The Continental Army: Leadership School of the Early Republic

David Lawrence Ward

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The Continental Army: Leadership School of the Early Republic

David Lawrence Ward
Williamsburg, Virginia

Master of Strategic Studies, U.S. Army War College, 2010
Masters of Business Administration, James Madison University, 1995
Bachelor of Arts in History and French, University of Mississippi, 1985

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Master of Arts

David Lawrence Ward

Approved by the Committee, April, 2015

Committee Chair
Associate Professor Paul Mapp, History
The College of William & Mary

Pullen Professor Carol Sheriff, History
The College of William & Mary

Visiting Assistant Professor Guillaume Aubert, History
The College of William & Mary
ABSTRACT

The orthodox understanding of the fate of the demobilized Continental Army soldiers holds that extended military service disadvantaged men in their subsequent civilian lives. Supposedly, the men never regained the years of service to their country and paid the price in lost wages, social status, and marriage opportunities until the nation belatedly and niggardly offered meager pensions starting in 1819. In contradiction to prevailing historiography, this paper argues military service and training equipped Continental Army junior leaders with skills critical to their postwar success when they moved to new communities as the nation expanded. Through a combination of long-term service, von Steuben’s manual and training program, and merit-based promotions, the Continental Army created a competent corps of sergeants, lieutenants, and captains. Their diaries and letters show the junior leaders understood the changes they had undergone while fighting in the war. When matched against the tenets written in von Steuben’s manual, there emerged a remarkable correlation. While militarily competent and tactically proficient in drill and maneuver, these junior leaders also left the army with skills they could transfer to civilian pursuits. While not profiting financially from their military service, the junior leaders used their newfound abilities to achieve political success at the local level and assist in the expansion of the Early Republic. The Continental Army served as a leadership school for these junior leaders and the United States benefited.
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This Masters Thesis is dedicated to my wife, Mary K. Ward who provided the support necessary to embark on my second career. As she has often said, “she would follow me anywhere” and she has.
The Continental Army: Leadership School of the Early Republic

Introduction

The soldiers who fought for their country and returned home to build the middle class in the aftermath of the Great Depression and a World War earned the title “Greatest Generation” from some authors. These soldiers’ accomplishments fill numerous books. Magazines and journals still frequently publish articles celebrating and examining their wartime experiences and their impact on the United States. The majority were drafted and took up arms for only two years—from 1943 through mid-1945. The soldiers’ rapid demobilization after World War II was only one of a series of armed forces expansions and contractions in America’s history. These former military members, once they returned to work or went to college, learned new skills and enlarged the American middle class. They were not the first group of demobilized soldiers to have a positive impact on the growth of the United States. However, unlike the Greatest Generation, historians have overlooked the effect of the wartime service of Continental Army junior leaders and their contributions to the growth of the United States.

Over half of the twenty thousand soldiers who filed for pensions between 1818 and 1832 moved from their recruitment locations to different states or regions in the early Republic.1 Some of them had achieved the ranks of sergeant, lieutenant, and captain before leaving the army.2 Continental Army training turned them into junior leaders who took their skills into civilian life. Much like the biblical parable of seeds planted in good soil, the former junior leaders bore an abundance of good fruit when planted in their new communities. Without understanding the how and why of their contributions, one cannot fully grasp the remarkable story of the early Republic’s rapid expansion.

The orthodox understanding of the fate of the demobilized Continental Army soldiers holds that extended military service disadvantaged men in their subsequent civilian lives. The

2 I use the term “junior officers” or “leaders” to refer to sergeants, subalterns, ensigns, lieutenants, and captains.
men never regained the years of service to their country and paid the price in lost wages, social status, and marriage opportunities until the nation belatedly and niggardly offered meager pensions starting in 1819. While soldiers appreciated the delayed gratitude, the paltry pensions scarcely made up for the lack of wages during the war or the payment in worthless Continental dollars. Until the past twenty years, the prevailing wisdom was that most soldiers who joined the Continental Army after 1775 did so in pursuit of the wages and were from the lowest economic classes. In other words, the men entered the Army poor, and when they left they were still poor, as well as physically and mentally broken, with little to show for their service. Almost no one got rich serving in the Continental Army. The costs in health and personal fortune exceeded any possible reimbursement from the government. Everyone from General George Washington to the lowest private had a tale to tell of the tremendous personal costs of serving in the Army. If the focus remained on the economic costs of service, it would be easy to generalize military service as disadvantageous to the individual. With the lost wages, health concerns, and mental toil, it would be hard to predict any sort of success for soldiers after the war. The evidence initially appears to support the orthodox view.

However, cases exist that do not fit the historiography. Individuals who should have remained stuck in their social station emerged as leaders in their communities. This is especially true of junior officers and noncommissioned officers who moved from their recruitment locations or hometowns. Individuals, who were supposed to be poor, broken, and distrusted by the population due to their service in the Continental Army, emerged as respected local leaders. Local communities elected and appointed these veterans to positions of responsibility such as sheriff, justice of the peace, selectman, councilman, representative, and mayor. While not worthy of statewide or national notice, these positions were essential to the formation of stable communities in the expanding early Republic and the veterans’ contributions should be recognized.

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3 Resch, Suffering Soldiers, 50.
The proponents of "great man" history duly recorded the exploits of Washington, Hamilton, and Greene. Historians have debated the relative merits of the militia and Continental Army and compared the strategies of Washington and the British. Social historians have chronicled and explained the motivations of the average enlisted soldier and the Continental Army as a whole, but little work has been done on the junior leaders trained by the Army and their contributions to expanding the early Republic. This paper begins the overlooked story of the men who bridged the gap between the visions of the great men and ordinary men who lived with the results. These junior leaders took the lessons they learned in the Army and realized the vision for an expansion of the new nation dreamt by the founding fathers. These junior leaders made the idea of a single country a reality for the early Republic. Without a template and with only a vision, the junior leaders employed their own ability to see the grander picture, managed, and led their new communities, and ensured a rapid growth of states in the years after the end of the war. Before examining their contributions to the early Republic, it is necessary to understand how they attained their skills.


6 Sellers, "Military History of the American Revolution," 161, 164; Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 373; Charles Neimeyer, *America Goes to War: A Social History of the Continental Army, 1775-1783* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), xiv. John Sellers presented work at the Military History Symposium in 1974 which analyzed the socio-economic backgrounds of three different regimental-sized units and led him to declare that the soldier in the Revolutionary War enlisted primarily from the lowest rung of society for economic reasons in hopes for a better life - one they did not achieve. In response to a question, he answered "I am not impressed by the patriotic fervor of the privates. I think they all acted overwhelmingly out of self-interest. I do not believe that they really fought with a true understanding of independence." Sellers also averred that they did not amount to much after the war since they did not improve their economic standing or place in society even though a great majority of them relocated after the war. Royster did an excellent job of questioning the false dichotomy proposed by the proponents of enlistment solely for economic reasons. Neimeyer's social history of the Continental Army argued that soldiers in the army were those "least able to resist the blandishments of a recruiting party."
The first question should be, how typical are these individuals of demobilized soldiers in the early Republic? After all, someone had to be elected to serve in these community positions. Why veteran junior leaders and not someone else? Does anything distinguish these former officers from their contemporaries? Within any group of people, some are going to attain positions of greater trust due to natural ability, social class, or education. Did some select individuals overcome the disadvantages of military service and succeed in spite of the tremendous odds against them? Are these soldiers just random outliers from the historically established dregs of society who served in the Continental Army after the rage militaire passed in 1776? Or did something in their background provide the crucial edge for electoral success? Could there be some relationship between their military service and postwar service at the local level?

Junior leaders in the Continental Army experienced the war in a much different fashion than the average militia member or civilian who moved after the war. As officers and sergeants, they learned to lead men in difficult circumstances for extended periods of time. The Army provided training in the performance of their duties and rewarded success with promotion and more responsibility. Leaders dealt with individuals from disparate sections of the country. Their exposure to dissimilar peoples, landscapes, and ideas vastly exceeded the experience of the average citizen. Junior leaders with extensive experience on courts-martial panels served as justices of the peace in their new communities. Junior leaders with experience in establishing new camps and bivouac sites emerged as leaders in the establishment and organization of new towns. This would appear to be more than coincidence. If so obvious, why have historians not written about the advantages of military service for veterans in the growth of the United States? Why did previous historians overlook this issue?

Previous historians, by focusing on the senior leaders such as Washington, Greene, and others or on the enlisted forces as a whole, missed the advantage of military service for junior leaders. Individual biographers or editors of diaries have noted the postwar exploits and successes of their subjects, but no one has examined junior leaders as a cohort. Deterred by the relative

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scarcity of sources for enlisted soldiers as a whole, historians have not leveraged the available sources to their full potential. Reliance on pension applications and community legal records further limited their findings and conclusions. Pension records record only the last decades of the veterans' lives, while town studies work only where a large sample of veterans existed in an established community. The most recent study of Continental Army veterans focused on a rigid community in New Hampshire and provided the genesis for this paper. John Resch's thorough study of veterans from a single location contains a revelation that over half of the New England Continental Army soldiers moved to different states or sections of the country after the war. With a few notable exceptions due to physical or mental injuries, social status and the control of ruling families most likely had more impact on future success than service in the Continental Army instead of the militia forces. Drawing conclusions about the disadvantages of Continental Army service based on a New England town controlled by a few select families seems premature.8 The questions posited in the previous paragraphs and discrepancies in Resch's conclusions furnished the impetus to further investigate the role of former Continental Army junior leaders as they migrated to new communities.

Military service and training equipped Continental Army junior leaders with skills critical to their postwar success when they moved to new communities as the nation expanded. Neither the riffraff nor broken individuals, these junior leaders continued their contributions to the new nation by serving their new local communities in positions of trust. The skills in leading and managing people, forming bonds, and envisioning a larger vision of the United States learned while in extended service set them apart from their contemporaries. While not leading to economic success or riches for the individual, the expertise acquired in the Army enabled local political success that upends the current historiography on the Continental Army soldier after the war.

