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Fran Leskovar
University of Puget Sound

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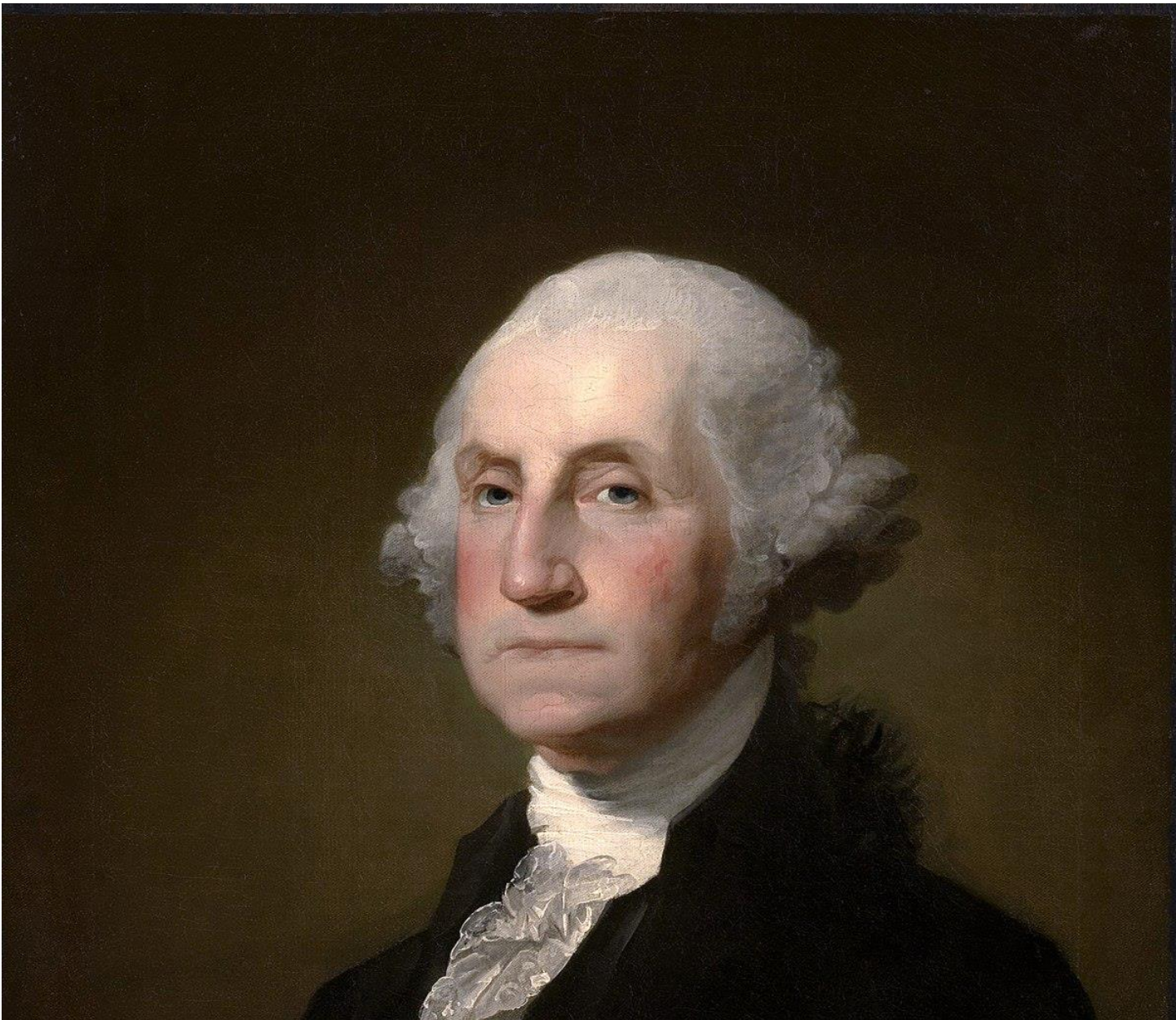
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The Setauket Gang:

The American Revolutionary War Spy Ring You've never heard about

Fran Leskovar

I would like to express my appreciation to the Chism Award for funding this research.

A 21-year old Yale Graduate with a diploma in his hand set up on a dangerous expedition to British controlled Long Island. No man except the bravest of the brave would be bold enough to depart on that journey. Merciless smugglers, deserters, and gunrunners, both rebels and redcoats or just acting for themselves, controlled the pond and the land surrounding it. Their monopoly often challenged by the British Royal Navy that was scouting for the rebel privateers and sometimes, but very rarely, for British refugees crossing the Sound under the flag of truce. From all these British sailors and officers, the rebels were particularly afraid of a notorious captain William Quarme who was in charge of the sixteen-gun brig *Halifax* and was very often accompanied on his voyages by the ruthless Queens Rangers. Even if they were able to avoid the contact with the *Halifax* or other ships, Patriots knew that their journey and intentions had to be hidden from their colleagues, friends, and family to avoid being caught by the British informers.¹ However, this young and brave boy decided that nothing was going to stop him from traversing the Sound, so he left the comforts of his community and embarked on a journey that he knew might be fatal.

Under the cover of darkness, on September 16, 1776, the American four-gun sloop *Schuylers* and fourteen-gun *Montgomery*, had weighed anchor near Long Island's north shore and rowed our brave boy ashore, and the two ships were able to move far away from the coast to a distance that was enough away to discourage any attempt of *Halifax* for the pursuit before the dawn would reveal their presence.² However, Patriot's clandestine voyage was noticed by Quarme and, according to the *Halifax*'s logbook, he "sent the tenders and boats armd to search the [Huntington] Bay for two rebel privateers having interlance of them," but the next day, around 6 p.m, "the tenders and boats returned not being able to find any rebel privateers."³ However, one man on the *Halifax* could not accept the scouts' report and was more than convinced that something fishy was going on. The latter's "senses sharpened by decades as a frontiersman, warrior, and ranger" were telling him that *Schuylers*'s and *Montgomery*'s maneuvers were not ordinary.⁴

With one person left on Long Island on the unspecified mission and one person wondering why two American ships were near the British controlled shore, it is time to expand this narrative and identify both people. The youngster's name was Nathan Hale who was on a mission to collect intelligence on the British forces on Long Island, and the name of the men aboard *Halifax*, was Robert Rogers of the Queens Rangers (aka Roger's Rangers), a merciless soldier influenced by the tragic childhood experience and unsuccessful business endeavors.

After landing on the Long Island shore, Nathan Hale, "improved in disguise," as a Tory storekeeper in Connecticut, Consider Tiffany, notes, and unaware of Robert Rogers' suspicion, had started his clandestine journey "to find whether the Long Island inhabitants were friends to America or not," but soon realized that the British troops movements indicated that the invasion

¹Alexander Rose, *Washington's Spies: The Story of Americas First Spy Ring* (New York: Bantam Books, 2007),

² Rose, *Washington's Spies*, 19

³ In Rose, *Washington's Spies*, 19

⁴ Rose, *Washington's Spies*, 19

of Manhattan was coming up and that his original mission, as noted by Kenneth A. Daigler, “were being overtaken by events.”⁵ Apparently, he decided to quit his mission and return back to the American lines, but his actions and methods of collecting intelligence “were suspicious enough to draw attention” on the young fellow with intention to get a teaching job in the British controlled territory, filled with refugees from the American lines, who might know Hale or heard some rumor about his endeavor.⁶ However, he was unable to hide from Robert Rogers, who had an immense reconnaissance experience, and whose guts were telling him that the rebels infiltrated a spy into the British territory.

Robert Rogers knew that any rebel spy would have to move along the coast to reach the friendly lines so “in mid-morning on September 18, Rogers landed at Sands Point, Long Island, and started on the trail of the spy.”⁷ After observing and following Nathan Hale for a few days, Rogers determined that it was a time to confirm his suspicions and had a bright idea to catch the spy in the lie. According to Consider Tiffany, “to convince himself,” Rogers decided to try “the same method, he quickly altered his own habit, with which he made Capt Hale a visit to his quarters, where the Colonel fell into some discourse concerning the war, intimating the trouble of his mind, in his being detained on an island, where the inhabitants sided with the Britains against the American Colonies, intimating withal, that he himself was upon the business of spying out the inclination of the people and motion of the British troops.”⁸ After hearing stranger’s story, which was credible to Hale, and feeling home-sick and lonely, our young fellow decided to tell the trusted friend, Robert Rogers, his secret.

After learning about Hale’s business, Colonel Rogers chose to invite our brave boy “to dine with him the next day at his quarters, unto which he agreed,” but he was unaware that the purpose of the latter meal was to push him to expose his secret in front of the witnesses so his arrest and punishment might be just. “The time being come, Capt Hale repaired to the place agreed on, where he met his pretended friend, with three or four men of the same stamp, and after being refreshed, began the same conversation as hath been already mentioned,” but Hale unaware of trap and soldiers outside of the barn, eagerly retold his story and was with the equivalent passion, but not his own, arrested and sent to New York.⁹

After realizing what had just had happened, Nathan Hale tried to deny “his name, and the business he came upon,” but was unable to convince anyone of his innocence, especially after his identity was confirmed by “the several persons,” and the incriminated documents were found in the soles of his shoes, and “was hanged as a spy, some say without being brought before a court-martial.”¹⁰ Consider Tiffany was not wrong, Hale’s guilt as a spy was evident, and General Howe immediately signed Hale’s death warrant. The next morning, Nathan Hale was “marched

⁵ Kenneth A. Daigler, *Spies, Patriots, and Traitors: American Intelligence in the Revolutionary War* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 106

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Daigler, *Spies, Patriots, and Traitors*, 106

⁸ Consider Tiffany, *Consider Tiffany Historical Sketch*, Manuscript, From Library of Congress, *Consider Tiffany Papers*, 1778-1796, MMC-3833.

⁹ Tiffany, *Consider Tiffany Historical Sketch*

¹⁰ Ibid.

to an artillery park next to the Dove Tavern and placed atop a ladder with a rope around his neck connected to a tree branch.”¹¹

Nathan Hale’s life is a story of a brave Patriot that still resonates in American minds and have become an everlasting symbol of individual’s willingness to sacrifice his life for the cause that was foreign to many inhabitants of the world and the country that was still too young, and mainly unknown to the brave martyr. Nathan Hale’s last words “I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country,” which are from the famous play of that period, *Cato*, by Joseph Addison and were probably ascribed to Hale by his friends in the years after the execution (the same as Shakespeare’s words were to Caesar), have become the most famous words in the American history. Nathan Hale’s story “is more drama than fact,” as Kenneth A. Daigler argues, but it is significant for the historians of the intelligence.¹² It shows the capacity of the British counterintelligence at the beginning of the war, specifically some of the officers, and, at the same time, provides us with the extraordinary case study that not only helps us to reconstruct the development of the American intelligence service but also understanding of the revolutionary leaders’ strategy.

Hale did not act on his own, nor he was sent onto his clandestine journey by some rank and file; instead, he volunteered to take the assignment when no one from his regiment was willing to do it and had received operation orders from the commander in chief himself. With that in mind, the operation showed the immaturity of the Patriots’ intelligence and its capacity to successfully infiltrate its agent into the epicenter of the British military activity, a weakness that was immeasurable, especially when we now know that the American outposts in Europe, especially one in Paris, were profoundly and successfully penetrated with the people of questionable loyalties and connections to the crown.

According to Kenneth A. Daigler, “for an intelligence activity to be successful, its planning must be well thought out, with careful attention to all details of the activity.” The agent has to have a credible cover that would survive every scrutiny and have alternative plans ready if the initial one does not go as it was planned. Moreover, he has to have access to the safe house, have a way to collect and dispatch intelligence reports without raising any suspicion. Finally, “both the entry into enemy territory and the return to the friendly territory should be carefully planned and timed, with backup arrangements also in place.”¹³

The biggest of all mistakes was that Nathan Hale was sent to the British lines with the cover of the schoolteacher. First, Hale’s superiors allowed him to operate under his real name. Even though they believed, apparently were convinced by Hale to think so, that his education background and his Yale diploma might strengthen his schoolteacher cover, they did not realize the weaknesses of the same legend. On Long Island there were many refugees who fled from the American Lines who might have been acquainted with Nathan Hale or might be able to recognize that name from some gossip or even from the street, especially after he was stationed in New York City during the American occupation and had “a powder burn from a musket-flash

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 107

¹² Daigler, *Spies, Patriots, and Traitors*, 95

¹³ *Ibid.*, 100-103

accident on his right cheek,”¹⁴ which was an interesting characteristic for someone who claimed to be a teacher. Almost every American family during that war had members on both sides of the conflict who might be suspicious of their kin’s presence in the British territory. We know that Hale’s cousin was a senior British officer who was well aware of Hale’s membership in the Continental Army. Hale also had a problem with blending into cover because of his above-average height.¹⁵

Second, Hale was sent to Long Island in September when the academic year had already started and “considering the interest most British soldiers of the time had in any intellectual pursuit, his stated purpose for wandering around the camps and fortifications was not very convincing.”¹⁶ Moreover, he was openly taking notes, which he would hide in the soles of his shoes, and discussing with the inhabitants about the news of the day. If he was pretending to be looking for a teaching job, why did he wander around the military posts and write his notes on the blank paper instead of taking notes and concealing the intelligence on the margin of the books that every teacher would carry with him? There were many more operational, such as recruiting an agent publicly within the regiment without bothering about moles that might have been infiltrated by the enemy, and tactical mistakes, such as Hale’s natural inability to lie and his everlasting trust in people’s honesty, that both Hale and his superior overlooked.¹⁷

Now, it might be strange to some that the general who was introduced to the clandestine activities during the French and Indian War and was not only able to learn from British intelligence failures during that war but also enemies’, would command such amateurish operation. Even though Washington learned a lot about the clandestine activities during the latter conflict, his knowledge was still basic, and, at the beginning of the War for Independence, his main priority was the organization of the Continental Army and discipline among soldiers. Indeed, he did try to open some communication channels for intelligence and start some necessary collection activities, as Nathan Hale’s example clearly shows, but he knew that “a more focused and disciplined approach to his intelligence activities would have to wait until he got his army somewhat organized,”¹⁸ as Kenneth A. Daigler argues. Still we have to keep in mind that Nathan Hale’s expedition and its outcome not only gave Washington an opportunity to learn from his mistakes and to improve the intelligence collection but, at the same time, proved that he “possessed a mind and nature-oriented toward the intelligence discipline,”¹⁹ and an aspiration to become the founder of the American intelligence collection, a title that he will earn in the coming years of the war.

During the Revolutionary War, the Commander in Chief would establish the secret service and tactics that would be almost foreign to the enemies. The extraordinary success of American spies is solely Washington’s who was the principal architect of all operations that his agents undertook. At the same time, Washington was the chief intelligence officer and the

¹⁴ Daigler, *Spies, Patriots, and Traitors*, 102

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 101-2

¹⁷ Ibid., 93-125

¹⁸ Daigler, *Spies, Patriots, and Traitors*, 5

¹⁹ Ibid., 1

primary consumer. According to Daigler, “with both these responsibilities, he was able to direct his collection efforts on what he wanted and needed to know, rather than what could readily be collected.”²⁰ The latter allowed him to cross-reference every intelligence received from his civilian assets with the tactical reports submitted to his headquarters by his officers and soldiers. It is an easy task to identify Washington’s role in all of this, but one question that remains and that is the focus of this work is the question of recruitment.

When George Washington asked thirty-seven-year-old Lieutenant Thomas Knowlton to recruit some soldiers for the intelligence service from amongst his men, nobody wanted to do it because the world of spies was murky and would destroy gentlemen’s honor, which was cherished so dearly by the people at that time. As mentioned before, Nathan Hale was the only member of the Knowlton’s Rangers who was willing to undertake this endeavor, but not because he was driven by a self-interest nor desire for money but because he just wanted to serve and be an active member of the team. He told his friend, William Hull, that he “thought he owed to his country the accomplishment of an object so important and so much desired by the commander of her armies,”²¹ and he firmly stated that “if the exigencies of my country demand a peculiar service its claims to perform that service are imperious.”²² He felt like he hasn’t done anything for his country for a year, and spying allowed him to do something that will make a difference. He asked himself a straightforward question: “If not me then who?” Every patriot and soldier who was called to serve would probably feel the same. If the ideology was the main factor that induced Hale to serve the cause, what did motivate others to join Washington in the outmaneuvering the enemy? Why would some people choose to overlook their apparent differences, ethnicity, religion, gender, and race, and risked being hung to participate in something where the outcome was not certain? Could they have sensed a moment in history was larger than they were and felt premonition of the new country before it was born?

Due to the complex and vibrant environment, a single answer is not possible. The Anglo-American conflict was not as French nor Russian Revolution; instead, it was a gradual transformation of individual social and political views. The British aggressive imperial policies had a significant impact on the colonial routine. The *quasi-independent* political environment and accustomed economic dealings were suddenly coming under stricter control of the Westminster. These actions were the antithesis to the constitutional rights of the British subjects and personal want, and people started wondering whether they held the same status as the residents of the British Isle. The colonial legislatures, acting for the whole dominion, sent numerous grievances to the Crown, but the ignorance, stubbornness, and want for mastery prevented London from grasping and accepting colonial reasoning. In this environment, the radical ideas, championed by a small group of people, were slowly gaining momentum and becoming a refuge from, and suddenly an alternative to, the British imperialistic policies. This process would not stop when the new American life was conceptualized in 1776; instead, the British atrocities on the battlefield and conditions in the occupied territory would keep it alive. The Revolution and War for Independence were ideological in nature, but, at the same time,

²⁰ Ibid., 1

²¹ In Ross, *Washington’s Spies*, 17

²² Ibid.

interwoven with personal motivations and experience. Almost all colonials were driven to consider joining the cause by the dominant psychological adjustments, but their internal motivations pushed them to cut permanently their ties with the crown.

