

Hadley's Struggle for Independence
The Small Farming Town and Its People in the
Revolutionary War

By: Simon J. Pongratz

The study of history can take many forms. Often, history is told as relations between nations and peoples, and smaller stories are sometimes neglected in favor of the big picture. In some cases, these very stories can in fact show interesting, insightful viewpoints that deserve to be illuminated. There are innumerable books and studies done on the American Revolutionary War, but most of them illustrate this bias. With the large-scale causes, ebbs, and flows of the Revolution in mind, one can get an entirely different and enlightening view of that great event by looking at the smaller-scale stories of individuals and communities.

Hadley, Massachusetts, is one of those communities. Though in the Western part of the state, Hadley was “in no way behind [her] sister towns in the Eastern part of the state, in [her] determination to defend [her] rights and principles: and [cooperate] with [the eastern towns] in their efforts to take measures to protect their interests, and fight if need be for their liberty.”¹

Examining the Revolution’s effect on life in that small farming town can illuminate aspects of the Revolutionary War that would otherwise remain hidden. Close scrutiny of town meeting records, diaries, and war records, to name a few, yields information that may be woven into a unique tapestry, telling a compelling story.

The Massachusetts and Plymouth Colonies had, 100 years prior to the beginning of the Revolutionary War, outlined their “Fundamentals and Bills of Rights,” many of which were perceived by the American colonists as having been abused by Great Britain.

Mrs. John Barstow quotes Dr. Holland:

The arrival of military force, the misrepresentation of the colonies abroad, the refusal of their petitions, the popular combinations against importing British goods, the struggle between patriotism and governmental policy in the British

¹ Mrs. John S. Barstow, “Hadley in the Revolution” (paper, Hadley Historical Society, 1905), 2.

Parliament, the ever memorable and ever glorious protest against oppression, by the General Assembly of the Colony, the collusions of soldiers with the people of Boston, the firm and persistent opposition to the usurpation of the chartered rights, the traitorous conduct of the Governor, in his capacity as the tool of the British ministry, the destruction of the tea in Boston harbor, the holding of county meetings and conventions, the institution of committees of safety and correspondence—all these events in which civil liberty and national glory were taking root, prepared the way for the first demonstration, which sealed in blood, on the soil of Massachusetts, the doom of British rule in the American colonies.²

When the peoples' anger erupted into revolution, the towns in Western Massachusetts were “no less sensitive than their neighbors,” in “their determination to defend their rights and principles.”³

The experience of war was not alien to Hadley. It had been attacked in King Phillip's War (1675 - 1676), seen murder (of Richard Church by natives) and intrigue in King William's War (1688 – 1689), and the frightening native assault on Deerfield in Queen Anne's War (1703 – 1713). The town had been fortified by the beginning of the Revolution, and the citizens of Hadley were not overwhelmed by the demands for war in 1775 due to its frequency in the preceding century. Between 1775 and 1781, Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors records the incredible number of 185 men from Hadley that engaged in the war.⁴

Elizabeth Porter Phelps, a prominent member of the Hadley community, was related to both Eleazer Porter and Charles Phelps and resided at the Porter-Phelps farm.⁵ She kept a diary, from which we may find much information about the effect of the war

² Ibid., 1-2.

³ Barstow, *Revolution*, 2.

⁴ *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War*, compilation from the archives, 17 volumes (Boston, Wright and Potter Printing Co., 1908. These volumes have been invaluable in constructing certain parts of this paper. However, it has proven inadequate in terms of clarity and consistency, proving unreliable for some purposes. Therefore, some conclusions may be disputable, such as this number.

⁵ Also called “Forty Acres.”

on personal life in Hadley. During the time before hostilities broke out, Elizabeth is sometimes silent about major events, such as the Stamp or ^{Townshend} Townsend acts, and it is likely that anger at Britain and talk of revolution was initially more prominent in Eastern Massachusetts. Hadley may have buzzed with news of these early events, but those in town who kept diaries, to whom we will turn for information, saw no need to write it down. The appearance of ‘a mob in Hadley on account of trees,’ suggests that people were more upset about local laws and policy conflict—in this case, Imperial policy prohibited colonists from cutting down trees that would be useful for shipbuilding. Even the Boston massacre (March 1770) received little attention, for Hadley’s residents had problems of their own.⁶

Three years later, the sense of impending war was in the air, and on 29 November 1773 Elizabeth Porter Phelps refers to a “General Training” that her cousin Captain Elisha Porter led. Forty-Seven of the Hadley men who fought in the war were under Captain Porter’s command at one time or another, as part of the 4th Hampshire County regiment of Massachusetts Militia, many of them raised to reinforce the Continental Army.⁷

The Massachusetts Militia was a distinctly separate entity from the “Continental Army of the United Colonies.” It was not a standing army, and was called forth principally, as the records of many Hadley men show, to respond to some military emergency. Shortly after the outbreak of armed conflict, the Massachusetts Militia

⁶ Elizabeth Porter-Phelps, *Diary*, summarized in a Microsoft Word Document, *Elizabeth Porter Phelps’ American Revolution*, (Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum), 1-2. The document was kindly prepared and provided by the Museum.

