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**Minutemen For Months:
The Making of an American Revolutionary Army Before Washington¹**
April 20-July 2, 1775

General Washington Takes Command of The Army. The scene is engrained into the American mind as one of the key moments of the Revolution, like Washington's crossing the Delaware or Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown. On July 3, 1775, General Washington, clad in a shining blue uniform emblazoned with brass buttons and gold ruffles, gallops under the famous elm tree on the Cambridge Common with mounted escort in trail. As his larger-than-life white horse rears up, the General tips his tri-cornered hat to take command of the army. Many years later, Joshua Slocum, one of the soldiers waiting for the General, recalled the emotion of the moment: 'what must have been the feelings inspired when...for the first time, we were permitted to see, face to face, the great man who, under God, was destined to achieve the Independence of his country, and to lay broad and deep the foundation of this stupendous republic.'²

Recounting the story of that July day to his son, Slocum continued, 'The Commander in Chief, immediately on his arrival among us, commenced organizing the army...which he found in a sad condition, undisciplined, poorly armed and equipped, and to some extent lacking in subordination.' While General Washington's beaming figure dominates the moment, Slocum and his comrades are not absent from the scene. These rag-tag minutemen huddle together in

¹ The author would like to thank Fred Anderson, Bernard Bailyn, Yonatan Eyal, Ronald Florence, Laurel Ulrich, and the members of the spring 2001 Harvard University graduate seminar in early American social history.

² John Slocum, *An Authentic Narrative of the Life of Joshua Slocum: Containing a Succinct Account of His Revolutionary Services* (Hartford: Printed for the Author, 1844), 67-8. John claims to be merely compiling and writing down the stories his father Joshua told him, so it is not clear whether father, son or both have edited the story this way.

undisciplined chaos. They have no uniforms, no guns, no organization and no leader of their own. Their eager faces display their awe at the General's presence, but cannot mask their insubordination or the sad condition of their broken ranks.

Historians have long taken this image for granted. They have accepted the sharp dichotomy Slocum suggests between the militia that fought at Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill, and the Continental Army that General Washington subsequently organized. The first generations of American historians did so to celebrate the achievements of the 'father of our country.' By emphasizing the troubled state of the forces Washington took over, they enhanced the daunting challenge that he faced in his first public moment.³ In recent years, scholars of the

³ I take this notion of historical emplotment from Hayden White, 'The Historical Text as Literary Artifact' *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978). I do not wish to diminish Washington's accomplishments, rather to account for why the period before his arrival has been ignored and discounted by generations of historians. Historians writing about the beginning of the war have focused on three self-contained events: the opening conflict at Lexington and Concord, the Battle of Bunker Hill and Washington's taking command, instead of looking at the more gradual transformation of the Revolutionary forces. As early as George Bancroft American historians have emphasized the chaos of the New England forces Washington took command of in order to enhance the Virginian's reputation. Bancroft, *A History of the United States from the Discovery of the American Continent* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1838-1876), v. 7, p. 321, 388; v. 8, pp. 40-45, labels Washington's predecessor 'incompetent' and goes into great detail on Washington's arrival. Richard Frothingham's *History of the Siege of Boston, and of the Battles of Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1873, 4th edition), like Bancroft's account of the beginning of the war, focuses mostly on the battles of Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill. He writes of Washington's arrival, 'everything about him inspired confidence and hope' and claims that Washington introduced 'subordination into the army' (222-3). Allen French, in the early twentieth century, wrote two books on the Siege of Boston which again enforce the importance of Lexington and Concord, Bunker Hill and Washington's arrival. French does not entirely ignore the contributions of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress to establishing an army. See Allen French, *The First Year of the American Revolution* (Boston: The Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934) and French, *The Siege of Boston* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1911).

While many contributions to the 'new military history' ignore this period altogether in their thematic treatments of the Continental Army, even the most recent narrative accounts of the war follow these nineteenth-century trajectories for the opening of the conflict. Don Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence: Military Attitudes, Policies, and Practice, 1763-1789* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), titles his chapter for this period, 'Militia versus Regulars.' He writes, on page 57, 'When the War of Independence began, there was no American army. During the early hostilities only the colonial militias, especially that of Massachusetts, occupied the field against Britain's regulars.' Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982) contains multiple page accounts of the Battles at Lexington and Concord (266-73), Bunker Hill (281-92), and Washington's arrival and organizing activity (293-304), but little on the nature of the American forces before Washington came. Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1979) likewise implicitly accepts this notion that the American forces in late June were the same that had fought the first day of the war when he writes on page 37 that the 'militia...had proven its competence at Lexington and Bunker Hill.' Recently, in an essay for the Massachusetts Historical Society, Bernard Bailyn has written that following Bunker

‘new military history’ have focused on the difference in order to scrutinize the character and social composition of the Continental Army.⁴ Despite the historiographic reversals, the image has lived on, part of the lore of the Revolution that every school-child learns.

Lost in all of the rhetoric is the fact that by the time Washington reached Cambridge, New Englanders had already created an American Revolutionary army. Contrary to what Joshua Slocum and others would later claim, soldiers at the time, many of whom recorded important activities in their diaries each day, paid little attention to Washington’s arrival. Although he might be ‘destined to achieve the Independence of his country, and to lay broad and deep the foundations of this stupendous republic,’ Washington was still a relatively unknown country squire from Virginia when he arrived in Cambridge on July 2, 1775. Elihu Clark of Connecticut, stationed in the second American camp at Roxbury, made no mention in his diary of Washington’s arrival on July 2nd or 3rd. On the 4th he hired a horse, arranged for friends to carry out his duties and rode all the way into Cambridge. All he wrote of his trip was that he left his ‘hat to be dreped.’⁵ He made no record of Washington at all, let alone the elaborate ceremonies and joyful acclamations Slocum later remembered. Samuel Hews was one of many soldier-

Hill, if the Americans had any hope of success in the war, ‘a leader of great personal force and of great political and military skill would have to be forthcoming.’ Bailyn, ‘Essay on Battle of Bunker Hill’ (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2001, accessed 20 April, 2001) ; available from <http://www.masshist.org/bh/essay.html> ; Internet. Fred Anderson’s article ‘The Hinge of the Revolution: George Washington Confronts a People’s Army, July 3, 1775’ *The Massachusetts Historical Review*, 1 (1999), 21-48, most directly argues for Washington’s importance, but is based on Washington’s own writings (and thus his own assessment of his role).

⁴ Much of the recent literature, beginning with John Shy, ‘A New Look at the Colonial Militia,’ *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., 20 (1963), 175-85 and continuing up to Charles Patrick Neimeyer, *America Goes to War: A Social History of the Continental Army* (New York: New York University Press, 1996) debunks the myth that the fighting in the war was carried about by yeoman-farmers. The most comprehensive account of the character of the Continental Army is Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War*. Royster classifies 1775 as an era of ‘rage militaire’ in which men were eager to fight and needed (and received) little organization and support. I would like to modify that notion by showing how this willingness to take part in an army was carefully molded by leaders of the Revolution and not as haphazard as Royster suggests.

⁵ Elihu Clark, ‘Journal of Elihu Clark, 1775 Apr. 20-Dec. 20’ Force papers, Series 7E entry 17, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Entry is for July 4, 1775. I have left the original spelling, grammar and punctuation in the soldiers’ diaries, although in some cases, where I am working from published versions, the text has already been modernized. Hereafter all dates refer to 1775 unless otherwise noted.

diarists who wrote of July 3rd, ‘nothing remarkable today.’⁶ While several diaries mention Washington’s arrival, they do so in passing, while describing other activities of the day: organizing for parade with their units, serving guard duty, building fortifications and dodging bombardments.

As the diary entries of many soldiers suggest, when General Washington arrived in Cambridge the American forces gathered outside of Boston were no longer the disorganized band of individual citizen-soldiers that amateur patriots and professional historians have long imagined. The Massachusetts civilian and military leaders of the Revolution had already transformed the minutemen who had rushed to defend their neighboring towns on April 19th into a structured, organized and disciplined army. The records of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress (the representative governing body directing the Revolution) and the orderly book left behind by General Artemas Ward (the first commander of the Revolutionary forces) underscore that they did so consciously and actively.⁷ The surviving diaries of twenty-two soldiers, from privates to colonels to chaplains, show how New England men experienced these opening days of the Revolutionary war and became integrated into a new army.

In the twelve weeks following the Battle of Lexington the efforts of civilian and military leaders to instill in thousands of men a will to fight as part of an American army kept these men from going home and kept the Revolution alive. This brief period marked an important turning point between rebellion and revolution, between resistance and war. The enlistment of a paid,

⁶ Samuel Hews, ‘A Journal for 1775’ in *The Military Journals of Two Private Soldiers* (Poughkeepsie: Abraham Tomlinson, 1855), 60. James Stevens wrote ‘nothing hapeng extroderly’ for July 3rd, ‘Diary,’ *Historical Collections of the Essex Institute* 48 (1912): 41-70.

⁷ This, despite Royster’s claims of the weariness of creating a standing army in the ideology of the Revolution, pages 35-40. I do not wish to defend Ward’s tactical or strategic talents as a general. That has been done before by Charles Martyn, *The life of Artemas Ward, the first commander-in-chief of the American Revolution* (New York: A. Ward, 1921). The only other book-length account of Ward focuses on his position in the colonial elite: James Ferrell Smith, ‘The Rise of Artemas Ward, 1727-1777’ (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Colorado, 1990). The best

recruited army, the sole purpose of which was to fight the British Regulars, not defend a home town, signaled a point of no return on the path towards American independence.

This transition from a collection of minutemen companies to a permanent army can be broken down into three rough but distinct phases. In the first phase, which lasted for a week following April 20th, leaders of the Revolution stabilized the crisis and chaos of the immediate response to the outbreak of hostilities and designed the structure for a new army. Next, from the last days of April until the last days of May, officers and soldiers alike seemed to become aware that they would have to remain in their position surrounding Boston for some time to come, and adjusted to more permanent routines and institutions of army life. The final phase, from the closing days of May until Washington's arrival, can be characterized by the new army's first significant fighting with the British and by a series of measures taken to enforce discipline.

