



REVOLUTIONARY—FEDERALIST—REPUBLICAN:  
THE EARLY LIFE AND REPUTATIONS OF WILLIAM HULL

by

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of  
AddRan College of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Texas Christian University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

December 2007

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2007

## PREFACE

This study originated, as many dissertations do, with a graduate seminar paper—in this case for Dr. Gene Allen Smith’s “Age of Jefferson” course. The paper examined Governor and General William Hull’s notorious surrender of Detroit in 1812, and its aftermath: the court martial that pronounced him guilty of cowardice and other charges, his efforts to vindicate his “character,” and the evolving debate among both contemporaries and historians over his guilt and thus proper reputation. Convinced that the subject deserved more extensive treatment, I decided to expand it into a dissertation.

It became necessary to determine more fully who Hull was and what capabilities, personality, values and views, reputations, and experiences he brought to his ill-fated campaign. As research continued, what I had expected to serve mostly as background grew—in bulk, but also in terms of interest and significance independent of later events. I was surprised to discover a wealth of untapped material bearing on Hull’s earlier life and career, both as a trusted Revolutionary War officer and a rising, often controversial, figure in early republican Massachusetts. Moreover it became increasingly apparent that the earlier phases of his career had received no sustained scholarly attention and yet intersected with several important themes of early national politics and culture. It now seemed that the greater contribution would be to concentrate on this part of Hull’s life and career, and save examination of his later, more familiar roles for another time. The result is the work that follows. I hope it provides something of value and interest.

I am deeply grateful for the guidance, assistance, patience, and prayers of many people as I worked through this project. This begins with my longtime mentor, friend, and co-adviser of this dissertation, Dr. Kenneth R. Stevens, who first sparked my interest in the early American republic and has provided an abundance of wise professional counsel, scholarly critique, personal support, and good humor through every stage of my work. His editorial input was vital; his love of good coffee and used-book shops were just bonuses. Over many years he and his wife Nancy have been generous and encouraging to my wife and me in numerous ways. “Thanks” is insufficient but heartfelt for these dear friends. My gratitude also extends to my other co-adviser, the aforementioned Dr. Gene Allen Smith, who not only got me started on this project but motivated its further development and pointed me to important interpretive issues and source materials. He is a dedicated scholar, and I value the instruction and opportunities he provided. I wish to thank as well Lyndon B. Johnson Chair Dr. Mark T. Gilderhus and Dr. Todd M. Kerstetter for their careful reading and commentary as dissertation committee members.

The history department of the AddRan College of Arts and Sciences at Texas Christian University provided excellent academic training in a collegial environment. I received significant financial help and valuable experience through graduate and teaching assistantships. I thank the departmental office staff, my fellow graduate students, and most of all my professors. I would also express appreciation to Dr. Don Coerver, earlier as professor, more recently as Associate Dean, for his kind assistance.

Another individual deserves special acknowledgment and thanks. Lyndon B. Johnson Chair Emeritus Dr. Paul F. Boller assisted this project in several ways, not the

least of which was his personal interest and encouragement. He also provided financial assistance through his Boller Graduate Scholarship fund, and personally made possible a weeklong research trip to the Library of Congress, and a brief research excursion to Boston. I was delighted and honored that he also attended and participated in my dissertation defense.

With regard to research assistance, my gratitude ranges broadly. The archivists and staffs of the manuscript repositories cited in the bibliography were unfailingly friendly and helpful, whether in person, over the phone, or by email. For particularly kind and personal attention at various points I thank Susan D. Abele of the Newton History Museum in Newton, Massachusetts, J. Kevin Graffagnino of the Vermont Historical Society, Connell Gallagher of the Bailey/Howe Library at the University of Vermont, and Olga Tsapina of the Huntington Library. I also extend special thanks to the reference and interlibrary loan staffs of the Mary Couets Burnett Library at Texas Christian University, and to the librarians of the Ennis and Nancy Ham Library at Rochester College (Rochester Hills, Michigan), especially interlibrary loan officer Jeanette MacAdam, for their enthusiastic and indispensable aid.

A full accounting of those who provided moral support at various stages of my work would run for several pages. To think of them all, family and friends, is to recognize my deep dependence and blessing. I would acknowledge and thank collectively the campus community of Rochester College, where I now teach. For the many words of encouragement that fellow faculty, the administration, staff, and students have offered, I am truly grateful.

My parents, Dr. James and Connie Greer, provided support and encouragement of every kind—intellectual, financial, moral, and spiritual—throughout the course of this project, as indeed through my whole life. My mother also proofread my chapters and made helpful editorial suggestions. (She recommends that I eliminate excess modifiers, and I will certainly do my absolute best to studiously avoid this troublesome tendency in the upcoming future.)

Finally and most of all, I thank my devoted wife, Branka, whose extraordinary support, patience, and timely prodding enabled me to complete this project. She has blessed my life beyond measure.

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## INTRODUCTION

On March 1, 1805, the U.S. Senate confirmed President Thomas Jefferson's nomination of General William Hull of Newton, Massachusetts, as governor of the new Michigan Territory. The appointment represented a great honor as well as a major turning point for the fifty-one-year-old "Revolutionary hero," militia general, and state magistrate. Soon Hull removed his family from their comfortable and familiar New England town to far-away Detroit, a town and military fort on the edge of a wooded wilderness inhabited mostly by indigenous peoples. There over the next seven years he exercised broad administrative, legal, and military authority that often produced controversy and, on August 16, 1812, culminated in an American military disaster for which he remains most famous, or rather infamous: the surrender of Fort Detroit and the entire U.S. Northwestern Army. This capitulation to a smaller British and Indian force at the outset of the War of 1812 may have saved Canada from American conquest; it absolutely stunned the American people and Madison Administration who beheld the event as a military and moral failure of the first order.

Much has been written on these matters, though not much in recent decades. Regional histories have examined Hull's tenure as governor, while studies of Native Americans and Indian-American relations have included various aspects of his role as Indian Superintendent. Most extensively, historians—American, Canadian, and British; professional, partisan, and the merely curious—have examined the Detroit campaign (or

“invasion of Canada”) and the reasons and responsibility for the surrender, but without fully solving its essential mystery. Some have scrutinized Hull’s court martial, conviction, and sentence of death by firing squad, which made him, as John K. Mahon has noted, “the only general officer in American military history who was ever sentenced to be executed for a military failure.”<sup>1</sup> Although President James Madison remitted the sentence, Hull lived the remainder of his days disgraced and in debt, struggling until his death in 1825 to clear his name and recover lost wealth. All these aspects of his life and career deserve fresh scholarly study.<sup>2</sup>

While Hull’s governorship and surrender have received considerable attention, historians have almost completely ignored his earlier life and career, already long and distinguished. Born in 1753 in Derby, Connecticut, he achieved distinction as a Yale graduate, long-serving Continental officer, Society of the Cincinnati founder, opponent of Shays’s Rebellion, vocal advocate for the Constitution, federal envoy to Canada, general of the Massachusetts militia, justice of the peace and of the court of common pleas, state senator, trustee and agent for the New England Mississippi Land Company, and prominent Republican in a Federalist-dominated state. He was an officer, lawyer, diplomat, speculator, entrepreneur, lobbyist, judge, legislator, and father of a large family in Newton. These various roles have drawn little more than passing notice, and almost no writers have made extensive use of Hull’s papers.

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<sup>1</sup> John K. Mahon, “Hull, William,” in Dictionary of American Military Biography, ed. Roger J. Spiller, Joseph G. Dawson III, and T. Harry Williams (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984), 2:503.

<sup>2</sup> Donald R. Hickey included both Hull and the Detroit campaign in his listing of subjects related to the War of 1812 in need of modern studies. Donald R. Hickey, “The War of 1812: Still a Forgotten Conflict?,” Journal of Military History 65 (July 2001): 768. William B. Skelton, “Hull, William,” in American National Biography, ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, 24 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), has duly noted the absence of a modern biography.

The major exception to this was Maria Campbell, Hull's fifth child of eight (and fourth daughter of seven), who by 1845 had completed a full-length account, compiling and editorializing her father's handwritten memoirs and papers in her possession. Signing off as "editor" in her preface, she died within days of completing her work. Her nephew and Hull's grandson, James Freeman Clarke, who acquired fame in his own right as a Unitarian pastor and writer, published her manuscript in 1848 under the title *Revolutionary Services and Civil Life of General William Hull*, binding it with his own *History of the Campaign of 1812, and the Surrender of the Post of Detroit*. The combined volume marked a renewal of the family project to restore Hull's tarnished reputation and preserve his "proper" place in the national memory.<sup>3</sup>

In trying to counteract the "poison of falsehood" in the schoolbooks of the day that were perpetuating "distorted views," the two works served different functions.<sup>4</sup> Clarke's was a straightforward attempt to correct the historical record with respect to both fact and interpretation of the Detroit campaign. Campbell's approach was indirect but equally important to the task of revising public memory and vindicating her father. *Revolutionary Services and Civil Life* represented an effort to establish and fix Hull's "character"—a broad concept that encompassed inner nature, public display, and reputation—in such a way that the later accusations of cowardice, neglect of duty,

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<sup>3</sup> Maria Campbell and James Freeman Clarke, *Revolutionary Services and Civil Life of General William Hull; Prepared from his Manuscripts, by his Daughter, Mrs. Maria Campbell: Together with the History of the Campaign of 1812, and the Surrender of the Post of Detroit, by his Grandson, James Freeman Clarke* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1848; facsimile reprint, New York: Garrett Press, 1970). Although the two works are distinct from each other, pagination is continuous, including for respective appendices, and subsequent references will cite them as a single volume.

<sup>4</sup> Clarke's preface in Campbell and Clarke, *Revolutionary Services*, xvi. Clarke's concern was especially acute given that American history was increasingly required in schools and emerging as a separate academic discipline. Russel Blaine Nye, *Society and Culture in America, 1830-1860* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 107.

unofficer-like conduct, and even treason, would seem utterly implausible. (His trial judges had found him innocent of treason, but many of his countrymen continued to believe the charge.) The account portrayed him in themes of patriotism, gentility, courage, devotion to duty and the republican cause, perseverance over hardship, compassionate but firm leadership, merit recognized by George Washington and other prominent worthies, civic virtue, and, above all, honor.

The unstated presumption in all this was that “character,” once formed, was fixed and immutable.<sup>5</sup> Its habitual display and recognition over a long period made later deviations extremely unlikely, especially in matters as serious as honor, courage, and patriotism. Could the virtuous Washington, Lafayette, Jefferson, and other “great men” of the Revolutionary and early national eras have been so grossly mistaken in their admiration of and confidence in Hull? To indict him, the unstated argument ran, was to indict the judgment of America’s best and to defy good sense. It was to acknowledge patriotism, heroism, and virtue as tentative, throwing republican and romantic notions of character and reputation into crisis. Surely another explanation of Hull’s surrender was therefore worth considering. With this foundation in place, Clarke could hope for readers more receptive to his revisionist account.

Despite its didactic aims, “great man” approach, and moralistic tone, all typical of mid-nineteenth-century American history and biography, Campbell’s work is still valuable—to historiographers as a fine example of the era’s filiopietistic writing and “life-and-letters” genre, and to historians because much of the original material that she

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<sup>5</sup> Although arguments persisted over whether character was innate or a product of environment, the idea of its immutability was yet a lingering vestige of aristocratic gentility, Puritan Calvinism, and classical republicanism. It had already become quaint among liberal individualists and Christian and social reformers of the mid-nineteenth century.

transcribed and commented upon later disappeared.<sup>6</sup> *Revolutionary Services and Civil Life* remains the most thorough published source of information about Hull's Revolutionary and early public life.<sup>7</sup> Handled with care, it provides valuable source material unavailable elsewhere. Nevertheless, its limitations for present-day historians are obvious. Beyond its hagiographical and uncritical features, the work simply offers an

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<sup>6</sup> A good example of a contemporary statement regarding the desirable purposes and execution of written history and biography is W. H., "History and Biography," *The New-England Magazine* 6, no. 3 (March 1834): 197-200. The most recent and subtle study of the biographical genre of the nineteenth century is Scott E. Casper, *Constructing American Lives: Biography and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). See especially Casper's "Introduction" and chaps. 1 and 3 for context here. An extensive search for materials relating to Hull has failed to uncover many of the documents that Campbell transcribed and drew from. The fate of these and other papers is uncertain. James Freeman Clarke recounted the disappearance of some Hull materials in a later memoir. Searching for papers to help in preparing his *History of the Campaign of 1812*, he discovered in the attic of Hull's old vacant home in Newton a trunk filled with numerous letters to Hull from many important personages of the revolutionary era (including four from Washington), military commissions, and passports for European travel signed by governors John Hancock and Samuel Adams. Clarke took some of the documents for his project and reprinted several as an appendix to his narrative. "But," he wrote, "being too absurdly conscientious, I left the rest, and they were afterward carried away by some unknown persons. Let us hope that, since they cannot be in my collection of autographs, they may adorn that of some other more enthusiastic collector." James Freeman Clarke, *Memorials and Biographical Sketches* (Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Co., 1880), 407-408. Other materials may have been lost in the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. Samuel C. Clarke, James's older brother, family genealogist, and also a Hull memorialist, informed his niece in 1896 that some of the original family documents in his possession, including letters, were destroyed in that awful event. Samuel C. Clarke to Lilian Freeman Clarke, 17 September 1896, William Hull Papers, BMS Am 1569.6 (65), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>7</sup> Other reviews of Hull's pre-Michigan service include his own brief memoir appended to a lengthy published defense of his actions at Detroit. William Hull, *Memoirs of the Campaign of the North Western Army of the United States, A.D. 1812. In a Series of Letters Addressed to the Citizens of the United States. With an Appendix, Containing a Brief Sketch of the Revolutionary Services of the Author* (Boston: True & Greene, 1824), appendix. In the late nineteenth century, grandsons James Freeman Clarke and Samuel C. Clarke each produced brief memoirs, drawing from Campbell but also their own researches and childhood memories. James Freeman Clarke, "William Hull," chap. in his *Memorials*, 409-424. This article was later reprinted with some editing by his daughter, Hull's great-granddaughter, Lilian Freeman Clarke, for the centennial of the surrender, and appeared as James Freeman Clarke, *William Hull and the Surrender of Detroit: A Biographical Sketch* (Boston: Geo. H. Ellis Co., 1912); Samuel C. Clarke, "William Hull," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 47 (1893): 142-153, 305-314, and reprinted as *Memoir of Gen. William Hull* (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1893). Samuel C. Clarke also earlier contributed to, if he did not fully author, Hull's entry in Francis S. Drake, *Memorials of the Society of the Cincinnati of Massachusetts* (Boston: Printed for the Society, 1873), 341-345. More recent overviews that pay more than glancing attention to Hull's earlier career, and draw from sources beyond those already cited, are William L. Jenks's introduction to *Documents Relating to Detroit and Vicinity, 1805-1813*, vol. 40 of *Michigan Historical Collections* (Lansing, Mich.: Michigan Historical Commission, 1929), 25-51; and John K. Mahon's entry on Hull in *Dictionary of American Military Biography*, 2:499-504. Both of these contain minor errors, mostly due to incompleteness of source information.

incomplete record. This is true enough for Hull's Revolutionary career, but is especially the case for his more controversial postwar activities and ideas. It hardly needs stating that a great deal of source material is now available that was not over a century and a half ago. Furthermore, Campbell's compilation naturally reflects Hull's early republican-New England-elite perspectives and anticipates an audience also steeped in values and perspectives quite different from early-twenty-first-century dissertation committees.

Why, then, have historians disregarded the earlier phases of Hull's career?

Perhaps in part because he has fallen through historical cracks. He was not of the first or even quite second rank in America's Revolutionary and founding generation, and so has remained obscured from the historian's gaze.<sup>8</sup> Neither did he belong to any underdocumented or unempowered group whose recovery in the historical record has become the indispensable project of recent decades. Also, although most materials are accessible, they are widely scattered, no doubt putting off would-be students, especially before the proliferation of electronic databases and search engines. Regrettably it is also probable that Hull's eventual fall from national grace has muted enthusiasm for a more thorough study of his earlier life and roles. Scholars too have gravitated toward stories with more inspiring or ennobling outcomes, particularly if they seek a wider readership. In spite of these possible explanations, however, Hull's neglect in the literature is still somewhat surprising in light of the traditionally strong representation of New England figures and subjects in American historical writing.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> It is remarkable, for example, despite the vast scholarly literature on the era, how very few of the studies cite Hull's name or any of his papers.

<sup>9</sup> Possibly narrowing the potential field even more is that Hull's most historically notable and notorious act took place in the War of 1812, what one historian has entitled a "forgotten conflict." Donald R. Hickey, The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

It remains to assert why Hull's early life and career is worth recovering and examining. One reason already implied is that such a study offers needed background and context for understanding his later, better-known roles as territorial governor and failed general. Both roles involved matters of controversy, and a better knowledge of the man—his environments, experiences, connections, ideas, interests, politics, and reputations—aids in understanding and assessing those regional and national events in which he played a crucial part. More than merely anticipatory, however, the subject stands on its own merits.<sup>10</sup> Hull was a fascinating individual of some prominence and impact throughout the Revolutionary, Confederation, and early Constitutional periods. He participated in and commented on a great many of the critical events, activities, and debates that gave shape to the young American nation and Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Over many years he represented a variety of interests, both broad and narrow, and espoused political, economic, and social views that contended for dominance throughout this extraordinarily contentious era, finding himself admired and endorsed by some, resented and distrusted by others, always seeking influence and advancement. In all of this, Hull reflected the swirling ideological forces of his time and place, and represented that ideological hybrid of the era, the gentleman republican liberal nationalist.

This study, then, seeks to recover and carefully examine the early life, career, and reputations of William Hull, and in so doing to better illuminate not only his later actions but also various aspects of American social, military, and political culture in the pre-

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<sup>10</sup> A recent example of a study seeking to examine an important figure without merely telescoping to a fixed (and likewise infamous) historical point is James Kirby Martin, Benedict Arnold, Revolutionary Hero: An American Warrior Reconsidered (New York: New York University Press, 1997). Coincidentally, Hull was under Arnold's command at the time of the general's treason in 1780, and later frequently compared to Arnold after his Detroit surrender in 1812.

Revolutionary, Revolutionary, and Early Republican periods. The study takes a primarily chronological approach. Chapter One traces his family background and upbringing in Connecticut to the moment of his joining the Revolution. His education and cultivation as a young “gentleman” figure large here. Chapter Two examines his long and successful Revolutionary career in detail, highlighting not only his roles in battle and various other services but also the war’s broader impact on his self-image and reputation. Among other things, the War of Independence shifted his identity of place to Massachusetts and the new nation at large. Chapter Three analyzes his return to family life and civilian society in the midst of the postwar depression of the Confederation era. As a debt-collecting lawyer, founding member of the Society of the Cincinnati, and suppressor of the Regulation movement and Shays’s Rebellion, Hull appeared in a far less heroic light among many. He, along with other fiscal conservatives and the bulk of the national-oriented and pension-seeking Continental officer corps, became an avid Federalist proponent of the Constitution.

The following three chapters explore, amidst other matters and details, Hull’s seemingly unexpected progression from a staunch pro-ratification Federalist and devotee of Washington into a leading New England Republican and ally of Jefferson, as well as his gradual rise toward “first character” status in Massachusetts. Chapter Four highlights various disappointments and frustrations that shook his initial enthusiasm for the new government and its president. Looming especially large was the government’s rejection of an officer compensation settlement, a campaign for which Hull became a key advocate. His appointment for a special federal mission to Upper Canada at the close of Washington’s first term restored some pride but not perhaps his earlier optimism.



Chapter Five turns to the impact of the war between Revolutionary France and Great Britain on Hull's political environment and reputation, and examines his expanding and ill-advised capitalist ventures. His inheritance by marriage, commercial excursion to England and France, unwise loan to a scheming adventurer, and overconfident speculations in Yazoo (Georgia) and Ohio lands are featured. Chapter Six develops the completion of his Republican identity and rise to "first character" status in his county and state, and his resulting role as a chief lobbyist in the Yazoo settlement dispute. In this period he withstood severe High Federalist attacks on his politics and character, and served, among other roles and activities, as militia division commander, county judge, Masonic lodge master, state senator, and trustee and advocate for the New England Mississippi Land Company. Finally, Chapter Seven explores the reasons for his appointment, and his acceptance, of the office of territorial governor, what proved a fundamental turning point in his life.

Like the new nation itself, Hull embodied both idealism and opportunism. Altogether his diverse roles and reputations well illustrate the dynamic, transforming, and often divided nature of American society in an era characterized by exciting and disturbing change, euphoric hopes and desperate fears, and by a range of political, economic, social, and cultural reorientations.

CHAPTER 1  
A YOUNG GENTLEMAN  
(1753-1775)

The stunning news of armed clashes in Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts, on April 19, 1775, quickly reached Connecticut and raced through its towns and settlements. In Derby, on the Housatonic River, aroused townspeople heeded the plea of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress by immediately raising a company of volunteers to join the siege against the hated redcoat occupiers of Boston. An evening town meeting took up the question of who to appoint as company captain.<sup>1</sup> The choice—a strapping, near-twenty-two year old Yale College graduate and newly minted lawyer—would become one of the longest serving officers of the Revolution, a remarkable figure whose military service would earn honors and commendations in this war, and tragically, dishonor and condemnation in another some three decades later.

By the time William Hull joined the Revolution, he was already recognized as an intelligent, charming young gentleman of great promise, having enjoyed a comfortable and locally prominent New England upbringing and a fine education. Born to Joseph and Eliza Clark Hull in 1753, he traced his paternal line in America back five generations to

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<sup>1</sup> Maria Campbell and James Freeman Clarke, Revolutionary Services and Civil Life of General William Hull; Prepared from his Manuscripts, by his Daughter, Mrs. Maria Campbell: Together with the History of the Campaign of 1812, and the Surrender of the Post of Detroit, by his Grandson, James Freeman Clarke (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1848; facsimile reprint, New York: Garrett Press, 1970), 22.

Richard Hull of Derbyshire, England. Richard had been part of the Great Puritan Migration to New England and became a freeman in Dorchester, Massachusetts in 1634, before taking his carpentry skills to New Haven Colony in 1639.<sup>2</sup> In the mid-1670s Richard's firstborn, John Hull, moved his family about twelve miles upriver to Derby, a young Connecticut settlement on the east bank of the Housatonic River. John quickly assumed a position of importance, serving as both town selectman and representative to the General Assembly, the first of several generations to do so. Later family tradition claimed that he was the John Hull who served as surgeon in King Philip's War. He more certainly was an adept carpenter, employed to build Derby's first parsonage and grain mill, which he also at least partly owned. He oversaw the construction of the first meetinghouse. A later chronicle listed him also as the town's first physician.<sup>3</sup>

In the late 1680s, the fathers of the town of Wallingford offered "Dr. Hull" (as they addressed him) a seven-hundred-acre plot to attract him there. And so he left his considerable Derby landholdings to his grown sons, one of whom was Joseph Hull.

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<sup>2</sup> Samuel C. Clarke, comp., Records of Some of the Descendants of Richard Hull, New Haven, 1639-1662 (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1869), 3-4; James Savage, A Genealogical Dictionary of the First Settlers of New England, Showing Three Generations of Those Who Came before May, 1692, on the Basis of Farmer's Register, 4 vols. (Boston, 1860-1862; facsimile reprint, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1998), 2:494; Samuel Orcutt and Ambrose Beardsley, The History of the Old Town of Derby, Connecticut, 1642-1880. With Biographies and Genealogies (Springfield, Mass.: Springfield Printing Company, 1880), 732; Edgar Hull, A Review of Many Subjects of and Concerning the Hulls (Fort Edward, N.Y.: privately printed, 1904), 12. It is unknown to what degree, if any, Richard Hull's move to New Haven, the most conservative Puritan colony, was motivated by religious concerns.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel C. Clarke, Descendants of Richard Hull, 4; Savage, Genealogical Dictionary, 2: 493-4; Orcutt and Beardsley, History of Derby, 732-3, 791-801. Several discrepancies in names, dates, and order exist, particularly between Clarke's and the other two works. Orcutt and Beardsley relied much on Savage for names and dates. Some uncertainty surrounds John Hull's identity. Orcutt and Beardsley cited an opinion of Savage—not given in his Genealogical Dictionary—that Richard's son John, the war surgeon, resided in Killingworth (now Clinton), and that the John Hull of Derby was instead the son of an Andrew Hull, supposedly Richard's brother. Samuel C. Clarke, descendant and family genealogist, lists no "Andrew" among Richard's supposed brothers. Earlier than all of these works, Maria Campbell simply recorded Joseph Hull, John's son in the other two accounts, as the original immigrant. Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 17.

Joseph maintained the family's prominent political and business position in Derby, adding the title of militia captain to those of selectman and representative. Joseph's second son, Joseph Hull, Jr., was a substantial farmer, as was in turn his only son, Joseph Hull 3<sup>rd</sup>, the father of William. Like their forebears, William Hull's father and grandfather served in both town and colonial government. Joseph 3<sup>rd</sup>, recognized by the General Assembly as one of Derby's "principal inhabitants," also owned a local ironworks and served as a justice of the peace for New Haven County. So it was that young William inherited a world of local notoriety, landed property, material security, political engagement, and pride of heritage.<sup>4</sup>

Adding to the latter was the claim of young William's mother Eliza, who believed herself to be a descendant of an officer on the Pilgrims' *Mayflower*. Although the claim has been challenged and now appears impossible to verify, she apparently "was in the habit of asserting" it.<sup>5</sup> She traced her father's American line back to Thomas Clarke who, tradition held, was the mate or pilot on the legendary 1620 voyage. Clarke presumably returned with the ship to England, but made a second Atlantic crossing aboard the *Ann* in 1623, now to settle in Plymouth. Arriving with cattle and other property, he engaged in various occupations, including carpentry, and became a leading figure in the community. In 1637 he headed the list of volunteers to fight the Pequot Indians. So well regarded was his character that the town entrusted him with the license to "draw and sell strong

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<sup>4</sup> Samuel C. Clarke, Descendants of Richard Hull, 4-5; Orcutt and Beardsley, History of Derby, 733-4, 792-3, 797-8; Linda M. Maloney, The Captain from Connecticut: The Life and Naval Times of Isaac Hull (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986), 3.

<sup>5</sup> Savage, Genealogical Dictionary, 1:400-401. Quote from Samuel C. Clarke, comp., Records of Some of the Descendants of Thomas Clarke, Plymouth, 1623-1697 (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1869), 16n. See also Samuel C. Clarke to Lilian Freeman Clarke, 28 February 1896, William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (65), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

waters.” Later in life he became a long-serving deacon of the Plymouth church, and probably, in light of his remarkable longevity (1599-1697), colonial patriarch. Indeed, his intriguing life spanned that of Plymouth Colony.<sup>6</sup>

Building from Thomas Clarke’s success, the Clarke (or Clark) descendants prospered in succeeding decades. In 1735, William and Hannah Clark of Lyme, Connecticut, moved to Derby where he became a merchant, considered a quite respectable if not traditionally genteel vocation. Their oldest daughter Elizabeth, or Eliza, married Joseph Hull III in 1749, and immediately began a family. The couple had eight children over the next seventeen years. William was the fourth, preceded by brothers Joseph, Samuel, and Isaac. Levi followed but died young, and Eliza, David, and Sarah came after. None suspected at the time that theirs would be a Revolutionary generation.<sup>7</sup>

Not much is known of William Hull’s childhood. He was born in Derby on June 24, 1753, and baptized in St. James’s Church, where an aunt’s husband was rector.<sup>8</sup> Later his parents sent him to live nearby with his grandfather Joseph, who “loved the affectionate and industrious boy.” William’s early education was that of both the farm,

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<sup>6</sup> Samuel C. Clarke, Descendants of Thomas Clarke, 3-7; Savage suggested that the Thomas Clarke of the Ann was different than that of the Mayflower mate. Savage, Genealogical Dictionary, 1:400-401. Clarke acknowledged a lack of evidence for any definitive conclusion. Samuel C. Clarke to Lilian Freeman Clarke, 28 February and 17 September 1896, William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (65), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

<sup>7</sup> Samuel C. Clarke, Descendants of Thomas Clarke, 16n; Samuel C. Clarke, Descendants of Richard Hull, 5-9; Orcutt and Beardsley, History of Derby, 734. Clarke gives 1749 as the year of marriage. Orcutt and Beardsley give the specific dates of May 3, 1750, for the marriage, and October 27, 1850, for the birth of their first child. The issues raised by this discrepancy, whether in relation to source reliability or social mores, are interesting.

<sup>8</sup> Donald Lines Jacobus, “Register of Baptisms,” in “Records of St. James’s Church, Derby, Conn., 1740-1796,” New England Historical and Genealogical Register 76 (1922): 135; Franklin Bowditch Dexter, Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College with Annals of the College History, 6 vols. (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1885), 1:687-8.

where he worked daily, and the traditional New England schoolhouse. Physically strong and intellectually sharp, he apparently excelled in both environments. His father took note of his academic aptitude and decided to pursue that advantage, but only over the protests of William's brokenhearted grandfather: "Billy is a *pure* boy to work: it is a shame to take him to College," he reputedly argued.<sup>9</sup>

The meaning and significance of this decision for "Billy" should not be overlooked. The problem of providing for multiple sons in the late colonial period was no small one for New England families. Nearby available farmland was now scarcer than in earlier decades. To keep family estates from becoming too parceled out among several sons, fathers often selected one or two primary heirs, usually the oldest, and anxiously sought other avenues to secure for the rest respectable and profitable futures.<sup>10</sup> In light of this, and William's manifest abilities, the decision to have him educated in the liberal arts—and thereby established as a man of letters, a "gentleman," with the consequent social and economic benefits—was both logical and ambitious.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 20.

<sup>10</sup> John J. Waters, "Family, Inheritance, and Migration in Colonial New England: The Evidence from Guilford, Connecticut," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 39 (1982): 65, 81-83; Philip J. Greven Jr., Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970), 227-228; Kenneth Lockridge, "Land, Population and the Evolution of New England Society 1630-1790," Past and Present 39 (1968): 70-71, 74; Toby L. Ditz, Property and Kinship: Inheritance in Early Connecticut, 1750-1820 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), 70-72; Gordon S. Wood, The Radicalism of the American Revolution (New York: Knopf, 1992), 46-47, 125-127, 350. Fred Anderson, A People's Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years' War (New York: Norton, 1984), 33, observes that "the sons not favored with land enough for farming received the bulk of their portions in other forms: help in purchasing land elsewhere, cash, tools, a liberal education, and so on, in degrees determined by the financial condition of the family."

<sup>11</sup> Conrad Edick Wright, Revolutionary Generation: Harvard Men and the Consequences of Independence (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, in association with Massachusetts Historical Society, 2005), chap. 1 passim.

His parents held out hope that he would join the clergy. Along with law and medicine, the ministry was regarded as a learned profession whose liberally educated, licensed practitioners were by definition “gentlemen.” Historians such as Richard L. Bushman and Gordon S. Wood have emphasized that this designation in pre-Revolutionary America, and for some time following, was a profoundly significant matter. To be “genteel” meant that one belonged to an elite class of men whose liberal education, manners, speech, posture and carriage, taste, and, above all, “character” set them apart from the much larger caste of coarser ordinary folk.<sup>12</sup> Although less rigid and wide than its English counterpart, the social gap between gentry and commoners was real. Indeed, Wood asserted, it “overwhelmed all others in the culture” and “made manifest the unequal and hierarchical nature of society.”<sup>13</sup> Whatever leveling had taken place or was underway, American colonial society was still one substantially marked by deference.<sup>14</sup>

William’s parents placed him under the tutelage of his aunt Sarah’s husband, the Reverend Mark Leavenworth, a well-known Congregational pastor in Waterbury and a Yale College graduate. Like many Yale men of the era, Leavenworth had embraced the

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<sup>12</sup> Richard L. Bushman, The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities (New York: Knopf, 1992), provides a thorough examination of genteel culture in the period. See also Wright, Revolutionary Generation, 19-23, 62; Wood, Radicalism of the American Revolution, 24-42, 194-197.

<sup>13</sup> Wood, Radicalism of the American Revolution, 25.

<sup>14</sup> Wood, Radicalism of the American Revolution, passim; J. R. Pole, “Historians and the Problem of Early American Democracy,” American Historical Review 67 (1962): 626-646; J. Franklin Jameson, The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1926; reprint, Boston: Beacon Press, 1956), 19-20; John Shy, “American Society and Its War for Independence,” in A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence, revised ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 123-124. The characterization of eighteenth-century American colonial society as “deferential” has met with challengers. See, for example, Michael Zuckerman, “Tocqueville, Turner, and Turds: Four Stories of Manners in Early America,” Journal of American History 85 (1998): 13-42; and Jon Butler, Becoming America: The Revolution before 1776 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

Awakening-inspired “New Divinity” movement. He held the reputation of an enthusiastic New Light, a sharp critic of traditional clerical authority and, now increasingly, its monarchical underpinnings. During the French and Indian War he had briefly served as a regimental chaplain. Later he would become a zealous advocate of American independence and an active recruiter in the Revolution, with sons also joined in the cause. The influence of Leavenworth on young William’s religious, political, and military outlook must remain a matter of conjecture, but presumably it was significant. William completed his tutorial—emphasizing Latin, Greek, and classical writings, as well as the rudiments of genteel conduct and expression, even penmanship—in 1768, a year behind his cousin, Mark Leavenworth, Jr. At age fifteen, William followed him to Yale, already a hotbed of anti-British sentiment.<sup>15</sup>

It was an extraordinary time in which to come of age. The Townshend Acts of the previous year had again inflamed the issues of colonial taxation and representation and provoked general boycotts of British goods. As Hull began his studies in New Haven, two British regiments landed in Boston, to be met by a declaration of Massachusetts delegates proclaiming their “aversion to an unnecessary Standing Army.”<sup>16</sup> In 1769, Yale hosted a second convention of an anti-Anglican “Union” of New

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<sup>15</sup> Dexter, Biographical Sketches, 1:581-2; Henry P. Johnston, Yale and Her Honor-Roll in the American Revolution, 1775-1783 (New York: privately printed, 1888), 221, 274, 340-341; Alice M. Baldwin, The New England Clergy and the American Revolution (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1928), 189; J. David Hoeveler, Creating the American Mind: Intellect and Politics in the Colonial Colleges, American Intellectual Culture series, ed. Jean Bethke Elshtain, Ted V. McAllister, and Wilfred M. McClay (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 68-74, 260-62; Wright, Revolutionary Generation, 26-27. On the relation of the Connecticut clergy to religious and political authority, see Richard L. Bushman, From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765 (New York: Norton, 1967), especially chap. 15. Rev. Leavenworth also tutored another nephew, David Perry, who graduated from Yale along with Hull and became a Congregational pastor “of ‘New Divinity’ sympathies.” Hull’s younger brother David also later attended Yale, graduating in 1785. Dexter, Biographical Sketches, 3:451-2, 4:417.

<sup>16</sup> Quote in George Brown Tindall and David Shi, America: A Narrative History, 3d ed. (New York: Norton, 1992), 193.



England ministers.<sup>17</sup> Then, in 1770, shocking accounts of the Boston Massacre burst through the colonies, followed by the triumphant news that the hated Townshend duties had been repealed, save that on tea. Relative calm followed until just before Hull's graduation, when the *Gaspee* incident in Rhode Island and the announcement of independent salaries for royal officials in Massachusetts reignited fears and sharp constitutional debates throughout the colonies.<sup>18</sup>

All the while Hull performed well in his studies, which included Greek and Latin, the classics (for cultivating "taste" as well as the intellect), logic and moral philosophy, rhetoric, natural philosophy (mathematics and the sciences), geography, theology, English composition, and fine literature. He demonstrated particular facility in rhetoric and oratory, which had recently begun to receive greater curricular emphasis.<sup>19</sup> The intellectual training, genteel polishing, and social exposure at Yale unquestionably improved his prospects. In his class alone were Abraham Baldwin, a future delegate to the Constitutional Convention and U.S. senator; Amasa Learned, a future U.S. congressman; a doctor; and, of course, several lawyers and ministers. Other schoolmates achieving future distinction included fellow Derby-man David Humphreys and the younger Nathan Hale, whom Hull would later help to immortalize in American historical memory. Now nineteen, "Guilielmus Hull" graduated *cum laude* in 1772. He received

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<sup>17</sup> Hoeveler, Creating the American Mind, 268.

<sup>18</sup> A good overview of Connecticut's responses to events in the pre-Revolutionary period is chapter 1 of Richard Buel Jr., Dear Liberty: Connecticut's Mobilization for the Revolutionary War (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1980).

<sup>19</sup> Wright, Revolutionary Generation, 39-43, 248 (note 39).

the further honor of being selected from his class of twenty-three to deliver the English commencement oration, the first of several similar distinctions in his early career.<sup>20</sup>

Like many graduates then and now, Hull was uncertain as to which learned profession he should now pursue. And so he did what many fellow New England graduates did to bide their time: become a schoolmaster.<sup>21</sup> A year was enough in Hull's case to encourage him to acquiesce in his parents' desire that he become a minister. He took up theological studies in Milford under the young Reverend and future Yale professor Samuel Wales. Uninspired, however, Hull withdrew after another year.<sup>22</sup>

Decades later his daughter attributed this decision to piety and honor: "He was too deeply impressed with the sacred trust devolving on a minister of the gospel, to assume its responsibilities without a single eye to the glory of God, and a distinct call from the Holy Spirit."<sup>23</sup>

It may also be that the ministry did not adequately suit his interests, ambition, or emerging political impulses. He was after all an articulate, robust, well-situated young man living in dynamic, politically charged times. By now extralegal Committees of Correspondence were active in Connecticut and throughout the colonies, and an imperial showdown marked by the Boston "Tea Party" and "Intolerable Acts" was playing out.

Hull set his energies toward more temporal matters. While the First Continental

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<sup>20</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 21, 34; Dexter, Biographical Sketches, 3:431-468; Johnston, Yale and Her Honor-Roll, 275-276.

<sup>21</sup> In his study of Harvard graduates, Conrad Edick Wright notes that "at some point during their first three years after graduation, about one-quarter of the members of Harvard's revolutionary generation put in time as teachers." Wright, Revolutionary Generation, 61.

<sup>22</sup> Dexter, Biographical Sketches, 3:445.

<sup>23</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 21.

Congress assembled in Philadelphia, he took up the study of law with Tapping Reeve in Litchfield, an experience that veteran historian J. R. Pole has described as “extremely uninspiring” for most.<sup>24</sup> Alongside Reeve’s brother-in-law Aaron Burr, also in training, Hull pored over the newly available “lawyer’s bible,” Sir William Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, and Edward Coke’s *Commentaries on Littleton* for grounding in common law; Baron Samuel von Pufendorf’s *On the Law of Nature and Nations* for instruction on natural law; works on international law and the court system, and other writings. Finally, in early 1775, he gained admittance to the bar. The young gentleman lawyer returned to Derby shortly before minutemen and redcoats spilled first blood in Massachusetts.<sup>25</sup>

The news of Lexington and Concord in April sparked an intense war spirit—a *rage militaire*, as Charles Royster deems the phenomenon—throughout Connecticut, which rallied men and material to the cause.<sup>26</sup> Derby’s election of Hull as captain was an acknowledgment of his personal qualities and education as well as a reflection of his father’s standing. Both were consistent with the comment of one French officer that

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<sup>24</sup> Author’s notes of J. R. Pole, panelist presentation, opening session, at Society for Historians of the Early American Republic Annual Meeting, 17 July 2003, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.

<sup>25</sup> Campbell and Clarke, *Revolutionary Services*, 21; Wright, *Revolutionary Generation*, 66; Marian C. McKenna, *Tapping Reeve and the Litchfield Law School* (New York: Oceana Publications, 1986), 31. Chap. 1 of the latter includes discussion of the significance of Blackstone’s *Commentaries*, appearing in America in 1771, to American legal study. Campbell states that Hull “attached himself” to the “celebrated” school, usually considered the first school of law in America. However, Reeve did not institute a “school” until the end of the Revolution. Having himself just moved to Litchfield and gained admission to the bar in 1773, he had only begun to take readers in 1774, beginning with Burr and soon, apparently, Hull. It is therefore not surprising that Hull does not appear in the law school’s catalog of students. McKenna, *Tapping Reeve*, 35, 41, 59-61, 187-197 (catalog listing). Hull himself, in a later brief listing of personal history, though not mentioning Reeve, stated that he was “admitted to the practice of the law, in the County of Litchfield (Connect[icu]t) 1774.” [William Hull,] Draft outline of his life and career, 2 December 1812, Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

<sup>26</sup> Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), chap. 1; Buel, *Dear Liberty*, 35-38.

American officers were usually “farmers and farmers’ sons of independent or easy fortunes. Many of them have been bred to the learned professions” and many “would not pass unnoticed in the politest court in Europe.”<sup>27</sup> In America as in Europe, military rank was largely an extension of the social structure, at least initially.<sup>28</sup> The idea, an aristocratic carryover, still prevailed that an officer was or ought to be a gentleman; it naturally followed that a commission gave one a greater claim to that status. Such linkage, historian John Shy has pointed out, would suffer over the course of the war.<sup>29</sup>

Hull’s election also recognized that his sentiments on Englishmen’s rights and imperial relations fully supported the rebel cause. Since the Stamp and Quartering Acts of 1765, colonials had vigorously reexamined and debated these issues, nowhere more so than in Connecticut.<sup>30</sup> The “enlightened” arguments of Locke and Montesquieu, along with the “radical Whig” critiques of Cato’s Letters, Viscount Bolingbroke, Algernon Sidney and such, had become familiar and widespread through a deluge of political pamphlets and newspapers. Many colonists, presumably including Hull, had come to believe that a full-blown British conspiracy against their English and natural rights was in

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<sup>27</sup> “From the original letters of Monsieur DeLisle,” New Jersey Gazette, 23 April 1778, quoted in Mark Edward Lender, “The Social Structure of the New Jersey Brigade: The Continental Line as an American Standing Army,” in The Military in America: From the Colonial Era to the Present, ed. Peter Karsten (New York: Free Press, 1980), 35. It was perhaps because of his liberal education that the town elected William as company captain rather than one of his older brothers, in particular the two eldest, Joseph and Samuel, who also served as Revolutionary officers. Samuel C. Clarke, Descendants of Richard Hull, 6.

<sup>28</sup> An excellent analysis of this for New Jersey is Lender, “The Social Structure of the New Jersey Brigade,” in Karsten, The Military in America, 27-44, esp. 35-38.

<sup>29</sup> John Shy, “The Legacy of the American Revolutionary War,” in A People Numerous and Armed, 260-262.

<sup>30</sup> Buel, Dear Liberty, 12.

progress.<sup>31</sup> But Hull was hardly a firebrand; nothing in his life suggests anything like that. Indeed, it would have been incompatible with the genteel demeanor he so deliberately aspired to. Although he would demonstrate capacity to act with impulse, determination, and force, he was even-tempered by nature and training, and valued good order. No demagogue, he nevertheless would show himself to be a committed patriot espousing the ideals of both polite society and classical republicanism, ideals that most colonials saw as complementary rather than antagonistic.<sup>32</sup>

Hull and his descendants were naturally eager to emphasize his fidelity to the ethics of both gentility and republicanism. According to his daughter's narrative, he "maintained a reserve in regard to his [patriotic] inclinations, which he foresaw would soon ripen into action." He subsequently received the news of his election with some measure of surprise. This agreed with the republican code of the era, which forbade a man to openly desire or seek office (a self-serving act), while at the same time demanding that he dutifully accept the call of fellow citizens to service when it came (a sacrificial act). The latter presumed, according to the overlapping code of gentility, that the service called for was in keeping with one's social stature. With these conditions satisfied, Hull "hesitated not in accepting the appointment, so unexpectedly offered by his townsmen."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Bernard Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), chaps. 1-4 passim; Gordon S. Wood, "Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style: Causality and Deceit in the Eighteenth Century," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 39 (1982): 401-441.

<sup>32</sup> On the latter point see especially Wood, Radicalism of the American Revolution, 95-109. The complementary nature of gentility and republicanism in this era is further illustrated in that Yale College, while grooming gentlemen, could also draw criticism from a Loyalist graduate for being "a nursery of sedition, of faction, and republicanism." Quoted in Johnston, Yale and Her Honor-Roll, 99.

<sup>33</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 22.

It was at this proud moment that tragedy struck. Hull's father, at the age of forty-seven, died from a sudden, severe illness. Having once planned a clerical profession for William, Joseph had lived just long enough to see his son to the threshold of his most notable (and, much later, notorious) career: that of a military officer. The family property, "respectable for the time," was left to Eliza and the children. What portion Hull was to receive, whether an equal share or a smaller one in favor of his older brothers, is unknown. The latter seems likely, given William's liberal education and broader opportunities. In any case he nobly refused his share, declaring, "I want only my sword and my uniform"—or so an adoring daughter later claimed.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 22.

CHAPTER 2  
REVOLUTIONARY  
(1775-1784)

A slender, handsome young man, Hull was just turning twenty-two in June when he and the citizen-soldiers of Derby joined Col. Charles Webb's volunteer regiment and marched toward Boston under a six-month enlistment. The homespun-clad, zealous patriots reached the American camp in Cambridge soon after the Second Continental Congress accepted authority over the rebel army and appointed Virginian George Washington as commander-in-chief.<sup>1</sup> The formation of the Continental Army required some initial adjustments. In July the Connecticut General Assembly appointed Hull as first lieutenant of the second company (under Lieut. Col. Street Hall) in Webb's Seventh Connecticut regiment.<sup>2</sup> Hull thus began his professional military career as a company-grade officer of the Continental Army, serving actively until the army's final

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<sup>1</sup> Maria Campbell and James Freeman Clarke, Revolutionary Services and Civil Life of General William Hull; Prepared from his Manuscripts, by his Daughter, Mrs. Maria Campbell: Together with the History of the Campaign of 1812, and the Surrender of the Post of Detroit, by his Grandson, James Freeman Clarke (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1848; facsimile reprint, New York: Garrett Press, 1970), 22; Robert W. Coakley and Stetson Conn, The War of the American Revolution: Narrative, Chronology, and Bibliography (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1975), 26, 90-91. A discrepancy appears regarding Hull's physical stature. Grandson Samuel C. Clarke referred to Hull as being "of medium height." A great-granddaughter, however, claimed that he was 5'11", which would have made him quite tall in the Revolutionary era. Samuel C. Clarke, Memoir of Gen. William Hull (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1893), 24; Ella Wingate Ireland, "Sarah Hull" (paper presented to Sarah Hull Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Newton, Mass., 2 December 1897), typed manuscript, "Sarah Hull" file, Hull Family Papers, Newton History Museum at the Jackson Homestead, Newton, Mass., 3.

<sup>2</sup> Charles J. Hoadly, ed., The Public Records of the Colony of Connecticut, 15 vols. (Hartford: Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co., 1890), 15:93.

disbandment almost exactly nine years later. During that period he transferred from the Connecticut to the Massachusetts line and rose in rank from lieutenant to captain, major, and lieutenant colonel. He received additional assignments along the way: as an army commissioner to state officials; deputy inspector under the Prussian “Baron” Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben; deputy adjutant general of the Northern army; and government agent to Canada.<sup>3</sup> At the conclusion of his service in the summer of 1784, he could claim to be among the longest serving Revolutionary figures.

Not surprisingly, the war engrossed Hull’s young adulthood and established his primary identity. Whatever advantages he held already—a respectable family, Yale education, or legal profession—the War of Independence was the seminal experience of his life. It became for him a deep reservoir of pride and a critical component of his self-image. His Revolutionary reputation—his “character” or “fame” as then conceived—would become for him a near-sacred matter. Although the war tended to diminish the prestige of the old colonial aristocracy, as John Shy and others have observed, it “also created a new basis for social prestige and political power” and “rewarded those who had met its test.”<sup>4</sup> Hull certainly numbered among the latter. He entered the war socially advantaged, but it was merit that sustained and enhanced his status. In the end, his wartime record was indeed a distinguished one, marked by demonstrations of courage,

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<sup>3</sup> [William Hull,] Draft outline of his life and career, 2 December 1812, Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. This document is identifiable by Hull’s handwriting. Franklin Bowditch Dexter, Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College with Annals of the College History (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1885-1912), 3:445; Francis B. Heitman, Historical Register of Officers of the Continental Army during the War of the Revolution, April, 1775, to December, 1783, rev. and enl. ed. (Washington, D.C., 1914; reprint, with addenda by Robert H. Kelby, 1932; reprint, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1982), 308. Assignments of rank were made by state legislatures, often, though not always, according to Washington’s recommendations.

<sup>4</sup> John Shy, “The Legacy of the American Revolutionary War,” in A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence, rev. ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 262.



discipline, leadership, and stamina. He participated in a host of major and minor engagements in the war's northern theatre, faithfully exercising many positions of responsibility and holding the confidence of his superiors, including the commander-in-chief.<sup>5</sup>

Hull's rise to Revolutionary distinction began during the siege of Boston alongside college-mate, friend, and future patriot icon Nathan Hale. In late October 1775 the two Yale men and several other subalterns applied to serve as acting captains. The matter quickly proved contentious, as confusions in army arrangements, ill discipline among soldiers and officers alike, and jealousies of rank and promotion were already plaguing the American force. Hull and Hale each received enthusiastic endorsements from superiors and got the desired appointments. Their success apparently provoked jealous comrades. At one point, according to Hale's diary, anger over officer arrangements erupted into a brawl. The two emerged in good stead, however, regularly visiting headquarters in Cambridge and dining with General Israel Putnam and others.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> As discussed in the introduction, the fullest account of Hull's service in the Revolution is that of his daughter Maria Campbell, based on his manuscripts. Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 22-210. Other summaries include that in William Hull, Memoirs of the Campaign of the North Western Army of the United States, A.D. 1812. In a Series of Letters Addressed to the Citizens of the United States. With an Appendix, Containing a Brief Sketch of the Revolutionary Services of the Author (Boston: True & Greene, 1824), appendix: i-x; and those by two of his grandsons: James Freeman Clarke, "William Hull," chap. in Memorials and Biographical Sketches (Boston: Houghton, Osgood & Co., 1880), 409-423; and Samuel C. Clarke, Memoir of Gen. William Hull (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1893), 4-12. The latter also contributed to, or wrote completely, the entry for Hull in Francis S. Drake, Memorials of the Society of the Cincinnati of Massachusetts (Boston: printed for the Society, 1873), 341-345. See also Samuel Orcutt and Ambrose Beardsley, The History of the Old Town of Derby, Connecticut, 1642-1880. With Biographies and Genealogies (Springfield, Mass.: Springfield Printing Company, 1880), 577-584; Henry P. Johnston, Yale and Her Honor-Roll in the American Revolution, 1775-1783 (New York: privately printed, 1888), 278-280; and Leo T. Molloy, Commodore Isaac Hull, U.S.N.: His Life and Times (Derby, Conn.: Hull Book Fund, 1964), 105. A brief modern treatment is John K. Mahon, "Hull, William," in Dictionary of American Military Biography, ed. Roger J. Spiller, Joseph G. Dawson III, and T. Harry Williams (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984).

<sup>6</sup> Nathan Hale diary, 30 October-12 November 1775, in Charlotte Molyneux Holloway, Nathan Hale: The Martyr-Hero of the Revolution, with a Hale Genealogy and Hale's Diary (New York: A. L. Burt Co., 1902), 273-281. Walter Leslie Sargent, "Answering the Call to Arms: The Social Composition of the

In the general rearrangement of the army of January 1, 1776, Hull was promoted to full captain in Webb's reorganized regiment, now the 19th Continental Infantry. The promotion was fateful, for it placed him directly under Major John Brooks, a physician from Reading, Massachusetts, minuteman captain at Lexington and Concord, and future seven-term governor of the Bay State.<sup>7</sup> Brooks would become in this period a model and sponsor of sorts for Hull, and the two became fast friends. It was also during this time that Hull and many other young officers became Freemasons. In February they joined the new American Union Lodge, the first of several itinerant Masonic lodges formed by Continental officers during the Revolution.<sup>8</sup> These functioned largely as officers' clubs and helped to bond men like Hull more fully to the officer corps in this early period.<sup>9</sup>

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Revolutionary Soldiers of Massachusetts, 1775-1783" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 2004), 76-79, notes some of the problems of Washington's force in this period. Hull and Hale were disappointed that their appointments as acting captains did not come with a captain's pay. They had petitioned for this but Washington refused (p. 273), probably a wise decision under the circumstances. In mid-December Hull faced another major problem of army life: according to Hale, he had "taken violently ill" and remained "very bad" with a high fever. Hale diary, 14 December 1775, in Holloway, Nathan Hale, 295.

<sup>7</sup> Heitman, Historical Register, 123, 308; Drake, Memorials of the Society of the Cincinnati, 237-242; William R. Cutter, "Brooks, John," in William R. Cutter, ed., Historic Homes and Places, and Genealogical and Personal Memoirs, Relating to the Families of Middlesex County, Massachusetts, 4 vols. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1908), 1:5-9; Samuel Eliot Morison, "Brooks, John," in Dictionary of American Biography, ed. Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, 11 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931); Harry M. Ward, "Brooks, John," in American National Biography, ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, 24 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). Nathan Hale recorded that Brooks had applied for their regiment back in early November, which at that touchy moment had added to the distress among the captains. Hale diary, 7 November 1775, in Holloway, Nathan Hale, 277. As Ward notes, Brooks is another major figure of the Revolution and early American republic yet to receive thorough study.

<sup>8</sup> Photo reproduction of pages in Revolutionary War Record, American Union Lodge No. 1, entry for 26 February 1776, in Charles S. Plumb, The History of American Union Lodge No. 1. Free and Accepted Masons of Ohio, 1776 to 1933 (Marietta, Oh.: American Union Lodge No. 1 F. & A. M., 1934), 11, 13, lists Hull as an "Entered Apprentice." Plumb, 81, gives 13 March 1776 as the date of Hull's acceptance as a Master Mason. The American Union Lodge, established in Roxbury by several New England officers including Samuel Holden Parsons, received its charter ("dispensation") on February 15. John Rowe, Grand Master, to Joel Clark, 15 February 1776, reprinted in J. Hugo Tatsch, Freemasonry in the Thirteen Colonies, 2d ed. (New York: Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Co., 1933), 204.

<sup>9</sup> Plumb, History of American Union Lodge, chaps. 1-3, provides information on the American Union Lodge during the Revolution. See also Sidney Kaplan, "Veteran Officers and Politics in Massachusetts, 1783-1787," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 9 (1952): 31-32. Campbell's account,

Stephen C. Bullock has observed that “by building organizations that stressed familial affection within a profoundly disorienting situation, Masonry provided a counterweight to the fragmentation that threatened the officer corps, helping create the sense of common purpose necessary for the survival of the army—and thus the success of the Revolution itself.”<sup>10</sup> It is a further evidence of Hull’s polished manners and oratory that the lodge selected him to deliver its first St. John’s Day (June 24) address on the benefits of Masonry.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, Hull saw his first significant action when, on the night of March 4, he led his company in the seizure of Dorchester Heights overlooking Boston. There he helped emplace the cannon that other patriot troops had taken and transported from Fort Ticonderoga. The successful action threatened the British position in Boston and prompted their quick evacuation by sea.<sup>12</sup>

The respite was not to last, of course. On July 2—the day that the Continental Congress in Philadelphia voted to transform the American rebellion into a war for independence—thousands of British and Hessian troops under General William Howe began landing on Staten Island in New York, opening a new theater of war. Hull’s regiment now joined Washington on Manhattan (then York) Island. The ensuing Battle of Long Island in late August drew Washington and a division that included Hull across

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written in an era of widespread anti-Mason sentiment, makes no mention of Hull’s association with Freemasonry.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen C. Bullock, Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Va., 1996), 129.

<sup>11</sup> Plumb, History of American Union Lodge, 22.

<sup>12</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 28.

the East River to bolster the American position at Brooklyn Heights. The effort proved futile as the well-disciplined, well-uniformed, well-equipped, and well-provisioned British forces drove the sorry defenders into a desperate overnight escape back to New York, and soon thereafter to Fort Washington on the island's northern end.<sup>13</sup>

It was there in September that Hull counseled his close friend Nathan Hale against volunteering as a spy. The narrative of their exchange, though surely embellished in later years by Hull, nevertheless provides some insight into the divergent and even conflicting reasoning among Revolutionary officers on the proper relationship between patriotism and personal honor. Knowing Washington's desire for detailed information on enemy plans, Hale insisted on performing the "peculiar service." The young gentleman-officer had concluded that espionage, although universally condemned by gentlemen as lowly and despicable because of its inherent reliance on duplicity and pretense, became not only acceptable but indeed a positive duty when serving honorable and patriotic ends. Hull's sharp protest reflected a more idealistic, traditionally genteel perspective on the matter: namely, the end did not justify the means. The desire of being useful to one's country, he argued, did not justify the destruction of one's honor; rather, the latter would ultimately destroy the former. Spying, Hull assured his friend, was simply outside of his character:

His nature was too frank and open for deceit and disguise. . . . Admitting that he was successful, who could wish success at such a price? Did his country demand the moral degradation of her sons, to advance her interests?

Hull drew a contrast between the respectable subterfuge of field maneuver with the disgraceful deceit of espionage:

Stratagems are resorted to in war; they are feints and evasions, performed under no disguise; . . . The tact with which they are executed, exacts admiration from the

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<sup>13</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 28-33.

enemy. But who respects the character of a spy, assuming the garb of friendship but to betray? . . . As soldiers, let us do our duty in the field; contend for our legitimate rights, and not stain our honour by the sacrifice of integrity.

He warned Hale not to be deceived “by the belief that [an unworthy act] was sanctified by its object.” Prophetically, he feared that his friend’s “short, bright career, would close with an ignominious death.”

To this line of appeal Hale responded, “I am not influenced by the expectation of promotion or pecuniary reward; I wish to be useful, and every kind of service, necessary to the public good, becomes honourable by being necessary.” Hull readily conceded the purity of Hale’s motives, but still rejected the conclusion. His final exhortation was “for the love of country, for the love of kindred, to abandon an enterprise which would only end in the sacrifice of the dearest interests of both.” Hale paused, took his friend’s hand and said, “I will reflect, and do nothing but what duty demands.”<sup>14</sup> There the matter rested, with Hale standing on patriotism and selfless motive, and Hull upholding the primacy of character and personal honor. The precise meaning and content of patriotism and honor in this Revolutionary era was, this exchange would suggest, unsettled and contested.<sup>15</sup>

It was the last time Hull saw his brother-in-arms. Within days Hale was discovered and arrested on Long Island and transported to General Howe’s New York

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<sup>14</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 33-37. Twenty years after the Revolution, Mercy Otis Warren, though making no reference to the Hale story, reflected the same perspective on espionage: “The character of a spy has ever been held mean and disgraceful by all classes of men” because it was “a business to which so much deception and baseness is attached.” Mercy Otis Warren, History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution. Interspersed with Biographical, Political and Moral Observations, 3 vols. (Boston: n.p., 1805; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1970), 2:264-265.

<sup>15</sup> More than a century ago Hale’s biographer Charlotte Holloway, in a passing comment, captured this idea, crediting Hale with producing “a new conception of the claims of country.” Holloway, Nathan Hale, 150.

headquarters for execution. According to the story that in later decades gained wide circulation, the patriot Hale, just before being hanged, declared with genteel calm and dignity: "I only regret, that I have but one life to lose for my country." The source of this account, since canonized in American popular memory, was in fact Hull, who claimed to have heard it from a British officer sent to inform the American camp of the event. In reality the Hale incident received no such attention at the time, it being a failed and dubious affair. Captain John Montross, an aide-de-camp to Howe, had approached under truce that very evening to deliver a letter proposing a prisoner exchange and only mentioned Hale's morning execution as an aside. Told of the news, however, a distressed Hull applied to join the delegation sent the next day to accept the prisoner exchange. There Montross confirmed Hale's death to Hull; anything else he said only Hull could know.<sup>16</sup> As for the "I regret" line, aptly concludes one recent author, Hull "allowed his friend the posthumous privilege of uttering it."<sup>17</sup> If not Hale's actual words, however, it probably did reflect his sentiments, certainly as Hull knew them to be.

As the fragile patriot army continued its northward withdrawal through Westchester County, Hull was deeply impressed with the virtues of strict discipline,

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<sup>16</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 37-38. Hannah Adams credited Hull as the source of the Hale account in her A Summary History of New-England, from the First Settlement at Plymouth, to the Acceptance of the Federal Constitution. Comprehending a General Sketch of the American War (Dedham, Mass.: H. Mann and J. H. Adams, 1799), 358-361 (Hull credited on 361). Later, Revolutionary surgeon James Thacher reprinted in footnote Adams's account, after Hull had vouched for it, when he published his journal of wartime experiences in 1823. James Thacher, Military Journal of the American Revolution, Eyewitness Accounts of the American Revolution Series ([Boston, 1823]; reprint, Hartford, Conn.: Hurlbut, Williams and Co., 1862; facsimile reprint, New York: New York Times and Arno Press, 1969), 229-231n. A brief examination of the origins and evolution of Hale's famous statement is F. K. Donnelly, "A Possible Source for Nathan Hale's Dying Words," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 42 (July 1985): 394-396. Recent examinations of the Hale episode and its subsequent portrayal are Robert E. Cray, Jr., "The Revolutionary Spy as Hero: Nathan Hale in the Public Memory, 1776-1846," Connecticut History 38, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 85-104, and Alexander Rose, Washington's Spies: The Story of America's First Spy Ring (New York: Bantam Books, 2006), 16-18, 27-34, 290-293 (notes 67 and 69).

<sup>17</sup> Rose, Washington's Spies, 31.

thorough training, and capable leadership, which is to say that he had become disgusted with the rampant ill-discipline and misbehavior within the force. The young officer had already faced insults, blows, drunkenness, and disobedience from subordinates as the *rage militaire* gave way to retreat and drudgeries.<sup>18</sup> Now he proclaimed that “good disciplined Troops are the best Fortifications in the World. . . . There never was a disciplined Army more wanted than we do at present.” As for leadership, he observed, “It is not every man that sustains a respectable Character at home that is fit for an Officer. They ought to be Gentlemen of Honor, Principle & Ambition.”<sup>19</sup> According to the unwritten but well understood code of gentility, these qualities were fully complementary. Hull would aspire to that model throughout his years of service. He wholeheartedly approved Washington’s (and the European) policy of maintaining social and economic distance between commissioned officers and the rank and file in order to preserve authority and discipline, and thereby army efficiency. To that end he became meticulous about form and order, whether in his own uniform or in the drilling of troops. His Revolutionary service very much therefore tended to reinforce an elitist perspective.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Court martial rulings are noted in George Washington, General Orders, 3 May 1776 and 9 June 1776, in John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799, 39 vols. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1931-1944), from Library of Congress, The George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741-1799, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007). See also Hale diary, 11 November 1775, in Holloway, Nathan Hale, 281. A later instance of disobedience and abusive language against Hull appears in George Washington, General Orders, 9 June 1779, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007).

<sup>19</sup> William Hull to Andrew Adams, 21 October 1776, Misc. Mss. H, New-York Historical Society, New York. Adjutant General Joseph Reed had similar impressions, observing that where “the principles of democracy so universally prevail, where so great an equality and so thorough a levelling spirit, predominates, either no discipline can be established, or he who attempts it must become odious and detestable.” William B. Reed, Life and Correspondence of Joseph Reed (Philadelphia, 1847), 1:243, quoted in Sidney Kaplan, “Rank and Status among Massachusetts Continental Officers,” American Historical Review 56 (1951): 321.

<sup>20</sup> See anecdote in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 23-24. The fact that Hull’s communications never referred to individual enlistees except in returns was not unusual among

In light of the army's weakness, Hull also clearly understood Washington's cautious strategy. "Now we must act on the defensive," he wrote to a friend, "for should we attack them and meet with a Defeat the Consequences to the Country would be fatal."<sup>21</sup> A week later, on October 28, the patriots faced a major British attack at White Plains. Hull's division made up the American right wing and saw intense, close action as they attempted a defense of Chatterton Hill. He took a minor wound while leading his detachment against a British flanking attempt, and provided signal service in a desperate stand against double his numbers to hold open the only road of escape. Afterwards Washington gave the regiment his personal thanks.<sup>22</sup>

Hull's pride was tempered by the bleak situation into which American morale and material conditions had fallen. Washington now led a shrinking division in steady retreat across New Jersey, while Hull's regiment withdrew to the Highlands on the Hudson River under the division command of the eccentric General Charles Lee. Within a month Lee's numbers shriveled from seven thousand to four thousand.<sup>23</sup> Hull also learned that his oldest brother Joseph, who in the summer had joined the army as a lieutenant of

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Revolutionary officers. Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 86. A good discussion of Washington's strict policy against egalitarianism in the Continental Army is Kaplan, "Rank and Status," 318-326.

<sup>21</sup> William Hull to Andrew Adams, 21 October 1776, Misc. Mss. H, New-York Historical Society, New York. On Washington's "strategy of attrition," the first requirement of which was the preservation of the army, see Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), chap. 1.

<sup>22</sup> James Freeman Clarke, *Memorials*, 411; Campbell and Clarke, *Revolutionary Services*, 54-55; Otto Hufeland, *Westchester County during the American Revolution, 1775-1783*, Publications of the Westchester County Historical Society, vol. 3 (White Plains, N.Y.: Westchester County Historical Society, 1926; reprint, Harrison, N.Y.: Harbor Hill Books, 1974), 143.

<sup>23</sup> Campbell and Clarke, *Revolutionary Services*, 56; David Hackett Fischer, *Washington's Crossing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 128-129.



artillery, was among the many hundreds taken prisoner in the surrender of Fort Washington on Manhattan Island. Joseph would endure nearly two years in a miserable prison hulk in New York harbor before being exchanged, after which he commanded a private whaleboat flotilla on Long Island Sound, harassing enemy forces and profitably seizing prizes.<sup>24</sup>

In early December, as Washington's force escaped across the Delaware River into Pennsylvania to prepare to defend the capital, Lee finally bowed to the commander-in-chief's urging and moved his army into northwestern New Jersey en route to join the defense. Hull later recounted the miserable conditions:

When we left the Highlands, my company consisted of about fifty, rank and file. On examining the state of the clothing, I found there was not more than one poor blanket to two men: many of them had neither shoes nor stockings; and those who had, found them nearly worn out. All the clothing was of the same wretched description.<sup>25</sup>

Then suddenly, on the morning of December 13, an advanced guard of British dragoons discovered Lee in his exposed farmhouse inn and carried him off without a fight.

Although the event may have been, in the reckoning of David Hackett Fischer, "a gift to the American cause," and did remove a brewing dispute for Washington, Hull and other Continentals in the moment lamented it as yet another tragic misfortune.<sup>26</sup> "It is impossible to describe the excitement produced by this event," Hull recalled. "The army

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<sup>24</sup> Linda M. Maloney, The Captain from Connecticut: The Life and Naval Times of Isaac Hull (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986), 3-4; Samuel C. Clarke, comp., Records of Some of the Descendants of Richard Hull, New Haven, 1639-1662 (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1869), 6.

<sup>25</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 70.

<sup>26</sup> Fischer, Washington's Crossing, 150. (Fischer's evaluation of Lee and his capture are found in pp. 147-150.) Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services,

considered that, next to Washington, Lee was the sinew and soul of their strength.”<sup>27</sup>

General John Sullivan assumed control of the division and pressed the march to Pennsylvania, reuniting with Washington on December 20. “Here we remained a few days, but found no relief from our sufferings, unless it was relief to join companions in similar distress,” remembered an older Hull.<sup>28</sup>

Accompanying the army’s physical distress was the “desponding spirit,” “deepest gloom,” and “disaffection” that ran rife through the region: “The patriotic feelings that pervaded every part of the country at the commencement of the contest, appeared now to be nearly extinguished.”<sup>29</sup> However, the arrival of Sullivan’s reinforcements, doubling the size of Washington’s force, and the simultaneous distribution of Thomas Paine’s pamphlet *The American Crisis* (“These are the times that try men’s souls”), cheered the army and civilian patriots all along the Delaware. Washington determined to exploit and perhaps expand the revival with a daring wintertime assault on enemy camps in New Jersey.<sup>30</sup>

So it was that Hull played an active role in the famous crossing of the Delaware River and surprise attacks on Trenton and Princeton, properly recognized as a crucial episode in the war and thus in North American and world history.<sup>31</sup> Like all but the

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<sup>27</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 57.

<sup>28</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 71.

<sup>29</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 57.

<sup>30</sup> Fischer, Washington’s Crossing, 140-143. Fischer emphasizes not only the positive impact of Paine’s pamphlet, but makes the important point that the boost in American spirits preceded and enabled the attacks on Trenton and Princeton, and was not merely the result of them.

<sup>31</sup> Fischer, Washington’s Crossing, is a recent examination of the campaign and its significance. For campaign details, see also William S. Stryker, The Battles of Trenton and Princeton (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1898).

highest-ranking officers, Hull knew no details of the planned operation against Hessian-occupied Trenton, only that something significant was afoot. It began Christmas evening and took place, Hull wrote, in “as violent a Storm . . . of Hail & Snow as I ever felt.”<sup>32</sup> The storm-blackened, wind-whipped, icy conditions slowed the nighttime crossing of guns and carriages, horses, and some 2400 men. Winding inclines and slippery ravines further delayed the ten-mile southward march and undid the planned pre-dawn attack, but there was no choice of turning back. Halfway to Trenton, Washington paused at a crossroads to shore up and divide his force for the final approach.<sup>33</sup> Many men had already succumbed to exposure, fatigue, or illness, including Major Brooks who had to return to camp. Two privates had frozen to death. According to Hull’s daughter’s account, it was at that moment that Colonel Webb summoned Hull: his lieutenant colonel (Street Hall) was absent, and with Brooks out of action, he wished Hull to stand in and “assist him . . . in the general command of the regiment.”<sup>34</sup> Hull joined the other field officers in setting his watch by Washington’s for the fixed time of attack.<sup>35</sup>

The march resumed as the incessant swirl of snow, rain, and hail intensified. Hull’s brigade under Col. John Glover formed part of the left column led by General Nathanael Greene and Washington himself.<sup>36</sup> They would approach the town from the

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<sup>32</sup> William Hull to Andrew Adams, 1 January 1777, in Catherine V. R. Bonney, comp., [A Legacy of Historical Gleanings](#), 2d ed. (Albany, N.Y.: J. Munsell, 1875), 1:57; also in Stryker, [Battles of Trenton and Princeton](#), 375. Adams, a Litchfield jurist and militia officer, was Hull’s friend and probably law tutor.

<sup>33</sup> Fischer, [Washington’s Crossing](#), 206-233, appendix L on 403-404.

<sup>34</sup> Campbell and Clarke, [Revolutionary Services](#), 59. Stryker, [Battles of Trenton and Princeton](#), 356, notes that Webb’s Nineteenth Connecticut Continental regiment consisted of “22 commissioned officers and 190 enlisted men present.”

<sup>35</sup> William Hull to Andrew Adams, 1 January 1777, in Bonney, [Historical Gleanings](#), 1:57.

<sup>36</sup> Campbell and Clarke, [Revolutionary Services](#), 59; Stryker, [Battles of Trenton and Princeton](#), 355-356.

north. By eight o'clock the Americans were in position and discovered that the violent weather, though causing delay, had also kept the Hessians from sooner detecting their approach. The surprise was intact after all. Hull described what followed:

Just after Light, we came to their out Guard, which fired upon us and retreated. The first sound of the Musquetry and Retreat of the Guards animated the Men and they pushed on with Resolution and Firmness. Happily the fire begun [sic] on every Side at the same instant, their Main Body had just Time to form when there ensued a heavy Cannonade from our Field Pieces and a fine brisk and lively fire from our Infantry. This continued but a Short Time before the Enemy finding themselves flanked on every Side laid down their arms.<sup>37</sup>

Written a week after the event and composed at a time when civilian morale and military recruitment were desperate needs, this brief account overlooked the terror and carnage and hardly portrayed the true “face of battle.”<sup>38</sup> Still, it was an astonishing victory, with nearly nine hundred prisoners of war brought back over the Delaware into Pennsylvania. Hull’s own company did not recross the river until between two and three the next morning. He remembered well the overwhelming exhaustion after two nights and a day on his feet:

I marched [my company] to the house of a farmer, and halted to obtain some refreshments and rest. After my men were accommodated, I went into a room where a number of officers were sitting around a table, with a large dish of ‘hasty pudding’ in its center. I sat down, procured my spoon, and began to eat. While eating, I fell from my chair to the floor, overcome with sleep, and in the morning, when I awoke, the spoon was fast clenched in my hand.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> William Hull to Andrew Adams, 1 January 1777, in Bonney, Historical Gleanings, 1:57.

<sup>38</sup> The term reflects the title of historian John Keegan’s well-known book on warfare from the perspective of actual combatants. Fischer, Washington’s Crossing, 248, cites other American participants to note that the surprise attack produced among the Hessians “a scene of horror beyond imagining.”

<sup>39</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 62.

