolution* (1960). With both of these writers and others who can be placed in the neo-Whig category, the national pride in the Revolution and its achievements and significance are at the forefront of their writings. These historians relied heavily on the pamphlet literature of the Revolutionary period to posit the idea that there was much more ideological cohesion among the colonists than Progressive historians had given them credit for. They dismissed the Progressive idea that there was considerable class divisions in the colonies and that the primary motivation for the Revolution was economic. Among the neo-Whigs there was a general consensus on the egalitarian and democratic character of the colonial Americans, and they characterized the Revolution as the defense of traditional rights against tyranny and oppression. In this body of historical literature, we see the archetypal citizen-soldier reemerge as the primary defender of liberty and republican principles.

Taking a different approach than those within the consensus school was Bernard Bailyn, who was the first historian to look at the role of ideology in the outbreak of the Revolution. In his work, *Ideological Origins of the Revolution*, Bailyn argues that republican ideology was at the core of the American belief system; this differs from the consensus school argument in that Bailyn maintains that this republican ideology was transferred directly from the classical libertarian traditions from Britain, whereas the Consensus school maintained that the republican impulses of Americans was a direct result of their independent-minded character.

Rather than focusing on ideology, many historians during the 1960s and 1970s began to shift their attention towards different aspects of the Revolution. These approaches have been



referred to as the New Left and the New Social histories. Each of these academic movements had as a central focus the switching of attention to the common people: history from the bottom up.<sup>76</sup>

The term New Left is used to describe the group of historians who rejected the consensus school of historiography. These writings began to appear during the 1960s in an America which in the background was experiencing the civil rights movement, anti-war protests over Vietnam, and countercultural protests by the younger generations. Building on the work of the earlier progressive historians, the New Left analyzed the structures of colonial society and reaffirmed the popular dimension of the Revolution, thus rebelling against the Consensus School and the notion of the Revolution being a case of the triumph of liberty over tyranny. The most prominent consensus historians that the New Left was in rebellion against include individuals such as Richard Hofstadter, Louis Hartz, Daniel Boorstin, and Edmund Morgan.<sup>77</sup> Although the New Left historians had little to say about the Revolution itself, they did examine the economic problems in the colonies and the role of the mobs which depicted the resentment of both American and British elitists.<sup>78</sup> The New Left historians included two main groups; one associated with William Appleman Williams and Fred Harvey Harrington, and the other group associated with Jesse Lemisch and Staughton Lynd.<sup>79</sup> Although the terms New Left and counter-progressives describe the works of those two groups of historians best, the broader designation of 'new social history' has been often times used to discuss under a single heading these works that appeared between the mid-1960s and the beginning of the 1980s.<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> Alfred Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party*, (Boston; Beacon Press, 1999), ix.

<sup>77</sup> Willard Hogeboom, "The New Left and the Revision of American History", *The History Teacher* Vol.2, No.1 (Nov., 1968), 51.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>79</sup> Gwenda Morgan, *Debate on the American Revolution* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2007), 81.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

Following the lead of the European social historians, particularly the *Annales* School founded in France by Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch which became prominent immediately after World War II, scholars began using new methodologies to analyze the social conditions and behaviors of ordinary individuals who took part in the Revolution. This form of writing which became popular in the 1980s is referred to as the “New Social History” which is distinct from the New Left. In his study of this New Social History, James A. Henretta notes that although these historians did not categorically reject previous standards of historical research methods, “their own work represents a fundamental reorientation of many of the traditional concerns of the discipline.”<sup>81</sup> Specific topics studied in this new social history included the characteristics of America’s rank and file soldiers, their families and towns, the operations of the local government, and relations between the military and civil institutions just to name a few. In reference to the rank and file soldiers of the Revolution there is a group of individuals who produced a series of influential studies of the specific groups of soldiers. These individuals included John Sellers, James Kirby Martin, Edward Papenfuse, Mark Lender, and Gregory Stiverson. Basing their research on empirical and demographic data, and utilizing new research tools made practical for the first time by the ready availability of computer technology, these individuals revealed that many of the enlisted soldiers were young, landless, and poor. This finding de-romanticized the image of the embattled farmer. Prior to this new social history, the Revolutionary soldier was still assumed to have been the yeoman farmer that Emerson had idealized a century before in his famous poem, “Concord Hymn.”

The new social history of the common soldier of the Revolution has sparked an intense historiographical debate about the character of the American Revolutionary army. The debate

---

<sup>81</sup> James Henretta, “Social History as Lived and Written,” *The American Historical Review*, (1979),1294.

first arose when some of the new social historians went beyond describing the social composition of the soldiers and made inferences about the soldiers' motivations for serving in the army.

These individuals, including Edward Papenfuse and Gregory Stiverson, have concluded that because of the low socioeconomic status of the soldiers, their primary reasons for enlisting were economic rather than based on a sense of duty or patriotism.<sup>82</sup> Other scholars have agreed that Papenfuse and Stiverson are correct in their assertions regarding the motivations of the soldiers.

John Sellers, a historian that has also studied the social composition of the soldiers has stated:

I am not impressed by the patriotic fervor of the privates. I think that they acted overwhelmingly out of self-interest. I do not believe that they really fought with a true understanding of independence.<sup>83</sup>

Not all historians however, have sided with those who claim that the Revolutionary soldiers' main motivation was pay. One of these individuals is Charles Royster, who looks further into the character and motivations of the Revolutionary soldiers in *A Revolutionary People at War*, has found that their economic status was not necessarily determinative of their army service.<sup>84</sup>

Royster asserts that to infer motivation from statistics leads to a misleading dichotomy between self-interest and revolutionary ideals as motives for army service. Royster explicitly stated his views towards the conclusions of Papenfuse, Stiverson, and Lenders when he stated:

The author's recurrent assumption that soldiers must have served either revolutionary ideals or self-interest exclusively is at least as schematic and improbable as the nineteenth-century rhetoric that these scholars have discredited.<sup>85</sup>

Royster argues, rightfully so, that none of the authors provide the evidence for the assumption that poverty and revolutionary ideals were mutually exclusive. Richard Kohn also supports

---

<sup>82</sup> Papenfuse and Stiverson, "Smallwood's Recruits," *William and Mary Quarterly*, (1973), 119.

<sup>83</sup> John R. Sellers, "Common Soldier," in Underdal, ed., *Military History Symposium* in Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 373.

<sup>84</sup> Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1979).

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 374.

Royster's contention that it is wrong to characterize the soldiers as being motivated merely by self-interest. Kohn argues that, "to portray the American soldier as a self-interested blue-collar scoundrel motivated solely by money and survival would be as gross a distortion a myth as the myth of the virtuous patriot."<sup>86</sup>

As a result of the difficulty involved in inferring motivation, other historians have been more conservative in making claims regarding the reasons as to why soldiers served in the Revolutionary War. Instead of arguing that the rank and file soldier's main motivation was economic, they have simply highlighted the similarities between the Continental Army and the British. An example of this can be found in the thorough studies of Mark Lender. Lender likens the Continental army to other armies of the eighteenth century, including the British. By likening the American army to the British, the idea of the American army as being "exceptional" falls apart. As a result of this inconsistency, some scholars have gone on the offense to dispel such statements including scholars such as Charles Royster.

In reviewing the professional historiography of the Revolution, it is clear that beginning in the period immediately following the Revolution, historians have more often than not contributed to the creation and maintenance of stereotypes in relation to American national identity and the image of the rank and file soldier of the American Revolution. Despite shifts in focus that occurred in the 1960s, including the new left and new social history that have worked towards deconstructing some of the most common myths in American history, it is the Whig and Consensus schools of history that have dominated the historiography of the American Revolution. The Whig and Consensus versions of American history are the ones that are most aligned with the popular memory of the Revolution. The reasons as to why these schools have

---

<sup>86</sup> Richard Kohn, "The Social History of the American Soldier: A Review and Prospectus for Research," *The American Historical Review* Vol. 86, No. 3 (Jun., 1981),560.

more popular support than the new left and social history are complex and will be addressed later in this study.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE ORIGIN OF THE FEAR OF STANDING ARMIES AND THE ROMANTICIZED MILITIA

It is clear that the soldiers of the Revolution are stereotypically viewed as virtuous embattled farmers, an image which seems to fit neatly into the longstanding American militia stereotype. It is necessary, however, to look at the origin of this romanticized stereotype; how did Americans come to view the free holding farmers as the individuals best fit to defend American liberties and how did the regular rank and file soldier of the Revolution come to take on the “virtuous citizen” identity?

It is clear that long before the Revolution there was a common set of mental images among the colonists regarding standing armies and citizen-soldiers. In 1776, Samuel Adams made the following statement regarding standing armies that succinctly expressed the collective attitude towards professional soldiers.

A Standing Army, however necessary it may be at some times, is always dangerous to the Liberties of the People. Soldiers are apt to consider themselves as a Body distinct from the rest of the Citizens. They have their arms always in their hands. Their Rules and their Discipline is severe. They soon become attached to their officers and disposed to yield implicit obedience to their Commands. Such a Power should be watched with a jealous Eye.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>87</sup> To Joseph Warren, Jan. 7, 1776, *Warren-Adams Letters* (Massachusetts Historical Society, Collections LXXII-LXXIII), 197-198.

In order to understand why stereotypes have persisted regarding the images of the soldiers, it is important to fully understand the origin of the ideas involved. In the context of standing armies versus the militia, it is necessary to trace from whence the negative images of standing armies originated and how those ideas were transferred to the American colonies.

In the period leading up to the revolution, Whig ideology permeated the views of what standing armies were like. This ideology was characterized by the view that standing armies were dangerous to liberty and that it should be the property holding citizens, ideally those who owned freehold farms, who should be responsible for defending liberty and personal property. It was a common eighteenth century worldview that only those individuals who owned property could be the true defenders of liberty due to the fact that they were the only ones who had a clear “stake” in the preservation of society, public liberty, and personal property.<sup>88</sup> Richard Kohn, in his look at the history of the American military establishment put it simply, “the origin and fear of standing armies lay in the conjunction of Americans’ own colonial experience and the radical Whig political ideology which was so influential in the way the Revolutionary generation perceived events.”<sup>89</sup> For those Whig ideologues, standing armies represented the ultimate tool of absolute despotism whereas the militia represented liberty.

In place of a standing army, Whig ideologues maintained that it was the militia that should be responsible for the defense of a country. At an oration for the Boston Massacre in 1774, John Hancock captured the collective thoughts about the militia when he said,

---

<sup>88</sup> James Kirby Martin and Mark E. Lender, *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic 1763-1789* (Illinois: Harlan Davidson Inc., 1982), 6-7.

<sup>89</sup> Richard Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, (New York: Free Press, 1975), 3.

From a well regulated militia we have nothing to fear; their interest is the same with that of the state...They do not jeopardize their lives for a master who considers them only as the instruments of his ambition....<sup>90</sup>

In theory, the militia system was to be based on universal obligation which included all of the “able-bodied” males, generally ages 16 to 60.<sup>91</sup> These men were expected to arm themselves and attend intermittent trainings. If the need arose, they were to report immediately to their local unit leader. Early on in colonial history, the militia in each of the colonies was fairly active as a result of the threat posed by the Native Americans. However, as time wore on and colonial life became safer, the militia “system” slowly began waning. The fact that the colonies were becoming much more urbanized also played a role in the deterioration of the militia system. Most militia units were not well adapted to an urban lifestyle. This can especially be seen in the densely populated seaboard regions where the militia service became much more ceremonial than a military function.<sup>92</sup>

In *Eagle and Sword*, Richard Kohn points out that “except in dire emergencies, no colony used the militia as it was organized on paper. Instead, the government usually called for volunteers or drafted quotas from various companies.”<sup>93</sup> In fact, even as early as the mid-seventeenth century, various colonies began drafting semi-regular forces. However, during the eighteenth century, as armed conflict increased in the colonies, it was the British regulars who carried most of the defense burden and many English officials criticized the militiamen in the colonies as being poorly trained and unwilling to serve. Despite its lack of efficiency, the colonists could not bear the thought of ridding themselves of the militia system; the concept of

---

<sup>90</sup> Boston Massacre Oration, March 5, 1774, in Peter Edes, ed., *Orations to Commemorate the [Boston Massacre]*(Boston, 1785), 51.

<sup>91</sup> Richard Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, (New York: Free Press, 1975), 6.

<sup>92</sup> Allan Millett, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America* (New York: Free Press, 1994), 5.

<sup>93</sup> Richard Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, (New York: Free Press, 1975), 7.



universal obligation had become deeply ingrained in colonial society and by the late eighteenth century the militia represented the antithesis of a militaristic and corrupt standing army.

Denunciation of standing armies and praise of citizen-soldiers can be traced back to early sixteenth century Florence with the writings of Niccolo Machiavelli. In his classic, *The Prince* (1513) Machiavelli warned, “that no state is safe unless it has its own arms... Your own arms are those composed of your subjects or citizens or dependents, all others are either mercenaries or auxiliaries.”<sup>94</sup> He highly condemned mercenaries and argued in the *Art of War*, that princes who relied on mercenaries would always have to be engaged in war or risk rebellion from the army after they became unemployed due to peace. Machiavelli tried time and again to implement a national militia system in Italy, as he saw mercenaries as “disunited, ambitious, without discipline, faithless, bold amongst friends and cowardly amongst enemies.”<sup>95</sup> Machiavelli’s ideas were highly controversial with the Catholic Church and they immediately condemned his writings. Protestant England then became the perfect breeding ground for this type of thought and Machiavelli’s ideas spread rapidly throughout England, so much so in fact, that by 1588 his *Art of War* had been translated into English and had undergone three printings.<sup>96</sup>

Beginning in the 1620s England began a tumultuous battle over the existence of an army. Officially, England had no standing army until the New Model Army was created in 1645. This army was created to win the Civil War and then kept on to help protect the commonwealth.<sup>97</sup> However, although the New Model Army was different than other standing armies, it was not without its problems, thus evoking hostility toward the military. Individuals across the political

---

<sup>94</sup> Pocock, “Machiavelli, Harrington, and English Political Ideologies in the Eighteenth Century,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Series, 22 (1965), 566.

<sup>95</sup> Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince and Discourses* (Mod. Lib. ed 1950) (1513), 44-45.

<sup>96</sup> William S. Fields, “The Third Amendment and the Issue of the Maintenance of Standing Armies: A Legal History,” *The American Journal of Legal History*, (1991), 407.

<sup>97</sup> Lois Schwoerer, *No Standing Armies: The Anti-Military Ideology in 17th century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 2-3.

spectrum expressed fear towards the New Model Army. One of the causes of this apprehension was in part due to the social composition of the ranks. This army was created with the intent of developing a non-aristocratic officer corps, and promotions were given on the basis of ability, which, as Lois Schwoerer points out, was a “radical and innovative policy.”<sup>98</sup> Another cause for concern apart from the composition of the army was its size. Although the numbers fell across the decade, during this time there were more soldiers in England than ever before.<sup>99</sup> “In Parliament and press, arguments were offered that a standing army during peacetime under the authority of the executive was politically dangerous, economically costly, socially menacing, and morally hazardous and that the country should depend for its land defense on the local militia controlled by the gentry.”<sup>100</sup> One tract that was printed in 1648 as an attempt to encourage the disbanding of the New Model Army stated, “if there were no other argument against it, it is enough that it is a thing never used in this kingdome.”<sup>101</sup> It was only after the Glorious Revolution of 1689 that Parliament not only gained control of the army but also implemented a yearly mutiny act and annual budget to keep the army under its control.

The military controversy surrounding the newly established army as well as the subsequent acts by Parliament in reference to their control of that army, led to the development of a wide range of anti-army ideology and although Machiavelli’s writings themselves were influential among the English people, the greatest impact came from those writers who utilized the ideas of Machiavelli and applied them to the seventeenth century. Libertarian political writers such as James Harrington elaborated on the ideas of Machiavelli and negative experience with Oliver Cromwell’s New Model Army to advocate the image of the citizen-soldier. In the

---

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>101</sup> *The Peaceable Militia or the Cause and Cure of this Late and Present Warre* (London, 1648), 2.