⁷ *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors* lists nineteen of these men under “Elisha Porter,” the others under “Porter,” but the similarities in their records and other areas suggest that all forty-seven were commanded by Elisha Porter.

companies were incorporated into the Continental Army, allowing the Militia to serve as a kind of preparation for more intense combat.

By 3 January 1774, those present at the town meeting saw fit to make a large entry in the records:

Resolved. That it is the opinion of this town that the grievances we labor under are owing, in great measure to methods taken by persons among us, of an arbitrary turn of mind, to set the temper and behavior of the people of this province in an unfavorable light at Great Britain [sic], and insinuating, that there must be an abridgement of what may be called English Liberties. Resolved that this town will use all such measures as shall appear to them consistent with their Duty, in order to obtain a redress of the grievances we feel, and to prevent, if possible, any further violations of our natural and Constitutional rights, that our invaluable liberties, civil and religious, may be enjoyed by us, and transmitted to our posterity inviolate: always hoping in the Goodness of Divine Providence, that the machinations of designing persons, to effect a change in our happy constitution will be rendered abortive from time to time to the latest generations.⁸

This followed an earlier resolution on 29 May 1772:

That the representatives of this town be instructed to use their utmost influence and power in the next session of the General Assembly, that our grievances may be made known to his Majesty, and the same may be redressed.⁹

The language gives insight into the citizens' thoughts and worries. They still saw themselves as Englishmen, deserving the same rights that their kinsmen across the Atlantic enjoyed. More importantly, much of the language contains the same ideas that would appear later in the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and Bill of Rights. Redress of grievances, natural and Constitutional rights, and civil and religious liberties, were foremost among peoples' thoughts, and would be secured in the historic documents. They were written with foresight, principally to prevent, as Hadley's citizens

⁸ Hadley Town Meeting Records, Microfilm (Special Collections and Archives, Umass W.E.B. DuBois Library, 25th floor), 1774, 315.

⁹ Barstow, *Revolution*, 1.

put it, “the machinations of designing persons, to effect a change in our happy constitution.”

After setting forth their course of action, the people of Hadley voted to establish a “committee of correspondence,” which Samuel Adams had been working to set up throughout the colony, to help the communities keep up with the developing crisis. These committees were made up of elected members of the town, and often dealt with important town matters. The Committee of Correspondence in Concord, Massachusetts, dealt with requisitioning of supplies and in fact all important wartime business.¹⁰ Hadley’s committee is mentioned often in the town meeting records, and was charged with much of the same tasks as Concord’s. In addition, an inspection committee of seven men was established, charged with seeing that “the association agreed upon and entered into by the Continental Congress (Philadelphia, 4 September 1774)... be carried into execution in this town.”¹¹

By 3 October the crisis was deepening, and Hadley voted to send schoolteacher and selectman Josiah Pierce “to concert such measures as may be adopted and executed by the whole people in this time of distress and danger,”¹² for which he was paid four shillings per day. To supply and fortify the town, they voted to provide four half-barrels of powder, construction of a powder house “in the middle lane leading into the Great Meadow,” and to “make an enquiry whether the Great Gun which formerly belong [sic]

¹⁰ Robert Gross, *The Minutemen and their World*. (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976).

¹¹ *Records*, 323.

¹² *Ibid.*, 322.

to this town is the property of the town now.”¹³ Hadley had taken the first step in committing to the war.

The gun was found to currently belong to the town, and on 4 January 1775, Warham and William Smith were sent to Williamstown to retrieve it. Warham Smith would eventually serve under Col. Porter, Capt. Cook, and was raised for nine months for service in the Continental Army. An interesting entry in Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors states that he “claimed to be an asst. dep. commissary, but notwithstanding was sent forward with the other recruits. Arrived at Fishkill July 6 1778.”

Two more half-barrels of powder were also ordered at the January 4th meeting, and a committee was set up which included Charles Phelps. Charles, as Elizabeth Porter-Phelps’ husband, was very influential in Hadley. On 28 August 1774 he traveled to Springfield to sit on the General Court, and instead witnessed the closing of the courthouse by a mob¹⁴—a disturbing scene that figured greatly in Charles’ and his family’s consciousness during and following the Revolution.¹⁵

Charles’ committee was established to receive donations for the towns of Boston and Charlestown, which since 1774 had been plagued by British designs, such as the (Boston Port Act) Coercive Acts and closing of Boston’s port, to break the spirit of the Americans. The former are summarized by Robert Gross:

All further trade through the port of Boston was banned until the town compensated the East India Company for its losses¹⁶... The Royal Governor no longer had to work with an elective council, whose members were chosen annually by the legislature; it was replaced by a Crown-appointed body... And the

-> yes, MA's charter / constitution was revoked

¹³ Barstow, *Revolution*, 4.

¹⁴ Porter-Phelps, *Diary*.

¹⁵ Charles Phelps and his kin were wealthy members of Hadley’s aristocracy, with no taste for rule by the mob. They were Federalists after the war, supporting the creation of a strong central government. They also supported the suppression of Shay’s Rebellion.

¹⁶ Resulting from the Boston Tea Party.

