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CHARLES HULETT, CONTINENTAL ARMY DRUMMER: A REVOLUTIONARY LIFE REEXAMIN

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my patient and loving husband, Bill Midgley, who provided his unfailing support to me throughout my graduate studies.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Dr. John Chappo, my thesis advisor, for his support and direction throughout my thesis project and for inspiring my love of history in the early days of my graduate studies. I wish to thank Dr. Stanley D. M. Carpenter, whose passion for teaching the complexities of the War for American Independence led me to a much deeper appreciation for America’s first great civil war. I also wish to thank the kind professors at APUS who challenged and encouraged me during my program studies, including Dr. Brett Woods, Dr. Anne Venzon, Dr. Mark Bowles, and Dr. Jon Mikolashek.

I also wish to thank the following people for their exceptional research assistance: Katherine Ludwig, Librarian of the David Library of the American Revolution, Dr. Greg Walsh of Marion Court College, Todd Braisted, Loyalist and New Jersey Volunteers expert, and Charles Baxley, publisher of *Southern Campaigns of the American Revolution*.

Most of all, I wish to thank my husband for his love, support and encouragement throughout my master’s program.
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

CHARLES HULETT, CONTINENTAL ARMY DRUMMER: A REVOLUTIONARY LIFE REEXAMINED

by

Anne M. Midgley

American Public University System, July 27, 2014

Charles Town, West Virginia

Professor John Chappo, Thesis Professor

This study is a micro-history of the American War of Independence based on the experiences of Charles Hulett, who entered the war as a sixteen-year-old New Jersey militiaman. The study examines the political, social, and military milieu of colonial and revolutionary New Jersey, including the province’s demographics and religious denomination affiliations, which influenced the choices made by the residents to either support the British Crown or the Whig rebellion. The study traces Hulett’s career through the war as he experienced life as a militiaman in colonial New Jersey, a member of revolutionary New Jersey’s state troops, a conscripted drummer in the American Continental Army, and a British provincial soldier in the New Jersey Volunteers. The study demonstrates that in order to develop a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the Revolutionary War period, one must understand the impact of the war upon the life and choices of an ordinary American soldier. It differs from other micro-studies by highlighting that an individual’s choice between the Whig concept of liberty and loyalty to the
British Crown often turned on pragmatic concerns and emotional ties, rather than upon lofty ideals. For Hulett, the choice to enlist with the Loyalist New Jersey Volunteers in 1780 followed compulsory service with the Continental Army as a nine-month draftee. His actions illustrate that in some cases, Americans made decisions based on the will to survive a long and brutal civil war, not on the resolution to pursue ideological goals.
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Introduction

The American Revolution and its related War for American Independence inextricably defined Charles Hulett’s life. Born in 1760, the year that George III ascended the throne of Great Britain, Hulett and his contemporaries experienced a maelstrom of events that culminated in the creation of the United States of America. The events of 1775 through 1783 forged a new nation, and for Hulett, who came of age as a common soldier during that time, it was the centerpiece of his life. As his mourners laid him to rest in May 1835, they praised Hulett as a “most excellent and exemplary man.”¹ His obituary did not mention the accomplishments of his long life, but rather celebrated the role he played as “one of the band of revolutionary worthies.”² His experience during the Battle of Princeton, which taking place on 3 January 1777 preceded his death by almost sixty years, was the focal point of his obituary. Hulett, like many of his contemporaries, faced events far beyond his control during his early life. Though only a “bit player” on the revolutionary stage, Hulett experienced life as a militiaman in colonial New Jersey, a member of revolutionary New Jersey’s state troops, a conscripted drummer in the American Continental Army, and a British provincial soldier in the New Jersey Volunteers. At seventeen, he witnessed British soldiers bayonet to death his popular commander, Captain Daniel Neil, during the Battle of Princeton, while his unit was “almost cut to pieces.”³ This study will demonstrate that in order to develop a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the Revolutionary War period, one must understand the impact of the war upon the life and choices of an ordinary American soldier.

² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
This study differs from existing scholarship by keeping an individual soldier as the primary focus, though it includes historical context to add background, perspective, and depth to his story. The project results include a brief social, political, and military overview of colonial New Jersey, Hulett’s home province, a colony which scholars have little studied for it did not play a principal role in the period leading up to the rebellion. Revolutionary War historiography primarily focuses on the leading radical Whigs in Massachusetts Bay and events there that sparked the war. Secondarily, historians examine the colony of Virginia, as its leaders also played a key role in the rebellion. New Jersey, a relatively small colony with a rural and heterogeneous population, did not factor into the pivotal events that preceded the Whig rebellion. Military historians place primary emphasis on pivotal battles that either changed the assumed course of the war or caused it to continue; in this study, the emphasis will be different. The author’s research found that some documents, such as a pension request, which place Hulett at various battles in the war, are inaccurate. By researching the circumstances that led to each battle mentioned as well as the participating troops, the author identified those in which Hulett did play a role in and those that he did not. The research results will be included in the study; however, the author will only provide lengthy treatment to those battles where Hulett experienced combat, including one relatively unknown large-scale battle that occurred late in the war but did not play a pivotal role in its outcome. While Hulett’s personal involvement in the War for American Independence did not affect its outcome, this study of his experience illuminates the role of an individual soldier. Revolutionary War historiography’s focus on leading characters, causes, and pivotal events now shares the stage with “bottoms up” treatments, which research groups of previously under-represented people, including women, African Americans, Native Americans, and soldiers. Very few studies, if any, focus on an individual solder, unless based upon his
journal. However, understanding the circumstances affecting an individual soldier and the choices he made when given an option create a better understanding of the social complexities which affected the Revolutionary War soldier.

In an August 1845 pension application filed on behalf of Hulett’s heirs, his son-in-law, Jonas Aby, claimed that the British wounded, captured, and held Hulett as a prisoner at some point following the 28 June 1778 Battle of Monmouth Courthouse. Aby further claimed that the British “carried [Hulett] in captivity to the West Indies” and that Hulett enlisted with the British to escape the “horrors of his imprisonment;” as the fate of many American prisoners-of-war was frequently starvation, disease, and death. In Aby’s version of the story, while in captivity Hulett enlisted with the British as a musician, accompanied the British Army’s return to the United States, and eventually deserted to re-join the ranks of the Continental Army. The findings of this study contradict that claim and hypothesize that Hulett enlisted with the New Jersey Volunteers, a Loyalist regiment, in April 1780. Hulett eventually transferred to the Provincial Light Infantry and fought extensively with the British during the American Revolutionary War Southern Campaign. At the Battle of Eutaw Springs on 8 September 1781, one of the longest and bloodiest of the war, Hulett became a prisoner of the American rebels.


5 Todd Braisted, e-mail message to author, January 23, 2014. Braisted is the Loyalist expert used by the David Library of the American Revolution. He provided the information and sources regarding Hulett’s provincial service. Braisted noted that the New Jersey State Archives reflect that Hulett enlisted in the 1st Battalion, New Jersey Volunteers in the NJSA, Department of Defense Manuscripts, Loyalist Manuscripts, Box 17, No. 12-L. The muster rolls of Captain Cougle's and Captain Shaw's companies list him in 1780 and are both located in the Library and Archives Canada, RG 8, "C" Series, Volume 1852. Materials for 1782-1783, in Captain Hutchinson's Company (Hutchinson was promoted to command Shaw's Company after Shaw’s death following the Battle of Eutaw Springs) are in Volume 1853. The two muster rolls of Captain Shaw's Company in South Carolina are in Volume 1900 of the same collection.
This study of Charles Hulett’s Revolutionary War service is a military micro-history featuring his service through the known period of his enlistment. It surveys a number of related revolutionary war-era themes and events that influenced his life as a both a New Jersey resident and as common soldier.

The historiography of the American Revolution began soon after the last sounds of battle fell silent. American authors were eager to memorialize the experience of the country’s birth and separation from Britain. Much of the work done by the earliest writers of American Revolutionary history was celebratory in nature and focused primarily, if not solely, on the conflict between the Whig radicals and the mother country, painting the rebellion and its ultimate victory in an ideological and heroic cast. Mercy Otis Warren’s *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution* falls into this category. Other early writers include David Ramsay, who had been a surgeon in the Continental Army during the war, and John Marshall, who later became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. America, in a sense, was born based on a radical version of English Whig political ideology, which stressed the constitutional limits placed upon the British monarchy and the overall benefits of an elected representative government to protect personal liberties and offset the tyrannical tendencies of a monarch. Whig historiography played a prominent role in American Revolution historiography through the nineteenth century as it chronicled the causes and outcomes of the American Revolution as an advance toward human liberty against British oppression. Historian George Bancroft epitomized this form.6

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The early twentieth century’s professional historians challenged this trend and underscored the importance of economics and class struggles within American society. Perhaps the most important of these Progressive historians were James and Mary Beard as well as Carl Becker. Writing at about the same time in Britain, Sir Lewis Namier began to examine the British perspective of the War for American Independence and the political, economic and social environment that spawned it from a micro-level, examining its causes at the level of “agents and families.”

The American Progressive School launched a reaction amongst historians seeking to return to an examination of the American Revolution’s ideological roots, rather than base its causes in economics. The historians who followed the Beards and Becker tended to be either “conservative” or “consensus” historians. These historians saw the revolution based in the American colonists’ desire to defend their liberties from perceived encroaching British tyranny. Additionally, consensus historians found ideological agreement across the colonies and downplayed the American Loyalists’ role in the revolution. Gordon S. Wood’s article “Rhetoric and Reality in the American Revolution” examines this trend and the works of Edmund Morgan and Bernard Bailyn in particular. Wood himself has been classified as a “neo-Whig,” a historian who examined the root causes of the American Revolution in the radical ideological break that occurred over time between the colonies and the mother country.


7 Breisach, Historiography, 301.


Recently historians have examined the American Revolution from a more micro level, moving away from lofty ideological origins to an examination of economic, social, cultural and political upheavals at the local and regional level. Some have taken a “bottoms-up” approach rather than the “top-down” approach that had prevailed during the first two hundred years of American Revolution historiography. T. H. Breen’s *Tobacco Culture: The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of Revolution* is an example of this recent form of historiography. Additionally, recent work initiated by British historians focusing on the history of Great Britain during the Georgian period has spurred the development of an Atlantic view of history during the American Revolutionary War period, challenging preconceived ideas about the nature of economic and social development in Great Britain. This new framework calls for a more integrated approach to the study of the American Revolutionary War, including the American colonies, Great Britain, and the British West Indies into an overarching framework that studies both the interrelatedness of the empire and the causes of conflict from more than the American-centric viewpoint.

Very little American Revolutionary War historiography explores the shifting alliances of common soldiers. So many soldiers switched sides throughout the war that prior to the Battle of Eutaw Springs in September 1781, Continental Army Major General Nathanael Greene exclaimed, “At the close of the war, we fought the enemy with British soldiers, and they fought

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us with those of America.” Hulett, like many others who served with the British during the conflict, faced a hard choice at the war’s end. It appears that a number of his kinsmen chose to remain Loyalists and migrated to British Canada. Others, with weaker ideological ties to the Crown, elected to reintegrate into American society. Hulett’s claimed connection to the West Indies appears to have been an attempt to fabricate a personal history acceptable to the Patriot faction, which would allow Hulett to blend into society following the war and secure his future in the new country. This study concludes with an examination of the various Revolutionary War Pension Acts and analyzes why Jonas Aby would claim that Hulett enlisted with the British while a prisoner of war in the West Indies. The epilogue also examines why Hulett’s West Indies connection became a central feature in the documentary evidence related to his Revolutionary War service.

While the historiography of the American Revolutionary War is vast, the unique and wide-ranging experiences of an individual soldier are not commonly studied; even recent “military and society” studies look at the experiences of groups of people. That said, this paper claims that to appreciate the cataclysmic effect of America’s first civil war, it is necessary to follow a common soldier through its trials. The themes undertaken include an overview of the various military forces in which Hulett served; these consist of the New Jersey militia, New Jersey state troops, the Continental Army, and the New Jersey Volunteers of the British Provincial Army. Several excellent studies of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century American militia soldiers’ experience exist including Kyle Zelner’s A Rabble in Arms: Massachusetts Towns and Militiamen during King Philip’s War and Fred Anderson’s A People’s Army:

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Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years’ War. Military historian Wayne Lee notes several others, including Harold E. Selesky’s War and society in colonial Connecticut and James W. Titus’s The Old Dominion at war: society, politics, and warfare in late colonial Virginia. These investigations examine both the social background and the military experiences of men in a given colony’s militia. While shedding a great deal of light on the military experiences of those men, for the most part, these studies examine their involvement within the general population of the militia studied and do not highlight that a common soldier may have had an extraordinarily individual experience. For that perspective, Joseph Plumb Martin’s story, A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier: Some of the Adventures, Dangers, and Sufferings of Joseph Plumb Martin and A British Soldier’s Story: Roger Lamb’s Narrative of the American Revolution add a great deal of color.

To provide a general background of the war itself as well as the specific battles that Hulett experienced, the author consulted a number of secondary sources. A quantity of excellent general military histories of the War of American Independence exist, and those written since the late 1960s incorporate political, cultural, and social context, as well, in a bow to the “war and


society” style that grew out of the “new military history” trend of the late twentieth century.¹⁷

Several first-rate examples include John Ferling’s *Almost a Miracle: The American Victory in the War of Independence*, Don Higginbotham’s *The War of American Independence: Military Attitudes, Policies, and Practice, 1763-1789*, and Robert Middlekauff’s *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789*, originally published in 1982 and substantially revised in 2005.¹⁸ Traditional American Revolutionary War military histories typically focus on the strategies and tactics of the commanders and combatants as well as the battles fought; these tracts still prove useful and help to flesh out the details affecting individual military units. Two examples of this genre include Christopher Ward’s two volume set *The War of the Revolution*, edited by John R. Alden and W. J. Wood’s *Battles of the Revolutionary War: 1775-1781*.¹⁹ Piers Mackesy’s masterful *The War for America: 1775-1783* together with Eric Robson’s unfinished *The American Revolution In its Political and Military Aspects 1763–1783* represent the British perspective of the war.²⁰ Robson died before completing his work, however, his mentor, Sir Lewis Namier, helped ensure its publication. Two other military histories are worth mentioning as the authors used extensive primary source quotes to allow the reader to hear directly from the war’s participants. These are Christopher Hibbert’s *Redcoats and Rebels: The American*
Revolution through British Eyes and the similarly titled Rebels and Redcoats: The American Revolution through the Eyes of Those Who Fought and Lived It, written by George F. Scheer and Hugh F. Rankin.21 “Founders Online,” a project of the National Archives, provides access to tens of thousands of letters between key figures of the American Revolution, including over twenty-eight thousand letters written by George Washington, beginning in 1747 through the period of his presidency. Washington’s communiqués are invaluable for insight into the day-to-day affairs of the commander-in-chief and the Continental Army; they also shed light on details that touched individuals. For example, Hulett served under New Jersey Colonel Matthias Ogden. Washington called for Ogden’s court martial in a letter dated 24 February 1779, based on charges brought by Isaac Morrison, the captain of Hulett’s unit. That incident resulted from acrimony that festered among the New Jersey officers over a variety of concerns, including issues of rank, and caused service in its lines to be more than just a matter of preparing for and engaging in combat. A descendant of Ogden’s, Tim Abbott, has created an extensive blog centered on the court martial, with a number of references to reliable historical sources, such as Washington’s letters regarding the trial. These documents have direct relevance to understanding the environment Hulett experienced during the early years of the war.22

Growing up in Essex County, New Jersey, Hulett experienced a social and political environment unique to the Middle Colonies. Unlike New England, the provinces of New Jersey,


New York, Delaware, and Pennsylvania were demographically diverse and divided in their loyalties. Much Colonial and American Revolution historiography downplays the divided nature of colonists’ loyalties. While the records this researcher has found to date do not identify Hulett’s parents, there is evidence that the Hulett/Hewlett/Hewlet/Hulit family resided in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut since the early seventeenth century. A number of Hewlett family members (the more commonly used phonetic spelling of the surname) were ardent Loyalists. A 1777 letter from Loyalist Lieutenant Colonel Richard Hewlett to the Royal Governor of New York, William Tryon, is among the Sir Henry Clinton Papers housed at the University of Michigan, William L. Clements Library.23

As many Loyalists fled to Canada, the Archives of Ontario has created a database of United Empire Loyalist Records. The Library and Archives Canada has preserved additional Loyalist records, including the papers of Ward Chipman, Muster Master’s Office (1777-1785), which contain muster rolls of Loyalists who settled in Canada.24 Many records are also available in The On-Line Institute for Advanced Loyalist Studies, including regimental histories and muster rolls for various Loyalist provincial units. The muster roll of the Light Infantry Company of the 1st Battalion, New Jersey Volunteers lists Charles Hulet(t) in the unit’s ranks on Staten Island 11 September 1780. Historian Walter T. Dornfest traced the officers and regiments of the American Loyalist regiments. His research notes seven provincial officers with the surname of Hewlett.25


25 “New Jersey Volunteers Cougle’s Coy.,” September 11, 1780 in The On-Line Institute for Advanced Loyalist Studies, accessed December 3, 2013,
Among the Loyalist officers, Richard Hewlett, mentioned earlier, was the most senior in rank. He was among the Loyalists who immigrated to Canada and a 1783 letter announcing his arrival to Sir Guy Carleton, the British commander-in-chief in North America and governor of British Canada, is among the online records of the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.26

After several initial forays by historians in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Loyalist studies have recently emerged as a focused subject, and for the most part, Loyalist historians have written specialized tracts. The general historiography of the period has not yet broadly integrated the analysis of Loyalist historians’ findings into overarching military and political histories of the war. It is clear that an individual’s religious affiliation, employment, economic situation, local society, age, and familial ties had a great influence on his choices in the early stages of the conflict, however, there is evidence that individuals in some areas “regularly switched sides” and that experiences following the outbreak of war often determined a person’s ultimate affiliation.27 Historians N. E. H. Hull, Peter C. Hoffer, and Steven L. Allen attempted to understand how colonists chose between loyalty and liberty in “Choosing Sides: A Quantitative Study of the Personality Determinants of Loyalist and Revolutionary Political Affiliation in New York,” published in *The Journal of American History.*28 It is likely that a combination of


28 Hull, Hoffer, and Allen, “Choosing Sides.”
previously existing ties to factors known to influence loyalty to the Crown in combination with his experiences as a draftee in the Continental Army led to Hulett’s final military adventure; his enlistment and service with the Loyalist New Jersey Volunteers. It is noteworthy that a more prominent member of Hulett’s community, a young man only three years older than Hulett and an officer in the Essex County Second Regiment North Battalion of New Jersey militia (Hulett’s militia regiment), Dr. Uzal Johnson, switched sides as early as 1776. Johnson joined the Volunteers as a surgeon in the Fifth Battalion and later transferred to the First Battalion.

According to William S. Stryker’s *The New Jersey Volunteers (Loyalists) in the Revolutionary War*, James Shaw and John Cougle, officers Hulett served under as a provincial soldier in the latter part of the war, were also in Johnson’s original battalion.29

Like Richard Hewlett, tens of thousands of colonial American Loyalists remained true to their British allegiance throughout the conflict and emigrated from America to places as varied as Great Britain, Canada, the West Indies, India, and Sierra Leone both during and after the war. Two well-known Loyalists were Thomas Hutchinson, the royal governor of Massachusetts and William Franklin, the illegitimate son of Ben Franklin and last royal governor of New Jersey. *The Diary and Letters of His Excellency Thomas Hutchinson, Esq., Captain-General and Governor-In-Chief of his Late Majesty’s Province of Massachusetts Bay in North America,* edited by his great-grandson, Peter Orlando Hutchinson, provide a rare glimpse into

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Hutchinson’s experiences as he strove to defend his province’s place in the British empire.\(^{30}\)

Insight into William Franklin’s governorship can be found through a great number of administrative records and letters, including his extensive correspondence with British ministers, which editors compiled in *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New Jersey, Volume X: Administration of Governor William Franklin: 1767-1776.*\(^{31}\) Additionally, the *Narrative of the Exertions and Sufferings of Lieut. James Moody, in the Cause of Government since the Year 1776* sheds light on the experiences of a Loyalist officer during the war.\(^{32}\)

The New Jersey Historical Commission appointed a study of Loyalists as part of a series of pamphlets created to commemorate the American Revolution. Titled “New Jersey’s Loyalists,” it provides an overview as well as a detailed bibliography of earlier works on Loyalists in that state. One of the earliest such works was Stryker’s 1887 book, *The New Jersey Volunteers (Loyalists) in the Revolutionary War.*\(^{33}\) Michael Adelberg has written several studies devoted to the volatile environment created by New Jersey’s Loyalist and Whig adherents, including “An Evenly Balanced County: The Scope and Severity of Civil Warfare in Revolutionary Monmouth County, New Jersey” published in *The Journal of Military History.*

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Adelberg also wrote “The Transformation of Local Governance in Monmouth County, New Jersey, during the War of the American Revolution,” published in the *Journal of the Early Republic*. While not specific to New Jersey, another fine Loyalist study is Robert Stansbury Lambert’s *South Carolina Loyalists in the American Revolution*. Recent works on the Loyalists include *Other Loyalists: Ordinary People, Royalism, and the Revolution in the Middle Colonies, 1763-1787* edited by Joseph S. Tiedemann, Eugene R. Fingerhut, and Robert W. Venables, *Tory Insurgents: The Loyalist Perception and Other Essays* by Robert Calhoon and Timothy Barnes, and *Generous Enemies: Patriots and Loyalists in Revolutionary New York* by Judith L. Van Buskirk. Tiedemann’s “Presbyterianism and the American Revolution in the Middle Colonies,” published in *Church History* analyzes the role that religious affiliation played in determining political adherence. In “The American Loyalists: Notes on Their Organization and Numerical Strength,” Paul Smith attempts to calculate not only the effective strength of Loyalist provincial units but also to extrapolate that information to form a mathematically sound assumption of overall Loyalist strength. While not conclusive evidence that Hulett belonged to the Anglican

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community in Essex County prior to the rebellion, the Reverend Alexander Balmain, the minister who officiated his marriage in Winchester, Virginia in 1787, was an Anglican minister.37

New Jersey played a pivotal role in the American Revolutionary War. A number of histories relate its contributions, including Francis Bazley Lee’s *New Jersey as a Colony and as a State: One of the Original Thirteen*, published in 1902. The prolific William S. Stryker wrote the *Official Register of the Officers and Men of New Jersey in the Revolutionary War*, which contains a number of resolutions calling on the colony to raise troops to fight the British, in addition to extensive data regarding the men in arms.38 *Battles and Skirmishes in New Jersey* by David C. Munn attempts to update an earlier work by John Alden and identify as many as possible of the hundreds of battles and skirmishes that took place in New Jersey. Munn notes the location and date of each incident and provides a high-level overview of the outcome. In addition to the battle summaries, Munn provides an extensive source list, including the manuscripts, newspapers, official publications and secondary sources used to create the list.39 The New Jersey Historical Commission published a series of twenty-eight pamphlets to commemorate the

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American Revolution. This series is available online as a digital collection of the New Jersey State Library and covers a wide variety of New Jersey Revolutionary War topics. The pamphlets cover topics as diverse as the press, the economy, religious issues, music, and a study of the New Jersey soldier. Historian Dennis P. Ryan measured the impact of the war on New Jersey through the lens of socioeconomic change in “Landholding, Opportunity, and Mobility in Revolutionary New Jersey,” published in The William and Mary Quarterly. Ryan noted that many young men from the lower socio-economic strata were not able to gain sufficient means to support themselves in New Jersey following the war and therefore migrated to other states. Hulett’s apparent relatively low social standing, represented by his rank as a private, and his decision to enlist with the Loyalists in 1780 undoubtedly affected his choice to relocate to Winchester, Virginia. While despite his Loyalist service, Essex County society eventually welcomed back Uzal Johnson, who as a surgeon had valuable skills, Hulett would not have been so fortunate.

