

## A REVOLUTION RESTRAINED

Established through violent revolution, the United States was born in blood. More than twenty-five thousand Americans died in the War for Independence – the result of battlefield kills and wounds, disease, and death from imprisonment. Based on relative population, this figure translates to 2.8 million deaths today. When we include the British lives lost, as well as the brutal persecutions and dislocations of tens of thousands of loyalists, Indians, and slaves, the outcome is clear: the violence of the American Revolution was an event in its own right.<sup>1</sup>

How should such violence be understood? For a long time, scholars linked the history of violent acts committed by colonial Americans in the Revolution to an ideological change. Raucous parades, mobs, and jail breaks marked just a few ways that colonials subverted legal processes in British North America. In the 1760s and 1770s, participants in these violent actions, according to the renowned scholar Bernard Bailyn, were “newly empowered by widely shared principles and beliefs.” Bailyn’s notion – that an attachment to democratic ideals pushed Americans to bloodshed – obscures an uncomfortable truth, however. Violent acts by the colonists were not committed in defense of deeply held political ideology. Rather, violence, in both practice and theory, was integral to the formation of the political and social values that underpinned the Revolution.<sup>2</sup>

American rebels used violent measures as a foundational tool in their effort to undermine British authority in the North American colonies. They were not alone. In the eighteenth century, a global conversation was taking place on the societal boundaries of physical force: who is sanctioned for violent acts – individuals, communities, or governments? How are people and institutions so sanctioned? What are the limits and boundaries of their violent activities? The debate over such questions helped launch the American Revolution as well as the subsequent revolutions in Haiti and France. Each nation, responding to varied events and histories, arrived at assorted solutions.

The displeasure expressed by many White British-American colonists on their treatment as soldiers in the Seven Years' War is an excellent place to begin this story. Carrying their displeasure into the Revolution, many everyday colonials tried to implement a new vision in opposition to their experiences within British military institutions. Their intent, formed in the shadows of colonization and slavery, looked to foster through state violence the kind of White democratic participation that later generations strove toward through politics. In places like Pennsylvania and Massachusetts, the Revolution offered the chance for commoners and leaders alike to employ a military organization aligned with a more egalitarian political principle. For New Englanders, whose earlier experiences encouraged them to empower the common soldier in the Massachusetts Army (the Continental Army's precursor), the use of violent acts to curtail protest within army ranks revealed an abandonment of such egalitarianism. It demonstrated to them but one way in which the era's radicalism would unwind.<sup>3</sup>



The Seven Years' War reshaped the global order in the eighteenth century. It took place on five continents, but to British colonists in North America, the battles were intimate and direct. In the winter of 1756/1757, French troops threatened important military and economic pathways in northern New York, leaving the New England colonies vulnerable. Its settlers sounded the alarm.

Unfortunately for the British colonists, the French were not alone. They had recruited members of Indian nations, and, in 1757, more than two thousand warriors from around thirty-three communities stood by them at Fort Carillon (Ticonderoga). It was in this place, between Lake Champlain and Lake George, that the war's bloodiest North American battle transpired. Some three thousand French, Indian, and British bodies would litter the surrounding forests by the time it was through – so many that, nineteen years later, in the midst of the Revolution, undersupplied American troops in the area used the dead men's shin and thigh bones to stake tents and drank from skeletal heads. Continental Army General Anthony Wayne would christen the spot "the Ancient Golgotha or place of skulls."<sup>4</sup>

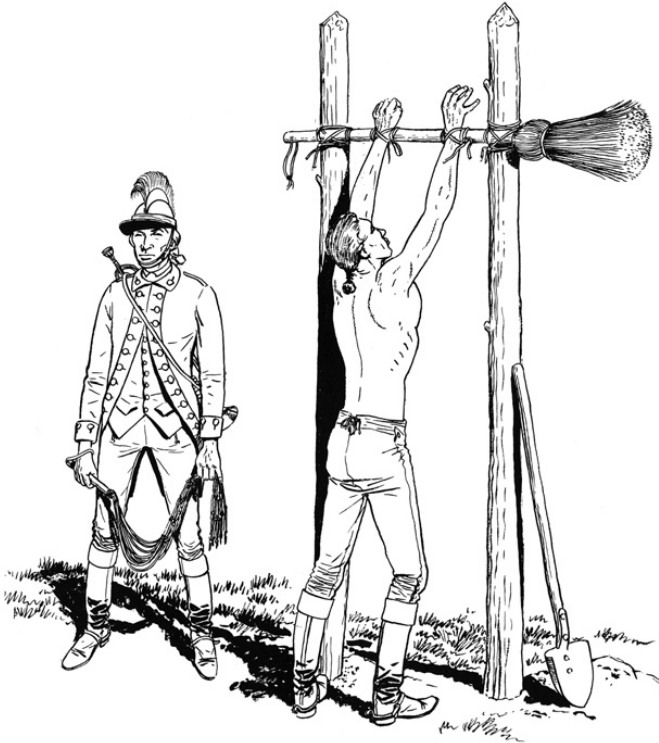
Between 1754 and 1763, New England men registered their strength within the British military. More than a third of military-qualified Massachusetts men served in provincial armies and thousands filled positions to support the war. Yet, reflecting the sort of hostile difference that

structured the empire, the British regulars looked down on the provincial military men, from whom they extracted menial labor and who, by a 1754 proclamation, were officially marked as lower in rank. According to the proclamation, for instance, a provincial general stood below an ensign in the British Army.<sup>5</sup>

For provincial soldiers, the increased military discipline they faced during these years was a shock. At first, the colonial men only met the strict disciplinary code of the British Army when their units served alongside those of regulars. But after 1756, leaders subjected all provincial soldiers to regular army rules. New England colonial Rufus Putnam, who joined the Massachusetts Provincial Army in 1757, took note of soldier punishment. Ten days after officers read the Articles of War to Putnam's group, he saw two men receive twenty lashes. "They were the first that were whipped in our Regt.," he reported. They were not the last. In a single day on September 5, Putnam observed two colonists shot and killed for desertion and "a Connecticut man whipped 500 Lashes for Enlisting into York forces." That evening, three men took six hundred of the thousand lashes due as punishment for desertion.<sup>6</sup>

A fellow soldier in the same regiment, Seth Metcalf, witnessed the horror too. He watched a man's back "whipt till the Blood Came Out at the knee of his Breeches" (Fig. 1.1). Luke Ridley, a Connecticut provincial soldier, noticed additional modes of reprimand. He saw a man run the gauntlet "through 30 men," reflecting, "god have mercy on me the Blood flying every stroke this was a sorrowful sight." He saw another man sentenced to "Ride the wooden horse" – a punishment that entailed straddling the sharp edge of a narrow log or board that was supported by four legs with the man's hands bound behind his back (Fig. 1.2). The soldier often had weights (like muskets) added on to heighten the pain while tormentors moved and bucked the horse. In this instance, Ridley reported that the soldier had "4 muskits tied to his feet." Permanent injury, including emasculation and even death, could result from a ride on the timber beast.<sup>7</sup>