Governor obtained enormous new powers unmatched by executives in the other colonies.¹⁷

After these developments, Elizabeth Porter Phelps wrote in her diary:

The People of the Land are greatly threatened with Cruelty and oppression from the Parliament of Great Britain – the port of Boston is now and has been ever since the first day of this month shut up and greater calamities are daily expected.¹⁸

4 January 1775 also saw Hadley's first call to arms in the town meeting archives, for the government and citizens of the town could not avoid matters any longer.

The town of Hadley will give all such effective men in said Hadley as shall bind themselves by their promise to equip themselves with proper accoutrements to go into the field of battle (if called to)...for fifteen half days to learn the art military, under the officers by them chosen...to begin the first time the twelfth day of this instant, and to train two half days in the month of January, and from that time one half day every week till the whole is finished.¹⁹

This seems to have been not a moment too soon, for on 28 March, Josiah Pierce wrote in his diary, "Chelsea fight last night till 6 or 7 this morn. Our troops burnt a schooner of regulars no one killed – 3 wounded on our side," and on 17 April, "The first engagement with the troops at Lexington 8 kills."²⁰ Elizabeth Porter Phelps wrote on the 23rd: "my Husband set out for Brookfield as a post to hear what News – for last Wed the Troops and our men had a Battle, numbers lost on both sides but it seems as if we were most favoured."²¹

¹⁷Gross, *Minutemen*, 48.

¹⁸ Porter-Phelps, *Diary*, 2.

¹⁹ *Records*, 323.

²⁰ Josiah Pierce, *diary and almanac*. (Hadley Historical Society), 1775-1779.

²¹ Porter-Phelps, *Diary*, 3.

The battles of Lexington and Concord resulted in over 100 colonial and 270 British deaths, and also made any course other than outright war nearly impossible. Indeed, 20 days later, George Washington and John Adams were attending the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia, “each...ready for war.”²² After the battle and for three months following, no fewer than thirty Hadley men mustered, most as part of the Militia, under company and regimental commanders Eliakim Smith and Jonathan Ward.

Josiah Pierce, from whose diary we have much valuable information, had been chosen as a delegate to the illegal Congress in Cambridge, which is corroborated by his diary on 10 February 1775: “I set off for Congress.” He was very active at town meetings and as a writer, and his diary provides an interesting look at events unfolding. On 19 June he wrote, “Fight at Charlestown began last Saturday, i.e. 17th and Charlestown burnt. The guns fired in this fight were heard at the foot of [inelligible] mountain...120 miles as the road goes.” Elizabeth Porter Phelps also wrote of the battle:

News has come from our Army at Cambridge and round about there that they had a battle last week Satturday – about 50 killed some wounded some taken. Tis thot many more of the Regulars are killed than of the Provincials – they have taken ground from our men.²³

On a personal note, Pierce added to his diary on the 24th: “I receive the news, David was wounded in Charlestown (‘tis said, slightly).”

Of Josiah Pierce’s son David, we know from his entry in Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors only that he was a member of Moses Kellogg’s company in Jonathan Ward’s regiment, and that he “reported on command to Quebec.” Given the fact that his record also states “Company return [probably Oct. 1775],” we may place Pierce with those

²² John Ferling, *Setting the World Ablaze*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 97.

²³ Porter-Phelps, Diary, 3.

twenty-five men from Hadley who marched on April 20 1775 for the alarm on the 19th, which would have been prompted by the bloodshed at Lexington and Concord. Many of those twenty-five men, including Pierce, were sent to Quebec and Fort Ticonderoga as reinforcements for the Continental Army for 2 months. Sadly, an entry may be found in Josiah Pierce's diary dated Dec 28th: "My son David Pierce died Dec 28th...at a town called [illegible] – I receive certain news of it Feb. 9th 1776." Pierce had other children; his son William was in the same company and regiment as his brother (Moses Kellogg, Jonathan Ward), and thus went also to Ticonderoga, and also with the militia to assist General Gates on an alarm. Younger Josiah Pierce, although not mentioned in Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors, joined the army in July 1779.

Elizabeth's husband Charles Phelps and other Hadley men, including his slave Cesar Phelps, went to Cambridge to sell provisions to the Continental soldiers surrounding Boston. When Charles left on 25 February 1776, Cesar remained in Cambridge and joined the army for 3 years, possibly in Charles' place. Eventually, Cesar marched with the twenty-five Hadley men to Fort Ticonderoga, from which he wrote this letter to his master:

Sir I take this opportunity to enform you that I don't entend to live with Capt Cranston if I can help it and I would Be glad if you would send me a letter that I may git my wagers for I have not got any of my wagers and I want to know how all the Folks Do at home and I Desire yor prayers for me while in the Sarves and if you Determin to Sel me I want you shud send my Stock²⁴ and Buckel So no more at present But I remain your ever faithful Slave, Cesar Phelps.²⁵

²⁴ Similar to a man's tie.

²⁵ Cesar Phelps and Zeb Prutt are two slaves who are known to have joined the army, yet they are not listed in *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors*. This suggests the methodical exclusion of slaves or former slaves from official service records.

This letter leaves us with many questions. For example, we do not know if Cesar wrote it, or if it was dictated. But it also informs us about Caesar's situation. He's still a slave, unable even to receive his wages without a letter from his master Charles. At the same time, he doesn't intend to live with Capt. Cranston, and asserts his ownership of the stock and buckle—he seems to have a semi-free status.