Therefore, if we must distill a single factor for spying during the Revolution, the traditional motives—money, ideology, coercion/compromise, and ego (‘MICE’)—would be the most accurate. With the ideological motivation more dominant on the side of George Washington and fellow Patriots, and monetary on the British. However, these factors should not be seen as singular motivators. They were interwoven with spies’ personal experiences, desires, and grievances.

Now, let us look at members of the most successful George Washington’s spy ring, the Culper Ring, and understand more deeply why they decided to join the cause and did what they did. However, before we do that, we have to understand more clearly the political and social problems that induced the emergence of the movement for the independence of British America and, ultimately, the new nation.

I. The Origins of the American Revolution: Problems, Decisions, and Outcomes that impacted many inhabitants of British America

The leading cause of the Revolution as we all know was the question of the Parliament's jurisdiction in the colonies, but that cannot be discussed in isolation.²³ Legitimate but at the same time illogical and arrogant British government's actions created an environment in which liberal ideas, which were championed by the radicals and were not entirely accepted by the colonists before 1764, suddenly became widely welcomed, first by the poor and soon by the merchants and wealthier residents. The willingness of the public to gradually reject the old ideas and replace them with new was a remarkable accomplishment. Everyone knows from their personal experience how hard it is to change your personality or your beliefs in a short time. However, that was not the case here. The change in American minds started a long time before rumors about the British intention to tax colonies began. In some way, it was the unintended consequence of British Americas migrants’ desires and aspirations for a better life.

Long before the Anglo-American controversy, North American colonies saw themselves as quasi-independent states. They had their own legislatures, town assemblies, and residents as their representatives. Despite that, they still considered themselves as active inhabitants of the British Empire and loyal to the Crown. The only thing they were reluctant to accept was the arbitrary control of the British government. It was a common belief that the governmental body had to mirror society and promote people’s desires. The government in London implicitly endorsed that view by loosely enforcing the regulations and laws in America that applied somewhere else. With the same zeal the colonials believed, as same as Samuel Williams did in 1774, that in the environment in which “the greatest part of the nations of the earth, are [were] held together under the yoke of universal slavery, the North-American provinces yet remain[ed] the country of free men: The asylum, and the last, to which such may flee from the common

²³ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017), 20

deluge.”²⁴ The religious dissidents looking for their “shining city upon the hill,” families hoping for a better life, found their peace in this vast territory.

In many other aspects, the communities radically differentiate from each other. For instance, Pennsylvania was a propriety colony under the leadership of the Penn family, but also was the hub of Quakerism. On the other hand, Maryland was mostly Catholic and started under the rule of the proprietors first, but then, same as New Jersey and North and South Carolina, became a royal, “and then straddled into two forms, with the Crown naming the chief officials but proprietors retaining the title too much of the land.”²⁵ The difference was not only evident in the conventional distinction of the type of colonies, but also on the grounds of customs and, especially, religion.

Some communities, mainly populating the Middle colonies, despised Yankees, who were mostly Congregationalists and Presbyterians,²⁶ and terrorized religious dissenters amongst their own people. Bostonians celebrated the “Pope’s Day” on November 5th, a derogatory holiday brought from England (an American version of England’s Guy Fawkes Day), to commemorate the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, while others, mainly Catholic, despised that tradition. Many communities placed legislations on the statutory books denying followers of particular religions right to naturalize or hold the public office, while others were divided into dogmatic questions, such as Quakers communities in Pennsylvania in 1755. It is impossible to defend the argument of this research without talking about one of the main characteristics of the colonies that would continuously be present during the Anglo-American controversy and post-conflict years, the question of religious toleration, or rather discrimination, interconnected with nativism and power.

Religion in British America

Not only did the colonists accepted the extended definition of heresy, which they did not like while they were oppressed by the European powers, but they also engaged in the witch hunt of dissenters. They went from being oppressed to an oppressor. Many non-Puritan groups experienced ambiguous, odd, and very violent policies in the New World. According to Consider Tiffany, “the Independents Churches in New England would not tolerate any Religious sects, but only their own; they not only persecuted the Quakers but all other denominations Even Down To A.D. 1774. And not long after the Quaker persecution, They fell upon The scheme of hanging all other Sects, But only Their own, by accusing Them of witch craft, and many persons Suffered Thereby in Salem and other Towns. Some persons were tortured, in order they might Confess Their Guilt; others were forced To Climb Trees, and if The falling of The Tree Did not Kill Them, Then That was Sufficient proof That They were witches or wizards, and They were accordingly Executed.”²⁷

²⁴ Williams, Samuel. “A Discourse on the Love of Our Country.” Teaching American History, <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/a-discourse-on-the-love-of-our-country/>.

²⁵ Edward Countryman, *The American Revolution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), 10

²⁶ Ross, *Washington’s Spies*, 81

²⁷ Consider Tiffany, *Consider Tiffany Historical Sketch*

The Roman Catholic faith became a synonym for a “devil” and “witch” in British America. In *Discoveries of Witchcraft*, Leonard Scot said that the “witches are women which be commonly old, lame, bleare-eied, pale, fowle, and full of wrinkles; poore, sullen, superstitious, and Papists; or such as know no religion.”²⁸ Similarly, Rev. Josiah Temple, in his sermon preached at Rye in 1619, argued that “because of witchcraft we have divers mischiefs and disorders; and witches they be so long as there be Papists, drabs of the strumpet Pope.”²⁹ Cotton Mather echoed the latter words during Ann Glover’s which trial and the Salem Trials that followed it. Catholics were the antithesis to the dominant religion and the origin of many problems that existed within the community. Their beliefs would be tested but would never get a passing grade from the oppressors because their “foreignness” would be noticeable.

After Glover was found guilty, Cotton Mather visited her in the prison and asked her to recite the Lord’s Prayer. It was a common belief that a Catholic nor Witch would be able to say that prayer. However, Ann Glover said *Pater Noster* in Latin, Irish, and English, but, according to Mather, she “could not end it.”³⁰ Mather’s observation was incorrect. Glover was able to finish it, but not in the way Mather wanted it. He wanted the Protestant version. By using prayer as a tool of checking someone’s innocence but, at the same time, not recognizing the existence of different religions, Cotton Mather proved that, as Kenneth C. Davis argues, “their ‘city upon a hill’ was theocracy that brooked no dissent, religious or political.”³¹ The discriminatory policies cannot be justified as fear of the Pope or new residents; instead, it was a fear of dissent and losing dominance.³²

Another group of non-Puritan who experienced similar religious discrimination were the Religious Society of Friends, also known as Quakers. They would be persecuted because of their weirdness and views, including a belief that God is present in every person. For example, the Massachusetts General Court passed the act that proscribed a death penalty for the followers of Quakerism who resided in that colony. In 1659, two Quakers, William Robinson, and Marmaduke Stevenson were executed in the letter colony because of just being the Friends.

A week before his execution, Stevenson in his emotional testimony described the Massachusetts law and declared to the oppressors that he would rather die for his beliefs than give up his religion: “So, after some time that I had been on the said island in the service of God, I heard that New England had made a law to put the servants of the living God to death if they returned after they were sentenced away, which did come near me at that time; and, as I considered the thing and pondered it in my heart, immediately came to word of the Lord unto me, saying, ‘Thou knowest not but that thou mayst go thither.’”³³

²⁸ Leonrad Scot, *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, as cited in Harold Dijon, “Goody Glover, An Irish victim of the Witch Craze Boston, Mass, 1688,” *The Journal of the American-Irish Historical Society* v.5 (1905): 16.

²⁹ Josiah Temple, as cited in Heron Dijon, “Goody Glover,” p. 16

³⁰ As cited in Heron Dijon, “Goody Glover,” p.20

³¹ Davis, Kenneth C. “America’s True History of Religious Tolerance.” Smithsonian.com. Smithsonian Institution, October 2010. <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/americas-true-history-of-religious-tolerance-61312684/>.

³² Even in Maryland, the Anti-Catholic bias became a dominant force with the passage of “An Act to Prevent the Growth of Popery within this colonies” in 1704, and acts denying voting rights, forbidding holding offices, practicing law and worshipping in the public.

³³ Stevenson, Marmaduke. “The Testimony of Marmaduke Stevenson.” The Testimony of Marmaduke Stevenson, <http://www.qhpress.org/quakerpages/qwhp/marmduke.htm>.

Even though the most colonies had the similar laws on their books as two Quakers or Glover experienced or had tried to disobey parliamentary policies regarding naturalization or religion at least once, there were some communities that did not behave in that way. The Lopez-Elizur incident is an excellent example of the latter.

Two Newport merchants, Aaron Lopez, and Isaac Elizur applied for the naturalization at the Rhode Island Superior Court on March 1761. They cited the legislative act of 1740 that allowed “the admission of Jews to the rights of subjectship.”³⁴ The court denied their petition on the “grounds that the Naturalization Act of 1740 referred to in the petition was not in the Court of and that only the General Assembly could act upon this petition as it had in other cases.”³⁵ The legislature scheduled a vote on the petitions and the lower house voted in favor of it, but the upper house refused to do the same. Lopez and Elizur went back to the Superior Court, and they applied again. This time the Court did not deny the jurisdiction over the case, but it upheld the legislature’s ruling. The court (not convincingly) argued that “since the Rhode Island was ‘already so full of people that many of His Majesty’s good subjects born within the same have removed and settled in Nova Scotia, and other places, [the colony] cannot come within the intention of the said act.’”³⁶ They also said that naturalization of Jews “as fellow subjects was ‘wholly inconsistent with the first principles upon which the colony was formed.’”³⁷ In the end, both of them were able to naturalize, not in Rhode Island though, but in other colonies, and both returned to their home colonies as subjects.

During the Anglo-American conflict, the patriots would be claiming, as Bernard Bailyn argues, “liberty of conscience to be an ‘unalienable right of every rational creature,” but, as we have seen, that was not a case prior to the controversy.³⁸ Although, without colonists who rather spent time behind the bars, tried to trick the system or gave up their property instead of capitulating to the established religion or paying a tax that would go to the religious organization they weren’t members of or did not support it, the question of relationship between church and state would never emerge during the conflict and would never be settled during the debate for the second constitution of the United States. Now, after we spent some time describing political, social, and religious characteristics of the colonial America, it is time to start with the revolutionary narrative.

The Beginning of the Radical Change of the British America’ Residents

Following the Treaty of Paris and the conclusion of the French and Indian War, the mother country had a huge surprise for their subjects claiming domicile in British America. George Grenville, the British prime minister, believed it was time to ask, rather demand, the colonials to start financially supporting the crown. The empire was close to the declaring the bankruptcy, and costs of America’s administration and defense were immense. Grenville knew

³⁴ James Kettner, “Privileges and Problems: The Significance of Colonial Naturalization,” in *The Development of American Citizenship, 1608-1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978).

³⁵ Kettner, “Privileges and Problems: The Significance of Colonial Naturalization,” 116

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 116-117

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Bailyn, *The Ideological Origin of the American Revolution*, 249

that British hegemony could only last as long as they were able to control newly acquired territories, but the problem was how to support it financially. He also believed that, at little cost, the colonials profited more than any other British subject from the war. In his view, the colonial trade and economy could only continue to grow, and, one day, become a threat to the British interest, except if it was regulated.

On the other hand, Grenville and the company in the Parliament, whose top priority was always to protect their personal interest over the country's, saw the opportunity to enact "great and necessary measures" that would secure "Britain's primacy in the face of what was starting to look like danger from the colonies."³⁹ They wanted to destroy illegal trade, which negatively affected their businesses or ones owned by the wealthy residents of the British Isles, and pass stronger measures that would make it impossible for the colonials to halt enforcement of parliamentary acts. Some of them also complained about the American judicial system and the inability of the crown's prosecutors to convince the jury to convict the smugglers. As one prominent historian described, "the costs of war, the looseness of empire, the certainty that the parliament was a right institution to legislate a remedy" formed the grounds of the Grenville's decision to change the way the colonies were run.⁴⁰ With the King's blessing, the Prime Minister started working on the package of acts.

In 1764, Grenville proposed the passage of the Revenue Act, better known as the "Sugar Act." The purpose of the act was to stop smuggling, which negatively affected the British trade and imperial system, and had ended the inefficient navigation system. The statute upheld and extended previous actions regarding "the clandestine landing of goods in this kingdom from vessels which hover upon the coasts thereof, several goods and vessels." The bill announced that "from and after the twenty-ninth day of September, one thousand seven hundred and sixty-four," that all goods not reported to the custom officials, but concealed in some hidden compartment on the ship shall be forfeited and lost, and shall and may be seized and prosecuted by any officer of the customs." If the colonial juries would not convict smugglers, the act authorized the court of vice-admiralty to hear the case. The sole judge, who was appointed to listen to arguments regarding technicality of the maritime law, would decide the dispute and determine a punishment. In order to make sure that the act was enforced, Grenville decided to provide custom officials with their share of booty: "one third part of the net produce shall be paid into the hands of the collector of his Majesty's customs at the port or place where such penalties or forfeitures shall be recovered, for the use of his Majesty, his heirs and successors; one third part to the governor or commander in chief of the said colony or plantation; and the other third part to the person who shall seize, inform, and sue for the same; excepting such seizures as shall be made at sea by the commanders or officers of his Majesty's ships or vessels of war duly authorized to make seizures."⁴¹ It was a lucrative inducement.

The Act also tried to protect the British interests and secure market for the British farmers. Even though the Molasses Act of 1733 had already imposed duties on the foreign molasses and proscribed regulations for the aforesaid trade, it was barely enforced. To ensure the workability of the new law, Grenville created a massive bureaucracy. Every vessel would be

³⁹ Countrymen, *The American Revolution*, 34

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 39

⁴¹ See The Sugar Act 1764.

required to declare its cargo and submit an affidavit of origin of the products, “signed and sword to before some justice of the peace in the said British colonies or plantation to the customs officials,” to the customs official who would issue a certificate. Upon the arrival to the port of “her discharge, either in Great Britain or any other port of his Majesty’s dominions, where such goods may be lawfully imported, the master or other person taking the charge of the ship or vessel shall, at the time he makes his report of his cargo, deliver the said certificate to the collector or other principal officer of the customs.” And, if some hidden and undeclared cargo was found aboard, the customs officials would fortify it. Finally, the act lowered a duty imposed on “molasses or syrups, being the growth, product, or manufacture, of any colony or plantation in America, not under the dominion of his Majesty,” to three pence. Grenville, as same as his successors, would continue to believe that the cheaper products would discourage smuggling, but whether he was right, the upcoming events would show it.

Grenville was aware that the Sugar Act would not be able to solve the “colonial problems” on its own. He needed a measure that would not be noticeable in the colonial ports, but one that would “reach into the heart of the American economy.”⁴² Therefore, in 1765, Grenville sent the “An act for granting and applying certain stamp duties,” popularly known as the “Stamp Act,” to the Parliament. The act required the purchase of the stamps for every piece of paper, which was nothing new, but the scope could not compare with the previous laws.⁴³ All official documents, court documents, marriage certificates, “every paper, commonly called a pamphlet, and upon every news paper, containing publick news, intelligence, or occurrences,” playing cards, dice and many other things fall were required to be stamped under the aforesaid act.⁴⁴

Moreover, the law required all purchases to be made in sterling, which was an intentional attack to local currencies or any attempt of it, and would continuously be evident in the communities and would impact all social classes.⁴⁵ As Edward Countrymen noted, “the rich, the poor, producers, consumers, the powerful, the powerless, people of commerce, people of fields, old people making their wills, young people planning to marry, pious people going to church, ribald people going to tavern, all of them would feel it.”⁴⁶ Finally, under the act, only vendors authorized by the government, who were very often siblings of the royal officials, were able to sell the stamps. Similarly, to the Sugar Act, the court of vice-admiralty would have jurisdiction over the cases involving stamps and hefty booty would be given to the stamp masters and “to the person who shall inform or sue for the same.”⁴⁷

Even though Grenville probably never thought his actions would start the revolution nor induce the colonies to declare the independence, it is surprising that he and other politicians believed that the colonies would quickly replace the loose system with more centralized and give up the privileges they enjoyed. However, when George Grenville introduced notorious Sugar Act, and, especially, Stamp Act, it was apparent that London was planning to start to mingle into the internal affairs of the colonies after years of inaction. Still loyal to the crown, the colonists'

⁴² Countrymen, *The American Revolution*, 40

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 41

⁴⁴ See The Stamp Act 1765.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 40-41

⁴⁶ Countrymen, *The American Revolution*, 42

⁴⁷ “Great Britain: Parliament - The Stamp Act, March 22, 1765,” The Avalon Projects: Documents in Law, History, and Diplomacy, accessed August 28, 2019, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/stamp_act_1765.asp

tried to make a case against the sovereignty of the parliament and to differentiate between external and internal rights and taxation. Even though they did not like the Sugar Act at all and had protested against it in the several pamphlets and issued a couple of statements, the act was quickly enacted and stayed on the books until the war started. The unethical and discriminatory Stamp Act became a focus of their grievances.

The Stamp Act was justifiably a trap, like a Trojan horse. The revenue collected from the aforesaid act would be quite small, and most residents would readily submit to it, which certainly was the case with some moderate colonials. However, the bill would establish a precedent and could be accordingly used thereafter. As John Dickerson argued at the height of the Anglo-American controversy, “nothing was wanted at home but a PRECEDENT, the force of which shall be established by the tacit submission of the colonies...If the Parliament succeeds in this attempt, other statutes will impose other duties...and thus the Parliament will levy upon us such sums of money as they choose to take, *without any other LIMITATION than their PLEASURE.*”⁴⁸ To the colonials, it was clear that the corruption, which destroyed Denmark and Poland, was coming to America.

In 1765, the group, the Sons of Liberty, led by Samuel Adams, known as “the Lenin of the American Revolution,” rallied masses to protest the actions and to demand repeal of the Stamp Act.⁴⁹ They paraded on the streets of Boston, met under the Liberty Tree, and held British profiteers, custom, and government officials in the contempt. Riots were getting bigger and more violent every day. The anger could be felt in almost in every community.

