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***“The Price of Their Blood and of Your Independency”*: The Social and Economic Disparities
within the Connecticut Line**

**by
Ernest Lucian Andreoli III
HIS 490 History Honors Thesis**

**Department of History
Providence College
Fall 2017**

“It is a melancholy reflection that what is of the most universal importance, is most universally neglected – I mean keeping up the credit of money.”

- Dr. Albigen Waldo

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INTRODUCTION

On June 8, 1783, George Washington, the Commander in Chief of the Continental Army, sent a letter to all state legislatures of the United States regarding the matters facing the new nation. Since 1775, Washington had managed the strategic operations of the Continental Army through “many anxious days and watchful nights.”¹ Prior to entering a “state of undisturbed repose,” Washington offered his perspectives to all citizens on important issues pertaining to the “tranquility of the United States.”² While the United States won the War of Independence, Washington believed that domestic instabilities remained a pressing conundrum for state legislators. Ultimately, Washington realized that some state legislators were reluctant to fully capitulate to the authority of the Continental Congress. Washington believed that if state legislatures did not delegate power to Congress, the perpetual union would succumb to “Anarchy and confusion,” and would fail to “regulate and govern the general concerns of the Confederated Republic.”³ In effect, Washington believed that this union would allow the United States to remain an independent nation.

Washington concluded that a permanent union between the state legislatures and Congress would thwart political corruption, and would maintain the independency of America. Through this

¹ “Washington’s Circular Letter of Farwell to the Army, June 8, 1783,” Library of Congress, www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/amrev/peace/circular.html (accessed August 30, 2017).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

indissoluble merger, Washington also believed that the country would be able to serve the public by resolving the country's debts to domestic and foreign creditors, and "earnestly inculcate" economic stability among all citizens. After serving the public in a military capacity, Washington argued that state legislators must properly recompense soldiers for their valor, and repay creditors for their altruism. He referred to these public compensations as a "debt of honor and of gratitude" that would allow these public servants to "reap the fruit of his labours." Specifically, Washington asserted that Congress' reluctance to recompense soldiers for their service cheated the Continentals. Although state legislatures struggled to repay public creditors due to the limited supply of monetary reserves, Washington viewed Congress' unwillingness to allocate annual payments to soldiers, especially Continental officers, as a disgrace.⁴ During the war, citizens and legislators constantly debated the issuance of service pensions. The discourse was especially acrimonious in Connecticut. For example, three of Connecticut's Congressional delegates, Roger Sherman, Samuel Huntington, and Oliver Wolcott, provided their united opinion on the question of service entitlements to Governor Jonathan Trumbull. On May 18, 1778, the Connecticut delegates wrote a letter to Governor Trumbull noting that disagreement over the institution of service pensions was "the most painful and disagreeable question that hath ever been agitated in Congress."⁵ Sherman, Huntington, and Wolcott's letter suggested that legislators were more concerned with recompensing public creditors and controlling debt, than dispensing entitlements to soldiers. Yet, Washington insisted that service pensions would prevent a "total dereliction of the Service."⁶ Regardless of whether or not Congress believed that service gratuities were odious

⁴ "Washington's Circular Letter of Farwell to the Army, June 8, 1783," Library of Congress.

⁵ "The Connecticut Delegates to the Governor of Connecticut (Jonathan Trumbull), May 18, 1778," in *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress*, ed. Edmund C. Burnett, Volume III, (Washington, D.C.: The Carnegie Institution of Washington), 1926, 255-256.

⁶ "Washington's Circular Letter of Farwell to the Army, June 8, 1783," Library of Congress.

in that it added to the public debt, Washington maintained that soldiers' service pensions were analogous to "the price of their blood and of your independency."⁷

Although Washington's 1783 circular letter to the state legislatures declared that while he supported service pensions, he also advocated against this entitlement during the war. In November 1777, Washington noted in his personal writings that service entitlements would be "impracticable."⁸ Despite a surge in desertions, and a clear decline in a number of Continentals' morale during the winter of 1778, Washington justified his stance by recording the potential reactions of ordinary people, as well as the impact service gratuities would have on the country's debt. In terms of public backlash, Washington believed that service entitlements would create perpetual dissensions between civilians and Continental volunteers. As Marjoleine Kars argues, ordinary colonists who sought economic autonomy, and resisted imperial oppression, fueled the Revolutionary War. While the Crown continued to implement oppressive policies among the American Colonies, middling colonists rebelled against impartial local governments, and excessive taxation.⁹ Washington feared that if Congress were to authorize service remunerations to all soldiers, payments would eventually create a partial social distinction between Continentals and commoners, who resisted imperial tyranny through local militia groups and committees of safety. In terms of the country's deficit, Washington deemed service entitlements as another

⁷ "Washington's Circular Letter of Farewell to the Army, June 8, 1783," Library of Congress.

⁸ "Remarks on Plan of Field Officers for Remodeling the Army, November 1777," in *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick, Hathi Trust Digital, Volume 10, October 1933, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office), 126, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=msu.31293001055601;view=1up;seq=189> (accessed November 3, 2017).

⁹ Marjoleine Kars, *Breaking Loose Together: The Regulator Rebellion in Pre-Revolutionary North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press), 2002, 6.

expenditure that would “sink the Colonies under the load of it.”¹⁰ In an effort to balk popular uproar, as well as thwart further economic stagnation, Washington initially opposed service gratuities for Continentals.

The evolution in Washington’s stance toward service entitlements altered through his leadership of the Continental Army, as well as his experience in dealing with a growing sense of disobedience among Continental regiments. In January 1778, a committee on Army affairs for the Continental Congress proposed the ratification of an entitlement legislation that sought to remunerate all Continental officers, who served till the end of the war, with half-pay for life.¹¹ In a letter to Henry Laurens, the fifth President of the Continental Congress, Washington argued that half-pay pensions would lead to the “salvation of the cause.”¹² Washington suggested that if the Continental Congress authorized an entitlement program that provided financial security to officers, it would enable these Continentals to secure economic opportunity following the war, thus maintaining the health of the union. Despite Washington’s idyllic view toward lifelong service payments for officers, political opposition remained strong. For example, Laurens believed that half-pay pensions would lead to larger taxes on the citizenry in order to pay for this social expenditure, and would virtually create an officer corps aristocracy.¹³ As opposition continued in

¹⁰ “Remarks on Plan of Field Officers for Remodeling the Army, November 1777,” in *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick, 126.

¹¹ William H. Glasson, *Federal Military Pensions in the United States*, ed. David Kinley, (New York: Oxford University Press), 1918, 25.

¹² “From George Washington to Henry Laurens, 10 April 1778,” Founders Online, National Archives, last modified February 1, 2018, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-14-02-0430> (accessed February 2, 2018).

¹³ “Henry Laurens to William Livingston, April 19, 1778,” in *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress*, ed. Edmund C. Burnett, Volume III, (Washington, D.C.: The Carnegie Institution of Washington), 1926, 176-178.

Congress, many Continental officers feared that their service pensions would never become legitimate. In December 1782, an officer corps stationed in Newburgh, New York sent a memorial to Congressional delegates insisting that entitlements were an “honorable and just recompense for several years hard service.”¹⁴ In the same token, Henry Knox, Jedidiah Huntington, among other commanders of the Connecticut Line argued that “any further experiments,” that attempted to hesitantly compensate the impatient officers, could lead to “fatal effects.”¹⁵ As delegates failed to construct entitlement legislation, the Newburgh officers’ address seemed more like a threat to the Continental Congress. Because Congress hesitated to authorize life pensions for officers, some delegates believed that a military coup d’état was foreseeable. As talks of peace emerged with the Crown, Congress reluctantly passed the Commutation Act on March 22, 1783 that sought to provide five years payment, in money or securities, to all Continental officers.¹⁶ Washington’s eventual support of service entitlements arose out of sympathy toward the fact that soldiers’ financial security remained dubious following the war, and an effort to prevent a military threat on Congressional delegates.

While Washington’s eventual support of service pensions gave officers a sense of assurance following the war, an economic downturn undermined the Commutation Act. High taxes, coupled with the injustices of service entitlements, led to unrelenting public outrage. Specifically, service pension protestors in Farmington, Connecticut believed that the Commutation Act reduced the regular standing army, and commoners, to a subservient level against officers. In

¹⁴ “The Address and Petition of the Officers of the Army of the United States, December 1782,” in *Journals of the Continental Congress 1774-1789*, ed. Gaillard Hunt, Library of Congress, Volume XXIV, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office), 1922, 291-292.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Laura Jensen, *Patriots, Settlers, and the Origins of American Social Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 2003, 60.

order to procure Commutation payments, state legislatures were forced to increase taxes. As money remained scarce, ordinary Americans fell deeper into impoverishment, and dissenters believed that the entitlement statute gave officers an unfair social distinction among Continental privates, and militia volunteers.¹⁷ By 1790, Congress's entitlement legislation failed due to opposition from ordinary Americans and state legislators, as well as the lack of monetary reserves to recompense officers. However, contentions over social standing remained at the forefront of service entitlements.¹⁸ The evidence of rationing martial goods for impoverished soldiers, and discrepancies in soldiers' compensation records reveals that the social and wealth distribution of the Connecticut Line was diverse. Social historians of the Revolutionary War interpret the social and economic composition of the Continental Army in a variety of ways. While some insist that the majority of soldiers came from elite landholding backgrounds, other historians assert that there were far less soldiers from prominent Anglo-American families based on tax assessment data.

Although there has not been a comprehensive analysis on the social and wealth distribution of the Connecticut Line, a number of historians have examined the stark social and economic divisions within different states' regiments legitimized by the Continental Congress. Mark E. Lender argues that the officer corps for the New Jersey Line predominately hailed from elite landholding families in America. According to Lender, "fully 84 percent of the New Jersey officers came from the wealthiest third of the state's population."¹⁹ In addition, Lender asserts that nearly

¹⁷ Solomon Whitman, "At a Meeting of the Inhabitants of the Town of Farmington, on the Fourth Day of August, 1783," *Connecticut Courant*, August 12, 1783, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.providence.idm.oclc.org> (accessed October 5, 2017).

¹⁸ Jensen, 62.

¹⁹ Mark E. Lender, "The Enlisted Line: The Continental Soldiers of New Jersey," (Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers University, 1975), 128-129.

a third of the continental officers were from the state's "richest tenth," and represented the "flower of society."²⁰ Furthermore, Lender claims that none of the New Jersey officers came from lower-tier segments of New Jersey's population. A number of historians, such as James Kirby Martin, and Ray Raphael, incorporated Lender's analysis on the Continental Army's officer corps into their own scholarly work. Raphael asserts that "with the exception of the officers, most of the long-term soldiers were boys and men of little wealth."²¹ In addition, Lender collaborated with James Kirby Martin in a 2006 book entitled, *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic, 1763 – 1789*, that includes tax and property wealth data from Lender's dissertation. Ultimately, Lender and Martin assert that "overall [the officers] were no different in socioeconomic composition and personal accomplishments than their fellow Revolutionaries in state legislatures and Congress."²² Lender, Martin, and Raphael argue that the majority of officers were members of America's social elite.

Charles Royster, on the other hand, places a greater emphasis on the wealth variance in the Continental Army. Royster describes the role of enrollment requirements for rising officers from middling backgrounds. According to Royster, the ability of colonists to raise a company of soldiers provided an avenue for higher status, despite their humble origins.²³ Furthermore, he asserts that

²⁰ Lender, "The Enlisted Line," 128-129.

²¹ Ray Raphael, *A People's History of the American Revolution: How Common People Shaped the Fight for Independence* (New York: Perennial), 2002, 82.

²² James Kirby Martin and Mark E. Lender, *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic, 1763 – 1789*, 2nd ed. (Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, 2006), 108.

²³ Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775 – 1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 1979, 64. Royster incorporates a passage from the memoirs of John Lacey, a Brigadier-General in the Pennsylvania militia, to argue that the majority of officers were not from affluent origins. Lacey acknowledged that the majority of his fellow officers were "Sons of Farmers or Mechaniks, who had quit the Plow or the Workshop (Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War*, 87).

if working class men fulfilled the Continental Army's enrollment requirements, these men could encourage their neighbors to join their companies, and secure their posts as officers. Royster concludes that the social and economic status of the rank-and-file of the Continental Army was more diverse than previously measured by historians, because the majority of officers were day laborers of middling, or poverty-stricken origins.²⁴ In addition to unraveling the significance of enrollment requirements for rising officers from working class backgrounds, Royster counters Lender's argument on the social status of the Continental Army officers by emphasizing that "the revolutionaries did not have enough gentlemen to go around."²⁵ Similarly, John Shy asserts that commentators of the war "noted that American officers often were not gentlemen."²⁶ Shy claims in *A People Numerous and Armed* that approximately 15,000 and 20,000 Americans became officers in the Continental Army, as well as the colonial militia units. However, the dangers of fighting in the Continental force detracted many elite landholding Americans from enlisting. Shy argues that "military service in the Revolution deflected life not only outward but inward."²⁷ Ultimately, Royster and Shy illustrate that a profound segment of the officer corps were from middling, or poverty-stricken backgrounds.

A number of scholars conclude that the majority of Continental soldiers hailed from elite Anglo-American families that owned a vast amount of acreage, and were financially prosperous. However, Royster and Shy counter this argument by indicating the importance of enrollment

²⁴ Royster, 86.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 87.

²⁶ John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), 1990, 251.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

requirements, and the ordinary colonists' ability to receive commissions for fulfilling enrollment quotas.²⁸ In addition to Royster and Shy, in 2014, Derrick Lapp re-examined the Maryland Line's social composition to analyze whether or not the majority of soldiers within this segment of the Continental Army were elite landowners. By incorporating consensus and tax data from the late-eighteenth century, Lapp asserts that a larger segment of the Maryland Line's officer corps originated from a middling socioeconomic backgrounds.²⁹ Ultimately, Lapp successfully argues that the social composition of Maryland's citizenry, as well as the state's land and monetary inflation, contributed to more than twenty-five percent of the Maryland officers originating from working class, or financially impoverished backgrounds.³⁰ Lapp incorporates a great deal of his statistical findings from Gregory Stiverson's examination on inequalities in tax levies, and property holding, among the Maryland citizenry following the War of Independence. Stiverson gathers wealth data from 1783 tax assessments from various Maryland counties, and showed the stark social and economic divisions through statistical figures.³¹ While Lapp included Stiverson's economic analysis in his dissertation, he predominately hones in on two officers within the Maryland Line to illustrate the social, and financial, divisions within the colony's regiment. Ultimately, Lapp's dissertation argues against the narrative that the Continental Army's officer corps were predominately from elite landowning families.³²

²⁸ Shy, 251.

²⁹ Derick E. Lapp, *Did They Really "Take None But Gentlemen"? Henry Hardman, the Maryland Line, and a Reconsideration of the Socioeconomic Composition of the Continental Officer Corps*, *Journal of Military History*, 2014, 1241, <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&sid=d2ec0574-69fe-4267-ac48-5797fbc5ab79%40sessionmgr4006> (accessed August 20, 2017).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1251.

³¹ Gregory A. Stiverson, *Poverty in the Land of Plenty: Tenancy in Eighteenth-Century Maryland* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 1977, 144 – 147.

³² Lapp, 1251.

