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THE COMMITTEES OF CORRESPONDENCE, INSPECTION AND SAFETY
IN OLD HAMPSHIRE COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS,
DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

A Thesis Presented

by

CAROLYN D. HERTZ

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 1993

Department of History

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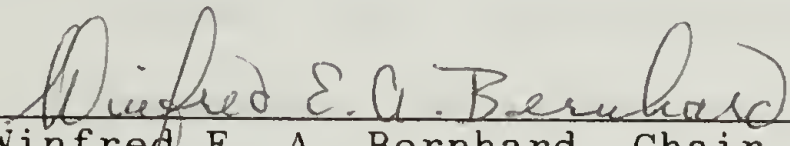
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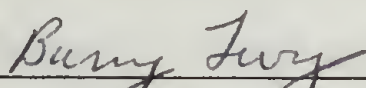
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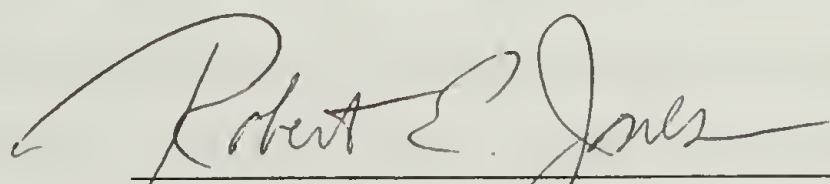
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Personnel at the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston were of assistance in retrieving materials of the Boston Committee of Correspondence, as well as other files and microforms; those at the American Antiquarian Society retrieved files on the American Revolution.

ABSTRACT

THE COMMITTEES OF CORRESPONDENCE, INSPECTION AND SAFETY
OF OLD HAMPSHIRE COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS
DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

MAY 1993

CAROLYN D. HERTZ, B.S., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS
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During the War for Independence, local Committees of Correspondence, Inspection and Safety were an integral part of the Revolutionary movement in Massachusetts. In Hampshire County, they helped the development of backcountry support for Boston when town autonomy was threatened by the Massachusetts Government Act (1774). The Committees adjusted their activities as necessity arose. In association with the Continental Congress, provincial legislature, and county organization, Hampshire County town Committees provided military support, controlled Tories, acted as juridical tribunals in the absence of a court system, and attempted to stabilize the economy with wage and price controls. All these activities were an extension of the Town Meeting process, which elected the members of the Committees. Cooperation and communication among the different local Committees provided a network that united the populace and was the heart of the Revolutionary movement in Hampshire County.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Perhaps no single step contributed so much to cement the union of the colonies, and the final acquisition of independence, as the establishment of committees of correspondence," proclaimed Mercy Otis Warren in her History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution (Warren 1970 I:109).

The cement that provided the adhesion of all the colonies began simply with the individual exchange of information and grievances on a person-to-person basis. With time, there was grassroots participation in both large and small communities within the province of the Massachusetts-Bay. These towns and districts, Boston in particular, then corresponded with other towns throughout the American colonies, as well as with Great Britain and Canada with the objective of presenting their views and opinions of the transgressions of the British Parliament in the years prior to the Revolution. This extensive communication network provided the unity of thought and purpose that guided the American colonies through their war with England.

The local Committees of Correspondence, Inspection, and Safety were very important in the development of the Revolutionary movement in Hampshire County. Indeed, they

aided in the development of the backcountry resistance in support of Boston against the Crown. The Committees provided coordination of energies and purpose for the war effort. It was the local Committees that carried out the orders of the Continental Congress which had been passed on through the provincial/state level.

Several types of ad hoc Committees with different functions were spawned during the era of the American Revolution. These Committees were an integral part of the coordination of the movement toward independence. Prior to the outbreak of war, the Committees of Correspondence circulated news of any grievances, while Committees of Inspection were responsible for detection of tea drinkers. The functions of the Committees, from the Provincial level down to the town level, evolved throughout the war as circumstances required. The local Committees of Safety, for instance, helped in recruitment of soldiers for the conflict when enlistments did not meet quotas. In 1776 the three separate Committees were combined into one Committee, usually recorded in Town Meeting records as Committees of Correspondence, Inspection and Safety. Without benefit of a county court system, towns used these Committees as judge and jury until the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780 provided a stable judiciary. For example, they became responsible for trials of Loyalists and disposition of lands confiscated from them; some Committees were involved

in the trying of counterfeiters. As the war turned to the Southern states, the Committees faded from existence although in certain towns members were elected until 1783 when the Treaty of Paris was signed.

An important aspect of these Committees in Massachusetts was that they were elected by the townsmen in open town meetings; in some instances, the political powers of the town meeting actually opened the meetings to include all the inhabitants of the town, not just those who were qualified by law to vote. The members of the Committees of Correspondence, Inspection, and Safety were elected to serve the town, just as other officials were elected. These Committees were not secret or covert political cells acting on their own without public scrutiny; they were elected for a specific purpose, similar to committees appointed to build a meetinghouse or mediate a dispute among residents.

Despite the importance of the Committees of Correspondence to the American Revolution in Massachusetts, few historians do more than mention them. Merrill Jensen included the Boston Committee of Correspondence in his discussions in The Founding of a Nation 1763-1776 (1968), but the Boston Committee was not mentioned, and neither was the creation of other grassroots Committees, in events after October 1774. Pauline Maier, in From Resistance to Revolution (1974), merely acknowledged the existence of

these Committees, as did Robert E. Brown in Middle-Class Democracy and the Revolution in Massachusetts, 1691-1780 (1968). Gary B. Nash in The Urban Crucible (1986) and Arthur M. Schlesinger in Prelude to Independence (1958) briefly touched on the activities of the Boston Committee after 1773.

When historians discussed the Committees, the discourse generally took into account only the origins of these bodies. The best coverage was provided by Richard D. Brown in Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts (1970). His study focused on the contacts of the Boston Committee of Correspondence (1772-1774) with towns, most of which were in the eastern part of the state. Such towns as Brimfield, Charlemont Colrain, Granville, Pelham, and Wilbraham in Hampshire County were mentioned in relation to the Tea Act and the Solemn League and Covenant. Brown also conveyed this information in an article about the towns' reply to the Committee in 1773 (1968). In another article, Bruce Henry wrote about Dr. Thomas Young and the Boston Committee (1976).

Edward D. Collins wrote a short article, "Committees of Correspondence of the American Revolution," published in the Annual Report of the American Historical Association (1902). This article should properly be entitled "The Creation of Provincial Committees of Correspondence 1772-1774," as its scope was very limited. In fact, the

work concentrated on provincial-level, not local-level Committees in Massachusetts, Virginia, New York, and New Jersey, while only speaking in passing of the Committees in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and North Carolina. South Carolina, Georgia, and Delaware were not even mentioned. Agnes Hunt also wrote a short unremarkable essay about the Committees in The Provincial Committees of Safety of the American Revolution (1904).

Many of the better-known histories of New England are histories of Massachusetts -- for example, Michael Zuckerman's Peaceable Kingdoms (1970) and Edward M. Cook Jr.'s Fathers of the Towns (1976). In particular, "Table One" (pp.12-14) of Cook's study listed thirty-six Massachusetts towns, as compared to thirty-seven for all of the other five states in New England combined. Furthermore, many histories of Massachusetts are in reality histories of Boston, leaving the rest of the state, especially western Massachusetts, not as thoroughly studied.

Robert J. Taylor titled his book Western Massachusetts in the Revolution (1954), but he actually gave us a picture of events in western Massachusetts which led up to the Revolution and the events of Shays' Rebellion after it, rather than a detailed description of the war years between 1776 and 1781. He mentioned the Committees only in

a cursory way. Gregory H. Nobles wrote specifically about Old Hampshire County in Divisions Throughout the Whole (1983); but he discussed events leading up to the Revolution between 1740 and 1775, without delving heavily into the war years. Anne Webb wrote a dissertation about society and the effects of the Great Awakening in Northampton from 1750 to 1775 (1976). Lee Nathaniel Newcomer in The Embattled Farmers (1953) provided a brief overview of the Revolution in Berkshire, Hampshire, and Worcester Counties. The Committees received little mention other than as scattered examples.

The thesis presented here differs from the above-mentioned works in that it has as its focus the local town Committees of Correspondence, Inspection, and Safety of Old Hampshire County, Massachusetts. This study concentrates on towns far from the Boston metropolis. Instead of choosing an upland and a river town, or an old and a new town, or a rural and a market town, I decided to gather materials from an entire region, thereby encompassing many different types of towns in my study. The region of Old Hampshire County provides excellent diversity and a frame of reference from which to view the American Revolution.

I have limited the scope of this study to the years 1770 through 1783, which permits me to survey three periods: the years just prior to the Revolution, the war's early phase, and the period after the military action

in the War for Independence moved southward. The Committees of Correspondence, Inspection and Safety were most active from 1775 to 1780, although some towns had Committees as early as 1773 and some as late as 1783. It was necessary to institute a criterion for selecting a town for inclusion in this discussion: it must have been a full-member town by 1775, i.e., it was allowed all the privileges of incorporation including sending its own representative to the General Court. Districts -- communities that had most of the privileges of a town but were not considered a town de jure -- were given full-member status by the Council and House of Representatives on August 23, 1775, and are included in this study. Note that Plantation Number Five (Cummington) and Plantation Number Seven (Hawley) were unincorporated political entities at that time, and their status was not changed by the general act; consequently, Cummington and Hawley are not included. In addition, the Town of Middlefield (now in Hampshire County) is not a cohort member, as it was not created until 1783 from the towns of Chester and Worthington in Old Hampshire County, and Peru, Becket, and Washington in Berkshire County. See the map of Hampshire County with political boundaries as they existed in 1775 on page 8 (Massachusetts Historical Commission 1988).