Exhaustion quickly gave way to elation. “What can’t men do when engaged in so noble a cause?” Hull glowed.<sup>40</sup> His leadership in the field and subsequent success in persuading his threadbare company to extend their enlistments for six weeks evidently pleased Washington, who now moved a revived American army back into Trenton to follow up on their initial victory. On January 1, 1777, Washington summoned Hull to headquarters for his first personal audience. The commander-in-chief proposed, subject to Hull’s willingness to part from the Connecticut line, to promote him to a field command at the rank of major in Col. Michael Jackson’s Eighth Massachusetts regiment. By this arrangement he would continue under the direct command of Brooks who was being promoted to lieutenant colonel in the same regiment. Hull’s ambition, respect for Brooks, and national outlook overcame any attachment to his native state, and he gratefully accepted.<sup>41</sup> Whether he in fact declared, “I am a soldier for my country, and it is immaterial in what particular line of the army I serve,” cannot be known, though it would have been within character.<sup>42</sup> Later Washington explained to another officer that he had appointed Hull based on the request of several Massachusetts officers, including Brooks.<sup>43</sup> For Hull this reassignment was important for more than just military reasons. Besides keeping him closely connected with Brooks, it also brought him the attention and eventual friendship of Colonel Jackson, who already was incapacitated for field

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<sup>40</sup> William Hull to Andrew Adams, 1 January 1777, in Bonney, Historical Gleanings, 1:58.

<sup>41</sup> William Hull to Andrew Adams, 1 January 1777, in Bonney, Historical Gleanings, 1:58; James Freeman Clarke, Memorials, 412-414; Heitman, Historical Register, 38, 123, 308; Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 64-66. Hull’s promotion and transfer were part of Washington’s broader rearrangement of the army under newly vested authority from Congress. Stryker, Battles of Trenton and Princeton, 243-245.

<sup>42</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 66.

<sup>43</sup> George Washington to William Heath, 13 December 1799, William Heath Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, microfilm, reel 14:385.

command from a severe leg wound received in the New York Campaign. Jackson was of a prominent family in Newton, Massachusetts, a circumstance that would have a profound influence on Hull's domestic future.<sup>44</sup>

The day after his new appointment, now-Major Hull received orders to lead a detachment in the effort to harass and slow British commander Lord Cornwallis's vanguard as his large army advanced from Princeton toward Trenton. The patriot skirmishers created enough distraction and delay to postpone a face-off of the two main armies until dusk and enable the American force to make its daring overnight escape toward Princeton.<sup>45</sup> In a dinner conversation some sixteen years later, Hull described to Governor-General of Upper Canada John Graves Simcoe the terrible vulnerability of the American force in Trenton at that moment. The memory stirred the governor who rose from his chair and declared to his younger officers that he, then but a lieutenant colonel, had urged Cornwallis immediately to press the attack, but that the British commander had refused, sure that the Americans could not escape before morning and wishing to rest his weary troops. The matter still obviously rankled. "Thus . . . was lost an opportunity of

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<sup>44</sup> Hull's bond with Jackson remained intimate after the war. He served as Jackson's attorney in petitioning the government for relief, executor of his will, and educator of his youngest son Charles, later district attorney for Georgia, in the law. He was present at his friend's passing in 1801. Evidence of these activities is available in the Jackson Family Papers II, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass. See especially Michael Jackson's will, 13 June 1792, box 1, Col. Michael Jackson Correspondence 1792 file; William Hull to Charles Jackson, 20 April 1801, box 2, Charles Jackson Correspondence 1799-1801 file; Ebenezer Jackson to Simon Jackson, 11 October 1805 and 31 January 1806, box 1, Ebenezer Jackson Correspondence 1804-1806 file. See also William Hull to Henry Knox, 24 January 1791, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 55:34; and William Hull to Alexander Hamilton, 29 June 1789, in Harold C. Syrett and Jacob E. Cooke, eds., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, 27 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961-1987), 5:345.

<sup>45</sup> Campbell and Clarke, *Revolutionary Services*, 66-68; Fischer, *Washington's Crossing*, 290-323.

putting an end to the war, in which case both countries would now have been happy, in forming one great and powerful nation,” Simcoe lamented.<sup>46</sup>

Instead, at around 8 A.M. on January 3, the Americans had overwhelmed the shocked and out-manned British defenders at Princeton, then fled northward ahead of Cornwallis’s furious march. Washington was unwilling to risk a reversal of his stunning victories and so diverted his force to Morristown, west of the Watchung Mountains, where it settled into winter camp. Altogether the audacious and pivotal New Jersey Campaign had boosted patriot morale and many reputations with it, Hull’s certainly among them.<sup>47</sup>

While Washington’s Continentals wintered at Morristown, Hull joined Brooks on a regimental recruiting trip. Brooks focused his efforts on his home region in and around Boston, while Hull had some success in his native Connecticut around New Haven. In February, General Samuel Holden Parsons notified Hull of Washington’s orders that all American troops be inoculated against smallpox, and that all Massachusetts forces proceed to Fort Ticonderoga for its defense. Hull headed north to Springfield to drill his newly raised companies and await Brooks’s recruits, who were delayed.<sup>48</sup> In late April, he marched some three hundred fresh recruits northward to reinforce Ticonderoga in anticipation of British General John Burgoyne’s massive southward advance. Stationed forward on the old French lines, Hull’s force resisted several attacks. The American

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<sup>46</sup> “Colonel Hull’s conversation with Governor Simcoe, respecting Washington’s escape from Cornwallis, at Trenton, New Jersey,” in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 269.

<sup>47</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 68-69; Fischer, Washington’s Crossing, 324-345.

<sup>48</sup> Hull, Memoirs, appendix, iii; Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 72; William Hull to John Brooks, 28 February and 21 April 1777, William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (2), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.; Elizabeth A. Fenn, Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82 (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 93-94.

position became increasingly untenable, however, and in late June General Arthur St. Clair called a council of war that unanimously agreed upon a withdrawal in order to preserve their army. Hull was commanding the rear guard of about a hundred men when suddenly a small band of Indians fired upon them. The raw troops panicked and began to run. Major James Wilkinson watched as Hull, on horseback, made “the most animated exertions to rally his men . . . and in turn drove the enemy with great gallantry.” Nevertheless, in the rapid retreat through the thickly wooded hills of Vermont, Hull lost all of his personal effects, including his military library and camp furniture.<sup>49</sup>

The evacuation of the stronghold of Ticonderoga prompted bitter public outcries against St. Clair, and helped provoke Congressman John Adams to vent that “we shall never defend a post until we shoot a General.”<sup>50</sup> Several of Hull’s fellow officers also joined the clamor, no doubt fearing injury to their own reputations by association with the event. By contrast, Hull favored the retreat and defended it as a necessary and prudent action in the face of insurmountable force.<sup>51</sup> Had not Washington, after all, used such prudence to advantage? The episode, and Hull’s open defense of the embattled St. Clair,

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<sup>49</sup> Hull, Memoirs, appendix, iii; Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 72-77; James Wilkinson, Memoirs of My Own Times, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Abraham Small, 1816), 1:203.

<sup>50</sup> John Adams to Abigail Adams, 19 August 1777, in Charles Francis Adams, ed., Familiar Letters of John Adams and His Wife Abigail Adams, During the Revolution. With a Memoir of Mrs. Adams (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1875), 292.

<sup>51</sup> “Extract of a letter from an officer of distinction in the Northern Army, dated July 17, 1777, at Moses’ Creek,” in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 273-274. According to Campbell, Hull sent this letter to Judge Mitchell of Hartford, Connecticut, who published it in the Connecticut Courant. Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 77. Benjamin Stone, rustic Revolutionary captain of New Hampshire, thought poorly of gentleman Hull’s view. Decades later, after hearing of Hull’s 1812 surrender of the Northwestern Army, Stone attributed Hull’s support of the retreat from Ticonderoga not to strategic thinking but to cowardice. “He did not appear to me when at tieconderoga to be a man that was not affeard of gun Powder,” he wrote President James Madison, “He was a fanncy Parade officer.” [Misspellings in original.] Benjamin Stone to James Madison, 9 October 1812, in J. C. A. Stagg and others, eds., The Papers of James Madison: Presidential Series (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004), 5:381. Hull’s Revolutionary record would seem to belie that judgment.



is particularly interesting in light of the circumstances surrounding, and responses to, his later surrender of Detroit in 1812.<sup>52</sup>

The patriot force regrouped at Fort Edward, but as Burgoyne's march continued, so did the American withdrawal. Near Saratoga, Hull commanded the rear guard of three hundred Continentals and additional militia when suddenly British regulars and Indians launched a sharp sunrise attack. Hull quickly formed the line and returned fire, but the militia composing his left flank collapsed, forcing an immediate retreat. The fleeing Americans rushed into an Indian ambush. Forty men and three officers were killed in the melee before the guard made good its escape. In spite of the losses, Hull received the thanks of General Philip Schuyler. He placed Hull's regiment in a column assembling under General Benedict Arnold to relieve the British-Indian-Loyalist siege of the Fort Stanwix garrison and thwart the British advance along the Mohawk Valley.<sup>53</sup> In later years, Revolutionary veteran Solomon Adams of Maine recalled Hull's presence on the court martial of a Loyalist spy captured en route. The court condemned the young man to hang, but Arnold contrived to allow him an opportunity to save himself by fooling the enemy into believing that a much larger patriot force was approaching. The scheme

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<sup>52</sup> A court martial acquitted St. Clair more than a year later. Surgeon James Thacher's comment on the occasion reads much like later defenses of Hull. "General St. Clair, it is presumed, will never receive an adequate compensation for the unmerited contumely which he has experienced from Congress and the public. It is the height of injustice to subject a man of established character to suffer in reputation and in sensibility, merely from surmise and suspicion; and the injury is greatly aggravated when the accused is long held up to public odium, and not permitted to adduce evidence in his own vindication." Thacher, Military Journal, 153.

<sup>53</sup> Hull, Memoirs, appendix, iv; Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 78-80; Thacher, Military Journal, 91; Simeon Alexander, pension application, [1832], in John C. Dann, ed., The Revolution Remembered: Eyewitness Accounts of the War for Independence (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 108-109.

worked to perfection. Col. Barry St. Leger's Indian allies hastily fled the scene, forcing him to lift the siege and withdraw before the smaller American corps arrived.<sup>54</sup>

With the western threat removed, Hull's regiment immediately rejoined the main army, now commanded by General Horatio Gates. The crucial Battle of Saratoga soon followed, and Hull played a significant role. In the first engagement of September 19 he led a detachment against Burgoyne's attack at Freeman's Farm. The severe noon-to-dusk fighting included a bayonet charge through thick woods that became littered with dead and wounded. Hull lost fully half of his three hundred men in the hand-to-hand combat. Then on October 7 at Bemis Heights, Burgoyne made a second major attempt to dislodge the Americans from their fortified position. Now Hull's advanced guard joined Arnold's divisions and the corps of Col. Daniel Morgan and Major Henry Dearborn to drive the British right wing back in another bloody engagement. As the redcoats retreated, Hull's guard broke off to remove prisoners, wounded, and artillery from the field. That assignment had prevented him from joining in the final storming of the British post, he afterward regretted. Nevertheless he was present at Burgoyne's surrender, the war's turning point, on October 17. Numbering among the artillery pieces taken that day were six brass eight-pounders. Ironically, thirty-five years later Hull would watch these very same guns revert to British hands by his own order at Detroit.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> "Revolutionary Anecdote," The Mississippian (reprinted from the Cleveland Advertiser), 13 June 1834. In light of Hull's participation here and later surrender of Detroit, it is perhaps interesting to note that Hull had witnessed at least one instance in which a smaller force deceived a larger force into withdrawal.

<sup>55</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 92-111; Samuel C. Clarke, Memoir, 7-8; Thacher, Military Journal, 98-102. Continental Surgeon James Thacher recorded that in the October 7 engagement, Hull "was among those who so bravely stormed the enemy's intrenchment [sic] and acted a conspicuous part." Thacher, Military Journal, 102. Hull numbers among the many officers pictured in John Trumbull's famous painting on display in the U.S. Capitol rotunda. John Trumbull, Surrender of General Burgoyne at Saratoga, oil on canvas, 1817-1822, United States Capitol, Washington, D.C.

The soldiers of the Eighth Massachusetts endured the bitter winter of 1777-1778 in makeshift huts at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, short of supplies and provisions. Hull and other officers enjoyed better accommodations than the rank and file. He and Brooks shared a one-room log hut and painted their walls with a clay-water mix. They lined one side with shelves of books purchased from a circulating library; on the other they kept a row of Derby cheeses sent from Hull's mother, such that, Hull recalled, "Our neighbors now declared [the domicile] to be quite an elegant mansion."<sup>56</sup> Conditions deteriorated for everyone, however. Brooks wrote of the "poor brave fellows living in tents, bare-footed, bare-legged, bare-breeched," blaming the commissary and "the cursed Quakers and the other inhabitants."<sup>57</sup> The suffering from hunger, exposure, and disease grew intense and seriously threatened the cohesion of the army.<sup>58</sup> Hull himself managed to escape the smallpox, scabies, and other illnesses that wreaked havoc on the destitute American cantonment, but the appalling sights all around made a deep impression on him. "Long years after these trials had passed by," remembered James Freeman Clarke a century later, "my grandfather Hull could scarcely allude to them without emotion."<sup>59</sup>

Hull's service to prominent Revolutionary figures continued in this period.

During the trying winter, Washington ordered Hull into short-term but hard field service

<sup>56</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 116-117; James Freeman Clarke, Memorials, 415.

<sup>57</sup> Letter of Brooks, 5 January 1778, in Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society (1873-1875), 244, quoted in Ward, "Brooks, John," in American National Biography; and Louis Clinton Hatch, The Administration of the American Revolutionary Army (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1904), 94.

<sup>58</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 117, 120-123.

<sup>59</sup> James Freeman Clarke, Memorials, 416. Although no direct evidence has been found, it seems probable that Hull underwent smallpox inoculation—and thus a mild but still unpleasant form of the disease—either during the siege of Boston or, more likely, in the general army inoculation of early 1777.

under Daniel Morgan to harass and turn back British foraging parties. With the advent of spring, Hull was among several officers selected and specially trained by the Prussian Baron von Steuben as a brigade inspector for Steuben's newly adapted military system. For six weeks Hull drilled ill-trained troops in posture, marches, turns, formation shifts, musket firing and loading, bayonet technique, and camp procedure in an effort to develop a more uniform and disciplined force. He was responsible as well to monitor soldiers' conduct and condition, and evaluate regimental officers' effectiveness. Following this, in May, he assisted another prominent foreign officer by joining the detachment sent to reinforce and prevent the entrapment of the reconnaissance force under the Marquis de Lafayette.<sup>60</sup>

The following month Hull participated in the last major engagement of the northern theater. As the British army quit Philadelphia for New York, Washington pursued and on a sweltering June 28 engaged the enemy's rear guard at Monmouth Court House. In the absence of the wounded Jackson and the reassigned Brooks, Hull commanded the entire Eighth Massachusetts and helped repel the British right. The Battle of Monmouth harassed but failed to inflict significant damage on the withdrawing British force. Afterwards Hull's regiment moved on to the Hudson where most of the army would winter. There they anticipated more comfortable accommodations and a respite from arduous duty.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> George Washington, General Orders, 29 March 1778, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007); Harry M. Ward, George Washington's Enforcers: Policing the Continental Army (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006), 51-56; James D. Scudieri, "The Continentals: A Comparative Analysis of a Late Eighteenth-Century Standing Army, 1775-1783" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1993), 233-246; Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 119-120, 126-129.

<sup>61</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 133-138, 142. Brooks had been temporarily reassigned as adjutant-general to General Charles Lee. Hull ventured no opinion on the performance of

Hull was now twenty-five and recognized as a reliable, disciplined field officer and an expert skirmisher with remarkable stamina. He was well liked and regarded by his superiors. How respected he was by those under his command is harder to determine. He certainly faced instances of defiance, but this, notes Charles Royster, was all too common in the Revolution.<sup>62</sup> His merits must have been sufficiently strong, for he was recognized late that year with an offer of promotion to lieutenant colonel in the Connecticut line. However, as Washington later recalled hearing, “many of the Massachusetts Officers discovered great uneasiness at the idea of his being taken from them, and he himself, hoping that all were content with his services & rank, generously refused the Offer.”<sup>63</sup> Brooks, meanwhile, transferred to the Massachusetts Seventh, thus removing himself as Hull’s immediate superior after nearly two years.<sup>64</sup>

Now General Alexander McDougall gave Hull the prestigious but dangerous assignment of commanding the advanced lines in Westchester County—the tense, ravaged no-man’s land north of Manhattan on the eastern side of the Hudson. Faced with exchanging comfortable winter quarters in Poughkeepsie for another arduous and extremely hazardous mission, Hull’s regiment rose—or rather, lay—in protest, refusing to muster for the march. Infuriated by this insubordination, he browbeat his halfhearted officers and ordered them into the barracks to drive out and parade the defiant troops.

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Lee, whose decision to break off engagement for a more defensible position so famously enraged Washington.

<sup>62</sup> Royster, *A Revolutionary People*, 86-88.

<sup>63</sup> George Washington to William Heath, 13 December 1799, William Heath Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, microfilm, reel 14:385. “I only mention it as a trait of his character,” Washington added.

<sup>64</sup> Heitman, *Historical Register*, 38, 123.

With the body soon reassembled, Hull emphatically reminded them of their duty and ordered a severe punishment of the revolt ringleader, a sergeant, in the presence of the troops. The detachment of four hundred proceeded to White Plains and then moved to the front lines. In mid-March 1779, Hull replaced Lieut. Col. Aaron Burr as commander in the region upon Burr's resignation from the army.<sup>65</sup>

Hull's unit had good reason to be apprehensive about its new assignment. Since the British occupation of New York, the "Neutral Ground" between the American and British lines in Westchester County had become notorious for violence and plundering by Tories, patriots, and opportunists who took advantage of the anarchy.<sup>66</sup> A confused and volatile mix of revolution, civil war, guerrilla warfare, and sheer banditry produced many of the outrages and atrocities recognized as tragically common to such conflicts. In particular, bands of loyalist "Cowboys" (the patriot term) or "Refugees" (the British term) led by James DeLancey, former sheriff of Westchester County and member of the prominent New York family, regularly raided farms, seized cattle, and carried off

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<sup>65</sup> Hull, Memoirs, appendix, vii; Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 142-151; Hufeland, Westchester County, 277-280; Gen. Alexander McDougall to William Hull, 11 March 1779, in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 277-278. Hull's memoirs state that he arrived with his detachment in early December 1778 and served on the lines for five months. Two letters from McDougall to Burr, however, reprinted in Burr's memoirs, indicate that Hull was ordered to White Plains in late February. It is unclear whether Hull had other service in the region prior to this or if Hull's memory was faulty. Hull, Memoirs, appendix, vii; McDougall to Aaron Burr, 23 and 25 February 1779, in Aaron Burr, Memoirs of Aaron Burr. With Miscellaneous Selections from His Correspondence, ed. Matthew L. Davis, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Bros., 1836; facsimile reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 1:154-155.

<sup>66</sup> Helpful reviews of the background and extreme conditions here are Sung Bok Kim, "The Limits of Politicization in the American Revolution: The Experience of Westchester County, New York," Journal of American History 80 (1993): 868-889; and Harry M. Ward, Between the Lines: Banditti of the American Revolution (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002), chap. 2. Judith L. Van Buskirk, Generous Enemies: Patriots and Loyalists in Revolutionary New York (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), provides useful background on the complexities of wartime loyalty and activity in the New York region. See also Hufeland, Westchester County, 236-239, 367; Philip Ranlet, The New York Loyalists (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986), 146-150; John Shy, "The Loyalist Problem in the Lower Hudson Valley: The British Perspective," in The Loyalist Americans: A Focus on Greater New York, ed. Robert A. East and Jacob Judd (Tarrytown, N.Y.: Sleepy Hollow Restorations, 1975), 8-9. A good contemporary description is Thacher, Military Journal, 237-238.

prisoners for exchange.<sup>67</sup> They especially targeted those who took New York State's mandated loyalty oath. Much worse in Hull's eyes, however, were the "Skinners," shameless rogues claiming Whig sympathies who committed indiscriminate acts of plunder and terror.<sup>68</sup> These Hull held in total contempt. "They seemed, like the savage, to have learned to enjoy the sight of the sufferings they inflicted," he later wrote.

Oftentimes they left their wretched victims, from whom they plundered their all, hung up by their arms, and sometimes by their thumbs, on barn doors, enduring the agony of the wounds that had been inflicted, to wrest from them their property. These miserable beings [the victims] were frequently relieved by our patrols, who every night scoured the country.<sup>69</sup>

Finally, of course, major British forts filled with regulars lay nearby, an ever-present and real threat. It was this chaotic and terrorized region that in 1821 became the setting for James Fenimore Cooper's The Spy, "the first significant novel to be set in the American past," which Hull read with great interest in his old age.<sup>70</sup>

Having earlier fought in Westchester on the retreat from New York, Hull now became intimately familiar with this once flourishing and well-populated region. His assignment was to monitor and counter British movements, provide some degree of order

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<sup>67</sup> Ranlet, New York Loyalists, 149; Charles Worthen Spencer, "DeLancey, James," in Dictionary of American Biography.

<sup>68</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 147-149.

<sup>69</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 147. See Thacher, Military Journal, 238, 256, for similar descriptions. Hull's contempt for the Skinners lends support to Catherine S. Crary's argument that DeLancey's Cowboys, although irregular, were "lawful combatants," unlike the rogue, duplicitous Skinners. Catherine S. Crary, "Guerrilla Activities of James DeLancey's Cowboys in Westchester County: Conventional Warfare or Self-Interested Freebooting?," in The Loyalist Americans, ed. East and Judd, 14-24 (especially 18-19). Crary's contention, however, that the Cowboys were not regular plunderers has been dismissed by Sung Bok Kim, "The Limits of Politicization," 884n, nor is it borne out by Hull's view.

<sup>70</sup> "Extract of a letter from Mrs. [Sarah] Hull to one of her daughters," 12 April 1822, in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 284-285. Quote in Warren S. Walker, foreword to The Spy: A Tale of the Neutral Ground, by James Fenimore Cooper (New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1960), (9). A useful discussion of The Spy and, by extension, revolutionary Westchester, is found in Charles Hansford Adams, "The Guardian of the Law": Authority and Identity in James Fenimore Cooper (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 27-33, 40-42.

and security to faithful citizens, and prevent the less scrupulous from committing outrages or trading with the enemy. To those ends he continued the various measures developed by Burr for order and safety, and which Hull deemed “highly judicious.”<sup>71</sup> These included registering the names and, in cipher, the “character” of each of the inhabitants, hiring trustworthy local guides, and maintaining a network of citizen informants, several of who lived well within the British lines.<sup>72</sup> Constantly vulnerable to attack, he took great care to avoid being caught off guard. He frequently shifted his camp, arising each day at 3:00 A.M. to ride some twenty miles to check the lines and visit informants, and riding another twenty in daytime. The troops were kept in a constant state of readiness, parading and patrolling day and night. So taxing was the service that half of Hull’s unit was relieved every ten days, though he remained throughout.<sup>73</sup> “It is impossible for Duty to be severer than mine,” he wrote Brooks. “I never even take off my boots.”<sup>74</sup> Later Hull proudly recalled that “in this exposed situation . . . within three

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<sup>71</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 145. Burr, who had assumed command in the region in January, was also outraged at supposed patriots engaging in plunder, even some regular officers. “Sir, till now, I never wished for arbitrary power,” he wrote McDougall. “I could gibbet half a dozen *good whigs*, with all the venom of an inveterate tory.” Aaron Burr to Gen. Alexander McDougall, 13 January 1779, in Burr, Memoirs, 1:142.

<sup>72</sup> Samuel Young to Commodore Valentine Morris, 25 January 1814, in Burr, Memoirs, 1:160. According to this Westchester resident, Burr had worked a revolution in discipline and order during his service there. “It was these very measures [of Burr’s] which saved Hull, on whom the command devolved for a short time,” wrote Young. Burr, Memoirs, 1:162. (It should be noted that this was written at the time of the beginning of Hull’s trial for the surrender of Detroit.)

<sup>73</sup> James Freeman Clarke, Memorials, 417-419; Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 146-151; William Hull to Lt. Col. John Brooks, 14 March 1779 [incorrectly catalogued as 14 November 1779], William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (2), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge. See also various letters of General Alexander McDougall to Hull during this period, printed in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 277-280, 282-283.

<sup>74</sup> William Hull to Lt. Col. John Brooks, 14 March 1779 [incorrectly catalogued as 14 November 1779], William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (2), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge. Another testimony of the extreme exhaustion Hull faced in this service appeared over a decade later from a Westchester County resident seeking belated compensation for a valuable mare he claimed to have lent Hull in May 1779. “You had been all Night on the March, was much fatigued, and unable to proceed for



hours' march of the whole British army, no part of my troops was ever surprized, although many attempts were made for the purpose, and many successful enterprizes were made against the enemy's out-posts."<sup>75</sup>

As the local commander under conditions of martial law, Hull inevitably found himself involved in both military and civil affairs, and sometimes caught between. He directed the seizure of identified enemies, criminals, and suspicious individuals and transferred them to headquarters at Peekskill. Under orders he also overrode state impressment laws by confiscating horses, cattle, flour, and other military necessities from inhabitants, issuing Continental certificates of exchange as compensation. This naturally provoked complaints from both inhabitants and state authorities.<sup>76</sup> As Sung Bok Kim has aptly observed, "To victims forced to surrender the means of their livelihood in return for certificates of uncertain value, the line between impressment and plundering was blurred."<sup>77</sup>

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want of a Horse," the old man reminded Hull. Samuel Merritt to General [William] Hull, 2 October 1790, William Hull Correspondence, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.

<sup>75</sup> Hull, Memoirs, appendix, vii.

<sup>76</sup> Don Higginbotham, War and Society in Revolutionary America: The Wider Dimensions of Conflict (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 102; Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 147, 149; Gen. Alexander McDougall, "Warrant to Major Hull, commanding on the Lines," 28 March 1779, McDougall to Hull, 13 April 1779, and Justice of the Peace Solomon Sherwood to William Hull, 28 April 1779, in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 278-281. An excellent review of the problems and issues related to impressment is E. Wayne Carp, To Starve the Army at Pleasure: Continental Army Administration and American Political Culture, 1775-1783 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), chap. 4. On the relationship between impressments and Continental certificates, see E. James Ferguson, The Power of the Purse: A History of American Public Finance, 1776-1790 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Va., 1961), chap. 4 passim.

<sup>77</sup> Sung Bok Kim, "The Limits of Politicization," 877.

Hull reported increased enemy activity as early as the end of April.<sup>78</sup> The Americans were expecting a northward thrust in the spring, and British General Henry Clinton did not disappoint them. In late May a column of redcoats crossed over Kingsbridge and moved toward White Plains. Under McDougall's orders, Hull rapidly withdrew his unit to Peekskill, leaving unevacuated residents vulnerable to renewed depredations.<sup>79</sup> The British pressed forward and seized both Stony Point and Verplanck's Point, which stood opposite each other on the Hudson River and thus formed a gateway to the Highlands. Hull was stationed at West Point to construct defensive forts in preparation for an attack, but the British advance halted.

There, for the first time in three years, Hull met with his American Union Lodge brothers and resumed active Masonic participation. The dispersion of members following the retreat from New York in 1776 had forced the lodge to suspend meeting until February 1779, after which several lodge members held regular meetings in western Connecticut. New members were also accepted, including Hull's friend and former commander Brooks.<sup>80</sup> Hull's assignment in nearby Westchester had prevented his attending, but now, in anticipation of a British assault, the American force was again more concentrated. On June 24 the lodge hosted other army Freemasons at Nelson's

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<sup>78</sup> William Hull to Gen. Alexander McDougall, 30 April and 2 May 1779, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007).

<sup>79</sup> During the retreat, Hull wrote his predecessor Aaron Burr that "the ground you so long defended is now left to the depredation of the Enemy [sic], and our friends [are] in distressing circumstances." William Hull to Aaron Burr, 29 May 1799, in Worthington Chauncey Ford, ed., "Some Papers of Aaron Burr," Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society, n.s., 29, part 1 (1919): 88-89; Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 152.

<sup>80</sup> Plumb, History of American Union Lodge, 27-28, 40. Lodge records indicate that a few members did hold a meeting on March 19, 1777 (p. 25). Brooks's name is listed among those who accepted the revised lodge by-laws (p. 34).

Point, across the Hudson from West Point, for a Festival of St. John the Baptist. It was among the largest Masonic events of the war. According to lodge secretary Thomas Grosvenor's records, Washington—also a Freemason—attended with his aides and “a number of gentlemen collected on the occasion.” Hull delivered one of the evening's two addresses in a bower fronting the meetinghouse. The merry celebration proceeded with toasts—to Congress, the “Friendly Powers of Europe,” the “Females of America,” the Arts and Sciences, and the like—followed by music and songs. “God Save America” played and over a hundred society brethren exchanged hurrahs with Washington's entourage as his barge departed the festive scene.<sup>81</sup>

That fall Hull transferred his lodge membership. He and several other Massachusetts officers petitioned the Massachusetts Grand Lodge to form a new military lodge, which they would name after their revered commander. Washington Lodge No. 10 was officially initiated on November 11 with Hull and Col. Benjamin Tupper as wardens, and General John Patterson as master.<sup>82</sup> Hull's identification with Massachusetts was becoming more complete.

Notwithstanding the celebratory event of June, the military situation remained grave. The Americans had not checked the British advance, and Washington determined that a counterthrust was necessary. On July 13 he assigned the mission of recapturing

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<sup>81</sup> Records of American Union Lodge Secretary [Thomas Grosvenor], 24 June 1779, reprinted in Plumb, History of American Union Lodge, 45-47. Among the listed attendees who figured in Hull's post-revolutionary career were Benjamin Tupper and Daniel Shays. The lodge later officially thanked Hull for his address on the occasion (pp. 53-54).

<sup>82</sup> Extract from the minutes of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, 6 October 1779, in Tatsch, Freemasonry in the Thirteen Colonies, 211. Brooks also joined the new lodge.

Stony Point to General Anthony Wayne, whose own light infantry was to be joined by detachments under Col. Return J. Meigs, Major Hardy Murfree, and Hull.<sup>83</sup>

In the midnight attack of July 16, Hull took up the rear of Wayne's right column, behind Meigs's Connecticut regiment.<sup>84</sup> The bold, bayonet-only assault on the British garrison succeeded with a cost of nearly one hundred casualties on each side, including a head wound suffered by Wayne. Hull narrowly escaped the same. "One ball passed through the crown of my hat," he later reminisced, "another struck my boot."<sup>85</sup> The Continentals shortly afterwards abandoned the post, but Hull had earned coveted recognition for his "noble gallantry" and leadership.<sup>86</sup> Washington recommended him to the Massachusetts legislature, which, after a brief dispute discussed below, promoted him to lieutenant colonel in the Third Massachusetts regiment.<sup>87</sup> The attack also proved materially profitable. In addition to his share of seized military stores, Hull was awarded

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<sup>83</sup> George Washington, General Orders, 13 July 1779, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007); Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 152-153. Hull received his new orders from Wayne the following day. William Hull to Anthony Wayne, 14 July 1799, Anthony Wayne Papers, vol. 7: 38, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

<sup>84</sup> Aide-de-camp H. W. Archer to Maj. Gen. [Henry] Lee, 15 July 1779, "True Copy from the Original Orders," reprinted in George Clinton, Public Papers of George Clinton, First Governor of New York, 1777-1795—1801-1804, 10 vols. (Albany: Published by the State of New York, 1899-1914), 5:155n; Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 158-159. Meigs, of the Sixth Connecticut Regiment, would later figure in Hull's War of 1812 campaign as the governor of Ohio.

<sup>85</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 166. Hull's manuscript account of the capture of Stony Point was reprinted in the Magazine of American History 28 (July-December 1892): 182-185.

<sup>86</sup> Thacher, Military Journal, 178. In early September, Wayne granted Hull a short leave of absence to attend the Yale commencement. An unpleasant case of facial ringworm briefly delayed his return to duty. William Hull to Anthony Wayne, 1 and 18 September 1779, Anthony Wayne Papers, vol. 8:13, 18, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

<sup>87</sup> George Washington to William Heath, 13 December 1779, William Heath Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, microfilm, reel 14:385.

a British colonel's complete set of camp furnishings, the prestigious accoutrements of a gentleman officer.<sup>88</sup>

Tangible goods such as these were highly valued, in part for the status they indicated, but also now because of the increasingly rapid depreciation of the Continental currency.<sup>89</sup> Continental soldiers and officers especially suffered from this, as well as from frequently delinquent or shorted pay. Now, as the Northern army retired to West Point for the winter, distressed Massachusetts officers drew up a petition calling upon their state legislature for relief. Hull was among the officers to whom Washington granted leave to deliver the petition and negotiate a settlement. The trip to Boston—Hull's first since the initial siege—was intended to be brief. Instead it became “protracted to a much greater extent than was expected,” lasting from November 1779 to May 1780.<sup>90</sup> The mission enabled Hull to enjoy the enhanced reputation that came with the Stony Point victory and his promotion, and on arrival in Boston he acquired an

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<sup>88</sup> Hull's new furnishings included “a marquee, with a mattress, bedstead, curtains, a large pair of horse canteens, bottles, plates, and furniture of every kind, sufficient for a small table,” all of which could be packed onto a single horse. Campbell and Clarke, *Revolutionary Services*, 167-168. Ella Wingate Ireland, “Sarah Hull” (paper presented to Sarah Hull Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Newton, Mass., 2 December 1897), typed manuscript, “Sarah Hull” file, Hull Family Papers, Newton History Museum at the Jackson Homestead, Newton, Mass., 7. Hull's inlaid oak field desk is preserved in the Newton History Museum. The significance of the desk in genteel culture is noted in Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Knopf, 1992), 95-96.

<sup>89</sup> A table illustrating the general timing and pace of depreciation may be found in Ferguson, *Power of the Purse*, 32.

<sup>90</sup> Campbell and Clarke, *Revolutionary Services*, 172-173; Hull, *Memoirs*, appendix, ix. Washington wrongly expected that Hull's absence would be “but of short duration.” Washington to Anthony Wayne, 14 November 1779, from Library of Congress, *George Washington Papers*, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007). Petitions in this era, it should be remembered, “were taken very seriously . . . and treated as legal documents requiring action rather than mere expressions of public opinion.” Jeffrey L. Pasley, “Democracy, Gentility, and Lobbying in the Early U.S. Congress,” in *The American Congress: The Building of Democracy*, ed. Julian E. Zelizer (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), 49.

elegant new uniform to more properly present his new rank and standing.<sup>91</sup> Extended time in the area also gave him the opportunity to make political and social contacts, and assess the state's political and economic climate. Nevertheless, the primary mission of extracting relief from the legislature ended in frustration.<sup>92</sup> Hull left Boston little knowing that the role of officer agent and lobbyist was one that would engage and frustrate him for many years to come.

Upon Hull's return to the Highlands in May 1780, General Steuben once again chose him for duty, this time as a deputy inspector to the division under General Robert Howe. It was service Hull seemed particularly to enjoy, and Steuben, whom Merrill Jensen among other historians consider "probably as nearly indispensable as any man in the army except Washington," valued Hull's studious attention to detail and discipline.<sup>93</sup> At this same moment, so Hull claimed later in life, General Parsons also approached him with an invitation to become one of Washington's aides-de-camp, a position of exceptional honor. However, when Hull informed Steuben of his opportunity, the charismatic German urged upon him the indispensability of his present service to the

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<sup>91</sup> William Hull (signed), 19 December 1779, War Office (Boston), receipted account for articles of clothing from the Board of War, Letter File: Hull, William, Gunther Collection, Chicago Historical Society, Chicago. The various fine fabrics and articles amounted to £1120, presumably the price in depreciated currency. Bushman, Refinement of America, 69-74, notes the significance of dress—particularly smooth fabrics—for gentility.

<sup>92</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 173-174; Sidney Kaplan, "Pay, Pensions, and Power: Economic Grievances of the Massachusetts Officers of the Revolution," Boston Public Library Quarterly 3 (1951): 20-21; "Report of the Committee of the Army on the Depreciation of the Currency [November 1779-May 1780]," in Worcester Magazine and Historical Journal 1 (1825-1826): 357. The entire "Report," found on pages 134-136, 165-168, 198-199, 232-235, 267-271, 310-312, 321-323, and 356-359, details the commissioners' efforts. Brooks expressed his concerns over the negotiations in a letter to Hull of 10 February 1780, William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (26), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge.

<sup>93</sup> Merrill Jensen, The New Nation: A History of the United States during the Confederation, 1781-1789 (New York: Vintage Books, 1950), 31.

success of the army and ultimately dissuaded him from accepting. “I felt it a duty to remain where I could be of most service,” Hull explained, “however much I might desire distinction, or however great my attachment to the Commander-in-Chief.” By this account, republican virtue dictated pursuing duty over fame, so that he “felt compelled to decline the honour of an appointment, so gratifying to my feelings, and so well calculated to elevate me in the eyes of my countrymen.” Instead he recommended his fellow Derby townsman and Yale college-mate Captain David Humphreys, who received the appointment on June 23 and went on to achieve much distinction.<sup>94</sup>

The focus of the war had by now shifted to the southern states, but the apparent calm in the northern theater was soon shattered. Hull’s service as inspector and drillmaster was briefly interrupted in late July when Howe sent him with one hundred fifty men to relieve Col. Rufus Putnam in Westchester County.<sup>95</sup> A week later General Arnold assumed command at West Point and, on Washington’s orders, recalled Hull.<sup>96</sup> It seems therefore probable that Hull was nearby when, the following month, Arnold betrayed his country and fellow officers and threatened the Revolution itself by

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<sup>94</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 174-176; Edward M. Cifelli, “Humphreys, David,” in American National Biography. Hull explained that his purpose in relating this anecdote was to correct a newspaper article, appearing after Humphreys’s death in 1818, which stated that Humphreys had been preferred over him for the honored position. Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 177. Hull’s published account of his revolutionary services, appended to his 1824 Memoirs, makes no mention of the matter. The absence of corroborating evidence, of course, allows room for questioning Hull’s claims. However, as seen previously, it would not have been the first time that he declined promotion out of a sense of duty and service.

<sup>95</sup> General [Robert] Howe to Rufus Putnam, 25 July 1780, in Rufus Putnam, The Memoirs of Rufus Putnam and Certain Official Papers and Correspondence, comp. and annotated by Rowena Buell (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1903), 176. Howe informed Putnam here that he could return his men to their regular regiments upon the arrival of Hull’s detachment, for “tho’ I call it in Orders a *Reinforcement*, I mean it a Relief.”

<sup>96</sup> William Hull to Benedict Arnold, 4 August 1780, and George Washington to Benedict Arnold, 8 August 1780, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007).

attempting to deliver the American stronghold into enemy hands. The event was a shock of enormous magnitude, reverberating throughout the army and the country, and establishing for generations the standard of treachery and treason in America. Hull would not then have imagined a day when many of his fellow countrymen would place his own name alongside that of the infamous turncoat.<sup>97</sup>

Financial, material, and moral distress among the Continentals reached a critical level as they entered the winter of 1780-1781. Reactions to the bombshell news of Arnold's treason were just settling down when the six Pennsylvania regiments at Morristown mutinied on New Year's Day. This raised fears that the British would mount attacks to capitalize on American demoralization. Loyalist raiders, in fact, had already stepped up their incursions into the regions around New York. As before, Washington saw the need for some positive action to discourage enemy aggression and revive patriot spirits. In late December he recalled Hull from Steuben's service and—because of Hull's "perfect knowledge of the Country, and People"—placed him again in Westchester County.<sup>98</sup> Once more he was to patrol the region, forage for the army, and scout British

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<sup>97</sup> A good example of this among public officers is found in the U.S. Senate debate of July 12, 1842. Congress, Senate, Debate on a bill for the relief of the legal representatives of William Hull, 27<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., Congressional Globe (12 July 1842), 744-745. Brian F. Carso, Jr., "Whom Can We Trust Now?": The Meaning of Treason in the United States, from the Revolution through the Civil War (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2006), chap. 4, examines the establishment of Arnold as the archetype of treason in America.

<sup>98</sup> William Heath, Heath's Memoirs of the American War, intro. and notes by Rufus Rockwell Wilson (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 281; Quote from George Washington to William Heath, 23 December 1780, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007). The assessment was from General McDougall, commander during Hull's previous service in the region.



positions and movements.<sup>99</sup> The stage was set for Hull's most daring independent military enterprise.

Hull found the region even more ravaged and the situation more desperate than before.<sup>100</sup> The American lines had by now withdrawn to the northern part of the county at the Croton River. Cowboys and Skinners persisted in their outrages and the civilian suffering at their hands appalled him. As criminals in the guise of friends, the Skinners continued to evoke his deepest fury. "These Villians [sic] . . . divest themselves of every humane Feeling and stick at no Measures to accomplish their horrid Designs," he reported to Heath on January 6, 1781.

Ought we to suffer such Enormities to pass unpunished? . . . Does not Humanity to the distressed, do not the eternal Laws of Justice & Equity call on any Power in being to prevent Crimes which disgrace our Country and tarnish the Reputations we have already acquired?

He proposed stricter controls on movement into the "neutral ground," more aggressive pursuit of offenders, and harsher and more certain punishments. "Was I sure, I should not receive the Censure of my Gen[era]l or be called to answer before military Tribunal, I

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<sup>99</sup> George Washington to William Heath, 23 December 1780, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007); "Extract of a letter from Mrs. [Sarah] Hull to one of her daughters," 12 April 1822, in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 284-285. For patrolling, foraging, and scouting activities, and other matters relating to Hull's command, see his reports to William Heath, 27, 29, and 31 December 1780, and 3 January 1781, William Heath Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, microfilm, reel 18:224, 236, 253-254, 280; William Hull to William Heath, 6 and 16 January 1781, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007); and William Heath to William Hull, 28 December 1780, United States Revolution Collection, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.

<sup>100</sup> One account of the conditions in the region in late 1780 is Philip Pell Jr. to Robert Benson, 22 December 1780, reprinted in Hufeland, Westchester County, 370-371. He wrote, "Verily I believe that unless something is done, Westchester County, in less than a month, will be totally in the Enemy's power; their exposed situation occasions those who were once good men to become corrupt by trading with the Enemy, and this I am afraid gains ground fast; besides the constant taking away of them lessens the number of fighting men."

would endeavor to see that Justice took place among the Inhabitants, and risk any civil Process, which could be brought against me.”<sup>101</sup>

The same day Hull made these proposals, New York militia officers approached him with the bold idea of attacking the loyalist camp at Morrisania (in present-day Bronx), where a force of four to five hundred was based.<sup>102</sup> “Delancey’s Corps” had recently been organized as part of the paramilitary “Associated Loyalists” and had stepped up their expeditions of plunder.<sup>103</sup> The mission would be risky and make extreme physical demands. Morrisania itself was barely fortified, but it lay only four miles south of the British camp at Kingsbridge, and just over two miles from Redoubt No. 8 on Manhattan Island. This Hessian-manned post guarded the pontoon bridge across the Harlem River, connecting Forts George, Tryon, and Knyphausen (formerly Fort Washington) with the mainland.<sup>104</sup> The militia officers invited Hull to join his detachment to theirs and command the entire operation. Seeing an opportunity to inflict damage on this “Nest of Thieves & Robbers” and gain further personal distinction, he immediately sought authorization for the enterprise.<sup>105</sup> Heath forwarded the proposal to

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<sup>101</sup> William Hull to William Heath, 6 January 1781, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007). Thacher’s account also reflects the dangers and devastation of the region. Thacher, Military Journal, 237-238.

<sup>102</sup> William Hull to William Heath, 6 January 1781, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007).

<sup>103</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 184.

<sup>104</sup> Hufeland, Westchester County, 316, 374-375, map attached between pp. 102 and 103.

<sup>105</sup> William Hull to William Heath, 6 January 1781, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007).

Washington, who replied that although he was “not very sanguine” about its success, “yet I think in our present circumstances it will be adviseable [sic] to encourage it.”<sup>106</sup>

With permission in hand, Hull worked out a logistical plan and made preparations. The scheme was fraught with hazard and depended, as Hull acknowledged and both Washington and Heath reemphasized, upon perfect secrecy and speed.<sup>107</sup> It was a mark of the confidence Washington had in Hull’s judgment and leadership that he entrusted to him both the planning and conduct of the operation. Washington also dispatched a small cavalry unit under Humphreys to augment the American force, but ice on the Hudson prevented its participation. On January 19 Washington approved Hull’s final arrangements and Heath offered last minute instructions, advice, and assurances. “Confiding in your valor and ability I rest assured, that your plan will be Industriously and well executed and [I] hope your success will be equal to your most sanguine expectations.”<sup>108</sup>

On January 21 Hull’s corps of about six hundred, including a company of New York Volunteer cavalry, began a stealthy thirty-mile southward march, the troops “not knowing whither going or what the object.” Roads muddied by earlier downpours impeded the advance, but in the frigid pre-dawn hours of January 22 the corps passed

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<sup>106</sup> George Washington to William Heath, 7 January 1781, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007). (Reprinted in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 183n.)

<sup>107</sup> George Washington to William Heath, 7 January 1781, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007). (Reprinted in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 183n.); William Heath to William Hull, 7 January 1781, United States Revolution Collection, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.

<sup>108</sup> George Washington to William Heath, 19 January 1781, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007); William Heath to William Hull, 19 January 1781, William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (34), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge. (Draft copy of same in William Heath Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, microfilm, reel 18B:400.)

Kingsbridge undetected. Pausing before the final approach, Hull informed his men of their mission. He sent a large detachment to the right to cut loose the pontoon bridge over the Harlem River, and a smaller one eastward to take control of Delancey's Bridge, spanning the Bronx River, by which they planned to escape to Eastchester. The main force of four hundred then moved toward the loyalist camp.<sup>109</sup>

As they drew within earshot of Morrisania, a swollen creek filled with broken ice blocked their final approach. Hull ordered the infantry to mount in back of the horsemen for a series of crossings. The cumbersome process delayed the attack and the inevitable noise alerted loyalist guards. The full surprise was now lost and both sides rushed to position. With daylight breaking, Hull rapidly formed his lines and discharged several volleys, following with a cavalry charge that scattered the less prepared and disciplined loyalist force. The Americans hastily rounded up fifty-two prisoners, sixty horses, and a large number of cattle, and set fire to the huts and abundant stores. Fleeing the scene with captives in tow, they forded another small brook and pushed toward Delancey's Bridge.<sup>110</sup> More than eight miles still separated the already fatigued patriots from Eastchester, where fifteen hundred reinforcements under General Parsons awaited.

Meanwhile, as the noise and smoke rose from Morrisania, the British forts awoke with a thunder. Cannon and skyrockets from New York and Fort Knyphausen signaled

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<sup>109</sup> Hull's accounts of the operation are found in William Hull to General [Samuel Holden] Parsons, 25 January 1781, from Library of Congress, [George Washington Papers](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html), <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007); and Campbell and Clarke, *Revolutionary Services*, 186-196. Quote from John Stacy, a soldier in the Morrisania expedition, to General Hull, 20 August 1824, in Campbell and Clarke, *Revolutionary Services*, 433.

<sup>110</sup> The prisoners were placed in the charge of the New York Volunteer cavalry under Captain (and New York Justice) Honeywell, whose service Hull faithfully commended to the New York governor. William Hull to Governor George Clinton, 25 January 1781, in Clinton, [Public Papers of George Clinton](#), 6:595-596.

the general alarm and redcoats poured out in swift pursuit. The detached pontoon bridge saved Hull from certain capture but his situation remained critical. Stubborn resistance at Delancey's Bridge briefly delayed the retreat, as did snipers from a stone church along the road. Patriots dispersed the snipers with a bayonet attack and freed from a nearby jail thirty-two prisoners of war and several others. Among these was an African-American named Tillo who, having lost his small farm in the "Neutral Ground," attached himself to Hull as a servant until the end of the war.<sup>111</sup>

British troops soon began to arrive and attack the rear and flanks of the encumbered American corps. Hull formed a rear guard of two hundred to keep the steadily swelling enemy at bay. About a mile and a half from Eastchester he received warning that a large British force was rapidly closing ahead of him and threatening to intercept. Only a timely ambush of the British pursuers by Col. Moses Hazen's regiment enabled Hull's exhausted force to break off engagement, turn, and race toward a narrow escape into Parsons's protection. The British, overmatched for the moment, held back to regroup. The exhausted American army continued its retreat until midnight, unchallenged save by fatigue and a severe winter storm.

Hull and his corps had covered at least fifty miles in the operation. After a welcome rest they added many more as they marched back to the Highlands, arriving January 28 to a warm reception. "In this station, as in many others," wrote Surgeon James Thacher, "[Hull] has evinced his military skill and judgment. He has executed an enterprise with such address and gallantry, as to merit for himself and his detachment the

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<sup>111</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 191-192n; "Extract of a letter from Mrs. [Sarah] Hull to one of her daughters," 12 April 1822, in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 285.

highest honor.”<sup>112</sup> Another officer agreed. “Colonel Hull’s success exceeded our expectations,” he told a fellow major. “Meeting with many unexpected difficulties, he discovered his military knowledge and good judgement in surmounting them.”<sup>113</sup> Parsons’s report praised Hull’s “judicious arrangements” and declared that their execution did him “great Honor.”<sup>114</sup> A Hessian officer not engaged in the event thought it impressive enough to report in a letter home.<sup>115</sup>

Though he had no precise figures, Hull believed enemy losses to have been considerable; his own were minimal: one officer, a drummer, and ten soldiers killed, two officers and eleven others wounded, and six missing.<sup>116</sup> He commended his officers “in the fullest Terms of Approbation” and the soldiers for their “Patience and Fortitude . . . in the Execution of so severe a Service,” particularly for their good order in facing attack.<sup>117</sup> Upon receiving reports of the enterprise, Washington heartily congratulated all concerned for their conduct, skill, and courage, singling out Parsons and Hull for particular

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<sup>112</sup> Thacher, Military Journal, 250.

<sup>113</sup> Major Alden to Major [Benjamin] Tallmadge, n.d., in Charles S. Hall, Life and Letters of Samuel Holden Parsons, Major General in the Continental Army and Chief Judge of the Northwestern Territory, 1737-1789 (Binghamton, N.Y.: Otseningo Publishing Co., 1905), 333.

<sup>114</sup> General Samuel Holden Parsons to William Heath, 25 January 1781, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007); also in Hall, Life and Letters of Samuel Holden Parsons, 330-332.

<sup>115</sup> Bernhard A. Uhlendorf, trans. and ed., Revolution in America: Confidential Letters and Journals 1776-1784 of Adjutant General Major Baumeister of the Hessian Forces (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1957), 411.

<sup>116</sup> Heath, Heath’s Memoirs, 286-287; Samuel H[olden] Parsons, Casualty returns, 26 January 1781, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007). Major Carl von Baumeister of the Hessian forces reported in a letter home that the losses to Delancey’s Corps were sixteen killed, twice that wounded, and seventeen prisoners taken. Uhlendorf, trans. and ed., Revolution in America, 411.

<sup>117</sup> William Hull to General [Samuel Holden] Parsons, 25 January 1781, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007).

thanks.<sup>118</sup> They were, he wrote Congress, “intitled [sic] to the highest praise.”<sup>119</sup>

Thacher observed that Hull “possesses in a high degree the confidence of the commander-in-chief.”<sup>120</sup> Washington forwarded Parsons’s and Hull’s reports to Congress, which responded with its own resolution of thanks.<sup>121</sup> “No person but a military man knows how to appreciate the honor bestowed, when the Commander-in-Chief and the Congress of the United States return the thanks for a military achievement,” Benjamin Tallmadge reflected on his own wartime commendation.<sup>122</sup> It was a sentiment Hull undoubtedly shared.

Hull had little time to dwell on his success. His attention was already fixed elsewhere, toward a reward of another kind. Her name was Sarah Fuller (1759-1826), the only child of the prominent judge and ardent patriot Abraham Fuller (1720-1794) of Newton, Massachusetts. When the pair first met is unknown, perhaps as early as the first year of the war when the army was headquartered in Cambridge, but their courtship almost certainly developed over the previous winter during Hull’s visit as a commissioner

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<sup>118</sup> George Washington, 29 January 1781, in Hall, Life and Letters of Samuel Holden Parsons, 334; George Washington, General Orders, 30 January 1781, in John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799, 39 vols. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1931-44), 21:158-160.

<sup>119</sup> George Washington to Continental Congress, 31 January 1781, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007).

<sup>120</sup> Thacher, Military Journal, 250.

<sup>121</sup> Continental Congress, 5 February 1781, Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789, ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford et al. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1904-37), 19:114-115, from Library of Congress, A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774-1875, [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(jc01936\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DOCID+@lit(jc01936))) (accessed 4 April 2007); Samuel Huntington to George Washington, 9 February 1781, in Paul H. Smith et al., eds., Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774-1789, 24 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1989), 16:697.

<sup>122</sup> Benjamin Tallmadge, Memoir of Col. Benjamin Tallmadge, Eyewitness Accounts of the American Revolution Series (New York: Thomas Holman, 1858; reprint, New York: The New York Times and Arno Press, 1968), 42.

of the Massachusetts officers to the General Court, of which Judge Fuller was a member.<sup>123</sup> (For Hull, this must have created a peculiar combination, if not conflict, of interests.) Brooks had chided Hull for not writing his comrades at West Point much during that period. “But we conjecture the reason; so much fiddling, so much dancing & so much kissing, I sup[pose] no one never saw.”<sup>124</sup> Unfortunately no letters written during the time of the couple’s separation have surfaced. As early as December 1780 Hull had applied for a leave of absence and informed Sarah to expect him in early January. However, the mutiny crisis and secretive operation against Morrisania had simultaneously required his delay and prevented him from notifying her of it. His anxiety on this account and eagerness to proceed to Newton as soon as possible were understandably great.<sup>125</sup> Now at last Hull obtained leave for the remainder of the winter. The couple married at the Fuller homestead in February 1781, he at the age of twenty-seven, she not quite twenty-two.

It was a mutually pleasing arrangement. Though Hull possessed no personal fortune, Sarah and her influential father recognized him as a well-mannered, handsome, intelligent, up-and-coming officer and gentleman of good reputation, respected by fellow officers, imbued with republican principles, trained in law and full of professional and commercial promise. (It seems probable that Col. Michael Jackson, Hull’s regimental

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<sup>123</sup> Samuel C. Clarke, comp., Records of Some of the Descendants of John Fuller, Newton, 1644-98 (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1869), 8-9.

<sup>124</sup> Lt. Col. John Brooks to William Hull, 10 February 1780, William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (26), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge.

<sup>125</sup> “Extract of a letter from Mrs. [Sarah] Hull to one of her daughters,” 12 April 1822, in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 285. Hull’s sense of urgency comes through clearly in his communications to General Heath of 13, 14, and 27 January 1781, William Heath Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, microfilm, reel 18:365-366, and 18B:440.



commander of three years, and perhaps also Brooks, had commended him to Judge Fuller.) Sarah, on the other hand, was the well-educated, vivacious, and charming daughter of an important family of means and republican views.<sup>126</sup> With Sarah, Hull stood to inherit the sizable Fuller estate in Newton, a special advantage to a landless son. So like Washington, Hamilton, and Knox, he married well. In this sense, despite wartime privations, the Revolution did help to improve his social and economic future. The marriage was not one of mere calculation, however. By all appearances it was marked by genuine affection and devotion, lasting nearly forty-five years through sometimes extraordinarily distressing circumstances.

While still at Newton, Hull befriended General Benjamin Lincoln, a fellow Mason and soon to be Secretary of War, who recruited him to serve on a committee to examine Massachusetts' military supply depots. The assignment, Hull informed Heath, would likely delay his return to West Point beyond March. He also reported the state's latest military recruitment and payroll woes. A sizeable bounty in specie was proving an inadequate inducement for enlistment, and no resources remained in the treasury to satisfy the payroll requirements.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> A memoir description of Sarah Hull, by her grandson, is in [Samuel C. Clarke] to [James Freeman Clarke], n.p., n.d., William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (105v), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge. Another is found in Ella Wingate Ireland, "Sarah Hull" (paper presented to Sarah Hull Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Newton, Mass., 2 December 1897), typed manuscript, "Sarah Hull" file, Hull Family Papers, Newton History Museum at the Jackson Homestead, Newton, Mass. Ireland's remarks were based on reminiscences of her grandmother, William and Sarah's second daughter Eliza (p. 2). A popular mid-nineteenth-century work, Elizabeth F. Ellet, The Women of the American Revolution, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., 2 vols. (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1849), 1:145-146, included Sarah Hull, though it perpetuated the myth that she was with Hull and the army at Saratoga and joined in providing solace to the wives of surrendered British officers.

<sup>127</sup> William Hull to William Heath, 8 March 1781, William Heath Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, microfilm, reel 19:168.

Hull arrived back in camp at West Point accompanied by his new bride who joined a coterie of officers' wives there.<sup>128</sup> Then, on July 1, Washington dispatched Hull to western Connecticut to guide and assist the French column under the Duke de Lauzun (part of the Count de Rochambeau's army) to divert their planned march to West Point and join the Americans in a united attack on New York. Washington introduced Hull, who of course knew the region extremely well, as "an active and very intelligent Officer" and "a Gentleman who will be extremely useful."<sup>129</sup> The planned operation, however, was soon abandoned. Instead, as American and French armies headed southward toward the fateful Battle of Yorktown, Hull returned to his command in the Third Massachusetts, one of twenty regiments remaining in the Highlands under General Heath.<sup>130</sup>

Hull's reputation for attentiveness to good order, justice, and discipline was soon reaffirmed by additional appointments, first as deputy quartermaster, then again as division inspector, and finally, on December 1, as deputy adjutant general, a position he held until his next furlough at the end of April 1782.<sup>131</sup> As an administrative aide and disciplinary officer of the Northern army, Hull assumed multiple administrative

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<sup>128</sup> "Extract of a letter from Mrs. [Sarah] Hull to one of her daughters," 12 April 1822, in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 285. For the presence of wives among Continentals, see Holly A. Mayer, Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and Community during the American Revolution (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), 145-152, 161n.

<sup>129</sup> George Washington to Jean B. Donatien de Vimeur, Comte de Rochambeau, 2 July 1781, and George Washington to Armand Louis de Gontaut Brionne, Duc de Lauzun, 1 July 1781, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007). The diversion of the French army is noted in Howard C. Rice Jr., and Anne S. K. Brown, translators and eds., The American Campaigns of Rochambeau's Army, 1780, 1781, 1782, 1783, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J., and Providence, R.I.: Princeton University Press and Brown University Press, 1972), 1:31-32, 2:7, 14n, 16-17n.

<sup>130</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 199-205.

<sup>131</sup> Johnston, Yale and Her Honor-Roll, 280. Hull replaced Thomas Grosvenor as deputy adjutant general on 1 December. William Heath, General Orders, 1 December 1781, excerpted in Johnston, Yale and Her Honor-Roll, 243.

responsibilities that included keeping personnel records, addressing manpower requests, and enforcing army regulations.<sup>132</sup> In February, Heath placed him on an arbitration committee responsible for assessing the amount of forage taken for support of the American and French armies in Westchester County during the previous year, in order to address the demands of the state for compensation.<sup>133</sup>

On April 19, Hull joined a council of war called by Washington to decide how to respond to the summary execution of Captain Joshua Huddy of the New Jersey militia. The Board of Associated Loyalists had ordered the officer hanged in open retribution for the killing of a prominent New Jersey “Refugee” by patriot militia. The Huddy affair had already enraged both the army and patriot citizenry, and the pressure on Washington to retaliate was enormous. He presented his officers with a questionnaire and requested

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<sup>132</sup> Correspondence and documents illustrating Hull’s various functions in this period include: (1) In the United States Revolution Collection, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.: John Strang to Hull, 24 December 1781; T[imothy] Woodbridge to Hull, 20 February 1782; John Campbell to Hull, 21 February 1782; Assistant Adjutant General Robert Pemberton to Hull, 12, 13, 17, and 24 April 1782; Hull to Pemberton, 14 April 1782; (2) In the William Hull Correspondence, American Antiquarian Society: Deputy Adjutant General E[lnathan] Haskell to Hull, 4 and 20 January, and 22 February 1782; Pemberton to Hull, 17 April 1782; (3) In the William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge: Lt. Col. John Brooks to Hull, 5 March 1782, doc. no. 26, and Adjutant General Robert Pemberton to Hull, 13 April 1782, doc. no. 43; (4) Hull to Captain Carlisle, 8 April 1782, Misc. Mss. H, New-York Historical Society, New York; (5) William Hull, 3 September 1781, Rank of subaltern officers in the Massachusetts line, and Hull to William Heath, 7 July 1782, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007). Hull also continued in his regimental command. See, for example, Hull to William Heath, 4, 10, and 23 July 1782, William Heath Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, microfilm, reel 25:297, 328, and 25B:424.

<sup>133</sup> “Journal of the proceedings of Colonel Rufus Putnam, Major Robert Boyd, and Lieutenant Colonel William Hull; nominated as Arbitrators by the Honourable Major General William Heath, and Colonel Udny Hay[,] Agent of the State of New York, for the purpose of ascertaining the quantity of Forage consumed by the allied Army under the command of his Excellency General Washington, in Westchester County, last Campaign,” HM 668, Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif. Washington approved Hull’s participation in the arbitration proceedings in June. George Washington to William Heath, 17 June 1782, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007).

their individual written submissions.<sup>134</sup> Hull responded that retaliation was indeed “justifiable and expedient,” and that those responsible for Huddy’s “murder” ought to be turned over by General Clinton. If the British commander refused, an unconditional prisoner of war of Huddy’s rank should be chosen by lot and executed. “The necessity of retaliation is so great,” Hull argued, that if no such officer were in their possession, another should be selected from those “under the capitulation of York Town.”<sup>135</sup> This view was unanimous, and in due course Yorktown prisoner Captain Charles Asgill, the nineteen-year-old son of the ex-mayor of London, drew the lot. Only after pleadings from his mother and the king and queen of France did Congress grant a pardon.<sup>136</sup>

Throughout his years of service, Hull was typical of the officer corps in closely guarding his “military character,” that is, his rank, reputation, and identity. The Continental Army and state militias attracted not merely selfless patriots and high-minded republicans, of course, but also men of strong ambition eager for recognition and its rewards.<sup>137</sup> This was human nature at work, to be sure, but perhaps also somewhat a

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<sup>134</sup> Thacher, Military Journal, 312-314; Ward, Between the Lines, 64-66; North Callahan, Royal Raiders: The Tories of the American Revolution (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), 244-245; George Washington to Continental Army Field Officers, Questionnaire and Copy, 19 April 1782, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007).

<sup>135</sup> William Hull to George Washington, 19 April 1782, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, Series 3f: Varick Transcripts, Letterbook 3:37, <http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mgw/mgw3f/003/036037.jpg> (accessed April 4, 2007).

<sup>136</sup> Thacher, Military Journal, 314-318; Ward, Between the Lines, 66-67; Wallace Brown, The Good Americans: The Loyalists in the American Revolution (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1969), 106-108. Louis P. Masur, Rites of Execution: Capital Punishment and the Transformation of American Culture, 1776-1865 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 56-58, argues that the Huddy-Asgill affair in particular “injected the issue of the death penalty into public discourse” and increased American discomfort with it.

<sup>137</sup> One revealing statement on this came from Lieut. Col. Isaac Sherman, who wrote, “Honor and glory are, together with a desire of rendering our country great, happy, and respectable, the grand incentives to our continuing in the army. And what can be more agreeable to the man of feeling, and what can be a greater inducement to urge him on to the performance of actions great and hazardous, as well as

consequence of the democratizing forces released by the Revolution—the military equivalent to what was beginning to take place in American political life. Don Higginbotham has suggested that the intense desire for advancement “may have been owing to the very seamlessness of American society, for the ways that men were recognized in more rigidly hierarchical social systems were absent in America.”<sup>138</sup> Put another way, the very possibility of military distinction fueled the desire for it. Such a view fits with Alexis de Tocqueville’s observation. In Democracy in America, published in the 1830s, the French aristocrat alerted his fellow countrymen that an officer in a democratic army “sees nothing that naturally and inevitably stops him at one rank rather than another, and each rank has an immense price in his eyes because his rank in society almost always depends on his rank in the army.” Thus, Tocqueville declared, “the desire to advance is almost universal; it is ardent, tenacious, continual.”<sup>139</sup>

Hull and his comrades well understood the importance of their military “fame” for their social, economic, and political futures, but also, they believed, for the army’s effectiveness in the present. Most held to the view expressed by Major Samuel Shaw that “that the man who suffers the least imputation . . . on his own honor can never be a

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glorious, but the happiness of his country, a desire of the grateful applause of his fellow citizens, and of transmitting [sic] his name in an amiable point of view to the world. These are the united motives that have inspired you to tread the scenes of carnage; for no one will believe the welfare of your country separate from every other consideration, was the only incentive. Isaac Sherman to Anthony Wayne, 22 August 1779, Anthony Wayne Papers, vol. 7:96, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. Douglass Adair, “Fame and the Founding Fathers,” chap. in Fame and the Founding Fathers: Essays by Douglass Adair, ed. Trevor Colbourn (New York: Norton, for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Va., 1974) argues that the desire for historical “fame” was a key factor in the behavior of the leading founders.

<sup>138</sup> Higginbotham, War and Society, 95.

<sup>139</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, trans. and ed. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 618-619.

faithful guardian to that of his country.”<sup>140</sup> Whether toward self-serving or patriotic ends, however, the gentlemen’s code of honor, explains Royster, “not only required a man to uphold his rank, keep his word, and demand the same of others; it also required that he resent any insult.”<sup>141</sup> But this could be taken to destructive extremes, as the treason of Arnold, the outbreak of officer dueling during the war, or the incessant protests over rank and assignments illustrate. In such a milieu the issues of recognition and rank were highly volatile, and ones with which Washington, Congress, and state legislatures constantly contended.<sup>142</sup> “A soldier’s honor forbids the idea of giving up the least pretension to rank,” Colonel John Trumbull assured the president of the Continental Congress.<sup>143</sup> John Adams took a particularly dim view of this aspect of the American officer corps: “They Quarrell [sic] like Cats and Dogs. They worry one another like Mastiffs, Scrambling for Rank and Pay like Apes and Nuts.”<sup>144</sup>

At what point, then, did healthy “sensitivity” become harmful hypersensitivity? The question was one that officers and gentlemen like Hull grappled with throughout the era. He appears to have been among the more successful in negotiating this difficult terrain, to the appreciation of, among others, Washington. One touchy episode had arisen for Hull following the storming of Stony Point under Anthony Wayne in August 1779.

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<sup>140</sup> Samuel Shaw to Henry Knox, 21 March 1782, Henry Knox Papers, 8:90, quoted in Hatch, Administration of the American Revolutionary Army, 36.

<sup>141</sup> Royster, A Revolutionary People, 88.

<sup>142</sup> Hatch, Administration of the American Revolutionary Army, chap. 3; Scudieri, “The Continentals,” 277-284. On the rise of officer dueling, see Royster, A Revolutionary People, 208-210.

<sup>143</sup> John Trumbull to John Hancock, 1777, quoted in Conrad Edick Wright, Revolutionary Generation: Harvard Men and the Consequences of Independence (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, in association with Massachusetts Historical Society, 2005), 92.

<sup>144</sup> L. H. Butterfield, ed., Adams Family Correspondence, 4 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1963-1973), 2:245, quoted in Higginbotham, War and Society, 95.

The general's initial report on the affair omitted the names of several officers, including Hull's, and drew potent reactions. The offended officers fired off letters of protest to the general, in varying degrees of deliberation. Lieut. Col. Isaac Sherman accused Wayne of "State partiality" and all but invited a duel: "Rather than be injured, rather than be trampled upon and considered as insignificant beings in the scale, *my blood boils at the thought, Nature recoils, and points out a mode, the only one of redress.*"<sup>145</sup> Colonel Return J. Meigs also wrote, not for himself since he had been properly acknowledged, but out of alarm for the unrest the omissions were producing. Respectfully he reminded Wayne, "Our feelings in these matters are exquisite, & are absolutely necessary to us as Soldiers." Hull in particular deserved recognition, Meigs thought, having as a major commanded a regiment in the attack: "I could have wish'd that his name had been mention[e]d with the Colonels."<sup>146</sup> Hull too was indignant at his neglect, but gave a more carefully measured response. "No arguments that I could use with myself could convince me, that a Degree of Injustice was not done me," he explained.<sup>147</sup> The personal intervention of Washington and a letter from Wayne to the Continental Congress

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<sup>145</sup> Isaac Sherman to Anthony Wayne, 22 August 1779, Anthony Wayne Papers, vol. 7:96, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. (Underlining in original.) The intemperate letter infuriated Wayne, who had already corrected his omissions. He refused to respond to Sherman directly, probably because the matter now involved a potential "affair of honor," but issued a stern warning through Return Jonathan Meigs. Sherman's letter, he wrote, was "of a very extraordinary nature,—which at a proper season will require a very serious & particular explanation,—for altho' I don't wish to incur an[y] Gentlemans displeasure, . . . I put up with no mans Insults." (Underlining in original.) Anthony Wayne to Return Jonathan Meigs, 23 August 1779, Anthony Wayne Papers, vol. 7:97, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. The collection of correspondence between Wayne and the offended officers is vol. 7:95-105.

<sup>146</sup> Return Jonathan Meigs to Anthony Wayne, 22 August 1779, Anthony Wayne Papers, vol. 7:95, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. In the case of Hull and some of the other field officers, Wayne agreed. "I was not a little hurt on account of the Omission," he confessed to Meigs, and was pleased to be able to correct the error. Anthony Wayne to Return Jonathan Meigs, 23 August 1779, Anthony Wayne Papers, vol. 7:97, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

<sup>147</sup> William Hull to Anthony Wayne, 25 August 1779, Anthony Wayne Papers, vol. 7:99, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

recognizing the officers—by name—sufficiently eased Hull’s sense of injury, or at least gave him enough room to honorably withdraw his protest. He declared his satisfaction and pledged his continued support, Wayne accepted, and the matter was closed.<sup>148</sup>

A more complex dispute emerged that November when the Massachusetts General Court approved Major Thomas Cogswell of Essex County over Hull, whom Washington had recommended, for promotion to lieutenant colonel in the Third Massachusetts. Hull ranked Cogswell on the list of majors in the Massachusetts line. But the Court ruled that Hull’s commission, although preceding Cogswell’s, had been issued by Washington, whereas Cogswell’s had come directly from the Court.<sup>149</sup> The irregular action—just one manifestation of the new and uncertain state-national balance of authority—created an uneasy stir among army officers, and Hull immediately protested to General Heath. Hull argued that Cogswell’s selection was politically driven and that it violated both the army’s and state’s established rules of rank and promotion. He appealed for “that Justice . . . which my Station & Services intitle [sic] me to.”<sup>150</sup>

Heath, a politically aspiring general from Roxbury, Massachusetts, referred the delicate matter to Washington for advice. The commander-in-chief was “exceedingly

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<sup>148</sup> Anthony Wayne to President of Congress John Jay, 10 August 1779, in United States, Continental Congress, Papers of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789, National Archives Microfilm Publications, M247, reel 179, item 161:221-223; William Hull to Anthony Wayne, and Anthony Wayne to William Hull (draft), 25 August 1779, Anthony Wayne Papers, vol. 7:99-100, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; Johnston, Yale and Her Honor-Roll, 105. Wayne’s sent letter is also printed in James Freeman Clarke, Memorials, 420. In his supplemental letter to Congress, Wayne blamed his oversight on his head wound. A brief discussion of the dispute between Wayne and the officers is in Paul David Nelson, Anthony Wayne: Soldier of the Early Republic (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 101-102.

<sup>149</sup> Artemas Ward, President of the Massachusetts General Court, to William Heath, 26 November 1779, William Heath Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, microfilm, reel 14:300.

<sup>150</sup> William Hull to William Heath, 28 November 1779, William Heath Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, microfilm, reel 14:305.



concerned at the proceedings,” which he feared would “lead . . . to the revival of a part of the various mischiefs and distractions which have so long torn the army to pieces—the disputes about rank.” In a lengthy reply, Washington reviewed the two-year process by which the rules of promotion had been established. If these principles were ignored in the present case it would only “produce an infinity of claims.” “All the labor that has been bestowed will have been to no purpose,” he wrote, “and we shall be all a float [sic] in confusion again.” He saw no legitimate grounds for Cogswell’s superseding Hull. Recalling that his earlier promotion of Hull had been made with clear authorization and, furthermore, “at the intercession of several Officers in the [Massachusetts] State line,” he considered that “there has been no injustice done Major Cogswell.” As for Hull, Washington acknowledged him as “an Officer of great merit . . . whose services have been honourable to himself and honourable and profitable to his Country.” Washington left it to Heath to sort out the affair, but warned that “unless the States will be accurate and adhere strictly to the principles of promotion . . . we shall always be in troubled water and the service embarrassed with unhappy feuds.”<sup>151</sup> Heath dutifully entreated the Court to hold the established rules “sacred and inviolate.”<sup>152</sup> The promotion went to Hull, much to Cogswell’s displeasure, but to the delight of Hull’s fellow officers.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> George Washington to William Heath, 13 December 1799, William Heath Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, microfilm, reel 14:385.

<sup>152</sup> William Heath to Artemas Ward (draft), [28?] December 1779, William Heath Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, microfilm, reel 14:423. Heath enclosed with his letter excerpted paragraphs of Washington’s.