*Commonwealth of Oceana*, written in 1656, Harrington wrote a detailed description of what he and other classical republicans believed to be the perfect republican Utopia, a state built upon the principles of liberty and no standing army. Harrington's primary thesis was that no nation could maintain its liberty and maintain a standing army simultaneously. In this work, Harrington set out to offer an alternative to the standing army that he hoped would be adopted by his countrymen. This alternative included placing the defense of the nation in the hands of the citizens; the amount of their military obligation would be proportionate to their level of wealth, but all citizens were expected to serve.<sup>102</sup> Harrington's work provided many other writers with an intellectual foundation that linked the subject of arms to power and oppression.<sup>103</sup> As a result of this and other anti-army literature, it has been said that generations of Englishmen and Americans as well were unable to

distinguish the varieties of militarism and military interference in politics or the differences in military institutions. Henceforth, Rome's legions, the Turkish janissaries, and Cromwell's New Model Army would all qualify as 'standing armies', a powerful, emotional phrase so easily understood and so universally accepted that it needed no further definition.<sup>104</sup>

In his study of the effects that ideology played in the outbreak of the American Revolution, Bernard Bailyn argues that, "the ultimate origins of this distinctive ideological strain lay in the radical social and political thought of the English Civil War and of the Commonwealth period; but its permanent form had been acquired at the turn of the seventeenth century and in the early eighteenth century, in the writings of a group of prolific opposition theorists, 'country' politicians and publicists."<sup>105</sup> Bailyn points out that while there were multiple mediums of

---

<sup>102</sup> Lois Schwoerer, *No Standing Armies: The Anti-Military Ideology in 17th century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 66.

<sup>103</sup> Robert Shalhope, "Origins of the Second Amendment," *The Journal of American History*, (1982), 607.

<sup>104</sup> Richard Kohn, *Eagle and Sword* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), 4.

<sup>105</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 34.

written expression that were used in the colonies, such as pamphlets, newspapers, broadsides, almanacs, and magazines, the most widely used medium was the pamphlet. Thousands of pamphlets were produced during the pre-revolutionary era and after concerning the nature of standing armies. In his study of the propaganda of the American Revolution, Philip Davidson states, “the pamphlet, when used to develop the constitutional argument, appealed to the intellectual classes and was the best possible type of propaganda for that purpose.”<sup>106</sup> These pamphlets were booklets consisting “of a few printers’ sheets, folded in various ways so as to make various sizes and number of pages, and sold- the pages stitched together loosely, unbound and uncovered-usually for a shilling or two.”<sup>107</sup> In the colonies, the content of these pamphlets can be grouped into three categories. The first category was written responses to the events of the time period, such as the Stamp Act, Townshend Duties, Tea Party, Coercive Acts, and the Boston Massacre. Each of these events sparked a massive increase in pamphleteering and these writings were filled with political theory.<sup>108</sup> The second category of pamphlets were those that were written as what Bailyn has termed, “chain reacting personal polemics,” which were essentially exchanges between individuals on various controversial issues surrounding the push for Revolution. Anytime a pamphleteer made a daring statement on one of these “sensitive” issues, several rebuttal pamphlets soon followed. Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* for example, was followed not by one or two counter-arguments, but by at least six pamphlets attacking his assertions. The last category of pamphlet was those that recorded orations for events that had occurred, such as the anniversary of the repeal of the Stamp Act and the Boston Massacre.<sup>109</sup> No matter what the purpose of the pamphlets was, it is clear that it was the most significant type of

---

<sup>106</sup> Philip Davidson, *Propaganda and the American Revolution* (North Carolina, University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 210.

<sup>107</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 2.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-6.

literature of the Revolution and ultimately played a role in the shaping of political thoughts surrounding the existence of a standing army in the American colonies.

One pamphleteer in particular, John Trenchard, exemplified the Whig ideology surrounding standing armies and the romanticized militia and is even thought of by some historians as the leader of the pamphleteers.

Trenchard was well qualified by his wide knowledge and able pen to inspire individuals with intellectual and political interests. He was widely read in ancient and modern history and had been profoundly influenced by Machiavelli, Bacon, and Harrington. He was deeply obligated to Robert Molesworth's *An Account of Denmark*, printed in 1693, and drew freely on this history of the Danish revolution in 1660, with its equation of absolutism and paid troops.<sup>110</sup>

In a combined effort with Thomas Gordon, who was also an English political writer, Trenchard began publishing the *Independent Whig*, a weekly publication that focused on promoting Whig ideals. Joseph Addison's play, *Cato*, which chronicled the rise and fall of Rome's last great republican, was influential in creating what Bailyn calls a "catonic" image. In the play, *Cato*, becomes a strong martyr for liberty and for many of the American colonists, their only knowledge of the history of Rome came from watching this play being performed. Thus, a trend developed in the colonies in which the political leaders become obsessed with emulating the "catonic" image. The play also inspired the writing of *Cato's* letters, first published between 1720 and 1723; this was a series of 144 essays published originally in the *London Journal*, later in the *British Journal*. These essays were written by John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon and focused on a variety of issues which included condemning tyranny (and standing armies) and advancing liberty (the citizen-soldier). In one essay in particular Gordon noted,

---

<sup>110</sup> Lois G. Schwoerer, "The Literature of the Standing Army Controversy, 1697-1699," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 28 (1965), 190.

In free Countries, as People work for themselves, so they fight for themselves. Every virtuous freeholder would willingly sacrifice his personal interests, even to the point of death, to defend property and liberties; for if these were lost, “he loses all the Blessings of Life.”<sup>111</sup>

Bailyn notes that both the play “Cato” and the essays, “Cato’s Letters” were central to political theory of the time “in which the career of the half-mythological Roman and the words of the two London journalists merged indistinguishably.”<sup>112</sup> Trenchard also worked closely with Walter Moyle in an attack upon standing armies. In their essays, Trenchard and Moyle continuously reminded readers that no nation that was truly free had soldiers in their cities that received constant pay. They argued that there should be “no difference between the Citizen, the Souldier, and the Husbandman.”<sup>113</sup> The essays of Trenchard, Gordon, and Moyle all put forth similar themes which included opposition to standing armies, dependence upon militias, and support of the armed citizen. Another classical hero who was believed to embody Roman virtues was the Republican, Cincinnatus. Cincinnatus gained fame as a Roman farmer, dictator and consul of the Roman republic, who willingly gave up his power to return back home to his life as a farmer and has been revered throughout history for his humility. In the book, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment*, Garry Wills discusses how influential the image of Cincinnatus was on many of our founders, most importantly George Washington.<sup>114</sup> Wills maintains that the image of Cincinnatus symbolizes early American attitudes towards power and morality.

---

<sup>111</sup> Thomas Gordon, “Cato’s Letter No. 65: Military Virtue produced and Supported by Civil Liberty only” (February 10, 1722).

<sup>112</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 44.

<sup>113</sup> John Trenchard and Walter Moyle, *An Argument Shewing, That a Standing Army Is Inconsistent with a Free Government, and Absolutely Destructive to the Constitution of the English Monarchy* (London, 1697), 7.

<sup>114</sup> Garry Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment* (New York: Doubleday, 1984).

This type of literature was not confined to England; beginning in the late seventeenth century Thomas Hollis, an English radical and philanthropist, sent many of the pamphlets surrounding the anti-army debate as gifts to the Harvard University library. A study of the Harvard library catalog in the 1790s shows that the library was stocked with the writings of Trenchard and his associates.<sup>115</sup> Many of Hollis's contemporaries have even attributed to him, "a share in the political birth of the American Republic which has since almost been forgotten."<sup>116</sup> Reverend Noel Turner, a known Tory had this to say regarding Hollis's contributions of literature to the American colonies:

This Mr. Hollis, it may be proper to say, was a bigotted Whig or Republican; one who mis-spent an ample fortune in paving the way for sedition and revolt in this and the neighboring kingdoms, by dispensing democratical works; and sometimes highly ornamented with daggers, caps of liberty etc... This Hollis, indeed, might be said even to have laid the first train of com-bustibles for the American explosion; he having long ago sent a present of some book or books, to Harvard College in New Cambridge, accompanied by the following curious document:" People of Massachusetts when your country shall be cultivated, adorned like this country and ye shall become elegant, re-fined in civil life-, then, if not before,- 'ware your liberties!"<sup>117</sup>

Not only did Hollis give books demonstrating Whig ideology to Harvard College, but he also routinely had Whig ideological pieces advertised in the press, especially during times of crisis. Political maxims advertised by Hollis included those of Harrington, Trenchard, and Molesworth. According to Bailyn and others who have studied the role that ideology played in the outbreak of the American Revolution, "the seventeenth and early eighteenth-century English

---

<sup>115</sup> Lois G. Schworer, "The Literature of the Standing Army Controversy, 1697-1699," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 28 (1965), 210.

<sup>116</sup> Caroline Robbins, "Strenuous Whig: Thomas Hollis of Lincoln's Inn," *William and Mary Quarterly*, (1950), 407.

<sup>117</sup> J. Nichols, *Illustrations of Literary History* (London, 1830), VI, 157 found in Caroline Robbins, "Strenuous Whig: Thomas Hollis of Lincoln's Inn," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, Vol. 7, No. 3 (July, 1950), 407.

libertarian tradition was the most important intellectual force shaping the thought of the American colonists.”<sup>118</sup>

The American colonists were so inundated with this type of literature in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century that by the time colonial leaders began pushing towards revolution, the image of standing armies was deeply ingrained in the minds of the colonists. Although the anti-army literature was widely available and influential in the colonies, it was the provincial Americans (those who were educated) and provincial leaders who found themselves in the position of opposition as they challenged Britain’s imperial policies.<sup>119</sup> The leaders in turn used this ideology to influence the colonists’ attitudes towards the British Army, who in the eighteenth century served as a perfect example of a regular standing army. Trenchard and Gordon’s writings were quoted time and again in all of the colonial newspapers. Some of the colonial leaders who utilized these principles in their own writings were men such as George Mason, John Allen, James Madison, and Samuel Adams. “It was Joel Barlow, however, who most eloquently articulated the vital role of arms in American republican thought. Barlow firmly believed that one of America's greatest strengths rested in ‘making every citizen a soldier, and every soldier a citizen; not only permitting every man to arm, but obliging him to arm.”<sup>120</sup> Without a doubt, these writings and images constructed by radical Whig writers contributed to the view of standing armies.

In addition to the influence of Whig ideologues via pamphlets and other print sources, the colonists’ own experience with the British army in the years leading up to the revolution was

---

<sup>118</sup> Lois Schwoerer, *No Standing Armies: The Anti-Military Ideology in 17th century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 195-196

<sup>119</sup> James Kirby Martin and Mark E. Lender, *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic 1763-1789* (Illinois: Harlan Davidson Inc., 1982).

<sup>120</sup> Robert Shalhope, “Origins of the Second Amendment,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 69, No. 3 (Dec., 1982), 607.



influential in the way in which Americans perceived standing armies. As Richard Kohn points out in *Eagle and Sword*, it was after 1763 that the British placed several thousand soldiers in the mainland colonies for the first time. Edward Leach, another scholar who has looked at the relationship between the American colonists and the British regulars, acknowledges that during the seventeenth century, the colonists gave little thought to the nature of the British army since their contact with those soldiers was only sporadic and usually for the purpose of delivering a new governor or replenishing supplies.<sup>121</sup> However, as troop presence increased in the colonies, so did the colonists' distaste for them. Leach states, "adding to the popular distaste for such an armed force was the generally bad impression constantly being given by the personnel of the army itself."<sup>122</sup> When tenant riots broke out along some of the Hudson River manors in 1766, the redcoats suppressed them and afterwards looted and destroyed property. This led many Americans to see the "analogy between the British army and the standing army of classical theory... after 1766, incidents of civil-military friction increased steadily; colonial agitation continued and imperial officials called more and more often upon the military for protection and enforcement."<sup>123</sup> Thus it seems that the more contact the colonists had with the soldiers, the more reasons the colonists found to push towards Revolution.

Among these instances of friction between the soldiers and the colonists was the issue of the quartering of the British regulars. One of the first major issues of contention occurred when Parliament passed the Quartering Act in 1765, which stated that colonists had to supply British troops with food, munitions, and barracks. This act of Parliament angered the Americans, particularly because the troops were used to enforce Parliament's new tax policies in the

---

<sup>121</sup> Douglas Edward Leach, *Roots of Conflict: British Armed Forces and Colonial Americans* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 3.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

colonies; the negative effect this had on American sentiment toward the British army and toward professional soldiers in general was profound: “The use of the army in civil affairs convinced many Americans that they would be governed by military force unless they met force with force to maintain the liberties they insisted were rightfully theirs.”<sup>124</sup>

On March 5, 1770, after multiple instances of civil-military disputes, one of the most dramatic events involving the king’s standing military forces occurred in Boston, in an event which would later be named the Boston Massacre. In this incident, British regulars killed five civilians, and the event very quickly became politicized by Whig leaders. Massive funeral orations were held for those who died, and public protests to have the troops removed from the colony began the very next day. The letters, pamphlets, newspaper articles, and orations of American colonial figures like John Adams, Samuel Adams, John Dickinson, Elbridge Gerry, Thomas Jefferson, George Mason, and Josiah Quincy, Jr., stated that no matter what measures were taken to try and control it, a standing army during peacetime would impose on their liberty and was much too dangerous an instrument to experiment with. However, no oration was as vivid as the one delivered by Dr. Joseph Warren in 1772 when he said,

the fatal fifth of March, 1770.... Language is too feeble to paint the emotions of our souls, when our streets were stained with the blood of our brethren; when our ears were wounded by the groans of the dying, and our eyes were tormented with the sight of the mangled bodies of the dead....

After this event the mere presence of soldiers fueled anti-army sentiments. “Their red coats and muskets served to symbolize the suppression of liberty and to infuse anti-standing army ideology with vibrant meaning.”<sup>125</sup> Soon after this event, the breakdown of communication in the empire

---

<sup>124</sup> Merrill Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation: A History of the American Revolution, 1763–1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 668.

<sup>125</sup> James Kirby Martin and Mark E. Lender, *A Respectable Army*, 22.

quickly accelerated and although there was a short period of calm, in 1773 things quickly fell apart. The Coercive Acts of 1774, passed in response to the Boston Tea Party, contained several provisions which upset nearly everyone in the colonies; and it was these provisions which prompted the formation of the first Continental Congress in September 1774.<sup>126</sup> It was truly the mutual venting on the part of the colonials and the British soldiers that became so highly inflammable that rebellion rather than accommodation finally prevailed in 1775.<sup>127</sup>

The points of view of the colonial leaders came to have what Lois Schwoerer describes as a “practical political effect” on the American colonies.<sup>128</sup> Resentment against both the maintenance of a standing army in peacetime and the involuntary quartering of soldiers found expression in the First Continental Congress's Declaration of Resolves of 1774 and in the Declaration of Independence of 1776. The declaration, which listed the grievances against Britain, made several references to the presence of a standing army in the colonies. These references included:

He has kept among us, in times of peace, Standing Armies without the Consent of our legislatures, He has affected to render the Military independent of and superior to the Civil Power.... For quartering large bodies of armed troops among us: For protecting them, by a mock Trial from punishment for any Murders which they should commit on the Inhabitants of these States

Even more displeasing to the colonists, aside from the fact that there were British regulars being kept among them, was the fact that the British government had hired Hessian mercenaries to work alongside the British soldiers. For the colonists, this represented the ultimate “republican

---

<sup>126</sup> James Kirby Martin and Mark E. Lender, *A Respectable Army*, 26.

<sup>127</sup> Douglas Edward Leach, *Roots of Conflict: British Armed Forces and Colonial Americans* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 7.

<sup>128</sup> Lois Schwoerer, *No Standing Armies: The Anti-Military Ideology in 17th century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 197.

nightmare.”<sup>129</sup> In the Declaration of Independence, the outrage over the hiring of Hessian mercenaries can be seen in the charge against King George III which states, “he sent large armies of foreign mercenaries to compleat the works of death, destruction and tyranny...”

