

American Martial Culture and Revolutionary Success: Analysis of the Impacts that Martial Culture had on the People and Leadership of the Revolutionary War

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I. Introduction

The American Revolution was a bloody conflict between the British government and their colonists that ushered in the start of a new constitutional government known to the world as the United States of America. While many people know and discuss such the topics of Washington's troops crossing the Delaware and the colonist's disposition towards taxation, one thing that is often ignored is the martial culture that imbued the colonists lives on the frontier. To discuss this history of the martial culture and its impacts on the United States development, we will be examining several key historians. We will be examining the works of John R. Alden, Fred Anderson, Robert Gross, Don Higginbotham, Gregory Massy, Samuel E. Morrison, Edmund Morgan, Jim Piecuch, John Shy and Steven Siry. To understand their significance, we must look at how they contribute to the historiography.

When examining the colonists' martial culture, we will be looking at Fred Anderson's *A People's Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years' War*, which follows the lives of the Massachusetts colonists and their experiences with the British Regulars in the Seven Years' War. Robert Gross's *The Minutemen and their World* focuses on the colonists of Concord and what led to their eventual uprising against the British Government. John Shy's *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American*, that focuses on the causes of the Revolution from the people's perspective, the colonial and the British leadership to paint a detailed account of the conflict. Edmund Morgan's *American Slavery, American Freedom* which examine the colonists of Virginia and the struggles they experienced establishing the

colony. John R. Alden with *George Washington: A Bibliography* and Don Higginbotham's *George Washington and the American Military Tradition* take a look at Washington's path from a young man to commander and Chief of the Continental Army. The historians Gregory Massy and Jim Piecuch in *General Nathaniel Greene and The American Revolution in the South*, and Steven Siry in *Greene: Revolutionary General* examine Nathaniel Greene and his legacy from a Quaker colonist to the General leading the Southern branch of the Continental Army. Finally, we look at historian Samuel E. Morrison's *A Sailor's Bibliography: John Paul Jones* to understand how John Paul Jones went from a Scottish merchant to a Naval General in the revolutionary war.

There are several questions that must be asked when discussing martial culture. The first question we must consider is, how important martial culture was to the populations of the north American colonists, and how did it shape pre-Revolutionary society and politics? This question is important because it shows us how martial culture helped to mold the colonists and how it led them to fight for independence. Martial culture is the idea of a cultural movement built around warfare, using violence and military organization in order to protect and advance their society. In order to prove that this is a viable definition of martial culture, we have to look at Early American societies like New England and Virginia. While it is important to look at the political sentiments of the colonists, we can also assume that martial culture influenced their decision with its impacts on the economics, religious, and family structures. Deciding to turn on their British leadership was not a sudden act of democracy, but rather an amalgamation of martial culture on these societal structures.

The second question that we must ask is how did the military leaders of the Revolution integrate their own martial culture into a new American martial culture? We will look at the pre-Revolutionary experiences, military training, fighting techniques, wartime experiences, and

contributions of George Washington, Nathaniel Greene and John Paul Jones. In order to illustrate these contributions, we will start on the Northern front, following Washington, the Commander and Chief of the Continental Army. Then we will look South to Greene, a Quaker with no prior war experience who broke from tradition in order to join the revolution. Finally, we will be Paul Jones, a naval general who used unorthodox methods of defeating the British navy.

Alongside the secondary sources, I will be using a variety of primary sources in order to answer these questions. Three data tables from the Historical Statistics of the United States database, “Poor relief expenditures in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York: 1700–1775”, “Value of imports into and exports from England, by colony or locality: 1693–1791” and Population, by race and by colony or locality: 1610–1780” will be used to show how martial culture impacted the different sectors of society. I will also use letters addressed to and from these Generals in order to elaborate on their experiences within the war.

II. Martial Culture in Early America

While it is important to define martial culture, we must also verify it with an examination of the historiographical conversation on the topic. I will be examining three historian’s observations of Early American society. The first historian, and one of the older pieces that I will examine is Edmund S. Morgan in *American Slavery, American Freedom* that focuses on Virginia colonists in the 17th century. Morgan states that the colonists felt that they were spared from slavery when, “[in 1756] British troops turned back the French... paptists and [Native] savages.”¹ When the threat of French and Indian warfare was removed by the British forces, the Virginian colonists feared that they would lose their autonomy and become economic slaves to the system. As a colony involved in warfare, they felt that without their threats they would become economic slaves when the British Parliament started increasing taxation, “Twenty years

later the people of Virginia were again in peril... through the devious method of Parliamentary taxation.”² If we look further back to when the Native Americans and Virginians first started coming into contact with each other, we can see that there was conflict when the British disrespected their lands, “[in March 22, 1622] warnings could not be spread fast enough through the straggling settlements to prevent the massacre of 347 men, women and children.”³ This led to the massacre of countless Native Americans as the colonists proceeded to take revenge on the Native communities.⁴ With a long history of combat with the French and Indians, we can assume that martial culture is a society that focuses on the aspect of military or warfare. In order to verify this definition, we have to look at another historian Robert Gross who focuses on Concord, Massachusetts.

In *The Minutemen and Their World* by Robert Gross, states that the people of Concord were not strangers to warfare. He mentions that Concord was a major hub of operations for warfare against the French, “[Concord] was a hub of communications and one of the trading centers of the province. In all the old colonial wars against the Indians and the French, provincial military expeditions were frequently launched from the town.”⁵ War was a time-honored tradition for these people, “war had engaged nearly every generation of Yankees since the founding of Massachusetts in the 1630s.”⁶ He also mentions that, “it had taken colonists nearly a century to advance even thirty miles above tidewater, and, in some areas Indians remained a formidable threat.”⁷ In a similar fashion to Morgan, Robert Gross shows that the colonists of Concord were engaged in military activities since the beginning of the settlements. Having the constant threat of warfare and harsh environments impacts and shapes these communities into tightly knit communities that rely on each other’s protection. While the constant threat of invasion and war can explain the warlike mentality of the colonists in the Chesapeake Bay and