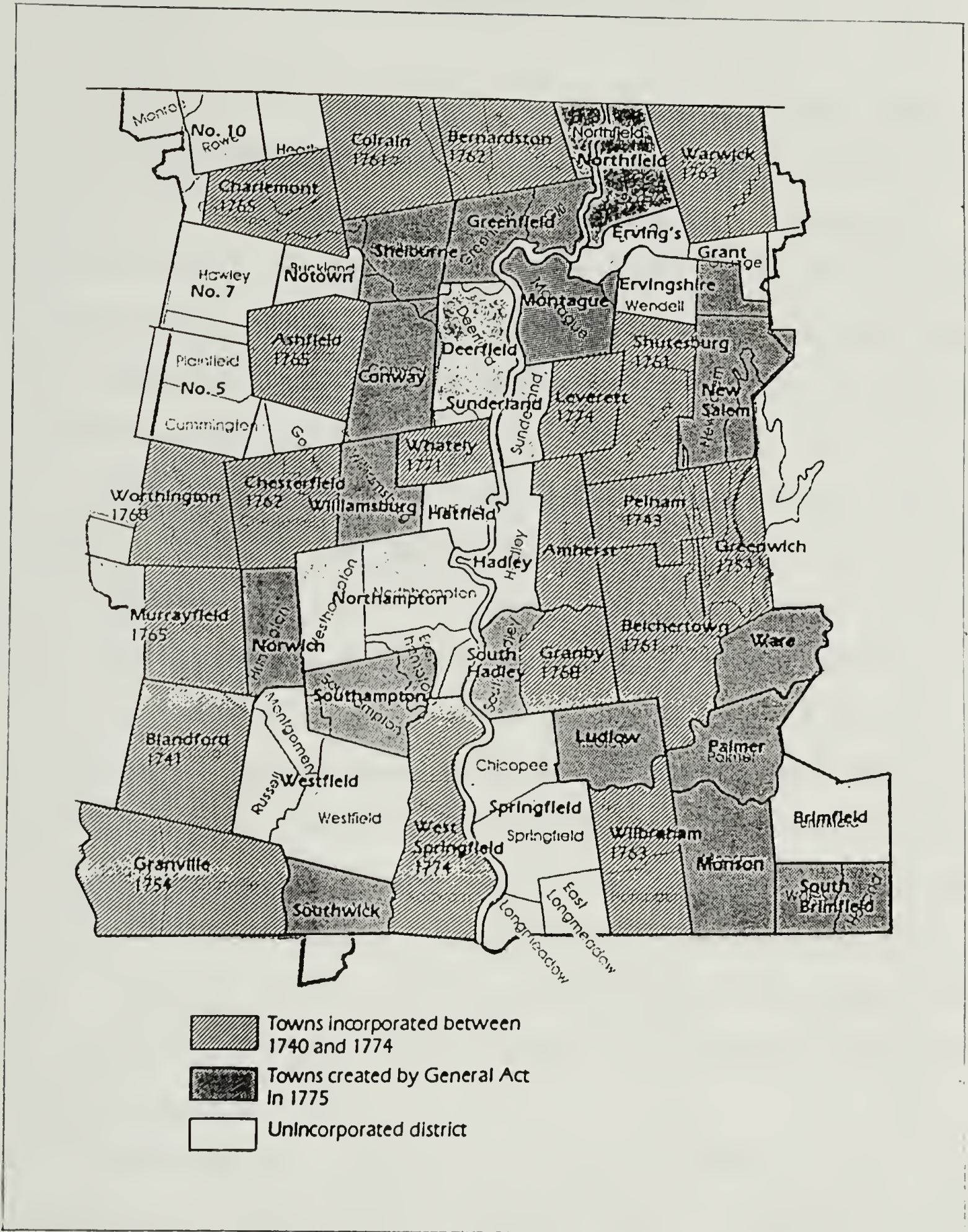


Illustration 1. Hampshire County Town Boundaries in 1775

CHAPTER 2

OLD HAMPSHIRE COUNTY

At the time of the American Revolution, Hampshire County encompassed all of the lands that today lie in Hampshire, Hampden, and Franklin Counties in Massachusetts. The county stretched from the Vermont border in the north, to the Connecticut line in the south, and was sandwiched between Worcester County to the east and Berkshire County to the west.

The topography of the county varies widely, from the marshy lowlands and moderate, rolling uplands of Wilbraham in the south, to the fertile Connecticut River floodplain at Northampton, and to the rugged uplands of Colrain on the Vermont border. Towns situated along the flats of the Connecticut River were primarily agricultural. The larger market centers were located at Springfield and Northampton, while Greenfield served as a smaller outlet facility. Towns farther than a two-town-wide swath on each side of the river were hilly and difficult to farm; these situations provided opportunities for lumbering, and cattle and dairy production.

Population of these polities in 1765 and 1776 varied considerably as the following Table 1 clarifies (Benton 1905:82-85; Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1909):

Table 1
Population in Hampshire County, Massachusetts

<u>Town</u>	<u>1765</u>	<u>1776</u>
Amherst	645	915
Ashfield	NR*	628
Belchertown	418	972
Bernardston	230	607
Blandford	406	772
Brimfield	773	1,064
Charlemont	NR*	NR
Chester [Murrayfield]	NR*	405
Chesterfield	161	1,092
Colrain	297	566
Conway	NR*	897
Deerfield	737	836
Granby	NR*	491
Granville	682	1,126
Greenfield	368	735
Greenwich	434	890
Hadley	573	681
Hatfield	815	582
Huntington [Norwich]	NR*	400
Leverett	NR*	293
Ludlow	NR*	413
Monson	389	813
Montague	392	575
New Salem	375	910
Northampton	1,280	1,790
Northfield	415	580
Palmer	508	727
Pelham	371	729
Shelburne	NR*	575
Shutesbury	330	598
Southampton	437	740
South Hadley	817	584
Southwick	NR*	450
Springfield	2,755	1,974
Sunderland	NR*	409
Wales [South Brimfield]	624	850
Ware	485	773
Warwick	191	766
Westfield	1,324	1,488
West Springfield	NR*	1,744
Whately	NR*	410
Wilbraham	491	1,057
Williamsburg	NR*	534
Worthington	NR*	639

* NR = No Record. The Town of Sunderland, and the plantations Ashfield, Charlemont, Chester, and Worthington were not listed in the 1765 census. Other towns without data were still a part of their respective mother towns in 1765, and therefore were not recorded separately.

There were forty-six political entities in Hampshire County in 1775: twenty-seven towns, seventeen districts, and two plantations.

According to the laws of the Massachusetts-Bay, a plantation was an unincorporated settlement. A town was denoted as an incorporated body entitled to all privileges of a political unit that could be accorded to it by law, which included election of officers and representatives to the General Court, collection of taxes to provide for ministers, schools, and roads. This body could also warn people out of town and admit new inhabitants. A district was an incorporated portion of a town, which was allowed all town privileges, except that of sending its own representative to the General Court. A precinct was empowered to choose officers in connection with providing its own church services (Acts and Resolves 1869).

A law enacted August 23, 1775, promoted all districts to full-member town status. The most important aspect of this law was that it enabled them to send representatives to the General Court (Acts and Resolves 1886 V:419-420). According to the preamble of the act, some incorporation laws passed by the General Court in former years were "against common right, and in derogation of the rights granted to the inhabitants of this colony by charter," when they excepted the districts from sending their own representative to the Great and General Court (Acts and

Resolves 1886 V:419). With the general act, any town or district with thirty qualified freeholders and other inhabitants was enabled to send a spokesman from the community. Neither precincts nor plantations were affected by this ruling.

The political status of each town or district is shown in Table 2 (Commonwealth of Massachusetts 1909:passim; Town Records of each locale). Also shown is the town, district or plantation from which the town or district was separated or created. For reasons discussed in the Introduction, Middlefield (1783) and the plantations that became Hawley (1792) and Cummington (1779) are not shown in Table 2 on page 14; towns and cities created after 1775 in Old Hampshire County are also not included.

Table 2
Political Entities in 1775

<u>TOWNS</u>	<u>INCORPORATED</u>	<u>FROM</u>	
Ashfield	1765	Huntstown plantation	
Belchertown	1761	Cold Spring plantation	
Bernardston	1762	Fall Town plantation	
Blandford	1741	New Glasgow	
Brimfield	1731		
Charlemont	1765	Charley's Mount plantation	
Chester	1765	Murrayfield plantation	
Chesterfield	1762	New Hingham plantation	
Colrain	1761	Colerain plantation	
Deerfield	1673		
Granby	1768	South Hadley district	
Greenwich	1754	Quabin plantation	
Hadley	1661		
Hatfield	1670	Hadley	
Leverett	1774	Sunderland	
Northampton	1654		
Northfield	1714	Squakeag plantation	
Pelham	1743		
Shutesbury	1761	Roadtown plantation	
Springfield	1646		
Sunderland	1718	Hadley	
Warwick	1763	Roxbury-Canada plantation	
Westfield	1669		
West Springfield	1774	Springfield	
Wilbraham	1768	Springfield	
Worthington	1768	Plantation Number 3	
<u>DISTRICT</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>MOTHER TOWN</u>	<u>PLANTATION</u>
Amherst	1759	Hadley	
Conway	1767	Deerfield	
Granville	1754		Bedford
Greenfield	1753	Deerfield	
Huntington [Norwich]	1773		Murrayfield
Ludlow	1774	Springfield	
Monson	1760	Brimfield	
Montague	1754	Sunderland	
New Salem	1753		New Salem
Palmer	1752		Elbows
Shelburne	1768	Deerfield	
Southampton	1753	Northampton	
South Hadley	1753	Hadley	
Southwick	1770	Westfield	
Wales [So. Brimfield]	1762	Brimfield	
Ware	1761	Palmer et al.	
Whately	1771	Hatfield	
Williamsburg	1771	Hatfield	

CHAPTER 3

ORIGINS OF THE COMMITTEES

Letters of protest had long been a means of airing grievances in the American colonies. In 1764 Parliament provided additional authority to the Board of Trade to prosecute violations of the Acts of Trade and passed the unpopular revenue measure, the Sugar Act. Colonists attempted to enforce boycotts and wrote letters to Parliament, contending that they would not be able to buy any more English goods if the situation continued. The Sugar Act and new regulations regarding the Acts of Trade were quickly followed by the proposal of the Stamp Act. This revenue enhancement measure provided the colonies with cause for rebellion against what they saw as further infringement on their rights. The Massachusetts House of Representatives sent a circular letter to the other colonies, requesting unified action against both the Sugar Act and the Stamp Act. Angry letters from the provincials were not well received in England. With little debate, Parliament passed the Stamp Act into law.

When news of the passage of the Stamp Act reached Boston, the Massachusetts House of Representatives, led by the Boston members, again wrote to the other colonies, asking for a congress to meet in New York in October 1765. At this convention, delegates argued that under the British

Constitution, all people living in the British colonies were provided with the same rights as those living in England. One of the delegates from the Massachusetts-Bay, Timothy Ruggles of Hardwick in Worcester County, was elected chairman of the congress; he refused to sign the consequent document produced by the congress as it did not acknowledge the authority of Parliament. One of the other Massachusetts representatives, Oliver Partridge of Hatfield in Hampshire County, later to come under fire for his Tory leanings, did sign the congressional instrument (Morgan and Morgan 1962:147).

When the Stamp Act went into effect, Governor Bernard of the Massachusetts-Bay believed that the radical Bostonians stood alone in their opposition to England. Within a few months, however, he wrote to General Conway, "They [the people in the countryside] talk of revolting from Great Britain in the most familiar Manner, and declare that tho' the British Forces should possess themselves of the Coast and Maritime Towns, they never will subdue the inland" (Bernard to Conway, January 25, 1766, as quoted in Morgan and Morgan 1962:171).

Protests and riots against the Stamp Act became the order of the day, but peaceful outlets were also explored (Maier 1974:53-60). Encouragement of American manufacturing to avoid importing goods from Great Britain again became a local issue. Letter-writing campaigns were begun; both

American and British merchants deluged Parliament with petitions for repeal. Jonathan Mayhew characterized this endeavor as "joint, manly and spirited, yet respectful and loyal petitioning" (Maier 1974:114). Their efforts, aided by the fall of the Grenville ministry and the appointment of the Marquis of Rockingham who was friendly toward America, proved successful in February 1766 when the Stamp Act was rescinded by Parliament (Morgan and Morgan 1962:331).

The Townshend Acts of 1767 brought on yet another round of boycott covenants and non-importation agreements by the colonists. Some towns, focusing on the non-importation of tea, created committees of inspection to enforce the boycott (Brown 1970:28). While these were not permanent, they were a prototype for committees of the future.

In early 1768, the Massachusetts House of Representatives was busy writing letters explaining their position to their agent in London and to the Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain. These were followed with a circular letter to other provincial legislatures to obtain opposition to the Townshend Acts (General Court 1949:38-49). Lord Hillsborough demanded retraction of the circular letter by Massachusetts, but the legislators refused by a vote of 92 to 17. In penning a memorial to the governor to apprise him of the vote, the House also

informed him that a committee had been appointed to draft "a humble, dutiful and loyal Petition to the KING," asking him to remove Bernard from office. The Governor prorogued the Assembly until August 3, but he later dismissed the General Court so that it did not sit until after the May elections in 1769 (General Court 1949:24-36).