Sources & Methodology

In order to validate the argument of the advantages of military service for local postwar

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8 Resch, Suffering Soldiers, 56. Resch's excellent study of Peterborough, New Hampshire focused on one small community controlled by a few powerful families who originally founded the town a few generations earlier.
civilian success, the paper will examine three periods of five individuals' lives through their written words, extant records, and secondary sources. The five men are familiar to Revolutionary War scholars through their writings: Joseph Plumb Martin, Jeremiah Greenman, Ebenezer Denny, Samuel Richards, and Benjamin Gilbert. They all entered military service at the lowest enlisted ranks, and, through extended service, attained rank in the noncommissioned and commissioned officer corps. All but one all attained positions of trust and responsibility in locations away from their birth communities. The exception returned to his hometown and did well after the war. Their pre-war lives, wartime experiences and training, and postwar lives are investigated.

The paper examines the soldiers' lives before entering the military to determine if pre-war experiences and conditions provided the equivalent skills acquired during military training. For example, were they successful businessmen, church officers, and sons of landed gentry, experiences which taught them how to manage men and women? Social class is also examined to speculate about their chance for advancement in their natal communities. The level of education is an important criterion. While all were literate, what was the extent of their formal schooling? In eighteenth-century America, access to capital and social class standing often allowed one to obtain positions of trust, regardless of talent or ability. As a matter of practice, individuals with social standing and wealth received commissions of greater rank in the Continental Army and would not have served long, if at all, as sergeants and junior commissioned officers.

Since military service and training forms the critical step in the argument, the process of developing leaders in the Continental Army receives additional explanation. Once the foundation is laid, each individual's experience and growth are compared with contemporary standards and the individual's words. The United States had a difficult task in forming a professional army capable of winning independence. After the rage militaire subsided in 1776 and militias proved ineffective in prosecuting the war, Congress and General Washington had to form a professional

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9 United States. Continental Army, *Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States. Part I.* (Steiner, Melchior, printer., 1779), 130. Fortunately, literacy was a criteria for selection as a noncommissioned officer and officer.

army to serve for the duration.\textsuperscript{11} Creating a professional Army from scratch was no easy task. The differences between the professional British Army, the impact of Baron von Steuben's manual, and the strengths and weaknesses of militia must be understood to fully comprehend the impact of military service and training on the chosen individuals.\textsuperscript{12} The recollections of first combat remained vivid for all the individuals and provided insight into the ability to deal with chaotic situations and persevere in their mission. All the individuals recorded impressions of good and bad leaders that affected their own exercise of power. Their growth in understanding the leader's role and respect and love for the men entrusted to their care emerged from their letters and diaries. They all experienced the need for discipline and the careful application of justice to ensure a stable community. Campaigns took them far from their recruitment locations and exposed them to the diversity of people and customs in late eighteenth-century America. The skills in dealing with the variety of circumstances encountered while in leadership positions in the Army proved transferable to civilian lives.

It is all the more remarkable that skills obtained during service made success possible in local neighborhoods when one understands that the soldiers and junior officers were not looked upon favorably after the war.\textsuperscript{13} It is also important to note that contemporary civilians did not hold the Continental Army and soldiers in great esteem. Acknowledgment of service in the Army would not have provided easy access to positions of power and trust. Soldiers, especially commissioned officers, were viewed with great mistrust by large swaths of the population in the years after the war.\textsuperscript{14} Most civilians distrusted the idea of the "man on horseback" and viewed

\begin{footnotes}
\item[12] United States. Continental Army, \textit{Regulations}. Baron von Steuben is the author of the first version of the \textit{Regulations}. Like contemporary leaders, the paper refers to the regulations hereafter as von Steuben's manual for the remainder of the paper.
\item[14] Resch, \textit{Suffering Soldiers}, 3,4; William Doyle, \textit{Aristocracy and Its Enemies in the Age of Revolution} (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2009), Chap 4. "Few Americans shared Scott's belief that the Continental Army had won the war. Nor did most Americans share Scott's conviction that regular soldiers deserved special honors and reward.(3)"; They [Continental Army
standing armies with suspicion. Since service alone would have not guaranteed respect and
election to positions of trust, there must have been something else that enabled them to overcome
the stigma of having been a soldier, and to subsequently achieve success.

In order to determine the ingredients for success, the selected group of postwar lives and
records are sifted through for evidence of application of lessons learned during military service.
The records are also analyzed to see the impact of their success in destination versus natal
communities. Postwar success is not defined in terms of financial riches. Several of the
individuals suffered greatly in their economic pursuits after the war. They failed as farmers and
merchants or lost vast sums of money during bad business ventures. Success is defined as gaining
the trust of their associates to serve in positions of responsibility. These elected posts were not
awarded based on wealth, but trust – trust earned through the demonstration of skills mastered
in the Army as junior leaders.

The small number of sources available for investigation might initially be thought to pose
a problem. Fortunately, the targets of this inquiry required literacy for their positions. Junior
leaders had to compose reports and understand written instructions. Several of them understood
the importance of the endeavors upon which they had embarked and proceeded to keep written
records. While noticeably sparse on issues of geopolitical strategy or long discourses on their
motivations for fighting or enlisting, they are rich with anecdotes and observations on what they
considered important. Even when some historians have downplayed the significance of the
memoirs or diaries as overly preoccupied with the routine and deprivation of camp life, they still
reveal keen insights into the growth and development of junior leaders. The pioneers of women's
history provided a methodology to examining seemingly insignificant details along with
additional sources to provide a larger context and reveal more than was originally understood.

Diaries and memoirs composed after the fact can be criticized for the editing the author

soldiers] were no longer dangerous 'hirelings and mercenaries' who posed a threat to liberty.(4); Doyle provides an excellent recounting of the founding of the Society of Cincinnati and the
problems the Society caused for Continental Army officers' reputations and motives.
15 Alfred Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution*
(Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1999), 7; J.Todd White and Charles H. Lesser, *Fighters for
Independence: A Guide to Sources of Biographical Information On Soldiers and Sailors of the
American Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977). Young states that there are at
least 500 examples of accounts of Revolutionary War soldiers. The guide contains approximately
500 of diaries, autobiographies, and letters of all ranks.
undertook to cast himself in the best possible light, and thereby obscure his true feelings or actions at the time of the event. This acknowledged weakness can be a strength for the purposes of this exploration. One can reasonably assume authors included events they considered important to their military service and growth. This assumption becomes increasingly important when the memoir is composed after the army service, when the author highlights how his army past influenced his postwar success by accentuating events in his past that explain actions in civilian life. Through comparing the observations in the diaries and letters with the standards of training and education provided to Continental Army junior leaders as they assumed their duties, the soldiers' writings divulge interpretations previously overlooked.

Fortunately, five of the best-known soldiers' letters and diaries of the Revolutionary War were written by men who joined as privates, received promotions, and achieved a measure of postwar success. Other contemporary diarists, not as well known, will be occasionally referenced to reinforce the primary sources or provide clarification. The best known of these writers is Joseph Plumb Martin who joined as a private from Connecticut, served for seven years, mustered out as a sergeant, and served as a Maine selectman for twenty years. Jeremiah Greenman enlisted as a private in 1776 from Rhode Island, served eight years, became a lieutenant, and was later elected as justice of the peace in Ohio. Ebenezer Denny from Carlisle, Pennsylvania, signed up as a sailor on a privateer, later received an appointment to the commissioned officer ranks in the Army, and continued in the Army after the war on the northwest frontier. Upon leaving the service and relocating westward to Pittsburgh, Denny was elected a county commissioner, director of the bank, and Pittsburgh's first mayor in 1816. Samuel Richards enlisted in 1775 during the rage militaire and fought outside of Boston. He later reentered the Army as a commissioned officer and served until the end of the war. Upon leaving the Army, he served as a deacon at his local church and worked as the Postmaster General of Farmington, Connecticut, for

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over thirty years. Benjamin Gilbert enlisted in 1775 from Massachusetts, attained the rank of Sergeant, and eventually appointed as a commissioned officer. He served for eight years. Gilbert moved to western New York and served as the Otsego county sheriff for eleven years and three terms as a New York assemblyman along with other positions in the area. These five individuals demonstrated success at the local political level after the war in contradiction to the long-held image of the suffering soldier.

The method for determining the linkage to military service as junior leaders and the resulting postwar success is remarkably simple. The individuals’ biographical data and written words were compared with the training and education regimes instituted by the Continental Army, as well as postwar information on their careers. The written sources were investigated for examples of the growth in leading and managing people, forming bonds with soldiers from disparate parts of the country, and developing a larger, idealistic vision of the United States based on travels while on military operations. The diary entries and letters corroborate growth and understanding by what the soldier chose to record as important. With limited time and space to record notes on paper, only the most important thoughts were saved. The thoughts that occupied their days and minds flowed from their pens to paper. The notes served as triggers some turned into narratives after the war. Boring and routine ideas did not merit the effort to ensure recollection years later. While some historians may interpret the drudgeries of camp life as routine, an individual whose survival depended on execution of simple tasks had a different understanding. Preoccupations with weather and guard duty change to attention on mission accomplishment as the soldier assumed new responsibilities. By understanding the context of these entries at different times in their careers, one sees the development of junior leaders and their understanding of the change in their written words.

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19 Samuel Richards, “Personal Narrative of an Officer in the Revolutionary War,” United Service; a Quarterly Review of Military and Naval Affairs (1879-1905), August 1884, 200.
Prewar Lives

A brief review of the soldiers’ lives before the army does not identify any markers of distinction or foreshadowing of greatness. None of them was a member of the upper class, but nor were any of them destitute. Their lives before enlistment would not have made them identifiable as deadbeats. All received the rudiments of an education and were literate. They had attachments to their communities and extended families. They were not wage laborers looking solely for sustenance when they originally enlisted.

Joseph Plumb Martin was only fifteen when he joined the Continental Army for the first time. His life before enlistment consisted of living with his grandparents while learning to be a farmer. He did come from respectable origins as his father was a Yale College graduate who pastored a number of churches; unfortunately, none of them very successfully. Martin’s father was constantly in dire financial straits, which is why Joseph ended up with his grandparents. Martin would have probably inherited his grandparents’ farm or worked as a farmer. He likely would not have become rich given the dire prospects for farmers in New England due to overuse of land and dwindling plots for each succeeding generation. While he could have become a landowner and citizen, his prospects for economic success, marriage potential, or social advancement would have been limited. Whether he understood these facts is unknowable. Martin joined the Continental Army in time for the campaigns around Long Island and New York City.

