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THE AMERICAN SOLDIER 1763 - 1783

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Abstract

MILITIAMEN TO REGULARS: THE TRAINING OF  
THE AMERICAN SOLDIER 1763 - 1783

Edwin M. Perry

The militiaman of 1775 evolved into the regular soldier of 1783 because Americans changed their perception as to what constituted military preparedness. Political pamphlets and religious sermons had readied the colonists emotionally and intellectually to take up arms against the British. But their militia's training which stressed musket drill was inadequate and prepared them only for battle. During 1776 and 1777 Washington attempted to correct the soldiers' deficiencies and used his General Orders to train the Continental Army for war. After 1778 Washington was assisted by Steuben, who as the army's Inspector General stressed uniformity in drill and maneuver, as well as emphasizing the maintenance of equipment. Steuben's and Washington's efforts transformed the soldiers of the Continental Army into competent professionals who were able to engage successfully their European counterparts in battle while sustaining themselves in a war.

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## Introduction

How did the American soldier prepare for war during the period of the American Revolution, 1763 - 1783? This topic has not been fully explored by historians, for when describing the Revolution, they have either given little space to the common soldier or uniformly neglected the details of his training.<sup>1</sup> No one, except Robert A. Gross in The Minutemen and Their World, has examined how the colonists prepared for war prior to 1775.<sup>2</sup> Gross, however, dwells almost exclusively on why men fought and ignores how and why they developed their battlefield skills. General histories of the war, such as Willard M. Wallace's Appeal to Arms, often leave the reader with the impression that no training occurred until the Baron Frederick William von Steuben arrived in 1778.<sup>3</sup> More specialized studies of the American soldier, such as Charles Knowles Bolton The Private Soldier Under Washington and Charles Royster A Revolutionary People at War, also fail to explore the evolution of training. Bolton's topical analysis of the soldier's life in the Continental Army only superficially describes how training changed, and Royster is preoccupied with ideology.<sup>4</sup>

In this thesis, I attempted to follow the development

of the soldier's preparation for war from the beginnings of the revolutionary movement until the disbandment of the army in 1783. I have used diaries, drill manuals, unit orders, sermons, and legislative acts to explore what the colonists considered important in preparing soldiers for war. I wanted to discover what motivated the soldier to fight, how he trained, and what was the source of his military knowledge. I also asked whether his preparation changed over time and whether personalities like Steuben really created something new.

However, this thesis does not fully explore the preparation of all American military forces during the revolutionary period. I have limited my study to only those soldiers who were most critical to the struggle at a particular time. Therefore prior to 1776 the militia's preparation was my primary concern. Then in 1776 the Continental Army, especially that portion of the army under Washington, is my focus. I also ignored the training of all but the infantry, for they were the most numerous and important category of soldier during the American  
5  
Revolution.

## Notes

1. The most recent study of the Continental Army, Robert K. Wright, Jr. The Continental Army (1983), also ignores the details of the soldiers' training. Wright's book examines the evolution of the Continental Army as an institution.
2. Robert A. Gross, The Minutemen and Their World (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976). Gross explores how the people of the town of Concord Massachusetts become involved in the revolutionary struggle and how that struggle changes the town.
3. Willard M. Wallace, Appeal to Arms: A Military History of the American Revolution (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951). Wallace narrates the battles without looking at how training may have caused them to have been fought as they were. His chapter on Steuben is entitled, "Valley Forge and the New American Army." Was the army entirely new or was it another stage in the development of the old?
4. Charles Knowles Bolton, The Private Soldier Under Washington (Port Washington New York: Kennikat Press, 1964) Bolton examines one facet of the soldier's life in each chapter of his book. Charles Royster, A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and the American Character, 1775 - 1783 (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1979). Royster does not really examine training with any detail except to look at how it affects the attitudes of the soldier and their relationship with the civilian population.
5. Infantry was the dominant arm of the American military. Prior to 1776 only Connecticut had developed a cavalry of any size. During the war, a Continental cavalry was not created until December 1776 and even then it consisted of only one regiment compared to 88 infantry battalions. Artillery and engineers were separate corps and Washington left their training to the discretion of their commanders.



## CHAPTER 1

### Pamphlets and Sermons

When members of Parliament voted and King George approved the Boston Port Act in March 1774, they believed that the colonies could not resist their efforts because the colonial militias, which were the Americans' only defense, were seriously deficient in the military arts and the people generally nonsupportive of military ventures. They had formed these views during the Seven Years' War, and recent reports had confirmed that the Americans still lacked military preparedness. All too soon the British would discover that they were mistaken, that at least in one sense the colonial militiamen had received excellent preparation for the coming struggle. How could this be so? How had the colonists prepared themselves to take up arms against King and Parliament? How had the militiamen learned about their political rights, their obligations to protect those rights, and their responsibilities as servants of the people? In short, how was it that they were ready in 1775 to answer a call to arms?

#### The Militia Before 1763

When the first colonists arrived in America, they

required all male citizens to act as soldiers. The colonists were forced to adopt this policy because they were too poor and too short of manpower to permit some men to function only as soldiers. Using the English militia system as a model, the settlers initially created informal arrangements among themselves to defend their communities. Slowly, these informal arrangements were enacted into laws. Virginia first codified its citizens' militia duties when its legislature ordered in 1619 a general military obligation for all its male citizens. Massachusetts soon followed when its General Court, in 1631, decreed that all males between sixteen and sixty must provide themselves with a weapon and form units for training. By the early eighteenth century, all the colonies except Quaker Pennsylvania had formally established a militia force in which most men between sixteen and sixty were required to serve.

Disparities in the proficiency of individual soldiers varied with time and place according to the anxiety of the settlers. The early colonists lived in constant fear of an Indian, French or Spanish attack and therefore drilled frequently to maintain military proficiency. However, as the threat of attack decreased, militia training received less emphasis and training days were reduced. The variations in the training days of the Massachusetts militia

illustrate this point. In 1632, the Plymouth General Court, concerned about possible Indian attacks, required weekly training; but in 1638, when the colonists felt more secure, the General Court reduced the number of training days to only eight per year. In 1675 during the King Philip's War, when the colonists again felt threatened, the General Court again mandated weekly training. Virginia, followed a similar pattern. Here the legislature had required weekly drill in 1632 during the First Tidewater War, but by 1674, it had decreased mandatory training days to just three days<sup>2</sup> per year.

The distribution and density of colonial population also influenced the effectiveness of militias and the quality of the training which the militiamen received. In the New England colonies, where religious practices and the system of agriculture promoted the development of towns, the militia developed and maintained itself as a competent fighting force. In the South, however, the great distances between plantations made the militia system less effective, especially as the threat to the coastal plantations diminished. Also, as the population of the colonies increased, the need for all men to serve in the militia diminished. In some areas the militia responded to this population growth by slowly evolving into a social club in which military preparedness played but a secondary role. In

other areas, especially New England, two categories of militiamen developed. Volunteers formed the first and most capable pool of soldiers and were normally designated as the alarm list. These volunteers promised to be the first to respond to any call to arms and were normally better trained than the remainder of the militia. The balance of the able bodied men formed the "common militia," which in theory, existed as a trained manpower pool to fill any shortages in the "volunteer militia" and as a potential source of soldiers for any required draft. Certain groups of the volunteer militia, especially artillery volunteers, slowly took on an elite status in their colonies.<sup>3</sup>

Even when the militiamen were well trained, they fought most effectively when close to home. The militias' local orientation posed no significant problems for colonial defense until the outbreak of the Seven Years' War. This war, fought primarily along the approaches to the Ohio River Valley and in Canada, seemed remote and distant to many colonial settlers.<sup>4</sup> Some provincial governments failed to support the war. Many of these felt the French threat should be met by British troops and "such voluntary help as each colony was disposed to give when its own territory was threatened."<sup>5</sup> Such a limited outlook was displayed by the upper house of Maryland's legislative assembly when in 1755 it disapproved an act by the lower house which would have

provided supplies for "his Majesty's service." The upper house called the act inflationary and instead called for "his Majesty's troops" to fight against those who encroached on "his Majesty's Territories."<sup>6</sup>

Even, where the threat was near, provincial governors and legislatures, could not fully mobilize their populations to support the war. Militiamen in Maryland refused to march to the frontiers, while in Virginia and Massachusetts, the legislatures could not find enough volunteers to fill their quotas for provincial regiments. However, none of these legislatures wanted to resort to a militia draft. Instead, they sought to fill their ranks through economic enticements.<sup>7</sup>

The British government, however, was not able to wait for the colonies' attempts to mobilize their populations, especially after three stunning setbacks in 1755 -- the defeat of two regiments near Pittsburgh, the death of General Edward Braddock, and the loss of Fort Oswego. Therefore, in 1756, King George II decided to commit British regiments in mass to support the war effort. By 1759, over 30,000 British soldiers, in 32 regiments, were fighting the war in North America.<sup>8</sup>

British officers developed contempt for the American soldier during the Seven Years' War and their attitude was

not unwarranted. Colonial governments, unable and unwilling to use a militia draft, obtained volunteers for service through large bounties or promises of debt relief. Some provincial governments went as far as impressing migrant workers or "strollers." Such recruiting methods often filled the ranks with the least desirable elements of the colonial population.

American volunteers often joined the campaign poorly prepared for war. Many of the soldiers were ignorant of complex maneuvers and therefore useless to the British on the battlefield. But even in camp, the militiamen were wanting in the skills necessary for survival. Never trained for extended campaigns, they knew little about camp sanitation and hygiene, and the provincial camps became, as one British officer related, "nastier than anything I could conceive." The American troops' training deficiencies prompted the British to increasingly use them, during the war, as manual laborers. This diminished role aggravated morale problems within the provincial volunteers, increased problems of discipline, and added to the lack of British respect for the American soldier.

As a result in part of the poor performance of the American soldier while on campaign, the colonial governments' unwillingness to support the war effort, and internal politics in Britain, the government of Great

Britain decided, in 1763, to leave several British infantry regiments in the American colonies. The ministry in Britain justified this decision during debates at home and in the colonies by the presence of 80,000 French descendants in Canada, the need to continue to be secure against a surprise Indian or French attack, and the need for a police force against unfair fur traders and squatters on Indian lands. Their decision formed the foundations upon which later American grievances against the British government would be built.

#### Militia Preparedness 1763 - 1774

The stationing of British soldiers in America allowed the colonial governments to forego any serious examination or restructuring of their militias at the end of the Seven Years' War. New Jersey, the most blatant of the offenders, used its militia act of 1746 without change through 1775. Every few years, the New Jersey representatives passed a continuing resolution which maintained the law and its required two days per year of training. Most other colonial legislatures also believed that the number of annual training days required by their militia laws, written during the Seven Years' Wars, insured their forces could satisfactorily respond to any military emergencies after the war's end.

Island truly modified their colonies' militia laws. In these three cases, however, the legislatures decreased the number of training days from three or four to just two per year.<sup>13</sup>

The militia, now a second line of defense, began to decline in military proficiency as it had after most other wars. Even the failures of the British Army during Pontiac's Rebellion could not spur to action the colonial legislatures.<sup>14</sup> The decline soon became visible. Pelatiah Webster, present at the celebration of King George's birthday in Charleston, South Carolina on 4 June 1765, noticed that the local militia "were not so well trained and exercised, but made a pretty good and handsome appearance."<sup>15</sup> External forces occasionally aggravated the legislature's lack of concern. In 1765, the court of King George III, hoping to stimulate additional colonization of North Carolina, told the royal governor to be less demanding towards the militia. The instructions Governor William Tyron received told him "to take especial care, that neither the frequency nor unreasonableness of remote marches, musters or training be an unnecessary impediment to the affairs of the inhabitants."<sup>16</sup>

Some crown officials in the colonies were leery of revitalizing the militias especially after the riots which accompanied the Stamp Act Crisis of 1765 and 1766. During



this period many governors were unsure of militia loyalties. Georgia's Governor Sir James Wright reported to the Lords of Trade in February 1766, that he believed that he could rely on perhaps ten militiamen in Savannah, while John Wentworth, Governor of New Hampshire, expressed similar concerns when he stated that "the militia are the very people on the other side of the question." Where British soldiers were present, some officials demanded their assistance.<sup>17</sup>

Ultimately, the Stamp Act riots and the accompanying fear of the militias' reliability hastened the redeployment of the British forces from the continental interior to the major port cities.<sup>18</sup> British officials could then rely on "regulars" to provide local defense. The redeployment also allowed government officials to become suspicious of and ignore local agitation for the revitalize the militia. Massachusetts' Lieutenant-Governor Thomas Hutchinson reported such actions in May 1770 to the Earl of Hillsborough. He explained his decision to ignore "applications . . . to put the militia upon a more respectable footing" was based on the presence, in Boston, of pamphlets which told the people that they must prepare "to defend themselves and their rights not by arguments but by arms."<sup>19</sup>

Even when musters were conducted, the colonial militia

often ignored the drill period and turned the day into a social event. Timothy Pickering described and condemned this behavior in two articles he wrote in 1769 for the Essex Gazette.<sup>20</sup> Pickering, a future quartermaster general of the Continental Army, narrated a typical training day of a Essex County, Massachusetts, militia company. Training activities began late because men or officers were absent. Once training commenced around eleven o'clock, the morning was dedicated to calling the roll and marching to the drill field; and "if any officer of the company had learnt the words of command for the manual exercise," musket drill was conducted once or twice. Then the unit broke for lunch, during which "wine and punch went round." Around three-thirty the unit reformed and repeated the morning routine. The company was dismissed by five.

This pattern would be followed, Pickering claimed, for two of the three remaining annual drill days. Once each year, however, the militia unit would break routine and fire "at marks" in the morning and conduct a mock battle in the afternoon. Pickering claimed such abuses were not restricted to only the Essex County militia, but were typical of most New England forces. He hoped that by making these charges other citizens would become aware of their own militia's weaknesses and work to promote discipline and proficiency within the militia.

The New England clergy were, like Pickering, voicing their desires for a militia skilled in the art of war and vocally lamented the militia's lack of training. As early as 1763 they were warning their listeners that now was the wrong time to "beat our Swords into Plowshares, and our spears into Pruning Hooks, and lay aside our military Weapons as useless . . . ." They believed that America's enemies were ever restless and therefore military skill must not be lost.<sup>22</sup> The ministers stressed that the martial spirit should be cultivated and claimed that a nation which cast off its military skills was prepared for destruction. Did not the Israelite kings David and Jehoshaphat consider military preparedness the first defense of the people's prosperity? The clergy emphasized, however, the militia's preparation should be defensive only. God would sanction only a defensive war. Should the colonists seek conquest or revenge they would not be supported by God and should expect to be defeated.<sup>23</sup>

Provincial governors were aware of their militias' ineffectiveness. Responding to queries from the British government in November 1770, William Bull, the Governor of South Carolina, claimed that even though his militia now numbered "about ten thousand men," they were "divided into ten regiments unequal in numbers, but equal in want of discipline."<sup>24</sup> New York's governor, John Murray, the Fourth

Earl of Dunmore, provided Lord Hillsborough, Secretary of State to the Colonies, a similar appraisal of his colony's militia. He reported that as of December 1770, "having been for several years past without exercising [, the New York militia] would be of little use in their present state . . .  
<sup>25</sup>  
 ."

In some colonies the governors and the citizen attempted to remedy their militia's deficiencies. Governor John Wentworth of New Hampshire proposed in January 1771 that the legislature appoint a special committee to revise the militia law. He was concerned that "the present appearances of impending war leaves us no time to loose [lose] in making effectual preparations to the defense and safety of the province . . . ."<sup>26</sup> The legislature responded to the request, but only renewed the provisions of the Militia Act of 1759.<sup>27</sup> In April 1771, the citizens of Charleston, South Carolina, used a jury to demand that militia officers in their state obey the law and muster<sup>28</sup> their units as frequently as the law required. Even in New York, Governor William Tryon found support in 1772 when he attempted with some success to reinvigorate the New York militia by forming volunteer militia companies which were commanded by "some Gentlemen of the first families" of New York City.<sup>29</sup>

Militia forces appeared to be proficient and active

only in areas where threat of Indian attack remained strong. In one such area, Frederick County, Virginia, the inhabitants could boast in 1772, that their militia consisted of nearly 2,200 armed men who were ready to repel any invasion. A small number of full-time rangers and patrollers supported the militia and patrolled the frontier for early warnings of any Indian attack.<sup>30</sup> Governor Tyron also claimed that the militia in northern New York was well prepared. He informed Lord Hillsborough in August 1772 that he was pleased with the quality of the three militia regiments around Fort Herkimer which consisted "of fourteen hundred effective men."<sup>31</sup> But, as in Virginia, the people of this area also feared Indian raids.

#### Intellectual and Emotional Preparation for War

Yet in spite of the lack of training in "the military arts," the colonial soldier did undergo intensive preparation for war from 1763 through 1774. During this period, the militiaman was conditioned emotionally and intellectually for the approaching war with Britain. This component of a soldier's training requires examination because, in many respects, psychological or moral training is more important than technical training. It is, as Carl von Clausewitz said, "the precious metal, the real weapon, the finely honed blade"<sup>32</sup> for it animates a person to

action. During the pre-war period, this psychological training occurred and was critical to all future events of the revolution. Without it, the soldier might never have responded as enthusiastically as he did to the call to arms in late 1774.

Though Parliament's creation of a standing army in North America fueled the American Revolution, its decision to tax the colonies to support that force began the political debates that ignited the revolution. Before the passage of the Stamp Act, in 1765, the colonists had not been forced to consider seriously the constitutional issues of representation, taxation, or sovereignty. However, with this British effort to tax the colonies, the colonists slowly perceived that their rights as British citizens were being violated. Subsequent actions by Parliament and the Crown to enforce British authority fueled growing colonial concern that all their rights and privileges were to be ignored.

The contending parties during the colonial debates used newspapers, almanacs, pamphlets, and sermons to educate and motivate the colonists for action. Of these, political pamphlets and sermons played a most important role -- political pamphlets because in them "the best thought of the day expressed itself," and sermons because religious ideology carried "the ranks of militia and citizens" to

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war. This mixture of politics and religion also combined  
the two dominant ways by which the colonists interpreted  
34  
events.

In his book The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, Bernard Bailyn has examined the intellectual preparation of the colonists for the revolution. Bailyn argues that the American revolution, was a political, constitutional, and ideological struggle in which pamphlets were an "expression of the ideas, attitudes and motivations that lay at the heart of the Revolution . . . ." 35 Their authors combined selectively elements of classical literature, Enlightenment rationalism, British common law traditions, New England Puritanism, and the literature of the British radical Whigs to sustain what they defined as the origins and extent of American political rights. Through these political tracts the colonists slowly developed a new view of the world and a understanding of their special role in it.

In these pamphlets the colonists in general, and the soldiers in particular, learned that corruption threatened liberty in England and that soon selfish men would attempt to steal liberty away from the people in America. The authors warned their readers that they must be prepared to fight to preserve their liberties, because the American colonies provided liberty its last refuge. The pamphleteers

also explained how selfish men in England and North America would attempt to corrupt the colonists, to subvert their constitutions, and to enslave them for their own gain. If corruption failed, then a standing army would be used to suppress the people.

The colonists feared this conspiracy to subvert their liberty. They interpreted British efforts to regulate and tax the colonies as signs that this conspiracy was being implemented. Their paranoia helps explain why many, especially the secure, prominent colonists, came to oppose and eventually rebel against British efforts to regulate and tax the colonies.

In addition to the pamphlets, sermons also played an important role in developing within the colonists a willingness to take up arms when called on by Congress in September 1774. Religion influenced the peoples' actions most strongly in New England where the Puritan heritage was still vibrant. However, as the revolution approached religious themes became entwined in the political rhetoric and to some extent all colonists were influenced. <sup>36</sup> The sermons presented to the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Boston, preached annually before the company's election of officers, reveal the lessons the New England clergy attempted to impart to the militia volunteer. The sermons to these soldiers intertwined practical, religious



and political themes throughout the period being  
discussed.<sup>37</sup> Published after the elections, other ministers  
outside Boston likely employed the themes of the election  
sermons when they too preached before their local militia.<sup>38</sup>

The ministers did not rush their soldiers into  
rebellion. Rather they responded slowly to the increasing  
evidence of a British conspiracy against their liberties.  
They wanted the militia to respect and obey their princes  
and governors and to react to their demands.<sup>39</sup> Many clergy  
understood that the colonies had benefited from their  
relationship with Britain, especially from British efforts  
during the last war. This appreciation of past cooperation  
allowed the Reverend Jonas Clarke, in 1768, to compare King  
George III to the biblical King Jehoshaphat who the  
colonists recognized as a great leader of the Israelites and  
a defender of the peoples' security. Even in 1771, Eli  
Forbes could still dedicate his sermon to Thomas Hutchinson.  
Hutchinson, the royal governor of Massachusetts, had been  
politically unpopular as early as the 1740's and by 1774  
would be the symbol of British tyranny.<sup>40</sup> So tentative were  
some clergy that, even after the war had begun, Abiel  
Leonard would compose a prayer for the colonial soldier in  
which he hoped "that the Britons and Americans may again  
rejoice in the King as minister of God to both for good."<sup>41</sup>

Even so, by 1773 the clergy were warning their

militiamen that France and Spain were no longer the the greatest threat. Americans could no longer be "sure that Great Britain would always both be able and willing to protect us in our liberty . . . ." <sup>42</sup> The people of England had become corrupted and their leaders now sought to enslave America. The clergy became markedly more political in their sermons before military audiences. They now attempted to explain to the militia the origins of each man's natural rights and how certain groups of men were threatening to deny those rights. The clergy told their military congregations "that we may and ought, to resist, and even make war against those rulers who leaped the bounds prescribed to them by the constitution, and attempt to oppress and enslave the[ir] subjects." Britain had forfeited its rights to rule the colonies and the clergy told the soldiers in 1774, the colonists now had two choices -- to be virtuous and oppose British tyranny or to become a petty nation and live as slaves. <sup>43</sup> However, the clergy warned if the colonists defended their liberty the British might not respond to gentle methods and the soldiers might have to go to war. Their efforts would be necessary because 'men are also bound, individuals and society to take care of temporal happiness, and to do all they lawfully can, to promote it." <sup>44</sup>

The clergy also explained to the militia the peoples'

rights and liberties and the soldiers' role in defending those rights and liberties. They told the soldier that each person was allowed the privileges of life, liberty, and property and that "every creature is invested with a power, in some degree, to secure that happiness . . . ." To protect these rights, they explained that men had formed societies. The clergy warned their listeners that attempts would be made to threaten these rights for they were "opposed by an appetite for power which blinds the individual to passion and suppresses liberty." To defend against these threats, the clergy warned the soldier he must must be prepared for a defensive war.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to the political education of the soldier, the clergy defined the ideal colonial soldier and expressed their desire that the militia achieve that ideal. Reverend Samuel Stillman prepared in 1770 perhaps the most comprehensive discourse on this subject. Stillman selected eight essential qualities of a good soldier which applied "both to him who commands, and those who obey." Five traits he applied to any soldiers in any army. He expected all soldiers to possess loyalty, fortitude, and a knowledge of the art of war; while he also believed that soldiers should act with secrecy and dispatch and be able to endure hardships. The other qualities Stillman selected, however, highlighted important concerns of the colonists. Stillman

wanted his soldier always to be subordinate to the civil powers, because "without such subordination, neither the state nor the militia could ever be in a reputable circumstance." He also expected the American soldier to act without cruelty, believing "the men of the sword are to defend, not to destroy their fellow-subjects; to secure, not to waste their property." Lastly, he wanted his soldier to be religious and "seek the direction of heaven when about to engage in war."<sup>46</sup> These traits would be echoed frequently by General George Washington in his General Orders during the coming war.

