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Forging Bonds: Examining Experiences of Friendship for Officers and Soldiers
of the Continental Army, 1775-1783

by

Rachel A. Engl

A Thesis

Presented to the Graduate and Research Committee

of Lehigh University

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

History

Lehigh University

August 2012

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Thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in History.

“Forging Bonds: Examining Experiences of Friendships for Officers and Soldiers of the Continental Army, 1775-1783”
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August 16, 2012

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the multitude of people who made this project possible. First off, I would like to thank my advisor, Monica Najar. Her skillful guidance and unwavering support through numerous drafts were great, and I appreciate her continuous challenge to make this piece better than before. I would also like to thank Michelle LeMaster for her insightful advice that helped me to move beyond the ruts of writing and editing.

Additional thanks to my fellow graduate students, especially Kristin Tremper, Christine Hill, and Kelli Curtin who have all generously given their time to reading several drafts.

Thank you also to my family who have always supported me and believed that I could finish this! Lastly, I would like to thank my husband who has patiently stood by my side during this process and accepted my curt responses to his questions of “how’s the thesis going?” especially towards the end of the project.

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Abstract

Previous studies examining friendship in early America have overlooked the nuances of friendships or intimate homosocial relationships for individuals of different social backgrounds. In an effort to revise this problem, this thesis examines the variation in the experience of friendship for officers and soldiers of the Continental Army during the American Revolution arguing that these two groups of men both supported and experienced differing models of friendship. Officers supported friendships through formal activities and values, such as honor, gentility, and civility, whereas soldiers cultivated their friendships through informal social gatherings with spirit of camaraderie, which highlight their divergent values. Ultimately, the experiential difference of friendship for soldiers and officers in the Continental Army provides historians with the opportunity to examine how factors such as emerging conceptions of masculinity as well as social distinctions affected individual interactions and relationships within a homosocial environment during the American Revolution.

Nearly six decades after the American Revolution ended, Private Joseph Plumb Martin published a memoir of his experience as a soldier in the Continental Army. Even after so many years, his recollection of the close relationships he had enjoyed with his fellow soldiers remained clear. “[T]he soldiers,” he wrote, “each in his particular circle of acquaintance, were as strict a band of brotherhood as Masons, and I believe, as faithful to each other.”¹ The men who enlisted and volunteered for service in the Continental Army endured much together throughout the American Revolution. Within the environment of the military, these men spent nearly every minute in the company of other men, voluntarily or not. They slept together in the same quarters; they ate together in the same camp; and they soldiered together through the wilderness and on the battlefield. Despite this seemingly endless contact that was antagonistic at times, overall these soldiers built a foundation for friendships and intimate relationships through the experience they shared. Martin’s remarks illustrated the significance of hindsight and reflection. While many soldiers may not have recognized or reflected upon their strong brotherhood as Martin did in formal writing, they nevertheless demonstrated through their actions and simple gestures that they achieved meaningful bonds with one another. Martin’s use of the word “brotherhood” to describe the community of common soldiers signified that they not only had a connection as acquaintances within the army but also a deep level of attachment through fictive kinship ties. Although most soldiers did not use such familial language to describe their relationships with their comrades during the war,

¹ Joseph Plumb Martin, *A Narrative of Some of the Adventures, Dangers and Sufferings of a Revolutionary Soldier*, ed. George E. Scheer (New York: Arno Press, 1962), 280. Note that Plumb’s account is a memoir and written after his service in the Continental Army. Despite the lapse in time between when the events occurred and when he wrote them, his account is nevertheless significant to the study of relationships created between common soldiers. Hereafter cited as *Adventures of a Revolutionary Soldier*.

Martin's remarks in his memoirs highlighted how he came to understand these bonds. Martin and other soldiers conceived of themselves as part of a larger community. In effect, soldiers like Martin sought to create communities like those that they had left behind through their friendships in an effort to ease the transition from civilian to military life. This form of male sociability, or the tendency to associate with a particular group of people, highlights the fundamental values and experience of soldiers, as well as officers throughout the American Revolution.

The hyper-masculine environment of the Continental Army, which featured the concentration of men from various backgrounds within the contrived setting of the military, facilitated the formation of friendships between officers as well as between soldiers. These relationships provided an intimate level of connection among men who were often strangers before the outbreak of the American Revolution. Officers and soldiers alike embraced these new bonds and found various ways to support them through social activities, while also expressing their value and significance through words and actions. Soldiers fraternized with their comrades at local taverns and within camp while officers enjoyed each other's company within individuals' homes or their headquarters. In addition, officers tended to socialize in intimate settings with a handful of other men while soldiers fraternized in larger groups. This experiential difference of friendship between officers and soldiers marked larger distinctions, as officers and soldiers supported different standards of behavior and values for men. These different standards in turn contributed to divergent understandings of masculinity, which include the typical characteristics and qualities molded by society for men. Throughout the American Revolution, conceptions of masculinity as well as a social hierarchy influenced the

manner and spaces within which officers and soldiers cultivated friendships. For example, the values both groups of men supported often shaped the development of intimate homosocial relationships, which were bonds between members of the same sex in a merely platonic and not sexual sense, and moreover their experience of friendship. By examining these two groups of men, historians can begin to understand how the multiplicity of masculinities complicated an emerging social hierarchy and influenced individual interactions within a homosocial environment during this period of change in the United States. As men from the upper ranks of society, evidence of officers' immersion within the world of sentimentality materialized within their friendships with other officers through emotional letters and intimate dinners. Conversely, soldiers, who remained largely removed from such a sentimental world, were far more matter-of-fact in the way they talked about their friendships, although the feelings of devotion doubtless ran deep. Although military culture for officers and soldiers differed in many ways, both groups of individuals supported the creation of relationships between men, highlighting their community's values and beliefs. These essential differences illustrated the two experiences of male friendship in the Continental Army, which were each embedded in the multitude conceptions of masculinity and a social hierarchy among officers and soldiers of the American Revolution.

This thesis consists of three main sections: an exploration of the values of friendship, an examination of the behaviors of such relationships, and finally a study of individuals who exhibited the variation in the experience of friendship as members of the Continental Army who were promoted from the ranks of the soldiery to the officer corps. In order to demonstrate the experiential difference of friendship between officers and

soldiers during the American Revolution, this thesis begins with an exploration of contemporary class structure resulting in the emphasis of different values for officers and soldiers thereby contributing to the varying experiences of friendship. Following this introductory piece, the thesis explores the fundamental values upheld by officers and subsequently those upheld by soldiers. This section establishes that friendships between soldiers and between officers were fundamentally different as exemplified by the varying values these two groups of men supported. This first section concludes with a case study of disputes which provides an insightful comparison to further examine the diverging values maintained by these two groups of men and the effect on the relationships cultivated by soldiers and officers. Next, this thesis further delves into the experiential difference of friendship between officers and soldiers by investigating the activities and behaviors indicative of such relationships for first officers and then soldiers in the second section. The contrast between officers' formal socializing and soldiers' informal camaraderie becomes apparent through discussion of the similarities and differences of their interpersonal relationships, which helps to crystallize the different experiences of friendship supported by officers and soldiers. Once again, a case study, this time of death within the context of war, helps to draw out the different models of friendship that evolved throughout the American Revolution, with special focus on the inherent behaviors seen through such relationships for officers versus soldiers. The thesis concludes with a section examining a few individuals who rose through the ranks of the soldiery to become officers in order to highlight the differing models of friendships maintained by officers versus soldiers as the behavior and values of this group of men shifted after their promotion to the officer corps.

In seeking to understand how two models of friendship developed among officers and soldiers, one must study the factors, including varying conceptions of masculinity, as well as social standards, and how they affected the experience of friendship for individual men. Historians of masculinity have provided helpful methods to approaching such a topic by challenging static conceptions of gender and seeking to demonstrate how understandings of men's identity transformed in relation to a host of variables in their works. E. Anthony Rotundo's book *American Manhood* provided the foundation for such studies by presenting an overview of the transformation of masculinity from the colonial period through the twentieth century.² He contends that during the Revolutionary period a shift in masculinity occurs from one that typically was communally-based to one that was more individually sustained and promoted. His book spurred additional studies that focused on masculinity within specific periods of American history. For example, an important work that followed Rotundo's book was Lisa Wilson's *Ye Heart of a Man: The Domestic Life of Men in Colonial New England*, in which she examined masculinity within the context of colonial New England.³ Wilson argued that a man sought interdependence with his family and his community. She established this argument upon the idea that a man's perception of himself was based on his "usefulness" to these two groups. Throughout her book, Wilson provided examples to support the conception of masculinity informed by one's community during the colonial period, which Rotundo established in his book. In the book, *Sex and the Eighteenth-Century Man*, Thomas Foster sought to further our understanding of men's

² E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

³ Lisa Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man: The Domestic Life of Men in Colonial New England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

identities during the colonial period.⁴ Foster argued that sex was an essential part of the identity of an eighteenth century man. In addition, he contended that a community of men helped to regulate and enforce certain concepts of masculinity, which supported Rotundo's idea of communally-based masculinity. Scholars studying the emotional history of the United States have also joined the discussion of conceptions of masculinity. For example, in examining the intersection of manhood and American Revolution, Stefan Dudink and Karen Hagemann argued that there were multiple contradictory masculinities operating during this period of warfare to support their claim that discourses of masculinity helped to transform social standards. These conceptions supported the ideal of an independent citizen at the same time as they forced men to enlist in the Continental Army through acts of conscription.⁵ Together these works influenced the ways in which historians approached transformations in masculinity from the colonial period through the revolutionary era. By building off their conclusions, this study will illustrate how varying concepts of masculinity influenced relationships created by officers and soldiers in the Continental Army throughout the American Revolution.

Many historians have addressed the topic of Continental Army soldiers and officers; however, few have fully examined the relationships created during the Revolution between these two groups of men. Richard Godbeer in his book, *The Overflowing of Friendship: Love between Men and the Creation of the American Republic*, devoted a chapter to the bonds formed among officers in the Continental Army during the American Revolution. Godbeer argued that friendships between men during

⁴ Thomas A. Foster, *Sex and the Eighteenth-Century Man: Massachusetts and the History of Sexuality in America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006).