Jeremiah Greenman preceded Martin into the Continental Army. Greenman was seventeen when he enlisted, but no record exists of his training for a trade. He was an only child whose father may have made his living by the sea given his residence in Newport, Rhode Island. Greenman’s education was rudimentary, but it was enough for him to refine his reading and writing in the army. The record indicates no exceptional social standing, ability, or connections that predicted success in his birth community. It may have been for the excitement of war or hope for some economic payoff to improve his prospects that Greenman decided to enlist. Greenman

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21 Resch, Suffering Soldiers. Resch’s study is an excellent analysis of the socioeconomic background of soldiers during the war that disproves the conclusions of the 1970s. Resch identifies the Revolutionary War as a “peoples war” where all classes served in the military.

22 Martin, Ordinary Courage, vii–ix.
joined in time for the assaults on Quebec during the winter of 1775.\textsuperscript{23}

Ebenezer Denny followed a somewhat different path into the Continental Army. Born to a farmer south of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Denny appears to have possessed an adventurous streak. At the age of thirteen in 1774, he secured employment carrying dispatches from Fort Pitt. After a couple of close encounters with hostile Indians, he ended up working as a clerk in his father's store. From the records, Denny's father does not appear to have been successful as a merchant.\textsuperscript{24} Denny learned of a ship which obtained a letter of marque and he volunteered for duty. His position as a sailor was similar to a private in the army. The captain eventually assigned him command of a watch, which would have had almost identical duties to a sergeant of the guard in any army unit. The voyage was successful, and Denny obtained a share of the prize money. Upon return, Denny was offered a commission as an ensign in the Pennsylvania regiment. The Pennsylvania regiment had just suffered one of the more serious mutinies in 1780, and the state was probably interested in reliable individuals. Denny's uncle had raised a company in the early days of the war and was killed at the battle of Crooked Billet on May 1, 1778. Denny may have been seen as a trustworthy choice by authorities, even at the age of nineteen. In spite of his adventures, he was not a hardened campaigner, as his initial responses to combat verified. He came from good family, but still had to succeed by his own endeavors. He did not come from wealth, and all his pursuits were designed to procure additional means for his family.\textsuperscript{25}

Farmington, Connecticut, was the birthplace of Samuel Richards. Richards was twenty-one when he joined one of the initial volunteer levies on May 5, 1775 that departed for action around Boston in the aftermath of Lexington and Concord.\textsuperscript{26} By 1776, he was a commissioned officer. Little is known of Richards' prewar life. Articles written by his granddaughter in the late nineteenth century acknowledge that little is known of his life before military service.\textsuperscript{27} Richards mentioned that he grew up listening to stories of his father's exploits during the siege of Louisburgh in 1745 and this served as the inspiration for writing down his Revolutionary War

\textsuperscript{23} Greenman, \textit{Diary}, xiv–xv.
\textsuperscript{24} Denny, \textit{Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny}, 7:209.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 7:207–211.
\textsuperscript{26} Richards, "Personal Narrative Part I," 202.
memories. As a twenty-one year old, he should have already chosen a profession or occupation, but Richards never felt the need to mention it. Securing the Postmaster General position in Farmington indicated he leveraged military service and political patronage to obtain the job after discharge. Nothing indicated exceptional social class, wealth, or education to predestine him for distinguished service, had the war not come along. War and military service changed his fortunes.

War changed Benjamin Gilbert’s fortunes as well. Gilbert came from a family that performed military service during the French Wars of the 1740s and 1750s. Gilbert’s father, Daniel, completed his service as a junior officer. While Benjamin’s father was a selectman during the initial hostilities with Great Britain, his primary occupation was farming. Benjamin Gilbert’s primary school education was elementary and he, like Greenman, was self-taught. Gilbert, nineteen years old, enlisted as a private in 1775 and marched off to Boston.28 Gilbert initially served as a private and sergeant for over four years before obtaining a commission as an officer in August 1780.29 Gilbert enjoyed drinking and consorting with prostitutes a bit too much and had some difficulty in making the transition from enlisted to commissioned officer.30 His diary as an enlisted man reveals someone who enjoyed the pleasures of the flesh and bottle and held little potential for distinguished service. His commanders did trust him with important posts, such as quartermaster of the company. His success as the supply sergeant evidently put him in good stead with his commander when the time for letters of recommendation for promotion to the officer ranks arrived. Even so, Gilbert took almost twice as long as Greenman to make the leap from sergeant to ensign. While war quickly matured Greenman in the eyes of his leaders, Gilbert took longer. Greenman’s exposure to more combat and captivity than Gilbert probably accelerated the process.

War changed individuals. That truth has not changed in the millennia of human history. The ill-effects included bodily harm, mental trauma, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), to name only a few. Combat also subjected individuals to stressful situations, and when survived, infused the person with newfound confidence in their abilities and potential. When lessons

28 Gilbert, Winding Down, 10–11.
29 Ibid., 19.
30 Ibid., 87. Gilbert’s whoring and drinking are referenced in the letters he wrote to a friend on March 1, 1783.
instilled by the Army resulted in the tangible benefit of surviving battle and accomplishing the mission, an individual learned to trust his training and education. While fear remained present, individuals performed when others might have hesitated or panicked. New, uncertain situations did not create the same trepidation or intimidation as they might have done previously. The individual's comfort zone increased. In regard to these men, this expanded comfort zone later enabled them to migrate to new communities with new people, integrate into the fabric of society, and establish relationships. Since the new neighborhoods would not have the same hardened social structures as established communities on the eastern seaboard, the junior leader's opportunity to put his training to use worked to allow him to gain positions of trust based on skill and merit. Confidence in new abilities did not come solely from reading a manual or instruction. Developing junior leaders required the combination of experience and training.

First Exposure to Combat

When tracking leader development in the written records, it is particularly important to note how the soldiers recorded their reactions to their first exposure to combat and how they matured over the period of their service. Chronology was important because all the men experienced combat before they received any training on leadership. In most cases, formal training occurred two years after they joined. After they underwent instruction, their memoirs show an appreciation and application of their lessons.

With only two exceptions, the diaries and letters used underwent some editing before dissemination to family members or publication. The incidents recalled and remaining in the accounts were important to the individual. Even events that at first glance might seem embarrassing to the casual reader serve as starting point for finding the author's growth as a soldier. The junior leaders knew they had changed over time and wrote about these incidents. The soldiers saw them as formative events in their lives and service. The study will analyze these initial exposures to combat and the lessons that the author either learned or wanted to pass on to his family and friends once the work was published.

31 Cox, A Proper Sense of Honor, 44. “Reading about army life was not going to train the army. Rather, living the Army life would have to do it.”
32 Jeremiah Greenman and Benjamin Gilbert’s letters have survived unedited.
Understandably, an individual's first experience in combat varied. Common reactions involved terror and fear. Thankfulness for survival and attributing their safety to divine protection were other common reactions. Tracking reactions and recording of the individuals' first exposure to combat for leader development makes it possible to plot their growth over subsequent campaigns and years. The crucial aspect is to understand how each individual remembered and viewed his own initial combat experience, and not how another may have viewed his composure. Another party may have viewed him as uncaring, disinterested, or calm under pressure, when in fact, the individual may have been terrified, but maintained the necessary composure because of training and experience and to inspire courage in his subordinates. Leading individuals during stressful times required the ability to instill confidence. How an individual learned this lesson can be understood by examining the record of his first exposure to combat and how good leaders acted in subsequent entries.

Martin's diary contained one of the more fully developed and chronological accounts of the growth and development of an individual's leadership skills and experience. Martin acknowledged the start of his growth as a leader during the New York campaign when he recorded his first recognition as a "man" by an officer. Martin's unit landed at Brooklyn and was marching towards the battle when he encountered wounded men for the first time and started to feel fear. Another soldier then started complaining about being thirsty to an officer when Martin recounted what the officer said. "'Look at that man,' said he, pointing to me, 'he is not thirsty, I will warrant it.' I felt a little elated to be styled a man." Being recognized as a man by someone in authority during a time of danger made an impression on Martin. Martin recorded this entry as his marker

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33 Ebenezer Fletcher, *The Narrative of Ebenezer Fletcher, a Soldier of the Revolution*, ed. Charles I. Bushnell (New York.: Priv. print., 1866), 14. "The enemy pursued our men in great haste. Some of them came over the log where I lay. Some came so near I could almost touch them. I was not discovered by the enemy till the battle was over. When they were picking up the dead and wounded among the brush and logs, I heard them coming towards me, and began to be much terrified, lest I should be found."

34 Samuel A. Green, *Three Military Diaries Kept by Groton Soldiers in Different Wars;* (Groton, Mass.: J. Wilson and Son, 1901), 84. "Monday tus wedens May 8. 9 & 10 days Etended Prayers Morning And night there was Several gons Discharged about this time Kiled one or two others Escaping narraly Blesed Be God that my life is Preserved" All quotations are rendered as recorded for the remainder of the paper.

35 Joseph Plumb Martin, *A Narrative of Some of the Adventures, Dangers and Sufferings of a Revolutionary Soldier; Interspersed with Anecdotes of Incidents That Occurred within His Own Observation* (Hallowell Me.: Printed by Glazier Masters & Co., 1830), 19.
as to when he stopped being a boy and matured into an adult.

Later in the battle, Martin saw his first example of poor leadership, and it remained with him for 50 years. A lieutenant ran around his soldiers in fear, sniveling, blubbering, and asking for forgiveness from his men for any wrong doings he may have committed. Martin was disgusted with the performance. As he noted: "A fine soldier you are, I thought, an exemplary man for young soldiers! I would have then suffered anything short of death than have made such an exhibition of myself...." Martin internalized this lesson about the proper composure for a leader. Martin did not fault the officer for being afraid. He was critical in the way he showed it and the effect it had on his soldiers. Martin himself recorded that even though he had to retreat very quickly when in danger of being overrun by superior forces, he maintained his composure.