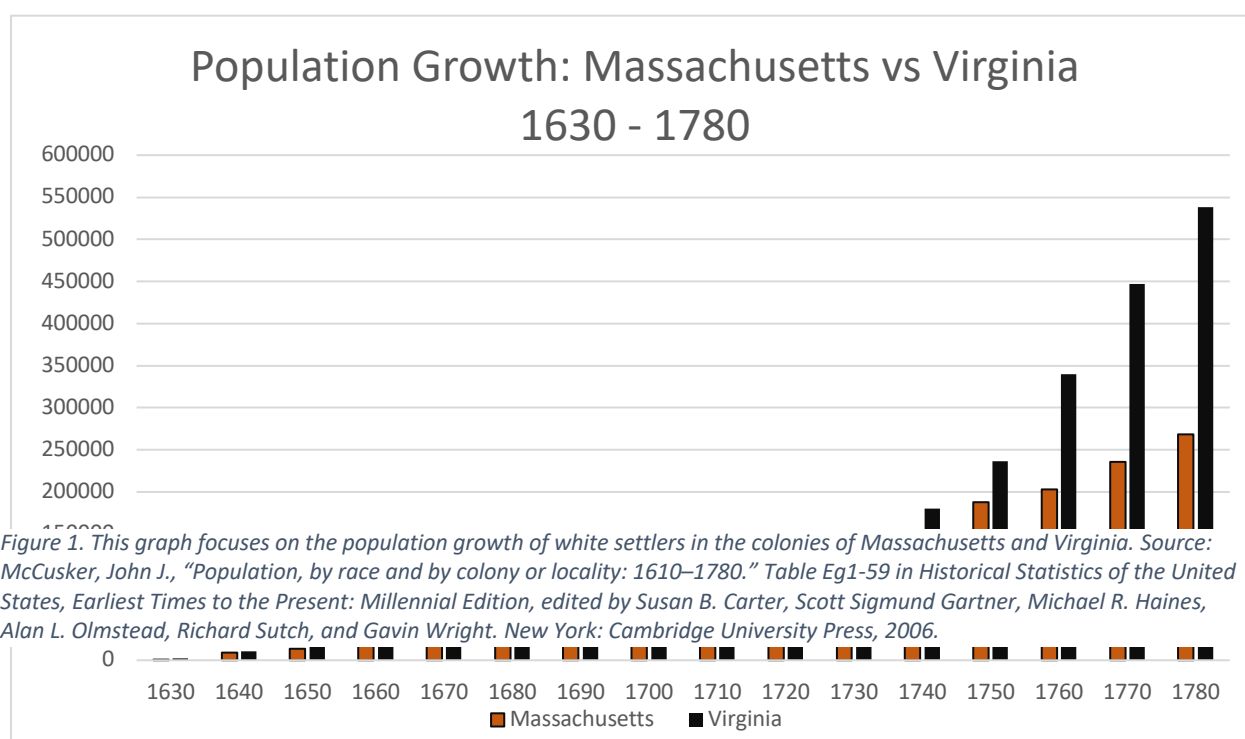
New England, we need to go to Fred Anderson's work in order to understand what led to conflict with the British government.

In *A People's Army and its World*, Fred Anderson examines the martial culture of New England through the Seven Years' War the last major conflict between the French and British forces in North America. As Anderson points out, there were, "four successive spasms of violence, named in honor of three monarchs and a royal governor, had dominated public affairs in the province since the late seventeenth century."⁸ Anderson later mentions that, "Military service, especially when it occurs under harsh conditions, tends to promote a powerful sense of camaraderie among soldiers, a camaraderie that is perhaps the strongest emotional bond they have formed outside their family origin."⁹ However, this was not the case during the Seven Years' War. While the provincial armies and the British regulars worked closely together during this conflict, the colonists had a rivalry with the redcoats. While they should have been closer because of the common experiences, they felt, "the desire to prove themselves the equals of the redcoats in strength and skill."¹⁰ The martial culture of the colonists put them in a position where they could sense that they were different from the British regulars. It created a rift between these groups during the Seven Years' War, which led the colonists to not trust the British. While this was a problem, the martial culture also benefitted the colonists because it made integration back into society easier for them.¹¹ Their martial culture allowed for this transition because of its unique organization and structure based on conflict. Now that we know what martial culture is, we have to understand its importance to the pre-revolutionary society.

III. Martial Culture and the Early American Society

In order to determine how it helped shape the culture of the pre-revolutionary society, we have to understand what is happening during the period leading up to the Revolution. As John Shy mentions in *A People Numerous and Armed*, a growing population created strains within the colonies.¹² See Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows the Massachusetts Bay colonies growth compared to Virginia the largest colony, to show how quickly the population growth expanded. While the rapid increase in population in Virginia can probably be accounted for with the increasing importation of slaves,



these areas were still becoming more crowded and harder to distribute land. Another major issues that Shy mentions is the fact that, “there were... two views of the imperial constitution: the one prevalent in America emphasized the equal rights of all Englishmen, whereas the other, held widely in Britain, stressed the necessary subordination of colonies.”¹³

IV. Politics and Martial Society

Politics, like many of the structures of these societies were lined with conflict, but most colonists could agree that they should maintain a form of autonomy in their political systems. Morgan discusses the Virginia colonies views on English freedom as, “paradoxically, to be as free as possible from interference by England.”¹⁴ Where they had the last say in what happens with their government, keeping outsiders away from their political systems. Gross on the other hand, talks about the internal discourse that helped unify the colonists when it came to deciding on joining the Revolution. In order to do this, he tells a story about the growing conflict growing between those closer to the center of Concord, and those who lived on the outskirts, “With town government affecting so much of daily life, no New England Community could not escape political conflict.”¹⁵ He brings up the notion that the colonists did not want to separate from their government and considered themselves loyal to the Crown, but needed to unify in order to protect their rights.¹⁶ These two interpretations of the political motivations are reinforced by Andersons analysis of the conflicts between British leadership and colonial leadership during the Seven Years’ War. Anderson states that the regular officers did not understand the customs and expectations that the provincial soldiers had coming into service, causing them to view the colonists in a negative light.¹⁷ The colonists wanted to maintain their power to govern themselves, they did not trust outsiders to be fair. While politics played an important role in convincing colonists to turn against England, it was not the sole reason for the martial society to consolidate their strengths in order to defeat the superior British forces.

V. Martial Culture and the Economy

The first example of martial culture influencing the economy in early American society takes place in Virginia through slavery. Tobacco, the main cash crop of Virginia, was extremely profitable. However, it was not without issues, in the early years it was also susceptible to damage during transport.¹⁸ Morgan mentions that Virginia originally started with indentured servants, only moving to slaves because it was more cost effective, “the [men] who could afford to operate on a larger scale, looking to the long run, bought slaves as they became more profitable and as they became available.”¹⁹ However, the indentured servants were also exploited heavily by this system, shipped to the colony in order to drive profits.²⁰ See Figure 2.

