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# The Professionalization of the American Army through the War of 1812

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## Abstract

### The Professionalization of the American Army through the War of 1812

The American military tradition stretches back to the militia of England. The English colonists brought a tradition of militia service and a fear of standing armies to America. Once in America, the colonies formed their own militias, using them for defense and then later for offensive operations. At the time of the American Revolution the American colonies had to combine the militia with an army. The fear of a standing army hindered the Continental Army, and then later the American Army, from being an effective force. By the time of the American Civil War, this had changed. There was a standing army as well as thousands of trained officers. When did the transformation of the American military from a citizen based ideal to a professional force occur?

Many historians point to the decades between 1820 and 1840 as the years when the army professionalized. This thesis proposes that the War of 1812 was the defining event that spurred the professionalization of the American Army. To achieve this, the American military tradition from the earliest colonists to the mid-eighteenth century is explored. This thesis divides these two hundred and fifty years into eras. Several authors' works are compared in each era to assess the state of the army and how it had changed from the previous era. The requirements of a professional army, the transformation of the army's organization, and the attitude of the American people will be analyzed in order to determine what sparked the professionalization of the American Army.

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The Professionalization of the American Army through the War of 1812

A Thesis in  
History

By

Robert Heiss

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## Introduction

“A militia is the most natural defence of a free state, from invasion and tyranny...Men who enlist themselves for life, soon lose the feelings of citizens.”<sup>1</sup>The thirteen colonies that would become the United States of America had a long standing tradition of praising the civilian who took up arms against his enemies. Hand in hand with this sentiment was a distrust of military authority and of professional soldiers. Both of these traditions had arisen from the colonies’ English heritage. Allan Millet and Peter Maslowski state that, “The colonists’ most revered military institution (the militia) and their most cherished military tradition (fear of a standing army) both came from England.”<sup>2</sup> The colonists’ experience in North America would add to this heritage.

During the American Revolution, the sentiment against a standing army was high. This was due to a mixture of political heritage, military experience, and philosophical ideology. This sentiment promoted the heroic encounters of the militia. Robert K. Wright Jr. states that, “The rhetoric of protest against British policy had strongly denied the need for a large “standing army” of regular soldiers in America on the grounds that the colonial militia forces, composed of virtuous citizen-soldiers, were perfectly adequate for local defense...Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill only seemed to confirm the validity of that assumption.”<sup>3</sup> Congress was realistic and saw the need for an army, yet the army was always complemented with militia. According to Millet and Maslowski, “Throughout the war the Continental Army complemented rather than supplanted the state militias, and at practically every critical juncture these disparate forces acted

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Welsh, “Oration, Delivered at Boston, March 5, 1783,” in *Anglo-American Antimilitary Tracts 1697-1830*, ed. Richard H. Kohn (New York: Arno Press, 1979), 174-175.

<sup>2</sup> Millet and Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America* (New York: Free Press, 1984), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Robert K. Wright Jr., *The Continental Army* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army, 1986), 43.

in concert.”<sup>4</sup> In contrast, during the Mexican War, six decades later, it was the Regular Army that was in the forefront of battles and campaigns. Russell Weigley states that in the Mexican War, “The regulars always went to the decisive front; the volunteers were used as though they were auxiliaries.”<sup>5</sup>

Sometime during these years, the American Army began its transformation toward becoming a professionalized force. In the nineteenth century the most important aspect to a professional army was a large number of professional officers. In the previous century, armies were small, highly drilled forces. With the advent of the *levee en masse*, introduced in the Napoleonic Era, the size of armies exploded. In order to quickly train large numbers of new soldiers, armies relied upon a large corps of educated professional officers.

In order to obtain these professional officers the army needed several things. First, the position had to be full time. Second, officers who entered into the military had to see it as a lifelong career. Third, there had to be a military institution that could produce highly trained officers. Fourth, the army had to be competently organized with high standards. And lastly, the army had to be accepted by the society in which it resided.<sup>6</sup>

It is the intention of this thesis to highlight the profound impact that the War of 1812 had on the professionalization of the American Army. Prior to the war, the American military was still semi-professional. During the American Revolution the majority of the Continental Army was comprised of militia. Furthermore from 1789 up until the beginning of the War of 1812, the Regular Army amounted to just over 6,000 men.<sup>7</sup> During the War of 1812, there were never

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<sup>4</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 57.

<sup>5</sup> Russell F. Weigley, *Towards an American Army: Military Thought from Washington to Marshall* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 36.

<sup>6</sup> See William B. Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms: The Army Officer Corps, 1784-1861* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> Statistics from Francis B. Heitman, *Historical Register and Dictionary of the United States Army: From its organization, September 29, 1789 to March 2, 1903* Vol.2 (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1965), 626.

more than 36,000 regulars, on paper.<sup>8</sup> In the 1790s and in the first decade of the nineteenth century, the army had a few professionalizing reforms. Yet, the power of the anti-standing army sentiment prevented the formation of a professional army. The War of 1812 brought the deficiencies in the American military to the attention of the American government, and brought forth a new generation of officers who would lead the professionalization.

Since this topic covers two centuries of history, a wide range of scholarship had to be consulted. There are four authors whose work closely mirrors this one, and whose work the author has frequently cited. Allan Millet and Peter Maslowski outlined the whole history of the American military tradition in their work *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America*. Millet and Maslowski both describe the dual tradition of the American army, militiamen and regulars.

Russell F. Weigley produced several works regarding the early American Army. In *History of the United States Army*, Weigley outlined the history of the American military from colonial times to the mid 1980s. Weigley's *Towards an American Army: Military Thought from Washington to Marshall* was heavily weighted towards the theoretical aspect of the army. This work examines two authors of American military thought in each era of American history. *The American Way of War* is along the lines of the Weigley's previous work. This book begins at the American Revolution and traces military thought up to the Vietnam War.

Edward M. Coffman's *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898* focused on the soldiers and officers away from war. This work is informative for such issues as frontier life, education, careerism, pay, and other such issues associated with the early peacetime army.

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<sup>8</sup> Heitman, 626.

William B. Skelton has written numerous works on the professionalization of the American Army and its officer corps. Skelton expanded on Coffman's work to produce a thorough observation of the early American Army. In *An American Profession of Arms: The Army Officer Corps, 1784-1861*, Skelton examined a number of important issues in the development of the army during this time. Skelton's in depth analysis of the army is quite extensive, particularly helpful are the number of figures and graphs illustrating the officers' background and career length. In his article, "The Commanding Generals and the Question of Civil Control in the Antebellum U.S. Army", Skelton related the establishment of the General Staff and the position of the Commanding General in 1821. Skelton examined the impact the War of 1812 had on the American Army in "High Army Leadership in the Era of the War of 1812: The Making and Remaking of the Officer Corps."

All of these works point to the decades between the War of 1812 and the Mexican War in 1846, as the time when the American Army pushed towards professionalization.<sup>9</sup> This was due to many factors which will be examined later. In "High Army Leadership in the Era of the War of 1812: The Making and Remaking of the Officer Corps", Skelton examined the officer corps during the War of 1812. In his article Skelton stated, "By the later stages of the war, the performance of the officer corps was steadily improving, partly through administration efforts to advance talented men but, more important, through the experience that young officers had acquired by years of field service."<sup>10</sup> It is the goal of this thesis to expand upon Skelton's work and to place greater emphasis on the War of 1812 as the turning point towards the professionalization of the American Army.

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<sup>9</sup> Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 144-172; Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 109-130.

<sup>10</sup> William B. Skelton, "High Army Leadership in the Era of the War of 1812: The Making and Remaking of the Officer Corps," *The William and Mary Quarterly* (Third Series Vol. 51, No. 2), 274.



Due to the magnitude of the topic, the first chapter traces the militia heritage of the American military prior to the American Revolution. This chapter focuses on two contributing factors; the seventeenth century history of England, and the militia's colonial experience. In the seventeenth century, the clashes between the King and members in Parliament highlighted a debate over the consequences resulting from a standing army. This era highlighted issues concerning standing armies and militia. Once in America, colonists had to defend themselves against the Native Indians, pirates, and other European nations. In the early stages of colonization the colonists learned to gain trust in their militia, and their ability to defend themselves. At the end of the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century, the colonies began to send out inter-colonial military expeditions against Indians and then against European soldiers.

The second chapter covers the American military from the American Revolution to the eve of the War of 1812. In these years the tradition of the dual army arises in the American military. The need for a professional army in order to defend the nation was countered by the fear of a military aristocracy and dictatorship. This chapter also focuses on the change in the notion of a professional army in Europe. During the second half of the eighteenth century, small professional armies with career soldiers were prominent. During and after the Napoleonic Era, armies became large, with a great number of professional officers trained in Military Academies. The American military attempted to emulate some of these examples, but the War of 1812 would prove that they had not succeeded.

The first two years of the War of 1812 are discussed in the third chapter. The semi-professionalism of the American Army at the start of 1812 is exhibited by the military failures in the first two years of the war. The army needed to relearn the lessons that it had once learned during the Revolutionary War. The defeats and losses in 1812 and 1813 eliminated the old semi-

professional high ranking officers while giving experience to young promising officers. These officers led America's armies in 1814 and played a prominent role in the professionalization of the army in the post-war years.

The fourth chapter examines the final year of the War of 1812 and the decades after. Propelled by the experience of the war, the army turns to professionalizing itself in the 1820s and 1830s. Officers, who experienced the defeats and confusion of the first two years of the war, now spur the army towards professionalization. The army is given three decades of peace from major wars to implement these changes. While there are no major wars during these decades, the army must defend the frontier and is engaged in several Indian wars that keep it busy and away from American society.

The fifth chapter relates the Mexican War, whose results vindicate the professionalization of the American Army. This was the first time since the War of 1812, that the American Army faced an army with a recognized government. This aggressive war showcased the War of 1812 generation, which led the new generation of West Point educated officers. The greater portion of the junior officers, in the army at that time, were academy trained and helped lead the American forces to victories. This war, contrasted with the War of 1812, highlighted the changes that had been made in the intervening decades.

Prior to the American Revolution, the American colonies had relied solely on the citizen soldier for their defense. By the time of the Mexican War in 1846, America had a small regular army filled with academy trained professional officers. In the preceding six decades the American Army had transformed from militia based into a professional force. This thesis stresses the importance of the War of 1812 as the driving force behind the professionalization of the American Army. The results of this war highlighted the army's unprepared state, and

propelled the American government to professionalize the small army. This professionalization was spearheaded by career officers who had risen through the army's ranks in the War of 1812.

## Chapter One: America's Militia Heritage

In order to understand the American military in the late eighteenth century, it would be useful to trace the military tradition of the American colonies and their heritage prior to the American Revolution. This heritage can be separated into two aspects; the militia heritage of seventeenth century England and the colonies' own military traditions from the founding of the first permanent English settlement in 1607 to the American Revolution.

The thirteen colonies that would become the United States of America were founded by European immigrants. From the beginning all of these colonies were in the British Empire.<sup>1</sup> This was significant because Great Britain had a constitutional monarchy, which was a rare government in Europe at the time. This style of government provided the colonists with a dual tradition of militia and armies. England's militia tradition stretched back to the Statute of Winchester in 1285, the Assize of Arms in 1181, and even earlier to the pre-Norman age.<sup>2</sup> The clash between militias and standing armies within English society really heated up in the seventeenth century, exactly during the time of American colonization. This is vital to the American sense of being because, immigrants would have taken this heritage with them to the New World.<sup>3</sup>

The year 1628 is important because that is when King Charles I and Parliament first clashed over the military. This would eventually lead to an argument over martial law and

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<sup>1</sup> William Murray, "13 Originals Founding the American Colonies", <http://www.timepage.org/spl/13colony.html#mass> (accessed 3/1/2012).

<sup>2</sup> Lois G. Schworer, *"No Standing Armies!"* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1974), 14.

<sup>3</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 1; Kyle F. Zelter, *A Rabble in Arms: Massachusetts Towns and Militiamen during King Philip's War* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 28-29.

billeting of soldiers, both issues that concerned the colonists in 1775.<sup>4</sup> In 1628, during the Thirty Years War, England was at war with France and Spain. King Charles I of England needed money in order to carry on the war and, not winning the cooperation of Parliament, decided to pay for his army by his own means. He prorogued Parliament and ruled without it. A problem for Charles was that there were no army camps or a system of barracks in England. Therefore the King had no alternative but to billet soldiers in public houses, inns, and private houses. Lois Schwoerer mentions that homeowners who billeted soldiers would be reimbursed by the crown. It was only when payments became late that complaints began to mount.<sup>5</sup> In answer to this Parliament issued the Petition of Right. Schwoerer states that, “The Petition made it illegal for him to billet soldiers on unwilling subjects and to discipline the army in peacetime by martial law.”<sup>6</sup> This time period and the Petition of Right “served as a precedent throughout the century in criticism of the army.”<sup>7</sup>

In 1642, events developed that would lead to the English Civil War. After more than a decade, King Charles reconvened Parliament in order to finance an army. In 1642, Parliament passed the Militia Ordinance which transferred power over the militia from the King to Parliament.<sup>8</sup> The King saw this as a direct affront to his royal prerogatives and eventually both sides went to war. The English Civil War and the Militia Ordinance had a profound effect on colonial America because, “The idea that the legislature rather than the executive should have

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<sup>4</sup> Schwoerer, 19-32. This chapter reviews the year 1628 and the Petition of Right; See Allan I. Macinnes, *The British Revolution, 1629-1660* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Schwoerer, 20-22.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-50. Also see Ian Gentles, *The English Revolution: and the Wars in the Three Kingdoms 1638-1652* (Harlow, England: Pearson Education Limited, 2007).

ultimate control over the armed force of the nation became a central element in all future arguments.”<sup>9</sup>

The next event in the seventeenth century that affected American thinking on military issues was the advent of the New Model Army during the English Civil War.<sup>10</sup> This army had been created in 1645 in order to defend Parliament and defeat the monarchy, and in turn, it set up the English Protectorate. As Lois Schwoerer notes, “It was kept standing for fifteen years. Thus, for the first time in its history, England directly experienced the effects of a large peacetime military establishment.”<sup>11</sup> During these fifteen years, the army showed itself to be an instrument of political power.

In 1647, factions in Parliament were attempting to affect a reconciliation with King Charles. Aggressive members in the New Model Army, angry at the reconciliation attempt, led an army towards London. From December 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup>, 1648, troops under Colonel Thomas Pride purged the “Long Parliament”; three hundred and seventeen members of Parliament were arrested, excluded, or walked out. The resultant “Rump Parliament”, minus the House of Lords, executed King Charles on January 30, 1649.<sup>12</sup> This Parliament was then replaced in April 1653, due to tensions between it and the army.<sup>13</sup> Finally in December 1653, Cromwell, with the backing of the army, formed the Protectorate and assumed supreme power in England, as the Lord High Protector.<sup>14</sup> The Protectorate remained until May 8, 1660 when Charles II was crowned King. The extent of the army’s influence from 1645 to 1660 had increased the population’s hatred and fear of a standing army. “Basically, the Restoration of Charles II was a

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<sup>9</sup> Schwoerer, 50.

<sup>10</sup> Ian Gentles, *The New Model Army* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> Schwoerer, 51.

<sup>12</sup> Gentles, *The New Model Army*, 276-283; Macinnes, 188-189.

<sup>13</sup> Macinnes, 202.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

repudiation of government by the sword and a test of how deeply Englishmen had come to dislike and distrust a professional military instrument.”<sup>15</sup>

During the Interregnum the literature against standing armies began to pour forth. An example of this was an article titled *The Peaceable Militia* which appeared in print anonymously in August 1648. “I conceive that *upon no pretence whatsoever, there ought to be kept or maintain’d any constant Army and Forces in the Kingdome.*”<sup>16</sup> This author stated that it was more important to “restrain and guard the Power (whatsoever it is, and in whomsoever it resides) which is exercisable over the Subjects of England,” than to dispute whether the King or Parliament should have control over the militia.<sup>17</sup>

In 1654, following Oliver Cromwell’s elevation to Lord High Protector, a group of three colonels in the New Model Army wrote a petition to Cromwell. Entitled *The Humble Petition of Several Colonels of the Army*, it argued against the military power that Cromwell wielded as Lord High Protector. The three colonels stated that the army was formed to secure the rights and liberties of the nation, and not as a mercenary army. Following the events of recent years they stated that, “A Standing Army...by the policy of any single person that shall succeed, [can] be made wholly Mercenary, and be made use of to destroy at his pleasure the being of Parliaments.”<sup>18</sup> The colonels claimed that Cromwell was committing the same abuses of power that had led to war with the king. Parliament alone had the power to raise money for an army, and a standing army could be a threat to freedom.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Schwoerer, 71.

<sup>16</sup> *The Peaceable Militia or The Cause and Cure of this late and Present Warre* (London, 1648), 2 [database on-line], Buffalo State College, E.H. Butler Library Research: accessed May 30, 2012.

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

<sup>18</sup> Colonel Thomas Saunders, *To His Highness the Lord Protector, &c. and our General The Humble Petition of Several Colonels of the Army* (London: S.N., 1654), 1 [database on-line], Buffalo State College, E.H. Butler Library Research: accessed May 30, 2012.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

In 1660, Charles II was crowned king, and the Restoration Period began. During the three decades from 1660 to 1690 the anti-standing army sentiment ebbed and flowed. During years of war the sentiment would naturally increase, but just as quickly would decrease once war ended and the army was disbanded. Towards the late 1680s sentiment rose against Charles' heir, James II, as some MPs believed he was creating a permanent standing army of his own. More importantly, too many officer positions were being held by Catholics. In 1689, James II was deposed and William III was pronounced king in the Glorious Revolution.<sup>20</sup> This pronouncement was preceded by the Bill of Rights which the new king had to accept. This document is important because, "Article vi asserted that it was ancient right and law that there should be no standing army in time of peace without Parliament's consent."<sup>21</sup> The authority of the crown over military forces was not fully explored, but Parliamentary control of the army in peacetime was asserted. The King could no longer raise as many troops as he liked in peacetime, without Parliament's acceptance.

The final important event, as it relates to eighteenth century American thought, happened at the end of the century. During these years a most spirited debate unfolded over the idea of a standing army in England. This was as a result of the Nine Years War being resolved in 1697 with the Treaty of Ryswick. The argument was not about Parliament's authority over the army in peacetime, "but whether the king would accept Parliament's decision on the size of the army and abide by it."<sup>22</sup> One faction in Parliament wanted the army's strength cut to 6,500 while the King's side wanted 30,000. Both sides printed arguments for their cause, with John Trenchard and Andrew Fletcher the top advocates for one side and Daniel Defoe for the crown's side. John Trenchard, in an *Argument Shewing that a Standing Army is Inconsistent with a Free*

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<sup>20</sup> Steve Pincus, *1688 The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> Schwoerer, 151.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.



*Government*, stated that, “than no Nation ever preserved its Liberty, that maintained an Army otherwise constituted within the Seat of their Government...”<sup>23</sup> These arguments over the military influenced American colonists’ thinking.

The seventeenth century was full of featured arguments over the evils of a standing army, and the virtues of the militia. Trenchard’s pamphlets came out only eighty years before the American Revolution. The English Civil War, the execution of King Charles I, and the New Model Army happened one hundred and thirty years before the American Revolution. The vital point is that these events happened close to the American Revolution. The colonists grew up with family stories, history education, and political references associated with these events. These events had an impact on the military culture of the American colonies. For example, during the American Revolution, William Tudor delivered a speech in Boston warning against a military dictator that could arise if America won the war:

We have known a people ruled by a despot, who, from a private station, rose to uncontrolled dominion, at a time when they were sternly virtuous. And this mode of introducing bondage is ever to be apprehended at the close of a successful struggle for liberty, when a triumphant army, elated with victories, and headed by a popular general, may become more formidable than the tyrant that has been expelled. Witness the last century in the English history! Witness the aspiring Cromwell!<sup>24</sup>

When the first English colonists arrived at Jamestown in 1607 one of their first priorities was to establish a military in order to protect themselves.<sup>25</sup> According to Millet and Maslowski, the new settlers in colonial America relied on professional soldiers at the outset, prominent

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<sup>23</sup> John Trenchard, *Argument Shewing that a Standing Army is Inconsistent with a Free Government* (London: E. Whitlock, 1698), 8 [database on-line], Buffalo State College, E.H. Butler Library Research: accessed May 30, 2012.

<sup>24</sup> William Tudor, Esq. “Oration, Delivered at Boston, March 5, 1779,” in *Anglo-American Antimilitary Tracts 1697-1830*, 117.