In each of these three stages the participants have left behind evidence of three criteria necessary for the existence of an army: first, the establishment of an organizational structure of units and chain of command; second, the carrying out of the practical tasks required by an army—paying and supplying soldiers, building hospitals, guarding and cleaning camp—to name a few; and third, the development of a common sense of belonging to an army. In other words, between April 20th and July 2nd, 1775, an American revolutionary army grew in words, in deeds, and in spirit.

An Army in Words (*April 20-28, 1775*)

Early on the morning of April 19, 1775, express riders alarmed the New England countryside that the British Regulars had marched out from Boston to seize the military stores that colonial rebels had gathered in Concord. While some towns like Lexington and Concord

biographical survey of Ward is Clifford K. Shipton's entry, 'Artemas Ward' in *Sibley's Harvard Graduates*,

received the news in time to muster their companies of minutemen to confront the Regulars, many towns farther from Boston did not receive the alarm for days to come. In the middle of the day on April 19th the news reached the town of Groton. The alarm spread quickly, and the members of the town's two minutemen companies, the rapid response units which had been organized over the previous winter to complement the age-old town militia, gathered to march off to battle.⁸ Amos Farnsworth, a twenty-one year old living at home on his family's farm, served in one of the minutemen companies and kept a diary of his experiences.⁹ Hours after the battle in Lexington had concluded, the company arrived there and watched as the town began to recover from the day's tragedy. Farnsworth 'saw many Ded Regulars' and was shocked when he 'went into a house where Blood was half over Shoes.'¹⁰ Farnsworth and his companions spent that first night in Lexington, and the next day marched to Cambridge, where those colonists who had followed the Regulars' retreat back to Boston had set up camp the previous night.

Farnsworth wrote of his company's arrival in Cambridge: 'there was some men wanted to go to Charlston. I went for one and viewed the regulars and found they was intrenching on Charlston hill.' Farnsworth's brief entry reveals much about the interests and attitudes of the thousands of men who arrived in Cambridge on the days after April 19th. Many, like Farnsworth,

Volume XII, 1746-1750, (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1962).

⁸ Towns had raised militia companies since the earliest days of the colonial period. These companies were composed of nearly all men in the town between the ages of sixteen and sixty served (in theory) as an emergency defense force for the town. Their original purpose was to protect against Indian raids. The minutemen companies had begun in the winter of 1774/5 when revolutionaries believed they needed smaller and quicker forces which could respond to alarms in a minute. Robert Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 70-4.

⁹ Amos Farnsworth, 'Diary: April, 1775-May, 1779,' *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 2d. ser. 12 (1897-9): 74-107. Farnsworth's diary is neither the most extensively detailed nor the most typical of those I have looked at. I have, however, emphasized it in this paper for several reasons. First, Farnsworth is relatively reflective on his own experiences. Second, Farnsworth both responded to the initial alarm and enlisted into the permanent army. Many of the surviving diarists did one, but not both of these activities. Finally, the diary covers many of the major themes and events mentioned more sporadically in other diaries. I have primarily although not exclusively used J. Todd White and Charles Lesser, *Fighters for Independence: A guide to sources of biographical information on soldiers and sailors of the American Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977) to locate soldiers'

who came from the country and missed the first day of fighting, had never seen British Regulars before. They had little idea of what to expect from war, and had a keen interest in scouting out what a European army at work looked like. Farnsworth's entry also shows the irregularity of the forces arriving in Cambridge. Neither his company as a whole, nor individual soldiers, were *ordered* to march to Charlestown and scout the Regulars. They do not even appear to have done this activity together: Farnsworth's language, 'I went for one,' suggests there were many who stayed behind. Acting on individual initiative, Farnsworth and his companions were a far cry from the professional soldiers they watched furiously digging in to a new position. On this first day in camp they more played the part of curious tourists eager to explore a new surrounding.

Farnsworth's informal activity on April 20th followed the pattern of colonial resistance in the previous day's fighting. Historian David Hackett Fischer has corrected the myth that individual farmers single-handedly stood up to the British Regulars at Lexington and Concord. Rather, they fought with their neighbors in minutemen and militia companies. But, there was little order or authority at work. When the Lexington militia gathered on the town green to block the British, they collectively debated whether to stand their ground or to retreat.¹¹ They had elected officers for the company from amongst themselves, but saw no need to follow blindly their command. These were not soldiers following officers' orders, but men deciding whether to risk their lives to defend their town. The Massachusetts Provincial Congress's Committee of

diaries from the period. Of the approximately seventy-five diaries I have looked at, twenty-two cover the time and place in question.

¹⁰ Farnsworth, April 19.

¹¹ David Hackett Fischer, *Paul Revere's Ride* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 188-9. A large literature focuses on the colonial militia and minutemen companies and their fighting at Lexington and Concord. John Galvin, *The Minutemen: The First Fight: Myths & Realities of the American Revolution* (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1989) traces the origins of the minutemen and their roll in the first day of fighting. John Morgan Dederer, *War in America to 1775: Before Yankee Doodle* (New York: New York University Press, 1990) offers a comprehensive survey of the colonial military tradition.

Safety, in theory, directed the overall resistance, but in reality there was little coherence to the colonial fighting. Companies simply went where they thought they might find action.

On the morning of April 20th General Artemas Ward arrived in Cambridge and took command of the colonial forces from William Heath, a Roxbury militia officer who had, more than any other figure, tried to direct the fighting the previous day.¹² Ward, an important local official in his home town of Shrewsbury, a representative to the Provincial Congress, and a veteran officer of the Seven Years' War, was one of three men who had been appointed the previous fall by the Provincial Congress to head the colony's militia efforts.¹³ Ward set up his headquarters in the Hastings House in Cambridge, where the Committee of Safety was meeting. In daily Councils of War with high-ranking militia officers and in meetings with the Committee of Safety, Ward sought to stabilize the chaos around him. It was a busy week for these leaders, and a tense one: at any point they expected the British Regulars to pounce out of Boston by land towards Roxbury or across the Charles to Charlestown and Cambridge.

In addition to preparing for that scenario, they had thousands of men in camp who needed to be taken care of, organized and supplied. Each day Ward issued a series of orders to direct the soldiers' activity. He created a quarantine for possible smallpox cases, posted various guards around the American camps at Cambridge and Roxbury, ordered a newly appointed commissary

¹² William Heath, *The Memoirs of Major-General William Heath* (New York: W. Abbatt, 1901), 24. Ward had been notified of the alarm the previous day at about noon by Israel Bissell, an express rider on his way to Connecticut and New York with the news. As the story has it, Ward was lying in his sick bed when he received the news that morning, suffering from the gallstones. He none-the-less saddled his horse, gathered his supplies, and rode off to join the battle. I do not know where this story originated but it is mentioned in, among other sources, William H. Hallahan, *The Day the Revolution Began* (New York: William Morrow, 2000), 77, who writes, 'In Shrewsbury, Bissel alerted fat, slow-moving Artemus Ward, brigadier general and second in command of the Massachusetts militia. Racked with gallstones, the forty-eight-year-old General Ward struggled from his bed to his feet, climbed into the saddle, and in spite of extreme pain rode to Charlestown.'

¹³ Ward had been appointed second in command. Jedidiah Preble, of Falmouth, appointed first in command, declined the command for reasons of old age and poor health. On Ward's appointment on October 27, 1774, as a field officer, second in command of the militia, see William Lincoln (ed.), *The Journals of Each Provincial Congress of Massachusetts* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, Printers to the State, 1838), 35. Hereafter cited as MAPC.

general to supply the soldiers, organized his headquarters by naming officers of the day, ordered the officers of minutemen units to provide him with daily returns of the numbers of men in their companies and regiments, distributed orderly books to these units to help them organize their men, and established a daily schedule for reveille, parade, and curfew.¹⁴

By April 28th, the orderly book kept by Ward's adjutant began to take on the form it would follow for the rest of the General's tenure. For each date, a password, officer of the day, field-officer of the picket and main guard, and adjutant of the day were listed, followed by specific 'General's Orders' for the army. April 28th, a week after Ward took command, was the first day that his orderly book contained just this standard set of orders with no additional commands, a sign that Ward and the army had weathered the initial storm.¹⁵

Amos Farnsworth's experience in his first week in camp reflected the military leaders' efforts to establish some stability in the army. During these days, he and his company were 'cept in mothon' as he put it.¹⁶ They marched across the Charles River from Cambridge to reinforce the American position at Roxbury. Once there, they responded to an alarm (which proved to be false) of a British attack, and shuffled each night between houses which served as temporary barracks. On Sunday, April 23rd, things calmed down enough that Farnsworth and his regiment were able to 'lay stil in the fore noon' and go to hear a 'fine sermon' in the meeting house in the afternoon. On Monday, Farnsworth went down below the American guards to once again observe the British Regulars, and on Tuesday, Farnsworth wrote, 'in the afternoon we went up to the Generals and received ordars and marched to Cambridge Again.' Each day brought some sort of new activity for Farnsworth and his companions.

¹⁴ Jonathan Ward, 'General Ward's Orderly Book' Artemas Ward Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Microfilm Reel 4, April 20-26. Hereafter cited as Orderly book.

¹⁵ Orderly book, April 27, 28.

¹⁶ Farnsworth, April 22. The phrase applies to his entire first week in camp.

Farnsworth penned a separate diary entry for each of his first few days in camp, but wrote just one combined entry for the next four days, the 26th through 29th. That these four days received just a single collective recording suggests that the action-packed adventures of Farnsworth's first days in camp had begun to subside. Farnsworth was no longer marching back and forth around Boston; life away from home was not quite as exciting and disorganized as it had been those first days. It also hints at the importance of the activity described in the entry: 'Was A Strugling with the offisers which should be the hiest In offist. Finaly Farwell got ordars to List And listed Some And then gined with townshind Company and made out A Company. I myself listed with the rest.' Other surviving records can help unlock this cryptic entry to show how an American army was recruited and organized, at least on paper.

Farnsworth's confusing entry about struggles between officers, companies joining together, and 'listing,' represented the culmination of the Provincial Congress's plans to structurally create an army out of the disparate militia and minutemen companies gathered in Cambridge and Roxbury. In the fall of 1774, when the Congress had broken away from the British colonial government, they had begun to make preparations for military resistance. They gathered military supplies, discussed alternate methods for military training, and organized the militia companies into larger battalions with elected field officers. In the early months of 1775, they began to plan an 'Army of Observation and Defense' to track the movements of the British Regulars. In early April, they prepared oaths this hypothetical army might take, rules and regulations it would follow, and even wrote to the other New England colonies to combine forces.¹⁷ The representatives from each town who served in the Provincial Congress were farmers, not professional politicians, and they adjourned home to take care of their fields on April 15th, planning to reconvene in May to continue planning for this Army of Observation.