⁵ Stefan Dudink and Karen Hagemann, "Masculinity in Politics and War in the Age of Democratic Revolutions, 1750-1850" in *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History*, ed. Stefan Dudink et al. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 8-9.

the Revolutionary period, including those between soldiers and officers in the army, provided the foundation for the new republic. With this new connection of friendship, Godbeer claimed officers were able to collaborate in different ways that were beneficial and conducive to the formation of a new nation following the end of the war. In his chapter, "Fraternal Love in the Continental Army," Godbeer focused on relationships both created and strengthened by the war between officers. While he presented a good foundation for studying these kinds of connections among men, his study was neither comprehensive nor exhaustive. The sampling of Godbeer's evidence on male friendships within the context of the Continental Army was relatively small and limited to a select group of individuals. He admitted that all men of this period had the ability to form sentimental friendships with other men. However, he conceded that "while we can be confident that a broad range of Americans were exposed to a public conversation about male friendship, we cannot be sure how they responded." As a result, Godbeer confined his study to "the personal lives of literate, educated men."⁶ In choosing to focus on relationships created by "literate, educated men," Godbeer excluded much of the Continental Army. He tended to equate "literate, educated men" with the officers, which was not necessarily always the case. In fact, several educated and literate soldiers in the Continental Army did not enter the ranks of the officer corps. While their level of education certainly did not match those of the majority of the officers, many soldiers did have a basic education that facilitated their ability to record their experiences during the war in letters to friends and relatives back home, as well as in journals and diaries kept during the American Revolution or memoirs written thereafter. Godbeer wrote that "the

⁶ Richard Godbeer, *The Overflowing of Friendship: Love Between Men and the Creation of the American Republic* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 14.

loving and supportive relationships that developed between officers in the Continental Army was by no means limited to Washington's immediate staff."⁷ However, the evidence he provided to support such a claim remained limited to the realm of the officer corps thereby restricting the scope of Godbeer's study to the records and accounts produced by members of the officer corps and the aides of such figures like George Washington and Baron von Steuben. Yet, there is more to the story of friendship in the Continental Army than Godbeer explored in his book. This study serves as a starting point for further examination of the relationships created during the American Revolution, especially those beyond the luminary figures of the period, to reveal the competing standards of masculinity between officers and soldiers. Godbeer's preliminary analysis illustrated that a historiographical gap remains in the study of masculinity and friendship cultivated by soldiers and officers, a gap which this study will address. In addition, Godbeer lumped different models of friendships together, but this study will strive to provide a more nuanced assessment of their significance for officers and soldiers.

Steven Bullock addressed the topic of fraternal ties among soldiers and officers through his examination of the organization of the Freemasons in *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840*.⁸ In this study, Bullock argued that Masonry played a fundamental role in providing a foundation that fostered a sense of camaraderie within the Continental Army. Bullock acknowledged that the overwhelming majority of those who participated in this

⁷ Godbeer, *The Overflowing of Friendship*, 123.

⁸ See Steven Bullock, "According to Their Rank: Masonry and the Revolutionary, 1775-1792 in *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 109-133.

organization both before and after the American Revolution came from the upper sorts of American society. As a result, he only considered a select group of men, which downplayed the connections common soldiers achieved throughout their time in the army. Nevertheless, Bullock's work provided valuable insight into how the ideals of Masonry influenced the image of unity within the minds of the Continental Army's officers. Utilizing Bullock's findings, this study will expand on his conclusions pertaining to bonds created among Freemasons in the Continental Army by examining in greater depth the role of more informal associations that provided a foundation for the creation of friendships among soldiers and officers. Further, this study will demonstrate the differing conceptions of masculinity officers and soldiers supported through these groups.

In another recent work, Sarah Knott contributed to the historiography of relationships among men in the Continental Army through her examination of the topic of sentimental friendship in her book, *Sensibility and the American Revolution*.⁹ Throughout her study, Knott contended that the American Revolution was not just a revolution of politics in America, but it was also a revolution of American society. She substantiated her argument by showing that officers sought to develop cohesion in the army based on the model of fraternity. She distinguished officers from the general soldiery by emphasizing the ways in which members of the officer staff strove to establish sentimental friendships with their fellow men. Knott incorporated this idea by explaining that officers and soldiers differed in the ways they expressed themselves. Overall, she proposed that only officers were really able to achieve substantial

⁹ See Sarah Knott, "The War for Independence" in *Sensibility and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 153-193.

relationships because of their cultural awareness of sentimental friendship as members of the middling and upper sorts of colonial society. Knott, like Godbeer and Bullock, focused on men from the officer corps, failing to provide a concrete connection to how their ideals informed their leadership of the soldiery. This study will extend Knott's conclusions about officers and incorporate soldiers in order to highlight their differing conceptions of masculinity and how this factor influenced their varying experiences of friendship during the American Revolution.

§§§

Within the differing social environments and cultures of officers and soldiers, two models of male friendships emerged. In order to understand how experiences of friendship differed for officers and soldiers, it is necessary to understand the social context in which these relationships formed. The contrast between the friendships of soldiers versus those of officers was indicative of their varying belief systems, which incorporated different understandings of masculinity linked to their differing social standing. While officers championed behavior supporting the ideals of respect, valor, and honor, soldiers celebrated those who were adventurous, loyal, and steadfast in battle.¹⁰ These distinctive standards of behavior created differences between the ways in which friendships were crafted and sustained throughout the duration of the war. Relationships among soldiers were embedded in leisure culture, whereas the friendships of officers were circumscribed by the dictates of a genteel culture associated with respectable gentlemen. For officers, their relationships demonstrated their understanding of sentimental friendship, which was a relationship “formed in shared sensibility:

¹⁰ William Guthrie Sayen, “George Washington’s ‘Unmannerly’ Behavior: The Clash between Civility and Honor” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 107, no. 1 (Winter 1999): 7.

similitude of refined temperament, articulation of sentiment, mutual exchange of sympathy.”¹¹ Soldiers too initiated close friendships with each other, but they were not immersed in this same world of sentimentality.

Despite differences in the actual experience of friendship, both groups of men supported classical understandings of male friendship. In the ancient civilizations of Greek and Rome, homosocial relationships between men were integral to society. According to Rotundo, Americans men were inspired by “classical antiquity, citing the devoted friendship of Damon and Pythias, and quoting the writings of Aristotle and Cicero, who praised pure, spiritual relationships between equal men.”¹² For officers and soldiers alike, friendship was a relationship between two individuals who were engaged and devoted emotionally to one another, albeit to varying degrees. Through the formation of friendships, officers and soldiers alike gained companionship in the new and unfamiliar world of the Continental Army. These men sought comfort by establishing “familiar” or intimate relationships with one another as part of their effort to recreate a sense of community within the Continental Army amongst this exclusive group. According to historian Sarah Pearsall, familiarity “was an ideal that allowed non-family members to become integrated in family-like worlds. Beyond politeness, familiarity helped to broker connections between individuals who were on the move.”¹³ This condition provided a foundation for friendships to grow and withstand the pressures of war.

Beyond this fundamental understanding of friendship, the experiences of officers

¹¹ Knott, *Sensibility and the American Revolution*, 113.

¹² Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 83.

¹³ Sarah M. S. Pearsall, *Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 57.

and soldiers diverged. For officers, friendships provided the opportunity to connect to their fellow men as they sought to realize the ideals of honor, duty, valor, and respect. Soldiers, on the other hand, relied upon the friendships they formed to recreate the support networks they left behind in their communities and with their families back home. These distinctive models of friendship also meant that soldiers and officers sustained these bonds through different means. Officers cultivated these friendships through formal social functions and formulaic expressions, whereas soldiers fostered these relationships through organic and more informal social events and communications.

Contemporary accounts of the American Revolution demonstrated that the difference between officers and soldiers was not simply one of military rank but rather a complex set of standards that encouraged or discouraged certain types of behavior. For officers, the accepted understanding was that they were to act like “gentlemen,” for they were “by legal definition, gentlemen.”¹⁴ Conversely, soldiers were not considered gentlemen, so they maintained a different set of standards conducive to their own experience in the Continental Army. This difference between officers and soldiers was frequently noted by those within the army as well as by outsiders; yet many never really provided any reasoning behind their perception. For example, Sally Wister, a young Quaker woman from Pennsylvania who maintained a journal throughout the American Revolution, set up a dichotomy between these two groups of men observing that “the officers appear gentlemanly, and the soldiers civil.”¹⁵ In using different words to describe officers and soldiers, Wister reflected her idea that these men represented

¹⁴ Caroline Cox, *A Proper Sense of Honor: Service and Sacrifice in George Washington's Army* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), xv.

¹⁵ *Sally Wister's Journal: A True Narrative Being a Quaker Maiden's Account of her Experiences with Officers of the Continental Army, 1777-1778*, edited by Albert Cook Myers (Philadelphia: Ferris & Leach Publishers, 1902), 66-67.

conflicting understandings of colonial manhood. In another entry, Wister described her perception of the type of men the soldiery was composed of, writing that “the yard [is] alive with soldiers, – very peaceable sort of men tho’. They eat like other folks, talk like them, and behave themselves with elegance.”¹⁶ Wister’s remarks indicated that she was somewhat surprised by the behavior of the soldiers, finding them more respectable than she had expected. She did not elaborate about the reasoning for her differentiation; yet her remarks still represented the perception many elite Americans had of these men and perpetuated the distinction of military rank. As historian Caroline Cox noted, “colonists came to the war assuming that poor men would be soldiers, but they also assumed that the officers leading them would all be gentlemen.”¹⁷ Wister, like many of her contemporaries, equated soldiers with the lower sort of colonial society. Her remarks indicated that she expected them to behave in a certain manner unbecoming of those who filled the elite ranks of society. In writing that they behaved “with elegance,” Wister revealed her expectation that their good behavior challenged her understanding of soldiers.

