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“A CORPS OF MUCH SERVICE:” THE GERMAN REGIMENT OF THE CONTINENTAL  
ARMY

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honors in  
History from the College of William and Mary in Virginia,

by

John Bradstreet Weaver

Accepted for \_\_\_\_\_  
(Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors)

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Williamsburg, VA  
25 April 2017

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My interest in the German Regiment started on a bleak hill at Morristown National Historical Park in northern New Jersey in December 2011, when I joined my father and other Revolutionary War enthusiasts for the restoration of a reconstructed hut like the ones used by George Washington's Army during the hard winter of 1779 – 1780; I have been fascinated ever since. I could not have written this thesis without encouragement and help from my family, friends, and professors. I would like to thank my parents, Elizabeth and Thaddeus Weaver, who encouraged me to write a thesis and have supported me and my love of history for my whole life. I would like to thank my brother, Robert, and my grandparents, Jackie Weaver, and Nat and Jan Dodge, for their continuing love and support. I would like to thank everyone who has taught me history, both high school teachers and college professors, and especially Professor Julie Richter, my advisor, for helping me to develop my skills in history and realize what I want to study and follow as a career. I would like to thank Jim Mullins of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation for helping me to understand the Virginia Regiment and John David Woelpper. I would also like to thank the Charles Center for providing me with a platform to raise money for research, as well as all the people who donated: Debra Kirk, James William Vizzard, Michael Gornicki, Roger Swagler, Jon Stauff, James Green, Kimberly J. Smith, Christine Gottesman, Karl Fink, Karen and Doug Richards, Andrew Barry, JD Bowers, and Howard Estes. Without the Charles Center or any of these donors, I would not have been able to complete my summer research.

### **Abstract**

The German Regiment was a unit raised for service in the Continental Army in the summer of 1776 from among the ethnic German populations of Pennsylvania and Maryland, which saw service in late 1776 at the Battle of Trenton and in early 1777 at the Battles of Assunpink Creek (Second Trenton) and Princeton. This thesis to examines the role of the regiment from the time it was raised to the aftermath of the campaign in New Jersey and Pennsylvania in late 1776 and 1777, emphasizing the social makeup of the regiment's officers and men, and its place as an ethnic regiment in America's first professional army.

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## Introduction

1776 was a hard year. Despite the fact that America declared independence in July, that year saw desperate times for the Continental Army during the fight against the British. At the very end of 1775, the Continental Army failed in its attempt to invade Canada, and many men were taken prisoner or forced to retreat unceremoniously. The following year, the Continental Army failed in its defense of New York City, and George Washington suffered defeat and retreat. The new America and the Continental Army faced many difficult problems. The struggle for independence was not just a struggle for men like George Washington, who led the Continental Army and held the fate of thousands of men in his hands. It was also a struggle for the civilian people of the United States who faced shortages, inflation, and taxation because of the war. Common soldiers and officers of the Continental army faced starvation, disease, and the deprivations of war that soldiers have faced for millennia. 1776 was a time of uncertainty for the new America, and especially for those actively participating in the Revolution.

By the time of the Revolution, Colonial British North America was a political landscape dominated by the English language and English culture, which in part was gradually transforming into American culture. The largest ethnic group in British North America was English, and there were many other peoples from the British Isles: Scottish, Irish, Welsh, and Scots-Irish. The largest group of non-British peoples in British North America were undoubtedly African, most of them forcibly transported from the West African slave trade to labor in the agrarian, cash-crop centered economy of the American south. However, the largest white ethnic group after British peoples were Germans, most of whom who arrived after 1681 after the founding of the colony of Pennsylvania. By the time of the American Revolution, the German-American community was massive. Pennsylvania was particularly attractive to Germans,

because it had good land for farming and offered freedom of religion. The colony became multicultural and multilingual, largely through the influence of German immigration.

Pennsylvania and its neighbor Maryland were attractive colonies for immigrants. Pennsylvania was officially religiously tolerant, thanks to its foundation by the Quakers, and it had good farmland which stretched westward into Maryland and down into the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Many popular historians like to portray the German groups that settled in Pennsylvania, who later became known as the Pennsylvania Dutch, as all part of radical Protestant sects, like the Amish and Mennonites, who eschewed a worldly way of life and did not participate in politics. This notion is patently false. Most German immigrants were either Lutherans or Reformed (Calvinist) and Germans were vigorous in their participation in local politics.

Much of German participation in local politics was intended to uphold and defend their rights to private property, and the most important kind of property was land. The quest for land ownership during the colonial period is what guided much German settlement down into the valley of Virginia and even as far south as the backcountry of North Carolina. However, the greatest concentration of Germans in America by the time of the American Revolution was in Pennsylvania, which was one of the most multicultural colonies in British North America and certainly the most multicultural of the Middle Colonies: which also include New Jersey, Delaware, and New York.

The Middle Colonies were just as affected as other Colonies when trouble started to brew in the 1760s between the mother country of Great Britain and the Thirteen Colonies. German-Americans were just as active as their British-American contemporaries in resisting British efforts to bring the colonies to heel. In the Holy Roman Empire, Germans had faced an

oppressive noble class that historically trampled on the rights of peasants, but in British North America, there was never any titled nobility. When war broke out between the colonies and the mother country in 1775, Germans joined the newly-formed Continental Army when it began recruiting where they lived. The ranks of many Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia regiments were full of Germans, though German was never the language of command; at the establishment of the Continental Army as a national force, there were no regiments that tried to recruit Germans exclusively. Recruitment was generally done locally, so if an officer was recruiting in an area with a significant German population, then he would have a significant number of German recruits.

The German Regiment of Maryland and Pennsylvania was not the only “ethnic” regiment raised by Congress. Virginia had its own German regiment, the 8<sup>th</sup> Virginia, which was nicknamed the German Regiment but had a number designation, unlike the German Regiment of Maryland and Pennsylvania, which was at first considered an “Additional Regiment” not under the control of any one state. After a reorganization of the Continental Army later in the war, the German Regiment officially fell under the Maryland establishment, despite the fact that more than half of its troops came from Pennsylvania. There were other German units, such as Ottendorf’s Corps, a small unit that was a mix of musket-armed and rifle-armed infantry. There were also attempts at raising French-Canadian regiments, though these met with mixed success. There were attempts at raising African-American Regiments, and Rhode Island did later organize a regiment that was majority black. The new United States often experimented with ethnic regiments, but it was not always successful.

Officers such as those in the German Regiment typically recruited at the lower level of command. Field officers like colonels, who commanded the regiment, and their immediate



subordinates, lieutenant colonels and majors, often dealt more with the administrative tasks of creating a new military unit than actively trying to get people to join. That task fell to officers like captains, who commanded companies. The German Regiment had nine companies: four were from Pennsylvania, four were from Maryland, and an additional company which recruited in many different places. Within the company, captains typically did the most recruiting, however lieutenants, who were in charge of platoons, and ensigns, who were the lowest ranking commissioned officers, also actively recruited men. The result was a Continental Army that mirrored in its organization of rank the social organization of the country that decided to raise it. Historian Caroline Cox writes that “every aspect of military society is pertinent to social history and so understanding the tensions and values within the military community will help us understand the larger society.”<sup>1</sup> The study of the German Regiment can give insight into not only the German-American community at the time of the American Revolution, but also the views that others held on the German-American community, and how fully the German-Americans participated in the struggle for American independence.

The German Regiment presents a unique opportunity to study an “ethnic” regiment in the early army of the United States, however there is little in-depth research on it. Henry J. Retzer published a short history of the German Regiment in 1991, and his research is strong, but it is essentially a narrative of exactly what the German Regiment did in the Revolutionary War, and it lacks the social history style of analysis which has characterized historical writing for the past generation. The German Regiment is often mentioned in histories of the American Revolution and the Continental Army, but it is usually mentioned in passing. Most historians do not delve directly into the German Regiment and its importance, unless they are actively trying to write

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<sup>1</sup> Caroline Cox, *A Proper Sense of Honor: Service and Sacrifice in George Washington's Army* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2004) xi.

about German participation in the war, such as Charles Patrick Neimeyer in *America Goes to War: A Social History of the Continental Army*. Neimeyer devotes a chapter of his book to Germans in the continental army, but only a few pages of that chapter actually deal with the German Regiment of Maryland and Pennsylvania.<sup>2</sup> So far, the German Regiment is an overlooked subject of academic study.

The German Regiment represented German-American participation in the Revolutionary War. It was a professional unit raised from the heart of the American lands inhabited by Germans, and English was its general language of command, but the culture of the unit was distinct from that of the rest of the Continental Army. It was full of contradictions: it mutinied multiple times, but the mutineers believed that they had legal justification. Though the German Regiment was a unique unit, some of its experiences were universal. Its officer corps could in many ways be considered a microcosm of the rest of the Continental Army, and its men faced the same depredations of war as any other soldiers. In particular, they gave up their liberty as civilians to fight for the liberty of the United States as soldiers.

This thesis examines the German Regiment with an eye to the social history with which Henry J. Retzer did not engage when he wrote his monograph. The first chapter of this thesis answers the question of why Congress decided raise the German Regiment by exploring precedent for the German Regiment in the western military tradition, and the needs of America during the war. The second chapter examines the enlisted men of the German Regiment, and touches on the role of women in the German Regiment. The third chapter explores the officer corps of the German Regiment, and how it could be considered a microcosm even of the whole Continental Army officer corps. The fourth and fifth chapter deal with the German Regiment's

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Patrick Neimeyer, *America Goes to War: A Social History of the Continental Army* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1996) 49 – 50.

first months of service, and its critical role during the Trenton-Princeton Campaign of late 1776 and early 1777. The German Regiment did not have as prominent a role in the rest of the war as it did in late 1776 and early 1777, and so the entirety of the German Regiment's service will not be covered.

## Chapter 1: Why a German Regiment?

The German Regiment was not an “aha!” moment for the Continental Congress; there was much precedent for raising the German Regiment in the European military tradition. The German Regiment was in part originally conceived as a recruiting strategy, and it was one of several German units in the Continental Army. The German Regiment was a unit of the Continental Army which helped it to look more like the European-style army that George Washington wanted, rather than the distinctly American army he got. This might be why when Washington first heard about the German Regiment, he remarked in a letter that it might be “a Corps of much service.”<sup>3</sup> Congress decided to raise a German Regiment because of many European precedents, the large number of Germans in America, and the immediate needs of the war as it stood in the first half of 1776.

The German Regiment represented an experiment for the Continental Congress: raising a distinct ethnic regiment in America. This experiment was not bold or new by the time of the American Revolution, but it was not a particularly old idea. From the late Middle Ages until well into the seventeenth century, European armies were very multinational, much of the forces made up of mercenaries recruited from all over the continent. In the sixteenth century, kingdoms competed to hire mercenaries from Switzerland and often hired bands of mercenaries originating from the Holy Roman Empire known as Landsknecht. Regiments of Landsknecht, while originating within Germany (and in particular from Swabia in the southwest region) recruited men from all over Europe, especially while on campaign. After large battles during the Thirty Years War (1618 – 1648) it was commonplace for the winning side to incorporate the losing

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<sup>3</sup> “From George Washington to John Hancock, 30 June 1776,” *Founders Online*, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-05-02-107> [last update: 2016-3-28]).

side's soldiers into its own fighting force. Multinationality was a given for most armies at the time. The Thirty Years War, however, saw some of the first particular ethnic regiments in a modern western military: the Kingdom of Sweden had regiments of Finnish and Saami light cavalymen, the former of which famously utilized to great effect during the Battle of Breitenfeld near Leipzig in 1631. Even while armies were still very multinational, military leaders specifically recruited from native "ethnic" populations within their borders.

Because they were mercenaries, armies were almost political forces unto themselves in the first part of the Early Modern Period: they were a force meant to exert the power of a state, but the state had to balance its own agenda with the agendas of the armies in its service, namely keeping them paid so they would not pillage the land they were serving. With the formation of modern nation-states in the seventeenth century, states began to create the army as an extension of the nation, and often tried to keep the ranks of the army with members of that nation. However, that leaves the problem of multiple "nations," i.e. ethnic groups as they were perceived at the time, which lived within the same state, or nearby. Rulers wanted to consolidate their power and keep the state pacified, but territorial wars and treaties ceding lands and countries to other states was constant in early modern Europe.

A good example of this consolidation of power is England and Scotland's Act of Union in the first decade of the eighteenth century. The Scottish Parliament voted to join England, and the Kingdoms of England and Scotland formed into the United Kingdom of Great Britain. While Scotland and England had at that point been ruled by the same monarch for a century, they were still separate countries until Union. In the eighteenth century, Britain incorporated Scottish Regiments into the British Army for service both domestic and abroad, the most famous of which being the Highland regiments, recruited from the Gaelic-speaking people of Northern

Scotland. The British Army was raised from volunteers: when more soldiers were needed, officers and sergeants would travel the land trying to get people to join their regiments. There was a potential for fraud and misdeeds in the recruiting service; in fact, recruiting sergeants were notorious for their abilities of deception. However, they still had to convince people to join voluntarily, and so the soldiers of the regular British Army were almost always natives of the British Empire in Europe.

The situation on the European Continent was different than in Great Britain. Many European states conscripted their soldiers, and as a result of that conscription and the need for recruiters to fill their quotas, a few foreigners forced into the military did see service as individuals in regiments that were otherwise made up of that state's natives. However, the frequency of wars and the particular situations of each war led to the need for extra troops. The French, for example, often recruited regiments specifically from abroad. The French army as well as the Spanish was home to a number of Irish Regiments recruited from the famous “Wild Geese,” Catholic Irishmen fleeing from Protestant repression in Ireland.<sup>4</sup>

There were also a number of Germans serving in the French army. In particular, there was a regiment that represented almost all of the military power of a neighboring German state to France, that of the Palatinate of Zweibrücken. In 1751, the Palatine of Zweibrücken decided to rent out his troops to French Service.<sup>5</sup> The Royal Zweibrücken Regiment, known to the French as the Royal Deux-Ponts, was created in the spring of 1756 “as the eighth Regiment of German-speaking soldiers in the army of Louis XV.”<sup>6</sup> The Royal Deux-Ponts saw service in Europe

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<sup>4</sup> Rene Chartrand, “The French Army’s Irish Brigade in America” *Military Collector and Historian: Journal of the Company of Military Historians*, Volume 60, No. 1, (Spring 2008) 67.

<sup>5</sup> Selig, Robert A. "George Washington's German Allies: Das Deutsche Königlich-Französische Infanterie Regiment von Zweybrücken or Royal Deux-Ponts" *Journal of the Johannes Schwalm Historical Association* 7 no. 3 (2003) 53.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 52.

during the Seven Years War and at the Siege of Yorktown in the American Revolutionary War. Later, they were incorporated into the Revolutionary French Army.

The eighteenth century saw the development of the use of ethnic regiments in western armies, such as the British Army, the French Army, and the American Continental Army. The experience of ethnic regiments in the Seven Years War would lead to their solidification as an institution in the British Army, including the use of Swiss and American soldiers in the Royal American Regiment, probably the most direct precursor to the German Regiment in the British Army.

The Royal American Regiment was part of the largest British military expedition to North America that occurred prior to the American Revolution: the French and Indian War, a time when the British made heavy use of ethnic regiments. Highland Regiments from Scotland and the Royal American Regiment saw heavy service during this war. The Royal American Regiment was formed specifically for British Service in America. Before the American Revolution, there was precedent in the British military system for regiments raised for specific wars out of specific ethnic populations. Since the Continental Army was based off the British, units like British Highland Regiments and the Royal American Regiment can be considered as precedents to the German Regiment.

The German Regiment was conceived as a recruiting gimmick to bolster the ranks of the Continental Army. By serving in the German Regiment, enlistees had the opportunity to serve alongside their “countrymen,” i.e. other German immigrants or German Americans. Highland Regiments in British service had a similar conception, but the ethnic identity of the Highland Regiments was far more personal than that of the German Regiment. Highland Regiments gave Highland Scots an opportunity to participate in their culture in a way that the British government

had prevented since end of the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion. According to historian Stephen Brumwell:

The victorious Hanoverian Regime had made determined efforts to destroy the tribal and militaristic clan society of the region [of the Scottish Highlands]. The system of land holding whereby tenants owed military service to clan chiefs was abolished, and the carrying of traditional weapons, and even the wearing of tartan, was banned.<sup>7</sup>

The British, though they had pacified the enemy they found in Scottish Highland troops, realized that they could make use of Highland martial culture and ferocity in battle. Even to this day, Scottish troops in British service have a particular reputation for military prowess. The formation of the Highland Regiments gave Scottish Highlanders a chance to participate in their culture in a way that the British Empire found constructive, while providing men from the Highlands with an opportunity for social advancement. Highland regiments were special in the British army, because “each Scottish regiment was as big as a brigade.”<sup>8</sup> They were often arranged along clan lines, and were distinct in many ways, mainly because of their language and uniform. In terms of language, “Many new recruits spoke only Gaelic. In the eighteenth century, Highland regiments ran their own schools ... to teach the men to read and write English so that they could communicate with the rest of the army.”<sup>9</sup> The British Army armed and uniformed these Scottish soldiers in the Highland way: in addition to muskets, they carried swords, pistols, and dirks, and wore a coat cut short in the Highland fashion, a bonnet, and a kilt. However, just as enlisting in a Highland regiment gave Highland Scots the opportunity to serve with their family and friends

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<sup>7</sup> Stephen Brumwell, *Redcoats: The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755 – 1763* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 268.