It appears from the Congress's records that the members planned to follow a model established during the Seven Years' War, when each year the colonial government recruited armies of Massachusetts residents to campaign alongside the British Regulars. Historian Fred Anderson has described the stages of this recruitment process during the Seven Years War. First, the colonial government selected officers and gave them 'beating orders' to go out to the towns and enlist men. Depending on how many men the prospective officers could sign up, they would be given a different rank. The recruitment process happened in an orderly fashion in the late winter months each year, and in the spring the companies and regiments would gather together and march off for the year's campaign.¹⁸ This system had worked well, but it was a system designed for organizing an army in peaceful surroundings and then marching them away to a distant campaign (the Massachusetts armies of the Seven Years' War fought in New York and Canada, never within the boundaries of Massachusetts). It was not well suited to be enacted in a war-time environment, when rival forces had staked out ground opposite each other surrounding Boston. It was, however, the only system familiar to members of the Provincial Congress. And so, when the Congress rushed back early from its recess and reconvened on April 22nd, this was the plan it enacted.

To begin, the Provincial Congress voted on April 23rd to recruit an army of thirty thousand men, some thirteen thousand of whom would come from Massachusetts, with the

¹⁷ The Congress discussed these issues throughout April, 1775, until their recess on April 15. MAPC, April 1-15.

¹⁸ Fred Anderson, *A People's Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), chapter 2, especially 39-50. As Anderson emphasizes, the Massachusetts soldiers of the Seven Years' War had a firmly contractual understanding of their enlistment. They agreed to fight for a certain period of time, in exchange for a specified salary and a guaranteed list of provisions. If they were supplied with less, or told to fight longer, the soldiers would be quite upset. Many of the representatives who served in the Provincial Congress, including General Ward, were veterans of the Seven Years' War. Those who were not almost certainly had fathers, brothers, or uncles who were. Ward kept a diary of his service in 1758 as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Seven Years War. Artemas Ward, 'Diary' Artemas Ward Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Microfilm Reel 4.

remainder from the neighboring colonies.¹⁹ It also delegated the process of recruiting this army to the Committee of Safety. Meeting in Ward's Cambridge headquarters, the Committee of Safety prepared enlistment forms and delineated the quotas for companies and regiments. Finally, they asked General Ward, other high-level militia officers, and civilian representatives from each county to give them a list of men who could serve as colonels of regiments. The Committee of Safety distributed printed enlisting papers to these prospective officers, who set out to recruit their companies and regiments. Some officers recruited men from the minutemen companies already in the American camps outside of Boston, others visited their home counties to enlist men who had not responded to the initial alarm or who had since returned home. When the officers had filled their quotas of men, they would receive their commissions. Often, however, multiple men from a single town were given these enlisting papers, and tried to recruit the same men into their companies. Moreover, unlike the militia and minutemen companies, which were based on town residence, there was no necessary link between one's town and one's unit in the new army. As a result, frequent tensions developed between these prospective officers over who would rank highest and command the regiment, who would command the companies under them, and who would have the first option to enlist different men.

It was this chaotic and tension-filled process which Amos Farnsworth described when he wrote in his diary of the 'struggling with the officers which should be highest in office' in the closing days of April. In his company, one of the captains, Farwell, got enlisting orders from the Congress, and got men to enlist into his (potential) company. But Farwell did not fill the quota

¹⁹ On April 21st the Committee of Safety resolved to enlist an army of eight thousand men. Lincoln, 'Journals of the Committee of Safety,' *The Journals of Each Provincial Congress*, April 21. Hereafter referred to as COS. The Provincial Congress decided this was not big enough when they reconvened. MAPC, April 23.

of fifty-nine men.²⁰ So, he ‘gined with townshind Company,’ which was one of the minutemen companies from a neighboring town and that put together enough men to make up a full company in the new army. This action already represented a substantial and significant departure from the old minutemen and militia system to a new army. Companies no longer elected their officers; instead, revolutionary leaders appointed them. Men no longer served only with men from their own town but were mixed together with others from around the province. The stakes had been raised from working along-side neighbors in defending a hometown to serving in an army.

Farnsworth closed his four-day diary entry by noting, ‘I myself Listed with the rest.’ ‘Listing’ meant that Farnsworth enlisted, signing himself up to join the permanent army until the end of the year. He no longer voluntarily served as long as he wished, but was contractually bound to serve for an eight-month campaign. He would be paid for his service and supplied with certain provisions. This new process of organizing the army caused tension not just with prospective officers, but enlisted men. Men who in the first week of the war had served under officers from their towns, along-side their neighbors, could be upset at being placed under unfamiliar officers and among strange men. General Ward addressed this complaint with an order of April 27th, that ‘the men that now enlist may be assured that they shall have liberty to be under the command of such officers as may be appointed by the Committee of Safety, until the particular regiments and companies are completed ; and the utmost care will be taken to make every soldier happy in being under good officers.’²¹ Ward’s order emphasizes both his

²⁰ The quota for each company was originally set for one hundred men, the traditional number from the Seven Years’ War. But, it quickly became apparent that this was an unrealistic target so on April 25th, the Congress voted to reduce the size to fifty-nine men. Each regiment was to be composed of ten companies. This caused occasional confusion, as companies were at times formed with no regimental affiliation. The Congress and Committee of Safety had to deal with these incidents as they came up.

²¹ Orderly book, April 27.

awareness of the importance of the enlistment contract, and his recognition of the necessity of approximating ‘normal’ patterns of enlistment under anomalous circumstances.

Farnsworth’s diary entry on this important moment of his enlistment was brief and to the point. He gave no detail of what this process of enlistment was like. A fellow diarist, Abner Sanger, of Keene, New Hampshire, described what enlisting was like for the men from New Hampshire. He, like Ward and Farnsworth had responded to the initial alarm and rushed to Cambridge with his minuteman company. In his entry for April 29th, Sanger wrote:

we are drawn up (viz) Capt. Wymans Company to go & praid on ye grand common by caimbridge common. We & all hampshire forcies are drawn up; colonals and majors are appointed & captain are chosen to be over companies...Major Maclintick or McClure leads the whole band of Hampshire forcies round Cambridge Common twice; yn we are dismissed till 2 o’clock to go to our Qarters & get Dinner. Aftn we meet on sd Common again. We are all drawed up in a four square form to Inlist into the service for the Defence of the Lives & Liberties of America our Propertice &c.²²

Sanger’s entry suggests a ritualized and ceremonial aspect to the enlistment process. His description of companies parading, officers being called off, men marching around the common in two laps and forming a four square to enlist not just into an army, but ‘into the service for the defence of the lives and liberties of America’ reveals a far more orderly process than Farnsworth experienced.

Despite this elaborate display of military unity and powerful evocation of natural rights, not everybody in the American camp enlisted into this new army. On the day after the enlistment ceremony Sanger wrote, ‘this morning the men of Keene Surry & Gilsome that don’t List into the Service get Passes to return home to yr several towns. We set out...’²³ Sanger was

²² Abner Sanger, ‘Ye Journal of Abner Sanger’ *Repertory*, v. 1-2, 1924-7, 113. Entry is for April 29.

²³ Sanger, April 30. While it is interesting that Sanger only wrote on the following day that he had not enlisted into the army, it is also dangerous to read too much into this. Most of the diarists wrote what they did each day, not what they did not do, or what they planned to do the following day. Sanger does not explain why he chose not to enlist. Another example is James Parker of Shirley, Massachusetts who responded to the Lexington alarm but did not choose to enlist. He arrived in Cambridge on April 21st, and by April 24th returned home. In his diary he noted that on April 30th, an officer came by and ‘enlisted 4 soldiers’ from amongst his neighbors. Parker remained a member of the Shirley militia company and was called out briefly for a false alarm in late May. James Parker, ‘Extracts from the Diary of James Parker of Shirely, Mass’ *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 69 (1915): 8-17,

one of many of the men who did not, like Farnsworth, choose to enlist, but instead opted to return home to his family and fields.

The days and weeks after April 19th were indeed a period of coming and going. While men like Sanger returned home after opting not to enlist, other companies recruited throughout New England continued to arrive each day in Cambridge and Roxbury. Even the composition of individual companies changed dramatically. One of the soldier-diarists, Joseph Merriam, wrote his diary in two parts. The first is a list of the soldiers who came and went from his company, and the second a more typical diary of his activities. He noted that on April 19th, his company of thirty men marched from Grafton to Cambridge. Between April 22nd and May 14th, he recorded the men who left his company, and those who arrived to take their places. In this period, twenty-four of the original thirty men in the company left, and only ten new men arrived to take their places. Up until May 4th, most of the men who went home did so, in Merriam's words, 'without leave' while after that, most found replacements. Merriam himself went home on May 14th, and was careful to write down who replaced him.²⁴

While men continued to come and go from the army each day, for Joseph Merriam as for Abner Sanger, Amos Farnsworth, and General Ward, by the end of April, the initial chaotic phase following Lexington and Concord had come to a close. An army had been created, at least on paper, and men were either enlisting into it or returning home. The composition of the army would continue to shift, no longer haphazardly, but in a codified and organized way.

117-27, 211-24, 294-308, transcribed by Ethel Stanwood Bolton. See entries for April 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 30 and May 30, all on page 123.

²⁴ Joseph Merriam, 'Diary,' Manuscript Collections, Boston Public Library, Boston.

An Army in Deeds (*April 29-May 26, 1775*)

When Abner Sanger returned home, the activities he wrote about in his diary show that despite a bout with the chicken pox he quickly returned to the rhythms of daily life, making the rounds in town and working in his fields. So too, from the last days of April until the last days of May, the soldiers in camp began to settle into the routines of military life. In part, the passing of time and the easing of tension at the British refrain from attacks made this inevitable. To a greater extent it reflected the successful efforts of General Ward and other leaders to create a more permanent environment for the newly forming army. As Ward realized that the army would encircle Boston for some time to come, his orders began to focus less on responding to immediate emergencies and more on establishing a safe, healthy and efficiently working military camp. At first, these orders were comprehensive, albeit vague, like that on April 29th, ‘That all officers are to observe how duty is done, and reprimand those that are negligent, or report them to the proper officers, although they may not belong to the same corps.’ Lest any not take this order seriously, he added, ‘That all officers see that the foregoing orders be punctually complied with.’²⁵ Ward’s order required officers to act like officers, and generally enforced the notion of subordination within the army.