In addition to the grievances listed in the Declaration of Independence, hatred of the armies could be seen in other colonial documents. Provisions relating to the maintenance of standing armies were included in the declarations or constitutions adopted by Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Vermont.<sup>130</sup> Although each of these states wrote grievances that expressed similar ideas about the danger of keeping a standing army during peace time, there was not a consensus among the states about the exact nature of the grievance. Certain states such as Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Virginia, and Vermont adopted provisions reflecting the traditional Harringtonian view on standing armies which all basically stated, “as standing armies in the time of peace are dangerous to liberty, they ought not to be kept up.”<sup>131</sup> Other states took a slightly more lenient stance on the issue of standing armies. Maryland, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire took the position that standing armies were dangerous to liberty as well, however they differed from the other states in that instead of arguing for them not to be kept up at all, they added the stipulation that they not be kept up except with the approval of the legislature. It was the Virginia Bill of Rights of 1776 that entirely resembled the Whig view of standing armies and militia with its notation, “That a well-regulated militia, composed of the body of the people, trained to arms, is

---

<sup>129</sup> David Williams, “Civic Republicanism and the Citizen Militia: The Terrifying Second Amendment”, *The Yale Law Journal*, (1991), 573

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 197-198.

<sup>131</sup> William S. Fields, “The Third Amendment and the Issue of the Maintenance of Standing Armies: A Legal History,” *American Journal of Legal History* 35 (1991), 393.

the proper, natural, and safe defense of a free State."<sup>132</sup> Within these state documents, several references were also made to the prohibition of quartering soldiers in civilian homes.

Without a doubt, it can be said that the colonists held deep convictions about standing armies. First transferred from England in the 1700s, it can be seen that the negative images of standing armies were continually reinforced in the time period leading up to the Revolution, whether it be through deliberate propaganda used to influence the colonists or through the actions of the British soldiers stationed in North America which seemed to reinforce their pre-existing ideas about how professional soldiers were dangerous to liberty.

---

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE REALITIES OF THE MILITIA SYSTEM AND THE SOCIAL COMPOSITION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY SOLDIERS

Despite popular reverence for the militia concept, from the outset of his role as commander of the Continental Army, George Washington knew that total reliance on citizen-soldiers during a war was foolishness. He even went as far as stating, “to place any dependence upon militia is assuredly resting on a broken staff.” His experience from the French and Indian War provided him with what, in his mind, was an ideal model for an effective army, and that model was the one which he now was fighting against: the British standing army. In a letter to Congress in September 1776, Washington wrote:

The Jealousies of a standing Army, and the Evils to be apprehended from one, are remote; and in my judgment, situated and circumstanced as we are, not at all to be dreaded; but the consequence of wanting one, according to my Ideas, formed from the present view of things, is certain, and inevitable Ruin; for if I was called upon to declare upon Oath, whether the Militia have been most serviceable or hurtful upon the whole; I should subscribe to the latter.<sup>133</sup>

Washington would not be the only individual to recognize the problems associated with the militia. Almost anyone who took part in the conflict came to the realization that it was the rank and file enlisted soldier who was carrying the brunt of the fighting.

---

<sup>133</sup> George Washington, “Recruiting and Maintaining An Army” found in John Fitzpatrick (ed.) *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources: 1745-1791 Volume 6* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1932), 114-115.

Discipline within the militia was the most serious of all the problems Washington faced. He was conscious of the fact that moral ardor or the *rage militaire* among untrained militiamen could not hold up against trained regulars if the war were to rage on. As James Kirby Martin and Mark E. Lender succinctly wrote in *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic 1763-1789*, “his immediate objective became that of turning the citizen-soldiers into well-trained and disciplined fighters—functioning cogs in the machinery of war rather than strutting individualists of militia muster days.”<sup>134</sup> Similarly, Nathanael Greene, who was a major general in the Continental Army wrote that the militiamen represented:

...people coming home with all of the tender feelings of domestic life and are not sufficiently fortified with natural courage to stand the shocking scenes of war. To march over dead men, to hear without concern the groans of the wounded, I say few men can stand such scenes unless steeled by habit and fortified by military pride.<sup>135</sup>

In examining the personal papers of Washington, Greene, and the other generals, there are repeated instances of militiamen returning back to their homes. At one point, Washington wrote of the militia, “They come in you cannot tell how, go, you cannot tell when; and act, you cannot tell where; they consume your Provisions, exhaust your Stores, and leave you at last in a critical moment.”<sup>136</sup> After the battle of Long Island for example, out of the eight thousand Connecticut militiamen serving under Washington in August of 1776, more than half deserted and only two thousand men could be located after the evacuation to Manhattan. The others had simply drifted away and gone back home. Just before the second battle of Saratoga in 1777—the engagement that was the turning point of the Revolution—men of General John Stark's New Hampshire

---

<sup>134</sup> James Kirby Martin and Mark E. Lender, *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic 1763-1789* (Illinois: Harlan Davidson Inc., 1982), 44.

<sup>135</sup> George Washington Green, *The Life of Nathaniel Greene* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1871), 165.

<sup>136</sup> To the President of Congress, Dec. 20, 1776, WGW, VI, 403 in Richard Kohn's, *The Eagle and Sword*, (New York: Free Press, 1975), 9.

militia jeopardized the eventual victory by leaving before noon because their enlistments were up. Few events in the war so proved the “utter failure of the militia system,” American historian C.H. Van Tyne later wrote.<sup>137</sup> Not only were the officers of the Continental Army displeased by the desertions of militiamen, but there was a constant tension over the issue of who was carrying the brunt of the war between the militia and the continentals. One of the rank and file soldiers, a twenty two year old stationed in Peekskill, New York stated:

The present appearance is very gloomy, the British troops making head wherever they attempt, our people instead of behaving as brave men, behave like Rascalls & to add to that, it seems that the British troops had gone into the Jerseys only to receive the submission of the Whole Country, beside those of the militia Who have been sent for our assistance leave us the minute their times are out and would not stay tho’ their eternal salvation was to be forfeited if they went home.<sup>138</sup>

Another problem with the militia was that in addition to their lack of discipline they were wasteful of their very limited amount of supplies and weapons. One general from Pennsylvania, John Lacey, noted that the departing militia “had left their camp equipage strewed everywhere—muskets, Cartouch-boxes, camp kettels and blankets—some in and some out of the huts the men had left...”<sup>139</sup> The problem was so severe and local units had made off with so many Continental weapons that Washington ordered that the militia not be delivered any more supplies.

Despite his personal beliefs regarding the militia, Washington was realistic about the fact that one of his biggest challenges as commander would be managing an army that was to “maintain its citizen-soldier character.”<sup>140</sup> He knew that no matter how inefficient, the colonial militia tradition could not be altogether abandoned and Washington himself was cautious not to

---

<sup>137</sup> C.H. Van Tyne, *The War of Independence* (Boston, 1929), 115.

<sup>138</sup> Ebenezer Huntington, *Letters Written by Ebenezer Huntington during the American Revolution* (New York: Charles F. Heartman, 1915), 53.

<sup>139</sup> *Memoirs and Correspondence of John Lacey*, New York Historical Society.

<sup>140</sup> James Kirby Martin and Mark E. Lender, *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic 1763-1789* (Illinois: Harlan Davidson Inc., 1982), 43.



allow the republican cause, or at least the façade of a republican cause, be undermined by a military dictatorship. The fear of a military dictatorship almost became a reality in the latter part of the war as officers within the Continental Army, who were disgruntled with Congress's handling of the war, threatened to take up arms against civilian authorities. As will be noted in a later chapter, the so-called "Newburgh Conspiracy" would play a major role in discussions about ratification of the Constitution and feed into making the legend of the citizen-soldier as the proper military representative for a republic.<sup>141</sup>

Throughout the war and in the period after during the establishment of the new government, Washington was always careful about questioning the presumed virtue and moral commitment of citizen-soldiers, and when addressing the matter of republican virtue, he used great tact as can be seen in this statement to John Banister in 1778:

We must take the passions of Men, as nature has given them, and those principles as a guide, which are generally the rule of action. I do not mean to exclude altogether the idea of patriotism. I know it exists, and I know it has done much in the present contest. But I will venture to assert, that a great and lasting War can never be supported on this principle alone—It must be aided by a prospect of interest or some reward. For a time it may, of itself, push men to action—to bear much—to encounter difficulties; but it will not endure unassisted by interest.<sup>142</sup>

Washington was well aware of the fact that the initial surge of patriot support had died out after the New York campaign and obtaining long-term enlistments proved to be problematic; by the end of 1775 very few of the original enlistments had signed up again and entire militia units had simply drifted back to civilian life.<sup>143</sup>

---

<sup>141</sup> See Richard Kohn, "The Inside History of the Newburgh Conspiracy: America and the Coup d'Etat," *William and Mary Quarterly* 27, no. 2, Third Series (April, 1970), 187-220.

<sup>142</sup> George Washington to John Banister, April 21, 1778.

<sup>143</sup> James Kirby Martin and Mark E. Lender, *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic 1763-1789* (Illinois: Harlan Davidson Inc., 1982), 69.

It is clear that it was not the revered militia who were carrying the brunt of the war; rather, it was the rank and file enlisted soldier, given all of the stereotypes, the image of the common soldier remains ambiguous. The popular image of the common soldier is of a man of moderate means dedicated to the defense of liberty, ready at a minute's notice to protect his farm and defend his country. Historians have only recently considered the question of who the common soldier was because the evidence is scattered and biographical reconstruction is time consuming. William Skelton, who has studied the military origins of the United States has expressed the importance of understanding the social background of the Revolutionary soldiers in that it serves as a source of our nationalism. Skelton notes:

military service has been a central experience in the lives of a great many ordinary Americans, and the study of its patterns and effects may illuminate not only the history of the armed forces but also such diverse historical problems as social and geographical mobility, the structure of community leadership, and the sources of nationalism.<sup>144</sup>

Other scholars apparently agree with Skelton that there is a great deal to be learned from the study of the military and in recent years there have been an increasing number of studies that look at the origins of the American military and the relationship between the military and nationalism.

In addition to taking a closer look at our military's origins in general, many social historians have begun delving into the social composition of the Continental Army from sources such as enlistment rolls and tax records. One example of this type of study was done by Edward Papenfuse and Gregory Stiverson. In this study, they analyze what they refer to as "an unusually detailed muster roll for 308 men of the Maryland Line and the survival of relevant census, tax, and pension records which permit a rare glimpse into the lives of those who fought as privates in

---

<sup>144</sup> William Skelton, "The Confederation's Regulars: A Social Profile of Enlisted Service in America's First Standing Army." *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., Vol. 46, No. 4 (Oct., 1990), 770.

the Revolutionary War.”<sup>145</sup> By analyzing the detailed records and muster rolls of Gen. William Smallwood, Papenfuse and Stiverson were able to prove that the soldiers of the Continental Army did not represent a cross-section of the population, nor did they represent the property holding citizens in colonial America. Statistics point to the fact that most of the enlisted soldiers were under the age of twenty three and owned little or no property. The mid-1700s were a time of depression in the commercial towns of New England and the middle states. The recruiters’ promise of food, clothing, and four dollars a month surely proved attractive to such men, offering a means of survival during hard times. A large percent of the enlisted men were either laborers or artisans.<sup>146</sup> Even under normal conditions, the laborers and less-skilled artisans of the eighteenth century American cities lived on the margin of poverty—employment was irregular and wages were barely sufficient to support their families—but during the economic hard times that characterized the era leading up to the Revolution, conditions would have been much worse.<sup>147</sup>

AGE AT ENLISTMENT OF SMALLWOOD’S RECRUITS

<i>Age</i>	<i>Foreign-born</i> ( <i>n</i> = 120)	<i>Native-born</i> ( <i>n</i> = 179)	<i>Total</i> ( <i>n</i> = 299)
14–19	9	67	76
20–24	21	78	99
25–29	32	22	54
30–34	25	5	30
35–39	23	6	29
40–44	6	1	7
45–49	4	0	4

Table 1: Age of Enlisted Soldiers of General Smallwood

<sup>145</sup> Papenfuse and Stiverson, “Smallwood’s Recruits,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, XXX (1973), 118.

<sup>146</sup> William Skelton, “The Confederation’s Regulars: A Social Profile of Enlisted Service in America’s First Standing Army.” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., Vol. 46, No. 4 (Oct., 1990), 770.

<sup>147</sup> Papenfuse and Stiverson, “Smallwood’s Recruits,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, XXX (1973), 124-125.

The table above shows that the majority of the enlisted men were between the ages of twenty and twenty-four.<sup>148</sup> Additionally, these findings demonstrate the fact that a large number of the common soldiers were foreign born. In the table below, Papenfuse and Stiverson show that a little over forty percent of all of the enlistees were born in places other than the colonies, most notably England and Ireland.<sup>149</sup> Many of these individuals (foreign born enlistees from all states) were in dire economic circumstances, so much so that many of the states passed laws prohibiting creditors from pulling them from the ranks and having them thrown in jail for small debts.<sup>150</sup>

**PLACE OF BIRTH OF SMALLWOOD'S RECRUITS**

<i>Foreign-born</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Native-born</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
England	53	44.2	Maryland	90	50.3
Ireland	53	44.2	"America"	79	44.1
Scotland	7	5.8	Pennsylvania	7	3.9
Germany	6	5.0	Virginia	2	1.1
"Europe"	1	0.8	New Jersey	1	0.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 2: Place of birth of General Smallwood's Recruits**

Although Americans typically like to view our military has a purely volunteer force, the use of draft systems in order to meet quotas for troops has been in use as early as the American Revolution. When the Revolution began, enlistments were typically short, generally one year, with the hope that the war would be over soon and in the case that it was not, that the cause of liberty would continue to bring in recruits. As a result of their fear of standing armies, Congress did not try long-term enlistments until mid-1776. In their minds, these short enlistments would

<sup>148</sup> Papenfuse and Stiverson, "Smallwood's Recruits," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, XXX (1973), 121.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ronald Hoffman, *The Military Character of the American Revolution* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1984), 124-125.

protect the Americans from some of the abuses associated with standing armies (more specifically, the British army). However, Washington quickly realized that the “*rage militaire*” had died out and that the cause of liberty was not enough to keep men in the army. Problems and questions arose about the nature of the draft and the effectiveness of the length of enlistments.

Josiah Bartlett, a delegate in Congress from Rhode Island stated,

I am fully sensible of the great difficulties we labour under by the soldiers being enlisted for such short period, and that it would have been much better had they at first received good bounty, and been enlisted to serve during the war. But you may recollect the many, and, to appearance almost insuperable difficulties that then lay in our way. No money, no magazines of provisions, no military stores, no government; in short when I look back, and consider our situation about fifteen months ago, instead of wondering that we are in no better situation than at present, I am surprised we are in so good. <sup>151</sup>

Even patriot historian Charles Royster points out the failure of the one year enlistments in *A Revolutionary People at War*. Royster states, “the failure of the one year enlistment caused revolutionaries special distress, because the central element in their definition of their army was volunteerism.”<sup>152</sup> However, even those men who did volunteer without enlisting, such as many men of independent means and the yeomanry, were not necessarily welcomed by the officers in the Continental Army. George Washington responded to the Virginia governor’s offer of sending in volunteers to assist in 1777 when Virginia was unable to fulfill the quota of enlistees that,

Men of the volunteer kind, are uneasy, impatient of command, ungovernable and claiming to themselves a sort of superior merit, generally assume, not only the privilege of their thinking, but do as they please.<sup>153</sup>

---

<sup>151</sup> Charles Bolton, *The Private Soldier Under Washington* (Massachusetts: Corner House Publishers, 1976), 31.

<sup>152</sup> Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 50.

<sup>153</sup> George Washington to Patrick Henry, April 13, 1777 in John Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources 1745-1799* (Washington D.C., 1931-1944), VII, 408.

It can be inferred from these statements concerning short enlistments and volunteers that the most significant factor in determining military success against the British would be discipline in the army, the type of discipline that Americans criticized the British army for.