<sup>8</sup> David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 47

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 48.



and speak their own language, so did service in the German Regiment give German-Americans an opportunity to speak their own language while fighting in the Continental Army.

Both the German Regiment and the Royal American Regiment formed in response to the immediate need for troops. Much like the Highland Regiments, the Royal American Regiment was an oversize regiment.<sup>10</sup> It was a regiment of mixed troops from all over Continental Europe, and its founder, James Prevost, had the idea that its soldiers would serve under officers from their own nations.<sup>11</sup> While the British eventually reduced the number of foreign officers, they stocked the Royal American Regiment with troops from both Britain and the European Continent, including Nicholas Haussegger, who eventually became the first Colonel of the German Regiment. When the Royal American Regiment came to America in 1757, American colonists bolstered its ranks of Europeans.<sup>12</sup> The Royal American Regiment is a stronger precedent to the German Regiment than the Highland Regiments. It not only had men who would eventually serve in the German Regiment, but it was founded for service in North America, and was an outlet for foreign officers wishing to volunteer in the British Army. The Continental Congress also used the German Regiment as a place to put foreign volunteers wishing to aid America in the fight against Great Britain. The Royal American Regiment also gave Americans a chance to serve in the regular British Army, rather than in Provincial Regiments or militia, as the German Regiment gave German-Americans an extra opportunity to serve in the regular army, rather than just in their local militia.

Ethnic Regiments occupy a strange space in the social structure; they are both a tool of liberation and a tool of oppression. As a tool of liberation, they give their members a chance to

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<sup>10</sup> Alexander V. Campbell, *The Royal American Regiment: An Atlantic Microcosm, 1755 – 1772* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010) 49.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

be among their own culture and “prove themselves” to the rest of the army, and thereby their nation. However, ethnic regiments can act as a tool of oppression in that they separate their members as an other, a group of people somehow different from other soldiers in the same army. In the case of the German Regiment, and the British-American experience of ethnic regiments prior to the American Revolution, ethnic regiments served as a means to tempt men to join the army. Governments desperate for troops tried to make military life as appealing as possible for people who may not have necessarily joined the army otherwise. In this capacity, the Highland Regiments and the Royal American Regiment were fine precedents for the German Regiment, though ultimately the Highland Regiments would stand the test of time and continue to exist in the present day.

In addition to British precedents for the German Regiment during the French and Indian War, there were American precedents, particularly in the form of American militia and provincial troops. During King George’s War (1744 – 1748), Benjamin Franklin noted that “Mulberry Ward [in Philadelphia] being very large is divided into two Companies, and as our German Brethren who are as hearty and as forward as [any of] us, have desired to be by themselves, [one] of those Companies is accordingly German, [and the] other English.”<sup>13</sup> Provincials were American soldiers that formed their own battalions under their own officers, but they were not members of the militia and came under the authority of the British military establishment. New England provided the most provincial troops to the British Army during the French and Indian War, but Pennsylvania also formed provincial battalions. Although there was some planning to form an American German Regiment during the French and Indian War, British leadership dismissed the idea:

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<sup>13</sup> “Address to the Associators, 7 December 1747,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified December 28, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-03-02-0099>.

There is a Scheme to raise German Regiment in Pensylvania of four Battalions, each to contain one Thousand Men. There was certainly people in England, well acquainted enough with America, to inform Them that such a scheme was impracticable: I know not indeed, whether they design falling upon some new method to engage The Germans to inlist, but I am certain by The ordinary methods of inlistment, They will never be able to inlist one Battalion of Germans in a Twelve Month. I don't believe we could muster two Hundred Germans out of all the Forces now on Foot. Our officers who recruited in Pensylvania, tell me they are the last People in the Province that are willing to turn Soldiers.<sup>14</sup>

Germans did serve as provincial troops in the French and Indian War, but they tended to serve on a local basis and within their own communities. Historian R.S. Stephenson reports that in “Lancaster in the Fall of 1755 that the ‘Dutch’ held a separate meeting to organize themselves.”<sup>15</sup> Officers recruited out of their own communities as well: “Nearly all of [Nicholas] Wetherholt’s company ... were Germans or native-born sons of Germans.”<sup>16</sup> Germans were the second largest ethnic group in the Pennsylvania Regiments at about fifteen percent, after the Scots-Irish; they outnumbered the English, and there were distinct “German” companies.<sup>17</sup> Conrad Weiser, a German immigrant and famous Indian agent, was colonel of the First Battalion of the Pennsylvania Regiment in the French and Indian War. He was also father to one of the German Regiment’s captains, Benjamin Weiser, which furthers the continuity between the German Regiment and provincial troops in the French and Indian War.

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<sup>14</sup> “To George Washington from Thomas Gage, 10 May 1756,” *Founders Online*, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington.02-03-09-0109> [last update: 2016-03-28]).

<sup>15</sup> R.S. Stephenson, “Pennsylvania Provincial Soldiers in the Seven Years’ War” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (Spring 1995) 201.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 204.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 206.

Despite the fact that Germans were not the largest ethnic group to fight in Pennsylvania's Provincial Corps during the French and Indian War, their service disproved Thomas Gage's opinion that they "were the last People in the Province that are willing to turn Soldiers."<sup>18</sup> However, the number of German soldiers in the Pennsylvania Battalions was not representative of the Pennsylvania German population at the time of the French and Indian War. The height of German immigration to the British Colonies, according to Marianne S. Wokek, was in the years 1749 – 1754, right after King George's War, known as the War of the Austrian Succession in Europe, and directly before the French and Indian War.<sup>19</sup> Thirty-five thousand Germans arrived during this time.<sup>20</sup> The German Regiment was not something meant to entice German immigrants to enlist right as they got off the boat. That would not really have been possible, since British firms controlled the immigration trade and German immigrants went through British ports and sailed to America on British ships.<sup>21</sup> The nature of German immigration would have also precluded immediate enlistment, since most Germans who travelled to America at the time came over as indentured servants, and would have been unable to enlist without their master's permission.

German indentured servants came to be known as "Redemptioners." They generally made a contract with the shipping company stating that someone in America would pay for their passage upon landfall.<sup>22</sup> If a Redemptioner could not find someone to pay off his or her debt, he or she would find someone for whom to work as an indentured servant, or the shipping company would sell him or her as an indentured servant in order to pay off the immigrant's debt. The

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<sup>18</sup> "To George Washington from Thomas Gage, 10 May 1756," *Founders Online*.

<sup>19</sup> Marianne S. Wokek, *Trade in Strangers: the Beginning of Mass migration to North America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999) 44.

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

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 128 – 130.

<sup>22</sup> Aaron Spencer Fogleman, *Hopeful Journeys: German Immigration, Settlement, and Political Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996) 78.

actual sale of German indentured servants has parallels in the African slave trade, but there are a few key differences that made it nowhere near as oppressive or horrific. Most importantly, German immigration to America was entirely voluntary, and even though the shipping companies took advantage of immigrants and sold them off of a block like slaves, indentured servitude was not permanent or hereditary. Indentures usually stood for a term of four to seven years for German immigrants in the eighteenth century. To most German immigrants coming to America, life on the voyage and in their new land was a life of contracts and oaths. They had to contract with groups to leave the Holy Roman Empire, contract with shipping firms to get themselves over the Atlantic, enter a contract to pay off their debts, and swear that they would be loyal subjects of the British Empire.<sup>23</sup>

Germans came to America with a different political background than the English, but one that complemented English political thought, most notably in German notions of “Liberty” in German *Freiheit* or *Freiheiten*, and “Property,” *Eigentum*. Durs Thommen, a German immigrant wrote to his family in 1736:

I took a place with 350 *Juchert* (about 435 acres), two houses and barns, and have, believe it or not, 6 horses, 2 colts, 15 cattle, and about 35 sacks of oats, 46 sacks of wheat, 25 sacks of rye, and 23 sacks of corn. For all this land I have to pay no more than 7 shilling, or about 7 times 5 Swiss batzen, for tithes, quitrents, and other dues. In this country there are abundant *Freyheiten* in just about all matters.<sup>24</sup>

Thommen uses *Freiheit* in the plural, which is emblematic of German use of the word in the eighteenth century. To an eighteenth-century German, liberties meant privileges, which is what

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<sup>23</sup> As will be mentioned later, this life of contracts even colored German-American perceptions of military service.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 33.

the nobility granted peasants when they lived in the Holy Roman Empire. To the English, liberty meant freedom to, rather than freedom from, such as the freedom to worship in Pennsylvania or freedom of the press to report without censorship. To an eighteenth-century German, freedom meant freedom from, such as exemptions from certain taxes or military conscription. In the Holy Roman Empire, freedom was given by the ruler, and was not something which people inherently possessed outside of their own conscience.<sup>25</sup> Within the German notion of liberty, the most important right was the right of property. While in America, Germans had the ability to accumulate more property, especially in the form of land, than they ever could have if they had remained in Europe, and they were more than willing to fight for their property rights if they came under threat.<sup>26</sup>

Germans were politically active in many ways when they came to America, such as voting when they could and serving in the militia. They spoke their own language, and formed their own dialogue with the English-speaking people who ran the colonial governments. While many German religious sects, such as the Amish, Dunkers, and Schwenkfelders forbade political participation, most Germans were not radical Protestants like individuals in these groups. Most German immigrants were either Lutheran or German Reformed (Calvinist), but there was also a relatively tiny Catholic minority among German-Americans. Germans occupied an odd place in the social hierarchy of British America. They were a very sizable minority: between 1681, when Pennsylvania was founded, and 1776, when the Revolutionary War broke out, more than 100,000 Germans came to British North America. There were German communities in almost every colony except for Delaware and New England, and Germans made up about ten percent of

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<sup>25</sup> A.G. Roeber, *Palatines, Liberty, and Property: German Lutherans in Colonial British America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) 19.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 184 – 186.

the total British North American population on the eve of the Revolution.<sup>27</sup> Being a sizable minority made Germans visible. Most spoke German as their first language, even if they were born in North America rather than in the Holy Roman Empire. With the exception of small communities in the Deep South and New York, most German Americans lived in a fairly contiguous area: a band of land that extends from Western New Jersey around Philadelphia to Southern Pennsylvania and Western Maryland, which reached down the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia to its furthest point in the North Carolina Backcountry. Germans were an “other” to the English, but were nowhere near as marginalized as Africans or Indians. Germans were white, and for the most part, Protestant, but to the English, they were foreigners, and tended to live apart.

Even though they lived apart, Germans in America seemed a natural fit for Continental Army Service in distinct regiments, because they were a sizable, visible, politically active minority which occupied a distinct land area. However, the precedents and reasoning for raising the German Regiment are not just in the years leading up to the Revolution, and do not come solely out of established European practice. There are two other circumstances which caused the Continental Congress to decide to raise a separate German Regiment, both of which have to do with the immediate military situation of the Revolutionary War.

The first reason was the always-pressing need for troops. The German Regiment was one of the first regiments in the Continental Army which enlisted its men for three years or the duration of the war. Before late spring 1776, Continental Army soldiers enlisted for terms of a few months or up to a year. Enlistments were so short because of the British and British-

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<sup>27</sup> A.G. Roeber “‘The Origin of Whatever is not English Among Us’: the Dutch-speaking and German Speaking Peoples of British North America,” *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the first British Empire*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991) 244 – 245.

American aversion to permanent standing armies. English-speakers commonly thought that if an army were to be too large or too permanent a fixture, then it would acquire too much power and oppress its nation's people. This logic was very normal to the eighteenth-century American, and there is a great body of work that deals with the interplay of the Continental Army as a professional military in a democratic society.<sup>28</sup> It is important to the German Regiment's history not only because it was one of the first long-term regiments, but also because many German Regiment soldiers had seen previous military service in regiments that were raised for service in the short term. One such soldier was David Fink who "enlisted for one year in the State of Pennsylvania in the company commanded by Captain John Miller of the 5<sup>th</sup> Regiment Pennsylvania & after the expiration of the One year, he further enlisted in the service of the United States for three years in the State of Pennsylvania in the Company commanded by Captain Grable."<sup>29</sup> Fink is one of many German Regiment soldiers who had previous military experience, or claimed to in their later applications for pensions. Reenlistment into a new unit was not exclusive to the German-American population, but it was common in the German Regiment and important to the United States Congress in the increasingly desperate military situation of mid-1776.

Congress voted to raise "a regiment of Germans" on 25 May 1776.<sup>30</sup> The second reason behind the decision to raise the German Regiment came on the heels of the news that Great Britain had hired auxiliary troops from various principalities within the Holy Roman Empire.

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<sup>28</sup> The seminal work on democracy and the Continental Army is Charles Royster's *A Revolutionary People At War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979).

<sup>29</sup> David Fink Pension Application, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, Fold3 Military Records, Fold3.com, S42194. Pension applications are unique sources: no two are exactly the same, though the language in each is usually similar. They are also one of the few places where the voice of common soldiers, who represented America's lower classes, can be heard in military history. Almost all official military records were written by officers, and not by enlisted men.

<sup>30</sup> *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, ed. Worthington C. Ford et al. (Washington, D.C., 1904-37), 4:390.



Known colloquially as the “Hessians,” these soldiers came from five different German principalities: Hessen-Kassel, which provided the most troops; Hessen-Hanau, Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, Anhalt-Zerbst, Ansbach-Bayreuth, and Waldeck, the last of which provided only one regiment.<sup>31</sup>

The British Government’s consideration to hire foreign troops for the war in America was widely reported in the newspapers. British officials began to discuss the idea even before 1776. On 23 August 1775, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* reported that in Boston “The people say great pains are taken to persuade them to stay, by telling them that 30,000 Hanoverians, 30,000 Hessians, and as many Russians, are shortly expected, when they shall destroy all the rebels at once.”<sup>32</sup> The British government did not make treaties until late 1775 and early 1776. In January of 1776, the *Maryland Gazette* printed a speech given by John Wilkes, a radical Whig, and the biggest pro-American voice in British Parliament at the time:

I trust no part of the subjects of this vast empire will ever submit to be slaves. I am sure the Americans are too high spirited to brook the idea. Your whole power, and that of your allies, if you had any, and of all the German troops cannot effect so wicked a purpose.<sup>33</sup>

Wilkes wanted to dissuade Parliament from making treaties with German principalities for soldiers, but Parliament chose to, and hired thousands of German troops to serve in America. On 10 May 1776, the *Pennsylvanischer Staatsbote*, the largest German-language newspaper in America at the time of the Revolution, reported that “the government took from Germany 1800

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<sup>31</sup> The state of Hanover was ruled by the same king as Great Britain, but Hanoverian troops did not serve in America during the war, instead serving in the European theater, such as at the Siege of Gibraltar from 1779 – 1783.

<sup>32</sup> “PHILADELPHIA, August 23,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Accessible Archives.

<sup>33</sup>, *Maryland Gazette Collection*, Archives of Maryland Online, Image 1021.

<http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc4800/sc4872/001282/html/m1282-1021.html>

so-called Jaegers .... The Landgrave of Hessen-Cassel gave 12000 men, and the Duke of Braunschweig 5000.”<sup>34</sup> If the German Regiment was raised in reaction to the news that the British government had decided to hire troops from the Holy Roman Empire, it stands to reason that the German Regiment could, to some degree, be considered an American *freikorps* or free battalion.

The raising of the German Regiment as a reaction to the incoming German Auxiliary troops suggests that Congress wanted to create a unit that would take advantage of the desire of some deserters or prisoners of war from the auxiliary troops to serve in the Continental Army. In European practice, armies recruited out of deserter groups or prisoners of war and organized them into free battalions, which were typically irregular units of light infantry. According to Christopher Duffy, adventurers in Central Europe helped the Prussian army to organize its first free battalions during the Seven Years War, in order to combat the incredibly effective Croatian light infantry of the Habsburg military.<sup>35</sup> The German Regiment was not irregular light infantry, though it would temporarily be considered part of light infantry brigades throughout the war, most notably when they served in the light infantry under General Hand during General John Sullivan’s expedition against the Iroquois in 1779. Penalties for desertion were severe in eighteenth-century militaries, but there was plenty of reason for auxiliary troops to want to desert, or so Congress thought. On 14 August 1776, the Continental Congress considered the situation of German auxiliary troops:

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<sup>34</sup> Henry Miller, “1776. Dienstags, den 14 Mai ... London, den 10 Jenner,” *Der Wochentliche Philadelphischer Staatsbote*, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Microfilm. Original German: *Die regierung hat nach Deutschland geschickt 1800 mann sogenannte jäger in dienste zu nehmen .... Der Landgraf von Hessen-Cassel hat, wie es heißt, 12000 mannn zugestanden, under Herzog von Braunschweig 5000.*

<sup>35</sup> Christopher Duffy, *The Army of Frederick the Great: Second Edition* (Chicago: The Emperor’s Press, 1996) 131 – 133.