Stillman's desires that American soldiers be skillful, christian, and subject to civil control were not uncommon in these prewar years. As early as 1763, the Reverend Thomas A.M. Balch had told his military audience how "skillful and brave Soldiers are ever the Beauty and Glory, and under God, the Safety and defense of a People."<sup>47</sup> Reverend Eli Forbes and Nathaniel Robbins echoed similar sentiments when they spoke in 1771 and 1772. Forbes desired "that the state should be able on every emergency to send into the field an army of well disciplined troops, men of valour, expert in war, . . . under the directions of the laws, [of] the civil powers at home . . ."; while Robbins challenged the soldiers to "excel in soldiership," to "be Jerusalem's friend," and work only "for the welfare of God's people, with whom you

are partakers in the civil and religious privileges truly  
honourable . . . ."<sup>48</sup>

Some clergy were concerned that their image of a  
soldier might be difficult to achieve. They recognized that  
the "military is not an original character" and must be  
learned.<sup>49</sup> They also worried that the colonies "considering  
the infancy of the country; the vast demand of labourers in  
the arts of agriculture and trade," would be unable to  
develop soldiers with the necessary military skills to  
defend the country.<sup>50</sup> Other ministers, however, saw this  
deficiency as an asset. They believed that Americans could  
master the military arts; and the drill necessary to achieve  
this proficiency would have an added advantage -- it would  
lead to virtue. Nathaniel Robbins expressed this opinion  
when he told his listeners that "military exercise: it  
inspires the mind with such just, honorable and exalted  
notions and dispositions; It so much tends to banish a  
littleness and meanness, and fill men with greatness of  
spirit . . . ."<sup>51</sup>

Ultimately, however, all the clergy wanted their  
soldiers to possess virtue. They lectured their military  
audiences that the wicked and godless soldiers would retreat  
in battle, but righteous soldiers "under a sense of moral  
obligation, and in hope of a reward after this life is  
ended, in every department of duty, will be bold as a

lion."<sup>52</sup> To maintain this virtue, the clergy told the soldiers they had to be religious. This virtue would enable them to exhibit true fortitude and withstand the attack of a skilled but godless enemy. Religious virtue would provide the soldiers' leaders wisdom, which the clergy announced was "better than weapons in war."<sup>53</sup> Also important, a devout army would insure God would not desert the colonies in their time of need.<sup>54</sup>

#### Results of the Preparations

The colonists were brought to action by what they perceived as British attempts to deny them their liberties. The scope of the resistance increased slowly as more and more people of the colonies were influenced by the messages which the pamphlets and sermons presented. Early colonial resistance was aimed at restricting British trade through non-importation agreements. Through such actions the people hoped British merchants would help to end Parliament's taxation of the colonies. However, these measures which appeared successful initially, ultimately proved unsuccessful as Parliament refused to renounce its authority to regulate and tax the colonies.<sup>55</sup>

British reaction to the Boston Tea Party led to the culmination of the emotional and intellectual preparation of the soldier prior to the resumption of active military

training by the colonists. The passage of the Boston Port Act and its approval by King George III in March 1774 convinced most revolutionary leaders and ordinary citizens that some form of united effort was required to fend off British oppression. The passage of the additional "Intolerable Acts" in May and June 1774 gave greater impetus to their actions. In June, colonies began to select members to the Continental Congress which was to meet in Philadelphia in September; while in towns and counties groups of citizens gathered and planned their reaction to British oppression.

One group, from Suffolk County, Massachusetts, carried the reaction against Great Britain farther than any other group had previously. On September 9, 1774, the Suffolk County delegates approved the "Suffolk Resolves" which included as one of its provisions a call for all qualified citizens to "use their utmost diligence to acquaint themselves with the art of war as soon as possible, and do, for that purpose, appear under arms at least once every week." <sup>56</sup> Paul Revere carried the resolves to the Continental Congress the next week, and on September 18, 1774, the Congress "recommended to their brethren, a perseverance in the same firm and temperate conduct as expressed in . . . the meeting of the delegates for the county of Suffolk . . .

<sup>57</sup>  
."

The colonists had decided to prepare once again for war. Political pamphlets and religious sermons had readied them to oppose the King and Parliament. Aware that their militiamen had lost military skill, the colonists called on their soldiers to return to the drillfield. To what extent the militiamen's emotional commitment to the struggle translated into action and how they acquired a knowledge of the military art will be examined next.



## Notes

1. Russel F. Weigley, A History of the United States Army (New York: Macmillan Company, 1967), 4 - 8; Pennsylvania's first militia law, "An Act for Forming and Regulating the Militia", was not passed until March 29, 1757. Prior to that date Pennsylvania authorities did allow voluntary associations for defense. See Samuel Hazard, ed. Pennsylvania Archives (Philadelphia: Joseph Severns & Company, 1853), vol. 3, 120 - 136, and "An Act for the Better Ordering and Regulating Such as are Willing and Desirous to be United for Military Purposes Within This Province", October 13, 1756, Pennsylvania (Colony) Laws and Statutes, 1756.
2. Weigley, A History of the United States Army, 6 - 7; John Shy, "A New Look at the Colonial Militia" in A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 24; Philip Alexander Bruce, Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), 63 - 67.
3. Shy, A People Numerous and Armed, 25 - 31; and Weigley, A History of the United States Army, 8.
4. Weigley, A History of the United States Army, pg 11.
5. J. Hall Pleasant, ed., Archives of Maryland LII-Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly of Maryland, 1755 - 1756 (Baltimore: The Lord Baltimore Press, 1935), vol. 52, viii.
6. Ibid., 70.
7. Certificate of militia CPT Peregrine Brown in Willian Hand Browne, ed, Archives of Maryland - Proceedings of the Council of Maryland August 10, 1753 - March 20, 1761 - Letters to Governor Horatio Sharpe, 1754 - 1765, vol. 31, 283; Letter, General Jeffrey Amherst to William Byrd III, dated 11 May 1761 discusses Virginia's inability to meet its 1000 man quota. In Marion Tingling, ed., The Correspondence of the Three William Byrds of Westover, Virginia, 1684 - 1776 (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1977), vol. II; Shy, A People Numerous and Armed, 30 - 31.
8. John Shy, Toward Lexington: The Role of the British

Army in the Coming of the American Revolution (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 35.

9. Shy, A People Numerous and Armed, 30 - 33; and note 27, page 265.

10. Shy, Toward Lexington, 45 - 46, 52 -58, 82. King George III also desired to retain a larger standing army than Parliament would authorize for defense of Great Britain itself. The colonial requirements allowed him to keep regiments active, though at reduced strength, which he might have been forced to disband if they were returned to England.

11. "An Act for the Better Settling and Regulating the Militia of this Colony of New Jersey, for the Repelling of Invasions, and Suppressing Insurrections and Rebellions, served New Jersey from its passage on May 8, 1746 through 1775. The act was renewed in 1747, 1752, 1753, 1756, 1757, 1766, 1767, 1769. See Acts of the General Assembly of the Province of New Jersey from 1701 - 1776 (Burlington, New Jersey: Isaac Collins, 1776) 139, 171, 189, 197, 210, 214, 281, 296, 339.

12. Georgia required at the end of the Seven Years' War 6 company training days per year and maintained that requirement during the following period of peace. New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Delaware, Pennsylvania and Virginia required 4 training days per year at the end of the war and maintained this requirement through 1775. North Carolina in 1763 had required 3 training days per year, however decreased them to 2 in 1765, but in 1773 again required 3.

13. "An Act for Appointing a Militia", January 1764, in A Collection of all the Acts of the Assembly of the Providence of North Carolina Now in Force and Use (Newbern, North Carolina: James Davis, 1765), 309 - 315; "An Act in Alteration of an Act entitled an Act for Forming and Regulating the Militia and for Encouraging Military Skills for the Better Defense of this Colony", May 1764, in Charles J. Hoadly, ed., The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, from May, 1762, to October, 1767 (Hartford: The Case Lockwood, and Brainard Co., 1831), 248; "Militia Act", 1767 in Acts and Laws of the English Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantation, in New England in America (Newport: Samuel Hall, 1767), 179 - 189.

14. Shy, Toward Lexington, 136. None of the colonial legislatures were willing to raise their quota of militiamen for the 1764 campaign to suppress the Indian rebellion.

15. Entry, dated June 4, 1765 in "Pelatiah Webster's Journal of a Visit to Charleston, 1765" in H. Roy Merrens, ed., The Colonial South Carolina Scene: Contemporary Views, 1697 - 1774 (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1977), 222.

16. Letter, dated December 24, 1765, "Instructions to William Tryon from the Court", in William S. Powell, ed., The Correspondence of William Tryon and Other Selected Papers, 1758 - 1767 (Raleigh, North Carolina: Division of Archives and History, 1980), vol. I, 204.

17. Edmund S. and Helen Morgan, The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution (New York: Collier Books, 1978), 253 - 254.

18. Shy, A People Numerous and Armed, 259 n59.

19. Letter, Lieutenant-Governor Thomas Hutchinson to Earl of Hillsborough, dated 18 May, 1770, K.G. Davies, ed., Documents of the American Revolution 1770 - 1783 (Colonial Office Series) (Shannon, Ireland: Irish University Press, 1972), vol. II, 96.

20. Quoted in part by Octavius Pickering, The Life of Timothy Pickering (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1867), vol. 1, 16 - 18.

21. Ibid.

22. Thomas A.M. Balch, A Sermon Preached to the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company at Boston, June 6, 1763 (Boston: Eades & Gill, 1763), 34.

23. Jonas Clarke, The Importance of Military Skill Measured for Defence and a Martial Spirit, in a Time of Peace: A Sermon Preached to the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company in Boston, New England, June 6, 1768 (Boston: Kneeland and Adams, 1768), 7 - 9, 24; and Nathaniel Robbins, Jerusalem's Peace Wished: A Sermon Preached to the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company in Boston, New England June 1, 1772 (Boston: John Boyles, 1772), 4.

24. Letter, Governor Bull to Secretary of State, dated November 30, 1770 in Merrens, The Colonial Carolina Scene, 261.

25. Letter, Earl of Dunmore to Earl of Hillsborough, New York, December 6, 1770, in E. B. O'Callaghan, ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York; Procured in Holland, England, and France by John Romeyn Brohead (Albany, New York: Weed, Parsons and Company,

1857), vol. 8, 259.

26. Letter, Governor John Wentworth to the Assembly, January 1, 1771, in Nathaniel Boutons, ed., Documents and Records Relating to the Province of New Hampshire (Concord, New Hampshire: G.E. Jenks, 1867 - 1873), vol. VII, 267. Governor Wentworth, in 1771, characterized his province as "being in the perfectest tranquility and obedience to law . . ." he probably thought that his colony might escape the revolutionary whirlwind and therefore saw no reason to fear increasing his militia's preparedness. See letter dated September 23, 1771, Governor John Wentworth to Earl of Hillsborough, Davies, ed., Documents of the American Revolution, vol. III, 194.

27. The militia laws published in a collection of the current law's of New Hampshire in 1761 and 1771 are the same. "An Act for the Regulating of the Militia" passed in 1759 served as the base act. Acts can be found in the 1761 and 1771 printings of Acts and Laws of His Majesty's Province of New Hampshire in New England with Sundry Acts of Parliament by Daniel Fowle.

28. W. Roy Smith, South Carolina as a Royal Province 1719 - 1776 (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1903), 181 - 182. Author cites "Public Records, Ms. XXXV, 88 - 89.

29. Willard W. Wallace, Appeal to Arms: A Military History of the American Revolution (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), 3. Tryon appears to have attempted to counteract popular sentiments by forming a volunteer militia companies officered by loyalists. See letter dated January 1773, Governor Tryon to Earl of Dartmouth, O'Callaghan, ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, vol. VIII, 343.

30. Freeman H. Hart, The Valley of Virginia in the American Revolution, 1763 - 1789 (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1942), 77.

31. Tone of the letter hints at Tryons satisfaction with the quality of the militia. See letter, dated 31 August, 1772, Governor William Tryon to Earl of Hillsborough, Davies, ed., Documents of the American Revolution, Vol. V, 179. Fort Herkimer was in Northern New York's Mohawk River Valley.

32. Karl Von Clausewitz, On War, Michael Howard and Peter Paret, ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 184 - 185.

33. Philip Davidson, Propoganda and The American

Revolution (Chapel Hill, 1941) 209 - 210 quoted in Bernard Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1982), 3; Perry Miller "Religion as Revolutionary Ideology", in John R. Howe, Jr., ed The Role of Ideology in the American Revolution (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 39.

34. Charles Royster, A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775 - 1783 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979), 18.

35. Bailyn, Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, 8.

36. Miller, "Religion as Ideology", 35 - 37.

37. The Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company was an elite volunteer militia unit in Boston, Massachusetts.

38. Miller, "Religion as Revolutionary Ideology", 36. Miller claims religious tracks published in Boston normally circulated down the coast influencing other preachers.

39. Balch, A Sermon Preached in 1763, 26.

40. Eli Forbes, The Dignity and Importance of the Military Character Illustrated, A Sermon Preached to the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company in Boston, New England, June 3, 1771 (Boston: Richard Draper, 1771), i; Morgan, The Stamp Act Crisis, 266 - 269.

41. Abiel Leonard, A Prayer, Composed For the Benefit of the Soldiery, In the American Army, to assist them in the Private Devotions (Cambridge: S & E Hall, 1775), 7.

42. Simeon Howard, A Sermon Preached to the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company, in Boston, New England, June 4, 1773 (Boston: John Boyles, 1773), 39.

43. John Lathrop, A Sermon Preached to the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company, in Boston, New England, June 6, 1774 (Boston: Kneeland and Davis, 1774), 23 - 28.

44. Howard, A Sermon Preached in 1773, 12 - 13, 32.

45. Daniel Shute, A Sermon Preached to the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company, in Boston, New England, June 1, 1767 (Boston: Eades and Gill, 1767), 19, 25, 14, 21.

46. Samuel Stillman, A Sermon Preached to the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company, in Boston, New England, June 4th, 1770 (Boston: Eades and Gill, 1770).

47. Balch, A Sermon Preached in 1763, 35.

48. Forbes, The Dignity and Importance of the Military Character Illustrated, ii; and Robbins, Jerusalem's Peace Wished, 20 - 22.

49. Forbes, The Dignity and Imporance of the Military Character, 13.

50. Ibid., ii.

51. Robbins, Jerusalem's Wished, 14.

52. Shute, A Sermon Preached in 1767, 33.

53. Ibid., 5.

54. The development of this concept of virtue was important to the American Revolution. The term "virtue" was used to describe serveral traits which the Americans desired. Specifically, virtue included restraint and sacrifice. This meant a person would give up private advantage for the community's good. Royster, A Revolutionary People at War, 23.

55. Morgan, The Stamp Act, 356 - 361.

56. Worthington C. Ford, ed., The Journals of the Continental Congress vol. I, 35note 39, 40.

57. Ibid., 39.

## CHAPTER 2

### By the Book

After the Continental Congress had approved the Suffolk Resolves, the colonists responded quickly to its call for military preparations. From New Hampshire to Georgia militiamen returned to the drill field with an intensity that had been unknown in recent times. One observer commented that "there is such a spirit prevailing here such as I have never saw before. I remember the conquest of Louisburg, in 1745; . . . but I remember nothing like what I've seen in the past six months." <sup>1</sup> The colonists' confidence in themselves fueled their intensity. They knew that they had the support of their God and with his support they would triumph over their British oppressors. Their leaders believed that the militiamen could master the essentials of the military art quickly. But would their preparations for the coming war be effective? How would their assumptions about their struggle with Britain and their understanding of what constituted military training affect their preparations for war?

#### The Response to the Call

The New England colonies submitted most rapidly to the

provisions of the Suffolk Resolves. On September 18, the inhabitants of Concord, Massachusetts, decided in a town meeting to revitalize their common and volunteer militia. However, now the townspeople would call their volunteers by a new name, minutemen. Like their predecessors, the minutemen promised that during their ten-month enlistment they would hone their military skills through frequent training and would respond immediately to any military emergency.<sup>2</sup> During November 1774 the members of the town of Acton, Massachusetts, decided to improve the military readiness of their common militia while also establishing a group of minutemen.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile in New Hampshire, Governor Wentworth claimed in a letter to the Earl of Dartmouth that his province, which he had described as "being in the perfectest tranquility and obedience to law" in 1771, now<sup>4</sup> was acting in "submission to the Resolves of Congress."

Outside the New England colonies, other locally elected bodies also responded to the call for increased military training. In Delaware, "pursuant to an intimation given by the said Continental Congress" the New-Castle County Committee of Correspondence voted on December 5, 1774, to establish a militia force of white freemen who ranged in age from 16 to 50. The committee designated January 17, 1775, as the date when those eligible should meet to form companies and to train and "make themselves masters of the military



exercise." Maryland's revolutionary assembly, claiming that only a "well regulated militia will contribute to the preservation of American liberty," also ordered its free male population to organize into companies of 50 to 75 men in December 1774. On the same day that the Delaware militia were assembling, George Washington, as chairman of the Fairfax County Committee of Correspondence, led his Virginia county to a similar decision to prepare its militia companies for a possible war.<sup>5</sup>

Soon British officials and colonists alike noticed the increasing military preparedness of the militias. In September 1774 the British Brigadier General Hugh Earl Percy acknowledged that the militias of Massachusetts were approaching their training days seriously, and he commented in a letter to his father in London that when trained the American militiamen "did not make a despicable appearance as soldiers."<sup>6</sup> Another British officer echoed Percy's sentiments in a letter written home in December 1774. He informed his friend that the colonists were "preparing for war with the greatest alacrity."<sup>7</sup> In South Carolina Governor Bull also perceived that increased preparations were being undertaken by the militias of his province. In a report he sent to the colonial secretary of state early in 1775, he worried that the militia companies were meeting frequently in anticipation of possible service.<sup>8</sup> Even the ordinary

citizen discerned the renewed emphasis that the training of the colonial militias was receiving. One such gentlemen in Massachusetts informed his London associates that "the neighboring colonies of New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Connecticut are arming and training themselves with great spirit."<sup>9</sup>

All aspects of the colonies' mobilization were not progressing smoothly, however. A major obstacle was translating the colonists' enthusiasm for liberty into militia enlistments. In Concord, the eligible inhabitants responded slowly to the community's September call for volunteers and by January 1775 the town's quota of 100 minutemen was not yet filled. The reluctant volunteers claimed that the promised wage of one shilling four pence each training day was well below the normal wage of two shillings paid to the common laborer. They would like to serve but could not afford to. The town leaders would not give in to these wage demands and threatened a draft to fill<sup>10</sup> the ranks.

A shortage of weapons with which to arm the growing militia companies and powder and ball ammunition required to train them also slowed military preparations. Without these materials teaching the manual exercise was impossible. The colonists attempted to purchase these supplies; but when legal avenues were blocked, the colonists stole muskets,

powder, lead balls, and even cannon from the British arsenals. Nevertheless, critical shortages of powder and ball plagued the colonists, and in the months before the war's first battle, training in some areas had to be<sup>11</sup> curtailed.

A lack of skilled trainers also affected the quality of the militias' preparations for combat. Many of the experienced senior militia commanders, men who had fought during the Seven Years' War and who held their positions through royal appointment, refused to oppose the King and Parliament during the debates of 1774. When the Committees of Correspondence and other local bodies reorganized the militia companies, they barred many of these officers from their former positions. Instead, the new militia companies elected their officers and often selected men who were more in touch with the revolutionary ideology than skilled in the military arts. The militia forces lost experience which was not easily regained; but the militiamen's belief in their<sup>12</sup> ultimate success was not diminished.