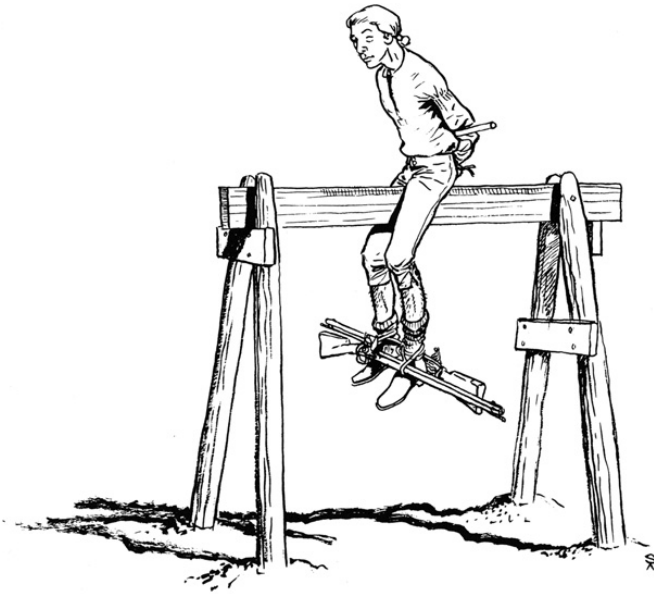
Soldier discipline and the separation of ranks distinguished the order found in units of British regulars. Reflecting the structures of hostile difference in British societies, it forged an unequal system of military justice where the enlisted, more so than their officers, stood exposed to corporal punishment and the death penalty. A later general called this strict code "the *despotic government of the army in the field*." When it was applied to provincial soldiers, though, it practically upended the White American colonials' world.<sup>8</sup>



**Fig. 1.1** A military flogging. © 1977 University of Oklahoma Press. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

White colonists entered provincial armies from provincial militias. These militias often operated on ideals far different than those of the British military. Rufus Putnam, for example, had served in the militia in Brookfield, Massachusetts. Here, many of the region's able men between sixteen and sixty participated in military drills. Notably, in a mix of racism and elitism, the colony exempted from militia service slaves, Indians, ministers, civil magistrates, and Harvard students and faculty. The shared sense of local camaraderie and security found in the militia forged the bonds that led Putnam to "a Provincial Regiment of Foot" in the "Company of Capt. Ebenezer Learned."<sup>9</sup>

Putnam's experience was common. Provincial recruiters relied on the militia's relationships of community and kin to fill army ranks. Recruiters for the British Army, by contrast, often used a variety of coercive and deceptive methods to sign on lower-class men. The logic, as once expressed



**Fig 1.2** Riding the wooden horse. © 1977 University of Oklahoma Press. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

in Parliament, that “the worst men make the best soldiers” was based in the belief that such individuals responded satisfactorily to physical punishment. Soldiers and officers in provincial service were thus bound more by association than by authority. To British leaders, the provincial army men appeared untrained, disorganized, and disobedient. And as imperial leaders increasingly implemented new forms of discipline for provincial soldiers, the colonial men pushed back. To those in the American colonies, who had grown accustomed to electing the militia officers who served over them, life in the provincial army developed into something strange and harsh.<sup>10</sup>

Yet the choice to enlist in “His Majesty’s Service” for a man like Putnam was probably an easy one. Putnam’s father, a farmer who was a civil, militia, and religious leader in the town of Sutton, Massachusetts, had died in 1745. This left the young Putnam in a precarious position. For two years, he lived with his grandfather; then with his stepfather, Captain Sadler, an illiterate man who forbade Putnam from attending school; and, after Sadler’s death in 1753, Putnam was bound as an apprentice to a local millwright. Farming, trade work, and laboring were the three central professions in

Massachusetts colony. As the youngest of eleven children, Putnam had failed to access one familiar path to farm ownership: the inheritance of land. And the possibilities available to him in mill construction and repair, it seems, were less attractive than the avenue opened by war. A provincial soldier enlisted for an annual term, and while a private in provincial service earned just as much per month as a common laborer, soldiering was steady work and the army awarded attractive bonuses. By the end of his year of service, Putnam could have saved enough to purchase more than one hundred acres of land near Brookfield.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, the violent capability of the imperial state in North America was linked to economic opportunity. Provincial men, whose interpersonal relationships had crafted a less repressive military experience in the militias, connected to the British polity in contractual terms. In 1757, Rufus Putnam passed muster in “New Braintry” (current-day New Braintree) and, two weeks later, received “arms and clothing at Worster” (Worcester) – the central site for Massachusetts troops headed to northern New York. As shocked as he might have been by the deliberate disciplining of fellow soldiers during this time, however, he saw too the near-inevitable result of untrained men and guns. In July, he wrote: “There was a man shot off his gun accidentally, & shot a man in the next Tent through the body; who never spoke any more words than these: I am a dead man; the Lord have mercy on me.”<sup>12</sup>

Putnam reported on wartime’s direct brutalities too. He saw “a great No. of Invalids” (wounded veterans) who marched past his camp on their way home and detailed the sufferings of fallen provincial and British soldiers. The corpse of one provincial man was described to Putnam as having been “found barbecued . . . with his nails all pulled out, his lips cut off down to his chin and up to his nose, and his jaws lay bare; his scalp was taken off, his breast cut open, his heart pulled out and his bullet pouch put in the room of it . . . a Tomahawk left in his bowels.” (Significantly, British colonists and other Europeans often highlighted physical mutilation when Natives committed the act; they failed to note when they themselves disfigured enemy and Indigenous bodies.) A few weeks after hearing this grisly tale, Putnam learned of Lieutenant Dormit, “found with his head and arms cut off and his body cut to pieces.”<sup>13</sup>

Yet the accidents and designs of war appeared to bother Putnam less than its broken promises. As a provincial soldier, he expected to see – and perhaps fall prey to – torture and death. But he and the colonial men with whom he served wielded a clear sense of what such risks were worth. On July 27, 1757, for example, Putnam and fellow soldiers (then stationed at

Fort Edward) refused “to go a scouting without some consideration for it.” To scout – to locate and detail enemy locations – was dangerous duty. The Fort Edward men also served as rangers, patrolling the area to provide early warnings of attack. In a sign that provincial soldiers did indeed resist the rigid command structure of the British, Putnam and friends brokered a deal. The commanding officer of the fort, Major Fletcher, offered “three dollars per month” for ranger duty and “half a pint of Rum when” the soldiers scouted. Putnam was quick to note, however: “The Rum we got sometimes; but the money we never see.”<sup>14</sup>

The broken deal that July proved the least of Putnam’s woes. When most of the 1,800 men with whom he had entered provincial service were discharged in November, Putnam was among the 360 “drafted to stay.” Winter weather put a stop to the war’s open fighting, and the young soldier’s ability as a millwright proved invaluable to the military. He worked as a carpenter. But then, just when his year of military service was officially set to end on February 2, 1758, Putnam learned that he might be forced to keep on. A message from Major-General Abercrombie to leaders at the fort intimated that since Abercrombie did not yet “know what the government intends to do with” the men, the soldiers had to wait for their discharge. British superiors further explained that anyone who left without proper orders would “Suffer Death.” Unsurprisingly, the provincials immediately dissented. Neither their commanders “nor the Province could hold us any longer,” they argued, and “by going off” they asserted that they were not breaking any law.<sup>15</sup>