His Britannic Majesty ... unable to engage Britons sufficient to execute his sanguinary measures, has applied for aid to foreign princes, who are in the habit of selling the blood of their people for money, and from them has procured ... considerable numbers of foreigners. And ... such foreigners, if appraised of the practice of these states would chuse to accept of lands, liberty, safety and a communion of good laws, and mild government, in a country where many of their friends and relations are already happily settled, rather than continue exposed to the toils and dangers of a long and bloody war, waged against a people, guilty of no other crime, than that of refusing to exchange freedom for slavery; and that they will do this the more especially when they reflect, that after they shall have violated every Christian and moral precept, by invading, and attempting to destroy, those who have never injured them or their country, their only reward, if they escape death and captivity, will be a return to the despotism of their prince, to be by him again sold to do the drudgery of some other enemy to the rights of mankind.<sup>36</sup>

To the members of Congress, the auxiliary troops were in a pitiable situation, and there would be nothing better for them than to desert their old service and join with the cause of the United States. Ultimately, Congress resolved to give bounties of land to any German auxiliaries who would be willing to run the risk of desertion:

These states will receive all such foreigners who shall leave the armies of his Britannic majesty in America, and shall chuse to become members of any of these states; that they shall be protected in the free exercise of their respective religions, and be invested with the rights, privileges and immunities of natives, as

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<sup>36</sup> *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, ed. Worthington C. Ford et al. (Washington, D.C., 1904-37), 5:653 – 654.

established by the laws of these states; and, moreover, that this Congress will provide, for every such person, 50 Acres of unappropriated lands in some of these states, to be held by him and his heirs in absolute property.<sup>37</sup>

If any auxiliaries wanted to fight in the Continental Army, they could serve in the German Regiment, where the other men and officers spoke their language, and where they could hardly be considered a foreigner.

The German Regiment was not a product of sudden ideas, but it was the culmination of centuries of European military experience, and decades of the founders' experience dealing with Germans in America. It was, to some degree, a recruiting "gimmick," and the effectiveness of that approach is debatable, since they raised only one regiment as a German Regiment. German-Americans did not have the same strength of cultural identity, as the Highland Scots did in their service in the British Army, but they were set apart from British-Americans. On June 27<sup>th</sup>, Congress worked out how they would raise the German Regiment, with four companies from Maryland and four companies from Pennsylvania.<sup>38</sup> Many German-Americans from Pennsylvania and Maryland served in the Continental Army, but ultimately, most of them did not serve in the German Regiment. The German Regiment was an experiment by Congress to see if they could use other Americans' identity to spur recruitment.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 654 – 655.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 5:487.

## Chapter 2: “A German or the son of a German:” The Common Soldier of the German Regiment

Far from sitting on the sidelines while British-Americans made decisions which would affect their lives, German-Americans in colonial and Revolutionary America were a politically active group. While most open political discourse was in English, Germans were active participants in the politics of Maryland and Pennsylvania, and German-language newspapers, such as Henry Miller’s *Pennsylvanischer Staatsbote*, kept German-Americans informed about their world.<sup>39</sup> For example, the *Staatsbote* was the first German-language newspaper to print a German translation of the Declaration of Independence, on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1776.<sup>40</sup> German-American political participation manifested itself in many ways: Germans were active voters, and even the act of immigration itself can be seen as a political decision to reject the rule of the Holy Roman Empire’s nobility. However, the strongest act of political participation in the German-American community was military service, especially in Pennsylvania.

The colony of Pennsylvania was unique among the thirteen colonies in that it did not have a militia law. In other colonies, like Virginia, men were required to be armed, and turn out several times a year to practice military drill. During most of the colonial period, the French and Spanish were legitimate threats to English rule in North America, and many colonists faced near constant conflict with Indians on their western borders. Colonial militias were seen in many places as a necessary tool of defense. However, Quakers founded Pennsylvania, and because they were pacifists, there was no militia law until 17 March 1777, well after revolutionaries

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<sup>39</sup> Henry Miller’s name can also be found as “Henrich Mueller” or “Henrich Miller.” When dealing with English speakers, German-Americans in the eighteenth century, often anglicized their names, but used their German names when dealing with German-speakers.

<sup>40</sup> Henry Miller, *Der Wöchentliche Philadelphische Staatsbote Front Page, July 9, 1776* [*The Weekly Philadelphian State-Herald*] [electronic Resource], 1776.

ousted the Quakers from power.<sup>41</sup> Prior to the institution of a formal state militia, Pennsylvania used bodies of men called “Associators” who organized themselves as a volunteer militia when the colony as a whole came under threat. Service in the Associators was not compulsory, but one of the leading groups to join the Associators *en masse* were German-Americans. One of the founders of the Pennsylvania Associators was Benjamin Franklin who called upon “brave and steady” Germans to join the Associators during King George’s War in the 1740s.<sup>42</sup> Although Franklin was not always a friend to the German-American community, at one point deriding them as “palatine boors,” he understood their importance as one of the largest ethnic groups in Pennsylvania. Germans lived on the Pennsylvania frontier, and at one point faced more threat from Indians than any other group in the colony.

By the time of the Revolutionary War, the Associators, and in particular the Philadelphia Associators, were one of the most radical factions in Pennsylvania politics. The Associators in the Revolutionary War were run by a Committee of Privates, and, according to Steven Rosswurm, “in no other colony or city did the political participation of the laboring poor become institutionalized as it did with the Philadelphia Committee of Privates.”<sup>43</sup> Germans formed a substantial part of Philadelphia’s laboring poor, and thus were in the Philadelphia Associators in considerable numbers. The radicalism of the Associators is best demonstrated by their response to the class divides of the eighteenth century. Associator authors pushed the idea that the “‘better sort’ who were made, ordained, constituted, appointed and predestined from the foundation of the world to *govern*, and to all intents and valuable purposes, *possess* the surface of this globe,

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<sup>41</sup> Steven Rosswurm, *Arms, Country, and Class: the Philadelphia Militia and the “Lower Sort” During the American Revolution, 1775 – 1783* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1987) 135.

<sup>42</sup> Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 2008 ) 32. The word “Associators” or “Association” frequently occurred in Colonial and Early American Politics. When the Colonies decided to stop imports and exports from and to Britain, they formed the Continental Association.

<sup>43</sup> Rosswurm, *Arms*, 66.

and all its inhabitants,” in other words, according to Rosswurm, that “all of recorded human history had been the history of class domination.”<sup>44</sup> While these ideas were by no means the mainstream way of thought, they were circulated throughout the Philadelphia Associators and would have certainly been on their minds.

Regular army Regiments often recruited out of their state’s militia, and the German Regiment recruited out of the Philadelphia Associators, because they were a ready body of men willing to fight in the Revolution. One way of discovering Associator service in the German Regiment is through deserter descriptions in the *Pennsylvanischer Staatsbote*. When soldiers would desert from their units, officers from those units often would place advertisements in the newspaper, seeking their return along with a reward:

September last ran from Capt. Jacob Bonner’s Company in the First German Battalion, under the command of Colonel Nicholas Haussegger ... the following soldier ... Johann Meyer, about 5 foot 6 Inches tall, of clean face, has short black hair, had on when he left, a yellow *Kittel* and trousers of the same, he belonged before to Colonel Bull’s Battalion of the Militia.<sup>45</sup>

At least one Associator who joined the German Regiment did not find it to his liking enough to remain. The Continental Army had harsher discipline than the militia, and militia often did not have to fight outside of their own state, though Philadelphia Associators fought in battles like in New Jersey.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 91 – 92.

<sup>45</sup> Henrich Miller, “1776. Dienstags, den 29 October ... Im Letzten September,” *Der Wochentliche Philadelphischer Staatsbote*, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Microfilm. Original German: “*Im Letzten September sind von Cap. Jacob Bonners Campanie, in dem ersten Deutschen Battallion, unde dem Befehl des Obersten Nicolaus Hussagger, die ... folgende Soldat ... Johann Meyer, bey 5 Fuß, 6 Zoll lang, saubern Angesichts, hat kurze schwarze Haare; hatten an als err wegging, einen gelben Kittel und der gleichen lange Hosen; er gehörte vor diesem zu des Orbersten Bulls Battallion von der Militz.*” This is as close to the English language and phrasing used in eighteenth century Runaway descriptions as possible. *Kittel* is a sort of German-style work coat in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, not dissimilar to an English-style fly coat, which was sporting wear designed to protect other garments.

In addition to recruiting from the Associators, the German Regiment also found soldiers in the Flying Camp, a body of militia stationed at Perth Amboy, in New Jersey, under the command of Brigadier General Hugh Mercer.<sup>46</sup> The Flying Camp included militia from Delaware, Maryland and Pennsylvania, and one of its missions was to quash Loyalist activity in the vicinity of New York City.<sup>47</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Stricker requested on 25 July 1776 that the German Regiment's officers have the "power to enlist the men who have engaged in the Flying Camp, as there are many of them would willingly go with us."<sup>48</sup> In his 1818 pension application, German Regiment soldier Christian Dull recalled that he "enlisted in Amboy in the State of New Jersey in the 25<sup>th</sup> of August in year the year ... 1776."<sup>49</sup> He was not the only German Regiment soldier who enlisted in Amboy. The German Regiment drew many Pennsylvania militiamen as recruits, who possibly represented a politically radical element in the unit.

The German Regiment had some success in attracting deserters and prisoners of war from German auxiliaries serving with the British Army. Again, deserter descriptions are a useful tool in identifying who were the common soldiers of the German Regiment. Captain Woelpper, who received his commission later than the other officers, had a hard time filling out the ranks of his company. Since the other officers of the German Regiment had recruited throughout other German-speaking parts of Pennsylvania and Maryland, and many German-Americans already served in regiments outside of the German Regiment, Woelpper had a relatively small recruiting pool. Woelpper was also an experienced enough soldier that it is also possible that he was choosy in trying to pick men who would make the best soldiers. The soldiers of his company are

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<sup>46</sup> Thomas J. McGuire, *Stop the Revolution: America in the Summer of Independence and the Conference for Peace* (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 2011) 56.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>48</sup> George Stricker to Samuel Chase, *Archives of Maryland: Journal and Correspondence of the Maryland Council of Safety, July 7 – December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1776* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1893) 116.

<sup>49</sup> Christian Dull Pension Application, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, Fold3 Military Records, Fold3.com, S42688.



a special case because many of them were not Germans, and he appears to have had the greatest number of German auxiliary troops in his company. A deserter description from 1777 shows four men in his company that had previously belonged to the auxiliary troops, including one Hessian, and two men from the Third Waldeck Regiment, the only regiment from the German Principality of Waldeck in British service:

DESERTED from Captain Woelpper Company of the German battalion .... John Man Flicket, a Hessian ... Thomas Wenick, a German Waldecker ... John Peter Ulerick, a Waldecker<sup>50</sup>

Another man in the same deserter description, Christopher Moore, was listed as “German born” and “lately come to the country.”<sup>51</sup> Henry J. Retzer, a historian of the German Regiment, found that Christopher Moore was also a Waldeck soldier.<sup>52</sup> The same deserter description included an explicit reference to a non-German in Woelpper’s Company: John Kennington, “an Irishman.”<sup>53</sup>

Unless an ethnic regiment recruit exclusively from a particular population within a particular region, it stands to reason that it would lose its cultural homogeneity over time; the need for warm bodies to fill the ranks would win over any philosophical desire to keep the regiment filled with people from the same community. No one would have understood this better than Captain Woelpper, the most seasoned veteran of the German Regiment other than perhaps Colonel Haussegger himself. Billing a unit as an ethnic regiment might be a way to get secure recruits right at its foundation. However, once the war began, and the regiment began taking casualties, men began deserting, and enlistments began to expire, filling the ranks became the

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<sup>50</sup> John David Woelpper “One Hundred and Twelve Dollars Reward,” *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Accessible Archives.

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

<sup>52</sup> Henry J. Retzer, “Waldeck Deserters in the German Regiment of the Continental Army,” *Journal of the Johannes Schwalm Historical Association*, Vol. 5, No. 4, 1996, 82.

<sup>53</sup> Woelpper, “One Hundred,” Accessible Archives.

most important priority for all the officers of the German Regiment, even if each individual recruit was “not ... a German or the son of a German.”<sup>54</sup>

Woelpper’s company is something of the exception rather than the rule; most of the enlisted men of the German Regiment were German immigrants or American-born Germans, though the unit did lose some of its “ethnic character” over time, since during the course of the war the number of Germans willing to enlist in the regiment dwindled. American men would have had a different approach to people like the Hessians or Waldeckers, who were often forced into military service by their autocratic rulers. German-Americans, like other Americans at the time, saw military service as a social contract. In *A People’s Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years’ War* Fred Anderson posits:

The cultural context of [New England] society and the demands of the provincial economy made contracts a part of everyday life and talk, while notions of ... sovereignty and ... elite made remained for the vast majority of colonists rather distant and abstract .... [In the French and Indian War] redcoat officers could not concluded ... all Americans lacked the character to make good soldiers.<sup>55</sup>

Anderson’s theory can be applied to much of Colonial America. If Americans were poor soldiers, then the British would have won the Revolutionary War. However, on paper, the German Regiment does seem to be made up of poorly disciplined soldiers, as they mutinied almost three times. However, mutiny does not just happen; soldiers needed to feel a real grievance with their commanders before they mutinied.

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<sup>54</sup> Neimeyer, *America Goes to War*, 50.

<sup>55</sup> Fred Anderson, *A People’s Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984) 194 – 195.

Germans may have had a more developed idea of the elite in society than other people in Revolutionary America, and this possibly contributed to the occasional lack of discipline within the Regiment. Germans came from the rigidly hierarchical Holy Roman Empire where the ruling nobility had often abused their power against the largely peasant population. Because of this abuse, it is possible that the soldiers of the German Regiment distrusted any noblemen, especially German noblemen. Such a theory why the unit's second colonel, Henry Leonard Philip, Baron d'Arendt, may not have been popular among the common soldiers.<sup>56</sup> Soldiers in the German Regiment, their parents, or grandparents may have borne grudges against nobility, especially nobility who treated them like peasants.

If military service was considered a social contract, then the soldiers of the German Regiment would have expected to have received something in return for their service other than the obvious pay, food, and equipment; they would have expected the military to uphold its agreement with the soldiers made when they enlisted. This notion is evident in 1779, when the German Regiment mutinied for the second time. William Rogers, the chaplain to Hand's Brigade, wrote in his journal about the German Regiment's breach of discipline:

Wednesday, July 14th. Last Night thirty three of the German Regiment deserted under the plea of their time being out. They went off properly armed with drum and fife. . . . a detachment of fifty soldiers on horseback were ordered to pursue them.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> "To George Washington from Colonel Arendt, 7 August 1777," Founders Online, National Archives, last modified December 28, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-10-02-0541>.

<sup>57</sup> William Rogers, *The Journal of a Brigade Chaplain in the Campaign of 1779 Against the Six Nations Under Command of Major-general John Sullivan* ed. Sidney Smith Rider (Michigan State University: Sidney S. Rider, 1879) 62.

The common enlistment for a soldier in the Continental Army from 1776 onwards was three years, or the duration of the war. In the summer of 1779, assuming most of the men had enlisted for three years instead of the duration of the war, their time truly would have expired. The men of the German Regiment had filled their end of the contract of military service: it was time for the government to uphold its promise and let them leave. The mutineers penned this petition to the United States Congress:

We the four Different Companys Raised in the State of Pennsylvania, Now Belonging to the German Regiment by this our Humple Petition, Beg leave to lay our grievances Before the Honorable House. We Being First Inlisted for three years, and received Ten Dollars bounty, at the Expiration of three months there being Ten dollars more Given to Us, Being Persuadet that it was Only a Present, of the above state, But now we are tould by Our Officers that we are Inlisted During the War. Several of use Having Received the other Ten Dollars, and Several Have not. As we have unterwent the Hardships of a three years Campaign, and all of us having Familys, or Aged Parents now Suffering in Distress, and Helpless. We Most Humply Pray that the Honorable Gentlemen of the United States, In General Congress assembled, would take the Matter Into a Serious Consideration, and Grant us discharges at the Expiration of the said Three Years, and we Pray to Almighty God, to Creon you and our Labours for our Valuable Rights and Libertys, with success, and Glory and if it should ever Come to our Turn, to Turn out with the militia, we shall obey with pleasure.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> “German Battalion, Companies of the, to Congress” Papers of the Continental Congress, Fold3.com. The entire text of the petition is important enough that nothing from it ought to be omitted.

The men of the German Regiment made the claim that the extra bounty money was thought to be a gift. This may or may not be true; along with a possible language barrier and the potential for those who handed out to the bounty to have lied, the claims of the deserters could be legitimate. The mutinous soldiers may have also just been looking for a way to escape from their military service, because they would soon enter the truly foreign territory of the Iroquois. The petition did not reach the Continental Congress, but it did reach the Commander-in-Chief of the expedition, Major-General John Sullivan. Sullivan would have known that his commanding officer, George Washington, did not like to execute men, even for mutiny and desertion. Washington thought it would undermine discipline and create resentment in the ranks. Sullivan made the decision not to execute any of the participants in the 1779 mutiny. Two weeks after their desertion, William Rogers wrote:

Monday, July 26th ... the Commander-in-Chief having received a petition from the prisoners of the German Battalion ... wishing to extend mercy where it can be done without injury to the public service, has accordingly consented to pardon each and every one of the offenders ... and directs that they be immediately released and restored to their duty.<sup>59</sup>

The mutineers, however, did not go unpunished. The ringleaders, who were the sergeants and corporals, were originally sentenced to be shot or made to run the gauntlet. However, they were only reduced to the ranks as privates, and those who just followed the mutiny along received no punishment except being forced to serve for the duration of the war.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Rogers, *Journal*, 69.