#### Colonial Assumptions about War

The colonists believed that they would be victorious and maintain their liberties. They understood that they were fighting for God and his cause. Pamphleteers and preachers had developed these themes in the prerevolutionary

years and had convinced the colonists that God had selected North America to be world's model for self-government and liberty. The colonists knew that God would protect them and their freedoms. This confidence in divine intervention prompted the Reverend Thomas Balch in 1763 to attribute the British and American victories during the Seven Years' Wars to divine providence, while other clergy later claimed the growing prosperity of the colonies signalled God's continued support.<sup>13</sup>

As the war approached the image of God the benefactor of the colonies changed especially before military audiences. God assumed the image of Jehovah, the God of War, who on his war cloud would ride into battle with the patriot soldier.<sup>14</sup> Reverend William Emerson depicted such a God when, during a militia muster sermon in March 1775 he exclaimed, "Behold, God himself is with us for our Captain." He then continued to explain how the Israelites, defeated an enemy twice their size because of God's blessings. The message he delivered was not lost on his audience which believed that the colonists, currently God's chosen, would also defeat a more powerful enemy.<sup>15</sup>

The colonists' confidence that God would intervene in their behalf, influenced the training of the militia. The clergy, though they called for military preparedness, told the militiamen that they were not required to adopt the

rigid discipline of a standing army. With God's help, virtuous colonists fighting to defend their freedoms, would overcome the mercenary army of their oppressor. The virtue that animated the colonists to action, would make the American soldiers "bold as a lion," and they would overwhelm and defeat the trained British Regulars because "mercenary troops . . . [are] not in general possessed of those sentiments which ennoble human nature, cannot be trusted in time of danger . . . ." <sup>16</sup> Besides, the militiamen, being virtuous soldiers, would possess natural courage and wisdom which would negate their training deficiencies on the <sup>17</sup> battlefield.

Lastly, the colonists expected any contest of arms with Britain to be short-lived. Many of the colonists believed that the King and members of Parliament would negotiate to settle grievances as they became aware of the growing military proficiency of the militias and the colonists' dedication to their liberties. Even George Washington believed that any armed uprising would end in rapid negotiations. Few foresaw a war lasting more than a single <sup>18</sup> campaign. This expectation reinforced their belief that the militias, relying on God and their individual soldier's native courage, could defeat the British, maintain liberty, and return home quickly. Therefore, preparing the militiaman for combat required only teaching him the

fundamentals of soldiership. Even the proven British veteran General Charles Lee, when he joined the revolutionary cause, told the Americans they could dispense with "the tinsel and show of war" and stress only the essentials.<sup>19</sup>

### Training for War

In 1774 the colonists' ideas of what was essential training for war came primarily from two sources -- observations of the local British garrisons and drill books published in the colonies. A third source existed, former British officers and soldiers, but their influence has been difficult to gauge.<sup>20</sup> From the two primary sources the colonists erroneously concluded that a soldier's military preparations consisted of little more than mastering the manual exercise and platoon drill. But this understanding of British training included only a portion of the soldiers' actual preparation for war.

On the surface the British Army appeared to emphasize individual and small unit drill, an appearance caused by the peacetime distribution of the King's soldiers. Dispersed in small garrisons or assigned to units manning numerous guard posts, British officers seldom gathered their men together and trained in any formations larger than a company. Therefore the army infrequently trained in the more advanced

techniques for battle which required at least a full regiment to practice properly. Perfection of the basic elements of drill and maneuver became the only meaningful training many soldiers could have received. Even in Great Britain, soldiers seldom gathered more than once a year for advanced training. The officers consequently stressed the perfection of those skills which soldiers could practice in small groups commanded by a noncommissioned officer. What the colonist failed to understand was that before being committed to a war, the soldiers of the scattered regiments would be gathered together for advanced training.<sup>21</sup>

The routine repetition of drill encompassed much more than perfection of the soldier in the manual exercise or platoon drill itself. The British soldiers referred to this repetitive training as teaching "the mechanical part of the soldier." This training, though, could only occur after the soldier had mastered the essential elements of drill in his "basic training." The repetitive training was designed to ingrain military habits into the soldier's psyche. During the routines of garrison life the troop would be hardened to the discipline of the service, develop comradeship with the members of his drill group, and build a shield against fear on the battlefield.<sup>22</sup>

The was another facet of garrison life, hidden to the colonists, that may have also helped prepare British

soldiers for war in ways which could not occur in the colonial militias. While in garrison, veterans taught the new troops many of the unwritten, but essential aspects of soldiering. These subjects -- learning how to pack a knapsack, how to survive in a camp, or how to keep healthy on campaign -- were seldom written down. Instead, old soldiers passed them to the new by word of mouth or by example within the regiment. In the colonial militias where most soldiers went home each evening after drill these essentials of military knowledge remained hidden.<sup>23</sup>

Besides observing the British train, an officer who desired to learn about essential elements of soldiering could turn to the drill books which were published in the colonies. Before the outbreak of the war in April 1775 four training manuals published in the colonies provided the foundations for any expertise.<sup>24</sup> The oldest and most respected of these manuals was General Humphrey Bland's An Abstract of Military Discipline. First published in the colonies in 1743, Bland's work had been the dominant manual in America during the Seven Years' War. Also influential at the same time was William Blankney's The New Manual Exercise. After end of the Seven Years' War two new publications competed for dominance -- William Harvey's The Manual Exercise, also called "the 64th," and William Windham's A Plan of Exercise.<sup>25</sup>



To determine who used what manual and when as the war approached is difficult. Bland's An Abstract of Military Discipline was most popular in the south. George Washington possessed copies of this manual and recommended its use to friends as late as November 1775. Yet, under Washington's leadership, the Fairfax County Committee of Correspondence had recommended in January 1775 that the Virginia militia adopt "the 64th" as its standard manual. In the New England colonies similar confusion existed. In 1775 the Connecticut Assembly ordered its militia to use William Windham's A Plan of Exercise; however, prior to 1769 Bland's manual had been the standard in the province. Similarly, Massachusetts had also redesignated its official drill book. Before October 1774 the royal governor had ordered the militias to use Windham's manual when they drilled. After the Massachusetts Provincial Congress seized control of the government it, like Virginia, desired "the 64th" be followed. Therefore, to understand how the American's prepared militarily for their approaching conflict with Britain, each of these manuals should be examined.

Humphrey Bland's An Treatise of Military Discipline was published in London in 1727. When he wrote the book, the General desired that the work would pass on some of the lessons that the British Army had learned in Flanders during the War of Spanish Succession. He hoped that by detailing

the duties and responsibilities of officers and enlisted men of various grades and branches that future British soldiers would learn from their veterans and not have to rediscover the same lessons on the battlefield.<sup>26</sup>

In the colonies the complete treatise was never published; only portions of the work dealing with specific items of drill were printed under the appropriate titled An Abstract of Military Discipline. Though abbreviated, this manual was extremely popular in the militias of the provinces, and between 1743 and 1755 it was published 6<sup>27</sup> times. From the portions of the text which were printed, the militias of the colonies could learn the manual exercise, evolutions of the foot (marching maneuvers), directions for the forming of a battalion, some bayonet drill, and the proper technique to pass in review. The colonial printings of Bland's work did not explain the art of war to the colonists or even describe what training was necessary to prepare the soldiers for war. The drillbook detailed only the mechanical skills required of the soldier in a battle.

Another drillbook which was popular with some of the colonists during the 1740's and 1750's was William Blackney's A New Manual Exercise.<sup>28</sup> The manual exercise which this drillbook presented was the first in the colonies designed specifically for a militia, the militia of the

Spotswood Regiment which took part in the Cartagena campaign in 1740. The technique that Blackney developed never gained favor in Great Britain and the work was published only in the colonies.<sup>29</sup> The manual, however, possessed the same deficiency as Bland's drillbook; it gave the colonists no true understanding of war, only procedures to follow.

The most widely distributed of the training manuals in the colonies was Harvey's The New Manual Exercise. This drillbook presented the British Infantry Drill Regulation of 1764 and, in America it was initially published in New York in 1766 and reprinted in cities from Boston to Williamsburg 18 times between 1766 and 1775. The intensity of the colonists' military preparations is illustrated by the fact that 16 of these printings were in 1774 and 1775.<sup>30</sup> Like Bland's and Blackney's drill books, the majority of the colonial publications of "the 64th" compiled only the established drill procedures of the British Army. The militia could learn from its text the manual exercise including the responsibilities of each rank during volley firing, the "maneuvers usually practiced," the proper method to advance or retreat, and techniques for volley firing and passing defiles. But once again, most trainers of the militiamen could not discover any of the reasons behind the drill.

Some editions of The Manual Exercise did, however,

provide the trainers of the militias with some additional insight into the philosophy of training. The Norwich and Boston editions of "the 64th" included an excerpt of General James Wolfe's Instructions for Young Officers. In this excerpt, Wolfe advised the young officers to "make themselves perfect masters of the exercises of the firelock, that they might be able to assist in training the young soldier in arms." He also stressed that the officers must insist that the troops maintain a soldierly dress.<sup>31</sup> Though Wolfe's instructions were skimpy, the selected passages hinted at the officers' responsibility to act as role models for their men and their duty to maintain discipline.

The drill books most useful for preparing the militiamen for war was William Windham's A Plan of Exercise. Windham wrote the manual in 1760 for the militia of Norfolk in Great Britain. In it he attempted to explain the best method to train militiamen. He described his training methods so thoroughly that his plan became the most popular drill book in the British Army during the 1760's.<sup>32</sup> British officers carried the book from Great Britain to the colonies, and during the period 1768 through 1774, A Plan of Exercise was reprinted at least 8 times by colonial printers.<sup>33</sup>

Although Windham's manual covered the same topics as did Bland's, Blackney's, and Harvey's works, A Plan of

Exercise explored training with much greater detail.<sup>34</sup> Not only did Windham explain how something was to be done, he often explained why it should be done. He expressed in writing some of the knowledge which was so often transferred verbally in a standing army. Now, the trainer of the militia, be he a hired man, a newly commissioned officer, or noncommissioned officer, could better understand how and why certain types of training should be pursued.

In his manual, Windham prepared his trainers for the difficulties which would be encountered when training militiamen for combat. He advised "all gentlemen who intend to act as militia officers, to arm themselves with a great deal of patience," for their soldiers would be lacking in many areas -- some awkward, some scared, some forgetful, and some lazy. Windham told them that "the only way to overcome these difficulties is to be cool and sedate, and to teach the men with great good nature and gentleness." He warned them, however, not to become too familiar with the troops -- to keep "up such a kind of deportment and behavior, as will shew them that they are under the command of a superior."<sup>35</sup>

Windham, though he stressed a gentle approach when training militiamen, did believe in maintaining firm discipline. Discipline was the source of all military proficiency, he told his readers, and he insisted that his trainers should maintain a "strictness of discipline, as

established by law." Windham's concept of discipline, however, excluded the use of "harsh language to the men, much less striking them [the soldier]." He wanted his trainers to motivate the men without violence. Violent discipline, he contended, "will inspire them [soldiers] with a dislike and aversion to the service," while it would also hinder some soldiers' ability to learn.<sup>36</sup>

By acting as ideal role models, Windham believed, officers could enhance the militias' training and discipline. He recommended that officers always arrive at drill on time and in proper uniform. Such actions, he claimed, would influence the men to stress their own appearance and punctuality, qualities which Windham described as an essential characteristics of a good soldier. So committed was Windham to these ideals that he attributed the military successes of the Prussian army in large part to the emphasis its officers placed on the soldiers' dress. He believed "that some degree of attention to it [an exactness in dress] is certainly requisite, even in a militia . . ." because "a man who does not take in his own person, and is not neat in his dress, arms and accoutrements, never makes a good soldier."<sup>37</sup>

Borrowing from the training methods of the regular army, Windham insisted that a progressive, or step by step method be used when teaching the troops. He explained that

"by showing them [the new soldiers], separately and distinctly, what is expected from them, and what they are to do, never leaving them till they have a clear picture of it; by degrees the awkward will improve, the dull comprehend, and the inattentive be taught to observe, and mind the business." He applied the progressive method to his instructions for both the manual exercise and marching. In teaching both, he directed that the soldiers should progress from performing the actions alone to acting in concert with others in ranks and platoons. Windham did not desire, however, the soldiers "to do things mechanically, and merely by memory." Instead, he wanted the troops trained under his system to listen to the words of command.

In a chapter entitled "Directions for the Days of Exercise by a Single Company" Windham told the militia trainers how they could and should conduct their training. The day, he envisioned, began with the sizing and viewing of the company. This would be done by the sergeants in anticipation of the officers' inspection. During this time, the noncommissioned officers would check to see that the men's uniforms and firelocks were clean, their accoutrements in good order, and their bayonets fixed. Next, the officers inspected and insured that the sergeants had done their business and the men were indeed ready for training. Finally, after all deficiencies were corrected, Windham

directed that the officers march the unit to the training field for the drill which he described in other chapters.<sup>39</sup>

The training which Windham believed the militia should use to prepare for combat consisted primarily of marching and the manual exercise. "Marching," Windham thought, "is an affair of so much importance in real service, that the officers must take the most particular care to render the men as perfect as possible . . . ." <sup>40</sup> Marshall Maurice de Saxe, a French military theoretician, had inspired Windham, and Windham took from Saxe the maneuvers in which a militia should train. <sup>41</sup> However, Windham did specify that the militia should practice the loading and firing sequences of the manual exercise most diligently since, ultimately, <sup>42</sup> firepower would decide the battle.

Other books describing the art of war were available in the colonies before the outbreak of the American Revolution. These books were European publications which some reader or bookseller imported. George Washington, for example, had requested in 1756 that a London bookseller send him a complete edition of Bland's A Treatise of Military Discipline. <sup>43</sup> Henry Knox, Washington's Chief of Artillery during the war, also had read many military books printed in Europe when he owned a bookstore in Boston. <sup>44</sup> However, most trainers of the colonial militia never had the opportunity to read one of these publications.



Windham's A Plan of Exercise must have represented the best drill manual the average militia company could obtain as it prepared for war with Great Britain. Even Timothy Pickering, who would publish in 1775 his own drill book, An Easy Plan of Discipline, claimed in 1770 that "if the methods of teaching prescribed in the Norfolk Exercise be observed . . . every man may be seen and every error corrected, [and] they will make a surprising progress in a short time."<sup>45</sup>

Yet, the book possessed deficiencies which would handicap the colonists' war-making abilities. A Plan of Exercise was designed for the militia regiments of England, forces like the colonists' own. These forces would not be the main defense of the Kingdom of Great Britain should England be attacked. Like the militias in the colonies after 1763, the British militiamen would augment the regular British Army and would be used in all likelihood close to their homes. These forces, therefore, would not be expected to prepare for extended campaigns and prolonged periods in the camp. Those deficiencies which had plagued the colonists during the Seven Years' War, an inability to maneuver on the battlefield and little knowledge of field sanitation, were left unexplored by Windham's drillbook for the Norfolk militia.

By the spring of 1775, the colonists thought their soldiers were well trained and that victory would be theirs in any war with Great Britain. Had they not observed and imitated the training methods which the British soldiers used; and did not their training conform to the British drill books? Even if by some chance a few deficiencies did exist, the colonists knew their militiamen possessed greater natural courage than their British opponents and that they would receive the support of God in the war. Their assumptions would soon be tested, for General Thomas Gage, royal governor of Massachusetts and commander of British forces in North America, had decided that on April 19th a detachment of 700 British soldiers would march to Concord, Massachusetts, and seize hidden military supplies that belonged to the outlawed Massachusetts Provincial Congress.

#### Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill

How well prepared were the colonial militias at the outset of the American Revolution? As has been discussed earlier, their proficiency varied by location and by the proximity of the threat. Since the British Army menaced the New England colonies most visibly in 1775, the militiamen of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Connecticut were as a whole probably the best prepared in the provinces. Therefore, the condition of the other

colonies' militias can be inferred by studying the strengths and weakness which the New England militia displayed during the first three battles of the war -- Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill -- and the first months of the siege of Boston.<sup>46</sup>

The most visible strength of the militiamen at the outset of the war was their willingness to fight the British. The actions of the militia forces which responded to the battles at Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775, demonstrated that the propaganda of the prewar years had profoundly influenced the colonial soldiers. The people of the countryside around Boston reacted swiftly as the news spread that a British force under Lieutenant Colonel Francis Smith and Major John Picairn were marching towards Concord. Militiamen picked up their muskets and poured into the Lexington and Concord areas. The intellectual and emotional preparation which had spurred the soldiers to train for war after the Continental Congress' Resolution of September 18, 1774, now brought the soldiers to the battlefield. So powerful was its influence that in some towns only a handful of men remained behind.<sup>47</sup>

The first American test of arms at Lexington cannot be a definitive measure of the colonists preparation for war. The militiamen responded quickly to the call for assembly, but they did not willingly enter into the battle. Captain

John Parker, the commander of the Lexington minutemen, had decided not to engage the British when he recognized his force was significantly smaller than that of the British. The battle began as he was attempting to withdraw his armed men. Nevertheless, one of his reasons for avoiding the contest did not speak well of the confidence he had in his men's military proficiency. Parker was concerned that under the circumstances his troops would not or could not stand fast under the threat of a British charge. His fears were confirmed when his company broke and ran from the field after the first volleys were fired and the British charged.

At Concord, however, the colonists entered into battle with the British voluntarily. The engagement at Concord's North Bridge therefore provides a better measure than Lexington for evaluating the military preparedness of the militia. As at Lexington, the most obvious strength of the militiamen was their commitment to the protection of their freedoms. All the militiamen which fought the British in Concord were not from the town. Many of the more than 400 who participated in the battle were men without a close bond to Concord. This lack of a personal attachment with the town again proves that the pre-war rhetoric did influence the militia to action.

The militiamen who fought in the battle at the North Bridge showed that they had mastered the minimum skills

required of a soldier in combat. Before and during the battle, the soldiers responded to orders and formed themselves into ranks, marched forward under the command of Colonel James Barret, and fired when ordered. The militiamen even maintained their ground and formation when they felt the sting of the first British volley.

The militiamen showed, however, that they lacked battlefield discipline as they sensed victory. The soldiers had not been well enough trained to hold their formation as the British detachment which had guarded the bridge withdrew towards the center of Concord. Soldiers broke ranks, and as one soldier commented, "Every man was his own commander."<sup>48</sup> Some men, individually and in groups, pursued the British across the field and began to snipe at the retreating Redcoats from concealed positions. Others, believed that their duty had been done, picked up their wounded and dead, and departed the battlefield for home. One group, tired and hungry from the day's adventures sat down by the bridge and ate their lunch. This group did not even get back into formation to oppose a small British detachment which recrossed the bridge as it returned from a search of Colonel Barrett's farm.<sup>49</sup> The soldiers' indiscipline revealed the shallowness of the militias' preparation for battle and showed that in success as well as adversity the militia were not yet fully prepared for a battle or a war.

The militiamen's actions for the remainder of the day confirmed their commitment to fight, but to fight under conditions of their own choosing. As the British withdrew from Concord to Boston more than 4,000 militiamen from 23 towns and villages joined in the fray.<sup>50</sup> Throughout the day General William Heath and Doctor Joseph Warren tried desperately to manage the militia forces which were entering the battle. However, they failed to gain control of the militia units, and soldiers continued to join the battle when and where they wished. Most of these militiamen fought the British when the British were near and left the battle as they tired or when their powder ran out. At no time after Concord did a militia unit under the command of its officers and in standard eighteenth-century formation engage the British. Instead, the soldiers fought as individuals and fired from behind barns and stone walls at the passing British soldiers.

The militias' victory of April 19, 1775, concealed the inability of military leaders to control their formation and the shallowness of the militiamen's preparation for war. The majority of the colonists acknowledged only the rapid and enthusiastic response of the militiamen and the reports which claimed large numbers of British casualties. The colonists used these facts to confirm their visions of the virtuous soldier in combat assisted by a benevolent God.

They failed to recognize their own shortcomings and to see that the militias inflicted only 12 of the 247 British casualties in a battle -- a battle in which the British soldiers were outnumbered. Snipers and soldiers firing from behind fences and trees killed or wounded the remaining 235 British soldiers as their column returned to Boston. The Americans, flushed with a sense of victory, believed they had achieved military prowess. They would be forced to discover on other days their military deficiencies and the real costs of waging war with the British on near equal terms.

The other colonies responded quickly to the battles of Lexington and Concord and confirmed that the ideological indoctrination of the colonial population and their militias through pamphlets and sermons had been effective. Swiftly, the other New England colonies promised support for the militia army that the Massachusetts Provincial Council established on April 22. Rhode Island pledged 1,500 troops, Connecticut 6,000. Even New Hampshire indicated they would send a force of 2,000 men to support the war effort. By May 23 the New England provinces had pledged more than 24,500 men.<sup>51</sup> The remaining colonies chose to act through their delegates at the Continental Congress. On June 14, 1775, Congress approved a resolution calling for the formation of a Continental Army to fight the British around Boston.<sup>52</sup>

While this militia army was forming, General Artemas Ward, commander of the Massachusetts Provincial forces, and Doctor Joseph Warren avoided a general engagement with the British. They sensed that their forces, lacking munitions and training, could not sustain themselves in open combat with the British Army for long. Both hoped that given some time for training they could encourage the officers of the various militias to improve the quality of their troops.

The colonists attempted to improve the readiness of their militia army outside Boston and many units returned to the drill field two or three times per day to hone their military skills. <sup>53</sup> Perhaps more important, the clergy arrived and continued the religious and political indoctrination of the soldiers. Their preaching, which had brought so many soldiers to Boston, now kept the farmers among the militiamen in place as their planting season passed. The ministers clearly stated their message and told the soldiers to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" and "fite for our land and contry: saying we did not do our duty if we did not stand up now." <sup>54</sup>

However, neither the British nor the provincial politicians gave Ward, Warren, or the militiamen the time they required. On June 15 the Massachusetts Committee of Safety, having learned that Gage had decided to seize Dorchester Heights on the night of 18 June, ordered the



occupation and defense of Bunker Hill to preempt Gage's advance. On the night of June 16 a colonial force of 1,200 men moved forward from Cambridge and occupied Breed and Bunker Hills. During the night they worked feverishly preparing earthen fortifications which the officers hoped would increase the militiamen's effectiveness and resolve to fight.<sup>55</sup>

The British discovered the construction of the fortifications early on June 17 and after a debate among their senior commanders, General Gage decided to seize the hill by frontal assault that afternoon. During the day, the British bombarded the Americans in their earthen fortification from their fleet anchored in the harbor. The first cannonades intimidated the novice militiamen and General Oliver Prescott in an act of bravado which quieted the men's fears mounted a parapet and encouraged the militia to remain fast.

