



2002

Gettysburg Historical Journal 2002

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/ghj>

 Part of the [History Commons](#)

Share feedback about the accessibility of this item.

(2002) "Gettysburg Historical Journal 2002," *The Gettysburg Historical Journal*: Vol. 1 , Article 1.
Available at: <https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/ghj/vol1/iss1/1>

This open access complete issue is brought to you by The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of The Cupola. For more information, please contact cupola@gettysburg.edu.

Gettysburg Historical Journal 2002

THE
GETTYSBURG
HISTORICAL
JOURNAL

VOLUME I

FALL 2002

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
GETTYSBURG COLLEGE
GETTYSBURG, PA 17325

CONTENTS

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR	2
COERCION GONE WRONG: COLONIAL RESPONSE TO THE BOSTON PORT ACT	Jared Peatman, '02 3
A MAJESTIC PRESENCE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAJESTIC THEATER IN GETTYSBURG	Kelli Burnham, '03 7 Jay Gallagher, '03 Nancy Moll, '03
ABIGAIL AND MERCY	Amber Moulton, '02 18
THE TAVERN IN COLONIAL AMERICA	Steve Stuzinski, '03 29
"GOD MOVES IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY": PUBLIC DISCOURSE ON PROVIDENCE AND THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG	Sarah Marie Andrews, '02 39
KITCHNER'S VOLUNTEERS	Peter Braurer, '02 55

Readers,

Less than a year ago, the History Department faculty at Gettysburg College offered a challenge to a group of its students: put together the first issue of an undergraduate journal using the best work from the department. The following months found our small editorial board embarking into new waters—trying to use the wonderful advice that was given to us while also keeping in mind our own realities. We now present you with the fruit of our best efforts—an issue which we hope will only spark further high-caliber undergraduate history work and thus continue to supply this journal with articles for many years to come. This issue is but a beginning, though we believe it is a good beginning.

Many people have helped us put this inaugural issue together. First, I must thank all of the members of the editorial board—four of whom are seniors, and two who will carry the torch for next year’s issue. I have immensely enjoyed working with them, and know we have all learned a great deal during this process. A great deal of gratitude must also be extended to our two advisors: Dr. Joseph Coohill, who we will unfortunately be losing as an advisor, but whose mark on this project is undeniable and will remain as long as it is published; and also to Dr. Scott Hancock, whose guidance this year makes us confident that the journal will continue to grow and mature under his talented leadership. Carla Pavlick, our Production Consultant, but mostly our unlimited source of information, has contributed more than words can truly capture. We are also greatly indebted to the professors of the History Department, whose inspiration has motivated all of the articles which herein appear and whose support for this journal continues to inspire us. Finally, we must certainly offer our deepest thanks to Dr. Michael Birkner, whose vision for this project lit a spark that has illuminated all of our work and whose constant support and guidance as helped us stay focused and motivated.

Writing in the last century of the Common Era, Roman Marcus T. Cicero explained, “History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time; it illuminates reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life, and brings us tidings of antiquity.” This inaugural issue of the Gettysburg Historical Journal seeks to capture glimpses of reality, to remind readers of from whence we come, and to where we are or ought to be heading. Such is the simple, yet indeed enormous task of the historian.

Sarah Marie Andrews, '02
General Editor

COERCION GONE WRONG: COLONIAL RESPONSE TO THE BOSTON PORT ACT

JARED PEATMAN

On March 25, 1774, the British Parliament passed the Boston Port Act, closing Boston Harbor to commerce. The act was meant to force Boston into paying for tea dumped into the harbor four months earlier during the Boston Tea Party. Parliament believed that the colonies would not support Boston and it would be only a short time before Boston acquiesced and paid for the tea, reestablishing British authority in the colonies.¹ They could not have been more wrong. The thirteen colonies were deeply disturbed by the Boston Port Act, and came together in a way that shocked Parliament. Rather than separating Boston from the rest of the colonies, the Boston Port Act ignited all of the colonies into anti-British actions.

On March 14, 1774, the Boston Port Act was proposed in Parliament. Before the Boston Tea Party large portions of Parliament had supported the colonial protests against taxes, but when the Bostonians went so far as to willfully destroy the tea they lost any friends they may have had in Parliament.² Benjamin Franklin observed, "I suppose we never had since we were a people, so few friends in Britain. The violent destruction of the tea seems to have united all parties [in Britain] against our province. . ."³ According to Lord Frederick North, the prime minister of Britain, the dispute was now over whether or not Great Britain possessed any authority over the colonies, not simply over taxation.⁴ After just eleven days, a remarkably short period, the act was passed by parliament, with an implementation date of June 1st.⁵

Word of the act reached the colonies on May 11, 1774, setting off immediate sparks.⁶ The Monday, May 16th edition of the Boston Evening Post carried news of the act, with a supplement carrying the text of the act. Practically the whole edition of May 16th was dedicated to the impending crisis. Simply put, the townsmen were enraged. A writer calling himself "JUSTICE" wrote,

Without the shadow of evidence, without any direct accusation against the town, with all the circumstances of suspicion that their enemies were the authors of this outrage, the town of Boston is to be punished with a severity of which the worst times of this country cannot furnish

1 John C. Miller, *Origins of the American Revolution* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1943), 359.

2 *Ibid*, 355.

3 Peter D. G. Thomas, *Tea Party to Independence: The Third Phase of the American Revolution 1773-1776* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1991), 56-57.

4 Miller, *Origins of the American Revolution*, 356.

5 *Ibid*, 359.

6 *Ibid*, 360.

a single example.

Multiple articles of that edition blamed Governor Hutchinson (who had been recalled on May 10th and replaced by General Thomas Gage) for the Tea Party, believing that he had deliberately provoked them into taking action by refusing to send the tea back to Britain, and that they were being unjustly punished for his faults.

The May 17th edition of the Connecticut Courant broke the news of the act to its readership on the second page. The act did not directly affect Connecticut, and as such did not earn a place on the first page. The paper glazed over the act, giving its essentials but not offering too much sympathy for their neighbors to the north. For the time being, it seemed as though Parliament had gauged colonial reactions correctly, the other colonies did not appear to be rallying to the side of the Bostonians.⁷

Immediately after receiving news of the act, Bostonians began calling for a unification of all colonies to meet the British threat. Another editorial in the May 16th edition of the Boston Evening Post, this one titled, "AMERICANS," read, "Tyranny without a covering now stares you all in the face. . . You must ALL unite to guard your Rights, or you will ALL be slaves!" This edition also carried the news that Paul Revere had been dispatched to New York and Philadelphia to drum up support for unified opposition to the act. Bostonians called for the other colonies to join them in stopping importation and exportation with Great Britain, hoping to inflict as much damage as they were suffering.

The May 23rd edition of the Boston Evening Post opened with an article detailing all the areas in North America that the colonists had helped bring under Great Britain's Empire, showing that they had been good and faithful subjects and did not deserve to have their ports closed. More significantly, this edition of the paper carried several replies to Boston's plea for unification. The New York Committee of Correspondence responded sympathetically, and said they would broach the topic of a trade boycott with community leaders. Providence and Newport officials pledged their support, saying they would end trade with Britain immediately. This initial response was positive on the whole, and was the beginning of a unification of the colonies.

By May 24th Connecticut had thrown Boston its support, and in that day's edition of the Connecticut Courant one writer offered as a reason:

the insult and indignity offered to our virtuous countrymen in that metropolitans who have so nobly stood as a barrier against slavery. . . The Generals of despotism are now drawing the lines of circumvallation around our bulwarks of liberty and nothing but unity, resolution, and perseverance, can save our selves and posterity from what is worse

⁷ Connecticut Courant, May 17, 1774.

than death – SLAVERY.

The image of colonists becoming slaves to British taxation had first been suggested in the May 16th edition of the Boston Evening Post and was one of the major reasons why Boston was able to unite the colonies against the Port Act. The colonists did not view the Boston Port Act as just Boston's problem. They believed that all the colonies had to unite against taxation or they would lose their rights one by one until they were all gone and they had been reduced to slaves. So while Boston may have been the battleground, the colonies felt that their future was intricately linked to the outcome of that battle. This was what Parliament did not understand when they had passed the act.

June 1st, the day the act was to go into effect, saw protests throughout the colonies. In Hartford the church bells rang all day and storekeepers covered their windows with black cloth. Some of the more radical citizens burned a copy of the act in the town square.⁸ New York was even more adamant in their opposition, burning Lord North in effigy.⁹

The June 6th edition of the Boston Evening Post carried a letter from Philadelphia stating, "By sea they will beat us; by land they will not attempt us; we must try it out in a way of commerce." That edition also carried the ominous news that more punitive acts were being discussed in parliament.

The next day, the Connecticut Courant carried an article urging, "all our merchants [to] unite as one man." Further, the paper stated that, "This horrid Attack upon the Town of Boston we consider not as an Attempt upon that Town singly, but upon the whole Continent." Connecticut had thrown its full weight behind its neighbors to the north, and was willing to do all they could to support Boston. In case anyone would forget why they were so adamantly supporting the Bostonians, the paper carried repeated references to Americans becoming "slaves" if they did not check the British powers. Additionally, the colonies were beginning to actively support Boston by severing trade with Britain. This shift from symbolic support in the form of resolutions and speeches to actual support in the form of economic alliance further strengthened Boston's position.

By the time the June 13, 1774 edition of the Boston Evening Post came out the act had been in effect for nearly two weeks. Several regiments of British troops had marched into the town and encamped on the green, prepared to uphold the act and protect the King's agents. Additionally, several warships patrolled the port, making sure nothing other than food was allowed in or out.¹⁰ Boston was feeling the effects of the act. However, though the British were accomplishing their goal of punishing the Bostonians, they had not forced the Bostonians to stand alone, nor was the spirit of the colonists from

8 Connecticut Courant, June 7, 1774

9 Miller, *Origins of the American Revolution*, 361-362.
economically.

10 Boston Evening Post, June 20, 1774.

Massachusetts broken. At this point the citizens of Boston took a new approach, and began discussing their grievances with their new governor, Thomas Gage.

In the June 20, 1774 edition of the Boston Evening Post the paper printed an open letter to Gage from a New Salem resident that stated, "The Inhabitants of this Province claim no more than the Rights of Englishmen." The colonials were arguing that they, as Englishmen, had a right to representation. Without that right, they would refuse to pay taxes. This was more a political ploy than anything else; the Bostonians did not want representation as much as they did not want to pay taxes, but "no taxation without representation" became one of the cries of liberty in Colonial America. It also put Britain in a sticky situation. If Parliament were to admit that the colonists were Englishmen then they must give them representation, if Parliament were to deny they were Englishmen than they were admitting they had no right to tax them.

When Parliament decided to enact the Boston Port Act they believed that it would reestablish British authority in the colonies. Boston had been particularly rebellious, and Parliament felt that it was time to show Bostonians that their actions would no longer be tolerated. Parliament believed that most of the colonists were loyal citizens who disapproved of Boston's rebellious nature, and that they would not oppose punitive actions taken against Boston. They were dead wrong, and instead of bringing Boston back into line, the Boston Port Act united the thirteen colonies into opposition to the Crown. Rather than seeing the Bostonians as agitators who got what they deserved, the other thirteen colonies saw them as a martyr for the cause. This was not, they believed, an issue only involving one port or one state. Using words such as "slaves" to describe the positions held by colonials in the British Empire, contemporary newspapers urged the colonies to unite and come to the aid of Boston. If not, the papers warned, the British would begin imposing more and more of their will on the colonies. Parliament had failed in its goal to punish Boston, and had actually caused the colonists to come together to oppose the crown. The Boston Port Act was another example of Great Britain's misjudgment of colonial attitudes.

A MAJESTIC PRESENCE: A STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MAJESTIC THEATER IN GETTYSBURG

JAY GALLAGHER, KELLY BURNHAM AND NANCY MOLL

In an era of collective entertainment, before private home entertainment systems, people sought amusement within their communities. One aspect of this community entertainment, the theater, offered a social gathering place. Theaters provided an important dual role for the community—both for entertainment and also a certain amount of public service. Theaters in the 1920s and 1930s, in small towns such as Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, served a much different purpose than they do today, with a more prominent and more important role within society.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Gettysburg had several theaters. The two most prominent were the Majestic and the Strand (known as the Photoplay before the 1926 renovation). These buildings acted as true centers and hubs for Gettysburg and the surrounding area. These theaters, “served as a showplace and a gathering place for people of all ages from Adams County and the surrounding area of Northern Maryland.”¹ The building’s primary use, as a theater, provided a much needed social environment where people could come, relax, and be entertained, people would come from all over to attend the movies. As the years went on, renovations were made to improve the building. For instance, “in 1926, Mr. Troxell refurbished the theater completely, installing a new screen, the latest in upholstered chairs, new aisle carpeting, a two console organ and a huge fan designed to change the air every minute.”²

Even more important than the Majestic’s role as a theater were its ties with the community. The theater came about because of a need in the community, and once in place the theater continued to maintain strong ties with the community. This occurred in many ways. One of the simpler ways that the theater built ties with the community was by using community members as employees, both adults as well



1 Greg Carbaugh, “The Strand Theater, Gettysburg, PA,” Provided by William Troxell.

2 Ibid

3 Ibid.

4 William Troxell, Major of Gettysburg, interview by Jay Gallagher (25 April 2001).

as teenagers. This helped to build the sense of community and helped the town feel some level of ownership in the theater. Even the way the Strand Theater advertised their shows demonstrated and strengthened this tie to the community. For instance, one of the main ways of advertising was, "to take over a thousand circulars or handbills with the list and description of coming events and distribute them door to door over all of Gettysburg once a week."³ The theater also used sandwich board advertisement, a technique in which a person would wear a device that would place a board on their front and another on their back. On each board an advertisement would be placed, then each of these people would walk up and down the street trying to engage people in conversation and to get them to go to the theater.⁴ These techniques obviously bolstered ties with the community as it put a face to the theater. They placed the employees in the town talking to the community members, as opposed to the much colder techniques we see for movies today, mostly just TV commercials, with almost a complete lack of advertisement for the theater itself.

Theaters also had a reciprocal role with the community, and oftentimes gave something back to the community. The theater served as a hub to its town. It provided one of the few social outlets, and often attracted large crowds from all walks of life. In the case of the Strand, Saturday night was the biggest night of the week, attracting people from all across town, as well as farmers from the suburbs. The theater also tried to give back to the community. For instance, the Strand, from time to time, would have a special admission movie where they would change the admission price; instead of charging a fee, they would require patrons to bring a food item to donate to charity. Another tradition at the Strand was to have one day where all school children were allowed to come to the movies for free.⁵

Many of the movie theaters were also used for other purposes, such as speakers, conventions, live shows, town meetings, and the like. The Strand did play a part in this role of theaters as well. The Strand frequently hosted live shows and bands when not showing a movie. The theater also served the community in a more tangible, generous sense. For instance, when Eddie Plank was pitching for the college, and the game happened to be away, the Strand would open its doors for free to the public. Inside people could sit and relax. The theater would set up a telegraph station and the action in the game would be relayed from wherever the game was being played. The theater then had someone who would go up front and update the crowd on how Eddie Plank and the Gettysburg Bullets were doing.⁶

This public service aspect, however, also became one of the drawbacks of the theater. The Strand was just too small, seating only 300 after renovations. A town such as Gettysburg needed a larger space in order to hold town meetings and functions, attract larger shows, provide space for local sports teams games to be broadcast, and offer

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

a place for the college and high school to hold events such as commencement.

In January of 1923, Henry Scharf attended a town meeting at which the main topic of discussion was the building of a community hall for the town of Gettysburg. He joined a committee that was charged with developing definite plans for such a building.⁷ An architect was hired to draw up plans for a building that would seat 1450 people and would be adaptable for many uses, including conventions, dances, theater, basketball and other indoor sports. Plans for the building were submitted in May of that same year, but the costs of the building project forced the town to indefinitely shelve the idea.⁸

Almost a year later in February 1924, Scharf announced that the Gettysburg Hotel would be expanding to fill the empty lot behind it with an entirely new building. This new structure would include a community center as well as an expansion for the hotel which would occupy the upper floors of the annex. This was to be Henry Scharf's special community project, fulfilling the need to expand his business, but at the same time meeting the goal the town had set for a community hall.⁹ The building Scharf proposed would include new rooms for the hotel, but also, perhaps not surprisingly, an auditorium, a theater and several commercial areas that would be for town use.¹⁰

The architect who was hired to design the building was W.H. Lee of Philadelphia, who had designed many notable theaters in Pennsylvania.¹¹ It is possible that he was drawn into the project by his connection with Hotel President P.H. Fuhrman and Hotel Treasurer Max Schmidt, the three men were from the same town of Shamokin, Pennsylvania.¹² The plans for the building went through many stages before they were firmed into what became the Hotel Annex and Majestic Theater. The ultimate plans contained two separate large rooms, one a theater with permanent seats that could hold up to twelve hundred people and the other a gymnasium that could hold up to six hundred people.¹³ Attached to the gymnasium was a ladies' retiring room (bathroom), kitchen, men's smoking room, dressing rooms, and shower-baths for men and women. The entrance to the gymnasium was through the foyer in the annex lobby that connected it to the theater. The theater was designed to be 120 feet long and 70 feet wide.¹⁴ The floor was graded towards the stage to allow for a good view from every seat in the house. The front end of the theater held the stage and an orchestra pit, as well as a large pipe organ. There were restrooms, music rooms and dressing rooms beneath the stage floor. Along Carlisle Street were the ticket booth as well as several spaces for stores.

8 Scharf-Fox, 61.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 Sandra L. Tatman, "Philadelphia Architects and Buildings." N.d. <http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm?ArchitectId=A0817> (28 April 2001).

12 Hilary Russell, *The Majestic Theater, Gettysburg PA: A Preliminary Historic Research Report on the Majestic Theater, Gettysburg, PA*, Sept. 5 2000, produced by Janis A Barlow and Associates, p. 18.

13 "Hotel Annex Embodies Latest In Architectural Design and Superior Construction Work," *Gettysburg Times*, July 15, 1925, supplement.

14 Ibid, *Gettysburg Times*, July 15, 1925, supplement. 15 "Auditorium of 1,500 Seating Capacity is Promised Town," *February 8, 1924*, p. 1.

This entire project, however, hinged on the passing of an ordinance by the town council allowing the hotel owners to build a bridge over Race Horse Alley, connecting the two buildings. If the council refused to pass the ordinance, the hotel company would simply expand upward and build new floors on the current building, which would deprive the town of its proposed auditorium.¹⁵ On Thursday February 7, 1924, the Gettysburg Town Council passed an ordinance allowing the building of the bridge.¹⁶

However, one of the councilmen still had doubts about the feasibility of the theater portion of the hotel annex and wrote to the President of the hotel company, Mr. P. H. Fuhrmann with his concerns. Mr. Charles Butt worried because there was a plan to enlarge the Lincoln Way Theater, and was concerned Gettysburg could not support two theaters.¹⁷ Mr. Fuhrmann demonstrated the Hotel Gettysburg's determination to continue the addition as planned by explaining they had a moral obligation to build the theater and they could either "make it convertible to other purposes such as a picture house or theater or not build it [the annex] at all."¹⁸ Clearly the hotel company was devoted to their idea of building the annex and would keep their word to build the promised community hall, even in the face of competition from other venues.

The other problem the Hotel Gettysburg faced in building their new addition was funding. The total cost of the annex was about \$350,000. One of the ways they found to finance their endeavor was to sell bonds to the townspeople of Gettysburg, since this project was for community's benefit.¹⁹

The Hotel Gettysburg ran several ads in the Gettysburg Times announcing the sale of bonds in April 1925, but two months later still did not have enough interest. In a letter from Mr. Fuhrmann to Herbert L. Grimm of the Gettysburg Times, Fuhrmann requested more advertising that would speak to the public's sense of community pride: "Incidentally, the pride of the residents of Gettysburg should be in the properly way aroused to such extent that they want to be personally identified with our enterprise by purchasing some of our bonds, which in order to give even the poorest man a chance, have been made in denominations of as low as \$100.00."²⁰ He also suggested adding that citizens in surrounding towns, such as Hanover, were raising money for new hotels out of public spirit, and that the majority of the stockholders who "carry all of the risk connected with our enterprise are residing in other towns."²¹ Mr. Fuhrmann was clearly disappointed that so few of the Gettysburg townspeople were showing interest the project. He tried to instill a message of healthy competition with other towns along with the idea of Gettysburgians shouldering some of the burden.

¹⁶ Ibid, Gettysburg Times, February 8, 1924, 1.

¹⁷ Charles Butt, letter to P.H. Fuhrmann, May 15, 1925, Hotel Gettysburg Correspondences-1925, in the Scharf Collection at the Adams County Historical Society. (hereafter ACHS)

¹⁸ P. H. Fuhrmann letter in response to that of Charles Butt, May 17, 1925. Hotel Gettysburg Correspondences-1925, ACHS.

¹⁹ Scharf-Fox page 61

²⁰ P.H. Fuhrmann, letter to Herbert Grimm of the Gettysburg Times, June 29, 1925. Hotel Gettysburg Correspondences-1925, ACHS.

²¹ Ibid.

Another letter from Mr. Fuhrmann to Mr. Scharf mentions a visit from some members of the Knights of Columbus to the Hotel Gettysburg. Mr. Fuhrmann thought that “some of them are prospective buyers of our bonds and I am therefore particularly anxious that they should be pleased with the service at the hotel.”²² Mr. Fuhrmann was concerned about finding buyers for the bonds and was looking wherever he could. In another letter to Scharf he also voices his frustration with the lack of interest, saying, “I myself refuse to accept any responsibility for the consequences, although I shall do my best to float the bonds.”²³ Despite these problems, they managed to get the money together and begin construction.

The Gettysburg Times recorded on March 27, 1925 that the construction of the annex project was expected to take eighty-five days beginning in April of 1925; in actuality it took one hundred and four days.²⁴ Nevertheless, such a swift construction demanded respect and notice of the hotel management and townspeople. The Hotel Gettysburg hired the renowned Austin Company of Philadelphia to oversee the completion of the annex. Observing the organization and quality of the Austin Company’s work, the Gettysburg Times printed an article on July 15, 1925 describing the Austin Company as a well-established, nation-wide firm, known for its fast construction.²⁵

Before the Austin Company took control of the site, however, the builder and contractor A.R. Warner of Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, first had to construct a foundation and framework for the annex, using 785 square yards of concrete in the foundation and 185 tons of steel in the framework.²⁶ This imposing task evidently required a great deal of time—the Austin Company was forced to ask for an extension on the project because Warner’s steelworkers had not finished the framework when expected.²⁷ W. H. Lee understood the contractors’ predicament and replied:

We appreciate the fact that you have prosecuted your work as rapidly as possible as is consistent with good construction and therefore, owing to the delay as stated above, an extension will be granted you, and the number of days fixed when the steel work and the steel erectors are entirely out of your way.²⁸

The Austin Company eventually began its work in mid-May, when Warner’s men had finally completed their impressive task. The Austin Company’s workers received \$3.50 a day: \$2.50 for food and \$1.00 for lodging.²⁹ These workers provided general labor for the construction, using materials from various companies. In addition, some firms, such as electrical companies, sent their own laborers to install their products.