Lapp and Stiverson's focus on officer and soldier compensation allows them to measure the wealth variance among the Maryland Line, as well as soldiers' social and economic composition following the War of Independence. Similarly, Laura Jensen analyzes the development of America's entitlement policies from the onset of the Revolutionary War through the Civil War. While examining land and monetary entitlement benefits for veterans, Jensen argues that America's leaders did not struggle to develop social programs following the Revolutionary War.³³ Jensen reveals that the Federal Government first developed entitlement programs in 1776. While she asserts that veteran pensions and land entitlements were integral social policies for many soldiers and their families, Jensen exposes the shortcomings and inequities of these service remunerations.³⁴ While the Commutation Act failed, ordinary citizens believed Congressional delegates had been coerced by unpredictable officers.³⁵ Jensen argues that the Commutation notes had a twofold impact. First, the shortage of currency in the American economy led to these bonds holding an uncertain market value. Similar to other risky government securities during the late-eighteenth century, a number of officers eventually sold their Commutation notes at a discounted value to speculators who hoped to strengthen their investment portfolios.³⁶ Second, Congress's decision to solely bestow Commutation notes to officers sparked discord between low-to-middle income laborers, and elite landholders. Poor farmers and mechanics, who did not qualify as

³³ Jensen, 10. Jensen argues that inequalities in service remunerations remained for thirty-four years after the legislative attempt at Commutation Notes. It was not until the ratification of the Federal Pension Act of 1818 that the regular standing army could apply for an entitlement from the Federal Government. However, Jensen reveals that the Office of War Department improperly assessed a number of pension applicants' financial stability. She suggests that veterans who did not state that they were disabled struggled to receive an entitlement in comparison to applicants with physical impairments. Furthermore, Jensen argues that all Revolutionary War veterans were not guaranteed an equal chance at receiving a pension until the revision of the entitlement statute in 1832.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 60.

³⁶ Ibid., 64.

beneficiaries of Commutation notes, believed that these payments were unjust in that Congressional delegates, and state legislators, failed to adequately compensate poverty-stricken veterans.³⁷ Although the majority of Revolutionary veterans neared the end of their lives, Congress finally allowed surviving Continentals to apply to receive pension annuities in 1818. However, Jensen carefully critiques the social policy's flaws, specifically the assessment procedure that prevented a number elderly, and destitute, veterans from receiving a just remuneration.³⁸

While Jensen argues that Congress's ratification of the 1818 pension legislation led to the creation of future welfare programs, she suggests that a number of poverty-stricken soldiers struggled to receive fair payments due to the assessors' inability to properly assess the financial stability of its veteran pension applicants.³⁹ Similar to Jensen's examination of social policy legislation, Woody Holton examines the role of market forces following the Revolutionary War, as well as ordinary Americans contentions with Congress, and their respective state legislators. Holton's analysis reveals that working class Americans believed that the American economy's recession in the 1780s was rooted from the state government's disruptive economic policies, such as regressive taxes, poorly constructed debt-relief initiatives, and the shortage of specie in circulation.⁴⁰ For example, Holton identifies that as the money supply tightened in the 1780s, land lost approximately two-thirds of its value, and livestock prices fell by fifty percent. A number of low-to-middle income Americans were irate with the federal and state governments' decision to

³⁷ Jensen, 62.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 82.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁴⁰ Woody Holton, *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution* (New York: Hill and Wang), 2007, 30.

support an economic ceiling on specie to allow Congress and state governments' to pay back private creditors' debts for loaning goods and specie to the Continental Army.⁴¹ In addition to examining the market forces that caused the economic recession of the late-eighteenth century, Holton traces the speculative investment practices for Revolutionary War veterans' service bonds, or Consolidated notes. According to Holton, the speculation behind these bonds contributed to the economic slump following the war. During the Revolutionary War, colonists lent specie to the government, army contractors, and soldiers. Eventually, these funds were converted into bonds. Holton asserts that practically every soldier in the Continental Army received these war bonds for their service following the war.⁴² However, these securities were worth only a fraction of their face-value. While some veterans held onto these debt certificates, a number of poor farmers and urban mechanics sold these undervalued bonds out of disappointment. The soldiers' inequitable compensation led to a large segment of low-to-middle income Americans protesting against Congress and the state governments' inability to resolve the economic slump following the Revolutionary War.⁴³

For decades, historians have debated the extent of the social and economic divisions within the Continental Army. While Lender, Martin, and Raphael contend that the Continental Army was predominately composed of elite landholding men from prominent Anglo-American backgrounds, a number of historians have countered this scholarly argument.⁴⁴ Lapp's dissertation utilizes wealth and tax data to argue that a much larger segment of the Continental Army was composed

⁴¹ Holton, 31.

⁴² Holton, 33.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Lapp, 1241.

of working class Americans who became vulnerable to financially and physically toilsome effects of the war, as well as the economic slump during the late-eighteenth century.⁴⁵ In addition, Jensen's analysis of the development of America's entitlement policies indicates why the selective, and error-prone nature of the Pension Act of 1818 crippled already-impoverished veterans. Evidently, these pension applications showcased that the wealth gap within the Continental Army was much more profound than previously thought by scholars.⁴⁶ In addition, Holton's examination of the role of ordinary Americans dealing with the state governments' disruptive economic policies indicates that the economic recession augmented veterans' economic instability, specifically poor farmers and urban mechanics. Ultimately, Holton concludes that asset taxes, inefficient debt-relief initiatives, and the shortage of specie in circulation, amplified working class veterans' inability to stabilize their financial livelihoods.⁴⁷ The socioeconomic divisions with the Continental Army cannot be minimized. Furthermore, the recessionary market forces and payment discrepancies recorded in officers' orderly books indicate that the socioeconomic composition of the Connecticut Line was striking.

Middling, as well as poverty-stricken farmers and mechanics were at the heart of the American Revolution, and were the daring laborers that eventually comprised the majority of the Continental Army. Although no scholar has undertaken a comprehensive analysis on the social and wealth distribution of the Connecticut Line, I did so by constructing a set of case studies on Connecticut soldiers, unveiling the impact of rationing techniques on low-to-middle income soldiers, incorporating why market forces effected the financial security of Connecticut

⁴⁵ Lapp, 1251.

⁴⁶ Jensen, 82.

⁴⁷ Holton, 30.

Continental Army, as well as analyzing discrepancies in soldiers' compensation records. My aim in this thesis is to explain that the social and economic distribution of the Connecticut Line was diverse, and argue that the Continental Army's wealth disparity between the rich and the poor was far more profound than previously suggested by scholars.

Farmers, bricklayers, sawyers, among other physically arduous laborers, cannot be forgotten in the shadow of the Early American meritocracy. Despite the absence of tax assessment data, Connecticut soldiers' affidavits on their financial stance and service, as well as soldiers' asset valuations, appraised by county court administrators following the ratification of the Pension Act of 1818, reveal the social and economic contrast within the Connecticut Line. After gathering Connecticut soldiers' pension records from the National Archive's digitized microfilm pension proceedings, I aggregate quantitative, and qualitative data, for thirty-six soldiers in Microsoft Excel. By comparing service tenure, annual service gratuity, rank, occupation, and total asset value among Connecticut beneficiaries, I reveal the extent of the Connecticut Line's social diversity, and its impoverishment gap.

In an effort to show the extent of the poverty gap in the Connecticut Line, I have placed an emphasis on discrepancies in Connecticut soldiers' compensation records. Chapter 1 analyzes the effects of provisional rationing, and inequities in medical services among Connecticut Continentals. Connecticut officers' orderly books, and paymasters' rationing account books, reveal that a number of soldiers within the Connecticut Line did not receive equivalent clothing and equipment rations. In addition, a surgeon's journal entries indicates that medical attention was skewed against impoverished soldiers throughout the war. However, while instances of despair and disobedience arose from commanding officers' rationing techniques, a number of poor farmers and urban mechanics continued to fight for the Continental Army in an effort to eventually receive

adequate compensations for their service. Ultimately, commanders' inequivalent provisions left many poverty-stricken, and middling soldiers faced with financial hardships as the war came to a close.

The economic downturn of the 1780s prevented many poor farmers and urban mechanics from overcoming the debilitating impact of provisional rationing. Chapter 2 shows how inflationary market forces affected the entire citizenry, especially poor farmers and urban mechanics who served in the Connecticut Line. In an effort to repay private creditors, state legislators devised a number of debt relief legislations that crippled low-to-middle income Americans. As the supply of specie contracted, a number of Connecticut veterans were stuck in a poverty trap. Chapter 2 also considers the public's reaction to the inflationary economy, and the failure of state legislatures to indemnify impoverished soldiers through risky securities. Ordinary citizens believed that the state assemblies' monetary policies devastated the American economy, and criticized elite misrule following the Revolutionary War. By allowing government bond speculation, and adhering to private creditors' demands, state legislators and Congressional delegates were criticized for not properly allocating funds toward indigent soldiers.

Eventually, as Chapter 3 shows, Connecticut's debt-relief legislation deteriorated labor productivity among low-to-middle income Connecticut inhabitants, especially veterans of the Revolutionary War. Despite Congress's ratification of the Pension Act of 1818, an entitlement program headed by the Office of War Department, a number of surviving Connecticut veterans did not receive equitable benefits. Rather, an aggregation of a socially and economically diverse population of Connecticut soldiers revealed that pension assessors examined applicants on their social standing, and, in a number of cases, granted insubstantial payments to the most impoverished veterans. By identifying the parallels and contrasts between middling, and poverty-

stricken soldiers' payment discrepancies, I illuminate the extent of social diversity, the impoverishment gap, and the discrepancies in material provisions and remunerations among Connecticut Continentals. This social economic historical piece is a testament to the grievances, and financial hardships, of ordinary citizens during a period of unprecedented rebellion and uncertainty.

CHAPTER 1: A FRAMEWORK FOR THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC COMPOSITION OF THE CONNECTICUT LINE

Josias Poheague, a Native American soldier for the first and fifth regiments of the Connecticut Line, was one of twenty-two documented Connecticut soldiers who died during the Battle of Yorktown in 1781.⁴⁸ On May 8, 1783, the Connecticut Committee of Payable issued a postmortem military pay voucher for Poheague's "services incurred for the United States."⁴⁹ The voucher indicated that Poheague resided in Stonington, Connecticut, and served from 1777 until 1781. While there is no way to confirm Poheague's total assets, nor his occupation in the committee's order, his residency on Long Island Sound indicated that he was most likely a maritime laborer who took up arms against Great Britain.⁵⁰ Poheague's voucher, which totaled forty pounds and eighteen pence, presented a rudimentary sketch of his economic livelihood.

Poheague appears to have left little behind. Over the course of his life, he faded in and out of his commanding officers' muster rolls, pay rolls, daily commands in officers' orderly books, as well as the town of Stonington's genealogical registers. However, the Committee of Payable's 1783 voucher, as well as the Connecticut Adjutant-General's Office's 1889 service record, allows for a sharper picture of Poheague's social and economic situation prior to his death. Poheague initially joined the Connecticut Line as a non-commissioned private on February 22, 1777, and

⁴⁸ "American Casualties at Yorktown," National Park Service, February 26, 2015, <https://www.nps.gov/york/learn/historyculture/american-casualties-at-yorktown.htm> (accessed September 1, 2017).

⁴⁹ "Connecticut Committee of Payable Remittance to Josias Poheague, May 8, 1783," Military Pay Vouchers, 1783, 99190 (Sheet 1), Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

served in Captain James Eldridge's Stonington Company until late-December 1780. The Connecticut Adjunct-General's service record indicated that he then served as a non-commissioned private within Captain Asahel Hodge's Company from January 1, 1781 to his death on October 16, 1781.⁵¹ Although Poheague was a Native American who fought throughout the Revolutionary War, he was not an anomaly within the rank-and-file of the Continental Army. The enlistment of indigenous peoples was an integral component of the success of the Continental Army.⁵² While Poheague's service record depicted his faithfulness to the Continental Army, as well as its ethnic diversity, the Connecticut Committee of Payable's postmortem voucher failed to properly recompense Poheague's beneficiaries.

Poheague's payment certificate was unusual in its composition compared to compensation records used by scholars, such as officers' orderly book tables, and service entitlements from the federal government. Joseph Plumb Martin, a Connecticut farmer who served for seven years as a private within the Connecticut Line, revealed in his memoir that while payments were rarely distributed to soldiers during the war, a Continental voucher usually translated into specie, and

⁵¹ Connecticut Adjunct-General, *Record of Service of Connecticut Men in the I. War of the Revolution, II. War of 1812, III. Mexican War*, ed. Henry Phelps Johnston, (Hartford: The Case, Lockwood, and Brainard Company), 1889, 152.

⁵² Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 11-34; Charles Patrick Neimeyer, *America Goes to War: A Social History of the Continental Army* (New York: New York University Press), 1996, 96-116. According to Calloway, the majority of the indigenous tribes populated along the Appalachian Mountains initially sought neutrality between the American revolutionaries and the British. However, while a majority of natives perceived this conflict as a "white man's war" between Americans, it was difficult for indigenous people to remain neutral. By the start of the war, many indigenous groups had become economically and diplomatically dependent upon their European neighbors, and immersed within a Pan-Indian trade culture. Ultimately, this economic dependence led to a civil war within the Iroquois League. Intertribal political discord led to hundreds of indigenous people enlisting in the Continental Army. Neimeyer argues that the majority of Congressional delegates believed that Indian enlistment would weaken the British Army, a prior ally of many indigenous peoples, and weaken Native American diplomatic autonomy by creating factions throughout their communities. According to a May 1776 act drafted by Congress, legislators allowed Washington to recruit "up to 2,000 Indians." In addition, Congress authorized Washington to reward commissioned indigenous officers and private soldiers payment if they were to "take [British soldiers] prisoners." Neimeyer argues that this order was striking in that Congress never offered these terms to the entire Continental Army.

entitled a soldier to a discount for a specified good, such as clothing, staple foods, and land.⁵³ However, Poheague's voucher did not indicate either one of these guarantees. Instead, this order specified that the committee appointed Captain Phineas Stanton, an officer for the Connecticut Line, to administer the "intestate estate of Josias Poheague," as well as handle his "bonds taken as the law directs."⁵⁴ According to the order, Poheague's death allowed for an officer in the Connecticut Line to administer the sale of his Stonington property, and redeem his payment. Poheague's voucher epitomized the inequities that many Connecticut soldiers dealt with during, and following, the Revolutionary War.