Bernard was recalled to Great Britain in 1769, and Thomas Hutchinson became acting governor of the Massachusetts-Bay. Soon Hutchinson had a crisis on his hands. Passions ran high in Boston when British soldiers killed several citizens in March 1770. Quickly dubbed the "Boston massacre," the incident spread the fury to the countryside. Just after the infamous episode, Hutchinson wrote to friends that he had heard from Israel Williams of Hatfield and Timothy Ruggles who "tell me it spread to their Towns so remote and [a] great part of their people would have been down to join Boston" (Brown 1970:34).

The Sugar Act, new trade regulations, the Stamp Act, the Townshend duties, and other attempts to subordinate the American colonies were met with vigorous letter-writing campaigns to colonial agents, to Members of Parliament, to the Prime Ministers, as well as to the King. After a time, the pleas fell on deaf ears. New avenues of resistance were established: local committees of correspondence.

Origin of the idea for committees of correspondence is unclear. In Mitre and Sceptre: Transatlantic Faiths, Ideas, Personalities, and Politics, 1689-1775, Carl Bridenbaugh said that it came from "the tried-and-proved ecclesiastical organization of the Nonconformist churches and adapted it to secular affairs with great though hardly surprising success" (Bridenbaugh 1962:203-204). Richard D. Brown agreed with Bridenbaugh's assessment, saying that Samuel Adams took the idea from New York dissenters who had joined in committees in 1769 to write to dissenters in England; Adams then reworked the concept in discussions with other Whigs (Brown 1970:45).

According to Brown and others, the Virginia House of Burgesses is credited with appointing the first provincial-level Committee of Correspondence in March 1773, specifically to communicate with other colonies on "matters of mutual interest, and to obtain early and authentic intelligence of such acts and resolutions of the British Parliament or proceedings of the administration as might relate to or affect" the British colonies in America (Leake 1917:61; Brown 1970:viii).

Mercy Otis Warren, however, said that credit lay elsewhere. "At an early period of the contest, when the public mind was agitated by unexpected events, and remarkably pervaded with perplexity and anxiety, James Warren, Esq. of Plymouth first proposed this institution to

a private friend, on a visit at his own house" (Warren 1970 I:109). Richard D. Brown did not mention this possible origin, nor did he list Mrs. Warren's book, History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution, in his bibliography (Brown 1970:256-271).

Regardless of who was responsible for the concept of the Committees, the idea was acted upon and was significant in the War for Independence. In a letter to Arthur Lee of Virginia dated September 27, 1771, Samuel Adams proposed that a network "be formed out of the most respectable Inhabitants" to correspond with England (Adams 1904 II:234). It was essential that the members of the network be upright citizens, as their efforts would be directed toward the King and the Parliament. It was equally important that the organization be as aristocratic as possible to be effective in promoting their own colonial views. By necessity, the well-born had to take up the banner in order for the colonists to be heard by the royalty in England. Thus, early in the years of the struggle, a poor farmer necessarily had to be excluded from participating in committee work, as he could wield no influence in England.

Just as it was important to correspond with England, it was also necessary to establish contacts with other colonies on the provincial level, as well as with towns in the different colonies on the local level.

The Boston Committee of Correspondence

The network was set in motion. Colonials heard in 1772 that Governor Hutchinson and the judges of the Superior Court of the Massachusetts-Bay would be paid by the King. Playing right into the hands of Samuel Adams, Hutchinson accepted the policy and refused to call a General Assembly to give any information regarding the new pay procedures when he was questioned by the populace. As a response, at Boston Town Meeting on November 2, 1772, Adams proposed, "That a Committee of Correspondence be appointed to consist of twenty-one Persons to state the Rights of the colonists and of this Province in particular as Men, as Christians, and as Subjects; to communicate and publish the same to the several Towns in this Province and to the World as the sense of this Town, with the Infringements and Violations thereof that have been, or from time to time may be made -- Also requesting of each Town a free communication of their Sentiments of this Subject" (Boston Town Records 1770-1777 1887 XVIII:93). Mercy Otis Warren said that the proposal "was adopted with zeal, and spread with the rapidity of enthusiasm, from town to town, and from province to province" (Warren 1970 I:109).

Election of the Committee was a very important step for Boston to take. They gathered -- as Samuel Adams told Arthur Lee -- the best and the brightest, to come up with

what they believed to be the rights and grievances of their own province, and those of all the colonies as well. Richard D. Brown wrote in Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts that the twenty-one men of the original Boston Committee of Correspondence were all affluent and had served in various town offices; one-third of them had graduated from Harvard. Most had worked for the repeal of the Stamp Act and the Townshend duties, and they were already attuned to the rights of the American colonies (Brown 1970:59).

In addition, Adams thought it would be beneficial for people to communicate with each other, with other colonies, as well as with England. Such Committees seemed excellent vehicles by which to educate the public about civil rights. Within the extant governmental system, a selection of properly-versed, respectable citizens could be made; they in turn could guide public opinion to the ultimate goal of liberty: pursuit of happiness. The choice of those already committed to the proper mode of thinking lent credence to the patriotic cause, as they acted for the entire town, with the town's approbation.

The pamphlet that the Town of Boston approved on November 20 was sent out by the Committee in December 1772, and had three parts: (1) a statement of the rights of the colonists, (2) perceived violations of those rights, and (3) a cover letter asking for a response from

the towns (Boston Town Records 1770-1777 1887 XVIII:94-108). Six hundred copies of the pamphlet were published and sent to town selectmen, representatives to the General Court, and to the clergy. The real genius of this piece of propaganda was that it did not simply bemoan the plight of the colonists, but asked the towns to reply with their own sentiments of the rights and grievances of the colonists.

Response to the Boston Committee

Many communities throughout the Massachusetts-Bay did respond to the Boston Committee during the first months of 1773. Most of those that did were from the eastern part of the province. According to Benjamin Labaree in The Boston Tea Party, by early 1773 about 80 towns had endorsed the circular letter (Labaree 1964). Richard D. Brown said that by April 1773, 119 of the 260 towns and districts had replied; 65 percent of the eastern towns responded, while only 22 percent of Hampshire and Berkshire Counties in the west replied (Brown 1970). In Hampshire County, seven of the then-existing towns and districts (Brimfield, South Hadley, Shutesbury, Wilbraham, Montague, Hatfield, Whately), or 17.5 percent, had written to Boston by the end of May 1773. The figure might be even higher if information were available regarding some towns whose records are lost. (Ashfield has scattered records for this time period; Southwick has no records available from its

incorporation as a district November 7, 1770, through March 14, 1775.)

Extant records do not reveal why towns did not reply to the Boston circular letter. We might, however, find a clue in some of the cover letters that were received by the Boston Committee but were not recorded in town meeting records. The district of Montague wrote, for example, "That we are so late in acting is owing partly to your Pamphlet not reaching us in season have been carried to Ehamp [Easthampton] and Saybrook [Connecticut] by the Bearer, after having travilled to both extremities of the River" (Boston Committee of Correspondence, Book 4, MHS). Winter travel must have been particularly difficult, since the major east-west highway, the Boston Post Road, would very likely have been clogged with snow. The north-south transportation route was the Connecticut River, which probably contained large ice floes swiftly passing with the currents. It was, therefore, not at all unreasonable for the Hampshire County towns to have been a little slower in their response than communities closer to Boston with easier access to the metropolis.

Even when Boston's circular letter reached the towns, it was not assured that the pamphlet would be discussed. In at least one instance, "the Lettors you sent us were fraudulently withheld from us nine months" (Boston Committee of Correspondence Book 1, MHS). Western

Massachusetts cannot be accused of non-support of Boston simply on the grounds that they did not immediately respond to the Committee's post.

Just as poor weather conditions, poor postal delivery, and outright deceit played important roles at this stage of the controversy, local affairs also took some attention away from events in Boston. Most towns were busy with interests within their own borders during the winter of 1772-1773: Belchertown carried on the routine business of laying out new roads and dividing the town into school districts; Bernardston was busy moving its meetinghouse; Sunderland agitated against having the county road go through their town; and Worthington wrote to the General Court requesting a tax abatement (Belchertown Town Records December 1772; Bernardston Town Records December 15, 18, 18, 23, 26, and 29, 1772; Sunderland Town Records December 17, 1772; Worthington Town Records December 23, 1772).

Richard D. Brown interpreted inaction on the pamphlet by the large market town of Springfield as collusion of John Worthington Esq. and his friends against the Whig faction in Boston. "It is clear that the decision to ignore the Boston pamphlet or even suppress it was a deliberate political act of repudiation" against Boston by "local leaders allied to the Hutchinson administration" (Brown 1970:98). This is far from the case, as evidenced in Springfield Town Records, and in comments of Josiah

Gilbert Holland in his History of Western Massachusetts (1855), the latter of which was not listed in Brown's bibliography.

During the Fall of 1772 and the Spring of 1773, Springfield was in the midst of a local political struggle. Although separated from Springfield in 1763, the Town of Wilbraham continued to elect Representatives to the General Court with its mother town. In his History of Western Massachusetts, Holland explained that for some time the policy had been to elect one representative from the east and one from the west side of the Connecticut River. In 1772, however, the West Springfield people who were in the majority "at last became a little overbearing, and assumed some dictation," proposing to drop Colonel John Worthington, the east side member, from consideration. The Springfielders brought in the Wilbraham vote with the promise of electing one of their own. The westsiders were surprised when the balloting showed that Colonel Worthington of Springfield and John Bliss of Wilbraham were elected (Holland 1855 II:157-158).

In addition to the animosity existing between east and west siders in general, throughout 1772 Springfield town meetings involved attempts at managing controversies among a large, segmented populace. Different sectors wanted bridges built across the Agawam and "Chickobee" Rivers, and each wanted town monies to build their own schools.

Ludlow, West Springfield, and Longmeadow wanted to be set off as separate entities, but Springfield remained adamantly opposed, denying Longmeadow on November 18. For some time, West Springfield on occasion had hosted Town Meeting, but even their autumn meeting was cancelled at the same meeting in which Longmeadow was crushed. At its annual meeting, March 23, 1773, Springfield chose a committee to consider "the Disputes & Animosities that Subsist between the Several parts." The committee reported the following week that "the said town is in A most Unhappy & Melancholy State that Considering the Situation & Circumstances of the town & the Inclinations and tempers of the Inhabitants there is no prospect they Can Longer Manage their public Affairs to Mutual & General Advantage in one intire corporate Body but that it is quite necessary there Should be Some Division thereof" (Springfield Town Records).

Although Colonel John Worthington was not in attendance, he was chosen Moderator at this annual meeting but declined to serve. He, therefore, could not be partial to any side, particularly Hutchinson's (Springfield Town Records).

Division of town lands and property kept citizens occupied for some time. The General Court finally approved the division of Springfield in February 1774; Ludlow was designated as a district of Springfield, and West

Springfield was set off as a separate town (Acts and Resolves Vol. V). In May, Springfield Town Meeting again refused to set off Longmeadow Parish.

Springfield had enough to deal with in the year 1773 without discussion of the Boston pamphlet. Even if it had been on the agenda, it is likely that the several competing sectors of the town would not have been able to come to an agreement on the subject. After its conflicts with Ludlow and West Springfield had been settled, however, Springfield was able to focus on the dangers of the Coercive Acts. The town wrote to its neighbors inviting them to the county congress in Northampton in September 1774 (Westfield Town Records).