22 P. H. Fuhrmann, letter to Henry Scharf, May 7, 1925. Hotel Gettysburg Correspondences-1925, ACHS.

23 P.H. Fuhrmann, letter to Henry Scharf of the Hotel Gettysburg, April 25, 1925. Hotel Gettysburg Correspondences-1925, ACHS.

25 Gettysburg Times, July 15, 1925.

26 Gettysburg Times, Majestic Theater Files, Adams County Historical Society, hereafter ACHS.

27 Letter to W. H. Lee from The Austin Co., April 23, 1925, Hotel Gettysburg Correspondences-1925, ACHS.

28 Letter to The Austin Co. from W. H. Lee, April 27, 1925, Hotel Gettysburg Correspondences-1925, ACHS.

As the contractors of the Hotel Gettysburg Annex, A.O. and Oscar Larson and Fred E. Voges of The Austin Company acted as a link between Henry Scharf and the individual companies responsible for different aspects of the annex's construction. On July 15, 1925, the Gettysburg Times printed a series of company advertisements that gave a breakdown of the different pieces that fit together to complete the hotel annex. In addition, various letters and invoices of 1925 from The Austin Company to Henry Scharf described the firms' involvement with the construction. M. and T.E. Farrell of Gettysburg provided the crushed stone used for the foundation. The Harrisburg Lumber Company constructed the hardwood flooring, framing, doors, trim, and stairways. The asbestos roofing was completed by The Worden Paint and Roofing Company of Harrisburg and York, Pennsylvania. The Waterproofing Company of St. Louis made certain that the roof was watertight. Potts Manufacturing Company of Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, constructed various metalwork including steel staircases and fire escapes. The paint was provided by Sherwin & Williams from the Gettysburg Department Store, while the Adams County Hardware Company in Gettysburg and J. Jacob Shannon and Co. of Philadelphia equipped the project with most of the other hardware. The Austin Company hired G. R. Thompson's Sons of Gettysburg for cementing and plastering, and Auburn Shale Brick Co., Inc. of Auburn, Pennsylvania, for brickwork. Novinger & Wagner of Pennbrook, Pennsylvania, provided wood and metal lathers. H.T. Maring of Gettysburg provided sheet metal for the project. Finally, the Everlastone Corporation completed the stucco on July 21st for the exterior.³⁰

For the interior of the annex, many more companies staked their claim in the construction. Philadelphia plumbing contractor Daniel J. Keating oversaw all of the pipe-work, while the company of W.D. Armors constructed the bathrooms. Within the bathrooms, Columbia Mosaic & Tile Company of Washington, DC installed decorative tile and marble. Furthermore, the nationwide Otis Elevator Company provided elevators. The Cumberland Valley Telephone Company installed telephones in the annex. Live Wire Electric Company of Gettysburg installed electric light fixtures, while Ross Electric Construction Company of Philadelphia took charge of all other electric work, including the Sprinkler Alarm System and installation of the pipe



29 Payroll sheet, September 16, 1925, Hotel Gettysburg Correspondences-1925, ACHS.

30 Advertisements in the Gettysburg Times, July 15, 1925; contract with Waterproofing Co. of St. Louis discussed in letter to Gettysburg Hotel Co. from Austin Co., September 16, 1925, Hotel Gettysburg Correspondences-1925, ACHS; invoice of J. Jacob Shannon and Co., Hotel Gettysburg Correspondences-1925, ACHS; guarantee to the Austin CO. from Everlastone Products Corp., August 28, 1925, Hotel Gettysburg Correspondences, 1925, ACHS.

organ in the theater.³¹ The construction of the annex proved an enormous project. A great many firms from a variety of locations, both in and out of Gettysburg, contributed their efforts under the leadership of the Austin Company.

The complicated task of the theater's construction required many more companies and laborers. The Art Decorating Company of Philadelphia directed the decorative style of the theater. For the theater's lighting, T.R. Blake installed decorative light fixtures. Novelty Scenic Studios of New York City provided draperies and stage settings. Lewis M. Swaab & Son Co. of Philadelphia erected motion picture screens, while the Hertner Electric Co. provided the generator for motion pictures, which Swaab's men also installed. The American Seating Company of Chicago installed the 1,200 comfortable and sturdy seats for the floor and the balcony, which totaled \$9,476.18; \$6,527.28 for chairs on concrete and \$2,928.90 for chairs on wood. In addition, Lee Lash Studios of Mount Vernon, New York provided scenery, rigging, and installation totaling \$4850.60.³²

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the theater's creation, however, was the selection and installation of the pipe organ. The hotel management wished to purchase an organ to accompany the silent motion pictures in the new theater. By owning an organ, the hotel would not regularly have to hire a full orchestra. One of the last components of the theater to be installed, the pipe organ was carefully selected. In a letter to Henry Scharf at the end of July 1925, P. H. Fuhrmann wrote:

During my conversation with Mr. Schwartz yesterday, he stated that it was impossible to get up an orchestra at Gettysburg and it is therefore of the greatest importance that the order for the organ should be placed with the least possible delay.³³

Scharf replied two days later that, "The selection of the organ for the theater should be based in my opinion upon the reputation of the organ, the manufacturers and their ability to service it at regular intervals." Scharf wrote of a friend's claim that, "Möller Organ is to organs what Fords are to automobiles."³⁴ Fuhrmann and Scharf eventually agreed that M. P. Möller, Inc. of Hagerstown, Maryland, would give them their best option—a quality Manual Pipe Organ at the reasonable price of \$10,000.³⁵ While most of the companies

31 Advertisements in Gettysburg Times, July 15, 1925; letter to Mr. A.O. Larson of Austin Co. from Henry Scharf, July 1, 1925, concerning Cumberland Valley Telephone Co., Hotel Gettysburg Correspondences-1925, ACHS; letter to Austin Co. from Henry Scharf, September 28, 1925, concerning Ross Electric Co. Hotel Gettysburg Correspondences-1925, ACHS.

32 Letter to Henry Scharf from T.R. Blake, December 15, 1925; letter to Gettysburg Theater from Novelty Scenic Studios, November 4, 1925; letter to Lewis Swaab from Henry Scharf, November 6, 1925; letter to Henry Scharf from Lewis Swaab & Son, concerning Hertner Electric Co., October 20, 1925; bill from American Seating Company, September 12, 1925; estimate from Lee Lash Studios, December 26, 1925; all in Hotel Gettysburg Correspondences-1925, ACHS.

33 Letter to Henry Scharf from P. H. Fuhrmann, July 29, 1925, Hotel Gettysburg Correspondences-1925, ACHS.

34 Letter to P. H. Fuhrmann from Henry Scharf, July 31, 1925, Hotel Gettysburg Correspondences-1925, ACHS.

35 Contract and Specifications of Möller Organ, Hotel Gettysburg Correspondences-1925, ACHS.

participating in the construction of the annex, as a whole, came from Gettysburg and other Pennsylvania locations, the theater's construction drew companies from all over the United States. Scharf and the Austin Company were dedicated to hire the most reputable and skilled companies of theater construction. On July 15, 1925, the Gettysburg Times described how the new theater measured 120 ft. x 70 ft. (the stage itself measured 67 ft. x 30 ft.) and could seat more than 1,200 people. It had graded floors, a balcony and loges, paneled walls and ceilings, and comfortable dressing rooms under the stage. There was an operator's coup in the balcony for moving pictures. The theater's entrance was to the left upon entering the main door. There were ticket offices and marble floors in the foyer, and marquee over the entrance. The theater was ventilated by the latest fresh-air-blowing devices.³⁶ Furthermore, W. H. Lee had specified that the theater would be decorated in mulberry and gold, with velour cover the balcony rails.³⁷

While most of the work for the annex had been completed by mid-August, the theater still needed work as the summer drew to a close. On August 18, 1925, the Gettysburg Times described the timetable of the theater's construction:

The theater-auditorium will be finished last. Mr. [Oscar] Larson stated this morning that this section of the structure was not included in the contract to be completed within 85-working days, but that all work would be finished within a short time after September 1. The metal ceiling, paper work on the walls, practically all the balcony decorations and front of the auditorium have been completed. Laying of the floor and installation of the seats remain as the bulk of the work to be accomplished in the new theater.³⁸

A couple of days later, James B. Aumen, chief of the Gettysburg Fire Department, made a formal inspection of the annex. Aumen praised the project, explaining, "Hotel Gettysburg's new \$350,000 annex is as fireproof as any building I have ever seen. . . . It is equal to any city building . . . and I am pleased to learn that the hotel management was so concise and specific relative to the fireproof construction." Along with six 75-foot fire hoses along the walls and panic bolts in the doors, the theater boasted a modern and complicated system of fireproofing:

The skylight over the stage in the theater contains fused side doors which drop automatically when these fuses reach a certain degree of heat. At the same time the asbestos curtain drops automatically. The ventilation and air currents caused by the dropping of these skylight

36 Gettysburg Times, July 15, 1925, and Elise Scharf Fox, Hotel Gettysburg, 64.

37 Architect's specifications for the theater, July 17, 1925, Hotel Gettysburg Correspondences-1925, ACHS.

38 Gettysburg Times, August 18, 1925.

doors and the lowering of the asbestos curtain—both automatic—causes any fire on the stage to be drawn out through the skylight.³⁹

Yet another firm involved in the theater's construction, James H. Channon Mfg. Co. provided the asbestos curtains for the fireproofing.⁴⁰ In case a calamity did strike the theater, or the annex as a whole, the hotel management had invested in insurance from various companies, such as Laura B. Fissel and William E. Olinger, both of Gettysburg., the Gettysburg Insurance Company, Theater Inter-Insurance Exchange of Philadelphia, and Fidelity-Phoenix Fire Insurance Company of New York.⁴¹ The Gettysburg Hotel's attention to excellence in the Majestic Theater's construction was matched by its dedication to fire safety and insurance.

As construction of the theater drew to a close in mid-October, loose ends were tied up for the grand opening scheduled for mid-November. Scharf gave praise to the respected Austin Company on October 3 proclaiming, "Congratulations are due you for the wonderful construction record made by reason of your skillful direction of the forces under you. It is to be noted that quality of work was not at any time sacrificed for the speed that was necessary."⁴² The Austin Company fulfilled its duties as contractors with efficiency and outstanding quality. In the beginning of November, Henry Scharf and the Hotel Gettysburg made final preparations for the long-anticipated opening. Scharf telegraphed to Lewis M. Swaab & Sons, the installers of the motion picture screen, on November 6, "[We will] open immediately after you finish."⁴³ The movie screen would be essential for opening night, as Cecil B. De Mille's 10-reel motion picture *The Road to Yesterday* was scheduled as the main event of the evening.⁴⁴

The opening gala at the Majestic Theater on November 14, 1925 evoked the excitement and pride of the community. P.H. Fuhrmann, Fred E. Voges and the Larsons of the Austin company, along with the architect W.H. Lee all attended. The Gettysburg Times printed a lengthy description of the ornate theater two days later:

The pipe organ chambers and side walls are paneled with additional medallions and stencil work. The chairs were upholstered and comfortable and the lights consisting of big ceiling fixtures, a pyramid fixture at each organ chamber, and softly shaded wall brackets aided considerably in producing the delightful tone of the environment. In the balcony all the aisles with small fixtures attached to the seats were lighted during

39 Gettysburg Times, August 22, 1925.

40 Letter to Austin Co. from Channon Mfg. Co., July 21, 1925.

41 Advertisements in the Gettysburg Times, July 15, 1925; Letter to Theater Inter-Insurance Exchange from Henry Scharf, November 3, 1925; Letter to Philip R. Bickle of Gettysburg Insurance Co. from the Division Engineer of Fidelity-Phoenix Fire Insurance Co., May 28, 1925, all in Hotel Gettysburg Correspondences-1925, ACHS.

42 Letter from Henry Scharf to the Austin Co., October 3, 1925, Hotel Gettysburg Correspondences-1925, ACHS.

43 Telegraph to Lewis Swaab from Henry Scharf, November 6, 1925, Hotel Gettysburg Correspondences-1925, ACHS.

44 Elise K. Scharf, Reflections on the Hotel Gettysburg, presented at ACHS September 4, 1984, p. 13. Scharf Family Collection, ACHS.

the performance. The lighting in the lobby, as in the theatre, carried out brilliant warmth by the use of canary gold lamps. Entering into the lobby one sunk deeply in the heavy carpet which continues from the lobby into the foyer and aisles of the theatre auditorium. In the rear a beautifully lighted drinking fountain was observed, while to the right of this was an attractively decorated and furnished ladies parlor.⁴⁵

The Higgins Amusement Company became the lessees and operators of the theater, with W.E. Woodward as manager. Woodward stated in admiration, “[The Majestic] is one of the most beautiful houses I have seen anywhere in my twelve years’ experience in theatre management.”⁴⁶ The citizens of Gettysburg, fully impressed with the splendidly decorated and equipped theater, were also deeply grateful to the Hotel Gettysburg for creating such a modern and beautiful facility.

The hotel company set out with very clear objectives. One of the primary objectives of the Hotel Gettysburg Company in building the annex with its theater and combination gymnasium-ballroom was to take advantage of the off-season market offered by the presence of over one thousand students from Gettysburg College and other nearby schools. But another important objective was to equip the hotel for the growing and extremely lucrative convention trade.⁴⁷ Based on the community’s response and especially individual comments made, they achieved their objectives well.

Many prominent people in the community praised the hotel. For example, Elise Singmaster, a prominent author said, “One of the chief benefits the town will derive from the annex to the hotel Gettysburg will come from the large and spacious auditorium, much needed for conventions meeting here and for local gatherings.” Even competitors spoke favorably of the annex. For instance, George Lynch, who was the proprietor of the Eagle Hotel, said, “My compliments to the management of the Gettysburg Hotel for their enterprise in adding the annex which, with its basketball court and auditorium, fills a long-felt want in Gettysburg.” These remarks were typical of the warm response the new annex received.⁴⁸

The theaters in this era, specifically the Majestic, played an integral role in their local communities. As the Times praised, “The thousands of guests entertained there during the space of a years time will convey their impression of Gettysburg as a live, modern, up-to-date town, by their appreciation of the modern conveniences.”⁴⁹ The theater became the centerpiece of entertainment in the town, both for locals and travelers. In

45 Gettysburg Times, November 16, 1925.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Gettysburg Times, July, 15, 1925.

49 Ibid.

the case of the Majestic, the addition of the theater and the gymnasium launched the hotel to a status of national fame. The building became an instant magnet for all, both within and outside the town. The hotel even gained enough prominence to attract Presidents Calvin Coolidge and Dwight Eisenhower. The theater within the Hotel Gettysburg, a social hub of extravagance and popularity, achieved the high standards set by its name: a majestic pride of Gettysburg.



Years after its completion the theatre continued to draw many famous people, including President Eisenhower, who became good friends with the proprietor of the theatre, Mr. Henry Scharf.

ABIGAIL AND MERCY

AMBER MOULTON

The study of history, by its nature, is constantly evolving, as contemporary society reestablishes values and examines history under a new scope of social priorities. During this process of historical evolution, it is not events alone that take on new importance, but also the portrayal of historical figures themselves, personalities and influences changing from biography to biography over the years. Such has been the case with the historical Abigail Adams, best known for her well-preserved and archived correspondence with her husband, the Revolutionary Founding Father John Adams, among many other acquaintances. Abigail Adams has been portrayed in a number of lights over the years, from that of ideal New England matron, to republican mother to wife, and flirtatious, insidious manipulator. Each portrayal was motivated by the historian's personal agenda, social background, or contemporary context. The true Abigail can hardly be described in a single cliché.

One of Adams's primary correspondents was her dear friend Mercy Otis Warren. Warren was a mother of five sons, wife of politician, pamphleteer, poet, and author James Warren. In short, she was a successful wife and mother, while also taking on responsibilities which were not traditionally practiced by women. Some historians consider her a politician, though more realistically she was a historian and a moral philosopher. While Abigail's thoughts and actions are known because of her letter writing, Mercy Warren's prolific correspondence is not as well preserved. The character of the former has been quite complete and attainable through the reading of her letters, and thus Abigail has become somewhat of a mythical heroine of American history. Warren, on the other hand, regardless of her many accomplishments, has been forgotten by popular history.

One way to measure the radicalness of these historical women is to study their actions and thoughts in the context of the contemporary paradigm of ideal womanhood. The purpose of this paper is to explore the lives of Mercy Otis Warren and Abigail Adams with regard to their work within and without their gender sphere. Was either woman particularly revolutionary for her time? These women are clearly not simple, uneducated farm wives or toiling servants, but why have they, especially Abigail, been remembered as outstanding women? What sets them apart from the other women of their era?

The most reasonable interpretations of Abigail's character and her influence slate her as being a very intelligent, well-read woman who illustrated a loving relationship with her husband through their letters, and who appeared to be interested in, if not politics per se, at least the realm of current events outside of the female domestic sphere. Her letters indicate that her family and home were of primary importance to her, over the

founding of a nation and details of a war fought to maintain it. She corresponded with John during their twenty-seven year sporadic separation, as well as with other men who knew him, and whom she hoped might give her some word regarding his well being when his writing was lax.¹ Mercy Warren was the only woman, save her daughter, with whom Abigail maintained frequent correspondence. In their letters, the women wrote regarding all aspects of their lives, from feelings for their spouses to child rearing, to politics and philosophy.

In addition, during her life, Warren wrote periodicals for the Revolution, illustrated a pointed political interest in writing satire, and wrote a history of the American Revolution. It is also rumored that she held significant sway over her husband, persuading him to remain at home with her rather than fill political appointments abroad.² Abigail, on the other hand, performed the role of republican wife and supported her husband stoically, if not enthusiastically, in his founding of the new nation. Abigail had an open correspondence with John, and theirs is often interpreted as an equal relationship. Upon closer study, it is clear that their relationship was not equal, but that Abigail viewed herself as a traditional mother and wife, and took on those duties with great energy. Though the Adamses loved each other, and though Abigail had a well-developed mind, John remained the patriarch of the family, and as much as it might aggravate feminist historians, she appears to have truly wished for the constant help, guidance, and instruction of her husband.

Abigail Adams was a very intelligent and high-minded individual, but she was not actively stretching the boundaries of gender. Adams was the ideal republican wife and mother. She did not personally seek out profundity or greatness for herself, or for the greater good of her sex, but rather for her family. Of these two great founding women, Mercy Otis Warren is the figure who truly went above and beyond the expectations of womanhood, to twist and break her gender sphere. The field of history owes it as a service to her, to reintroduce Mercy Otis Warren to popular history as the most active American proponent of equal gender rights in the new era, and as proof of its legitimacy.

Abigail Adams was born Abigail Smith in 1744, in Weymouth, Massachusetts. Her father was the local pastor of the North Parish Congregational Church, and though neither Abigail nor her sister Mary went to formal school, they received a well-rounded education from their parents and grandparents. As was normal throughout New England, Abigail was instructed in housekeeping and decorative female activities like piano playing, singing, and speaking French. Her family was well-off financially, but the girls were raised to take after their father, who reputedly put his own hands into the work of the farm and

1 Edith B. Gelles, *Portia: The World of Abigail Adams* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 116.

2 Edith B. Gelles, *First Thoughts: Life and Letters of Abigail Adams* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998), 34.

the sheep flock which he owned.³ They were not above gardening or cooking, regardless of their social status, and they gained their domestic knowledge and identity as women from their mother, Elizabeth. She was a stern woman, the stereotypical pastor's wife, who served her community with tender piety, and lived her life with great religiosity and obedience to the expectations of her station. Biographer Charles Akers claims that she gave her daughters a "patient submission to their duty in whatever life brought them."⁴ The girls grew up to be essentially Puritans like their parents, unlike their brother who ultimately turned his back on religion and shamed the family, and Abigail became a full member of her church just before her fifteenth birthday. Abigail concurrently broadened her literary knowledge by reading the books in her father's library, supplemented during her teens (perhaps as early as age eleven) by the friendly instruction of Richard Cranch, later to be her sister Mary's husband, in British poetry and literature.⁵

Abigail probably met John Adams when she was a young teenager, as he was brought into repeated contact with the Smiths through mutual friends such as Cranch and Cotton Tufts, and by way of the Massachusetts political scene. The two began courting in 1761, and the relationship immediately held a unique note of mutuality, love, and passion. In one of the first letters to Abigail, John wrote:

Miss Adorable, By the same Token that the Bearer hereof sat up with you last night I hereby order you to give him, as many Kisses, and as many Hours of your Company after 9 O'Clock as he shall please to Demand . . . I presume I have good Right to draw upon you for the Kisses as I have given two or three Millions at least, when one has been received, and of Consequence the Account between us is immensely in favour of yours, John Adams.⁶

They were wed in 1764, and moved to the house in Braintree, Massachusetts, which John had inherited from his father. Immediately after their marriage, Abigail became pregnant and bore her first and only living daughter, Abigail Junior, in July of the following year. John Quincy was born two years following that, succeeded by Charles and Thomas in the 1770s. This six-person family unit was the center of Abigail's concerns throughout the rest of her life. When her husband was called off to facilitate the birth of the new nation beginning in 1774, Abigail's life and her love were transformed and thenceforth were expressed primarily through letters to first her husband, then friends, and finally children far from home. The Adams letters illustrate a relationship based on love and mutual interests, as well as fidelity and devotion over the miles and through

3 Charles Akers, *Abigail Adams: An American Woman* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980), 6.

4 Akers, *Abigail Adams*, 5.

5 *Ibid.*, 9.

6 L. H. Butterfield, *Adams Family Correspondence* vol. 1 (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1963), 2.

the years.

What must not be overlooked is that John Adams was the patriarch of this revolutionary relationship. Though he was quite liberal in his allowance of Abigail's speaking her own mind and expressing her thoughts to him, John was always the decision maker, wise giver of advice, and emotional support. Their correspondence, especially through their first years of separation, show that Abigail nearly buckled under the strain of running their farm (albeit with the help of farm hands), their family, and their finances. During one of John's absences, Abigail had difficulty coercing a farm hand to do his work around the property. She wrote to John for advice, and he promptly urged her to remind the man that she was the mistress of the house in his absence, apparently to no avail. Abigail eventually had to pay the man to leave his lodgings on the grounds. She was very flustered by this confrontation, and commented on it repeatedly during the belligerent man's stay, wishing that John could return to settle the issue.⁷

Though later in her life, when John was abroad in Europe, Abigail was able to take some initiative with the family economy, selling gifts that John sent her to tinkers, to supplement the irregular pay which John received, Abigail did not enjoy financial and administrative responsibilities. No matter the training in self-sufficiency she had obtained from her father, Abigail fully intended to be an aid, not a substitute, for her husband. In late August of 1775, Abigail wrote not to John, but to Mercy Otis Warren about her fear and sadness at having to part with John again. "I find I am obliged to summons all my patriotism to feel willing to part with him again. You will readily believe me when I say that I make no small sacrifice to the publick."⁸ The ideal, courageous, and yet tried and burdened republican wife wrote to her female friend, not her husband, about her grief at his leaving. She sacrificed her energy and emotion for the patriots' cause.