Some of our men at this time seemed to think that they could never run fast or far enough. I never wanted to run, if I was forced to run, further than to be beyond the reach of the enemy's shot, after which I had no more fear of their overtaking me than I should have of an army of lobsters doing, unless it were their horsemen, and they dared not do it. [italics in original]

Similar to Martin, Jeremiah Greenman initially enlisted at a young age as a private early in the war. His first major campaign was the disastrous assault on Quebec. Greenman breached the walls of Quebec, but he was trapped inside when the remainder of the Continental Army fled after the death of General Montgomery. His first exposure to combat introduced him to heroism and cowardice. Greenman did not run and the British took him prisoner and he spent the next ten months in captivity.

Ten months of captivity matured Greenman far beyond his eighteen years. He saw numerous men die from sickness, felt despondent, tried to escape, learned how to keep men's hope alive, and learned what to expect from leaders. After a prisoner exchange, Greenman became a First Sergeant within two years. Greenman's promotions suggested ability; past
performance resulted in his promotion to Sergeant for his next enlistment and led to his appointment as First Sergeant. Without evidence of other factors such as patronage, wealth, or social status, the officers in Greenman's unit noticed both the effect he had on the soldiers and his past performance, and promoted him into positions of greater responsibility.  

Greenman's maturity and transformation can be tracked by the content of his entries between September 1775 and March of 1776. Greenman's diary begins by noting the day-to-day activities of a soldier. These types of entries continued for seven months until the third month of captivity. Beginning in March 1776, his entries started to comment on items such as policies, events of greater significance than his immediate surroundings, and behavior of the leaders. Greenman clearly began to think about and see the military situation in a larger context than just its immediate effects on him. He learned what good leaders need to do to take care of men in stressful situations. This knowledge would have been invaluable while serving as justice of the peace in Ohio in 1806.

During his first exposure to combat as a young officer, Ebenezer Denny experienced combat unlike anything he saw during his naval exploits. He noted that the initial sight of battle sickened him. His first time in combat as an officer almost ended in disaster when he came close to passing out from dehydration. Lieutenant Denny survived his first encounter in a skirmish near Williamsburg and took part in the final assault on Yorktown's defenses.

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40 Ibid., 104. The editors, Robert Bray and Paul Bushnell, opine that Greenman owed "his advance through the ranks as much as steadfastness as to anything else." They base this assessment on his being relied upon to take his unit to retrieve the majority of the Rhode Island regiment which mutinied in 1779: "informed me that the bigger part of the Regiment had turn'd out in Muterny / I received orders to march with my men to camp all except 3 which was {to} keep Guad. / I then pushed on for camp as fast as possible ware I arrived about 4 oclock ware I joined my party to sum more Capt. Humphry had. / then marcht in persuit of the Mutiners which had marcht off for Greenwich to take a man from the Guad that was under Sentence of Death for Muterny"

41 Ibid., 15, 22, and 25. S7. Set out this morn very early / came 7 milds (p.15); S9. a pleasant morn but Cule / in the after noon there was orders given for 440 men to be in readiness (p. 22); F 16 to T 29 very Cold indeed / we git sum wheat that is [in] bags below ware we go after wood and burn it wich makith very good Coffe and selling sum of our thing we git sum money & so we have once in a wile sums Caffe (p. 25).

42 Ibid., 26,27,29 and 30.

43 Denny, Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, 7:240. "Here for the first time saw wounded men; Feelings not very agreeable; endeavor to conquer this disposition or weakness; the site sickened me."

44 Ibid., 7:241. "My captain, Montgomery, received a shot in his foot and had hopped back in the rear; Lieutenant Bluer being absent, the charge of the company devolved on me; young and inexperienced, exhausted with hunger and fatigue, had like to have disgraced myself—had eat
The content of the entries in his diary illustrate Denny's transformation from a terrified young man in his first skirmish to a seasoned officer. Denny's real maturity and leadership growth took place when his unit marched to South Carolina, where he spent the next fourteen months outside of Charleston. He impressed the right individuals through his competence. He even made note of dining with General Nathaniel Green. Denny took command of separate units for foraging missions and witnessed the reduction of his Pennsylvania regiment through illness. Denny exercised good leadership skills while serving in a climate inhospitable for Pennsylvania soldiers who lacked adequate supplies. Denny's account made note of his concern for the care and feeding of his men:

Our camp very thin; not more than three relieves of officers and men for the ordinary duties. Hospitals crowded, and great many sick in camp; deaths so frequent, the funeral ceremony dispensed with. Provisions scarce and very indifferent; the beef brought from the back counties of North Carolina, by the time they reach the camp, poor indeed, and must be unwholesome.

This entry correlated closely with the lessons von Steuben wrote in his manual on the officer's responsibility to care for his men in all matters.

Like Martin, Samuel Richards was also present at the battle of Long Island and experienced the fear and confusion of the battlefield similar to Martin's recollections. Richards was a subaltern during the Battle of Long Island. He noted the confusion of the battle and the disregard for the accepted conduct of the laws of war by the British regulars in bayoneting the wounded: "..., yet the scenes of this memorable day was so complicated that enough remains to be told occupy an inquisitive mind. No mention being made of the wounded, it is presumed that they were dispatched by the bayonet. No one unused to such scenes can form any just idea of the confused and mixed scenes of that day." Richards let his family know that unless one experienced combat, it was extremely difficult to convey in words the chaos, complexity, and horror. The experience had a lasting effect on him and his development as a leader.

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45 Ibid., 7:253. "Pennsylvanians have been reduced, by deaths, desertions, &c., and were now incorporated into one regiment of six hundred men."
46 Ibid., 7:251.
47 United States. Continental Army, Regulations, 139.
49 Ibid., 218.
His memoir recounted his development as a soldier and officer accustomed to the rigors of combat. With a certain sangfroid he notes, "One night a ball passed thro' my apartment in the barrack, a few feet over me as I lay in my berth. Such things having become common, we thought little of them." Richards' growing maturity as a leader led him to recognize that there are some things one can control in war and some things one cannot. He let the reader know there is no use worrying over them.

Richards' diary contained an account for his family to demonstrate he was brave in battle, but not foolish. His account mentions the feelings of patriotism and desire to be tested in battle during the siege of Boston in 1775. After participating in numerous campaigns, he displayed the wisdom and maturity of a leader. This is his account of his conduct during one engagement:

The soldier well knows that when the smoke from the muzzle of the vent of the gun is seen in the same line with himself the piece points directly at him. I recollect that, seeing the flash of the discharge of a gun, the smoke from the muzzle and vent being in line with me, I stepped behind a tree while the grape passed, one of which I noticed struck the tree. Those being the only passes through which the enemy could approach directly, and our force so posted was viewed sufficient to defend them, both bodies remained in that position until the night of the 26th.

Richards moved and hid behind a tree when the enemy fired. A less seasoned leader might have been afraid of showing cowardice in front of his men. Richards was sure enough of his conduct, growth, and performance as a leader to record this episode for his family. Creating and remaining in formation was an important part of eighteenth-century tactics. For a leader to break formation could be a serious issue. This is why Richards immediately followed his account of the episode with a sentence to ensure his family knew he did not run and was not a coward. He remained with his unit in position and performed his duty. Richards' diary contained episodes highlighting the author's satisfaction at having performed as befitted an officer after less than a year as an enlisted man. Richards quickly made the transition to the officer ranks and his own recollections record satisfactory service without presenting himself as a hero.

As mentioned earlier, Benjamin Gilbert enlisted as a private and made sergeant during his first four years in the Army. Gilbert did not record his first impressions of combat while an enlisted soldier. This could have been due to the absence of major battles in his unit's area of

50 Ibid., 209.
51 Ibid., 217.
operation. Later as a newly commissioned officer in 1780, two letters written almost ten months apart displayed Gilbert's growth as a leader. The first letter, written to his family after being back in the army only six weeks as a commissioned officer, recorded his frustration with his duties. As a commissioned officer, his leadership responsibilities should have increased. Instead, he found his duties remarkably similar to the ones he left behind as a sergeant. He contemplated resigning and leaving the army:

As soon as I am certain that the remaining Regiments will not be filled with men for the War I shall leave the Army immediately, for I am determined not to be a drill Sergeant always. Ever since I came to camp I have ben up at day-brake disciplining the levies and every afternoon when off duty on the same or Business. As soon as they are learned their times are out we must take new ones that makes us perpetual slaves.s2

Another letter written ten months later extolled the army's success and lauded the soldiers' bravery: "Our army being at that time from Eight to fifteen miles from the field of action, no immediate support could be lent them, but they maintaining their ground with unexampled Bravery, kept the Enemy at such a distance, as gave time for six hundred of Pensilvania line to come to their assistance."s3 This is the same series of skirmishes around Williamsburg in which Denny first tasted combat. Lieutenant Gilbert evidently learned how to motivate and direct his troops in combat, which is a fundamental part of leadership well demonstrated by the soldiers' performance. Gilbert went from a petulant junior officer complaining about his soldiers to a mature leader extolling their bravery to his family.

Forging Leaders

While important, combat experience alone is insufficient to forge a junior leader into one who can transfer hard-earned skills to civilian pursuits. Even though some individuals are born leaders, the vast majority requires instruction to be successful. The United States did not possess a noble class that provided leaders for the newly formed Continental Army. Although initially enamored with the idea of citizen-soldiers formed into militia units, General Washington and congressional leaders eventually understood independence required a professional army to prosecute the war. The British Army used the sons of nobility to populate its junior officer corps.

s2 Gilbert, Winding Down, 25.

s3 Ibid., 46.
and developed sergeants through a process of on-the-job training for ten years.\textsuperscript{54} The Continental Army could not exercise either of these options. It did not have a pool of noble sons nor the time to grow sergeants. A large pool of former professional soldiers also did not exist from which to draw. The army would have to teach junior officers quickly through a combination of training, education, and experience.