Hulett’s wartime experience included the Battles of Princeton, Monmouth, and finally Eutaw Springs, where, as a provincial soldier he fought his final battle. The American rebels captured hundreds of British and provincial soldiers following that combat, including Hulett.


42 Katherine Ludwig, Librarian, David Library of the American Revolution, e-mail to author, January 1, 2014 with Charles Hulett service cards, Capt Isaac Morrison’s Company, 1st New Jersey Regiment 27 May 1778 until February 1779; Earnest Clyde Simpson Connecticut Society of Sons of the American Revolution records, containing letter from War Department, Military Secretary’s Office, December 10, 1906 and from Department of the Interior, Bureau of Pensions, October 17, 1906, outlining Hulett’s service in 1776 with Frelinghuysen’s Eastern Company of Artillery, New Jersey, commanded by Captains Neil and Van Dyke, as a drummer in Captain Isaac Morrison’s Company and as a private in Colonel’s Company, 1st New Jersey Regiment, commanded by Colonel Mathias
Family oral history indicated that Hulett fought at the Battle of Brandywine, however, that is unlikely given the known makeup of the American forces that participated at that battle. Based on the involvement of the New Jersey militia in the Philadelphia Campaign, documentary evidence supports that the state’s militia took part at the Battle of Germantown, not Brandywine. However, the author’s research determined that the participating militia units did not include Hulett’s unit from Essex County. Although a Daughter of the American Revolution (DAR) application notes that Hulett participated at the Battle of Cowpens, the author’s research concludes that reference to be an error. Jonas Aby’s pension application on behalf of Hulett’s heirs notes that Hulett was at the Battle of Yorktown; however, the author cannot substantiate that claim and doubts its validity. Historian Lawrence Babits, in an e-mail to the author, noted that a soldier taken as a prisoner-of-war at Eutaw Springs could not possibly have escorted prisoners-of-war to Winchester following the Battle of Yorktown, as had been claimed by Aby. Hulett did participate in an unknown number of smaller skirmishes; many of those that occurred during the Southern Campaign are identifiable based on his service with the Provincial Light Infantry from September 1780 to 8 September 1781. Dornfest’s “John Watson Tadwell Watson and the Provincial Light Infantry, 1780-1781” provides specifics of the battles and skirmishes fought by the light infantry during the period of Hulett’s enlistment with that battalion.

The American Revolution that Hulett experienced was a bitter and violent civil war. He experienced it both as a private soldier and as a military musician, serving as a drummer for at

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43 Lawrence Babits, e-mail message to author, February 23, 2014.

least eight months during the war according to records of his service with the Continental Army from May 1778 to February 1779. In the latter part of the war, most soldiers who enlisted in the Continental Army did so for three years or for the duration of the war. Hulett was among the unfortunate men that New Jersey conscripted from its militia ranks as a result of the “Act for the speedy and effectual recruiting of the four New-Jersey Regiments in the Service of the United States,” passed by the New Jersey general assembly on 3 April 1778. The conscription act called for those individuals selected, or their substitutes, to serve for nine months. Hulett served most of his time in the Continental Army during that nine-month period as a drummer. Military musicians played an important role during eighteenth century combat and an examination of that role is included in the study. The role of the military musician has not received much detailed study, however, Raoul F. Camus’s definitive *Military Music of the American Revolution* provides historians with an excellent analysis. The author’s study will explore the role of a drummer in the military order of the eighteenth century, as military musicians, including drummers, served as an important command and control element for the army.45

A number of historians have examined the Battle of Princeton, frequently pairing their study of that battle with the Battle of Trenton, which preceded it by nine days. David Hackett Fischer’s *Washington’s Crossing* contains not only an exceptional history of the battles but also a comprehensive examination of the political, social, cultural, and military environment in New York and New Jersey in the months leading up to Trenton and Princeton. Early treatments of the

same battles include Stryker’s *The Battles of Trenton and Princeton*. Stryker used extensive primary source documents to recreate the American, British, and Hessian experience of the battles.\(^{46}\) The Battle of Brandywine, while lesser known than those of Trenton, Princeton, Monmouth, and Yorktown, receives a full treatment in *The Philadelphia Campaign: Volume One: Brandywine and the Fall of Philadelphia* by Thomas J. McGuire. It has also been covered in recent journal articles such as “Washington’s struggle for survival,” in *The Quarterly Journal of Military History* by Willard Sterne Randall, and “Battle of Brandywine: Setback for the Continental Army,” in *Military History* by Allen Eastby.\(^{47}\) A number of historians, including John Ferling, Christopher Ward, and Robert Middlekauff, cover the Battle of Germantown within their larger military histories of the war. The Battle of Monmouth has received less coverage than it merits. Joseph Bilby and his daughter, Katherine Bilby Jenkins covered the battle in a recent, somewhat flawed volume, *Monmouth Court House: The Battle that Made the American Army*. John Shy’s chapter on “American Strategy: Charles Lee and the Radical Alternative,” in *A People Numerous & Armed* provides a short but excellent analysis of General Charles Lee’s unraveling grip on the battle’s progress, which, for Lee, culminated in the humiliating dressing down that George Washington handed him in the midst of battle. David R.


Wade’s “Washington saves the day at Monmouth,” published in *Military History*, provides an excellent overview of the battle.48

While outside the scope of this analysis, British General John Burgoyne’s surrender of his army at Saratoga on 17 October 1777 played a crucial role in the war. Saratoga was a pivotal point in the War for American Independence as Burgoyne’s surrender prompted France to embrace openly the American rebels. Burgoyne’s defeat led directly to the Treaty of Amity and Commerce between France and the former American mainland colonies of Britain in 1778. The British loss led to acrimonious debates in Parliament as it reinvigorated the ministry’s opposition party, which had been subdued during 1776. The French alliance caused a significant change in British strategy. Britain lost its singular focus on subduing the American colonial revolt and turned its attention to defending British holdings in places as distant as Minorca, Gibraltar, India and the British West Indies while also protecting the home islands from the threat of French invasion. General Sir Henry Clinton, the new commander-in-chief of the British forces in America after General Sir William Howe’s resignation, relinquished a number of his troops to support British needs elsewhere, including sending a force of five thousand troops to the West Indies and three thousand to reinforce the British position in Florida. Britain saw the island colonies as too great a prize to lose without a fight and sought to protect the islands rather than continue an offensive war in the Northern and Middle colonies. Clinton, the British general who had consistently counseled both Howe and his predecessor, General Thomas Gage to attack the rebels, was himself forced to evacuate Philadelphia and retrench in New York City. These

strategic events formed the background that influenced the remainder of Hulett’s wartime experience.\footnote{Piers Mackesy, \textit{The War for America: 1775-1783} (1964; repr., Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 141-144; 183; Treaty of Amity and Commerce Between The United States and France; February 6, 1778, Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library, accessed June 25, 2013, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fr1788-1.asp.}

Aby’s pension request placed Hulett in the West Indies at some point following the Battle of Monmouth. The author’s research has determined that Aby’s claim was unfounded and likely resulted from stories that Hulett constructed to explain why he served with the British during the Southern Campaign. To reach this conclusion, the author researched the British expedition to the West Indies, British treatment of American prisoners-of-war, and the interaction and troop movements between the British Lesser Antilles campaign and the mainland American campaigns. American historians have not placed much focus on the events that occurred in the West Indies, although these played a significant role in the outcome of the war. British historian Piers Mackesy’s \textit{The War for America: 1775-1783} provides a comprehensive overview of Britain’s challenges in the West Indies and recently, Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy examined the relationship between the American mainland colonies and the British West Indies in \textit{An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean}.\footnote{Mackesy, \textit{The War for America: 1775-1783}; Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy, \textit{An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).} A mid-twentieth century doctoral dissertation by Robert Neil McLarty, “The Expedition of Major General John Vaughan to the Lesser Antilles, 1779-1781” included extensive details of the British expedition and its related troop movements. In “Christopher Vail, Soldier and Seaman in the American Revolution,” published in \textit{Winterthur Portfolio}, historian John O. Sands examined the experiences of Vail, whose Revolutionary War journal included a description of his time in a
British prison in the islands. Vail, unlike Hulett, was a ship hand on an American privateer prior to his capture and imprisonment.\textsuperscript{51}

The British treated American prisoners-of-war in a gruesome manner as they considered the rebels to be traitors. Several studies have recently delved into British prisoner-of-war treatment, including Edwin G. Burrow’s *Forgotten Patriots: The Untold Story of American Prisoners during the Revolutionary War*. American rebel treatment of British and Hessian prisoners varied. Daniel Krebs study, “Useful Enemies: The Treatment of German Prisoners of War during the American War of Independence,” in *The Journal of Military History* notes that prisoners were “farmed out” to locals to provide labor. Betsy Knight’s “Prisoner Exchange and Parole in the American Revolution,” published in *The William and Mary Quarterly* examines British attitudes towards Americans as traitors and the Continental Congress’s lack of provisions for prisoner of war treatment as factors that led to varied prisoner treatments. Likewise, James E. Held’s “British Prison Ships: A Season in Hell,” published in *Military History* examines the horrific experiences of Americans held captive on British prison ships.\textsuperscript{52} While the British did hold American captives in West Indies prisons, they did not transport prisoners taken in mainland battles to the islands. Nor did the British send provincial troops with the West Indies expedition. Finally, the British troops in the West Indies suffered grievously from disease and


other privations; in the end, they were too few and too desperately needed to defend the islands for the British to return troops from the islands to fight the Americans. Hulett’s “West Indies connection” does not appear to be a factual representation of the circumstances which brought him to the American South, although the broadened scope of the war did likely lead to Hulett’s enlistment with the New Jersey Volunteers in April 1780 and his subsequent service with the British in the Southern Campaign. Historian Paul H. Smith describes Britain’s evolving Loyalist policy in *Loyalists & Redcoats: A Study in British Revolutionary Policy*. Britain’s stance toward the Loyalists shifted in the later part of the war. Significant reforms in Britain’s provincial military policy provided enhanced inducements to encourage enlistment in the provincial corp.53

The study concludes with an analysis of the Revolutionary War pension acts. It examines the evolution of the acts and the expanding pension eligibility provided by the acts, which led thousands of Revolutionary War-era veterans, widows, and their survivors to document the military experiences of soldiers. As shown by this study, not all the historical events identified in pension applications were factual, making these documents suspect as primary sources, although they are often used by historians to document and describe actions in the American Revolutionary War.

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**Chapter One: Revolutionary New Jersey**

Call this war, dearest friend, by whatsoever name you may, only call it not an American Rebellion, it is nothing more nor less than an Irish-Scotch Presbyterian Rebellion.

— Captain Johann Heinrichs, January 18, 1778

It is impossible to comprehend the actions of any eighteenth century character without first developing an appreciation for the society from which he or she sprang. Charles Hulett, the subject of this study, was born in 1760. Contemporary records note him as a native of Essex County, New Jersey. By the mid-eighteenth century, New Jersey was one of the smallest, least influential, and least populated of Britain’s mainland American colonies. It was also one of the most culturally diverse. New Jersey was a combination of what for a time had been two separate proprietary colonies, East and West Jersey. Consolidated into a single royal colony during the reign of Queen Anne in 1702, the colony retained two capitals, one at Perth Amboy and the other at Burlington. New Jersey’s unique history and its ethnic, religious, economic, political, and social diversity shaped Hulett’s perception of the world around him and influenced the choices that he made during the War for American Independence. This chapter will outline key elements in New Jersey’s experience prior to the outbreak of war that influenced the choices that Hulett and others would make in the days ahead. Some of these factors dated from the founding of New Jersey as an English colony and led to land disputes between the residents that continued up to the Seven Years’ War. Other aspects included the heterogeneous nature of the provincial population and its religious diversity, which led to internal conflicts and rivalries between adherents of various religious denominations. In all, the residents of New Jersey faced the
choices forced upon them armed with their own perception of the conflict, rooted in New
Jersey’s rural, moderate, and culturally diverse past.54

Colonial past

Unlike the initial English colonization of Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, and Rhode
Island, that of colonial New York and New Jersey did not occur until the latter part of the
seventeenth century. In 1664, King Charles II (r.1660-1685) provided a vast New World territory
to his “dearest brother James Duke of York” through a royal grant.55 In return for an annual
consideration of “forty beaver skins,” the king granted to his brother “full and absolute power”
over territories that encompassed virtually all of New England as well as the lands “commonly
called by the several name or names of Matowacks or Long Island.”56 The grant also included
“the said river called Hudsons river (sic), and all the lands from the west side of Conecticut (sic),
to the east side of Delaware Bay.”57 Unfortunately, at least for the early Dutch settlers, much of
the land granted to the duke included their colony of New Netherlands. In 1664, Charles II
commissioned a military force led by Colonel Richard Nicolls to obtain control of the region.

54 Peter O. Wacker, New Jersey’s Revolutionary Experience, Volume 4, The Cultural Geography of
Eighteenth Century New Jersey (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1975), 5; Larry R. Gerlach, New
Jersey’s Revolutionary Experience, Volume 7, The Road to Revolution (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Historical
Commission, 1975), 6; Joseph R. Klett, Using the Records of the East and West Jersey Proprietors (New Jersey

55 Franklin Ellis, History of Monmouth County New Jersey (Philadelphia: R. T. Peck & Co., 1885), 22;
“United Kingdom Monarchs (1603 – present), The Stuarts, Charles II (r.1660-1685),” The official website of The

56 “Charles II’s Grant of New England to the Duke of York, Exemplified by Queen Anne, 1712,” The

57 Ibid.
Nicolls accomplished his goal with little effort, as the practical Dutch gave up their claims to the English with barely a struggle.\textsuperscript{58}

Its initial European settlement by the Dutch and Swedish, however, gave a decidedly diverse character to the region that eventually became New York and New Jersey. The enterprising Dutch had established a much more tolerant society than that created by the rigid English Puritan colonists of Massachusetts Bay. Prior to the English invasion of New Amsterdam, its multicultural population spoke as many as eighteen different languages and its people represented a variety of European and non-European ethnic groups. Dutch religious liberality allowed a proliferation of Christian denominations to flourish in New Netherlands and attracted a small Jewish settlement. Dutch tolerance also attracted the attention of a group of colonists from the English colony of New Haven, which later became part of Connecticut. In 1661, a contingent from New Haven sought safe harbor with the Dutch, as they feared that a resurgence of religious intolerance would follow the ascension of Charles II. The group, led by Robert Treat, petitioned the governor of New Amsterdam, Petrus Stuyvesant, for asylum. Prior to their relocation to the Dutch colony, however, the English force under Nicolls arrived and acquired New Amsterdam. In the meantime, the Duke of York transferred title to New Caesarea (New Jersey) to two English noblemen, Lord John Berkeley and Sir George Carteret. Berkeley and Carteret, jointly referred to as the Lords Proprietors, then established the basic constitution of rights for future settlers. Known as “The Concession and Agreement of the Lords Proprietors of the Province of New Caesarea, or New Jersey, to and With All and Every the Adventurers and All Such as Shall Settle or Plant There,” this document set forth the governance framework for

the new province as well as outlined the rights of its future colonists. It established the office of Governor and provided the Governor with the power to appoint a Council. It created the offices of Secretary and Surveyor General and established the framework for an elected colonial assembly. Furthermore, the Lords Proprietors instituted a generous set of benefits for those freemen willing to accompany the first governor to the new province, including extensive land grants. The promise of land, together with benefits thought to flow from the new and presumed benevolent colonial government, attracted disaffected groups into New Jersey. These groups included the New Haven dissidents who previously sought Dutch protection. Rhode Island, already known as a non-conformist province, also provided a number of New Jersey’s early English settlers.59

New Jersey’s earliest history had significant ramifications for its future. The Duke of York had established Nicolls as acting governor of his new territory when he and his brother, the king, dispatched Nicolls to take the land from the Dutch. Upon arrival in the province, Nicolls granted the ability to buy Indian lands to freeholders to entice settlement in the colony. Unbeknownst to Nicolls, however, the Duke transferred title to Berkeley and Carteret, the Lords Proprietors. Berkeley’s and Carteret’s ownership of the New Jersey territory and subsequent transfer of property rights through land sale set in motion land disputes between those who claimed rights to the land from transfers originating with Nicolls’ actions and those whose claims traced back to the Lords Proprietors. The disputes became increasingly violent, especially in

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areas where the title claims were weakest; including Charles Hulett’s hometown of Newark. Historian Thomas L. Purvis, author of “Origins and Patterns of Agrarian Unrest in New Jersey, 1735 to 1754,” determined that over sixty-five percent of identified land claim rioters resided in Newark Township. Land claim disputes and their related violence formed a backdrop of unrest in New Jersey during the years leading up to the Seven Years’ War. New Jersey’s land disputes set a precedent of violence amongst neighbors that would erupt with renewed force during the Revolutionary War, this time between Whigs and Loyalists.60

While the author has been unable to connect Charles Hulett, the subject of this study, to his parents, evidence exists that the Hulett family, variously referenced in contemporary documents with phonetic spellings such as Hulett/Hulet/Hewlett/Hewlet/Hewlit/Hulit, immigrated to New Jersey in the mid-seventeenth century. One of the earliest New Jersey Huletts, George Hulett, together with a number of other men and their families, emigrated from Rhode Island in 1665 and settled in Monmouth County.61 In 1689, a William Hulett appears in court records, accused of “playing ‘nyne-pins’ on a Sabbath Day,” indicating that even in relatively tolerant New Jersey, there were still limits to what was deemed appropriate behavior, particularly as it related to standards set by religious practice.62

The variety of religious denominations within New Jersey had a significant impact on the colony. The Lords Proprietors established generous terms for New Jersey’s future inhabitants to


61 Ellis, History of Monmouth County, 63.

exercise freedom of religion. In their “Concession and Agreement,” they stated that no subject of
the King in that province should be in any way be “molested, punished, disquieted or called into
question for any difference in opinion or practice in [matters] of religious concernments.”63 This
liberal foundation attracted adherents of a variety of religious beliefs and denominations and
likely eased the concerns of the original European settlers who had flourished in the area under
Dutch tolerance. By the time of the Revolutionary War, New Jersey’s citizens represented a
variety of Protestant denominations, including a large population of pacifist Quakers, a
substantial number of Anglicans (members of the Church of England), newer sects like the
Baptists and Methodists, together with descendants of New England’s Puritans, the
Congregationalists and Presbyterians. The province also included Dutch Reformed
congregations.64

Approximately twenty percent of the Middle Colonies’ population belonged to the
Presbyterian denomination. This religious denomination, found amongst both recent Scotch-Irish
immigrants and former New Englanders, has frequently been associated with those that espoused
radical Whig political principles.65 Historian Joseph S. Tiedemann’s study, “Presbyterianism and
the American Revolution in the Middle Colonies,” examined the role that rivalries between
different Protestant denominations played in the period leading up to the American Revolution.
Tiedemann noted that religious affiliation and political ideology, while frequently linked, did not
have a simplistic relationship. However, members of the Church of England, or Anglicans,

63 “The Concession and Agreement of the Lords Proprietors of the Province of New Caesarea.”

64 Robert Middlekauff, The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789 (Revised ed. New York:
Oxford University Press, 2005), 46-49; Edward J. Cody, New Jersey’s Revolutionary Experience, Volume 10, The
Religious Issue in Revolutionary New Jersey (Trenton: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1975), 5-7, 11.