At certain points in their correspondence, John took on a tone of chastisement, when Abigail overstepped her bounds as his wife, in making major decisions for the family, or raising undesirable issues. After a number of years, when Abigail had taken up trading gifts from Europe to add to her domestic economy, she had a real estate venture, and decided to buy a plot of land in the empty recesses of Vermont. She did not wait for John's approval to purchase this land, and after having signed his name to the deed, she wrote to him of her action, explaining her hope that after his retirement they might move north to settle in the New England wilderness. John's response was a mixture of humor and chastisement when he wrote, "dont meddle any more with Vermont." Though Abigail had written first of her dream of the wilderness refuge, John had not responded in either support or denial.⁹ Though Abigail took the initiative, it came to naught in the

7 Gelles, Portia, 78.

8 Butterfield, AFC, 276.

9 Butterfield, *The Book of Abigail and John: Selected Letters of the Adams Family, 1762-1784* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 331.

end, with a taciturn refusal from her husband.

The most well known and perhaps the least understood of all of the Adams' letters is the letter which Abigail wrote to John to "remember the ladies" while writing the new code of laws in the spring of 1776. Her letter is often read as one of the first feminist, equal rights movement actions. Abigail was not, though, attempting to gain gender equality through her letter, or even through legislation created because of it. She asked that they "put it out of the power of the vicious and the Lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity with impunity. . . . Regard us then as Beings placed by providence under your protection and in imitation of the Supreme Being make use of that power only for our happiness." In essence, Abigail was asking for reasonable treatment of women, and the acknowledgement of women as human beings. Abigail wrote the first letter of that exchange; John responded by calling his wife "saucy" and her letter laughable. Abigail reminded him once more about the tyrannical nature of men, and then a number of weeks later, she wrote to Mercy Otis Warren about their exchange saying that she might ask Mercy to join her in petitioning Congress for redress of the grievances of women against men, as detailed in her letter to John.¹⁰ Interestingly, there is no record of Mercy Otis Warren's ever having responded to that letter or the request for a petitioning aid. Whether the letter was simply lost, Mercy thought Abigail's request unnecessary, or whether the older and sometimes aloof Warren thought Abigail's letter insignificant or humorous, cannot be determined.

Throughout their thirty-year correspondence, Mercy Warren's attitude toward her younger friend ran the gauntlet from amicable, to maternal, to scrutinizing, to condescending. At the start of their friendship, Abigail set herself up as a pupil, willing to learn from the older and wiser Warren. Edith B. Gelles argues that this was a ploy by which to attract Warren's attention, and that it worked.¹¹ Regardless, though, of whether it was a trick or a sincere wish for a mentor in Warren, Abigail did not seek at first an equal friendship, but one based upon respect for age. Warren's attitude was often pedagogical while writing to Abigail. Given the former's public interests and persona, it is no wonder that she appears to have more admiration and respect for John Adams, and valued his correspondence more highly than she did his wife's. He was, after all, already working successfully within the political arena which Mercy Otis Warren frequented through her authorship.

Warren was born to the merchant Otis family of Barnstable, Massachusetts, and was fortunate enough to be tutored along with her two brothers as they prepared for collegiate life at Harvard. While the extent of Abigail's formal training had been in literature

¹⁰ The correspondence of Abigail and John is found in Butterfield, *Book of Abigail and John*, 121-124. The citation of the letter to Mercy Otis Warren can be found in Butterfield, *AFC*, 397.

¹¹ Gelles, *First Thoughts*, 38.

and poetry, Warren's was in history and philosophy. Mercy Otis married James Warren and they had five sons in the course of ten years. During her sons' youths, Warren took up the pen and began to write poetry about her surroundings.¹² The genre interested her, and from that point in the early 1760s, through her life, she considered herself an author.

Warren's first publication was a play called *The Adulateur*, followed by others, most famous of which were *The Defeat* and *The Group* in the middle 1770s. The topics of these works were responses to the Governor Thomas Hutchinson administration in the Massachusetts Bay Colony at that time. In 1790 she published *Poems: Dramatic and Miscellaneous*, carrying over the genre of her first writing later, when she had already gained acclaim and had an audience of readers. Her career was brought to a dramatic finale, though, by her publication of a three volume history of the American Revolution entitled *The History of the American Revolution: Interspersed with Biographical, Philosophical, and Moral Observations*.¹³ This was more than a military history text; it contained interspersed observations and judgments based on Mercy's strict religiosity and staunch republicanism.

Mercy Otis Warren's first introduction to the Adamses was to John in 1772, when James Warren, John, and Sam Adams met at the Warren home to discuss plans for the committees of correspondence.¹⁴ It is of dire importance to remember that Mercy Warren's original intent was to begin corresponding with the politician and fire-brand John Adams, not his wife. Her children were all self-sufficient, she had been writing her first play, and Warren sought a political-minded pen pal. Warren was able to look up to John and to seek out advice from him, while Abigail did not pose such an asset, but was rather just a friend and a confidant. Ironically, the pinnacle of her career, her *History*, caused a rift between herself and her mentor, John. Among other things, she insinuated that he had despotic tendencies, a charge which did not work to charm a staunch revolutionary and American federalist. Adams wrote a series of eight scathing letters defending himself against Warren's attacks, and then discontinued their correspondence. Abigail, too, did not write to Mercy for some time, though she was eventually the reconciler of differences between the two parties.¹⁵

The conflict stemmed from the Warrens' political agenda. They were some of the stalwart anti-federalists in Massachusetts and fell out of favor with the majority of their friends and acquaintances with whom they had previously worked so arduously for liberty from the tyranny of the crown.¹⁶ She and her husband were true republicans and believed that the country had fought to be independent with the goal being a confederation of states into a republic. Any centralized government for the North American

12 Carla Mulford, *American Women Prose Writers to 1820* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1999), 386.

13 Theresa Boos Dykeman, *American Women Philosophers, 1650-1930* (Lewiston: the Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), 69.

14 Lester H. Cohen, "Explaining the Revolution: Ideology and Ethics in Mercy Otis Warren's *Historical Theory*," *William and Mary Quarterly* 37 (April 1980): 210.

15 Butterfield, *AFC* vols. 5-6.

16 Mulford, *American Women Writers*, 393.

continental republic was contrary to the Enlightenment principles for which the patriots fought. A strong executive and a strong central government, they believed, swung too close to monarchy or oligarchy by placing responsibility and power in the hands of the few rather than the many loyal Americans who shed their blood for that liberty. Mercy Otis Warren's History sketches were admittedly moral examinations. Thus, the attack on John Adams appeared to be a direct insult rather than simply a misrepresentation of his attitude. He was characterized as a fallen patriot: the unfortunate whose lack of moral rectitude caused his fall. If John Adams could fall from the lofty Enlightenment principles which the Founding Fathers used, Warren argued, any citizen could do the same.¹⁷ The friend who had urged Warren to write the history, and to continue writing it over the years, she had slandered for her own political gain. The bond that the two had was irretrievably torn asunder.

The two women eventually fell back into good stead with one another, and continued writing less intensely until Warren's death. Their writing is filled with gems of personal, political, religious, and philosophical advice, in the context of a friendship based on respect and admiration on the part of Abigail, and an interest to have an informal pupil and a pen-pal with a concordant education and ability to grasp her cultivated cultural literacy, on the part of Warren. The elder woman's sensing her superior stance in the relationship caused the aloof attitude eluded to earlier to be a central theme in many of the letters from Warren to Adams. There was a perpetual catty battle over whom last wrote, which woman owed a letter, and whom cared more about the feelings of the other, running through a great deal of the letters. During April 1776, the women were discussing, amid the political reality of war and their husbands' absence, the issue of a worthy letter. After a handful of attempts to describe such a letter, Mercy Otis Warren wrote to Abigail:

If my dear friend Required only a very Long Letter to make it agreeable I could Easily Gratify her but I know There must be many more Requisites to make it pleasing to her taste. . . . But as Curiosity seems to be awake with Regard to the Company I keep and the Manner of spending of my time I will Endeavour to Gratify you.¹⁸

She then continued to write a two or three page letter about her daily tasks. This was not intended to be an instructional letter, but rather one half of a pointless letter-writing argument.

Mercy often wrote to Abigail inquiring as to a letter she had sent to John, or a response she might have been awaiting. Historian Charles Akers and Edith B. Gelles argue

¹⁷ Gelles, *First Thoughts*, 60.

¹⁸ Butterfield, *AFC* vol. 1, 385.

in their respective works, that Mercy Otis Warren undoubtedly valued John's epistolary friendship more than she did Abigail's.¹⁹ Though this might be an overstatement of Warren's view, as she wrote innumerable letters to Abigail and indicated a real affection for the younger woman, she did make it a point to write to John when she was in need of advice. For Abigail, her Dear John and Mercy Warren were her sources of strength and advice. Warren chose John Adams to fill that role for her. Though Warren, herself, was a woman interested in politics, current events, and the traditional male sphere of interest, she did not view her close lady friend as a similarly inclined woman. When doing as the men did, Warren thought it advisable to seek guidance from one who knew through experience.

What, then, was the extent of Mercy Otis Warren's transcendence of her domestic sphere? She was in a field of almost exclusively men, but she certainly did not consider herself to be a man. In fact, she did not even view her success and her public works as sojourns into the realm of men. She wrote of her attitude in the introduction to her *History*, "stimulated to observation a mind that had not yielded to the assertion, that all political attentions lay out of the road of female life."²⁰ She considered her work as simply new steps taken within the woman's sphere.

There were aspects of Mercy Otis Warren's *History* which were uncharacteristic of works done by men in the same genre. The most prominent of these is her moral foundation. Warren did not by any means write social history, but rather military history. She wrote dutifully of the battles and great influential people of the Revolution, showed no propensity to women's contributions, and generally followed the standard for historical writing at the time. However, she approached the same events and biographies from a different angle. She wrote a disclaimer in her book, apologizing for the observations of personal character in her book. She argued that her digressions on "the moral conduct of man, on religious opinion or persecutions, and the motives by which mankind are actuated in their various pursuits . . . are more congenial to the taste, inclination, and sex of the writer, than a detail of the rough and terrific scenes of war."²¹ Warren would argue that she was taking a female perspective on the war. She did not wish to place herself outside of her gender sphere, and so molded her interests and works around activities which did, and thus, if nothing else, stretched the domestic sphere of the time to allow for political aims.

All of these endeavors, it must be remembered, were personally thought through and executed by Mercy Otis Warren, for Mercy Otis Warren. She did not see herself as a beacon of female political activity and indeed did not even invite Abigail, one of the most intellectual and worldly women of the early republic, to join her in politics. Warren

19 Gelles, *Portia*, 166 (mentions Akers' claim).

20 Nina Baym, "Between Enlightenment and Victorian: toward a narrative of American women writers writing history," *Critical Inquiry* 18 (Autumn 1991): 32.

21 Baym, "Between Enlightenment and Victorian," 33.

was well aware that Abigail wrote often to her husband about the affairs of the day, as well as to other politicians, most notably Thomas Jefferson, with a remarkably amiability considering the traditional style of writing between a woman and a prominent male figure. Abigail maintained a composed, well-organized, and proprietous letter writing friendship with Jefferson, even after the years of his and John Adams' falling out over federalism and presidential administration.²² Aside from commenting on the affairs at hand, which she did with a great deal of detail and interest, the only truly political letter which Abigail ever wrote to a man was the "remember the ladies" letter to her husband, most likely half in jest, but with the safety of knowing that the letter was not to be taken before Congress, but simply read and responded to in private.

Mercy Otis Warren realized that she was stepping beyond a woman's traditional role as wife and mother, and she realized that in order to be successful in that endeavor, she would have to correspond with men, ask the advice of men, and learn to do as the men did in their public realm. Warren was a strong and intelligent enough individual to alter the genre to fit her personal wishes, as she did with her *History* and its moral rather than physical basis. Because of their friendship, though, Mercy Otis Warren certainly expressed many of her thoughts and theories to Abigail. She valued the feelings and suggestions of her friend, in as much as they were not professional, and posterity has subsequently been blessed with a detailed correspondence of the two women, in which the ideals and goals of each are expressed. Their letters allow us a window into the minds of both Mercy and Abigail, their views of gender, and their placement within those gendered realms, with which we can construct a fuller picture of their attitudes, revolutionary bents, and radicalisms.

In one instance in 1775, Mercy Warren wrote to Abigail about the woman's traditional domestic sphere.

However I may fall short of Mrs. Adams in many female accomplishments, I believe we are on an Equal footing with Regard to the one quality which the other sex . . . Consigns over to us. . . . We have one advantage peculiar to ourselves. If the Mental Faculties of the Female are not improved it may be Concealed in the Obscure Retreats of the Bed Chamber or the kitchen which she is not often necessitated to leave.²³

While she makes offhanded comments and jokes about a woman's role, while she is in a way complimenting, in a way condescending to her friend, the realities of Warren's accomplishments must have been on the minds of both the writer and the reader of the

²² Frank Shuffelton, "In Different Voices: Gender in the American Republic of Letters," *Early American Literature* 25 (1990): 297.
²³ Butterfield, *AFC* vol. 1, 182.

letter. Abigail would have been well aware of the fact that though Mercy praised her for her “female accomplishments,” she had also disregarded such female roles as unimportant, and had taken up the pen to write her way into the world of men’s accomplishments.

Mercy Otis Warren often referred to republican virtues and republican womanhood, though in some instances she played down the affects of sacrifice for the cause, and raises herself to a tier above common women. In a letter of 11 December 1775, Warren wrote to Abigail that “it is Less painful to me to be Alone than to many others of my sex Though at the same time none takes Greater pleasure in the Entertainment and Converse of Real Friends.”²⁴ She claims her stoicism above other women and certainly does not include Abigail among her ranks. This is understandable in that the previous year and a half of Abigail’s letters to Mercy were filled with lamentations on the absence of her Dearest Friend. “How hard it is,” she wrote in July of 1775, “to devest the Humane mind of all private ambition, and to sacrifice ourselves and all we possess to the publick Emolement.” Though Mercy, too, felt the absence of her husband, it did not throw her life into complete tumult as it did for Abigail. “I find myself dear Marcia,” Abigail wrote in April of 1776, “multiplied in cares to which I know myself uneaquel, in the education of my little flock I stand in need of the constant assistance of my Better half.”²⁵

The Adamses were very much in love, and thus any absence for them might be that much more trying than for a couple brought together for less romantic reasons. Regardless, the above passage illustrates the differences between Adams and Warren. Mercy Otis Warren was writing poetry while her children grew up. She abdicated some responsibility for her children’s upbringing to seek out her own interests and fulfillment. Though during the war the Adamses never had the money for, for instance, skilled tutors for their young children (though they did go away for formal schooling),²⁶ Abigail did not even voice a wish for such aid. Her life was the republican upbringing of her children to be good citizens, and the only help she sought was that of her husband. Abigail’s writings time and again showed devotion to her children, her husband, and the work which took up so much of his time and stole him away from her.

While Abigail Adams is completely deserving of her legacy as a great woman for her eloquence, grace, and perseverance, historians must not misconstrue republican womanhood with feminism. Abigail was the ultimate republican woman. She was intelligent, schooled in Enlightenment principles, supportive of her husband and knowledgeable about his work, devoted wholeheartedly to the raising of patriot children, and composed with the initiative to maintain and foster her wits through constant reading and correspondence with friends and acquaintances at home and abroad. She had compassion and zeal, and should reside in the minds of Americans as an individual who attempted to embody in all things the cause of American independence and its security.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 339.

²⁵ The two previous quotations are found in Butterfield, *AFC*, 255 and 377.

²⁶ Gelles, *Portia*, 46.

Mercy Otis Warren was a republican mother in her own right, but she was a thoroughly educated woman for whom the social realm held no insurmountable obstacles. Whether stretching the domestic sphere to fit her needs, or vaulting the wall to edge her way into a public sphere which was at the time reserved for males, but which she knew would not always, and should not always be so, Mercy Warren was ahead of her time. Temperamental and aloof, she does not offer posterity as admirable a character as Abigail Adams, and her relationship with James Warren offers nothing of the sentimental love affair that the Adams story does, but Mercy was an extraordinary woman during her lifetime. She used the resources and talents that she had to do things of which other women at that time did not even think to dream. While Abigail and John can become like friends to a reader of their letters, and thus understandably loved, Mercy Otis Warren must be given credit, for credit is due.

THE TAVERN IN COLONIAL AMERICA

STEVEN STRUZINSKI

The tavern in Colonial America, or the “ordinary” as it was referred to in Puritan Massachusetts, was a staple in the social, political, and travel lives of colonial citizens from very early in this country’s existence. Samuel Cole in Boston opened the first tavern on March 4, 1634.¹ It was not long before the demand and necessity for taverns in New England, and throughout the colonies, was overwhelming. In 1656 the General Court of Massachusetts held towns accountable with fines if they did not sustain an ordinary.²

The tavern served a multitude of purposes in colonial towns and countrysides. They were means of direction for travelers, as well as settings where they could eat, drink, be entertained, and spend the night. As historian Carl Bridenbaugh states, “The tavern was conceived as a public institution which should provide all needed services, and which should be carefully regulated by law to prevent all usual sorts of abuses.”³ Obviously the term “abuses” refers to the use of alcohol and the behaviors caused by its over-consumption. The tavern was the means by which the town assemblies controlled the distribution of alcohol. Along with alcoholic beverages, colonists could play games, enjoy entertainment, participate in discussion, and receive the latest news and debate of the time.

Along with being popular locations of social congress, taverns were significant for their function in town culture and society. Taverns were utilized as meeting places for assemblies and courts, destinations for refreshment and entertainment, and, most importantly, democratic venues of debate and discussion. The purpose of this investigation is to identify the democratic nature of tavern culture and the formation of differing opinions concerning the influence taverns had on political opposition and the general socialization of a colonial town.

A handful of historians have embraced the issue concerning the role of taverns in colonial society with varied success. Alice M. Earle views the tavern as a traditional institution “whose effect was to pull fledgling communities together.”⁴ While this is a relatively concise explanation of tavern importance, it does little to explain the influence of tavern culture in society. David W. Conroy presents a different argument suggesting that taverns “became a public stage upon which colonists resisted, initiated, and addressed changes

1 Alice M. Earle, *Stage Coach and Tavern Days* (New York: MacMillan, 1900), 180.

2 *Ibid.*, 2.

3 Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in the Wilderness: The First Century of Urban Life 1625-1742* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938) 114.

4 Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch Revolution: Taverngoing and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999) 11.

in their society . . . gradually redefin[ing] their relationships with figures of authority.”⁵ Because of a lack of evidence concerning the extent of tavern use, Conroy resorted to analyzing specific attempts made by ministers and legislators to regulate tavern culture. Although this is a clever scheme for gaining a perspective regarding the influence of tavern culture, it is a biased perspective originating exclusively from the social elite: the group who felt most threatened by taverns.

Through his contemporary use of methods surrounding the concepts of modern social history, Peter Thompson analyzes the influence of tavern culture in Eighteenth Century Philadelphia by considering the perspectives of tavern-goers through his use of tavern guest-books and personal histories. Thompson suggests that tavern-going was more of a popular activity through which a range of desires were expressed, rather than Conroy’s claim that tavern culture was essentially oppositional toward authoritative provincial leaders.⁶ Thompson is successful at attaining a view of tavern culture from the opposite perspective of the elitists, who felt most threatened by this popular culture.

Both of their claims represent two opposite views concerning the influence of tavern culture: one suggests oppositional intent, while the other advocates a melting pot of ideology and entertainment. Thompson’s analysis seems to contain more merit, however Conroy’s work certainly deserves consideration. In the following survey of the colonial tavern culture, in order to decipher its influence in society, I suggest that the concept of tavern going was political and oppositional to authority indirectly by ways of an un-influential minority, thus the primary influence of tavern culture remaining inherently social in nature. To accurately understand the influence of taverns, one must first realize the function of the tavern itself, followed by the significance of the most controversial activities of tavern culture, namely drinking, gambling, and entertainment.

THE COLONIAL TAVERN

The tavern itself was rather simply designed and coordinated. The earliest taverns were mostly independent structures, yet they could also be located within or attached to residential houses.⁷ The interiors of taverns were designed with different rooms, the largest room being the taproom with furnishings such as chairs, desks, the bar, and a fireplace. Certain upper-class taverns had parlors that were attached to the taproom. The taverns located in towns usually had special rooms designated for meetings of groups or, the more likely case, assemblies and court proceedings.⁸ No doubt partially caused by their frequent occupation of taverns, assemblies throughout the colonies assigned functions for taverns including required provisions of lodging, food, and drink. Often

5 David W. Conroy, *In Public Houses: Drink and the Revolution of Authority in Colonial Massachusetts* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995) 6-7.

6 Thompson, 12, 14.

7 Nancy L. Struna, *People of Prowess: Sport, Leisure and Labor in Early Anglo-America* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1996) 144.

8 Earle, 43, 44.

laws regulated the prices that a tavern keeper charged for these services.⁹

Virtually anyone in the colony could keep a tavern, however they were required to possess a license. Aside from the license, colonists were encouraged to keep a tavern for the benefit of the community. Inducements such as land grants, pastures for cattle, or exemption from school and church taxes were offered to citizens to keep a tavern.¹⁰ Many tavern keepers held other trades along with the tavern. It was not uncommon to see women tavern keepers, however they were usually widows or single women.¹¹

Taverns were establishments that fostered activity from morning until night. A typical day, for example, may have consisted of laborers, seamen and artisans gathering at a tavern in the morning to begin their day. Most taverns provided a formal breakfast at nine o'clock. After noon the first card or ninepins (a primitive form of bowling) games would begin, followed by a two o'clock "dinner" and drinks. Supper was usually served at seven o'clock followed by more drinks and a mixture of shooting contests, card play, a rendezvous in the backroom, a round of dancing, a fight between the inebriated, and possibly a political philosophical discussion.¹²

Taverns were establishments where many natural facets of daily life occurred. Merchants and mariners utilized the atmosphere of the tavern to bargain over cargoes. Churchgoers would warm themselves after two or three hours in an unheated meeting-house with a warm beverage or a meal.¹³ Taverns at this time were also fundamental venues in government operation. Tavern rooms would serve as meeting places for Superior and Lower court sessions, as well as public meetings.¹⁴ In addition the tavern was the place where business was conducted between farmers, artisans, and town merchants. They served as centers for people to receive their mail, catch up on news, and debate politics.¹⁵

This exchange of gossip and information also occurred in Philadelphia taverns, however, because of Benjamin Franklin, Philadelphia had competing weekly newspapers as well as an efficient postal service. Because of this residents and strangers did not have to rely as heavily on tavern-talk for news, yet such talk still fascinated them.¹⁶

Colonial taverns were one of the most important assets to a traveler. As Kym Rice describes, "A person did not have to be traveling a great distance to be in need of a tavern. A trip ten miles beyond Boston required spending the night."¹⁷ In New Am-

9 Struna, 145.

10 Earle, 2.

11 Struna, 146.

12 Ibid, 148.

13 Bridenbaugh, 107.

14 Susanna Barrows and Robin Room, eds., *Drinking: Behavior and Belief in Modern History* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991) 31.

15 Struna, 145.

16 Thompson, 2.

17 Kym Rice, "Early American Taverns for the Enlightenment of Friends and Strangers," *Early American Literature* 14 (1983): 46.

sterdam Director-General Kieft, in order to accommodate English visitors traveling from New England to Virginia from whom he suffered “great annoyances,” was forced to open a tavern of his own in 1642.¹⁸ Along with being establishments for travelers to acquire refreshment and housing for the night, taverns also served as landmarks to guide travelers on their journeys.