Continental Army leaders with previous British Army service knew the shortfalls of the Continental Army. Short terms of service as provincial soldiers during the Seven Years War provided only a rudimentary foundation on which to produce an army's leaders.\textsuperscript{55} The challenge was educating junior leaders fast enough in the face of expiring enlistments, combat losses, and extended maneuvers. Pamphlets and manuals existed for maneuver tactics, siege warfare, or logistics, but leadership development was noticeably absent.\textsuperscript{56} The sons of nobles were expected to have learned the art of command from father figures and other male nobles. Military manuals treated the art of command as a requirement before attempting to master the science of war. Merely studying war in a book proved insufficient to bridge the distance between novice and practitioner. The Continental Army commanders did not bridge the gap until two and half years

\textsuperscript{54} Sylvia R. Frey, \textit{The British Soldier in America: A Social History of Military Life in the Revolutionary Period} (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 23, 97. The average age of the British soldier in the Army when he joined was twenty. The average infantryman had ten years of service. He was part of a group of men who had lived, trained, and campaigned together for years, which in turn created an extremely strong bond of kinship. The men's immediate leaders, the noncommissioned officers, were predominantly promoted from within the ranks after many years of service. Although commissioned officers were responsible for the training of their men, the class-conscious officers found it demeaning and boring, and NCOs conducted the real training.


\textsuperscript{56} Thomas Simes, \textit{The Military Guide for Young Officers}, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: J. Humphrey, R. Bell, and R. Aitken, 1776); Thomas Webb, \textit{A Military Treatise on the Appointments of the Army Containing Many Useful Hints, Not Touched upon before by Any Author: And Proposing Some New Regulations in the Army, Which Will Be Particularly Useful in Carrying on the War in North-America: Together with A Short Treatise on Military Honors} (Philadelphia: Printed by W. Dunlap, 1759); William Young, \textit{The Practice of Manoeuwring a Battalion of Infantry. By William Young, Late Major of Brigade to the Corps of Grenadiers and Highlanders Who Served in Germany, and Now in the Service of Brunswick.} (London: Printed for J. Millan near Whitehall, 1771). The technical aspect of some of the manuals was very informative and practical such as Young's Maneuvers which contained detailed explanations and the use of terrain boards and map exercises that would be familiar to current soldiers. Others such as Simes' \textit{The Military Guide for Young Officers} or Webb's \textit{A Treatise on the Appointments of the Army} contained more theory and maxims supported by examples from antiquity and more recent European campaigns.
later during the winter encampment from 1777-1778 at Valley Forge when Baron von Steuben wrote, disseminated, and personally taught his manual to junior leaders.

It would be hard to over-estimate the importance of von Steuben's manual on the professionalization of the Continental Army. Most regard it as a drill manual that allowed the American soldiers to compete with the British soldiers on the battlefield using similar tactics. In fact, it did accomplish this task as demonstrated at the subsequent Battle of Monmouth in June 1778. More importantly, the manual provided instructions to junior leaders on their responsibilities and duties.\(^5\) In addition to required qualifications, the manual identified the traits and habits of junior leaders at every level.\(^6\) Promotion was not based on social status, popularity, or seniority but on ability and demonstrated proficiency. The junior leader ranks became a meritocracy and broke with provincial or militia traditions.

Learning the manual was the educational portion of junior leader development. The repetition of drill and manual of arms constituted the training portion of the leader's growth. The junior leaders mastered a task and then had to teach new recruits from all areas of the country.

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\(^5\) United States. Continental Army, *Regulations*. Baron von Steuben's manual was not entirely new creation. Several passages were condensed versions of previous published works. Instructions for Captains and Lieutenants can be found in Simes, Thomas. *The Military Guide for Young Officers*. However, duties for noncommissioned officers are missing.

\(^6\) Ibid. United States. Continental Army, *Regulations*. "A captain cannot be too careful of the company the state has committed to his charge. He must pay the greatest attention to the health of his men, their discipline, arms, accoutrements, ammunition, clothes and necessaries. His first object should be, to gain the love of his men, by treating them with every possible kindness and humanity, enquiring into their complaints, and well founded, seeing them redressed. He should know every man of his company by name and character (p. 138)". For Lieutenant, "He should endeavor to gain the love of his men, by attention to everything which may contribute to their health and convenience. He should often visit them at different hours; inspect into their manner of living; see that their provisions are good and well cooked, and as far as possible oblige them to take their meals at regulated hours. He should pay attention to their complaints, and when well founded, endeavor to get them redressed; but discourage them from complaining on every frivolous occasion (p. 141)." First Sergeant, "The soldier having acquired that degree of confidence of his officers as to be appointed first sergeant of the company, Should consider the importance of his office; that the discipline of the company, the conduct of the men, their exactness and obeying orders, and the regularity of their manners, will integrate measure depend on his vigilance. He should be intimately acquainted with the character of every soldier of the company, and should take great pains to impress upon their minds the indispensable necessity of the strictest obedience, as the foundation of order and regularity (p.145)." Sergeants and corporals. " It being on the noncommissioned officers that the discipline and order of a company and a great measure depends, they cannot be too circumspect in their behavior towards the men, by treating them with mildness, and at the same time obliging everyone to do his duty. By avoiding two great familiarity with the men, they will not only gain their love and confidence, but they traded with a proper respect; whereas by a contrary conduct they forfeit all regard, in their authority becomes despised (p. 148)."

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and differing educational levels. Much like a craftsman teaching an apprentice, junior leaders had to instill discipline and a response to commands to ensure survival on and off the battlefield. The junior leaders learned how to use fear, instill respect, disperse praise and administer justice to train and lead their charges. Especially for sergeants, intimidation could only be a short-term leadership tactic. Day-to-day interaction required more than just barking orders. Several different approaches were needed to deal with different situations. Not all sergeants succeeded, but the ones who learned adaptability flourished. Familiarity with human nature in stressful situations would have given these junior leaders an advantage, especially for those individuals who executed the duties of justice of the peace or sheriff, in dealing with civilians in new communities. 59

The memoirs written during and after the war by the chosen individuals demonstrated the importance of von Steuben’s lessons and their effect on their future lives.

Martin was still a private at Valley Forge and was part of the initial training base for the newly trained forces. As Martin recorded, "After I joined my regiment I was kept constantly, when off other duty, engaged in learning the Baron de Steuben’s new Prussian exercise; it was a continual drill." 60 Martin learned his lessons well and made sergeant a couple of years later. 61 Martin achieved fame with historians due to his ability to tell a good story about his experiences, but the highest rank he achieved was sergeant late in the war due to his young age. Martin was only twenty when appointed a sergeant in the Corps of Miners and the war essentially ended within the year.

Although Greenman was only a few years older than Martin when he enlisted, he was also very perceptive observer of human nature. These two facts allowed him to achieve rank faster than Martin. When Greenman received instruction personally from Baron von Steuben on drill

59 Ibid., 142. Junior leaders mastered listening to the soldiers and deciding how to handle problems. Elected officials required the same talents when dealing with constituents. This instruction is directed at lieutenants: “He should pay attention to their complaints, and when well-founded, endeavor to get them redressed; but discourage them from complaining on every frivolous occasion.”

60 Martin, A Narrative, 86.

61 Ibid., 140. "All the officers were required to be acquainted with the sciences, and it was desirable to have as intelligent young men as could be procured to compose it, although some of us fell considerably short of perfection. Agreeable to the arrangement between my former commander and my new captain, I was appointed a sergeant in this corps, which was as high an office I ever obtained in the army; and I had some doubts in my own mind at the time whether I was altogether qualified for that."
and command later in his enlistment, he recognized the importance of what von Steuben wrote. While historians know that Continental Army officers attempted to make up for deficiencies in military science through their book purchases, Greenman’s diary contained entries on the actual reading of military manuals to increase his professional knowledge. Entries in this part of the diary contain more fully formed thoughts, as well as observations on more consequential matters than the weather and hunger. It is clear Greenman improved his literacy skills as he progressed through the ranks. His entries also highlight his growth and maturity as a commander of men.

Denny does not specifically mention any formal education as a soldier, while Gilbert’s letters and diary contain information on his education and training of soldiers. Denny received his commission rather late in the war in August 1780 just in time for Yorktown. He briefly mentions that he received some on-the-job instruction from his company commander as he deployed his soldiers for battle. “My captain (Montgomery) fell behind his company where my place was, talked with me; gives me a lesson useful to me.” This is Denny’s sole mention of any training or instruction in his memoirs. While Denny did not receive instruction from von Steuben, he knew of his impact on the Army. He evidently was familiar with von Steuben’s manual since his preferred duty was as an adjutant, and his observations conformed to the duties and responsibilities of a junior leader.

Richards’ unit wintered in the Highlands and West Point between 1777-1778 and partook in von Steuben’s training later in the year. Richards commanded a select unit of 200 soldiers to receive training from one of von Steuben’s disciples. Richards may have received some on-the-

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62 Greenman, Diary, 134, 139. “April 1779, S4 to T22 ...we exercise the prusan way left of the 64th. intirely..” and “September 1779 S5 ...order’d to see our mens arm cleen to march in the morn to be reviewed by Barron Stuban, a Major Genl. Who hold the rank of inspector Genl. Of the American army / he is prusan / first brought the prusan Exercise into our army”  
63 Ibid., 210. “(June 1781) “F8 Continuing at my quarters / the forepart of the day in reading Military Instruction for officers... S9 Spent the forenoon in reading Military Instruction”  
64 Denny, Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny, 7:237.  
65 Ibid., 7:240.  
66 Ibid., 7:243. “Baron Steuben, our great military oracle.”  
67 Ibid., 7:255. 255 “Exercised often; perform the parade duties in absence of the adjutant – very fond of this.” The manual explained in great detail the responsibilities of the adjutant for drill and ceremonies.  
68 Samuel Richards, “Personal Narrative of an Officer in the Revolutionary War Part II,” United Service; a Quarterly Review of Military and Naval Affairs (1879-1905), September 1884, 277.  
69 Ibid., 279. “Baron Steuben having arrived in the country to introduce into our army the Prussian discipline, a French officer was sent from him on to the Point, and two hundred men
job training from one other well-known individual. He shared quarters with Thaddeus Kosciusko and accompanied him on surveys.70 The only clues to his knowledge of the requirements for his position are the numerous entries that could serve as examples for von Steuben's traits.71 The entries are often inserted with little regard for the flow of the narrative. Even though they were not germane to the story he was telling, they were important enough that he wanted his son to know how he acted in accordance with the expectations of a commissioned officer and did not abuse his position. When he wrote, he also wanted to challenge the prevailing feeling that commissioned officers were trying to create a new aristocracy by their demands for pensions in the aftermath of the war. Richards was a charter member of the Society of Cincinnati and worked faithfully to obtain pensions for soldiers in later years.72

Like Richards, Benjamin Gilbert's regiment spent the winter of 1777-1778 quartered along the Hudson River in New York, and therefore did not partake of von Steuben's drill exercises at Valley Forge.73 His regiment does not seem to have acquired the new manuals until late spring 1778.74 Gilbert was quite a bit older than Martin and Greenman, but much more immature at the time. At the age of twenty four, his diary contains numerous entries such as, “Got back to camp Just before sunrise and meeting again at 8 ocClock we kept up a Drinking all Day.”75 Most mentions of other sergeants contain references to drinking grog with them. His first term of service expired January 17, 1780.76 While Gilbert left the Army as a sergeant, his diary contains numerous references to fraternizing with officers to include his company commander, Captain

were selected to pass through the exercises as a model, of which I had the command, and two days in the week we used to go through the exercises, with maneuvering and firing.”