Under the English and later the American standards, slaves could win their freedom in the army, a hitherto unavailable road of opportunity. The military lifestyle also may have been seen as an attractive departure from the drab, weary life of a slave. The Americans were not motivated by the same manpower shortages that had plagued them in past wars against the French and Indians, and they were not forced, as their fathers had been, to call up large numbers of black slaves. Many enlisted nevertheless, such as Cesar and Zeb Prutt from Hadley, due to the obvious advantages to life as a slave.

As 1776 progressed, the war began to take precedence in the lives of Hadley's residents. Josiah Pierce made an entry into his diary on March 8th 1776, "meeting to choose Capt. + 2 Lieuts." Then on the 25th, "I administer oaths to Maj.'s Porter and Williams." The bottom of the page reads: "Company march from Hadley. 3rd day. Troops evacuated Boston. 17th day." Twelve Hadley men, under the command of James Hendrick, show a "Pay abstract for travel allowance to and from camp, Charlestown, camp no. 3, Jan 13 1776."²⁶

The 17th of March was indeed a cause for celebration for the Americans, symbolized by George Washington's words from the ruined city of Boston to "Look

²⁶ *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors*. These men were: Privates Reuben Coats, Josiah Cook, Silas Farr, Timothy Hammond, Jonathan Harriman, Abraham Kellogg, Perez Smith, Samuel Whitney, and Carmiah Wright (also a Corporal), and Sergeants Israel Lyman and Timothy Marsh. Joseph Smith is also included, but his records list James Hendrick as the Regimental (usually a Lieutenant Colonel), rather than Company (usually a Captain), commander.

upon Zion...a tabernacle that shall not be taken down.”²⁷ Elizabeth Porter Phelps’ words on the evacuation of Boston by the British betray her emotions: “This day the Regulars have left Boston which they have held as their garrison this year – Glory to God.”²⁸ The British evacuation and retreat to Halifax with the Royalist families of Boston, coming instead of a planned counterattack that would have been very violent, gave the Americans a much needed morale boost.

On Aug 17 1777, the bells in Hatfield began ringing at 4:00 AM. Elizabeth Porter Phelps wrote “an alarm from the westward—many men set out to go—all in confusion.” At least 17 men, including Captain Oliver Smith and his company, marched on the alarm to Bennington with hundreds of men from Western Massachusetts under Parson Thomas Allen of Pittsfield and commanded by Brig. Gen. John Stark. They were responding to Gen. Burgoyne’s plan to “sweep up Lake Champlain, capture weakly held Ticonderoga, drive south across the narrow land bridge that separated the lake from the Upper Hudson, and then push on gloriously to Albany.”²⁹

The battle of Bennington saw Stark’s men massacre about 800 German mercenaries under General Burgoyne, and was a precursor to the latter’s ultimate defeat at Saratoga. After the battle, Elizabeth Porter Phelps wrote: ““The event of the late alarm was that the Enemy sent out a party to come and destroy the outparts but the people rose and the Lord so ordered it that they met with great defeat drove ‘em back.”³⁰

In September 1777, Josiah Pierce wrote on the 28th, “The militia march, great part of them, to assist the Northern Army.” This is confirmed by the records of at least 15

²⁷ Bruce Lancaster, *The American Revolution*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971), 105.

²⁸ Porter-Phelps, *Diary*, 3.

²⁹ Lancaster, *Revolution*, 199.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

men who, according to Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors, “marched on an alarm to reinforce the Northern Army under Maj. Gen. Gates.” This included Privates Joseph Alexander, Elihu Dickinson, Jonas Elwell, Josiah Goodrich, William Jones, John Kibby, Elijah Lyman (two listings, neither from Hadley), Joseph Marsh, Josiah Nash, Elihu Warner, Giles White (no town listing), Corporal Carmiah Wright, 1st Lieutenant John Clark, Captain Moses Kellogg, and Colonel Elisha Porter.

Only two months after Bennington, Pierce wrote in his diary on Oct 22 1777 “William returns home from the taking of Burgoyne with 5,200 men near Fort Edward,” and again on the 27th: “About half of Burgoyne’s army taken at Saratoga by Gen. Gates.” Although Soldiers and Sailors does not confirm the presence of Hadley men at Saratoga, William Pierce seems to have been at least in the vicinity of the battle, and Gen. Gates, to whose relief the fifteen men above marched, commanded the Continental Army there. Gen. Schuyler, who was at Saratoga, briefly commanded nine Hadley men when they marched to reinforce the Continental Army at Mores Creek.

Saratoga was a disaster for the British war effort. The surrender of over 5,000 crack troops and subsequent recognition of the United States by France changed the whole equation, and set the stage for the eventual American victory. On Oct 29th, Burgoyne’s defeated men passed through Hadley while crowds gathered on the common to watch. Elizabeth Porter Phelps wrote “Oh wonderful, wonderful words cant express our adoration and praise! I desire to fall down in astonishment!”³¹ The story that Burgoyne was given hospitality at Eleazer Porter’s house and subsequently presented his sword to the latter receives no attention in Elizabeth’s diary, putting its validity into question, although a letter dated March of 1880s speaks of Burgoyne’s officers camping

³¹ Ibid., 5.

in Gen. Porter's yard, the excellent treatment Burgoyne received at the hands of Porter, and Burgoyne's subsequent gift of the sword.