In Salem, Massachusetts tavern licenses were granted with the proviso that “there be sett up in some inoffensive sign obvious [means] for direction to strangers.”¹⁹ Aside from a tavern’s sign being easy for a foreign traveler to identify, the symbols and icons depicted on these signs were necessary because of a low literacy rate. As literacy grew in the colonies, signs became virtually obsolete, however many taverns elected to keep their sign for tradition, nostalgia, or humor.²⁰

Depicted on these signs, along with symbols, were often distinct tavern names of which the origins are rather intriguing. The varying, apparently meaningless names on tavern signs are actually modifications and alterations that transpired over time to familiar English sayings or concepts. For instance the tavern “The Bag o’ Nails” was originally “The Bacchanalians.” The familiar “Cat and Wheel” was the “Catherine Wheel,” and even earlier “St. Catherine’s Wheel,” an allusion to the saint and her martyrdom. The tavern “The Goat and Compass” stood for the motto “God encompasseth us.” Similarly “The Pig and Carrot” was the “Pique et Carreau” (the spade and diamond in playing cards). These quirky evolutions not only reflect the effects of the translation of dialects, but also the successive mistakes of ignorant sign painters.²¹

In relation to travel, taverns also served a significant role in colonial development. William Penn desired an efficient settlement of Philadelphia and believed a thriving seaport would provide this. He believed taverns would speed development by serving the needs of workmen and travelers and convincing settlers that Philadelphia was hospitable.²² Paralleling the development of towns, the rural expansion of farms led to an increase in the need for rural taverns. The increase of traffic and population in Philadelphia in the 18th Century called for an increase in taverns. By 1731 there were nearly 100 legal taverns in Philadelphia, and that total increased to 120 by 1750.²³ Taverns functioned in a somewhat different respect in the southern colonies. Since the population was more spread out, each plantation was, in effect, a separate tavern. It was only in larger southern

18 Bridenbaugh, 107.

19 Earle, 20.

20 Ibid, 138.

21 Ibid, 141.

22 Thompson, 9.

23 Struna, 145.

cities that taverns thrived in the way they did in the north.²⁴

ALCOHOL

In the 18th Century drinking was the most popular and controversial of all tavern recreations. One of the primary functions of taverns was to carry on English drinking culture in America. Because of the stricter religious limitations, specifically in New England, the practices of drinking, and to greater extent drunkenness, tended to be more restricted. However, seeking refreshment by way of alcoholic beverages remained as one of the primary desires of tavern-goers.

The types of drinks found in taverns varied anywhere from beers and ciders to wines and mixed concoctions. The most universal staple in all colonial taverns was rum. A liquor unique to the colonies, rum originated from the gypsy word “powerful,” and the effects of it concurred. Two of the most popular drinks in colonial taverns were flip and punch. Flip, a distinctly American beverage, was made in pitchers and consisted of two-thirds strong beer (sweetened with sugar, molasses, or dried pumpkin) and rum. Into this mixture was dropped a red-hot iron loggerhead that made it foam and gave the drink its unique burnt, bitter taste. Punch was another popular drink in Colonial America that had its origins in India. The basic recipe for the drink was the combination of tea, rum, arrack, sugar, lemons, and water in a large bowl. Taverns often had several of their own distinct versions of punch that were classified by various other fruit juices, liquors, and spices as well as the quantities of each used.²⁵

Many of the problems that arose in taverns concerning alcohol surrounded drunkenness, and in response to this, authorities implemented many restrictions. However, because inebriated patrons were a minority in the tavern-going population, these restrictions were rarely enforced. Another common problem that arose in taverns concerning alcohol was the illegal sale of tainted beer and liquor. Often tavern keepers would be caught selling beer that contained pollutants and sediments to make profits on otherwise useless beverages. Restrictions were placed on these actions, however, the question remains as to how serious of a crime tavern-goers actually perceived this to be. In Philadelphia in 1722 laws established heavy penalties for the sale of adulterated and polluted beer, yet they were never followed.²⁶

It is evident that the issues of drunkenness concerning alcohol were more of a problem in certain areas. In 1681 the General Court took direct control over licensing and reduced public houses in Boston from 45 to 24 in explicit response to alcohol problems. Despite these restrictions, there was an indispensable necessity for taverns in society to

²⁴ Earle, 32.

²⁵ Earle, 100-101, 108-109, 114.

²⁶ Bridenbaugh, 432.

accommodate gatherings, meetings, and to house travelers. As David Conroy admits, "Even the most rabid critics of intemperance admitted the necessity of public houses for the provision of alcohol so necessary for the conduct of social relations as well as the refreshment of travelers."²⁷

GAMES AND GAMBLING

Gaming in taverns was another exceedingly controversial issue associated with these establishments. Taverns were sites of all varieties of social contests in general whether it be sporting, dancing, social justice (the courts), or debates.²⁸ The problems, however, surfaced when gambling became associated with these activities. Thus, the restrictions that ensued concerning tavern games were not because of the games themselves, rather the gambling that surrounded them.

The types of games played at taverns were relatively similar regardless of location. Card playing was one of the most prominent tavern and domestic amusements. Patrons would participate in card games in tavern public rooms, during private gatherings, and during other events.²⁹ Other indoor games included dancing, fistfights, and shooting at random indoor targets. Taverns also usually had grounds outside where patrons would play cricket or quoits. Ninepins, an early form of bowling, was usually played in a side alley or lane. One of the most popular sporting events in colonial taverns with outdoor space was cockfighting. The origins of this peculiar phenomenon are unknown, however the sport spread throughout the colonies by the turn of the century. Despite the extensive gambling that was associated with the sport, it was never regulated.³⁰

The problems that formed with tavern sporting concerned mainly the element of risk. Because gambling in taverns was often illegal, those patrons were embracing a risk in participating. Issues regarding liquor, games, matches, and socializing were all popular forms of tavern entertainment that were a threat to the tavern keeper because of the possibility of fines or imprisonment.³¹ Interestingly problems surrounding tavern violence, as defined by today's standards, were relatively infrequent. Most "violent" acts were usually considered acts of strength, power, stamina, or speed.³² Despite the fact that these behaviors did occur, strangely they were never outlawed. For example in the December 19, 1749 edition of *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, an article reads:

Two seamen belonging to a brig . . . agreed to walk out, and take a trial

27 Conroy, 19.

28 Struna, 154.

29 Rice, 52, 54.

30 Struna, 148-150.

31 Struna, 148.

32 *Ibid*, 153.

of skill at boxing; which having exercised a while, they were parted, and came in and drank friends, where the person who boasted of his strength, died in a few minutes after.³³

Despite the violent nature of this encounter, the article does not suggest any forthcoming disciplinary action concerning the event.

The controversy surrounding taverns, more specifically the dispute concerning games and gambling, concentrates on the idea that taverns were places where ordinary people could participate in extraordinary activities.³⁴ This disturbed certain genteel members of the community because of the threat they believed this culture had on their status and style. More specifically the elite society considered gambling a wasteful economic activity that promoted the lackadaisical treatment of finances. While this may have been a legitimate concern at the time, it is another issue that seriously affected only a minority of the population who were heavy gamblers.

ENTERTAINMENT

While all of the activities embraced in tavern culture could be considered forms of entertainment, there were a select few that created conflict between the classes. Nonetheless, taverns became the most important venue in serving as homes for shows, exhibitions, and other forms of entertainment in town.³⁵

Dancing became a popular form of entertainment found in taverns. In 1631, however, laws were passed forbidding dancing in taverns as a consequence to some excessive wedding celebrations.³⁶ These limitations did not linger primarily because of the difficulty of enforcing such laws in an environment so ideal for this activity.³⁷ Courtship was another type of entertainment where the tavern had a function. As historian Bruce Daniels notes: "A tavern outside the city became known as a favorite place for courting sweethearts to go for dinner."³⁸ Authorities, however, closely monitored this activity. In the mid-1600's towns had night watches to find young men and women walking together after ten o'clock. The watchmen would question a suspect couple and would ensure that they both went their separate ways.³⁹ Formal activities were also held in taverns. The most upper class New York tavern, The Black Horse, was owned by Robert Todd and played host to concerts, dinners, receptions, and balls such as the one given in honor of the Prince of Wales' birthday on January 19, 1736.⁴⁰

33 "New York, December 4," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 19 December 1749.

34 Struna, 153.

35 Bridenbaugh, 426.

36 Earle, 5-6.

37 Bruce C. Daniels, *Puritans at Play: Leisure and Recreation in Colonial New England* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1995) 117.

38 Daniels, 134.

39 Earle, 6.

40 *Ibid*, 39.

Jokes were also commonplace in the colonial tavern. Often there was a specific person who was the butt of many practical jokes. In one old tavern located on the road between New Haven and Litchfield, a burly African American was the butt of all tavern jokes and was a great source of amusement to travelers and local patrons. By means of these pranks, which often culminated in a rough fight, it is understandable how the genteel members of the town could view this behavior as primitive and foolish.⁴¹ Other bizarre forms of tavern entertainment were traveling freak shows and exhibitions of the newest technological inventions. Shows of deformed beasts and people, mechanical devices, “electric machines” experimenting with the concept of electricity, plays, music, and lotteries all amused tavern folk while being stringently monitored by authorities. Lotteries and shows were regulated so money and political figures could not be exploited.⁴²

THE INFLUENCE OF TAVERN CULTURE

To acquire an accurate understanding of the distinct influence of taverns in society, a perception of the cultural composition of tavern-goers must first be established. Historian Carl Bridenbaugh suggests that the tavern was “the one agency that influenced the social and economic life of every class, enabling representatives from all walks of life to rub shoulders in a friendly and growingly democratic fashion.”⁴³ This notion can be attributed to the specific environmental characteristics of a tavern. In country taverns, for example, manners were rude and no exclusiveness was kept; everyone sat at the same table and many strangers shared beds.⁴⁴ In the earliest Philadelphia taverns, Peter Thompson notes, many rooms were cramped: “[In] a city with an ethnically and culturally diverse population and a relatively fluid social hierarchy, taverns drew together customers from a wide variety of backgrounds in conditions of enforced intimacy.”⁴⁵ This culturally diverse makeup is illustrated in the conflicts that occasionally erupted. For instance this incident was noted in the April 10, 1740 issue of *The Pennsylvania Gazette*:

Nicholas Hantwerk, a Palatine, and Patrick McQuire an Irishman, being at a tavern and drinking freely, a Difference arose between them, and they had a small scuffle . . . but the Dutchman proving too hard for the other beat him cruelly about the Head and disabled him.⁴⁶

The opinion that taverns were culturally diverse does have its opposition. Nancy

41 Earle, 92.

42 Ibid, 198-203.

43 Bridenbaugh, 434.

44 Earle, 79.

45 Thompson, 3.

46 “Philadelphia,” *The Pennsylvania Gazette* 10 April 1740.

L. Struna argues that taverns were not social melting pots as traditionally believed. The fact that during sporting matches people would join together in the atmosphere, she argues, were equalities that were short lived. In the endnotes of Struna's book, *People of Prowess: Sport, Leisure and Labor in Early Anglo-America*, she mentions Conroy's claim and suggests that the seclusion of the elite and those who challenged authority "seems to be more reasonable."⁴⁷ Considering Thompson's research of the common patron's perspective and his discovery of the extent of cultural diversity in Philadelphia taverns, it becomes more difficult to make such an audacious generalization. It must be noted, however, that Philadelphia was noted as being a culturally diverse city, which may have differed from a more socially segregated New England.

Considering the background and composition of colonial taverns, the actual political influence versus the supposed influence can be deciphered. For this argument, actual political influence will be defined as any influence taverns had on society as a whole, while supposed influence will refer to the effects of a popular minority.

It would be unreasonable to suggest that taverns had no actual political influence in colonial society. There are instances when taverns had a significant role in affecting the authoritative figures in the community. For instance tavern patronage had importance concerning ministers. Conversation in taverns concerning a minister's style and content in his preaching could have consequences for his community position. In this way tavern-goers could, in effect, oppose the minister in a given town.⁴⁸ The argument could be made that tavern culture was contrary to the ideology of the church. Conversely, tavern function actually paralleled with church function. Licenses were often granted to tavern keepers provided the tavern was located near a church. The General Court of Massachusetts required all keepers within a mile of a church to clear their taverns during church hours, thus forcing people to attend church.⁴⁹

With the lack of political opposition to authority present in tavern culture, Conroy's argument must be questioned. It also must be reiterated that Conroy's claim that taverns represented oppositional forces in society rests on the views and legislation of the genteel. The reactions of people with this status were actually reactions to concentrated problems within tavern culture that had no significant political influence, such as extreme drunkenness. Conroy's argument has relevance concerning the lack of purpose and uneconomical themes the genteel believed taverns represented, however, this was only associated with a minority of drunkards and those customers who exploited taverns.

Conroy suggests that in the 1720s, "As conflict between the elected assembly

47 Struna, 152, 245.

48 Bridenbaugh, 38-39.

49 Earle, 13,15.

and the newly established royal government intensified, taverns became important instruments in the organization of popular antipathy to royal authority.⁵⁰ While this argument may have been applicable in a few select taverns, it is unreasonable to suggest that tavern culture in general was opposed to government. Likewise, rather than their concern being imbedded in fears of political upheaval, genteel critics were more apprehensive of tavern-goers because of the “rampant gambling, heavy drinking, and other ‘evil’ associated” with taverns. “They saw it as a threat to the style they had cultivated” because it “countered gentility and refinement.”⁵¹ In actuality these critics feared societal modification, not political anarchy.

Issues associated with drinking have also been correlated to the oppositional political influence of taverns. In the January 11, 1739 edition of *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, an Act of Assembly was described, “As a Means for the suppressing that irreligious Practice of frequenting Ale-House, taverns, and other public Places, and drinking and tipping there, as the first Day of the Week, commonly called Sunday.”⁵² While there is no doubt that this was most likely a legitimate concern, it is difficult to believe that, in a society so highly influenced by religion, the population for whom this act was implemented to regulate could have been anything other than a minority.

Another issue that was present in colonial society that raises inquiry into the actual oppositional influence of taverns is the enforcement of legislation. Retaliatory laws and acts of assemblies addressed many “illegalities” of tavern culture, yet the neglecting of the strict enforcement of these laws suggests a smaller actual political influence. If society, as a whole, were so concerned with the oppositional power of tavern culture, they would have put forth more effort in enforcing regulation.

Taverns in Colonial America were undoubtedly a major force in societal culture. The roles they fulfilled as places of refreshment, hostels for travelers, means of direction, places of entertainment, and meeting places for the most influential people in a town were necessary for the well being of a community. The tavern’s role in society was influential and, at times, deviant. However, rarely was it oppositional to authority.

Tavern culture and its influence on society cannot be isolated by one diagnosis. Each tavern varied, as did the citizens who frequented them. While there were people who chose the extreme alternatives of excessive drinking, gambling, and protest, they were a minority. It is important to recognize the minority for their worth and the influences they maintained. However, in attempting to illustrate the influence of the colonial tavern on society, the most accurate classification would have to be a place of refreshment and entertainment for townspeople and travelers where ideas were discussed and news shared. Simply, it was an establishment for ordinary people.

50 Barrows, 31.

51 Struna, 161.

52 “Philadelphia,” *The Pennsylvania Gazette* 11 January 1739.

"GOD MOVES IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY":
PUBLIC DISCOURSE ON PROVIDENCE
AND THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

SARAH MARIE ANDREWS

PREFACE

This study of public reaction to the Battle of Gettysburg in the context of the wider experience of the American Civil War focuses on the view of Providence in history and war. To that end, this study primarily utilizes documents which were part of the public discourse during the war. This includes two major groups of writings: newspaper editorials and articles and published sermons. This allows a view of the intersecting of religion with the secular world as well as patriotism within in the religious community. Collections from both the Union and the Confederacy have been accessed in an attempt to provide a balanced picture of the wartime public religious discourse. Published sermons have been selected for two reasons. First, they make up the vast majority of the historical record which we have today. Second, published sermons had the ability to reach a wider audience than one congregation on one specific Sunday morning. It is important to note that published sermons generally reflect a specific socio-economic and political group. Only pastors who had access to a publishing house, or who had members with such connections, would have been able to publish their sermons to would have been asked to publish their sermons.¹ This would suggest that pastors whose sermons were published were not of the lower economic classes. Further, since most of these published sermons were requested by groups, they likely represent views held by a wider section of the surrounding society. This fact contributes to their import as evidence of the tide of religious discussion on each side, but also limits any dissenting voices. Thus, this study is interested in the commonly expressed religious views of each side, but does not examine in depth questions of the totality of such views.

"God moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines,
Of never failing skill,
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sovereign will"²

Following the Battle of Gettysburg in the first days of July 1863, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed, "It has pleased Almighty God to hearken to the supplications and

¹ The overwhelming majority of sermons used in this study appear to have been requested for publication by members who heard the sermon delivered. This is seen by the series of introductory letters between members or committees and ministers which generally accompany the sermons preceding the actual text of the sermon.

² William Cowper, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way," taken from *Service Book and Hymnal* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1958) 484.

prayers of an afflicted people, and to vouchsafe to the army and the navy of the United States victories on land and on the sea...it is meet and right to recognize and confess the presence of the Almighty Father and the power of His hand equally in these triumphs and these in sorrows.”³ Truly, Lincoln’s words captured the mood of many in the Union. July and early August of 1863 found many ministers, rabbis and laymen invoking the wonderful mercy and assistance of God for the Union cause. However, southern clerics were simultaneously maintaining that the Lord was on the side of the Confederacy, using the victories of the ancient Hebrews over pagan nations as evidence of God’s faithfulness. When all of the political, social and military interpretations have been completed, it is in the interplay of the sacred and secular that the deepest meaning of the Battle of Gettysburg is to be found, religion remains a vital element of the contemporary understandings of the battle.

The entire basis of the historical analysis of religion and the religious window on history presupposes that whether or not one personally believes in God’s providence, or the will of God manifest, many people throughout history have accepted just such a notion. The continuing scholarly debate about the origins of religious belief and practice raises questions such as whether religion and faith developed as a result of a human psychological need to find a higher power that governs the world with some sort of intelligible system. In his well-publicized 1997 work *The Cousins’ Wars: Religion, Politics, and the Triumph of Anglo-America*, Kevin Phillips explains that the value and importance of religion in the history of peoples and nations, “should not even be debatable.” Further, Phillips argues, all of the central historical landmarks in British and American history, “were wars—bitter, fratricidal wars—accompanied by Puritan and abolitionist sermons and battle hymns and principally fought to change the shape of internal politics, liberty, and religion.”⁴

In *For Cause and Comrades*, his landmark study of the reasons why soldiers joined and fought in the Civil War armies, James McPherson examines the letters and journals of numerous soldiers on both sides of the conflict. Many of these soldiers used religious language in their writings, often as a justification for the struggle. Characteristic of these soldiers was one Southerner who wrote home to his wife, “Everyday I have a more religious feeling, that this war is a crusade for the good of mankind.”⁵ Nonetheless, though the views of the soldiers were central to the ability of the sides to continue the fight, the morale of the Northern and Southern home-fronts also dictated the ability of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis to keep their armies on the field. Since they shared many religious traditions, both sides often used the same arguments to support a wide range of views. In words that were echoed in similar fashion by people on all sides of the war,

3 Abraham Lincoln, “Proclamation of Thanksgiving,” ed. Roy P. Basler, vol. 6, *Collected Works* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953) 332.

4 Kevin Phillips, *The Cousins’ Wars: Religion, Politics, and the Triumph of Anglo-America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999) xii-xiii.

5 James McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 13.

Northern clergyman George Ide told his audience,

Every attribute of God, every unfolding of His will in His word and in His providence, assures us that He is on our side in this awful exigency, and will bring to our aid the succors of His omnipotence. The wheels of His chariot may tarry. He may try us by delay. He may humble us by temporary defeats and reverses, in order to deepen our feeling of dependence upon Him, and to render us more obedient to the leadings of His hand. But He will not forsake us. Our cause is this cause, the cause of Civilization, the cause of Humanity, the cause of true Religion—and must triumph.⁶

As the war progressed, the religious discourse became a more complex mix of theology and reality. Eventually, each side would emerge from the war, victors or conquered, as Christians who still needed to reconcile their beliefs with their experiences. Thus, the examination of the religious justifications of the war in the newspapers and the political language in sermons which were directed both towards the soldiers and civilians have import for explaining the motivations behind the war in general. As one northern cleric concluded a few months after the close of the war, “During the dread struggle through which the nation has passed, no conviction was stronger or more universal than that of God’s interference in human affairs.”⁷

Despite the common patterns in both Southern and Northern religious dialogues, concepts were intensely connected with the success or failure of each side at a given moment. For example, while the South saw a virtually unbroken string of victories in the first two years of the war especially in the East, Confederate clergy and writers took great advantage of victories as signs of God’s favor. Small defeats were simply opportunities for Southerners to recommit to their personal piety and had no bearing on the righteousness of their cause. At the same time, in the North, many blamed moral lapses, such as Lincoln’s failure to emancipate the slaves, as the barrier between God’s active support of their cause and their current military ineptitude. Thus, with the issuance of the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, many Christians across the Union joined Edmund Fairchild, the president of Freewill Baptist College, to herald that, “the day of our redemption draweth nigh...Justice...and Right and Heaven are with us!”⁸ Many in the North expected that 1863 would bring a renewal of God’s favor to their cause. In the first days of July 1863, they found that renewal; it was heralded from the small southern

6 George Barton Ide, *Battle Echoes, or, Lessons from the War* (Boston : Gould and Lincoln, 1866) 52.

7 *Ibid.*, 5.

8 Victor B. Howard, *Religion and the Radical Republican Movement* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1990) 55.

Pennsylvania town of Gettysburg.

The origins of religious discourse in the public arena are varied for the extremes of the Union and Confederacy—Puritan New England and the Deep South. Since the first Puritan settlements, religion and politics had been intertwined in New England society. The South also saw an intertwining of the religious and political spheres early in its history, but had developed a socio-religious system independent of the North in many ways. One element of this separation became a marked division in the South between sacred and secular. For example, it was highly frowned upon in much of the South on the eve of the war for preachers to mention politics in their sermons. In their study of “white Richmond society at war,” Harry Stout and Christopher Grasso explain that church-wide fast days were common in the Old South. With the exception of some fasts surrounding Henry Clay’s 1850 Compromise, these fast days had specific boundaries, and were never integrated as tools in the political landscape. The common fasts in the South, “were spiritual events confined to the spiritual space and time of churches. With rare exceptions, fast sermons delivered on these occasions were not published, nor did they constitute a central genre of public discourse.”⁹

With the coming of secession, however, pressures upon the new Confederate States of America precipitated a shift in the application of jeremiads. Whereas the ante-bellum years had been characterized by a practical separation of church and state, the very news of secession brought an intertwining on the two. For example, Richmond witnessed mass euphoria upon the announcement of Virginia’s departure from the Union, including a speech by former president John Tyler, who invoked the “benign providence” of God upon the “holy effort” of the newly declared nation.¹⁰ Over the next few years, this call for God’s mercy and definition of the sacredness of the Southern cause would be continually repeated. As North Carolina pastor Joel Tucker told his congregation, “Your cause is the cause of God, of Christ, of humanity. It is a conflict of truth with error—of the Bible with Northern infidelity—of a pure Christianity with Northern fanaticism.”¹¹ The gauntlet had been laid and the course defined—this would be a war steeped in religious rhetoric. The outcome of the war would be deeply intertwined with the development of various theological and religious ideologies.