<sup>153</sup> George Washington to Thomas Cogswell, 26 January 1780, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007); John Brooks to William Hull, 10 February 1780, William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (26), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge.

Again in January 1781, as Hull prepared his attack on Morrisania, another controversy arose. Having received Washington's authorization to head the operation, Hull contacted Colonel Thomas of the New York militia to plan his assistance. But Thomas, who had helped conceive the mission, arrived the following evening in full expectation of commanding the whole enterprise on account of his superior rank. Hull was furious and refused to concede. He protested to Heath that, although he recognized the authority of rank in usual circumstances, "when the Colonel of Militia turns out at his own option, collects a Number of Volunteers for a particular Purpose, and joins regular Troops for a Day, [then] he has no Right to assume that Command." Hull had informed Thomas "that he must not expect my Cooperation, unless my Gen[era]l differs with me in Sentiment, and orders me to a Measure, which my Judgment does not approve." The colonel, believing he could not properly place himself under Hull's command, planned to go forward with the mission. The interview ended in an amicable stalemate, and the officers awaited Heath's determination. In the end, Hull retained his assigned command.<sup>154</sup>

Two years later, in January 1783, with the outcome of the war seemingly assured and the opportunity for military distinction closing, Hull protested yet another indignity with regard to his post. He was now with the main American force around Newburgh, and by the issued orders of January 17 he found that Lieut. Col. James Mellen of the Fourth Massachusetts was appointed to the head of his own Third Regiment, filling the

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<sup>154</sup> William Hull to William Heath, 8 January 1781, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007). Heath had first learned of the plan from Thomas, but gave it no consideration until the following day when Hull wrote him, asking to lead it. William Heath to George Washington, 6 January 1781, in Jared Sparks, ed., Correspondence of the American Revolution; Being Letters of Eminent Men to George Washington, From the Time of His Taking Command of the Army to the End of His Presidency, 4 vols. (n.p., 1853; reprint, Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 3:193-194.

vacancy left by Col. John Greaton's promotion to brigadier general. Since one officer could not serve under another of equal rank, the order automatically excluded him from his station. Yet it made no further provision for him except that his reassignment was to be determined by Major General Gates, second in the army and an embittered foe of Washington.<sup>155</sup> Preparing to leave on furlough the next morning to be present for the birth of his first child, Hull wrote a letter to Col. Henry Jackson, Mellen's former superior, appealing to him to help protect his "Rights as an Officer." Hull argued that the order violated protocol by leaving him in the absurd situation of being an officer without a command. He did not specifically object to Mellen's appointment (although that undoubtedly nettled him), but to the disrespect that an unfixed status suggested. Officers should "not be left to be disposed of as Convenience or any other Reasons may suggest." By right and propriety he should receive Mellen's vacated position.<sup>156</sup> This time Hull's efforts initially appeared unsuccessful. Gates gave Hull command of the Sixth Massachusetts, where he served for the next five months before being transferred under Jackson.<sup>157</sup>

Hull's agitation over his displacement took place in an already anxious and potentially dangerous period for the army and the fragile new nation. The very certainty of the war's ending only increased frustration among officers, now numbering around

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<sup>155</sup> William Hull to Col. Harry [Henry] Jackson, 17 January 1783, Horatio Gates Papers, Box 16, No. 146, New-York Historical Society, New York.

<sup>156</sup> William Hull to Col. Harry [Henry] Jackson, 17 January 1783, Horatio Gates Papers, Box 16, No. 146, New-York Historical Society, New York.

<sup>157</sup> Johnston, *Yale and Her Honor-Roll*, 280. Heitman's *Historical Register* records Mellen's assignment to the Third Massachusetts but misses both of Hull's transfers. See pp. 37, 308.

550 in the area of Newburgh.<sup>158</sup> For several months they again had received no pay, and the failure of the destitute Confederation Congress to fulfill its promise of pensions raised fears that the army might be simply disbanded and forgotten. Richard H. Kohn has aptly described the atmosphere:

Most officers were apprehensive about returning to civilian life. Many had been impoverished by the war while friends at home had grown fat on the opportunities provided by the war. For all, the end of hostilities meant re-entering a society that had adjusted to their absence, and in traditionally antimilitary New England, a society that would accord none of the advantages or plaudits that returning veterans expect to receive. During those long, boring months of 1782, a growing feeling of martyrdom, an uncertainty, and a realization that long years of service might go unrewarded—or perhaps even hamper their future careers—made the situation increasingly explosive.<sup>159</sup>

The crisis had already been building. During the previous September, Brooks, Rufus Putnam, and Hull had presented a petition by the Massachusetts officers to the state legislature seeking, again, payment adjustments based on currency depreciation and now also guarantees of promised half-pay pensions or commutation to a lump sum at the war's end. The petition ran into determined opposition, however, despite assurances of support from John Adams and Governor John Hancock. The committee returned to Newburgh in November, empty-handed and still more frustrated.<sup>160</sup> With tempers on edge, General Knox drafted a sternly worded memorial to Congress on behalf of the entire army. Brooks, McDougall, and Col. Matthias Ogden delivered the document on January 6, 1783.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Richard H. Kohn, Eagle and Sword: The Beginnings of the Military Establishment in America (New York: Free Press, 1975), 19.

<sup>159</sup> Kohn, Eagle and Sword, 19.

<sup>160</sup> Hatch, Administration of the American Revolutionary Army, 144-145.

<sup>161</sup> Hatch, Administration of the American Revolutionary Army, 150-152; Kaplan, "Pay, Pension, and Power," 29-31, 127-131. The latter petition called for a commutation of half-pay for life to full pay for

However, with the national emergency now over, public opinion was growing disinterested, in places hostile, and more reluctant to honor its military debts. The failure to gain the required unanimity among state legislatures for an amendment that would authorize a national impost further hamstrung Congress's ability to respond positively.<sup>162</sup> The complex maneuverings that followed in early 1783—involving first the Knox-McDougall-Brooks group and a nationalist group in Congress, and then a combination of the latter and a more radical group under Gates—aimed at getting the army to threaten non-disbandment until pay and pension guarantees were secured. This led in mid-March to the so-called Newburgh Conspiracy, perhaps the closest an American army ever came to asserting independence from civilian control. The prestige and dramatic personal appearance of Washington at the moment of decision thwarted any potential subversive action.<sup>163</sup> Afterwards, a cowed Congress hastily voted a pension commutation settlement, but the issues were far from resolved.

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five years to enable officers time to get back on their financial feet. H. James Henderson, Party Politics in the Continental Congress (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), 120-124, 328-330, discusses the half-pay question in the Continental Congress, deeming it “one of the more critical issues in the early history of the Congress” (124). See also Hatch, Administration of the American Revolutionary Army, chap. 5.

<sup>162</sup> Roger H. Brown, Redeeming the Republic: Federalists, Taxation, and the Origins of the Constitution (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 22-23.

<sup>163</sup> There is disagreement among historians over the actual danger posed. Richard H. Kohn in particular has interpreted the threat as substantial, while others, including C. Edward Skeen and Charles Royster, have argued that little real danger to Washington or Congress's authority existed. See Richard H. Kohn, “The Inside History of the Newburgh Conspiracy: America and the Coup d’Etat,” William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 27 (1970): 187-220; Kohn, Eagle and Sword, chap. 2; C. Edward Skeen, “The Newburgh Conspiracy Reconsidered,” William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 31 (1974): 273-290, with Kohn's Rebuttal, 290-298; Royster, A Revolutionary People, 333-339. See also James Kirby Martin and Mark Edward Lender, A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic, 1763-1789, The American History Series (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 1982), 186-194; Kaplan, “Pay, Pensions, and Power,” 134-137.

Hull's relationship to these critical events is unknown and can only be conjectured.<sup>164</sup> He fully shared the outrage of his comrades toward the contempt shown by civilian authorities in the irregular and inadequate compensation for those who had sacrificed so much and, in their view, were most responsible for achieving national independence. As previously noted, twice already he had served on officer committees to the Massachusetts legislature seeking relief. Nevertheless, given his strong republican sentiments (tried and tempered, but intact), his generally deliberate and even disposition, his scrupulousness with regard to duty, order, and discipline, and above all his deep loyalty and attachment to Washington, it seems highly improbable that he would have countenanced any action subversive of the authority of the commander-in-chief. Hull also perhaps faced less financial and social insecurity than most other young officers because of his advantageous marriage and education. Unlike Hull, as Royster has commented, "comparatively few of [the officers] felt secure as gentlemen on their own account, with or without a commission. . . . With good reason they feared that maintaining this distinction outside the army would be difficult, probably impossible without external aid."<sup>165</sup> Hull's service had surely enhanced his status as a gentleman, but it had not created it.

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<sup>164</sup> Excepting his complaint to Col. Henry Jackson over reassignment, discussed above, and a minor note requesting a court martial for a deserter, no letters to or from Hull between the summers of 1782 and 1783 have been found. It is uncertain whether Hull's furlough, presumably begun on January 18, was of such duration as to prevent his attendance at the famous Newburgh meeting. Enticingly, forty-three years later Timothy Pickering penned a letter to Hull asking him to confirm some specifics in regard to the Newburgh meeting. "I presume that you were present at that meeting," stated Pickering. Timothy Pickering to William Hull (draft), 14 November 1825, Timothy Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, microfilm, reel 16:75. Since only the draft survives, it is unknown if Pickering actually sent the letter or if Hull responded to it. Already ill, Hull died just two weeks later.

<sup>165</sup> Royster, *A Revolutionary People*, 343-344.

Still, it is not inconceivable that he could have been won over to non-disbandment, as most of the officers might have been, had Washington himself openly supported the move. McDougall and Brooks initially favored it, not to mention Gates and John Armstrong, Jr., author of the Newburgh Addresses, who possibly planned such a step even without the commander-in-chief's cooperation.<sup>166</sup> Some used the argument that the officers' status as gentlemen positively *required* them not to tolerate insults to their honor. Hull's view of mutiny against Congress and state legislatures, however, much more likely mirrored Washington's: that is, however perfect the merits of the officers' claims and however deep their material and moral distress and resentment over ill-treatment by civilian authority, to defy constitutional authority at the moment of military triumph would permanently damage the army's reputation, and thus their own. As Royster again observed of the officer corps, "Although they resented ingratitude, they feared isolation even more. Not only would it leave them powerless, but it would also repudiate them as leaders of the revolution."<sup>167</sup> Like many others, Hull understood that his own prestige was now closely tied to that of the army's as a whole, as much as to his particular rank within it. The army's fame and honor was the foundation for his own.

On April 11 the Confederation Congress proclaimed an end to hostilities with Britain. Days later it ratified the preliminary peace. The demobilization of Continental soldiers was underway by the end of May. As the British began their withdrawal from New York, however, violence between embittered patriots and loyalists erupted again in

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<sup>166</sup> Kohn, *Eagle and Sword*, 24-32, 312n36. Kohn believes that the Gates-Armstrong group clearly advocated mutiny, even to the point of preparing a *coup d'etat*, while others dispute this. See note 163 above.

<sup>167</sup> Royster, *A Revolutionary People*, 338.

Westchester County. On June 16, Hull was transferred to Col. Henry Jackson's Fourth Massachusetts but was immediately detached yet again to the volatile region at the head of a newly formed corps of light infantry.<sup>168</sup> His task was to prevent vigilante activity and assist the reestablishment of civil authority until the final surrender of New York.<sup>169</sup>

Upon his arrival Hull dispersed his companies in garrisons across the peninsula and established a cordial intercourse with the British outpost commander, General Thomas Musgrave.<sup>170</sup> "I was happy to find him disposed to do everything in his power to suppress those Enormities which have so long disgraced this part of the Country and which some of the People seem yet inclined to practice," Hull reported to Washington.<sup>171</sup> Washington forbade his accepting an invitation to dine in New York with Sir Guy Carleton, commander-in-chief of British forces in America, but Hull frequently received other British officers.<sup>172</sup> He lamented, in fact, the financial burden "not only from my being at the Head of a Corps, but from the Multiplicity of Company from the British

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<sup>168</sup> Johnston, Yale and Her Honor-Roll, 280; Hull, Memoirs, appendix, x; Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 206.

<sup>169</sup> George Washington, June 20, 1783, General Orders, and George Washington to Continental Congress, December 21, 1783, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007); William Hull to [Ebenezer Slocum] Burling, Copy, 15 July 1783, United States Revolution Collection, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.; Sir Guy Carleton to Gov. George Clinton, 25 July 1783, in Clinton, Public Papers of George Clinton, 8:239-241.

<sup>170</sup> Musgrave initially protested Hull's establishing a post so near his own as provocative and encouraging British desertions. Hull assured Musgrave of his opposite intentions. Brig. Gen. Thomas Musgrave to William Hull, 27 June 1783; William Hull to Brig. Gen. Thomas Musgrave, 27 June 1783; William Hull to George Washington, 7 July 1783, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007).

<sup>171</sup> William Hull to George Washington, 7 July 1783, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007).

<sup>172</sup> George Washington to William Hull, 8 July 1783, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007). Washington forbade any American officers to visit New York on grounds, he explained, that it would encourage contact between American and British troops.



Army, our own Army, and the Country, merely on Account of my being the Com[mandin]g Officer in this part of the Country.”<sup>173</sup> He requested and later got Washington’s help in seeking reimbursement.<sup>174</sup>

Even with somewhat better regional order and a soothing of British-American tensions, significant problems remained. Banditry and retaliation persisted between loyalists and returning patriots, requiring Hull’s intervention.<sup>175</sup> He and Musgrave had agreed to return captured deserters, but the British commander was disappointed at Hull’s unwillingness to track down and apprehend those who made it past the American lines.<sup>176</sup> In August Hull was obliged to protest a British sentry’s rude treatment of Congressman

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<sup>173</sup> William Hull to George Washington, 7 July 1783, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007).

<sup>174</sup> William Hull to George Washington, 7 July 1783, and George Washington to William Hull, 8 July 1783, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007); George Washington to Caleb Brewster, 10 June 1784, in W. W. Abbot et al., eds., The Papers of George Washington: Confederation Series, 6 vols. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992-1997), 1:433-434. Hull’s reimbursement application, submitted in December, was for \$24 per month for the five months of his service—an amount far below his actual expenses, he claimed. George Washington to Continental Congress, 21 December 1783, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007); William Hull to George Washington, 2 December 1783, Officers of the Revolution Papers, case 4, box 20, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

<sup>175</sup> The case of Benjamin Hunt, lieutenant colonel of the New York militia, is illustrative of the region’s complicated and difficult circumstances. In early July three men forced Hunt from his farm near East Chester. A few days later several others, including “a Continental officer whose name [I] cannot discover,” declared him a loyalist and beat him. Hunt applied to Ebenezer Slocum Burling, Justice of the Peace at New Rochelle and husband of the daughter of Hunt’s half-brother, for redress. Burling refused, declaring Hunt an outlaw and open enemy. Hunt then sought protection from Hull who, he affirmed, “treated him well & gave him a safe Guard,” even in the face of the “rioters.” He made his way to Kingsbridge under Continental guard. Meanwhile Hull wrote Burling requesting that he give Hunt the protection of the law. Affidavit of Benjamin Hunt (copy), 19 July 1783, Papers of the Continental Congress, National Archives Microfilm Publications, M247, reel 66, item 52:263-265; William Hull to [Ebenezer Slocum] Burling, Copy, 15 July 1783, United States Revolution Collection, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass. See also William Hull to Brig. Gen. Thomas Musgrave (copy), 18 July 1783, Papers of the Continental Congress, M247, reel 66, item 52:203.

<sup>176</sup> William Hull to Brig. Gen. Thomas Musgrave, 27 June 1783, and William Hull to George Washington, 21 July 1783, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007).

Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts—ironically a leader in the opposition to regular armies and officer pensions—who evidently had failed to observe proper form in presenting his passport.<sup>177</sup> That fall Hull confirmed the persistent instability in the region when he advised Knox against any lapse of government there. Were there an “interregnum” following the British withdrawal, he warned, “the most shocking Consequences would follow.”<sup>178</sup>

On September 3 the Treaty of Paris became final and was sent to Congress for ratification. Hull used the opportunity to take a brief furlough to the Boston area to visit home and look in on the debates over pension commutation and the supporting impost.<sup>179</sup> Meanwhile the British evacuation of New York continued, along with the departure of several thousand loyalists.<sup>180</sup> By November, General Carleton notified Washington of his readiness to withdraw from New York, and, on Knox’s instructions, Hull made preparations for the grand occasion of the American re-entrance. As one who took great pride in presentation and discipline, he requested new clothing for his ragged “light infantry” corps—composed of selected troops from the four regiments at West Point—so that they might “appear with any kind of Decency.” He was disappointed, however, that

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<sup>177</sup> Brig. Gen. Thomas Musgrave to William Hull, 9 August 1783, William Hull Correspondence, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.

<sup>178</sup> William Hull to Henry Knox, 9 November 1783, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 15:172.

<sup>179</sup> William Hull to Henry Knox, 10 September 1783, Misc. Mss. H, New-York Historical Society, New York; William Hull to Henry Knox, 14 October 1783, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 15:41.

<sup>180</sup> Coakley and Conn, The War of the American Revolution, 136; Paul David Nelson, General Sir Guy Carleton, Lord Dorchester: Soldier-Statesman of Early British Canada (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2000), 171-173.

the woolen overalls he requested could not be issued. Instead he asked for thirty extra pairs of breeches to make up the lack and at least show uniformity.<sup>181</sup>

Washington, Governor George Clinton, and General Knox arrived at Hull's post on November 22. The following morning, Hull marched his corps under a cold downpour and took possession of the northern Manhattan forts. The rain delayed Carleton's final departure, but on the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup> the light infantry escorted Washington, Clinton, and a procession of military and New York civil officers into the city they had been forced to evacuate more than seven years earlier. With the Second Regiment also present for the reoccupation, the grand parade numbered around eight hundred men.<sup>182</sup> In his memoirs, Hull recalled the scene much like a precursor to future ticker tape parades: "The streets, the tops of houses, and the windows, were filled with men, women and children, waving plumes and garlands of greens and flowers, and cheering our path with every expression of joy and gratitude, to which the occasion gave rise."<sup>183</sup> On December 2, the official day of thanksgiving, citizens and soldiers were treated to a spectacular fireworks display. By design but also spontaneously, a spirit of gratitude and unity prevailed in this celebratory moment.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> William Hull to Henry Knox, 9 November 1783, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 15:172 (with quote); Henry Knox to William Hull, 15 November 1783, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 16:14; William Hull to [Henry Knox], 16 November 1783, John S. H. Fogg Autograph Collection, vol. 50, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine.

<sup>182</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 206-208; Hull, Memoirs, x; Thacher, Military Journal, 346-347; Henry P. Johnston, "1783 Evacuation of New York by the British," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 67, no. 402 (November 1883): 914-915.

<sup>183</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 208.

<sup>184</sup> William Hull to Henry Knox, 10 February 1784, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 17:10; Sarah J. Purcell, Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 57, 60-61.

At noon on December 4, the same day the last British troops left Staten Island and Long Island, Washington met with his remaining officers in the assembly room of Samuel Fraunces's Tavern. In a deeply affecting scene, he commended, blessed, and with tears in his eyes embraced each of them. Then, with Hull escorting, he passed along the line of the corps toward his awaiting barge.<sup>185</sup> The man Hull most admired and sought to emulate now made his way to Annapolis where, on December 23, he famously returned his commission to Congress. In his congratulatory and farewell address, Washington commended "those who have continued in the service to the present moment, as worthy of the favorable notice and patronage of Congress."<sup>186</sup> Hull was in that select group. Having responded to the war's initial call, he had seen it through to its conclusion.

The war was over, but not yet Hull's Continental service. Before leaving New York, Washington had instructed Knox to reduce the army to one infantry battalion of five hundred troops and a small artillery corps. Hull was appointed second in command of this "American Regiment" under Col. Henry Jackson, assigned to protect army stores and assist civil authority in New York.<sup>187</sup> Stationed at West Point, in accommodations "more agreeable than expected," Hull tried to relieve the monotony of the regiment's

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<sup>185</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 209; Hull, Memoirs, x; Thacher, Military Journal, 347.

<sup>186</sup> George Washington to the President of Congress, 23 December 1783, reprinted in Thacher, Military Journal, 348-349.

<sup>187</sup> George Washington to Continental Congress, 21 December 1783, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007); Kohn, Eagle and Sword, 41; Johnston, Yale and Her Honor-Roll, 280. Campbell (or likely Hull himself in his memoirs left to her) mistakenly identified the commanding officer as General Heath. The error was perpetuated in several subsequent memorials. Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 211. Hull's cousin Nathan Leavenworth, the youngest son of Hull's childhood tutor, was Surgeon's Mate in the regiment. Johnston, Yale and Her Honor-Roll, 340-341.

winter garrison duty by holding a celebration feast on February 6, 1784, to honor the sixth anniversary of the Franco-American alliance. Fireworks—the few left after the New York festival—were displayed and the troops received an extra allowance of rum.<sup>188</sup>

Such an occasion, however, could not overcome what was mostly mundane and tedious service marked by continuing problems of poor supply (especially of clothing), disease, delinquent pay, desertion, and troop misbehavior.<sup>189</sup> An outrageous instance of the latter occurred about the same time as the festivities noted above. (Hull did not specify the incident's date but, if the same, it naturally raises the question of whether or not the extra rum authorized by Hull contributed to the crime.) Several soldiers left their quarters in the night, broke into the house and store of a local Quaker merchant, fired on him as he fled, “abused his Wife, and plundered his Store” of various goods and “a considerable Sum of Money.” The “Villains” were soon caught and the goods and money recovered.<sup>190</sup> Hull ordered a court martial, which sentenced two of the

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<sup>188</sup> Quote in William Hull to Henry Knox, 1 February 1784, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 17:2; William Hull to Daniel Parker Esq. & Co., 3 February 1784, William Hull Correspondence, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.; William Hull to Henry Knox, 10 February 1784, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 17:10. Here Hull informed Knox that his decision to so commemorate the day “was induced from political Motives.” He might also have planned the event as a way to celebrate the birth of his second daughter in late January. Orcutt and Beardsley, *History of Derby*, 735.

<sup>189</sup> William Hull to Major [Job] Sumner, 13 March 1784, Ch.E.7.57, and William Hull to Major [Joseph] Williams, 11 April 1784, Chamberlain Collection, C.2.53, Dept. of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Boston Public Library, Boston; William Hull to Major [Job] Sumner, 3 April 1794, A.L.S. mounted in an extra-illustrated copy of Benson J. Lossing, *The Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution; or, Illustrations, by Pen and Pencil, of the History, Biography, Scenery, Relics, and Traditions of the War of Independence* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1900), 1:54, call no. 39002 in The Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.; William Hull to Henry Knox, 27 March 1784, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 17:50; Late officers of the American Army to John Pierce, 21 June 1784, Papers of the Continental Congress, National Archives Microfilm Publications, M247, reel 76, vol. 62:49-51; Petition of the Officers of the late American Regiment to Congress, 20 November 1784, Papers of the Continental Congress, M247, reel 55, vol. 6:113-116.

<sup>190</sup> William Hull to Henry Knox, 10 February 1784, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 17: 10.

perpetrators to death and four others to a hundred lashes. Hull pardoned a lesser offender “on account of his being an Evidence.” Submitting the death sentences to Knox for approval, Hull noted his strong feelings on the matter: “The crime was of so daring and atrocious a Nature, that I have nothing to plead in Favor of those who are condemned.”<sup>191</sup>

Hull also ran into problems with Major Sebastian Bauman, commander of the artillery corps at West Point. The unhappy major protested Hull’s order to take his turn at garrison duty, claiming that assigning an artillery officer to infantry duty was irregular, improper, and detracted from more critical responsibilities. When Hull refused to rescind the order, Bauman requested a suspension until Knox should decide on the matter. To this Hull consented and both men awaited a determination.<sup>192</sup> Knox upheld Hull’s position, requesting Bauman to acquiesce. Reluctantly and under private protest, the major agreed and was reinstated by Hull.<sup>193</sup>

With the onset of spring, yet another outbreak of smallpox among the soldiers compounded the misery of the service. Hull reluctantly ordered a general inoculation

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<sup>191</sup> William Hull to Henry Knox, 13 February 1784, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 17:15. Section 13, article 21, of the Articles of War authorized capital punishment for any officer or soldier who “shall leave his post or colors to go in search of plunder.” Continental Congress, Articles of War, 20 September 1776, *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1779*, ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford (Washington, DC : GPO, 1905), from the Avalon Project at the Yale Law School, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/contcong/09-20-76.htm> (accessed 4 April 2007).

<sup>192</sup> Major Sebastian Bauman to William Hull, 4, 5, and 6 February 1784; William Hull to Sebastian Bauman, 7 February 1784; Sebastian Bauman to Henry Knox, 7 February 1784; and William Hull to Henry Knox, 10 February 1784, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 17:3, 5-8, 10.

<sup>193</sup> Henry Knox to Sebastian Bauman, 7 March 1784; Sebastian Bauman to Henry Knox, 24 March 1784; William Hull to Henry Knox, 27 March 1784, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 17:53.

even though he suspected that inoculations among the area inhabitants had caused the outbreak in the first place.<sup>194</sup>

Elsewhere in the spring, acrimony over congressional authority and the establishment of a peacetime standing army raged in Congress. At last, with Elbridge Gerry and the New England states entrenched in opposition, Congress voted on June 2 that the remnant of the Continental Army be discharged, replacing it the next day with tiny artillery garrisons for West Point and Fort Pitt.<sup>195</sup> Having received earlier assurances of support, the officers, including Jackson and Hull, complained that they had received but two months' pay (in paper) for six months' service, and only promissory certificates for the remainder, leaving them to return home financially and hence morally "embarrassed."<sup>196</sup>

Hull, however, had yet one more important duty to perform. In what became a postscript to his long Revolutionary career, he immediately left on a diplomatic mission, this time to Quebec to meet and negotiate with the commander-in-chief and governor of Canada, Lieutenant General Frederick Haldimand. The British had not turned over the western forts as agreed in the peace, and on May 24 Congress, mostly to keep New York from acting unilaterally, approved Knox's proposition to send a "confidential field

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<sup>194</sup> William Hull to Henry Knox, 2 March 1784, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 17:53.

<sup>195</sup> Kohn, Eagle and Sword, 57-60. Gerry's passionate resistance to a standing army in this period is well reviewed in George Athan Billias, Elbridge Gerry: Founding Father and Republican Statesman (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), 106-112.

<sup>196</sup> Late officers of the American Army to John [Curee?], 21 June 1784, Papers of the Continental Congress, National Archives Microfilm Publications, M247, reel 76, vol. 62:49-51; Petition of the Officers of the late American Regiment to Congress, Papers of the Continental Congress, M247, reel 55, vol. 6:113-116.

officer” to arrange the transfer.<sup>197</sup> Acknowledging the “great importance to have the business transacted with as much precision, and expedition as possible,” Knox appointed Hull to the task the following day, instructing him to request an immediate evacuation of the forts and, if the governor complied, to visit and inspect each post. For the convenience and economy of both sides he was to suggest that various cannon and munitions remain in the evacuated forts, and their equivalent be supplied at some convenient American post.<sup>198</sup>

Haldimand received Hull “with great politeness” on his arrival in July, and Hull presented Knox’s letter of request. The mission, however, was bound to fail. Having earlier put off Governor Clinton’s officer, Haldimand continued to maintain that he could not accommodate the Americans without explicit directions from his government, the ratified treaty notwithstanding.<sup>199</sup> Unofficially the governor offered his “private opinion” that Americans’ poor treatment of returning loyalists probably hindered the transfer of the

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<sup>197</sup> Resolution of the United States Congress, 24 May 1784, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 17:74; Henry Knox to the President of Congress, 24 May 1784, Papers of the Continental Congress, National Archives Microfilm Publications, M247, reel 184, item 167:395-396; Elbridge Gerry to Thomas Jefferson, 24 August 1784, in Edmund C. Burnett, ed., Letters of Members of the Continental Congress, 8 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1921-1936; reprint, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1963), 7:587; Kohn, Eagle and Sword, 56. Congress had initially (12 May) directed Knox merely to open a correspondence with Haldimand. Thomas Mifflin to Henry Knox, 15 May 1784, in Smith, Letters of Delegates to Congress, 21:619. The previous summer Washington had sent Steuben to discuss the forts’ transfer with Haldimand, with no positive result. Kohn, Eagle and Sword, 50-51.

<sup>198</sup> Quote in Henry Knox to the President of Congress, 24 May 1784, Papers of the Continental Congress, National Archives Microfilm Publications, M247, reel 184, item 167:395-396; Henry Knox to William Hull, 25 May 1784, and William Hull to Henry Knox, 29 May 1784, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 17:75, 77; Instructions to Lieut. Colonel Hull (copy), 13 June 1784, Papers of the Continental Congress, M247, reel 184, item 167:435-437.

<sup>199</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 213-215; Gov. Frederick Haldimand to Gov. George Clinton, 10 May 1784; William Hull to Frederick Haldimand, 12 July 1784; Frederick Haldimand to William Hull, 13 July 1784; Frederick Haldimand to Maj. Gen Henry Knox, 13 July 1784, in William R. Manning, ed., Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States: Canadian Relations, 1784-1860 (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1940), 1:50-51n; Henry Knox to George Washington, 26 July 1784, in Abbot et al., Papers of George Washington: Confederation Series, 2:10-11.



forts.<sup>200</sup> Hull's efforts to persuade were futile. Disappointed at the outcome but exceedingly pleased to have received the distinction of a national assignment, he returned to West Point, then moved on to Philadelphia in mid-August to brief the president of the now-adjourned Congress and collect reimbursement for his expenses. At long last his Continental service was complete.<sup>201</sup> He would long recall with pride his final role as "sole commissioner" for the United States.<sup>202</sup> Now he went home to Newton to a hopeful but uncertain future.

In nine years of service Hull had acquired the reputation of a trustworthy, brave, strong, intelligent, and ambitious field officer. He had encountered at various times almost all of the problems and difficulties that confronted the American army at large: harsh physical conditions; insubordination, poor discipline, and desertion among troops and officers; irregular and insufficient pay; disputes over rank and promotion; a citizenry of divided loyalties and imperfect virtue; conflicts between civilians and the army; conflicts between state and national authority; and, not least, a determined and skilled enemy. This is to say nothing of the many horrific scenes of human carnage and suffering that he had witnessed and now painfully but silently bore in memory, and which

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<sup>200</sup> Haldimand to Sydney, 16 July 1784, Canadian Archives, ser. Q, vol. 23, p. 329, quoted in Samuel Flagg Bemis, Jay's Treaty: A Study in Commerce and Diplomacy, rev. ed. (New Haven, Conn., and London: Yale University Press, 1962), 5.

<sup>201</sup> William Hull to the Chairman of the Committee of the States [Samuel Hardy], 5 August 1784, Papers of the Continental Congress, National Archives Microfilm Publications, M247, reel 184, item 167:411; Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 215. Superintendent of finance Robert Morris recorded Hull's arrival in Philadelphia on August 17. Hull's claimed expenses totaled just over \$600. Robert Morris, Diary entry, 17 and 19 August 1784, in Elizabeth M. Nuxoll and Mary A. Gallagher, eds., The Papers of Robert Morris, 1781-1784, 9 vols. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999), 9:490, 501, 501n.

<sup>202</sup> Hull included this service in a listing of his various public service roles in 1812. [William Hull,] Draft outline of his life and career, 2 December 1812, Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. (This unsigned, incomplete draft is in Hull's handwriting.)

later romanticized histories largely forgot or ignored. As an officer, Hull on many occasions had led distinguished and courageous defensive or rear guard actions—at White Plains, Trenton, Ticonderoga, Saratoga, and Monmouth, for example. Especially in Westchester County he became expert in protecting his forces in hostile territory through exceptional vigilance. He also led men in attack, although, like the army generally, less frequently—Stony Point and Morrisania come to mind.

Through such service, Hull had achieved much of the distinction and recognition that he and so many of his young, ambitious contemporaries craved. His superiors had shown confidence in him as a well mannered, intelligent, and effective negotiator and diplomat through committee and arbitration assignments and his mission to Quebec. Steuben in particular appreciated his attention to order and discipline. Hull's forceful but levelheaded defenses of his rank and honor achieved his purposes without alienating others or provoking further conflict. (There is no evidence of any involvement in dueling, for example, even though in the course of the war it became all too common within the officer corps.)<sup>203</sup> Indeed, Washington considered it a mark of Hull's good character that he, unlike most others, maintained the Revolutionary "cause" ahead of his own elevation.<sup>204</sup> A list of prominent figures, American and foreign, with whom Hull closely served reads like a Revolutionary Who's Who: Arnold, Brooks, Burr, Gates, Hale, Heath, Knox, Lafayette, Lincoln, McDougall, Morgan, Parsons, Putnam, St. Clair,

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<sup>203</sup> Royster, *A Revolutionary People*, 208-210.

<sup>204</sup> George Washington to William Heath, 13 December 1799, William Heath Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, microfilm, reel 14:385. Early in the war Washington had vented his disappointment with American officers at large. Those motivated by honor and principle above personal interest, he judged, were "no more than a drop in the ocean." George Washington to John Hancock, 24 September 1776, from Library of Congress, *George Washington Papers*, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007).

Schuyler, Steuben, and Wayne. Two others, Meigs and Dearborn, were also promising young comrades who would figure in Hull's later Detroit campaign. Of course, raised above all other names was that of Washington, whose confidence Hull had earned from Trenton to final disbandment, and whom Hull held up as a model for his own military and social demeanor. Such a collection of acquaintances and friendships buttressed his "fame" and established him as a Continental insider. Over a decade later, then-President Washington included Hull's name on a select list of "the most prominent characters" from the war.<sup>205</sup>

Hull had devoted his young adulthood to the Revolution. Along with so many others who served, he awaited the peacetime benefits that would flow from it. The Connecticut son, Yale graduate, and nascent lawyer had become at age thirty-one a Massachusetts gentleman and an acknowledged war hero with a reputation for exceptional bravery, a "character" that could become the foundation for future professional, social, and political distinctions. He had played a long, significant, and sacrificial role in achieving American independence. However, as he already saw, he was a gentleman and hero in a new republican order that would not always recognize or easily defer to his "virtue."

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<sup>205</sup> Timothy Pickering to Alexander Hamilton, 17 November 1795, in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 19:437-440.

## CHAPTER 3

### FEDERALIST (1783-1789)

The five-year period following Hull's homecoming in late summer of 1784 saw the construction of a new phase in his reputation. That of "Revolutionary hero" was not removed, but as Massachusetts and the United States confronted major problems in the postwar Confederation years, Hull found himself with professional and economic interests to protect, and ideological and political principles to uphold. These interests and principles—as indistinguishable to him as to most historical actors—led him to espouse positions that identified him with the Commonwealth's most fiscally conservative, elite, and nationalist factions. By the time of the Constitutional ratification debates, he was an unabashed Federalist, declaring the Confederation a "nerveless" and "feeble system," fervently arguing that the new system would preserve both order and liberty and fulfill the republican promise of the Revolution. These views were to a large degree the predictable outcome of Hull's Revolutionary experience and associations, his new family connections, and his resumed legal practice. Although a newcomer to Massachusetts society, he appeared well poised to thrive in what he hoped would be a new republican aristocracy of merit. His course in this period naturally makes his later political evolution and choices all the more intriguing.

Having now devoted his young adulthood to the causes of national independence and republican government, Hull returned to Newton “to enjoy the tranquil and happy scenes of domestic life.”<sup>1</sup> This farming and commercial town lay along the bending and nearly encircling Charles River on the western edge of the settled Boston area. With a population of over 1,300 in the 1780s, Newton was among Massachusetts’ larger inland communities, with easy access to Cambridge, four miles downriver, and the markets of Boston just eight miles away. It would grow only gradually over the succeeding decades so that its inhabitants numbered around two thousand at the time of Hull’s death in 1825.<sup>2</sup>

Hull was awaited by his wife Sarah—“Sally” as he called her—and their two baby daughters, Sarah and Eliza. Initially they lived on a twenty-acre plot known as Angier’s Corner, part of Sarah’s dowry, but the following spring Hull purchased an adjoining sixty-five acres with a “Mansion House,” barn, and other buildings to accommodate a growing household.<sup>3</sup> The next year a son arrived, Abraham, named after his honored grandfather, followed by five more daughters over the next nine years: Ann,

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<sup>1</sup> Maria Campbell and James Freeman Clarke, Revolutionary Services and Civil Life of General William Hull: Prepared from his Manuscripts, by his Daughter, Mrs. Maria Campbell: Together with the History of the Campaign of 1812, and the Surrender of the Post of Detroit, by his Grandson, James Freeman Clarke (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1848; facsimile reprint, New York: Garrett Press, 1970), 215.

<sup>2</sup> Francis Jackson, History of Newton (Boston: published by the author, 1854), 222; Samuel F. Smith, History of Newton, Massachusetts, Town and City from Its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time, 1630-1880 (Boston: American Logotype Co., 1880), 765. See these works for the founding and early background of the town.

<sup>3</sup> Hull bought the land at auction from the estate of the recently deceased Phineas Cook, a minutemen captain under Michael Jackson at Lexington and Concord. William Hunt (estate administrator), deed to William Hull, 6 April 1785, Miscellaneous Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston; Samuel F. Smith, “Newton,” in Samuel Adams Drake, History of Middlesex County, Massachusetts, containing carefully prepared histories of every city and town in the county, by well-known writers; and a general history of the county, from the earliest to the present time. 2 vols. (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1880), 2:254.

Maria, Rebecca, Caroline, and Julia.<sup>4</sup> Also part of the household was Tillo (Othello), an African-American boy now six years old. He was the namesake of his father, who had attached himself to Hull after being freed from a loyalist jail during the Morrisania expedition. When the war ended, according to Hull's daughter, the elder Tillo returned to his small farm in Westchester County, but requested that the Hulls retain his son until he should come of age. Years later the "simple-hearted" young man asked to remain with the family. And so he did to the end of his life, well beyond the lifetimes of William and Sarah, officially listed as an "incumbrance" of the Hull estate.<sup>5</sup>

Other family relations periodically joined the household as well, undoubtedly adding a financial burden. Living with the Hulls for a time was William's younger

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<sup>4</sup> Samuel C. Clarke, comp., Records of Some of the Descendants of Richard Hull, New Haven, 1639-1662 (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1869), 8-12. The listed dates of the children are: Sarah (29 January 1783-26 February 1810), Eliza (22 January 1784-20 October 1864), Abraham Fuller (8 March 1786-25 July 1814), Ann Binney (19 June 1787-26 December 1846), Maria (7 June 1788-24 May 1845), Rebecca Parker (7 February 1790-25 May 1865), Caroline (30 April 1793-22 August 1825), and Julia Knox (1795-26 June 1842).

<sup>5</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 191-192n. According to Campbell, as of the mid-1840s the younger Tillo was still living on the old Hull homestead. Another of Hull's daughters, Eliza, portrayed Tillo as the family handyman. Ella Wingate Ireland, "Sarah Hull" (paper presented to Sarah Hull Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Newton, Mass., 2 December 1897), typed manuscript, "Sarah Hull" file, Hull Family Papers, Newton History Museum at the Jackson Homestead, Newton, Mass., 5. Grandson Samuel C. Clarke recalled from his youth that "old Tillo" joined the Hull household for Sunday services, but "occupied alone, the highest seat in the Village Church." [Samuel C. Clarke] to [James Freeman Clarke], n.p., n.d., William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (105v), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge. One Newton chronicler remembered Tillo for his popular fiddle accompaniment at local dances. M. F. Sweetser, King's Handbook of Newton, Massachusetts (Boston: Moses King Corp., 1889), 146. Another recorded Tillo as "the last remnant of slavery" in the town and "a life-long incumbrance" of Hull's estate, who at his death was buried beside Hull. As a New Englander writing in the late 1870s, Samuel F. Smith was careful to explain that "slavery, as administered by the fathers of Newton, was patriarchal, rather than selfish and tyrannical." Smith, History of Newton, 536, 538. The designation of "incumbrance," by which was acknowledged a belonging to an estate but holding no property value, appeared in New England in the early nineteenth century as one feature of an often confused and uncomfortable process of gradual emancipation. See Joanne Pope Melish, Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998), 107-108. Tillo perhaps married sometime between 1810 and 1820. In the 1820 census, a female "free colored person" in the same age category as Tillo appears with the Hull household for the first time. United States, 1820 Census, Newton, Middlesex County, Massachusetts, ser. M33, roll 51:198, [database online]; available from HeritageQuest Online.

brother David, a recent Yale graduate. David came from Connecticut to study medicine under William Eustis of Boston, a surgeon in the Revolution whose subsequently prominent public career would intersect with Hull's, most unfortunately in the War of 1812. Another family presence for a brief period was the son of William's oldest brother Joseph, who may have hoped that the boy might become a lawyer like his uncle. Young Isaac Hull showed little interest in school but manifested a strong attraction to the sea, influenced no doubt by Joseph's maritime exploits during the Revolution and trading ventures. Isaac would achieve national heroic stature in 1812 as commander of the *U.S.S. Constitution*, in striking contrast with his uncle William's near-simultaneous downfall in the Old Northwest.<sup>6</sup>

Judge Abraham Fuller and his wife, also named Sarah, cherished the nearness of their only child and grandchildren. The judge was now in his sixties, still a large, vital man, "somewhat stern in aspect and manner" with a famously booming voice.<sup>7</sup> According to nineteenth-century local historian Samuel F. Smith (also author of "My Country 'Tis of Thee"), Fuller was "the leading citizen of Newton of his day."<sup>8</sup> He had kept a private grammar school until his father's death in 1766 when, being the only son, he took over the family estate and farmed. Soon he was elected town clerk and treasurer, which duties he performed for twenty-seven years. He also served four years as

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<sup>6</sup> Samuel C. Clarke, Descendants of Richard Hull, 6, 9-10; Samuel C. Clarke, Memoir of Gen. William Hull (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1893), 13. Isaac Hull's most thorough biographer assesses that Isaac probably arrived in 1784 and probably stayed no more than a year with his uncle. Linda M. Maloney, The Captain from Connecticut: The Life and Naval Times of Isaac Hull (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986), 4-5. David Hull married the daughter of another Boston physician in 1789 and afterward settled in Fairfield, Connecticut.

<sup>7</sup> Samuel C. Clarke, comp., Records of Some of the Descendants of John Fuller, Newton, 1644-98 (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1869), 10.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel F. Smith, "Newton," in Drake, History of Middlesex County, 2:255.

selectman and eighteen as representative to the General Court. In 1774 and 1775 he had been one of Newton's two delegates to the Provincial Congress. Following the adoption of the state constitution in 1780 he served as a senator, a member of the governor's Council, and judge of the Court of Common Pleas for Middlesex County.<sup>9</sup> Hull's close connection to such an important and imposing figure was another expected advantage for his prospects.

Despite such favorable initial circumstances, the return to civilian life was for Hull, as for the majority of officers and veterans, uncertain. He had successfully negotiated military life and duty and made a name for himself. It remained to be seen how he would fare as a civilian in a peacetime society that was often suspicious and resentful of his and other Continentals' claims on public "gratitude."<sup>10</sup> Indeed, his life and career over the next two decades would well illustrate the formative, dynamic, and often tumultuous nature of early national society, politics, and economic life. The War for Independence had produced more than just a political revolution; it had also inspired—critics would say unleashed—a rapid transformation of society that continued to work itself out over the next decades. Hull and the founding elites would have to find their way in the accelerated evolution away from a society based in monarchy and its

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<sup>9</sup> Jackson, History of Newton, 284 (see also map attached between pp. 112 and 113); Smith, History of Newton, 394, 779-780; Sweetser, King's Handbook of Newton, 144; Samuel C. Clarke, Descendants of John Fuller, 8-11. The Fullers' only son had died in infancy in 1765.

<sup>10</sup> Charles Royster, A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 343-345, 351-353, discusses officer anxieties and problems of reintegration into peacetime society. See also John Resch, Suffering Soldiers: Revolutionary War Veterans, Moral Sentiment, and Political Culture in the Early Republic (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), which argues that Continental Army veterans were not fully embraced by American society at large until well after the War of 1812; and Sarah J. Purcell, Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), chap. 2, which focuses on the contentious issue of postwar "gratitude" toward Revolutionary soldiers.



hierarchical values to one of increasing liberal democracy and its notions of equality.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, these were the years whose changes so astonished the newly awakened Rip Van Winkle of Washington Irving's famous tale.

Although Hull's reputation was secure within the officer corps and gave him enviable recognition in New England, it provided no guarantee of future success in the restless, uncertain years following the Revolution. In fact, as he had already discovered, it was often a liability. By the time of his homecoming, waves of controversy had left a residue of public suspicion and even resentment toward the Continental officers. Indeed, a contest between the officers and civilians for ownership of the Revolution was already well underway.<sup>12</sup> Charles Royster explains it thus:

The public wanted the officers, like the privates, to return to civilian life inconspicuously, not only laying aside their military character for the safety of republicanism but also forgoing invidious claims to have done more for independence than civilians had done. . . . By discrediting the officers for their pensions and their aristocratic pretensions, civilians could demonstrate that the public and not the army had secured independence.<sup>13</sup>

Hull arrived in a charged, contentious public atmosphere that would test his patience as well as his politics.

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<sup>11</sup> Gordon S. Wood, The Radicalism of the American Revolution (New York: Knopf, 1992), passim; J. Franklin Jameson, The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1926; reprint, Boston: Beacon Press, 1956), chap. 1; Joyce Appleby, Capitalism and the New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s (New York: New York University Press, 1984), chap. 3; Alan Taylor, "From Fathers to Friends of the People: Political Personae in the Early Republic," Journal of the Early Republic 11 (winter 1991): 465-491; Pauline Maier, "The Transforming Impact of Independence, Reaffirmed: 1776 and the Definition of American Social Structure," in The Transformation of Early American History: Society, Authority, and Ideology, ed. James A. Henretta, Michael Kammen, and Stanley N. Katz (New York: Knopf, 1991), 194-217 passim.

<sup>12</sup> Royster, A Revolutionary People, 345-351; James Kirby Martin and Mark Edward Lender, A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic, 1763-1789, The American History Series (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 1982), 203-204; Purcell, Sealed with Blood, 51-52.

<sup>13</sup> Royster, A Revolutionary People, 349, 350-351.

In the immediate aftermath of the Newburgh crisis in March 1783, the Confederation Congress had hurriedly acceded to the officers' demand for commuting promised but unpopular half-pay pensions to lump-sum bonuses of five years' full salary. With no funds available, however, Congress had been forced to issue payment in transferable interest-bearing certificates. A new federal impost was planned to enable the government to meet the obligation. However, hostile anti-pension and anti-impost sentiment throughout New England protested this measure and Congress's perpetual bankruptcy prevented fulfillment of the obligation. The objections to the impost were myriad, reflecting economic, ideological, and social concerns. In Massachusetts, Governor John Hancock and the state senate supported the impost bill, but opposition in the house of representatives was entrenched. Supporters had used "every argument which Justice, Gratitude, and Policy could inspire," Hull reported to Knox after his fall visit to Boston, but "those Arguments were opposed by Envy, Obstinacy, and Avarice, and the latter triumphed by a considerable Majority."<sup>14</sup>

Hull was dumbfounded by the intensity of anti-pension and anti-impost feeling among the representatives. "Many of them declare they had rather risque [sic] any Consequences [sic] than discharge so unjust a Debt, even a Dissolution of the Union," he wrote. "What will be the Consequences of such Madness & Folly, Time must determine." It was disgraceful that "a People should be able to conduct a War in such a Manner as to gain the Admiration of the World, and at the same Time . . . be destitute of

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<sup>14</sup> William Hull to Henry Knox, 14 October 1783, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 15:41. Lawrence Delbert Cress, Citizens in Arms: The Army and the Militia in American Society to the War of 1812 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 67-74, discusses the meaning and significance of the half-pay/commutation controversy. See also Jackson Turner Main, The Antifederalists: Critics of the Constitution, 1781-1788 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961), chap. 4; and H. James Henderson, Party Politics in the Continental Congress (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), 335-338.

sufficient Wisdom to form Arrangements for Peace, which will make them happy and respectable.” Exasperated, Hull fell back to the line of sacrificial virtue:

Let what will happen we shall have the Satisfaction of reflecting that during the Storm we have saved the Ship, and if her present Pilot, thro[ugh] Ignorance or Obstinacy suffer her to sink, in a perfect Calm, we shall not be answerable for the Consiquences [sic], being only Passengers.<sup>15</sup>

In light of such widespread public sentiment, several higher officers had embraced General Knox’s idea to establish a fraternal order for mutual fellowship, commemoration, and benevolence. The Society of the Cincinnati—so named after the fifth-century B.C. Roman general, Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus, who humbly returned to his farm after successfully leading the defense of Rome—formed at the Highlands camp in May 1783 and designated Washington as president-general. Hull was among the Society’s founders and closely participated in its formation. In June, just before his final assignment to Westchester County, he helped organize the Massachusetts branch and, with General Steuben presiding, convened with fifteen others to more fully arrange the general Society.<sup>16</sup> As originally designed, membership would consist of Continental and foreign allied officers who had served at least three years, or were serving at the time of disbandment. Honorary members could also be appointed. So that the Society would be perpetual, membership would pass to the oldest male descendants. Members would

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<sup>15</sup> William Hull to Henry Knox, 14 October 1783, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 15:41.

<sup>16</sup> The Institution and Proceedings of the Society of the Cincinnati, Formed by the Officers of the United States, at the Cantonment of the Banks of Hudson’s River, May 10, 1783: With the Proceedings of the Massachusetts State Society of the Cincinnati, from its Organization, June 9, 1783, to July 4, 1811 (Boston: Thomas B. Wait and Co., 1812), 21. Hull’s own copy of this volume, donated by his daughter and granddaughter in 1843, is one of four in the Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. The fullest scholarly study of the Society’s founding and early history is Richard Frank Saunders Jr., “The Origin and Early History of the Society of the Cincinnati: The Oldest Hereditary and Patriotic Association in the United States” (Ph.D. diss., University of Georgia, 1969).

identify themselves by wearing bald eagle medals designed by Major Pierre L'Enfant. Each member would contribute one month's salary to create a benevolence fund for the relief of destitute officers or their families.<sup>17</sup>

The fraternity reflected the strong identification the officers felt with each other and the Revolution, as well as their collective feeling of neglect by the broader citizenry. But it also gave every appearance of an institution grounded in aristocracy and with the potential to wield enormous political influence. As such it stepped beyond the bounds of popular acceptability in the new republic, most especially in New England. All admired Washington's Cincinnatus-like retirement, but by early 1784 the furor over the Society had displaced and surpassed that over pensions. New England legislators and editorialists alike attacked the order as inimical to republican principles, a subversive attempt to create an American nobility and establish European-style hereditary distinctions. They worried about the influence that organized and funded military figures could exert on public affairs. Some worried about the Society's potential to monopolize Revolutionary memory to its members' exclusive advantage. Some alarmists blasted the Society as a foreign conspiracy.<sup>18</sup> Even Massachusetts elites felt great unease and

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<sup>17</sup> Wallace Evans Davies, "The Society of the Cincinnati in New England, 1783-1800," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 5 (1948): 1-2; Saunders, "Origin and Early History of the Society of the Cincinnati," 76-79; Sidney Kaplan, "Veteran Officers and Politics in Massachusetts, 1783-1787," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 9 (1952): 34-35; Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 211-212.

<sup>18</sup> The most recent and thorough study of the controversy over the Cincinnati is Markus Hünemörder, The Society of the Cincinnati: Conspiracy and Distrust in Early America, European Studies in American History, ed. Michael Wala (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006). See also Edgar Erskine Hume, "Early Opposition to the Cincinnati," Americana 30 (October 1936): 597-638; Saunders, "Origin and Early History of the Society of the Cincinnati," chap. 3; Royster, A Revolutionary People, 354-357; Martin and Lender, A Respectable Army, 202-203; Kaplan, "Veteran Officers," 37-38; Merrill Jensen, The New Nation: A History of the United States during the Confederation, 1781-1789 (New York: Vintage Books, 1950), 261-263; Henry Knox to George Washington, 21 February 1784, in Jared Sparks, ed., Correspondence of the American Revolution: Being Letters of Eminent Men to George Washington, From the Time of His Taking Command of the Army to the End of His Presidency, 4 vols. (n. p., 1853; reprint, Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 4:58-59. The most influential attack on the Society was

dreaded its corruptive effects. Republican ideologue Elbridge Gerry feared the Society would create an “*imperium in imperio*,” and in the Netherlands John Adams declared it “the first step taken to deface the beauty of our temple of liberty.”<sup>19</sup> Fueling some of this anxiety was the officers’ strong national sentiments, a predictable effect of their Continental wartime experience and threatening to the many state leaders who favored a weak central government.<sup>20</sup> The Society, in fact, had included the promotion of the Union and national honor among its “immutable” and founding principles.<sup>21</sup>

On February 10, while Hull commanded the last Continental regiment at West Point, a meeting in Boston of the Massachusetts Cincinnati named him as one of their representatives to attend the first general convention, scheduled for May in

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the pamphlet Considerations on the Order or Society of Cincinnati by Judge Aedanus Burke (under the pseudonym “Cassius”) of South Carolina. The work was reprinted throughout the country and widely read in New England. It was, Hünemörder notes, “the seminal text that transformed vague criticism of the Society into a fully fledged controversy.” Hünemörder, Society of the Cincinnati, 27; Saunders, “Origin and Early History of the Society of the Cincinnati,” 93-97, 125-126; Hume, “Early Opposition to the Cincinnati,” 598-601; Davies, “Society of the Cincinnati in New England,” 5, 9-10. See also Boston’s Independent Chronicle, which excerpted Burke’s pamphlet and printed numerous hostile commentaries on the Society throughout the spring of 1784.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Davies, “Society of the Cincinnati in New England,” 11. George Athan Billias, Elbridge Gerry: Founding Father and Republican Statesman (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), 103-106, examines Gerry’s entrenched opposition to the Cincinnati. Also among those who maintained deep hostility toward the society was Gerry’s close friend Mercy Otis Warren, whose widely read history of the American Revolution sustained the attack into the nineteenth century. Mercy Otis Warren, History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution. Interspersed with Biographical, Political and Moral Observations, 3 vols. (Boston: n. p., 1805; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1970), 3:278-293.

<sup>20</sup> Martin and Lender, A Respectable Army, 203; Davies, “Society of the Cincinnati in New England,” 10; William A. Benton, “Pennsylvania Revolutionary Officers and the Constitution,” in The Military in America: From the Colonial Era to the Present, ed. Peter Karsten (New York: Free Press, 1980), 57-69; Edwin G. Burrows, “Military Experience and the Origins of Federalism and Antifederalism,” in Aspects of Early New York Society and Politics, ed. Jacob Judd and Irwin H. Polishook (Tarrytown, N.Y.: Sleepy Hollow Restorations, 1974), 83-92. Richard H. Kohn observes, “There was a modicum of truth in the opposition’s animosity. By maintaining the associations of the war, the Cincinnati provided an institutional and emotional bond between the Continental Army and the future Federalist party.” Kohn, Eagle and Sword: The Beginnings of the Military Establishment in America (New York: Free Press, 1975), 13.

<sup>21</sup> Saunders, “Origin and Early History of the Society of the Cincinnati,” 73, 299.

Philadelphia.<sup>22</sup> At the same time, the Massachusetts legislature appointed a committee to investigate the Society. The Court called Knox, Brooks, and another officer (probably state chapter president Benjamin Lincoln) for a hearing. The officer's report to Hull on the proceedings well illustrates the high level of anxiety among state officials over the Society:

They appeared to be much alarmed and affraid [sic] of its consequences, and recommended in the strongest terms to Dissolve the Society—not that they were under the least apprehension of danger from its present members, for they consider them as the most virtuous set of men in the community, but as it was hereditary no one could vouch for the members that may come after us—the [benevolence] Funds & the bald Eagle, they were much startled at, indeed they do not know what to make of the Institution, nor what to do with it, they think it some dreadfull thing, but do not know where to take hold of it.<sup>23</sup>

On March 22 the Court voted lengthy resolutions condemning the Society, but referred its fate to the next legislature.<sup>24</sup> Knox wrote to Hull of the “pretty general sentiments” of indignation by both liberals and conservatives. The members of the next Court would gather, he was sure, “with instructions to demolish [the Society] with all their might and main.”<sup>25</sup> Overall, taken together with pension commutation, the creation of the Society

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<sup>22</sup> Henry Knox to George Washington, 21 February 1784, and Benjamin Lincoln to George Washington, 2 March 1784, in W. W. Abbot et al., eds., The Papers of George Washington: Confederation Series, 6 vols. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992-1997), 1:143, 167.

<sup>23</sup> [Benjamin Lincoln?] to William Hull, 5 April 1784, William Hull Correspondence, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass. Only the first four pages of this letter are preserved. See also Henry Knox to William Hull, 7 March 1784, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 17:41. Concern over the benevolence fund centered on the fear that, however honorably intended, it could in the future be put to illegal or anti-republican uses, such as exerting inappropriate political influence.

<sup>24</sup> Saunders, “Origin and Early History of the Society of the Cincinnati,” 131-132; Davies, “Society of the Cincinnati in New England,” 12-13; Kaplan, “Veteran Officers,” 39.

<sup>25</sup> Henry Knox to William Hull, 5 April 1784, William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (37), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge. In sharp contrast, Knox continued, the Society was the toast of the town in France. King Louis XVI had given French officers his permission to accept membership and “to exhibit the illustrious Bald eagle” on all occasions. “But let this be known only to a few,” warned Knox with droll understatement, “for I believe it is not much in our favor at present.” Indeed,

of the Cincinnati resulted in a heightened suspicion toward the officers as a class. They might retain their elevated status as individuals, but as a group they had become widely distrusted.

The leaders bowed to this reality at the Society's first general convention in May. At Knox's encouragement, Hull absented himself from his post at West Point to join the other Massachusetts delegates at the Philadelphia meeting.<sup>26</sup> There Washington was adamant that changes be made to ease fears and maintain social respect and credibility. In the face of hostile public opinion and a threatened resignation by "the indispensable man," delegates passed substantial amendments—most notably the abolishment of hereditary and honorary membership—that were then submitted to the state branches for ratification.<sup>27</sup> Hull was on his mission to Governor Haldimand in Canada when the members of the Massachusetts society—at well over three hundred members, second only to the French society in numbers—celebrated Independence Day at the Bunch of Grapes tavern in Boston and voted in favor of the amendments.<sup>28</sup> The tactic worked. Lincoln reported to Washington that the new submissive measures gave "great satisfaction to the citizens at large."<sup>29</sup> When the General Court next met, they left the Society alone. "Thus," notes Sidney Kaplan, "after a year of attack and maneuver, the

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the Cincinnati eagle was one of only two foreign decorations the king permitted French officers. Hünemörder, Society of the Cincinnati, 126.

<sup>26</sup> Henry Knox to William Hull, 5 April 1784, William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (37), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge.

<sup>27</sup> Saunders, "Origin and Early History of the Society of the Cincinnati," 158-169; Kaplan, "Veteran Officers," 39-40; Hume, "Early Opposition to the Cincinnati," 617-618; Davies, "Society of the Cincinnati in New England," 14-15.

<sup>28</sup> By this time over 2,300 members were enrolled. Saunders, "Origin and Early History of the Society of the Cincinnati," 82. Individual state totals are also reprinted here.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Kaplan, "Veteran Officers," 48.

Cincinnati arrived at an uneasy peace with the irate citizenry of the Commonwealth.”<sup>30</sup> Royster adds that “by defeating the officers’ demand for deference, the opponents of pensions and of the Cincinnati . . . accomplished a miniature revolution.”<sup>31</sup> So the matter stood upon Hull’s arrival in Newton, in time to join other Society brothers in welcoming fellow member Lafayette during his visit to Boston in the fall.<sup>32</sup> The reputation of the Society of the Cincinnati would rise, fall, or divide in succeeding years according to the political environment, but the crisis was over. Even with the later rescinding of amendments, the order’s existence was not again seriously threatened by external pressure.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless for several members, including Hull, association with it would remain a political liability.

The Society of the Cincinnati was not the only group Hull belonged to that underwent scrutiny and harsh criticism in this “critical period” of the new American nation. He also established himself as a lawyer, apparently the first college-educated, “professional” one residing in Newton.<sup>34</sup> In fact he was but one of dozens of new

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<sup>30</sup> Kaplan, “Veteran Officers,” 41. Some state branches, including those of Connecticut and New Hampshire, protested and refused to ratify the new constitution, and so it was never adopted. The Massachusetts branch later reversed itself, reinstating hereditary and honorary membership. Nevertheless, the members’ submission to public opinion at this moment sufficiently quelled fears and resentments until a time when it was more favorable. Davies, “Society of the Cincinnati in New England,” 15-18; Kaplan, “Veteran Officers,” 54.

<sup>31</sup> Royster, A Revolutionary People, 357.

<sup>32</sup> Kaplan, “Veteran Officers,” 41. Other Cincinnati of Newton included Hull’s former commander in the Eighth Massachusetts, Col. Michael Jackson, four of his sons, and Brevet Major Daniel Jackson. Smith, History of Newton, 383-384.

<sup>33</sup> Saunders, “Origin and Early History of the Society of the Cincinnati,” 170.

<sup>34</sup> See listing of “Massachusetts Lawyers, 1692-1775” in Richard Scott Eckert, “The Gentlemen of the Profession”: The Emergence of Lawyers in Massachusetts, 1630-1810 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991), appendix A, 525-537. Charles R. McKirdy notes that the concept of a “profession” has been problematic and much debated among social scientists, but includes the criteria of being a full-time earning occupation, requiring a body of theoretical and systematized knowledge and skills acquired through formal education, identification of practitioners with one another and the profession, and their general acceptance



attorneys appearing throughout the state in the early to mid-1780s. Some of these merely made up the loss of departed loyalist practitioners, nearly half of the Commonwealth's pre-Revolutionary total. But the rapid increase—from thirty-four in 1780 to ninety-two by 1785 and continuing upward—mostly resulted from a growth in demand driven by the postwar resumption of regular court schedules, a quickened development of commercial society, and the consequences of a severe postwar economic depression.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, financial distress—debt defaults and litigation—contributed much to the influx of new lawyers. (Critics often charged that the reverse was true.) Thus was the bar a prestigious, profitable, and frequently embattled profession.<sup>36</sup>

Having commenced practicing just before the Revolution broke, Hull found himself in the fall of 1784 well positioned to benefit from an exploding demand for legal services just as the depression was setting in. Immediately after the peace, British dumping of goods began absorbing both specie and credit as American merchants and consumers gorged themselves on discounted imports. Soon British and American

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and control of professional “culture”: norms, standards, and values. Charles R. McKirdy, “Massachusetts Lawyers on the Eve of the American Revolution: The State of the Profession,” in Law in Colonial Massachusetts, 1630-1800, vol. 62 of Publications of The Colonial Society of Massachusetts (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1984), 313-317. The process of professionalization of the bar had begun prior to the Revolution but was yet in flux. John M. Murrin, “The Legal Transformation: The Bench and the Bar of Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts,” in Stanley N. Katz and John M. Murrin, eds., Colonial America: Essays in Politics and Social Development, 3d ed. (New York: Knopf, 1983), argues that the Revolution abruptly reversed a strong pre-Revolutionary trend toward an English hierarchical model in the legal profession of New England, shifting it toward a model of the independent common lawyer of the nineteenth century. See also Gerard W. Gawalt, The Promise of Power: The Emergence of the Legal Profession in Massachusetts, 1760-1840, Contributions in Legal Studies, ed. Paul Murphy, no. 6 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979), chap. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Gawalt, Promise of Power, 14, 44-45; Daniel R. Coquillette, “Introduction,” in Law in Colonial Massachusetts, xxiv. Richard Scott Eckert also notes that the number of trained, full-time lawyers more than doubled from 1780 to 1786, most settling in rural towns and focusing on debt collection. Eckert, “Gentlemen of the Profession”, 483-485.

<sup>36</sup> On the economic and social status of lawyers and the legal profession in this period, see Jackson Turner Main, The Social Structure of Revolutionary America (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 101-102, 146-147, 203-205; and Eckert, “Gentlemen of the Profession”, chap. 10.

wholesalers and retailers rushed to collect a host of prewar and, mostly, postwar debts. Typical of the “chain of debt” was British importers calling for specie payment from New England wholesalers, who extended the demand to retailers, who in turn pressed consumers, mostly yeoman farmers and artisans, to meet their credit obligations.<sup>37</sup> The severe shortage of specie, and heavy poll and property taxes imposed by a conservative legislature, added to the economic dislocation already produced by the war, making payment difficult or impossible for the many debtors. The result, Hull accurately recalled, was that “lawsuits were multiplied beyond all former example.”<sup>38</sup> Lawyers became increasingly associated with debt collection and the defense of contract law, the foundation of economic and social order in a market-oriented society. Fears of foreclosures, debtors’ prison, and the high costs of avoiding them grew widespread. Not only debtors but also creditors worried about drawn-out litigation, which the court system encouraged and attorneys frequently promoted.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The postwar economic context and chain of debt is examined in David P. Szatmary, Shays’ Rebellion: The Making of an Agrarian Insurrection (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), chap. 2. Leonard L. Richards, Shays’s Rebellion: The American Revolution’s Final Battle (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 58-62, challenges the “chain of debt” as an adequate explanation for Shays’s Rebellion, but accepts its existence as far west as Worcester County. Hull had a clear conception of this chain. See Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 220. See also Jensen, The New Nation, 184-193; Charles P. Nettels, The Emergence of a National Economy, 1775-1815, Economic History of the United States Series, ed. Henry David et al., vol. 2 (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), chap. 3.

<sup>38</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 220. Richards, Shays’s Rebellion, 82-83, highlights the regressive nature of these taxes. Roger H. Brown, Redeeming the Republic: Federalists, Taxation, and the Origins of the Constitution (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), chap. 8, examines Confederation-era taxation in Massachusetts. Illustrative statistics on the disposition of taxes are in Richard B. Morris, The Forging of the Union, 1781-1789 (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 259. On the rise in the numbers of debt cases, see Van Beck Hall, Politics without Parties: Massachusetts, 1780-1791 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972), 192-193; Szatmary, Shays’ Rebellion, 29-31; Eckert, “Gentlemen of the Profession”, 472-474.

<sup>39</sup> Jonathan M. Chu, “Debt Litigation and Shays’s Rebellion,” in Robert A. Gross, ed., In Debt to Shays: The Bicentennial of an Agrarian Rebellion, vol. 65 of Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993), 81-99. This is a good examination of the complex relationship between debtor, creditor, and lawyer in post-Revolutionary Massachusetts. Chu

Not surprisingly the bar, along with the courts, was an easy target of public condemnation. Calls for the regulation and even abolition of lawyers became common. One editorialist complained that attorneys seemed “more numerous than locusts were formerly in Egypt and nearly as destructive.”<sup>40</sup> Even in law-abiding Newton, a group of citizens cited “the pernicious practice of many of our lawyers” as part of a dysfunctional and oppressive legal system.<sup>41</sup> Like the Cincinnati, then, lawyers as a group attracted both respect for their knowledge and skills and resentment for perceived abuses and profiteering. Together with merchants they made up most of the upper class of New England society, and vulnerable citizens increasingly denounced them as “the instruments of oppression,” unsympathetic, aristocratic exploiters of their hardship, and extortioners.<sup>42</sup>

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asserts that lawyers “grew fat off creditor and debtor alike” (p. 94). See also Eckert, “Gentlemen of the Profession”, 475-476. Gawalt, Promise of Power, 52, points out that attorneys represented more creditors than debtors because the latter “could not afford fees and did not perceive great benefits or security flowing from legal counsel.” More broadly, Bruce H. Mann, Republic of Debtors: Bankruptcy in the Age of American Independence (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), elucidates the culture and legal procedures of debt in eighteenth-century America.

<sup>40</sup> Massachusetts Centinel (Boston), 8 October 1785, quoted in Gawalt, Promise of Power, 52. The best-known example of contemporary criticisms and suggested reforms of the judicial system is the series of newspaper letters in the Independent Chronicle (Boston ) by “Honestus” [Benjamin Austin Jr.], pamphletized as Observations on the Pernicious Practice of the Law (Boston: Adams and Nourse, 1786). For a review of Austin’s writings and anti-lawyer sentiment, see Sidney Kaplan, “‘Honestus’ and the Annihilation of the Lawyers,” South Atlantic Quarterly 48 (July 1949): 401-420.

<sup>41</sup> “The Freeholders and other inhabitants of Newton, in town meeting assembled, to the Hon. Abraham Fuller,” May 1786, reprinted in Smith, History of Newton, 386-387. See also Eckert, “Gentlemen of the Profession”, 475-478, 485-488. Among these may have been Simon Jackson, son of Hull’s friend and former commander Michael Jackson, whose poor regard for lawyers had ripened by the end of the decade. “You judge too hardly of the Brother Lawyers,” replied Simon’s younger brother Charles, who had recently completed his legal education under Hull and now resided in Georgia. “If you know some who are knaves, I assure you, I know many who are very honest. . . . However it is certain that Knavish Lawyers too much abound in Massachusetts.” Charles Jackson to Simon Jackson, 11 April 1790, Jackson Family Papers II, carton 2, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

<sup>42</sup> Quote in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 221. See also Main, Social Structure of Revolutionary America, 113, 203-205; Szatmary, Shays’ Rebellion, 42-43. Greater regulation of lawyers was often included among the demands of the county petitions in 1786. That summer the conservative state senate killed a bill intended to do just that. Jackson Turner Main, Political Parties before the

Massachusetts society became increasingly divided between the fortunate few, the well-to-do concentrated around Boston and the other commercial centers along the coast, and the distressed many, particularly the western farmers.<sup>43</sup> Among the distressed were the vast majority of Revolutionary veterans, including most of the officers, who in dire financial straits had sold their Continental pay certificates for as little as a tenth of face value. Purchasing speculators, including some of the more affluent high-ranking officers, hoped for handsome profits. Massachusetts officers, observed Kaplan, were rapidly diverging into “a minority of haves and a majority of have-littles and have-nots.”<sup>44</sup> By 1786 their economic and policy interests had diverged and matters were quickly approaching a crisis.

Hull clearly numbered among the “haves”—the elite, advantaged few. His family connections, ready profession, and personal creditworthiness enabled him to avoid the cash crisis that forced so many less fortunate officers to part cheaply with their devalued promissory notes. Indeed, his sixty-five-acre purchase in April 1785 was paid in gold and silver coin amounting to £588.<sup>45</sup> It does not appear that he sought and amassed these

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Constitution (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Va., 1973), 115; Hall, Politics without Parties, 203.

<sup>43</sup> For analyses of issues and divisions in Massachusetts politics in this period, see Hall, Politics without Parties, chaps. 1-7; Main, Political Parties before the Constitution, chap. 4; Szatmary, Shays' Rebellion, chaps. 1-2. Hall posits a “commercial-cosmopolitan” continuum and identifies three major town groupings. Similarly, fellow cliometrician Main identifies the two major contending factions as Cosmopolitans, emanating from the eastern urban centers, and Localists, comprised mostly of farmers in the interior. The former represented the more educated, cultivated, and wealthy part of the population, while the latter were more isolated, parochial in perspective, and lacking in surplus wealth. Szatmary views the division as primarily between a rural, community-based tradition and an expanding market-oriented society.

<sup>44</sup> Kaplan, “Veteran Officers,” 44-47 (quote on 47); Richards, Shays's Rebellion, 111-113.

<sup>45</sup> William Hunt (estate administrator), Deed to William Hull, 6 April 1785, Miscellaneous Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

discounted securities, perhaps because he did not yet command sufficient capital to do so after his land purchase. However, his entrepreneurial impulses were alive and well, merely awaiting the means, and his economic activities increased in variety and scope over subsequent years as his income and credit rose. Indeed, ventures in land, securities, and commerce engaged him in various roles—as investor, attorney, commissioner, and lobbyist—over the next three decades. Like so many others, he was an ambitious young gentleman on the make, eager for wealth, reputation, and personal independence. The relationships formed in the course of the war, notably among fellow Freemasons and Cincinnati, placed him in circles where interest in both land and securities investments ran high. Long before disbandment, officers such as Knox, Lincoln, Putnam, and Benjamin Tupper were already considering various options and making ambitious plans.<sup>46</sup> And, as Bernard Bailyn has pointed out, “There was never a time in American history when land speculation had not been a major preoccupation of ambitious people.”<sup>47</sup>

Hull’s continuation in the army had prevented him from affixing his name to a memorial to Congress in June 1783, calling for a state-sized tract of western land to be set aside as payment to officers. That petition had died, but Virginia’s cession in 1784 of the territory north of the Ohio and Congress’s passage of the Land Ordinance of 1785,

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<sup>46</sup> All four of these were, like Hull, Freemasons and Cincinnati. (Kaplan, “Veteran Officers,” in particular has emphasized the close connection between Freemasonry, the Society of the Cincinnati, and land speculation, particularly that of the Ohio Company.) For an instance of Hull’s gathering information for Knox on a possible land purchase, see William Hull to Henry Knox, 29 August 1783, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 14:6; William Hull to Henry Knox, 10 September 1783, Misc. Mss. H, New-York Historical Society, New York.