70 Ibid., 278.
71 Richards, “Personal Narrative Part I,” 210. “Readers of History generally seem to be looking for descriptions of bloody battles and counting the number of killed and wounded, but the real philanthropist must experience a higher gratification in contemplating a series of firm, prudent, and judicious arrangements tending to effect a great object without one of those sanguinary conflicts which so strongly interest the feelings of most readers.” The previous entry exemplifies the importance von Steuben placed on accomplishing the routine duties on page 142 of his manual. Richards entry on helping a wounded comrade served as an example for von Steuben’s admonition to care for the wounded on page 139: “The attachment that arises from this kind of attention to the sick and the wounded, is almost inconceivable; it will moreover be the means of preserving the lives of many valuable men.”
73 Benjamin Gilbert, Gilbert Diary, 46.
74 Ibid., 32. (June, 1778) “the 8th ‘Our Regt. learnt the New exercise.”
75 Ibid., 59.
76 Ibid., 63.
Daniel Shays.\(^7\) While his diary entries do not leave the reader with the impression of diligence, he evidently impressed his officers, which is why he was able to obtain a commission as an officer later in the year on February 21, 1780.\(^8\) Gilbert’s sole reference to self-improvement came when he noted borrowing a book on geography from a fellow officer.\(^9\) Map reading and terrain appreciation were indispensable skills for a commissioned officer. Gilbert evidently recognized his deficiency and undertook to correct it.

Demonstrating abilities to manage people, administer justice, form bonds, and understand the larger reality of the United States made veteran junior leaders attractive candidates for local elected office and public trust. The men in this study recorded events confirming their proficiency at these tasks. Even if they understood the importance of these skills before joining the army, continued service in the army made them extremely competent.

Continued service in the Continental Army is the important variable, which sets these men apart from their comrades in the militia. The Continental Army soldiers gained wisdom during the long periods in the field, before and after the battle, when the militias and short-term enlistees were absent. Citizen-soldiers in the militia generally fought for much shorter periods, near home, and with neighbors and kinfolk. Although combat in any form affects an individual, substantive leadership changes take place over longer periods than possible in a battle or maneuvers. The Continental Army soldiers experienced long-term exposure to discipline, deprivation, and poverty, sustained in a unique environment where the transformation occurred.\(^8\)\(^0\) The diaries of our soldiers provide ample evidence of this hard-earned and practiced wisdom.

Successful leaders learn how to lead people and manage resources, and Continental Army soldiers were no exception. Soldiers recognized good and bad leadership and noted it in their diaries and letters.\(^8\) Martin was an especially prolific writer on good and bad leadership examples

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\(^7\) This is the same Shays of Shays Rebellion in 1786.  
\(^8\) Benjamin Gilbert, *Gilbert Diary*, 65.  
\(^9\) Ibid., 66.  
\(^8\) Samuel Bixby, *Sergeant Samuel Bixby Diary* (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, n.d.), 295. "Col. David Brewer was tried by a Court Martial, for giving his son, 16 years of age, a commission, and drawing the pay for him for the month of August, while the inexperienced lad was at home in his own service. Also, for sending two soldiers belonging to his Regiment to work on his farm! The Court ordered the said David Brewer to be dismissed the service. Amen to that."
he observed. Whether the steadfast commander in combat, the selfish lieutenants who looked after their own needs before their own soldiers', the drunken officers along the line of march, or in any other episodes, Martin was sure to portray them in terms the average citizen could understand. He also included an assessment of his own conduct to show he had learned how a good leader acted. One of the more profound examples Martin recorded toward the end of his first enlistment involved an aide de camp who made a rash judgment without gathering all the facts. Martin knew what the appropriate actions should have been, and he implied the aide de camp should have known as well. Martin recorded for his readers the importance he placed on protecting his fellow soldiers, and by extension, his neighbors when he was in public service.

A sergeant was accused by an aide-de-camp of deserting his post when he was in fact carrying out the orders of his superior officer to procure additional ammunition in the midst of the battle. The aide-de-camp drew his sword and ordered the sergeant back to his unit. The sergeant then cocked and pointed his musket at the officer and told him he was going to follow his officer's orders. The sergeant was subdued and sentenced for execution. When he was brought before the troops for execution, a last minute stay was issued. The planned execution had not been well received by the Connecticut troops. As Martin recorded, "But the Sergeant was reprieved, and I believe it was well that he was, for his blood would have not been the only blood

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82 Martin, A Narrative, 92,107. "The officer who commanded the platoon that I belonged to was a captain, belonging to the Rhode Island troops, and a fine brave man he was; he feared nobody nor nothing. When we were paraded, 'Now,' he said to us, 'you have been wishing for some days past to come up with the British, you have been wanting to fight. Now you shall have fighting enough before the night.' The men did not need much haranguing to raise their courage, for when the officers came to order the sick and lame to stay behind as guards, they were forced to exercise their authority to the full extent before they could make even the invalid stay behind, and when some of their arms were about to be exchanged with those who were going into the field, they would not part with them. 'If their arms went,' they said, 'they would go with them at all events (p. 92)." "Some of the other officers who had not dipped their bills quite so deep parted them, at the same time representing to them the ridiculous situation they stood in, fighting like blackguards in sight of the soldiers (p. 107)."

83 Ibid., 142. "However, I was a Sergeant, and I think I did use my best abilities to perform the duties of the office according to my best knowledge and judgment. Indeed, I can say at this late hour of my life, that my conscious never did, and I trust never will, accuse me of any failure in my duty to my country, but, on the contrary, I always fulfilled my engagements to her, however she failed in for fulfilling hers with me." Through another diary entry in 1781, Martin provided an excellent manifestation of learning the lessons of leadership and having been transformed by service. Martin, now a Sergeant in the Corps of Miners, was on furlough for an extended period in West Point, New York. When he returned to camp, he found out that his unit and soldiers had been ordered south to participate in the siege of Yorktown. Although given permission to remain behind, Martin felt a sense of obligation to his men as a noncommissioned officer.

84 Ibid., 34.
that would have been spilt...[But], as I said before, it was well that it ended as it did, both on account of the honor of the soldiers and the safety of some others...."85 This was an extreme example of how bad leadership almost precipitated mutinous conduct. While rash acts are easily identified, neglect can be just as insidious.

Greenman identified poor officer leadership during his first captivity. Greenman also learned how soldiers perceived leaders' and officers' behaviors. As he and his fellow soldiers were enduring deplorable conditions in captivity, he made the following entry: "we hear that our officer have thair Liberty of ye town &cfort."86 Greenman made note when the British officers and officials visited the captive Continental Army soldiers, and even recorded the gist of the conversations. Very few visits by Continental Army officers are recorded in his diary during his captivity. This entry of the officers' visit was Greenman's way of voicing frustration at the seeming lack of concern of the American officers for the well-being of the enlisted soldiers. As Greenman was bonding with his fellow captives, he internalized the idea that loyalty works both ways in the chain of command, as his diary entry suggested. Leaders expect soldiers to be loyal to them, but soldiers also expect leaders to be loyal in return.87 This is what Baron von Steuben's instructions to Lieutenants meant to convey. This type of loyalty would have been important in a civilian post of trust as well.

While Gilbert may not have been an exemplary sergeant off duty, he knew what was expected of leaders on the march. While his unit maneuvered for battle, noncommissioned and commissioned officers were reduced for failing to obey orders against pillaging the local population. "Serjt. Peck of Capt Bensons Compy got Reduced to Ranks for Going into an orchard after apples. Adjt Trotter and Lieut Cooper had their Swords Taken from them for Gettin into a Turnip yard after Turnips."88 Bad leadership decisions resulted in the administration of military justice. Given the practices of eighteenth-century warfare, reductions in rank and lashes were not uncommon.

85 Ibid., 35.
86 Greenman, Diary, 30.
87 Ibid., 214. In 1781, when 1st Lieutenant Greenman was captive again, he did not forget his men even though he was given more freedom as an officer. “T21. This day went to Graves End Neck / picked a few cucumber, from a friends field and sent to the prisoners in the Sugar house [cipher]”
88 Benjamin Gilbert, Gilbert Diary, 37.
Junior leaders constantly administered or witnessed military justice. Diaries are replete with punishments meted out to soldiers of all ranks. Some authors have misread the prevalence of punishments dealt out by courts-martial as evidence of the arbitrariness of officers in abusing the enlisted force, when in fact, junior leaders understood the need for a formal system of justice to prevent even worse forms of soldier (in)justice and anarchy. Martin witnessed many acts of military justice, but never noted his own application of any punishment.