<sup>25</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 6.

examples being Captain John Smith in Jamestown and Miles Standish in Plymouth.<sup>26</sup> These settlers had to defend themselves against Indians, pirates, and other European powers without much assistance from the home government. This was due to several factors. England did not possess a standing army, soldiers would take several weeks to cross the Atlantic Ocean, and the colonies were commercial ventures, not national enterprises. Therefore one of the first things instituted in each settlement was a militia. The average militia included all able bodied males from sixteen to sixty years old. The basic unit in the militia was the company, or trained band. The militia was regularly trained in order to keep up a semblance of military precision. This common militia was a force that was used in defense in an emergency invasion, but was not used in military expeditions.<sup>27</sup>

Due to the nature of Indian warfare, attacks were usually unexpected. Many times the militia could not be gathered in time to repel the first wave of an Indian attack. To counter this problem, settlements constructed garrison houses, blockhouses, and stockades. When an attack came, inhabitants would gather in the fortifications, with the militiamen at the loopholes. The settlement would be looted and the food eaten or destroyed. Yet Indians often lacked the military discipline to conduct siege operations, which meant that settlers could usually wait out the Indians in their fortifications.<sup>28</sup> In the beginning of the colonial period, the common militia could not effectively defend its inhabitants and settlements. According to Millet and Maslowski the militia was best utilized as a police force. The militia could preserve the domestic peace,

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<sup>26</sup> Millet and Maslowski, Introduction; Karr, Ronald Dale, "“Why Should You Be So Furious?”: The Violence of the Pequot War,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 85, No. 3 (December, 1998): 891.

<sup>27</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 7.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

recover fugitive slaves and suppress slave insurrections in the South, and quell any movement against the established political order.<sup>29</sup>

Once a settlement decided on mounting a military expedition against a foe, they would call out the volunteer militia. These forces included volunteers, draftees, substitutes, and hirelings, and consisted of mostly lower class people. This volunteer militia was assembled through militia district quotas. Based on population, each district had to supply a certain number of men for a military expedition. This allowed settlements to supply men, and still have enough manpower to tend to their crops. Militia districts enticed volunteers with bounties, and if that failed they turned to drafts.<sup>30</sup> The effect of this policy of common militia and volunteer militia led to a system that Kyle Zelner describes as, “a hybrid of the English system, with its two separate forces: untrained militia for offensive missions and trainbands for defense.”<sup>31</sup>

The members of this volunteer militia saw themselves as holding a legal contract between themselves and the authorities.<sup>32</sup> Therefore if the objective was achieved, or the contract broken in their eyes, they felt no compunction about leaving or refusing to continue. According to Fred Anderson, “Once made, the contract could not be altered by any human agency, although it could be destroyed.”<sup>33</sup> This was legal to colonial soldiers, but unthinkable in European armies.<sup>34</sup> An example of this practice took place in the French and Indian War. In 1756 Massachusetts Governor William Shirley relinquished his position as acting commander in chief in North America. He had planned to launch an invasion against the French held forts along Lake Champlain. Shirley had stimulated militia conscription for an assault on Crown Point at the

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<sup>29</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 7.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-8.

<sup>31</sup> Zelner, 29.

<sup>32</sup> Fred Anderson. *A People's Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 167-195.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>34</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 8.

northern end of the lake by stating that the militia would only serve under their own commanders and only within a certain geographical area. Various colonies responded by raising seven thousand militiamen under the command of John Winslow. In late July Lord Loudoun arrived in New York to assume command over the military in North America. As a professional soldier Loudoun attempted to force the militia under Winslow to submit to the regular army. A series of letters went back and forth between Shirley, Winslow, and Loudoun. Realizing that he could not obtain the objectives he wanted in North America without the cooperation of the militia, Loudoun reluctantly allowed the campaign to remain under Winslow's authority.<sup>35</sup> To the colonial militia, their legal contracts took priority over military efficiency and expediency.

Militia officers, like colonial politicians, usually came from the upper class. In 1636, Massachusetts' militiamen began nominating their company officers. This appalled the professional soldiers in the colony. As prominent citizens in the community, upper class colonial persons held numerous officer positions.<sup>36</sup> Yet contrasted with the British officer corps, there was still a good deal of social flexibility. In the French and Indian War, over half of the Massachusetts militia company officers "identified themselves with manual occupations, and in fact followed the same livelihoods as private soldiers, although in different proportions."<sup>37</sup> However, chances were that the higher grade the officer was, the higher his social status was.<sup>38</sup> Military and political offices were connected and it was not uncommon for a person to hold both offices at once.<sup>39</sup> For example, in 1675, during King Philip's War, a militia army was gathered in New England to attack the Narragansett tribe. The commander of the inter-colonial army was

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<sup>35</sup> Anderson, *A People's Army*, 168-179

<sup>36</sup> Zelner, 28.

<sup>37</sup> Anderson, *A People's Army*, 55.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>39</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 4.

the Governor of Massachusetts Josiah Winslow, the grandfather of John Winslow.<sup>40</sup> For colonials, the officers leading the militia were not necessarily the most militarily experienced individuals, but they were expected to have leadership ability and physical bravery.<sup>41</sup>

In the seventeenth century, the American colonies concerned themselves with several Indian wars. At the outset, the European settlers were fighting for their lives. Unlike contemporary Europe, the settlers could not afford to engage in “Limited Warfare,” they had to fight for their existence. As the century war on and the colonies grew larger, the Indians and colonists conducted an ever increasingly devastating type of warfare. The colonists pushed for more land, while the Indians sought to stop them and push the colonists back to the coast. The three wars that best exhibit this trend were the Tidewater Wars, the Pequot War, and King Philip’s War.

In the first fifteen years of colonization in Virginia, the 1,100 English settlers had had peaceful relations with the neighboring Indians. Peace had only been broken once, in 1617.<sup>42</sup> On Easter Sunday March 22, 1622 Indians raided white settlements in the Tidewater region of Virginia. This unprovoked attack by the Tidewater Confederation was led by Opechancanough. Within hours the Indians had killed 25 percent of Virginia’s population. In response, the colonists allied with the Potomac Indians and retaliated against Opechancanough. This First Tidewater War lasted for ten years and ravaged the Virginia countryside. In 1632 the governor signed a peace treaty with major tribes in the Tidewater Confederation.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Saltonstall, Nathaniel. “A Continuation of the State of New England, 1676,” in *Narratives of the Indian Wars: 1675-1699*, ed. Charles H. Lincoln (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1959), 56.

<sup>41</sup> Anderson, *A People’s Army*, 161.

<sup>42</sup> Powell, William S. “Aftermath of the Massacre: The First Indian War, 1622-1632,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 66, No. 1 (January, 1958), 44.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-75.

The peace between the Indians and the Virginians would not last. Opechancanough launched another attack in 1644, killing five hundred people on the first day. This time however, the Virginia colony had grown to a size of 8,000 people. The white population was large enough to mount many more expeditions than previously. This Second Tidewater War lasted only two years and ended with the capture of Opechancanough. These two wars were the first full scale wars between Indians and the English colonists. Indian tribes pounced on the early white settlements in order to destroy them, but were in turn destroyed a decade later. These two wars transformed warfare between the Indians and the colonists into a war for survival.<sup>44</sup>

This kind of unconditional warfare continued with the Pequot War in New England in 1637. In the early 1630s the Pequot tribe was the most powerful tribe in New England. A complex series of events led them into war with the English colonists. The major battle of the Pequot War was fought at a Pequot fort along the Mystic River. Colonial troops commanded by Captain Underhill of Massachusetts and John Mason of Connecticut, accompanied by several hundred friendly Indians attacked the Pequot fort. After a brief defense, the Pequots were overwhelmed, and the coalition of colonists and Indians killed most of the Pequots and burned their settlement. This battle broke the back of the Pequot resistance and the survivors fled north to the Mohawk tribe. The colonial troops followed the survivors, seeking the annihilation of the Pequot tribe. The Mohawks captured the Pequot chief Sassacus and forty of his warriors. The Pequot War reduced the once mighty Pequot nation to impotence.<sup>45</sup>

A third example of this type of survival warfare was King Philip's War in 1675. King Philip was a chief of the Wampanoag Indians, a tribe friendly to the colonies. By the 1670s the ever expanding colonies had transformed King Philip's friendship to hostility. In June 1675

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<sup>44</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 12-13.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15; Karr, 876-909.

Wampanoag Indians destroyed several buildings along the frontier. Plymouth colonists mobilized to retaliate while the Wampanoags prepared to defend themselves. The war intensified when the Nipmuck tribe joined Philip's Wampanoags. Colonists feared that other tribes might join Philip.<sup>46</sup>

The colonists struck first, attacking the Narragansett tribe. This tribe was the most powerful tribe in the area, and while it was a traditional enemy of the Wampanoags, many colonists saw their neutral stance as a threat. In the Great Swamp Fight on December 19, 1675 an inter-colonial army attacked a Narragansett village in Rhode Island's Great Swamp. The force was commanded by the governor of Plymouth Colony, Josiah Winslow, and comprised of 1,000 men from Plymouth, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Indian allies. The colonial army defeated the Narragansetts, burned their village and supplies, and drove the remaining survivors into the swamp. A narrative of the battle was kept by a soldier who stated that:

As soon as ever our Men had entred the Fort, the Indians fled, our Men killed many of them, as also of their Wives and Children...Our Men... had set fire to most of the Wigwams in and about the Fort...how many were burnt down they could not tell positively, only thus; That they Marched above three Miles from the Fort by the Light of the Fires.<sup>47</sup>

The end of the war came when a colonial force under Benjamin Church, led by a Wampanoag turncoat, located Philip and killed him on August 12, 1676.<sup>48</sup>

These three wars forever solidified the relationship between the colonists and the Indians. The colonies were on their own in the middle of a forbidding land surrounded by a different race of people who did not share their same culture and religious beliefs. This might have made it easier to practice such aggressive warfare. Ronald Karr believes that the colonists could engage

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<sup>46</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 15-16.

<sup>47</sup> Saltonstall, 59.

<sup>48</sup> Zelner, 104-105.

in this kind of total war because of the nature of Indian fighting.<sup>49</sup> Conventional European warfare would happen when both sides in a war fought in that manner; fighting in the open, sparing prisoners and women and children. Karr states that, “When soldiers were ordered to fight unconventional wars, such as wars of conquest and subjugation, guerrilla warfare, crusades against infidels, and putting down rebellions, they often left the rules of war behind.”<sup>50</sup> In this first century of European colonization of America, the colonists learned to rely on the militia and gained confidence in fighting the Indians. They learned to adapt to some guerilla type tactics that better suited warfare in the densely forested America, and if they did not, they learned to hire other Indian tribes to complement their European style tactics.

An example of colonials imitating Indian tactics was the New England war hero Benjamin Church. He had fought at the Great Swamp Fight against the Narragansett Indians in 1675. In 1676, he raised a volunteer company of Indians and whites to fight in Indian guerrilla tactics. Church’s company was the most famous of the volunteer raiding units raised by Plymouth and Connecticut. These companies were allowed to pursue the enemy without formal battle plans, thereby making them an effective raiding force. It was Church’s force that found King Philip and killed him.<sup>51</sup>

Starting from 1689, the American colonies began to fight European powers.<sup>52</sup> During King William’s War (1689-1697) and Queen Anne’s War (1701-1713), the American colonies began to organize large military expeditions that included inter-colony cooperation. These wars pitted England against its long time enemy France. During King William’s War the most significant campaign happened in 1690. An inter-colonial conference met in New York City,

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<sup>49</sup> Karr, 907-909.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 883.

<sup>51</sup> Zelner, 200-201.

<sup>52</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 21-46.



attended by representatives from New York, Connecticut, Plymouth, and Massachusetts. These colonies adopted a plan that would contain the hallmark of invading Canada for the next one hundred and thirty years. An overland force would march from Albany to Lake Champlain and down the Richelieu River to Montreal. In concert, a sea-borne force would move down the St. Lawrence River and attack Quebec. These two cities were the heart of New France, and would later be the heart of British Canada.<sup>53</sup>

The New York plan got off to a bad start. The colonies raised fewer militiamen for the Montreal army than had been expected. The Indian contingent as well was far smaller than was expected. The Montreal campaign fizzled out when the militia/Indian force arrived at Lake Champlain. The scarcity of boats, and a smallpox epidemic forced the commander to cancel the Montreal attack. The 2,000 man Quebec force, under the command of Sir William Phips, arrived at Quebec in early October. Quebec was a fortified city atop steep cliffs. The Comte d' Frontenac, New France's governor, was able to reinforce Quebec's fortifications when the Montreal invasion force turned back. Phips put his force ashore, but was unable to make any headway against the French. Depressed, Phips returned to New England with his troops.<sup>54</sup>

The colonies made no more efforts on the scale of 1690 for the remaining seven years of the war. The war turned into a series of raids. French and Indian raiding parties attacked settlements and homes on the frontier. The colonial militia was unable to defend the frontier, usually arriving too late to affect the course of the raid. The colonies therefore sent out raiding parties of their own in retaliation. The war finally came to an end in September 1697, when the European powers signed the Treaty of Ryswick.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 27-28.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

In 1702, war erupted again between France and England. This was known in North America as Queen Anne's War. The North American war was mainly between the Indians and the American colonists. However several colonies (New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania) decided to strike Canada which they knew supplied the Indians with weapons.<sup>56</sup> In 1709, a plan to assault French Quebec and Montreal, much like that of 1690, was formulated. The plan was to send a militia army west and north to assault Montreal, and a force of British regulars to assault Quebec from the east. In July an army of more than 1,500 militiamen from those four colonies, and several hundred Indians, gathered at Wood Creek near Lake Champlain, under the command of Colonel Francis Nicholson. A 1,200 man army made up of New England militiamen gathered at Boston waiting for the British armada to transport it to the St. Lawrence River. However in September, England canceled its part of the invasion. This news reached the disgruntled militiamen in October, who returned to their homes.<sup>57</sup>

Then again in 1711 the same plan was renewed. In June a British fleet commanded by Sir Hovenden Walker arrived at Boston. He would transport seven regular regiments and a marine battalion, under Brigadier General John Hill, and hundreds of New England militiamen by water into the St. Lawrence River and toward Quebec. At the same time, Colonel Nicholson would again command the western army, now made up of more than 2,000 militiamen and Indians, and march against Montreal. The plan went bad from the beginning. There were more than 12,000 soldiers and sailors in Boston that had to be provisioned in anticipation of a long voyage. The addition of Nicholson's militiamen meant that, "the strength of the expedition

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<sup>56</sup> Howard H. Peckham, *The Colonial Wars 1689-1762* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), 68.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 69-71.

exceeded the total population of Boston and [its] vicinity, making a logistics crisis inevitable.”<sup>58</sup> The price of food in Boston gradually rose, defying military remonstrance and local government decree. The British saw this as the colonials’ greed. By the time that Walker sailed from Boston he had added, “three months’ supply of bread, beef, pork, and cheese to supplement what remained of the English rations.”<sup>59</sup> These supplies however would not be able to feed his troops through the winter. In addition to the supply problem was Walker’s difficulty in finding knowledgeable pilots for his fleet. He had expected to find a number of good pilots, but instead found the pilots in Boston refuse to join his expedition.<sup>60</sup>

Walker’s fleet of nine ships of war, two bomb vessels, and sixty transports carrying 7,500 troops and marines, left Boston on July 30, 1711. This time the British flotilla made it to the St. Lawrence River, where they ran into a storm in late August. The flotilla lost a thousand men, seven transports, and one storeship. On August 26, 1711, Walker called a council of war. In his journal, Walker recorded, “That by reason of the Ignorance of the Pilots, it was wholly impracticable to go up the River of St. Laurence with the Men of War and Transports as far as Quebec...”<sup>61</sup> Walker decided to return to Boston, but called one last council of war on September 8. After taking into account, “the shortness of our Provisions, the Uncertainty and Difficulty of being supply’d...the unanimous Result was...we should return to *Great Britain* with the Ships and Forces that came from thence, and the *New England* Troops and Vessels to *Boston*.”<sup>62</sup> Nicholson’s army had been marching northward towards Montreal when it was called

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<sup>58</sup> Gerald S. Graham, ed. *The Walker Expedition To Quebec, 1711* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1953), 23.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28.

<sup>61</sup> Hovenden Walker, “A Journal or Full Account of the Late Expedition to Canada,” in *The Walker Expedition to Quebec, 1711*, 142.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

back. Nicholson, angered at the canceled invasion, marched his troops back to Albany and dispersed them.<sup>63</sup>

Both the 1709 and 1711 invasions led the colonists to harbor hard feelings against the British regulars and the government. The colonies had gone to great expense to raise the militia armies, only to have England cancel the invasions. In 1713, France and England signed the Treaty of Utrecht which would usher in twenty-five years of peace between the two nations.<sup>64</sup>

The feeling of distrust toward the mother government was reinforced during King George's War (1744-1748) in which Great Britain was once again at war with the French. In 1745 Massachusetts Governor William Shirley proposed a colonial attack on the French held fortress of Louisbourg. Louisbourg commanded the mouth of the St. Lawrence River and hence the naval supply lines to Quebec and Montreal. William Pepperrell commanded a 4,000 man New England militia army. This army, with the aid of a British fleet, succeeded in capturing Louisbourg after a seven week siege. The taking of Louisbourg was the most noted action of the war. Yet at the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, Great Britain gave up Louisbourg in return for the French withdrawal from Flanders on the European Continent. The fact that England gave up a fortress taken by the American militia, only deepened the resentment of the colonies toward the British government and military. Colonists thought that the mother government disregarded their own sacrifices and had sacrificed their own security.<sup>65</sup>

The most important colonial war, before the American Revolution, was the French and Indian War (1754-1765).<sup>66</sup> In this war massive numbers of British regulars were sent to the

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<sup>63</sup> Peckham, 72; Graham, 38.

<sup>64</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 30-31.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-35.

<sup>66</sup> For information on the French and Indian War see Walter R. Borneman, *The French and Indian War: deciding the fate of North America* (Harper Collins Publishers, 2006); For a detailed account of the American militia, with a special look at individual soldiers see Fred Anderson, *A People's Army* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

American colonies. The failures and loss of life in the first three years of the war reinforced, in the minds of the colonists, the ineffectiveness of professional soldiers. Two examples of this would be the Battle of the Monongahela River in 1755 and the Battle of Fort Ticonderoga in 1758. In 1755, the British ministry had selected to attack four positions that would cripple the French in North America. These positions were Fort Duquesne (Pittsburgh), Niagara, Crown Point (at the southern end of Lake Champlain), and Fort Beausejour. In 1755, a regular/militia force under Major General Edward Braddock headed towards Fort Duquesne. However on July 9 near the Monongahela River, the army was ambushed by a French and Indian force. The advance guard of Braddock's army fell back on his main force causing great confusion. The French and Indian army remained hidden in the forest firing at the British army until Braddock was killed and his army fled from the battlefield.<sup>67</sup>

In 1757, the French commander in Canada, the Marquis de Montcalm, marched from Fort Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain and attacked the British Fort William Henry at the southern end of Lake George. After a siege the British surrendered the fort to Montcalm who burned it, and returned to Ticonderoga. In the following year the British began a renewed war effort in North America, under the leadership of the British Prime Minister William Pitt. An army of more than 12,000 British regulars and colonial troops commanded by the British commander in chief in North America, James Abercromby, labored towards Fort Ticonderoga. Montcalm had fewer than 4,000 soldiers at Ticonderoga, but he had constructed extensive fortifications. On July 8, 1758, Abercromby hurled his soldiers at Montcalm's fortifications. For four hours the British and colonial troops assaulted the French until finally Abercromby called a halt. The British had

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<sup>67</sup> Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and The Fate of Empire in British North America, 1755-1766* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 94-107.

lost more than 1,600 regulars and 300 colonials. The unnerved British commander withdrew his troops from Fort Ticonderoga.<sup>68</sup>

Despite the British setback at Ticonderoga, British armies did succeed in capturing Louisbourg, Fort Duquesne, and destroying Fort Frontenac on the St. Lawrence River. In the following year British armies took Fort Ticonderoga, Fort Niagara, and in a famous campaign took Quebec. In 1760 Montreal capitulated to the British which effectively ended the war in North America.<sup>69</sup>

An event happened in 1754 that would set a precedent for the American colonies in the coming decades. In 1754, seven colonies sent representatives to Albany to discuss defense problems and to entice the Six Nations of the Iroquois to ally with the British. In 1753, the British secretary of state charged with North America urged the colonies to support each other against any invasions. The Albany Conference proposed a Plan of Union calling for united action in defense matters. This was not a particularly new idea. As early as 1643 Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, Connecticut, and New Haven had formed the New England Confederation to provide for mutual defense. The representatives took the Plan of Union back to their respective colonies (Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and New York); however no colonial assembly approved the plan.<sup>70</sup> The Plan of Union called for a general government in America that allowed the colonies to protect one another. A crowned appointed president-general would administer the government. He would be supported by a grand council of forty-eight representatives elected by the assemblies of the individual

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<sup>68</sup> Anderson, *The Crucible of War*, 240-249.

<sup>69</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 39-41.

<sup>70</sup> Anderson, *The Crucible of War*, 77-85.

colonies. Although the Plan of Union was rejected by the colonial legislatures, the Albany Conference was a step towards the Continental Congress in the following decades.<sup>71</sup>

Millet and Maslowski contend that the American colonies had a habit of downplaying the role of the British regulars. “Colonists typically emphasized British defeats and insufficiently praised the triumphs of Amherst, Forbes, and Wolfe. Such attitudes were a tribute to the colonists’ selective military memory and help explain colonial confidence in 1775.”<sup>72</sup> The French and Indian War gave the colonies even more confidence in the militia as opposed to a regular army. Furthermore the oppressive, in colonial eyes, demands of the British commanders, which included quartering and supplying, gave the colonies even more of a reason to distrust a standing army. Lastly the Albany Conference of 1754 advanced the idea that the colonies could work together for their own safety, which was juxtaposed to the decreasing confidence and estranged thoughts toward the Mother Country.<sup>73</sup>

On the eve of the American Revolution, the American colonies had survived and fought on the continent for over one and a half centuries. In the seventeenth century, the colonies had learned to protect themselves and wage wars of extermination with the Indian tribes adjacent to them. In the late seventeenth and into the eighteenth centuries the colonies began relying on volunteer militia to conduct military expeditions against the Indians and then the French. The colonies’ reliance on militia was due to many factors, including the rough geography of the New World, the lack of a sufficient economic infrastructure to support an army, and the anti-standing army heritage that flowed from seventeenth century England. The presence of a regular army in the American colonies, along with British defeats, had reinforced the already imbedded notion of

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<sup>71</sup> Borneman, 25-39.