The Chesapeake Bay was extremely profitable compared to New England, except during the Revolutionary War where shipments were greatly reduced. While servitude and slavery helped provide many white settlers with a way of cashing in on the fertile land and popular products, it was also a driving force in convincing colonists that their lives were about to change



after the threat of French forces were eliminated. This fear was developed because of the harsh treatment of slaves, where colonists felt that they would be treated similarly to their captives.

Unlike Virginia and the Chesapeake, New England did not have a large slave population. However, as Gross points out they still made profits from the exploitation of African slaves through the slave trade. As English colonists, some may argue that there was no threat of them ever being forced into the same conditions as the slaves these colonies exploited, but Anderson brings up a major point to contest this idea. During the Seven Years' War, the British leadership and regulars were considered extremely violent with, "aggressiveness [as] the final touch in the provincial's portrait of the redcoats."²¹ They would also force some provincial soldiers to work past their agreed upon terms of contract, even after the war had ended, "After the defeat of the French... the redcoats were intentionally detaining the provincials in Canada 'to get all they possibly can out of us before they dismiss us'."²² Since the colonists were a part of a society where violence and war were the norm, they felt that their own exploitation was the next logical step once the French were out of the picture. While it could be seen as an exaggeration of the events, the colonists projected these fears because of their society's norms.

Robert Gross also mentions that the people of Concord faced a similar issue as these early Virginians, "since the mid-1770s the all-important West Indian market for Yankee livestock, lumber, fish and rum had been slackening, and Concordians, along with the rest of New England, inevitably felt the pinch of hard times."²³ These hardships created a culture of temporarily unemployed men, who would join the militias in order to save up money before they gained their own land.²⁴ One common theme in the economic structure of the colonies was the persistent idea of economies that were strained, and that they were exasperated by the new tax laws put into place by the British government. Anderson states, were the result of, "[The Seven Years' War that] would drive taxes to the highest levels in history of the province, create massive public debt, and bring the government to the brink of bankruptcy."²⁵

One problem he notes about the economy is that, “demand was seldom intense enough to permit many Bay colonists to specialize in the production of goods for the market.”²⁶ Anderson

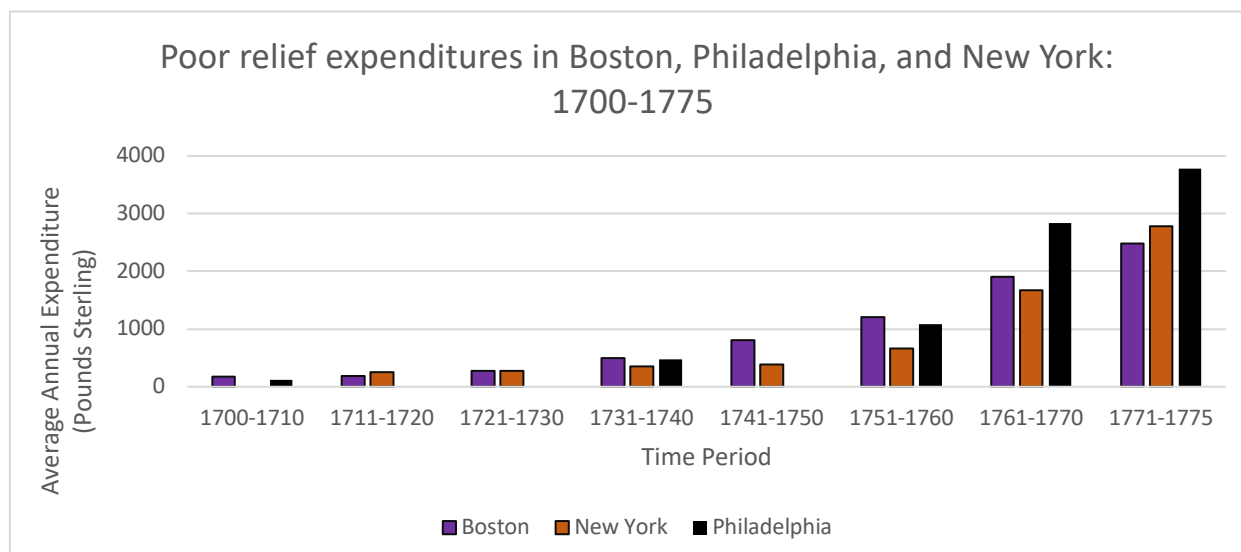


Figure 3. Shows the amount of Sterling silver that the British government needed to spend in order to assist poor colonists
 Source: Ziliak, Stephen T., “Poor relief expenditures in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York: 1700–1775.” Table Bf8-16 in *Historical Statistics of the United States, Earliest Times to the Present: Millennial Edition*, edited by Susan B. Carter, Scott Sigmund Gartner, Michael R. Haines, Alan L. Olmstead, Richard Sutch, and Gavin Wright. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. <http://dx.doi.org.libproxy.csudh.edu/10.1017/ISBN-9780511132971.Bf1-187>

points out that although the number of poor were increasing, they were not treated the same as the temporarily unemployed men of the Bay Colonies, “local villagers did not regard them in the same light as the young men we have been discussing – even though they were equally bereft of property.”²⁷ He also mentions that age was a major factor in peoples standing within society.²⁸ This shows that although many people may have been suffering from economic hardships, they kept an organization in society dividing the poor from those they expected to inherit money. This is why Gross states that, so many communities “protected” themselves by warning poor people away, because they felt that they needed to defend their towns from accepting the burden of someone that they felt would not work.²⁹ You can see the influence of martial society because everyone had a sort of rank and file based on age and wealth, where, “many men did not attain full standings in their communities until they were in their forties.”³⁰ See Figure 3.

Figure 3 shows that the British government had to start helping more and more communities with the growing poor populations. These numbers were steadily rising throughout the 18th century until the Revolution. These communities felt the need to protect themselves from the burden of others, because they felt that they would take away from the already limited resources of the colonists. They did not want to risk allowing too many outsiders because for these colonists, their tightly knit communities were extremely important to their survival. They were willing to fight in order to ensure that their own were protected from suffering a similar fate than those they saw roaming through the colonies.