The raising and supplying of troops created economic issues for Hadley that would constantly surface at the town meetings, with the assembly voting again and again to assess town property for tax revenue, as two such entries from the first and fifteenth of January show: "Voted that the cost and charge of the lead sent to the men who went from this town in our defense; and also the cost of the horses employed in that service, be referred to a committee..." for payment, and:

Voted and accepted the report of the committee appointed...to examine and adjust the cost and charge of the load of provisions sent to the soldiers at Cambridge and the transport thereof. Voted that the town be assessed for the payment of the above's aid cost and charge.³²

In addition, a committee was set up in March 1777, consisting of both Eleazer Porter and Charles Phelps, "to address the proportion each ratable inhabitant (taxable male) of this town ought to pay towards raising men for the army; provided they do not serve personally."³³ Throughout the war, funds were frequently set aside for use of the town (£400 in June, 1778), on which the town drew in March 1779 for relief of soldiers' families.³⁴

As the conflict dragged on, the town selectmen were frequently required by the assembly to "examine the town stockpiles of lead and flint, supply what is wanting out of supplies received from the General Court, and sell remainder."³⁵ In 1780, grants were given by the town to those who would make and sell clothing at low prices to the army,

³² Records, 329.

³³ Ibid., 337.

³⁴ Ibid., 348.

³⁵ Ibid., 349. This was on January 11, 1779.

and prodded by the General Court, Hadley raised £800 and £400 to “comply with the requisitions of...clothing for the soldiers the present year.”³⁶

Certain citizens of Hadley were very active in supporting the troops. In mid 1775, Elizabeth Porter Phelps learned from a local tailoress how to make breeches for the soldiers, and added in her diary, “people are sent too [sic] find ‘em clothes.”³⁷ Eleazer Porter was appointed to a committee examining the affairs of providing for the families of soldiers and on Jan. 5 1780, late in the war when the harsh winter necessitated it, the town assembly passed a resolution:

Whereas the selectman find it not in their power to procure the number of blankets required of this town for the use of the army: therefore it is recommended to the inhabitants, that the number of families...join together in furnishing one blanket for the necessity of the soldiers, and so on until the number shall be completed.³⁸

As men enlisted, especially in the flurry of activity in 1777, the workers in Hadley, on the Porter-Phelps farm and others, began to disappear. On April 20 of that year, hired men Simon Baker and Jonas Kelsey both enlisted, and the acceptance at the farm of a Scottish man named John Morrison shows the need to replenish labor. His case is interesting—Morrison was a Scottish Highlander who joined the British Army and was sent to Boston while the city³⁹ still belonged to the British. The city was captured while the troops were en route, and when they arrived, Morrison and the 267 others were placed in handcuffs and distributed throughout the state, to alleviate the manpower shortage.⁴⁰ The Porter-Phelps slave Cesar Phelps, as we have seen, also left to join the army in 1776.

³⁶ Ibid., 369.

³⁷ Porter-Phelps, Diary, 3.

³⁸ Records, 360.

³⁹ Contemporaries referred to Boston as a ‘town’.

⁴⁰ Porter-Phelps, Diary, 4.

These economic issues were complicated by the inflation in prices that came with the war. Continental Bills had lost all value by mid-1779, which is why the town records continue to speak of payments in Pounds (£).⁴¹ By May 16 1777, the situation was at a point where the town saw fit to pass a resolution stating that the “act of this state to prevent monopoly and extortion” should be complied with literally, which included fixing prices:

Wheat = 12 shillings/bushel, rice = 8s/bushel, peas = 8s/bushel, unimproved land = 8s/per bushel, meadow land for the price it was sold for last summer: An house and barn...at 130 Pounds, a last Spring calf = 18s. a yearling 36s, a two years old £3 10s, a three years old £6, a cow £6, a middling yoke of oxen £20, beef at 6 pence per lb., pork at 8p, store hogs 6p, a middling sheep 12s, English hay 40s per tun [sic], common hay 20s per tun.⁴²

Charles Phelps was subsequently elected to a committee to prosecute those who violate the act. Again, on Aug 2 1779, Eleazer Porter and Charles Phelps were part of a committee to “consider the proceedings of the convention at Concord...with power to meet and confer...and report a regulation of prices,” and a meeting at Northampton three weeks later decided “that there may be a uniformity of prices....”⁴³

Counterfeiting was also rampant after some time, and a good portion of Josiah Pierce’s diary is dedicated to describing the irregularities of counterfeit bills: “The first four letters in the word Spanish are longer than the three ending letters.”⁴⁴

The citizens of Hadley sought, in their sense of Puritan piety, to identify with their friends and neighbors affected by the war, which they did by fasting. On Nov 13 1774, according to Elizabeth Porter Phelps, towns across Massachusetts were encouraged to set aside time for fasting and praying in view of the “dark state” of public affairs, and on Dec

⁴¹ Gross, *Minutemen*, 144.

⁴² *Records*, 339.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 357.

⁴⁴ Pierce, *Diary*, Sept. 1779.