The next morning at 3 a.m., seventy provincial soldiers acted on this belief. The men left the fort as they had joined – bound now by shared experience as well as community and kin. The close ties between common soldier and officer were apparent. Captain Learned himself led the rebellious group. Clad with snowshoes, the men carried three days’ provisions. It was not enough. After a terrible winter storm their first night, the group followed the wrong river and soon became lost. But, to the men’s approval, Learned announced, “I will die in the woods before I go back.” By the third day, the men had all but consumed their rations. The occasional turkey, killed and roasted, was not enough for such a large contingent. With snow five feet deep and low temperatures, many suffered from frostbite as well. On February 8, the starved soldiers killed “a large dog” who had travelled with them. “None can tell what a sweet morsel this dog’s guts and feet were but those that eat them as I did the feet and the riddings of the guts,” Putnam reported. Canine butchery made what was taboo for the soldiers more routine. “With respect to the meate of a Dog,” Putnam

later said, “I have ever since . . . believed it to be very good eating, and that I could at any time eat it without disgust.” Finally, after eight days of marching, the group found Hawk’s Fort in Charlemont, Massachusetts, on February 10.<sup>16</sup>

The British blamed Captain Learned for the incident and would not offer him another commission in the war. But Putnam and the men who walked away knew that Learned had not imposed his beliefs on them. When Learned shouted that he would rather die than turn back, the men “all cried out that they would die with him.” This bond, forged in respect, relationship, and righteousness, highlighted an early American conception of how government force might work. It was a participatory system with power more equally divided than it was in the oversight of the British regular forces. Yet, even when the British system failed – as was seen in the regimental rebellion and what Putnam referred to as “Sufferings in my return home” – provincial service and its economic lure remained attractive. Only two months after his 1758 Massachusetts homecoming, Putnam enlisted for another year.<sup>17</sup>

The spaces of equity forged within provincial military work, though, were not open to everyone. Distinguished by race, class, gender, education, and empire, the Massachusetts military men were as varied as the population of the colony they represented. White male colonials of British background, regardless of their economic situation, tended to enjoy most of the privileges afforded by kin and community in provincial militaries. Free Blacks, Indians, and deserters from the enemy (Putnam noted men of French and Dutch descent) inhabited a different place in the organization. In summer 1757, for example, Captain Learned contracted smallpox, was “carried into the Hospital,” and, a month later, was provided furlough in New England. But when a free Black scout fell sick during a twelve-day campaign near Ticonderoga, his captain left him “in the woods with two Indians to look after him.” The trio remained there for several days, scouted on by the French and French-allied Indians, before forty men, including Putnam, rescued them.<sup>18</sup>

Here, amid more equality and opportunity for some, provincial service in the Seven Years’ War prefigured modern political and social forms. While men like Putnam enjoyed a relatively progressive military life, the impoverished, unfree, and disenfranchised often experienced what would also be an American tradition: uneven access to and deployment of physical force by governments and individuals.

The war helped colonists imagine a military that transcended local borders, and the effect lay a foundation for the tumult that led to revolution



in the 1770s. At first, New Englanders and others in the colonies – especially those who had served in the conflict – felt great imperial pride and promise, the result of being on the winning side. But the war was followed by severe economic depression in North America, the product of wartime demobilization and plans that accentuated the region's cash shortages. These troubles began to seed doubts. In Philadelphia and New York, the courts compelled property sales to cover debt at a rate two to three times that of recent years. The poor packed almshouses beyond capacity. And rural migrants in search of opportunity collected in the Carolina backcountry, where loosely structured legal systems gave way to vigilantism and mob law. Indeed, the postwar period was not a good time for policy changes that expected more from British North Americans. And yet, that is just what the politics of empire in London demanded.<sup>19</sup>

A basic economic question started the trouble. Between 1689 and 1763, British military expenditures had more than tripled. In the Seven Years' War alone, the British deficit increased from £74 million to £133 million. At times in the eighteenth century, more than 40 percent of annual British revenue was used to service national debt. In 1764, the ever-frugal Chief Minister George Grenville shifted the financial burden for North American security to the colonists who lived there. Some ten thousand British soldiers stood ready to stave off Indigenous and French attacks on the North American frontier. They stood ready too to try and stop westward settler expansion over the Appalachians to enforce the Proclamation Line of 1763. To underwrite these armed forces, British leaders levied well-known taxes such as the Sugar Act, Stamp Act, and Townsend Revenue Act of the 1760s. In other words, state violence and the ability to pay for such violence stand as central causes of the British–American conflict.<sup>20</sup>

Financial considerations often drove military decisions in the British empire. In the late seventeenth century, for example, regular troops based in Jamaica and Virginia were removed after the colonies failed to locate enough funds to cover the cost of the men stationed there. Yet Grenville's decision in the 1760s marked a decided shift. Since the 1690s, the empire had funded its militarism through economic growth. By and large, the approach had worked. Where other European governments' military costs exceeded 80 percent of their annual public expenditures in times of war, the British spent less: between 61 and 74 percent. Armed with the world's greatest navy and a formidable army, Parliament funded measures to bolster social and economic life in its colonies. This changed in 1764. Rather than promote the expansion of producers and consumers, British leaders targeted production. In the North American colonies, tax, trade limit, and

migration restraint established extraction and cost reduction as the new means to pay down British debt. Akin to the modifications Grenville helped introduce to the British navy (an amplified form of authoritarianism), the British government now embraced enforcement. “He that accepts protection, stipulates obedience,” said London author Samuel Johnson to the American colonists.<sup>21</sup>

As the British–American controversy heightened in the 1760s and 1770s, the use of physical force by individuals and governments was not the issue. Many colonials, especially men, accepted violence as a means to regulate family, work, and society. Animals, children, criminals, slaves, and the poor represented some of the groups viewed as receptive to or in need of physical discipline. As they advanced on to Native lands, as well as those occupied by Spain and France, White American colonials also asked for British soldiers to shield them against Indigenous communities. Meanwhile, in principle and practice, Redcoats guarded colonial American slaveholders who, along with masters of indentured servants, sustained a brutal system of labor control.

But just as slaves and indentures resisted such authority, White colonials turned on British forces that acted as colonial police. Tension and hatred had arisen between British soldiers and settlers in Virginia during Bacon’s Rebellion in 1676 and in New York during the Leisler Rebellion in 1691. A similar pattern held in 1763, when the British government cracked down on White migration, and in 1766, after British troops looted and destroyed property during a Hudson River manor tenant protest. As these later deployments represented a change in British colonial strategy, American rebels identified the problem: it was not government soldiers, but a lack of influence over how soldiers were used.<sup>22</sup>

In the cry “no taxation without representation,” White colonial Americans packaged together several complaints. They understood that financial resources are the foundation of the violent capability of a state and that the state’s ability to act with violence ensures its monopoly on taxation. The famous words also summoned deep-rooted precedent. The relationship between taxes and political influence had been established in the Middle Ages in France and England. Liberty, as developed as a White, Western ideal, exchanged economic and physical extraction (in taxation, mercantilist plans, and troop placement) for a voice in government (in a representative form). American rebels rejected the British claim that they had virtual representation – an assertion that each member of Parliament stood by himself an agent of empire and every citizen therein. The White colonists, buoyed by the recent war victory over France, imagined

themselves full British citizens. Their treatment as colonial subjects, however, failed to sustain such imaginings. It mattered little to the colonials that British citizens in Sheffield, Birmingham, and Leeds were likewise unrepresented and yet still taxed. Representation was local, they said, and only representatives who originated from a particular locale could operate with the consent of the governed.<sup>23</sup>

Often recognized as a lynchpin of American rebel political ideology, such thinking directly affected notions of state violence in the colonies. “Keeping a standing army in the province in time of peace without consent of the representatives is against law,” said the Massachusetts Provincial Congress in October 1774. This well-known argument – that without representation, without consent, the British treated American colonials not as citizens, but, in the parlance of the Revolution, as slaves – framed the perception of White colonial victimhood. And this status, many in the colonies came to believe, sanctioned violent acts against British aggression.<sup>24</sup>