65 Joseph S. Tiedemann, “Presbyterianism and the American Revolution in the Middle Colonies,” Church
tended to support the Crown while large numbers of Presbyterians passionately advocated for American liberties. Other complex regional factors frequently came into play, however, these often intertwined with religious denominational disputes. In the town of Newark, land disputes between the proprietors and landowners claiming ownership through titles traced back to Nicolls’ grants had a religious undertone; most of the proprietors were Anglicans while many dispossessed settlers were Presbyterians. Tiedemann notes that Essex County was primarily Whig by 1776 and that large numbers of its Presbyterian congregants became active in the rebellion.66 However, Essex County itself was home to a variety of churches. These included the oldest, First Presbyterian of Newark, founded in 1667, as well as two Reformed Dutch churches, the earliest founded in 1700, two Episcopalian churches, the earliest dating from 1743, and one Baptist church, founded in 1769.67

The connection between church affiliation and political association was widely recognized by contemporaries and church property often took the brunt of sectarian anger. The British burned the Presbyterian Church at Elizabeth Town, New Jersey in January 1780, recognizing the role that Presbyterianism played in the revolt. They were not alone in destroying church property, as extracts from the records of Newark’s Trinity Church indicate that Continental soldiers damaged the church’s property on multiple occasions.68

66 Ibid., 311.
68 “Extracts from Records of Trinity Church, Newark, February 8, 1779,” in Proceedings New Jersey Historical Society, January 1894, 39, accessed April 12, 2014, via books.google.com; “Presbyterian Church burned at Elizabethtown, New Jersey,” Revolutionary War and Beyond, accessed April 12, 2014, http://www.revolutionary-war-and-beyond.com/presbyterian-church-burned-elizabethtown-new-jersey.html. William Nelson, the author of “Church Records in New Jersey,” noted in his article that no records that existed at the First Presbyterian Church at the time of the Revolution survived the war; all had been either lost or destroyed.
**Revolutionary New Jersey’s social order**

New Jersey, like most of Britain’s American colonies, was a hierarchical society. Significant economic inequalities existed among Jersey residents. Historian Mark Lender’s study of the social and economic origin of New Jersey’s Continental Army officers and soldiers found that the top ten percent of New Jersey’s wealthiest citizens owned about forty-five percent of its tax ratable wealth while the top third owned almost eighty-five percent of the province’s ratable wealth. While the income disparity in colonial society did not mirror the great gulf between England’s wealthiest aristocracy and its meanest commoners, colonial America was by no means an egalitarian society. New Jersey’s Continental Line reflected the economic inequality of its provincial society; almost eighty-five percent of New Jersey’s Continental Army officers came from the wealthiest third of its population while over sixty percent of its enlisted men came from the poorest third of its society. Without the ability to link Hulett to his parents, and with no evidence to the contrary, the author assumes that his economic circumstances mirrored those of New Jersey’s typical enlisted men.⁶⁹

Newspaper advertisements and notices provide a glimpse into the social and political framework of colonial New Jersey. The province itself was not home to a regularly published newspaper until 1775. Papers from New York and Pennsylvania fulfilled New Jersey’s need for information, as New York City and Philadelphia, the two most populous centers in the Middle Colonies, were home to a number of newspapers, produced by both rebel and Loyalist printers. Among signs of increasing unrest, the papers continued to provide news items, property listings,

marriage notices, pleas for assistance in the return of stolen property, and notices requesting help capturing deserters, runaway slaves, apprentices, servants, and wayward wives. On 22 December 1775, Colonel William Maxwell placed a notice advising a number of deserters from New Jersey’s Second Battalion of the Continental Army that they could return and expect forgiveness for their first offence.\(^70\) That preliminary note of moderation ended with a call that “all friends to American Liberty are requested to be aiding and assisting in taking the above-mentioned men.”\(^71\) Days later, Benjamin Thackrey placed a reward for the return of his English “servant lad;” a young man he described in detail, noting that the truant would likely be headed for Dunmore, as he was “a great Tory.”\(^72\) Properties advertised for sale or rent varied substantially, from homes on small plots to large plantations situated on thousands of acres of orchards, meadows, and pastures. One such plantation also contained substantial outbuildings, including barns, stables, and a wagon house, as well as buildings for cattle and poultry. Many other farms offered for sale were smaller, ranging from 10 to 70 acres. New Jersey consisted of much fertile farmland, as evidenced by the property listings that comprised the bulk of the newspaper articles. Notices included the types of fruit grown on properties, such as “nectarines, apricots (sic), pears, Peaches, plumbs (sic), raspberries, &c.”\(^73\) Reflecting the rural nature of provincial New Jersey and the interests of its inhabitants, many newspaper notices also focused on horses, especially those offered for sale or stud service. Several advertisements for stud service noted the stallion’s


\(^71\) Stryker, *Documents relating to the Revolutionary History of the State of New Jersey*, 5-7.

\(^72\) Ibid., 9.

\(^73\) Ibid., 33.
pedigree descending from the Godolphin Arabian, one of the founding studs of the modern
Thoroughbred. Notices reflected that breeders shipped horses with top lineage between England
and the colonies for breeding purposes. Despite increasing rancor between the colonists and the
mother country, colonial horsemen continued to seek the finest bloodlines.\textsuperscript{74}

New Jersey’s colonial government, in a manner similar to the other North American
colonies, distributed power between the Royal Governor and his advisors in the Provincial
Council and the provincial General Assembly, a popularly elected body that controlled the
colony’s purse strings. As relations between Britain and the colonies deteriorated through the late
1760s and early 1770s, New Jersey became a reluctant party to the growing rebellion. The Royal
Governor, William Franklin, sought to prevent New Jersey’s participation in the colonial Stamp
Act Congress. New Jersey’s Whigs, however, fearful that the colony’s lack of participation
would imply that New Jersey’s residents saw no oppression in Britain’s Stamp Act, called an
extra-legal meeting of the Assembly and appointed several of its members to represent the
colony.\textsuperscript{75} Bitterness subsided with the repeal of the Stamp Act but rekindled in New Jersey, as
elsewhere, with the imposition of the Townshend duties. Franklin reported to London “Mens
Minds are sour’d, a sullen Discontent prevails . . . and no Force on Earth is sufficient to make the
Assemblies acknowledge . . . that the Parliament has a Right to Impose Taxes on America.”\textsuperscript{76} As
Britain repeatedly imposed and then withdrew taxation measures, New Jersey’s Whig element
consolidated power and gained converts. In February 1774, New Jersey became the last colony

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 72-75.

\textsuperscript{75} Gerlach, The Road to Revolution, 15.

\textsuperscript{76} William Franklin to Wills Hill, Earl of Hillsborough, Secretary of the American Department, November
23, 1768, \textit{New Jersey in the American Revolution}, accessed April 27, 2014,
http://slic.njstatelib.org/slic_files/imported/NJ_Information/Digital_Collections/NJInTheAmericanRevolution1763-
1783/2.5.pdf.
to form a Committee of Correspondence, the name applied to the appointed committees that sought to coordinate actions amongst the colonies in opposition to Britain. In early June 1774, responding to the British blockade of Boston, New Jersey townsfolk began to gather to voice their support for the beleaguered city. The township of Lower Freehold, Monmouth County was the first to react. Days later, John De Hart and Isaac Ogden, prominent Essex County Whigs, called for a meeting of that county’s freeholders. The Essex County Resolutions that resulted from the 11 June 1774 meeting at the Newark Court House reflected that the men present committed to participate in colonial non-importation agreements targeted at applying economic pressure to Britain. They also appointed representatives to a colonial Congress “in order to form a general plan of union” and resolved to correspond with other colonial committees to “consider the present distressing state of our public affairs.”77 Other New Jersey counties quickly followed suit. On 21 July 1774, representatives of the various counties’ committees met at New Brunswick to nominate delegates to the Continental Congress.

While steadfastly acting to uphold their rights against perceived British tyranny, New Jersey Whigs showed no compunction in squashing the liberties of those who voiced support for the Crown. The townspeople of Elizabeth Town, New Jersey, the largest town in the state with a population of approximately 1,200 residents, resolved to boycott the paper of publisher James Rivington, whose writings were “inimical to the liberties of America.”78 Elizabeth Town residents additionally resolved to break off trade and commerce with the people of nearby Staten Island on 13 February 1775, as those same citizens neglected to send representatives to the

77 “Extract from Minutes of House of Assembly, Burlington, Tuesday, February 8, 1774,” Minutes of the Provincial Congress and the Council of Safety of the State of New Jersey (Trenton, NJ: Naar, Day & Naar, 1879), 1-3, 7-8.
Continental Congress.⁷⁹ New Jersey’s social order fractured further and residents frequently found themselves on opposite sides of the political debate.

Governor Franklin and Cortlandt Skinner, the Attorney General for New Jersey and Speaker of the colony’s Assembly, attempted to preserve harmony between New Jersey and Britain, despite the escalating discord. In early May 1775, Franklin called for a meeting of the New Jersey Council and Assembly; he had received a resolution from the House of Commons that he believed provided a means to resolve the conflict between the colonies and Britain. His timing, however, could not have been worse. On 16 May 1775, the day that Franklin offered the resolution to the assembled council members and representatives, Samuel Tucker, a representative from Hunterdon, presented to the gathered assembly an extract of a confidential letter written by Franklin to William Legge, the Earl of Dartmouth and British Secretary for the Americas. Friends of the rebel cause in Britain had obtained the letter, which contained Franklin’s update to Dartmouth of the deteriorating affairs in the colonies, and routed it back to the colonies. While relations between Franklin and the assembly had previously been strained, they were now broken beyond repair. Here was evidence that Franklin had attempted to manipulate the assembly and had reported his efforts, and their lack of success, to his superiors in London.⁸⁰ After days of debate, the Assembly provided to Franklin their response to the House of Commons resolution. No peaceful solution was forthcoming; “we cannot, in our present opinion, comply with a proposition which we really apprehend to give up the privileges of freemen; nor do we want any time to consider whether we shall submit to that which, in our

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⁸⁰ Minutes of the Provincial Congress and the Council of Safety of the State of New Jersey (Trenton, NJ: Naar, Day & Naar, 1879), 76, 79, 130-134.
apprehension, will reduce us and our constituents to a state little better than that of slavery.”

Whatever slight opportunity may have existed to disperse the storm clouds gathering in New Jersey had been lost.

As New Jersey’s Whigs tightened their political control, they took stern measures to crush dissent. On 12 February 1776, the Committee of Essex County resolved

No Person be allowed to move into, or settle within this County, unless they bring a Certificate from the Committee of the County where they reside [establishing that they] . . . signed the Association recommended by Congress, or a similar one . . . and had in all Things behaved in a Manner friendly to American Liberty.

Like many who objected to the rebellion, a certain Ananias Halsey crossed the new ruling order. The Hanover, New Jersey committee hauled him in based on complaints that he had vilified the steps taken by the colonists to redress grievances with Britain. The committee judged Halsey an enemy of his country and directed all peoples to break off trading with him.

**Loyalism in New Jersey**

Adelberg’s study of Monmouth County’s population determined that the statement “during the Revolutionary War, the Tories & Patriots in the County of Monmouth were very evenly balanced” made by Rhoda Sutphin, wife of a Monmouth County militiaman was supported by a quantitative analysis of the county residents’ records, including military, church and court records. In New Jersey, political leanings often had much to do with the residents’

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81 Ibid., 141.

82 Stryker, *Documents relating to the Revolutionary History of the State of New Jersey*, 36.

83 Ibid., 51.

religious affiliations and ethnic heritage. Unlike the “evenly balanced” people of Monmouth County, many residents of Essex County, descendants of New England Congregationalists, were supportive of the rebellion as were most residents of Morris and Sussex counties, who were typically Scots-Irish Presbyterians. Yet residence and religious affiliation were not the sole determinants of Loyalism. For many in New Jersey, the growing rebellion caused a personal crisis and forced a choice of sides. Some, like Dr. Uzal Johnson, initially went along with Whig measures, but chose to remain loyal to Britain when the Continental Congress announced the Declaration of Independence in July 1776. Others, like Cortlandt Skinner, fled New Jersey rather than face arrest for their conservative “Toryism” in the face of hostile rebel actions, following the passage of the Tory Act on 2 January 1776 by the Continental Congress.85

New Jersey and the outbreak of war: The militia system’s historical antecedents and early colonial practices

The militia system brought to the American mainland colonies by seventeenth century English settlers had deep roots. One of its earliest forms sprang from the Assize of Arms of 1181, a measure instituted during the reign of King Henry II. The Assize established requirements for the types of weapons owned by free men of various socio-economic levels, from wealthy men to those who owned property or rents valued at ten marks.86 The English Writ for Enforcing Watch


and Ward, 1242 provided added measures and gradations of required military service. Historian Richard Mortimer notes that by this time “there was a growing tendency to summon stated numbers of men from a given area.”

During the reigns of Queen Mary (1553-1558) and Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603), the Tudors enacted changes to the militia system to enable better defense of the kingdom from the threat of French and Spanish armies. While English custom required that men “between the ages of sixteen and sixty” arms themselves and participate in the militia, very few were actually proficient in the use of their weapons. Queen Elizabeth established “trainbands” as well as requirements for the regular mustering and training of the militia. King Charles I, crowned in 1625, sought to create a “perfect militia” but in fact created a menace. His perfect militia wreaked havoc on the English people, the very people the militia should have protected, when the men returned from war. Historian Kyle Zelner posits that the militia structure established in the Massachusetts Bay Colony at the time of its settlement was a direct reaction to the evils of the militia system in England during Charles’ reign, and in large part, the colonists attempted to return to the Elizabethan structure.

Shortly after the establishment of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, its founders developed the initial structure of the colony’s militia system. They retained the requirement for men between sixteen and sixty to serve in the militia and established the concept of “trainbands” to ensure that men had weapons training and knowledge. In 1672, Massachusetts created a “town committee of militia” structure to provide “civilian control over the militia” and to determine who would be called to actually fight, should the need arise. When King Philip’s War broke

87 Mortimer, Angevin England, 41.
88 Zelner, A Rabble in Arms, 20.
89 Ibid., 22.
out in 1675 and threatened Massachusetts, the town committees of militia impressed soldiers for war. In doing so, they balanced the need to guard each community’s stability by keeping sufficient men at home while protecting the community by sending men off to defend its very survival. Zelner describes the militia impressment process as one that typically chose men perceived to be of lesser value to the community to fight its battles; “men who did not have a family to support” while protecting “eldest sons [and] farmers” and those who were seen as important to the community. By the time of the French and Indian War, however, Massachusetts Bay’s system to raise troops for military service had changed. While militia service remained in effect, the men who became provincial solders in arms with the British regulars were overwhelmingly volunteers, not impressed soldiers or men paid to take the place of impressed soldiers. For his study “A People’s Army: Provincial Military Service in Massachusetts during the Seven Years’ War,” historian Fred Anderson conducted extensive research based on the records of six Massachusetts regiments stationed at Fort William Henry and Fort Edward during the summer of 1756. Based on his research, he noted that 87.9 percent of the men studied had volunteered, while only 2.2 percent were impressed. The remainder represented men who hired their services to replace those impressed into arms. 91 While frequently described as “riff-raff” by British commanders, the majority of the men studied by Anderson were young men who had not yet come into their own, or, in the words of provincial Lieutenant Colonel John Winslow, “these Men are Sons of some of the best yeomen in New England.”92

90 Ibid., 28-29, 35.


92 Ibid., 524.
In *Crucible of War: The Seven Years’ War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766*, Anderson points out that one of the lessons of the Seven Years’ War that contemporaries failed to initially comprehended was the ability of New England to quickly raise a significant military force. Following British General Daniel Webb’s pleas for reinforcements to defend Fort William Henry, the New England colonies quickly gathered approximately twelve thousand men and sent them rapidly marching to the fort. Anderson states, “The northern provinces had demonstrated a capacity to respond to a military emergency without parallel in the English-speaking world.” Massachusetts would demonstrate that capacity again in April 1775, as its militiamen rapidly mustered to respond to the British threat to Lexington and Concord.

**New Jersey militia**

New Jersey’s military history included small-scale conflicts between its original European settlers, the Dutch and Swedes, and the area’s indigenous peoples, primarily the Lenni Lenape, who comprised several groups of related peoples and inhabited three distinct areas in the middle colonies. After the English conquest of the Dutch territories, New Jersey’s frontier warfare with Native Americans subsided. The Lenape had not been a war-like people; European diseases had decimated their population and they were not a serious threat to the newly acquired English colony. However, fighting amongst the various European countries’ colonists, which preceded 1664, and its sporadic continuation afterward, together with small-scale battles between the colonists and the Native Americans, created an environment that required the colonists to

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establish a means of self-defense. The Lords Proprietors “Concession and Agreement” established the rights of the colony’s elected assembly to erect “forts, fortresses, castles, cities, corporations, boroughs, towns, villages, and other places of strength and defence” and to supply them with “ordnance, powder, shot, armour, and all other weapons” to protect the province. That same constitution provided the provincial assembly with the power to “constitute train’d bands and companies, with the number of soldiers for the safety, strength and defence” of the province, thereby establishing the foundation for the colony’s militia. The document provided the colony’s governor with the right to place the soldiers and their officers in various locations for the colony’s defense, and established the governor’s rights to commission military officers. To the governor, New Jersey’s founding constitution provided the right to “muster and train all forces . . . to prosecute war, pursue an enemy, suppress all rebellions, and mutinies, as well by sea as land; and to exercise the whole militia . . . provided that they appoint no military forces but what are freeholders in the said Province, unless the General Assembly shall consent.”

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95 “The Concession and Agreement of the Lords Proprietors of the Province of New Caesarea.”

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.
New Jersey’s militia laws were similar to those of other colonies. The province required militia service of “free men between the ages of sixteen and fifty.” Unlike Massachusetts Bay and other provinces continually exposed to frontier warfare, New Jersey’s militia saw little action in the early to mid-eighteenth century. It became an ineffective organization existing more in theory than in practice.

By 1775, the Whigs were firmly in control of the New Jersey assembly and had ousted any militia officers with Loyalist leanings. Shortly after the momentous Battles of Lexington and Concord, word that war had kindled quickly spread throughout the mainland British colonies. On 24 April 1775, the Committee of Observation for Newark, in Essex County, New Jersey, assembled. The committee Chairman, Caleb Camp, opened the session with news of the fighting, which an express rider from Boston had brought to the town. The committee members agreed that they “are willing at this alarming crisis to risk their lives and fortunes in support of American liberty.” The emergency caused the committee to send word to its militia captains; they should “muster and exercise their respective Companies at least once in every week, and carefully [ensure] . . . that each man be provided with arms and ammunition, as the Militia Law directs.” The committee agreed that “all heads of families and masters of apprentices” should ensure that the young men under their direction learn military exercises and directed that these elders allow the young men the time necessary to train and become competent militiamen.

Less than two weeks later, at a town meeting held in Newark, the town freeholders agreed to a

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98 Lender, One State in Arms, 14.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid.
motion to support the Continental Congress against the “despotick (sic) and oppressive Acts of British Parliament” by sending representatives of the town to the Provincial Congress.\textsuperscript{102} By 3 June 1775, New Jersey’s extralegal Provincial Congress enacted a plan “for regulating the Militia of this Colony” to defend the colony’s freedom.\textsuperscript{103} The plan called for the men of each district, ages sixteen to fifty, to form companies of approximately eighty men and for the men to elect their officers up to the rank of captain. The elected officers of each company were then responsible for designating their company’s non-commissioned officers and company drummers. They were also responsible for coming together as regimental officers to elect their field commanders, the regiment’s colonel, lieutenant colonel, major and adjutant. Soon the Provincial Congress determined that its initial militia plan was insufficient. On 28 October 1775, Congress strengthened its militia regulation. Each militia captain was required to list all the men in his district between the ages of sixteen and fifty who were capable of bearing arms. The new orders required the militia company captains to send their muster rolls to their colonel, who in turn, would submit his muster roll to the division’s Brigadier General. However, those whose religious principles forbade bearing arms were not required to participate in New Jersey’s militia. The toughened standards required each militiaman to provide his own arms, including his musket and bayonet, as well as a sword or tomahawk, together with all the necessary accoutrements. The regulation established penalties for non-compliance, including fines, and in times of alarm, subjected officers and soldiers to the same penalties as those in place for the Continental Army. The toughened standards also assessed monthly charges to those men and boys excused from

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 112-113.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 179.
service due to their religious beliefs. Thus, while not known if he was the son of a freeholder or the apprentice of a Newark master, when he turned sixteen years old in 1776, Charles Hulett joined the New Jersey militia, mustering with his friends and neighbors.

**Raising New Jersey troops for the Continental Army**

As 21 April 1775 dawned, the various militias who had responded to the alarm raised by the Battles of Lexington and Concord were camped around Boston, encircling General Thomas Gage and his British troops. As many as 20,000 militiamen had responded to the crisis. Lacking central authority and overall discipline, it quickly became evident to the extralegal Massachusetts Provincial Congress that the conglomeration of armed men needed some form of overall command structure. While many of the hastily gathered militiamen returned to their homes and farms, Massachusetts enlisted a volunteer army from the remaining men and appointed General Artemis Ward as its commander. Ward did not possess broad powers. Dr. Joseph Warren, president of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, controlled much of the administrative, diplomatic, logistical, and operational tasks that resulted from the unexpected armed standoff with the British Army. Ward and Warren did not have direct authority over the militia troops from other colonies who had rushed to the aid of Massachusetts. These included troops from Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Hampshire. The men in these units reported to their own militia commanders, who cooperated with Ward to the degree that they saw fit. It was soon obvious to both the Massachusetts Provincial Congress and to the delegates of the Second Continental Congress that a more formal army organization was necessary to mold the various troops into an effective fighting force to oppose the professional and widely renowned British
Army. Massachusetts appealed to the Continental Congress to take control of the impromptu army. Congress did so by mid-June 1775 and on 16 June 1775 elected the Virginian, George Washington, “by a unanimous vote . . . [to] be general and com[mander] in chief to take the supreme command of the forces raised and to be raised, in defence (sic) of American Liberty.”

New Jersey responded to a letter dated 12 October 1775 from John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress, which requested that the province raise troops for the Continental Army. Congress requested that the colony raise two battalions, each comprised of eight companies, which would consist of sixty-eight privates, four corporals, four sergeants, one ensign, one lieutenant, and one captain; every man expected to be an “able-bodied freeman.” Each private soldier enlisted for a one year duration and was entitled to receive five dollars a month, as well as “a felt hat, a pair of yarn stockings, and a pair of shoes: the men to find their own arms.” On 10 January 1776, the Continental Congress authorized a third New Jersey battalion. While the third battalion was to recruit men under the same terms as the first two battalions, the New Jersey Provincial Congress added some stipulations. Any apprentice seeking to enlist must have the consent of his master or mistress and any young man under the age of twenty-one, whose parents objected to his enlistment, had twenty-four hours to revoke his enlistment by returning to the recruiting officer either the supplies he had been given or their value in money. Such niceties reflected the eagerness of many to serve in the early stages of the


107 Stryker, Official Register of the Officers and Men of New Jersey in the Revolutionary War, 10.

108 Ibid.
war; as the brutal realities of battle, death and destruction took their toll, the Continental Army and the New Jersey Provincial Congress would find recruiting troops a much more difficult task.  

**New Jersey state troops**

New Jersey had a third military arm, its state troops, established to fill the need to protect the state not served by either the militia or the Continental Army. Militias were local bodies composed of men who typically rotated in and out of duty in short-term assignments often close to their homes. New Jersey’s Continental Army troops, on the other hand, served for lengthy periods, often far from home. In fear of the British and mindful of the need to protect its citizens, New Jersey believed that it could not sufficiently rely on either the militia or the Continental Army, and from time to time embodied volunteers from its various county militias to serve together for extended periods. Also known as the “New Jersey Levies,” or “Five Months’ Levies,” the state troops first appeared in February 1776, when the Provincial Congress authorized two artillery companies. New Jersey positioned one of the new artillery batteries in the eastern portion of the state, the other to the west. According to Stryker, “each company was to consist of a captain, captain-lieutenant, first and second lieutenants, a fire-worker, four sergeants, four corporals, one bombardier, and fifty matrosses.” It was in the Eastern Company of Artillery, under the command of Captain Daniel Neil, that Hulett first experienced the terror of war during the Battle of Princeton, presumably as a matross, or gunner’s mate.