Poheague's postmortem pay voucher represented a first-hand account of the subtle, yet pervasive payment discrepancies toward a number of Continentals. The Committee of Payable assigned Phineas Stanton, an elite landholding resident of Stonington, as the bearer of Poheague's payment, and the administrator of Poheague's acreage in New London County.⁵⁵ According to Richard Anson Wheeler's genealogical register, Stanton served as a British captain during the Seven Years' War in Nova Scotia. He also served as a Stonington deputy from 1760 to 1771. Although Stanton was sixty-four at the time of the Committee of Payable's voucher, he was still an influential businessman in Stonington. Yet, why was Stanton assigned as the bearer of Poheague's rightful voucher? For one thing, the voucher did not indicate that Poheague had a family. However, a 1785 preamble passed by the Connecticut General Assembly revealed that Stonington land agents sought Poheague's acreage for a reconstruction of New London County's

⁵³ Joseph Plumb Martin, *A Narrative of a Revolutionary Soldier: Some of the Adventures, Dangers, and Sufferings of Joseph Plumb Martin* (New York: Signet Classics), 2010, 241.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

“bridges and roads” in order to develop a more efficient public mail route.⁵⁶ According to genealogical records, Paul Wheeler, Edward Hancox, and Stanton were instructed by two “representatives of Stonington” to “measure the highway from Long Point to New London” in order to “raise three hundred pounds lawful money, to enable them to build a bridge across the cove, called Lambert’s Cove, from Pine Point to Quana duct.”⁵⁷ And while there is no record of exactly where Poheague’s designated acreage was located in Stonington, the Committee of Payable’s decision to name Stanton as the bearer of Poheague’s voucher showcased Anglo-American infringement on rightful indigenous land, as well as a disturbing compensation inequity.⁵⁸

Prior to the existence of payment discrepancies among Connecticut soldiers, men like Poheague were eager to join the Continental force due to the provisions promised to them. In addition to settlement certificates that could later be sold to obtain clothing and money, all soldiers were ensured adequate daily rations of goods. According to Joseph Plumb Martin, soldiers were promised, upon enlistment, “one pound of good and wholesome fresh or salt beef, or three fourths of a pound of good salt pork, a pound of good flour,” among other staple goods. In addition, Martin noted that privates were promised “six dollars and two thirds a month,” upon enlistment. For poor farmers and urban mechanics, these provisions proved to be an unmatched selling point.⁵⁹ In addition to these procurements, camaraderie drove men to join. After registering as a soldier,

⁵⁶ Richard Anson Wheeler, *History of the Town of Stonington, County of New London, Connecticut, from its First Settlement in 1649 to 1900, with a Genealogical Register of Stonington Families*, Hathi Trust Digital Library, 1966, 109, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=yale.39002003062560;view=1up;seq=127> (accessed September 3, 2017).

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ “Connecticut Committee of Payable Remittance to Josias Poheague, May 8, 1783,” Military Pay Vouchers, 1783, 99190 (Sheet 1), Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

⁵⁹ Martin, 245-247.

Martin described an unprecedented sense of “liveliness” among enlistees. The following entry from Martin’s memoir illustrated that monetary assurances, as well as fraternity, influenced his decision to fight for independence. “I thought, as I must go, I might as well endeavor to get as much for my skin as I could; - accordingly, I told them that I would go for them.”⁶⁰ Whether or not men like Martin and Poheague believed that the war would threaten their economic security, enlisted men believed that their service would play a profound role in the future relationship between the American Colonies and Britain. However, Martin’s memoir indicated that many soldiers never received the provisional rations promised to them by Continental commanders and Congressional delegates. Despite their valor, a number of Connecticut Continentals suffered from the skewed distribution of remunerations.

Continental’s compensation records reveals the extent of the social and economic divisions within the Connecticut Line. Poheague’s postmortem voucher was a shocking account of the partiality of soldiers’ distorted payments. In addition, this unique voucher indicated that the social and economic composition of the Connecticut Line was more diverse than previously understood. While scholars have pointed out that the majority of the enlisted soldiers were from middling backgrounds, Poheague’s advantageous property countered this argument.⁶¹ According to the Committee of Payable’s 1783 payment, Poheague held a substantial amount of acreage that led to the Committee of Payable’s decision to assign a prominent landowning agent from Stonington to be the administrator for future transactions with Poheague’s property. Although Poheague served

⁶⁰ Martin, 53.

⁶¹ Lender, “The Enlisted Line,” 128-129; Raphael, 82. Lender argues that “fully 84 percent of the New Jersey officers came from the wealthiest third” of New Jersey’s population. In addition, Lender suggests that no New Jersey officer hailed from the lower third tax segment of the state’s socioeconomic sphere. After relying a great deal on accessible tax assessment data on the state’s officer corps, Lender asserts that the New Jersey Line’s officer corps encapsulated America’s social elite. Similarly, Raphael argues that “with the exception of the officers,” the majority of the regular standing army “were boys and men of little wealth.”

as a non-commissioned private, the Committee of Payable's indication that he owned valuable property in one of the most economically vibrant maritime towns in Connecticut during the late-eighteenth century suggests that the social and economic composition of the enlisted soldiers was communally and financially diverse.

The Committee of Payable's improper issuance of Poheague's redeemable voucher is a unique example of the existence of drastic compensation discrepancies among Connecticut soldiers, and the fact that a soldiers' social and economic status was an integral component of service payment discrepancies.⁶² After examining Connecticut soldiers' asset schedules, compensation records, and officers' orderly books, the Connecticut Line's diverse social and economic composition indicated that low-to-middle income soldiers' remunerations were skewed in comparison to soldiers from elite landowning families.⁶³ As the American economy constricted following the War for Independence, a number of poor farmers and mechanics, who served as privates and officers, struggled to escape economic instability, malnutrition, and physical defects caused by the war.

From the onset of the war, inequitable compensations were evident throughout the Connecticut Line's officer corps. After the Continental Congress authorized state legislatures to raise a quota of infantry regiments for the establishment of the Continental Army, General Washington was concerned about the election of men for the Continental officer corps. In a letter to John Hancock in September 1776, Washington urged Hancock that in order to organize the Continental Army "upon a permanent footing," the Continental Congress must enlist men

⁶² "Connecticut Committee of Payable Remittance to Josias Poheague, May 8, 1783," Military Pay Vouchers, 1783, 99190 (Sheet 1), Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

⁶³ Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

“actuated by Principles of honour, and a spirit of enterprize.”⁶⁴ In other words, Washington implied that the Continental officer corps should be comprised of wealthy landholding men. Yet how do we explain the ascension of a working class farmer from New Hartford, Connecticut from a Lieutenant to a Captain in less than a year, and the fact that he received a Continental Captain’s commission?⁶⁵

According to Aaron Austin’s 1820 affidavit presented to the Litchfield County Court for a Federal service entitlement, Austin was appointed a Lieutenant in Colonel Hubael Griswold’s regiment in “April or May 1775,” and served in the “Northern department” until December 1775. Following his service in Griswold’s regiment, Austin indicated that he received a “Captains commission signed by John Hancock,” and became a Captain within Colonel Charles Burrall’s regiment on January 19, 1776. In addition, Austin noted that he “raised a company joined the regiment marched into Canada and continued in the service until the fifth day of February 1777.”⁶⁶ Austin’s ability to enroll troops indicated that soldiers from laboring backgrounds took advantage of enrollment requirements to advance their rank-and-file in the Continental Army. Yet, while Austin quickly ascended to a commissioned Captain within the Connecticut Line, his economic livelihood following the war indicated a stark account of payment discrepancies within the state’s quota of Continentals.⁶⁷ On December 24, 1817, the House of Representatives passed a bill that provided federal pensions of \$8 per month for soldiers and \$20 per month to officers who served

⁶⁴ “From George Washington to John Hancock, 25 September 1776,” Founders Online, National Archives, last modified November 26, 2017, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-06-02-0305> (accessed November 28, 2017).

⁶⁵ “Aaron Austin Affidavit to Superior County Court of Litchfield, July 5, 1820,” Litchfield County Pension Records, 1820 – 1834, Litchfield Historical Society.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

in the Revolutionary War, and were incapable of earning an income.⁶⁸ Although this federal assistance was selective due to the sheer number of applicants, the seventy-two year old secured a pension from the United States Government on April 1, 1818. At a rate of \$20 per month, Austin received a total of \$102.66 from the Federal Pension Act of 1818.⁶⁹ Yet, on July 5, 1820 Austin presented an affidavit to the Litchfield County Court for a more suitable remuneration for his service. Evidently, the Federal Government's payment for Austin's service in the Revolutionary War was not adequate, and it did not ameliorate his economic instability following the war.⁷⁰

As a seventy-four year old farmer "able to do as much business as men in general of my age," Austin was indigent. Although he was a commissioned Captain, Austin's livelihood was affected by the recession of the late-eighteenth century.⁷¹ In addition to his disagreement over the federal government's pension, Austin indicated that the total value of his possessions added up to \$543, and included "forty acres of land," "two cows," "one old horse," "two axes," among other meagre belongings. Austin's static assets, and his inability to earn an income prevented him from supporting his "feeble" wife, his "very poor" thirty-six year old daughter, and himself. Furthermore, Austin noted that he required a "greater sum" for his service in the Connecticut Line, and he required "the munificence of Government" to support him in his "old age and further saith

⁶⁸ Jensen, 71.

⁶⁹ "Pension File of Aaron Austin, April 1, 1818," Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

⁷⁰ "Aaron Austin Affidavit to Superior County Court of Litchfield, July 5, 1820," Litchfield County Pension Records, 1820 – 1834, Litchfield Historical Society.

⁷¹ Ibid.

rot.”⁷² Ultimately, he was trapped in a financially unstable position following his years as a Captain for the Connecticut Line.

While some scholars suggest that the Continental officer corps were solely comprised of elite landholding men, Austin’s social and economic standing countered this claim. Many Connecticut soldiers were poor, or middling men, who momentarily quit their agrarian and mechanical trades to serve in the War of Independence.⁷³ A case study of Poheague’s and Austin’s service and compensation records indicates that the Connecticut Line was socially and economically heterogeneous. Evidently, poor farmers’ and urban mechanics’ economic instabilities stemmed from payment inequities, and market forces in the late-eighteenth century. According to Holton, while Connecticut legislators believed that debt relief legislation would properly pay back private creditors for loaning money for the Continental Army’s supplies, these ordinances triggered a shortage of specie in circulation. As a result, sawyers, farmers, and other laborers became indebted to landowners, creditors, and tax collectors. The recession that followed the war prevented a number of low-to-middle income veterans from being able to earn a steady income to support themselves, and their families.⁷⁴ Furthermore, while the Federal Pension Act of 1818 was a vanguard social policy program for the Federal Government of the United States, administrators for the Office of the War Department poorly assessed its pension applicants on their social and financial standings. After aggregating a population of captains, lieutenants, sergeants, and privates in the Connecticut Line, the social and economic diversity of Connecticut’s enlisted soldiers and officer corps was striking. Officers’ orderly books, soldiers’ pay roll records, letter

⁷² “Aaron Austin Affidavit to Superior County Court of Litchfield, July 5, 1820,” Litchfield County Pension Records, 1820 – 1834, Litchfield Historical Society.

⁷³ Shy, 251.

⁷⁴ Holton, 30.

correspondences between officers and Connecticut legislators, as well as soldiers' pension records, revealed that a soldier's social and economic composition played an integral role in his remunerations for service.

In order to properly set the stage for how a Revolutionary War soldier's social and economic standing figured into their remunerations, we must look back to the start of the war. Following the Battles of Lexington and Concord, the Patriot force was composed entirely of militia and state troops. According to historian D.J. Mulloy, Washington and the delegates of the Continental Congress believed that a colony-funded army would be a more successful force against British troops than decentralized militia units.⁷⁵ However, throughout the Revolutionary War, the Connecticut Militia remained an integral component of the American colonists' force. Charles Hall suggests that the Connecticut Militia averaged twenty-three thousand men throughout the war, and was carved up into "twenty-eight regiments of infantry and five regiments of light horse."⁷⁶ In addition to these volunteer regiments, in September and October 1776, Congress authorized the enlistment of eighty-eight regiments to serve as the Continental Army, eight regiments being raised in Connecticut. According to Charles Hall, 7,400 "from the [Connecticut] militia" became a part of the "troops of the United Provinces of North America."⁷⁷ Over the course of two months, the Continental Army formed into a centralized unit that would counteract British assaults on rural communities and sustainable commercial hubs throughout the American colonies. In 1777,

⁷⁵ D.J. Mulloy, "Liberty or Death: Violence and the Rhetoric of Revolution in the American Militia Movement," *Canadian Review of American Studies*, Volume 38, Issue 1, 2008, 121, Academic Search Complete (accessed September 5, 2017).

⁷⁶ Charles S. Hall, *Life and Letters of General Samuel Holden Parsons Major General in the Continental Army and Chief Judge of the Northwestern Territory 1787-1789* (Binghamton, NY: Otseningo Publishing Co.), 1968, 2.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Alexander Purdie, a publisher from Williamsburg, Virginia, printed an ordinance authorized by the Continental Congress that stated that the Continental soldiers and officers “shall be raised, officered, clothed, armed, and equipped,” by each states’ legislatures “necessary for the defense and welfare of the United States.”⁷⁸ However, inequivalent medical attention, clothing rations, and equipment quotas contradicted the delegates’ agenda for a “perpetual union between the states.”⁷⁹

Connecticut officers’ orderly books, paymasters’ rationing account books, and surgeons’ journal entries reveal that a number of soldiers within the Connecticut Line did not receive equivalent equipment rations, nor medical attention throughout the war. Noadiah Hooker, a resident of Farmington, Connecticut, served as a Captain in General Joseph Spencer’s second regiment from May 1, 1775 to December 18, 1775. As the descendant of Thomas Hooker, a Congressionalist minister who founded Connecticut in the early-seventeenth century, Hooker hailed from an elite Anglo-American family. While Hooker served as a Captain prior to the organization of the Connecticut Line, his seven and a half month tenure as a military leader for Connecticut enabled him to become a leader for the Connecticut Militia following his discharge. In 1779, he was promoted to a Colonel in the Connecticut Militia’s fifteenth regiment.⁸⁰ Hooker’s orderly book consisted of a collection of military orders and disciplinary issues regarding the Connecticut Militia’s fifteenth regiment, as well as a number of Connecticut Line regiments. According to his entries throughout 1776, Hooker’s militia regiment was stationed at a Ticonderoga encampment with a number of regiments from the Connecticut Line. Ultimately, his

⁷⁸ Second Continental Congress, “Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union between the States of New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Rhode Island, and Providence Plantations, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia,” Library of Congress, 1777, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/bdsdcc.06701/?sp=2&q=soldiers+of+the+continental+army> (accessed September 3, 2017).

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Connecticut Adjunct-General, 48.

entries from October 1776 revealed low soldier morale and unsettling verdicts for court-martials among the Continental soldiers.⁸¹ In order to maintain control of the regular standing army, procedures, such as granting court-martials to disobedient soldiers, were common. However, stringent martial protocols created numerous instances of soldiers deserting their posts.⁸²

While a number of Hooker's entries illustrated why some soldiers decided to disobey their commanders' orders and desert their companies, there were a number of instances of fraternity among soldiers. For example, while stationed at an unspecified Ticonderoga headquarters, Hooker recorded a cordial order authorized by Captain Asa Bray for his entire militia company on October 4, 1776. Due to the "wet weather," Hooker noted that the company's commanders issued "one gill of rum to each noncommissioned officer and soldier in the company."⁸³ According to Hooker's entry in his orderly book, Bray felt the need to reward his militia unit for their determination to stay in the fight, despite the apparent torrential rainfall. However, examples like Bray's generosity to fulfill his soldiers' thirst for alcohol were rare. The hardships were evident from soldiers' disciplinary punishments recorded by Hooker, especially for deserters.⁸⁴

Hooker's orderly book indicated that defiance and desertion was common among soldiers who disagreed with officers' imposing orders. Recalcitrance was rampant throughout the Connecticut Line, as well as the Connecticut Militia.⁸⁵ On October 6, 1776, Hooker recorded in

⁸¹ Noadiah Hooker's Orderly Book, 1776-1806, The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

⁸² Joseph St. Rock, "Breaking Points: Mutiny in the Continental Army," (University of Connecticut, 2008), Honors Scholars Thesis, 18, http://digitalcommons.uconn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1046&context=srhonors_theses (accessed September 13, 2017).