In an effort to uncover who the Revolutionary soldiers were, one needs only to look at the British army of the eighteenth century. One of the primary goals of the revolutionaries was to highlight the distinctions between the British soldiers and the colonists. By characterizing the British soldiers as the dregs of society kept in line only by a harsh system of justice and the American soldiers as property holding citizen-soldiers committed to republican ideals, Americans were able to create the mindset that America was something unique and exceptional. There have been no direct comparisons done of the rank and file soldiers of the Continental Army and that of the British soldiers, however, several historians, including Mark Lender and Gregory Martin have pointed out that the two armies were similar in many respects.<sup>154</sup>

Although there were some men who enlisted for a variety of reasons, including patriotism, an argument can be made that the main reason for enlisting was economic on both sides of war.<sup>155</sup> There is a broad comparison that can be made between the British and American soldiers and the reasons why they enlisted. Economic factors were one of the driving forces behind getting men to enlist. The types of men that joined on both sides were displaced laborers who were suffering from financial problems. Both governments had to resort to drafts to increase the size of their armies. The types of men who were drafted were typically the lower classes, or what some have referred to as, “the dregs of society: beggars, vagrants, and

---

<sup>154</sup> James Kirby Martin, and Mark E. Lender, *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic, 1763-1789* (Illinois: Harlan Davidson Inc., 1982).

<sup>155</sup> William Skelton, “The Confederation’s Regulars: A Social Profile of Enlisted Service in America’s First Standing Army.” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., (1990): 776.

criminals.”<sup>156</sup> It cannot be said, however, that the men on both sides of the war enlisted *only* for economic reasons simply as a result of their socioeconomic backgrounds. In order for that to be true the assumption would have to be made that only property-holding citizens were capable of certain virtues such as patriotism. Although many men may have enlisted for economic reasons, they often developed bonds with one another that enabled them to carry on in battle and regroup after losses. These men were set apart from the militia by the length of their service, by their officers' esteem for them, and by their own contempt for part-time soldiers, and as a result of these differences, the Continentals slowly developed resilience and pride.<sup>157</sup>

Beyond the similarity in socio-economic background, the more closely-grained social historiography about Revolutionary soldiery indicates that the day-to-day experiences of soldiers on both sides of the conflict were quite similar. Historians of the American Revolution have frequently described the sufferings of the Continental Army. The British soldiers, though more reliably supplied and better paid than the Americans, often underwent comparable adversity during the war; however, in the many attempts to portray the Continental Army as being exceptional, most popular and even some professional histories fail to acknowledge this fact. One significant difference, though not one that upholds the exceptionalist discourse, was that the British army was composed of professional, career soldiers; soldiers were typically thirty-year old men who had usually served a minimum of ten years and had already experienced the hardships associated with military combat.<sup>158</sup> Like the great mass of manual workers in eighteenth-century England, the common soldier worked long hours doing cyclical, uninspired work, in conditions that were at best dreary, at worst dangerous. The soldiers' day began at

---

<sup>156</sup> Sylvia Frey, *The British Soldier in America*, 2.

<sup>157</sup> Robert Middlekauf, “Why Men Fought in the American Revolution,” *Huntington Library Quarterly*, (1980), 147.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

daybreak and ended at 8:00 p.m.<sup>159</sup> A part of every soldier's day was devoted to fatigue duties, which consisted of cleaning latrines, disposing of food and other perishables, unloading and moving provisions, shoveling snow, cleaning areas to prevent fires, and preparing cartridges for battle.<sup>160</sup> There was no remuneration for these routine chores because they were considered part of the soldier's obligation. Only those with special training, such as masons or carpenters, whose skills were urgently needed to repair redoubts, barracks, and storehouses, received extra pay. Among the regular assignments none was more bitterly despised than guard duty. On the average, during peace time each soldier mounted guard every three to four days. In periods of war, however, this duty became much more frequent.

Similarly, the Continental soldier's life did not pass in idleness. Uniforms and arms required daily attention before the hour for parade, and the endless duties connected with cooking, obtaining fuel, and caring for the camp provided work for all.<sup>161</sup> In the opening years of the war many soldiers, from ignorance of military life or from carelessness, brought trouble upon themselves; some went back to their quarters to get provisions, leaving their posts unprotected. Others sat down in comfort under trees, and as just stated, were so negligent that their guns were stolen from their keeping.<sup>162</sup> In September 1775, the following description of military duty appears in a letter written by a Southern rifleman at Prospect Hill:

On Thursday at firing the morning Gun we were ordered to Plow'd Hill, where we lay all that day-I took my paper and Ink along as you once desired I would, but found so much to do besides writing, that you only had a few lines manufactured (in the face of 18 battering Cannon; there was too much noise for writing and the Generals appearing sight I tho't it not quite so decent a Posture of a SOLDIER,

---

<sup>159</sup> Money Barnes, *A History of the Regiments & Uniforms of the British Army* (London: Seeley Service & Co., 1950), 54.

<sup>160</sup> Sylvia Frey, *The British Soldier in America*, 94-95.

<sup>161</sup> Charles Bolton, *The Private Soldier Under Washington* (Massachusetts: Corner House Publishers, 1976), 35.

<sup>162</sup> Richard Kohn, *The Social History of the American Soldier*, 558.



thrust my wrting materials under an old blanket, Shouldered my firelock, and strutted with all the parade of a careful lad.<sup>163</sup>

Both the British and American soldier spent the majority of their time doing “fatigue” duties. And, on both sides guard duty was the most despised of all. These duties seemed to emphasize their low position in the hierarchy. Many of the newly recruited soldiers (from both armies) who were inexperienced in the field received punishment when these duties were not carried out properly. The British were infinitely better off than their enemies in this regard. They had behind them an established system, and even though it was occasionally inefficient, and functioned over great distances, they still did reasonably well.

For the British, preparation of new recruits and drafts for service in America apparently began soon after enlistment. While waiting to embark from Cork, Ireland, young Thomas Sullivan and other recruits for the 49<sup>th</sup> Regiment “were marched to a back-yard in Blarney lane and also several days to the South Mall, where we learned to march and go through different facings, which we fully learned in Cork.”<sup>164</sup> In Halifax, Nova Scotia, recruits for the Royal Highland Emigrants were drilled twice every day. Even veteran troops were regularly exercised during peace and in preparation for war. In the years before the outbreak of hostilities, British regulars stationed in Boston were drilled daily on Brattle Square. Because of the exacting nature of the infantry exercise, each of the three daily drill sessions was limited to three hours. The first session was devoted to conditioning exercises, such as running to prepare the men for rigorous field operations. Under normal conditions an army in the field usually marched about fifteen miles a day; but a forced march could cover twenty-five to thirty miles a day. The second and

---

<sup>163</sup> Samuel Searls, *Letter from Samuel Searls to his Mother* (University of Groningen, 2001).

<sup>164</sup> Thomas Sullivan. “The Common British Soldier”-from the Journal of Thomas Sullivan. Editor Sydney Bradford, *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 6 (September 1967), 234.

third drill sessions were usually spent practicing facings, wheelings, and other complicated motions that made up both the infantry and cavalry exercises.

Unlike the British army, the Americans were just starting out; therefore, their training was not nearly as organized and rigorous. As the Revolution approached, the colonies had a fully organized militia system, at least in theory. Governor Trumbull reported in 1774 that the Connecticut militia had 26,260 men enrolled, and each town had its trained bands attending drill four times a year; there were eighteen regiments of foot, each with an attached troop of cavalry. Rhode Island in 1640 had eight training days a year and two general muster days. Company drill in the militia was held at more or less irregular periods; but these should not be confused with training and muster days. Training days were for regimental, battalion, and company drills and parades. On these days, the soldiers engaged in conditioning exercises and practicing maneuvers. The muster was usually prescribed by the legislature; and all freemen were required to be present unless excused or outside the prescribed age limits in order to take the physical examination for enrollment.

The British army was an authoritarian organization with rigid and inflexible patterns of authority and subordination. Discipline, designed to produce obedient personalities, pervaded every aspect of the soldiers' lives, especially training. Close-order drill, borrowed from the Prussians, formal guard mounts, and parades all helped generate conformity. The Continental army was different from this mainly because the army as a whole was very young, with many of its soldiers never having been in any type of military. When they were training, however, there were similarities between the types of drills and exercises they would do, thus dispelling the common myth of a ragtag militia defeating the most organized and professional military of the eighteenth century: the British Army.

Drunkenness was epidemic in the British Army during the eighteenth century and American propagandists have used this issue to characterize the British soldiers as being of low moral character. Alcohol abuse was regularly blamed for poor performance by the soldiery, for undermining morals and discipline, and for shortening lives. In consequence, there were frequent campaigns against it. Almost invariably, however, such efforts failed to reduce drinking significantly. Drunkenness in the ranks was common long before the eighteenth century, and it was sometimes facilitated by a ration, mainly of beer and ale, or occasionally wine. Including spirits in the rations appears to have been unusual, although brandy and whiskey were sometimes provided.<sup>165</sup> Soldiers who wanted stronger drink usually had to obtain it through purchase, barter, or theft. It is probable that during the eighteenth century the amount of liquor distributed in the form of ration increased markedly in the army at large, this was clearly the case in America. Rum was the main, perhaps the only form of spirits to be issued in America, and soldiers seemed to have preferred it for purchase as well. Rum was cheap in America. Concerns over drunkenness in the ranks were common to chaplains, medical personnel, officers, and some soldiers.<sup>166</sup> *The Soldier's Monitor*, a tract written by Josiah Woodward in 1701 and published in many editions through to the 1830s, appealed not only to the soldiers' fears, but also to their sense of pride.

Intemperance, wherever it prevails, destroys a Man's reason, Honour, and Conscience at once; and opens a wide gap for any Sin or folly, though never so monstrous and inhuman, to make Its entrance. It perfectly bereaves the brave soldier of all that is great and noble in his character. A very child exceeds him in strength, and an idiot is his equal in discretion.<sup>167</sup>

---

<sup>165</sup> Paul Kopperman, "The Cheapest Pay: Alcohol Abuse in the Eighteenth Century British Army" *Journal of Military History*, (1996), 445.

<sup>166</sup> Sylvia Frey, *The British Soldier in America*, 90.

<sup>167</sup> "Being Serious Advice to Soldiers to behave themselves with Just regard to Religion and True Manhood." *The Soldiers Monitor* 13th ed. (London, 1823).

*The Soldier's Monitor* was more widely disseminated within the British Army than was any other piece of religious literature.

Despite the propaganda confining alcohol abuse to just the British forces, it is wrong to assume that it was only the British soldiers who had problems; the Continental army also faced difficulties with drunkenness in the ranks. It was not the case, however, that alcohol consumption was considered a significant social problem at the time. As historian W. J. Rorabaugh notes concerning the use of alcohol during the eighteenth century,

Americans, like Englishmen and Europeans, universally believed, that rum, gin, and brandy were nutritious and healthful. Distilled spirits were viewed as foods that supplemented limited and monotonous diets, as medications that could cure colds, fevers, snakebites, frosted toes, and broken legs, and as relaxants that would relieve depression, reduce tension, and enable hard-working laborers to enjoy a moment of happy, frivolous camaraderie. Such favorable views led to a widespread use of strong drink. Before 1750 nearly all Americans of all social classes drank alcoholic beverages in quantity, sometimes to the point of intoxication.<sup>168</sup>

That said, however, in the Continental Army at war, when rum was an article of daily consumption, its evil effects must have balanced whatever good it did. It was drunk “to the health and success of the ladies,” to celebrate victories, to encourage enlisting, by fatigue parties to counteract the strain of hard work in bad weather, and even more liberally when there was no object in view; when taken early in the morning, unmixed with water, it impaired the health of the men and in long marches the hard drinker was most apt to suffer.<sup>169</sup> At the siege of Boston, Sam Haws, a private, experienced the not unusual effects of merry-making. “We turned out,” he says, “and went to the Larm post and it was very cold, and we came home and there was a high go of drinking Brandy, and several of the company were taken not well pretty soon after.”<sup>170</sup>

---

<sup>168</sup> W. J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 25.

<sup>169</sup> Charles Bolton, *The Private Soldier under Washington*, 88.

<sup>170</sup> William Moultrie, *Memoirs of the American Revolution* (New York: New York Times and Arno Press, 1968), 168.

David How tells the story of two men at Cambridge who fell to bantering one another as to who could drink the most. This led to excessive drinking, from which one of the men died in an hour or two.<sup>171</sup> Such excesses led Benjamin Rush, for a time the surgeon general of the Continental Army, to conclude that the daily rum ration was dangerous.<sup>172</sup> To check excessive drinking, spirits were only allowed to be sold in one place within the limits of each brigade, and civilian vendors within the camps were sometimes prohibited from selling after the retreat had been sounded at sunset.

As this summary demonstrates, the historical record shows that the eighteenth century British Army and the Continental soldiers were similar in many respects, and there is clearly enough information to dispel the myth that it was the archetypal citizen-soldier who fought and eventually won the war. The men who won the war were the rank and file enlisted soldiers, not the freehold farmers rushing off to war to defend their liberty. The common soldiers were young, poor men who enlisted for many reasons, most notably economic ones. This does not mean that these men had no morals or values as can be seen by the social bonds created within the army and their willingness to fight and die in battle. As the war raged on and the property-holding citizens became less involved in the war effort, we see that the army came to resemble the British army and, as a result, began fighting better, enough so to actually force the British into surrendering at Yorktown in 1781.

---

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 169-170.

<sup>172</sup> As a result of his experience with the wartime army, Rush became a lifetime advocate for temperance reform. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic*, 40.

CHAPTER V  
STEREOTYPES SURROUNDING THE RANK AND FILE SOLDIER OF THE  
REVOLUTION IN PUBLIC MEMORY

As the previous chapter argues, the American revolutionary army was not, in fact, “exceptional.” Rather, as the war dragged on, it came increasingly to resemble the British model against which it was pitted. To some extent, this was the inevitable outcome of the vicissitudes of war, but it was also a reflection of well-considered military theory on the part of leaders like George Washington, who fully understood the natural limitations imposed by relying on voluntary citizen-soldiers. Nonetheless, as noted in Chapter III, the image of the yeoman Minuteman still stands.

Stories of the American Revolution were first communicated by word of mouth, and these folkloric renditions, infinitely malleable, provided fertile grounds for the invention of history.<sup>173</sup> Serious efforts to write national histories of the American Revolution began in the years immediately after the war and continued until the early 1800s. After the Revolution, the founders set about the task of creating a national identity that would instill patriotism and was uniquely American. Since that time, numerous works by both British and American scholars have documented the causes, important battles, leaders, and consequences of the revolution; yet it has only been recently that scholars have begun looking at the social histories of the common soldier, and, even to this day, these studies are few in number. Despite increasing research in the

---

<sup>173</sup> Ray Raphael, *Founding Myths*, (New York: The New Press, 2004), 2.

field of social history, popular memories of the Revolutionary soldiers have not changed. Stereotypes and myths surrounding the soldiers have become so ingrained in American collective memory that the new professional social histories of the soldiers have been largely ignored or repudiated. Michael Kammen, a leading scholar in the field of historical memory, has found through much of his research that “myths and legends flourish despite accessible bodies of factual information that contradict them.”<sup>174</sup>

The American government has played a role in the creation of this memory beginning with the founding fathers. Some historians, such as Philip Davidson, have looked at propaganda during the American Revolution using primary source materials: newspapers, pamphlets, and even illustrations.<sup>175</sup> Although his work is somewhat dated, Davidson effectively proves that leading up to the revolution and immediately thereafter, there was a “conscious, systematic effort on the part of certain colonial leaders to gain public support for their ideas.”<sup>176</sup> This propaganda was used not only to gain support for the ideas of the revolutionaries, but also to create an image of the common soldier, both American and British. Much of the old scholarship of the Revolution aimed to present the ideas of “American exceptionalism” and scholarship was not concerned with facts per se.

As has already been noted, popular portrayals of the British soldier coming out of the Revolutionary era are that of a drunken, downtrodden, and resentful individual whose primary motivation for serving in the army was pay. Although this portrayal has some factual basis, it is misleading to assume that the British soldiers were alone in their low socioeconomic origins or in their bad behavior. However, in the quest for justifying independence, it became necessary for

---

<sup>174</sup> Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 26.