<sup>72</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 46.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 46.

a fear of standing armies. All of these factors influenced colonial views of military forces prior to the American Revolution.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Lee, Wayne E., "Early American Ways of War: A New Reconnaissance, 1600-1815," *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (March 2001): 269-289. Lee conducts an in-depth analysis on historiographical works relating to warfare in America for two centuries.



## Chapter 2: The United States Army in the Napoleonic Era

Leading up to the American Revolution, the most pressing example of a professional eighteenth century European army was the Prussian Army of King Frederick II. This army came to prominence during the Seven Years War and was the most exalted army at the time.<sup>1</sup> The key to Prussian military success was the drill and discipline that was hammered into its soldiers. European armies in the eighteenth century were small (compared with the armies in the Napoleonic Era), constantly drilled, and separated from society. The army was an autonomous unit within the state. Officers were from aristocratic families and the soldiers were mostly from poor ones.<sup>2</sup> Warfare of the eighteenth century demanded uniformity and constant drill. The Prussian Army stood out as the most drilled army of this time period. As Geoffrey Best notes, “Frederick’s armies had done well by arriving at the battlefield in good order and by maintaining a high order of disciplined efficiency through the basic business of maneuvering and firing.”<sup>3</sup>

Drilling was essential because of the type of warfare that European armies practiced, which was known as linear warfare. Linear warfare in the eighteenth century comprised two armies facing each other with compact, neat, orderly lines. These lines were two to three men deep shoulder to shoulder. The opposing armies stood 50-100 yards from each other using mass volleys in order to tear great holes in the enemy’s line. Linear warfare was a response to the limitation of the weapons of the time. In the best situation the smoothbore musket, the main infantry weapon, could load 2-3 times a minute. Yet during battle, confusion and panic could greatly reduce this efficiency. Furthermore muskets were only accurate at very close distances,

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<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Best, *War and Society in Revolutionary Europe, 1770-1870* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 36.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

perhaps fifty yards. Linear tactics used massed firepower in order to assure damage to the enemy. Compact linear lines also enabled the officers and NCO's to observe their soldiers.<sup>4</sup> Drill was essential to any army in any period, but especially to the eighteenth century army. Constant practice of repetitive motions and movements broke down individuality and replaced it with the instinct to obey. Paul Lockhart states that, "Thought was a tactical liability, for thought and emotion could induce panic in stressful situations."<sup>5</sup> Once panic set in, a soldier might discharge his weapon prematurely, run for cover, or flee. This panic could quickly spread throughout an army. It was the officer's duty to instill the instinct to follow orders, so that when the horrors of battle occurred the soldiers would maintain discipline.<sup>6</sup> Therefore professional officers who understood drill, relentlessly pursued it, and maintained order in the ranks, were essential to an army. These were the kind of officers that the Continental Army was deficient in during the first few years of the American Revolution.<sup>7</sup> John Adams stated to Henry Knox in 1776:

The true cause of the want of good officers in the army is not because the appointment is left to the assemblies, but because such officers in sufficient numbers are not in America... Time, study, and experience alone must make a sufficient number of able officers.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to drill, flexibility was another hallmark of the Prussian army. Constant drill enabled an army to turn direction quicker and with more cohesion than their counterparts. This flexibility enabled Frederick to perform his most utilized tactic, the flank attack. Robert Citino argues that the legacy of Frederick II was his aggressive operations, short campaigns, heavier

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<sup>4</sup> John A. Lynn, "En avant! The Origins of the Revolutionary Attack," in *Tools of War: Instruments, Ideas, and Institutions of Warfare, 1445-1871*, ed. John A. Lynn (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 159.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Lockhart, *The Drillmaster of Valley Forge* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008), 90.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 89-92.

<sup>7</sup> Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 44-45.

<sup>8</sup> John Adams, "John Adams to Henry Knox, September 1776," in *The Works of John Adams 10 Volumes*, ed. Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1856), 1:257.

emphasis on cavalry tactics, and most importantly operational movement (out of sight movement).<sup>9</sup> Frederick's most utilized tactic was to fall on his enemy's flank prior to engagement. This was most fully shown at the battle of Leuthen in 1757. The Prussians were outnumbered two-to-one by the Austrian army. While a diversionary force attacked the Austrian front, Frederick's main force marched to the right behind a line of hills. Once clear of the hills, the Prussian army wheeled left, attacked, and rolled up the Austrian left flank. This victory against a superior foe encapsulated Frederick's plan of operational movement.<sup>10</sup> Napoleon would utilize this tactic in his battles fifty years later. The Seven Years War was a war of survival for the Prussian state. The existence and success of the Prussian Army in the Seven Years War against Russia, France, and Austria; lifted the Prussian Army up as the model of eighteenth century professionalism.

A second example of a professional army in the eighteenth century was the British Army. The British Army was an important source of emulation because the American colonies were British. Furthermore many of the citizens and leaders of the Continental Army had been familiar or had worked alongside the British Army during the French and Indian War. In terms of drill and tactics, the British Army emulated the Prussian. The British had translated many foreign military texts into English including Marshal Saxe of France's *Reveries* and Frederick the Great's *Prussian Field Regulations*.<sup>11</sup> The difference between the British and the Prussian armies was most noticeable in relation to the officer corps. The British officer corps was based on purchasing commissions. According to Best, in the British Army "every rank, from ensign up

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<sup>9</sup> Robert M. Citino, *The German Way of War: From the Thirty Years' War to the Third Reich* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 100.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>11</sup> Sandra L. Powers, "Studying the Art of War: Military Books Known to American Officers and Their French Counterparts during the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century," *The Journal of Military History* Vol. 70, No.3 (July, 2006): 791.

to colonel, had a cash label on it, and a quasi-official little branch of military bureaucracy established itself for the convenient negotiation of sales and purchases.”<sup>12</sup> The Prussian officer corps was more militarized than the British and, due to a lack of money in the state, prized military distinction over monetary gain.<sup>13</sup> Certainly there were plenty of British officers who were professional, but there were also quite a few who knew nothing about the army. The British purchasing system also made it more difficult for talented young officers to rise in the ranks quickly.<sup>14</sup>

In the American Revolution the mainstay of the British Army was the infantry. These were professional lifelong soldiers. The British utilized line infantry, as well as light infantry and grenadiers. Light infantry would be used as skirmishers, advance guards, and for reconnaissance. Grenadiers were big men and were used as a shock force in combat. An important component of the British attack was the bayonet charge. After firing a volley the infantry would rush towards the enemy with fixed bayonets. This was the tactic that so frightened the undisciplined American troops.<sup>15</sup> The British also relied on auxiliaries such as the loyalists and Indians to complement their troops. They devised several quick striking cavalry and light infantry forces; the most notable of which was Tarleton’s Legion. The British army still predominantly favored European style open battles, which were less frequent in North American fighting. Yet the British could also utilize unconventional European warfare against the Americans.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Best, 42.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>14</sup> W. J. Wood, *Battles of the Revolutionary War: 1775-1781* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1990), xxix.

<sup>15</sup> Lockhart, xxxi.

<sup>16</sup> Correlli Barnett, *Britain and Her Army 1509-1970: A Military, Political, and Social Survey* (New York: William Morrow And Company, 1970), 225.

On April 19, 1775, American militia and British Regulars clashed at the Battles of Lexington and Concord. Two months later, a British army and an American militia army met at the Battle of Bunker Hill.<sup>17</sup> These events marked the beginning of the American Revolutionary War. However, the American Revolution does not mark the beginning of the American Army. This would officially begin in 1784. Rather the Continental Army served as the example and forerunner to the American Army. On July 2, 1775, George Washington took command of the Continental Army surrounding Boston.<sup>18</sup> This war began what Millet and Maslowski term the “dual army tradition” in the American military.<sup>19</sup> This entailed a very large partially trained militia combined with a small core of experienced regulars. These two entities would, for most of the American armies in the war, work in tandem with each other.

The militia was organized and their terms of enlistment were processed by each state. The enlistment term of a militiaman was generally short, from weeks to a few months.<sup>20</sup> Supposedly, the militia cut back expenses for the Continental Congress and the states by each individual providing his own clothes and firearm.<sup>21</sup> Yet there are several instances where militia units requested firearms.<sup>22</sup> While militia would generally bring their own firearms, food still had to be provided by the army. Furthermore, while militiamen were in the army they could not tend to their crops, which could mean less food for the army. Once their enlistments were up, the militiamen would return to their farms.<sup>23</sup> Militiamen were called up to defend their region, and would return home once they felt that their contract had been fulfilled. Militiamen could arrive

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<sup>17</sup> Wood, 3-34.

<sup>18</sup> William Addleman Ganoe, *The History of the United States Army* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1942), 1.

<sup>19</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 57.

<sup>20</sup> Wood, xxi.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, xxii.

<sup>22</sup> Lockhart, 243.

<sup>23</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 57.

in great quantities but this was offset by their short enlistment, lack of battlefield training and experience, and tendency to return to their homes at inopportune times for the commanders.<sup>24</sup>

The American militia had a wide ranging level of performance in the American Revolution. They performed very well in some battles and very poorly in other ones. At the Battle of Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775 the militia performed very well versus British regulars.<sup>25</sup> The American militia force was made up of several different state militias stretching across the Charlestown Peninsula in Boston Harbor. The British regulars assaulted the American line three times, before they were finally able to force the Americans to retreat. The American militia was able to hold the British in check for most of the day, due to the expertise of their officers who included, General Israel Putnam, William Prescott, Artemis Ward, and John Stark. These officers had gained experience in the French and Indian War, and they taught the militia how to fire in controlled volleys. The performance of the militia at Bunker Hill stands in contrast to the battle of Camden in August 16, 1780. General Horatio Gates with 3,000 men was defeated by the British General Cornwallis with 2,000. Gates' militia constituted two thirds of his army. In this battle, Gates positioned his troops in open ground with the militia on the left and center and the regulars on the right. The British lined up opposite and charged the Americans with bayonets. The American militia promptly fled. The American regulars fought bravely with the British for over an hour, but were also eventually routed.<sup>26</sup>

There are a variety of reasons for the varying performances of the militia throughout the war. The first was the ability and overall combat readiness of the militia. In the beginning of the war, most of the militiamen were inexperienced in battle. Therefore when they faced off against British regulars in open ground, they would mostly turn and flee. Towards the end of the war,

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<sup>24</sup> Wood, xxi.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-34.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 172-207.

many militia units could be composed of discharged Continentals. For example, at the Battle of Cowpens on January 17, 1781, the Virginia militia was composed of discharged Continentals. Rather than putting these men in the front line with the inexperienced militia, the American General Daniel Morgan placed these Virginians alongside his regulars where they proceeded to stand in the open field against charge after charge of British infantry.<sup>27</sup>

A second reason for the varying performance of the militia in the war was how the militia was used. According to Matthew Ward, the militia was most effective in policing the countryside.<sup>28</sup> Correlli Barnett claims that loyalists were suppressed everywhere except under the immediate shield of a British army. The militia was therefore very effective in persecuting *perceived* waverers.<sup>29</sup> The militia could fight very well in defense of their homes, quelling Loyalist sentiment, putting down servile insurrections, and gathering supplies. It was when the militia was used in open battle that it had to be handled carefully.

Unlike the regulars, militia for the most part did not have bayonets, or were not schooled in the use of the bayonet. This, combined with the lack of ideal training, is the main reason why militias were not strong enough to fight the British infantry in the open field. Once the British leveled their bayonets and charged, the militia would run. This was prevalent in most Revolutionary War battles, unless the militia was commanded by experienced commanders, such as at the Battle of Bunker Hill. The militia was much better being used as auxiliaries. Militia could be used to harry an opponent, hit the flanks, and skirmish.<sup>30</sup> This was the kind of warfare that Americans were used to with the Indians. From 1777 until 1781 Washington used mobile militia raiding parties to continually harass British outposts in New Jersey and New York. “Here

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<sup>27</sup> Wood, 208-226.

<sup>28</sup> Matthew C. Ward, “The American Militias: “Garnish on the Table”,” in *War in an Age of Revolution, 1775-1815*, ed. Roger Chickering and Stig Forster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 164.

<sup>29</sup> Barnett, 216-217.

<sup>30</sup> Ward, 166.

the militia had distinct advantages over regular troops. Rotating parties of militia could remain on constant duty, and the militiamen knew the roads and byways through the woods and could intercept any farmer attempting to sell produce to the British.”<sup>31</sup> All of these actions stress the hit and run aspect of the militia, as opposed to European linear tactics.

The third aspect that determined the militia’s performance was the ability of the commander.<sup>32</sup> The American commanders at Bunker Hill held the British at bay because they restrained the militia’s tendency to fire early by stressing fire by volley.<sup>33</sup> At the Battle of Cowpens, Daniel Morgan effectively used his militia by incorporating a series of tactics. Morgan understood the militia’s tendency to run away from an advancing line of British bayonets. To combat this urge, Morgan first set his army in front of a river, thereby preventing the militia from retreating from the battlefield. Second, Morgan put the militia in the front of his army. He told the militia to fire twice and then run behind the Continentals. This allowed the militia to inflict some damage while not forcing them to stand and trade volleys with the British regulars. This tactic convinced the British commander that the American army was retreating. The British regulars charged right into the muzzles of the Continentals, who halted the British charge. Lastly, Morgan was able to reform the militia and use them to flank the final British assault.<sup>34</sup> The result was a conclusive victory for the Americans. This instance of militia performing linear tactics well against British regulars was the exception to the rule in the American Revolution. The militia performed very well under men such as Daniel Morgan, John Stark, and Baron von Steuben. Put under less capable leaders such as Horatio Gates and the militia performed badly.

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<sup>31</sup> Ward, 167.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>33</sup> Wood, 20.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 208-226.



The regular, or Continental regiment, was requested by Congress and raised by each state. The advantage of the Continental soldier was that he was a longer term soldier. An enlistment term for the Continental could be one year or longer. The Continental was issued whichever type of flintlock musket that Congress could acquire.<sup>35</sup> This allowed him to have and be trained in the use of a bayonet. The enlistment term of the Continental allowed the army commander the opportunity to drill and train the soldier to counter the British opponent.

The American regulars fought the British Army using linear tactics. During the first two years of the war the regulars fought with bravery and distinction. However the regulars lacked the ability to maneuver and change formation quickly and the restraint needed to deliver coordinated devastating volleys of musketry.<sup>36</sup> At the Battle of Brandywine on September 11, 1777, the American army was situated along the Brandywine creek. The British army under General Howe was on the opposite side of the creek. Howe left a holding force in front of the American army and took the main portion of his army around the American right flank. Once Washington realized this had happened he refused his right flank (brought his right flank back 90 degrees). The British fell upon Washington's right flank and broke it. Yet the division under General Nathaniel Greene was able to conduct a fighting withdraw which kept the British from pursuing. In this battle the American regulars were able to fight with the British regulars for some time, but the maneuverability and firepower of the British infantry on the field of battle was too much for the Americans.<sup>37</sup>

There was also one more unit that has been famed in American military tradition, the rifleman. According to Wood, less than three percent of the American military in the American

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<sup>35</sup> Wood, xxiii.

<sup>36</sup> Lockhart, 57.

<sup>37</sup> Wood, 92-114.

Revolution was made up of rifleman.<sup>38</sup> Riflemen carried the Kentucky long rifle, which had much improved accuracy over the musket of the eighteenth century, with one disadvantage being that it could not be fitted with a bayonet. Riflemen were light infantry who would be used as skirmishers and snipers, and could not engage in hand to hand fighting with the British.<sup>39</sup>

The turning point of the war for the Continental Army was the winter at Valley Forge, when a Prussian captain named Friedrich Wilhelm August Heinrich Ferdinand von Steuben entered the American camp. Up to this point each Continental regiment had trained according to the practices favored by its commanding officer. It remained to the individual officer in what manner and how much he would train his soldiers. Anthony Wayne, for instance, was noted for his training.<sup>40</sup> Wayne severely punished soldiers who breached military regulations. Paul David Nelson states that, “Deserters were handled with special severity, and six of them in less than three months received between fifteen and thirty-nine lashes each.”<sup>41</sup> Wayne extensively read military texts and practiced the concepts he learned. At Valley Forge he had his men drill twice a day. His soldiers were some of the best trained of Washington’s soldiers. This was exhibited on the night of July 16, 1779, when Wayne led a bayonet attack against the British fort at Stony Point. Wayne’s force killed, wounded, or captured almost seven hundred men, at a cost of one hundred.<sup>42</sup>

The major problem for the Continental Army was not the lack of drill, but that it did not have a universal system of training. It seems that the only aspect in which the army was mostly unified in was drilling in the use of the musket according to the British military manual,

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<sup>38</sup> Wood, xxvii.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, xxvii.

<sup>40</sup> Lockhart, 93.

<sup>41</sup> Paul David Nelson, *Anthony Wayne: Soldier of the Early Republic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 18.

<sup>42</sup> Alan D. Gaff, *Bayonets in the Wilderness: Anthony Wayne’s Legion in the Old Northwest* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), 27-29.

Regulations of 1764.<sup>43</sup> From mid-March to May 1778, Steuben focused the training of the Continental Army in marching. Steuben based this on the Prussian mode of training. The Continental Army was taught the Prussian 75 step a minute pace, how to march quick step (120 steps a minute), to march obliquely, to turn, to fire and advance, and to fire and retreat. He began with a 150 man model company and then disseminated his teachings throughout the Army. By the beginning of May the Continental Army was able to host a Grand Review in which the whole army marched and performed maneuvers.<sup>44</sup> What Steuben instilled in the Continental Army was a sense of pride, how to maneuver quickly on the battlefield, and how to march and fire in unison. This was showcased at the Battle of Monmouth on June 8, 1778.<sup>45</sup>

In the Battle of Monmouth the American advance force attacked a superior British army at Monmouth Court House in New Jersey. After some fighting, the British pushed the Americans from the field. Normally this would have resulted in a disaster, yet once General Washington and the main army marched up, the retreating units were able to reform and check the British advance. The two armies slugged it out the entire day, and towards the end of the day, the American army was starting to push the British back. It was only the setting of the sun that prevented a resolution to the conflict. The Battle of Monmouth was a tactical draw. The importance of the battle was not the leadership of the American army, but how the army was able to reform, maneuver, and trade volley for volley with a victorious British army.<sup>46</sup>

Steuben's drilling did not promise that the Continental Army could defeat the British. It did give Washington confidence to engage in smaller engagements such as the Battle of Stony

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<sup>43</sup> Lockhart, 94.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 100-109.

<sup>45</sup> John Ferling, *Almost a Miracle: the American Victory in the War of Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 300-306.

<sup>46</sup> Lockhart, 165.

Point, and Springfield.<sup>47</sup> Valley Forge gave the Continental Army a uniform style of drilling; a sense of professionalism, and it educated the young field officers. Many of these young officers would be officers in the American Army after the American Revolution. The system of training at Valley Forge was reflected on and emulated later in the early national period.<sup>48</sup>

Baron von Steuben's impact was also felt in another way. In 1779, he wrote a military manual entitled the *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States*, more commonly known as the Blue Book. The 150 page book was divided into three parts; a drill manual, regulations for military conduct, and the duties of all ranks in the army. The Blue Book was a military manual stripped of ostentatious formations and focused on basic instructions. This was ideal for the amateur officers in the Continental Army.<sup>49</sup> This manual served as an instructional booklet for army officers all the way up to and through the War of 1812.<sup>50</sup>

The Continental Army blended the military practices of Europe with its own style of military tradition grown out of their nearly two hundred year existence in North America. For certain the British Army was a factor in the modeling of the Continental Army. In the early part of the war the American units were trained with the British Regulations of 1764.<sup>51</sup> Baron von Steuben complained about the American officer's reluctance to personally train his troops, leaving that duty to the NCO. He claimed this was a leftover from the British officer tradition.<sup>52</sup> While the American military allowed for a greater degree of social variety in the Continental officer corps, Washington was still insistent that officers be gentlemen. This idea was the

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<sup>47</sup> Lockhart, 211.

<sup>48</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 90.

<sup>49</sup> Lockhart, 190-196.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 93; Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 217.

prevalent thought in the eighteenth century. Skelton asserts that, “Officers were to be gentlemen whose social standing would reinforce their military rank.”<sup>53</sup> In these ways the Continental Army continued to observe Old World conventions.