Although elitist, Wister’s observations reflected some realities of the composition of the army. In a study of a group of enlisted men, historian John Shy noted that “the hard core of Continental soldiers...who shouldered the heaviest military burden, were something *less* than average colonial Americans. As a group, they were poorer, more marginal, less anchored in the society.”¹⁸ Shy’s study illustrated the majority of soldiers in the revolution fell in the hierarchy of emerging American society. While Wister’s

¹⁶ October 19, 1777, *Sally Wister’s Journal*, 81.

¹⁷ Cox, *A Proper Sense of Honor*, 21.

¹⁸ John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflection on the Military Struggles for American Independence* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1990), 173.

comments provide her conception of the meaning of class, Shy's study helps to further explain the class difference between soldiers and officers. The distinct standards of behavior indicated by Wister's comments facilitated the divide between the culture of the community of officers and that of soldiers and help to explain how these two groups of men experienced friendship differently throughout the war.

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These differences in the perceptions and material conditions of class and status provide the backdrop to understanding friendships in the Continental Army. Officers and soldiers championed different values in their male comrades. While emotions within the relationships might have been fundamentally similar, the way these groups of men talked about what they wanted from friendships and admired in their friends differed greatly. These differences in values become particularly clear in the crisis moments of homosocial relationships.

For officers, a sense of personal honor was integral to constructions of masculinity during the Revolutionary War and in turn shaped the model of friendship experienced in the social circles of officers. The quality of honor, which meant for them "a set of rigid principles by which men of property ordered and defended their personal reputations," helped to establish a hierarchy among officers and provided legitimacy to their military rank above soldiers. Furthermore, honor served as a "precondition for the intimacies of sentimental friendship."¹⁹ Officers in the Continental Army placed much value on maintaining a sense of honor not only among their men but also their fellow officers. For example, Nathanael Greene expressed his desire to abide by his standard of colonial masculinity as an officer of the Continental Army by serving his country

¹⁹ Knott, *Sensibility and the American Revolution*, 164.

honorably and distinctively. In a letter to his brother, he wrote, “I hope God will preserve me in the Bounds of Moderation and enable me to support myself with proper Dignity, neither rash nor timorous but between them, that my conduct may appear to be regulated by a manly Firmness not of frenzy.”²⁰ In expressing such desires, Greene demonstrated how he, like other officers, sought to preserve and enhance his standing among men through his actions. Greene hoped to distinguish himself from those who did not adhere to the standards of behavior associated with colonial gentlemen by possessing self-control of his emotions. Officers, like Greene, believed that they needed to provide an example to their men through their behavior as they strove to embody such ideals as Greene listed. From the outset of the American Revolution, Washington and his officers tried to mold their soldiers into respectable men.²¹ As members of the upper ranks of society, officers supported the belief that behavior provided the barometer through which society measured individuals. Those who embraced the gentlemanly ideals of duty, valor, respect, and honor were considered part of the polished or polite section of society. Men who did not maintain such standards were classified by the elite as the unpolished or vulgar part of colonial society.²² In order to solidify their reputations, officers valued friendships as a way to develop a sense of personal honor among a group of their peers.

Throughout the war, officers engaged in the culture associated with elite and more respectable men of colonial society within a formal setting, which highlighted their belief in the value of exclusivity. They sought to differentiate themselves from the soldiery,

²⁰ Nathanael Greene to Jacob Greene, June 28, 1775, *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, eds. Richard K. Showman, Robert E. McCarthy, and Margaret Cobb (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976) 1:93.

²¹ Holly A. Mayer, *Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and Community during the American Revolution* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 42.

²² Sayen, “George Washington’s ‘Unmannerly’ Behavior,” 7.

who were perceived to be members of the lower and middling sorts of colonial society. As historian Caroline Cox noted, “officers, even on their worst day, would have cut a very different appearance from the men under their command, and officers were quick to insist on the distinctions among each other.”²³ These distinctions were upheld by measures prohibiting the fraternization between officers and soldiers. While officers sought to achieve and protect their status as gentlemen, soldiers were frequently reminded of their inferiority to their officers through their strict physical separation. This even translated to the spaces in which officers and soldiers enjoyed the company of friends. Officers were informed that a leader was not supposed to “[e]at or drink with his Men, or play at any games with them.”²⁴ By distinguishing officers from soldiers, Washington and his commanders sought to instill a high level of respect for one’s superiors in an attempt to recreate a type of social hierarchy within a military environment. They engaged in socializing with their proper social equals, fellow officers who also claimed the status of gentlemen, within the settings of respectable leisure culture, usually meeting in private homes, whereas the soldiers fraternized with one another in more casual places, like taverns. Historian John Ferling remarked upon this experiential difference between soldiers and officers:

There was a surreal quality to a wartime army camp in which the enlisted men retreated after dark to their cold, overcrowded huts while only a few hundred yards away officers reveled in ebullient society, attending parties, enjoying formal dinners at which bands of musicians played, and delighting in balls that lasted into the night.²⁵

The environment crafted by officers to resemble the exclusive culture of elite gentlemen

²³ Cox, *A Proper Sense of Honor*, 59.

²⁴ General John Sullivan, Standing Orders, February 12, 1777 in *Letters and Papers of Major General John Sullivan*, ed. Otis G. Hammond (Concord: New Hampshire Historical Society, 1939) 1:316.

²⁵ John Ferling, *Almost a Miracle: The American Victory in the War of Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 328.

provided opportunities to cultivate friendships through various activities. Overall, officers sought to uphold the standards of colonial elite gentlemen through their friendships with their fellow officers.

The values of gentility and civility supported by the officer corps through their claimed status of gentlemen encouraged their adoption of the value of possessing sentimental affection within their intimate relationships. Sentimentality, which was associated with the ability to maintain a high level of sensibility or emotional susceptibility, was distinct marker of the friendships cultivated by officers throughout the American Revolution. Officers praised men who exhibited a keen awareness of sentimentality as Nathanael Greene did in writing about the chaplain of his brigade. Greene wrote that his friend, the chaplain was “perfectly well acquainted with the human heart and knew how to address him self accordingly.”²⁶ Highlighting the chaplain’s exquisite ability to connect with others emotionally, Greene effectively conveyed his belief in the importance of sentimentality as a fundamental value for men of his stature. Greene again described the significance of sentimentality within the experience of friendship when writing to his wife about his ability to connect with another officer over the reality of death. He wrote that “we [Greene and Col. Wadsworth] felt a secret relief from the painted sorrow by mutual sympathy and mixed melancholy...our conversation run upon the excellence of friendship and the transitory state of human affairs, and how necessary the former was to carry us comfortably through the voyage of life.”²⁷ In reflecting upon his friendship with Col. Wadsworth, Greene demonstrated the

²⁶ Nathanael Greene to Catharine Greene, August 16, 1779, *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene* 4: 323.

²⁷ Nathanael Greene to Catharine Greene, August 16, 1779, *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene* 4: 324.

fundamental importance of friendship as experienced through the sentimental connection to another individual. Like Greene, other officers supported their friends emotionally in an effort to achieve a more intimate kind of bond.

While officers increasingly supported their friendships through the ideals associated with gentility, honor, and sentimentality, soldiers sustained their friendships through different values, including the casual spirit of camaraderie throughout the American Revolution. In fact, most soldiers were removed from the world of sentimentality that generated and sustained many friendships cultivated between officers. Their perceived distance from such emotions was reinforced by the beliefs of officers including Alexander Hamilton who maintained that “officers be men of sense and sentiment, and the nearer soldiers approach to machines perhaps the better.”²⁸ While officers built friendships through distance, soldiers focused more on building networks through proximity and did not rely upon a feigned form of sentimentality to initiate or sustain relationships.

The inclination to create connections within a group of strangers was something many soldiers experienced in their communities back home. Communalism, which was a commitment to a particular group of people, was a value upheld throughout New England, a region which many soldiers in the Continental Army called home. The spirit of camaraderie was supported through communalism, which not only provided these men with a common purpose but also with the opportunity to connect with their comrades on a more intimate level. Historian Charles Royster argued that “soldiers’ strong local attachments came not only from their affection for family and friends but from lives

²⁸ Alexander Hamilton to John Jay, March 14, 1779, Harold C. Syrett et al., eds., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961-1987) 2:18.

wholly shaped by experience within a small area.”²⁹ Soldiers sought to mimic their local attachments they enjoyed at home through their friendships with their fellow comrades in the army. Enlisting in the Continental Army, these men adapted the principle of communalism to their new lives in the military and embraced camaraderie as they relied upon their new friends to survive the experience of war.

Soldiers valued allegiance demonstrated by their friendships as they became increasingly devoted to one another realizing that their officers and leaders were not always responsive to their basic needs. Joseph Plumb Martin recalled an incident in his memoirs when one of his messmates brought him food while he was sick. Martin concluded that “he did all he could do. He gave me the best he had to give.”³⁰ To Martin, it did not matter what his friend was able to give him but rather the manner in which it was given. In recognizing the exigencies of war, soldiers, like Martin, did not have lofty expectations of their friendships. Instead, many soldiers accepted these relationships as a way to adapt to their new lives in the Continental Army. Martin’s recognition that his friend “gave me the best he had to give” showed how soldiers willingly sacrificed to protect their comrades. Soldiers looked out for one another in different ways, as well. Martin described another event during which a small group from his company who were quartered together went out in search of food. The men brought back a goose and enjoyed each other’s company over this feast.³¹ These soldiers demonstrated their selflessness by willingly sharing their little food with their comrades. Overall, the actions soldiers took to protect and defend their friends throughout the war

²⁹ Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 61.

³⁰ Martin, *Adventures of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 55.

³¹ Martin, *Adventures of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 83.

demonstrated their values of loyalty and commitment to their comrades.