<sup>175</sup> Philip Davidson. *Propaganda and the American Revolution*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941).

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi.

the revolutionaries to depict the British soldiers as the antithesis of what they believed to be a virtuous citizenry. The Boston Massacre was one of the first major incidents used to condemn the British troops through newspapers, pamphlets, and even art.<sup>177</sup> The name “massacre” (although five people killed hardly qualifies as a massacre) alone provokes a sense of abhorrence for the British soldiers. Propagandists used this event and a great many others to play up the insolence and brutality of the troops. One primary example of capitalizing on any sign of the brutality of the British Soldiers can be seen in one of the most famous images associated with the Boston Massacre.



Figure 1: The Boston "Massacre" as Portrayed by Paul Revere

<sup>177</sup> Davidson, 150.



This engraving by Paul Revere shows the British soldiers lined up, as if in battle form, firing at what would appear to be a calm and innocent crowd. It fails to show the event as it actually occurred, which was basically a street riot among the colonists against the soldiers. Both sides were behaving belligerently, and Revere's engraving fails to capture this.

There are clear indications that professional historians have been reluctant to challenge popular models of the British soldier due to the lack of records. However, as scholars began looking more closely into the popular history, what they have found is that these popular models were not based on records or files, but rather drawn up from imaginary inferences like the image above and then perpetuated by writers and ingrained in public memory. Even some more recent scholarship has contributed to the perpetuation of these stereotypes. Eric Robson's "The Armed Forces and the Art of War" and Franklin and Mary Wickwire's *Cornwallis* both depict the British soldiers as vagrants and criminals who were kept in line only by a harsh system of justice.<sup>178</sup>

American soldiers of the Revolution, on the other hand, are typically viewed as men who fought purely out of patriotism and liberty. As Richard Kohn points out, "our vision of the American soldier-the prototypical enlisted man in the army, navy, or militia has been expressed in various forms of symbol and myth."<sup>179</sup> Kohn maintains that the American soldier has consistently been viewed as an individual from a "cross section of the American population; he enlisted and fought out of patriotism; his love of liberty, intelligence and native individualism

---

<sup>178</sup> Eric Robson, "The Armed Forces and the Art of War" in *The New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. 7, *The Old Regime, 1713-1763*, edited by J.O. Lindsay (Cambridge, 1957); Franklin Wickwire and Mary Wickwire, *Cornwallis: The American Adventure* (Boston, 1970).

<sup>179</sup> Richard Kohn, "The Social History of the American Soldier", 554.

meant that the goals of the war had to be explained to him.”<sup>180</sup> To mobilize the population and justify the cause, propaganda has consistently pictured the American uniform in the best possible light.<sup>181</sup> Kohn maintains that the “American soldier has been a symbol, a political and cultural artifact for a nation diverse in culture, uncertain in unity, and concerned through much of its history with proving its superiority to the rest of the world.”<sup>182</sup> There is also a romanticized image of the minutemen as men who, in a moment’s notice, would drop what they were doing, grab their musket, and rush off to fight in the name of freedom. Figure two is one of the many public statues erected in honor of the Revolution; this statue in particular can be found in Concord, Massachusetts and depicts a minuteman. In one hand, the minuteman has a rifle and a plow in the other, thus emphasizing the role of the “embattled farmer” in the war for Independence.

---

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., 555.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 556.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 556.



**Figure 2: Minuteman Statue**



**Figure 3: Cincinnatus Statue**

It is worth noting as well that this is a solitary figure, the individual whose primary bond with his military cohort is grounded in voluntarism and commitment to common principles rather than military discipline or esprit de corp. When the immediate threat is over, the band will be suspended, the musket put down, and the individual farmer will return to the plow until some other threat to individual liberties would cause the cohort to reform. Note the similarity to Figure three, which is a statue that was erected in Cincinnati, Ohio in honor of the ancient Roman Republican farmer and general, Cincinnatus. Because of the fact that Cincinnatus had long been revered by the revolutionary generation as being the model of the Republican values that they very much wanted to emulate, it is not surprising that such striking similarities can be seen in the statue of the minuteman. In theory, the minuteman epitomized the ideal citizen who would rush off to defend his country only when needed and then melt back into civilian life seamlessly just as the Roman farmer turned general, Cincinnatus, did.

Various forms of propaganda have been utilized to portray both British and American soldiers. Film is one medium that has been used in recent times to perpetuate stereotypes and myths. Films have the ability to be highly influential, moreso than professional history in that they have the capability of reaching a wider audience. In her study of twelve American films featuring the American Revolution between 1939 and 2002, Nancy Rhoden found that each of these films have varied plots and focuses; however, each evokes a historical era in which the quest for liberty is the unifying goal for the patriots and a single pursuit that defines both the protagonists and the antagonists in the story: the patriots and the villains (or the British Redcoats).<sup>183</sup> Rhoden states, “This examination of the main heroes, their villainous counterparts (typically British soldiers and loyalist civilians), reveals some remarkable thematic consistencies over the past six decades.”<sup>184</sup> In addressing these consistencies, she points to the gulf between the professional historiography regarding the Revolution and the Revolution as portrayed in film. Historians have long argued as to whether the Revolution was a conservative or radical event. In film, however, Rhoden finds that filmmakers portray the Revolution in a similar way.

In comparison with fluctuating fashions among historians, filmmakers have seemed far more unified over the decades in depicting the American Revolution as a struggle for liberty against distant, obvious (yet ambiguously defined) British tyranny; a civil war that pitted neighbours against neighbours; and a potential social revolution, in which downtrodden members of society attempted to free themselves from elite leadership.<sup>185</sup>

In such films as *The Howards of Virginia*, *Drums along the Mohawk*, *The Devil's Disciple*, *The Rebels*, and *The Patriot* almost all conflict can be fit neatly according to loyalist-patriot interests,

---

<sup>183</sup> Nancy Rhoden, “Patriots, Villains, and the Quest for Liberty: How American Film has Depicted the American Revolution” *Canadian Review of American Studies* (2007), 206-238.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

and consequently, patriot unity is emphasized.<sup>186</sup> In no way does the historical record show that there was unity among the patriots, in that as a goal,

“liberty” meant many different things to those defined as patriots. Rhoden maintains that, “as a patriot goal, the terms "liberty" or "freedom" resonate for modern film viewers with a meaning so self-evident, so culturally embedded, that they seem to require no explanation. Consequently, audiences are likely to find quite plausible filmmakers' representations of patriots from different classes or walks of life as unified, particularly if they are not inclined to think of liberty as a historical construct, requiring definition from the context of the times.<sup>187</sup>

In an article titled “Film and the Public Memory: The Phenomena of Nonfiction Film Fragments,” James F. Moyer poses the following important question in regards to the impact that films can have on public memory. Moyer writes,

Does film make it possible for you to remember in "real time and motion" something you never saw? People and events of the twentieth century are screened before us as vividly and convincingly as that movie each of us screens in her mind and calls her past. What would it mean to remember something you never saw?<sup>188</sup>

What Moyer is essentially arguing in this essay is that watching films does contribute to the formation of memories of events that occurred before our times or events for which we were not present. Moyer does an excellent job of describing the types of memory that film contributes to and that in which it does not.

Let us call filmic memory *public memory* to distinguish it from literal memory as we normally understand it, without compromising film's own literalism, transparency, realism-or whatever ontological term honors its accuracy. This public memory is not to be confused with collective memory. Collective memory may not be, and often is not, accurate; public memory, as constituted by some films, is always accurate. Collective memory is a cultural aggregate-the shared

---

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>188</sup> James Moyer, “Film and the Public Memory: The Phenomena of Nonfiction Film Fragments,” *Contemporary Aesthetics* (2007).

‘memory’ (or legend, or myth) of many people at once; public or filmic memory is only incidentally shared. Public memory is *incidentally* shared precisely because it is public—that is, available for objective viewing by none, one, or a million people. In other words, public memory is only incidentally collective—always *potentially* collective—precisely because it is so resolutely public and not already aggregated in many minds, meme-like, the way rumors and stories and national histories are.<sup>189</sup>

It is clear that films depicting the Revolutionary War have consistently upheld the image of the virtuous embattled farmer and, in turn, this image has been ingrained in public memory.

Another medium through which myths surrounding the American Revolution and the soldiers of the Revolution can be found is in the textbooks read by school children in the nineteenth century. Ruth Miller Elson did a study of the textbooks in circulation—over one thousand in fact—and made many interesting discoveries about the similar attempts to shape an American culture. Elson points to the fact that most books being read in the nineteenth century by most Americans were not those written by intellectuals, rather, they were schoolbooks “written by printers, journalists, future lawyers earning their way through college, teachers and ministers.”<sup>190</sup> It was these individuals, Elson maintains, that were responsible for the shaping of American culture, and as noted above, they drew upon imaginary inferences rather than primary sources. Elson states, “However ill-qualified to do so, the authors of schoolbooks created and solidified American tradition.”<sup>191</sup> Elson goes on to say that the authors’ choice of what “was to be admired in the past and present preserved for the future was likely to be the first formal evaluation of man and his works to which the child was exposed, and it came to him from

---

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>190</sup> Ruth Miller Elson, “American Schoolbooks and “Culture” in the Nineteenth Century,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* (1959), 412.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 412.

authority.”<sup>192</sup> These schoolbooks represented a compilation of popularly accepted ideas regarding America and created a foundation or mental schema for the American child that contained an “idealized image of himself and of the history that had produced the much-admired American type.”<sup>193</sup> Americans were consistently depicted as men of great virtue. Two individuals most frequently emphasized as American heroes were George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. In many respects Washington was depicted as almost divine. “As a Christlike liberator, the contrast between Washington and European heroes was sharp indeed.”<sup>194</sup>

In one book in particular, the *Franklin Fifth Reader*, which was used by public and private schools, the author, George S. Hillard, himself an attorney and amateur antiquarian,<sup>195</sup> had this to say in regards to Washington.

Does anyone maintain that in the raising up of such a man to be the leader of our fathers in their Revolutionary struggle, to be the model, guide, and inspiration, in all coming time, to the new development and progress which humanity is to make on this continent, he sees nothing wonderfully providential?<sup>196</sup>

In regards to the account of Battle of Lexington and Concord, the *Franklin Fifth Reader* attempted to invoke feelings of unity and liberty.

How often on that village green, hard by the burial-place of their forefathers, had they pledged themselves to each other to combat manfully for their birthright inheritance of liberty! There they now stood, side by side, under the provincial banner, with arms in their hands, silent and fearless, willing to fight for their privileges, scrupulous not to begin civil war, and as yet unsuspecting of immediate danger. The ground on which they trod was the altar of freedom, and they were to furnish its victims.<sup>197</sup>

---

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 418.

<sup>195</sup> Hillard, George Stillman, *Appletons' Cyclopaedia of American Biography* [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Appletons%27\\_Cyclop%C3%A6dia\\_of\\_American\\_Biography/Hillard,\\_George\\_Stillman](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Appletons%27_Cyclop%C3%A6dia_of_American_Biography/Hillard,_George_Stillman) (accessed 4/9/2012).

<sup>196</sup> George Stillman Hillard, *The Franklin Fifth Reader*, (Boston: Brewer and Tilsen, 1873), 343.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid., 301.

In many ways, the language used by many early schoolbooks began laying the groundwork for what Jill Lepore refers to as historical fundamentalism. Lepore argues, “historical fundamentalism is marked by the belief that a particular and quite narrowly defined past—‘the founding’—is ageless and sacred to be worshipped; that certain historical texts—‘the founding documents’—are to be read in the same spirit with which religious fundamentalists read for instance, the Ten Commandments.”<sup>198</sup> In referring to the patriots who lost their lives during the Revolution, Hillard states, “these are the village heroes, who were more than of noble blood, proving by their spirit that they were of a race divine.”<sup>199</sup>

But misleading texts were not confined to the nineteenth century. In a recent survey of twelve of the most widely used U.S. History textbooks in high schools, James Loewen found that they do very little to dispel mythic history. Rather, he argues that they intentionally try to promote blind patriotism and conveniently leave out anything that may reflect badly on our national character. Loewen states,

Textbooks in American history stand in sharp contrast to the rest of our schooling. Why are they so bad? Nationalism is one of the culprits. Their contents are muddled by the conflicting desires to promote inquiry and indoctrinate blind patriotism. "Take a look in your history book, and you'll see why we should be proud," goes an anthem often sung by high school glee clubs, but we need not even take a look inside. The difference begins with their titles: *The Great Republic*, *The American Way*, *Land of Promise*, *Rise of the American Nation*. Such titles differ from all other textbooks students read in high school or college. Chemistry books are called Chemistry or Principles of Chemistry, not Rise of the Molecule. Even literature collections are likely to be titled Readings in American

---

<sup>198</sup> Jill Lepore, *The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party's Revolution and the Battle over American History* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010), 15-16.

<sup>199</sup> George Stillman Hillard, *The Franklin Fifth Reader*, (Boston: Brewer and Tilsen, 1873), 302.



Literature. Not most history books. And you can tell these books from their covers, graced with American flags, eagles, and the Statue of Liberty.<sup>200</sup>

One textbook currently in use in high schools and one that was examined by Loewen, is the *American Pageant: The History of the Republic*. In general, it has been noted recently that Advanced Placement (AP) high school texts are much more balanced and reliable than those in elementary and middle school. Ray Raphael, author of *Founding Myths*, found through his review of twenty-two current textbooks being used that, “more of the myths are perpetuated in elementary and middle school texts than in AP high school texts.”<sup>201</sup> Despite the fact that AP textbooks may be “better” than those used in the lower grades, there are various instances throughout the AP U.S. history book *American Pageant* in which myths are perpetuated and stereotypical language is utilized. Many of these myths and stereotypes are written in such a way that it appears as cold hard facts. Take the example of the account of the Boston Massacre:

British officials, faced with a breakdown of law and order, landed two regiments of troops in Boston in 1768. Many of the soldiers were drunken and profane characters. Liberty-loving colonists, resenting the presence of the red-coated ‘ruffians,’ taunted the ‘bloody backs’ unmercifully.<sup>202</sup>

Notice the reference towards the British being “drunken and profane” characters whereas the colonists are described as “liberty-loving.” In reference to other military engagements of the American Revolution similar archetypical provoking language is used. In the account of the Battle of Lexington and Concord, the textbook provides this information:

At Lexington the colonial ‘Minute Men’ refused to disperse rapidly enough, and shots were fired that killed eight Americans and wounded several more. The affair was more the ‘Lexington Massacre’ more than a battle. The redcoats pushed on to

---

<sup>200</sup> James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 6-7.

<sup>201</sup> Ray Raphael, “Are U.S. History Textbooks Still Full of Lies and Half –Truths?” *History News Network*, September 2004, <http://hnn.us/articles/are-us-history-textbooks-still-full-lies-and-half-truths> (accessed January 5, 2012).

<sup>202</sup> David Kennedy, Lizabeth Cohen, Thomas Bailey, *American Pageant: The History of the Republic 12th edition*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 153.

Concord, whence they were forced to retreat by the rough and ready Americans,  
whom Emerson immortalized:

*By the rude bridge the arched the flood,  
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,  
Here once the embattled farmers stood,  
And fired the shot heard round the world*<sup>203</sup>

The militia is frequently described in the text as winning the hearts and minds of the colonists. “Often lacking bayonets but always loaded with political zeal, the ragtag militia units served as remarkably effective agents of Revolutionary ideas.”<sup>204</sup> Although the language utilized in the modern day textbooks is not as indoctrinating as schoolbooks from the nineteenth century, there are definitely still problems with myth perpetuating in our modern day textbooks. Raphael notes that, “the reasons that nineteenth century mythologies are still perpetuated in twenty-first century texts are deeply rooted in both narrative structures and American Nationalism.”<sup>205</sup>

Many scholars have examined the social pressures facing textbook publishers that often times cause them to censor their own material. Textbook content regarding the American Revolution and the soldiers of the Revolution has been deformed by identity politics and pressure groups. Loewen cites one of the most well-known textbook critics from Texas, Norma Gabler, with respect to how historical figures should be portrayed in textbooks. “The textbook critic Norma Gabler testified that textbooks should ‘present our nation’s patriots in a way that would honor and respect them.’”<sup>206</sup> In an obituary in the *San Diego Union Tribune*, Douglas

---

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>205</sup> Ray Raphael, “Are U.S. History Textbooks Still Full of Lies and Half-Truths?” *History News Network*, September 2004, <http://hnn.us/articles/are-us-history-textbooks-still-full-lies-and-half-truths> (accessed January 5, 2012).