Baron von Steuben contributed a Prussian aspect to the Continental Army. What he did in formulating his own regulations book was to discard all of the ostentatious unnecessary movements in the Prussian drill.<sup>54</sup> Steuben showed the American officer how to care for his troops and also how to retain a certain amount of military decorum. A problem the Continental Army had was the militia tradition of electing their company officers. This led many of the officers to fraternize freely with their soldiers. Steuben tried to combat this democratic urge by maintaining that soldiers not speak to officers unless asked to do so.<sup>55</sup> The most telling example of the Prussian drill instilled in the army occurred in October 1782. The French army under the Count de Rochambeau was marching from toward Boston to sail back to France. On the way, the French stopped to observe a Grand Review of the Continental Army. During the procession Rochambeau proclaimed that the American soldiers drilled like Prussians.<sup>56</sup>

The high commanders in the Continental Army had also read or were aware of contemporary European military books. In a letter to his brother in 1755, George Washington included an invoice of goods to be shipped to Mount Vernon. Among the items was Humphrey Bland’s 1727 treatise on *Military Discipline*.<sup>57</sup> Henry Knox had been a bookseller before the Revolution, and had read many military works. In 1776, John Adams inquired after Henry Knox’s opinion on what works Congress should recommend to the American officer corps.

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<sup>53</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 53.

<sup>54</sup> Lockhart, 192.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

<sup>57</sup> George Washington, *The Writings of George Washington* 39 Volumes, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1932), 5:254-255.

Knox responded with works by various eighteenth century authors. Knox mentioned that Marshal Saxe, “had done more towards reducing war to fix’d principles than perhaps any other man of the age.”<sup>58</sup> Most books had to be shipped over from England, but some were also printed in America. “At least five Boston editions and two New York abstracts of Bland's Treatise of Military Discipline appeared before 1756; in 1757, two New York editions of the Prussian short field exercises appeared. Between 1766 and 1780, no fewer than twenty-six American imprints of the official 1764 Manual Exercise, As Ordered by His Majesty spewed from presses in eight of the thirteen colonies.”<sup>59</sup>

Besides the colonial officers, there were also numerous European officers who had firsthand experience in European warfare and were familiar with current military works. Horatio Gates, Charles Lee, and Richard Montgomery had fought in the British Army, and Baron von Steuben and Baron de Kalb had fought with the Prussians.<sup>60</sup> Many of these officers as well as other American officers had a wide variety of military works and could read many different languages. Charles Lee could read several languages and had an extensive library. “Charles Cotesworth Pinckney of South Carolina, having studied the classics in England and the art of war in Caen, France, knew Latin, Greek, and French.”<sup>61</sup> There were American generals who knew about current military works and methods. The lack of military centralization, a long army history, and available English editions of military works hampered the Continental Army. Furthermore regimental and company grade officers had to become thoroughly professional in order to affect a difference. It took a few years for these officers to be able to gain enough experience to professionalize the Continental Army.

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<sup>58</sup> John Adams, *Papers of John Adams* 16 Volumes, ed. Robert J. Taylor (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1979), 4:190.

<sup>59</sup> Powers, 790.

<sup>60</sup> Wright Jr., 25.

<sup>61</sup> Powers, 799.

The Continental Army also had many American aspects to it. In many instances promotion was based on military ability. The contemporary European officer corps was based on social status. In the Continental Army, officers could come from the landed gentry, ex-officers, or from other areas of society. For example, Benedict Arnold was a merchant, Daniel Morgan was a frontiersman, Nathaniel Greene was a Quaker farmer, and Henry Knox was a bookseller. All of these men became generals in the Continental Army due to their abilities. This aspect highlighted America's deficiency in professionalism, but also allowed for upward mobility.

Another American aspect of the Continental Army was the extent of the dual army tradition. At times the militia could be very effective. For example during the Southern Campaign in 1780, a militia army surrounded an army of British Loyalists and destroyed them at the Battle of King's Mountain.<sup>62</sup> They then proceeded to disband and go back to their homes. The rifleman was a uniquely American force. Riflemen were used with great efficiency in harassing British armies. Commanders such as Nathaniel Greene, Daniel Morgan, and John Stark used unconventional tactics in order to defeat the British. These men used linear tactics when they had to but, perhaps due to circumstances, incorporated the militia and riflemen to harass the British. The dense American forests and swamps, in which linear tactics were of little use, allowed for hit and run tactics. One such example is in North and South Carolina in 1780 and 1781. General Greene out of necessity divided his army into several parts. Greene could feed his army much more readily with several detachments. Russell Weigley asserts that, "By violating the principle of concentration, Greene tempted Cornwallis to violate it also, and thus he might make the British army still more vulnerable to partisan harassment and to encounters with

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<sup>62</sup> Wood, 202.

his own force...”<sup>63</sup> Greene used the partisan militia bands in the area to protect his force and to continually harass the larger British army, by using the swamps and forests as protection.

The Continental Army in the American Revolution did not begin as a professional army. Throughout the war it could be classified as a semi-professional army. There are two aspects that hindered the professionalization of the Continental Army, the anti-army sentiment and the democratic fracturing of authority. The long tradition of anti-standing army sentiment manifested itself in many ways. First, militiamen were raised far more easily and numerous to the detriment of the Continental regiments. The militia formed on a short term basis which allowed for quick actions and eliminated the need for the rigors of regular army life.<sup>64</sup> The anti-army sentiment also hindered military institutions and quantities of translated military books from forming in the colonies. While there were a few general officers who had fought in the French and Indian War, most of the line officers for the Continental Army were untrained.<sup>65</sup> Worse than that there were no military regulations or academies in North America. That is why the issuing of a universal drill manual by Steuben was so profound for the Continental Army. It allowed the line officers of the entire army to train their men in a standard way.

The democratic system in the Continental Congress led to several problems with the army. The root of the problems was the fact that each state jealously guarded its rights. An example of this was in 1775 when Congress formed the Continental Army. Congress commissioned one general (George Washington), two major generals (Artemis Ward and Charles Lee), and one adjutant general (Horatio Gates). This angered the other colonies because Washington, Lee, and Gates were all from Virginia. In response Congress commissioned Philip

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<sup>63</sup> Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company Inc., 1973), 29.

<sup>64</sup> Millet and Maslowski. 58.

<sup>65</sup> Ganoe, 13.



Schuyler, from New York, as the third major general. The brigadier generals were divided among the colonies: three for Massachusetts, two for Connecticut, and one each for New York, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island.<sup>66</sup>

In 1777, the Continental Army was estimated to reach a strength of 60,000 men. This necessitated the commissioning of more major generals. Congress could not decide on the method of promotion. Francis Lewis wrote back to New York, “Colonial prejudices sway the minds of individuals that each state appear interested in the debates, for promotion in the line of their respective State[s].”<sup>67</sup> Two methods proposed were promotion on the basis of seniority, or promotion proportionate to the number of soldiers furnished by each state.

Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina desired that each State should recommend officers in proportion to the men they furnish... This was rejected. It was then proposed to promote General officers as they stood in rank, and rejected.<sup>68</sup>

If seniority was the method in which general officers were promoted, then the states who were late in raising troops would have a greater proportion of junior officers. If officers were promoted on the basis of the number of troops a state furnished, then able senior generals from states who contributed fewer soldiers would be passed over. The high sense of honor held by officers of this period meant that it was likely they would resign if they were passed over for promotion.<sup>69</sup> General Daniel Morgan, who was passed over for command, retired and went back to his farm in 1779. He was reinstated and promoted right before the crucial Battle of Cowpens.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Jonathan Gregory Rossie, *The Politics of Command in the American Revolution* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1975), 12-16.

<sup>67</sup> Francis Lewis, “Francis Lewis to the President of the New York Convention (Abraham Ten Broeck), February 18, 1777,” in *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress* 8 Volumes, ed. Edmund C. Burnett (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1926), 2:261-262.

<sup>68</sup> Thomas Burke, “Abstract of Debates, February 12-16, 1777,” in *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress*, 2:261.

<sup>69</sup> Rossie, 140.

<sup>70</sup> Wood, 210.

The solution that Congress adopted was to consider the officer's time in the grade, merit, and equity among state lines. However, state politics still played a role in the promotion process. In February 1777 four Connecticut brigadier generals were passed over for promotion to major general. One of these was Benedict Arnold who had outranked five of the recently promoted generals. Roger Sherman wrote back to the Governor of Connecticut the reason for Congress' decision was, "that Connecticut had more general officers than in the proportion to the number of troops furnished by the State..."<sup>71</sup> Benjamin Lincoln, a militia officer, was one of those men who was promoted to major general over Arnold. The fact that a militia officer was promoted to major general in the Continental Army over the heads of several experienced brigadier generals, angered many officers.<sup>72</sup> The states' jealous protection of their interests affected the overall effectiveness of the Continental Army. This method of promotion hampered the rise of talented commanders and bred, "dissatisfaction among many of the officers who felt they were unjustly passed over..."<sup>73</sup>

The fact that the Continental Congress was not very powerful also hindered the growth of professionalism. Congress did not have the authority to tax or to force the individual states to do anything. This inability added to the rampant inflation that followed the printing of Continental paper money led to the conclusion that by the end of the war the soldiers' pay was many months if not years in arrears.<sup>74</sup> In January 1776, Congress began recruiting Continental regiments, and in September it authorized eighty eight Continental regiments to be raised.<sup>75</sup> Yet it was up to the individual states to raise both the Continental regiments and the militia. This, combined with the

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<sup>71</sup> Roger Sherman, "Roger Sherman to the Governor of Connecticut (Jonathan Trumbull), March 4, 1777," in *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress*, 2:288

<sup>72</sup> Rossie, 139.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>74</sup> Wood, 278

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, xxii.

lack of a good road system and cooperation of the states, made transportation of supplies very slow.<sup>76</sup> In a country made up of farms, the Continental Army was starving many times. This was not for want of food in the countryside, but the lack of roads and an efficient Quartermaster Department. Since states were given the power to raise militia and Continentals, American commanders had a difficult job establishing uniformity in their armies.

It was from the experience of the American Revolution that the Continental Army came to resemble a professional army. The American colonies began the war with a lack of centralized authority and an anti-army sentiment. The war had shown a number of men, mostly in the military, the necessity of a professional and uniform military. By the end of the war the Continental Army had gained a certain degree of professionalism. It had proved a training ground for the young officers of the American Army.

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On July 14, 1789, French demonstrators stormed the Bastille Fortress, setting in motion a chain of events that would lead to the overthrow of the French monarchy and the formation of the French Republic. In April 1792, the French Republic declared war on Austria. In the next few years, one by one the other European monarchies would break off relations with Revolutionary France and eventually declare war.<sup>77</sup> This would mark a period in Europe of more than 20 years of war with a few intervals of peace. France would first fight the other European nations under the French Republic, and then under the leadership of Emperor Napoleon as the French Empire. This era ushered in many new ideas into European warfare. The most relevant to the notion of professionalism was the introduction of levee en masse, the development of a staff corps, and war colleges.

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<sup>76</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 64.

<sup>77</sup> Best, 67-81.

The French Army experienced many new changes in the Napoleonic era which enabled it to conquer most of Europe. In order to combat the power of Austria, Great Britain, Spain, and Russia, the French Republic had to create enormous armies. It did this by instituting the *levee en masse*. France pooled its male population and made military service mandatory. This enabled the French Republic to produce great numbers of soldiers for their armies in which to combat the other European nations. In 1798, the French government made service compulsory for males between the ages of twenty to twenty five years old. Each male had to serve for five years, or for the duration of the war. At first there were no exceptions, but eventually exceptions crept into the policy. In 1799, 400,000 of the one million French males were in the military's ranks. This allowed France to field armies much larger than their enemies. In addition to national conscription, France also introduced promotion on merit. These two aspects allowed for large French armies with the promise of effective leadership.<sup>78</sup>

France utilized the presence of a staff not only for the army commander, but for the division and corps commanders. Up to this point army commanders had large staffs but division and brigade commanders usually had a few aides. The presence of an effective staff made it much easier to process information from superiors and relay it to subordinates in a timely manner. It also gave the commanders, working in a more autonomous manner than before, a sounding board for advice on the spot.<sup>79</sup>

The Prussian Army went into the Napoleonic Wars still holding onto the fame of the old Frederician army. A combination of Prussia's society and the memory of Frederick the Great kept the Prussian Army from adapting to the times. All of this added up to a catastrophe for the Prussian Army in the Napoleonic Wars. It entered the war in 1806, and later that year its army

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<sup>78</sup> Best, 90-91

<sup>79</sup> Citino, 108.

was practically destroyed by the French at the battles of Auerstadt and Jena.<sup>80</sup> It was these two defeats, and the French occupation afterward, that forced the Prussian military to change.

The defeat of the Prussian Army allowed for changes in its military. During the period from 1808-1813, the Prussian military was reinvigorated.<sup>81</sup> The officer corps was opened to all classes, serfdom was abolished, a ministry of war was formed, brigades were made into a permanent military unit, the speed on the battlefield was enhanced, and the many old generals were discharged from service. The most lasting contribution to European warfare though, was the creation of officer schools. In 1810, the Officer's War College and the Junior Officers College were opened to further officer's military education. These schools focused on both tactics and strategy as well as non-military matters. From this officer pool a chief of staff was formed for each commander in the field. The role of the Chief of Staff was not to command troops. His sole purpose was to give military advice to the commander. "He was simply a highly trained officer...who could give sound advice."<sup>82</sup> This gave each commander a very highly trained military advisor.<sup>83</sup> This greatly enhanced the effectiveness of the Prussian military.

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Across the Atlantic, after the Treaty of Paris in 1783, the United States of America achieved its independence from Great Britain. Following the treaty there was an ongoing debate over the necessity of a standing army. There was also a debate over a national versus a state run militia. In his "Sentiments on a Peace Establishment", George Washington outlined his ideas for America's military in four main points. He wanted a small regular army, totaling about 2,600

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<sup>80</sup> Citino, 119.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

officers and men, to defend the frontiers and act as the core of the military. Washington also stressed the need for military arsenals and fortifications, and for a military institution. In addition to these points he wanted all males between the ages of 18 and 50 to be enrolled in a Continental Militia. This militia would be mustered by counties and regularly trained. Former Continental Army officers would be given preference for militia officer commissions. All militia throughout the thirteen states would have uniformity in drill and training, using an agreed upon military manual. Occasionally several militia companies would be gathered together and trained in battalions and regiments. A national militia uniformly trained and drilled would negate the need for a large standing army. Once war had commenced, a newly raised American Army would have soldiers and officers already familiar with military drill and training.<sup>84</sup> Instead on June 2, 1784 Congress disbanded all but eighty men from the Continental Army. On June 3, 1784 Congress raised 700 militiamen from four states, for one year to form the First American Regiment. The following year Congress continued the regiment, called for three year recruits, and omitted any reference to militia.<sup>85</sup> The history of the American Army from this point to the beginning of the War of 1812 would be marked by several periods of expansion and reduction, corresponding with international events. This was exactly what George Washington had warned about in his "Sentiments on a Peace Establishment".<sup>86</sup> Following Shay's Rebellion in 1786 Congress increased the army to over 2,000 men. Yet the next year, the army was reduced. The army was expanded in 1786, 1791-1794, 1798, 1808, and 1812-1814. It was reduced in 1787, 1796, 1800, 1802, and 1815.<sup>87</sup> There was no constancy or uniformity in the American military.

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<sup>84</sup> Washington, 26:374-398.

<sup>85</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 91.

<sup>86</sup> Washington, 26:375.

<sup>87</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 10.

This process severely hampered the effectiveness of the American military in the early national period.

The American Constitution attempted to clarify the issue of a nationalized militia and a standing army. It was also with the Constitution that the dual army tradition, begun during the Revolution, was institutionalized. In the Constitution, Congress was given the power to raise and support armies, the ability to call forth the militia, and to regulate and govern the militia in national service. When called into service, the President was the head of the national militia as well as the army. He could also appoint military officers, with the advice and consent of the Senate. The states though were able to retain their militia, appoint its officers, and train the militia according to Congress. The issue in conflict was over a national militia or state run militia. A national militia would allow for uniformity in training, weapons, and officer selection. It might also prevent the need for a small standing army. Yet states guarded their right to run militia. The Constitution allowed for both of these ideas.<sup>88</sup> The emphasis was still on checks and balances and not on military effectiveness.

The question over militia was answered in 1792 with the Calling Forth Act and the Uniform Militia Act. Under the Calling Forth Act Congress was able to call forth militia under the President's authority, but for no more than three months. Also, the President could use the militia to suppress insurrection, only with the assent of a federal judge. Under the Uniform Militia Act all able bodied males between eighteen and forty five were enrolled into the militia. Each man had to arm and equip himself. Congress had no control over officer selection or training. There was also no penalty for states or individuals who disobeyed Congress' authority on these matters.<sup>89</sup> These bills killed the idea of a national militia, and necessitated a standing

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<sup>88</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 93.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 94-95.

army. Since individuals provided their own firearms, enforcement was left to the states, and there was no federal standard of training; the national militia would not be an effective solution to a standing army.<sup>90</sup>

As mentioned before the history of the American Army in the early national period was a story of several expansions and reductions. There were, however, four major attempts at professionalizing the American Army. The first major attempt at professionalization happened as a result of the Northwest Indian Wars. In 1790, the United States Army led by Brigadier General Josiah Harmar set out from Cincinnati to perform a show of force to the Indians in present day Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Tensions had been very high because the army had been ineffective in stopping civilian encroachment onto Indian land. This led to raids by the Indians and counter raids by the whites. General Harmar divided his force of regulars and 1,500 militia in Indian territory. The Indians fell upon Harmar's detachments and defeated them in detail. This, along with British encouragement, emboldened the Indians to fight back against the Americans.<sup>91</sup> Congress added one more regiment to the army; authorized the President to call out the militia, and to enlist 2,000 levies for a six month period. Major General Arthur St. Clair with a force over 1,500 regulars, levies, and militia marched out from Cincinnati in September 1791. Poorly disciplined and led, the army was attacked on November 4 and soundly defeated. This was the worst defeat inflicted on the army by Indians in American history; 632 men became casualties.<sup>92</sup>

St. Clair's defeat led Congress to authorize three more regiments which were reorganized and named the Legion of the United States. This force of over 5,000 men was under the

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<sup>90</sup> Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 94.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 90-91.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-92; Gaff, 3-8; for a collection of Anthony Wayne's Correspondence during the Northwest Indian Wars see Anthony Wayne, *Anthony Wayne: A Name in Arms*, ed. Richard C. Knopf (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1960).



authority of Major General Anthony Wayne. For two years after St. Claire's defeat, Congress tried to negotiate a treaty with the Northwest Indians, while Wayne trained the new Legion. According to Skelton this was the first significant attempt in the professionalization of the American Army since the Revolution.<sup>93</sup> Wayne had amassed 5,000 men, drilling them in the manner that the Continental Army had done under Steuben. This was significant because the disbursement of the army had prohibited large uniformity in training and drilling. Wayne blended the separate arms of the army (cavalry, artillery, and infantry) to work as a cohesive unit. Wayne strictly enforced the chain of command as well as discipline within the Legion, which had become lax since the American Revolution.<sup>94</sup> All of this culminated in Wayne's campaign against the Northwest Indians in 1794 and the Battle of Fallen Timbers. Wayne's actions broke the power of the Northwest Indians and led to the British evacuating the forts south of the Great Lakes.<sup>95</sup> The uniformity and cohesion that Wayne brought to the army was only temporary. In 1796, Anthony Wayne died and Congress abolished the Legion and reduced the army to four infantry regiments and two companies of light dragoons.<sup>96</sup> Many officers and soldiers, trained under Wayne, were dismissed and the army was scattered once again along the frontier.

A second attempt at professionalization occurred in 1794 when Congress voted to create four arsenals, to build fortifications, and to form a Corps of Artillerists and Engineers.<sup>97</sup> This was at a time when America's tensions were running high with both Great Britain and France. Instead of building a large army, Congress decided to construct six frigates and concentrate on coastal fortifications. The science of artillery and engineering had been pursued diligently in

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<sup>93</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 90.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>95</sup> Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 93; Gaff, 301-313.

<sup>96</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 99.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

Europe since the seventeenth century.<sup>98</sup> These disciplines were seen to require more fundamental education, including mathematics. America had relied upon European professionals very heavily during the eighteenth century. In 1782, there was only one American engineer officer out of the fourteen in the service of the American Army.<sup>99</sup> The army scheduled courses to be taught to this new corps of artilleryists and engineers at West Point. Yet, internal dissension and a lackluster leadership led to the cessation of classes, and scattered these officers to various fortifications along the coast.<sup>100</sup>

At the height of the Quasi-War with France in 1798, Congress passed the Alien and Sedition Acts and greatly increased the army.<sup>101</sup> Congress potentially authorized the President to command five separate American armies in the event of war with France.<sup>102</sup> Congress immediately raised the so-called New Army, which consisted of twelve infantry regiments and six troops of dragoons. President John Adams nominated George Washington as the commander, who would only accept leadership once war had been declared. Until that time his inspector general, Alexander Hamilton, trained and organized the army. William Skelton maintains that no other person attempted to re-organize the American Army in the early national period more than Alexander Hamilton.<sup>103</sup> The impracticality of a French invasion led to questioning Hamilton's motive for the army. It may be suggested that he wanted to use the army as a weapon to cower his Republican opponents.<sup>104</sup> Yet all of his work was for naught. President Adams, who never trusted Hamilton's ambition, signed a treaty with France in 1800. In the same year, Congress disbanded the New Army, and the officers and men returned to their

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<sup>98</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 93.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>101</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 100.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>103</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 98.