The protestors marched to the government officials’ mansions, banged on the door and demanded either public resignation or promise not to endorse the Act. They even went one, or even more than one, step further. On Wednesday, August 14, 1765, Bostonians rushed to see effigy of Andrew Oliver, who was newly appointed stamp master and Thomas Hutchinson’s brother in law, and a boot with devil with a copy of the Stamp Act, which was a symbol for Lord Bute whom the colonials blamed for exercising influence over young King, hanging from the tree.⁵⁰ Onto Oliver’s effigy was pinned a couplet: “What greater joy did New England see/ Than a stamp man hanging on a tree,” and beneath the figure was posted a warning: “He that takes this down is an enemy to his country.”⁵¹ The described violence was not peculiar to only Boston. On August 27, effigies of stamp masters were placed in Newport and officials were harassed. In Annapolis, the protestors burned down the warehouse where the stamps were stored. The episodes of the vandalism and stamp officials’ resignations continued throughout British America. Even though protestors were reluctant to use civil unrest to achieve desirable outcome initially, they realized it was “an effective way to intimidate local British officials.”⁵²

Samuel Adams and prominent members of the Sons of Liberty knew about rioters’ tools and secretly supported them, but they publicly denied any knowledge of violent actions; instead,

⁴⁸ Bailyn, *The Ideological Origin of the American Revolution*, 101

⁴⁹ Daigler, *Spies, Patriots, and Traitors*, 18

⁵⁰ AJ Langguth, *Patriots: The Men Who Started the American Revolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1988), 52

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 53

⁵² Daigler, *Spies, Patriots, and Traitors*, 21

they focused on writing newspaper articles, circular letters to other colonies, or pamphlets.⁵³ They left the streets to the ordinary citizens, who not only resented the Stamp Act but the “accumulation of wealth and power by the haughty prerogative faction led by Hutchinson” and other profiteers.⁵⁴ As Garry B. Nash argues, “Behind every swing of the ax and every hurled stone, behind every shattered crystal goblet and splintered mahogany chair, lay the fury of a plain Bostonian who had read or heard the repeated references to impoverished people as ‘rabble’ and to Boston’s popular caucus, led by Samuel Adams, as a ‘herd of fools, tools, and sycophants.’”⁵⁵

Even if London was not convinced right away, the dismantling of Oliver’s and Hutchinson’s homes and Governor Bernard’s inability to disperse the protestors was a sufficient proof of unworkability of the administration and failure to consolidate control over the colonies. The colonial government was paralyzed. “The Mob was so general and so supported that all civil power ceased in an instant, and I had not the least authority to oppose or quiet the mob,” wrote Governor Bernard.⁵⁶ London was helpless, as well. Usage of military force was undesirable and unlikely; negotiating with the demonstrators and submitting to their demands was seen as dishonorable. They instructed royal governors to adjourn town halls, secure stamps, and try to obstruct the planned meeting of colonies, the Stamp Act Congress, in New York regarding colonial response to the act by preventing the election of the delegates. Governors of Virginia, North Carolina, and Georgia succeeded, and others did not. However, after months of stubbornness and being harassed by the colonists, the British government finally gave up and decided to repeal the Act. Officially, the law was revoked in March of 1766, but the story was far from being over. The political climate in the Westminster before and after the repeal showed it.

The Westminster and government’s second chance

The Parliamentary debate on the Stamp Act and colonies was very intense. It showed division within the House of Commons, and political inability to cope with the colonial response and crown’s desires. George Grenville and Townsend argued fiercely for keeping the Stamp Act on the books but would accept some adjustments to the law. Others called for the repeal of the act. The discourse culminated when William Pitt made a sudden appearance on the House Floor and attacked Grenville’s policy. The speech he delivered was eagerly welcomed across the pond and gave the credibility to the American argument.

He opened his remarks with his J’Accuse moment. “I have been charged,” he stated in the opening paragraph, “with giving birth to sedition in America. They have spoken their sentiments with freedom against this unhappy act, and that freedom has become their crime.” “The gentleman asks,” he continued, “when were the colonies emancipated? But I desire to know, when were they made slaves.” Then, he assured them their “success would be hazardous. America, if she fell, would fall like a strong man. She would embrace the pillars of the state and

⁵³ Ibid.,21

⁵⁴ Gary B. Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: The untruly Birth of Democracy and the struggle to create America* (New York: Penguin Books,),48

⁵⁵ Ibid.,48.

⁵⁶ Ibid.,48

pull down the constitution along with her.”⁵⁷ Even though Pitt was calling for the immediate repeal of the Stamp Act and dismissed MP’s “crying injustice” as groundless, he firmly believed that the Parliament ought to have control over its colonies. However, he thought that the Parliament did not have a right to impose duties on the colonies without their consent. He explained that “the taxation is no part of the governing or the legislative power. The taxes are a voluntary gift and grant of the commons alone.” Only provincial assemblies possessed a constitutional authority to tax their citizens. If they did not have that right, they would be slaves. “But in American tax,” he asked “what do we do? We, your majesty’s commons of Great Britain, give and grant to your majesty, what? Our own property? No. We give and grant to your majesty, the property of your commons in America. It is an absurdity in terms.” He concluded that as long as the Americans did not have their representatives seating in the House of Commons, the internal tax would be unjust. The Parliament listened to Pitt’s words and voted to repeal the act. They also passed the Declaratory Act, a resolution that proclaimed the Parliament had “full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the colonies and people of America, subjects of the crown of Great Britain, in all cases whatsoever.”⁵⁸ The law was ambiguous, and it signaled the continuation of the conflict.

What did the debate on the House floor and the Parliament’s post-repeal resolution show was that the British imperial and parliamentary honor were vulnerable, embarrassed, and undermined by the British American colonies. In its long history, the Westminster had never experienced to be successfully harassed by the inferior subject and lectured by its member on their authority. In the aftermath of the repeal, the parliament was lost, and MP’s were panicking about their reputation. What would the British foreign and domestic adversaries think? What about the economy and British colonial interests? Was this a sign that the British Empire was falling apart? Was the government broken and ineffective? Probably questions like that induced many MPs that it is time to do something. The Sons of England had to learn their lesson. Two-years after the repeal of the act, they decided to give one more try and introduce another tax bill. This time, however, members of the parliament thought, and were assured, they would succeed in their attempt. They would simply follow colonial desires. What can possibly go wrong?

During the debate for the repeal of the Stamp Act, the House of Commons invited Benjamin Franklin, a Pennsylvania agent, to testify before them. They wanted to learn about the colonial political mood.⁵⁹ Franklin accepted, as A.J. Langguth describes, because he “hoped to soothe those members who felt that the Sons of Liberty must be taught the lesson.” However, Franklin’s admission that the “authority of parliament was allowed to be valid in all laws, except such as should lay internal taxes” was quintessential. When asked to elaborate on his answer, he stated that he “never heard any objection to the right of laying duties to regulate commerce; but a right to lay internal taxes was never supposed to be in parliament, as we [the colonials] are not represented there.”⁶⁰ Based on Franklin’s testimony and the colonial submission to the Sugar

⁵⁷ William Pitt, “Speech on the Stamp Act,” (speech, London, January 14, 1766), American History: From Revolution to Reconstruction and beyond, <http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/documents/1751-1775/william-pitts-speech-on-the-stamp-act-january-14-1766.php>.

⁵⁸ Ibid.; A.J. Langguth, *Patriots: The Men who started the American Revolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 1988), 84-86

⁵⁹ Langguth, *Patriots*, 86

⁶⁰ “Eximination before the Committee of the whole of the House of Commons , 13 February 1766,” Founders online, accessed August 28, 2019, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-13-02-0035>

Act, Charles Townshend decided to reintroduce the idea of an American tax and hoped to portray himself as a tough leader. The bill won the support in the Parliament, despite Pitt's objection, and was scheduled to take effect on November 20th, 1767. However, the Parliament passed additional four acts in the term 1767 and 1768 regarding colonial politics, and together with this bill, they were part of the Townshend reforms.

The new tax would be collected for goods "imported from Great Britain into any colony or plantation in America at the port of entry. It would be imposed on "the several commodities that Americans were required by law to import exclusively from England—paint, paper, lead, and tea."⁶¹ He also lucratively lowered tax on the East Indian Company Tea with the hope of destroying the illicit trade. Moreover, Townshend provided customs officials with broad powers. It was easier to obtain the writs of assistance, and "to enter and go into any house, warehouse, shop, cellar, or other place, in the British colonies of plantations of America, to search for and seize prohibited or uncustomed goods."⁶² The Commissioners of Customs Act replaced the "commissioners of the customs in England" under whose authority the customs officials in America operated with the commissioners who were in the colonies. Townshend appointed five new commissioners, headquartered in Boston, "who would have the same powers and authorities for carrying into execution the several laws relating to the revenues and trade of the said British colonies in Americas."⁶³ To avoid colonial juries that usually were unwilling to prosecute smugglers and other colonials, Townshend continued the tradition of the usage of the Court of Admiralty. The universal right, the trial by the peers, that every British subject was proud of and enjoyed it was suddenly diminished. It is surprising that Townshend and his supporters thought they would succeed in their attempt.

The collapse of British parliamentary honor: "Then join hand in hand, brave Americans all."

The colonials responded with the fire and fury to the Townshend Acts. Pamphlets, sermons, poems, and songs were written in the protest. People were back on the streets. They were parading, yelling, and demanding answers:

"In FREEDOM we're BORN, and in FREEDOM we'll LIVE
Our Purses are ready,
Steady, Friends, Steady,
Not as SLAVES, but as FREEMEN our Money we'll give"⁶⁴

"If Great Britain," the Pennsylvania farmer, John Dickinson told his countrymen, "can order us to come to her for necessaries we want, and can order us to pay what taxes she pleases before we take them away, or when we land them here, we are as abject slaves as France and Poland can show in wooden shoes and with uncombed hair. . . ."⁶⁵ With the same zeal, Hannah Griffitts proclaimed:

⁶¹ Langguth, *Patriots*, 93

⁶² See The Townshend Revenue Act

⁶³ "Commissioners of Customs Act." Revolutionary War and Beyond. <http://www.revolutionary-war-and-beyond.com/commissioners-of-customs-act-text.html>.

⁶⁴ John Dickinson, "A Song," in *The Boston Gazette*, and Country Journal, 18 July 1768.

⁶⁵ John Dickinson, *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the inhabitants of the British colonies*

“If the Sons, so degenerate! the Blessing despise, Let the Daughters of Liberty nobly arise.”⁶⁶

People were galvanized, and nothing could have stopped them. The leader of the Sons of Liberty, Samuel Adams, wanted to use that anger and seize the five commissioners on their arrival and march them to the Liberty Tree where they would be forced to resign. Even though Adams’s proposal did not win the support, the mob eventually turned their anger onto the customs officials.

The customs decision to seize John Hancock’s ship *Liberty* for the false tax declaration and the presence of H.M.S. *Romney* in the harbor inflamed the Bostonians. They saw it as a provocation. The mob was throwing stones on the customs officials and beating them with the clubs. Collector Joseph Harrison was beaten, and his son was dragged through the streets of Boston by his hair.⁶⁷ After trying to take control over the crowd, the commissioners capitulated and took a refuge on the *Romney*. Soon, they escaped to the safer place, the Castle William. Violence continued even though the commissioners were lodged in the unassailable quarters.

Meanwhile, Samuel Adams and James Otis, during the session of the Massachusetts House, tried to persuade their colleagues to authorize the circular letter to other colonies against the Townshend Acts, but they were couple of votes short. But when the Bernard’s and Hutchinson’s supporters left the town, Adams and Otis got the majority. The circular letter was sent to the colonial brothers.

In the letter, Adams surprisingly acknowledged that “his Majesty’s high court of Parliament is [was] the supreme legislative power over the whole empire,” but, if the sole purpose was to raise the money, the external duties were infringements on the constitutional and natural rights.⁶⁸ The taxation without representation could not be supported. They also eagerly attacked Townshend’s attempt to destroy the only leverage the colonies had, providing money for the salaries of the royal officials. “The judges of the land and other civil officers,” Adams asserted, “having salaries appointed for them by the Crown, independent of the people,” were contradictory to the law of nature.⁶⁹ However, the Crown did not understand the meaning of the letter again.

Even though the letter was not as radical as it could have been, the British Secretary for Colonial Affairs, condemned it. “As his Majesty,” the Earl of Hillsborough began, “considers this Measure [the circular letter] to be of a most dangerous & factious tendency calculated to enflame the minds of his good Subjects in the Colonies, to promote an unwarrantable combination and to excite and encourage an open opposition to and denial of the Authority of Parliament, &to subvert the true principles of the constitution.”⁷⁰ He instructed colonial officials “to prevent any proceeding upon it by an immediate Prorogation or Dissolution” of the assemblies if the letter “give [gave] any Countenance to this Seditious Paper.”⁷¹ The decision to disrupt and undermine the legitimacy of the provincial assemblies was another proof of London’s corruption. The colonies did not have other option than to continue with the demonstrations. They signed the non-importation agreement and pledged not to import nor use commodities taxed under the Townshend Acts. Even though some pro-British residents, notably

⁶⁶ Hannah Griffitts, “The Female Patriots,” in *The Pennsylvania Chronicle*, December 25, 1769.

⁶⁷ Langguth, *Patriots*, 95-97

⁶⁸ Samuel Adams, *The Massachusetts Circular Letter*, 1768.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Earl of Hillsborough, British Secretary for Colonial Affairs, “Response to the Governors in America,” April 21, 1768.

⁷¹ Earl Hillsborough, “Response.”

Peter Oliver, accused Patriots of hypocrisy, residents generally followed the agreement and called out those who had not. What the colonials did privately, they did not share with others. If somebody had confronted them about the commodities, they would certainly deny the possession. However, the smugglers did not close their businesses.

Meanwhile, during the summer of 1768, Governor Francis Bernard admitted that the royal government lost control over Boston. “So we are not without a Government, only it is in the hands of the people of the Town,” he described the situation. The Town meetings illegitimately took over the control over their communities, a power that naturally belonged to the royal government. It was a sign of the state of war. The crown decided to send three regiments of troops to Boston under the command of General Gage to establish order and secure the community from the future unrests. The arrival and presence of the soldiers just rubbed the salt into the fresh colonial wound.

Gage was demanding that the troops were quartered in Boston and, none and less, in the private homes. The bitter memory of the suffrage, a refusal to comply with the Quartering Act of 1765, of fellow compatriots in New York was suddenly revived. The new British action was seen as yet another proof of “taxation without a representation,” and the propaganda machine got the opportunity they had been waiting for. The British patience was almost exhausted when the HMS *Liberty* was destroyed by the protestors in Newport. The incident showed “the degree to which the colonial leaders were willing to go to demonstrate their control of the local environment.”⁷² The culmination of the conflict, however, was yet to come.

When on February 22, 1770, notable loyalist Ebenezer Richardson visited a merchant who was a target of the protestors and attempted to destroy the sign condemning a merchant, the demonstrators confronted him and harassed him on his way home.⁷³ They were throwing rocks and wood at him, and ultimately onto his house. Feeling endangered, he took his musket and threatened to use it. The crowd was unmoved with his words and continued with the riot. Ultimately, he pulled the trigger and wounded several people, including an eleven-year-old boy, Christopher Seider, who died that evening. The Sons of Liberty organized a massive funeral, portrayed him as a martyr, and used his death for further confrontation with the British. However, the significance of this event was far more significant. It was an overture into one of the bloodiest incidents of the pre-war struggle, the Boston Massacre.

On March 2, 1770, an off-duty soldier, Patrick Walker, of the twenty-ninth regiment was looking for a part-time job in addition to his military assignment. The soldier’s endeavor was not unusual. The British soldiers usually wanted to pick up extra money during their free time. Walker went to Boston’s largest rope maker at the time, John Gray, who employed soldiers for a temporary job, but was insulted by one of Grey’s employees. In that spirit, William Green told Walker to “go and clean out my shithouse” in response to walker’s request for a job.⁷⁴ Walker was furious and attacked Green and other employees but was knocked down. He rushed to barracks pledging to be avenged and was back with fellow soldiers demanding answers. The similar encounters with the twenty-ninth regiment would continue in the days that followed.⁷⁵

On March 5, Walker’s regiment took responsibility for the sentry posts in Boston and became a target of protestors. One young Bostonian harassed a soldier stationed near the customs

⁷² Daigler, *Spies, Patriots, and Traitors*, 27.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁷⁴ Langguth, *Patriots*, 130.

⁷⁵ Langguth, *Patriots*, 130-132

house and was eventually struck with the musket. The crowd gathered around the sentry and continued with insults. The riot spread throughout the town. The church bells started to ring, and people were shouting “fire.” The reinforcements were sent to the customhouse under Capt. Thomas Preston’s command to free the sentry and march back to the barracks.

The people formed a human shield and with the same zeal insulted the troops. The loud shouts could only be heard. The soldiers were hit with the snowballs from all sides and were helplessly standing there in the formation with loaded muskets. Then, one soldier was knocked down and fired into the crowd. The others followed. The first victim was an African American boy, Crispus Atticus.

No one heard that the Preston ordered his troops to fire nor to cease it. The calls to “arms” and beating of the drums could be heard, but Sons of Liberty were calling for the cessation of the hostility. Samuel Adams knew the significance of the event. He soon called the courts to prosecute the soldiers and organized a massive funeral for the victims. The propaganda machine was working tirelessly but was not able to secure justice. Capt. Preston was not convicted, and some soldiers got away from the punishment by pleading a benefit of clergy. Once again, the outrage came back to the streets, and the dispute continued into another decade.⁷⁶

The 1770s: A Birth of the Colonial Transformation

The acceleration of violence affected the Parliament’s patience and the British economy. The Townshend Acts had shown to be unworkable and fatal. Ultimately, the Parliament decided to repeal almost all of the acts, except the most hated act, the Tea Act. “The result was,” as Countrymen argues, “that once again, Parliament’s pride and the problem of colonial revenue became intertwined.”⁷⁷ One thing the Westminster knew for sure was that the parliamentary tradition and honor could not be undermined by the inferior British subjects. As Countrymen further described. “It was important to assert the principle that Parliament could do what it wanted when it wanted, to whom it wanted.”⁷⁸ With troops in Boston and elevation of Lt. Governor Thomas Hutchinson to the governorship, the Parliament’s stubbornness and ignorance were not prudent. Some would think that they would realize that by then, but the actions that followed serve as proof that London did not learn anything from the past mistakes.