Governor Hutchinson also responded to the pamphlet sent out by the Boston Committee of Correspondence. In January 1773 he addressed the General Court, and delivered to them the choice: the supremacy of Parliament or independence from Great Britain. Since Hutchinson thought that the colonies surely could not survive without their link to England, the only alternative was acceptance of Parliamentary supremacy. He was confident that quiet would return after the populace realized this one fact. Over the next weeks, he heard from his friends outside of Boston that all was calm. As Brown put it, "Believing the towns to be quiet, Hutchinson could assume that by their silence they acquiesced with the government, a conventional

assumption of contemporary English politics" (Brown 1970:91).

On March 23, 1773, Boston directed its Committee of Correspondence to deliver to the towns a rebuttal of Hutchinson's harangue (Boston Town Records 1770-1777 1887 XVIII:125). As the statement was being drafted, the Resolves of the Committee of Correspondence of the Virginia House of Burgesses arrived. These resolves were printed and dispersed with the rebuttal, demonstrating to the towns that Massachusetts and Boston did not stand alone in the struggle for liberty.

Letters written by Governor Hutchinson and Andrew Oliver during the Stamp Act crisis to acquaintances in England surfaced in Boston. Copies of the correspondence were distributed and read in June before a closed session of the House of Representatives. The authors were condemned by a vote of 101 to 5, and a recommendation was made to the King to remove the parties from office (Bailyn 1974:228-233,238-239). The sentiments expressed in the letters were the same as those Hutchinson had declared in his speech to the General Court the previous January. It was shocking, however, to know that for many years high government officials had advocated to England the abridgment of American liberties and the punishment of political opponents. A long-imagined conspiracy against

America was there in black and white -- and it was their own countrymen who were a part of it (Bailyn 1967).

Revelation of the letters moved the Town of Shelburne to name a Committee of Correspondence to consult about the "Resolves of the House of Representatives Concerning Some Letters Sent to England by his Excellency and others." The Town Meeting accepted the report of the Committee, which was forwarded to Boston (Shelburne Town Records). Charlemont also chose a Committee of Correspondence, whose draft was unanimously accepted by the Town Meeting. They required their Clerk to copy the letter into the town book before sending it to the Boston Committee. In the letter, they complained that the late acts of Parliament, i.e., the taking of payment of the governor and judges and the admiralty court out of the hands of the people was a "great grievance." It was the opinion of the town that "certain letters signed by Hutchinson and Oliver and Charles Paxton" were written "with a desire to overthrow our excellent Constitution and consequently rob us of either liberty or property." In doing so, the town considered it "as a very great frown of Almighty God to permit a man to govern us that schemes so much, bent to ruin the people he is set to protect" (Charlemont Town Records).

The Hutchinson conspiracy letters had just become public, when another storm wave rolled ashore in the form of the Tea Act. This combination of events had an

immediate effect: four more Hampshire County towns (Hadley, Greenfield, Pelham, and Bernardston) appointed Committees of Correspondence in November and early December 1773 to communicate their support to the metropolis. Pelham exclaimed to the Boston Committee that they were "Not alittle [sic] Shocked at the Attempts upon the liberties of America" (Pelham Town Records).

Near the end of November 1773, news arrived that a shipment of tea would soon be put ashore. The Boston Committee called on the Committees of Correspondence from neighboring Roxbury, Dorchester, Brookline, and Cambridge. Together these towns drafted a letter citing the Tea Act as just another blow to the colonists' rights won by their illustrious forefathers. In the letter it was claimed that if the duty on tea were accepted, a Pandora's box would be opened. The Boston Committee added a note to the Massachusetts farmers, explaining that the duty on tea would cost approximately \$1.6 million in specie, causing an even greater scarcity of hard money. As it seemed to have played well the previous year, Boston again asked the towns for their opinion and advice regarding the crisis, inquiring whether the towns thought they should sit quietly by like good slaves, or put up resistance "as becomes wise freemen" (Broadside, November 23, 1773, as quoted in Brown 1970:161; Labaree 1964:116-117).

The famous shipment of tea arrived in Boston port a few days later, before the broadside could be published. A Boston public meeting with several thousand persons in attendance unanimously voted to send the tea back to England. The Boston Committee of Correspondence was directed to order all volunteer watchmen who were assigned to guard ships to warn others should anyone try to land with another consignment of tea. Those who disregarded the ban on importation would be branded as enemies to America. Proceedings of this public meeting and the broadside that had been drafted by Boston in association with Roxbury, Dorchester, Brookline, and Cambridge were sent throughout the province, to other colonies and to England.

Fevered negotiations went on for days between the Town of Boston, the ship's owner, and the governor. Hutchinson ordered the men on a ship of war, two frigates, and other residual vessels to be ready for a possible expedition into Boston (Boston Town Records 1770-1777 1887 XVIII).

"It was much feared the country would have destroyed the teas" (Dr. Samuel Cooper to Dr. Benjamin Franklin, Boston, December 17, 1773, MHS Collections 4th Series, 1858 IV:384). On December 16, 1773, Boston Town Meeting asked the owner of the ship to depart. He attempted to receive clearance to return to England, but was denied by the customs officials and the governor. "As soon as the Governor's refusal was known, the assembly was

dissolved. Just before the dissolution, two or three hundred persons, in dress and appearance like Indians, passed by the Old South meeting-house, where the assembly was held, gave a war-hoop, and hastened to the wharf." They came to "where all the tea ships lay, and demanding the tea, which was given up to them without the least resistance, they soon emptied all the chests into the harbor, to the amount of about three hundred and forty." Cooper said that "This was done without injury to any other property or to any man's person....A remarkable instance of order and justice among savages. When they had done their business, they silently departed, and the town has been remarkable quiet ever since" (Dr. Samuel Cooper to Dr. Benjamin Franklin, Boston, December 17, 1773, MHS Collections 4th Series, 1858 IV:385). (Tradition has it that Aaron J. Miller of South Hadley, while a student at Harvard College, was one of the Mohawks at the Boston Tea Party (Eastman 1912:143). Miller was later a physician in the town of Ludlow (Noon 1875:21).)

Response to the circular letter and to the dumping of the tea in Boston Harbor was gratifying to the Boston Committee. "More than eighty towns, twenty of which had never before communicated with Boston, sent their resolves endorsing resistance" (Brown 1970:167). Amherst, which had been "long silent," as well as Colrain sent the "Thanks of this Town to the Town of Boston & adjacent Towns & the

Com[mi]ttee[e] of Correspondance for their Vigilance & care in the cause of our Liberty" (Amherst and Colrain Town Records; Boston Committee of Correspondence Vol. II, Book 7, MHS). Montague once again took the opportunity to correspond with Boston: "We admire the Coolness Wisdom and Resolution of Those respectable Bodies [Boston and other towns] They appeared to be harty in every Effort to effect the return of the Teas to their old rotting Place. We have been informed by other means of Intelligence of the Tale of the Teas and heartely acquiesee in it" (Boston Committee of Correspondence Vol. II, Book 7, MHS). Even though the Hampshire County towns that already had Committees wrote favorably to Boston regarding the tea, no new Committees of Correspondence were created in Hampshire County as a response to the destruction of the tea.

The Boston Committee, however, felt confident of their support in Massachusetts. They turned their attention to garnering the support of the other colonies, in order to show a united front to Great Britain.

While the Committee was projecting its opinions and seeking confirmation outside the colony, Parliament was brewing a storm to be directed at impudent Boston. The arrival of the news of the Coercive Acts put Hampshire County in a quandary.

CHAPTER 4

IMPETUS OF THE MASSACHUSETTS GOVERNMENT ACT

By 1774 a small number of Hampshire County towns had availed themselves of the opportunity to name a Committee of Correspondence to communicate with Boston on the weighty matters of the day. The winter of 1773-1774 was spent doing the usual business of deciding the minister's salary, paying town debts, and accounting for highway work done by the local citizens. No more Committees were named in Hampshire County until General Gage sailed into Boston harbor in May 1774 to replace Governor Hutchinson. With Gage, arrived four regiments of troop and the news that a Port Act, the first of the Coercive Acts, had been passed by Parliament. This act officially closed the Port of Boston as of June 1, 1774, until all losses from the dumping of the tea were repaid in full. The retribution meted out by Parliament received a great deal of attention in the colonies. Samuel Adams wrote to James Warren, "It appears that we have been tried and condemned, and are to be punished, by the shutting up of the harbor and other marks of revenge, until we shall disgrace ourselves by servilely yielding up, in effect, the just and righteous claims of America" (Adams to Warren, Boston, May 14, 1775, MHS Collections 4th Series 1858 IV:390).

Boston Town Meeting requested its Committee of Correspondence to prepare a rebuttal. As a consequence, the Boston Committee met with eight other towns. Two separate committees were named to write circular letters: one to gain support from other colonies, and one to concentrate on Massachusetts towns. The letters indicated that although the Port Act singled out Boston for punishment, it was an attempt to divide and conquer the colonies, which should be united against the suppression of their liberties. The letters suggested that the path "to defeat the design" was suspension of all trade with England, and a non-consumption agreement (Boston Committee of Correspondence, Books 9 and 10, MHS).

Within a week of the arrival of Governor Gage, the Boston Committee began a campaign to get the local merchants to remand their orders for goods from England. Few merchants were willing to accept the forfeiture of the purchase price. On May 30, however, Town Meeting voted not to buy any British goods from Boston merchants, except those which could not be manufactured locally (Boston Town Records 1770 - 1777 1887 XVIII:176).

In response to the latest situation, the Town of Westfield named a Committee of Correspondence on May 25, 1774, "to inquire into the calamities that had befallen the Town of Boston due to the enactment of the Port Bill" (Westfield Town Records). The Committee reported to Town

Meeting on July 19, and the town voted to send aid to Boston; they also agreed to a general congress of all the colonies and voted funds for it (Westfield Town Records). On June 27, 1774, Springfield named "a committee to consider letters from Boston in the hands of the Clerk;" the committee's report was accepted "by a Large Majority" and the Clerk was ordered to send a copy to the Boston Town Clerk. At an adjournment another committee was chosen "to prepare the form of an association." The townsmen called for a county congress at Northampton, elected delegates to attend, and named a Committee of Correspondence "to acquaint the sd. Towns therewith" (Springfield Town Records).

By June 1774, fifteen Hampshire County towns had named Committees of Correspondence, but it took an even more powerful act than the Port Bill to motivate other towns in the county to establish Committees. Parliament hit Massachusetts towns right in their backyards with new legislation.

Another blow against American liberty landed in Boston in the form of three additional Coercive Acts. The Act for the Impartial Administration of Justice provided the governor with power to change the venue of any official who was indicted for murder during the course of subduing a riotous situation. A Quartering Act empowered the governor to move troops into Boston and seize buildings in which to

house them. The third act, however, was the important wake-up call to the towns of Hampshire County.

The Massachusetts Government Act called for the appointment of the Governor's Council by the Crown, instead of election by the House of Representatives; the royal governor was to appoint officers of the court without input from the House. In addition, county sheriffs, instead of local townsmen, would name jurors; and towns were allowed only one annual meeting to elect officials and conduct all town business. This last provision struck at the heart of self-government in Massachusetts-Bay towns.

