

**An ‘artful Misrepresentation’ of Affairs: Alleged British Atrocities in American
Colonial Newspapers during the War of Independence**

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Abstract

During the American War for Independence, the revolutionaries effectively leveraged the newspapers to launch numerous atrocity allegations against the British military, claiming they breached European laws of war. These grievances became a focal point for political agendas and tensions to unfold in the public eye via the newspaper press. Using the allegations that emerged in the immediate aftermath of five notable battles, this thesis provides an in-depth examination of the American newspaper's response to these incidents and their impact on perceptions thereafter. This work demonstrates that the hitherto unappreciated propaganda war that occurred in the American press also left a lasting impression in the popular memory of the war. Right from the outset of the war, atrocity allegations made in the Patriot press triggered actions by British politicians and generals to prove their innocence, demonstrating that these accusations mattered. Despite their questionable validity, the revolutionaries' complaints impacted the British military and government by threatening public relations crises that jeopardized support for the British cause. Even when the Patriot response ebbed in cases where the battle occurred in rural or British-occupied territory, it was the sensational content that caught the public's attention, leading to unprecedented actions on both sides to win over public support. This study focuses on the emerging British reaction to these American allegations and the subsequent battle for control over the narrative, which the British ultimately lost. While British leadership attempted to bolster their propaganda efforts, they never gained the upper hand, an overlooked factor leading to the loss of the American colonies.

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Abbreviations

<i>AHN</i>	Readex America's Historical Newspapers
CO	Colonial Office
ES	English Series, Gage papers
<i>JCC</i>	Journals of the Continental Congress
LOC	Library of Congress
NARA	U.S. National Archives
NYPL	New York Public Library
TNA	The National Archives (Kew)
WO	War Office Records

Note on Terminology

Guidance from Gregory Younging's *Elements of Indigenous Style* was used when referencing Indigenous Peoples.¹ When describing the German auxiliary soldiers, the word 'German' is used unless referencing soldiers from the Hesse regions of the Holy Roman Empire. In that case, 'Hessian' is used. 'Patriots,' 'Americans,' and 'revolutionaries' are used to describe those colonists who supported independence, and 'Loyalists' for those who supported reconciliation with Great Britain. The derogatory terms 'rebel,' 'whig,' and 'tory' are not used. The more accurate descriptor of 'enslaved people' is used instead of 'slave.'

¹ Gregory Younging, *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing By and About Indigenous Peoples* (Brush, 2018).

Introduction

The extent to which the Americans leveraged the newspapers to spread revolutionary-leaning ideology and influence public opinion is remarkable. Benjamin Franklin exemplified this agency in shaping perceptions on 22 April 1782, when he wrote to John Adams describing a fake news article he composed. Franklin's story centered on 954 scalps taken from men, women, and children living on the western frontier of America by members of the British-allied Seneca Nation. From his post in Paris, France, where he served as the first American Minister, Franklin explained to Adams his intent for the article with his usual wit, stating:

I send enclosed a Paper, of the Veracity of which I have some doubt, as to the Form, but none as to the Substance, for I believe the Number of People actually scalp'd in this murdering War by the Indians to exceed what is mention'd in the Invoice, and that Muley Istmael (a happy Name for a Prince as obstinate as a Mule) is full as black a Tyrant as he is represented in Paul Jones's pretended Letter: These being substantial Truths, the Form is to be considered as Paper and Packthread. If it were re-publish'd in England it might make them a little asham'd of themselves.²

The article Franklin referenced depicted correspondence from a ship captain who intercepted a British cargo vessel carrying the scalps, intended as gifts from the Seneca sachems to George III, Queen Charlotte, members of Parliament, and the clergy. Franklin, famous for his didactic prose, used this fictitious news report to demonstrate British tyranny. With peace talks commencing between the United States and Great Britain, Franklin's scheme to publish the article in the British newspapers was intended

² 'To John Adams from Benjamin Franklin, 22 April 1782,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/06-12-02-0289>> [accessed 9 April 2024].

to both embarrass the British people and government and strengthen the Americans' bargaining position.³

Franklin's fallacious article derived from a list of British atrocities that he developed in May 1779 with the help of Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette. Throughout the American War for Independence, the Continental Congress launched multiple investigations on the conduct of the British military, their German auxiliary troops, and Indigenous allies. This list drew upon the findings of these investigations, which alleged the British army breached eighteenth-century laws of war. While all the allegations were based upon actual incidents, most were exaggerated or misleading.⁴ With the list developed by Franklin and Lafayette towards the end of the war, Congress took their propaganda to another level by directing Franklin to make a schoolbook about the multiple 'British Barbarities' reportedly committed. Franklin explained his plan to a close associate and British politician, David Hartley, detailing that:

Prints designed here by good artists and engraved each expressing one or more of the different horrid facts, to be inserted in the Book, in order to impress the minds of Children and Posterity with a deep sense of your bloody and insatiable Malice and Wickedness.⁵

There is no evidence Franklin's children's book on British atrocities ever came to fruition. On the other hand, his fabricated story on the shipment of scalps to leadership in Great Britain did find its way into *The Public Advertiser*, a London-based paper, on

³ 'Supplement to the Boston Independent Chronicle,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-37-02-0132>> [accessed 9 April 2024]; 'Benjamin Franklin,' in *Office of the Historian* <<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1776-1783/b-franklin#:~:text=Franklin%20served%20from%201776%20to,of%20the%20New%20World%20Enlightenment>> [accessed 9 April 2024].

⁴ 'Franklin and Lafayette's List of Prints to Illustrate British Cruelties, [c. May 1779],' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-29-02-0477>> [accessed 13 April 2024].

⁵ 'From Benjamin Franklin to David Hartley, 2 February 1780,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-31-02-0310>> [accessed 9 April 2024].

27 September 1780. However, the publishers quickly identified it as a hoax.⁶ In all, this endeavor by Franklin demonstrates the propaganda extremes the revolutionaries took to pin the British military with allegations that they breached laws of war, using the newspapers to embarrass British leadership and rally public support on both sides of the Atlantic for independence from Great Britain.

Atrocity Allegations Through the Lens of the Newspapers

The following is a social-political history of British atrocity allegations published in the newspapers of the Thirteen Colonies during the American War for Independence. This thesis demonstrates how the newspapers served as the primary medium used to broadcast this battle occurring in a separate sphere, over the colonial public's hearts and minds. Moreover, European laws of war were the standard used to form the British and American defense of their actions, as both sides interpreted and applied these laws to their respective causes. This work will explore how these atrocity allegations became a focal point for political agendas and tensions to play out in the public eye via the newspaper press. It will assess how the multiple allegations Americans launched against the British military during the war impacted the British military and government, their reaction in response to the Americans' allegations, and subsequent battle for control over the narrative. To use Franklin's words, the

⁶ According to the U. S. National Archives, *The Public Advertiser* published the article. However, there is no evidence it was published elsewhere in Great Britain. See: 'Supplement to the Boston Independent Chronicle,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-37-02-0132>> [accessed 9 April 2024].

fundamental question this work will strive to answer is whether these allegations, in fact, did make the British ashamed of themselves.

To evaluate the impact of the Americans' accusations, this thesis will provide a survey of the newspaper reports from both the Loyalist and Patriot-leaning newspapers within the Thirteen Colonies alleging that the British breached laws of war. Using the allegations that emerged in the immediate aftermath of five battles notable for the revolutionaries' complaints that the British breached laws of war, this work will provide an in-depth examination of the public reaction to these incidents as seen through the lens of the news. Along with analyzing the newspaper data, cultural factors are considered to assess how they influenced the reaction. Further, a comparison of how these battles are remembered today will demonstrate that the lasting notoriety gained from these conflicts, in a few cases, did not develop until well after the war's end. Finally, an examination of sources connected to the main players in these allegations will aid in understanding the British government's response and the impact of the allegations on their cause.

Historiography

This thesis contributes to the growing number of works over the past few decades on the American War of Independence that shed new light on atrocities committed during the war and divert from the sanitized versions of this conflict that minimized the level of violence used by both combatants.⁷ While these historical

⁷ For one example of the Romantic Era mythical accounts of the American Revolution, see: Mason Locke Weems, *The Life of Washington the Great* (George P Randolph, 1806), pp. 8-9. In this monograph, Weems provides the false but widely known Cherry Tree account when Washington admitted bravely to his angry

monographs overlap with this writer's thesis, none attempt to provide a view of these allegations principally through the lens of the newspapers, nor do they assess the impact these atrocity allegations had on British leadership. Yet, several notable pieces cover atrocities, such as Holger Hoock's *Scars of Independence*. Hoock provides a general survey of all types of atrocities committed during the war, effectively writing 'the violence back into the story of the Revolution.' Hoock's work is part of the growing literature from the past two decades that refutes a common depiction of the war as a rebellion by the righteous and morally correct Patriots against the immoral and cruel British Empire.⁸

Spotlighting the level of violence perpetrated during the war are several manuscripts that focus on atrocities committed against prisoners of war. Edwin Burrows' *Forgotten Patriots* recounts the horror of British prisons for American prisoners of war and the enormity of deaths that occurred as a result.⁹ Daniel Krebs' *A Generous and Merciful Enemy* and T. Cole Jones's *Captives of Liberty* center on the American treatment of prisoners of war, taking the focus off the British as the sole perpetrator of cruelties committed against prisoners. Krebs' work on captured German subsidy soldiers

father that 'I cannot tell a lie...I did cut it with my hatchet.' More recent scholars have noted that contemporary historical accounts continue to further glorify and minimize the level of violence that occurred during the war. For example, T. C. Jones, *Captives of Liberty* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), p. 255, argues that several historians 'glorifies the war, rather than illuminate the violence,' for example: Joseph Ellis, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2016); John Ferling, *Setting the World Ablaze* (Oxford University Press, 2002); and Stephen Brumwell, *George Washington: Gentleman Warrior* (Quercus, 2012). For an example of the 'militarily conservative' view, see John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed* (University of Michigan Press, 1990), p. 161. For a recent example of attempts to subdue scholarly research that aims to provide a realistic, unglorified, and 'unsanitized' understanding of United States history is the *1776 Commission Report* developed by a Presidential Advisory Commission during the Trump administration. See: <https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/1776-commission-takes-historic-scholarly-step-restore-understanding-greatness-american-founding/>.

⁸ Holger Hoock, *Scars of Independence: America's Violent Birth* (Crown, 2017), pp. 3-22.

⁹ Edwin Burrows, *Forgotten Patriots: The Untold Story of American Prisoners During the Revolutionary War* (Perseus Books, 2010), pp. 11-13.

demonstrates how American leadership not only used them to work needed trades but also as effective propaganda tools. Jones's research covers the treatment of both British and German captives, arguing that while the number of British deaths in captivity was less, the hardships endured by the British were just as extreme. Further, Jones's work provides evidence that the conflicts that occurred in the northern colonies were just as bloody and cruel as those in the South. Deflating the long-standing myths that the Southern Campaign was unique in its level of cruelty and mercilessness.¹⁰

The most available research on atrocities centers on the treatment of prisoners of war while in long-term confinement and does not address those that occur when a soldier attempts to surrender. One exception is Daniel Krebs' chapter in *How Fighting Ends*, 'Ritual Performance: Surrender during the American War of Independence.' Krebs analyzes the 'dangerous affair' of surrender and ascertains what battlefield conditions led to the victors performing the 'rites of passage,' which provided protections to those surrendering. Krebs, who also calls for more research in this area, concludes that rituals of surrender were more likely to occur following the larger and more decisive battles. While those defeated in smaller skirmishes or engagements were less likely to be afforded these protections. Harold Selesky supports Krebs' argument in his piece titled 'Colonial America,' in *The Laws of War*, which concludes that any control over the inappropriate use of violence decreased when away from the central operations and senior leadership.¹¹

¹⁰ Daniel Krebs, *A Generous and Merciful Enemy: Life for German Prisoners of War during the American Revolution* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), pp. 3-11; Jones, *Captives*, pp. 1-11.

¹¹ Harold E. Selesky, 'Colonial America,' in *The Laws of War: Constraints on Warfare in the Western World* ed. by Michael Howard, George J. Andreopoulos and Mark R. Shulman (Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 59-85 (p. 85).

The eighteenth-century European laws of war are key to understanding decisions about the treatment of prisoners of war during the American Revolution. On this topic, there is an abundance of historical analysis available that assesses the impact these standards had on the actions of combatants during the war. For one, Stephen Conway's 'To Subdue America' demonstrates that a great divide in strategic thought developed between British officers who either supported 'hardliner' approaches against the revolutionaries and those who supported 'conciliatory' approaches. Conway argues that senior officers leaned towards conciliatory approaches, and more junior officers were likely to argue for hardliner strategies.¹² Armstrong Starkey expanded on Conway's thesis by demonstrating how some officers changed their opinion over the course of the war, favoring the hardliner approach as the war dragged on.¹³

Inherent to laws of war is the research that centers on the concept of 'Military Europe' and how this ideology influenced behavior on the battlefield and led to atrocities. One of the first works on this concept is another of Conway's articles titled, 'The British Army, 'Military Europe,' and the American War of Independence.' Here, Conway argues that the British did not consider American forces a part of Military Europe and instead viewed them as a substandard force composed of rebels who fought in an 'underhanded manner' and thus were unworthy of any protections afforded per the laws of war.¹⁴ Similarly, Mathew Spring's *With Zeal and With Bayonets Only* maintains that the British treated American troops with a lack of respect because they deviated

¹² Stephen Conway, 'To Subdue America: British Army Officers and the Conduct of the Revolutionary War,' *The William and Mary Quarterly* 43 (1986), 381-407 (pp. 381-384).

¹³ Armstrong Starkey, 'War and Culture, a Case Study: The Enlightenment and the Conduct of the British Army in America, 1755-1781,' *War & Society* 8 (1990), 1-28 (pp. 15-17).

¹⁴ Stephen Conway, 'The British Army, 'Military Europe,' and the American War of Independence,' *The William and Mary Quarterly* 67 (2010), 69-100 (p. 70).

from the proper behavior and appearance that the British believed soldiers should exemplify. Spring compares the British treatment of Americans with the French, who were afforded a higher level of respect because they conducted themselves by their standards.¹⁵ From another viewpoint, John Chandler's article on the Continental Army contends that the revolutionary leadership considered themselves a member of Military Europe, which helped guide their behavior throughout the war. It was only after the British committed atrocities that some Continental soldiers declared that they were no longer required to honor laws of war.¹⁶

Coupled with research on atrocities are the studies on the cultural groups that the Americans often targeted their allegations, such as the German subsidy troops. One of the first monographs to move away from the long-standing depiction of these troops as overly brutal and savage was Rodney Atwood's *The Hessians: Mercenaries from Hessen-Kassel in the American Revolution*. Atwood argues that the Patriot newspapers had a hand in painting this unfavorable description of the Germans, which contributed to enormous anger and fear of these troops even before they arrived in the colonies.¹⁷ Furthermore, Atwood concluded that the German troops did not commit any more atrocities than the British troops did after providing a detailed analysis of accounts that mainly focused on allegations of plunder.¹⁸ Supporting the argument that the German soldiers were more similar to the British troops than different is Mark Wishon's *German Forces and the British Army*. Wishon contends that not only did both militaries strongly

¹⁵ Matthew Spring, *With Zeal and With Bayonets Only: The British Army on Campaign in North America, 1775 – 1783* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), pp. 132-137.

¹⁶ Jon Chandler, 'The Continental Army and 'Military Europe': Professionalism and Restraint in the American War of Independence,' *War in History*, 00 (2020), 1-18 (pp. 17-18).

¹⁷ Rodney Atwood, *The Hessians, Mercenaries from Hessen-Kassel in the American Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 60.

¹⁸ Atwood, *The Hessians*, p. 173.

identify with each other due to their European connections but that the negative reputation earned by the Germans, which lasts even to this day, is not supported by fact.¹⁹ Friederike Baer's new book, *Hessians*, provides a bottom-up look at the German troops' experiences and supports the historians who refute the idea that these men did not respect the laws of war.²⁰

Many works on the ways of war of the Indigenous population in North America support this thesis, especially those calling attention to how differences in martial culture and tactics were connected with atrocity allegations. For example, Colin Calloway's *The American Revolution in Indian Country* emphasizes how Europeans used the writings of Vattel to justify the 'conquest, dispossession, and assimilation' of Indigenous people because they deemed them members of a 'savage' nation.²¹ Further, Wayne Lee's analysis of Indigenous martial culture in 'Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge' contends that this European view led to the acceptance of unlimited methods when attempting to subdue the native population. Although contrary to the colonial public's beliefs, Lee argues that integrated into the Indigenous way of war were traditions and requirements that limited the level of violence used against an enemy.²²

In several battles where atrocity charges emerged by the revolutionaries, elite troops, such as light infantry, rangers, and cavalry, became the focus. In a few studies,

¹⁹ Mark Wishon, *German Forces and the British Army: Interactions and Perceptions, 1742 – 1815* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 105-111, 132.

²⁰ Friederike Baer, *Hessians: German Soldiers in the American Revolutionary War* (Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 119.

²¹ Colin Calloway, *The Indian World of George Washington* (Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 325. Also see: Colin Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 1-25.

²² Wayne Lee, 'Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge: Patterns of Restraint in Native American Warfare, 1500-1800,' *The Journal of Military History* 71 (2007), 701-41 (pp. 701-704); Also see: Wayne Lee, *Barbarians and Brothers: Anglo-American warfare, 1500-1865* (Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 151-159.

researchers connect elite troop tactics with an increased propensity to commit atrocities. John Grenier's *The First Way of War* argues that ranger tactics evolved from both European and Indigenous tactics, ultimately developing into a form of extirpative warfare that included scalp hunting and targeting noncombatants.²³ Matthew Spring demonstrates how the British light infantry's martial culture, which historically had a reputation for using excessive force, led to their use of harsh measures against the American troops.²⁴ Spring argues that as a result of their elite military culture, which led these troops to be 'intoxicated by a well-developed sense of martial superiority,' it is not a coincidence that the perpetrators of the alleged atrocities were often light infantrymen.²⁵

A well-researched theme that buttresses this thesis is the impact of the newspaper business in the American colonies on the war effort and how effectively they maintained control of this industry throughout the war.²⁶ Of all the research conducted on eighteenth-century newspapers, the most notable is Jürgen Habermas's thesis on the

²³ John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 12-14, 19.

²⁴ Spring, *With Zeal*, pp. 233-236.

²⁵ Spring, *With Zeal*, p. 234.

²⁶ For more on newspapers, see: Joseph Adelman, *Revolutionary Networks: The Business and Politics of Printing the News, 1763-1789* (John Hopkins University Press, 2019); Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695-1855* (Longman, 2000); Hannah Barker, 'England, c. 1760-1815' in *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760 – 1820*, ed. by Hannah Barker and Simon Burrows (Cambridge University Press, 2002); Jeremy Black, 'The Press and Politics in the Eighteenth Century,' *Media History*, 8 (2002), 175-82; David Copeland, 'America, c. 1750-1820,' in *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760-1820*, ed. by Hannah Barker and Simon Burrows (Cambridge University Press, 2002); Uriel Heyd, *Reading Newspapers: Press and Public in Eighteenth-Century Britain and America* (Voltaire Foundation, 2012.); Karl W. Schweizer, 'Newspapers, Politics and Public Opinion in the Later Hanoverian Era', *Parliamentary History*, 25 (2006), 32-48; Sue Carol Humphrey, *The American Revolution and the Press: The Promise of Independence* (Northwestern University Press, 2013); Michael Eamon, *Imprinting Britain: Newspapers, Sociability, and the Shaping of British North America* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015); Carl Berger, *Broadsides and Bayonets: The Propaganda War of the American Revolution* (Papamoa Press, 1961); For one of the earliest works on this topic, see: Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America, with a Biography of Printers, and an Account of Newspapers* (American Antiquarian Society, 1874).

public sphere, which directly applies to what occurred in America during the war. In the Thirteen Colonies, since a large portion of the population had access to the news, this broadened the public sphere and set in motion increased political action, which will be revisited in Chapter One.²⁷

In terms of research on the connection between atrocity allegations and colonial newspapers, a few historians have explored how this became a useful tool to sway the colonial public into supporting their cause. However, in these works, there are gaps in historical knowledge that are being filled by this thesis. While Hooch's research focused on the atrocities committed throughout the war, he did not examine the influence of the press on the public sphere.²⁸ Another is Robert Parkinson's book *The Common Cause*, which analyzes the impact of newspapers on long-term perceptions of race in the United States.²⁹ Parkinson argues that in order to maintain the momentum of hatred towards the British, the Patriot press focused only on the unfavorable actions of minority groups, such as the Indigenous populations, laying the ground for Americans' perceptions of race.³⁰ Parkinson's subsequent book, *Thirteen Clocks*, expands on this thesis by focusing on the year leading up to the signing of the Declaration of Independence. In this work, Parkinson shows how Patriot leaders weaponized stories about British-instigated slave insurrections, Indigenous alliances, and German mercenaries to bring unity to the Thirteen Colonies. These stories, in turn, became the heart of the founding stories of the

²⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. by Frederick Lawrence (MIT Press, 1991), pp. 181-183; Jürgen Habermas, 'Further Reflections on the Public Sphere,' in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. by Craig Calhoun (MIT Press, 1992), pp. 421-461 (pp. 430-441); see Chapter One, pp. 31-32.

²⁸ Hooch, *Scars*, pp. 17-20.

²⁹ Robert Parkinson, *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution* (University of North Carolina Press, 2016), p. 17.

³⁰ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 641-673; Parkinson, *Thirteen Clocks*, pp. 2-3.

United States and were handed down to generations.³¹ However, Parkinson's focus in both books is on how 'war stories' about African Americans and Indigenous people that were intended to unite colonists against the British impacted the development of racial prejudice. Further, *Thirteen Clocks* has a chronology different from this thesis as it explores the time leading up to the outbreak of war.

Thesis Methodology and Structure

Each of the five chapters that compose this thesis provides a case study of the immediate aftermath of key battles throughout the war. Most of the battles chosen for the case study are well-known in American historical memory for alleged British atrocities, with many of the allegations included on Franklin and Lafayette's list. The atrocities center on the moment of surrender, when, allegedly, the British military breached the laws of war. Through an in-depth review of the American newspapers accessed from the database *Readex's America's Historical Newspapers* for the first two months after each battle, this thesis will provide a look at how these allegations played out in the public eye through the news. For additional context, this analysis examines what other events dominated the news at the time. Moreover, in many instances, the newspaper response led to more questions, which required additional research to tell the complete story.

Chapter One sets the stage by introducing key themes and background on the robust American colonial newspaper business and also eighteenth-century European laws of war, which served as the basis for the Americans' allegations. This chapter will

³¹ Hooch, *Scars*, pp. 162-163.

also explore the revolutionary response to the first battle of the war when the British army attacked military stores in the towns of Lexington and Concord (April 1775). It will detail how the Americans made the news from the very outset of the war and arguably took British leadership by surprise, forcing them to scramble to clean up a potential public relations disaster.

Chapter Two focuses on the Battle of the Cedars (May 1776) that occurred in the Canadian region of the British colonies. It is in this series of conflicts that, for the first time, the British armies' Indigenous allies come under fire for breaching laws of war. Cedars also occurred at a time when the Continental Congress was about to declare independence from Great Britain, using Britain's alliance with Indigenous troops as one of their main grievances, despite American attempts to also align with Indigenous nations. This chapter will explore how the revolutionary reaction differed from the previous case study with the introduction of Indigenous support. It will also examine how memories of ruthless frontier warfare triggered immense fears in the population, as reflected in the newspaper response. Although a minor conflict, Cedars caused a level of outrage and sensationalism that was out of proportion to its military significance.

The next chapter introduces the German soldier to the war in a case study of the aftermath of the Battle of Long Island (August 1776). To this day, these German subsidy troops hold a reputation for extreme cruelty despite any evidence they behaved differently than the British troops. Chapter Three examines how the Continental Congress primed the colonists to view Germans in a negative light by drawing on the longer history of antipathy towards German mercenaries. At the same time, they launched a scheme to try and entice these troops to desert with the hope of recruiting

them. The newspaper reports demonstrate that this view shifted by early 1777, as Americans became less afraid of the German troops. Instead, Americans redirected their accusations to the British troops as the Continental Congress ordered another investigation against the British army.

Chapter Four examines two conflicts that became known as the Paoli (1777) and Baylor (1778) Massacres. It is the Paoli Massacre that holds a reputation today as being the scene of one of the worst British atrocities to occur during the war. This chapter argues that despite the historical memory of Paoli, there was barely any immediate response to this attack, even with the allegations the British violated laws of war. It was the Baylor Massacre that occurred a year later that propelled the attack at Paoli into the spotlight after the Continental Congress released a manifesto alleging multiple breaches over the previous two years. Collectively, these allegations led to debates in Parliament over using harsh measures as the way forward with a war at a crossroads.

The following chapter focuses on the Battle of Waxhaws, known today as a conflict that led to allegations that the British Legion breached laws of war after refusing quarter to surrendering American cavalry troops. It will examine why, despite the historical memory of these atrocities today, the revolutionary newspaper and political response to this battle was minimal. As a result, the British were not called on to answer the allegations as in the previous case studies. Further, it will explore why the Legion's commander, Banastre Tarleton, came away with one of the worst reputations of any British officer from this war. This chapter will also offer evidence of the underrepresented analysis of the brutality of the war in the North, due to the

historiographical focus on the extreme violence that occurred during the Southern Campaign.

The last chapter of this thesis is the conclusion, which brings together all themes and patterns that emerged from the extensive newspaper analysis conducted in the immediate aftermath of the five battles.

Chapter One: Lexington and Concord and the Battle for the Moral High Ground

Introduction

After the smoke cleared from the Battle of Lexington and Concord on 19 April 1775, another conflict ensued off the battlefield. This battle occurred in a separate sphere after the military action ended and played out on the ground to the public eye through the colonial newspapers. The objective was to prove who held the moral high ground. It was the revolutionaries who prevailed as they were quick to leverage the power of the newspapers, ultimately taking British leadership by surprise. This chapter will demonstrate how, in the aftermath of Lexington and Concord, the revolutionaries held the upper hand in the information war that occurred in the newspapers. As a result, this achievement negatively impacted the British government's efforts to win support in suppressing colonial resistance. To the surprise of British leadership, it took only one day for news of the attack to reach the surrounding colonies and two days for the papers to accuse Gage of inhumane and barbaric actions against innocent civilians. Furthermore, the Patriots succeeded in publishing their version of events in the British newspapers weeks before Gage's report arrived in the hands of the British government. As a result, Parliament found themselves scrambling to change the narrative in their favor. However, despite these efforts, in the end, they could never catch up. By using a combination of speed in flooding the newspapers with allegations against the British military, appealing to the public's understanding of civilized warfare, and moral constructs around Christianity, the revolutionary narrative of events dominated the colonial news.

Americans ‘Make’ the News

At the start of the American War for Independence, the British realized immediately after the first engagement of the war the immense control the Americans had over the news. So much so, in fact, they were ‘making’ the news by shaping public perceptions with information that was not always factual to argue that the British were on the wrong side of history. The revolutionary grip on the information war became evident not only to General Thomas Gage, Commander in Chief of British Forces in North America and Governor of Massachusetts Bay, but to other key members of Parliament soon after the dust settled from the opening battle of the war. Due to a blunder on Gage’s part, the Patriots succeeded in publishing their narrative of the battle in the British newspapers before his version arrived in Great Britain. Taken completely off guard, British leadership faced the potential for a massive public relations crisis if they did not take immediate action to reset the narrative in their favor.

The Battle of Lexington and Concord, fought on 19 April 1775, resulted from several years of unrest and tension in the city of Boston. Triggering this unrest was resistance to the British government’s attempts to gain greater control of the colonies and repay expenses from the Seven Years’ War by levying new taxes. Prior to the battle, Gage received a royal proclamation from Parliament requiring him to regain control of this rebellious city. Parliament also ordered him to capture and punish any suspected ringleaders of the opposition as an example to others.³² It was William Legge, 2nd Earl of Dartmouth and Secretary of State for the Colonies, who sent the order to Gage. In his

³² This order was printed in *The Providence Gazette*, 22 April 1775, p. 2.

letter, Dartmouth relayed a message from George III that Gage must do everything possible to avoid violent measures and ‘to quiet the minds of the people, to remove their prejudices’ by using ‘mild and gentle persuasion’ to induce them into submission.³³ In response to this order from Parliament and the King, on 19 April, Gage deployed approximately 1500 grenadier and light infantry troops to Lexington and then Concord to seize military stores intended for use by the resistance. This deployment ultimately ended in disaster, forcing the British to retreat to the relative safety of Boston, leaving two hundred and seventy-three British soldiers and ninety-five American militia killed.³⁴

On 22 April 1775, three days after the battle, Gage sent his reports on the conflict to both Lord Dartmouth and William Barrington, 2nd Viscount Barrington, and Secretary at War. However, unbeknownst to Gage, a revolutionary version of the conflict would arrive in Great Britain several weeks before his reached the mainland. To make matters worse, this American account was published in the British newspapers, taking Parliament by surprise. As expected, the revolutionary version of the battle did not shine a favorable light on Gage’s handling of the colonial resistance to the British military’s operation on 19 April. After becoming apprised of the newspaper article, Dartmouth quickly understood that a public relations problem was at hand. Whitehall needed to take immediate action to release their version of events and bring calm to increasingly anxious members of Parliament. However, without Gage’s report, the ministry could do

³³ ‘19 January 1775,’ 18th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers, Parliamentary Register (1774-1780), pp. 1-2 of 73, in *U. K. Parliamentary Papers* <https://parlipapers.proquest.com/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.pr_1774_1780-000011?accountid=14664> [accessed 14 January 2024].

³⁴ Rick Atkinson, *The British are Coming: The War for America, Lexington to Princeton, 1775-1777* (Henry Holt and Company, 2019), pp. 36-54; John Ferling, *Winning Independence* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021), pp. 1-52; Andrew Robert, *The Last King of America: The Misunderstood Reign of George III* (Viking, 2021), pp. 244-262; Woody Holton, *Liberty is Sweet: The Hidden History of the American Revolution* (Simon and Schuster, 2021), pp. 1-19.

no more than caution the British public not to believe this revolutionary version of events.³⁵

In a letter sent to Gage on 1 June, Dartmouth expressed serious concerns that he had not received any information on the conflict from Gage. Dartmouth detailed that:

Since my letter to you of the 27th Ult., an Account has been printed here, accompanied with Depositions to verify it, of Skirmishes between a Detachment of the Troops under your Command and different Bodies of the Provincial Militia. It appears, upon the fullest Inquiry, that this Account, which is chiefly taken from a Salem News-Paper, has been published by a Captain Darby, who arrived on Friday or Saturday at Southampton, in a small Vessel in Ballast, directly from Salam, and from every Circumstance relating to this Person and the Vessel, it is evident he was employed by the Provincial Congress to bring this Account, which is plainly made up for the purpose of conveying every possible Prejudice and Misrepresentation of the Truth.³⁶

The Salem newspaper referenced by Dartmouth arrived in Great Britain in late May 1775 and was likely *The Essex Gazette*, the only newspaper published in Salem, Massachusetts. The revolutionaries sent this version of events on a smaller, lighter ship that embarked from Salem, hoping it would cross the Atlantic quicker than the ship Gage dispatched. This paper printed its article on the conflict on 25 April and alleged the British military set fire to several homes, pillaged ‘almost every house they passed by,’ killed innocent civilians who were ‘aged and infirm,’ and killed ‘without Mercy,’ wounded American militia.³⁷

³⁵ Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, William L. Clements Library, ES, Vol. 29, Folder 14, Dartmouth to Gage, 1 June 1775. Dartmouth’s reference to ‘In Ballast’ means that a ship is not carrying cargo, but instead containers of seawater to add weight and keep a lightweight ship level and faster. See: ‘In Ballast,’ Cambridge Dictionary <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/in-ballast>> [accessed 10 March 2024].

³⁶ Clements Library, ES, Vol. 29, Folder 14, Dartmouth to Gage, 1 June 1775.

³⁷ ‘Salem, April 25,’ *The Essex Gazette*, 25 April 1775, p. 3; While there is no reference in Dartmouth’s letter to the name of the newspaper, there was only one newspaper published in Salam, Massachusetts.

The Americans' success in getting their version of events to Great Britain before Gage's caused Dartmouth much consternation. 'It is very much to be lamented,' he stated, 'that we have not some Account from you of this Transaction.'³⁸ Furthermore, all signs pointed to the employer of the ship being the Continental Congress. Dartmouth hoped the public might question its validity until Gage's dispatches arrived and they could set the story straight. Even though Dartmouth knew Gage's reports were on the way from intelligence he received after an interrogation of the ship's captain who transported the revolutionary version of events, this knowledge did not ease Dartmouth's angst. In closing his letter, Dartmouth stated, 'We expect the Arrival of that Vessel with great Impatience, but till she arrives I can form no decisive judgment of what has happened, and therefore, can have nothing more to add.'³⁹ Gage's account could not come soon enough.

On 10 June, Barrington and Dartmouth finally received Gage's letter detailing his version of events. Gage opened by stating, 'I have now nothing to trouble your Lordship with but of an Affair that happened here on the 19th Instant.'⁴⁰ Gage explained that a conflict with the local inhabitants occurred after he received intelligence about a large store of weapons and supplies at Concord intended for arming the militia to act in rebellion against the King's troops. In response, he ordered Lieutenant Colonel Smith and approximately 700 regular troops to destroy these military supplies. However, despite efforts to conduct the mission in secrecy, the local inhabitants quickly spotted the British military on the move. 'From the firing of Alarm Guns and Ringing of Bells,'

³⁸ Clements Library, *ES*, Vol. 29, Folder 14, Dartmouth to Gage, 1 June 1775.

³⁹ Clements Library, *ES*, Vol. 29, Folder 14, Dartmouth to Gage, 1 June 1775.

⁴⁰ Clements Library, *ES*, Vol. 29, Folder 2, Gage to Barrington, 22 April 1775.

Gage stated, the locals discovered the British troops, and the militia rapidly assembled. In turn, Smith was ‘Opposed by a Body of Men within Six Miles of Concord: some few of whom first began to fire upon his Advanced Company’s, which brought on a fire from the Troops.’ While they still managed to destroy the military stores, on the return march to Boston, the militia attacked from all sides. Gage sent reinforcements headed by Lord Hugh Percy, but the conflict continued as the British pushed their way back through the town of Lexington and eventually to Boston. Gage explained the ordeal as ‘A continual Skirmish for the Space of Fifteen Miles, receiving Fire from every Hill, Fence, House, Barn.’ Yet, ‘His Lordship (Lord Percy) kept the Enemy off, and brought the Troops to Charles Town, from whence they were ferried over to Boston.’⁴¹ Gage closed by expressing his astonishment:

The whole Country was Assembled in Arms with Surprising expedition, and several Thousands are now Assembled about this Town, threatening an Attack, and getting up Artillery, and we are very busy in making preparations to Oppose them.⁴²

By the time Gage’s dispatches arrived in Great Britain, the ten-day period, where the public only knew the information written from the revolutionaries’ view, caused damage. In a letter written on 1 July, Dartmouth admonished Gage for not taking all measures possible to get his account to Great Britain as fast as possible. Dartmouth also described the impact the delay in information had on the British public’s view by explaining:

Their [the revolutionaries] Industry on this occasion had its Effect in leaving for some Days a false Impression upon Peoples minds; and I mention it to you with a Hope that in any future Event of Importance, it

⁴¹ Clements Library, *ES*, Vol. 29, Folder 2, Gage to Barrington, 22 April 1775.

⁴² Clements Library, *ES*, Vol. 29, Folder 2, Gage to Barrington, 22 April 1775.

will be thought proper, by both yourself and the Admiral, to send your Dispatches by one of the Light Vessels of the Fleet.⁴³

Dartmouth grew concerned that the Patriots' skill in making the news was impacting the British public's view of the action at Lexington and Concord. Although Dartmouth directed Gage to continue efforts to subdue the rebellion if the colonists persisted, he advised that Gage should prioritize using conciliatory approaches. Gage's goal should be reconciliation, but only after the colonies 'Have recovered from the Prejudices and Consternation,' Dartmouth stated, 'which were created by the artful Misrepresentation of the Affair of the 19th of April.'⁴⁴ In the end, key leadership within the British military never expected the 'industry' shown by the revolutionaries to ensure their version of the conflict made the news first, and they now had to scramble to clean up the public relations predicament that ensued.

Dartmouth noted early on that Great Britain lagged behind the Americans in the information war not only because of the Americans' swift response after Lexington and Concord but also because of their skill in distorting the facts to their favor. Although he stepped down as Secretary of State for the Colonies in November 1775, he continued to keep a close eye on the events occurring in America through his correspondence with key members of the government serving in the colonies. One man Dartmouth heavily relied on to keep up with the American rebellion was Ambrose Serle. Serle previously served as Dartmouth's Under-Secretary, and in the summer of 1776, he became Secretary to Admiral Howe. Although he no longer worked for Dartmouth, he kept frequent correspondence with him throughout his time in the colonies. Serle was one of

⁴³ Clements Library, *ES*, Vol. 30, Folder 1, Dartmouth to Gage, 1 July 1775.

⁴⁴ Clements Library, *ES*, Vol. 30, Folder 1, Dartmouth to Gage, 1 July 1775.

the few who, along with Dartmouth, recognized the risk of allowing the Americans to continue to hold the upper hand in their propaganda efforts. As Howe's Secretary, Serle used his influence to change the British information strategy and gain control of some colonial newspapers.⁴⁵

Serle arrived in the colonies as the British Army prepared to attack New York City by staging thousands of troops on Staten Island in New York. Serle traveled to the colonies on *The Eagle*, the same ship as Admiral Howe, which docked at Staten Island on 12 July 1776. He was an avid writer and a staunch Loyalist who published a pamphlet in 1775 titled *Americans Against Liberty*, arguing against the American revolutionary cause.⁴⁶ Soon after his arrival, he learned that the revolutionary Congress signed the Declaration of Independence, which he described as, 'A more impudent, false and atrocious Proclamation was never fabricated by the Hands of Man.'⁴⁷ On 16 July, after reading a colonial newspaper for the first time, Serle was appalled, explaining in his diary that it was full of 'Bitterness and Malignancy.'⁴⁸ A few weeks later, Serle obtained a copy of a Philadelphia newspaper and exclaimed that 'Never was more Insolence or more Falsehood comprised in so narrow a Compass before.'⁴⁹ Furthermore, it did not take Serle long to recognize the impact these fallacious reports had on the British public as well, including his own family:

The English Newspapers teem with Falsehoods respecting American Affairs; and I fear my dear Family has been frightened by some of them respecting my safety. They very freely killed Lord Howe at Rhode Island,

⁴⁵ Ambrose Serle, *The American Journal of Ambrose Serle: Secretary to Lord Howe, 1776-1778*, ed. by E. Tatum (Huntington Library, 1940), pp. x-xii.

⁴⁶ Serle, *American Journal*, p. 28.

⁴⁷ Serle, *American Journal*, p. 31.

⁴⁸ Serle, *American Journal*, p. 36.

⁴⁹ Serle, *American Journal*, p. 51.

while he was laboring to get over the Banks of Newfoundland. A very trifling Difference between the Plot and Action of a Lye!⁵⁰

Serle quickly realized that the British needed to improve their information strategy. In a letter to Dartmouth written in November 1776, Serle expressed his frustration over the fake news published in the colonial papers, stating:

Among other Engines, which have raised the present Commotion next to the indecent Harangues of the Preachers, none has had a more extensive or stronger Influence than the Newspapers of the respective Colonies. One is astonished to see with what Avidity they are sought after, and how implicitly they are believed, by the great Bulk of the People. The Congress saw the Necessity of securing this Advantage entirely to themselves, and of preventing all Publications, which might wither expose or refute the Policy of their measures.⁵¹

Never did Serle expect that the public could believe the false and exaggerated reports that, frankly, made the British military look bad. Furthermore, he recognized that the Continental Congress intentionally gained control of the majority of newspapers early on by only allowing reports published that aligned with their agenda. As a result, Serle advocated for leadership to take immediate measures to mitigate the crisis they faced, which will be revisited in Chapter Three.⁵²

The American Colonial Newspapers

The Americans' successes in harnessing the power of the newspapers in their favor was undoubtedly due to the Thirteen Colonies' robust newspaper culture, which in turn provoked political activism. In the American colonies, members of the public

⁵⁰ Serle, *American Journal*, p. 127.

⁵¹ *B. F. Steven's Facsimiles of Manuscripts in European Archives Relating to America, 1773 – 1783*, ed. by B. F. Stevens (London: [n. pub], 1895), xxiv, p. 265.

⁵² See Chapter Three, pp. 181-183.

sphere gathered at coffee houses and other public facilities, where they took part in political discourse centered around the war in the colonies. It was the information provided to the colonial public by the newspapers that fueled these debates, shaping public opinion and setting people in motion to advocate for change. Newspapers' popularity even surpassed that of essay papers and pamphlets, the main forms of media for centuries up to this point. With newspapers, not only could one read the recent news reports from all over the world but also numerous other local commentaries on events all in one publication. Furthermore, in America, more people had access to the news due to higher literacy rates, arguably making the public sphere more extensive than compared to European nations, and the newspapers a more powerful medium for political action. In the end, the revolutionaries effectively leveraged the newspapers' capabilities to sway public opinion against the Crown.⁵³

The high literacy rates in America gave colonists the advantage of increased access to the information provided in the newspapers. By one estimate, the literacy rate reached ninety percent by the year 1800. This data also includes women whose estimated literacy rates were on par with men by the nineteenth century. Moreover, the news reached the illiterate public as well. The widespread practice of sharing and debating news and events in taverns and coffee houses by reading newspaper articles aloud meant those who could not read still had the means to access the news. Further, these venues became popular arenas for political debates and a platform for people to

⁵³ Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society 1695-1855* (Pearson Education Limited, 2000), p. 127; David Copeland, 'America 1750-1820,' in *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America 1760-1820*, ed. by Hannah Barker and Simon Burrows (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 140-158 (pp. 141-154); Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. by Frederick Lawrence (MIT Press, 1991), pp. 181-183; Jürgen Habermas, 'Further Reflections on the Public Sphere,' in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. by Craig Calhoun (MIT Press, 1992), pp. 421-461 (pp. 430-441).

exchange their views on current events. As a result of the colonial news-sharing culture, in 1775, news from the papers reached approximately 2.5 million people.⁵⁴

Throughout the war, the state of the newspaper industry in the Thirteen Colonies was topsy-turvy, as there was much movement within the industry as many publishing houses struggled to stay in business. While there were thirty-seven active newspapers in the colonies at the beginning of the war, by the end, there were thirty-five. However, out of all the newspapers active at the beginning of the war, twenty continued to publish through the end of the war. Predictably, the location of the majority of the newspaper presses was in the heavier populated northern colonies, compared to the South, with approximately a quarter of the papers located in the cities of New York and Philadelphia.⁵⁵ Many pro-revolutionary businesses shut down when the British occupied their location, and others moved out of British territory for safety reasons. When the British occupied the large port cities such as Boston, New York, Newport, Philadelphia, Charleston, and Savannah, several Loyalist-leaning publishing houses stood up. Throughout the war, several changes occurred within the newspaper industry as publishers attempted to move with the political tide and stay above water as the British-occupied territories shifted and pressure increased on the printers to, in essence, pick a side.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Copeland, 'America 1750-1820,' pp. 141-143; Carol Sue Humphrey, *The American Revolution and the Press: The Promise of Independence* (Northwestern University Press, 2013), p. xiii.

⁵⁵ Robert Parkinson, *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution* (University of North Carolina Press, 2016), p. 41; Of the thirty-seven newspapers in existence in 1775, the colony of Connecticut had four newspapers, Massachusetts had eight, New Hampshire had one, Rhode Island had three, New York City had three, the city of Philadelphia had six, the colony of Maryland had two, Virginia had four, North Carolina had two, South Carolina had three, and Georgia had one. Robert Parkinson conducted extensive research on the state of the newspapers throughout the war, not seen in other secondary sources. See: Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 675-703.

⁵⁶ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, p. 675.

The newspaper publishers that first dealt with the immediate impacts of the Battle of Lexington and Concord were, of course, those located in Boston, Massachusetts. No publisher could stay neutral, although some tried and failed. *The Boston Evening Post*, for example, fought to maintain neutrality but caved under too much pressure and closed its doors in late April 1775, only a few weeks after the battle. However, those publishers that maintained their support for independence from Great Britain had no choice but to evacuate Boston. The Patriot-leaning *Massachusetts Spy*, first published in 1770, shut down when the publisher fled Boston the day after Lexington and Concord. However, they relocated to Worcester, about 50 miles away, and opened up again a month later with a new name, *The Massachusetts Spy and American Oracle of Liberty*. *The Boston Gazette's* publishers, Benjamin Edes and John Gill, decided to split up after Lexington and Concord. A few months after the battle, Edes moved *The Gazette* to Watertown, about ten miles from Boston. Gill, on the other hand, remained in Boston, and after the British evacuated the city, he started up *The Continental Journal* in May 1776. A few years later, *The Independent Ledger*, another Patriot paper, also started in Boston in 1778.⁵⁷ As for Loyalist papers, *The Massachusetts Gazette* set up shop immediately after Lexington and Concord but then went out of business when the publisher evacuated Boston with the British in March 1776.⁵⁸

In the New England colonies, Patriot-leaning publishing houses not located in the path of the British army expectedly fared much better during the war. For example, the four newspapers from Connecticut all stayed afloat throughout the entire war

⁵⁷ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 675-679.

⁵⁸ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 675-682.

because the British army never occupied their locations.⁵⁹ However, in some cases, the threat was not the British army. For example, when revolutionaries accused the publisher of the *New Hampshire Gazette* of being a Loyalist, he stepped down in 1776. A few months later, a new publisher picked up its operations in Portsmouth, and the paper reemerged as the *Freeman's Journal*. However, in 1778, it took on its former name once again when another publisher took over the business. In the colony of Rhode Island, *The Providence Gazette* survived the war with no issues, as the British did not besiege this city. However, when the British occupied Newport, *The Newport Mercury*, a Patriot-leaning paper, stopped publication in 1776 when British soldiers almost captured the publisher. However, in 1780, a new publisher bought *The Mercury* and started publishing again.⁶⁰

In Philadelphia alone, there were six newspapers located in this city at the beginning of the war.⁶¹ One unfortunately went out of business for non-war related issues when a fire destroyed *Story & Humphrey's Pennsylvania Mercury's* publishing house in 1775. When the British occupied Philadelphia in September 1777, all publishers except Benjamin Town from the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* evacuated the town. Those who evacuated either suspended printing or scattered to safer locations within the colonies to resume operations. Town, on the other hand, decided to ride out the occupation by printing Loyalist-leaning material. During the occupation, Loyalist newspapers opened up, such as the *Royal Pennsylvania Gazette* and the *Pennsylvania Ledger*; when James Humphreys Jr, who initially fled the town when the British arrived,

⁵⁹ The Connecticut newspapers reviewed are the *Courant, Journal, Gazette, and Norwich Packet*.

⁶⁰ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 680-681.

⁶¹ The six newspapers included: *The Pennsylvania Gazette, The Packet, The Journal, The Evening Post, Story & Humphrey's Pennsylvania Mercury*, and *The Ledger*; Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, p. 686.

returned to resume publishing.⁶² When the British evacuated the city in June 1778, the *Evening Post* reverted back to publishing as a Patriot-leaning paper. *The Royal Pennsylvania Gazette* and the *Ledger* ended operations, and both publishers moved to British-occupied New York. Furthermore, two remaining publishers who initially evacuated Philadelphia returned and continued operations through 1783.⁶³

In Virginia, at the start of the war, there were four newspapers in the colony titled *The Virginia Gazette* because of the provincial government's requirement for all papers to have this title. Three of these were located in Williamsburg and one in Norfolk, and they all supported independence. The Norfolk newspaper shut down not long after it opened when John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore, the Virginia Royal Governor, confiscated its press. Furthermore, none of the Williamsburg papers survived the war. *The Gazettes*, owned by John Pinkney and Alexander Purdie, shut down by 1780 because both publishers passed away.⁶⁴ The *Gazette*, owned by John Dixon, originally partnered with William Hunter Jr, but when Dixon found out that Hunter was a Loyalist, he fired Hunter and took on a new partner. By 1780, Dixon moved the paper to Richmond for safety reasons but then shut down in May 1781 due to the threat of British troops in this area.⁶⁵

The newspapers in the southern colonies experienced the same level of challenges as in the North, especially in the cities of Charleston and Savannah. In the

⁶² James Humphreys and his brother published several Loyalist papers for the King during the war. They followed the British army and started up Loyalist papers at each location they went. Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, p. 682.

⁶³ The two publishers that returned owned *The Pennsylvania Journal* and *The Pennsylvania Packet*. After evacuating Philadelphia, both publishers stood up operations at alternate locations until returning to the city.

⁶⁴ Pinkney's paper shut down in February 1776, and Purdie's in April 1779.

⁶⁵ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, p. 694.

busy port city of Charleston, South Carolina, there were six newspapers during the war. However, none published consistently throughout the war because of the British attacks on the city and the eventual siege.⁶⁶ With the British occupation in 1780, four of the papers shut down operations, and two Loyalist papers opened their doors. As expected, these two papers shut down after the Americans won the Battle of Yorktown.⁶⁷ Georgia had two newspapers located in Savannah, the colony's largest city. The publisher of *The Georgia Gazette*, a Loyalist, stopped publishing in February 1776. Then, in January 1779, the same publisher stood up the Loyalist-leaning paper titled, *The Royal Georgia Gazette*, only to shut down a few years later when the British evacuated.⁶⁸ However, the publisher stayed in Savannah and survived by riding the wave of anti-Loyalist oppression after the war to eventually launch a new paper called *The Gazette of the State of Georgia* in 1783.⁶⁹ This paper continued until 1788, when the publisher changed its title once again back to the *Georgia Gazette*, which continued until his retirement in 1802.⁷⁰

The colony of North Carolina only had two newspapers at the start of the war. Both newspapers were Patriot-leaning, and both shut down by the war's end due to reasons unrelated to the war. *The Cape-Fear Mercury* shut down in 1775 because the

⁶⁶ The papers in Charlestown included: *The South-Carolina Gazette* (started in 1734 and stopped December 1775), *The South-Carolina Gazette and Country Journal* (started in 1765 and stopped August 1775), *The Charleston Gazette* (started August 1778 and stopped January 1780), *The Gazette of State of South Carolina* (from 1777 to 1779), *The South-Carolina and American General Gazette* (from 1758 to December 1779), *The Royal South Carolina Gazette* (from 1780 to 1782), and *The Royal Gazette* (from 1781 to 1782). Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 695-698.

⁶⁷ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 695-698.

⁶⁸ Neither of the Georgia newspapers were available in *AHN* for this chapter's case study. Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, p. 698.

⁶⁹ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, p. 698. None of the newspapers from the Carolinas and Georgia were available in *America's Historical Newspapers* during the period of this case study.

⁷⁰ 'The Georgia Gazette,' in *Georgia Historical Newspapers*

<<https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/lccn/sn83016182/#:~:text=In%201763%2C%20twenty%2Dfive%2D,news%20alongside%20his%20local%20reporting>> [accessed 9 April 2024].

publisher became a minister. *The North Carolina Gazette* was published on and off throughout the years, once shutting down in 1769 because a hurricane destroyed its shop. This paper shut its doors for good in 1778 for unknown reasons.⁷¹ In Maryland, four Patriot-leaning newspapers published out of Baltimore and Annapolis. Only *The Maryland Journal* survived through the entire war from its location in Baltimore. *Dunlap's Maryland Gazette*, the same publisher as *The Pennsylvania Packet*, started publishing in early May 1775, only to shut down in 1778 for unknown reasons.⁷²

In New York City lived one of the most well-known newspaper publishers of this time, James Rivington, of *Rivington's New York Gazetteer*, who started this publication in 1773. With the British invasion of New York City in 1776, Rivington shut down, only to reemerge in 1777 with his newspaper, now called *The Royal Gazette*.⁷³ John Holt, the publisher of *The New York Journal*, started operations in 1766 with the support of the Sons of Liberty and moved to upstate New York when the British arrived, never to return. *The New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury's* publisher, Hugh Gaine, fled to Newark, New Jersey, after the British occupation. Only a few weeks later, he returned to New York City. Now a Loyalist, Gaine worked with Ambrose Serle, and started a Loyalist-leaning paper under the same name.⁷⁴ With New York City now secure for

⁷¹ The other North Carolina paper was *The Cape-Fear Mercury* which published until 1775. Neither of the North Carolina newspapers were available in *AHN* for this chapter's case study. Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, p. 694.

⁷² Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 700, 692. *The Maryland Gazette* also printed in Annapolis but was not available in the *AHN* for this chapter's case study.

⁷³ James Rivington is still controversial today, mainly because the TV show 'TURN: Washington's Spies (2014-2017).' This show brought to light the legend that Rivington, who was outwardly extremely loyal to the Crown, was actually a spy for the United States during the war. Also see: Todd Andrlik, 'James Rivington: King's Printer and Patriot Spy?,' *Journal of the American Revolution*, (2014) <<https://allthingsliberty.com/2014/03/james-rivington-kings-printer-patriot-spy/>> [accessed 11 February 2024].

⁷⁴ Serle, *American Journal*, p. 114; Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 684-685.

Loyalists to reside, in 1777, Alexander and James Robertson opened *The Royal American Gazette*.⁷⁵ Lastly, in New Jersey, the colony next door to New York City, only had one newspaper. *The New Jersey Gazette*, a Patriot-leaning paper, started up in 1777 and continued publishing throughout the war.⁷⁶

Newspaper publishers in the Thirteen Colonies often followed similar patterns in the publication and presentation of information within their newspapers. On average, most publishers released issues once a week. However, a few published several times a week, such as *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, which released its paper three times a week. The majority of newspapers comprised four pages of content and, at times, included ‘Supplements’ or additional pages of information if needed. The content of the newspapers followed similar patterns, with the front page generally containing news from Great Britain, most often pertaining to events in Parliament, and opinion pieces from anonymous writers. The interior pages contained local news from within the colonies, such as reports on the battles occurring in the colonies. Most publishers dedicated the last page to advertisements, with the exception of James Rivington, who placed advertisements on all four of his newspaper’s pages. Publishers often noted the sources of the reports, whether it was by a ship arriving from overseas, expresses arriving at the printer’s office with breaking news, or from a ‘gentleman’ of credibility delivering it directly to the publishers’ office.⁷⁷ Unlike today, publishers generally did not reserve the front page for the most breaking news, except in a few cases. For

⁷⁵ The New York newspapers not available in *AHN* for this chapter’s case study are *The NY Constitutional Gazette*, *The New York Mercury*, and *The New York Packet*.

⁷⁶ The only other newspaper in New Jersey started operations in 1779 by a former Continental officer and was named *The New Jersey Journal*.

⁷⁷ The observations made in this paragraph came from the author’s review of newspapers for this study.

example, the day after the Battle of Lexington and Concord, *The New Hampshire Gazette* published this news on the first page, with the header, ‘Bloody News.’

While the first newspaper publisher opened its doors in Boston in 1690, newspaper growth in the American colonies was relatively slow until the mid-eighteenth century.⁷⁸ With the onset of the Seven Years’ War, the newspaper business in the American colonies experienced a rapid expansion due to an increased interest in politics spurred by the war.⁷⁹ American colonists clamored for news on the conflict, and the newspapers delivered by providing both local and international views on the events. The public response and the subsequent high demand for news on this imperial conflict also laid the groundwork for the high level of interest the newspapers received during the American Revolution.⁸⁰

While the Thirteen Colonies’ newspaper business boomed during the Seven Years’ War, the recently conquered British colonies to the north of Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Quebec’s printing capabilities and newspaper productions were comparatively small-scale. Only two newspapers existed in the Canadian region before 1776, both of which were started by colonists who began their careers in Philadelphia and Massachusetts.⁸¹ Bartholomew Green Jr, the son of a famous Boston printer, launched the *Halifax Gazette*, the oldest newspaper produced in the colony of Nova Scotia, in the early 1750s.⁸² The second oldest was the *Quebec Gazette*, founded in 1764

⁷⁸ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, p. 41; Copeland, ‘America 1750-1820,’ p. 145; Humphrey, *The American Revolution and the Press*, p. 180.

⁷⁹ Copeland, ‘America 1750-1820,’ p. 148; Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, p. 10.

⁸⁰ Copeland, ‘America 1750-1820,’ p. 148; Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, p. 10.

⁸¹ Humphrey, *The American Revolution and the Press*, p. 180.

⁸² Michael Eamon, *Imprinting Britain: Newspapers, Sociability, and the Shaping of British North America* (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015), p. 58; Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America* (Printed for the Society, 1874), pp. 357-8.

after the British victory over the French in the Seven Years' War by William Brown and Thomas Gilmore, two printers from Philadelphia.⁸³

The Canadian region's newspaper culture did not grow as quickly as those in the Thirteen Colonies predominately because of its smaller population, the harsher weather compared to their southern neighbors, and also because of the state of newspapers in France compared to Great Britain. In 1750, the French colonies' estimated population was 55,000, compared to one million colonists that Benjamin Franklin estimated lived in the British colonies.⁸⁴ Unlike the flourishing newspaper culture handed over to the British colonies from Great Britain, the colonies of New France did not inherit the same advantage from its mother country. Furthermore, the Canadian colonies struggled with significant delays in receiving the news due to the harsher weather since the primary source of information for all newspapers in the American colonies came from ship crew and travelers.⁸⁵ The harbor at Quebec City had to close during the winter months due to the ice buildup compounded by its inland location on the St. Lawrence River. On the other hand, while the Port of Halifax was one of the deepest and 'ice-free' harbors in the colonies, making sea travel to this port possible during winter, travel on land from Halifax to anywhere else in the British colonies was almost impossible.⁸⁶

⁸³ Eamon, *Imprinting Britain*, p. 58; Thomas, *The History of Printing in America*, pp. 362-363.

⁸⁴ Timothy Shannon, *The Seven Years' War in North America, A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2014), pp. 8-9.

⁸⁵ Eamon, *Imprinting Britain*, p. 59.

⁸⁶ Samuel Venière, 'Port of Quebec,' *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (2018) <<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/port-of-quebec>> [accessed 11 February 2024]; Brett McGillivray, 'The Contemporary City,' *Britannica* <<https://www.britannica.com/place/Halifax-Nova-Scotia/The-contemporary-city>> [accessed 11 February 2024]; Eamon, *Imprinting Britain*, p. 59.

Without question, the British colonies in America replicated the newspaper culture and business practices already existing in Great Britain.⁸⁷ Ownership of newspapers followed the British standard as often the printer managed all operations in the publishing house, or the owner contracted management of the business with a printer.⁸⁸ Furthermore, the practice of ‘exchanging’ newspaper reports was an accepted practice during this time. This meant that publishers took news articles from other newspapers and printed them in their own papers. Publishers did not consider this practice as plagiarism. Instead, they openly shared articles with each other and often referenced the article’s original source. This meant that colonists read the same reports, with the same information that circulated through the news within the British colonies, which often originated in newspapers across the Atlantic.⁸⁹

The relationship between politics and the press, along with the gravity of maintaining the ‘freedom of the press,’ all originated in Great Britain, and their colonies followed suit.⁹⁰ The ideology around liberty of the press strengthened during the eighteenth century, and by the American Revolution, it was a powerful concept that lived in the conscience of the public sphere.⁹¹ The growth of this ideation was a result of very little repression and censorship of the British press since 1695, unlike its European counterparts.⁹² While the press could be a problem for some politicians, press support was a greater advantage, which is why politicians rarely pursued state action against the

⁸⁷ Uriel Heyd, *Reading Newspapers: Press and Public in Eighteenth-Century Britain and America* (Voltaire Foundation, 2012), p. 2.

⁸⁸ Copeland, ‘America 1750-1820,’ p. 145.

⁸⁹ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, p. 15; Robert Parkinson, *Thirteen Clocks* (University of North Carolina Press, 2021), p. 28.

⁹⁰ Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*, pp. 67, 80 - 86, 93 - 94.

⁹¹ Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*, p. 12.

⁹² Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society*, p. 68.

press.⁹³ Adding to press liberties, in the 1760s and 70s, the government lost its ability to execute ‘general warrants,’ which gave the government power to take action against a newspaper with very little evidence. Furthermore, the government also lost its ability to prevent the publication of parliamentary debates. This increased level of transparency in government matters led most of the public to believe that the press was not a threat to the constitution, despite some concerns of misleading and false reports, but the constitution’s protector. In essence, the press became the ‘public watchdog’ that protected a country against government corruption by publicizing their actions, despite some lingering concerns over misleading reports.⁹⁴

Along with freedom of the press was the fundamental expectation that newspapers printed accurate newspaper reports and the concern of the damage that inaccurate or misleading reports wielded.⁹⁵ Consternation over fake news triggered anger in both British and American societies. For example, in America, the public’s demand for accurate reporting is apparent in Harbottle Dorr’s newspaper collection. Dorr, a Boston merchant and member of the Sons of Liberty, collected newspapers and organized them with an elaborate indexing scheme he developed. Dorr also wrote comments on the newspapers he collected, often making a point to highlight any inaccurate information or indicate that the report was false. For example, in response to an article printed on 7 November 1776 declaring that the French offered George III

⁹³ Hannah Barker, ‘England, c. 1760-1815,’ in *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760 – 1820*, ed. by Hannah Barker and Simon Burrows (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 95.

⁹⁴ Barker, ‘England, c. 1760-1815,’ p. 95.

⁹⁵ Heyd, *Reading Newspapers*, p. 56.

about 5,000 men to ‘subdue the rebels,’ Dorr jotted down the exclamation that this statement was ‘a lie!’⁹⁶

Despite the multiple similarities between the American and British newspapers, by 1800, they evolved into two distinct newspaper cultures. The American press started to diverge from the British press standards of practice in some ways around the same time that many American colonists started to protest British rule. Unique differences developed from the Americans’ awareness that no longer were newspapers solely a means to communicate information and events, but they also became an avenue to win support for independence. By the year 1774, in the American colonies, those supporting independence from Britain were keenly aware of the power of the newspaper press and its utility in gaining support for the revolutionary cause – most notably Benjamin Franklin.⁹⁷ Franklin and other revolutionary leaders understood the press as a powerful mechanism that could lead to victory if used wisely. Franklin famously stated that with news, politicians could ‘strike while the iron is hot’ and continue to strike.⁹⁸ As a result, when the war started, those supporting independence took immediate action to mobilize the press, taking the British off guard and unprepared to counter the information war that ensued.⁹⁹

The Patriots’ ability to quickly dominate the press was partly due to the establishment of Committees of Correspondence in the early 1770s. These committees

⁹⁶ Heyd, *Reading Newspapers*, pp. 46, 56; ‘The Annotated Newspapers of Harbottle Dorr’, *Massachusetts Historical Society*, (2024) <<https://www.masshist.org/dorr/volume/4/sequence/1122>> [accessed 28 January 2024].

⁹⁷ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, p. 172.

⁹⁸ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, p. 10.

⁹⁹ Benjamin Franklin was a former newspaper publisher and owner of the successful *Pennsylvania Gazette*. See: H. W. Brands, *The First American: The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin* (Anchor Books, 2000), p. 23.

were communication networks composed of like-minded colonists who opposed British rule.¹⁰⁰ Colonists established the first Committee of Correspondence in Boston, Massachusetts which triggered the establishment of multiple others throughout the Thirteen Colonies. The committee members used newspaper delivery routes to transmit information to each other by connecting all thirty-six newspaper printers, establishing a web of news with its epicenter in New England.¹⁰¹ After the first shots rang out in the war, Patriot leaders seized control of this already established communication network. Through these networks, the news alleging that British forces committed injustices at Lexington and Concord spread through all Thirteen Colonies within one week.¹⁰²

The revolutionaries' actions to control the press also made it impossible for newspaper publishers to remain neutral, causing them to become heavily partisan.¹⁰³ Depending on the location of the publishing house, colonial newspapers had no choice other than to support the revolutionaries or the Crown. Throughout the war, the Patriots subjected newspaper owners to threats, coercion, and violence, forcing them to support their cause. Most revolutionary leaders believed these drastic measures were a necessary evil in the path towards victory. As a result, by January 1776, unless a Loyalist publisher relocated to British-occupied territory, they went out of business.¹⁰⁴ Of the thirty-seven newspapers in business when the war started, twenty managed to survive for the duration of the war.

¹⁰⁰ Heyd, *Reading Newspapers*, p. 30.

¹⁰¹ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 29-30, 41.

¹⁰² Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 75-76; Copeland, 'America 1750-1820,' p. 145.

¹⁰³ Humphrey, *The American Revolution and the Press*, pp. 93-94; Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, p. 30.

¹⁰⁴ Humphrey, *The American Revolution and the Press*, p. 117; Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, p. 675.

As the American revolutionaries gained control over newspaper ownership and communication networks, they also ensured the publisher filled its pages with pro-revolutionary content. A large part of these Patriot-leaning articles contained allegations that the British breached laws of war. To aid in winning the war of words, the Patriot-leaning colonial press broadcasted stories of British troops and their German and Indigenous auxiliaries and allies committing grievous acts and unnecessary brutality against American forces and innocent civilians. To add to the impact, a small number of historians argue that the Patriot-leaning news tended to overlook news of heroic acts by American-allied Indigenous forces, so to maintain the momentum of hatred against the British for also allying with Indigenous nations. For example, in July 1778, the Battle of Wyoming triggered an enormous amount of newspaper attention describing alleged atrocities committed by the British's Haudenosaunee allies in the Wyoming Valley, Pennsylvania.¹⁰⁵ Only a few months later, Daniel Nimham, commander of the pro-revolutionary Stockbridge Indian Company, suffered a devastating defeat at the Battle of Kingsbridge. In this battle, Nimham's company fought to the end against British cavalry without attempting to flee or surrender. However, in this case, none of the Patriot-supporting newspapers reported on this battle, while the Crown's newspapers only touted the British success.¹⁰⁶ Stories of heroic acts, like those of Nimham and the Stockbridge Indian Company, arguably did not fit the revolutionary narrative and did not make the papers.¹⁰⁷ The impact of the stories that the revolutionaries told – or did not

¹⁰⁵ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 411- 416. Haudenosaunee is the Indigenous term for the Six Nations of the Iroquois.

¹⁰⁶ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, p. 378; the Battle of Kingsbridge will also be discussed in Chapter Five, pp. 287-291.

¹⁰⁷ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 378-380.

tell – conceivably set the stage to embed racial division within the political system of the United States.¹⁰⁸

While the Americans had control of the majority of presses in the Thirteen Colonies, they failed to harness the power of the press in the Canadian region despite attempts by the American leadership. In early 1776, the Continental Congress endeavored to bring Patriot propaganda to the Canadian region, but their efforts came too late to make an impact. The commissioners sent to sway public opinion soon found after their arrival that their mission was futile as the majority of the colonists were unaffected by the war and not motivated to support their cause. In the end, they were unable to exploit the newspapers in this region as they did in the Thirteen Colonies. With the loss of the Canadian Region, the Americans also lost the ability to bring news to and from this area.¹⁰⁹

The Newspaper Response to the Battle of Lexington and Concord

Only one day after the Battle of Lexington and Concord, local newspapers published the first reports on the conflict. These first articles provided brief and cautious accounts with minimal information and were highly circumspect. The primary sources

¹⁰⁸ This is the crux of Parkinson's argument in: Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 21-25.