Ward also addressed a series of specific problems. He devoted much attention to the physical condition and hygiene of the American camp. With thousands of men all living together, often sleeping in tents, barns and other irregular shelters, and relieving themselves whenever and wherever necessary, the filth and stench of the camp could be unbearable.²⁶ On May 2nd Ward ordered ‘that vaults be immediately dug...that the parade and camp be cleaned

²⁵ Orderly book, April 29.

²⁶ Paul Litchfield, a Harvard student who visited Cambridge from his home on the South Shore in May, was dismayed at the condition of the college, which was right at the center of the American camp. He wrote, ‘Found my

away every day, and all the filth buried.²⁷ Cleaning the camp had cosmetic benefits, but most importantly prevented the spread of disease. To protect the soldiers' water source, Ward established a new guard-post around the main water pump to 'take particular care that no person put any thing into said pump.'²⁸ In addition to cleaning up the camp, if the Americans planned to hold out there for some time, they needed to build proper defenses. On May 3rd, Ward ordered the organization of a fatigue party each day, of four hundred privates with the appropriate officers, to build defensive fortifications. Each morning, they drew tools from the commissary general and followed the instructions of the engineer of the army.²⁹

While some men labored in the fatigue party, others served on one of several guard duties. Each day, officers drafted men from different companies to serve on either the main guard or the picket guard. The former patrolled the external boundaries of the camp; the latter was an on call emergency response force. The men served on guard for twenty-four hour shifts which served the double function of keeping them occupied, and exhausting them to reduce disorder in their free time.³⁰

Cleaning, building and guarding the new camp offered physical protection (both against the enemy and the spread of disease) and comfort. It also created a sense of order, not just to the men's physical surroundings, but their daily schedules. Most men, however, on any given day did not serve on either guard or fatigue duty. To give them some daily activity, Ward, on May 3rd, ordered the entire army to stand in a general parade each day at 10 AM and 4 PM on the

chamber broken up & several things missing.' Paul Litchfield, 'Diary, March 23 to July 19, 1775' Manuscript Collections, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, entry for May 25.

²⁷ Orderly book, May 2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Orderly book, May 3. Originally, the plan was for a fatigue party of two hundred men, but the same day Ward decided to double its size. During this period, the Provincial Congress discussed the appointment of an engineer for the army to oversee the fortifications and construction of defenses. MAPC, April 26.

newly cleaned camp parade grounds.³¹ These twice daily parades not only gave structure to each day, they also displayed military organization and fostered a sense of the army as a whole. Finally, they played an important role in the soldiers' military drill, teaching them to respond to commands and to act in unison. Although the Americans prided themselves on doing away with the pomp and circumstance of the British army, Ward felt they needed some formal training. In the winter of 1774 the Provincial Congress adopted Timothy Pickering's *An Easy Plan of Discipline for a Militia* as the official guide for training the province's militia. Pickering, himself a member of the Provincial Congress, devoted chapters to how men should equip themselves, how they should be taught exercises, and various martial formations and maneuvers. The manual emphasized 'that the men be clearly informed of the Reason of every action and movement.' Referring to the British Regulars, Pickering continued, 'tis the boast of some that their men are mere machines...but God forbid that my countrymen should ever be thus degraded.'³²

Although the American soldiers spent much of their time following these daily schedules of parade, guard and fatigue duties, they could be quite reckless in their time off. Ward, in the first week of May, tried to crack down on disorderly behavior in camp. He repeatedly commanded soldiers not to fire their guns without permission.³³ The frequent echoing of lone

³⁰ Anderson, 79, notes that the Massachusetts armies in the Seven Years' War served similar types of guard duty. Anderson claims that the duties not only added structure while the men were serving guard, but because they lasted twenty-four hours and left the men so exhausted, served to reduce disorder in camp.

³¹ Orderly book, May 3.

³² Timothy Pickering, *An Easy Plan of Discipline for a Militia* (Boston: S. Hall, 1776, 2nd edition, 1775), 9-10. In the fall of 1774, when the Provincial Congress began to discuss military preparation, they chose a 1764 British training method. They later reconsidered and selected Pickering's plan. MAPC, December 8, 1774.

³³ The constant explosions of gun shots through day and night deeply troubled General Ward. Day after day, he commanded soldiers in vain to not 'fire a gun without orders.' He finally declared on April 30 that 'if any guards or regiments hear firing of arms near them, they are to send out immediately to know the persons and the cause of it; and if soldiers without leave, they are to be made prisoners, and a report sent to the commanding officer.' Orderly book, April 30. A chaplain in the camp, David Avery wrote of friendly fire incidents on May 8th, 'Ys day Four guns were discharged in ye camp & endangered men's lives. One out of our window—One at ye Piquit guard. Two others hurt.' Avery, 'A Chaplain of the American Revolution' *American Monthly Magazine* 17 (1900): 342-47,

guns through the night caused accidents, wasted the army's dwindling supply of ammunition, and distracted guards listening for British movements. The gunshots were just part of the disturbance. On May 5th, Ward specifically ordered Colonel Wyman to 'reduce his men to good order, as there have been repeated complaints...of very disorderly conduct.' One cause for this disorder was the excessive consumption of 'spirituous liquors.' Ward prohibited the distribution of rum without his orders, and cracked down on the sale of liquor.³⁴ The latter 'iniquitous practice,' Ward claimed in an order, 'has a tendency to destroy the peace and good order of the camp.' Those who violated this would have their liquors seized by the commissary general 'for the use of the army.'³⁵

Needless to say, rum was not part of the daily provisions supplied to the soldiers. In this period, General Ward and civilian leaders developed a system for effectively supplying the army. In his second day in command Ward had ordered, 'That the Commissary-General do supply the troops with provisions in the manner he can, without spending time for exactness.'³⁶ Now that the initial crisis had passed and the army began to follow daily routines, exactness became a priority. On May 8th, Ward issued a detailed order establishing a schedule for the distribution of provisions to different regiments. The delivery began each morning at five, and was broken into different fifteen-minute segments, continuing until 4:30 in the afternoon.³⁷ A Committee of Supplies, under the direction of the Provincial Congress and the Committee of Safety, requisitioned the necessary supplies for the army. On April 28th, the Congress essentially gave

May 8. Joseph Merriam on May 8th wrote of 'the awful News of a young man...being Shot by a gun that was thought not Charged.' He noted it was 'a solemn warning to the whole army.' On May 9th, Merriam attended services conducted by Avery who gave 'a friendly Admonition of ye Danger we were in from our own Carelessness & earnestly desired ye Solgery to a strict attention to there Duty care & watchfulness.' Merriam, May 8, 9.

³⁴ Orderly book, May 4.

³⁵ Orderly book, May 8.

³⁶ Orderly book, April 21.

³⁷ Orderly book, May 8. Ward also issued an order on May 4 regarding the distribution of provisions.

the Committee free rein to purchase and impress supplies as needed, from tents and straw for men to sleep on to shovels and spears to build defenses.³⁸

While General Ward engaged in a flurry of activity in the first week of May to create a more permanent camp and structure for the army, between May 10th and May 28th he issued no general orders about the organization or function of the army. In fact, for sixteen of these nineteen days, Ward issued no general orders at all, only, ‘otherwise as usual,’ the phrase in his orderly book so reminiscent of the ‘nothing remarkable today’ which runs through the diaries of the soldiers. Ward had settled into the daily routine he had established for the army.

Amos Farnsworth’s diary shows that the patterns of his daily life changed with Ward’s efforts to prepare the army for a more permanent existence. For his entry of May 1st, Farnsworth wrote that he was ‘cawled upon main Gard.’ He ‘marched to leachmors Point stayed there 24 hours And returned back to the Barn Again.’³⁹ Farnsworth’s next diary entry is, ‘Now from Mondy till Saturday night Nothing Material hapned. Did my turns of duty And we mooved A Saturday to a hous Oppersit the Collig &c.’⁴⁰ Farnsworth’s phrase, ‘did my turns of duty’ expresses the repetitive nature of these new army routines. After this, Farnsworth for the most part stopped to record which duty he served: these became part of his life as much as eating, sleeping, or sitting around camp-fires at night. He only wrote down these responsibilities of army life when they disrupted his other plans. For example, on Sunday, May 7th, he wrote, ‘Was upon Piquit this day but got leve to go on the Comon and herd Prayers and Preaching all Day...o this was fine Preaching.’

³⁸ MAPC, April 28. The Congress’s proceedings are filled with debates and resolves on issues related to supplying the army. For example, on May 19, the Congress appointed John Pigeon as the official commissary for the army, responsible for supplying it. In May, the Congress began working out specific daily food allowances for soldiers, but did not complete this until June 10.

³⁹ Farnsworth, May 1.

⁴⁰ Farnsworth, no date. The entry is between entries for May 1 and May 7.

Farnsworth, much more than other authors of surviving diaries, took a particular interest in writing down his religious activities in the army. He also appears to have been particularly devout. Farnsworth really did not want to miss prayers on May 7th, it was more than an excuse to avoid guard duty. Farnsworth's diary, which is otherwise inconsistent, always includes entries for the Sabbath, with details of which preacher (and often preachers) he heard, what their Biblical text was, and often the location of the exercises and some sense of the content of the sermon. For Farnsworth, serving God was no haphazard activity. On Sunday, May 21st, first thing in the morning he 'etended pray on the common.' Then, he 'retired for secret prayer.' At about ten, he 'went to the Chapel and herd the revent Docter Langdon' preach. Later that afternoon, he 'went to the meting house and herd Mr Havery' preach. Weekdays also were full of prayers. In his collective entry for May 8th through 10th, he wrote, 'etended prayers Morning and Night.' These services, as much as parade and guard duties, became part of Farnsworth's daily routine.⁴¹

Providing the army with religion was no less important an administrative task for the Provincial Congress than providing it with gun-powder and food. Within the first week of the war, the Congress and Committee of Safety asked ministers to serve as chaplains for the army. On April 28th, the Committee of Safety appointed Samuel Langdon, the President of Harvard, as the chaplain pro tempore of the army.⁴² Throughout May and into June, the Congress ironed out details on the plans for providing each regiment in the new army with a chaplain, and creating a system by which the province's ministers would rotate through for a few months at a time.⁴³

⁴¹ Farnsworth, May 8-10. Farnsworth also had the opportunity to hear preaching on Thursday, May 11.