<sup>60</sup> Running the gauntlet was an old military practice by the time of the Revolution. A convicted man was made to walk at a slow pace between two lines of men, who would strike him with their ramrods, a steel rod with a flat end used to load a musket.

One of the enlisted soldiers who left the longest paper trail, and participated in the 1779 mutiny in the German Regiment was a man named Jacob Bottomer, who applied for a pension from the state government of Pennsylvania in 1813.<sup>61</sup> Pensions were often issued very early on. As soon after the war as the late 1780s, the government issued soldiers money for their time spent in the military. However, the earlier the pensions were issued, the greater the restrictions put on them. Both the Federal Government and state governments issued pensions to Revolutionary War soldiers. The first pensions were given out to soldiers who served in just the Continental Army, who had been rendered unable to work because of their time spent in the military, such as if they had been disabled by wounds or sickness sustained during the war. As time wore on, these restrictions became looser. Widows and children could receive pensions for fallen husbands and fathers, people who had served in the militia could get pensions, and eventually, anyone who had served at all, even if they were not impoverished or disabled could receive money from the government. Bottomer claimed that he was wounded at the Second Battle of Trenton.<sup>62</sup> Bottomer's fate in that battle was pitiful, as told from the perspective of his Lieutenant, Bernard Hubley:

BOTTOMER was wounded in the left side. Hubley was near BOTTOMER when he was wounded and heard him cry out that he was shot. He immediately ordered the soldiers to bring him along and advised him not to cry out. When he was near the bridge that crossed the creek, which passed through Trenton he fell down and was run over by at least fifty soldiers. When they crossed the bridge and formed in battle array along the creek, BOTTOMER came crawling along, being weak

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<sup>61</sup> "Pension Application of Jacob Bottimore", Record Group 2 Container 1, Pennsylvania State Archives.

<sup>62</sup> This battle will be covered in the chapter about the German Regiment's first campaign.

from loss of blood. They pronounced his wound mortal and he was placed under the care of Surgeons.<sup>63</sup>

Bottomer did recover and rejoin his company, but after his wounding, he did not owe anything to the army beyond the bare minimum of his service. Medicine, especially military medicine, was not terribly reliable in the eighteenth century, and being left to the care of the surgeons may have been equivalent to being left for dead.

Bottomer is far from the only soldier to have applied for a pension. There are dozens of German Regiment soldiers who applied for pensions, and while some might be fraudulent, such as those which claim that the applicant fought at Bunker Hill, a year before the regiment was formed and hundreds of miles from German-American country, most are authentic. Important details about German Regiment soldiers can be gleaned from them. In many pension applications, soldiers opted to “mark their mark” signing with an “X” rather than their own name. From this, it stands to reason that some German Regiment soldiers were illiterate, at least in English, or they were unable to write. Deserter descriptions often included remarks about deserters’ facility for languages such as “speaks very poor English.”<sup>64</sup> Many German Regiment pensions also came from widows of the German Regiment, who applied after their husbands died.

The common soldier of the German Regiment is difficult to characterize: there are very few sources left behind by soldiers who were not officers. However, even harder to discover are the women who followed the army: often they were known as camp followers or distaff. The

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<sup>63</sup> Thomas Lynch Montgomery ed., “Abstracts of Pension Applications on File in the Division of Public Records, Pennsylvania State Records”, *Pennsylvania Archives, Series 5 Volume IV* (Harrisburg, Harrisburg Publishing Company, State Printer, 1906) 586 –587.

<sup>64</sup> Henrich Miller, “1776. Dienstags, den 29 October ... Im Letzten September,” *Der Wochentliche Philadelphiaer Staatsbote*, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Microfilm. Original German: *spricht sehr wenig English*.

longest primary source reference to the German Regiment camp followers come from Sullivan's Campaign in 1779:

At a Garrison Court Martial whereof Capt. Morrill was Prestt, was Tried John Emersly, Soldier, for stealing & selling Clothing belonging to Catharina Castner found Guilty and Sentenced to Receive 100 Lashes on his bare back well laid on, at the head of the Troops in the Garrison ----- And to be but under Monthly Stoppages of half his Pay until Catharina Castner is paid forty five Dolls. The sum which she paid for the Clothing and Catty Castner 15 dollars for the Stockings and Sleave Buttons not yet found The Commanding officer approves this sentence and orders it to be but in Execution this evening at Roll Call.<sup>65</sup>

Germans in the Revolution went to war to protect the right of private property, among others. This one, short reference to a thief receiving military justice as a consequence for his crime shows that German-American soldiers and camp followers were vigorous in upholding their rights even in the semi-authoritarian system of the military. Not all women related to German Regiment soldiers went with the army; the Continental Army placed strict limits on women following their husbands and relatives to war, and their numbers were generally small. However, the soldiers of the German Regiment did what they could to make sure that the women in their lives had a support system in times of war.

In the eighteenth century, armies were vast bodies of people who consumed much and produced little. Living in America, which had no regular army prior to the Revolution, was particularly difficult during the War for Independence because the country had yet to develop a system which supported the military and civilian population, such as the more developed

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<sup>65</sup> Christian Myers, "Garrison Orders, Sept. 1<sup>st</sup> 1779" Christian Myers orderly book, 1778-1780, Library of Congress, LCCN mm 81034058, Shelving No. MMC-1259.



European states including Britain, France, and Prussia. Common soldiers in the German Regiment, in order to support family and friends, sent money home, like soldiers from armies throughout history. The account book of Captain Graybell's Company reports that for Henry Decker, "due allow my wife to Rec'd out of my monthly wages the sum of Twenty Shillings."<sup>66</sup> Other entries include lines like "To cash paid [James Capele's] wife" 15 shillings.<sup>67</sup> Soldier Peter Baker allotted his wife Christina "25 shillings pr. Month."<sup>68</sup> The soldiers of the German Regiment did not fight for personal gain: they fought because they believed in the Revolutionary cause. Continental soldiers were not paid well, if they were even paid at all. It would be incredible if any of these soldiers' wives saw the full amount of the money taken from their husbands' wages.

Common soldiers in the German Regiment were not much different than other soldiers in the Continental Army. They were recruited from a variety of sources, largely the militia, and many of them were born in America, rather than abroad. They spoke a different language than most other Continental Soldiers, but they still thought of themselves as Americans, fighting for their rights. Their notions of "liberty" and "property" may have been different than their English-speaking counterparts, but they shared in the same experiences, fought in the same battles, and were as instrumental as anyone else in the political struggle for American Independence. The officers of the German Regiment, however, had a variety of reasons to fight for independence.

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<sup>66</sup> *Account Book of Captain Philip Graybill's Company, German Regiment*, Jones Family Papers, MS 518, Historical Society of Maryland.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

### **Chapter 3: Professional Soldiers and Political Radicals: the Officers of the German Regiment**

The most famous foreign officer to serve in the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War is undoubtedly the Marquis de Lafayette, in a possible tie with the Baron von Steuben. Close behind these two are probably the two Polish officers, Tadeusz Kosciuszko, the engineer, and Kazimierz Pulaski, the cavalryman. However, there were far more than four foreign-born officers serving in the Continental Army. Several of these individuals saw service in the German Regiment: some of these men immigrated to America before the war, and settled in the country after peace, while others presented themselves to the Continental Congress like their famous counterparts once the hostilities between Great Britain and its colonies began. Besides the foreign-born officers in the German Regiment, many of its leaders were second and third generation Americans whose parents had emigrated from the Holy Roman Empire to Pennsylvania or Maryland. The officer corps of the German Regiment was, due to its ethnic nature, one of the most multinational in the Continental Army. The German Regiment, due to the high proportion of foreign volunteers, immigrants, and born Americans is in many ways a microcosm for the Continental Army as a whole.

While most of its international officers came from the various states of the Holy Roman Empire, the German Regiment also had Swiss and French officers, in addition to American-born ethnic Germans. For example, the first two Colonels of the German Regiment, Nicholas Haussegger and Henry Leonard Philip, Baron d'Arendt, were Swiss and Prussian, respectively. Important in the history of the German Regiment are its first set of field officers: the majors, lieutenant-colonels, and colonels, as well as a few of its notable captains, such as John David Woelpper, a personal friend of George Washington. The officer corps of the German Regiment

represents the multi-nationality of Western militaries in the eighteenth century, as well as a diversity of experience, faith, and loyalty.

The first colonel of the German Regiment was an immigrant. Nicholas Haussegger, was born in Bern in 1729 and, before he left Europe, he was employed as a sergeant in the Regiment Struler, a Swiss Regiment in the service of the Netherlands.<sup>69</sup> Other European countries had long employed Swiss regiments, and because Haussegger was a sergeant at the time, a non-commissioned officer (NCO), it is clear that he decided to make the military his career. Eighteenth-century Swiss regiments were not the terror of European battlefields that they had been in the Renaissance, but Swiss soldiers still had the reputation of being reliable, disciplined troops.<sup>70</sup> Haussegger would not have been able to climb his way up the chain of command without exemplifying the abilities of a good non-commissioned officer in the eighteenth century; he did not just have to be able to lead his men, but he had to teach and discipline them as well. In writing his instruction manual for the American military, Baron von Steuben said that

Non-commissioned officers ... are to be perfectly acquainted with the manual exercise, marchings and firings that they may be able to instruct their soldiers when necessary; they must also be acquainted with the dress, discipline, and police of the troops, and with every thing that relates to the service.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> James F. Davis, *A Man of No Country: the Case of Colonel Nicholas Haussegger 1729 – 1786* (Lebanon: Lebanon County Historical Society, 1989) 6.

<sup>70</sup> John McCormack, *One Million Mercenaries: Swiss Soldiers in the Armies of the World* (London: Leo Cooper, 1993) 140.

<sup>71</sup> Frederick William Baron von Steuben, *Baron von Steuben's Revolutionary War Drill Manual: A Facsimile Reprint of the 1794 Edition* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1985) 6. While Von Steuben did not write his manual until 1778, and it did not see full publication until 1780, his writing describes the ideal of soldiers' ability to carry out their duty in the eighteenth century. Von Steuben was a talented administrator, and despite the fact that he never interacted much with the German Regiment, the Baron's manual is still a useful tool for interpreting the role of administration in the Continental Army throughout the American Revolutionary War.

Many eighteenth-century militaries placed barriers before the enlisted men like NCOs to prevent them from becoming regular commissioned officers, because commissioned officers often came from the upper classes, and enlisted men came from lower classes. While it was not impossible for officers to be raised from the ranks, most officers in eighteenth-century militaries began their career as the lowest rank of officer, which in the British Army was ensign. In the eighteenth century, prospective officers to the British Army commonly purchased their commissions: that is to say that if someone wanted to enter the army, they usually had to buy a spot in the officer corps of a regiment, and if they wanted to go up in rank, they also could buy their promotions. When Haussegger moved from the Swiss Regiment Struler into the Royal American Regiment during the French and Indian War, he was still a sergeant. He was recruited out of the Regiment Struler, rather than buying his way in to the British Army.

The Royal American Regiment was an experiment within the British Army: the regiment was raised specifically to fight in the French and Indian War, and specifically from Protestants who did not live in British Isles. In fact, English fears of Continental European absolutism barred this regiment from ever serving within the United Kingdom.<sup>72</sup> However, the Royal American Regiment was raised to make up for problems of manpower in the British colonies, and its designation as an “American Regiment” meant that the Regiment would see service in America. After seeing an enormous amount of service the French and Indian War, many members of its ranks, including Nicholas Haussegger, opted to stay in British North America.

Haussegger did not spend that much time in the Royal Americans. Because he had such problems finding promotion, he transferred to Colonel James Burd’s Battalion of the Pennsylvania Regiment in 1760, where he was commissioned as a lieutenant, and ended the war

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<sup>72</sup> Campbell, *Royal American Regiment*, 21.

as a captain.<sup>73</sup> After the French and Indian War ended in 1763, Haussegger settled in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, then in the northern part of Lancaster County. He was a competent officer in the French and Indian War, and he was always looking to better himself: he operated a tavern in Lebanon, which looked like it was about to become quite a prosperous town, as it was “a center for lucrative trade in cattle, grain and iron.”<sup>74</sup> Haussegger rose to local prominence, and when war returned to British North America, he would keep his prominence with a commission as a field officer.

In early 1776, Haussegger was Major in the Fourth Pennsylvania Battalion under the command of then-colonel Anthony Wayne, who would become a brigadier general in the Continental Army and earn the epithet of “Mad Anthony.” Haussegger proved to be a dutiful officer in the Fourth, but he was not always the most obedient to his colonel. His letters to Anthony Wayne show a man who seemed to care about the welfare of his men and how it affected their discipline:

Your Promiss to oure Men last week & not Performed Complet greeth [great] Disturbances and muitiney this two Days, Capt. Mores Compy. came to me just now, and demead mony ore they would all go home as the Colo. had forfeited his word. The think them Selves farr from all Engagement.<sup>75</sup>

As an officer, Haussegger was critical of his superiors, and did what he thought was best for his unit rather than what his commanding officer told him to do. Wayne continually ordered Haussegger to return to New York where the Fourth was stationed and the Swiss Major consistently refused. If Haussegger’s letters are to be believed, his refusal was due to continuing

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<sup>73</sup> Davis, *Man of No Country*, 8 – 10.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>75</sup> Nicholas Haussegger, “Lebanon Jan. 18th 1776,” Wayne, Anthony 1745-1796. Anthony Wayne Papers. Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

affairs in Southeastern Pennsylvania. At one point, Haussegger said that “just now I arrived from the dock having sent [soldiers] off from there but the wind against them & they obliged to make ankers until the present time, till ... comes again ... a fear wind.”<sup>76</sup> Nature provided an easy excuse not to send his men up, and while Haussegger’s testimony is easily corroborated, he says in that very same letter that “I don’t intent to come up to the Regt. At Newyork.”<sup>77</sup> By not marching to New York, Haussegger managed to remove himself from the hammering the Continental Army received at the hands of the British in the summer of 1776. On June 27<sup>th</sup>, Congress resolved to raise the German Regiment, and by making him its Colonel, Congress severed any possible connection of Haussegger to the defeats of mid-1776. Despite the fact that he was raised to the colonelcy of the German Regiment, Haussegger managed to keep himself busy until October of 1776, when he joined the Regiment in barracks in Philadelphia. There he put his military skills to use, overseeing the Regiment after its poor treatment at the hands of its first Lieutenant Colonel, George Stricker.

Haussegger was, however, not the only European professional soldier to have settled in America and joined the German Regiment a little late. The most notable of the captains of the German Regiment, and the one who likely had the most military experience of any officer in the regiment due to his age, was John David Woelpper who came to America in 1749.<sup>78</sup> Twenty-seven years later, in 1776, Woelpper wrote to the Pennsylvania Committee of Safety and noted that he was the most experienced company-grade officer in his unit and “was a soldier for 50 years.” However, due to the date of his commission, Woelpper was in fact the most junior

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<sup>76</sup> “Chester May 2<sup>d</sup> 1776” Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Henry J. Retzer, *The German Regiment of Maryland and Pennsylvania in the Continental Army, 1776 – 1781* (Westminster: Family Line Publications, 1991) 80. Though the original German version is Johannes Davidt Völpert, there are a multitude of ways to write Woelpper’s name, as 18<sup>th</sup> century spelling was largely a matter of personal opinion. Woelpper himself seems to prefer “Woelpper”, and outside of quotations from primary sources, his name is rendered as such in this paper. George Washington often refers to him as “Wilper,” “Welper,” or “Wilpert.”

captain in his regiment, with the least authority.<sup>79</sup> Woelpper's claim of long service was corroborated by Washington who wrote that Woelpper "was a soldier in his own country."<sup>80</sup> As a soldier in early modern Central Europe, Woelpper could have seen action in the large wars of the first half of the eighteenth century, such as the War of Polish Succession (1733 – 1738) or the War of Austrian Succession (1740 – 1748). Woelpper first saw American service in the in the Virginia Regiment in 1754. Because he enlisted as a sergeant, it is obvious that he had previous military experience.

Other than conjecture that can be inferred from a few letters, there is very little other information available about Woelpper's life before coming to America, or before his time in Virginian Service during the French and Indian War. Records from after the Revolutionary War show that he was married on Christmas Eve, 1785, in the German Reformed Church in Philadelphia, so he was certainly a Calvinist, at least at that point in his life.<sup>81</sup> If he had been a soldier for 50 years in 1776, Woelpper would have been in the military ever since he reached what is today considered adulthood at the age of 18, and had no other trade or occupation. Considering the debts which Woelpper faced later in his life, it is quite possible that he had trouble finding gainful employment during a time of peace, and had few marketable skills beyond his abilities as a soldier.

Woelpper arrived in American in 1749 on the ship *Lydia*.<sup>82</sup> In the latter years of migration, a few Germans settled in western Virginia at the far reaches of the British Empire's control, in regions such as the Shenandoah Valley, which had just become open to white

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<sup>79</sup> "The Pennsylvania Archives 1776" *The Pennsylvania Archives, Series 1, Volume V*, 48. Fold3 Historical Military Records, fold3.com

<sup>80</sup> George Washington to the Pennsylvania Committee of Safety, 8 July 1776, *American Archives: Documents of the American Revolutionary Period, 1774 – 1776*. <http://amarch.lib.niu.edu/islandora/object/niu-amarch%3A89111>

<sup>81</sup> "Marriage Record of the German Reformed Church, At Philadelphia, 1748 – 1802" *The Pennsylvania Archives, Series 2, Volume VIII*, 730, Fold3 Historical Military Records, fold3.com

<sup>82</sup> Retzer, *German Regiment*, 80.

settlement. Woelpper may have settled in the Shenandoah, where he might have been recruited by the Virginia Regiment.