The discourse of providence in the Confederacy had several foundations. From the beginning of the war, Southerners relied upon obedience to God and fidelity to their cause as a hallmark of their claim to God’s providential aid. Joseph Atkinson told his Raleigh, North Carolina congregation, “So long as we shall deeply feel our dependence on

9 Harry S. Stout and Christopher Grasso, “Civil War, Religion, and Communications,” in *Religion and the American Civil War*, Randall M. Miller, Harry S. Stout and Charles Reagan Wilson, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 314, 319.

10 Stout, and Grasso, “Civil War, Religion and Communications,” in *Religion and the American Civil War*, 318.

11 Joel W. Tucker, “God’s Providence in War,” 229-237, in “God Ordained this War”: *Sermons on the Sectional Crisis, 1830-1865*, David B. Chesebrough, ed. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991) 236.

God alone, and put our trust in Him, He will favor us, and our progress will be irresistible as the march of time.”¹² Readers of the *Charleston Mercury* read in late July 1863 that, “Although our afflictions may be great, and protracted beyond expectations, let us have faith to believe that a just cause will prevail at last. Let us derive fortitude and Christian courage to suffer and to dare all things in this struggle for liberty and pure religion.”¹³

Secular newspapers contributed a great deal to the religious propaganda during the first half of the war. Civil War Richmond was the home of four major secular newspapers, which all published a spattering of religious interest items. Two of these papers, the *Enquirer* and the *Dispatch*, took a special interest in Christian issues, publishing lists of upcoming religious events and occasionally even minutes from regional church conventions.¹⁴ As ministers across the South interpreted early Confederate defeats as recriminations for the sins of individual Southerners, the *Dispatch* simply bowed to the mysterious ways of God. Confederate fast-days were declared across the nation beginning early in the war and prompting a variety of support and reaction from the leading papers. The *Dispatch* viewed fast days as opportunities to repeat the chorus of God’s overarching providence and the certainty of an eventual retribution against the North for its transgressions. Another Richmond paper, the *Enquirer*, used fast days throughout the war to call forth God’s blessing and to strengthen Southern confidence in their ultimate success under God.¹⁵ This difference of religious interpretation was maintained throughout the war, though the defeats of 1863 began a tense era in the religious discourse of the South, as orators and writers struggled to weave their wartime theology into new circumstances.

Some Southerners were unable to continue to accept the idea of God’s aid, especially once the Confederate army began to suffer severe defeats. The *Examiner* criticized the prevalent emphasis in the young nation upon God’s deliverance, especially as shown by Jefferson Davis. While the paper admitted that, “Piety is estimable,” it firmly maintained that practical concerns, such as better equipping the army, had to be addressed as well. Further, the paper said that instead of gearing up for war, Davis was, “relying on a miracle to save the country,” a stance that was, “depressing in the extreme.”¹⁶ In an October 1863 speech to troops in the western theater, Jefferson Davis echoed his religious refrain, telling the soldiers of, “his deep conviction of our eventual success under the blessing of Providence.”¹⁷ Coincidentally, it was at the location of this speech, Missionary Ridge, that the Confederate Army suffered yet another terrible defeat only a month and a half later. A month after the Battle of Gettysburg, the *Examiner* went so far as to proclaim to its readers, “There is neither Christianity nor religion of any kind in this war. We prosecute

12 Atkinson, Joseph M. “God, The Giver of Victory and Peace.” Sermon. Delivered in the Presbyterian Church, Raleigh, North Carolina, September 18, 1862. Located in the database of the Documenting the American South project of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Collection accessible at <http://docsouth.unc.edu>. Accessed 7 October 2001.

13 “Humiliation and Prayer,” *Charleston Mercury*, 29 July 1863, page 1, column 2.

14 Stout, and Grasso, “Civil War, Religion and Communications,” in *Religion and the American Civil War*, 330.

15 *Ibid*, 331.

16 *Ibid*, 335.

it in self-defense, for the preservation of our liberty, our homes and our Negroes.”¹⁸

The Northern Christian community was not more united. The issue of abolition had divided groups early, as churches such as the Methodist Episcopal Church managed to maintain full communion with Southern conferences until the middle of the nineteenth century. At the denomination’s 1844 Annual Conference a conflict over the ownership of slaves by Bishop James Andrew of the Baltimore Conference initiated a split that would last nearly an entire century.¹⁹ The Southern Baptist Convention came into being the following year, as Baptists in eight slaveholding states withdrew from the national organization.²⁰ Lutherans splintered into even more branches than they had been before the issue arose in their synods. The Presbyterian Church maintained union until the outbreak of the war, when the Presbyterian Church of the Confederate States of America was established.²¹ During the war, Protestant Episcopal churches in the South attempted to leave their national organization, but the Northern members never approved the move. This allowed a simple re-integration of Southern churches after the war. To many, these church divisions laid the way for the rupture of the bonds of the nation. Almost a decade before the fall of Fort Sumter, statesman Henry Clay lamented on his death bed, “I tell you, this sundering of the religious ties which have bound our people together I consider the greatest source of danger to our country.”²²

However, abolitionist sentiment in the North was still not unified after the purge of the Southern churches. Indeed, some staunch abolitionists sought to blame the early losses of the North on Lincoln’s failure to free the slaves. In a collection of his wartime writings published in 1866, cleric George Ide included an essay written prior to Lincoln’s Proclamation, pleading, “In our methods of conducting [this war], we are not working in harmony with the Divine intention. We are aiming to restore the Union as it was, with slavery in it.” Ide argued that God’s plan is freedom of the slaves, and he maintained, “Disaster will pursue us till we accept [God’s] plan.”²³ The Emancipation Proclamation, served as a huge ethical underpinning for Christian abolitionists. After Lincoln’s issuance of the document on the first day of 1863, these religious activists heralded the arrival of God’s favor now that the nation was fighting for a truly holy cause. In early December 1863, a seminary professor from Pennsylvania reflected,

Slavery dreads the spirit of the North quite as much or even more than it dreads the bayonets and columbiads of the North. The South at-

17 Haskell M. Monroe, Jr. and James T. McIntosh, eds., *The Papers of Jefferson Davis*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971) vol. 10, page 21.

18 Stout, and Grasso, “Civil War, Religion and Communications,” in *Religion and the American Civil War*, 339.

19 Frederick Norwood, *The Story of American Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974) 197-199.

20 Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper, 1953) 1261.

21. This organization was renamed as the Presbyterian Church in the United States during Reconstruction. *Ibid*, 1261

22 Phillips, *The Cousins’ Wars*, 401.

23 Ide, *Battle Echoes*, 142.

tempts to found a mighty empire, the “cornerstone” of which is Human Bondage. The North inscribes Universal Freedom on her banner, and flings it to the breeze. While He who came into this world “to proclaim liberty to the captives,” sits on the throne of the universe, who can, for one moment, doubt the issue?²⁴

Other Northern preachers also appealed to the sacred cause of emancipation as justification for God’s favor upon their cause.

However, the entire North was not ready to accept the liberation of slaves as the primary focus of the war. In a September 1863 article in the *Christian Examiner*, the author chided those who sought to make the war just about slavery. He wrote, “We do not consider battles and carnage a fit method of establishing policies of mercy, or extending the Divine kingdom upon earth...it is for the integrity, the honor, the existence of a nation which we belong to, and believe in, and are loyal to...[that] we fight, and invoke the blessing of Heaven on our arms.”²⁵ Nevertheless, the author goes on to declare that, “in fighting for ourselves because we must, we could not do it without also fighting for the dearest and most sacred principles of universal humanity.”²⁶ Such a view was also argued by many other Northerners, including Abraham Lincoln, most notably in his August 22, 1862 letter to Horace Greely in the *New York Tribune*. In the letter, Lincoln told Greely, and thus, the American people, “My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or destroy slavery...What I do about slavery...I do because I believe it helps to save the Union.”²⁷

Leaders in the North called upon the glorious history of their own nation as proof that God would continue to support them. As a Pittsburgh pastor told his flock, “God has not piloted the Ship of State through so many storms, and over so many breakers, to allow her to be sunk by the snag—secession.”²⁸ The same pastor also called upon struggles of great peoples throughout history, from the Greeks to the Romans and the Crusaders. He further identified his people with the ancient Hebrews, proclaiming, “When the Jew wanted to assure himself of God’s continued favor and protection, he ran his eye back over the history of his nation...The past was glorious, and full of miraculous power... With hope and joy he flung his glance into the future...So do we to-day.”²⁹ Religious faithfulness was equated with patriotism. A sermon republished in Gettysburg’s *Adams Sentinel* expressed a deep commitment to both Christianity and the Union. The author wrote, “Our first duty is to stand by the throne of God; the next, by the flag of our country. If we are a christian, we must, we should be a patriotic people. A true Christian must be,

24 Samuel Jennings Wilson, “Hope for the Republic.” Sermon. Delivered at Sixth Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, November 26, 1863. (Printed by Klausner & Theophilus, Allegheny City, Penn., 1864) Located in collection of the Clifford E. Barbour Library, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, 10.

25 “A Month of Victory, and Its Results.” *Christian Examiner* 75 (September 1863): 258-278, 277.

26 *Ibid.*, 278.

27 Abraham Lincoln, “To Horace Greely,” ed. Roy P. Basler, vol. 5, *Collected Works* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953) 388.

is, the best ruler and subject, citizen and soldier.”³⁰

A rhetorical tool that was relied upon in both Northern and Southern religious discussion was the identification of both sides with the ancient Hebrews of the Old Testament. In the trials of Israel, citizens and soldiers alike found reason to believe that their reversals and losses were merely part of God’s plan to refine them into His true people. In victory, each faction claimed that God had been faithful to his people, as He had always been to Israel. For example, Northerner George Ide used many illustrations from the Old Testament to convince his readers of the justification of the Northern cause, concluding, “By placing us in circumstances which require the furnishing of vast means to sustain the Government, [God] rebukes our avarice,” as He had used defeat to recommit the people of Israel to their God.³¹ Southern ministers equated their people’s position as that of the “chosen people [of Israel],” whose, “affliction, permitted by paternal love to chasten and purify them are part of the process by which their Father is preparing them for fuller and sweeter communion with himself in this world, and for heaven at the end.”³² Following the Battle of Gettysburg, one New York rabbi prayed with his congregation that, “In other days and in ours may Judah be saved and Israel dwell in safety, and may the Redeemer come unto Zion, and may this be the will of God, and let us say Amen.”³³ Further, some Southerners not only identified themselves with the Israelites, but they also equated the North with Pharaoh and Egypt, as voiced by Confederate clergy in a letter to the Charleston Mercury in mid-July 1863, stating that the Confederacy, “asked only, as the Israelites asked of old, that they should be allowed to ‘depart in peace.’”³⁴

Further, both the Union and the Confederacy claimed the heritage of the nation’s Revolutionary fathers as well as other secular examples of God’s will. Parishioners in a Fayetteville, North Carolina, church in May of 1862 were told by their pastor that, “God was with our Revolutionary fathers in their struggle for independence; but he suffered them often to be defeated in their seven years conflict with the mother country. . . . So, God has sent our reverses for our good.”³⁵ Several months later, a pastor from North Carolina asserted to his congregation, that, “The course of Providential development in our first Revolution was essentially unlike what we have thus far witnessed in this. Compared to the former, the hand of God is more bare, more open, more visible, in that which is now in process of consummation.”³⁶ A writer for the Charleston Mercury told his audience in mid-July 1863, “There has, perhaps, been less in the South of that narrow, pharisaic, intolerant Puritanism which distinguished the founders of Massachusetts, and is not yet

28 Wilson, “Hope for the Republic,” 18.

29 Wilson, “Hope for the Republic,” 18-19.

30 George Duffold, “God and My Country!” *Adams Sentinel*, 15 September 1863. Page 1, Column 6.

31 Ide, *Battle Echoes*, 48.

32 A.M. Poindexter and R. Lynden Cowper, *God’s Providence a Source of Comfort and Courage to Christians [1861-1865]*. Tract. Located in the database of the Documenting the American South project of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, collection accessible at <http://docsouth.unc.edu>, accessed 7 October 2001.

33 “Thanksgiving Among the Jews,” *New York Herald*, 7 August 1863. Page 1, Column 5.

34 “Letter of the Confederate Clergymen,” *Charleston Mercury*, 21 July 1863, page 1, column 2.

35 Tucker, “God’s Providence in War,” 233.

extinct in New England; but the Southerners have always been always an earnestly and devoutly Christian people.”³⁷ Preaching in Pittsburgh at the end of 1863, Dr. S.J. Wilson from Western Theological Seminary told his Christian Commission audience that the geography of the nation itself was a sign from God that the country must be united. Specifically, Dr. Wilson explained, “[God] has poured the floods of ocean around [the nation] in the form of a U, and that U stands for UNION.”³⁸ Ministers and political leaders scrambled throughout the war to create and maintain public support for the war, using whatever tools they could lay hold of, from Biblical precedent to American history to geography.

The Battle of Gettysburg, July 1-3, 1863, changed the stakes in the religious discourse of both nations. In the North, Christians could finally begin to see God’s active hand in the outcome of the war in their favor. As one newsman wrote to his readers in Philadelphia who awaited final news of the battle, “May God defend the right.”³⁹ Though some in the South initially heard good news from Pennsylvania, as the *Charleston Mercury*, for example, reported on the ninth of July on the battle, claiming a “brilliant and crushing victory,” for the Army of Northern Virginia.⁴⁰ However, by the thirteen, the *Mercury* was reporting that northern papers were proclaiming a Confederate defeat.⁴¹ The Union victory there marked the heightening of voices in the South who questioned whether, “God had always been on our side, or that he operates actively, in this conflict at all.”⁴² In fact, some scholars argue that doubts about God’s favor for the Confederate cause had never been, “very far beneath the surface,” and were simply exposed by the combined Confederate defeats at Gettysburg and Vicksburg in the first days of July 1863. However in the wake of Gettysburg, many southern clerics did attempt to maintain the theological foundation they had labored so hard to establish throughout the first half of the war.

As Southern pastors sought this continuity, David Chesebrough maintains, “they must be admired for their consistency. They were sure that even as God had been a participant in the early stages of the war when so much was going well, so God was still a participant in the latter stages.”⁴³ Chesebrough then identifies two common characteristics of post-Gettysburg/Vicksburg southern jeremiads. First, pastors argued that Southerners were being punished for their transgressions. Second, despite this punishment, the South could reclaim God’s favor, but only by earnest penitence and a renewed dedication to the holy cause of the war.⁴⁴ Southern Christians were thus able to

36 Joseph M. Atkinson, “God, the Giver of Victory and Peace.”

37 “Letter of the Confederate Clergymen,” *Mercury*, 21 July 1863.

38 Wilson, “Hope for the Republic.”

39 “The Battle at Gettysburg,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 3 July 1863. Page 2, Column 3.

40 “The War in Pennsylvania,” *Charleston Mercury*, July 9, 1863, Page 1, Column 2.

41 “From the United States,” *Charleston Mercury*, 13 July 1863, Page 1, Column 3.

42 Richard E. Beringer, *The Elements of Confederate Defeat: Nationalism, War Aims, and Religion* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988) 119.

43 David B. Chesebrough, ed., “God Ordained this War”: Sermons on the Sectional Crisis, 1830-1865 (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991) 238.

44 *Ibid*, 238.

maintain their commitment to the war effort, in spite of July 1863. As one person wrote in to the Milledgeville Confederate Union, "We need the favor of God. Without it, we perish. God is angry with us for our sins. Hence the war itself, and hence the reverses of this summer."⁴⁵ In reality, the ability of people of faith to adapt their theology to defeat was determined by a variety of factors, including the depth of that theology prior to July 1863, how intensely comparisons were made to the defeats of ancient Israel, and whether they viewed Gettysburg as an anomaly or as a sign of things to come.

The secular press, which had long participated in this public religious discourse, maintained their religious rhetoric in their immediate reactions to the battle. In a July 10, 1863 editorial, the *Richmond Enquirer* asked its readers if the battle should prompt Southerners to lose faith in God's support, help and, "just Providence." The writer concludes, "All that we have already done, and vowed to do; all our past, all our future, call on us, pledge us, compel us, to read in all that has befallen but one lesson—that we must repair our faults. . . .and use all our resources so as to present a stern front of resistance," to the enemy.⁴⁶ Eleven days later, the *Enquirer* was casting Abraham Lincoln in a decidedly negative religious role as, "the vicegerent [sic] of the Devil on earth."⁴⁷ The same article concluded with an affirmation from the author professing his belief in the ultimate triumph of the Confederacy, rooted in his, "firm faith which reliance in the justice of a righteous God inspires."⁴⁸

Southern fears about the future after the Battle of Gettysburg raged from caution, and even hope to despair. One of the most vocal Richmond religious writers was J.B. Jones, who voiced his opinions throughout the war, though seldom quite so hopelessly as he did in the July 29, 1863 issue of his paper. Jones moaned, "Still raining! The great fear is that the crops will be ruined, and famine, which we have long been verging upon, will be complete. Is providence upon us for our sins, or upon our cause?"⁴⁹ The secular *Charleston Mercury* hit a more cautionary note the same day, explaining,

It may be, too, that the Supreme Ruler has chosen this means to teach us the iniquity of all invasions, and to impress upon our minds the justice and wisdom of defending our cause upon our own blood baptized [sic] soil. Indeed, there are some things connected with the late battle which would seem to justify the belief that this punishment was inflicted by

45 Beringer, *The Elements of Confederate Defeat*, 121.

46 Editorial, *Richmond Enquirer*, 10 July 1863, located in the database of Accessible Archives, <http://srch.accessible.com>, accessed 26 September 2001.

47 "From General Lee's Army," *Richmond Enquirer*, 21 July 1863, located in the database of Accessible Archives, <http://srch.accessible.com>, accessed 26 September 2001.

48 *Ibid.*

49 Stout, and Grasso, "Civil War, Religion and Communications," in *Religion and the American Civil War*, 341.

a Divine Hand, and for some wise purpose.⁵⁰

Southern reaction to Gettysburg affirmed the belief in God's providential aid, but it did so with a growing realization of the difficulty connected with maintaining such a belief in the face of disaster. As one military chaplain, R.F. Bunting, wrote to his troops almost two months after Gettysburg that their reverses were, "not a matter of astonishment," since the Southern people had, become too much elated," due to their early victories. Thus, they had forgotten, "the honor which was due to that God who hath power to put down one and raise up another," and hence, Reverend Bunting and his fellow Southerners were "receiving in our disasters for months past, the wages of our sins."⁵¹

In the North, victory at Gettysburg added a new element to their Puritan-based religious justification of their cause. Despite admitting an immense loss of troops, a writer in the September 1863 issue of the Boston-based *Christian Examiner* expressed satisfaction that, "The three days' desperate struggle at Gettysburg beat back the Confederate force at the highest flood-tide of its invasion: since then, we have seen only the baffled, slow, and sullen movement of its reluctant wave."⁵² Recognizing the significance of Gettysburg, the same author claimed,

It is not easy for us to realize, even now, the greatness and imminency [sic] of the peril from which we were saved at Gettysburg by the repulse of Longstreet's column on Friday afternoon, the 3d of July. To meet this crisis, or grand climacteric of the gigantic struggle, several things concurred, as if by special directing of a Higher Power, turning what might have been the most terrific disaster into a glorious deliverance... It was a stronger hand and a higher wisdom than ours that saved us on that Friday afternoon.⁵³

Secular newsmen across the nation also recognized the importance of Gettysburg. Readers in Philadelphia read that, "The battle of the 3d of July, at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, will probably be regarded in all coming time as one of those few great victories which have settled the map of the world," which was thanks to, "Almighty God, who has defended our liberties thus far."⁵⁴ The *Hartford Courant* praised the successes of the first week of July, including Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and even the repulse of Confederates in Helena, Arkansas, concluding, "Amid the exaltations of victory let us not forget our debt of gratitude

⁵⁰ "The Pennsylvania Campaign," *Charleston Mercury*, 29 July 1863, page 1, column 4.

⁵¹ Robert Franklin Bunting, "The Mysteries of Providence: A Fast-Day Discourse," sermon, delivered August 21, 1863, in camp on Silver Creek, near Rome, Georgia (Atlanta: Franklin Steam Press, 1864) 9, 15.

⁵² "A Month of Victory and Its Results," in the *Christian Examiner*, 259.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 260-261.

⁵⁴ "Attempted Repudiation of the Fourth of July," in *Philadelphia Public Ledger and Daily Transcript*, 6 July 1863.

to the Supreme Ruler who ordereth all things.”⁵⁵ The New York Herald told its audience, “great or greater than those of Waterloo are the results of this battle of Gettysburg,” and that, “To Him ‘who doeth all things well’ shall eternal praise be given.”⁵⁶

The secular press also passed on religious rhetoric as it published official statements. President Lincoln issued a proclamation the day after the battle which was published in papers across the nation, closing, “He whose will, not ours, should ever be done, be everywhere remembered and revered with the profoundest gratitude.”⁵⁷ The same day, General Meade issued a congratulatory order that was also published in many papers, though with a bit more delay. He closed his order with religious language, declaring, “It is right and proper that we should, on all suitable occasions, return our grateful thanks to the Almighty Disposer of events that in the goodness of his Providence He has thought fit to give victory to the cause of the just.”⁵⁸ By October, Lincoln had issued a longer declaration, judging that even those normally immune to sensing God’s hand in history could not easily cast aside, “the ever watchful providence of Almighty God,” after such a season. He also credited God with all of the successes the army had experienced over the summer of 1863, writing, “They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.”⁵⁹

In the North, the religious rhetoric of Lincoln’s tradition of days of Thanksgiving paralleled Davis’ fast days. Lincoln’s public proclamations of thankfulness for Gettysburg began immediately after the battle, with many papers publishing a July fourth statement requesting that, “He whose will, not ours, should ever be done, be everywhere remembered and revered with profoundest gratitude.”⁶⁰ On July fifteenth, Lincoln issued an extended proclamation, announcing August 6, 1863 as a Day of National Thanksgiving. To the God who had, “hearken[ed] to the supplications and prayers of an afflicted people,” the president gave, “the homage due to the Divine Majesty, for the wonderful things he has done in the Nation’s behalf.”⁶¹ Lincoln also echoed sentiments proclaimed in the South, telling his people that they needed to travel, “through the paths of repentance and submission in the Divine Will, back to the perfect enjoyment of Union and fraternal peace.”⁶²

Like many in the secular press, Christian ministers also recognized the import of the fighting at Gettysburg and Vicksburg. On August sixth, the specially appointed day of thanksgiving, the pastor of New York’s St. George Church told his members that God had done marvelous deeds for his faithful, the North, and that consequently, “The last

55 “The Fourth,” in Hartford Courant (Connecticut), 9 July 1863. Page 2, Column 1.

56 “The Battle of Gettysburg,” in New York Herald, 9 July 1863. Page 1, Column 2.