⁴² COS, April 28; see also, MAPC, April 26, when the Congress thanked the province's ministers for agreeing to serve as chaplains.

⁴³ MAPC, May 20. The Congress continued through June to work out the exact system of chaplains. See MAPC, May 31 and June 1, 2, 14. David Avery kept a diary of his experience during this period as chaplain of Colonel John Patterson's regiment. Avery marched with a militia company from Western Massachusetts on April 22nd, and arrived in Cambridge on the 29th. He notes nearly every day that he attended prayers with the regiment. He also

While the Congress and Committee of Safety saw to supplying the army with chaplains, it was up to the generals to ensure that their soldiers actually attended the twice daily required prayers and services.⁴⁴

Religion served many purposes in the army. It comforted men facing trying and troubling circumstances. The daily morning and evening prayer services added structure and a sense of time to the soldiers' lives, and provided a sense of continuity with life at home. Religion contributed to the disciplining of the army: pious men would behave well. Religion gave the men motivation, and their service meaning. Finally, these New Englanders believed in a providentialist world order, where pious behavior would promote God's active intervention on their behalf, a critical component of any military success. The sermons they heard were not always focused solely on heavenly matters. On Sunday, April 30th, Farnsworth wrote that a Reverend Goodridge delivered an 'exelent Sermon' in which 'he incoridged us to go and fite for our Land And Contry : saying we Did not do our Duty if we did not Stand up now.'⁴⁵ On May 21st, Samuel Langdon, used his sermon to the troops to, in Farnsworth's words, 'encorridge us to enlist our selves under the Great Jeneral of our Salvation.'⁴⁶ This 'Jeneral' was neither Washington nor Ward. By using the words 'enlist' and 'General' Langdon imparted to Farnsworth and others a direct parallel between enlisting in the new army and serving God's will. Farnsworth was fully convinced that he was fighting under God, and that God was on his

helped men write letters home and visited them in the hospital. Avery, April 22, 29 and May 1, 16. William Emerson, the minister of Concord, kept a diary of his experiences before and after the Battles at Lexington and Concord. He preached to troops at Concord on April 21st, and to the army at Cambridge on April 30th and June 11th. Beginning July 11th, after Washington took command of the army, Emerson served a rotation as chaplain to the army for a week. *Diaries and Letters of William Emerson* (1972, arranged by Amelia Forbes Emerson), 75-80.

⁴⁴ Ward, for example, ordered the fatigue party to attend prayers before setting out for the day's work. *Orderly book*, May 30.

⁴⁵ Farnsworth, April 30.

⁴⁶ Farnsworth, May 21.

side. As he wrote after taking part in a successful battle in June: ‘Surely God fote the Battle and not we.’⁴⁷

Amos Farnsworth’s diary was not the only one to reveal the routine which began to regulate the soldiers’ days in early May. Joseph Merriam, on May 13th, explicitly described the established rhythms of each day, ‘our people are all well; our warlike preparations are going on and many tents are pitched the army is employed thus; a large number is upon guard night and day another party is upon fatigue, or labour and the rest perform duty on the common from 10 to 12 and from 4 to sun set except such as have ben out upon guard all night; prayer at 6...’⁴⁸ The increasingly stable environment for the army did not put an end to extraordinary circumstances. This same day that Merriam described the routine schedule of army life, he added, ‘A young man aged 19 was buried who belonged to bolton who was takend sick of a fever last Monday; was the 2nd that died with sickness in the hospital near us.’

Even though the American army saw virtually no combat in the month after April 19th, soldiers did get hurt or sick, and some died. The cramped and unsanitary living conditions of the camp, where men with little training were constantly handling guns, exacerbated the need for medical care. The leaders of the Revolution directing the army realized this. In the end of April, the Committee of Safety established hospitals for the American camp in houses impressed from Cambridge residents. In May they supplied the camps at Roxbury and Cambridge with chests of medical supplies and determined that each regiment could choose its own surgeon. As with enlisting the army, supplying it, and providing chaplains, it took the civilian and military leaders

⁴⁷ Farnsworth, June 1. Since at least as far back as the Seven Years’ War, religion had given meaning and motivation to soldiers. On the soldiers’ characterization of their efforts in providential terms, see Anderson, chapter seven. Nathan O. Hatch, ‘The Origins of Civil Millennialism in America: New England Clergymen, War with France, and the Revolution,’ *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., XXXI (1974): 407-430, reprinted in Stanley N. Katz, John M. Murrin and Douglas Greenberg, *Colonial America* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1993, 4th edition), analyzes clergymen’s efforts to connect the imperial conflict to religious life.

some time to refine the medical care for the army. Not until June were regular surgeons for each regiment appointed, and thorough procedures for medical care established. These hospitals, like organized religion, contributed to a sense of permanence and stability in the army, while at the same time serving a specific purpose.⁴⁹

Organizing the necessary institutions of army life did much to foster a sense of stability in the American forces, but did not eliminate all of the soldiers' fears. One external pressure on these men, the common fear of British assault and bombardment, likewise contributed to the formation of the army. Jehiel Stewart's diary reflects his obsession with British military prowess. On May 25th he noted, 'this day their was a man of war came in to Boston and they fired the guns they fired about 25.' The following day he wrote, 'they fired about forty of fifting great guns.' And the next day, 'they fired all night till monring they fired great guns.' Stewart's diary is a virtual chronicle of the number of guns fired by the British.⁵⁰ The constant threat kept the men on guard, and reminded them that as generally peaceful as camp life had become, they did share a common enemy.

Leaders of the army, as much as Jehiel Stewart, felt the constant threat of British bombardment. They watched as British transports carried reinforcements into the harbor, and worried that while the British built up their forces, the river split their own army in half. They knew their army fell short of the thirty-thousand-man target they had set, but still had difficulties

⁴⁸ Merriam, May 13. Merriam left the army on May 14th which perhaps explains why he wrote down the daily schedule which had become so routine that most diarists did not consider writing it down.

⁴⁹ MAPC, May 8; June 2, 12, 19, 20, 22, 24, 27, 30; July 1, and COS, April 29; May 4, 7; June 19, 25, 28 among other dates for discussion of establishing hospitals and regimental surgeons. Philip Cash, *Medical Men at the Siege of Boston* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1973) offers an exhaustive account of medical problems and solutions in the year the American army surrounded Boston. Cash divides his account into the two sections: before and after Washington. He, however, gives a good deal of credit to the response of Massachusetts leaders to the extremely difficult health problems they faced.

⁵⁰ Jehiel Stewart, 'Jehiel Stewart his Book' Revolutionary War Pension Files, case number W25138, National Archives, Washington, entries for May 25-27. Another diarist, Samuel Bixby, wrote that when the British fired a particularly large cannon one day at Boston, some soldiers picked up the twenty-four pound cannon ball and carried

obtaining a reliable number. Pressured by the Committee of Safety and the Provincial Congress, Ward repeatedly demanded that his subordinates give him returns of who was in the army.⁵¹ Many of the men who had responded to the initial alarm, by the middle of May, desperately sought to return home, at least temporarily, and departed from the camp without leave. In late April, anxious about the shrinking size of the army, Ward wrote to the Congress demanding they do something or risk leaving him all alone.⁵² In response, on April 29th and again on May 9th, the Committee of Safety mobilized the local militia units to provide emergency reinforcements.⁵³ Leaders realized that they could not trap the soldiers in camp forever, so they designed a plan to give them temporary furloughs if they found replacements from their own town for themselves.⁵⁴ Some men, who could not find substitutes, expressed their reluctant acceptance at being denied leave. On May 11th Joseph Merriam and some of his companions ‘went with our Captain to see ye General & to know wether we may Expect soon to be released who told us he would gladly do it but could not at present.’⁵⁵ Others were luckier. Amos Farnsworth, on June 5th, wrote, ‘my

it to General Thomas, who gave them two gallons of rum as a reward. Samuel Bixby, ‘Diary of Samuel Bixby,’ *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 14 (1875-6): 285-98, entry for June 5.

⁵¹ Orderly book, April 30. The Committee of Safety, on May 20th, reported that only twenty-four thousand men had been raised. Other than this, no exact numbers for the army at different points survive (COS, May 20). As Joseph Merriam’s chronicle of the coming and going of men in his company alone revealed, figuring out the size of the army at any given time could be a difficult task.

⁵² Ward wrote to the Provincial Congress on April 24th, ‘My situation is such, that if I have not enlisting orders immediately, I shall be left all alone.’ Quoted in French, *The First Year of the American Revolution*, 52.

⁵³ COS, April 29, May 9. On May 10th, the Congress considered a partial retreat back from Cambridge, and the Committee of Safety told the regimental commanders to absolutely not allow any men to depart from Cambridge because they were considering a ‘blow’ against the enemies. This may have been a bluff to keep morale high. MAPC, May 10; COS, May 10. Samuel Pierce, a militia officer from Dorchester, wrote in his diary for May 9th, ‘An express came to me from the General, and I got the Company together and marcht of, but we met with interruption that night.’ Pierce, ‘Diary of Samuel Pierce’ in *Dorchester Antiquarian and Historical Society, History of the Town of Dorchester* (Boston: E. Clapp, 1859), 365.

⁵⁴ Orderly book, May 3. Ward’s order forbade men from leaving the army without finding replacements from their own towns as substitutes. Men who had enlisted were not to be dismissed for any reason; and those who had already enlisted into one company were not to be signed into a second. This latter clause seems like a strange order, but given the system in place, makes sense. Officers tried to get as many men to agree to enlist into their companies as possible, and men, unsure which officer might complete a company might not hesitate to enlist multiple times, especially if substitutes were needed. A Connecticut Lt. Colonel, Experience Storrs, wrote on June 6th that he got liberty for some of his ‘men who have been here since the allarrum to return home on furlough of 12 days.’ Storrs, ‘Diary,’ copied by Jas. L. Storrs, verbatim, *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 14 (1875-6): 84-7.

⁵⁵ Merriam, May 11.