Greenman, Denny, Richards, and Gilbert all recorded their participation in the military justice system. Their entries indicated necessity, but no great love, for the duty. After Greenman’s promotion to commissioned officer, his diary became filled with notes referencing duty on courts-martial panels. Up until the end of the war, he administered military justice on a regular basis, but not all charges resulted in punishment for the accused soldiers. Denny’s notes on military justice are very sparse with his only extended comments being on the insurrection by disaffected soldiers and officers in Philadelphia after the war. Richards recounted having the unpleasant duty of executing a traitor who had orders to enlist disaffected Continental Army soldiers in the loyalist cause:

The order being positive, I could do no other than execute it, however unpleasant and mournful. I forwarded a serjeant with a small party to the place of execution to make the necessary preparation, and on the 9th of June superintended his execution in presence of a large concourse of spectators, among which were his own family. After hanging the hour, the body was taken down, and a request was made from his family that the body

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89 Neimeyer, *America Goes to War*, 131, 136, and 140. "The kinds and degrees of resistance practiced by the soldiers were connected to the kinds and degrees of repression and violence they suffered at the hands of their officers (p. 136)." Some historians have questioned the discipline aspect of leadership in the Continental Army by noting the mutinies that occurred at various periods during the war, numerous courts martial, and the high rates of desertion. Although any army hoped to avoid mutinies, crimes punishable by courts martial, and the unauthorized absence of soldiers, a reexamination of the unique circumstances of the Continental Army revealed the impact of junior leader development on these issues. What Neimeyer failed to understand about the Continental Army mutinies was that they were extraordinarily disciplined affairs. The soldiers did not turn into pillaging mobs, desert in mass, or go over to the British.

90 Greenman, *Diary*, 248. "This day set on Court Martial / Tryed Sergt. Crandal for disobedience of Orders & a Soldier for forging Major olneys Name / both acquitted"

91 Denny, *Military Journal of Major Ebenezer Denny*, 7:257. "A few days brought General Howe from headquarters with a brigade of light troops, for purpose of suppressing the insurrection. Most of the officers who were here previous to our arrival were arrested, and a few taken in close custody. General court martial ordered for their trial. Government were desirous of getting rid of the army in as quiet a manner as possible; at this particular period it was thought best not to be too rigid. Howe had his cue; officers released."
might be delivered to them, which of course was readily granted.\textsuperscript{92}

Gilbert's diary, analogous to Greenman's, contains numerous military justice actions and punishments, along with the crimes.\textsuperscript{93} In addition to recording their adherence to military discipline, the soldiers noted their acts of compassion and ability to form bonds with fellow soldiers, and even the civilians they interacted with, on a daily basis.\textsuperscript{94}

Martin sums up his ability to form bonds by relating his first meeting with his new soldiers once he was promoted to sergeant: "I had of course to form new acquaintances, but I was not long in doing that; I had a pretty free use of my tongue and was sometimes apt to use it when there was no occasion for it. However, I soon found myself at home with them."\textsuperscript{95} Martin saw his fellow soldiers as more than just workmates. He saw them as brothers.\textsuperscript{96} They looked after one another, as Martin recorded in the following episode: "I told him he should not die there nor anywhere else that day, if I could help it; and at length with more persuasion and some force I succeeded in getting him upon his feet again and to moving on."\textsuperscript{97} Richards records a similar episode in his memoirs. "I left him recovering, my heart glowing with the reflection that I had been the instrument of saving a fellow man from immediate death."\textsuperscript{98} Much like Martin, Richards referred to his comrades in arms as family.\textsuperscript{99} Greenman wrote several entries, which tracked the formation of bonds between men during periods of stress, and the resulting power of those bonds.

\textsuperscript{92} Richards, "Personal Narrative Part II," 272.
\textsuperscript{93} Benjamin Gilbert, \textit{Gilbert Diary}, 35. "Roger Alger of Capt. Shays Compy was whipt 50 Lashes for Stealing" and "This Morning one Smith formally Belonging to Colo. Greatons Regt was Shot to Death for Desertion and Inlisting several times."
\textsuperscript{94} Martin, \textit{A Narrative}, 83. Martin spent the majority of his time at Valley Forge as a member of foraging party obtaining supplies from reluctant farmers in the winter of 1777-1778. "But I will give them the credit of never receiving the least abuse or injury from an individual during the whole time I was employed in this business. I doubt whether the people of New England would have borne it as patiently, their 'steady habits' to the contrary notwithstanding."
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 141.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 203. "We had lived together as a family of brothers for several years (setting aside some little family squabbles, like most other families); had shared with each other the hardships, dangers, and sufferings incident to a soldiers life; had sympathize with each other in trouble and sickness; had assisted in bearing each other's burdens or strive to make them lighter by council and advice; had endeavored to conceal each other's faults and make them appear in as good a light as they would bear. In short, the soldiery, each in his particular circle of acquaintance, was as strict a band of brotherhood as Masons, and I believe, as faithful to each other."
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{98} Richards, "Personal Narrative Part I," 221.
\textsuperscript{99} Richards, "Personal Narrative Part II," 278.
to lift their spirits.\textsuperscript{100} As the editor of Gilbert's diary notes, "He was clearly a gregarious individual. Whether with his regiment or at home in Brookfield, he was constantly visiting neighbors or military comrades. He frequently mentions playing ball or "checors" and obviously raised many convivial glasses. When on leave, he seemed to spend as much time at friends' homes as with his family."\textsuperscript{101} Gilbert served with men he knew from civilian life and this accounted for the lax discipline regarding fraternization within the Massachusetts regiment. Still, the shared sacrifices strengthened the bonds of the men and allowed Gilbert to hone his inter-personal skills for use in civilian pursuits after the war. While the bonds between soldiers reinforced their desire to fight for one another, they still acknowledged their part in a larger organization and purpose.

\textbf{Understanding the Bigger Picture}

Although the soldiers recognized that their regiments were recruited from individual states, they identified with an American army and fighting for the country of America or the United States. The soldiers quoted above are representative of the travels that the Continental Army soldier undertook during the War. Joseph Plumb Martin and Benjamin Gilbert campaigned from Massachusetts to Virginia. Jeremiah Greenman fought from Quebec to Virginia. Ebenezer Denny marched from Pennsylvania to South Carolina. They traveled a large portion of the United States. If they were parochial or local in the outlook before their tours, service in the Continental Army forced them to see a larger entity.

Some scholars have downplayed the patriotic motivations or the sense of purpose of the Continental Army soldier in the years after 1775.\textsuperscript{102} They question whether the soldier had any concept of the United States or the country of America. The written words of the diaries kept

\textsuperscript{100} Greenman, \textit{Diary}, 28. Greenman records an event that made an impression on him. At the beginning of the week, he was very despondent. At the end of the week, the British allowed the prisoners to get some exercise and play a team sport. "Keep our Selves ha[r]ty in playin ball in ye yard." The team sports and further bonding with his fellow prisoners improved his outlook. The next week he wrote "these [days] very Contented hoping we shall go home in a little wile." Even though it was another three months before Greenman was paroled, he recorded lessons on the importance of forming bonds. Without formal training or an instruction manual, Greenman observed and recorded information on the forming and maintaining of a brotherhood as well as learning how to do it.
\textsuperscript{101} Benjamin Gilbert, \textit{Gilbert Diary}, 18.
\textsuperscript{102} Sellers, "Military History of the American Revolution," 165. In 1974, John Sellers stated that he did not think that Privates fought with a true understanding of independence. He doubted the patriotic fervor of the Privates.
during the war prove that the junior leaders knew they were fighting for the United States and not simply a paycheck. The two best indications of this understanding come from the accounts that underwent the least amount of postwar editing. While Martin, Denny, and Richards may have had similar thoughts at the time, their accounts were composed years after victory had been won. Greenman's and Gilbert's entries provide contemporary accounts that exhibit soldiers awareness that they were in service to the United States.

Patriotic fervor may not have been the sole or primary motivator for soldiers enlisting; however, once they had served in the Continental Army for a year or more, their diary entries reflect an understanding of the political idea of the United States or America. Individuals serving in the Continental Army realized they were part of a larger community because of their service. Levon Powell understood that he was part of an American army on November 7, 1777 when he wrote his wife, “The affair the day before yesterday that not only does great honor to the American arms but will in my opinion be of infinite importance and its consequence.”

Jeremiah Greenman understood that he was part of the United States in May 1777 when he noted that “order for all our arms to be carried to town to have them stamped US.” He further recorded on April 21, 1778 when commenting “The town fired 13 rounds of Canon hearing that the French and Spaniards had declared us independent.” Greenman is even more explicit on July 4, 1781: “this day all the officers that are present on the Island assembled, to commamorate the 4th July it being the anniversary of Independency and drank the 13 following 1st. United State of America maybe ever be independent & Suvering [sovereign].” Near the end of the war on July 4, 1783, Greenman records some final toasts: “2nd The United States & their congress,...10th May the characture of America never be sullied by Ingratitude to her delivers...”

Benjamin Gilbert saw the larger community after four years in the Continental Army when he wrote his family, “the providential transe of circumstances which leat to it affords the

103 Leven Powell, “Leven Powell Papers” (Special Collections Research Center, Swem Library, College of William and Mary, n.d.), November 7, 1777, Special Collections Research Center, Swem Library, College of William and Mary.
104 Ibid., 115.
105 Ibid., 212.
106 Ibid., 266.
most convincing proof that the liberties of America is the object of divine protection.”108 He referred to the liberties of America rather to his state or himself. He was not above taking swipes at other states, though. While campaigning in Virginia before the Battle of Yorktown, he wrote to a friend, “The country appears to be devoted to their services, and it is as hard a matter to find a sincere friend to his country in this part of the state as it is to find a Tory in the state of Massachusetts Bay.”109 Gilbert clearly imagined himself as part of a larger country and disparaged those individuals in states who did not support America. His private comments notwithstanding, his and the others’ ability to manage sectional and local differences benefited these leaders when they moved to new settings.

Within newly forming communities, the recently arrived soldiers possessed neither fame, social status, wealth, nor established connections in their new neighborhoods. It is doubtful that service alone in the Continental Army would have provided a significant advantage to any candidate for local positions of responsibility. Continental Army Soldiers were not venerated nationwide until 1818.110 Numerous studies have shown that soldiers did not get wealthy from their service in the war. They may have had bounty money or a land grant, but little else. They entered an emerging social situation formed with people from numerous backgrounds who were trying to establish communities where they could survive and possibly prosper. Fortunately for the noncommissioned officers and junior commissioned officers, this was familiar territory based on their military experience. Army service may not have made them better farmers or merchants, but it did equip them with the skills necessary to form groups and survive under the rule of law.