However, like many of the ideas that authorize war, notions of White American victimhood often stood divorced of reality. First, the deployment of British regulars in Massachusetts was not extraordinary. The colonists lived and had lived in a system that consistently privileged the soldier over the citizen. While military authority in the American colonies was centralized and controlled by a commander who reported to London, political authority was dispersed among colony governors. As historian John Shy notes, “No American commander ever lost a battle with a royal governor.” The deployment of several thousand troops in the North American interior after the Seven Years’ War highlighted this imbalance. The military readily put the men in place, but the colony leaders could not raise funds from colonial Americans to pay for them. The great irony of the 1770s is that within a structure that favored military response, colonial protest – and its consequent collapse of civil authority – only furthered the very dynamic the American rebels set to destroy: British militarization devoid of White colonist influence. Second, White American colonials knew that their treatment by the British failed to mimic the accepted, interpersonal violence that buttressed racialized slavery in the empire. Still, they loudly declared such treatment unacceptable for White male recipients. And the false analogy of British politicians ruling White American slaves provided a potent result: the talk of White suffering prepared the colonists to act with violent, supposedly self-defensive acts.<sup>25</sup>

Eventually members of both sides, British leaders and American protesters, concluded that the most appropriate way to communicate was

through force. In Parliament, Whig statesman William Pitt was confident that “in a good cause, on a sound bottom” (by which he meant that popular opinion and the law stood in the empire’s favor) the British military could “crush America to atoms.” By 1770, British commander Thomas Gage appeared ready to test Pitt’s theory. “America is a mere bully, from one end to the other, and the Bostonians,” he said, “by far the greatest bullies.” One such Boston bully was the intellectual Mercy Otis Warren. Warren claimed that once British authority was asserted through physical coercion – in other words, once it became destructive instead of protective – the relationship between the colonies and mother country collapsed. She likened the British state to “an unnatural parent” who “has plung’d her dagger into the Bosom of her affectionate offspring.” It was “the law of nature,” John Adams said to explain the colonial response, “to repel injuries by force.”<sup>26</sup>

The rebels grounded their use of armed resistance in the idea of self-defense – a common practice to support violence exercised by individuals and government. When colonists seized Fort Ticonderoga, for example, they portrayed the event in a defensive light. The capture, marked as the “taking of Ticonderoga,” was an early American pre-emptive strike. “Defence and preservation,” along with the “overruling law of self-preservation,” explained the Continental Congress, mandated the attack. This need for American violence in self-defense soon defied even religious contradiction. Benjamin Franklin looked to recruit known adherents of nonviolent confrontation, Quakers, to the cause, as they would “arm in a defensive war.” “The principles of self-preservation,” explained minister Zabdiel Adams, sanction “the *humble* and *quiet*, the *meek* and *inoffensive* to turn their attention to the art of war . . . And while they breathe the pacific spirit of the gospel, furnish themselves with the instruments of slaughter.”<sup>27</sup>

But how such violent instruments should be created and wielded proved a muddled task. When the Massachusetts Provincial Congress eyed Fort Ticonderoga, for instance, its lawmakers appointed Connecticut businessman Benedict Arnold to direct an attack. The provincials authorized Arnold to gather an army of no more than four hundred men, which could act beyond the bounds of their authority in “neighboring colonies.” Rather than raise his own troops, however, Arnold rushed to meet a group of Vermonters. Ethan Allen, a backwoods renegade, also sought Ticonderoga. And Allen’s men, a militia in the loose sense of the term, cheered as Arnold brought the official support of Massachusetts to their mission. Tension soon arose, though, over who was to lead the attack and why. Arnold, who flaunted his commission from the Provincial Congress,

believed the expedition was his by right. Allen's men, in contrast, "were shockingly surprised when Col Arnold presumed to contend for the command" and refused to "be commanded by any others but those they engaged with." Unable to decide whether the people themselves – the Vermont soldiers – or the people's representative governed the American forces, both leaders proceeded into the battle.<sup>28</sup>

As British activity in Massachusetts increased and imperial soldiers marched in Boston's streets, the province's leaders promptly rejected the rigid social and military hierarchy associated with the empire. Massachusetts lawmakers mused that a violent American state, one that coupled popular violence and elite prerogative, had to be different. The New Englanders borrowed on experience from the Seven Years' War and on a host of thinkers – from sixteenth-century classicists to seventeenth-century English radicals. In the end, they sided with Italian Niccolò Machiavelli, who identified the republic – where power channels from the consent of the governed – as a reasonable means to control state violence. Other forms of political organization lauded the violence of the state over its people. Republican violence, by contrast, derived from within – from armed citizens in a militia. Citizens (most often White, wealthy individuals) had a stake in the success of the republic; thus, less violence was needed to sustain a republican society. When state violence allied an armed citizenry with national achievement, Machiavelli believed, (White) liberty was the result.<sup>29</sup>

Republican thoughts were no doubt on Massachusetts Committee of Safety member Joseph Warren's mind when he spoke of a nation in which "every member feels it to be his interest, and knows it to be his duty, to preserve inviolate the constitution on which the public safety depends." Warren's committee was ready "to alarm, muster, and cause to be assembled with the utmost expedition and completely armed, accoutered, and supplied with provisions . . . so many of the militia" as it deemed necessary. The resolves of October 26, 1774, recognized the role of the people in this militarized condition. The Provincial Congress valued the "knowledge and skill in the art military" of the men of Massachusetts, who it deemed should be properly "armed and equipped." If the men were unable to arm themselves, the towns and, ultimately, the province would supply them. Further, the legislature "recommended to the several militia in this province who have not already chosen and appointed officers, that they meet forthwith and elect officers to command respective companies." These armed citizens would defend Massachusetts, but only for as long "as the safety of the province" required it.<sup>30</sup>

Armed by private and public means, democratic in its election of officers, impermanent, and manned by militiamen, the Massachusetts Army created a military form familiar to New Englanders. But much like its earlier manifestations in colonial militias, the democratic impulses in the Massachusetts Army tended more toward a flawed than an efficient fighting machine. The selection of officers by vote bound those supposedly in authority to their men rather than the other way around. In reaction to an irksome order or reprimand, therefore, many militiamen opted to elect a new officer or simply decamp. These soldiers were “armed tourists,” who “did as they pleased and went where they pleased.” Still, the Massachusetts leaders applauded themselves for the creation of an armed force “without any such severe articles and rules . . . as are usually practiced in standing armies.” A popular militia manual went so far as to condemn the use of violence as a pedagogical tool. Soldiers in training, it suggested, would “be quite confounded” by physical discipline “and rendered incapable of learning any thing at all, and even forget what they already know.” In short, the Provincial Congress created an army of consent.<sup>31</sup>

By early spring 1775, though, the Massachusetts Army had suffered setbacks. The men gathered in Cambridge and Roxbury required food, shelter, and arms – expenditures which the province struggled to disburse. Chaos ruled: 3,700 men set out from Connecticut for Boston; within ten days, about 2,500 of them returned. Among the comings and goings, the American generals found it difficult to assess their numbers. For those who did stay, sanitation was an issue. Pit latrines – “sinks” as they were called – were routine for an eighteenth-century army; here, they were substituted by nature. As historian Paul Lockhart writes, “Men urinated and defecated whenever the mood struck them, sometimes right outside their tents, sometimes in close proximity to supplies of fresh water.” This assemblage witnessed other unfortunate but easily foreseen events, as well. On April 28, for example, while on parade with his regiment, eighteen-year-old Abiel Petty of Walpole fired his musket by accident. The mistake cost twenty-two-year-old Asa Cheney his life. Eager and spirited, these soldiers were untrained and dangerous.<sup>32</sup>