VI. Martial Culture and Religion

Religion is the next major societal organization that was impacted by the martial culture of the colonies. Religion was extremely important to a lot of colonists, especially those living in New England. Gross mentions that people would weather dangerous temperatures in order to make it to sermons, often times being unable to traverse the roads due to snow.³¹ Concord had a major problem with people from their outskirts wanting to be free from paying for the minister, or hiring their own because of these difficulties.³² The colonist's devotion to religion was tested during the Seven Years' war, where the British regulars were crude and did not practice faith. During this conflict with the French, the colonists felt that they were on a mission from God, "identifying the French King with [the] Antichrist."³³ They were on a crusade to purge the French influences in North America, and started discovering the cultural rifts between themselves and the British.³⁴ They had determined that the redcoats were morally deficit, creating mistrust between the groups as conflicts grew leading up to the Revolution.³⁵ This was due to the fact that many of the men who served with these British regulars were the same ones that took up arms against the British government. People were willing to fight with their own

neighbors over religious belief, when they find that the British did not hold the same beliefs, they treated them as a threat to their way of life. This goes back to the idea that they needed to follow their martial culture in order to protect and maintain their beliefs and systems.

VII. Martial Culture and Family

The third major structure of the colonist's society that was important to the development of the martial culture was family. Death was often an expected outcome for many colonists who felt the strain of providing for their families, and defending their communities. Morgan shows that 17th century Virginia was extremely different than New England society when it came to family ties. Men were more likely than women and children to die from the environment, that wealth was distributed to the widow.³⁶ Because of this unique situation, "women were too rare in Virginia to be left for long without husbands."³⁷ Unlike New England where land was passed down from Father to son. The distribution of this land was used as a method of controlling his children, "[until] there were simply too many sons and not enough productive land for all."³⁸ This created a growing power struggle between young adults looking to start their lives and their parents who would need them to help on the farms. Land was not the only importance of family though, Gross states that family bonds were often used to, "reinforce a soldier's obligations to follow orders."³⁹ As Anderson also points out, "Rather than a uniform hierarchy of officers and men, a provincial army was in fact a confederation of tiny war bands, bound together less by the formal relationships of command than by an organic network of kinship and personal loyalties."⁴⁰ This was important to raising militias and keeping the strength of New England because the soldiers and officers were not just fighting for England, but they were fighting for their own flesh and blood. It increased the feeling of unity and discipline because they were of similar social classes.

VIII. Martial Culture of American Leadership

The Revolutionary War was a long hard-fought war of attrition between the American leadership and the British government. The American leadership had an uphill battle to defeating one of the strongest military forces in the world at that time, while maintaining the morale of the troops in order to encourage them to continue the fight. To figure out how they won such a lopsided battle, we must ask how the colonial leadership’s martial culture helped to shape the decisions they made, and how did these leaders add to the larger American martial culture as a whole? We will examine three leaders, George Washington, Nathanael Greene and John Paul Jones. See Figure 4, Generals in Focus.

Figure 4, Generals in Focus: George Washington, Nathanael Greene, and John Paul Jones

<i>General</i>	Birthplace & Year	Age and Rank at enlistment	Pre-Military Career/ Education	Years of military service before the Revolution	Wars Participated	Post – Revolutionary career and Death
<i>George Washington</i>	Born in Westmoreland County, Virginia on February 22, 1732.	Major at 21, Revolutionary General/ Commander and Chief of Continental Army at 43.	Inherited his father’s farm after his death, Land Surveyor	6 years of service, 4 of these years were during the Seven Years’ War.	Seven Years’ War, American Revolution	Farmer, President of the United States. Died on December 14, 1799 at Mt. Vernon farm at the age of 67.
<i>Nathanael Greene</i>	Born in Potowomut, Rhode Island on August 7, 1742.	Militia Lieutenant and Revolutionary General in Continental Army at the age of 32.	Merchant, had a collection of military books that he studied. Raised as a Quaker, no combat experience.	4 months of militia service under the Kentish Guards, joined in October of 1774, was picked to be a General by Rhode Island General Assembly in April 1775.	American Revolution	Debt from pre-revolution and poor investments, became farmer. Died on June 19, 1786 at the age of 44 after experiencing several major headaches on a trip to pay off debts.
<i>John Paul Jones</i>	Born in Arbigland, Scotland on July 6, 1747.	First Lieutenant in the Continental Navy, at the age of 28.	Joined merchant marine, of England at 13. Learned navigation and eventually became Master of a merchant vessel at the age of 21.	No proper military service, used to practice shouting commands with friends, also had an apprenticeship under a naval lieutenant for two years at the age of 15.	American Revolution, Second Russo-Turkish War	Moved to France, Sailed for navy of Catherine the Great in the second Russo-Turkish War. Died on July 18, 1792 in France from jaundice, glomerulo-nephritis and possibly bronchial pneumonia at the age of 45.

Figure 4. Informational table focusing on the lives of George Washington, Nathaniel Green and John Paul Jones. Sources: For George Washington, see Alden, John R. *George Washington: A Bibliography*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1984. And Higginbotham, Don. *George Washington and the American Military Tradition*. Athens: The University of Georgia, 1985. For Nathanael Greene, see Carbone, Gerald M. *Nathanael Greene: A Biography of the American Revolution*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010., Massey, Gregory D., and Jim Piccuch, ed. *General Nathanael Greene and the American Revolution in the South*. Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2012., and Siry, Steven E. *Greene: Revolutionary General*. Dulles: Potomac Books, 2006. For John Paul Jones, see Morison, Samuel Eliot. *A Sailor’s Biography John Paul Jones*. Annapolis: Naval institute Press, 1959.

Figure 4 helps to give readers insight to the Revolutionary Generals, for a quick break down of what these men had to experience throughout their lives. It also helps readers understand the differences between these men, and why it is important that we do not view them as generic

revolutionary leaders, but as individual people. Allowing readers to see the men as regular people also helps to humanize these figures that are often viewed as divine beings in the ethos of American history.

IX. George Washington's Martial Culture

George Washington was in control of the Continental Army, as the Commander and Chief, and leader of the Northern front. However, in order to see how he got to this position; we need to start with his childhood. John R. Alden states that Washington's father died when he was eleven and, "he inherited the Ferry Farm, other real estate and ten slaves."⁴¹ This shows that Washington had to take responsibility of his family's property from a young age, growing up quickly in order to ensure that the farm was ran properly. Alden also states that as an adult he became a land surveyor, "eventually he became a successful land speculator, but he did not confine himself to the collection of fertile land."⁴² Although commanding the farm, and learning to examine land may have given him useful skills, however, it does not explain where he developed his martial skills. One of the first places that we can see where he learned military techniques is when he applied to be an adjutant. Alden says that an adjutant was, "responsible for enlightening militia officers about things military, and they in turn were supposed to train the rank and file."⁴³ However, he also points out that, "no evidence has been found that Washington ever had any kind of military training."⁴⁴ This shows that Washington most likely learned about colonial martial culture through experiences teaching, in the adjutant position, rather than serving in a militia.