In creating communities through friendships, soldiers exhibited how much they valued the principle of loyalty. These communities drew strength from their exclusivity by defining insiders versus outsiders similar to how officers views soldiers as outsiders or not worthy of the status of gentlemen. Soldiers were fiercely loyal firstly to the members of their company and then to their regiment. Oftentimes, soldiers exhibited regional loyalty, like a Connecticut soldier for New England regiments and a Virginia soldier for southern regiments. Martin described the conglomeration of one's devotion as a soldier's "particular circle of acquaintance."³² Within this circle, soldiers exhibited empathy and compassion for their comrades; however, outside of this grouping, there was not any particular sense of attachment. For example, Martin highlighted several occasions demonstrating the confines of a soldier's intimate group. In one instance, Martin was in need of water and saw two soldiers who had some. However, these men were unwilling to share their supply with him, and in the end, he had to purchase it from them.³³ Regional differences played a significant role in preventing camaraderie among the soldiers. Martin recalled an incident when he injured himself and forcing him to hop on one leg in excess of five miles because as he described he had "no acquaintance with any of the party, most of whom were New Yorkers, and consequently, at that time, no great friends to the Yankees [or New Englanders]." Upon his arrival back in camp, his fellow soldiers immediately sent for the surgeon.³⁴ James Melvin also noted the limitations of soldiers' loyalty in an entry in his journal. For example, he described an incident in which his messmates gave food to strangers but refused to give him any even though they

³² Martin, *Adventures of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 280.

³³ Martin, *Adventures of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 103.

³⁴ Martin, *Adventures of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 70.

knew that his provisions had been stolen.³⁵ In recreating communities after enlisting in the Continental Army, soldiers often established intimate relationships within a close-knit group of men. Although soldiers experienced friendship more informally than officers did, they still discerned who to include in their intimate circle of friends. Within this exclusive set of friends, soldiers, similar to officers, displayed their loyalty and commitment to one another through their actions and behaviors together. While we have less information about soldiers, their values still become apparent through their interactions with their fellow men in their experience of friendship.

For both officers and soldiers, values became enmeshed in the experience of friendships and help to form the differing models of this intimate sort of connection between men. Although officers and soldiers supported different models of friendships, all of their relationships were put to the test within the environment of the military and the culture of warfare, which naturally bred competition. Despite forming differing models of friendships, the settling of disputes for both officers and officers reveal important lessons about the construction of masculinities and male sociability during the time of the American Revolution.

While soldiers often sought retribution through physical activities such as wrestling or boxing, officers abided by the standards of gentlemanly honor and appealed to the rules of civility by settling their disputes through duels. For example, Samuel Bixby recounted that “James Wood, a soldier, broke his arm wrestling” following a dispute with another fellow soldier.³⁶ Historian E. Anthony Rotundo argued that the act

³⁵ November 2, 1775, Andrew A. Melvin, *The Journal of James Melvin, Private Soldier in Arnold's Expedition Against Quebec* (Portland, ME: Hubbard W. Bryant, 1802), 53.

³⁶ July 4, 1775, “Diary of Samuel Bixby,” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 14 (March 1876): 289.

of wrestling, more generally, “served as disguised channels of affection between boys.”³⁷ This type of fighting was very intense in the moment, but soldiers were able to resume their friendships afterwards and continue to enjoy a sense of camaraderie among their fellow men. Martin witnessed two soldiers boxing while they were drinking, but they were able to put aside their differences and become friends once again. He noted that “no friendship had been lost.”³⁸ The practice of wrestling provided a practical solution to settling disputes for soldiers in the Continental Army, which allowed soldiers to move beyond disagreements harmful to the maintenance of their friendship and the spirit of camaraderie among the soldiery.

Officers, on the other hand, relied upon the much more personal and serious practice of dueling to serve as a settlement for disputes. These two different responses to personal disputes indicated that soldiers and officers maintained different sets of values. Dueling was perceived as a more civilized and appropriate way in which to settle affairs of honor in the eyes of Continental officers who adhered to a more elite understanding of behavior of men. Furthermore, this practice provided the opportunity to defend one’s pride, a key component of masculinity for elite men.³⁹ Often, though, a less elaborate form of settling a dispute was through correspondence. Men wrote letters to their friends and superiors to bolster their cause against another individual. In these cases, individuals relied upon their friends to defend their honor and promote the respect they felt they deserved.

Disputes often arose between officers because they adhered to values associated

³⁷ Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 84.

³⁸ Martin, *Adventures of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 146.

³⁹ Joanne B. Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 195.

with the behavior of gentlemen in which personal honor was essential to an individual's reputation. Officers often turned to their friends during these conflicts to help moderate the situation. As historian Sarah Knott argued, honor served as a "precondition for the intimacies of sentimental friendship," so this meant that officers who were friends also respected one another to a point that they were willing to defend one another.⁴⁰

One of the bitterest disputes between officers of the Continental Army, that of Horatio Gates and Benedict Arnold, illustrated the lengths individuals were willing to go in order to defend their own personal honor or that of a friend. In a letter to Philip Schuyler, the commander of the Northern Department at the time, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Brockholst Livingston expressed his dismay over this ongoing disagreement between the two men. Livingston appealed to Schuyler and tried to present his understanding of the current situation writing, "I have, for some time past observed the great Coolness, & in many instances, even disrespect with which Gen. Arnold has been treated at Head Qrs. His Proposal have been rejected with marks of Indignity. His own orders have been frequently contravened—and himself set in a ridiculous Light by those of the *Commander in Chief*." From Livingston's perspective, several officers in the army, including Washington himself, disrespected Arnold on numerous occasions. Respect was one of the most important components of an individual's reputation or honor for officers who not only demanded the respect of their soldiers but also sought to attract the esteem of their fellow officers. Livingston asserted that Arnold "enjoys the Confidence & Affection of Officers & Soldiers. They would, to a Man, follow him to Conquest or Death. His absence will dishearten them to such a degree, as to render them of but little Service." Livingston defended his friend by utilizing the reasoning that

⁴⁰ Knott, *Sensibility of the American Revolution*, 164.

Arnold's men respected him, questioning why Gates and other officers would not. Livingston further vouched for his friend and said that "he is the Life & Soul of the Troops...To him & to him alone is due the Honor of our late victory. Whatever Share his Superiors may claim they are entitled to None."⁴¹ Through these statements, Livingston not only vouched for his friend but actively sought to defend the reputation of his friend by employing the reasoning that Arnold supported and achieved the ideals of a gentleman and was an exemplary leader for his soldiers. To Livingston and other officers, Arnold exemplified many qualities they viewed as essential not only for a Continental Army officer but also for a colonial gentleman.

While these disputes could have a damaging effect on the unity of the Continental Army, they nevertheless demonstrated how loyalty and moreover sentimentality was integral to officers' model of friendship. Disputes often revolved around issues of jealousy. Washington was involved in the Conway Cabal, which was a ploy plotted out by several men in the army to overtake his position as the commander-in-chief as a result of their lack of faith in the General. Following the incident, Washington received a flurry of letters from his most vocal supporters insisting upon their loyalty to the General. In response to one received from the Marquis de Lafayette, Washington wrote to him and said, "Your favour of Yesterday conveyed to me fresh proof of that friendship and attachment which I have happily experienced since the first of our acquaintance, and for which I entertain sentiments of the purest affection."⁴² In expressing his intimate

⁴¹ Lieutenant Colonel Brockholst Livingston to Philip Schuyler, September 23, 1777, *A Salute to Courage: The American Revolution as Seen Through Wartime Writings of Officers of the Continental Army and Navy*, ed. Dennis P. Ryan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 98.

⁴² George Washington to Marquis de Lafayette, December 31, 1777 in *The Papers of George Washington: Revolutionary War Series*, eds., Dorothy Twohig, Philander D. Chase, and Beverly H. Runger (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001) 13: 83.

emotions, Washington demonstrated how he was immersed in the world of sentimentality. For officers, sentimentality was the manner through which they communicated about their connection to other men and was an integral characteristic to the officers' model of friendship. Through this letter, Washington also rewarded Lafayette for his intense loyalty through his use of sentimental language. He appealed to Lafayette's emotions in an attempt to repay his for commitment to their friendship expressing his heartfelt connection to the Marquis. Following this incident, Washington continued to shower Lafayette with praise writing:

The Sentiments of affection & attachment which breathe so conspicuously in all your Letters to me, are at once pleasing & honourable; and afford me abundant cause to rejoice at the happiness of my acquaintance with you. Your love of liberty—The just sense you entertain of this valuable blessing—and yr noble, & disinterested exertions in the cause of it, added to the innate goodness of your heart, conspire to render you dear to me; and I think myself happy in being linked with you in bonds of strictest friendship.⁴³

In this passage, Washington provided a general overview of the officers' model of friendship by indicating the characteristics he valued in a friend. For Washington and many other officers, loyalty, respect, honor provided the foundation to a solid friendship. In addition, Washington demonstrated how central an emotional connection was to such a model of friendship through his long and very personal letters to Lafayette, particularly those following the Conway Cabal. This incident provided the opportunity for two friends to demonstrate in an elaborate manner their devotion to one another. Through his correspondence, Washington outlined the values he championed including faithfulness, respect, and honor, which influenced the qualities he sought through his friendship with

⁴³ George Washington to Marquis de Lafayette, September 25, 1778 in *The Writings of George Washington: From the Original Manuscript Sources 1745-1799*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1934) 12: 500.

other officers. This sense of personal honor was guarded and promoted most liberally among the officers of the Continental Army. For them, this mark of personal integrity provided the foundation for the social connections to form among men who maintained similar values and help to differentiate themselves from the soldiery.

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Just as officers and soldiers differed in values, so too did officers and soldiers differ in their experience of friendship. Officers utilized their little time spent together to develop their friendships socially within the company of other men in a formal setting, aligned with the behavior of gentlemen. Soldiers, on the other hand, indulged in drinking and gambling within a more informal setting, reinforcing their inferior status. These differences in the experiences of friendship become magnified in difficult situations, as demonstrated by the different responses the death of comrades evoked in soldiers and officers.