Headed by General Artemas Ward, a Shrewsbury shopkeeper whose first general order required a record of soldiers by race, the coagulation of men on the Boston town commons was clearly a failure. Massachusetts leaders instituted a new oath of service, but the army of consent suffered from direction not allegiance. The local representatives soon turned to the Continental Congress, which had just convened its second meeting in Philadelphia. “The prospect of deciding the question between our

mother country and us, by the sword, gave us the greatest pain and anxiety,” they wrote, “but, we have made all the preparation for our necessary defence.” They worried, however, that while Massachusetts had created an army, it had yet to assume the “reins of civil government.” With an army but no government, the members of the Provincial Congress acknowledged that they were in violation of a key republican principle: that “the sword should in all free states be subservient to civil powers.” To correct this problem, the provincial men offered two solutions. The first option placed the Massachusetts Army under the yet-to-be established civil authority of the Provincial Congress. The second, which members of the Provincial Congress preferred, placed the Massachusetts Army under the control of the Continental Congress. The local lawmakers even suggested that the Continental Congress meet closer to Boston, where advice “may be more expeditiously afforded upon any emergency.” But no matter which corrective course was chosen, the existing records from the Provincial Congress reveal that the formation of the Massachusetts troops predated the formation of a civil authority to oversee them. This suggests that the establishment of state violence drove American political development.<sup>33</sup>

Though the Massachusetts legislators expressed concern over the army that they created, many of them enthusiastically endorsed the use of physical force to counter British authority. Take, for instance, Joseph Warren who helped to author several letters sent from the Provincial Congress to the Continental Congress in 1775. Like most of the more than 230 Provincial Congress members, Warren, a Harvard graduate and physician, had been active in the colonial turmoil since the 1760s. British troop buildup and colonial disarmament frightened the Massachusetts slaveholder. “Even if a private gentleman carries one [gun] out of town with him for diversion,” Warren explained, “he is not permitted to bring it back again.” There was hope in the prospect of a colonies-wide militarism, though, and he trusted the Continentals would agree. “The exactness and beauty” of the British troops will “inspire our youth with ardor in the pursuit of military knowledge.” This circulation of violence, Warren assured, would work toward American ends. “The mistress we court is LIBERTY; and it is better to die than not to obtain her.” White American rebels, rich and poor, bonded in this belief: physical sacrifice validates social and political faith.<sup>34</sup>

Warren and his Provincial Congress colleagues picked a near-perfect time to proposition the Continental Congress. In spring 1775, militant tones resounded in the large rebel assembly. The delegate and enslaver

from North Carolina, Richard Caswell, wrote home from his Philadelphia seat, “Here a Greater Martial Spirit prevails, if possible, than I have been describing in Virginia & Maryland. They have . . . near 2000 men who March out to the Common & go thro their Exercises twice a day regularly. Scarce any thing But Warlike Musick is to be heard in the streets.” Caswell advised his son to become a soldier “to defend our Country & Support our Liberties.” Fellow delegate Joseph Hewes, who enslaved at least ten Black people at the time, confirmed that, in Philadelphia, “nothing heard but the sound of Drums & Fifes, all Ranks and Degrees of men are in Arms.” Along with others, Hewes was especially impressed that “all the Quakers except a few of the old Rigid ones have taken up arms . . . one or two of the Companies are composed entirely of Quakers.”<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile, Connecticut’s Continental Silas Deane, who also enslaved Black persons, observed the uniforms of Philadelphia militiamen. “Their Coat is made Short, falling but a little below the Waistband of the Breeches, which,” he said to his wife, “shews the Size of a Man to a very great advantage.” The sexual overtones were unmistakable. Hardly unique to the United States, a link between male physicality, particularly sexual virility, and violent prowess would persist in America. Deane, who displayed a keen eye, made another connection transparent: “Their Cartouch Boxes are large, with the Word Liberty.” Again, size marked a heightened power, but, more importantly, coupled violence – the cartouche box carried ammunition – and liberty.<sup>36</sup>

This environment, where White colonials embraced such forceful displays of dress and action, sounded clear notes in the ears of those in the Continental Congress who would soon agree to the Massachusetts military request. On June 2, 1775, the delegates acted quickly after receipt of the Provincial Congress application and moved to take command of the “Army now collecting from different colonies.” The next day, Saturday, June 3, they charged a committee to borrow six thousand pounds to purchase gunpowder to be used by what they now referred to as “the Continental Army.” And by the end of the following week, the congress orchestrated a unified defense. It ordered the removal of provisions and armaments from places like New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and western New Jersey to the most likely sites of conflict: Boston, New York, and Philadelphia.<sup>37</sup>

Alone among the thirteen colonies, only Georgia did not participate in the Continental Congress’s Philadelphia assembly. Therefore, only Georgia did not agree at this time to the creation of the Continental Army. Its leaders feared their “dreaded” and “vast number of negroes [slaves],” as well as the “bad effects of an Indian War.” The Georgians believed that “none but Great



Britain” could provide “such powerful aid and assistance” necessary to overawe the enslaved and Indians. Of course, the representatives from the twelve other colonies disagreed and established an American military.<sup>38</sup>

Founded on notions of White consent, justified by the laws of nature and nations, and integral to the formation of colonial unity, the violent American state would thus be built on a robust foundation. Yet the men who met in Philadelphia for the Continental Congress still harbored doubts on assuming control of the Massachusetts Army, which was on the verge of dissolution and lacked discipline, arms, and latrines. They discussed the possibility of raising a whole other army. However, “the difficulty of collecting another and the probability that the British Army would take Advantage” of their disorganization subdued the discussion. What was apparent to the likes of Ethan Allen weeks before in Vermont was now a more widespread opinion: “a war has already commenced between Great Britain and the colonies . . . To fight the king’s troops has become inevitable.”<sup>39</sup>

Insofar as the transfer of violence from the “state of nature” to a political body marks the creation of liberal government, the Continental Congress founded America on Thursday, June 15, 1775. It was on this day, after weeks spent in preparation for the formation of the Continental Army, that the Continental Congress “Resolved, That a General be appointed to command all the continental forces, raised, or to be raised, for the defence of American liberty.” The Virginia slaveholder and delegate Edmund Pendleton’s words speak plainly to the significance of what the group decided that day: “Colonel Washington is appointed General and Commander in chief of all the American Force.”<sup>40</sup>

The selection of George Washington was no accident. By 1775, the forty-three-year-old had a long history of military service. Back in 1754, an openly ambitious Washington persuaded Virginia Governor Dinwiddie to appoint him lieutenant-colonel for an assault in the Ohio country. He won a quick victory over French and Native forces, but his success was soon overshadowed. During the battle, a French delegate bearing a diplomatic note was killed. Then, in a surprising turn of events, the French opposition overran Washington and his men at a makeshift defense dubbed Fort Necessity. In the rain and dark, Washington, who forever claimed there had been a deception, capitulated – with terms that admitted his responsibility for a diplomatic assassination.<sup>41</sup>