The smugglers provided the colonies with a cheaper Dutch tea, and the Townshend and non-importation agreement decreased the East India Company’s sales in America, which became a problem. As Edward Countrymen describes, “like the chartered companies that began American colonization, the East India Company tried to carry out both the private function of making a profit and the public task of governing a society.”⁷⁹ More Tea in the warehouses, less profit, and influence.

In 1733, the company was on the brink of collapse, and the Parliament could not risk losing a pro-British force in the strategic part of the world. Instead of restructuring the East India company and providing the loan, the Parliament decided to allow them to have tea monopoly in the colonies, an exclusive right to sell the tea.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 132-162.

⁷⁷ Countryman, *The American Revolution*, 46.

⁷⁸ Countrymen, *The American Revolution*, 46.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Now, the Company would have its own colonial agents. It would not have to go through a bidding process in Britain nor pay the importation duty twice. The three pence Townshend duty would only be required to be paid. Ultimately, the tea would be cheaper than the smuggled Dutch or legal one sold by the Americans. The Westminster was rubbing its hands. Only foolish people would protest more affordable commodities. Britain would finally teach the colonies its lesson, would raise the much-needed revenue and save the crucial company. But on December 16, 1773, the Sons of Liberty, dressed as Indians to symbolize American freedom and to hide their true identities, climbed onto the decks of three ships, *Dartmouth*, *Eleanor*, and *Beaver*, and dumped the tea, which was on the vessel, into the Boston harbor. “What a cup of tea,” said one of the participants, “we’re making for the fishes.”⁸⁰ What a cup of tea they made for the Parliament. The British were confused and paralyzed. Any attempt to respond would result in the destruction of ships and its cargo. Governor Hutchinson deemed it necessary to use the military force to end the riots for once and for all.

The Parliament agreed that the time of wimpy laws and officials was over. As a response to the Boston Tea Party and other similar incidents in other colonies, notably in New York City, the Parliament passed the four acts, commonly known as the Coercive Acts of 1774. Under the law, the Port of Boston was closed for the commercial shipping, except supplies necessary to feed the population; the autonomy of local assemblies was limited, and committee of correspondence was banned; governor gained a right to appoint officers, who were usually annually elected, and to move trials to other colonies or Britain, if he deemed it necessary; finally, the Quartering Act of 1765 was expanded, and the governor could seize “such and so many uninhabited houses, out-houses, barns, or other buildings, as he shall think necessary to be taken... for such time as he shall think proper.”⁸¹ American colonials, suddenly, lost all rights known to the British subjects elsewhere. Also, to their surprise, the Westminster extended rights to the French Catholics in the province of Quebec.

To enforce the parliament’s will, the crown replaced Thomas Hutchinson with General Gage. As soon as the news of new laws reached the harbor, Gage announced the arrival of four regiments and closure of the Massachusetts legislature until June. The martial law was born. The colonials were outraged and disappointed. They did not have other choices than to call for colonial congress.

Colonies, towns, cities, and villages all welcomed the invitation and started organizing the convention of colonies in Philadelphia. The communities forgot their differences and were united in the same cause, and when they finally met, they began to work on the specific action plan. However, Britain continued to ignore the colonial grievances and use military strength to subordinate their subjects. The conflict had become a zero-sum game, and it was becoming evident that the military conflict was on the horizon. Meanwhile, the first America’s intelligence organization, *Mechanics*, composed of members of the Sons of Liberty, was formed.

The creation of clandestine groups attests the seriousness of the situation. When the movement can entrust its secrets to the members and embark them onto classified missions, it shows maturity of their vision.⁸² Samuel Adams knew that the existence of the cause depended upon accurate identification of the British intentions and clear initiatives, and that could only have been achieved through the intelligence collection. Without the committed agents, the colonials would not be able to monitor British troop movements, ammunition, and

⁸⁰ Langguth, *Patriots*, 181.

⁸¹ See The Coercive Acts.

⁸² Daigler, *Spies, Patriots, and Traitors*, 39.

assassination plots, such as one planned by the British soldiers for the fifth anniversary of the Boston Massacre. On the other hand, Thomas Gage, without his intelligence capabilities, would be ignorant of the Sons of Liberty's actions.

The British administration continued to collapse. Without taxes, the control over communities was impossible.⁸³ The committee of correspondence and local politicians were gradually taking control, and, to protect their authority, colonials started to organize local militias.⁸⁴ After witnessing the mobilization, John Murray, the royal governor of Virginia, reported to London in 1774 that “every county was ‘arming a company of men for the avowed purpose of protecting their committees.’”⁸⁵ He also stated that “there is not a justice of the peace in Virginia that acts except as a committee man.”⁸⁶ The British were stung. The “prepping of the battlefield” had just begun and would grow into the hot conflict on April 19, 1775. With Concord and Lexington under attack, Bostonians and other colonies knew that it was time to take up arms and fight the British. It was no longer a struggle of radicals; instead, it was a battle for the existence of their natural rights, specifically under the British constitution. The Americans resented beginning any serious discussion about the country's independence until it was the only option left.

Between 1765 and 1775, the Americans did not march on the streets because they wanted to cut their ties with the mother country; instead, they wanted to raise awareness of the civil inequality that existed within the empire. They knew that they were first and foremost British subjects and were proud of that. Even though they operated as *quasi-independent* states and were divided on many political and social questions within themselves and with their mother country, the European roots were still evident. The English common law and the British Constitution were seen as guardians of their liberty. However, London failed to recognize that special relationship. The private, corporate, and imperial interests took precedent over anything else. The West Indies sugar planters lobbied fiercely in the House of Commons in 1733, and the Molasses Act was the result of it.⁸⁷ The Townshend duties were enacted to cover the cost of lower taxes in Britain. And, finally, the Tea Act of 1733 to protect the East India Company. Instead of listening to the colonial grievances, the Westminster always thought it was more prudent to show strength rather than cooperation. Were the British merely ignorant and stubborn? Was it a conspiracy against the colonies, as Americans claimed? The best answer to the questions was offered by Edward Countrymen in his book, *The American Revolution*.

“It was neither incompetence,” Countrymen begins, “nor simple accident. The men who made British policy—Grenville, Townshend, Lord Hillsborough, Lord Shelburne, Lord North, King George—were as capable of both wisdom and folly as anyone else.” Instead, it was a struggle for power and economic domination. “In the long run,” he continues, “British policy would lead to stagnation and underdevelopment for the North American economy, and this was no accident.”⁸⁸ In contrast to the West Indies, the American colonies, especially the northern ones, could easily develop an urban economic network. They had already produced almost everything necessary on their own, except luxury items and foreign goods, marketed among themselves, and exported products, which the metropolis did not want, to other European

⁸³ Ibid., 41.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Puls p. 163

⁸⁶ Puls p.164

⁸⁷ Countrymen, *The American Revolution*, 46.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 48.

countries, notably to Southern Europe. It had been evident that the colonies were not as dependent as Britain wanted to.

To secure the British economic might, the Westminster had to remove the competition. Economies of two other British territories, Ireland and India, were in the process of the economic subordination during that time. “In those countries,” Countrymen describes, “local merchants and local trading networks were crushed when the British moved in. Local industry was stifled so British industry could prosper. Local agriculture was organized to produce staple crops for Britain to process, rather than mixed crops for local people to use.” Now, it was time to do the same in America. They would be “foolish to do anything else,” and Americans “would have been equally foolish not to resist.”⁸⁹

In the end, the birth of the new nation had been slowly and silently in the making. The post-Lexington and Concord events were not a result of a sudden outburst of anger, fear, nor desires. It was an outcome of, as Bernard Bailyn describes, “the realization, the comprehensions, and fulfillment, of the inheritance of liberty and of what was taken to be America’s destiny in the context of world history.”⁹⁰ The British actions, colonial pamphlets, samizdat, and injustice and changes within the community induced the colonials to gradually adopt radical ideas. That “radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people,” as what John Adams told Hezekiah Niles⁹¹, transformed the society and created an environment that could not coexist within the British Empire. Even though many old principles remained present in the communities, such as religious and racial discrimination, the new ideas were formulated in a way that a prosecuted religious group and a slave could easily subscribe to. Initially, a radical idea, suddenly, became conceptualized and accepted by almost everyone on July 4th, 1776.

II. The Birth of mature American Intelligence: The Culper Spy Ring

The final stretch of the conceptualization of American viewpoint started with the Draft of Instructions to the Virginia Delegates in the Continental Congress (A Summary View), was continued with the publication of *Common Sense*, and was finished and confirmed with the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. All three documents had a tremendous impact on colonialists’ personalities and provoked them to realize that the *ancien regime* was unpredictable, unjust, and tyrannical, but any change of the political environment required not only adoption of new ideas but also boldness and willingness to fight for a new order.

“The sun never,” as Thomas Paine said, “shined on a cause of greater worth.”⁹² Colonials all knew that the British actions were contradictory to their promise of not mingling into the internal affairs and only securing peace. It was a battle for honor, faith, and life. “The whole art of government,” Thomas Jefferson said, “consists in the art of being honest.”⁹³ Life was not a life without liberty. That symbiotic relationship was challenged by the King and his ministers. “The hand of force” might have weakened the relationship of the two components, but, as influential and ordinary colonials detested, had not disjoined them.⁹⁴ The notion of the judiciary superiority over any person or a group promised a revival of human existence. With the

⁸⁹ Countrymen, *The American Revolution*, 48-49.

⁹⁰ Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of American Revolution*, 19.

⁹¹ As cited in Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of American Revolution*, 160.

⁹² Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1997), 18.

⁹³ See Thomas Jefferson, *A Summary View*.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

words “Life, Liberty, and Pursuit of Happiness,” the new nation, patriotism, and national service were born.

“Had the British Troops,” Consider Tiffany writes, “at the Time of the Lexington fight, drove the war, as they could have done at that season; Americans might have been brought to thorough subjection to British Constitution of Government.”⁹⁵ In the immediate aftermath of the Lexington and Concord, the British army showed discipline, strength, and maneuver skills. They were able to score essential victories and spread fear through the Washington’s camp. The unsuccessful initial campaigns together with the expiration of the citizen-soldiers’ commissions and scarce provisioning supplies demoralized the American public and the leadership and convinced the British that the ultimate defeat of the colonies was on the horizon. From Boston, Philadelphia to New York, the Continental Army was always holding the defensive line and was constantly on a retreat. However, the American resilience and courage, especially seen during the Battle of Bunker Hill in June 1775 and at the Saratoga, and the British inability to assess the real strength of the enemy and logistically hard plans undermined the importance of the British victories and gave the Patriots ability to recuperate their strength and zeal.

Although the colonials knew that the victory over such a powerful enemy was impossible without accurate and timely information gathering, as Nathan Hale’s situation detests, they did not consider it paramount tool on the American battlefield in the early years of the war, especially when we take into the consideration that the armed forces had to be created from the ordinary residents. In Europe, there was a different picture. The Continental Congress knew that the lack of professional clandestine activities had to be compensated with the existence of intelligence capabilities on the European continent. On November 29, 1775, Congress created the Committee of Secret Correspondence with the task of “corresponding with our friends in Great Britain, Ireland and other parts of the world.”⁹⁶

The committee had to negotiate alliance and understand the mood of the European states *sub rosa* and see what approach the American leadership had to take to legitimize their cause. “It would be agreeable,” the Congress instructed their agent, Arthur Lee, “to Congress to know the disposition of foreign powers toward us, and we hope this object will engage your attention. We need not hint that great circumspection and impenetrable secrecy are necessary.”⁹⁷ Paris, a center of the first American diplomatic outpost, thus, became, same as Berlin during the Cold War, a center of American foreign intelligence gathering under Benjamin Franklin’s leadership. The unsustainability of the zero-sum game on the American battlefield and superior British counterintelligence possibilities in Europe (the Patriots mainly stayed ignorant of the deep penetration of the Paris commission and the tools used by the British) induced George Washington to revive the idea of establishment of the professional and somehow superior service in the North America. The powerful military enemy could only be defeated with superior deception and intelligence master. The intelligence advantage, therefore, was not only prudent but inevitable and requisite.

The military scouting was not enough. George Washington knew that the unique American battlefield required a new approach. Residents without a military nor intelligence experience would become the cornerstone of the new service. In contrast to disguised soldiers, the residents would be able to sneak into the enemy-controlled territory with real passes and would not possess a military discipline that very often was a burden for a successful mission.

⁹⁵ Consider Tiffany, *Consider Tiffany Historical Sketch*.

⁹⁶ Daigler, *Spies, Patriots, and Traitors*, 63

⁹⁷ Christopher Andrew, *The Secret World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 294.

They would enter British lines “under the pretence of asking advice.”⁹⁸ George Washington requested a member of New York’s Committee for Detecting and Defeating Conspiracies, William Duer, to recruit someone who would be interested in leading the new clandestine service. The name of Nathan Sackett was forwarded to the commander in chief, and the nomination was accepted. “The advantage,” Washington wrote to Sackett on February 4th, 1777, “of obtaining the earliest and best Intelligence of the design of the enemy, the good character given of you by Colonel Duer added to your capacity for an undertaking of this kind have induced me to entrust the management of this business to your care till further orders on this head.” He was given \$50 a month for his service to the American people and \$500 fund “to pay those whom you [Sackett] may find necessary to employ in the transaction of this business.” Benjamin Tallmadge, a good friend of Nathan Hale and captain in the Second Continental Light Dragoons, was appointed Sackett’s deputy with the task of managing logistics of intelligence operations. The first mission was to infiltrate a young Pennsylvania lawyer, Major John Clark, into the British Long Island. The Patriots got their first professional agent, case officer, and together with the Committee on Spies’ 1776 report to the Congress on how to deal with the people, such as Benjamin Church, providing intelligence to the enemy, the American intelligence was officially born. Contradictory to the well-established belief, the honorable gentlemen eagerly and actively engaged in deceiving the enemy and collecting information on the enemy movements and desires.

Nathan Sackett revolutionized gathering of information. He was sending his agents into New York City under various mercantile covers and was using personal situations as a way of distilling information from the loyalists and British officers. For instance, he sent a woman who was married to the prominent Tory to go to the British authorities regarding the American seizure of her personal property.⁹⁹ Even though Sackett organized the whole intelligence community remarkably, he was quickly fired by George Washington. As Daigler says, the circumstances under which Sackett was fired remain unknown, but in the letter dated April 8th, 1777, Washington provided some criticism of the latter’s leadership. The message remains a good source of the commander in chief’s view on clandestine service and personality that will be evident in the future intelligence and counterintelligence operations.

“As your Letter of yesterdays date,” Washington begins, “is rather a narrative of what you have done, than any thing else, scarce any answer is necessary.” Washington disliked, like any other case officer, when his agents engaged in long critical analysis without providing any sufficient operational and technical detail. Information had to be specific and accurate and reports short and concise. “The good effect of Intelligence,” Washington continued, “may be lost if it is not speedily transmitted—this should be strongly Impressed upon the Persons Employed.” Even though the timely delivery of information was justifiable and necessary, it is hard to achieve it without logistically complex courier service that increases the possibility of failure of the operation, and, thus, it would remain Washington’s main critique of his agents’ activities. The poor operational planning and spys’ unprofessionalism would continue to negatively affect Washington’s temperament and young and mature, but still immature, intelligence structure.

Soon after Sackett’s departure, the Continental Army was defeated at the Brandywine and lost Philadelphia, a de facto capital city. If he wasn’t already, Washington was fully aware that espionage was the only tool left in his toolbox to give a new nation bright future. Both New York City and Philadelphia became a focal point of American penetration. John Clark had

⁹⁸ Rose, *Washington’s Spies*, 42.

⁹⁹ Daigler, *Spies, Patriots, and Traitors*, 172.

moved from Long Island to Philadelphia and established an extensive collection network. Following Washington's guidelines, he carefully developed covers, operational and infiltration plans. Covers varied from agent to agent, but farmers, tradesmen, or any other profession that had access to the city was very often used. Non-Quakers frequently pretended to be the Friends and were not subject of searches nor suspicion by the British authorities. Their pacifism was widely spread. The frequent travelers and deserters were also used to record new British gossip or provide additional information. Finally, Clark was able to successfully deceive General Howe by chicken feeding him with the false reports and using at least one double agent. On the other hand, Allan McLane, another case officer, focused on a reconnaissance activity, British movements, and, as Daigler says, he also probably ran agents in Philadelphia on occasion. Both case officers received help from other ordinary dedicated Patriots such as the Darragh family of Philadelphia.

The intelligence-gathering became a family enterprise, as Daigler says, and each family member played an active role. William, the husband, coded intelligence collected by his wife, Lydia, and their younger son, John, sewed the message into his clothing and carried it through the British controlled territory to his older brother, Charles, who served in the Second Pennsylvania Regiment of the Continental Army and passed the decoded information to the headquarters.¹⁰⁰ Darragh's military intelligence collection and reporting became a routine. However, when on December 2, 1777, Lydia overheard British officers discussing the plan to attack quietly American forces at Whitemarsh in her home, she knew that the message had to be delivered to the headquarters as soon as possible.¹⁰¹ She embarked on a journey with the disguise of going to the nearby mill to purchase flour and went to the American outpost instead. She told the commanding officer the message which was promptly forwarded to George Washington thereafter. Lydia's information was cross-referenced with similar reports collected by Clark's agents and confirmed British plans. On Long Island, similarly, residents of one small town provided information to the headquarters and were almost principle architects of George Washington's decisions and actions regarding New York, British America, and the whole America, especially after the British abandoned Philadelphia.