<sup>47</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1988), 67. Pp. 65-86 of this work is a good discussion of the role of land speculation in colonial America.

authorizing the survey and sale of the land, prompted Putnam, Tupper (both surveyors) and others to form the famous Ohio Company of Associates in March 1786. This unincorporated, private joint-stock venture sought to promote both settlement and speculation by raising a fund of one million dollars in Continental certificates and veteran land bounties to purchase a tract of western land from the federal Congress.<sup>48</sup> At the inaugural meeting, attended by nearly eighteen hundred delegates of prospective settlers and investors, Hull was appointed to join fellow Cincinnati Winthrop Sargent and John Mills on an interim executive committee. (He was selected after Brooks declined, yet another of several instances in which Hull appeared as an understudy of sorts for Brooks.) The committee would coordinate communications, receive and handle certificates, and lobby for the company until a board of directors should be chosen at the next meeting scheduled for October.<sup>49</sup>

Before that time came, however, the social and economic division in Massachusetts threatened to undo the venture and the eventual insurgency named after Daniel Shays drew Hull back into uniform. In March 1786, the conservative General Court enacted the state's highest specie tax of the post-Revolutionary period and reinforced collection procedures. This and the Court's adamant opposition to paper money provoked new agitation and activism.irate and fearful citizens throughout the

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<sup>48</sup> Kaplan, "Veteran Officers," 33-34, 42-43; Henderson, Party Politics in the Continental Congress, 410; Archer Butler Hulbert, ed., The Records of the Original Proceedings of the Ohio Company, Ohio Company Series, vol. 1, Marietta College Historical Collections, vol. 1 (Marietta, Ohio: Marietta Historical Commission, 1917), 1-6; William Parker Cutler and Julia Perkins Cutler, Life, Journals and Correspondence of Rev. Manasseh Cutler, LL.D. By His Grandchildren, William Parker Cutler and Julia Perkins Cutler, 2 vols. (Cincinnati: R. Clarke & Co., 1888), 1:186.

<sup>49</sup> Hulbert, Proceedings of the Ohio Company, 11. Hull and Sargent had known each other well since the beginning of the Revolution. The two had joined the American Union Lodge together in early 1776. Plumb, History of American Union Lodge, 11, 81. Mills had served under Hull at the end of the war as a captain in the American Regiment at West Point.

state, particularly in the rural interior, launched a petition campaign and began calling public meetings to consider alternative strategies for getting their grievances redressed. The calling of extralegal conventions in the counties of Berkshire, Hampshire, Worcester, Bristol, and Hull's own Middlesex in the summer alarmed state conservatives.<sup>50</sup>

In July, the selectmen of Newton received an invitation from Captain John Nutting, chair of a committee from several towns in northwestern Middlesex County, to send delegates to a convention set to meet in Concord the following month.<sup>51</sup> Lying inland but closely connected with Boston by the Charles River, Newton numbered among the market-oriented communities identified by historian Jackson Turner Main as holding an intermediate position between commercial centers and the farms of the interior. "Culturally they afforded no great opportunities," Main observes, "but their location near urban centers and their economic prosperity assured them of stimulating connections with the outside world."<sup>52</sup> Many in Newton sympathized with farmers' grievances, but conservatives dominated its government. Indeed, Middlesex was a county culturally, economically, and ideologically divided, with Concord lying along a line separating its market-oriented southeastern towns from the rest. Borrowing Main's terminology, the

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<sup>50</sup> Brown, Redeeming the Republic, 102 (table 11), 108-111, 247-248 (appendix 1); Szatmary, Shays' Rebellion, 38-44, 53; Robert J. Taylor, Western Massachusetts in the Revolution (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1954), 128-141; William Pencak, "'The Fine Theoretic Government of Massachusetts is Prostrated to the Earth': The Response to Shays's Rebellion Reconsidered," in Gross, ed., In Debt to Shays, 127. Robert Feer argues that the discontent and rebellion were not the result merely of specie shortages, taxes, and debt, but these in combination with over-inflated Revolutionary expectations. Robert Arnold Feer, "Shays's Rebellion" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1958), 69. The development of a lower-class ideology for a "new moral economy," by which state governments would adopt policies that encouraged greater equality, is a focus of Ruth Bogin, "Petitioning and the New Moral Economy of Post-Revolutionary America," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 45 (1988): 391-425.

<sup>51</sup> Smith, History of Newton, 389; Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 221.

<sup>52</sup> Main, Political Parties before the Constitution, 85. According to Van Beck Hall's classification, Newton fell into the most "commercial-cosmopolitan" grouping of Massachusetts towns. See map in Hall, Politics without Parties, 10.

“Cosmopolitan” leadership of Newton refused to join the irregular proceedings promoted by their more isolated “Localist” counterparts.<sup>53</sup> They appointed Hull—probably for his military rank and reputation as well as his legal training, rhetorical skill, and political views—as head of a committee assigned to respond.<sup>54</sup>

In the resulting letter of August 21, Hull’s committee gave firm expression to the conservative position, conceding neither moral nor legal ground, upholding the primacy of law, order, and civic obligation, and chastising the convention organizers. Citing concerns that the “designs and intentions” of the proposed meeting “were not altogether coincident with constitutional government,” Hull affirmed the full legitimacy and adequacy of republican authority. He thus rejected the legitimacy of grievances over the public debt and taxes:

When we consider that we have voluntarily taken upon ourselves these burdens, that the debt we have contracted is the price of our freedom and independence, we feel ourselves bound by every principle of justice, every consideration of policy, and every tie of gratitude, honorably to discharge it.

On the payment of private debts, he took the offensive, affirming the established legal system in the process:

Is it a grievance to pay those debts we have voluntarily contracted, and for which we have received a valuable consideration? Is it a grievance for a man, after having had the use of his neighbor’s property, to return it to him? Is it a grievance that the fruits of a man’s industry and labor are secured to him by the laws of the community? Is it a grievance that the idle and profligate are not permitted to riot on the hard-earned property of the frugal and industrious? Is it a grievance that the courts of justice are open to all ranks and classes of people? Is it a grievance that the widow and orphan, the aged and infirm can recover their rights against those who are dishonest and overbearing? . . . If these are grievances, the mildest

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<sup>53</sup> Main, Political Parties before the Constitution, 92. Feer, “Shays’s Rebellion,” 519, also notes that “the western part of the county, further from Boston and in worse economic straits, produced more insurgents.”

<sup>54</sup> Smith, History of Newton, 390.



government that ever secured to a people its political rights is tyranny and oppression.

Hull reiterated the impropriety of an irregular convention that, he stated, “will have a tendency to create dissension and weaken our government.” He urged the disaffected instead to “pursue [their] several employments, to practise the duties of frugality and economy, and support the government under which we live.” In doing so, “we shall convince the world that mankind have wisdom and virtue sufficient to govern themselves.” By contrast, he warned, if “we are tumultuous and factious, . . . we have reason to fear that anarchy and disorder will be the inevitable consequence; . . . and that it will finally end in tyranny and oppression.”<sup>55</sup>

The letter persuaded no one. The Concord convention went on as planned and resulted in a decision to stop the upcoming session of the Middlesex Court of Common Pleas in order to prevent continued foreclosures. In the following days and weeks insurgent “Regulators” forcibly shut down courts in Berkshire, Hampshire, and Worcester counties, incensing conservatives.

In this crisis, Governor James Bowdoin, who had presided over the convention that produced the state constitution of 1780, summoned a private and informal council of

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<sup>55</sup> [The town of Newton] to Captain John Nutting, Chairman of a Committee from the several towns of Groton, Pepperell, Shirley, Townsend and Ashby, 21 August 1786, reprinted in Smith, History of Newton, 390-392. The advice to “practise the duties of frugality and economy” reflected the common eighteenth-century view that persistent poverty and debt defaults were not systemic matters but the result of laziness, overindulgence, or vice—moral failure—and therefore properly remedied by greater personal virtue—patience, temperance, thrift, and industry. Mann, Republic of Debtors, 2-3, 37-40. Hull did not engage the question of democratic legitimacy of the state constitution of 1780. Paul Goodman, for example, claims the constitution “was neither a conservative, liberal, nor class document but rather represented a community consensus.” By contrast, Leonard L. Richards argues that rural westerners never gave real consent to the constitution that “undoubtedly consolidated power in the hands of the mercantile elite and the eastern part of the state.” Paul Goodman, The Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts: Politics in a Young Republic (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 4; Richards, Shays’s Rebellion, 71-74 (quote on 74). Cambridge rejected the invitation also on the grounds that conventions were justified only when “no constitutional means of redress remains.” Feer, “Shays’s Rebellion,” 91.

several prominent “gentlemen” to consider a course of action for Middlesex. (Most in his regular council were out of town and the legislature was not in session.) Hull was among several invited to consult with the ad hoc group on local conditions, along with John Brooks, now major general of the Middlesex militia. Brooks could offer no assurances about the numbers or reliability of men who would turn out in these circumstances, and so the advisors favored calling out militia from other eastern counties to assist him in protecting the county court. Fearing a violent clash, however, Concord officials rushed to Boston to urge conciliation. Bowdoin, also wishing to avoid bloodshed and uncertain of the outcome, rescinded the order for troops and agreed to call a convention of Middlesex town delegations in Concord on the court’s opening day to give them a hearing.<sup>56</sup> The decision probably did prevent violence but did not achieve the broader objective.

Hull was on the scene for the extraordinary events of September 12. The usual court-day population of justices, lawyers, plaintiffs, defendants, and witnesses was further swelled by the delegates from two-dozen towns convening at the town meetinghouse for the announced government hearing. That morning, under a downpour, a body of over a hundred insurgents led by Captain Job Shattuck of Groton stormed into town, seized the courthouse, surrounded the meetinghouse, and jailed the government’s agents, demanding the cancellation of the court sessions. At the town common, Captain Nathan Smith of Shirley threatened the wrath of God against townspeople who failed to support the insurrection within two hours. Hull and other attorneys and “gentlemen” were at the hotel with the judges, preparing to make their way to the courthouse when an

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<sup>56</sup> Campbell and Clarke, *Revolutionary Services*, 222-223; Feer, “Shays’s Rebellion,” 195-204; Richards, *Shays’s Rebellion*, 9-11; Szatmary, *Shays’ Rebellion*, 79-80; Hall, *Politics without Parties*, 212-213.

armed band confronted and confined them. That afternoon about a hundred Regulator reinforcements arrived from Worcester County, some of who had blocked the courts there a week earlier. In this emergency, the “neutral” conventioners appointed mediators to help bring an end to the standoff. The reluctant but powerless justices agreed to declare the court adjourned until November and then left town. The following morning the successful Regulators released their captives and departed.<sup>57</sup>

This brazen, lawless affair only reinforced Hull’s antipathy toward the Regulation movement. He was no stranger to a divided citizenry; his wartime experience, most notably in Westchester, had shown him the dreadful consequences of a breakdown in the rule of law, not merely for the well being of private property, credit, and commerce but also for societal cohesion, personal security, and liberty. Along with the other members of the commercial and professional elite, he saw this attack and other forced court closings not as rational, limited measures for removing longstanding economic and social injustices, but rather, in Knox’s words, a “formidable rebellion against reason, the principle of all government.” It was the beginning of a broad assault on ordered society itself, which could only produce chaos and destruction, and ultimately lead to despotism. The insurrection was clearly in Hull’s mind a serious threat to republicanism and to the Revolution, and so to his own identity and interests.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 223-224; Feer, “Shays’s Rebellion,” 204-207; Richards, Shays’s Rebellion, 11-12. On Nathan Smith, see Robert A. Gross, “The Confidence Man and the Preacher: The Cultural Politics of Shays’s Rebellion,” in Gross, ed., In Debt to Shays, 298.

<sup>58</sup> Henry Knox to George Washington, 23 October 1786, quoted in Szatmary, Shays’ Rebellion, 71. The ideology and reactions of the conservatives are developed in Szatmary, Shays’ Rebellion, chap. 5. Van Beck Hall and Robert Feer have argued that the conservatives misjudged the Regulators’ intentions, which were not radical. Hall, Politics without Parties, 210-211; Feer, “Shays’s Rebellion,” 103, 130-133. For an interesting analysis of opposing contemporary interpretations of the Regulator movement, see Michael Lienesch, “Reinterpreting Rebellion: The Influence of Shays’s Rebellion on American Political Thought,” in Gross, ed., In Debt to Shays, 161-184. It is doubtful that Hull, or most others for that matter,

His views squared not only with the Newton fathers and the mercantile interests but also with the leading Massachusetts Cincinnati. The officers' fraternity had lain low for two years after the controversy surrounding its formation, but the swelling crisis that would become known as Shays's Rebellion now coaxed it back into the public eye and ultimately earned it unexpected favor among anxious commercial elites in the state, healing much of the breach in conservatism. Already at the Society's annual meeting in July, attendees had spoken out against "the enemies of *public faith, public honor, and public justice.*"<sup>59</sup> Now with the Regulator court closings, Society leaders called an emergency session, again in Boston. The outcome of the October meeting was significant but not surprising. Hull joined a committee of Knox, Lincoln, Brooks, Henry Jackson, William Eustis, and Joseph Crocker in drafting a memorial to the General Court expressing "abhorrence" at the recent disturbances. The petition demanded that "public faith and private credit" be fully upheld and pledged support to the government "by every means and every exertion in [the members'] power."<sup>60</sup> Whether more motivated by self-interest as creditors, speculators, and commercial men, as Progressive and New Left histories have contended, or on principle, as most nineteenth- and still several twentieth-century interpretations maintained, former Continental officers were again ready to take

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seriously believed that the Regulation leaders plotted economic and social leveling and an end to private property, such as reported to Washington by David Humphreys and Henry Knox, though Hull perhaps believed the movement would tend toward that effect. Szatmary, Shays' Rebellion, 72; Richards, Shays's Rebellion, 2, 129-130.

<sup>59</sup> Independent Chronicle, 6 July 1786, quoted in Kaplan, "Veteran Officers," 48.

<sup>60</sup> Szatmary, Shays' Rebellion, 87; Kaplan, "Veteran Officers," 49-50 (quote on 50). On October 11, the day of the Society meeting, Lincoln issued a letter to "the Officers of the Massachusetts line" that decried the Regulator actions against the courts. The attacks, he warned, "have a tendency to . . . render totally futile the most implicit and absolute principles of government." Quoted in Szatmary, Shays' Rebellion, 71.

up arms in defense of the government and society they believed to be best.<sup>61</sup> The irony of ex-rebels now standing as bastions of law and order is frequently observed and continues to fascinate. The question of home rule may have been settled; that of who should rule at home, and to what ends, had not.

The Regulator crisis interrupted much of Hull's litigation activity—which included a collection suit for his cousin Mark Leavenworth, Jr., now a Connecticut lawyer—but it did not bring all of Hull's regular business to a halt.<sup>62</sup> Continuing as Ohio Company commissioner beyond the date originally set, he solicited advice from Washington, now busy trying to sell his own Ohio lands, on the company's planned settlement. Presuming the general's "perfect Knowledge of that Country, and . . . a Disposition to oblige" his war companions, Hull requested particular information about transport to the region and the availability of cattle and supplies there. "Any general Hints," he added, "will be very gratefully received by those who feel the strongest Affection to your Person."<sup>63</sup> Washington responded graciously. Admitting his own knowledge to be "more general, than particular," he assigned his agent to collect information in Pittsburgh, and in late December reported the helpful findings to Hull.

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<sup>61</sup> This dichotomy is, of course, overly simplistic and limiting, as perhaps best illustrated by the excellent collection of essays in Gross, ed., *In Debt to Shays*. Nevertheless, the debate over the motives of the opponents of the Regulator movement in Massachusetts remains active, as exemplified in the same volume by the essays of Joseph A. Ernst and Stephen E. Patterson for the "interest" view, and Richard Buel Jr. and William Pencak for the "principle" view. Kaplan, "Veteran Officers," 48-50, assumes a strongly Beardian interpretation for the motives of the Cincinnati. Brief historiographical overviews of the rebellion may be found in Szatmary, *Shays' Rebellion*, xi-xiv, and Pencak's essay above, 121-124. Most recently, Richards, *Shays's Rebellion*, strongly emphasizes "interest" motives.

<sup>62</sup> Mark Leavenworth [Jr.] to William Hull, 22 August 1786, William Hull Correspondence, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.; Henry P. Johnston, *Yale and Her Honor-Roll in the American Revolution, 1775-1783* (New York: privately printed, 1888), 274.

<sup>63</sup> William Hull to George Washington, 25 October 1786, in Abbot et al., *Papers of George Washington: Confederation Series*, 4:305-306.

But further action on that matter would have to wait until the immediate conflict was resolved.<sup>64</sup>

As winter set in, Regulator protest escalated toward armed confrontation. Late in October the General Court, in which Hull's father-in-law held a seat, began passing severe anti-insurgency laws, including a new Riot Act, a suspension of *habeas corpus*, and a sedition law, but also passed bills providing some limited debtor relief. Knox, as the Confederation's Secretary at War, publicized his alarmist version of the rebellion throughout the nation and secured a congressional requisition for an enlarged army to deal with the rebels. The Court's strict legislation and two state-sponsored raids, however, merely validated radical conspiracy and corruption theories—reminiscent of pre-Revolutionary days—and provoked more determined opposition. Although another planned demonstration against the Middlesex courts faltered, other court closings continued and more extremist “Shaysites” began organizing. Meanwhile the Confederation's lack of funds hamstrung recruitment for the authorized army, in which Hull had been selected and had agreed to serve as first major under Henry Jackson.<sup>65</sup> By January the increased militancy of the Shaysites and the demonstrated impotency of the national government moved Governor Bowdoin and General Lincoln to take matters into

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<sup>64</sup> George Washington to William Hull, 20 November and 29 December 1786, in Abbot et al., Papers of George Washington: Confederation Series, 4:307n, 488-490.

<sup>65</sup> Richards Shays's Rebellion, 15-22; Feer, “Shays's Rebellion,” 253, 273-274; Taylor, Western Massachusetts, 150-159; Henderson, Party Politics in the Continental Congress, 400-401; Brown, Redeeming the Republic, 117-118; Henry Jackson to Henry Knox, 19 November 1786, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 19. Hull afterward explained that he was willing to accept a lower rank than what he had held in the Continental Army since his relative position—second officer of the Massachusetts regiment—was preserved. “The mere whistling of a Name did not influence me,” he claimed. William Hull to Henry Knox, 4 March 1787, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 20:12.

their own hands.<sup>66</sup> Lincoln, Knox, and others directly appealed to Boston's wealthiest to help fund a large militia force, warning of imminent disaster if the rebel army gained momentum. Within a few days coastal merchants and professionals provided ample specie loans. In Newton, the town meeting of January 16 voted a bounty of twenty shillings for every man who would enlist in the government force being raised, and on January 21 Lincoln led five divisions toward Worcester, determined to defend the court there and crush the agrarian rebellion throughout the state.<sup>67</sup>

Hull jumped in with Lincoln and several others in his elite circle of former Continental officers—also Cincinnati, Masonic, and speculator associates—in commanding the state troops.<sup>68</sup> These self-styled “defenders of the Revolution” would confront a rebel force whose own leadership included some former though generally lower-ranking Continental officers. Captain Daniel Shays, with whom the insurrection became identified, had served, like Hull, both at Saratoga (under Rufus Putnam's command) and in the capture of Stony Point. Luke and Elijah Day were Cincinnati, though afterwards stripped of their membership. All three men were Freemasons.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Lincoln had expressed his view of the matter to Washington a month earlier. He simply attributed the “present commotion” to the insurgents’ “want of industry, œconomy, and common honesty.” Quoted in Feer, “Shays’s Rebellion,” 352.

<sup>67</sup> Szatmary, Shays’ Rebellion, 82-98; Taylor, Western Massachusetts, 159; Hall, Politics without Parties, 220-222; Jackson, History of Newton, 213. The connection between pre-Revolutionary and Regulator rhetoric is noted in John L. Brooke, “To the Quiet of the People: Revolutionary Settlements and Civil Unrest in Western Massachusetts, 1774-1789,” William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 46 (1989): 426-427. Szatmary contended that it was Lincoln’s expedition that turned what had been fundamentally a movement for reform into an outright rebellion against the Massachusetts government, while William Pencak saw continuity with the insurgents’ earlier illegal and anti-governmental action. Pencak, “Fine Theoretic Government,” in Gross, ed., In Debt to Shays, 124-129.

<sup>68</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 225; Kaplan, “Veteran Officers,” 51-52; Szatmary, Shays’ Rebellion, 86-87.

<sup>69</sup> Peter S. Onuf, “Shays, Daniel,” in American National Biography, ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, 24 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Kaplan, “Veteran Officers,” 51-52; Robert A. Gross, “The Uninvited Guest: Daniel Shays and the Constitution,” in Gross, ed., In Debt to Shays, 1;

Shays himself had attended the grand St. John's Day celebration that Hull had addressed in 1779.<sup>70</sup>

The rebel advance on January 25 toward the federal arsenal at Springfield—home of the Day brothers—set the state army in motion. The small force there under General William Shepard fired on the rebels, killing four and dispersing the rest. Lincoln immediately ordered his troops in Worcester to the march when he received word of the event. With Hull commanding the left wing and Putnam the right, the government force of three thousand rushed to Springfield, then pursued the withdrawing insurgent force of fewer than two thousand northward to Amherst, Hadley, and Shays's hometown of Pelham.<sup>71</sup> Lincoln dispatched Hull back to Worcester to raise two more regiments for immediate reinforcement. But after meeting with both Brooks and Bowdoin, Hull had to notify Lincoln that the disposition of the country was such that the requisite number of troops was not available. (Such indeed was the general popularity of the government campaign.) Hull more happily reported, however, that the General Court had authorized the governor to use any means necessary to quell the rebellion. "The General Court & the Friends to Government in every quarter appear now to be fully impressed with the

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Richards, Shays's Rebellion, 44-48; John L. Brooke, "A Deacon's Orthodoxy: Religion, Class, and the Moral Economy of Shays's Rebellion," in Gross, ed., In Debt to Shays, 209. The Revolution, of course, had also deeply divided Freemasons, who became both patriots and Loyalists. See Steven C. Bullock, Revolutionary Brotherhood, chap. 4.

<sup>70</sup> Records of American Union Lodge Secretary [Thomas Grosvenor], 24 June 1779, reprinted in Plumb, History of American Union Lodge, 46. See p. 51 above.

<sup>71</sup> Szatmary, Shays' Rebellion, 91, 102-114; Richards, Shays's Rebellion, 28-30; Taylor, Western Massachusetts, 159-161; Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 226-227.



necessity of radically curing the Disorders of the Commonwealth, and they are fully persuaded you will effect it.”<sup>72</sup>

Lincoln had already begun. Having ordered a thirty-mile, overnight trek through wind, snow, and ice, he took the Shaysites by surprise at Petersham on the morning of February 4. The rebels instantly scattered and many hundreds fled the state. Although the bloodiest encounter of the Rebellion would occur three weeks later in the western town of Sheffield, and “social banditry” against western merchants, lawyers, government officials and troops would persist through the next few months, any real threat to the state government was now over.<sup>73</sup>

The General Court was taking no chances and quickly set out to establish a more fixed and permanent volunteer command force, a “standing militia” of sorts. This creation produced a momentary crisis of honor for Hull, for he was furious to discover that the state House of Representatives had ranked Major William North ahead of him. It was all the more surprising because the Court had so recently appointed Hull to the second position—just below Jackson and immediately ahead of North—in Massachusetts’ regiment in the abortive federal army.<sup>74</sup> In early March Hull informed Knox in New York that if any new system of rank were adopted that deprived him of his rightful position, he could not honorably continue in the service. “However some may

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<sup>72</sup> William Hull to Benjamin Lincoln, 5 February 1787, James Freeman Clarke Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, bMS Am 1569.7 (382).

<sup>73</sup> Szatmary, *Shays’ Rebellion*, 102-114; Taylor, *Western Massachusetts*, 161-164. The earliest published account of the rebellion, written from a conservative’s viewpoint, is George Richards Minot, *The History of the Insurrections in Massachusetts in the Year MDCCLXXXVI, and the Rebellion Consequent Thereon* (Worcester, Mass.: Isaiah Thomas, 1788).

<sup>74</sup> Henry Jackson to Henry Knox, 19 November 1786, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 19.

wish to consign to Oblivion the past Situation & services of the Army, they are so deeply impressed on my Mind, that it is impossible for me to erase them,” he wrote. Any new ranking that disregarded past ones would do “very great Injustice.” His “military Existence” now hung in the balance.<sup>75</sup>

Jackson, a close friend of both Hull and Knox, understood that Hull was not merely posturing and hoped Knox would intervene in Hull’s favor. The previous fall, while recruiting for the federal army, the colonel had forewarned Knox that North, also a trusted intimate of Knox’s, believed he would outrank Hull in the Massachusetts line. Jackson had protested that “he cannot upon any principle, & he must not upon every principle.”<sup>76</sup> Now Jackson informed Knox: “I shall certainly loose [sic] him [Hull] . . . if from any cause he is not consider’d as stand[in]g next to me—he will not dispute the point with any one—nor could I ask him.” Losing Hull, Jackson added, would be “a Fatal stab to the Regiment.”<sup>77</sup>

Knox, it appears, had already responded to Hull before he received Jackson’s letter. The dispute presented him with the unpleasant prospect of choosing between

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<sup>75</sup> William Hull to Henry Knox, 4 March 1787, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 20:12. Conflict over rank, and therefore honor, remained a common feature among former Continental officers in this period. Feer, “Shays’s Rebellion,” 275-276. In light of his later fate at Detroit, Hull might have wished for a different outcome here.

<sup>76</sup> Henry Jackson to Henry Knox, 19 November 1786, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 19. Historian Robert A. East suggests that North was Knox’s witting or unwitting agent in a campaign to use the Regulation crisis to strengthen a conservative constitutional movement. Robert A. East, “The Massachusetts Conservatives in the Critical Period,” in The Era of the American Revolution, ed. Richard B. Morris (New York: Harper & Row, 1939), 380-386.

<sup>77</sup> Henry Jackson to Henry Knox, 18 March 1787, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 20:24. Underscoring in original. “It is without a doubt,” Jackson added, “that the Governor & Council would not have appointed anyone in that grade that might interfere in the least with his ranking next to me.” Unfortunately for Hull, Knox’s confidence in Jackson may have diminished through the army fiasco, and North may have replaced him as Knox’s most trusted agent. See the discussion of Jackson by Feer, “Shays’s Rebellion,” 271-280, also 303.

friends and professional allies. Not only that, he told Jackson, but also he felt his present situation—as Secretary at War for an enfeebled Confederation—to be “peculiarly delicate.”<sup>78</sup> In this uncomfortable situation, he resorted to simply denying any authority in the matter. “It appears plainly to be a decision resting with the State of Massachusetts,” he explained to Hull, reminding him that regardless of his past Continental service and rank, the states retained the full rights of arranging their own forces. Knox did not offer to exert any personal influence on Hull’s behalf. Instead, while expressing “real satisfaction” at Hull’s appointment in the new corps, his sympathies seemed to lean toward North. “I should be extremely sorry, were any arrangement to deprive the service of Major North for whom I have the most [solid?] esteem, and who is an excellent officer.”<sup>79</sup> In light of his own threat to resign the service, Hull could hardly have read this without chagrin. Knox enclosed the letter in another to Jackson, telling him to read, seal, and give it to Hull. To further shield himself from responsibility, Knox added, “I am of the opinion that a certificate under the hand and seal of the Governor, and Secretary will be necessary . . . certifying that they [Hull and North] are to rank accordingly.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Henry Knox to Henry Jackson, 18 March 1787, in Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, vol. 62 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1930), 139.

<sup>79</sup> Henry Knox to William Hull (draft), 17 March 1787, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 20:23. North, former aide-de-camp to Baron von Steuben, had succeeded Steuben as the American army’s inspector general in 1784. Harry M. Ward, George Washington’s Enforcers: Policing the Continental Army (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006), 58.

<sup>80</sup> Henry Knox to Henry Jackson, 18 March 1787, in Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 62:139. Whether the letter actually reached Hull is not certain. There is no record of any response to it, and Hull’s friendship with Knox appears to have remained intact. It is perhaps interesting to note that a quarter century later, as Hull awaited his trial for the surrender of Detroit, North composed a letter strongly defending Hull against the charges of treason and cowardice. See William North to Major Jackson, 20 February 1813, Gilder Lehrman Collection, GLC 2542.20, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York.

There is no evidence of a response from Hull to Knox on the matter, or of lasting damage to their friendship, but it seems unlikely that such a snub would not have rankled. Any embarrassment or resentment on Hull's part, however, quickly subsided when the General Court more than compensated by naming him a brigadier general in the Massachusetts militia, a rank he held until his further promotion to major general in 1796.<sup>81</sup> The esteemed title of "General" now attached to Hull's name and became the one he preferred throughout his life.

The Regulation and insurrection in Massachusetts had drawn the close attention of elites in the other states where similar turmoil was stirring, and had intensified the worries of conservatives and nationalists. The most familiar result of this was to focus much greater attention and hopes on the upcoming national convention in Philadelphia, officially called merely to discuss revisions to the Articles of Confederation. The Annapolis Convention in September 1786 had faltered, but events had since reached a point where many more leading figures were now prepared to "form a more perfect Union" in order to "insure domestic tranquility" and "promote the general welfare" over what James Madison of Virginia deemed a "spirit of *locality*."<sup>82</sup> The Massachusetts crisis had showcased the federal government's impotence, deeply disturbing men like Hull with strong national sentiments born of long Revolutionary service and cosmopolitan interests,

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<sup>81</sup> [William Hull,] Draft outline of his life and career, 2 December 1812, Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; Alexander Shepard to General William Hull, 12 November 1787, William Hull Correspondence, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.

<sup>82</sup> U.S. Constitution, preamble; Madison quote in Gordon S. Wood, The American Revolution: A History (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 141.

and convincing many men of wealth of the need to more effectively secure property and republican liberty.<sup>83</sup>

The government victory over the Shaysites enabled both the Ohio Company and the Society of the Cincinnati to resume their activities with greater confidence. On March 8, 1787, the Ohio Associates met in Boston to select a board of directors—five months later than originally planned. All but one of the directors, the Reverend Manasseh Cutler, were Cincinnati. The establishment of the board relieved Hull, who had neither interest nor proper circumstances to remove to Ohio, of further responsibility to the company. The first settlers, led by Rufus Putnam, headed out for their new land by the end of the year.<sup>84</sup> In April, the Massachusetts Cincinnati also convened again, now basking in the unfamiliar glow of public (or, more correctly, conservatives’) approval. The prominent role played by members in quashing the rebellion had significantly improved the Society’s reputation among the majority of the shaken Massachusetts elite, such that Knox would write Washington that “the clamor and prejudice which existed against it are no more. . . . The men who have been most against it say that the Society is the only bar to lawless ambition and dreadful anarchy.”<sup>85</sup> Although a few members—Tupper, for one—vented monarchical notions within this newfound confidence, there is no evidence to support a suggestion that Hull, devoutly republican, held any such

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<sup>83</sup> The relationship between Shays’s Rebellion and the Constitution is the subject of Szatmary, Shays’ Rebellion, chap. 7, and Richards, Shays’s Rebellion, 125-138.

<sup>84</sup> Kaplan, “Veteran Officers,” 56-57. Speculators, not settlers, held more than a two-thirds majority of the 817 shares in the company. Shaw Livermore, Early American Land Companies: Their Influence on Corporate Development (The Commonwealth Fund, 1939; reprint, New York: Octagon Books, 1968), 137-138.

<sup>85</sup> Henry Knox to George Washington, 19 March 1787, quoted in Kaplan, “Veteran Officers,” 54.

sympathies.<sup>86</sup> The Society established a standing committee of thirteen to conduct monthly business, and at their traditional Fourth of July celebration in Boston they approved a revival of hereditary membership. The few outside grumbles this produced were now easily ignored.<sup>87</sup> For Hull the establishment of primogeniture held greater meaning than before: his first and only son had been born a year earlier.

Hull had returned home from the Shays campaign to resume his law practice, satisfied that he had helped to preserve lawful order, public faith, republican government, and, no doubt, his own opportunities. They were not long in coming. By April he was serving as a justice of the peace for Middlesex County, and the respectful title of “Esquire” now also attached to his name.<sup>88</sup> He discovered, however, that moderate citizens had grown increasingly displeased with the repressive measures adopted by the governor and General Court. The government’s hard-line position produced an electoral backlash in the spring. Voters decisively returned John Hancock over Bowdoin as governor, and kept only 77 of 203 incumbents of the Court that had suspended the writ of *habeas corpus* (in violation of the state constitution, many believed), declared the insurgents in a state of rebellion, disqualified Shaysites from holding public office, and

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<sup>86</sup> Kaplan, “Veteran Officers,” 54-55; Minor Myers Jr., Liberty without Anarchy: A History of the Society of the Cincinnati (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983), 102. Myers includes Hull as probably among a few Cincinnati who “supported monarchy in the late 1780s.”

<sup>87</sup> Institution and Proceedings of the Society of the Cincinnati, 61; Kaplan, “Veteran Officers,” 54. Seven of the other state societies also reverted to the original Institution, while three had never accepted the amendments. Saunders, “Origin and Early History of the Society of the Cincinnati,” 169-182; Hume, “Early Opposition to the Cincinnati,” 621-622.

<sup>88</sup> Justice of the Peace William Hull to the Sheriff of Middlesex County, Writ for the seizure of property or person of David Fisk of Lincoln, 6 April 1787, William Hull Correspondence, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass. (This document does not appear in the Society’s printed index list.); Alexander Shepard Jr. to William Hull, 23 May 1787, William Hull Correspondence, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.

authorized continued military suppression.<sup>89</sup> In Newton the sour mood expressed itself in the surprising election of Edward Fuller, a Revolutionary militia captain who had spoken out in sympathy for the insurgents, to the state house of representatives. The vote ousted Hull's father-in-law Judge Abraham Fuller and dismayed Newton's conservative leaders who, when the result was announced at the town meeting, quickly moved that a committee be formed to provide instructions for Captain Fuller. Being common practice, the motion easily passed, and Hull was chosen to draw up the instructions.<sup>90</sup> The document he submitted in May was long and, like his earlier committee letter, thoroughly conservative in its views. Addressed to Captain Fuller, Hull's letter was also clearly intended to "educate" the citizens who had put him in office. As an exposition both of Hull's interpretation of the recent events, and of his political and economic orientation in this period, it merits some review.<sup>91</sup>

Hull's opening comments revealed the conservatives' worry over Captain Fuller's politics. Absent was an affirmation of "utmost confidence" that Judge Abraham Fuller's instructions had contained a year earlier.<sup>92</sup> Rather, Hull wrote, "we think it our duty to furnish you with every information in our power for the regulation of your conduct."

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<sup>89</sup> Hall, Politics without Parties, 227, 229-235, 246; Szatmary, Shays' Rebellion, 106; Richards, Shays's Rebellion, 33-38; Brown, Redeeming the Republic, 118-119. In Middlesex County, voter turnout tripled over the previous year's elections, slightly exceeding the state's overall average increase. Many western towns sent delegates for the first time, increasing their percentage of representation in the legislature. Hall, Politics without Parties, 237-238, 246.

<sup>90</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 228-229; Smith, History of Newton, 386.

<sup>91</sup> "Instructions to Captain Edward Fuller, Representative for the Town of Newton," 18 March [May] 1787, reprinted in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 229-239. Except as noted, the following seven paragraphs are drawn from this document. The date of the letter was mistakenly transcribed. Elections were held in April, and the letter itself mentions the "Federal Convention, now sitting in Philadelphia." The convention opened May 14.

<sup>92</sup> "The Freeholders and other inhabitants of Newton, in town meeting assembled, to the Hon. Abraham Fuller," May 1786, reprinted in Smith, History of Newton, 386.

Reminding the new representative “that the office of legislation is an elevated trust,” Hull warned him against “the influence of passion, of private interest, or party views.” The statement thus reflected a common feature of political thought in the early national period: that party spirit—as opposed to public-minded virtue—was an affliction of one’s opponent, never of oneself.

Hull addressed the major issues on which the upcoming legislature was expected to decide: the continuing rebellion, paper money, public securities, the Philadelphia Convention, and taxes and expenditures. First, regarding the General Court’s decisive and divisive measures against the “late unnatural and unprovoked rebellion,” Hull unequivocally pronounced them to have been “necessary to the salvation of the country.” Indeed, he argued, the matter was not yet finished. “The energetic arm must fall on the untamed spirit, or it will be found that the interests of the best members of the community will fall a sacrifice to the lawless views of the worst.” He acknowledged the economic sufferings and grievances of many citizens in recent years. “But deplorable as their condition was, they lived under a government of their own choice, and should have considered, that violent and unlawful measures would only recoil on themselves.” In this situation, Hull declared, “the virtue of the higher classes preserved the State, perhaps the Union.” Had the insurgent spirit been “sustained by men of talents, influence, and military experience, [it] would have produced incalculable misery.” Nevertheless, “mercy was construed to be weakness,” and insurrection spread. Military force became “the only alternative.” But now, despite the restoration of order and good faith, the spirit of rebellion was still roaming the land, and “must be subdued.” And so Hull came to his first charge to Captain Fuller: “The measures [against rebellion] adopted by the last



Legislature, have met our highest approbation; and we expect that you will exert your influence to secure their permanency, so long as the necessity exists.”

Second and equally uncompromising was Hull’s position against any authorization of paper money. Such a policy, he warned, would be “political empiricism, founded in fraud, which would involve individuals in ruin, and eventually beggar our country.”<sup>93</sup> To bring Captain Fuller and his supporters along, Hull reviewed liberal economic theory and the nature of money and credit. Taking a page from Adam Smith, he explained that precious metals “resemble a fluid, ever striving for equilibrium” so that “money cannot long, in any place, be too plenty or too scarce.” The present economic evils, therefore, “must work their own cure. Patience and industry, united to honour and integrity in our dealings, are the only remedies to be applied.” Paper tender, by substituting for specie, would only prevent specie from coming in, leaving the country impoverished and defenseless in a time of emergency such as a foreign invasion. In such a case, Hull stated, “we should find ourselves poor and wretched in the extreme, without supplies, without money, and without credit.”

Not only on practical grounds was paper unacceptable, but on principle as well. For Hull and the conservatives the rights of property and the sanctity of contracts, grounded in natural law by Enlightenment thinkers, were absolute. The use of a paper medium to discharge debts would infringe both, and any act authorizing it would be “a violation of delegated trust.” “It is therefore our most serious opinion,” he declared, “that whenever legislators attempt to take away or destroy private property, allegiance is no

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<sup>93</sup> Reviewing this comment a century later, during the great national monetary controversy of the 1890s, Hull’s grandson and Cincinnati heir remarked that his grandfather’s observation on paper currency was “as true in 1892 as it was in 1792.” Samuel C. Clarke, Memoir of Gen. William Hull, 13.

longer a virtue, and the people are again thrown upon their natural and reserved rights.” There is some irony here. In Hull’s critique of the insurgency, democracy legitimized government and thus removed the right of rebellion. Now, he suggested, democratic government that interfered with the pre-existing, “natural” rights of property de-legitimized itself and permitted, even demanded, disobedience. Having thus asserted this Lockean right of rebellion and the superiority of property over democratic law, he openly portrayed the current conflict as a class struggle. He expressed regret over this and the threat it posed to republican government and civil society:

Our present convulsed state of society takes its rise from a principle of opposition between debtors and creditors; between the rich and the poor: a source from whence has arisen most of those civil wars, which, after having drenched in blood a greater part of the ancient and many of the modern republics, have occasioned the ruin of them all.

Equating the creditor interest with the ultimate good of the whole, Hull issued his second injunction to Fuller: to oppose any legal tender laws, “and all others interfering with private engagements.”

Third, Hull solemnly entreated Fuller to oppose any legislation that would “stamp a depreciation on the public securities” and so “defraud those who, in a day of public distress, advanced their property and devoted their lives to the service of their country.” As Hull, the officer elites, and commercial conservatives argued, the matter was one of justice, public gratitude, and even national security:

Let the thought never find utterance, that we are members of a community, where ingratitude is countenanced by authority; where injustice is sustained by law. . . . The safety of our country may again call for public credit and public services; it is therefore important that the laws be enacted, to secure confidence in the faith of our Government.

Those laws should reflect a guiding rule for individuals, communities, and nations: “Debt ought never to be cancelled until fully paid.”

Next Hull turned to the federal convention meeting in Philadelphia, noting that the General Court would likely have to consider its proposals. Shays’s Rebellion and now the unfavorable elections had converted many more state conservatives into advocates of stronger national government.<sup>94</sup> For Hull, of course, no conversion was needed. His service and relations in the Continental Army—“the most cosmopolitan of eighteenth-century American institutions,” as Andrew R. L. Cayton has remarked—had long since instilled in him a national orientation.<sup>95</sup> He viewed the Philadelphia meeting and its purpose as not only legitimate and helpful, but crucial. “Experience has taught that the powers of the present confederacy are inadequate to the great objects of its institution,” he asserted. Expressing full confidence in the “august assembly” composed of “firm patriots” and including “the illustrious Washington,” Hull gave his fourth unwavering directive: “Should this body present to the Legislature, as we doubt not they will, a system which promises a firm, efficient Federal Government, . . . you will not hesitate to vote for it.” As it turned out, Fuller did not need to decide on the matter. The framers of the Constitution would intentionally avoid the unreliable legislatures for ratification in favor of specially elected state conventions.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Hall, Politics without Parties, 256-265.

<sup>95</sup> Andrew R. L. Cayton, “Land, Power, and Reputation: The Cultural Dimensions of Power in the Ohio Country,” William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 47 (1990): 273. William A. Benton, “Pennsylvania Revolutionary Officers and the Constitution,” in The Military in America, ed. Peter Karsten, 68-69, concludes that service in the Revolution was a statistically significant factor in the support of the Constitution, especially for members of the Society of Cincinnati. See also Stanley M. Elkins and Eric McKittrick, “Youth and the Continental Vision,” in Leonard W. Levy, ed., Essays on the Making of the Constitution (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 241.

<sup>96</sup> Morris, The Forging of the Union, 299-300.

Hull's final instructions on taxing and spending policy were broader and more broadly appealing than those preceding. Acknowledging the current land and poll taxes as too high, Hull urged Fuller to use his efforts to shift the source of revenue more toward import duties and excises on luxury items. In this way, he argued, the tax burden would "lie on those who are able and willing to support them, and afford support and encouragement to the temperate and frugal." As for expenditures, government should observe "the greatest economy." Salaries of public officers, for example, should be "as low as is consistent with the dignity and honour of their station," and even reduced whenever money appreciated.

Hull concluded his charge to Captain Fuller with reminders that "a sacred regard should be had for public and private faith"—that is, for the upholding of contractual obligations—and that "the rights of debtor and creditor be equally secured." The instructions were presented at the next town meeting and overwhelmingly approved by the freeholders. Many years later Hull's daughter observed the curious inconsistency of Newton's citizens, "who had elected a man professing sentiments entirely opposite to those contained in his instructions."<sup>97</sup> She might as easily have commented on the reluctance of conservative leaders to accede to unattractive results of the democratic process, or perhaps on the persistent hold of traditional deference on Newton freeholders, even in periods of high dissatisfaction.

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<sup>97</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 229.

With the arrival of William and Sarah Hull's fourth child (and third daughter), he cast about for a moneymaking venture to supplement the income of his legal practice.<sup>98</sup> Among these was an idea to set up a brewery on the family property in neighboring Watertown. This would be a natural extension of Judge Fuller's established business in the malt trade. It would also help supply the high demand for beer, "the very frequent beverage of the people," which still lagged behind rum as the drink of choice in New England.<sup>99</sup> At present there was no commercial brewery in the entire Commonwealth, which imported beer from other states, mostly New York.<sup>100</sup> Hull's friend Daniel Parker tried to discourage him from that project, however. Parker, a major Revolutionary army contractor and wealthy Watertown merchant now operating in Europe, advised Hull from London to pursue "objects more promising of advantage, & more suited to your talents." He recommended that Hull establish himself as an importer of British goods. He even offered assistance, inviting Hull to England where he would help him obtain the necessary credit and goods for an initial shipment in the spring. "In my own mind I see no difficulty at all," Parker assured him.<sup>101</sup> Hull did not make the trip at this time, but

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<sup>98</sup> Samuel C. Clarke, Descendants of Richard Hull, 10; Samuel C. Clarke, Memoir of Gen. William Hull, 13.

<sup>99</sup> Smith, History of Newton, 779.

<sup>100</sup> A year and a half later, "A Farmer" was still calling for a domestic brewery to lower prices and encourage a weaning away from British-controlled rum. In words that today amuse, he asked, "Would it not be more for the health and wealth of the good people of this Commonwealth, to drink more malt liquors, and by degrees, to break off the excessive use of Rum, which has such a direct tendency to destroy the estates and corrupt the morals of the people." "A Farmer," in The Independent Chronicle, 19 February 1789.

<sup>101</sup> Daniel Parker to William Hull, 30 July 1787, William Hull Correspondence, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass. On Parker's European activities in this period see E. James Ferguson, The Power of the Purse: A History of American Public Finance, 1776-1790 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Va., 1961), 260-264. Hull had known and corresponded with Parker since at least 1780, and in 1784 had recommended his brother to Parker as a shipbuilder. Daniel Parker to William Hull, 7

kept the idea in mind. In November he applied to the General Court for some form of financial encouragement to import foreign porter and beer—a bounty per gallon, profit from the duties, or a temporary monopoly. The Court divided on the matter, and the project seems to have come to naught.<sup>102</sup> In the decade following, however, Hull would act on both Parker’s commercial proposal and the brewery project.

By year’s end, of course, the great subject of discussion was the proposed Federal Constitution that the Confederation Congress had now submitted to the states for ratification. Delaware, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey had already approved it; within days Georgia and Connecticut followed suit. Massachusetts, however, was deeply divided, with Federalists and Antifederalists broadly, though far from perfectly, mirroring the Cosmopolitan-Localist model. Soon the better-organized Federalists (really “Nationalists”) outmaneuvered their state rivals, in part by coaxing to their side Revolutionary icons John Hancock and Samuel Adams. The Massachusetts convention narrowly assented to the Constitution on February 6, 1788, in a vote of 187 to 168.<sup>103</sup> Among the delegates supporting the new national charter was Hull’s father-in-law. He was in the minority among Middlesex County delegates, however, as only seventeen voted in favor while twenty-five opposed.<sup>104</sup> Clearly, the county did not provide a secure

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December 1780, and William Hull to Daniel Parker, 7 March 1784, William Hull Correspondence, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.

<sup>102</sup> Stephen Dana to William Hull, 15 November 1787, William Hull Correspondence, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.

<sup>103</sup> Main, The Antifederalists, xi, 187-209; Szatmary, Shays’ Rebellion, 131-133; Morris, The Forging of the Union, 303-304.

<sup>104</sup> Jackson, History of Newton, 214; Samuel C. Clarke, Descendants of John Fuller, 9-10; “Adolphus” to the Electors of the County of Middlesex, in Independent Chronicle, 1 January 1789.

base for aspiring national-minded politicians. Later it would become a bastion of Jeffersonian Republicanism.<sup>105</sup>

Hull was nevertheless satisfied with the overall result. There is no question but that he was an enthusiastic and outspoken Federalist. Indeed he fit well the profile of leading promoters of the Constitution identified by Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick: namely, young men of the Revolution who “happened to have their careers opened up at a particular time and in such a way that their very public personalities came to be staked upon the national quality of the experience which formed them.”<sup>106</sup> As a nationalist, classical republican, and fiscal liberal (conservative, in present idiom), he favored more “energetic” centralized government to better secure the future of the national union, provide virtuous leadership, and protect a liberal economy.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, in addition to the greater security and stability the new system could provide, and the greater strength internationally, the power to tax might at last enable the national government to honor its promise of commuted army pensions. (Among the attacks on the Constitution was that of Benjamin Gale who saw a conspiracy between financial interests and army officers seeking commutation.)<sup>108</sup> Continental officers could be confident of a sympathetic ally and possible patron in the first president, who would again become commander-in-chief of a national army. The Constitution would also bring state militias under some federal control, presumably improving discipline and uniformity. As Don Higginbotham has

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<sup>105</sup> Goodman, Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts, 85.

<sup>106</sup> Elkins and McKittrick, “Youth and the Continental Vision,” 241-245 (quote on 245).

<sup>107</sup> For a succinct and insightful analysis of the framers’ anticipated benefits of the new Constitutional system, see Brown, Redeeming the Republic, chap. 15.

<sup>108</sup> Kohn, Eagle and Sword, 82.

noted, the military provisions in the Constitution “represented a virtually complete triumph for the nationalists.”<sup>109</sup>

While awaiting the outcome of other crucial ratification battles (particularly those in Virginia and New York), General Hull remained active in prosecuting, defending, and arbitrating debt suits, and in helping to reorganize the state militia.<sup>110</sup> His family grew yet again in June with the arrival of another daughter, Maria, who in her later years would write an account of her father’s Revolutionary and early civil service.<sup>111</sup>

The Massachusetts Cincinnati, meanwhile, selected Hull to deliver their second annual Fourth of July oration in Boston. (Here was yet another instance of Hull’s following the path of Brooks, who had given the society’s first such address the previous year.)<sup>112</sup> The occasion allowed him publicly to affirm the new national charter, comment upon the current state of public affairs, and reclaim for the Continental officers and himself the mantle of Revolutionary and republican virtue.<sup>113</sup> On July 4, 1788, around

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<sup>109</sup> Higginbotham, War and Society, 179. See also Kohn, Eagle and Sword, chap. 5; and Burrows, “Military Experience,” 89-91.

<sup>110</sup> For examples of Hull’s legal activity in this period, see John Lathrop to William Hull, 16 February 1788, and Ebenezer Bowman to William Hull, 27 May 1788, William Hull Correspondence, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.; William Hull to Robert Treat Paine, 6 March 1788, Robert Treat Paine Papers, vol. 28, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston. Meanwhile Fisher Ames wrote Hull advocating against a proposed de-ranking of the Dedham regiment. Fisher Ames to William Hull, 24 April 1788, Fisher Ames Letters, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass. Other indicators of Hull’s legal activity for the remainder of the year are Edmund Trowbridge to William Hull, 21 August 1788 and 17 November 1788, William Willard Wheeler to William Hull, 17 September 1788, and William Winthrop to William Hull, 24 November 1788, William Hull Correspondence, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.; William Hull and Timothy Jackson, Announcement for estate claimants, in Independent Chronicle, 18 and 25 December 1788, and 1 January 1789.

<sup>111</sup> Samuel C. Clarke, Descendants of Richard Hull, 11.

<sup>112</sup> John Brooks, An Oration Delivered to the Society of the Cincinnati in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, July 4, 1787 (Boston: Edmund Freeman, 1787).

<sup>113</sup> Institution and Proceedings of the Society of the Cincinnati, 61; William Hull, An Oration Delivered to the Society of the Cincinnati in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, July 4, 1788 (Boston: Benjamin Russell, 1788). Excerpts of Brooks’s and Hull’s addresses, along with brief life sketches, are in



midday, Cincinnati brothers, prominent citizens and other public figures crowded into the Old Brick meetinghouse for Hull's address. After the patriotic ode, he took the podium. The oration showed him as fully engaged in the officers' efforts to shape public memory of the Revolutionary era to their advantage.<sup>114</sup> In accordance with established formula, he began by rehearsing the dominant patriot narrative on the origins of the Declaration of Independence. British jealousy of American prosperity had excited "an unbounded thirst for domination and power," to which American leaders virtuously responded with reasoned, principled, and historically grounded argument. Convinced that "taxation and representation ought ever to go hand in hand," Americans had concluded that resistance to British outrages against their "unalienable rights" was imperative. Hull paused to frame the emergency in words clearly crafted for the political present: As divided colonies, "every separate effort was feeble and unavailing." Instead, "a union of the wisdom and power of the whole was the dictate of policy." He resumed: When the "decent, but manly" protestations and "humble petitions" of patriot leaders fell on deaf ears, a declaration of independence, backed by force, became necessary. "Thus was

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James Spear Loring, The Hundred Boston Orators Appointed by the Municipal Authorities and Other Public Bodies, from 1770 to 1852; Comprising Historical Gleanings, Illustrating the Principles and Progress of our Republican Institutions (Boston: John P. Jewett & Co., 1854), 184-188, 218-222. It is noteworthy that Campbell's Revolutionary Services makes no reference to this occasion or Hull's oration.

<sup>114</sup> Len Travers, Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 48-49. Travers notes that through Fourth of July commemorations in this era, "committed partisans struggled to control the meaning of the Revolution and its fruits. (70)" Purcell, Sealed with Blood, 86-91, emphasizes the early Society's engagement in the politics of public memory and the fears it provoked. The theme of controlling the meaning of the Revolution, republicanism, and the "nation" through public celebration in this period is also examined in David Waldstreicher, In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Va., 1997), chap. 2. Waldstreicher concluded that "the Federalists succeeded in sacralizing the Constitution as the true culmination of the American Revolution. (108)"

dismembered a continent from an island—thus was restored the order of nature,” he declared, drawing upon Thomas Paine’s famous argument.<sup>115</sup>

In dispensing accolades for the successful Revolutionary enterprise, Hull had already credited the “fair daughters of America” for their industry, economy, simplicity, and patriotic example to the youth. He now lauded the military heroes in the audience and the “consummate prudence,” “unshaken perseverance,” and “greatness of mind” of the “illustrious Washington.” In a bow to the attending French consul of Boston, Hull paid homage to King Louis XVI, who, when “the fate of this vast continent was suspended in the dreadful balance of uncertainty,” had “smiled on our cause, and embraced us in the arms of his friendship.” “Illustrious Monarch,” Hull saluted, “Long may you live the patron of the rights of man—long may you reign, and may your reign be ever glorious.”<sup>116</sup> The blessing was wholly ineffectual, of course. Only a year separated this from the opening scenes of France’s own spectacular revolution, which would soon end the king’s reign and life.

Having duly portrayed a glorious, virtuous, and heroic Revolutionary history, Hull shifted to a harsh critique of the recent past. Here he fired off a barrage of rhetorical questions comprising a long list of outstanding Federalist frustrations. In the five years since the termination of the war, he asked his fellow officers and citizens, “Have your reasonable expectations been gratified?”

Have you realized those blessings for the attainment of which your treasure has been exhausted, the eloquence of your patriots has been exerted, and the blood of your heroes been sacrificed? Have the sacred rights of property been uninvaded? Have publick faith and publick justice . . . remained inviolate? Has the national

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<sup>115</sup> Hull, *Oration*, 3-8; Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth*, 49.

<sup>116</sup> Hull, *Oration*, 5-6, 10-12.

honour and character been preserved pure and unspotted? Have we adhered to that union under whose banners our freedom was obtained, and we rode to independence, as the rock of our salvation? . . . Have not other nations taken advantage of the nerveless system of our government? . . . And finally, has not the federal head been languishing under an awful inability to fulfil [sic] the most solemn engagements, and to complete those great national purposes for which it was instituted?

These “various streams of evils,” Hull suggested, were traceable to “the great source from which they flowed”: the Confederation system. But now hope was renewed and the future again shone brightly. “Yes, my fellow-citizens,” he beamed,

you may now be congratulated on the happy prospect of bidding a final farewell [sic] to a feeble system . . . which could neither guard the welfare, secure the honour, or advance the prosperity of your country; and of embracing a Constitution . . . calculated on the one hand to give stability and dignity to your national character, and on the other, provided with those great checks which will ever afford a paladium [sic] to your liberties.<sup>117</sup>

Hull turned his final remarks to the Cincinnati, defiantly reaffirming their virtue and honor and the legitimacy of their institution. Recalling the desire for continued fellowship that first motivated them to form the Society, he assured them, “Heaven saw with approbation the purity of your intentions, and your institution arose on the broad foundation of patriotism, friendship and charity.” With pure hearts and clear consciences, they need not “blush to avow [those principles] in the face of the world.” Mindful of residual distrust and criticism among many prominent figures, including some in his audience, he encouraged his fraternity brothers nevertheless to banish self-doubt and maintain their commitment to each other. Although they should “pay a proper deference” to public opinion, he wished that none, “allured by the fluctuating opinion of the moment,” would equivocate with regard to “his honor and his feelings as a man.”

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<sup>117</sup> Hull, *Oration*, 12-15. This theme was far from unique to Hull or Boston. Philadelphia is a case in point. “Compared to the dominant theme of glorifying the Constitution,” observes Len Travers, “the celebration of Independence Day was decidedly secondary.” Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth*, 82.

Drawing from the gentlemen's code of honor, in words that would become a recurring theme in his writings, he advised them, "Let a consciousness of the integrity of your views bear you superior to ill-founded prejudice, and inspire you with a contempt for popular applause, when acquired at the expense of your honour and virtue."<sup>118</sup> Hull concluded his address by quoting from the general Society's circular letter of May 1784, admonishing his comrades to fulfill their mission of charity to the families of their deceased and destitute brothers, and reiterating the superiority of honor, sincerity, and integrity over popularity: "Let heaven and our own consciences approve our conduct . . . and let us leave a lesson to posterity, that the glory of soldiers cannot be completed, without acting well the part of citizens."<sup>119</sup>

Hull's address does not appear as one well calculated to a future in electoral politics. Much of the language would seem to indicate that he did not strongly contemplate the possibility, or at least that he did not well regard the democratic transformation that was afoot. He spoke as a classical republican and eighteenth-century gentleman, certainly not as a democrat. Accordingly, heaven and conscience—not public opinion—were the only legitimate tribunals for a gentleman officer and a virtuous citizen.

The oration appears to have been duly appreciated by most of those present. The Cincinnati followed protocol and promoted the Society's own interest by unanimously

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<sup>118</sup> Hull, *Oration*, 16-20.

<sup>119</sup> Hull, *Oration*, 21-22; Saunders, "Origin and Early History of the Society of the Cincinnati," 167.

voting thanks to Hull and requesting that the address be printed and distributed.<sup>120</sup> The French consul congratulated Hull on his “elegant and learned Oration” and thanked him for his pamphlet copy.<sup>121</sup> Not everyone was so impressed. John Quincy Adams, like his father a firm critic of the Society, had earlier attended the oration for town authorities delivered by Harrison Gray Otis, finding it superior in both composition and delivery. Hull’s address seemed “rather indifferent” by comparison. However, Adams recorded in his diary, “I found afterwards there were many persons who thought or pretended to think this Oration better both in matter and manner than the other; and they certainly have a right to enjoy their opinions.”<sup>122</sup>

The mid-afternoon arrival in Boston of the news of Virginia’s ratification added to the day’s elite-orchestrated observances a noisier, less reserved public festivity. “Immediately the bells were set to ringing, and the guns to firing again, without any mercy,” wrote a mildly irritated Adams.<sup>123</sup> By the end of the month, New York, now fearing the consequences of exclusion more than a loss of local control, also assented.

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<sup>120</sup> Thomas Edwards, Secretary of the Massachusetts Society of the Cincinnati, Minutes, 4 July 1788, and William Hull to Committee of the Massachusetts Society, 7 July 1788, printed in Hull, Oration, 2; Travers, Celebrating the Fourth, 32.

<sup>121</sup> Consul of France to William Hull, 15 July 1788, William Hull Correspondence, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.

<sup>122</sup> Diary entry, 4 July 1788, in John Quincy Adams, Diary of John Quincy Adams, ed. David Grayson Allen et al., 2 vols., The Adams Papers, ed. Robert J. Taylor, Series 1: Diaries (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1981), 2:424-425. Otis’s address is noted and excerpted in Loring, Hundred Boston Orators, 188-189. Even before the Society’s reinstatement of hereditary membership the year before, Adams had expressed a belief that the Society “will become a body dangerous, if not fatal to the Constitution.” John Quincy Adams to John Adams, 30 June 1787, in John Quincy Adams, Writings of John Quincy Adams, ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford, 7 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1913-1917), 1:32-33.

<sup>123</sup> “In the evening,” Adams continued, “a number of young fellows paraded round the streets with candles lighted in their hands, and a drum before them, not much to their own credit or to the honour of the day; but they did no damage.” Diary entry, 4 July 1788, in Adams, Diary of John Quincy Adams, 2:425. See also Len Travers, “Hurrah for the Fourth: Patriotism, Politics, and Independence Day in Federalist Boston, 1783-1818,” Essex Institute Historical Collections 125, no. 2 (April 1989): 137.

On September 13 the Confederation Congress set dates for the selection and voting of presidential electors and the commencement of the unprecedented government-to-be. Meanwhile the Federalist-Antifederalist debates over ratification of the Constitution merely shifted to the issue of proposed amendments.<sup>124</sup>

Hull's social, professional, and political standing was on the rise. On August 18 he received the further distinction of being enrolled in the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts, joining friends Lincoln and Brooks, and was designated its captain for the year 1789.<sup>125</sup>

His status was also such that he could emerge as a candidate in the elections to the first federal House of Representatives. He was not initially put forward. However, the December 1788 vote in Middlesex, one of Massachusetts' eight newly formed districts, produced no majority. The frontrunner, former president of the Confederation Congress and signer of the Constitution, Nathaniel Gorham, subsequently withdrew from consideration, leaving runner-up Elbridge Gerry—nemesi of officer pensions, peacetime armies, and the Society of the Cincinnati, and who strongly advocated constitutional amendments—in a heavily advantaged position.<sup>126</sup> Joseph B. Varnum of Dracut,

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<sup>124</sup> Merrill Jensen and Robert A. Becker, eds., The Documentary History of the First Federal Elections, 1788-1790, 4 vols. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976-1989), 1:ix-x, 4, 22.

<sup>125</sup> Roll of Members of the Military Company of the Massachusetts, Now Called the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts, with a Roster of the Commissioned Officers and Preachers, 1638-1894 (Boston: Alfred Mudge & Son, 1895), 20-21, 87-88. Here again Hull followed Brooks, who joined in 1786 and served as captain in 1787 and 1794.

<sup>126</sup> Both men had represented Massachusetts in the Constitutional Convention. Gorham presided during Washington's absences and was influential in Massachusetts' ratification. Gerry, who in 1786 had moved from his native Marblehead in Essex County to Cambridge, refused to sign the final document. See brief biographical overviews in Jensen and Becker, eds., First Federal Elections, 1:749-751, and Billias, Elbridge Gerry, 199-203. In Newton, Gorham polled twenty votes, Gerry and Brooks received eleven each, while Hull got one. Hull received sixteen more, all from Brooks's hometown of Medford, where he carried a slight majority. Hull also received one vote for presidential elector, in Newton. Official election

formerly a militia captain in the Revolution and suppression of Shays's Rebellion, now a colonel in the Third Division and state senator from northern Middlesex County, had polled a distant third. However, Varnum, who had voted for ratification only after a bill of rights was promised, now had Gorham's endorsement.<sup>127</sup>

Several staunch nationalists led by prominent Cincinnati were unhappy with these options. Regarded by their enemies as "fiery federalists" and a "self created nobility," this group sought a different standard-bearer. Lincoln, now lieutenant-governor of the state and embroiled in a conflict with Governor Hancock, privately informed Washington that Brooks and Hull had been determined upon, and that one or the other would be pushed in the next election.<sup>128</sup> The astute Brooks, who had polled well in the initial round, recognized a losing cause and declined. His less politically deft friend accepted.<sup>129</sup>

Hull's handlers launched an editorial campaign to unite "friends of the Constitution" around him. Henry Jackson urged Knox to seek Gorham's influence for

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returns for electors and representatives are in Jensen and Becker, eds., First Federal Elections, 1:532, 616-617.

<sup>127</sup> Jensen and Becker, eds., First Federal Elections, 1:760-761; Henry Jackson to Henry Knox, 21 December 1788 (excerpt), in Jensen and Becker, eds., First Federal Elections, 1:600-601; "Countryman" to Messieurs Printers, in The Boston Gazette, and the Country Journal, 26 January 1789; Edward W. Hanson, "Varnum, Joseph Bradley," in American National Biography; Frederick W. Coburn, "Varnum, Joseph Bradley," in Dictionary of American Biography, ed. Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, 11 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931).

<sup>128</sup> Goodman, Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts, 25-26; Hall, Politics without Parties, 317; Benjamin Lincoln to George Washington, 4 January 1789, in W. W. Abbot et al., eds., The Papers of George Washington: Presidential Series, 9 vols. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1987-1999), 1:234.

<sup>129</sup> Massachusetts Centinel, 7 Jan. 1789, cited in Jensen and Becker, eds., First Federal Elections, 1:641n; Henry Jackson to Henry Knox (excerpt), 11 January 1789, in Jensen and Becker, eds., First Federal Elections, 1:644.

Hull, but with no perceivable effect.<sup>130</sup> In the Massachusetts Centinel of January 10, “Middlesex” warned Federalists that unless they followed the Antifederalist example of “bestowing *all their votes on one man*,” they would lose. Only by uniting on Brigadier General Hull would they “defeat the designs of the enemies to the new Constitution.”<sup>131</sup> Other writers echoed the theme throughout the month: “My friends, if we do not unite in this man, the chance is, they will carry Mr. Gerry, and then fare you well poor Middlesex.”<sup>132</sup>

As a nationalist front man, Hull inspired both advocates and detractors in the Boston press, which devoted an unusual amount of space to the Middlesex election.<sup>133</sup> The public airing of Hull’s merits and demerits provides glimpses into his divided reputation during this dynamic, transitional period. Editorials naturally focused on character, qualifications, and the amendments issue. In the Boston Gazette, for example, “An Old Soldier” from Cambridge heartily recommended General Hull to his fellow countrymen as “a character suitable” and “in every respect . . . a fit person” to represent them. He was “a man who has ever been a firm Revolutionist, a brave Soldier, and a complete Politician.” Not only was he held in high regard by the future president, he was

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<sup>130</sup> Henry Jackson to Henry Knox (excerpt), 11 January 1789, in Jensen and Becker, eds., First Federal Elections, 1:644.

<sup>131</sup> “Middlesex” to the Electors of the County of Middlesex, 8 January 1789, in The Massachusetts Centinel, 10 January 1789. (Italics in original.) The writer also referred to Hull as “an able and upright federalist.”

<sup>132</sup> X to the Electors of Middlesex, The Herald of Freedom, and the Federal Advertiser, 16 January 1789, in Jensen and Becker, eds., First Federal Elections, 1:645-646. Other examples include: “A Middlesex Elector,” in Independent Chronicle, 15 January 1789; “Middlesex,” 20 January 1789, in Independent Chronicle, 22 January 1789; “An Old Soldier,” 22 January 1789, in Boston Gazette, 26 January 1789.

<sup>133</sup> Jensen and Becker, eds., First Federal Elections, 1:635. The Suffolk District representative had been chosen in the earlier election.



“also beloved by almost all who have any acquaintance with him.” As for amendments, the writer assured his readers that “this truly good man” would do his utmost to satisfy his constituents’ desires. The people would honor themselves by selecting a man of “a federal, military character,” concluded the veteran, “for such a one will be very necessary.”<sup>134</sup> An advocate in the Independent Chronicle similarly promoted Hull as a gentleman, a long-suffering, brave Revolutionary, knowledgeable, politically able, and a close personal friend of Washington. The writer added as other advantages to “*the virtuous and enlightened yeomanry*” Hull’s support of both agriculture and domestic manufactures and opposition to high land taxes. “*Friends of amendments*” could rely on him, claimed the writer, for Hull was “a gentleman, who, from his tried patriotism and natural condescension to the *well meant* prejudices of others, would cheerfully exert himself . . . for every alteration . . . which *impartial enquiry and experience* should point out, as promotive of the general harmony and safety.”<sup>135</sup> Another letter argued that “no candidate could be more likely to unite the various classes of the people.” His own wealth “lying chiefly in the landed way,” he regarded landholders “as members of the same family with himself.” Furthermore, this sponsor observed, since the new federal legislature would regulate the militia, the state needed someone with military knowledge and experience. “The public good requires that we should have one member at least . . . who understands the state of our militia, and may recommend the best methods of

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<sup>134</sup> “An Old Soldier,” 22 January 1789, in Boston Gazette, 26 January 1789.

<sup>135</sup> “A Middlesex Elector,” in Independent Chronicle, 15 January 1789. (Italics in original.) The writer also cited Hull’s selection as agent to Canada at the end of the war as a confirming mark of his competence and Washington’s confidence.

preserving and rendering serviceable that great palladium of our republic.”<sup>136</sup> In the Massachusetts Centinel, “Candidus” tried to reassure yeomen farmers and artisans that Hull was qualified, trustworthy, and no extremist. Even Antifederalists could rest easy as he was “known to be a cool and dispassionate man—a well-wisher to the prosperity and advancement of agriculture—and a friend to the rights and liberties of mankind.”<sup>137</sup> On the eve of the election Hull again appeared in print as “the farmer’s friend—the manufacturers supporter—a cool, determined Republican, and a landholder.”<sup>138</sup>

If Hull’s endorsements as a gallant Revolutionary and trusted confidant of Washington worked to any advantage with district voters, his reputation as a lawyer and a prominent member of the Society of the Cincinnati most certainly did not. To many Middlesex citizens, such associations automatically made Hull and his backers anything but trustworthy. It was enough for Gerry’s supporters mildly to remind voters of those bitter connections—without directly attacking Hull’s character—in order to keep the opposition vote weak and divided. One writer from Charlestown objected to Hull specifically on the grounds of his legal profession and ties to the Cincinnati. Denying any prejudice against lawyers as such, the writer foresaw their monopolization of the new federal government. Other districts had so far elected mostly lawyers; now he warned the electors of Middlesex, “If you give your votes for one of these gentlemen of the Long

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<sup>136</sup> “Middlesex,” 20 January 1789, in Independent Chronicle, 22 January 1789. Hull’s military authority had been on public display again recently. On November 6 in Cambridge he conducted a review of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry, under Col. Nathan Fuller of Newton, of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division. Supreme Court judges, the attorney general, and several other notables attended. Independent Chronicle, 28 November 1788.

<sup>137</sup> “Candidus” to Mr. [Benjamin] Russell, 23 January 1789, in Massachusetts Centinel, 24 January 1789.

<sup>138</sup> “Concord” to Mr. [Benjamin] Russell, 26 January 1789, in Massachusetts Centinel, 28 January 1789.

Robe, we shall, instead of a government of Laws, in reality have a government of Lawyers.”<sup>139</sup> In a swipe at the Cincinnati, another Gerry campaigner declared, “The electors of Middlesex do not intend to vote for any *self-created nobleman*.”<sup>140</sup> (Hull’s promoters probably now wished that he had tempered his defiant language in his Fourth of July oration.) Still another correspondent complained that lawyers and Cincinnati already predominated in the new government. “*Other interests* should at least have a *small weight* in the Federal Legislature,” he reasoned.<sup>141</sup>

One of the more biting (and entertaining) campaign letters was one printed in the Boston Gazette of January 26. In homely style, “Countryman” posed as a dupe of Federalist propaganda. Even though Gerry was honest, capable, and experienced in public service, he was also independent-minded and, worse yet, he was *not* a lawyer. “Now, I say, if you tell that, and neighbor Tatler knows that I said so, he’ll carry the story to Boston to’orrow, and ev’ry body will call me antifed, paper money, Shayite, and all such terrible hard names I shall not know what to say.” In deference to “the great folks,” the writer called for citizens to obediently unite in voting for Hull. “They say he is a *toping* [sic] *fed*—a brave General, and one of your Cincinnatick-men, and above all a Lawyer.” The writer indulged himself in sweet sarcasm. Lawyers, he understood,

will be likely to set good examples before the people, and be moderate in their own salaries, because the poor people are to pay them for their abilities, for finding out such deep great learned words and things that nobody else can find out:—and besides, if we are good and kind to them now, they will be kind to us bye and bye,

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<sup>139</sup> “Charlestown” to the Electors of Middlesex, in Boston Gazette, 26 January 1789.

<sup>140</sup> Middlesex Essex (excerpt), Herald of Freedom, 20 January 1789, in Jensen and Becker, eds., First Federal Elections, 1:646. (Italics in original.)

<sup>141</sup> Independent Chronicle, 22 January 1789. (Italics in original.)

and tell us how to have our deeds drawn so as to save our lands for less than one half [of what] the land is worth.<sup>142</sup>

Undoubtedly Hull was spared more direct personal attacks—on his pension and anti-Regulator activism, for example—because Federalists were divided among themselves. He was never a serious threat to win. Opponents seemed to view him throughout as, if not a pawn, at least a representative placeholder for an extremist cabal. “An Observer” anticipated that Hull, “whose military merit is conspicuous,” would garner support primarily from those opposed to any amendments at all, who were few, while Gerry would draw both outright Antifederalists and enthusiasts for amendments, who were many.<sup>143</sup> Meanwhile the Boston newspapers virtually ignored state senator Varnum, who retained substantial support despite Jackson’s prediction to Knox that he would not be a factor.<sup>144</sup>

In the end, all of the editorial maneuvering meant little. Hull, politically handicapped and an electoral novice, could hardly challenge a veteran officeholder with a large base of support in a time of great uncertainty. The January 29 election was a landslide and an embarrassment for Hull and his promoters. Antifederalist towns rallied around Gerry, while Federalists divided themselves among the candidates. Of 1,867 votes cast, Gerry’s 1,140 (61%) overwhelmed Varnum’s 366 (19%) and Hull’s 205 (11%). Not surprisingly, Hull’s timid support remained concentrated in the county’s

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<sup>142</sup> “Countryman,” in Boston Gazette, 26 January 1789.