The supposed slaughter of an ambassador placed Washington at the center of an international brouhaha. To make matters worse, the French stole his diary and printed its contents. French leaders fully blamed the

British for the killing, to the extent that the incident stands as one of the immediate triggers for the Seven Years' War. The occasion was so notable in its time that Washington's name appeared in John Barrow's *A New and Impartial History of England, From the Invasion of Julius Caesar, to the Signing of the Preliminaries of Peace, in the Year 1762*.<sup>42</sup>

Despite this initial disaster, Washington established himself as a no-nonsense military man. A doomed campaign in the western theater at Fort Duquesne in 1755 highlighted his steely nerve. British Major-General Edward Braddock, who led the attack, was killed. His aide, Washington, lived to brag of the "4 bullets through [his] coat and two horses shot under." With pride, Washington kept his battle-scarred hat. "I heard Bullets whistle," he wrote to his brother, John Augustine, "and believe me there was something charming in the sound." (One memoir has it that King George II, upon hearing the anecdote, responded, "He would not say so, if he had been used to hear many.") The next year, the *Boston Gazette* welcomed Washington as "the Hon. Colonel Washington, a gentleman who has deservedly a high reputation of military skill, integrity, and valor, though success has not always attended his undertakings." The *Royal Magazine* described him as "a young gentleman of great bravery and distinguished merit."<sup>43</sup>

A willingness to play the disciplinarian bolstered Washington's military worth. In opposition to the underlying ideals of the Massachusetts Army, he believed that men, particularly of the non-elite class, responded best to violence. He held this belief from the very start of his career. Washington especially saw the need for this disciplinary standard when it came to the Virginia militiamen, whom he found "obstinate, self-willed, perverse; of little or no service to the people, and very burthensome to the Country." To combat the disorder, especially the high desertion rates that plagued his Virginia Regiment, he regularly meted out whippings and hangings. In his orders for early July 1756, Washington sustained the sentences of John Leigh and Andrew Simmons at 250 lashes; Andrew Lockhart at 400 lashes; John Jenkins at 500 lashes; and William Pritchard, William Davis, and Robert Yates at 1,000 lashes apiece – all penalties for desertion, repeated desertion, and influencing others to desert. Washington appeared only slightly more charitable in practice, demanding "the above prisoners to receive as much of their punishment as the Surgeon (who must attend upon this occasion) shall judge they are able to bear."<sup>44</sup>

The British military, of course, was organized under such practices, and Washington chose to follow custom. A noted military manual of the era states: "The Drum-major counts every lash with a loud voice; the Adjutant

stands by to see the punishment properly inflicted; and the Surgeon, or his Mate attends, that no punishment may extend to life or limb.” However, that flogging was not intended to kill or maim did not prevent the killing or maiming of the victim. Nor did such boundaries shelter recipients of the lash from horrific torture. British Major-General Charles Napier, who began his army career in the 1790s, offered this:

I have seen hundreds of men flogged, and have always observed that when the skin is thoroughly cut up, or flayed off, the great pain subsides. Men are frequently convulsed and screaming, during the time they receive from one lash to three hundred lashes, and then they bear the remainder, even to eight hundred, or a thousand lashes, without a groan; they will often lie as if without life, and the drummers appear to be flogging a lump of dead, raw flesh.

Massachusetts provincial soldier David Perry agreed. He upheld whipping as “the most cruel punishment I ever saw” and noted that after 300 lashes on two soldiers, “The flesh appeared to be entirely whipped from their shoulders, and they hung mute and motionless as though they had been long deprived of life.” Perry remarked, too, that the surgeon on hand then signaled that the men could “bear it yet” – meaning that they could receive more lashes.<sup>45</sup>

According to one estimate, George Washington ordered (in a military setting) on average 613 lashes based on data from May and July 1757. This average placed him a touch under the 713 annual average for the British Army. Despite the small sample size, some scholars point to this study as evidence of Washington’s humanity (while ignoring the whippings and other punishments received by Washington’s slaves). Such sentiment, it is important to note, stands in contrast to actions and requests over the course of his career as a colonial and American military leader. In the service of the British and, later, the Continental Congress, Washington made repeated requests to make the punishments available to him more severe.<sup>46</sup>

Severe punishment never seemed to stem the outflow of Washington’s units in the 1750s. Yet he continued to order lashings, place men in shackles, and throw them in “dark rooms” (for example, solitary confinement) for desertion. It was not enough. Along with Governor Dinwiddie, he petitioned the legislature to allow executions for desertion and other disobediences. The young colonel believed, in the vein of an early New England Puritan, that violent public example served a civic good. “Henry Campbell, for Desertion, is to be shot on Sunday morning at seven of the clock,” Washington ordered in June 1756. To bring home the lesson, he

further ordered “all the Soldiers and Draughts to attend the execution.” To Dinwiddie he wrote: “These Examples, and proper encouragement for good Behaviour, will I hope, bring the Soldiers under proper Discipline.”<sup>47</sup>

Washington’s practice of exemplary violence fit well within White societal norms in the British empire. It reflected an arrogant belief that the lower classes, including Black slaves, were uncontrollable without physical chastisement. The famed slave trader and sea captain, John Newton, active between 1748 and 1754, demonstrated this mindset on the high seas. “Without a strict discipline,” he said, “the common sailors would be unmanageable.” Anthony Whitting, who managed George Washington’s estate in Virginia, echoed this conviction when he whipped Charlotte, a Black enslaved woman at Mount Vernon. He wrote, “She will behave herself for I am determined to lower her Spirit or Skin her Back.” Washington agreed with the method, responding, “Your treatment of Charlotte was very proper.”<sup>48</sup>

Though White enslavers like Washington sustained exemplary violence across a variety of British and soon American institutions, such as the military and human slavery, this does not suggest that the victims of those institutions, the common soldiers and the enslaved, suffered similar fates. For example, flogging (or whipping) was a form of physical torture used in a variety of settings. The whipping of a Black person in enslavement, however, sustained a system described by the sociologist Orlando Patterson as the “permanent, violent, and personal domination of natively alienated and generally dishonored persons.” In other words, the violence of slavery created and defined a racialized group of “disposable” people. Meanwhile, harsh military discipline – the internal violence of the military – created and continued a regimented military workforce. To conclude, the broader implication is that Washington and other leaders readily deployed violence in many different settings, even though the meaning and function of violence in each setting was different. And regardless of the setting, although on occasion Washington opted for peaceful means to manage confrontation, his default mode was for further violence.<sup>49</sup>

By the 1770s, Washington had settled more into the life of a Virginia planter than that of a military leader. The British Army had shunned him from its regular ranks, as it did most colonials. But when the Revolutionary crisis arose, Washington quickly turned back the clock. As a delegate for the Continental Congress, he arrived in Philadelphia with his outfit and colors from the Fairfax militia. Most likely it was the same clothing he wore for a 1772 portrait by Charles Wilson Peale. Washington had never abandoned his martial leanings and, more than two weeks before the

Continental Congress appointed him general, John Adams noted, “Coll. Washington appears at Congress in his Uniform and, by his great Experience and Abilities in military Matters, is of much service to Us.”<sup>50</sup>

Six feet in height, with wide, muscular hips that made him a great horseman and dancer, Washington stood tall above his peers. On horseback, he dominated the scene. Such physical presence only reinforced the perception of his military prowess. The well-known physician Benjamin Rush was hardly alone in observing that Washington “has so much martial dignity in his deportment that you would distinguish him to be a general and a soldier from among ten thousand people.” John Adams gushed like a schoolboy after seeing the Virginia colonel in uniform. “Oh that I was a Soldier!” he declared. So inspired, he continued, “I will be. – I am reading military Books. – Every Body must and will, and shall be a soldier.”<sup>51</sup>