57 Abraham Lincoln, “Announcement of News from Gettysburg,” ed. Roy P. Basler, vol. 6, Collected Works (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953) 314.

58 General George Meade, “Congratulatory Order,” issued 4 July 1863, published in Adams Sentinel, 7 July 1863.

59 Abraham Lincoln, “Proclamation of Thanksgiving,” ed. Roy P. Basler, vol. 6, Collected Works (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953) 496-497.

60 Abraham Lincoln, “Announcement of News from Gettysburg,” Collected Works, 314.

61 Abraham Lincoln, “Proclamation of Thanksgiving,” Collected Works, 332.

62 Ibid.

thirty-three days had been days of lightning glances of power and triumph.”⁶³ Finally, Rev. Dr. Osgood told his Unitarian congregation,

We meet in the sanctuary, not to sing hosannas for triumphs over neighbors and friends achieved by men’s hands, but as a part of God’s people, and, as far as human weakness will permit, to celebrate His providence and grace and mercy to us as a people. As a loyal and civilized people we must recognize His power and His mercies to us; and, while our religion uses not the arms of warfare, it at the same time recognizes the legitimacy of military power in its own rightful season, keeping and reserving to itself the arms that are spiritual and eternal.⁶⁴

The August sixth Day of Thanksgiving was observed in churches throughout the North, as ministers hastened to take advantage of yet another opportunity to call forth God’s favor on the Union cause. Several sermons from August 6, 1863 were published the following day on the front page of the *New York Herald*. Among these were homilies from a range of denominations, and even an account of services held in the town’s synagogues. Among the clergy featured, many called for hearty thanks to “Almighty God,” who had “not given us over a prey to our enemies.”⁶⁵ Congregants at Madison Square Presbyterian Church were instructed by their pastor to, “trust in Jehovah alone, with adoration and enthusiastic oblations of the soul.”⁶⁶ The sentiments of the *New York* newsmen and clergy were mirrored across the nation.

In New York, the August 6, 1863 sermon that Reverend Chalon Burgess delivered in Panama was published in the *Chautauqua Democrat* (New York) in late September. Burgess told his audience, “God [has] been for thirty days or more granting [our] prayers and so arranged his providence [that] the harvests of war, should synchronize [with] the harvests of peace.”⁶⁷ Burgess also outlined American history as evidence of God’s providence, from the Pilgrims through the American Revolution and to the Civil War. Addressing the human cost, Burgess assessed it as, “punishment for our many national sins,” though despite the sins of the people, God, “has seen fit to interpose with his scourge, if by any means he might whip us back to paths of purity and justice.”⁶⁸ Nonetheless, Burgess cautioned his parishioners against naively assuming God’s favor, lest they fall victim to, “a superstitious and presumptuous confidence in our title as Americans to the

63 “St. George’s Church,” *New York Herald*, 7 August 1863. Page 1, Column 2.

64 “Rev. Dr. Osgood’s (Unitarian) Church,” *New York Herald*, 7 August 1863. Page 1, Column 3.

65 “Trinity Church,” *New York Herald*, 7 August 1863. Page 1, Column 1.

66 “Madison Square Presbyterian Church,” *New York Herald*, 7 August 1863. Page 1, Column 3.

67 Chalon Burgess, “Thanksgiving Sermon,” in the *Chautauqua Democrat* (New York), 28 September 1863, delivered at Panama, 6 August 1863, from Rare and Manuscript Collections, Carl A. Kroch Library, Cornell University. Page and column numbers unclear.

68 *Ibid.*

69 *Ibid.*

70 *Ibid.*

good-will and favor of God.”⁶⁹ Burgess concluded his sermon by instructing his listeners and readers that, “Our impatient populace has yet to learn that every thing really valuable and lasting is slowly evolving and slowly matured,” and that Americans should not expect the victories of the summer to speedily end the war.⁷⁰ The North also celebrated Thanksgiving at its appointed date in November, when ministers had a wide range of victories to point to for reinforcing their argument that God was on their side.

November 1863 also witnessed the dedication of the Soldiers’ National Cemetery in Gettysburg, where many would speak of God’s providential aid to the North, though none would do so with quite the eloquence and historical impact of President Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. The religious language at the ceremony was initiated by Rev. Dr. Stockton, who gave the invocation, informing the audience, “Oh, had it not been for God! For lo! our enemies, they came unresisted, multitudinous, mighty, flushed with victory, and sure of success... Glory to God for this rescue!”⁷¹ The crowd then joined in a hymn, singing,

We trust, O God! Thy gracious power
To aid us in our darkest hour.
This be our prayer—“O Father! Save
A people’s freedom from its grave.
All praise to Thee!”⁷²

Even in his homage to classic Greek culture and tradition, Edward Everett’s speech at the ceremony called upon the providential aid of God. In the midst of a detailed recounting of the action during the Battle of Gettysburg, Everett praised the “providential inaction,” of the Confederate army.⁷³ According to Everett, it was “under Providence,” that the Union forces, motivated by patriotism and the belief in the justness of their cause, were able to gain the victory at Gettysburg.⁷⁴

The words of the address of President Lincoln on that day are the longest lasting and most powerful words in the public discourse about the Battle of Gettysburg, and thus, central to the theme of public reaction to the battle in terms of God’s providence. The ceremony that November day has remained alive in American memory as children today, who are no longer forced to memorize facts to the extent of previous generations, still nonetheless can recite the beginning, if not the entire address of President Lincoln. Despite disagreements as to when Lincoln added these words to his speech, he felt the need to conclude his oration by crowning the United States as a nation “under God.” Two

71 “Prayer of Rev. Dr. Stockton,” Revised Report of the Select Committee Relative to the Soldiers National Cemetery together with the Accompanying Documents, as Reported to the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Harrisburg: Singerly & Myers State Printers, 1865) 180.

72 B.B. French, “Hymn,” Revised Report of the Select Committee Relative to the Soldiers National Cemetery, 210.

73 Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992) 226.

74 *Ibid.*, 229.

75 Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 263.

words, yet as renowned as he was for being succinct, it is all together obvious that Lincoln did not invoke God over the nation without a firm historical and cultural foundation and necessity. The ceremony on November 19, 1863 at the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg served as a major part of national closure for the Battle of Gettysburg insofar as that was possible. "It is altogether fitting and proper," that the religious rhetoric of the divided nation, both from the Union and Confederacy, would be called together in a speech which sought to unite the country, be united in two simple words in one of the single greatest orations in American and world history.⁷⁵

Religion, defined broadly as a person's conception of a higher power, and identified specifically as the ritualistic demonstration of that conception, has had a central part in history. The ability of humans to mentally accommodate the taking of another's life, laws establishing limits on appropriate and inappropriate actions, and social mores, all denote a sense of the greater good. In modern times, a dependence on human logic and reason to accommodate value structures has often superceded the role of religion as a law-establishing authority. Society is viewed as the greater good, and philosophers define right and wrong by reviewing the social benefits of actions and decisions. Consequently, established religion, such as the Christian church, has fought to remain relevant in a world where questions of origins and futures are increasingly answered adequately enough for many people by science and secular philosophy. This process of social secularization has accompanied religious development throughout history, as the line between religion, politics and culture have constantly intertwined and intersected.

The religious language and ideologies of the American Civil War illustrate the pervasiveness of religion in politics and politics in religion. Most people live lives of integration with the various elements of their existence forming streams that overflow into each other. It is impossible to study historical events such as war without examining all of the component ingredients. Both sides of the Civil War found justifications for their actions. And initially, both were able to be confident of God's favor for their cause. Despite differing substantially on the issues leading to the war, the religious rhetoric of the Confederacy and the Union was extraordinarily similar throughout the war. However as the outcome of the war became progressively more evident to many, especially in the wake of the Battle of Gettysburg, this public religious dialogue developed along increasingly different lines. Whereas many in the South became progressively more unconfident of God's active role in their cause as 1863 wore on, that same period saw a growing assuredness in the North that God was indeed on their side, especially as many viewed the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation as the final element to put the North completely on God's side.

In the end, the major difference between perceptions of providence in the Union and the Confederacy is rooted in one of the few differences in religious rhetoric

at the beginning of the war. Most Southerners, as proclaimed through their papers and preachers, accepted from the moment of secession that God was on their side. In the North, ministers urged their congregations to be worthy of God's favor, a categorization that still differed in each area of the Union. As the North was pummeled by defeat in the first two years of the war, few Northerners ever publicly questioned that their cause was true. At the same time, many left room for a long and terrible struggle that would not always grant their army victory. In the South, the early success of Lee and his men contributed to the assumption of God's providential aid, and the first week of July, with the combined reverses of Gettysburg and Vicksburg, seriously challenged the ability of many in the South, especially those had not been absolutely convinced of God's assistance prior to July, to accept that God would ultimately lead them to victory.

Religion, both in schematic and practical ways, did change as a result of the Civil War. The nation changed. While issues such as homosexuality and church polity challenge denominations today, our nation has distanced church and state to such an extent that one could no longer fathom the splintering of denominations as the opening act of a national war. Further, it seems absurd to most twenty-first century students of history that a state could leave the union. Like mid-nineteenth century Americans, religion today is often part of the lives of Americans, but it rarely enters the public domain until times of national crisis, whether it is a shooting at a high school in Colorado or a terrorist attack on our military and economic nerve centers. Even today, in a world Americans feel is becoming increasingly secular, crises draw forth the depths of our religious reserves. Political leaders continue to use religious language to identify our cause and delineate our enemy. Religious leaders proclaim patriotic messages from the pulpit.

Rather than being an anomaly, public response to the Battle of Gettysburg is just one piece in the pattern of religious importance throughout history. Without religious dialogues, the ability of the two sides to process and move on in the face of Gettysburg would have been significantly different, and perhaps inconceivable. Each side needed to feel that God was on their side regardless of the battle results. The South moved forth from Gettysburg a different nation, seeing more acutely than before the vulnerability of their troops. The North stepped forward with a renewed will to press on. Their consequent religious adaptations began a spiral of difference that continued throughout that war. What has and does remain the same throughout history is the human desire or need to have the providential aid of God. Like their nineteenth century ancestors, today's Americans face their challenges with an eye heavenward, a nod to God's mysterious ways, and a hope for the intervention of Providence in their struggles.

KITCHENER'S VOLUNTEERS

PETER BRAUER

The fourth of August 1914 was a day of jubilation throughout Britain. German armies, numbering in the millions, had overrun Belgian border stations the previous day and were advancing unchecked across the frontier. As the morning progressed, a buzz of enthusiasm began to grow. News placards throughout Britain broadcast the news of the German invasion to the eager public from every street corner. Those British in the big cities were first to hear. From London to Birmingham, Manchester to Cardiff, and Edinburgh to Belfast, people gathered to hear the news. By noon, Trafalgar Square was packed end to end with Londoners.¹ The war that Europe had been waiting for had finally arrived. Within hours thousands were gathering outside local recruiting stations. The queues consisted of men young and old, rich and poor, covering the spectrum of Britain's class society. These men were here for many reasons but all wanted in before their chance had passed.²

It had been nearly a century since the Battle of Waterloo ended Britain's last major war. People had become complacent towards war during this period of peace and greeted the renewal of war. The public, and in many ways the Army, were ignorant to the effects of modern warfare. The belief in a romantic and quick war was in the minds of many during those early days of August.³ Within months, however, the world knew that this war would be more devastating than any other before it. The Western Front ground into a stalemate by December 1914 and both sides began to burrow into the soils of northern France and Belgium.⁴ By spring the trenches had been fortified to a point that no offensive could break them; the great trench systems of the Western Front had been born.

Beginning in the spring of 1915 those men who had volunteered in the early days of August found themselves thrown into the underworld of the trenches. No training time had been allotted for the daily dangers of trench warfare.⁵ The men were on their own. In many ways the soldiers not only had to battle the Germans but also the dangers of the elements, vermin, disease, and most of all one's own sanity.

Over the years much has been written about the British soldiers on the Western Front in an attempt to understand how these men survived the constant ordeal of the trenches. To try to define the experiences of these soldiers as a whole is impossible be-

1 John Keegan, *The First World War* (London: Pimlico, 1999), 81.

2 Donald Hankey, *A Student in Arms* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1917), 25.

3 Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 21.

4 D. E. Schowalter, "Maneuver Warfare: The Eastern and Western Fronts, 1914-1915," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War*, ed. Hew Strachan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 46.

5 Denis Winter, *Death's Men: Soldiers of the Great War* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 39-40; Ian Beckett, "The Nation in Arms, 1914-1918", in *A Nation in Arms: A Social Study of the British Army in the First World War*, ed. Ian Beckett and Keith Simpson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 110.

cause the front varied in every way imaginable— from one phase of the war to another, from one part of the line to the next, and also according to changing terrain and climate conditions.⁶ To view the Western Front as a constant fire fight involving thunderous artillery duels and massive infantry attacks across no-man’s land would be inaccurate. Apart from the major battles, Verdun, the Somme, second Ypres and Passchendaele to name a few, the front remained relatively inactive. Denis Winter argues in *Death’s Men* that trench life could often be worse than battle.⁷ The strain that accompanied waiting for an enemy that never came could be overwhelming. There was a demoralizing feeling to being kept confined below ground, living an animal-like existence. Winter writes, “The problem was that in training no one had been prepared for vigilant inaction, for the blinded feeling which followed being confined below the surface, for the demoralizing stooped walk, for the need to take constant care. Men were worn out by all these things.”⁸

In “The British Soldier on the Western Front,” Keith Simpson argues that social historians of the First World War have tended to portray the Western Front as a unique experience common to all soldiers that served there. In response, Simpson believes it necessary to study the combatants individually by nation, rather than as a general European history.⁹ World War One, the first modern European war to directly effect British society, had a profound impact on the hundreds of thousands of men who enlisted in Kitchener’s Army.¹⁰ Accordingly, these men carried much of their civilian lives to France. Simpson argues, in fact, that because of their civilian background, British soldiers were able to adapt through laughter and camaraderie to the horrors of the trenches. Because of this, he believes, there has been too much emphasis by past historians on the horrors faced by British soldiers on the Western Front:

Danger and fear were not necessarily the continuous or universal experience of all British soldiers, and many of them thought at the time, and later, that it had been ‘the great adventure.’ Many of them were young men who were exhilarated by the danger, remembered the laughter and the camaraderie and indeed the love they had experienced as temporary soldiers on the Western Front.¹¹

Aside from the everyday struggles of trench life that the British soldier was forced to cope with, the reality of war dictated that at some point he would be called upon to kill other human beings. It is this, the act of killing, that Joanna Bourke argues cannot be

6 Keith Simpson, “The British Soldier on the Western Front,” in *Home Fires and Foreign Fields: British Social and Military Experience in the First World War*, ed. Peter H. Liddle (New York: Brassey’s Defense Publishers, 1985), 141.

7 Denis Winter, *Death’s Men: Soldiers of the Great War* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 89.

8 *Ibid.*

9 Simpson, “British Soldier on the Western Front”, 154-155.

10 Alan Warburton, Lecture on “Britain: The Home Front”, December 8, 2000 (Lancaster University: Lancaster, England)

11 Simpson, “British Soldier on the Western Front”, 155.

ignored when discussing the First World War. She states, in "The Experience of Killing," that it has long been the history of military institutions, when recruiting, to gloss over the fact that in war people are killed. The last question veterans want to hear is "How many people did you kill?" Bourke believes it is this element of warfare that is most paradoxical to times of peace and therefore cannot be cast aside.¹² To better understand the experience of the British soldier on the Western Front it becomes crucial to understand his dealings with death, both the killing of the enemy and of his friends.

It cannot be denied that the act of killing placed a significant burden on the mental toughness of every soldier. These are the memories that stay with veterans forever, but they are not the only memories of war, especially war on the Western Front. The Western Front produced a kind of warfare never before seen on such a grand scale. Conditions were so intolerable and horrific that even today it is hard to comprehend how soldiers survived from one day to the next. Arriving in the early months of 1915, the Kitchener volunteers took on the task of survival in these trenches and it is from their diaries, memories, and letters home that historians form the best impression of life on the Western Front.

While the moments just prior to an attack produced the greatest amount of fear and the preceding experiences of combat that left an indelible picture of violence and destruction in a soldier's mind, these events were not constant; they filled only a fraction of his experiences on the Western Front. It was the struggle for everyday survival between the enemy, the elements, vermin, disease, and one's own mind that dominated the experiences of the Kitchener volunteer on the Western Front. During the war, these soldiers were forbidden to keep diaries and their letters home had to pass through censors which weeded out much of the original prose. It was not until after the war that many veterans had the opportunity to record their experiences of life on the Western Front. These published narratives provide an invaluable glimpse at the struggles that British volunteers faced on a daily basis. By looking at a few of the more notable accounts, including Bruce Bairnsfather's *Bullets and Billets* (1917), George Coppard's *With a Machine Gun to Cambrai* (1969), and Donald Hankey's *A Student in Arms* (1917) it is possible to examine the transformation of Kitchener's Army during the first two years of World War One. The soldiers' narratives offer an insight into daily life on the Western Front, from their arrival on the Continent, through their time in and out of the line, to their departure either through injury, death, or in rare cases peace.

FORMING KITCHENER'S ARMY

The great German offensive to envelope and annihilate France in the opening

12 Joanna Bourke, "The Experience of Killing," in *The Great World War, 1914-1945*, vol. 1, *Lightning Strikes twice*, ed. Peter Liddle, John Bourne, Ian Whitehead (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000), 293.

13 Schowalter, "Maneuver Warfare", 46.

weeks of the war died on the banks of the Marne in early September. After flanking maneuvers petered out in the race to the sea, Germany launched a final attack at Ypres. This, too, failed.¹³ The continuous weeks of heavy fighting had, however, severely depleted the ranks of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) positioned in northern France and Belgium. By December only a skeleton of the original 160,000-man army remained. It had been nearly wiped out during the battles of Mons, Le Cateau, and especially Ypres, where 54,000 casualties alone were reported.¹⁴

All along the newly established Western Front soldiers began to dig in for protection against the new weapons of modern warfare. The exhausted men faced not only increased artillery fire, but also the destructiveness of the elements as they burrowed into the earth during the closing weeks of 1914.¹⁵ To further frustrate their efforts six inches of rain fell throughout December, the most for that month since 1876. With little to hold up the muddy walls, collapses increased rapidly. Water collected in the trenches caused the men to be perpetually wet. Frostbite, rheumatism, and trench foot skyrocketed, further depleting the ranks of the BEF.¹⁶ It became clear that more and more men were needed to fill the trenches, and needed quickly. All eyes turned back to Britain for help.

Lord Kitchener, appointed British Minister of War on the fifth of August, moved rapidly to expand the Army's manpower. Before the outbreak of hostilities, Kitchener had argued for the creation of a massed army numbering in the millions. He saw the approaching conflict as long and destructive. Few top officials listened and his concerns were never addressed.¹⁷ Once in office, Kitchener took matters into his own hands. He appealed to Parliament for an immediate enlargement of the Army by 500,000 on August sixth and appealed to the public the following day for volunteers aged nineteen to thirty for "General service for a period of three years, or until the war is concluded."¹⁸ The results were momentous. Approximately 300,000 men volunteered by the end of August with another 450,000 swelling the recruitment offices in September.¹⁹

Those that enlisted in Kitchener's Army, or what came to be known as the New Army, came from every sector of society and for a wide range of reasons. Donald Hankey, who enlisted as a student, remembered that, "All classes were there, struggling for the privilege of enlisting in the new Citizen Army, conscious of their unity, and determined to give effect of it in the common life of service."²⁰ Despite the popular conception of

14 Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 100.

15 Hew Strachan, "Economic Mobilization: Money, Munitions, and Machines," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 137-138; Jean-Jacques Becker, *The Great War and the French People*, trans. Arnold Pomerans, with an introduction by Jay Winter (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1990), 23. Artillery shells had been designed to destroy formations of troops on open ground using shrapnel. New high explosive shells were now required to blow away dug-in fortifications and trench systems. The transformation began to show results in December of 1914, although they continued to plague operations throughout 1915.

16 Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 102-103.

17 *Ibid.*, 101.

18 Peter H. Liddle, *The Soldier's War, 1914-1918* (New York: Blandford Press, 1988), 16; Beckett, "Nation in Arms", 12.

19 Winter, *Death's Men*, 27.

20 Hankey, *Student in Arms*, 25.

a “rush to the colors” it was predominantly the men without strong commitments who volunteered first. Many were persuaded by the prospects of a stable economic future that the army offered.²¹ Following these men came the vast number of recruits from the working and middle classes. The majority of the working class saw enlistment as an opportunity for improvement, either through better living conditions, employment, or a break from the dull routine of factory work.²² The middle class saw the war from a different viewpoint.²³ For them the Western Front was the “great adventure” and the “supreme test” of manhood for a generation that had never experienced war.²⁴ One soldier remarked, “My work was not unpleasant but I knew I wouldn’t miss it. My thought of joining was instantaneous. I was terribly keen to go, afraid to miss any of it. I’d had a very happy youth but no doubt looked for adventure.”²⁵ They viewed the war as a pathway to the future, to progress, revolution, and change. For other men the effects of social and family pressures, combined with a sense of patriotism and the wish not to be left out escorted them down the block to the recruiting center. For a boy of sixteen and a half the excitement was overwhelming:

Although I seldom saw a newspaper, I knew about the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand at Sarajevo. News placards screamed out at every street corner, and military bands blared out their martial music in the main streets of Croydon. This was too much for me to resist, and as if drawn by a magnet, I knew I had to enlist straight away.²⁶

Another soldier remembered the pressure to enlist:

My reason was a simple one, at my age and in my circumstances and in the atmosphere of patriotic enthusiasm, I would have been ashamed not to join and my parents would have been ashamed of me if I had not done so. Secondary reasons were that several of my friends were joining the same regiment, also I had decided I did not want to be a Civil Engineer. It seemed likely to be a dull sort of profession.²⁷

One of the greatest virtues of the Kitchener volunteers in the early months of the war was their special spirit of enthusiasm, camaraderie, and belief that they would succeed where the old army had failed.²⁸ This excitement began to diminish as the men exchanged their

21 Beckett, “Nation in Arms”, 103.

22 Liddle, *Soldier’s War*, 16.

23 Simpson, “British Soldier on Western Front”, 143.

24 *Ibid.*

25 Liddle, *Soldier’s War*, 16.

26 George Coppard, *With a Machine Gun to Cambrai: The Tale of a Young Tommy in Kitchener’s Army, 1914-1918* (London: Crown, 1969), 1.

27 Liddle, *Soldier’s War*, 16.

28 Simpson, “British Soldier on the Western Front”, 143.

civilian lives for that of the soldier.