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109 Ibid., 17-18.


Like many other young Jersey men, Hulett found himself in battle, due not to any strong ideological commitment to the revolutionary cause, but because events in 1775-1776 brought radical Whigs to power in America. They successfully stilled the voices of their more conservative brethren and launched a march to independence. Their cause, which began as a constitutional argument with the British king, his ministry, and Parliament over the rights of the American colonists to a degree of self-rule, erupted into war and carried many colonists who would have preferred a different course along the path that eventually led to an independent nation.
Chapter Two: Hulett and the Northern Campaign (1776 to 1779)

Charles Hulett, the subject of this study, was a comparatively young militia soldier at the outbreak of the war. His enlistment records dating from the time that he joined the Continental Army as a nine-month draftee in May 1778 described him as eighteen years old, dark-skinned and relatively slight of build by today’s standards, at five feet six inches in height, but close to the norm for men his age during the late eighteenth century. When Hulett experienced his baptism by fire sixteen months earlier, at the Battle of Princeton, he could have been as young as sixteen years old. This chapter outlines his experience in the Northern Campaign of the American Revolutionary War and provides an overarching view of the war from the British invasion of New York until the Battle of Monmouth Courthouse. The author’s purpose in doing so is to analyze whether some of the historical documents that describe Hulett’s service during the war are reliable and provide accurate information. That analysis determined that several of the key events described in Jonas Aby’s pension application on behalf of Hulett’s heirs are inaccurate. With assistance from several period subject matter experts, the author has discovered an alternative version of Hulett’s service in the period 1780 – 1781, which saw him enlist as a private in the New Jersey Volunteers, a Loyalist provincial unit. This chapter traces the main actions of the war that have bearing on Hulett’s story.

Howe’s New York Campaign

Having evacuated their untenable situation in Boston on 17 March 1776, the British returned in the summer to crush the colonial rebellion. The new British commander-in-chief, General William Howe and his brother, Admiral Richard Lord Howe, led what historian David

Hackett Fischer termed “the largest projection of seaborne power ever attempted by a European state.”\(^{113}\) The British commanders carefully planned and flawlessly executed the massive invasion. On 29 June 1776, New York’s lower harbor began to fill with British ships; by the third day, well over one hundred had arrived. In testimony to the capable command coordination between the two brothers, thousands of British soldiers disembarked with little resistance from the Americans. Over the next few weeks, thousands more arrived. The combined force included both British regulars and Hessian troops, in all totaling nearly thirty-three thousand men and representing some of the finest troops the old world had to offer. Despite a valiant attempt by the Americans to defend Long Island, the British force humiliated their efforts by a deceptive flanking action that adeptly used intelligence gathered from local Loyalists and caught the unprepared rebels off guard. The British easily crushed American resistance, eventually sweeping as many as ten thousand Americans into an apparent trap on Brooklyn Heights. The British had hemmed in the rebels and it appeared that the Royal Navy would cut off any hope of withdrawal from Long Island to Manhattan Island. Almost miraculously, however, nature intervened. A tremendous storm blew in and blanketed the region with heavy rain, then thick fog. Under the cover of the storm, the rebels gathered every possible vessel available and evacuated the troops before the British could spring their trap. The Americans survived, as much by grit and determination as by luck. For the American army however, disaster followed disaster. Pushed before the British, they retreated out of New York City. For most of the rebels, their good fortune continued, despite repeated losses. The majority of Washington’s troops escaped the British.\(^{114}\)


\(^{114}\) Ibid., 33, 94, 100-101, 103-107.
Following the humiliating defeats in New York, Washington and his Continental Army retreated. By 1 November, the army was at White Plains, New York. Discipline was disintegrating; Washington’s General Orders for the day noted his alarm with the actions of his troops and he insisted that his officers call rolls frequently, at least three times a day, to prevent further disobedience and mayhem. Washington was particularly concerned about soldiers straying from the main army and plundering the local populace. He insisted that firing guns in camp cease and he required the immediate punishment of any offender. The same General Orders indicated the upcoming Court Martial of Colonel Morris Graham on charges that he ordered his men to retreat without firing on the enemy. Accusations amongst the officers against each other became commonplace; the General Orders of 8 November 1776 indicated several instances of officers accusing their peers of cowardly retreats in the face of the on-coming British.115

Washington abhorred the wanton acts of destruction that his own men engaged in which alienated the local residents. When soldiers set fire to a courthouse, Washington expressed astonishment and dismay. He insisted that the culprits be found and brought to justice, which resulted in the court-martial of Major Jonathan Austin, who was implicated in the destruction of property and “wanton barbarous conduct” to local residents. 116


By 14 November, Washington and his men retreated to Fort Lee, New Jersey and arrived at General Nathanael Greene’s quarters. From there, Washington reported to John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress, that the entire Continental Army, with the exception of a single regiment, had passed into New Jersey. He expressed his desire to quarter his troops at key towns throughout the state. Yet, the British rapidly approached and pushed the rebels to continue their retreat. On 17 November, Washington reported the loss of an American position on Harlem Heights. Two days later, from Hackensack, New Jersey, he reported to Hancock that the British had taken Fort Lee itself. Conditions continued to deteriorate. Washington and his “Flying Camp” prepared to depart Newark, New Jersey on 23 November, as the assistance that Washington desperately sought to stem the British advance failed to materialize. His subordinate, General Charles Lee, accompanied by a larger army than Washington, dawdled and ignored Washington’s order to join him.\footnote{“From George Washington to John Hancock, 14 November 1776,” \textit{Founders Online}, National Archives, accessed April 19, 2014, http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-07-02-0075, ver. 2014-02-12; “From George Washington to Jonathan Trumbull, Sr., 17 November 1776,” \textit{Founders Online}, National Archives, accessed April 19, 2014, http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-07-02-0123, ver. 2014-02-12; “From George Washington to John Hancock, 23 November 1776,” \textit{Founders Online}, National Archives, accessed April 19, 2014, http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-07-02-0139, ver. 2014-02-12.} To Washington’s despair, New Jersey’s Whigs did not rise to protect their homes; the colony’s militia ignored the British threat as well as repeated calls for them to turn out. A Philadelphia newspaper essayist, seeking to shame the militia to do their duty, stated, “If in this hour of adversity they shrink from danger, they deserve to be slaves.”\footnote{John Ferling, \textit{Almost a Miracle: The American Victory in the War of Independence} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 164.}
By early December 1776, as the ragged, ill-fed, and discouraged troops of the Continental Army hemorrhaged men, the British occupation of New Jersey restored the local Loyalists to preeminence. Howe ceased hostilities for the winter and deployed his army across an extensive “arc of posts” in New Jersey not only for forage but also to hearten and protect the local Loyalists.\textsuperscript{119} While concerned about his troops’ exposure and vulnerability given their dispersion, Howe assumed that his successful campaign season of 1776 had brought the rebel forces to the brink of extinction.\textsuperscript{120}

Much to the consternation of the New Jersey Loyalists that Howe sought to protect, however, the arrival of the British and Hessian forces did not alleviate their woes. The Loyalists’ delight in their deliverance was short-lived as British and Hessian soldiers plundered the homes of rebel and Loyalist alike, paying no heed to the allegiance of their victims. His own troops dealt Howe’s plans to pacify the province a mortal blow as their legitimate foraging expeditions crossed the boundaries of suitable behavior to plundering, which in turn degenerated into pillaging, senseless destruction, rape and brutality. New Jersey’s people suffered substantially under the British occupation and began to retaliate. Armed men roamed the countryside seeking to attack small groups of British and Hessian soldiers; soon the violence escalated dramatically. Many who had been neutral threw their support to the rebellion in reaction to the loathsome behavior of the occupying British and Hessian forces. At the same time, the Whig New Jersey Provincial Congress fled and then later disbanded, leaving the people without any form of


\textsuperscript{120} Stephenson, "Washington Risks Everything."
legitimate government.\textsuperscript{121} New Jersey descended into anarchy with “robbers and bandits [infesting] the countryside.”\textsuperscript{122} The lawlessness affected the isolated British outposts. Couriers traveling between posts especially became the targets of retribution. The Hessians housed at Trenton, one of the most isolated British garrisons, found themselves subjected to constant harassment, including lightning strikes launched by Pennsylvania rebels from across the Delaware River. The Hessian post commander, Colonel Johann Rall, kept his men in a constant state of preparedness and called to his superiors for reinforcements, reporting that his soldiers were under continuous threat, exhausted and quartered in a town that Rall felt was indefensible.\textsuperscript{123}

The lawlessness that terrorized the New Jersey countryside spurred its wayward militia to rise and defend their province. On 4 December 1776, the Eastern Artillery Company, part of the newly formed New Jersey state troops and the company to which Charles Hulett belonged, became part of Colonel Henry Knox’s Continental Army artillery brigade. Initially led by Captain Frederick Frelinghuysen, the artillery company came under the command of Captain Daniel Neil upon Frelinghuysen’s resignation.\textsuperscript{124}


\textsuperscript{122} Fischer, \textit{Washington’s Crossing}, 180.

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 179, 195-196, 201.

\textsuperscript{124} William S. Stryker, \textit{Official Register of the Officers and Men of New Jersey in the Revolutionary War} (Trenton, NJ: WM. T. Nicholson & Co., Printers, 1872), 319-320; William S. Stryker, \textit{The Battles of Trenton and Princeton} (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1898), 174. A number of mid-nineteenth century historical accounts of the Battle of Trenton claim that Frelinghuysen fired the shot that killed the Hessian commander, Colonel Rall, during the Battle of Trenton. Stryker, however, notes that claim is unfounded; he argues that Frelinghuysen, commanded by Brigadier General Philemon Dickinson who led the New Jersey militia, was likely on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware River, and did not participate in the action at Trenton. Dickinson’s men were with General James Ewing, who was unsuccessful in his bid to cross the Delaware the night of 25 December 1776.
**Battles of Trenton and Princeton**

Washington knew he must act while he still had men under his command. He and his commanders designed a daring plan to strike Trenton. Their battle plan relied heavily on artillery, as the weather was a “violent storm of snow and hail;” the sort of conditions that would render muskets useless. His plans included field artillery in a much greater proportion than customary as Washington had a great deal of confidence in his artillery commander, Knox, and his men. They had some of the best morale in the Continental Army and Washington hoped that their steadfast nature and impressive weaponry would provide backbone to the infantry.

Washington’s plans included having three groups cross the Delaware River. He and the men under his personal command planned to cross at McConkey’s and Johnson’s ferries. Washington’s contingent included Major-General John Sullivan, who would command the American right wing on the approach to Trenton. The New Jersey artillery battery under Captain Neil accompanied Sullivan’s division. (If Hulett participated in the Battle of Trenton, it would have been with Neil.) A smaller force, led by General James Ewing was to cross at Trenton Ferry. The New Jersey militia, under their commander, Brigadier General Philemon Dickinson accompanied Ewing. A third group, under Colonel John Cadwalader, commander of the Philadelphia Associators, a volunteer militia force, attempted to cross from Bristol, Pennsylvania to Burlington, New Jersey. As difficult as Washington’s crossing was, the conditions faced by Ewing and Cadwalader were worse and they were unable to gain their objectives. The weather provided a benefit to the Americans, however, as its ferocity caused Rall to relax his guard a bit.

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he believed it was preposterous to think that the rebels would attack his men during the violent storm and he cancelled a planned early morning patrol.127

Washington’s force executed his plan extremely well, given the weather and road conditions, essentially carrying out an extraordinarily well synchronized attack on the Hessian outpost. Two divisions, one led by Greene, the other by Sullivan, advanced to encircle and cutoff the troops quartered in Trenton. Despite the precautions that Rall took with his forward positions and outguards, the Americans effectively surprised the garrison. American artillery bombarded Trenton from units on hand and those massed on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware. The rebels descended on their quarry. As surprised as they were, the Hessians fought skillfully and counter-attacked, but Washington would not be denied. His capable, devastating artillery attack coupled with a coordinated infantry assault overwhelmed the much smaller Hessian force. Rall fell mortally wounded; some of the Hessians believed his loss to be the turning point of the battle, while others blamed him entirely for the debacle. Few Hessian soldiers escaped. The following day, Washington again wrote to Hancock, informing him of the victory. Washington recounted the essential points of the battle and informed Hancock that he had captured 909 of the enemy comprised of 23 officers and 886 men. Washington extolled the bravery and behavior of his men. Congress quickly sent Washington’s update to a Baltimore printer, from whence the news rapidly spread.128


128 Fischer, *Washington’s Crossing*, 228-231, 234-235, 238-239, 249; “From George Washington to John Hancock, 27 December 1776,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, accessed April 19, 2014, http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-07-02-0355, ver. 2014-02-12. Fischer describes that the American’s captured 896 officers and men, including the wounded on page 254; Washington’s letter to Hancock lists the number stated in the text of this paper and estimates that an additional twenty or thirty were killed. The footnotes in *Founders Online* that accompany Washington’s letter to Hancock state that the Hessian returns noted 893 captured officers and men, not counting five artillerymen left wounded or ill at Trenton. A final footnote in the
Washington desired to follow his Trenton victory with another bold stroke. He knew that his situation remained precarious and that he needed to solidify his Trenton conquest to keep his troops’ spirits alive and to reignite fervor for the cause in New Jersey. As he noted in a letter to Hancock, “Our situation was most critical and our force small. To remove immediately was again destroying every dawn of hope which had begun to revive in the breasts of the Jersey Militia.” Cadwalader and the Philadelphia Associators presented Washington with an unlooked-for opportunity. Cadwalader and his men had crossed into New Jersey on their own initiative and they were anxious to cause further damage to the British. In light of Cadwalader’s actions, Washington held a council of war on 27 December and with those present debated the alternatives, eventually agreeing to follow the earlier success at Trenton with another strike intended to liberate much of New Jersey. Washington faced the loss of most of his army on 31 December as their enlistments were set to expire. He pleaded for the men to remain and most heeded his appeal to their honor. The wheels were set in motion for one of the riskiest American undertakings of the war. Washington called out the militia and mustered his army for a much larger advance across the Delaware. The militia turned out in droves as New Jersey men answered Washington’s call. Over a two-day period beginning 29 December, Washington and his men on the Pennsylvania side again crossed the Delaware, this time with more than twice the amount of artillery than used to take Trenton. The second Battle of Trenton, however, would pit Washington not against an isolated outpost but opposed to General Charles Lord Cornwallis, one same document summarizes the information listed by Tench Tilghman giving regimental breakdowns of the captured officers and men and states the total at 918 prisoners. Regardless of the discrepancies noted, Washington’s capture of two-thirds of the Trenton garrison gave new life to the rebel cause and became a pivotal moment in the Revolutionary War.

of Howe’s most aggressive field commanders, and a British army of approximately nine thousand men.\textsuperscript{130}

Once settled in Trenton, Washington and his commanders searched for a suitable defensive position, intending to draw Cornwallis and his troops into a “costly assault” but the risk to Washington and his men was grave.\textsuperscript{131} Washington’s position on high ground by the Assunpink Creek had a great deal of natural strength for defenders, but it could have also become a death trap as many of the men realized. Captain Stephen Olney summed up the situation, by stating “It appeared to me then that our army was in the most desperate situation I had ever known it; we had no boats to carry us across the Delaware, and if we had, so powerful an enemy would certainly destroy the better half before we could embark.”\textsuperscript{132}

Nevertheless, Washington’s gamble paid off. Cornwallis elected to approach the American position for a frontal attack and delaying actions carried out by Colonel Edward Hand and his Pennsylvania riflemen bought Washington valuable time. Several other factors played a crucial role in the day’s outcome, including effective use of Colonel Henry Knox’s artillery and Washington’s thoughtful use of the militia, which he carefully interspersed between his seasoned Continental units. Probing attacks by the British on American positions proved bloody and fruitless for the British, however, Cornwallis intended to recapture the initiative in the morning and attack the Americans’ weak right flank. Washington and his senior officers recognized the

\textsuperscript{130} Fischer, \textit{Washington’s Crossing}, 265-266, 269, 272-273, 275, 293.

\textsuperscript{131} Fischer, \textit{Washington’s Crossing}, 278

\textsuperscript{132} Stephen Olney quoted in Stephenson, "Washington Risks Everything."
danger, and under the cover of darkness took a little known path away from the trap, leaving behind lit campfires and a few hundred men to mask their escape.\textsuperscript{133}

Washington and his men did not retreat across the Delaware this time, they instead set out on a night march to attack the small British force remaining at Princeton. Although Washington’s troops covered the distance between Trenton toward Princeton at a much quicker pace than the British had traveled in the opposite direction, they did not make their destination before daybreak. A small body of British troops under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Charles Mawhood who were traveling to reinforce Cornwallis discovered the American advance position and a pitched battle ensued between Mawhood’s men and an American brigade led by General Hugh Mercer. Mercer’s division included Neil’s artillery battery. Neil “brought two of his guns into position, and threw some shot into the enemy’s right wing.”\textsuperscript{134} Despite being outnumbered more than two-to-one, the British fought ferociously and their bayonet charge nearly routed the Americans. The scene was horrific; a veteran recounted that blood was everywhere and flowed in rivulets across the frozen ground. Mercer cried out for a retreat, then fell to a British shot. The British rushed in to bayonet Mercer. Hulett’s commander, Neil, died by British bayonets as he worked his cannon.\textsuperscript{135} Hulett’s obituary reported that Neil’s unit “was almost cut to pieces after the fall of its commander.”\textsuperscript{136} The unit’s First Lieutenant, John Van Dyke, led Hulett and the remaining men of Neil’s battery in retreat. The Americans wavered and

\textsuperscript{133} Fischer, \textit{Washington’s Crossing}, 301-302, 309-310, 314-316.

\textsuperscript{134} Stryker, \textit{The Battles of Trenton and Princeton}, 281.

\textsuperscript{135} Fischer, \textit{Washington’s Crossing}, 333. Fischer includes an image of a sketch by John Trumbull, \textit{Study for the Battle of Princeton}, drawn in 1786. Trumbull’s drawing shows the death of Captain Daniel Neil. In the foreground lies a drum, and to the right, what appears to be a dazed, young drummer.

\textsuperscript{136} Obituary of Charles Hulett, \textit{Winchester Republican}, vol. XXV, no. 11, May 27, 1835.
nearly crumbled before the furious British attack; however, Washington arrived on the scene with reinforcements and stemmed the rebel retreat. The British broke and fled. Those who remained in Princeton attempted to defend the town against the Americans, but were overwhelmed. The carnage was appalling. Historian John Ferling estimated that the Americans captured, killed, or wounded nearly half of the British soldiers who engaged in the action.\footnote{Sergeant R__, “The Battle of Princeton,” originally published in The Phoenix of March 24, 1832, published at Wellsborough, Pennsylvania, The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 20, no. 4 (1896): 515-519, accessed July 22, 2013, \url{http://www.jstor.org/stable/20085717}; Ferling, Almost a Miracle, 184-185.}

Following his victory at Princeton, Washington advised Hancock “The Militia are taking spirit and I am told, are coming in fast from this State,” and he praised Cadwalader and the Pennsylvania militia, recognizing that they “have undergone more fatigue and hardship than I expected Militia (especially Citizens) would have done at this inclement Season.”\footnote{“From George Washington to John Hancock, 5 January 1777,” Founders Online, National Archives, accessed April 1, 2014, \url{http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-07-02-0411}.} He also reported that he and his Continentals would head toward “Morris town” where Washington planned “to put them under the best cover I can. Hitherto we have been without any and many of our poor Soldiers quite bear foot (sic) & ill clad in other respects.”\footnote{Ibid.} Washington and his men entered winter quarters. However, the fight against the British continued, this time prosecuted primarily by militia, who Washington directed to deny the British the food and forage that they needed for their men and animals throughout the winter. Known collectively as the “Forage Wars,” clashes between the rebels and the British occurred throughout New Jersey. To date, the author has not found evidence that Hulett participated in any of the forage-related skirmishes that occurred between early January and late March 1777, however, it is likely, as at least one battle
occurred at his hometown of Newark. The rebels targeted New Jersey’s Loyalists as well, punishing them for their earlier support of the British.\textsuperscript{140}

The Battles of Trenton and Princeton had noteworthy repercussions for both the British and the American rebels. The rebel cause gained substantial support as word of the victories spread. Medical doctor James Thacher noted in his military journal, “The militia of Jersey, immediately on their being liberated from the control of the British flew to arms.”\textsuperscript{141} He wrote that Washington’s reputation soared as “It is often exultingly remarked in our camp, that Washington was born for the salvation of his country, and that he is endowed with all the talents and abilities necessary to qualify him for the great undertaking.”\textsuperscript{142} Historian Ira Gruber fittingly states that the victories at Trenton and Princeton “blasted the illusion of British invincibility, restored American morale, and ended the Howes’ chances for a negotiated peace.”\textsuperscript{143}

The events at Trenton and Princeton shattered Howe’s optimism for a rapid end to the war. Following the battles, Howe abruptly changed his proposal for the 1777 campaign. In the third of his multiple plans for the year submitted to Lord George Germain, the British Secretary for the Americas, Howe proposed to bring Washington to a pitched battle by advancing on


\textsuperscript{141} James Thacher, A Military Journal during the American Revolutionary War, from 1775 to 1783: Describing interesting events and Transactions of this Period; with Numerous Historical Facts and Anecdotes, from the Original Manuscript, (Boston: Cottons & Barnard, 1827), 74, accessed July 20, 2013, \url{http://archive.org/details/jamesthachermil00revorich}.

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.

Philadelphia, thought to be the seat of power in America, as the Continental Congress made the city its home. Howe no longer mentioned that he intended to provide any support to General John Burgoyne’s planned invasion of the Hudson Valley from Canada. Howe’s fourth and final plan for 1777 modified his strategy to attack Philadelphia; he intended to approach the city entirely by sea. In this manner, Howe would avoid marching his troops through New Jersey; the forage wars had made the state markedly more hostile to the British than it had been in the fall of 1776. Historian Ira Gruber claimed a clear link between the British debacle at Trenton and Howe’s revised plan for 1777; he asserted that Howe “went to Pennsylvania instead of the Hudson in 1777 from a guilty wish to justify his widespread cantonments which had opened the way to the Trenton disaster.” The Battles of Trenton and Princeton set off a chain of events that embroiled Britain in a global war and dramatically raised the stakes in the War for American Independence. Germain sensed the repercussions and wrote to Howe “The disagreeable occurrence at Trenton was extremely mortifying, especially as I fear that this affair will elate the enemy and encourage them to persevere in their rebellion.”