¹⁰⁹ As a way to ramp up support from the Canadian public, in early 1776, Congress agreed to send commissioners to the Canadian region to 'establish a free press, and to give directions for the frequent publication of such pieces as may be of service to the cause of the United Colonies.' The men sent to serve as commissioners included the popular congressman from Pennsylvania and newspaper publisher Benjamin Franklin, along with Samuel Chase, Charles Carrol, and his Catholic cousin, Reverend John Carrol. Also accompanying them was Fleury Mesplet, a French printer from Philadelphia, who brought along his printing hand press. See: *JCC*, IV, ed. Ford, p. 217; Atkinson, *The British are Coming*, pp. 275-276; Gavin Watt, *Poisoned by Lies and Hypocrisy: America's First Attempt to Bring Liberty to Canada, 1775-1776* (Dundurn, 2014), p. 128; 'Mesplet, Fleury,' in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mesplet_fleury_4E.html> [accessed 31 August 2020]; Eamon, *Imprinting Britain*, p. 58.

for this breaking news were letters between Committee of Correspondence members and accounts obtained by express riders who flooded into the location of the battle. These express riders worked expeditiously to gain information and bring back updates to eager colonists in the surrounding towns awaiting more news. During this time, publishers were also careful to provide only a few details on the battle they could corroborate with witness statements. Newspaper owners clearly made a concerted effort to give the most accurate information amongst the streams of reports coming out of the area around Lexington and Concord.

On 20 April 1775, the newspapers from Massachusetts and its neighboring colony of Connecticut were the first papers to release the news on the conflict. An article from *The Norwich Packet* explained, ‘Just as this Paper was ready for Press, an Express arrived here from Brookline,’ a town located just a few miles west of Boston, with news of a British attack.¹¹⁰ The alarming information received from express rider Israel Bissel announced that 1,000 British troops landed at Cambridge after crossing the Charles River from Boston and continued their march to Lexington, Massachusetts. This urgent message arrived by one of many express riders charged with alerting the countryside that the British army was on the move. Bissel traveled almost one hundred miles to the town of Norwich, Connecticut, to get the news to *The Packet* publishers as soon as possible. His efforts paid off as *The Packet* was the first newspaper outside the colony of Massachusetts to publish the news on Gage’s failed attempt to secure militia armories. ‘To all Friends of American Liberty,’ the article decried, that while in Lexington, let it be known that ‘without provocation,’ the King’s troops fired at the colonial militia, killing

¹¹⁰ ‘Norwich, April 20,’ *The Norwich Packet*, 20 April 1775, p. 3.

six men and wounding four.¹¹¹ Attested by the Committee of Correspondence as a true copy, the express also reported that several witnesses saw the dead and wounded.¹¹² ‘Pray let the Delegates from this Colony to Connecticut see this,’ the message implored, so that all may know what occurred.¹¹³

On the same day, Boston’s *Massachusetts Gazette* also released news on the conflict. While *The Gazette*’s front page contained transcripts of parliamentary debates in Great Britain on the American crisis, page three provided additional details on the battle. Here, the article confirmed that about 1,800 British regulars arrived on longboats from Charlestown to a farm in Cambridge.¹¹⁴ Further, the arrival of the British army triggered panic among the inhabitants, who set off alarm guns and multiple expresses to the surrounding towns. Large numbers of colonists turned out, and a battle ensued, leading to losses on both sides until the British forces eventually retreated to Charlestown. The news report declared the battle a ‘shocking Introduction to all the Miseries of a Civil War.’¹¹⁵ However, it also added the disclaimer that because of the inconsistency of the reports coming in, they could only provide limited information at that time.¹¹⁶

The following day, news of the battle also reached a newspaper in Portsmouth, a city in the colony of New Hampshire, fifty-six miles north of Boston. An article on the first page titled, ‘Bloody News,’ contained a report from the Chairman of the Committee

¹¹¹ ‘Norwich, April 20,’ *The Norwich Packet*, 20 April 1775, p. 3.

¹¹² For more on Committees of Correspondence, see: Catherine Treesh, ‘Committees of Correspondence,’ *Digital Encyclopedia of the George Washington Presidential Library* <<https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/committees-of-correspondence/>> [accessed 11 February 2024]; Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 26, 29-32.

¹¹³ ‘Norwich, April 20,’ *The Norwich Packet*, 20 April 1775, p. 3.

¹¹⁴ Charlestown is about 2 miles from the heart of Boston.

¹¹⁵ *The Massachusetts Gazette*, 20 April 1775, p. 3.

¹¹⁶ *The Massachusetts Gazette*, 20 April 1775, p. 3.

of Correspondence in Newbury-Port, Massachusetts, to a member of the same committee in Portsmouth.¹¹⁷ The source of the information came from two gentlemen with ‘credibility’ who stated that 25,000 civilians engaged in a conflict against about 4,000 British regulars.¹¹⁸ The article also requested urgent assistance from the neighboring colonies, proclaiming, ‘As the Sword is now drawn, the first drawn on the Side of the Troops.’¹¹⁹ This article not only reported almost double the number of British troops compared to the first articles, but it was also the first article to allege British violations of laws of war. This report accused British regulars of burning a meeting house and other buildings and destroying private property. In response, an astounding fifty thousand people from the surrounding towns assembled to resist the British attack.¹²⁰

Quickly the news reports shifted when the papers began to provide more information, with fewer attestations, and the colonial public was first apprised of the most grievous allegations against the British. On 22 April, *The Norwich Packet* published additional articles about the conflict, which contained the first allegations that British forces killed innocent civilians and wounded militia. Under the header, ‘Interesting Intelligence,’ several letters and reports provided by express riders claimed that British forces murdered ‘Americans’ who were defending their person and property against an unjustified attack.¹²¹ First was an account alleging that the British started the battle in Lexington when they threatened the local inhabitants to lay down their arms.

¹¹⁷ ‘Bloody News,’ *The New Hampshire Gazette*, 21 April 1775, p. 1. Newbury-Port is about 38 miles North of Boston and 23 miles south of Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

¹¹⁸ ‘Bloody News,’ *The New Hampshire Gazette*, 21 April 1775, p. 1.

¹¹⁹ ‘Bloody News,’ *The New Hampshire Gazette*, 21 April 1775, p. 1.

¹²⁰ ‘Bloody News,’ *The New Hampshire Gazette*, 21 April 1775, p. 1.

¹²¹ ‘Interesting Intelligence,’ *The Norwich Packet*, 22 April 1775, p. 1 (supplement).

Initially refusing to do so, the inhabitants then quickly dispersed, only to be immediately fired upon by the regulars. Killed in this action were thirty Americans, seventy British privates, and one officer. After accusing the British soldiers of starting the conflict, the articles alleged that the redcoats killed several wounded militiamen and destroyed personal property. ‘Not a single wounded Man [was]found alive,’ the report claimed, and ‘with a Barbarity heretofor unpracticed by British Soldiers,’ they burned down three houses and wreaked havoc to all personal property they encountered.¹²²

Yet, these allegations would only get worse. In addition to murdering American troops, *The Norwich Packet* reported that the King’s troops killed a sick, elderly man with a bayonet while he was in his bed and shot two other infirm inhabitants while in their houses. ‘The Ravages and barbarous Cruelty of our Enemies is almost unparalleled among the Savage Nations,’ the writer declared.¹²³ And in another accusation, women and children were brutally slain. ‘The [British] Troops have behaved in a very cruel and barbarous Manner’ as the soldiers stormed into houses and by ‘putting the Muzzel of the Gun into their Mouths’ killed sick people, and ‘some Children had their Brains beat out.’¹²⁴ Following these allegations was a call to arms encouraging men to volunteer to serve as either enlisted or officers and to also send provisions to Cambridge, where a rapidly growing American army rallied.¹²⁵

In *The Providence Gazette*, along with chilling reports that Generals Howe, Burgoyne, and Clinton, with several regiments of foot, dragoons, and marines, were on

¹²² ‘Interesting Intelligence,’ *The Norwich Packet*, 22 April 1775, p. 1 (supplement).

¹²³ ‘Interesting Intelligence,’ *The Norwich Packet*, 22 April 1775, p. 1 (supplement).

¹²⁴ ‘Interesting Intelligence,’ *The Norwich Packet*, 22 April 1775, p. 1 (supplement).

¹²⁵ ‘Interesting Intelligence,’ *The Norwich Packet*, 22 April 1775, p. 1 (supplement).

their way to Boston, was more news recounting British barbarity.¹²⁶ *The Gazette*, located in the neighboring colony of Rhode Island, highlighted that ‘Disgraceful to the Character of British Soldiers,’ the King’s troops killed all wounded Americans, burnt dwelling houses, and killed several sick and elderly.¹²⁷ Absent from this article, however, were the allegations redcoats killed women and children. Although, once again, there were claims that the redcoats fired upon Americans without provocation, and now the British were scrambling to collect testimonies to support an argument that the Americans fired first. In the end, the report proclaimed, ‘Thus has commenced the American Civil War,’ which will undoubtedly fill the annals of history.¹²⁸

In the weeks after the conflict, more information continued to flood the papers, including more details on allegations that the British killed noncombatants. For example, on 28 April, a paper from the colony of Pennsylvania reported on an incident that occurred during the hunt for the ringleaders of the rebellion. Shockingly, while searching a house believed to be hiding John Hancock and Samuel Adams, British troops killed a woman and her children and then set the house on fire.¹²⁹ In the end, the British failed in their mission to capture Hancock and Adams.

Also evolving and becoming increasingly grave were the reports that British troops killed wounded militia. After reporting the British burned and pillaged almost every house in their path, an article in *The Essex Gazette* alleged:

The savage Barbarity exercised upon the Bodies of our unfortunate Brethren who fell, is almost incredible: Not content with shooting down the unarmed, aged and infirm, they disregarded the Cries of the wounded,

¹²⁶ ‘Extract of a letter from London, January 28,’ *The Providence Gazette*, 22 April 1775, p. 3.

¹²⁷ ‘Providence, April 22,’ *The Providence Gazette*, 22 April 1775, p. 3.

¹²⁸ ‘Providence, April 22,’ *The Providence Gazette*, 22 April 1775, p. 3.

¹²⁹ ‘By a fourth Express arrived here Yesterday evening,’ *Story and Humphrey’s Pennsylvania Mercury*, 28 April 1775, p. 4.

killing them without Mercy, and mangling their Bodies in the most shocking Manner.¹³⁰

With each new report on the battle, the news stories became more sensational.

By the end of April, news on the battle and claims of British barbarity circulated through all colonial newspapers from New Hampshire to Virginia. For example, Dixon and Hunter's *Virginia Gazette*, based in Williamsburg and located almost 600 miles from Boston, released its first article on the conflict on 29 April.¹³¹ Most of the reports contained similar information, as newspapers circulated the same accounts obtained by letters and information received by express riders.

However, a few newspapers remained hesitant to publish information related to the allegations against the British troops out of concern for their validity. *The Connecticut Journal* on 29 April reported that the information received continued to be confusing, making it almost impossible to provide facts.¹³² *Rivington's New York Gazetteer*, whose motto in April 1775 was 'Printed at his Open and Uninfluenced Press,' was even more cautious with its reports.¹³³ Rivington provided a disclaimer explaining that while there were reports of 'shocking barbarities' at the hands of the British regulars, the paper would only provide more information when they obtained credible accounts. While revolutionaries already accused Rivington of supporting the King, a claim he denied at the time, Rivington eventually published depositions that detailed British cruelty. However, Patriot authorities eventually forced Rivington to leave New

¹³⁰ 'Salem, April 25,' *The Essex Gazette*, April 25, 1775, p. 5.

¹³¹ 'Williamsburg, April 29,' *The Virginia Gazette*, 29 April 1775, p. 3 (supplement). John Dixon and William Hunter published the version referenced here.

¹³² 'New-Haven, April 29,' *The Connecticut Journal*, 29 April 1775, p. 2. Several other newspapers made the same cautionary statement. These statements were not as common as the war progressed.

¹³³ By 1780, Rivington's logo became 'Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty' and renamed *The Royal Gazette*.

York City and hide in exile after they seized his printer and forced him to claim allegiance to the Continental Congress.¹³⁴

While publishers took pains to provide accurate and neutral accounts in the aftermath of Lexington and Concord, eventually, as explained earlier, all newspapers would become partisan. With threats coming from both sides, publishers faced no choice but to either support the American cause or remain Loyalist.¹³⁵ As a result, the statements made by publishers reporting on the battle about the legitimacy — or not — of the information received decreased as the war progressed. Some papers quickly made their decision as to which side to take; for example, *The Massachusetts Spy*, whose logo declared, ‘Americans!---Liberty or Death!---Join or Die!’, openly proclaimed support for independence starting with their publication released on 3 May 1775.¹³⁶ Other publishers, like Rivington, continued to claim neutrality until forced to take sides. Arguably, regardless of whether a newspaper would eventually proclaim loyalty to the King or those supporting independence, the first few days after Lexington and Concord provided the most balanced reporting of the war.

European Laws of War – Foundation for the American Atrocity Allegations

While newspapers were the medium that spread the revolutionaries’ message throughout the colonies, European customs of warfighting were the legs upon which they built their argument. These customs of warfighting were developed by military

¹³⁴ ‘New-York, April 27,’ *Rivington’s New York Gazetteer*, 27 April 1775. On 20 April 1775 Rivington reported in his newspaper that revolutionaries accused him of being a Loyalist. *Rivington’s New York Gazetteer*, 20 April 1775, p. 4; Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, p. 684.

¹³⁵ Humphrey, *The American Revolution and the Press*, 117; Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 26-27, 36.

¹³⁶ ‘To the Public,’ *The Massachusetts Spy*, 3 May 1775, p. 1.

enlightenment philosophers who defined what constituted waging and fighting a just war. Violations of these customs were considered a war crime to eighteenth-century people of European descent. As this chapter has already shown, in many instances, the American news media described breaches of these warfighting conventions as extremely cruel actions on the part of the British.¹³⁷ Acts such as these constitute today's definition of atrocity, the term used in this work to describe these acts.¹³⁸ The Battle of Lexington and Concord was just the beginning as the revolutionaries aired their grievances throughout the war in the newspapers and in proclamations such as in the Declaration of Independence. When considering all the grievances the Americans waged against the Crown, many centered on the fundamental argument that the British military breached eighteenth-century rules of war.¹³⁹ These breaches were a significant point of contention for the American public, who broadcasted their fury over British atrocities in the Patriot-leaning newspapers throughout the war.

The main principles that formed the laws of war during this period came from military theorists inspired by the larger intellectual movement recognized as the Enlightenment. Beginning in the late seventeenth century, a military enlightenment grew in Europe from those who searched for a deeper understanding of how to fight wars and train a military. In France, widely considered the heart of this military reform, these philosophers strived to align warfighting with the broader principles of the Enlightenment by theorizing how to wage war effectively and humanely. In Great

¹³⁷ See p. 51 for an example.

¹³⁸ See The Oxford Dictionary for the contemporary definition of atrocity.

¹³⁹ 'Declaration of Independence,' *Library of Congress* <<https://www.loc.gov/item/90898054/>> [accessed 14 February 2024]. Also see the following congressional manifesto released in October 1778 alleging cruel measures taken by the Crown: 'By the Congress of the United States of America. Manifesto,' *Library of Congress* <<https://www.loc.gov/item/90898054/>> [accessed 14 February 2024].

Britain, however, the military enlightenment experience took a different turn than on the European mainland. It was not until losses the British sustained during the War of Austrian Succession (1740-1748) and the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 that prompted Britain's military enlightenment. This 'accidental military enlightenment' reshaped how the British Army fought and was primarily a result of experience gained fighting battles in unique and challenging environments worldwide combined with an informal network of communication of these experiences by military leadership. The British Army's experience fighting in North America exemplifies how unique environmental challenges drove innovation, such as the development of light infantry tactics during the Seven Years' War, out of necessity and survival. These reformations included how the British Army viewed compassion and restraint in war. At times, however, surviving these challenging environments required soldiers to resort to more brutal methods. Whilst experience triggered needed debates on humanity and warfare, the British Army did not uniformly apply these restraints and resorted to more brutal methods when justified, such as when facing an army that deployed irregular tactics.¹⁴⁰

To comprehend the emotions behind the public's reaction to these allegations requires an examination of eighteenth-century codes and customs of warfighting and how the Americans and British interpreted and applied these rules to their respective causes. While the contemporary public often referenced these rules as 'laws,' they were not codified law as they are today. Because the rules that the Enlightenment thinkers promulgated around warfighting were not laws, they were challenging to enforce and

¹⁴⁰ Huw Davies, *The Wandering Army* (Yale University Press, 2022), pp. 4-7, 9, 15-17, 370-379, 387; Christy Pichichero, *The Military Enlightenment* (Cornell University Press, 2017), pp. 2-5, 18-19, 27-28; John Lynn, *Battle* (Westview Press, 2003), pp. 125-128, 132-136.

open to a variety of interpretations.¹⁴¹ There were Articles of War governing the British and the United States military, but they did not entirely cover all principles around *jus in bello*, such as handling prisoners of war.¹⁴² In general, the Articles of War focused on offenses such as plunder and desertion while also providing recommended punishments for these breaches. The first law that extensively addressed a soldier's conduct in war, which included a provision that forbade killing prisoners of war, was General Order No. 100. United States President Abraham Lincoln signed this law, also known as the Lieber Code, in 1863 during the American Civil War.¹⁴³

One prominent military enlightenment thinker was international lawyer Emer de Vattel, whose writings will form the basis of this chapter's section.¹⁴⁴ However, while Vattel was certainly a primary influencer, there were other similar works by Enlightenment philosophers during this time, especially around the topic of restraint in warfare.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, by the time Vattel wrote his book *Laws of Nations* in 1758, the concept of civilized conduct in war was by no means a new topic. Vattel and other theorists during his time based their ideas on the works of seventeenth-century intellectuals, such as Hugo Grotius and Samuel von Pufendorf.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, the origins of these treatises on the laws of war can be traced back to Greek civilization before the

¹⁴¹ Geoffrey Best, *Humanity in Warfare: The Modern History of the International Law of Armed Conflicts* (Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 11-12; Emer de Vattel, *The Law of Nations*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Liberty Fund, 2008), pp. 366-79, 412-428.

¹⁴² 'Rules and Articles For the better Government of our Horse and Foot-Guards, And all other Our Land-Forces In our Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland, and Dominions beyond the Seas,' (Printed by John Baskett, 1718), pp. 1-41; The Continental Congress first published articles of war for the American military on 30 June 1775, see: *JCC*, ed. by Ford, II, pp. 111-123.

¹⁴³ Michael Howard, 'Constraints on Warfare,' in *The Laws of War: Constraints on Warfare in the Western World* ed. by Michael Howard, George J. Andreopoulos and Mark R. Shulman (Yale University Press, 1994), p. 6.

¹⁴⁴ Best, *Humanity in Warfare*, p. 36.

¹⁴⁵ The other Enlightenment writers Best identifies as most influential were: J.J. Moser and G. F. Martens, see: Best, *Humanity in Warfare*, p. 38; Lynn, *Battle*, pp. 135-136.

¹⁴⁶ Best, *Humanity in Warfare*, p. 34.

Peloponnesian War.¹⁴⁷ What evolved into conventions of war during the Early Modern Period were directives influenced by multiple sources such as the Bible, Greek society, Roman law, medieval customs around chivalry, and canon law.¹⁴⁸

Despite the lack of a codified law addressing how to fight a just war, eighteenth-century European nations respected the customs that evolved into laws of war. Works like Vattel's that outlined reasons to declare war (*jus ad bellum*) and how civilized nations should conduct themselves in war (*jus in bello*) influenced military thought within what historians describe as 'military Europe.' Military Europe, in essence, describes the 'soldierly fraternity' of European militaries that shared beliefs on military etiquettes and ideas on 'Eurocentric laws of war.'¹⁴⁹ While these soldiers come from very different nationalities within Europe, they shared similar values on how to fight a just war that formed a 'professional ethos' among the officer corps.¹⁵⁰

During the American Revolution, many of Great Britain's top leaders did not consider Washington's Continental Army a part of the military Europe fraternity.¹⁵¹ Further, referencing the contemporary laws of war, many questioned the legitimacy of the conflict and viewed it as a rebellion and not a just war between two nations. Adding weight to the British view were the accusations that American forces used unfair, irregular tactics, especially during the first battles of the war, such as sniping their

¹⁴⁷ Geoffrey Parker, 'Early Modern Europe,' in *The Laws of War: Constraints on Warfare in the Western World*, ed. by Michael Howard, George J. Andreopoulos and Mark R. Shulman (Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 40-58 (pp 41-42).

¹⁴⁸ Parker, 'Early Modern Europe,' pp. 41-42; Best, *Humanity in Warfare Conflicts*, pp. 34, 38; Geoffrey Best also explains that the Enlightenment writers cited in the essay were also the forerunners of the profession of international law.

¹⁴⁹ Stephen Conway, 'The British Army, 'Military Europe,' and the American War of Independence,' *The William and Mary Quarterly* 67 (2010), 69–100 (p. 70).

¹⁵⁰ Gavin, Daly, 'Barbarity More Suited to Savages': British Soldiers' Views of Spanish and Portuguese Violence During the Peninsular War, 1808-1814', *War & Society*, 35 (2016), 242-58 (p. 257).

¹⁵¹ Conway, 'The British Army, 'Military Europe,' pp. 70-71.

opponents with hunting rifles from behind rocks and trees and targeting officers. The military Europe fraternity considered these tactics as breaches of laws of war.¹⁵²

Undoubtedly, Washington and the Continental Congress were cognizant of the need to demonstrate that the United States was a civilized nation and an honorable foe, not rebels or savages.¹⁵³ Moreover, they had to prove the revolutionary cause was a ‘just cause’ against an unjust King.

In order for Americans to win the information war playing out in the newspaper sphere, it was vital for them to prove they were a civilized nation that merited certain restraints, such as giving quarter to surrendering troops. The Enlightenment theorists defined an enemy who deserved civilized restraints during the war. For example, Vattel wrote the following guidance on showing restraint towards an enemy that surrenders:

As soon as your enemy has laid down his arms and surrendered his person you have no farther right over his life unless he should give you such a right by some new crime, or had before committed against you a crime deserving death. Therefore, it was a dreadful error of antiquity, a most unjust and savage claim, to assume a right of putting a prisoner of war to death, and even by the hand of the executioner.¹⁵⁴

However, Vattel provided some exceptions to these rules on handling prisoners of war. For one, they did not apply to an enemy who did not abide by the laws of nations by explaining:

When the war is with a savage nation, which observes no rules, and never gives quarter, it may be chastised in the persons of any seized or taken, they are among the guilty, that by this rigour they may be brought to conform to the laws of humanity.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Matthew Spring, *With Zeal and With Bayonets Only* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), pp. 133-136; Holger Hoock, *Scars of Independence* (Crown, 2017), p. 76.

¹⁵³ Harold Selesky, ‘Colonial America,’ in *The Laws of War*, ed. by Michael Howard, George J. Andreopoulos and Mark R. Shulman (Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 40-58 (p. 75).

¹⁵⁴ Vattel, *The Law of Nations*, p. 419.

¹⁵⁵ Vattel, *The Law of Nations*, p. 414.

Therefore, a nation could take harsher measures towards an uncivilized society to ensure they adhered to what civilized nations considered appropriate behavior. Furthermore, those deemed ‘rebels’ did not deserve restraint in war. Vattel defined rebels as:

All subjects unjustly taking arms against the head of a society are termed *rebels*, whether their view be to deprive him of the supreme authority, or whether they intend to resist his command, in some particular affair, in order to impose conditions on him.¹⁵⁶

Vattel also described that there are different severity levels within a rebellion. It was *sedition* if rebels focused their violence on government officials. However, much worse was when it was an *insurrection*, and the rebellion spread such disorder that it grew to a level that impacted entire towns and cities. In this case, the violence caused by insurgents were ‘crimes of state,’ even if those found guilty claim to have just reasons for committing these actions.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, a sovereign had free reign to severely punish those who commit such a crime. However, Vattel also urged sovereigns to consider using leniency if appropriate to maintain the population’s support.¹⁵⁸ In all, the British response depended on how they defined the revolutionaries’ actions during the American War — which was open to interpretation.

Needless to say, different opinions existed amongst British leadership on the best strategy for handling the American colonists around taking a ‘hardliner’ or ‘conciliatory’ approach.¹⁵⁹ Early in the war, British commanders-in-chief determined that flaws

¹⁵⁶ Vattel, *The Law of Nations*, p. 485.

¹⁵⁷ Vattel, *The Law of Nations*, p. 485.

¹⁵⁸ Vattel, *The Law of Nations*, pp. 485-486.

¹⁵⁹ Stephen Conway, ‘To Subdue America: British Army Officers and the Conduct of the Revolutionary War,’ *The William and Mary Quarterly* 43 (1986) 381-407 (pp. 381-383); Conway’s research assessed the views of British officers during the war and determined that there existed two primary and conflicting beliefs on the best strategy to win the war. The ‘conciliatory’ approach consisted of those who believed the best approach for a victory was by winning the hearts and minds of the colonists. Those officers who supported the ‘hardliner’ approach believed that extreme and brutal measures were the only way to subdue the population into supporting the Crown.

existed in a strategy that called for unlimited methods to counter the American rebellion. Many grew concerned that tactics aimed at terrorizing and subduing the population into ending their support for the American cause would only counter their efforts to suppress the rebellion. As a result of these conflicting views and sentiments, some senior leaders, such as the Howe brothers and Clinton, advocated that a conciliatory approach aimed at winning the American public's hearts and minds was the best method in dealing with the rebels.¹⁶⁰

Vattel also made a crucial distinction between a civil war and a rebellion, which is a distinction that contemporaries struggled with when defining this conflict. This is evident by the newspaper reports after the Battle of Lexington and Concord when the Patriot-leaning news proclaimed the start of an 'American Civil War.'¹⁶¹ Clearly, Gage defined the situation in Boston as a rebellion or an unjust uprising against George III. Yet, a civil war was when a party within a state no longer obeys the sovereign and is strong enough to wage war against the sovereign, or if a nation splits into opposing sides and takes up arms against each other.¹⁶² If a conflict is deemed a civil war, according to Vattel, 'the war is to be carried on between them in the same manner as between two different nations,' minimizing the amount of unnecessary violence and working towards peace.¹⁶³ Thus, to curtail the amount of destruction and death the American leadership feared the war would cause — not to mention the repercussions if they lost the war — Washington and the Continental Congress understood the urgent need to prove that the

¹⁶⁰ John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence* (University of Michigan Press, 1990), p. 208. Ambivalence towards revolutionaries also resulted from personal contacts with those who supported the revolutionary cause. Richard Holmes, *Redcoat: The British Soldier in the Age of Horse and Musket* (Harper Collins, 2002), p. 403.

¹⁶¹ See: *The Providence Gazette*, 22 April 1775, p. 3.

¹⁶² Vattel, *The Law of Nations*, p. 487.

¹⁶³ Vattel, *The Law of Nations*, p. 489.

United States was a civilized nation. Furthermore, the current conflict against the Crown was a civil war raised against an unjust sovereign and not merely a rebellion.¹⁶⁴

There is no doubt that American leadership were well-read on the subject of just war. While Vattel was not the only author on this topic, there is evidence of his direct influence on Washington and the Continental Congress. For one, Washington owned a copy of Vattel's book, as evidenced by a letter that survives with his book order on 6 October 1773 from his London-based merchant.¹⁶⁵ Further, Benjamin Franklin referenced Vattel in a letter to Charles-Guillaume-Frédéric Dumas on 9 December 1775. Franklin stated in his letter:

I am much obliged by the kind present you have made us of your edition of Vattel. It came to us in good season, when the circumstances of a rising state make it necessary frequently to consult with the law of nations.¹⁶⁶

Undoubtedly, Vattel impacted Washington and Franklin's thoughts and formed the foundation for their arguments in support of waging war against the King and their strategy for managing the ongoing conflict.

As a part of their strategy, the United States' case against Britain using Enlightenment theories to support their arguments needed to be well documented and heard worldwide to gain the most effect. To achieve this end, the Continental Congress appointed committees to investigate allegations against the British and release proclamations based on the information they obtained. The most famous proclamation is the Declaration of Independence, which established the foundation for starting the war.

¹⁶⁴ Selesky, 'Colonial America,' p. 75.

¹⁶⁵ 'From George Washington to Robert Carey & Company, 6 October 1773,' *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-09-02-0268>> [accessed 3 May 2020].

¹⁶⁶ 'From Benjamin Franklin to Charles-Guillaume-Frédéric Dumas, 9 December 1775,' *Founders Online*, <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-22-02-0172>> [accessed 3 May 2020].

However, this document was not the only statement released by the Continental Congress. For example, on 30 October 1778, Congress released a manifesto condemning barbaric acts of unnecessary violence executed by the British military and their allies against members of the United States' military and innocent civilians. In this document, Congress communicated a warning to the British that if they continued to commit these atrocities, they could expect retaliation from the United States with the level of force required to deter such acts from occurring again in the future.¹⁶⁷ However, proclamations were not effective if not accessible to the general public. This is where the newspapers played a vital role. As explained earlier in this chapter, the revolutionaries learned early in the war that the best mechanism to ensure widespread dissemination of their claims of British injustices was through newspaper reports. In turn, the Americans published all their grievances, allegations, proclamations, manifestos, and findings from multiple congressional hearings in the colonial newspapers, which evidently made it to the news publications in Great Britain as well.

British Crisis Management and Americans Claim the Moral High Ground

Three days after the Battle of Lexington and Concord, Gage attempted to salvage his public image. It was at this point that he took the first steps to gain control of the narrative after the newspapers released articles alleging the British military committed inhumane and barbaric actions against innocent civilians. To stop the flow of information, Gage halted all communication leaving Boston and prohibited the local

¹⁶⁷ 'By the Congress of the United States of America. Manifesto,' *Library of Congress* <<https://www.loc.gov/item/90898054/>> [accessed 14 February 2024].

presses from any further printing.¹⁶⁸ The newspapers reported that Boston was cut off from the rest of the colonies as British troops prohibited anyone from coming and going.¹⁶⁹ However, Gage eased this restriction within a few weeks, allowing the inhabitants to leave the town only after they handed over any arms they owned.¹⁷⁰ Despite Gage's efforts, he could not stop the stream of reports leaving the city. Not only did the newspaper reports continue, but the allegations against the British increased in intensity and severity.

In response to the complaints of British atrocities, in early May, Gage published a warning to his troops prohibiting them from harming any peaceful inhabitants of Boston or face the death penalty.¹⁷¹ However, it was not until mid-May that the public received Gage's account of what occurred. On 12 May, *The New England Chronicle* was the first paper to publish Gage's response to the allegations against him and his troops by Jonathan Trumbull, the Governor of Connecticut.¹⁷² In his letter to Gage, Trumbull accused the British troops of committing acts that 'disgrace even barbarians, and much more Britons, so highly famed for humanity as well as bravery.' The Governor demanded answers for the alleged 'outrages' that occurred. *The Chronicle* also published Gage's response, which opened with an assurance that he took the reports seriously and, as a result, investigated the allegations. In the outcome of this investigation, however, he 'found no vestige of cruelty or barbarity' committed by any British troops. Moreover, the redcoats treated the inhabitants with compassion throughout the engagement, taking

¹⁶⁸ 'New-York, April 20,' *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 23 April 1775, p. 4.

¹⁶⁹ *The Newport Mercury*, 24 April 1775, p. 3.

¹⁷⁰ 'Thursday, 4 P. M.,' *The Norwich Packet*, 27 April 1775, pp. 2-3.

¹⁷¹ 'Thursday, 4 P. M.,' *The Norwich Packet*, 27 April 1775, pp. 2-3.

¹⁷² 'Cambridge, May 12,' *The New England Chronicle*, 12 May 1775, p. 2., This paper changed its name from *The Essex Gazette* to *The New England Chronicle*, after this edition.

pains not to harm any peaceful bystanders. However, Gage added one caveat explaining that collateral damage might have occurred in the heat of the battle. ‘It was very possible,’ Gage stated, ‘that in firing into houses, from whence they were fired upon, the old people, women or children may have suffered.’ Gage then continued to denounce the ‘inflammatory’ allegations, declaring that they only ‘served to deceive and inflame the minds of the people.’ In all, Gage argued that his actions were legal and justified and that he had every authority to respond to the rebellion in the Massachusetts Bay colony.¹⁷³

In his letter to Trumbull, Gage also accused the revolutionaries of stealing letters written by British soldiers from the Boston Post Office. Furthermore, the Americans used these letters to incite public anger against the British by publishing them in the newspapers. The brief extracts of personal letters from these soldiers mostly blamed the start of the conflict on the American militia, who reportedly fired at them first. However, while explaining their actions, they also implicated themselves. In one letter, the writer explained that ‘they fired at us out of the houses and killed and wounded a great number of us, but we leveled their houses as we came along.’¹⁷⁴ In another letter reportedly written by a British soldier to his parents, the soldier admitted that women and children died from burns after their houses were set on fire. To ensure the public did not overlook these key statements, the Patriot-leaning *Massachusetts’s Spy* highlighted them in italics.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ ‘Cambridge, May 12,’ *The New England Chronicle*, 12 May 1775, p. 2.

¹⁷⁴ ‘Worcester, May 14,’ *The Massachusetts’s Spy*, 17 May 1775, p. 2.

¹⁷⁵ ‘Worcester, May 14,’ *The Massachusetts’s Spy*, 17 May 1775, p. 2.

Even though the letters served to add to the evidence of British inhumanity, they also accused the American militia of committing barbaric acts. One of the letters included a report that the militia scalped wounded British soldiers.¹⁷⁶ The writer explained, ‘These people are very numerous, and full as bad as the Indians for scalping and cutting the dead men’s ears and noses off, and those they get alive, that are wounded and cannot get off the ground.’¹⁷⁷ But what seemed to cause the most anger was that the militia ‘did not fight like the regular Army,’ as they ‘loaded on their bellies’ and hid behind trees, stone walls, in the woods, and behind houses. One writer compared them to ‘savages’ because they lived in areas surrounded by woods. Another writer complained they were ‘not brought up in our military Way.’¹⁷⁸ From the British soldiers’ perspective, the act of scalping was not the only breach of laws of war the militia committed that angered them, but their irregular tactics were as well.

Supporting the allegation that militia scalped wounded British soldiers was another letter first printed in *The New York Journal*, from ‘A Deserter,’ of the 18th Regiment of Foot.¹⁷⁹ The story warned of what to expect if captured by the ‘rebels’ by recounting how the militia mutilated three British soldiers during the battle. Reportedly, the American ‘scoundrels were so barbarous that nothing but savages could have equaled it.’¹⁸⁰ They scalped two wounded British regulars, cut their ears off, and carved the eyes out of one. This article and the release of the intercepted letters from British

¹⁷⁶ ‘The following Extracts from several intercepted letters,’ *The Massachusetts’s Spy*, 17 May 1775, p. 4.

¹⁷⁷ ‘The following Extracts from several intercepted letters,’ *The Massachusetts’s Spy*, 17 May 1775, p. 4.

¹⁷⁸ ‘The following Extracts from several intercepted letters,’ *The Massachusetts’s Spy*, 17 May 1775, p. 4.

¹⁷⁸ ‘The following Extracts from several intercepted letters,’ *The Massachusetts’s Spy*, 17 May 1775, p. 4.

¹⁷⁹ ‘To the Printer,’ *The New York Journal*, 11 May 1775, p. 3.

¹⁸⁰ ‘To the Printer,’ *The New York Journal*, 11 May 1775, p. 3.

soldiers helped change the tide of allegations that, before this point, only targeted the British.¹⁸¹

Gage's last defense of the allegations made of the King's Troops was the publication of his official account of the conflict. However, some newspapers also included comments that mocked Gage's narrative, attempting to discredit his version of events. In *The New England Chronicle*, for example, the commentator called Gage a 'public robber,' the King's troops 'instruments of tyranny,' and the account a 'gross misrepresentation' filled with many lies.¹⁸² Gage's account also included the allegation that American militia scalped a wounded British soldier and cut off his ears, which, surprisingly, this Patriot-leaning critic did not try to refute. In his account, Gage admitted to destroying all military stores but denied that soldiers intentionally injured any inhabitants or destroyed their property and, of course, accused the Americans of firing first.¹⁸³

Gage's response to these allegations begs the question — why did British leadership care? After all, in February 1775, Parliament declared the colony of Massachusetts to be in a state of rebellion; therefore, preventing further violence was a legitimate reason to secure arms stored by the revolutionaries.¹⁸⁴ As detailed earlier in this chapter, Vattel's guidelines around laws of war allowed for harsher measures when confronted with a rebellion. However, Great Britain faced a complicated problem.

Unlike the British response to the Jacobite Rebellion in 1745, where Parliament passed

¹⁸¹ 'To the Printer,' *The New York Journal*, 11 May 1775, p. 3.

¹⁸² 'In our last we inserted as a curtesy, an infamous, lying letter from General Gage,' *The New England Chronicle*, 18 May 1775, p. 4.

¹⁸³ 'In our last we inserted as a curtesy, an infamous, lying letter from General Gage,' *The New England Chronicle*, 18 May 1775, p. 4.

¹⁸⁴ Atkinson, *The British Are Coming*, pp. 21-23.

hardliner measures intended to permanently suppress the Jacobite movement, this approach would not work in the American colonies.¹⁸⁵ The British had to win the hearts and minds of the public if they were to retain the region as a British colony.¹⁸⁶ For one, many colonists were loyal to the crown, making it difficult to identify the enemy. Furthermore, the British did not have the troop strength to subdue a region as large as the Thirteen Colonies through force alone. They also did not benefit from the same logistical support as they did when suppressing the rebellion in Scotland, given that it took several months to ship military supplies from Britain to America. Needless to say, the newspaper reports released to the colonial public immediately after Lexington and Concord that accused the British regulars of breaching laws of war did not aid Gage in winning the hearts and minds of the American colonists or the British public.¹⁸⁷

Meanwhile, as Gage attempted to repair public relations, the Continental Congress contemplated their next move in response to the attack. Congress' first step was to convene the Second Continental Congress, which they also announced in the newspapers. During the first few weeks of May, along with the news that the Congress adjourned, it also detailed their goal of determining how to respond to Gage's assault and to protect colonists against any further attacks by British troops. Anticipation grew as the papers reported sightings of colonial representatives passing through different towns on their way to Philadelphia. For example, *Dunlap's Maryland Gazette* noted that several Virginia delegates traveled through Baltimore, including Peyton Randolph,

¹⁸⁵ Conway, 'To Subdue America,' pp. 381-382. For more on the measures passed in Parliament between 1746 and 1752, see: Matthew P. Dziennik, "Under ye Lash of ye Law': The State and the Law in the Post-Culloden Scottish Highlands,' *Journal of British Studies*, 60 (2021), 609-631.

¹⁸⁶ Conway, 'To Subdue America,' pp. 381-382.

¹⁸⁷ Ferling, *Winning*, pp. 6 – 13; Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed*, pp. 208-212; Conway, 'To Subdue America,' p. 385.

Richard Henry Lee, and George Washington.¹⁸⁸ While in Baltimore, Washington and other delegates reviewed four companies of the Baltimore militia and expressed their approval of the soldiers' bearing and appearance. In less than a month, on 19 June, Congress would appoint Washington as Commander in Chief of the Continental Army.¹⁸⁹ Furthermore, the papers announced that Dr. Benjamin Franklin arrived in Philadelphia from London after spending several years attempting to resolve the conflict with Great Britain diplomatically.¹⁹⁰ Also inspiring were reports of Indigenous communities allying with the revolutionary cause, such as the Seneca Nation, who were 'determined to support the Americans, against the arbitrary exactions of the British parliament.'¹⁹¹ While the papers continued to provide dismal news, such as the names of those killed and wounded in the battle, they also exuded a feeling of excitement with these motivational reports, especially for those supporting independence.

In response to the allegations against the redcoats, the recently convened Second Continental Congress moved to obtain depositions from witnesses. The decision to take this action was an unprecedented move by the Congress, who in essence, was already acting the part of an independent nation. *The Pennsylvania Ledger*, located in Philadelphia where the Congress convened, first released the depositions on 13 May. Twenty-five sworn testimonies from both British regulars and American militia would circulate through all the newspapers within the Thirteen Colonies.¹⁹² While the testimonies likely served to fuel anger over the British actions, none accused them of

¹⁸⁸ 'Baltimore, May 9,' *Dunlap's Maryland Gazette*, 9 May 1775, p. 3. At this time Washington was still a Colonel in the Virginia Militia.

¹⁸⁹ 'Baltimore, May 9,' *Dunlap's Maryland Gazette*, 9 May 1775, p. 3.

¹⁹⁰ 'Philadelphia,' *The Pennsylvania Ledger*, 6 May 1775, p. 3.

¹⁹¹ 'Hartford, May 8,' *The Connecticut Courant*, 8 May 1775, p. 3. The Seneca Nation, however, eventually solidified an alliance with the British, which lasted until the war's end.

¹⁹² 'Affidavits and depositions,' *The Pennsylvania Ledger*, 13 May 1775, p. 2.

killing any innocent civilians or wounded American combatants. What the witness statements did corroborate was that the British plundered and destroyed private property and burned down three houses, a barn, and a shop. And from most accounts, minus the one British officer who testified, they alleged the British fired first without provocation.¹⁹³

Along with these sworn testimonies, the papers published a letter to the 'Inhabitants of Great Britain' from Joseph Warren, who represented the Continental Congress.¹⁹⁴ The letter provided a 'True and authentic account of this inhuman proceeding' by His Majesty's Troops. This official account included no mention of British forces killing women and children. Although it did confirm other allegations:

To give a particular account of the ravages of the troops as they retreated from Concord to Charlestown, would be very difficult, if not impracticable; let it suffice to say, that a great number of houses on the road were plundered and rendered unfit for use; several were burnt; women in child-bed were driven, by the soldiery, naked in the streets, old men peaceably in their houses were shot dead; and such scenes exhibited as would disgrace the annals of the most uncivilized nation.¹⁹⁵

These actions, the writers argued, were an attempt to take vengeance on a people who refused to submit to 'slavery.' Further, those opposed to British tyranny were determined to 'die or be free.' Lastly, the Congress headed a warning to the people of Britain that they should beware as further oppression would also lead to the destruction and enslavement of 'Britaineus' itself.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ 'Affidavits and depositions,' *The Pennsylvania Ledger*, 13 May 1775, p. 2.

¹⁹⁴ 'In Provincial Congress,' *The Pennsylvania Ledger*, 13 May 1775, p. 3. Joseph Warren was a physician and served as president of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress. He is known for sending Paul Revere and William Dawes to warn inhabitants of the British raid on Concord. He fought at Lexington and Concord and was killed in action during the Battle at Bunker Hill on 17 June 1775.

¹⁹⁵ 'In Provincial Congress,' *The Pennsylvania Ledger*, 13 May 1775, p. 3.

¹⁹⁶ 'In Provincial Congress,' *The Pennsylvania Ledger*, 13 May 1775, p. 3.

While the reports of what occurred on the battlefield made their way through the newspapers, another battle heated up over who held the moral high ground. Increasingly, the writers of the reports on the military action also made a point to highlight the difference in behavior between the British troops and the American militia. For example, one article released just days after the conflict reported that while the Americans ‘behaved with the greatest Intrepidity,’ the British troops’ behavior was not only uncivilized but that they executed the ‘sanguinary Measures of a wicked Ministry.’¹⁹⁷ In another article, the reporter claimed that despite provocation from the enemy, not one act of cruelty was committed by the militia as they ‘breathed higher Sentiments of Humanity’ in accordance with the Christian religion.¹⁹⁸ Making a case that the Americans held higher moral standards compared to the British was a growing trend seen in the Patriot-leaning papers.

Another trend in the newspapers in early May was opinion pieces by anonymous writers that condemned the British actions. In an article titled, ‘The Rural Heroes: or, The Battle of Concord’ first released by *The Newport Mercury*, the writer paid tribute to the fallen ‘American heroes.’ The writer lamented:

Some future historian will relate, with pleasure, and the latest posterity will read with wonder and admiration, how three hundred intrepid, rural sons of freedom drove before them more than five times their number, of regular, well appointed troops, and forced them to take shelter behind their bulwarks!¹⁹⁹

Furthermore, that this conflict should ‘open the eyes of our deluded Sovereign,’ who took misleading advice from self-serving politicians.²⁰⁰ Another example from *The*

¹⁹⁷ ‘Providence, April 22,’ *The Providence Gazette*, 22 April 1775, p. 3.

¹⁹⁸ ‘Salem, April 25, 1775,’ *The New Hampshire Gazette*, 28 April 1775, p. 2.

¹⁹⁹ ‘Providence, April 22,’ *The Providence Gazette*, 22 April 1775, p. 3.

²⁰⁰ ‘The Rural Heroes,’ *The Newport Mercury*, 8 May 1776, p. 3.

Pennsylvania Journal, whose writer questioned, ‘What folly could induce Gen. Gage to act a part so fatal to Britain?’ In a seeming attempt to taunt Loyalists, the writer further exclaimed that it was amazing how ‘a handful of raw, undisciplined peasants’ could defeat the invincible British military.²⁰¹ Both articles declared that it was the beginning of the end of Great Britain’s control over the colonies.

Towards the end of May, the Patriot-leaning news took a slightly different turn and began to personally target Gage. *The Massachusetts Spy*, for example, published two anonymous letters to the editor criticizing Gage by comparing him to a criminal. A writer named ‘An American,’ after referencing the Bible, wrote:

It is no new thing for great villians[sic], even robbers and murderers, to sanctify their villainy, with many specious words and pretenses, that what they do is only defensive.²⁰²

Another article from ‘PloughJogger,’ responded to Gage’s account of the battle, declaring, ‘It is replete with such notorious falsehoods, calumny, and evasion.’ Further alleging that all the ‘robberies, abuses and insults,’ including shooting at children, were all ‘justified by the *humane* Thomas Gage.’²⁰³ Using a heavy dose of sarcasm, the writer intended to convey to the public that Gage was indeed inhumane.

As the end of May approached, the attacks on Gage continued. On the front page of *The Pennsylvania Journal* was a letter to Gage from ‘Junius Americanus.’ The writer proclaimed:

²⁰¹ ‘Extract of a letter from Roxbury, dated April 28,’ *The Pennsylvania Journal*, 10 May 1775, p. 3. A Patriot leaning paper, evident by its logo of the divided snake with the quote ‘Unite or Die,’ first used during the Seven Years’ War. Benjamin Franklin first published the Unite or Die logo in 1754 in his newspaper, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, when he advocated for a colonial alliance as a strategy to defeat the French.

²⁰² ‘For the Massachusetts Spy,’ *The Massachusetts Spy*, 24 May 1775, p. 2.

²⁰³ ‘For the Massachusetts Spy,’ *The Massachusetts Spy*, 24 May 1775, p. 2.

How the mighty have fallen! No wonder they trembled and fled at the fight of a few Companies of American Militia, for English courage can dwell only in the society of justice and humanity.²⁰⁴

Further, Gage would never ‘wipe away the stain’ brought upon the British army. The writer declared Gage to be ‘Cruel, without inhumanity – unjust, without avarice – and artful, without design.’ Junius Americanus then closed with an expression of hope that if Gage would admit to the strength of the unity of the colonies and the weaknesses of his forces to Parliament, perhaps he could bring peace.²⁰⁵

On 5 June, *The Boston Gazette* released an article by Massachusettensis which yielded more attacks targeting the ‘perfidious, the truce-breaking Thomas Gage.’ ‘It is difficult to know how to address such a monster,’ the author stated, then asked, ‘What original law of nature are you not daily breaking?’²⁰⁶ Massachusettensis also accused Gage of being a criminal who should repent for his actions, otherwise, not only would Great Britain suffer, but God would punish him. The essay closed promising that ‘the Printing-Press’ will continue the ‘scourging of Tyranny and Tyrants’ and that the name Gage will be forever known as a brutal despot.²⁰⁷ These anonymous writers effectively equated Gage with being a villain and a leader whose moral standards fell well below those of Americans. While it is unknown how these opinion pieces directly impacted the decisions of revolutionary leadership, the Massachusetts assembly did move to declare that Gage was no longer the Governor of the colony. On 25 May, *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* reported that a certain ‘respectable Assembly hath declared General Gage

²⁰⁴ ‘To General Gage,’ *The Pennsylvania Journal*, 31 May 1775, p. 1.

²⁰⁵ ‘To General Gage,’ *The Pennsylvania Journal*, 31 May 1775, p. 1.

²⁰⁶ ‘To the perfidious, the truce breaking Thomas Gage,’ *The Boston Gazette*, 5 June 1775, pp. 1-2. For more on Massachusettensis see Parkinson, *Thirteen Clocks*, p. 62. Interestingly, Massachusettensis was initially Loyalist-leaning.

²⁰⁷ ‘To the perfidious, the truce breaking Thomas Gage,’ *The Boston Gazette*, 5 June 1775, pp. 1-2.

to be an inveterate enemy to this country.' As a result, no one should obey any orders issued by Gage nor pay any respect to him as Governor of the colony of Massachusetts.²⁰⁸

During this time, the Americans also strengthened their defense on the scalping allegation. Overall, the allegation an American scalped a wounded British soldier, as reported in the intercepted letters from British soldiers and within Gage's official account, did not gain as much attention as the allegations against the British. There were no opinion papers or articles proclaiming anger over this tactic from Loyalists. Despite this, a series of articles written by Reverend William Gordon of Roxbury, Massachusetts, defended the revolutionaries. Gordon, a supporter of the revolutionary cause, wrote about the allegation within his account of the conflict as a whole.²⁰⁹ While Gordon wrote his version in a letter to a friend in England, he also gave the newspapers express permission to publish it. In his narration, Gordon picked apart the official account that Gage approved based on information he reportedly received from witnesses. He also claimed he did not read Gage's account till after interviewing witnesses and coming to his own conclusions.

Gordon's assessment of what occurred during the battle paid particular attention to the accusation that an American mutilated a wounded British soldier. Based on his interviews, Gordon concluded that there was some truth to the story. However, instead of scalping and cutting off a redcoat's ears, the American broke the skull of a wounded

²⁰⁸ 'Cambridge, May 12,' *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 25 May 1775, p. 2.

²⁰⁹ 'An Account of the Commencement of Hostilities between Great-Britain and America,' *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 7 June 1775, pp. 1, 4. Reverend William Gordon was the pastor of the Third Congregational Church from 1771 to 1786 and was an ardent supporter of the revolution. He also wrote a history of the American Revolution. However, he moved back to Great Britain in 1786 after he insulted Alexander Hamilton and then was subsequently attacked by the press. See: George William Pitcher, 'William Gordon and the History of the American Revolution,' *The Historian*, 34 (1971), pp. 447-464.

British soldier with a small ax after seeing him attempt to get up. In all, the militiaman reacted to a perceived threat and did not scalp the soldier. Regarding the allegations of destruction of property, Gordon concluded that the soldiers burned three houses, one barn, and two shops. Further, they attempted to burn private buildings unsuccessfully and plundered and destroyed everything they could get their hands on. Gordon stated nothing, however, of the allegations that the British killed women, children, and the infirm. Gordon closed his assessment, reporting that the British prisoners received good treatment, but the ‘policy of the people would determine them thereto, if their humanity did not.’²¹⁰ Gordon emphasized the humanity and higher morality of the Americans despite the cruel treatment by the British.²¹¹ Using the reverend as an authority on the validity of the allegations against the militia is an example of the revolutionaries’ use of religion to prove their higher morality. In essence, the revolutionaries called on the reverend to serve as their official moral compass and provide the final verdict on the allegations against the American militia. Ultimately, the reverend’s account of the battle was the last time the papers mentioned the scalping allegation.

A Growing Martial Spirit

While the newspapers excoriated Gage, his troops, and the Crown, the Patriot-leaning press also reported on the buildup and successes of the American troops by highlighting the growing amount of support for the revolutionary cause. Despite the

²¹⁰ ‘An Account of the Commencement of Hostilities between Great-Britain and America,’ *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 7 June 1775, pp. 1, 4.

²¹¹ ‘An Account of the Commencement of Hostilities between Great-Britain and America,’ *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 7 June 1775, pp. 1, 4.

reports also bringing threatening news, such as the arrival of Generals Howe, Burgoyne, and Clinton to Boston, all signs pointed to an increasing martial spirit amongst the revolutionaries.²¹² One of these American successes was the news they captured the British forts at Crown Point and Ticonderoga in northern New York. This move would hopefully stop the ‘Canadians and Indians’ from raiding the northern provinces. Immediately following this article was a paragraph clearly intended to drum up revolutionary support and compel men to join the fight. This commentary proclaimed, ‘the martial spirit, diffused through this province at this juncture, is almost beyond conception,’ as the locals raised several companies, produced uniforms, and conducted drills. The article closed asserting that these men were ready to fight alongside the most seasoned veterans.²¹³

As promising news broke of the successes in New York, articles detailing an intensifying ‘martial spirit’ growing in the colonies also surfaced in the newspapers. Further generating this growing spirit were reports on the buildup of troops at Cambridge. For example, *The New Hampshire Gazette* on 19 May contained five articles on Lexington and Concord, with one alleging women and children were burnt to death.²¹⁴ On the first page, however, was news that ‘The GRAND AMERICAN ARMY at Cambridge and Roxbury’ was prepared and ready to fight.²¹⁵ Furthermore, in the column right next to this article was one announcing, ‘that a Constitutional Post-Office is now rising on the Ruins of the Parliamentary One, which is just expiring in

²¹² *The Providence Gazette*, 27 May 1775, p. 3.

²¹³ *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 16 May 1775, p. 3.

²¹⁴ ‘The following Extracts from several intercepted Letters of Soldiery in Boston....,’ *The New Hampshire Gazette*, 19 May 1775, p. 4.

²¹⁵ *The New Hampshire Gazette*, 19 May 1775, p. 1.

Convulsions.’²¹⁶ This group of articles provided both devastating stories of British atrocities alongside hopeful news of people rising up against tyranny.

Also, on 19 May, *The Connecticut Gazette* followed a similar pattern by posting motivational articles near the devastating story of the British burning people’s houses during Lexington and Concord.²¹⁷ In the column next to this frightening news was a report declaring that ‘by accounts from all parts of the country we find, that they are every were learning the use of arms, and seem determined on *Liberty or Death*.’²¹⁸ And, with the arrival of Continental Congress’ delegates to Philadelphia, ‘it is impossible to describe the military ardor which now prevails in this city.’ Further, to demonstrate the strength of this military ‘ardor,’ another article explained that a number of ‘Friends’ — referring to Quakers who held anti-war beliefs and refused to bear arms — raised their own company.²¹⁹

Included in this fervor was news of Indigenous people, non-English speaking colonists, and women joining the fight against the British. For example, *The Massachusetts Gazette* published a letter extract from Congress claiming that the Mohawk nation gave their approval to the Stockbridge people, who had strong ties to the much larger Mohawk nation, to join the Americans.²²⁰ This article was bookended

²¹⁶ ‘Hartford,’ *The New Hampshire Gazette*, 19 May 1775, p. 1.

²¹⁷ This story came from the intercepted letters of British soldiers in Boston. ‘Honour’d Mother,’ *The Connecticut Gazette*, 19 May 1775, p. 3.

²¹⁸ ‘Philadelphia, May 10,’ *The Connecticut Gazette*, 19 May 1775, p. 3.

²¹⁹ ‘Philadelphia, May 10,’ *The Connecticut Gazette*, 19 May 1775, p. 3.

²²⁰ ‘Extract of another Letter from a Gentleman, dated May 9,’ *The Massachusetts Gazette*, 25 May 1775, p. 2. The Mohawk nation was a part of the Six Nations of the Iroquois alliance. The Stockbridge people were a mix of Mahican, Housatonic, and Wappinger tribe members who originated from the Hudson Valley and Western Massachusetts. The name Stockbridge originates from a village founded in 1736 by English Christian missionaries who built the town to serve as an Indian mission, or ‘praying town.’ Eventually, Indigenous people from the town of Stockbridge acquired the name ‘Stockbridge Indians’ from Europeans, but their native name was Moheconnuck. The Mohawk was a powerful nation and had many family ties with the Stockbridge, which is likely why they ‘gave approval’ to the Stockbridge. The article further noted the value of allying with Indigenous troops if the British attacked again. In this case,

between news on the taking of Ticonderoga and the letters between Trumbull and Gage. Following a statement declaring, ‘The spirit of opposition to the arbitrary and tyrannical acts of the Ministry and Parliament,’ *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* detailed how even non-English speaking German colonists formed units. From the town of Reading, reportedly four companies formed, fittingly named the Old Man’s Company because it consisted of around eighty Germans all over the age of forty who served in the German military.²²¹ Women also contributed, as one story detailed how the ladies of a town provided uniforms and drums for the local regiment.²²² This story immediately followed news that inhabitants stopped the King’s Troops from foraging in the town of Weymouth near Boston.²²³ The perception formed in these newspaper reports was that people from all walks of life united to support the revolutionary cause.

As more details emerged on the Americans’ success in Ticonderoga, so did the articles aimed at motivating the public to fight against Great Britain. Clearly, an air of excitement reverberated through the newspaper reports that proclaimed, ‘The glorious News of the taking of that Place by the American Forces, without the Loss of a Man.’²²⁴ Stories provided accounts of how Colonel Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys, and Colonel James Easton took the fort with ease after a minor skirmish. In the end, Easton demanded that the commanding officer surrender the fort, ‘IN THE NAME OF

the Stockbridge people maintained the strongest Indigenous alliance with Americans throughout the war. The Mohawk nation, on the other hand, would mostly ally with the British.

²²¹ ‘Philadelphia, June 1,’ *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 1 June 1775, p. 2. It is likely this paper received its news from one of the German newspapers in Pennsylvania, such as the *Pennsylvanisher Staatsbote*.

²²² ‘The Ladies,’ *Story and Humphries Pennsylvania Mercury*, 2 June 1775, p. 2.

²²³ ‘We have received advice from Boston,’ *Story and Humphries Pennsylvania Mercury*, 2 June 1775, p. 2.

²²⁴ ‘YESTERDAY,’ *The New Hampshire Gazette*, 26 May 1775, p. 3.

AMERICA.²²⁵ The article also highlighted that Colonel Easton informed the British officer commanding the fort, ‘He should be treated with much more Honour than our People had met with from the British Troops,’ once again emphasizing the idea that Americans held higher moral standards than the British.²²⁶ Furthermore, placed immediately before this news was a song that exalted, ‘Hark! ‘tis Freedom that calls, come Patriots awake! To Arms my brave Boys, and away.’²²⁷ This time, instead of news of British atrocities, it was the news of the Americans’ success and honorable actions that the paper linked with calls for the people to rally in support of the revolutionary cause.

In the month of June, articles that detailed American efforts to raise troops and form militia units throughout the Thirteen Colonies continued to circulate. For example, in Albany, New York, colonists raised eight hundred men ‘for the defenc[s]e of American liberty.’²²⁸ Back in Cambridge, the same paper announced their ‘pleasure to inform the public, that the grand American army is nearly completed.’²²⁹ These articles followed a mix of news pertaining to Lexington and Concord, including reports that the Continental Congress had resolved to ban exports to the Canadian region and that the Queen was in tears after hearing news from Boston —questioning, ‘God bless her?’²³⁰ Also from Philadelphia, another paper reported that fifteen hundred men, including artillery, light infantry, rangers, and riflemen, displayed their ‘manual exercises firings and maneuvers’ for the Continental Congress.²³¹ Lastly, in a Boston paper, news broke

²²⁵ ‘YESTERDAY,’ *The New Hampshire Gazette*, 26 May 1775, p. 3.

²²⁶ ‘YESTERDAY,’ *The New Hampshire Gazette*, 26 May 1775, p. 3.

²²⁷ ‘A Song,’ *The New Hampshire Gazette*, 26 May 1775, p. 2.

²²⁸ ‘Hartford, June 5,’ *The Essex Journal*, 9 June 1775, p. 3.

²²⁹ ‘Cambridge, June 8,’ *The Essex Journal*, 9 June 1775, p. 3.

²³⁰ ‘Philadelphia, May 24,’ *The Essex Journal*, 9 June 1775, p. 3.

²³¹ ‘Philadelphia,’ *The Pennsylvania Ledger*, 10 June 1775, p. 3.

that the Continental Congress voted to allocate three million dollars of ‘lawful money’ to support raising seventy thousand men.²³² On the same page as this report was also news that the Provincial Congress worked to support the poor in Boston, ‘suffering by the cruel Hand of arbitrary Power.’²³³

Anger over the news of the conduct of the King’s Troops at Lexington and Concord – which included allegations that the newspapers projected to all corners of the British colonies in North America and Great Britain – helped fuel the growing martial spirit. This is evident by the placement of the articles within the newspapers. Often, reports of the raising of American troops flanked news of British atrocities committed during Lexington and Concord. In other instances, placed near articles compelling colonists to join the American army was the news of the army’s success, such as at Fort Ticonderoga or when the citizens thwarted British efforts to forage in their town. Just within two months of the battle, the atmosphere the newspapers painted shows the emotions of the colonial people turned from anger and shock to a unified excitement and optimism over the building of a grand army.

In June, the reports on the conflict and allegations slowed dramatically as the public attention turned towards the events at Cambridge and the buildup of American troops. Furthermore, the Battle of Bunker Hill, occurring on 17 June 1775, soon dominated the newspaper reports, taking the focus off Lexington and Concord. The only article circulating about Lexington and Concord was Reverend Gordan’s account, although these articles also ceased by the end of June. In what seemed a last-ditch effort to gain control of the situation, Gage issued a proclamation that he would pardon anyone

²³² ‘Watertown, June 12,’ *The Boston Gazette*, 12 June 1775, p. 2.

²³³ ‘In Provincial Congress,’ *The Boston Gazette*, 12 June 1775, p. 2.

involved in the rebellion if they promised to lay down their arms unless they were one of the known ring leaders.²³⁴ Further, in the midst of the reports emerging about a buildup of troops at Bunker Hill, *The Essex Journal* provided a story on the arrival of the three Generals (Howe, Burgoyne, and Clinton) to Boston, but gave it a humorous spin, perhaps to minimize the importance of their arrival. The writer claimed that when the three British generals arrived at Boston, the ship Captain informed them that ten thousand angry inhabitants surrounded them and that five thousand regulars remained in the city. In response, Burgoyne exclaimed:

What! Ten thousand peasants keep five thousand King's troops shut up!
Well, let us get in, and we'll soon find *elbow* room!²³⁵

By mid-June, there was no further mention of the allegations that British troops killed innocent women and children in the newspapers. Before they disappeared, however, these accusations forced British leadership to scramble to clean up the public relations predicament that occurred, especially when the news reached Great Britain. Although the British declared the Boston area to be in a state of rebellion, they could not ignore the Americans' allegations, given their need for public support from the majority of colonists to succeed. Evident by Gage, Barrington, and Dartmouth's response to the arrival of the revolutionary version of the Battle of Lexington and Concord, they feared the Americans were succeeding in making the news by shaping the perception of what occurred – and they were correct. In the end, the revolutionaries quickly extinguished any attempts by Gage to reset the narrative in their favor.

²³⁴ 'By his Excellency, The Hon. Thomas Gage, Esq,' *The Essex Journal*, 16 June 1775, p. 2.

²³⁵ 'By his Excellency, The Hon. Thomas Gage, Esq,' *The Essex Journal*, 16 June 1775, p. 3.

Conclusion

Despite the impact of the American allegations on British public relations, as the dust settled from the whirlwind of reports after Lexington and Concord, very little evidence emerged to support the worst allegations that British soldiers killed noncombatants and wounded American militia. In the end, the American depositions and complaints collected by the Continental Congress did not allege the British committed these atrocities. Furthermore, as the public became aware of these allegations through the newspapers, so did members of Congress. If there was any evidence that this occurred, given the character of the revolutionary leadership, they would have undoubtedly jumped at the opportunity to add these murders to their growing grievances against the British government.²³⁶

While there was no corroboration for the accusation that an American militiaman scalped a wounded redcoat, it is plausible given the militia were using irregular tactics. Furthermore, scalping was by no means a terror tactic solely used by Indigenous warriors by the year 1775.²³⁷ It is also likely that this allegation triggered fears stemming from the French and Indigenous raids on frontier settlements during the Seven Years' War, which is a topic explored in the next chapter.²³⁸ In the aftermath of

²³⁶ The last report alleging wounded militia were killed was in *The Pennsylvania Journal* on 24 May. The last paper to publish the intercepted letters from British soldiers that reported they killed women and children was from *Dunlap's Maryland Gazette* on 13 June. See: 'The following Extracts from several intercepted letters,' *Dunlap's Maryland Gazette*, 13 June 1775, p. 1; 'Worcester, (Massachusetts-Bay) May 3,' *The Pennsylvania Journal*, 24 May 1775, p. 5.

²³⁷ John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 21-23; Shannon, *The Seven Years' War in North America*, pp. 85-86.

²³⁸ Colin Calloway, *The Indian World of George Washington* (Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 130-131; Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War* (Vintage Books, 2000), pp. 108-109. It was during these raids that the French army's Indigenous allies either scalped innocent civilians or took them captive. In one estimate, the Native troops took 1,000 captives between 1755 and 1758. See: Shannon, *The Seven Years'*

Lexington and Concord, however, the Americans could not acknowledge this act occurred, as they were attempting to build an argument that the British military were the ones using savage, barbaric, and inhumane tactics. In what was perhaps the Patriots' strategy to erase the scalping allegations, Reverend Gordon entered the scene to set the story straight. Presumably, it is less likely the public would dispute the assessment of a Congregationalist pastor from one of the most prominent religions in the New England colonies.²³⁹ Ultimately, the scalping allegation disappeared from the newspapers and the memory of the colonial public, which, in all probability, was Congress' intent.

What is consistent throughout this case study were the allegations that the British regulars plundered, burned, and destroyed private property. In fact, this was the only type of allegation corroborated by the testimonies the newspapers published and the intercepted letters from British soldiers. Furthermore, the letter to the people of Great Britain by the Continental Congress alleged the same, likely because there existed more evidence to support its validity. Also plausible was that the British killed male noncombatants in the heat of the battle, who might not have been a threat. The Continental Congress highlighted this allegation in their letter to the British public that 'old men peaceably in their houses were shot dead.'²⁴⁰ While the depositions and intercepted letters did not support this accusation, Gage alluded in his defense that innocent people might have suffered in the chaos of the conflict. It is feasible that the

War in North America, pp. 88-89. Fears triggered by the memories of atrocities during the Seven Years' War will be further explored in Chapter Two, see pp. 99-102.

²³⁹ For more on Congregationalism, see: Daniel T. Jenkins, 'Congregationalism,' *Britannica* <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Congregationalism> [accessed 16 February 2024]; Mark Noll, *America's God* (Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 162.

²⁴⁰ 'In Provincial Congress,' *Rivington's New York Gazetteer*, 18 May 1775, p. 3. Of note, one of the first newspapers that published the letter to the British people from the Continental Congress was *Rivington's New York Gazetteer* on 18 May 1775.

British troops mistook these men as combatants in the conflict, especially if they resided in the houses from which the militia fired.

The revolutionaries had full control of the narrative in this opening battle of the war, apparent by the sheer number of articles that the newspapers published starting the day after the battle. The dominance of the Patriot-leaning colonial news was visually evident from the newspapers reviewed in this case study. Using the newspapers as their means to broadcast grievous allegations against the British forces to all corners of the colonies, they also employed European laws of war as their basis for making the allegations. However, launching accusations at the British that they committed grievous acts was not the only way the Patriots labored to shape the narrative after Lexington and Concord. While the news reports excoriated Gage, simultaneously, the revolutionary-leaning press made multiple claims that they held, in essence, the moral high ground. Furthermore, along with statements of ethical superiority, reports of the buildup of American troops and growing 'martial spirit' also dominated the news. This pattern occurred repeatedly in the newspapers, often on the same page, effectively exuding and arguably triggering a sense of growing excitement for the revolutionary cause. The rapid response that flooded the news starting a day after the conflict kept momentum throughout the two-month period of this case study. Any attempts by the British to either throw counter-allegations against the Americans or to reset the narrative in their favor did not hold. Clearly, the Americans took the British completely by surprise because of their control of the information war that was occurring in the newspapers. A war that, in this case study, the British lost.