The British government was overwhelmed by the 750,000 volunteers during the first two months of war. Training facilities were completely inadequate, lacking clothing, food, housing, and weapons. Nearly all the materials needed to properly train the soldiers had become scarce by October. Even with the wartime mobilization of Britain's economy these problems would not be fixed until early 1915.²⁹ One soldier explained, "As tents were in short supply, the maximum number of recruits were allotted to each one. If I remember correctly, the number was twenty-two . . . As if to complete the picture of utter ineptitude, dummy rifles were issued to us."³⁰ Shortages of weapons, due to the dire need for them at the front, became such a problem that some units did not receive them until the eve of embarkation.³¹ Lacking many of the instruments of war that are so crucial to a soldier's existence, many found it hard to grasp the reality of the situation. With limited exposure to live fire, numerous soldiers still could not comprehend what faced them across the Channel.³²

Compounding the problem of supply shortages was the outdated and insufficient training the volunteers received. One third of training was spent on drill, with the majority of this filled by inspections of every kind: clothing, weapons (if they had them), personal hygiene, and the traditionally dreaded kit inspection.³³ Another soldier explained, "We were plagued by kit inspections every week . . . Deductions from pay for the losses made me realize more than ever that I was in the army."³⁴ Because of the strong need for men at the front, the training of battlefield and combat tactics was often relegated to retired officers. They performed the best they could under the circumstances but the tactics and terminology they used was outdated, mostly developed during the Boer War. To further exacerbate the situation, the teaching of open warfare doctrine was still the policy of the British Army. Very little emphasis was placed on trench warfare with the belief that offensives launched in 1915 would return the Western Front to a war of maneuver.³⁵ As a result, most soldiers received very little of the training they would need for the next three and a half years of war.

After six months of basic training, the men were deemed fit for combat and awaited their orders to the front.³⁶ When the call came in, units would gather for the short trip across the Channel. Departure usually took place from Folkestone on the southern

29 Winter, *Death's Men*, 37.

30 Coppard, *With a Machine Gun to Cambrai*, 3.

31 Beckett, "Nation in Arms", 110.

32 *Ibid.*

33 Winter, *Death's Men*, 39.

34 Coppard, *With a Machine Gun to Cambrai*, 8.

35 Beckett, "Nation in Arms", 110; Winter, *Death's Men*, 39.

36 Beckett, "Nation in Arms", 110. Due to the desperate need for men on the Western Front the training period was reduced to four months in 1915.

coast of England. Carrying full packs weighing up to sixty pounds, they made their way down a narrow, steep path to the edge of the cliffs where their papers were checked and life jackets issued.³⁷ As the gray Channel steamers slowly churned towards France, others passed them in the opposite direction filled with wounded returning to England. These were the first signs of war for the new soldiers and for many, the romantic war they had envisioned was beginning to fade. For others, the adventure continued as one young soldier exclaimed on arrival in France, "I was very excited at being on foreign soil for the first time."³⁸

Upon arrival in France, soldiers marched to a designated base camp to await transfer to the front. The biggest of the camps was Étapes, which could hold 100,000 men, and was visited by most soldiers at one point or another.³⁹ One soldier described that,

It is a vast, dreadful encampment. It seemed neither France nor England but a kind of paddock where the beasts were kept a few days before the shambles. There was a very strange look on all faces in that camp; an incomprehensible look which a man will never see in England nor can it be seen in any battle, only in Étapes. It was not despair or terror. It was more terrible than terror, for it was a blindfold look and without expression, like a dead rabbit's. It will never be painted and no actor will ever seize it.⁴⁰

It was at this staging area that men realized they no longer had the security of England under their shoes. The war was becoming very real to all of them.

Within a few days the new units would be ordered to the front. Amidst chaos and confusion soldiers were packed into freight cars, many times up to forty men per car with little food or water besides their field rations and canteens. The process could take up to five and a half hours to complete and oftentimes the soldiers were not told of their destination or the time it would take.⁴¹ The only thing to do was to sit back and wait. Many men tried to enjoy the scenic trip through the French countryside rather than dwell on the uncertainty that awaited them. As one soldier explained, "I sat on the side of the open doorway [of the train], legs dangling over the edge. The countryside looked beautiful and I felt as if I was taking part in a Sunday school treat."⁴²

The trains disembarked well away from the front to avoid any long range heavy artillery fire. From here, the infantry underwent another prolonged march to their designated sectors. Before entering the trenches, a short announcement was usually given by the commanding officer detailing last minute warnings and instructions:

³⁷ Winter, *Death's Men*, 71. A carefully kept memorial of rosemary now grows along this path in remembrance of all those that made the one way trip to the Western Front.

³⁸ Coppard, *Machine Gun to Cambrai*, 16.

³⁹ Winter, *Death's Men*, 72.

⁴⁰ H. Owen, *Journey from Obscurity* (Oxford, 1965), in Winter, *Death's Men*, 72-73.

⁴¹ Winter, *Death's Men*, 74.

The Colonel addressed us and said that we would be going into the trenches the next day. He reminded us that we were on a war footing and that the severest military laws would apply for any dereliction of duty . . . A conviction by court martial for any such offense would carry the death sentence.⁴³

With these words of encouragement the new soldiers entered the trenches of the Western Front for the first time. Movement through the winding maze of communication trenches was preformed at night to avoid unnecessary aerial observation by the Germans. The newcomers would be accompanied in the support and front line trenches by an experienced unit for a number of days until they could become accustomed to their surroundings.⁴⁴ After this they were on their own.

IN THE LINE

For the early arrivals on the Western Front in the winter and spring of 1915, the trenches were still in their infancy. Many of the newly arriving soldiers remarked on their haphazard design and construction.⁴⁵ Throughout the year, however, trench systems on both sides of no-man's land were quickly transformed into virtual fortresses, impervious to everything but the super heavy mortars and artillery. For many soldiers going into the trenches for the first time the experience was shocking. Finding one's self huddled in the bottom of a six foot hole, soaking wet, covered in mud, disoriented, with rifle shots whizzing overhead or clanging off the parapet could be very sobering. One soldier recalled, "Cold, wet through, and covered with mud. This was the first day . . . Nothing was to be heard except the occasional sniper's shot, the dripping of the rain, and the low murmur of voices from the outer cave."⁴⁶ This was only the first day; things would get far worse for the new volunteers on the Western Front.

While the Western Front was no doubt a dangerous place, it was not the scene of constant fighting and battles. Along the thirty-six miles of front the British held in 1915 only the region around Ypres witnessed fierce fighting on a near regular basis.⁴⁷ Within the inactive front, a daily routine was established to maintain the effectiveness of the soldiers. Little time was allotted for men to contemplate their presence in the trenches.

The day started with "stand-to" a half hour before sunrise. With rifles loaded, soldiers manned the firesteps listening for any movement by the enemy. It was at this

42 Coppard, *Machine Gun to Cambrai*, 16-17.

43 *Ibid.*, 19.

44 *Ibid.*; Liddle, *Soldier's War*, 58.

45 Bruce Bairnsfather, *Bullets and Billets* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917), 25.

46 *Ibid.*, 29.

47 Simpson, "British Soldier on Western Front", 141; Tony Ashworth, *Trench Warfare, 1914-1918: The Live and Let Live System* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1980), 82.

time, just before dawn and just prior to dusk, that infantry attacks were considered most likely. After a tense thirty minutes, "stand-down" was ordered and the men quickly set about preparing breakfast. This meal was regarded as the most enjoyable by the soldiers for it meant they had survived another night.⁴⁸ After breakfast it was time for work, the need for which was never lacking. Just when everything seemed satisfactory an officer would require a kit inspection or order a new construction project:

Breakfast over, there was not long to wait before an officer appeared with details of the duties and fatigues to be performed. Weapon cleaning and inspection, always a prime task, would soon be followed by pick and shovel work. Trench maintenance was constant, a job without end. Owing to the weather or enemy action, trenches required repairing, deepening, widening and strengthening, while new support trenches always seemed to be wanted. The carrying of rations and supplies from the rear went on interminably.⁴⁹

Attempts by the high command to regulate every aspect of the soldiers' lives failed because these men were still civilians at heart. They were not professional soldiers that had undergone years of training, nor had they ever experienced battle before. For many it was their first time away from home and they missed it. In response they tried to make trench life as close to their former lives as possible. The front line soldiers soon realized that constant harassment of the enemy, ordered from above, was a useless and dangerous activity. All it achieved was a retaliatory attack on one's own trenches, causing the need for yet more repairs and hard work, not to mention needless casualties. What developed from this mindset was the system of live-and-let-live.⁵⁰

First occurring in areas of the front where weather conditions and local terrain made any form of hostility nearly impossible, the system of live-and-let-live spread to all sectors of the Western Front, though it was most abundant among the British lines.⁵¹ The system also expanded into an intricate network of local truces which were understood by everyone involved but rarely formally agreed to. Many of the truces were concerned with the dreaded repair work that took up so much of the soldiers time. Nobody on either side of no-man's land enjoyed this work so they saw no reason why they should make it worse by firing upon one another while engaged in it. As one British soldier later explained, "We used to do our repairs at the same time as they did. When we finished we signaled Jerry and he used to signal us with one rifle shot and we then scrambled back

48 Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, 85.

49 Coppard, *Machine Gun to Cambrai*, 21-22.

50 Alan Warburton, Lecture on "The Trench Experience", November 28, 2000 (Lancaster University: Lancaster, England)

51 Simpson, "British Soldier on the Western Front", 149.

to our trenches.”⁵² As other soldiers confessed, a code of behavior was strictly adhered to by both sides: “We go out at night in front of the trenches . . . the German working parties are also out, so it is not considered etiquette to fire.”⁵³ Another discomfort for which the troops devised their own rules of action were night patrols through no-man’s land. Soldiers believed the primary goal of these patrols to be the reconnoitering of enemy defenses, not the engagement of them. If contact with the enemy was made, it was better to look the other way than to disrupt the established peace.⁵⁴ One soldier told of this practice by saying,

During the night a little excitement is provided by patrolling the enemy’s wire. Our chief enemy is nettles and mosquitoes. All patrol—English and German—are much averse to the death and glory principle; so, on running up against one another . . . both pretend that they are Levites and the other is a good Samaritan—and pass by on the other side, no word spoken. For either side to bomb the other would be a useless violation of the unwritten laws that govern the relations of combatants permanently within a hundred yards of distance to each other, who have found out that to provide discomfort for the other is but a roundabout way of providing it for themselves.⁵⁵

Aside from established practices concerning contact with the enemy, truces also brought a sense of benevolence to the trenches. Mealtimes were traditionally the quietest point of the day. Food was such an integral part of the soldiers’ lives that any harassment while eating would guarantee a harsh retaliation. Temporary cease-fires were sometimes called to allow for the removal of wounded from no-man’s land. All of these practices were frowned upon by general officers who insisted on maintaining an “offensive spirit.”⁵⁶ Often there was the recognition that men on both sides of no-man’s land were not much different. They faced the miserable conditions of the Western Front together. There was no controlling the weather, vermin, and disease, but if the needless barraging of the opponents trenches could be curtailed even by the slightest then maybe the same would be done for you: “Across no-man’s land there were men sharing trouble with us, fighting the same losing battle against water [coming into the trenches], powerless before the sudden storm of bursting metal, and longing to be home again with their children. Were they the enemy?”⁵⁷

52 Liddle, *Soldier’s War*, 61.

53 G. H. Greenwell, *An Infant in Arms* (London: Allen Lane, 1972), 16-17, in Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, 149.

54 Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 105.

55 *Ibid.*

56 *Ibid.*, 104; Warburton, “The Trench Experience”; Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, 135.

57 Lt. Wyn Griffiths, *Up to Mametz* (London: Faber, 1931), 130, in Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, 142.

No-man's land was reduced to as little as fifty yards in some places, and the proximity of the trenches allowed for the communication between sides. This helped to further the belief in live-and-let-live by seeing the enemy not as a crazed killer, but as a fellow human being not unlike the men in one's own trench:

hatred of the enemy, so strenuously fostered in training days, largely faded away in the line. We somehow realized that individually they were very like ourselves, just as fed up and as anxious to be done with it all. For the most part, the killing that was done and attempted was quite impersonal.⁵⁸

Communication usually occurred in one of two ways—through either music or conversation whenever a German soldier who had picked up some English along the way was positioned in the opposite trench.⁵⁹ The dialogues of these conversations were rarely in depth. One soldier stationed on the Western Front described the typical exchange:

They shout to us every morning asking us over to dinner. One day they held up a bit of blackboard, and on it was written in big letters, 'When are you Englishmen going home and let us have peace.' They shout across at us that they want peace.⁶⁰

In another sector of the front, a German would greet his British counterparts with "It is I Fritz the bunmaker of London. What is the football news?"⁶¹ Conversing with the Germans was seen as more of a humorous activity, while music was one of the rare pleasures to be found in the trenches and was much appreciated by both sides. One soldier remembered a German violinist, "In the summer evenings when a slight breeze was blowing towards us we could distinguish every note. We always gave him a clap and shouted for an encore."⁶² The musical instruments brought into the trenches were usually small and handmade but in rare situations larger pieces could be found. One soldier remembered, "In one trench there was a piano actually in the front line, and the men had many good sing songs. The Germans did not object to this as a general rule."⁶³

However, as much as the soldiers swore to the live-and-let-live code of trench life, it was always in jeopardy of being destroyed by the high commands insistence on

58 Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, 134.

59 Many Germans learned English before the war while studying or working in Britain. When war broke out they were allowed to return to Germany. These procedures would not be repeated in future wars.

60 Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 105-106.

61 *The War History of the Sixth Battalion The South Staffordshire Regiment* (London: Heinemann, 1924), 32, in Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, 138.

62 F. Richards, *Old Soldiers Never Die* (London: Faber & Faber, 1933), 103, in Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, 140.

63 A. L. Raimes, *The Fifth Battalion The Durham Light Infantry, 1914-1918* (London, 1931), 34-35, in Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, 132.

maintaining an “offensive attitude.” The trench raid, first used by the Canadians, and quickly adopted by all armies on the Western Front, was the primary tool for keeping the offensive spirit alive among the front line soldiers. It was the view of the general officers that these raids were necessary, not only to keep the men on their toes, but also to gather important intelligence of the enemy’s strength and numbers.⁶⁴

On the whole, trench raids increased the level of aggression displayed by both sides, but not by the ways high command had intended. Trench raiding destroyed the system of live-and-let-live, setting off a domino effect of retaliatory attacks that lasted days after the initial raid. The side that had raided expected retaliation, unable to predict where, when, or how. The raided became nervous, not knowing whether the attack was an isolated event or an indication of the arrival of an élite unit who would surely carry out subsequent attacks.⁶⁵ T. Lloyd explains, “Generally a raid had the same effect as stirring the muddy bed of a stream, where the water remains discolored long after the discoloration. Ever expectant of another visitation, the subsequent period found both sides harassing one another.”⁶⁶

Apart from the side effects of raiding, the raid in itself was almost always a disaster. Ranging in size from around a hundred men to a few thousand accompanied by artillery support, the raiders always had to mount a frontal assault against a well dug-in defender who could bring an enormous amount of firepower upon their approaches.⁶⁷ The resulting casualties were grievous in number. Soldiers could not rationalize the raids, but the orders kept coming down, further disconnecting them from the outside world.

While trench raids brought death to the front lines in large numbers, the ever present sniper incessantly tested the soldiers’ nerves. Sniper struck unannounced and often with deadly consequences. The only means of protection was to keep one’s head down, but it only took one lapse of concentration for the sniper to find his mark. Even in inactive fronts sniping provided a steady stream of casualties: “During the ten-day spell in that quiet sector, the battalion lost two or three men every day by Jerry sniping, none surviving.”⁶⁸ The high command was well aware of the dangers of snipers, but was reluctant to remove tall men from the front line trenches. For soldiers over six feet the dangers became magnified because they continually had to duck down to avoid exposing themselves.⁶⁹

Soldiers feared the enemy on the Western Front because they could strike without warning. This form of death was quick compared to that brought on from the effects of climate and disease. In this sense, soldiers struggled much more to survive against the elements than against the Germans. The BEF operated the northern component of the

64 Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, 185-186.

65 *Ibid.*, 191, 194.

66 T. Lloyd, *The Blazing Trail of Flanders* (London: Heath Cranton, 1933), 126, in Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, 194-195.

67 Winter, *Death’s Men*, 94; Liddle, *Soldier’s War*, 63.

68 Coppard, *Machine Gun to Cambrai*, 26.

69 *Ibid.*

Western Front, including the area from Nieuport, near the Belgium coast, to Armentières, in France. It was here that the trenches stretched across the flat and often flooded fields of Flanders.⁷⁰ Even without the heavy rain that plagued these areas, the water table remained high. The result was that the trenches underwent continuous flooding problems. Nearly every veteran of this theatre mentioned the perpetual wetness and incessant mud as one of his worst experiences of the war. One veteran told of how,

The trenches were full of liquid mud, which reached up to our knees. With the absence of proper dugouts and no dry place to sleep, we were soon in a wretched state. It rained cats and dogs, and the nights were pitch dark and bitterly cold. On gun duty the hours dragged by with excruciating tedium and hunger.⁷¹

The same man goes on to remark, "I always think of my time there [Festubert] as one of the worst of my experiences, not so much because of enemy action, but because of the miserable conditions."⁷²

The weather also had a demoralizing effect upon the soldiers as there was no way to escape it. Frontline dugouts and living quarters capable of warding off some of the elements were mostly reserved for officers, leaving the infantry to scarp together primitive shelters using discarded war materials. No matter how much soldiers tried, they could never get completely dry or remove all the mud from themselves while in the front line and support trenches. Being constantly wet also caused a soldier to be perpetually cold. Trying to get warm was another major problem. Fuel was rationed and other burning materials were scarce or used to reinforce the trenches. Fires, in general, were regulated because they attracted artillery fire.⁷³ The weather alone was enough to reduce even the newest arrivals at the front into a miserable array of ruffians. One observer described a passing group of British soldiers as, "tattered, worn, straggling, footsore, weary and looking generally broken to pieces. Hairy, unshaved, dirty-faced, and dressed in every possible variety of head-dress, the men looked like so many prehistoric savages rather than a crack regiment of the British Army."⁷⁴ Mud was not only a problem for the men but also rendered vast amounts of equipment useless. Rifles were especially vulnerable to the effects of mud, repeatedly jamming if not washed and cleaned on a daily basis.⁷⁵

As depressing as the weather were the vermin that called the Western Front home

70 Simpson, "British Soldier on the Western Front", 141.

71 Coppard, *Machine Gun to Cambrai*, 52.

72 *Ibid.*, 58.

73 Liddle, *Soldier's War*, 65.

74 Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 103.

75 H. E. Harvey, *Battle-Line Narratives, 1915-1918* (London: Brentano's LTD, 1928), 28.

and were equally despised. This group consisted primarily of two villains, rats being the visible threat and lice the invisible. With rotting food and thousands of corpses scattered across the battlefield, rats multiplied by the tens of thousands.⁷⁶ Seeking the warmth and safety of the trenches they tormented the soldiers: "These rats are the limit! The dugout swarms with them. Last night they ate half my biscuits and a good part of Timothy's clean socks, and whenever I began to get to sleep one of them would run across my face."⁷⁷ Rats did, however, provide a certain degree of entertainment to the men. Rat hunting became a popular sport among the trenches with soldiers competing as to who could kill the most in a single day. The liquidation of the rat population provided another way to pass the monotonous routine of trench life. As one ingenious soldier explained, "One night, with a big moon rising behind Jerry's line, I put a piece of cheese on the parapet, a black mountain against the moon's face. I cocked a revolver close to the bait and stood motionless. Rat after rat came in quick succession, took one sniff and died."⁷⁸

Hand in hand with the rats were the lice. With no hope of exterminating all of them, soldiers took on the never-ending task of killing as many as possible. The favored methods for lice hunting, known as "chatting" by the soldiers, were either roasting them with a match or crushing them between the forefinger and thumb nails.⁷⁹ One soldier later told of how,

A full day's rest allowed us to clean up a bit, and to launch a full scale attack on lice. I sat in a quiet corner of a barn for two hours delousing myself as best I could. We were all at it, for none of us escaped their vile attentions. The things lay in the seams of trousers, in the deep furrows of long thick woolly pants, and seemed impregnable in their deep entrenchments. A lighted candle applied where they were thickest made them pop like Chinese crackers.⁸⁰

The combined force of enemy action, weather-related discomforts, and the presence of vermin had a debilitating effect on the British soldiers, both mentally and physically. Among the diseases that racked the trenches, trench foot was the most common. Developing from unrelieved duty or poorly drained trenches it could rapidly result in amputation if not properly treated.⁸¹ Chronic lack of sleep combined with a lack of sense of purpose added to the physical sluggishness of the front. Little mentioned in memoirs, but well documented after the war, was the prominence of mental depression among soldiers involved in front line experiences.⁸² Liddle explains,

76 Coppard, *Machine Gun to Cambrai*, 47.

77 Donald Hankey, *A Student in Arms*, 2nd series (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1917), 82.

78 Coppard, *Machine Gun to Cambrai*, 47.

79 Liddle, *Soldier's War*, 65-67; Coppard, *Machine Gun to Cambrai*, 43.

80 Coppard, *Machine Gun to Cambrai*, 43.

81 Liddle, *Soldier's war*, 65.

82 Winter, *Death's Men*, 100-101.

Prolonged exposure to siege warfare conditions . . . seriously affected the morale and nervous systems of men not physically capable of endurance. If any poor devil's nerves got the better of him and he was found wandering behind the lines, a not infrequent occurrence, it was *prima facie* a cowardice or desertion case. There was no psychiatric defense available to help save him from a firing squad.⁸³

With death lurking around every corner, the pressures of the front lines were enormous. One of the most popular methods soldiers used to temporarily escape the miseries of the trenches was letter writing. This was one of the few leisure activities permitted in the lines and allowed men a connection to the outside world. It was also the easiest way to communicate with loved ones back in Britain.⁸⁴ The Army allowed soldiers to write two letters a week. An uncensored letter, sealed in special green envelopes, were permitted once a month, provided men promised not to give away tactical information.⁸⁵

Soldiers writing home often struggled to find the right words to describe their experiences on the Continent. Many glossed over the horror of the trenches in an attempt to reassure family members, while others used the pages to record their feelings towards the war. Written in the early months of the war one soldier still displayed the patriotism with which he enlisted:

We are just at the beginning of the struggle I'm afraid, and every hour we should remind ourselves that it is our great privilege to save the traditions of all centuries behind us. It's a grand opportunity, and we must spare no effort to use it, for if we fail we shall curse ourselves in bitterness every year that we live, and our children will despise our memory.⁸⁶

As the war dragged on, feelings became increasingly pessimistic:

Oh this is awful, no one can imagine war till they are at it, every living thing suffers by it . . . The Kaiser may be accursed forever, may he never sleep peacefully again, the mad fiend, may he never find rest even after death . . . We must finish him, for if not, we shall never be safe.⁸⁷

83 Coppard, *Machine Gun to Cambrai*, 41.

84 Winter, *Death's Men*, 164.

85 *Ibid.*

86 Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 119.