<sup>104</sup> Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 100.

homes.<sup>105</sup> Russell Weigley claims, “the Federalist efforts to forge the Army into a political weapon assured the continuance in America of the post-Restoration English tradition of the nonpolitical army.”<sup>106</sup>

The last major attempt at professionalization of the army in prior to the War of 1812 was the formal authorization of a military academy at West Point in 1802.<sup>107</sup> The Military Peace Establishment Act of 1802 institutionalized the military academy as well as reducing the army. This formally created a military academy from the idea of the Corps of Artillerists and Engineers in 1794. President Thomas Jefferson had opposed this idea when the Federalists under Washington and Hamilton had proposed it. He saw it as a haven for Federalist control of the military. Yet, he was not opposed to the idea of a military academy in principle.<sup>108</sup> He wanted a small army with a professional officer corps. But these officers had to be useful to civilian society, and therefore West Point was mainly focused on engineering. It was modeled after the Ecole Polytechnique engineering school in France.<sup>109</sup> The academy translated European military texts and focused on military science, especially artillery and engineering. Jefferson appointed Jonathan Williams as Superintendent of West Point. It was under his tutelage that the study of engineering and artillery took shape. Yet for all of this work, West Point produced just 89 cadets prior to the War of 1812.<sup>110</sup> On April 29, 1812 Congress doubled the faculty at West Point and allowed up to 250 cadets to be appointed yearly.<sup>111</sup> The War of 1812 highlighted the army’s need for military educated officers.

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<sup>105</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 102.

<sup>106</sup> Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 104.

<sup>107</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 98.

<sup>108</sup> Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 105.

<sup>109</sup> Edward M. Coffman, *The Old Army: A Portrait of the American Army in Peacetime, 1784-1898* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 29.

<sup>110</sup> Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 106.

<sup>111</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 102.

Despite these attempts, William Skelton still maintains that the American Army was an amateur army.<sup>112</sup> There are several reasons for this. First, the small size of the army stationed over such a large area, prohibited training of anything larger than a company. “In 1793, Wayne scattered 346 officers and men in ten satellite posts, with the entire garrisons at two consisting of only 14 men; four others had just 1 officer and 21 men each. Eleven years later 2,732 officers and men were distributed in forty-three locations. More than two-thirds of the troops were on or near the frontier, with the largest concentration, 375, at New Orleans.”<sup>113</sup> Training and discipline depended on the commander at the post. Baron von Steuben’s Blue Book from the American Revolution was still the de facto training manual for the army.<sup>114</sup> Yet, Congress had not regulated the Blue Book as such, so it was still up to the commander on how and how often to train his troops.

Another reason was the high attrition rate in the officer corps. Concerning the information available about the 181 officers in the American Army in 1797; forty three died in service, sixty nine resigned, and seven were dismissed.<sup>115</sup> The frequency of reductions in the army also meant that many officers’ jobs were temporary. In the 1816 army, only nineteen officers had begun their career in the eighteenth century, and a majority had not seen service before the War of 1812.<sup>116</sup>

Promotion in the officer corps was based on the rule of seniority. This allowed officers to gain experience in their field with the opportunity to be promoted. Yet for higher ranks, such as colonel and general, many political leaders were chosen. This was especially true during times of war when the army was greatly increased. In the Legion of the United States in 1794

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<sup>112</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 68.

<sup>113</sup> Coffman, 19.

<sup>114</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 38.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

and the New Army in 1796 there were many senior and junior officers appointed from civilian life. This naturally angered officers who thought they deserved a promotion. Yet veteran officers had to know that these new units would be the first to be dismissed during the frequent army reductions.<sup>117</sup> This practice continued in the War of 1812. In 1813, Congress authorized the creation of a second major and a third lieutenant in each regiment. Yet these positions were given to civilians.<sup>118</sup> Even after the war, when the seniority rule was followed more closely, political patronage counted for something.

The low pay of the soldiers and officers hampered the professionalization of the army. A soldier was offered a bounty when he enlisted, which ranged from \$2 in 1784 to \$16 in 1798, and then back down to \$12 in 1802. Privates' monthly pay fluctuated from \$3 to \$7 during this same time period. In contrast, "between 1800 and 1811, able-bodied seamen in the coasting trade could expect \$15.00 to \$20.00 a month, and if they enlisted in the navy \$10.00 to \$12.00."<sup>119</sup> Officers, while not as aristocratically disseminating as their European counterparts, still thought of themselves as gentlemen.<sup>120</sup> Many of them did come from more well to do families, and the lifestyle that they thought was required of them in order to fulfill social responsibilities was not met by army pay. A captain's annual pay ranged from \$420 in the 1780's to \$480 in 1812. "In contrast, a government clerk, or indeed a clerk in a business, could expect \$700 or \$800 by 1800, and a few might make as much as \$1,400."<sup>121</sup> Therefore many officers supplemented their military careers by also carrying on civilian jobs as well. One officer took a leave of absence,

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<sup>117</sup> Coffman, 12.

<sup>118</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 50.

<sup>119</sup> Coffman, 16.

<sup>120</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 51.

<sup>121</sup> Coffman, 30.

obtained a license to practice law and became a parish judge.<sup>122</sup> The image of an officer corps as an elite apart from civilian life is false.<sup>123</sup>

The lack of military institutions prohibited professional socialization of the military. There had been military schools for Artillery and Engineers in Europe since the late seventeenth century.<sup>124</sup> Due to the combination of a growing importance of fortifications in Europe and the high level of mathematics needed in engineering, military academies of this period focused on these subjects. In some European armies there were cadet companies where beginning officers served as cadets in the army. This is true of the Prussian military in the Berlin Cadet Corps which produced 2,987 cadets in the span of Frederick the Great's reign.<sup>125</sup> In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, military schools had also opened up to instruct other elements of the military as well. However, most infantry and cavalry officers gained instruction in the art of war through independent reading and/or experience.<sup>126</sup> West Point was not officially a military institution until 1802, and even then it did not garner major attention until after the War of 1812.

From the Treaty of Paris in 1783 to the outbreak of the War of 1812 the American Army still maintained a level of amateurism. The isolated military posts, relatively small size of the army, lack of pay, and continuous expansions and reductions limited the amount of professionalization. The Legion of the United States, New Army, Corps of Artillerists and Engineers, and the formation of West Point were all attempts in remedying this amateurism. Yet their impact was temporary and relied too much on the personality of people such as Anthony Wayne, Alexander Hamilton, and Jonathan Williams.<sup>127</sup> The problem was the prestige of the

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<sup>122</sup> Coffman, 31.

<sup>123</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 86.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>125</sup> Armstrong Starkey, *War in the Age of Enlightenment 1700-1789* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 82.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>127</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 104.

militia, the suspicion of a standing army, and a centralized military institution.<sup>128</sup> At the outbreak of war in 1812, the United States Army was not as combat ready as it could have been, if these measures had been sustained.

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<sup>128</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 89.

### Chapter 3: Failing the Test: The Early Years of the War of 1812

On June 18, 1812, Congress signed a declaration of war against Great Britain. Ever since the 1790s the tension between the two countries had been growing. The British Navy's practice of impressing American sailors into service, continually aggravated the American public. In 1807 the British frigate *Leopard* fired on the USS *Chesapeake* in search of British deserters. This action infuriated the American public, leading to the 1808 army expansion, and the Embargo Act.<sup>1</sup> During the Northwest Indian Wars of the early 1790s, American's had suspected the British of supporting the Indians. This resurfaced after the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811. The Indiana Territory Governor William Henry Harrison defeated a Shawnee led Indian force. After the battle Harrison found British-supplied equipment nearby.<sup>2</sup> The War of 1812 was the first European war for America since the American Revolution. This war had the effect of reinforcing the military lessons of the American Revolution to the first American born generation, at a time when the Revolutionary generation was dying out. The first two years of the War of 1812 would underline the United States Army's state of unpreparedness. In the War of 1812, the American military continued the practice of the dual army tradition of militia and regulars. Yet this was the last war where the militia, as an institution, would play a major role.

The War of 1812 was the turning point for the fledgling American Army. The army consisted of militia, volunteers, and regulars. Out of a population of around 7,700,000 in 1812, there were estimated 703,000 militiamen available for duty in the seventeen states, as well as 20,000 available in five territories. It is estimated that during the war 458,000 militiamen were

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<sup>1</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 100-101.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.



called up.<sup>3</sup> The militiamen were called out for ninety days by their state. Since their time was so short there was little time to train, so most militiamen were not experienced and lacked discipline. The second type of American military unit was the volunteer. It was this type of soldier that would come to dominate the American Army during the wars in the nineteenth century. The volunteer signed up for six months to one year instead of the militia's three months. This gave the commanders more of a chance to drill the volunteers. During the War of 1812, Congress began to place greater emphasis on the Regular Army. This was due to the lack of unity, experience, drill, and leadership that continued to occur in the militia.

There were three main issues that plagued the army in the first two years. First, there was a lack of uniformity in drill. Military standards were not uniform, there was no set of regulations to inform new officer recruits, and many of these new recruits were political appointees. Second, the Madison Administration appointed Revolutionary officers to command the campaigns. These officers were in their late 50s to early 60s, and had lost much of the aggressiveness of their Revolutionary years. Furthermore, many of these officers had not remained in the army since the American Revolution, which meant that whatever experience they had was decades in the past. In addition to these Revolutionary general officers, the Madison administration nominated political appointees with little military experience to command armies. Lastly, there was a lack of command structure within the army. Units and officers within the United States Army refused to assist each other. On top of this, the navy and the army were too slavish to their own plans, to assist each other in defeating the British.

On April 12, 1808, Congress increased the United States Army from two infantry regiments and a corps of engineers to seven infantry, one rifleman, one artillery, and one light

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<sup>3</sup> Donald R. Hickey, *Don't Give up the Ship! Myths of the War of 1812* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 2006), 169.

dragoon regiments. Despite discrepancy between paper and actual strength, these measures doubled the Army's strength from 2,700 to 5,700 officers and men.<sup>4</sup> Henry Dearborn, the Secretary of War, was responsible for officer appointments. He distributed the regiments throughout the states and let them recruit locally. Officers tended to be local, regional, or state elites who could gather new recruits. Dearborn allowed congress to choose officer appointments, which resulted in a very high number of Republican candidates chosen in 1808 and 1809.<sup>5</sup> Winfield Scott recorded his thought on the officers of 1808:

It may...be safely said that many of the appointments were positively bad, and a majority of the remainder indifferent. Party spirit of that day knew no bounds, and, of course, was blind to policy. Federalists were almost entirely excluded from selection, though great numbers were eager for the field, and in the New England and some other States, there were but very few educated Republicans. Hence the selections from those communities consisted mostly of coarse and ignorant men. In the other States, where there was no lack of educated men in the dominant party, the appointments consisted, generally, of swaggerers, dependents, decayed gentlemen, and others—"fit for nothing else," which always turned out utterly unfit for any military purpose whatever.<sup>6</sup>

Despite Scott's pessimistic view, many officers who went on to have long successful careers in the army received commissions in the 1808 expansion.

In January and June of 1812 Congress further increased the overall strength of the army to twenty one infantry regiments. Congress added another nineteen regiments in 1813. By March 1814, the United States Army consisted of forty-six regiments of infantry, four of riflemen, three of artillery, three of light dragoons, and one regiment of light artillery. This amounted to 62,674 officers and men on paper. In actuality, the largest the army became during the war was 38,186 officers and men.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Skelton, "High Army Leadership in the Era of the War of 1812," 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Scott, 1:34-35.

<sup>7</sup> Skelton, "High Army Leadership in the Era of the War of 1812", 3.

In 1813 and 1814, the Madison administration attempted to regain control of officer appointments, especially the general appointments.<sup>8</sup> This resulted in the promotion of more deserving officers in the last year of the war. However at the beginning of the war there was still a predominance of old political officers in the army high command. In 1812, the average age of the fourteen generals was forty-five years old, with only one under forty. Eleven of them had served in the American Revolution and only two of them had served between the Revolution and 1808. There were a great number of Republican appointments.<sup>9</sup> This, combined with the army's unprepared state in 1812, led to several reverses in the first and second year of the war.

The first year of the war consisted of three disastrous campaigns. The old generals from the American Revolution showed their ineffectiveness, the lack of drill and uniformity demonstrated itself, and the lack of cooperation between the militia and regulars appeared. President Madison, the Secretary of War William Eustis, and the most senior general in the army, Major General Henry Dearborn, devised a three part plan to invade Canada. There would be three separate prongs that would converge on Canada all at the same time in order to confuse the British and prevent them from reinforcing any one point. Brigadier General William Hull, a fifty-eight year old Revolutionary officer, would strike east from Detroit. Brigadier General Stephen Van Rensselaer, a political appointee with no previous military experience, would take a combined regular and militia force from Buffalo, New York, and strike west towards York (Toronto), the capital of Upper Canada. Major General Henry Dearborn would take a force north up Lake Champlain to threaten Montreal.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Skelton, "High Army Leadership in the Era of the War of 1812", 5.

<sup>9</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 110.

<sup>10</sup> Richard V. Barbuto, *Niagara, 1814 America invades Canada* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 27-28; Pierre Berton, *The Invasion of Canada: Vol. One: 1812-1813* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1980), 199-264.

The British forces were spread out along the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes. Water transportation was the natural way to supply the isolated posts. Therefore, the most strategic plan was to strike as far east as possible, thereby cutting off supplies to every post west. Due to politics, the American forces had to fight at Detroit in order to eliminate the Indian threat and protect the frontier. Detroit was an important center for trade and diplomacy with the Indians. Ever since the American Revolution had ended British agents had supplied the Northwest Indians who raided American settlements in the area. Furthermore the Shawnee chief, Tecumseh, had begun to build an Indian Confederation in the early years of the nineteenth century. In 1811 General William Henry Harrison, the Governor of the Indiana Territory, had destroyed Tecumseh's capitol at Prophetstown. He then defeated the Shawnee at the Battle of Tippecanoe. Tecumseh was certain to gain strength with the British, now that formal war had been declared between Great Britain and the United States. The American government had to appear to care about protecting the American frontier settlements.<sup>11</sup>

General William Hull, the governor of the Michigan Territory, was given an appointment as a brigadier general and ordered to raise an army and cross the Detroit River. Hull's Army of the Northwest, around twenty-two hundred men, was made up of Ohio militiamen with a compliment of regulars. Hull marched his army from Ohio to the Detroit River, and crossed the river into Canada in mid-July. After a brief foray Hull lost his nerve and retreated back to Fort Detroit. General Brock, the British commander in Upper Canada, travelled from York to Amherstburg in a week with reinforcements to relieve the garrison. The British army, now under Brock, crossed the Detroit River. Joined by Tecumseh and his Indian warriors, Brock prepared to bombard Fort Detroit and the Americans inside. The outnumbered Brock used his Indian contingent to intimidate General Hull. Before a single shot was fired General Hull surrendered

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<sup>11</sup> J. C. A. Stagg, *The War of 1812* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 50-52.

the fort, the troops inside, and all of his soldiers outside the fort who had been on various missions. Hull claimed that Brock's threat of an Indian massacre forced him to think of the innocent civilians inside the fort and to surrender for their sake. Brock's bluff worked and he inventoried the equipment, paroled the militia, and took the regulars back to Quebec as prisoners of war. With this battle, the left wing of the three prong attack had been clipped. For the rest of the year the Indians and British would raid American settlements and outlying forts.<sup>12</sup>

There were essentially two separate armies in the State of New York in 1812. They were both under the supreme command of Major General Henry Dearborn, who was made the Commander in Chief of the United States Army. On the Niagara Peninsula General Stephen Van Rensselaer, a Federalist politician, commanded the militia army. Van Rensselaer was a militia general, which caused major problems in the campaign. The regulars in the area were under the command of Brigadier General Alexander Smyth who had stationed himself at Buffalo. Refusing to submit to a militia general, he decided not to assist Van Rensselaer's proposed attack across the Niagara River at the town of Lewiston. Van Rensselaer's army was composed mostly of militia with a few regular army units, including the 2<sup>nd</sup> US Artillery under Lieutenant Colonel Winfield Scott. This would be Winfield Scott's first major combat experience in his long career. Scott, more than any other officer, would be responsible for the professionalization of the United States Army in the first half of the nineteenth century. Van Rensselaer crossed the Niagara River at Lewiston at 3 am on October 13, 1812. Due to a lack of boats, the four thousand man American army could cross only six hundred men at a time. Once on the Canadian side, the Americans found themselves pinned down by British troops on the shore and a British cannon on the heights. At the sound of the gunfire General Brock, who had returned from Detroit, rode down to Queenston from Fort George summoning reinforcements along the way. He arrived at

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<sup>12</sup> Barbuto, 28-29; Berton, *The Invasion of Canada*, 115-188.

Queenston and took command of the cannon that was firing on the Americans. One daring American officer named Captain John E. Wool led some men up the escarpment and descended upon the unprotected rear of British artillery position. Brock and the men with him at the cannon fled for cover without a moment to spare. He then rallied two hundred men and made a counterattack against the Americans, which was driven back and resulted in the death of General Brock at the head of his troops. The Americans held the heights but could not send enough reinforcements to hold them. The militiamen on the opposite shore, watching the battle, refused to leave American soil claiming the right that as militia they could not cross into another country. Eventually the British General Sheaffe led some regulars and Indians against what was left of the Americans on the heights. After a gallant fight, and with no prospect of reinforcements, the Americans surrendered. Among the surrendered were 925 soldiers and officers including a brigadier general and five lieutenant colonels. Six weeks after the Battle of Queenston Heights, General Smyth, now in command on the Niagara Peninsula, attempted unsuccessfully to cross the Niagara River at Buffalo. The soldiers then went into winter quarters.<sup>13</sup>

The third prong to the invasion of Canada involved the American army at Plattsburg, NY adjacent to Lake Champlain which was under the direct command of General Dearborn. In November the general decided to call off the offensive into Canada due to disease in his army, and instead he sent Col. Zebulon Pike north with a force of six hundred regulars. Pike led his men to a Canadian blockhouse at La Colle Mill and there fought a minor battle with the British on Nov. 20, 1812. After a few hours of firing, both forces fell back. This effectively ended the campaigns of 1812. These three failed campaigns ended with the Secretary of War William

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<sup>13</sup> Scott, 1:54-64; Berton, *The Invasion of Canada*, 199-264.

Eustis resigning on December 3, 1812. On February 3<sup>rd</sup> John Armstrong Jr. was nominated as the new Secretary of War.<sup>14</sup>

Generals Hull, Van Rensselaer, Smyth, and Dearborn had all failed in both the tactical and strategic aspects of their respective campaigns. Of these commanders, one was a political appointee and two were Revolutionary officers. Stephen Van Rensselaer was a Federalist politician who was nominated as a militia general by his political rival, New York Governor Daniel Tompkins, in order to get him out of New York City.<sup>15</sup> General Hull had served in many battles during the American Revolution, rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel. He was made Governor of the Michigan Territory in 1805. He received his commission in 1812 even though he had not seen campaigning since the American Revolution.<sup>16</sup> General Dearborn had also served in the American Revolution. After the Revolution he became an influential politician, becoming the Secretary of War under Jefferson. He likewise received his commission in 1812.<sup>17</sup> Only General Smyth could be said to be a professional soldier. He was the Inspector General of the Army, and had written a copy of infantry tactics. However he became discredited after vigorously proclaiming he was going to invade Canada after the Battle of Queenston Heights, and then failing to do so.<sup>18</sup> These men were the generals of the American armies in the first year of the war because of the lack of capable officers. America had not engaged in a war with a European power since the American Revolution. The last time a major conflict had occurred was during the Northwest Indian Wars. Unfortunately Anthony Wayne was dead, and the Revolutionary officers had not remained in the army. The academy at West Point had only started in 1802 and the officers turned out were placed in the Engineer Corps or in the artillery.

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<sup>14</sup> Barbuto, 30.

<sup>15</sup> John K. Mahon, *The War of 1812* (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1972), 75.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>18</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 104.

Therefore there were few subordinate officers with enough experience and knowledge to make up for the deficiencies of the senior commanders.

There was tremendous confusion in the chain of command and communication in the United States Army. This confusion was due to the lack of a comprehensive hierarchy in the American military, an example of the semi-professionalism of the army as a whole. All three of the 1812 attacks were supposed to begin at the same time, in order to impair the British's ability to concentrate their forces. Hull's campaign began in July and ended in August. The Battle of Queenston Heights did not occur until mid-October, and Dearborn did not meet the British until November and then promptly retreated.<sup>19</sup> This allowed General Brock to block both the American push from Detroit and then from Buffalo. Furthermore, there was a no clear commander on the Niagara Peninsula. General Smyth refused to serve under the command of the militia General Van Rensselaer. Smyth even refused to assist Van Rensselaer in his attack at Queenston. This also was reflected in the other regular officers. Lieutenant Colonel Winfield Scott took his artillery regiment to Queenston the night before the battle, but refused to serve under the militia commander. "He [Scott] was refused, because all arrangements were made and instructions given, placing Lieutenant-Colonel Van Rensselaer, the chief of the general's staff, at the head of the movement, and I [Scott], his senior would not serve under any junior..."<sup>20</sup> The militia also refused to follow orders and assist the soldiers already on the Canadian side of the Niagara River. Major General Van Rensselaer on the American side of the river is supposed to have written to Scott, "I have passed through my camp. Not a regiment, not a company is willing to join you. Save yourselves by a retreat, if you can."<sup>21</sup> These examples illustrate the

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<sup>19</sup> Barbuto, 27-30

<sup>20</sup> Scott, 1:56-57.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Scott, 1:60.



lack of coordination and command structure in the United States Army at the beginning of the War of 1812.