<sup>206</sup> James W. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 26.

Martin discusses the powerful influence that she had on the learning of United States history. In her obituary, Martin makes mention of how she was single handedly able to influence what children read, not just in Texas but the entire country for more than four decades. Martin explains the reasons why Texas had such power in the world of textbook publishing and it basically boils down to buying power. The only larger state than Texas is California, and since it is difficult and costly for publishers to put out multiple editions, a book rejected by Texas might not be printed at all. Martin goes on to prove this point by citing, “In a 1982 article in *The New York Times*, Anthony T. Podesta, executive director of People for the American Way, a liberal group, said, ‘Texas has the buying power to influence the development of teaching materials nationwide, and a textbook edition chosen for Texas often becomes the sole edition available.’”<sup>207</sup> Others, such as Jill Lepore, have noted the impact that the state of Texas has had on textbook publishing, and she highlights this point by discussing the recent heated debates in the state legislature over modifications to the social studies standards or TEKS.

These myths are also still prevalent in modern literature, especially children’s literature. An example of this can be found in the book, *My brother Sam is Dead*, which is a novelist’s view of the Revolutionary War through the eyes of the child. The book plays into the stereotype by characterizing the soldiers as men who enlisted primarily for patriotic reasons. In addition to romanticizing the American soldier, this book portrays the British as ruthless men who routinely murdered women and children. Adding legitimacy to the book is the fact that the author is a professor of history at the University of Bridgeport, in Connecticut. His specialty is in early American history, specifically the American Revolution.<sup>208</sup> In 2002, one of the most popular

---

<sup>207</sup> Douglas Martin, “Norma Gabler; textbook critic and education activist”, *San Diego Union Tribune* (August 5, 2007).

<sup>208</sup> James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier, *My Brother Sam is Dead* (New York: Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, 1974).

Revolutionary history books aimed at children was published titled, *Eyewitness: The American Revolution*.<sup>209</sup> This book clearly perpetuates stereotypes, and one needs only to look at the cover of the book which reads, “Discover how a few brave patriots battled a great empire.”<sup>210</sup> In referencing the children’s literature about the American Revolution, Ray Raphael states that authors consistently “enlist the basic elements of successful storytelling: heroes and heroines, with an emphasis on wise men; battles that pit good against evil and David and Goliath; and, of course, happy endings.”<sup>211</sup>

Public commemorations of the Revolution involve a variety of activities, including reenactments, parades, orations, erection of monuments and statues, and even eulogies. These commemorations began during the Revolution and continue to this day and have also contributed to stereotypes being propagated to the public. There are a multitude of private groups and organizations that put together reenactments of events surrounding the Revolutionary War, and school children are always invited to watch and take part in such events. One of the earliest groups to organize such events was the Daughters of the American Revolution. In the organization’s 1890 by-laws, they expressed their first objective:

To perpetuate the memory and spirit of the men and women who achieved American Independence; by the acquisition and protection of historic spots and the erection of monuments; ...by the preservation of documents and relics, and of the records of individual services of Revolutionary soldiers and patriots; and by the promotion of celebrations of all patriotic anniversaries.<sup>212</sup>

“The Continental Line” is one modern day organization in particular that conducts reenactments of the events surrounding the Revolution. As far as who they are as an

---

<sup>209</sup> Stuart Murray, ed., *Eyewitness: The American Revolution* (New York: DK Publishing, 2002).

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., Front Cover.

<sup>211</sup> Ray Raphael, *Founding Myths*, (New York: The New Press, 2004), 270.

<sup>212</sup> Ann Arnold Hunter, *A Century of Service: The Story of the DAR* (Washington, D.C.: National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, 1991), pg. 15-16 in Ray Raphael, *Founding Myths*, (New York: The New Press, 2004), 250.

organization, they state, “The Continental Line, Inc, established in 1987 is an educational organization of recreated units representing the Continental Army.”<sup>213</sup> One needs only to look at their website to see the type of patriotic rhetoric that is espoused by this group. In regards to one of their former commemorations of the anniversary of the Revolutionary War, they made this public appeal:

Self governance – freedom. What an idea. This seems very normal to all of us today. But in the 18th Century – the Age of Enlightenment – this was a new concept. To form a country not based on a feudal system but based on a belief system. The belief in freedom and self-determination. This is a radical change in the world history. This is our heritage, this is our legacy, and to be perfectly honest, I believe it is what makes us great as a people. This light of freedom which was light by the political theory and actions of these farmers and laborers in the colonies in the later part of the 18th Century still is alive today. As living historians – or reenactors, we share a hobby that is great fun – we as the participants have a wonderful time... but there is more to this hobby than that. I would say that we play an important role in informal education about our country’s heritage. I ask that you light a lantern or a candle and put it in the window of your house. Reflect on the actions of these common men, 225 years ago. The sacrifices and risks they took to help secure our freedom. Their actions help brighten Freedom’s Flame. We all need to remember their actions - We as need to embrace these special days, honor them, and share them with others. That is what living history is about. This is our common Legacy, this is America, this is the light of freedom!<sup>214</sup>

Not only are private groups such as the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Continental Line involved in public commemorations, but government has also played a role in the indoctrination of students regarding the founding of our country.

Public schools play a key role in producing and transmitting American civil religion, manifested in daily rituals such as “the pledge of allegiance; in holiday observances, with

---

<sup>213</sup> “The Continental Line,” <http://www.continentalline.org/en/> (accessed December 27, 2011).

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

activities such as music and art; and in the social studies curriculum.”<sup>215</sup> Federal law states that “each educational institution that receives federal funds for a fiscal year shall hold an educational program on the United States Constitution on September 17 of each year” which commemorates September 17, 1787, the signing of the Constitution.<sup>216</sup> In the state of Texas, the state legislature has mandated that children study and recite text from the Declaration of Independence during “Freedom Week.” The Texas Education Code specifically states:

Each school district shall require that, during Celebrate Freedom Week students in Grades 3-12 study and recite the following text: “We hold the Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness—That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed.”<sup>217</sup>

One of the most powerful acts of commemoration that has played a huge role in perpetuating Revolutionary myths are the fourth-of- July celebrations that take place each year to commemorate the signing of the Declaration of Independence. In his deconstruction of the “founding myths” of the United States, Ray Raphael cites John Adams’ statement regarding what he envisioned for these event that would celebrate the “birth of the nation,” thus proving that commemorations were important to our founders who had great interest in how the Revolution would be portrayed to subsequent generations. In a letter to his wife Abigail Adams, John Adams wrote:

The second of July 1776, will be the most memorable epocha in the history of America. I am apt to believe it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty. It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and

---

<sup>215</sup> Adam Gamoran, “Civil Religion in American Schools,” *Sociological Analysis*, (1990), 235.

<sup>216</sup> Department of Education “Notice of Implementation of Constitution Day and Citizenship Day,” *Federal Register* Vol. 70, No. 99 (May 2005).

<sup>217</sup> Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 19, Part II Chapter 113, Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies Subchapter A. Elementary.

illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forevermore.<sup>218</sup>

In examining the popular history of the American Revolution, whether it be film, schoolbooks, oral traditions, visual art, or public celebrations, it is clear that these public commemorations of the Revolutionary War have contributed to the formation of an American national identity by allowing Americans to “imagine” what these events were like. Unfortunately, this popular history has consistently romanticized and distorted the Revolution to the point that the image of the common soldier of the Revolution has been lost to stereotypes and myths.

---

<sup>218</sup> John Adams to Abigail Adams, July 3, 1776, in Adams, *Familiar Letters of John Adams and his Wife Abigail Adams during the Revolution*, Charles Adams, ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1875), 193-194 found in Ray Raphael, *Founding Myths*, (New York: The New Press, 2004), 250.

## CHAPTER VI

### SCHEMA THEORY OF MEMORY AND COGNITIVE DISSONANCE

Upon reviewing the popular memory and professional historiography of the Revolution and the image of the soldiers, there is an apparent gulf between the two. It has only been recently that historians have begun looking into the role that public memory plays in the creation of a national identity, and there has yet to be any research that looks specifically at how the shaping of our national identity has affected the popular image or collective memory of the soldiers of the American Revolution. The study of memory by historians has opened up many new opportunities for analysis and can demonstrate how individuals, political parties and cultures shape and reshape their identity. In an article titled, “Memory and American history,” historian David Thelen states:

Since the memory of past experiences is so profoundly intertwined with the basic identities of individuals, groups, and cultures, the study of memory exists in different forms along a spectrum of experience, from the personal, individual and private to the collective, cultural and public. At one end of the spectrum are psychological issues of individual motivation and perception in the creation of memories. At the other end are linguistic or anthropological issues of how cultures establish traditions and myths from the past to guide the conduct of their members in the present.<sup>219</sup>

Thelen’s comment demonstrates the relationship between memory and identity, while acknowledging the complex nature that the study of memory brings. In order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the image of the Revolutionary soldier, one must look at both ends of

---

<sup>219</sup> David Thelen, “Memory and American History,” *The Journal of American History* (1989), 1117.



the spectrum; how individuals create and maintain memories and how publics can create traditions and myths on which people base their personal memories.

Memory, in general can be defined as “the retention of information over time.”<sup>220</sup> All forms of memory are seen as fluid and dynamic, and “remain in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived.”<sup>221</sup> The study of memory has become much more important to historians in recent years in response to the growing mistrust of “official history”; this criticism of a singular, authoritative history has pushed scholars to look at the role of memories as a way of understanding the “complex interrelationships among past, present, and future.”<sup>222</sup> Michael Kammen, the leading scholar in the field of American historical memory, argues that there are two types of memories that exist, “dominant” or mainstream collective consciousness and “alternative”; and, as Alfred Young, another scholar in the field of historical memory points out, these two types of memory “correspond more or less to the “official” and “popular” memory.”<sup>223</sup>

According to John Bodnar, an American social historian who has looked at the study of memory and commemoration in the U.S., public memory can be defined as “a body of beliefs and ideas about the past that help a public or society understand both its past, present and by implication, its future.”<sup>224</sup> In his essay, “Public Memory in Place and Time,” Edward Casey attempts to identify and explain the interrelationships between what he claims are the four major

---

<sup>220</sup> John Santrock, *Psychology* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2000), 181.

<sup>221</sup> Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire,” *Representations* 26 (1989), 8.

<sup>222</sup> Kendall Phillips, ed. *Framing Public Memory* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>223</sup> Alfred Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), xv.

<sup>224</sup> John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 15.

types of human memory: individual, social, collective, and public memory proper. It is important to note, however, that all of these forms of memory are related. Casey states, “the primary locus of memory is found not only in body or mind but in an intersubjective nexus that is at once social and collective, cultural and public.”<sup>225</sup>

As this study has argued, public memory of the Revolutionary soldiers has undergone several transformations throughout the history of the United States in response to changes or attempts to change and shape our national identity, and with each of these transformations there are clear indications that the popular memory was being shaped systematically by various groups of individuals and political parties. In addressing the reason as to why certain individuals feel the need to shape public memory, Bodnar maintains, “cultural leaders orchestrate commemorative events to calm anxiety about change or political events, eliminate citizen indifference toward official concerns, promote exemplary patterns of citizen behavior and stress citizen duties over rights.”<sup>226</sup> In using the phrase, “cultural leaders” the question is raised as to who these leaders are in American society. Bodnar asserts that these leaders are usually middle class professionals, those that are “self conscious purveyors” of loyalty to political structures and existing institutions.<sup>227</sup> These individuals may be government officials, teachers, military personnel, and small businessmen.

Regardless of the intentions of “cultural leaders,” public memory, especially memory about particularly significant and socially binding past events, cannot simply be changed or manipulated at will, and as this study has suggested, there has been a remarkable degree of continuity in the public-at-large’s view of the citizen-soldier in the American Revolution.

---

<sup>225</sup> Edward Casey, “Public Memory in Place and Time” in Kendall Phillips, ed. *Framing Public Memory* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 21.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

Psychologists have concluded that people actively construct memories in response to changing circumstances and that these memories are not constructed in isolation but rather through “conversations with others that occur in the contexts of community, broader politics, and social dynamics,” in other words, in the “intersubjective nexus” identified by Edward Casey.<sup>228</sup> Additionally, biologists have discovered that there is no storage facility in the brain to hold information and that memories are most likely triggered by associations. As one’s world view changes, his or her associations change, thus transforming memories.

One prominent theory associated with the construction of memory is the Schema theory of memory, introduced by Sir Fredrick Bartlett in 1932.<sup>229</sup> Bartlett introduced the idea of schemas while studying how people interpret and remember stories. He came to his conclusions regarding the creation of schemas after twenty years of research that was published in his book, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology*. In this research Bartlett had his subjects read the North American Indian tale “War of Ghosts” and then after different periods of time, had the subjects write what they recalled of the tale. What Bartlett discovered through this process was that there were various deviations between the recollections and the original story in the form of regroupings, simplifications, and modifications. Bartlett attributed these deviations to the constructive processing that took place by his subjects’ “effort after meaning” to relate the new information to previously existing knowledge structures.

Although Bartlett explicitly states that he dislikes the specific term, he proposed the notion of a “schema” as a hypothetical cognitive structure that was,

an active organization of past reactions or experiences which must always be supposed to be operating in a well organized organic response. That is, whenever

---

<sup>228</sup> David Thelen, “Memory and American History,” *The Journal of American History* 4 (1989): pg. 1119; Casey, “Public Memory in Place and Time,” 21.

<sup>229</sup> John Santrock, *Psychology* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2000),188.

there is an order or regularity to behavior, a particular response is possible because it related to similar responses, which have been serially organized, yet which operate not as individual members coming one after another but as a unitary mass.<sup>230</sup>

Bartlett maintained that schemas, put simply, are general frameworks used to understand incoming information and affect how people perceive, notice, and interpret information. The underlying idea of this theory is that humans, as they receive incoming information, organize it around their previously developed schemata, or “networks of connected ideas”.<sup>231</sup> If something contradicts our schema, it may be interpreted as an exception or as unique. Thus, schemata are consistently prone to distortion. They have a tendency to remain unchanged, even in the face of contradictory information.<sup>232</sup>

Being fundamental to the process of information acquisition and comprehension, the idea of schema and schemata have more recently been applied by cognitive and educational psychologists to the structures individuals store in their heads; knowledge that affects their processing of information, its recall, and comprehension.<sup>233</sup> In essence, the schema theory is a learning theory which views organized knowledge as an elaborate network of abstract mental structures that represent one's understanding of the world. Although Bartlett was the first to argue that individuals must have some sort of mental model or structure in place to assist them in remembering, the actual term “schema theory” was developed by the educational psychologist R. C. Anderson and since has been expanded upon by other educational psychologists.

---

<sup>230</sup> F.C. Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1932, 1995), 201.

<sup>231</sup> Robert Slavin, *Educational Psychology: Theory into Practice* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1988), 155.

<sup>232</sup> F.C. Bartlett, *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1932, 1995).

<sup>233</sup> Jeanne Chall, “Reading Comprehension research in the past decade: Implications for Educational Publishing”, *Publishing Research Quarterly*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (1982), 95-102.