Around two in the afternoon the British commenced their attack. Gage sent 2,500 regulars against the trenchlines on Breed's Hill manned by the militiamen of the colonies. The colonists, firing rapidly at close range, repelled the first two British advances. The third British advance, however, breeched the colonial lines. The Americans, their ammunition exhausted and unfamiliar with bayonet fighting, fled as the Redcoats poured into their trenches. The

officers of the withdrawing colonial forces lost control, and even the dynamic Israel Putnam on top of Bunker Hill was unable to stop the militiamen's headlong flight to the rear.

Once again the training deficiencies of the colonists had hindered them in battle. However, as had occurred at Lexington and Concord, these weaknesses were not fully revealed. The British had suffered tremendous casualties in their attacks against the fortified positions of the militiamen. The colonists killed or wounded 1,054 British soldiers, forty-two per cent of their entire force. The British could ill afford more victories like Bunker Hill. But neither could the colonists. The colonial military forces and the colonists themselves left the battle believing the myth that an amateur force of militiamen could successfully face British regulars on the battlefield.

The militiamen who fought at Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill and who were now besieging Boston, were not prepared for war in spite of their enthusiasm. Some were veterans; but veterans of a war in which British officers had found the Americans inept. Most members of this militia army, however, had never trained or campaigned in any organization higher than a company. These soldiers, who identified primarily with their town's militia company, were ignorant of battalions and regiments, the building blocks of

18th century warfare and of the battlefield tactics which made them successful.

Unfamiliarity with camp routines also decreased the colonists' military proficiency. None of the popular peacetime drill books had discussed any of the routines of camp life. The militia soldiers and their leaders were required to improvise procedures for camp sanitation, guard duty, and drum signals; all matters which in established armies would have been controlled by regulations or standard operating procedures. So disorganized was this army that the members of the Massachusetts' Provincial Assembly apologized to Washington for the militia army's poor condition when he arrived in Boston in July 1775. However, as Washington assumed command, everyone expected him to march to victory with this army which had been barely prepared for a battle, much less a war.

## Notes

1. "Extract of a Letter From a Gentleman in Massachusetts to His Friend in London, dated January 21, 1775," Peter Force, ed., American Archives: Fourth Series (Washington D.C.: M. St. Clair and Peter Force, 1837), vol. I, 1168.
2. Robert A. Gross, The Minutemen and Their World (New York: Hill and Wang, 1976), 59 - 60.
3. Entry of November 23, 1775, Acton Town Meeting Record, vol. 1, 263. 4. See Chapter 1, note 26; American Archives: Fourth Series, vol. I. 1013.
5. Ibid., minutes, dated 5 December, 1774, "New-Castle County (Delaware) Committee," 1022, Proclamation posted in Annapolis, Maryland, dated December 31, 1774, 1087, "Extracts from the Proceedings of the Committee of Fairfax County, on the 17th of January, 1775," 1145. The Fairfax County Committee of Correspondence directed all its militia companies use the British drill regulations published in 1764 as a training guide.
6. Letter dated September 12, 1774, Lord Percy to his Father as quoted in Charles Knowles Bolton, The Private Soldier Under Washington (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1964), 9.
7. American Archives: Fourth Series, vol. I, 1050.
8. Smith, South Carolina as a Royal Province, 1719 - 1776, 182.
9. American Archives: Fourth Series, vol. I, 1168.
10. Gross, The Minutemen and Their World, 60.
11. Ibid., 59; Bolton, The Private Soldier Under Washington, 9 - 10; Trevor N. Dupuy and Gay Martin Hammerman, eds., People & Events of the American Revolution (Dunn Loring, Virginia: T.N. Dupuy Associates, 1974), 38 - 39.
12. Louis Clinton Hatch, The Administration of the American Revolutionary Army (New York: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1904), 3; Gross, The Minutemen and Their World, 59.
13. Balch, A Sermon Preached in 1763, 31 - 34.

14. Catherine L. Albanese, Sons of the Fathers: The Civil Religion of the American Revolution (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1980), 162 - 165.

15. Gross, The Minutemen and Their World, 72.

16. Shute, A Sermon Preached in 1767, 33; Lathrop, A Sermon Preached in 1774, 36.

17. Shute, A Sermon Preached in 1767, 30; Royster, A Revolutionary People at War, 25 - 27.

18. Weigley, A History of the United States Army, 33.

19. Quoting Charles Lee, Royster, A Revolutionary People at War, 26, 383n2.

20. Former British officers and soldiers had remained in or returned to the colonies after their discharge from the British Army, while a number of British soldiers were known to have deserted from the British Army before the war. Horatio Gates, Edward Hand, Moses Hanzon, Richard Humpton, Richard Montgomery, and Arthur St. Clair, former British and future American officers, all resided in the colonies prior to 1775. They were, however, widely dispersed throughout the colonies and engaged in private pursuits prior to the war. Their usefulness to the American's training efforts was probably small. No study has been done that examines who were the drillmasters of the various town militias before the war. These were positions which former British enlisted might have ideally filled. However, the physical abilities of many of the discharged soldiers would have limited their use. The British Army did not discharge healthy men from its ranks. Those who the army did release were suffering from tuberculocis, rheumatism, or were just "wore out." See Ira Gruber, "For King and Country: The Limits of Loyalty of British Officers in the War For American Independence." in Limits of Loyalty, ed., Edgar Denton III (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980), 32n20. Shy, Toward Lexington, 358 - 364.

21. J.A. Houlding, Fit for Service: The Training of the British Army, 1715 - 1795 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 269 - 270.

22. Ibid.; Houlding describes the basic training of the British soldier in Chapter IV of Fit for Service. He claims that the "basic training" of the British soldier was a two phased process in which the second phase never ended. During the first phase, the recruit would be taught the "material exercises of the soldier" which included facing

movements, marching movements, the manual exercise, the platoon exercise, and some other miscellaneous skills. The greatest emphasis was placed on the manual and platoon exercises since they were essential for combat proficiency. All training during the soldier's initial basic training was progressive, with the soldier never moving to the next step of training until the current step had been mastered. The second and continuous phase, which is described in my text was what the colonists would have observed.

23. This process is seldom described, but occurs as veteran soldiers pass on knowledge required for survival or comfort. This is a personal observation.

24. I have surveyed National Index of American Imprints through 1800: the Short-Titled Evans and determined that between 1740 and 1775 these were the only military books published in the colonies.

25. William Harvey was the Adjutant-General of the British Army at this time. His drill manual was the British Infantry Drill Regulation of 1764. Any army wide regulation, such as the 1764 drill manual, would be published under his signature.

26. Houlding, Fit For Service, 179 - 183.

27. Publication data Humphrey Bland's An Abstract of Discipline (Boston: Henschman, 1743; Boston: Henschman, 1744; Boston: Henschman, 1747; New York: DeForeest, 1754; Boston: Henschman, 1755; New York: Gaine, 1755). Clifford K. Shipton and James E. Mooney, eds., National Index of American Imprints Through 1800: The Short Titled Evans (Boston: American Antiquarian Society and Barre Publishers, 1969), vol. 1, 97.

28. Publication data William Blachney's A New Manual Exercise Philadelphia: Franklin, 1746; Philadelphia: Franklin, 1747; New York: Parker and Weyman, 1754; Philadelphia: Bradford, 1755; New York: Parker and Weyman, 1756; New York: Gaine, 1759. Ibid., 96.

29. Houlding, Fit for Service, 188 - 189.

30. Publication data: William Harvey, The Manual Exercise, (New York: Weyman, 1766; Boston: Fleets, 1774 and Thomas, 1774; New Haven: np, 1774; Newburyport: np, 1774; Norwich: Spooner, 1774; Norwich: Robertson and Trumball, 1774; Providence: n.p., 1774; Baltimore: n.p., 1775; Lancaster: n.p., 1775; New York: Gaine, 1775; Norwich: Robertson and Tumball, 1775; Philadelphia: Aitken, 1775 and Bradfords, 1775; Williamsburg: Purdie, 1775; Wilmington:

n.p., 1775); The New Manual and Platoon Exercise (New York: n.p., 1769; Williamsburg: Dixon and Hunter, 1775); The New Manual Exercise (New York: Gaine, 1773). Shipton and Mooney, eds. National Index of American Imprints Through 1800, voll, 346.

31. William Harvey, The Manual Exercise (Boston: Thomas, 1774), 21.

32. Houlding, Fit for Service, 207.

33. Publication data: William Windham, For Promoting Military Discipline (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Fowles, 1771); A Plan of Exercise for the Militia of the Colony of Connecticut (New Haven: n.p., 1772); A Plan of Exercise for the Militia of the Colony of Connecticut (New London: n.p., 1772); A Plan of Exercise for the Militia of the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay (Boston: Draper, 1768), reissued by Draper in 1770, 1771, 1772, 1774. Shipton and Mooney, National Index of American Imprints Through 1800, vol. 2, 1009.

34. I have not been able to find out why Windham's manual was published fewer times than Harvey's. Perhaps Harvey was bought by many soldiers as they attempted to learn drill while Windham's work was purchased by only officers or noncommissioned officers.

35. William Windham, A Plan of Exercise, for the Province of the Massachusetts Bay, (Boston: Draper, 1768), 34.

36. Ibid., 34 - 35.

37. Ibid., 35 - 36.

38. Ibid., 35 - 42.

39. Ibid., Chpt 5, 73 - 78.

40. Ibid., 51.

41. Marshall de Saxe discussed his philosophy of training an army in Reveries Upon the Art of War (1756). He particularly stressed the Prussian Step along with the short, the long and the double step.

42. Ibid., 47.

43. Oliver L. Spaulding, Jr., "The Military Studies of George Washington," The American Historical Review (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1924), vol. XXIX, October 1923

to July 1924, 676.

44. Knox recommended that officers read the military writings of Saxe, Louis Andre Clairac's (Field Engineer, 1760), John Muller (Elementary Fortifications, Practical Fortifications, Attac & Defence, Treatise of Artillery), John Pleydell (Field Fortifications), Sebastien le Prestre Vauban, Baron Menno van Coehoorn, and Blaise de Pagan. Described by North Callahan, Henry Knox: General Washington's General (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1958), 35 - 36. These work primarily examined artillery and engineering aspects of warfare. Other works which may have also entered the colonies as part of the personal baggage of British officers.

45. Octavius Pickering, The Life of Timothy Pickering, 18. Timothy Pickering's An Easy Plan of Discipline was published in Salem, Massachusetts between February 1775 and January 1776. See pages 85 - 86 in Octavius Pickering's Life of Timothey Pickering.

46. Unless otherwise noted the information cited when describing the Battle of Lexington, the British flight from Concord, and the Battle of Bunker Hill is taken from Chapter 2 and 3 of Willard M. Wallace's Appeal to Arms: A Military History of the American Revolution (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951). The account of the Battle of Concord draws primarily from pages 118 to 130 in The Minutemen and Their World by Robert Gross.

47. Bolton, The Private Soldier Under Washington, 12.

48. Quotation of Thaddeus Blood in Gross, The Minutemen and Their World, 126.

49. Wallace, Appeal to Arms, 22.

50. Bolton, The Private Soldier Under Washington, 12.

51. Ibid., 15 and Wallace, An Appeal to Arms, 27.

52. Dupuy, The People and Events of the American Revolution, 61.

53. Amos Farnsworth in his diary commented, on May 16, 1775, that on this day "Nothing done but our usual Preading which are at six oclock in the morning at ten; and at fore a night . . . ." "Amos Farnsworth's Dairy," Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society: Second Series (Boston:Massachusetts Historical Society, 1899), 80.



54. Entries of April 23 and April 30, 1775, Ibid., 78 - 79. In the first six weeks of the Siege of Boston Farnsworth names 9 different ministers who preached before him and his unit.

55. Engineering texts imported from Europe and civilian engineers were the source of the colonists' military engineering knowledge. See note 33 this chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

## The General Orders

Washington accepted the position of Commander in Chief of the Continental Army on June 16, 1775, and departed for Boston one week later. He carried with him specific instructions from the Congress which outlined his duties and responsibilities and which also reflected the popular misunderstanding that the militia army outside Boston was a competent military force. In those instructions, Congress directed Washington to go immediately to Boston, assume command of the army, and provide Congress with a census of American and British forces. No one in Congress saw any need to direct Washington to prepare his forces for war; but, as Washington soon discovered at Cambridge, his army<sup>1</sup> required training.

During the next two and one half years, Washington and his generals worked to build an army that could bring America its freedom from Britain. However, all they initially created was an army that barely could keep that hope of freedom alive. What was Washington neglecting which was so necessary for insuring his soldiers' success? Could he and his generals discover that important secret or would an outsider be necessary to bring the Americans victory?

### The General Orders

Throughout the war, Washington used daily orders, called General Orders, to convey routine instructions and information to the officers and men of his army. Though often repetitive, these orders were designed to improve the army by letting it know the desires of the commander-in-chief. Washington established their importance at Boston when he announced in his orders dated July 5, 1775, that:

"the adjutant of each regiment is required to take special care, that all general orders are communicated, as well to the private men, as to the officers, that there may be no pleas of ignorance . . . ."

Soon, Washington also directed that the brigade majors, adjutants, and aides-de-camp would maintain copies of these orders in orderly books, while ensuring the orders were properly disseminated. He "deemed [them] answerable for all the consequences which may follow a neglect of this order."<sup>2</sup>

Washington's general orders also served as a newspaper for the Continental Army and contained information that was important to the United Colonies, the army as a whole, and the soldiers as individuals. Through the general orders the soldiers discovered in July 1776 that the United Colonies had declared their independence from Great Britain. They also learned through these orders that General Gates had

defeated General John Burgoyne at Saratoga in October 1777. Nevertheless, Washington understood that his soldiers were most concerned with the information that affected them directly. He therefore used his general orders to tell his soldiers why flour was to be issued in lieu of hardbread or a that a gill of rum was to be provided to each soldier<sup>3</sup> owing to the bad weather.

As the soldiers' primary source for information when in the field, the general orders performed an important psychological and motivational function. The content of his orders suggests that Washington understood this role. Seldom did he publish any information about military setbacks. Instead, the orders abound with praise for individual or unit heroics and promises of additional Congressional support.

Washington also prepared his soldiers for battles and adversity through his orders. Often, when he believed the army would soon fight, Washington would attempt to motivate his men by reminding them of the importance of the revolution and their role in securing the people's freedom. At the same time he would promote tactical readiness by interspersing calls for increased security, preparations of rations, and increased personal accountability within his orders. At Valley Forge, Washington countered growing discontent within the ranks by publicly announcing that he

gave his:

warmest thanks to the virtuous officers and soldiers of this Army for that persevering fidelity and Zeal which they have uniformly manifested in all their conduct . . . they possess in an eminent degree the spirit of soldiers and the magnanimity of Patriots."

Meanwhile, he condemned those soldiers who "disgraced themselves by murmurs" and "hoped [they] have repented such unmanly behavior . . . ." <sup>4</sup> Such comments by Washington played on the soldiers' desires to have that superior public virtue acknowledged which kept them faithful to the <sup>5</sup> revolutionary cause.

Washington's General Orders also performed one other function that is central to this study -- from the outbreak of the war until March 1779 the General Orders were Washington's primary means of conveying training information to the Continental Army. Through his orders Washington informed his subordinates of the training that he thought necessary to correct the army's shortcomings. These orders therefore provide a record of what Washington perceived as his soldiers' weaknesses and his plans for correcting them.

The topics that Washington stressed tended to conform to the seasonal patterns of eighteenth-century warfare. As winter gave way to spring, Washington would stress camp sanitation and hygiene. He ordered old carrion removed, bones picked up, and "necessaries" (latrines) dug to insure

disease would not spread in the camp as the snows began to melt.<sup>6</sup> Soon, Washington would emphasize the preparation of the new recruits and veteran soldiers for combat through individual and unit drill. In his orders Washington would designate drill periods.<sup>7</sup> Then, sometime during the summer, the general orders would be filled with directions which would ready the soldier for movement. Washington would warn his soldiers they should have their provisions prepared and be ready to march at a moment's notice. As the campaign began, Washington would fill his orders with instructions directing the army's movement and calls for increased security and dedication.<sup>8</sup> He also would attempt to correct, as best he could, those training deficiencies discovered during the campaign. Finally, in late November or early December as the campaign season drew to a close, Washington would begin to instruct his men to prepare for winter quarters.<sup>9</sup> Normally the cycle ended sometime in February when plans were made and preparations announced for the next campaign.

#### Boston -- The First Six Months

After Washington had arrived in Boston to assume command of the army, legislators from Massachusetts sent him letters that warned him that his militiamen, though brave and competent fighters when properly led, were "youth . . .

used to a laborous life" who might lack the discipline and decorum most officers would desire in the men in an regular army.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, the scene that had met Washington when he had arrived in Cambridge on July 2, 1775, had already prepared him for such information. As Washington arrived at his headquarters he could hear in the distance sporadic musket fire; not from soldiers engaged in combat or sniping, but from soldiers in the army's camp randomly discharging their weapons.<sup>11</sup> Also, the camp itself lacked any uniformity. Some soldiers lived in huts built from wood while others lived in shelters made of sailcloth; each, however, was a "portraiture of the temper and taste of the person encamped in it." Only one regiment, the Rhode Islanders, possessed tents suitable for a military campaign.<sup>12</sup> Washington must have then realized that achieving victory with this army would not be an easy task.

The absence of external discipline and control only manifested what was missing internally. The army which surrounded Boston was not one army -- it was really a collection of several. Each colony's troops, were subject to their own internal rules and disciplines. They obeyed General Ward, the nominal commander of this army when Washington arrived, solely on their colony's deference to Ward's province's leading role in the revolution.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, discipline in this force was lax, and the

soldiers and officers often saw themselves as equals. Most lower ranking officers, the ones Washington would have to turn to to enforce his orders, had been elected to their positions. They maintained discipline through personal persuasion, not through the authority of law.<sup>14</sup> To make matters worse, most of these soldiers' enlistments would expire in December 1775.

Washington wanted to create a European styled army in America. But, he soon realized that to prepare this army for future battles and the war he needed to develop soldiers who would obey instructions from a superior not because they respected that individual, but simply because they knew it was an order to be obeyed. His initial efforts, therefore, were directed at developing disciplined soldiers who obeyed a hierachical chain of command. However, Washington knew that discipline could not be taught simply by the reading of orders and he decided he must first work to create rank differentiation within the army.

The absence of uniforms momentarily hindered Washington's efforts to create a hierarchical structure, but he soon found suitable substitutes by which he was able to designate rank. He adopted for himself a "blue ribband wore across the breast between the coat and waistcoat," while other generals were directed to wear, in a similar manner, pink ribbons and their aides green. For the officers and



non-commissioned officers Washington created various "badges of distinction." Officers were to wear "colour'd cockades in their hatts" based upon the rank -- red or pink for field officers; buff or yellow for captains; and green for subalterns. Sergeants, Washington distinguished, "by epaulettes or stripe of red cloth, sewed upon the right shoulder; the corporal by one of green."<sup>15</sup>

In an effort to hasten the separation of the ranks Washington sought to teach his army proper military courtesy. In doing so he initially sought to correct the improper habits of the guards. Washington especially wanted the guards correctly to honor the general officers when they passed, and provided them detailed instructions on how the generals should be met.<sup>16</sup> However, Washington's insistence that the guards, and ultimately all the soldiers, display the proper courtesies went beyond the need to differentiate the ranks. He also understood that the Continental Army's guard procedures were an important indication to the British of the quality of the entire force. Washington therefore wanted to assure that the British would see only the best side of his army, not its weaknesses.

Congressional approval of the Articles of War on June 30, 1775, helped Washington impose discipline within his militia army.<sup>17</sup> The articles arrived in camp in early August and in his General Orders of August 9, 1775, Washington

announced that "to morrow the Rules and Articles formed by the Honourable, the Continental Congress . . . will be delivered out, . . . throughout the several corps of the Army." He directed that the articles be signed by all officers and soldiers to insure that no one could claim that he did not know the rules.

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Although, at this time Washington made no other effort to ensure that his soldiers understood the contents of the Articles of War, some unit commanders probably did take the time to educate the soldiers. At a minimum, this training would have forced commanders to explain how a soldier should perform his most basic duties. How else would a soldier know how properly to use a watchword or password, which if compromised could bring a court-martial?

The Articles of War allowed Washington to punish those who failed to respond to his calls for compliance with the law. This is perhaps their most significant contribution in 1775; for now men could learn from the lash lessons which they otherwise ignored. This is not to say that discipline did not exist before Washington and the Articles of War. General Ward had conducted courts martial prior to Washington's assumption of command. However, the militia laws which had guided the courts to their decisions were created during times of peace or immediately after the Battles of Lexington and Concord. Since the colonies

jealously guarded their soldiers' rights, often the punishments which the courts would directed, monetary deductions in some cases, did not contribute to instilling discipline during the stresses of war.<sup>19</sup>

Initially Washington singled out officers who had been cowardly during the battle of Bunker Hill for courts-martial. He hoped, by striking at those few leaders who fled during combat, to instill in the others a desire to do their duty bravely. However, most soldiers expected and understood the necessity of such action.<sup>20</sup>

What Washington sought was a case in which he could stress his insistence that soldiers obey orders, and he gained that opportunity when on August 25, Ensign Joshau Trofton was convicted of disobedience. When Washington announced his approval of the punishment, dismissal from the service, he took the unusual step of amplifying the court's decision. He commented that this punishment was most fitting because "disobedience of orders, is amongst the first and most atrocious of all military crimes."<sup>21</sup>

While attempting to instill some discipline in the army, Washington also sought to develop within the soldiers an appreciation of their responsibility always to remain with their units. Many soldiers came and departed camp at will. Amos Farnsworth in his diary notes that on Monday,

June 5, 1775, his "brother came and took my plase and on Tuesday about noon I sot out on my journey for home . . .  
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." Though he returned two weeks later, such comings and goings contributed to the difficulties Washington experienced in obtaining an accurate count of the soldiers under his command which also hindered his planning for any action either offensive or defensive.