The pivotal year – 1777

The year 1777 proved to be pivotal; Burgoyne’s northern invasion crashed upon the shoals of a massive rebel militia outpouring in New York, a province that the British presumed to be heavily Loyalist. His surrender at Saratoga, New York on 17 October 1777 ended his

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144 Mackesy, The War for America, 110-112; Ferling, Almost a Miracle, 189-191; Higginbotham, The War of American Independence, 178-179;


campaign and forfeited an entire British army of over 5,700 men as well as all their artillery, arms, ammunition and matériel. The British loss at Saratoga directly led to France’s entrance into the war as an American ally.\textsuperscript{147}

Meanwhile, General Howe, knighted in recognition of his brilliant New York campaign, sought to bring Washington to a climactic battle. After many delays, Howe and his troops left New York for Philadelphia. His transport armada included over 260 ships and more than 13,000 men. Howe first attempted to land his forces near the Delaware River, but switched course and returned to sea. His movements baffled the Americans as they attempted to predict his landing zone and stall his advance on Philadelphia. After a lengthy and debilitating voyage, which cost the British many of their horses and substantially weakened his men, Howe and his troops came ashore at the Head of Elk, Maryland, on 25 August after sailing in through the Chesapeake Bay.\textsuperscript{148} On 11 September 1777, the Battle of Brandywine Creek provided Howe the faceoff with Washington that he so desired. Although Howe once again demonstrated his tactical acumen and clearly “outgeneraled” Washington, his hollow victory did not bring him the conclusion he sought, for Philadelphia was not the true American center of gravity. The Continental Congress fled the city before it fell, and the Continental Army, though suffering losses, remained intact. As long as Washington and the Continentals remained a viable force and embodied the will of the majority of Americans, they, and not a city, represented the center of gravity to the American rebellion.\textsuperscript{149} Howe forfeited the opportunity to collaborate with Burgoyne, which likely would


\textsuperscript{148} Higginbotham, \textit{The War of American Independence}, 183.

have assured the British of a victorious campaign. For Howe, the men he lost at Brandywine were irreplaceable. Washington, on the other hand, while experiencing recruiting difficulties, had many more options available to him.

For Hulett, now seventeen years old, the clash of giants near Philadelphia found him as a private in Captain Elijah Squier’s militia company, stationed at Newark, New Jersey. Family oral history, arising from stories that Hulett shared with his grandchildren about the Battle of Brandywine, indicated that Hulett fought at the battle, however, that is unlikely. Extant muster rolls place him at Newark for the period of 24 September to 1 October 1777. It is clear from records of the battle that the New Jersey soldiers who participated were Continentals, not militia. Nor did Hulett engage in the Battle of Germantown, which occurred on 4 October 1777, although a number of New Jersey militia did join in that battle. Brigadier General David Forman led the New Jersey militia troops at Germantown; however, his brigade did not include Essex county men. Hulett’s grandson, Henry Clay Warrell, recounted that as a child, he sat on Hulett’s lap while his grandfather shared with him stories about the Battle of Brandywine. The author’s research indicates that Hulett’s tales did not relate a personal experience of the battle.

**The Continental Army’s recruitment challenges**

As the war dragged on, the Continental Army encountered significant challenges in recruiting its rank and file soldiers. By 1777, the men in the ranks of the New Jersey Continental Line did not resemble the Patriot image of the idealistic yeoman, but rather, they came from the poorer members of society, much like the soldiers of the British Army. Lender’s study “The

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150 Bette M. Epstein, New Jersey State Archives, e-mail to author, December 31, 2013 referencing Revolutionary War Mss. #245, which noted Charles Hulett as a private in Capt. Elijah Squier’s Company, stationed at Newark, Sept. 24 – Oct. 1, 1777. The information is a transcription of original document at the National Archives.

Social Structure of the New Jersey Brigade: The Continental Line as an American Standing Army,” provides an in-depth examination of the social origins of New Jersey’s common soldier, based on an analysis of muster rolls from the period following the British invasion of New Jersey to mid-1780 compared to tax ratables. Lender determined that a substantial number of the men were quite young; fifty-five percent of those he studied were twenty-two years old or younger. Additionally, the soldiers were less likely than the population of New Jersey as a whole to own land; while thirty-seven percent of New Jersey residents were landless, over fifty-six percent of the soldiers fell into this category, with an additional thirty-four percent owning less than one hundred acres. Lender also determined that a sizable number of New Jersey’s enlisted men had no ties to the community and included a number of foreigners.152

The winter of 1777-1778 found the Continental Army at Valley Forge. While the harsh winter further decimated its ranks, the army emerged from its winter quarters as a professional fighting force. One of the Continental Army’s European “imports,” Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben, devoted significant energy to imposing a standard drill for the officers and soldiers. Before Steuben’s arrival, American officers had used whichever drill method they had learned, be it Prussian, French, or British. Steuben instilled a consistency of drill and maneuver for the army, enshrined in his Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States, published in 1779, more commonly known as the “Blue Book” for the color of paper used by the first printer of the book. Historian Paul Lockhart notes that in the campaigns that followed Valley Forge, the “Continental Army demonstrated again and again that its metamorphosis at

Valley Forge was no temporary phenomenon. Steuben’s students had learned their lessons well. The army’s ranks, however, required an infusion of new men. Over the winter, death, disease, and desertion had taken their toll.

Some states, including New Jersey, turned to conscription to fill the quota of men they owed to the continental war effort. Drafted into service through the “Act for the speedy and effectual recruiting of the four New-Jersey Regiments in the Service of the United States,” passed by the New Jersey General Assembly on 3 April 1778, Hulett joined Captain Isaac Morrison’s company of the 1st New Jersey Regiment as one of the nine-month levies who bolstered its ranks in May 1778. Morrison’s company was part of Colonel Matthias Ogden’s regiment, under the overall command of Brigadier General William Maxwell. Morrison’s company grew from thirty-three privates in March 1778 to eighty-eight in May 1778. Morrison’s May muster roll listed over sixty percent of the company’s privates as nine-month enlistees. Hulett served the first eight months of his enlistment as a drummer and his final month as a private. Neither Hulett’s service cards dating from May 1778 to February 1779 nor his company’s muster rolls indicate that Hulett was injured, or captured by the British, as claimed in Aby’s pension request.


154 “Muster roll of Capt. Isaac Morrison’s Company Regiment from Jersey Commanded by Col. Matthias Ogden, Taken for the month of March 1778,” U.S. Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775-1783, National Archives and Records Administration, accessed May 6, 2014, Ancestry.com. The March 1778 muster roll for Morrison’s company reflects a large number of sick soldiers. Of the thirty-three privates listed, thirteen were sick. The company’s drummer and fifer were also sick.

Hulett apparently took a great deal of pride in his role as a drummer, for the pension application submitted by Aby emphasized that Hulett served in that capacity and claimed that Hulett retired from the Continental Army as a drum major. Drummers played a critical role in eighteenth century armies. Music historian Raoul Camus traced the origins of the drum as an instrument of war in his book *Military Music of the American Revolution*. Like many other Islamic innovations that found their way north, Christian knights brought the drum and its military use back with them to Europe when they returned from the Crusades. As early as the sixteenth century, references appear to the drum’s beat setting the cadence for English marching troops. The drum, later joined by the fife, trumpet, and bugle, became critical to European military maneuvers and tactics as a “conveyor of signals and orders.”\footnote{Raoul F. Camus, *Military Music of the American Revolution* (1975; repr., Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1995), 6.} The infantry and artillery used the drum and fife while mounted units used the trumpet and, later, the bugle, for similar purposes.\footnote{Anne Midgley, “Call to Arms: Military Musicians in Colonial and Revolutionary America,” *Saber and Scroll Journal* 1, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 42-47. http://apus.campusguides.com/content.php?pid=205954&sid=4640035.}

age of Pennsylvania’s drummers upon entering the service was eighteen, while that of fifers was seventeen. New Jersey’s drummers ranged from fourteen to thirty-five years of age, while the fifers were a bit younger, and ranged from ten years to twenty-eight years of age. Ogden’s adjutant assigned eighteen-year old Hulett to be Morrison’s drummer, as his previous drummer deserted the company the month before Hulett joined it. The author found no evidence that Hulett was a musician prior to his assignment as a drummer in 1778.

Military music served a variety of purposes, including the most important, to convey orders to the troops. Steuben’s Blue Book listed various drumbeats and drum signals and each served a unique purpose. The “Tattoo” for instance, directed “soldiers to repair to their tents, where they must remain till reveille beating the next morning.” The Blue Book provided instructions for each role in the military. In following orders, the private must “acquaint himself with the usual beats and signals of the drum, and instantly obey them.”

As in the British military tradition during the Revolutionary War period, efforts to recruit new soldiers often used drummers and fifers. The musicians’ contributions were effective; the stirring military music was a siren call for potential enlistees. Camus recounts that the “act of enlisting (or reenlisting) was called ‘following the drum.’” Drummers also inflicted some forms of military discipline. It fell to the drummer to administer lash punishments, a task few

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161 Ibid., 152.

162 Camus, Military Music, xi.
desired, and a task that at least one drummer refused to perform, resulting in his own arrest and court-martial. The Americans also adopted many British traditions of military discipline, including the practice of “drumming out” serious offenders. The practice applied to both combatants and camp followers alike; women who accompanied the soldiers and provided cooking, nursing, and washing chores were subject to military discipline, even in this severe form. A certain Mary Johnson, “for plotting to desert to the enemy, received one hundred lashes and was ‘drum’d out of the Army by all the Drums and Fifes in the Division.’” References to the practice mention instances where as many as fifty-five drummers and sixty fifers participated in the ceremony, which included playing the tune *Rogues March*, as they paraded the guilty party in front of the entire regiment. At the end of the ceremony, the thoroughly shamed miscreant received one final bit of humiliation; a “kick from the youngest drummer” sent him on his way with “instructions never to return.”

Drummers were often vulnerable in battle, as similar to their unit’s officers, drummers were critical to the effectiveness of the troops to whom they signaled commands. They therefore became targets for the enemy. Drummers dressed differently than the typical rank and file soldier to be readily visible to their Captain in the heat of battle, which, of course, also made them conspicuous to the enemy. Continental regiments often had distinctive regional dress and


165 Ibid., 113.

drummers and fifers wore the “reverse color of the regimental uniforms.” 

Not all performed nobly. At the Battle of Brandywine, the entire 2nd Maryland Brigade, including the officers and musicians “turned on their heels and ran.” However, many more were steadfast in duty and served admirably.

**Britain’s world war and the West Indies**

In the pension claim filed by Jonas Aby in August 1845 on behalf of the heirs of Charles Hulett, Aby stated that he “always understood and verily believes [that Hulett] was a soldier and musician in the service of the United States during the Revolutionary War.” Aby then laid out what he believed to be the facts of Hulett’s service, including that Hulett “was engaged in the battle of Monmouth and was wounded in the leg and then or soon after taken as prisoner by the enemy and carried in captivity to the West Indies.” Aby further states that Hulett enlisted with the British as a musician to “relieve himself from the horrors of his imprisonment . . . and was sent to the United States.”

The last statement is perhaps the most intriguing and questionable of the details provided by Aby of Hulett’s service. It deserves in-depth examination and the research findings indicate that it does not stand up to historical evidence. It is however, worth noting that the reference to

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167 Camus, *Military Music*, 158-159


170 Jonas Aby, Charles Hulett Pension Request, New Jersey, No. S. 9592, August 1848. Frederick County, Virginia.

171 Ibid.

172 Ibid.
the West Indies displays that Aby, likely from information related to him by Hulett, understood that the War for America was much more than a war fought on American soil.

The British sent thousands of troops from New York to the West Indies in 1778 under the command of Major General James Grant, draining much of the troop strength from the new British Commander-in-chief in America, General Sir Henry Clinton. Why the British choose to decimate their fighting capabilities in mainland America is a complex story that reflects the global nature of Britain’s eighteenth century empire and Britain’s long-term hostilities with the Bourbon empires of France and Spain. While twenty-first century Americans are relatively oblivious to the fact, in truth, the War for America was the second world war fought by Britain against its ancient enemies in the space of two decades. The first, known in America as the French and Indian War, was part of the much greater Seven Years’ War, which was fought in America, in Europe, and in the outposts of the British, French and Spanish empires throughout the world. The Seven Years’ War raged on land and on sea; the combatants waged battles in mainland America and Europe as well as Gibraltar, Minorca, West Africa, Havana, the coast of France, and Manila.173

By the close of 1778, the American rebellion itself became a global war. The strategic situation facing the British and American forces battling for control of the mainland American colonies was vastly different than it had been in the spring of 1775. Britain had suffered a humiliating defeat at Saratoga. The American victory at Saratoga substantially boosted the rebel cause and convinced France to join the conflict by entering into a military and political alliance with the American rebels. The war became a global conflict, threatening the British Empire

across its far-flung territories and posing significant risks for the British West Indies. For Britain, the fallout from Saratoga sparked a significant reassessment of its military strategy.\footnote{Piers Mackesy, \textit{The War for America: 1775-1783} (1964; repr., Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 141-144; 183.}

Britain’s struggle to put down a colonial rebellion had shifted in focus; it was back fighting a familiar foe, France. Britain’s Cabinet ordered Clinton, the new commander-in-chief of the British forces in America following General Sir William Howe’s resignation, to relinquish a number of his troops to support British needs elsewhere, including sending a force of five thousand troops to the West Indies and three thousand to reinforce the British position in Florida. The island colonies were too great a prize to lose without a fight and Britain sought to protect the islands rather than continue an offensive war in the Northern and Middle Colonies. The British West Indies were scattered across the Caribbean; Jamaica, Britain’s most valuable island colony, lay to the south of Spanish Cuba, in a group of islands referred to as the Greater Antilles. Britain’s Bahaman Islands lay to the northeast of Cuba. The majority of Britain’s island colonies lay far to the east, in the Lesser Antilles. These islands included the Leeward Islands of St. Kitts, Nevis, Montserrat, Barbuda, Antigua, and Dominica, and the Windward Islands of Barbados, St. Vincent, Grenada, and Tobago. France and Spain also had numerous colonies in the Caribbean. French St. Lucia, Martinique, Marie-Galante, and Guadeloupe lay amongst the British islands, threatening their security. In addition to Cuba, Spain controlled Hispaniola, Porto Rico and Trinidad, while the neutral Dutch held St. Eustatius.\footnote{Mackesy, \textit{The War for America}, 182-185; 226.}
and the American mainland colonies tightly to each other prior to the American Revolution and included the slave trade triangle, which facilitated the trade of New England rum, African slaves, and West Indies molasses, a key ingredient in the production of rum. The slaves’ passage to the West Indies and their backbreaking work on the island plantations exacted a tremendous cost in terms of human lives and kept the continuous cycle of slave trade in motion. The islands’ disease environment was also harsh on the British colonists, and created a “demographic disaster area” with the white population skewed towards young adult males, rather than stable families.  

The islands’ white population was transient and essentially focused on economic profit, rather than building a long-term home. The colonists transformed the islands to be heavily reliant on the production of sugar and little else. The islanders depended on the mainland colonies for virtually all their foodstuffs, livestock, and lumber needs. Under the British mercantile system, only the combination of the mainland colonies with the islands could support the intense single agricultural focus of the islands. The steady increase in wealth generated from the islands, combined with the political influence exercised by the “West Indian ‘interest’ in British politics” ensured that the West Indies occupied a powerful place in British decision-making about Atlantic trade policies in the period from 1763 to the outbreak of war.  

In his doctoral dissertation, historian Robert Neil McLarty notes that West Indian absentee owners were “both opulent and

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extremely influential . . . they exerted a far greater influence over British politics than any other contemporary group.”

As relations between the mainland colonies and Britain deteriorated, the West Indies lobbyists stepped up their influence to protect the islands’ interests. The outbreak of war harmed the islands considerably, for the trade they relied upon to provide essential food items withered away. From the onset of the war, then, Great Britain was required to allocate military resources for the islands both to protect them against American privateers and to provide critically needed supplies. All the while, significant gunpowder, weapons, and supplies made their way to the mainland colonies by way of the islands, as the French and the Dutch brought the munitions to the West Indies, where privateers transferred it to ships bound for the mainland. The Dutch island of St. Eustatius was particularly notorious as a source of both legal and illegal trade. After France’s entry into the war as an American ally, Britain’s exposure in the islands became an immediate concern. Thinly dispersed across the islands, Britain’s troops were ill equipped to defend any individual island. Disease had further reduced the British ranks. Rather than rely on defensive measures to protect the British West Indies, the ministry chose to act offensively and seize St. Lucia, which had a fine harbor and could theoretically prove critical to Britain’s command of the surrounding islands.

Yet Britain had few troops to spare. Balancing its defenses against the Bourbon threat to Britain’s empire required that British troops guard the home islands as well its far-flung holdings

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in Canada, East and West Florida, Gibraltar, Minorca, and India. The decision to wrest St. Lucia from the French then, mandated that the troops come from America. Clinton delayed embarking troops for the islands and Florida, however. His first order of business was to evacuate Philadelphia, which Howe had so recently won, and consolidate much of his force in New York City, the seat of British strength in America since the Howe brothers had captured the city in the summer of 1776.\(^{180}\)

**Battle of Monmouth Courthouse**

Clinton honorably included the Loyalists in his evacuation plans. He did not have sufficient transport ships available to send both his troops and the Loyalists to New York City by sea, so he elected to march his army overland and provide seaborne evacuation to the Loyalists and their families. His strategy committed over ten thousand troops, together with their assorted supplies and equipment, baggage, horses, and artillery to a hundred mile march through now-hostile New Jersey.\(^{181}\)

Washington’s intelligence network alerted him that the British planned a major move. On 25 May 1778, Washington wrote to New Jersey’s Brigadier General William Maxwell ordering him to obtain as much information as possible and to ready his men to march. By late May, Maxwell’s Continentals moved to Mount Holly, New Jersey, situated to the northeast of Philadelphia. During late May to early June, Washington’s army mushroomed in size as it benefited from the influx of new levies as well as the militia that answered his call. In addition to Maxwell’s Continentals, General Philomen Dickinson and his militia of approximately eight hundred men represented the Jerseys. Altogether, Jerseymen signified slightly less than twenty


percent of the twelve thousand or so men fielded for Washington’s attempt to punish the British.\textsuperscript{182}

Clinton and his army moved out of Philadelphia on 18 June. The Royal Navy and its load of Loyalists slipped out of Philadelphia as well, carrying their distraught human cargo away from home. Many Loyalists would never return to their homes. The British successfully evacuated the town, which fell eerily silent. As Clinton and his army marched toward New York City, the Jerseymen under Maxwell and Dickinson impeded his progress. Clinton’s pace slowed to a crawl as his men rebuilt bridges destroyed by the Americans and removed the obstructions that they placed along the way to slow his march. Clinton’s men carried packs weighing between sixty to one hundred pounds; the weight as well as the hot, humid weather further affected their speed. Clinton feared that his twelve-mile train of men and equipment would not reach the safety of New York City unless he adjusted his route and moved his men further away from Washington’s main force. Clinton’s new path brought him and his exhausted army to the vicinity of Monmouth Court House on 26 June.\textsuperscript{183}

Washington knew that the composite army gathered together under his command needed structure to succeed; his force combined the Continentals with a number of independent elements, including various militias as well as Virginia’s Colonel Daniel Morgan and his roughly six hundred riflemen. Washington hoped to give command of his advance force to Charles Lee, his mercurial second-in-command whom the British had held as a prisoner-of-war and recently


\textsuperscript{183} Ward, \textit{The War of the Revolution}, 571.
released. Lee initially refused and Washington designated Lafayette to lead the van, however, Lee reversed his decision when he learned that the troops under his command would number almost five thousand men.\textsuperscript{184}

The battle that occurred on 28 June 1778 has been subject to a great deal of historic debate. For the most part, the American soldiers performed well during the daylong battle. Lack of coherence among the American commanders, however, caused anarchy for the Americans. Historians do not agree about where the blame should rest; Ward and Middlekauff largely place fault with Major-General Charles Lee and ascribe to him a lack of planning and direction that led to mass confusion and a pell-mell retreat. Others such as Higginbotham, Ferling and Shy are a bit more even-handed in their treatment of Lee. All the above agree that once the Americans engaged the British, the impact of the terrain, crossed by three difficult-to-navigate ravines, and poor communication among the American field commanders impaired their overall performance. Various American elements, unclear about their positions, advanced and fell back without any overall coordination.\textsuperscript{185} Shy notes that the actual outcome was “better than the Americans deserved” as Washington rallied his troops and turned what could have been a rout into a battle well fought by the Continental Army.\textsuperscript{186} Washington, not noted for losing his temper, gave Lee a tremendous dressing-down on the battlefield. Washington swore that day “till the leaves shook

\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., 570.


The first troops that Washington encountered; the men of the 13th Pennsylvania Regiment and the 3rd Maryland halted their retreat and responded with promptness to his demands that they turn about and hold the enemy. Though obliged to withdraw by the forceful attack of the British dragoons, the men fought well. The Continental Army’s artillery entered the fray and an artillery duel between the American and British cannons raged for nearly an hour. During the firefight, American regiments ordered into position “under fire . . . wheeled into line with as much precision as on an ordinary parade and with the coolness and intrepidity of veteran troops.”

Hulett and the men of Ogden’s 1st New Jersey regiment no doubt faced firsthand the confusion of Monmouth. While Hulett’s pension application did not recount details of the battle, those of several of his peers did provide insight into their experience. John Ackerman, a nine-month man in Captain Peter Van Voorhees’ company of Ogden’s regiment, recounted that his regiment on that day was ordered by the Colo to retreat which was effected by passing through a morass in which he lost his shoes . . . After retreating through this morass, his regiment came to the road just as the troops under the immediate command of Gen Washington were passing. Gen Washington halted his troops, and the retreating Regiment (sic) was immediately paraded having become disordered in retreating through the [morass] He well recollects that Gen Washington on that occasion asked the troops if they could fight and that they answered him with three cheers.

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188 Ibid., 582.