<sup>143</sup> “An Observer,” in Independent Chronicle, 22 January 1789.

<sup>144</sup> Henry Jackson to Henry Knox (excerpt), 11 January 1789, in Jensen and Becker, eds., First Federal Elections, 1:644. An exception to the editorial silence on Varnum was the 26 February 1789 issue of the Boston Gazette. “Lucius” wrote as an advocate, while “Charlestown,” having opposed Hull on account of his profession, was harsher towards Varnum, perhaps fearing a more serious challenge: “I know not a single quality that he has to recommend him.”

southeastern towns. He drew his highest vote total in Newton with thirty-three, but even there fell behind Gerry's thirty-six. Only in Medford, Brooks's hometown, did Hull muster a majority or even a plurality. In Cambridge Hull received just two of 114 votes.<sup>145</sup>

The vote can be read as a choice for moderation over perceived extremism. Perhaps in this regard even Hull's friend Henry Jackson expressed some satisfaction over Gerry's election.<sup>146</sup> Some of Gerry's supporters could not resist gloating over their trouncing of the "violent Constitutionalists." One compared them to the wife of Haman, who in the biblical account encouraged her prideful husband to arrange the destruction of his enemy, only to see him fall victim to the very gallows he had constructed for the purpose.<sup>147</sup> Of course at this period none of the three candidates—Gerry, Varnum, or Hull—could foresee a time when they would be thrown together in common political cause, as Jeffersonian Republicans, only one of many strange results from political upheavals yet to come.

As the Constitutional era opened, then, Hull deservedly held the public reputation of a committed conservative and nationalist. This is not surprising given his founding

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<sup>145</sup> Official election returns in Jensen and Becker, eds., First Federal Elections, 1:654-655.

<sup>146</sup> Goodman, Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts, 28. Gerry's most sophisticated biographer argues his consistent post-Revolutionary determination to avoid the extremes of both monarchy and anarchy. Billias, Elbridge Gerry, 151. Ronald P. Formisano, The Transformation of Political Culture: Massachusetts Parties, 1790s-1840s (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 68, 72-73, also identifies Gerry as a moderate. Saul Cornell, The Other Founders: Anti-Federalism and the Dissenting Tradition in America, 1788-1828 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Va., 1999), 154-157, points out that supporters of Gerry in this election promoted him in different ways, some as the protector of the yeomanry against the aristocracy, others as a disinterested republican statesman, revealing division in Antifederalist ideology. Gerry regarded himself as the latter.

<sup>147</sup> John Bacon to Elbridge Gerry, 26 February 1789, in Jensen and Becker, eds., First Federal Elections, 1:659. Bacon mistakenly used the name Naman here. The story is found in the Old Testament book of Esther, chapters 5-7.

role in the Society of the Cincinnati, as well as his practice of law, service as justice of the peace, generalship in the militia, and speculative activity. His public letters and addresses had articulated doctrinaire support for republican law, order, and authority, the sanctity of contracts and property, and liberal economics.<sup>148</sup> These he expressed as matters of moral principle and natural rights, of national honor and character, not of class or personal interest. Conversely, he perceived those who opposed these ideas as motivated by self-interest and party spirit over principle, civic virtue, and good sense. The Regulation and Shays's Rebellion had manifested inherent dangers and called him once more into the field. The affair had demonstrated both the "virtue of the higher classes" and the inadequacy of the Confederation. He now looked forward to the Constitution as the salvation of the national union and the Revolution. Despite his sound defeat as a hard-line Federalist candidate for the national Congress, he had much to be pleased about. The contest over the meaning and purpose of the Revolution seemed to be moving in his favor, and his beloved former commander-in-chief was now to be the nation's president. Could national stability and prosperity, true republican principles and dignity in government, and personal benefits, such as long awaited officer pensions, be far behind?

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<sup>148</sup> With regard to the once lively but now subsided debate among historians over whether classical republicanism or liberal capitalism more fully dominated the era, Hull appears to have comfortably and equally sustained both.

CHAPTER 4  
HOPE AND FRUSTRATION  
(1789-1793)

Today it is often observed that the Federalists of the constitutional ratification debates were not the same as the Federalists who emerged in the national political battles of the 1790s, although they shared many leaders and members; neither were the Antifederalists coequal with the Republicans (or Democratic-Republicans) who by 1800, under the leadership of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, would wrest national power from their initially dominant rivals.<sup>1</sup> This was especially true for Massachusetts. Hull and many other outspoken advocates of the Constitution could enter the turn of the century as Republicans without necessarily abandoning their earlier political, economic, or social ideas. The context, both domestic and international, had dramatically changed.

Even so it remains an intriguing question why Hull, who in the Confederation period appeared so fixed in political nationalism, economic liberalism, and social conservatism, parted from many of his close associates, including Washington, Knox, and Brooks, and entered the Republican—ostensibly more democratic and states-rights—fold. Indeed it is difficult with the available evidence to point to any single moment,

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<sup>1</sup> The classic Progressive argument for continuity between the opposing groups, and the primacy and essential continuity of economic issues, is Charles A. Beard, Economic Origins of Jeffersonian Democracy (New York: Macmillan, 1915). Among those who have concluded for discontinuity are Lance Banning, The Jeffersonian Persuasion: Evolution of a Party Ideology (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 114-115, and Noble E. Cunningham Jr., The Jeffersonian Republicans: The Formation of Party Organization, 1789-1801 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Va., 1957), 23-24.

issue, circumstance, association, or condition that determined Hull's political trajectory. Clues and hypotheses are available, but none are definitive. Certainly Hull was far from alone among either elites or ratification supporters in identifying with the Republicans, the weaker faction in Federalist-dominated Massachusetts. Nor would he be without ample company among the state's Cincinnati, lawyers, and entrepreneurs. The political situation was simply more complicated than the traditional Progressive interpretation admits, as many careful students of the period have noted. David Hackett Fischer's remark on partisanship in the period is appropriate: "There were many patterns of political allegiance—all of them intricate in the extreme. Taken together, they present a picture of bewildering, disheartening complexity." Similarly, Paul Goodman observes, "The Democratic-Republican formation was a heterogeneous coalition of interests which cut across regional, economic, occupational, and religious lines." Ronald P. Formisano recognizes that "many Republican and Federal leaders shared many assumptions about society and politics," and in Massachusetts, adds James M. Banner Jr., "Republicanism and Federalism shared a similar intellectual heritage and possessed many of the same traits."<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, just as these and other scholars have still been able to discern

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<sup>2</sup> David Hackett Fischer, The Revolution of American Conservatism: The Federalist Party in the Era of Jeffersonian Democracy (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 201; Paul Goodman, The Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts: Politics in a Young Republic (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 70; Ronald P. Formisano, The Transformation of Political Culture: Massachusetts Parties, 1790s-1840s (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 132; James M. Banner Jr., To the Hartford Convention: The Federalists and the Origins of Party Politics in Massachusetts, 1789-1815 (New York: Knopf, 1970), 3. See also Morton Borden, Parties and Politics in the Early Republic, 1789-1815, *The American History Series*, ed. John Hope Franklin and Abraham S. Eisenstadt (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 1967), 43-47. In an earlier study, Formisano declared that "the description of party labels as 'fluid' in the 1790s is an understatement." Ronald P. Formisano, "Deferential-Participant Politics: The Early Republic's Political Culture, 1789-1840," American Political Science Review 68 (1974): 481. This was recognized even in the mid-nineteenth century, especially as a contrast to the political polarization of that era. "If such a [party] difference did exist, the lines of demarcation were not closely drawn and they were frequently overstepped on one side and on the other." John Stetson Barry, The History of Massachusetts, vol. 3, The Confederation Period (Boston: published for the author, 1857), 316.



patterns relating to political identification, so is it possible by examining Hull's activities in this era to suggest plausible explanations for his seemingly unlikely political course, a course that eventually led him into a position of broad authority in America's northwestern frontier.

Hull's evolution into a Jeffersonian Republican probably had its origin in the four years corresponding to the first American presidential term. During that time he experienced several disappointments and frustrations: in his efforts to obtain a federal office and promised Revolutionary compensation, and also with circumstances that prevented him from capitalizing on opportunities that did come. The establishment of the constitutional government, especially with Washington and Knox as first president and secretary of war, had raised Hull's hopes that his own Revolutionary, civic, and professional service would at last yield the dividends he felt were merited. Experience fell short of expectations, however, jarring loose some of Hull's firmer notions and confidences along the way, cultivating an ambivalence that likely prepared him for other political voices.

Hull's search for federal patronage began at the outset of the new constitutional government. Washington's assumption of the presidency in the spring of 1789 and the continuation of Knox as war secretary gave Hull hope not only in respect to the survival of the country and the Revolutionary legacy, but also as to his own personal and political fortunes. Having obtained Washington's favor throughout the Revolution and shown himself an enthusiast for the Constitution, he could reasonably anticipate some advantage in securing a desirable federal appointment. He lost little time in making his wishes

known, joining the throng who had already solicited the president.<sup>3</sup> In mid-May he wrote Washington directly, tendering his congratulations, republican condolences (for being recalled “from a happy Retreat to the difficult and arduous scenes of public Life”), and prayers, and announcing a desire for office: “If in the administration of the general Government, there is any Employment, in which I could be usefull [sic] to my Country, I do now express my willingness to devote myself to the service of the public.”<sup>4</sup> Unlike most applicants, he did not cite personal qualifications, military service, financial distress, or political compatibility.<sup>5</sup> He simply, confidently, assumed Washington’s familiarity and goodwill and left it at that.

But Revolutionary, personal, and political credentials were not enough, at least for a non-military post. President Washington, alert to the significance and delicacy of his every action and decision as the nation’s first executive, understood that patronage would be among the most sensitive and perilous of his responsibilities, and would substantially add to or detract from the legitimacy of the new government. “It is the nature of

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<sup>3</sup> “Scarcely a day passes in which applications of one kind or another do not arrive,” Washington wrote a friend in March. George Washington to Samuel Vaughan, 21 March 1789, in John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799, 39 vols. (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1931-1944), from Library of Congress, The George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress, 1741-1799, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007). See also Gaillard Hunt, “Office-Seeking during Washington’s Administration,” American Historical Review 1, no. 2 (January 1896): 270. Initially Washington’s administration carefully considered applicants’ support of the new constitutional government in making appointments. Thereafter the issue receded as political conformity began to rise in significance. Leonard D. White, The Federalists: A Study in Administrative History (New York: Macmillan, 1956), 271-272.

<sup>4</sup> William Hull to George Washington, 16 May 1789, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, Series 7: Applications for Office, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mgw7&fileName=gwpage121.db&recNum=499> (accessed 4 April 2007). Hull’s comment of condolence fit with Washington’s oft-quoted statement that, in accepting the presidency, he felt like a “culprit who is going to the place of his execution.” George Washington to Henry Knox, 1 April 1789, in John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., The Writings of George Washington, 39 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1931-1944), 30:268.

<sup>5</sup> Hunt, “Office-Seeking during Washington’s Administration,” 275-283.

Republicans, who are nearly in a state of equality, to be extremely jealous as to the disposal of all honorary or lucrative appointments,” he observed to a friend. To merely reward or even appear to reward favorites at a time when all was precedent and symbol, when a recollection of a corrupted British practice was fresh in American minds, could easily and quickly erode not only his own reputation, but also the fragile government’s most critical need—trust. Hence, while he required integrity and competence, and weighed previous service and present distress in making appointments, he would also carefully consider two other factors: geographic distribution and public stature. “Without precautions of this kind, I clearly foresaw the endless jealousies, and possibly, the fatal consequences, to which a government, depending altogether on the good will of the people for its establishment, would certainly be exposed in its early stages.”<sup>6</sup>

Appointments were not just a matter of recognizing skill, knowledge, or faithful service; they also were to strategically bolster local, state, and regional support for the new government. He therefore desired “first Characters,” men whose leadership and authority were already well established and well regarded in their communities, states, and regions.<sup>7</sup> Patronage, though not partisan, was nevertheless political. One result, as

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<sup>6</sup> George Washington to Samuel Vaughan, 21 March 1789, in Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of George Washington, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, The Age of Federalism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 52-55; Leonard D. White, The Federalists, 258-260. Quoted phrase in George Washington to Samuel Vaughan, 21 March 1789, in Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of George Washington, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwhome.html> (accessed 4 April 2007).

Richard Norton Smith has observed, was that “old soldiers received little special consideration.”<sup>8</sup>

Hull did not yet adequately meet Washington’s Burkean standard for office. To be sure, he was known throughout Middlesex County and eastern Massachusetts as a lawyer, justice of the peace, and brigadier general of the militia. But he was also, after all, a relative newcomer to his state and community. He had joined the Massachusetts line of the Continental Army in 1777 and was connected by marriage to a locally distinguished family, but his personal wealth was still inconsequential, and only since his return from service in 1784 had he taken up permanent residence in Newton. Whatever his advantages and accomplishments in the five years since, they were insufficient to attain the first rank of that organic authority that Washington thought necessary for early civil appointments.<sup>9</sup> Hull’s poor showing in the recent congressional election highlighted the fact. Even so, as the first session of Congress ended in late September, he still hoped for some executive preferment. The Senate had only just confirmed Washington’s secretarial nominations; many lower-level offices were yet to be filled.<sup>10</sup>

With or without this in mind, Hull saw an opportunity presented by the first presidential tour of New England in the fall. On October 15, 1789, Washington and a small retinue departed New York and headed eastward on a month-long trip by which he hoped to assess and promote popular support for the new government. Town after town

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Norton Smith, Patriarch: George Washington and the New American Nation (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993), 34.

<sup>9</sup> James Madison, among others, observed of Washington: “In comparing the candidates for office, he was particularly inquisitive as to their standing with the public and the opinion entertained of them by men of public weight.” Elizabeth Fleet, ed., “Madison’s ‘Detached Memoranda,’” William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 3 (1946): 541.

<sup>10</sup> Elkins and McKittrick, Age of Federalism, 52.

jubilantly feted “his Excellency” with elaborate receptions, decorations, civic processions, addresses, odes, and elite dinner parties.<sup>11</sup> These “sentimental exchanges” between president and citizens magnified feelings of patriotism and nationalism. Additionally, as David Waldstreicher notes, “Washington’s presence reinforced local authority by giving elites the chance to display their privileged access to his person.”<sup>12</sup>

Hull fully apprehended the social and political capital that any special attention from Washington bestowed. Anticipating the planned visit to Boston, Hull sent a letter to a “General,” almost certainly Knox, whom he mistakenly understood or assumed would be accompanying the president, on October 20. On Governor John Hancock’s authority, Hull wrote, Major General Brooks and he were preparing a large military review in Cambridge on the same ground where Washington had first taken charge of the Continental Army in 1775. The carefully orchestrated event would involve some eight hundred men from Middlesex County: “two Troops of Cavalry, three Companies of Artillery, four Companies of Light Infantry, and a Regiment of Militia,” most of which were of Hull’s brigade. Hull asked for advance notice of the president’s arrival so that he might have everything in full readiness. Even better, he inquired, since they would be approaching from the west, would not the president and he be willing to take lodging at his home in Newton the night before the event, or at least call for breakfast the following

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<sup>11</sup> Washington’s own record of his purpose and of the journey is found in his diary, 5-6 October and 15 October-13 November 1789, in Donald Jackson and Dorothy Twohig, eds., The Diaries of George Washington, 6 vols. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979), 5:452-453, 460-497. His retinue included personal assistants Major William Jackson and Tobias Lear, and six servants. See also Douglas Southall Freeman, George Washington: A Biography, 7 vols. (New York: Scribner, 1954), 6:240-245; and Elkins and McKittrick, Age of Federalism, 74-75.

<sup>12</sup> David Waldstreicher, In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Va., 1997), 119.

morning? Cambridge being only four miles from his home, they could conveniently remain until the troops were fully assembled and ready for review. Hull would “esteem it an honor” should his proposal meet with the president’s approval.<sup>13</sup>

Essentially, Hull was hoping to reprise the role he had played in the festive reoccupation of New York City at the conclusion of the Revolution. Then too he had arranged housing for Washington, Knox, and their entourage, had led the parade of dignitaries into the celebrating city, and had personally escorted the commander-in-chief to his awaiting barge before weepy officers and an adoring populace. Washington’s visit now would be a reminder to himself and his adopted state and community of his national status and merit. Not only would it confirm and renew a friendship; it would be a reputational triumph, perhaps elevating him closer to that coveted status of “first character.” Washington’s approval at the Cambridge inspection would of itself impart some benefit, but a personal visit would confer a distinction and honor reserved for few.

Washington was well aware of the meaning of such an act. It was impressed on him every day as dozens of individuals courted his attentions. For this very reason he had determined beforehand not to accept any invitations to private quarters, but to lodge only in inns and taverns, lest he inspire jealousies and divisions. This determination not to show favoritism would dash Hull’s hopes. Whether Hull’s personal invitation reached Washington at all is uncertain, since Knox, the letter’s probable recipient, had remained in New York.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> William Hull to “General” [Knox?], 20 October 1789, John S. H. Fogg Autograph Collection, vol. 50, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine. Knox is assumed here to be the recipient based on internal and circumstantial evidence.

<sup>14</sup> Washington received many invitations for private lodging and personal visits during his tour, as an examination of his correspondence in the period indicates. Knox regularly corresponded with the president during the time. See letters from this period from Library of Congress, [George Washington](#)

On October 23, an aide dispatched by Brooks intercepted the president in Worcester and informed him of arrangements for the “military parade” the following day.<sup>15</sup> The proposal made Washington uneasy. He believed a formal inspection and maneuvers to be inappropriate, given the tour’s goal of promoting unity and engendering trust. He did not want to present the image of a triumphant general, or to give any impression of trespassing upon the governor’s rightful command of the militia.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, finding the event unavoidable, he reluctantly agreed to observe the assembled force as a civilian. That evening, after a day’s journey of some forty miles, the presidential party slept in Weston, about six miles from Newton. The following morning, as agreed, they arrived at Cambridge promptly at ten. An impatient president waited on the scene for over an hour before all of the citizen-troops arrived, a problem Hull had foreseen and hoped to prevent. Once gathered however, Washington later recorded in his diary, the troops made “an excellent appearance.” A later account claimed that Washington, being impressed by the military display, had remarked to Brooks in reference to the Revolution: “Ah! General, if we had had such troops as these,

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Papers, Series 4: General Correspondence, <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/gwhtml/gwser4.html> (accessed 4 April 2007).

<sup>15</sup> John Brooks to George Washington, 21 October 1789, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, Series 4: General Correspondence, [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/P?mgw:4:/temp/~ammem\\_gV7h::](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/P?mgw:4:/temp/~ammem_gV7h::) (accessed 4 April 2007); George Washington diary, 23 October 1789, in Jackson and Twohig, eds., Diaries of George Washington, 5:472.

<sup>16</sup> George Washington diary, 23 October 1789, in Jackson and Twohig, eds., Diaries of George Washington, 5:472-473. Freeman makes the latter argument for Washington’s discomfort with the proposed event. Hull’s letter, however, claimed that it had been arranged at Hancock’s direction, and this was surely communicated to Washington by Brooks’s aide. Even so, Washington was undoubtedly concerned not to confuse lines of authority, as his subsequent well-known standoff with Hancock demonstrated. Freeman, George Washington, 6:244; William Hull to “General” [Knox?], 20 October 1789, John S. H. Fogg Autograph Collection, vol. 50, Maine Historical Society, Portland, Maine.

we should have made short work of it!”<sup>17</sup> At one o’clock Lieutenant-Governor Samuel Adams (notably, not Governor Hancock) and the state executive council escorted the president from the scene and across the Charles River to a gala reception in Boston.<sup>18</sup>

Hull’s feelings about the Cambridge muster were probably mixed. The president’s good opinion undoubtedly gave satisfaction to the former Continental drillmaster. Washington’s wait may even have provided Hull and Brooks an extra opportunity to reacquaint with their esteemed commander. On the other hand, while the event was certainly laudable, Hull’s higher hopes had not been realized. There was no private audience, no distinction of the kind that might raise his social authority. Instead the occasion was a reminder that his Revolutionary credentials offered no guarantee of personal advantage under the new political system, and probably served to check his expectations.

For most Americans, including Hull, the 1790s opened with ample reasons for optimism. The economy had largely recovered from the postwar slump and was poised to expand beyond all expectations. The first federal Congress had already laid the basis of a sustainable national infrastructure by authorizing executive departments, instituting a judiciary system, and establishing independent sources of revenue. The addition of a bill of rights to the Constitution had palliated most of the remaining Antifederalist criticism. Overseas the French Revolution had undone the Old Regime and its system of hereditary privilege, and appeared to be enshrining and spreading Enlightenment (now American)

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<sup>17</sup> W[illiam] H[yslop] Sumner, “Memoir of Increase Sumner,” New England Historical and Genealogical Register 8 (1854): 122.

<sup>18</sup> George Washington diary, 23-24 October 1789, in Jackson and Twohig, eds., Diaries of George Washington, 5:472-473; Freeman, George Washington, 243-244.



ideals of constitutionalism and natural rights. True, disputes between the United States and Great Britain over fulfillment of the peace terms persisted, but altogether it seemed that the newest American experiment in republican government had launched successfully. While serious divisions and disagreements among members of Congress existed, to be sure, no real partisan factionalism disturbed the republican peace. That was about to change.<sup>19</sup>

In early January 1790 the First Congress reconvened in New York for its second session and Alexander Hamilton submitted the first of his famous reports on the nation's finances, ensuring that the initial period of good feelings was short-lived. The Treasury Secretary's controversial recommendations that the federal government fund the entire public debt at face value and assume the states' remaining Revolutionary debts aroused fierce debate, dividing former Federalist allies and laying a foundation for new broad coalitions of interests and ideology—"parties"—that would become more recognized and organized as the decade wore on.<sup>20</sup> Fueling objections to Hamilton's program was the fact that it had set off a new frenzy of speculation, much of which had taken place in the months and weeks prior to the report's appearance in January. Men of wealth and information scoured the country for public securities not already hoarded in sure anticipation of realizing huge profits. Congressman James Madison's proposal of discrimination—to divide the benefits of funding between the original and current

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<sup>19</sup> Helpful reviews of this early period of the first federal Congress include Elkins and McKittrick, Age of Federalism, chap. 1; and John C. Miller, The Federalist Era, 1789-1801 (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 14-32.

<sup>20</sup> Miller, Federalist Era, 39-50; Borden, Parties and Politics in the Early Republic, 15-21, 44; Lance Banning, Conceived in Liberty: The Struggle to Define the New Republic, 1789-1793 (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), chap. 1; James Roger Sharp, American Politics in the Early Republic: The New Nation in Crisis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 34-38.

securities holders—drew impassioned speeches but not many votes beyond those of Virginia. The eventual passage of the funding act in early August proved for the speculators, in the words of E. James Ferguson, “the final vindication of all risks.” Of the more than \$40 million domestic debt funded, about \$11 million consisted of the Revolutionary veterans’ final settlement certificates issued in 1783, the vast majority of which were now held by a relatively few wealthy men.<sup>21</sup>

Hull’s response to these momentous measures can only be surmised in the absence of explicit records. As both a nationalist and a Massachusetts citizen he could certainly welcome the assumption plan as highly advantageous. It would help to further consolidate the nation, as Hamilton intended, and by absorbing Massachusetts’s Revolutionary debt—with South Carolina’s, the largest among the states—it would remove a major source of political division in the state and end the decade-long battle over land taxes.<sup>22</sup>

If assumption helped close a rift in his state, however, the funding plan may have opened another within Hull himself. The measure could pose a quandary for a fiscal conservative and Revolutionary colonel. On one hand he wholeheartedly believed in and had publicly upheld the sanctity of property and contracts, which of course—as

Hamilton’s report stated and Middlesex’s Gerry adamantly reiterated in debate—included

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<sup>21</sup> Elkins and McKittrick, Age of Federalism, 138-145; E. James Ferguson, The Power of the Purse: A History of American Public Finance, 1776-1790 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Va., 1961), 251-252, 273, 297, 303 (quote on 251). Disagreement exists on whether Madison’s proposal emanated from principle and a sense of justice or mere political calculation. Elkins and McKittrick, and Lance Banning, The Sacred Fire of Liberty: James Madison and the Founding of the Federal Republic (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995), 311-316, for example, argue the former position, while such as Ferguson (pp. 297-302, 325) and Forrest McDonald, Alexander Hamilton: A Biography (New York: Norton, 1979), 178-179, support the latter. The vote against discrimination (February 22) was 36 to 13. Nine of the latter were from Virginia.

<sup>22</sup> Goodman, Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts, 32-37; Ferguson, Power of the Purse, 308-309. Hull, it will be recalled, had opposed high taxes on land.

securities.<sup>23</sup> He also could appreciate the many practical advantages the proposed system offered, not the least of which was an ample and secure money supply. On the other hand Hull's identity and his sense of justice and honor remained most closely connected with the Continental officer corps whose personal and material sacrifices during and since the war once more appeared unconscionably disregarded. From the perspective of most Revolutionary officers and many other Americans, the funding plan's failure to discriminate between veterans forced by service-induced distress to sell their commutation certificates at steep discounts, and rich "stock-jobbers" poised to reap exorbitant profits, violated both humanitarian and national justice. This was especially so in light of the Continental Congress's unfulfilled promises of veteran pensions, and subsequently the Confederation's failure to fund commutation by imposts or other means. Was this not a national breach of contract demanding satisfaction? Which contract was to be preferred, that between the nation and veterans, or that between the nation and speculators? Which was the more just?<sup>24</sup> Hamilton had argued: "If the voice of humanity plead[s] more loudly in favor of some than of others, the voice of policy, no less than of justice, pleads in favor of all."<sup>25</sup> Was this indeed where true justice lay? Was

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<sup>23</sup> Alexander Hamilton, "Report Relative to a Provision for the Support of Public Credit," [9 January 1790], in Harold C. Syrett and Jacob E. Cooke, eds., The Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 27 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961-1987), 6:73, 76; Goodman, Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts, 33-34. Gerry, it may be worth pointing out, held \$39,900 face value in continental securities. McDonald, Alexander Hamilton, 176.

<sup>24</sup> If Lance Banning is correct, this was the very same reasoning and motivation of Madison, also a firm believer in contract sanctity, for supporting discrimination. His decision derived, Madison later wrote, from "the enormous gain of the [secondary] holders, particularly out of soldiers' certificates, and [from] the sacrifice of these, to whom the public faith had not been fulfilled." Banning, Sacred Fire of Liberty, 314-316 (Madison quote on 314).

<sup>25</sup> Hamilton, "Report Relative to a Provision for the Support of Public Credit," in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 6:78. For similar expressions and reasoning, see also Hamilton to George Washington, 28 May 1790, in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 6:433-439.

policy superior to humanity? Such questions challenged Hull's heretofore more categorical notions of debt and moral right.

On April 13, 1790, Hull met with thirty-six other former officers of the Massachusetts line in Boston's Green Dragon Tavern to consider the army payment issue and the proposed funding plan. After much discussion, the group formed a committee of seven—Hull among them—to draw up a petition to Congress advocating discrimination for the Continentals. The matter was delicate in light of lingering suspicions of the Cincinnati and their connections to Washington and Knox, and the committee sought Knox's input on wording to help avoid unnecessary trouble.<sup>26</sup> In early July the assembled officers approved and signed a draft, which asked Congress to reconsider “the nature and degree of [the army's] compensation” and take such actions “that the contract between the country and the army may be faithfully and honourably performed.”<sup>27</sup> The officers submitted the document to their delegates in the House of Representatives, where on August 3 the petition was presented, read, and tabled.<sup>28</sup> Far from concluding matters, it was but an opening round of Hull's determined efforts in the cause.

Meanwhile, another part of Hamilton's emerging financial program caught Hull's interest: the excise on distilled spirits. Late in January 1791, Hull sought to take personal

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<sup>26</sup> Benjamin Lincoln to Theodore Sedgwick, 14 April 1790, printed in Kenneth R. Bowling, William Charles diGiacomantonio, and Charlene Bangs Bickford, eds., Petition Histories: Revolutionary War-Related Claims, vol. 7 of Documentary History of the First Federal Congress of the United States of America, 4 March 1789-3 March 1791, ed. Charlene Bangs Bickford, Kenneth R. Bowling, Helen E. Veit, and William Charles diGiacomantonio (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 177. In addition to Hull, the committee consisted of Lincoln, William Heath, John Brooks, William Eustis, David Cobb, and Christopher Marshall.

<sup>27</sup> “Petition of the Officers of the Massachusetts Line,” in Bowling, diGiacomantonio, and Bickford, eds., Petition Histories, 177-178.

<sup>28</sup> *Journal of the House*, 1: 287, excerpted in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 11:53, note 2; Bowling, diGiacomantonio, and Bickford, eds., Petition Histories, 176.

advantage of this by soliciting Washington for another appointment, this time as federal tax inspector for Middlesex County. Although the “whiskey tax” still awaited Senate approval, Hull was anxious to get a jump on the president’s attentions for this potentially lucrative post. In his favor he drew attention to the county’s many distilleries and his “convenient situation to exercise the Office.” Additionally, he observed, the advanced age of the current state collector for Middlesex perhaps rendered that man less suited to the task.<sup>29</sup> Again, Hull’s application to the president went unfulfilled.

An offer of a different kind soon appeared, however. That spring Hull received from Knox an unexpected and potentially consequential offer to command the newly created Second U.S. Infantry. Congress, having now relocated to Philadelphia, had authorized the regiment of about a thousand men—a near doubling of American infantry strength—in the wake of General Josiah Harmar’s disastrous Indian campaign in the West, and in preparation of a retaliatory expedition. As lieutenant colonel commandant, Hull would serve under General Arthur St. Clair—the same man whom Hull had defended in the Revolution after the retreat from Fort Ticonderoga—presently also governor of the Northwest Territory. In addition to joining St. Clair’s campaign, the new regiment would garrison additional posts along the entire length of the western frontier.<sup>30</sup>

It was an honorable appointment, one that could bestow a national reputation and the

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<sup>29</sup> William Hull to George Washington, 28 January 1791, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, Series 7: Applications for Office, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mgw7&fileName=gwpage121.db&recNum=502> (accessed 4 April 2007).

<sup>30</sup> William Hull to Henry Knox, 21 May 1791, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 28:64; Richard H. Kohn, Eagle and Sword: The Beginnings of the Military Establishment in America (New York: Free Press, 1975), 106, 109; Russell F. Weigley, History of the United States Army (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 89-91; James Ripley Jacobs, The Beginning of the U.S. Army, 1783-1812 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1947), 68-69; Francis Paul Prucha, The Sword of the Republic: The United States Army on the Frontier, 1783-1846 (London: Collier-Macmillan, 1969), 22. Congress had officially adopted the army of the Confederation on September 29, 1789. The following April the sole infantry regiment had been expanded to over 1200 men.

chance for further distinction. It also carried great risks. Hull rightly perceived the decision as one of both opportunity and hazard, one also that might establish him in a military career and indefinitely remove him and his family from New England.

Hull knew he was not the first offered the post. Artillery Major John Doughty had already refused, citing family concerns but emphasizing the poor regard of the nation and government toward the military establishment for his decision to retire to civilian life. “What are the Inducements for a Gentleman of good Connections & moderate Abilities to enter upon the military Profession as a Profession for Life,” the already embittered major asked Knox, “for without this in View no man of common Prudence should ever enter upon it.”<sup>31</sup> Knox himself confided to Henry Jackson that “the nature of the service is bad, and not profitable.”<sup>32</sup> Jackson in turn predicted that troop recruitment would go poorly. “Our smart, active young Men will not inlist [sic] on the terms offered,” but only “Rogues & Vagabonds” who would desert at the first opportunity. Despite this, in late April Jackson assured Knox that either Hull or John Brooks would accept an offer. “Better men you cannot have,” he wrote.<sup>33</sup> By the time Hull arrived in Philadelphia in late April, chosen along with Knox by the Massachusetts Cincinnati to attend the Society’s general meeting, the offer awaited him.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Henry Knox to John Doughty, 4 March 1791, and John Doughty to Henry Knox, 8 March 1791, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 27:154, 160.

<sup>32</sup> Henry Jackson to Henry Knox, 27 March 1791, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 27:178. In making this statement Knox was in part trying to dissuade Jackson from seeking the position.

<sup>33</sup> Henry Jackson to Henry Knox, 10 and 24 April 1791, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 28:21, 33. Jackson also believed John Brooks would accept.

<sup>34</sup> Henry Jackson to Henry Knox, 3 April and 1 May 1791, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 28:5, 45.

Hull soon returned to Newton and deliberated. He appears to have been more sanguine than Doughty about the position, but also decided against it. “Every wish of my heart strongly urges me again to resume the Sword,” he assured Knox, “yet a variety of Considerations . . . obliges me to decline it.” Refusing a presidential appointment was a delicate matter, however, especially in light of Hull’s previous solicitations, and he certainly wished to maintain his good standing with both Washington and Knox. He cast the decision as a reluctant one. “I have been more influenced by the opinion of my Friends than by my own Judgment,” he claimed. Expressing deep gratitude for Knox’s confidence, he wrote that it was his “decided opinion, that I am relinquishing fairer prospects, than I can reasonably expect in any other situation.”<sup>35</sup>

Although it is impossible to know exactly how Hull viewed the offer, his ambivalence was probably genuine. His own present financial situation was strained and uncertain, and the appointment would comport with his ambition and identity. Nevertheless, the “considerations” leading to his refusal are not difficult to imagine. Beyond the inherent physical risks of the expected campaign, the political and social circumstances under which he would regularly operate would likely be unpleasant and dangerous. Both the northwestern and southwestern frontiers had become increasingly tense and volatile as growing numbers of white settlers steadily pushed farther into Indian lands, provoking cycles of retaliatory raids and, to the south, raising tensions with Spain. A commander could as easily lose reputation as gain it in this Indian-white “middle ground” where distrust, chaos, and fear prevailed. Hull’s experience in the lawless “Neutral Ground” of the Revolution had provided a vivid lesson on the dangers. He

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<sup>35</sup> William Hull to Henry Knox, 21 May 1791, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 28:64.

would inevitably be called upon to restrain whites as much as Indians in trying to keep order, quickly making him unpopular with both.<sup>36</sup> The general disdain in New England toward the administration's Indian policy, and the widespread view that speculators and settlers were the main source of the problems probably influenced him as well.<sup>37</sup> Also there would be extraordinary demands of physical energy and time. In addition to any campaigning, he would regularly have to travel long distances to monitor the widely spread posts, respond to urgencies, and consult with officials in Philadelphia and western capitals.

All of this might yet not impede an unencumbered man, but these were hardly desirable conditions for one with a young and growing family and aging in-laws to look after. It weighed heavily on Hull. An indefinite absence from Sarah and now six children ranging in age from one to eight years was unappealing and perhaps irresponsible in light of the dangers. Removing them from the familiar, settled community of Newton to a remote and hazardous environment was even more unthinkable, and outright intolerable to Sarah's increasingly dependent parents who may also have shared an aversion to the government's Indian policy. The strong-willed Judge Fuller was now in his seventies, and Sarah was an only child and heir to the estate. Notwithstanding Hull's current financial trouble and humility as to his prospects, he did anticipate an acquisition of valuable property and still hoped for greater professional and

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<sup>36</sup> Richard White, The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 418-420.

<sup>37</sup> A good source for the context of this appointment is Kohn, Eagle and Sword, 91-113. See also Elkins and McKittrick, Age of Federalism, 271. Henry Jackson informed Knox from Boston that "the kind of service is a great objection to the people in this quarter." Henry Jackson to Henry Knox, 1 May 1791, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 28:45.



economic successes.<sup>38</sup> Although he regretted to lose an opportunity for national preferment and recognition, these were circumstances that mature ambition could not responsibly set aside. The soldier deferred to the provider.

Several days after notifying Knox of his decision, Hull was “mortified” to find a statement announcing his appointment and refusal in the June 1 issue of the Columbian Centinel. Upset over this breach of confidentiality and knowing the sensitivities of the administration, he immediately dispatched an apology to Knox. He had not intended the offer to become public, Hull claimed, but one or more of his friends whose advice he had sought in private had been indiscreet and “by this means it became known to many.” The paper’s next issue, he assured Knox, would contradict the report—on the grounds that the appointment was never officially made—and state that its publication was without any authority. “It would be painfull [sic] to me to have it supposed that so important & honorable a station would not be eagerly embraced by any Gentleman in our Country, who should be deemed qualified for it,” he explained, ignoring that that was exactly what he had done.<sup>39</sup> Not only that, but Brooks also subsequently declined the command that,

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<sup>38</sup> Perhaps as an added incentive, Fuller sold Hull a small plot of land abutting Hull’s twenty acres and bordering the county road for £17, and provided an additional loan of £173. Abraham Fuller, Deed of land sold to William Hull, 6 June 1791; and William Hull notes of 8 June 1791, listed in manuscript list of personal property belonging to the estate of Abraham Fuller, 15 May 1794, William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (32), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge.

<sup>39</sup> William Hull to Henry Knox, 2 June 1791, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 28:79. In the June 1 issue, Centinel publisher Benjamin Russell reported that Major Doughty had declined the appointment and that “Gen. Hull of this State, we hear, has since been appointed, but has also declined accepting.” In the next issue Russell merely posted: “The paragraph in our last [issue], respecting the resignation of the *appointments* to the command of the ad[ditional] U.S. Regiment, is authentick [sic] *only* as it respects Major Doughty.” Columbian Centinel (Boston), 1 and 4 June 1791. It may be useful to note that while Hull may have worried about the impact of the published report on his relations with the administration, he might nevertheless derive some local benefit: local gentlemen would be freshly reminded of his worthiness and national connections. A useful discussion on the importance and uses of newspapers in the early national period to bolster and attack reputations, although in the context of personal and political conflict, is Joanne B. Freeman, Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 123-126.

to him, offered no advancement in rank, therefore no honor, and “little . . . more than a bare subsistence.”<sup>40</sup>

Hull retained Knox’s friendship and confidence. Perhaps it helped that Hull already was partially linked with him in a bold scheme to build a canal between the upper Connecticut and lower Charles Rivers. The expected point of entry, below the Charles’s lower falls, was at Watertown, not much beyond a stone’s throw from Hull’s home. (A portion of Hull’s plot actually fell within the small section of Watertown that lay on the southern side of the Charles.)<sup>41</sup> The completed project, according to one promoter’s estimate, would yield at least \$90,000 annually in tolls.<sup>42</sup> The potential windfall for the enterprising Hull and his advantageously located community was obvious and exciting.

In early April, Knox had asked Hull and others to advise and assist John Hills, an Englishman whom Knox had hired to survey the route.<sup>43</sup> Problems quickly appeared, however. Hills could find no easy route to the Charles River at Watertown and so turned his surveys towards the town of Milton on the Neponset River. The diversion would deprive Boston, and of course Hull and his townsmen, of any benefit from the project. Distressed at losing another opportunity for relief and prosperity, Hull, who by now was functioning as sponsoring agent for potential investors, recruited other “intelligent

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<sup>40</sup> John Brooks to Henry Knox, 14 June 1791, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 28:107.

<sup>41</sup> Abraham Fuller, Deed of land sold to William Hull, 6 June 1791, William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (32), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge.

<sup>42</sup> David Cobb to Henry Knox, 19 December 1790, Henry Knox Papers, vol. 27:85, excerpted in Christopher Roberts, *The Middlesex Canal, 1793-1860* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), 20; Editor note in Julian P. Boyd, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 31 vols. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1950-2004), 20:121.

<sup>43</sup> Henry Knox to William Smith, Isaiah Thomas, and William Hull, 7 April 1791, and Indenture between Henry Knox and John Hills, 8 April 1791, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 28:16, 17; Roberts, *Middlesex Canal*, 21.

Gentlemen” to reexamine the original area. In December he informed Knox that they had identified what they believed to be a favorable route. “Perhaps we viewed with prejudiced Eyes and formed an opinion, rather from what we wished, than from what could be effected,” Hull conceded. “We meant however to be candid.” He asked that their proposal be confirmed and considered before any final decision was made on the matter. The expense of an accurate survey, he advised, “we will cheerfully pay.”<sup>44</sup> The plea went unheeded, but this time to Hull’s advantage. Shortly thereafter the whole impracticable scheme fell apart.<sup>45</sup> Still, for Hull the matter represented another episode of financial hope, anxiety, and disappointment.

Meanwhile the nightmarish outcome of St. Clair’s expedition had produced, in the words of Jefferson, a “great sensation” throughout the nation.<sup>46</sup> At dawn on November 4, a thousand Indian warriors caught the American force of 1400 regulars, levies (short-term enlistees), and militia by surprise and quickly routed them in one of the worst defeats in U.S. military history. Many of the more than six hundred American dead (many scalped) and three hundred wounded were of the Second Regiment, only two of whose officers survived. Among the fallen was its commander, Lt. Col. William Oldham, a former Revolutionary captain who had finally accepted the position offered to Doughty, Hull,

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<sup>44</sup> William Hull to Henry Knox, 20 December 1791, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 30:59.

<sup>45</sup> Roberts, Middlesex Canal, 25-26.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in Kohn, Eagle and Sword, 116. A close study of official and editorial reactions is William Patrick Walsh, “The Defeat of Major General Arthur St. Clair, November 4, 1791: A Study of the Nation’s Response, 1791-1793” (Ph.D. diss., Loyola University of Chicago, 1977).

and Brooks. Overall losses among commissioned officers were heavy: thirty-five killed and twenty-nine wounded, according to Adjutant General Winthrop Sargent.<sup>47</sup>

One can imagine Hull's and his family's sensations upon reading the December 19 issue of the Centinel. Here they absorbed the first report of the debacle in which Hull might have been a participant and victim, or might, perhaps they thought, have helped to prevent. He lamented "the loss of so many brave men." However, he told Knox, "we are happy in being assured . . . that our officers were not deficient in personal Bravery." As in all unexpected disasters—such as Hull's in 1812—citizens and officials clamored for explanations and sought to assign responsibility. Western settlers and militia, the regular army, the Washington administration (especially Knox), army contractors, and St. Clair all came in for blame from one corner or another. For his part, Hull placed the onus on the nation itself and its misguided representatives—for their contempt and neglect of the regular army and officer corps since the Revolution:

I hope we shall improve by the misfortune—that the national defence will be considered as an object of consequence, and that a proper military establishment will be found, —that the Country will avail itself of that military Knowledge, which has been so dearly purchased in the course of a long war, and that the rewards may bear some proportion to the trials & Dangers, which must necessarily be encountered by those who embrace so hazardous a profession.<sup>48</sup>

Hull's comment, while true to his general sentiments, also served another agenda, for he remained actively engaged in the campaign of Continental officers for long overdue compensation, to satisfy what they regarded as "a just debt as yet undischarged

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<sup>47</sup> Kohn, Eagle and Sword, 115-116; Prucha, Sword of the Republic, 25-26; Weigley, History of the United States Army, 91-92; Jacobs, Beginning of the U.S. Army, 107, 114-115. Chapter 5 of the latter work examines in detail the expedition's defeat and immediate aftermath.

<sup>48</sup> William Hull to Henry Knox, 20 December 1791, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 30:59. On the issue of blame, see Kohn, Eagle and Sword, 116-120; and Walsh, "The Defeat of Major General Arthur St. Clair," especially chap. 4, *passim*. Hull's judgment on this count echoed that of both Washington and Knox.

on the part of Government.<sup>49</sup> The funding act had ignored veteran claims, assuming them fulfilled by the 1783 commutation certificates, and the officers' already noted petition to the Congress in August 1790 had produced no effect. Other former Continentals preferred the strategy of mobilizing officers from all the states to produce a single unified application. One determined leader in that effort, James Blanchard of New Hampshire, reported to Hull in November 1791 that officers from the Southern states and elsewhere agreed with the idea but also felt that Northern officers should take the lead. (The letter suggests that Hull was acting as a coordinating agent for the Massachusetts officers.)<sup>50</sup>

Hull and his colleagues persistently argued that they were not seeking funds already committed to public creditors. Rather, they targeted the difference between the domestic debt as originally owed and the debt as it had been negotiated and passed in the funding bill, roughly the difference between six percent and four percent interest. Soon after the bill's adoption some large creditors, dissatisfied with the new arrangement, had begun lobbying for this "remnant" or "residue" of the original debt. It was their activity that had put even greater pressure on the army officers to mobilize and resume the active

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<sup>49</sup> Circular Letter from the Officers of the Massachusetts Line of the Late Army, 28 February 1792, in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 11:52.

<sup>50</sup> James Blanchard to William Hull, 12 November 1791, William Hull Correspondence, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass. Blanchard informed Hull that "the North and South Carolina and Georgia Officers have read the debates on discrimination and Unanimous[ly] agree that the Funding Bill is very Inconvenient—and the 25<sup>th</sup> of Oct[obe]r the Virginia Line had a full meeting and the Subject fully discussed—and . . . the Grievance was Unanimously Agreed on, and they Ap[p]roved of what had been written, but as the Northern Members were the Cause of it, the Northern Officers ought to take the Lead and Nothing on their part should be Wanting. . . . The other States are in the Same Situation, and say they are ready to Join." Blanchard had served in the Third New Hampshire Regiment as quartermaster and paymaster. By 1793 his activism and open criticism of Alexander Hamilton drew the fury of the Treasury Secretary. See James Blanchard to Alexander Hamilton, May 1791, and Alexander Hamilton, draft of article against James Blanchard, [January 1793], in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 8:401-403 (and note 1); 13:521-527.

pursuit of their own claim.<sup>51</sup> Hull was especially enthusiastic about this campaign because it would do justice to veterans while, in his view, calling upon the government to do no more than honor the original level of debt. Critics, of course, argued that this was nothing but another form of Madison's "discrimination."

The matter took on new urgency when, on February 2, 1792, Congress voted to create a much enlarged and newly organized army to subdue the Northwest. The measure would incur an enormous new expense and so further jeopardize the officers' plans. A committee of Massachusetts officers that included William Heath, John Brooks, Henry Jackson, and William Eustis decided it best that, for time's sake, applications be submitted by state. They adopted a new petition penned by Benjamin Lincoln, and deputized Hull as their advocate and lobbyist in the federal capital.<sup>52</sup> They also hastily issued a circular to officers of the other states advising them immediately to take similar action and coordinate with Hull. Sure of the justice of their cause, the committee declared their resolve to force a decision: "Our determination is to repeat our application, and re-assert our claim, until we obtain consideration and relief; or until it shall be

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<sup>51</sup> On the final funding terms and remaining creditor dissent, see Ferguson, Power of the Purse, 296-297, 303-304, 321-322; and McDonald, Alexander Hamilton, 185-186, 188, 190. "There is now a formadable [sic] Memorial before Congress by the public creditors (Alias Speculators) for the residue," Blanchard wrote Hull, "and I conceive all our Chance is now." James Blanchard to William Hull, 12 November 1791, William Hull Correspondence, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.

<sup>52</sup> Hull's selection for this duty was another acknowledgment not only of his military and legal experience, but also his mastery of genteel performance, a near necessity for success. Jeffrey L. Pasley has observed that "in the 1790s, a lobbyist whose manners, appearance, and knowledge seemed to mark him as a gentleman had virtually unlimited access to any member of Congress he chose. . . . [He] could not only see congressmen but join fully in their social life at the seat of government." Pasley, "Private Access and Public Power: Gentility and Lobbying in the Early Congress," in The House and Senate in the 1790s: Petitioning, Lobbying, and Institutional Development, ed. Kenneth R. Bowling and Donald R. Kennon (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press for the United States Capitol Historical Society, 2002), 90. See also Pasley's "Democracy, Gentility, and Lobbying in the Early U.S. Congress," in The American Congress: The Building of Democracy, ed. Julian E. Zelizer (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004).

declared by the voice of the United States in Congress, that our claims are visionary and without foundation.”<sup>53</sup>

Following his instructions, Hull arrived in Philadelphia by March 20. The House received his new petition four days later and, as before, promptly tabled it.<sup>54</sup> Although the Massachusetts officers’ project was almost certainly doomed in any case, their timing could hardly have been worse. In addition to the recent funding for an expanded army, there had erupted that very month the United States’ first financial panic. Emanating from New York, it set commercial and political nerves on edge in the capital. Furthermore, no other states had sent applications or officer agents, a problem that Hull attributed to the late communication of the circular. Still he lobbied vigorously, no doubt to the agitation of opponents. “By coaxing, and wheedling, by fawning and flattery, by art and address, he attempted to draw Congress into the measure,” chided a partisan opponent several years later.<sup>55</sup> Finding no success, Hull quickly perceived that it was

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<sup>53</sup> Circular Letter from the Officers of the Massachusetts Line of the Late Army, 28 February 1792, in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 11:52. A copy of the “Petition of the Massachusetts officers to congress,” under Lincoln’s signature, is appended to another copy of the circular, the date mistyped as 23 February. See “Circular letter. From a committee appointed by the officers of the Massachusetts line of the late federal army, to the officers of the different states,” 23 [28] February 1792, from Library of Congress, An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadsides and Other Printed Ephemera, [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/P?rbpe:1:/temp/~ammem\\_FMD7::](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/P?rbpe:1:/temp/~ammem_FMD7::) (accessed 4 April 2007).

<sup>54</sup> Congress, House, 2<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., House Journal (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1826), 1:547 (24 March 1792), from Library of Congress, A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774-1875, [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llhj&fileName=001/llhj001.db&recNum=540&itemLink=r?ammem/hlaw:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(hj001531\)\)%230010541&linkText=1](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llhj&fileName=001/llhj001.db&recNum=540&itemLink=r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DOCID+@lit(hj001531))%230010541&linkText=1) (accessed April 4, 2007). Also reprinted in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 11:53-54, note 2. Hull’s daughter erroneously believed that Hull did not present the petition in the absence of other states’ applications. Maria Campbell and James Freeman Clarke, Revolutionary Services and Civil Life of General William Hull: Prepared from his Manuscripts, by his Daughter, Mrs. Maria Campbell: Together with the History of the Campaign of 1812, and the Surrender of the Post of Detroit, by his Grandson, James Freeman Clarke (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1848; facsimile reprint, New York: Garrett Press, 1970), 241.

<sup>55</sup> “Civis,” “The Chameleon Unmasked, No. 1,” in Columbian Centinel, 29 August 1798, pp. 1-2.

both futile and impolitic to continue independently. With the approval of the Massachusetts committee, he shifted focus toward recruiting more “active” support for the next meeting of Congress in November. On April 14, Hull issued his own printed circular to selected senior officials—Jefferson, Madison, and Postmaster General Timothy Pickering among them—wherein he laid out the army’s case and asked that they “take the earliest opportunity to make this communication known to the officers” within their states.<sup>56</sup>

Hull’s letter exhibited the skill of a trained advocate and the language of moral certitude and honor typical of the age. One finds here few shades of gray. The veterans’ claim was both “fixed in the unalterable principles of justice” and “a demand of the most sacred nature.” Although inevitably some would oppose it, he wrote, “the feelings of every honest heart will overcome every argument which sophistry can devise or ingenuity invent.” The new constitutional government had been formed expressly to “establish justice”; it followed that a matter “founded in the clear and eternal principles of justice” must command its support. In addition, “every honest American” would recognize that the veterans on whose services their own prosperity rested were as yet unrewarded, and that because of this many were now “pining in indigence, languishing in jails, or compelled to seek a subsistence in the neighborhood of savages.” The new fiscal system only deepened the injury, because now “nearly every thing they eat, drink or wear, in

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<sup>56</sup> There are several transcript copies of this circular available, among them Robert A. Rutland and Thomas A. Mason, eds., *The Papers of James Madison*, 17 vols. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1983), 14:283-287; and Campbell and Clarke, *Revolutionary Services*, 241-247. Images of original copies may be found in the Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., microfilm, reel 16; and the Timothy Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, microfilm, reel 19:266.



these distressing situations, is taxed to pay the difference between the former low and the present high value of their certificates to the present holders of them.”<sup>57</sup>

Upon this moral and humanitarian foundation, Hull made the officers’ proposal. He presented it as both just and feasible, one that would enable the government to honor its contracts with both veterans and creditors. First, he argued that only those veterans who had enlisted in 1777 and served a three-year term or to the war’s end yet deserved compensation. Those serving terms expiring before 1777 had not experienced significant currency depreciation, he explained, while those enlisting after 1780 had received substantial bounties. Second, compensation could be made “only by paying the debt which actually existed at the time when the funding system was adopted.” In this way, he argued, “no new debt will be created, and the purchasers of alien[at]ed securities will not be affected, or any interference be made with any systems which have been adobted [sic].” In other words, as above noted, the “remnant” of the original debt would provide the funds. The rivals for this remnant, he wrote, would be “the original holders, who earned the whole by the sweat of their brow, and the present holders, who have already received seven or eight hundred per cent” on their investment. Again assuming full moral posture, he pronounced: “In the name of justice, equity, and good conscience, which claim is to be preferred? Every man will answer, that of the soldier; unless his feelings are steeled against every principle of honor, good faith, and gratitude.”<sup>58</sup> There was no place, it would appear, for legitimate or honorable opposition.

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<sup>57</sup> William Hull to James Madison, Circular, 14 April 1792, Rutland and Mason, eds., Papers of James Madison, 14:284-285.

<sup>58</sup> William Hull to James Madison, Circular, 14 April 1792, Rutland and Mason, eds., Papers of James Madison, 14:285-286.

Such an unequivocal position as Hull's naturally raises the question of Washington's views and how they may have affected Hull's attitude toward his trusted commander. It is well known that Hamilton had successfully convinced Washington of the wisdom of his financial program; the president had approved every measure reaching his desk, funding included. But it was the same Washington to whom the officers looked for influence and leadership in their cause. Had he not pledged himself to support their just compensation at the end of the war, and was this not, if ever, the moment to redeem that pledge? Yet Washington kept publicly aloof. Years later Hull remembered having frequent conversations with him on the subject in this period. The president had acknowledged the justice of the veterans' claims and regretted their neglect. "It is, however, a business of legislation," Washington explained, "and does not belong to my department." Ultimately the commander-in-chief accepted the decision of Congress that granting the officers' demands at present would "interfere with the arrangements which had been made for the public debt." Although he personally desired the army's eventual satisfaction and reaffirmed his support, he would not intervene.<sup>59</sup>

It requires little effort to imagine some officers' exasperation with Washington's prudence. Other contemporaries apparently accused Hull, as principal lobbyist for the officers, of something more than mere disappointment. They blamed him for a series of anonymous editorial attacks against Washington that appeared in Philadelphia at the time—"the first, and most virulent invective against that immortal patriot," one of Hull's later critics declared.<sup>60</sup> Hull denied it outright. "I was not the author, and had no agency

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<sup>59</sup> Campbell and Clarke, *Revolutionary Services*, 249-250.

<sup>60</sup> "Civis," "The Chameleon Unmasked, No. 1," in *Columbian Centinel*, 29 August 1798, p. 2.

or knowledge whatever, either in writing or publishing them,” he protested in his memoir.<sup>61</sup> Probably so, but Washington’s doctrinaire observance of separation of powers on a matter viewed by Hull as one of honor, good faith, and justice could hardly be other than troubling, perhaps deeply disillusioning. Indeed, it is reasonable to consider that the issue of officer compensation did indeed meaningfully contribute to Hull’s eventual parting from many early Federalist/Nationalist allies and drift toward a more Republican interpretation of America’s condition. Had not Madison, after all, advocated justice for veterans and voiced sympathy for their plight when challenging Hamilton’s funding plan?<sup>62</sup> Hull’s later critic regarded his frustration over compensation as “the obvious but unworthy cause of his defection from the side of order and the laws.”<sup>63</sup>

Hull’s engagement as officer agent, meanwhile, in no way precluded his continuing hunt for an honorable and profitable federal appointment. In early February, having heard a rumor of the imminent dismissal of the postmaster of Boston, Hull sent a confidential letter to Postmaster General Pickering asking to be remembered for the position. By Pickering’s estimate, the office drew a yearly income of \$800 and rising. Hull now cited family need as the basis for his request. “Having a numerous family of young children, and wishing to reside in a convenient Situation for their education, would be my principal inducement,” he explained.<sup>64</sup> Pickering confirmed to Hull his wish for

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<sup>61</sup> Campbell and Clarke, *Revolutionary Services*, 249. See also the 4 September 1798 entry in William Bentley, *The Diary of William Bentley, D.D., Pastor of the East Church, Salem, Massachusetts*, (Salem, Mass.: Essex Institute, 1905-1914; reprint, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1962), 2:280.

<sup>62</sup> Banning, *Sacred Fire of Liberty*, 311-313.

<sup>63</sup> Civis,” “The Chameleon Unmasked, No. 2,” in *Columbian Centinel*, 1 September 1798, p. 1.

<sup>64</sup> William Hull to Timothy Pickering, 4 February 1792, Timothy Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, microfilm, reel 19:253.

the Boston postmaster's removal. Unfortunately, Pickering explained, the man had caught wind of the plan and mobilized political support, such that for now the matter was suspended.<sup>65</sup>

After this, in Philadelphia, Hull sought another opportunity. In April, Knox presented to John Brooks another military commission, this time as brigadier general in the reorganized and again expanded national army, the so-called Legion of the United States, under the new command of Major General Anthony Wayne.<sup>66</sup> Informed of this, Hull once again wrote Washington to ask for Brooks's current position as federal marshal for the district of Massachusetts.<sup>67</sup>

Earlier, before Brooks's selection, Hull had discussed the Legion post with Knox and candidly expressed a desire for it. The fact that Brooks had been chosen over him was perfectly understandable, Hull now reported, given his respect for Brooks and their ranking in the Revolution; indeed, he would have made the same choice. (Both Hull and Brooks, it will be remembered, had refused a lower-ranking appointment the previous year, to their good fortune.) Just before Hull left Philadelphia to return to Newton, Knox privately informed him that, should Brooks decline, the commission would most likely be his.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Timothy Pickering to William Hull, 16 February 1792, Autograph File: James Freeman Clarke, 45M-181 (438), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge. Pickering agreed to honor Hull's request for confidentiality.

<sup>66</sup> Henry Knox to John Brooks, 12 April 1792, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 31:35.

<sup>67</sup> William Hull to George Washington, 12 April 1792, from Library of Congress, George Washington Papers, Series 7: Applications for Office, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mgw7&fileName=gwpage121.db&recNum=505> (accessed 4 April 2007).

<sup>68</sup> William Hull to Henry Knox, 27 May 1792, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 31:115.

Brooks's reluctance to accept soon became apparent, and on May 6 an anxious secretary of war wrote Hull, urging him to accept the Legion appointment and return to the capital "with all possible dispatch" at the first notice of Brooks's refusal. In fact Brooks had already informed Hull of his decision even before Knox's letter arrived. The rank of brigadier general in the U.S. Army and a military career were now Hull's for the taking. More than the earlier offer of a command under St. Clair, this commission would reaffirm and elevate Hull's status under the new government. Such had been Hull's expressed desire for it that Knox had already assured Washington of Hull's acceptance.<sup>69</sup>

Instead Hull again frustrated the war secretary's expectations. His desire for the position, Hull confessed, had now come up against certain realities at home. Upon arrival in Newton, he found his father-in-law gravely ill, with "no expectation of living but a short time." Weak in body, however, the old man's will remained strong. When Hull presented to him the contents of Knox's letter, Hull explained, "no arguments which I could make use of, would reconcile him to the measure. . . . He considered that I had an intention, not only of abandoning him, but my family." Judge Fuller, Hull reminded Knox, possessed "a very independent property" and Sarah was his only child. On both filial and fiscal grounds, therefore, he could not accept. There were other considerations in the decision to decline, Hull noted, but he hoped that his frankness on this count would help to preserve with Knox "a character of consistency and propriety of conduct."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> John Brooks to Henry Knox, 24 April 1792; Henry Knox to William Hull, 6 May 1792; William Hull to Henry Knox, 17 May 1792; and Henry Knox to William Hull, 20 May 1792, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 31:54, 76, 96, 98.

<sup>70</sup> William Hull to Henry Knox, 27 May 1792, William Hull to Henry Knox, 27 May 1792, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 31:115. Undoubtedly some of Hull's other reasons for declining were similar to those of the previous year. Also, Fuller again encouraged Hull in his decision by making a loan of £159. Under the circumstances this was actually an advance on Hull's inheritance. See inclusion of Hull's notes of 22 May 1792, listed in manuscript list of personal property belonging to the

Neither Hull's refusal of command nor his prominence as a lobbyist for Revolutionary compensation appears to have harmed his standing with Washington's administration. His selection for these important roles demonstrates that he held the confidence of many colleagues and superiors, including several "first characters," who regarded him as a reliable and capable officer, effective advocate, and accomplished gentleman. To affirm the fact, perhaps to mark his upcoming fortieth birthday, he sat bewigged, erect, and uniformed for the famous portrait and patriot artist John Trumbull.<sup>71</sup>

Despite Hull's second refusal to accept a federal military commission, American-Indian relations soon developed in a way that drew him into western affairs. While the army under Wayne prepared for a campaign of conquest to retrieve Harmar's and St. Clair's losses, Knox sent out several emissaries to western Indians to persuade them of the United States' desire to resolve differences peacefully. Two died at the hands of hostile warriors. In September Brigadier General Rufus Putnam, Hull's former Ohio Company colleague, held a council in Vincennes with a number of Illinois and Wabash tribes and signed a treaty guaranteeing the natives' control of their lands. Neither side honored the terms. American-recruited Six Nations (Iroquois) chiefs including Mohawk Joseph Brant also ventured west as intermediaries. None of course could resolve the major point of contention: American settlement north of the Ohio River. By now the

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estate of Abraham Fuller, 15 May 1794, William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (32), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge. Perhaps Hull had also thought twice about serving under Anthony Wayne. It was under Wayne, of course, that Hull had participated in the assault on Stony Point in the Revolution, and against whom he and other officers had protested for slighting their contributions in the initial report to Congress. Campbell's biography makes no mention of either this or Knox's previous offer of command to Hull. Subsequent refusals by others ultimately resulted in the promotion of James Wilkinson to second in command under Wayne.

<sup>71</sup> The actual date of this small (4" x 3 1/8") oil-on-panel portrait, now owned by the Yale University Art Gallery, is uncertain. Smithsonian Institution, National Portrait Gallery, Portrait Search, "William Hull," <http://emuseum.si.edu/code/emuseum.asp> (accessed 18 March 2005).

western Indians, with British backing, wanted the great river fixed as a permanent, unambiguous, and enforceable boundary between themselves and the swelling American presence. For Washington and Knox a ray of hope appeared in the fall of 1792 when their Six Nations emissaries reported that a grand Indian council at the Maumee rapids (or Auglaize, near present-day Defiance, Ohio) had agreed to treat with American representatives the following spring. With Wayne's army far from ready and Indian war possible, and with domestic opposition to the administration's Indian policy intensifying, the president eagerly accepted.<sup>72</sup>

Knox continued to focus on military plans while Hamilton took charge of logistical arrangements for the spring council.<sup>73</sup> The complex and expensive task of hosting some five thousand men, women, and children for as long as six weeks in territory still under British control would require careful planning and diplomacy. The British controlled all traffic on Lake Erie, and it was obvious that the United States could accomplish little without their cooperation, in particular that of the governor of the newly created province of Upper Canada.<sup>74</sup> In December the British Minister to the United States George Hammond told Hamilton that all needed provisions could likely be gotten

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<sup>72</sup> Kohn, Eagle and Sword, 141-146; Reginald Horsman, Expansion and American Indian Policy, 1783-1812 (n.p.: Michigan State University Press, 1967), 90-96. Brant and the Six Nations chiefs deliberately did not inform the Washington administration of the western Indians' stipulations for a peace council: acceptance of the Ohio boundary and the American evacuation of all forts recently established north of Cincinnati. A good examination of these and subsequent negotiations and policy is Gerard H. Clarfield, Timothy Pickering and the American Republic (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1980), chap. 10. The broader context of Indian-British-American borderland relations in this era is examined in Alan Taylor, The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution (New York: Knopf, 2006). See especially pp. 266-277.

<sup>73</sup> This division of responsibility between the War and Treasury departments was one result of investigations following St. Clair's disaster.

<sup>74</sup> Earlier that year another American peace effort had already foundered on that count. Kohn, Eagle and Sword, 143-144; Horsman, Expansion and American Indian Policy, 90-91.

from Canadian suppliers, a suggestion that seemed to imply that the governor had necessary authority in the matter. Hamilton quickly announced that he would send an agent to the region to make the arrangements.<sup>75</sup>

Specifically how and why Hull was chosen for this mission—whether at the preference of Hamilton, Knox, or Washington or as an outcome of general discussion; whether as a first or alternate choice—is not certain. Availability was probably a consideration. Hull was already in Philadelphia for Congress’s new session to resume his advocacy for officer pensions. Finding no progress possible, he could welcome an honorable and gainful short-term assignment. Some opponents may have seen his appointment as an attempt to appease or divert a bothersome presence.<sup>76</sup> Whether based in any truth or not—and no evidence has been found to give this weight—Hull’s appointment did reflect his qualifications and recognition as an able diplomat, negotiator, and administrator. Eight and a half years earlier he had ended his long Revolutionary service with a mission to the governor of Quebec to expedite the evacuation of British-held forts in the Northwest. Now his second trip to Canada, and first to the Great Lakes, would require him to negotiate with another governor as well as private contractors and tribal chiefs.

On January 15, 1793, the president approved Hamilton’s draft of Hull’s instructions. First, he was to arrange for the free passage of supplies to the Indian council, and to protest the illegal arming and provisioning of Indians by British agents.

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<sup>75</sup> Alexander Hamilton to George Hammond, British Minister to the United States, 29 December 1792, in Syrett and Cooke, eds., *Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, 13:382-383.

<sup>76</sup> In 1798 a heated Federalist critic wrote of Hull’s appointment: “Willing to take the loaves and fishes of the government which he was abusing, the General accepted, and after receiving the fruits returned to *Philadelphia* to continue that abuse against the President and Congress, which he had begun.” “Civis,” “The Chameleon Unmasked, No. 1,” in *Columbian Centinel*, 29 August 1798, p. 2.



Second, he would conclude contracts with Canadian merchants for all needed provisions. Finally, he was to promote the council and American goodwill among the tribes.<sup>77</sup>

Hull set out promptly, stopping in New York City to call on William Edgar, a partner in a Detroit-based firm that regularly supplied the British army's Indian department. Hamilton had requested letters of introduction for Hull to respectable Canadian merchants.<sup>78</sup> Equipped with these, Hull began his wintertime expedition towards the Upper Canadian seat of government at Niagara. He headed north along the Hudson River to Schenectady, from where he proceeded westward by sleigh. On January 27 he passed through Oneida territory and drew paternalistic satisfaction as he witnessed signs of the tribe's acculturation: a mill, a blacksmith, a schoolmaster, and a clergyman. "God grant, that the avarice of this country may never disturb these native proprietors," he wrote in his journal, "but that they may long live to enjoy their innocent customs, be enlightened, and made respectable and happy." That evening he arrived in Canandaigua, the most developed frontier town of the region, where he met the American Superintendent to the Six Nations, General Israel Chapin, a former Revolutionary militia officer of Grafton, Massachusetts, and now well-to-do cattle raiser. The following morning Chapin introduced Hull to a council of some thirty Seneca chiefs and warriors. Hull addressed the assembly and received a "handsome and very interesting" reply.

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<sup>77</sup> George Washington, journal entry, 14-15 January 1793, in Dorothy Twohig, ed., The Journal of the Proceedings of the President, 1793-1797, vol. in W. W. Abbot, ed., The Papers of George Washington (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1981), 17-18. No original copies of either drafted or final instructions have been found, only a summary in Campbell's account. Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 254-255.

<sup>78</sup> Alexander Hamilton to William Edgar, 17 January 1793, in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 13:502, (inc. ed. note 1).

“They seemed much pleased,” he thought, “especially when I informed them that I should leave a sum of money to be applied to their entertainment.”<sup>79</sup>

On the subject of Hull’s mission, Chapin claimed that American merchants could better supply the spring peace council than those of Upper Canada. Hull responded by drawing up a provisional contract with a Colonel Taylor and two of Chapin’s sons for all supplies that might be required. The contract stipulated, first, that the British agree to allow free passage on the lakes, and second, that no more advantageous contract could be made in Canada. Hull acknowledged that his instructions did not specifically authorize him to contract with American citizens. However, he informed Hamilton, “I re-examined my power of attorney and found sufficient Authority in that for the purpose.”<sup>80</sup>

Hull departed Canandaigua accompanied by Taylor, who intended to make arrangements immediately upon satisfaction of the contract stipulations, and a young Mr. Reed, son of Col. Seth Reed of Geneva who provided the party a fresh sleigh and horses. Reaching the east bank of the Genesee River, the three travelers crossed the river, leaving the sleigh and the last white settlement behind, and proceeded westward on horseback along an Indian trail.<sup>81</sup> By now the weather had warmed so that they had to slog along

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<sup>79</sup> William Hull, journal entry, 27 January [1793] (misprinted as 1794), “Extracts from a Journal of Colonel Hull, while Commissioner to treat with the British and hold Treaties with the Indians,” in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 286-287. A nice description of Canandaigua and American development in the region for this period is in William H. Siles, “Wilderness Investment: The New York Frontier During the Federal Period,” in World of the Founders: New York Communities in the Federal Period, ed. Stephen L. Schechter and Wendell Tripp (Albany: New York State Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution, 1990), 139-164. On Chapin and the growing Iroquois expectation of hospitality, see Taylor, Divided Ground, 273-274.

<sup>80</sup> William Hull to Alexander Hamilton, 6 February 1793, in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 14:9-13.

<sup>81</sup> William Hull to Alexander Hamilton, 6 February 1793, in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 14:9-13; William Hull, journal entry, 28 January 1793, “Extracts from a Journal of Colonel Hull,” in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 287-288. Campbell’s transcription of Hull’s journal identifies the river as the “Geneva,” but this was almost certainly a misreading of Hull’s

the “very deep and miry” path—perhaps for Hull a reminder of some of his Revolutionary travails. On February 1, the worn-out trio drew to within about four miles of the Indian village of Tonawanda when darkness overtook them. Hull gave in to his companions’ urging to press on. He described what followed:

About eight o’clock we arrived at the river opposite to the village. It was frozen about half over, and quite deep. We called, and an Indian soon came to the opposite bank. He could not speak English, and we could understand nothing he said. We finally broke away the ice and plunged in with our horses. The water was up to the saddles. The Indian guided us to his wigwam. It was not long before a great many of the Indians assembled. I spoke to them in the most friendly terms possible, and continued to speak until exhausted by fatigue, I fell asleep, and did not awake until daylight.

That morning Hull thanked his hosts, reaffirmed the American mission of peace, and provided “money enough to make the whole village happy.”<sup>82</sup>

Accompanied by Tonawanda guides, the small party approached the Niagara River. Hull cast his first gaze upon the great falls now shrouded in cascades of ice, then continued northward along the river toward Lake Ontario. En route the party stopped at a Tuscarora village where Hull again tried to promote American goodwill. He encouraged the chiefs to attend the spring treaty, the warriors to remain peaceful, and all to “drink the health of their Father and friend, General Washington.” After dispensing another monetary gift, Hull and his suite proceeded to Fort Niagara at the river’s end.<sup>83</sup> The next

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script. Actual geography, known settlement conditions of the period, and an examination of Hull’s writing of the name elsewhere support the conclusion that the Genesee is the river referred to. See, for example, [William Hull], *Directions to the United States Commissioners*, n.d., Timothy Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, microfilm, reel 59:96; and William Hull, *Diary of 23 March-2 April 1793*, 26 March 1793 entry, William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (105a), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge.

<sup>82</sup> William Hull, journal entry, 1 February 1793, “Extracts from a Journal of Colonel Hull,” in Campbell and Clarke, *Revolutionary Services*, 288-289.

<sup>83</sup> William Hull, journal entry, 2 February 1793, “Extracts from a Journal of Colonel Hull,” in Campbell and Clarke, *Revolutionary Services*, 289.

day, February 3, the Americans crossed to the western side of the ice-laden river to the town of Niagara (today Niagara-on-the-Lake). Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe politely and formally welcomed Hull at his Navy Hall residence with full company assembled. Hull presented his letter of credentials from Hammond and explained his purpose, of which the governor was already well aware.<sup>84</sup>

The dignified reception notwithstanding, the reality was that Hull could have faced no more inveterate or enterprising foe of American independence and expansion than Simcoe. The governor's antipathy toward George Washington and the American government was longstanding and intense; he was as much unreconciled to the American Revolution as Hull identified with it.<sup>85</sup> A year older than Hull, Simcoe had assumed his post as first governor of Upper Canada only the previous summer. He, like Hull, had served long years in the Revolutionary War, rising from a British adjutant at Boston in 1775 to full colonel following the British surrender at Yorktown in 1781. In the course of the war he was twice wounded, once seriously, and once captured and made prisoner. He had served under Lord Cornwallis in Trenton during that famous engagement. Simcoe's main wartime reputation had been made as commander of the "Queen's Rangers," an effective loyalist regiment based in New Jersey that had joined in the Battle of Monmouth and the first British capture of Stony Point, also important scenes of action

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<sup>84</sup> Hull's and Simcoe's reports of their meeting are found, respectively, in William Hull to Alexander Hamilton, 6 February 1793, in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 14:9-13, and John Graves Simcoe to George Hammond, 3 February 1793, in E. A. Cruikshank, ed., The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe, With Allied Documents Relating to his Administration of the Government of Upper Canada, 5 vols. (Toronto: Ontario Historical Society, 1923-1931), 1:286-287, most of which is also printed in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 14:9-10, note 2. See also Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 254-259.