Brother Came and took my plase And...I Sot out on my jurney for home...found my parance
And frinds well.’⁵⁶

Massachusetts leaders looked to neighboring colonies to supplement the ranks of the army. Minutemen companies from New Hampshire, Connecticut and Rhode Island had responded to the initial alarm after Lexington, and as early as April 20th, the Committee of Safety had sent circular letters to these provinces declaring it ‘necessary to raise an army’ and asking for assistance.⁵⁷ General Putnam of Connecticut had joined Ward’s Council of War on April 21st.⁵⁸ As Abner Sanger’s diary entry about the New Hampshire enlistment ceremony shows, many of these men had enlisted into the new army. Like Massachusetts, the other New England provinces fell short of the quota set for them, and the Committee of Safety and Provincial Congress repeatedly sent out letters and delegates to other Revolutionary leaders pleading for men and supplies.⁵⁹ Connecticut leaders in particular, although they had a quota second only to Massachusetts, hesitated to send men to Boston because they wanted to defend sea-coast towns like New London and be in a position to protect New York.⁶⁰ The recruits from different provinces were officially enlisted into the ‘Connecticut army’ or the ‘New Hampshire army,’ and were organized and paid by that province. However, they served together as a single American army around Boston. A Connecticut officer, Samuel Richards, wrote of his company’s arrival in Roxbury in May that they ‘fell under the command of Genl. Ward of Massachusetts who was

⁵⁶ Farnsworth, June 5. Ten days after he returned home, Farnsworth wrote, ‘took leve of frinds and rode to Cambridge and my Brother Came home.’ Farnsworth, June 14.

⁵⁷ COS, April 20.

⁵⁸ Orderly book, April 21.

⁵⁹ COS April 27, and May 1, 4; MAPC April 28, and May 4, 5, 7. When the Massachusetts leaders had set a target of thirty thousand men for the army, they had divided this into quotas for each of the four New England provinces. MAPC, April 23.

⁶⁰ Richard Buel, *Dear Liberty: Connecticut’s Mobilization for the Revolutionary War* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1980), 40-45, notes the hesitation to leave Connecticut and New York for Boston, but also that two regiments immediately marched to Massachusetts, and later in June six hundred more men joined the siege of Boston.

stationed there to command and receive the troops as they should arrive.’⁶¹ Men from different provinces put aside territorial conflicts to take up their positions in the new army. Recruiting and organizing these men from outside Massachusetts turned the force around Boston into an American army.

The Massachusetts leaders of the Revolution knew that the New England colonies alone could not hold off the British for long, so they worked to enlist the support of the Second Continental Congress which had convened at Philadelphia on May 5th. The Massachusetts Congress carefully drafted and sent a petition on May 16th, explaining that they had been ‘compelled to raise an army, which will be able to defend us and all America.’ They requested that, ‘as the army, collecting from different colonies, is for the defense of the rights of America, we would beg leave to suggest to your consideration, the propriety of your taking the regulation and general direction of it.’⁶² The Massachusetts leaders hoped to turn the force they had put together over to the Continental Congress, but would have to wait until June for the Continental Congress to decide what to do about the army gathered around Boston.

The growing and strengthening institutions of this army—the creation of regular daily cleaning, parade, guard and fatigue duties, the crackdown on disorder, the establishment of medical and religious institutions, and the cooperation between different provinces, signaled key steps in the transition from the disorganized militia mixture of April 19th to an army. These activities and institutions accomplished practical tasks like protecting the camp, providing prayer opportunities, and taking care of the injured, but they also changed the attitudes and emotions of

⁶¹ ‘Diary of Samuel Richards, Captain of the Connecticut Line War of the Revolution, 1775-1781’ (Philadelphia: Published by his great grandson, Press of the Leeds & Biddle Co., 1909). This ‘diary’ appears to have been edited, if not written altogether, after the Revolution. Richards likely has his details confused. His company as part of the army did serve under the command of General Ward, but it was probably General John Thomas, the commander of the Roxbury camp, who greeted them.

the soldiers. These military routines fostered in the soldiers a sense that they belonged to a larger unified body, and gave this army life. Inactive periods can be trying for any army, but the establishment of these routines and institutions in the daily rhythms of the soldiers' lives helped pull them through the spring.

An Army in Spirit (*May 27-July 2, 1775*)

This relatively calm period of digging in to new camps and new routines of military life would not last forever; neither the British Regulars nor the soldiers themselves would allow that. In the closing days of May, the British set out from Boston to Chelsea, Noddle's Island (now East Boston) and other islands in Boston harbor to capture livestock and produce. The Americans had cut off Boston from the land and were determined to prevent the Regulars from getting their hands on these supplies—they wanted them for their own army. In response the Council of War and Committee of Safety sent an American force to stop the British.

On the evening of May 26th, after attending prayers, Amos Farnsworth and ten men from his company marched with a party that he estimated to be between two and three hundred men for Noddle's Island. His diary entries for the next two days describe his travels between islands, his capture of livestock, an exchange of fire with a company of British Regulars, and finally his companions' burning of a British schooner that had run aground. Farnsworth's first combat of the war (he arrived in the American camp after the Battle of Lexington) was a major success. He wrote, 'Not withstanding the Bulets flue very thitch yet thare was not A Man of us kild Suerly God has A faver towards us.' Although these bullets wounded four of his fellow soldiers,

⁶² MAPC, May 16. The Provincial Congress again petitioned the Continental Congress in June, emphasizing their fear of the British, and later in June appointed a committee to try to get arms and gun-powder from the Continental Congress. MAPC, June 11, 17.

Farnsworth closed his entry poetically, ‘Thanks be unto God that so little hurt was Done us when the Bauls Sung like Bees Round our heds.’⁶³

General Israel Putnam of Connecticut directed the fighting in these island battles. A member of Ward’s Council of War, he commanded not just Connecticut troops, but also Massachusetts men. James Stevens wrote in his entry of May 28th, ‘Curnul putnum com & ordered us down to the whoife.’⁶⁴ The joint command network shows the extent to which the regiments from the different provinces had been integrated into a single army. Just as in this battle Stevens served under a Connecticut officer, in turn Putnam reported back to General Ward. There truly was one army, not separate contingents from the different provinces.

Diarists at Roxbury and Cambridge followed these minor skirmishes, which involved just a few hundred men, with rapt attention. Phineas Ingalls was not selected from his company to go to the fight, although fourteen others were. In his entries about the battle, he used the word ‘heard’ many times: ‘we *heard* they were upon Hog Island. *Heard* that a company went before. *Heard* firing all night’ he writes on May 27th. On May 28th, ‘*Heard* that the Regulars had wounded 3 or 4 of our men...*We heard* that our men had got the victory...’ and on May 30th, ‘*Heard* this morning that the Regulars were gone to Salem...*Heard* our men were getting cattle off of Noddle’s Island.’⁶⁵ Ingalls used the word ‘heard’ in two ways: to refer directly to sounds of the fighting in the distance, and to the rampant rumor running through the camp. His focused attention to the skirmish in the distance shows the growing mutual concern developing in the army. These men saw themselves as engaged in a common fight, whether they were watching and listening or dodging bullets themselves.

⁶³ Farnsworth, May 26-28. Allen French, *The First Year of the American Revolution*, 190-194, offers an excellent survey of the island fighting.

⁶⁴ Stevens, May 28.

Amos Farnsworth took a ten-day furlough from the army after this initial fighting and returned to camp on June 15th. On the following afternoon, when the generals got word of a British plan to occupy Charlestown, Farnsworth's regiment marched to reinforce Bunker's Hill. He described the battle of June 17th in his diary. He and his compatriots 'sustained the Enemy's Attacks with great Bravery and Resolution, kiled and wounded great Numbers, and repulsed them several times.' They could not hold out against the British forever. As Farnsworth continued, 'after bearing, for about 2 Hours, as severe and heavy a Fire as perhaps ever was known, and many having fired away all their Ammunition, and having no Reinforcement. . .we ware over-powered by Numbers and obliged to leave the Intrenchment retreating about Sunset.'⁶⁶ While the British perhaps did not launch as 'heavy a Fire...as ever was known,' they did put up more of a fight than Farnsworth and his fellow soldiers had ever faced.

Only later in his entry for that day, after he described the Battle in its entirety, did Farnsworth add a note on his personal behavior under fire: 'I did not leave the Intrenchment until the Enemy got in...then I received a wound in my rite arm the bawl going through a little below my Elbow breaking the little shel Bone Another bawl struk my Back taking of a piece of Skin ababout as Big as a Penny.'⁶⁷ These two painful wounds would seem the most important event of Farnsworth's day. Yet he did not write of them in the beginning of the entry, or even in their

⁶⁵ Phineas Ingalls, 'Revolutionary War Journal, April 19, 1775-December 8, 1776' *Historical Collections of the Essex Institute* 53 (1917): 81-92. See entries for May 26-May 30. Emphasis is mine.

⁶⁶ Farnsworth, June 17. Farnsworth's account of the Battle corresponds with the general consensus of historians that the Americans put up a courageous fight, and strategically won the battle through the morale boost of inflicting such heavy casualties, despite losing the battle tactically. General Ward has taken perhaps 'as heavy a fire as was every known' from military historians of the Revolution for his failure to adequately reinforce the American position on Bunker Hill, perhaps the reason for his and this period's general loss of esteem. Ward's defenders claim he needed to protect the main American camps at Roxbury and Cambridge and could not afford to divert any resources.

⁶⁷ Farnsworth, June 17. Farnsworth made it back to Cambridge that night despite the 'great Pane' from his wounds. Since he was out of service, he got permission to return home. Farnsworth, June 17-20. We should be somewhat suspicious of the entries about Bunker Hill because after his June 20th entry Farnsworth wrote, 'now for a considerable time Pas I Could not keep my Jornal for my wound in my Arme But Now I begin to Rite a little.' It is thus not likely that he was able to write in his journal on the days immediately after he received his injury. He likely filled the Bunker Hill entries in later.

proper chronological place in the battle's action (soldiers almost always ordered their diary entries chronologically). By writing his own personal story of the battle after that of the army at large, Farnsworth implied his interest in the welfare of the army as a whole. The detailed entries of many soldiers who were not at the Battle of Bunker Hill, but left behind in Cambridge and Roxbury, further emphasize the collective consciousness the soldiers felt. The members of the army, through battle, came to see themselves as participating as a unit in a common cause.⁶⁸

The battle scared soldiers and officers alike. The Committee of Safety contemplated calling out the militia from nearby towns, and set about fortifying new positions at a frantic pace. Samuel Bixby observed the rapid pace of digging both new fortifications and graves for the dead in the aftermath of the battle. On the 18th, the day after the battle, he wrote, 'The Rhode Islanders laid out a piece of ground for an entrenchment, & went to work entrenching.' Later that week he noted, 'Nothing new this day, unless it is new to dig graves.' Lest the Americans feel depressed, Bixby added that, 'We can see the regulars, with the spy glass digging graves in Boston.'⁶⁹ The shock of large numbers of deaths in the fighting hit home. Many diary entries contain estimates of casualties sustained by both sides. The Battle of Bunker Hill made it clear to these soldiers that being part of an army meant fighting and maybe dying, not just guarding and parading.