This theory of learning and memory has not always been the most accepted theory; in fact, the work of Bartlett was largely overlooked during his time as a result of the focus on behaviorism in the world of experimental psychology. It was not until the 1970s that cognitive psychologists began to study the mental processes involved in human memory and understanding.<sup>234</sup> In 1985, cognitive psychologist Howard Gardner wrote in his book, *In the Mind's New Science: A History of the Cognitive Revolution*,

Where forty years ago at the height of the behaviorist era, few scientists dared to speak of schemas, images, rules, transformations and other mental structures and operations, these representational assumptions are now taken for granted and permeate the cognitive sciences.<sup>235</sup>

In her analysis of the educational research regarding the cognitive processes involved in reading, Nancy Spivey notes that it was also during the 1970s that American researchers began “resurrecting” the ideas and research approach of Sir Frederic Bartlett. Since this time, schemata have been characterized as the “building blocks of cognition” and the fundamental elements upon which all information processing depends.<sup>236</sup>

Another psychologist that embraced the ideas of schemas was Jean Piaget. The research of this Swiss cognitive psychologist has contributed immensely to the understanding of the development of learning in children. In his work with the cognitive development of children, Piaget looks at the ways and processes in which children develop schemas to understand the world around them and process new information. Piaget found that children develop many schemas early in life, and he suggested that those schemas may be modified, added to, or

---

<sup>234</sup> Nancy Spivey, “Construing Constructivism: Reading Research in the United States” *Occasional Paper*, No. 12 (June 1989), 1-26.

<sup>235</sup> Howard Gardner, *In the Mind's New Science: A History of the Cognitive Revolution*, (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 383.

<sup>236</sup> D.E. Rumelhart, “Schemata: The building blocks of cognition” in R.J. Spiro, *Theoretic Issues In Reading Comprehension*, (Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1980), 33-58.

changed as they have new experiences or gain new knowledge.<sup>237</sup> To Piaget, cognitive development was a progressive reorganization of mental processes as a result of maturation and experience. Children construct an understanding of the world around them, and then experience discrepancies between what they already know and what they discover in their environment. Piaget's theory is central to the school of cognitive theory known as "cognitive constructivism."<sup>238</sup>

Not only have cognitive and educational psychologists accepted the schema theory of memory but recently the scientific community has embraced the theory as well after conducting experiments dealing with the consolidation of memory in the neocortex portion of the brain. In an article titled "Schemas and Memory Consolidation," scientist Dorothy Tse reviews these findings,

Memory encoding occurs rapidly, but the consolidation of memory in the neocortex has long been held to be a more gradual process. We now report, however, that systems consolidation can occur extremely quickly if an associative "schema" into which new information is incorporated has previously been created. In experiments using a hippocampal-dependent paired-associate task for rats, the memory of flavor-place associations became persistent over time as a putative neocortical schema gradually developed. New traces, trained for only one trial, then became assimilated and rapidly hippocampal-independent. Schemas also played a causal role in the creation of lasting associative memory representations during one-trial learning. The concept of neocortical schemas may unite psychological accounts of knowledge structures with neurobiological theories of systems memory consolidation.<sup>239</sup>

Never before has an individual used scientific and psychological testing to determine whether a certain historical memory has persisted as a result of the psychological processes involved in

---

<sup>237</sup> S. Carey, *Conceptual Change in Childhood*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 47-48.

<sup>238</sup> J.S. Atherton, *Learning and Teaching: Piaget's Developmental Theory* (UK: On-Line, retrieved December 2011) <http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/piaget.htm> .

<sup>239</sup> Dorothy Tse, "Schemas and Memory Consolidation," *Science* Vol. 316 No. 5821 (April 2007), 76.

creating memories; however the scientific and psychological evidence regarding the importance of schemata in processing new information shows that stereotypes and myths in historical memory have most likely persisted as a result of these schemata.

While all of this theory would seem to suggest that ideas and memories are particularly malleable and subject to change in response to an immediate environment, social cognition researchers have also demonstrated how new information is integrated into pre-established schemas, especially when that information is contrary to those schemas. Pre-established schemas tend to guide attention to new information that is consistent with the schema and to ignore information that is inconsistent. This is referred to as a confirmation bias. Sometimes inconsistent information is sub-categorized and stored away as a special case or as an exception, leaving the original schema intact without any alterations. This process of subcategorizing has become known by psychologists as sub-typing.<sup>240</sup>

Another theory similar to the confirmation bias is what is known as the Cognitive Dissonance Theory. In the book *When Prophecy Fails*, Leon Festinger describes what happens when an individual with strong convictions about a topic (in this case, millennial or messianic movements) encounters information that is completely contrary to those convictions. This contradiction of beliefs that occurs in the mind is what has been termed as cognitive dissonance.<sup>241</sup> Festinger poses the question,

Suppose an individual believes something with his whole heart; suppose further that he has a commitment to this belief that he has taken irrevocable actions because of it; finally suppose that he is presented with evidence, unequivocal and undeniable evidence that his belief is wrong; what will happen?<sup>242</sup>

---

<sup>240</sup> Zoe Richards, "Subtyping and Subgrouping: Processes for the Prevention and Promotion of Stereotype Change," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* (February 2001 vol. 5 no. 1), 52-73.

<sup>241</sup> Leon Festinger, *When Prophecy Fails*, (Pinter and Martin Ltd, 2008), 1.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

Through his research, Festinger discovered that often times if the conviction was strong enough to begin with, that the person will emerge even more convinced of its correctness and will usually try to increase efforts to convince others of the same belief.<sup>243</sup> Festinger notes that any form of dissonance within the mind makes individuals uncomfortable, and it will become necessary for them to attempt to reduce the dissonance. Typically, an individual will do this by “changing one or more beliefs, opinions or behaviors involved in the dissonance; to acquire new information or beliefs that will increase the existing consonance and thus cause the total dissonance to be reduced; or to forget or reduce the importance of those cognitions that are in a dissonant relationship.”<sup>244</sup>

What does all of this theoretical and experimental information suggest about the process of historic public memory? To date, no historian, psychologist, sociologist, or scientist has yet to apply the schema or Cognitive Dissonance theory to public memory in general or to the American Revolution and the popular image of the common soldiers who fought in it. But to the extent that these theories are correct, and as noted, experimental data seems to support them, then historians must consider such structures and their cognitive impact when weighing the formation and transmission of culturally significant shared memories. As noted, there is a disconnect between the more recent professional historiography regarding the soldiers of the American Revolution and images of those soldiers in popular memory. Given the prejudice against standing armies and the love affair with the idea of the citizen-soldier documented in this study, it would be most likely that the preexisting schema in the minds of Americans would promote acceptance of an esteemed role for the militia and an inclination to distrust or even deny the

---

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 28.



existence and actual socioeconomic character of the regular national army. This, according to Richard Kohn, is precisely what Americans did in setting up the new government once the Revolution was over.<sup>245</sup> The romanticized militia schema that had been so ingrained in the minds of the colonists should have been essentially destroyed by facts that were emerging regarding the performance of the militia during the Revolution, yet because of the commitment to the militia tradition, we see that many Americans, including some of the leading figures within the Continental Congress, struggled with the mental turmoil this information produced. As Festinger points out, “the more important the issue and the greater degree the person’s commitment to it, the greater the dissonance—and the greater the need to reduce it.”<sup>246</sup> In analyzing Festinger’s research focusing on the various ways in which people attempt to reduce dissonance, there is a strong correlation between the methods he discusses and the transformation that has occurred in popular memory regarding the image of the American Revolutionary soldiers. In order to analyze this transformation which occurred as a response to cognitive dissonance, it is necessary to highlight the critical time periods in which dissonance arose and how the public attempted to reduce it.

Prior to the outbreak of the Revolution, the anti-army ideology that had been transferred to the colonies from England seemed continually to be reinforced by the actions of the British government and the British soldiers who were stationed in the colonies. This anti-army ideology would later prove to be the first set of schemata associated with American identity and this ideology, which has been transformed over the years, continues to be an integral part of what it means to be American. Note, for example, the sentimental statuary and associated literature

---

<sup>245</sup> Richard Kohn, *The Eagle and Sword*, (New York: Free Press, 1975), 13.

<sup>246</sup> Leon Festinger, *When Prophecy Fails*, (Pinter and Martin Ltd, 2008), 61.

discussed in Chapter V in conjunction with Seymour Martin Lipset's discussion of the "American Creed" and the entire shape of American exceptionalist civil religion discussed in Chapter I. During the pre-revolutionary era, propagandists and pamphleteers alike took advantage of every misstep of the British soldiers and used those cases to perpetuate the fear and danger of standing armies and promotion of the citizen-soldier, thus creating consonance in the minds of the colonists who already had a set of schemata ingrained regarding standing armies and state militias.

However, after 1776 and the initial battles of the Revolution, a conflict between the prevalent anti-army ideology and reality arose. Time and time again, the militia proved unreliable in battle, and it was the rank and file enlisted soldiers that were carrying much of the burden of the war. Yet, members of congress during this time, those who later were to be called the "founding fathers," were unwilling to let go of the romanticized image of the militia and even to this day, the conception of the citizen-soldier epitomizes for most Americans the spirit of the Revolutionary generation. It is during the war, after the initial *rage militaire* had died out, that the first examples of cognitive dissonance arose. Washington and his generals made clear their dissatisfaction with the various militia units and continually reiterated to the Continental Congress the need for a more professional force, a force similar to that of the British. For their part, Congress persistently resisted accepting the needs of the regular army, in part triggering the Newburgh Conspiracy, discussed in Chapter II, which, in turn, reinforced the already existing antimilitary bias. As Festinger points out in *When Prophecy Fails*, the greater the commitment to an idea or mental set of schema regarding an issue, the greater the need to reduce this dissonance once it arises.<sup>247</sup> However, the question then becomes why was there such a commitment to this

---

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

anti-army ideology? The answer to this question is simple: characterizing the British army as a force of drunken, tyrannical mercenaries provided the emotional justification necessary for revolution, and, in order to keep that schema intact, the American colonists had to be different, had to be exceptional. In the minds of the colonists, being exceptional meant relying solely on a force of citizen-soldiers. The fact that the militia were both unwilling and unfit to wage a successful rebellion against the British mortified Congressional delegates and left most scrambling for a way to swallow that bitter pill of reality.

As the dissonance that arose as a result of the conflict between the predominant schema and reality increased, many Americans scrambled to reduce the dissonance by either justifying the actions of the militia, ignoring the incoming negative information altogether, or shifting the focus from the numerous problems associated with the militia to the one area in which they did a fairly decent job during the war, most notably at Lexington and Concord. In analyzing the reasons as to why the citizen-soldier received such wide acclaim at the beginning of the war, it is most definitely as a result of the inordinate focus on the Battles of Lexington and Concord. By focusing on these initial battles where the minutemen and state militia carried much of the burden and where patriotic spirit was running high, it is easy to see how the militia schema would be reinforced. However, the battle that occurred in April of 1775 was not indicative of the type of patriotic spirit that would continue throughout the war, and as a result, studies of the Revolution that include the Lexington and Concord paradigm are misleading at best.<sup>248</sup> By subscribing to the “myth of conjured innocence-the image of professional British soldiers mowing down common farmers ill-equipped for battle- we lose sight of the momentous arming

---

<sup>248</sup> John Galvin, *The Minutemen: The First Fight: Myths and Realities of the American Revolution* (Virginia: Brassey's Books, 1989), 198.

and mobilizing that went on throughout the countryside for the better part of a year.”<sup>249</sup> As John Galvin put it in his work *The Minutemen: The First Fight: Myths and Realities of the American Revolution*, “mythology obscures what really happened in 1775.”<sup>250</sup> The minutemen had received a fair amount of training prior to the “shot heard round the world,” and after these battles, participation died off.

Although the initial rally to arms was impressive, hence the term, “Spirit of 76,” by 1777 Congress recommended drafting soldiers when quotas were not being met, and by 1778 most states were conscripting men. Washington made his point very clear when he told Congress,

The Government must have recourse to coercive measures; for if the quotas required of each State cannot be had by voluntary enlistment, in time, and the Powers of Government are not adequate to drafting, there is an end of the Contest, and opposition becomes vain.<sup>251</sup>

As John Ferling points out in “Myths of the American Revolution,” “Washington’s army in 1775-1776 represented a cross-section of the free-male population. But few who owned farms were willing to serve for the duration, fearing loss if their property if years passed without producing revenue from which to pay taxes. As the statistics cited in Chapter IV make clear, after 1777, the average Continental soldier was young, single, propertyless, poor, and in many cases an outright pauper.”<sup>252</sup> This fact was not an easy one for certain members of Congress to deal with. While some members came to terms with the idea of creating a regular force based on European models, others chose to shift their focus on the few successes of the militia and

---

<sup>249</sup> Ray Raphael, *Founding Myths: Stories that Hide our Patriotic Past* (New York: New Press, 2004), 707.

<sup>250</sup> John Galvin, *The Minutemen: The First Fight: Myths and Realities of the American Revolution* (Virginia: Brassey's Books, 1989), xvi.

<sup>251</sup> John Ferling, “Myths of the American Revolution” *Smithsonian* Vol. 40 No. 10 (January 2010), 4.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*

continued to try to reduce dissonance and carried the fight against a standing army into the ratification over the Constitution.

During the Revolution, the group of individuals who took part in the conflict on the battlefield and realized the ineffectiveness of the militia and the need for a national army, those who also became known as the federalists, continued pushing for the creation of a permanent national army. According to Richard Kohn, one of the leading scholars on the American military, this group of men would continue to dominate American politics for at least a decade. This group, including George Washington and other high-ranking officers of the Continental Army, concluded that regular troops should replace all citizen regiments. It was also a group of officers, led by Henry Knox, that joined together after the war and formed what was termed the “Society of Cincinnati.”<sup>253</sup> Although it was argued by its members that the purpose of the organization was to perpetuate friendships and memories of their wartime service, opponents of the organization felt as though it represented the exact type of military aristocracy that was associated with the fear of standing armies.<sup>254</sup> Many members of Congress, those who became known as the anti-federalists, used the creation of this organization as a means to justify their existing mental schemas regarding the fear of a standing army. It is at this time that some contemporary commentators began to modify the historical reality and explain away why the citizenry had not been more eager to defend liberty. Individuals such as Mercy Otis Warren used the Society of Cincinnati and the Newburgh Conspiracy in 1783 to portray the common soldiers as being of a “mutinous disposition” and claimed that it was fortunate that those soldiers “did not appear to have infected the whole army: many of the soldiers were the substantial yeomanry of

---

<sup>253</sup> William Doyle, *Aristocracy and its Enemies in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 109.

<sup>254</sup> Richard Kohn, *The Eagle and Sword* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 13.

this country.”<sup>255</sup> This transformation of reality meant that the army’s regulars were now seen as the troublemakers as neatly juxtaposed to the virtuous citizen-soldier.

The fact of the matter is that immediately following the end of the Revolution, most Americans viewed the Continental soldiers with as much suspicion as they had the British soldiers. As Richard Kohn points out,

today the army is fond of tracing its origins back to the Revolution, depicting itself as the descendant of Washington’s valiant Continentals. On the contrary, the Continental Army went out of existence permanently in 1783. The Continental Army disappeared, as a force in politics and as a prototype for American military institutions.<sup>256</sup>

On June 2, 1784, Congress declared that the remaining military establishment should be discharged, with the exception of eighty troops to guard military stores. The delegates had concluded that “standing armies in time of peace are inconsistent with the principles of republican government.”<sup>257</sup> The new nation, which was now somewhat reassured of its republican fervor easily retreated into the traditional anti-standing army schema. Washington resigned from his service as military commander and once again, Cincinnatus images abounded as it seemed as though Washington wanted nothing other than thanks from a grateful citizenry and the chance to return to his plow. This mythic moment was captured and commemorated in an epic statue by Horatio Greenough commissioned by Congress in 1832, which, occupying a central place in the Capitol Rotunda, again reinforced the classical republican allusion.<sup>258</sup>

---

<sup>255</sup> Mercy Otis Warren, *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution*, 3 vols. (Boston, 1805) , 277.

<sup>256</sup> Richard Kohn, *The Eagle and Sword* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 41.

<sup>257</sup> James Kirby Martin and Mark Edward Lender, *A Respectable Army*, 12.

<sup>258</sup> National Museum of American History, “Landmark Object: George Washington Statue, 1841,” <http://americanhistory.si.edu/news/factsheet.cfm?key=30&newskey=779>.