<sup>85</sup> See, for example, John Graves Simcoe to Alured Clarke, 1 and 5 April 1793, in Cruikshank, ed., Simcoe Correspondence, 1:308-311. To Simcoe's mind, the Revolution had not been won by the Americans, but rather lost "by error and domestic treason."

for Hull. The two men could have much of mutual interest to discuss, albeit from differing points of view.<sup>86</sup> Time was limited, however, for Simcoe had already arranged to leave the next morning on a six-week overland tour to Detroit.<sup>87</sup>

The governor, who still dreamed of restoring the United States to Britain's Empire, favored for now the establishment of the Allegheny and Ohio Rivers as a clear boundary between American and Indian territory, with the British as guarantor. At a minimum he was determined to prevent any further Indian land cessions; he hoped the United States could be induced to accept the desired boundary in exchange for peace. It followed that he supported a peace council but only one whose outcome he could control.<sup>88</sup> Naturally he distrusted American intentions. The western chiefs had announced Lower Sandusky as their chosen council site. Knox, however, had subsequently declared that the event would take place further west and inland at the Maumee rapids. The change was no accident, Simcoe believed, but calculated to enable American agents to reconnoiter the more remote and strategic region.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Charles Alexander Harris, "Simcoe, John Graves," in Dictionary of National Biography, ed. Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee, 22 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1921-1922); Mark Mayo Boatner III, Encyclopedia of the American Revolution (New York: David McCay Co., 1966), 1009-1010. It was at this time that the conversation between Hull and Simcoe over the American army's escape from Trenton took place. See above, pp. 38-39.

<sup>87</sup> William Hull to Alexander Hamilton, 6 February 1793, in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 14:11; John Graves Simcoe to George Hammond, 3 February 1793, in Cruikshank, ed., Simcoe Correspondence, 1:287.

<sup>88</sup> John Graves Simcoe to Alured Clarke, 1 and 5 April 1793, in Cruikshank, ed., Simcoe Correspondence, 1:308-311; Taylor, Divided Ground, 268-269.

<sup>89</sup> John Graves Simcoe to George Hammond, 21 January 1793, in Cruikshank, ed., Simcoe Correspondence, 5:29-30, and excerpted in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 13:383, note 1. Historian Alan Taylor has emphasized that Simcoe's goal in this period remained to achieve a complete reversal of the Revolution. Alan Taylor, "John Graves Simcoe's Counter-Revolution," presentation given at Society for Historians of the Early American Republic Annual Meeting, 18 July 2003, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio (author's notes).

Even before Hull's arrival, the governor had determined that no exception could or would be made to his standing orders not to permit passage of any American supplies to the Indians. Instead he would honor military orders, approved precedent, and his own pledge to the Indians to furnish all needed provisions. The chiefs did not wish to be dependent on the nation they were treating with, he informed Hull.<sup>90</sup> He also confirmed what Chapin and the Indians had already told Hull, that Lower Sandusky was indeed the designated council site. Hull expressed his assumption that the discrepancy was not intentional, but must have originated from a misinterpretation in the message sent to the president, which indeed proved to be the case.<sup>91</sup>

Simcoe was deft in pursuing his goal. His presentation was that of one wishing to be supportive and cooperative, but inflexibly constrained by policy, precedent, and promises. On those grounds he firmly refused to allow any American supply to the Sandusky council—thus assuring a British presence—even while affirming that he had no wish either to prevent or impede it. On the contrary, he told Hull, he would do everything possible to facilitate the passage and accommodations of the American commissioners.<sup>92</sup> The governor offered British vessels and his full personal assistance,

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<sup>90</sup> William Hull to Alexander Hamilton, 6 February 1793, in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 14:9-13; John Graves Simcoe to George Hammond, 3 February 1793, in Cruikshank, ed., Simcoe Correspondence, 1:286-287; William Hull to General Israel Chapin, 10 February 1793, B.V. Sec., Henry O'Reilly Papers, vol. 9, case 40, New-York Historical Society, New York.

<sup>91</sup> John Graves Simcoe to George Hammond, 21 January 1793 and 3 February 1793, in Cruikshank, ed., Simcoe Correspondence, 5:29-30, and 1:286-287. (Both letters are excerpted in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 14:9-10, notes 1 and 2.) By the end of the month, Knox acknowledged the mistake caused, he claimed, by the interpreter, one Jasper Parrish. Henry Knox to William Hull, 28 February 1793, Northwest Territory Collection, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; George Washington, journal entry, 28 February 1793, in Twohig, ed., Journal of the Proceedings of the President, 73, and 74-75, note 2.

<sup>92</sup> John Graves Simcoe to George Hammond, 3 February 1793, in Cruikshank, ed., Simcoe Correspondence, 1:286-287; William Hull to General Israel Chapin, 10 February 1793, B.V. Sec., Henry O'Reilly Papers, vol. 9, case 40, New-York Historical Society, New York.

even his own attendance if desired. He supplied Hull with certified copies of the proceedings of the earlier Indian councils, and of his replies. Finally, perhaps to induce American acceptance of his participation, he hinted that “by proper management, the Indians might be brought to recede from their demands with respect to the boundaries.”<sup>93</sup>

Simcoe’s rigid position left little room for negotiation. In private discussions after dinner and following breakfast the next morning, Hull pressed the governor regarding his real discretion in the supply question. After all, why would Hammond have suggested that the Americans could get their supplies in Canada if there was an established policy to the contrary? The point made no impression. Neither did a restatement of the Treaty of Paris provision for shared navigation rights on the lakes. Hull saw clearly that Simcoe intended to maintain a British presence at the treaty. As for the governor’s offer of assistance, Hull politely thanked him but denied any authority to accept or decline. Hull also followed Hamilton’s instructions by warmly protesting the continued arming of Indians by Upper Canadian agents and officers. Simcoe disclaimed responsibility, stating that military and Indian policy fell under the authority of Lord Dorchester (formerly General Guy Carleton), governor-general of British North America, whom he presumed had exercised his authority properly.<sup>94</sup> The tone of Hull’s statement, however, apparently impressed Simcoe with the depth of American feelings that the

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<sup>93</sup> George Washington, journal entry, 24 February 1793, in Twohig, ed., Journal of the Proceedings of the President, 66.

<sup>94</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 254-259; “Extracts from a Journal of Colonel Hull,” in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 289. Carleton, it will be recalled, was the commanding general in New York at the conclusion of the Revolution whose dinner invitation Hull had been obliged to decline. He had been ennobled as the first Baron Dorchester in August 1786. George Fisher Russell Barker, “Carleton, Guy,” in Dictionary of National Biography; Paul David Nelson, General Sir Guy Carleton, Lord Dorchester: Soldier-Statesman of Early British Canada (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2000).

continued British occupation of the western forts was unjustified and intolerable. He also later repeated on more than one occasion Hull's probing remark half-threatening a challenge to his ban on Lake Erie: "Suppose we were to drive cattle from New England to Presqu' Isle, there salt them down, and build boats to carry them to the Indians, would that not be a good New England trick?"<sup>95</sup>

Despite their opposing political and national views, Simcoe and Hull apparently acquired a grudging mutual respect. Hull was pleased with the courteous and genteel treatment accorded him. "I have received every possible civility & respect, from the Governor[, ] his officers, and the Gentlemen of the place," he reported to Hamilton.<sup>96</sup> Simcoe cut an impressive figure, as did his accomplished wife Elizabeth. "She sustains a most excellent character," Hull recorded privately, "and the Governor seems to be the idol of the people."<sup>97</sup> Likewise, Simcoe perceived Hull as a model diplomat and gentleman: "General Hull . . . was in all his behaviour very acceptable to His Majesty's Officers," he later recalled.<sup>98</sup> Before taking his own departure, Simcoe provided Hull a passport authorizing him and his companions to return to American territory whenever and wherever he thought proper.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> John Graves Simcoe to Alured Clarke, 5 April 1793, in Cruikshank, ed., Simcoe Correspondence, 1:310. See also John Graves Simcoe to Lord Dorchester, 14 March 1794, in Cruikshank, ed., Simcoe Correspondence, 2:183.

<sup>96</sup> William Hull to Alexander Hamilton, 6 February 1793, in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 14:13.

<sup>97</sup> "Extracts from a Journal of Colonel Hull," in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 289.

<sup>98</sup> John Graves Simcoe to the Duke of Portland, 22 December 1794, in Cruikshank, ed., Simcoe Correspondence, 3:239.

<sup>99</sup> Passport for General Hull, Colonel Taylor, and the General's suite, 4 February 1793, William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (105e), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge.



Hull hesitated on how best to proceed, however, uncertain of how the administration in Philadelphia would respond to the unexpected news of his thwarted mission. Would the president try to move the council to a place accessible to American provisions? Would he proceed on Simcoe's terms and send commissioners through Niagara? Or would he scrap the whole business along with the hope of peace? Hull dispatched the young Reed to rush his reports to Hamilton and Knox, enclosing Simcoe's copies of the proceedings of the Indian councils and the governor's replies.<sup>100</sup> He initially thought to return to Canandaigua to await further instructions, in case the president should choose the first option. Hull knew, however, that the Indians would dislike the idea of relocating the treaty. He decided instead to remain in the Niagara area and continue gathering information on the region's personnel and resources.<sup>101</sup> This he did, visiting among others Robert Hamilton, "the most respectable" Niagara merchant and a Legislative Council member who also oversaw the portage around the falls, and John Stedman, a trader at Fort Schlosser near the falls on the American side. There Hull awaited his instructions from Philadelphia.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Henry Knox to William Hull, 28 February 1793, Northwest Territory Collection, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; George Washington, journal entry, 24 February 1793, in Twohig, ed., Journal of the Proceedings of the President, 66.

<sup>101</sup> William Hull to Alexander Hamilton, 6 February 1793, in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 14:12-13; George Washington, journal entry, 24 February 1793, in Twohig, ed., Journal of the Proceedings of the President, 66. Hull also wrote to Chapin with the disappointing news of his negotiations. Should the administration try to move the council, he conjectured, Niagara, Buffalo, or Canandaigua would be the most likely options. William Hull to General Israel Chapin, 10 February 1793, B.V. Sec., Henry O'Reilly Papers, vol. 9, case 40, New-York Historical Society, New York.

<sup>102</sup> From Robert Hamilton, Hull concluded that "a part of the supplies could have been better supplied here than from the States." William Hull to Alexander Hamilton, 6 February 1793, in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 14:12; John Graves Simcoe to Alured Clarke, 20 March 1793, in Cruikshank, ed., Simcoe Correspondence, 1:303. Stedman's accommodations were, in Hull's judgment, much the best in the region. [William Hull], Directions to the United States Commissioners, n.d., Timothy Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, microfilm, reel 59:97.

On Sunday, February 24, Hull's communications reached the president, prompting him to gather his cabinet for urgent consultation the following morning. The administration now evidently concluded that peace with the Indians on acceptable terms was all but impossible. They unanimously agreed, however, that the Sandusky council ought to proceed, if for no other reason than to quiet criticism of the administration's war policy—"merely to gratify public opinion," as Jefferson put it, "not from an expectation of success." It would also provide General Wayne more time to prepare the western offensive.<sup>103</sup> Reed set out again on February 28 with Hull's instructions to accept Simcoe's offer to facilitate the passage of the American commissioners to Sandusky, and then to return to Philadelphia. There was no proper basis, Knox added, for offering an invitation to any British officer to attend the council.<sup>104</sup>

Three weeks into March, Simcoe returned from Detroit and was astonished to find Hull still in Niagara. The two again dined together and agreed on arrangements for the American commissioners. Some of the governor's aides expressed a desire to attend the council; Hull merely promised that he would communicate their request. The next day he departed, perhaps anticipating that he might soon be back again. "General Hull, I apprehend, expects to be one of the Commissioners," Simcoe reported.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> George Washington to Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, Henry Knox, and Edmund Randolph, 24 February 1793, in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 14:140; George Washington, journal entry, 24 February 1793, in Twohig, ed., Journal of the Proceedings of the President, 66-67; "Cabinet Opinions on Indian Affairs," [25 February 1793], in Boyd, ed., The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, 25:258-259; Horsman, Expansion and American Indian Policy, 96; Kohn, Eagle and Sword, 149-150 (Jefferson quote on p. 149).

<sup>104</sup> Henry Knox to William Hull, 28 February 1793, Northwest Territory Collection, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; George Washington, journal entry, 24 February 1793, in Twohig, ed., Journal of the Proceedings of the President, 66; Alexander Hamilton to William Hull, 28 February 1793, in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 26:694-695.

<sup>105</sup> John Graves Simcoe to Alured Clarke, 20 March 1793, and Edward Baker Littlehales to George Hammond, 21 March 1793, in Cruikshank, ed., Simcoe Correspondence, 1:303, 3:36; [William

Hull returned to Philadelphia by an entirely different route, giving him an opportunity to observe firsthand other territory and peoples he had only heard of. He started southward to Fort Erie, where for the first time he gazed out onto the waters that would play an important and ultimately tragic role in his still-distant future. "It is a beautiful Lake & the Lands on it are excellent," he observed in his journal. He and a servant then ferried over to American territory and lodged with an Indian trader at the large Seneca settlement of Buffalo Creek. From there they rode east to Tonawanda Creek, slept in the woods, and continued on to the Genesee. Turning southward and upland, Hull visited the home of a Captain Williamson on the Canaseraga River. This American speculator and his London partner had purchased a large tract of land from Robert Morris, and then recruited some three hundred Germans to settle there. "At present they are troublesome, and make much difficulty," complained the captain's agent to Hull.<sup>106</sup> Twelve miles farther upriver, Hull endured a miserable night in a twelve-foot-square hovel crowded with eighteen men, women, and children. Mountainous terrain over the watershed and muddy roads on a long, plodding ride to Canisteo only compounded his fatigue. Conditions grew so poor that Hull was forced to abandon his horses altogether, and with no canoes available he had no choice but to carve out his own. Beginning the project in the morning, he finished by mid-afternoon and, accompanied by a hired local settler, launched the makeshift craft into the Canisteo River. The journey now moved along more swiftly and comfortably, as over the next several days Hull

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Hull], Directions to the United States Commissioners, n.d., Timothy Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, microfilm, reel 59:96-98.

<sup>106</sup> William Hull, Diary of 23 March-2 April 1793, William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (105a), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge.

followed the strong springtime currents of the Canisteo, Tioga, Chemung, and Susquehanna Rivers.<sup>107</sup> He arrived in the American capital by the second week of April, after Congress's adjournment in March. There he briefed the administration, and collected \$1,088 for his near three-months' service.<sup>108</sup>

Any notion Hull may have had of continuing as one of the Sandusky commissioners went unrealized, however. Washington had already selected a set of "first characters"—Timothy Pickering, Benjamin Lincoln, and former Virginia governor Beverly Randolph—as part of the administration's strategy to win public support for the planned war. If citizens were to perceive the president as having made anything less than his best effort for peace, critics would have the upper hand.<sup>109</sup> In any case, Hull could not have changed the mission's outcome, which ultimately had nothing to do with diplomatic skill and everything to do with the incompatible positions of the American government and the British-backed western Indians. The failure of the peace mission over the next several months is well recorded, as is the success of Wayne's army in the Battle of Fallen Timbers a year later.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> William Hull, Diary of 23 March-2 April 1793, William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (105a), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge.

<sup>108</sup> Alexander Hamilton, "Report on an Account of Receipts and Expenditures of the United States for the Year 1793," 26 December 1794, in Syrett and Cooke, eds., Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 17:527.

<sup>109</sup> For this reason Washington even considered appointing North Carolina congressman John Steele, one of the most vocal opponents of the president's military policy. Kohn, Eagle and Sword, 147, 151. Gerard H. Clarfield notes that Pickering was chosen also because of his support among the Six Nations. Clarfield, Timothy Pickering and the American Republic, 138. Washington officially appointed Pickering, Lincoln, and Randolph on March 2, although he had already issued secret instructions to them the day after the cabinet discussion. John B. Dillon, A History of Indiana, from its Earliest Exploration by Europeans to the Close of the Territorial Government, in 1816; Comprehending a History of the Discovery, Settlement, and Civil and Military Affairs of the Territory of the U.S. Northwest of the River Ohio (Indianapolis: Bingham & Doughty, 1859), 301.

<sup>110</sup> Useful accounts include Kohn, Eagle and Sword, 151-154; Clarfield, Timothy Pickering and the American Republic, 138-144; and Paul David Nelson, Anthony Wayne: Soldier of the Early Republic (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1985).

Despite the limited effect of Hull's Niagara mission on policy, however, his appointment and experience were personally significant. His exposure to the landscape, resources, politics, and peoples of the northern American hinterland and Great Lakes region provided an important introduction. Hull would soon speculate in these "excellent" lands and later, of course, serve as governor in the Indian-white "middle ground" of the Old Northwest. Exactly how his encounters with the Upper Canadian government and regional traders, settlers, and indigenous peoples may have played into a vision of his own prospects and potential as a territorial governor is uncertain. In any case, the mission succored his diplomatic credentials and sense of national standing. He and his family would justly take pride that he had been singly entrusted with a matter of national importance under the new constitutional government.

By the beginning of Washington's second presidential term, then, Hull had become a familiar presence in the national capital. His military and legal experience had parlayed into offers of frontier army commands, an interest-group assignment as Continental officer advocate, and a short-term appointment as federal emissary. At the same time, however, his hopes of greater personal reward and recognition by the new government whose founding he had so warmly supported had failed to materialize. It was evident that he still did not bear a civic reputation—a "character"—of the first rank, and thus had been unable to convert his Revolutionary credentials and administration connections into an honorific and lucrative public appointment. With the memory of the Revolution growing only more distant and other matters of state taking precedence, and without greater wealth to improve his status, he now saw clearly that gaining such a position was unlikely. Most disconcerting was the steadfast refusal of Congress to

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reconsider officer compensation, in Hull's mind a national pledge yet unredeemed.

Despite his continued advocacy, the majority remained opposed and the measure died.<sup>111</sup>

That issue, already over a decade old, would remain a sore point for him and his family for several decades more, even well beyond the 1818 Revolutionary War Pension Act.<sup>112</sup>

All in all, if the establishment of the new constitutional government had been a national blessing, it had also thus far proven personally disappointing.

As it happened, Hull's reappearance in Philadelphia coincided with a much more momentous arrival that excited new passions in the capital and throughout the nation: news that the young French Republic, having guillotined the deposed King Louis XVI, had also declared war on Great Britain and the Netherlands. A new collision between Atlantic giants that would engulf most of a quarter century and profoundly affect American fortunes (and Hull's) was begun. On April 22 the president, having rushed back from Mount Vernon to consult with his cabinet, proclaimed American neutrality, while the new French minister to the United States, Citizen Edmond Charles Genet, made his feted procession northward from Charleston towards the American capital. Hull, meanwhile, more quietly sailed for Massachusetts, arriving home in time for the birth of

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<sup>111</sup> According to Campbell, Hull was chosen again in 1793 as the Massachusetts officers' agent to Philadelphia. During the preceding year the financial panic had run its course and officers of several other states had drawn up their own petitions and dispatched agents to join Hull's effort. Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 248.

<sup>112</sup> See his daughter Maria's comment in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 250. For discussion of the 1818 pension act, see John Resch, Suffering Soldiers: Revolutionary War Veterans, Moral Sentiment, and Political Culture in the Early Republic (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999).

his seventh child.<sup>113</sup> Now soon to turn forty, he was more uncertain than ever of his future course but still determined to realize his post-Revolutionary aspirations.

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<sup>113</sup> Samuel C. Clarke, comp., Records of Some of the Descendants of Richard Hull, New Haven, 1639-1662 (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1869), 9; Thomas Hunt to William Hull, 16 December 1793, William Hull Correspondence, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.

## CHAPTER 5

### CAPITALIST (1793-1799)

The curtain to the so-called “age of passion” and “political violence” rose just as Hull returned from his Niagara mission in the spring of 1793, at the beginning of Washington’s second presidential term. He was perhaps more uncertain than ever of his future course, but still determined to provide well for his family and fulfill his Revolutionary promise. He still held major advantages. Foremost was his standing reputation as an intrepid Revolutionary officer. Despite lingering resentment about the Society of the Cincinnati and the campaign for officer pensions among some fellow citizens, Hull’s role in winning national independence was well known and respected. He also retained his militia command as brigadier general. His recent assignment to Canada had reaffirmed his national credentials. He could still provide legal services, although demand had shrunk with the economic recovery and expansion that had begun in the late 1780s.<sup>1</sup> Fellow gentlemen, even opponents, acknowledged his refined manners, gracious hospitality, informed and polite conversation and warm disposition, which gave him access to men of influence and credit.

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<sup>1</sup> The Reverend Jonathan Homer of Newton, for example, observed in 1798 that in Newton “Law litigations . . . are exceedingly rare.” Jonathan Homer, “Description and History of Newton, in the County of Middlesex,” in Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, 1<sup>st</sup> ser., 5 (Samuel Hall, 1798; reprint, Boston: John H. Eastburn, 1835), 277.



American politics was entering a new phase in 1793-1794 as opinion sharply divided over developments in revolutionary France, its war with Great Britain, and U.S. foreign policy. French minister Edmond Genet had embraced a rapturous public only to plummet into obsolescence by the rejection of the Washington administration and the overthrow of his own Girondist government in Paris. By late summer of 1793, the Jacobinist “Committee of Public Safety” was exercising emergency powers to defeat enemies abroad and at home. It succeeded through the establishment of severe economic controls, censorship, mass conscription, and a policy of “terror” by which thousands of opponents and innocents died in the following months. Many Americans, most famously Jefferson, maintained unflinching support for France and its revolution, considering the tactics employed as a regrettable but probably unavoidable cost in the broader war for democracy and liberty against aristocracy and tyranny. But reports of violent excesses, radical rhetoric, and government promotion of deism made other Americans, especially traditionalist New Englanders, increasingly alarmed and vocal about what appeared to be not an expansion but a corruption of republicanism, virtue, and true religion.<sup>2</sup> These contesting interpretations of events abroad were superimposed over pre-existing domestic quarrels, particularly those inspired by Hamilton’s economic program.<sup>3</sup> The result was

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<sup>2</sup> Good discussions of the impact of the French Revolution on American politics and thought in this period include Charles Downer Hazen, Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1897; reprint, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1964); Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, The Age of Federalism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), chap. 8; James Roger Sharp, American Politics in the Early Republic: The New Nation in Crisis (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993), chap. 4; Lance Banning, The Jeffersonian Persuasion: Evolution of a Party Ideology (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978), chap. 8; Richard Buel Jr., Securing the Revolution: Ideology in American Politics, 1789-1815 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972), 36-49; John C. Miller, The Federalist Era, 1789-1801 (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), chap. 8; Paul Goodman, The Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts: Politics in a Young Republic (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 71.

<sup>3</sup> Banning, Jeffersonian Persuasion, 209-212; Buel, Securing the Revolution, 51-52; Noble E. Cunningham Jr., The Jeffersonian Republicans: The Formation of Party Organization, 1789-1801 (Chapel

an extension and polarization of the party groupings by now identifiable as Federalists and Republicans. The rapid appearance of Democratic-Republican Societies and expansion of partisan press rivalries, such as that between Boston's Federalist Columbian Centinel and Republican Independent Chronicle, were symptoms of, contributors to, and catalysts for rising enthusiasms.<sup>4</sup>

The clash of sentiments and ideologies became more rancorous in debates over American neutrality in the war between France and Britain. Federalists, wary of the Royal Navy's power and skeptical of French virtue, believed that American economic and security interests lay in not provoking the British. Republicans, still identifying the French cause with their own, held that the American republic's moral interest and duty, long-term security, not to mention treaty obligations, required policies favoring France.<sup>5</sup> Thus the problem of diplomatic and commercial neutrality speeded the erosion of domestic political neutrality and the growth of parties.<sup>6</sup> The acrimony would reach its

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Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture at Williamsburg, Va., 1957), 54-55.

<sup>4</sup> Philip S. Foner, ed., The Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800: A Documentary Sourcebook of Constitutions, Declarations, Addresses, Resolutions, and Toasts (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976), 17-40, 255-264; Eugene Perry Link, The Democratic-Republican Societies, 1790-1800 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942; reprint, New York: Octagon Books, 1965), chap. 1; Matthew Schoenbachler, "Republicanism in the Age of Democratic Revolution: The Democratic-Republican Societies of the 1790s," Journal of the Early Republic 18 (1998): 237-261; Hazen, Contemporary American Opinion, 188-209; Elkins and McKittrick, Age of Federalism, 456-461, 848 note 14; Sharp, American Politics in the Early Republic, 90-91; Cunningham, Jeffersonian Republicans, 62-66; Goodman, Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts, 60, 72; Donald H. Stewart, The Opposition Press of the Federalist Period (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1969), passim, especially chap. 1; Jeffrey L. Pasley, "The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001), chaps. 1-2; Banning, Jeffersonian Persuasion, 231-233.

<sup>5</sup> Elkins and McKittrick, Age of Federalism, 336-341, 376; Miller, Federalist Era, 128-131, 140-141; Buel, Securing the Revolution, 39-49; Goodman, Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts, 54-57.

<sup>6</sup> As Richard Buel explains, "The European war changed things by raising issues so dramatic that no one could be oblivious to their implications for the survival of the republic, forcing an ever-wider circle of men to make strategic choices for ideological reasons." Buel, Securing the Revolution, 51.

first crescendo in 1795 in the nationwide debates over the Jay Treaty (Treaty of London). The treaty enabled Americans to avoid war, but only by accepting Britain's definition of neutral rights, and thereby conceding their own vulnerability.<sup>7</sup>

As for Massachusetts, the newest French-British war ended what had been a period of relative political and social calm following the Regulation and Constitutional controversies of the late 1780s. Hamilton's fiscal and Washington's appointment policies, while not closing all rifts, had generally promoted stability and attachment to the union. More importantly, the Commonwealth had been enjoying new prosperity, with demand rising for its commodities and carrying trade. Bay State merchants, shippers, and politicians, as well as farmers, welcomed neutrality as the means of preserving and increasing that prosperity. Then came the British maritime attacks, producing broad-based outrage and many advocates for a more pro-French policy. Republican sentiments, supported by governors John Hancock (until his death in October 1793) and Samuel Adams, initially thrived in the absence of coordinated opposition. In January 1794 several Bostonians formed the Democratic-Republican "Massachusetts Constitutional Society." However, during the war crisis and debates over the Jay Treaty, Federalist leaders and the majority of Congregationalist clerics mobilized, attacked, and successfully discredited the French Revolution in the eyes of most Massachusetts voters.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Buel, Securing the Revolution, chap. 3; Banning, Jeffersonian Persuasion, 233-241; Stewart, Opposition Press, chap. 6; Elkins and McKittrick, Age of Federalism, chap. 9 passim. Regarding Jay's Treaty, the latter work well notes the dilemma: "If [Americans] accepted Jay's work, they sacrificed a measure of their own national self-esteem; if they rejected it, they sacrificed their own material prosperity. They chose in the end to take it, but they underwent a deep crisis of spirit before doing so." Elkins and McKittrick, Age of Federalism, 376.

<sup>8</sup> Goodman, Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts, 37, 47-61; William A. Robinson, Jeffersonian Democracy in New England (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1916; reprint, New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), chap. 1; James M. Banner, Jr., To the Hartford Convention: The Federalists

Republicans thereafter found themselves an embattled minority in the state, subject to a level of vilification usually reserved for foreign foes and infidels, as indeed their opponents often portrayed them. Hull himself would become the target of at least one conspiracy-minded editorialist.

Despite the offensives of print and pulpit, Massachusetts Republicanism survived and in places thrived, nowhere more so than in Hull's own Middlesex County. Scholars such as James M. Banner Jr. and Ronald P. Formisano have suggested various socio-economic factors for the development of Republican strength there, including the county's mixed and dynamic economy, its relatively weaker religious orthodoxy, and a "Core-Periphery" rivalry between the commercial center and Federalist stronghold of Boston and the surrounding market-oriented towns like Charlestown, Cambridge, Waterford, and Newton.<sup>9</sup> Whatever the actual operation of these or other forces,

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and the Origins of Party Politics in Massachusetts, 1789-1815 (New York: Knopf, 1970), 11-21. Banner writes that "in no region were the political and intellectual consequences of the [French] Revolution more severe than in New England and in no state more than in Massachusetts." The Massachusetts Constitutional Society's constitution and founding declaration of 13 January 1794 are reprinted in Foner, Democratic-Republican Societies, 255-258. Nearly a century ago, Anson Ely Morse emphasized the prominent role of the clergy in The Federalist Party in Massachusetts to the Year 1800 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1909). Later, Gary B. Nash, "The American Clergy and the French Revolution," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 22 (1965): 392-412, argued that the clergy did not turn against the French Revolution until late 1794, months after the anticlerical Terror government had fallen. The change, Nash contends, was driven more by the rise of Republicanism at home than by events in France. See also Jonathan D. Sassi, A Republic of Righteousness: The Public Christianity of the Post-Revolutionary New England Clergy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 75-83; Stewart, Opposition Press, 395-402.

<sup>9</sup> Banner, To the Hartford Convention, chap. 5, and Ronald P. Formisano, The Transformation of Political Culture: Massachusetts Parties, 1790s-1840s (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), chap. 7, examine social sources of Massachusetts Federalism and Republicanism. Formisano asserts the "Core-Periphery" model, one that expresses geographic, but also cultural, religious, status, and economic lines of division (14). These divisions pitted "central networks of traditional authority against peripheral challengers, newcomers, dissenters, and outsiders who wished to be included in, protected from, or just let alone by the central establishment" (149).

frustrated Federalists would come to deride Middlesex as “the most Frenchified county in the commonwealth.”<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately no personal expressions of Hull’s political thinking in the transitional and transformational period of the mid-1790s have been found. It would be interesting and instructive to know his thoughts on the execution of Louis XVI, whom he had once so fervently honored in a Fourth of July oration; or on the Whiskey Rebellion, his having been so prominently engaged against the Shaysites; or on Wayne’s victory at Fallen Timbers and the subsequent Treaty of Greenville, important links in the chain of events between Hull’s Niagara mission and governorship in Michigan Territory. Most significant would be his views on the very matters noted above: the French Revolutionary project, American foreign policy (especially the Jay Treaty, which by gaining the Northwestern forts resolved the issues that had prompted his missions to Canada), and the growth of political partisanship. Absent more explicit records, the pace and means of his eventual identification with the Republicans is impossible to determine with precision. Nevertheless, as already suggested, disappointments and frustrations with the new federal government in which he had initially placed such high hopes had made him open to persuasion. His principles, interests, and Revolutionary identity, having earlier drawn him into the movement for a stronger national government, now led him toward a political home apart from many former allies.

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<sup>10</sup> “Civis,” “The Chameleon Unmasked, No. II,” in Columbian Centinel, 1 September 1798, p. 1. As Paul Goodman observed in his careful study of Massachusetts Republicans, “The county became a [Republican] party bastion and did not waver until the War of 1812.” Goodman, Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts, 85. Anson Ely Morse called Middlesex County “the most consistent republican stronghold.” Morse, Federalist Party in Massachusetts, 175.

Another important contributor to Republican strength in Middlesex County, highlighted by Paul Goodman, was the party's abundance of leadership. This included figures such as Elbridge Gerry, James Winthrop, and Dr. Aaron Hill of Cambridge; Joseph B. Varnum and Samuel Dana of northern Middlesex County; and, from Newton, William Hull.<sup>11</sup> Goodman's choice of examples is interesting in that he included, perhaps inadvertently, the three men who had stood for the Middlesex district's congressional seat in the first federal elections. Then, it will be recalled, Gerry had been the overwhelming winner and the choice of Middlesex Antifederalists, while then-state senator Varnum drew some of the veteran and northern county vote. Hull had appeared as the doctrinaire conservative and nationalist, representing "energetic" government and, in many minds, Continental officer interests.<sup>12</sup> And in fact Hull's support of these never changed. There was little reason, then, to project that his eventual political identity would be Republican, and in this sense his later appearance among the party leadership comes as a surprise.

Yet from another angle Hull seems indeed to fit well the profile of a Massachusetts Republican leader as identified by Goodman, Banner, and Formisano. Put succinctly, he was a man of frustrated ambition. As Goodman explained, "The [Republican] party attracted persons either outside the elite or enjoying a recently acquired and insecure position in local society. They were often new men who came from rising families that had been excluded from the highest levels of influence and standing." Federalism, by contrast, "threatened the future of the newcomer, the

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<sup>11</sup> Goodman, *Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts*, 83-85.

<sup>12</sup> See chap. 3, pp. 142-149 above.

ambitious man, the outsider.”<sup>13</sup> Banner described the typical Federalist as “an ‘insider’ who enjoyed some sort of identification with men who customarily exerted moral, social, and political suasion in the Commonwealth.”<sup>14</sup> Against such men, noted Formisano, were pitted “peripheral challengers, newcomers, dissenters, and outsiders who wished to be included in, protected from, or just let alone by the central establishment.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, Republicanism held out something for men who aspired to be “first characters” but found their path blocked. Rightly or wrongly, they felt themselves as outsiders from exclusive circles of power and prestige. Banner’s examination of leading Federalist kinship networks lends credence to such a perspective.<sup>16</sup> Having been a Continental “insider” in the Revolution, where all were newcomers, Hull had found it more difficult to achieve similar status in his adopted state. In Massachusetts, Goodman aptly continues, “the Republican appeal was essentially an attack on traditional sources of leadership, not a call for social upheaval but a demand for enlarged opportunities for the excluded.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Goodman, Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts, 75-76. Goodman also noted that “the party attracted persons alienated from established authority, convinced that those long entrenched in positions of influence blocked the advancement of worthy and ambitious though less favored citizens” (70). In reiteration and support of his point, Goodman later used quantitative analysis of the House of Representatives to bolster his suggestion that “Republican leadership except in the South came from elements less well established in their communities than were their rivals.” Paul Goodman, “Social Status of Party Leadership: The House of Representatives, 1797-1804,” William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 25 (1968): 465-474 (quote on 474).

<sup>14</sup> Banner, To the Hartford Convention, 169.

<sup>15</sup> Formisano, Transformation of Political Culture, 149.

<sup>16</sup> Banner, To the Hartford Convention, 178-181.

<sup>17</sup> Goodman, Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts, 77. Men such as Hull, wrote Goodman, “came into prominence in the revolutionary period, but did not achieve a secure position in Middlesex County. Ambitious, able, and impatient, not content to let all the local honors pass them by, they identified their interests with Republicanism . . . [and] . . . bid for power by attacking the indirect rule of the old-line leadership” (pp. 84-85). Elkins and McKittrick, Age of Federalism, 458-460, notes the influence of “social outsidership” nationwide.

The latter point is important because, while Hull sought to improve his social and economic position, in no way did he advocate social or economic leveling, a charge regularly made by Federalists to try to discredit their challengers among men of property. Hull's regard for order and the sanctity of property and contracts remained steadfast. Neither did he cling to any idea of an unerring popular will; his experiences during the Revolution and Regulation had made that proposition doubtful. His habits of mind and manners remained genteel and patriarchal, rooted and nurtured in his education, Revolutionary and Cincinnati identities, Masonic and professional associations, and pretensions to prominence. And he was not unusual in this. "Many Republicans," observed Formisano, "shared the elitism and status consciousness of the Federalists."<sup>18</sup>

Hull's Republicanism, then, was never of an extremist bent. He could be "Jacobin" only in the minds and maneuverings of political opponents. He was a man of the moderate, not the radical Enlightenment; his politics and identity remained firmly grounded in the American Revolution, not the French. He continued to support and honor the Constitution as the preserver of the Revolution and the American republican experiment. In this sense he was indeed representative of what Formisano termed the "Revolutionary Center."<sup>19</sup> He upheld the Revolutionary ideals of personal liberty, but also classical republicanism, expecting like Jefferson and most other framers that a government and society freed of corruptive "artificial" influences would open positions of authority and opportunity to "natural" talent and initiative.

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<sup>18</sup> Formisano, Transformation of Political Culture, 132.

<sup>19</sup> Formisano, Transformation of Political Culture, 10-11, 57-59.



While it was a decade of political evolution for Hull, it was also one of dramatically expanded commercial, entrepreneurial, and speculative activity. Aided by an inheritance, Hull's wealth, credit, and influence would grow to a degree that he could engage in larger-scale projects—from supporting an overseas trading and arms-purchasing venture to speculating in Ohio and Georgia lands. All of these produced trouble of one sort or another, and would saddle him with debt and legal battles. His Newton farm, businesses, connections, and legal skill would enable him to avoid insolvency, but financial distress almost certainly played into his acceptance of President Jefferson's extraordinary offer of a territorial governorship in 1805. So it was in time that party and personal credentials would meet with ambition and economic need.

Meanwhile, in April 1793, Hull arrived home from his Niagara mission still an economic dependent and awaiting the benefits of a wife's inheritance. His father-in-law Abraham Fuller remained in a weakened state, and in July he enlisted Hull's aid in drawing up his last will and testament, naming wife Sarah Fuller and son-in-law Hull co-executors. The tenacious judge and town leader would live on into the following spring until, at age seventy-four, on April 20, 1794, the great man of Newton died.<sup>20</sup>

Fuller's will divided most of his estate between his wife and daughter, the latter to obtain the whole upon her mother's death (which came in 1803). Sarah Hull was to take the larger part of the family house and a half-portion of her father's other buildings and lands in Newton and Cambridge. In personal property, she received three-quarters

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<sup>20</sup> Abraham Fuller's last will and testament, 2 July 1793, Middlesex County Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, Mass., Probate Records: 1<sup>st</sup> series (1648-1871), microfilm reel 397068, docket 8719, microfilmed by the Genealogical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah; Samuel C. Clarke, comp., Records of Some of the Descendants of John Fuller, Newton, 1644-98 (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1869), 11; Homer, "Description and History of Newton," 277. The script of Fuller's will, signed by him and other witnesses, is in Hull's handwriting.

portion of his cash, bonds, notes, and wearing apparel, and half of all outdoor equipment and goods, cattle, and other stock. Her mother retained all indoor equipment and household furniture. Judge Fuller also bequeathed £300 of his estate for the foundation of an academy in Newton. “Placing the fullest confidence in [Hull’s] discretion and judgment,” he assigned his son-in-law responsibility for approving the site and appropriating the funds. Although within a few years Hull converted their former house into an academy with a resident master, the conscientious judge would have been distressed to see his son-in-law’s incurred debts delay the complete fulfillment of the obligation for many years more.<sup>21</sup>

The passing of Fuller marked a turning point for Hull, releasing him from familial and economic constraints. Indeed, if Hull’s burst of activity following Fuller’s death is any indicator, his pent-up energy and ambition had been immense. It now became clear that the son-in-law’s perspective on debt and speculation was not that of the father-in-law, who, according to a descendant of both, “was very averse to owing even the smallest

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<sup>21</sup> Abraham Fuller’s last will and testament, 2 July 1793, Middlesex County Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, Mass., Probate Records: 1<sup>st</sup> series (1648-1871), microfilm reel 397068, docket 8719, microfilmed by the Genealogical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah; William Bentley, 4 September 1798, in William Bentley, *The Diary of William Bentley, D.D., Pastor of the East Church, Salem, Massachusetts*, 4 vols. (Salem, Mass.: The Essex Institute, 1905-1914; reprint, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1962), 2:280; Samuel F. Smith, *History of Newton, Massachusetts, Town and City from Its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time, 1630-1880* (Boston: American Logotype Co., 1880), 720. Fuller’s will also provided that his only grandson, Abraham Fuller Hull, receive £600 (\$1980) following Sarah Fuller’s death and his reaching age 24. He did so in 1810, but died, unmarried, in March 1814 at the Battle of Lundy’s Lane. See also Manuscript list of Abraham Fuller’s personal property, 15 May 1794, William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (32), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge. This document, in Hull’s hand and signed by Sarah Fuller, calculates the value of Judge Fuller’s personalty (non-landed property) at £2593. Of this amount—slightly adjusted for a minor error of addition—just over £1000 consisted of bonds and promissory notes of many individuals, including £333 in notes from Hull. Town and state notes made up the bulk of the remainder. Also included were “out door moveables” (£142) and “malt on hand” (£60). The Hulls received all but £450 allotted to Sarah Fuller and the £300 for the academy, which he was to hold in trust. Subtracting these and the value of Hull’s own notes (which now cancelled), he took control of £1510 in personalty, most of which was still accruing interest.

sum of money.”<sup>22</sup> Instead, Hull dove confidently into new real estate and commercial ventures. Among his first moves was to use his enlarged freedom, wealth, and credit to acquire various new tracts in Newton, consolidating and expanding the property near Angier’s Corner and along the Charles River.<sup>23</sup>

He also began making arrangements for a commercial venture to Europe, a project recommended to him several years earlier by his friend Daniel Parker and now made even more potentially lucrative by surging wartime demand for American commodities.<sup>24</sup> Such a trip would indulge Hull’s innate curiosity and sense of adventure. It would also gratify his social and economic ambitions since European travel and connections complemented genteel and entrepreneurial credentials. What Sarah thought of her husband’s idea is unknown. He would likely be gone half a year, and she was again pregnant.<sup>25</sup> There were always dangers accompanying any transatlantic passage. On the other hand, she too could appreciate the potential benefits to the family. A successful trip could result in thousands of dollars in specie and credit, and lay the foundation for further mercantile activity. Should his efforts prove fruitful, he could also acquire fashionable personal and household effects for the family. Among other things,

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<sup>22</sup> Samuel C. Clarke, Descendants of John Fuller, 10. Clarke here related family lore about an exchange in Fuller’s last hours. Asked by his wife Sarah why he seemed so troubled, the dying Fuller replied: “I owe Lady Harris ninepence for mending my shoe; send over and pay the money; I have never lived in debt, and I cannot die in debt.”

<sup>23</sup> See Deed to William Hull from Gilbert Dench, 19 April 1794; from Fitch Hall, 10 May 1794; from Roger Adams, 12 May 1794; and from John Hicks, 17 June 1794, *Miscellaneous Papers: Hull, William*, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

<sup>24</sup> See chap. 3, pp. 133-134.

<sup>25</sup> Sarah’s pregnancy is calculated based on the birth year (1795) of the Hull’s eighth child recorded in Samuel C. Clarke, comp., Records of Some of the Descendants of Richard Hull, New Haven, 1639-1662 (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1869), 12, and the fact that Hull did not actually return until the following autumn. It is possible that the couple did not yet know of the pregnancy at the time of Hull’s departure, but that seems less likely.

Hull promised Sarah, he would seek a good forte piano for their eldest daughter, so enabling her (and perhaps her sisters) to develop an important feminine skill of genteel refinement.<sup>26</sup>

By late November Hull had raised the necessary capital, assembled a shipment, and scheduled cargo space and a berth.<sup>27</sup> He applied to Knox for letters of introduction to the American officials in England—Minister Thomas Pinckney and special envoy John Jay—and any other of Knox’s friends. He also inquired about possible public service and, not wishing to miss any opportunity, offered Knox his personal assistance: “Should any of your friends have any private negotiations [sic] in the Country, I shall be in a situation to attend to them.”<sup>28</sup> On December 2, the ship slipped from Boston harbor bound for England. He would return by spring, he hoped.<sup>29</sup>

Aboard with Hull was thirty-year-old John Andrew Graham, an eloquent and prosperous lawyer and entrepreneur of Rutland, Vermont, and military aide to Governor

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<sup>26</sup> William Hull to his wife “Sally” [Sarah Hull], autograph letter fragment signed, [4] and 17 January [1795], William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (15), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge. This letter fragment was begun sometime before January 4, but is filed under the date 17 January [n.d.].

<sup>27</sup> See Deed to William Hull from Edward and William Reynolds, 7 June 1796 (which references Hull’s sale of small riverside tracts in June and September 1794), Miscellaneous Papers: Hull, William, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass.; Hull bond to Stephen Cooke of Watertown, 1 September 1794, Samuel Torrey Morse Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass. Together these funds amounted to over \$10,000. Although the purposes for the monies raised are not stated, it seems reasonable that they were at least in part to support Hull’s overseas venture.

<sup>28</sup> William Hull to Henry Knox, 30 November 1794, Henry Knox Papers, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, vol. 36:110. No response to Hull’s request has been found. Knox, it turned out, was about to resign as secretary of war. Although both Pinckney and Jay were still in London when Hull arrived, there is no evidence of direct contact with either man. Jay left the country in April 1795 to return to the United States, while Pinckney departed in mid-May to assume treaty negotiations with Spain. Samuel Flagg Bemis, *Pinckney’s Treaty: America’s Advantage from Europe’s Distress, 1783-1800*, rev. ed. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1960), 250-251.

<sup>29</sup> William Hull to [Sarah Hull], autograph letter fragment signed, [4] and 17 January [1795], William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (15), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge.

Thomas Chittenden. Colonel Graham, as he was known, had recently been in Boston at Chittenden's behest in a fruitless effort to locate available muskets for Vermont's undersupplied militia. Now he was headed to England officially as an agent of the Vermont Episcopalian diocese to lobby for the consecration of a relative in London, the Reverend and exiled Connecticut loyalist Samuel Peters, as bishop of Vermont. However, Graham also intended to explore other business opportunities and, possibly, to escape marital trouble.<sup>30</sup> How and when Hull first met Graham is unclear, but it appears that they developed a friendly acquaintance—one that would prove consequential.<sup>31</sup>

Even with affable company, Hull's first Atlantic crossing was not a pleasant one. He was no seasoned sailor. "I was very sick almost the whole time," he wrote Sarah. "I could enjoy nothing. . . . It is a most trying disorder." The weather compounded the misery. In early January the voyage stalled altogether when the vessel put in at St. Mary's, largest of the Isles of Scilly, the small archipelago about twenty-five nautical miles from the southwestern peninsula of England. A terrific wintry gale arose from the

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<sup>30</sup> Noel Perrin, Introduction to A Descriptive Sketch of the Present State of Vermont, by John A. Graham, Vermont Heritage Press Reprint Series, ed. J. Kevin Graffagnino (Bennington, Vt.: Vermont Heritage Press, 1987; orig. pub. 1797), ix-xiv; Noel Perrin, "'So Good Bye, You Jackall': An Annotated Copy of John Andrew Graham's Descriptive Sketch of the Present State of Vermont (1797)," Vermont History 43, no. 2 (1975): 95-102; H. W. Howard Knott, "Graham, John Andrew," in Dictionary of American Biography, ed. Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, 11 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931); Sheldon S. Cohen, Connecticut's Loyalist Gadfly: The Reverend Samuel Andrew Peters (Hartford: The American Revolution Bicentennial Commission of Connecticut, 1976), 45-46; Ira Allen to Thomas Erskine, John Nicholl and Robert Slade, 25 October 1798, in John J. Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin: Correspondence, 1772-1819, 2 vols. (Hanover, N.H., and London: University Press of New England, 1998), 2:591; Deposition of John A. Graham, 17 December 1796, printed in Ira Allen, Particulars of the Capture of the Ship Olive Branch, Laden with a Cargo of Arms, &c. (London: J. W. Myers, 1798), in J. Kevin Graffagnino, ed., Ethan and Ira Allen: Collected Works, 3 vols. (Benson, Vt.: Chalidze Publications, 1992), 2:112. For notice of the first two of these references the author thanks historian J. Kevin Graffagnino, currently Director of the Vermont Historical Society, who describes Graham as "an interesting rascal who's received relatively little attention." E-mail message to the author, 18 March 2006.

<sup>31</sup> Hull forwarded Graham's greetings to Sarah in a letter written en route. "If he is successfull [sic] in England, he intends presenting you with as good a watch as can be purchased," Hull added. William Hull to [Sarah Hull], autograph letter fragment signed, [4] and 17 January [1795], William Hull Papers, BMS Am 1569.6 (15), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge.

east that for at least two weeks prevented all ships from continuing into the English channel or even mainland. The island's harbor and accommodations quickly became crowded: "Sixty or seventy Vessels, bound to England, have put in here, and not one has attempted to sail," Hull reported. He grew impatient in his confinement and even joined one attempted crossing to the mainland in a small boat, but with no luck. "Such a time never was known here before," he was told.<sup>32</sup> Severe winter storms, in fact, were impeding all North Atlantic sea traffic, including the packet carrying the signed but still-secret Jay Treaty to Philadelphia for ratification.

In time the winds subsided enough to proceed to the English mainland and on to London, where Hull made the necessary social and business rounds. Through Graham he became acquainted with the Reverend Peters; he also caught up with Daniel Parker and offered his commercial services.<sup>33</sup> His late arrival, however, may have prevented his concluding business in time to secure early shipments back to Boston.<sup>34</sup> He would wait for the fall season, no doubt to the disappointment of his family.

The extra months gave Hull the opportunity to pay an extended visit to that most tumultuous and dynamic of European nations, Revolutionary France. He obtained a

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<sup>32</sup> William Hull to [Sarah Hull], autograph letter fragment signed, [4] and 17 January [1795], William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (15), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge. Another brief firsthand account of the distress and delays caused by this winter storm is in John Allen Finch to Ira Allen, 26 March 1795, in Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 2:435.

<sup>33</sup> William Hull to the Reverend Samuel Peters, 4 December 1795, The Francis L. Hawks and General Convention Collection of Early Episcopal Church Manuscripts, 6:116, Archives of the Episcopal Church, Austin, Texas; Ira Allen's journal, in James Benjamin Wilbur, Ira Allen: Founder of Vermont, 1751-1814, 2 vols. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), 2:86.

<sup>34</sup> John Allen Finch, also on a commercial venture from Boston, arrived in London in March and reported that the storm-related delay "has made me to[o] late for this Springs Shipments." John Allen Finch to Ira Allen, 26 March 1795, in Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 2:435.

passport from Pinckney on March 9 and headed out across the channel.<sup>35</sup> Over the next several weeks (and perhaps even into the summer) he toured the French countryside and capital. According to his daughter's account, he "witnessed the Legislative Assembly, and the Revolutionary Tribunals of that ill-fated country; [and] visited its armies."<sup>36</sup> Although the Royal Navy still held France in check at sea, the Republic's massed citizen armies had gained the advantage on the continent, and its interim Thermidorian government was drawing up yet another constitution. Whether or not Hull witnessed any of the period's anti-Jacobin "White Terror," or the sans-culottes riots in Paris, or their invasion of the National Convention in May, he could not have failed to be astounded by the continued ferment of this extraordinary nation.<sup>37</sup>

In Paris Hull received welcome hospitality from the ardent Jeffersonian and pro-French American minister (and future U.S. president) James Monroe.<sup>38</sup> James and Elizabeth Monroe regularly received and entertained American visitors as well as French officials and friends, initially in the home assumed from Monroe's predecessor Gouverneur Morris, then in the elegant Italian-style residence on the edge of Paris (near

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas Pinckney, passport for William Hull, 9 March 1795, James Freeman Clarke Papers, Autograph file, BMS Am 1569.7, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge.

<sup>36</sup> Maria Campbell and James Freeman Clarke, Revolutionary Services and Civil Life of General William Hull; Prepared from his Manuscripts, by his Daughter, Mrs. Maria Campbell: Together with the History of the Campaign of 1812, and the Surrender of the Post of Detroit, by his Grandson, James Freeman Clarke (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1848; facsimile reprint, New York: Garrett Press, 1970), 261.

<sup>37</sup> The record of one Boston merchant's impressions of Revolutionary politics and Parisian society during the time of Hull's visit is Thomas Handasyd Perkins's diary, vols. 3-6, Thomas Handasyd Perkins Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass., microfilm, reel 3.

<sup>38</sup> William Hull to "Citizen Munroe," 3 December 1795, James Monroe Papers, ser. 1, Presidential Papers Microfilm, Library of Congress, reel 1; William Hull to James Monroe, 8 February 1801, James Monroe Papers, 1772-1836, New York Public Library, Manuscript Division, New York, N.Y., microfilm, reel 1. Whether Hull received similar hospitality from the American officials in London is unknown, though the lack of any record suggests not.

Montmartre) that Monroe purchased shortly after Hull's arrival.<sup>39</sup> It seems likely that Hull would have encountered the famous and controversial Thomas Paine, whom the Monroes had taken in to recuperate from his imprisonment under the Terror. No doubt Hull connected with several of the many other Americans in France pursuing commercial and speculative projects, including his own cousin Mark Leavenworth, Jr., of Hartford, Connecticut, now a wealthy land merchant and owner of a magnificent house beside the Champs-Élysées. Hull also called on the Marquess de Lafayette, whose husband, Hull's former comrade-in-arms, was now a captive of the Prussians. Perhaps Hull lingered in the capital long enough for the grand Fourth of July dinner hosted by the Monroes on their estate grounds, with nearly a hundred American citizens and as many French dignitaries in attendance.<sup>40</sup>

In any case, by the time Hull took his leave he had come to admire Monroe, a fellow Continental officer, as a republican gentleman and worthy diplomat working under

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<sup>39</sup> Harry Ammon, James Monroe: The Quest for National Identity (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), 133-134; Melanie Randolph Miller, Envoy to the Terror: Gouverneur Morris and the French Revolution (Dulles, Va.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2005), 233; Yvon Bizardel, "French Estates, American Landlords," trans. Francine Yorke, Apollo 101 (1975): 111-112. Monroe's purchase and subsequent sale of the estate later led to some politically driven charges against him for speculating in public monies. Having been present at the time, Hull later gladly provided an affidavit refuting the charges, for which Monroe was grateful.

<sup>40</sup> James Monroe, The Autobiography of James Monroe, ed. Stuart Jerry Brown (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1959), 66, 71-72, 102-103; Ammon, James Monroe, 135-137, 139; Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 2:497n; William Lee, diary entry, 5 March 1796, in Mary Lee Mann, ed., A Yankee Jeffersonian: Selections from the Diary and Letters of William Lee of Massachusetts, Written from 1796 to 1840 (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1958), 20; Yvon Bizardel, Les Américains à Paris pendant la Révolution ([Paris]: Calmann-Lévy, 1972), 247-248, 278; Bizardel, "French Estates, American Landlords," 108-109. William Stinchcombe, The XYZ Affair (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), chap. 5, has a useful discussion of the number and activities of Americans in France in the mid-to-late 1790s. "The Boston-Salem area alone accounted for more than sixty American merchants in Paris," he notes (p. 82). Both Federalists and Republicans were well represented in Paris, but the latter "were probably a majority" (p. 96). Hull noted his visit to Lafayette's wife in William Hull to the Marquis de Lafayette, autograph draft letter, 25 August 1824, William Hull Papers, BMS Am 1569.6 (7), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, reprinted in Transactions, 1904-1906, vol. 10, Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts (Boston: published by the Society, 1907), 367-368.



exceptionally delicate and volatile circumstances.<sup>41</sup> It was an opinion that would be resented by many in Federalist New England, where Monroe's service had become extremely controversial. Arriving in August 1794, the American minister's effusions of friendship with France and its Revolution appeared to work at cross-purposes with Jay's negotiations in Britain. The subsequent revelation of Jay's Treaty and its approval in 1795 naturally dismayed French leaders. Monroe's reassurances to them and antipathy to the treaty put him further at odds with the Washington administration and Federalists, and would eventually lead to his recall.<sup>42</sup>

With various newly acquired personal items in tow, Hull returned to England, completed arrangements for his goods shipment to Boston, and sailed in the fall. This transatlantic passage was much smoother than the first; after forty-two days at sea he arrived safely home, relieved to find his family, including newborn Julia Knox Hull, "in perfect health."<sup>43</sup> He presented Sarah with a fine black velvet gown—which, according

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<sup>41</sup> William Hull to "Citizen Munroe," 3 December 1795, James Monroe Papers, ser. 1, Presidential Papers Microfilm, Library of Congress, reel 1. In 1798, Monroe recalled a conversation in Paris in which Hull declared "that he hoped I sho[ul]d serve my country there many years." James Monroe to James Madison, 24 June 1798, from Library of Congress, The James Madison Papers, 1723-1836, [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mjm&fileName=06/mjm06.db&recNum=600&itemLink=r?ammem/mjm:@FIELD\(D OCID+@BAND\(@lit\(mjm013496\)\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mjm&fileName=06/mjm06.db&recNum=600&itemLink=r?ammem/mjm:@FIELD(D OCID+@BAND(@lit(mjm013496)))) (accessed 4 April 2007). Still later Hull reaffirmed that opinion: "I was strongly impressed with the propriety and dignity of your conduct while I had the honor of knowing you in Paris." William Hull to James Monroe, 8 February 1801, James Monroe Papers, New York Public Library, Manuscript Division, New York, N.Y., microfilm, reel 1.

<sup>42</sup> Useful examinations of Monroe's mission include Beverly W. Bond, Jr., The Monroe Mission to France, 1794-1796, in Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, ed. J. M. Vincent, J. H. Hollander, and W. W. Willoughby, ser. 25, nos. 2-3 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1907); Alexander DeConde, Entangling Alliances: Politics and Diplomacy under George Washington (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1958), chap. 11; Albert Hall Bowman, The Struggle for Neutrality: Franco-American Diplomacy During the Federalist Era (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1974), chaps. 8, 10; Ammon, James Monroe, chaps. 7-8; and Elkins and McKittrick, Age of Federalism, 498-513.

<sup>43</sup> William Hull to the Reverend Samuel Peters, 4 December 1795, The Francis L. Hawks and General Convention Collection of Early Episcopal Church Manuscripts, 6:116, Archives of the Episcopal Church, Austin, Texas; Samuel C. Clarke, Descendants of Richard Hull, 12. Julia Knox Hull is the only one of the Hulls' eight children whose specific date of birth is not recorded. Her naming suggests that the

to family accounts she thereafter “wore on all state occasions”—and several elegant home furnishings from Paris, including a table, turning chair, and silver candlesticks.<sup>44</sup> Altogether, it seems, Hull’s first and only European trip had been a grand adventure and financial success.

Hull’s time abroad, particularly in France, surely had some influence on his personal and political outlook, although the degree and exact character of that influence remain open to conjecture. Three years after his return, at the apex of party animosity, one sarcastic Federalist would claim that Hull, already predisposed to Democracy, had become radicalized in France: “Suffice it to say, that the General returned enraptured with the virtue, purity, magnanimity and power of the *wonderful Republic*.”<sup>45</sup> Reading the charge, Congregationalist pastor and Republican William Bentley of Salem acknowledged that Hull “has been in France & is not without his prejudices in favour of that nation.”<sup>46</sup> These remarks, however, speak more to Hull’s views in 1798 than to those of late 1795. A half century later Hull’s daughter Maria, who had been just seven at the time of her father’s homecoming, seemed at pains to reassure her readers that he had “returned to America with a just pride in the superiority of his own country, in virtue,

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Hull-Knox friendship remained close in this period. According to Hull descendants—wrongly, it appears—the Knoxes had earlier named one of their own daughters Sarah Hull Knox. Samuel C. Clarke to “Cousin,” 15 May 1889, Hull Family Papers, Newton History Museum at the Jackson Homestead, Newton, Mass.; Ella Wingate Ireland, “Sarah Hull” (paper presented to Sarah Hull Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Newton, Mass., 2 December 1897), typed manuscript, “Sarah Hull” file, Hull Family Papers, Newton History Museum at the Jackson Homestead, Newton, Mass., 3.

<sup>44</sup> Ella Wingate Ireland, “Sarah Hull” (paper presented to Sarah Hull Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Newton, Mass., 2 December 1897), typed manuscript, “Sarah Hull” file, Hull Family Papers, Newton History Museum at the Jackson Homestead, Newton, Mass., 4, 7. According to Ireland, Hull’s great-granddaughter, most of the furnishings were purchased from the former estate of Louis Philippe.

<sup>45</sup> “Civis,” “The Chameleon Unmasked, No. II,” in Columbian Centinel, 1 September 1798, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> William Bentley, 4 September 1798, in Bentley, Diary, 2:280.

patriotism, and moderation.” She affirmed as well the “happy termination of the treaty with the British Government, so ably negotiated by Mr. Jay.”<sup>47</sup>

On balance, the available evidence suggests that Hull did arrive home with a greater sympathy for republican France than that of most in Federalist Boston, but also that his sentiments were hardly dogmatic. Indeed one may wonder whether Hull’s political views were affected more by his experiences abroad or by the reactionary mood he discovered in Massachusetts upon his return. The political atmosphere since his leaving had reached new levels of intensity and acrimony. Moderation on the French question had become anathema to many Federalists who held sway in the political and mercantile communities of coastal New England. Whereas the recent Treaty of Greenville with the western Indians, which opened Ohio lands for settlement, the treaty with Algiers by which the United States agreed to pay ransom and annual tribute, and Pinckney’s Treaty with Spain, which would assure free navigation of the Mississippi River, aroused only limited American opposition, Jay’s Treaty touched an extremely sensitive nerve. It had already divided and inflamed political passions like nothing before, as Republican and Federalist leaders, in historian James Roger Sharp’s words, “systematically, extensively, and feverishly” campaigned for popular opinion.<sup>48</sup> Indeed,

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<sup>47</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 259, 261. Another consideration for Campbell’s portrayal here is that she wrote in 1848, a year of crisis and revolution in a host of European capitals. Campbell’s account, which appears to place Hull’s trip in 1798 rather than 1795, produced some persistent confusion of chronology. Hull’s grandson Samuel C. Clarke reproduced the error in his several memorials, as did subsequent borrowers such as Benson J. Lossing and Leo T. Molloy. Another grandson, James Freeman Clarke, simply put the trip “during the French Revolution.” James Freeman Clarke, Memorials and Biographical Sketches (Boston: Houghton, Osgood and Co., 1880), 423. By contrast, William L. Jenks, in his introduction to Documents Relating to Detroit and Vicinity, 1805-1813, vol. 40 of Michigan Historical Collections (Lansing, Mich.: Michigan Historical Commission, 1929), 28, correctly cites 1795.

<sup>48</sup> Sharp, American Politics in the Early Republic, 118-119. The disputation over the treaty continued in the first session of the Fourth Congress, which only narrowly approved funding its implementation the following April. An effective recent study of the campaign for public opinion in connection with the treaty, and thus the shaping of early American political culture, is Todd Estes, The Jay

so intemperate and outlandish were some charges against Monroe that Hull felt compelled to come to his defense, which only further agitated many Federalists.<sup>49</sup>

Hull's main desire, however, was not to dive into turbulent political waters. Instead he was determined to make up for lost time building his fortune. Now more flush with cash and credit, he eagerly embraced further opportunities and risks in commercial and land speculations. His enthusiasm would lead him into mistaken confidences, complicated maneuverings, protracted litigation, tiresome lobbying, and debt.

It began soon after his return from Europe when he was introduced to a newly arrived visitor to Boston, the energetic and controversial revolutionary, speculator, propagandist, and founder of Vermont, Ira Allen. Allen—one of the Revolution's Green Mountain Boys, youngest brother of the legendary and now-deceased Ethan, and of Democratic-Republican sympathies—was by now mired in debt and shut out of political power in his home state where Federalism was in the ascendancy. He remained a leading landholder and a friend of Governor Chittenden, but to save his teetering fortunes the cash-poor adventurer had determined upon a bold overseas enterprise. In late November 1795 he was circulating through Boston in search of loans to support it.<sup>50</sup>

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Treaty Debate, Public Opinion, and the Evolution of Early American Political Culture (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006).

<sup>49</sup> Hull assured Monroe that “a sense of duty and Justice has induced me on all occasions since my arrival, of expressing the great Services you have rendered our Country, and the confidence which is placed in you by the French Republic.” William Hull to “Citizen Munroe,” 3 December 1795, James Monroe Papers, ser. 1, Presidential Papers Microfilm, Library of Congress, reel 1; “Civis,” “The Chameleon Unmasked, No. II,” in Columbian Centinel, 1 September 1798, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> For Allen's activities in the 1790s, see J. Kevin Graffagnino's extensive work: “Revolution and Empire on the Northern Frontier: Ira Allen of Vermont, 1751-1814” (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1993), chaps. 7-8; “‘Twenty Thousand Muskets!!!’: Ira Allen and the *Olive Branch* Affair,” William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 48 (1991): 409-431; and “Introduction” to his edited Ethan and Ira Allen: Collected Works, 3 vols. (Benson, Vt.: Chalidze Publications, 1992), 1:vii-xxiii. See also Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 1:xxxii-xxxiii, xxxvi; 2:387-388, 453-454; and Chilton Williamson, Vermont in Quandary, 1763-1825, vol. 4 of Growth of Vermont, ed. Earle Williams Newton (Montpelier,

Among those now working in concert with Allen was none other than John Andrew Graham, whose arrival back in New England had only shortly preceded Hull's.<sup>51</sup> Graham had both speculative and marital reasons for a hasty return to England, and now saw another opportunity with Allen, a fellow entrepreneur and opponent of Federalism.<sup>52</sup> Allen in turn grasped the potential benefits of Graham's English connections and by November had welcomed him into his close circle. Graham quickly proved his worth by marking Hull as a potential sponsor for Allen and arranging their introduction.<sup>53</sup> Over the course of several days Hull met with Allen, Graham, and other Vermont associates in a State Street hotel to discuss Allen's project and work out terms of a loan.<sup>54</sup>

Allen's plan, however, was far grander than that of an ordinary merchant taking advantage of surging Anglo-American trade, and reflected what J. Kevin Graffagnino has deemed his "lifelong obsession to create a commercial and real estate empire on the

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Vt.: Vermont Historical Society, 1949), 223-241. James Benjamin Wilbur's Ira Allen, the only major published biography of Allen to date, is more detailed but less critically reliable.

<sup>51</sup> William Hull to the Reverend Samuel Peters, 4 December 1795, The Francis L. Hawks and General Convention Collection of Early Episcopal Church Manuscripts, 6:116, Archives of the Episcopal Church, Austin, Texas.

<sup>52</sup> In October Graham had persuaded the Vermont legislature to grant him a monopoly on most mining and smelting in the state (by which, it seems, his goal was less to extract ore than sell shares). Then he had convinced the Vermont diocese to extend his commission to help his relative Samuel Peters obtain the bishopric (and the lands that came with it). Finally, he had filed for a divorce—on grounds of his wife's purported infidelity, but perhaps also because of his affection for another wealthy lady in London. Perrin, "Introduction," xii-xix; Perrin, "So Good Bye, You Jackall," 95-97, 100-101; Graffagnino, "Revolution and Empire," 317; Wayne Normile Metz, "The Reverend Samuel Peters (1735-1826): Connecticut Anglican, Loyalist, Priest" (Ph.D. diss., Oklahoma State University, 1966), 200-204. Some, including Peters's daughter, doubted the veracity of Graham's accusations, but Hull and most others accepted it. See Metz, "The Reverend Samuel Peters," 210; and William Hull to the Reverend Samuel Peters, 4 December 1795, The Francis L. Hawks and General Convention Collection of Early Episcopal Church Manuscripts, 6:116, Archives of the Episcopal Church, Austin, Texas. Reprinted by Permission of the Archives of the Episcopal Church, USA. Hull wrote Peters that "her [Mrs. Graham's] conduct is universally condemned, as far as I have had the means of information."

<sup>53</sup> Wilbur, Ira Allen, 2: 75, 78; Graffagnino, "Revolution and Empire," 317.

<sup>54</sup> Ira Allen to Thomas Erskine, John Nicholl and Robert Slade, 25 October 1798; Ira Allen to Robert Slade, 17 May 1799, in Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 2:590-591, 624-625.

shores of Lake Champlain.”<sup>55</sup> He spoke openly of assuming the arms-purchasing project for the Vermont militia, both as militia general and private speculator.<sup>56</sup> Perhaps he also informed Hull of his intention to petition the British Home Secretary to allow or even sponsor construction of a canal linking Lake Champlain with the St. Lawrence River.<sup>57</sup> So far, so good—but, as evidence now shows, there was more. Should the canal scheme fail, and quite possibly without regard to it at all, Allen conceived (and concealed) a breathtaking plan to arm and incite rebellion in Lower Canada, annex it to Vermont and form an independent republic of “United Columbia” with Burlington as its capital. This would, of course, also necessitate undoing Vermont’s recent entry into the American union, something Allen had only reluctantly accepted in the first place.<sup>58</sup>

No reliable evidence has surfaced to indicate that Hull knew anything of this most fantastic scheme. Certainly it is hard to imagine that he would countenance a separation of Vermont from the Union. But why he would involve himself with a man of Allen’s

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<sup>55</sup> Graffagnino, ““Twenty Thousand Muskets!!!”,” 411.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Chittenden, letters of credentials for Ira Allen, 27 October 1795, printed in Wilbur, *Ira Allen*, 2:76-77, and in Allen, *Particulars of the Capture*, in Graffagnino, ed., *Ethan and Ira Allen*, 2:109-110. Allen would pursue the purchase as first major general under Governor Chittenden’s authority, but personally assuming the costs and risks, and taking the profits. Thus would the state be freed from risk and expense while still making arms available for militiamen, required by law to furnish their own weapons. From Allen’s perspective, this arrangement would give him control over final dispensation of the arms with the cover of government sanction, hence a disguise and deniability if challenged by British authorities.

<sup>57</sup> The long-desired canal would directly connect Vermont shipping with European markets and dramatically raising the value of Allen’s vast Champlain Valley landholdings. It had been a goal of the Allen brothers at least since 1783, when they had applied for the same to Governor Frederick Haldimand. Graffagnino, ““Twenty Thousand Muskets!!!”,” 416.

<sup>58</sup> Duffy et al., eds., *Ethan Allen and His Kin*, 1:xxxiii, xxxvi; 2:387-388, 453, 473n; Ira Allen to the Directory, June 1796, in Duffy et al., eds., *Ethan Allen and His Kin*, 2:473-474; Graffagnino, ed., *Ethan and Ira Allen*, 1:xvii-xviii; Graffagnino, ““Twenty Thousand Muskets!!!””; Graffagnino, “Revolution and Empire,” 254-258; Williamson, *Vermont in Quandary*, 225, 234-235; Jeanne A. Ojala, “Ira Allen and the French Directory, 1796: Plans for the Creation of the Republic of United Columbia,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 36 (1979): 436-448. Allen’s plan involved arming and inciting an American-French Canadian rebellion—with French aid if possible—against Lower Canada, thereby removing Britain altogether as an obstacle to his personal imperial ambitions.

controversial standing in the first place is perplexing. Was he unaware of Allen's "widespread reputation for venality" or the Federalist rumors that Allen and the Democratic-Republican leaders of Vermont, with funding through Genet, had plotted an invasion against British Quebec?<sup>59</sup> That seems unlikely. However, given the political climate of the time and Hull's prior good opinion of Graham, such accusations might easily be dismissed as the hysteria or rumormongering of political and economic enemies, as the Vermonters no doubt assured him. (Indeed, Hull's defense of Monroe and negotiations with Allen—*personae non grata* to Federalists—suggest some skepticism toward orthodox Federalist opinion and a certain outsider status.) Chittenden's endorsement of Allen as an "esteemed a gentleman of honor, a man of business and distinction" was also reassuring. And Allen's plan, as presented, looked sound and promising, especially in the more secure commercial environment established by the Jay Treaty.<sup>60</sup> Hull even informed Allen that he could purchase arms most cheaply in France, which held a surplus of surrendered weapons.<sup>61</sup>

All in all, Allen appears to have sufficiently reassured Hull. "He is a Gentleman of the first respectability in this Country," Hull wrote Samuel Peters. "You will find him a sincere Friend, & generous Patron."<sup>62</sup> However, economic interest and not personal

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<sup>59</sup> Graffagnino, "Revolution and Empire," 299, 337; Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 2:388, 437n.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas Chittenden, letter of credentials for Ira Allen, 27 October 1795, printed in Wilbur, Ira Allen, 2:76.

<sup>61</sup> Ira Allen, Statements Applicable to the Cause of the Olive Branch (Philadelphia: printed for the author, July 1807), reprinted in Graffagnino, ed., Ethan and Ira Allen, 3:237; Ira Allen to Thomas Erskine, John Nicholl and Robert Slade, 25 October 1798, and Ira Allen to Robert Slade, 17 May 1799, in Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 2:591, 624-625.

<sup>62</sup> William Hull to the Reverend Samuel Peters, 4 December 1795, The Francis L. Hawks and General Convention Collection of Early Episcopal Church Manuscripts, 6:116, Archives of the Episcopal Church, Austin, Texas. Reprinted by Permission of the Archives of the Episcopal Church, USA. Hull's

merit would determine the deal. Any agreement between the men would be a matter of coolly calculating risks against prospective returns. Here Allen, desperate to conduct his mission and cocksure of its success, was prepared to overcome any reluctance on Hull's part by securing the loan with lands worth well in excess of the loan amount.<sup>63</sup> In the end he made an offer Hull could not refuse.