Historiographical Contribution

Previous scholars made judgments on the postwar success of Continental Army soldiers primarily using the pension applications filed from 1818 to 1832. The justifications for public assistance listed on the pensions are not the final word on whether the soldiers were successful after the war. The lack of monetary means or land holdings was not unusual for individuals who

109 Ibid., 41.
110 Resch, *Suffering Soldiers*, 1,4. “The country greeted them with indifference; it quickly forgot them.” and “By 1818, however, the nation embraced a new view of the Revolutionary War.”
lived into their old age.\textsuperscript{111} The need to provide dowries for daughters or inheritances for sons often depleted any monetary gains and divided farms into smaller parcels. Continental Army soldiers who first applied for pensions in 1818 would have been in their early sixties, which was past the prime for farm labor or other manual tasks. It is not surprising that they would have not been still working farms or engaging in heavy labor. Their material possessions would have been limited. Tools of the trade as well as farm implements and livestock would have been passed down to children or sold to the next generation.\textsuperscript{112} It is important to note that the claim was based on their contemporary economic well-being. What they had done in the previous 40 to 50 years was not a factor in determining awarding of a pension. This is the gap in analysis that previous historians have missed when arguing that military service in the Continental Army disadvantaged men in their postwar lives.

Some historians have pointed to the fact that soldiers moved from their hometowns soon after demobilization as evidence of the lack of economic prospects for former soldiers. This may have been true of all single men in their home towns, regardless of whether they served in the Army or not. It was certainly true in New England before the war.\textsuperscript{113} Other historians such as John Resch have highlighted the lack of economic and social mobility of returning veterans to established communities such as Peterborough, New Hampshire, as evidence of the deleterious effect of Continental Army service on men. The key fact in Resch's analysis is the men were from all sections of a society with established social strata already in place. Men returned to a closed society that hindered upward movement. A few close kin networks controlled social and economic opportunity in Peterborough.\textsuperscript{114} The assessments from Resch's study are not universally applicable to all Continental Army veterans. Unfortunately, his work, referenced in most histories of the war published since 1999, was the last major work on soldiers after the war.

As fine a work as Resch's study is, it misses the more interesting story of what happened

\textsuperscript{111} Robert A. Gross, \textit{The Minutemen and Their World}, 1st ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 107. "Members of the older generation had no answers. They had their own anxieties. They were failing as parents: failing to pass on their property and status to the next generation, failing to direct their children to their proper roles in life...What would happen to them when they were old and in need of help?"

\textsuperscript{112} Resch, \textit{Suffering Soldiers}, 164. Description of retirement contracts.

\textsuperscript{113} Gross, \textit{The Minutemen and Their World}, 87–89.

\textsuperscript{114} Resch, \textit{Suffering Soldiers}, 16. "By 1775 many Peterborough families orbited around two large kin networks."
to Continental Army soldiers who did not return to their previous occupations in their hometowns after the war. Historians have noted that many demobilized soldiers moved west into newly available lands in the years after the Treaty of Paris in 1783. Unfortunately, historians have concluded that the soldiers met with further ostracization and economic failure based on their pension applications. However, the evidence suggests that the soldiers put to use the skills in leadership learned in the Continental Army to obtain positions of trust in their new communities. This was especially true of non-commissioned officers and junior officers who obtained their rank in the army through merit.

**Postwar Contributions**

As a former sergeant, Joseph Plumb Martin put his army skills to work over the next fifty years in Maine. As a biography sketch noted in 1876: “In securing an act of incorporation for his adopted town, in reducing the place to system and order as a civil community, he bore a prominent part. He held various stations of trust, being repeatedly selectmen, representative to the state legislature, and for over a quarter of a century town clerk.” These positions of trust hardly seem like the mark of a failure. Martin moved from his birthplace, where he evidently had little chance of prosperity, to an unsettled area of the future state of Maine, and made his mark.

Greenman experienced financial disappointment when he returned to his hometown and attempted to make a living as a shopkeeper. When shop keeping did not provide an adequate living, he entered the merchant marine where he made a number of voyages. He eventually got his master’s certificate and began to captain vessels. Greenman also kept up a steady barrage of letters to friends and acquaintances to secure employment in a federal position or a commission in the new Army. Neither of these two courses of action came to fruition, so in 1806, he moved to Ohio to take advantage of his bounty land and become a farmer. The land he settled on was not ideal for raising crops, but he established himself in the community. Within six years, he was repeatedly elected the township justice of the peace.\(^{116}\) While Greenman was a landowner, he clearly was not a wealthy farmer. His skills, developed and honed in the army, convinced his new


neighbors that he could be trusted with a position of authority.

Of the five individuals examined in this paper, Ebenezer Denny had the greatest success after the war in employing his skills learned while in service. Denny continued in the Army and served in several campaigns in the Northwest Territory. He eventually made Major. His post-military career was just as successful. Denny settled in the area around Fort Pitt. Neighbors elected him a county commissioner and to the state legislature in 1797. In 1804, business associates appointed him director of the Bank of Pennsylvania, which later became a branch of the Bank of the United States. When the Pennsylvania legislature incorporated Pittsburgh in 1816, Denny was elected the first mayor. His military service and skills contributed to earning all these positions of trust. Denny is another example of a Revolutionary War soldier who was not broken by service, but actually thrived because of it.

Samuel Richards’ story after the war differs from the others in one critical detail. Because he obtained a federal position, Postmaster General of Farmington, Connecticut, he did not have to move to provide for his family. His long military service in the Connecticut regiment from the beginning to the end of the war did allow him to develop a network of friends and supporters. He honed his ability to manage men and developed a patronage network, which assisted his efforts to garner a plum federal job. However, his efforts were not entirely self-serving. In his community, he served as a deacon for his local church for a number of years and lent his talents to assisting soldiers to receive pensions. As a deacon in his local congregation, his fellow worshipers thought he exhibited all the qualities listed in the Bible’s 1 Timothy 3:1-13. Richards clearly had their trust and he maintained trust with his fellow soldiers as shown by his work with their pensions. Richards was successful in his postwar career in his birth community due to a federal job, but he still put his army-developed skills to use in his community.

Benjamin Gilbert’s postwar life almost matches the success of Denny’s accomplishments. Gilbert moved to an undeveloped portion of New York near Otsego Lake. He helped form Montgomery County in 1791, was appointed sheriff in 1792, and served in the position for ten of the next eleven years. Elected positions include supervisor from 1803-1809 and 1812-1816. Other

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18 Ibid., 7:234.
duties included justice of the peace, surveyor, and town clerk. Gilbert's diary indicated a very social man who liked the company of others, male and female. He was also a Mason and helped found the Otsego Lodge in Cooperstown. While these qualities and connections certainly helped his rise, the experience and skills learned during extended service in the Continental Army proved the critical element. Familiarity with the application of justice and experience as a quartermaster and supplies would have proved invaluable in the chartering of a new town and the management of resources and people. The Continental Army prepared Gilbert well for his civilian pursuits after demobilization.

Conclusion

The review of postwar life completes the examination of the five subjects. The soldiers' unpresuming origins before enlistment identified none destined or marked for greatness. In fact, any potential at all for the individuals to advance into leadership positions would have been doubtful. Their memoirs reveal men changed by their time in the Army. Entries describing their first times in combat disclosed scared men who learned to face their fears and deal with uncertain situations. This ability proved beneficial to those embarking on journeys to new towns and establishing law and order. They received training in the army that went beyond on-the-job observation. Through personal training by von Steuben or his disciples and a clearly written manual, they learned the tenets of being a good leader. As they continued through their careers, they made note of episodes that proved their competence. These hard won skills furnished the ability and confidence to shoulder positions of trust. Enough evidence exists to argue military service and training equipped Continental Army junior leaders with skills critical to their postwar success when they moved to new communities as the nation expanded.

More was needed than solely learning how to march, fire a musket, and follow orders, which would have been familiar to soldiers of any army of the time. Due to unique circumstances, the United States had to form a cadre of junior leaders to man its professional units. Through a combination of long-term service, von Steuben's manual and training program, and merit-based promotions, the Continental Army created a competent corps of sergeants, lieutenants, and

\[119 \text{Benjamin Gilbert, } Gilbert \text{ Diary, } 16-17.\]
captains. While militarily competent and tactically proficient in drill and maneuver, these junior leaders also left the army with skills they could transfer to civilian pursuits. Their diaries and letters show they understood the changes they had undergone while fighting in the war. When matched against the tenets written in von Steuben's manual, there emerged a remarkable correlation. The writers believed they had met the standards of what von Steuben's manual required of junior leaders and they wanted to record their success. The tone of the memoirs composed after the war clearly attributed their postwar success to lessons learned during service. Individual editors of the diaries used in this study noted their subjects' postwar success and the impact of service. What has been missing from the histories is a study of a sizable portion of the former veteran junior leaders as they moved to new communities during the early Republic's expansion. Over half of the demobilized veterans moved from their birth locations or places of enlistment. A substantial number moved west into the newly forming states. The sources used in this paper show that these individuals had much in common. Further research is possible on those individuals who did not bequeath fully formed memoirs or completed diaries to historians. Sources of biographical data such as the Daughters of the American Revolution and the pension applications provide excellent repositories to identify other junior leaders and reconstruct their postwar lives. The period after the Revolutionary War saw one of the greatest expansions of the nation. Eleven states were settled, organized, and admitted into the union by 1821.\textsuperscript{120} Between 1783 and 1821 would have been the prime years for junior leaders to contribute to their communities. The former soldiers may not have been financially successful in their later years, but their contributions to the growth of the United States may have been overlooked. This study clearly demonstrates that further work is needed to illuminate the junior leaders' continued service to their country.

\textsuperscript{120} Eleven additional states were admitted into the union by 1821 after the original 13 ratified the US Constitution in 1787. (Vermont, Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio, Louisiana, Indiana, Mississippi, Illinois, Alabama, Maine, and Missouri.) It would be fifteen years until the next state, Arkansas, entered the union in 1836.