One of the earliest documents that mentions him is a letter from 1755, where Woelpper is mentioned in orders from Colonel Washington to Ensign William Fleming of Captain Peter Hog's Company whom Washington ordered to march to an outpost in western Virginia:

If you should arrive at August Court-House before Sergeant Wilper and his Party, you are to halt there until he joins, in order to escort the Ammunition &c. for the Fort; where you will receive Clothes and Arms for the Men.<sup>83</sup>

By the time he joined the Virginia Regiment, Woelpper was an experienced soldier. He made a good enough impression on Washington that later in the war he trusted Woelpper to serve in charge of a detachment, a command of twelve or thirteen men, which would act independently from the rest of the Virginia Regiment. Washington would grant Woelpper other opportunities to prove himself, and even act as a representative of the Virginia Regiment, and, by extension, Virginia.

Towards the beginning of the French and Indian War, the Cherokee Indians were allied with the British government, and sent a delegation into Virginia. When this delegation needed to be escorted back into territory the Cherokee directly controlled, Washington sent Woelpper with a detachment of men to guide them, in keeping with Governor Robert Dinwiddie's recommendation that the Virginia Regiment "design to keep them in order on their March thro' the Country."<sup>84</sup> The soldiers protecting the Indians faced a difficult task: ever since the war began, many Native American war parties allied with the French had swept up and down the

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<sup>83</sup> "From George Washington to William Fleming, 28 October 1755," Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-02-02-0146> [last update: 2016-03-28]).

<sup>84</sup> "To George Washington from Robert Dinwiddie, 23–27 May 1757," Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-04-02-0088> [last update: 2016-03-28]).



Virginian frontier, in a brutal campaign that terrified a populace already frightened by the prospect of war. As shocking as the idea would be to people living today, a settler on Virginia's western frontier during the French and Indian War probably would have thought that shooting an Indian on sight was a sensible idea. Though there were certainly cultural markings that distinguished groups of Indians from each other, whites could often not tell the difference, and while on a military campaign, Indians would sometimes disguise themselves as their enemies. Furthermore, even friendly<sup>85</sup> Indians would have been unwelcome guests to a poor white settler. They would require food and lodging, and did not hesitate to use force to take what they wanted or needed, and even went as far as to steal horses.<sup>86</sup> Keeping the members of the Cherokee delegation "in order" would not only mean protecting them from white settlers, hostile groups of Indians, and the French, but also preventing them from upsetting the local white populace. Washington would have thought it necessary that someone he could trust be placed in charge of escorting the Cherokee delegation, and so he turned to Sergeant Woelpper for this diplomatic mission. Woelpper accomplished this mission with little apparent trouble, and continually proved himself to Washington to be a reliable soldier and capable leader. In 1759, Woelpper received a commission as a lieutenant.<sup>87</sup>

After the French and Indian War, Woelpper seems to have lived a quiet life until the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, when again he felt called to take up arms for his adopted land, and received a commission as a first lieutenant in Colonel Shee's 3<sup>rd</sup> Pennsylvania Battalion in January of 1776.<sup>88</sup> However, Woelpper did not remain a lieutenant for long. Thanks

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<sup>85</sup> "Friendly" as in allied with the British Crown.

<sup>86</sup> Jim Mullins (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, author of *Of Sorts for Provincials: American Weapons of the French and Indian War* and expert on the Virginia Regiment) in discussion with the author, April 2016. Horse theft was a hanging offense in colonial Virginia.

<sup>87</sup> "The Pennsylvania Archives 1776," *Archives, Series I, Volume V*, 48.

<sup>88</sup> Retzer, *German Regiment*, 80.

to Washington's recommendation, Woelpper received a commission as a captain in the German Regiment in July of 1776. Woelpper did not have an easy time getting this promotion. The German Regiment was originally raised in eight companies: four from Pennsylvania, and four from Maryland. When Congress promoted Woelpper, the captains of all eight companies had already been appointed and were in the process of recruiting their men. Washington wrote vigorously to Congress asking them to appoint his friend, saying that during the French and Indian War, Woelpper "conducted himself as an active, vigilant, and brave Officer he is a German, and his merit as a soldier entitles him much to the Office that he wishes for."<sup>89</sup> The German Regiment was a very new regiment, and Washington would have wanted someone he trusted in their ranks. On 17 July 1776, Congress added a ninth company to the German Regiment, and appointed Woelpper to its command.<sup>90</sup> While Haussegger found himself appointed to the command of the German Regiment solely through his merits, Woelpper, who was a good and experienced soldier, only was able to get promotion by working with his connections and the patronage he found through George Washington.

Beside Nicholas Haussegger and John David Woelpper, there are three other notable European-born professional soldiers in the German Regiment: Henry Leonhard Philip, Baron d'Arendt, a Prussian Officer of Engineers; Paul Bentalou, a volunteer in the French cavalry; and Louis von Linkensdorf, a Swiss-born former officer of the King of Sardinia's Swiss Regiment. Of these three men, only Paul Bentalou permanently settled in the United States.

Baron d'Arendt was the second colonel of the German Regiment, after Nicholas Haussegger lost command in the dubious circumstances discussed in Chapter Five which covers

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<sup>89</sup> "From George Washington to John Hancock, 8 July 1776," Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-05-02-0171> [last update: 2016-03-28]).

<sup>90</sup> *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, ed. Worthington C. Ford et al. (Washington, D.C., 1904-37), 5:571.

the German Regiment's first months of operations. Arendt was a competent officer, but he naturally was very European in his outlook on military affairs. In a letter to George Washington, he described his relationship to the common soldiers of the German Regiment:

there is a great deal of Discontent in my Regiment, and altho' I am perfectly convinced, that no one can complain either of my conduct towards him or on any other account, I believe however that the Discipline which I have thought necessary to establish in the Regiment added to my being a Stranger and having the command against their will, have inspired them with unfavorable Sentiments respecting me.<sup>91</sup>

d'Arendt obviously came to America looking for make a name for himself, and did not seem involved with the American cause in a capacity greater than seeking employment. While d'Arendt may have treated his men fairly in his own eyes, he likely treated them the way a haughty European officer might have, and his men may have resented him for it. Not wanting to foment a mutiny, d'Arendt sought transfer to some other command, and in fall of 1777, Washington placed him in charge of Fort Mifflin on the Delaware River.

Paul Bentalou, who travelled to America on the same ship as Baron d'Arendt was a remarkable figure in the context of the German Regiment in a few ways. Firstly, he was French, and differed from the Germans, German-speaking Swiss, and German-Americans that made up the rest of the regiment. Secondly, Bentalou was Jewish, which would make him the only known non-Christian in the Regiment.<sup>92</sup> Bentalou was also originally a cavalryman, rather than an infantryman, and after he left the German Regiment in late 1777, he joined Pulaski's Legion. In

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<sup>91</sup> "To George Washington from Colonel Arendt, 7 August 1777," Founders Online, National Archives, last modified December 28, 2016, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-10-02-0541>.

<sup>92</sup> A. B. Leonard and David Pretel, editors. *The Caribbean and the Atlantic World Economy: Circuits of Trade, Money and Knowledge, 1650–1914*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) 94.

1823 Bentalou published *Pulaski Vindicated*, an attack on detractors of the late Polish soldier. Other than these irregularities in the context of the German Regiment, Bentalou is the foreign volunteer who seems to have made the least impact on its history.

Like Baron d’Arendt and Paul Bentalou, Louis von Linkensdorf appears to have come to the United States seeking out employment in the Continental Army. However, he had a difficult time getting a job; when he first presented himself before Congress and received a commission in the German Regiment, he may not have spoken English. However, the Regiment still found a way to put him to use. On one of the first pages of the German Regiment’s Orderly book after its first orders of the day, “made known through me Louis von Linkensdorf” is written in German.<sup>93</sup> Linkensdorf was originally proposed as a First Lieutenant in Captain Woelpper’s Company, but Woelpper did not want him, and Linkensdorf became the regiment’s adjutant. Adjutants served an administrative function in their regiment: they, along with the Major and Sergeant-Major were tasked with dealing with the mountains of paperwork that accumulate in any military organization. On December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1776, von Linkensdorf petitioned the Continental Congress for an advance in his pay to buy a new horse as his “duties in the present Situation of Affairs can hardly be performed without an Horse and some Equipage, of which he has lately had the Misfortune to loose an considerate part and cannot afford to replace without some Advance.”<sup>94</sup> Linkensdorf seems to have taken on a role as liaison between the common soldiers, the company officers, and the commanding officer. Many individual enlisted men of the regiment spoke no or poor English, and even though there is no doubt that the other officers of the German Regiment

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<sup>93</sup> “Head Quarter Philadelphia Sept.<sup>br</sup> 17.<sup>th</sup> 1776.” Nicholas Haussegger orderly book (Collection Am .623), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The original German is *bekannt gemacht durch mich*. While the Historical Society of Pennsylvania calls it the Nicholas Haussegger orderly book, it is in fact the orderly book of from September of 1776 to June of 1777.

<sup>94</sup> Louis von Linkensdorf, “Lewis de Linkensdorff Memorial to the Honorable Continental Congress” Papers of the Continental Congress, Fold3 Military Records, fold3.com.

spoke German, it gave Linkensdorf a useful job without distracting them from their important work of training their men in preparation for the upcoming campaign.

Linkensdorf probably did not write his own memorial to Congress about the horse: the handwriting is completely different than his German handwriting, and his name is not spelled in his own way. Furthermore, the handwriting bears a striking similarity to writing found in the account book of Philip Graybell's company of the German Regiment. The writing is a quotation from the play *Cato*, which was exceedingly popular among Whiggish Americans in the late eighteenth century. The quotation reads:

Thy Steady Temper Portius can look on guilt *Rebellion* fraud & Caser in the Calm  
light of mild Philosophy I am torn e'n to Madness when I think on the Proud  
Victor every Time he is named, Pharsilia Rises to my View, I see the Insulting  
TYRANT PRANCING<sup>95</sup>

*Cato* tells the story of the last vestiges of the Roman Republic holding out against a tyrannical Julius Caesar. English Whigs, ever fearful of uncontrolled monarchical rule, felt a connection with the people of the Roman Republic who worked to keep it from becoming an empire. A quotation from *Cato* in the margins of official German Regiment documentation suggests that the German Regiment's American-born officers were often as radical Whigs as their ethnically British-American counterparts in the rest of the Continental Army. This is not surprising, as before receiving their commissions as officers, many had involvements with other Regiments in the Continental Army, or their local committees of Safety, Correspondence, or Observation.

The Captains of the nine companies of the German Regiment each came from a distinct geographic location, the same one in whose revolutionary government they were involved, and

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<sup>95</sup> *Account Book of Captain Philip Graybill's Company, German Regiment*, Jones Family Papers, MS 518, Historical Society of Maryland.

tended to recruit out of that location. Out of Maryland, Major Ludowick Weltner Captains Charles Baltzel and Henry Fister recruited in Frederick County, and Philip Graybell and George Keeports recruited from Baltimore County. From Pennsylvania, Captain George Hubley recruited from Lancaster County, Daniel Burkhardt and Jacob Bunner recruited in Philadelphia, and Captain Benjamin Weiser recruited out of Berks County and the area around Reading, Pennsylvania. Captain Woelpper's company was the exception, and was recruited from wherever Woelpper could find men willing to enlist with him.<sup>96</sup>

Two of the most radical officers in the German Regiment were George Keeports and Philip Graybell, the two Baltimore captains. Both were members of the Baltimore Independent Company of Cadets, a troop of sixty men who took up arms before the war even began.<sup>97</sup> The Independent Company of Cadets formed in December 1774 and its ranks included other notable Marylanders, such as Mordecai Gist, their captain, and later a General in the Continental Army. The proclamation of their founding reads:

For the better Security of our lives, liberties, and Properties under such Alarming Circumstances, we think it highly advisable and necessary that we form ourselves into a Body, or Company in order to [learn] the military discipline; to act in defense of our Country agreeable to the resolves of the Continental Congress.<sup>98</sup>

Marylanders started to realize that the dispute between Britain and her colonies might lead to armed conflict, and German-Americans were part of that process. George Keeports himself was involved with the Baltimore Committee of Observation, having bought them “1018 Squires of

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<sup>96</sup> Retzer, *German Regiment*, 72 – 80. Benjamin Weiser was a son of the famous Indian agent and religious radical Conrad Weiser.

<sup>97</sup> “The Baltimore Independent Cadets,” *Maryland Historical Magazine, Volume IV* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1909) 374.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, 372.

Large Sheathing Paper.”<sup>99</sup> The paper was bought from Thomas Ewing, another member of the Baltimore Independent Company of Cadets.<sup>100</sup> Graybell was also a radical: it was his account book that contains the quotation from *Cato*.

There is another candidate to have written the *Cato* quotation. On the muster roll of Graybell’s company, added almost as an afterthought, are the words “a Cadet John Stricker.”<sup>101</sup> John Stricker was the son of the German Regiment’s first Lieutenant Colonel, George Stricker, who unsurprisingly may have pulled strings to find his son a place in his regiment. In the Continental Army, cadets were also known as “Gentlemen Volunteers” and there were gentleman volunteers in many regiments. Cadets followed the army without having received a commission from Congress, and they often aided in the day to day business of running their unit, in the hope that the army might find an official place for them. As Holly Mayer observed, “They pursued adventure, honor, and, usually, rank. They accompanied the army in battle, on the march, and into camp.”<sup>102</sup> John Stricker found rank in an artillery regiment later in the American Revolution, and during the War of 1812 he achieved national fame as a Brigadier General in the Maryland Militia and the hero of the Battle of North Point in 1814. His military career started as a volunteer, serving without pay, in the German Regiment. Stricker’s duties as a volunteer may have included doing staff work, such as filling out regimental account books and working with the adjutant. If John Stricker did write the quotation from *Cato* in Graybell’s orderly book, it is quite possible that he was one of the more radical Whigs in the German Regiment.

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<sup>99</sup> George Peter Keepports, “To Baltimore Committee of Observation, 1776 March 9,” Maryland Historical Society, MS 1814.

<sup>100</sup> “Baltimore Cadets” *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 374.

<sup>101</sup> Phillip Graybill, “Company of Roll of Captain Philip Graybill. 1776,” Maryland Historical Society, MS 1814.

<sup>102</sup> Holly A. Mayer, *Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and Community during the American Revolution*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996) 177.

The officers of the German Regiment represent, for the most part, two distinct groups: German-Americans, and foreign volunteers. Among the German-Americans, there were first- second- and third- generation immigrants, and their connections to the Revolution vary. Besides Nicholas Haussegger, who had dubious loyalty to the Revolutionary cause, and John David Woelpper, who was a career professional soldier, the German-American officers of the German regiment, especially the Marylanders, were radical supporters of the Revolutionary government. The foreign volunteers sought employment as part of the European tradition of advancing oneself through service in foreign armies, and while their careers with the German Regiment were temporary, they were still important. The officers of the German Regiment not only took the lead as part of an experimental unit, which represented German-American experience and participation in America's struggle for Independence, they also could be considered a microcosm of the whole officer corps of the Continental Army, considering that their ranks contained native born Americans, immigrants, and foreign volunteers. The German Regiment had all three of the above categories of officer when it started training in fall of 1776.



#### Chapter 4: The German Regiment in Fall of 1776

The German Regiment began its training in Philadelphia in the late summer and early fall of 1776. Not every soldier in the German Regiment arrived at the same time: officers were out recruiting, and coming in with the bodies of men they gathered. Recruits likely spent most of their time in around their barracks, learning the new military life they had undertaken. However, the most important part of the time the German Regiment spent in barracks during its training was the development of the relationship between the enlisted men and the officers. From September to December of 1776, the leadership and rank-and-file of the German Regiment created a dynamic which would persist throughout the German Regiment's first campaign, wherein the soldiers distrusted their highest ranking leaders, and had more faith in their major, Ludowick Weltner, a former breeches maker from Frederick, Maryland.

It is well known that Continental soldiers faced hardship. Soldiers, dressed in rags, marching barefoot through the snow is an image ingrained into the mythology of the American Revolution. This image is debatably accurate, even for such hard times as leading up to the Battle of Trenton, on 26 December 1776.<sup>103</sup> Before the German Regiment faced its first battle, and before completing its training, its soldiers faced supply problems which had plagued the Continental Army before and would continue plague it for the rest of the war. Every man came to the army with clothes on his back, but many men in the Continental Army were among the poorer sort, or may have not travelled with very many clothes. The widow of one soldier, Frederick Filler, described the miserable situation of the German Regiment when they were in the Philadelphia barracks in her pension application after her husband's death:

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<sup>103</sup> The German Regiment's role at the Battle of Trenton is discussed in the next chapter.

During the said time [of his enlistment] he suffered much from want of clothing being sometimes nearly naked, and that at one time his mother travelled from Frederick County [in Western Maryland] to Philadelphia to take him clothes.<sup>104</sup>

The only time that the German Regiment was ever garrisoned in Philadelphia was from September to December of 1776, when it was training.