One other place that we can see a development of Washington's martial culture is through British military service as a provincial officer. Washington was interested in expanding his prospects while he was an officer and used every opportunity to take on difficult tasks. One such

task was to inform the French to leave the British territory, “learning of the decision doubtless from Colonel Fairfax, Washington asked to be appointed as the bearer of the message.”⁴⁵ Alden wants readers to understand that Washington was to use his skills as a surveyor to also take account of the French forces to relay back to British command.⁴⁶ Unfortunately this exchange renewed hostilities between the French and British in North America, and potentially helped to spark the Seven Years’ War. The final example of military training that Washington learned, was from his service as a volunteer under General Braddock. Washington wanted to increase his chances of being an officer in the British army, however, “learning that Braddock could appoint no officer above the rank of captain by brevet -- higher ranks were filled in London – the Virginian asked to be allowed to act as a volunteer on the general’s staff.”⁴⁷ We can assume that under his command, Washington learned about military warfare and techniques through witnessing them first hand. Even without proper training, he had ample opportunities to learn from others and develop his own leadership skills.

X. Washington’s Fighting Techniques

While there is not much to be examined about Washington’s fighting techniques, we can see that he did not use traditional European styles. While on the way to the Jumonville party, a French military party that he was told to strike, “advancing from all sides, the Virginians were briefly checked by sharp gunfire.”⁴⁸ Unlike the method of facing enemies head on, Washington liked to use the technique of splitting up his party in order to surround and prevent their escape. We can also see his usage of unconventional measures in the Seven Years’ War, when Braddock asked for advice, he had, “urged that the army be organized into two divisions to secure more rapid advance.”⁴⁹ This was not a normal way of advancing onto enemies because it splits your soldiers up when most fighting in Europe would be between large groups. Alden also stated that

while under fire, “Washington urged Braddock to order his men to take cover and fight the French and Indians in their own way but the general had declined to accept his advice.”⁵⁰ He had adopted a style similar to the French and Indians, where it was more advantageous to fight from cover than it is to march on the enemy. This gave him an advantage over traditional European warfare during the Revolution, because he was more likely to accept the usage of unconventional methods.

XI. Washington’s Training

Although we know from Washington’s martial culture that he did not have traditional military training, we can see where he might have learned military methods through his experiences. While in the Seven Years’ War, we know that he had advised Braddock, “it was extraordinary that a veteran British commander should accept the argument of a young man whose martial experience was so limited.”⁵¹ He most likely learned from this experience, assisting with commanding an army. Plus, Alden says that although he had, “not commanded a large body of men in the Seven Years’ War; nor had he won a great victory”, he was considered the only choice for leading the colonists in the Revolution.⁵² Although there were more qualified choices like Charles Henry Lee, Washington was most likely picked due to, “his ability to withstand the strain of warfare.”⁵³ They also felt more confident with him being the leader, “because the Continental Congress had found its initial trust in Washington not only confirmed but strengthened, the delegates were more willing to risk the uncertainties of declaring their independence from Great Britain in the summer of 1776.”⁵⁴ Washington commanded respect with his demeanor, and this helped him during the Revolution.

XII. Washington’s Experience in the Revolution

Although Washington was the commander of the army in the Revolution, he still faced problems as a leader. One major problem he faced was the lack of a real military body, “Inheriting the vague semblance of an army outside Boston, Washington struggled to create a real one, without too much success.”⁵⁵ He had expected these men to be ready for war and well trained, but this was not the case. Alden states that what Washington experienced was, “that the Yankees were not what he had expected them to be... he saw instead men who bore a strong resemblance to those he had led to battle in his youth.”⁵⁶ Along with men that were not ready for warfare, he had a problem with the colonist’s feelings about the militia forces. Don Higginbotham mentions that, “Americans had always believed that militia composed of upstanding citizens were most trustworthy than professional soldiers, who were seen as the dregs of society.”⁵⁷ However, even with these major setbacks, he had one thing that helped him train these men. Higginbotham states that Washington, “continued with the Revolutionary army to show the ability to win and hold the respect of men who served under him, there has been a tendency to term Washington a charismatic figure.”⁵⁸ This was an important quality because he needed real soldiers to enlist since, “the militia moved too tardily to execute their assignments --- demonstrating the wisdom of Washington in refraining from using them in the vital center of his army.”⁵⁹ Washington was tasked with gaining the loyalty and respect of his soldiers in order to prevent them from being demolished by a more well trained military. He had to convince the colonists that a standing military was useful, when militias were the norm.

XIII. Washington’s Contribution to the Larger Martial Culture

In term in contributions to the larger martial culture of the United States, there are several major points that we must examine. The creation of the Continental Army, bringing discipline to the colonists, and surrendering power after the Revolution was over. While Alden states that,

“Washington had not hitherto displayed much military ability except for a vital willingness to fight”, it can be argued that he had brought a lot to the colonist’s forces.⁶⁰ As Higginbotham states, “[Washington] knew that in colonial America there was an enormous gap between the theory and the reality of the militia.”⁶¹ Which is why he established a real army, he knew that without a well-trained force, the colonists could not win the war. One way that he made sure to make these men battle ready was through military training. Higginbotham felt that, “Washington never wavered from his old conviction that discipline was the soul of any military organization.”⁶² George Washington himself sent a General Order, stating that, “It is required and expected that exact discipline be observed, and due Subordination prevail thro’ the whole Army, as a Failure in these most essential points must necessarily produce extreme Hazard, Disorder and Confusion; and end in shameful disappointment and disgrace.”⁶³ Without discipline and order, his troops would not stand a chance. The final contribution to American martial culture is the peaceful relinquishment of power, when the war was over, he gave up command, “There remained the matter of his own discharge... the united states must maintain an army, but he was determined not to lead it.”⁶⁴ This is extremely important because it set a precedent of allowing a peaceful transfer of power, rather than create a monarchy like England.

XIV. Nathanael Greene’s Martial Culture

The next leader that we will examine is Nathanael Greene, who was one of Washington’s Generals, that commanded the Continental Army in the South. Gerald E. Carbone mentions that Greene was from a Quaker family, “and had not fought in the French and Indian Wars.”⁶⁵ While Quakers were usually peaceful people, he decided to join the Revolution was due to outrage of his ship being affected by the Navigation Acts.⁶⁶ He was losing money from the taxes brought about by the Acts and felt that it was impeding on his rights as a British colonist. He ended up

going to Boston in order to get a gun, so that he could start training for a potential Revolution, “this would have been a black-market transaction, not something to be set on paper.”⁶⁷ Due to his familial traditions, and lack of military experience, his martial culture was developed in adulthood.