In addition to his threats of courts-martial, Washington also adopted other measures which he hoped would control the flow of soldiers in and out of the Cambridge camp while teaching them about their duties. On September 25, 1775, he established a furlough policy for soldiers in the various units. Washington directed that no more than one sergeant or corporal and two privates could be absent from a company at any time and established a requirement that regimental commanders approve passes for the soldiers.  
23  
But the flow of soldiers in and out of camp continued.

Washington concern for the soldiers' preparation for war extended beyond the establishment of discipline and control. He was also concerned about the physical and moral health of his army and sought means by which he could teach the soldiers the importance of each. Washington found few knowledgeable supporters in the army to help his fight to stop the spread of diseases. Morally, however, he had the help of the many ministers who voluntarily served the

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army.

When the colonists joined battle with the British no one had yet published in America any manual which described an army's field sanitation and hygiene procedures. <sup>25</sup> With what little medical help was available, Washington was forced to instruct his army how to prevent the occurrence and spread of illnesses. At first he attempted to control the spread of diseases within the command by isolating sick soldiers in regimental hospitals and explaining to his soldiers in general orders why he was taking these action. But Washington also used his orders to prevent the occurrences of illness the army. For example, in August 1775 he warned his soldiers to avoid the new cider which the sutlers where peddling in the environs of the camp -- it had caused "the bloody flux" in those who drank it. In October he told his men to save their month's pay because the army soon would be selling them winter clothes at cost. Nevertheless, Washington understood that most troops would respond effectively to only those things which were checked by officers, and he frequently called on his officers to enforce standards of hygiene. <sup>26</sup>

Washington also was concerned about the moral health of the soldiers in his command and desired that "to the distinguished character of the Patriot, it should be our highest glory to add the more distinguished character of the

Christian."<sup>27</sup> Washington supported the efforts of the chaplains who were associated with the army and stressed his soldiers' attendance at religious services.<sup>28</sup> No doubt he was aware that the New England clergy had played an important role in the soldiers' response to the call to arms and hoped such assistance would still be forthcoming. He was not disappointed. Clergy throughout the colonies, but especially those in New England, were drawn to the military. They saw in the revolutionary cause and its army<sup>29</sup> a great opportunity to serve their God and their country.

The clergy pleaded with the soldier to avoid the vices which had afflicted most armies in the past -- gambling, liquor, and bad women; but the clergy also reminded him of his soldierly duties. They told the soldier that this army had a special mission and had him pray that God would give him "courage, zeal and resolution in the day of battle." The clergy also asked the soldier to furnish himself with<sup>30</sup> military skills.

Washington tried to help the clergy and used his orders during the war to remind the troops of God's intervention on their behalf. He also sought to abolish certain vices, especially gambling. Throughout the war he lectured his men how time spent gambling could be better spent training, and in October 1775 he threatened punishment for "any officer, non commissioned officer, or soldier, who shall hereafter be

detected playing at toss-up, pitch and hustle, or any other  
game of chance . . . ."<sup>31</sup>

However, toward the end of November 1775 Washington appears to have ended his efforts to improve this militia army. His immediate concern was recruiting a new army while preventing the total evaporation of his military forces around Boston. Throughout the month of December, as enlistments expired and the militiamen marched from camp, Washington pleaded with them to wait for replacements to arrive before they left the siege lines unguarded.<sup>32</sup> Many listened, but others, like the Connecticut regiments,<sup>33</sup> ignored his pleas and went home. As the month of December 1775 came to a close, Washington, no doubt, was looking forward to January 1, 1776, and the establishment of a truly continental army.

#### The Campaign of 1776

Washington could not conceal the joy which the new year brought him. Gone were the militiamen who were governed by a variety of rules and in their place stood a "new army, which, in every point of view is entirely Continental." Washington hoped that such an army, under one head and one set of rules, would become a formidable force capable of defeating Britain, "our unnatural parent [who] is

threat'ning of us with destruction . . . ." <sup>34</sup> However, to achieve his goal Washington had to overturn the popular belief that the training which had prepared the militia for the battles at Concord and Bunker Hill would sufficiently prepare his soldiers for war. To do this he once again turned to his General Orders.

In his orders of January 1, 1776, Washington announced to his soldiers the standard by which he would measure their performance. He wanted them to be disciplined because "an Army without Order, Regularity and Discipline, is no better than a Commission'd Mob." But Washington also demanded that his soldiers strive to master their new trade and he challenged them to "endeavour by all the Skill and Discipline in our power, to acquire that knowledge, and <sup>35</sup>conduct which is necessary in War."

However, Washington told his army that being disciplined and possessing military skill were in themselves not sufficient; soldiers had to look like soldiers -- "as nothing add more to the appearance of a man, than dress, and a proper degree of cleanliness in his person . . . ." <sup>36</sup> In part Washington may have been reacting to the New England militiamen who he claimed "would fight very well (if properly Officered) although they are an exceedingly dirty and nasty people . . . ." <sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, the numerous times which Washington did return to this theme confirms that he



did believe that:

"next to the favour of divine providence, nothing is more essential to give this Army victory over all its enemies, than exactness of discipline, Alertness when on duty, and Cleanliness in their arms and persons." 38.

Washington demanded cleanliness of his soldiers not just for the sake of appearance. He firmly believed that "if a soldier cannot be induced to take pride in his person, he will soon become Sloven, and indifferent to every thing else." <sup>39</sup> Primarily, Washington knew that an indifferent soldier might easily be killed on the battlefield. But in January 1776 as he worked to build a Continental Army, Washington understood that a soldier, indifferent to hygiene might also be lost through sickness or death before a fight. Therefore, he stressed cleanliness to his troops to insure the survival of the army.

Washington did not discard all that he had emphasized to the soldiers in his orders of the previous year just because militiamen no longer filled the ranks. He understood that his new recruits only recently had been militiamen and that he needed to transform them into regular soldiers. So he told his men that:

"All standing orders heretofore issued for the Government of the late Army, of which every Regiment has, or ought to have Copies, are to be strictly complied with, until changed, or countermanded."

Washington insisted that he would hold accountable anyone who failed to comply with their contents, especially commanders who failed to keep their troops informed. Now, he also demanded that companies, as well as regiments and brigades, maintain copies of these orders in an orderly book.<sup>40</sup>

Washington continued to develop a separation between the ranks which he believed was necessary for creating discipline. He informed the officers that they held a unique role as his confidants and advisors and told them that, because the many needs of the army divided his attention, he could not correct all of the deficiencies alone. He asked his officers to help in training this new army and announced "that he would thank any officer, of whatsoever Rank, for any useful hints, or profitable Informations . . . ."<sup>41</sup>

To continue his own and his officers' efforts to establish and maintain discipline Washington distributed the new Articles of War on January 3, 1776. These amended articles, passed by the Continental Congress in November 1775 at Washington's request, corrected some of the deficiencies which Washington had discovered in the original articles during the first month of the war. Specifically the new Articles of War indicated when the death sentence was appropriate, while they also limited the courts' discretion

when imposing punishment.<sup>42</sup> As he had in August 1775 when he passed out the first Articles of War, Washington again directed that these new articles be signed by the all the soldiers of the army. However, unlike the previous August when he had made to special effort to educate the troops about their content, he now ordered that "These articles are to be read to the men by an Officer of a Company, at least once a week." As before he intended that no one should be allowed to plead ignorance of the law.<sup>43</sup>

With the arrival of the new year and the many new recruits, Washington began to emphasize those skills which his soldiers would require in battle. On January 3, 1776, he directed:

"that the Commanding officers of Regiments will be exceedingly attentive to the training, exercising, and disciplining their men; bringing them as soon as possible acquainted with the different Evolutions and Manoeuvres, necessary to be practiced . . . ." 44.

Washington, however, clarified his instructions during the next few months in a way which would improve the army.

Washington understood that preparation for battle included more than teaching the soldier how to load and fire his musket when facing the enemy. Washington valued the soldiers' ability to move on the battlefield and he reversed the degree of emphasis which the militias placed on the manual exercise and maneuver. Washington told the

regimental commanders of the continental army that they must pay the:

"strictest attention to the discipline of their men -- learning them to march and perform all the different Evolutions and Manoeuvres; which is of more essential service, than dwelling too long upon the manual Exercise." 45.

However, in spite of his orders, Washington's emphasis on maneuver would not fully solve the difficulties his army faced on the battlefield. He had to overcome the inertia of previous habit. The manuals written by Windham, Harvey, Bland, and Blackney which all had stressed the manual exercise still defined training for a large portion of the army. Even the two "new" manuals which had been published in 1775, Thomas Hanson's The Prussian Evolutions in Actual Engagement and Timothy Pickering's An Easy Plan of Discipline for the Militia, had not, for different reasons, changed the officers' bias towards stressing the manual exercise.  
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Though Hanson stated that he wrote The Prussian Evolution in Actual Engagements "to commit to writing, the little knowledge I have acquired in military matters, for the instruction of those who have yet to learn," he did emphasize maneuver over musket drill.  
47 He used one half of his text to explain how the Prussian infantry moved their forces on the battlefield and included 28 drawings showing the movements. He even briefly described how to establish a

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camp.

Newly commissioned Continental Army officers would have found this information very useful; however, a variety of reasons hindered their discovery of this drillbook. Most significantly, Hanson published his manual in Philadelphia, which in 1775 was far from the war zone. Few New Englanders would have turned to his work, for they were abundantly supplied with manuals printed locally. Also the type unit which Pennsylvania supplied to the Continental Army outside Boston in 1776 -- a regiment of riflemen -- reduced the chance that the manual would be carried to New England.<sup>49</sup> The officers of this unit, whose weapon dictated individual initiative or small group skirmishing, were unlikely to have used this drillbook because it ignored the techniques of their trade.

Published in Salem, Timothy Pickering's An Easy Plan of Discipline for the Militia, was available to the officers of the Continental Army stationed outside Boston. His primary source contributed to his success. Pickering drew extensively from Windham's A Plan of Discipline and like Windham provided an excellent description of small unit training for the militia.<sup>50</sup> A newly commissioned officer would have readily adopted such a manual because it would help him train his men in subjects his prewar experiences would have told him were important.

Unfortunately for Washington, Pickering like Windham, stressed teaching the manual exercise over maneuver. But Pickering wrote for militiamen and he believed that militiamen, unlike long-term soldiers, "can rarely, if ever, be engaged to attend so far as to learn all the essential parts of discipline."<sup>51</sup> Pickering addressed only the essentials of being a soldier in combat and did not explore the training required by a soldier in a standing army. However, at this point of the war most officers of the American army did not understand the difference.

Even though the American army had the British trapped inside Boston, and the British had made no serious attempt to fight the rebellious colonists since Bunker Hill, Washington still desired to improve his army's security in the first months of 1776. He hoped that by controlling his guards and teaching the soldiers how to react properly to a surprise attack he would make his army less vulnerable while also increasing the army's discipline and unity.

On January 16, 1776, Washington ordered that the guards remain in the guard house or at their posts until an officer properly relieved them from duty.<sup>52</sup> Though guards absenting themselves improperly from duty may appear to be a minor violation of military law, it was a serious problem in this army. When he forced the soldiers to submit to some other

authority other than their personal desires, Washington was slowly molding his men to accept discipline. Also, by stressing this point Washington insured that his Army's defenses were not compromised and the British did not see his army's weaknesses.

Later in February Washington directed that officers were formally to inspect their guards before they assumed their posts. In General Orders dated February 27, 1776, he announced that:

"the Officers and men, who are to mount guard, do parade every morning at eight O'Clock, upon their regimental parades, where they are to be reviewed by the Adjutants, in the presence of a Field Officer, who is to see that their arms, ammunition, and accoutrements are compleat, and the men dress'd in a soldier-like manner." 53.

Once this initial inspections was completed the adjutants then marched the guards to the brigade's parade field where they were inspected again. Finally, the soldiers marched "to the Grand- Parade, where the Brigadier, with the Field Officers of the day, will attend, to see all the Guards paraded and marched to their several destinations [guard posts]."<sup>54</sup>

These procedures, though they may now appear to us cumbersome and wasteful, had important benefits for the soldiers of Washington's army in 1776. Through them Washington showed his soldiers that they were not just

members of a geographically recruited regiment but were members of one regiment of the Continental Army. At the same time, the series of inspections also helped Washington impress on the soldiers the necessity of personal cleanliness and maintenance of their weapons and equipment. Finally, by creating a special set of procedures surrounding the performance of guard, Washington conveyed to his men that this duty was something special and important to the army.

However, Washington believed that having a protective screen of guards surrounding the army was not enough and he sought to teach his men that they must always be ready for combat. He accomplished this goal partly by having his officers take their units to the location which they would defend should the British conduct a surprise assault. This routine, he hoped, would familiarize the soldiers with the terrain they would be defending so "that no confusion may ensue when the troops are called to action . . . ." <sup>55</sup> The soldiers must be knowledgeable about their defensive positions, Washington thought, and added to his soldiers readiness by informing them, through general orders, of an alarm signal which would call them to these defensive <sup>56</sup> positions any time during the day or night.

Washington's expectations of a battle with the British caused him to stress preparedness to his army in late



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February and early March. In January Henry Knox had arrived with cannon that the colonists had seized at Fort Ticonderoga in May 1775. The availability of these cannons had wetted Washington's desire for some action against the British; but he knew that his army was barely organized and not well trained. Furthermore, his generals had advised him not to consider any direct action against the British and proposed instead that the army seize Dorchester Heights which overlooked the city and the harbor of Boston. Washington concurred because he expected that the capture of the heights would bring on a general engagement on terms favorable to the American army or force the evacuation of Boston by the British.

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As the date for the seizure of Dorchester Heights approached Washington readied his soldiers emotionally for battle. In his orders of March 3rd Washington announced that:

"as it is not unlikely but a contest may soon be brought on, between the ministerial Troops, and this Army; The General flatters himself, that every Officer, and Soldier, will endeavour to give, such distinguish'd proofs of his conduct, and good behavior, as becomes men, fighting for all that is dear, and valuable to Freemen, remembering at the same time what a disgraceful punishment will attend a contrary behavior." 59.

In spite of such moral encouragement Washington also attempted to insure his army's tactical effectiveness. Because his army lacked muskets, he directed that only those

soldiers who had demonstrated proficiency in the manual exercise be issued muskets. Those who had not yet mastered the weapon, Washington said should be issued spears of a design he had published in his orders.<sup>60</sup> Even with his muskets in the hands of his best trained soldiers Washington made plans to keep his soldiers from breaking their ranks or wasting their ammunition. He ordered regimental commanders to post officers in the rear of battalions "to keep their men to their duty" and within the formations to prevent the men from firing at too great a distance.<sup>61</sup>

On March 4, 1776, under the cover of darkness, elements of the Continental Army moved and seized Dorchester Heights. All during the night the soldiers worked furiously to construct their defenses. General William Howe was surprised to discover the Americans on the heights the next morning and knew that from that position the Americans' artillery could ravage the British fleet in the harbor and the town of Boston itself. Initially, Howe planned to assault the Americans' entrenchments and expel them from their lines with a bayonet charge. However, bad weather during the day and night of March 5 prevented any operations by Howe's assembled force; and on March 7 Howe decided to depart Boston.

The British Army's flight from Boston denied Washington any opportunity to test his soldiers' readiness. However,

Washington could not dwell on lost opportunities because he had more pressing concerns at that moment. First, he had to decide where the British would take their army. Second, after limited evidence suggested New York City as the British destination, he had to prepare the soldiers of his army for their first major move.

Unlike the British Army, the Americans had no regulations which dictated their organization for the march. Washington therefore used expedient measures and had officers perform many functions which should have been the responsibilities of sergeants. For example, he ordered his regimental commanders to inspect the men's packs and insure that they carried only necessary items.<sup>62</sup> But even when Washington took these precautions, unforeseen problems arose such as when his troops, instead of carrying their equipment as he desired, placed their knapsacks on the few wagons of the army. Such problems he corrected through his general orders.<sup>63</sup>

However, the reports that soldiers were plundering in Boston upset Washington as he prepared to depart for New York. Washington tried immediately to put a stop to this conduct because he believed that the soldiers of the revolution must learn not betray the people's trust. He appealed to his soldiers through his general orders saying that "the inhabitants of that distress'd town have already

sufferr'd heavily from the Iron hand of oppression! --  
their Countrymen surely will not be base enough to add to  
their misfortunes." <sup>64</sup> Nevertheless the soldiers were; and  
Washington, on March 21, 1776, issued a proclamation which  
threatened severe and immediate punishment against any  
soldier who abused an inhabitant of Boston. <sup>65</sup>

As the Continental Army arrived in the New York area,  
Washington again ordered the troops not to plunder. He said  
that the soldiers must treat the civilians properly so "that  
he shall hear no complaints from the Citizens, of abuse or  
ill treatment, in any respect whatsoever . . . ." <sup>66</sup> However,  
the soldiers disappointed Washington and continued to  
destroy and steal civilian property. Washington became so  
concerned with the reports that troops were damaging homes  
lent to the army for barracks that he ordered his officers  
to inspect them frequently and punish any soldier guilty of  
damaging private property. <sup>67</sup> Meanwhile, he continued to  
plead with his soldiers to stop shooting the cattle which  
was to provide the army its meat and harrassing the local  
farmers who were bringing their produce to the army's  
market. <sup>68</sup>

The move to Long Island did give Washington a new  
opportunity to continue the military instruction of his  
fledgling army. Initially he sought to reestablish those  
habits which he had cultivated in Boston and during late May

Washington reestablished the system of alarms and alarm post<sup>69</sup> used to defend the army's encampment. But, Washington knew that teaching soldiers how to secure an army in the field was more difficult than teaching them how to protect themselves when besieging a city.

He continued the daily guard mount formations which he had established in Boston, but now he directed additional methods which were necessary for an army on campaign. One new technique that he ordered was that piquet guards be established. These guards, which stood prepared for action but did not man any posts, served as a small reaction force<sup>70</sup> for the army in case of any surprise attack. He also emphasized routine habits which could greatly enhance the army's security while requiring little extra effort from the remaining soldiers. One such example was his order that the officers responsible for the guards would insure each day at dawn that "all the guards are to be under arms, at their proper posts, . . . and every thing is in good order for<sup>71</sup> defence, in case of an attack . . . ." Another was his orders that the guards should detain all soldiers who<sup>72</sup> improperly used the passwords and countersign at night or during the day.

Washington regularly stressed the same topics which he had thought important while the Army was outside Boston -- maintenance of weapons, drill which emphasized maneuver over

the manual exercise, and the reading of general orders. However, where he had often used persuasion with violators in Boston, slowly while in New York, Washington turned to the lash as the means to punish offenders. During the summer of 1776 Washington sought to make more visible the punishment of convicted soldiers.<sup>73</sup> On June 28th he used for the first time the most severe sentence available when he ordered the execution of Thomas Hickey for the crimes of mutiny, sedition, and treachery -- an execution which he hoped would "be a warning to every soldier, in the Army . . ."<sup>74</sup>

In spite of Washington's and his officers' efforts to build an Army during the first nine months of 1776 the soldiers of the Continental Army were not prepared for their first test by fire. Washington had tried to create an army while in the field, and though he had stressed discipline, drill, security and cleanliness, those lessons had not had enough time to become ingrained in the army. His men still failed him in foolish ways. Some offended him by letting their security become lax and allowing the British fleet to pass by unmolested.<sup>75</sup> Others simply lost their musket's flint or damaged their weapon by "snapping."<sup>76</sup> A shortage of continental soldiers which required him reluctantly to turn to militia and state volunteers for help and officers who did not yet know their profession also hindered his

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efforts.

Under such conditions his army's performance during the Battle of Long Island on August 27, 1776, should not have been unexpected though at that time the defeat shocked the colonists. The battle began when the superior forces of General Howe smashed into the flanks of General John Sullivan's Continentals while Hessians were assaulting them from the front. Under such pressure the troops rapidly lost the protection of the entrenchments which had proved so important in steadying their nerves in earlier battles. Sullivan's brigades broke and ran; and as they retreated to the rear they weakened the spirit of the untested forces they met. Though Lord Stirling, commander of the American right flank tried to hold on, his men were soon overwhelmed and he was forced to surrender. The British completely routed the American Army that day.

However, Washington refused to criticize the conduct of his troops. Perhaps for reasons of morale he claimed the retreat "from Long Island was made by the unanimous advice of the General Officers, not from any doubt of the spirit of the troops . . . ." <sup>78</sup> But maybe Washington understood that his men, still untrained in the ways of war, did not possess the necessary strength to carry them through adversity and <sup>79</sup> that only victory, not drill, could bring that strength.

Washington had no time during the remainder of the year to correct the deficiencies which had been revealed during the Battle of Long Island. Instead, he was forced to fight for his, his army's, and perhaps his cause's survival as the British pursued him up the Hudson River Valley and then across New Jersey. Even though the Battle of Harlem Heights restored some of the confidence of the soldiers in their capabilities, their defeat at White Plains and flight across New Jersey during the month of November must have devastated the morale of his troops.

Washington recognized these problems of morale and during the Fall of 1776 attempted to renew his soldiers' emotional commitment to the struggle for independence. He played on his soldiers' pride and their claims of superior civic virtue to maintain his army. He told his men that now "is no time for ease and indulgence" and "that soldiers fighting is such a cause as ours, will not be discouraged by any difficulties that may offer." <sup>80</sup> He hoped that such comments might slow the steady stream of deserters. Washington also identified in General Orders groups of successful or brave soldiers and called on the remainder of the army to follow their lead. He praised collectively the soldiers that stopped Howe's advance at Harlem Heights on September 16 and in October commended the men of Colonel <sup>81</sup> John Glover's unit for bravery during a skirmish.