⁸³ "Headquarters Ticonderoga, October, 4, 1776," Noadiah Hooker's Orderly Book, 1776 – 1806," The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

⁸⁴ "Ticonderoga, October 6, 1776," Noadiah Hooker's Orderly Book, 1776 – 1806, The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

⁸⁵ St. Rock, "Breaking Points," 8.

his orderly book that a “general court martial of the lines” was to be held the following day for “three lieutenants belonging to the independent company [of Captain Jonathan Johnson],” for “deserting their posts without orders or being attacked by their enemies.”⁸⁶ In addition to the three unnamed lieutenants, Hooker’s entry also noted that the court-martial included an unspecified number of “non-commissioned officers,” as well as an undefined number of “soldiers from three [other] companies.”⁸⁷ Although Hooker did not explicitly state which regiment the court-martial pertained to, a cross-reference between the Connecticut Adjutant General’s office’s service record and Hooker’s orderly record indicated that Hooker referred to a disciplinary issue in Colonel Philip Burr Bradley’s Connecticut Line Battalion.⁸⁸ Ultimately, Hooker’s record of a court-martial for unidentified soldiers within Colonel Bradley’s Connecticut Line battalion signaled that a number of soldiers evaded their commanding officers’ orders due to a potential dissatisfaction over the rations set by their superiors, or discontent over their commanders’ directives.

The Connecticut Adjunct-General’s service record indicated that throughout the battalion’s existence, seventeen men were appointed to lieutenant, and all served at one point or another. While Hooker kept the court-martialed soldiers’ names anonymous, he most likely kept these soldiers undisclosed in order to not interfere with the “Deputy Quartermaster General’s” decision “to dismiss all who are negligent of their duty.”⁸⁹ According to Hooker’s entry, the commanding officers’ decision to drop disciplinary charges triggered the battalion’s superiors to place more of

⁸⁶ “Ticonderoga, October 6, 1776,” Noadiah Hooker’s Orderly Book, 1776 – 1806, The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Connecticut Adjunct-General, 414.

⁸⁹ “Ticonderoga, October 6, 1776,” Noadiah Hooker’s Orderly Book, 1776 – 1806, The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

an emphasis on soldiers' order completion and time away from their encampments. Hooker described this decision by noting that the "commissary is to deliver to every noncommissioned officer a soldier who are returned from guard every morning at nine o'clock," and that the "officer coming off guard [is] to sign the return of the commissary."⁹⁰ Ultimately, defiance triggered the battalion's leaders to adopt a more strict policy against soldiers disobeying orders. In effect, the commanding officers' draconian policy amplified the tension between the leaders of the Connecticut Line's fifth battalion and its soldiers.⁹¹

Hooker's account of disobedience within the Connecticut Line's battalion indicated that a number of soldiers were dissatisfied with their commanding officers' oppressive orders.⁹² In addition, inequivalent material rations were prevalent among the Connecticut Line, and created a sense of discontent among many soldiers. The paymaster papers of Colonel Elisha Sheldon's light dragoons regiment illustrated an example of the rationing techniques used by the Connecticut Line. According to the Connecticut Adjunct-General's service record, Sheldon was appointed colonel of the second regiment of light dragoons on December 12, 1776, and served throughout the war. The Connecticut Adjunct-General's service record noted that for most of the war, Sheldon's light dragoons served along the eastern side of the Hudson River in eastern New York and western Connecticut.⁹³ This geographically diverse regiment included men from towns in Hartford County, as well as northern New Jersey, western Massachusetts, as well as a lieutenant from France. In fact, Elijah Janes, the appointed paymaster for the regiment in 1782, was a resident of Brimfield,

⁹⁰ "Ticonderoga, October 6, 1776," Noadiah Hooker's Orderly Book, 1776 – 1806, The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Connecticut Adjunct-General, 271.

Massachusetts. Janes served as a cornet for the regiment in mid-November 1779, and a lieutenant beginning in late-November 1779. After sustaining a ligament injury on the battlefield, Janes became the regiment's paymaster in 1782.⁹⁴ Although this regiment was geographically diverse, Janes' paymaster papers showcased inequivalent material rationing among the regiment's privates.⁹⁵

Janes' clothing record for the light dragoon regiment indicated that all soldiers did not receive the necessary equipment for battle. According to Janes' "account of clothing [for the] second regiment [of] light dragoons" from an unspecified year, the thirty-two recorded men received the designated regiment's coats, as well as one cloak each. However, all seven officers, and six out of the twenty-three privates received a pair of boots. This begs the question as to why less than thirty percent of the privates in this regiment received footwear.⁹⁶ Evidently, this metric contradicted the Continental Congress's 1777 ordinance that all Continental soldiers and officers "shall be raised, officered, clothed, armed, and equipped."⁹⁷

Joseph Plumb Martin's memoirs reveal that commanding officers' issuance of inequivalent clothing provisions, and soldiers' dissatisfaction, was common throughout the Connecticut Line, and created frustration and misery for a number of soldiers. In one instance Martin recounted that he and his comrades "were forced by our old master, Necessity, to lay down and sleep if we could,

⁹⁴ Kate S. Curry and Donald Lines Jacobus, *Revolutionary War Records of Fairfield, Connecticut* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc.), 2004, 306.

⁹⁵ Elijah Janes Paymaster Papers of the 2nd Regiment of Light Dragoons, 1779 – 1783, The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

⁹⁶ "Account of Clothing [for the] 2nd Regiment of Light Dragoons," Elijah Janes Paymaster Papers of the 2nd Regiment of Light Dragoons, 1779 – 1783, The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

⁹⁷ Second Continental Congress, "Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union between the States," Library of Congress. 1777.

with three others of our constant companions, Fatigue, Hunger, and Cold.”⁹⁸ Martin’s account of the unjust material rationing techniques used by a number of commanders for the Connecticut Line depicted the miserable conditions many soldiers dealt with on a daily basis. In addition, Martin’s illustration of the harsh weather conditions that a number of soldiers faced during the winter of Valley Forge spoke volumes about the skewed material rations authorized by the Connecticut Line’s commanding officers. During the winter of 1777, Martin noted that he and his fellow soldiers were compelled to complete their orders despite having “little or no strength to perform it with.”⁹⁹ Martin’s accounts, and Janes’ 1782 clothing record for the second regiment of light dragoons, showcased the extent of inequivalent material rations to a number of soldiers within the Connecticut Line.

Hooker’s orderly book and Janes’ rationing accounts suggest that a number of soldiers’ inability to receive equal rations led to instances of despair and disobedience. In addition, the Connecticut Line’s underlying social and economic diversity among the Connecticut infantry led to inequivalent medical attention in the treatment of physical and mental impairments, as well as bacterial syndromes. Dr. Albigeance Waldo served as a surgeon for the Continental Army from 1775 to 1779. According to Joseph Hall’s 1883 compilation of the Waldo family’s town and private records, Waldo, and his fellow licensed physicians, ventured from his hometown of Pomfret, Connecticut to Boston “immediately after receiving news of the battle of Lexington, their leader probably being General [Israel] Putnam.”¹⁰⁰ From April 1775 to December 1776, Waldo served as a physician in Cambridge and Roxbury “until honorably discharged, his health having

⁹⁸ Martin, 98.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 101.

¹⁰⁰ Joseph D. Hall, Jr., *The Genealogy and Biography of the Waldos of America from 1650 to 1883* (Danielsonville, CT: Press of Scofield & Hamilton), 1883, 112.

failed him.”¹⁰¹ Following his recovery of an unspecified health circumstance, Waldo was commissioned by Governor Trumbull “surgeon of the ship *Cromwell*” in December 1776.¹⁰² According to the Vice Admiralty Court of Halifax, Nova Scotia, the *Oliver Cromwell* was one of the largest full-rigged ships constructed for the Connecticut naval force during the war, and eventually was captured by the British Navy in July 1779.¹⁰³ In April 1777, Waldo, “by the Governor’s permission,” served as a surgeon for the first Connecticut Infantry Regiment until his discharge in October 1779.¹⁰⁴ Throughout his tenure as a physician for the Continental Army, Waldo recorded notes on the services he performed during the war, as well as the inequivalent medical services provided to low-ranking soldiers during and after the war.

According to a letter to the Connecticut State legislature circa 1785, Waldo pitied the Connecticut soldiers’ “undeserved indigence,” and a number of soldiers’ “doleful prospect of rags and starvation” during the late-1770s.¹⁰⁵ Waldo’s letter indicated that the Connecticut Line’s social and economic divisions hindered low-to-middle income soldiers from being able to receive adequate medical attention above their commanders, who, in the majority of cases, were from elite colonial families.¹⁰⁶ According to the Waldo family’s genealogical records, Waldo’s unpublished patient records contained approximately “6,000 patients treated by him,” and that “General

¹⁰¹ Hall, Jr., 188.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Vice Admiralty Court at Halifax, Nova Scotia, *American Vessels Captured by the British during the Revolution and the War of 1812*, (Salem, MA: The Essex Institute), 1911, 65.

¹⁰⁴ Hall Jr., 112.

¹⁰⁵ “Albigeance Waldo to the Connecticut State Legislature, circa 1785,” Albigeance Waldo Papers, 1768-1793 (inclusive), Undated, B MS c21, Boston Medical Library, Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine, Boston, Massachusetts.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

Putnam's name appears several times."¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, the Waldo family's genealogical record noted that Albigence "was a neighbor and intimate friend of the General," given that "his brother Samuel was the General's son-in-law."¹⁰⁸ Nicknamed, "Old Put," Israel Putnam hailed from an Anglo-American family, and commanded the third regiment of the Connecticut Line during the Battle of Bunker Hill, the Siege of Boston, as well as the Continental Army's campaign in New York during the late-1770s.¹⁰⁹ Ultimately, the inability of commanding officers to provide equivalent medical attention throughout the Connecticut Line led to a number of soldiers dying from curable afflictions, and deserting their regiments.

According to one of Waldo's diary entries from January 4, 1778, an indigenous soldier within the Connecticut Line perished because of delayed medical attention. While stationed at Valley Forge with the Connecticut Line's first regiment, Waldo noted that he was "called to relieve a Soldier thought to be dying – he expired before I reached the Hutt."¹¹⁰ Waldo recounted in his diary that the deceased "was an Indian – an excellent soldier – and an obedient good-natured fellow," and that "he fought for those very people who disinherited his forefathers."¹¹¹ After reflecting on the inequivalent medical attention throughout the Connecticut Line, Waldo noted "what a frail-dying creature is Man."¹¹² Ultimately, Waldo's depiction of a soldier who was unable

¹⁰⁷ Hall Jr., 113.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ George Canning Hill, *Gen. Israel Putnam ("Old Put"), A Biography* (Boston: E.O. Libby and Company), 1858, 128.

¹¹⁰ Albigence Waldo, "Valley Forge, 1777 – 1778, *Diary of Surgeon Albigence Waldo, of the Connecticut Line*," January 4, 1778, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), 1897, 319, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20085750> (accessed September 28, 2017).

¹¹¹ Waldo, *Valley Forge, 1777 – 1778*, 319.

¹¹² Ibid., 320.

to receive proper medical treatment suggests that commanding officers received more acute medical attention than soldiers within the regular standing army.

Albigence Waldo's letter to Connecticut legislators, his patient records, as well as his depiction of the hopelessness a number of soldiers' dealt with while on the battlefield, indicated that many soldiers experienced emotional turmoil from their inability to receive adequate medical attention. Why did a number of commanding officers for the Connecticut Line not place more of an emphasis on universal medical treatment for soldiers who suffered from inequivalent clothing rations or curable afflictions? After analyzing Waldo's notes on his service during the Revolutionary War, it is evident that a Connecticut soldier's social and economic composition played a significant role in whether or not he was able to receive medical attention, rudiment rations, as well as financial security. At the onset of the war, poor farmers and urban mechanics believed they held the advantage among the Continental Army's commanders. Men from low-to-middle income backgrounds were more likely to enlist if they received confirmation that they would be compensated with "good and regular pay, annual clothing, and adequate food."¹¹³ Charles Royster argues that the Continental Army's constant desire for able-bodied men throughout the war created a shortage for soldiers. In effect, middling, and poverty-stricken men thought they held the upper hand in bartering for adequate clothing, nourishment, and pay.¹¹⁴ Joseph Plumb Martin recounted this perceived edge over commanders by noting, "I might as well endeavor to get as much for my skin as I could."¹¹⁵ Contrary to Martin's eagerness to receive

¹¹³ St. Rock, "Breaking Points: Mutiny in the Continental Army," 6.

¹¹⁴ Royster, 65.

¹¹⁵ Martin, 61.

sufficient provisions for his service, a number of Connecticut Continentals received inequivalent compensations and rations.

Albigeance Waldo's diary entries revealed that a number of Connecticut Line soldiers faced financial hardships as a result of their commanders' issuance of inequivalent provisions and remunerations. On December 28, 1777, while stationed at Valley Forge, Waldo noted that "Six or Seven [officers] of our Regiment" resigned from Colonel Jedediah Huntington's infantry regiment due to their "Families being so much neglected at home on account of Provisions."¹¹⁶ Waldo's illustration of the resignation of these officers revealed that a number of commissioned officers believed they were not justly compensated for their service. Furthermore, Waldo indicated that "it is a melancholy reflection that what is of the most universal importance, is most universally neglected – I mean keeping up the credit of money."¹¹⁷ According to Waldo's depiction, a number of Connecticut Continentals believed that they were being financially deprived by their commanders, as well as their state's legislators.

Inadequate medical attention and material rations, as well as deficient remunerations, occurred throughout the Connecticut Line.¹¹⁸ In a number of instances, these deficiencies correlated with soldiers' social and economic standing. In addition to the unjust provisional rationing techniques used by commanding officers, many laboring soldiers remained vulnerable against the inflationary market forces that laid ahead. Woody Holton suggests that the Revolutionary War singlehandedly contributed to the economic recession of the late-eighteenth century. Prior to the Treaty of Paris in 1783, state legislators were burdened with copious amounts

¹¹⁶ Waldo, *Valley Forge, 1777 – 1778*, 314.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

of debt that had to be repaid to private creditors who supplied funds for the Continental Army. Ultimately, the state governments' debts triggered inflationary policies, such as the shortage of specie, myopic debt relief legislation, as well as exorbitant taxes on poor farmers and urban mechanics. In effect, a number of soldiers from the low-to-middle income sphere wrongfully suffered with these debilitating shortcomings.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Holton, *Unruly Americans*, 30.