XV. Greene’s Fighting Technique

Greene used a specific style of fighting in order to deal with Cornwallis in the Southern front of the War. He would use a technique of dividing his forces to surround the British, “although Greene knew that the partisans were potentially unreliable, he recognized that they were essential to an overall strategy against the British.”⁶⁸ He would split his troops into different groups in order to surround the enemy forces and overwhelm them from multiple sides. Carbone mentions that Greene and Cornwallis were, “like boxers circling in search of an opening they continuously camped near each other looking for the right conditions to press an attack.”⁶⁹ Greene had to adapt his forces to deal with the threat of Cornwallis’s superior force in order to mount an advantage. There was no way that he would have been able to face Cornwallis head on, so he kept his troops on the move. In order to understand why he adopted such a mobile fighting style, was have to look at the training he acquired.

XVI. Greene’s Training

Although Greene did not have a lot of training compared to some Revolutionary Leaders, Steven E. Siry mentions that as a young child Greene, “eventually had a library of more than two hundred works on a wide range of topics, including numerous books on military science.”⁷⁰ These books may have given Greene some technical knowledge on the art of war and how to maneuver his troops. It may have also given him some insight on the risks and benefits of certain fighting styles. Although the books may have helped, most of his training also came from his

time in the Kentish Guard, a military company that was supposed to support the local militia.⁷¹

Carbone states that he hired, “a British deserter to come and work as a ‘drill master’ for the newly formed militia.”⁷² This militia training was important because it showed him how to lead men and give orders, something that he would not have been able to learn from books alone. Unlike Washington who served in the Seven Years’ War, or John Paul Jones who ran a ship, Greene did not have these experiences. Besides the militia training, he also served under George Washington’s command in the Northern army as a general and advisor, “at thirty-two he was the youngest general in the Continental Army.”⁷³ He may have picked up some techniques from Washington in order to command a larger force than just a militia, he could have also picked up some of Washington’s style of using small forces to act strategically. All of these small factors could have been an integral part of Greene’s success as a General, he went from a non-military civilian to a key player in the war over the South.

XVII. Greene’s Experience in the Revolution

Nathanael Greene was put in charge of the Southern branch of the Continental Army. One issue with this is that, “the southern theater had proved a graveyard for the reputations of most of the generals who had commanded there.”⁷⁴ They were not having much luck facing British Generals such as Cornwallis and it seemed as if Greene would suffer a similar fate. Carbone points out that Greene, “through the entire month of February 1781 and well into March, [he] never took off his clothes, not even to sleep or bathe; he did not even change his shirt... he was too busy, too aware that as he dogged Cornwallis’s troops, they might attack him at any moment.”⁷⁵ Unlike Washington who would be able to cross a river, or John Paul Jones would could move away from enemy ships, Greene was deep into enemy territory. However, this does not mean that he was not prepared, prior to this position, he had served under Washington, “the

previous five and a half years of service on and off the field.”⁷⁶ So he had some experience that would prove useful in the South. He also had the issue of being able to get supplies for his men, “Greene asserted that those people who believed corruption was the principal reason for the army’s supply problems had no understanding of the difficulties involved in logistical operations.”⁷⁷ Greene knew that this would be an issue, so in order to help his supply lines he told his troops not to raid civilians in order to gain their favor.⁷⁸ Greene knew that he would have to call upon the help of civilians when supplies were short, Nathanael realized the importance of public favor in getting the things he needed.

XVIII. Greene’s Contribution to the Larger Martial Culture

There are two major ways that Nathanael Greene contributed to the martial culture of the United States. One way was with the suggestion of giving out medals in order to boost morale, “Congress eventually adopted, his recommendations that to give medals of valor to officers who had distinguished themselves in combat... would be an inexpensive way to promote morale and to increase the bonds between Congress and the army.”⁷⁹ This suggestion was useful because it gives soldiers something to look forward to, or to work towards. With soldiers leaving the military and not wanting to stay for long periods of time, this might have helped keep certain men from leaving in a quest for valor. However, this was not his only addition to the martial culture. Greene was best known for his maneuvering of troops, “Greene’s greatest innovation during the war for independence was the coordination of the movements of regular and partisan forces in a very mobile style of war.”⁸⁰ This is important because not only was it useful for defeating the British, it was strategically important because it allowed him to split up his forces in order to overcome a larger enemy in the South.

XIX. John Paul Jones ’s Martial Culture

John Paul Jones was a Scottish born Naval General who fought on the side of the United States during the American revolution. He is probably one of the most well-known Naval captains during this period for his feats against the Royal Navy. One thing that we must ask is how did he develop his martial culture, and how does it compare to the other two generals that we are focusing on. John Paul Jones did not grow up with friends or family members who were wealthy, Samuel Eliot Morrison states that he was the son of a gardener, “determined from very young to better his station in society... he did not intend to be a gardener, farmer or fisherman.”⁸¹ Growing up, he would often times go down to the ports in order to study and watch sailors, “[teaching] his playmates to maneuver their little rowboats to mimic a naval battle, while he, taking his stand on the tiny cliff over-looking the roadstead, shouted shrill commands.”⁸² He was persistent on becoming a sailor at a young age, however, he did not have the same opportunities as someone of a higher class. Morrison points out that, “With proper connections and a sum of money our John could have been entered as a midshipman in the Royal Navy but none of his friends had any influence that way, so he was constrained to join the merchant marine.”⁸³ While Paul Jones did not have the same struggle for survival in the new world as the other generals, he still had to push against the barriers of class that he was born into. He could have been like the people of Concord, growing up as a poor farmer, but instead he continuously pushed back against social norms. He had to develop his martial culture without the traditional means of acquiring experience as other American generals.