And men were not the only ones drawn to Washington. Married to a soldier, Martha Daingerfield Bland had much to say of the Virginian. Observing his attributes, she said, “Now let me speak of our Noble and Agreeable Commander (for he commands both Sexes) one by his Excellent Skill in Military Matters the other by his ability, politeness, and attention.” Indeed, Washington’s virility was bolstered by his wealth and rank, and extended to many flirtations with women. “He can be down right impudent sometimes,” Bland explained to a friend, “such impudence, Fanny, as you and I like.”<sup>52</sup>

Under Washington’s command, the Continental Army stands as the first instance of American institutionalized violence. That the individual in charge of it sported a manly vigor linked to authoritarian ways and a dominant physical presence cannot be overstated. In 1775, Abigail Adams remarked upon it when she wrote to her husband, John, “I was struck with General Washington . . . Dignity with ease, and complacency, the Gentleman and Soldier look agreeably blended in him.” Notably, Washington was among the wealthiest men in America, a Virginia planter whose manner and dress often mimicked that of the British aristocracy. At the same time, he was unschooled – a somewhat self-made man, to borrow the phrasing of later generations – and had a clear record of ferocity. As portraitist Gilbert Stuart said of Washington, “had he been born in the forest, it was his opinion that [Washington] would have been the fiercest among the savage tribes.” Stuart’s statement reflects the image found in the proverbial “colonial mirror,” as it is described by anthropologist Michael Taussig. This view “reflects back onto the colonists the barbarity of their own social relations, but as imputed to the savage or evil figure they wish to colonize.” It is therefore significant, from this perspective, that Stuart

failed to acknowledge that Washington often deployed his ruthlessness in pursuit of Native lands and, as a military leader, in destruction of Native communities.<sup>53</sup>

In the Continental Congress, Washington was one of several candidates who jockeyed for position before the final decision announced him as the chief of the Continental Army. Artemas Ward, for example, who served as general of the troops under the aegis of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, was in the mix. His candidacy rested on the belief that the New England soldiers already “had a General of their own” and “appeared to be satisfied with him.” At the time, Continental Congress President John Hancock, an enslaver of two or three Black persons in Massachusetts, also had open designs on the military post. But even though John Adams marked him a thorough patriot, “the Delicacy of his health, and his entire Want of Experience in actual Service . . . were decisive Objections.” Hancock’s “Ambition to be appointed Commander in Chief” worked against his campaign as well. Political men in the late eighteenth century often held grand notions of civic service – they frowned on individual aspiration or financial profit as motives for public duty. Delegates were duly impressed, then, that whenever Washington’s name was mentioned, the colonel “from his Usual Modesty darted into the Library Room” away from the debate. Washington was, in fact, a genius at playing the politics of virtue. He convinced many in the Continental Congress that, even though he arrived in Philadelphia in military garb, he did not crave the position.<sup>54</sup>

Southerners were keen to support the selection of George Washington. Talk of liberty exposed a growing rift over race and labor in the colonies. Significantly, White leaders in the North were not unyielding advocates of Black slave emancipation – there were tens of thousands of northern slaves. Indeed, many northern politicians proved wedded to White supremacy during the processes of slave abolition that would eventually start in several northern states. But, as seen in Georgia’s initial refusal to join the Continental Congress, the maintenance of robust state violence was necessary for plantation life and a significant southern concern. In New Hanover County, North Carolina, representatives understood the importance of the Battles of Lexington and Concord, but said that only when combined with “the dread of instigated [slave] insurrections in the colonies” did it justify “the use of [American] arms.” White men in Wilmington, North Carolina, watched in disbelief as the British commander of Fort Johnston “basely encouraged slaves from their masters, paid and employed them, and declared openly, that he would excite them to an insurrection.” The Committee of Safety in Pitt County denounced the commander’s “atrocious

and horrid declaration” and placed a “Poll Tax on all the Taxable Negroes.” The monies would pay for slaves “Killed or disabled” by White American “Patrolers” – men authorized to shoot “Negroes” in groups larger than four found off their plantations and who “will not submit.” Southern delegates needed George Washington – an enslaver of hundreds of Black individuals – because they needed a general who shared their view on slavery. They thus opted for a man who at times wore dentures formed of teeth torn from the mouths of slaves.<sup>55</sup>

The debate over Washington’s selection did expose some of the earliest divisions between the northern and southern colonies, however. Southern delegates flummoxed John Adams, who strained to understand why they were so adamant for one of their own to lead. He questioned whether their stance was sincere or “mere pride and a haughty Ambition.” But Washington’s personal character, military reputation, and the ideological unity brought by a southerner at the head of what was then a New England army persuaded him. “There is something charming to me in the conduct of Washington,” Adams said. “A gentleman of one of the first fortunes upon the continent, leaving his delicious retirement, his family and friends, sacrificing his ease, and hazarding all in the cause of his country!”<sup>56</sup>

In no small part, Washington earned the trust of leaders in the North and South with his record of coercion. Yet he demonstrated a deft ability to downplay the link between physical, economic, and social domination and his acceptance of the leadership position. When offered the generalship, Washington received the command with the expected propriety. Speaking to the Continental Congress, he moderated his military skill – “I do not think myself equal to the command I am honored with.” He even refused to earn a salary, opting only for reimbursement of expenses incurred, stating, “I do not wish to make any proffit from it.” In private, he continued in this vein. To Martha, his wife, he wrote, “so far from seeking this appointment I have used every endeavor in my power to avoid it.” To Burwell Bassett, his brother-in-law, he laid blame for the move on the Continental Congress: “I have been called upon by the unanimous Voice of the Colonies to the Command of the Continental Army – It is an honour I by no means aspired to.”<sup>57</sup>

On June 19, 1775, the “Commission from the Continental Congress” authorized Washington as “GENERAL AND COMMANDER IN CHIEF for the defence of American Liberty and for repelling every hostile invasion thereof.” It specifically conferred on him “full power and authority to act . . . for the good and Welfare of the service.” In this wording, the delegates made clear their expectation that Washington would put an end

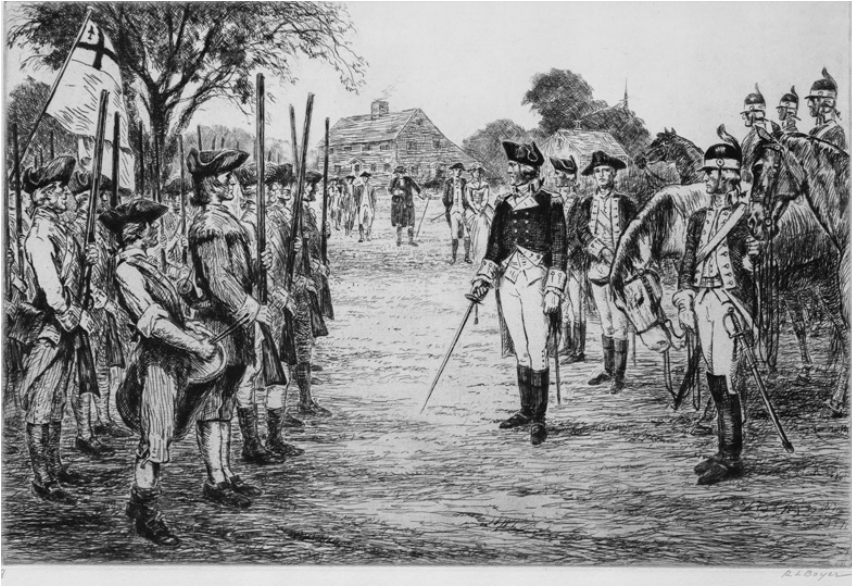
to the disorder that plagued the army. Not only did they tell Washington to “require all officers and soldiers under your command to be obedient to your orders,” they demanded the general bring about “strict discipline and order.” On June 22, the Continentals elaborated on these instructions: “You shall take every method in your power, consistent with prudence, to destroy or make prisoners of all persons, who now are, or who hereafter shall appear in arms against the good people of the United Colonies.” In the Continental Congress’s orders, the self-defensive logic of the Revolution was thus reversed: the Americans had become the state, and they justified the use of violence since they upheld order.<sup>58</sup>