The privations which affected Frederick Filler and other members of the German Regiment can be attributed to two causes: lack of supplies, and poor leadership. The second half of 1776 was the most desperate time for the Continental Army and Congress may have prioritized getting what little supplies they could muster to the active soldiers in the field, rather than the recruits in training. The German Regiment's Orderly Book, one of the few surviving original records of the Regiment, often listed orders to send out officers to procure necessary military supplies, and its first entry, dated 17 September 1776, instructed its officers to take inventory of the supplies their men had, so the commanding officer could then order more if need be:

Colonel George Stricker order the Several Captains in the City of Philadelphia Belonging to the first German Battalion of Continental troops to make proper letters of the number of men belonging to their company, and otherwise return to me the number of sufficient arms belonging to each company, the number of Blankets and Cartridge Boxes.<sup>105</sup>

The commanding officer of the German Regiment at the time was the Marylander George Stricker, formerly a Captain in Colonel Smallwood's Maryland Regiment, and the German

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<sup>104</sup> Frederick Filler Pension Application, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, Fold3 Military Records, Fold3.com, W4692.

<sup>105</sup> "Head Quarter Philadelphia Sept.br 17.th 1776." Nicholas Haussegger orderly book.

Regiment's first Lieutenant Colonel. The orderly book makes it seem like Stricker was an attentive officer, who looked out for the needs of his men, but kept them in line. Most of the entries from the time when Lieutenant Colonel Stricker was in charge end with the same moral lesson: "Vigilance, Sobriety and good orders are enjoined."<sup>106</sup>

The real situation of the German Regiment was much less than the military ideal, and it was not until the arrival of Colonel Haussegger in October that the German Regiment was able to sort itself out. According to historian James Davis, "the task of recruiting ... officers and men, finding clothing and equipment for them, and organizing them into a battalion of infantry was more than Stricker was prepared to accomplish."<sup>107</sup> Stricker came to his wit's end in dealing with his troops fairly early on, as "the enlisted men did as they pleased and talked back when ordered to perform even simple tasks .... On September 24<sup>th</sup> ... Stricker refused to feed those men who did not do their duty."<sup>108</sup> This sort of policy was understandably unpopular, and the men of the German Regiment were fed up with Stricker's lackluster leadership.

The orderly book does give some hint of the poor situation early on, most obviously in the paroles and countersigns issued to the troops. Parole and countersign were the eighteenth-century way of referring to an ancient military tradition of keeping a password for men who leave the camp, or barracks, or wherever else soldiers stayed. The men guarding the barracks or encampment would challenge the arrival with the parole, and if they gave the correct countersign, they would be allowed to pass. A parole and countersign serve a practical purpose and were often set up like a mnemonic, or two things which have some relation to one another, in order for people to remember them easily. The trick with them was to make it so that the

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Davis, *Man of No Country*, 26.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 27.

mnemonic was not necessarily so obvious, that it could be easily guessed. For example, on 11 November 1776, the parole was “Wilmington” and the countersign was “Chester.”<sup>109</sup>

Wilmington is a town in northern Delaware and is not far from the Pennsylvanian town of Chester.

The earliest paroles and countersigns of the German Regiment were not just mnemonics, but they also tell little stories. On 21 September 1776 the orderly book read “Parole. Discontent. Countersign. Difficulties.”<sup>110</sup> There was an addition tacked on to Stricker’s little moral order as well, written as “Wigilance good orders and Sobriety are enjoyed *under paying exemplary punishment.*”<sup>111</sup> The next day, the parole and countersign were “I hope” and “Satisfaction,” respectively.<sup>112</sup> On 23 September 1776 Stricker ordered “that the soldiers pay a diu respect to their Officers as it is a greet addition to a solder to behave polite and genteel,” with the parole “Be Early” and the countersign “don’t sleep too long.”<sup>113</sup> These are likely sideways references to the insubordination rife in the German Regiment at the time. The problematic situation of the German Regiment came to a head on the 24<sup>th</sup>, when Stricker decided that men who did not follow orders would not be fed:

Orders that the Capns. receive the pay for the their men aggregable to the Muster Rolls’ returned be the Muster Master and pay of their men as I shall hereafter directy time and day of payment thereof. Ordered that every Capn. Be perraded every morning at Six a Clok and every Evening at Four a Clok in order to do duty in that is to Say Either in private Companys or in Battalion as I shall Hereafter

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<sup>109</sup> “Phila Nov. 11 1776” Haussegger Orderly Book.

<sup>110</sup> “Head Quarters Philadelphia Sept. br 21. th 1776,” Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. Emphasis added.

<sup>112</sup> “Head Quarters Philadelphia Sept. br 22. th 1776,” Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> “Head Quarters Philadelphia Sept. br 23. th 1776,” Ibid.

Direct the provisions of the day to be drawn every morning after the return from  
Duty I Desire that the Capn. Return to me who do not attend his duty.<sup>114</sup>

This led to what almost became the first mutiny of the German Regiment, which is referred to in this paper as the “First Mutiny,” “Philadelphia Mutiny,” or the “1776 Mutiny.” Stricker’s decision was naturally unpopular with the common soldiers, who expected that the army would keep up its end of the bargain; they would fight, and in return, the army would give them pay, clothes, and food.

Soldiers were not entitled to much: the issuance of clothing and food for the average eighteenth-century soldier was tolerable, but not grand. Soldiers serving in a professional army, in which they gave up their personal liberty, often wanted to hold the military administration accountable for anything that it did to them. Long before the German Regiment’s conception, on 4 November 1775, the Continental Congress worked out the administration and structure of the Continental Army, including a soldier’s daily ration:

That a ration consist of the following kind and quantity of provisions, viz:

1 lb. of beef, or  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb. pork, or 1 lb. salt fish, per day

1 lb. of bread or flour per day; 3 pints of pease, or beans per week, or vegetables  
equivalent, at one dollar per bushel for pease or beans.

1 pint of milk per man per day, or at the rate of  $\frac{1}{72}$  of a dollar.

1 half pint of Rice, or 1 pint of indian meal per man per week.

1 quart of spruce beer or cyder per man per day, or nine gallons of Molasses per  
company of 100 men per week.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> “Head Quarters Philadelphia Septbr. 24. 1776,” Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 3:322.

This resolution listed what each man was entitled to be given for his daily sustenance when he enlisted, and what he would have been informed that he was owed when he enlisted. Private soldiers paid for their own clothes issued by the army with “stoppages ... at [one and two-thirds] dollars per month.”<sup>116</sup> Stoppages were money taken out of a soldier’s pay by the army. At bare minimum, if the soldier received no other rations, he was supposed to have his daily pound of meat and pound of flour or bread.

Stoppages were common military practice in the eighteenth century, though they could have disastrous consequences if the military overused them. A good example of the havoc it could wreak occurred in the British Army when it occupied former French and Spanish territory following its victory in the French and Indian War. After the war was over, the British needed ways to pay off the massive war debt incurred from driving the French out North America. The Army decided that one way of doing so was to impose stoppages of “4d. of a private’s daily earnings of 6d. in order to pay for provisions that had been freely supplied throughout the war.”<sup>117</sup> Two thirds of a common soldier’s low wages, paid only in pennies, were to go to pay for his food, when he risked his life and limb to serve his empire. The idea to impose stoppages on soldiers’ rations did not go over well in the British Army, and a large mutiny broke out. According to historian Peter Way, “soldiers were a type of unfree labor” in the eighteenth century.<sup>118</sup> Unfree laborers in the eighteenth century, such as slaves or indentured servants who may or may not have been entitled to some form of pay, were typically entitled to food and housing, usually laid out in their contracts. By forcing soldiers to pay for their own food, the British army violated what the soldiers saw was their end of the social contract. The German

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 3:323.

<sup>117</sup> Peter Way, “Rebellion of the Regulars: Working Soldiers and the Mutiny of 1763 – 1764,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 57(2000): 761.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, 765.

Regiment never got to the point of violent mutiny, but its soldiers did protest their officers withholding the rations to which they were legally entitled. Removing the men's rations was not a form of stoppages; Stricker did not take money out of their pay for their rations. However, he still prevented the soldiers from receiving their legal rations.

The soldiers from the German Regiment came out of an emerging democratic society, and entering the quasi-authoritarian world of professional military service may have been something of a culture shock for them, thanks to officers like Stricker. Davis described what happened on the 24 September 1776:

The men gathered on the parade ground and worked themselves up to the verge of rioting. Stricker turned out several soldiers with loaded muskets and threatened to shoot someone if order was not restored. A sullen calm prevailed in the regiment after the incident. Performances did not improve, and Stricker threatened them with dire punishment without taking any action.<sup>119</sup>

At this point, Stricker showed that he was capable of being a tyrant and he might have been aware that after this incident the men would have lost their respect for him.

Colonel Nicholas Haussegger, Stricker's commanding officer, did not arrive for some time after this incident, and Stricker may have feared for his life and the lives of his officers, and worried about his reputation within the Continental Army. On September 25<sup>th</sup>, Stricker wrote that "I have had Complaints made to me that the Men had not got their full allowance of Provisions agreeable to the Continental Bataions I therefore order that the Captains see their men receive their full allowance that they will have no Aecation [occasion] to Lodge a Complaint of the Sort thereafter."<sup>120</sup> There was also "An additional order for the Day each Captain furnishing

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<sup>119</sup> Davis, *Man*, 27.

<sup>120</sup> "Head Quarters Philadelphia Sept. 25<sup>th</sup> 1776" Haussegger Orderly Book.

two men as a Additional guard Captain Learnt take the Command of the Guard and fix as many sentries as he sees Necessary in order to keep pease and unity amongst the Troops and Charge the Sentries Muskets I hope that good order may lead here to.”<sup>121</sup> The most fascinating of the German Regiment’s paroles and countersigns were also recorded on 25 September “Parole *Be Peaceable* Countersign *on Muteny*.”<sup>122</sup> After the near mutiny, the German Regiment seemed to quiet down into a daily routine of guard duty and practicing “the manuel exercise” such as musket drill and practicing marching and following orders.<sup>123</sup>

The first evidence of Haussegger taking command from Stricker is on 20 October 1776, when Haussegger issued his first orders in the German Regiment orderly book. Haussegger’s first orders are lengthy, and take up more space in the book than anything issued by Stricker. Haussegger was a career professional who likely wanted to make an impression on the enlisted men of his regiment and to set an example for its officers, in addition to solving the earlier problems that the German Regiment faced. Haussegger’s orders set stricter discipline on the men for not being at their posts, and gave more organization to the system for officers of the guard, how to post the daily guard, and how the regiment was to go on parade.<sup>124</sup> After Haussegger joined the regiment, there is little mention of Stricker by either name or rank in the orderly book, and it is likely that he faded into the background fulfilling the administrative duties that often fell to higher ranking officers.

While Haussegger and Stricker were the German Regiment’s commanders, the officers with whom common soldiers developed the closest relationship would probably have been their ensigns, lieutenants, and captains, the officers who most directly oversaw their daily lives.

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid, emphasis added.

<sup>123</sup> “Head Quarters Philidelphia October 14<sup>th</sup> 1776,” Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> “Philadelphia October 20<sup>th</sup> 1776” Ibid.



Administratively, most soldiers would be separated by their company, and each company was referred to by the name of its commanding officer e.g. Woelpper's Company or Graybell's Company. Each company generally would have come from the same geographic area, and it is quite likely that the men in each company knew each other before they joined the army.

The highest ranking officer in the German Regiment whom the soldiers of the German Regiment saw regularly and may have interacted with was Ludowick Weltner, the first major of the German Regiment who was later promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. Weltner was a leather breeches maker and was active in the Frederick County militia prior to receiving a major's commission in the German Regiment on 17 July 1776.<sup>125</sup> Even though Major Weltner ranked lower than George Stricker, Haussegger appears to have placed a lot more faith in him than the Lieutenant Colonel. On 28 October 1776, Colonel Haussegger ordered that "The Regt. [is] To be kept twice at the Exercize every day under the Direction of the Major."<sup>126</sup> Weltner was also entrusted with the internal discipline of the Regiment, making sure that not only were the enlisted men doing their jobs, but also the officers:

The commissioned Officer with Serjeants and Corporals that are of Duty are to Parade every morning after Guard Mounting and Exercise till a half an hour after 10 OClock and at that time the Battallion turn out and Exercize till 12 OClock and in the afternoon the officerse Serjeants and Corporals are again to Parade precisely at 2 OClock and exerize till three OClock. And then the Battallion till 4 OClock ... The Major will be answerable that this Orders is strickly Complied with.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Retzer, *The German Regiment*, 79 – 80.

<sup>126</sup> "Philadelphia October 28<sup>th</sup> 1776" Haussegger Orderly book.

<sup>127</sup> "Philadelphia November 3<sup>rd</sup> 1776" Ibid.

Ludowick Weltner became the face of the German Regiment's leadership to both the lower ranking officers and the enlisted men. He was the man most responsible for their military education and for disciplining them when they did something wrong. Haussegger was the man who was ultimately in charge of the Regiment, but he likely spent much of his time handling matters that pertained the German Regiment's role in the Continental Army, and was not a man whom the common soldier or even lower ranking officer may have seen often. Understanding this dynamic is incredibly important to understanding what happened to the German Regiment on the day of the Battle of Princeton, when the British took Colonel Haussegger, along with a few other men, prisoner.

Before the arrival of Colonel Haussegger, the German Regiment proved that it could be insubordinate when its enlisted men believed that the army failed to hold up its end of the social contract. Later in the war the German Regiment acquired a reputation for unreliability. There is a myth that, prior to the encampment at Valley Forge in the winter of 1777 – 1778, the Continental Army was, as a whole, an untrained and undisciplined force. While that may have been true for many individual soldiers and even some regiments, that was not so for the German Regiment. The German Regiment's common soldiers' instances of insubordination always came in specific circumstances, almost always when the army did not fulfill the agreement it had made with its troops. The German Regiment spent three months in barracks, from September to December 1776, before leaving Philadelphia to join the rest of the Continental Army as it retreated through New Jersey into Pennsylvania before striking at Trenton. While there was tension between the commanding officers and soldiers at the beginning of those three months, it eventually diffused. In addition after the arrival of Nicholas Haussegger on 20 October, the German Regiment started to take on a more professional atmosphere. Eventually, men in this regiment received the

supplies of coats and blankets that they lacked at the beginning, and Haussegger's orders to have the men supplied with bayonet belts on 3 November 1776 indicates that they even had bayonets, unlike many other units in the Continental army.<sup>128</sup>

On 2 December 1776 when the German Regiment marched out of Philadelphia, they were the numerically strongest single regiment in the Continental Army, numbering around 450 men.<sup>129</sup> The men enlisted long term, so there was no danger of any enlistments expiring during the upcoming campaign. Though some soldiers and officers of the German Regiment had been in other units or served in previous wars, most of its soldiers were recruits who had yet to actually face battle, even though they spent the last three months training. The dynamic of the German Regiment was that of a social contract between the officers and men. Instead of the soldiers looking to their Colonel Nicholas Haussegger for leadership, due to the way they were trained and the misconduct of George Stricker, they looked to their Major, Ludowick Weltner. This dynamic would persist throughout the upcoming Trenton-Princeton Campaign, the most important time in the history of the German Regiment.

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Retzer, *The German Regiment*, 66.

## **Chapter 5: “He Later Became a Tory”: The German Regiment in the Trenton-Princeton Campaign**

On 2 December 1776, the German Regiment marched out of Philadelphia to Trenton, New Jersey, the epicenter of the winter campaign of 1776 – 1777. The first full day the German Regiment spent in Trenton was 4 December 1776, a full ten days before the Hessian Regiments under the command of Colonel Johann Rall arrived in the town. The winter campaign is the most important time in the history of the German Regiment. It is the one place in the popular mythology of the Revolution in which the German Regiment features prominently, and is important to the memories of the soldiers who served in the regiment. Most importantly, the Trenton-Princeton Campaign was a critical time for the German Regiment because it resulted in the capture of Nicholas Haussegger at the Battle of Princeton and established the reputation of the German Regiment as a unit of reliability.

The Trenton-Princeton Campaign was the only campaign during the Revolutionary War during which the German Regiment was absolutely vital. Therefore, understanding this campaign as a whole is important to understanding the German Regiment’s place in it. After departing from Philadelphia, the German Regiment did not arrive in Trenton as a complete unit. On 5 December, 1776, George Washington wrote:

shall this day reinforce Lord Stirling with 1200 Men, which will make his numbers about 2400, to morrow I mean to repair to Princeton myself and shall order the Pennsylvania Troops (who are not yet arrivd except a part of the German Battalion and a Company of Light Infantry) on to the same place.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> George Washington, *The Writings of George Washington from the original manuscript sources, 1745-1799* ed. John C. Fitzpatrick, Hathi Trust Digital Library V.6, 333.

Once in New Jersey, the German Regiment was on the front with the rest of the Continental Army. Washington had been pursued for months by the British Army, first being pushed out of New York and the area around Manhattan into the state of New Jersey, often referred to as “the Jerseys” in the period. In December of 1776, the morale of the Continental Army was at a low point. Washington had lost numerous battles in and around New York City, and the army was barely holding together. A multitude of men deserted, and the enlistments of most of the army would expire at the end of the year.