Several soldiers took avid interest in another military accomplishment later in June. Caleb Haskell wrote on the 25th, 'In the evening a number of Indians went down to the enemy's sentinels and fired on them. Killed five and wounded one.'⁷⁰ John Kettel mentioned similar

⁶⁸ Jehiel Stewart, for example, wrote almost two pages about what he heard and saw on June 17th, even though he was in Roxbury. Stewart, June 17.

⁶⁹ Bixby, June 18, 23.

⁷⁰ Caleb Haskell, 'Caleb Haskell's Diary, May 5, 1775—May 30, 1776' (Newburyport: William H. Huse & Company, 1881, edited by Lothrop Withington), 7. Entry for June 25.

activity that day, as well as earlier in the week.⁷¹ Two companies of Stockbridge Indians had first joined the camp in the end of April.⁷² These men had been recruited and negotiated with by the Provincial Congress from the beginning of the conflict through June. In late June, the Congress bargained with Penobscot Indians from Cape Cod to send men to the army as well.⁷³ American soldiers were not just curious, they took pride in the successful raids of these Indians they served along-side: a victory for the army was a victory for each soldier, whether he participated in the fighting or not.

Other specific events in June, besides these encounters with the Regulars, caught the attention of a variety of soldiers in different places and of different ranks. In his June 2nd entry, Jehiel Stewart, based in Roxbury, wrote, ‘Last night their was a man hanged him self at Cambridge.’⁷⁴ It is not surprising that James Stevens or Phineas Ingalls, who were based in Cambridge where the incident occurred, wrote about it; it is that Stewart and others in the Roxbury camp did, offering further evidence of the shared consciousness of the army. Only one of the surviving diarists, Samuel Bixby, who was also in Roxbury, offered an explanation: ‘We heard to-day that a soldier over at Cambridge was deeply in love, & wished to go home to see his dear, and being refused leave of absence by his Captain, went into a barn and hanged himself.’⁷⁵

Whether or not the soldier killed himself because he was torn away from his sweetheart, his homesickness and lovesickness resonated with Bixby. By the beginning of June, many of the

⁷¹ John Kettel, ‘John Kettell his Book’ Richard Frothingham Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Microfilm Reel 2. See entries for June 21, 25, 26.

⁷² Joseph Merriam that day noted, ‘large body of Mohawk or Stockbridge indians come, occasion much speculation; paraded and marched on common.’ Merriam, April 29.

⁷³ On these negotiations, from the Congress’ perspective, MAPC, April 25; May 12, 14, 19; June 5, 7, 8, 20, 21, 23, 24, among other dates. Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), chapter 3, covers the Stockbridge Indians’ response to and participation in the Revolution.

⁷⁴ Stewart, June 2. Phineas Ingalls wrote, ‘A man hung himself in a barn. He was found at daylight this morning. Supposed to have hung about ½ an hour.’ Ingalls, June 2. James Stevens noted matter-of-factly, ‘I herd that ther was a man hang[ed]...I went down & saw him I went hom & tuk a nap.’ Stevens, June 1. The entry date is off because Stewart was up all night the 1st on guard duty.

men in the American camp had been away from their homes and loved ones for as long as seven weeks. The men in the army wanted to go home for a variety of reasons: to visit family, to take care of their business affairs, and to plant crops. Some men, like Farnsworth, took brief furloughs if they could find replacements. Many others were denied any leave. Men wrote letters home: Colonel William Henshaw, one of Ward's adjutants, exchanged a series of letters with his wife Phebe which survive. On April 28th, he wrote, 'My Dear, -- I am sorry that you are distressed for me, seeing I am engaged in a good Cause.' He asked her to send him some supplies: linen, a sword, belt and gloves, and also suggested she have her brother 'look a little to my affairs,' giving her fairly detailed information on his accounts and agricultural needs.⁷⁶ Despite the efforts of the Provincial Congress to install a postal system, exchanging letters was difficult and inconsistent. Phebe's letter back to William on July 16th showed her frustration, 'I have received one Letter from you dated the 7th inst., and since that, have heard from you by Mr. Livermore who said he was to have brought a letter from you, but came by, and wholly forgot it. This is the third I have wrote and have not sent.' Phebe updated William on her directing of his agricultural affairs, and again begged him to 'Write me as often as you can...'⁷⁷

Separated from home for long times, with exchanging letters so difficult, men looked for other outlets for their loneliness. Eighteenth-century armies generally attracted female camp followers who did some of the cooking and cleaning, and provided companionship for the soldiers. While the British army in Boston welcomed these women, the American camp shunned them.⁷⁸ The soldiers in the American camp did their own cleaning. Ward, on June 1st, issued an

⁷⁵ Bixby, June 1.

⁷⁶ William Henshaw to Phebe Henshaw, April 28, *The Orderly Book of Colonel William Henshaw of the American Army* (Boston: A. Williams and Company, 1881), 132.

⁷⁷ Phebe Henshaw to William Henshaw, July 16, *ibid.*, 134.

⁷⁸ Donald Chidsey, *The Siege of Boston*, (New York: Crown, 1966), 68-9. Holly A. Mayer, *Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and Community during the American Revolution* offers a thematically-organized account of the camp followers and their relations to the Continental Army, focusing on later in the war.

order ‘That the commanding officer of each regiment, detachment, or company, daily visit his soldiers, whether in barracks or tents, and oblige them to keep themselves clean.’⁷⁹ The order made an impact: Samuel Bixby explained, ‘Orders to wash the floor of the Barracks, and clean out every hole and corner, and to sweep the yards.’⁸⁰ They also did their own cooking: James Stevens recorded on June 10th that he ‘cukt for out two meses.’⁸¹ Living together and taking care of each other like this forced the men to rely on each other as family.

On June 8th several diarists recorded another event which attracted widespread interest within the army. James Stevens described the occasion: ‘In the afternune there was a woman dukt & drumd out of the regement.’ John Kettel, Caleb Haskell and Paul Lunt also noted the ‘grate shouting’ by the soldiers as they dunked this ‘bad’ woman in the river and then drummed her out of camp.⁸² While this is the only incident of the kind that diarists record, later in the month Ward ordered, ‘That all possible care be taken that no lewd women come into the camp ; and all persons ordered to give information of such persons, if any there be, that proper measures be taken to bring them to condign punishment, and rid the camp of all such nuisances.’⁸³ The American army would distinguish itself through proper behavior. These righteous and religious New Englanders did not need the ‘bad’ influence of ‘lewd’ female camp followers, and feared the wrath of God their presence might call down on the army.

The soldiers themselves could face equally harsh disciplinary measures. Ward ordered on June 3rd ‘That the commanding officer of each regiment, company, or detachment, oblige all that are off of duty, under his command, to be paraded at four o’clock in the afternoon, and be

⁷⁹ Orderly book, June 1.

⁸⁰ Bixby, June 6.

⁸¹ Stevens, June 10.

⁸² Kettel, June 8.

⁸³ Orderly book, June 30.

ready to attend the whipping of two persons for stealing, at five o'clock, P.M.⁸⁴ Farnsworth wrote in his diary, 'Abought fore in ye afternoon Peraded with the Batllion And Saw two men whipt for Stealing and Another Dromd out of ye Camps.'⁸⁵ Nearly every diarist mentioned this episode of military discipline, and most in precisely the same way: that two men were whipped for stealing and that another was drummed out of the camp. Many added details to this formula. Farnsworth editorialized, 'O what A Pernitious thing it is for A man to Steal And Cheat his feler nabers And how Prevocking is it to God.' Caleb Haskell noted that one of the men whipped was black and the other white.⁸⁶ Nathaniel Ober added that there were fifty drummers and seventy fifers at the ceremony who provided 'Fine music.'⁸⁷ Phineas Ingalls observed that one man had been whipped '20 & the other 10 lashes.'⁸⁸ The soldiers wrote similarly about several disciplinary ceremonies in the month of June. Ward had ordered the establishment of a system of general and regimental courts martial to enforce discipline in the army and to try offenders for crimes ranging from stealing to saying nasty things about their officers. The exactness of the details in soldiers' diaries (four o'clock, 20 lashes, fifty drummers) suggests how closely they followed these increasingly codified disciplinings. The ceremonies seem to have had a powerful effect: the men were quite taken with the pomp and circumstance. By removing some men from the army, these ceremonies reinforced the bond connecting those soldiers who remained.

Phineas Ingalls' entry immediately after that for June 3rd that 'One man drummed out of the army' came on June 6th. He wrote, 'We were sworn today. Many took their oaths.' Drumming men out could be even more powerful if a comparable ceremony initiated men into the army. The late April diary entries of Amos Farnsworth and Abner Sanger which described

⁸⁴ Orderly book, June 3.

⁸⁵ Farnsworth, June 3.

⁸⁶ Haskell, June 3.

the enlistment of soldiers into different companies showed one part of this. But, the bureaucracy of the Provincial Congress had not caught up by then to the fast emergency action of enlisting an army. Although men had signed their names to serving in different companies and regiments, they still had to officially enter the army through a process known as ‘passing muster.’ For recruits to pass muster an officer known as a ‘muster master’ had to inspect them to make sure they were fit for service.⁸⁹

Once they passed muster, soldiers had to take an oath that the Provincial Congress had written in May: ‘I, A.B. swear, I will truly and faithfully serve in the Massachusetts army, to which I belong, for the defence and security of the estates, lives and liberties of the good people of this and the sister colonies in America...that I will adhere to the rules and regulations of said army ; observe and obey the generals and other officers set over me...So help me God.’⁹⁰

Soldiers then received their first month’s pay of forty shillings.⁹¹ Officers too, including General Ward, had to take specially prepared oaths to receive their commissions. Their oaths were

⁸⁷ Nathaniel Ober, ‘His Book 1775’ Nathaniel Ober Manuscripts, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston. Entry for June 3.