However, where positive inducement failed Washington was prepared to turn to harsher measures to maintain his army in the field. Initially, he only threatened "exemplary punishment" for those guilty of cowardice on the battlefield.<sup>82</sup> Later, however, he directed that all brigade commanders:

"select some good officers to be at the rear of their battalions . . . to shoot any officer or soldier who shall presume to quit his ranks, or retreat, unless the retreat is ordered by proper authority; . . . for the sake of example." 83.

But Washington knew that force, though it might temporarily hold soldiers in the ranks, could not keep them faithful to the army. Therefore, Washington must have undertaken the last combat actions of the year -- Trenton and Princeton -- in part to rebuild the confidence of his army.

Both attacks, though sound tactically, were acts of desperation. They were taken after General Howe, assuming the normal campaigning season was over, had put his army into winter quarters.<sup>84</sup> But the victories gave the Continental Army hope for the future course of the war. As the soldiers of Washington's small army moved into winter quarters at Morristown, New Jersey, their confidence in their leaders had been renewed. For Washington, the victories gave him the time and the opportunity to ponder his army's failures.

Reaction to Defeat

Long before Washington had the opportunity to ponder his soldiers' failures, the Continental Congress had provided him with some tools by which he would be able to build a stronger, more professional army. Immediately after the Army's defeat at Long Island Congress had approved three resolutions which reflected its new outlook towards the soldier in the Continental Army. The Congressmen seemed to have decided that freedom could only be won by adopting a European type army. This decision, however, required the delegates to the Congress to reject strongly held assumptions about voluntarism and the dangers of a professional army.<sup>85</sup>

By September 1776 the members of the Continental Congress had concluded that voluntarism was no longer enough to provide manpower for the army. Though they had authorized an army of 20,372 men in November 1775; Washington had been unable to recruit anywhere near that number and was continually forced to call on militiamen or state troops for help.<sup>86</sup> Washington had also complained that the one-year enlistments were insufficient to train and "temper" the soldier for effective service.<sup>87</sup> So it was that on September 16, 1776, the Continental Congress created a professional army of eighty-eight infantry battalions composed of soldiers who were to enlist for the duration of

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the war.

Congress moved rapidly to shore up the other weaknesses of the Army which they had noticed and which Washington had discussed with them in his letters. Congress now recognized that the training of the army was an important concern of Washington and they directed him:

"to give positive orders to the brigadier generals and colonels and all other officers in their several armies, that the troops under their command, may, every day be called together, and trained in arms, in order that officers and men may be perfect in the manual exercise and manoeuvres . . . ." 89.

The congressmen also gave Washington the new articles of war which he had requested. With a professional army, the delegates perceived a need to punish more severely those men who would not obey and they abolished the biblical limitation that punishments should not exceed 39 lashes. Now Washington could permit courts-martial to award 100 lashes as punishment to recalcitrant soldiers. Furthermore, to insure no soldier could plead ignorance of the laws, Congress directed that the articles be read to all soldiers before enlistment and once every two weeks thereafter.<sup>90</sup> Slowly the Continental Army was adopting European standards of discipline.

During the winter and early spring of 1777, Washington was most concerned with recruiting an army of long-term

volunteers, and his general orders do not provide any new information describing how he sought to rectify the training deficiencies which the campaign of 1776 had revealed. During this time many of his orders seem to be nothing more than repetition of earlier prescriptions as he emphasized religious training and restrictions on gambling. Nevertheless, he did express a desire that his officers "devote the vacant moments, they may have, to the study of military authors."<sup>91</sup>

However, as the campaign season approached, a change in Washington's attitudes towards his soldiers' training became apparent. He still stressed in his letters to the commanders of the armies of the northern, southern, and western departments that "teaching the men the use of their legs . . . is infinitely more importance than learning them the manual exercise."<sup>92</sup> But in a letter written to General Alexander McDougall in May 1777 Washington shows that he had discovered the major weakness of his soldiers. He comments that:

"I perfectly agree with you in the impropriety of that diversity in the modes of training our Regiments which has prevailed hitherto. I have it in contemplation, very soon to digest and establish a regular system of discipline, manoeuvres, evolutions, regulations for guards &ca. to be observed throughout the Army; in the mean time, I should be glad you would introduce an uniformity among those under your command . . . ." 93.

In the coming months Washington made good his promise to promote uniformity.

Washington's first efforts to establish routine procedures came in late May when he ordered General Nathaniel Greene and the other general officers in his army to develop standard procedures for the camp's guards. Washington desired that these procedures be written so that the men would be enabled "to act in concert, and support each other."<sup>94</sup> The officers provided him his regulation in early June.

Washington published his generals' guard regulation in the his orders of June 12 and 15, 1777. It was a major improvement over those which Washington had first published in February 1776. Washington was not concerned in these regulations with insuring cleanliness or promoting unity, though he still stressed those qualities. Instead the new instructions were designed to insure the guards of the Continental Army were tactically effective and uniform in their procedures. The orders specified clearly what actions the officer of the guard was to take to prepare his force and how the guards were to react to any suspected<sup>95</sup> emergencies.

Nevertheless, the new regulation did have deficiencies which would not be corrected until 1779. This regulation

told the common soldier that during his tour of duty he could expect only three things -- that he would not sleep, would not be allowed to cook any meals, and would not be allowed to depart his post. The regulation still did not tell him specifically how to challenge, stand his post, or do the other tasks inherent in his guard responsibilities. This meant that a soldier in one unit might not respond properly to the challenge of soldier in another. The difference also meant that time had to be wasted coordinating procedures between units in the camps of the same army.

Washington also attempted to insure that his soldiers were familiar with and could function in units larger than companies. Beginning in June 1777 he required that each corps, in addition to its daily drill in the manual exercise and evolutions, would form "at least once a week . . . collectively under the direction of its Brigadier" for drill in the most essential part of discipline -- marching and forming. Washington demanded that the field officers lead their regiments when the corps were assembled for drill so that the soldiers would become "accustomed to the commands and voice of those, who are to direct them in action . . ."

Washington's new emphasis on standardization and large unit drill did not mean he had forgotten the new soldiers

and their needs. As earlier as February 1777, when the new recruits were trickling into the camp at Morristown, Washington instructed that all recruits wear "blue, red, or yellow ribband attached to the hat to identify their future regiment . . . ." <sup>98</sup> He also directed that all regiments make some provisions for the remedial training of "those men who appear to be the least acquainted with the [manual] exercise . . ." <sup>99</sup> so that all soldiers would be prepared for battle.

Throughout the summer of 1777 Washington continued to look for ways in which to standardize the actions of the army. The last regulation he wrote before his army returned to the field standardized the procedures which the army would use the morning of a march. That regulation, published in general orders on August 16, 1777, stipulated the drum beats which would announce to the soldiers a march and then regulate their preparations for it. Now, the soldiers knew that when the "Beating of the General" played in the morning instead of the normal "revellie," the unit would march that day. The regulation also gave the troops a timetable between drum rolls so they could plan their activities -- pack their tents, cook their breakfasts, and prepare their knapsacks -- and be ready to march when <sup>100</sup> ordered.

Howe did not give Washington the time he had desired to prepare his new army because on three occasions during the

summer Howe had attempted to entice Washington into battle by placing pressure on the Continental Army's camp. Each time, however, Washington withdrew. But in late August Howe began an advance against Philadelphia and forced Washington to come out to fight with his half-trained troops. The two armies met on September 11, 1776, along the Brandywine Creek in Pennsylvania.

Howe had planned to fight at Brandywine using a plan similar to the one which had brought him success at Long Island. Fixing Greene's brigades with forces commanded by General William von Knysphausen, Howe sent Lord Cornwallis and his troops to turn at the right flank of the Americans which was commanded by General Sullivan. Cornwallis' approach march against the American's right went undetected, and when he struck at Sullivan's divisions they collapsed and brought others down along with them. This time, Washington was able to respond, and he detached Greene with two Brigades to establish a screen through which Sullivan's fragmented units could pass and behind which they could reform.

Though the fighting had been severe, the American soldiers had avoided a rout. Both of the brigades which Greene had used to stop Cornwallis' advance had performed exceedingly well -- marching more than 4 miles in forty-five minutes and then forming and withstanding Hessian bayonet



assaults. Even Sullivan's soldiers, though they broke and ran, showed some mettle as they reformed and made an orderly retreat once Greene helped them. The soldiers of the Continental Army, though still lacking in skill, showed the British that they were improving.

In early October, after Howe had captured Philadelphia, Washington again joined in battle with Howe's army. At Germantown the Americans proved that they were an improving army. The battle did show some of the deficiencies which still plagued the Continental Army. Though British unit historians have said Washington's plan was too complex for his half-trained soldiers, the real problem was not the complexity of this plan, but the Americans' lack of confidence in their fellow soldiers. <sup>101</sup> British soldiers trained to fight with maneuvers designated by the army. They knew what to expect from the soldiers and the units to their left or right. The Continental Army units had not yet established one uniform system of drill and maneuver. Each regimental commander adopted whatever system of maneuver pleased him. This variety at Germantown proved detrimental, for with the battlefield obscured by smoke and fog the American soldiers panicked. One American unit, unsure who was to their front, accidentally fired at the rear of another American regiment. Under such such adverse conditions elements of the army broke and "ran from

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victory."

Though the Continental Army was defeated at Brandywine and Germantown, as soldiers its men were more proficient than those who had fought at Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill. Washington had improved the army significantly during the past two and one-half years. The fact that the soldiers held together after defeat is evidence of this improvement, for at Concord the militiamen failed to remain a coherent tactical force after victory. Washington had taught this army to fight as a single entity; no longer were its soldiers a mere band of snipers firing individually from behind trees and fences. Additionally, this army had learned to survive on campaign and move from battle to battle as a whole.

Washington's army, however, still possessed many deficiencies which need to be corrected. The soldiers may have discovered how to fight in units, but the units of the army could not fight collectively. The army lacked uniformity. Maneuvers were not standardized; guard procedures varied between companies; equipment was lost unnecessarily; and soldiers lacked confidence in their comrades. Before the army could truly be successful against the British this one major flaw, a lack of uniformity, needed to be corrected. Until Washington sought to correct that weakness, all others would remain.

Circular to the General Officers

In spite of the loss of Philadelphia, Congress saw fit to offer praise to the men who fought at Brandywine and Germantown.<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, Washington was not satisfied with his army's performance. Washington wanted and demanded more. On October 12, 1777, he told his officers that they:

"now have an opportunity of attending to the discipline of the troops. Every day when the weather permits, the corps are to be turned out and practiced in the most essential exercises, particularly in priming and loading, forming, advancing, retreating, breaking, and rallying. No pains are to be spared to improve the troops in these points." 104.

Still, Washington had not established a uniform set of maneuvers.

Gates' victories against General John Burgoyne at Saratoga in September and October 1777 drove Washington to seek a solution to his army's difficulties.<sup>105</sup> Though he wanted his men to share in the joy of Northern Army, Washington also hoped that his army would want "at least to equal their northern brethren in brave and intrepid exertions when called thereto."<sup>106</sup> In his drive for success and excellence, he approached his general officers in search of a solution.

On October 26, 1777, Washington distributed a "Circular

to the General Officers." The sixth item which Washington asked his officers consider was:

"Will the Office of the Inspector Genl. to our Army, for the purpose, principally, of establishing one uniform sett of Manoeuvres and Manual, be adviseable as the time of the Adjutant Genl. seems to be totally engaged with other business? 107.

The general officers informed Washington during a council of war convined on October 29th that "such an officer is adviseable."<sup>108</sup> The American army, was now poised to take another step towards adopting a European way of war and a European way of training.

## Notes

1. Entry dated June 20, 1775, Worthington C. Ford, et al, eds., The Journals of the Continental Congress (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1906), vol II, 100 - 101.

2. Orders dated July 5, 17, and 20, 1775, John C Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington From the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745 - 1799 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1944), vol 3, 311, 342, 352. Orderly books were notebooks in which the adjutants or subordinate commanders kept handwritten copies of the orders of their commander.

3. Orders dated July 9, 1776, October 15, and August 29, 1777, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 5, 244, vol. 9, 377, 145.

4. Orders dated March 8, 1778; Fitzpatrick, ed. The Writings of Washington, vol. 11, 49.

5. Royster, A Revolutionary People at War, 299.

6. Orders dated April 11, 1779, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of Washington, vol. 11, 249.

7. Orders dated February 20, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of Washington, vol. 4, 341.

8. Orders dated July 2, 1777, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 336.

9. Orders dated December 14, 1778, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 13, 395.

10. Letter dated July 5, 1775 Joseph Hawley to George Washington, Jared Sparks, ed., The Writings of George Washington (Boston:Russel, Odiorne, and Metcalf and Hilliard, Gray, and Company, 1834), vol. III, page 489. Hawley states that "I may venture to say that if the officers will do their duty there is no fear of the soldiery." Letter dated July 6, 1775, Massachusetts Congress to George Washington, in Pennsylvania Packet and quoted in Royster, A Revolutionary People at War, 59.

11. Ibid.

12. Letter undated, Reverend William Emerson to

unidentified person, quoted in Sparks, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. III, 491 - 492.

13. Ibid., 486 - 490. General Ward was from Massachusetts.

14. Wallace, Appeal to Arms, 51.

15. Orders dated July 14, 1775, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 3, 338 - 339.

16. Ibid.

17. Entry dated 30 June 1775, Ford, ed. The Journals of the Continental Congress, vol. 2, 111 - 123.

18. Orders dated August 9, 1775, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 3, 411.

19. For Examples of the Article of War of the Colonies which were in use at Boston see Rhode Island, Acts and Statutes, Rules and Regulations for the Rhode Island Army (Newport: Southwick, 1775) or Charles J. Hoady, ed., The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, from 1775 to June 1776 (Hartford: The Case, Lockwood and Brainard Company, 1890). During many of the courts martials officers from one colony would not support the charges from an officer of another colony.

20. Wallace, Appeal to Arms, 52.

21. Orders dated August 25, 1775, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 3, 448.

22. Entry dated June 5, 1775 in "Amos Farnsworth's Diary", Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 82.

23. Orders dated September 25, 1775, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 3, 517 - 518. The number of corporals and sergeants and privates in a company varied by province. Generally, a company consisted of approximately 60 to 70 privates with 4 sergeants or corporals, a captain, a lieutenant, and an ensign.

24. Chaplains would not be approved for the Army until January 1776. Until that date all clergy who served with the army were volunteers.

25. From a Survey of Short-Titled Evans. The first publication of a medical treatise for military use in the colonies was Benjamin Rush's Directions for Preserving the

Health of the Soldiers: Recommended to the Consideration of the Officers of the United States (Lancaster: John Dunlap 1778). The publication was made at the request of the Board of War dated September 5, 1777.

26. Orders dated August 22, August 28, October 28, Nov 22, 1775, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol 3. 440, 449, vol. 4, 49, 109 - 110.

27. Washington's Revolutionary Orders (Whiting), 75; quoted by Bolton, The Private Soldier Under Washington, 159.

28. Orders dated July 4, 1775, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 3, 309. This was the first of approximately 20 directives by Washington that the troops should attend some form of religious services.

29. An example of the attraction the war had on the clergy can be seen in Ebenezer David's letters where he describes the Continental Army as a "large field of action" for the clergy to work in. Letter undated, Ebenezer David to Nicholas Brown, Janette Black and William Green Roekler, eds., A Rhode Island Chaplain in the Revolution: Letters of Ebenezer David to Nicholas Brown, 1775 - 1778 (Providence: The Rhode Island Society of the Cincinnati, 1949), 10.

30. Abiel Leonard, A Prayer Composed for the Benefit of the Soldiery, in the American Army, 5.

31. Orders dated October 2, 1775, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 4, 1.

32. Orders dated December 3, December 17, December 28, 1775, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 4, 138, 168, 189.

33. Royster, A Revolutionary People at War, 63.

34. Orders dated January 1, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 4, 202.

35. Ibid.

36. Orders dated January 5, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 4, 213.

37. Letter Washington to Lund Washington, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 3, 433, quoted in Wallace, Appeal to Arms, 64.

38. Orders dated February 27, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 4, 355.

39. Orders dated January 3, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 4, 207.

40. Orders dated January 1, 1776, vol. 4, 203 - 204.

41. Ibid.

42. Entry dated November 7, 1775, Ford, ed., Journals of the Continental Congress, vol. 3, 330 - 334.

43. Orders dated January 3, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 4, 206 - 207.

44. Ibid. Evolutions and maneuvers are both marching movements. Exercising normally referred to drilling in the manual exercise (musket drill).

45. Ibid.

46. This opinion is based on the numerous times Washington had to stress the training of maneuver over the manual exercise and his comments concerning the inexperience of his officers.

47. Thomas Hanson, The Prussian Evolutions in Actual Engagement; To which is added the Prussian Manual Exercise: also the Theory and Some Practice of Gunnery (Philadelphia: J. Douglas McDougall, 1775), vol. 1, ii.

48. Ibid., vol. 1, 1 - 14, 30 - 63, plates 1 - 28; 63 - 64, plate 30.

49. Muster Returns, April 1776, Charles H. Lesser, ed., The Sinews of Independence: Monthly Strength Reports of the Continental Army (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), 20.

50. A personal assessment based on my readings of the two drillbooks. The only major addition of Pickering was a chapter describing how to make powder cartridges for the musket.

51. Timothy Pickering, An Easy Plan of Discipline for a Militia (Salem: Samuel and Ebenezer Hall, 1775), 11.

52. Orders dated January 16, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 4, 246.

53. Orders dated, February 27, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed.,



The Writings of George Washington. vol. 4, 355 - 356.

54. Ibid., 356.

55. Ibid., and Orders dated February 28, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 4. 358 - 359.

56. Orders dated March 4, 1775, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 4, 368.

57. Orders dated March 3, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 4, 364.

58. Wallace, Appeal to Arms, 61.

59. Orders dated March 3, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 4, 364.

60. Orders dated July 23, 1775, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 3, 351. Washington wanted pikes thirteen feet in length made to supplant the defenses of the earthworks around Boston.

61. Orders dated March 3, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol 4, 364 - 365.

62. Orders dated March 11, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 4, 387.

63. Orders dated March 15, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 4, 400.

64. Orders dated March 13, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 4, 389 - 390.

65. Proclamation dated March 21, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 4, 412 - 413.

66. Orders dated April 14, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 4, 477.

67. Orders dated April 17, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 4, 485 - 486.

68. Orders dated July 7 and August 16, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 5, 231, 441.

69. Orders dated May 19 and 21, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol 5. 59, 71.

70. Orders dated May 7, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 5, 21.

71. Ibid.

72. Orders dated June 27, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 5, 181.

73. A personal assessment based on survey of the punishments given out from January through August and published in General Orders.

74. Orders dated June 28, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 5, 194 - 195.

75. Orders dated July 13, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 5, 268.

76. Washington continually stressed during June, July and August that muskets must be cleaned and repaired. Snapping occurred when troops pulled back on the flintlock mechanism, pulled the trigger when no powder was in the flashpan. This habit damaged the flints of the muskets unnecessarily.

77. One-third to one half of the forces Washington commanded in August 1776 were militia or state volunteers. Lesser, The Sinews of Independence, 30 - 31.

78. Orders dated August 31, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 5, 501. Washington said in a personal letter to John Hancock dated September 2, 1776 that he "was obliged to confess my want of confidence, in the generality of the Troops." Letter dated September 2, 1776 Washington to John Hancock, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 6, 4-5.

79. Clausewitz discusses the effect which victory or defeat has on new soldiers of a untested army in Chapter 10, Book 4, On War.

80. Orders dated September 14 and 20, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 6, 55, 79.

81. Orders dated September 17 and October 21, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 6, 64, 221.

82. Orders dated September 3, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 6, 8.

83. Orders dated October 1, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 6, 146.

84. Wallace, Appeal to Arms, 127.

85. See Royster, A Revolutionary People at War, 63 - 69.

86. Continental Army volunteers seldom exceeded 9000 to 10,000 men. The shortfall was made up by using militia drafts and state volunteers.

87. Letter dated February 1, 1776, Washington to Joseph Reed, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 4, 300.

88. Entry dated September 16, 1776, Ford, ed., Journals of the Continental Congress, vol. 5, 262 - 263.

89. Entry dated September 19, 1776, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, Ford, ed., The Journals of the Continental Congress, vol. 5, 784.

90. Entry dated September 20, 1776, Ford, ed., The Journals of the Continental Congress, 788 - 807.

91. Orders dated May 8, 1777, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 8., 28 - 29.

92. Letter dated May 26, 1777, Washington to General William Smallwood, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 8, 127 - 128. Washington also wrote letters to his generals William Woodford (May 10), John Sullivan (May 23), and Alexander McDougall (May 23). stressing a similar message as he gave Smallwood.

93. Letter dated May 23, 1777, Washington to General Alexander McDougall, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol 8, 107 - 108.

94. Orders dated May 29, 1777, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 8, 141.

95. Orders dated June 12 and 15, 1777, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 8, 227 - 231, 250 - 251.

96. Joseph Bloomfield in his revolutionary war diary narrates a story which illustrate this point. He tells of an incident in which the centry from his company accidently

fired on a soldier from another company who did not respond to his call. The unit commanders then had to go back to ensure that their men knew what procedures were to be used. Mark E. Lender and James Kirby Martin, eds., Citizen Soldier: The Revolutionary War Journal of Joseph Bloomfield (Newark: The New Jersey Historical Society, 1982), 76.

97. Orders dated June 1, 1777, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 8, 155.

98. Orders dated February 6, 1777, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol 7, 112.

99. Orders dated July 6, 1777, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 8, 360.

100. Orders dated August 16, 1777, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol 9, 79 - 80.

101. Wallace, Appeal to Arms, 143, citing J. W. Fortescue, History of the British Army (London: np, 1899 - 1930), vol. III, 223.

102. Ibid., citing General Anthony Wayne as quoted in J.C. Miller, Triumph of Freedom (Boston: np, 1948), 206.

103. Washington announced in his Orders dated September 13 and October 11, 1777, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 9, 211, 254.