At the time, Washington seemed to be doing very little. Most of the Continental Army was out of the Jerseys, on the west side of the Delaware River in Pennsylvania. American artillery batteries lined some parts of the west bank of the Delaware River, and these batteries threatened any British soldiers that tried to scout the river or come within their sight.<sup>131</sup> However, Washington and many of his aides believed that they could not defend themselves if the British were to attempt a river crossing.<sup>132</sup> Washington’s position was not as vulnerable as it had been a few weeks earlier during his retreat through New Jersey, but it was not advantageous. The campaign he subsequently carried out was absolutely necessary not only to raise the morale of his army, but also to drive the British out of central New Jersey. In this campaign Washington would make full use of the largest regiment in his command, the German Regiment.

In Mid-December, British command thought that it was almost finished with pacifying the Jerseys and soon the Continental Army itself, but they never completed their task. The people of New Jersey resented the occupation of their home by the British and German auxiliary soldiers, and started fighting back in a movement that became known as “The Rising of New Jersey.” In the Rising, militiamen from all over the state fought back against the occupying

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<sup>131</sup> David Hackett Fisher, *Washington’s Crossing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) 187.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, 190.

forces and, to the great advantage of the Continental Army, gave British and German auxiliary garrisons little rest. The war in New Jersey went from a conventional European war of battle and occupation to a *petit guerre*, a guerilla war of the local inhabitants defying professional soldiers, attacking them when they went out in small groups, and forcing reinforce the towns they occupied. The soldiers in these towns were forced into long nights of continuous watch, and by the end of the month were mentally and physically exhausted with the constant threat of attack. Due to his intelligence network, Washington was aware of the extensive militia activity in New Jersey and the vulnerability it exposed on the British and German auxiliaries occupying the state.<sup>133</sup>

Washington's army assembled the afternoon of 25 December 1776, in order to make its attempt on Trenton. At this point, the German Regiment along with the rest of the Continental Army, crossed the Delaware and prepared to march on Trenton. The crossing was a miserable affair, and was exceedingly cold and wet, but according to historian David Hackett Fisher "Not a man was lost to the river, but the guardian angels of the army were working overtime."<sup>134</sup> Once across the river, the Continental Army had to make the ten mile march to Trenton with as much secrecy as possible. Here the myth of the Revolution does in many ways reflect reality: the Continental Army was a desperate force, and many men were without shoes or other basic necessities. The night was freezing, and after a cold, wet, river crossing, a heavy snowstorm began to blow.

The conditions of Trenton were extreme, and it is almost always the first battle mentioned in the pension applications of German Regiment soldiers, even if the applicant had seen prior service in other military units. The action at Trenton was short and sharp, and there

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 191.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 219.

were few Continental casualties. However, the soldiers endured great hardship on the march to Trenton, even before they “saw the elephant” in the town itself. In the testimony in a pension application to the federal government, from the widow of one German Regiment soldier, Conrad Beam, another soldier gave a heart-wrenching account of the hardships soldiers went through on the march to Trenton:

We were attached to what was called the duch Batallion under the command of Col. Whosicer [Haussegger] from Philadelphia we marched into the state of New Jersey where we remained until the night of the 25<sup>th</sup> of December 1776 when we march to New Town [had] hail rain & sleet our clothes was frozen to our back<sup>135</sup>

The Continental Army marched through this freezing landscape and took three Hessian regiments by surprise: the Grenadier Regiment Rall, the Fusilier Regiment Von Lossberg, and the Fusilier Regiment Von Knyphausen, as well as some artillery.

The Hessian troops were not taken by surprise because they had spent the night celebrating Christmas, as the popular notion of the Battle of Trenton typically posits. Rather, they had news of an incoming attack by the Continental Army and had stationed men in posts outside the city in order to warn the main Hessian force of any incoming soldiers. The Continental Army made first contact with a detachment of Hessian soldiers under the command of Lieutenant Andreas von Wiederholt which was stationed in a cooper’s shop to the north of the town.<sup>136</sup> The Continental Army was able to take the Hessians by surprise because they were exhausted from the constant mental and physical wear of being stationed in hostile territory, and because men like Von Wiederholt believed that the entire Continental Army could not have

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<sup>135</sup> Pension Application of Conrad Beam, Fold3 Military Records, W25323.

<sup>136</sup> Hackett Fisher, *Crossing*, 235.

moved so quickly through such a severe storm. As a result, Von Wiederholt's first impression was that they were a detachment sent to inspect the sentries.<sup>137</sup>

Von Wiederholt watched Washington's plan of attack for the Battle of Trenton unfold: the Commander-in-Chief divided his army by its brigades and each brigade formed an arm in the encirclement of the city of Trenton. The German Regiment, then part of General Roche de Fermoy's Brigade in General Nathaniel Greene's Division, was sent to the east of Trenton along with Colonel Edward Hand's First Continental Regiment to cut off a Hessian retreat into the New Jersey countryside and towards any larger body of the British Army. This action is the one place in which the German Regiment appears in the mythology of the Revolution. As Hessian morale began to waver, the German Regiment's soldiers called out in their own language for the enemy to lay down their arms and surrender. The Rall and Von Lossberg Regiments surrendered in an apple orchard to the northeast of Trenton German Regiment and the First Continental.<sup>138</sup> The Continental Army suffered few casualties; according to Washington, just "two officers and one or two privates wounded."<sup>139</sup>

Washington's decision to place the German Regiment on the left flank of the American attack was an excellent tactical choice. The German Regiment had not yet seen battle, and so its trained but inexperienced men would not have been overwhelmed by an attack by the Hessians, who were veterans. However, if the Hessians were to make a counterattack towards the German Regiment, they would be met with strong resistance from a combined force of musket-and-bayonet-armed troops of the German Regiment, who held high ground, and were not advancing into the city. Continental troops were well-known to wither and retreat in the face of a British or

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<sup>137</sup> Ibid, 236.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, 250.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, 254.



German auxiliary bayonet charge, but the German Regiment would have been fighting with the confidence that the Hessians were vastly outnumbered and that they had already clashed and been at first defeated by some of the Continental Army's more experienced troops. The German Regiment performed admirably at Trenton, and at that point its reputation looked promising.

While the First Battle of Trenton was a decisive victory, Washington did not have the time to rest on his laurels. New Jersey was full of British and German auxiliary forces, and he was forced to fight again on 2 January 1777, at the Second Battle of Trenton, which can be best categorized as a fighting retreat. Washington needed to prevent his army from being overwhelmed by the British, and the German Regiment was one of the units to bear the brunt of the fighting on a bridge crossing the Assunpink Creek.<sup>140</sup> One of the German Regiment's enlisted men, Jacob Bottomer, was severely wounded at the Second Battle of Trenton.<sup>141</sup>

Bottomer's lieutenant at the time, Bernard Hubley testified:

Colonel Hand, was ordered by his Excellency General Washington to march a considerable Detachment to endeavor to prevent and annoy the Enemy from crossing Maidenhead Bridge in the Jersey: - I was with this Detachment ... the Enemy forced us to retreat, and on our retreat through the Streets of Trenton ... as soon as we had crossed the bridge, we formed in Battle array along the Creek, Our Artillery began to fire upon the Enemy, and after dark we made up large fires, and about midnight our Army marched off for Princeton.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> The Second Battle of Trenton is sometimes known as "the Battle of Assunpink Creek."

<sup>141</sup> Bottomer's personal story is related in Chapter 2, page 36.

<sup>142</sup> "Bernard Hubley to the Hon. Jas. Brady Lancaster March 18, 1807," Buttermore Cousins Homepage, [http://hawkmanohio.tripod.com/Jacob\\_Notes.htm](http://hawkmanohio.tripod.com/Jacob_Notes.htm). The descendants of Jacob Bottomer now spell their name "Buttermore" and have transcribed many of the documents relating to his life and post-war pension application.

The Second Battle of Trenton was really a precursor to the Battle of Princeton. It is an often overlooked action, in which Washington did what he had been doing for months leading up to First Trenton: conduct a fighting retreat in an effort keep his army from being destroyed. Second Trenton was the first time that the German Regiment actually faced real defeat. The Continental Army was driven out of the city of Trenton and had to maneuver out of the way of a large incoming British force, which Washington did, and proceeded to march on Princeton.

At the Battle of Princeton, Washington seems to have had a similar battle plan to the Battle of Trenton: send a large force to attack the town directly, and send the German Regiment around to cut off potential retreat or a flanking maneuver. Princeton ultimately was a victory for the Continental Army, but it was much more hard-fought than the First Battle of Trenton, largely because the German Regiment was absent for much of it. This instance is the most important part of the German Regiment's role in the Continental Army as a whole, and demonstrates the particular relationship between the German Regiment's officers and men. David Hackett Fisher posits that Haussegger and some of his men were captured at the Second Battle of Trenton, but this is not the case.<sup>143</sup> Other historians, including James Davis, Haussegger's biographer, also claim that he was captured at Second Trenton.<sup>144</sup> Haussegger's own account confirms that he was captured on the road on the way to the Battle of Princeton:

And as I come to the Plains of Princetown I heard a Fireing, thinking that my Battallion was engaged with the Enemy whom I was persuing, thereupon I rode towards the Battallion into the Woods, and to my great Surprize was stoped by a

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<sup>143</sup> Hackett Fisher, *Crossing*, 300.

<sup>144</sup> Davis, *Man of No Country*, 32.

Party of the Enemy's, who took me Prisoner and brought me to their  
Commander.<sup>145</sup>

There were a multitude of accusations against Haussegger. Some people suspected that he allowed himself to be captured, and had been funneling intelligence to the British during his time as Colonel of the German Regiment. David Hackett Fisher “found no primary evidence that he turned his coat.”<sup>146</sup> Haussegger was regarded with deep suspicion by the rest of the army and even by his own men.

One man who distrusted Haussegger was John Adlum, often known as the “Father of American Viticulture,” who was a soldier in the Revolutionary War, and later wrote a memoir which featured Haussegger and discussed the circumstances of his capture and his dubious loyalty to the American cause. Adlum was captured at Fort Washington during fighting in the New York campaign in mid-1776, and his memoir, includes an account of life as a prisoner of the British in New York City.<sup>147</sup> Adlum encountered Haussegger when he came to New York after his capture, and wrote that Haussegger said “I went to reconnoiter at Princeton and I was with ten men taken by the Hessians.”<sup>148</sup> There was not any significant force of Hessian soldiers at Princeton, so this may show unreliability on the part of Adlum, or a gap in Haussegger's story. Attending Colonel Haussegger at his lodging in New York was Private Conrad Housman, who was captured with Haussegger. Adlum recognized Housman because he was the younger brother of a butcher in their mutual hometown of York, Pennsylvania. Either the Housman brothers were both enlisted in the German Regiment, or the younger Housman was released and continued to

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<sup>145</sup> “To George Washington from Colonel Nicholas Haussegger, 16 January 1777,” Founders Online, National Archives, last modified February 21, 2017, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-08-02-0087>.

<sup>146</sup> Hackett Fisher, *Crossing*, 528.

<sup>147</sup> John Adlum, ed. Howard H. Peckham, *Memoirs of the Life of John Adlum in the Revolutionary War* (Chicago: the Caxton Club, 1968) 70.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, 118.

serve with the Continental Army, because a 1778 muster roll, lists one “Conrad Houseman” as “butcher in camp” at the encampment in White Plains, New York.<sup>149</sup> Since this obscure detail of Adlum’s account can be otherwise confirmed, it is reasonable to believe that his narrative of Haussegger’s capture can be considered, for the most part, trustworthy.

Adlum’s detailed description came from the narrative of Housman, whom he had gotten drunk, after high ranking officers asked Adlum to interview the butcher.<sup>150</sup> According to Housman, the capture of Nicholas Haussegger was predicated by an argument between the Colonel and Major Ludowick Weltner. Haussegger wanted to go into the town of Princeton with the whole of the German Regiment, while Weltner correctly believed that the town was fully occupied by the British and that doing so would result in the Regiment’s capture. It is best to let Adlum’s account speak for itself:

Housman gave us the following particulars. The regiment was marched toward Princeton and not meeting with any enemy they continued marching until they came within about half a mile of Princeton. Major Weltner rode up to Col. Housaker and immediately a smart altercation took place between them. The Major ordered the regiment to halt.<sup>151</sup>

Ludowick Weltner and Colonel Haussegger, were both field officers, and the imminent danger of battle made other the men of the regiment comfortable about disobeying the Colonel’s orders and obeying the Major’s:

Housaker ordered them to march, when the Major said “the enemy are in the town.” Housaker said they were not. The regiment halted during the altercation,

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<sup>149</sup> Houseman, Conrad, Revolutionary War Service Records, Continental Troops, German Battalion, Individual, Fold3 Military Records, Fold3.com.

<sup>150</sup> Adlum, *Memoirs*, 118 – 119.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*, 119.

and most of the officers of the regiment came to where the Colonel and the Major were disputing at the head of the regiment. The Major said “They shall not march until the town is reconnoitered and then we can act according to circumstances. The Colonel replied he would go and reconnoiter the town himself. He ordered out ten men and Lieutenant Bernard Hubly to go with him. The Major ordered the Lieutenant to stand by his platoon. Housaker said it was mutiny and that he would have him punished. The Major replied that prudence was not mutiny and that he knew the enemy were in the town and that the Colonel also knew it, and that it was highly improper to go into a place occupied by the enemy.”<sup>152</sup>

Haussegger seems to have left in a huff and Housman noted that “he set out for Princeton taking ten men with him and went direct to the Hessian general’s quarters, who came to the door and took him by the hand and asked him where his regiment was.”<sup>153</sup> However, there was no Hessian general quartered in Princeton. British troops occupied the town and the nearby Hessians were a group of Jaegers closer to Trenton. Houseman’s account depicted Haussegger as a total and complete traitor, who even accepted a bribe from the unnamed Hessian General who “pulled out his purse and poured some gold into his own hand and told Housaker to take what he wanted of it.”<sup>154</sup> Adlum’s narrative painted Haussegger as a complete scoundrel, and the officers with whom he stayed in New York, including Ethan Allen, agreed that Haussegger was a certainly a traitor.

There are some breaks with historical reality in John Adlum’s narrative, and the most important one concerns Haussegger after he got his parole, which was permission to leave

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid, 119 – 120.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, 120.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, 121.

imprisonment on the promise not have any hand in continuing the fight. Adlum wrote that Haussegger, “instead of going home [to Lebanon Pennsylvania] immediately returned to N. York and accepted of a captaincy in the new levies in the British service, where he died.”<sup>155</sup> This assertion is false. While Haussegger did give his parole, he did not take British service, but did go home to Lebanon, where he lived until he died in 1786.<sup>156</sup>

Ethan Allen, whom Adlum met, has his own account of his meeting with Haussegger, and Allen’s narrative, unlike Adlum’s, was written during the war, rather than years later. Allen’s account may even have influenced Adlum’s, given the similarity of the two. Allen’s assessment of Colonel Haussegger as a prisoner in New York is as follows:

Col. Hussecker, of the Continental Army, (as he then reported) was taken prisoner, and brought to New York, who gave out, that the country was most universally submitting to the English kings authority, and that there would be little or no opposition to Great Britain: This at first gave the [other] officers a little shock, but in a few days they recovered themselves, for this Col. Hussecker, being a german, was feasting with Gen. D. Heister, his countryman, and from this conduct they were apprehensive, that he was a knave, at least he was esteemed so by most of the officers, it was nevertheless a day of trouble.<sup>157</sup>

General Leopold Philip de Heister is the best candidate for the “Hessian General” who gave money to Haussegger. De Heister was one of the overall commanders of Hessian forces in America during the Revolutionary War. Ethan Allen did not like Haussegger, and remained

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid, 123 – 124.

<sup>156</sup> Davis, *Man*, 39.

<sup>157</sup> Ethan Allen, *The Narrative of Colonel Ethan Allen* (Cambridge: Applewood Books, 1989) 88. This book was Originally published in Philadelphia in 1779.

deeply suspicious of him. After Haussegger's capture, all of Revolutionary America seemed to turn against him, on the suspicion that he had been secretly colluding with the British.

Although George Washington did not seem to have a strong opinion on whether or not Haussegger actually deserted, he went along with the consensus of the rest of the Continental Army and the general public opinion of the man. Washington wrote in a letter to Major General Horatio Gates, expressing his concerns about Haussegger's capture:

This will be delivered you by the Officers who came with Colo. Hawsecker and under whose care he returns again. His arrival here was what I did not expect, as I had no particular, specific charge against him, nor has any thing more been alleged than General suspicions. All I meant or wished to be done respecting him, was that you should by inquiry trace if you could the causes of complaint and obtain some certain information of the Facts imputed to him. To this end I thought it proper that his conduct after his return home, should be marked with some degree of vigilance & cautious attention by our Friends in his Neighbourhood, but in such away as not to afford him room for suspicion. This I would wish to be done yet, but as to retaining him in arrest or under guard without some certain and positive accusation & witnesses to support it, It cannot be done; indeed his remaining here would put it much in his power to escape to the Enemy or to transmit them Intelligence of an injurious nature should he be so disposed.<sup>158</sup>

Washington did not know for sure if Haussegger had really turned Tory, but he was unwilling to risk keeping Haussegger near and jeopardizing the Continental Army. Of course, Washington did have an inside man in the German Regiment: his old friend Captain John David Woelpper.

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<sup>158</sup> "From George Washington to Major General Horatio Gates, 12 February 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified February 21, 2017, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-08-02-0339>.