Chapter Two: The Battle of the Cedars and Britain's Indigenous Allies

Introduction

From 18 to 27 May 1776, a series of battles occurred in the Canadian region at a small American post called Cedars, which sparked as much controversy over the actions of the British military as Lexington and Concord. It was in the Canadian region that Britain received support from their First Nation allies for the first time during the war. While a minor conflict and not well-known compared to other battles fought during the revolution, this incident caused unprecedented responses by both the British and American leadership. As with the first battle of the war, the allegations that British forces breached laws of war and its aftermath unfolded in the public eye through the newspapers. While the Cedars conflict generated fewer newspaper reports compared to the first battle of the war, they were arguably just as impactful because of the sensational content. As a result, Cedars had an importance way out of proportion to the military significance of the events, triggered by the British use of Indigenous support for the first known instance of the war. This response was a result of a combination of factors, including the longer history of frontier warfare in the region, racial tension around the Indigenous ways of war, and also the immediate context of the summer of 1776 when Congress asserted its sovereignty as the United States.

This chapter will focus on the aftermath of the Battles at Cedars and the measures taken by both British and American leadership in response to allegations around the mistreatment of American prisoners of war by the British military and their allies. The gruesome allegations that emerged accused the First Nation warriors of

mutilating and killing American prisoners of war while the British regular forces stood by and did nothing. In response, the Continental Congress, for the first time acting as the United States, responded to the allegations by conducting an official investigation into the conflict, then sent their results to the British high command. As for the British, they found themselves, once again, scrambling to fix another public image disaster. Different from Lexington and Concord, the Cedars conflict involved the British's Indigenous allies, whose known customs of warfighting only added to the seriousness of the allegations from a white colonist perspective. In response, the British officers involved in the conflict claimed a similar defense as did the French during the Seven Years' War, that, in the end, they could not control their allies. In this case, not only were the British officers' defense printed in the newspapers, but their sworn statements circulated throughout Great Britain in a published pamphlet. However, as the dust settled from the Cedars controversy, key leaders within the British government recognized the critical need to take more action to gain control of what they perceived as fabricated news originating from the colonial papers. Despite the British successes on the battlefield in the Canadian region, they continued to lag behind the Americans in winning the information war.

Indigenous Support & Frontier Warfare

The Battle of the Cedars occurred in a small village just southwest of Montréal, in an area located on the border of the frontier region, otherwise known as 'Indian Territory.' This region was a space where the European laws of war did not take precedence, subjecting the area to a long history of atrocities committed as a result of

frontier warfare that raged between the French and British militaries and the Indigenous people that inhabited the land. The long history of the fragile and complex political, social, and cultural environment in the region is perhaps why this minor conflict triggered a response that was out of proportion to the size of the engagement itself. During the American War for Independence, this space offered an opportunity for the revolutionaries to shape perceptions about what occurred in the frontier to support their agenda. By drawing on existing and engrained fears of frontier warfare, combined with the revolutionaries' anger over the news of the British support from Indigenous nations, the Americans used the Cedars conflict to make their claim as a civilized nation. At the same time, as the Americans blamed the British for making alliances with Indigenous people, they were actively recruiting Indigenous support as well.²⁴¹

At the start of the American War for Independence, the frontier - generally defined as those areas on the western borders not yet 'officially' settled by white colonists - consisted of the land west of the border delineated by both the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and Treaty of Fort Stanwix in 1768.²⁴² In 1763, after the British defeat of the French in the Seven Years' War, the crown drew the Proclamation Line, which spanned from north to south, primarily along the Appalachian Mountain Range and west of Québec. The intent of the royal proclamation of 1763 was to prohibit Anglo-American colonists from settling in this frontier region, thus preventing further conflicts with the Indigenous population already outraged over encroaching settlers. In the end, it failed to prevent colonists from settling in these areas, which triggered Pontiac's War.

²⁴¹ Colin Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crises and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 1-2.

²⁴² Calloway, *Indian Country*, pp. 1-2.

This war ended with the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, which pushed the boundary in the Thirteen Colonies west approximately 100 miles after an agreement between Great Britain and the Haudenosaunee, or Six Nations of the Iroquois, who also represented other Indigenous nations in the area. This space, which had already sustained a long history of frontier warfare and racial tensions, became the setting for the Battle at the Cedars.²⁴³

Despite the legacy of frontier warfare that struck fear into the hearts and minds of white colonists, both the British and Americans actively courted the First Nations people in hopes of persuading them to support their political agendas.²⁴⁴ Eventually, both armies came to value Indigenous support in battle not only for their skill in fighting in the American terrain but also because they supplemented the regular and militia forces whose muster rolls were often depleted and difficult to replenish.²⁴⁵ However, the Americans, while at the same time actively recruiting Indigenous support, also launched complaints against the King and Parliament over British plans to do the same. The revolutionaries documented this grievance in the Declaration of Independence. Of the

²⁴³ Pontiac's War occurred in 1763 after leaders from multiple Indigenous nations in the Great Lakes region joined together and attempt to drive British forces out of the area. See: Calloway, *Indian Country*, pp. 20-25; Colin Calloway, *The Indian World of George Washington: The First President, the First Americans, and the Birth of a Nation* (Oxford University Press, 2018), pp: 184-190.

²⁴⁴ The term 'First Nations' is a general term for all Indigenous people living in the Canadian region. Canadians today use First Nations as opposed to Native American or American Indian. For an example of Washington's attempts to gain Indigenous allies, see:

'From George Washington to the Chiefs of the Passamaquoddy Indians, 24 December 1776,' *Founders Online*

< <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-07-02-0340> > [accessed 11 March 2024].

²⁴⁵ For an example of British troop deployments outside of the northern colonies, see Clinton's response to Whitehall's directive to send five thousand troops to the Caribbean to defend British fortifications against the French in: Henry Clinton, *The American Rebellion: Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of his Campaigns, 1775-1782*, ed. by William Willcox (Yale University Press, 1954), p. 86; Stephen Brumwell, *Redcoats: The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755-1763* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 203-206.

twenty-seven grievances aimed at George III, one was over the British use of Indigenous troops:

He has excited domestic Insurrections amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the Inhabitants of our Frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known Rule of Warfare, is an undistinguished Destruction, of all Ages, Sexes and Conditions.²⁴⁶

Around the same time the Continental Congress ratified the declaration on 4 July 1776, they launched an investigation into the Battle of the Cedars, claiming the officers did nothing to prevent their Indigenous troops from abusing American prisoners of war.²⁴⁷

At the onset of the war, the Continental Congress' strategy with the Indigenous population was to try to persuade them to remain neutral. This changed not long after the start of the war when the American leadership realized the value of forging an alliance and allowing Washington to supplement the Continental Army with Indigenous warriors. As Colin Calloway notes, while the British were quicker to recruit these troops, both sides initially had their reservations and shared concerns that native warriors 'were unpredictable' because 'they fought for their own reasons and in their own way; they were expensive to supply and maintain' and, 'they might commit atrocities.'²⁴⁸ Furthermore, fear of Indigenous terror tactics, including scalping, torture of captives, and irregular warfighting techniques, existed within the colonial population since the early seventeenth century.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ 'The Declaration of Independence,' *LOC* <<https://www.loc.gov/item/2003576546>> [accessed 9 March 2024].

²⁴⁷ Mark Anderson, *Down the Warpath to the Cedars: Indian's First Battles in the Revolution* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2021), pp. 134-137.

²⁴⁸ Calloway, *Indian World*, p. 218.

²⁴⁹ Calloway, *Indian World*, p. 218, 231, 285.

Shaping racial perspectives is evidence that military and civilian colonial leadership exploited fears of Indigenous ways of war for their own benefit. For example, during the Seven Years' War, combined Indigenous and French units conducted raids on settlements and fortifications on the frontier to break morale and divert British attention away from New France.²⁵⁰ Further, the British accused the French of encouraging their Indigenous allies to commit atrocities, then claimed no responsibility for their actions. The most well-known instance of this allegation was the surrender at Fort William Henry, where French allied Indigenous forces from the Huron Nation brutally killed British prisoners of war.²⁵¹ However, during the American Revolution, the Americans alleged the same against the British during the Battle of the Cedars.²⁵² In the end, the European exploitation of Indigenous customs of warfighting helped cement their reputation as 'savages' in the eyes of colonists.²⁵³

Despite the concerns around native warfighting customs, on 30 November 1775, the Continental Congress resolved to actively recruit their support, specifically 'the Indians of St. Francis, Penobscot, Stockbridge, and St. John's.'²⁵⁴ Congress made this determination after recognizing that if they did not start recruiting Indigenous troops,

²⁵⁰ Timothy Shannon, *The Seven Years' War in North America: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2014), p. 63; Anderson, *Down the Warpath*, pp. 89, 124, Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy*, 32-34; Eric Hinderaker, 'Declaring Independence: The Ohio Indians and the Seven Years' War', in *Cultures in Conflict*, ed. by Warren Hofstra (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), pp. 116-117.

²⁵¹ Ian K. Steele, *Betrayals: Fort William Henry and the Massacre* (Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 131-132.

²⁵² Calloway, *Indian Country*, pp. 116-117; Anderson, *Down the Warpath*, pp. 134-137.

²⁵³ Chapter One highlights this argument on pp. 45-46 and supports Robert Parkinson and Holger Hoock's research, see Robert Parkinson, *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution* (University of North Carolina Press, 2016), pp. 21-25 and Holger Hoock, *Scars of Independence* (Crown, 2017), pp. 12-14.

²⁵⁴ *JCC*, 34 vols, ed. by Worthington Chauncey Ford (U. S. Government Printing Office, 1904-1937), III, p. 401.

then the British most certainly would, leaving the American army at a disadvantage.²⁵⁵ Instead of a strategy focused on persuading Indigenous people to remain neutral, Congress now actively sought to convince them to fight for the revolutionary cause. Although Congress' initial intent confused Washington, on 8 June 1776, he asked for clarification on 'taking Indians into service.' He was not clear whether Congress' authorization pertained only to Indigenous nations located in the Canadian region or any nation within the colonies. In the end, Congress gave Washington free rein to recruit Indigenous support to augment the Continental forces.²⁵⁶

To garner Indigenous support for the American invasion of the Canadian region, the Patriots targeted the town of Kahnawake, located in southern Quebec, as a source of support.²⁵⁷ This Jesuit missionary town comprised many people from the Mohawk nation, with whom the Americans made several attempts to form an alliance. Starting in 1775, Major General Phillip Schuyler, Commander of the Northern Department of the Continental Army, entrusted Ethan Allan and John Brown with a mission to deliver a declaration from the Continental Congress and distribute it to several towns in Canada, including Kahnawake. The message in the declaration intended to persuade the Indigenous population to support American independence from Great Britain. Schuyler

²⁵⁵ Calloway, *Indian World*, p. 218; Timothy Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy on the Early American Frontier* (Penguin Books, 2008), pp. 33-36.

²⁵⁶ 'From George Washington to John Hancock, 8 June 1776,' *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-04-02-0367>> [accessed 9 March 2024].

²⁵⁷ *JCC*, III, ed. by Ford, p. 401. For an example of Washington's attempts to gain Native American allies, see:

'From George Washington to the Chiefs of the Passamaquoddy Indians, 24 December 1776,' *Founders Online*

< <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-07-02-0340>> [accessed 8 March 2024].

Kahnawake was a village founded by Jesuit missionaries that attracted many people from the Mohawk nation, many of whom converted to Catholicism. The Kahnawake Mohawk people separated from the Six Nations of the Iroquois' lands in upstate New York and resettled in Canada in the seventeenth century. They now belonged to the alliance of the Seven Nations.

also sent ambassadors from the American-allied Oneida people of the Haudenosaunee to issue an indiscreet warning that Schuyler would attack the Kahnawake if they assisted the British.²⁵⁸ These declarations and threats from the Americans amounted to very little support from Indigenous people living in the Canadian region. Ultimately, most Kahnawake people either supported the Crown or stayed neutral.

However, there was one man from Kahnawake who pledged his support to the Americans named Louis Atayataghronghta — also known as Atiatoharongwen or Louis Cook. During the Seven Years' War, Atayataghronghta fought for the French along with many other warriors from Kahnawake. At the start of the American Revolution, while most Kahnawake people supported the Crown or stayed neutral, Atayataghronghta sympathized with the Patriot cause. In December 1775, Atayataghronghta, a Mohawk chief, led a detachment of Indigenous forces from Kahnawake in support of Benedict Arnold's troops during the attack on Quebec City. Atayataghronghta demonstrated his commitment to the American army soon after Lexington and Concord when he traveled to Washington's camp in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to offer aid.²⁵⁹ Overall, it was Atayataghronghta and the small number of men he recruited that became one of the few Indigenous allies during the Americans' attempt to seize Quebec.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ Calloway, *Indian World*, pp. 215-217. Haudenosaunee is the Indigenous word for the Six Nations of the Iroquois.

²⁵⁹ 'Atiatoharongwen,' *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/atiatoharongwen_5E.html> [accessed 8 March 2024]; Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy*, p. 58; Calloway, *Indian World*, pp. 222-223. Atayataghronghta was the son of a Saint-François Abenaki woman and a black man. In 1745, French forces captured Atayataghronghta and his mother, but native people from the village of Kahnawake, located near Montreal, came to their rescue. The Seven Nations consisted of an alliance of several missionary towns along the St. Lawrence River, unlike the Six Nations, which were an alliance of different nations or nationalities.

²⁶⁰ Gavin Watt, *Poisoned by Lies and Hypocrisy: America's First Attempt to Bring Liberty to Canada, 1775-1776* (Dundurn, 2014), pp. 19-20, 78; 'Atiatoharongwen,' *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/atiatoharongwen_5E.html> [accessed 31 August 2020]; Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy*, p. 58; Calloway, *Indian World*, pp. 222-223.

Another nation the Continental Congress targeted for recruitment from the Canadian region was the Abenaki people, who lived in the town of Odanak, located along the St. Lawrence River near Quebec.²⁶¹ This community, also referred to as the St. Francis, were members of the Seven Nations of Canada. The people of the Seven Nations lived in multiple towns in this area, and their population consisted of a mix of individuals from other nations, such as the Iroquois, Algonquin, Huron, Abenaki, and Nipissing.²⁶² Once again, however, Congress was unsuccessful in recruiting from the Abenaki nation, as with the Kahnawake, most eventually allied with the British or remained natural.²⁶³

One Indigenous community that Americans relied heavily on to gain support from the ingenious people to the north because of their strong ties with the Kahnawake was the Stockbridge people. The Stockbridge lived in the western Massachusetts Protestant missionary town of the same name and included people from the Mahican, Housatonic, and Wappinger communities. During the Seven Years' War, the Stockbridge community supported the British, and during the American Revolution, they fully supported the Patriot cause.²⁶⁴ At the beginning of the war, Abraham Nimham, a Stockbridge sachem, and his men traveled to the colony of Quebec to negotiate with the local Indigenous population to support the revolutionaries. In the end, their mission failed. In May 1775, British forces captured Nimham and his men outside of Fort St.

²⁶¹ Also referred to as the people of St. Francis.

²⁶² 'Seven Nations,' *The Canadian Encyclopedia* <<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/seven-nations>> [accessed 31 August 2020]; Also see: 'The Seven Nations of Canada: The Other Iroquois Confederacy,' *The Wampum Chronicles* <<http://www.wampumchronicles.com/sevennations.html>> [accessed 9 March 2024]; Calloway, *Indian World*, p. 222. Most people of the Seven Nations were Catholic and during the Seven Years' War they mostly allied with France.

²⁶³ Calloway, *Indian World*, p. 224.

²⁶⁴ Calloway, *Indian World*, p. 219.

John, located east of Montreal along the Richelieu River. The British knew the Stockbridge supported the Americans, and after searching their personal items, they found wampum belts and letters intended for use in gaining support from the Kahnawake.²⁶⁵ The British sentenced Nimham and his men to death for attempting to incite violence against the King. However, the local Kahnawake leaders protested and demanded Carleton release them, arguing that Nimham and his men were ambassadors, not traitors.²⁶⁶ Eventually, the British released the Stockbridge to the Kahnawake with orders never to enter the province of Quebec again.²⁶⁷ The Kahnawake then escorted Nimham and his men to safety at Crown Point in the colony of New York.²⁶⁸

The Haudenosaunee, one of the most powerful nations, whose lands mostly spanned the northwestern region of the colony of New York, were critical in gaining support for the Canadian invasion, given their close ties to the First Nations. However, once again, the British were more successful than the Americans in establishing these alliances. Of the six nations of the Haudenosaunee, four formalized an alliance with the British in 1777 during a council at Fort Oswego — the Onodowaga (Seneca), Kanienkehaka (Mohawk), Onondagega (Onondaga), and Gayogohono (Cayuga).²⁶⁹ The

²⁶⁵ *Minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence, 1775-1778*, ed. by James Sullivan, 2 vols (The University of the State of New York, 1923), I, pp. 129-132.

²⁶⁶ Patrick Frazier, *The Mohicans of Stockbridge* (University of Nebraska Press, 1992), p. 202. According to Frazier, the connection between these two nations was because both the Kahnawake and Stockbridge sent their young men to attend Dartmouth College, located in the Patriot-controlled colony of New Hampshire.

²⁶⁷ Watt, *Poisoned by Lies and Hypocrisy*, pp. 51-52; *Minutes of the Albany Committee of Correspondence*, pp. 131-132.

²⁶⁸ Frazier, *The Mohicans*, p. 203.

²⁶⁹ The Six Nations of the Iroquois are also referred to as the Iroquois Confederacy or Haudenosaunee in their native language. The Six Nations consisted of the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora tribes. The confederacy was called the Five Nations of the Iroquois until the Tuscarora were admitted into the confederacy in the 1720s. The homeland of the Six Nations during the American Revolution spanned what is today the entire upstate New York area.

remaining two nations — the Onyoteaka (Oneida) and Skarure (Tuscarora) — mostly aligned with the Americans fighting for independence.²⁷⁰

The British also struggled to gain support from the First Nations people despite their eventual successes. Initial attempts by the British to recruit the Kahnawake failed as the native leaders did not understand why the Crown was waging war against its own people.²⁷¹ The tide turned, however, in July 1775 with the arrival of Guy Johnson, Superintendent of Northern Indians, and Daniel Claus, his deputy, to Montreal. Guy Johnson recently succeeded his deceased father-in-law and uncle, Sir William Johnson, who successfully held the position since its inception in 1756. Johnson, the elder, was pivotal in forming alliances with the Haudenosaunee and the people of the Seven Nations. Guy Johnson hoped to continue his father-in-law's legacy by using the same methods of holding council, which required numerous gift offerings and lengthy diplomatic negotiations with the Indigenous leadership. These councils often lasted for several weeks and cost the Crown significant capital. Once in Montreal, Claus held prosperous talks with the Kahnawake, and Johnson conducted an equally successful council at Lachine on 26 July. As a result of their efforts, the British gained support from approximately sixteen hundred Indigenous troops, mostly from the Seven Nations.²⁷²

²⁷⁰ Anthony Wallace, *The Death and Rebirth of the Seneca* (Vintage Books, 1972), p. 132; Calloway, *Indian Country*, p. 108; 'Big Idea 5: Native American Soldiers and Scouts,' *Museum of the American Revolution* <<https://www.amrevmuseum.org/big-idea-5-native-american-soldiers-and-scouts>> [accessed 9 March 2024].

²⁷¹ Watt, *Poisoned by Lies and Hypocrisy*, pp. 25-26, 50, 61-62.

²⁷² Colin Calloway, *Indian Country*, pp. 188-120. Watt, *Poisoned by Lies and Hypocrisy*, pp. 61-62. Most Indigenous nations located in northeastern America, including the Haudenosaunee, followed the custom of gift-giving. This custom required a reciprocal exchange of presents in order to seal relationships. Giving gifts also symbolized a promise that each party would make good on agreements. Belts and strings of wampum accompanied the gifts, as a symbol of the sincerity of the message provided by the council members. Indigenous customs of diplomacy required holding a council in accordance with a strict protocol. See: Daniel Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (The Institute for Early American History, 1992), pp. 4, 22, 41- 42, 47.

The reasoning behind the Indigenous alliances had nothing to do with the principles that European nations fought over. Nor did it have to do with any sense of admiration or respect for the European nation they chose to ally with. Often, Indigenous nations entered into alliances with more than one European nation simultaneously. It all came down to what they assessed as the best course of action for their people at the moment. In essence, Indigenous people ‘were doing what any people would – defending their lives, their women and children, their land and their freedom.’²⁷³ For hundreds of years, Indigenous nations held political opportunities and agency between the rival powers of France and England, practicing a ‘diplomatic balancing act’ based on the best interests of their nation.²⁷⁴ During the Seven Years’ War, for example, the Seven Nations allied with the French because they took more measures to stop the flow of English settlers onto their lands.²⁷⁵ The French also offered more gifts than the English, honoring the Indigenous custom required for maintaining alliances.²⁷⁶ It is for these same reasons that the Six Nations of the Iroquois split in terms of who they decided to support during the American Revolution. The Oneida and Tuscarora people supported the Americans due to their assessment that they would best protect their interests, with the other four nations supporting the British for the same reason.²⁷⁷

The first alliances with European nations started not long after the first Europeans settled in America. For the English settlers, the alliance they formally developed with the Haudenosaunee – termed the Covenant Chain - started in 1677 when

²⁷³ Calloway, *Indian World*, p. 117.

²⁷⁴ Calloway, *Indian World*, p. 30.

²⁷⁵ Calloway, *Indian World*, p. 117.

²⁷⁶ Calloway, *Indian World*, p. 135; Michael Leroy Oberg, *Peacemakers: The Iroquois, the United States, and the Treaty of Canandaigua, 1794* (Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 4.

²⁷⁷ Calloway, *Indian World*, pp. 239-243.

New York governor Edmond Andros negotiated an accord with the nation's sachems.²⁷⁸

Although, what the English did not know initially was that the Iroquois were also negotiating with the French. Eventually, the European colonial leaders came to learn that the Indigenous people did not view alliances in the same way. After they agreed to the terms of the Covenant Chain, the Iroquois expected ongoing reciprocity after linking arms in the form of gifts. Furthermore, they refused to fight in battles for the Europeans if their kin fought for the opposite side.²⁷⁹ In the end, the Covenant Chain did not endure. Once the Haudenosaunee people realized it did not meet their needs, they did not abide by it.²⁸⁰

To maintain alliances with Indigenous nations, it required ongoing attention and care. For example, in 1753, the Iroquois alliance with the British broke down after the Mohawk sachem claimed the British cheated them out of their lands. In response, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs at the time, Sir William Johnson, attempted to repair the fractured relationship. After much negotiation, the alliance was reestablished, which also led to the Six Nations' support of the British during the Seven Years' War.²⁸¹ The main reason the Haudenosaunee reconsidered their alliance with Great Britain was because of the Crown's efforts to protect the Indigenous land from white settlers with the Proclamation of 1763.²⁸² Further, the Quebec Act of 1774 — which many colonists perceived as an extension of the Intolerable Acts — expanded the territory of the

²⁷⁸ Oberg, *Peacemakers*, p. 16.

²⁷⁹ Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy*, p. 161; Oberg, *Peacemakers*, p. 12; For more on the origins of the Covenant Chain see: Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy*, pp. 38-46; 'Covenant Chain,' in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* <<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/covenant-chain>> [accessed 31 August 2020].

²⁸⁰ Oberg, *Peacemakers*, p. 17; Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse*, p. 91.

²⁸¹ Calloway, *Indian World*, p. 30.

²⁸² Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy*, pp. 166-167; 'Proclamation of 1763,' in *Britannica* <<https://www.britannica.com/event/Proclamation-of-1763>> [accessed 1 September 2020].

Province of Quebec west, making Ohio Company land claims null and void, much to the dismay of land speculators, such as Washington.²⁸³ In sum, the alliances between the Indigenous population and Europeans were fluid and centered on the survival of their people, lands, and customs.²⁸⁴

During the eighteenth century, Europeans dealt with Indigenous people as if they belonged to a foreign nation and not people who belonged to the same nation. Overall, Great Britain and the United States, just like their French and Dutch predecessors, did not treat Indigenous people as subjects.²⁸⁵ This is evident by how the British handled the Stockbridge sachem, Abraham Nimham, and his men after apprehending them for attempting to persuade the Kahnawake to support the revolutionary cause.²⁸⁶ As a result, the European powers who claimed American land entered into multiple treaties with Indigenous nations that defined their relationships. The way these alliances and relationships operated was dictated by Indigenous people to their European neighbors from the time of first contact. For the northeastern native nations, autonomy and independence were key – whether it be individual relationships, those between Indigenous nations, or those with European nations. In the Haudenosaunee language, the term *guswenta* describes how these relationships operated for Indigenous people. *Guswenta* describes the ‘Two Row’ wampum belt provided to the first Dutch settlers. It depicts two boats traveling down the same stream. In terms of their alliances with European nations, the boats depict two separate but peaceful nations, working together

²⁸³ The Ohio Company of Virginia was a land speculation company established in 1747, which Washington joined in 1749. See Calloway, *Indian World*, pp. 47-49.

²⁸⁴ Oberg, *Peacemakers*, p. 12.

²⁸⁵ Calloway, *Indian World*, p. 2.

²⁸⁶ See p. 93 of this chapter.

but also not interfering with each other's business. *Guswenta* remained a key principle in how they required relationships to operate within European alliances and later with the United States as well.²⁸⁷

In May 1776, Great Britain leveraged one of their Mohawk allies from St. Regis to support their goal of pushing the American army out of Canada. As a result, the Battle of the Cedars became the first battle of the war that the British used Indigenous support. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the British recruitment of Indigenous support angered the revolutionaries, as they believed that the British intended to subject their colonists to cruel and barbaric acts practiced within the Indigenous way of war. These fears stemmed from the devastation caused by the French and Indigenous raids occurring during the Seven Years' War just over a decade prior. In turn, the Americans used the British alliances with Indigenous nations to fuel their movement for independence.²⁸⁸

The Indigenous custom that struck the most fear in the hearts of white colonists was captive taking, both in battle and during raids on frontier settlements. It was during the Seven Years' War that captive-taking reached unprecedented levels. By one estimate, combined Indigenous and French forces took one thousand men, women, and children

²⁸⁷ Oberg, *Peacemakers*, pp. 12-13. The United States continued with the formal process of negotiating treaties with Indigenous nations until 1871. In 1831, however, the relationship changed when the Supreme Court ruled that Indigenous nations were no longer to be viewed as 'independent nations,' but now 'domestic dependent nations.' These treaties were written into the U.S. Constitution in 1787 and required formal agreements between the U.S. and Indigenous nations. There were 370 treaties negotiated with the U.S. See: Oberg, *Peacemakers*, pp. 3-4. As for Great Britain, the Crown entered into treaties starting in 1701 and continued the practice for 200 years. See: 'Treaties and Agreements,' *The Government of Canada* <<https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100028574/1529354437231>>, [accessed 28 February 2024].

²⁸⁸ Anderson, *Down the Warpath*, pp. 89, 124; Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy*, 32-34; Hinderaker, 'Declaring Independence', pp. 116-117.

captive between 1755 and 1758 after raiding frontier settlements.²⁸⁹ Captive-taking was a custom well established within several northeast Indigenous nations long before the French arrived. However, the British blamed the French for encouraging and equipping their Indigenous allies to conduct raids on settlements and fortifications on the frontier. Since the seventeenth century, the French used this irregular strategy against the British to break morale and divert British attention away from New France. The use of this terror tactic during the Seven Years' War yielded multiple captivity narratives containing graphic depictions of the captivity experience.²⁹⁰ These traumatic memories were still fresh in the colonists' minds at the start of the American Revolution.²⁹¹

Underpinning this practice of captive taking were the fundamental beliefs around practices intended to assuage grief from the loss of loved ones. The Haudenosaunee, for example, feared the detrimental impact that grief and loss had on the human soul. This impact is depicted in one of their creation stories about a man named Hiawatha who, because of grief, became uncontrollably violent and mentally ill. Another man named Diganawidah gave Hiawatha strings of wampum and spoke words of condolence to ease his grief over the loss of family members. Diganawidah's actions helped dry Hiawatha's tears, opened his ears to reason, his throat to speak clearly again, and restored him to a 'good mind.'²⁹² To ensure their nation's mental health, the Iroquois embedded rituals of condolence into many aspects of their daily lives. In the seventeenth century, however, significant losses due to disease and war, mainly due to the arrival of Europeans,

²⁸⁹ Shannon, *The Seven Years' War in North America*, pp. 32-34.

²⁹⁰ Captivity narratives were composed by white colonists taken by Indigenous people and emerged in the seventeenth-century British American colonies. For more, see: Shannon, *The Seven Years' War in North America*, p. 89-90.

²⁹¹ Shannon, *The Seven Years' War in North America*, pp. 88-89; Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy*, 32-34.

²⁹² Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse*, pp. 31-33; Oberg, *Peacemakers*, p. 9.

required aggressive measures to restore the Haudenosaunee to a ‘good mind.’ Often called ‘mourning wars,’ the practice of raiding towns and capturing, then either adopting or killing the captives to ease grief and boost the nation’s population significantly increased.²⁹³ It was the women’s role in the family in mourning to call for a raid to receive captives, which they hoped would assuage the family’s grief.²⁹⁴ Towards the end of the seventeenth century, mourning wars started to inflict more casualties than captives, producing a violent cycle that no longer fulfilled their needs.²⁹⁵ It was the Covenant Chain alliance with the English that helped reduce the need for mourning wars by securing the borders of Iroquoia to the north and east and opening up their western borders to move freely once again to conduct ‘war, diplomacy, and trade.’²⁹⁶ While this increase in security decreased the need for mourning wars, the practice of taking captives continued through most of the eighteenth century within the Six Nations of the Iroquois.²⁹⁷

While the Iroquois adopted most captives into their nation, some faced torture and death. The decision on a captive’s fate depended on several factors, such as whether they could survive the trip back to the captors’ destination or whether white settlers pursued the captors to rescue their captives. Adult males were more likely to be tortured and executed, and females were more likely to be adopted if they were in good health.²⁹⁸ Most important in determining the fate of the captive were the wishes of the bereaved and whether the acts committed by the enemy were so grievous that they warranted

²⁹³ Calloway, *Indian World*, p. 30; Oberg, *Peacemakers*, p. 16.

²⁹⁴ Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse*, pp. 33, 60.

²⁹⁵ Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse*, p. 74.

²⁹⁶ Oberg, *Peacemakers*, p. 16; *Iroquoia* is the term used to describe the Iroquois’ land.

²⁹⁷ Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy*, pp. 33-34, 36, 40.

²⁹⁸ Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy*, pp. 32 – 34; Wayne Lee, *Barbarians & Brothers: Anglo-American Warfare, 1500 – 1865* (Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 155-157.

torture as the only response that would console the grieving family.²⁹⁹ Mary Jemison, a white settler taken captive by Shawnees and ‘Frenchmen’ as a teenager in 1755, then adopted into a Seneca family, provides insight on this practice in her memoir written when she was eighty years old. Jemison explained:

It is a custom of the Indians, when one of their number is slain or taken prisoner in battle, to give to the nearest relative to the dead or absent, a prisoner, if they have a chance to take one, and if not, to give him the scalp of an enemy. On the return of the Indians from conquest, which is always announced by peculiar shoutings, demonstrations of joy, and the exhibition of some trophy of victory, the mourners come forward and make their claims. If they receive a prisoner, it is at their option either to satiate their vengeance by taking his life in the most cruel manner they can conceive of; or, to receive and adopt him into the family, in place of him whom they have lost. All the prisoners that are taken in battle and carried to the encampment or town by the Indians, are given to the bereaved families, till their number is made good.³⁰⁰

Jemison’s fate was adoption into a Seneca clan who treated her as a family member during her years of captivity. However, Jemison’s captors killed her entire family.³⁰¹ Adopting captives into an Indigenous family was the most common fate of a captive, even if they took the captive after a battle. Indigenous warriors, on the other hand, had a higher chance of death after being captured by Europeans in comparison.³⁰² It was this practice that led to many allegations against combined British and Indigenous forces

²⁹⁹ Calloway, *Indian World*, pp. 118-119; Shannon, *Iroquois Diplomacy*, pp. 33-36; An example of when a nation chose torture was after the massacre of Gnadenhutzen in 1782 when Pennsylvania militia attacked a village inhabited by pacifist Delaware and Wyandot Christians. The militia attacked the village erroneously believing they aided and abetted nations who supported the British. The militia killed ninety-six men, women, and children. Soon after, a contingent of Wyandot and Delaware warriors and British rangers fought an American militia unit that contained many of the perpetrators from the massacre. After the battle, the native troops took about ten captives whose inevitable fate was torture and death to assuage the losses at Gnadenhutzen. See: Calloway, *Indian World*, pp. 275-277.

³⁰⁰ *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison*, ed. by James E. Seaver (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014 [1824]), p. 19.

³⁰¹ *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison*, p. 15; Jemison later found out that several men from her town attempted a rescue and pursued the captors. Their pursuit ended when they found the remains of Jemison’s father, mother, brothers, and other captives from her town, and it was no longer possible to trace their whereabouts.

³⁰² Calloway, *Indian World*, p. 118.

during the American Revolution that led to explosive reports of savagery in the colonial newspapers over Indigenous treatment of American prisoners of war that the American leadership ultimately blamed the British for inciting.

From the European perspective, tactics used by American colonists since first contact with Indigenous people and their ways of war became increasingly brutal and ruthless out of military necessity. Colonists did not know how to subdue an enemy that effectively executed raids and skirmishes and then swiftly disappeared into the woods. Further, it was impossible for them to lure Indigenous warriors into battle on an open field, where the Europeans held the technological advantages of firearms and steel weapons. In response to the challenges European colonists faced in protecting themselves from raids by their Indigenous neighbors, the first ranger units developed during King Phillip's War (1675-1678). Ranger tactics evolved from European and Indigenous tactics and weaponry, ultimately developing into a highly lethal and brutal form of warfare. During the American War for Independence, Americans did not formalize the role of ranger units or use them to the extent the British did by forming units such as Butler's and the Queen's Rangers. The Queen's Rangers, first raised and trained by Robert Rogers, had a remarkable ability to carry out their mission and were amongst the most dedicated and professional troops in the British military. John Butler's Rangers supported the British regular troops during the Battle of Cedars. In the aftermath of the Battle of the Cedars, these political, social, and racial factors clashed, sparking outrage by the public and triggering an unprecedented response by both American and British leadership.³⁰³

³⁰³ John Grenier, *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 21-23; J. A. Houlding, *Fit for Service: The Training of the British Army, 1715-1795*

The Battle of the Cedars

Aside from a recent book released in 2022 dedicated to the Battle of the Cedars, few other works exist covering this little-known conflict.³⁰⁴ Within Cedar's limited historiography, most works focus on the battle from the narrow lens of traditional military history and not the wider political-military-cultural lens that this chapter aims to provide. Furthermore, most of the publications that contain the story of Cedars are generally part of a larger narrative on the American invasion of the Canadian region in 1775.³⁰⁵ Even when comparing the Canadian invasion as a whole with other campaigns during the war, most of the historiographical attention is on the campaigns that occurred in the Thirteen Colonies. Because of this relative historiographic silence, this section will provide background on the events leading up to this battle and also detail the complicated events that occurred at the small American fortress called Cedars, which triggered immense uproar by the revolutionaries.

The decision to attack Canada was not an easy one for the Continental Congress to make. Much debate ensued as some representatives did not want the public to view the Americans as the aggressors in the rebellion against the Crown. As a result, Congress attempted to employ a strategy to win the hearts and minds of the French Canadians, or *les Canadiens*. If successful, they could possibly avoid any attempts to invade the

(Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 336; Davies, *The Wandering Army*, pp. 33-36; Wayne Lee, *The Cutting-Off Way* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2023), pp. 70-73.

³⁰⁴ The most recent work released on the Battle of the Cedars is Mark Anderson's *Down the Warpath to the Cedars*. Anderson is the only author to provide a dedicated book about the battle who also considers the wider political and cultural implications. Within his narrative of the events, one argument he supports is that the revolutionary press accounts of the incident detailing Indigenous violence against American prisoners of war helped to unify those supporting independence. See: Anderson, *Down the Warpath*, p. 137.

³⁰⁵ Examples of these works include Watt's *Poisoned by Lies and Hypocrisy*; Justin H. Smith, *Our Struggle for the Fourteenth Colony: Canada and the American Revolution* and Douglas R. Cubbison, *The American Northern Theater Army in 1776: The Ruin and Reconstruction of the Continental Force*.

Canadian region, which was an enormous risk and drain on precious blood and treasure.³⁰⁶ To achieve this goal, Congress sent multiple open letters in both English and French, inviting *Canadiens* to join the rebel cause. While they expressed hope of uniting with the *Canadiens* to defend ‘our common liberty,’ they also threatened them not to ‘reduce us to the disagreeable necessity of treating you as enemies.’³⁰⁷ In early 1776, Congress sent commissioners with the goal of aiding efforts to gain support from the area, along with a printer and his printing press, to support propaganda efforts. Ultimately, these letters and threats made little impact on swaying *Canadiens* to support the Patriot cause.³⁰⁸

Despite efforts by the revolutionaries to win support from the French Canadian public, the British were more successful in garnering their support. In May 1774, Governor Sir Guy Carleton passed the Québec Act, which gave the *Canadiens* the rights they had hoped for since the British conquest of the French colonies in 1763. This act accepted the French language as an official language of the three British colonies in the Canadian region, allowed for *Canadiens* to serve in government, retained French civil law, and fully accepted the Roman Catholic Church — including the right for Catholics to serve in the military — and expanded the colony’s borders south and west to secure the fur trade.³⁰⁹ Carleton’s act destroyed any chance for the Continental Congress to

³⁰⁶ Rick Atkinson, *The British are Coming* (Henry Holt and Company, 2019), pp. 275-276; Watt, *Poisoned by Lies and Hypocrisy*, pp. 142-145.

³⁰⁷ *JCC*, II, ed. by Ford, p. 70.

³⁰⁸ Atkinson, *The British are Coming*, pp. 275-276; Watt, *Poisoned by Lies and Hypocrisy*, p.128.

³⁰⁹ Watt, *Poisoned by Lies and Hypocrisy*, p. 15; Atkinson, *The British are Coming*, p. 143. Justin H. Smith, *Our Struggle for the Fourteenth Colony: Canada and the American Revolution* (G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1907), I, p. 365; Douglas R. Cubbison, *The American Northern Theater Army in 1776: The Ruin and Reconstruction of the Continental Force* (McFarland & Company, 2010), p. 88.

persuade the *Canadiens* to support the American revolutionary cause well before they even set out on this endeavor.³¹⁰

When it became evident that the American information war was not working, in June 1775, the revolutionaries set out to attack British forces in the Canadian region in an attempt to disable the Crown's ability to strike from the north.³¹¹ The Americans' main target was Québec City, the center of operations for the British military in the Canadian colonies. While the Continental troops led by Major General Richard Montgomery succeeded in seizing the cities of St. John's and Montréal along the way, they failed to take Québec. On 30 December, in a two-pronged assault, Montgomery led a column of Continentals who approached from the South along the St. Lawrence River, while Colonel Benedict Arnold led another column coming from the North along the St. Charles River. Included in the American offensive assault were Indigenous troops from Kahnawake under the command of Atayataghrongha.³¹² However, the Americans failed to push through the British bombardment thrown at them from the cover of houses and other structures inside the city. In the end, the British captured 389 Americans and killed thirty, including Montgomery, while the British sustained five dead and forty-one wounded.³¹³

³¹⁰ While positive for the *Canadiens*, it angered Americans to such an extent that historians, such as Gavin Watt, argue it excited rebellion more than any other measure taken by the British government. The Protestant-dominant Thirteen Colonies to the South viewed the measure as a threat to their religion and civil liberties. It also set a dangerous precedent in their eyes by establishing rule by a royal governor and not by an elected official. Most damaging was that the support and benefits the act gave *Canadiens* made the idea of joining the American cause much less enticing. See: Watt, *Poisoned by Lies and Hypocrisy*, p. 15.

³¹¹ *JCC*, ed. by Ford, II, p. 109.

³¹² 'Atiatoharongwen,' *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/atiatoharongwen_5E.html> [accessed 31 August 2020].

³¹³ Atkinson, *The British are Coming*, pp. 196-212; Watt, *Poisoned by Lies and Hypocrisy*, pp. 108-112.

The Battle of the Cedars occurred in May 1776, in the midst of the Americans' efforts to evacuate Canada once it became evident that there was no hope of securing the region. The last straw for the revolutionaries was on 6 May 1776 when they learned that British reinforcements arrived in Québec.³¹⁴ Upon learning this news, Major General John Thomas, the commander of American forces in Canada, ordered the army to start moving southwest along the St. Lawrence River towards Sorel.³¹⁵ Luckily for the Americans, Carleton chose not to immediately pursue the revolutionary forces while his reinforcements recuperated from their journey to Canada. Meanwhile, Colonel Moses Hazen, the commander of American troops in Montreal, ordered Colonel Timothy Bedel to occupy and defend the small settlement of Cedars, located about thirty-five miles south of Montréal. The fortress at Cedars served as a crucial piece of the American defenses against British attacks from the frontier forts to their west of Oswegatchie, Niagara, Detroit, and Michilimackinac.³¹⁶

Bedel arrived at Cedars on 6 May after recovering from a bout of smallpox. Soon after, he received reports that Indigenous and British troops from Fort Oswegatchie, led by Captain George Forster of the 8th Regiment of Foot, planned to attack.³¹⁷ Forster was a veteran of the Seven Years' War and served on the European

³¹⁴ 'The Commissioners to Canada to John Hancock, 1 May 1776,' *Founders Online* < <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-22-02-0244> > [accessed 1 September 2020]; Atkinson, *The British are Coming*, p. 282.

³¹⁵ Unfortunately for the Americans, Thomas died from smallpox on 2 June, and his replacement, General William Thompson, would be captured by the British six days after he assumed command. Command of the American forces was then handed to General John Sullivan.

³¹⁶ Smith, *Our Struggle for the Fourteenth Colony*, I, p. 365; Douglas R. Cubbison, *The American Northern Theater Army in 1776: The Ruin and Reconstruction of the Continental Force* (McFarland & Company, 2010), p. 88.

³¹⁷ Watt, *Poisoned by Lies and Hypocrisy*, pp. 141, 162. Bedel, a native of the colony of New Hampshire, was a veteran of the Seven Years' War. For more on Bedel, see Calloway, *Indian World*, pp. 223-225. Smallpox spread rapidly through the American army, weakening their forces significantly and one reason for the evacuation. The Americans eventually captured Peters and held him under suspicion of spying, but he escaped Montreal and fled behind British lines.

front. He arrived in the Canadian region in 1768, received a promotion to Captain in 1770, and then ordered to Fort Oswegatchie in 1774. Forster commanded a company of light infantry who received support from men of the Mohawk Nation from the town of St. Regis, located along the St Lawrence River in the colony of New York. Claude-Nicolas-Guillaume de Lorimier, a member of the French-Canadian upper class and also a veteran of the Seven Years' War, commanded the Indigenous arm of Forster's troops.³¹⁸ Soon after Bedel learned of the impending British attack, he made the decision to abandon his post — a decision that led to his eventual court-martial. However, at the time, Bedel claimed he needed to leave Cedars to secure reinforcements in Montréal, appointing Major Isaac Butterfield to command the post in his stead.³¹⁹

Forster arrived at the American fort on 18 May with forty light infantry soldiers, eleven Loyalist militiamen, and 160 Indigenous warriors.³²⁰ The British also received reinforcements when Lieutenant Colonel John Butler, Loyalist commander of Butler's Rangers, arrived from Fort Niagara with 140 rangers and 22 Six and Lakes' Nations men.³²¹ Butterfield's American troop strength, on the other hand, totaled 400, mostly New Hampshire militia.³²² When the attack ensued, the Americans held a firm resistance. Butterfield panicked and considered surrendering out of fear of the Indigenous warriors' capabilities and tactics. However, most of Butterfield's officers

³¹⁸ Smith, *Our Struggle for the Fourteenth Colony*, I, p. 370; Cubbison, *The American Northern Theater Army*, p. 90; Anderson, *Down the Warpath*, pp. 47-48. Lorimier fought for the French during the Seven Years' War.

³¹⁹ Bedel's logic for abandoning his post is unclear. Some reports say he fled to Montreal to inform Arnold and secure reinforcements. Other sources suggest that he left to recruit Kahnawake support to defend Cedars. Watt, *Poisoned by Lies and Hypocrisy*, p. 14; Cubbison, *The American Northern Theater Army*, p. 90.

³²⁰ Watt, *Poisoned by Lies and Hypocrisy*, p. 142-143.

³²¹ 'Butler, John,' *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/butler_john_1796_4E.html> [accessed 1 September 2020].

³²² Cubbison, *The American Northern Theater Army*, pp. 88, 91-92.

opposed surrendering primarily because they had enough supplies and ammunition to last a week. Despite the officer's opinions that the Americans could hold the fort, Butterfield surrendered on 19 May.³²³

Forster's initial terms of surrender allowed the Americans to leave the fort with only the clothes on their backs, which Butterfield declined. Forster then countered with a warning that if Butterfield did not surrender under his original terms, he could not protect the American troops against his Indigenous auxiliaries, which he stated would not give quarter.³²⁴ This threat swayed Butterfield to finally accept the terms. However, when his troops left the fort, Forster's native allies proceeded to strip his troops of all their clothes. Both Forster and Lorimier claimed they ultimately had no control over their Indigenous allies. In his journal, Lorimier admitted that the Indigenous troops removed from the Americans 'everything they had,' and, as a result, he felt obliged to give Butterfield some of his own clothes.³²⁵

Meanwhile, in his pursuit for reinforcements, Bedel managed to get news to General Benedict Arnold, commander of the Continental Army in Montréal, who responded by sending 140 reinforcements under the command of Major Henry Sherburne.³²⁶ When Forster received intelligence that Sherburne was on his way to relieve the fortress, he sent eighty Indigenous and eighteen Canadian troops under the command of Lorimier to ambush Sherburne.³²⁷ About four miles east of Cedars,

³²³ Cubbison, *The American Northern Theater Army*, pp. 88, 91-92; Smith, *Our Struggle for the Fourteenth Colony*, p. 370; Anderson, *Down the Warpath*, pp. 75-86.

³²⁴ Watt, *Poisoned by Lies and Hypocrisy*, p. 147; Cubbison, *The American Northern Theater Army*, p. 92.

³²⁵ Claude Nicolas Guillaume de Lorimier, *At War with the Americans: The Journal of Claude-Nicholas-Guillaume de Lorimier*, ed. and trans. by Peter Aichinger (Press Porcépic, 1981), p. 53.

³²⁶ Cubbison, *The American Northern Theater Army*, p. 93; Smith, *Our Struggle for the Fourteenth Colony*, p. 370.

³²⁷ 'Major Sherburne's Testimony on the Affair at the Cedars, 17 June 1776,' *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-01-02-0166>> [accessed 1 September 2020].

Lorimier caught up with Sherburne and attacked. After about two hours, Sherburne surrendered after Lorimier's troops successfully cut off their escape route.³²⁸

It is at this point in the conflict that both Forster and Lorimier lost control of the Indigenous forces. While the Americans lost the battle, Lorimier's Indigenous troops sustained heavy casualties. Among the dead was a prominent Seneca leader named Kanughsgawiat.³²⁹ Infuriated by their losses, the Indigenous forces immediately started to take the prisoners' clothing and personal items. And, in accordance with Indigenous traditions, some demanded redress for their losses in the form of scalps. Lorimier attempted to intervene and prevent any scalping out of concern their actions would endanger the lives of British prisoners of war, but his efforts failed as the situation only escalated.³³⁰ While the plunder sufficed to assuage the loss for some of the Indigenous warriors, others took captives. Sherburne himself narrowly escaped becoming captive, but Lorimier intervened again.³³¹

Sherburne attested after the incident that Indigenous troops killed several of his men after they surrendered and scalped two of them. He alleged that they also shot one of his men after taking him prisoner and then burned the man while he was still alive. Sherburne explained that once Forster promised free plunder, the British commander lost any ability to control his allies.³³² Furthermore, after taking 487 American prisoners, Forster did not have enough of his own soldiers to safely move the Americans to

³²⁸ Watt, *Poisoned by Lies and Hypocrisy*, p. 148.

³²⁹ Smith, *Our Struggle for the Fourteenth Colony*, I, p. 373; Watt, *Poisoned by Lies and Hypocrisy*, p. 148; Cubbison, *The American Northern Theater Army*, p. 93.

³³⁰ Lorimier, *At War with the Americans*, pp. 54-55.

³³¹ Watt, *Poisoned by Lies and Hypocrisy*, p. 149; Cubbison, *The American Northern Theater Army*, p. 93.

³³² 'Major Sherburne's Testimony on the Affair at the Cedars, 17 June 1776,' *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-01-02-0166>> [accessed 1 September 2020].

Montréal.³³³ Given these concerns, Forster held most of the prisoners at Cedars and sent the captured officers to a prison in a town called Conosadaga under the guard of two Catholic priests.³³⁴

Upon hearing of the attack on Sherburne, Arnold made his way toward Cedars with reinforcements. Arnold planned to attack the British after calculating that the odds were with the Americans since Forster was guarding ten times his number of men.³³⁵ However, Arnold's senior advisors cautioned against an attack out of concern for the safety of their prisoners inside the fort.³³⁶ Soon after Arnold's arrival, Forster sent an envoy to propose an exchange. According to Sherburne's congressional testimony, Forster threatened Arnold, stating, 'If they rejected the cartel, Forster would put to death all prisoners.'³³⁷ Forster eventually denied this allegation when he provided his testimony on the conflict. Nevertheless, Arnold reluctantly agreed to a prisoner exchange on equal terms and signed the cartel on 27 May 1776.³³⁸ Thus, the affair at Cedars ended until the colonial newspapers put the conflict back into the spotlight.

The Unprecedented Response to the Cedars Affair

³³³ Cubbison, *The American Northern Theater Army*, p. 94; Smith, *Our Struggle for the Fourteenth Colony*, pp. 374, 377.

³³⁴ Cubbison, *The American Northern Theater Army*, p. 94; Smith, *Our Struggle for the Fourteenth Colony*, pp. 374, 377.

³³⁵ Cubbison, *The American Northern Theater Army*, p. 95.

³³⁶ Smith, *Our Struggle for the Fourteenth Colony*, p. 378.

³³⁷ 'Major Sherburne's Testimony on the Affair at the Cedars, 17 June 1776,' *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-01-02-0166>> [accessed 1 September 2020].

³³⁸ 'Major Sherburne's Testimony on the Affair at the Cedars, 17 June 1776,' *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-01-02-0166>> [accessed 1 September 2020]; Smith, *Our Struggle for the Fourteenth Colony*, p. 380. As a part of the agreement, Arnold consented to leave four officers as hostages in British custody until both sides completed the exchange. One of these four hostages was Captain Ebenezer Sullivan, the brother of Major General John Sullivan, the recently appointed commander of American forces in Canada.

The colonial newspapers first reported on the Battle of the Cedars on 8 June, approximately two weeks after Arnold and Forster agreed to a prisoner exchange. Thereafter, the news slowly trickled in on the events until late June, when the first allegations emerged that the British breached the laws of war. From this point, the news on Cedars gained traction. While the pace of the newspaper reports released after the Cedars conflict was not as quick, nor as numerous, as those articles published after Lexington and Concord, the content was just as sensational. It was these shocking details that caught the attention of the Continental Congress, who subsequently launched an investigation into the incident. As a result, these events forced British leadership to scramble once again in order to prevent another public relations nightmare.

In May 1776, no articles on the incident made it to the news, most likely due to the length of time it took the news to travel to the Thirteen Colonies from the rural Canadian region and other events taking precedence. The news at the time traveled much faster around the populated areas in Massachusetts, as seen after Lexington and Concord. Furthermore, the main focus of the colonial newspapers during this month was on reports of the buildup and imminent arrival of the British and German auxiliary troops to New York. Reportedly, twenty thousand Hessians, Brunswickers, Waldeckers, and Hanoverian ‘foreign troops’ were heading for America which is discussed in the next chapter.³³⁹ Also appearing in the newspapers was the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1st Viscount Sackville, George Germain’s strategy to ‘beat the rebels’ after entering from Canada, then move south to secure the Hudson River and finally occupy

³³⁹ ‘London, February 18,’ *The Providence Gazette*, 18 May 1776, p. 1; see Chapter Three, pp. 140-142.

New York.³⁴⁰ In response, one article from *The Providence Gazette* exclaimed, ‘O George! are these thy Commissioners of peace and reconciliation?’³⁴¹

The first news reports on Cedars followed a similar pattern to the aftermath of Lexington and Concord. These articles provided minimal details on the conflict and did not include any allegations against the British. The first accounts of the affair at Cedars also falsely claimed the Americans prevailed. These reports recounted that the British attacked the American fort commanded by Bedel and took all those not killed as prisoners. Then, the King’s troops attacked the American reinforcements, commanded by Sherburn, as they headed toward the fort. However, Arnold saved the day after coming to rescue with over a thousand additional men, and the Americans triumphed. This article also inaccurately claimed that the Americans released all their prisoners and took seven hundred British troops and their native allies captive.³⁴²

On 17 June, one month after the battles, *The Connecticut Courant* published the first article alleging the British breached laws of war by mistreating captured Americans. The source of this allegation was a letter written by Arnold on 28 May. In his letter, Arnold explained that ‘a number of regulars and savages’ took five hundred of his men prisoners and that soon, an agreement he made for the exchange of prisoners would become public. However, without providing details, Arnold alleged:

I never was more mortified in not having it in my power to revenge the cruel and perfidious treatment of our enemies: Humanity forbid the step; and though I had sufficient force, my hands were tied.³⁴³

³⁴⁰ ‘Bristol, February 17,’ *The Providence Gazette*, 18 May 1775, p. 2; Germain replaced Dartmouth as Secretary of the Colonies in November 1775. It is unknown whether Germain intended for the papers to publish the details of this attack, regardless, this news undoubtedly unnerved the revolutionaries.

³⁴¹ ‘London, February 18,’ *The Providence Gazette*, 18 May 1776, p. 1.

³⁴² ‘Fresh News from Canada,’ *The Constitutional Gazette*, 8 June 1776, p. 3; ‘Extract of a letter from Montreal, May 17, 1776,’ *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 8 June 1776, p. 3.

³⁴³ ‘New-Haven, June 12,’ *The Connecticut Courant*, 17 June 1776, p. 2.

On 20 June, the reports took a more gruesome turn when additional details emerged about the attack on Major Sherburne's men. First reported in *The New York Journal* by an officer with an 'authentic account,' the writer alleged that after the attack by 'a large body of Savages and Canadians,' they massacred many of the American prisoners.³⁴⁴ Witnesses to the horror reported that 'A scene of Savage barbarity ensued, and many of our people were sacrificed to the fury, butchered with tomahawks and other instruments of murder.'³⁴⁵ Further, Captain Forster ordered all prisoners to be stripped of their clothes and belongings. It explained Arnold and Forster ultimately agreed upon a cartel for an equal exchange of prisoners, and Arnold agreed to leave four American captains as hostages until the exchange was complete.³⁴⁶ The reports alleged that while Forster was not to blame for the worst allegations, he also did nothing to stop his allies from abusing the prisoners.³⁴⁷

One week later, *The New York Journal* published details from witnesses who explained that when Bedel received the initial reports that a 'large body of Canadians, Indians, and some Regulars' headed their way, he set off to Montreal to solicit reinforcements and left his second in command, Butterfield, in charge.³⁴⁸ After a siege that lasted about two days, Butterfield surrendered the fort, a move that several other American officers did not support. After Arnold arrived with 500 reinforcements, Forster sent him 'very insolent' terms of capitulation, advising Arnold that:

He [Forster] had with him only about 40 regulars, and little more than 100 Canadians, and that the rest were all Savages, over whom he had no

³⁴⁴ 'New-York, June 20,' *The New York Journal*, 20 June 1776, p. 3.

³⁴⁵ 'New-York, June 20,' *The New York Journal*, 20 June 1776, p. 3.

³⁴⁶ The four officers that remained behind included, Captains Sullivan (brother to the General John Sullivan, commander of the American military in Quebec) Bliss, Stephens and Green.

³⁴⁷ 'New-York, June 20,' *The New York Journal*, 20 June 1776, p. 3.

³⁴⁸ 'Left out last week for want of room,' *The New York Journal*, 27 June 1776, p. 3.

command, and but little influence; that they being actuated wholly by hope of plunder, or revenge for some of their countrymen slain in the contest, and having the prisoners all in their power, he could not refrain them; and that the moment Gen. Arnold should begin to attack them, they were determined to murder all the prisoners, and had prepared every thing for that purpose.³⁴⁹

Arnold agreed to a cartel, but after Forster released the prisoners, it was evident that they had ‘been much abused, and treated with great barbarity, [and] were left almost starved and entirely naked.’³⁵⁰ The enemy, the Americans accused, violated the terms of capitulation on several occasions by harming the prisoners and returning them without their clothes and belongings.³⁵¹

Two days later, a letter from Major Sherburne appeared for the first time in *The Providence Gazette*, which provided his defense of his actions during the incident. The Continental Congress called on Sherburne to testify about the incident. When on his way to Philadelphia, Sherburne wrote a letter to a ‘Gentleman,’ recounting the events of the ‘unhappy Affair.’³⁵² In his letter, Sherburne explained that 500 Canadians and ‘Savages’ attacked his men while he was on the way to support the post at Cedars. After realizing the British and their auxiliaries completely surrounded them, ‘We stood our ground,’ Sherburne stated until he had no choice but to retreat.³⁵³ However, the Indigenous troops soon caught up to his men and took them captive. Sherburne explained that after their capture, the Indigenous forces:

Immediately employed in stripping us almost naked, whilst others were scalping and tomahawking my wounded Men, some of whom were butchered in my Presence. After they had stripped us, and killed as many as they thought proper, we were marched off to the Cedars, the Place we

³⁴⁹ ‘Left out last week for want of room,’ *The New York Journal*, 27 June 1776, p. 3.

³⁵⁰ ‘Left out last week for want of room,’ *The New York Journal*, 27 June 1776, p. 3.

³⁵¹ ‘Left out last week for want of room,’ *The New York Journal*, 27 June 1776, p. 3.

³⁵² ‘Extract of a Letter from Major Henry Sherburne,’ *The Providence Gazette*, 29 June 1776, p. 3.

³⁵³ ‘Extract of a Letter from Major Henry Sherburne,’ *The Providence Gazette*, 29 June 1776, p. 3.

were destined to reinforce, which had been given up to them the day before by one Major Butterfield...the vile Conduct of Major Butterfield was the unhappy Cause of my Disaster.³⁵⁴

The blame for this fiasco, according to Sherburne, was Butterfield, who needlessly surrendered when he had over 400 men ready and willing to fight and enough ammunition, cannon, and supplies to last several days.³⁵⁵ After the release of Sherburne's letter, no additional reports on the conflict made the news until the Continental Congress published their investigation on the incident in late July. However, Congress' investigation caused such controversy that the newspapers continued to report on the aftermath of this battle well into 1777.

When compared to Lexington and Concord, this conflict generated fewer articles that the newspapers released at a much slower pace. However, the impact of the sensational content of the news reports detailing the abuse of American prisoners at the hands of the Indigenous troops was just as great. Different than the allegations after Lexington and Concord were the horrific allegations against the British's Indigenous allies. These reports drew up memories of violence committed in the much longer history of frontier warfare in the area and the fears of Indigenous ways of war by white colonists. It was the content of the news that detailed the torture and death of American prisoners of war at the hands of the Indigenous warriors, making this small conflict that sparked only a limited volume of news one that the colonial public could not easily forget.

Analogous to the aftermath of Lexington and Concord, eventually, the allegations against the King's troops and their allies reached the British newspapers as

³⁵⁴ 'Extract of a Letter from Major Henry Sherburne,' *The Providence Gazette*, 29 June 1776, p. 3.

³⁵⁵ 'Extract of a Letter from Major Henry Sherburne,' *The Providence Gazette*, 29 June 1776, p. 3.

well. The publication of these allegations in Britain triggered a greater response by the British government to prevent a potential public relations disaster caused by the negative and inhumane image the articles depicted of the British army. The newspaper-reading public in Great Britain became apprised of the Cedars affair in early July 1776 when the local newspapers published the first articles on the conflict. The British papers circulated mostly the same articles published in the colonial newspapers, which propelled the events from this relatively minor conflict to the attention of the British public.

In a similar pattern seen in the colonies, the early reports on the conflict provided minimal information on the British win against the ‘rebels’ near Lake Champlain.³⁵⁶ *The Scots Magazine*, for example, informed its readers that Forster captured hundreds of Americans after sieging the American fort. Yet because Forster could not manage the number of captured Americans, he coordinated an exchange for British soldiers from the 26th Regiment of Foot captured after the battle at St. Johns. Forster warned the American leadership that:

The Indians marked the rebels that were exchanged on the ear, that they might know them again; telling them, that if they afterwards found any of them in arms during the present rebellion, they would cut off their heads.³⁵⁷

While the news reported the number of American prisoners taken, there were no additional details about their treatment.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁶ ‘From an officer on board the *Blond*, June 20,’ *Scots Magazine*, 1 July 1776, p. 361.

³⁵⁷ ‘From an officer on board the *Blond*, June 20,’ *Scots Magazine*, 1 July 1776, p. 361. The same report appeared starting a few weeks later in *The Stamford Mercury*, *The Norfolk Chronicle*, *The Hampshire Chronicle*, *The Northampton Mercury*.

³⁵⁸ ‘From an officer on board the *Blond*, June 20,’ *Scots Magazine*, 1 July 1776, p. 361.

Two months later, however, reports of alleged atrocities committed by the British Indigenous allies also made the news in Great Britain. On 27 August, newspapers such as *The Leeds Intelligencer* published reports from the ‘New-York papers’ on the treatment of American prisoners at Cedars. This article alleged:

The Indians killed all the wounded and disabled prisoners after the action at the Cedars; that there were twenty-two Indians killed in the action, among which was the Chief of the Seneca nation: to this cause is imputed the above savage violence and the ill usage of the other prisoners.³⁵⁹

Further, the article explained that Arnold wisely chose not to attack in response to the acts of brutality committed against his troops because if he did, ‘All the prisoners would have been tomahawked.’³⁶⁰ Instead, the article explained, Arnold agreed to a prisoner exchange over the following two months.³⁶¹

In September, the British newspapers published a full account of the conflict, which also detailed Forster’s efforts to stop the Indigenous troops from harming the Americans. On two occasions, the article explained, Forster intervened in attempts to stop his native allies from killing the prisoners. The article stated:

After their surrender, the savages insisted on killing them, because their numbers were too great for them to guard, and they had not provisions for them. Here Captain Foster interposed, and agreed with the savages to send them home to their respective Provinces, on the express condition that they should send back to Quebec as many Prisoners of equal degree our of those taken at St. John and Chamblee.³⁶²

³⁵⁹ ‘The New-York papers have the following articles,’ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 27 August 1776, p. 2.

³⁶⁰ ‘The New-York papers have the following articles,’ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 27 August 1776, p. 2. After General Richard Montgomery’s death during the attempted siege of Quebec in December 1775, Arnold became commander of the American army in Canada, despite being wounded in the leg during the battle.

³⁶¹ ‘The New-York papers have the following articles,’ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 27 August 1776, p. 2.

³⁶² ‘The New-York papers have the following articles,’ *Leeds Intelligencer*, 27 August 1776, p. 2. The captain’s last name is spelled many different ways in the primary sources. For this chapter, I will use the most common spelling of Forster.

Later, during the negotiations, the report explained that Forster had to intervene again. When Arnold arrived at the fort with reinforcements, the leadership within the native ranks insisted on killing prisoners as the Americans now outnumbered their troops. In response:

Capt. Foster stopt them till he should send to Mr. Arnold, and let him know the unhappy situation in which the Prisoners were placed. He told him, that in the case the Indians should be attacked, they would assuredly put every soul of them to death, and it would be out of his power to prevent it.³⁶³

Ultimately, Arnold did not attack and instead entered into a prisoner exchange agreement with Forster. While the agreement saved many lives, the article reported that Indigenous troops did kill two or three American prisoners and took a few captives as well.³⁶⁴

The defense that Forster laid forth was reminiscent of what the French alleged during the Seven Years' War — that they ultimately could not control the actions of his Indigenous allies. As evident by the newspaper articles, Forster painstakingly voiced that he made every effort to stop their allies from harming, killing, or taking captive the American prisoners of war. Given that the drama played out in the public eye through the news, it is likely that the Battle of the Cedars provoked memories of the French siege on Fort William Henry only nineteen years earlier during the Seven Years' War from 3 to 9 August 1757. Fort William Henry was also located in the frontier region about 300 kilometers south of Cedars in the colony of New York. After Lieutenant Colonel George Monro surrendered the fort, French General Louis-Joseph de Montcalm claimed he lost control of his Indigenous allies when they immediately sought to kill and

³⁶³ 'London, Sept. 19,' *Leeds Intelligencer*, 24 September 1776, p. 2.

³⁶⁴ 'London, Sept. 19,' *Leeds Intelligencer*, 24 September 1776, p. 2.

take captive British soldiers.³⁶⁵ However, Montcalm did not simply give up during the incident as French forces took some actions to stop the slaughter and plunder of the British fort. In the end, Montcalm knew what occurred was a public affairs disaster for the French. Further, out of concern that the British would not honor the terms of capitulation, Montcalm took immediate steps to return all British captives.³⁶⁶ Similar to Cedars, this conflict caused an uproar within the British public and government and ended up being a public image dilemma for the French. Now, the British were in the same position as the events occurring at Cedars unfolded in the British public's eye via the newspapers.³⁶⁷

Meanwhile, the Continental Congress saw an opportunity to use what occurred at Cedars and the allegations against the British in their favor. In response, they launched a congressional investigation of the incident, which, in turn, forced British leadership to answer for the actions of their army. This investigation was the first of its kind for the fledgling United States, which had just declared independence from Great Britain. Members of Congress initially learned of the conflict and prisoner exchange between Arnold and Forster on 6 June when they received a copy of the cartel from Arnold.³⁶⁸ A few days later, they appointed Thomas Jefferson to lead a committee to investigate the British attacks on Butterfield and Sherburne and the subsequent cartel. Congress officially completed its investigation shortly after becoming a new nation on 10 July,

³⁶⁵ Steele, *Betrayals*, pp. 131-132. This incident became forever memorialized as depicted in James Fenimore Cooper's book *The Last of the Mohicans*.

³⁶⁶ Steele, *Betrayals*, pp. 129-133; According to Steele, 2,308 men surrendered and he estimated between 68 to 184 were killed. See: Steele, *Betrayals*, p. 144.

³⁶⁷ Steele, *Betrayals*, pp. 129-133.

³⁶⁸ *JCC*, V, ed. by Ford, p. 420.

just six days after adopting the Declaration of Independence. Congress released its report on the incident to the newspapers to ensure public awareness and support.