As these laws were being put into effect, Representatives to a General Court had been elected in May 1774. When the body met in Boston, Governor Gage rejected thirteen of the twenty-eight councillors. The Assembly sat for a few days, and was then adjourned to Salem to meet on June 7. "The leading characters in the house of representatives contemplated the present moment, replete with consequences of the utmost magnitude," and they "judged it a crisis that required measures bold and decisive, though hazardous, and that the extrication of their country from the designs of their enemies, depended much on the conduct of the present assembly" (Warren 1970 I:134). Samuel Adams and James Warren "drew off a few chosen spirits": Hancock, Cushing, Hawley, Sullivan, Robert Paine, Benjamin Greenleaf and others, who met for three

evenings to complete their plans. This committee invented the idea of "a general congress from all the colonies, to consult on the common safety of America" (Warren 1970 I:135). They estimated the cost of such a venture, provided funds for it, and wrote letters to the other colonies calling for the convention. This action was proposed to the House of Representatives, which concurred with the committee under lock and key (Acts and Resolves 1858 V:387-412). The governor's assistant, who had been sent with orders to dissolve the gathering, was kept waiting outside the locked door of the chamber until the assemblage had completed its work on June 17.

While the extralegal session of the legislature was meeting, the Boston Committee of Correspondence changed the non-consumption agreement that the Town Meeting had approved to a "Solemn League and Covenant." This document was not sanctioned by the Town of Boston and was more strident than that which had been approved. It promoted suspension of commerce with Great Britain and non-consumption of English merchandise, and also required that no one purchase goods from merchants who had not signed the pact.

Richard D. Brown found that seven towns had signed the covenant (Brown 1970:200). Among others, the towns of Gorham and Lincoln in present-day Maine signed it. The Town of Billerica was the only known supporter of this

agreement from the eastern part of Massachusetts. Athol (just northeast of New Salem) in Worcester County, approved the covenant as did Brimfield, Montague, and Chester in Hampshire County. In addition to those seven towns, others in Hampshire County acceded to the new version of the agreement. Wilbraham, for example, was a supporter, contended that they had "taken into Serious Consideration the precarious State of the Liberties of north america & more especially the present Distressed Condition of this insulted province Embarrassed as it is by Several acts of the British parliament tending to the entire subversion of our natural and Charter rights." The town voted to sign the Solemn League and Covenant and suspend all commercial intercourse with Great Britain, and they agreed to the imposition of non-consumption after August 31, 1774. "We agree to break off all trade, Commerce and dealings whatever with all persons who prefer there own private intrist to the Salvation of their now perishing country" [sic]. One hundred twenty-five men in the town signed the covenant on June 23, 1774 (Wilbraham Town Clerk Records).

The townsmen of Bernardston were flexible, and much less definitive in their action. They "Voted, that we will come into this or any Similar agreement that shall be generally come into by the Other Towns in the Province or what shall be agreed upon by the general Congress" (Bernardston Town Records). On July 7, 1774, Monson also

agreed to sign the covenant proposed by the Boston Committee (Monson Town Records).

It is possible that powerful local figures, such as Major Joseph Hawley of Northampton, who were opposed to the covenant worked against it. Jonathan Judd of Southampton recorded in his diary that Major Hawley objected to the covenant. Unfortunately, no extant papers of Hawley's shed any light on the matter (Judd MS.; Hawley Papers). Obviously Major Hawley was not against the measures simply because of their proposal by the Boston Committee (its constituency had not agreed to the Solemn League and Covenant). For many years Hawley had espoused the rights and liberties of British America, and was a great friend of both Samuel Adams, John Adams, and others in "the Boston faction" of the colonial legislature. No animosity existed between Hawley and Boston.

Hampshire County towns were very independent in their thinking, and certainly were not awed by Boston. Although some western Massachusetts towns might not have been in step with Boston, they saw the need for strong measures. They did not go along with the material presented by Boston, but had their own ideas of resistance. For example, the Town of Shutesbury, which had been most laudatory toward Boston the previous year, chose not to name a standing Committee of Correspondence, but did name a committee to consider the Worcester Covenant or draft a new

one. The Worcester Covenant, which pushed back the effective date of the boycott from August 31 to October 1, was accepted by the town (Shutesbury Town Records). Ashfield styled its own covenant, "Resistance to the Tyranny of the British Parliament." Sixty-six men signed the agreement September 14, 1774 (Ashfield Town Meeting Records).

By the end of June 1774, five more towns (Williamsburg, Monson, Springfield, Worthington, and Wales) in Hampshire County had named Committees of Correspondence. During the remainder of the summer, another five (Granville, Chester, Hatfield, Ware, and Warwick) named committees to respond to the suggestions of the covenant. Granville did not concur: "Although we approve of the Sentiment & Spirit of there covenant," townsmen thought that it was "too Precipitate" (Granville Town Records).

On July 8, 1774, Hatfield requested a day of fasting from Reverend Lyman before entering into the covenant. At the adjournment of that meeting on July 29, it was decided to wait to see what to do regarding the covenant as the Continental Congress was soon to take place in Philadelphia (Hatfield Town Records). This hesitant attitude was shared by other towns, all of which were deeply concerned about the Intolerable, or Coercive, Acts passed by Parliament. According to town records of June 17, Boston was also

"waiting with anxious Expectation for the Result of a Continental Congress; whose Meeting we impatiently desire, & in whose Wisdom & Firmness we can Confide, & in whose Determinations we shall chearfully acquiesce" (Boston Town Records 1770-1777 1887 XVIII:176).

Most importantly, the situation, increasingly regarded as critical, was discussed in the towns, and they in turn began to correspond with each other. "Thus an intercourse was established, by which a similarity of opinion, a connexion of interest, and a union of action appeared, that set opposition at defiance, and defeated the machinations of their enemies through all the colonies" (Warren 1970 I:110).

CHAPTER 5

THE COMMITTEES' RELATIONS TO THE CONGRESSES

Several different types and levels of ad hoc Committees were spawned during the era of the American Revolution. In the beginning, the Committees were a grassroots effort to effect change. Originally, those who were elected to the Committees were men of standing in the community and who had already held responsible town office. Over time, Committee personnel were men who had served in the war, and those who had not previously served in high office.

The Committees were elected by townsmen in open town meetings to perform tasks assigned to them. Committees and assignments changed throughout the war to accommodate exigencies. Before the end of the conflict, the local Committees had become another level in the bureaucracy. The local Committees reported to the county, which reported to the legislature, and they passed on any pertinent information to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. Operations were very much military in form, with the Continental Congress acting as the general giving overall orders to the states. The states, in turn, acted in a semi-autonomous mode, carrying out the orders of the Philadelphia Congress in their own fashion via locally-chosen military officers and Committees.

County Conventions

Throughout the summer of 1774, while Massachusetts-Bay communities were waiting for the meeting of the Continental Congress, County Conventions were organized by towns. Town Meetings were called to elect delegates who were either Committee of Correspondence members, or town selectmen where no Committee had been named, to attend County Congresses. Local Committees along with County Conventions were instrumental in establishing the Provincial Congress, which constituted the revolutionary transitional government of Massachusetts.

The first of these conventions was held in Berkshire County in July 1774. This and other conventions held over the summer called for both a general colonial congress and a Massachusetts provincial congress to be held as soon as possible.

Hampshire County did not hold its Convention until September 22-23 in Northampton. Timothy Danielson of Brimfield was elected chairman and Ebenezer Hunt Jr. of Northampton was named Clerk. Charlemont and Southwick were listed in the records of the Convention as not having sent representatives. In Charlemont there was no Town Meeting recorded between the annual March meeting and a meeting held December 16, 1774. Charlemont was, however, not ignorant of the crisis. At the December meeting, money for ammunition was allotted and the town voted to have the

constables pay their province tax money to Henry Gardner as requested by the Provincial Congress. Southwick has no extant town records for this period; therefore, we can only speculate why these towns sent no agents. Although it is unlikely, it is possible that they did not hear about the convention, or that there was no money available to pay someone to go to Northampton on behalf of the towns (Provincial Congress 1838:601-660; Charlemont Town Records, Southwick General Records).

Some cautious Hampshire County towns may have lagged behind others in their patriotic zeal, but Belchertown was not one of them; in contrast, it was on the cutting edge of resistance. Its delegates to the Northampton congress conveyed the message that since the "Port of Boston [was] shut up by the King and Parliament," this made a "Provincial Congress absolutely necessary" (Belchertown Town Records). Few people would say that the King was also responsible for the problems faced by the colonists; most preferred to lay the blame solely at the feet of Parliament. County Conventions pledged loyalty to the King, while abhorring the edicts of Parliament (Provincial Congress 1838:601-660).

As the Continental Congress had already begun on September 5, 1774, the Hampshire County Convention endorsed it and called for the meeting of a Provincial Congress, as Governor Gage had cancelled the meeting of the General

Court which had been scheduled for October (Provincial Congress 1838:601-660). By the time the Continental Congress met, twenty-five Hampshire County towns had Committees of Correspondence. The passage of the Massachusetts Government Act provided Hampshire County with the final proof necessary that Parliament was out to destroy the lives, liberty and pursuit of happiness of the people. Some towns simply awaited directives from the Continental Congress.

These County Conventions were instrumental in providing a sounding board for communities. They also gave impetus to the grassroots effort by helping these men realize there was a consensus of opinion among them. In insisting that a Provincial Congress be held, the County Conventions lent legitimacy to the Congress.

The Suffolk County Convention

One County Convention in particular was very significant. The resolves generated at the Suffolk County Convention had an immediate and profound effect on the work of the Continental Congress. Their intent was clear: to preserve civil and religious rights and liberties "by all lawful ways and means in our power." They would not, however, submit to tyrannical British authority.

The resolves were simultaneously both practical and radical. Practically speaking, the Suffolk County delegates

prepared for an enemy invasion through the network of the Committees of Correspondence; townsmen were to acquaint themselves with the military art, and local manufacturing was encouraged. In a more radical vein, the imposition of new court system procedures were considered unconstitutional. To avoid the judicial process, it was recommended that grievances should be settled by arbitration. If either party refused, "they ought to be considered as cooperating with the enemies of this country." The Patriots also attempted a government boycott by cutting off funding at the Province level. Town treasurers were advised to keep their tax rates until the meeting of a provincial congress. Ever conscious of "appearances," they cautioned against pillage and plunder. Any detention of Americans would result in the same treatment of the British and their sympathizers.

The Suffolk County Convention, like other County Conventions in the Massachusetts-Bay, looked to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia for advice. They resolved to abide by the measures set forth by the Continental Congress to restore their rights and renew ties with Great Britain (Provincial Congress 1838:601-606).

The Continental Congress

The Continental Congress first met in Philadelphia on September 5, 1774. It approved the Suffolk County Resolves

that had been delivered to them on September 16, 1774, by Paul Revere (Continental Congress 1904 I:39).

The Continental Congress ordered the Suffolk Resolves to be printed in the newspapers. The following week, it was unanimously resolved to ask merchants not to place any orders with Great Britain, and to delay receiving orders already placed. This plan was revised shortly thereafter to a resolution for non-importation and non-consumption to begin December 1; soon non-exportation was included, but was not to take effect until September 10, 1775 (Continental Congress 1904 I:40-53).

An express mail from the Boston Committee of Correspondence was presented to the Continental Congress on October 6, stating that the fortifications prepared by the encamped British soldiers on the hills surrounding Boston were almost complete. With further proof of tyranny to come, the Continental Congress discussed the Boston letter at length. The delegates prepared a declaration of rights and grievances, as well as an Association Agreement, for non-consumption and non-importation of British goods, and non-exportation to Great Britain (Continental Congress 1904 I:55-81).

Committees of Inspection

As of October 28, 1774, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress had not "received from the Continental Congress

such explicit directions respecting non-importation and non-consumption agreements as are expected," but approved of those that had voluntarily been entered into (Provincial Congress 1838:40).