11 1774, Massachusetts' new Provincial Congress declared a fast day. Days in January and July of the following year were also "recommended fast days,"⁴⁵ and Josiah Pierce records August 28 1777 as a "General fast on account of the war."

Committees were set up in January 1776 to ensure that the troops were receiving their fair share of the provisions donated by the town, and to "devise ways and means for introducing the art of manufacturing salt peter." Putting business aside for a moment, the meeting "voted that the selectmen give the thanks of this town to Col. Porter for serving the town gratis as representative from the first of June to the twelfth of August."⁴⁶

In the last great requisition of supplies, Hadley on June 17th 1776 voted to request a procurement of 100 lbs. of gunpowder in addition to what was already stored, and asked Maj. Williams to replace what he had borrowed. A month later, they petitioned the "Great and General Court" for ammunition from the public stores, for which Hadley would pay.⁴⁷

In Sept 1776 a most controversial problem surfaced at the town meeting, after a vote that an inoculation house against smallpox be set up, and a committee formed to help the town doctor, Dr. Coleman, find a skillful doctor to help him in "carrying on the business of inoculation for the smallpox in this town." Hatfield residents had already burned a smallpox house to the ground, believing (perhaps rightly so) that it would be a detriment to the town's general health, and in Hadley, Zeb Prutt had returned from Ticonderoga with the disease⁴⁸, for which reason the town should have taken ample

⁴⁵ Porter-Phelps, Diary, 3-4.

⁴⁶ Records, 330. Salt Peter is Sodium Nitrate, used for producing explosions.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 332.

⁴⁸ Porter-Phelps, Diary, 4.

precaution but did not, deciding first to build a hospital, and then reconsidering and stopping Dr. Coleman's inoculations.

In March 1777 the assembly again tried to vote for a smallpox hospital, to be located "at the foot of Tinker's hill on the little hill," from which it was then moved "from hills to sheep pasture." On the 24th, the vote permitting the hospital was reconsidered, and on the 31st, the reconsideration was reconsidered. Finally the hospital was allowed "with restrictions set out."⁴⁹

Disease was rampant in the military camps, and Elizabeth Porter Phelps' diary mentions on 15 September 1776 a sickness plaguing Col. Porter. Josiah Pierce records the death of Captain Eliakim Smith (ordered commissioned May 24 1775) on August 25 of sickness, in camp at Watertown. Three entries into the same diary for the year 1776 record the deaths of Abram Kellogg, Josiah Gaylord, and Joseph Peck Jr. in camp at New York and Ticonderoga.

Shortly after the capture of Boston, no doubt motivated by the successes of the American war effort, the Hadley town assembly joined other citizens and towns in every colony in making a historic declaration. On 30 May 1776, they proclaimed:

...Warned and assembled for the purpose of instructing the representative of Hadley whether if the American Congress should for the safety of the United Colonies, declare them independent of the Kingdom of Great Britain, we the inhabitants of said Hadley will engage, with our lives and fortunes, to support them in this measure.

Their answer: "Voted. That we adopt the measure recommended; and that Mr. Williams our representative be, and he is hereby instructed to act accordingly."⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Records, 333-339.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 332.

A short time later, Congressional delegates signed the Declaration of Independence, in which much of the same language can be found. A poem in Josiah Pierce's almanac on July 28 also reflects this spirit, reading: "Flam'd by this spark *America* will shine – and lighten distant worlds with rays benign." This strong belief in the righteousness of their experiment, illustrated by Josiah Pierce's bold writing at least once every year after 1776 "The United States of North America declared independence the 4th of July 1776," would do much to shape the actions and identities of the men who were working to carry it through successfully.

In time, a perceived threat of subversion caused the people of Hadley to petition the General Court "that all persons traveling through the [town] should have passes denoting their friendship to the American States; and make provisions for such persons being taken up, examined, etc." On 5 Aug 1778, an entry in Josiah Pierce's diary reads: "Eleazer Porter esq., one of the justices of the peace for the county of Hampshire, took the oath appointed by the act...an act for prescribing and establishing an oath of fidelity and allegiance."⁵¹

These somewhat draconian resolutions were put into practice on certain occasions, such as the case of a man called Mr. Bartholomew, who was taken off for being a Tory in Feb 1778.⁵² In September of 1780, a man named Simon Strong was disbarred in Hadley "considering his general unfriendly conduct to these United States."⁵³ Their tendency to take these measures was characteristic of the early Americans,

⁵¹ Records, 334.

⁵² Porter-Phelps, Diary, 5. Mr. Bartholomew's case is strange: He and his wife were Royalists who appeared at the Porter-Phelps farm shortly after the fall of Ticonderoga to the British—perhaps he came into contact with Cesar Phelps or another Hadley resident there. Perhaps it was some link to their former slave, some kindnesses shown him that encouraged the Phelps family to harbor a family with loyalist sympathies. Or, perhaps he took Cesar's place at the farm, for Cesar never returns.

⁵³ Records, 375.

tenacious of their liberties and alert to lurking danger. Hadley's statement of 3 January 1774 understood the inevitability of having to deal with 'the machinations of designing persons,' and that they could not be avoided, but instead must be 'rendered abortive from time to time.'