87 *Ibid.*

Donald Hankey, who left school in the early days of August 1914 to join the Army found the conditions of the Western Front to be far different than he had expected:

When one sees the dead, their limbs crushed and mangled, their features distorted and blackened, one can only have repulsion for war. It is easy to talk of glory and heroism when one is away from it, when memory has softened the gruesome details. But here, in the presence of the mutilated and tortured dead, one can only feel the horror and wickedness of war.⁸⁸

Letter writing was an important part of the soldiers' time in the trenches, but the receiving of mail provided an even greater joy. Letters provided personalized news from home, including how family members were doing, reports on the year's harvest, and crucial football scores.⁸⁹ Parcels were also received, often from volunteer groups trying to brighten the spirits of the fighting men. Items from these groups could be the most touching of all. A note attached to one box read,

We are sorry that you are cold at night so we are sending you a blanket. We mean to send one every week because you are so brave and taking care of us and our dear country. We send you our love and pray to God to end the war soon and bring you safe home.
Your loving little friends, Garden Fields School (girls)
P.S. We are not going to buy sweets till the war is over but save our money for blankets and tobacco.⁹⁰

The writing and receiving of letters was always done in close contact with the other soldiers in one's trench. It was these men that soldiers relied upon to keep them alive, and out of this grew a special camaraderie unique to no other. These friendships became so close that a type of trench household was created: "men are welded into a closer comradeship by dangers and discomforts shared. They learn to trust each other, and to look for the essential qualities rather than for the accidental graces."⁹¹ Rations would be cooked and consumed collectively and care packages would be distributed evenly among the members. Practical jokes were always prevalent in the trench households, as

88 Hankey, *Student in Arms*, 2nd series, 88-89.

89 Winter, *Death's Men*, 164.

90 *Ibid.*, 165.

91 Hankey, *Student in Arms*, 33.

was swearing, the long renowned art of soldiers. One soldier explained, "A pent-up bloke felt good after delivering a particularly foul and original sentence, and his face would beam at the cheers which acclaimed his efforts."⁹² When a soldier was killed, another would write a personalized account to accompany the official notice to the next of kin.⁹³

British soldiers did the best they could to relate their experiences on the Western Front to their prior civilian lives, but it became increasingly difficult with each passing day in the trenches.⁹⁴ They were soldiers and, in turn, were expected to kill. While positioned within an inactive sector, soldiers could influence their safety to some degree, as the system of live-and-let-live has shown, but soldiers knew that offensives would be needed to win the war and that meant they could be thrown into battle at any time. It was the great battle, although infrequent and relatively short lived, that put a shiver down the soldier's spine.⁹⁵

The high command did its best to keep news of coming offensives quiet but rarely succeeded. The amounts of supplies needed for an offensive were enormous, requiring thousands of artillery pieces, shells, and men. The men could sense the coming battle weeks in advance. They would be pulled out of the line for extra rest and training, often moved to different locations along the front. As the event drew closer they received additional rations of food and cigarettes.⁹⁶ With each day that passed soldiers became more tense, not knowing if tomorrow would be the day or the next or the next. One soldier remembered waiting for news, explaining, "You just waited in a day-to-day kind of existence until things happened. It did not do you any good to know that you were going to be in a great battle next Wednesday. I preferred not to have too much time to work myself into a state of wind-up."⁹⁷

Finally word would come through that the battle was approaching. The soldiers had been surrounded by death their entire time at the front but the knowledge that many of their friends, and perhaps even themselves, would not survive the attack was emotionally draining. Anticipating a push, one man wrote, "We are waiting to go up and do the charge. I imagine we will be a lot weaker coming home if we ever see billets again. I think this anticipation is almost worse for the men who have been through a show before."⁹⁸ Another soldier later confessed,

The momentary peace was tinged with apprehension. As time went past, it crept into my mind and became acute as I weighed my chances of surviving the attack. No. I could not so easily give up life, so alluring and precious at that moment .

92 Coppard, *Machine Gun to Cambrai*, 46.

93 Ashworth, *Trench Warfare*, 155.

94 Winter, *Death's Men*, 133.

95 Liddle, *Soldier's War*, 48-52.

96 Winter, *Death's Men*, 174-175.

97 Coppard, *Machine Gun to Cambrai*, 30.

98 Liddle, *Soldier's War*, 52.

.. The grip of life on me was tightening and more than ever I wanted to live.⁹⁹

As night fell the tension grew worse. Men geared up, joining the long lines of infantry slowly making their way through the communication trenches to their jumping-off positions. After midnight orders usually came through for a few hours of rest but most could not sleep: "All through that night I never slept a wink of sleep. My stomach would insist on rising to my throat to choke me each time I thought of some lurid possibility. I would find myself calculating the chances for survival."¹⁰⁰

In the final hours before an attack, hundreds even thousands of guns would open up on the German lines, causing the ground to shake uncontrollably. The men had been used to artillery but few had experienced such an intense barrage. Waiting to go into battle one soldier later described the bombardment, saying, "Their deafening thunder threatened the ear drums. It was inspiring, though uncomfortable, for soon eighteen-pounder shells were screaming just over our heads, an experience to which we were not yet accustomed from our own artillery."¹⁰¹ The artillery barrage continued to increase until reaching its climax during the final hour prior to the attack. By this time soldiers could no longer hear themselves think.¹⁰² One soldier described his thoughts in the final minutes before going into battle explained, "One indulges in regrets about the home one may never see again. One is rather sorry for oneself . . . one feels mildly heroic."¹⁰³ At ten minutes to H-hour officers would distribute rum rations down the line with orders to fix bayonets. There was usually time for one last equipment check before the artillery stopped abruptly. Men, with ears still ringing from hours of shell explosions, would then hear the shrill of the whistle and pour over the top of their trenches into the inferno of combat.¹⁰⁴

Struggling over the trench parapet the soldiers, weighed down with equipment, began their life and death dash across no-man's land. It was here where they were at their most vulnerable, being exposed to the full fury of enemy fire. One witness recalled, "They seemed so toy-like, so trivial and ineffective when opposed to that overwhelming wrath of shells and yet they moved forward mechanically as though they were hypnotized by some superior will."¹⁰⁵ Deafening noise continued to tear at the soldiers' ears while their eyes became choked with smoke and dirt was blown into their faces. The ground was littered with shell holes and all forms of war debris. Throughout the action, the enemy's machine guns strafed the terrain with deadly accuracy while artillery laid down a wall of steel on the advancing troops.¹⁰⁶ It did not take long for the infantry lines to begin to

99 P. Maze, *A Frenchman in Khaki* (Heinemann, 1934), in *Winter, Death's Men*, 175.

100 F. Ball, quoted in *Winter, Death's Men*, 173.

101 Coppard, *Machine Gun to Cambrai*, 30.

102 *Winter, Death's Men*, 175.

103 Hankey, *A Student in Arms*, 2nd series, 117.

104 *Ibid.*, 116-118; *Winter, Death's Men*, 176-177.

105 F. Manning, *Her Privates We* (Murray, 1930), in *Winter, Death's Men*, 177.

106 *Winter, Death's Men*, 179.

break apart. One soldier explained, "It was a terrible thing to watch line after line crumple up. Meanwhile, the trenches were absolutely blocked with the dead, dying and wounded. If people at home really knew what a show like Sunday's was like."¹⁰⁷

The soldiers continued to advance. Their emotions had been numbed by the adrenaline of battle. Their body chemistry was now so upset that they fought in a semi-drugged state, often unable to recall their actions after the battle.¹⁰⁸ The soldiers' thoughts focused around death, their own and that of the enemy. As one man confessed, "I knew that at any moment my life might be blotted out by a bullet crashing through my head, or by flying shell fragments rending me apart."¹⁰⁹ It was the site of others dying that affected the soldiers the most:

I came across Flannery lying close to a barbed wire support, one arm round it as if in embrace . . . I knelt down beside him and cut his tunic with my scissors where a burnt hole clotted with blood showed under the kidney. A splinter of shell had torn part of his side away. All hope was lost for the poor soul . . . I placed the morphia under his tongue and he closed his eyes as if going to sleep. Then with an effort he tried to get up and gripped the wire. His legs shot out from under him and, muttering something about rations being fit for pigs and not for men, he fell back and died.¹¹⁰

The anguish was intensified when one's friend lay dying before them: "I felt the passing of Bill acutely, as it was the first time a pal had been struck down beside me. It was a shock to realize that death could come from nowhere."¹¹¹

With combat inevitably came the need to kill. Soldiers attempted to rationalize this act in many ways but when performed in the intimacy of the trenches it had a shattering effect. As one soldier explained,

When we got to the German trench I fell on top of a young fellow, and my bayonet went right through him. It was a crime to get him, at that. He was as delicate as a pencil. When I returned to our trenches after my first charge I could not sleep for a long time afterwards for remembering what that fellow looked like and how my bayonet slipped into him and how he screamed when he fell. He had his legs and his neck

107 Liddle, *Soldier's War*, 49.

108 Winter, *Death's Men*, 181.

109 Coppard, *Machine Gun to Cambrai*, 38.

110 P. MacGill, *The Great Push* (Jenkins, 1928), in Winter, *Death's Men*, 181-182.

111 Coppard, *Machine Gun to Cambrai*, 26.

twisted under him after he got it. I thought about it a lot, and it grew to be almost a habit that whenever I was going to sleep I would think about him, and then all hope of sleeping was gone.¹¹²

Many soldiers approached killing with a “them or me” mentality. The Western Front was not governed by outside laws. A soldier had to do whatever he could to survive. One man wrote,

You can't talk of fighting cleanly. There is no cleanliness in warfare. It isn't clean to live in the earth. It isn't clean to batter men's heads in . . . You have no idea how ridiculous this war is. You sit in a trench and wait, and fire, and send bombs over, and shell, and wait again, and bury a few men, and wait again, and fire, sleep-possibly-and wake, and wait and shell and wait, and that's all! It is not warfare; to use an impossible expression, it's civilized savagery and barbarous civilization.¹¹³

No matter the manner of thinking, soldiers could not escape the experiences of killing unscathed. With each additional day of combat or miserable day among the front line trenches, the men grew more weary. All they could hope for was to survive their current tour of duty until they were pulled out of the line for a few days rest.¹¹⁴

OUT OF THE LINE

The last day prior to moving out of the line could often be the most nerve racking as men took extra precautions to avoid being a victim of German sniping. Soldiers could quite quickly vacate their trenches once their relief unit had arrived. With the hike back through the communication trenches, the men began to awaken from the dulled mental state of trench life. It was not long before real grass grew along the road, trees contained all their branches and leaves, and even the birds could be heard again.¹¹⁵

Once out of the line, the soldiers' top priority was a bath. Some headed to the army bathing houses with, “twenty or thirty big tubs with hot shower bath above. Each man was allowed four minutes in the tub and was given a clean set of underclothing, his dirty ones were collected to be washed and used for future battalions.”¹¹⁶ The houses operated from seven in the morning to seven at night, sometimes servicing a thousand men daily. However, the house were plagued by breakdowns. Boilers often broke, produc-

112 Albert N. Depew, *Gunner Depew* (London: Cassell & Co., 1918), 61, in Bourke, “Experience of Killing”, 294-295.

113 Anonymous letter quoted in James J. Fisher, “The Immortal Deeds of Our Irish Regiments in Flanders and the Dardanelles”, No. 1, unpaginated (Dublin: Irish Regiments, 1916), in Bourke, “Experience of Killing”, 295.

114 Winter, *Death's Men*, 133.

115 *Ibid.*, 142.

116 Liddle, *Soldier's War*, 78.

ing cold baths, or the houses ran out of water all together when too many men arrived suddenly. New underwear was irritating to the skin, and usually the wrong size; clean shirts were issued with dirty pants or vice versa.¹¹⁷ Others improvised in a nearby river or pond. One soldier describe how, "A bathing parade was organized . . . In the warm summer evening we sported in the water like kids without a care. The war seemed far off, yet the line was but a mile away."¹¹⁸ Whichever option was chosen, the soldiers enjoyed themselves. Unfortunately, with the return of their clothes, returned the lice. The only answer was a new set, which rarely came.

Once clean, soldiers queued to receive their billeting assignments. Everyone prayed for a town billet where sexual indulgence and drinking were more likely to occur. Resting in a village for a few days also had the effect of reminding the men of their civilian days. The results were positive for the most part.¹¹⁹ Those not fortunate enough to find a civilian residence were relegated to the army's designated rest camps. Here they were packed into bell tents, holding up to twelve men, or Nissen huts, which could hold twenty-four. Both were tightly packed, dirty, and wet. Still, the men were above ground, freed from the torments of the rats and nobody was shooting at them.¹²⁰

Once housing was established, the soldiers received their pay. While useless in the trenches, opportunities for spending money out of the line were widespread. The first stop for a soldier with a pocket full of money was usually the army canteens where he could replenish his much cherished supply of cigarettes. Tobacco use had increased more than fourfold in Britain since the turn of the century and was one of the few pleasures allotted to the men while in the trenches.¹²¹ Specifically, "Cigarettes were as important as ammunition. A Tommy would ask for a fag when near death."¹²² Great panic would ensue if a soldier's tobacco supply dwindled. After attempting to smoke dried tea leaves rolled in brown paper, one soldier vowed never to run out of tobacco again.¹²³

Apart from tobacco, the Army canteens offered books, newspapers, candles, tinned goods, biscuits, and chocolates to the men. These were also supplemented by YMCA canteens.¹²⁴ Soldiers could get hot meals here, which was a welcome relief after the dribble of the trenches. For a few extra Francs men turned to the homely atmosphere of the French Estaminets. Here the men received fried food and crisp bread rolls to help restore their self-respect and digestive tracks. Also offered was the famous egg and chips, remembered by all who served on the Western Front. All this was, in turn, washed down with a pint or two of French beer.¹²⁵ The Estaminets were remembered for their ability to bring a little bit of England to France, helping the soldiers to relax in a social setting not

117 Winter, *Death's Men*, 146-147.

118 Coppard, *Machine Gun to Cambrai*, 24.

119 Liddle, *Soldier's War*, 75.

120 Winter, *Death's Men*, 146.

121 J. G. Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture in the British and Dominion Armies, 1914-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 82; Winter, *Death's Men*, 149.

122 Coppard, *Machine Gun to Cambrai*, 44.

123 *Ibid.*

unlike the pubs of Britain. One soldier explained,

We entered the estaminet. Soldiers were standing round the walls waiting for vacant seats . . . In the middle there was a long table and soldiers were seated around it, squeezed tightly together, eating eggs and chips and drinking wine and coffee . . . The conversation was boisterous and vulgar, much of it at the expense of the women, who laughed frequently and pretended to be shocked and called the soldiers 'naughty boys.'¹²⁶

With a full stomach soldiers could truly begin to relax. After the tribulations of the trenches men wanted to be comforted. The answer was, naturally, women:

In the shuddering revulsion from death, one turns instinctively to love as an act which seems to affirm the completeness of being . . . in the actual agony of battle, these cupidities have no place at all and women cease to exist so completely that they are not even irrelevant. Afterwards, yes.¹²⁷

There were a number of reasons why soldiers flocked to the droves of village girls, refugees, and prostitutes that loitered in the towns and around the base camps. The largely middle and working class infantry believed that good health required regular sex and they had to make up for lost time in the trenches. This attitude had its effects as venereal disease infection skyrocketed throughout the war, accounting for nearly a third of all reported diseases.¹²⁸ Other soldiers, after the strain of the front, simply wanted to be in the company of women as a way of bringing them back to the civilian world they had left behind in Britain.¹²⁹ Finally, there were those that just enjoyed the humor of the situation: "I have never seen such an unattractive collection of females in my life. I would have thought it enough to put anyone off completely even if he had gone on with the usual intention. We hurriedly left to a torrent of abuse in both English and French."¹³⁰

In attempts to quell the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and ease the men's minds in other ways, the Army offered a wide range of entertainment to the soldiers, the most substantial of which was the Army concert party. Established and run by British musicians, its performances matched those of the professional music halls.¹³¹ A small fee was sometimes required, causing soldiers to create ad hoc performances of their

124 Fuller, *Troop Morale*, 82.

125 *Ibid.*, 74; Liddle, *Soldier's War*, 75.

126 F. Voigt, quoted in Winter, *Death's Men*, 152.

127 F. Manning, *Her Privates We* (Murray: 1930), in Winter, *Death's Men*, 150.

128 Winter, *Death's Men*, 150.

129 *Ibid.*, 142.

130 Liddle, *Soldier's War*, 77.

131 L. J. Collins, *Theatre at War, 1914-1918* (New York: Macmillan, 1998), 149-150; Fuller, *Troop Morale*, 94, 100.

132 Fuller, *Troop Morale*, 99.

own.¹³² Old English folk dancing was also introduced to the troops with some degree of success.¹³³ Gambling was also common among the troops, especially when a soldier's money began to run out. The emphasis was on a wide range of card and dice games, the rules of which have long since disappeared.¹³⁴ Most popular of all remained sport, specifically football. From the misty day of the Christmas Truce men had used football as an escape from the war, playing it whenever and wherever they could.¹³⁵ F.C. Grimwade explains, "Sport allowed above all a brief mental escape from the stress and horror . . . on coming out of the trenches, weary, muddy, possibly hungry, and almost certainly wet through, the men's first moments of freedom were spent in a game of football."¹³⁶

Through these activities the soldiers hoped to distance themselves from the war. Still, they knew in a week or so they would be heading back down the road toward the sound of the guns. Even while out of the line, these men remained soldiers. The only real escape from the war zone was through injury, death, or a leave pass. The opportunity for leave was so rare in the first two years of the war that many men never expected it to come, and when it did, the mixed emotions it brought were almost too much to bear.¹³⁷ An instinctive joy came to a man knowing in a few hours he would be out of the cauldron of death that was the Western Front and back across the Channel with family and friends. At the same time, he was deeply saddened to leave his mates behind, not knowing who would be left alive when he returned. Camaraderie had grown so intense in the trenches that some refused to leave their friends.¹³⁸

Transport back to Britain brought with it the abruptness of civilian life. Soldiers found themselves suddenly thrown back into a society that knew none of his hardships. For most, it was impossible to talk of their experiences with family and friends. Where once great conversation had reined, a void now separated the men from their loved ones. Any hopes that a return to Britain would restore their role as civilians were dashed, the prewar life was gone forever.¹³⁹ Also, the men knew leave was only temporary. Inevitably, they would have to return to the front, a world encompassed by death, but now less alien than the streets they grew up on. One man who had received leave during the war later wrote, "The wrench came when I had to say goodbye and return to France. Heart-breaking scenes occurred when the troop trains departed. I was in tears."¹⁴⁰

Back in camp the repression of emotions began anew. Clothes had been cleaned, the affliction of lice abated, and stomachs filled; it was time to re-enter the trenches:

It is surprising how one's tautened nerves relax as a result of a few days rest and quiet-and how, once more in the danger zone, the strain on

132 Collins, *Theatre at War*, 151.

134 Winter, *Death's Men*, 153.

135 Eksteins, *Rites of Spring*, 123, 125.

136 F. C. Grimwade, *War History of the Fourth Battalion The London Regiment, 1914-1919* (1922), 293, in Fuller, *Troop Morale*, 91.

137 Fuller, *Troop Morale*, 72-73.

138 Liddle, *Soldier's War*, 83.

139 *Ibid.*; Fuller, *Troop Morale*, 72-73.

sorely tried nerves begins again after the painful process which makes one feel conditions more acutely and which take time to acclimatize one to the previous level one had attained. Do not believe that soldiers get used to war and danger. They never do.¹⁴¹

And so they went, the men of Kitchener's Army, citizen soldiers, down the mud slicked roads, past bombed and abandoned buildings, through the communication and support trenches, to the front, always carrying with them the emotional malaise of the Western Front.

This is how the British soldiers lived their lives on the Western Front day after day, week after week, month after month. With each passing day the experiences of war became harder to bear. This was not the war men had signed up for back in August of 1914. At that time the war seemed so temporary, so far away. The hundreds of thousands of men who volunteered in those early days saw the war as employment, a chance to start over in life, an adventure, or just simply something to do. Few could have realized what was in store for them on the plains of northern France and Belgium.

Men had their grievances concerning the new rules the Army imposed on them in basic training, but still the reality of being soldiers was lacking. A deficiency in supplies and training left the new soldiers further unprepared for life among the trenches. Before long the volunteers found themselves thrown into the trenches of the Western Front. Following a brief orientation by veteran units, the men were alone. Instantly, emotions took a reversal of fortunes. Men who had never traveled much beyond their town, much less beyond England, now found themselves crouching in muddy, water soaked trenches. Men whose only experiences with violence and aggression were at the local pub were now exposed to the fury and evils of modern warfare. The great adventure had become the great nightmare.

Humans are made to adapt, and that is just what the British soldiers did. They replaced as many aspects of military life as they could with reminders of home. Time was almost always allotted for the English Breakfast, with tea breaks occurring at regular intervals, and sport continued to be practiced. To diminish the unnecessary killing and destruction of war the live-and-let-live system of truces was established.

Even with these attempts at civilianizing the war, the men were already beginning to change. They could not escape the death that enveloped them. It was everywhere, in no-man's land, in the trenches, in the rear, and even in the eyes of the living. The only hope was to somehow push it to the back of the mind. The resulting mental impact of day after day in the trenches ravaged the soldiers to the point that emotions became so

140 Coppard, *Machine Gun to Cambrai*, 65.

141 A. Worden, *Yes, Daddy* (MacMillan, 1961), in *Winter, Death's Men*, 161.

142 Liddle, *Soldier's War*, 21.

143 Warburton, "Britain: The Home Front".

144 Keegan, *First World War*, 310-324, 393-394.

145 *Ibid.*, 426.

dulled one could not tell if a man was alive or dead.

Adding to the mental drain of the front was the physical abuse the British soldiers endured on a daily basis. Being perpetually cold and wet, it took great efforts to fight off the attacks of rats, lice, and enemy assaults. Still, the men came to accept this form of torture as long as they were spared the experiences of the great battle. It was here that soldiers witnessed and engaged in the act of killing on a scale so grand it is hard to conceive. The experiences of slaying the enemy, along with the death of one's friends and comrades, left the soldiers with memories and personal anguish of untold proportions.

Rest periods out of the line offered time away from the front for soldiers to recuperate as best as possible, but were never fully successful. They were too short and the men knew eventually they would have to return. While out of the line, soldiers were able to escape the experiences of the trenches for a few days at least. They received baths and improved food, had the opportunities to associate with women again, and play a few games of football. To some, leave back to Britain was granted, forcing a soldier to undergo the full spectrum of emotions in a matter of days. These events could not purge the soldiers of their front line experiences; in many ways, they added to them. Men were by and large left alone to deal with their emotions and the experiences of the Western Front.

The war did not stop for individual soldiers. It kept on going, day after day, requiring more and more men to feed its appetite. With volunteer enlistment declining steadily throughout 1915, Britain instituted its first Military Conscription Act in January of 1916.¹⁴² By 1916, Britain had also become fully mobilized towards the war and was now able to pour vast amounts of war material into France.¹⁴³

With each year, the Great War became greater. Each year brought increased destruction and higher casualty figures. For the British, 1916 brought the great attrition battle of the Somme, to be followed in 1917 by Passchendaele.¹⁴⁴ Through all of this the British soldier continued to man his trenches, enduring all the horrors of the Western Front. Not until the Spring Offensives of the Germans failed in 1918 did the war revert back to one of maneuver, freeing the soldiers from their subterranean chambers for the first time in three and a half years.¹⁴⁵

The eleventh of November 1918 was a day of jubilation throughout Britain. Germany had signed an armistice that morning ending hostilities in all its theatres, including along the Western Front. The war Europe had been so anxious for was finally over. The crowds that gathered in the streets of Britain that day were forever distanced from those who had gathered in August of 1914. The world had changed in that time. There is no better example of this than the British volunteer soldiers who entered the trenches of the Western Front naive and innocent, to emerge four years later hardened by their experiences.