Figure 4: George Washington, by Horatio Greenough

Although the Society of Cincinnati generated intense suspicion, its members were a driving force behind the birth of a military establishment in the United States. As Seymour Martin Lipset points out in, “*America as a New Nation*,”

The energy behind the “nationalistic” aims of the Constitutional Convention came from leaders of a young generation whose careers, having been launched in the continental war effort of the Revolution, depended upon the survival of a nationalistic outlook. In age and aspiration, they resembled the leadership of many contemporary new states. On the other hand, those opposed to a strong central American government, who had little if any representation at the Constitutional Convention, came from an older generation whose careers were not only state centered but had been formed prior to the Revolution.<sup>259</sup>

One individual in particular who represented the faction of individuals opposed to a strong central government and opposed to the creation of a national army was Congressman Stephen Higginson. Higginson stated at one point:

---

<sup>259</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, *The First New Nation: The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 30.

There are those also among us who wish to keep up a large force, to have large garrisons, to increase the navy, to have a large diplomatic Corps...It is easy to see where all of this will lead us, and Congress I think is not yet prepared for such Systems.<sup>260</sup>

During the early national period, those men pushing for a strong nationalist government found themselves facing the critical problem of trying to implement a program so similar to a standing army in the face of a suspicious Congress and public. The first concrete proposal for lodging a military power in the Congress was made in the Virginia Plan, which gave the Congress an unlimited power to raise and support an army. The discussions over the power to raise and support an army as listed in the Virginia Plan showed strong distaste from many members of Congress. Later during the ratification debates, Article I, Section 7, proved to be one of the most hotly contested portions of the Constitution. In this section, Congress was given the exclusive right to “raise and support armies” and “To provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining the militia, and for governing such part of them as may be employed in the service of the United States ... and the authority of training the militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress.” Nearly every state’s ratifying convention proposed amendments to the Constitution that either warned against standing armies, limited Congress’s power to raise forces, or banned the quartering of regulars in people’s homes. More specifically, each state wanted an explicit guarantee that would retain their authority over militia forces.

Within the Bill of Rights on the other hand, the Second Amendment states that private citizens are authorized to arm themselves and to form truly independent militias, and the Third Amendment restricts the quartering of regulars in private homes. The language in Article I and then the language in the Second Amendment is clearly an effort to have it both ways. This fact is

---

<sup>260</sup> Stephen Higginson to Samuel Adams, May 20, 1783, LMCC, VII, 167 in Richard Kohn’s *The Eagle and Sword*, (New York: Free Press, 1975), 40.



a clear indication that the cognitive dissonance that occurred as a result of the contradictory information regarding the ingrained militia schema has essentially been interwoven in the fabric of the Constitution itself, reinforcing the schemata and making it the official doctrine of the land.

It is not surprising, then, that in the contest for popular memory, the objective realities presented by academic scholars – ideas that to some extent undermine the citizen-soldier schema and reinforce lessons concerning class distinctions and points of commonality between the American and British military experience during the Revolutionary War – have consistently been trumped by. With the notable exception of the years of negative reaction to the Gilded Age, the suffering during the Great Depression, and the civil rights and anti-war struggles of the 1960s, it has been entirely against the grain of American culture to admit that the nation was founded on the backs of common people who, for the most part, were pressed into service out of economic necessity or relative lack of options. To admit this would be to deny centuries of ingrained schemata that have been systematically reinforced through popular demonstrations, displays, school lessons, literary expositions, movies, and the whole of the intersubjective discourse so clearly outlined by David Thelen, Michael Kamman, John Bodnar, and especially Edward Casey. Hopefully this study has made clear that to a large extent the “imagined community” that is the United States depends upon such myths and that academic historians need to understand both the functional role that they play and the mechanisms by which they continue to operate as they move forward in trying to reconstruct a past that is, in Leopold von Ranke’s famous expression, “wie es eigentlich gewesen” (as it really was).

## CONCLUSION

During the American Revolution, most of the enlisted men forged by George Washington into a standing army, the regulars of the Continental Line, were those without ties to local communities and often without families. They had no stake in society. They owned no land or personal property. They were not town meeting members or voters. They were servants, criminals, and slaves, the broad underclass of Revolutionary American society. They grumbled and complained, but despite lousy treatment by the Continental Congress and many civilians, they endured, and overcame because prior to their experience in the Continental Army, these men had never belonged to anything or been accepted by anyone. In the army they found friends and comrades. Although it was these men who carried the brunt of the Revolutionary War, throughout the history of the United States they have not been given their due credit in either the professional historiography or popular culture. Instead, most Americans and many professional historians believe that citizen-soldiers like the Minutemen at Lexington and Concord in April 1775, fought and won the American Revolution. The reality is that when the patriotic enthusiasm faded in the New England colonies, most citizen-soldiers went home.

Although Americans trace our military origins back to the Revolution, the fact of the matter is that the army ceased to exist after 1783 and even when a national army was created in 1789 after the ratification debates, many still viewed the standing army during peacetime with grave suspicion. The pre-existing anti-army schema that was transferred from England in the seventeenth century, the same schema that provided the emotional justification for many militant

patriots to break ties from the mother country, was a difficult one for Americans to change. The gulf between the civilian-soldier schema and reality created cognitive dissonance in the minds of Americans and it is for this reason that Americans still choose to think of the Battle of Lexington and Concord and the virtuous embattled farmer when tracing our military origins.

The inordinate focus on the value of the citizen-soldier has become a large part of our national mythology. This mythology provided emotional justification for a group of militant patriots looking to break all ties to their mother country. The British soldiers, who were of a similar stature to that of the Continental rank and file, were consistently portrayed as the dregs of society and upholding this image became necessary for Americans to see themselves as exceptional. The notion of 'American Exceptionalism' was indeed created during the Revolutionary Era and has been continually reinforced throughout our history. The reasons behind why the civilian-soldier myth has endured for so long can only be answered by looking at the psychological and sociological aspects of memory. As this thesis has demonstrated, popular memory as well as private memory is highly affected by outside influences which, in the case of the Revolutionary soldiers, can refer to folkloric renditions, film, schoolbook, visual art, public commemorations, and even some patriotic professional histories. Although our national identity is complex, it is clear that the image of the Revolutionary soldier and the historical memory that accompanies these men has consistently been at core of what defines the United States of America.

## REFERENCES

Adams, John. Letter To Joseph Warren, Jan. 7, 1776, *Warren-Adams Letters* (Massachusetts Historical Society, Collections LXXII-LXXIII).

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*, rev. ed. (London: Verso Books, 1991).

Atherton, J.S. *Learning and Teaching; Piaget's Developmental Theory* (UK: On-Line, retrieved December 2011) <http://www.learningandteaching.info/learning/piaget.htm>.

Bailyn, Bernard. *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

Bancroft, George. *History of the United States of America, from the discovery of the American continent* (Boston: Little, Brown, and company, 1874-78).

Bartlett, F.C. *Remembering: A Study in Experimental and Social Psychology* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1932, 1995).

Beard, Charles. *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York, 1913).

Bellah, R.N. "Civil Religion in America," *Daedalus* 96 (1967).

Boatner, Mark. "The Revolution: Some Misconceptions" *American History Illustrated* 3(4) (1968).

Bodnar, John. *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993).

Carey, S. *Conceptual Change in Childhood*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987).

Casey, Edward. "Public Memory in Place and Time" in Kendall Phillips, ed. *Framing Public Memory* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004).

- Chall, Jeanne. "Reading Comprehension research in the past decade: Implications for Educational Publishing", *Publishing Research Quarterly*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (1982).
- Cohen, Lester. *The Revolutionary Histories*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980).
- Coleman, John. "Civil Religion" *Sociological Analysis* Vol. 31, No. 2 (Summer, 1970).
- Collier, James Lincoln and Christopher Collier, *My Brother Sam is Dead* (New York: Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, 1974).
- Davidson, Philip. *Propaganda and the American Revolution*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941).
- Department of Education "Notice of Implementation of Constitution Day and Citizenship Day," *Federal Register* Vol. 70, No. 99 (May 2005).
- Edes, Peter, ed. "Boston Massacre Oration, March 5, 1774", *Orations to Commemorate the Boston Massacre* (Boston, 1785).
- Elson, Ruth Miller. "American Schoolbooks and "Culture" in the Nineteenth Century," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* Vol. 46 No. 3 (Dec. 1959).
- Ferling, John. "Myths of the American Revolution" *Smithsonian* Vol. 40 No. 10 (January 2010).
- Fields, William S. "The Third Amendment and the Issue of the Maintenance of Standing Armies: A Legal History," *The American Journal of Legal History*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Oct., 1991).
- Finley, Moses. *The Use and Abuse of History* (New York: Chatto and Windus, 1975).
- Galvin, John. *The Minutemen: The First Fight: Myths and Realities of the American Revolution* (Virginia:Brassey's Books, 1989).
- Gamoran, Adam. "Civil Religion in American Schools," *Sociological Analysis*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (autumn 1990).
- Gardner, Howard. *In the Mind's New Science: A History of the Cognitive Revolution*, (New York: Basic Books, 1985).
- Gordon, Alan. *The Hero and the Historians* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010).

Gordon, Thomas. "Cato's Letter No. 65: Military Virtue produced and Supported by Civil Liberty only" (February 10, 1722).

Gordon, William. *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Establishment of the Independent United States of America: including an account of the late war, vol. 1* (London, 1788).

Greene, Jack. "The Flight from Determinism: A Review of the Recent Literature on the Coming of the American Revolution," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, LXI (1962).

Hillard, George Stillman. *The Franklin Fifth Reader*, (Boston: Brewer and Tilton, 1873).

Hume, Janice. "Building an American Story: How Early American Historians Used Press Sources to Remember the Revolution," *Journalism History* 37:3 (Fall 2011).

Hunter, Ann Arnold. *A Century of Service: The Story of the DAR* (Washington, D.C.: National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, 1991).

Hutchinson, Thomas. *The History of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, 3 Vols* (Cambridge, MA; 1936).

Jensen, Merrill. *The Founding of a Nation: A History of the American Revolution, 1763–1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

Kammen, Michael. *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1991).

Kennedy, David, Elizabeth Cohen, Thomas Bailey, *American Pageant: The History of the Republic 12<sup>th</sup> edition*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001).

Kohn, Richard. "The Social History of the American Soldier: A Review and Prospectus for Research" *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 86, No. 3 (June 1981).

Kohn, Richard. *Eagle and Sword*, (New York: Free Press, 1975).

Leon Festinger, *When Prophecy Fails*, (Pinter and Martin Ltd, 2008).

Lepore, Jill. *The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party's Revolution and the Battle over American History* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2010).

Levi-Strauss, Claude. *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1963).

Lipset, Seymour Martin, *American Exceptionalism: A Double Edged Sword*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997).

Loewen, James. *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Prince and Discourses* (Mod. Lib. ed 1950) (1513).

Martin, Douglas. "Norma Gabler; textbook critic and education activist", *San Diego Union Tribune* (August 5, 2007).

Martin, James Kirby and Mark E. Lender, *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic 1763-1789* (Illinois: Harlan Davidson Inc., 1982).

Morgan, Gwenda. *Debate on the American Revolution* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2007).

Moyer, James. "Film and the Public Memory: The Phenomena of Nonfiction Film Fragments," *Contemporary Aesthetics* Volume 5 (May 2007).

Murray, Stuart ed. *Eyewitness: The American Revolution* (New York: DK Publishing, 2002).

Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," *Representations* 26 (1989).

Phillips, Kendall. *Framing Public Memory* (Alabama, University of Alabama Press).

Pocock, J.G. "Machiavelli, Harrington, and English Political Ideologies in the Eighteenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Series, 22 (1965).

Purcell, Sarah. *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice and Memory in Revolutionary America*, (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

Raphael, Ray. "Are U.S. History Textbooks Still Full of Lies and Half-Truths?" *History News Network*, September 2004, <http://hnn.us/articles/are-us-history-textbooks-still-full-lies-and-half-truths> (accessed January 5, 2012).

Renan, Ernest, "What is a Nation?" in Eley, Geoff and Suny, Ronald Grigor, ed. 1996. *Becoming National: A Reader*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996)

Revere, Paul. Engraving, "The bloody massacre perpetrated in King Street Boston on March 5th 1770 by a party of the 29th Regt", Reproduction No. LC-DIG-ppmsca-01657 Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/p.print>

Rhoden, Nancy. "Patriots, Villains, and the Quest for Liberty: How American Film has Depicted the American Revolution" *Canadian Review of American Studies* Vol. 37 No. 2 (2007).

Robbins, Caroline. "Strenuous Whig: Thomas Hollis of Lincoln's Inn," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, Vol. 7, No. 3 (July, 1950).

Robson, Eric. "The Armed Forces and the Art of War" in *The New Cambridge Modern History*, vol. 7, *The Old Regime, 1713-1763*, edited by J.O. Lindsay (Cambridge, 1957).

Rumelhart, D.E. "Schemata: The building blocks of cognition" in R.J. Spiro, *Theoretic Issues In Reading Comprehension*, (Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1980).

Santrock, John. *Psychology* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2000).

Schwoerer, Lois. *No Standing Armies: The Anti-Military Ideology in 17<sup>th</sup> century England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).

Shalhope, Robert. "Origins of the Second Amendment," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 69, No. 3 (Dec., 1982).

Slavin, Robert. *Educational Psychology: Theory into Practice* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1988).

Spivey, Nancy. "Construing Constructivism: Reading Research in the United States" *Occasional Paper*, No. 12 (June 1989).

Swatos, William, ed. "Civil Religion," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society*, (California: Alta Mira Press, 1998).

Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 19, Part II Chapter 113, Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies Subchapter A. Elementary.

Thelen, David. "Memory and American History," *The Journal of American History* Vol. 75 No. 4 (1989).



Trenchard and Walter Moyle, *An Argument Shewing, That a Standing Army Is Inconsistent with a Free Government, and Absolutely Destructive to the Constitution of the English Monarchy* (London, 1697).

Tse, Dorothy. "Schemas and Memory Consolidation," *Science* Vol. 316 No. 5821 (April 2007).

Van Tyne, C.H. *The War of Independence* (Boston, 1929).

Wickwire, Franklin and Mary Wickwire. *Cornwallis: The American Adventure* (Boston, 1970).

Williams, David. "Civic Republicanism and the Citizen Militia: The Terrifying Second Amendment", *The Yale Law Journal*, Vol.101, No. 3 (Dec., 1991).

Wimberley, Ronald C. "Testing the Civil Religion Hypothesis," *Sociological Analysis* Vol. 37 No. 4 (Winter, 1976).

Wright, Esmond. *Causes and Consequences of the American Revolution*, (Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1966).

Young, Alfred. "George Robert Twelves Hewes (1742-1840): A Boston Shoemaker and the Memory of the American Revolution" *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 38 (October, 1981): 561-623.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Stephanie Nichole Powelson was born in Lansing, Michigan to parents Richard and Cathy Powelson and moved to the Rio Grande Valley at the age of one. After attending the Science Academy in Mercedes for her first two years of high school, Stephanie transferred to and graduated from Harlingen South High School in May of 1999. Upon graduating from high school, she immediately enrolled at the University of Texas Pan American and began her undergraduate studies in the fall of 1999 although she was unsure as to what she wanted to major in. After taking an entry level American History class with Dr. Michael Weaver, Stephanie realized that she had a passion for history and chose to major in Social Studies. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Social Studies Composite degree in May of 2003 and also received her Social Studies teaching certification for teaching high school level students. She graduated Cum Laude and as an undergraduate was on the Dean's List almost every semester and was inducted into the Phi Kappa Phi honor society in May of 2003. Upon graduation, she began teaching Social Studies at Weslaco High School and was even named Weslaco ISD's Secondary Teacher of the Year in 2010. Through the Teaching American History Grant that she received in 2005 she was able to begin her pursuit of a Master's Degree in History at UTPA. For personal and medical reasons, she placed school on hold in 2007 and returned in 2009 to complete her graduate coursework and begin the research for her master's thesis. She graduated with a Master of Arts in History in the spring of 2012. Email: [snpowelson@gmail.com](mailto:snpowelson@gmail.com)