Out of the disasters of 1812, the United States Army and the administration recognized the need for effective command. The administration attempted to remedy the confusion in the chain of command. The first change was the replacement of the Secretary of War William Eustis, with John Armstrong Jr. John Armstrong Jr. was a veteran of the Revolutionary War and more capable in strategic terms than his predecessor.<sup>22</sup>

In 1813, Madison made appointments of four major generals and seven brigadier generals. The major generals were James Wilkinson, Wade Hampton, William Henry Harrison, and Morgan Lewis. Wilkinson and Hampton had both been American Revolutionary officers. Wilkinson had stayed in the army since the American Revolution gaining experience in the Northwest Indian Wars and in the South. Lewis was a friend of President Madison's and was therefore a political appointee. Harrison was a major general of militia and governor of the Indiana Territory, but he was young, stern, and aggressive.<sup>23</sup> General Harrison had military experience as the Governor of the Indiana Territory before the War of 1812. One year before the outbreak of the War of 1812, Harrison marched an army of one thousand men into Indian Territory and defeated an Indian army at the Battle of Tippecanoe on Nov.7, 1811. Furthermore he, like Anthony Wayne with whom he had served in 1794, was a stickler for drill. Except for the forty year old Harrison, the average age of the major generals was fifty seven.<sup>24</sup>

The brigadier generals that were promoted were Zebulon Pike, George Izard, Lewis Cass, Duncan McArthur, William Winder, Benjamin Howard, and Thomas Parker. Of these new generals, Pike and Izard were young professionals with military training. Thomas Parker had

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<sup>22</sup> Barbuto, 31.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>24</sup> Mahon, 103.

fought in the American Revolution but had remained in the army as colonel since that time. These generals were much younger than their superiors.<sup>25</sup> In addition to some of these generals, a few junior officers also began to show military promise. These officers would go on to be major figures in the 1814 campaigns.

Another sign of improvement in 1813 was the beginning of the General Staff. Up to the War of 1812, most logistical duties for the military were performed by civil agents. This led to a great deal of conflict between the military officers and the civil agents, and in many cases to extortion. In the War of 1812 and beyond, these logistical duties would be carried out by staff bureaus.<sup>26</sup> Despite these promising signs in the army, it was still plagued by the same problems as in 1812.

There was much more cooperation in 1813 than there had been in 1812. There were three instances of this, of which the most decisive example took place in the west. Ever since General Hull had surrendered at Detroit, the British and their Indian allies had been raiding settlements on the Western Frontier. As was common in the other theaters of the war, water transportation was key to supplying British soldiers. Therefore the first major conflict took place on Lake Erie. Commodore Perry, a young and promising naval officer, had been put in command of the Lake Erie fleet. On September 13, 1813, Perry's fleet engaged the British at Put-In-Bay near the Ohio coast. In the Battle of Lake Erie Perry crushed the British fleet once and for all, and in a famous note wrote to General Harrison, "We have met the enemy, and they are ours."<sup>27</sup> William Henry Harrison had been anxiously waiting with his army on the nearby shore, and once the note came he marched his army of well-trained soldiers towards Detroit.

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<sup>25</sup> Mahon, 103.

<sup>26</sup> Skelton, "High Army Leadership in the Era of the War of 1812," 254.

<sup>27</sup> Quoted in A. J. Langguth, *Union 1812: The Americans who Fought the Second War of Independence* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 256.

Instead of fighting, the British army under General Procter, retreated to the Canadian side of the Detroit River and began to march his army further east along the Thames River. Perry ferried Harrison's army across the Detroit River and joined his army marching to overtake the British. On October 5, 1813 Harrison's army caught up with the British at Moraviantown on Canadian soil. In the resulting Battle of the Thames, Harrison put the British to flight, and effectively crushed unified Indian resistance in the West by killing Tecumseh. This battle resulted in the British retreating eastward all the way to the Niagara Peninsula. The Americans now had undisputed control over Lake Erie and could move troops from the Michigan Territory to the East.<sup>28</sup>

Another example occurred on Lake Ontario when the army and navy cooperated to assault York, the capital of Upper Canada. General Pike was ordered to take twenty-five hundred men to assault York. The army was sailed across the lake by Commodore Chauncey's Lake Ontario fleet. The army landed at York on April 29, 1813 and drove off the British troops commanded by General Sheaffe, Brock's replacement, with comparatively little loss. The Americans then went on to sack the Canadian capital and to burn the ship being constructed in the harbor. The biggest loss for the Americans was the death of General Pike, who was killed when a powder magazine exploded sending down a shower of debris that crushed him. Despite the loss of this officer, the raid was a success.<sup>29</sup>

The last example of this army/navy cooperation occurred on the Niagara Peninsula in late May. A portion of the Lake Ontario squadron ferried Colonel Winfield Scott and forty-five hundred troops from the eastern side of the Niagara River past the British Fort George and landed west of the fort. The Americans quickly pushed back the British force opposing their

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<sup>28</sup> Barbuto, 31-32; Mahon, 159-186.

<sup>29</sup> Barbuto, 33.

landing and drove them from Fort George. The American assault was so unexpected and swift, that the British withdrew all of their troops from the Niagara River forts.<sup>30</sup>

These three examples of excellent cooperation and coordination were overshadowed by two subsequent events. Instead of immediately pursuing the British army after the Battle of Fort George, the Niagara army leisurely pushed westward. The army was under two subordinate commanders, Brigadier Generals William Winder and John Chandler. Both men were political appointees. The two generals were surprised and utterly defeated at Stoney Creek on June 6 when the British force attacked at night. Later in June, the British defeated another American force on the Niagara Peninsula at Beaver Dams. The series of defeats pushed the American forces back to Fort George.<sup>31</sup>

In July, General Wilkinson commanded an army moving eastward up the St. Lawrence River towards Montreal. General Hampton, a personal enemy of Wilkinson's, commanded an army that was supposed to move up Lake Champlain towards Montreal. These two forces were supposed to meet at the city and destroy it. The two commanders failed to cooperate, resulting in the Battles of Chrysler's Farm and Chateaugay. These battles combined with the onset of winter forced the American armies to retreat back into New York and end the campaign.<sup>32</sup>

The first two years of the War of 1812 showcased the ill-prepared state of the United States Army. The high command was flooded with political and senior Revolutionary generals. These men lacked the aggressiveness or military experience requisite in commanding the armies. Furthermore, there was a deficiency in the army command structure and cooperation within the

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<sup>30</sup> Barbuto, 33; For more information see Margaret Coleman, *The American Capture of Fort George, Ontario* (Ottawa: National Historic Parks and Sites Branch, Parks Canada, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1977).

<sup>31</sup> Barbuto, 78-81.

<sup>32</sup> Donald E. Graves, *Field of Glory: The Battle of Chrysler's Farm, 1813* (Toronto: Ontario: Robin Brass Studio, 1999).

army and between the army and navy. Camillus M. Mann, the editor of the *Baltimore National Museum and Weekly Gazette* wrote a letter to President Madison in December 1813 stating the problems of the American military as he saw them. He stated that:

The land military force of our confederated country is not commensurate with the emergency...The collision between the army proper, and the actual militia, is injurious to the Union...The insubordinate independence of the militia is galling, perplexing, and of bad example to troops compelled by the severities of stricter regulations.<sup>33</sup>

Two bright spots in the early years of the War of 1812 were the beginnings of the General Staff which helped facilitate supply, and the emergence of junior officers. A staff department allowed for a more comprehensible and efficient mode of supply for the army. Up to this point civilians had commanded most of the supply duties. The list of energetic young officers came to the fore in 1813, and they would command in 1814. General Harrison and Commodore Perry had won in the West. Zebulon Pike, Jacob Brown, Winfield Scott, Alexander Macomb, and Andrew Jackson were all rising stars in the East. It was the emergence of battle tested junior and senior officers who would change the army's fortunes in 1814 and assist in the professionalization of the United States Army in the postwar era.

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<sup>33</sup> James Madison, "A letter from Camillus M. Mann to James Madison, December 19, 1813," in *The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series 7 Vols.*, ed. J. C. A. Stagg (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 5:121-122.

## Chapter 4: 1814 and the Advent of Professionalism

By 1814, the United States Army had two years of fighting experience against a professional European army. This gave the junior officers time to gain experience in commanding troops, and it allowed the inefficient commanders to be weeded out. The army did considerably better in the last year of the war than in the previous two. This was due to the emergence of young, battle experienced, capable leaders as well as examples of more sternly drilled and uniform armies. In 1814, many of the Revolutionary officers fell by the wayside including Wade Hampton and James Wilkinson. Unfortunately for the Army, William Henry Harrison resigned his post in the belief that Congress denied him advancement. In addition, Harrison had created an enemy of Secretary of War John Armstrong Jr. who saw Harrison as a political rival. In order to negate Harrison's popularity, Armstrong kept him from a meaningful military post. Armstrong also led a Congressional investigation of Harrison's accounts in his 1813 campaign. Harrison resigned on May 11, 1814.<sup>1</sup> In their place Madison promoted George Izard and Jacob Brown to major general. He also promoted six officers to brigadier general: Alexander Macomb, Thomas Smith, Daniel Bissell, Edmund P. Gaines, Winfield Scott, and Eleazar Ripley. While some of these officers had served in the pre-war army and some had not, all of them had worked their way through the ranks during the first two years of the war. Furthermore the average age of the brigadier generals was thirty-three. Many of these men would perform well in 1814 and continue in the army after the war.<sup>2</sup>

There were four theaters of war in 1814; the Niagara Peninsula, the Lake Champlain region, the American South, and coastal Maryland. This year was a much greater test for the

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<sup>1</sup> J.C.A. Stagg, *Mr. Madison's War* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), 398-399; Hugh Howard, *Mr. And Mrs. Madison's War* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2012), 141-142.

<sup>2</sup> Barbuto, 105-106.

United States Army because Napoleon had been exiled to Elba, which left Great Britain free to send thousands of soldiers from Europe to North America. Officers in three of the four major campaigns would go on to gain high positions in the postwar army. An outline of these campaigns will help project the army and the officers instrumental in professionalizing it.

In 1813, the Americans had pushed the British from the Detroit area, had sacked York and taken the forts at the mouth of the Niagara River. Everything except the most important goals had been accomplished, the taking of Kingston and Montreal. This was John Armstrong's objective for the campaign of 1814. The Americans now had two armies in New York, one at Lake Champlain and one at Sacketts Harbor at the eastern end of Lake Ontario. Again instead of providing an overall commander, Armstrong appointed two new generals to command each army. Major General Jacob Brown was made commander of the army at Sacketts Harbor and Major General George Izard was given command at Plattsburg. These two men, unlike their predecessors, were young, competent, and had fought continuously through the ranks from the beginning of the war. The plan was to have Izard threaten Montreal, as in the previous year, while Brown moved against Kingston. Due to the heavy fortifications at Kingston, and a misunderstanding in a series of confusing letters, Brown moved his army to the Niagara region.<sup>3</sup>

In early December 1813, the new Lt. Governor of Upper Canada, Sir Gordon Drummond, arrived on the Niagara peninsula. The Americans had abandoned Fort George when Wilkinson had taken the troops to Montreal. Drummond immediately ordered an assault on Fort Niagara which was carried out flawlessly on December 19. In the days that followed, Drummond's subordinate, Major General Phineas Riall marched south burning Lewiston, Manchester (Niagara

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<sup>3</sup> Mahon, 266-284.

Falls), Black Rock, and Buffalo. The American side of the Niagara River had become a wasteland.<sup>4</sup>

The army that Jacob Brown commanded in the Niagara campaign in 1814 was called the Left Division. It was so called because the Right Division was the army that was stationed in eastern New York at Plattsburg. The four brigadier generals at the beginning of the campaign were generals Edmund Pendleton Gaines, Winfield Scott, Eleazar Ripley, and Peter B. Porter. Edmund Pendleton Gaines and Winfield Scott had both seen service prior to the war and had extensive service from the beginning of the war. Eleazar Ripley volunteered in 1812 and had served admirably since then. Peter B. Porter was a militia commander and a War Hawk congressman. He commanded the militia, volunteers, and Indians in the 1814 Niagara campaign.<sup>5</sup> There were also a number of important regimental officers which included but were not limited to Major Henry Leavenworth, Major Thomas Jesup, and Colonel James Miller. By 1814, all of these men had seen service and had become competent in their duties. This allowed the Left Division to meet the British on a much more level playing ground than it had in 1812.

It was apparent to Brown by March 1814, that he would invade Canada through the Niagara Peninsula. He therefore sent General Scott and Ripley to Buffalo with four of his five regiments. From April until July Scott set up a camp in Buffalo and drilled these soldiers everyday using one of the three handbooks available. This camp has been highlighted as the reason for the army's success.<sup>6</sup> By the end of June 1814, General Brown had arrived at Buffalo. He divided his army into three brigades. General Scott would command the first brigade, General Ripley the second brigade, and General Porter commanded the third brigade which was

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<sup>4</sup> Donald E. Graves, *Where Right and Glory Lead! The Battle of Lundy's Lane, 1814* (Toronto: Robin Brass, 1997), 12.

<sup>5</sup> Barbuto, 115-116.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 123-133.



composed of five hundred Indians, a company of mounted riflemen, and a regiment of Pennsylvania volunteers.

The Left Division crossed the Niagara River from Buffalo, on the morning of July 3, 1814 and quickly forced the garrison at Fort Erie to surrender. After almost two days of transferring the army to the Canadian side, as well as establishing the base at the fort, General Brown marched his army north towards Niagara Falls. General Riall, who heard about the American crossing, marched south from Fort George with an army of about 2,200 men. The two forces met just south of Niagara Falls on July 5 at the little town of Chippewa. In the resultant battle, the Americans defeated the British on a plain in a conventional European battle. In the aftermath of the battle, General Brown pushed the British army all the way back to Fort George. The American army stopped at Queenston and waited in vain for the Lake Erie naval fleet to arrive with siege cannon before assaulting Fort George. By July 20, with no sight of the American Navy, Brown retreated back to Chippewa.<sup>7</sup>

In the last week of July Sir Gordon Drummond landed on the Niagara Peninsula with reinforcements and immediately ordered an advance upon the Americans. Brown in turn ordered Scott to advance to Niagara Falls. On the evening of July 25 both armies met a mile from the falls. In the Battle of Lundy's Lane, or the Battle of Niagara, the Americans pushed the British off of their position. Due to heavy casualties, including Generals Brown and Scott, the Americans under Ripley withdrew in the middle of the night back to Chippewa. This has led to many disputes over which side won the battle. The Americans withdrew under their own initiative after repulsing every attack the British made. However in the morning the British held the field. After the Battle of Lundy's Lane, General Ripley, who took the place of the wounded

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<sup>7</sup> Barbuto, 163-205; Donald E. Graves, *Redcoats & Grey Jackets: The Battle of Chippewa, 5 July 1814* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1994).

General Brown, pulled the Left Division back to Fort Erie. Disgusted with Ripley's apparent lack of resolution, General Brown ordered General Gaines to come from Sacketts Harbor and take command at Fort Erie. General Drummond and the British army, after a week of rest, arrived outside the fort on August 2, 1814. The week allowed the Americans to expand the fortifications of Fort Erie with batteries, redoubts, abatis, and trenches. The British constructed batteries of their own to bombard the fort, and began the siege of Fort Erie. The siege lasted from August 2 to September 20, 1814, and involved two major events.<sup>8</sup>

At 2 am on August 15, the British army assaulted the American siege works in three waves. The first two attacks were repulsed with heavy casualties. The third column succeeded in wresting the northeast bastion of Fort Erie from the Americans. The attack appeared to have gained momentum, when at 5am a huge explosion erupted in the bastion. This explosion had the effect of ending the British attack. The British had suffered an estimated 1,000 casualties, while the Americans suffered fewer than ninety.<sup>9</sup>

In early September General Brown returned to command, to take over for the wounded General Gaines. He planned a two pronged sortie to take place on September 17. The two prongs were led by General Porter and General Miller. The U.S. troops focused their attack on three British batteries. They succeeded in capturing two batteries, but a combination of weather, an experienced enemy, and the failure of the reserve to provide sufficient support forced the Americans back into Fort Erie. The American attack, at a cost of more than six hundred casualties, reinforced General Drummond's decision to lift the siege.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Joseph Whitehorne, *While Washington Burned: The Battle for Fort Erie 1814* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Nautical & Aviation Publishing Company of America, 1992), 41-59.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 60-67.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 69-81.

Late in September General George Izard, and the Right Division of the American army at Plattsburg, arrived in the Niagara region to join forces with Brown. As the senior officer, Izard took command of the combined 6,500 man army. Izard did not have the aggressive spirit of Brown and instead of pressing the outmatched Drummond, Izard held back at Fort Erie. In October, Izard sent a small force out to swing around the British army. The skirmish known as the Battle of Cook's Mill on October 19 ended the campaign. In November, Izard blew up Fort Erie and withdrew all his soldiers back into America. Izard's caution in engaging the British frustrated the aggressive Brown. Once Izard decided to return to the American side of the Niagara River, Brown asked to be transferred to Sacketts Harbor. In the end, the Niagara campaign of 1814 gave no significant strategic advantage to the Americans. Yet, the campaign was important to the nation. American regulars had defeated the British army several times in open combat. The officers from this division in particular would hold many key positions in the postwar army.<sup>11</sup> In his message to Congress, James Madison stated:

The splendid victories gained on the Canadian side of the Niagara, by the American forces under major general Brown, and brigadiers Scott and Gaines, have gained for those heroes, and their emulating companions, the most unfading laurels; and, having triumphantly tested progressive discipline of the American soldiers...<sup>12</sup>

While battle raged on the Niagara, Governor General of Canada Sir George Prevost launched a major invasion down Lake Champlain in September. General Izard had taken most of the American forces west towards the Niagara Peninsula. A combined army/navy victory halted the invasion at Plattsburgh on September 11, 1814. The American fleet on Lake Champlain, under Thomas MacDonough, defeated the British in a furious naval battle. General

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<sup>11</sup> Barbuto, 282-318.

<sup>12</sup> Madison, James, "President's Message to Congress, September 20, 1814," in *Official Letters of the Military and Naval Officers of the United States, during the War with Great Britain in the years 1812, 13, 14, and 15*, ed. John Brannan (Washington: Way & Gideon, 1823), 432.