The Association Agreement hammered out by the First Continental Congress in 1774 urged that a Committee of Inspection be chosen in every town, county and colony. According to the instructions of the Congress, it was these Committees "whose business it shall be attentively to observe the conduct of all persons touching this association" (Continental Congress 1904 I:79). A majority of any committee could act as judge and jury. Any miscreants in violation of the agreement were to be published in the newspapers, and "universally condemned as the enemies of American liberty" (Continental Congress 1904 I:79).

Members of the Massachusetts delegation to the Continental Congress returned with a published copy of that body's proceedings, which they laid before the Provincial Congress on November 24, 1774. The Congress appointed a seven-man committee, including Major Joseph Hawley of Northampton, to study the octavo. This committee reported on December 1, but the resolves were recommitted. On December 5, resolutions were passed in favor of the work of the Continental Congress, which was deemed "worthy of their most vigorous support, as essentially necessary to

liberty." Passing along the request of the Congress at Philadelphia, the Provincial Congress "strongly recommended to the committee of inspection, (which ought immediately to be chosen, agreeably to the said association, by each town and district in the colony not having already appointed such committees,) that they exert themselves in causing the association...to be executed" (Provincial Congress 1838:49-50,54,56,58).

Hampshire County towns responded to the agreement with unanimity. Those who had been waiting for direction from the Continental Congress named Committees of Inspection; additionally, some named Committees of Correspondence as well.

Massachusetts Provincial Congress and Its Committees

A meeting of Committees from Suffolk, Worcester, Middlesex and Essex Counties met on August 26-27, 1774, at Faneuil Hall in Boston. Here they decided "That a Provincial Congress is necessary for concerting and executing an effectual plan for counteracting the system of Despotism mentioned, as well as for substituting referee Committees during the unconstitutionality of the Courts of Justice in the province." Furthermore, "each County will act wisely by choosing members as soon as may be for said Congress; and by resolutely executing its measures when

recommended" (Revolutionary Correspondence III:61-63, Bancroft Collection, as quoted in Cushing 1895:73n).

This meeting was followed up with separate county meetings. Worcester held its first county-wide meeting of Committees of Correspondence on August 9-10, and adjourned to August 30. Other County Committees were held after the four-county meeting, which had been held in Boston. Middlesex met August 30-31, Essex on September 6-7, and Suffolk on September 6. A meeting of delegates in Provincial Congress was recommended by all of these County Conventions after their joint meeting.

On September 1, 1774, Governor Gage called for legislative elections for a General Court to meet in Salem on October 5. Mercy Otis Warren said that Gage issued the call for an assembly "to preclude the appearance of necessity for such a convention" [Provincial Congress] (Warren 1970 I:162). However, due to the many disorders involving the resignations of his mandamus councillors, Gage countermanded his order for a "great and general court."

The Representatives convened in Salem on October 5 anyway. When Governor Gage did not attend the assembly, they organized a convention of the ninety men who were in attendance. Resolves of the convention were accepted by the Representatives in session, and the ninety resolved themselves into a Provincial Congress.

Thirty-five Hampshire County towns were represented. According to the published journals of the Congress, several Hampshire County towns did not send delegates: Ashfield, Chester, Chesterfield, Leverett, Shutesbury, and Williamsburg (Provincial Congress 1838:10-11). Chesterfield was trying to rid itself of its minister in September; on September 29 Leverett decided to write to the Congress with their concerns and opinions of the situation instead of sending a delegate; Shutesbury voted October 3 not to send a delegate; Williamsburg voted October 8 to send Russell Kellogg, but the vote was recalled. Chester and Ashfield records did not mention the Provincial Congress. Three towns were not even listed in the rolls with other Hampshire County towns: Bernardston, Blandford, and Pelham. Bernardston and Blandford voted not to send delegates; but Pelham added to its Committee of Correspondence, and voted that the selectmen and the Committee write to the Congress regarding their concerns.

When the chosen delegates gathered, one of the first orders of business of the Provincial Congress was to resolve on October 14, 1774, that all province rates were not to be paid to Harrison Gray, the Province Treasurer, but to the Receiver General, Henry Gardner of Stow. The Congress also named a committee on the defense and safety of the province, and a committee to consider "the most proper time for this province to provide a stock of powder,

ordnance, and ordnance stores." The War for Independence began that afternoon (October 24) when the committee reported that "now was the proper time" to procure ammunition (Provincial Congress 1838:28).

The Committee on the Defense and Safety of the Province soon discovered that it would be necessary and expedient to have a Committee of Safety, which could muster militia troops to any locale and dismiss them when the alarm had passed. This Committee of Safety was to be joined in its efforts by a Committee of Supplies, which was to assure that proper accoutrements were available if needed. A Committee of Correspondence was also named, as requested by the Continental Congress "to inspect the entries of their custom-houses, and inform each other, from time to time, of the true state thereof, and of every other material circumstance that may occur relative to this association" (Provincial Congress 1838:53; Continental Congress 1904 I:79).

Supported by colonial delegates to the Continental Congress, Massachusetts-Bay was confident that it was not acting alone. Its Provincial Congress began to prepare for what it believed was an inevitable clash with Great Britain. Long before the Battles of Lexington and Concord, Patriots were planning and organizing strategies. Division of labor and tasks was essential to the operation. Much of

the conduct of the coming war would rest in hands of the Committees of Correspondence, Inspection and Safety.

CHAPTER 6

FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMITTEES

Local Committees of Correspondence

When Samuel Adams proposed the creation of a Committee of Correspondence at Boston Town Meeting in 1772, he probably did not foresee anything more than a concerted, organized letter-writing campaign. He may have hoped for letters from the countryside expressing concerns about a corrupt provincial government: letters that he could pass on to the correct persons in England to show that Massachusetts was alert to the dangers posed by enemies within and without. The grassroots campaign mushroomed and exceeded even Adams' hopes for the venture. Originally, these local-level Committees had as their chief duties the gathering and dissemination of information, and the propagandizing of their tenets. According to Mercy Otis Warren, the Committees "were directed to keep up a regular correspondence with each other, and to give information of all intelligence received, relative to the proceedings of administration, so far as they affected the interest of the British colonies throughout America" (Warren 1970 I:109). In 1774 the District of Granville empowered its Committee of Correspondence to communicate "with other committees in this and the neighboring colonies [Granville bordered Connecticut], and give due information of all

infringements upon our rights and liberties" (Granville Town Records).

Since the segments of this network of Committees were created by Town Meetings, they had the sanction of legality, and, as Samuel Adams had suggested to Arthur Lee, were composed of men who were among the most respectable inhabitants of each town.

Local Committees of Inspection

Word arrived that the Continental Congress had unanimously voted for an Association Agreement. After consulting Boston's selectmen, its Committee of Correspondence, and others, the First Provincial Congress of Massachusetts recommended on October 21, 1774, "an abhorrence and detestation of all kinds of East India teas, as the baneful vehicle of a corrupt and venal administration, for the purpose of introducing despotism and slavery into this once happy country." To prevent this, the Congress also requested that all towns appoint a Committee to post the names of all those "who shall sell or consume so extravagant and unnecessary an article of luxury" (Provincial Congress 1838:26).

Apparently Hampshire County was waiting for the advice of the convention in Philadelphia. On December 5, 1774, the Provincial Congress once again asked the towns to appoint Committees of Inspection, if they had not already

done so, to comply with the articles of the Association Agreement of the Continental Congress. With the backing of the other colonies, the few remaining Hampshire County communities came into compliance.

These local Committees of Inspection were responsible for taking inventory of all merchants' wares. Merchants were no longer able to sell imported British goods; anyone who refused to have his wares inventoried or who sold contraband would have his merchandise confiscated and held until repeal of the acts of Parliament. Names of buyers and sellers were published in newspapers, and these persons were then branded as enemies to the liberties of America (Provincial Congress 1838:58).

Local Committees of Safety

Town Committees of Safety had two missions: assisting in military affairs and monitoring political opposition.

Early in the controversy, these Committees had mostly military obligations. They were the lowest level of bureaucracy, which dealt with the recruitment and training of troops, and the organization of commissions for officers. Local Committees received authority for calling out the militia from the Provincial Committee of Safety. It was through this system that the alarm at Bunker Hill and others were answered.

These Committees also were responsible for attempting to persuade local Tories to join with them in their patriotic revolution. The local Committees of Safety acted both independently and in conjunction with other towns' Committees. A person convicted of loyalism in one town, was allowed a hearing by Committees from other towns. For example, dissatisfied with the answers of Colonel Israel Williams and his son, the Hatfield Committee requested the Amherst and Northampton Committees to meet with them "to Consider and Determine how and in what manner the Col. and Son shall be secured until they may have a fair and Impartial Tryal" (Hatfield Committee of Safety file, Jones Library, Amherst). Unfortunately for the Williamses, not everyone was interested in providing them with a fair trial. A "mob" from other towns seized father and son and smoked them overnight until they professed that they had changed their colors to patriotic. Also taken was Oliver Partridge of Hatfield; Partridge convinced his accusers that he would not take the Tory view (Judd MS.).

The Committees could also seize weapons of suspected Tories, jail them when convicted, and make them pay for time spent in guarding them as prisoners (e.g., see Amherst Town Records and "Committee of Safety" file at the Jones Library, and Montague Town Records). Blandford's Committee confined its several Loyalists to their own farms (Holland 1855 II:10).

In the case of South Hadley, the town demanded that the Committee of Safety be composed of "sober and discreet persons who shall suppress mobs [and] quiet disturbances between neighbor and neighbor," i.e., between Patriot and Tory. In addition, the Committee was to "give assistance to the towns about us if they shall be asked" (South Hadley Town Records).

Local Committees of Correspondence, Inspection, and Safety

The three separate Committees were combined at the request of the House of Representatives in February 1776. Beginning in that year at the annual March meetings, towns elected an umbrella organization, the Committee of Correspondence, Inspection and Safety. This one Committee assumed all the responsibilities of each separate entity. To the care of the Committee was entrusted an extensive range of activities including political and personal conduct, trade relations, property rights, local security, public finance, and adherence to the recommendations of the Continental Congress and the Massachusetts General Assembly.

In Hampshire County it was often the case that the personnel on the separate Committees overlapped considerably. Therefore, it was no great strain for these same people basically to continue to do what they had been doing all along; the operation simply had a new name.

Many communities sent Tories and prisoners of war to the jail in Northampton. The Northampton Committee was empowered to release some of the prisoners on their honor; they were not to go beyond the limits of the town without express permission of the Committee. On at least one occasion, prisoners escaped and were pursued by members of the Committee. The Chairman requested aid from the prison in Hartford to "safely hold and keep [them] until taken out" by the members of the Northampton Committee (Northampton file, Jones Library, Amherst).

County Committees

During the Second Provincial Congress, on April 12, 1775, a further insistence on local compliance was coordinated. The Committee on the State of the Province brought in a resolve to appoint five-man County Committees to receive returns from the local Committees regarding the state of the towns on their execution of Continental and Provincial plans. These Committees were to meet every other month, and prepare a report for presentation to the Provincial Congress; they in turn would forward a progress report to Philadelphia.

The first of the County Committee members were not chosen from the populace at large, nor the local town Committees, but from the delegates sent to the Provincial Congress. The first Hampshire County Committee consisted

of Major Joseph Hawley of Northampton, Colonel Timothy Danielson of Brimfield, Noah Goodman of South Hadley, Colonel Elisha Porter of Hadley, and Colonel John Mosley of Westfield. Samuel Adams must have handpicked these gentlemen; they were the very essence of Adams' "most respectable inhabitants."