Upholding the values of genteel and respectable men, officers often pre-planned social gatherings and utilized formal invitations, which differed from the practice of impromptu events of soldiers. Physician Lewis Beebe recorded a typical type of gathering between officers writing that he “by invitation crossed the river and dined with Colo. Reed, Mr. Barnum & a number of other Gentn. Had a most elegant table in the wilderness. It is pleasant and agreeable in this strange land, now and then to see old friends, and be a little sociable in retirement.”⁴⁴ Such occasions as Beebe described provided officers with the opportunity to see men with whom they were familiar. The comfort of seeing “old friends” over a social dinner may have reminded Beebe and other

⁴⁴ October 10, 1776, *Journal of Lewis Beebe, a Physician on the Campaign against Canada, 1776*, ed. Frederic R. Kirkland (New York: Arno Press, 1971), 10.

officers of the type of life they enjoyed before the war. The contrast between elegance and the wilderness that Beebe noted indicated that he and the other officers remained committed to their standards and sought to replicate genteel culture within the harsh environment of the war. Throughout the war, officers consistently sought to uphold their status as gentlemen and their friendships and activities planned within these groups enabled them to reinforce their position as members of the upper ranks of society.⁴⁵ The activities officers enjoyed among friends reflected their belief in the values associated with gentility and civility. For example, in a letter to his brother, First Lieutenant Erkuries Beatty recounted the dances he enjoyed while stationed in Morristown.⁴⁶ Dances, like the ones that Beatty described, not only provided the opportunity for officers to interact with one another but also with members of the opposite sex in a respectable venue and manner. Furthermore, the frequency of such events demonstrated how officers clung to the standards of gentility and civility throughout their interactions with both fellow officers and civilians despite the change in lifestyle as members of the Continental Army.

One of the most important activities through which officers fostered friendships was through formal dinners, which provided the opportunity for this select group of men to be entertained and unwind within the company of friends. Officers and members of Washington's staff tended to socialize in the private within the homes of individuals. Within the privacy of these spaces, men were able to enjoy the company of other respectable men. In this setting, men balanced formality with familiarity, allowing them

⁴⁵ Mayer, *Belonging to the Army*, 57.

⁴⁶ Erkuries Beatty to Reading Beatty, March 30, 1780, "Letters of the Four Beatty Brothers of the Continental Army, 1774-1794" *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 44, no. 3 (1920): 214.

to achieve a certain level of intimacy which was a goal for sentimental relationships between equals.⁴⁷ In addition, these dinners “furthered their indoctrination as members of a military brotherhood” and helped instill certain kinds of standards for officers, aligning with their values as gentlemen.⁴⁸ For example, Lieutenant Robert Parker recounted in his journal that he “went to Springfield in Company with a number of gentlemen to dine with the Officers of Coll Butler’s Reg’t, in compliance with a previous Invitation.”⁴⁹ Dinners, like the one Parker recalled in his journal entry, provided opportunities for officers to develop friendships in a formalized setting championed by officers who adhered to the standards of civility. Officers seized various opportunities, such as the anniversaries of key battles, to create a setting where they could come together and enjoy the company of familiar friends. Colonel Israel Angell helped to organize these types of social functions for the officers. For example, on the anniversary of the Battle of Monmouth, Angell noted that he arranged “Entertainment for all the Officers of my Regt. And all Dind together.”⁵⁰ These events helped officers to establish themselves as part of group of elite colonial gentlemen.

Officers valued the formal activities with their fellow officers and the friendships they had cultivated together because through these relationships, they upheld the standards of gentility and civility. Officers achieved such values by striving to display behavior with refinement and courteousness, all characteristics becoming of propertied gentlemen or citizens, in their interactions with their fellow friends. Lieutenant Benjamin

⁴⁷ C. Dallett Hemphill, “Class, Gender, and the Regulation of Emotional Expression in Revolutionary Era Conduct Literature” in *An Emotional History of the United States*, ed. Peter N. Stearns and Jan Lewis (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 37.

⁴⁸ Mayer, *Belonging to the Army*, 54.

⁴⁹ June 29, 1779, “Journal of Lieutenant Robert Parker, of the Second Continental Artillery,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 27, no. 3 (1903): 407.

⁵⁰ June 28, 1779, *The Diary of Colonel Israel Angell* (New York: Arno Press, 1971), 56-7.

Gilbert explained to his friend, Lieutenant Park Holland his preference to be among his friends in the army over any other type of company, including women, in order to maintain the standards of gentility and civility without temptation. He wrote:

Daily Invitations are given by the Inhabitants for our Gentleman to dine and drin[k] grogg with them where they are generally entertained with musick and the conversation of the Ladies. Yet notwithstanding these diversions...the unwholesomeness of the Climent makes me anxious to return to Head Quarters where I shall Injoye the Company and agreeable conversation of my old friends.⁵¹

Gilbert's comments illustrated not only his connection to his fellow officers but his commitment to their friendship because it was through such relationships that he was able to effectively achieve the values of gentility and civility.

These forms of entertainment were not unfamiliar territory for many officers. Before the outbreak of the American Revolution, elite men often sought companionship over dinners throughout the latter half of the eighteenth with other men of the upper circles of colonial society. This was part of male sociability for this section of society. These practices emerged first as part of men's work in business. E. Anthony Rotundo describes the significance dinner parties had during this period writing that "dinners were times when men...gathered to joke and chat about politics, sports, friends while sometimes talking business as well."⁵² During the American Revolution, these same men who were cultivated in this world of elite sociability utilized the forum of the dinner party to cultivate friendships as officers of the Continental Army. Through these shared formal activities, officers developed a model of friendship which upheld the sociability of gentlemen.

⁵¹ Lieutenant Benjamin Gilbert to Lieutenant Park Holland, August 1781, *Winding Down: The Revolutionary War Letters of Lieutenant Benjamin Gilbert of Massachusetts, 1780-1783*, ed. John Shy (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1989), 47.

⁵² Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 199.

Through letters to their friends, officers demonstrated their immersion within the elite culture of sentimentality through emotional greetings and expressions. The practice of letter writing helped to facilitate a feeling of familiarity by “creat[ing] critical ‘fictive families’, carving out a familiar social space, and so reinforcing the connections that existed between familiar individuals.”⁵³ Officers were often well-versed in this form of communication and sought to achieve a level of familiarity through these formulaic expressions. The practice of letter writing was one that was familiar for both officers and literate soldiers; however, the purpose of these writings differed greatly. According to historian Konstantin Dierks, an expert on culture of letter writing, this practice first became popular in the seventeenth century as a means to communicate between men of business. Dierks traced the development of this form of communication within conceptions of masculinity. He contended that “letter writing became closely associated not with the exercise of social authority over others, but with a capacity for personal agency.”⁵⁴

The officers of the Continental Army recognized the social utility of writing letters. These men wrote letters in order to keep their fellow men abreast of the current situation of the war and the progression of the British but also to maintain their rapport among the other officers. Dierks argued that letters were “a fundamental duty and vital activity of military officers.”⁵⁵ Letters provided the forum and space for officers to reflect upon their intimate connections with one another. Officers’ belief in gentility promoted the expression of sentimentality between members of the same sex, which was

⁵³ Pearsall, *Atlantic Families*, 57.

⁵⁴ Konstantin Dierks, *In My Power: Letter Writing and Communications in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 98.

⁵⁵ Dierks, *In My Power*, 214.

achieved partially through these emotional letters between friends. For example, General Anthony Wayne recognized the value of letters in the development and experience of friendship with Colonel Hartley. He praised his friend for maintaining their relationship even after his retirement from the army saying “I find that you are not quite like many other Gentlemen, who when once they leave this Ground forget that they have left behind their people who yet esteem their Friendships.”⁵⁶ Through this acknowledgment, Wayne distinguished his friend’s effort to help their relationship, noting that others may not have recognized the significance of letter writing as a way to sustain a friendship. Wayne was encouraged by the fact that his friend reciprocated such feelings by his desire to maintain their relationship through letter writing.

In similar fashion to Wayne, officers often displayed their immersion within the world of sentimentality through their correspondence with friends. For example, Alexander Hamilton wrote in a letter to one of his most intimate friends that “I wish, my dear Laurens, it might be in my power, by action rather than words, to convince you that I love you. I shall only tell you that ‘till you bade us adieu, I hardly knew the value you had taught my heart to set upon you.”⁵⁷ For Hamilton, the distance from Laurens he was forced to endure because of military life caused his feelings for his friend to grow stronger. While Hamilton wished to demonstrate in person his attachment to Laurens, he relied upon routine correspondence to convince his friend of their deep emotional connection through the use of sentimental language. Another officer William Kelly, an aide to General Scott, attempted to persuade his friend to understand the importance of correspondence writing that “I could wish you would favour me with a letter now and

⁵⁶ Anthony Wayne to Colonel Hartley, December 20, 1776, Anthony Wayne Papers, 1765-1890, Coll. 699. Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, box 1, folder 14.

⁵⁷ Alexander Hamilton to John Laurens, April 1779, *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton* 2: 34.

then as you are my only correspondent...to hear from a friend is some consolation in the tediousness of the sameness of a camp.”⁵⁸ For Kelly, letters from his friend were desirable because they reminded him of life outside the monotony of the military. The examples from these men illustrate how officers utilized letters to express themselves emotionally and develop sentimental friendships with other officers. Such affirmations of respect and love through correspondence with friends were a distinct characteristic of relationships between fellow officers and illustrated their immersion within the elite culture of sentimentality.