On 17 July, the congressional committee provided its final report to Congress. In this report, the committee summarized the events and highlighted the allegation that:

The enemy broke the capitulation utterly and immediately on their part, plundering the garrison of their baggage, and stripping the cloathes from their backs [and Delivering the Prisoners into the hands of the Savages].³⁶⁹

Furthermore, they alleged that the British Indigenous troops murdered two Americans, one with a tomahawk and by drowning the other, and left countless exposed to the elements without clothing.³⁷⁰ The committee then summed up the investigation by threatening retaliation if the ill-treatment of their prisoners continued by stating:

If the enemy shall commit any farther violences by putting to death, torturing, or otherwise ill treating the prisoners retained by them, or any of the hostages put into their hands, recourse be had to retaliation, as the sole means of stopping the progress of human butchery; and that for the purpose of punishments of the same kind and degree be inflicted on an equal number of the captives from thence in our possession, till they shall be taught due respect to the violated rights of nations.³⁷¹

The Continental Congress divided its findings on the Cedars investigation into eight resolutions. The first five admonished the ‘officers and soldiers of his Britannic Majesty’ and ‘foreigners or Savages’ in their service for ‘all acts, contrary to good faith, and the laws of nature, or the customs of civilized nations.’³⁷² Further plundering and stripping the soldiers of their clothes was a breach of the terms of capitulation. Lastly, and most importantly, the murder of prisoners of war ‘was a gross and inhuman

³⁶⁹ *JCC*, V, ed. by Ford, p. 455.

³⁷⁰ *JCC*, V, ed. by Ford, p. 456.

³⁷¹ ‘In Congress, July 10, 1776,’ *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 25 July 1776, pp. 1-2.

³⁷² ‘In Congress, July 10, 1776,’ *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 25 July 1776, pp. 1-2.

violation of the laws of nature and nations.’³⁷³ Congress also annulled the cartel between Arnold and Forster since Arnold reportedly did not have the authority to enter into this agreement. Further, they asserted that Butterfield’s surrender of the post at Cedars was ‘shameful’ and ‘is chargeable of the commanding officer.’ The Congress, however, exonerated Sherburne due to their assessment that he surrendered out of necessity.

In the final three resolutions, the Congress addressed the prisoner exchange and what they now demanded of the British. In terms of the exchange of troops, Congress called for Carleton to ‘deliver into our hands the authors, abettors, and perpetrators of the horrid murder committed on the prisoners.’³⁷⁴ Furthermore, the British government must compensate the Americans for all items lost when their Indigenous troops plundered their men after the surrender. In all, Congress resolved that Forster’s actions were a ‘breach of the capitulation on the part of the enemy’ and were a violation of the law of nations.³⁷⁵ In addition to the threat of recourse for any future abuses of American prisoners of war, the Congress also determined to send their report on Cedars to both Generals Howe and John Burgoyne, one of Howe’s senior commanders.³⁷⁶ Omitted in the news article, but resolved in Congress, was an order that Carleton receive a copy of the report for his own investigation on the allegations.³⁷⁷

The Battle of the Cedars occurred at the perfect time for the Continental Congress to use these events as a means to help stake their claim as a new nation. The

³⁷³ ‘In Congress, July 10, 1776,’ *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 25 July 1776, pp. 1-2.

³⁷⁴ ‘In Congress, July 10, 1776,’ *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 25 July 1776, pp. 1-2; *JCC*, V, ed. by Ford, pp. 455-456.

³⁷⁵ *JCC*, V, ed. by Ford, p. 458.

³⁷⁶ ‘In Congress, July 10, 1776,’ *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 25 July 1776, pp. 1-2; It was Washington who sent the investigation findings to Howe and Burgoyne on 15 July, see: ‘From George Washington to Major Generals William Howe and John Burgoyne, 15 July 1776,’ *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-05-02-0234>> [accessed 8 March 2024].

³⁷⁷ *JCC*, V, ed. by Ford, p. 458.

Congress' intentions are evident by the findings of their investigation. The aim of the Congressional resolutions was not only to prove that Great Britain's actions at Cedars were inhumane and breached laws of war, but they also demanded that the Crown treat the United States as a legitimate and civilized nation. This is also why they moved to annul Arnold and Forster's cartel, as Arnold did not follow the proper procedures. In essence, the Continental Congress took this opportunity to establish its authority not only towards Great Britain but also within the Continental Army. Because Cedars occurred in the midst of the Continental Congress' move to officially claim independence from Great Britain, this was an opportunity to use the incident in their favor to substantiate their claim as a nation and independence from Great Britain.

Not only did the Continental Congress take considerable action in response to Cedars, but so did Washington. Washington was on edge waiting to hear all the details of what occurred as the news of the incident arrived at Washington's headquarters in small increments over several weeks — excruciatingly slow for the General's liking. On 28 May, Washington received the first reports of the surrender of Cedars from Major General Phillip Schuyler; however, the letter did not contain the outcome. It was not until 7 June he received news of Bedel, Butterfield, and Sherburne's defeat and surrender, although this news did not contain the reasons why they surrendered the fort.³⁷⁸ Out of frustration over the slow flow of information to his headquarters, on 8 June, Washington wrote to John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress, requesting to establish an express between Continental posts. Washington explained:

The late Imperfect and contradictory accounts respecting our defeat at the Cedars strongly point out the necessity there is for It — No intelligence

³⁷⁸ 'From George Washington to John Hancock, 7 June 1776,' *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-04-02-0367>> [accessed 21 April 2023].

has yet come from any Officer in command there, and most probably for want of a proper channel to convey It, tho this misfortune happened so long agoe[*sic*].³⁷⁹

On 9 June, Washington, still without information, further lamented to Hancock that, ‘I am still in the dark, how the unfortunate affair ended at the Cedars, or on what terms the surrender was made.’³⁸⁰ Finally, on 13 June, Washington received the full report of what occurred at Cedars, confirming his fears — Bedel and Butterfield unnecessarily surrendered to the British. In a letter to Schuyler, he concluded that if all accounts were correct, a court-martial was in order, as the entire affair was due to the cowardly behavior of Bedel and Butterfield.³⁸¹

While Washington’s initial focus was on the failures of Bedel and Butterfield to defend their post at Cedars, he also responded to the cruel treatment of the American prisoners of war. On 20 July, at Washington’s headquarters in New York, he met with British Lieutenant Colonel James Patterson, Howe’s Adjutant General, regarding the affair and the allegations made against them. In true revolutionary fashion, a summary of this meeting also made the colonial news.³⁸² In the meeting, Patterson relayed Howe’s sentiments on the treatment of the prisoners of war, explaining, ‘Howe utterly disapproved of every infringement of the rights of humanity.’ However, ‘The Affairs of Canada were in another Department not subject to the Controul of Genl Howe.’³⁸³ Then, in an attempt to appeal to Washington’s sensibilities, Patterson urged that ‘Cruelty was

³⁷⁹ ‘From George Washington to John Hancock, 7 June 1776,’ *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-04-02-0367>> [accessed 21 April 2023].

³⁸⁰ ‘From George Washington to John Hancock, 9 June 1776,’ *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-04-02-0370>> [accessed 8 March 2024].

³⁸¹ ‘From George Washington to Major General Philip Schuyler, 13 June 1776,’ *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-04-02-0405>> [accessed 21 April 2023].

³⁸² ‘Philadelphia, July 27,’ *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 27 July 1776, p. 3.

³⁸³ ‘Memorandum of an Interview with Lieutenant Colonel James Paterson, 20 July 1776,’ *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-05-02-0295>> [accessed 21 April 2023].

not the characteristic of the British nation.’ The meeting ended with a promise from Patterson that both Howe and Burgoyne would take appropriate action in response to the Continental Congress’ report.³⁸⁴

As for Bedel and Butterfield, Arnold ordered their arrest immediately after he finalized the cartel with Forster. Sullivan then called on Congress to conduct an inquiry into their conduct.³⁸⁵ On 30 July, the Continental Congress resolved that Bedel was to be ‘tried by a courts martial for leaving his command at the Cedars, and for declining to return to the same with Major Sherburne’s reinforcement.’ And Butterfield, to ‘be tried by a court martial for surrendering to the enemy the post at the Cedars, and also such other officers as were with him, and consented to that surrender.’³⁸⁶ The members of Congress fumed over the cowardly actions of Bedel and Butterfield. John Adams, for example, described the surrender as the ‘most infamous piece of Cowardice.’³⁸⁷ In a letter to Francis Eppes on 15 July, Jefferson conveyed his disdain for the two officers, calling Butterfield a ‘scoundrel’ because he surrendered for no legitimate reason.³⁸⁸ Jefferson concluded that while the British acted barbarously, ‘no men on earth behaved

³⁸⁴ ‘Memorandum of an Interview with Lieutenant Colonel James Paterson, 20 July 1776,’ *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-05-02-0295>> [accessed 21 April 2023]. ‘Philadelphia, July 27,’ *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 27 July 1776, p. 3.

³⁸⁵ Cubbison, *The American Northern Theater Army*, p. 95; John Sullivan, *Letters and Papers of Major-General John Sullivan Continental Army*, ed. Otis G. Hammond (New Hampshire Historical Society, 1930), I, p. 232; ‘To George Washington from Brigadier General John Sullivan, 3 June 1776,’ *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-04-02-0344>> [accessed 1 September 2020]; Sullivan, *Letters and Papers*, I, p. 212.

³⁸⁶ Sullivan, *Letters and Papers*, I, p. 616.

³⁸⁷ ‘From Thomas Jefferson to Francis Eppes, 15 July 1776,’ *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-01-02-0181>> [accessed 1 September 2020]; Sullivan, *Letters and Papers*, I, p. 259; ‘From John Adams to John Sullivan, 23 June 1776,’ <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/06-04-02-0133>> [accessed 8 March 2024].

³⁸⁸ ‘From Thomas Jefferson to Francis Eppes, 15 July 1776,’ *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-01-02-0181>> [accessed 1 September 2020]; *JCC*, V, ed. by Ford, p. 534.

better than ours did,' except, of course, Butterfield and Bedel.³⁸⁹ While incarcerated, Bedel wrote to Sullivan expressing hope of an acquittal once the committee reviewed the evidence.³⁹⁰ However, this would not come to pass as both officers received a guilty verdict by a court-martial held on 1 August and then were cashiered from the military.³⁹¹

Across the Atlantic, the British responded to the American allegations that would ultimately be against Carleton by publishing a pamphlet with their full defense whilst attempting to discredit the Continental Congress. This pamphlet demonstrates that not only did the British leadership take the allegations seriously, but that it was also not enough to publish their defense in the newspapers. After the Continental Congress published the results of their investigation, the publication of this additional piece of print media circulated in both Great Britain and the United States. The pamphlet's publication shows that a determination was made to bolster Britain's defense of the allegations to hopefully gain back public support. Public support that the newspaper reports on Cedars presumably damaged.

In early 1777, the testimonies provided by the British officers involved in the Cedars conflicts circulated through Great Britain via a pamphlet titled *An Authentic Narrative of Facts Relating to the Exchange of Prisoners Taken at the Cedars*. The efforts taken to publish a pamphlet with the British defense was arguably a step taken out of concern that the Americans, once again, turned the public's approval against the British army.³⁹² The intent of the pamphlet, as expressed by the compiler, was to answer

³⁸⁹ JCC, V, ed. by Ford, p. 534.

³⁹⁰ Sullivan, *Letters and Papers*, I, p. 232.

³⁹¹ Smith, *Our Struggle for the Fourteenth Colony*, p 471; Charles Henry Jones, *History of the Campaign for the Conquest of Canada in 1776* (Porter & Coates, 1882), pp. 57-58. While this ended the career of Butterfield, Bedel eventually received another commission and continued to serve for the rest of the war.

³⁹² The publisher of this pamphlet was British officer Lieutenant Andrew Parke according to Anderson. See: Anderson, *Down the Warpath*, p. 138.

to the Continental Congress' investigation that the London-based newspaper, *The Public Advertiser*, published on 23 December 1776.³⁹³ The contents included not only the officer's testimonies but also evidence accusing the American leadership of fabricating the allegations against the British. In sum, the British officer's primary defense was consistent with the newspaper articles in that they ultimately could not control their Indigenous allies despite taking all measures possible to protect the American prisoners of war.

The pamphlet opened with a passionate statement accusing the Continental Congress of fabricating the allegations against Forster and his men. The author stated:

The compiler of the following sheets thinks it incumbent on him to lay them before the Public, thereby to shew the people, how grossly they have been abused by a few factious leaders of the American Congress, who justly merit their utmost indignation: to convince mankind that Britons cannot be cruel, and to justify the conduct of the kings servants from the foul aspersions cases on them by the reports and resolves of the Congress, stated to the Public, with the sole view of supporting and increasing the flames of civil war.³⁹⁴

The narrative then detailed the events leading up to the surrender at Cedars and the attack on Sherburne, followed by the British officer's official testimony. The officers provided this testimony on 6 September 1776, when Forster and three other officers signed a sworn statement declaring that the allegations made by the Continental Congress were all lies. The officers argued that 'The Congress, in drawing up their report and resolves, were guided by motives, in which truth, justice, or the good of their country, had no share.'³⁹⁵ Further, the British regulars did all they could to protect the

³⁹³ *An Authentic Narrative of Facts Relating to the Exchange of Prisoners Taken at the Cedars* (Printed for T. Cadell in the Strand, 1777), p. 2. This pamphlet was printed in London.

³⁹⁴ *An Authentic Narrative of Facts*, pp. 2-3.

³⁹⁵ *An Authentic Narrative of Facts*, p. 19.

American prisoners of war and denied that their Indigenous allies stripped the prisoners of their clothing after the surrender at Cedars, but they did take some personal items. They also acknowledged that after the attack on Sherburne, the Indigenous troops took some Americans captive due to the loss of one of their leaders in the battle.

The officers also detailed the measures they took to protect the American prisoners. To prevent their Indigenous allies from killing the prisoners, Forster purchased them back at a significant cost.³⁹⁶ The officers asserted that, as a result, their First Nation allies did not hurt the prisoners. Once Forster finalized the prisoner exchange agreement with Arnold, he admitted that their allies harassed the prisoners by firing their muskets at the batteaux transporting them to the exchange meeting point. Though they had no intent to harm the prisoners, and no injuries resulted from the incident.³⁹⁷ The British officers closed their account, exclaiming:

Thus we have faithfully stated the truth, and nothing but the truth, lies and perfidy being the refuge of knaves and fools. Let those who have sense and leisure to analyze the search to the bottom, compare this simple narrative, with the flagitious and contemptible report and resolves of the congress, whose violation of truth, marks the weakness of their cause.³⁹⁸

It was not just the junior officers who had to defend their actions; Carleton did as well. Included in the published version of the officer's defense was a grievance that the Continental Congress insulted Carleton by sending their report on the investigation to Burgoyne, his second in command at the time. However, as is evident from the Continental Congress' journals, they reportedly sent a copy to Carleton in addition to

³⁹⁶ *An Authentic Narrative of Facts*, pp. 27-29.

³⁹⁷ *An Authentic Narrative of Facts*, pp. 21-38.

³⁹⁸ *An Authentic Narrative of Facts*, p. 38.

Burgoyne and Howe.³⁹⁹ Nevertheless, the writer of this section of the pamphlet alleged that the Congress did this in an attempt ‘to create a jealousy between him and General Burgoyne.’ Prior to this slight by the Continental Congress, Carleton had always treated the revolutionaries with compassion, the writer asserted.⁴⁰⁰ However, as a result of this insult, Carleton responded by publishing orders to seize all those supporting independence from Britain and place them in confinement, even if acting as an ambassador or under a flag of truce.⁴⁰¹ The writer also explained that while seemingly harsh, Carleton’s actions were justified by the Americans ceaselessly plundering the inhabitants of Montreal.⁴⁰² The addition of Carleton’s rebuttal to the allegations lodged against him signifies that all officers within Forster’s chain of command were under scrutiny as a result of Cedars.

In another jab at the Americans, the publication added an intercepted letter from one of the four American officers held by the British, who criticized the actions of the Continental Congress. Even more damaging to the Americans was that the officer in question was Captain Ebenezer Sullivan, the younger brother of Brigadier General John Sullivan, the American commander for all troops in Canada. On 14 August, Captain Sullivan wrote a letter to his brother expressing his anger at the Continental Congress for voiding the cartel that Arnold negotiated.

I am much surprised to hear that the Congress, instead of redeeming us according to the cartel, have not only refused to do it, but have demanded Captain Forster to be delivered up to answer his conduct, in what they are pleased to term the massacre[sic] of the Cedars [sic].⁴⁰³

³⁹⁹ *JCC*, V, ed. by Ford, p. 458.

⁴⁰⁰ *JCC*, V, ed. by Ford, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁰¹ *JCC*, V, ed. by Ford, p. 15.

⁴⁰² *JCC*, V, ed. by Ford, p. 19. In fact, the Continental Congress did send the first report on 17 June to Carleton but sent the follow-up report on 10 July to Generals Burgoyne and Howe.

⁴⁰³ *An Authentic Narrative of Facts*, p. 39.

After swearing he was not under any stress to write the letter, he asserted that Forster's actions were beyond reproach, stating, 'Not a man living could have used more humanity than Captain Forester did.'⁴⁰⁴ Clearly perplexed by the actions of Congress, he vented his frustration that even if the allegations were true, he did not understand why Congress would leave them in the hands of the reportedly 'merciless' enemy. In closing, the younger Sullivan expressed that he felt deceived by Congress and hoped his brother would prevent America from developing a reputation of injustice.⁴⁰⁵

The timing of the publication was significant as the Cedars controversy lasted well into the fall of 1776, which was a crucial point in the British strategy to suppress the rebellion. By the time the British officers provided their official testimony in September 1776, the British Army had just successfully occupied New York City after the Battle of Long Island on 26 August 1776. With the estimated British troop strength being 20,000, there was no turning back in their mission to destroy Washington's army, which was still a viable force despite the British victory.⁴⁰⁶ The publication of this pamphlet was a sign that as the British increased their military response, they also needed to increase their public relations responses, as they needed this support on both sides of the Atlantic now more than ever.

The incident at Cedars and the Americans' effective use of these events for propaganda was so impactful that British leadership continued to discuss the events that

⁴⁰⁴ *An Authentic Narrative of Facts*, p. 40.

⁴⁰⁵ *An Authentic Narrative of Facts*, pp. 39-42. Ebenezer Sullivan's brother, Brigadier General John Sullivan, would command what became known as the Sullivan Campaign in 1779.

⁴⁰⁶ Frederike Baer, *Hessians: German Soldiers in the American Revolutionary War* (Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 91-92; Atkinson, *The British are Coming*, pp. 365-373; John Ferling, *Winning Independence* (Bloomsbury, 2021), pp. 21-26.

followed the battle well past the year 1777. For example, on 28 September 1779, Lieutenant General Fredrick Haldimand wrote to Clinton about a predicament he faced regarding prisoner exchanges. In 1778, Haldimand replaced Carleton as Governor of Quebec after Carleton requested to step down from his post after not receiving command of the Saratoga Campaign.⁴⁰⁷ To make his case that an exchange was necessary, he highlighted the pamphlet created in defense of the British at Cedars. It seems he believed that the evidence provided against the Americans in the pamphlet could help negotiate prisoner exchanges. However, unsure if Clinton even knew the details about Cedars, Haldimand opened the letter explaining:

As your Excellency may not have had an opportunity of being informed of all the circumstances relative to the Affair at the Cedars in 1776, so falsely represented by the Congress, in their resolves upon it. I take this occasion to transmit to you a Pamphlet containing a circumstantial, and attested account of the whole transaction, it is so strong a testimony of the perfidy of the Enemy we have to deal with, that they have no doubt suppressed it. It may be serviceable in negotiating the Exchange of Prisoners.⁴⁰⁸

Haldimand continued to explain to Clinton that, as evidenced by the pamphlet, Carleton prohibited any negotiations with the enemy. However, he was pressed to negotiate an exchange for the wife and children of one of his senior officers who the Americans took prisoner. While it is unclear from the letter exactly how Haldimand planned to leverage the evidence in the pamphlet for the prisoner exchange, it seems he believed that

⁴⁰⁷ Ferling, *Winning*, pp. 20, 38. Howe also removed Carleton's military authority in Canada which also impacted his decision to step down.

⁴⁰⁸ London, British Library, Haldimand Papers, MS 21807, fols. 111-112, Haldimand to Clinton, 28 September 1779.

perhaps the Americans might acquiesce to certain terms if he threatened to bring the pamphlet to light again.⁴⁰⁹

This letter reveals not only the impact of the Americans' response to the Cedars but that, as Haldimand alleges, the evidence in the pamphlet was so damning that the revolutionaries took measures to suppress it. Further, as evident by Haldimand's first sentence in his letter, he was unsure that Clinton was even aware of the incident or the pamphlet. Thus, by 1779, many within the British leadership either did not know about Cedars and the aftermath because perhaps the revolutionaries did succeed in suppressing the pamphlet, or they just forgot about it. Either way, some British officers were still talking about it in 1779, mostly demonstrating the effectiveness of American propaganda using the events that occurred at Cedars.

Conclusion

The Battle of the Cedars was the first known instance in which the British received support from their Indigenous allies. While a minor conflict in the American War for Independence, this battle triggered an immense response that was disproportionate to the battle's military significance. This apparent insignificance of the Battle of the Cedars is also evident by the relatively silent historiography on this conflict, with most works focusing on the military history aspect within the larger context of the American invasion of Canada. However, when considering the wider social, cultural, and political context that impacted the response to this battle, the

⁴⁰⁹ London, British Library, Haldimand Papers, MS 21807, fols. 111-112, Haldimand to Clinton, 28 September 1779.

importance of Cedars increased dramatically. It was because of the unique environment in which the Battle of the Cedars occurred, along with the timing being right on the precipice of the Americans' Declaration of Independence, that triggered such an unprecedented response from American and British leadership.

While the volume of the initial newspaper response was far less and the response much slower than seen after Lexington and Concord, it was the content that captured the public's attention. The news on the Cedars conflicts echoed stories of atrocities committed in the region's longer history of frontier warfare by detailing the abuse of American prisoners of war at the hands of the British's Indigenous allies. At the same time, the Americans alleged that Forster turned a blind eye to the abuses at the hands of his Indigenous arm, similar to what the British alleged French forces did during the Seven Years' War. While there is no evidence that Forster allowed these abuses, the newspaper presses broadcasted his name across the Atlantic world, risking severe damage to his reputation. The Cedars incident demonstrated, once again, the Americans' ongoing grip on the information war through their control of the colonial news and their ability to also ensure the allegations made their way to Great Britain. As also evident by Serle's letters to Dartmouth in Chapter One which he wrote around the same time, it became increasingly apparent that they needed to take more measures to improve their strategy on the information war.⁴¹⁰

When the Continental Congress responded to these allegations, they did so not solely out of concern for the well-being of the American prisoners but because they also saw a bigger opportunity to use the events to support their cause. The Battle of the

⁴¹⁰ See Chapter One, pp. 30-31.

Cedars occurred in the midst of the Continental Congress' move to assert its sovereignty as the United States. This battle became an opportunity and a means for them to demonstrate their authority by demanding the same rights that civilized nations deserve within the laws of war. Furthermore, the frontier space where this battle occurred, a space where historically laws of war were not exclusively rooted in European values and there was little colonial oversight, gave the Americans a greater ability to shape perceptions about what occurred. This is precisely what they did when they launched a Congressional investigation, which kept discussions on Cedars in the news well into the following year. As argued by a few historians such as Parkinson, Hooock, and most recently Anderson, the sensational and horrifying reports of the Indigenous treatment of American prisoners helped to unite the revolutionaries against the Crown by dredging up entrenched racial biases and fears of Indigenous people and their customs.⁴¹¹

From the British perspective, once again, they faced a public relations crisis that required an immediate response to turn the narrative back in their favor. Despite the evidence supporting Forster's claim that he tried to stop the abuses from occurring, the British had no choice but to conduct crisis management. The fact that the British took pains to respond to allegations proves that the negative public image displayed through the news mattered to British leadership. Initially, as a means to voice their rebuttal, Forster's defense surfaced in the newspapers. Furthermore, Howe entertained a meeting with Washington to assert, through a messenger, that the reported treatment of their

⁴¹¹ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 17, 641-673; Hooock, *Scars*, pp. 3-22; Anderson, *Down the Warpath*, pp. 134-137.

prisoners was unacceptable. However, Howe also stated he had no control over the Canadian region. These initial actions were not enough to quiet the controversy, and the British then published a pamphlet spelling out their defense that circulated in Great Britain. This pamphlet aimed at clearing both Forster's name and Carleton's — the general officer who oversaw the Canadian region. This pamphlet also made its way to Québec, as evidenced by Haldimand's letter to Clinton in 1779, which detailed the Americans' control over the narrative. In this letter, Haldimand also claimed that the Americans tried to ignore, or even suppress, the pamphlet because it contained strong evidence that the allegations they lodged were false. Haldimand's letter also implies that Clinton did not know about the Cedars incident. If true, this means that while news on the Battle of the Cedars and subsequent investigation triggered an immense response at the time as intended by the Continental Congress, it was also the Americans' design that the public would also quickly forget before discovering any misinformation – which appeared to be the case by 1779.

Chapter Three: The Battle of Long Island and Britain's German Auxiliary Troops

Introduction

On 12 June 1775, General Gage wrote to Barrington urging the ministry to explore ways to augment the British regular army with outside sources such as foreign troops. Over the past year, in almost every letter written to Barrington, Gage pleaded for more troops as tensions in the American colonies heated up. 'If you think ten thousand men sufficient, send twenty, if one million is thought enough, give two,' by doing so, Gage implored, 'You will save both blood and treasure.'⁴¹² While some relief arrived at Boston after the battles of Lexington and Concord, to Gage, this was not enough. Due to the 'boldness of the Rebels,' Gage warned Barrington, they had not only taken Fort Ticonderoga but the Americans now headed towards Montréal. Gage's letters reflected his concern that Great Britain would lose the North American colonies if they did not fully exert her force. Given their limited resources, one solution was to increase Indigenous support, a recommendation Gage already provided to Carleton. Another option, Gage stated, was to consider 'Hanoverians, Hessians, perhaps – Russians may be hired.'⁴¹³ The ministry should leave no stone unturned in finding ways to increase its troop strength. In the end, they listened. One year later, 8,632 German subsidy troops arrived at Staten Island, New York, as General William Howe, Gage's replacement as Commander-in-Chief, prepared a major assault on Long Island, New York.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹² London, British Library, Barrington Papers, MS 73550, Gage to Barrington, 25 September 1774.

⁴¹³ London, British Library, Barrington Papers, MS 73550, Gage to Barrington, 12 June 1775.

⁴¹⁴ Friederike Baer, *Hessians: German Soldiers in the American Revolutionary War* (Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 88.

This chapter will explore the aftermath of the Battle of Long Island and the events leading up to another congressional investigation into the conduct of the British military and their German auxiliary forces that commenced in the winter of 1777. It will also assess how the addition of the German subsidy troops impacted the Patriot-leaning narrative and accusations made against the British military in the newspapers. In this case study, Patriot leadership alleged that the British, including Scottish highlanders, and their German auxiliaries killed surrendering American troops and maltreated prisoners of war. In the end, it would be the German troops that would carry a reputation for extreme brutality that still exists today. Despite this reputation, however, the Patriot-leaning press did not focus the bulk of their atrocity allegations on the Germans. Instead, by early 1777, they targeted the British regular troops. Furthermore, British attempts to take control of the narrative brought forth in the colonial newspapers failed. The news reports alleging violations of laws of war, once again, drove British leadership to answer to allegations that the American newspapers broadcasted through the Atlantic world.

The analysis provided in the following chapter also demonstrates that well before the arrival of the German troops to America, the Continental Congress primed the colonial public to view these soldiers as, in essence, subhuman monsters who would wreak havoc on the colonies. Simultaneously, Congress held designs to entice these troops into deserting and then recruit them to fight for the revolutionary cause. While the American revolutionaries' propaganda machine worked to provoke fear of the German soldiers, they also developed a scheme to lure the German troops into supporting the United States — the same strategy used toward Indigenous people as seen in the previous chapter. However, Congress' first move was to use Great Britain's

agreements with the German princes for their own propaganda purposes. To do this, they successfully drew from a long history of antipathy towards German ‘mercenaries’ that began with Britain’s first use of subsidy troops in the late seventeenth century. Not only was there an established history of animosity towards the German subsidy forces, but for several months prior to their arrival, the Patriot-leaning news reinforced this notion. In July 1776, Congress listed Britain’s use of German troops as one of their grievances and reasons for declaring independence. However, before the German subsidy troops arrived in America, the colonial public had already solidified their stance that they now faced — thanks to the Crown — one of the most ruthless militaries.⁴¹⁵

German Prejudice

The Continental Congress, along with the Patriot-leaning news, worked to shape the public’s views of the German soldiers even before they stepped foot in America. Several months prior to their arrival, the newspapers published multiple stories depicting these soldiers as barbaric mercenaries. For those supporting independence, the news reports on the British government’s acquisition and deployment of these German troops to fight against their own subjects served to fuel the rebellion. The papers continued to report on sightings of the German troops as they headed towards America throughout the summer of 1776.⁴¹⁶ Then, on 4 July, the Continental Congress formally documented their anger over the German auxiliaries when they signed the Declaration of

⁴¹⁵ ‘Extract of a letter from London,’ *The Pennsylvania Journal*, 22 May 1776, p. 3. Rodney Atwood, *The Hessians: Mercenaries from Hessen-Kassel in the American Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 6; Daniel Krebs, *A Generous and Merciful Enemy* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), pp. 26 – 32; Baer, *Hessians*, pp. 26-27.

⁴¹⁶ ‘Halifax, May 14,’ *The Connecticut Gazette*, 28 June 1776, p. 3.

Independence. This declaration specifically targeted George III for recruiting not only Indigenous support but support from foreign nations as well by proclaiming:

He is, at this time, transporting large armies of foreign mercenaries to complete the works of death, desolation, and tyranny, already begun with circumstances of cruelty and perfidy scarcely paralleled in the most barbarous ages, and totally unworthy the head of a civilized nation.⁴¹⁷

Similar to the anger over the British military's support from Indigenous forces, the Americans alleged that with the recruitment of German mercenaries, George III intended to subject British colonists to the cruelty associated with the violence of both groups.

While the Continental Congress admonished Great Britain for acquiring the German troops to fight the war in America, they also had ambitious designs to recruit them. Enticing German troops to desert, thus weakening the British forces and possibly augmenting the Americans, was a strategy the Continental Congress employed not long after the Germans arrived in America. In August 1776, Congress resolved to give land to 'Foreign officers' who chose to desert and become citizens of the United States.⁴¹⁸ The offer specified how much land would be given in proportion to the German soldiers' rank. Captain Carl Leopold Baurmeister, adjutant to the Hessian Commanders in Chief, confirmed in his journal the efforts Americans made to lure Germans into changing sides. In the aftermath of the Battle of Long Island, while the British and Germans surveyed the American fortifications and encampments, they found several thousand printed flyers. In these flyers was a message from the Continental Congress that, first

⁴¹⁷ 'In CONGRESS, July 4, 1776,' *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 6 July 1776, p. 1; 'The Declaration of Independence,' *Library of Congress* <<https://www.loc.gov/item/2003576546>> [accessed 9 March 2024].

⁴¹⁸ *JCC*, 34 vols, ed. by Worthington Chauncey Ford (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1904-1937), V, pp. 707-708; Baer, *Hessians*, pp. 26-27.

off, declared the righteousness of the American cause in what Baurmeister described as ‘high-sounding phrases.’ It then offered land to those who deserted.⁴¹⁹ To further ensure that word got out, Congress translated their resolves into German and distributed them on Staten Island, where, at the time, the British and German soldiers encamped.⁴²⁰

The British ministry considered the possibility that the soldiers might desert when negotiating the treaties with the German Landgraves. Furthermore, they had intelligence warning them that the Continental Congress was prepared to distribute flyers in German and English, enticing both German and British troops to desert.⁴²¹ As a protection against desertion, some of the subsidy treaties specifically addressed this risk. For example, the treaty with the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel stated that all deserters would be handed back over to their German chain of command if found and not allowed to stay in America.⁴²² However, the task of determining if a missing soldier either deserted or was killed in action was likely, at times, impossible.

Due to the number of German-speaking colonists already settled in America, the revolutionary leadership mistakenly thought their native countrymen would further attract the German troops to change allegiances and stay in America. In one newspaper article, the writer stated that ‘It is generally believed that very few will ever return, as it is most probably that those who do not get their brains knocked out, will insist upon staying among their own countrymen who have emigrated there.’⁴²³ Indeed, many

⁴¹⁹ *Revolution in America: Confidential Letters and Journals 1776-1784 of Adjutant General Major Baurmeister of the Hessian Forces*, ed. and trans. by Bernhard A. Uhlendorf (Rutgers University Press, 1957), p. 4. By Baurmeister’s death in 1803, he was elevated to nobility and commissioned as a Major General.

⁴²⁰ *JCC*, Vol. V, p. 708; See: ‘Benjamin Franklin to General Horatio Gates, 28 August 1776’, in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-22-02-0347>> [accessed 25 March 2024].

⁴²¹ *The Pennsylvania Journal*, 22 May 1776.

⁴²² *The Pennsylvania Journal*, 22 May 1776.

⁴²³ *The Norwich Packet*, 24 June 1776.

Germans settled in the colonies well before the war, especially in the colony of Pennsylvania, where German-language newspapers such as the *Pennsylvanischer Staatsbote* existed. The existence of established German communities perhaps made the idea more plausible that these soldiers would feel welcome in America. However, the hope that many German troops would betray their nation and side with the revolutionaries did not come to fruition, as very few decided to abandon their commitment to their country.⁴²⁴ One theory for the low number of deserters, despite the generous offers of land by Congress, was that the German soldiers did not respect the American leadership or their cause and looked down upon the American soldiers. Many Germans were not impressed as they observed an army that lacked provisions and clothing and also lacked discipline and training.⁴²⁵ According to recent estimates of Hessen-Kassel troops, approximately 66 deserted in 1776 and 109 in 1777 — rates which stayed relatively the same for the remaining years of the war.⁴²⁶

As Congress worked to develop their plan, the colonial newspapers fueled fear and anger over the German troops by equating them to mercenaries when reporting on their impending arrival prior to the Battle of Long Island. The first newspaper reports proclaimed that Great Britain mobilized foreign ‘mercenaries’ to suppress what they declared a rebellion. For example, *The Norwich Packet*’s front page news on 8 July magnified this fear by proclaiming:

As the Royal Tyrant, the Pharaoh of Great Britain---together with his Ministry and Parliament, are exerting their combined influence to involve this Continent in a scene of blood and ashes; and for that end, are hiring

⁴²⁴ For more on German migration to the American Colonies, see: Rosalind Beiler, ‘German Migration to the British American Colonies, 1680-1780,’ in *The Atlantic World*, ed. by Willem Klooster and Alfred Padula (Routledge, 2005), pp. 91-106.

⁴²⁵ Krebs, *A Generous and Merciful Enemy*, p. 145; Baer, *Hessians*, p. 105.

⁴²⁶ Krebs, *A Generous and Merciful Enemy*, pp. 145, 243-256.

German mercenaries, in great numbers---whose native ferocity, when heightened and whetted, by the influence and malice of the sceptered savage of Great-Britain, thirsting for the blood of his faithful American subjects; will exhibit such scene of cruelty, death and devastation, as will fill those of us that survive the carnage, with indignation and horror; attended with poverty and wretchedness---and make the ears of our posterity, the millions who are yet unborn, tingle, when they read the transaction in the pages of some future history.⁴²⁷

The article then proceeded to give an account of atrocities committed by Russian mercenaries during the Seven Years' War by describing how they plundered towns and set them on fire, then tortured and murdered innocent civilians after destroying their homes and stealing property.⁴²⁸

Newspaper reports on the arrival of British forces and their German auxiliaries emerged in the spring of 1776. For example, *The Massachusetts Spy* on 18 May explained that included with the large number of British forces that set sail for America were '12,000 Hessians, taken into English pay.' In addition to Hessians were Brunswick, Waldeck, and Hanoverian troops, amounting to a total of 20,000 foreign troops, costing the British government 900,000 pounds.⁴²⁹ On the same day, *The Providence Gazette* reported that a total of 45,000 British and foreign soldiers had embarked to the colonies.⁴³⁰

Not only was the number of German troops heading towards America provided in the news, but also the ministries' plan to use them for war against America. On 21 May, along with the reports of 'Hessian' troops arriving in Halifax, the papers printed the Secretary of State for the Colonies, George Germain's, strategy for the war against

⁴²⁷ 'To the Printer of the Norwich Packet,' *The Norwich Packet*, 8 July 1776, p. 1.

⁴²⁸ 'To the Printer of the Norwich Packet,' *The Norwich Packet*, 8 July 1776, p. 1.

⁴²⁹ 'London, February 19,' *The Massachusetts Spy*, 18 May 1776, p. 2.

⁴³⁰ 'London, February 18,' *The Providence Gazette*, 18 May 1776, p. 1.

the revolutionaries. First, the plan detailed how they sent commissioners to negotiate peace with the Continental Congress. However, if these talks failed, then the Hessian troops would assist in securing New England and cutting off all communication between the colonies.⁴³¹ Among the German auxiliaries were riflemen called ‘Jagers,’ who would be a match to the ‘American rifle men.’⁴³² The publication of Germain’s plan for war in the colonies provided the public with details on how the German troops would aid Great Britain in subduing the rebellion.

The papers also published the treaties made with the German principalities in May, in case anyone doubted their impending arrival. For example, on 24 May, *The Pennsylvania Journal* published the entire agreement between George III and the Duke of Brunswick, the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel, and the Count of Hanau. These documents outlined the number and types of soldiers the states would provide and also how much the British government was to pay the Landgraves for each soldier, including the additional payment if a soldier was wounded or killed in action. ‘According to custom,’ the treaty with the Duke of Brunswick stated, ‘three wounded men shall be reckoned as one killed.’⁴³³ For the newspaper reading public, the publication of these contracts between the British government and German principalities confirmed a preexisting belief among many colonists that the Landgraves were motivated solely by greed and in making ‘blood money,’ with no care for the well-being of their subjects. The newspapers reinforced this belief by announcing Congress’ plan to recruit German troops. In the same article, the news declared that since ‘the Landgrave of Hesse is an

⁴³¹ ‘Bristol, February 14,’ *The Connecticut Journal*, 22 May 1776, p. 1; ‘Philadelphia, May 18,’ *Dunlap’s Maryland Gazette*, 21 May 1776, p. 2.

⁴³² ‘London, January 12,’ *The Freeman’s Journal*, 25 May 1776, p. 3.

⁴³³ ‘Extract of a letter from London,’ *The Pennsylvania Journal*, 22 May 1776, p. 3.

absolute tyrant,' the Continental Congress prepared to offer 'proposals' to the German soldiers in America. With these proposals, which turned out to be offers of land, Congress hoped to entice the German troops to desert.⁴³⁴

While it is unlikely that the German troops behaved much differently than the British, an established fear of these troops existed before they even set foot in the American colonies. The roots of this fear and trepidation towards the Germans grew from a history spanning decades of anger over Britain's use of German subsidy troops; soldiers often described using the controversial term 'mercenaries.' One example from this history is the 'Maidstone Affair' of 1756. Matthew McCormack's work demonstrates how this incident brought to the public forefront the controversy over the use of subsidy troops and effectively helped to solidify a deeply engrained prejudice against these German men.⁴³⁵ It was from this history that the unprecedented negative reaction to the use of these troops during the American war grew, exacerbated by what Peter Wilson argued as 'shifts in intellectual opinion,' as opposed to any changes in the treaty process.⁴³⁶

Supporting this view are several sources from those who fought or witnessed the war, confirming that the American people were initially frightened of the German soldiers. Ambrose Serle, Secretary to Admiral Howe, for example, remarked on how visible this intense fear of German soldiers was by the Americans. On 7 October, in his diary, Serle explained:

⁴³⁴ 'Extract of a letter from London,' *The Pennsylvania Journal*, 22 May 1776, p. 3.

⁴³⁵ Matthew McCormack, 'Citizenship, Nationhood, and Masculinity in the Affair of the Hanoverian Soldier, 1756', *The Historical Journal*, 49.4 (2006), 971–93 (p. 980)
<<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X0600570X>>.

⁴³⁶ Peter H. Wilson, 'The German "Soldier Trade" of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: A Reassessment,' *The International History Review*, 18.4 (1996), 757–92 (p. 764-765, 792).

The Dread, which the Rebels have of these Hessians, is inconceivable: They almost run away at their Name. Indeed, they spare nobody, but glean all away like an Army of Locusts. It is melancholy to see the dismal State of this once happy land.⁴³⁷

Observations made in journals written by German soldiers in America also confirm these preexisting fears. German Lieutenant Jacob Piel, a prisoner of war after the Battle of Trenton, described the reactions they received from the colonial public while traveling through several towns on the way to Fredericksburg, Virginia, where Washington quartered the officers. In a town in Maryland, Piel explained that their arrival ‘drew a lot of unpleasant visitors to us.’ However, the people became disappointed when what they saw did not match what they imagined. Piel explained:

They had come to see strange animals and found to their disgust that we looked like human beings. It seemed comical, but it is true, that they had formed such an idea of Hessians, but in the beginning, they would not believe our words that we were really Hessians.⁴³⁸

Captain Andreas Wiederhold, also a German prisoner of war after Trenton, described the Americans’ fear of them in his journal as well. While quartered in Dumfries, Virginia, a few miles from Fredericksburg, Wiederhold wrote, ‘The stupid Americans had strange ideas and a fear of us Hessians, believing that we were not like other normal humans, that we spoke a strange language, and above all, were an uncivilized, wild, and barbaric people.’⁴³⁹ Wiederhold learned of this irrational fear from an American officer who told him a humorous tale about several frightened American patrols who were surveilling an area near a German encampment in the middle of the

⁴³⁷ Ambrose Serle, *The American Journal of Ambrose Serle: Secretary to Lord Howe, 1776-1778*, ed. by E. Tatum (Huntington Library, 1940), p. 120.

⁴³⁸ *Defeat, Disaster, and Dedication*, ed. and trans. by Bruce E. Burgoyne (Heritage Books, 2008), pp. 23-24.

⁴³⁹ *Defeat, Disaster, and Dedication*, pp. 89-90.

night. As they rode through the woods, they heard a loud croak from a bullfrog, which they immediately believed to be a German picket. Paralyzed with fear, the Americans managed only to yell back in the direction of the bullfrog that they surrendered. The men waited for hours until they finally realized the sound was not from a German man but a bullfrog.⁴⁴⁰

There is some indication that the fear of the German troops did not last very long. Charles Stedman, for example, a British officer who fought in the war and wrote one of the first histories of the war, witnessed this change. He argued that up until the American victory at Trenton on 26 December 1776, ‘The Americans had hitherto beheld the Hessians with fear and dismay. They knew they were veterans in the highest state of discipline.’⁴⁴¹ However, after this British defeat, the views of the German troops changed dramatically. The result of the battle was that the Americans took thousands of German auxiliaries as prisoners of war. After this, Washington had them parade through the streets of Philadelphia. Stedman argues this was a spectacle not only meant to humiliate the Germans but to show the public for the first time that these troops were not invincible. The result was that the colonial population’s view of these troops changed as fear slowly turned into pity.⁴⁴²

The relationships that the German officers formed with the families they resided with while on prisoner parole also indicated that American colonists grew less afraid of them over time. Wiederhold’s diary proves how these barriers slowly diminished as he

⁴⁴⁰ *Defeat, Disaster, and Dedication*, p. 90.

⁴⁴¹ C. Stedman, *The History of the Origin, Progress, and Termination of the American War*, 2 vols (Printed for the Author, 1794), p. 233.

⁴⁴² For more on German prisoners of war after Trenton and Princeton, and Washington’s order to parade them through the streets of Philadelphia, see: Krebs, *A Generous and Merciful Enemy*, pp. 99-101.

not only formed close relationships with American colonists but also fell in love with a young woman from Fredericksburg, Virginia. He met this young lady through the family he lived with in Dumfries, Virginia, located just a few miles from Fredericksburg. Unfortunately for this couple, Wiederhold soon received orders to move to Philadelphia and join the rest of his unit. Wiederhold wrote about the friendships made with the family that quartered him and the local townspeople. He also expressed the sadness he felt in leaving, especially the 'beautiful and rich' American woman he fell in love with. 'I must stop thinking of her,' he stated, 'in order to pull myself out of the feeling, which will effect me too much if held onto.'⁴⁴³ Clearly, the colonists whom Wiederhold developed relationships with did not express, nor gave any indication, that they harbored any fears of the German officer.

Despite the uproar over the German troops, the American Revolution was by no means the first time Great Britain used German troops to augment their army. With a history spanning from 1689 to 1816, Great Britain's practice of hiring German troops to bolster their forces was well established despite many critics over the years. The idea of hiring foreign troops to fight for British causes did not sit well with many people of Great Britain, nor several members of Parliament. Those who supported the practice opposed maintaining a large standing professional army, recalling the atrocities and corruption occurring during the English Civil War, which ended in 1651.⁴⁴⁴ Despite criticisms of hiring foreign soldiers, Great Britain continued this practice due to its effectiveness in aiding Great Britain in winning wars. William Pitt the Elder, Prime Minister during the Seven Years' War, initially condemned the practice but eventually

⁴⁴³ *Defeat, Disaster, and Dedication*, p. 101.

⁴⁴⁴ Krebs, *A Generous and Merciful Enemy*, p. 19.

became an enthusiastic supporter. As a result, this practice became a staple of military strategy in Great Britain throughout the eighteenth century, only ending after the Napoleonic Wars.⁴⁴⁵

During the Glorious Revolution and the reign of William and Mary, England first subsidized 12,000 German soldiers from various principalities within the Holy Roman Empire. With the auxiliaries positioned to protect the borders of the Dutch Republic, the more experienced troops deployed to the front lines to fight Louis XIV's armies during the Nine Years' War. Given William III's role as a Dutch Stadtholder, this first experiment in hiring German auxiliaries to supplement an army was a Dutch and English collaboration, as both states shared the cost. This practice continued through Queen Anne's reign and the War of Spanish Succession. Both the Dutch and English would jointly fund the cost to augment their armies with 100,000 German troops.⁴⁴⁶

This practice continued throughout the eighteenth century. During the War of Austrian Succession from 1740 to 1748, both Great Britain and France hired German auxiliary troops who, at times, ended up fighting against each other. Also, during this war, Britain sent German auxiliaries to Scotland to reinforce their regular troops in subduing the Jacobite Rebellion of 1746. During the Seven Years' War, Great Britain expanded its use of these soldiers by deploying them to the American colonies while also stationing other subsidy troops in Great Britain to protect the home front from the

⁴⁴⁵ Mark Wishon, *German Forces and the British Army* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), pp. 82-83; Krebs, *A Generous and Merciful Enemy*, p. 19.

⁴⁴⁶ Wishon, *German Forces*, pp. 81-82; Atwood, *The Hessians*, pp. 13-20.

French. Despite their utility and cost-benefit, both conflicts triggered a political and public backlash.⁴⁴⁷

The 'Maidstone Affair' was an incident during the Seven Years' War where the controversy over foreign subsidiary troops came to a head. In 1756, the British government contracted with both principalities of Hanover and Hesse for soldiers to serve within Great Britain. In the town of Maidstone, Kent, the location of a Hanoverian regiment, local authorities arrested a German soldier for stealing silk handkerchiefs from a shop. Word spread quickly about the German soldier's alleged theft, which led to public outrage from a public already uneasy about the Germans' presence in their community. This led to even more conflict over whether the case fell within the jurisdiction of the British government or the soldier's command. Because the incident caused so much consternation amongst the public, the case ended up at Whitehall for determination. In the end, the British government released the soldier to his command for punishment. This determination did not end the controversy, however, as news of the incident continued to spread, even triggering fierce debates within Parliament. Now, the anger over the incident was no longer solely about the German's theft or jurisdictional question but of Great Britain's use of auxiliary troops in general. In the end, the controversy became highly politicized, and some lost their jobs as a result, as the government became split over their opinion on the overall use of subsidy contracts.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁷ Wishon, *German Forces*, pp. 82-83; McCormack, 'Citizenship, Nationhood, and Masculinity,' pp. 973-976.

⁴⁴⁸ McCormack, 'Citizenship, Nationhood, and Masculinity,' pp. 973-976. Pitt the Elder led the charge against the use of these contracts. Ultimately, this incident destroyed the Secretary of State's career, the soldier was drummed out of his unit, and his commander was sent back to Hanover by order of George II.

The Maidstone incident brought to the fore the divisiveness that German auxiliary troops caused within the British public and government, which lasted through the American Revolution. By stationing these German troops on the home front in 1756, and embedding them within communities, this exposed them to the public's eye and served to amplify any animosities over this practice, causing a civil-military clash both nationally and internationally. Furthermore, politicians exploited the incident to further their cause. For example, those supporting militia reforms used the incident for their benefit. It also brought out sentiments and beliefs of the inferiority and fear of the German 'mercenary' soldiers, despite the knowledge by many within the government that the subsidy contracts were the only way Britain could respond to the threat of France. McCormack argues this point by stating, 'Commentators on the affair, therefore, were able to tap a rich vein of popular prejudice that identified German soldiers with venality, arrogance, lawlessness, and aggression.'⁴⁴⁹ It is no wonder that American colonists would also tap this vein almost twenty years later by vocalizing the same rhetoric about German auxiliary troops and exploiting these biases for their own cause. Arguably, the Maidstone affair helped lay the foundation for the Americans' reaction to these troops' arrival to the colonies.

Using the term 'mercenaries' to describe the German subsidiary troops was undoubtedly an effective propaganda move by the Americans due to the negative connotation the term held at the time. However, several scholars, such as Daniel Krebs, argue that this term was not an accurate descriptor of the German auxiliary troops. The crux of the argument is that a mercenary generally refers to an individual hired as a

⁴⁴⁹ McCormack, 'Citizenship, Nationhood, and Masculinity,' pp. 979, 980, 990.

professional soldier to fight for the employer's nation or interest. Unlike the German troops, mercenaries fought primarily for financial gain, which was the individual's choice. Within the European nations, the practice of hiring individuals to fight for another's cause garnered much criticism as they were often found to be undisciplined, unnecessarily brutal, and unreliable, especially if their employer did not pay as promised.⁴⁵⁰ More impactful was the memory of atrocities perpetrated by mercenary soldiers that solidified their negative reputation and also triggered fear in a population.⁴⁵¹ This fear was one of the drivers behind the passionate response by the British public to the Maidstone incident.

While German auxiliaries did receive payment to fight for Great Britain, the German principalities recruited and raised units to fulfill their contracts with other nations. This is a key difference to mercenaries as they generally did not fulfill an obligation to their native country. While a few individuals within the Landgraves' armies did meet the definition of a mercenary, the majority did not. The Landgraves mostly filled their quotas by employing a conscription system, which required a certain amount of military service from their male citizens. Of the German states that used conscription to raise troops, there existed two main methods: the use of enrollment lists or the canton system.⁴⁵² The enrollment list system, or *Enrollierungslisten*, required districts within the state to submit the names of all men between the ages of seventeen and thirty. From this list, they chose the most capable men who met the enlistment standards to serve for a period of time. This method yielded multiple problems, mainly because it was difficult

⁴⁵⁰ Krebs, *A Generous and Merciful Enemy*, 32-25. Atwood, *The Hessians*, p. 23.

⁴⁵¹ Krebs, *A Generous and Merciful Enemy*, p. 32.

⁴⁵² Krebs, *A Generous and Merciful Enemy*, p. 37.

to enforce, and there existed numerous exemptions to service. The issues with the enrollment list method led to the use of a canton system, or *Kantonsystem*, based on a Prussian model. With the canton system, regiments were responsible for specific regions within a state to muster conscripts. Hessen-Kassel, for example, required conscripts to serve for twenty-four years, and they received furlough on a rotational basis to work vital trade jobs and farm the land.⁴⁵³ It is because these German troops had a requirement to serve, despite some exemptions, that they differed from mercenaries who held more individual control over their decisions to serve for a foreign state or entity.

In June 1775, Gage urged Barrington to look to other sources of reinforcements, including foreign armies, which is what the Prime Minister, Fredrick North, 2nd Earl of Guilford's ministry ultimately did.⁴⁵⁴ As Parliament determined which foreign armies could augment their forces, the Russian Empire was the first choice. However, attempts to enter into a treaty with Empress Catherine the Great failed when she refused George III's request.⁴⁵⁵ Parliament then turned to the German Landgraves for support. By February 1776, Parliament finalized subsidy treaties with the six German principalities within the Holy Roman Empire.⁴⁵⁶ The principalities that contracted with Great Britain included Hessen-Kassel, Hessen-Hanau, Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, Waldeck, Ansbach-Bayreuth, and Anhalt-Zerbst.⁴⁵⁷ By the summer of 1776, the British Army now had the troop strength that Gage advocated for a year prior.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵³ Krebs, *A Generous and Merciful Enemy*, pp. 46-51.

⁴⁵⁴ London, British Library, MS 73550, Gage to Barrington, 2 October 1774.

⁴⁵⁵ Andrew Roberts, *The Last King of America: The Misunderstood Reign of George III* (Viking, 2021), p. 273; Krebs, *A Generous and Merciful Enemy*, p. 20; Wishon, *German Forces*, p. 105.

⁴⁵⁶ Wishon, *German Forces*, p. 105.

⁴⁵⁷ While contemporaries used the term 'Hessians' to collectively describe the German auxiliary troops, only two of the principalities were from the Hesse regions.

⁴⁵⁸ Krebs, *A Generous and Merciful Enemy*, p. 19, 24.

The first group of 8,632 German troops arrived on Staten Island in August 1776 to reinforce Howe's British regulars poised to attack Long Island. However, Howe could not deploy all of the soldiers that composed the Hessian Corps at one time due to difficulties securing transport ships.⁴⁵⁹ For example, the 2nd Division, under Lieutenant General Wilhelm Freiherr von Knyphausen, arrived in New York City in October after the British occupied the area. The first wave of German troops sent to America was from Hessen-Kassel and fell under the command of Lieutenant General Phillip von Heister, a seasoned officer who served in the Seven Years' War.⁴⁶⁰ Heister's 1st Division of the Hessian Corps consisted of thirteen infantry battalions, a Jäger company, and a Field Battery.⁴⁶¹ On 25 August 1776, Heister moved his division to Long Island, and the next day, they saw combat for the first time on American soil in a combined British and German attack on the Continental Army.⁴⁶²

Although both British and German forces attacked Long Island, after the war, it was the German auxiliary troops and not the British regulars that would carry a reputation for cruelty for many decades to come. The legend of German cruelty during the American Revolution became engrained in American culture through popular and academic secondary sources written since the war. Even some recent historical manuscripts serve to perpetuate this memory. While the evidence supports that Americans feared the Germans before they even stepped foot in the colonies, very little supports that they committed any more grievous acts than the British troops. Regardless,

⁴⁵⁹ Max von Eelking, *The German Allied Troops in the North American War of Independence 1776 -1783* (Joel Munsell's Sons, Publishers, 1892), p. 23; Atwood, *The Hessians*, p. 36.

⁴⁶⁰ von Eelking, *The German Allied Troops*, p. 23.

⁴⁶¹ von Eelking, *The German Allied Troops*, p. 23; Atwood, *The Hessians*, p. 36.

⁴⁶² von Eelking, *The German Allied Troops*, p. 29, 45; Baer, *Hessians*, p. 92.

the American Revolution solidified their lasting reputation for extreme cruelty. So much so that in recent works, historians continue to refute this legend and defend the German troops.⁴⁶³

The post-war memory that contributed to the perpetuation of the German reputation for violations of laws of war started with historical works. The most influential nineteenth-century historians who wrote about German soldiers in the American Revolution were Edward Jackson Lowell and Max von Eelking. Eelking argued that frustration over the Americans' way of warfighting led to atrocities, a defense that rings similar to what British forces expressed as well. However, Eelking also blamed the British for the bulk of the violations, claiming they encouraged the Germans not to give quarter. In 1863, Eelking, a German historian, published a two-volume book titled *The German Allied Troops in the North American War of Independence 1776 -1783*. Eelking explained that the American troops feared capture by German soldiers because they believed they would give no quarter. This fear led to their futile resistance to the German troops during the Battle of Long Island, evident because the Americans only fired once before their frantic retreat.⁴⁶⁴ This angered the German soldiers, who were already frustrated over their 'new method of fighting' that was not in line with European methods. Furthermore, in some instances, the Americans pretended to surrender and then fired on their captors, also a breach of European standards of warfare. The Germans also looked down on many of the American officers as they were tradesmen and not of high birth. Therefore, they did not accept them as officers when

⁴⁶³ Baer, *Hessians*, p. 113.

⁴⁶⁴ von Eelking, *The German Allied Troops*, p. 32.

captured.⁴⁶⁵ Due to the Americans' fear of the German troops and their refusal to surrender, Eelking alleges that many were 'slaughtered in cold blood.' Eelking cited Colonel Von Heeringen and claimed that he blamed the British for the atrocities committed against the Americans. In Heeringen's report to Colonel Von Lossberg, he reportedly stated, 'The English gave little quarter to the enemy and encouraged our men to do the same thing.'⁴⁶⁶ Eelking also asserted that Rall's Regiment did no harm to their captured Americans at Long Island.⁴⁶⁷

Lowell, on the other hand, argued that the biggest factor that led to the American allegations of no quarter was that they did not understand the German language. Language barriers decreased the chances of Americans surrendering to the Germans and also caused misunderstandings that led to further violence after their capture.⁴⁶⁸ His book, *The Hessians and the other German auxiliaries of Great Britain in the Revolutionary War*, published in 1884, is often cited when referring to atrocities committed by German soldiers. Lowell based his book on archival research he conducted in Kassel, Marburg, and Waldeck, Germany, and provides accounts of the war from the German perspective. He also denounced Eelking's book as being 'marred with inaccuracies,' arguing that he did not thoroughly research his topic despite his connections and service in the Saxon-Meiningen military.⁴⁶⁹ In Lowell's account of the Battle of Long Island, he also quoted Colonel Von Heeringen, the commander of a

⁴⁶⁵ von Eelking, *The German Allied Troops*, p. 33, 35.

⁴⁶⁶ von Eelking, *The German Allied Troops*, p. 35.

⁴⁶⁷ von Eelking, *The German Allied Troops*, p. 36.

⁴⁶⁸ Edward J. Lowell, *The Hessians, and Other German Auxiliaries of Great Britain in the Revolutionary War* (Heritage Books Inc., 2008), p. 69.

⁴⁶⁹ Lowell, *The Hessians, and Other German Auxiliaries*, p. v.

Hessian regiment. When describing the aftermath of the battle after surveying the American fortifications, reportedly Heeringen stated:

The enemy had almost impenetrable thickets, lines, abattis, and redoubts in front of them. The riflemen were mostly spitted to the trees with bayonets. These frightful people deserve pity rather than fear. It always takes them a quarter of an hour to load, and meanwhile they feel our balls and bayonets.⁴⁷⁰

This quote appears in multiple secondary works to highlight German cruelty against surrendering American soldiers.⁴⁷¹ While historians use this quote to blame the German troops for these acts, it is also unclear who Heeringen is referring to as the perpetrator of these acts, leaving it open to different interpretations.

It was not until the late twentieth century that a historical monograph refuted the belief about German cruelty by providing evidence that these soldiers did not violate laws of war as their reputation claims. Rodney Atwood's book, *The Hessians*, published in 1980, provided a new look at the German auxiliary troops. Atwood argued that 'A balanced view of the Hessians has too long been frustrated on the one hand emotional issues, first of German nationalism, and then of 'blood money' and 'trade in human beings,' and on the other simply by ignorance of German conditions and source material.'⁴⁷² Atwood was one of the first historians to argue about the inaccuracy of the term 'mercenary' and also that the German soldiers did not commit any more violations of laws of war than the British soldiers.⁴⁷³ Furthermore, he blamed the British for buttressing an established fear of these troops by encouraging animosity and telling

⁴⁷⁰ Lowell, *The Hessians, and Other German Auxiliaries*, p. 66.

⁴⁷¹ For example, see: David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing* (Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 97. Baer references Colonel Heinrich Anton von Heeringen, but does not use this quote in her book; See: Baer, *Hessians*, p. 92.

⁴⁷² Atwood, *The Hessians*, p. 6.

⁴⁷³ Atwood, *The Hessians*, pp. 22-23, 171-183.

German troops to expect no quarter from the rebels.⁴⁷⁴ Overall, Atwood concluded that while there was evidence the Germans plundered, the atrocities alleged were untrue and exaggerated in the colonial newspapers.⁴⁷⁵

One thing for certain is that historians still feel compelled to defend the German troops as this legend continues to evolve. For example, Holger Hooch concluded in *Scars of Independence* that there is ‘little definitive evidence that the Hessians fought more brutally in that battle, or violated the codes of war more egregiously, than did British units.’⁴⁷⁶ Hooch argues that the American memory of atrocities during this war changed focus from the actions of the British regulars to the Germans during World War I. For example, in 1917, the movie *The Spirit of ‘76* depicted British soldiers killing women and children. Because of this depiction of British soldiers, the producer, Robert Goldstein, was charged with ‘inciting mutiny’ against the United States’ ally, Great Britain, under Woodrow Wilson’s Espionage Act. Goldstein received a ten-year sentence in prison, and the film was banned from release.⁴⁷⁷

Even when a book does not focus on war crimes committed by these German troops, historians defend them. For example, Andrew Roberts’ recent work, *The Last King of America* on George III, argues that the idea that the German troops behaved any more grievously or inhuman than the British or Americans ‘was nonsense,’ as they ‘did not fundamentally behave any differently.’⁴⁷⁸ Further, a defense is provided in the most recently published secondary source on the German auxiliaries, Friederike Baer’s *The*

⁴⁷⁴ Atwood, *The Hessians*, p. 60.

⁴⁷⁵ Atwood, *The Hessians*, p. 173.

⁴⁷⁶ Holger Hooch, *Scars of Independence* (Crown, 2017), p. 114.

⁴⁷⁷ Hooch, *Scars*, pp. 401-402.

⁴⁷⁸ Roberts, *The Last King*, p. 304.

Hessians. Baer's work provides the experience of the war through the eyes of the German troops. Baer provides evidence that the German soldiers were aware of their negative reputation and took pains to defend themselves and their honor. In all, Baer, similar to Atwood, argues that while there is ample evidence of German plundering, there is no evidence to support the allegations they killed or assaulted wounded Americans or civilians.⁴⁷⁹

One reason the legend of Hessian aggression still exists is perhaps because many recent works perpetuate this idea by recounting the few allegations made in diaries and journals of witnesses without providing any critical analysis of the reports. Some evidence suggests that when people read the same allegations repeatedly, the more they believe it is true.⁴⁸⁰ Examples of this phenomenon come from Edwin Burrow's research on American prisoners of war in *Forgotten Patriots*, David Hackett Fischer's popular book *Washington's Crossing*, and David McCullough's book *1776*. All three books, written within the past twenty years, arguably perpetuate this legend by repeating the one statement that German troops pinned Americans to the trees with their bayonets during the Battle of Long Island. Both Burrow and Fischer used Lowell's reference to Heeringen, who alleged that rebels were 'spitted to the trees.'⁴⁸¹ McCullough states that 'there were repeated stories of Hessians pinning Americans to trees with their bayonets' without citing multiple sources to support this statement. While he asserts that 'no mass

⁴⁷⁹ Baer, *Hessians*, p. 119; Baer cites a broadside titled, *The progress of the British and Hessian troops through New Jersey....*[Philadelphia?, 1776] & and the newspaper: *The Continental Journal*, 2 January 1777.

⁴⁸⁰ Also known as the Illusory Truth Effect. For a recent study on this effect, see: Aumyo Hassan and Sarah J. Barber, 'The Effects of Repetition Frequency on the Illusory Truth Effect,' *Cognitive Research: Principles and Implications*, 6.38 (2021), doi.org/10.1186/s41235-021-00301-5 .

⁴⁸¹ Edwin Burrows, *Forgotten Patriots: The Untold Story of American Prisoners During the Revolutionary War* (Perseus, 2010), p. 19; David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing* (Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 97.

atrocities were committed' by the Germans, he does claim that some accounts were reliable.⁴⁸² These are examples of works that serve to place these accusations back in historical memory with little dispute, thus keeping this narrative alive.⁴⁸³

First Contact - The Battle of Long Island

The Battle of Long Island was the first conflict that the American army faced German subsidy troops, and their fears manifested on the battleground. After months of anticipation over the pending arrival of these troops, whose cruel reputation superseded their first steps on American soil, the moment finally arrived when these two armies clashed. The fear and trepidation of the Germans, which the newspapers had a role in generating over the previous months, unfolded on the battlefield as American troops navigated their survival when it became clear they were on the losing side. Of the thousands of American troops that surrendered, some sought out British regular troops, as opposed to the Germans, over consternation that their chances of survival may diminish if they landed in the hands of the latter. On the other hand, the Germans' anger toward the Americans only increased exponentially after exposure to their irregular tactics, leading to some of the violence that the Americans reported after the fact. In many ways, the Battle of Long Island was a clash of military cultures as they made contact for the first time. However, the Americans' terrifying view of the German troops did not last through the year 1777. By the aftermath of the Battles of Trenton and

⁴⁸² David McCullough, *1776* (Simon & Schuster, 2005), p. 181; McCullough relies heavily on the Diary of Jabez Fitch, an American prisoner of war, who is discussed later in this chapter.

⁴⁸³ Burrows, *Forgotten Patriots*, pp. 19-20.

Princeton, attitudes started to shift as Americans realized that the Germans were not the monsters they originally thought.⁴⁸⁴

The Americans anticipated the British and German attack on Brooklyn and New York City for several months through news reports and warnings from American leadership. Warnings of the impending attack heightened already existing fears of the redcoats and now the German troops as well. For example, from his headquarters in New York City, on 17 August 1776, Washington released a letter to the local inhabitants alerting them of an imminent invasion by declaring the following:

Whereas a bombardment and attack upon the city of New-York, by our cruel, and inveterate enemy, may be hourly expected: And as there are great numbers of women, children, and infirm persons, yet remaining in the city, whose continuance will rather be prejudicial than advantageous to the army, and their persons exposed to great danger and hazard: I Do, therefore, recommend it to all such persons, as they value their own safety and preservation, to remove with all expedition, out of the said town, at this critical period, — trusting, that with blessings of Heaven, upon the American army, they may soon return to it in perfect security.⁴⁸⁵

This letter, which also circulated through newspapers, built upon the American propaganda campaign that painted the British regular army and the German mercenaries that supported them as inhumane and barbaric. Washington also advised the population that no one would be safe from the attack, including children, women, and the infirm.

On 21 August 1776, Howe made his first move when 10,000 British and Hessian troops embarked from Staten Island to the coast of Brooklyn, Long Island, at Gravesend Bay. This movement of Howe's troops to Long Island took several days. Lieutenant von Bardeleben of the von Donop brigade recalled in his diary that his unit and several other

⁴⁸⁴ Baer, *Hessians*, pp. 120-122.

⁴⁸⁵ 'By His Excellency George Washington,' *The Continental Journal*, 29 August 1776, p. 2.

Hessian brigades embarked on the 25th and encamped near the town of Flatbush.⁴⁸⁶

Waiting on the other side were the Americans, including Continental officer First Lieutenant Jabez Fitch, who recalls being notified that the British regulars landed on Long Island on 22 August.⁴⁸⁷ Small skirmishes broke out for several days as both sides observed each other's movements.