Alexander Macomb with 5,000 soldiers halted Prevost's army at Plattsburgh. This dual defeat forced Prevost to withdraw back up into Canada. The naval defeat was particularly destructive, because the British relied on water transportation for their supplies. Without the navy to bring supplies, Prevost decided to withdraw back into Canada.<sup>13</sup>

In contrast to these two campaigns was the British invasion of Washington. An example of the lingering poor logistical and command structure in the army was the fact that the British were able to so easily capture the nation's capital. A British army under General Robert Ross defeated an American militia force at the Battle of Bladensburg, after which the British marched into Washington D.C. and burned it. Following this triumph the British moved north to attack Baltimore. General Ross was killed in a skirmish leading up to Baltimore. The British stopped outside Baltimore's fortifications and waited for the British fleet to take Fort McHenry. On September 13, the British fleet bombarded the fort. The next day revealed the American flag was still flying. The British withdrew on the fourteenth, thereby halting the Chesapeake campaign. In this campaign the American militia had been routed as in the American Revolution. They had not been under a competent leader and, more importantly, there had been no trained force to defend the United States capital. The militiamen were hastily formed and the city had never been fortified. This led to the dismissal of Secretary of War John Armstrong. This was a reminder of the continuing amateurism of the American Army. More specifically this shows the lack of a military hierarchy. Had there been one in place, the nation's capital would never have been left undefended.<sup>14</sup>

In the Southern Theater, Major General Andrew Jackson had defeated the Creek Indians in a campaign that lasted from 1813 to early 1814. A large portion of the Creek nation had

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<sup>13</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 110; Mahon, 317-328; Col. David G. Fitz-Enz, *The Final Invasion: Plattsburgh, the War of 1812's Most Decisive Battle* (New York: First Cooper Square Press, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 110; Mahon, 289-316.

gone on the warpath in 1813 and had killed over 500 whites at Fort Mims. General Andrew Jackson hounded the Creek Indians. At the Battle of Horseshoe Bend he crushed the remaining strength of the Creek. In May, Jackson marched to New Orleans and set about preparing the city's defenses for a planned British attack. The last battle of the War of 1812 would be fought once a treaty had been written but before it had been ratified. A British force under General Packenham, the brother-in-law of the Duke of Wellington, conducted a campaign against New Orleans. Jackson assembled a force of marines, sailors, regulars, militia and volunteers, free black men, Choctaw Indians, and pirates to defend the city. On December 23, 1814, Jackson attacked the British who were only nine miles from the city. After the battle, Jackson retreated to a defensive position that he had prepared. After a couple of small probes, Packenham assaulted Jackson's fortifications on January 8, 1815 in the Fourth Battle of New Orleans. The resultant battle destroyed the British army, inflicting almost 2,000 casualties to Jackson's fifty. This battle made Jackson a hero and would be held up as the reason for the peace. The Treaty of Ghent had actually been signed on December 24, 1814. Despite this discrepancy in dates, the Battle of New Orleans became celebrated as a militia victory in the mold of the Battles of Bunker Hill or Bennington.<sup>15</sup>

At the end of the war Congress cut the general officers to two major generals and four brigadier generals. Andrew Jackson and Jacob Brown were militia generals who had risen through the ranks to become regular major generals. They were transitional figures, wartime appointees who performed well in the war. The brigadier generals were Eleazar Ripley, Alexander Macomb, Edmund P. Gaines, and Winfield Scott. Ripley, Gaines, and Scott had all had prominent positions in the 1814 Niagara campaign. Macomb had commanded the American

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<sup>15</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 111-114; Robin Reilly, *The British at the Gates: The New Orleans Campaign in the War of 1812* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1974); Robert V. Remini, *The Battle of New Orleans* (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1999).

army that turned the British back at the Battle of Plattsburgh. Besides these men, there were a number of field officers who contributed to the victories of the Army in 1814.<sup>16</sup> The emergence of these young, battle experienced officers was cemented shortly after the war when a board of generals was convened. This board had the task of screening the officer corps and selecting those to be retained in the post-war army.<sup>17</sup> The officer corps was reduced from 3,495 to 674 officers. Despite the principle of seniority, President Madison and the board selected young battle tested generals and officers. All of the officers tied with the American Revolution, and the political appointees were dismissed.<sup>18</sup> The board retained sixty-two of the high ranking wartime commanders. The average age of these commanders was thirty-three, with seven years average experience. These young commanders remembered the failures of the early part of the War of 1812, and set about stabilizing and reforming the army.<sup>19</sup>

A recurring example of the confused nature of the army early in the war was the lack of a unifying training regimen. There were three manuals that were mostly used by officers to train their soldiers. These were Baron Von Steuben's Blue Book from the American Revolution, William Duane's *Handbook for Infantry* (1813) and Alexander Smyth's *Regulations for the Field Exercises...of the Infantry* (1813). The last two were both based on French manuals.<sup>20</sup> The absence of a uniform tactics manual was compounded by the lack of a thorough training camp. The most highly recorded example of a training camp occurred under General Winfield Scott at Flint Hill in Buffalo, New York. This occurred in April 1814, leading up to the campaign conducted by the Left Division later that summer. General Scott drilled four of the six regular regiments that would constitute the division. In ten weeks, Scott had drilled the core for the

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<sup>16</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 110; Barbuto, 322-323.

<sup>17</sup> Skelton, "High Army Leadership in the Era of the War of 1812," 21.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>20</sup> Whitehorne, 20.

division in uniform training.<sup>21</sup> It attests to the ongoing disarray in the army that one, this camp was needed two years into the war, and two that it is the most widely known example of a drill camp. Part of this is because of the results of the later campaign, and part because Winfield Scott recorded these events in his autobiography in 1866. The men from this division went on to validate their training in the Battles of Chippewa, Lundy's Lane, and Fort Erie. Yet even this example has a fault. The other American army in New York State, the Right Division, was under Major General Izard in Plattsburgh, New York. Izard trained his army using Steuben's Blue Book, while Scott had used the French system. When these two armies later merged in late September 1814, they were under two separate sets of drills.<sup>22</sup> Officers could not easily be transferred between the two forces, because the soldiers would be trained in a different style. Also, these two forces would have a much more difficult time operating in tandem on the battlefield.

The War of 1812 renewed interest in the Military Academy at West Point. From the official founding in 1802 to 1812, 89 cadets graduated from West Point.<sup>23</sup> On April 29, 1812, Congress authorized West Point to appoint up to 250 cadets into the Academy.<sup>24</sup> Up to the end of the war, West Point cadets entered into the engineering or artillery corps. These positions limited their effectiveness, because these two branches of service had the least amount of promotion. Despite the scattering of these cadets, they did show their influence. Joseph Swift was the first graduate of West Point. In 1813, he was General Wilkinson's Chief Engineer during the campaign against Montreal. Sylvanus Thayer graduated from West Point in 1808 and entered into the Engineer Corps. During the War of 1812 he constructed fortifications. He also

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<sup>21</sup> Allan Peskin, *Winfield Scott and the Profession of Arms* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 2003), 36.

<sup>22</sup> Barbuto, 202.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>24</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 102.

joined General Wilkinson's Montreal campaign.<sup>25</sup> There were two West Point cadets in the Left Division during the Niagara campaign of 1814. Lieutenant Colonel William McRee (an 1805 West Point graduate) was the divisional engineer and Major Eleazar D. Wood (1808 graduate) was his assistant.<sup>26</sup> These two staff officers had an important, if unheralded, effect on the effectiveness of the Left Division. In many instances throughout the campaign, these two officers had the duty of selecting sites for the infantry and artillery positions of the army.<sup>27</sup> At the Battle of Fort Erie, these two officers commanded important batteries against the British assault. Lieutenant Colonel McRee commanded the artillery in Douglass Battery, and Major Wood commanded four infantry companies at Snake Hill.<sup>28</sup> In the subsequent sortie, Major Wood commanded 400 soldiers in one of the attacking columns.<sup>29</sup> The conduct of the West Point officers, and the war in general, induced Congress to re-focus attention on West Point.

The experience during the War of 1812 precipitated the solidification of the professionalization of the United States Army in the early national period of the United States of America. From the end of the war in 1815 to the beginning of the Mexican War, the United States Army would go through changes that resulted in a professional army. The experience from the War of 1812, and the officers who fought in it, led to the professionalization of the army during the 1820s and 1830s.

The news of the victory at the Battle of New Orleans and the signing of the Treaty of Ghent arrived in Washington in late January and early February 1815. This decisive victory, on top of the army's increasingly better results along the northern border and the victory at Fort

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<sup>25</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 123.

<sup>26</sup> Graves, *The Battle of Lundy's Lane*, 38.

<sup>27</sup> Whitehorne, 60. McRee and Wood's actions at Ft. Erie.; Graves, *The Battle of Lundy's Lane*, 121-128. McRee and Wood's actions at Lundy's Lane.

<sup>28</sup> Whitehorne, 62-63.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.



McHenry, superseded the burning of Washington in the mind of the populace. This led to a great surge in nationalism and better opinion of the regular army in the post war years. This nationalism and good feeling towards the American Army was mirrored by Congress. In March 1815, Congress debated the topic of army reduction. Writing to the Military Committee of the Senate in February 1815, Secretary of War James Monroe wrote:

From the view which I have taken of the subject I am of the opinion that not less than 20,000 troops ought for the present to be retained in service, to be composed of every species of force, that is of infantry, cavalry and artillery...By retaining a part of every species of force now in service the knowledge which has been acquired in the science of war may be preserved and improved.<sup>30</sup>

Despite Monroe's opinion, Congress authorized the reduction of the American Army to 12,000 men. Yet, this number was still the largest the army had been in peacetime in the young nation's history.<sup>31</sup>

The professionalization of the American Army continued to be pushed forward by Monroe's successors, Secretaries of War William H. Crawford (1815-1816) and John C. Calhoun (1817-1825). William Skelton identifies John C. Calhoun as the conduit for the professional army officers.<sup>32</sup> Calhoun was essential to the army in several ways. By 1821, the goodwill towards the army had started to decline. This was due in part to the poor economy resulting from the Panic of 1819, the price spent on the army, and the poor reception following General Andrew Jackson's invasion of Spanish Florida.<sup>33</sup> Congress intended on reducing the army, and instructed Calhoun to prepare a reduction plan. Calhoun wrote an impassioned speech for the defense of the United States Army. After conversing with his officers, Calhoun

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<sup>30</sup> James Monroe, *The Writings of James Monroe 7 Vols.*, ed. Stanislaus Murray Hamilton (New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1969), 5:326 "To the Military Committee of the Senate." Dept. of War, February 22, 1815.

<sup>31</sup> Millett and Maslowski, 126.

<sup>32</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 117.

<sup>33</sup> Millett and Maslowski, 127.

recommended a cadre system, also known as the “skeleton” or “expansible” army plan.<sup>34</sup> In this plan, the line soldiers would be reduced while maintaining the actual companies and officers.

In previous reductions, Congress had eliminated whole companies and regiments. The “skeleton” plan reduced the number of soldiers in each company, while retaining the officers. Thus, when war threatened, the incoming soldiers could be used to bring each company up to full strength. The new soldiers would be placed under experienced officers, and with experienced soldiers, thereby allowing for a trained army in a much shorter time than it had taken previously. This concept had been put forward by previous American leaders, as recently as James Monroe in 1815.<sup>35</sup> In March 1821, Congress slashed the American Army to 6,183 officers and men. Yet it did retain the skeleton concept proposed by Calhoun. The act cut the authorized enlistment strength of the army by half, but it reduced the officer corps by only one-fifth. While Congress did not officially endorse Calhoun’s idea, it did allow for a greater ration of officers to men.<sup>36</sup>

Despite an interest in retaining the experience gained from the War of 1812, the general feeling toward the United States Army did decline as years passed from the end of the war. In 1822, James Monroe wrote, “I was exposed, in the course of the last Session, to much embarrassment. The lessons of the late war seem to have been forgotten, and the efforts since made to put the country in a better state of defense for another...have been tortured into crimes, and those who have been most active treated as the greatest criminals.”<sup>37</sup> The usual threat of a standing army, and the expense, was directed against the United States Army.

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<sup>34</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 127; John C. Calhoun, *The Works of John C. Calhoun* 7 Volumes, ed. Richard K. Cralle (New York: Russell & Russell, 1851-1856), 5:80-93 “Report On the Reduction of the Army, communicated to the House of Representatives, December 12, 1820.”

<sup>35</sup> Monroe, 5:326

<sup>36</sup> Millett and Maslowski, 128.

<sup>37</sup> Monroe, 6:292 “To General Jackson” Washington May 30, 1822.

The professionalization of the army during the post-war years can be shown in five examples; the development of a General Staff and Commanding General, the production and circulation of uniform training manuals, the emergence of the Military Academy at West Point, the Board of Engineers, and the higher proportion of career officers.

In 1816, and then again in 1818, Congress expanded and improved the General Staff, which had been formed in 1813. John C. Calhoun on December 14, 1818 communicated his thoughts on the General Staff to the House of Representatives:

In fact, no part of our military organization requires more attention in peace than our general staff. It is in every service invariably the last in attaining perfection; and, if neglected in peace, when there is leisure, it will be impossible, in the midst of the hurry and bustle of war, to bring it to perfection. It is in peace that it should receive a perfect organization, and that the officers should be trained to method and punctuality; so that, at the commencement of war, instead of creating anew, nothing more should be necessary than to give to it the necessary enlargement.<sup>38</sup>

The focus on the General Staff had the effect of increasing the efficiency of the army by eliminating civilian agents and bringing a sense of order to the army's logistics. This General Staff included an Inspector General, an Adjutant General, a Quartermaster General, a Paymaster General, a Commissary General, a Surgeon General, and Chief of Engineers.<sup>39</sup> Under an 1818 act, Secretary of War Calhoun had these bureau heads attached to the War Department, with their headquarters in Washington D.C. to allow for accessibility with the administration.<sup>40</sup> Up until 1817, the headquarters of the heads of departments had been spread throughout the nation. This, in an age void of fax machines, telephones, and computers meant that cooperation and communication amongst the various department heads and the Secretary of War was very

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<sup>38</sup> Calhoun, *The Works of John C. Calhoun*, 5:30 "Report On the Reduction of the Army, communicated to the Housed of Representatives, December, 14, 1818."

<sup>39</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 132; Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 134-135.

<sup>40</sup> William B. Skelton, "The Commanding Generals and the Question of Civil Control in the Antebellum U.S. Army," *American Nineteenth Century History* Vol.7, No.2 (June 2006): 157.

tedious. The field staff officers from each department were to send their reports directly to the respective department heads in Washington D.C. By 1820, the General Staff had reached a state that it would retain until the twentieth century.<sup>41</sup> Each commander on the General Staff was in charge of a specific logistical issue connected with the military. Furthermore, the General Staff held their positions for many years in the post-war army. This gave the Secretary of War a knowledgeable administrative staff.

In connection with the General Staff was the position of Commanding General which was created in 1821, as a byproduct of the reduction of the army.<sup>42</sup> Congress cutback the general officers to one major general and two brigadier generals. The major general position effectively became the Commanding General. This decision was made easier when Major General Andrew Jackson resigned his commission in 1821 after the conclusion of the First Seminole War. Until that point, there had been two major generals, Jackson and Brown.<sup>43</sup> Major General Jacob Brown became the first Commanding General in the post-war army.<sup>44</sup> The Commanding General was in charge of the line command of the United States Army, all those men and officers excluding the staff officers. He served as the figurehead of the army, as a go between for the Secretary of War and the line officers, and as a sounding board for the Secretary and the President.<sup>45</sup>

Both the General Staff and the Commanding General assisted in streamlining the army and allowing for a more efficient line of communications. Yet these positions also created problems. First, there were many disputes about the exact authority of the Commanding General

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<sup>41</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 120.

<sup>42</sup> Heitman, 2:626.

<sup>43</sup> Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 138.

<sup>44</sup> Skelton, *The Commanding Generals and the Question of Civil Control in the Antebellum U.S. Army*, 157.

<sup>45</sup> Millett and Maslowski, 127; Skelton, *The Commanding Generals and the Question of Civil Control in the Antebellum U.S. Army*, 158.

in relation to the Secretary of War. Could the Commanding General actually command the Army, or was he to simply relate orders from the Secretary of War? If so, then the title of Commanding General was merely honorific, with no real power. Jacob Brown worked fairly harmoniously with Secretary of War John C. Calhoun and his successor, until Brown died in 1828. The second and third Commanding General, Alexander Macomb and Winfield Scott, both clashed with the Secretary of War over their respective powers.<sup>46</sup>

The twin positions of Secretary of War and Commanding General were destined to clash in the nineteenth century. It was a dispute over who could command the Army. In 1855, Scott became embroiled in a dispute with Secretary of War Jefferson Davis. As the civilian agent of the President of the United States, strong willed Jefferson Davis, saw his position as the representation of the civilian authority over the military. Therefore, the Secretary of War had to be able to command the Commanding General. Davis and Scott's dispute arose over the fact that Davis was communicating directly with Scott's subordinates, bypassing Scott in the chain of command. Scott took offense to this on the grounds that he was the head of the Army and any communications had to go through him first.<sup>47</sup> A major fact that hindered the relations between the Commanding General and the Secretary of War was that the Commanding Generals held their position until they died, resigned, or were dismissed. The Secretary of War, on the other hand, was replaced every few years. This led to authority gravitating to the Commanding Generals.

The General Staff provided a power struggle for both the Secretary of War and the Commanding General. These bureau chiefs, held commissions for life and had a clearly defined role, contrary to that of the Commanding General. "Secretaries rarely stayed in office more than

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<sup>46</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 160.

<sup>47</sup> Skelton, *The Commanding Generals and the Question of Civil Control in the Antebellum U.S. Army*, 165-166; Peskin, 219-224.

a few years, so power gravitated to the bureau chiefs, who held commissions for life.”<sup>48</sup>

Quartermaster General Thomas S. Jesup and Commissary General George Gibson would hold their offices from 1818 to the 1860’s.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, the staff departments, which had been created after the War of 1812, predated the office of the Commanding General.<sup>50</sup> The Bureau Chiefs were answerable only to the Secretary of War, thereby negating the authority of the Commanding General. As a result, a feud arose between the department heads and the Commanding General, and between the line and staff officers.<sup>51</sup>

General Macomb recognized the scattering of authority in the General Staff. Macomb sent a letter to the Secretary of War in July 1831 outlining the problem that the bureau chiefs reported to the Secretary and not to himself. Due to the short tenure of the Secretaries, these bureau chiefs tended to acclimate power to themselves. Under the present system “one would suppose they did not belong to the same service.”<sup>52</sup> The War Department should make rules and regulations for the appointment of officers “but the command of Troops under the Executive, the maintaining discipline, the preservation of order and economy, the carrying into effect the commands of the Executive in reference to Military movements, properly belongs to the Commander of the Army.”<sup>53</sup> Macomb ordered the other staff bureau chiefs to report to him frequently, and attempted to bring them under his control. In 1830, he brought his Adjutant General, Colonel Roger Jones, on charges of disobeying his orders and communicating directly with the Secretary of War. The court convicted Jones of insubordination, thereby strengthening

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<sup>48</sup> Millett and Maslowski, 127.

<sup>49</sup> Coffman, 49.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>51</sup> Millett and Maslowski, 127; Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 135.

<sup>52</sup> Alexander Macomb, “Letter on More Effective Organization,” in *The New American State Papers: Military Affairs* Vol. 11, ed. Thomas C. Cochran (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1979), 167.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

Macomb's control of the other staff bureaus. Macomb had early success in his career as Commanding General because of friendly administrations. However he was never able to establish the perception that the Commanding General could control the other staff bureau chiefs.<sup>54</sup>

The creation of the General Staff greatly increased the organization and efficiency of the American Army. It allowed for detailed running of the American Army by taking responsibility away from the Secretary of War and institutionalizing specialized bureaus. However, the power struggle between the bureau chiefs, Commanding General, and Secretary of War would continue until 1903 when the staff and the line would "be integrated into a general staff capable of planning and coordinating military operations with unity, harmony, and efficiency..."<sup>55</sup>

A major problem for the American military ever since the American Revolution had been its lack of uniformity. From Baron von Steuben in 1777, to Anthony Wayne in 1791, to the War of 1812, general officers had found it necessary to standardize the drill and training of the regiments within their commands. Yet, different army commanders often decided on different training manuals for their troops, thereby impairing any army composed of two different forces. Towards the end of the War of 1812, and immediately after, the Madison administration and army officers sought to remedy this persisting problem within the army.

The overriding overseer of the uniform alteration of the army in the decades after the War of 1812 was General Winfield Scott. He was not an academy trained professional, but he would be one of the most influential military commanders in professionalizing the United States Army in the first half of the nineteenth century. He experienced the military failures in the first two years of the War of 1812. He was the commander at the military training camp at Flint Hill in

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<sup>54</sup> Skelton, *The Commanding Generals and the Question of Civil Control in the Antebellum U.S. Army*, 160-163.

<sup>55</sup> Peskin, 119.

Buffalo during the summer of 1814. He led a brigade during the 1814 Niagara campaign and was prominent at the Battles of Chippewa and Lundy's Lane, where he was wounded.<sup>56</sup> While he convalesced he conversed with the Madison administration. In December 1814, Congress appointed a board of officers, headed by Scott, to prepare an official manual of infantry tactics and drill based on the 1791 French manual.<sup>57</sup> In two months the board had written the manual and it officially became the infantry manual of the United States Army. This manual, revised in 1824 and 1835, remained the army's infantry manual until the 1850's.<sup>58</sup> In addition to infantry tactics, Scott was also on a board in 1826 that organized a system of artillery, cavalry, and rifle tactics. By 1830, the United States Army had a collection of uniform tactics for every branch of the service.<sup>59</sup>

In 1818 Scott began working on the army regulations, the *General Regulations for the Army* (or *Scott's Institutes*). After two years of work, Congress finally approved these as the official regulations of the United States Army. These regulations gave minute detail on every aspect of the army. It covered all details of discipline and administration, returns and reports, dress, military honors, all printed within a logical framework. This allowed new officers, or transferred officers, to quickly adjust to their new responsibilities with as little difficulty as possible. Anything that an officer needed to get information on, he could find in the *Regulations*. According to Scott the work contained, "all that can be desired for an army, in the field-excepting tactics, strategy, and engineering..."<sup>60</sup> This work was a major step in the standardization of the United States Army.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> See Peskin, *Winfield Scott and the Profession of Arms*.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>58</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 121-122.

<sup>59</sup> Scott, I:207.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, I:206.

<sup>61</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 122; Peskin, 67-68.



In 1817, Sylvanus Thayer became the superintendent of the Military Academy of West Point.<sup>62</sup> Thayer authored the transformation of West Point into the premier military academy in the country that it would be at the time of the American Civil War and beyond. Thayer modeled the academy on two French military academies, the Ecole Polytechnique and the School of Application for Engineers and Artillery at Metz. The French academies stressed tactics, fortification, and military engineering. All of these had been put on display and glorified during the Napoleonic Wars. The Prussian academies focused on strategy and military policy, but these were not stressed at West Point. The Franco-Prussian War in the latter half of the nineteenth century would show the superiority of the Prussian thought.<sup>63</sup>

First, Thayer created an Academic Board consisting of permanent professors at the academy that would meet with the superintendent to determine academic policy. A four year curriculum was approved upon, as well as set requirements of proficiency that the cadets would have to meet. Up to this point of time, there was no set number of years that a cadet had to attend at West Point. The curriculum was extended beyond engineering to other subjects such as, chemistry, French, drawing, mathematics, general history, moral philosophy, geography, ethics, and law. Thayer established the office of commandant of cadets, whose duty it was to conduct the training of cadets. The West Point cadets also had to participate in three two-month summer encampments for military field exercises.<sup>64</sup>

Thayer sent several officers to Europe to study contemporary European military thought; one such example was Dennis Hart Mahan. Mahan, an 1822 West Point graduate, was sent to France in 1826 and enrolled at the academy at Metz. Upon returning, he lectured on

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<sup>62</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 123.