The Culper Spy Ring

The occupied New York was a city of intrigues and, as Alexander Rose describes it, "intelligence-wise, dark and silent."¹⁰² It was a home of the British North America's military headquarters whose hallways concealed the Crown's secrets and plans. The territory surrounding the city was secured and heavily guarded by the British army. Multiple checkpoints, encampments, and troop provisions broke a homogenous and casual community into one dominated with the military discipline and suspicion. In that environment, not only it was impossible to penetrate the British command, but also it was difficult to get information, which was evident to every resident, about troop strength and morale or to transmit popular gossip or names of new officers to families or friends living on the other side of the line. The news, however, found a way to the American territory through small communication pores left open after the occupation, and those channels were paramount to survival of American morale and ultimately wartime hardship.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 140.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Rose, *Washington's Spies*, 67.

The relationship between the ordinary rebels and Tories in the city, and everywhere else in America during the war, was not antagonistic nor characterized with the animosity as one between the armies and leaders; instead, it was ambiguous. Both lines were marked with the massive population of the displaced, uprooted, people who were placed, to them, into unknown communities within the proximity of army and subject to the martial law. Constant relocation of civilians, plunder, and seizure of private property by the people with a similar background became an everyday reality.¹⁰³ With families scattered on both sides and territories, the residents had to demand relief from the government, but, as Judith L. Van Buskirk argues, they found none; instead, the institutions demanded more sacrifice.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, they turned to personal networks used before the war. Even though many friends, kin members, or acquaintances of them were ideologically opposite, they shared the same language, traditions, ambitions, and quasi-mutual respect. From prominent figures, such as John Jay or Governor Morris, to ordinary farmers, Americans, but British too, survived the war by using this unique wartime invention. “Ties of family and friendship,” as Van Buskirk describes, “often proved more important to Americans caught in the coils of revolution than did military or political differences.”¹⁰⁵ Besides the aforementioned reasons, economic ambition and want for profit were, and remained, the main catalysator and keeper of the latter channel.

A disparity between goods sold in New York and within American lines was immense. Because of the British Royal Navy’s control of the sea, luxury items such as German mustard, Spanish Olives, Tea or Indian spices were regularly available in the city.¹⁰⁶ The Patriots, on the other hand, had a vast stockpile of meat and milk and control of rural areas. With the mutual market closed due to conflict, both sides had to find a way to interact with each other and exchange products, and, thus, illegal trading became a lucrative practice.

The Black market, popularly known as the “London trade,” was busy and crowded with people from all milieus, even the ideologically hard-core patriots participated in it. Suddenly, ideology and respect of ad hoc lines did not matter; the only thing that mattered was profit.¹⁰⁷ The trade offered the single channel through which Americans were able to exchange their good for the hard currency, the British pound, and, hence, avoided being paid in the continental currency. Similarly, the British merchants smuggled necessary food supplies and had a monopoly over the latter’s prices, especially during the shortages. The British, however, found a way to utilize the Patriot’s monetary need for political purposes as well. They used it to overflow the enemy with the continental currency, an attempt to destroy the American credit. Presumably, the British secret service also used it to get information out of the commander in chief’s headquarters and military camps. This practice, together with the excessive usage of the flag of truce and refugee migration, caused confusion and alarm in the American command.

The Continental Congress and some prominent American politicians called George Washington to act and ban the “London Trade” and punish intruders. The main reason behind that was fear of economic collapse, loss of wartime morale, and penetration of the political and military structure. Washington was, however, at first reluctant, rather he procrastinated, to do

¹⁰³ Judith L. Van Buskirk, *Generous Enemies: Patriots and Loyalists in Revolutionary New York* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 2-3

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 3

¹⁰⁶ Rose, *Washington’s Spies*, 72.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

anything about it, but soon realized that it could be fatal and, thus, decided to act and introduce draconic punishments for all involved. When the commander in chief chose to tackle the smuggling practice, he also regulated the flag of truce usage and landing sites. The British would eventually do the same because of the common fear. Even though both parties decided to control the illegal trade, the practice continued until the end of the conflict in 1783. The channel would be secretly used by Washington's secret intelligence in the future, which was understandable and logical. Without dedicated patriots willing to go or living in that military powerhouse, New York City, and couriers, American chances of outmaneuvering the enemy were slim.

On August 7th, 1778, Caleb Brewster offered his intelligence services to George Washington. That letter was lost but George Washington's reply of the next day provides us with insight into Washington's reasoning regarding the enemy and was one of the founding documents of the most successful American Revolutionary Spy Ring, the Culper Ring.¹⁰⁸ Together with the well-established notion of the importance of accurate and timely delivered messages, George Washington adopted a more mature view on the personality of his secret agents. First, the commander in chief recommended to Brewster that it is necessary to "use every possible means to obtain intelligence of the Enemys motions." The alias and creative collection techniques were crucial for the success of the operation. The goal was to win over the superior British counterintelligence; although it was more powerful in the military might than in the collection services, it could not be underestimated. Brewster's task was to report on the naval movements and the position of the British troops, which was the prime concern for the newly arrived French fleet. But Brewster would not be able to record the British fleet's position nor deliver timely information without employing residents, who would easily access the British naval sights, or usage of other tools that would not raise the suspicion. "Do not spare any reasonable expence," Washington warned Brewster, "to come at early & true information; always recollecting, & bearing in mind, that vague, & uncertain accts of things, on which any plan is to be formed or executed is more distressing & dangerous than receiving none at all." Washington wanted to receive vetted and detailed reports that could not be easily scrutinized nor be part of the enemy's plot to deceive the Americans. The foundation of the bigger organization was laid down.

The decision to permit Brewster to spy on the enemy proved to be a good investment. He provided the headquarters with the qualitative intelligence that gave to the leadership sense of the British naval strength and position, but also the notion of accessibility and similar economic desires between Tories and Patriots. The only critique was the question of management. Frequently, information delivered would be a couple of days old, although that was better than none, Washington wanted to employ more agents and centralize the ring. The transactional collection was not long-term efficient. Because of the lack of logistical capabilities, Brewster would continue to deliver information in the same manner during the critical moments and more peaceful developments. Washington, therefore, decided to appoint General Charles Scott, who oversaw the light infantry and fought at Trenton, Germantown, and Monmouth, to manage Brewster and find new agents.¹⁰⁹ Again, Benjamin Tallmadge was chosen as a deputy to his

¹⁰⁸ Rose, *Washington's Spies*, 67.

¹⁰⁹ Rose, *Washington's Spies*, 71.

highest-ranking intelligence officer. However, because of Scott's other assignments, he was given immense autonomy over the secret service.

Inspired with Sackett and his previous experience, Tallmadge wanted to have an asset permanently residing in the enemy territory who would utilize various sources to gather information about the British troops regularly, and discreetly passed that information over the Sound. He understood that the war effort and sustainability of the intelligence collection required non-military personnel who would not come to the temptation to salute to their or enemy's superiors. He was, however, aware that ordinary citizens would not be able to stay in character unless their alias was somehow connected to their background and personality. As it was evident during the Iran hostage crisis, it was apparent during the war for independence. With the realistic covers, it was not hard to portray sources as the British sympathizers and secure the confidence within Loyalists circles. If the preparation work was done professionally, agents could work actively and mingle unsuspectedly with the enemy. When his services would no longer be needed, the agent would return to his regular every-day routine, such as farming, and wait for the potential next assignment. This perspective was not only prudent because the case officer would not have to continually worry about the penetration and exfiltration strategy, but also because it opened new opportunities that were unimaginable before.

Tallmadge was a man devoted to the smallest detail. Alexander Ross described Tallmadge as "obsessively observant," and a person who was "the only officer in the army whose roster of recruits contained not just the usual, humdrum facts—names, date of enlistments, discharges, and so forth—but a detailed description of each man's physiognomy, including his eye color, height, build, and complexion."¹¹⁰ With the person of such a caliber in the *de facto* charge of the clandestine service, Washington's project was elevated to another level.

Charles Scott, however, fundamentally disagreed with the Tallmadge's approach. He preferred smaller reconnaissance operations. He wanted to use traditional military scouts and send agents on Nathan Hale-style missions and have them out of the British territory after the single mission was over.¹¹¹ Not only because Tallmadge's view of the service was very progressive, abstract, and complex for that time, Scott's personality, specifically his ego, did not allow the general to listen to his subordinates. If Scott saw someone as a threat to his position, he would do everything to remove it. He would report them or fire them. As Alexander Ross says, he was "a notoriously difficult boss with the history of undermining his subordinates."¹¹² Washington, initially, sided with Scott's tactic, which was not surprising for a leader of an intelligence operation in development. If one single-time agent was captured, he would not be able to name other agents. Working as a member of the ring, even though the real identity of agents was concealed, spies would know each other and, if arrested, they would be able to tell the British about dead drops, contacts, and tactics used. Scott's dissent did not discourage Tallmadge from experimenting with his approach.

Tallmadge chose his fellow Setauket native and a friend Abraham Woodhull to be his principal asset in New York. He would collect intelligence within the city walls, ride back to Setauket and pass it to Brewster who would deliver it to Tallmadge. After the information was analyzed, it would be passed to Scott and Washington.

Abraham Woodhull was a farmer and, thus, his trips to New York would not raise any suspicion among the British. His experience, also, with the notorious smugglers and the London

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 72.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 77.

¹¹² Ibid., 76.

Trade provided him with the expertise necessary to maintain his cover. Washington supported Tallmadge's man, and, on August 25, he told Tallmadge that he "should be perfectly convinced of the Integrity of W—— previous to his imbarking in the business proposed—this being done I [Washington] shall be happy in employing him."¹¹³

Woodhull's extracurricular activity, smuggling, did not bother the commander in chief even in the wake of Congress' war against the illicit trade. Washington believed, as Alexander Ross argues, if Woodhull "could smuggle goods," he "could also smuggle information."¹¹⁴ Before he started his service, Woodhull wanted to meet Washington, but the general dismissed the idea as not prudent. "There will be an impropriety," Washington explicitly stated, "in his [Woodhull's] coming with you to head Quarters, as a knowledge of that circumstance in the enemy might blast the whole design."¹¹⁵ Security of assets and operation was Washington's high priority.

To strengthen Woodhull's position among Tories, especially after he was quickly released from American custody after he was detained while crossing the Sound between Connecticut and Long Island, Tallmadge decided to encourage Woodhull to take the newly created oath to the King by the Carlisle Commission, which was sent to America to negotiate the cessation of the hostilities. Woodhull should, Tallmadge told Washington, "take the benefit of the same and serve as in his present capacity," and as a friend of the King would have "a better opportunity of acquainting with their proceedings."¹¹⁶ Woodhull consented.

Also, Tallmadge on Washington's encouragement recommended that in the official correspondence members of the network use alias instead of their real names. Tallmadge became John Bolton and Woodhull Samuel Culper. As Alexander Ross explains, "Washington, Scott, and Tallmadge collaborated to invent the latter code name. Samuel Culper's reversed initials are those of Charles Scott, while Washington lightheartedly amended the name of Culpeper County in Virginia—where, aged seventeen, he had worked as a surveyor back in 1749—to 'Culper.'"¹¹⁷ Samuel was chosen based on the name of Benjamin Tallmadge's brother. Caleb Brewster was the only member who refused the alias and preferred his real name. Even though Scott initially supported Tallmadge's source, who was way more productive than his own agents, he started to undermine Tallmadge's authority and do everything to discredit Woodhull in the fall of 1778.

However, abruptly, General Scott, after serving as a chief intelligence officer for a couple of months, resigned in October of 1778. "My unhappy Misfortuns," Scott stated, "make It indispensably Necessary that I should leave the army in a few weeks... in Mean time be assur'd Sir that it is not Choice but Mear Necessaty that Compells the Measure."¹¹⁸ Not only Scott personal and family problems were behind his departure but also Benjamin Tallmadge.

Scott and Tallmadge had a strained relationship. Tallmadge complained about Scott's attitude and ignorance of his asset on Long Island, Samuel Culper. In a letter to Scott, October 29, 1778, Tallmadge informed him of receiving a message from Culper and explicitly stated that he believes the information was accurate.¹¹⁹ Scott explained that he disregarded report not because it was inaccurate, but because it was not received "through the proper channel' and

¹¹³ See Letter, Washington to Tallmadge, August 25, 1778.

¹¹⁴ Rose p.74.

¹¹⁵ See Letter, Washington to Tallmadge, August 25, 1778.

¹¹⁶ Tallmadge to Washington, Letter, December 11, 1778, in Rose, *Washington's Spies*, 78.

¹¹⁷ Rose, *Washington's Spies*, 75.

¹¹⁸ See Letter, Scott to Washington, October 29, 1778.

¹¹⁹ See Letter, Tallmadge to Scott, October 29, 1778.

therefore ‘I did not give the credit to it.’”¹²⁰ That relationship was not sustaining. After Scott’s resignation, George Washington elevated Benjamin Tallmadge to a vacant position and encouraged him to continue to develop his *incognito* network on Long Island.

Soon after dispatching a letter to Tallmadge October 29th, 1778, Woodhull became reluctant and refused to transmit any information in writing. Brewster and Tallmadge, however, promised him that no one except them and the commander in chief would know his real identity and that all correspondence would be copied and destroyed after it was read. Tallmadge’s writing concealed the identity of the actual asset in the city. With that promise in mind, Woodhull continued to serve the American cause and write numerous epistle reports that provided the headquarters with the valuable, but very often open-source, information.

Woodhull embarked on a dangerous fifty-five-mile journey to New York City regularly without no one to accompany him. He had to continually maintain his cover, a farmer on a business trip, and pass through territory controlled by the British plunders, smugglers and troops respectively. When in the city, Woodhull would stay at Amos Underhill’s place, who was his brother-in-law through his sister. Together with the latter he would observe British movements and collect information that he would write down on a piece of paper and carry it back to Setauket where Brewster or his one-time sailors would smuggle it across the sound and deliver it to Tallmadge and Washington.

Even though Washington appreciated Culper’s service, he complained to Tallmadge that Woodhull’s letters, characterized with the provincial colloquialism, were vague and very often delivered late, which was fatal for the precise military planning. “I wish you would request,” Washington asserted, “the person whom you formerly recommended to me, and who Gen. Scott tells me, to correspond with you, to ascertain the following facts with as much precision and expedition, as possible.”¹²¹ The delivery delay, however, was not Woodhull’s fault; instead, it depended on Brewster, but especially on his crew who weren’t aware of the true nature of the operation and, thus, could not request leave from their military duty. They thought that the business they attended to was yet another smuggling assignment.

With dependent members of his family in Setauket and constant fear of possible capture, Woodhull was reluctant to travel to the City regularly. By the winter of 1778, he resided at Underhill’s house and done most of the spy work from there. He occasionally traversed back to Setauket. On November 29, 1778, in a letter to Tallmadge, Washington again recognized appreciation for the Culper’s services but shared again his dissatisfaction with the late reports. “At the same time,” Washington asserted, “I am at a loss how it can be conveniently carried on, as he is so scrupulous respecting the channel of conveyance.”¹²² Not only delay was caused by Woodhull, but also Tallmadge who had to pick-up information from Brewster and then travel to the headquarters. Washington thought the establishment of the independent courier service was a solution to that occurring problem. “I wish you could fix upon some officer at Danbury,” the general requested, “in whose discretion your correspondent would be willing to confide; or perhaps the matter might be so managed, that his communications might be conveyed through that officer without his knowing from whom they came.”¹²³ Tallmadge accepted the proposal and established the chain of the couriers from his encampment to the commander in chief, but he had

¹²⁰ See Letter, Scott to Washington, October 30, 1778, in Rose, *Washington’s Spies*, 76.

¹²¹ See Letter, Washington to Tallmadge, November 18, 1778.

¹²² See Letter, Washington to Tallmadge, November 29, 1778.

¹²³ See Letter, Washington to Tallmadge, November 29, 1778.

a harder time to find someone to carry information from Woodhull in New York to Brewster in the bay surrounding Setauket.

Tallmadge recruited Jonas Hawkins, who was childhood acquaintance of Woodhull, Brewster, and Tallmadge, to serve as a courier between the City and Setauket. “as from the Regularity of his Dispatches,” Tallmadge assured Washington, “ & the Characters of the Persons who I know are intrusted with their Conveyance from N.Y. to Brook Haven, I dare venture to say there is not the least probability, & I had almost said hardly a possibility of a Discovery.”¹²⁴ Very soon, another Setauket resident and buyer of Woodhull’s tavern, Austin Roe, joined Washington’s secret postal service and, it is fair to say, was principal asset serving in that branch of clandestine service.

“At this stage,” Alexander Rose correctly concluded, “the growing cell was recruiting solely from the ranks of men its members knew they could trust implicitly, men who shared their religion, blood, class, and creed.”¹²⁵ With limiting recruitment to the family or trusted Setauket community members, Tallmadge created a homogenous organization that was immune to external threats and fear from the enemy’s penetration. Everyone knew everyone and each member secured trust not based on someone’s word, but on his actions before, when no one imagined that independent secret service would be created, and after the Lexington. It was a perfect balance.

The royal governor of New York, William Tryon, was crafting a plan to break the popular support of the American cause—the same strategy that was proven to be fatal for the British repeatedly. As Alexander Rose argues, Tryon “had been urging Clinton to authorize the use of ‘desolation warfare’ upon the enemy. For Tryon and other Loyalist hard-liners, Clinton’s [justifiable] reluctance to countenance attacks on pro-Patriot civilians was evidence of namby-pambyism; only by punishing popular support for the rebel regime could Americans be wooed back into the monarchical fold.”¹²⁶ Clinton rejected the idea partially but decided to use it as a bait for General Washington. He thought if Tryon attacks the Connecticut coastline, Washington will leave his headquarters with a massive army to engage with the intruders. Meanwhile, Clinton would march to New Jersey and seize his provisions there, and a threat to capture the strongholds on Hudson. That maneuver would induce Washington to switch to defense mood and retreat, and “thereby allowing Clinton an opportunity to meet him on the field of battle and inflict a decisive defeat.”¹²⁷

Abraham Woodhull had to traverse through dangerous woods to reach New York, and there was a constant threat of his capture by notorious profiteers and marauding gangs of Cowboys and Skinners. It was unlikely that Woodhull would not become a victim of the latter. In the letter of April 12, 1779, Benjamin Tallmadge informed the general that “Culper was the other day robbed of all his money near Huntington, and was glad to escape with his life.”¹²⁸ Incidents such as robbery and harassment might lower the asset’s morale and induce him to quit the service. Even worse robbers might suspect or find something that might compromise the whole operation. Together with Woodhull’s constant fear of detection and possibility of Tory’s questioning of his business trips, these incidents alarmed the headquarters. “Should suspicions of him [Samuel Culper] rise so high,” Washington told Tallmadge, “as to render it unsafe to

¹²⁴ See Letter, Tallmadge to Washington, December 23, 1778.