On 27 August, the British launched a surprise attack on the Americans' left flank at an unprotected area called Jamaica Pass in Brooklyn. After six hours of fighting, the Continental Army suffered an enormous defeat after the combined British and German forces completely routed the Americans.⁴⁸⁸ The number of combatants who fought in the Battle of Long Island was larger than any other battle during the War for American Independence. In one estimate, over 40,000 men fought on both sides in this conflict.⁴⁸⁹ Howe's reported losses included 59 killed, 267 wounded, and 31 missing. Washington, though unable to receive an accurate count right after the battle, reported to the Continental Congress that his losses were estimated between 700 to 1,000 killed, wounded, or taken prisoner.⁴⁹⁰ Even worse, the British now trapped the Americans between the British lines and the East River, which runs between Brooklyn and New York City. Across the East River, Washington's reinforcements waited, and if he did not make a move, it could mean the end of the revolutionary cause. But in what many historians call a miracle, over the night of 27 August, Washington evacuated the entire

⁴⁸⁶ *The Diary of Lieutenant von Bardeleben and Other von Donop Regimental Documents*, ed. and trans by Bruce E Burgoyne (Heritage Books, 2007), p. 54.

⁴⁸⁷ *The New-York Diary of Lieutenant Jabez Fitch*, ed. by William H.W. Sabine (The New York Times & Arno Press, 1954), p. 25.

⁴⁸⁸ Atkinson, *The British are Coming*, p. 366-371.

⁴⁸⁹ McCullough, *1776*, pp. 178-170; Rick Atkinson, *The British are Coming* (Henry Holt and Company, 2019), pp. 372-373.

⁴⁹⁰ McCullough, *1776*, pp. 179-180.

American army over the river to the relative safety of New York City. Thanks to support from the sailors and fishermen from Massachusetts, some fog, and Howe's decision not to continue the attack, the Continental Army stayed in the fight.⁴⁹¹

The Battle of Long Island was not only the first battle that the Germans fought, but it also yielded the first allegations against the German soldiers that they breached laws of war in their handling of prisoners of war. While the Americans also made allegations against others, such as the Scottish Highlanders, it was the allegations aimed at the German forces that remain prominent in the historical memory of the war to this day. However, unlike the previous two case studies, the newspapers did not report on these allegations. The most grievous allegations remembered today mostly came from accounts written by American prisoners of war and the diaries of British and German soldiers. These journals often cited secondary sources written after the war when referencing atrocious acts committed by the German and British forces overall. It is from these accounts that the lasting image of the German soldiers as savage and cruel formed.

One of the most often cited primary sources when referencing German breaches of laws of war is the diary and narrative of Lieutenant Fitch. Fitch, a Connecticut native and veteran of the Seven Years' War, was commissioned as a First Lieutenant in the 8th Connecticut Regiment in July 1775. On 27 August 1776, Fitch and his men surrendered to British soldiers from the 57th Regiment during the Battle of Long Island after being

⁴⁹¹ Atkinson, *The British are Coming*, p. 376-377; See: James Gabriel Montrésor and John Montrésor, *The Montresor Journals*, ed. by G. D. Scull (Printed for the Society, 1882), p. 122. Captain John Montresor, British Army Engineer, was the first to find out that the Americans had evacuated. Howe would testify to Parliament later that he assessed a frontal attack at that point would cause too many casualties due to his assessment of the number of American reinforcements lay in wait in New York City and the American robust defenses. Also see: Atkinson, *The British are Coming*, p. 374.

surrounded by the enemy. Fitch recalled in his narrative that, ‘I myself was so happy, as to fall at first into the hands of a party of this kind when taken prisoner; It was part of the 57th: Regt: who used me with some degree of Civility.’ Those Americans ‘who were so unfortunate’ to surrender to the Germans, however, were treated with ‘as much Insolence as their savage Capacities were capable of.’⁴⁹² Fitch spent the next year and a half as a prisoner of war until his exchange on 15 December 1777. What is most intriguing is that he wrote two versions of his time in captivity: a diary he kept with him and a narrative he mailed to his brother periodically undercover. Fitch’s diary was a sanitized version out of concern that his British guards may confiscate it and, therefore, did not contain as many details as his narrative. However, his narrative is where he alleged breaches of laws of war over the cruel treatment of the American prisoners of war.⁴⁹³

In his journal, Fitch explained that when he surrendered to the British regulars, they treated him with humanity. Although when they were marched past a battalion of ‘Hessians’ and ‘Highlanders,’ Fitch explained they received ‘many Insults from those Formidable Europeans.’ Fitch’s diary did not allege any maltreatment after he surrendered, aside from the insults they received from German and Highland officers. However, he wrote about stories he heard from other officers who surrendered to German troops. In these accounts, the Germans allegedly stripped and robbed the American prisoners of war of all their possessions.⁴⁹⁴ In all, these were the worst allegations Fitch revealed in his diary.

⁴⁹² *Diary of Lieutenant Jabez Fitch*, p. 137.

⁴⁹³ *Diary of Lieutenant Jabez Fitch*, pp. 9-21, 30-31.

⁴⁹⁴ *Diary of Lieutenant Jabez Fitch*, pp. 31, 63, 70.

While writing his diary, Fitch also wrote his 'narrative' that he periodically mailed through secret channels to his brother, as Howe's commissary of prisoners, Joshua Loring Jr., reviewed all official mail. Fitch's narrative contained the details of his experience that he thought best not to add to his diary for his own safety. In an entry written on 2 April 1777, he explained that while some regular officers treated them with the proper respect, others did not. The officers, who Fitch claimed treated them poorly, verbally threatened the prisoners by making a constant point 'to Remind us of the British laws against Rebellion, Treason &c.'⁴⁹⁵ Further, they turned a blind eye to many of the prisoners, 'who had been strip'd & abused by the Savages under their comd,' the 'savages' in this case being the German soldiers.⁴⁹⁶ Fitch made a point to provide the names in his narrative of those who treated him with civility and those who did not. For Fitch, the worst of his experiences during his confinement was that the British threatened them and referred to them as 'rebels,' however, overall, he did not endure brutal treatment.⁴⁹⁷

Fitch's time as a prisoner of war was relatively comfortable. As an officer, he was quartered in houses with families, could walk around freely, and had all the provisions he needed. However, it was the traumatic experience of the enlisted prisoners that Fitch recorded that also caught the attention of many historians over the years. The worst experiences were of those who surrendered to the Hessians. Fitch explained that the Germans treated those that fell into their hands 'with more Cruelty and Insolence than the Britains.'⁴⁹⁸ Reportedly, they subjected the Americans to physical abuse and

⁴⁹⁵ *Diary of Lieutenant Jabez Fitch*, p. 138.

⁴⁹⁶ *Diary of Lieutenant Jabez Fitch*, p. 138.

⁴⁹⁷ *Diary of Lieutenant Jabez Fitch*, p. 137.

⁴⁹⁸ *Diary of Lieutenant Jabez Fitch*, p. 142.

further humiliated them by striping and robbing the prisoners of all possessions.⁴⁹⁹

Furthermore, some unfortunate captives were murdered. Allegedly, the Germans' harsh treatment of Brigadier General Nathaniel Woodhull of the Suffolk and Queens County militia led to his death from wounds after being stabbed multiple times. Fitch also recorded the experience of soldier Jonathan Gillet, who reported that after surrendering to the Germans, they plundered all he had. According to Gillet, the Germans also physically assaulted him, stating they:

Abused me by bruising my flesh with the butts of their (guns. They knocked me down;) I got up and they (kept on) beating me almost all the way to their (camp).⁵⁰⁰

However, the story Fitch heard about a prisoner from the 17th Regiment named Sam Talman was the most horrifying. Reportedly, after the Germans stripped him of all his belongings, he 'was set up a small distance as a mark for them to shoot at for Diversion or practice.' Amazingly, Talman did not die after being used as target practice, but reportedly, he later starved to death.⁵⁰¹

The diaries of some German troops corroborated allegations that German soldiers physically abused American prisoners. One such diary is Ensign Johann Heinrich von Bardeleben of the Hesse-Cassel von Donop Regiment. Bardeleben's diary is interesting in that he used a code for select information that he entered into his diary. Bruce Burgoyne deciphered some of this code when translating his diary in 1998. In an entry on the day of the Battle of Long Island, on 27 August, Bardeleben wrote about the harsh treatment prisoners received at the hands of the Hessians. In code, he wrote,

⁴⁹⁹ *Diary of Lieutenant Jabez Fitch*, p. 142.

⁵⁰⁰ Henry R. Stiles, *Letters from the Prisons and Prison-Ships of the Revolution* (Privately Printed, 1865) pp. 7-15.

⁵⁰¹ *Diary of Lieutenant Jabez Fitch*, p. 143.

‘Many high ranking individuals at this time shed their ideas of being heroes,’ and, ‘The prisoners who knelt and sought to surrender were beaten.’⁵⁰² On the same day, Bardeleben wrote a story about Lieutenant General von Heister’s treatment of the prisoners. While he ensured the wounded received medical treatment, he also abused others. In many cases, he forced prisoners to ‘drink to the health of the King of England,’ and threatened that those who refused would be ‘shot dead on the spot.’ Bardeleben recounts how one prisoner refused to do so, explaining that as a school teacher, ‘he felt it was his duty of his position and had tried with all his efforts to instruct his students never to declare themselves for the King, he would gladly sacrifice his life and lose everything before he would change his sentiment.’⁵⁰³ After providing the schoolteacher’s response, Bardeleben wrote more in code, but Burgoyne could not translate it. In the end, no one knows the fate of the schoolteacher.⁵⁰⁴

One allegation often recounted in secondary sources since the war was that German soldiers stabbed and killed prisoners with their bayonets soon after they surrendered. These allegations came from two primary sources. As referred to earlier in this chapter, one is a quote from Colonel von Heeringen, who stated that riflemen ‘were mostly spitted to the trees with bayonets.’⁵⁰⁵ The first publication to use this quote was Lowell’s book, *The Hessians*. However, the original source is unknown as there are no citations in Lowell’s book. Despite this lack of ability to pinpoint the source, many secondary sources cite Heeringen’s quote through Lowell’s book. Another commonly used source is from an unknown British officer’s letter published in the *Massachusetts*

⁵⁰² *The Diary of Lieutenant von Bardeleben*, p. 56.

⁵⁰³ *The Diary of Lieutenant von Bardeleben*, p. 57.

⁵⁰⁴ *The Diary of Lieutenant von Bardeleben*, p. 57.

⁵⁰⁵ Lowell, *The Hessians, and Other German Auxiliaries*, pp. 65-67.

Spy, a Patriot-leaning paper. In it, the officer bragged that ‘The Hessians and our brave Highlanders gave no quarter, and it was a fine site to see with what alacrity they dispatched the Rebels with their bayonets after we had surrounded them so that they could not resist.’⁵⁰⁶ The letter goes on to explain, ‘We took care to tell the Hessians that the Rebels had resolved to give no quarters to them in particular, which made them fight desperately, and put all to death that fell into their hands.’⁵⁰⁷ This newspaper article is cited in Peter Force’s, *American Archives*, published in 1837, of which Force makes a comment that the article was not a forgery because it was taken from an English newspaper.⁵⁰⁸ However, in a keyword search of both the British Library’s *British Newspaper* database, the *London Gazette* archive, and *America’s Historical Newspapers* for the year 1776, no such article exists. The reliability of both sources is questionable, given the uncertainty of their origin.

Lieutenant Fredrick Mackenzie of the 23rd Regiment of Royal Welch Fusiliers provides a British perspective and corroborates the stories of German aggression in his diary. In his entry on 15 September 1776, he provides an account of the British landing at Kip’s Bay in New York City from Brooklyn, right before the British occupied Manhattan. Mackenzie reported soon after they disembarked that an American rifleman killed two German soldiers. As retaliation, Mackenzie explained that the Americans ‘Paid dearly for this, as did some others who came forward soon after, with an intention of surrendering themselves, as the Hessians killed about 60 of them, and took a few

⁵⁰⁶ Washington D.C., LOC, Peter Force, *American Archives*, 5th Series, vol. 1, 1259-1260.

⁵⁰⁷ Washington D.C., LOC, Peter Force, *American Archives*, 5th Series, vol. 1, 1260.

⁵⁰⁸ Washington D.C., LOC, Peter Force, *American Archives*, 5th Series, vol. 1, 1260.

prisoners.⁵⁰⁹ This example demonstrates the frustration often cited that the Germans and British had over the tactics used by the American riflemen that they claim led to violations of laws of war.

Serle also documented incidents involving the German troops. In his letters to Dartmouth and his diary, he often wrote about his frustration with the ‘Hessians’ as many reports surfaced that they incessantly plundered civilians. Serle was not a proponent of using foreigners to fight British wars, and he also expressed his opinion in his diary. Two days before the Battle of Long Island, Serle wrote his thoughts on the Germans in his diary:

Early this Morning the main Body of the Hessians passed over in Flat Boats from Staten to Long Island. They left enough behind them for the Defence of the Island. I was very sorry to be informed (I think by Ld Dunmore) that these People had committed already several Depredations, and even upon the Friends of the Government. If a private Individual may be allowed to wish any thing in public Measures, I should have rejoiced if the Rebellion could have been reduced without Foreign Troops at all; for I fear our Employment of these upon this Service will tend to irritate and inflame the American infinitely more than two or three British Armies upon such an Occasion....But perhaps there was no Alternative, which alone renders the Measure excusable.⁵¹⁰

In the aftermath of the Battle of Long Island, Serle not only received complaints about the German troops but observed the destruction they reportedly committed in his travels around Long Island and Manhattan. ‘It is impossible to express the Devastations,’ Serle wrote on 1 September, ‘which the Hessians have made upon the Houses & Country Seats of some of the Rebels.’⁵¹¹ They pillaged and then destroyed entire houses, making them inhabitable. A few weeks later, Serle reported that ‘Sad

⁵⁰⁹ Fredrick Mackenzie, *Diary of Fredrick Mackenzie*, ed. by Allen French, 2 vols (Harvard University Press, 1930), I, p. 48.

⁵¹⁰ Serle, *American Journal*, p. 77.

⁵¹¹ Serle, *American Journal*, p. 85.

complaints are made of the Hessians, who plunder all men, Friends of the Government as well as Foes, indiscriminately.’ Clearly concerned about the damage these foreign troops did to the British cause by harming those loyal to the Crown, Serle complained to Dartmouth. In a letter written in November 1776, he reported that the German common soldiers hoped to gain their fortune in this war by plundering inhabitants. Further, those dreams of plunder had ‘stimulated them to such a Degree, as by no means inclines them to show Tenderness and Mercy.’⁵¹² In closing, Serle expressed the expectation that the example of the British troops would prevent some of this behavior in the future.

Overall, Serle’s main complaints against the German soldiers focused on plundering, and he did not allege they abused or killed any American prisoners. In his diary on 29 August 1777, he stated that the ‘The Hessians are more infamous & cruel than any,’ but did not provide any additional details.⁵¹³ Further, ‘It is a misfortune, we ever had such a dirty, cowardly Set of contemptable miscreants.’⁵¹⁴ Although the editor noted here that Serle erased part of his statement, Serle never blamed Germans for the most grievous offenses against the American prisoners of war.

Serle did, however, highlight the ‘Highlanders’ as the worst offenders in a letter to Dartmouth on 20 March 1777. While explaining what he believed to be the root cause of excessive violence against the American troops, Serle points to the Scottish Highlander troops:

Their firing from behind Walls and Hedges has so much exasperated the Soldiers, that when they come up with such People, they give them no Quarter, and, tis believed, that in future Conflicts it will be difficult to make them give any. In an Attack lately made by the Highlanders, they

⁵¹² ‘Ambrose Serle to Lord Dartmouth, Nov. 26, 1776,’ *Facsimiles of Manuscripts in European Archives Relating to America, 1773-1783*, ed. B. F. Stevens (n. p., 1895), xxiv, fol. 2042, p. 225.

⁵¹³ Serle, *American Journal*, p. 246.

⁵¹⁴ Serle, *American Journal*, p. 246.

put to the Bayonet above 300 Men, and took no prisoners. Tis truly shocking to hear what often passes on both sides, and the Notion of Humanity and Kindred Blood begins to wear away.⁵¹⁵

Serle echoed the common theme that the Americans' unconventional warfare triggered rage and anger, which led to breaches in laws of war committed by the British troops. This is the same complaint made by British soldiers in letters to friends and family that the newspapers published after Lexington and Concord.⁵¹⁶

The Newspaper Response

Despite the long-term damage to the German soldier's reputation caused by the allegations that emerged after the battles around New York City, the newspaper reports immediately after the battle yielded very few allegations other than accusations of plunder. In fact, the focus of the newspaper reports during the first two months after the Battle of Long Island centered around German desertion from their military service.

The first reports on the battle surfaced the day of the conflict when the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* reported that British and German troops landed on Long Island from Staten Island. Similar to the aftermath of Lexington and Concord, the news published immediately after the battle yielded no allegations and minimal details on the conflict. It was not until October that articles alleging German plundering emerged. For example, one article printed in Alexander Purdie's *Virginia Gazette* stated the Germans 'greatly disgust the British troops' and that 'These foreigners say, they will plunder

⁵¹⁵ 'Ambrose Serle to Lord Dartmouth, Nov. 26, 1776,' *Facsimiles*, xxiv, fol. 2052, p. 311.

⁵¹⁶ See Chapter One, pp. 64-65; This allegation also surfaced during the Americans' attempted siege of Quebec as reported by Captain Thomas Ainslie, see: Gavin Watt, *Poisoned by Lies and Hypocrisy: America's First Attempt to Bring Liberty to Canada, 1775-1776* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2014), p. 108.

every thing before them, and have even insisted on transports to carry over their stolen cattle and other plunder to their families.’⁵¹⁷ Further, in the papers on 24 and 25 October, there appeared a letter from a ‘gentleman’ from Harlem, New York, who alleged:

The Hessians plunder all indiscriminately, Tories as well as Whigs; if they see any thing they want, they seize it, and say, ‘Rebel, good for Hesse man.’ A Tory complained to Gen. Howe that he was plundered by the Hessians; The general said he could not help it, it was their way of making war.⁵¹⁸

In all, the allegations of Hessian plundering were minimal and did not circulate through all the papers in the first two months after the conflict in Brooklyn.

Aside from plundering, the only other allegation that British or German troops breached laws of war within the first two months of the battle was from Boston’s *Continental Journal* on 19 September. Here, the newspaper published a letter from Boston giving an account of the recent actions on Long Island and an exchange between two officers over allegations the British breached laws of war. The writer explained that after the Americans evacuated to New York City, a few regiments remained on Governors Island, a small island between the city and Brooklyn. After cannonading the island, the British sent over a message delivered by a Colonel with a flag of truce demanding the Americans surrender the island. During the discussion between the two officers, an American Major ‘told the Col. that he had violated an inviolable custom amongst civiliz’d warriors, by firing upon them, when the flag of truce lay off. This was really a fact, for Gen. Sullivan had just come up with a flag.’ The British Colonel responded that ‘upon his honour’ knew nothing of the flag and the incident.⁵¹⁹ This

⁵¹⁷ ‘Extract of a letter from Philadelphia,’ *The Virginia Gazette*, 11 October 1776, p. 2.

⁵¹⁸ ‘Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman at Harlem,’ *The Independent Chronicle*, 24 October 1776, p. 3;

‘Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman at Harlem,’ *The Essex Journal*, 25 October 1776, p. 3.

⁵¹⁹ ‘Boston, September 19,’ *The Continental Journal*, 19 September 1776, p. 4.

article alleging that the British fired on surrendering American troops received very little coverage as it did not appear in any other of the newspapers reviewed in this case study. Despite the news reports provoking fear among the German troops before the battle, in the first two months after the Battle of Long Island, there were few allegations made in the papers that supported these claims.

The dominant items of focus related to the German troops in the newspapers during the months of August and September 1776 pertained to reports of desertion. On 27 August, the day of the battle in Brooklyn, *The Pennsylvania Packet* reported the following:

We learn further, that the German troops on Staten Island are much dissatisfied with their present service, and wish for a favourable opportunity of laying down their arms. Two or three of them it is said have been executed on the island for refusing to do duty in the present impious war.⁵²⁰

And in another article circulating at the same time, the writer announced:

Great numbers of the Germans desert daily, and are anxiously concealed by the inhabitants; 70 Brunswickers disappeared in one day. Their officers are so much afraid of bush-fighting, and ambushes, that they will not head any parties to pursue the runaways. The men have the same fears, which prevents them from deserting in so great numbers as it is supposed they will, when once our fleet shall appear cruising on the lake to receive and protect them.⁵²¹

In *The Providence Gazette* on 31 August, in an article published on the front page was a letter from a 'Hessian soldier, going to America.' In this letter to his friend, he expressed his intention of deserting and settling in America. The soldier wrote:

We are all coming to England, and shall be happy if I have an opportunity of coming to London to see you; if not, you will do me a particular

⁵²⁰ 'Philadelphia, August 27,' *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 27 August 1776, p. 2.

⁵²¹ 'Extract of a letter from Philadelphia,' *The Virginia Gazette*, 30 August 1776, p. 3.

pleasure if you will come down to the port, where we shall lay till we embark for America; for most probably I shall never have another opportunity of seeing you again, as I intend to reside in America; and many hundreds of my countrymen have resolved to do the same, having taken leave of their country and friends forever.⁵²²

The article then turned to a critique of the British administration's decision to hire foreign troops and criticized the total cost of deploying them to America. The article further admonished that, 'Our wise administration will pay dear for their hired troops, as by stipulation, with the Landgrave of Hesse and the other German princes, we are to pay 30£ for every man who shall not return.'⁵²³ This article referred to the agreement in the treaties that the British consented to compensate the Landgraves for each soldier who did not return, presumably due to death, and a lesser sum for those who returned with a disability. The Patriot-leaning press used these articles to undermine the ministries' decision to employ German troops by highlighting the costs involved. Despite the allegations of plunder reported by the revolutionary press, articles such as these suggest the Patriots also moved to blame the German Landgraves. Blaming the princes and not the German soldiers who perhaps plundered because of inadequate pay implied that the German princes were the real mercenaries.⁵²⁴

Shifting Attitudes

⁵²² 'London, May 6,' *The Providence Gazette*, 31 August 1776, p. 1.

⁵²³ 'London, May 6,' *The Providence Gazette*, 31 August 1776, p. 1.

⁵²⁴ There is some evidence that the amount of plunder by the Germans was due to insufficient pay, see: Krebs, *A Generous and Merciful Enemy*, p. 246. Some in European society viewed the Germans as victims of their greedy princes, see: Krebs, *A Generous and Merciful Enemy*, pp. 26-32. Furthermore, plunder was also customary and seen as 'spoils of war' and, at times, bordered on legitimate attempts to forage, see Atwood, *The Hessians*, pp. 174-175; Baer, *Hessians*, pp. 116-119.

In early 1777, there occurred a shift in attitudes and perceptions from all sides. For the Americans, their animus towards the German troops slowly turned to empathy and pity. This was a surprising turn of events, given the propaganda campaign launched before the Germans' arrival. Furthermore, Americans now targeted the British regular troops as the main perpetrators of any atrocities committed. During this time, an increasing number of newspaper articles emerged accusing the British and Germans of breaching laws of war, while the Continental Congress initiated another investigation. Gradually, however, the allegations turned less towards the Germans and refocused on the British regulars. As for the British, a different type of shift occurred. As the Patriots continued to launch allegations against the British, this triggered a need to take more measures to control colonial newspapers. As a result, the British stepped up their propaganda efforts, using the newspapers from the newly occupied territory of New York City.

The shift in attitudes by the Americans did not occur until 1777 after the British succeeded in driving the Americans out of New York and New Jersey. For several months after the British victory at Long Island on 27 August 1776, Washington's army suffered multiple defeats, which almost ended the revolutionaries' efforts. From September to December 1776, the British succeeded in pushing the Continental Army out of Long Island and Manhattan, north to White Plains, across the Hudson River, south through New Jersey, then across the Delaware River to the relative safety of Pennsylvania. Arguably, during this time, Washington and the Continental Congress were in survival mode and unable to focus on much else. The newspaper articles reflect this, as very few reports emerged that continued the revolutionary tradition of focusing

the public's attention on the reportedly grievous acts committed by the British. However, this changed after Washington surprised the British with his stunning victories at Trenton on 26 December 1776 and then Princeton on 3 January 1777. It was not long after these battles that Patriot leaders began another campaign to obtain information on dishonorable British and German conduct, especially around the treatment of prisoners of war. As the dust settled from the previous months, Congress and Washington began their investigation into the conduct of British and German troops.

At the same time, public perception of the German soldiers also changed due to the thousands that Washington took captive after the battles at Trenton and Princeton. From Trenton alone, the Americans took captive approximately 848 Hessen-Kassel troops.⁵²⁵ On 30 December 1776, Washington paraded these prisoners through the streets of Philadelphia as a show of strength that the American army was still alive and well. Prisoners reported the humiliations as observers pushed and shoved them, shouted insults, and threw dirt at them as they made their way to their barracks.⁵²⁶ The result, however, was that the fear and anger of these German soldiers turned into pity. In *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* on 7 January, for example, the paper published a letter from an observer of the parade of German captives. The writer explained:

I have just been with the curious multitude to view General Washington's thousand captives, the mighty children of Hess, in which my great expectation was never more disappointed. I had been told they were mere Sampsons for strength of body, and of Patagonian stature; but on sight they proved quite the contrary, meer pigmies in comparison, of a sickly sallow hue creeping half starved animals with legible marks of abject slavery painted in their wan countenances. Crazy Neddy looks like a prince to them. O, Heavens! Exclaimed I, are these the Orangotangs which the King of Britain has employed to enslave the free born sons of

⁵²⁵ Krebs, *A Generous and Merciful Enemy*, p. 78.

⁵²⁶ Krebs, *A Generous and Merciful Enemy*, p. 78.

America, and reduce them so the same abject and ignoble condition with themselves?⁵²⁷

Another observer of the parade commented that the prisoners had with them a number of women and children, stating, ‘The wretched condition of these unhappy men, most of whom were dragged from their wives and families by a despotic and avaricious prince.’⁵²⁸ As these reports show, the public no longer feared the German soldiers.

News of the Congressional investigation into allegations of brutal treatment by British and German soldiers also circulated during January and February. On 23 January, the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* reported that on 16 January 1777, the Continental Congress launched its investigation. The Congress resolved:

That a committee of seven be appointed to enquire into the conduct of the British and Hessian generals and officers towards the officers, soldiers and mariners in the service of the United States, and any other persons, in habitants of these States, in their possession, as prisoners of war, or otherwise.⁵²⁹

Congress also directed Washington to negotiate with Howe to allow the United States to appoint a delegate to ensure that American prisoners received essential items needed to survive.⁵³⁰ Washington also ordered his troops to provide depositions on British and German conduct to send to Congress and the newspapers.⁵³¹

Perhaps in a strategic move to demonstrate, once again, who held the moral high ground, Washington also sent out several orders at this time ‘strictly forbidding’

⁵²⁷ ‘Philadelphia, January 4, 1777,’ *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 7 January 1777, p. 1.

⁵²⁸ ‘Philadelphia, January 4,’ *The Essex Journal*, 30 January 1777, p. 1.

⁵²⁹ ‘In Congress, January 16, 1777,’ *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 23 January 1777, p. 5 (supplement); *JCC*, 34 vols, ed. by Worthington Chauncey Ford (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1904-1937), VII, pp. 42-43.

⁵³⁰ *JCC*, VII, pp. 42-43.

⁵³¹ ‘From George Washington to Samuel Chase, 5 February 1777,’ in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-08-02-0265>> [accessed 25 March 2024].

American soldiers from plundering inhabitants whether they were ‘Tories or other.’⁵³² This order circulated through the news along with the reports on the investigation into the British and German troops. Washington did not make this move purely for propaganda reasons, as the American army also dealt with disciplinary issues related to plunder. German Captain Andreas Wiederhold, for example, recalled in his diary when Washington required American soldiers to return their swords after they plundered the location they encamped before the Battle of Trenton. His diary also portrays how Washington made efforts to show compassion to the German troops, which was perhaps deliberate. Wiederhold recounted when Washington took time to converse with the German officers, and he received praise from the American Commander in Chief for demonstrating skill as an excellent officer. Washington then offered ‘free access’ to him whenever needed. Washington’s motives for this show of kindness may have been out of hope that the most capable German officers would defect to the Americans, given that the Continental Congress made known their intent to recruit these soldiers.⁵³³

In February 1777, the news started to target British soldiers as the main perpetrators of cruelty towards prisoners, moving attention away from the Germans. For example, one lengthy article that circulated provided an account of the brutality British soldiers subjected to American prisoners in New York. Immediately after their captivity, the British allegedly robbed the Americans of all their possessions. They took some prisoners aboard ships and forced them into the hold with very little fresh air. They held other prisoners in churches with no fire for heat nor adequate clothing. ‘It seems, no

⁵³² ‘His Excellency General Washington,’ *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 14 January 1777, p. 4.

⁵³³ *Defeat, Disaster, and Dedication*, pp. 76-78. Weiderhold’s diary ends in 1780 when they arrive in New York City after finally being exchanged. It is unknown if he returned to Germany.

bound to their cruelty,' the writer complained, as the British deprived all the prisoners of food and water. British officers also threw insults at the captives and threatened to hang them. For example, in one case, 'they ordered a number to choose each man his halter, out of a parcel officered, wherewith to be hanged.' Many of the captives succumbed to illness, including smallpox, an epidemic made worse by being crowded into close confinement with no help from a physician. To this end, the writer reported that hundreds died in captivity, and of those still alive, 'their constitutions are broken.'⁵³⁴

Following the same pattern seen in the previous chapters, the newspaper articles also highlighted the humane treatment both British and German prisoners received at the hands of the Americans. Reportedly, not only did the Americans allow their prisoners to move about freely, but they also received generous treatment and provided all the necessities to live. The writer declared:

This teaches us what spirit our enemies are of, and what we are to expect from them, if we either submit to be taken, or to be pardoned by them. For cruelty runs thro' a man's whole conduct, and he that is so cruel in one part of his conduct, will be cruel throughout.⁵³⁵

In these narratives about the ill-treatment of American prisoners, there was not one mention of any German troops as the perpetrators. These articles specifically pointed to British officers as the main culprits.

Another article that targeted the British regular troops also circulated in February 1777 and accused British redcoats of murdering wounded American troops. The anonymous writer reported in *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* on 25 February that 'Mr. Kelly, a brave officer in my brigade, and five other Virginians slightly wounded in the

⁵³⁴ 'From the New-Haven News-Paper of Jan 30,' *The Connecticut Gazette*, 28 February 1777, p. 1.

⁵³⁵ 'From the New-Haven News-Paper of Jan 30,' *The Connecticut Gazette*, 28 February 1777, p. 1.

muscular parts, were murdered, had their bodies mangled, and their brains beat out.’ It was not the German troops who committed these acts, but the ‘troops of his Britannic Majesty.’ Their commander, Sir William Erskine, was the recipient of the letter. The writer then brought forth memories of the Seven Years’ War, alleging that General Braddock’s wounded soldiers received better treatment by the French and Indigenous troops that defeated them than the Americans were currently at the hands of the British. Similar to the previous article, the writer then proclaimed that Americans treated the British wounded and prisoners with humanity to emphasize to the reader who held the moral high ground.

In the same article, the publisher provided Erskine’s brief response, which mirrors complaints made by the British in the previous case studies. In all, Erskine denied the allegations, but with one caveat. He explained:

I may mention that it is not to be wondered at if our soldiers are a little exasperated, considering the many cruelties that have been of late committed on them, and their officers, even unarmed, passing singly from quarter to quarter.⁵³⁶

This statement referenced the American rifleman’s tactic of sniping British officers while hidden behind cover such as trees and rocks. After Lexington and Concord, the British launched the same complaint about the Americans’ unconventional tactics, which triggered their firm response that ultimately led to allegations that the British troops breached laws of war.

⁵³⁶ ‘A copy of a letter sent to Sir William Erskine,’ *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 25 February 1777, p. 2.

Washington, it seems, also held the opinion that British forces were responsible for maltreatment towards the American forces and not the German auxiliary troops. In a letter to Samuel Chase on 5 February 1777, Washington stated:

One thing I must remark in favor of the Hessians, and that is, that our people who have been prisoners generally agree that they received much kinder treatment from them, than from the British Officers and Soldiers.⁵³⁷

Washington based this judgment on the testimonies he received from his men. For example, Lieutenants Yates and Kelly, who died of wounds they received from British regulars after they surrendered, attested before they passed away that British officers gave orders not to provide quarter. Moreover, Washington alleged that Howe had knowledge of the allegations, and while he disapproved, he also denied any responsibility for what occurred.⁵³⁸ However, it is hard to know Washington's thoughts and motives, as the hopes of German desertion conceivably influenced his opinion. It is certain, however, that in early 1777, the newspaper propaganda strategy shifted away from the German troops and now focused on the British regular troops as the main perpetrators of violating laws of war.

The Patriot allegations the British breached laws of war not only triggered a need for more efforts in controlling the newspapers, the primary means the public became aware of the accusations, but also forced a response to allegations once again from British leadership at all levels. The most immediate response to the Patriot propaganda

⁵³⁷ 'From George Washington to Samuel Chase, 5 February 1777,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-09-02-0268>> [accessed 2 May 2020].

⁵³⁸ 'From George Washington to Samuel Chase, 5 February 1777,' in *Founders Online* <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-08-02-0265> [accessed 2 May 2020]. Howe was torn about the conflict in America and favored a conciliatory approach towards the American colonists as the best strategy to win the war. See: Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution and the Fate of the Empire* (Yale University Press, 2013), pp. 112-116.

in the newspapers that occurred after the Battle of Long Island was an effort led by Serle to control the narrative. It was in British-occupied New York City that this campaign started, as this location was now British territory after their victory on 22 August and subsequent occupation of the city five days later. Serle, who made multiple complaints about the fake news coming from the Patriot-leaning newspapers to Dartmouth, finally got a chance to do something about it. In his updates to Dartmouth, Serle argued that the British government should take more measures to ‘employ this popular Engine.’

Furthermore, he boasted:

Ever since the Press here has been under my Direction (from the 30th of Sept) I have seen sufficient Reason to confirm this Opinion, and have had all the Pleasure to hear, that the Papers, which have been circulated extensively as possible, have been attended with the most promising Effects.⁵³⁹

Serle truly believed that any funds used to take these measures were undoubtedly worth the costs.

On 30 September 1776, Serle took over the management of the *New York Gazette* after its publisher, Hugh Gaine, fled to Newark, New Jersey, to escape British occupation. Serle recorded in his diary his negotiations with the Governor of New York, William Tryon, and also Gaine himself, ‘To settle the Publication of a New paper.’⁵⁴⁰ Soon after, Serle took over with the charge to turn the previously revolutionary-leaning *Gazette* into a Loyalist publication. For the first few months of Serle’s endeavor, two versions of the *New York Gazette* existed that claimed the same publisher. There was Serle’s version, which still noted Gaine as the publisher and continued circulation from New York City, and also Gaine’s new publication that he housed in Newark, New

⁵³⁹ ‘Ambrose Serle to Lord Dartmouth, Nov. 26, 1776,’ *Facsimiles*, xxiv, fol. 2046, pp. 265-266.

⁵⁴⁰ Serle, *American Journal*, p. 114.

Jersey.⁵⁴¹ Ultimately, Gaine returned to New York City in November 1776 and switched loyalties to the Crown, a decision made more for financial interests than principles.⁵⁴²

Upon his return, Gaine resumed duties as sole publisher for *The Gazette*. While it is unclear how much oversight of the paper Serle maintained after Gaine's return, both men maintained a professional relationship for the two years Serle served in America.

Serle's efforts to boost British propaganda included writing essays that Gaine published in his paper under the pseudonym *Integer*. As expected, Serle wrote anti-Patriot pieces to counter the false news he claimed the revolutionaries published in the papers, hoping to sway those taking a neutral stance into supporting the British cause. For example, in one piece that Gaine published on the front page of *The Gazette* on 10 February 1777, he criticized the Continental Congress over the enormous amount of funds they needed to raise in order to start their own government. An essay akin to the Patriot news article highlighted earlier in this chapter on the costs the Crown agreed on to hire German auxiliaries. In Serle's opinion piece, he argued that Congress could not raise the millions needed unless they taxed the people, contradicting the main reason for the revolution. According to Serle, no country could safely exist and thrive without raising taxes.⁵⁴³

Gaine often brought concerning news stories to Serle's attention that he thought important not only for Serle to see but also for his employer, Howe. For example, Gaine warned Serle about a report in early 1777 that American leadership was attempting to

⁵⁴¹ Robert Parkinson, *The Common Cause* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2016), pp. 684-685. For the two versions of the Gazette, see: *The New York Gazette*, 30 September 1776 (NYC) and *The New York Gazette*, 28 September 1776 (Newark). For more on Hugh Gaine see Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 318-319, 685.

⁵⁴² Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 684-685.

⁵⁴³ 'To the Printer,' *The New York Gazette*, 10 February 1777, p. 1, Serle, *American Journal*, p. 185.

disgrace the British army, once again, by alleging breaches of laws of war. In his diary, on 17 January 1777, Serle explained:

Govr. Tryon called upon & sate with me in the Evening. We had a Variety of Discourse upon the Plundering made by our Troops, which we lamented & which the Govr. [Tryon] yesterday represented the ill Consequences of to the General [Howe]...Gaine, the Printer, brought me several Publications of the Rebels, which shewed that they were endeavoring to turn the blameable Conduct of our Troops to their own Account; which I immediately sent to Lord Howe.⁵⁴⁴

Despite Serle's belief that the German troops were to blame for the majority of the plunder allegations, it became clear at this point that the Americans now focused their allegations on the British military. Over the course of the next month, Serle would see the reports turn from plunder allegations to the mistreatment and other grievous acts committed against American prisoners of war.

As with the Cedars incident, the American leadership eventually demanded answers from Howe. In a letter Washington sent to Howe on 13 January 1777, he enclosed a deathbed affidavit from Lieutenant Bartholomew Yates recounting his treatment after being taken captive at the Battle of Princeton. In his account, Yates reported that the British beat and stabbed him multiple times after he surrendered to British regulars and begged for quarter. Washington also claimed that British officers in his custody received significantly better treatment than the American prisoners.

Washington proposed:

I would beg that some certain Rule of Conduct towards prisoners may be settled, if you are determined to make Captivity as distressing as possible to those whose lot it is to fall into it, let me know it that we may be upon equal terms For your Conduct must and shall mark mine.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴⁴ Serle, *American Journal*, p. 176.

⁵⁴⁵ 'From George Washington to General William Howe, 13 January 1777,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-08-02-0063>> [accessed 15 August 2023].

Howe responded a week later, asserting that Washington's threats for retaliation were not necessary and promised that 'During the Course of my Command, you will not have just Cause to accuse me of Inhumanity, Prejudice or Passion.' In regard to Yates's testimony, Howe denied the cruel acts occurred and declared that 'the Officers under my Command are equally inclined to discourage such Behavior, and to prevent it in every possible Degree.' However, Howe added one caveat, 'but the Heat of Action will sometimes produce Instances that are only to be lamented.'⁵⁴⁶ A very similar response to Gage's when called on to answer to allegations the British regulars violated laws of war after Lexington and Concord.

It was not just Howe who had to answer to the allegations, but the British Prime Minister as well. Debates over the treatment of American troops occurred in Parliament soon after the Battle of Long Island. In one case, North had to answer to other members of Parliament in November 1776. In a debate published in the *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, Thomas Townsend, who did not support the war in America, alleged that British forces killed Americans in 'cold-blood.' Townsend 'spoke of the slaughter of the Provincials,' and that this was 'an act of the most savage barbarity.'⁵⁴⁷ In response:

His Lordship denied that our troops, or those employed by us, had massacred any of the rebels in cold blood, and particularly cleared the Hessians from the aspersion, proving that four hundred and fifty of the prisoners were taken by the Hessians. His Lordship said, that in the heat of battle some of the rebels might first fire, then run and cry out quarter; that some of these might possibly have been put to the bayonet, but, he conceived, no man would throw out a general censure on account of a particular accident.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁶ 'From George Washington to General William Howe, 13 January 1777,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-08-02-0063>> [accessed 15 August 2023].

⁵⁴⁷ 'Debates in the House of Commons,' *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 15 February 1777, p. 1.

⁵⁴⁸ 'Debates in the House of Commons,' *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 15 February 1777, p. 1.

Similar to the defense provided by Gage and Howe, North countered Townsend's attack, professing that during 'the heat of the battle,' unintended deaths occurred.

Conclusion

The battles in New York and New Jersey from August 1776 to January 1777 introduced German soldiers into the war, who became the focus of public attention throughout 1776 and into 1777. Using newspapers as the means, the revolutionaries shaped the American public's perceptions by reinforcing a preexisting fear of the German troops before they even stepped foot in the colonies by drawing on the longer history of antipathy to German mercenaries. The news reports detailing the German subsidy contracts and their impending arrival, along with those depicting cruelties committed by mercenary soldiers in wars past, intended to precipitate public anger and trepidation. However, at the same time, the Continental Congress planned ways to entice Germans to desert and join the revolutionary cause. The Battle of Long Island was the first contact between the American and German soldiers, and it was a culture shock for both. Intense fear of the German troops the American soldiers initially held drove them to avoid contact with the Germans at all costs. For the Germans, their frustration over the Americans' irregular tactics only increased their anger towards the rebels and likely triggered more aggressive treatment of prisoners of war when they did make contact. Ultimately, the diaries and journals written after the fact yielded these abuse allegations against the Germans. However, in this case, allegations against the Germans did not arise in the newspapers immediately after this conflict. After the battle started, the focus

of the news turned to German allegations of plunder and speculation that many would desert.

Despite the American propaganda campaign, the negative view of the German troops did not last through 1777. With the American victory at Trenton and Princeton, which led to thousands of German prisoners of war, the view of these soldiers changed from fear to pity. It was at this time that the focus of the American allegations turned towards the British regulars, and not the Germans, and the Americans launched another investigation alleging the British breached laws of war. Although the allegations targeting the Germans that emerged in the diaries and letters of witnesses after the fact and not at the time of the battle ended up cementing the German reputation for cruelty until this day. While little evidence exists to support the reputation that the revolutionaries painted before their arrival, nor that they collectively breached laws of war, historians to this day feel compelled to continuously refute this legend of German cruelty as it remains fixed in American historical memory.

For the British, this period also reflected shifting views on their handling of newspaper propaganda. Now that they occupied New York City, they also had control of the news leaving from this major city as well – and they used this in their favor. During this period, for the first time, British leadership made concerted efforts to control the narrative and the press in British-occupied New York. Heading this initiative was Serle, who advocated for such measures since arriving in New York. Serle complained of the massive amount of fake news coming from the Patriot papers in his diary and also in his letters to Dartmouth. Although both Howe and Washington accused each other's armies of mistreating and abusing prisoners of war, it was the reports on the British actions and

response that dominated the news. Evident by Serle's journal, it was through these Patriot-leaning news stories that leaders, such as Howe, learned of a renewed propaganda effort by the Americans to accuse the British of breaching laws of war and show who was the most ethical military. These allegations also touched the highest levels of leadership within the British government when the Prime Minister also had to answer to them in Parliament. Despite efforts from British leadership, like Serle, to gain control of the news coming from British-occupied New York, by the end of the period of this case study, the revolutionaries still held the upper hand in the information war.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁹ For an example of Howe accusing Washington of mistreating his troops, see: 'To George Washington From Lieutenant General William Howe, 11 November 1776,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-07-02-0103>> [accessed 10 August 2023].

Chapter Four: The ‘no flint General’ and the Paoli and Baylor Massacres

Introduction

On Thursday, 29 October 1778, *The Pennsylvania Packet* published testimonies from twenty-one American troopers from Colonel George Baylor’s 3rd Regiment of Continental Light Dragoons. These testimonies alleged that a British light infantry unit, under the command of General Charles Grey, murdered over a hundred of Baylor’s cavalymen in cold blood after they pleaded for quarter. Grey’s light infantry executed this surprise attack at night while most of the dragoons slept. By order of Grey, the British light infantry removed the flints from their muskets, only allowing them the use of bayonets during the attack. As a result, the revolutionary-leaning news declared that:

This occasioned the General to be nicknamed, among such of the British officers as can feel the compuncions of humanity, *the no flint General*.⁵⁵⁰

Grey’s successful rout of Baylor’s troopers was the second attack he executed using the same tactic with light infantry troops, as he did one year earlier, in 1777, when his men ambushed American General Anthony Wayne’s troops. Both attacks yielded allegations that the British refused quarter to surrendering American troops and remains in American historical memory as one of the worst atrocities committed by the British during the war.

This chapter will explore the aftermath of the attacks led by the *No Flint General*, remembered today as the Paoli and Baylor Massacres. In both attacks, it was Grey’s light infantry that crushed the American troops, using only their bayonets.

⁵⁵⁰ ‘Philadelphia,’ *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 29 October 1778, p. 1.

However, it was the Baylor Massacre in 1778 that gained immense Patriot newspaper coverage over alleged breaches of laws of war. The Paoli Massacre, on the other hand, only entered the spotlight after the Baylor engagement hit the news, and both the Continental Congress and revolutionary-leaning press responded to an ultimatum written by the Parliament's Carlyle Peace Commission. Further, the failure of the Carlyle Commission, along with the inability of the British military to crush the rebellion, triggered several debates in Parliament in 1779 to determine the way ahead. It was in these hearings that multiple discussions on laws of war occurred, demonstrating how several members of Parliament and senior military commanders, including Grey himself, held serious concerns over the use of harsh measures. Arguably, these conversations would not have occurred without the American influence on the newspaper presses that published multiple allegations that the British breached laws of war in the year 1778.

The Paoli Massacre

The conflict that eventually became known as the Paoli Massacre occurred on 20 September 1777, just west of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. While revolutionary lore claims this battle spurred the first rallying cry of the war, in the immediate aftermath of the battle, the revolutionary press gave virtually no public attention to this incident. Within the first two months, the news on the battle did not focus on Grey, his tactics, or any breaches of laws of war committed by the British army. Conversely, the focus turned to the American commander's court-martial. Further, the majority of testimonies provided by members of Wayne's unit for the court-martial described an extremely

lethal assault and intense close-quarter fighting that followed after the British light infantry completely surprised the Americans. Void of most testimonies were any allegations that the British broke laws of war by refusing quarter, making the eventual allegations that emerged questionable.

The stage was set for the battle at Paoli when Grey arrived in New York City in June 1777, at a time when both armies were at a standstill. Since the American victories in Trenton and Princeton, the Continental Army regrouped at their winter quarters in Morristown, New Jersey, awaiting Howe's next steps. Howe, on the other hand, was at a strategic decision point. His initial plan was to move the bulk of his forces north to support General John Burgoyne's forces, who were to advance south from Canada and take Albany, New York. By occupying the region from New York City to Albany, including the Hudson River and Lake George and Champlain to the north, the British could block most of the American troops and supply movements between the northern and southern colonies. If successful, this would cripple the American cause. However, Howe also set his sights on taking the city of Philadelphia, the seat of the Continental Congress, and epicentre for the revolutionaries. Many of Howe's senior officers, including Clinton and Grey, believed the best strategy was to advance north to support Burgoyne and not split his forces. However, in the end, Howe decided not to provide immediate support to Burgoyne and, instead, moved to occupy Philadelphia.⁵⁵¹

As for the Americans, after his stunning victories at Trenton and Princeton, Washington moved his forces to their winter headquarters in January 1777, where they remained until May 1777. Morristown served as a vantage point for Washington as it

⁵⁵¹ John Ferling, *Winning Independence* (Bloomsbury, 2021), pp. 45-52, 545-546.

allowed him to track the British armies' movements and also keep a lifeline open for the revolutionary cause by protecting the roads leading south to Philadelphia and the New England colonies in the North. Washington also used this time to rebuild and reorganize the Continental Army after his troop strength significantly decreased due to desertion and enlistments expiring.⁵⁵²

During this period, the Continental Congress wrapped up their investigation of the conduct of British and German troops during the 1776 campaign. Similar to previous investigations, the Congress published the outcome of the investigation in the colonial newspapers. This investigation looked into four types of complaints: destruction of property, inhumane treatment of prisoners, refusing quarter to those that surrendered, and rape. The committee reported their findings to the Congress on 18 April 1777. They found that the British Army destroyed private property along their path from New York through New Jersey, including places of worship. Multiple witnesses reported rape occurred, although only a few women confirmed these allegations. While they found no evidence that British leadership ordered their men to refuse quarter to American prisoners, multiple testimonies from individuals attested that many wounded were 'barbarously mangled and put to death.' Unlike the aftermath of Cedars, Congress did not send their findings to the British Commander in Chief. However, they did resolve once again to have the findings published, along with the affidavits, in the colonial newspapers.⁵⁵³

⁵⁵² Rick Atkinson, *The British are Coming* (Henry Holt and Company, 2019), pp. 549-554.

⁵⁵³ *JCC*, 34 vols, ed. by Worthington Chauncey Ford (U. S. Government Printing Office, 1904-1937), VII, pp. 276-279.

In August 1777, Howe launched his Philadelphia campaign by sea, first embarking for Head of Elk, Maryland. Once in Maryland, Howe marched 13,000 British troops north towards the revolutionary capital. Upon learning of the British movements, Washington scrambled his troops to respond. The first battle of the campaign occurred on 11 September at the Brandywine River, approximately thirty miles southwest of Philadelphia. The result was an overwhelming British victory, leaving their path to Philadelphia mostly clear. As the British pushed their way towards Philadelphia, members of the Continental Congress evacuated first to Lancaster and then to York, Pennsylvania. All inhabitants who sympathized with the revolutionary cause also fled the city, leaving Philadelphia almost abandoned, other than the small number of Loyalists who remained. In a final effort to slow Howe's approach, Washington dispatched Generals Anthony Wayne, William Smallwood, and William Maxwell with orders to harass the rear of the British army. If the Americans could buy enough time to recoup after the losses at Brandywine, Washington could challenge Howe's approach to Philadelphia once again.⁵⁵⁴

As the British moved towards Philadelphia, and Washington attempted to slow their approach, Grey led an attack Americans eventually termed the Paoli Massacre. However, this attack was not the conflict that propelled Grey to notoriety. Grey, who commanded the Third Brigade, arrived with his troops and the rest of Howe's forces on 25 August at Head of Elk, Maryland. After the Battle of Brandywine, Grey grew

⁵⁵⁴ Ferling, *Winning*, pp. 40-49; 'From George Washington to Brigadier General Anthony Wayne, 18 September 1777, in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-11-02-0262>> [accessed 1 November 2023]; 'From George Washington to Brigadier General William Smallwood, 12 September 1777,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-11-02-0201>> [accessed 1 November 2023].

concerned that, while a British victory, the Continental Army was still intact despite their losses. According to Grey's biographer, Paul Nelson, this observation frustrated Grey as he believed Howe missed an opportunity to take advantage of the Americans' depleted state after the battle. If Howe continued to pursue Washington's weakened forces, he might gain a total victory, and possibly end the war.⁵⁵⁵ Instead, now Washington was in a position to harass the British army and challenge their last few miles to Philadelphia.

On 20 September, Wayne, one of the three generals Washington dispatched to pursue the British, encamped near a town called Paoli, located about twenty miles west of Philadelphia and about three miles from where the British bivouacked. While fully aware of the location of the British troops, Wayne erroneously thought Howe did not know of their location, but he was wrong.⁵⁵⁶ Major John André, Grey's aide-de-camp, wrote in his journal that Howe received intelligence on Wayne's location and his intent to attack.⁵⁵⁷ Howe explained to Lord George Germain, 1st Viscount Sackville, and Secretary of State for the Colonies, a month later that:

Upon intelligence that General Wayne was lying in the woods with a corps of fifteen hundred men and four pieces of cannon about three miles distant and in the rear of the left wing of the army, Major-General Grey was detached on the 20th late at night with the 2nd light infantry, the 42nd and 44th regiments, to surprise this corps.⁵⁵⁸

With Howe's orders, Grey moved his forces towards the location of Wayne's unit. Along the way, the British apprehended all inhabitants they encountered to ensure complete

⁵⁵⁵ Paul Nelson, *Sir Charles Grey, First Earl Grey: Royal Soldier, Family Patriarch* (Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 1996), pp. 25-26; John Ferling, *Almost a Miracle* (Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 247-251; Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause* (Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 395-397.

⁵⁵⁶ Ferling, *Almost a Miracle*, pp. 250-251; Nelson, *Sir Charles Grey*, pp. 26-27.

⁵⁵⁷ John André, *The Journal of Major John André* (Charles River Editors via PublishDrive, 2018), p. 23.

⁵⁵⁸ K. G. Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1793*, 21 vols (Irish Academic Press, 1977) XIV, p. 205.

secrecy. After forcing a local blacksmith to reveal the exact location of Wayne's forces, they confirmed their target. Soon, Grey's forces came upon the American pickets guarding their camp.⁵⁵⁹

Earlier the same evening, Wayne received news that Howe knew his location. In response, he scrambled to post extra security and put the camp on high alert. However, these efforts did little to protect Wayne's unit. Around midnight, Grey's forces raided Wayne's encampment, quickly overtaking the Americans with an aggressive bayonet charge. Before the attack, in order to maintain the element of surprise, Grey ordered his troops to remove the flints from the flintlock of their muskets, so to force them to use only bayonets. Removing the flints also ensured that their muskets could not accidentally go off and either give away the unit's location or start the fight prematurely. André explained, 'No soldier of either [unit] was suffered to load; those who could not draw their pieces took out the flints.'⁵⁶⁰ The German Adjutant General, Major Carl Leopold Baumeister, noted the success of this tactic and reported that Grey:

Having forbidden a single musket to be loaded, attacked their right wing with the bayonet. His men deployed so fast that they massacred it.⁵⁶¹

The British relentlessly pursued the panicked American troops who attempted to flee, stabbing them with their bayonets until they entirely disabled Wayne's unit.⁵⁶² In the

⁵⁵⁹ André, *The Journal*, p. 23; Nelson, *Sir Charles Grey*, pp. 6, 27.

⁵⁶⁰ André, *The Journal*, p. 23.

⁵⁶¹ Carl Leopold Baumeister, *Revolution in America: Confidential Letters and Journals, 1776-1784, of Adjutant General Major Baurmeister of the Hessian Forces* (Rutgers University Press, 1957), p. 115.

⁵⁶² Armstrong Starkey, 'Paoli to Stony Point: Military Ethics and Weaponry during the American Revolution', *The Journal of Military History*, 58 (1994), 7-27 (pp. 7-9), doi.org/10.2307/2944177 ; Ferling, *Almost a Miracle*, pp. 251-252; Holger Hooek, *Scars of Independence: America's Violent Birth* (Crown, 2017), p. 250; Henry Clinton, *The American Rebellion: Sir Henry Clinton's Narrative of his Campaigns, 1775-1782*, ed. William Willcox (Yale University Press, 1954), pp. 250-252.

end, Grey's light infantry completely routed the American troops. The British never fired one round.⁵⁶³

In Wayne's initial report to Washington, he provided a watered-down version of the conflict. His report not only omitted the details of the ambush but also minimized the number of American casualties. Wayne explained to Washington that:

About 11 O'clock last Evening we were alarmed by a firing from One of our Out guards – The Division was immediately formed, which was no sooner done than a firing began on our Right flank – I thought proper to order the Division to file off by the left, except the Infantry and two or three Regiments nearest to where the Attack began in order to favour our Retreat-by this time the Enemy and we were not more than Ten Yards distant-a well directed fire mutually took place, followed by a charge of Bayonet-Numbers fell on each side-we then drew off a little distance and formed a Front to oppose to theirs-they did not think prudent to push matters further.⁵⁶⁴

Meanwhile, in Howe's initial report to Germain, he slightly exaggerated the American losses. Howe reported:

The most effectual precaution being taken by the general to prevent his detachment from firing, he gained the enemy's left about one o'clock, and having by the bayonet only forced their out-sentries and pickets, he rushed in upon their encampment directed by the light of their fires, killed and wounded not less than three hundred on the spot, taking between seventy and eighty prisoners including several officers, the greater part of their arms, and eight wagons loaded with baggage and stores...One captain of [British] light infantry and three men were killed in the attack and four men wounded.⁵⁶⁵

André's report estimated approximately three British infantry and about two hundred American troops were killed.⁵⁶⁶ Final estimates of the American casualties after the

⁵⁶³ André, *The Journal*, pp. 23-24.

⁵⁶⁴ 'To George Washington from Brigadier General Anthony Wayne, 21 September 1777,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-11-02-0294>> [accessed 1 November 2023].

⁵⁶⁵ Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution*, XVI, p. 205.

⁵⁶⁶ André, *The Journal*, pp. 24-25; Nelson, *Sir Charles Grey*, pp. 29-30.

conflict were a total of 272, with most taken captive.⁵⁶⁷ Howe applauded Grey's success, commending him and his troops for executing a flawless operation. Most importantly, Grey's success helped smooth the way for Howe to take possession of Philadelphia, virtually unopposed, a few weeks later on 26 September.⁵⁶⁸

For Wayne, however, it was a different outcome, as Washington's immediate response to Grey's attack was to initiate a court-martial. Angered over the incident, Washington believed that Wayne had ample time to set up additional defenses around his camp. Washington's charges against Wayne were:

That he had timely notice of the enemy's intention to attack the troops under his command on the night of the 20th Ult: and notwithstanding that intelligence, he neglected making a disposition until it was too late either to annoy the enemy, or make a retreat without the utmost danger and confusion.⁵⁶⁹

To prepare for the hearing, Washington ordered all officers involved in the action to provide their testimony. These testimonies painted a much different picture of events than Wayne's initial report to Washington. A few officers did claim they saw nothing and could be of no assistance to the court of inquiry. However, most spoke of the chaos that ensued after the enemy quickly attacked, leaving them no choice but to retreat. For example, Colonel Daniel Brodhead reported that when the enemy appeared at their front, utter confusion prevailed as a:

General pushing bayonets ensued, and after rallying the troops twice we were in the greatest confusion, being obliged to retreat over a number of fences near one of which I received a small wound and being dismounted fell in the rear.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁷ For an estimated casualty count see: 'Paoli,' in *American Battlefield Trust* <<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/revolutionary-war/battles/paoli>> [accessed 31 March 2024].

⁵⁶⁸ Davies, *Documents of the American Revolution*, XIV, p. 206.

⁵⁶⁹ 'General Orders, 11 October 1777,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-11-02-0488>> [accessed 1 November 2023].

⁵⁷⁰ Washington D.C., LOC, Peter Force Collection, Papers concerning the court-martial of Gen. Anthony Wayne, 1777-1778, Box VII, E: 9-11, Reel 6-8, 35.39, #2867.

However, one officer reported that amidst the chaos, the British light infantry also breached laws of war. According to Lieutenant Colonel Hubley, when some men attempted to surrender, the enemy refused quarter. Before they had any chance to react, Hubley explained, the enemy ‘were upon us in our rear, and with charged bayonets.’ He tried to quickly form his men and attack, but to no avail. Hubley claimed they faced an impossible situation:

The enemy being then almost mixed with us, at the same time calling out no quarters, &c, which, in my humble opinion, caused our men to make a desperate and indeed obstinate stand. A most severe bayoneting was the consequences.⁵⁷¹

While alleging that the British gave no quarter, Hubley also described a chaotic situation where extreme close-quarter fighting ensued. As a result of these conditions, the Americans had no chance to surrender when the enemy was already bearing down on them with their bayonets. It was the close-quarter fighting that created the conditions for this allegation to emerge, more than the bayonet itself. Moreover, in such a scene, it is impossible to stop an attack and give quarter to the enemy without risking one’s own life, making this lone allegation amongst all the testimonies debatable.

The court held their inquiry on Wayne’s conduct from 13 to 15 October. While they cleared him of the misconduct charges, they did not totally exonerate him. The court found him partially responsible for the outcome of the attack because of the intelligence he received the night prior. Several officers testified that Wayne had knowledge of the impending attack and could have taken more measures to prevent the massacre. Wayne wanted to fully clear his name and reputation, so he then requested a

⁵⁷¹ Washington D.C, LOC, Peter Force Collection, Papers concerning the court-martial of Gen. Anthony Wayne, 1777-1778, Box VII, E: 9-11, Reel 6-8, 35.39, #2876.

general court-martial. Held on 25 October, the general court-martial acquitted Wayne of the charges. In all, they found that Wayne did all he could, considering the situation he faced.⁵⁷²

To this day, Americans remember this action as the Paoli Massacre. Some claim that, ‘Remember Paoli!,’ was the United States’ first battle cry.⁵⁷³ It is recalled as a cold-blooded and cruel massacre of defenseless American troops, most of whom were sleeping, and many murdered after pleading for quarter. Wayne became a hero after obtaining redress at the Battle of Stony Point on 15 July 1779. In this conflict, Wayne successfully defeated the British using the same tactic as Grey. Wayne executed a nighttime assault on the British fort at Stony Point, ordering his men not to load their muskets and only use their bayonets. However, in the conflict, the Americans reportedly gave quarter to surrendering British troops. The revolutionary leadership, of course, highlighted this conflict as an example of the United States taking the moral high ground. Wayne eventually acquired the name ‘Mad’ Anthony Wayne and is forever remembered for his zeal in battle.⁵⁷⁴

Despite American historical memory of Grey’s attack at Paoli as a massacre of Wayne’s troops, none of the newspaper articles released within the first two months of the conflict alleged that the British breached laws of war. In addition, the newspaper response was very slow, as no reports surfaced on the battle until almost six weeks after it occurred. The slow response to the newspaper report was perhaps due to the British

⁵⁷² ‘General Orders, 11 October 1777,’ in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-11-02-0488>> [accessed 1 November 2023].

⁵⁷³ For America’s first battle cry, see: ‘Our Nation’s First Battle Cry,’ in *Paoli Battlefield Preservation Fund*: <<https://pbpfinc.org/our-nations-first-battle-cry/>> [accessed 31 March 2024].

⁵⁷⁴ Starkey, ‘Paoli to Stony Point,’ pp. 20-23.

occupation of the city of Philadelphia not long after the battle. The city of Philadelphia housed one of the largest concentrations of revolutionary-leaning newspapers, which shut down after the occupation. However, once reports on the battle emerged, none of them focused on Grey or his tactics. At no time did the news even refer to Grey as the ‘No-Flint General.’ Instead, Wayne’s court-martial became the primary focus of the news regarding this conflict, then the battle itself.

The first reports on the conflict came from the Loyalist newspapers out of New York almost a month and a half after the attack. On 6 November 1777, *The Royal American Gazette*, a new bi-weekly newspaper launched earlier that year after the British occupied the city, published a brief article touting Grey’s success and exaggerating the American death toll.⁵⁷⁵ It reported that a battalion of light troops under Grey advanced upon the enemy under ‘Mr. Wayne, Brigadier General.’ At around four o’clock in the morning, the light troops killed, ‘without firing a gun, upwards of 400, took about 50 prisoners,’ with a total loss of one British officer killed.⁵⁷⁶ This article circulated through all the Loyalist papers in the area. Publisher James Rivington, for example, who returned to New York City in early 1777 after it was safe to do so, printed the same article in the *New York Gazette* two days later.⁵⁷⁷ Hugh Gaine’s *New York Gazette* also mentioned the attack in an article published a few days after Rivington’s. However, Gaine added the details that Grey ordered his men to take the flints out of their firelocks to force an attack using only their bayonets.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁵ Robert Parkinson, *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution* (University of North Carolina Press, 2016), p. 685. Since New York’s occupation in late 1776, Loyalist newspapers thrived in the area.

⁵⁷⁶ ‘New-York, November 6,’ *The Royal American Gazette*, 6 November 1777, p. 3.

⁵⁷⁷ ‘New-York, November 6,’ *Rivington’s New York Gazette*, 8 November 1777, p. 2.

⁵⁷⁸ ‘A Detail of the Proceedings...,’ *The New York Gazette*, 10 November 1777, p. 3.

The first and only Patriot newspaper to publish an article on the conflict within the first two months after Grey's attack was *The Maryland Journal*.⁵⁷⁹ However, the focus of the article was not on the attack itself but on Wayne's court-martial. This article, published on 18 November, detailed that Wayne was the subject of a court-martial held the last week of October. The court charged him with failing to respond appropriately to intelligence he received of the enemies' intentions to attack the night before. The paper also published the testimonies from the officers within his unit that alleged Wayne did not act on the information he received the night before the assault that the British knew his location and intended to attack. It also published statements from others that Wayne did all he could, given the limited options, when faced with an enemy that struck quickly and relentlessly.⁵⁸⁰

The article in *The Maryland Journal* also intended to squash all gossip circulating about Wayne. It highlighted that after being found not guilty, the court declared Wayne 'did everything that could be expected from an active, brave, and vigilant officer, under the orders he then had.'⁵⁸¹ Furthermore, 'The action of that night has caused much speculation – the tongue of slander has not been idle,' but 'yet they find themselves egregiously disappointed.' Wayne and his troops displayed 'unapparelled bravery' in facing the bayonets of the enemy.⁵⁸² The goal of this article seemed to be two-fold. Not only did it report on the outcome of the court-martial, but it also intended to stop the spread of false rumors about Wayne.

⁵⁷⁹ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 698-705. 'To the Printer,' *The Maryland Journal*, 18 November 1777, p. 2.

⁵⁸⁰ 'To the Printer,' *The Maryland Journal*, 18 November 1777, p. 2.

⁵⁸¹ 'To the Printer,' *The Maryland Journal*, 18 November 1777, p. 2.

⁵⁸² 'To the Printer,' *The Maryland Journal*, 18 November 1777, p. 2.

If using only the newspaper reports as a gauge, the conflict at Paoli did not generate much, if any, anger by those supporting the Patriot cause at the time it occurred. One reason for the minimal attention was perhaps not just the British occupation of Philadelphia, but also the stunning American victory at Saratoga, both occurring within a month after the conflict, overshadowed this minor action. On 7 October 1777, the Americans' success at the Battle of Saratoga resulted in Lieutenant General John Burgoyne's surrender of five thousand British and German troops to Major General Horatio Gates' Continental army.⁵⁸³ Circulating through the news at this time was also a letter Gates addressed to Burgoyne accusing the British troops of burning down private property during the British's retreat from the area. Gates alleged that:

The Cruelties which mark the Retreat of your Army in burning the Gentlemen's and Farmers Houses, as they pass along, is almost amongst civilized Nations, without Precedent; they should not endeavor to ruin those they could not conquer; this Conduct betrays more of the vindictive Malice of a Monk, than the Generosity of a Soldier.⁵⁸⁴

It is possible that this allegation, which circulated on the front page of several papers after Saratoga, took precedence. However, despite the fact that Paoli was a minor conflict compared to Saratoga, both battles became equally prominent in American historical memory.

On the whole, within the first two months of the so-called Paoli Massacre, the news did not focus on Grey, his tactics, nor any breaches of laws of war. In December 1777, a few additional papers reported on Grey's bayonet assault on Wayne's troops, but

⁵⁸³ 'To George Washington from Lieutenant Colonel James Wilkinson, 24 October 1777,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-11-02-0618>> [accessed 1 November 2023].

⁵⁸⁴ 'Portsmouth,' *The Freeman's Journal*, 1 November 1777, p. 1; Baroness Riedesel confirmed in her memoir that Burgoyne ordered personal property burnt down, see: Frederika Charlotta Riedesel, *Letters and Memoirs Relating to the War of American Independence and the Capture of the German Troops at Saratoga* (New York: G. & C. Carvill, 1827), p. 191.

none alleged any violations of laws of war. Only the Loyalist newspaper reports even mentioned what occurred in the conflict while bragging about Grey's complete victory. The Patriot-leaning news, on the other hand, focused on Wayne's court-martial and efforts to clear his name. Once again, the revolutionary press was shaping the news instead of simply echoing events that occurred by turning the public's focus to clearing Wayne's name and justifying the Americans' loss.