Routine correspondence enabled officers to maintain an affected level of familiarity with one another despite their distance. This was a deliberate effort on the part of officers to ensure the maintenance of an emotional connection with friends. Captain Robinson wrote to his friend, Colonel Anthony Wayne, about the importance of their letters saying “I have made it a point to write as frequently as possible well knowing the satisfaction it affords to receive letters from one’s friends when at the Distance you are.”⁵⁹ Robinson recognized the significant role that letters had in their ability to maintain and support social relationships. This form of communication was a space in which officers were able to strengthen friendship through familiarity based on a shared cultural practice of exchanging sentimental expressions or practical information. The Marquis de Lafayette too believed that the practice of letter writing was a way to sustain and deepen his attachment through friendship to General Washington. He wrote “to hear from you, my most Respected friend, will be one of the greatest happiness I may feel—

⁵⁸ William Kelly to Allan McLane, The Papers of Allan McLane, The New York Historical Society, reel 1.

⁵⁹ Captain Robinson to Colonel Anthony Wayne, September 26, 1776, Wayne Papers, box 1, folder 10.

the longer letters you'll write the more Bless'd with Satisfaction I Schall think myself—I hope you will not Refuse me that pleasure as often as you Can—I hope you will ever preserve that affection which I do Return by the most tenderest Sentiments.”⁶⁰ In this letter, Lafayette used the language of sentimentality by expressing his tender affections for his friend. He also called for reciprocity in his relationship with Washington by asking for long, if not emotional, letters in order to maintain this level of familiarity and devotion. Through the forum of letter writing, individuals like Lafayette and Washington had the opportunity and space to elaborate on their feelings for one another which helped to solidify their friendship and establish familiarity. Officers were often kept at a distance from one another for prolonged periods of time. Consequently, letters facilitated communication between friends and allowed them to sustain a level of familiarity and intimacy through the sharing of their emotions.

Some officers, though, recognized the artificiality of correspondence and the attempt to feign intimacy with a fellow officer. Alexander Hamilton was one of the officers who instead strove to achieve a more authentic version of friendship, which involved not only an emotional connection in writing but in actions, as well. He convinced his friend, John Laurens, that they must strive to avoid such a casual friendship and instead “let [the] friendship between us be more than a name.”⁶¹ Hamilton tried to convince Laurens that their friendship was not artificial but rather involved a more significant bond as evidenced through their reciprocal exchange of sentiments. More importantly, the practice of letter writing, which fostered a sense of familiarity,

⁶⁰ Marquis de Lafayette to General Washington, January 5, 1779, *Lafayette in the Age of the American Revolution: Selected Letters and Papers, 1776-1780*, ed. Stanley J. Idzerda (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979) 2: 218.

⁶¹ Alexander Hamilton to John Laurens, September 16, 1780, *Papers of Alexander Hamilton* 2: 431.

represented a distinct characteristic of friendships between officers, along with other formal activities these men enjoyed together. The examples of their letters provide a testament to not only their proclivity to form intimate friendships with other men but also their determination to maintain such bonds through the difficulties of warfare. Overall, officers utilized letters to achieve a certain level of comfort among men with similar interests. Elite men celebrated such a practice for its ability to bring men closer together and achieve a level of commitment and devotion to one another as they sought to establish themselves as individuals in an emerging American society.

In addition to letters and formal dinners, officers often utilized formal organizations such as the Freemasons to solidify their friendships and community as a group. For men steeped in the ideals of genteel culture, the Masons not only provided another level of connectedness but also reinforcement of the principles of honor and love, which were fundamental to the sentimental friendships between officers. Organizations like the Masons helped to foment the bonds between officers, and as historian Steven Bullock suggested such “fraternal ties among the officers helped to create and sustain the sense of common purpose necessary for the survival of the Continental Army.”⁶² While both soldiers and officers strove to create a common foundation to facilitate friendships, officers had the advantage of drawing support from established associations. Fraternal organizations like the Masons tended to exclude the soldiery which helped them to create separate sets of standards which in turn affected their experience of friendship. Bullock explained that “by balancing inclusiveness and exclusivity, the fraternity spoke directly to the peculiar needs of men who sought both to uphold their seemingly precarious social position and to build ties with a diverse group of fellow officers separated by local origin,

⁶² Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood*, 122.

religious affiliation, and military rank.”⁶³ Highlighting the difference between the networks of support for relationships created between officers during the Revolution versus those created between soldiers, Bullock alluded to differing models of friendship for these two groups of individuals. Formal organizations like Masonry provided a concrete example for officers for how to establish their bonds based on personal honor and love and rewarded them for achieving them through membership to an exclusive organization. Further, they helped to create an officer corps as a more unified group by downplaying their various differences and instead emphasizing their commonly held beliefs and ideals.

As officers fostered friendships through shared activities based on their similar social backgrounds, claiming the status of gentlemen, so too did soldiers establish close relationships through a common foundation of their shared experience in the Continental Army. The struggles soldiers endured together provided a common foundation from which many friendships emerged during the American Revolution and produced a sense of camaraderie. Military life for soldiers was not very easy; however, it was through this ordeal that soldiers learned to rely upon their fellow men and forge bonds despite their different backgrounds. General Nathanael Greene described that soldiers “coming from home with all the tender feelings of domestic life are not sufficiently fortified with natural courage to stand the shocking scenes of war.”⁶⁴ The transition from civilian life to military life was difficult for many soldiers for the reason that Greene offered. However, these soldiers were able to navigate their new lives because of the creation of a new community that helped to ease the process. James Giles, a common soldier, noted

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Nathanael Greene to Jacob Greene, September 28, 1776, *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene* 1: 303.

that there were “Hardships I’ve endured in common with my fellow Soldiers.”⁶⁵ The language Giles utilized highlighted the fact that these men experienced the same hardships and victories together within their company, sharing similar problems including low and inconsistent pay and supply issues. Joseph Plumb Martin elaborated about this common experience in his memoir and wrote that “I was not alone in misery; there were a number in the same circumstances.”⁶⁶ Martin’s understanding of his situation allowed him to develop a sense of fellowship with the other men in the army experiencing similar hardships.

The common experience of soldiers allowed them to conceive of themselves as a community and bred camaraderie and in some cases, helped to diminish regional prejudices that kept them apart. These men were no longer mere strangers since they could relate to one another through the physical, emotional, and mental pain they each endured as soldiers of the Continental Army. Jeremiah Greenman, another common soldier, maintained a diary throughout his time as a prisoner with several other soldiers during the Quebec campaign. He described their daily routine as captives. “[W]e live very Cold and desag[reeable] but imply our Selvs in all of the plays [games] that we can think of.”⁶⁷ Greenman and the other prisoners sought to make the best of their “disagreeable” experience by enjoying one another’s company. Soldiers, such as Greenman, created friendships through their common experience of adversity. In addition, their friendships provided them with a network of support throughout the ordeal of war and battle. Private George Ewing addressed his sense of the fissure between the

⁶⁵ James Giles to his mother, March 20, 1779, *A Salute to Courage*, 144.

⁶⁶ Martin, *Adventures of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 47.

⁶⁷ February 16-29, 1776, *Diary of a Common Soldier in the American Revolution, 1775-1783: An Annotated Edition of the Military Journal of Jeremiah Greenman*, eds. Robert C. Bray & Paul E. Bushnell (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1978), 25.

world of soldiers and the world of civilians in his journal. “Were I to describe the hardships and the difficulties we underwent from this time until the 4 of October no person but those who were with us would credit my relation therefore I chuse to pass it over in silence rather than those who should see this work should think me guilty of an Hyperbole.”⁶⁸ For soldiers like Ewing, they believed they could only relate to other men in the army based on their similar experience of the harshness of warfare. Unlike officers who continued to cultivate friendships across the boundaries of the military with gentlemen of the surrounding towns, soldiers tended to create more exclusive communities of friendships with members of their company and other regiments. In Ewing’s mind, those who were not part of the army could not fathom the challenges they faced. The common experience of being a soldier in the American Revolution created the opportunity for men, who had previously been strangers to one another, to cultivate friendships. The exigencies of war isolated men from their original communities and created a need for the development of new relationships within their new environment.

The relationships between soldiers were solidified through their identification with a new informal community that included the soldiers of their company and regiment. In his memoirs about the war, Martin reflected that:

We had lived together as family of brothers for several years, setting aside some little family squabbles, like most other families, had shared with each other the hardships, dangers, and sufferings incident to a soldier’s life; had sympathized with each other in trouble and sickness; had assisted in bearing each other’s burdens or strove to make them lighter by council and advice; had endeavored to conceal each other’s faults or make them appear in as good a light as they would bear.⁶⁹

Martin’s remarks emphasized how the common struggles soldiers endured throughout the

⁶⁸ September–October 1777, *Journal of George Ewing, a Soldier of Valley Forge*, eds. William Cox Ewing and Thomas Ewing (Yonkers, NY: Thomas Ewing, 1928), 28.

⁶⁹ Martin, *Adventures of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 280.

war helped them to cultivate friendships. While recognizing that there were times the soldiers did not always get along, Martin also remembered times during which he and his fellow comrades relied upon each other to survive the ordeal of war. Sometimes, soldiers with their newfound friendships even attempted to sway the opinions of officers to lighten the punishments of their comrades.⁷⁰ The bonds created between these men were very strong considering that many of them had just met each other upon their enlistment. Leaving behind family and friends, the soldiers formed communities through friendships, which provided an alternative to their communities back home with family and friends. Martin described this community of soldiers as a “brotherhood,” which served as a counterbalance to the diverse backgrounds from which the soldiers came. The idea of a “brotherhood” provided them with a more universal connection through a new kind of fictive family and replaced the relationships these men had to leave behind when they joined the army. According to Martin, the relationships fostered between soldiers enabled them to survive the war together and have someone to share the struggle to adjust to their new lives in the army. Through their informal “brotherhood,” and friendships, soldiers learned to grapple with the horrors of warfare and develop a sense of camaraderie.