104. Orders dated October 12, 1777, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 9, 359 - 360.

105. Gates' victory was less the result of his superior generalship than it was of the Burgoyne's poor plan. Burgoyne was overextended, operating far from his base of supply in Canada. He needed support from Clinton which never arrived and was forced to surrender because his line of retreat back into Canada was cut off.

106. Orders dated October 15, 1777, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 9, 377.

107. Circular dated October 26, 1777, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 9, 441 - 442.

108. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 9, 440n60.

## CHAPTER 4

## Training to a Standard

As Washington was marching his small army to their winter encampment at Valley Forge, the members of the Continental Congress were again trying to correct the deficiencies of the army. On December 13, 1778, without consulting Washington, Congress voted that "an appointment be made of inspectors general, agreeable to the practice of the best European armies."<sup>1</sup> Washington was unhappy with Congress' actions and initially opposed the man they had selected as inspector-general. Yet, eventually Washington came to rely on the inspector general and his advice. What changed to make Washington accept the inspector general and how did they improve the army?

Congress gave the inspector general much greater authority than Washington had envisioned when he had proposed the position to his general officers. He had conceived of the inspector general being responsible for "establishing one uniform sett of manoeuvres and manual . . ."<sup>2</sup> However, Congress gave the inspector general not only the authority to "review from time to time, the troops, and to see that every officer and soldier be instructed in the exercise and manoeuvres which may be established by the

Board of War," but also the power to examine the clothing, arms and accoutrements of soldiers, the pay books of all regiments, and the muster rolls. Congress wanted the inspector general to inspect twice a year, at the beginning and end of each campaign, and report directly to it. The inspector general, as created by the Congress, did not work<sup>3</sup> for Washington.

Washington opposed the system that Congress had created because he distrusted the intentions of some of the men involved. He believed that Thomas Conway, the man Congress had selected as the inspector general, and General Horatio Gates, the new President of the Board of War, and several congressmen were conspiring to threaten his position as<sup>4</sup> Commander-in-Chief. At first, Washington concealed his displeasure but informed Conway in a letter dated December 30, 1777, that his promotion to major general might cause "those brigadiers, who by your promotion are superceded . . . to remonstrate against it."<sup>5</sup> However, Washington's criticism of the appointment went much farther than concern for his subordinates' feelings. Washington openly condemned Conway in a letter written to the Congress early the next month and claimed that Conway was "my enemy" and that he should not expect to be received "in the language of a warm<sup>6</sup> and cordial friend . . . ."

Although Washington did promise that he would support

Conway in "fulfilling the duties of his appointment," Conway recognized that Washington's attack had compromised his position as inspector general.<sup>7</sup> He sought instead to command an American invasion into Canada proposed by Gates and planned for the summer of 1778. Washington opposed his assignment to this position, and when Congress refused to give him command of a division, Conway resigned from the service.<sup>8</sup>

#### Steuben Trains an Army

As Conway prepared to tender his resignation Baron Frederick William von Steuben arrived in York, Pennsylvania,<sup>9</sup> seeking employment with the American Army. Steuben, unlike Conway, had insured that he would offend neither Washington nor Congress in his quest for a position in the Continental Army. When he arrived in the colonies he had written immediately to both Washington and the Congress saying that he came as a volunteer seeking neither "riches nor titles" but only the opportunity to "render your country all the service in my power, and to deserve the title of a citizen of America, by fighting for the cause of your liberty." Additionally, he told Washington that he would serve without rank to prevent offending the other officers already serving and that he would proceed from Boston only after receiving Washington's approval.<sup>10</sup>

In late December Washington informed Steuben that only Congress could accept the services of a foreign officer and directed that he proceed immediately to York, Pennsylvania. Steuben did so and presented himself to the members of the Congress on February 6, 1778. Congress was pleased to hear Steuben's limited conditions for service -- that they defray his expenses while he was in their employment and that Congress provide commissions for his aides -- and in accordance with their earlier resolution of January 14, 1778, Congress "cheerfully accept[ed] his services as a volunteer in the services of these states, and wish[ed] him to repair to General Washington's quarters as soon as convenient." He departed York on February 19, 1778, and arrived at Valley Forge on February 23, 1778.<sup>11</sup>

Steuben found the Continental Army at Valley Forge in poor condition. Its ranks had thinned to just over 6,000 soldiers present and fit for duty. The muster rolls revealed another 5,000 men were sick and present or present but without clothes. The army also lacked food, arms, and ammunition. Under such conditions Steuben was surprised to see any soldiers at all.

Steuben continued to assess the condition of the army. He found its various departments -- quartermaster general, paymaster, and commissary -- all patterned on the British, and concluded that they were all "bad copies of a bad



original."<sup>12</sup> Steuben also discovered that the size of units, which Congress had specified, varied considerably. The constant flow of men in and out of camp made the terms attached to units meaningless. Some companies consisted of as few as one person while brigades often existed with fewer men than some regiments. Additionally, the soldiers of the army ignored their responsibilities to maintain their equipment; while "the captains and the colonels did not consider their companies and their regiments as corps confided to them by the United States for the[ir] care . . .

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The army was also deficient tactically. The unpredictable size of the units prevented the proper execution of battlefield maneuvers. The generals could not predict how units would perform on a particular day because as the units' strength varied so did their ability to take up space on the line of battle. Even when properly manned, the units could not work in unison because there existed no standard organization. Some units formed for battle with three platoons while others with eight. The whim of the regimental commanders controlled what system was adopted. Steuben found:

"only one thing in which they were uniform, and that was in the way of marching in the maneuvers and on the line of march. They all adopted the mode of marching in files used by the Indians." 14.

Washington acknowledged these deficiencies and requested that Steuben develop a plan to correct them. General Nathanael Greene, Colonel John Laurens, and Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Hamilton assisted Steuben in his efforts "to form a plan in conformity with the spirit of the nation . . . ." Steuben praised them for their efforts because they knew what "might likely succeed so as not to disgust the officers belonging to the different States."<sup>15</sup>

In early March Steuben proposed a plan in which:

"an inspector general ought to be appointed at once, who should establish a uniform system for forming the troops, for exercising and maneuvering them; for their duties in the camp and on the march, and for the duties of the guards, pickets and sentries. He should also define and point out the duties of every officer, from the colonel to the corporal . . . ."

Steuben also believed none of this could effectively happen unless the inspector general could inspect for compliance. He proposed that the inspector general must be allowed to check all the records of the army and the equipment belonging to the troops. To help the inspector general in his duties there should be one colonel in each division and a major in each brigade to establish what the commander-in-chief thought proper to implement.<sup>16</sup> Though this plan differed little from that proposed in the Continental Congress' earlier resolution, Washington accepted Steuben's draft. Soon afterward Washington asked

Steuben if he would be willing to undertake the task of training the Army.

Steuben, though demanding, did not expect American soldiers to act like Prussians on the battlefield. Instead, he combined his technical knowledge with his understanding of the American soldiers' motivation and experience to create a system of tactics that would work in the Continental Army.<sup>17</sup> His system revealed itself through his training of Washington's guards. Steuben drilled these soldiers personally, spending many hours on the drillfield showing this company how "to carry arms, stand at ease, to load, take aim, fire by platoons, and charge with the bayonet."<sup>18</sup> He taught them how to march and how to form using one standard and simple set of maneuvers. Steuben explained to the troops why certain maneuvers were necessary because he believed that American soldiers would perform better if they understood why they were required to do something. He ignored, however, the manual exercise because he knew that to attack the one facet of the soldiers' training to which most commanders had paid attention would most likely doom him to failure. Soon Washington's guards<sup>19</sup> were an example for the rest of the army.

Steuben's impressive display with the guards convinced Washington to implement the Baron's program. In General Orders dated March 22, 1778, Washington suspended all

training in maneuver until Steuben was prepared to introduce his new system to the army.<sup>20</sup> But, Washington could not wait until Steuben published his procedures. Steuben therefore taught his inspectors one day the lessons they would teach the troops the next day.<sup>21</sup> This process began on March 25 and continued through April and May. Washington knew the system would tax his soldiers; and on March 28, 1778, when he announced that Steuben was appointed the inspector general, he also told the army that:

"the importance of establishing a uniform system of useful manoeuvres and regularity of discipline must be obvious, the deficiency of our Army in these respects must be equally so; the time we shall probably have to introduce the necessary reformatations is short, without the most active exertions therefore of officers of every class it will be impossible to derive the advantages proposed from this institution . . . ." 22.

Steuben succeeded because Washington insured that the officers trained the troops using the maneuvers Steuben developed. Washington directed that each regiment train each morning and afternoon and only under the watchful eye of Steuben or one of his assistants. Where before Steuben's arrival Washington had allowed units to train using any system, he now claimed "any alteration or innovations will again plunge the Army into that contrariety and confusion from which it is endeavouring to emerge."<sup>23</sup> Throughout the army at Valley Forge Washington stressed uniformity. Washington even told Steuben's sub-inspectors that "they are

not to practice a single manoeuvre without his [Steuben's] direction, nor in a method different from it."<sup>24</sup>

Steuben and Washington did not limit their concerns solely to the improvement of the battlefield proficiency of the army. Steuben also instructed the guards how to execute properly their duties in mounting guard and rendering honors to officers.<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, Washington began to repeat again his demands for a clean camp and personal hygiene.<sup>26</sup>

Washington and Steuben sought to place the army on a sound footing and their actions, when combined, promoted improvements in almost all areas. They even joined in a successful effort to have the army's organization replaced by one that was more flexible yet one which made the terms applied to units, such as companies and regiments, useful for planning purposes.<sup>27</sup>

The combination of Steuben's detailed instructions, Washington's support, and the soldiers' exertions soon yielded visible results. Washington praised the "exactness and the order" that characterized the army's maneuvers on May 5, 1778, that celebrated the announcement of the Franco-American alliance. Washington claimed that the soldiers' maneuvers were "a pleasing evidence of the progress they are making in military improvement . . . ." <sup>28</sup> What also pleased Washington was the news that his army's forage parties, which had operated away from Valley Forge at

some risk, now had become more aggressive. Washington recognized that not only was Steuben's training improving the soldiers' tactical proficiency, but his lessons were also building the confidence of the soldiers.<sup>29</sup>

The alliance with France provided Washington his first opportunity to test the newly learned military skills of his troops.<sup>30</sup> General Henry Clinton, the new commander of British forces in North America, was worried that his army in Philadelphia might be trapped should a French fleet and an American army combine their efforts. He decided during the first week of June 1778 to withdraw his army and any loyalist who felt compelled to join him to New York City. Clinton, unable to transport all his soldiers and fleeing loyalists to New York by ship, was forced to march a portion of the army across New Jersey. He obtained, however, one advantage when he split his forces; Washington's army was denied an unimpeded advance to the vicinity of New York City.

Washington shadowed Clinton's movements across New Jersey and on June 28, 1778, Washington's men overtook the British at Monmouth Courthouse in Freehold, New Jersey. The Continental Army's advanced corps initiated the battle; but their commander, General Charles Lee, did not pursue the Americans' advantages with any vigor. He was a recently returned prisoner of war and was unfamiliar with the

training which Steuben had initiated. Though British officers commented that the Americans appeared well trained and were "marching very rapidly and in good order,"<sup>31</sup> Lee lacked confidence in his men's abilities and ordered his forces to withdraw. Washington, discovering the flight, reformed his army and required his men to stand fast. Once reformed the troops performed admirably and withstood and repelled British infantry assaults. Slowly, fighting in the style of a European army, the Continentals gained an advantage over the British. Washington's troops forced Clinton to withdraw his forces until their flanks were fixed on two tree lines. Darkness arrived before Washington could prepare another assault; and Clinton was able to break contact with Washington's army and withdraw.

Washington considered the Battle of Monmouth an overwhelming American success even though he knew a greater victory had eluded him owing to Lee's timidity. His soldiers had fought well and Steuben's training had been apparent. The soldiers even charged successfully at one point in the battle with bayonet. The Continental Army had for the first time forced the British into battle and fought under conditions which previously had favored the British. But Washington would count no more victories in 1778. Monmouth was Washington's last major test of arms until the Yorktown campaign in 1781, for as Clinton's army moved to

New York City, and Washington's, to the Highlands and New Jersey, the war shifted to the southern colonies.<sup>32</sup>

The British decided to transfer the war to the Southern colonies during the spring of 1778. They hoped to seize Georgia and the Carolinas as a base from which they could then blockade the remaining colonies' ports. Their strategy was influenced by numerous factors, including a shortage of British soldiers caused by Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga and reports that many in the south still were loyal to the King.<sup>33</sup> They found, however, that they were as incapable of securing these colonies as they were of subduing the rebellion in the north. The reports of loyalty had been exaggerated and the climate, topography, and geography of the south prevented the British from effectively securing control of the area. During the next three years the British and their loyalists supporters were to fight numerous battles -- at Kettle Creek, Camden, King's Mountain, Cowpens, and Guilford Courthouse -- against a predominately militia army commanded by Continental officers.<sup>34</sup>

#### Under the Rules

After Monmouth Washington continued to use Steuben to develop and mold the training of the soldiers. He had in May 1778 permanently posted Steuben to the rank of major



general and installed him as the inspector general. Though this had caused some dissention within the officers' ranks, Washington fully supported Steuben's efforts to train and discipline the army. Steuben, however, was slightly disappointed for he had wanted a line command. Nevertheless, he responded to Washington's orders and turned his energies to reorganizing the inspectorship and the army to suit Washington's desires and the soldiers' needs. From July 1778 until March 1779 Steuben worked diligently to codify how the army should fight and train.<sup>35</sup>

During Steuben's numerous absences his assistants continued to train the soldiers and the officers of the army in the maneuvers Steuben had established. Washington helped by requiring constant drilling of the soldiers. During the summer and fall months the soldiers and their officers were on the parade field a minimum of 4 hours each day.<sup>36</sup> Washington also demanded similar exertions by those forces not under his direct supervision in the Highlands of New York. He wrote to his other commanders and directed them that any training which was conducted must be "agreeable to the rules and regulations established for that purpose."<sup>37</sup> Washington had decided not to let variety reappear in his army's drill.

While Washington continued to demand that the army train during the winter months Steuben worked in

Philadelphia to complete his department's rules and the army's first regulation. Although Washington approved "the conciseness of the work, founded on your general principles of rejecting everything superfluous," he required Steuben<sup>38</sup> "to be more minute and particular in some [other] parts." Washington wanted the regulation published in time to prepare the army for its next campaign. He wrote the President of the Congress on March 11, 1779, and explained that should the plan of discipline "appear agreeable to Congress, it will be necessary that they give it their public sanction, that the regulation may be carried into execution as soon as possible."<sup>39</sup>

Congress approved the Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of The United States on March 29, 1779, and ordered that 3,000 copies of the regulation be printed and distributed.<sup>40</sup> The regulations, or "The Blue Book" as it was to be called by the officers of the army, codified many of the topics which Washington had at various times dwelled on in his general orders. But it also presented some information which Washington had never seen fit to give the troops such as challenge and password procedures or how to charge with the bayonet. Steuben sought to create uniformity in the army and develop the soldiers' proficiency in all required skills. Twenty-four of the twenty-five chapters of Steuben's regulation

standardized the life of all soldiers, officer and enlisted,<sup>41</sup> in the army. Steuben told them how they were to dress, maneuver, march, make camp, guard, and preserve their health. He wrote in enough detail so that no one could misunderstand what he and Washington expected of a soldier. The Continental Army now had one regulation and one set of maneuvers that governed its actions. Soldiers throughout the army now could expect to know what actions other units might take in combat.<sup>42</sup>

In addition, Steuben also thoroughly explained what Washington perceived as the responsibilities of the various grades. He told them that "the commanding officer of each regiment is to be answerable for the general instructions of the regiment, and is to exercise or cause to exercise, the officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers whenever he thinks proper."<sup>43</sup> The regimental major was "particularly charged with the discipline, arms, accoutrements, cloathing . . ." of his soldiers. He was also "to make the regiment perform all their exercises and manoeuvres with the greatest vivacity and precision . . ."<sup>44</sup> Washington wanted captains to stress the soldiers discipline, health, welfare and "to gain the love of his men by treating them with every possible kindness and humanity, inquiring into their complaints, and, when well founded, seeing them redressed."<sup>45</sup>

Washington made each sergeant and corporal "answerable for the squad committed to his care," and next to the regimental majors the noncommissioned officers were most responsible for the soldier's training. The sergeants and corporals taught the recruits and soldiers how "to dress with a soldier like air, how to clean their arms, . . . [how] to challenge briskly, and everything else they are to do in their different situations." They prepared the soldier so he could obey the orders of his officers when performing the maneuvers outlined in the regulations. The regulations even outlined the duties of the private so that he knew what to do.

Washington immediately implemented the regulation when he learned that Congress had approved it. He did not want his army to wait until the regulation had been printed to use its procedures. So, while the army waited for Congress to publish the regulations, Washington required:

"all the brigade inspectors and Adjutants of regiments to attend at the Orderly Office . . . to copy . . . the chapters of the Baron Steuben's instructions which are to be strictly adhered to and immediately put into practice." 48.

As much as the regulation improved the army, Washington's continued enforcement of its provisions improved it more. He ensured that the soldiers were trained using its principles. He demanded in his orders that commanders "redouble their zeal in carrying it [the

regulation] into execution," and ordered them to insure "no waiter or other soldier is to be exempted from this exercise."<sup>49</sup> Washington also wanted his officers "zealously [to] employ themselves to become thoroughly acquainted with these regulations . . . ."<sup>50</sup> He returned his units to the parade field and throughout the spring and the early summer the army trained under the watchful eyes of Steuben, Steuben's inspectors, and Washington himself.

That summer, the American attack against Stony Point confirmed that the Continental Army had made rapid progress under Steuben's system. In this action, the soldiers under the leadership of General Anthony Wayne made a night-time assault against prepared British positions on July 15, 1779. But, the fact that the attack was at night was only half the story. The Americans never loaded their weapons; they used only the bayonet to kill, wound, or capture more than 600 British soldiers. The Continentals' use of the bayonet at Stony Point is significant because before Steuben's arrival the soldiers seldom used it except as a cooking implement. Now this weapon had successfully been used as the primary weapon in an American assault. The Americans' assault also indicated the soldiers' new prowess. Now they were charging entrenchments rather than<sup>51</sup> hiding behind an earthen wall as they had in the past.

In late June 1779, before Wayne's attack on Stony

Point, Steuben had written Washington asking that the responsibilities of his office be increased. He proposed to the Commander-in-Chief that he be allowed to begin inspecting the troops as outlined in Washington's orders dated May 12, 1779.<sup>52</sup> Washington concurred and announced to the army on July 1, 1779, that:

"The whole Army is for the future to undergo a monthly inspection, in which the State of the men's arms accoutrements, ammunition, clothing and camp equipage is to be carefully examined. At these inspections the following returns are to be made to the inspector . . . ."

The returns of the regiments were then to be "communicated to the officers commanding divisions and brigades . . . as well as the Commander in Chief . . . ."<sup>53</sup>

Steuben and his assistants conducted the first inspections during the first week of August 1779.<sup>54</sup> From then until the army was disbanded at the end of the war, these reviews were a constant feature of the soldiers' life. Each month, or as frequently as possible during a campaign, Steuben would review the troops. He would check the soldiers' clothing, making sure that all soldiers still possessed what they had been issued; and that their weapons and accoutrements, worked properly and were clean. He would praise those soldiers who were prepared and scold those who were not. Steuben similarly awarded praise or condemnation to the officers of the units he inspected. But, regardless

of the rank, the soldiers worked diligently to prepare for inspections by Steuben and he obtained the results he desired. Steuben's inspections reduced the losses of muskets and bayonets, estimated at over 5,000 and 10,000 respectively in 1776, to almost nothing by the war's end, while the dress of the soldier improved considerably as losses of clothing were also reduced.<sup>55</sup>

When Washington combined the Regulations for the Discipline of the Troops of the United States with the system of monthly inspections he took the final step required to transform the Continental Army from a "commission'd mob" which it had been in 1775 into a coherent military force. The regulation defined the tactical procedures of the army so that it could as a whole fight effectively on the battlefield and survive; the system of inspections taught the soldiers logistical responsibility and ensured that they had the equipment to fight.

Washington continued to stress the training of the soldier, but the training became more complex. In May 1780 Washington ordered Steuben to train his units how to integrate more effectively the infantry and artillery. Steuben was "every Monday Wednesday and Saturday . . . [to] exercise on the Green near Morristown two battalions detached from the line with four field pieces [artillery] . . ."<sup>56</sup> However, whereas prior to 1779 Washington had

specified in writing the type of training he desired, he could now direct his officers to train in accordance with a particular chapter of the regulation. In July 1780, for example, he told his officers that as they trained the new levies for the army "the greatest attention is to be paid to the instruction of the recruits and drafts agreeable to Chapter 5 of the regulation . . . ."<sup>57</sup>

By 1780 Steuben's regulation had supplanted Washington's general orders as the focus of the soldiers' tactical preparations. Washington wanted it that way and told his officers to obey the regulation because:

"it is impossible for the Commander in chief to discharge the general duties of his station while he is incumbered by the many minutious details which are daily brought before him only because the regulation is not attended to and made the rule of Conduct." 58.

However, Washington's orders still played an important role in the preparation of the soldier for service. Washington continued to use his general orders to inform and to motivate his soldiers. This became critically important in the last years of the war as the army shrank in size, sometimes to few more than 2,000 men.<sup>59</sup> Washington had to keep his soldiers informed if only to encourage the few remaining to stay in the ranks. He again began to praise those units of his army that had performed well in local skirmishes, informed the troops about victories of the army



in the south, told the troops that they would receive their back pay, and promised them that French military support was on the way.<sup>60</sup>

For a six-month period, June through November 1780, Washington also published watchwords which, like the countersigns, were short phrases which could remind the soldiers of their military duties as well as their greater responsibility to the American people. The origin or the use of the phrases are not revealed, but the messages which the watchwords provide are readily apparent. Through them, Washington amplified his earlier calls for "vigilance," "silence," or "caution" by the soldiers. He also reminded them at other times that they were fighting for "independence," "freedom," or "glory."<sup>61</sup>

Through his orders Washington also stressed the physical well-being of his soldiers. Though Steuben's Regulation did establish procedures outlining field sanitation and hygiene, Washington believed that he as commander-in-chief still needed to advise his troops how they could preserve their health. In spring he told his men that since "the hot season is approaching, all possible attention is to be payed to the cleanliness in the interior and the environs of the camp." He would then advise them to open windows, air out the straw, and isolate the sick.<sup>62</sup> Each fall as the cold weather approached, he specify how to

build huts properly and how the men should maintain their huts during the winter.