Charles Grey and Light Infantry

In truth, the British did have reason to brag about the ambush of American troops at Paoli, as Grey's light infantry irrefutably executed a flawless operation. Much of this success is due to Grey's military experience, which included action in the Jacobite Rebellion, making him the right man for the job. Grey was a seasoned military commander who held the respect of the British military's top Generals, such as Clinton and Howe. His experience during the Seven Years' War as a commander of a light infantry company within the Twelfth Regiment propelled his career. At the Battle of Minden, the Twelfth Regiment served with distinction, and despite significant casualties, the British and German forces successfully crushed the French.⁵⁸⁵ Also serving as an aide-de-camp to Prince Ferdinand during this time, Grey soon earned a reputation as a competent and reliable military leader. According to Nelson, Grey learned of the advantages and 'the shock value of an unanticipated, violent assault upon even the best-

⁵⁸⁵ Daniel Baugh, *The Global Seven Years War, 1754-1763* (Routledge, 2014), p. 124; Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (Vintage Books, 2000), pp. 444-445.

prepared and strongest-positioned troops,' which is a lesson that Grey effectively put into action during his time serving in America.⁵⁸⁶

Grey began his military career at age fourteen when his father purchased his commission as an ensign with the Sixth Regiment of Foot. His first deployment was to Scotland in 1745 to suppress the Jacobite Rebellion led by Prince Charles Stuart. Grey fought at the Battle of Culloden when Prince William Augustus, Duke of Cumberland, handed the last blow to the Jacobites, crushing their forces and ending the rebellion. Cumberland ordered the execution of thousands of prisoners of war and imprisoned countless others. He tracked down any remaining fugitives in an effort to completely quash the Jacobite movement so they could not rise up again. Cumberland's actions almost wiped out the entire Scottish Highland culture in the process.⁵⁸⁷

Grey's experience serving under Cumberland in suppressing the Jacobite Rebellion also prepared him for the bayonet charge he ordered at Paoli. It was during the rising of 1745 that the British Army developed more effective bayonet drills, specifically designed to counter the Highland charge known to effectively block bayonet thrusts. The British Army's new method was one major factor that led them to victory at the Battle of Culloden, the last battle of the Forty-Five. More broadly speaking, it is also argued that what occurred in the Scottish Highlands was a proving ground for breaking resistance to the British Empire. Grey's participation in subduing the Jacobite uprising is undoubtedly an experience that he, in essence, applied to the American Revolution.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁶ Nelson, *Sir Charles Grey*, p. 6.

⁵⁸⁷ William McMichael, 'Bloody Culloden, 1746,' *Military History* 31 (2014), 64-70 (p. 70).

⁵⁸⁸ David Stevenson, 'The Highland Charge,' *History Today*, 32 (1982), 3-8 (p. 8); Nicola Martin, 'Lord Loudan, the Highlands and Imperial Subjecthood in North America,' *The Scottish Historical Review*, C.2 (2021), 249-276 (pp. 251, 275), doi.org/10.3366/shr.2021.0517.

Grey served honorably during the Seven Years' War with the Twelfth Regiment, where Lieutenant Colonel James Wolfe became his mentor. During the war, Grey deployed to Germany and fought at the Battle of Minden, also serving as an Aide-de-camp to Prince Ferdinand. Grey then joined the Eighty-Eighth Regiment of Foot and was stationed in Portugal after Britain declared war on Spain. After the Seven Years' War, he retired for several years to his estate in Fallodon. However, his retirement was short-lived. After receiving news of the outbreak of war in North America in 1775, he immediately campaigned for a command.⁵⁸⁹

Grey's wish for a command in America came to fruition when, in early 1777, he received orders to join the Twenty-Eighth Regiment. After arriving in New York City on 3 June 1777, it did not take long for him to grow concerned over the future of the British cause in America.⁵⁹⁰ Grey was quite disappointed in learning that Howe had made very little progress in suppressing the rebellion during the previous campaign season in New York and New Jersey. While they won many victories, Washington's Army and the revolutionary cause continued to thrive. Furthermore, he quickly gleaned that few colonists outwardly supported the British. This was a surprise as the common assumption in Great Britain was that the majority of colonists were Loyalists. Grey began to seriously question whether the British could ever defeat the Americans.⁵⁹¹

According to Nelson, Grey was a 'hardliner' at heart, and he thought Howe, and then Clinton as well, needed to use more aggressive measures against the revolutionaries. Grey believed that Howe was unable to effectively strategize against the

⁵⁸⁹ Nelson, *Sir Charles Grey*, pp. 7-17.

⁵⁹⁰ Nelson, *Sir Charles Grey*, p. 6.

⁵⁹¹ Ferling, *Winning*, p. 110.

Patriots because he was indecisive and apprehensive of using harsher measures. He believed the British could not extinguish the revolutionary movement using a conciliatory approach. Similar to Gage, Grey maintained that the only way to defeat the enemy was to go after the 'enemy's jugular and settle matters quickly on the battlefield.'⁵⁹² Grey was not afraid to make his opinion known to his seniors. For example, Grey demonstrated his frustration over Clinton's conciliatory strategy when he reportedly lost his temper after receiving a briefing on military plans and operations after the evacuation from Philadelphia at Clinton's headquarters in the Spring of 1778.⁵⁹³ Grey responded to Clinton's plan by stating that the only way to defeat the Americans was 'with sword' and not with 'half measures,' making clear his strategic stance.⁵⁹⁴

Stephen Conway's research argues that, indeed, a strategic divide developed within the British officer corps between those who supported a conciliatory approach and those who favored harsh measures. It was this divide, according to Conway, that led to multiple allegations the British breached laws of war. Conway defined these two approaches, explaining that conciliatory measures focused on winning the hearts and minds of the American public, and the hardliner approach supported the use of harsher, more violent tactics to scare colonists into supporting the Crown. He argued that because most British junior officers supported the hardliner approach, they overshadowed those officers who supported conciliatory methods. Furthermore, it was the hardliner approaches that made a more lasting impact and were not forgotten easily.

⁵⁹² Nelson, *Sir Charles Grey*, p. 25; see Chapter Three, p. 135 for Gage's view, and Ferling, *Winning*, pp. 3-5.

⁵⁹³ Nelson, *Sir Charles Grey* pp. 56-57.

⁵⁹⁴ Nelson, *Sir Charles Grey*, pp. 56-57.

Therefore, despite the conciliatory strategies of the Commanders-in-Chief, such as Howe and Clinton, some British officers continued to choose hardliner approaches. This ideological conflict led to multiple accusations that the British committed atrocities during the war with America.⁵⁹⁵

Another aspect that added to Grey's success in the surprise attack at Paoli was his effective use of the light infantry. Moreover, the fact that it was light infantry that executed the attacks, adds to current-day fascination with the Paoli Massacre. The British military incorporated light infantry to serve as highly mobile troops effective in executing raids, harassing the enemy, and conducting surveillance. Light infantry today is often associated with today's elite units such as rangers or special forces. Matthew Spring used Grey's raids as an example to argue that the martial culture of the British light infantry, who historically had a reputation for using excessive force, increased the likelihood of them using harsh measures against the American troops.⁵⁹⁶ As a result of their elite military culture, Spring states it was not a coincidence that the perpetrators of the alleged atrocities were often light infantrymen.⁵⁹⁷ However, during the American Revolution, light infantry was a relatively new arm of the British military. First raised during the Seven Years' War, eighteenth-century British light infantry was both controversial and still in its infancy as its training doctrine was just developing.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁵ Stephen Conway, 'To Subdue America: British Army Officers and the Conduct of the Revolutionary War,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, 43 (1986), 381-407 (pp. 381-382, 404-407), doi.org/10.2307/1922482.

⁵⁹⁶ Matthew Spring, *With Zeal and With Bayonets Only: The British Army on Campaign in North America, 1775 – 1783* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), pp. 233-236.

⁵⁹⁷ Spring, *With Zeal*, pp. 216-244.

⁵⁹⁸ For an example of a current view of Grey's British light infantry see: 'Our Nation's First Battle Cry,' *Paoli Battlefield Preservation Fund* <<https://pbpfinc.org/our-nations-first-battle-cry/>> [accessed 30 April 2024].

Despite being a new type of force within the British military, many senior commanders, such as Howe, Gage, and Grey, held experience with light infantry troops they gained before the American Revolution. The British identified a need for light troops during the North American campaign of the Seven Years' War. At the time, they lagged behind their European counterparts, including their Habsburg and French enemies, in terms of the development of light infantry tactics and units.⁵⁹⁹ After the ambush and defeat of General Edward Braddock's troops in 1755 at the Monongahela River by French and Indigenous forces, the need for specialty troops became apparent. Light infantry troops, more proficient at operating effectively in the dense forests in America, who protected the flanks of the main body of infantry and could also effectively face an enemy proficient in irregular tactics, might have saved Braddock.⁶⁰⁰

Out of a force of approximately two thousand men at the Battle of Monongahela River, Braddock suffered a devastating defeat, losing almost half of his men.⁶⁰¹ Killed or wounded were sixty-three out of eighty-six officers and nine hundred and fourteen of Braddock's enlisted troops.⁶⁰² Braddock himself died four days after the attack due to wounds he sustained from a musket ball that penetrated his lungs. Fred Anderson explains, 'The Indians fought in the ways they knew, and the redcoats did their best to do the same, trying repeatedly to form themselves into companies and return fire, a process that drew them even more tightly together in the road.'⁶⁰³ Ultimately, the British were no match for the Indigenous marksmen or the French colonial regulars (*troupes de*

⁵⁹⁹ J. A. Houlding, *Fit for Service: The Training of the British Army, 1715-1795* (Clarendon, 1981), p. 374.

⁶⁰⁰ Richard Holmes, *Redcoat: The British Soldier in the Age of Horse and Musket* (Harper Collins Publishers, 2001), p. 70; Houlding, *Fit for Service*, pp. 374-375.

⁶⁰¹ Baugh, *The Global Seven Years War*, p. 124; Anderson, *Crucible of War*, p. 105.

⁶⁰² Holmes, *Redcoat*, p. 71.

⁶⁰³ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, p. 99.

la marine), who surrounded the British and annihilated Braddock's force. After the battle, the need for troops with specialized training to confront their French and Indigenous enemies became essential.⁶⁰⁴

Soon after Braddock's catastrophic defeat, the British commissioned a new regiment, the 60th (Royal American) Regiment of Foot, that included marksmen specially trained for service in the woods.⁶⁰⁵ These marksmen learned to load and fire while lying or kneeling on the ground, march in all types of terrains, and carry all their equipment while on the move.⁶⁰⁶ In addition to the creation of the 60th Regiment of Foot, the British also attached light companies to each battalion.⁶⁰⁷ These light companies, whose men were also called 'light-bobs,' were to form on the battalion's left flank to augment the existing grenadier companies forming on the right. However, as quickly as the British raised light infantry companies after Braddock's defeat, they also disappeared after the British victory against the French in the Seven Years' War. The decision to remove the light infantry companies and return to their conventional regimental structures was due to the belief that these units were no longer relevant as they were a temporary adaptation due to seemingly unique circumstances.⁶⁰⁸

Light infantry filled similar roles to grenadiers and rangers. Light infantry were 'flanking' units because of their position within a regiment on the left flank, with light grenadier companies placed on the right flank. At the time, the older, more established grenadier units were considered more elite than light infantry and also filled a different

⁶⁰⁴ Holmes, *Redcoat*, pp. 71-72.

⁶⁰⁵ Holmes, *Redcoat*, pp. 71-72.

⁶⁰⁶ Holmes, *Redcoat*, pp. 71-72.

⁶⁰⁷ Spring, *With Zeal*, p. 245.

⁶⁰⁸ Holmes, *Recoat*, pp. 71-72.

role. The mission of grenadiers was to serve as ‘shock’ troops, or assault troops, that led attacks. Commanders also used grenadiers to reinforce areas of weakness in the line of battle. The role of the light infantry developed into one that was similar to the tactics executed by ranger units. However, ranger units, such as Robert Rogers’s, who served during the Seven Years’ War and at the beginning of the American Revolution, were notorious for their lack of discipline. The British needed a force that would execute the same tactics but be assigned within a regiment to increase command and control and also have the flexibility to break apart from the regiment for special operations when needed.⁶⁰⁹

Two British Commanders in Chief during the American Revolution had notable experience with light infantry before the war. During the Seven Years’ War, it was Howe who led the light infantry in scaling the cliffs at the *L’Anse au Foulon* during the Battle of the Plains of Abraham.⁶¹⁰ In 1774, William Howe started a training camp in Britain for light infantry units and designed an effective system of training in the art of skirmishing and rapid maneuvers.⁶¹¹ Howe wrote the light infantry doctrine, ‘Discipline Established by Major General Howe for Light Infantry in Battalion.’⁶¹² Howe’s experience eventually led to the development of his drill instructions, which aimed at training light companies on maneuver techniques that were in concert with its battalion.⁶¹³ Howe tested his methods on a regiment at a training camp in Salisbury,

⁶⁰⁹ Stephen Brumwell, *Redcoats* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 23, 209, 228-234; Spring, *With Zeal*, p. 57.

⁶¹⁰ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, pp. 353-354.

⁶¹¹ Houlding, *Fit for Service*, p. 336.

⁶¹² London, National Army Museum, William Howe, ‘Maj.-Gen. Howe’s MS Light Infantry Discipline,’ September 1774, MS 6807/157/6.

⁶¹³ London, National Army Museum, William Howe, ‘Maj.-Gen. Howe’s MS Light Infantry Discipline,’ September 1774, MS 6807/157/6.

Great Britain, and also coordinated a display of light infantry maneuvers before George III at Richmond Park in October 1774, right before he deployed to America.⁶¹⁴ Some historians salute Howe as a godfather of the developing light tactical extension of the British regiments. However, others hail Lieutenant General George Townsend, who, in 1772, was the first to develop doctrine for his regiments serving in Dublin, Ireland, on the training and equipping of light companies.⁶¹⁵ Both Townsend and Howe were huge supporters of reintroducing light infantry into their regiments when war broke out in the American colonies.⁶¹⁶

Gage also had light infantry experience, which he gained during the Seven Years' War. After serving with Braddock's forces during the ambush at Monongahela River, he then raised the 80th Regiment of Light-Armed Foot in 1758, which is widely recognized as the first light infantry regiment in the British Army. In Boston, aside from grenadiers, the majority of Gage's troops who engaged in the Battle of Lexington and Concord in 1775 were light infantry. J. A. Houlding notes that these troops did not have training in light tactics, and their performance in this first battle of the war was poor. However, there is some evidence that Gage attempted some training, as evident by the instructions he issued a few days before Lexington and Concord, where he ordered maneuver training for both the grenadiers and light infantry companies.⁶¹⁷ In the end, the performance of the light companies at the Battle of Lexington and Concord and the Battle of Bunker Hill disappointed some observers who assessed that the light infantry

⁶¹⁴ London, National Army Museum, William Howe, 'Maj.-Gen. Howe's MS Light Infantry Discipline,' September 1774, MS 6807/157/6.

⁶¹⁵ Spring, *With Zeal*, p. 246.

⁶¹⁶ Spring, *With Zeal*, p. 246.

⁶¹⁷ Houlding, *Fit for Service*, pp. 250-251; Spring, *With Zeal*, pp. 250-251.

did not demonstrate any proficiency in the art of ‘woodland skirmishing.’⁶¹⁸ In actuality, their tactics modeled those of the heavy infantry and not the irregular tactics that light companies were intended to execute. Light infantries’ performance during these battles led to Clinton’s statement in July 1775 that, ‘Perhaps in all America there is not a worse spot than this we are in for a regular army without light troops...for I cannot call our light companies such, nor would you if I were to converse with you for five minutes.’⁶¹⁹

Despite the negative reviews and unimpressive performance of light infantry at the beginning of the war, these companies remained within the British regiments as a flanking unit throughout the American Revolution. Furthermore, their performance improved as the war progressed. During the war, most British regiments included ten companies: eight were regular infantry, otherwise known as ‘hat’ companies, with one light infantry and one grenadier company flanking the hat companies. Starting at the Battle of Long Island, reports of light infantry successfully crushing American troops that hid behind rocks and trees emerged. These successes were due in part to improvised training on bushfighting tactics finally conducted by multiple commanders after the initial British defeats in 1775. Further, by 1776, training light infantry on both the deadly bayonet charge and removing the flints from their muskets during night attacks was increasingly common practice within the British army. As a result, these are the tactics embraced by Grey at Paoli, which he would use once again almost a year to date.⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁸ Spring, *With Zeal*, p. 251.

⁶¹⁹ Clinton quoted in Spring, *With Zeal*, p. 252.

⁶²⁰ Houlding, *Fit for Service*, pp. 250-255, 262, 287-288, 318-322.

The Baylor Massacre

The British campaign faced more challenges one year after Grey's success at Paoli. In 1778, the war in America entered its third year with no end in sight to the rebellion. Not long after Grey's success at Paoli and Howe's occupation of Philadelphia on 26 September 1777, the British sustained several major setbacks. On 7 October 1777, the Americans prevailed at the Battle of Saratoga, taking over 6,000 British and German soldiers captive. Furthermore, with the news of this staggering American victory, the French officially agreed to support the United States by finalizing the Treaty of Alliance in February 1778.⁶²¹ This major loss eventually led to Howe resigning his command, and Sir Henry Clinton was appointed the new Commander-in-Chief in May 1778. Clinton immediately faced challenges as threats of French invasions forced him to send a large portion of his army to the Caribbean and Florida. This realignment of troops significantly weakened Clinton's military strength in America. While Philadelphia became increasingly untenable, New York City was now more important to protect from a French invasion. In response, he ordered the British evacuation of Philadelphia in June 1778 and moved almost 20,000 British troops back to New York.⁶²² New York City now became the home base for the majority of Loyalist newspaper publishers.⁶²³ The evacuation, while a sound military move, angered the thousands of Loyalists in Philadelphia who felt abandoned by the British military.⁶²⁴

⁶²¹ John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence* (University of Michigan Press, 1990), p. 195.

⁶²² Clinton, *The American Rebellion*, pp. 86-88.

⁶²³ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 702-702.

⁶²⁴ Ambrose Serle wrote in his diary on 22 May 1778 the impact the withdrawal from Philadelphia had on his friend and Loyalist, stating, 'I endeavored to console, as well as to advise my Friend. I felt for him & with him. Nothing remains for him but to attempt Reconciliation with (what I now venture to call) the

After the successful evacuation of the British Army from Philadelphia to New York City, Clinton turned his attention to protecting the British garrison and port at Rhode Island. In addition, to eliminate the threat of American privateers in the area, Clinton targeted the coastal towns in New England known to harbor them. In early September 1778, Grey led a successful expedition aimed at destroying Patriot assets in the towns of New Bedford and Fairhaven, Connecticut, and Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts. The population of Martha's Vineyard did not resist and allowed the British army to complete their mission. However, during his invasion of the Connecticut towns, Grey met with resistance from the local townspeople, who refused to surrender their military stores. In response, Grey's troops raided and destroyed military storehouses and shipping assets in these towns.

Grey's attacks on the New England towns triggered scarcely any response from the Patriot newspapers. It was the Loyalist *New York Gazette* that reported on 28 September that about 4000 British troops appeared off the town of Bedford and began their 'hellish work of burning the rope walks, 12 houses...and all the store houses and the principal part of shipping in the harbour.'⁶²⁵ Reportedly, during the attack, the British forces killed two men and a boy. On the same day, the Patriot-leaning *Independent Ledger* did not report the same information as *The Gazette* but instead published Grey's orders that his troops were not to destroy any personal property during the attack. Grey issued orders to his 'Commanding officers,' stating they 'are to be answerable that no houses or barns are set on fire by the soldiers, unless by particular orders from Major-

United States of America; which probably may not succeed, as they have attained him in Body & Goods by an Act of the Legislature in Pennsylvania – O Thou righteous GOD, where will this Villainy end!

⁶²⁵ 'September 10,' *The New York Gazette*, 28 September 1778, p. 2.

General Gray.⁶²⁶ Despite this grievous news of civilian casualties and destruction of personal property, the focus of the papers centered on Grey's orders to his troops and not the alleged atrocities. This diversion from the devastation caused by Grey's raids was perhaps due to the British occupation of both Providence, Rhode Island, and New York City and their control of the newspapers in those areas.

After the attacks on the coastal towns in New England, Clinton ordered Lord Charles Cornwallis, Grey's senior officer, to move his forces to northern New Jersey. Since the bulk of the British army was now located in New York City, the prime area for the British army to forage was in New Jersey and Westchester County, New York. These missions to forage led to multiple skirmishes in these areas, including another nighttime ambush using the same tactics as at Paoli executed by Grey's light infantrymen. This time, the target was an American dragoon troop. However, unlike Paoli, Grey's tactics triggered a fierce response from American leadership and the Patriot-leaning press.⁶²⁷ Furthermore, after this attack, the revolutionaries bestowed Grey with the nickname the No-Flint General.

Upon arriving in New Jersey, Grey set up camp near the town of New Bridge, located in the northern region of the colony, close to the New York border. Soon after, Cornwallis received intelligence that a unit of Continental dragoons encamped just to the north near a town called Old Tappan. Cornwallis ordered Grey to execute a surprise night attack, similar to the action at Paoli, using men from the Second Light Infantry and

⁶²⁶ 'From the Providence Gazette,' *The Independent Ledger*, 28 September 1778, p. 4. Grey is spelled 'Gray' in this article.

⁶²⁷ Todd Braisted, *Grand Forage, 1778* (Westholme, 2016), pp. 2-11.

grenadiers, dragoons, and men from the Thirty-Third and Sixty-Fourth Regiments.⁶²⁸

The American dragoons targeted by the British were the Third Continental Light Dragoons, also known as Mrs. Washington's Guards, commanded by Colonel George Baylor. On the evening of 27 September, Baylor quartered his troopers on a farm near the village of Old Tappan. Washington positioned Baylor in the area so that they could observe the movements of Cornwallis's troops. The closest American unit to Baylor was the New Jersey militia under the command of General William Winds. However, unbeknownst to Baylor, Winds evacuated the area earlier that day after coming into contact with Cornwallis's troops, leaving Baylor's troops isolated and vulnerable to attack.⁶²⁹

At three o'clock in the morning, Grey's troops approached Baylor's encampment. Similar to Paoli, Grey ordered his men to remove the flints from their muskets, forcing them to use only their bayonets. Leading the attack were six light infantry companies, who surrounded the houses and barns where Baylor's dragoons slept.⁶³⁰ Grey's light infantry stormed the houses and barns and, without firing a shot, quickly overpowered the stunned and unarmed American dragoons. After their rapid assault, the light infantry swiftly withdrew out of concern for enemy reinforcements in the area.⁶³¹

⁶²⁸ Houlding, *Fit for Service*, pp. 238-241; Hoock, *Scars*, pp. 250-251; Nelson, *Sir Charles Grey*, pp. 50-52.

⁶²⁹ William Maurer, *Dragoon Diary: The History of the Third Continental Light Dragoons* (Author House, 2005), pp. 139-141.

⁶³⁰ Hoock, *Scars*, pp. 253-254; Maurer, *Dragoon Diary*, pp. 146-147; André, *The Journal*, p. 59.

⁶³¹ Nelson, *Sir Charles Grey*, p. 52.

The American casualty count, as reported by André, included, ‘The whole corps [of Baylor’s dragoons] within six or eight men were killed or taken prisoner.’⁶³² In Cornwallis’s report to Clinton, he commended Grey’s performance, boasting that:

The Major General conducted his march with so much order and so silently and made so good a disposition to surround the Village of Old Tappan where the Reg of Dragoons lay, that he entirely surprised them and very few escaped being either killed or taken, the likewise fell in with a small party of Militia, a few of whom were killed and some taken prisoner. The whole loss on our side was one man kill’d of the second Batt. of L[igh]t Infantry, who had the principal share in this business and behaved with their usual spirit and alacrity.⁶³³

Although not involved in the conflict, the German Adjutant General Baumeister commented on the attack in his journal. Baumeister reported that out of 120 dragoons, sixty ‘were cut down,’ and sixty-six were either wounded or taken prisoner. Baumeister was impressed with Baylor’s unit, adding that:

The men and horses show what Virginia has to offer. Not a single dragoon was younger than eighteen or older than twenty-six.⁶³⁴

Meanwhile, on 28 September, Washington received four letters that delivered him the unwelcome news about Baylor. Major General Israel Putnam reported information received from a sergeant in the dragoon unit, who explained that in the early morning hours:

The enemy found means to surprise Col. Bailer[sic] with his whole Regiment, then laying at Harring-town. They came upon them when they had only one man out to Reconnoiter, which they took and advanced immediately to where the Regt. Lay: They was so completely surprised, that sargt Robinson tells me, only himself, and two officers effected an escape. It is probable he may exaggerate a little, but I believe they have met with a verry [sic] severe blow.⁶³⁵

⁶³² André, *The Journal*, p. 59.

⁶³³ Clements Library, Henry Clinton Papers, Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 8 October 1778.

⁶³⁴ Baurmeister, *Revolution in America*, p. 220.

⁶³⁵ ‘To George Washington from Major General Israel Putnam, 28 September 1778,’ in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-17-02-0166>> [accessed 2 November 2023].

The casualty count, according to Robinson, was about fifty killed and about as many taken prisoner.⁶³⁶ Charles Stewart also wrote to Washington that he heard from a judge that resided near Tappan that Baylor's light horse 'have been surrounded, and cut off[f] or taken.'⁶³⁷ Colonel Otho Holland Williams reported that Captain Smith of Baylor's unit arrived with thirteen other men who escaped a surprise British attack between three and four in the morning. The captain explained that 'finding himself surrounded [they] asked for Quarter which they refus'd.' Further that he witnesses about twenty dragoons killed, and many others 'mortally wounded with Bayonets.' Captain Smith also reported that Baylor and his second in command, Major Alexander Clough, were taken prisoner.⁶³⁸ Finally, General William Winds, who commanded a militia unit that evacuated the area after spotting Cornwallis's troops, also wrote to Washington. Winds confirmed that Baylor lost a considerable number of men in his unit as a result of the surprise attack.⁶³⁹

On 29 September, Washington wrote to Henry Laurens, the President of the Continental Congress, and Brigadier General Charles Scott about the unfortunate news. At this point, Washington explained that he received hardly any information from just 'a few straglers [*sic*] that have come in,' who provided 'a very imperfect account' of the incident. He reported that this second-hand information alleged that the British took

⁶³⁶ 'To George Washington from Major General Israel Putnam, 28 September 1778,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-17-02-0166>> [accessed 2 November 2023].

⁶³⁷ 'To George Washington from Major General Israel Putnam, 28 September 1778,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-17-02-0166>> [accessed 2 November 2023].

⁶³⁸ 'To George Washington from Colonel Otho Holland Williams, 28 September 1778,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-17-02-0173>> [accessed 2 November 2023].

⁶³⁹ 'To George Washington from Brigadier General William Winds, 28 September 1778,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-17-02-0175>> [accessed 1 November 2023].

most of the officers as prisoners, and the ‘privates were put to the sword.’⁶⁴⁰ Because his initial reports came from only a handful of men who made their way to his camp, Washington expressed to Scott that ‘there is hope of its not being so bad as represented.’⁶⁴¹

Similar to his response to Wayne a year earlier, Washington also began to question the level of security that Baylor posted. In the same letter to Scott, he explained how the British found their way to Baylor’s encampment by the local inhabitants who gave away his position. The British then evaded all of Baylor’s guards by accessing the encampment through ‘unsuspecting roads.’ As a result, Washington cautioned to always instruct those in command to ‘take care of those parts from whence they suspect no danger.’⁶⁴²

As additional details trickled in from survivors, Washington began to suspect that the British acted with unnecessary cruelty that breached the laws of war. On 30 September, in a letter to Major General Horatio Gates, he explained that the British:

Surprized and cut off Col. Baylor, with the principal part of his regiment. I have not yet received an account sufficiently distinct, of this affair; but it appears to have been attended with every circumstance of barbarity. Most of his men, it seems, were killed unresisting and begging for quarter.⁶⁴³

⁶⁴⁰ ‘From George Washington to Henry Laurens, 29 September 1778,’ in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-17-02-0186>> [accessed 1 November 2023].

⁶⁴¹ ‘From George Washington to Brigadier General Charles Scott, 29 September 1778,’ in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-17-02-0193>> [accessed 1 November 2023].

⁶⁴² ‘From George Washington to Brigadier General Charles Scott, 29 September 1778,’ in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-17-02-0193>> [accessed 1 November 2023].

⁶⁴³ ‘From George Washington to Major General Horatio Gates, 30 September 1778,’ in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-17-02-0201>> [accessed 1 November 2023].

Washington also reported this allegation to Congress in a letter to Laurens on 3 October. Here, Washington provided a death toll, which now reached between fifty men and seventy horses. While the fate of Baylor was still unknown, his second in command, Clough, had since died from his wounds. ‘This affair, ‘Washington asserted, ‘appears to have been attended with every circumstance of cruelty.’⁶⁴⁴

Similar to the aftermath of the Battles of Trenton and Princeton, upon hearing the grievous reports, the Continental Congress launched an investigation into the British military’s conduct. Placed in charge of the investigation was William Livingston, the American governor of New Jersey. In a letter to Washington on 13 October, Livingston relayed his charge to obtain ‘The best information upon oath of the treatment of Lieut. Collo. Baylor, & his party by the Enemy who attacked them.’ Congress resolved that ‘if the bayonetting in cold blood should be proved he [Laurens] apprehends suitable retaliation will immediately follow a refusal of Satisfaction.’⁶⁴⁵ Assisting Livingston was General William Alexander Sterling, who enlisted the support of Dr. David Griffith, the Continental Army surgeon and a chaplain who attended to Baylor’s wounded troopers. ‘I have desired Doctor Griffith to Collect every Circumstance relative to the Massacre of Colonel Baylors Corps,’ Sterling wrote to Washington, ‘and to get them Assertaind on Oath.’⁶⁴⁶ Unlike the aftermath of Grey’s attack at Paoli, ‘The Baylor Massacre,’ and subsequent investigation, would soon erupt in the newspapers.

⁶⁴⁴ ‘From George Washington to Henry Laurens, 3 October 1778,’ in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-17-02-0247>> [accessed 1 November 2023].

⁶⁴⁵ ‘To George Washington from William Livingston, 13 October 1778,’ in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-17-02-0387>> [accessed 2 November 2023]; *JCC*, XII, p. 987.

⁶⁴⁶ ‘To George Washington from Major General Stirling, 16 October 1778,’ in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-17-02-0433>> [accessed 1 November 2023].

Different from the slow newspaper response to the British attack at Paoli, the papers published news on Grey's attack on Baylor's troops in less than one week. Furthermore, the response from the papers thereafter eclipsed the attack at Paoli a year earlier. The Loyalist-leaning newspapers were the first to publish on the battle, and similar to the Paoli reports, they praised Grey's success. On 30 September, the Loyalist *Royal Gazette* published the first accounts that the writer noted were delivered to the printer's office by an officer present at the action. The report exalted, 'Our troops dashed upon them with their bayonets to such effect, that only three of that corps escaped.' The article gave an account of the Americans captured, wounded, and killed in action. Further highlighting that Baylor's troops 'are said to have been the best appointed guards in his army.' Moreover, no British troops were hurt in the attack.⁶⁴⁷

In *The Royal Gazette*'s next issue three days later, the printer, Rivington, added additional details on the attack. The account detailed that when Grey's light infantry entered the houses where the American troopers slept, Colonel Baylor and Major McLeod attempted to escape up a large Dutch chimney. After the light infantry broke into another house, the troopers attempted to defend themselves with their broadswords 'sans effet.' In response, nine were instantly bayoneted, and seven received quarter. However, in another instance, when the British entered, an American officer demanded the name of the attacking unit, and the response was, 'The British light-infantry,' after which the American responded, 'then we shall all be cut off.'⁶⁴⁸ Both Loyalist papers, *The New York Gazette* and *The New York Journal*, followed *The Royal Gazette*'s lead

⁶⁴⁷ 'New-York,' *The Royal Gazette*, 30 September 1778, p. 3.

⁶⁴⁸ 'New-York,' *The Royal Gazette*, 3 October 1778, p. 3.

and circulated the same reports in their issues released that week.⁶⁴⁹ A few days later, the Patriot-leaning press in Connecticut released the same accounts which circulated in two other papers within the same week.⁶⁵⁰

While the Loyalist papers were the first to report on Baylor's defeat, soon the Patriot press would be the first to claim that the British refused quarter to surrendering American troops. In *The New Jersey Gazette* on 7 October was a more detailed account of the surprise attack on Baylor. The article blamed the attack on a 'tory' who gave information to the British on the location of the American troops and who, thereafter, escorted them to the location of Baylor's regiment. The article then alleged:

These horrible murderers consisted of two regiments of British light-infantry, a regiment and two troops of horse---who made a joint attack, the British officers ordering their men to "give no quarter to the rebels." Our cavalry being in a situation which did not admit of a successful defence[sic], a considerable part of the regiment unavoidably fell a sacrifice to those cruel and merciless men: Several of our soldiers were murdered after they had surrendered.⁶⁵¹

The account closed with the ultimatum that because the British demonstrated such cruelty, the American soldiers 'cry out for revenge.' *The New Jersey Gazette's* article would soon trigger anger among those supporting independence and become a rallying cry for their cause.⁶⁵²

The allegations gained more traction as they circulated within the Patriot-leaning papers. In *The Continental Journal* on 8 October, an article titled, 'Extract of a letter from Head Quarters,' which the publisher received via express from the 'Jersies,'

⁶⁴⁹ 'New-York,' *The New York Gazette*, 5 October 1778, p. 2; 'Fish-Kill,' *The New York Journal*, 5 October 1778, p. 2.

⁶⁵⁰ 'Fish-Kill,' *The Connecticut Courant*, 6 October 1778, p. 2; the other two Patriot-leaning papers to release this account were *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 6 October 1778, p. 2; and *The Connecticut Journal*, 7 October 1778, p. 3.

⁶⁵¹ 'Trenton,' *The New Jersey Gazette*, 7 October 1778, p. 3.

⁶⁵² 'Trenton,' *The New Jersey Gazette*, 7 October 1778, p. 3.

alleged more breaches of laws of war by the British. It reported that ‘In the most barbarous and unheard of manner [the British light infantry] murder’d in cold blood (after they had surrender’d) all the non commission’d officers and privates.’⁶⁵³ On the same day, *The Pennsylvania Packet* released an extract of a letter from Washington to Congress. After providing the grim news of the attack on Baylor’s men and the estimated losses, Washington ended the report stating, ‘This affair appears to have been attended with every circumstance of cruelty.’ He also added that as a ‘small compensation for this accident,’ after the attack on Baylor, the Americans surprised one hundred Jägers, killing ten and taking eighteen men prisoners, righteously taking revenge for the atrocities committed against Baylor’s troops.⁶⁵⁴

The same articles circulated for a week until 14 October, when *The New Jersey Gazette* reported additional allegations against the British. This report contained a description of the attack from an American officer from Baylor’s regiment. The officer explained:

Capt. Smith being suddenly surrounded by the enemy’s horse and foot, and feeling probable way of getting off, called out for quarter; but they, contrary to the rules of war and to every sentiment of humanity, refused his request, called him a *damn’d rebel*, and struck him over the head with a sword---which fired him with such indignation, that he bravely fought his way thro’ them, leaped over a fence, and escaped into a morass.⁶⁵⁵

This article not only alleged the British refused quarter but also highlighted that they breached the known laws of war. While circulated through most of the Patriot papers, the three Loyalist-leaning New York papers did not publish this officer’s testimony.

⁶⁵³ ‘Extract of a letter...,’ *The Continental Journal*, 8 October 1778, p. 2.

⁶⁵⁴ ‘Extract of a letter...,’ *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 8 October 1778, p. 3.

⁶⁵⁵ ‘Trenton,’ *The New Jersey Gazette*, 14 October 1778, p. 2.

Then, on 29 October, *The Pennsylvania Packet* published letters between Major General William Alexander Stirling and Dr. Griffith. It was in this article that Grey received the moniker the ‘No-Flint General.’ Stirling informed Griffith that Congress ‘Was desirous to have the particulars of the massacre of Col. Baylor’s regiment.’⁶⁵⁶ Griffith responded assuredly that Congress was not misinformed about the ‘savage cruelty’ shown to Baylor’s men by the British forces under Grey. Griffith confirmed that to ensure his men used their bayonets only, Grey ordered them to remove the flints from their firelocks. And most disturbingly, Grey ordered his men to give no quarter to the Americans. Griffith lamented, ‘This has occasioned the General to be nicknamed, among such of the British officers as can feel the compunctions of humanity, the *no Flint General*.’⁶⁵⁷ The article then provided the names of the British light infantry officers in command of the locations ‘where the greatest cruelties were exercised.’⁶⁵⁸

The same article was followed by affidavits from twenty of Baylor’s troopers, who all testified under oath. All but one testified that the British refused quarter and killed American prisoners. One witness explained that he was fortunate to escape, but when fleeing the scene, he heard the British cry out, ‘Skiver him!’ Several troopers also accused the British of tricking them into thinking they would give quarter. One reported that several men left the barn after the British offered quarter, but when they exited, they were immediately bayoneted. One private reported that an infantryman stabbed him in the arm after he fled from the barn. Miraculously, he escaped by pulling the bayonet from the firelock, then ran with the bayonet still lodged in his arm. Another trooper

⁶⁵⁶ ‘Philadelphia,’ *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 29 October 1778, pp. 1–2.

⁶⁵⁷ ‘Philadelphia,’ *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 29 October 1778, pp. 1–2.

⁶⁵⁸ ‘Philadelphia,’ *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 29 October 1778, pp. 1–2.

reported that when he asked for quarter, a British soldier replied, ‘They could not give none, for it was their orders to stab every man.’

Some troopers reported that a few of the British light infantrymen did give quarter. For example, a dragoon who was stabbed three times reported that some of the British soldiers gave quarter to four men they found hiding in straw.⁶⁵⁹ Highlighted in this article were also the honorable actions of one unknown British light infantry officer. Reportedly, after giving the order to attack, most of the officers did not storm the houses alongside their men. Some witnesses believed that this lack of oversight by the British officers caused total chaos to ensue, one stating that ‘no stop might be put to the rage and barbarity of the blood hounds.’ However, one British captain did enter the house they raided with his men. Reportedly, this unknown captain:

Had the feelings of remorse, and ventured to disobey the orders; he gave quarter to the whole fourth troop, and not a man of them was hurt, except two that happened to be on guard. For the honor of humanity it is to be wished, this gentleman’s name had been known.⁶⁶⁰

This story begs the question of whether Grey gave a general order to refuse quarter or left it to the junior officers to make this decision independently. If Grey ordered his men to give no quarter, however, then some British soldiers disobeyed his orders. The revolutionary-leaning articles that highlighted the humanity of some British soldiers also implied that Grey did not have total control of his men.

Overall, the negative response to this incident was significantly greater than the aftermath of Paoli, which was virtually nonexistent. The public reaction and anger over Grey’s attack on Baylor were just as intense as the aftermath of Lexington and Concord

⁶⁵⁹ ‘Philadelphia,’ *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 29 October 1778, pp. 1–2.

⁶⁶⁰ ‘Philadelphia,’ *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 29 October 1778, pp. 1–2.

and as sensational as Ceders. Furthermore, this conflict led to another investigation ordered by the Continental Congress. After this incident, the newspaper articles also endowed Grey with the nickname the No-Flint General. Of all British general officers who served during the American Revolution, Grey was the only one the revolutionaries awarded this honor. Moreover, the news highlighted multiple times that the light infantry troops executed the shocking attacks, perhaps bolstering their reputation for using excessive force.

As Grey rose to notoriety in the public eye, the newspapers continued to show interest in his activities after the Baylor massacre. As the news of his attack on Baylor's troops circulated, reports also surfaced that Grey was leaving America. In *The New Jersey Gazette*, on 25 November 1778, a brief report informed the public that Grey's baggage was loaded on a ship bound for Great Britain. An extract of a letter that reported on British movements stated, 'Yesterday General Grey's baggage was put on board the Brune frigate, it is said he is going to England.'⁶⁶¹ News of Grey's departure perhaps indicated the American public's increased attention on his whereabouts.

Indeed, Grey did return to Great Britain a few months after the Baylor incident. In the Fall of 1778, Grey petitioned George III to allow him to return to England. At the heart of his petition was his belief that the British could not win the war. Furthermore, with tensions rising between Great Britain and France once again, he believed he would easily gain a command elsewhere. According to Nelson, Grey was acutely aware of the controversy that Paoli and especially the attack on Baylor's dragoons caused. Nelson argues that Grey ignored the colonial newspaper reports, explaining that due to his

⁶⁶¹ 'Trenton,' *The New Jersey Gazette*, 25 November 1778, p. 3.

‘Qualities as a soldier and his awareness of the psychological factor in warfare, he probably dismissed the Americans’ prating as exercises in propaganda and those on his own side as uninformed opinion-mongering.’⁶⁶² Grey never responded to the allegation that he ordered his troops in these conflicts to give no quarter. In late November 1778, after receiving approval from Barrington to return to England, he departed New York.

The Aftermath

At the same time Grey boarded a ship for England, members of a commission appointed by Parliament also returned after failing to negotiate peace with the Continental Congress. Both parties set sail to England with grim hopes for the future of their campaign in America. The intent of the Carlisle Peace Commission, sent to America by North in 1777, was to extend an olive branch to revolutionary leadership out of concern that the United States and France would formalize their alliance. However, Congress refused to negotiate. As a departing gift, the commissioners left the American people with a manifesto, giving them one last chance to declare allegiance to the King. Arguably, because they released their manifesto soon after the Baylor massacre, it only triggered the Continental Congress to respond with their own manifesto alleging multiple incidents that the King’s troops breached laws of war. The Continental Congress’ manifesto was more than simply a reply to the peace commissioners’ final statements and declarations to the people in America. Similar to the Declaration of Independence, Congress included multiple grievances against the British; however, this time, they all centered around breaches of laws of war. The response to Congress’

⁶⁶² Nelson, *Sir Charles Grey*, p. 54.

manifesto also put certain conflicts that initially did not yield press coverage into the spotlight, including Paoli.

Parliament's fear of a Franco-American alliance was valid. After the Americans' victory at Saratoga in October 1777, both nations started negotiations for a treaty that cemented France's financial and military support for the new American government.⁶⁶³ In return, the United States would aid France in case of an attack by Great Britain. To stop the alliance, Britain offered the Americans everything they previously demanded, except full independence, in exchange for peace. Parliament drafted offerings that removed Great Britain's taxing power over the colonies and rescinded the restrictions placed on the Massachusetts Bay colony after the Boston Tea Party.⁶⁶⁴ North also gave the Peace Commission authorization to add concessions as appropriate during negotiations. The commission was also to negotiate for the release of the thousands of British prisoners of war captured after the Battle of Saratoga.⁶⁶⁵

The commissioners set sail for America in April 1777. Named head of the commission was Frederick Howard, Earl of Carlisle. At only thirty years old, Carlisle came with little experience but much promise since entering the House of Lords in 1770. However, the slightly more experienced William Eden, 1st Baron of Auckland,

⁶⁶³ 'Treaty of Alliance with France (1778),' in *National Archives* <<https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/treaty-of-alliance-with-france>> [accessed 31 March 2024]. In 1777, the Continental Congress sent Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane, and Arthur Lee traveled to France to conduct the negotiations. The Treaty of Alliance with France was signed on 6 February 1778.

⁶⁶⁴ The Massachusetts Government Act, 20 May 1774, restructured the colony's government, giving crown-appointed officials more power. The newspapers published the offers made to Congress, see: 'From the London Morning Post, *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 2 October 1779, p. 2.

⁶⁶⁵ Anthony Gregory, 'Formed for Empire': The Continental Congress Responds to the Carlisle Peace Commission,' *Journal of the Early Republic*, 38 (2018), 643-672 (p. 648), doi.org/10.1353/jer.2018.0068. The Carlisle Peace Commission was the second attempt at peace extended by Great Britain. The first occurred in May 1776 with the Howe brothers serving as the commissioners. However, they held little negotiating power, and their efforts failed as the colonies were set on independence.

took on the group's leadership role. Eden was a member of the Board of Trade and also worked in intelligence gathering in Europe during the war.⁶⁶⁶ The third commissioner was the more seasoned former governor of British West Florida and Royal Navy officer, George Johnstone. While North also appointed the Howe brothers, who already resided in America, they played no part in the negotiations. Lastly, Adam Ferguson, a philosophy professor at the University of St. Andrews in Edinburgh, served as the commission's secretary.⁶⁶⁷

By the time the commissioners arrived in America on 4 June 1778, they were unaware that the Continental Congress already responded to their offerings, which they printed in the newspapers. On 22 April 1778, an article reported that Congress received:

A certain printed paper sent from Philadelphia, purporting to be the draught of a bill for declaring the intention of the parliament of Great Britain as to the exercise of what they are pleased to term their right of imposing taxes within these United States: and also the draught of a bill to enable the king of Great Britain to appoint commissioners with powers to treat, consult and agree upon the means of quieting certain disorders within the said states.⁶⁶⁸

Sitting in their alternate location of York, Pennsylvania, after the British occupied Philadelphia, Congress suspected the origin and authenticity of the papers. However, if legitimate, Congress determined that the papers provided evidence of the 'weakness and wickedness of the enemy.' They assumed that the British must have come to the realization that they could not enforce what they initially demanded of the colonies. Instead of honoring the treatise previously made by Congress, the King rejected all and instead 'waged a most cruel war against them, and employed the savages to butcher

⁶⁶⁶ Gregory, 'Formed for Empire,' p. 650.

⁶⁶⁷ Gregory, 'Formed for Empire,' p. 650.

⁶⁶⁸ *JCC*, X, pp. 374-380.

innocent women and children.’ But most concerning was that if Congress agreed to the offerings, they had no confidence that the British would not renege on their promises at a later date. In all, Congress agreed that the bills were a ploy intended to sow division within the American people. They also resolved that if any man attempted to treat with the commissioners, they would be deemed ‘Enemies of the United States.’ In all, the Continental Congress resolved that they would not enter into any agreement with Great Britain unless they withdrew their troops and acknowledged their independence.⁶⁶⁹

When the commissioners arrived at the colonies, not only did they learn that the Congress already rejected their offers, but also, to their dismay, that Clinton had evacuated the British Army from Philadelphia just days earlier. Philadelphia was a bargaining chip that the commissioners no longer held, placing them at a diplomatic disadvantage. Further, the British evacuation of the American capital city caused many Loyalists to feel abandoned by the British government, which led to some switching allegiances. The evacuation of Philadelphia also triggered a loss of confidence in Britain’s ability to suppress the rebellion. Commissioner Eden strongly believed this action only showed weakness in Britain’s ability to rule in America and strengthened the revolutionary cause.⁶⁷⁰

In the end, the commissioners never met with Congress, as the Americans refused to negotiate in person. In addition to what they initially assessed of Parliament’s offering, Congress was infuriated over allegations that Johnstone tried to bribe Washington and other members of the Continental Congress into supporting

⁶⁶⁹ *JCC*, X, pp. 374-380.

⁶⁷⁰ Gregory, ‘Formed for Empire,’ p. 671.

reconciliation.⁶⁷¹ Further, the Congress did not trust the British government would uphold any agreements. As a last straw, the commissioners attempted to appeal to the American public by alleging that Congress blocked the people's opinions from entering the negotiations by refusing an audience with the commissioners.⁶⁷² These appeals only made the situation worse and the distrust of the commissioners' intentions even stronger. Congress stood firm in their stance that they would settle for nothing less than full independence.⁶⁷³

Before returning to Great Britain, the commissioners made one final attempt to appeal to the American public by printing their response to the uncompromising Continental Congress on a broadside titled, 'Manifesto and Proclamation,' published on 3 October 1778.⁶⁷⁴ Officially sent by Clinton on behalf of the commissioners, the proclamation announced that they were discontinuing their efforts to discourse with Congress and were returning to England. It summarized all that the commissioners wanted to offer to the Americans, and by refusing to negotiate, Congress was now responsible to their people and the world for the continuation of the war. In a move intended to sow division within the colonial public, they offered to meet separately with any colonial assembly, organization, religious group, or individual who would still like to pursue peace with Britain and return to 'the class of peaceful citizens.' Further, full pardons would be given to both civilians and those serving in a civil or military capacity who were angered by Congress' refusal to talk with the commissioners and thus no

⁶⁷¹ Gregory, 'Formed for Empire,' pp. 659, 665, 657.

⁶⁷² Gregory, 'Formed for Empire,' pp. 663-664.

⁶⁷³ Gregory, 'Formed for Empire,' p. 668.

⁶⁷⁴ 'Clinton, Henry, Sir (1738?-1795) Manifesto and Proclamation to the members of the Congress,' in *The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History* <<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/glc01032>> [accessed 1 November 2023]; Rivington was the printer of this broadside.

longer supported the revolutionary cause. The commissioners gave the American people forty days to decide.⁶⁷⁵ Soon, the Loyalist-leaning press warned that ‘The olive branch cannot be held out forever,’ and that Congress was resting on shaky and uncertain grounds and unlikely to succeed in their quest for independence.⁶⁷⁶

The Patriot-leaning press also responded swiftly by immediately printing the Carlyle Commission’s manifesto with commentary in their news publications. On 19 October, for example, an article in *The Independent Ledger* commented on ‘The DYING SPEECH of the British Commissioners’ by explaining how their manifesto offended the public. For one, it referenced the United States as ‘rebels’ and attempted to divide the people from Congress. Further, the commissioners criticized the American alliance with France, proclaiming, ‘And no wonder; since it is the final blow to British tyranny in America.’ Alleging breaches of laws of war, the writer complained that after Great Britain ignored the petitions America made in the past, they had since endured their conduct in war and maltreatment of its prisoners. While the commissioners gave Americans forty days to decide, it will come to no avail, the article proclaimed, adding, ‘Oh, what a pity, since it [America] rises so glorious in the eyes of all the world.’⁶⁷⁷ Here again, claiming America has taken the moral high ground.

The Continental Congress responded to the commissioners with their own manifesto, signed on 13 October and subsequently published in the colonial papers. However, Congress did not only respond to the commissioners’ claims and threats, but

⁶⁷⁵ ‘Clinton, Henry, Sir (1738?-1795) Manifesto and Proclamation to the members of the Congress,’ in *The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History* <<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/glc01032>> [accessed 1 November 2023].

⁶⁷⁶ ‘To his Excellency,’ *The Royal Gazette*, November 14, 1778, p. 2.

⁶⁷⁷ ‘Boston,’ *The Independent Ledger*, 19 October 1778, p. 2.

they included multiple allegations the British military violated laws of war over the past two years. Highlighting these atrocities led to a response from the newspapers that pushed Paoli, a battle that initially gained little attention, into the spotlight. Congress' manifesto began by denouncing the commissioners' quest to 'subjugate the unconquerable spirit of freedom' by attempting to break 'the bonds of allegiance' amongst the American people using bribes and deceit. Then they blamed Great Britain for using 'oppressive and tyrannous measures,' declaring:

The conduct of those serving under the King of Great-Britain, hath, with some few exceptions, been diametrically opposite. They have laid waste to open country, burned the defenseless villages, and butchered citizens of America. Their prisons have been slaughter-houses of her soldiers, their ships of her seamen, and several injuries have been aggravated by the greatest insult.⁶⁷⁸

The document closed with a threat stating if Great Britain could not follow the Americans' example and 'respect those laws which are held sacred among civilized nations,' the United States would have no choice but to 'vindicate the rights of humanity,' and, 'take such exemplarily vengeance as shall deter other from a like conduct.'⁶⁷⁹ In essence, the United States would have the right to retaliate if the atrocities continued.

Anonymous news writers, such as 'Americanus,' reinforced Congress' message to Great Britain by expanding on the list of atrocities the British Army committed over the campaign season of 1778. In a scathing letter to Clinton, published in *The*

⁶⁷⁸ 'Philadelphia,' *The Maryland Journal*, 9 November 1778; p. 2; United States Continental Congress, Henry Laurens, Charles Thomson, John Dunlap, and Continental Congress Broadside Collection, 'By the Congress of the United States of America. Manifesto,' LOC <<https://www.loc.gov/item/90898054/>> [accessed 1 April 2024].

⁶⁷⁹ 'Philadelphia,' *The Maryland Journal*, 9 November 1778, p. 2; United States Continental Congress, Henry Laurens, Charles Thomson, John Dunlap, and Continental Congress Broadside Collection, 'By the Congress of the United States of America. Manifesto,' LOC <<https://www.loc.gov/item/90898054/>> [accessed 1 April 2024].

Pennsylvania Packet on 10 November, Americanus criticized the British Commander-in-Chief by declaring:

The threats in your late despicable Manifesto, I call British courage, in the present contest, into question, it appears to me, that you do not think yourselves safe while a yeoman of American lives.⁶⁸⁰

Americanus's letter also blamed Clinton for breaching laws of war, specifically citing both Grey's attacks on Baylor and Wayne a year earlier as examples. Further, Americanus highlighted two other incidents that occurred in 1778 as well, stating:

If your repeated massacres in former campaigns, and the horrid spectacle of Lacey's wounded militia men, smothered and burnt in straw, had been forgotten, and recent butchery of Col. Baylor's light horse and some of Pulaski's legion would revive them, and add new provocatives for revenge. The stale excuse for your repeated barbarous murders, "that carnage is inevitable in surprizes and nocturnal attacks," is once more confronted to your disgrace.⁶⁸¹

Americanus, in essence, tied criticism of Grey's tactics against Baylor's light horse with the Continental Congress' response to the Carlisle Commission. This action arguably propelled Grey further into the public eye and may also be why Parliament eventually called on Grey to testify, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Americanus then explained that while the American forces were capable of effective surprise night attacks as well, they would do the honorable thing and give quarter, unlike the British, as 'we have not learned to imitate their barbarities.' Once again, this argues that Americans held higher moral standards than the British. The letter ended with a threat, similar to Congress' manifesto, stating:

⁶⁸⁰ 'To his Excellency,' *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 10 November 1778, p. 3.

⁶⁸¹ 'To his Excellency,' *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 10 November 1778, p. 3; In reference to the Paoli massacre, the article described, 'the ghosts of Baylor's, Lacey's, and Wayne's butchered men...'

But remember, if you give another proof of your degeneracy from those sentiments which is the boast of civilized nations, we shall be obliged to bring you to a sense of justice, and we have the means in our hands.⁶⁸²

Americanus' letter to Clinton admonishing the commissioners and accused Clinton of multiple breaches of laws of war. It is in this article that the public became informed of the connections between Grey's attack on Baylor's men and the attack on Wayne at Paoli a year earlier. Arguably propelling the Paoli massacre into the same spotlight as the Baylor massacre and further defaming Grey.

Aside from the massacre of Baylor and Wayne's troops, Americanus' article also referenced the alleged murders of Brigadier General John Lacey's Pennsylvania militia during the battle of Crooked Billet on 1 May 1778.⁶⁸³ Reportedly, after the dust settled from this minor conflict, several militiamen were found burnt to death in a pile of straw.⁶⁸⁴ The alleged perpetrators in this case were the Queen's American Rangers commanded by Major John Simcoe and a unit of Grenadiers.⁶⁸⁵ In addition, Americanus cited the allegations that several troops from General Casimir Pulaski's Legion were refused quarter at the Battle of Little Egg Harbor on 15 October 1778. This British attack was led by Captain Patrick Ferguson's Loyalist militia and a detachment from the

⁶⁸² 'To his Excellency,' *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 10 November 1778, p. 3.

⁶⁸³ 'To his Excellency,' *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 10 November 1778, p. 3; For more on Little Egg Harbor, see: Clements Library, Henry Clinton Papers, Patrick Ferguson to Henry Clinton, 15 October 1778. Ferguson admitted to not giving quarter. Also see: Francis Kajencki, *The Pulaski Legion in the American Revolution* (Southwest Polonia Press, 2004), 99-101.

⁶⁸⁴ For more on Crooked Billet, see: 'Testimony of British Atrocities at Crooked Billet, May 1, 1778,' in *Explore PA History* <<http://explorepahistory.com/odocument.php?docId=1-4-2F>> [accessed 1 November 2023], Witnessed and recorded by Major Carl Baurmeister, of the German auxiliaries, in Baurmeister, *Revolution in America*, p. 169.

⁶⁸⁵ For Simcoe's account of Crooked Billet, see: John Graves Simcoe, *A Journal of the Operations of the Queen's Rangers* (The New York Times & Arno Press, 1968), pp. 56-60. For the allegation that the British burnt several militiamen to death see: 'To George Washington from Brigadier General John Lacey, Jr., 2 May 1778,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-15-02-0018>> [accessed 27 October 2023].

70th Regiment of Foot. Similar to Grey's assaults, Ferguson's men raided houses where Pulaski's men slept and slaughtered many solely using their bayonets.⁶⁸⁶

Indeed, the year 1778 was a year of many atrocity allegations against the British. The newspapers highlighted other incidents occurring this year, accusing the British of refusing quarter, and also murdering civilians, and setting private houses on fire. As mentioned earlier, Grey's mission to destroy several coastal villages housing American military stores prior to the Baylor massacre received some news coverage.⁶⁸⁷ Also implicated in another incident were Simcoe and his Queen's Rangers in a conflict occurring at a location called Hancock House in New Jersey on 21 March 1778. Once again, allegations the British refused quarter emerged after the rangers stormed a house that American militia quartered. The rangers killed thirty militia and also the owner of the house, Judge Hancock, who turned out to be a noncombatant and Loyalist. The newspaper reports accused the rangers of murdering not only innocent civilians in the house but also the militia who had attempted to surrender.⁶⁸⁸

Lastly, on 3 July, another British ranger unit allegedly massacred surrendering American militia in the Pennsylvania frontier region called the Wyoming Valley. The perpetrators were John Butler's rangers and his Haudenosaunee Indigenous allies led by Sayenqueraghta, an Onodowaga war chief.⁶⁸⁹ Butler and Sayenqueraghta's men killed approximately two hundred American militia under Colonel Zebulon Butler and destroyed multiple private houses. News spread that the Indigenous troops scalped and

⁶⁸⁶ For more on the Battle at Little Egg Harbor in New Jersey and Pulaski's legion, see: Kajencki, *The Pulaski Legion*, pp. 99-101.

⁶⁸⁷ 'Boston,' *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 29 September 1778, p. 2.

⁶⁸⁸ 'From a correspondent,' *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 15 April 1778, p. 2.

⁶⁸⁹ Onodowaga is the Indigenous term for the Seneca Nation.

murdered hundreds of civilians and also militia who were attempting to surrender.⁶⁹⁰

During this battle, a Haudenosaunee woman named Queen Esther allegedly tortured American militia captured after the Battle of Wyoming. As a result, the legend of Queen Esther and her 'bloody rock' arose. However, this story did not appear in the newspapers at the time, as it emerged after the war.⁶⁹¹ Once again, their British allies, this time under Butler, denied any control over Sayenqueraghta's men. Moreover, the Wyoming massacre brought the focus of atrocity allegations back on Indigenous forces as the main perpetrators since the last allegations made at Cedars in 1776.

The events of 1778 also triggered debates in Parliament in early 1779 that often centered on laws of war and the use of harsh measures. It was during these discussions that Parliament called on Grey to testify. After the failure of the peace commissioners and the British army's inability to crush the rebellion, the British government reached a point of strategic uncertainty on the way forward. Parliament was divided between those who believed the war could not be won and those who insisted that with more men, using hardliner strategies, they could finally suppress the revolutionary movement. This division led to a hearing in the House of Commons on the American war in May 1779. The intent was to scrutinize the failures thus far and to debate the way forward. However, also emerging from this hearing were the thoughts from key leadership on applying laws of war. During these discussions, many expressed concerns that hardliner

⁶⁹⁰ 'Poughkeepsie,' *The Connecticut Courant*, 28 July 1778, p. 2; 'Fish-Kill,' *The New Jersey Gazette*, 22 July 1778, p. 3; 'New-London,' *The Independent Ledger*, 27 July 1778, p. 2.

⁶⁹¹ This is the story of Esther Montour, for more, see: William Kashatus, 'The Wyoming Massacre: The Surpassing Horror of the American Revolution, July 3, 1778,' *The Valley Forge Journal* 4.2 (1988), 107-122 (p. 117), Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse University Press, 1972), p. 174; Eileen Palma, 'The Battle of Wyoming, 1778: Legends of Atrocities,' *Iroquoia* 5 (2019), 119-145 (pp. 135-138).

measures were never going to lead to a victory. Surprisingly, during this hearing, Grey was the biggest proponent advocating against harsh measures.

Predictably, the debates and divisions within Parliament were made public to the colonial people through the newspapers. Some articles focused on Clinton's demands for reinforcements and intent to continue down the warpath. For example, a report initially published in London on 27 January 1779, and then in the colonial papers in June, stated that:

We hear from good authority, that the ministry are in the utmost perplexity, how to act in regard to the army in America; as it is certain that Sir Henry Clinton has demanded such reinforcements as they have it not in their inclination to feud; and that he has declared his intention of resigning the command, if his requisition is not complied with. It is also whispered, that Lord Cornwallis and General Grey were ready to embark for America on the shortest notice, to accompany such reinforcements as the commander in chief has required.⁶⁹²

On the one hand, this article may have given some comfort to colonists who were against the war that they had friends in Parliament who disagreed with continuing to fund it.⁶⁹³ This article also demonstrates that Grey remained a focus of attention in the news several months after he returned to England.

The colonial news also published the minutes of the Parliamentary hearings that debated the future of the American war. The hearing was led by a Committee on the American Papers and focused on the content of several letters between the Commanders-in-Chief and members of the administration, primarily the Secretary of the Colonies, since the beginning of the war. The intent was to investigate the actions taken by the military commanders, why they failed thus far, and then determine the way

⁶⁹² 'London,' *The Pennsylvania Journal*, 2 June 1779, p. 2.

⁶⁹³ 'London,' *The Pennsylvania Journal*, 2 June 1779, p. 2.

forward. Several key leaders provided testimony, which was a mix of those for and against continuing the war. *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, for example, published this discourse proclaiming that ‘Lord Cornwallis, lord Howe, gen. Howe, gen. Grey, col. Montefor, and capt. Hammond of the Roebuck, have declared their opinions, in the most positive terms, in parliament, that a conquest of the United States, is impracticable.’⁶⁹⁴

The first to testify during the hearing was Cornwallis, who provided a strong defense of Howe’s actions by giving the audience a picture of the immense challenges he faced. Cornwallis explained:

America was better calculated than any country he ever saw for a defensive war, that from the great number of woods with which it abounds, the King’s troops were continually liable to ambuscades, and that it is a matter of extreme difficulty ever to get any the least information from the inhabitants for military purposes. His Lordship also admitted that it was impossible at any time to gain any good intelligence of the enemy’s force from a reconnoitre.’⁶⁹⁵

The committee then asked Cornwallis about Howe’s failure to crush the Continental Army at the Battle of Long Island while he had them trapped between the British front and the East River in Brooklyn. The general responded that if Howe ‘attempted it, and succeeded at the attack, it must have cost him more men than it would have been worth, for any purpose it would have answered.’⁶⁹⁶ After being further questioned about

⁶⁹⁴ ‘Philadelphia,’ *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 21 August 1779, p. 4; Some declined to testify out of concern that there was an American spy in the midst. General Robinson reportedly was one who held this concern. The article stated: ‘The Gen. declined giving an opinion on some military point, and alleged as a reason, that the Americans might avail themselves of such an opinion.’ When asked, ‘what means he thought the Americans would come to the knowledge of such an opinion?’ Robinson stated, ‘he really could not tell; he knew that opinions and information too had reached that country from this, and his opinion might be conveyed through that same channel.’ Robinson was concerned that there was a friend of the Americans in the House of Commons who was leaking information to the revolutionaries; see: ‘New-York,’ *The Royal Gazette*, 4 September 1779, p. 3.

⁶⁹⁵ ‘London,’ *The New Jersey Gazette*, 1 September 1779, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁹⁶ ‘London,’ *The New Jersey Gazette*, 1 September 1779, pp. 1-2.

Howe's actions at White Plains and then also Trenton and Princeton, Cornwallis continued to defend the former Commander-in-Chief. However, Cornwallis refused to answer questions about how to proceed with the war.⁶⁹⁷ When asked whether he thought it prudent at this time to 'pursue the war with more severity,' Cornwallis responded that 'he did not think severity on our side would *now* terrify the rebels; it would rather tend in his opinion to animate them.'⁶⁹⁸ Cornwallis believed that harsher measures would only increase the revolutionaries' resolve and not achieve the end goal of terrorizing them into submission.

Next to testify was General Grey, and the newspapers also published a summary of his comments. Overall, Grey concurred with Cornwallis's reasoning as to why the British could not win the war in America. Howe then asked Grey several questions related to the use of harsh measures. Howe first asked whether he [Howe] 'had ever treated the rebels with any improper lenity?' Grey responded that 'The Commander in Chief had never shewn them any lenity but what was extremely proper, highly to the service of the King, and much to the honor of the British troops.' Howe then questioned whether 'a more severe course of war would have been attended with any good consequences?' Grey responded that a more severe course 'would not have had any such effect, but would have exasperated the rebels to more vigorous exertion of their strength, which (in his opinion) had always been superior to ours.'⁶⁹⁹ Grey continued to explain that the war was a war of posts, 'as the rebels were, from the nature of their country,

⁶⁹⁷ See Cornwallis's full testimony in: '6 May 1779,' *History Proceedings and Debates of the Fifth Session of the House of Commons of the Fourteenth Parliament of Great-Britain*, 13 (1779), 1-33 (pp. 1-16) <https://parlipapers.proquest.com/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.pr_1774_1780-000895?accountid=14664> [accessed 30 April 2024].

⁶⁹⁸ 'London,' *The New Jersey Gazette*, 1 September 1779, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁹⁹ 'London,' *The New Jersey Gazette*, 1 September 1779, pp. 1-2.

able to dispute every inch of ground as it were with us,' and the British could never extend their operations too far from their fleet providing supplies and provisions.⁷⁰⁰ More extreme violence against the Americans would never work. Grey explained that 'though they possibly might have been terrified at first, it was not to be done now.'⁷⁰¹ In essence, the British no longer held any grip on the American people, using fear as a means to manipulate the colonists into submission.⁷⁰²

Despite his already notorious reputation for orchestrating the cruel and inhumane attacks on Wayne and Baylor's men, Grey strongly urged parliament that employing harsh measures would not help their cause. Grey explained that hardliner tactics would trigger more negative repercussions for the British, with no gains. When asked whether 'desolation of the country in America would have tended more to alienate the minds of the Americans from his Majesty's government, then to terrify them into obedience?' Grey responded that he 'thought it would have had the very contrary effect from terrifying them into obedience.' While not questioned about the two attacks that led him to be known as the No-Flint General nor his raid on coastal towns in New England, the committee asked him about the burning of 500 houses in the town of Falmouth, Massachusetts, on 18 October 1775. During his time in Germany and France during the Seven Years' War, they asked if Grey had ever known of an instance similar to Falmouth. Grey responded, 'I never saw that one instance, where such sort of war was

⁷⁰⁰ 'London,' *The New Jersey Gazette*, 1 September 1779, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁰¹ 'London,' *The New Jersey Gazette*, 1 September 1779, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁰² For Grey's testimony, see: '6 May 1779,' in *History Proceedings and Debates of the Fifth Session of the House of Commons of the Fourteenth Parliament of Great-Britain*, 13 (1779), 1-33 (pp. 17-32) <https://parlipapers.proquest.com/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.pr_1774_1780-000895?accountid=14664> [accessed 30 April 2024].

carried into execution, and I hope I never shall.’⁷⁰³ Grey’s response was a tacit denial of any wrongdoing during his raid on the coastal towns in Connecticut.