For both officers and soldiers, friendships allowed them to achieve a level of familiarity within the environment of the Continental Army. Familiarity for officers was based on not necessarily with whom they connected but how they achieved such friendships. The formation of such relationships revolved around a form of elite genteel culture that many officers strove to transmit to the army. The demands of military life restricted the schedules of officers, who were often unable to see or visit each other. As a

⁷⁰ Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War*, 78.

surgeon for the Continental Army, Lewis Beebe reveled in the opportunities to spend time with other officers. He noted after one night spent with friends that “it is pleasant and agreeable in this strange land, now and then to see old friends, and be a little sociable in retirement.”⁷¹ For Beebe, spending time with his friends was comforting as he adjusted to the new environment of the military. Friendships between officers illustrated the significance of fellowship within the culture of elite men. At the end of the war, Dr. James Thacher reflected upon his experience in the Continental Army and the friendships he had cultivated. He wrote “to my military companions I bid a final adieu...with a heart fraught with grateful recollections of the kindness and affectionate intercourse which I have experienced from my superiors, and from my numerous companions and associates.”⁷² Thacher’s comments highlighted the intimate emotional connection familiarity bred between officers in the Continental Army. For him, reminiscing about the fellowship of officers evoked strong emotions and pleasant memories. The model of friendship maintained by officers throughout the duration of the war supported sentimental connections between men to replicate the familiar environment of genteel culture and achieve fellowship among men with similar interests and tastes.

The companionship Dr. Beebe and Dr. Thacher experienced with other officers was not that different from the camaraderie soldiers sought to achieve. Throughout the American Revolution, soldiers too strove to establish bonds with their fellow comrades to achieve a sense of familiarity with one another to serve as a replacement from the communities they left behind. Although this process was more difficult for soldiers than officers for a variety of reasons including the fact that they were not given as much

⁷¹ June 12, 1776, *Journal of Lewis Beebe*, 10.

⁷² January 1, 1783, James Thacher, *A Military Journal during the American Revolutionary War, from 1775 to 1783* (Boston: Richardson and Lord, 1823), 326.

freedom of movement or the support of formal organizations, as well as the reality of short enlistments, they nevertheless managed to form connections to those in their regiments. For example, after being separated at one time, Joseph Plumb Martin rejoined his regiment and said, “I was *sincerely* glad to see them, for I was once more among friends or at least acquaintances.”⁷³ For Plumb and other soldiers, familiarity bred comfort nurtured by their newly crafted communities of friendship within the Continental Army. Soldiers spent the majority of their time among men who belonged to their companies and regiments. Within these military groupings, smaller communities emerged through the development of the soldiers’ model of friendship, which was fundamentally founded on familiarity and comfort. While officers identified themselves within the larger community of Continental Army officers, soldiers tended to view themselves through more organic groupings of individuals. Even though soldiers did not have the same formal opportunities as officers enjoyed to support their relationships with fellow soldiers, they still recognized friendship as a way to build a sense of community, camaraderie, and most importantly, familiarity. Furthermore, soldiers adapted to their environment full of strangers by seeking friendships with other men. For example, Joseph Plumb Martin remarked that, “I had now got among a new set [of soldiers], who were, to a man, entire strangers to me. I had, of course, to form new acquaintances, but I was not long in doing that...I soon found myself at home with them. We were all young men and therefore easy to get acquainted.”⁷⁴ Martin’s natural inclination to try and make connections with his fellow comrades, as a response to his new environment, differed from officers’ effort to network through their friendships. In contrast to officers, soldiers

⁷³ Martin, *Adventures of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 39. Emphasis original to text.

⁷⁴ Martin, *Adventures of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 134.

like Martin formed friendships to achieve comfort and familiarity over honor.

While soldiers did not reflect upon the friendships they cultivated during the war in the same manner as officers, they nevertheless sought to create friendships with one another as a way to recreate the communities they left behind. Even though there were not any formal organizations to support the friendships cultivated by soldiers in the Continental Army, they discovered ways to maintain these relationships and sense of camaraderie through the formation of a community. Martin described one instance during which members of his regiment reunited with some of the friends they had been with during their prior assignments. He wrote that “some four or five of our men, knowing the regiments to which they formerly belonged were near, slipped off for a few minutes to see their old messmates.”⁷⁵ The friendships soldiers cultivated throughout the war were not always fleeting, and as Martin described they were able to sustain some of their relationships despite separation. Caleb Haskell also noted in his diary when he happened to be reunited with some of messmates who he had not seen in a while.⁷⁶ Martin, Haskell, and other soldiers coped with distance differently than officers. Officers relied upon letters or their ability to arrange meetings to maintain their friendships with their fellow officers. While soldiers did not have the same advantages as the officer corps did in sustaining their friendships, they nevertheless embraced opportunities to reconnect with old friends from the army in order to maintain a level of connection. Despite not having control over when they would see former friends, soldiers demonstrated how their friendships were flexible by embracing opportunities to rekindle

⁷⁵ Martin, *Adventures of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 135.

⁷⁶ May 29, 1776, *Caleb Haskell's Diary: A Revolutionary Soldier's Record before Boston and with Arnold's Quebec Expedition*, ed. Lothrop Withington (Newburyport: William H. Huse & Company, 1881), 20.

old relationships.

While officers and soldiers participated in varying activities to support their friendships, there were certain circumstances neither group could escape as a result of the reality of warfare. The conditions created by the horrors of warfare required officers and soldiers alike to cope with their new environments. For example, officers and soldiers both faced the prevalence of death throughout the American Revolution, which revealed both the similarities and differences of the emotional and behavioral tendencies for these two disparate groups of men. Death for both officers and soldiers provided an opportunity to reflect on the relationships men cultivated in the army. The pervasiveness of death throughout the war hardened many men, yet officers and soldiers, alike, experienced intense emotions upon the passing of an intimate friend. Major Samuel Shaw described in a letter to his parents regarding the recent death of a comrade with whom he had established a relationship. He wrote that “the severest stroke I have felt is the loss of an intimate acquaintance and sincere friend, Thomas Henley, since I left you, who lost his life a few nights ago, in a skirmish with the enemy.”⁷⁷ For Shaw, the death of his friend severely affected him. His reaction alluded to the strength of the friendship he shared with his fellow officer. While the reactions of soldiers to the death of their comrades differed somewhat from that of officers, they still harbored the same connections to their fellow men as officers did. Joseph Plumb Martin discovered one of his close friends had been killed in action when he went to retrieve the canteen he had lent him. In writing about his comrades, Martin recounted that “he was the most intimate

⁷⁷ Samuel Shaw to his parents, September 27, 1776, The Samuel Shaw Papers: 1775-1887, The David Library of the American Revolution, Washington Crossing, PA, reel 1. Duplicated from original in Massachusetts Historical Society.

associate I had in the army, but he was gone.”⁷⁸ Other soldiers, like Caleb Haskell, kept consistent records of the deaths of those around him but did not provide any further details. For example, upon one individual’s passing, he remarked that “one of our company died of small-pox.”⁷⁹ Haskell did not elaborate further about who the man was or even his own relation to the individual except to say that he was a member of his company. Companies in the Continental Army ranged in size but typically were comprised of one hundred men, which meant that Haskell was most likely somewhat acquainted with the soldier who died. This practice of recording deaths enabled Haskell to place distance between himself and the deceased, while also reminding himself of his mortality. The different reactions to death exhibited by Martin and Haskell demonstrated how soldiers coped with the reality of the omnipresence of death in their daily lives. Unlike Martin, Haskell did not have the luxury of time to reflect upon the magnitude of death in his daily life as he recorded these instances in his diary. Nevertheless, the death of his comrades was significant for him, as he felt obligated to make note of them. More importantly, the reactions of Martin and Haskell illustrated how many common soldiers were just as affected by the death of their friends as were officers. While officers were often more expressive of their feelings, soldiers too experienced similar emotions upon the passing of their friends in the army.

Officers’ emotionally expressive response to the death of fellow officers demonstrated a fundamental difference in the models of friendships for these two groups of men. Because many officers achieved a deeply sentimental connection with other men through friendships, they were emotionally devastated by the passing of such men. One

⁷⁸ Martin, *Adventures of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 93.

⁷⁹ December 31, 1776, *Caleb Haskell’s Diary*, 15.

of the best examples of this type of response, which officers tended to display, was that of Alexander Hamilton to the death of his dear friend, John Laurens. Hamilton described his agonizing loss of a friend to others in letters writing that “I feel the deepest affliction at the news we have just received of the loss of our dear and <inesti>mable friend Laurens.”⁸⁰ He elaborated to Nathanael Greene about the feelings he experienced while trying to process the death of his friend writing with intense emotion that “the world will feel the loss of a man who has left few like him behind, and America of a citizen whose heart realized that patriotism of which others only talk. I feel the loss of a friend I truly and tenderly loved, and one of a very small number.”⁸¹ In distinguishing Laurens as a friend, Hamilton attempted to articulate his true sentimental attachment to another man. Hamilton’s use of sentimental language highlighted the divide between the responses to death for soldiers versus officers. Although both soldiers and officers experienced intimate connections with other men, officers were the ones to engage in a more sentimental and expressive form of friendship. The case study of officers’ and soldiers’ reaction to the death of their friends helps to crystallize one of the fundamental differences of the varying experiences of friendship for men in the Continental Army. Officers, claiming the status of elite gentlemen who valued sentimentality, were more apt to reflect emotionally upon the passing of a friend than soldiers who did not indulge in the expression of the emotions with the same language or behavior.

Despite fundamental differences between the experiences of friendship for officers and soldiers, the varying models of friendship for officers versus soldiers

⁸⁰ Alexander Hamilton to Nathanael Greene, October 17, 1782, *Papers of Alexander Hamilton* 3: 183.

⁸¹ Alexander Hamilton to Nathanael Greene, October 17, 1782, *Papers of Alexander Hamilton* 3: 183-4.

coexisted for the majority of the American Revolution; however, at times, the model of friendship supported by soldiers directly challenged officers' vision for the Continental Army. Officers challenged what they viewed as the rowdy behavior of soldiers, which was embedded in their foundation of their friendships. These men often bonded through their own forms of leisure culture. Drinking alcohol with friends was part of the everyday lives of soldiers, which allowed them to cope with the hardships of warfare and military life. Washington and his officers, though, sought to curb such behavior occasionally in order to promote their more polite ideal of soldiers' behavior. For example, Washington and his officers recognized that soldiers congregated in taverns, which they considered to be potentially "disreputable" places, and issued orders to the owners of local taverns to turn away the soldiers' business.⁸² Through this directive, Washington hoped to keep soldiers away from these local establishments in order to maintain a level of discipline among the restive men, which was not conducive to their culture of drinking.