The assembled citizens of Hadley attempted another step towards a new, unique form of government on Sept 26 1776:

Put to vote; whether this town will give their consent that the present House of Representatives of this state of the Massachusetts Bay Colony of New England, together with the Council, if they consent in one body with the House, and with equal voice, should consult, agree on, and enact such a Constitution and form of government for this state, as the said House of Representatives and Council as aforesaid, on the fullest and most mature deliberation shall judge will most conduce to the safety, peace and happiness of this state, in all after successions and generations; and if they direct that the same be made public for the inspection and perusal of the inhabitants, before the ratification thereof by the assembly: and passed in the negative.⁵⁴

Unfortunately, the records leave us no indication as to why the residents voted against this measure. Despite the strong wording of their earlier statements, there is evidence that the town had been favorable to the Tories, under the "influence of wealthy and powerful Israel Williams,"⁵⁵ despite the active efforts of Reverend Joseph Lyman and others. This version of the Constitution was deemed too Liberal by many towns in Massachusetts, most joining Hadley in rejecting it.

Two years later, on Feb 11 1778, the people of Hadley were ready to make the leap:

Voted. That this town approve of the articles of confederation and perpetual union between the United States of America, formed by the honorable Congress: and do hereby instruct Elisha Porter esq. and Mr. Jonathan Smith their

⁵⁴Records, 334. The margin reads "Question upon forming a Constitution. At present negative."

⁵⁵Porter-Phelps, Diary, 3.

representatives in the general assembly, to authorize the honorable delegates of this state, to notify the same in the Congress of the United States.⁵⁶

On March 30th, the “Constitution and form of Government for the state of Massachusetts” was read in the meeting, and on April 9th it was accepted by a vote of 40 to 2.

The town records for April 27 1780 read: “Constitution agreed upon in convention at Cambridge. Read in meeting.” Voting on the articles and language then began. On May 11, for example, 27 voted for and 1 against the 27th Article in the Bill of Rights. The meticulous attention to detail is amazing, as the accounts of the meeting read “Votes upon the Constitution: Chap. 1, Sec. 2, Art. 5: 12 for 5 against.” And on May 17th, Hadley’s anti-Papist Puritanism surfaced: “Voted: that where the words “Christian Religion” are used in the Constitution, it is desired that the words “Christian Protestant Religion” may be used instead thereof: 25 for.” The same day, they ordered delegate Charles Phelps “to agree upon a time when this form of government shall take place, without returning the same again to the people,” and afterward accepted the Constitution.⁵⁷

After the surrender at Saratoga in October 1777, the war slowly faded from peoples’ concerns, and extant writings of the citizens of Hadley, including Elizabeth Porter Phelps, Josiah Pierce, and even the town meeting records reflect the shift in focus from the northern to the southern part of the colonies. Although they would continue to be conscious of it, the worst was over. Two years after Saratoga, on Jan 6 1780, Hadley

⁵⁶ Records, 341.

⁵⁷ Records, 367-368.

sold the cannon that had been brought from Williamsburg five years ago almost to the day.⁵⁸

Despite it fading from peoples' minds, there was still a war in the South and men were sorely needed. The shift in the theater of war made it difficult to find men who would willingly muster, and as the town records show, money was being offered more often, and in greater amounts, than before. Those who marched to Dorchester and Cambridge requested either a bounty coat or its equivalent in money at the end of the year. Now, two and a half years later, on 13 May 1778:

Voted. That the six men now required of this town for the Continental Army, those who have engaged, and those who shall engage by the twentieth day of May, instantly shall receive out of the town treasury, so much money as with the fine money in the hands of the militia officers, shall make to each of them a bounty of £40.⁵⁹

Those men who marched for the alarms of July, August, and September 1777 “shall have credit at the rate of three months for one.” Those who went to Ticonderoga “shall have credit at the rate of three months for two.” On June 16 1778, a “bill of proportion” for service for the war was drafted by, among others, Eleazer Porter, Josiah Pierce, and Charles Phelps, and was accepted three days later. On June 21 of the next year, the town added that to “the six men (the quota of this town) or so many of that number as shall engage to serve” would receive 40 shillings, payable to “them or their legal representatives,” and that they would be free from subsequent poll taxes.⁶⁰

Charles Phelps and Eleazer Porter were On June 21 1779 appointed to a committee to “assist militia officers in procuring men for the Continental Army.” When, to the town’s delight, Ebenezer Pomeroy (one who marched to Bennington) asked, and

⁵⁸ Ibid., 361.

⁵⁹ Records, 346.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 347, 354.

was granted, permission to join the army, the assembly added afterward "...the like encouragement to all others undertake [to] pass muster and march...on the present emergency."⁶¹ Eleazer Porter also headed another committee in June the following year, charged with inspecting the book of war service kept by the town to record contributions, and reporting on what was due from delinquents.⁶² The delinquents would be called to account in May of 1781.