Grey continued to emphasize multiple times that using more severe measures would give no advantage to the King’s forces. From his assessment, Great Britain could never subdue the Americans, no matter how harsh the measures taken. If that occurred, ‘so horrid a war’ would only serve to hurt the British military more than the Americans, given all the disadvantages Grey and Cornwallis explained the British army faced in America.⁷⁰⁴ In the end, Grey made it clear once again that, ‘I do not think, from the beginning of June, when I landed at New York, in 1777, to the 20th of November, 1778, there was in that time a number of troops in America altogether adequate to the subduing that country by force of arms.’⁷⁰⁵ During this hearing, Grey did not display the hardliner tendencies one would assume based on his reputation.

One member of Parliament who opposed Grey and Cornwallis’s assessment as to whether Great Britain could win the war was William Eden, the head of the Carlyle Commission. Although he disagreed with their opinion on the future of the war, he did express his firm support for staying in alignment with the laws of war. In his testimony, he alluded to Grey’s political leanings as a reason for his stance on the war, although he

⁷⁰³ ‘6 May 1779,’ in *History Proceedings and Debates of the Fifth Session of the House of Commons of the Fourteenth Parliament of Great-Britain*, 13 (1779), 1-33 (p. 28)
<https://parlipapers.proquest.com/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.pr_1774_1780-000895?accountid=14664> [accessed 30 April 2024].

⁷⁰⁴ ‘6 May 1779,’ in *History Proceedings and Debates of the Fifth Session of the House of Commons of the Fourteenth Parliament of Great-Britain*, 13 (1779), 1-33 (p. 19)
<https://parlipapers.proquest.com/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.pr_1774_1780-000895?accountid=14664> [accessed 30 April 2024].

⁷⁰⁵ ‘6 May 1779,’ in *History Proceedings and Debates of the Fifth Session of the House of Commons of the Fourteenth Parliament of Great-Britain*, 13 (1779), 1-33 (p. 31)
<https://parlipapers.proquest.com/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.pr_1774_1780-000895?accountid=14664> [accessed 30 April 2024].

highly admired him for his skill as a commander. Furthermore, he felt compelled to give his opposing opinion but acknowledged that his experience in America consisted of staying in the larger cities and not in the camps or on ships where the action was. In terms of his opinion on the way forward, Eden was clear that Great Britain must honor America with the laws of war. He explained:

A short collection of those laws and usages of war, applied to the past conduct of our armies, is, indeed, a most sufficient defence of the paragraph in question. Nothing in my opinion is more clear than that the exertions made by this country, previous to the year 1778, have been amply adequate to the reduction of the rebellion; and surely the lenity to which that paragraph alludes, though not the chief cause, is the most creditable cause of our failure; that cause is surely the most flattering both to this country and the late Commanders, and to those who instructed them – In plain English, if this war is to be prosecuted, and that it must be so is a matter, not merely of experience or justice, but of necessity, it must be followed in a very different system. Not with a wanton inhumanity, unauthorized by civilized nations, but with those severities which are usually exercised in our days by one foreign nation at war with another, and which, horrible and calamitous as they appear in fanciful descriptions and declamations, are, in moral sense, not more than the common use of the musket, against which less is said, because we are more familiarized to it.⁷⁰⁶

Here, Eden blamed much of Britain's failure to end the rebellion on lenient measures and called for the war to continue as conducted between civilized nations. However, while not condoning breaching laws of war, he supported harsher measures.

Despite what Grey testified to Parliament in 1779, there is evidence from Serle's journal that when he arrived in America, he held strong hardliner sentiments. Serle dined with Grey and also Sir William Erskine, Clinton's Quartermaster-General, and Colonel James Patterson, Adjutant General in America, on 1 June 1778, not long after the British evacuated Philadelphia. During the dinner, a conversation arose regarding negotiation

⁷⁰⁶ 'From the London Morning Post,' *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 2 October 1779, p. 2.

with Washington on the exchange of prisoners from the Battle of Saratoga. Patterson implied that they used ‘some Delicacy’ when addressing this issue with the Americans, which had not been done previously. Grey interrupted, stating:

Too much Refinement & altercation with such men as Washington & his People had been used already, or affairs had never been in their present Situation; That there was but one mode of settling any thing effectually with them, and that this was by the Sword.⁷⁰⁷

Grey continued that if Washington would not agree to an exchange, then they should place their American prisoners in the ‘Holds of Vessels,’ where they would likely face sickness and even death. Serle reported that Erskine also agreed and further argued that:

The Time of Lenity was now over, and we had already suffered sufficiently by it... This Abandonment of the Town [Philadelphia], so void of all Honor, Spirit & Policy, made him miserable in himself & ashamed of the name of a Briton. The Rebels were nothing compared with our Army in any respect; and that, humanely speaking, we might even now (as we could have done long since) “put our foot upon them” & soon settle the Controversy.⁷⁰⁸

Grey wholeheartedly agreed with Erskine’s comments. Serle, devastated by the loss of Philadelphia, commented that ‘the two Generals spoke with much Warmth, and strong Resentment of the Disgrace, wch [*sic*] was arising to their Country & to the British Arms.’ Further that, ‘The rest of us were silent, but, I believe, greatly pleased.’⁷⁰⁹ Grey put his words into action when attacking Baylor’s troopers three months later.

It is possible Grey’s beliefs over how to handle the revolutionaries evolved over his short service in America, triggering his turn in opinion. Or, it is possible that his testimony in 1779 was politically motivated. Regardless, Grey came to America with the

⁷⁰⁷ Ambrose Serle, *The American Journal of Ambrose Serle: Secretary to Lord Howe, 1776-1778*, ed. by E. Tatum (Huntington Library, 1940), pp. 300-302.

⁷⁰⁸ Serle, *American Journal*, pp. 300-301.

⁷⁰⁹ Serle, *American Journal*, pp. 300-302.

idea that harsh measures were the only path to success. It is plausible that after his attack on Baylor's troopers, he noticed the public response that effused through the newspapers and saw how quickly allegations they violated laws of war, whether true or not, increased the revolutionary's resolve. Nelson argues that he ignored the reports and allegations against him in the colonial papers.⁷¹⁰ However, Grey may have observed the impact of the allegations, leading to his later advice to Parliament, which suggests that his experience forced him to reconsider his actions and come to the belief that the time for harsh measures had passed, and the people were no longer afraid of the British Army. This is a similar dynamic that occurred with the arrival of the German troops. The colonists feared them upon their arrival, but after Trenton and Princeton, this fear also faded away.

Grey's return to Great Britain in November 1778 marked the end of his service in America. The Americans' allegations against Grey did not impact him professionally as he continued to have a long and successful military career. However, it was not without controversy from his service in the Caribbean. Within months of the Parliamentary hearings concluding, Grey received an assignment in Plymouth to assist in securing the port's defenses due to the threat of French and Spanish attacks. Grey kept tabs on the war in America through his ongoing correspondence with Clinton, often discussing issues of strategic importance. Clinton asked Grey to rejoin him in America, as he needed his military expertise. However, Grey declined, as he never wavered from his belief that the British could not win the American war.⁷¹¹

⁷¹⁰ Nelson, *Sir Charles Grey*, pp. 56-59.

⁷¹¹ Nelson, *Sir Charles Grey*, p. 70.

After about ten years of respite from the military due to health issues, Grey was offered a command as part of a campaign in the Caribbean, which he accepted. Grey, along with Admiral Sir John Jervis, arrived at Barbados on 6 January 1794. During his time here, Grey led multiple successful attacks on French forts. In several cases, he ordered bayonet assaults, especially during night attacks, similar to the tactics used while in America. Grey's successes earned him much praise in Great Britain, and in January 1795, he returned to England.⁷¹²

However, after his return, Grey faced criticism over his policies of seizing property and other belongings from the inhabitants of the islands they occupied. Grey demanded a parliamentary inquiry into the allegations against him and his second in command, Jervis, to clear their names and reputations. The House of Commons debated the issue, and in the end, Grey and Jervis were cleared of any wrongdoing. In fact, they were both further heralded for their service in the Caribbean. With the enormous sum of money that Grey and Jervis acquired from the confiscation of property, while distributed to others within his command, including widows of those killed in action, their wealth increased exponentially as a result. Grey returned to active duty in August 1796 after being promoted to General and received command of the Southern District with orders to strengthen coastal defenses. In February 1800, Grey resigned from this position due to his ill health. When he recuperated, he campaigned for a new command but never received another military post. In 1801, he was given peerage as a baron, making him Baron Grey of Howick. Then, in 1806, due to a political scheme intended to reward his

⁷¹² Nelson, *Sir Charles Grey*, pp. 122-139, 141-153.

highly regarded and politically talented son, Charles Grey, the elder Grey became Viscount Howick and Earl Grey.⁷¹³

Conclusion

The campaign season of 1778 did indeed yield multiple allegations following relatively minor conflicts that spread like wildfire through the colonial news. In essence, from the spring to the fall of 1778, the newspapers bombarded the public with allegations the British breached laws of war, arguably more than any other year of the war. In these reports, the revolutionaries made the bulk of the allegations against light infantry, grenadiers, cavalry, rangers, and Indigenous allies. Notably absent from these allegations were any references to German troops. Regardless, this assault on Great Britain's reputation as a civilized nation flooded through the news. This newspaper response demonstrates the revolutionaries' handle on presses in 1778, and arguably made the Carlisle commissioners' attempts to gain support from the colonists almost impossible.

The timing of the Continental Congress' manifesto and subsequent newspaper response to the Carlyle Commission ultimatum that connected the Battle of Paoli with Grey, along with the recent attack on Baylor, served to propel the lesser-known Paoli massacre into the spotlight and further sensationalize the Baylor massacre. Once again, the revolutionary press demonstrated its agency in using allegations that the British breached laws of war, whether true or not, to reinforce existing support for their cause. When comparing the revolutionary response to both of Grey's successful bayonet

⁷¹³ Nelson, *Sir Charles Grey*, pp. 156-165, 190.

attacks on Continental forces and his raid on coastal towns, as seen through the newspapers, the Baylor massacre triggered an unprecedented response more than any other conflict led by Grey. It was only after Grey's attack on Baylor's dragoons that Americans solidified his notorious reputation as the 'The No-Flint General,' who ordered his light infantry to attack using their bayonets only and allegedly directed them to give no quarter. Along with the numerous newspaper articles alleging that Grey's forces breached laws of war, this battle also triggered another investigation by the Continental Congress and, ultimately, conversations in Parliament over the use of hardline measures. This was not the case a year earlier after Grey's attack on Wayne. However, as seen in this chapter, Paoli did not stay under the Patriots' radar for long.

Despite the level of attention given to these actions at the time, Americans today remember the Paoli Massacre of 1777 as the foremost example of British atrocities during the war, and not the Baylor Massacre. Furthermore, many claim this conflict yielded America's first battle cry, 'Remember Paoli!' However, there is no evidence that this battle cry emerged immediately after the battle when using the newspapers as a gauge. A part of today's fascination with the Paoli massacre is over Grey's light infantry who led the attack; while a relatively new arm of the British military that had mixed reviews, light infantry's reputation has since grown to be a high-speed, elite force. Yet the Battle of Paoli received virtually no press coverage in the immediate aftermath of the successful assault on Wayne's men. It is plausible that a part of the reason for the relative silence from the Patriot-leaning press at this time was because of the British defeat at Saratoga and the occupation of Philadelphia a few weeks after. It was in this city that existed a critical mass of revolutionary newspaper publishers who fled when

the British arrived, effectively cutting off their communication and thwarting their ability to shape perceptions of the Paoli massacre. The news that did get out on Paoli focused primarily on Wayne's court-martial and whether he was negligent in his duties. In this case, it seems the revolutionary press aimed to take the focus off the Americans' catastrophic defeat against Grey and clear Wayne's name.

As to whether Grey ordered his troops to refuse quarter, the preponderance of the evidence does not support the validity of this allegation. For one, given the nature of Grey's shock attack, it would almost be impossible to stop the momentum of the attack to offer quarter. At the Paoli assault, most of the American reports painted a scene of absolute chaos and panic on the battlefield after the British pounced, leading to a close-quarter fight where they had no option but to flee. Only one American soldier alleged that the British refused quarter after Paoli. On the other hand, the attack on Baylor occurred at the end of a campaign season that yielded many allegations that the British breached laws because they refused quarter and just before the release of the Congressional manifesto, making it difficult to parse out what news headlines were accurate – especially knowing the nature of the Patriot-leaning press. However, because there is evidence that a few British officers gave quarter, it is doubtful that Grey gave a general order to his light infantry to refuse protection to surrendering Americans.

Additionally, in exploring Grey's character, it does not seem in his nature to give such a grievous order, especially given the directive he sent out not to harm civilian property before his coastal raids. While there is evidence that Grey held 'hardliner' sentiments from Serle's journal, which he arguably put into action at the Paoli and Baylor massacres, there is nothing to indicate that he ever supported using terror tactics

that breached laws of war. While perhaps a hardliner, depending on Grey's definition of what 'harsh' measures are, this does not always equate to breaching laws of war. Furthermore, during the Parliamentary hearings, Grey emerged as the biggest advocate against the use of harsh measures as he believed they only increased the American resolve — which was visibly apparent in the colonial press. While Grey's statement in Parliament might have been politically motivated, it is more likely this demonstrates that Grey did not consider his actions to be harsh but legitimate shock tactics, which perhaps was his idea of 'hardliner,' but not terror tactics and certainly not tactics that breached laws of war.

Overall, the testimonies provided in the Parliamentary hearing in 1779 demonstrated that applying laws of war to American conflict war mattered to those at the highest level of leadership in Great Britain. While the intent of the hearing was to determine what failed, and also the way ahead for the war, much of the discussion centered around the use of harsh measures against the revolutionaries. Grey was one of the general officers called to testify, perhaps because the Patriots catapulted his name into the spotlight after the immense backlash triggered by the Carlyle Peace Commission's ultimatum. In response, the Continental Congress, and then the newspapers, dug up grievances from the prior two years, which all focused on breaches of laws of war, with Grey being the centerpiece. The bombardment of allegations that emerged from the newspapers after multiple conflicts in the year 1778, which culminated with the Baylor massacre, is also evidence that the Patriots still maintained their grip on the information war and their agency in twisting these stories to fit their narrative. These reports are also why Grey eventually determined that the British Army

was unable to win the war because they lost the ability to strike fear into the hearts and minds of revolutionaries. This is a similar shift that occurred to the German auxiliaries in the previous chapter. The revolutionaries' continued agency in using the allegations to shape the public's perceptions is evident once again in this chapter. These allegations were also evidence of the fearlessness that Grey noted, leading to his argument that Great Britain could never win the war.

Chapter Five: The ‘Bold Dragoon’ and the Battle of Waxhaws

Introduction

The Museum of the American Revolution, located in Philadelphia, houses an exhibit dedicated to the ‘War in the South’ that includes a display of two life-size statues of dragoons on horseback depicting the British Legion. The caption reads, ‘Even amidst the horrors of the Southern war, [Lieutenant Colonel Banastre] Tarleton’s corps had a particular reputation for cruelty and mercilessness.’⁷¹⁴ Furthermore, ‘The British Legion came to symbolize the extreme violence of war in this region.’⁷¹⁵ This display reflects how American memory and much of the historical research on atrocities during this war focuses on the actions of British forces during the Southern Campaign of 1778 to 1781 and on conflicts involving the British Legion, such as the Battle of Waxhaws, that occurred during this period. As a result, the British Legion’s commander acquired the name ‘Bloody Ban’ due to the grievous acts he ordered his men to commit that the revolutionaries alleged breached the laws of war.⁷¹⁶ Part of the fascination over the events in the South is around the irregular warfare tactics used by both Loyalists and Patriots. Furthermore, American partisan leaders such as Francis ‘The Swamp Fox’ Marion, Andrew Pickens, and Thomas Sumter, ‘The Fighting Gamecock’ became notorious for their exploits during the war.⁷¹⁷ Today, the Battle of Waxhaws and

⁷¹⁴ ‘The War in the South,’ *The Museum of the American Revolution*, <<https://museumvirtualtour.org>> [accessed 9 April 2022].

⁷¹⁵ ‘The War in the South,’ *The Museum of the American Revolution*, <<https://museumvirtualtour.org>> [accessed 9 April 2022].

⁷¹⁶ The origin of this moniker is unknown, as it was not one used in the newspapers reviewed for this case study, however, it is still used today.

⁷¹⁷ John Ferling, *Almost a Miracle* (Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 454.

Banastre Tarleton continue to symbolize not just the extreme violence of the war in the South, but also the underrepresented analysis of the brutality of the war in the northern colonies.

This case study will examine the aftermath of the Battle of Waxhaws (29 May 1780) and the revolutionaries' response that followed in colonial newspapers. In this battle, the revolutionaries alleged at the time that the British breached laws of war by refusing quarter to surrendering American troops. In this study, the focus of the allegations is on the British Legion, a combined and rapid force consisting of cavalry, infantry, and artillery, and its notorious commander, Tarleton. This chapter will analyze what the newspapers tell us about the impact of the battle and the allegations that followed, and whether it gained the same type and level of attention then that it still has today. While there is no doubt of the brutality that occurred during the Southern phase of the war, the immense focus on this campaign has led to a skewed view of the history of violence throughout the war.⁷¹⁸

The Battle of Waxhaws

Considering the Patriot press's reaction to allegations against the British military in the previous case studies, surprisingly, they paid very little attention to the Battle of

⁷¹⁸ John Gordon, *South Carolina and the American Revolution* (The University of South Carolina Press, 2003), pp. 1-3; Woody Holton, *Liberty is Sweet* (Simon & Schuster, 2021), pp. 400-403, 415-419; For a recent historian who supports the idea that the brutality of the Southern Campaign was a continuation of the cycle of violence already occurring in the North, see: Holger Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, (Crown, 2017), p. 302. Hoock argues that the southern colonies were subjected to violence for decades before the war as frontier militia conducted scorched-earth raids against Cherokee villages, and white settlers fought amongst themselves after clashing over ethnic and religious differences. Also see: T. Cole Jones, *Captives of Liberty* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), p. 238: Jones argues that the extreme violence in the South 'was not an anomaly,' but reflective of what already occurred in the North.

Waxhaws at the time. In fact, there was barely any newspaper coverage of the battle at all. Moreover, despite the fact that the American military did allege that the British breached laws of war by massacring their enemy after they attempted to surrender, this allegation never gained traction in the newspapers at the time. There was no fervor in the press as seen after the slaughter of Baylor's troopers, for example, and there was no investigation launched by the Continental Congress. This lack of attention to the events at Waxhaws is intriguing, given not only how the revolutionary press and politicians treated previous events but also because of how Americans memorialize the battle today.

The Battle of Waxhaws occurred approximately a year after the Parliamentary hearings, discussed in the previous chapter, that debated how best to move forward, or not, with the American war. Despite those advocating to end what they believed to be an unwinnable war with America — such as Howe, Cornwallis, and Grey — George III and his ministers determined to press on. However, instead of continuing to focus on the northern colonies, Great Britain turned their sights on the southern colonies once again. Due to what unfortunately ended as misleading reports of extensive Loyalist support in these colonies, Great Britain looked to harness this untapped source of support as their last hope to finally put an end to the war. By occupying the major ports at Savannah, Georgia, and Charleston, South Carolina, the British planned to cut off the channels through which the revolutionaries received foreign aid and weaken the rebellion throughout the Thirteen Colonies. After occupying the region, the military would hand

over the oversight and policing of the area to Loyalists, so that the military could then focus on other crucial areas, such as protecting against the growing French threat.⁷¹⁹

Of the units that received orders to move South was the British Legion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton. This unit would eventually become one of Great Britain's most celebrated units due to its multiple successes during the war, including at the Battle of Waxhaws. Tarleton's Legion was a combined light cavalry, infantry, and artillery unit composed of Loyalists from several northern colonies. In December 1779, they arrived in South Carolina with the bulk of Clinton's forces.⁷²⁰ Clinton's main target was to occupy Charleston, which he achieved on 12 May 1780 after a siege that lasted almost six weeks. After the successful occupation of Charleston, Clinton set his sights on gaining control of the rural region, or 'backcountry,' of the Carolinas because he did not want the British army trapped in Charleston. Clinton also needed to harness the Loyalist support in the area and establish a line of fortresses from the Carolinas to Virginia.

To achieve his goals for the Carolinas, Clinton needed to eliminate the revolutionary forces in the area. One of the American units that moved to the backcountry after the siege of Charleston was the Virginian Continentals, commanded by Colonel Abraham Buford. It was not long before Clinton received intelligence on the location of Buford's forces, and in response, he ordered Cornwallis to pursue and

⁷¹⁹ Ferling, *Almost a Miracle*, pp. 409-411; John Shy, *A People Numerous & Armed* (University of Michigan Press, 1990), pp. 193-212; The British attempted to occupy the southern colonies in 1776, but after the unsuccessful assault on Charleston on 28 June 1776, they abandoned this strategy until 1780. The British also had support from the Indigenous nations in this region, such as the Cherokee. The Cherokee people either allied with the British or remained neutral. See: Tyler Boulware, *Deconstructing the Cherokee Nation* (University Press of Florida, 2011), pp. 152-153.

⁷²⁰ Donald Gara, in *Cavalry in the American Revolution*, ed. Jim Picuch (Westholme, 2014), p. 83.

apprehend the Virginians. Cornwallis, who Clinton would soon leave in command of the southern theater, then assigned Tarleton's Legion to pursue them.

During the siege of Charleston, Buford held a posting just outside the city. However, when the Americans surrendered, he received a directive to return to North Carolina. Buford's forces moved expeditiously and arrived at an area called Waxhaws, near the present-day town of Buford, South Carolina, located about seven miles south of the North Carolina border. It was here that Tarleton's Legion caught up with the Americans on 29 May after riding over one hundred miles in two days.⁷²¹ Tarleton recalled in his memoirs of the war that the push to catch Buford exhausted his men and horses, but their motivation to seize the rebels kept them going.⁷²²

With hopes of slowing Buford down and giving the British an opportunity to attack, Tarleton sent a messenger pushing Buford to surrender. Tarleton's message also included terms of capitulation. In his ultimatum Tarleton later admitted to exaggerating the number of British cavalry so to intimidate Buford into surrendering. In his hastily written letter to Buford, Tarleton warned Buford that British artillery and seven hundred light cavalry troops surrounded the Continentals. To prevent 'the Effusion of Blood,' Tarleton offered the same terms of surrender as were given at Charleston, which allowed for the parole of the officers, but the regular soldiers remained as prisoners until exchanged, and any militia could go home. Tarleton admitted in his memoir that during

⁷²¹ Ferling, *Winning*, p. 209.

⁷²² Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America* (Printed for T. Cadell in the Strand, 1787), pp. 27-29.

the negotiation, the Legion continued to move closer toward Buford's location.

However, in the end, Buford refused to surrender, and Tarleton attacked.⁷²³

Tarleton recalled defeating Buford with relative ease after the Legion charged the enemy leading to a conflict that lasted only a few minutes. Although he lost his horse from under him after it was shot, Tarleton was unharmed. Buford attempted to defend against the Legion's cavalry charge by having his men, who mostly consisted of infantry with no artillery, form a defensive line. However, this effort was to no avail, as they were no match against the British light cavalry charge. Initially, when Buford reported to the Virginia Assembly on the battle, he was uncertain of his total losses but disclosed that an estimated two-thirds of his officers and soldiers were killed or wounded.⁷²⁴ In the end, Buford lost one hundred and thirteen of his men whilst Tarleton only lost five of his cavalymen and thirty-one horses.⁷²⁵

In Buford's initial report on the battle, he alleged that the Legion killed many Continentals after they surrendered. Then again, he also feared for his reputation because of his catastrophic defeat. The account that he wrote to the Virginia Assembly on 2 June detailed that the British cavalry first attacked their rear, and then their dismounted infantry approached from their left. Buford explained that:

By this time we were completely surrounded by four times our numbers, saw no hopes of driving them, I sent a flag to the commanding officer to offer a surrender which was refused in a very rude manner all this time my men were bravely fighting tho the enemies horse frequently charged through the battalion...Our loss is very great. Two third of the officers &

⁷²³ John Knight, *War at Saber Point* (Westholme, 2020), p. 95; Tarleton, *A History*, pp. 27-28. 'Letter to [Col. Abraham Buford.],' in *NYPL Archives & Manuscripts*, <<https://archives.nypl.org/mss/927#c3624>> [accessed 8 April 2024].

⁷²⁴ Abraham Buford, 'Letter to the Assembly [of Virginia], June 2, 1780,' in *NYPL Archives & Manuscripts* <<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/904e2341-5b96-358c-e040-e00a18066207/?uuiid=904e2341-5b96-358c-e040-e00a18066207>> [accessed 9 April 2024].

⁷²⁵ Ferling, *Winning*, p. 210; Knight, *War*, pp. 96-97; Tarleton, *A History*, p. 30.

soldiers that were form'd in Battalion killed & wounded many of which were killed after they had laid down their arms.⁷²⁶

While the Legion's refusal of quarter to his surrendering men angered Buford, his main concern appeared to be more so that the incident would stain his reputation. To avoid this, Buford added, 'My conduct on the occasion I have reason to believe will not suffer in the eyes of those who know anything of the matter.' Although Buford lamented that since the public solely merited successes, he held little hope they would acknowledge the honorable actions of his men who went head to head with the Legion without fear and with the knowledge the British outnumbered them.⁷²⁷

In the end, neither Washington nor the Continental Congress responded to Buford's claim of no quarter. As evident from Washington's letters, he was more concerned about the losses of men and equipment and not whether the Legion violated laws of war. Washington first became aware of the conflict on 13 June when he received a copy of a letter from the governor of South Carolina, John Rutledge, to Thomas Jefferson, governor of Virginia. Jefferson sent Rutledge's letter and other intelligence about the status 'of our disasters in the South' via an express dispatch delivered by Major William Galvan. In it, Rutledge reported that 'Co. Buford was attacked last monday on his march and totally defeated, with the loss of two field pieces, his baggage &c.'⁷²⁸ While Rutledge provided no other details on the attack at Waxhaws, he reported

⁷²⁶ Abraham Buford, 'Letter to the Assembly [of Virginia], June 2, 1780,' in *NYPL Archives & Manuscripts* <<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/904e2341-5b96-358c-e040-e00a18066207#/?uuid=904e2341-5b96-358c-e040-e00a18066207>> [accessed 9 April 2024].

⁷²⁷ Abraham Buford, 'Letter to the Assembly [of Virginia], June 2, 1780,' in *NYPL Archives & Manuscripts* <<https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/904e2341-5b96-358c-e040-e00a18066207#/?uuid=904e2341-5b96-358c-e040-e00a18066207>> [accessed 9 April 2024].

⁷²⁸ 'From Thomas Jefferson to George Washington, 11 June 1780,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-03-02-0502>> [accessed 9 April 2024]; 'To George

on several other matters of concern, including the movement of 3,900 men under Cornwallis near Camden, South Carolina.

Information was slow to get to Washington, but on 16 June, Washington received word that the losses were as bad as initially feared. In a letter from Benjamin Harrison, a member of the House of Delegates in Virginia, he received the troubling details, explaining that:

Before this reaches you you [*sic*] will no doubt have hear'd of the fate of Colo. Buford, he and about 70 Men have escaped, the rest to the amou[n]t of upwards of 200 were either cut to pieces or taken, he prepared us for this event by a Letter to our assembly the day before it happen'd, which I hope you have seen as I sent a Copy of it to one of our Delegates and desired him to forward it to you.⁷²⁹

As promised in his letter, Harrison ensured that the letter Buford wrote to the Virginia Assembly reached him as well. Over the next few days, Washington also received confirmation that Buford was ‘totally routed’ and ‘cut to pieces’ from both Philip Schuyler, former commander of the Northern Department, and Brigadier General Peter Muhlenberg, commander of the Continental Army’s Virginia Line.⁷³⁰

Washington’s response to the news was void of the same anger and frustration seen after the attack on Baylor. His only reference to the attack on Buford within a month after the incident was in a letter to Samuel Huntington, President of the Continental Congress, sent on 18 June. Here, he appeared more concerned with the loss

Washington from Major William Galvan, 13 June 1780,’ in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-26-02-0285>> [accessed 9 April 2024].

⁷²⁹ ‘To George Washington from Benjamin Harrison, 16 June 1780,’ in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-26-02-0304>> [accessed 9 April 2024].

⁷³⁰ ‘To George Washington from Brigadier General Peter Muhlenberg, 19 June 1780,’ in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-26-02-0336>> [accessed 9 April 2024]; ‘To George Washington from Philip Schuyler, 18 June 1780,’ in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-26-02-0326>> [accessed 9 April 2024].

of cannons and equipment than that the British Legion breached laws of war. Washington explained to Huntington that he had received a ‘Hand Bill from New York, which I very much fear indicates the loss of the Cannon and Baggage which General Woodford left in his Rear.’ Woodford was Buford’s senior commander of the Virginia Line; the handbill was in reference to the losses from Buford’s detachment.⁷³¹ This comment about Buford’s losses is the only statement Washington made regarding the Battle of Waxhaws in the first few months following the conflict that survives in the archives. Furthermore, despite awareness of the battle and allegations by Huntington, the Continental Congress did not respond to these allegations, nor did they order an investigation as they did in the cases studied in the previous chapters.⁷³²

The Patriot newspapers also paid minimal attention to Buford’s allegations the British breached laws of war, which was unusual given the revolutionary reaction compared to previous incidents. This lack of response is even more puzzling considering that the allegations did reach the colonial publishers, which a few published – but these articles did not circulate with the same fury as seen previously. Moreover, soon after the release of the articles relaying Buford’s allegations, the news changed focus to other aspects of the battle, such as Tarleton’s terms of capitulation. One may presume that the scarce number of reports on the conflict, which slowly emerged, was due to the rural backcountry location of the battle. Certainly, the location impacted the speed with which

⁷³¹ ‘From George Washington to Samuel Huntington, 18 June 1780,’ in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-26-02-0321>> [accessed 9 April 2024]. The connection between the handbill Washington references and Buford’s defeat is explained in a footnote of Washington’s letter to Huntington by *NARA*. Evidence that a ship arrived in New York comes from the diary of Loyalist William Smith. Smith wrote on 16 June that a Man of War from Charleston arrived the night before with exciting news of Buford’s defeat and hope that ‘the Colony now at Rest, under the King’s Government.’ See: William Smith *Historical Memoirs of William Smith, 1778-1783*, ed. by W.H.W Sabine (The New York Times & Arno Press, 1971), p. 278.

⁷³² This author reviewed the *JCC* for any reference to the conflict at Waxhaws.

the news got to the publishers, who then released the first articles on 17 June, almost three weeks after the battle. However, a search of the colonial newspaper archives reveals that the battle never gained much attention and traction in the news, even after two months.⁷³³

The first newspapers to release articles on the Battle of Waxhaws were Loyalist papers that published briefly on the battle following a similar pattern to the events discussed in previous chapters. Predictably, these initial articles celebrated the British Legion's success and also justified Tarleton's actions. It was the New York papers that released the initial reports on this conflict after a Man of War arrived at the city bringing news from Charleston on 16 June.⁷³⁴ On 17 June, Rivington's New York paper outlined what Tarleton reported on the battle, bragging that he cut to pieces one hundred and seventy-five of Buford's Virginians. Rivington also added in capital letters that His Majesty's Troops now had total control of South Carolina, and there was 'not a rebel in arms in the country.' The turncoat publisher, Hugh Gaine, also from New York, published the same article on 19 June. Gaine, however, added additional details including a congratulatory message from Cornwallis on Tarleton's success in the back county. This article also explained the British rationale for the attack, making clear that Buford rejected terms of capitulation, which led to the attack. The celebratory piece closed voicing that while they lost two British officers, all was worth the advantage gained.⁷³⁵

⁷³³ This search was conducted by using a key word search in the newspaper database.

⁷³⁴ Smith, *Historical Memoirs*, p. 278. Rivington's *Royal Gazette* was the first newspaper reviewed for this case study to release a report.

⁷³⁵ Rivington's New York paper, now proclaimed to be, 'Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty.' 'Col. TARLETON's Report,' *The Royal Gazette*, 17 June 1780, p. 2, 'Col. TARLETON's REPORT,' *The New York Gazette*, 19 June 1780, p. 2.

One day later, the Patriot-leaning press released articles on Waxhaws, but with minimal details, and also reported on Tarleton's terms of capitulation. *The Maryland Journal* provided a brief report explaining that Tarleton and his cavalry overtook Buford's forces in a heavy pursuit and 'the Colonel and about 40 of his men...fell into the Enemy's Hands.'⁷³⁶ On 26 June, *The Boston Gazette* published more details about why Tarleton attacked. After Tarleton caught up with Buford, the article reported, he 'summoned them to surrender,' but Buford rejected his terms' and, therefore, Tarleton pounced. Further, the British lauded this success, and Clinton boasted that despite having his horse shot from under him, Tarleton led his cavalry to a British victory. This report also listed the number and rank of both the 'rebel' and British forces killed, taken, or wounded.⁷³⁷ The following day, *The Maryland Journal* announced that they planned to publish the full terms of capitulation that Tarleton offered to Buford before his 'Massacre' in their next paper.⁷³⁸

For the remainder of June and early July, most newspapers circulated the same articles around Tarleton's offer to Buford; however, one paper accused the British of exaggerating the American losses.⁷³⁹ *The Pennsylvania Journal*, on 28 June, instead of blaming the British for an unfair massacre, accused them of 'shamefully' exaggerating the accounts of Buford's losses. Of the hundreds of Virginia Continentals killed as initially reported in the Loyalist news, Buford's losses 'did not amount to more than

⁷³⁶ 'Baltimore,' *The Maryland Journal*, 20 June 1780, p. 2; *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* published the same article on 23 June.

⁷³⁷ 'Head-Quarters,' *The Boston Gazette*, 26 June 1780, p. 2; Casualty count listed in the article for the Americans was 318 killed or wounded and 50 Americans taken prisoner. For the British were 4 killed and 14 wounded.

⁷³⁸ 'Just as this Paper was going to Press,' *The Maryland Journal*, 27 June 1780, p. 2.

⁷³⁹ *The American Journal* and *The New Jersey Gazette* circulated the same articles.

80.⁷⁴⁰ Over the following week, the papers continued to publish the same information on the conflict, with some also echoing the allegation that the British exaggerated the American casualty counts.⁷⁴¹

On 5 July, the news reported that Tarleton's unit breached laws of war. However, this article was short-lived in the news. Dixon and Nicolson's Patriot-leaning newspaper, *The Virginia Gazette*, reported that Cornwallis's men at present encamped in Camden, South Carolina. However, to the north were the cavalry, 'under Tarleton who massacred Col Buford's party after they had begged for quarters.'⁷⁴² Only three other newspapers picked this piece of news up during the month of July, and afterward, there was no mention that the British Legion killed surrendering American troops again.

While the few articles alleging that Tarleton refused quarter circulated in the month of July, the news changed their focus back to the articles of capitulation Tarleton offered to Buford before the massacre. *The Maryland Journal* initially promised to publish the articles in their 4 July issue, but they did not.⁷⁴³ The first paper to publish his terms was *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* on 7 July, and two other papers picked this article up in July. These publications outlined Tarleton's five articles which he claimed were the same offers given to the Americans who surrendered at Charleston. However, he also warned Buford, 'If you do not receive these terms,' then, 'the blood be on your head.' Highlighting these terms in the papers seems to demonstrate his efforts to, at least

⁷⁴⁰ 'Intelligence from the Southward,' *The Pennsylvania Journal*, 28 June 1780, p. 3.

⁷⁴¹ For example, *The Connecticut Gazette*, *The Pennsylvania Packet*, *The Providence Gazette*, *The Connecticut Courant* also claimed the British exaggerated their reports.

⁷⁴² 'Richmond, July 5,' *The Virginia Gazette*, 5 July 1780, p. 2; *The Maryland Journal* published the same article on 18 July.

⁷⁴³ *The Maryland Journal*, 4 July 1780.

overtly, stay in alignment with the customs of warfare. For the public, perhaps they served to legitimize his actions after Buford rejected his terms.⁷⁴⁴

Towards the end of July, the papers switched focus once again and now spotlighted a story that showed Tarleton in a different light. On 21 July, *The Pennsylvania Evening Post* published a piece about the bravery of American Captain Adam Wallace, who fell in the battle at Waxhaws. After the attack started, it quickly became clear to Wallace that Tarleton's cavalry would give no quarter. Realizing this, Wallace attempted to kill Tarleton while also defending himself from all sides, but he did not survive. The article memorialized Wallace, stating, 'Thus was massacred a man whose bravery merits universal applause.' However, the article then stated that 'Col. Tarleton, the next day publicly mentioned his bravery, which, he said, entitled him to immortal honor.'⁷⁴⁵ While alleging the British Legion gave no quarter to Buford's men, the reports with Wallace's memorial also depicted Tarleton as honorable. As a result, it is plausible that this story calmed the Patriot-leaning press and public for the moment. This account was the last one reported on the Battle of Waxhaws within the first two months of the conflict.

Overall, the response, as seen in the newspapers, generated nowhere near the same public uproar as in the previous chapters. Furthermore, in a similar pattern to the earlier chapters, the first articles published on the conflict were in the Loyalist papers and contained few details. After the reports hit the Patriot news, they mainly focused on

⁷⁴⁴ 'Richmond (Virginia) June 21,' *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 7 July 1780, p. 1; The other newspapers to publish Tarleton's terms of capitulation were *The Norwich Packet*, 13 July 1780, p. 2 and *The Independent Ledger*, 17 July 1780, p. 1. These papers erroneously reported Tarleton's first name was Benjamin.

⁷⁴⁵ 'Richmond, July 5,' *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 21 July 1780, p. 1; *The New Jersey Gazette*, 26 July 1780, p. 1, also published this article.

Tarleton's terms of capitulation. When the news did reveal that Buford's men claimed they received no quarter, there was no public uproar. These allegations disappeared from the news by the end of July. Instead, a report of the death of Wallace and Tarleton's memorial of the man circulated. The effect of this story, along with the terms of capitulation, may have thwarted public anger over Buford's allegations for the moment.

Other Newsworthy Events

In July 1780, several other items circulated in the news that stole attention away from the Battle of Waxhaws, a reason for the limited coverage of the battle despite the Americans' allegations. On the other hand, these other incidents also provide evidence that the relative silence on Waxhaws was not because the Patriots, nor the public in general, were becoming immune to wartime violence and the propaganda value of certain events.

One major event that captured public attention was the Americans' surrender of Charleston on 12 May, which led to a battle that unfolded in the newspapers over who was telling the truth. Specifically enraging to the revolutionaries was the disinformation they claimed the British had released about the outcome of their siege on the city. These complaints provide evidence that the British were increasingly getting a handle on their information warfare. Multiple articles claimed that news in the Loyalist papers of the Americans' surrender was not true. The information that trickled in from Charleston was often confusing and unclear, keeping the majority of the colonial people on the edge of their seats. In the end, however, it was the Loyalist reports that turned out to be true.

The first intelligence that Washington received on the status of Charleston frustrated him no end, as ambiguous bits of information filtered in, which often ended up being inaccurate. As late as 25 May, Washington still did not know that the Americans under Major General Benjamin Lincoln had surrendered the city almost two weeks earlier. In a letter to Major General Robert Howe, while he thanked the general for providing him intelligence that Clinton raised the siege and returned to New York, he expressed uncertainty over their veracity. Washington explained:

A variety of reports of the same nature with respect to Sir Henry Clintons raising the siege of Charles Town-and returning have been received through other Channels. How far they are to be depended on, I can not determine; but it seems beyond a doubt that the Enemy are under great anxiety about something. I have had no Official Accounts from Charles Town myself since the 9th of April.⁷⁴⁶

This confusion over the status of Charleston led the Americans to accuse the Loyalist papers, especially Rivington's New York paper, of publishing fake news. For example, *The Continental Journal* published an article that originated from *The Gazette* claiming that the British now occupied Charleston by stating, 'The following intelligence is taken from James Rivington's lying Gazette.'⁷⁴⁷ Moreover, on 15 June, *The Norwich Packet* reported that Rivington released a false report that the British had taken the city on 17 May and that Charleston was actually still in American hands. However, Rivington had acknowledged his mistake, the article claimed.⁷⁴⁸ The report that Rivington supposedly backpedaled his claim that the British conquered Charleston

⁷⁴⁶ 'From George Washington to Major General Robert Howe, 25 May 1780,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-26-02-0118>> [accessed 9 April 2024].

⁷⁴⁷ 'New-York, May 31,' *The Continental Journal*, 8 June 1780, p. 2.

⁷⁴⁸ 'Fish-Kill, June 8,' *The Norwich Packet*, 15 June 1780, p. 2.

led to criticism in many other newspaper articles. For example, *The Independent Chronicle*, on 22 June, reported that:

We hear that Mr. Rivington, smitten with remorse of conscience for his many aberrations from the truth, and finding that his reputation has been greatly injured by them, is determined to being to confine himself within the limits of veracity.⁷⁴⁹

In the same paper, a ‘gentleman of character’ proclaimed that ‘It appears that Charleston was not in the hands of the enemy.’ Furthermore, a letter to the printer from an anonymous Patriot writer thanked Mr. Rivington for publishing the lies, which ended up ‘restoring our activity and energy.’⁷⁵⁰

Along with claims of fake news about the British occupation of Charleston, the Americans accused the British of purposefully orchestrating a disinformation campaign. For example, in *The Connecticut Courant* there were several letters from ‘Gentleman of good information, in Europe’ making this assertion. In one letter, the author preached that:

The art of making and spreading false news, to answer political purposes, is not peculiar to Great Britain: but yet she seems to possess this art, and the talent of giving to her fictions the colour of probability, beyond other nations; at least she seems to have more success in making her impostures believed, than any other.⁷⁵¹

This letter accused the British of spreading false information about alliances between Britain, Russia, and Denmark and British attempts to pull more troops from Germany and Ireland.⁷⁵²

⁷⁴⁹ ‘Fish-Kill, June 15,’ *The Independent Chronicle*, 22 June 1780, p. 3.

⁷⁵⁰ ‘Fish-Kill, June 15,’ *The Independent Chronicle*, 22 June 1780, p. 3.

⁷⁵¹ ‘Philadelphia, May 17,’ *The Connecticut Courant*, 30 May 1780, pp. 2-3.

⁷⁵² ‘Philadelphia, May 17,’ *The Connecticut Courant*, 30 May 1780, pp. 2-3.

In the end, Rivington was not spreading lies, as the Americans did surrender Charleston on 12 May 1780. On the same day *The Independent Chronicle* accused Rivington of lying, *The Massachusetts Spy* confirmed that it was over for the Americans. *The Spy* also published several letters between Major General Benjamin Lincoln and Clinton between 10 April and 11 May, which included the agreed-upon terms of capitulation.⁷⁵³ Of course, Rivington wasted no time rubbing salt in the wound by printing an address from several inhabitants of Charleston to Clinton, congratulating him on the success of taking the city and pledging their loyalty to the King.⁷⁵⁴ Rivington then commented on a false report from the revolutionaries that claimed the British lost 2,000 men during the siege of Charleston, stating:

In all the rebel accounts of this siege, much misrepresentation and shabby cunning is visible; the fallacy of the misstated return of killed, wounded and prisoners of their own Rascallions (mischievous people) is preparing, and shall be pointed out in short time – They know the British Troops never run – unless in pursuit of a fugitive enemy.⁷⁵⁵

Rivington ultimately won this battle over the truth, effectively turning the blame on the revolutionaries for their disinformation campaign efforts.

During the month of June, another conflict that occurred in New Jersey on 7 June 1780 also took precedence in the news over the Battle of Waxhaws. It was during the Battle of Connecticut Farms in New Jersey that some of the most grievous allegations emerged alleging the British and German troops breached laws of war. Unlike Waxhaws, where the allegations were about soldiers, during this battle, the accusations centered around the murder of an innocent woman. Surprisingly, Americans

⁷⁵³ 'Particulars relating to the surrender,' *The Massachusetts Spy*, 22 June 1780, p. 2.

⁷⁵⁴ 'The humble ADDRESS,' *The Royal Gazette*, 24 June 1780, p. 3.

⁷⁵⁵ 'From the New-Jersey Journal,' *The Royal Gazette*, 24 June 1780, p. 3.

barely remember this battle today despite being one of the last major conflicts fought in the northern colonies. Here, the Americans alleged that the British burned all but two houses and barns in the village, including a church. The worst allegation, however, was that British soldiers killed the wife of the town Reverend, known for his fervent support of the revolutionary cause.⁷⁵⁶

The Maryland Journal provided a detailed account of the battle at Connecticut Farms on 20 June 1780. The report came from a letter written by ‘an intelligent Gentleman,’ who professed to be in the area at the time of the conflict. The writer proclaimed, ‘To give you any tolerable idea of their ravages and cruelty is beyond my descriptive abilities.’ Further that:

Every step was marked with wanton cruelty and causeless devastation — They set fire to, and entirely destroyed, the Presbyterian church and 14 dwelling houses and barns, so that there are (I think) but two dwelling houses remaining in that fertile settlement. But alas, Sir, this is only one part of the horrid scene!⁷⁵⁷

The writer explained that revolutionary supporter, Reverend Mr. James Caldwell, had left his wife and nine children at home, ‘trusting to the politeness and humanity of the enemy towards an amiable woman, and a number of helpless and innocent children.’⁷⁵⁸ Several friends of the reverend warned him not to leave them alone, but his good-

⁷⁵⁶ Clinton’s attack on Connecticut Farms, New Jersey was intended to force Washington into open battle, and also seize Patriot military stores and disperse the revolutionary forces in the area. Clinton put Lieutenant General Knyphausen in charge of the attack. The aim was to advance from Elizabethtown and attack Washington’s forces located at Morristown, New Jersey. However, Continental and militia forces attacked the British forces at Connecticut Farms. While the British seized the town, they were unable to advance to Morristown. Knyphausen made another attempt on 23 June but was defeated by American forces under General Nathanael Greene, which ended Clinton’s campaign in New Jersey. See: ‘Editorial Note,’ in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-26-02-0378-0001>> [accessed 10 April 2024].

⁷⁵⁷ ‘Philadelphia,’ *The Maryland Journal*, 20 June 1780, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁵⁸ ‘Philadelphia,’ *The Maryland Journal*, 20 June 1780, pp. 1-2.

hearted and trusting nature led him to this travesty. After the British occupied the town, the writer claimed:

A soldier came to the house, and putting his gun to the window of the room where this worthy woman was sitting (with her children and a maid with an infant in her arms, along side of her) he shot her through the lungs dead on the spot: Soon after an officer with two Hessians came in and ordered a hole dug and her body thrown in, and the house to be set on fire.⁷⁵⁹

The reporter provided extensive additional details on the battle and outcome. At the end of his letter, he added that the British almost killed another woman who they initially thought was Ms. Caldwell but spared her life when another officer recognized her as someone else.⁷⁶⁰

This article circulated through more papers and generated more anger than the Battle of Waxhaws. The first paper to publish a brief mention of the atrocities that occurred was *The New Jersey Gazette* on 14 June. In an extract of a letter from a ‘gentleman,’ it declared that:

According to British custom, they have burnt almost every building in Connecticut Farms, above 20 in number; and agreeable to British humanity, they shot Mrs. Caldwell, a lady of the most amiable character, as she sat in her parlour.⁷⁶¹

⁷⁵⁹ ‘Philadelphia,’ *The Maryland Journal*, 20 June 1780, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁶⁰ ‘Philadelphia,’ *The Maryland Journal*, 20 June 1780, pp. 1-2.

⁷⁶¹ ‘Trenton, June 14,’ *The New Jersey Gazette*, 14 June 1780, p. 3. Hannah Ogden Caldwell was killed during this attack, according to the *NARA*. See: ‘To John Adams from Samuel Cooper, 25 July 1780,’ in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/06-10-02-0019>> [accessed 10 April 2024]. She was the wife of Reverend James Caldwell. James Caldwell and his wife Hannah had ten children. Reverend Caldwell helped American troops defeat the British at the Battle of Springfield a few weeks after his wife was killed. The reverend was killed on 24 November 1781 by an American sentry who suspected he carried illegal British goods. See: ‘Reverend James Caldwell,’ in *Union Township Historical Society* <<https://www.unionnjhistory.com/james-and-hannah-caldwell>> [accessed 10 April 2024]. In 1782, Washington offered to provide financial support for support for their children. ‘From George Washington to Elias Boudinot, 14 December 1782,’ in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-10200>> [accessed 10 April 2024].

In the usual fervor seen after the conflicts in the previous case studies, this incident also triggered opinion pieces from anonymous writers. In response to the incident, a writer for *The Independent Ledger* on 3 July declared that ‘The enemy’s brutality to some women at Connecticut Farms would make even savages blush.’⁷⁶² Moreover, an article from ‘A Soldier’ published in *The Continental Journal* on 13 July 1780 claimed that ‘The late conduct of the British *demons* in New Jersey, in the robberies, burnings, ravishments and murders, with a long catalogue of crimes as black as *hell!*’⁷⁶³ The uproar seen in the Patriot press regarding Waxhaws was in no comparison to that in response to the Battle of Connecticut Farms.

Furthermore, this conflict gained more attention from Washington and the Continental Congress than Waxhaws. For example, Samuel Cooper, a Congregational minister, wrote to both John Adams and Benjamin Franklin on 25 July 1780. He detailed to Adams how the British descended on New Jersey ‘with the usual, or even greater Examples of Barbarity and Rage.’ Further that:

Springfield [a town in close to Connecticut Farms] was laid in Ashes: many Women abused, and the Wife of a Clergyman who had distinguished himself in the Cause of his Country, cruelly murdered.⁷⁶⁴

To Franklin, Cooper reported that the attacks in New Jersey served to increase the revolutionary martial spirit once again. A similar phenomenon occurred in the aftermath of Lexington and Concord. Cooper explained that:

The Britons and their Mercenaries renewed a Scene of Barbarities equal perhaps to any Thing of the Kind they had ever before exhibited. This is saying not a little. They were however, nobly opposed by General Green with an handful of Troops and the Jersey Militia. They retired

⁷⁶² ‘A Philadelphia,’ *The Independent Ledger*, 3 July 1780, p. 3.

⁷⁶³ ‘Citizens of the United States,’ *The Continental Journal*, 13 July 1780, p. 1.

⁷⁶⁴ ‘To John Adams from Samuel Cooper, 25 July 1780,’ in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/06-10-02-0019>> [accessed 10 April 2024].

precipitately having lost, by the best Accounts we can obtain 900 kill'd and wounded. Our own Loss was but small. Springfield was burnt, many Women abused, and Mrs Calder the Wife of a Clergyman who had distinguished himself in the Cause of his Country, cruelly murdered.⁷⁶⁵

Washington was also more invested in the events that occurred in New Jersey, as evidenced by his letters; however, he was also located closer to these events at the time. As discussed earlier in the chapter, the intelligence Washington received on the Battle of Waxhaws, which occurred approximately 600 miles away from his location in Morristown, New Jersey, was not only questionable but also limited and sporadic. Despite Washington's proximity to both battles, the anger generated by Connecticut Farms clearly motivated support for the revolutionary support more than that of Waxhaws. However, the conflict in New Jersey is not as prominent in American historical memory as Tarleton's attack at Waxhaws.⁷⁶⁶

There were also a number of revolutionary-leaning news reports aimed at rallying support for their cause, much the same as the aftermath of Lexington and Concord, despite the grim news from Charleston. As the British reveled in their successful capture of Charleston, and the news that droves of Loyalists now emerged from the woodwork in renewed support for the Crown, many held high hopes the war was finally turning in their favor. This expectation of increased Loyalist support is

⁷⁶⁵ 'To Benjamin Franklin from Samuel Cooper, 25 July 1780,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-33-02-0086>> [accessed 10 April 2024]. During the British attack on Springfield, the British raided the home (Liberty Hall) of the New Jersey Governor, William Livingston. A legend emerged from the Livingston family that a drunken Hessian who entered the home mistook Susan Livingston for the ghost of Hannah Caldwell and immediately exited the house. See footnotes in: 'To John Jay from Robert R. Livingston, 6 July 1780,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jay/01-02-02-0072>> [accessed 10 April 2024].

⁷⁶⁶ Abigail Adams spoke to John about rising morale during this time as well. L. H. Butterfield and Marc Friedlaender, eds., *The Adams Papers: Adams Family Correspondence*, 15 vols. (The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1973), III, p. 371, 418.

evident from the British-leaning newspaper reports coming from New York that support for the American cause waned with news of the British victories in the southern colonies. One article, for example, proclaimed that ‘Neither Threats nor Persuasions can prevail upon the Southern Militia to turn out.’ Despite the payment offered to volunteers, the article alleged that the revolutionaries struggled to secure recruits.⁷⁶⁷ During the first two months after the Battle of Waxhaws, the public’s main concern was not over the allegations made by Buford, but that support for the revolutionary cause was rapidly slipping away.

In response, several motivational pieces emerged in the Patriot-leaning papers. In *The Boston Gazette*, an article from ‘A Military Countryman’ urged those revolutionaries whose enlistment expired to reenlist immediately. Furthermore, those who had not served should take the rare opportunity to play an active part in securing independence. And finally, to those who actively supported the cause, the writer pleaded, ‘Your work is not yet done; the enemy are yet in your country, and must be vanquished.’⁷⁶⁸ Moreover, from *The Pennsylvania Packet*, encompassing the entire second page was a letter to the people who inhabited the southern colonies that begged the colonists supporting independence not to give up in response to the news of the British occupation of Charleston. The writer, under the pseudonym ‘Z,’ pressed that ‘You cannot be ignorant that the enemy is playing his last game, and that it will be your fault should it not be finished in this year in your favour.’⁷⁶⁹ Z argued that the British

⁷⁶⁷ ‘New-York, June 12,’ *The New York Gazette*, 12 June 1780, p. 3.

⁷⁶⁸ ‘My Fellow Countrymen,’ *The Boston Gazette*, 29 May 1780, p. 2.

⁷⁶⁹ ‘From the Maryland Journal,’ *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 20 June 1780, p. 2.

exertions in the South only demonstrated that Great Britain was desperate, and those supporting independence still had an advantage that they must wield expeditiously.⁷⁷⁰

In a similar pattern to the aftermath of Lexington and Concord, several articles followed that spoke to the increase in enlistments supporting the American cause in response to the British army's successes in the South. Anonymous writer 'Milton,' implored, 'To the YOUNG MEN of Massachusetts, Awake, arise, or be *forever* fallen!'⁷⁷¹ *The Pennsylvania Journal* claimed that 'with great alacrity...ten Thousand Virginian's it is said, are under marching orders to join the increasing Continental army in North Carolina.'⁷⁷² Circulating through several newspapers, this article followed news of Lincoln's surrender of Charleston to Clinton and also the news of Tarleton's success against Buford at Waxhaws. Instead of anger and grievances over acts committed by the British army, the news took a motivational stance.

In July, the news articles focused on patriotic women who supported the revolutionary cause. In *The Pennsylvania Packet*, two articles appealed to women to continue to do their part for 'American liberty.' One article described how 'The Ladies of Trenton' worked to collect donations to support men who served in the Continental Army and needed dire assistance.⁷⁷³ Then followed a story about 'the patriotism of the women,' who refused Burgoyne's boast that he would 'dance with the ladies, and coax the men to submission.' When not successful in this endeavor, the writer declared that Burgoyne 'must now have a better understanding of the good sense and public spirit of

⁷⁷⁰ 'From the Maryland Journal,' *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 20 June 1780, p. 2.

⁷⁷¹ 'To the YOUNG MEN,' *The Continental Journal*, 22 June 1780, p. 2.

⁷⁷² 'Baltimore, June 20,' *The Pennsylvania Journal*, 28 June 1780, p. 2; 'Baltimore, June 20,' *The New Jersey Gazette*, 28 June 1780, p. 3.

⁷⁷³ 'Trenton, July 4, 1780,' *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 8 July 1780, p. 3.

our females.’⁷⁷⁴ Moreover, published in *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, an article written by ‘An American Woman’ urged all those supporting independence to show the same zeal for liberty as at the beginning of the war. The writer exclaimed, ‘The time has arrived to display the same sentiments which animated us at the beginning of the revolution.’⁷⁷⁵ In essence, this writer beseeched that women must renew the sacrifices made and the labor invested in ensuring they played their part in supporting the military as if it was 1775.

The ongoing frontier attacks led by joint Loyalist and Indigenous units were also another concern that prevailed in the Patriot news over Waxhaws during this time. In June, multiple articles recounted the devastating raids headed by John Johnson and his Indigenous allies in western New York along the Mohawk River. One article released early in the month reported:

By a person just arrived from Shenectady we are informed, that last Tuesday...about 500 Indians, headed by the villainous John Johnson, burnt and destroyed the infant settlements for several miles, bordering on the Mohawk river. This infernal plan was executed with such dispatch that our people had not time sufficient to collect, in order to annoy their retreat. A distinction was kept between Whig and Tory; the former suffered greatly, while the latter sustained no material injury.⁷⁷⁶

Sir John Johnson was the son of Sir William Johnson, and as described in Chapter Two, Guy Johnson was the senior Johnson’s nephew.⁷⁷⁷ Both were instrumental in leading the attacks on the Pennsylvania and New York frontiers in 1778. These recent attacks along the Mohawk River in 1780 brought these two men, along with their Indigenous allies, back into the public eye since their first devastating raids.

⁷⁷⁴ ‘Extract of a letter from an Officer,’ *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 8 July 1780, p. 3.

⁷⁷⁵ ‘The Sentiments of an American Woman,’ *The Independent Ledger*, 10 July 1780, p. 1.

⁷⁷⁶ ‘Norwich, June 1,’ *The Norwich Packet*, 1 June 1780, p. 3.

⁷⁷⁷ See Chapter Two, pp. 94-95.

In retaliation for the frontier raids, news circulated of an expedition deployed in defense of Pennsylvania settlements led by the American Colonel Daniel Brodhead. In *The Pennsylvania Packet*, news that ‘the brave Col. Broadhead, with a considerable body of expert Rangers and other Troops,’ prepared to go head to head with Indigenous forces ‘laying waste’ to settlements in the colony.⁷⁷⁸ In 1779, Brodhead partook in the Sullivan-Clinton Expedition, a scorched-earth mission Washington ordered to retaliate against the Iroquois nations who supported the British in the frontier attacks executed in 1778. In this campaign, Brodhead led an arm of the Continental forces that targeted western New York’s Seneca territory. Brodhead continued the cycle of retaliation when, in 1780, he returned to seek retribution for the ongoing attacks in Pennsylvania.⁷⁷⁹

However, the news of Brodhead’s mission became buried in more articles on the terrifying frontier attacks by British and Indigenous troops headed by the Johnsons. Multiple articles circulated in early June detailing the fear triggered by these raids, explaining, ‘The Savages, with Guy Johnson at their head...committed the greatest depredations and most wonton cruelty on the Mohawk river.’⁷⁸⁰ In another article, reportedly, the Johnsons not only destroyed settlements by plundering then burning but also were ‘murdering or captivating the inhabitants.’⁷⁸¹ Further, *The Massachusetts Spy* published news at ‘12 persons’ were murdered by a ‘number of Indians vagabond tories, commanded it is said by Sir John Johnson.’⁷⁸² And, an article published in *The Connecticut Courant* provided more details on the devastation caused by Johnson’s men,

⁷⁷⁸ ‘Baltimore, May 10,’ *The Pennsylvania Packet*, 3 June 1780, p. 2. Brodhead is spelled incorrectly here.

⁷⁷⁹ Hooek, *Scars*, pp. 281-283.

⁷⁸⁰ ‘Chatham, May 31,’ *The Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 6 June 1780, p. 2.

⁷⁸¹ ‘Poughkeepsie, May 29,’ *The Independent Chronicle*, 8 June 1780, p. 2.

⁷⁸² ‘Fish-kill, June 1,’ *The Massachusetts Spy*, 8 June 1780, p. 3.

also identifying some of those who lost their lives. In one case, explaining how a ‘Col. Fisher,’ and his two brothers ‘fought with great bravery.’ While the colonel survived, both brothers perished despite Fisher’s attempt to pull one of his brothers out of their burning house. In another case, the article detailed how ‘Old Mr. Fonda was cut in several parts of his head with a tomahawk.’⁷⁸³

Yet, Johnson’s attacks were not the only joint Anglo-Indigenous attacks against American colonists that the papers made public in the first two months after Waxhaws. The Loyalist news from New York City also published articles about Lieutenant Colonel John Butler, who commanded Butler’s Rangers, and Joseph Brant, or Thayendanegea, a Mohawk military and diplomatic leader. By this point, both men were notorious for their leadership in devastating raids committed on frontier settlements, such as the Cherry Valley and Wyoming massacres. This article announced:

The Loyalists a Majority in all Places---and daily Accessions to their Numbers. We learn also from the Wall Kill, that there is another Party, under Butler and Brant, in the Western Parts of Ulster County.⁷⁸⁴

Interestingly, this article also detailed Johnson’s attack without reporting that Indigenous forces supported his unit. However, printed in the Patriot-leaning news several weeks later was a summary of both attacks. This article explained:

By an officer from Albany, we are informed, that a few hours before he left that place, an express had arrived there from the Oneidas, giving an account that a considerable body of the enemy supposed to be 7 or 800, chiefly savages, commanded by the noted *Butler* and *Brant*, had been discovered near the old Oneida castle, about 20 miles from fort Schuyler; to proceed down the Mohawk river, in order to cut off the remains of that defenceless, and yet important part of the country for grain; which it

⁷⁸³ ‘Fish-Kill, June 8,’ *The Connecticut Courant*, 13 June 1780, p. 2.

⁷⁸⁴ ‘New-York, June 12,’ *The New York Gazette*, 12 June 1780, p. 3.

seems Sir John Johnson, in his late notable expedition, by reason of the haste he was in to carry off his plate, had not sufficient time to effect.⁷⁸⁵

The gruesome details in these articles about Johnson, Butler and Brant outdid any written about the Battle of Waxhaws.

In terms of fear, the argument made by Grey and several senior officers in the previous chapter that the revolutionaries were no longer afraid may be indicative of the lack of reports covering Waxhaws. However, using the newspaper reports as a measure, this was not the case in terms of the events ongoing in the North. The number of articles on the battles occurring in New Jersey and the frontier raids occurring around the same time, combined with the sensational language used when describing the battles and raids occurring in the North, well overshadowed that of Waxhaws.

Banastre Tarleton

While Tarleton made the newspapers quite often during the war, he did not gain the notoriety he still holds today until well after Waxhaws. Even within the immediate aftermath of the battle, the news coverage of him mostly showed him in a positive light. In all, public and revolutionary leaders paid little attention to Tarleton and the Battle of Waxhaws. Despite this lack of attention, he gained an enduring and infamous reputation. Eventually, Tarleton was to be forever connected with the ‘horrors’ of the Southern Campaign as both the British and Americans placed blame on him for breaching laws of war.

⁷⁸⁵ ‘General Orders,’ *The New Hampshire Gazette*, 15 July 1780, p. 3. The Oneida Nation, a part of the Six Nations of the Iroquois, was chiefly allied with the Americans, despite the fact that the majority of the other Six Nations were allied with the British.

As seen earlier in this chapter, the colonial press did not cover the Battle of Waxhaws with the same fervor seen in the previous case studies. However, the British press gave Tarleton much positive attention after the news arrived in his home country. In the year 1780, Tarleton received immense praise in the British press for his successes. For one, *The Scots Magazine* reported on Tarleton's win at Waxhaws on 1 June 1780 by publishing a letter from Clinton to Germain. 'Lt-Col. Tarleton headed this detachment,' Clinton reported, 'whose celerity in performing a march of near an hundred miles in two days, was equal to the ardor with which they attacked the enemy.'⁷⁸⁶ *The Scots Magazine* released this article while other papers in Britain were still reporting on the successful occupation of Charleston, which also highlighted Tarleton. For example, on 19 June, the *Northampton Mercury* published a letter from the *London Gazette Extraordinary* that Clinton wrote on 13 May 1780, a few weeks before Waxhaws. Here Clinton praised many of his officers for their actions during the siege. However, Clinton emphasized, 'I have to give the greatest Praise to Lieut. -Col Tarleton and the Cavalry, for their Conduct, Bravery, and eminent Services.'⁷⁸⁷ Furthermore, the first page of *The Leeds Intelligencer's* issue, published on 11 July, was another letter from Cornwallis to Clinton that included more accolades for Tarleton. Here, Cornwallis stated:

I can only add the highest encomiums on the conduct of Lieut. Col. Tarleton. It will give me the most sensible satisfaction to hear that your Excellency has been able to obtain for him some distinguished mark of his Majesty's favour.⁷⁸⁸

Not long after Tarleton's astounding success at Waxhaws, he gained more fame for the actions of his dragoons at the Battle of Camden on 16 August. From *The Scots*

⁷⁸⁶ 'America: Letters from Gen. Clinton,' *The Scots Magazine*, 1 June 1780, p. 301.

⁷⁸⁷ 'Thursday and Friday's Posts,' *Northampton Mercury*, 19 June 1789, p. 2.

⁷⁸⁸ 'Thursday's Post,' *Leeds Intelligencer*, 11 July 1780, p. 1.

Magazine, in a letter to Germain, Cornwallis highlighted the intrepidity of a few officers, one being Tarleton for his ‘capacity and vigour’ while serving at ‘the head of the cavalry.’ As a result, Tarleton deserved his ‘highest commendations.’ During the conflict, Cornwallis recounted how Tarleton surprised the rebel General Thomas Sumter’s militia troops in the middle of the day, and he ‘totally destroyed or dispersed his detachment...killing 150 on the spot.’ Moreover that:

Our loss otherwise was trifling. This action was too brilliant to need any comment of mine, I will, I have no doubt, highly recommend Lt. Col. Tarleton to his Majesty’s favour.⁷⁸⁹

The defeat of the American forces at the Battle of Camden was by far one of the greatest victories for the British during the war. The result for the Americans was 900 killed and wounded and 1,000 captured after Cornwallis completely routed the Patriot forces that were nearly double their size.

Throughout the year 1780, Tarleton remained in the news. However, interest grew around more than just his successes in America. For example, in the *Stamford Mercury* on 12 October was a short article titled, ‘Anecdotes of Lieut. Col. Tarleton.’ Here, it recounted how Cornwallis sent Tarleton to ‘destroy’ Sumter’s troops at Camden, despite knowing Sumter had double the number of men than Tarleton. However, Cornwallis was certain that if Tarleton caught up with Sumter, ‘he would do what he was ordered,’ which, of course, is what he did. At the end of the story, the writer added details on Tarleton’s history, explaining:

Lieut. Col. Tarleton was a Captain in the Liverpool Blues, but left that corps to serve in America; he commands a corps of Light Horse, and his present rank of Lieut. Col. is only for America. He is only 25 years of age.⁷⁹⁰

⁷⁸⁹ ‘America. [428], *The Scots Magazine*, vol. 42, 1 September 1780, pp. 484-487.

⁷⁹⁰ ‘London, October 10,’ *Stamford Mercury*, 12 October 1780, p. 4.