XX. Paul Jones 's Fighting Techniques

John Paul Jones was known for his ability to defeat ships from the Royal Navy even if it was considered a dangerous and impossible task. As Morrison states, “Paul Jones was an expert at getting the most out of a ship, using the wind to best advantage as we shall see when he maneuvered Alfred, and still more in his battles with H.M.S. Drake and *Serapis*.”⁸⁴ Like other American Generals, he used his environment to his advantage, not allowing for traditional fights. His fighting style can be compared to Washington telling General Braddock to have his men fight like the French and Natives, using cover to protect themselves.⁸⁵ Instead of firing upon British ships from afar and using cannons to win fights, he would bait the Royal Navy into getting close to his ship in order to board. He knew that he was outgunned, so he would often fly the British colors.⁸⁶ In his fight with the *Serapis*, “He knew that his only chance of victory, or even survival, was to disable the rigging of *Serapis* and kill of her crew by musketry and hand grenades, or to take her boarding; and as the British frigate had two covered gun decks, capture by boarding would be difficult.”⁸⁷ He also used strategic methods to protect the ships, he captured. Morrison states that Paul Jones, “now pulled a Navy version of the old fox-hunting trick of dragging a red herring across the scent to draw off the hounds.”⁸⁸ Paul Jones did not play by the traditional rules of war, his fighting techniques were comparable to the other American Generals who had to be tactical in their engagement of the British. Similar to Nathanael Greene would run from the British and reengage when it was safe to do so, Paul Jones would only engage when he needed to. He had to be smart out on the seas because the Royal Navy was hands down better equipped than any American ships. He embodied this American fighting technique of all out warfare, where it was safer to fight up close and dirty, than to allow the British to capitalize on their advantages.

XXI. Paul Jones ’s Training

Most of John Paul Jones 's training comes from his years as a merchant sailor and as a young captain. From the age of thirteen, he signed up to become the apprentice of a merchant marine named Mr. Younger, "for seven years, receiving next to no pay but learning the mariner's profession."⁸⁹ However, this apprenticeship was cut short, after only one summer, when the owner of the ship, "had gone broke and retired."⁹⁰ Instead of letting this discourage him, he jumped on the chance to join another ship, "he went directly from *Friendship* into the slave trade, and at the age of seventeen became third mate of King George, a blackbirder out of Whitehaven."⁹¹ Although Morrison said that he greatly disliked the selling of human bodies, he used this time to train himself, "John learned enough celestial navigation to conduct vessels anywhere he wished."⁹² While some people may have been discouraged and quit their dreams after a severe setback such as this, Paul Jones kept pursuing his goals despite losing his apprenticeship. He embraced an ideology similar to other Americans of not letting his struggles hinder his dreams. He used this time to enhance his skills, similar to how Washington volunteered to work under Braddock in order to continue his training when he retired from the military. This education proved to be one of the most important things that he was taught during his youth in order to sail. When he had left the slave trade and was heading home to Scotland, the captain and first mate of his ship had perished, "and since no one else knew how to navigate, Paul assumed command... the owners were so pleased that they appointed him master for John's next voyage."⁹³ While he did not have proper military training, he was well adapted to sailing. While he did not have proper military training, like Nathanael Greene who was the son of a Quaker, he was well adapted to sailing the seas. He used his skills as a merchant marine, and converted them to the ways of war once he decided to join the Revolutionary cause.

XXII. Paul Jones 's Experience in the Revolution

John Paul Jones involvement in the revolution was due to a series of events that occurred in Tobago. Samuel Morrison states that Paul Jones had a mutinous crew and ended up killing the leader, “the ring leader was in the very act of swinging the bludgeon to strike a lethal head blow when John ran him through the body with his sword, and he fell dead upon the deck.”⁹⁴ While Morrison says that this was not usually a huge issue for a captain to kill a mutinous crew member during this time, Paul Jones was likely to be at risk from the locals.⁹⁵ He had fled to the United States and lived there for a few months before he joined the navy, “it was not much of a navy in which Paul Jones received his lieutenant’s commission, only a haphazard collection of converted merchant ships.”⁹⁶ These ships had little chance against the Royal Navy, who had proper military vessels patrolling the Atlantic. However, he was still able to succeed in combat, one of his greatest feats was taking down the *Serapis*. Paul Jones mentioned in his memoir to Louis XIV that, “in this unfortunate extremity, having to contend with forces three times superior to my own, the *Bonhomme Richard* was in great danger of going to the bottom.”⁹⁷ Similar to the Generals back in the colonies, the American Navy did not stand a chance in a fair fight. Not only where the ships not battle ready, the crews were also an issue that many captains had to work with. Morrison stated that, “Paul Jones and other Captains in the Continental Navy had frequent reason to complain of privateers who enticed their men to desert.”⁹⁸ This created issues because of how strong the Royal Navy was, keeping men would be important to the struggle. If they thought that they could make more money as privateers, they were unlikely to stay with the American Navy. While this was not strictly a naval problem, Captains had to work more closely with their men than the Continental Generals, so having men leave could affect crew morale. Paul Jones also had to deal with a crew that wanted to apply democracy to attacking the Royal Navy. Morrison mentioned that, “Yankee sailors carried their notions of civil government to sea

with them, and felt that the Captain should have called a New England town meeting to decide by majority vote whether or not they should engage a ship or raid a town.”⁹⁹ This upset Paul Jones greatly because he needed his crew to follow his orders in order to maximize damage of British supply lines. While some Generals like Washington gave off an appearance of leadership from their trainings and dealings with wealthy Americans, Paul Jones did not share this quality. He did not have the luxury of being able to command from far away like Washington or Greene, he was on the frontline every time they engaged a target. Even with these challenges, he was considered to be a difficult opponent on the sea, he garnered the respect of his enemies. In a letter about Paul Jones between the Lord Sandwich and Captain Francis Reynolds, the British admiralty had high regard for his skills, “if you can take Paul Jones did Jones you will be as high in the estimation of the publick as if you had beat the combined fleets.”¹⁰⁰ As best said by Morison, “he foiled them and flailed them and make monkeys of them.”¹⁰¹ John Paul public Jones was one of the most notorious Captains in the American navy, making the British forces fear and respect his name.

XXIII. Paul Jones ’s Contribution to Larger Martial Culture

XXIV. John Paul public Jones greatest contribution the American martial culture was through legitimizing the American Navy. He felt that the American navy should be properly kept in order to distinguish themselves from pirates, “Paul Jones, always a stickler for neatness and proper tenue on board ship, [he] convened a group of naval officers at Boston in March 1777 to discuss a change in the uniform.”¹⁰² One of his suggestions for uniforms changes was not only for appearance, but was designed to make

it more difficult for the British to detect on the seas Although his plans for a new blue attire that was similar to the British uniforms were not accepted, he still made sure that his crew looked professional, “the same English man whom we have quoted on the officers’ uniform in *Bonhomme Richard*, reported that ‘the whole crew were clean drest’.”¹⁰³ This professionalism allowed him to be the first General that was able to exchange navy prisoners with Britain who, “allowed Army officers and soldiers to be freely exchanged, but insisted on treating all Americans taken prisoner in privateers or other armed vessels as rebels or pirates who had no belligerent rights.”¹⁰⁴ Morrison points out that in 1779, Paul Jones was able to get back 228 American sailors, something that was, “still irregular and illegal from the British point of view, and not until the spring of 1780 did Parliament pass an act permitting the Admiralty to exchange American naval prisoners.”¹⁰⁵ He was able to have the American Navy recognized by the British, something that had not happened up until that point because he wanted to ensure that the prisoners were released. In allowing this exchange these prisoners of war, it was as if the Parliament actually had to accept the fact that these Americans were their own entity and not just rebels or pirates. With proper recognition from Parliament, Americans were able to be returned home. Today you can still see the impacts of John Paul Jones’ suggestions, through how the American Navy still maintains a dress code for its members.