Now the most powerful American, Washington faced a difficult task. He had to bring stability to the army in Massachusetts and “destroy” the British empire in North America. And a letter dated June 24, 1775, alerted the general to yet another problem. Five of his slaves had run away from his Virginia plantation. Instability in the slave system, the very scenario feared most by many White southerners, was coming to pass. A few months later, Lord Dunmore added fuel to the fire, offering freedom to all American slaves and indentured servants who would fight for the British. It was an effective gambit. “There is not a man of them, but woud leave us, if they believe’d they coud make there Escape,” Lund Washington, the manager of Washington’s Mount Vernon estate, reported of the workforce in December. “Liberty is sweet.”<sup>59</sup>

General Washington recognized that orderly slaves and White American liberty depended on his wise deployment of violence on behalf of the would-be American state. Toward that end, he removed himself to Boston to organize his army and survey the British (Fig. 1.3). Though the term “Continental Army” was already in use, Washington called his men the “Troops of the United Provinces of North America.” On July 4, 1775, he released orders stating, “it is required and expected that exact discipline be observed, and due Subordination prevail thro’ the whole Army.” This, he claimed, would help the Americans avoid “shameful disappointment and disgrace.” He reminded the soldiers that army regulations forbade “profane cursing, swearing & drunkenness,” and insisted on “punctual attendance on divine service.” Washington had further instructions for his officers, whom he commanded to keep the “Men neat and clean – to visit them often at their quarters, and inculcate upon them the necessity of cleanliness, as essential to their health and service.”<sup>60</sup>

Only three days after his arrival in Boston, Washington proved that he meant business, ordering a “General Court martial” for July 6, 1775, at 10 a.m. One man was charged with insulting a sentry, one with leaving his





**Fig. 1.3** *Washington Assumes Command*. Ralph Ludwig Boyer, American, 1879–1952, Printed by Henry E. Carling, London, Published by the George Washington Memorial Association, New York, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT. Anonymous gift in honor of Dr. George C. F. Williams, 1933.172.

post, another with theft, and two with sleeping at their posts. In the upcoming days, the general arranged trials for desertion, “rescuing a Prisoner when in lawful custody,” and cowardice. On the last, he reflected, “the Cowardice of a single Officer may prove the Distruction of the whole army.”<sup>61</sup>

Through punishment, Washington looked to instill in his inexperienced soldiers the regimented European military ethos that he had learned over the course of his career. As he was well aware, drilling and discipline have served to transform ordinary citizens into killers across time and cultures. The power and coercion needed to enact such change, Washington believed, was most effective when issued from a central authority. And it was for this reason that he continued to doubt the militia. These temporary units of citizen-soldiers were often regulated under provincial control rather than that of Washington. As a result, they seemed insufficiently disciplined to the general. Writing to John Hancock, Washington reflected that “No Dependence can be put on the Militia for a Continuance in Camp, or Regularity and Discipline during the short Time they may stay.”<sup>62</sup>

Once Washington took command, the men in Cambridge and Roxbury were subjugated to a general who sought to create a rigid, British-styled military force. Now, with its earlier restraints loosened, the violence of the United American Colonies was freed to discipline and punish – the very situation that the architects of the Massachusetts Army had tried to prevent. And the clash of the two structures of state violence, the Continental Army and the Massachusetts Army – one more authoritarian, the other more egalitarian, both tied to the hierarchies of liberal life – forged a lasting American legacy.

Indeed, as Washington instituted a new command structure, which placed many southerners in charge, Andover's Samuel Osgood reported on the resistance of the common soldier. "Is the faithful obedient Soldier to be contemned because he says I know my own Colony Men, I choose to be commanded by them? . . . Can anything, Sir, fire upon us a more infamous Name, than that we are able to raise Men, but cannot officer them!" Osgood explained that many soldiers of the Massachusetts Army would refuse to re-enlist thanks to Washington's military reorganization. He already had anecdotal evidence. The "Connecticut Soldiers . . . at present appear to be determined to Leave the Camp" and the Massachusetts "Men will dance to the same Tune when their Time is ended."<sup>63</sup>

Washington supporter John Adams also voiced concern over the changes the general and his southern supporters demanded. The new military leaders had found the pay scale of the Massachusetts Army "too high for privates, and too low for the officers." They immediately altered it. Adams now feared "our people," New Englanders, would find the increase in officer salaries "extravagant, and be uneasy." Adams, like Osgood, believed that freeholders deserved more power and pay in the military. To them, it was an essential right of property-owning and, as was often the case, Whiteness. Each held fast to a belief in the sanctity of all men with property (as opposed to just that of men with significant holdings). This ideal, they argued, created "a Kind of Equality" in New England.<sup>64</sup>

But Washington and his southern commanders were not persuaded. As army chaplain Reverend William Emerson observed of the changes in Boston:

There is great overturning in the camp, as to order and regularity. New lords new laws. The Generals Washington and Lee are upon the lines every day. New orders from his Excellency are read to the respective regiments every morning after prayers. The strictest government is taking place, and great distinction is made between officers and soldiers. Every

one is made to know his place and keep in it, or be tied up and receive thirty or forty lashes according to his crime.<sup>65</sup>

Clearly, American leaders such as Washington and Adams disagreed on the contours and boundaries of White, male authority in the American provinces. Significantly, though, they did not question the racial, religious, and gendered assumptions at its core. Adams held notions of a more democratic environment for property-owning Whites, but he found it “dangerous” to “confound and destroy all Distinctions, and prostrate all Ranks, to one common Levell.” He also dismissed the broader political and social aspirations of Indians, Catholics, slaves, and women inspired by the Revolution’s egalitarian rhetoric. These movements, Adams said, were nothing more than a divisive campaign hatched by the British.<sup>66</sup>

Indeed, that the future American president, like its general, remained firm in such beliefs is a testament to the commitment to hierarchy and institutionalized inequity at the center of the nation’s founding. When his wife, Abigail, asked for change in married women’s dependent legal status, for example, John refused to answer in a rational tone. “General Washington, and all our brave Heroes would fight” such “Despotism of the Petticoat,” he replied. “We know better than to repeal our Masculine systems.” And yet, while Adams was right to highlight the masculine structures in place at the time of the Revolution, violent acts on behalf of a colony or province had never been an exclusively White, male domain. And during the Revolution and beyond, women, like other groups traditionally framed out of full rights and privileges, contested the military roles that men such as Washington found suitable for them.<sup>67</sup>