Moreover, in the *Northampton Mercury* on 16 October, another brief article provided some background on Tarleton. It stated that prior to his deployment to America, he was:

About five Years ago, a Student in the Temple; but being of a lively Disposition, and rather involved in his Circumstances, he had Recourse to the Army, as a Profession in which, from his natural Activity and Courage, he would be sure of making his Fortune, or dying in the Pursuit of it. He is about 28 Years old.⁷⁹¹

And, in *The Norfolk Chronicle* on 21 October, an article described the uniforms and weapons used by Tarleton's 'provincial corp.' This article closed by explaining:

Thus lightly accoutered, and mounted on the swiftest horses the country produces, it is impossible for the enemy to have any notice of their approach till they actually receive the shock of their charge.⁷⁹²

In December 1780, Parliament had reason to be hopeful about the direction the war had taken with the recent successes achieved in the Carolinas, thanks to the efforts of officers such as Tarleton. The minutes from the House of Commons that *The Scott's Magazine* published in December reflected this growing optimism. 'Dark and gloomy as might have been our situation at certain periods of the present war,' spoke Thomas De Grey, 'we had now some bright prospects to enliven it.'⁷⁹³ De Grey recognized key military figures that aided the British military's success, such as Sir George Rodney, General Augustin Prevost, Clinton, and Cornwallis. But, along with these general officers, De Grey also acknowledged Tarleton, stating, 'And the intrepidity of Col. Tarleton, which contributed so much to it.'⁷⁹⁴ By the year's end, while still a Lieutenant

⁷⁹¹ 'Postscript,' *Northampton Mercury*, 16 October 1780, p. 3.

⁷⁹² 'Sunday and Monday's Post,' *Norfolk Chronicle*, 21 October 1780, p. 1.

⁷⁹³ 'Parliament. [572],' *The Scots Magazine*, vol. 42, 1 December 1780, p. 633.

⁷⁹⁴ 'Parliament. [572],' *The Scots Magazine*, vol. 42, 1 December 1780, p. 633.

Colonel, members of Parliament compared him to the likes of several successful general officers, signaling that Tarleton's celebrity had undoubtedly grown.

As evident by the British newspapers, Tarleton gained tremendous popularity by the time of the Battle of Waxhaws. However, this acclaim would not last. By the Battle of Yorktown in 1781, Tarleton's renown took a negative turn, gaining him a notorious reputation that prevails even today. For example, in 2000, the Hollywood blockbuster *The Patriot* propelled Tarleton into the popular spotlight by loosely basing the character Colonel William Tavington on Tarleton. In this movie, Tavington, a dragoon officer, committed multiple atrocities, such as locking innocent civilians in a church and then ordering his men to burn it to the ground. Moreover, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, the Museum of the American Revolution's cavalry display describes Tarleton and his Legion as cruel and merciless, who symbolize the 'extreme' violence that occurred in the southern region. No British officer, besides perhaps Benedict Arnold and more recently John Simcoe — thanks to the television show *TURN* — acquired as bad a reputation as Tarleton. Not even Grey, who, as evidenced by the previous chapter, was the focus of more allegations that he breached laws of war than Tarleton.

In the past few decades, some historians have offered a defense of Tarleton, arguing that history has treated him unfairly. For example, John Knight's recent biography maintains that Tarleton commanded a highly effective light cavalry unit composed of Loyalists who were prepared to die for the Crown. Further, it was Tarleton who effectively harnessed their loyalty, driving them to achieve unbelievable accomplishments on the battlefield during this war.⁷⁹⁵ However, the allegations that

⁷⁹⁵ The most recent book defending Tarleton is Knight, *War*, pp. x-xi.

Tarleton and his British Legion were ‘cruel and merciless’ overshadow the fact that Tarleton was an exceptional cavalry officer and leader.⁷⁹⁶

How this controversial Lieutenant Colonel rose to celebrity in 1780 begs some background on the man. However, his pre-war history does not shine favorably on his character. Tarleton was the son of a wealthy merchant and ship owner who also served as the mayor of Liverpool and acquired much of his wealth from the transatlantic slave trade. As a result, Tarleton was a lifelong supporter of slavery. When his father passed away, Tarleton was 19 years old, and he spent his inheritance by gambling, heavy drinking, and prostitution. Many described him as handsome but also ‘hot-headed.’⁷⁹⁷ While at Oxford, he studied to be a lawyer, but he soon abandoned his plans to become an attorney. Instead, he purchased a commission in 1775 as a cavalry officer at age twenty-one. Evident by some news articles highlighting Tarleton’s history, his reputation as a *bon vivant* and womanizer followed him throughout his military career and, arguably, cast a shadow over his successes in America.

On 12 February 1776, Tarleton embarked for America from Cork, Ireland, with 2,500 British troops under the command of Cornwallis. Arriving in the colony of North Carolina on 3 May, Tarleton would not return to England for six years.⁷⁹⁸ After the British’s failed first attempt to take Charleston, South Carolina, on 28 June, Clinton moved his troops north in preparation to take New York City. Tarleton was among the troops that Clinton positioned in towns surrounding New York City, such as Sandy Hook, New Jersey, and Staten Island, New York. After the successful occupation of New

⁷⁹⁶ Knight, *War*, p. xi.

⁷⁹⁷ Knight, *War*, p.10

⁷⁹⁸ Knight, *War*, p. 11.

York, Tarleton requested a transfer to a newly arrived cavalry unit. In October 1776, Clinton granted his wish, and Tarleton joined the 16th Light Dragoons under the command of Lieutenant Colonel William Harcourt.

Tarleton's assignment with the 16th Light Dragoons was unique as the British did not fully leverage its regular cavalry arm during the American Revolution, and instead relied on Loyalist units to reinforce the Light Dragoons deployed to America.⁷⁹⁹ At the start of the war, the entire British army contained twenty-five regiments of horse, excluding the Horse Guards.⁸⁰⁰ However, only two regiments of Light Dragoons served in America during the war — the 16th and 17th Light Dragoons.⁸⁰¹ The first troopers to arrive were the 17th Light Dragoons, who disembarked at Boston in 1775 and stayed in America for the remainder of the war. In October 1776, the 16th Light Dragoons embarked for America only to return to Britain in 1779. Loyalist cavalry units, on the other hand, mainly hailed from the southern colonies and supplemented both the 16th and 17th Light Dragoons. The two most successful of these Loyalist cavalry units were Tarleton's British Legion and the Queen's Rangers. They were so effective during the

⁷⁹⁹ Knight, *War*, p. 56. The Americans ultimately had more cavalry units than the British. However, Washington initially resisted the use of light cavalry. On 11 July 1776, in a letter to John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress, he reported that hundreds of cavalry from the Connecticut Light Horse had arrived at his camp in New York. Initially concerned about the expense of keeping the horses, Washington rejected their support. However, 'in Justice to their zeal and laudable attachment to the cause of their Country,' he consented to allow them to stay as long as they covered their own expenses in maintaining their horses. See: 'From George Washington to John Hancock, 11 July 1776,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-05-02-019>> [accessed 10 April 2024]. After the British defeated the Americans in New York and drove Washington's army out of New York and New Jersey, he reconsidered. While encamped in Pennsylvania, just across the Delaware River, he wrote to Hancock, 'From the Experience I have had this Campaign of the Utility of Horse, I am convinced there is no carrying on the War without them.' As a result, he recommended the establishment of one or more cavalry corps, which the Continental Congress approved. See: 'From George Washington to John Hancock, 11 December 1776,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-07-02-0232>> [accessed 11 April 2024].

⁸⁰⁰ Gregory Irwin, in *Cavalry in the American Revolution*, ed. Jim Piccuch (Westholme, 2014), p 2.

⁸⁰¹ Knight, *War*, p. 56.

war that they were named to the American Establishment in 1782, which granted them equal status to regular British units.⁸⁰²

Another Loyalist cavalry unit that the newspapers highlighted during this case study was an elite cavalry group of twenty-four black and white Loyalists known as the Black Brigade, who supported the Queen's Rangers. The Black Brigade fought to protect the area around New York City by conducting raids for food and supplies and also to capture Patriot leaders accused of terrorizing Loyalist leaders in the area. Most notable among this cavalry brigade was a man named 'Colonel Ty.' In 1775, Ty escaped slavery from a plantation owned by a Quaker in Colt's Neck, New Jersey, and fled to New York to join the Black Brigade.⁸⁰³ Ty's actions while serving with the Brigade made the newspapers several times during this case study for his actions. For example, *The New Jersey Gazette*, on 14 June 1780, reported:

Ty, with his party of about twenty blacks and whites, last Friday afternoon took and carried off prisoners Capt. Barns Smock and Gilbert Vanmater; at the same time spiked up the iron four pounder at Capt. Smock's house, but took no ammunition: Two of the artillery horses, and two of Capt. Smock's horses were likewise taken off. The above-mentioned Ty...bears the title of Colonel, and commands a motly crew at Sandy-Hook.⁸⁰⁴

And, again on 28 June, the *New Jersey Gazette* reported:

Yesterday morning a party of the enemy, consisting of Ty with 30 blacks, 36 Queen's Rangers, and 30 refugee Tories landed at Conascung[sic]. They by some means got in between our scouts undiscovered.⁸⁰⁵

⁸⁰² Philip R. N. Katcher, *Encyclopedia of British, Provincial, and German Army Units, 1775-1783* (Stackpole Books, 1973), p. 83.

⁸⁰³ Alan Gilbert, *Black Patriots and Loyalists* (University of Chicago Press, 2012), p. 158.

⁸⁰⁴ 'Extract of a letter from Monmouth County, June 12,' *The New Jersey Gazette*, 14 June 1780, p. 3.

⁸⁰⁵ 'Trenton, June 28,' *The New Jersey Gazette*, 28 June 1780, p. 3.

In this case, the Black Brigade and Queen's Rangers plundered multiple houses and took ten prisoners. Ty and his troops conducted several raids on homesteads and plantations where enslaved people were held.⁸⁰⁶ Of note, these articles only mentioned Ty's name and no one else from the Queen's Rangers or white Loyalist troops. Ty and his cavalry unit made an impact, and as evident by the numerous newspaper reports, the public's interest in his actions was just as great as Tarleton's during the period of this case study.⁸⁰⁷

Tarleton first gained notice from the public and the newspapers and also received accolades from his senior leadership in December 1776. While still assigned to the 16th Light Dragoons, he headed the successful capture of Continental Army General Charles Lee, Washington's second in command. After the British pushed Washington's army to the Pennsylvanian side of the Delaware River, Washington ordered Lee to advance to his location. However, out of a loss of confidence in Washington's leadership after their devastating losses in New York, Lee delayed marching his troops to meet with Washington. Instead, Lee secured lodging at a tavern in Basking Ridge, New Jersey, for

⁸⁰⁶ 'Colonel Tye,' in *PBS* <<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part2/2p52.html>> [accessed 11 April 2024]; 'Colonel Tye: Leader of Loyalist Raiders – and Runaway Slave,' in *All Things Liberty* <<https://allthingsliberty.com/2021/02/colonel-tye-leader-of-loyalist-raiders-and-runaway-slave/>; <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/biographies/colonel-tye>> [accessed 11 April 2024].

⁸⁰⁷ Gilbert, *Black Patriots*, p. 158. Ty is often referred to as Tye or Titus. In September 1780, Ty died after contracting Tetanus or lockjaw. See: Gilbert, *Black Patriots*, p. 163. The British offered freedom to any enslaved person who fled to British-controlled areas at several points during the war. As with all the actions the British took to incorporate black men into the military, it enraged the American colonists who, from the beginning of the war, alleged that the King intended to incite insurrections. After they captured Charleston in May 1780, Cornwallis initially made no attempt to arm the formerly enslaved men. However, after the British defeat at Cowpens, Cornwallis eventually moved the bulk of British troops north into Virginia, leaving no cavalry to counter attacks by Continental and partisan cavalry that remained in South and North Carolina. The British then formed a cavalry unit of former enslaved men who eventually became known as the Black Dragoons. These units were commanded by freed black men who received a commission as British officers. In the end, despite no background in military training, the Black Dragoons' successful raids to acquire provisions, support in guard duty, pursuing deserters, and supplementing British units during battle provided the British with much-needed support. Jim Piccuch, 'The "Black Dragoons,"' in *Cavalry of the American Revolution*, ed. by Jim Piccuch (Westholme Yardley, 2014), pp. 214-15, 217, 221.

the nights of 11 and 12 December. Meanwhile, patrolling the area was Tarleton and his detachment from Harcourt's dragoons. After interrogating two American sentries they captured from Lee's unit, the British dragoons obtained Lee's location. In the end, Tarleton and his troopers surrounded the tavern and captured Lee. As a result of his actions on this day, Tarleton received a promotion to Major.⁸⁰⁸

In early 1778, Tarleton transferred to a newly formed unit called the British Legion, where he continued to make his mark. Prior to this reassignment, the 16th Light Dragoons fought in several key battles during the campaign season of 1777, including the Battle of Brandywine, the victory that cleared the way for Howe to take Philadelphia. In 1778, Clinton raised the British Legion by merging several Loyalist units into a light force that combined infantry, cavalry, and also artillery capabilities. Lord William Cathcart commanded the Legion; however, the newly promoted Lieutenant Colonel Tarleton would soon take over this command.⁸⁰⁹

Tarleton's experience with the British Legion in the northern colonies prior to Waxhaws was perhaps a rehearsal for what he would face in the southern colonies. Some biographers argue that the accolades Tarleton received during this time rewarded him for actions that eventually stained his reputation.⁸¹⁰ However, it was the actions of the British Legion under Tarleton in New York that propelled him to celebrity, as the British newspaper published several accounts of his successes. During the years 1778 to

⁸⁰⁸ Knight, *War*, pp. 24-25. Knight highlights in his biography, 'On his march toward and during the fighting at the tavern, he had on three separate occasions threatened 'the dread of instant death' to captured Continentals. Though this may have been a *ruse de guerre*, it was a disquieting prelude to accusations of brutality that would haunt his career.'

⁸⁰⁹ Knight, *War*, pp. 29-32; Ferling, *Almost a Miracle*, p. 251.

⁸¹⁰ Gara, 'Cavalry,' p. 74.

1780, before Clinton moved the bulk of his forces to Virginia in preparation to siege Charleston, Tarleton captured the attention of the British and colonial American public.

The first known engagement that involved the British Legion and also gained more positive attention for Tarleton was a skirmish in Kingsbridge, New York. The area of Kingsbridge was located just north of New York City. This area, which is now Westchester County, served as a neutral zone but was also the deadliest location during the war due to military detachments and plunderers from both sides continually roaming this area.⁸¹¹ On 31 August 1778, the British Legion, along with the Queen's Rangers, led by John Simcoe and Andreas Emmerick's corps of Loyalists, successfully routed the American Stockbridge Indian Company, commanded by Daniel and Abraham Nimham. After successfully driving the Stockbridge and also an American light infantry company, out of their covered positions, Tarleton led the British Legion cavalry in pursuit. Many from the American infantry detachment escaped, but the Legion continued to target the Stockbridge Company. When Tarleton's cavalry caught up to the enemy, despite falling off his horse, and almost being shot by a soldier from Nimham's company, the British Legion slaughtered almost the entire company.⁸¹²

While a small conflict, the outcome gained interest from those within the ranks, including a report from a German *jäger* commander, Captain Johann Ewald, that the Legion refused quarter to Nimham's men. Ewald's unit was posted in the area, and although not directly involved in this engagement, he provided a detailed description of the massacre of Nimham's men in his diary. After the battle, Ewald surveyed the

⁸¹¹ Mark Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War, 1775-1783* (The Kent State University Press, 1996), p. 199.

⁸¹² Colin Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 96-97; John Graves Simcoe, *A Journal of the Operations of the Queen's Rangers* (Printed for the author, 1789), pp. 84-86.

battlefield and examined the dead Stockbridge men left on the battlefield. He explained that the men of the Stockbridge Company gave a solid defense despite being surrounded on all sides. However, because initial intelligence reported the size of the Stockbridge Company to be 2,000 men strong, this triggered fear amongst ‘our men,’ Ewald explained, and ‘described to them as more dangerous than it really was.’ In the end, Ewald alleged that, ‘No Indians, especially, received quarter, including their chief called Nimham and his son, save for a few.’⁸¹³ From Ewald’s candid description of this skirmish, the British Legion’s refusal of quarter to the Stockbridge Company was driven by both fear of Indigenous capabilities and an exaggerated troop strength estimate.

The feedback from British leadership regarding the outcome of the skirmish at Kingsbridge brought positive attention to both Simcoe and Tarleton for their perfectly executed engagement. For one, the British sustained few casualties, as reported by Simcoe, whose count was only one light dragoon killed and two ‘Huzzars’ wounded.⁸¹⁴ In Cornwallis’s report to Clinton, he praised Simcoe, Tarleton, and Emmerick’s performance. Cornwallis stated:

Simcoe, Tarl[e]ton & Emmerick had a successful skirmish on the 31st, kill’d about 20 or 30 mostly Indians, & took a N[ew] England Capt & some prisoners. Simcoe & Tarl[e]ton behaved exceedingly well, the former has a slight wound in his arm, close to his last blow. Tarl[e]ton & his Drag[oon]s sabred a great many: we had in all but two kill’d & three wounded. A Patrole of jaghers the same day got into a scrape 7 had three kill’d & two wounded.⁸¹⁵

⁸¹³ Johann Ewald, *Diary of the American War: A Hessian Journal*, trans. and ed. by Joseph P. Tustin (Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 143-145. Ewald’s report the British Legion refused quarter was the only report from the British side that this occurred.

⁸¹⁴ Simcoe, *A Journal*, p. 86.

⁸¹⁵ Clements Library, Henry Clinton Papers, Charles Cornwallis to Henry Clinton, 2 September 1778.

Despite the recognition these dragoon units received from the Commander in Chief, this conflict received minimal attention from the news. Further, it was only the Loyalist newspapers out of New York City that published on this skirmish – a similar pattern when the conflicts occurred in or near British-occupied territory. For example, Rivington’s *Royal Gazette* reported that ‘Chief Sachem Nimham, who, fought with desperation, until a great number were killed.’⁸¹⁶ In this article, however, it did not mention Tarleton by name, and only Simcoe and Emmerich received mention.

For the Americans, this disturbing news reached Washington. In a letter from General Scott on 31 August, he reported:

I am sorry to inform you...Majr Steward and a partie of about forty, and Capt. Nimham with about the same number...war [were] led into an ambuscade...among the missing is Capt. Nimham his father and the whole of the officers of that Corps, Majr Steward tells me that he misses a Capt Sub & about twenty men from this partie, I am in Hopes it is not so bad as it at Preasant appears.⁸¹⁷

However, it was as bad as it appeared. In a letter to Maryland Governor Thomas Johnson, Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Ford, whose regiment was under the command of General Scott, revealed that Nimham’s men ‘behaved nobly tho surrounded by a much superior party they fought till the last.’ While the infantry detachment under ‘Major [Stewart],’ mostly escaped unhurt, Ford reported that the Stockbridge Company sustained the brunt of the casualties.⁸¹⁸ In the end, this battle crippled the Stockbridge

⁸¹⁶ ‘Monday; Valentine’s Hill,’ *The Royal Gazette*, 2 September 1778, p. 3.

⁸¹⁷ ‘To George Washington from Brigadier General Charles Scott, 31 August 1778,’ in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/?q=Stockbridge&s=1111311111&r=38>> [accessed March 24, 2019].

⁸¹⁸ Annapolis, Maryland State Archives, Benjamin Ford to Governor Thomas Johnson, September 1, 1778.

Indian Company's forces and resulted in being the last battle they fought during the war.⁸¹⁹

Despite the limited coverage from the news at the time, Americans today remember this skirmish as the 'The Massacre of the Stockbridge Indians.' However, this label did not emerge until the nineteenth century and came from an account written by Thomas DeVoe. DeVoe was a descendant of the owners of the DeVoe farm located near the site of the battle. In this account, DeVoe recounted a story that his grandmother told him when he was fourteen years old about the 'terrible massacre of the friendly Indians.' In 1778, DeVoe's grandmother was eighteen years old and reportedly witnessed its aftermath, and the burial of the Stockbridge men at the location of the conflict.⁸²⁰ The locals named this burial ground, 'Indian Field,' which is still the name of the area located in Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx.⁸²¹

⁸¹⁹ Calloway, *Indian Country*, pp. 85-86, 92, 96-97. Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois and the American Revolution* (Syracuse University Press, 1975), p. 33. The men from the Stockbridge Indian Company, or Moheconnuck, were one of several American units stationed in the area to patrol and gather intelligence. The commander of the Stockbridge unit was Abraham Nimham. His father, Daniel Nimham, who was awarded a commission as a captain in the Continental Army, accompanied his son's unit to Kingsbridge. During the French and Indian War, many Moheconnucks from Stockbridge served alongside the British army. Most notable was their service with Robert Rogers' Rangers, of which they participated in the raid and destruction of the town of St. Francis in October 1759. On the eve of the Revolutionary War, the Moheconnuck community sided with the Patriots' cause as the principles behind the rebellion aligned with their struggle to survive as a free people. In February 1775, before the first battle of the Revolutionary War, many Moheconnucks volunteered to serve as minutemen. According to historian Colin Calloway, 'Captain Soloman Uhaunauwanmut,' a Moheconnuck officer who fought with Robert Rogers' Rangers, 'requested that his men be allowed to fight Indian fashion rather than train like English soldiers.' Soon after, the Continental Congress accepted their offer of services and sent a message of assurance that their alliance would also benefit the Moheconnucks' cause. At this time, seventeen Moheconnuck warriors joined Washington's Continental Army at Cambridge. Also see: Victor J. DiSanto, 'Daniel Nimham, the Wappingers, and the Daniel Nimham Monument,' *Journal of the American Revolution*, <<https://allthingsliberty.com/2024/01/daniel-nimham-the-wappingers-and-the-daniel-nimham-monument/>> [accessed 11 January 2024].

⁸²⁰ Thomas DeVoe, 'The Massacre of the Stockbridge Indians, 1778,' *Magazine of American History*, 8 (1885), p.187.

⁸²¹ For information on the monument in Van Cortlandt Park, in Bronx, New York, see: 'Van Cortlandt Park,' *NYC Parks* <<https://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/VanCortlandtPark/monuments/1120>> [accessed 11 April 2024].

Tarleton's performance during the skirmish at Kingsbridge garnered him praise for the effectiveness of his Legion's cavalry in routing the Stockbridge Company. However, it was not the last time the Legion's actions in New York helped gain them recognition. The British Legion remained in the Westchester County area until early 1779, when they moved to Jericho, Long Island, then to Sag Harbor, on the very east end of the island, to continue surveillance and foraging duties.⁸²² Then, in the summer of 1779, the British Legion moved back to the neutral ground around Kingsbridge, New York. In July, Clinton ordered an attack on American militia and dragoon units near Pound Ridge, in Westchester County, after learning they were harassing Loyalist farmers. The British obtained the location of one of the dragoon troops responsible after intercepting a letter between Washington and Major Benjamin Tallmadge. Tallmadge served with the 2nd Continental Dragoons and was Washington's director for military intelligence in New York and leader of the Culper Spy Ring.⁸²³ Clinton placed Tarleton in charge of the detachment chosen for an expedition to hunt down the American dragoons.

On 2 July 1779, Tarleton did not disappoint. With his detachment comprised of the British Legion, troopers from the 17th Light Dragoons, the Queen's Rangers, and mounted German *Jägers*, they successfully pushed the American Dragoons out of the area and into Connecticut. However, in the course of this action, Tarleton's forces burnt multiple houses and public meeting houses to the ground. Tarleton admitted that his scorched earth tactics became necessary after the militia fired at them while concealed

⁸²² Knight, *War*, pp. 55, 74.

⁸²³ John Hutchins, 'Cavalry Action Poundridge, New York,' in *Cavalry in the American Revolution*, ed. Jim Piccuch (Westholme, 2014), p. 62; Knight, *War*, p. 78. Colonel Elisha Sheldon commanded the 2nd Continental Dragoons.

within the buildings he targeted.⁸²⁴ Tarleton reported his losses as one man and one horse killed, and one man wounded. Furthermore, they took the American dragoon unit's standard. Their losses were ten men wounded, eight missing, and twelve missing horses. Most significantly, the Legion seized Tallmadge's personal baggage, which contained papers and letters related to the American spies embedded around New York City.⁸²⁵

The cavalry action at Pound Ridge was the first known instance that Tarleton used scorched earth tactics, but it would not be the last. Tarleton eventually withdrew his cavalry from Pound Ridge after the American militia response only increased. As he passed through a town called Bedford, he ordered his troopers to set fire to the Presbyterian Meeting House in the village. Because of the American militia's quick response, the British cavalry fled the town in time for the villagers to save the church from destruction.⁸²⁶ As a result of Pound Ridge and Bedford — unlike the conflict at Kingsbridge — Tarleton received by-name press coverage in the Loyalist newspapers.⁸²⁷

In *The New York Gazette*, an article lauded:

Friday last Colonel Tarleton, with a Party of the Legion...surprised some Light Horse that were there, and killed a Few, bought off 20 Horses, 9 Continental Troops, 25 of the Militia, the Standard of the Troop, and several other Things.⁸²⁸

⁸²⁴ Hutchins, 'Cavalry Action,' p. 62; Knight, *War*, p. 69; Tarleton to Clinton, Clinton papers, referenced in: Gregory Irwin, in *Cavalry in the American Revolution*, ed. Jim Piecuch (Westholme, 2014), p. 23.

⁸²⁵ Hutchins, 'Cavalry Action,' p. 71. This engagement at Pound Ridge led to an increase in American cavalry patrols by the 2nd and 4th Light Horse, which culminated in the large scale raid that led to a clash between Simcoe's Queens Rangers and Lt. Col. Anthony White's 4th Continental Dragoons in August 1779. This would be the last cavalry engagement in the northern colonies during the war. See: Gara, 'Cavalry,' pp. 77-83.

⁸²⁶ Hutchins, 'Cavalry Action,' p. 70; Knight, *War*; pp. 78-79.

⁸²⁷ This is the first time Tarleton's name is mentioned despite his role in capturing General Lee in December 1776. The newspapers commended Col. Harcourt for capturing the American general with no loss of life. See: 'New-York, December 23,' *The New York Gazette*, 23 December 1776, p. 3.

⁸²⁸ 'Extract of a letter,' *The New York Gazette*, 5 July 1779, p. 3.

The British newspapers also published a report on Tarleton's success. For example, *The Scots Magazine* published Tarleton's account of the conflict that he sent to Clinton. In it, he reported on his order to burn houses, explaining:

The inveteracy of the inhabitants of Pound-bridge, and near Bedford, in firing from houses and outhouses, obliged me to burn some of the meeting and some of their dwelling houses with stores. I proposed to the militia terms, that if they would not fire shots from buildings, I would not burn. They interpreted my mild proposal wrong, imputing it to fear. They persisted in firing till the torch stopped their progress; afterwhich not a shot was fired.⁸²⁹

Stories about Tarleton and his Legion's exploits continued to circulate through the news in the fall of 1779. For example, in response to an unknown engagement, a report that an American unit 'prevented Col. Tarleton's men from exerting the bayonet, agreeable to his orders, which...were to give no quarters' circulated.⁸³⁰ However, soon, the terror would cease when Clinton turned his focus to the southern colonies, making this region the main theatre of war. In the winter of 1779-80, the British Legion moved with the bulk of Clinton's forces south. In this region, Tarleton reverted to his usual tactics, as evidenced by the news reports after Waxhaws.⁸³¹

On 16 August 1780, three months after Waxhaws, the British Legion was instrumental in Cornwallis's success against General Horatio Gates's American forces at Camden, South Carolina. This battle was a low point for the revolutionaries, who lost thousands of men, either killed or captured. This defeat also led to Washington's

⁸²⁹ 'Lt-Col. Banastre Tarleton, of the British Legion, to Gen. Clinton,' *The Scots Magazine*, September 1779, vol. 41, pp. 491-492.

⁸³⁰ 'Fish-Kill. Sept. 30,' *The Connecticut Courant*, 5 October 1779, p. 2.

⁸³¹ Hutchins, 'Cavalry Action,' pp. 73, 77-84.

decision to replace Gates with General Nathaniel Greene as commander of the Southern Army.⁸³² Furthermore, one day after the battle at Camden, the British Legion surprised partisan Colonel Thomas ‘the Gamecock’ Sumter’s militia. Tarleton’s forces almost completely wiped out Sumter’s men, capturing 300 Americans while also freeing about 100 British prisoners of war. While Tarleton’s victory earned him more accolades from his superiors, the Americans accused the British Legion of killing unarmed militia.⁸³³ However, these allegations likely emerged at a much later date as a search of the colonial news reveals that the Patriot papers did not report these allegations in the news.⁸³⁴

The British string of victories took a turn in October 1780 when they sustained a devastating defeat against the Patriot militia in South Carolina. According to American legend, this battle also served as an opportunity for retribution for alleged violations of laws of war by the British Legion. The Battle of King’s Mountain was a conflict between Patriot and Loyalist militia that ended in a much-needed American victory. During the conflict, the Patriot militia also killed the Loyalist commander, Major Patrick Ferguson, and then defiled his body. While the British Legion was not involved in this conflict, it is American lore that, reportedly, many of the Patriot militia refused quarter to surrendering Loyalists, shouting rally cries such as, ‘Buford, Buford, Tarleton’s Quarter!’ Furthermore, they left many of the wounded Loyalists to die a slow death on the battlefield.⁸³⁵

⁸³² Ferling, *Winning*, pp. 262-263.

⁸³³ John Loran Keil, ‘War Crimes in the American Revolution,’ *Military Law Review*, 213 (2012), pp. 38-39.

⁸³⁴ The search referenced here was a by-name search of Tarleton and Camden for one year after this battle.

⁸³⁵ Ferling, *Winning*, pp. 275-278, Hoock, *Scars*, pp. 320-321, Jones, *Captives*, pp. 200-203.

Then, on 17 January 1781, the British sustained another loss that had a direct and damaging impact on the renown Tarleton had benefitted from up to this point in the war. At the Battle of Cowpens, Brigadier General Daniel Morgan's Continentals crushed the British Legion. Reportedly, Morgan held his forces back from killing any of the 800 enemy wounded or captured.⁸³⁶ The number of losses by the British Legion severely disabled their ability to remain an effective fighting force. This was the point where Tarleton's reputation among the British military started to wane. Many British soldiers lost faith in his ability to command after he pushed his forces so hard in pursuit of Morgan that they were not fit to fight during the battle.⁸³⁷

Following the Legion's loss at Cowpens, the newspapers continued to focus on Tarleton. In 1781, articles alleged that the Legion terrorized the South by destroying private residences in search of key revolutionary leadership in the area. For example, *The Connecticut Journal* reported on 18 January that:

Tarleton has, since the action at Black Storks, hanged on Capt. Johnston a magistrate, of respectable character: They have also burned a prodigious number of houses, and turned a vast many women, of affluent or easy fortunes, with their children, almost naked, into the woods. Tarleton, at Gen. Richardson's widow's, exceeded his usual barbarity; for, having dined at her house, not only burnt it, after plundering every thing it contained, but having drove into the barn a number of cattle, hogs & poultry, he consumed them, together with the barn and the corn in it, in one general blaze.⁸³⁸

While the incident occurred in the area around Charlotte, North Carolina, this article also circulated through the newspapers in the northern colonies where Tarleton's cavalry raids occurred earlier in the war.

⁸³⁶ Ferling, *Winning*, p. 335.

⁸³⁷ Ferling, *Winning*, p. 337.

⁸³⁸ 'Extract of a letter from undoubted authority, dated Charlotte, Dec. 7,' *The Connecticut Journal*, 18 January 1781, p. 2.

Less than a year later, the British surrendered after the Battle of Yorktown on 19 October 1781, and accounts from these ceremonies demonstrate anger towards Tarleton's actions. One account in particular occurred during a surrender ceremony in the town of Gloucester, located across the York River from Yorktown. Here, Tarleton represented the British when they capitulated to the French. During the ceremony, Tarleton reportedly asked for personal protection out of fear of retaliation for acts he committed, which the French granted.⁸³⁹ Further, indicative of the revolutionary leadership's sentiments towards Tarleton, the Americans did not invite him to dine at Washington's headquarters along with all other high-ranking British officers. According to Lieutenant Colonel John Laurens, aide-de-camp to Washington and also the Marquis de Lafayette, this snub was intentional.⁸⁴⁰ When Tarleton asked both officers whether his omission from the invite list was an accident, reportedly, Laurens responded:

No, Colonel Tarleton, no accident at all; intentional, I can assure you, and meant as reproof for certain cruelties practiced by the troops under your command in the campaigns of the Carolinas...there are modes, sir, of discharging a soldier's duty, and where mercy has a share in the mode, it renders the duty the more acceptable to both friends and foes.⁸⁴¹

While some historians may argue that Tarleton received an unfair reputation, based on these memoirs, he did lose the respect of both American and French officers as a member of 'Military Europe' as a result of his actions.⁸⁴²

⁸³⁹ Ferling, *Winning*, pp. 527-528.

⁸⁴⁰ George Washington Parke Custis, *Recollections and Private Memories of Washington* (Derby & Jackson, 186), pp. 251-252.

⁸⁴¹ Custis, *Recollections*, pp. 251-252.

⁸⁴² For more on the term 'Military Europe,' see Jon Chandler, 'The Continental Army and 'Military Europe': Professionalism and Restraint in the American War of Independence,' *War in History* (2020), pp. 1-18, doi.org/10.1177/0968344520913594 ; Steven Conway, 'The British Army, "Military Europe," and the American War of Independence,' *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 67, (2010), pp. 69-100, doi.org/10.5309/willmaryquar.67.1.69 .

Tarleton never responded to the claims he refused quarter to Buford's troops at the Battle of Waxhaws. In his memoir that he wrote after the war, he admitted, however, that he lost some control of his troops during the heat of the battle. He also never admitted to burning anything other than military stores and food to prevent its use by American forces. In terms of Waxhaws, he admitted to challenges controlling his cavalry at one point. Tarleton explained:

The loss of officers and men was great on the part of the Americans, owing to the dragoons so effectually breaking the infantry, and to a report amongst the cavalry, that they had lost their commanding officer, which stimulated the [British] soldiers vindictive asperity not easily restrained.⁸⁴³

Tarleton did not provide any additional details of what this meant and whether this 'asperity' could have led to war crimes. Instead, he proceeded to give a sharp critique of Buford's military leadership. According to Tarleton, Buford made a major error in ordering his infantry to hold their fire until they were too close, which caused little impact on his cavalry and eliminated any chance for the Americans to reload. Overall, Tarleton claimed he showed great humanity as he ensured surgeons provided care for the wounded on both sides and that 'every possible convenience was provided by the British.'⁸⁴⁴

Even though extreme violence occurred in the northern colonies during this period, the historical focus has mainly been on the Southern Campaign. Furthermore, Tarleton has become almost synonymous with the war in the South. American fascination with the southern phase of the war, as well as Tarleton, traces back to some of the first histories written on the war. Most notable are the comments made by one of

⁸⁴³ Tarleton, *A History*, pp. 30-31.

⁸⁴⁴ Tarleton, *A History*, pp. 31-32.

the few histories written by a woman soon after the war, Mercy Otis Warren (1728-1814). In her book, *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution*, published in 1805, Warren further damaged Tarleton's reputation, alleging that 'the most striking outrages were every where committed,' by the British. However:

No partisan distinguished himself more on either side, than a colonel Tarleton, who made himself a character in the ravage of the Carolinas, equally conspicuous for bravery and barbarity; and had the effrontery afterwards on England, to boast in the presence of a lady of respectability, that he had killed more men, and ravished more women, than any man in America.⁸⁴⁵

Furthermore, Washington Irving (1783-1859), a renowned author who also perpetuated the Hessian myth in the *Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, arguably did the same for Tarleton's reputation. In his series entitled, *The Life of George Washington*, Irving provided multiple detailed accounts of Tarleton's exploits during the war. Irving's writings also elaborated on Tarleton's personality, stating:

There was a corps of two hundred and fifty dragoons, on which he [Clinton] depended greatly in the kind of guerrilla warfare he was likely to pursue, in a country of forests and morasses. Lieutenant-colonel Banastre Tarleton who commanded them, was one of those dogs of war, which Sir Henry was prepared to let slip on emergencies, to scour and maraud the country. This "bold dragoon," so noted in Southern warfare, was about twenty-six years of age, of a swarthy complexion, with small, black, piercing eyes. He is described as being rather below the middle size, square-built and strong, "with large muscular legs." It will be found that he was a first-rate partisan officer, prompt, ardent, active, but somewhat unscrupulous.⁸⁴⁶

To gauge Irving's focus on this young officer, consider that in this volume, he references Tarleton seventy-two times, compared to Clinton, who is referenced seventy-eight times. Despite both acknowledging his bravery, Irving and Warren's description of the

⁸⁴⁵ Mercy Otis Warren, *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution*, 2 vols (Manning and Loring, 1805), II, p. 197.

⁸⁴⁶ Washington Irving, *Life of George Washington*, 5 vols (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1857), IV, p. 50.

‘bold dragoon’ set the foundation of Tarleton’s character as a person with low morals and ethics.

There were also some within the British officer ranks who held the same sentiments as Warren and Irving. Charles Stedman (1753-1812) was a British officer who fought in the war and also published a history of the conflict in 1794. In his history, Stedman painted a picture of Tarleton as being an arrogant officer whose hubris led to the catastrophic British defeat at Cowpens. Furthermore, much of what Tarleton wrote in his memoirs of the war was unreliable. On a few occasions, Stedman noted in his history that Tarleton’s accounts were inaccurate as he exaggerated his own successes.⁸⁴⁷ Further, at Cowpens, due to his impatience and arrogance, he commenced a charge before the bulk of the British line completed their formation. Stedman explained, ‘Tarleton, relying on the valour of his troops, impatient of delay, and too confident of success, led on in person the first line to the attack, even before it was fully formed.’⁸⁴⁸ As a result of the defeat of Cowpens, Stedman argued:

The defeat of his majesty’s troops at the Cowpens formed a very principal link in the chain of circumstances which led to the independence of America. Colonel Tarleton acquired power without any extraordinary degree of merit, and upon most occasions exercised it without discretion.⁸⁴⁹

Moreover, Tarleton’s actions that day caused a loss of confidence in some troops ordered to serve under him. In 1781, in support of a mission to storm a Virginia assembly meeting in Charlotteville, Stedman claimed that:

The 71st regiment was ordered to accompany Tarleton on this service; but upon receiving the order the officers drew up a remonstrance, and

⁸⁴⁷ Charles Stedman, *The History of the Origin, Progress, and Termination of the American War* (Printed for Messrs. P. Wogan, P. Byrne, J. Moore, and W. Jones, 1794), pp. 255, 394, 423.

⁸⁴⁸ Stedman, *The History*, p. 357.

⁸⁴⁹ Stedman, *The History*, p. 361.

presented it to lord Cornwallis, stating their unwillingness to serve under Tarleton, from a recollection of his conduct at the Cowpens, where the other battalion of the 71st was taken by Morgan. In consequence of this remonstrance, the 71st regiment was attached to colonel Simcoe.⁸⁵⁰

Further, Stedman resented Tarleton's criticism of Cornwallis's actions during the war, claiming he caused the loss of America by moving to Virginia instead of remaining in South Carolina. To this, Stedman proclaimed, 'But colonel Tarleton, throughout his whole History, betrays great impatience to get rid of that burden of gratitude which was due to his lordship for past benefits conferred on him without any extraordinary degree of merit'⁸⁵¹ To Stedman, it seems, Tarleton's actions caused Great Britain to lose the war for America.

Conclusion

The newspaper research conducted on the Battle of Waxhaws revealed several themes related to the public's focus during this period, which, for the most part, did not pertain to the battle or the allegations made by Buford that the British Legion breached laws of war. These threads diverge in several directions, and while they provide a glimpse as to how Buford's allegations played out on the ground to the newspaper-reading public, the news reveals several additional details about what the American people truly cared about in the Spring of 1780. Furthermore, the news stories detailing the brutality of the battles and frontier raids simultaneously occurring in the northern

⁸⁵⁰ Stedman, *The History*, p. 432.

⁸⁵¹ Stedman, *The History*, p. 394.

colonies highlight a skewed view of history that developed since the war due to the immense focus on the history of violence in these years in the South.⁸⁵²

The Battle of Waxhaws draws memories for people today as a prime example of the British military breaching laws of war; however, as evidenced by the immediate newspaper response, it did not generate much attention or anger at the time. Even considering the rural location of this battle and the longer time it took for news to reach the publishers, the fact is that this battle never gained traction in the newspapers. During this period, many other items held the public's attention. For one, the surrender of Charleston and the battle over the truth that occurred in the papers. This battle ended with the redemption of the Loyalist publisher, Rivington, when it turned out that he was telling the truth that the Americans surrendered. This newspaper war is also evidence that the British had finally made some gains in upping their propaganda efforts.

Further, when comparing Waxhaws to the other battles covered in the news during this case study, public concern and uproar focused elsewhere. This is evident by the Battle of Connecticut Farms in New Jersey, where British regulars murdered a young woman, and the news of renewed frontier raids on civilian property by joint Loyalist and Indigenous units. In all, these events triggered more news coverage than Waxhaws, demonstrating that a lack of response to Waxhaws did not mean the American public or the press had become immune to wartime violence, nor did they stop their propaganda efforts.

Moreover, it is not clear that the British Legion breached laws of war during Waxhaws, as Tarleton offered terms of capitulation to Buford before commencing his

⁸⁵² Other historians who argue the same are: Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 21-25; Jones, *Captives*, p. 238; Hoock, *Scars*, pp. 15-20.

attack. Furthermore, the only person that made this allegation was Buford. There was no investigation initiated by Congress or Washington, and no other American service member came out publicly to proclaim this occurred at the time. Unlike the negative impact that the revolutionary allegations had on generating British support previously, Buford's allegations after Waxhaws had arguably no impact on the British because the Americans barely responded to them.

The aspect of the Battle of Waxhaws that gained the most attention was the man, Tarleton, who commanded the British Legion. Of all British officers of his rank during the war, Tarleton was the focus of more newspaper articles, and also described more in-depth in the first histories written on the war, than any other officer of his rank, and arguably more than some of the leading general officers. Even Grey's reputation never made it to the level of Tarleton's, despite all the anger focused on him. The public was obsessed with Tarleton then, as they still seem to be today. While he may not have been guilty of breaching laws of war during Waxhaws, what is evident was that Tarleton's scorched-earth tactics led to the destruction and burning of private property starting from his time in New York and on through the Southern Campaign. This led to a keener focus by the public on his whereabouts. Furthermore, the fact that he was a cavalry officer enhanced this fascination as the news focused more on cavalry troops in general, similar to light infantry in the last chapter. This is evidenced by the heavy news coverage of cavalry raids conducted by the Queen's Rangers and also by Colonel Ty's unit. During a time when people of color never made the news, except, sadly, in the advertisements by their slavers when they escaped — Ty did make the papers, by name, at several points during this study.

Indeed, Tarleton did achieve many successes throughout his time in America, but after Waxhaws, his reputation took a turn for the worse, especially after the Battle of Cowpens. By this time, Tarleton had established a grievous reputation amongst the revolutionary public, mostly because of his frequent use of scorched earth tactics. However, it was at Cowpens that he lost the faith of men within the British military, as shown by Stedman's history. While he started his career in America with a boom, receiving countless accolades from his leadership and positive coverage, especially in the British news, it did not end well for Tarleton. Tarleton never succeeded in improving his reputation, even after writing his memoir of the war. For the most part, what Stedman described as an arrogant man of hubris who only acted for self-serving reasons — is what stuck in historical memory. Whether Tarleton was good or bad still holds a fascination today as historians continue to publish works arguing for or against Tarleton's earned reputation.

Conclusion

This thesis aimed to explore how the publication of British atrocity allegations in American colonial newspapers was presented to the public and examine how they impacted perceptions of the British military's conduct of the War for Independence. It also sought to discover whether Benjamin Franklin's goal to 'make them [Great Britain] a little ashamed of themselves' came to fruition.⁸⁵³ The American colonial newspapers are a valuable resource for understanding how the public took in and imagined the conflict transpiring around them. In this work, the newspapers revealed new insights into how British atrocity allegations played out in the public eye and impacted the war effort. Multiple themes emerged around the veracity of the allegations, the speed at which they landed in the papers, the Americans' skill at shaping perceptions by harnessing the newspapers, and how these lasting images influence American memory today. It was possible that the complaints made by the revolutionaries about unfair treatment by the British military would not faze one of the most powerful countries in the world at the time. However, this thesis shows that the British took the allegations seriously and also enacted measures to avoid harm to their public image. Ultimately, it can be said that Franklin achieved his goal, starting with the first engagement of the war, well before he expressed this wish in 1782.

Right from the outset of the war, the response to atrocity allegations made in the Patriot press showed that these accusations mattered to British politicians and generals. The first case study of the aftermath of Lexington and Concord showed how British

⁸⁵³ 'To John Adams from Benjamin Franklin, 22 April 1782,' in *Founders Online* <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/06-12-02-0289>> [accessed 9 April 2024].

leadership scrambled to get ahead of the information war, especially after a British newspaper published a revolutionary account of the battle. While Gage did not initially understand the sheer industry of the Patriots' propaganda efforts, it was not long after the battle that it became clear the damage these allegations had on gaining public support for the British cause. Dartmouth, especially, grew concerned over the criticism that might ensue amongst the public, who, in many cases, opposed going to war against their colonists. The anxiety of waiting for Gage's version of the conflict was almost unbearable as the British public and Parliament read of alleged British atrocities committed by Gage's troops. This lag in time for Gage's account to arrive led to Dartmouth's reprimand of Gage for not sending his report of events to Britain quicker than the revolutionaries' version. At the same time, the numerous allegations that flooded the American colonial newspapers forced Gage to provide a public response defending his decision to order the operation and also justify the actions of his troops.

This reaction repeated itself in the following years, as the ongoing bombardment of revolutionary allegations forced British leadership to take steps to counter the allegations, defend their actions, and discredit the Patriot reports. After the conflicts at Fort Cedars, the sensational newspaper reports about the actions of the British Indigenous allies, along with the first investigation launched by the United States, led to the British publishing a circular in London intended to exonerate them from any wrongdoing and delegitimize the revolutionary reports and the Continental Congress' response. Furthermore, it was at this time the British determined that they needed to strengthen their information campaign with the assistance of Ambrose Serle. The newspaper reports after the battles of New York, Trenton, and Princeton, and the

subsequent investigation launched by the Continental Congress, compelled North to answer the allegations in Parliament. Moreover, during a parliamentary hearing on 6 May 1779, debates occurred over the effectiveness of using harsh measures, and it was Grey who argued against this strategy because it only led to an increase in the revolutionaries' resolve – as observed in the newspaper response to his attack on Baylor. These reactions to the Patriot-leaning news reports demonstrated the British did not ignore revolutionaries' accusations, nor did they assume no one would believe them. While the allegations that forced a British response were isolated incidents, they were persistent throughout the war and mattered enough to trigger deliberate measures by the British to turn the narrative in their favor multiple times throughout this thesis.

Surprisingly, the only exception to this pattern was the Battle of Waxhaws. In American memory of the war, Tarleton and the British Legion are notorious for breaching laws of war during the Southern Campaign, which also carries a reputation for the most horrid period of the war. After Buford alleged that the British Legion gave no quarter, one would expect a greater response from the Patriot-leaning press given their character thus far. However, the news paid little attention to the allegations, and thus, there was no reason for the British to respond. Theories as to why this occurred include the battle's rural location and its timing just after the Americans' surrender of Charleston. However, this battle remains prominent in American collective memory for alleged atrocities committed by the British Legion in part because of the lasting, albeit misleading, image of the Southern Campaign as being the most violent period of the war, which also aided in bolstering the Legion commander's enduring and grievous reputation. This memory is so enduring it is enshrined at the Museum of the American

Revolution and perhaps a product of what is suggested as the politicization of museums and archives in capitalist societies.⁸⁵⁴

Despite their impact, the revolutionaries' allegations were mostly untrue. Dartmouth explained it best when describing these accusations following Lexington and Concord as an 'artful Misrepresentation of Affairs.'⁸⁵⁵ While all allegations were based on some facts, they ranged from being wholly deceptive to completely untrue. Most fallacious were the worst allegations from Lexington and Concord that the redcoats murdered innocent civilians, including women, children, the sick, and the elderly. Gage admitted that some deaths occurred because the militia attacked the redcoats from within houses, which is plausible. However, none of the testimonies corroborated this allegation. Further, given the nature of the revolutionaries, if the American allegations were true, they would have most certainly, at the very least, added them to the grievances listed in the Declaration of Independence.

After the Battle of Cedars, the Americans aimed their allegations at both the British's Indigenous allies for mistreating prisoners of war and also the British commander for allowing these acts to occur. These accusations drew upon a much longer history of frontier and Indigenous warfare representations, especially stemming from the Seven Years' War. There is no evidence that Forster allowed his Indigenous allies to abuse American troops. Mark Anderson concurs that the worst atrocity legend that a man was burned alive did not occur, as only Sherburne recounted this tale.⁸⁵⁶ In

⁸⁵⁴ Richard Harvey Brown and Beth Davis-Brown, 'The Making of Memory: The Politics of Archives, Libraries and Museums in the Construction of National Consciousness,' *History of the Human Sciences*, 11.4 (1998), pp. 17–32 (p. 30), doi:10.1177/095269519801100402.

⁸⁵⁵ Clements Library, *ES*, Vol. 30, Folder 1, Dartmouth to Gage, 1 July 1775.

⁸⁵⁶ Mark Anderson, *Down the Warpath to the Cedars* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2021), p. 104.

fact, there is more evidence he tried to stop the acts from happening. Furthermore, his allies were acting according to their customs of warfare, which included the practices related to captive-taking. From the Indigenous view, these were not atrocities but actions required within their customs to cope with their losses in battle. Anderson accurately concludes that ‘key participants cooperated actively and passively to accommodate cultural differences,’ and they avoided extensive violence.⁸⁵⁷ Neither the British nor the Americans had any grounds to criticize the Indigenous way of war as they were well-known by the time of this battle. More importantly, if the British were guilty of allying with them, the Americans were just as guilty. At the same time that the revolutionaries accused the British of making Indigenous alliances, they were actively attempting to do the same.

The main allegations that emerged from the case studies on the Battle of Long Island, the so-called Paoli and Baylor massacres, and the Battle of Waxhaws were that British troops refused quarter to American soldiers attempting to surrender. Like previous scholarship from Atwood, Hooch, and Baer that clears the German auxiliary soldiers as the main perpetrators during the Battle of Long Island, this thesis also found no evidence that Britain’s German auxiliaries were especially brutal.⁸⁵⁸ The colonial press, however, propagated preconceived ideas that the German troops were ruthless and lawless mercenaries before they arrived in America. Conversely, there were more allegations that the British and Highlander troops refused quarter. While there were

⁸⁵⁷ Anderson, *Down the Warpath*, p. 107.

⁸⁵⁸ Rodney Atwood, *The Hessians: Mercenaries from Hessen-Kassel in the American Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp. 22-23, 171-183; Holger Hooch, *Scars of Independence* (Crown, 2017), p. 114; Friederike Baer, *Hessians: German Soldiers in the American Revolutionary War* (Oxford University Press, 2022), p. 119.

allegations in the newspapers that the Germans plundered, there were several allegations that the redcoats plundered as well. However, similar to Gage's responses to the Americans' use of irregular warfare, North admitted in November 1776 that accidental deaths occurred during this engagement when Americans fired, tried to flee, and then attempted to surrender.

Completely distorted were the Americans' allegations in response to Grey's attacks in September 1777 and 1778. To think that amid the rapid bayonet attacks Grey ordered, the momentum of this attack could suddenly halt to give quarter to every man who surrendered was impossible. Grey executed a flawless operation, and there is no evidence he acted outside of the laws of war. As for the Battle of Waxhaws, while there was not a great newspaper response, Buford did allege the Legion refused quarter. However, the facts are that Tarleton offered terms of surrender, which Buford refused, making the subsequent attack that ensued on his troops within the laws of war. Further, in all the case studies on this thesis, the British took American prisoners of war, evidence that no general orders were given to refuse quarter.

A secondary aim of this thesis was to identify trends in the ebb and flow of the allegations over the course of the war. Most prominent was the publishers' concern over fake news immediately after Lexington and Concord. As argued by scholars of misinformation, fake news was not a new concept during the American Revolution.⁸⁵⁹ In articles released immediately after the battle, publishers clearly documented their efforts to provide accurate information. Publishers took pains to provide only the details they

⁸⁵⁹ Joanna Burkhardt, 'History of Fake News,' *Library Technology Reports* 53.8 (2017), pp. 5–9 (p. 6). Also see: Lionel Laborie, 'The Treaty of Nîmes (1704): Fake News, Propaganda and Diplomacy During the War of the Spanish Succession,' *French History* 36.3 (2022), pp. 283–300; see Chapter One, pp. 42–43.

could corroborate. This finding aligns with Jordon Taylor, whose work explores transatlantic information exchange and argues that in the 1770s, Patriot printers took on the responsibility of assessing the truthfulness of news received from Great Britain. This led to several misperceptions that bolstered the crisis in America.⁸⁶⁰ However, this trend was not observed in any of the subsequent case studies. It was only during the first weeks after the opening battle of the war that this level of cautious reporting materialized in the newspapers, making this period the most balanced reporting of the war.

Patterns are perceptible regarding the dissemination of the news based on the location of the battles and the movements of the British army. It is not surprising that in the highly populated city of Boston, news on the Battle of Lexington and Concord surfaced the following day, with the first allegation against the British reported three days after the battle. Conversely, in the rural Canadian region around the American post at Cedars, the first news on the battle was released in the Thirteen Colonies twelve days later. The same was true in the rural area around Waxhaws, where the first news on the battle was published nineteen days later, and the first of the small number of allegations reported eighteen days thereafter. In this case, the news on Waxhaws took an indirect route, as it was first published in New York City after arriving through British communication channels before spreading anywhere else.

British occupation of territory impacted the type of news reported. While the British did not have control over all the news from the colonial newspapers, they did in the areas they occupied. This was especially true in the area around New York City and

⁸⁶⁰ Jordan Taylor, *Misinformation Nation: Foreign News and the Politics of Truth in Revolutionary America* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022), pp. 8-11.

Long Island, which remained British-occupied territory for most of the war, and the news coming from publishers at these locations was Loyalist-leaning. In this location, the British made deliberate attempts to engage in the information war by establishing Loyalist news outlets and influencing the press, as seen by Serle's efforts. After the Battle of Long Island, news on the conflict was released two days later, however, only one vague allegation against the British emerged. It was not until after the American victory at Trenton and Princeton in January 1777 that allegations against the British made it into the newspapers. A similar impact was seen after the Battle of Paoli, which occurred about thirty miles west of Philadelphia. News on this conflict did not reach the papers until forty-seven days after the battle, and in this case, no allegations made the news. Philadelphia was one of the largest cities with the most Patriot-leaning newspaper publishing houses in the colonies. The British occupation of the city less than a week later impacted the revolutionary news networks in this area. The opposite occurred the following year, in 1778, when news of Grey's assault on Baylor was published three days after the attack, and the first of many allegations flooded the papers seven days after the battle. At this location, the revolutionary communication networks were less constricted as the attack occurred in northern New Jersey, about thirty miles north of British-occupied New York City, a location that served as a foraging area for both armies. While the first news on the battle came from Loyalist-leaning papers from the city, the first newspaper to release an allegation against the British and open the floodgates was the Trenton-based, Patriot-leaning, *New Jersey Gazette*.

A prominent recurring theme that surfaced in the press and also private letters was the British and German's frustration with the American way of war. In every case

examined in this thesis, anger over the revolutionaries' tactics of firing from behind walls, trees, and within civilian houses was expressed. This triggered several incidents where the British burned down buildings and returned fire into the inhabitant's houses. As already highlighted, Gage admitted that 'accidental' deaths likely occurred because of these breaches of laws of war by the Americans. Awareness of these incidents reached the very top of the British chain of command as evidenced by a letter from Sir Jeffery Amherst, 1st Baron Amherst, that 'the Persons killed in Houses were those who had annoyed the Troops exceedingly.'⁸⁶¹ North, Howe, and Erskine all admitted to the same after the Battle of Long Island, and Tarleton was especially candid about his justification to use scorched earth tactics for this reason. Whether justified or not, the Patriots found strategic value in using the British military's response to their use of irregular warfare to chastise their enemy for their actions, which became fodder for the American propaganda machine.

The Americans were also skilled in causing public uproar over the British army's actions while, at the same time, claiming the moral high ground by using religion to boost their argument. These findings support the work of Craig Bruce Smith, who argues that the Patriots viewed the war as a 'matter of honor and a test of virtue caused by a British ethical failing.'⁸⁶² In almost every case, the publishers' placement of news articles about British atrocities was close to articles explaining how the Americans were both more ethical and held more Christian values than the British. Even to clear

⁸⁶¹ Maidstone, Kent History and Library Center, Amherst Manuscripts, U1350/O73/18: *Correspondence with Lord Townsend, Lieut Colonel Cleveland to Lord Townshend: detailed account of the fight at Lexington with note of casualties, 22 April 1775.*

⁸⁶² Craig Bruce Smith, *American Honor: The Creation of the Nation's Ideals during the Revolutionary Era* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2018), p.13.

themselves of the British allegation the militia scalped injured redcoats, the Americans used religion for their defense by relying on a minister as the prime investigator to exonerate them of any wrongdoing. Most interesting about this use of religion was that many revolutionaries opposed designating a state religion and advocated for a separation of church and state. Despite these ideas, Mark Knoll explains that by using religious language for political use, ‘the argument against Parliament acquired the emotive force of revival.’⁸⁶³ In turn, the revolutionaries drew from a long history of diverse sects of Christianity within the American colonies to unite colonists in support of the war. Religion became a tool used for the revolutionaries’ just-war arguments published in the newspapers that supported their claim of ethical superiority while simultaneously admonishing the British for their uncivilized behavior.

The American colonial newspapers provide evidence of the revolutionaries’ attempts to shape perceptions using preexisting fears. Their adeptness was demonstrated when the focus of the newspapers turned to Indigenous troops and then to the German auxiliary soldiers. By using emotive and sensational language in the news when reporting on these groups, the Patriot press used fear to spur action and drum up support for the revolutionary cause. While there is evidence to suggest that colonists were afraid of the German troops and dreaded their arrival, the news articles also indicate that this fear faded by early 1777. However, there is no evidence that any perceptions changed of Indigenous people and their customs of warfighting based on the sensational news that focused on this population throughout the war. The newspapers essentially stopped writing about German ‘mercenaries,’ and the grievous acts they might commit on

⁸⁶³ Mark Noll, *America’s God* (Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 85.

American soil soon after the Battles of Trenton and Princeton. Conversely, the fear-mongering articles depicting the Indigenous raids and the practice of taking captives never ceased.

Absent in the news articles reviewed for this thesis were reports that the British attempted to trigger unrest and insurrection by the enslaved population. These fears were initially spurred by John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore and royal Governor of Virginia's emancipation proclamation of November 1775, promising to free any enslaved people willing to join the Crown's army.⁸⁶⁴ Dunmore's actions led to the grievance expressed in the Declaration of Independence that 'he has excited domestic insurrections amongst us.'⁸⁶⁵ However, the case studies in this thesis did not yield any newspaper articles intended to provoke fear of an uprising. What the colonial papers did publish in 1780, however, were multiple articles about a freed black man and cavalry officer of the Black Brigade named Col Ty. These stories provided accounts of Ty and his men raiding multiple Patriot households in the North. Perhaps the economic devastation and security concerns that an insurrection would cause for the white enslavers were just too unnerving for colonists to grapple with and may not have had the mobilizing impact as the other allegations against the British. However, the articles depicting the actions of the Black Brigade aligned with the Patriots' propaganda campaign.

As the newspapers drew on long-established fears related to both populations, the American Congress also planned to recruit Indigenous and German men to fight for

⁸⁶⁴ Hooek, *Scars*, pp. 95-96.

⁸⁶⁵ 'The Declaration of Independence,' *LOC* <<https://www.loc.gov/item/2003576546>> [accessed 9 March 2024].

their cause. At the same time the American revolutionary leadership launched grievances against the King for subjecting American colonists to the horrors of German ‘mercenaries’ and Indigenous ‘savages,’ they actively worked to also gain their support. The hypocrisy the Americans demonstrated here is astounding. The Patriots’ deception is also evidence that their grievances were not purely driven by ideological hostility towards both groups but that they used established fears of these groups to bolster support for the revolution. However, this strategy was not successful, as few German troops switched allegiances despite the schemes set in place to entice them with offers of land. Further, the revolutionaries also failed to gain much Indigenous support as most chose to support the British in the end.

The newspapers proved that what is remembered today about the battles highlighted in each case study does not align with what contemporaries focused on at the time. The Battle of Waxhaws and also the attack at Paoli, for example, both received minimal attention at the time, but today are considered prime examples of engagements during this war where British atrocities occurred. Furthermore, when comparing the Patriot reaction to both of Grey’s attacks, Grey received significantly more criticism for the Baylor Massacre than Paoli; however, today, Paoli takes precedence in American historical memory. Suffice it to say, the enduring view of these battles as ‘massacres’ formed after the war, and perhaps, as highlighted by Dwyer, was the result of veterans of these battles reframing the events to ‘draw meaning’ from their traumatic experiences of war.⁸⁶⁶

⁸⁶⁶ Philip G. Dwyer, “‘It Still Makes Me Shudder,’ Memories of Massacres and Atrocities during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars,” *War in History*, 16.4 (2009), pp. 381–405 (p. 404), doi:10.1177/0968344509341681.

Along with the changing perceptions of certain battles that occurred since the war's end, the reputation of certain people that emerged during the war, evidenced by the newspapers, also does not match with today's contemporary view. As already stated, while fear of German troops existed before their arrival to America, this quickly started to diminish after the Battles of Trenton and Princeton. It was at this time that pity replaced fear when colonists came to realize they were just normal humans after the Americans captured thousands and marched them through the streets of Philadelphia, which Daniel Krebs first argued.⁸⁶⁷ Although the revolutionary press and government attempted to foment fear among the public by equating the German auxiliary troops with mercenaries who would murder innocent civilians and destroy their property, there is no evidence this occurred. Aside from plunder allegations, the behavior of the German troops was no different than that of the British. However, the grievous view of the Germans, which was at its strongest before they set foot in America, is actually what many Americans continue to hold today. As argued by Holger Hoock, the lasting reputation of the German auxiliary troops most likely formed from the actions of the German military in wars that occurred well after the American Revolution, such as World War I and World War II.⁸⁶⁸

One of the most controversial individuals of the war was, and still is, Banastre Tarleton. It is almost impossible to write about the brutal reputation of the Southern Campaign without acknowledging Tarleton's role. The newspapers paid an inordinate amount of attention to the actions and movements of this promising young dragoon commander over the course of his time in America, more so than any other British

⁸⁶⁷ Daniel Krebs, *A Generous and Merciful Enemy* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), pp. 78-79, 99.

⁸⁶⁸ Hoock, *Scars*, pp. 401-404.

Lieutenant Colonel who served in the colonies. While not always good press, his reputation did not truly start to deteriorate until after the Battle of Cowpens in January 1781. Given the view of him today, one would assume that after the Battle of Waxhaws, Tarleton would receive the same negative attention as Grey did after his notorious and successful nighttime assaults. However, surprisingly, in the aftermath of Waxhaws, the revolutionary news paid barely any attention to this battle. Unlike Grey, who received more negative press during his much shorter tour in America, Tarleton would never recover his reputation. Ultimately, what destroyed his reputation was not atrocious acts, but the poor leadership decisions he made during the Battle of Cowpens. In the end, Tarleton became the focus of criticism from both British and American officers for his conduct, along with early historians of the war. Even today, historians attempt to salvage his reputation but to no avail. Grey, on the other hand, did not sustain any damage to his reputation, and his career only progressed after the war.

This thesis highlights the underrepresented analysis of the brutality of the war in the northern colonies due to the historiographical focus on engagements during the Southern Campaign as the bloodiest of the war.⁸⁶⁹ Numerous allegations that the British breached laws of war emerged in response to the battles and raids occurring in the northern colonies during this case study. Most notable were the news articles in June 1780 that depicted the relatively obscure battles of Connecticut Farms and Springfield in

⁸⁶⁹ This observation supports the work Parkinson, Hoock, and Jones who argue that the ‘extreme violence’ of the conflicts during the Southern Campaign was not an anomaly but was a continuation of what already occurred in the North and also Philip Dwyer, who further contends that this war, overall, was just as vicious as the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars. See: Robert Parkinson, *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution* (University of North Carolina Press, 2016), pp. 21-25; T. Cole Jones, *Captives of Liberty: Prisoners of War and the Politics of Vengeance in the American Revolution*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), p. 238; Hoock, *Scars*, pp. 15-20; Dwyer, ‘It Still Makes Me Shudder,’ p. 404.

New Jersey, which occurred around the same time as the Battle of Waxhaws. Unlike the battles of focus in the case studies, during these battles, there is evidence that an innocent civilian was killed. Given the character of the revolutionaries shown throughout this study, it is unusual that the Patriots did not make more of this incident in official documents listing grievances against the British.

While the Americans did not have a central overarching organization for their information campaign, the evidence from this thesis shows there was a collective endeavor toward this specific goal. Parkinson suggests that the word ‘propaganda’ does not appropriately describe the revolutionaries’ campaign compared to state-sponsored propaganda seen today. However, the level of organization needed to achieve what was evidenced in the Patriot press arguably does meet the definition of propaganda.⁸⁷⁰ Immediately after the first engagement, the revolutionaries’ information war started strong and relentless. Each case study showed that their passion and alacrity in responding to any hint that the British breached laws of war did not dwindle over the course of the war. Even in May 1780, while there was no response to Waxhaws, there was an immense response to other battles and raids occurring at the same time in the North.

While the British leadership tried to harness the American colonial news to combat the Patriot information campaign, they never achieved success in suppressing the revolutionaries’ efforts. Yet, the Americans learned how to leverage the newspapers to their favor from the British, who had a longer history of using this tactic to rally support for their causes. Despite this, the British were surprised by the American

⁸⁷⁰ Parkinson, *The Common Cause*, pp. 17-18.

relentless propaganda campaign. There is evidence, however, that the British gained some traction with propaganda efforts as indicated by the uproar from the Americans over what they alleged was misinformation coming from Loyalist papers claiming the Americans surrendered Charleston in 1780. However, starting with Lexington and Concord, the British were consistently responding to the Americans' allegations and ultimately lost control of the narrative throughout the war. The British lapse in gaining control of the information war was a grave mistake that, to their detriment, led to a loss of support for the war not only from American colonists but also some within the British public and was an important, and hitherto unappreciated, factor leading to the loss of the American colonies.

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Box VIII D:58 Reel 72: *Jabez Fitch Diary*

Box IX: 11 Reels 100-101: *Miscellaneous Manuscripts, 19 January 1770 - December 1775*

Box VIII D: 53 Reel 37: *Letters of Lord Dartmouth and Lord George Germain to Guy Carleton (10 December 1774-19September 1777)*

Washington D.C., Society of the Cincinnati General William Smallwood Papers

MSS L1999LA3.1 *Prisoners of War, No Date*

MSS L1999LA3.6 M *James Tilghman, A.L.S., to Smallwood, 20 September 1776*

MSS L1999LA3.8 *Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer, A.L.S., to Smallwood, 15 February 1777*

MSS L1999LA3.9 *James Campbell, A.L.S., to Smallwood, 28 February 1777*

MSS L1999LA3.10 *James Campbell, A.L.S., to Smallwood, 2 March 1777*

MSS L1988.190.296 M *Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer, A.L.S., to Smallwood*

MSS L1999LA3.11 *John Weems, A.L.S., to Smallwood, 10 August 1778*

MSS L1999LA2.1-6 *William Davie, A.L.S., to Smallwood, November 1780 from Camp Waxhaws*

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Colonial America, Colonial Office 5 Series

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Gazette, Royal Gazette)**Royal American Gazette**South Carolina and American General
Gazette**Story and Humphrey's Pennsylvania
Mercury**Virginia Gazette – John Pinkney**Virginia Gazette – Alexander Purdie**Virginia Gazette – John Dixon &**William Hunter*

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