CHAPTER 2: MARKET FORCES AND THE RECESSION OF THE 1780s

On April 13, 1780, Governor Jonathan Trumbull called a meeting with the Connecticut legislators to amend the Continental Congress's "Act for the Establishment of Public Credit." The Connecticut General Assembly accepted the stark reality that "at a time when no regular civil governments were established of sufficient energy," the state governments struggled to properly collect taxes and redeem bills of credit. Because of these barriers, the Connecticut General Assembly agreed with Congress's decision to "reduce the quantity of paper medium in circulation" in order to "appropriate funds that shall ensure the punctual redemption of the bills."¹²⁰ Because the amount of paper money declined, and specie remained scarce, the Connecticut legislative's order created debt deflation for ordinary Americans' private arrears and taxes.¹²¹ Ultimately, the Connecticut General Assembly, along with other state governments, believed a quota for paper money would allow the Connecticut legislators to organize their payments, and, as a result, swiftly pay back the private creditors' bills of credit. For ordinary Americans, however, the shortage of specie led to a stark decline in consumer purchasing power. As scholars have pointed out, the economic recession of the 1780s was rooted in the state government's disruptive economic policies of debt-relief legislation, exorbitant taxes on low-to-middle income Americans, and the shortage of currency.¹²²

¹²⁰ "Act for the Establishment of Public Credit, April 13, 1780," Microfiche, (New York: Readex Microprint), 1985, 11 x 15 cm, Early American Imprints, First series; no. 43783, Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹²¹ Holton, 30.

¹²² Ibid.

The Connecticut General Assembly's indebtedness to private creditors, and the legislators' short-sighted debt-relief legislation for creditors of the war, caused deflation following the war. Throughout the War for Independence, private creditors provided the Continental Army with supplies and funds. According to correspondence between Captain Roger Bulkley and Connecticut merchants, loans allowed the Connecticut Line to function. As a leader in charge of supplying the Continental Army with supplies in Colchester, Bulkley was heavily involved in livestock dealings with David Trumbull, Jeremiah Wadsworth, among other private creditors in Connecticut. For instance, on May 21, 1778, Wadsworth wrote to Bulkley confirming that he lent Bulkley "grey horses by the barren."¹²³ Although Wadsworth did not specify the number of horses lent to Bulkley, his business receipt indicated that the Connecticut Line's commanders heavily relied on private creditors' dealings. Wadsworth was appointed by the Connecticut General Assembly, at the onset of the war, to buy yarn stockings, kettles, pork, as well as procure over one thousand pounds of specie for the Connecticut Line.¹²⁴

Because of his experience as a dependable private creditor in supplying goods and funds for the Connecticut Line, Wadsworth served as Commissary General of Purchases from April 1778 to December 1779. Bulkley's 1778 correspondence with Wadsworth revealed that private creditors could readily access supplies for the war effort through business and political connections. In addition to Bulkley's transaction with Wadsworth, David Trumbull, confirmed that he sold Bulkley "sixty head of Continental oxen" on June 2, 1778.¹²⁵ As the son of the Governor of

¹²³ "Jeremiah Wadsworth to Captain Roger Bulkley, May 21, 1778," Captain Roger Bulkley Papers, 1776-1778, 101235 (Folder 1), Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

¹²⁴ North Callahan, *Connecticut's Revolutionary War Leaders* (Guilford: Pequot Press), 1973, 36.

¹²⁵ "David Trumbull to Captain Roger Bulkley, June 2, 1778," Captain Roger Bulkley Papers, 1776-1778, 101235 (Folder 1), Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

Connecticut, Trumbull served as Assistant Commissary-General for the Connecticut General Assembly during the war. According to his personal and business correspondences, Trumbull handled supply transactions for the Connecticut Line.¹²⁶ Ultimately, Bulkley's transactions with Trumbull and Wadsworth revealed that private creditors were an integral component of the day-to-day operations of the Connecticut Line.

Connecticut's debt relief legislation during the late-eighteenth century, engineered by Trumbull and the state's legislators, sought to repay private creditors who supplied funds for the Continental Army. In the process of doing so, Connecticut legislators' decision to create a shortage of currency orchestrated a deflationary economy as consumer purchasing power contracted, and prices fell drastically. In conjunction with this strained monetary policy, the war brought on steep taxation. Stephen Reed Grossbart argues that Connecticut's regressive tax system placed an unprecedented burden on a majority of the state's population, specifically poor farmers and urban mechanics. As I show in Figure 1, tax rates increased by approximately eightfold from the rates levied prior to 1777 to those imposed during the early-1780s.¹²⁷ The Connecticut legislators' debt-relief legislation wrongfully miscounted for how shrinking the amount of paper money in circulation would affect Connecticut's working class.¹²⁸ With a lack of sound economic decision-making, Connecticut's debt-relief legislation materialized during the late-1770s. Legislators focused on strategies to repay private creditors for their financial assistance to Connecticut's legislative body during the war. Holton argues that the majority of private creditors who supplied

¹²⁶ David Trumbull Papers, 1773 – 1823, OCoLC)ocm42652236, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

¹²⁷ Stephen Reed Grossbart, "The Revolutionary Transition: Politics, Religion, and Economy in Eastern Connecticut, 1765-1800" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International), 1992, 175.

¹²⁸ Connecticut General Assembly, "Act for the Establishment of Public Credit, April 13, 1780," Massachusetts Historical Society.

funds to the Revolutionary War effort dabbled in land speculation schemes or invested in risky government securities. While a number of the Continental Army's debtholders coincidentally became delegates at the Constitutional Convention, Holton reveals that state legislators believed they had an obligation to alleviate their debts with private creditors in order to revive the war-ridden American economy.¹²⁹ The Connecticut General Assembly, like many of the other states' legislative bodies, believed that compensating debtholders' bills of credit was of grave importance following the war. However, the legislators' decision to create a shortage of circulating currency prevented many middling and poverty-stricken Americans from earning a tenable income, and burdened them with the war creditors' debt.¹³⁰

Figure 1: Tax Rates on Connecticut Citizenry Adjusted for Fiat Depreciation, 1774-1790



Figure 1: Data above takes into account the depreciation of paper money to translate all taxes into specie values (Grossbart, "The Revolutionary Transition," 1992, 180.)

¹²⁹ Holton, 23.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 103.

On January 2, 1778, the Connecticut General Assembly authorized the Continental Loan Office's "subscription papers," that could not be "less than two hundred dollars," to be bestowed among sixty private creditors for their efforts to supply and fund the Connecticut Line. Among the debtholders listed were Colonel Hezekiah Wyllys, Captain Aaron Bissell, and Deacon John Whiting. According to the legislative order, the Connecticut General Assembly decided to "procure Loan Office Certificates in favor of the lenders" in order to show proof of their debt to the state. Furthermore, the Connecticut legislators determined that the sixty private creditors would be "allowed by this State one quarter per cent" interest on their investments.¹³¹ While the 1778 order did not indicate a grand total for the state's accounts payable for the private creditors, nor did it outline whether or not this interest would grow over time, this resolution indicated that the Connecticut General Assembly began mapping out repayment strategies for the state's debtholders during the Revolutionary War. The 1778 order also revealed that the Connecticut Line would not have existed without loans from private creditors. For instance, if each of the sixty creditors received a bill of credit entitling them to the minimum payment of two hundred dollars, the Connecticut General Assembly owed approximately \$12,000 for their debts.¹³² In part, the private creditors' decision to supply the Connecticut Line with supplies and funds was courageous due to the fact that the Connecticut legislators did not confirm that they would fully repay the debtholders. However, following the war, the Connecticut General Assembly's debt-relief legislation contributed to the economic recession of the 1780s, and the devastating financial shortcomings of a number of low-to-middle income veterans.

¹³¹ "At a General Assembly of the Governor and Company of the State of Connecticut, January 2, 1778," Microfiche, (New York : Readex Microprint), 1985, 11 x 15 cm, Early American Imprints, First series; no. 15765, Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹³² Ibid.

While private creditors supported the Connecticut General Assembly's debt-relief legislation in order to receive a sufficient return on their investments, poor veteran farmers, and urban mechanics, remained vulnerable. According to a 1779 article from the *Connecticut Courant*, many Americans were concerned with the Connecticut legislators' debt. An anonymous author going by the pseudonym, "Observer," asserted that when the General Assembly "emitted those bills, and pledged her faith for the redemption of them, she was in great distress."¹³³ Furthermore, the author interpreted state governments' debt with private creditors as a "bad bargain" because poor farmers and urban mechanics would suffer from higher taxes. According to the anonymous author, if state governments raised taxes in order to alleviate the states' debts, "a middling farmer from the eastern States, would not have more to pay than the avails of one yoke of fat oxen or fifty bushels of wheat."¹³⁴ Ultimately, "Observer" argued that farmers struggled to pay such high taxes, especially when Connecticut legislators diminished the money supply. To make matters worse, economic output plummeted throughout the War of Independence. Warfare destroyed individuals' property, as well as the labor market's productivity. As the strife took its toll on individuals' property, and led to many poor farmers and urban mechanics struggling to earn a sustainable income, Connecticut's economic production plunged, and a deflationary economy began to coalesce.¹³⁵

Low-to-middle income farmers and mechanics believed that the economic recession of the 1780s was rooted in the state government's disruptive economic policies. Taxes, coupled with the

¹³³ Observer, "Thoughts on the Paper Currency," *Connecticut Courant*, March 9, 1779. <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.providence.idm.oclc.org> (accessed September 18, 2017).

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Holton, 27.

shortage of paper money, contributed to the inflated state debts of poverty-stricken, and middling, farmers and mechanics. As Holton reveals, by the end of the 1780s, the price of livestock fell by roughly half, and land lost around two-thirds of its pre-inflationary worth.¹³⁶ In addition to the currency shortage and the regressive tax system, the issuance of promissory notes, otherwise known as Consolidated notes, contributed to the economic slump following the war. State governments issued these bonds to colonists who lent money to the states' legislative bodies for the war effort, as well as to army contractors and soldiers. Holton argues that every soldier in the Continental Army received part of their compensation in these securities after the state governments decided to shrink the supply of specie, beginning in the early-1780s. Unfortunately, these bonds were essentially over-valued paper money, and worth only a fraction of their face-value. While some soldiers held onto these undervalued bonds, a number of Americans sold them out of disappointment, intuition, or absolute necessity.¹³⁷ For example, Joseph Plumb Martin, a Connecticut farmer who served throughout the war, indicated in his memoir how disappointed he was that his compensation for years of valor were worthless bonds. According to Martin, a number of men in his company, including himself, promptly sold these Consolidated notes "to procure decent clothing and money sufficient to enable them to pass with decency through the country."¹³⁸ Martin and a number of his comrades realized that the market value of these promissory notes were next to nothing, and believed selling the depreciated bonds would generate higher profits than holding onto them.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 31.

¹³⁷ Holton, 33.

¹³⁸ Martin, 241.

The short supply of specie contributed to more war bond holders speculating in the unpredictable Consolidated note market. Ultimately, the Connecticut legislators' decision to continue to "reduce the quantity of the paper medium in circulation" in order to pay back private creditors' debts was counterintuitive. Leonard Richards estimates that approximately two percent of Americans owned these bonds by 1790.¹³⁹ One of the most significant examples of this excess speculation in depreciated government paper money was the failed investment partnership between General Nathanael Greene and Charles Pettit, a prominent Philadelphia merchant. According to Holton, Greene collaborated with Pettit in an investment scheme purchasing \$32,000 worth of depreciated government securities, following his service as commander of the Southern theater from the early-1780s to the end of the war. However, due to the investment's lackluster return, Greene struggled to hold onto the risky securities in the summer of 1784, and eventually sought financial assistance from Jeremiah Wadsworth, the former Commissary General of Purchases for the Connecticut General Assembly. Wadsworth refused involvement in this speculative investment, and Greene allegedly committed suicide over the failed investment. According to a letter written by Wadsworth to George Washington in early October 1786, Wadsworth acknowledged that Greene's death was prompted by his "troubles with the creditors of Banks & Co," and that "the General was left liable."¹⁴⁰ Wadsworth's encounter with Greene's speculative investment revealed that the inflationary economy, coupled with the depreciated market value nature of these government securities, was perilous on investors. Despite this, speculation

¹³⁹ Leonard L. Richards, *Shays's Rebellion: The American Revolution's Final Battle* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), 2002, 80.

¹⁴⁰ "To George Washington from Jeremiah Wadsworth, 19 April 1781," *Founders Online*, National Archives, last modified February 1, 2018, <http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-05459> (accessed February 5, 2018).

remained rampant due to the short supply of currency. Further, Greene's failed investment suggests that the majority of war debt investments ended up in the hands of a small portion of affluent Americans.¹⁴¹

As more and more speculators got their hands on these depreciated bonds, state legislatures' imposition of taxes created a dichotomy. While low-income Americans struggled to pay taxes due to the short supply of specie in circulation, Consolidated note speculators benefitted from state legislatures' taxes, because they triggered interest payments for these investors. For example, according to a January 1783 order, the Connecticut General Assembly enacted a "Tax of One Shilling" on the "Polls and rateable Estate of the inhabitants of this State," and confirmed that all of the "Soldiers Notes" would "be received in payment of this tax."¹⁴² The Connecticut legislators' order indicated that taxes improved the speculators' return on investment through interest payments. John Webb, a Connecticut speculator, observed that "our State Notes have fallen to four shillings on the pound – oweing to the Assembly's not laying any Tax of any kind this session."¹⁴³ Furthermore, in a 1786 letter written to his brother, Samuel, Webb instructed his brother to continue purchasing Consolidated notes because the tax increase in Connecticut, "may enable me to turn them at 13/4 on the pound."¹⁴⁴ Webb's correspondences with his brother revealed that speculators understood that the market value of the Consolidated notes were positively correlated to the state legislators' securities tax. Yet the low-to-middle income veterans, who sold

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² "Acts and Laws, Made and Passed by the General Court or Assembly of the Governor and Company of the State of Connecticut, January 8, 1783," Microfiche, (New York: Readex Microprint), 1985, 11 x 15 cm, Early American Imprints, First series; no. 17880, Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹⁴³ "John Webb to Samuel Blachley Webb, June 25, 1786," in *Correspondence and Journals of Samuel Blachley Webb*, ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford, (Lancaster, PA: Wickersham Press), Volume 3, 1893, 59.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 56.

their consolidated notes, struggled to pay exorbitant taxes in light of the shortage of specie and the inflationary economy.

Connecticut advocates against the state's oppressive taxes, and debt-relief legislation, blamed poor farmers and urban mechanics' financial hardships on the state government's policy to tax the citizenry in order to procure interest payments for bondholders. According to a 1786 article from the *Middlesex Gazette*, an author who went by the pseudonym, "J" argued that "the public securities are so many, that they never can be paid up by taxation or any other way."¹⁴⁵ The anonymous author believed that the sheer number of Consolidated notes in circulation encouraged speculation. In addition, "J" reasoned that these government securities were "no better on these pieces of paper, then was on them bills."¹⁴⁶ The anonymous author believed that the war bond initiative was a failure among state legislators and Congressional delegates, because poor farmers and urban mechanics struggled to pay the interest-bearing taxes, and the notes did not solve America's massive debt problem.

A number of Connecticut residents believed that Governor Trumbull and the Connecticut legislators were to blame for the excessive, and unjust, Consolidated note taxes on low-to-middle income Americans. In addition, opponents of the state legislature's oppressive monetary policies sympathized with a number of poor veteran farmers and mechanics' inability to pay off their inflated personal, and interest taxes on the securities. In late March 1786, an anonymous author wrote a letter to the printers of the *Middlesex Gazette* discussing his or her opinion on the depreciation of the consolidated notes. The writer insisted that this recent economic event has

¹⁴⁵ "J –," *Middlesex Gazette*, March 27, 1786, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.providence.idm.oclc.org> (accessed September 4, 2017).