XXV. Conclusion

We can see from the historians who focused on early American society, that living in the colonies was often a cruel and bloody fight for survival. These struggles helped to form colonial martial cultures that impacted every aspect of society. As the colonies grew, the struggle for

survival became more difficult and pushed the colonists further from the British government. We can see from the data tables that poor relief grew as the population grew, and that shipping did not always indicate economic prosperity for the majority of colonists. As well as being forced to fight in several conflicts in the name of the Crown. However, we can see from multiple historians that the colonists had grown so accustomed to autonomy that even as they were pledging loyalty, they were preparing for war.

The militarization of early American culture created a situation where society was organized around the prospects of violence. Violence drove the growth and expansion of the colonies as well as the answer to their economic woes through the selling of goods. Once their major enemy was defeated, the colonists became desperate when they should have been celebrating peace. They were so focused on the expectations of warfare that they assumed Britain would cause a collapse of their societies, when in reality they were finally being governed properly by Parliament. The American leadership of the Revolutionary war had to convince other colonists to take up arms, in the defense of civil liberties, because of distrust due to a martial culture had protected them for so long. These colonists were coerced into joining the struggle, to put their lives on the line, because as a society that had been continuously fighting for survival. They felt that Britain would take advantage of them if they remained passive, even if they did not fully trust these new leaders, they were still American.

¹ Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1975), 3.

² *Ibid.*, 3.

³ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁵ Robert Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁸ Fred Anderson, *A People's Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years' War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹² John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 122.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁴ Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, 143.

¹⁵ Gross, *The Minutemen*, 11.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁷ Anderson, *A People's Army*, 61.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁹ Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, 305.

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- ²⁰ Ibid., 235.
- ²¹ Anderson, *A People's Army*, 119.
- ²² Ibid., 114.
- ²³ Gross, *The Minutemen*, 93.
- ²⁴ Anderson, *A People's Army*, 28.
- ²⁵ Ibid., 3.
- ²⁶ Ibid., 29.
- ²⁷ Ibid., 35.
- ²⁸ Ibid., 35.
- ²⁹ Gross, *The Minutemen*, 90.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 35.
- ³¹ Ibid., 16.
- ³² Ibid., 16.
- ³³ Anderson, *A People's Army*, 156.
- ³⁴ Ibid., 11.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 141.
- ³⁶ Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, 166.
- ³⁷ Ibid., 164.
- ³⁸ Gross, *The Minutemen*, 76.
- ³⁹ Ibid., 78.
- ⁴⁰ Anderson, *A People's Army*, 48.
- ⁴¹ John R. Alden, *George Washington: A Bibliography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1984), 4.
- ⁴² Ibid., 5.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 8.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 9.
- ⁴⁵ Alden, *George Washington: A Bibliography*, 16.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., 16.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., 34.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 27.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 37.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., 41.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., 37.
- ⁵² Ibid., 112.
- ⁵³ Ibid., 112.
- ⁵⁴ Don Higginbotham, *George Washington and the American Military Tradition* (Athens: The University of Georgia, 1985), 68.
- ⁵⁵ Alden, *George Washington: A Bibliography*, 117.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., 117.
- ⁵⁷ Higginbotham, *George Washington and the American Military Tradition*, 9.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., 71.
- ⁵⁹ Alden, *George Washington: A Bibliography*, 158.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid., 140.
- ⁶¹ Higginbotham, *George Washington and the American Military Tradition* 12.
- ⁶² Ibid., 52.
- ⁶³ George Washington, *This Glorious Struggle: George Washington's Revolutionary War Letters*, ed. by Edward G. Lengel (New York: HarperCollins Publisher Inc.), Kindle Edition, Location 202.
- ⁶⁴ Alden, *George Washington: A Bibliography*, 209.
- ⁶⁵ Gerald M. Carbone, *Nathanael Greene: A Biography of the American Revolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 15.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., 14.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., 15.
- ⁶⁸ Steven E. Siry, *Greene: Revolutionary General* (Dulles: Potomac Books, 2006), 64.
- ⁶⁹ Carbone, *Nathanael Greene: A Biography*, 177.

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- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 9.
- ⁷² Carbone, *Nathanael Greene*, 16.
- ⁷³ Siry, *Greene: Revolutionary General*, 13.
- ⁷⁴ Gregory D. Massey and Jim Piecuch, ed., *General Nathanael Greene and the American Revolution in the South* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2012), 56.
- ⁷⁵ Carbone, *Nathanael Greene: A Biography of the American Revolution*, 177.
- ⁷⁶ Siry, *Greene: Revolutionary General*, 57.
- ⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 48.
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 64.
- ⁸¹ Samuel E. Morison, *A Sailor's Bibliography: John Paul Jones* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1989), 27.
- ⁸² *Ibid.*, 29.
- ⁸³ *Ibid.*, 30.
- ⁸⁴ Morrison, *A Sailor's Bibliography*, 103.
- ⁸⁵ Alden, *George Washington: A Bibliography*, 41.
- ⁸⁶ Morrison, *A Sailor's Bibliography*, 273.
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 280.
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 109.
- ⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 34.
- ⁹² *Ibid.*, 34.
- ⁹³ *Ibid.*, 35.
- ⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.
- ⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.
- ⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.
- ⁹⁷ John Paul Jones, *John Paul Jones' Memoir of the American Revolution Presented to King Louis XVI of France*, ed. Gerard W. Gawalt and John R. Sellers (Washington: Library of Congress, 1979), 33.
- ⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.
- ⁹⁹ Morrison, *A Sailor's Bibliography*, 173.
- ¹⁰⁰ John Montagu to Captain Francis Reynolds, *Letters of John Paul Jones* (Boston: The Bibliophile Society, 1905), 14.
- ¹⁰¹ Morrison, *A Sailor's Bibliography*, 297.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 96.
- ¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 97.
- ¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 205.
- ¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 205.

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