¹²⁵ Rose, *Washington’s Spies*, 102.

¹²⁶ Rose, *Washington’s Spies*, 105.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹²⁸ See Letter, Tallmadge to Washington April 12, 1779.

continue in N—— Y—— I would by all means wish him to employ some person of whose attachment and abilities he entertains the best opinion, to act in his place.”¹²⁹ They needed a permanent source in the city, especially with the reports of British shipbuilding and a possible attack on Connecticut.

“It is a matter of great importance,” Washington wrote to Elias Boudinot, his commissary-general of prisoners, “to have early & good intelligence of the enemys strength & motions—and as far as possible, designs. & to obtain them through different channels. Do you think it practicable to come at these by means of —[Pintard]?I shall not press it upon him; but you must be sensible that to obtain intelligence from a man of observation near the head Quarters of an army from whence all orders flow & every thing originates must be a most desirable thing.”¹³⁰ Washington was alluding that newly appointed commissary of prisoners in New York, Lewis Pintard, was his pick for the permanent source in the city. Even though in the Pintard’s letter of introduction to General Howe, Washington promised that Pintard was under parole and would not engage in the gathering of intelligence, he decided to offer the latter position. Pintard would get a bottle of John Jay’s brother’s newly invented ink that required agent and counteragent to make the writing visible, hide his practice, and finally reward for his service “at a proper season.” Pintard, however, refused to accept the offer on the grounds of potential exposure. As he explained in his resignation letter to Washington in 1780, he has already seen as a spy and his activities deemed suspicious by the British:

“Notwithstanding the most careful Circumspection and exact attention to every part of my Conduct, yet such have been the extreme Jealousies & Envy of the Inhabitants of the City, that I have been considered as a Person of the most dangerous Principles to the safety of the City, as a spy and common Enemy of the British government, and indeed every necessary Act of Humanity & Duty that I have shewn to the Prisoners, tho strictly within my permission, has been represented as arising from some settled plan, Ruinous to their best Interest—I have been put entirely under the Control & Direction of Mr Loring, & therefore subject to his Caprice & Humour, and not being considered as acting in any Publick Character, have been treated by him with the Utmost Insolence & Contempt. In short such have been the treatment & Contempt that I have suffered for three years past, without the least Reason given it on my Part, and that as far as I can discover chiefly for want of Acting in a Publick acknowledged Character, that I cannot Possibly any longer submit to it.”

Even though Washington did succeed to recruit Pintard, he did not give up with his intention.

With the failure to recruit a person in New York and the British continued counterintelligence success¹³¹, Washington asked himself whether the intelligence adventure was worth it. No one, however, suspected that Woodhull eventually (aka Samuel Culper) would independently decide to leave New York and recruit a new agent.

Woodhull’s position was getting tougher and tougher. A paroled man, John Wolsey, returning from his imprisonment in Connecticut told notorious Col. Simcoe of the Queens

¹²⁹ See Letter, Washington to Tallmadge June 13, 1779.

¹³⁰ See Letter, Washington to Boudinot, May 3, 1779.

¹³¹ They intercepted a letter from Caleb Brewster to Benjamin Tallmadge that names Anna Smith Strong from Setauket as another member of the mysterious ring. She was a wife of judge Strong, an American spy, who was captured by the British and sent to prison ship *Jersey*

Rangers that Woodhull was up to something; specifically, he “lodged [some] information against” Woodhull. Simcoe went to Setauket to investigate the claim, but Woodhull had luckily departed for New York a day before the latter’s arrival. Realizing that Woodhull was not at home, Col. Simcoe attacked the latter’s father and “plundered him in a most shocking manner.”¹³² Even though he cleared of his name by asking Gen Aid for a favor, Woodhull believed that his time in New York was over. “And am sorry,” Samuel Culper told John Bolton, “to inform you that it hath rendered me almost unserviceable to you. I purpose quitting 10 [New York] and residing at 20 [Setauket]. As I am now a suspected person, I cannot frequent their camp as heretofore.”¹³³ Woodhull was aware that the resignation of his New York assignment would not help Washington with intelligence collection unless he finds someone to replace him. In the letter dated June 20th, Culper informed his superiors that he had communicated the business “to an intimate friend and disclosed every secret and laid before him every instruction that hath been handed to me; it was with great difficulty I gained his compliance, checked by fear...I have reasons to think his advantages for serving you and abilities are far superior to mine.”¹³⁴ The person who had “the interest of our country at heart and of good reputation, character, and family as any of my [Woodhull’s] acquaintance” was Robert Townsend, a Quaker from the Oster Bay and an occasional roomer at Amos Underhill’s, Woodhull’s brother in law. Remarkably, Benjamin Underhill, Amos’s brother and married to the daughter of Sylvanus Townsend, and Robert Townsend were business partners. There were other residents in that inn that were providing information to the patriots and shared same family root, notably with Townsends. With the recruitment of a permanent source and establishment of the safe house in the heart of the British garrison, Woodhull elevated the intelligence operation to another level. Now, Washington’s spies had a place to meet whenever they wished without raising any suspicion. If somebody asked Woodhull or Townsend why they stayed at the Underhill’s, the answer would be a family or business matter.

In a letter dated June 27th, 1779, Washington accepted Woodhull’s successor and advised that he should quickly convey the information and avoid “giving positive numbers by guess.”¹³⁵ Washington knew, however, that the confirmation could not be official without creating an alias for Robert Townsend. Because Woodhull recruited him and was his superior officer, Washington decided that logically his cover name should be Samuel Culper Jr.

In the same June letter, the general said to Tallmadge that “there is a man on York Island living on or near the North River, of the name of George Higday who I am told hath given signal proofs of his attachment to us, & at the same time stands well with the enemy.”¹³⁶ Higday might have been qualified for the clandestine job but was arrested before he even embarked on the first assignment for the ring. The commander in chief made a cardinal mistake in his June 27th letter. Instead of using an alias or just the first letter of source’s name, Washington bluntly used his full name and place of residency. It is surprising that person of the caliber such as Washington’s did

¹³² See Letter, Samuel Culper to John Bolton, June 5, 1779.

¹³³ See Letter, Woodhull to Tallmadge, June 5, 1779.

¹³⁴ See Letter, Woodhull to Tallmadge, June 20, 1779.

¹³⁵ See Letter, Washington to Tallmadge, June 27, 1779.

¹³⁶ See Letter, Washington to Tallmadge, June 27, 1779.

what he did, but, on the other hand, the general was a busy man and was engaged simultaneously in military and clandestine operations. Nothing would happen if the letter did not come into the British hands.

On July 2, 1779, the British troops under the leadership of Colonel Banastre Tarleton unexpectedly attacked Tallmadge's encampment and surprised unprepared soldiers of the Second Light Dragoons. The raid was neutralized with the help of the local militia, but Tallmadge was left with ten casualties and eight soldiers captured. The raiders also took twelve horses, including Tallmadge's, "whose saddlebags had contained twenty guineas from Washington intended for Woodhull and, worse," his letter of June 27 mentioning George Higday.¹³⁷ With previously intercepted Washington's June 13 letter, which mentioned C---r and American usage of the invisible ink, and newly acquired letter, Howe knew that Washington established a secret service with Benjamin Tallmadge as its chief officer and used a powerful new weapon to hide the real message and deceive the British. The element of surprise was over, and a hunt of the unnamed spy and chief officer was on. Before they dealt with the bigger fish, logically, the British had to deal with the source named in the captured letter. If he knew something, he might give them a clue that might lead them to C---r. The British troops went to Higday's home and arrested him. In his confession, Higday accused Washington of blackmailing because his past services for the latter were not based on the ideology but money.¹³⁸ Eventually, he was released from the custody and went back to his farm. Howe knew that keeping him was not a requisite. He could not be used as a double agent nor knew anything about Washington's service. On the other hand, Washington lost yet another possible agent, but this incident provided him and Tallmadge with the valuable experience.¹³⁹

Even though Washington provided spies with the American invented invisible ink, known as Sir James Jay's "sympathetic ink," that was revolutionary, the stockpile of that chemical was scarce given to the difficulty of acquiring substances for the mix, complexity, and secrecy of receipt. Not only liquid to be used to convey the message but also "a counter liquor (rubbed over the paper afterwards)," had to be produced. "I beg that no mention," Washington told Samuel Culper, "may ever be made of your having received such liquids from me or anyone else. In all cases and at all times this procedure and circumspection is necessary, but it is indispensably so now as I am informed that Govr. Tryon has a preparation of the same acid or something similar to it, which might lead to a detection if it is ever known that a matter of this sort has passed from me."¹⁴⁰ With the necessity of concealing the existence of this revolutionary patent, Washington also had to balance his spies' and his intelligence desires with his scarce funds. James Jay told him that he was more than willing to provide him with more ink but that financial burden caused by the "new System of Finance" resulted in the delay of production.

Both Culpers had always been low on the stain and constantly demanded more ink. Their fear of detection was probably the leading cause of excessive usage of the latter substance, which

¹³⁷ Rose, *Washington's Spies*, 112.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 113.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 113-114.

¹⁴⁰ Morton Pennypacker, *General Washington's Spies on Long Island and in New York* (Brooklyn, NY: Long Island Historical Society, 1939), 52

is justifiable. Notably, in April 12 letter to Washington, Tallmadge explained that when Abraham Woodhull was working on an intelligence report for the commander in chief, two people unexpectedly and uninvited entered his private chambers. He immediately destroyed the vial and papers. Even though he did not see who the intruders were, Woodhull was aware that several British officers were quartered in the next-door room and sensed that he might have been detected. The two, luckily, were ladies who just wanted to surprise him. The incident, however, proved how dangerous the secret world was and how careful the intelligence officer had to be, especially with using the powerful secret weapon. Because of incidents like this, Tallmadge and Washington decided that the invisible ink could not be the only security measure used by their assets. The need to use codes and to encipher the letters was the only plausible alternative.

Benjamin Tallmadge created a cipher almost from scratch. He had to be careful to avoid usage of code for the common words and articles. If the British counterintelligence realized the symbol of a substantive letter or a word for the easily identifiable word, the rest of the code could be easily cracked down. Even though Tallmadge's lacked resources to develop professional diplomatic cipher nor was able to provide education of his spies, he extended smaller code the Culpers' had already used and created a system based on the substitution. Instead of writing New York, Setauket or names of the two "Post riders," Austin Roe and Jonas Hawkins, in his letters, Woodhull would use numbers 10, 20, 30 and 40 respectively. With that in mind, Tallmadge took John Entick's *New Spelling Dictionary* and started crafting a codebook. In the left column of his book, he copied the words he deemed most useful in the alphabetical order, and onto the right side, consecutive numbers. He also ciphered the names of the prominent members of the ring such as Woodhull, Washington, Brewster and himself. The words or digits, however, that did not have appropriate symbol would be encrypted by using "mixed-alphabet scheme."¹⁴¹ The final product was the following:

¹⁴¹ Rose, *Washington's Spies*, 120-122.

Proper Names		Alphabet		Directions for the Alphabet
Gen ^l Garth	718	a	e	<p>N.B. the use of this Alphabet is when you wish to express some words not mentioned in the numerical Dictionary for instance the word <u>heart</u>, would be expressed thus <u>hiele</u>. look the letters of the real word in the first column and their opposites to them, let these letters in the second column represent them; in this case always observe to draw a line under the word, as <u>hiele</u> stands for <u>heart</u>.</p> <p>Numbers are represented by their opposite letters which must have a double line under them as <u>likom</u> is 456. & <u>ingaw</u> is 790.</p> <p>In the numerical Dictionary it is sufficient to express a part of a sentence only in figures, to make the rest perfectly unintelligible, as all words cannot be mentioned those of synonymous meaning must be sought for. If not to be found, the word not proper to be wrote, then the alphabet must be used. When numbers are used always observe to put a space after the number thus 28 sh. stand for 28 sh. & 295. in force.</p> <p>It will often happen that the same word may need to be changed thus the different modes, terms, names &c. thus if you would express the word <u>Introduce</u> the number would be 328. if you would express the word introduced make a small flourish over the same 328. <u>Home</u> is express. by 255. <u>Hooves</u> by 253. <u>kill</u> by 344. <u>killed</u> by 344. <u>improp</u> by 290. <u>improp</u> by 290, in such cases the foregoing & subsequent parts must determine the word.</p>
North, Lord	719	b	f	
Jermain d.	720	c	g	
Bilton John	721	d	h	
Culper Saml	722	e	i	
Culper Junr	723	f	ja	
Austin Rev	724	h	b	
C. Bromster	725	i	c	
Livington	726	j	d	
		k	e	
Places		l	m	
		m	n	
New York	727	n	o	
Long Island	728	o	p	
Setauket	729	p	q	
Thompsonbridge	730	q	r	
Bozzen	731	r	s	
Staten Island	732	s	t	
Boston	733	t	u	
Rhode Island	734	u	v	
Connecticut	735	v	w	
New Jersey	736	w	x	
Pennsylvania	737	x	y	
Maryland	738	y	z	
Virginia	739	z	a	
North Carolina	740	a	b	
South Carolina	741	b	c	
Georgia	742	c	d	
Quebeck	743	d	e	
Halifax	744	e	f	
England	745	f	g	
London	746	g	h	
Potmouth	747	h	i	
Plymouth	748	i	j	
Ireland	749	j	k	
Corke	750	k	l	
Scotland	751	l	m	
West Indies	752	m	n	
East Indies	753	n	o	
Gibraltar	754	o	p	
France	755	p	q	
Spain	756	q	r	
Scotland	757	r	s	
Portugal	758	s	t	
Denmark	759	t	u	
Russia	760	u	v	
Germany	761	v	w	
Hannover	762	w	x	
Head Quarters	763	x	y	

However, when the ink was available, Washington and his spies preferred to use that secret weapon instead of only using code to conceal the real message. The message could have been written on the blank book pages or margins. “I mean that he [Townsend] should occasionally write,” Washington told Tallmadge, “his information on the blank leaves of a pamphlet—on the first-second &c. pages of a common pocket book—on the blank leaves at each end of registers for the year—almanacks, or any new publication—or book of small value.” The informer did not have to worry whether the message written in the letter makes sense nor whether it would be intercepted. If someone requested to see the book, he would not see anything suspicious nor different from another book with the same title. The only thing that Culpers had to make sure was that the paper was of good quality because the ink was not legible on the cheap paper,¹⁴² which sometimes happened with letters Washington received. If they were sending letters, they would usually write them in a Tory style with a mixture of family matters and conceal the secret message, written with Jay’s ink, between the lines and on the remaining parts of the sheet.¹⁴³ In 1780, after the British become aware of the possible arrival of the French navy, the Culpers started to address the letters to the prominent Setauket loyalists with fictitious message to secure the Culper Ring’s couriers from unnecessary searches and interrogations by the British authorities, even though the real Tories had never received them nor were aware of Patriot’s usage of their names as a cover. The usage of the cipher, fake letters to pro-British neighbors and invisible ink might have been a better option than adopting Clinton’s secret weapon, the Cardan system, but the reality was probably that they weren’t aware of Clinton’s practice.

Sir Henry Clinton used a system created by the Italian code-breaker Geronimo Cardano in the sixteenth century that required a grille or a mask to read the hidden message. The writer had to write a fake intelligence report that made sense to conceal the real information within the lines, which required special writing skills. On its face the letter would look like the credible intelligence report and, if intercepted, the reader would not worry about deciphering it, unless he was aware of the system used and had the grille, which was highly unlikely. The mask and the message would be sent to the receiver separately to limit the possibility of detection. If one of the two items was captured, the sender would know it and replace the grille and continue to operate without having to replace the whole code system as it would happen if the code was compromised. Even though it was a very complex system, it was safer than both codes and ink. Eventually, however, Washington’s concealment system in conjunction with his revolutionary spying technique proved to be more advanced than Clinton’s.

Even with the security measures, both Abraham Woodhull and Robert Townsend were still paranoid about the possible detection. In a letter to Tallmadge, dated July 29, Robert Townsend requests discontinuance of his service, if his intelligence gathering was no longer required. Townsend describes, “the times now are extremely difficult—guard boats are kept out every night in the North and East Rivers to prevent any boats from passing, & I am informed that some persons have been searched on Long Island; therefore whenever you think that my intelligence is of no service, beg you will notify me, ‘till which time I will continue as usual.’”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² See Letter, Washington to Tallmadge, September 24, 1779.

¹⁴³ Nagy, *Invisible Ink*, 141.

¹⁴⁴ See Letter, Washington to Tallmadge, July 29, 1779.