### The Results

By 1781 the repetition of drill and inspections had molded a Continental Army that was as professional as any European force. Externally the changes were easily seen -- the soldiers now maneuvered in regiments, brigades, and divisions; equipment losses were significantly reduced; and the guards performed their duties well. But the army had also improved in many ways that were not readily apparent. These improvements, visible and invisible, were displayed, however, during the last campaign of the war.

Washington had planned during the spring of 1781 for an attack against New York during the summer months. <sup>63</sup> His and General Comte de Rochambeau's armies had joined together in anticipation of that attack in June. But, the attacked seemed doomed to failure when Washington discovered that Clinton had prepared strong defenses around the city's perimeter. Then in August Washington received two pieces of news which changed all his plans -- Lord Cornwallis, the British commander in the south, was moving his army to Yorktown and Admiral DeGrasse with 3,000 French troops had set sail on August 13 from the Caribbean enroute to the Chesapeake Bay. On August 19, 1779, Washington's and

Rochambeau's army began to move south to Yorktown where they hoped to trap a British army.

Meanwhile, in Virginia events were unfolding which would eventually bring Washington a major victory. Cornwallis had fought his way north from the Carolinas into Virginia during the spring and summer of 1781. In August, attempting to comply with orders from Clinton, Cornwallis had moved his 7,000 man army onto the Yorktown Peninsula. There it was to establish a well defended base for British shipping and from which a campaign in the Mid-Atlantic states could be launched later that year.<sup>64</sup> Washington sent orders to the Marquis de Lafayette to prevent Cornwallis' withdrawal from the peninsula, and on August 30 Lafayette and DeGrasse joined forces and effectively sealed off all land and sea escape routes.

As all this was transpiring, Washington's army was moving south. The army's movements showed how much it had improved, for Washington had no need to place detailed march instructions in his general orders. Washington had found little wrong with any of the marches conducted that summer; in fact he repeatedly had "express[ed] his satisfaction at the good order and regularity which this . . . march has been executed."<sup>65</sup> The soldiers had performed well. All but 3,000 soldiers had broken camp around New York on August 19, 1781, and moved silently to the south. Their preparation

and departure had been conducted so secretly that the British in New York did not discover until September 1 that the main American Army had moved. By then the Continentals were preparing to march triumphantly through Philadelphia.

Arriving near Yorktown on September 28 the combined American and French armies began siege operations against the trapped British army. The Continental soldiers' ability to engage in this truly European style of war was impressive. Neither Washington nor Steuben had trained the soldiers in siege operations, and Washington was unable to publish any siege regulation until October 6, 1781.<sup>66</sup> Yet, the troops were able to open the first parallel without delay because they responded effectively to orders from their officers.

On October 11 the Americans opened their second parallel, but to continue its advancement two British redoubts had to be taken. On the night of October 14 the Americans seized Redoubt Number 10 while the French seized Redoubt Number 9. The assault was again an impressive display of the Continental Army's proficiency. Led by Alexander Hamilton, the Americans seized a well defended and well prepared position using the bayonet. Their success brought the army its victory, for Cornwallis recognized that the loss of the two redoubts made his army's position untenable. On October 19, 1781, Cornwallis surrendered.

After Yorktown, Washington and his army returned to the Hudson Highland and waited for the eventual peace. Washington continued to insist the soldiers of his army train and improve their military skills. The troops drilled because they knew that British still held New York City and that elsewhere the fighting had not yet stopped. Steuben also continued to inspect the troops to insure their readiness. The Continental Army had developed its military skills and administrative systems to the point that had the people willed it, the force might easily have become a standing army.<sup>67</sup> However, the people did not desire to keep an instrument of tyranny in place during times of peace, and beginning in September 1783 the army slowly disbanded.

Washington's soldiers had learned a great deal during the last five years of the war and Steuben had been important to their education. He arrived at a time when Washington and his generals had recognized the need to standardize the tactical procedures that the army used in the field. Steuben saw this need, but also recognized that the Continental Army must be proficient in garrison duties as well. Through his regulations and system of inspections Steuben taught the Continental Army how to survive during times of peace and war. Steuben did move slowly and only after Washington had approved his actions. He recognized that Washington held the key to his success and that through

Washington could he mold an Americanized version of a European army.

Washington and Steuben both deserve credit for the improvement of the Continental Army after 1778. Steuben provided the technical expertise and the drive to make the army uniform in its practices. Washington was, however, wise enough and persistent enough to insure that the program which Steuben developed was implemented and successfully carried to fruition. Washington in many ways had the harder task because he had to balance the needs of his army with the army's ability to respond, and only he possessed the moral authority to make Steuben's program work.

## Notes

1. Entry dated December 13, 1777, Ford, et al, eds, The Journals of the Continental Congress, vol. IX, 1023 - 1026. Congress authorized the selection of two inspectors. A search of Washington's correspondence reveals no letters between he and Congress that discuss the position of inspector general before or after Washington's Circular to his general officers dated October 26, 1777.

2. Circular to the General Officers, dated October 26, 1777, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 9, 441 - 442.

3. See note 1.

4. For a detailed discusssion of the Conway Cabal see Royster, A Revolutionary People at War, 179 - 189.

5. Letter dated December 30, 1777, Washington to Thomas Conway, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 10, 227.

6. Letter dated January 2, 1778, Washington to the President of Congress, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 10, 249.

7. Ibid.

8. Wallace, Appeal to Arms, 176.

9. Steuben had been a Captain in the Prussian Army and had served under Frederick the Great. The Count de Saint Germain, French Minister of War in 1777, introduced Steuben to the American ambassadors in Paris, Benjamin Franklin and Silas Deane. Through the efforts of these three men Steuben was encouraged to seek employment in the Continental Army. See Friedrich Kapp, The Life of Frederick William Von Steuben, Major General in the Revolutionary (New York: Mason Brothers, 1859), Chapters. 2 - 3. Hereafter refered to as Kapp, Steuben.

10. Letters dated December 6, 1777, Steuben to Congress, Steuben to Washington, quoted in Kapp, Steuben, 95 - 97.

11. Ibid., 103; Entry dated January 14, 1778, Ford, et

- al, eds., The Journal of the Continental Congress, vol. X, 50.
12. Steuben As quoted in Kapp, Steuben, 114.
13. Steuben As quoted in Kapp, Steuben, 114 - 117, 118.
14. Ibid.; Steuben as quoted in Rudolf Cronau, The Army of the American Revolution and its Organizer (New York: Rudolf Cronau, 1923), 16.
15. Steuben as quoted in Kapp, Steuben, 124.
16. Steuben as quoted in Kapp, Steuben, 124 - 125.
17. Royster, A Revolutionary People at War, 216 - 220.
18. Steuben as quoted in Kapp, Steuben, 127.
19. Ibid., 127 - 128. At the same time Steuben was training the guards he was also training his subinspectors and the brigade-majors who had been selected by Washington to assist Steuben.
20. Orders dated March 22, 1778, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 11, 132.
21. Orders dated March 24, 1778, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 11, 140.
22. Orders dated March 28, 1778, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 11, 163.
23. Orders dated May 4, 1778, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 11, 346.
24. Ibid.
25. Beginning on March 29 and continue through April and May Steuben would instruct the officers and noncommissioned officers in guard mount procedures. See orders dated March 28 and April 2, 1778, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 11, 163 - 164, 200. Washington published "Honours due from Guards to the Generals and other Officers" in his Orders dated May 16, 1778, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 11, 399.
26. Orders dated April 8 and 10, 1778, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 11, 228, 232.
27. On May 27, 1778 Congress passed a resolution which reorganized the infantry of the American Army and which



standardized the internal organization of the regiments. Entry dated May 27, 1778, Ford, et al, eds., The Journal of the Continental Congress, vol. XI, 538 - 539.

28. Orders dated May 7, 1778, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 11, 362 - 363.

29. Dupuy, People & Events of the American Revolution, 163.

30. Information relating to the Battle of Monmouth taken from Wallace, Appeal to Arms, Chapter XVII.

31. Major Andre's Journal (Tarrytown: np, 1930), 79; as quoted in Wallace, Appeal to Arms, 187.

32. The period of inactivity may have also been Washington's only option militarily. The strength of his Army began a slow but steady decline until he had fewer than 3,000 combat ready soldiers at his command during the winter of 1781. See Lesser, Sinews of Independence.

33. For a fuller discussion of the British Southern strategy see Ira D. Gruber, "British Southern Strategy" in The Revolutionary War in the South: Power, Conflict, and Leadership, ed., W. Robert Higgins (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1979), 205 - 238.

34. In February 1781, for example, General Greene commanded an army of approximately 2000 men of which one-half was militia. Lessers, Sinews of Independence, 196.

35. Steuben was formally posted as Inspector General and given the rank of Major General on May 5, 1778. The promotion was opposed by some officers who believed that Steuben was gaining too much influence. They complained to Washington and had him in his General Orders dated June 15, 1778 restrict Steuben's ability to maneuver units at his discretion. See Kapp, Steuben, 151 - 154; Orders dated June 15, 1778, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 12, 66 - 68; Letters dated June 18, 1778, Washington to Steuben and Washington to the President of Congress, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, 78 - 79, 81 - 82. However, Washington did believe that Steuben should be supreme in his field and when Chevalier de la Neuvelle, the inspector assigned the Gate's Northern Army, began to call himself the "Inspector General in the Army commanded by General Gates," Washington wrote to Congress to have the situation corrected. See, Letter dated July 24, 1778, Washington to Henry Laurens, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 12, 222 - 226.

36. Orders dated August 1, 1778, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 12, 256. These orders established the four hours per day training while in the Highlands. Later orders varied the start and end times of training.

37. Letter dated November 24, 1778, Washington to General Alexander McDougall, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 13, 320 - 321.

38. Letter dated February 26, 1779, Washington to Steuben, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 14, 151 - 152.

39. Letter dated March 11, 1779, Washington to the President of Congress, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 14, 230.

40. Entry dated March 29, 1779, Ford, et al, eds., The Journal of the Continental Congress, vol. XIII, 384 - 385.

41. See appendix 1. for listing of chapter and subchapter headings.

42. I used the 1782 reprinting of the Regulation. U.S. Inspector General's Office, Regulation for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States (Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin, 1782 and the text of the regulation printed in Kapp's, Steuben, 199 - 214.

43. U.S. Inspector Generals Office, Regulation for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States, 5.

44. Ibid., 76 - 79.

45. Ibid., 79 - 81.

46. Ibid., 85 - 87.

47. Ibid., 87 - 89.

48. Orders dated April 12, 1779, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 14, 369. On this date he ordered chapters 5 and 6 be copied. As the training of the units progressed the other chapters were also copied. The regulation arrived in camp in pamphlet format in late June 1779. See orders dated June 30, 1779.

49. Orders dated May 4, 1779, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 14, 488.

50. Orders dated May 12, 1779, Fitzpatrick, ed., The

Writings of George Washington, vol. 15, 46 - 47.

51. Wallace, Appeal to Arms, 196 - 198 source of battle narrative.

52. Letter dated July 1, 1775, Washington to Steuben, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 15, 352 - 353. Steuben wrote a letter to Washington dated June 29, 1779; its current location is not known. 353n89. Washington General Orders of May 12, 1779 announced to the army the instructions for the Inspector General Department. In addition to the inspector generals training responsibilities Congress had directed that he also be responsible for the inspection of the soldiers, his arms and accoutrements, clothing, and regimental records. See Orders dated May 12, 1779, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 15, 47 - 49. Congress had passed permanent rules for the Inspector General's Department on February 29, 1779.

53. Orders dated July 1, 1779, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 15, 356 - 358.

54. Orders dated July 31, 1779, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 16, 22. Inspections were to be conducted between August 1 - 5, 1779.

55. Royster, A Revolutionary People at War, 239.

56. Orders dated May 12, 1780, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 18, 250.

57. Orders dated July 11, 1780, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 19, 153.

58. Orders dated February 12, 1780, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 18, 6.

59. During the Winter 1780 - 1781 the Continental Army fell to its lowest strength. See Lesser, Sinews of Independence, 192 - 200.

60. Orders dated January 6, 1781, Victory at Cowpens; November 1, 1780, pay; June 27, 1781, arrival of French; Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 21, 63; vol. 20, 277; vol. 21, 268.

61. See orders dated June through November 1780, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 18 - 20. The watchwords may have been used for security within the camp, while the parole and countersign were used on its perimeter.

62. Orders dated March 8 and May 6, 1780, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 18, 95; 337.

63. For a full discussion of the Yorktown Campaign see Wallace Appeal to Arms, Chapter XXII.

64. Gruber, "Britian's Southern Strategy," 236 - 237.

65. Orders dated July 2, 1781, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 22, 323.

66. Washington published "Regulations for the Service of a Siege" in his orders dated October 6, 1781, Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, vol. 23, 179 - 185.

67. Robert K. Wright asserts that the training of the soldier continued to improve and reached its zenith in 1782. That year Washington maneuvered 5 brigades, complete with their artillery and baggage by boat from Newburgh to Verplank's Point. Wright, "'Nor is Their Army to be Dispised': The Emmergence of the Continental Army as a Military Institution," in Arms and Independence: The Military Character of the American Revolution, eds., Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1984), 72.

### Conclusion

On April 19, 1775, more than 4,000 militiamen fought the British who had advanced to Concord to seize military supplies. They entered battle willingly and fought bravely, for they were protecting their families and their liberties from a tyrannical oppressor. The militiamen fought, however, as individuals; they sniped at the retreating British from behind trees and fences and stayed until their ammunition was spent, or until they became frightened or tired. By nightfall many of them had returned home.

On August 19, 1781, 5,000 Continental soldiers, ignorant of the destination, began a march which would take them from New York to Yorktown, Virginia. They moved because their officers had ordered them. On September 28, 1781, the soldiers commenced siege operations in conjunction with the French Army; and during the next three weeks they pushed entrenchments forward, stood guard, and assaulted prepared defensive works until they forced the British army to surrender. Then, after celebrating their victory, the Continental soldiers marched back to the Hudson Highlands where they observed the British in New York until the peace treaty was signed two years later.

The comparison of the two armies is useful for it shows

how much the soldier of the American Revolution had changed during the course of the war. Though he was more versatile, more generally competent at making war, the soldier of 1781 was not much different than his peer of 1775. What had occurred was that Americans' understanding of preparedness for war had evolved during the revolution, and the soldier of 1781 was a product of that new understanding.

In 1775 the militiaman was well prepared to answer the call to arms. He had learned from pamphlets and sermons that it was his duty to fight for his liberties. He had also been told that he need not rival his British opponent in military skill because God supported Americans in their search for liberty and would give him superior moral courage and victory over the British soldier on the battlefield. So effective was the militiaman's moral preparation for war that he and his fellow militiamen responded to the call in such numbers as to force the British onto the defensive during the first months of the war.

However, the militia's preparation for war was defective. The emphasis on morality, virtue, and God's intervention had concealed the technical deficiencies of the American soldier. His training was also inadequate. Though it conformed to the training dictated by the available drillbooks and mirrored the British peace-time practices, his efforts prepared him only for battle. When he was

forced to go to war he found that he could not sustain himself, that indiscipline was rampant, and that camp hygiene was non-existent.

Washington recognized his soldiers' limitations and, using his General Orders, worked to correct them. In part he was driven by the need to preserve the forces that he had available. He had to insure that those soldiers he had could fight effectively not as a "commission'd mob" but as an army. Therefore, Washington stressed obedience to orders and personal hygiene because he believed that without these two attributes the soldier of 1775 would not be the soldier of 1776.

Slowly Washington prepared his soldiers for both battle and war. He ordered his officers to take every opportunity to increase the tactical abilities of the troops; but like their militia predecessors, the officers of the young Continental Army did not understand that maneuver, not musketry, was the key to victory in battle. They continued to train using familiar methods and discovered their weaknesses only after the army's defeat on Long Island and its flight across New Jersey. Nevertheless, even after Washington had begun to stress maneuver, the army still suffered one serious flaw -- its soldiers had not yet learned to fight as a whole, for each unit's organization and drill were not the same.

Washington had discovered the need to stress uniformity by the spring of 1777; but until the arrival of Steuben in 1778 he had not the time, the personnel, or perhaps the ability to implement policies which would promote this goal. Washington, however, found in Steuben an officer who could develop uniform policies and procedures which insured the army's tactical as well as physical survival. Using regulations and inspections, Washington and Steuben molded an army that was technically prepared to fight battles as well as wars.

But Washington also understood that the tactical effectiveness and the physical survival of the soldier was only one facet of his preparation for war. He recognized that the soldier needed to maintain his moral commitment to the struggle for independence. Throughout the war he continued to remind the soldier why he was fighting. He used chaplains, his general orders, and even passwords or watchwords to keep the soldier true to the revolution's goals. Though the army shrank in size during the final years of the war, Washington succeeded; some of the few soldiers who did remain may have been motivated by hopes of personal gain, but most were also devoted to the cause of independence.

The evolution of the soldier's preparation for war,



though it did significantly contribute to America's victory over Britain, was only one of several causes for the final victory. The Continental Army was helped by a variety of other factors -- the vastness of the country, British tactical and strategic ineptness, French support, and the local militias. Nevertheless, had the concept of preparedness not evolved as it did during the course of the American Revolution, victory would have been achieved more slowly.

## Appendix 1

The following are the chapter and subchapter headings from Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States.

- Chapter 1. Of the Arms and Accoutrements of the Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and Soldiers.
- Chapter 2. Objects with which the Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers should be acquainted.
- Chapter 3. Of the Formation of a Company.
- Chapter 4. Of the Formation of a Regiment.
- Chapter 5. Of the Instructions of Recruits.
- Chapter 6. The Exercise of a Company.
  - Art 1. Of the Opening of Ranks for Inspection.
  - Art 2. Of the Firing.
  - Art 3. Of the March.
  - Art 4. Of the Wheeling.
  - Art 5. of the breaking off and forming by the Oblique Step.
- Chapter 7. Exercise of a Battalion.
- Chapter 8. Of the Formation and Displaying of Columns, with the Method of changing Front.
  - Art 1. The Close Column formed on the Ground by the Right, the Right in Front.
  - Art 2. The Displaying of a Column formed by the Right, the Right in Front.
  - Art 3. The close Column formed on the Ground by the Left, the Left in Front.
  - Art 4. Displaying of Column formed on the Center, or the Fifth Platoon, the Right in Front.
  - Art 5. The close formed on the Center, or the Fifth Platoon, the Right in Front.
  - Art 6. Display of a Column having the Right in Front, the Centre, or Fifth Platoon.
  - Art 7. The close Column formed by the Right, Right in Front, displayed to the Right.
  - Art 8 The close Column formed by the Left, Left in Front, displayed to the Left.
  - Art 9. Of open Columns.
  - Art 10. Of changing the Front of a Line.
- Chapter 9. Of the March of Columns.
  - Art 1. The march of an open Column.
  - Art 2. Columns changing the Direction of their march.
  - Art 3. Passage of a Defile by a column.
  - Art 4. A Column crossing a Plain liable to be attacked by cavalry.
  - Art 5. A Column marching by its Flank.
- Chapter 10. Of a March in Line.
  - Art 1. The March to the Front.

- Art 2. Of the charge with the Bayonets.
- Art 3. Method of passing any obstacle in Front of a Line.
- Art 4. Passage of a Defile in Front, by Platoons.
- Art 5. Passage of Defile in Front, by Files.
- Art 6. Of the March in Retreat.
- Art 7. Passage of a Defile in Retreat, by Platoons.
- Art 8. Passage of a Defile in Retreat, by Files.
- Art 9. Method of Passing the Front Line to the Rear.
- Chapter 11. Of the disposition of the Field-pieces attached to the Brigades.
- Chapter 12. Of the Firings.
  - Art 1. Firing by Battalion.
  - Art 2. Firing by Division and Platoons.
  - Art 3. Firing advancing.
  - Art 4. Firing retreating.
- Chapter 13. Of the March of an Army or Corps.
- Chapter 14. Of the Baggage on the March.
- Chapter 15. The Manner of laying out a Camp, with the Order of Encampment.
- Chapter 16. Manner of Entering a Camp.
- Chapter 17. Necessary Regulations for preserving Order and Cleanliness in the Camp.
- Chapter 18. Of Roll-calls.
- Chapter 19. Of the Inspection of the Men, their dress Necessaries Arms, Accoutrements and Ammunition.
- Chapter 20. Of the different Beats of the Drum.
- Chapter 21. Of the Service of the Guards.
  - Art 1. Of the different Guards, with their Use.
  - Art 2. Of the Grand Parade.
  - Art 3. Of relieving Guards and Sentinels.
  - Art 4. Instructions to Officers on Guard.
  - Art 5. Method of going and receiving the Grand Rounds.
  - Art 6. Honors due from the Guards to General Officers and others.
- Chapter 22. Of the Arms and Ammunition, with the Method of preserving them.
- Chapter 23. Of the Treatment of the Sick.
- Chapter 24. Of Reviews.
  - Art 1. Of Reviews of Parade.
  - Art 2. Of Reviews of Inspections.
- Instructions for the Commandant of a Regiment.
  - for the Major.
  - for the Adjutant.
  - for the Quartermaster.
  - for the Captain.
  - for the Lieutenant.
  - for the Ensign.
  - for the Sergeant-Major.
  - for the Quartermaster-Master Sergeant.
  - for the First Sergeant of a Company.

for the Sergeants and Corporals.  
for the Private Soldier.  
Chapter 25. Of the Points of View.

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