Northampton's Major Hawley was the among the most revered men in the county. He was an attorney who was graduated from Yale in 1742 and was renowned throughout the province for his honesty. It was said that if someone were to ask the Major to take his legal case and Hawley refused to do so, the party was automatically considered as guilty. When towns had disputes to be settled, it was Major Hawley who was called in to consult and mediate. Hawley served Northampton as Town Moderator and Selectman for many years both prior to and during the Revolution, as well as Chairman and Member of its Committee of Correspondence, Inspection and Safety from 1775 to 1783. He served several terms as Representative to the General Court; it was Hawley who pleaded the case of the Ashfield Baptists before the Court. Under the new State Constitution in 1780 he was elected a Senator, a post he declined to accept due to legislative insistence on officeholders being church members. Unfortunately for the newly-independent country, Joseph Hawley died in 1788

(Northampton Town Records; Hawley Papers; Brown 1966; Dexter 1888; Holland 1855).

Timothy Danielson, a graduate of Yale College (1756), was the mover and shaker in Brimfield. He was Town Clerk and Selectman for many years, served on Brimfield's Committee of Correspondence, and was entrusted to purchase powder and lead for the Minutemen. Prior to the Revolution, he was elected as Representative to the General Court from 1767 to 1772; he attended the convention of towns in 1768, and the Provincial Congresses in 1774-1775. Danielson was the Chairman of the Hampshire County Convention held at Northampton September 22-23, 1774. At the age of forty-two, he was a Colonel in the Massachusetts Militia at Cambridge in 1775, and was soon after named Brigadier General in charge of the organization and deployment of military troops and supplies for western Massachusetts; later he was promoted to Major General. Danielson was a delegate to the State Constitutional Convention, a Senator and Councillor of the General Court, and the first Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas. That he was chosen for the office of Chief Justice demonstrates his uprightness of character, as he was not trained as an attorney (Brimfield Town Records; Dexter 1888; Provincial Congress 1838; Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors in the Revolutionary War; Hyde 1879; Shipton 1968).

Noah Goodman of South Hadley served his town in several capacities ranging from Fence Viewer to Selectman. He was a member of the Committee of Correspondence in 1773 and 1774, and was also a member of the Committee of Inspection in 1775. Goodman was a "prominent government official" who was elected to attend all three Provincial Congresses (Eastman 1912:163). He was a Representative to the legislature for several years, and a delegate to the State Constitutional Convention. He probably served some time in the military, as he was listed in Town Records as "Ensign." Goodman's home, along with many others in South Hadley, was attacked and plundered during Shays' Rebellion (South Hadley Town Records; Eastman 1912; Holland 1855).

Elisha Porter of Hadley was graduated from Harvard College in 1761, and was thirty-three years old at the time of the Battles of Lexington/Concord. He served the town as Moderator and Selectman for several terms both before and after the war. During the Revolution, he was Colonel of the Hampshire County Regiment in 1776-1777. Porter was serving as County Sheriff during Shays' Rebellion and called out the troops to quell the riots at Northampton (Hadley Town Records; Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors in the Revolutionary War; Judd MS.; Holland 1855; Shipton 1968).

John Mosley was elected to several town offices from 1773 to 1780; these included the gamut from Hog Reeve to

Selectman. He was also on the Committee of Inspection in 1775, and the Committee of Correspondence in 1775 and 1776. Early in the conflict, Mosley was listed in town records as a Captain; he later served as Colonel of the Third Hampshire County Regiment in Brigadier General Timothy Danielson's Brigade (Westfield Town Records; Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors in the Revolutionary War).

County congresses were held throughout the war, although not as often as the Provincial Congress had originally asked. Personnel for the conventions were elected at Town Meeting, and generally were members of the local Committees of Correspondence, Inspection and Safety. Not all towns exercised their option to send a delegate, but the item was brought up on the agenda at Town Meetings. Later county-level meetings addressed several topics, among them the devaluation of currency, as well as wage and price controls.

The court system was also in question. In March 1776 Joseph Hawley, Chairman of the Committee for Northampton, sent out a circular letter at the request of the Chesterfield Committee to other Committees in the County to meet the following week. The topic to be discussed was "whether or not it be proper and Expedient that the Court of General Sessions of the peace be Suspended or Adjourned to Some future Season" (Deerfield Committee of

Correspondence, Inspection and Safety, PVMA). The court was met and adjourned, but the next session was called in the name of the people of Massachusetts (Holland 1855).

Many problems with Tories had surfaced, particularly in towns such as Amherst. Isaac Chauncey was convicted in April 1776 as "being an Enemy to and acting in opposition to the Just Rights and Privileges of America." A County convention held in Northampton July 25-26, 1776, addressed the Tory problem. As a result of the resolves of that meeting, local Committees were empowered to arrest and jail persons that they felt were threatening. Amherst was one of the towns that took advantage of this new authority, and also commended William Boltwood, Gentleman, to Captain Aaron Wright, "Keeper of the Gaol in Northampton" (Moses Dickinson file, Jones Library, Amherst).

On February 5, 1777, the County meeting was again held at Northampton. Robert Breck of Northampton was chosen Clerk and Nathaniel Dwight was elected President. Thirty-nine of the forty-four towns of Hampshire County were represented at the Convention. The gathering took into consideration the suffering of the Northern Army, and requested the Committee of Supplies to send the soldiers any equipment that they might need. Among other business, they wrote to the General Court regarding several county-wide problems. Since the American army had retreated from New York, "our inimical brethren have appeared with an

insulting air...saying that the day was over with us." In addition, the delegates to the convention complained that Tories were "using their utmost endeavors to destroy the currency of our paper money, counterfeiting the same" (Holland 1855 I:217; Revolution files, PVMA).

An example of the handling of the counterfeiting problem can be found in Greenfield. Several people noticed smoke rising from a local forest and called in the Committee to investigate. The Committee found a man named Harrington living in a cave; he was caught red-handed in possession of counterfeiting tools. The man was hauled to Northampton, where Major Joseph Hawley explained to the Greenfield Committee that there were so many Tories already in the jail that it could hold no more. He advised the Committee to take Harrington into the local pine woods, "give him as many lashes as they thought best," and release him. This they did, "then bathed his wounds with spirits, gave him to drink of the same, and, after exacting of him a promise not to be seen in those parts again, let him go" (Holland 1855 I:220).

Another case of counterfeiting came from Conway. In March 1776 two Deerfield men wrote to the Conway "Committee of Correspondence & Inspection &c." to accuse a Conway resident of counterfeiting. Allegedly, a Mrs. Allie Leach forged and passed a Rhode Island thirty shilling bill and a Continental \$10 note. Also at that time, her husband

Jeremiah Leach was under investigation by the Deerfield Committee for the same offense. They ultimately confessed to their crimes and were confined in the Northampton jail (Revolution file and Deerfield Committee of Correspondence, PVMA).

Provincial Committee of Correspondence

On the provincial level, the Committee of Correspondence acted as a liaison for the Congress, which provided it with instructions on whom they should contact, and with what information. Therefore, this Committee executed the same services as local Committees (i.e., dissemination of information and the propagandizing of tenets), but their network extended to other colonies as well. During the Second Provincial Congress, on February 16, 1775, their duties were expanded "to act as a committee of correspondence with the other colonies on this continent during the recess of this Congress." They were "empowered and directed, to consult with, and make proposals to such committees as now are or shall hereafter be appointed as committees of correspondence in the several American colonies" (Provincial Congress 1838:107). Their numbers included John Hancock, Thomas Cushing, Elbridge Gerry, Dr. Joseph Warren, Moses Gill, and of course Samuel Adams himself.

Provincial Committee of Safety

One of the first priorities of the First Provincial Congress in Massachusetts was to create a Committee of Safety on October 26, 1774. The functions and duties of this Committee were continually revised to meet immediate needs. Their first instructions were to "most carefully and diligently to inspect and observe all and every such person and persons as shall, at any time, attempt or enterprise the destruction, invasion, detriment or annoyance of this province, &c." (Provincial Congress 1838:32).

Originally, the Committee had nine members: three from Boston (John Hancock, Dr. Joseph Warren, and Dr. Benjamin Church) and six from the "country" (Richard Devens of Charlestown, Captain Benjamin White of Brookline, Colonel Joseph Palmer of Braintree, Norton Quincy, Abraham Watson of Cambridge, and Colonel Azor Orne of Marblehead). Within the month, two additional members were elected to serve: John Pigeon of Newton and Captain William Heath of Roxbury.

It is interesting to note that all of these men were residents of Boston and its close environs. Although they could be accused of not encompassing 90 percent of Massachusetts-Bay in their plans, geography likely dictated the situation. The Congress probably considered it expedient, since the Committee was empowered by the Provincial Congress to muster the militia when they deemed

it necessary. Towns along the shore would be the first to know of a British invasion from the sea, and the Boston Committee kept a constant watch on the movement of troops in the area. In addition, it would also be easier to muster the militia if members of the Committee of Safety lived close to each other and could quickly meet to assess the exigency and make a decision.

Those participating in the militia were men who were "completely armed, accoutred, and supplied with provisions sufficient for their support in their march to the place of rendezvous" (Provincial Congress 1838:32). As only well-to-do men could afford to provide their own arms and supplies, only the elites or men supplied by them were able to carry on resistance at this juncture. The Committee was allowed to recommend to the Provincial Congress those who would be commissioned as high-ranking officers, men whom they thought would be an asset in the situation. This Committee, in conjunction with the Committee of Supplies, provided everything else with which to fight a war, from utensils, cooking vats and food to cannons, carriages and cartridges. They were empowered to call out as many men as they thought were needed for an expedition, send them wherever necessary, keep them there as long as they wanted, and dismiss them when the alarm was ended.

From time to time, the Committee was requested by the Provincial Congress to correspond with the Continental

Congress, and they also corresponded with other colonies to seek assistance in procuring arms and supplies (Provincial Congress 1838:505).

During the Second Provincial Congress, the mission of the Committee remained basically the same as during the first Congress, with some adjustments: the Committee also became a sort of Committee of Inspection. It was their duty to "most carefully and diligently to inspect and observe all and every such person or persons as shall at any time attempt to carry into execution by force" the Massachusetts Government Act.

Other amendments were made to their mission statements to clarify further and bring order to the process of preparing for war. Originally, there was "no provision made by whom, to whom, or in what manner and quantities, the supplies provided by said committee of supplies shall be delivered." This gap was closed with the appointment of one of the Committee of Safety as commissary to deliver the "warlike stores" provided by the Committee of Supplies to the Committee of Safety "until the constitutional army shall be in the field" (Provincial Congress 1838:97). The Committee was empowered to impress horses or teams. For example, they recommended that Benedict Arnold be provided with horses and ammunition for the assault on Ticonderoga.

Although delegates from Boston's outlying areas were authorized to call the other members back into session

during recesses of the Congress, it was the Committee of Safety that was to be ever vigilant, ready to assess emergencies and call in the militia to any hot spot. The Committee was constantly on the alert and had many spies frequently taking the pulse of Governor Gage.

They also grappled with different problems as they arose. After Lexington/Concord, they were requested by the Congress "to inquire into the conduct of the several towns relative to the prisoners of war;" fifteen prisoners were removed from Concord to the Worcester jail. Prisoners of war were interviewed by the Committee, which provided the Provincial Congress with recommendations for sentencing or release; they could also grant paroles of honor. After the arrival of the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army, ten prisoners of war taken at Machias on board an armed cutter were directed to the Committee by General Washington. The Committee declined, believing that the prisoners were not within their commission. The prisoners were then sent along to the Provincial Congress for inspection (Provincial Congress 1838:172,490,522,549,596).