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

“alarmed the country,” because securities were purchased by speculators from “worthy soldiers” at a steep discount. Ultimately, the author argued that the speculators discounted investment “undervalued the public credit.” Evidently, most speculators bought the soldiers’ notes “from one shilling and six-pence to two shillings and six-pence on the pound,” whereas soldiers purchased these securities at “two shillings on the pound.” Furthermore, the writer indicated that “the soldiers that sold his notes at under par through necessity,” should seek legal reparations “against the buyer for extortion.”¹⁴⁷ This critique on the economically disruptive repercussions of securities speculation indicated that a number of Connecticut residents were uneasy with low-to-middle income veterans’ financial insecurities following the war, and revealed that speculative investments only tainted the state’s debt.

A number of advocates against the state’s monetary policies believed that Connecticut’s legislators should either intervene in the speculators’ investments by reimbursing noteholders at market value rather than face value, or eliminate the issuance of the promissory notes.¹⁴⁸ However, Connecticut’s citizenry were bombarded with more taxes in an effort to drive down the state’s domestic debt. For example, the Connecticut legislators instituted a 1783 tax order entitled, “Act an Excise on All the Following Articles Sold by Retail or Consumed within the State.” According to the tax agenda, a “Gallon of foreign Wine” was taxed one shilling, a “Gallon of West India Rum” was taxed six pence, among other retail items. In addition, the legislature levied a tax of “five Per Cent on the value thereof in lawful Money,” for civilians who purchased “Iron and Steel Ware,” “wrought silks,” among other articles produced in the state.¹⁴⁹ The Connecticut legislators’

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ “An Act for Laying an Excise on Sundry Articles of Consumption within this State, January 8, 1783,” in *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut for the Years of 1783 and 1784 with the Journal of the Council of*

taxes on foreign imports, as well as domestic goods produced within the state, augmented the burdens of a number of poor farmers and urban mechanics, such as the inability to earn an income, or pay off their steep debts with creditors. However, some defenders of the Connecticut General Assembly's taxes believed that middling, and poverty-stricken citizens' financial hardships were rooted from their extravagant spending habits, coupled with idleness. For instance, Noah Webster wrote an article in late September 1786 for the *United States Chronicle* under the pseudonym, "Tom Thoughtful," and argued that working class Americans struggled to pay their debts because, "luxury rages among you, and luxury is the *Devil*."¹⁵⁰ Webster myopically argued that day laborers' monetary austerities were attributed to their excessive spending habits, rather than the state legislature's currency quota and its oppressive tax schedule. Some advocates in support of the Connecticut legislature's tight monetary policies believed that the Revolutionary War fueled Continental soldiers' desire to consume more than they could afford. For example, David Daggett, an affluent attorney from New Haven, Connecticut, insisted that the war sparked instances of "public opinion" that were "erroneous through general ignorance."¹⁵¹ For Daggett, Webster, and other advocates in support of the Connecticut General Assembly's monetary policies, the excessive spending of indebted civilians and impoverished veterans led to their inability to pay off justified taxes.

While a number of prominent men from elite landholding families supported Connecticut's strict monetary policies, poor farmers and urban mechanics struggled to pay the state legislature's

Safety from January 9, 1783 to November 15, 1783 Compiled in Accordance with an Act of the General Assembly, ed. Leonard Woods Labaree, (Hartford: State of Connecticut), 1943, 16.

¹⁵⁰ Tom Thoughtful, "To the Public," *United States Chronicle*, September 28, 1786, <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.providence.idm.oclc.org> (accessed September 4, 2017).

¹⁵¹ David Daggett, "Steady Habits Vindicated: Or A Serious Remonstrance to the People of Connecticut, Against Changing their Government," (Hartford: Hudson & Goodwin), 1805, 6.

tariffs, as well as their private taxes, because the General Assembly had depleted the currency in circulation. To exacerbate the state's debt problem, as well as poor farmers and urban mechanics' indigence, Congress authorized a new war bond. On September 27, 1785, the thirteen state legislatures received a "requisition" from Congress that sought \$3 million from taxpayers for foreign debt to Dutch, French, and Spanish loan holders, as well as domestic debt for new officer service bonds, Commutation certificates. Congress sought payment of "one year's interest" for the privileged officers who held these high market value bonds, and decided to "apportion to each [state] a just quota of the public expenses."¹⁵² The officer bonds came to fruition over some officers threatening to commit mutinies among their respective citizenry, neglecting to defend civilians from future attacks by marching across the Appalachian Mountains, and even hinting that the state legislatures faced the possibility of a military coup.¹⁵³ Ultimately, Congress reluctantly agreed with their demands and authorized officer pensions, which were virtually bonuses worth five years' service.¹⁵⁴ According to a resolution passed on May 27, 1778, Congress authorized that the "Monthly pay of the officers and soldiers" was to be based on the "*rank in the line of the army*."¹⁵⁵ For example, commissioned Colonels received seventy-five dollars per month, commissioned Majors received fifty dollars per month, and commissioned Captains received forty dollars per

¹⁵² Confederation Congress, "By the United States in Congress Assembled," September 27, 1785, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/bdsdcc.15301/?st=gallery> (accessed September 3, 2017).

¹⁵³ "Benjamin Gale to Erastus Wood, February 10, 1787," in *Connecticut Historical Society Bulletin*, ed. Philip H. Jordan, Jr., Volume 28, Number 1, January 28, 1963, 18.

¹⁵⁴ Holton, 66.

¹⁵⁵ "Half Pay for Seven Years to Officers, and a Gratuity of \$80 to the Non-Commissioned Officers and Soldiers, May 27, 1778," in *Resolutions, Laws, and Ordinances, Relating to the Pay, Half Pay, Commutation of Half Pay, Bounty Lands, and Other Promises Made by Congress to Officers and Soldiers of the Revolution; To the Settlement of the Accounts Between the United States and the Several States, and to Funding the Revolutionary Debt*, ed. Thomas Allen, (Washington D.C.: Thomas Allen), 1838, 9.

month. Furthermore, the delegates indicated that these rates of payment “formed the basis of the settlements with the officers for their Commutation of five years’ full pay.”¹⁵⁶ Congress authorized another speculative debt instrument with an over-valued face value. As with the Consolidated notes, these bonds ended up in the hands of elite landholding Revolutionary war officers, as well as in the hands of investors who did not serve. Poor farmers and urban mechanics, continued to struggle to pay the Connecticut legislature’s cumbersome poll and property taxes, as well as the additional payment for Commutation certificates.¹⁵⁷

In an effort to raise interest payments for the officers’ payments, Congress’s 1785 requisition increased the Connecticut citizenry’s tax burden. According to a tax account conducted by the Connecticut legislators in October of 1785, each Connecticut town was forced to pay “£39 8 9 on the six penny Tax on the List 1783,” as well as the sum of “£8 10 3” for the 1784 tax list.¹⁵⁸ A number of low-to-middle income Americans believed their debts derived from speculators on these securities. One anti-Commutation activist believed that the Connecticut legislators’ only option to save working class Americans from “perpetual taxes” was to reduce the “heavy state debt lay upon us for depreciation to officers.”¹⁵⁹ According to the anonymous author with the

¹⁵⁶ “Half Pay for Seven Years to Officers, and a Gratuity of \$80 to the Non-Commissioned Officers and Soldiers, May 27, 1778,” in *Resolutions, Laws, and Ordinances*, ed. Thomas Allen, 1838, 9.

¹⁵⁷ Anonymous Essay, *Middlesex Gazette*, March 27, 1786.

¹⁵⁸ “An Account of What is by Law Made Receivable by the Several Collectors in Each Particular Tax and for Impost and Excise Due or Made Payable to the Treasurer of the State of Connecticut, October 13, 1785,” in *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut from May, 1785, through January, 1789 Compiled in Accordance with an Act of the General Assembly*, ed. Leonard Woods Labaree, (Hartford: State of Connecticut), 1945, 100-102. In addition to the state’s property and poll taxes, the Connecticut General Assembly imposed taxes on specie, household goods, as well as government securities.

¹⁵⁹ Agricola [William Williams], “To the Inhabitants of Connecticut,” *Connecticut Courant*, October 9, 1786. <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.providence.idm.oclc.org> (accessed September 5, 2017); “The Looking Glass for 1787,” 1787, Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3b42510/> (accessed February 7, 2018). William Williams, a member of the Continental Congress, and an eventual delegate of the Constitutional Convention in 1787, used “Agricola” as a pseudonym to express his ideas toward resolving the monetary shortage, and strengthening farmers’ interests as an Antifederalist.

pseudonym, “Agricola,” it would be “impolitic and injurious” if Connecticut’s legislators allowed its citizenry to pay interest on officers’ bonds.¹⁶⁰ Low-to-middle income workers understood that their taxes would drastically increase with the new interest tax for the procurement of Commutation bonds.

As uproar intensified over the state’s regressive tax system, a number of Continental officers publicly disapproved of Congress’s requisition. For example, a *Connecticut Courant* article from May 28, 1787 recorded Charles Burrall and Benjamin Chaplain’s speeches in front of the Connecticut House of Representatives on May 15, 1787. Burrall believed that the “people ought not to be taxed beyond their abilities.”¹⁶¹ Chaplain insisted that a number of poor farmers and mechanics from Windham County, Connecticut were “distressed” over the collection of more taxes. Furthermore, Chaplain indicated that a number of farmers already felt the need to “sell off their flock, their oxen, and their cows.”¹⁶² Because of the social uproar over Commutation certificates, the Connecticut House of Representatives dismissed Congress’s requisition in October of 1786 on the grounds that Connecticut’s citizenry were “labouring under Embarrassments by reason of Arreages of former taxes.”¹⁶³ Governor Trumbull and the Connecticut legislators could not bear to tack on an addition tax to the people. According to Jensen, because liquidity was scare,

¹⁶⁰ Agricola [William Williams], “To the Inhabitants of Connecticut,” *Connecticut Courant*, October 9, 1786. <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.providence.idm.oclc.org> (accessed September 5, 2017).

¹⁶¹ “Charles Burrall, Benjamin Chaplain, Speeches in Connecticut House of Representatives, May 15, 1787,” *Connecticut Courant*, May 28, 1787. <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.providence.idm.oclc.org> (accessed September 5, 2017).

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ “Whereas the Requisitions of Congress and Other Communications have been Received and Laid Before the Assembly, October 12, 1786,” in *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut from May, 1785, through January, 1789 Compiled in Accordance with an Act of the General Assembly*, ed. Leonard Woods Labaree, (Hartford: State of Connecticut), 1945, 232.

Commutation certificates continued to be distributed throughout the states. Yet, while the security payments were supposed to draw six percent interest for holders, the Confederation Government lacked the funds to redeem them.¹⁶⁴ In effect, a number of Continental officers sold their Commutation certificates in the securities market, and received returns as low as twelve and a half cents on the dollar. By the time Congress ratified legislation that sought to redeem these certificates on August 4, 1790, speculators possessed the majority of these securities, and many officers forfeited their promised returns.¹⁶⁵

The Connecticut state legislature's noncompliance with Congress's 1785 requisition eventually led to many officers not receiving their distinguished compensations. While it is peculiar that Congress's bold Commutation strategy faded away, public uproar in Connecticut played a major role in the security initiative's demise. In a letter from Samuel Adams to Noah Webster, Adams concluded that the officer corps payment initiative failed because it was "too much altercated."¹⁶⁶ In addition to Adams's deduction, Charles Royster indicates that a number of civilians "wanted the officers, like the privates, to return to civilian life inconspicuously," and renounce "invidious claims to have done more, for independence than civilians had done."¹⁶⁷ By the end of 1785, support for Congress's requisition waned as a result of a number of Connecticut residents who opposed yet another governmental scheme that hindered ordinary Americans' financial stability, and created unrestrained speculation.

¹⁶⁴ Jensen, 63.

¹⁶⁵ "An Act Making Provision for the Debt of the United States," *Annals of Congress*, August 4, 1790. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbpe.21500100/?sp=1> (accessed October 1, 2017).

¹⁶⁶ "Samuel Adams to Noah Webster, April 30, 1784," in *The Writings of Samuel Adams*, ed. Harry Alonzo Cushing, (New York: Knickerboker Press), 1908, Volume IV, 303.

¹⁶⁷ Royster, 349.

Although Congress's requisition eventually collapsed, the Connecticut legislators failed to understand that heavy tax and debt collection hindered poor farmers and urban mechanics ability to work. According to Holton, pro-creditor debt-relief legislations further diminished available capital, as well as labor productivity.¹⁶⁸ A number of essayists understood this matter, and sought to educate Connecticut's citizenry about why the low-to-middle income Americans, a majority of whom served as Continentals, were caught in a financial pitfall. An anonymous author who went by the pseudonym, "A Citizen of Connecticut," wrote an essay in an April 1786 issue of the *Connecticut Courant* that identified that farmers and mechanics suffered more than any other socioeconomic group. While "A Citizen of Connecticut," believed that the "idle and prostrate," were affected by the recession, the author believed that the "industrious laborious farmer," was far more affected by the currency shortage. The author went so far as to reveal that farmers he was acquainted with "lost their estates" and persistently struggled to "extricate themselves out of their troubles." Ultimately, this author indicated the discouraged mentality a number of middling, and poverty-stricken, farmers and urban mechanics held following the war.

Newspaper articles revealed that many Connecticut citizens were agitated with the state legislature's inability either to loosen their strict monetary policies, or combat rampant speculation. The state legislature's poor economic decision making even led to instances of attempted revolt. According to the *Middlesex Gazette*, in November 1786, a group of farmers and artisans in Preston, Connecticut were accused by state legislators for conspiring to support Daniel Shays' insurgency in Massachusetts.¹⁶⁹ "Zeno," the author's alias, believed that the Connecticut legislators' inability

¹⁶⁸ Holton, 101.

¹⁶⁹ Zeno "For the Middlesex Gazette," *Middlesex Gazette*, November 6, 1786. <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.providence.idm.oclc.org> (accessed September 7, 2017).

to recognize that low-to-middle income Connecticut civilians could not bear the inflationary economy any longer, and that “this most horrid distemper” had the potential to “become universal.” Securities speculation and shortsighted debt-relief legislation destroyed labor productivity among middling and poverty-stricken citizens. Furthermore, the economic failure of the war bond initiatives, and the currency shortage, worsened the financial stability for many impoverished veterans, specifically poor farmers and urban mechanics. Regardless of whether or not officers or soldiers were commissioned during their service, many veterans from the low-to-middle income socioeconomic sphere became increasingly indigent from the inflationary economic downturn.