⁸⁸ Ingalls, June 3.

⁸⁹ Most of the diarists passed muster, took their oaths and got their first pay in the month of June. See Stevens, June 5, 6; Hews, June 9; Haskell, June 22; Paul Lunt, ‘Paul Lunt’s Diary, May-Dec. 1775’ *Proceedings of Massachusetts Historical Society* 12 (1871-73): 192-206, entry for June 22. Originally the Provincial Congress directed that soldiers could only pass muster if they were properly fit and properly armed. They changed this because so many soldiers lacked effective fire-arms. MAPC, May 6, 26. This procedure was once again carried over from the Seven Years’ War. However, passing muster in the Seven Years’ War, as described by Anderson, while a similar process, was conducted in quite different circumstances. Then, the soldiers passed muster before they marched off to war, whereas in this case many had been fighting for weeks when they finally passed muster. Anderson, 66-7.

⁹⁰ MAPC, May 8.

⁹¹ The Provincial Congress had an extremely difficult time finding this money. They relied on Paul Revere to print bank and promissory notes, and also benefited from private contributions and loans. It would take the some time to finally right the province’s financial ship. On June 1st, they worked out a plan to have the receiver general of the army pay the month’s advance to one regiment each day. MAPC, June 1. The historical literature, led by Royster’s *A Revolutionary People at War*, particularly ‘Appendix: A Note on Statistics and Continental Soldiers’ Motivation’, 373-8, generally discounts the importance of paying the soldiers until later in the war. The economic motivation for enlisting late in the war has been demonstrated by Edward C. Papenfeuse and Gregory A. Stiverson, ‘General Smallwood’s Recruits: The Peacetime Career of the Revolutionary War Private’ *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser, 1973, 30(1): 117-32. Anderson, chapter 2, contends that the men who served in the Massachusetts Provincial armies during the Seven Years’ War did so because it offered an economic opportunity. Given that many men returned home from in late April just days after the initial alarm, I do not think it is inconceivable that those who

similar to those for the enlisted men, with the addition that they had to obey the Provincial ‘Congress or any future legislative body and committees’ lest the army usurp control from the civilian government.⁹² As soldiers passed muster and companies and regiments filled up, the Congress and Committee of Safety approved the commissions for each regimental officer, and administered the oaths to them.⁹³ For enlisted men and officers alike, passing muster and swearing under God to fight for the natural rights of Americans for a designated term of enlistment marked a final step of initiation into the new army.

From the last days of May until Washington’s arrival in early July, combat with the British Regulars combined with military ceremonies to define the character and cause of the American army and by extension the American Revolution. It was no coincidence that an escalation of disciplinary and ritualized proceedings came with the army’s first test in combat. General Ward and civilian leaders recognized that for the army to fight successfully, they needed the discipline and the spirit which these ceremonies imbued in the soldiers.

stayed early in the war (between these two periods) did so because of the economic gain they expected to get from the army, not because of a sense of ‘rage militaire.’

⁹² The Congress had prepared the oath for officers on May 17th. The oath was administered to Ward and his commission as General delivered to him on May 20th. MAPC, May 17, 20. The Provincial Congress was particularly concerned with maintaining a firm civilian control over the army. Their documents pertaining to the army repeatedly stressed that the Congress held ultimate authority. This, no doubt, arose from members’ perception that the British standing army based in Boston had not been properly reined in by Parliament and the Ministry in London. In late June, the Committee of Safety reprimanded Ward for not being properly deferential in dealings with them about the distribution of guns to soldiers. Their records for that day state, ‘whereas, the Hon. General Ward...has this day issued general orders, in which are these words, ‘*and the committee of safety are hereby ordered to deliver out arms to such commanding officers as make application to them for the same:*’ and whereas, this committee apprehend, that said resolve does not empower the general to *order them* to deliver said arms, but only to *order his officers* : and whereas, the committee apprehend, that it is of vast importance that no *orders* are issued by the military, or obeyed by the civil power, but only such as are *directed* by the honorable representative body of the people, from whom all military and civil power originates; and, though, this committee are satisfied, that General Ward has misunderstood said resolve, and does not mean or intent to set up the *military* power above the *civil*, yet, lest this order of the general, should be adduced as a precedent in the future, we think it our indispensable duty to protest against the general’s said order.’ COS, June 28. That the civilian authorities would even consider being usurped by Ward’s armies shows that the army was a creditable and powerful force.

⁹³ For example, on June 15th, the Congress commissioned Colonels David Brewer, Jonathan Little and Jonathan Brewer and administered the oath to them. MAPC, June 15.

An American Army

Although it probably did not happen, Joshua Slocum and his mates would have been wise to celebrate (as he later remembered they did) the news of General Washington's appointment to take over the American army: not because the army needed a brilliant leader, but because this news meant that a New England Revolution had become an American Revolution. The members of the Provincial Congress knew that Massachusetts alone, even with help from her neighboring provinces, could not defeat the British, but they hoped that they could with the support of all of the colonies and the Continental Congress. General Washington's appointment signaled that the Continental Congress had adopted General Ward's army and the American Revolution. It meant that the Massachusetts revolutionaries—politicians, officers and enlisted men alike—just by holding together an army, had kept the Revolution alive.

General Ward and other leaders wished to leave the army in respectable shape for Washington and the Continental Congress. In his final days in command, after he had been informed of General Washington's appointment above him, Ward issued a series of directives to correct last-minute disciplinary problems. On June 29th he reminded officers to make sure their men came out for duty 'immediately when called upon' and 'precisely by the time fixed.' The following day he announced 'that all profane cursing and swearing, all indecent language and behavior, will not be tolerated in camps.' He also reminded men to keep the camp clean, once again requested a return of the rank and names in the regiments under him, and directed 'that the rules and regulations for the American army be read at the head of the respective companies by the captains, or such other person as they shall appoint, once a week.'⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Orderly book, June 29, 30.

General Ward and the members of the Congress and Committee of Safety had not created a perfectly disciplined force that could match up to the standards of European armies. Despite Ward's efforts, and a warm welcome from the Provincial Congress, when Washington arrived in early July he expressed some disappointment with the state in which he found the army.⁹⁵ The Massachusetts Congress knew that the work of making the army was not finished. In a letter to Washington, they warned him, 'We wish you may have found such regularity and discipline already established in the army, as may be agreeable to your expectations.' They continued by explaining, 'The hurry with which it was necessarily collected, and the many disadvantages... under which we have raised and endeavored to regulate the forces of this colony, have rendered it a work of time ; and though, in great measure effected, the completion of so difficult, and at the same time so necessary a task, is reserved to your excellency.'⁹⁶ General Washington issued a lengthy series of orders in his first few days. Many were the same sorts of orders that Ward had been repeatedly issuing over the past weeks: exact returns were to be made; cursing, swearing and drunkenness were forbidden and prayer required; cleanliness was to be maintained; and, of course, there was to be 'no firing of cannon or small arms...except in case of necessary immediate defence.'⁹⁷

None of the soldiers who kept diaries acknowledged a change in the spirit and activity of the army upon Washington's taking command. They continued to record the same sorts of

⁹⁵ The Provincial Congress's records for the last half of June contain many details of their effort to properly welcome General Washington (and General Charles Lee with whom he arrived from Philadelphia). They sent a welcoming escort to meet him in Springfield, wrote him several letters, and prepared a headquarters and procured furniture for him. MAPC, June 24, 26, 29. The Provincial Congress showed far more deference to Washington than to Ward, and gave Washington far more latitude in running the army as he wished. In part, they did so because they respected his military wisdom. To a greater extent perhaps, the members respected Washington because he represented the Continental Congress, a body which they saw as higher than their own. Ward, on the other hand, had himself been a member of the Massachusetts Congress, and they viewed him as very much an equal to themselves, and not one to defer to.

⁹⁶ MAPC, July 1.

⁹⁷ General Washington's orders for July 3rd and 4th are contained in Henshaw, *The Orderly Book of Colonel William Henshaw*, 40-1.

activities: religious services, conflict with the British, and disciplinary ceremonies, for some time to come. Amos Farnsworth's diary is perhaps the most revealing. After he had been wounded at Bunker Hill, Farnsworth went home to recuperate. When he returned to Cambridge nearly two months later on August 14th he wrote just a simple entry, 'found our Company perty well.' Farnsworth, away from camp for the six weeks after Washington arrived, did not observe any noteworthy change in the spirit or operation of the army. His next entry enforces this: 'Now from Monday to Saterdag night Nothing hapned worth noteis.'⁹⁸

General Ward and the members of the Provincial Congress and Committee of Safety kept the Revolution alive through their conscious and active work to create an American army. If they had not taken the measures they did to recruit, enlist, supply, organize, pay and discipline the army, the men who gathered in Cambridge after the Battles of Lexington and Concord would soon have gone home. Many men did. But many others were convinced to enlist into an American army: a force designed not only to protect their homes, wives and fields, but to fight the British. Once these men enlisted, Ward and his fellow officers and political leaders initiated the new soldiers into the duties and institutions of military life, and imbued in them a sense that they were part of an American army, fighting for a righteous cause. As a result, by the time the Continental Congress got around to appointing General Washington and joining the war effort in the middle of June, there was an army to adopt and a Revolution under way.

By organizing this army, General Ward and his fellow leaders not only made a drastic impact on the immediate course of events of the Revolution, they also shifted the attitudes, motivations, and mindsets of the New Englanders who served in the army. Men who on April 20th rushed to defend their home towns, by July 2nd were part of an American army, which was

⁹⁸ Farnsworth, August 14.

engaged in a war with the British in defense of the life, liberty and properties not just of their townsmen, but of all Americans. Most of these men did not arrive at the scene in time to fight in the Battles of Lexington and Concord, and most of them watched rather than participated in the Battle of Bunker Hill. None of them took much interest in General Washington's arrival in early July. For men like Amos Farnsworth, it was not these three events, but daily life in a military camp and entry into an army, which made the first months of the Revolution important.