In 1776 the Continental Congress corrected the problem of jurisdiction, by directing the Provincial Committees to take care of all prisoners of war so designated by the Congress. The Committees were to observe the terms under which prisoners of war were confined, and to assure that they did not escape (Continental Congress 1905 IV:262).

The Provincial Congress frequently appointed committees to review and revise the parameters in which the Committee of Safety operated. In May 1775 the Committee was expanded to thirteen members. According to the review committee, "there appears to be still a deficiency of power in said committee."

Again following the lead from the Massachusetts-Bay, at the Second Continental Congress meeting in 1775, it was directed that the colonies appoint Committees of Safety "to superintend and direct all matters necessary for the security and defence of their respective colonies, in the recess of their assemblies and conventions;" thereby to serve as the de facto government. The colonial-level Committees of Safety carried on and extended the work of the Revolutionary Committees of Correspondence. They bridged the gap between "a state of nature" and the Provincial Congress.

In the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, it was reiterated that the Committee was responsible for mustering the militia in an emergency, but it could also station troops anywhere they judged "most conducive to the defence and service of the colony." With this new authority, the Committee recommended that Bunker Hill and Dorchester Heights be occupied by the Patriots. In addition, events were moving so swiftly that the Committee of Safety was empowered to commission military officers, which had been

the exclusive purview of the Provincial Congress. General Artemus Ward, who was named general and commander-in-chief of all troops, was "to observe and follow such orders and instructions...received from this...congress...or the committee of safety" (Provincial Congress 1838:241-243,569).

Constantly adjusting to the ebb and flow of the political tides, the Third Provincial Congress ordered towns to provide firearms for troops who had none; the guns were delivered to the Committee of Safety for distribution. The Committee was held in such high regard that it was asked to take into consideration emission of bills of credit: the total of the deficit, what denominations the bills should be, the rate of interest if any, when the notes could be redeemed, and recommend any other regulations they thought necessary. Indeed, their highest accolade came when the review committee empowered the Committee to call the Provincial Congress into session during its recess (Provincial Congress 1838:498).

The Provincial Committee of Safety also did Tory duty. It took possession of abandoned property, and either used it or parcelled it out to others; e.g., the cutting of hay and use of the house by General Washington at John Vassal's farm in Cambridge. The Deerfield Committee was permitted to rent out confiscated property. The Committee also took on the responsibility for the resettlement of the

Boston poor, and the support of those who remained there (Deerfield Committee of Correspondence, PVMA; Provincial Congress 1838: 499,587,593).

While there was ample room for problems in all quarters, Committee restrictions on army enlistments could not be debated: "no deserters from British army, no stroller, negro, or vagabond, no one suspected of being an enemy to the liberty of America, none under age eighteen, must be America-born." Furthermore, "as the cause is the best that can engage men, only the best men should be engaged in the cause" (Provincial Congress 1838:592). The indoctrination was a complete success; Samuel Adams must have been pleased.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis examined a relatively-unexplored topic in the history of the American Revolution, the Committees of Correspondence, Inspection, and Safety of Old Hampshire County, Massachusetts. Analysis focused on the origins, types, and functions of the Committees.

The local-level Committees were very important to the Revolutionary effort in Massachusetts, yet, in general, they have not been examined as thoroughly as their importance warrants. Their coordination of the several detailed facets of the war on the local level extended the sentiments of the Town Meetings, and their cooperation with other towns helped to cement the populace into a single revolutionary force.

The Revolutionary Committees of Correspondence were not an innovation. They had their roots in the tradition of establishing organizations to protest actions by a distant government, specifically in the case of the American Revolution, the Stamp Act and the Townshend Acts. Analysis of the records of forty-three of the forty-four towns (West Springfield not made available by the Town Clerk) of Old Hampshire County verified that the precipitating event in the creation of many Committees was the passage of the Massachusetts Government Act of 1774, which was to have

hobbled town meetings and local control of town affairs. Thus, independence on a local level began in Old Hampshire County as the move to protect the right of local self-government which was being threatened. Many of the communities named Committees during the summer of 1774 so that they could send delegates to the Hampshire County Convention, which sanctioned both the Continental and Provincial Congresses.

Committees provided the "cement" that united towns within the Province, and colonies up and down the continent. This was done by communicating the news of events that might otherwise have been seen as isolated abuses of power, and making the colonists regard themselves as a united entity opposed to a tyrannical government. Although communication was the original purpose, the functions of the Committees changed as time went on. Committees addressed political, judicial, economic, and military issues.

Even though Committees were established as early as January 1773, western Massachusetts has been accused of being "laggard revolutionaries" following the lead of Boston. Taylor characterized Samuel Adams' opinion of the west as lagging "far behind Boston in awareness of the grievances of the province" (Taylor 1954:59-60). Contrary to this view, Hampshire County towns were cognizant of events. Travel to Boston and to other colonies was common,

particularly for merchants and farmers who sold their surplus; newspapers from urban centers were available. As for becoming involved with issues of the time, Taylor was incorrect when he said that Hampshire County towns "either remained indifferent to the larger political questions that agitated the province or openly showed their hostility to Boston leadership" (Taylor 1954:52). Town Meeting records show that when issues touched the people of western Massachusetts, the populace reacted and they did not follow Boston slavishly. Future research should contrast the quickness of response of Hampshire County to that of other towns.

Boston was, however, the leader in establishing Committees of Correspondence in Massachusetts towns. The Boston Committee's three-part circular letter of 1772 called on towns to communicate the opinions of the people in the countryside to Boston. By encouraging the creation of Committees within each town, a core of revolutionary leaders who could mobilize, persuade, and contribute to the revolution was established. While it was true that clever leadership by Samuel Adams persuaded towns to adopt positions favorable to the Revolutionary cause, in no way can the Boston Committee be seen as a central authority over its sister town Committees.

On the local level, Town Meeting records showed that the Committees were not secret cabals of revolutionaries.

Committees were extensions of town government -- just another device to do a specified job for the community. The Committees were established and the members chosen in open Town Meetings. In some cases the Committees were elected not only by the men qualified to vote in town elections, but by all men of the town. The towns studied in Hampshire County chose as members of the Committees groups of respected leading citizens. The Committees contributed to good order in Hampshire County by providing guidance and stability during the War for Independence.

With the fundamental breakdown of the chartered provincial government in Massachusetts, anarchy might have prevailed if town government had not continued to function. In this maintenance of stability we can see an illustration of the consensus on community values that Zuckerman discussed in Peaceable Kingdoms (1970). "The towns maintained law and order as well without the provincial legal machinery as they had done with it because the community rather than the county courts had been the essential instrument of law and order all along" (Zuckerman 1970:239). Communities expected members to conform, and they had means to enforce conformity that did not depend on legal mechanisms. Further research on town activities during the Revolution might contribute to clarifying the extent to which conflict was successfully managed, and who did the managing.

Cooperation among all local and county committees with the provincial government, and the provincial government with the Continental Congress "averted the weakness of anarchy and discord, and gave to Massachusetts such unity, strength, and regularity of organization as assured either success without remorse or failure without regret" (Cushing 1895:111). In creating a network of Committees and a hierarchy of County Conventions under a Provincial Committee and the Provincial Congress, all ultimately under the Continental Congress, the political organization of the American Revolution foreshadowed the federal system of the new republic.

It is important to study Hampshire County, as it has been neglected by historians of the Revolution. The history of New England has often been presented as the history of Massachusetts, and the history of Massachusetts as the history of Boston. Further research on Old Hampshire County during the entire era will shed light on not only the beginning of the end of British rule in America but can also provide information regarding social history as the diversity of towns in the county provides a cross-section of Massachusetts. The true shape of the Revolution may be revealed in a region such as Hampshire County, because in 1775 the area had many types of towns, politically and economically. It had old towns and new plantations; market centers and farming towns; river towns

and rugged hill towns. Consequently, we can see in this range of communities a cross-section of Massachusetts. Hampshire County was a diverse region which presents for us an excellent study unit for viewing society during the era of the American Revolution. Examination of the local town Committees of Correspondence, Inspection, and Safety makes it clear that they were important parts of the history of Old Hampshire County, and the study of them also provides us with a window on how the Revolution happened and how revolutionary it was.

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TOWN MEETING RECORDS

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Amherst Town Records

Ashfield Vol. II, Town Meeting Records 1738 - 1775;
Vol. I Town Meeting Records 1776-1814 [sic]

Belchertown Town Meetings 1740 - 1773 Vol. A1;
Town Records Vol. 2 1774-1801

Bernardston Town Records

Blandford Miscellaneous Records 1737-1773; Miscellaneous
Records 1774-1802

Brimfield Town Records

Charlemont Town Records 1765-1826

Chester Town Records Vol. 1 1766-1787

Chesterfield Town Records Vols. I and II

Colrain Records 1741-1796

Conway Town Records Vol. 1

Deerfield Town Records

Granby Town Records Vol. A

Granville Town Records

Greenfield Town Records Vol. I 1753 - 1771 on microfilm;
Vol. II 1772-1810 is original volume

Hadley Town Records 1659-1805

Hatfield Town Records

Huntington Town Meeting Records are found in Miscellaneous
Records of Norwich 1773-1796 Vol. 1

Leverett Town Records Vol. I

Ludlow Town Records, Proceedings, Vital and Misc.

Monson Town Records Book 1 (typescript)

- Montague Town Records Vol. 1
- Town of Northampton, Mass., Records, No. 2, 1741 - 1772;
 Town of Northampton, Mass., Records, No. 3, 1772-1801
- Palmer Records 2
- Pelham Town Records
- Shelburne Town Records Book 1
- Shutesbury Town Records Vol. 2
- Southampton General Records, Second Precinct in Northampton
 1741-1753, District of Southampton, 1753-1776, Town of
 Southampton 1776 - 1791, Births, Marriages and
 Intentions
- South Hadley Town Records
- Southwick General Records 1771-1810
- Sunderland Town Records, Meetings and Misc. 1757-1816
- Wales Town Meetings 1762-1784 [South Brimfield]
- Ware Town Records (typescript)
- Warwick Town Records
- Westfield Town Records
- Whately Town Records Vol. I
- Wilbraham Town Clerk Records No. 1 1740 - 1785;
 Town Clerk Records No. 2A 1773-1824 [sic]
- Williamsburg Town Records Vol. 1
- Worthington Town Records Vol. 1

Amherst Town Records have also been published in
 Carpenter and Morehouse, History of Amherst, Part II, 1896.

In addition, some of the town meeting records can be
 found on microfilm in local libraries. The records for
 Deerfield are located at the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial
 Association Libraries in Deerfield. Records for Hatfield,
 Chesterfield, Hadley, Pelham, and Ware are on microfilm
 at the Forbes Library in Northampton. Town records
 for Ludlow are on microfilm at the Public Library; records
 for South Hadley are on microfiche at the Main Library.

The University of Massachusetts at Amherst Special Collections has records for Sunderland and Greenwich (after 1781) on microfilm. Records for Westfield are on microfilm at the Westfield Athenaeum. The Dickinson Library in Whately has photocopies of early town records in its History Room.

Original Greenwich town meeting records after 1781 are located at the Swift River Valley Historical Society in New Salem; apparently, earlier records have been lost. New Salem town records for the eighteenth century were lost to fire. The Northfield Town Clerk has no town records from the era of the American Revolution.

The Springfield City Clerk will not allow the town records to be handled, as they are in very poor condition. Springfield Town Records 1736 - 1799 are available on microfilm only through the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Bloomfield, Connecticut.

Due to the hostility towards educated persons on the part of the West Springfield Town Clerk, Town Records are not available.

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