He continued to gather intelligence for the general, but a couple of months later, the question of the security reemerged. When Woodhull was traveling through the countryside, carrying Culper Jr. letter, he was attacked by some armed men. One of the robbers was a man whom Woodhull frequently had seen in New York. Even though they “searched every pocket and lining of my [Woodhull’s] clothes, shoes,” and his saddle, luckily, the robbers did not find the letter, which was hidden somewhere in the saddle.¹⁴⁵

Washington was logically concerned with the internal security lapses and the external threats to his secret service, but he knew that with the expected arrival of the French fleet the intelligence gathering had to accelerate and his agents be willing to risk their lives for the cause. He also renewed the call for a more timely intelligence and in a letter, dated February 5, 1780, Washington expressed his earnest desire that Tallmadge would “press him [Townsend] to open, if possible, a communication” with him “by a more direct route than the present.”¹⁴⁶ Due to the long and circuitous route, Robert Townsend’s “intelligent, clear, and satisfactory” accounts were usually delayed and, thus, their value and possible American advantage diminished.¹⁴⁷

Typically, Roe would pick-up Robert Townsend’s report in New York, conceal it among the purchased articles and paper, and carry it to Setauket, where he immediately after arrival would check his cattle on Woodhull’s land. He would leave the message in a box hidden in the field. Woodhull then supposedly accidentally passing through his own property would uncover the box and took the letter with him.¹⁴⁸ With a dead-drop concealed on a property that both agents had access to and could claim the ownership of it, no one would suspect that some suspicious activity was occurring in their neighbors’ garden. At home, Woodhull would analyze and supplement the information with other intelligence. To signal Brewster that the packet was ready, Woodhull would tell the agent 355, Anna Smith Strong, to hang clothing on the clothesline on the Strong’s neck with a black petticoat indicating Brewster where to land. There were six possible landing places and six clothes hanging on the line. With messages in his hand, Brewster rowed back to Connecticut and forwarded packet to Tallmadge and the headquarters. However, to satisfy Washington’s request, Townsend recruited a courier, his cousin James who got himself captured by the Americans.¹⁴⁹ This incident, together with the idea of the British spies within the army, traumatized Robert Townsend, who refused to continue his service.¹⁵⁰ If any person can be pointed out,” Culper Sr. told Tallmadge in a letter, dated May 4, 1780, “by 711 at N.Y. who can be safely relayed on to supply C. Junr’s place, I will make myself known to him, and settle a plan for the purpose.” However, because of the delay of intelligence, Washington decided to temporarily cease the operations of the ring and told Tallmadge that Culper Sr. might be employed again in the summer.¹⁵¹ He also announced his desire to open a communication channel with New York City across Staten Island.¹⁵² Upon receiving

¹⁴⁵ Nagy, *Invisible Ink*, 141.

¹⁴⁶ See Letter, Washington to Tallmadge, February 5, 1780.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Nagy, *Invisible Ink*, 143.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 141-2.

¹⁵⁰ See Letter, Woodhull to Tallmadge, May 4, 1780.

¹⁵¹ See Letter, Washington to Tallmadge, May 19, 1780.

¹⁵² See Letter, Washington to Tallmadge, May 19, 1780.

Washington's letter, Woodhull was surprised and shocked by Washington's words. He wrote to Tallmadge, "Sorry we have been at so much cost and trouble for little or no purpose." However, upon realization of the importance of the Ring's operations, Washington decided to reactivate his agents. "As we may," Washington told Tallmadge, "every moment expect the arrival of French Fleet a revival of the correspondence with the Culpers will be of very great importance."¹⁵³ The Ring was back in the business. The British, however, were also aware of the arrival of the fleet and they tightened up their security measures to block any flow of information from the city.

"The enclosed requires your immediate departure," Woodhull wrote to Tallmadge upon receiving a message from Culper Jr., "this day by all means let not an hour pass: for this day must not be lost."¹⁵⁴ The British admiral Graves sailed for Rhode Island, a place of landing of the French fleet. Woodhull quickly summarized the message and forward it to Tallmadge, who sent it to the headquarters as soon as he received it. Washington was out of camp and was expected to return later that evening. But with a message of such an urgency that could not be possible. Alexander Hamilton, Washington's aide-de-camp, opened the letter and forwarded content to Marquis de Lafayette. Upon return of the commander in chief, the Americans prepared the deception strategy and sent a "package that continued details of a plan of attack on New York City."¹⁵⁵ The information was delivered to the British outpost by someone who supposedly claimed that he found information on the road. With Washington's letter in their hands, the fleet was recalled and returned to the city. They waited for the attack that never had happened. Comte de Rochambeau successfully arrived in Rhode Island. This was Culper's one of the most critical operations and was a mere proof of their importance.

During the summer of the same year, the Culper ring got a new member, George Smith of Nissequogue, and everything looked bright for the Culpers.¹⁵⁶ However, new external troubles and the British counterintelligence capabilities scared and demoralized our brave gang. The ring's works would eventually slow down. Nothing, but the long correspondence and the defection of the senior American officer, Benedict Arnold, and the events following it, sounded the loudest alarm in Washington's intelligence camp and caused rapid resignations, and ultimately halt of the operations.

After long clandestine communication, usage of the Bailey's Dictionary as the key code, Sir Henry Clinton's questioning of the source's true identity, John Andre, arriving on the British ship *Vulture* and clandestinely smuggled by Arnold's entourage into the American territory, finally met Benedict Arnold on September 21. There are no official records of the meeting available.¹⁵⁷ The only thing we know is that the general gave Andre six documents describing the garrison at the West Point and its strength. He also said to the major that George Washington would be at the West Point the next morning. With the fortification's plans in Andre's hands and the news of the commander in chief's arrival, the British had a wild card in their pocket that might have ended the conflict in their favor. Meanwhile, the Americans noticed the ship and

¹⁵³ See Letter, Washington to Tallmadge, July 11, 1780.

¹⁵⁴ See Letter, Woodhull to Tallmadge, as cited in Nagy, *Invisible Ink*, 144.

¹⁵⁵ Nagy, *Invisible Ink*, 144.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁵⁷ Daigler, *Spies, Patriots, and Traitors*, 165.

moved their artillery to the riverbank and started with the warning shots. The boat had to move downstream and leave Andre within American lines.¹⁵⁸

Arnold, thus, did not have any other option than to issue to his visitor a passport, advise him to change into civilian clothes to avoid being recognized, and provide Andre with the horse and a guide. With Andre's departure, Arnold returned to his house, near the West Point, to welcome the commander in chief like nothing had have happened. However, unexpectedly, the news reached Arnold that a person bearing his pass was captured by the three profiteers, John Paulding, Isaac Van Wart, and David Williams, and, upon finding incriminating documents in his boots, he was turned in to the American authorities. Arnold knew that he was in trouble. It was a question of time before someone realized who a mysterious Andre' contact was.

Arnold immediately left his home under the pretense of the urgent business at the West Point and advised his staff that he would be back for breakfast with Washington; instead, he rode to the riverbank and boarded *Vulture* before even Washington knew anything about the conspiracy. With Arnold behind the lines, the general could not do anything else than to interrogate and punish the captive, John Andre, and to calm down Arnold's hysterical wife, Peggy, who claimed that she did not know anything about the incident.

Immediately following his capture, John Andre wrote a letter to Washington, and identify himself as Adjutant General to Sir Clinton and requested a permission to send couple of letters and discussed the "condition of some gentlemen at Charlestown who, being either on parole or under protection, were engaged in a conspiracy" against the British government.¹⁵⁹ However, with the captured British spy in his hands and the still-fresh memory of Nathan Hale's execution, Washington knew that any exchange would not be possible unless the British were willing to turn in Benedict Arnold to Americans.

To encourage further defections and ultimately to demoralize the Continental Army, Clinton understood that he could not agree to those terms, even though he admired Andre like his biological son. Washington, thus, could not do more than call the Court Martial into a session. The court decided that given to the specifics of the case Andre should be executed. Because of his rank, however, they initially weren't sure whether the firing squad or gibbet would be used. Ultimately, Andre's decision to change his clothes, which was contradictory to Clinton's guidelines, decided his faith. John Andre would be hanged.

Benjamin Tallmadge, who spent time with Andre during the trail and escorted him to the place of execution, noted that he felt affection toward the latter. He knew Andre was like him; he might have been the one who was being executed if the whole incident happened in reverse. His top priority, thus, was to assess the impact this incident had on the Culper Ring and its members.

With Arnold's knowledge of Tallmadge being a chief intelligence officer and unsuccessful attempt to procure from Tallmadge information about the members of the Culper Ring, the ring's leadership, Woodhull, and Townsend were afraid of possible discovery. The

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ See Letter, John Andre to George Washington, 24 September 1780.

threat did not stop there. After the incident, Benedict Arnold sent letters to the American officers and encouraged further treachery. Benjamin Tallmadge was one of senior Washington's advisors who got an invitation from Arnold to "join him with as many men as you [Tallmadge] can bring over with you [him]."¹⁶⁰ Even though Tallmadge rejected, no one knew how many letters like this were sent out and how many people knew or suspected about Washington's intelligence capabilities. This together with the arrival of reports that the British were closing in on the Culper's alarmed Woodhull and Townsend.

Henry Vandyke, a British source in Connecticut, informed the British chief intelligence officer Oliver DeLancey that "there is one [Caleb] Brewster who has the direction of three whale boats that constantly come over from Connecticut shore once a week for the purpose of obtaining intelligence. They land at Dawn Meadow bay."¹⁶¹ Soon the British acquired more information from some officer in the American army for money about Brewster. Their source promised them to find out more detailed information about the members, but his initial report enabled the British to identify Austin Roe, Phillip Roe, and James Smith as couriers for the mysterious ring. Eventually, they will find out that all intelligence went via Setauket to Brewster.¹⁶²

"Private dispatches," Heron, another British spy, told DeLancey, "are frequently sent from your city to the chieftain here by some traitors, they come by the way of Setalket where a certain Brewster receives them at or near a certain woman's."¹⁶³ It was just a question of time when people would recall the suspicious release of Woodhull from the American custody or his constant travels to New York. Moreover, an ordinary observation of Roe's and Brewster's activities on Long Island would provide them with a clue about who else was involved in the secret service. And, finally, capture and interrogation of known spies might provide them with the evidence of some other resident's treason. The British had almost all pieces of the puzzle in their hands, and Woodhull and Townsend were aware of that. Culper Jr., however, was the first who said it was enough.

After Arnold's defection and the discovery of Brewster's secret activity, Robert Townsend no longer wanted to collect and provide information to Washington in writing, but only orally. He did not want to see his letter falling into the British hands.¹⁶⁴ In May 1781, Woodhull went to New York to find someone to take Culper Jr.'s place, but he was not successful; no one was willing to write.¹⁶⁵ "The enemy," Woodhull in his letter to Tallmadge, dated May 19, 1781, stated, "have got some hint of me for when passing at Brooklyn Ferry was strictly examined and told some villain supported a correspondence from this place [New York]." He further requested to be "relieved" from his "present anxiety"; he did not longer want to travel to the city nor submit his reports in writing.¹⁶⁶ On June 4, 1781, Woodhull told

¹⁶⁰ See Letter, Benedict Arnold to Benjamin Tallmadge,

¹⁶¹ Henry Vandyke's report, November 26, 1780.

¹⁶² Nagy, *Invisible Ink*, 147

¹⁶³ Hiram in cipher to DeLancey, February 1, 1781 in Nagy, *Invisible Ink*, 147; Pennypacker, *General Washington's Spies*, 198

¹⁶⁴ See Letter, Woodhull to Tallmadge, May 19, 1781

¹⁶⁵ Nagy, *Invisible Ink*, 147.

¹⁶⁶ See Letter, Woodhull to Tallmadge, May 19, 1781.

Tallmadge, that they “live in daily fear of death and destruction...I dare not to visit New York myself, and those that have been employed will serve no longer, through fear.”¹⁶⁷ With the fear of possible capture, the Culper members one by one left their positions. The ring’s operations gradually ceased. Now, after we narrated Culper ring’s adventures and services, it is time to understand why so many people decided to join Washington and risk their lives for the cause whose success was barely known to many. And, finally, why the British counterintelligence was never able to connect the dots and identify all members of Washington’s secret service.

III. Epilogue

The eighteenth-century colonial settlements were small places where everyone knew each other and whose friendships were interwoven with family connections. From weddings to funerals, people always gathered and shared their feelings. They also all interacted with each other through business dealings, landlord-renter relationship, and employment. No matter whether they were Tories or Whigs. The success of community depended on every resident and their cooperation.

The pre-controversy colonial settlements, as we already mentioned, were homogenous and autonomous. The colonial map was covered with hundreds of villages and towns that were different from each other, and very often maintained a constrained relationship with their neighbors. With the British push to retake the full control over the colonies and to subordinate residents to the crown, these homogenous communities suddenly became violent and divided; a situation that worsened with the arrival of the British troops in America. Family members or friends harassed, arrested, and executed. Property destroyed or seized. Streets filled with hundreds and hundreds of displaced people. Stores, shops, and farms burned, ransacked, or closed. This became a reality, and no one was exempt from this experience. Eventually, every person found a way how to cope with this trauma; and many decided to risk their lives and serve the cause. They just wanted the British out of their communities. The members of the Culper ring were not exempt from this process. Setauket, Oyster Bay, and other places on Long Island experienced this torture the loudest.

The Culper Ring’s case officer, Benjamin Tallmadge, who was preacher’s son and well “versed in the Latin and Greek languages,” develop a solid friendship with his brother in arms, Nathan Hale, during his education at Yale University.¹⁶⁸ Their relationship was frank and filled with dedication to themselves and their native land. Hale and Tallmadge were constantly discussing radical topics of the day and were challenging the reality all the time. In one way they were idealist, but their love of discussion, learning, and enlightenment ideas, which would be elevated to another level in the time of Lexington and Concord, could not be disputed nor matched. They also had a tremendous influence on each other. With a strong fraternal bond, nothing else was left, than to promise each other, as Alexander Rose argues, “If anything malign ever happened to one, the other would be merciless toward his assailants.”¹⁶⁹ This sense of

¹⁶⁷ See Letter, Woodhull to Tallmadge on June 4, 1781 in Nagy, *Invisible Ink*, 148

¹⁶⁸ Benjamin Tallmadge, *Memoir of Benjamin Tallmadge*, 8.

¹⁶⁹ Rose, *Washington’s Spies*, 6.

loyalty and patriotism was nothing unordinary for the Yale students during the years leading to and during the Anglo-American controversy. The school was a bastion of the revolutionary thought, camaraderie, and democracy. Students were boycotting British goods, accusing the mother country of corruption, and rejecting the idea of subordination to the crown. With the first shots at Lexington and Concord, Yale's patriotic zeal came to a test. Many students and alumni joined the fight for the cause. Hale and Tallmadge were one of them.

"I consider our country," Tallmadge wrote to Hale in a letter, dated July 4, 1775, "a land flowing as it were with milk & honey holding open her arms, & demanding assistance from all who can assist her in her sore distress ... [w]e all should be ready to step forth in the common cause."¹⁷⁰ With these words in mind, Hale joined the armed forces immediately following the official declaration of the war. Tallmadge, on the other hand, waited for a year and then when he was one-hundred percent sure that his loyalty to the new nation was not questionable, he took a musket and joined fellow Patriots in a fight for natural rights. "While I was in Cambridge with my military friends," Tallmadge described years later, "I was continually importuned to think of the oppression which was so abundantly exhibited by the British government towards the Colonies, until I finally became an entirely devoted to the cause in which my country was compelled to engage. I finally began to think seriously of putting on the uniform, and returned to Weathersfield full of zeal in the cause of my country."¹⁷¹ However, the death of his best friend on the British gallows induced him to confirm his ideological motivation and to fight even harder and punish the British for his loss. Tallmadge's personality and his view of the Anglo-American conflict were forever changed by this incident. Thus, when Washington offered him a position in his secret service, Tallmadge could not reject it. He immediately went to work and created a nucleus of a new ring.

The Culper Ring's crucial member was Caleb Brewster, a man of adventure and wilderness, without whom Culper Sr.'s and Jr.'s letters would not reach George Washington's desk. This Setauket native learned his craft in the dark, cold, and dangerous waters near Greenland, waiting for the whale to be captured. He was a whale boatman since he escaped the boredom of his home when he was nineteen years old. Soon he would replace whaler with a merchant ship where he served as a mate. In May 1775, he would support Salah Strong's candidacy to be a delegate to the Provincial Congress, and when the war started, he immediately took the musket and joined the band of brothers. For Brewster, it was a simple question, if not me then who?¹⁷²

Brewster offered his intelligence services to Washington not only because he wanted a new adventure but because he was enthusiastic about the cause; he wanted to make a change and serve side by side with his friends and relatives. Brewster's want for adventure can be seen in his refusal to use an alias. He always used his full name to sign reports and other documents. He was not afraid of capture. The same could be seen in his decision to act as a courier across the Sound, a dangerous bay packed, as we have already seen, with smugglers and profiteers. However, for

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 7

¹⁷¹ Tallmadge, *Memoir of Benjamin Tallmadge*, 9.

¹⁷² Rose, *Washington's Spies*, 82-83

Brewster, there was nothing better than help his friends, no matter how difficult it was, to defeat the British. The surprise attack on the Setauket's British headquarters and Colonel Hewlett, located at the local Presbyterian church ministered by Benjamin Tallmadge's father, was for sure one of Brewster's favorite operations in which he took part. Even though two other Culper Ring member, Abraham Woodhull (aka Samuel Culper Sr.) and Robert Townsend (aka Samuel Culper Jr.), lacked military stamina Tallmadge and Brewster posed, they possessed extraordinary cleverness and loyalty to the cause that could have not been matched by their British counterparts.

Abraham Woodhull, an ancestor of Richard Woodhull, an extraordinary Setauket mayor, lived on the family farm with his elderly parents, and after his brothers' death he took over the family business. He joined Suffolk militia in 1775, but, after a couple of months, he went back home. The martial spirit did not overtake Woodhull. Same as many other Long Island and New York residents, Woodhull remained mainly moderate during the early years of war and used the ambiguous environment to smuggle goods across the Sound. He supported the cause from the beginning of the controversy, but the one single event that happened during the Battle of New York confirmed his commitment and radicalized his views.