CHAPTER 3: THE ALTERED ‘*DEBTS OF HONOUR*’

Many low-to-middle income veterans, specifically poor farmers and mechanics, suffered from unequal and inadequate provisions during the war, and then faced the hardships of deflationary market forces beginning in the mid-1780s. Yet while many disenfranchised Connecticut veterans could not overcome their financial setbacks, entitlements for many physically wounded Revolutionary War veterans coalesced beginning in the late-1780s. The first instances of military pensions and land benefits stemmed from the ratification of the Bill of Rights in the early 1790s. While appealing to state and federal lawmakers became a codified right through the First Amendment, the practice of petitioning had been an enduring custom through Anglo legal precedent. Through this process, individuals could address their economic, political, and social concerns to legislators in order to refine, or create, statutes that ameliorated their grievances.¹⁷⁰ Specifically, the First Amendment documented Americans’ right to petition the United States Congress for aid to mend individuals’ debt, trade disputes, poverty, and property damage. In the midst of state building, the ratification of the Bill of Rights allowed Americans to play a greater role in the legislative process by retaining the affirmative right to state their injustices toward legislators, and having the expectation that policymakers were to be receptive to citizens’ resentments. In effect, petitioning led to Congress’s commitment to provide entitlements to disabled military veterans.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Pauline Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.), 1997, 51.

¹⁷¹ Jensen, 46.

As the First Congress of the United States preserved its control over assessing personal monetary claims, such as financial assistance appeals for poverty, injuries, and debt relief, entitlements for disabled veterans were of utmost importance for Congress's social policy agenda. Pensions for disabled veterans struck a nerve with Congress, as it had with the Confederation Congress, because, in the majority of instances, physically impaired veterans were unable to work, nor able to attain an adequate standard of living.¹⁷² Congressional support for disabled veterans' entitlements remained strong throughout the early-nineteenth century. Seth Weed, a Lieutenant within Colonel Charles Webbs' Connecticut Line regiment, benefitted from Congress's preservation of pensions for disabled veterans. According to a letter written by Weed to the Office of War Department on January 25, 1819, he was shot by a "musket ball" in his left leg following the British Army's raid on Danbury, Connecticut, during the spring of 1777. Although Weed did not indicate when he began receiving payments from the Office of War Department, nor the total amount of his entitlement, he revealed that he obtained a payment of \$81.60 per year.¹⁷³ According to an 1818 follow-up medical correspondence recorded by Sam Webb and John Auger, two surgeons appointed by Pierpont Edwards to assess Weed's medical state, his wound had turned into an infective ulcer. The surgeons noted that Weed was "incapable of procuring" a steady income through "manual or bodily labor."¹⁷⁴ Weed was eventually compensated with a large

¹⁷² Jensen, 49

¹⁷³ "Seth Weed to House of Representatives, January 25, 1819," Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

¹⁷⁴ "Sam Webb and John Auger to Honorable Pierpont Edwards, June 25, 1818," Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

payment of \$431.75 on June 25, 1818 for his physical impairments, because Congress decided to appropriate more money for the national-level entitlement in 1816.¹⁷⁵ On March 8, 1816, Congress used a portion of the United States Treasury's surplus to increase the disabled veterans' rates "according to their ranks and degrees of disabilities."¹⁷⁶ Evidently, the Fourteenth Congress continued to provide disabled veterans with comfortable remunerations for their physical impairments sustained during the war. Despite Weed's inability to receive suitable medical attention following his injury, he was compensated with an entitlement, because Congress supported pensions for disabled veterans.

While disabled veterans received remunerations from the Federal Government beginning in the late-1780s, service-based pensions remained contentious among legislators since the end of the Revolutionary War. Advocates who supported a universal service allotment believed that all veterans who could not earn an income to support themselves deserved cash benefits in recognition of their service. However, this concept failed to warrant support among Congress because of the long-standing rejection by martial leaders of the Revolutionary War, as well as the American public. While the Continental Army dealt with desertions during the winter of 1778, primarily because of the Continental Army's inability to provide soldiers with either adequate monthly pay or provisions, Washington dismissed service pensions as a feasible option to bolstering soldiers' morale. In November 1777, Washington noted in his personal writings that universal service-based

¹⁷⁵ "Sam Weed's Pension, June 25, 1818," Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, National Archives.

¹⁷⁶ Fourteenth United States Congress, "A Bill to Increase the Pensions of Invalids in Certain Cases, for the Relief of Invalids of the Militia, and for the Appointment of Pension Agents in Those States Where There Is No Commissioner of Loans," *Library of Congress*, March 8, 1816. <https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llhb&fileName=046/llhb046.db&recNum=251> (accessed September 29, 2017).

pensions would “give great disgust to the people at large.”¹⁷⁷ Washington’s rationale was twofold. He believed that service-based pensions were an unnecessary expense that would undoubtedly drive up the national debt, and he also believed that service-based pensions would create an unwarranted clash among different ranked soldiers, and Americans who did not serve in the state-funded infantry regiments. For Washington, he believed that many citizens could become alienated over an entitlement statute that determined which Americans should receive a greater distinction for their martial contributions.¹⁷⁸ In terms of the states’ growing debt, Washington argued that service entitlements to all soldiers would yield an “enormous expense” that would “add such weight to a debt already.”¹⁷⁹

Despite Washington’s perspective, the onset of Commutation certificates set off a series of dissensions between the public and the soldiers over social and economic standing. As officers demanded pension payments for their service, debate over the justness of the Commutation notes brought about clashes between socioeconomic classes. While Continental officers demanded entitlements from the Federal Government because they claimed their financial insecurities stemmed from the war, these contentions only heightened the unjust notion that remunerations depended on soldiers’ rank, as well as their social and economic status. Furthermore, the discord over the Commutation notes worsened impoverished soldiers’ ability to receive pensions, because

¹⁷⁷ “Remarks on Plan of Field Officers for Remodeling the Army, November 1777,” in *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick, 125-126.

¹⁷⁸ “Remarks on Plan of Field Officers for Remodeling the Army, November 1777,” in *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick, 125-126.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

veterans' social distinctions had become an integral component in determining who could receive remunerations for service.¹⁸⁰

When President James Monroe took office in 1817, however, Congress devised a robust social program act that looked to compensate indigent Revolutionary War veterans with monthly pension payments. For a number of low-to-middle income veterans, hope was restored. According to Jensen, because Monroe served as a Revolutionary officer, he encouraged Congress to construct a service pension proposal that would ameliorate financial instabilities for all surviving officers and soldiers.¹⁸¹ Monroe clarified that since the ratification of the United States Constitution in 1789, the democratic republic had created "profitable commerce," and "an extraordinary elevation" in public credit. However, in the wake of settling a significant amount of the United States' outstanding public debts, Monroe addressed the sad truth that surviving Revolutionary veterans "were reduced to indigence, and even to real distress."¹⁸² Although Monroe believed "that the number to be benefitted by any provision" would not be large because the war ended more than three decades ago, he believed service payments to surviving veterans would "do honor to their country to provide for them."¹⁸³ After months of legislative jockeying among supporters and opponents of Monroe's universal service pension program, a compromised version became law on March 18, 1818.¹⁸⁴ According to the new entitlement law, men who served in the Continental

¹⁸⁰ Jensen, 63.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁸² "President's Annual Message, December 2, 1817." *Annals of Congress. Senate. 15th Congress. 1st Session. Library of Congress.* 19. <https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llac&fileName=031/llac031.db&recNum=3> (accessed October 2, 2017).

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ Jensen, 79.

Army or Navy for at least nine months were entitled to receive pensions if they could demonstrate their “reduced circumstances in life.”¹⁸⁵ Unlike Monroe’s vision, the law gave the Office of War Department’s administrators the authority to accept or dismiss an applicant’s declaration for a pension. Due to these procedural guidelines, a number of administrators selectively assessed applicants’ financial worth and the extent of their poverty.

While Monroe hoped that the Federal Government could bestow pensions to all aged and poverty-stricken veterans, the Pension Act of 1818’s guidelines exposed social and economic disparity in the Continental Army. The Office of War Department’s inequitable remunerations greatly affected poor farmers and urban mechanics who served in the Connecticut Line. Although Jensen indicates that the Pension Act of 1818 was a watershed moment for domestic social policymaking, she argues that the entitlement program’s rigid eligibility structure encouraged self-interest and elitism to play a dominant role in applicants’ assessments.¹⁸⁶ One of the most significant problems with the Office of War Department’s pension assessment process was that it lacked an objective analysis of an applicant’s financial state. Ultimately, the Office of War Department’s administrators verified whether or not a petitioner legitimately served for more than nine months and determined the total amount to be paid to the petitioner based on their recorded income disparity, and infirmities. In addition, administrators for the Office of War Department did not evaluate applicants on an impartial case-by-case basis. Instead of carefully assessing a petitioner’s income disparity in relation to their demographic standing, the administrators evaluated its applicants on their written declarations that included the value of their possessions,

¹⁸⁵ “An Act to Provide for Certain Persons Engaged in the Land and Naval Service of the United States in the Revolutionary War, March 18, 1818,” in *The Pension Laws of the United States, including Sundry Resolutions of Congress, from 1776 to 1833: Executed at the War Department*, ed. Robert Mayo, (Washington D.C.: The Global Office), 1833, 107-108.

¹⁸⁶ Jensen, 80.

as well as why they required an entitlement from the Federal Government. Secretary of War John Calhoun, who oversaw the entitlement program, admitted to Joseph Bloomfield, the Chairman of the Committee on Revolutionary Pensions for Congress, that the pension assessors had made a number of “impositions or mistakes” in payment amounts due to the growing number of applicants. Despite the program’s “strict construction,” Calhoun revealed that the entitlement act had “been less successfully executed” in improving beneficiaries’ “condition in life, as to property.”¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, according to unrevealed sources, Calhoun disclosed that “many of the pensioners” hailed from “more affluent circumstances than that which the act contemplated.”¹⁸⁸ By not assessing veterans’ financial insecurities on a case-by-case basis, assessors bestowed inequitable payments to a number of pension applicants.

Reports trickling out of the Office of War Department that some petitioners fared better than others who were thought to be more deserving shocked Connecticut residents. For example, on July 16, 1818, the *Middlesex Gazette* published a letter written by Henry Shaw that chastised the pension assessors’ inability to objectively examine veterans’ dire need of assistance. The Congressman from Berkshire, Massachusetts believed that this issue was a “severe injustice” toward the “venerable, but indigent Soldier.”¹⁸⁹ In the same issue of the *Middlesex Gazette*, the town’s clerk published the proceedings from the Middletown town meeting on December 6, 1819. A number of Middletown residents criticized veterans of “affluent circumstances” distastefully

¹⁸⁷ “John C. Calhoun to Joseph Bloomfield, December 22, 1819,” in *American State Papers: Documents, Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States, From the First Sessions of the First to the Second Session of the Seventeenth Congress, Inclusive: Commencing March 4, 1789, and Ending March 3, 1823*, ed. Walter S. Franklin and Walter Lowrie, (Washington D.C.: Gales and Seaton), 1834, 682 – 683.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Henry Shaw, “From the *Pittsfield Sun*,” *Middlesex Gazette*, December 9, 1818. <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.providence.idm.oclc.org> (accessed September 7, 2017).

seeking entitlements from the Federal Government. Elisha Coe, the moderator at the town meeting, encouraged the Middletown citizenry to report any information of this fraudulent activity to the town's political leaders. Although Calhoun had made it clear that he would eradicate all entitlements made to more well off pensioners by re-assessing beneficiaries' degree of financial instability, a number of Connecticut veterans suffered from the administrators' payment discrepancies.¹⁹⁰

The fragmented nature of the entitlement program encouraged administrators to make payment decisions based on preferences.¹⁹¹ For example, on April 17, 1818, the Office of War Department began to remunerate Elias Stevens, a Connecticut veteran from Killingworth who served as a private for three years in a regiment commanded by Colonel Heman Swift. According to Stevens' file, he received a pension payment for four consecutive months that totaled \$36.80, until the Office of War Department asked him to testify before a local district judge in order to continue to receive the Federal Government's entitlement.¹⁹² However, on June 14, 1820, Stevens gave his declaration of need to the Middlesex County Court's Clerk, and presented an upscale asset schedule that totaled \$705.50 (see Table 1). According to his testimony, Stevens insisted that "lameness and rheumatism" prevented him from blacksmithing, a trade that he had performed for more than thirty years. However, his assets revealed that Stevens owned one "house barn," and "two-thirds of an old house and barn" situated on close to seventy-three acres of land. In addition

¹⁹⁰ Elisa Coe, "At an Adjourned Town Meeting of the Inhabitants of the Town of Middletown," *Middlesex Gazette*, December 9, 1818. <http://infoweb.newsbank.com.providence.idm.oclc.org> (accessed September 18, 2017).

¹⁹¹ Jensen, 96.

¹⁹² "Pension File of Elias Stevens, April 17, 1818," Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

to these possessions, Stevens owned more than twenty animals, including horses, oxen, and sheep, as well as furnished items such as a “Bureau” and a “Bookcase.”¹⁹³ After the Middlesex County Court examined Stevens’ testimony and asset schedule, Stevens received a letter from the Office of War Department on July 8, 1820 informing him that “on account of the amount of your property,” his name was “stricken from the Pension List.”¹⁹⁴ Stevens’ ability to receive a pension from the Office of War Department, given the extent of his possessions, indicated that the Pension Act of 1818 created inequitable remunerations among the applicant pool.

The significance of Stevens’ payment undermined the original purpose of the service pension program. Rather than relieving impoverished veterans’ financial instabilities, the Office of War Department’s payments to Stevens reveals social and economic divisions that existed in the Connecticut Line, as well as the preferential nature of the service entitlement program. On July 4, 1820, George Batterson, a sixty-three year old veteran from Warren, Connecticut filed an affidavit with the Litchfield County Court. According to Batterson’s declaration, he also served in the regiment commanded by Colonel Heman Swift for three years beginning in 1781. Batterson informed Frederick Wolcott, the court’s clerk, that he was a blacksmith by trade, but “unable to work at his trade for several years” due to a “Rheumatic Affection.” Batterson later admitted in his declaration that he had “no hope of being able to work [as a blacksmith] again.”¹⁹⁵ A valuation

¹⁹³ “Elias Stevens Affidavit to Middlesex County Court, June 14, 1820,” Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

¹⁹⁴ “Office of War Department to Elias Stevens, July 8, 1820,” Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

¹⁹⁵ “George Batterson Affidavit to Superior County Court of Litchfield, July 4, 1820,” Litchfield County Pension Records, 1820 – 1834, Litchfield Historical Society.

of his possessions of “one house on [the] highway,” “one cow,” among other basic household items brought the total value of his possessions to \$57.85. Clearly, the Office of War Department’s entitlement to Batterson of \$35.78 on April 21, 1818 was of little assistance (see Table 1). Batterson’s financial situation indicated the poverty trap a number of working class Connecticut veterans experienced following the war. In addition, a comparison between Batterson’s financial difficulties and Stevens’ means revealed an example of the Office of War Department’s inequitable payments to Revolutionary War veterans.¹⁹⁶

Although Batterson and Stevens both served for three years as non-commissioned privates, Stevens received a greater entitlement payment than Batterson. If the total value of Stevens’ assets were \$647.65 greater than Battersons’ assets, why was he compensated more than Batterson (see Table 1)? The Office of War Department’s miscalculations led to this payment discrepancy. The pension program’s improper assessment strategies enabled the assessors to make errors due to the overwhelming number of applicants.¹⁹⁷ In Connecticut alone, the Office of War Department compensated 1,373 veterans between 1818 and 1820. Approximately 8,398 pension recipients resided in New England. These statistics revealed that the sheer number of applicants created a sizable room for error in determining payment amounts.¹⁹⁸ Furthermore, the financial contrast between the two men indicated that the pension assessors incorporated the social and economic standing of Batterson, and Stevens in their payment decision.