On July 12, 1779, the six men listed for service in the Continental Army were: Seymore Kelsey, Francis Frayner, Ichabod Nye, Medad Noble, Timothy Smith, and Ebenezer Pomroy. Each received 100 dollars in advance pay.⁶³ One year later, on June 15 1780, a committee was formed "to assist militia officers in procuring the thirteen men required of this town for the Continental Army."⁶⁴

The demands of the war, in money and supplies for the soldiers, had by 1780 begun to tax Hadley's resources. The sale of the cannon was no doubt partially motivated by economic necessity, and on Jan 20th the assembly created a committee "to enquire why this town was taxed so high in the year 1779,"⁶⁵ and to petition the court for relief. Finally, the town voted on June 15, 1780, to create a new tax and raise £3,900 for soldiers' bounties. Those men who enlisted for three months in would receive £100, and six-month men would receive £3 20 shillings per month.

The same day, Eleazer Porter's war book committee declared "delinquents in the war service have liberty to pay their dues within 24 hours: 6 shillings 8 pence per month.

⁶¹ Ibid., 354.

⁶² Records, 369.

⁶³ Ibid., 356.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 370.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 362.

Those that fail are to be drafted.”⁶⁶ These threats are indicative of the desperate manpower situation. The quota for Hadley, which was 13 men in June 1780, had risen to 16 two weeks later, and the town saw fit to create a special seven member committee for procuring men. By mid-July five men had enlisted, and this after raising the bounty on July 3rd: “Sixteen 3 months men shall receive £50 in addition to £100 already promised, also £3 per month in silver or gold, or 40 shillings per month in grane [sic]; ‘at the rate called the old way.’”⁶⁷ Following this, a committee was formed to borrow Continental Bills to pay the soldiers, despite the fact that Gross tells us they had lost all value by mid-1779.

In 1781 another committee was formed, “to join with the militia officers in devising ways and means to raise the men now required of this town for the war.” Their recommendation was payment of “£60 hard money for three years” for the twelve men required at that time. The situation, as the town records show, was getting desperate by summer, 1781. Hadley was so in need of men for the war effort that the committee for procurement was now charged with “[consulting] with the soldiers who will engage to serve 3 months, about the terms on which they will enlist.” At the same meeting, the assembly also decided to give \$10 hard money to militia soldiers before they march and £3 per month, and the selectmen were directed again to borrow the money in order to pay.

While struggling to meet the demands for troops, Hadley was also asked to provide succor in other ways. On Sept. 13 1780, £28 was raised for clothing for the army, and a month later, £9,000 was raised for beef and a committee, including Messrs.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 369.

⁶⁷ Records, 369-373.

Porter and Phelps, created to handle its proper distribution to the soldiers. In the summer of 1781, they raised £110 for beef for the army, and £30 for clothing. The continuing need for monetary resources forced the constant assessment of the town for tax purposes.⁶⁸

On October 17th 1781, four years to the day after Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga, British soldiers filed out of their defenses at Yorktown and laid down their arms as their regimental drummers played "The World Turned Upside Down." With this final surrender of British forces, the war was over. On January 7 of that year Eleazer Porter was chosen town clerk, assessor, treasurer, and selectman.⁶⁹ According to Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors, the last year of discharge for any men from Hadley who went off to war was 1781.

Charles Phelps traveled again to Springfield in September 1786, where he again witnessed the closing of the Courthouse by a mob. These were farmers trying to avert the seizure of their property in debt proceedings, the remnants of the States' heavy borrowing during the war. In the armed conflict that pitted 2,000 farmers against 3,000 Governmental troops, Charles adhered to his family's traditional sympathies and sided with the victorious Government troops. He would serve 21 terms as selectman, as Deputy to the General Court, and Justice of the Peace, between 1774 and 1792.⁷⁰

As for Elizabeth, she remained on the Porter-Phelps farm for the rest of her life. Due to the post-war freeing of Massachusetts' slaves, her servant Peg "went off free" in June 1782, forcing Elizabeth to become "her own Negro now."⁷¹ She would live to see,

⁶⁸ Ibid., 378-385.

⁶⁹ Records, 385.

⁷⁰ Porter-Phelps, Diary, 6-7.

⁷¹ Ibid., 1.

in 1812, another war with Britain, the nation formerly called by her and so many others 'mother country.' The break with Britain—that long and difficult process called the Revolutionary War—had been made possible by the citizens of Hadley and other towns, who successfully bore the heavy burden to secure their freedom.

Works Cited

- Barstow, Mrs. John S. "Hadley in the Revolution" paper. Hadley, MA: Hadley Historical Society, 1905.
- Cutter, Mary Lou Brockett. Life Beside the Connecticut River. Hatfield MA: Hatfield Printing and Publishing, 1905.
- Farling, John. Setting the World Ablaze. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Gross, Robert. The Minutemen and their World. Toronto, Canada: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976.
- Judd, Sylvester. History of Hadley. Northampton, MA: Metcalf and Co, 1863.
- Lancaster, Bruce. The American Revolution. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1971.
- Pierce, Josiah. Diary and Almanac. Hadley, MA: Hadley Historical Society.
- Porter-Phelps, Elizabeth. Diary and Microsoft Word document. Hadley, MA: Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum.
- Resch, John. Suffering Soldiers. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999.
- Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War, A Compilation from the Archives. Boston, MA: Wright and Potter Printing Co., 1897.
- Hadley Town Meeting Records (Microfilm). Amherst, MA: Special Collections and Archives, W.E.B. DuBois Library, 25th floor.