According to their December 5 agreement, Hull would immediately provide Allen £4000 in cash and credit (£2500 in English gold coin, and two sight drafts, of £1000 and £500 respectively, to be paid in London by Daniel Parker), then supply dry goods for Allen's store in Boston and pay his drafts, the total loan amounting up to \$30,000. In return, Allen would cover the borrowed sum with shipped goods for Hull within one year's time. To secure their arrangement, Allen signed a note certifying receipt of the full \$30,000 and deeding to Hull some 46,000 acres of his most valuable lands in five townships along Lake Champlain. At the same time, Hull signed a quitclaim bond acknowledging Allen's deed as a mortgage and reconveying the properties. A trustee would hold Allen's deed and Hull's bond in escrow, and release one or the other according to the fulfillment or non-fulfillment of the repayment terms. Now business partners, Hull and Allen placed the documents in the safekeeping of State Street broker and signatory witness John Marston, who also made a separate loan to Allen.<sup>64</sup> A few

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primary purpose in this letter to Peters, probably written at Graham's request, was to affirm the legitimacy of Graham's divorce.

<sup>63</sup> Graffagnino, "Revolution and Empire," 307.

<sup>64</sup> According to the escrow arrangement, whenever Allen repaid half of the borrowed sum (up to the deadline), the third party would release to him Hull's quitclaim. Should Allen fail to complete repayment within a year, Hull would get the deed in hand and full title to the lands. Wilbur, *Ira Allen*, 2:79; Ira Allen, *Statements*, in Graffagnino, ed., *Ethan and Ira Allen*, 3:237-238; Ira Allen to the Commissioners of Bankruptcy, 21 September 1803, in Duffy et al., eds., *Ethan Allen and His Kin*, 2:785; Ira Allen, deed to William Hull, 5 December 1795, ms. copy, Colchester Proprietors' Records, vol. 2:35-



days later, with most of the gold from Hull now secretly pocketed and packed in a false trunk bottom, Allen felt sure of success.<sup>65</sup> “Indeed I am as certain of it as of my existence,” he boasted to a confidant.<sup>66</sup> Hull, meanwhile, anticipated handsome profits—either in marketable goods or valuable land—improving his credit in the present.<sup>67</sup>

Allen and Graham enjoyed an easy voyage and reached London in early January 1796. The two initially cooperated, and Peters joined Allen’s canal campaign and his inner circle. As planned, Allen early on sought out Daniel Parker to cash Hull’s drafts.<sup>68</sup> Parker paid the £500 note and, Allen later recorded, “made great promises of answering General Hull’s bills, friendship, assistance in business, &c.”<sup>69</sup> However, claimed Allen, Parker subsequently left for France and refused to pay the remaining £1000. Instead the “Damned . . . Rascal” offered through a third party to buy them at a sharp discount,

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37, Bailey/Howe Library, Special Collections Department, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vt. Marston also provided letters of introduction for Allen’s venture. Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 2:638n.

<sup>65</sup> Wilbur, Ira Allen, 2:80; Graffagnino, “Revolution and Empire,” 308.

<sup>66</sup> Ira Allen to Stephen Pearl, 7 December 1795, in Wilbur, Ira Allen, 2:82.

<sup>67</sup> On the same day of Allen’s departure, in Boston, Hull sold \$10,000 in interest-bearing stock to Boston merchant William Sawyer. William Hull, notarized certificate of stock transfer to William Sawyer, 11 December 1795, Robert A. Brock Papers, Miscellaneous File, BR Box 261 (29), The Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.

<sup>68</sup> Excerpt of Ira Allen’s journal, 1795-1796, in Wilbur, Ira Allen, 2:83-85, and “The Journal of Gen. Ira Allen,” The Vermonter 10, no. 7 (February 1905): 210-211. See also Samuel Peters, deposition statement, 17 March 1797, in Allen, Particulars of the Capture, in Graffagnino, ed., Ethan and Ira Allen, 2:114; Graffagnino, “Revolution and Empire,” 317-318, 322-325; Graffagnino, “‘Twenty Thousand Muskets!!!’,” 415-416. Among those sharing Allen and Graham’s cabin and carriages were Oliver Phelps, Jr., of Connecticut, namesake son of the famous land speculator, and his pregnant wife, the daughter of Hull’s cousin Mark Leavenworth, Jr., in Paris. The couple planned to have the child and spend some extended time in Paris, and carried with them a letter of introduction from Hull to Monroe. William Hull to “Citizen Munroe,” 3 December 1795, James Monroe Papers, ser. 1, Presidential Papers Microfilm, Library of Congress, reel 1.

<sup>69</sup> Excerpt of Ira Allen’s journal, in Wilbur, Ira Allen, 2:86.

which Allen refused.<sup>70</sup> Despite this setback, Allen made several commercial contacts and arranged shipments of saleable goods. His repeated applications for a St. Lawrence-Champlain canal, however, led nowhere.<sup>71</sup>

Frustrated by Home Secretary Portland's inattention, by late May Allen smuggled himself and Hull's gold to Paris and, astonishingly, succeeded in persuading the Directory government to sponsor his grand revolutionary plan and to supply twenty thousand muskets with bayonets, twenty-four brass cannons, and a few gun carriages and wagons. A phony contract was drawn up—"to deceive the enemies of France," in the words of the secret, genuine contract.<sup>72</sup> While his cargo was in preparation, the elated adventurer snuck back to London and unveiled his achievement to his confidants.<sup>73</sup> He also completed his arrangements for commercial goods shipments, part of which was to meet his obligation to Hull, before returning to the continent.

Then his luck ran out. In November, west of the Isles of Scilly, a British man-of-war intercepted Allen's chartered *Olive Branch*, condemned its cargo of arms, and

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<sup>70</sup> Allen, Statements, in Graffagnino, ed., Ethan and Ira Allen, 3:237; Graffagnino, "Revolution and Empire," 360, note 3; Ira Allen to the Commissioners of Bankruptcy, 21 September 1803, in Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 2:785. Quote in excerpt of Ira Allen's journal, in Wilbur, Ira Allen, 2:86.

<sup>71</sup> Allen also made inquiries on the availability and cost of arms, mostly as a tactic to build cover for his real intention of acquiring them from France. Graffagnino, "'Twenty Thousand Muskets!!!,'" 415-417; Graffagnino, "Revolution and Empire," 323-325; Williamson, Vermont in Quandary, 226-228; Wilbur, Ira Allen, 2:86-88; Allen, Particulars of the Capture, in Graffagnino, ed., Ethan and Ira Allen, 2:105, 143.

<sup>72</sup> Ira Allen's Contracts for the Purchase of Arms from the Republic of France, 11 July 1796, in Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 2:781-782. (Real contract quoted in editors' note, p. 782.) Not only did Allen not pay for the arms; he also received notes in Dutch florins worth as much as \$20,000. Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 2:475n, 477-478n.

<sup>73</sup> Peters—a former loyalist now hostile to Britain for denying him a bishopric—was positively giddy about a "United Columbia." Samuel Peters to Ira Allen, 17 September 1796, in Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 2:480-482; Williamson, Vermont in Quandary, 233.

escorted it to Portsmouth.<sup>74</sup> Allen subsequently endured a four-year ordeal that included an eighteen-month legal fight in England and a year in French prisons. He worked hard to support his ruse of a legitimate and benign arms purchase, soliciting depositions and affidavits (including from Hull), publishing defenses, and requesting more falsified evidence from the French Directory, whose attitude had shifted.<sup>75</sup> In England, Allen's own history and reputation, lackluster American support, and other insurrections in Canada and Ireland all hurt his case. Most shocking, however, was the betrayal of his erstwhile partner Graham, now remarried to a wealthy Englishwoman and settled in England.<sup>76</sup> Whether or not Graham specifically knew of Allen's plot to "revolutionize" Canada before Allen told his inner circle in late summer is uncertain, but by then (and perhaps with that very revelation) their interests had diverged. The *Olive Branch* seizure had both increased Graham's vulnerability and presented him a lucrative opportunity, and in January 1797 he turned informant. In the months and years following, Graham would continue to curry favor with British authorities. His accusations, some of which officials

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<sup>74</sup> Graffagnino, "'Twenty Thousand Muskets!!!,'" 417-422; Graffagnino, "Revolution and Empire," 325-335; Ojala, "Ira Allen and the French Directory," 438-448; Williamson, Vermont in Quandary, 226-231; Wilbur, Ira Allen, 2:88-102; Ira Allen to the Directory, June 1796, and Citizen Carnot to Ira Allen, 1 July 1796, in Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 2:473-475 (See also editors' notes on pp. 472-473).

<sup>75</sup> Ira Allen to Roger Enos, 12 February 1797, and Isaac Moseley to Ira Allen, 6 August 1800, in Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 2:500, 654.

<sup>76</sup> Graffagnino, "'Twenty Thousand Muskets!!!,'" 422-425; Graffagnino, "Revolution and Empire," 336-344; Williamson, Vermont in Quandary, 231-232.

suspected as bogus, would in time extend to several others, including Hull.<sup>77</sup> Little wonder that Allen came to regard Graham as “the Greatest Villen in Existance [sic].”<sup>78</sup>

Allen had yet another reason to think so, for Graham had also already undermined Allen’s credit, with significant consequences for both Allen and Hull. In September 1796—as Allen was leaving England to get his secret arms—Graham had suddenly refused to pay Allen’s draft to a commercial firm in Leeds. The merchants, knowing Graham as an intimate of Allen’s, were alarmed and immediately suspended a large shipment. Others quickly heard the news and withheld their shipments for Allen as well. These delays, precipitated by Graham, prevented goods intended for Hull from reaching Boston within the contractual period. (Such, at least, was the assumption of Noadiah Bissell, brother-in-law of Allen’s wife.) Allen had made other payment arrangements as soon as he heard of what had happened, probably after the capture of the *Olive Branch*, but it was too late. Hull’s goods arrived well after the December deadline, and, he told Bissell, he had received no letter of explanation from Allen.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Duke of Portland to Robert Prescott, Governor General of Quebec, 20 January 1797, and General Burton at Montreal to Major Green, military secretary to Lieutenant-Governor Robert S. Milnes, 15 July 1801, in Wilbur, *Ira Allen*, 2:110-11, 318-319.

<sup>78</sup> Ira Allen to Robert Slade, 17 May 1799, in Duffy et al., eds., *Ethan Allen and His Kin*, 2:625. A livid Samuel Peters, inevitably implicated, attacked his relative and defended Allen in the *London Post*. He avoided using Graham’s name, referring to him simply as “a certain American Colonel.” “A Friend to Truth” [Samuel Peters] to the Editor of the Morning Post, 29 September 1797, in Graffagnino, ed., *Ethan and Ira Allen*, 2:104-107; Wilbur, *Ira Allen*, 2:152-154. Privately, Peters and Stephen Thorn, another in Allen’s circle, nicknamed Graham “Stiff Knees,” descriptive of his subservience to the English aristocracy. Graffagnino, “Revolution and Empire,” 339. Dr. Isaac Moseley, another loyalist of Connecticut origin, called Graham “the very quintessence of all imposters.” Isaac Moseley to Ira Allen, 15 August 1800, excerpt in Wilbur, *Ira Allen*, 2:298.

<sup>79</sup> Wigglesworth, Hague & Co. to Ira Allen, 27 September 1796, and Ira Allen to Roger Enos, 12 February 1797, in Duffy et al., eds., *Ethan Allen and His Kin*, 2:482, 500; Wilbur, *Ira Allen*, 2:96-97, 103, 117. Allen also claimed that Graham defaulted on his agreement to pay his father-in-law for their early lodging in London, for which Allen was arrested and briefly jailed in September 1797. Strangely, in light of the circumstances, Allen had continued to reside there through much of the early *Olive Branch* affair. Wilbur, *Ira Allen*, 2:154; Ira Allen to James Lorimer, 26 September 1797, in Duffy et al., eds., *Ethan Allen and His Kin*, 2:532-533 (and ed. note 3).

The disposition of Allen's 46,000 acres was now thrown into question. By the strict terms of Allen's deed, Hull could assert clear title.<sup>80</sup> However, Hull's quitclaim, as long as it existed, could still potentially undermine the deed's authority. Despite his troubles, Allen remained a resourceful man with strong allies, and it was likely that upon his return he would mount a serious challenge, claiming, for example, to have satisfied the conditions of the mortgage as far as within his power. Undisputed control of the land, in other words, was not yet a certainty. In any case, Hull could not yet consummate his claim—not until trustee John Marston surrendered Allen's deed, which Allen believed Marston could not and would not do without his authorization. The State Street broker, in fact, did not do so—initially. Unfortunately for Allen, Marston too was awaiting a return on his own cash loan, and was undoubtedly troubled by Allen's detention and the allegations against him.<sup>81</sup>

No record of Hull's reaction to Allen's detention or Graham's defection has come to light.<sup>82</sup> By that time Hull had very likely already collected other opinions and better knowledge of both men. It seems, however, that by 1797 Hull would in any case have

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<sup>80</sup> James Benjamin Wilbur's biography points out that since (1) Daniel Parker had denied Hull's note, (2) Allen had not sent any drafts for Hull to pay, and (3) Hull had not supplied any goods to Allen's store in Boston, the actual loan taken was but about half of the \$30,000 authorized. However, whatever the sum borrowed, the deadline for repayment was the same. As Wilbur himself put it, "Allen, as usual, had been too generous in his security; or possibly it was necessary to obtain the money." Wilbur, Ira Allen, 2:79-80.

<sup>81</sup> Allen, Statements, in Graffagnino, ed., Ethan and Ira Allen, 3:238; Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 2:638n. In the meantime Hull apparently visited Vermont, probably to inspect the remote lands, assess their potential value, and take the political temperature of the region. Allen regarded Hull's visits in Vermont as evidence of a conspiracy to defraud him. Allen, Statements, in Graffagnino, ed., Ethan and Ira Allen, 3:238. Wilbur states that Bissell reported meeting Hull in the town of Hartford in February 1797, but provides no source. Wilbur, Ira Allen, 2:117.

<sup>82</sup> According to Wilbur, Bissell claimed that Hull said he had heard news of Allen's detention only after arriving in Hartford. Allen was there "on account of some demands against him from Canada," said Hull, but he could not learn the source of the reports. Wilbur, Ira Allen, 2:117.

been highly motivated to assume title of the lands, for since Allen's departure he had entered into other speculations and enterprises that hardly turned out as planned.

On January 7, 1796, for example, Hull and over thirty others had purchased a speculative interest in a strip of Georgia lands running east from the Mississippi River and estimated at about a million acres.<sup>83</sup> The tract was part of the massive 1795 Yazoo land sale approved by the Georgia legislature that had sparked outrage and protest, even in the federal Congress, because of the rampant bribery, questionable titles, and speculative frenzy connected with it. On February 13, 1796, the Georgia Mississippi Company, one of the four original purchasing syndicates in the Yazoo sale, sold its huge tract (about eleven million acres) to three trustees for a group of some twenty other large New England investors, afterward organized as the New England Mississippi Land Company. Hull bought further into this scheme, purchasing a 250,000-acre share for \$25,000 dollars.<sup>84</sup> At the same time, in Augusta, a newly elected "anti-Yazoo" Georgia legislature voided the entire original Yazoo grant, throwing all titles into question. When the news reached Boston in early March, a legal and political scramble was on among investors to re-validate the purchases or at least secure compensation. The whole episode would become a *cause célèbre*, lasting two decades and leading most famously to the Supreme Court decision in *Fletcher v. Peck* (1810), in which Chief Justice John Marshall applied a strict construction of the Constitution and upheld the original sale as an

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<sup>83</sup> American State Papers: Public Lands, 8 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Duff Green, 1834), 1:207.

<sup>84</sup> Israel Pickens to William Hull, 10 May 1816 and 4 February 1817 (with a copy of William Hull's reply, dated 22 February 1817, at the bottom of the latter), and William Hull, copy of deposition statement, [February 1817], William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (45, 105), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge.

inviolable contract, and its repeal as unconstitutional.<sup>85</sup> In the meantime, however, Hull's investment of "large sums of money" was in jeopardy.<sup>86</sup>

Also, in April 1796, Hull recruited some associates and purchased for \$50,000 the claims of the so-called "Excess Company," a speculative concern created the previous summer in agreement with the new Connecticut Land Company, which had bought a large portion of Connecticut's "Western Reserve" (presently northeastern Ohio). The Excess Company claimed the right to buy and hold all rights, title, and interest in the Connecticut Land Company's purchased land in excess of three million acres. The tract had yet to be fully surveyed—hence the speculation—but estimates, based on existing reports and maps, indicated that the surplus could be up to half a million acres. Alas, the reports and maps proved wrong. A survey taken that summer revealed that the southern shoreline of Lake Erie descended southward at a much sharper angle than previously thought. Land that was assumed to exist did not; instead of a surplus, there was a shortfall of nearly 200,000 acres. In a flash, Hull's \$50,000 investment had disappeared, further straining his credit. He managed to avoid utter disaster only when Connecticut

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<sup>85</sup> American State Papers: Public Lands, 1:202. Useful overview studies of the long and convoluted Yazoo land episode include Charles H. Haskins, "The Yazoo Land Companies," in Papers of the American Historical Association 5, no. 4 (October 1891): 61-108; Shaw Livermore, Early American Land Companies: Their Influence on Corporate Development (The Commonwealth Fund, 1939; reprint, New York: Octagon Books, 1968), 146-157; Thomas P. Abernethy, The South in the New Nation, 1789-1819, vol. 4, A History of the South, ed. Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter ([Baton Rouge]: Louisiana State University Press, 1961), 136-168; and C. Peter Magrath, Yazoo: Law and Politics in the New Republic: The Case of *Fletcher v. Peck* (New York: Norton, 1966). The land purchased by Hull's group was part of a seventeen million acre tract (the largest of four) acquired by the Georgia Company in the original 1795 sale. Livermore, Early American Land Companies, 153-154, 164-165n.

<sup>86</sup> Quote from William Hull to [?], 13 February 1803, draft letter, William Hull Papers, MS 407, folder 1, item 19, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah.

Land Company associates decided to make room for him in their shares. Still, the project failed to yield the dividends Hull had envisioned.<sup>87</sup>

By year's end, still awaiting Allen's promised goods, Hull's activities had depleted his cash and brought him into substantial debt. Among other things, this led to trouble with some family members of his Revolutionary commander, trusted friend, and Newton neighbor, Col. Michael Jackson. In December, Hull took a short-term loan of \$9,000 from Amasa Jackson, one of Colonel Jackson's several sons and one of the two agents for the Georgia Mississippi Company that had sold its land to the New England group.<sup>88</sup> Hull promised to redeem his two notes (for \$4,500 each) quickly, probably after the expected arrival of Allen's shipment. Upon leaving Boston, Amasa left the notes in the hands of his brother Simon, a Newton farmer who apparently had involved himself in some of Hull's speculations, for easier collection. Hull paid the first note—or Simon covered it for him—in early January 1797, but Amasa soon grew anxious for the remainder as his own creditors made demands.<sup>89</sup> By late April, his patience was near an

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<sup>87</sup> In The Western Reserve Historical Society, Annual Report for 1915-1916, Tract No. 96 (Cleveland: Western Reserve Historical Society, 1916), see Claude L. Shepard, "The Connecticut Land Company: A Study in the Beginnings of Colonization of the Western Reserve," 78; John Livingston's contract of sale with William Hull, 7 April 1796, 117-118; The Agreement of the Connecticut Land Company with William Hull as Successor to the Excess Company, 158-163; and Extracts from the Records of the Connecticut Land Company, 177-179. See also Livermore, Early American Land Companies, 177-185; Harlan Hatcher, The Western Reserve: The Story of New Connecticut in Ohio (Bobbs-Merrill, 1949; rev. ed., Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1966; reprint, Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1991), 27-31; A. M. Sakolski, The Great American Land Bubble: The Amazing Story of Land-Grabbing, Speculations, and Booms from Colonial Days to the Present Time (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1932), 120-121.

<sup>88</sup> Amasa Jackson's role is identified in Articles of Association and Agreement, Constituting the New-England Mississippi Land Company, as Amended March 12, 1798 (N.p., n.d.), 1, pamphlet copy in William Hull Papers, MS 407, folder 1, item 19, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah.

<sup>89</sup> Amasa Jackson to Simon Jackson, 17 December 1796, 7 February 1797, and 7 April 1797; Amasa Jackson to Michael Jackson Sr., 11 January 1797, transcriptions, Jackson Family Papers II, carton 2, Amasa Jackson Correspondence, 1796-1797 file, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston. In the latter document, Amasa remarked to his father, "I hope he [Simon] will find no difficulty in Hulls [sic] business."



end. “You may be sure that I am not a little astonished at the conduct of Genl Hull,” he wrote Simon from Augusta. “I beg that you will urge to him the extream [sic] necessity of fulfilling his promises. I shall be compelled to adopt the most pointed measures, if he does not comply.”<sup>90</sup> Indeed, in November 1798 Amasa won a judgment against Hull for over five thousand dollars.<sup>91</sup>

So it was that Ira Allen’s apparent forfeiture of land came at an opportune time for Hull. Whether Hull’s objective all along had been to acquire the Vermont properties, as Allen later suggested in one of his several self-promoting publications, he would, under the circumstances, have had few qualms about claiming such a windfall.<sup>92</sup> However, as long as the outcome of Allen’s case and date of his return remained uncertain, so was the outcome of any seizure of his lands. Marston too awaited more definitive news.

Not until December 1797 did the British court deliver its verdict against Allen. He promptly appealed, and in May 1798 again crossed to France to solicit more fabricated documentation for his case.<sup>93</sup> In the meantime he courted Hull’s patience from a distance. First, before leaving for Paris, he sent Hull a copy of his 405-page published

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Simon also had also become a secondary purchaser of Yazoo lands in May 1796. American State Papers: Public Lands, 1:205.

<sup>90</sup> Amasa Jackson to Simon Jackson, 21 April 1797, transcription, Jackson Family Papers II, carton 2, Amasa Jackson Correspondence, 1796-1797 file, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

<sup>91</sup> William Hull, copy of deposition statement, [February 1817], William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (105), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge.

<sup>92</sup> Allen, Statements (1807), in Graffagnino, ed., Ethan and Ira Allen, 3:237.

<sup>93</sup> Graffagnino, ““Twenty Thousand Muskets!!!”,” 424-425; Graffagnino, “Revolution and Empire,” 343-344, 351-352; Wilbur, Ira Allen, 2:191.

account of the *Olive Branch* affair.<sup>94</sup> Then, in August, he dispatched a letter to Hull lamenting “the Visisitudes of Fourtune [that] have Detained me in Europe” and explaining his most recent delay. “I Expect to see you this fall,” Allen wrote with unjustified optimism.<sup>95</sup> Instead, just days later he was arrested and imprisoned. Except for three weeks in December, he remained confined until September 1799, much of it in the deplorable Sainte-Pélagie prison. The Directory was unsympathetic, as Franco-American relations had devolved into an undeclared naval war.<sup>96</sup>

Allen’s incarceration in France broke the back of forbearance at home. The wheels of his already shaky Vermont empire were now coming off, and a scramble among anxious creditors for his assets was on.<sup>97</sup> “The world have now given over the idea that you will ever return,” wrote Allen’s nephew in 1799, “and no stone has been unturned to injure you.”<sup>98</sup> Among others, John Marston, like Hull an anxious Yazoo speculator, filed suit in 1798 to recover his loan to Allen. In October, Moses and Lucinda Catlin, she the daughter of Allen’s deceased brother Heman, obtained a judgment against

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<sup>94</sup> Hull’s was one of a hundred copies Allen distributed in February 1798. See Ira Allen to Noadiah Bissell, 2 May 1798, and Ira Allen to William Hull, 24 August 1798, in Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 2:547, 570.

<sup>95</sup> Ira Allen to William Hull, 24 August 1798, in Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 2:570-571.

<sup>96</sup> Graffagnino, ““Twenty Thousand Muskets!!!”,” 425-426; Graffagnino, “Revolution and Empire,” 351-356.

<sup>97</sup> Graffagnino, “Revolution and Empire,” 355. Making matters worse for Allen, Governor Chittenden had died in 1797, and Isaac Tichener, a Federalist enemy of Allen’s, now held the office.

<sup>98</sup> Heman Allen to Ira Allen, 11 September 1799, in Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 2:638.

Allen and immediately levied on three hundred seventy-three acres of Allen's land and mills in Burlington and Colchester, part of the properties deeded by Allen to Hull.<sup>99</sup>

The Catlin claim worried Hull, for not only did he stand to lose those valuable properties as long as they remained in Allen's name, but other claimants against Allen might soon try to foreclose on other properties Hull believed were his. He could not afford to wait longer, and he took action on at least three fronts. First, he sought a private opinion on the Catlin claim from prominent Boston lawyer, state attorney general, and fellow Republican and Yazoo investor James Sullivan, who concluded that the Catlins' suit and claim on Allen's property was illegitimate.<sup>100</sup> Second, Hull convinced Marston to declare Hull's quitclaim null and void and turn over Allen's deed to him. No record has been found showing whether Hull provided incentives (though it certainly seems possible), or if simply the escrow period had expired, as Marston claimed.<sup>101</sup> No doubt Marston's mounting grievance against Allen played a role. Hull now had in hand enough authority to dispense with the lands as he saw fit.

This led to his third action. On February 16, 1799, Hull sold Allen's deeded properties to Vermont legislator, county judge, and speculator Silas Hathaway of St. Albans for \$35,000. The amount was far below what the lands could actually draw, but the sale enabled Hull to turn a modest profit and clear out before any further problems

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<sup>99</sup> Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 2:546-547n, 638n, 644n, 729n; Wilbur, Ira Allen, 2:215. Marston's purchase of 80,000 acres in Georgia in November 1795 is noted in American State Papers: Public Lands, 1:206.

<sup>100</sup> James Sullivan to William Hull, 15 January 1799, copy, Allen Family Papers, box 19, folder 78, Bailey/Howe Library, Special Collections Department, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vt.; Wilbur, Ira Allen, 2:215. Only the administrator(s) of Heman's estate, not his heirs, could legally bring suit, argued Sullivan, and Allen himself was the administrator. Sullivan's opinion, of course, gave greater confidence to Hull that if necessary he could successfully challenge any foreclosure by the Catlins on his claimed land. On Sullivan, see Goodman, Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts, 99-100.

<sup>101</sup> Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 2:638n; Wilbur, Ira Allen, 2:248, 336.

developed. After the Yazoo and Excess Company debacles, he apparently had concluded that the uncertainties associated with holding onto the remote and contested lands were more than he was willing to bear. (Probably, given his public stature by that time, he was also desirous to free himself from the reputational baggage of any association with Allen.) Hence the contract of sale and deed transfer specifically stated that Hull was “never to be answerable or subject to any action for or on account of any incumbrance or defect of title in[,] on, or to the said land.”<sup>102</sup>

Hull had meanwhile begun one more project on his Newton land in 1798 to try to produce income. It was a business venture he had first explored a decade before: namely, a commercial brewery for “ale and strong beer.” For the purpose he constructed an impressive mile-long aqueduct from a hill to the west that carried fresh water to the Hull home and farm.<sup>103</sup> According to Newton pastor Jonathan Homer, Hull had also erected a

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<sup>102</sup> William Hull, deed to Silas Hathaway, 16 February 1799, photocopy (from original in the Franklin County Historical Museum, St. Albans, Vermont), Allen Family Papers, box 19, folder 97, Bailey/Howe Library, Special Collections Department, University of Vermont, Burlington, Vt. This document shows that the deed was recorded separately in the five concerned townships (Burlington, Shelburne, Essex, Colchester, and Georgia) over the course of more than a year, the last on May 8, 1800. For a brief background on Hathaway, see Duffy et al., eds., *Ethan Allen and His Kin*, 2:458-459n, 538-539n; Wilbur, *Ira Allen*, 2:247. Although Allen’s deed acknowledged receipt of \$30,000, the amount that Hull agreed to as the limit for his loan, it would seem that Hull had actually expended less than \$15,000. If so, the profit by his sale to Hathaway would have been about \$20,000. To Allen (and biographer Wilbur), the sale represented nothing short of theft, born of a conspiracy that included Hull, Hathaway, and even Colonel Graham. Wilbur, *Ira Allen*, 2:248, 282, 321. A letter to Allen from his nephew, written at the end of Allen’s imprisonment, confirmed Hull’s sale to Hathaway. Allen did not receive the letter, however, until March 1800, over a year after Hathaway’s purchase. Ironically, the letter was delivered to him by Supreme Court Chief Justice Oliver Ellsworth, one of three American envoys sent to France after Napoleon Bonaparte’s takeover to reestablish diplomatic and commercial ties. It was this same Ellsworth, a prominent Federalist, who, during his circuit court rounds, had issued the judgment against Allen in the Catlin case. Heman Allen to Ira Allen, 11 September 1799, in Duffy et al., eds., *Ethan Allen and His Kin*, 2:637-638; Wilbur, *Ira Allen*, 2:278-279.

<sup>103</sup> The aqueduct “supplies the fountains in front of the house, the cold Bath, the Barn yards, the gardens, & at different distances in the fields may be unstopped for use,” admired William Bentley. Bentley, 4 and 6 September 1798, in Bentley, *Diary*, 2:280-281.

“very capacious brick building” and employed “an eminent English brewer.”<sup>104</sup> One hundred twenty feet long and forty-two wide, and twenty-seven feet from floor to eaves, Bentley noted, the brewery stood next to a hill so that the spring water entered at the second story. Below, Hull also built a wharf on the Charles River to easily transport the finished product to Boston.<sup>105</sup> “It is one of the most favourable situations within the State for a brewery,” Homer claimed.<sup>106</sup> Unlike ten years earlier, however—when Hull had sought governmental incentives, including a temporary monopoly, to start such a business in the state—he now faced competition in Federalist Boston.<sup>107</sup> This project, too, appears to have amounted to little.

Despite disappointing business ventures since his return from Europe in late 1795, Hull had managed to stave off insolvency and so far, with his substantial landed endowment, sustain his credit and reputation. In fact his professional, social, and consequently political profile in Massachusetts had continued to rise in this period as he accepted several new positions of trust and distinction. Since 1787 he had served as brigadier general in the militia; now, in June 1796, he once again followed in the

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<sup>104</sup> Homer, “Description and History of Newton,” 254.

<sup>105</sup> Bentley also noted that the building stood on a part of Hull’s estate lying within the tiny section of Watertown that jutted across the Charles River, such that the Newton boundary fell in the field between the brewery and the family home. Bentley, 4 September 1798, in Bentley, *Diary*, 2:280. Pastor Homer, also in 1798, wrote of the brewery: “It is supplied with the purest water proceeding through tubes from a living spring of superior quality; and, from its situation upon Charles-River, it furnishes an easy and cheap conveyance of its manufactures to the capital.” Homer, “Description and History of Newton,” 254.

<sup>106</sup> Homer, “Description and History of Newton,” 254.

<sup>107</sup> See, for example, running advertisements of the Hancock store in 1797 for Boston porter, and brewers Andrew Dunlap & Co. of West Boston in 1798 for strong beer, table beer, and porter. *Independent Chronicle*, 28 September 1797, p. 1, and 8 October 1798, p. 1. For unknown reasons, Hull apparently soon mortgaged his brewery and other properties to Col. Michael Jackson and then quickly redeemed them. See Michael Jackson, deed to William Hull, 16 March 1799, Miscellaneous Papers: Hull, William, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

footsteps of John Brooks in being elected major general of the state's Third Division (encompassing Middlesex County).<sup>108</sup> Then in February 1797 the New England Mississippi Land Company chose him to replace one of its three original trustees to hold title to the Yazoo tract and distribute company scrip (transferable share certificates) to proprietors.<sup>109</sup> That same year the governor and Council appointed him as a judge of the Middlesex County court of common pleas.<sup>110</sup> Finally, in September 1798, the Masonic Grand Lodge of Massachusetts installed him as the first master of the new Meridian Lodge at Watertown.<sup>111</sup> If still not reckoned among the "first characters" of the Commonwealth, Hull was now certainly among the foremost men of Middlesex County.

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<sup>108</sup> William Hull to John Avery, Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 24 June 1796, Chamberlain Collection, C.12.14, Dept. of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Boston Public Library, Boston; Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 261.

<sup>109</sup> Articles of Association and Agreement, Constituting the New-England Mississippi Land Company, as Amended March 12, 1798 (N.p., n.d.), pamphlet copy in William Hull Papers, MS 407, folder 1, item 19, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah; William Hull to the Directors of the New England Mississippi Land Company, autograph draft signed, 7 October 1814, William Hull Papers, MS 407, folder 1, item 30, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah. The establishment of new trustees was part of a company reorganization and consolidation to provide a better front for lobbying against the Yazoo repudiation. Livermore, Early American Land Companies, 160. Ironically Hull's appointment came at the very time when Amasa Jackson, who had helped sell the land to this New England group, was losing patience with Hull's failure to repay his personal loan.

<sup>110</sup> [William Hull,] Draft outline of his life and career, 2 December 1812, Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 261.

<sup>111</sup> The announcement of the Meridian Lodge installation was placed in both the Independent Chronicle, 20 August 1798, p. 3; and Columbian Centinel, 8 August 1798, p. 3. A subsequent description of the event appeared in the Columbian Centinel, 12 September 1798, p. 1.

CHAPTER 6  
REPUBLICAN  
(1797-1804)

The emerging crisis in Franco-American relations in 1797 placed even greater attention and importance on Hull's new station as division commander than he had foreseen when accepting his commission as major general of the Third Division the previous June. In May 1797 the new President John Adams summoned Congress into special session and blasted French conduct in a belligerent speech that Republican papers throughout the nation criticized as warmongering. With fears of war and internal disunity rising, Hull's position would inevitably become politicized, as Federalist watchmen could be counted on to scrutinize his politics and, if necessary, challenge his reliability for the command.<sup>1</sup> The new major general, however, quickly saw an opportunity to promote both the public confidence and his reputation by crafting a more unified and disciplined force. It was a job the former Revolutionary inspector knew well and took great pride in.

Hull conceived a spectacular military review to demonstrate unity and preparedness to the public. Eight years earlier he had helped plan and execute the special review in Cambridge with some eight hundred men in honor of President Washington's visit. Now he proposed for the first time assembling in one place the entire Third

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<sup>1</sup> Richard H. Kohn, *Eagle and Sword: The Beginnings of the Military Establishment in America* (New York: Free Press, 1975), chap. 10, effectively emphasizes the intense Federalist fears of disunity in this period.

Division, from every corner of Middlesex County, for the mandatory annual muster. He began by urging all under his command to properly outfit themselves in order to present a “Martial Appearance.” “The addition of a Uniform has been found to give great Animation to the Exercises of the Field,” the adjutant general admonished on Hull’s behalf.<sup>2</sup> For many citizen-soldiers, however, this presented a real hardship. Proper equipment and dress were costly, and there was no governmental assistance. Fifty-year-old William Manning, a farmer and zealous Republican of rural North Billerica, complained that what started as a request soon led to deceitful and illegal measures as regimental officers tried to outdo each other in fulfilling Hull’s directives. “All the arts of flattery were used to obtain their ends,” he railed. “But seeing they were likely to fail in them, they soon had recourse to thretning & falsehoods.”<sup>3</sup> By August, with the approval of Governor Increase Sumner, Hull called for the grand review to be held at Concord the following month.<sup>4</sup> On Tuesday, September 26, over four thousand brigade and company officers and soldiers arrived. Some had trekked a few days; all came at their own expense. Governor Sumner and numerous other civil and military officers were present, along with a large gallery of spectators.

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<sup>2</sup> Adjutant General of the Third Division, General Order, 13 June 1797, quoted in Samuel Eliot Morison, ed. and intro., “William Manning’s The Key of Libberty,” William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 13 (1956): 229n.

<sup>3</sup> William Manning, in Morison, ed., “William Manning’s The Key of Libberty,” 228. (Original spelling retained.) Manning’s manuscript, which he completed in February 1798, was never published. At fifty, Manning was five years too old for militia duty. Manning’s account of the level of resistance to the muster contrasts with Hull’s rosier picture. See Maria Campbell and James Freeman Clarke, Revolutionary Services and Civil Life of General William Hull; Prepared from his Manuscripts, by his Daughter, Mrs. Maria Campbell: Together with the History of the Campaign of 1812, and the Surrender of the Post of Detroit, by his Grandson, James Freeman Clarke (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1848; facsimile reprint, New York: Garrett Press, 1970), 262.

<sup>4</sup> See Morison, ed., “William Manning’s The Key of Libberty,” 228, 229n.



What Hull had planned as a glorious exhibition, a rally to public morale, and a showcase of his leadership, however, produced instead disappointment and perhaps even a life-threatening episode. To start, Hull was ill and fatigued. Then the weather turned miserable. A severe nor'easter blew in that morning, dumping an incessant cold rain and drenching the citizen-soldiers and their new uniforms, as well as horses, guns and wagons, the grounds, and any spectators not sheltered from the elements. Later hearing of it, Manning took delight in this theatrical display of divine justice: "For it pleased the Almighty to send a tremendous Storme upon them at the very moment they ware about to Exhibit, which spilt all their fun." However, he added, "the authors of it have grate reason to be thankful that it did not rain fire & brimstone upon them instead of cold water."<sup>5</sup> Determined to persist against the elements, at ten o'clock Hull ordered his commanders to call their men to their positions. On horseback, exposed to the downpour, the forty-four-year-old general had commenced his initial inspection of the lines when, one soldier eyewitness recalled, a "*sudden and violent illness*" seized him. Unable to move, Hull was taken from his mount and carried from the field. Reports circulated that he had suffered "a stroke of paralysis."<sup>6</sup> Although the governor's review of the division parade proceeded, the usually exciting maneuvers and exercises were canceled and gloom

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<sup>5</sup> William Manning, in Morison, ed., "William Manning's The Key of Liberty," 228-229. [Original spelling.]

<sup>6</sup> Statement of Samuel Hoar, in Nathan Brooks to William H. Sumner, 19 July 1856, quoted in William Hyslop Sumner, "General William Hull" (letter to the editor, 8 October 1856), in New England Historical and Genealogical Register 11, no. 1 (January 1857): 15. Sumner's letter here, in which he discusses the episode at some length, was precipitated by a protest from Hull's grandson Samuel C. Clarke to Sumner's mention of the incident in a memoir of his father. In addition to the letter above (pp. 13-16), see in the New England Historical and Genealogical Register: William H. Sumner, "Memoir of Increase Sumner," 8, no. 2 (April 1854): 122; Samuel C. Clarke, "Gen. William Hull" (letter to the editor, 25 April 1854), 9, no. 1 (January 1855): 41-42; and William H. Sumner, "Correction," 11, no. 2 (April 1857): 168. Boston's Independent Chronicle afterward described the incident: "We are sorry to mention, the General was suddenly taken ill, and was carried off the field; we hope, however, his illness will be only temporary." "Military Review at Concord," Independent Chronicle, 28 September 1797, p. 3.

overshadowed the day. “The elementary inconvenience which Gen. Hull and his whole division experienced, gave pain to the breast of sensibility,” reported Worcester’s Massachusetts Spy.<sup>7</sup> Officials tried to put the best face on the fiasco. “The Patience and Fortitude discover’d by both Officers and Men, under their Disappointment did them much Honour,” announced the adjutant general on September 28, “and the Emulation and Ardour of the Several Corps under such Discouragements, evinced that tho’ thoroughly wet, their Military Fire was not Extinguished.”<sup>8</sup>

Hull remained incapacitated for several days and apparently manifested lingering effects from the affliction for some time after. Not until October 10 could he issue an official notice of thanks to the division. He lamented the “unfortunate Weather” and his “Sudden indisposion [sic],” but also congratulated the men on their dress and discipline. “To behold so large a body of the Militia assembled together; to see them not only completely organized, armed, and equiped [sic], but allmost [sic] in perfect uniform, is a Spectacle New in our Country.”<sup>9</sup> The whole episode had been frightening, probably depressing, and not a little embarrassing to a man who prided himself in part on physical stamina such as he had displayed in the Revolution. The last thing he wanted was a public appearance of frailty. But weakened he was. Visiting Hull a year later, the Reverend Bentley found him “an accomplished gentleman, but evidently impaired by his

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<sup>7</sup> Massachusetts Spy (Worcester), 4 October 1797, quoted in William H[yslop] Sumner to the editor, 8 October 1856, New England Historical and Genealogical Register 11, no. 1 (January 1857): 15.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Morison, ed., “William Manning’s The Key of Libberty,” 229n.

<sup>9</sup> Major General Hull, General Orders, copy, 10 October 1797, Manuscript Collection, MS.318, Dept. of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Boston Public Library, Boston.

paralytic affections.”<sup>10</sup> It appears that in time he fully recovered; but much later, in the mid-1850s, William Hyslop Sumner, who as a boy had witnessed the bizarre episode alongside his father the governor, posited Hull’s seizure as a sensible explanation for his baffling conduct fifteen years later in the surrender of Detroit:

Certainly, from our knowledge of Gen. Hull’s previous character, it is much more difficult to believe him guilty of *cowardice*, than, from the evidence given, to believe that his “agitation” at Detroit was caused by the previous weakening of his nervous system by *paralysis*. This latter belief removes all the doubt and mystery which now surrounds the subject.<sup>11</sup>

Sumner’s quite literal failure-of-nerve thesis, however, would get no traction with either Hull’s defenders or detractors.

As Hull recovered in the days after his attack, three envoys appointed by President Adams were arriving in Paris to try to restore relations and head off full-blown war with France. The mission faltered in the months following as the Americans indignantly refused to provide the loan, bribe, and apologies quietly demanded by French agents just for a hearing. When news of the failed peace effort arrived and spread in March 1798, hotheaded Republican congressmen and editors ratcheted up their charges against the president for maneuvering the nation toward an unnecessary and self-destructive war. Adams’s subsequent release of the envoys’ instructions and dispatches in early April, in turn, scandalized the nation and threw Republicans back on their heels. The XYZ affair, as the diplomatic episode became known, thrust Federalists into

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<sup>10</sup> William Bentley, 4 September 1798, in William Bentley, The Diary of William Bentley, D.D., Pastor of the East Church, Salem, Massachusetts, 4 vols. (Salem, Mass.: The Essex Institute, 1905-1914; reprint, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1962), 2:280.

<sup>11</sup> Sumner went on to explain that his purpose in raising the subject “was the hope and belief that, by it, means were offered to vindicate, in a measure, American honor, and do something towards wiping out the stain upon the fame of one whom all would delight to honor.” William H[yslop] Sumner to the editor, 8 October 1856, New England Historical and Genealogical Register 11, no. 1 (January 1857): 16.

momentary dominance. As Dr. Nathaniel Ames, a fanatical Republican and brother of the equally fanatical Federalist Fisher Ames, put it, “An infamous Gallomania seized the coca doodle doo Government.”<sup>12</sup> Robert Goodloe Harper’s banquet toast—“Millions for defense but not one cent for tribute”—became the national cry and Adams suddenly found himself in the unfamiliar position of being popular. Many Republican congressmen, cowed by outraged public opinion, shifted to support preparations for a defensive war as throughout the summer real fears of a French invasion loomed. As a result, in June and July Congress exceeded Adams’s requests by passing the extraordinary Alien and Sedition Laws and authorizing not only an enlarged navy but also a previously unthinkable expansion of the regular army with the retired Washington as its titular head. A direct tax on lands, houses, and slaves was also approved to pay for the military expansion.<sup>13</sup>

The climate of fear released a new torrent of fierce Federalist and clerical attacks against “Jacobins”—by which were meant Republicans, atheists, and anyone of influence who had not declared themselves enemies of both—in language that can hardly be exaggerated.<sup>14</sup> “The New England Federalists,” historian Charles Warren observed, “were, in fact, obsessed by the view that all who differed from them were little less than

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<sup>12</sup> Nathaniel Ames, diary entry for 28 March 1798, in Charles Warren, Jacobin and Junto, or Early American Politics as Viewed in the Diary of Dr. Nathaniel Ames, 1758-1822 (n.p., 1931; reprint, New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), 75.

<sup>13</sup> Thoughtful examinations of these events include Kohn, Eagle and Sword, 204-218, and Stanley Elkins and Eric McKittrick, The Age of Federalism (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 581-599.

<sup>14</sup> For good discussions and samples of abusive language in this period, see Marshall Smelser, “The Federalist Period as an Age of Passion,” American Quarterly 10 (winter 1958): 391-419; John R. Howe Jr., “Republican Thought and the Political Violence of the 1790s,” American Quarterly 19 (summer 1967): 147-165; Donald H. Stewart, The Opposition Press of the Federalist Period (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1969), passim; and Warren, Jacobin and Junto, 86-96.

criminals and traitors.”<sup>15</sup> Columbian Centinel printer Benjamin Russell frankly expressed such a view:

At all time, *when impartiality hath not been treason*, every party has had access to [the Centinel’s] columns. . . . But that time is not the present. . . . The *Sham Patriot* shall be stripped of his tinsel; and shall be exposed in his hypocrisy to public contempt and ridicule.<sup>16</sup>

The Federalist use of “Jacobin,” a Republican pamphleteer of Boston explained in later years, “involved the utmost extent of human atrocity.” Such a one was “an enemy to social order—to the rights of property—to religion—to morals—and ripe for rapine and spoil.”<sup>17</sup>

In such an environment it was perhaps to be expected that Hull, who held significant positions of both military and civil leadership, and commercial responsibility, would also become a target. In his congratulatory address to the Middlesex militia of 1797 he had thanked his men for showing “that they are elevated above every party Consideration, that they feel the pride of their American Character, and that they are prepared for the common defense of the Country,” and likewise honored their Revolutionary patrimony and the example of the “Great man” Washington.<sup>18</sup> But despite such attempts to promote unity and hold to what historian Ronald P. Formisano termed the “Revolutionary Center,” by 1798 Hull’s Republican affiliation was well recognized,

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<sup>15</sup> Warren, Jacobin and Junto, 89.

<sup>16</sup> “Political Miscellany,” Columbian Centinel, 19 September 1798, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Mathew Carey, Olive Branch or Faults on Both Sides (1814), quoted in Warren, Jacobin and Junto, 89. Kohn, Eagle and Sword, chap. 10, provides an excellent examination of Federalist motives and fears in this period.

<sup>18</sup> Major General Hull, General Orders, copy, 10 October 1797, Manuscript Collection, MS.318, Dept. of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Boston Public Library, Boston.

and in March he had made himself potentially vulnerable.<sup>19</sup> At that time, serving as county magistrate, he had delivered the official charge of duty to the new Middlesex grand jury. Much of the statement was unobjectionable, and parts hearkened back to themes prevalent in his conservative pre-ratification Federalist years. He urged jurors to “a proper distribution of justice” and “a due execution of the laws” and such.

Acknowledging the crisis in foreign relations, he dutifully declared that “the preservation of our own government is among our first duties, and will be our greatest blessing. It is the pole star . . . and will be the ark of our political salvation.” He called for unity, “a spirit of mutual good will towards each other,” and faithful support of the elected government. But then he had tipped his hand in what currently stands as his first explicit public statement of Republican views:

Every friend to the rights of men, every citizen who remembers and feels a veneration for the principles which gave rise to our own revolution, every one who cherishes those great principles on which our government is founded, every one, indeed, who does not consider national ingratitude as a virtue, will lament the unhappy differences between this country and the French republic.<sup>20</sup>

This was neither a radical manifesto nor a scurrilous assault. Certainly it appears mild in comparison with a Massachusetts chief justice’s charge to the state grand jury, declaring the “French faction” (that is, Republicans) as “apostles of atheism, and anarchy, bloodshed, and plunder.”<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, in tying American Revolutionary principles and history with republican France, Hull’s remark was an unmistakable rebuke of Federalist dogma and was bound to draw attention. As if immediately to blunt

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<sup>19</sup> Ronald P. Formisano, The Transformation of Political Culture: Massachusetts Parties, 1790s-1840s (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 10-11, 57-59.

<sup>20</sup> Excerpts of Judge William Hull’s charge, March 1798, in Grand Jurors of Middlesex County to the Citizens of Middlesex, 13 September 1798, printed in Columbian Centinel, 19 September 1798, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Warren, Jacobin and Junto, 87.

anticipated accusations of fanaticism or disloyalty, Hull also applauded “the wise and discreet measures” adopted by President Adams for settling differences with France.

Hoping “that harmony and friendship [with France] may again be restored,” he concluded with instructions to the jurors to show themselves “true Americans” by uniting in support of the government and in faithfully performing their public duty.<sup>22</sup>

Just days later the news of the failed American mission broke, followed in turn by the XYZ revelation and Republican retreat. Hull too had to tread carefully in the Federalist summer of triumph. The crisis meant that he would be watched more closely than ever, as conspiracy theories abounded. Could a Francophile, Jeffersonian, and defender of the hated Monroe be trusted with so crucial a responsibility as militia commander at such a time, especially in a county with a wide Republican base?<sup>23</sup> In fact Hull shared Federalists’ concerns (though not their paranoia) about disunity in a time of national threat, and with war seeming more imminent he continued his appeal for unity in the common defense of the country. His fall back to patriotic first principles suggested to some that he was perhaps undergoing a political change of heart, or could be encouraged

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<sup>22</sup> Excerpts of Hull’s charge, March 1798, in Grand Jurors of Middlesex County to the Citizens of Middlesex, 13 September 1798, Columbian Centinel, 19 September 1798, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Monroe at that very time was fighting Federalist charges that while in France he had speculated in public monies through the purchase and sale of his Paris residence. In preparing a defense, Monroe named Hull to James Madison as one who, having been present at the time of purchase, could affirm his upright conduct. James Monroe to James Madison, 24 June 1798, from Library of Congress, James Madison Papers, [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mjm&fileName=06/mjm06.db&recNum=600&itemLink=r?ammem/mjm:@FIELD\(D OCID+@BAND\(@lit\(mjm013496\)\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mjm&fileName=06/mjm06.db&recNum=600&itemLink=r?ammem/mjm:@FIELD(D OCID+@BAND(@lit(mjm013496)))) (accessed 4 April 2007); also printed in James Monroe, The Writings of James Monroe, ed. Stanislaus Murray Hamilton, 7 vols. (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1898-1903; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1969), 3:136. Later Hull gladly provided an affidavit refuting the charges, for which Monroe was grateful. William Hull to James Monroe, 8 February 1801, and William Lee to James Monroe, 10 February 1801, James Monroe Papers, New York Public Library, Manuscript Division, New York, N.Y., microfilm, reel 1; and James Monroe to General [William] Hull, 26 March 1801, reprinted in [James Monroe], “Letters of James Monroe, 1798-1808,” Bulletin of the New York Public Library 4 (1900): 46.

into it. In division orders of July, for example, the major general acquiesced in the partisan Federalist calls for reviving the black cockade, worn on the hats of patriot soldiers in the War of Independence, and also recommended the donning of uniforms on Sundays and holidays.<sup>24</sup>

Hull's division orders of late August may have further persuaded some Federalists. Besides announcing the upcoming annual musters and acknowledging "the present crisis of our public affairs," he affirmed that "a submission to the public will, expressed by the organ appointed by ourselves, is a most sacred duty," and declared that "an union of sentiment appears to be essentially necessary, as it regards the great question of public defense." "We certainly ought to respect the works of our own hands," wrote Hull in his old conservative voice, "and it is shameful to vilify the Government which has been established by our free consent." He reminded Republicans, who made up a large majority in the Middlesex division, that "their own opinions must yield to the will of the [broader] majority."<sup>25</sup>

Lest Federalists take too much satisfaction, however, Hull also denounced the principle embodied in the recent Sedition Act—outlawing all "false, scandalous, and malicious" statements against the United States government or president—as contrary to the basic principles of free government. He blasted partisan extremists and his own hidden critics for their intolerance:

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<sup>24</sup> Columbian Centinel, 28 July 1798, p. 3. See Warren, Jacobin and Junto, 81-86, for an amusing discussion of the political battle of cockades, what one Republican deemed the "cockade influenza," in which Federalists promoted the black cockade to challenge and discredit the French tricolor cockade.

<sup>25</sup> Major General Hull, Division Orders, 25 August 1798, printed in Columbian Centinel, 8 September 1798, p. 3. Hull himself noted that the large majority of the Middlesex militia was Republican. Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 263.



As long as the principle of free discussion is a part of our Constitution, so long we ought to view with contempt and indignation, any class of men, who consider their opinions too sacred to be examined, who abuse all who do not subscribe exactly to their creed, who claim the exclusive rights of being patriots, and who endeavor to banish into obscurity every man who differs from them in sentiment, and has sufficient independence to speak his opinions with manly freedom.

He also used the opportunity to defuse the circulating rumors and postings that had called his loyalty into question. He rejected any need to offer reassurances: “If the whole course of his public life is not a satisfactory evidence of his devotion to the public interest,” Hull wrote of himself, “he has no expectation of producing this conviction by the strongest declarations.” Then he angrily counterattacked:

Conscious of the integrity of his views, he feels superior to the malice of his enemies, and despises the dark attempts which have been made to shake the confidence which his fellow-citizens have placed in him; and should the cloud, which has overspread our political horizon, burst on our heads, . . . it will then be brought to a test, whether the public safety is to be secured by anonymous defamers, or by men who devote themselves to a preparation for public defense.<sup>26</sup>

Massachusetts Federalists themselves became divided over what to make of Hull, in part because he did not neatly conform to the polarized political conceptions of the day. (He remained, for example, a trustee for the New England Mississippi Land Company, which united men of both parties in the common purpose of recovering their speculation investments.) Some moderate strategists apparently were coming to believe that with careful handling he might be won over. Perhaps he could be or was already enticed by the possibility of gaining an appointment in the newly approved expansion of the federal army under commander-in-chief Washington, thereby reviving his national aspirations. High Federalists, especially the ideological conservatives of the so-called “Essex Junto,” rejected such a notion out of hand, certain that Hull was a Republican and

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<sup>26</sup> Major General Hull, Division Orders, 25 August 1798, printed in Columbian Centinel, 8 September 1798, p. 3-4.

French stalking-horse. Indeed, it appears that Hull, occupying the “Revolutionary Center,” was becoming an early point of contention in the emerging Federalist rift over the army and war issue.<sup>27</sup>

The irritation of Hull’s “anonymous defamers” was compounded with the announcement of the upcoming installation of a new Masonic lodge at Watertown, a predominantly Republican town in predominantly Republican Middlesex County. On September 5, the Massachusetts Grand Lodge would officially establish the Meridian Lodge, with its appointed Master none other than the Right Worshipful Brother William Hull. It was to be a grand event that would draw Freemasons from both within and outside the county.<sup>28</sup>

“General,” “Judge,” and “Master” Hull—this was all too much for one High Federalist (and possible Essexman) whose jaundiced eye had followed Hull for some time and who saw in Hull’s elevation the perfection of a nefarious Republican conspiracy. In such an emergency, this critic, signing as “Civis,” could restrain his outrage no longer. The result was a caustic attack on Hull appearing in Russell’s Columbian Centinel, the largest of the American newspapers, in late August and early September. Although the pseudonymous writer’s identity is not known, his goal was clear: to expose and discredit Hull as a self-serving, inconsistent, unprincipled charlatan, and so to ruin him as a public man. The three-part, front-paged, near three-thousand-

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<sup>27</sup> On the emerging schism in Massachusetts Federalism, see James M. Banner, Jr., To the Hartford Convention: The Federalists and the Origins of Party Politics in Massachusetts, 1789-1815 (New York: Knopf, 1970), chap. 6, and Stephen G. Kurtz, The Presidency of John Adams: The Collapse of Federalism, 1795-1800 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957), chap. 14. David H. Fischer, “The Myth of the Essex Junto,” William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 21, no. 2 (April 1964): 191-235, clarifies the beliefs and practices of that group’s members.

<sup>28</sup> “Masonic Installation,” Columbian Centinel, 8 August 1798, p. 3. Interestingly, the text of the Sedition Act appears on page 1 of this same issue.

word assault, entitled “The Chameleon Unmasked” and addressed “to the Independent Citizens of the county of Middlesex,” never referred to Hull by name, but adopted another pseudonym suggesting a two-faced character: “General Duplex.” As an extremist opponent’s interpretation of Hull’s political life and reputation, and as a fine specimen of the polemical writing and “paranoid style” of the period, the editorial merits attention.<sup>29</sup>

Civis’s first installment appeared on Saturday, August 29, and opened with a justification for his self-appointed task—one that would become familiar to Americans in later periods of acute national anxiety: “At the moment, when the political horizon of our country is darkened by the tempest which threatens to break with awful vengeance upon our heads, . . . it is a solemn, and incumbent duty . . . to search out our secret as well as open, our domestic as well as foreign enemies.” Exposing “the face of the hypocrite,” he asserted, “is not only a just, but an honorable and necessary employment.” He then sounded the tocsin:

There exists, my fellow citizens, in the bosom of our country, a man, whose political principles have been so often at variance with those of our Government, and whose local and official advantages, afford him so many dangerous opportunities of making proselytes to his heresies [sic], that it is the duty of every man who is acquainted with his character to display it.

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<sup>29</sup> “Civis,” “The Chameleon Unmasked,” nos. 1-3, in Columbian Centinel, 29 August, 1 September, and 8 September 1798. Joanne B. Freeman, Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 128-129, generally elucidates the strategies and significance of newspaper attacks and pseudonyms. Gordon S. Wood, “Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style: Causality and Deceit in the Eighteenth Century,” William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 39 (1982): 401-441, examines the sources and culture of eighteenth-century conspiratorial thought. See also Richard Hofstadter, The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays (New York: Knopf, 1965), chap. 1.

That man, he announced, was General Duplex, whose real identity was not for a second in doubt.<sup>30</sup>

Having acknowledged Hull's prominence, the masked critic conceded as well his accomplishments, all the more to underscore the threat he presented. As a Revolutionary soldier, Hull had "merited and received the respect and gratitude of his country." As a militia commander, he had improved the spirit and reputation of his division and "reflected great honor upon himself." As a gentleman, the writer affirmed, "he is affable, mild and insinuating, easy in his deportment, and engaging in his manners"; put more sinisterly, he possessed "all the accomplishments of the courtier."<sup>31</sup> Hull was also a gifted writer, speaker, and administrator. "These natural and acquired talents and advantages," Civis warned, "have given him a weight and importance in society" that could promote either the country's prosperity or its distress. "Would to God! his political biography was written on the same fair page, upon which his military fame has been inscribed!"

With that, Civis commenced a review of Hull's political career since the ratification debates—the period, he insisted, "when Federalism assumed its *present* form." At that time Hull, along with most veterans, "became a decided Federalist." This was "extremely natural" and Hull "was a zealot in the cause." "He harangued in his private circles and he preached on every public occasion, the doctrines of pure and energetic government."

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<sup>30</sup> This and the four paragraphs following draw from "Civis," "The Chameleon Unmasked, No. I," in Columbian Centinel, 29 August 1798, pp. 1-2. A good source for tracing the conspiracy-exposure theme through American history is David Brion Davis, The Fear of Conspiracy: Images of Un-American Subversion from the Revolution to the Present (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1971).

<sup>31</sup> "Courtier," Gordon Wood observes, had by this period become "a generic term of abuse" implying deceit and dissembling. Wood, "Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style," 423.

What, then, had turned him? Civis contended that it was the issue of officer compensation. Representing the Cincinnati, Hull “took up the occupation of a public, sturdy beggar” and “described in animated colours the injustices and ill faith of his country”—this, despite the fact that he possessed only mediocre talent as a lawyer and “owed most of his elevation to the honors which his country bestowed.” In Philadelphia General Duplex had used every tactic of persuasion, public and private, to gain unmerited extra compensation for the officers. When his “syren songs” failed, however, he resorted to intimidation. “It is a fact that can be fully established,” Civis asserted without establishing it, “that this patriotic General threatened the members of Congress, that, unless the demands of the soldiers were complied with, an immense body of men could, and would be raised, and would march to the doors of Congress, and enforce that justice, which Congress would not voluntarily bestow.” Such a picture, of course, alluded to lawless and chaotic French Revolutionary scenes.

But this was not the worst. Washington’s opposition to General Duplex’s demand was “*the sin* not to be forgiven; and accordingly that *aged* veteran, was abused, vilified, and calumniated, by this advocate of the army.” The magnanimous president, however, had overlooked the betrayal and, rather than shunning Hull, appeased him with an appointment as “Indian Commissioner” (the mission to Niagara). “Willing to take the loaves and fishes of the government which he was abusing, the General accepted,” but later returned to the capital “to continue the abuse . . . which he had begun, but had not carried to the apex of violence.”

Civis’s second installment, perhaps originally intended to be his last, appeared in the next Centinel issue of September 1. Here he concluded Hull’s résumé and took direct

aim at his political (and by implication, personal) character. Reminding readers of General Duplex's "two very opposite characters," first a "warm supporter," then a "violent opposer" of the federal government, Civis detected another shift when, he claimed, Hull's fellow officers voiced suspicions that he had been "silenced by the bounty of Government." "To prove his fidelity," Civis charged, Hull had launched "an outrageous crimination against his patron, the President," and made an "ostentatious display of Jacobinic and disorganizing sentiments."<sup>32</sup>

So well apprenticed as a Democrat and Jacobin, General Duplex then sailed for France "to polish and compleat [sic] a regular Sansculotte education." There he "enjoyed the fullest confidence of the wise and patriotic *Monroe*," and subsequently "expressed the highest opinion of the virtue and talents of *that able* Minister." Later, Civis continued, General Duplex became a tireless advocate of Jacobinic views and, under Jefferson, "the *great instrument* of retarding the progress of just sentiments in the county," so that Middlesex bore the "disgrace of being the most Frenchified county in the commonwealth."

The exposure of French perfidy in the XYZ affair and the corresponding shift in public opinion—"so inauspicious to the influence and reputation of our worthy General Duplex"—presented Hull an unpleasant dilemma: whether to "preserve the consistency of his character, and lose his influence, or retain his consequence, and sacrifice his consistency." Facing his crisis of conscience, General Duplex again showed his true character and, "like the *Chameleon*, changed his hue with the party which surrounded him." The result was a leap to extremes on the other side. This, of course, explained his

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<sup>32</sup> This and the three paragraphs following draw from "Civis," "The Chameleon Unmasked, No. II," in Columbian Centinel, 1 September 1798, pp. 1-2.

sudden adoption of “*outrageously* federal” military orders and statements, and his eloquent praise of Washington, “whom he had so often reviled and calumniated.” “But my fellow citizens,” Civis warned, “beware of the man who is blown about by every wind of political doctrine. There is a decorum even in a man’s conversion. If he instantly becomes intemperate on the other side, trust him not.”

Hull’s newest “conversion,” then, was a mere deception. As evidence, Civis cited Hull’s charge to the grand jury, delivered, he stated, *after* the XYZ dispatches had been made public. By Civis’s recollection, Hull had told the jury that “the imprudence of our Executive councils would probably involve us in a war with our natural allies and sincere friends, the Republicans of France.” More recently, Civis added, Hull had unsuccessfully lobbied to have the “open partisan of France” Joseph B. Varnum—now U.S. Representative from Middlesex district who had voted earlier against the Jay Treaty and recently against the Sedition Law, federal army and navy expansions, and direct tax—elected as brigadier general.<sup>33</sup> All of this was proof of a dangerous scam: “Can any honest man doubt of the insincerity and hollow patriotism of the General? . . . Ought he not to be doomed to that fit and proper punishment of all seekers after popularity—the contempt and derision of their fellow citizens?”

Civis’s charges appeared, of course, in anticipation of both the installation ceremony of the Meridian Lodge and the upcoming annual review of the Middlesex militia, each of which would feature “General Duplex.” As noted, Hull was aware that

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<sup>33</sup> Varnum already held a commission as colonel in the Hull’s division. Edward W. Hanson, “Varnum, Joseph Bradley,” in *American National Biography*, ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, 24 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Congress, House, 4<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., *Annals of Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1834-1856), 1291 (30 April 1796), from Library of Congress, *A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774-1875*, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llac&fileName=005/llac005.db&recNum=642> (accessed April 4, 2007).

such accusations were already in circulation, but their appearance in wide-reaching print elevated them to a more serious plane. Reputation was a precious commodity in the early republic, and newspaper attacks were not to be taken lightly. Many in the period led to duels. The possibility of an “affair of honor” was mitigated here by the use of pseudonyms and the fact that the writer had (technically) ascribed his remarks to Hull’s *political* character. Nevertheless, the attacks clearly bore upon his personal character, identity, and honor, and friends and foes alike would be watching to see how he would respond.<sup>34</sup>

It was at this moment that fellow Republican and Freemason William Bentley, invited to preach the sermon for the lodge installation, arrived a day early to take tea with Hull. Bentley was deeply concerned. “The suspicions from his political sentiments have lately been strengthened by a writer signing Civis,” the clergyman penned in his diary. Hull read the Centinel pieces in Bentley’s presence and “made his comments without any severe emotions.” As to points of fact, Hull denied having ever written anything against Washington and protested that his grand jury charge had *preceded* any news of the failed American mission to France.<sup>35</sup> The Reverend was satisfied and in fact thoroughly enjoyed his introduction to the Hull family, with whom he lodged for two nights. He found Hull to be “an accomplished gentleman” and “a very valuable man,” and Sarah to possess “great integrity.” The children as well were “agre[e]able and very familiar,” and Bentley warmed to their “free & open manners.” Elizabeth, the eldest, performed for him on the harpsichord and Abraham, the Hulls’ only son, showed himself “a very

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<sup>34</sup> Joanne B. Freeman, Affairs of Honor, xvi-xix, 125.

<sup>35</sup> William Bentley, 4 September 1798, in Bentley, Diary, 2:280.



enterprising little fellow.” Altogether the Republican pastor departed with admiration for “this lovely family.”<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile the Meridian Lodge installation turned out a great success. At eleven o’clock on Wednesday, September 5, Hull, Bentley, and over two hundred Masonic brethren gathered at the lodge hall and formed a procession to the Watertown meetinghouse, which was crowded to capacity. The ceremony opened with a religious service—prayer, hymn singing, instrumental music, and Bentley’s sermon—followed by the installation ritual in which the new Master Hull delivered a “pertinent and adapted” charge. Afterwards the fraternity retired to a “liberal & elegant” dinner under a canopy along the riverbank. Patriotic songs and toasts led by Master Hull highlighted the festive occasion.<sup>37</sup> Later that evening Hull “entertained a brilliant circle” in his “elegant Hall.”<sup>38</sup>

The splendid event no doubt added to High Federalist anxiety and frustration. Even more galling to Civis was that “charitable and calculating” Federalists were now actually counseling patience and coaxing with Hull rather than exposure and denunciation. This was not to be borne. If indeed Civis had intended his previous editorial to be his last word on Hull—nothing more was in the Centinel’s next issue—this provocation was too much. Hence his third and longest installment appeared September

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<sup>36</sup> William Bentley, 4 and 6 September 1798, in Bentley, Diary, 2:280-281.

<sup>37</sup> Report on the Masonic installation at Watertown, Columbian Centinel, 12 September 1798, p. 1; William Bentley, 5 September 1798, in Bentley, Diary, 2:281.

<sup>38</sup> William Bentley, 5 September 1798, in Bentley, Diary, 2:281. Bentley had already observed that the Hull house was “so constructed that it may at some future time be a Public House of entertainment.” Bentley, Diary, 2:280.

8, resuming his tirade against Hull, scolding those who would coddle him, and warning of a great dark conspiracy.<sup>39</sup>

In General Duplex, Civis refreshed readers, “we do not behold virtuous patriotism sacrificing self at the altar of its country, but fawning hypocrisy fabricating its ladder that it may ascend on the necks of the people.” His character was “blank” with but “feeble marks of genius or of talents” and “principally distinguished . . . by its deviations from rectitude.” Sadly, Civis reported, some Federalists had advised “that General Duplex is coming round, that he wishes to regain the confidence of the friends of government, and that it is good policy to receive him with open arms, and bury past offences in sweet oblivion.” But Civis would have none of it. Such a doctrine of forgiveness would be “a ruinous and destructive error,” emboldening villains such as Jefferson, Talleyrand, and the French Directors, “who would thus hope to retain their influence in the country.” No, Civis defiantly cried, Hull’s “death-bed repentance comes too late for pardon.” The duped “honest farmer” and “virtuous mechanic” might safely be welcomed back; but as for Hull and Republican leaders, Civis cautioned, Federalists should “be careful how we receive the *torpid Vipers* again into our bosoms.” Indeed it was political forgiveness and charity that had been “the *candid failing* of the amiable Washington,” for “gratitude, like all other moral virtues, is a stranger to the Jacobinic heart.” “The evil spirit of Jacobinism is not dead in Gen. Duplex,” warned Civis, “but *only sleepeth*.” His seeming new rectitude was false, his “*pompous military orders*” calling for unity and defense not to be trusted. After all, other well-known subversives had done the same, including Thomas Adams and his Independent Chronicle.

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<sup>39</sup> This and the following two paragraphs draw from “Civis,” “The Chameleon Unmasked, No. III,” in Columbian Centinel, 8 September 1798, p. 1.

Finally, lest he had not yet inspired enough alarm, Civis raised the specter of “Illuminatism,” the liberal, freethinking intellectual movement that originated in Bavaria in 1776. Although the Order of the Illuminati had been suppressed in Europe and was virtually defunct, many frightened conservatives by the late 1790s had come to believe that the secret society was somehow behind all that had suddenly turned wrong in the world: the French Revolution, Jacobinism, Democratic Societies, Paine’s atheistic Age of Reason, and so on. It had even permeated European (especially French) Freemasonry, and through treachery and intrigue was masterminding a worldwide plot against religion, good government, and social order.<sup>40</sup> American lodges were also being infiltrated and corrupted, warned New England traditionalists after the lead of the Reverend Jedidiah Morse of Charlestown. How else to account for—as John L. Brooke has examined—the rapid recent movement of Republicans into Freemasonry, that “organizational and symbolic bastion of the moderate Enlightenment” and once the domain of Federalists?<sup>41</sup> Civis latched onto this argument, warning citizens that the lodges were in grave danger of corruption by secret Illuminati with their “fanatic contagion of levellism” and “diabolical

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<sup>40</sup> Civis and others were fueled in their fears and speculations by a just-published exposé, written by a supposed authority, the former Freemason and University of Edinburgh professor of natural philosophy John Robison. His The Proofs of a Conspiracy against all Religions and Governments of Europe carried on in the secret meetings of the Free Masons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies appeared in America in May 1798, thus coinciding with news of the XYZ affair. The Illuminati issue raged for a brief period in New England, led by outspoken conservative clergy such as Jedidiah Morse of Charlestown and Yale President Timothy Dwight, but subsided with the calming of war fears in 1800. An excellent brief review of the episode is Michael Lienesch, “The Illusion of the Illuminati: The Counterconspiratorial Origins of Post-Revolutionary Conservatism,” in Revolutionary Histories: Transatlantic Cultural Nationalism, 1775-1815, ed. W. M. Verhoeven (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 152-158. The classic work on the subject is Vernon Stauffer, New England and the Bavarian Illuminati (New York: Columbia University Press, 1918).

<sup>41</sup> John L. Brooke, “Ancient Lodges and Self-Created Societies: Voluntary Association and the Public Sphere in the Early Republic,” in Launching the “Extended Republic”: The Federalist Era, ed. Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia for the United States Capitol Historical Society, 1996), 327.

spirit of Sansculottism.” The recent institution of “two Right Worshipful *Democrats*” as masters evidenced the conspiracy’s progress, and Hull, he suggested, was a leading conspirator: “When we recollect that Gen. Duplex spent several months at *Paris*, in the center of *illumination*, and might have been initiated into the mysteries of this new order, I think there is great reason to believe, that a part of the *grand* design is going forward in this country.” With this final bugaboo, *Civis* closed. Bentley, who already had taken up the defense of Freemasonry against charges of Illuminism, was astonished at this newest attack against Hull. “The virulence of invective was never more violent,” he lamented.<sup>42</sup>

Hull, it would seem, represented the very kind of man that most threatened and angered High Federalists in this period—an ideological and political traitor with public credentials and influence. Here was a former Revolutionary officer and intimate of Washington’s, a former outspoken advocate of strong government and the Constitution, betraying all in a Faustian bargain for popularity—among the worst of Federalist sins—and personal gain. Since politics was a manifestation of character, which, the thinking went, was immutable, it followed that Hull was politically irredeemable. Moreover he possessed a facility of rhetoric and charm that dangerously enabled him to mislead the people and infiltrate leadership.

Countermeasures against *Civis*’s charges were already underway, however, though exactly at whose prompting is unknown. Certainly the impression given by other items in this and successive *Centinel* issues is that cooler-headed, more pragmatic Federalists—whether seeking foremost to placate and encourage Hull, discredit *Civis* and his ilk, defend Freemasonry (Russell and several leading Federalists were devoted

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<sup>42</sup> William Bentley, 8 September 1798, in Bentley, *Diary*, 2:281-282. See Stauffer, *New England and the Bavarian Illuminati*, 326-331, for Bentley’s efforts in Masonry’s defense.

Masons), or merely apprehending that Civis’s rant did greater harm to Federalism than Republicanism in the public eye—convinced the editor that sobriety and damage control were needed.<sup>43</sup> Congressman Harrison Gray Otis, for example, once a Hamiltonian ally, had become deeply concerned by the threat that an all-out war with France would pose for Boston merchants, and was making his break from the party extremists towards support of Adams.<sup>44</sup> Another intriguing possibility is that a personal bond played a role. Not only were Hull and Russell fellow Masons but, according to Hull’s grandson Samuel C. Clarke, Russell “had been our Grandfather’s ‘tent-boy’ during his days of military service.”<sup>45</sup>

Whatever the reasons, Russell printed in the same September 8 issue Hull’s division orders of August 25, with its patriotic call to duty and unity and counterattack against “anonymous defamers.”<sup>46</sup> Page one of the next issue, September 12, featured a friendly review of the Meridian Lodge installation. This included a recounting of Master Hull’s toasts, among them: “May the virtue of Free Masonry in *America*, ever be a positive contradiction to the principles of Illuminatism.”<sup>47</sup> Just below the review was a

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<sup>43</sup> Banner, To the Hartford Convention, 155-156, identifies a Federalist backlash against Illuminati fear-mongering and the implicating of Masonry, noting Russell’s affiliation.