There is no written record of Woelpper telling Washington what he thought of Haussegger. However, it would be surprising if Washington neglected to speak to him in person about it, or wrote some correspondence with him on the subject. Since there is no written record, an in-person conversation on the matter seems the most likely. Traditionally, officers who were captured were put on rolls to be exchanged, and when they had been exchanged, even if they gave their parole and were far from the army, they were allowed to rejoin the fight. After the capture of the British Army under the command of General John Burgoyne at the Battle of Saratoga in 1777, and the exchange of prisoners in the subsequent years, Washington gave explicit instructions to his officers not to exchange Nicholas Haussegger:

You are not to exchange ... Col. Housekker on our part ... [He was] taken in a manner which will not suffer us to consider him in the light of a common prisoner.<sup>159</sup>

Haussegger was not a common prisoner because of the persistent rumor of his duplicity. It is possible that an assessment given to Washington by Woelpper had an important role in determining Washington's decision not to trust him.

While many people later found him untrustworthy, Haussegger probably did not go into Princeton with the intention of handing over his regiment. The Continental Army and the British Army did not know each other's precise locations until later that morning, and what happened on the road to Princeton was a result of the dynamic between members of the German Regiment during their training in the barracks in Philadelphia and the campaign up until that day. The most likely narrative of what happened early that morning probably would have gone as follows.

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<sup>159</sup> "From George Washington to John Beatty, 19 August 1779," *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified February 21, 2017, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-22-02-0151>.



Haussegger was an experienced officer with a European background, and because of his experience, was aggressive and energetic in his command. Not many of his officers, with the exception of a few experienced soldiers including Captain Woelpper, were well-versed in war, and mistook Haussegger's aggression for imprudence. When Major Weltner questioned Haussegger's orders, Haussegger saw an insubordinate, but the men and other officers saw Weltner as a caring leader who was worried about his men's safety, especially those who may have been demoralized from the defeat at Assunpink Bridge during the Second Battle of Trenton. In addition the whole Continental Army had also a few days' continuous battle and march, so its men, including officers and enlisted soldiers in the German Regiment, may have had the effects of exhaustion playing on their minds. Haussegger, angry at Weltner's decision to defy his orders, took a few men and did go to scout the town himself, without the intention of being captured. In this instance, the letter Haussegger wrote to Washington to explain himself can be trusted. However, there is still some question as to why Haussegger accepted money from General de Heister, as Housman told Adlum.

Haussegger's actions can be explained yet again through his experience of war as a European rather than an American. After the British surrender at the Battle of Yorktown, many British officers borrowed money from French officers, which was common European practice; Americans decried this fraternization with the enemy.<sup>160</sup> After his capture, Haussegger borrowed money from General de Heister, the ranking Hessian officer in New York. Here is a plausible explanation for Housman's assertion that the General "pulled out his purse and ... told Housaker to take what he wanted of it."<sup>161</sup> De Heister was not paying Haussegger for turning in his men; he loaned money to Haussegger for his upkeep. Due to the fact that Adlum wrote this memoir

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<sup>160</sup> Robert A. Selig, "America the Ungrateful," *American Heritage*, Vol. 48, Issue 1, 1997.

<sup>161</sup> Adlum, *Memoir*, 121.

years after the war ended, it is likely some of the details may have been foggy in his mind. It is obvious that Haussegger and de Heister did have some sort of relationship, because Ethan Allen reported that they dined. However, it is important to note the two acted like European officers did when one had taken another prisoner during a campaign. The notion of lending an enemy money may have been totally foreign to men like Adlum and Housman, so while Haussegger and De Heister did something they saw as normal, the two Americans saw it as proof of Haussegger's duplicity.

At some point, Haussegger did turn his coat, and it was most likely during his capture in New York, since both Adlum and Allen report that Haussegger was despairing for the American cause. Adlum wrote:

He told the gentlemen that the whole country was submitting to the British and that it was all over for us, that the country was as much conquered, and that the whole of the Jerseys was coming and taking the Oath of Allegiance to the King.<sup>162</sup>

While this could be taken as damning evidence of Haussegger's betrayal, it could also be a result of despair after being captured. There are two pieces of documentary evidence that assert that Haussegger, at some point in his career as a Continental Army officer, decided to betray the United States. In 1783, after America and Britain signed the peace treaty that ended the war of Independence, Haussegger wrote to Frederick Haldimand, then governor of Canada, stating that he was in "unhappy circumstances."<sup>163</sup> Haussegger sought some sort of position for which he might "be of service," because he was "one of those unfortunate royalists, who ... in defense of their King and government, was left ... at the mercy of an unhuman enemy."<sup>164</sup> Haldimand was

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid, 121 – 122.

<sup>163</sup> Davis, *Man*, 40.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

one of the founding officers of the Royal American Regiment, in which Haussegger served during the French and Indian War, and Haussegger hoped to leverage their familiarity. John Andre, a British intelligence officer, also remarked about Haussegger in a list of spies:

Ranking should have a cipher – and a word. Houseker a word, and they should point out a house on the frontier by which [Mohawk war chief Joseph] Brant might by sending the parole have communication and might arrange his operations.<sup>165</sup>

Ultimately, Haussegger did betray America in some way, otherwise he would not have bothered writing to Haldimand.

Along with the capture of Nicholas Haussegger came the decline of the German Regiment as a reliable and strong unit in the Continental Army. After the Battle of Princeton, Washington established winter quarters in Morristown in northern New Jersey. Morristown was just far enough away from New York that the Continental Army could have warning of British attack, but close enough that it could keep an eye on British activity in this city. The German Regiment, like many other units, found itself dispersed throughout the New Jersey countryside, in order to secure supplies for the Continental Army and defend it from British raiding parties. The first half of 1777 in New Jersey is known as the “Forage War.” During the Forage War, the German Regiment changed. It was still largely the same group of men who had marched out of Philadelphia on 2 December 1776, but the Continental Army administration did not see the German Regiment as the large, powerful unit that it was early on in the campaign, likely due to the loss and potential betrayal of its commanding officer, and its sub-par performance at the Battles of Second Battle of Trenton and Princeton.

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<sup>165</sup> Carl van Doren, *A Secret History of the American Revolution* (Garden City: Garden City Publishing Co., 1941) 231.

The German Regiment had an uneventful late winter and early spring, but there was slow change to the regiment. Despite the fact that he still held his commission as Colonel, Congress and Washington replaced Haussegger, and appointed another man: Henry Leonhard Philip, Baron d’Arendt.<sup>166</sup> Washington was pleased with Congress’ choice, writing to John Hancock:

I observe by your late promotion that a Foreign Gentleman is appointed to the command of the German Battalion. I could wish that he was ordered to join them immediately, as that Regt much wants an Officer of experience at the Head of it.<sup>167</sup>

While Washington was happy with the choice of d’Arendt as colonel, he was disappointed with the way the German Regiment had turned out, and for obvious reasons particularly with the conduct of its highest ranking officers. One letter expressed his disappointment with the German Regiment’s lack of organization:

On looking over the last Return of the German Battalion, there appears to be Fifty three privates Sick and absent—and Seventeen on Furlough. Almost four months have expired since orders were given for collecting the sick, and yet there are as many absent as if no such had issued. Such disobedience can no longer be pardonned in Officers. I do therefore in the most peremptory manner command that they be without loss of time collected. The privates now on Furlough must be ordered in and no more given in future. The Officers must continue with their Men, that they may be ready for action on a moments warning. In short as the

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<sup>166</sup> Baron d’Arendt is discussed in the chapter concerning the German Regiment’s officers.

<sup>167</sup> “From George Washington to John Hancock, 2 April 1777,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified February 21, 2017, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-09-02-0046>.

Campaign must open immediately, I must insist that both Officers & Men discharge their duty with the greatest punctuality.<sup>168</sup>

Soon after d'Arendt's promotion to Colonel, the German Regiment underwent another change: George Stricker resigned as Lieutenant Colonel. Washington wrote on 9 April to Thomas Johnson of Maryland:

Having heard that your State have appointed Lieut. Colo. Geo. Stricker to the Command of a Battalion, I hold myself bound to inform you That the Character he holds here as an Officer will not justify such an appointment—Yesterday he obtained my leave to resign ... Had there been any other Field Officer with the Batn. I should have permitted him to leave it immediately; he waits only for the Colonel's arrival.<sup>169</sup>

The incompetence which Stricker showed throughout his time as a field officer finally led to his leaving the army to return home to Maryland. The German Regiment would begin to be plagued with a shortage of officers which would last for the entire war. Finally, on 19 August 1777, the death knell rang for the German Regiment's officers:

The Board of Generals took in to Consideration your Excellency's Question, respecting that the German Battalion ... Are of Opinion; "That from the peculiar establishment of the German Regiment ... [the German Regiment's officers] had better rise Regimentally."<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> "From George Washington to the Commanding Officer of the German Battalion and the 1st and 12th Pennsylvania Regiments, 17 April 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified March 30, 2017, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-09-02-0171>.

<sup>169</sup> "From George Washington to Thomas Johnson, 9 April 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified February 21, 2017, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-09-02-0104>.

<sup>170</sup> "To George Washington from a Board of General Officers, 19 August 1777," *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified February 21, 2017, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-11-02-0002>.

This proclamation means that officers in the German Regiment could only be promoted within the regiment itself, and could not be promoted to vacancies in other regiments in the Continental Army. With this pronouncement, the German Regiment became a total and complete dead-end for the career of any ambitious Continental Army officer. From this point forward, officers in the German Regiment tried to leave in order to advance themselves. Paul Bentalou, the French Jewish volunteer, left the German Regiment to join Pulaski's Legion; this is also potential impetus for why Baron d'Arendt decided to leave the German Regiment. The unit continued to exist until 1781, but its slow breakdown as an important part of the Continental Army began in April of 1777.

The most crucial time in the history of the German Regiment is the few weeks from when it left barracks in Philadelphia in early December 1776 to the aftermath of the Battle of Princeton in early January 1777. The German Regiment played a vital role in the defeat of the Hessians at Trenton, and entered the mythology of the Revolution by calling to Hessian troops in their own language to lay down their arms. It defended the retreat of the Continental Army from Trenton, but saw very little action during the Battle of Princeton, thanks to the aggressive scouting by Nicholas Haussegger which led to his capture and eventual betrayal. In this time, the German Regiment went from being the largest regiment in the Continental Army, upon which George Washington pinned many hopes, to a unit wanting good leadership.

## Conclusion

While Congress was raising the German Regiment, George Washington wrote that they would be “a Corps of much service.”<sup>171</sup> Whether or not they lived up to Washington’s high expectations is debatable. As a Regiment they were involved in three mutinies: once in the barracks in Philadelphia in 1776, once while on Sullivan’s Campaign in 1779, finally in the mutiny of the Pennsylvania Line in early 1781. The German Regiment’s first colonel was captured by the British and eventually turned his coat. The second Colonel was an irresponsible volunteer that jumped ship when he realized that his men did not like him. In 1777, Washington decided to make the German Regiment a career dead-end for any officer that wished to serve in it. It may be that Washington himself did not think that the German Regiment was “a Corps of much service”<sup>172</sup> though they had existed only a little more than a year when he made that decision.

Whether or not the service of the German Regiment was valuable, they undeniably saw a lot of it. They fought in every major campaign in the Mid-Atlantic from late 1776 to early 1781: Trenton-Princeton, the Forage War of early 1777, the Philadelphia Campaign of 1777 – 1778, and Sullivan’s Campaign against the Iroquois in 1779. After Sullivan’s Campaign, they did not rejoin the rest of the Continental Army, which stayed in Morristown, New Jersey, for the winter of 1779 – 1780. Rather, the German Regiment was spread out along the frontier of Northumberland County, Pennsylvania, where they stayed until leaving for West Point in August 1780, where much of the Continental was encamped. As of 1781, a new reorganization of the Continental Army dissolved the German Regiment and many of its men were either released

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<sup>171</sup> “From George Washington to John Hancock, 30 June 1776,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified March 30, 2017, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-05-02-0107>.

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

from army service or were distributed to units from their respective states of either Maryland or Pennsylvania. There were German Regiment soldiers who fought at the Siege of Yorktown in early fall of 1781, but they were scattered in different units. In terms of how much time it spent with the Army, the German Regiment was a corps of much service: they literally saw much service, and it was on active duty for five years (1776 – 1780) out of the eight in the War for Independence (1775 – 1783).

The German Regiment does not seem to have left much of a long-term impact on the historical memory of the Revolution. They enter the mythology at the Battle of Trenton, but they are not typically regarded as a unit of Germans, but the story commonly goes that German soldiers in the Continental Army called out to the Hessians in their own language to surrender. Many historians studying the American Revolution and the Continental Army include the German Regiment in their analysis, but they do not study it in-depth. There are many possible reasons for neglecting to study the German Regiment, the most likely of which is that writers are simply interested in something else, and there is nothing wrong with that. However, there is some element of memory to it.

Germans are one of the largest ethnic groups in America, and have been so since the colonial period. Each new wave of immigrants since America's foundation has made new history, and Germans in America have become part of an ever-increasing picture. By the time of the American Civil War, there were so many German-Americans that there was no one German-American community. Immigrants to America bring their cultures with them, and often recreate something of their old homeland in their new homeland. Germans continued to speak their own language in America during the eighteenth century, all the way through the nineteenth century, but in the twentieth century, something changed. During the First World War, the United States



went to war with a German-speaking country for the first time and, according to historian Klaus Wust, “suddenly everything German was engulfed in a seas of hatred and bigotry.”<sup>173</sup> Distinct German-American culture declined sharply with the American entrance to the First World War, and by the time of the Second World War, there were few distinctly German American communities.

Today, when the Pennsylvania Dutch are mentioned, the image is of people like the Amish and Mennonites, even though there was and still is a much larger group of German-Americans who were and are not radical Protestants. Germans brought with them their own ideas of liberty and property, and were influential in shaping the new Republic. For example, the first Speaker of the House of Representatives was Frederick Muhlenberg, the son of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, the founder of the Lutheran Church in America. The German Regiment may not have always served with distinction, but it did serve for a long time, and was a cornerstone in the victory at the Battle of Trenton. Trenton is mythologized as the battle which saved the cause for American Independence, and truthfully, without a victory at Trenton or subsequently at Princeton, the Revolutionary War would probably have been lost.

Much study has gone into how a people trying to create a free republic interacted with the creation of a professional army during the Revolutionary war. Conventional wisdom dictates that an army must be authoritarian in order to carry out its mission. Germans were just as involved in the creation of the Continental Army as their English-speaking neighbors, albeit in smaller numbers. Germans seem to have overwhelmingly supported independence, with the exception of neutral pacifist groups and a few particular communities which felt a specific loyalty to the king of England, rather than the nation of Great Britain. These German groups were located in the

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<sup>173</sup> Klaus Wust, *The Virginia Germans* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1969) 247.

Deep South and New York, and the King had them settled there in order for them to escape oppression in the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>174</sup> However, these communities were small and had little influence on national politics during the Revolution.

The German Regiment was a body of men that in many ways represented German participation in the war. Though they did not serve with particular distinction, they were not any worse soldiers than anyone else in the Continental Army, and their history of insubordination came from what they regarded as the army not fulfilling its agreement with them. By the later period of the war, many troops in the German Regiment were not even German: all military units can face difficulty in recruitment, but recruiting becomes even more difficult if recruiters limit themselves to one group of people. In order to keep the German Regiment manned, officers recruited men who were not German. This is a common thread in the history of “ethnic” regiments. During the American Civil War, the Army of the United States tried to raise an enormous number of ethnic regiments, most of them German or Irish, the two largest groups of immigrants in America at the time. As the men died continuously in the terror of the American Civil War, these regiments also had an exceedingly hard time replenishing their ranks with men of the regiment’s declared ethnicity. According to William L. Burton, “with ethnics, as with the larger population, the first rush of enthusiasm for the war soon dwindled.”<sup>175</sup> In this aspect, what was true for the American Civil War was also true for the American War for Independence. As the war continued, people became less and less willing to fight in the Continental Army.

The German Regiment was an experiment for Congress and the Continental Army and it yielded mixed results. Its men fought well when they needed to, but could be insubordinate.

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<sup>174</sup> Roeber, *Palatines*, 316 – 17.

<sup>175</sup> William L. Burton, *Melting Pot Soldiers: the Union’s Ethnic Regiments* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998) 220.

However, mutiny is a common theme in the study of military history, so the German Regiment is not unique in its history of insubordination. The German Regiment was one of the first units to be enlisted in the long-term, which means that it was also one of the first truly professional units in the Continental Army. Before the German Regiment, soldiers enlisted for six months or a year. After the German Regiment, volunteers typically enlisted for either three years or the duration of the war. At the beginning of the Revolution, the German Regiment was one of the largest units in the Continental Army; by the time it dissolved, it was severely understrength and there were not enough officers to command each of its companies.

It is important to study military units which serve with distinction: their actions shape history and the world known today is largely a direct result of the battles in which they fought and the missions they undertook. However, units which serve without distinction can give a good idea of what life was like for most soldiers, and how society responded to the call to arms and the need to fight for a cause they deem just. The German Regiment was in many ways a typical regiment, but it gained infamy thanks to the betrayal of Nicholas Haussegger. Its effectiveness in pitched battle was average. Its men were volunteers, and so they entered the army on their own terms. They were rebellious patriots and loyal mutineers, and they fought and died for nation which set them apart from their English-speaking neighbors. The German Regiment was the first “ethnic” unit that the United States ever decided to raise, and though it has since become an obscure topic of historical study, it remains an important subject in the long history of immigrant communities in America and American military history.

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