Another private in Ogden’s regiment, David Cooper, outlined how the men spent the days preceding the battle “throwing all possible obstructions” before the British, felling trees and tearing down bridges. Cooper’s description of the battle itself indicates that Ogden’s men were “placed on the extreme Left (sic) & in the rear of the first lines where we remained during the action,” which led to the fact that no man in Hulett’s company was injured during the battle.191

The Battle of Monmouth continued until evening. Under the cover of night, Clinton extracted his men. Over the course of the next few days, he brought them safely to New York. Monmouth was the last major battle fought in the North and for the rebels, displayed their courage and professionalism against the cream of the British Army. The battle itself was not strategically important; historian Piers Mackesy addresses it with less than a paragraph. However, it did show the effects of Steuben’s training, Washington’s leadership, and the men’s courage and commitment to their cause. While a flawed execution on the American’s part, it showed that the rebel army now could stand up to the British forces and hold their own against the best of their day. If nothing else, the Battle of Monmouth Court House hardened the belief amongst British leaders that they could not win the war in the Northern colonies and further encouraged them to look to the Southern colonies and their thought-to-be sizable population of Loyalists for a new approach to win the war.192

Grant’s Expedition to the Lesser Antilles

His troops safely back in New York City; Clinton designated Grant to lead the expedition to take St. Lucia. According to British historian Piers Mackesy, Grant’s “ten regiments were all

191 Ibid., David Cooper S809; Muster roll of Capt. Isaac Morrison’s Company, May 1778.

British and good” for under the terms of their service, both provincial troops and Britain’s Hessians could not serve in the islands. Grant’s expedition departed on 4 November 1778, much delayed by both Clinton’s evacuation and by naval encounters between the Royal Navy and the French fleet, which postponed the Navy’s ability to provide troop transport and protection. Grant and his troops arrived at their initial destination, Barbados, on 10 December 1778 and three days later arrived at St. Lucia. The initial British landing quickly overran the island’s defenses. The French swiftly contested Grant’s control of the island. A land and sea battle for control of the island commenced with the arrival of a French fleet under Admiral d’Estaing on 16 December. The battle for St. Lucia was the largest fought in the islands and ended with St. Lucia firmly in British hands.

The French loss of St. Lucia did not end conflict in the West Indies; it grew in intensity. While Grant initially believed that the safety of the islands relied on the British fleet, pressure from the French, including the loss of St. Vincent forced Grant to disperse his troops throughout the British islands, rather than return some portion of the men to Clinton in New York. Grant’s health failed him and he left the islands for Britain in August 1779. His eventual replacement, Major General John Vaughan, inherited a rapidly deteriorating situation in the islands; disease, the logistics of providing support to troops dispersed amongst the islands, and on-going conflict with Britain’s enemies took its toll on the British forces. Like his predecessor, Vaughan was unable to return British troops to Clinton for the war in America. The only support Vaughan

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193 Mackesy, The War for America, 231.

could provide to Clinton was artillery; in response to a plea from the mainland commander, Vaughan provided “a shipload of artillery for the assault on Charleston.”

It is clear from the details of the British West Indies expedition in 1778 and subsequent British troop movements to protect the islands, that Hulett could not have accompanied the British expedition to the West Indies as a prisoner. The troop transports would not have carried unnecessary personnel. Nor did Hulett return to mainland America as a member of British forces; the troops sent to the West Indies remained in that theatre of the war. While the British did hold prisoners-of-war on the islands, they were typically seamen, including privateers captured at sea and prisoners taken during the various battles on the island. The West Indies segment of Hulett’s service described in the pension application filed by Jonas Aby on behalf of Hulett’s heirs frequently appeared in the DAR and SAR applications of Hulett’s descendants. It is an interesting adventure story, but not one founded in fact.

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Chapter Three: Hulett and the Southern Campaign (1780 to 1781)

This chapter explores factors that may have contributed to Charles Hulett’s enlistment with the New Jersey Volunteers as a Loyalist provincial soldier. It briefly focuses on key events and the social, political, and economic issues of the latter part of the war in New Jersey, a state that experienced far more civil war turmoil and destruction than most, with the exception of South Carolina. It also explores his experience in the Southern Campaign of the American Revolutionary War. As the focus of Britain’s efforts to retake the colonies shifted south, Hulett, as a private in the new corps of the Provincial Light Infantry, found himself in South Carolina, once again faced with a brutal civil war, inflamed by private passions on the part of southern partisans, in the midst of the larger war to reclaim America. This chapter traces the main actions of the war that have bearing on Hulett’s story. As Hulett enlisted in the provincial corps in 1780, the author has written this chapter largely from the British perspective.

Hulett’s Choice

It is likely that Hulett had a better than average understanding of the impact that the West Indies and Florida expeditions had upon British troop strength in America. According to records located and provided to the author by Loyalist researcher Todd Braisted, Hulett enlisted in the British provincial army on 1 April 1780, joining Captain John Cougle's Company of the 1st Battalion, New Jersey Volunteers. Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Barton had overall command of the battalion and reported to Brigadier General Cortlandt Skinner. The British stationed Cougle’s company at the garrison on Staten Island, directly across Arthur Kill, the tidal strait that separated the island from New Jersey. On 25 August 1780, Hulett subsequently transferred to Captain James Shaw's Light Infantry Company. That company became part of the new corps of
Provincial Light Infantry, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John Watson Tadswell Watson. British General Alexander Leslie's expedition to Virginia in October 1780 included Watson’s Light Infantry. From there, the Light Infantry proceeded to South Carolina, where it arrived in December 1780 to reinforce the British southern army under General Charles Lord Cornwallis, the man charged by Clinton to hold Charleston and the scattered British outposts in Georgia and South Carolina for the Crown.\textsuperscript{197}

Hulett’s enlistment with the New Jersey Volunteers followed a gap of fourteen months after his discharge from the Continental Army in February 1779. Although the company muster rolls and pay records provide a section to note casualties, there is no indication that the British either wounded or took Hulett prisoner during his nine months of Continental Army service. The author has found no record of Hulett’s activities from February 1779 until his enlistment in the provincial corps on 1 April 1780. However, Hulett’s enlistment with the New Jersey Volunteers follows reforms undertaken by the British in December 1778 to “put the Provincial Establishment . . . ‘upon the most liberal footing.’”\textsuperscript{198} These changes significantly improved the terms of service offered to provincial officers and enlisted men and included increased pay, a larger enlistment bounty, a provision for medical care, and half pay to officers upon the reduction of their unit.\textsuperscript{199}

Hulett’s choice to serve in the New Jersey Volunteers followed his compulsory service in the Essex County militia, the New Jersey state troops, and the Continental Army. While he did


\textsuperscript{199} Ibid.
not record his motives, it is possible to ascertain a number of factors that influenced his choice. Following the Battle of Monmouth Courthouse, the muster records for the company led by Hulett’s commander, Morrison, indicate that the company did not suffer many losses. The muster roll provided no remarks for Hulett; it simply listed his presence. Morrison’s June muster roll, filed in mid-July, noted that one man deserted the company in July. No member of the company appeared in the record as wounded or captured at the battle. Historian John U. Rees conducted an in-depth analysis of the New Jersey brigade’s losses at Monmouth. Rees notes that Eliacam Crane, the drummer for Baldwin’s company, 1st New Jersey, died the day of the battle and that the British took Henry Graham, the drummer for Cummings’ company, 2nd New Jersey as a prisoner on 22 June 1778. Graham rejoined his company in July 1778. The battle did claim New Jersey drummers, but Hulett appears to have left the Monmouth campaign unscathed.200

In August, with the majority of his company in Elizabeth Town, Morrison dispersed a number of men elsewhere, some as guards. Several men were sick and at least one man died in July. In September, with the company still stationed at Elizabeth Town, Morrison assigned his drummer, Hulett and a number of the company privates to the command location. Morrison’s company strength declined to sixty-nine privates by this time, down from the previous high of eighty-eight in May. It is likely that this decrease spurred recruitment efforts; the company listed eighty-three privates by October 1778. Still at Elizabeth Town in November, Morrison continued to assign his men elsewhere, some to Newark, some to Westfield, some to Short Hills, while others he sent to headquarters. The company commander assigned one of his men to guard cattle.

The muster roll lists still other privates as sick, confined, or absent without leave. A similar trend continued through January 1779. In February 1779, the last month of Hulett’s enlistment, noticeable changes occurred to Morrison’s company. Colonel Ogden replaced Morrison with a new company commander, Jacob Piatt. A new company drummer, William Walker, who enlisted for the duration of the war, replaced Hulett. For the final month of his enlistment, Hulett became a private, with a subsequent reduction in his already meager pay. It is likely that the loss of status and reduction in pay affected Hulett’s experience during the final month of his enlistment, and may have triggered bitterness toward his commanding officer, Colonel Matthias Ogden.

The changes to Morrison’s company in February 1779 occurred during the midst of turmoil in Maxwell’s brigade, a period best understood from letters between Maxwell and the Commander-in-chief, General George Washington. Early in February, Washington wrote to Maxwell to inform him of the Continental Army’s provisions for the dates of officers’ commissions, based on direction from the Continental Congress. During the war, the date of an officer’s commission was important to his status. Washington stated to Maxwell, “In case the relative rank of these officers cannot be amicably settled among themselves—it will be proper to have their claims discussed by a board of field officers, or such as are totally disinterested in the matter.” The letter indicates that the dissension caused by the matter between Maxwell’s officers had risen to the attention of the commander-in-chief. By 20 February 1779, Washington wrote to Maxwell:

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201 Muster roll of Capt. Isaac Morrison’s Company Regiment from Jersey Commanded by Col. Matthias Ogden, ” U.S. Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775-1783, National Archives and Records Administration, accessed May 6, 2014, Ancestry.com. The U.S. Revolutionary War Rolls contain both muster and pay rolls. The pay rolls indicate that musicians (drummers and fifers) were paid 2£ 15s while privates were paid 2£ 10s.

Capt. Isaac Morrison has lodged some charges of a very high nature against Colo. Ogden with Copy of which he has engaged to furnish Colo. Ogden. I think myself under the necessity of having the matter enquired into, and therefore wish you to desire Colo. Ogden to prepare his defence (sic). When he is ready I shall expect to be informed by you that a Court may be ordered for the purpose. None of the Feild (sic) Officers, Colonels Dayton and Barber excepted have the dates of their Comms. affixed. If it arises from any disputes among themselves I wish to be made acquainted that I may have it settled by the Regulations laid down by Congress.203

On 22 February 1779, Washington wrote directly to Ogden, providing a copy of the charges filed by Morrison, and directing Ogden to prepare his defense. Washington’s letter to Maxwell on 24 February restates his position regarding issues of rank, and notes that the charges against Ogden by Morrison have a number of witnesses, including “Colo. Dehart, Capt. Polhemus, Capt. Van Angel, Major Conway, Ensign Levy, Mr Mathias Williamson and Robt Kelso, who were returned as evidences to support the charges.”204 The court martial was held on 2 March 1779 and its findings were published in the General Orders issued 2 April 1779. The results indicated the charges and the court findings:

The Court Martial appointed to try Colonel Ogden charged with—1st—Neglect of duty in general—2nd—Repeated frauds against the Public and also the officers and soldiers under his command. 3rd—Cowardice—4th—Gaming, have declared it their opinion, “That he is not guilty of the 1st charge, that he is not guilty of the second, and are unanimously of opinion that he is not guilty of the 3rd charge & have unanimously acquitted him with honor.” “They are unanimously of opinion that he is guilty of the 4th charge, being a breach of the Commander in Chief’s orders dated the 8th of January 1778—and have sentenced him to be severely reprimanded in general orders.”205

Washington expressed his previous high opinion of Ogden and as well as his displeasure at Ogden’s behavior, particularly as Washington firmly believed that those in a position of

203 Ibid.


command ought to act with impeccable behavior. Washington noted with disgust that an officer who acts in disregard of the army’s rules “cannot prevent, much less punish, offences in others which he himself commits.” Washington ended his General Order on this note:

Coll Ogden knows [that General Orders are in force unless set aside] and he must have known also that the particular order which was the subject of the Court Martials’ consideration of the 4th charge against him, remained unalter’d and the infraction of it is more censurable, if possible, than that of any other, inasmuch as the order was intended to prevent the most pernicious Vice that can obtain in an Army, the vice of gaming.  

It is possible that the ill will between his captain, Morrison, and the regiment’s commanding officer, Ogden, played some small role in the growing disillusionment with the rebel cause felt by Hulett. It is more likely that his demotion and pay decrease affected his perception of the army, as he fell from acting as the unit’s drummer, an important and distinctive role in the company, to become a common soldier.

Once discharged from the Continental Army at the end of February 1779, Hulett, like many of his fellow nine-month levies, returned to his home and to his obligatory militia duty. By that point, New Jersey had been a battleground for over three long years. A “war within a war” raged in New Jersey. Raids and skirmishes between the Loyalists troops stationed at Staten Island and various New Jersey rebel militias continued unabated. The day-to-day life of rural New Jersey was no longer recognizable. New Jersey society splintered as people took different paths to survive the conflict. In “An Evenly Balanced County: The Scope and Severity of Civil Warfare in Revolutionary Monmouth County, New Jersey,” historian Michael Adelberg categorizes Jersey men as “Revolutionaries,” “Whigs,” “Loyalists,” “Disaffected,” or “Trimmers” - those who switched sides at various points in the war. He states that many people

206 Ibid.
fell outside these categories and did their best to remain neutral.\textsuperscript{207} The civil war in New Jersey, however, made neutrality a virtual impossibility, as brigands; those who chose to simply put their own interests first, preyed upon people in any and all political camps.\textsuperscript{208}

The author’s inability to tie Hulett to his parents makes it difficult to determine his relationship to other New Jersey people of the same last name; however, many Hulett families with surnames of various phonetic spellings resided in Monmouth County. In Adelberg’s \textit{Roster of the People of Revolutionary Monmouth County}, Daniel Hulletts appeared in the record indicted for “High Treason” on two occasions, January 1781 and November 1782. The Whigs arrested Joseph Hulletts for “disaffection” in November 1776 and accused him of “being active in Tory Rebellions of December 1776,” later indicting him for murder in May 1782.\textsuperscript{209} The record lists Michael Hulletts several times; the Whigs accused him of a misdemeanor in August 1779, he lost his estate to Whig confiscation in 1780, and the Whigs again indicted him for a misdemeanor in January 1781. Peter Hewlet enlisted as a private in the New Jersey Volunteers in January 1777, however his career with the provincial army was short-lived; he died on 14 March 1777. Loyalist provincial unit muster rolls included a number of officers with the surname of Hewlet; while the majority of these men came from nearby Long Island, New York, one, a William Hewlet, came from New Jersey and became an ensign in the New Jersey Volunteers,


\textsuperscript{208} Joseph Bilby and Katherine Bilby Jenkins, \textit{Monmouth Court House: The Battle that Made the American Army} (Yardley, PA: Westholme, 2010), 76.

\textsuperscript{209} Michael S. Adelberg, \textit{Roster of the People of Revolutionary Monmouth County} (Baltimore, MD: Clearfield Company, Inc., 1997), 142.
2nd Battalion. It is possible that family influence played some role in Charles Hulett’s choice to enlist with the New Jersey Volunteers; the author’s research indicates that a number of Hulett/Hewlet family members appear as Loyalists in period records.

While family pressure and disillusionment with the Continental Army may have played some role in Hulett’s enlistment with the New Jersey Volunteers in April 1780, other more pragmatic factors likely influenced his choice. The winter of 1779 – 1780 was one of the most severe on record. The Continental Army suffered extensively from the lack of suitable shelter, poor nutrition, and disease. Many American farmers preferred to sell their crops to the British for hard coin rather than to the American army for Continental currency. On a regular basis, the Continental Congress printed paper money in its attempts to pay for the war, sending inflation skyrocketing in the states and rendering the Continental money practically worthless. In a land of plenty, the Continental Army could not feed its men. In his journal, Private Joseph Plumb Martin described that he “literally starved” in January 1780. He noted, “I did not put a single morsel of victuals into my mouth for four days and as many nights, except a little black birch bark which I gnawed off a stick of wood . . . I saw several of the men roast their old shoes and eat them.”

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210 Adelberg, Roster of the People of Revolutionary Monmouth County., 132, 142; Dornfest, Military Loyalists of the American Revolution, 159-160. The New York Hewlet officers include Captain Charles Hewlet, Lieutenant Colonel Richard Hewlet, Captain Thomas Hewlet, Captain Benjamin Hewlet, Joseph Hewlet (rank not listed), and Captain Stephen Hewlet.


212 Martin, A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier, 148.

213 Ibid.
For many, the war became a matter of personal survival, and it is certain that Hulett weighed practical considerations like the perceived ability of the British provincial corps to feed, clothe, and pay its men against his experience with the Continental Army. Regardless of his motives, Hulett enlisted in the British provincial army on 1 April 1780, joining the New Jersey Volunteers.

**New Jersey Volunteers**

New Jersey’s last royal attorney general, Cortlandt Skinner, took command of the New Jersey Volunteers after he fled the colony in early 1776. Skinner took refuge on a British warship following his precipitous flight, triggered when New Jersey rebel militia under the command of Colonel William Alexander intercepted a candid letter he had written to his brother, William Skinner, a colonel in the British Army. Skinner, the scion of a wealthy and prominent New Jersey family, wrote that New Jersey Whigs were “attempting a superstructure (a republic) that will deluge this country in blood . . . and that “We are now upon the eve . . . [of] a revolution.”214 He feared for his fellow Loyalists and noted that the American press provided only the Whig side of the story, as the rebels destroyed opposition papers, including that of New York publisher James Rivington.215

On 7 July 1776, General William Howe, the British commander-in-chief, reported his pleasure with the initial turnout of men from New Jersey to the Crown,

I have great reason to expect an enormous body of the inhabitants to join the army from the provinces of York, the Jerseys and Connecticut, who, in this time of universal oppression, only wait for opportunities to give proofs of their loyalty and zeal for

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215 Ibid.
government. Sixty men came over two days ago with a few arms from the neighbourhood of Shrewsbury, in Jersey, who were desirous to serve, and I understand there are five hundred more in that quarter ready to follow their example.\textsuperscript{216}

On 4 September 1776, Howe appointed Cortlandt Skinner a brigadier general and commissioned him to raise troops. Skinner established his headquarters on Staten Island. In time, he formed the largest and one of the most effective Loyalist units of the war, the New Jersey Volunteers.\textsuperscript{217}

Two months after donning the red coat of the Volunteers, sometimes referred to as “Skinner’s Greens” due to the color of the uniform they wore in 1777-1778, Hulett came face to face with the harsh reality of civil war in New Jersey. When British General Sir Henry Clinton, commander-in-chief of the British forces in America, sailed south with his invasion force to take Charleston, South Carolina in December 1779, he left Hessian Lieutenant General Baron Wilhelm von Knyphausen, a seasoned veteran, in command of the troops remaining in New York City and its environs. Bowing to substantial pressure from several high-level British officers and exiled Loyalists, including Major Generals James Robertson and William Tryon, as well as William Franklin, the former royal governor of New Jersey and William Smith, son of the former chief justice of New York, Knyphausen launched an invasion of New Jersey on 6 June 1780. He sought to deal the weakened Continental Army at Morristown a crushing blow. The combined force of British, Hessians, and Loyalists that he brought from Staten Island to New Jersey outnumbered the Americans by nearly a two to one margin. Knyphausen’s force of

\textsuperscript{216} William Howe quoted in William S. Stryker, \textit{The New Jersey Volunteers}, 3-4. The digitized copy of Stryker’s pamphlet found and used by the author has an interesting feature; an unknown previous owner has erased or lined out every instance of the word “patriot” and replaced it with the word “rebel.”

more than six thousand men included the New Jersey Volunteers under Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Barton. Although the author has not found conclusive proof that Hulett fought at the battles that followed, Connecticut Farms and Springfield, it is likely. These battles occurred over a two-week period from 7 June to 23 June, following Knyphausen’s advance into New Jersey and brought the Volunteers face to face with Hulett’s old Continental Army commander, Colonel Ogden, and the men of the Second New Jersey Regiment of the Continental Army. 218

Knyphausen’s foray ran into unanticipated resistance from New Jersey militia who rapidly responded to alarm signals and raced to defend their homes. They understood the urgency of the situation; if the British won through to Morristown, they would likely defeat the smaller Continental Army and seize the Americans’ supply of ammunition and artillery. Brigadier General William Maxwell led his New Jersey Continentals to reinforce the militia and together the New Jersey men put up a fierce resistance to the British. Their delaying action allowed Washington time to blockade the road leading to Morristown. Knyphausen called off the attack and fortified the high ground by Connecticut Farms. It was there that he learned Clinton and his army were nearby, returning from the successful siege of Charleston. Knyphausen ordered a retreat to combine his forces with those of his returning commander-in-chief. 219

After joining with Knyphausen and analyzing the unexpected strategic situation he encountered on his return north, on 23 June Clinton ordered Knyphausen and a force of six

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thousand men toward Morristown. Clinton planned to lead a second force to cut off Washington. The American general, however, feared for the safety of West Point and accompanied by a detachment of the Continentals, he set off with a supply train for the threatened fortress, leaving Nathanael Greene with various Continental and militia units to defend the approaches to Morristown. As the battle unfolded, Knyphausen ordered Barton’s New Jersey Volunteers, the Queen’s Rangers under Lieutenant Colonel John Graves Simcoe, and several other units to a position at the approach to the Vauxhall Bridge. The American defenders at that location included Ogden and his New Jersey Continentals. Assuming that Hulett accompanied his Volunteers unit, he would have been aiming his musket at men with whom he had shared daily life the previous year.220

The British closed in on the American defenders at the bridge, threatening to destroy the scattered small groups of Continentals and militia. Greene ordered his reserve regiments forward, and the newly fortified American force stalled the British advance. The British column retreated from their position at Vauxhall Bridge and joined with Knyphausen. Their pullback gave renewed hope to the Americans under Greene, who consolidated their forces to await the next move by the British. Knyphausen’s troops did not re-engage the Americans; rather they began setting fire to the houses in Springfield, maddening the American militia, who watched as the blaze consumed their homes. As the Americans battled the conflagration, the British retreated. In a manner reminiscent of the British retreat from Concord, Massachusetts in April 1775, militia attempted to pick off the British soldiers from behind buildings and trees, however, the militia’s gunfire was largely ineffective. This time, Simcoe’s Queens Rangers covered the retreating column successfully and forced the militia to withdraw. Knyphausen’s plan to crush the weaker