General Nathaniel Woodhull, who was Abraham's cousin, was American moderate politician who was calling for reconciliation and had refused to sign New York's endorsement of the Declaration of Independence,¹⁷³ and despite all of that, he actively participated in the military activities. In August of 1776, Woodhull executed the order to burn and kill everything that British might use after they recaptured Long Island but was arrested and wounded by the British troops. There are many different accounts of this encounter. One was that he was "wounded on the head with a cutlass, and had a bayonet thrust through his arm," because he did not want to give up his sidearm.¹⁷⁴ Others claimed that one of the soldiers ordered Woodhull to say, "' God save the King,' to which Woodhull replied, 'God save us all,' whereupon he was assailed by Baird's broadsword."¹⁷⁵ Woodhull even claimed that he was tricked by Major Oliver De Lancey, who violated the surrender agreement. One thing we know for sure was that Woodhull was harassed by the British, experienced inhumane conditions at the prison and that he died in grave pain. This episode would have a tremendous impact on his cousin Abraham Woodhull and his decision to accept Tallmadge's offer and serve the cause.

As Alexander Rose argues, in contrast to Tallmadge and Brewster, Woodhull did not see a loss during the war as a sacrifice or an ordinary thing that happens during military conflicts; instead, he saw it as a murder and a proof of the British barbarism.¹⁷⁶ The memories of tyrannical British actions, harassment of Setauket residents by the Tory sympathizers, British ignorance of the natural rights were coming up in Woodhull's head and were inducing him to take action. His hate of the British and the sense of the urgency of a new free and independent nation were getting stronger. "I indeavour to collect and convey," Woodhull told Tallmadge in a letter, dated

¹⁷³ Ibid., 85.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.,

April 10, 1779, “the most accurate and explicit intelligence that I possibly can; and hope it may be of some service toward alleviating the misery of our distressed Country, nothing but that could have induced me to undertake it, for you must readily think it is a life of anxiety to be within (on such business) the lines of a cruel and mistrustful Enemy and that I most ardently wish and impatiently wait for their departure.”¹⁷⁷ He knew he had to serve. Sometimes, however, his service became a hostage of his idealistic views, but he showed resilience to the enemy and motivated other people to join him. One of those was Robert Townsend.

Robert Townsend (aka Samuel Culper Jr.) of the Oyster Bay was born on November 25, 1753, and his service to the new nation officially started while serving shortly as the commissary to Nathaniel Woodhull (yet another connection that might help explain his recruitment by Samuel Culper Sr.), but he “may have been [already] involved with the Sons of Liberty back in the early 1770s.”¹⁷⁸ He was an intelligent man whose life was interwoven with depression, his temperament, contradictions, twist, and turns. “Half—Quaker, half-Episcopalian, partly secular, partly devout, somewhat idealistic, somewhat mercenary,” Rose argues, “Townsend was not wholly pacifist nor entirely militant. He was an American who refused to fire a musket for his country, a Loyalist who struggled against the British”¹⁷⁹ Townsend’s duplicity of life was caused by his background.

His father, Samuel, whose views were often seen as an antithesis to the traditional Quakerism, similarly, was split on the role of Quakerism in his life. He was the Friend only in his education.¹⁸⁰ Sometimes he would get into trouble for his fondness of luxury items, opinions, and desire to be an ordinary colonial. During the Anglo-American struggle, he would protest Parliament’s imposition of brutal taxes on the colonies. This, however, did not get him into trouble nor he was faced with yet another crisis of conciseness as he was during the French and Indian war, because the Quakers, who were often merchants and businessmen, mainly supported the protests. The signature of non-importation agreement did not mean support for a military conflict. He stayed moderate during the years of non-combat conflict, but with the news of Lexington and Concord, he decided to openly argue for the American Independence.¹⁸¹ Together with his son and Woodhull, he executed the scorch earth order on Long Island, but when the British captured Long Island, he was arrested and forced to swear the oath of loyalty to the crown. His public advocacy for independence was over.

Like many other Patriots living under the British occupation, he externally accepted the reality, but internally he supported the cause. His son, who solely focused on his business career and the trade deals with both the British and Americans, also “bent his knee,” to the crown after the battle to continue with his normal life and business career.¹⁸² Why did this man suddenly change his mind and decided to risk his life for the cause? The words of newly arrived fellow

¹⁷⁷ See Letter, Woodhull to Tallmadge, April 10, 1779.

¹⁷⁸ Daigler, *Spies, Patriots, and Traitors*, 178; And, Pennypacker,

¹⁷⁹ Rose, *Washington’s Spies*, 132

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 136-140

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 136-150

Quaker, Thomas Paine, which induced him to serve earlier, in conjunction with the British inhumane actions against the residents of Long Island convinced him to accept Woodhull's offer.

Thomas Paine's work, *Common Sense*, which was one of the most influential pamphlets ever written and was widely circulated during the struggle, provided a refuge to the ordinary colonials; its charismatic words did not only reaffirm Patriot's commitment to the cause but also had helped to convince skeptics that the fight was just and requisite. With portraying the British King as a tyrant and the whole system of government as a corrupt, Paine defined American actions as defensive and ones that every "lover of Mankind" and freedom should support. "The sun never shined," he described, "on a cause of greater worth...Every quite method for peace hath been ineffectual....Wherefore, since nothing but blows will do, for God's sake, let us come to a final separation, and not leave the next generation to be cutting throats, under the violated unmeaning names of parent and child."¹⁸³ These words echoed an early religious dogma of Quakerism that "stressed the responsibility of individuals to participate in the struggle against worldly hubris, corruption, and narcissism so that they, too, might live in a paradisiacal, divine future."¹⁸⁴ Paine's words provided American Quakers with hope and strength. It was a much-needed clarification of the Anglo-American controversies and war. Once they were aware that their support of the struggle would not undermine their commitment to Quakerism, the Friends looked for a way how to help. However, their leadership disassociated themselves from the work and called it a conspiracy.

In their proclamation, *The Ancient Testimony and the Principles of the People Call'd Quakers*, they explained that only God has the prerogative to remove a King and that they stand firm against "all Plotting, Conspiracies and contriving Insurrections against the King or the Government, and against all Treacherous, Barbarous, and Murtherous Designs whatsoever, as Works of the Devil and Darkness."¹⁸⁵ Their confirmation of the commitment was a double edge sword.

Thomas Paine immediately panned their argument and accused them of not being a Quaker at all. With explicitly stating and reaffirming that the War for Independence was a struggle for peace in his response, Paine influenced even more people, and his work became a *perpetuum mobile* of the American support and recruitment. However, without the British draconic policies, arrogant personas and unintended consequences of the mother country's military rule, many people would, similarly as Samuel and Robert Townsend had, hold their ideological desires for themselves, pretended to be Tories, waited for and supported the reconciliation. Even the conceptualization of the idea and the firm accusation of the Crown in the Declaration of Independence did not convince the ordinary, moderate, and quasi-Tories to get out onto the streets and fight. The American leadership knew that the victory required a shift in

¹⁸³ Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 156

¹⁸⁵ "The Ancient Testimony and Principle of the People Called Quakers Renewed with Respect to the King and Government, and Touching the Present Association." The Early English Books, University of Michigan, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A75321.0001.001/1:1?rgn=div1;view>.

the allegiance. The pro-British and pacifist had to support the cause. But the conditions under the British rule provided Patriots with the opportunity to influence and recruit people to their side.

Even though many Tory loyalists and even moderates celebrated and welcomed the British rule after the Battle of New York, the British did not care about those emotions and did not see Long Island nor New York as a liberated territory; instead, they converted it into fortress Britannia and introduced the martial law. On one hand, because of the value of the newly acquired territory for further actions against the Continental Army, the decision was logical. However, on the other, it created an environment in which the British troops were continually harassing and preying on colonials and their property. The British would seize personal property, food, and other resources with little or no compensation at all, and the locals would have to suffer “the needless annoyances, and saw their homes occupied by British officers, some of whom had more than one residence.”¹⁸⁶

With people moving from their own homes to someone’s else, and then doing it all over again when some other British officer decided to use that house for his private chambers, pro-American colonials, and especially Loyalists, who were not exempt from the policy, were losing patience. Not only that caused the shift in loyalty, but also the presence of a considerable number of refugees on their streets and soldiers who were excessively drinking, assaulting women, and harassing their husbands.

The British, fundamentally, were antagonizing once a friendly relationship and, thus, rapidly losing support for their view of the conflict. “The people in general are [were] becoming indifferent, if not possible,” said Patrick Ferguson, a Loyalist militia officer, “to a government which in place of the liberty, prosperity, safety, and plenty, under promise of which it involved them in this war, has established a thorough despotism.”¹⁸⁷ The British arrogance had a tremendous impact on the population, and the number of Loyalists, who departed with the army after the surrender (one in every twenty), shows that many believed that the new government was better than the old one.¹⁸⁸

With colonel Simcoe quartering at his father’s home and the latter’s aggressive behavior towards his father and sister, Robert Townsend joined a band of brothers in declaring it was enough of undermining the fundamental rights and keeping those frustrations for himself; instead, it was a time to strike a silent blow against the British.¹⁸⁹ However, the story of extraordinary men and women who risked their lives would be incomplete without an account of Benedict Arnold, whose actions contradicted not only American ideals but also British gentlemanly manners.

American General Benedict Arnold whose heroism during the Battle of Saratoga could not be matched by any other officer-involved in that battle turned to be the most prominent American traitor. With hundreds and hundreds of Americans betraying their country, Benedict

¹⁸⁶ Oscar T. Barck, *New York City during the War for Independence, with special reference to the period of British occupation* (Port Washington, NY: I.J. Friedman, 1966), 88.

¹⁸⁷ As cited in Rose, *Washington’s Spies*, 159

¹⁸⁸ Rose, *Washington’s Spies*, 164

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 164

Arnold's treasonous attempt to sell the British the stronghold at West Point and obstruct American military plans is still remembered.¹⁹⁰ The betrayal in the midst of fight for "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness" could not be easily forgotten. His life was full of twist and turns.

He was born into an affluent Connecticut family that had righteously earned the respect of the community, but their business eventually collapsed, and his father started to drink.¹⁹¹ With leadership skills and military predispositions, Arnold, however, was not initially fond of the civilian career, but he eventually accepted it as a reality. He worked as an Apotheker and soon his profession took him into "the traditional New England trade, practiced by virtually all the prominent commercial families and many of the future leaders of the Revolution—smuggling products into the colonies to avoid paying the British taxes."¹⁹² It was logically, thus, that he joined the local chapter of Sons of Liberty and supported the American cause immediately when the Anglo-American controversies started. With the arrival of the news of attacks on Lexington and Concord, Arnold was among the first volunteering and calling for forming a militia unit from his community members. During the early stages of War, he led his troops aggressively to capture the Fort Ticonderoga, Lake Champlain, and successfully managed his unit in other important movements against the enemy. Washington considered him as a trusted friend and even zealously listened Arnold's idea of the capture of Canada, the British stronghold that refused to support independence which some radicals ascribed to British appeasement to the Canadian Catholics. The campaign, with its primary objective of capturing the city of Quebec, was logistically complex and required well-disciplined soldiers and proved to be a failure from the beginning. Arnold's most significant accomplishment, however, arrived when he suddenly boosted soldier's morale, rallied enforcements and bravely commanded troops during the Battle of Saratoga, specifically the Battle of Bemis Heights on October 7, 1778, and was wounded in the leg. In all examples of Arnold's extraordinary leadership and military, and even civilian, achievements, one Arnold's trait was always present—his ego.

Arnold was selfish and arrogant, and precisely that induced him to betray the American cause.¹⁹³ When the Congress promoted five less experienced senior brigadier generals to major generals, Arnold was furied and believed that his country betrayed him. To calm his friend down, Washington explained to Arnold that the real motivation behind the promotions was political, not one based on merit. To furnish troops with new provisions, the Congress decided that the number of officers should be proportional by the state.¹⁹⁴ With Connecticut already having two major generals, Arnold's appointed was impossible. Arnold stubbornly accepted the reality, but he remained internally angry on the Congress and their disrespect of his accomplishments.

¹⁹⁰ Daigler, *Spies, Patriots, and Traitors*, 145

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 146.

¹⁹³ In this light some would question Arnold's true motivation behind his decision to join the American cause. I personally believe that his decision to join the movement was influenced by the patriotic zeal, but also his economic interests similarly to many other members of the Sons of Liberty.

¹⁹⁴ See Letter, Washington to Arnold April 3, 1777.

When Arnold secured the crucial victory at Saratoga, he thought that he would prove to the Congress his value and reclaim his seniority, which he did indeed, but his wounded leg diminished his combat plans. Washington thus offered him a position of Philadelphia's military commander after the British abandoned the city in 1778. Arnold accepted it and started to plan how to administrate the city. Arnold's arrival to the city, home to the lavish social events during the occupation, in mid-June signaled the restoration of American government, the seat of Continental Congress, but also the last stage of American respect of that general. He arrived physically and psychologically wounded, and disappointed with his life and career, but that did not stop him from abandoning yet another characteristic of his—love of money.

Since his early campaign days, Arnold's expenditures and his usage of public money were under scrutiny, primarily because he could not provide paperwork to support his expenses. To Arnold, this was an attempt by his enemies to discredit his honor and accomplishments.¹⁹⁵ While in Philadelphia, the accusations against him would reemerge. He was living a lavish life that was way above his military income and constantly mingling with the Tory residents.¹⁹⁶ In the city, he met Peggy Shippen, a daughter of Philadelphia's prominent Loyalist, on whom he would spend money on and eventually marry. As Daigler describes, "his [Arnold's] types of commercial activities were not uncommon among many American political and military leaders during the war, as some biographers of Arnold note. However, the scope of his activities and their transparency made them public knowledge."¹⁹⁷ Arnold would grant specific merchants exclusive rights, use military resources to move non-government property, and purchase goods left by Tories without opening them for competitive bidding.¹⁹⁸ Arnold was using his position for an individual benefit which violated Washington's and government's ethical standards.

The Congress started an official investigation of Arnold's business dealings in early-1780, which eventually would result in a court-martial. Even though Arnold asked for Washington's help during the trial, the commander in chief separated himself from his trusted friend. That was a final blow to Arnold's wounded ego. Together with his new wife's consent, he decided to offer his services to the British and permanently relinquish his connections with the American side. Arnold instructed Joseph Stansbury, a Philadelphia merchant, and the British stay-behind, to travel to New York and request the audience with Sir Henry Clinton and offer American senior officer's services. The Andre-Arnold communication from then was on.

"The Heart which is Conciuous of its Own rectitude," Arnold wrote to Washington after the defection, "Cannot attempt to paliate a Step, which the world may Censure as wrong; I have ever acted from a Principle of Love to my Country, since the Commencement of the present unhappy Contest between Great Britian and the Colonies... I have no favor to ask for myself, I have too often experienced the Ingratitude of my Country to Attempt it." Benedict Arnold's ego, therefore, like Robert Hanssen's two hundred years later, interwoven with his love of money and sensitivity to the external monitoring of his actions would induce him to betray his country and

¹⁹⁵ Daigler, *Spies, Patriots, and Traitors*, 145-170.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 155

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 155

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 155

the cause for which he bravely fought before. Even though he thought his life would be better on the British side, he was despised equally by the British and Americans in the post-war life. The man with such a big ego died dressed into his old Continental army's uniform in London on June 14, 1801.

On the other hand, Arnold's contact in the British military during the controversies, John Andre, would be remembered as an honorable young man and admirer of art by both sides who found himself on the wrong side at the wrong time. Son of a Swiss merchant and flamboyant mother, Andre grew in Geneva and received a liberal education.¹⁹⁹ Upon completing his degree, he went to London to work for his father, and after his death, Andre bought a military commission and departed for America. He was captured by the Patriots during the siege of Fort St. James in 1775 but was exchanged after the Battle of New York in 1776. General Howe appointed him as his staff officer and translator for the Hessian troops. Howe's successors, Sir Henry Clinton, recognized Andre's extraordinary virtues and talents and appointed him as his adjutant general, an equivalent of today's chief of staff, and chief intelligence officer.²⁰⁰ Most importantly he became Clinton's closest confidant. In that capacity, he managed British intelligence operations and their most crucial asset, Benedict Arnold.

Andre was a devoted supporter of the Crown and held a meager opinion of Americans and detested those who were disloyal to the king.²⁰¹ This view probably could explain his mistakes and arrogance, especially during his capture.²⁰² Ideology, thus, combined with a desire of prestige and advancement motivated Andre to participate in the spy game, but his humility, manners, and love for art, poetry, drawing made him approachable and likable even to Americans. In his letter to Washington, written immediately after his capture, Andre stated that he was branded "with nothing dishonorable, as no motive could be mine but the service of my King." He also expressed that "having avowed myself a British officer, I have nothing to reveal but what relates to myself, which is true on the honor of an officer and a gentleman."²⁰³ With the dedication of the monument in the Westminster Abbey, a burial ground of many British sovereigns, Andre's virtues and patriotism were romanticized in Britain same as Nathan Hale's were in America.

We've begun this paper by narrating the story of Nathan Hale and finished our analysis with the story about other people, who willingly risked their lives for the end of the British tyranny in America and recognition of a new nation, and the answer to the question—why they did what they did. The American Revolution was a revolution of men and women who were induced by their psychological adjustments and their personal experience to demand the change. They organized each other, rallied support for their actions, and deceived the British by sending Quakers and women, who were commonly deemed not as a threat, on reconnaissance operations. Their strength and zeal could not be matched, and eventually, it would outmaneuver the most prominent military, and intelligence, force on the earth. The victory, however, would not be

¹⁹⁹ Rose, *Washington's Spies*, 200-201

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 201

²⁰¹ Daigler, *Spies, Patriots, and Traitors*, 153; Rose, *Washington's Spies*, 200-202.

²⁰² Daigler, *Spies, Patriots, and Traitors*, 153

²⁰³ See Letter, Andre to Washington

possible without the intelligence help and dedicated members of the Culper Ring who refined the meaning of the service and clandestine operations. Their secret of success is not only in their always careful approach to intelligence gathering and confirming the credibility of their sources, but also on their willingness to make the cause of their country a family business and to serve for no compensation at all, except reimbursement. To this day, their service is still unknown to the majority of Americans, but with every discovery, the story attracts the attention of millions of Americans and educates them about this institution. In the end, however, dear readers, it's on you to judge the importance and credibility of the Culper Ring and its significance. You can accept, scrutinize, or reject the argument entirely.

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