<sup>44</sup> Paul Goodman, The Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts: Politics in a Young Republic (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), 102-103. Goodman notes that in August 1798 Otis received notice from his old Harvard classmate Richard Codman, a Boston merchant now living in Paris, that only quick action would avert war.

<sup>45</sup> [Samuel C. Clarke] to [James Freeman Clarke], n.p., n.d., William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (105v), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge.

<sup>46</sup> Major General Hull, Division Orders, 25 August 1798, printed in Columbian Centinel, 8 September 1798, p. 3-4.

<sup>47</sup> Another oath given at the event, striking for its inclusion in the Centinel, appeared in the review: “*May we never have a War without a Washington; a Shays without a Lincoln; or a Morse without a Bentley.*” Report on the Masonic installation at Watertown, Columbian Centinel, 12 September 1798, p. 1.

letter to the editor commenting on Hull's division orders and extolling its "pure spirit of patriotism." "With Generals inspired with such feelings, at the head of our military forces, we may defy the threat of our enemies, and defeat the machinations of all internal traitors." The letter was signed "ANTI CIVIS."<sup>48</sup> A week later, under front-page "Political Miscellany," Hull's earlier charge to the Middlesex grand jury appeared, certified by the jury members and presented as a contradiction to "a writer over the signature of 'Civis.'" "If falshood [sic] is published for truth," the introduction stated, "it is easy to defame the fairest character." Russell, caught between contending Federalist pressures, felt obliged to preface this submission with a justification for its printing. "Fairness, as well as Federalism, is a characteristic of the Centinel," he explained, even as he reassured the Federalist faithful of his paper's orthodoxy, hatred of all French conduct and influence, and commitment to expose sympathizers. "No character whatever may be his elevation, who dares to advocate French measures, shall be shielded from severe castigations," he vowed. Nevertheless, he continued:

If . . . in the prosecution of the duty, any thing unworthy the best of causes, should escape notice;—if, on tiptoe, to discover political tergiversation, and to punish it, *report* should in any case be mistaken for *fact*; and *observation* should be deceived by illusions; JUSTICE shall still be our g[u]ide. The calumniated shall find opportunity for vindication; and the contrite be strengthened.

In print at least, Hull was winning the battle of reputation against the overreaching Civis and High Federalists, and enjoying a period of favorable press.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> "Anti Civis" to the editor, Columbian Centinel, 12 September 1798, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> "Political Miscellany," Columbian Centinel, 19 September 1798, p. 1. Jeffrey L. Pasley assesses that although Russell was an active participant in Boston Federalist councils, he "rarely strayed from his role as a loyal auxiliary." Jeffrey L. Pasley, "The Tyranny of Printers": Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2001), chaps. 1-2; Banning, Jeffersonian Persuasion, 233. John Bixler Hench, "The Newspaper in a Republic: Boston's Centinel and Chronicle, 1784-1801" (Ph.D. diss., Clark University, 1979), 173-174, sees (but does not develop in detail) a growing alignment of Russell with Adams Federalists in this period.

Thus reinforced, he eagerly prepared for the annual military review. Along with everyone he hoped for better weather than that which had spoiled the previous year's exercises and his health. Heeding earlier complaints, he did not again require the entire Middlesex division to muster as one body, but instead ordered his two brigades to assemble at different times and places.<sup>50</sup> That of the First Brigade was to be the showcase. Held on October 2 at Lexington, hallowed site of the Revolution's opening scene, this event proved to be everything that Hull might have wished. Once again Governor Sumner—a moderate Federalist—and a host of spectators attended. This time, mercifully, the conditions were ideal. The morning session began with line inspections by the governor, followed by parading and field drills. After a break for lunch, the brigade put on a crowd-pleasing show. The companies of infantry, cavalry, and artillery—some two thousand troops—broke into two bodies, one commanded by Hull, the other by Brigadier General J. Walker. A mock battle ensued in which Walker's corps maneuvered to dislodge Hull's from a wooded heights. Failing to turn Hull's left flank, Walker ordered a withdrawal. Hull then counterattacked, cut off Walker's retreat with cavalry and light infantry, and surrounded him in the plain, forcing a capitulation. The two corps then switched positions and a similar performance followed in a thrilling afternoon.<sup>51</sup>

Newspaper accounts of the day were glowing. The drills and exhibitions had been conducted “in a masterly manner,” reported the Independent Chronicle. “The

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<sup>50</sup> Major General Hull, Division Orders, 25 August 1798, printed in Columbian Centinel, 8 September 1798, p. 3; “Military Review,” Independent Chronicle, 27 September 1798, p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> “Military Review,” Columbian Centinel, 6 October 1798, p. 3; “Review at Lexington,” Independent Chronicle, 4 October 1798, p. 3.

officers shew great judgment and skill in their knowledge of tactics, and the soldiers gave meritorious specimens of discipline and subordination to command.”<sup>52</sup> The Centinel was even more lavish in praise: It was “one of the most gratifying military spectacles ever seen.”<sup>53</sup> The governor and spectators were unanimous in their admiration, and the troops appeared perfectly outfitted, “even to a button and a garter,” wrote a reviewer. “We do not remember ever to have witnessed in our country so brilliant and military appearance, as was presented at *Lexington*.” He concluded with a tribute: “If at a time like the present, it is an advantage to appear in a formidable state of defence [sic], the country is certainly greatly indebted to Major General Hull, and the troops.”<sup>54</sup>

Also duly cited among the day’s activities was a planned ritual to promote unity and national identity. Before dismissing for lunch, Hull took the field and read aloud to his brigade officers—most of them also of Republican sentiments—an address composed on their behalf to President Adams. Hull declared the brigade’s Americanism, extolled the national government and Constitution and renewed the officers’ oath to defend them, noting for good measure the symbolically significant field on which they were all met. “We feel a pride in the name and character of Americans,” Hull proclaimed (and instructed). Significantly, the address also included an offer of individual service in the new federal army. At the conclusion of the reading, the officers dutifully approved the document and asked that their names be subscribed to it. The patriotic address was but one of a multitude Adams had received over the previous months from all over the

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<sup>52</sup> “Review at Lexington,” Independent Chronicle, 4 October 1798, p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> Columbian Centinel, 3 October 1798, p. 3.

<sup>54</sup> “Military Review,” Columbian Centinel, 6 October 1798, p. 3.



country in this, his brief period of wide popularity. Within days the president, then residing at his home in Quincy, issued a reply. “That [oath] which you have taken, and so solemnly repeated on that venerable ground, is an ample pledge of your sincerity and devotion to your country and its government.” The Centinel reprinted both documents, prefacing them as “among the best [productions] which the times have called forth.”<sup>55</sup>

By year’s end, based at least on Centinel coverage, one might have taken Hull for a solid Adams Federalist. Such a perception was precisely what some Massachusetts High Federalists had dreaded and tried to head off. The matter was made worse by their rising apprehension that the president might actually adopt Hull and some of his militia officers into the new expanded army, intended by its High Federalist promoters to be as much a Federalist instrument as an American one. (Adams privately resented the Hamiltonian project and soon was seeking to thwart its formation by administrative delay and resumed diplomacy.)<sup>56</sup>

On New Year’s Day, 1799, Stephen Higginson of Boston penned a confidential letter on behalf of fellow Essexmen to their ally in the federal government, Secretary of

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<sup>55</sup> Address to the president from the First Brigade of the Third Division of the Militia of Massachusetts, 2 October 1798, and the president’s reply, 11 October 1798, in Columbian Centinel, 24 October 1798, p. 1; also in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 263-266. See also “Military Review,” Columbian Centinel, 6 October 1798, p. 3. Elkins and McKittrick, Age of Federalism, 588-589; and Kohn, Eagle and Sword, 211, note Adams’s attention to the many addresses received.

<sup>56</sup> The development and controversies of the so-called “new” and “provisional” armies are well treated in Kohn, Eagle and Sword, chaps. 11-12. The army expansion, approved by Congress during the summer, had become a Hamiltonian project imposed upon Adams by his cabinet members and Washington, the titular commander. Kohn deems the new army “a wholly political army—the only one in American history” (pp. 248-249). Leonard D. White, The Federalists: A Study in Administrative History (New York: Macmillan, 1956), 274, agrees: “The organization of the Provisional Army in 1798 was a strictly partisan affair.” Republicans, especially prominent ones, were to be excluded. Even so Hull was at least consulted in the process of selecting subaltern officers from Massachusetts. Daniel Hastings (age 24) and Thomas Durant (22) of Newton, Charles Hunt (19) of Watertown, and Nathaniel Soley of Charlestown were among those of Hull’s division who received favorable comments. “Candidates for Army Appointments from Massachusetts,” [9-28 December 1798], in Harold C. Syrett and Jacob E. Cooke, eds., The Papers of Alexander Hamilton, 27 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961-1987), 22:320-331.

State Timothy Pickering, portraying Hull as a secret insurgent, a Republican wolf in Federalist sheep's clothing. "It is a well known fact, that Hull & many of his Officers are of the most inveterate grade of Jacobins in the State, perhaps in the united States; and that it was their influence & exertions which have . . . kept Middlesex in a high state of democratic ferment," Higginson reported. "Nor is there any doubt of there being deep laid Schemes to defeat the measures of Governm[en]t, by assuming the garb of federalism, and enlisting into the public Service." Hull, he claimed, was working in concert with other leading Republican subversives such as U.S. Representative Joseph B. Varnum, state attorney general James Sullivan, and Dr. William Eustis, and with moderate Federalist (but soon to be moderate Republican) Elbridge Gerry, the latter having enraged High Federalist war hawks, especially Pickering, by remaining in France after the XYZ affair in hopes of yet obtaining peace.

It is here believed to be an essential part of the Jacobin System, to insert their devoted Agents into the military as well as the civil departments; & it was at once suspected that such was the desire of Genl. Hull in his addresses & tenders of Service &c.; from the known characters of the men & the whole course of their conduct.<sup>57</sup>

As it was, of course, the High Federalists needed to worry less about Republican infiltration of the army than about Adams's opposition. The president's renewed peace efforts would deprive the Hamiltonian project of political oxygen and eventually suffocate it.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Stephen Higginson to [Timothy Pickering] ("private"), 1 January 1799, Timothy Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass., microfilm, reel 24. On Gerry's political affiliation and Pickering's hostility in the period see George Athan Billias, Elbridge Gerry: Founding Father and Republican Statesman (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), 289-299.

<sup>58</sup> See Kohn, Eagle and Sword, chap. 13; Kurtz, Presidency of John Adams, chap. 16.

Despite the efforts of moderate Federalists to woo Hull, he remained aloof. He does not appear to have justified either the moderates' hopes for conversion or extremist Federalists' fears of conspiracy. At the same time, there is scant evidence to clarify what Hull's particular political views or activities were, for little record of his sentiments from this period is to be found among his surviving papers. Surprisingly, it cannot be established with certainty whether Hull preferred Jefferson for president in 1800 or if he joined with those Massachusetts Republicans such as Gerry who believed that an Adams victory would best undermine the Federalist war faction.<sup>59</sup> His Republicanism, in fact, appears foremost a response to Federalist extremism, which he increasingly believed endangered republican principles and the Revolutionary legacy.

Even Hull's granddaughter-biographer Maria Campbell appears not to have been sure of his particular views. Her inquiries on the matter yielded little help and her published work remarked only that "during this period, a strong party-spirit prevailed, and it was well understood that his political sentiments were not in accordance with the Government of the State."<sup>60</sup> In 1893 Hull's grandson and memorialist Samuel C. Clarke claimed that although Hull identified as a Republican, he was not a party enthusiast. "His friends were as numerous among the Federalists as among the Republicans," Clarke told his Yankee readers, "hence, he was never a great favorite with Jefferson or Madison, who

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<sup>59</sup> On the division among Massachusetts Republicans, see Goodman, Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts, 104. See also Billias, Elbridge Gerry, 301-303.

<sup>60</sup> Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 262. Responding to Campbell's query in 1835, William Sullivan, a former Federalist, could offer little clarity. After acknowledging that "the tyranny of party was as powerful then as it has been at any time since," he reflected: "I think . . . that your father would be ranked among the distinguished men in Massachusetts, who were of the Democratic party, and thought and acted as they did." Beyond that, he continued, "the precise line pursued by your father I cannot designate." William Sullivan to Maria Campbell, 27 July 1835, in Campbell and Clarke, Revolutionary Services, 480-481.

preferred absolute partizans.”<sup>61</sup> In fact Hull, as a major figure in a heavily Republican county, a division general during a war crisis and still with national aspirations, a man with speculative and commercial ambitions and a trustee of a bipartisan commercial group, and a Masonic leader and Cincinnati Society member grounded in Revolutionary republicanism, had ample reasons not to alienate fellow centrists.

Such record as does remain for Hull in the period leading up to the Jeffersonian “revolution of 1800” points to further public distinction, Revolutionary centrism, and antipathy towards Federalist extremism. The militia general was elected that year a state senator, a position he held thereafter until his appointment to the governorship of Michigan Territory in 1805.<sup>62</sup> Meanwhile, word of the sudden passing of Washington in December 1799 gave Hull an opportunity to revisit moderate republican themes and honor the memory of “that illustrious Character, whose death not only veiled his own Country but the civilized world in mourning.”<sup>63</sup> He would now join fellow Republican Masons in playing conspicuous roles in commemorative rites and thus, as John L. Brooke has noted, “quietly break the Federalist monopoly over the cult of Washington.” Lodge Master Hull was probably among the 1,600 uniformed brothers gathered for Masonic mourning ceremonies in Boston on February 11, 1800.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile, as division

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<sup>61</sup> Samuel C. Clarke, Memoir of Gen. William Hull (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1893), 12.

<sup>62</sup> [William Hull,] Draft outline of his life and career, 2 December 1812, Gratz Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; Franklin Bowditch Dexter, Biographical Sketches of the Graduates of Yale College with Annals of the College History, 6 vols. (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1903), 3:446. The first document, in Hull’s hand, lists the year of his election to the state senate as 1800, while Dexter cites 1802.

<sup>63</sup> Quote from Hull, Division Orders, 17 May 1800, item no. 3, Orderly book for the Third Division of the Massachusetts Militia under the command of General William Hull, William Hunt Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass.

<sup>64</sup> Brooke, “Ancient Lodges and Self-Created Societies,” 355. Brooke argues that the mourning rituals for Washington enabled Republican Masons, and thus Republicans, to claim “the heritage of the

commander, Hull admonished his Middlesex officers and soldiers to observe the acting governor's order for full uniform and the black crepe armbands on Sundays for six months; he also urged his various companies to attend services on February 22, Washington's birthday, as recommended by President Adams, and offer their assistance to local planning efforts.<sup>65</sup> Whatever lingering aggravation or disappointment Hull may have felt towards Washington over his lack of patronage or support for officer pensions were (and had to be, given Washington's mythic status) buried along with the Great Man. Besides, if indeed Hull had ever held out hope for a position in the new army, it was by now obvious that any such possibility was gone.

By late spring Hull turned his attention to the annual militia review, and again he called the nearly five thousand men under his command to "appear not only completely armed and accoutred, but in perfect uniform." To encourage full preparation and participation he played to the republican (and Republican) sentiments of Middlesex County. "Let us realize the pleasing idea," he declared in a none-too-subtle slap at the High Federalist army project, "that while other civilized nations of the world are degraded and oppressed by expensive military establishments we have the happiness of living in a Country where every Citizen is a Soldier, and every Soldier a Citizen."<sup>66</sup> It was, of course, an important election year, and rumors and charges of monarchist conspiracies had spread through the county. Hull did not dismiss the charges, and in late

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moderate Enlightenment, recently abandoned by the Federalists" and make "a strong claim to the center of the young republic's public sphere." See pp. 354-359 (quotes on 358).

<sup>65</sup> Division Orders, 10 January 1800, item no. 1, Orderly book, William Hunt Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass. Officers were also to cover the hilts of their swords with black.

<sup>66</sup> Division Orders, 17 May and 10 June 1800, item nos. 3-4, Orderly book, William Hunt Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass.

July reminded his officers and troops to be “elevated above party consideration, [and] remain firmly United in one Sentiment.” “Let it be your Glory,” he advised, “to be considered the constitutional Supporters of that Government which has been established by the publick [sic] Will.” Strikingly, however, in a statement reminiscent in form and language of Civis’s opening volley against him, Hull continued:

And if there really exists in the bosom of our Country a Junto or combination of men respectable for their talents in whom the people have heretofore placed confidence, whose object now is the subversion of our present constitution and the establishment of an hereditary [sic] Executive, . . . it becomes the indispensable duty of our Fellow Citizens composing the Militia, and all honest Republicans to rally round the Standard of the Constitution, and exhibit to their Country & the World, their abhorrence of the proposed Innovation.<sup>67</sup>

Although the likelihood of war with France had by now diminished, the tense political atmosphere of the 1800 campaign was clearly well in place.

In retrospect, perhaps Hull should not have tempted fate by staging the muster at Concord and once again calling the whole division to assemble in one body.<sup>68</sup> Three years earlier he had done so, and a chilling tempest had ruined the event, adding to the displeasure of many troops who had traveled from the county’s most distant communities. He hoped naturally for a repeat of the glorious Lexington review, conducted under fair skies and mild temperatures. That, however, was not to be. First, Hull received word that the new Governor Caleb Strong—a moderate Federalist who had only narrowly defeated Gerry for the office—would be unable to attend due to a family

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<sup>67</sup> Division Orders, 28 July 1800, item no. 6, Orderly book, William Hunt Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass.

<sup>68</sup> At the last minute, on the advice of some of his officers, he did allow some of the most distant companies to be excused. Division Orders, 28 July and 18 August 1800, item nos. 6 and 8, Orderly book, William Hunt Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass.

crisis.<sup>69</sup> Second, the weather again interfered. This time the problem was not cold but sweltering heat. In fact August 27 was, Hull lamented, “one of the warmest days, we have [ever] experienced.” As the number of soldiers “fainting and falling in the ranks” began to swell, he was forced to cut short the drills and dismiss the companies for water and food. He may have headed off a minor mutiny; an irate Lieut. Col. Jason Chamberlain had already broken from the parade and defiantly marched his regiment from the field without orders. Hull tried to salvage the afternoon maneuvers, but shortly after the companies reformed their lines a deluge fell. Unwilling to battle this relentless opponent, Hull cancelled the remaining exercises and declared the review completed. “Some have expressed their disappointment that so little was done when so much was expected,” he reported in his congratulatory statement the next day. However, “the design of this review was not to sacrifice the lives or the health of the Troops, it was not merely for show or parade or to the gratification of curiosity.” Despite the curtailments, he pronounced the review—as he must—a great success.<sup>70</sup>

The national election of 1800 was a triumph for Republicans, who would now control both the legislative and executive branches. In Massachusetts the party made remarkable gains. Although Federalists still dominated the state legislature, half of the

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<sup>69</sup> Strong had returned Hull’s letter of invitation with a note on the back that he could not attend because of the recent death of one child and the grave illness of another. William Hull to Governor Strong (with Strong’s reply), 18 August 1800, William Hull Papers, Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library, Detroit, Mich. On gubernatorial election results, see Banner, To the Hartford Convention, 225.

<sup>70</sup> Division Orders, 28 August 1800, item no. 12, Orderly book, William Hunt Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass. The planned exercises and maneuvers were outlined in detail in Hull’s Division Orders of 19 August 1800, item no. 9. Meanwhile Hull placed Chamberlain under arrest for “immilitary conduct, disobedience of orders, and behaving . . . in an unofficerlike manner,” and for using language “which had a tendency to excite the Officer & Soldiers of your Reg[imen]t to disobedience of orders.” Hull informed the division that “an impartial tribunal will determine whether his conduct deserves censure or applause.” Major General Hull to Lieut. Col. Commandant Jason Chamberlain, 28 August 1800, and Division Orders, 28 August 1800, item nos. 11 and 12, Orderly book, William Hunt Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass.

state's federal congressmen would be Republican. Among them was William Eustis, whom Hull had helped to defend against another Federalist smear campaign.<sup>71</sup> Hull was thrilled with the election results, especially the thwarting of High Federalist pretensions and plans. "The People of this Country have shewn [sic], they are independent," he wrote James Monroe, showing he appreciated the election's "revolutionary" aspect. "They have exhibited an Example, that they will be the Guardians of their rights. They have discovered they are worthy the Inheritance they enjoy. Feeling happy myself, I congratulate you on the glorious events which have taken place."<sup>72</sup>

The election had solidified Hull's Republican identity and stature. One indicator is another anonymous submission to the Centinel in January 1801. Here "A Federalist" proposed to test and defeat "Jacobin" boasts of superior "*talents, propriety and morality*" by simply attaching a "fair list of the distinguished characters" and "most conspicuous personages of each party" in the state. In separate "Federal" and "Antifederal" columns, he subdivided his lists according to professional categories, including "The Reverend Clergy"; "Mercantile," "Medical," and "Law Characters"; and "Mechanic Interests." First above these was the category of "General Political Characters"—those men, the writer explained, who did not represent any one profession in particular. Heading Federalist names here were John Adams, Caleb Strong, and Benjamin Lincoln. By contrast, or so intended, the names atop the shorter "Antifederal" column were Samuel

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<sup>71</sup> Mary-Jo Kline and Joanne Wood Ryan, eds., Political Correspondence and Public Papers of Aaron Burr, 2 vols. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), 1:456n; Goodman, Democratic-Republicans of Massachusetts, 104-105; Banner, To the Hartford Convention, 224n.

<sup>72</sup> William Hull to James Monroe, 8 February 1801, James Monroe Papers, New York Public Library, Manuscript Division, New York, microfilm, reel 1.



Adams, Elbridge Gerry, and William Hull, followed by a few others.<sup>73</sup> (Lincoln and Hull, each listed third, having once been friends and political allies, now stood juxtaposed as leading military figures in their differing parties.) Although the comparison was meant to diminish the Republicans and the list was not offered as a precise ranking within each party, it does show that Federalists recognized Hull as man of influence and a leading opposition figure.<sup>74</sup> Moreover it highlights his standing as a political figure, and not primarily as a man of military, legal, or business concerns.

With Jefferson as president and a Republican government taking over the new federal capital of Washington, D.C., Hull settled into the roles of a party regular and leader in the Bay State. Fellow Massachusetts Republicans Henry Dearborn—who years later would preside over Hull’s famous court martial, but whom Hull presently addressed as “dear friend”—and Levi Lincoln were named secretary of war and attorney general, respectively. Hull expected that at least some politically based removals and appointments would take place, and provided some referrals of local Republicans for consideration.<sup>75</sup> Although he had never gained the federal appointment he had once

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<sup>73</sup> “A Federalist” to the editor, 1 January 1801, in Columbian Centinel, 14 January 1801, p. 1. Hull’s name was immediately followed by Henry Dearborn (soon to be named secretary of war), William Heath, and others. It was not the last time that Hull’s and Dearborn’s names would be closely linked. The two were appointed generals at the beginning of the War of 1812, and in 1814, Dearborn served as presiding judge in the court martial that condemned Hull.

<sup>74</sup> This point is further confirmed by Timothy Pickering’s appeal to Hull in December 1803 to oppose ratification of the twelfth amendment to the Constitution, changing the mode of electing the president and vice president, and Fisher Ames’s reference to Hull, whom Ames still regarded as a Jacobin and democrat, in an 1804 editorial. Timothy Pickering to William Hull, 29 December 1803, Timothy Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass., microfilm, reel 14:71; [Fisher Ames], “The Republican IV,” Boston Gazette, 6 August 1804, in Fisher Ames, Works of Fisher Ames, ed. William B. Allen, “reprinted and expanded edition of that edited by Seth Ames, New York, 1854” (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1983), 301.

<sup>75</sup> William Hull to Henry Dearborn [erroneously filed as to Albert Gallatin], 15 July 1801, Gallatin Papers, 1801, no. 143, New-York Historical Society, New York, N.Y.; William Hull to James Madison, 12 August 1801, in James Madison, The Papers of James Madison: Secretary of State Series, ed. Robert J. Brugger et al., 7 vols. to date (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1986-), 2:37.

sought, he could now rest satisfied that he had reached a place of prominence—even perhaps of “first character” recognition—within his adopted state.

All in all, despite persistent debt, in 1801 Hull seems to have been full of hope and confidence that all would resolve well. In the four years of Jefferson’s first term, however, Hull found himself confronting new and resurgent problems. Most significantly, his optimism regarding his debts proved unfounded.

Among the trouble sources that resurfaced were the adventurer Ira Allen and his betrayer John Andrew Graham. Released at last from French imprisonment in 1799, Allen returned to the United States in January 1801 after failing to interest the new government under Napoleon Bonaparte in his revived plan to foment revolution in Canada.<sup>76</sup> Soon Allen was back in the Champlain Valley challenging Hull’s sale of his 46,000 acres to Silas Hathaway. In early 1802 he initiated a lawsuit against Hathaway and Hull in the Vermont Supreme Court. Allen and Hathaway soon agreed to have the matter arbitrated, but Hull objected to the arrangements, probably with Hathaway’s blessing. He offered to meet the other two at a later date to discuss the matter, but this was probably only a delaying tactic.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ira Allen’s Plan to Revolutionize British America, January 1800, in John J. Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin: Correspondence, 1772-1819, 2 vols. (Hanover, N.H., and London: University Press of New England, 1998), 2:783-784; J. Kevin Graffagnino, “‘Twenty Thousand Muskets!!!’: Ira Allen and the *Olive Branch* Affair,” William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 48 (1991): 426-427.

<sup>77</sup> Ira Allen to Silas Hathaway, 25 January 1802, Ira Allen to Pierpont Edwards, 8 May 1802, William Hull to Ira Allen, 24 July 1802, Ira Allen to Silas Hathaway, 19 August 1802, in Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 2:720-723, 728-729, 737-738; Graffagnino, “‘Twenty Thousand Muskets!!!’,” 426-427; J. Kevin Graffagnino, “Revolution and Empire on the Northern Frontier: Ira Allen of Vermont, 1751-1814” (Ph.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1993), 356-359, 372, 377; James Benjamin Wilbur, Ira Allen: Founder of Vermont, 1751-1814, 2 vols. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), 2:316-318.

Graham, meanwhile, had returned with his English wife to Vermont in 1799.<sup>78</sup> When Allen reappeared in 1801 he hastened to Montreal and Quebec, telling British officers there that Allen and other “Jacobins” were plotting another insurrection. Among the several men he listed as co-conspirators were Hull and Hathaway. “These Rascals are coming in and going out continually under the pretext of some other business—but for the express purpose of raising a rebellion,” Graham charged. They “are all disaffected towards the [American] Federal Government, have but little to lose and their hope is in the idea of plunder.”<sup>79</sup> General Burton at Montreal was skeptical. “I have some doubt as to the credit that should be given to all that the Colonel [Graham] has said, tho’ there may be some truth in the business,” Burton reported. “He appeared to me to magnify matters, in the hope of some advantage, that he seems to point at for himself.”<sup>80</sup> At Quebec, Lieutenant Governor Robert S. Milnes was also doubtful of Graham but took precautionary measures and informed British secretary Edward Thornton in Washington, D.C., leaving it to his discretion whether to pass the intelligence on to the American government.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Noel Perrin, “‘So Good Bye, You Jackall’: An Annotated Copy of John Andrew Graham’s Descriptive Sketch of the Present State of Vermont (1797),” Vermont History 43, no. 2 (1975): 97.

<sup>79</sup> John A. Graham, Statement No. 1, enclosed in General Burton to Major Green, military secretary to Lieutenant-Governor Robert S. Milnes, 14 July 1801, in Wilbur, Ira Allen, 2:319.

<sup>80</sup> General Burton to Major Green, military secretary to Lieutenant-Governor Robert S. Milnes, 14 July 1801, excerpted in Wilbur, Ira Allen, 2:319.

<sup>81</sup> Lieutenant-Governor Robert S. Milnes to General Burton, 19 July 1801, excerpted in Wilbur, Ira Allen, 2:320-321; Edward Thornton to Lord Hawkesbury, 27 December 1801, FO 115, 9:173-175, Public Record Office, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, United Kingdom.

By the fall of 1801 British officials had become more nervous that Allen was indeed organizing a rebellion, and Thornton alerted the Jefferson administration.<sup>82</sup> He did so, he told Foreign Minister Lord Hawkesbury in London, “that ignorance might not be pleaded” should the rebellion materialize. “It gave me an opportunity also of naming persons of some influence in the States bordering on Lower Canada, who had been pointed out as engaged in exciting disaffection and revolt in the province. Among these are General Hull (who is at present in this place) and General Ira Allen of Vermont.”<sup>83</sup> (For Thornton, the fact that Hull and Allen were known Republicans lent more credibility to the charges against them.) Jefferson ordered Attorney General Lincoln to have the district attorney for Vermont David Fay investigate this “strange affair” (Lincoln’s words), a response Thornton considered as good as could be expected from a Republican administration. Six months later, in June 1802, Fay reported back that the conspiracy rumor involving Allen and Hull was false, concocted in part by a Montreal schoolteacher and confidence man.<sup>84</sup>

It is ironic that Graham had charged Allen and Hull with collaborating when in fact they were in conflict. John Graham’s brother Robert, who also had been part of Allen’s inner circle and was well acquainted with both Hull and Hathaway, told Allen

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<sup>82</sup> Graffagnino, “‘Twenty Thousand Muskets!!!’,” 428; Graffagnino, “Revolution and Empire,” 383-384.

<sup>83</sup> Edward Thornton to Lord Hawkesbury, 27 December 1801, FO 115, 9:173-175, Public Record Office, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, United Kingdom. Thornton had no more to say of Hull but readily believed in Allen’s culpability. “He is a factious and turbulent spirit, speculative in his enterprises, and greedy of gain, like the majority of the inhabitants in half-civilized frontier settlements; and would not scruple to set the whole country in a flame, for the sake of sharing in the plunder of a single village.”

<sup>84</sup> Edward Thornton to Lord Hawkesbury, 27 December 1801, FO 115, 9:173-175, Public Record Office, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, United Kingdom; David Fay to Levi Lincoln, 29 June 1802, cited in Madison, Papers of James Madison: Secretary of State Series, 3:375n. Quoted phrase in Levi Lincoln to James Madison, 6 July 1802, in Madison, Papers of James Madison: Secretary of State Series, 3:375.

confidentially that the two were “highly gratified at the Idea that Genl Allen & the Grahams are at variance.”<sup>85</sup> As it turned out, Hull’s delaying tactics proved effective. The following spring Allen was arrested and placed in debtors’ jail. He managed to post bail but other creditors were closing in. In April 1803, before fleeing Vermont for good, Allen settled with Hathaway, taking but a promise of \$20,000 to end his claims against him for Hull’s sold lands and agreeing to divide equally any future amounts recovered from Hull.<sup>86</sup> Still this did not end the matter. For years after, long into Hull’s tenure as governor of Michigan Territory, Allen continued to attack Hull’s character and charge Hull and Hathaway with theft and conspiracy. By that time, however, Hull could easily ignore his discredited accuser.<sup>87</sup>

Of much broader significance for Hull during the first Republican administration was an issue that would involve and oppress him for an even longer period—that of the disputed Yazoo lands. He had initially purchased shares in early 1796, soon after his return from Europe and his agreement to fund Allen’s venture. A year later the New England Mississippi Land Company had established him as one of three trustees to “own” (in trust) and administer company shares. Now, in November 1801, company directors appointed him a member of a small bipartisan commission to pursue the company’s claims for compensation with the federal government in anticipation of

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<sup>85</sup> Robert Graham to Ira Allen, 12 May 1802, in Duffy et al., eds., Ethan Allen and His Kin, 2:730.

<sup>86</sup> Graffagnino, “Revolution and Empire,” 392.

<sup>87</sup> Allen, Statements, and Ira Allen, Copies of Letters to the Governor of Vermont, and Address to the Legislature Thereof, Respecting a Conspiracy against the Author (Philadelphia: printed by John Binns for the author, 1811), reprinted in J. Kevin Graffagnino, ed., Ethan and Ira Allen: Collected Works, 3 vols. (Benson, Vt.: Chalidze Publications, 1992), 3:234-238, 285, 312.

Georgia's cession of its western lands to Congress.<sup>88</sup> This was no small responsibility—New Englanders represented about three-fifths of the total claimants.<sup>89</sup> “Being ‘interested’ myself in this business, and it having been a grievous misfortune to those concerned, I feel it a duty to do all in my power to remove the embarrassments which attend it,” Hull told a friend and fellow investor before leaving for Washington.<sup>90</sup> The directors—setting aside party differences in pursuit of common economic interests—chose him perhaps for his experience as a commissioner and lobbyist, his reputation as a gentleman, and his large personal stake in the matter, but certainly also for his status as a well-regarded and moderate Republican. As C. Peter Magrath has noted, “The company . . . shrewdly recognized the shift from Federalist to Republican rule in 1801.”<sup>91</sup> He could be trusted by Federalist as well as Republican investors and stand well politically before Jefferson's appointed commissioners for the matter, all cabinet members: James Madison, Albert Gallatin, and Levi Lincoln.

Hull arrived in Washington—as yet an impressively unimpressive capital—in December 1801 for the first session of the Republican-controlled Sixth Congress, and seems to have served as the company's lead representative. Not until late April,

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<sup>88</sup> William Hull to James Winthrop, 25 November 1801, Baldwin Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich. Hull was joined on the commission by fellow Republican Benjamin Hichborn and moderate Federalists Samuel Dexter and Samuel Ward. Madison, Papers of James Madison: Secretary of State Series, 3:172n.

<sup>89</sup> C. Peter Magrath, Yazoo: Law and Politics in the New Republic: The Case of *Fletcher v. Peck* (New York: Norton, 1966), 38.

<sup>90</sup> William Hull to James Winthrop, 25 November 1801, Baldwin Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich.

<sup>91</sup> Magrath, Yazoo, 39. Magrath describes the company as a classic political interest group. “As an interest group,” he adds, “the dominant characteristics of the New England Mississippi Land Company were its sectionalism, its bipartisan composition, and the prominence, in business and politics, of its directors and largest shareholders.” Magrath, Yazoo, 37-38.

however, did Congress ratify the terms of the Georgia cession.<sup>92</sup> With that, on May 1, 1802, Madison, Gallatin, and Lincoln invited Hull and his colleagues to formally submit the company's claims with all supporting documentation and their proposal for a compromise settlement, essentially a payout of twenty-five cents per acre. However, since Congress would soon adjourn, and not reconvene until December, it was obvious that no settlement was possible until the following year.<sup>93</sup>

In the interim Hull remained an anxious and active company partner, trustee, and agent. He and fellow trustees Leonard Jarvis and Henry Newman prepared a deed to the United States for their claimed territory in expectation of a settlement, and in November the company again sent him to lobby and negotiate in Washington.<sup>94</sup> Matters soon became more complicated and contentious. "Agents are here for every part of the

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<sup>92</sup> Thomas P. Abernethy, The South in the New Nation, 1789-1819, vol. 4, A History of the South, ed. Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter ([Baton Rouge]: Louisiana State University Press, 1961), 162; Charles H. Haskins, "The Yazoo Land Companies," in Papers of the American Historical Association 5, no. 4 (October 1891): 89-90; Magrath, Yazoo, 35. A good description of the capital city in this early period is James Sterling Young, The Washington Community 1800-1828 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), chap. 2. For evidence of Hull's journey to and presence in Washington in December, see Ebenezer Jackson to Simon Jackson, 4 December and 30 December 1801, and Ebenezer Jackson to Charlotte Jackson, 30 December 1801, transcriptions, Jackson Family Papers II, carton 1, Ebenezer Jackson Correspondence, 1801 file, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston. Hull did not remain in Washington during the entire period, having to return for a time to Massachusetts in order to take his seat in the state senate. William Eustis to Aaron Burr, 9 January 1802, in Kline and Ryan, eds., Political Correspondence of Aaron Burr, 2:649. He returned to the federal city, now accompanied by one of his daughters, to submit the company's claims when the cession was made. See Rev. Manasseh Cutler, Diary entry, 9 May [1802], in William Parker Cutler and Julia Perkins Cutler, Life, Journals and Correspondence of Rev. Manasseh Cutler, LL.D. By His Grandchildren, William Parker Cutler and Julia Perkins Cutler, 2 vols. (Cincinnati: R. Clarke & Co., 1888), 2:108.

<sup>93</sup> James Madison, Albert Gallatin, and Levi Lincoln to William Hull, Samuel Dexter, Benjamin Hitchborn, and Samuel Ward, 1 May 1802, in Madison, Papers of James Madison: Secretary of State Series, 3:171-172; Haskins, "Yazoo Land Companies," 90.

<sup>94</sup> Leonard Jarvis, William Hull, and Henry Newman, Trustees of the New England Mississippi Land Company, deed to the United States, signed 29 October 1802, certified 17 and 18 November 1802, William Hull Papers, MS 407, folder 1, item 2, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah; Letter of instructions signed by nine attorneys of the New England Mississippi Land Company, and addressed to the five of them who would be "on the spot" to negotiate the vast claim with the U.S. Commissioners, 16 November 1802, manuscript currently in possession of the William Reese Company, Rare Books and Manuscripts, New Haven, Conn., inventory no. WRCAM 28440.

territory,” he reported in January 1803.<sup>95</sup> The U.S. commissioners had rejected the company’s first proposition as “inadmissible,” and instead were recommending that the government assign five million acres of the Georgia cession for settling all Yazoo claims. This set off a new round of conferences, negotiations, and propositions as agents and individual claimants maneuvered to maximize the value of their claims within this more limited resource.<sup>96</sup> “The title of the claimants cannot be supported,” the final commissioners’ report judged; nevertheless, as a matter of national expediency “a compromise on reasonable terms” should be adopted.<sup>97</sup> This recommendation for compromise aroused powerful opposition in the House from within Republican ranks, led by John Randolph of Virginia, endangering any actual compensation and opening a serious rift between business-oriented Northern Republicans such as Hull and agrarian, states-rights-oriented Southern Republicans. Hull and other Yazoo agents refused an invitation from the House to present their case in person, unwilling, they stated, to subject the merit of their claims to challenge. They offered instead minor amendments to their proposal to remove some initial objections, considering that “in so doing, [we] make a

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<sup>95</sup> William Hull to William Sullivan, 10 January 1803, William Hull Papers, MS 407, folder 1, item 4, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah. Hull and Benjamin Hichborn were concurrently acting as agents for Yazoo speculator Joshua B. Bond regarding a tract of 3,700,000 acres within the Georgia Company purchase. See Joshua B. Bond to William Hull, 9 January 1803, William Hull, power of attorney to John Peck, 31 January 1803, and William Hull and John Peck (as attorney for Benjamin Hichborn) to James Madison, Albert Gallatin, and Levi Lincoln, [winter 1803], William Hull Papers, MS 407, folder 1, items 3, 6, and 10, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah.

<sup>96</sup> In William Hull Papers, MS 407, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, see William Hull to William Sullivan, 10 January 1803, folder 1, item 4, and [New England Mississippi Land Company directors] to [U.S. commissioners], 9 and 10 February 1803, draft letters in Hull’s hand, folder 1, items 5 and 7. Hull and other agents and claimants submitted a new detailed proposal to the U.S. commissioners on January 19, 1803. William Hull, Perez Morton, Samuel Dexter, William Payne, and others to James Madison, Albert Gallatin, and Levi Lincoln, 19 January 1803, American State Papers: Public Lands, 8 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Duff Green, 1834), 1:137-139.

<sup>97</sup> U.S. commissioners’ report to the House of Representatives on the Georgia land claims, 16 February 1803, American State Papers: Public Lands, 1:122.



great sacrifice of individual rights, in order to attain the public objects . . . and to put an end to an unpleasant controversy.”<sup>98</sup> In the end the divided House passed a bill on March 3, 1803, reserving the five million acres and accepting compensation in principle, but making no specific arrangements. A year later a compensation bill pushed by the New England Mississippi Land Company faced even more determined opposition, and the issue was again postponed.<sup>99</sup> By spring of 1804, frustrated New England speculators were contemplating a change of tactics, including personnel.

Hull too was frustrated as financial uncertainty and pressing debt were taking their toll. The burden had forced him to seek payment for his services and the heavy expenses attending the lobbying campaign.<sup>100</sup> Debt was also straining some personal relationships. That with the family of Col. Michael Jackson, Hull’s former Revolutionary commander, is a case in point. (Tension over Hull’s obligation to Jackson’s son Amasa in 1797 has already been noted.) Colonel Jackson and Hull had remained intimate after the War of Independence. Among other things, Hull had served as Jackson’s attorney, had pursued government relief for his debilitating wartime wound, and had tutored his son Charles, now appointed federal district attorney of Georgia, in the law—all gratis. In April 1801 Jackson died at his home in Newton with his wife Ruth and friend Hull at his side. Hull, whom Jackson had made co-executor (with Ruth) of his will, sent a “most

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<sup>98</sup> William Payne, Samuel Dexter, William Hull, Perez Morton, and others to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, 22 February 1803, American State Papers: Public Lands, 1:145. Of Randolph, C. Peter Magrath observes, “As an agrarian of the Virginia plantation aristocracy, [he] saw the land speculators as a species of the financial capitalists whom he despised.” Magrath, Yazoo, 41.

<sup>99</sup> Abernethy, The South and the New Nation, 162-163; Haskins, “Yazoo Land Companies,” 91-93; Magrath, Yazoo, 39-43, 49.

<sup>100</sup> Draft contract between company committee and William Hull (in Hull’s hand), [1803], William Hull Papers, MS 407, folder 1, item 11, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah.

delicate and most consoling” report of his death to Jackson’s sons, and memorialized their father in the military and local press. However, he also had an outstanding debt to Colonel Jackson, which now transferred to Ruth. At first family gratitude and patience prevailed. Hull in turn offered to seek compensation in Washington for Simon Jackson’s Yazoo speculation. But as the Georgia affair dragged on and Hull’s circumstances worsened, frustration mounted and a dispute arose that involved legal threats and severely strained relations. “I am sorry that anything should occur, to create a coolness between Genl. Hull and my mother,” son Ebenezer Jackson told his brother Simon. For his part, Hull felt “extremely hurt in this business.” Only later, after Hull had relocated to Michigan Territory, was a compromise reached and a modicum of harmony between the families restored.<sup>101</sup>

Meanwhile, Hull’s distressed finances had become more commonly known in Washington and probably compromised his position as agent. One particularly interesting document—an unfinished draft letter to an unknown gentleman, composed by Hull in February 1803—sheds some light on his vulnerable situation and also comes closest of any surviving document to a self-declaration of his political identity at that

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<sup>101</sup> See various documents and transcriptions in Jackson Family Papers II, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Mass., especially Michael Jackson’s will, 13 June 1792, box 1, Col. Michael Jackson Correspondence 1792 file; William Hull to Charles Jackson, 20 April 1801, box 2, Charles Jackson Correspondence 1799-1801 file; Ebenezer Jackson to William Hull, 19 July [1801], and Ebenezer Jackson to Simon Jackson, 31 December 1801, box 1, Ebenezer Jackson Correspondence 1801 file; Ebenezer Jackson to Simon Jackson, 3 July 1804, 11 October 1805, and 31 January 1806, box 1, Ebenezer Jackson Correspondence 1804-1806 file; Ebenezer Jackson to Simon Jackson, June 1810, box 1, Ebenezer Jackson Correspondence 1810-1811 file; Notation, Background: Jackson Family file; Copy of funeral report, ascribed to Hull, written for Newton papers, Background: Charles E. Jackson Source Materials (Disbound) file. Quotes in Ebenezer Jackson to Simon Jackson, 9 May 1801, box 1, Ebenezer Jackson Correspondence 1801 file; Ebenezer Jackson to Simon Jackson, 11 October 1805, box 1, Ebenezer Jackson Correspondence 1804-1806 file; and William Hull to Simon Jackson, 20 April 1806, box 2, Simon Jackson Correspondence 1801-1806 file.

time.<sup>102</sup> The draft was prompted by a remark made that morning by the letter's intended recipient, probably, judging by Hull's response, a Jeffersonian of Southern (anti-Yazoo) persuasion. The gentleman had observed in company that the "embarrassments" in Hull's private affairs—that is, his debts—"had been stated, to be such, as would form an objection" to his becoming marshal for the district of Massachusetts, a position soon to open. Hull was mortified. "If, Sir, I had solicited this Office, it might have been proper to have stated the objections." But as that was not the case, Hull insisted, "I leave it to your own judgment, whether the occasion required it." Moreover, the offender appears to have impugned Hull's sincerity as a Republican, hinting, as Hull viewed it, that his affiliation was driven by opportunism over principle. This touched on his honor and viability as a public man. Now Hull was indignant. "With respect to my private affairs," he began, "they belong to myself. I thank God, if they are embarrassed, no person will be injured, but myself." He went on: "Should I be so unfortunate, as not to receive one Cent from the Government, for the large sums of money, I have paid for the Georgia Lands, I presume I shall be able to do full justice to every person on earth to whom I am indebted, and have a sufficiency left, to make my Family comfortable."

Hull turned to his politics. "With respect to the present administration of the Government, I have been sincere in my attachment to it, & have done every thing in my power to promote its interest." Far from gaining financial advantage, he emphasized, this had involved sacrifice. "For this reason alone, I have accepted, and have continued to hold very expensive Offices, in the legislative, judicial, & military departments of the State Government. They have been attended with great expence [sic], occupied much of

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<sup>102</sup> This and the two paragraphs following draw from William Hull to [?], 13 February 1803, draft letter in Hull's hand, William Hull Papers, MS 407, folder 1, item 8, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah.

my time, and produced nothing.” His debt obligations would not allow him to hold these positions much longer, however. Consequently he would “not be able . . . so intensively to promote those principles of which I have uniformly been the advocate.” Since the Revolutionary period, he insisted, those republican principles had “uniformly influenced every action of my life.” As to the Yazoo claims, Hull considered it “a mere question of property” and therefore of justice. “We propose a compromise. If we agree, it is well. If we do not, we stand on our right.” In the meantime, he reiterated, “I hope . . . hereafter, no objections will be raised against me, as a disqualification for any Office, which I never have expressed or even entertained a wish to be made the incumbent.” Finally, as if to stand down his challenger, Hull recalled his core credentials—his bedrock patriotic narrative and political identity—in words he might also have chosen at that period for an epitaph:

The circumstances, of having devoted eight years of the best of my life to the service of my Country; of having employed Seventeen Years, since that time in disciplining a militia, which I consider as the bulwark of our Liberties, and of having exerted all the powers of my mind in the dissemination of those republican principles, which are the basis of the present administration of our Government are consolations of which the World cannot deprive one.

In them I rejoice, & in them I will rejoice[.]

Clearly the letter was one of self-defense and self-justification. It strains credulity, for instance, that Hull had “accepted” his offices in Massachusetts *solely* to promote Republicanism. On the other hand, he was as adept as anyone at believing his own constructed narrative, which remained firmly rooted in classical republicanism. Furthermore Hull’s very protestations may suggest that he was once again open to, and perhaps positioning himself for, an honorable and lucrative federal appointment.

Determined to make a strong push and assume a more aggressive posture with Congress, in October 1804 the New England Mississippi Land Company directors opted for a change. They replaced Hull as agent to Washington with Perez Morton, also a prominent Massachusetts Republican and lawyer, and also recruited Gideon Granger of Connecticut, a loyal Jeffersonian and presently U.S. postmaster general. This was a delicate matter as Hull remained a company trustee and influential member, but he did not openly protest, perhaps because he saw another opportunity in the offing.<sup>103</sup> The next month Morton and Granger submitted a memorial to Congress together with a pamphlet arguing the rights of the claimants. The memorial assumed a more confrontational and impatient tone with the government.<sup>104</sup> Debates between congressional supporters and opponents grew only nastier, however, and the session ended in March 1805 with still no resolution. Furthermore, Magrath has duly noted, “it was becoming increasingly evident that the emotion-laden Yazoo issue was having a destructive impact on the Republican party and, consequently, on relations between Jefferson and Congress.”<sup>105</sup> Morton himself informed Hull later in the year: “This I am confident of, if we are again rejected or delayed, it will insert a deadly poison in the Republican Politics of Massachusetts—if

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<sup>103</sup> Benjamin Jarvis to William Hull, 5 October 1804, William Hull Papers, MS 407, folder 1, item 12, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah. Granger had reported the previous May that “a number of the leading People in Boston have requested me to prepare myself on that Subject [Yazoo] and to appear next Session at Congress’ Bar as an Advocate for the Sufferers[.] [T]o induce me they have offered me a commission of five prct. on what shall be gained.” Gideon Granger to Samuel Huntington, 17 May 1804, in “Letters from the Samuel Huntington Correspondence, 1800-1812,” part 2 of The Western Reserve Historical Society, Annual Report for 1914-1915, Tract No. 95 (Cleveland: Western Reserve Historical Society, 1915), 90-91.

<sup>104</sup> Perez Morton and Gideon Granger, Agents of the holders of the Georgia Mississippi Company’s purchase, to the President and Members of the Senate, and to the Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives of the United States, in Congress assembled, November 1804, in American State Papers: Public Lands, 1:191-192.

<sup>105</sup> Magrath, Yazoo, 45.

not all New England.” Writing just before the next session in Washington, Morton pleaded with Hull to use whatever influence he had, including his friendship with Vice President George Clinton, to “facilitate the object we all have in view.” “As one of the Trustees, & a former Agent,” Morton tried to reassure him, “you will no doubt be compensated hereafter in case of our Success, & any services you now render will without doubt expedite that object with the Directors.”<sup>106</sup> The appeal may have given Hull some personal satisfaction, but again the campaign proved fruitless, providing him no financial relief. Another nine years would pass before Congress passed a Yazoo compensation bill. By then there would be little for Hull, the only still-living company trustee, to celebrate—just days before President James Madison signed the bill into law on March 31, 1814, a court martial in Albany had condemned Hull for his 1812 surrender of Detroit and ordered him home to await Madison’s determination on his fate.<sup>107</sup>

By the time of Jefferson’s 1804 reelection Hull, now fifty-one, was widely recognized as a leading figure—a “first character”—in Massachusetts and in the state’s suddenly ascendant Republican party. His advocacy for the New England Mississippi Land Company had made his a familiar face in the nation’s capital as well. Friend and

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<sup>106</sup> Perez Morton to William Hull, 26 November 1805, William Hull Papers, MS 407, folder 1, item 14, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah. Hull’s close friendship with Clinton was recalled by descendants. See Samuel C. Clarke, Memoir of Gen. William Hull, 24, and Ella Wingate Ireland, “Sarah Hull” (paper presented to Sarah Hull Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Newton, Mass., 2 December 1897), typed manuscript, “Sarah Hull” file, Hull Family Papers, Newton History Museum at the Jackson Homestead, Newton, Mass., 4.

<sup>107</sup> Magrath, Yazoo, 97; Henry Dearborn to William Hull, 28 March 1814, William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (29), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge. In early 1812 Hull, then governor of Michigan Territory, accepted another stint as company agent and attorney in Washington during a return trip. He quit a month later, however, having accepted his ill-fated appointment as general of the U.S. Northwestern Army. See Samuel Brown et al. (committee of the New England Mississippi Land Company) to William Hull, Company power of attorney to Hull, 3 February 1812, Company directors’ letter of appointment to Hull, 3 February 1812, and John Peck and Henry Newman to William Hull, 21 March 1812, William Hull Papers, MS 407, folder 1, items 17-20, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah.

foe knew him as a man of military, legal, diplomatic, commercial, and administrative experience, an accomplished gentleman. However, it was also well known that he was mired in debt. In 1805, Hull's experience and need combined to bring about a major turn in his life and career.

## CHAPTER 7

### GOVERNOR (1805)

On January 11, 1805, Congress passed an act dividing Indiana Territory and creating a separate Territory of Michigan, effective July 1. Now it fell to Jefferson to nominate territorial officers, namely (as set by the Northwest Ordinance of 1787) a governor, secretary, and three judges.<sup>1</sup> Rumors had already been circulating about a role for Hull in the new presidential term. In Boston, a young Daniel Webster picked up scuttlebutt that Hull would become Secretary of War in place of Henry Dearborn, who would take Federalist Benjamin Lincoln's place as Boston's Collector of Customs.<sup>2</sup> All that was false, but Jefferson did have Hull early in mind for the governorship, an office of exceptionally broad power and varied responsibilities, including the role of superintendent of Indian affairs. He had the support of Dearborn and Levi Lincoln, fellow New Englanders. The office carried with it great honor and a \$2000 annual salary, but the territory's extreme remoteness would discourage many if not most qualified men. Some did express interest. Senator Thomas Worthington and his Ohio colleagues in

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Statutes at Large, 8<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d sess. (11 January 1805), 2:309-310, online at Library of Congress, American Memory, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=002/llsl002.db&recNum=346> (accessed 18 July 2007). Also printed in Clarence Edwin Carter, comp. and ed., The Territorial Papers of the United States, vol. 10, The Territory of Michigan, 1805-1820 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1942), 5-7.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Webster to Judah Dana, 29 December 1804, in Daniel Webster, The Papers of Daniel Webster: Legal Papers, vol. 1, The New Hampshire Practice, ed. Alfred S. Konefsky and Andrew J. King (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1982), 57. Dearborn did replace Lincoln in 1809.



Washington campaigned for Samuel Huntington, chief justice of the Ohio Supreme Court, only to be later told by Jefferson “that he had previously determined to app[oin]t Genl. Hull.”<sup>3</sup> Postmaster General Granger, now under attack for his dual roles as government official and land company agent, also made an appeal for the appointment, pleading fiscal distress and a wish to escape his enemies’ wrath “in the rude forests of the Interior.” Knowing Hull as the prime candidate, however, Granger assured the president: “My sense of propriety compels me to remark that in case of his willingness to accept, I decline all competition with him and no consideration would induce me to accept the Office to his disappointment.”<sup>4</sup>

In the end Hull was willing. While his reasons remain open to some conjecture, there seems little doubt that indebtedness was important if not decisive. It was the kind of prestigious federal appointment he had longed for in earlier days, during Washington’s administration, the kind that would duly reward his Continental service and sacrifice, provide some security, and gratify young ambition. But since then he had become well established and prominent in his community, county, and state. While ambition and a desire for fame (in the eighteenth-century sense) remained powerful inducements, it seems unlikely that these would have been enough to impel Hull to uproot himself and many of his family from all that was familiar and comfortable had his credit and

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Worthington to Samuel Huntington, 26 February 1805, in “Letters from the Samuel Huntington Correspondence, 1800-1812,” part 2 of The Western Reserve Historical Society, Annual Report for 1914-1915, Tract No. 95 (Cleveland: Western Reserve Historical Society, 1915), 98. See also Jeremiah Morrow to Samuel Huntington, 17 January 1805, in the same work, p. 100. Jefferson did appoint Huntington as one of the judges, but he declined.

<sup>4</sup> Gideon Granger to Thomas Jefferson, 28 January 1805, from Thomas Jefferson Papers, Series 1: General Correspondence, Library of Congress, [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mtj1&fileName=mtj1page032.db&recNum=350&itemLink=/ammem/mtjhtml/mtjser1.html&linkText=7&tempFile=./temp/~ammem\\_Nouo&filecode=mtj&next\\_filecode=mtj&prev\\_filecode=mtj&itemnum=13&ndocs=17](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=mtj1&fileName=mtj1page032.db&recNum=350&itemLink=/ammem/mtjhtml/mtjser1.html&linkText=7&tempFile=./temp/~ammem_Nouo&filecode=mtj&next_filecode=mtj&prev_filecode=mtj&itemnum=13&ndocs=17) (accessed 18 July 2007).

prospects remained sound. As Michigan historian William L. Jenks observed many years ago, even with the \$2,000 salary “the expenses attendant upon removal to so distant a point were considerable, so that from a financial standpoint the position to a man of profitable business or profession could not be considered attractive.”<sup>5</sup>

Hull was a logical and indeed welcome choice for Jefferson. Certainly he met the president’s most basic requirements of integrity, ability, and faithfulness to the Constitution. He also satisfied Jefferson’s criteria of party loyalty, social status, and section: Hull was an important Republican who had helped the party to recent victory in his state; a gentleman with a solid reputation of respectability and hospitality; and a New Englander, sectionally counterbalancing Indiana Territory Governor William Henry Harrison, of Virginian stock, and Orleans Territory Governor William C. C. Claiborne from Tennessee.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Hull had a résumé exceptionally well matched to the post. His military reputation and experience, particularly in organizing and training militia, would be highly valued in a region fearing possible Indian or British attack. Also his service as a government commissioner, twice in Canada with British officials and with Indians en route, and as a negotiator would seem advantageous, both for dealing with British officers across the Detroit River and carrying out the Jeffersonian policy of peaceably acquiring further Indian land cessions.<sup>7</sup> His legal and legislative experience and knowledge, especially in property law and administration, would be crucial for

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<sup>5</sup> William L. Jenks, introduction to Documents Relating to Detroit and Vicinity, 1805-1813, vol. 40 of Michigan Historical Collections (Lansing, Mich.: Michigan Historical Commission, 1929), 30.

<sup>6</sup> On Jefferson’s appointment criteria, see Leonard D. White, The Jeffersonians: A Study in Administrative History, 1801-1829 (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 351-364.

<sup>7</sup> A good exposition of Jefferson’s Indian policy in the Old Northwest is Reginald Horsman, Expansion and American Indian Policy, 1783-1812 ([East Lansing]: Michigan State University Press, 1967), chaps. 7 and 9.

maintaining order and harmony among contending settlers. Whether Hull's mindset, personality, and temperament were best suited to conditions such as existed in Michigan remained to be seen.

In short, Hull was probably the best-credentialed politically favorable figure willing to take the position. His task would prove extremely challenging. Well over a year earlier, while petitioning for separate territorial status, leading Michigan settlers had noted that "the qualifications for a Governor are more important than is generally supposed, but a knowledge of our situation will readily suggest the propriety of having a person of general information, of disinterested conduct, and integrity."<sup>8</sup> Making the point further, Dearborn wrote Hull after his appointment: "You will find a heterogen[e]ous mass of materials to govern, which will call for the exertions of your whole mass of skill, judgement, prudence and firmness, and it may be considered as peculiarly fortunate, that the qualifications of the Governor, are so extremely well suited to the duties of his Office."<sup>9</sup>

Jefferson nominated Hull on Tuesday, February 26. The Senate confirmed him on March 1, two days before the Eighth Congress and Jefferson's first term expired.<sup>10</sup> In April, Hull received his three-year commission at his Newton home and formally

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<sup>8</sup> James May and others to Thomas Worthington, 10 December 1803, in Carter, ed., Territorial Papers, 10:3-4.

<sup>9</sup> The Secretary of War to Governor Hull, 23 July 1805, in Carter, ed., Territorial Papers, 10:24.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate Executive Journal, 8<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2d sess., 26 February and 1 March 1805, 1:484, online, Library of Congress, American Memory, <[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llej&fileName=001/llej001.db&recNum=490&itemLink=r?ammem/hlaw:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(ej001834\)\):%230010491&linkText=1](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llej&fileName=001/llej001.db&recNum=490&itemLink=r?ammem/hlaw:@field(DOCID+@lit(ej001834)):%230010491&linkText=1)> (accessed 21 July 2007).

accepted, notifying Secretary of State Madison that he would arrange to be at Detroit before the territory's official establishment on July 1.<sup>11</sup>

On June 24, 1805, en route to Detroit with Sarah, two of his daughters, and his only son, Hull observed his fifty-second birthday.<sup>12</sup> Unable to see what lay ahead, he could at least take stock of what had already been an extraordinary career lived out in a dynamic, transformative era. Born in Derby, Connecticut, the fourth son of a comfortable and locally prominent family, he had emerged an energetic youth and worthy student, graduating Yale with honors and the demeanor of a gentleman. After brief stints as a schoolteacher and minister-in-training, he had turned to study law in Litchfield, soon passing the bar and returning to his hometown just before the rebellion against Great Britain erupted in neighboring Massachusetts. At twenty-two, he had led his town's volunteer company to join the siege of Boston.

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<sup>11</sup> Commission of William Hull as Governor, [1 March 1805], in Carter, ed., Territorial Papers, 10:9-10; William Hull to James Madison, 11 April 1805, in Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections (Lansing, Mich.: Michigan Historical Commission, 1901), 31:522-523. It appears that Hull had already begun setting his affairs in order, dispensing with some property to cover some of his outstanding debts. See, for example, the contracts between Hull and Peleg Coffin, 5 March 1805, Miscellaneous Papers: Hull, William, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, in which Hull deeded to Coffin a fifty-acre tract in Newton in exchange for Coffin's paying Hull's bond of \$1060 to the Union Bank of Boston. After the appointment Hull immediately began receiving recommendations for territorial appointments under his authority. See Daniel Putnam to William Hull, 30 March 1805, William Hull Papers, bMS Am 1569.6 (47), Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge.

<sup>12</sup> Along with this major and distant relocation, other family transitions had been just taken place. On March 13, William and Sarah's second daughter Eliza married Isaac McLellan of Portland. Then, on May 5, the Hulls became grandparents: William Hull McKesson was born to their oldest daughter Sarah, who had married New York lawyer John McKesson in 1802. (In January 1803 a son had been born to the McKessons prematurely and did not survive.) Finally, on May 18, a few days before the Hulls departed for far-off Detroit, their fifth daughter Rebecca Parker, just fifteen, married twenty-six-year-old Newton newcomer and merchant Samuel Clarke. The entire family, it would appear, was at a crossroads. Samuel C. Clarke, comp., Records of Some of the Descendants of Richard Hull, New Haven, 1639-1662 (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1869), 10-11; Samuel C. Clarke, comp., Records of Some of the Descendants of Thomas Clarke, Plymouth, 1623-1697 (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1869), 25.

The Revolution thereafter became the great event of Hull's life, the foundation of his self-understanding and a core component of his reputation. As a Continental officer he had endured terrific trials of body, mind, and spirit in the war's northern theater, rising to the rank of lieutenant colonel, and gaining the confidence and friendship of numerous well-known figures, most notably General Washington. He had seen much of both regular and irregular combat, earning a reputation for courage, discipline, physical stamina, dependability, and honor. If not necessarily an inspired officer, he had certainly been a model one, such that his superiors had assigned him to several special missions, including as an envoy to Canada at the conclusion of his service. In the end his Revolutionary tenure had been exemplary and among the longest. Much of his subsequent political activism and attitudes could be seen as an effort to guard the legacy and meaning of the Revolution as he understood it, whether as officer against civilian, Federalist against Antifederalist, or Republican against Federalist.

The war had influenced his identity and standing in other ways. He had built new associations, becoming a Freemason early in the conflict and, at war's end, a founder and active member of the Society of the Cincinnati. The war had placed him in high circles, with commensurate postwar expectations. His sense of place had changed as well, not only because he had transferred to the Massachusetts line, but also because he had met and married Sarah. Joined to the respected Fuller family of Newton, he had emerged from the war anticipating propertied independence in his new home state. He had also become a father of two, later to be followed by six more.

After the war, at age thirty-one, Hull had settled in Newton and resumed a legal practice as the postwar depression descended. In the context of economic dislocation and

widespread foreclosures, he had met with severe criticisms against both debt-collecting lawyers and veteran Continental officers seeking fulfillment of compensation promises and “gratitude.” When court closures and armed rebellion under Daniel Shays and others seemed to threaten lawful order (and the Revolutionary gains), he had eagerly joined with government forces in suppressing the movement. The former revolutionary had become a conservative, albeit still a republican one, and a vocal critic of the “feeble” Confederation government. Hoping a more “energetic” national government would, among other effects, overcome state obstacles to officer pensions, he had strongly advocated the proposed Constitution and rejoiced at its adoption. Additionally he had been appointed brigadier general in the state’s Third Division, named a member of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts, and made a Justice of the Peace. Circumstances had even briefly thrust him into futile contention for a seat in the first federal Congress. The contest had left no doubt of his conservative Federalist credentials and reputation.

Despite Hull’s enthusiasm for the new Constitutional government and its president, disappointments and frustrations had followed. He had received no federally appointed office as hoped, and the administration’s offers of western military commands had proved incompatible with his domestic and financial circumstances. More importantly, the matter of officer compensation—one of “Justice, Gratitude, and Policy”—had failed in Congress, a victim of the funding act and entrenched opposition that was driven, in his view, by “Envy, Obstinacy, and Avarice.” He had been a chief advocate and lobbyist in the compensation campaign, making President Washington’s failure to intervene all the more disconcerting. The welcome honor of a second short-

term appointment as a federal agent to Canada could not erase the sting (even though it did provide him a fascinating introduction to officers, settlers, and native peoples of the eastern Great Lakes “middle ground”). Meanwhile, during this three-month service in early 1793, Revolutionary France had declared war on Great Britain, altering the context and course of American political and commercial life.

In 1794 the valuable Fuller estate had passed largely to Hull’s control, enabling him to join in the commercial and speculative activities now ramping up among many of his peers. Financially independent for the first time at age forty-one, this man-on-the-make had embarked on a memorable venture to Europe—his first and only transatlantic tour—trading goods in England and witnessing some of the spectacle of post-Terror France. He had returned home an eager and, it turned out, over-hasty investor, ill-advisedly funding the scheming Ira Allen, speculating in disputed Yazoo lands, and purchasing claims to Ohio land that proved non-existent. Looming debt (and potential insolvency) had quickly become a feature of his life.

He had also returned from Europe to find a far less tolerant political environment, for in his absence the Jay Treaty debate had polarized and intensified political views. Federalists had especially recoiled from his defenses of James Monroe, whom he had befriended in Paris. His own Middlesex County, however, had developed marked Republican preferences, and it was there that he had accrued further honors and duties. In short order he had become major general of the Third (Middlesex) Division, judge of the court of common pleas, and master of a new Masonic lodge.

The Franco-American war crisis of the late 1790s had placed Hull’s political views under even closer scrutiny. As division commander he had tried to boost patriotic

unity and public confidence through carefully staged annual reviews and exercises, with varying success. Meanwhile the war hysteria following the XYZ affair had provided his bitterest critics an opportunity to challenge his trustworthiness. An editorial attack denouncing him as a political “chameleon” and “hypocrite,” a Jacobin in sheep’s clothing, a slanderer of Washington, and a dark conspirator, convinced him all the more of the dangers posed by High Federalism and “court” power to the Revolutionary legacy. Some Federalists had come to his defense, however—perhaps in hope of winning him over, or perhaps due to cross-partisan associations, whether Masonic, Cincinnati, or Yazoo—and he had weathered well that political storm.

He had emerged from the election of 1800 as a leading figure among Massachusetts Republicans, and, with the party’s rising influence over the next few years, a leading figure in the state—a “first character.” The New England Mississippi Land Company, having earlier made him a company trustee, had commissioned him to push its Yazoo compensation claims with the Jefferson Administration and Congress. His own large investment and growing credit problems assured he would be motivated; nevertheless, as with officer pensions before, his efforts had failed, at least for the time being. Financially vulnerable but still politically viable, he had received and embraced Jefferson’s offer of a territorial governorship in spite of the assignment’s distance. Not through President Washington, as once hoped, but through Jeffersonian Republicanism had he finally gained a prestigious federal office, even if it was one far more remote than he had originally envisioned.

As General Hull of Massachusetts became Governor Hull of Michigan, then, he had already played numerous roles in a long and distinguished career, not surprisingly



acquiring a variety of reputations in an evolving and divided American society. Least contested had been those of a gentleman, administrator, and military officer. Even his political adversaries acknowledged his accomplishments in these, and all three had factored into his appointment as governor. (The latter is interesting and ironic, of course, in light of his later downfall at Detroit.) More controversial were his financial and political reputations. Whether Hull's politics were really determined by "high-mindedness" or "narrow-mindedness"—"principle" or "interest"—was and perhaps remains in the eye of the beholder.<sup>13</sup> It is reasonable to suggest that motives were multiple, interwoven, and not fully conscious. He does appear, however, to have remained very much a man of the "Revolutionary Center."

On New Year's Day of 1825, in what would be the last year of his life, Hull declared in a letter to an elderly Thomas Jefferson: "Having early imbibed your principles of government, every day that I have since lived, has more and more convinced me of their soundness."<sup>14</sup> Perhaps, but upon close examination, "*how* early" and "*which* principles" prove to be challenging questions for an understanding of Hull's early life and career. Clearly he emerged from the turbulent politics of the 1790s as a well-known and influential Jeffersonian Republican in a Federalist-dominated state. But the pace and nature of his affiliation are not clear-cut matters. His harshest critic had attributed his "defection from the side of order and the laws" to his failure as a "public, sturdy beggar"

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<sup>13</sup> The quoted expressions were in regular use at this period, for example in arch-Federalist Stephen Higginson's comment that "some men were Federalists because they were high-minded; others because they were narrow-minded." Quoted in Charles Downer Hazen, Contemporary American Opinion of the French Revolution (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1897; reprint, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1964), 293.

<sup>14</sup> William Hull to Thomas Jefferson, 1 January 1825, from Library of Congress, The Thomas Jefferson Papers, 1606-1827, Series 1: General Correspondence, [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/P?mtj:1:/temp/~ammem\\_dffP::](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/P?mtj:1:/temp/~ammem_dffP::) (accessed 4 April 2007).

in gaining additional officer compensation.<sup>15</sup> It likely was an important preconditioning element, but it also fails to fully account for what was a much more complex evolution in the volatile and shifting political universe of the 1790s. Hull and his countrymen of the era had faced the daunting task of harmonizing previous convictions and understandings with new realities. In his mind, at least, steady and consistent principle led him into the Republican fold. Political foes saw rather a “conversion” based merely on personal opportunism. In any case, Hull’s political journey had been perhaps more uneven, tentative, and contingent than he cared to remember.

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<sup>15</sup> “Civis,” “The Chameleon Unmasked, No. I,” and “The Chameleon Unmasked, No. II,” in Columbian Centinel (Boston), 29 August and 1 September 1798.

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## VITA

David Alan Greer was born to James Reagan Greer and Connie Jane Greer on September 16, 1962, in Stephenville, Texas. He graduated from Adolfo Camarillo High School, Camarillo, California, in 1981. At Pepperdine University he served as Phi Alpha Theta chapter president, studied abroad in Germany and Israel, and in 1987 graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts in history. He received his Master of Arts degree in history from Texas Christian University in 1994.

In September 1992 he joined Manna International of Redwood City, California, and Mir na Zemlji (Peace on Earth) of Zagreb, Croatia, as a humanitarian relief coordinator for refugees of the wars of former Yugoslavia. In Zagreb he also met and married Branka (Pribanić) Greer, with whom he returned to the United States in 1995 to resume graduate study at Texas Christian University. He held Graduate and Teaching Assistantships from 1995-99 and received the Dean's Award for Outstanding Teaching in History.

He is currently Associate Professor of History at Rochester College, Rochester Hills, Michigan, where he has taught since August 1999, twice serving as faculty sponsor for study-abroad programs in Austria and Germany. He is a member of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic, the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, and the Organization of American Historians.

## ABSTRACT

### REVOLUTIONARY—FEDERALIST—REPUBLICAN: THE EARLY LIFE AND REPUTATIONS OF WILLIAM HULL

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This study examines the life, career, and evolving reputations of William Hull (1753-1825) up to his appointment as first governor of Michigan Territory in 1805. Usually remembered for his surrender of Fort Detroit and the U.S. Northwestern Army in 1812, Hull earlier had been known to contemporaries as an intrepid Revolutionary officer, a determined pro-Constitution Federalist, and then, perhaps surprisingly, a leading Republican of Massachusetts. Historians have hitherto paid little attention to Hull's early career, nor have they made extensive use of his widely scattered papers. Yet his Revolutionary and postwar contributions were significant, remarkably varied, and frequently controversial. His diverse roles and reputations well illustrate the dynamic and often-divided character of American society in an early republican period that evoked a range of political, economic, and social reorientations.

Born in western Connecticut, Hull gained distinction as a Yale graduate, long-serving Continental officer, founder of the Society of the Cincinnati, lawyer, opponent of Shays's Rebellion, advocate of the Constitution, officer lobbyist to Congress, federal envoy to Canada, commercial entrepreneur, speculator in western (including Yazoo)

lands, militia general, county magistrate, Masonic lodge master, state senator, trustee and agent of the New England Mississippi Land Company, and influential Jeffersonian Republican in Federalist-dominated Massachusetts. Over many years he participated in, and commented on, many of the critical events, activities, and debates that shaped the young American republic and his adopted state.

Hull's military and civilian roles not only provide necessary background for his later, more famous actions, but also highlight important aspects of American military, economic, and political culture of the Revolutionary and early national years. He represented a variety of interests, broad and narrow, and espoused views that competed for dominance in this extraordinarily contentious era. Among his chief concerns throughout was to protect the legacy of the Revolution as he understood it, whether as a veteran against civilian leaders, a Federalist against Antifederalists, or a New England Republican against High Federalists. Admired by some and resented by others, Hull reflected the swirling ideological forces of his day, and, like the new nation itself, embodied both idealism and opportunism.