220 Ibid., 19-24.
Continents had failed, in large part due to the New Jersey militia who rallied to defend their homes. The Battle of Springfield was the last sizable clash in the northern states.²²¹

The Provincial Light Infantry

Throughout the war, Britain overestimated the size, strength, commitment, and capability of the Loyalists to provide military support to the Crown. Moreover, the measures taken by British commanders in America and the British ministry played a role in depressing Loyalist support. New Jersey Loyalists initially welcomed the British invasion of their province, however by early 1777 the pillaging, rapes, and other crimes committed by British and Hessian troops alienated them and pushed many hitherto neutral Jersey men into the rebel camp. Early attempts by Loyalists to join with the British in armed resistance to the rebels met half-hearted British support and the terms of enlistment available to provincial soldiers treated them as second-class citizens. For instance, unlike officers in the British Army, officers of Loyalist provincial units raised in America were not eligible for half pay for life when their regiments reduced upon the cessation of hostilities. Nor did the British provide grants to provincial units for medical care until the reforms of 1778-1779.²²²

Each time the British withdrew from an area previously taken by force of arms, the rebels retaliated against their neighbors who had openly supported Britain, reducing the likelihood of future Loyalist support for the British Army. Yet despite setbacks in the Middle Colonies, Lord George Germain, Britain’s American Secretary, remained optimistic that the southern Loyalists


²²² Smith, Loyalists & Redcoats, 34-36.
would rise in support of King and country, providing men and logistical support for the King’s troops in America. After the French entered the war and the strategic situation facing the British dramatically changed, Germain became convinced that the southern Loyalists would prove to be of tougher mettle than their northern cousins and provide the level of support the British desperately needed.223

As early as 1775, the former colonial governors of North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia exhorted the American Department Secretary, then Lord Dartmouth, with tales of the southern Loyalists’ vitality and eagerness to support the Crown. James Simpson, Britain’s Attorney General for South Carolina and the American Department’s Undersecretary, William Knox, supported the claims of Loyalist strength in the South. Following Saratoga, former Pennsylvania Continental Congressman Joseph Galloway fled to Britain and added his voice to arguments for utilizing the Loyalists to help subdue the rebellion.224 Underlying the plans made for the British “Southern Strategy” was the assumption that the claims made by these “interested parties” were reliable and that the assessments of Loyalist refugees and former colonial officers represented the true state of affairs in America. Despite strong evidence to the contrary, including the Loyalist (North Carolina Highland Scots) loss at the Battle of Moore’s Creek Bridge in 1775 and the loss suffered by Loyalists in the backcountry of South Carolina in early 1776, Germain clung to the hope that the southern Loyalists were as strong and dedicated as their advocates claimed. Their persuasive voices provided an assessment that Germain was


224 Ibid., 43, 251-253.
predisposed to believe; therefore, the strategies for the Southern Campaign advanced, assuming that the Loyalists could match their rebel neighbors in military talent and tenacity.\textsuperscript{225}

The British soon discovered that Loyalists in South Carolina, similar to those in New Jersey, needed the active presence of the British Army to reestablish control in their regions; once the British withdrew, the Whigs retaliated against their Loyalists neighbors. Additionally, many southerners had no firm allegiance either to the rebels or to the British and switched sides when necessary to safeguard their homes and families or retreated from the conflict, hoping to outlast the violent civil war that erupted in the south.\textsuperscript{226}

The British Southern Strategy initially succeeded. Georgia, with a population of only forty thousand or so people, fell to the British with relative ease. Charleston, South Carolina capitulated after Clinton launched a near-perfect siege in late March 1780. Continental Army General Benjamin Lincoln surrendered the city on 11 May 1780. A small Continental force led by Colonel Abraham Buford had been on the march to come to the aid of Charleston when news of the city’s fall reached them. Buford turned his men back north; however, Cornwallis learned of their approach and dispatched Lieutenant-Colonel Banastre Tarleton to prevent their escape. Tarleton pressed his men hard and overtook Buford. Tarleton crushed the small Continental force in the battle that followed at the Waxhaws on 29 May 1780. Historians have debated whether a massacre actually occurred that day, however, Tarleton’s victory created a rebel propaganda opportunity of epic proportions. Rebels adopted the cry “Buford’s Quarter” and more frequently, “Tarleton’s Quarter” at more than one of the clashes that followed, as they revenged their fallen comrades. The story of the battle at Waxhaws played a significant role in destroying

\textsuperscript{225} Ibid., 253.

\textsuperscript{226} Ibid.
Cornwallis’s chance to win the “hearts and minds” of the south. Another British victory occurred at the Battle of Camden on 16 August 1780. The Continental Congress named the “hero of Saratoga,” General Horatio Gates, to lead a second Southern Continental Army. Cornwallis, at the head of a much smaller force, crushed the Continentals in one of the most significant American losses of the war, capturing or killing approximately 1,800 men. More bad news followed for the Americans. Several days after Camden, Tarleton overtook a partisan band led by South Carolina militia Brigadier General Thomas Sumter and smashed them, killing or capturing another 450 rebels.  

Back in New York, Clinton took measures to provide Cornwallis with additional troops. On 21 August 1780, the commander of the 1st New Jersey Volunteers, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Barton responded to orders, presumably from Clinton, to detach members of his battalion to form a company of light infantry. He appointed Captain James Shaw, together with Ensigns Reid and Jouett to command the men from his battalion who would form part of the regiment.  

On 25 August 1780, Hulett transferred from Cougle’s company to Shaw’s Light Infantry Company, commanded by the rather oddly named Lieutenant Colonel John Watson Tadwell Watson, a favorite of Clinton’s. The light infantry battalion included men from a number of provincial units, including the New Jersey Volunteers, Delancey’s Brigade, the Loyal American Regiment, and the King’s American Regiment. Watson’s light infantry became part of the force

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that Clinton assigned to General Alexander Leslie. Clinton dispatched Leslie with 2,500 troops to the Chesapeake Bay area to “make a diversion in favor of . . . Cornwallis.”229

Leslie and his men landed at Hampton Roads, Virginia on 20 October 1780. By that time, the situation in the south had become much less positive for the British. South Carolina was a far more complex colony than the British anticipated it to be. Its elite, wealthy planters lived in the coastal area while recent immigrant groups including English, Welsh, Scots, Scotch-Irish, Germans, Swiss, Irish Quakers and French Huguenots, as well as a small group of Sephardic Jews populated its middle and backcountry regions. Each group had its own affiliations and loyalties and most did not mix with the others. The heterogeneous population in the interior of the colony was hostile toward the Low Country elites, as the wealthy planters had withheld from them access to schools, courts, and law enforcement for decades. The backcountry people were initially apathetic toward the rebellion. Had the British consolidated their position after their successful siege of Charleston, South Carolina as Clinton intended, they might have been in a position to hold the principal port city of Charleston, refrain from antagonizing the people of the interior, and rebuild the government infrastructure of that key city.230

Cornwallis, left in control of the Southern campaign following Charleston’s fall, was anxious to spread his forces into the interior of the state, having confused the intention of his superior officer, Clinton, who above all else had stipulated that Cornwallis should protect Charleston. Clinton’s own contributions to the failure of the Southern campaign included his


inflammatory proclamations, which obliged South Carolinians to swear allegiance to the Crown; the proclamations barred a neutral position. Clinton’s act pushed many who had initially accepted parole into the rebel camp. His unclear command communications allowed Cornwallis to interpret his orders broadly. To Cornwallis’s aggressive frame of mind, Clinton’s orders gave him free rein to spread out and attempt to retake the entire colony. However, Clinton left Cornwallis only 3,000 men and Cornwallis perilously dispersed his force to various outposts, spreading his men too thin to reinforce each other. Cornwallis inadvertently set the troops charged with carrying communications and supplies to the various outposts up for failure. Partisan forces operating in Whig strongholds throughout the state frequently picked off these small groups in hit-and-run raids. The British had not spent sufficient time to study and understand their capabilities in the context of the challenges presented by South Carolina; nor did they consider the local animosities that already existed amongst the people of the colony. They did not anticipate the impact of partisan forces to destroy their far-flung detachments as they sought to spread out and retake the interior of the colony.

By the time Leslie and his command landed in Virginia, one of the South’s pivotal battles occurred, the Battle of Kings’ Mountain. After the victory at Charleston, Clinton appointed Major Patrick Ferguson to raise and lead Loyalist militia forces, naming him the “inspector general of militia for the province,” and stipulating that Ferguson “promote the establishment of a domestic militia for the maintenance of peace and good order throughout the country.”

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231 Carpenter, “British Strategic Failure in the Southern Campaign” Carpenter, 21.

232 Pancake, This Destructive War, 82.

233 Ibid., 69.
small group of New Jersey Volunteers, including Hulett’s former neighbor, Dr. Uzal Johnson, accompanied Ferguson and served alongside the Loyalist militia he recruited.  

Initially successful recruiting Loyalists in the area around Ninety Six, South Carolina, Ferguson let his early success betray him. As Cornwallis struggled to subdue South Carolina, a long-simmering civil war re-erupted between the rebels and the Loyalists. Ferguson, “determined to stamp out rebellion in the west” threatened the remaining rebels that if they “did not desist with their opposition to the British Arms [he would] hang their leaders and lay their country waste with fire and sword.” It was the wrong move. The fiercely independent “over mountain” men quickly joined forces and raced to take on Ferguson and his Loyalist troops. Word travelled fast through the mountains and soon over one thousand men from Virginia, Georgia, North and South Carolina gathered at Sycamore Shoals. Led by militia officers, many of the men were hunters, not soldiers, and came armed with their deadly, long-range rifles. Catching Ferguson encamped on King’s Mountain; they devastated the Loyalists troops and killed Ferguson. The rebels were ruthless and refused quarter to a number of Loyalist troops, citing Tarleton’s example at the Waxhaws. The rebels took hundreds more prisoners and a hung a number of these men before the rebel commanders were able to stop the atrocities and gain control of their men. Shock waves rolled through the backcountry and many Loyalists gave up the cause.

British actions often pushed the neutrals into the Rebel camp. Ferguson’s “fire and sword” proclamation was certainly such an instance. The “over mountain” men and their families

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235 Ibid., 116-117.

were largely of Scotch-Irish descent and were already flaunting both the law and convention in their social behaviors. While the British had prohibited colonists from settling west of the Appalachian Mountains, many Scotch-Irish did, living on the furthest reaches of the frontier and on a daily basis, battling nature and their unpredictable Native American neighbors. Historians frequently cite the observations of a missionary who attempted to evangelize this people, especially his comments about the lascivious dress of the young women. These were “a people apart” – they had little interest in the affairs of those on the eastern slopes, let alone the political squabbles between the British and their rebel subjects. Yet Ferguson’s proclamation threatened their families and their homes and these men would not stand for that. Some of them travelled over 330 miles to address the danger to their families, trekking over treacherous mountain terrain. They were fierce hunters, not soft Low Country Planters, and Ferguson unwittingly became their game.

The Battles of Kings’ Mountain destroyed the forces protecting Cornwallis’s western flank. About the time of the Battle of Kings’ Mountain, Leslie informed Clinton of his intention to vacate the Hampton Roads, Virginia area for the Cape Fear River at the southern tip of North Carolina. Clinton responded with his approval, for he had instructed Leslie that by moving south, Leslie should consider himself under the command of Cornwallis. Leslie’s troops, including the Provincial Light Infantry, were soon on the move, responding to urgent requests from South Carolina. Cornwallis, anxious to add Leslie’s troop strength to his own, sent transport ships to

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237 Ibid.
carry Leslie and his men from the Cape Fear area to Charleston, where they arrived on 14 December 1780. Cornwallis directed Leslie to detach a portion of his command to strengthen Charleston; Cornwallis then placed Watson and the light infantry under the command of Colonel Francis, Lord Rawdon, headquartered at Camden. Rawdon, one of Britain’s strongest field commanders in the South, controlled the eastern portion of South Carolina. By accompanying Leslie south, Hulett left the civil war in New Jersey only to descend into the savage internecine war that raged in South Carolina.240

Upon reaching Charleston, Colonel Nisbet Balfour, the local commander, informed Watson that he was to operate with an independent command. Watson became responsible to protect the “lines of communication within the eastern district of the province along the Santee River.”241 Unfortunately, for Watson and his men, the assignment placed them in the region where Colonel Francis Marion and his men operated and carried on an extensive and successful guerilla war against the British. Marion, previously an officer in the Continental Army, never operated with a sizeable force, but his knowledge of the area and his ability to quickly raise and command effective irregular troops enabled him to win numerous small battles, attrite the British forces, and keep the local Loyalists from aiding the British. In addition to Marion, militia Brigadier General Thomas Sumter and his partisans frequently ambushed the British.242

Rawdon ordered Watson to Nelson’s Ferry, close to the home of Sumter, and an area where a lightening attack by Marion and his men on 25 August 1780 had freed approximately 150 American prisoners taken by the British following the Battle of Camden. Watson and his


241 Ibid.

242 Pancake, This Destructive War, 110.
men reached Nelson’s Ferry on 25 December 1780 and sought a place in the area to use as a base. Watson established his headquarters at the site of an old Indian mound, an elevated area that he ordered to be fortified. His men built a stockade fort and surrounded it with a three-layer thick *abatis*, a defensive barrier built from felled trees with sharpened branches pointing outward from the fort.  

Soon after Watson settled his men in the fort he named after himself, events in the South took a dramatic turn in favor of the American rebels. Nathanael Greene replaced Gates as the Commander of the Southern Continental Army. Greene was a keen strategist and a bit of wildcard. One of his first moves upon assuming command of the Southern theatre displayed brilliance; he used two of his key men, General Edward Stevens of the Virginia militia and Colonel Edward Carrington, to survey the river systems as both means of transportation and for overall operational intelligence. Greene sent Polish volunteer and military engineer, Colonel Thaddeus Kosciuszko, to locate suitable quarters for the Continental Army, having determined that Charlotte, North Carolina could not support his needs for food and forage. Armed with much-needed knowledge of the district, Greene made a bold move, splitting his force in the face of greater British strength. Cornwallis was obliged to react, dividing his force as well, as he sought to ensure protection for his array of strategic outposts, including the fort at Ninety Six, South Carolina. The tactical brilliance of Brigadier General Daniel Morgan complemented Greene’s strategic genius. Morgan’s performance at the Battle of Cowpens on 17 January 1781 defeated the aggressive Tarleton by making the most of the land, with its slight elevation changes, and the men at his disposal. Morgan’s preparations included providing specific tactical

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244 Pancake, *Destructive War*, 128, 130.
instruction to the militia, whom he personally encouraged with camaraderie and with promises that they could accomplish what he asked of them. He deceived the British into thinking that another anticipated rout of ill-organized militia was at hand and then he turned the tables on Tarleton by unleashing his hidden cavalry under the command of Colonel William Washington. Morgan’s Continentals, led by Lieutenant Colonel John Eager Howard, the hardened core of Morgan’s force, delivered destructive fire. Even the confusion surrounding a misunderstood battlefield command played to the Americans’ advantage. The unintended orderly retreat of the Continentals and their movement to turn and deliver a point-blank, blistering fire at the approaching Highlanders halted the British advance and decimated its ranks. The Americans took hundreds of British prisoners.245

Morgan’s militia melted away while he, his men, and the British prisoners they escorted beat a rapid retreat northward to rejoin Greene and the main army. Shortly after Cowpens, Leslie with his reinforcement of approximately 1,500 crack troops joined Cornwallis. The American’s race to the relative safety of Virginia began in earnest. Greene’s advance knowledge of the numerous Southern river systems paid off and allowed him to outtrace the pursuing British and lead his small force successfully to the Dan River.246 The crucial battle of 15 March 1781 at Guilford Courthouse, which followed the Race to the Dan, is beyond the scope of this project. Guilford Courthouse was a pyrrhic victory for the British and a stepping-stone in the journey that led Cornwallis to Yorktown, Virginia. Greene, however, turned back to South Carolina after his loss to Cornwallis and carried out his strategy to attack and destroy the British in detail at their isolated posts.


246 Pancake, This Destructive War, 129, 159; Carpenter, “British Strategic Failure,” 31, 38.
As Cornwallis led his army north, he left Rawdon in command of the scattered British forces in South Carolina, including Watson and the Provincial Light Infantry. The Battles of Kings’ Mountain and Cowpens had a devastating effect on the British and cowed the southern Loyalists. Fewer would come forward to provide either military or logistical support to the British. Partisan forces led by Marion and Sumter, among others, harassed and intimidated the Loyalists, further suppressing any desire that they had to support the British. Those few who still tried to aid the British often suffered severely. On 25 February 1781, Continental Army Lieutenant Colonel Henry “Light Horse Harry” Lee and his men massacred a group of over three hundred Loyalist troops led by militia Colonel John Pyle who confused Lee’s green-coated dragoons for Tarleton and his men and led his men directly to Lee.247

With Cornwallis and Greene removed from South Carolina, Rawdon sought to effectively counter as well as pursue and destroy the state’s rebel partisans. Watson and most of his light infantry left their base at Fort Watson to seek out the enemy, leaving behind a small contingent of sick and wounded men under the command of Lieutenant James McKay. In the field, Watson played a game of cat and mouse with Sumter and his partisans. Sumter’s men captured a British supply train; shortly afterwards, a detached group of Watson’s light infantry recaptured the critical supplies. Infuriated, Sumter, known for his rash, aggressive leadership, determined to attack and destroy Fort Watson, which he assumed the British had left lightly guarded. Rawdon’s spy network obtained word of Sumter’s plans, enabling Rawdon to warn Watson of the planned attack. Sumter’s men struck a small group of light infantry who were foraging within a mile of

247 Carpenter, “British Strategic Failure,” 9, 19, 36-37, 45; Pancake, This Destructive War, 173.
the fort; sounds of their clash brought British reinforcements who soon drove off Sumter and his men, killing at least eighteen.\textsuperscript{248}

Watson went on the offensive in early March as Rawdon planned a coordinated attack on Marion and his men. Rawdon intended Watson to draw Marion to the Santee River, while Rawdon deployed a second contingent to attack Marion’s rear. Marion, a far better strategist than Sumter, countered Watson’s advance; a non-decisive skirmish between the two groups occurred at Wiboo Swamp. Both sides suffered small losses in a brief battle that involved artillery, cavalry, and infantry. Additional clashes between the light infantry and partisans occurred as each sought the advantage. On 14 March, the two groups collided again and fought a battle that raged for two days. Watson lost approximately twenty men and retreated to a nearby plantation where he sought to recover and rest his men.\textsuperscript{249} He and his troops continued to feel the effects of Marion’s ambush tactics. Watson described his elusive enemies; “[t]hey will not sleep and fight like gentlemen, but like savages are eternally firing and whooping around us by night, and by day waylaying and popping at us from behind every tree.”\textsuperscript{250} Encamped in an increasingly hostile territory, Watson decided to withdraw his troops to Georgetown. As the British broke camp on 28 March, the Americans continued harassing them, destroying bridges in their path on the Sampit River and attacking the British rear. Watson’s men panicked and rushed into the river, seeking to escape their hunters. An American sharpshooter shot Watson’s horse out from under him, while the quick action of his black servant saved Watson as the man killed a rebel

\textsuperscript{248} Dornfest, “John Watson Tadwell Watson and the Provincial Light Infantry, 1780-1781,” 49.


soldier who attempted to shoot Watson. The British loaded their wounded into wagons, left their
dead behind, and crossed the Sampit.251

Watson and his men again took the field in early April, crossing the Great Pee Dee River
on 7 April. Watson attempted to raise additional Loyalist troops in the area of Catfish Creek, but
soon learned that Greene had dispatched Lee and his cavalry to reinforce Marion’s troops and
operate together to attack the isolated British outposts. The two American groups combined
forces in mid-April. Watson and his men pulled back to Georgetown, where he detached a small
contingent to increase the strength of the British garrison. With his remaining command, Watson
moved toward Camden to reinforce Rawdon.252

Greene’s situation was still precarious; he had few men at his disposal and he did not
receive the civilian support he requested from Virginia. Greene had a critical need for healthy,
strong horses to replace the losses suffered by his mounted regiments. However, the Virginia
Assembly recognized the affection that Virginians bore for their superior steeds and placed a
value limit on those available to Greene. He expressed his frustration to Virginia’s governor,
Thomas Jefferson. “If Horses are dearer to the Inhabitants than the lives of Subjects or the
liberties of the People there will be no doubt of the Assembly persevering in their late resolution,
otherwise I hope they will reconsider the matter and not oblige me to take a measure which
cannot fail to bring ruin upon the Army, and fresh misfortunes upon the Country.”253

251 Bass, Swamp Fox: The life and campaigns of General Francis Marion, 154-155; Dornfest, “John
Watson Tadwell Watson and the Provincial Light Infantry, 1780-1781,” 49; Jefferson M. Gray, “Up From the

From the Swamp,” 64.

253 Nathanael Greene to Thomas Jefferson from Nathanael Greene, [28 April 1781],” Founders Online,
inability to procure sufficient, suitable horses for his cavalry and dragoons contributed to his loss to Rawdon on 20 April 1781 at the Battle of Hobrick’s Hill, another dearly bought British victory.254

Operating independently, Marion and Lee besieged the small command that Watson left behind at Fort Watson. The Americans built a Maham tower of felled logs close to the fort that enabled them to fire directly down on the defenders.255 Unable to counter the fire from the tower, the small garrison yielded to its attackers after a nine-day siege. Meanwhile, Watson and his men encountered significant delays as they marched to aid Rawdon. They forded numerous streams and swamps, pausing to build a sixty-foot bridge to ford one of the many rivers that crossed their path. They were unable to reach Rawdon by the time that he clashed with Greene at Hobrick’s Hill. When Watson and his men joined Rawdon, the British evacuated Camden. The Provincial Light Infantry, now reduced in ranks from the incessant small battles and skirmishes, accompanied Rawdon’s pullback.256

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255 Patrick O’Kelly, *Unwaried Patience and Fortitude: Francis Marion’s Orderly Book* (West Conshohocken, PA: Infinity Publishing, 2007), 527. American Major Hezekiah Maham proposed that the rebels build an elevated tower to assist in the siege of Fort Watson in April 1781. The Americans constructed a forty-foot tall tower of felled logs, which they notched together. The height of the Maham tower exceeded that of the fort. The Americans built a platform at the top of the tower that enabled riflemen to shoot down into the fort from small openings in the log walls. Marion credits Maham with the “execution of a work which was the Principal occasion of the Reduction of the fort.”