<sup>63</sup> Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 145-147.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 147; Theodore J. Crackel, *West Point: A Bicentennial History* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002) Chapter 4 "Sylvanus Thayer: father of the Military Academy".

engineering, tactics, and military thought at West Point until 1871.<sup>65</sup> The officers, sent to Europe, were also responsible for buying and bringing back European military manuals for the library at the academy. This had the effect of producing scores of well-educated junior military officers who entered into the American Army.

In addition to West Point, the American military attempted to further increase military education. In 1820 Secretary of War John C. Calhoun stated that, “whatever degree of perfection may be given to the Military Academy at West Point, as an elementary school, yet our military education, in the higher branches of the art of war, must remain imperfect, without a school of application and practice.”<sup>66</sup> In the 1820s two post-graduate military schools were established, the Artillery School of Practice at Fortress Monroe in 1824, and the Infantry School of Practice at Jefferson Barracks in 1826.<sup>67</sup> These two schools were attempts at further educating promising young officers in particular subjects. The Artillery School offered studies on a great range of topics including maneuvers, seacoast artillery, preparation of all types of ammunition, fortification, etc. It was designated to be encamped two months a year, and the school was allowed a permanent staff. The Infantry School was founded in 1826 with emphasis on discipline and military spirit rather than tactics. Both of these schools were based on French examples. Companies were rotated throughout the schools and many West Point graduates drew them as their first assignments. However, by 1834 a lack of interest by Commanding General Macomb and the administration, combined with a lack of funds had effectively ended these two schools.<sup>68</sup> Although these schools did not become permanent institutions within the American

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<sup>65</sup> Weigley, *Towards an American Army*, Chapter 4.

<sup>66</sup> Calhoun, *The Works of John C. Calhoun*, 5:79 “On the Military Academy at West Point, communicated to the House of Representatives, February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1820”.

<sup>67</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 183.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 249-252.

military, they did represent an interest in furthering the specialization and professionalization of the American officer corps.

A reality of the United States Army in the 1820s and 1830s was that it resembled the pre-War of 1812 army in many ways. It was still relatively small and spread out over many isolated frontier posts. The difference was that there were a higher proportion of officers in the army, due to Calhoun's "skeleton army," and that many of these officers were career long professionals. In addition, the uniform military manuals in the army allowed for easy transition and communication between officers in separate posts. Many of the officers were career professionals. Career professionals will be termed as those officers who stay at least twenty years in the army.

William Skelton conducted a survey on the career length of the officers named on the army registers for the years 1797, 1830, and 1860. The median career length for all the officers was 10 years in 1797, 22 years in 1830, and 23 years in 1860. The percentage of the officer corps serving twenty years was 12.7 % in 1797, 57.1 % in 1830, and 56.0 % in 1860. The percentage of the officer corps serving thirty years was 2.6 % in 1797, 37.7 % in 1830, and 41.5 % in 1860. In another survey, Skelton examines the career length of men appointed to the lowest commissioned ranks in 1792-94, 1821-1823, 1831-1833, and 1841-1843. Most officers received their first commissions in their early twenties as a second lieutenant. The median career length of these officers doubled from 6 years in 1792-1794 to 12 years in 1821-1823. The growth of the officers qualifying as careerists went from 3.5 % in 1792-1794 to 31.3 % in 1821-1823.<sup>69</sup> These surveys reveal that officers, especially young officers, increasingly saw the army as their profession after the War of 1812. This was a major difference from the pre-1812 officer corps.

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<sup>69</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 182-183.

An agency concerned with strategic thinking about the defense of the American nation was the Board of Engineers. American commanders and society had always stressed fortifications as an effective strategic necessity. A navy and fortifications were seen as less of a threat than a large standing army. A strong set of fortifications and a small navy, was thought, would not antagonize the European powers, especially Great Britain.<sup>70</sup> The Board of Engineers was created in 1816, and consisted of three board members and two attached members, all from the Corps of Engineers.<sup>71</sup> These professionally trained officers had the responsibility to envision possible invasion sites, choose sites for fortifications, classify these sites in terms of priority, and estimate the number of militia that could be concentrated at points between one and ten days after an enemy landing.<sup>72</sup> The board was in charge of supervising construction of coastal fortifications.

There were some American officers who opposed this defensive strategy. General Edmund Gaines, one of the army's two brigadier generals in the 1820s and 1830s, argued against major fortifications as obsolete against a determined navy. His solution was a greater emphasis on roads, railroads, and canals which would allow for a more rapid concentration of forces once an enemy landed.<sup>73</sup> However, the fortification strategy predominated throughout the nineteenth century. The Board of Engineers, while its strategy was disputed, was yet another area of specialization in the American Army in the post-War of 1812 years.

It is certain that by the 1830s the United States Army had become a professional army. Following the War of 1812 the Secretary of War had created the General Staff and the position of Commanding General which alleviated pressure on the Secretary. This command structure

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<sup>70</sup> Samuel J. Watson, "Knowledge, Interest and the Limits of Military Professionalism: The Discourse on American Coastal Defense, 1815-1860," *War in History* Vol. 5, No. 3 (July 1998):286.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 296-297.

allowed for a more comprehensible chain of command. The tactics manuals and army regulations finally addressed the issue of uniformity among the units of the American military. The West Point Military Academy standardized its curriculum and began yearly producing military educated young officers who would fill the lower ranks of the army. Officers held career positions in the army for decades. There were still some problems in the army. The General Staff would bicker with the Commanding General and the Secretary of War. The army had been reduced by Congress to fewer than 10,000 men and spread out over the frontier. The advanced schools of military science, the artillery and infantry school, eventually closed in the 1830s. Despite these setbacks the United States Army was a professional army.

## Chapter 5: Vindication of the Army: The Mexican War

The best illustration of the professionalization of the American Army would be the Army's results in the Mexican War. Mexico had refused to accept the results of the Texas Revolution of 1835. In 1845, the United States annexed Texas. Once the annexation of Texas happened, Mexico broke off relations with the United States government. The ignition to this powder keg of hostility happened when Texas and Mexico disputed Texas' southern border. Texas claimed it was the Rio Grande, but Mexico insisted it was the Nueces River. President Polk sent an army under General Zachary Taylor to the Rio Grande. A portion of this force clashed with the Mexican forces in the area in April 1846. On May 13, the United States declared war on Mexico. The goal of Polk's administration was to force Mexico to cede the New Mexico and Californian territory as well as all claims to Texas south to the Rio Grande. The army therefore took on an offensive stance.<sup>1</sup>

There were two main American armies in the Mexican War. The first was under General Zachary Taylor. The second was under Major General Winfield Scott. Both of these commanders had entered the army in 1808 and from then on were lifelong careerists.<sup>2</sup> These two leaders can be contrasted with the leaders at the beginning of the War of 1812, Generals Dearborn, Hull, and Wilkinson. Of those three men, only Wilkinson had remained in the army from the American Revolution. In age, the three generals in the War of 1812 and Scott and Taylor were relatively close. However the latter two had stayed in the army and had seen extensive service throughout their careers. That was the difference between the high command at the beginning of the War of 1812 and the Mexican War.

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<sup>1</sup> Millett and Maslowski, 137-138.

<sup>2</sup> John S.D. Eisenhower, *Zachary Taylor* (New York: Times Books, 2008).

The militia was very seldom used in the Mexican War. At the beginning of the war, Taylor called out 1,390 three month militia and General Gaines followed by mobilizing 11,211 six-month militiamen. On May 13, 1846, Congress extended the militia's term of service to six months. However most of the militiamen called up were not actually used in combat. Carl Edward Skeen states that, "Although 12,601 militiamen were used during the Mexican War, they comprised only 12 percent of the total force, compared to 88 percent in the War of 1812."<sup>3</sup> To take the place of the common militia Congress, on the same day that they declared war, called for 50,000 volunteers to serve for twelve months or the duration of the war. The Mexican War highlighted the "skeleton" army that Secretary of War Calhoun had argued for in 1821. At the outbreak of the war, the Regular Army consisted of 8,600 soldiers. In May 1846, Congress increased the number of privates, doubling the Regular Army's strength. In February 1847, Congress added ten more regiments to the army. In all, 30,476 men served in the Regular Army during the Mexican War.<sup>4</sup> While the army did use volunteers in the war, the Regular Army was more relied upon by General Winfield Scott. In General Winfield Scott's army that conducted the Mexico City Campaign, there were two divisions of regulars and two of volunteers.<sup>5</sup> It was not until the American Civil War that mass mobilization of the populace would take place. The Mexican War was a showcase for the small Regular Army.<sup>6</sup>

In the first phase of the war, General Taylor advanced from San Antonio south into Mexican territory. From May to September 1846, Taylor repeatedly defeated larger Mexican armies, and pushed them south of Monterrey. In October 1846, Congress allowed General Winfield Scott to conduct a new strategy. Scott took more than half of Taylor's men and,

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<sup>3</sup> C. Edward Skeen, *Citizen Soldiers in the War of 1812* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1999), 183-184

<sup>4</sup> Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 182-183.

<sup>5</sup> Timothy D. Johnson, *A Gallant Little Army: The Mexico City Campaign*, 274-290.

<sup>6</sup> Millett and Maslowski, 141-142.

combined with reinforcements, sailed his army and assaulted Veracruz. In February 1847, Taylor defeated an army under Santa Anna at the Battle of Buena Vista. This battle was significant because Taylor had 4,500 men, almost 90 percent volunteers who had never seen battle, against Santa Anna's 15,000. From March to September 1847 Scott with roughly 10,000 regulars and volunteers conducted a campaign from Veracruz to Mexico City. During the campaign, Scott defeated Santa Anna's army at several battles until he reached the walls of Mexico City itself. In a series of battles, Scott's 10,000 man army defeated Santa Anna's 25,000 man army and marched into the city on September 13, 1847. On March 10, 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was ratified.<sup>7</sup>

In less than two years the United States Army had defeated the Mexican Army at numerous battles. In many of these battles the American armies were outnumbered. While the Mexican Army was not comparable to the British, the result was still an indication of the great strides the United States Army had made since the War of 1812. The army had a logical line of command, well trained junior officers, and a competent military bureaucracy. This enabled the field commanders to have a better chance for battle field victories, as was shown in the war. Wayne Wei-siang Hsieh has said that, "On the level of corporate organization, the war vindicated the regular army's faith in all the laborious reforms enacted after the War of 1812 to professionalize the American military establishment."<sup>8</sup>

One of the hallmarks of the Mexican War was the performance of the junior officers. These officers were predominantly West Point trained. These men would go on to hold high positions on both armies in the American Civil War. Timothy Johnson asserts that, "The war with Mexico marks the first major conflict in which West Point graduates comprised a majority

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<sup>7</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 137-150.

<sup>8</sup> Wayne Wei-Siang Hsieh, *West Pointers and the Civil War: The Old Army in War and Peace* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 72.



of the officer corps, and Scott relied heavily on their engineering and reconnaissance skills.”<sup>9</sup> While they did not dominate the upper command level of the army, the West Point graduates filled the junior officer levels. Furthermore, many West Point graduates who had resigned their commission received volunteer commissions. This provided the volunteer regiments with militarily educated officers. Millet and Maslowski state that the:

Mexican War volunteers occasionally performed badly, but normally they fought as tenaciously as regulars, demonstrating anew what Scott had proved at Chippewa and Lundy’s Lane: good leaders could quickly transform ordinary citizens into excellent soldiers.<sup>10</sup>

In Taylor’s battles, especially at Buena Vista, much credit has been given to his professional subordinates who made up for his limitations as a field commander.<sup>11</sup> The curriculum at West Point produced far better military engineers. Yet the tactical training at the military academy proved sufficient to turn out skillful battlefield leaders.<sup>12</sup> It was these professional junior officers, trained by West Point instructors that helped the American forces win numerous battles in the Mexican War.

The contrast between the United States Army at the beginning of the War of 1812 and the Mexican War thirty years later clearly shows that the army had professionalized. The Mexican War was the vindication of the peacetime professionalization. This is attested to by various authors. Russell Weigley maintains that during the thirty years between the two wars, the army became increasingly professional.<sup>13</sup> At the outbreak of the Mexican War, “the new professional

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<sup>9</sup> Johnson, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Millet and Maslowski, 143.

<sup>11</sup> Hsieh, 72.

<sup>12</sup> Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 185.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 144-172.

army was highly confident of itself, and the Mexican War would seem to show with good cause.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 172.

## Conclusion

By the Mexican War, the American Army had achieved the requisite goals of a professional army in the nineteenth century, as related in the introduction. First, the civilian/military officers of the eighteenth century army had been replaced with full time career officers. Second, the West Point curriculum had been defined in 1817 and since then the academy had been turning out scores of trained officers annually. Third, the army's administration and organization had been greatly increased with the formation of the General Staff and Commanding General. Fourth, as is shown by the increased number of soldiers and officers in the peacetime decades, American society had begun to tolerate a small, but professional army. Last, uniform tactics manuals and the army regulations were written. These manuals finally created a uniform military and solved the problem of standard drilling instruction.

The 1820s and 1830s cemented the professionalization of the United States Army. The War of 1812, however, was the key to the professionalization of the army. This war produced young officers who identified with the military, made it their careers, and spearheaded the changes to the army. A few of the top career commanders produced by the war were Jacob Brown, Alexander Macomb, Winfield Scott, and Edmund Pendleton Gaines.

Jacob Brown received his first military training as a secretary under Alexander Hamilton in the New Army in 1798. He entered into the New York militia in 1807 and served in it until the war. He fought in most of the battles in the Northern Theater, commanding a brigade and then a division. He was promoted to Major General. In 1821, Brown became the first Commanding General, which would eventually come to be called the Army Chief of Staff. He worked closely with Secretary of War Calhoun to help professionalize the army. John Morris

believes that many of the things that Calhoun is credited for were spurred on by Brown. This was because after 1821 when Brown became Commanding General, he met with Calhoun on a daily basis. Their correspondence was more face to face than written down. Therefore actions that Calhoun put into place, might in fact have been suggested by Brown.<sup>1</sup> When Brown died in 1828, President John Quincy Adams stated that:

General Brown was one of the eminent men of this age and nation. Though bred a Quaker, he was a man of lofty and martial spirit, and in the late war contributed perhaps more than any other man to redeem and establish the military character of his country...The splendor of the defence of New Orleans has cast in the shade Brown's military fame, and his campaign on the Canadian frontier in 1814, far more severely contested than were the achievements of Jackson-less aided by good fortune and less favored by egregious errors of the enemy.<sup>2</sup>

Alexander Macomb entered the New York militia at age sixteen in 1798. He then was commissioned as a cornet in the Regular Army a year later. He was commissioned a first lieutenant in the Army Corps of Engineers at West Point. At the outbreak of the War of 1812 he was Acting Adjutant General of the Army and in the command of an artillery regiment. He became famous for defeating the British army under Prevost at the Battle of Plattsburgh on September 11, 1814. With only 1,500 regular troops and some militia, Macomb stymied a British army over 10,000 men. Macomb became the second Commanding General when Brown died in 1828. Macomb retained this position until he died in 1841.<sup>3</sup>

Winfield Scott entered the military as a captain of artillery in the 1808 expansion. He was a lieutenant colonel when the war started. He fought at the Battle of Queenston Heights in 1812, the 1813 Niagara campaign, the Montreal campaign, and was crucial in the 1814 Niagara campaign. He went on to help author the army's infantry tactics manual and the army's

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<sup>1</sup> John D. Morris, *Sword of the Border* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2000), 210 and 219.

<sup>2</sup> John Quincy Adams, *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams: Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848* 12 Vols., ed. Charles Francis Adams (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1874-77), 7:447-448.

<sup>3</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 111.

regulations. He became Commanding General in 1841 and remained so until 1861. He commanded in the Second Seminole War, the Nullification Crisis, the Creek War, and took center stage in the Mexican War. He, more than any other commander in the first half of the nineteenth century, was responsible for the professionalization of the United States Army.<sup>4</sup>

Edmund Pendleton Gaines enlisted in the army in 1799. He began the War of 1812 as a major. He fought in the Montreal campaign of 1813, at the Battle of the Thames, and at Fort Erie in 1814. He and Scott became the two brigadier generals in the army in 1821. He commanded the Western Department. He participated in the Black Hawk War, the Second Seminole War, and the Mexican War. He was a noted Indian fighter and strategic thinker, as was shown earlier. Gaines opposed the fixation of the military on European tactics which were then being focused at West Point and personified by Winfield Scott.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the top commanders, many junior officers gained their first experience in the War of 1812. Thomas Jesup joined the army in the 1808 expansion. He was a leader of one of Scott's regiments during the 1814 Niagara campaign, and performed well in battle. He became Quartermaster General on May 8, 1818 and retained that position until his death in 1860. He was instrumental in the formation of the Quartermaster Department up to the American Civil War. He participated under Scott in the Creek War. He also commanded the American forces in the Second Seminole War from 1836 to 1838.<sup>6</sup>

William J. Worth entered the army in 1812. He served as an aide to Scott during the 1814 Niagara campaign and was wounded at the Battle of Lundy's Lane. He went on to become Commandant of Cadets at West Point. He commanded the army in the Second Seminole War.

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<sup>4</sup> Peskin, *Winfield Scott and the Profession of Arms*.

<sup>5</sup> James W. Silver, *Edmund Pendleton Gaines, Frontier General* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1949).

<sup>6</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 116.

He eventually became a general and was commander of the first division of Scott's Mexico City invasion army.<sup>7</sup>

Zachary Taylor entered the United States Army in the 1808 expansion. As a captain he fought in many Indian battles prior to and during the War of 1812. Taylor stayed in the army after the war and participated in the Black Hawk War and commanded the army in the Second Seminole War from 1838 to 1840. He went on to become a major general and gain fame for his victories in the Mexican War. He parlayed this notoriety to become the President of the United States.<sup>8</sup>

Sylvanus Thayer was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1808 after graduating from the military Academy at West Point. During the War of 1812 Thayer was an aide to General Wade Hampton during the 1813 Montreal campaign. He also directed the fortification and defense of Norfolk, Virginia. In 1815 he travelled to Europe and studied for two years at the Ecole Polytechnique. Upon his return in 1817, President Monroe named him the Superintendent of West Point. He held this position until 1833. He was called the father of West Point for the programs that he started there, which has already been related. After his resignation in 1833, Thayer remained in the Army Corps of Engineers until 1863.<sup>9</sup>

John E. Wool, a storekeeper, was commissioned a captain in 1812. He was responsible for gaining the heights at the Battle of Queenston Heights in 1812. He went on to command a regiment at the Battle of Plattsburgh. In 1816 he became Inspector General of the Army. He stayed in the army, commanding a division in General Taylor's army during the Mexican War.

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<sup>7</sup> Wallace, Edward S. *General William Jenkins Worth, Monterey's Forgotten Hero*. Dallas, Texas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1953.

<sup>8</sup> Eisenhower, *Zachary Taylor*.

<sup>9</sup> Crackel, *West Point: A Bicentennial History*.

He finally retired in 1863, becoming the oldest general to command troops in the American Civil War.<sup>10</sup>

These officers assisted in the several changes to the army in the interim between the War of 1812 and the Mexican War. The curriculum at West Point was reworked and set at a mandatory four years by Sylvanus Thayer. West Point turned out at least twenty officers per year until the American Civil War.<sup>11</sup> West Point produced many junior officers who filled the ranks of the army. The General Staff and Commanding General positions were finalized by 1821. This allowed for a more rapid delivery of orders and a more comprehensible command structure than what had existed in the army. Many of the General Staff, including the first three Commanding Generals, had extensive experience in the War of 1812. The Board of Engineers, created in 1816, focused on the strategic concerns of the American nation. Winfield Scott assisted in writing the infantry tactics manual in 1814, and authored the army's regulations in 1821. All of these aspects of professionalization in the peacetime years, had their origins in the War of 1812 or within ten years from the war.

America has a long tradition of militia forces. It began with the English militia tradition, which was then transported across the ocean and grew in America. The Continental Army and the first American Army had provided seeds of professionalization for the nineteenth century American Army. By the mid nineteenth century, the state militia had been replaced as a fighting force by the volunteer. These soldiers enlisted for twelve months to several years, as opposed to the militiaman's three months. The volunteer was used in the Mexican War and made up the majority of the soldiers in the American Civil War.<sup>12</sup> Yet, America had learned to accept a small professional army with a number of professional officers. The peacetime in the early nineteenth

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<sup>10</sup> Skelton, *An American Profession of Arms*, 115.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 211-212.

century pushed forward the professionalization of the United States Army, but the War of 1812 had an indelible effect on the army and on the nation at large. As this thesis has argued, the War of 1812 was the driving force behind the professionalization of the United States Army.



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