In addition, punishments for soldiers from officers also illustrated the tension between the cultures of the two groups of men. Soldier David How noted in his diary that another soldier was punished for drinking and denying his duty.⁸³ Officers' fears regarding soldiers' alcohol consumption coincided with the ideas espoused by elite men concerning the culture of drinking. Historian Peter Thompson described this transformation in attitudes about drinking, writing that elite men's "distaste for all forms of alcoholic excess symbolized and exacerbated the social, economic, and cultural gulf

⁸² Mayer, *Belonging to the Army*, 35.

⁸³ March 27, 1776, *Diary of David How: A Private in Colonel Paul Dudley Sargent's Regiment of the Massachusetts Line, in the Army of the American Revolution*, eds. George Wingate Chase and Henry B. Dawson (Morrisania, NY: H. O. Houghton and Company, 1865), 12.

that grew between classes in the final quarter of the eighteenth century.”⁸⁴ As a result of these changing opinions, officers seized the opportunity to effectively distance themselves from their social inferiors within the soldiery by condemning their chosen sources of diversions.

Washington and his officers also sought to limit other “disrespectable” forms of leisure. In a speech given by Washington to his officers while at his headquarters in Morristown, he addressed the issue of gaming and the overall behavior he wished his officers to encourage among their men. He stated:

Let vice and Immorality of its kind be Discouraged as much as possible in your Brigades & as a chaplain is allowed to each Regiment see that the men Regularly attend Divine worship. Gaming of every kind is expressly forbid as the foundation of evil...Games of Exercise for amusement may not only be permitted but encouraged.⁸⁵

Through this speech, Washington conveyed his view on how soldiers should be spending their time. He believed that they should be attending religious services instead of participating in gaming or gambling, which he viewed as evil. These examples highlighted the ways in which Washington and his officers fought against types of behavior that were integral to the vitality of soldiers’ friendships. These “disrespectable” activities, though, were embedded in the model of friendship that the soldiers supported. Washington and his officers sought to reinforce order through various measures. These included clamping down on those who consumed alcohol excessively, affecting their behavior and sometimes leading them to neglect their duty as a soldier.

These efforts, though, were mostly futile and soldiers in the Continental Army

⁸⁴ Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution: Taverngoing and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 159.

⁸⁵ May 26, 1777, *The Correspondence and Papers of Allen McLane: 1775-1821*, New York Historical Society, reel 1.

discovered resourceful ways to continue to interact with one another in spite of such restrictions to support their own model of friendship. Part of the reason why soldiers were able to get away with the kinds of behavior that sustained their relationships was the lack of enforcement by officers. Although Washington and his officers did not approve of much of soldiers' activities, they were not constantly policing them. In fact, soldiers like Martin mentioned the relative absence of officers in their daily lives. Martin wrote that "our lieutenant scarcely ever saw us or we him, our sergeant never went out with us once, all the time we were there, nor our corporal *but* once."⁸⁶ The physical separation between officers and soldiers provided opportunities for the friendships of soldiers to exist and thrive. More importantly, though, without the presence of officers in the everyday lives of soldiers, these men constantly relied upon each other for survival and guidance. Their attachment to one another was not a result of mere coincidence of being in close quarters and spending nearly every moment with each other but more so their reliance on each other for survival. The friendships cultivated between soldiers during the Revolution represented a much different bond than those between soldiers and their friends at home. The experience of war fomented intense sorts of connections between men who relied upon each other in order to survive the hardships of military life. In essence, these friendships provided a mental, physical, and emotional support system for these young men. In addition, unlike officers, they did not need the formal setting of an establishment in order to enjoy their friends' company. Instead, they were rather content to amuse themselves in the vicinity of camp and while on duty. Joseph Plumb Martin remembered an incident in which members of his company broke into a wine cellar

⁸⁶ Martin, *Adventures of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 111.

together.⁸⁷ Another time, Martin recounted passing time with his comrades in shooting bats with arrows around camp.⁸⁸ Without strict enforcement of Washington's proposed standards of behavior and the flexibility of soldiers to make their own diversions, soldiers bonded through their common experience and values as a means to cope with the stresses of military life.

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Together the values and behaviors of individual men informed their experiences of friendship. This complex mix of ideals, feelings, activities formed the foundation of soldiers' and officers' understanding of friendship in addition to the reality of friendship they experienced on an individual basis. Combining together these factors studied in previous sections, the difference between the model of friendship for officers and soldiers becomes more apparent through the study of individuals who held positions within both groups. Several soldiers who served for a prolonged amount of time were rewarded for their service with a promotion to the officer corps. These men exhibited changes in behavior throughout their transition from the soldiery to the officer corps, which influenced the manners through which they developed relationships with their fellow men. For them, becoming men worthy of the status of an officer meant conforming to values and behaviors much different from their experience as soldiers.

Benjamin Gilbert began his service to his country as a minuteman in the first months of the American Revolution and progressed through the ranks achieving the rank of lieutenant by the end of the war. As John Shy, the editor of his letters, noted, there was a marked change in Gilbert's behavior sometime around the year of 1779. By

⁸⁷ Martin, *Adventures of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 20.

⁸⁸ Martin, *Adventures of a Revolutionary Soldier*, 118.

1780, Gilbert had received his promotion to lieutenant. Shy provided several explanations for this shift in behavior including a bad experience he had following drinking with his fellow soldiers in the summer of 1779 or simply maturing from a young boy into a man. More convincing, though, Shy proposed that his commission as an officer may have provided the impetus for his transformation.⁸⁹ Before 1779, Gilbert consistently recorded his many adventures with his fellow comrades as a soldier in the army. He frequently wrote about their time spent drinking with one another. For example, Gilbert described an incident following a long night of drinking that almost prevented him from being able to fulfill his duty as a soldier. However, as Shy observed, Gilbert no longer described these same kind of social activities following his appointment to the officer corps. Instead, Gilbert's writings focused on the movement and progression of the army instead of its social activities. In a letter to his father in 1781, Gilbert wrote about the pursuit of Cornwallis. He remarked:

having a few moments leasure [sic] at this time, which I have not had before for upwards of a month, I chearfully imbrace it in writing you a few line. Shall inform you that I injoye my health, but am so Fatigued by an incessant marching that should it continue I fear I shall be relaxed and reduced to the degre I shall not be able to do duty in the Field.⁹⁰

Instead of indulging himself in his previous social activities as a soldier during his spare time, Gilbert chose to correspond with his father. Gilbert consciously transformed his behavior upon becoming an officer as he assumed the responsibilities of a respectable gentleman.

The behavior of Jeremiah Greenman, another soldier who was able to reach the ranks of an officer during the Revolution, also shifted as he embraced the standards

⁸⁹ John Shy, ed., *Winding Down*, 15-16.

⁹⁰ Lieutenant Benjamin Gilbert to his father, July 3, 1781, *Winding Down*, 45.

upheld by the officer corps. His journal entries regarding the activities in which he participated as a soldier contrast with those he later described in his position as an officer in the Continental Army. Greenman increasingly recorded the company with whom he spent each night. He wrote that he “Spent the Evening & Night with Col. Hatfield” in one entry, and in another, he noted that “the Evening [was] Spent in Company with Capt. Harrison.”⁹¹ In previous entries, Gilbert did not make any specific references to individuals but referred collectively to his fellow soldiers as “we” when writing about the activities in which they engaged. He noted that “we keep o[*u*]r Selvs ha[*r*]ty in playin ball in ye yard” and “we continu very lousey making wooden Spoons & one notion [*and*] a Nother to imply our very disagreeable time.”⁹² Over time, the communal tone of Greenman’s diary entries was replaced by his awareness as an officer and gentleman who interacted with other men on a more personal and intimate level. In addition, the difference between Greenman earlier entries and later entries also indicated a shift in values. By keeping track of the individuals with whom he associated, Greenman showed how he valued and respected rank as he became a member of the officer corps. The experiences of both Gilbert and Greenman highlighted the contradictions between the cultures of soldiers and officers. In assuming their new positions within the officer corps, they were also expected to adopt the behavior of gentlemen and conform to the ideals of respect, honor, and valor. These two examples illustrate the essential differences between the development of friendships as soldiers versus as officers as evidenced by their changing behavior and sense of values.

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⁹¹ December 7, 1780 and April 3, 1782, *Diary of a Common Soldier*, 188, 246.

⁹² May 26-31, 1776 and January 22-31, 1776, *Diary of a Common Soldier*, 28, 24.

The different models of friendships officers and soldiers supported throughout the war provide an opportunity to examine emerging conceptions of masculinity as well as social distinctions. These two factors were integral to the experience and expression of friendships for both officers and soldiers, alike, and influenced the types of standards upheld by the two groups of men. Male sociability among officers and soldiers and subsequently their friendships evolved in different manners and resulted in two forms of male friendship. Nevertheless, both groups of men recognized the value of these relationships for providing companionship and familiarity in the new environment of the military in the midst of the turmoil of warfare. Embracing the status of gentlemen, officers sought to uphold the standards of gentility and civility through their sentimental friendships within the officer corps. In addition, officers embraced formal associations, like the Freemasons, and planned activities to create opportunities for male sociability within the environment of war by replicating elite genteel culture outside the military. Soldiers, on the other hand, capitalized on a sense of camaraderie fomented by their common experience to form communities established on their new friendships which highlighted their belief in the ideals of loyalty and an adventurous spirit. Following the end of the war, these men were often satisfied to their former communities and settled into their old lives and friendships. Overall, the different models of friendship resulted in an experiential difference within the Continental Army in which officers developed friendships in formal settings on a more intimate level than the soldiers who bonded with one another through their common experience on a much larger scale.

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