The American forces in the field continued to pick off the British field forts. One by one, they fell until only a few, including “Charleston, Augusta, Savannah, and Ninety Six [remained] in British hands.” Greene moved his army west to attack Ninety Six.

Beginning in September 1780, the fort’s commander, New York Loyalist Colonel John Harris Cruger, had worked ceaselessly to secure Ninety Six, building two redoubts and a block house and improving the existing palisade that surrounded the village with a deep ditch, which he enhanced with an abatis. Lieutenant Henry Haldane, a military engineer that Cornwallis had dispatched to the post, supported Cruger’s efforts, designing one of the redoubts as a star fort, an eight-pointed structure that allowed defenders to fire musket and cannon in all directions. A ditch and abatis surrounded the star fort. Ninety Six’s “Achilles heel” was its water supply, provided by a small stream to the west of the village. The second redoubt, Holmes Fort, protected the water supply. Trenches and covered walkways connected the town’s fortifications.

Greene and his men arrived on 22 May and immediately observed the strength of the fortifications. Greene launched what would become the longest field siege of the war, employing standard siege trench parallels, an attempt at an underground mine to blow up the fort, and a Maham tower. Cruger and his men conducted a spirited defense, sallying forth on a number of occasions to engage in bayonet attacks on the besieging forces. Cruger held out until 18 June,

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257 Carpenter, “British Strategic Failure in the Southern Campaign, 1778-1781,” 51.
when Greene and his men retreated, alarmed that Rawdon and a sizable force under his command, including the Provincial Light Infantry, was rapidly approaching to relieve the fort.259

Rawdon soon realized that Ninety Six lay too far to the west to adequately defend. He ordered Cruger and his men to torch the town. The Loyalists of Ninety Six evacuated their home and marched with the British defenders to Charleston. Britain’s tenuous grip on the South Carolina backcountry broke and Rawdon pulled his remaining forces back toward the coast.260

Hulett and the men of the Provincial Light Infantry took part in one final major battle that pitted a British force led by Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Stewart, who succeeded Rawdon, against Greene. Campaigning through the heat, humidity, and disease-ridden swamps of South Carolina had ruined Rawdon’s health, and he sailed for Britain in July 1781. Watson moved north to rejoin Clinton, but left his men to supplement Stewart’s command. On 8 September 1781, Greene attacked Stewart at Eutaw Springs. The Provincial Light Infantry engaged in the battle as part of the reserve force attached to Captain John Coffin or as part of the light infantry assigned to Major John Majoribanks. Stewart’s men numbered about two thousand, and included both British regulars and provincial troops. Greene’s men totaled a bit more, about twenty-four hundred, included Continentals, state troops, and militia. Stewart and Greene’s troops closely matched each other in numerical strength and skill. Greene described the battle that followed as the most obstinate fight he ever saw; officers on each side fought “hand to hand and sword to sword.”261 The battle, one of the bloodiest of the war, ended with yet another pyrrhic British victory. Stewart’s losses approached fifty percent of his men; historian Christopher Ward noted

259 Golway, Washington’s General, 274.

260 Ibid.

that the British suffered 85 killed, 351 wounded, and 430 missing. The battle decimated the Provincial Light Infantry; it suffered 48 casualties of the 108 men it fielded that day. Its losses included Hulett, whom the Americans took as a prisoner-of-war. Hulett’s captain, James Shaw, died in Charleston on 18 September 1781 from wounds he suffered at the battle.262

Hulett’s fate following the Battle of Eutaw Springs is not clear. He did not rejoin the remnants of the Provincial Light Infantry, which General Leslie ordered disbanded in December 1781. Hulett likely faced the choice to accept his fate as a prisoner-of-war or to enlist with the Americans. Aby’s pension application states that Hulett “deserted the British ranks and again joined the army of the United States at the South under General Greene.” That action likely occurred following the battle of Eutaw Springs. South Carolinians in the Revolution: With Service Records, edited by Sara Sullivan Ervin lists a Charles Hulet among a miscellaneous group of South Carolina soldiers, but provides no further details.263 Hulett next appears in reliable historical records on his wedding day, 16 January 1787.

While Hulett’s role in the War for American Independence did not affect its outcome, this study highlights that the unique regional, social, political, and economic circumstances faced by an individual soldier both dictated and limited his choices. It also provided evidence that historical documents, including pension applications, can be of questionable reliability to a researcher. A historian must compare a variety of reliable sources to determine the most reasonable sequence of events, causes, and outcomes. This study tested the reliability of claims

262 Dornfest, “John Watson Tadwell Watson and the Provincial Light Infantry, 1780-1781,” 50; Braisted, e-mail message to author, January 22, 2014; Dornfest, Military Loyalists of the American Revolution: Officers and Regiments, 308.

made in an 1845 pension application, and found that some of the most striking were at best unfounded. By seeking to understand Hulett’s wartime experience, it became clear to the researcher that the true losers in the American Revolutionary War were the American Loyalists, many of whom lost their livelihood, homes, and families to a cause that they believed in. Unlike the losers of America’s second civil war, many of the Loyalists emigrated far from their beloved land to escape the retribution of their victorious neighbors. American history has branded them as traitors, yet many simply strived to be loyal citizens to their legitimate government and sought to remain part of the British Empire.
Conclusion

America’s first large-scale civil war occurred in the eighteenth century, not the nineteenth. Unlike the Civil War of 1861-1865, the far longer War for American Independence pitted neighbor against neighbor, brother against brother, and father against son across the length and breadth of the thirteen mainland colonies. It involved both the old world and the new. Its combatants included American rebels and Loyalists who fought a vicious war against each other in places like New Jersey and South Carolina, as well as British troops that included not only men raised in the British Isles, but also German troops, commonly referred to as Hessians. The British units also enlisted American soldiers and officers. Additionally, the British commissioned and raised provincial troops in America; New Jersey contributed thousands of men to the British provincial corps. African Americans and Native Americans fought on both sides of the war, many for the British, as they perceived that Britain protected their rights better than the American rebels. The French entered the war on the part of the American cause following the British loss at Saratoga; later in the war, Spain allied with France in hopes of humiliating Britain and reclaiming territories lost to the British in previous wars. France invested substantially in the American rebels prior to the formal alliance, providing money, arms, ammunition, uniforms and other necessities of war.

The first American civil war was a world war, fought across the globe in places as remote as India, Gibraltar, and the West Indies as well as in the home waters of the British Isles. From the European perspective, it was an extension of the first world war, the Seven Years’ War. Britain’s gains following that war placed her at the pinnacle of power, but sowed the seeds of the rebellion that destroyed her hold on the thirteen mainland colonies. The Bourbon powers, France and Spain, had suffered a humiliating defeat in the Seven Years’ War and sought revenge. While
Britain’s once mighty fleet was a shell of its former self after the Seven Years’ War, France invested heavily in building a powerful fleet.264

The work presented here has been an effort to analyze the War of American Independence at the micro-level. Rather than focus on an individual region, town, or group of people who shared a common experience during some phase of the American Revolution, the author has concentrated on an individual soldier, Charles Hulett. Research for this project has taken the author down many unanticipated paths. It began as an inquiry into the Revolutionary War experience of Hulett based on the details of his service described in the pension application filed on behalf of his heirs by Jonas Aby in 1845. It soon became apparent that Aby’s description of Hulett’s service contained some fabricated elements. In telling Hulett’s story, the author has provided the social, political, cultural, and military background that shaped his experience and influenced his choices. It is clear that as a teenager of modest means, Hulett and others of his presumed social and economic station had a limited range of choices; provincial governments required military service in colonial, then state, militias when a young man reach sixteen years of age. Unless he practiced the Quaker faith or came from a well-to-do family, the militia structure required his service. However, many people in the Middle Colonies, particularly New Jersey, did not desire to break with the Crown. A number of New Jersey elites sought to work within the British system to find an amicable solution to the political dispute. However, the radical Whigs seized political control early through a combination of organizations like the Committees of Correspondence and the Committees of Safety, which created a network of like-minded people throughout the colonies. These groups formed the genesis of the extra-legal governments that assumed power in many states during 1775-1776 and quickly moved to crush dissent. The

264 Mackesy, *The War for America*, 104.
radical Whigs exerted firm control over the press and foreclosed the ability of Loyalists publishers to offer a dissenting view of events. The new state governments passed legislation that criminalized the Loyalists and forced the seizure of their homes and properties. Despite vicious suppression, many Loyalists did serve the Crown. Historians estimate that somewhere between 2,500 and 3,000 men from New Jersey alone enlisted as provincial officers and soldiers. Historians have struggled to estimate the total number of Loyalists in arms during the war, as the count fluctuated considerably over time. Perhaps as many as 10,000 Americans served in British provincial units in December 1780. Throughout the war and at its end, the British assisted as many as 60,000 Loyalist refugees escape and resettle in other parts of the British Empire.265

It is likely that a number of factors motivated Hulett’s decision to enlist with the New Jersey Volunteers in April 1780, and it is doubtful that he judged it to be an act of treason. More likely, he considered family and economic pressures and made what he considered the right choice, given the circumstances that he considered. Unfortunately, for Hulett, his choice led him from the vicious civil war in New Jersey to the area of the country that experienced the most brutal internecine conflict of the war, South Carolina. Hulett made at least two other significant choices toward the end of the war that set the course for the remainder of his life. After the Americans captured him during the Battle of Eutaw Springs, Hulett likely faced the choice to accept his fate as a prisoner-of-war or to enlist with the Americans. Aby’s pension application states that Hulett “deserted the British ranks and again joined the army of the United States at the South under General Greene.” That action likely did occur following the bloody battle of Eutaw Springs. South Carolinians in the Revolution: With Service Records, edited by Sara Sullivan Ervin lists a Charles Hulet among a miscellaneous group of South Carolina soldiers, but provides

265 Higginbotham, 277, Smith, 77, Captured at Kings Mountain, x.
no further details.\textsuperscript{266} Hulett’s last significant choice related to the war regarded where he should settle; he likely considered returning home to New Jersey but eliminated that option. Too many former neighbors would not have forgiven his earlier decision to enlist with the New Jersey Volunteers. Hulett found a new home in Winchester, Virginia, where he married a local girl, settled down, and raised a family. By the time of his death, Hulett had become “one of the band of revolutionary worthies;” honored for the role he played to establish the new nation, although the complete extent of his service was likely kept a closely held secret.\textsuperscript{267}


\textsuperscript{267} Obituary of Charles Hulett, \textit{Winchester Republican}, vol. XXV, no. 11, May 27, 1835.
Epilogue

Charles Hulett married Catherine Miller, a native of Winchester, Virginia on 16 January 1787. The Reverend Alexander Balmain celebrated the ceremony. Balmain served as a chaplain during the Revolutionary War and was the minister of the First Episcopal Church in Winchester. He practiced his ministry in Winchester for forty years, and during his tenure solemnized many weddings, including that of James Madison and Dolley Payne Todd.\(^{268}\)

Hulett and his wife had nine children, several of whom died quite young. Hulett appears in the 1810, 1820, and 1830 Federal censuses; by the 1830 census, his family count includes two females under age 15, his wife, and four enslaved persons. The last record found of Hulett prior to his death is an advertisement for a runaway slave, posted by Charles Hulet, Jailor of Frederick County, Virginia, on 17 March 1835 and re-run in the Richmond Enquirer on 28 April 1835. Although four children survived the death of Hulett and his wife; Richard Hulett (1792- ?), Barbara Hulett Aby (1794-1879), Harriet Hulett Warrell (1797-1867), and James Madison Hulett (1809 - ?), only his adult daughters were alive at the time of Jonas Aby’s pension claim in 1845 on behalf of the Hulett heirs.\(^{269}\)


Hulett collected a military pension under the provisions of the Pension Act of 1832. The *U.S. Pensioners, 1818-1872,* lists Hulett in the rolls of Virginia pensioners and notes that he was a musician. His half-year allowance was $16.50, and the pension payments occurred each September and March on a semi-annual basis from September 1831 to March 1835. The pension roll indicates that Hulet died 27 May 1835. It further reflects a half-quarter payment in 1846 and a final half payment in 1850. A Certificate of Pension written on 12 November 1845 notes that Charles Hulett, deceased, of Frederick “was a musician in the company commanded by Captain Neil of the Regiment commanded by Colonel Van Dyke in the New Jersey line for 9 months.” This service record relates to Hulett’s service in the New Jersey state troops that served with the Continental Army beginning in 1776. The certificate notes that Charles was to receive a pension of $33 per annum, beginning on the 4th day of March 1831.270

Jonas Aby filed a pension claim in August 1845 in a Frederick county, Virginia court, claiming benefits on behalf of Hulett’s surviving heirs, under the “Acts of Congress passed June 7, 1832 and July 7, 1838.”271 Aby appears to have been the first to claim Hulett’s West Indies connection; there is no mention of the West Indies in Hulett’s obituary.

The Revolutionary War had a profound impact on the historical memory and emerging national consciousness of America in the early nineteenth century. In *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America,* historian Sarah J. Purcell studied the impact of military memory on the Revolutionary war generation and upon its subsequent generation. She


271 Ibid.
notes that public events and commemorations following the war served to transform “the bloodshed, division and violence of war into beautiful symbols of unity and national cohesion.” 272 She described the process as one that evolved continuously, and that over time, common soldiers came to be seen as national heroes. 273 The heroic simple soldier motif was well represented in Hulett’s obituary, as he was honored as “one of the band of revolutionary worthies.” 274 Hulett “was buried with military and Masonic honors and the [funeral] procession was attended by a large number of citizens paying the last tribute of respect to the good and venerable man.” 275

The Revolutionary War Pension Acts trace the evolution of historical memory as well. In the years immediately following the war, the new nation did not hold Continental Army soldiers in high regard. To some extent a vestige of colonial America’s fear of standing armies, itself an inheritance from the English experience with Oliver Cromwell’s military dictatorship, Congress had been quick to disband the Continental Army following the Treaty of Paris in 1783. Mutinies within the Continental Army, which occurred during the final years of the war, and the near crisis, brought on by Congress’s failure to respond quickly to the grievances of the Continental Army officers, stoked Congress’ fear of the army. 276 The Continental Army officers’ complaints originated when Congress, having promised half-pay to the officers for life with the cessation of hostilities, failed to provide any form of compensation. The ensuing Newburgh Conspiracy


273 Ibid.


275 Ibid.

episode, so called based on unsigned addresses that passed amongst the officers at the Army’s headquarters in Newburgh, New York, was resolved by George Washington’s appeal to the officers. Though Washington’s first pleas did not placate their demands, he once again won their hearts and their loyalty when he stated, “Gentlemen, you will permit me to put on my spectacles, for I have not only grown gray, but almost blind, in the service of my country.”

In his First Annual Message to Congress, President James Monroe, himself a Revolutionary War veteran, called upon Congress to provide for the needs of Revolutionary War veterans who were experiencing financial distress, as he claimed,

> It is contemplating the happy situation of the United States, our attention is drawn with peculiar interest to the surviving officers and soldiers of our Revolutionary army, who so eminently contributed by their services to lay its foundation. Most of those very meritorious citizens have paid the debt of nature and gone to repose. It is believed that among the survivors there are some not provided for by existing laws, who are reduced to indigence and even to real distress. These men have a claim on the gratitude of their country, and it will do honor to their country to provide for them. The lapse of a few years more and the opportunity will be forever lost; indeed, so long already has been the interval that the number to be benefitted by any provision which may be made will not be great.

At the time of Monroe’s appeal, the country was experiencing a budget surplus and had both the means and the desire to provide for its aging and needy veterans. Monroe’s 1817 plea came to fruition with the Revolutionary War Pension Act of 1818. As noted by historian John P. Resch, the Act provided “lifetime pensions to veterans who had served at least nine months in

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the Continental Army and who were also ‘in reduced circumstances’ and ‘in need of assistance from [their] country for support.’”

Monroe issued his call for the veterans during a period that he described as “prosperous and happy,” and in passing the pension act, the government anticipated that the pensioners would be few and the impact to the federal budget would be modest. The Pension Act which finally passed Congress allowed any “officer, soldier, mariner, or marine who had served for at least nine months in a Continental line or served until the war ended (April 1783) and was in ‘reduced circumstances’” to collect a pension, provided that “testimony of service and an oath of indigency” was made before a court. The act excluded men who had seen service solely as members of the militia. Unexpectedly, costs of the program ballooned far beyond the government’s projections as nearly fifteen times the number of expected pensioners filed applications. At the same time, the economy entered a depression. The pension act became an extremely divisive focal point. Various Congressmen initiated efforts to modify it to apply a means test, to expand it, or alternately, to eliminate it. Efforts to expand it included those that sought to cover more men, including the militia who Congress had previously excluded. Others clamored to reduce the cost of the measure while still other Congressmen, typically those from states that did not have large veteran populations, sought to kill the pension act. A virtual political deadlock ensued.


280 Monroe, First Annual Message to Congress.


282 Ibid.
Eventually, an amendment, passed in 1820, suspended all pensioners until they were able to prove their poverty before a court official. The draconian means test ensured that only the most poverty-stricken veterans could obtain a pension.  

The political battle played out in the public arena as well as in Congress. Joseph Plumb Martin, a Continental Army soldier who initially enlisted in 1776, when he was not yet sixteen years old, and who experienced much of the worst the war offered, anonymously published his memoirs in 1830. Historian Catherine Kaplan claims that Martin’s memoirs were politically motivated; by sharing the horrific details of his personal experience of the war, Martin was in effect putting forth a “bill . . . for services rendered.” Kaplan claims that Martin was motivated to put forth his memoirs in response to the public and political outrage generated by the expense of the pension act and the fraud found to permeate its applications and administration.

Revisions to the pension act continued; the 1823 revision expanded the asset test eligibility to veterans with estates not in excess of $300; the War Department, which was responsible for determining the poverty limit, raised the amount to $960 in 1828. The relative value of $960 in 2012 dollars using the income index of the per capita GDP is $673,000, a very different level of assets than that of abject poverty.

283 Ibid.


285 Ibid.

During his 4 December 1827 third annual message to Congress, President John Quincy Adams called upon Congress to continue to address the “debt, rather of justice than gratitude, to the surviving warriors of the Revolutionary war.” The act of 1828, which followed, did not touch the lives of many veterans, but it was notable for removing evidence of poverty from pension eligibility determinants.

Like his predecessor, Andrew Jackson also called upon Congress to honor the veterans of the American Revolutionary War. Jackson was anxious to broaden the definition to include all who served, including the militia:

I would also suggest a review of the pension law, for the purpose of extending its benefits to every Revolutionary soldier who aided in establishing our liberties, and who is unable to maintain himself in comfort. These relics of the War of Independence have strong claims upon their country's gratitude and bounty. The law is defective in not embracing within its provisions all those who were during the last war disabled from supporting themselves by manual labor. Such an amendment would add but little to the amount of pensions, and is called for by the sympathies of the people as well as by considerations of sound policy.

Jackson, however, believed that the War Department had gone beyond the scope of its responsibilities in administering the pension eligibility standards and noted in his address, that “It will be perceived that a large addition to the list of pensioners has been occasioned by an order of the late Administration, departing materially from the rules which had previously prevailed.

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Considering it an act of legislation, I suspended its operation as soon as I was informed that it had commenced.”

The pension bill of 1832 substantially broadened pensioner eligibility such that:

. . . each of the surviving officers, non-commissioned officers, musicians, soldiers and Indian spies, who shall have served in the continental line, or state troops, volunteers or militia, at one or more terms, a period of two years, during the war of the revolution, and who are not entitled to any benefit under the act for the relief of certain surviving officers and soldiers of the revolution, passed the fifteenth day of May, eighteen hundred and twenty-eight, be authorized to receive, out of any money in the treasury not otherwise appropriated, the amount of his full pay in the said line, according to his rank, but not exceeding, in any case, the pay of a captain in the said line.

The bill of 1832 removed a means test and broadened eligibility to include members of the state troops and militia. It was under the terms of this expansion that Hulett became eligible to collect pension monies. In July 1838, Congress further extended the pension act to provide half pay and pensions to widows, who married Revolutionary War veterans prior to January 1794. Jonas Aby’s pension claim cited both the bill of 1832, which broadened eligibility to include veterans who were not in reduced circumstances and the bill of 1838, which extended benefits to widows. Aby’s claim cited that his wife and her sister were the sole heirs of Catherine Miller Hulett, the widow of Charles Hulett. Aby’s claim was for the “arrears of pension” due the heirs.

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290 Ibid.
In 1876, several decades after the last surviving Revolutionary War soldier passed away, the Sons of Revolutionary Sires formed. The National Society, Sons of the American Revolution (SAR) grew out of the earlier organization. SAR, chartered on April 30, 1889, is a genealogical society for linear descendants of Revolutionary war veterans and others actively involved in the pursuit of American Independence. Applicants to the SAR trace their lineage to a veteran and provide a summary of the veteran’s service in their SAR application. A similar organization, Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) formed in 1890. A number of members of these organizations, living and dead have traced their eligibility to Charles Hulett. Using pension records drawn on the testimony of Jonas Aby, rather than upon actual muster rolls, many SAR and DAR descendants of Hulett continue to perpetuate the myth of his imprisonment in the West Indies. In doing so, they have chosen to highlight the exotic claim fashioned by Aby, rather than the more mundane service Hulett performed during the dark years in New Jersey, when the likelihood of American independence appeared bleak. Most, likely, did not pause to consider the complex nature of America’s first civil war, but rather believed the American myth that citizen soldiers threw off the yoke of British tyranny in the cause of liberty. The fabric of the War for America, however, was far more complex, and not only pitted family members against each other, but also was fought by soldiers like Hulett, who switched allegiance during the war as they sought to preserve and fashion a future for themselves and their descendants.\footnote{Morris Ackerman Society of the Sons of the American Revolution application for membership, December 29, 1905, accessed May 9, 2014, ancestry.com; Beverly Nixon Rice Society of the Sons of the American Revolution application for membership, July 22, 1963, accessed May 9, 2014, ancestry.com; Jonas Catchings Aby Society of the Sons of the American Revolution application for membership, September 3, 1917, accessed May 31, 2014, ancestry.com; Earnest Clyde Simpson Society of the Sons of the American Revolution application for membership, December 18, 1917; John Emmett Drolshagen Society of the Sons of the American Revolution application for membership, March 20, 1958, accessed May 31, 2014, ancestry.com; Mary Drolshagen Mahlmeister National Society of the Daughters of the Revolution application for membership, undated draft.}

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