¹⁹⁶ “Pension File of George Batterson, April 21, 1818,” Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

¹⁹⁷ “John C. Calhoun to Joseph Bloomfield, December 22, 1819,” in *American State Papers*, ed. Franklin and Lowrie, 682 – 683.

¹⁹⁸ Jensen, 112.

Despite striking differences in soldiers' value of assets, pension assessors placed a far greater emphasis on social and economic standing, rather than proven indigence, in their remunerations to veterans. Pension payments among working class Connecticut veterans, as displayed in Table 1, were skewed. This division was particularly true for applicants that indicated they were "day laborers," by occupation. An aggregation of thirty-four Connecticut veterans' pension records, filed throughout the state, illustrates the extent of the social and economic divisions among Connecticut's surviving veterans from 1818 to 1820. On March 10, 1819, Edward Fuller, a resident of Norfolk, began receiving a monthly entitlement of \$8. In total, he would receive \$46.70 from the Office of War Department.¹⁹⁹ As a private who served for one year in a regiment commanded by Colonel Charles Burrell, Fuller's financial instability following the war was at the lowest-tier of the aggregation (see Table 1). According to an affidavit presented to the Litchfield County Court on July 5, 1820, Fuller testified in front of the Honorable Frederick Wolcott that the entitlement package he received from the Federal Government was insufficient in relieving his destitution. "I have no property [whatsoever]," stated Fuller. While neither Wolcott nor Fuller provided an explanation for his poverty, private debts and the state's exorbitant taxes most likely contributed to his "total amount in value of property" of zero dollars.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ "Pension File of Edward Fuller, March 10, 1819," Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

²⁰⁰ "Edward Fuller Affidavit to Superior County Court of Litchfield, July 5, 1820," Litchfield County Pension Records, 1820 – 1834, Litchfield Historical Society.

Table 1: Payments to Connecticut Veteran Applicants following the Pension Act of 1818

Occupation	Number of Applicants	% of Pension Applicants	Number of Years in Service	Total Payment Range (\$)	Total Value of Assets (\$)
Blacksmith	2	6.25	3.00	35.78 - 36.80	57.85 - 705.50
Day Laborer	7	21.88	0.75 - 6.00	37.60 - 137.54	0 - 282.48
Sawyer	2	6.25	0.75 - 1.00	88.80 - 121.30	87.95 - 159.85
Farmer	11	34.38	0.85 - 6.00	35.73 - 184.53	0 - 281.30
Shoemaker	3	9.38	1.00 - 6.00	37.33 - 138.58	76.25 - 382.07
Laborer	3	9.38	3.00 - 6.00	37.60 - 135.69	0 - 68.77
Occupations of one	4	12.50	0.75 - 6.00	67.00 - 216.00	14.00 - 65.50

^a Occupations of one: carpenter, merchant, seaman, tailor

Fuller's affidavit revealed that his age, and potential physical impediments, led to his inability to earn an income as a day laborer and to be self-sufficient. While the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics did not accurately track unemployment rates prior to 1890, census data reveals the extent of the labor productivity pitfall in 1820. While the population of Connecticut in 1820 was approximately 275,000, ninety-two percent of the state's population resided in rural Connecticut, while 21,000 individuals resided in cities, towns, and villages.²⁰¹ In 1820, approximately 17% of the Connecticut population was made up of residents aged forty-five years and older. Although the census did not have accurate projections to determine the number of workers able to earn an income, the report indicated that one percent of the state's population was a part of the labor force in 1820.²⁰² While statistical inaccuracies need to be taken into consideration, the data reveals how the labor market shortage contributed to the impoverishment

²⁰¹ Ben J. Wattenberg, *The Statistical History of the United States: From Colonial Times to the Present*, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers), 1976, 25.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 134.

of many Connecticut veterans. On April 22, 1818, Henry Baldwin, a resident of Cornwall, started to receive a monthly payment of \$8, which would amount to \$83.47. Baldwin served for nine months in a company commanded by Captain Edward Shipman.²⁰³ On July 4, 1820, Baldwin, a sixty-eight-year-old ex-soldier for the Connecticut Line, appeared before the Litchfield County Court's administrators to present a declaration toward the entitlement he received from the Office of War Department, as well as a schedule of his assets valued at \$93.68 (see Table 1).²⁰⁴

With passage of the Federal Pension Act of 1818, the Office of War Department required all local county court administrators to assess the value of the applicants' possessions. A valuation of an applicant's assets revealed more about their finances, labor productivity, and social status in the wake of the recession of the 1780s than a single paragraph that outlined their declaration for financial support. After revealing that he worked as a day laborer "but a small part of the time," Baldwin confessed that he could not perform steady labor on account of his health. In addition, the fact that his sixty-one-year-old wife could only perform "very light work," indicated that Baldwin and his wife were not able to work sustainably, nor earn incomes. Yet, Baldwin's asset schedule revealed the extent of his financial instability. Baldwin's possessions included two cows, one calf, three young cattle, a wagon and harness for a horse, among other agricultural assets.²⁰⁵ The issue with Baldwin's financial state was twofold. First, the schedule did not indicate that he owned any land. Second, the majority of Baldwin's assets were static in that he was not able to grow the value

²⁰³ "Pension File of Henry Baldwin, April 22, 1818," Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

²⁰⁴ "Henry Baldwin Affidavit to Superior County Court of Litchfield, July 4, 1820," Litchfield County Pension Records, 1820 – 1834, Litchfield Historical Society.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

of furniture or agricultural tools without costs of repair. Yet, at the end of his valuation, Baldwin stated that he was “indebted and owe[d] eighty dollars.” While Baldwin did not explicitly reveal the source of his indebtedness in the affidavit, the number of household assets suggests that Baldwin rented property and became indebted to a Cornwall landowner. Regardless of what actually caused his arrears, the fact that Baldwin’s debt was \$3.47 lower than the payment he received from the Office of the War Department brings to question how the department’s administrators arrived at the total entitlement payments to selected applicants.²⁰⁶ Ultimately, the Office of War Department did not have a standard algorithm that determined which applicant received how much in remunerations from the Federal Government. Rather, entitlement packages were determined at the discretion of administrators’ selection.²⁰⁷

Baldwin and his wife’s inability to work caused their financial despondence. However, a comparison between Baldwin and Edward Fuller reveals another example of the perplexing discrepancies in Connecticut veterans’ pension payments. Baldwin’s asset schedule revealed that he did not have the financial means of Elisa Stevens. However, in terms of asset schedule valuation, Fuller was far more impoverished than Baldwin. Despite Fuller’s total asset value of zero dollars, Baldwin received an entitlement that was \$36.77 more than Fuller’s total payment of \$46.70 (see Table 1). Ultimately, a comparison between these two men unveils pension assessors’ inability to evaluate the claimants’ needs, as well as the assessors’ impartial remunerations based on applicants’ social and economic standings. Fuller served as a Continental private for three more months than Baldwin’s nine month service tenure. While Congress’s service legislation intended

²⁰⁶ “Henry Baldwin Affidavit to Superior County Court of Litchfield, July 4, 1820,” Litchfield County Pension Records, 1820 – 1834, Litchfield Historical Society.

²⁰⁷ “An Act to Provide for Certain Persons Engaged in the Land and Naval Service of the United States in the Revolutionary War, March 18, 1818,” in *The Pension Laws of the United States*, ed. Mayo, 107-108.

to entitle veterans who served for a minimum of nine months “in need of assistance from his country for support,” the payment discrepancy between Baldwin and Fuller was clear.²⁰⁸ This deviation in aid brought out the social and economic contrast of the state’s Continental Army, as well as the extent of the wealth gap among patriot beneficiaries.

The entitlements were not determined by years of service, extent of poverty, physical or health impediments, among other quantitative variables. Rather, discrepancies in pay emerged from the War Department administrators’ counterintuitive assessment strategies. Whether or not the differences in payments arose from mere error, the imbalance of payments brought out Connecticut veterans’ social and economic disparities. Pension records for surviving veterans reinforced the extent of the Connecticut Line’s stark wealth gap. An aggregation of twenty-seven Connecticut privates revealed extensive payment discrepancies. Among the population of privates, remunerations were irregular in that the payments did not correlate with financial instability and service tenure (see Table 2). For instance, Gideon Goff, a day laborer from Wethersfield, received \$37.60. According to his April 1818 affidavit, Goff served six years in a company commanded by Captain Edward Buckley until he was “honorably discharged at West Point” on June 9, 1783.²⁰⁹ Despite his honorable service tenure, an assessment of Goff’s asset schedule on August 1, 1820 revealed that the total value of the fifty-nine year old’s possessions stood at \$282.48, and included a “dwelling House and Barn” valued at \$200. While Goff’s asset schedule, which included

²⁰⁸ “An Act to Provide for Certain Persons Engaged in the Land and Naval Service of the United States in the Revolutionary War, March 18, 1818,” in *The Pension Laws of the United States*, ed. Mayo, 107-108.

²⁰⁹ “Gideon Goff Affidavit to Hartford County Court, April 14, 1818,” Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

livestock and various household items, did not suggest that he was affluent, the amount he received in entitlements is puzzling when stacked up against his fellow Connecticut applicants.²¹⁰

Table 2: Payments to Privates in the Connecticut Line following the Pension Act of 1818

Number of Applicants	% of Pension Applicants	Number of Years in Service	Total Payment Range (\$)	Total Value of Assets (\$)
10	37.04	0 - 1.99	35.73 - 184.53	0 - 159.85
11	40.74	2 - 3.99	35.78 - 137.55	0 - 705.50
6	22.22	4 - 6	37.60 - 137.54	13.24 - 282.48

Length of service did not entitle a surviving veteran to greater financial aid. Congress's Pension Act of 1818 did not state that any variable applied to the amount of veterans' entitlements besides being in "reduced circumstances in life."²¹¹ Goff received the same payment as a Wethersfield laborer whose asset schedule amounted to zero dollars. Justus Blinn served for three years in the same company as Goff, and received the same amount as Goff from the Office of War Department in April of 1818.²¹² Yet, according to an affidavit recorded by the Hartford County Court on August 1, 1820, Blinn was indigent. At seventy-three years old, the Hartford County Court administrators valued Blinn's asset schedule at zero dollars (see Table 2). Blinn revealed that he was unable to work on account of his health, he had "no property except necessary beddings

²¹⁰ "Gideon Goff Affidavit to Hartford County Court, August 21, 1820," Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

²¹¹ "An Act to Provide for Certain Persons Engaged in the Land and Naval Service of the United States in the Revolutionary War, March 18, 1818," in *The Pension Laws of the United States*, ed. Mayo, 107-108.

²¹² "Pension File of Justus Blinn, April 14, 1818," Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

and clothing,” and that he had “no dependence for support except charity.”²¹³ In light of Blinn’s oath, as well as his idle asset schedule, the Federal Government rewarded Goff the same amount as Blinn. Rather than objectively examining both applicants, the Office of War Department’s assessment procedure did not justly recompense a number of veterans.

Pension payments were skewed among surviving privates of the Connecticut Line. Beneficiaries’ affidavits and asset valuations showcased the Office of War Departments’ partial assessment strategies in bestowing just remunerations to veterans in financial despair. In addition to Connecticut privates, an aggregation of seven surviving officers revealed less drastic, yet notable payment inequities. For instance, John Bulkeley, a mariner from Lyme, received a total entitlement of \$98.00.²¹⁴ According to an affidavit recorded by the New London County Court on June 27, 1820, Bulkeley served for five years as a lieutenant in a regiment commanded by Colonel Andrew Ward. Despite his service in the Connecticut Line’s officer corps, an assessment of Bulkeley’s asset schedule, totaled at \$45.00, indicated that the seventy-six year old veteran had little means, and that he was incapable of earning a steady income (see Table 2). On June 27, 1820, the New London County Court’s assessment of Bulkeley’s asset schedule revealed that he owned “50 acres of rough poor land lying in the North part of Lyme,” forty dollars’ worth of “notes and money,” among other possessions, such as a gun and a crop saw. Bulkeley declared that he was

²¹³ “Justus Blinn to Hartford County Court, August 1, 1820,” Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

²¹⁴ “Pension File of John Bulkeley, April 8, 1818,” Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

unable to work on account of his “age, a rupture, and other infirmities.”²¹⁵ Although Bulkeley had never been married, he disclosed that following the death of his sister, he had been living with a man who was previously married to one of his nieces. Bulkeley’s written declaration and asset schedule, like so many others, exposed that the Federal Government’s entitlement insufficiently improved his social and economic livelihood.

Following the abatement of Commutation certificates, due to the incalculable specie value of the notes, many low-to-middle income officers could not escape the recession brought about by the war. Due to the labor market’s shortage in Connecticut, a number of officers were pressed to find work in conjunction with paying off public and private debts, as well as battling deflated prices on goods and services. However, the formation of the Ohio Company, a land speculation business organized to help colonists buy property in the Ohio River Valley, enabled officers to purchase property by exchanging their unpredictable securities for land. In May of 1787, Congress arranged for the sale of 1.5 million acres in the Northwest Territory to the Ohio Company for one million dollars in securities at par value.²¹⁶ While this opportunity was a case of noblesse oblige, officers who had already sold their securities, or did not have the desire to leave their communities, did not receive an opportunity for financial assistance until the Pension Act of 1818. Samuel Gibbs, a merchant from Norwalk, received a total entitlement of \$216.00.²¹⁷ According to an affidavit

²¹⁵ “John Bulkeley Affidavit to New London County Court, June 27, 1820,” Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

²¹⁶ Timothy J. Shannon, “The Ohio Company and the Meaning of Opportunity in the American West, 1786-1795,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 64, No. 3, 1991, 402, www.jstor.org/providenc.idm.oclc.org/stable/pdf/366349.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A2b86f1483e40ed0b11f12315a061c6b6 (accessed September 11, 2017).

²¹⁷ “Pension File of Samuel Gibbs, April 11, 1818,” Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

recorded by the Fairfield County Court on July 25, 1820, Gibbs served for six years in a regiment commanded by Colonel Samuel Wyllys. The court administrators determined that the total value of the sixty-three-year-old's assets stood at \$47.86, and included six "Windsor chairs," two "old tables," six "earthen plates," as well as an ox, three swine, and a cow (see Table 2). Although Gibbs' possessions did not translate to affluence, the amount he received from the Office of War Department begs the question as to why he was entitled to such a large payment in comparison to his fellow Connecticut Continental officers.²¹⁸

The Office of War Department's impartial assessment of applicants' financial sufferings led to inequitable remunerations among the Connecticut Line's surviving officers. Although the value of Gibbs' assets were \$2.86 higher than the market price of Bulkeley's possessions, Gibbs received an entitlement worth \$118 more than Bulkeley (see Table 2). While Bulkeley's and Gibbs' asset valuations were relatively similar, a comparison between their declarations for assistance as well as their possessions indicates that Bulkeley should have received a greater entitlement from the Federal Government. While Bulkeley resided on several acres, his other assets suggested that the land was not feasible for cultivation, dwelling developments, nor readily accessible to the maritime commerce community along Long Island Sound. Bulkeley's age and physical impairments prevented him from earning an income or escaping his indigence.²¹⁹ On the contrary, Gibbs' financial despair seems to have stemmed from speculative business dealings.

²¹⁸ "Samuel Gibbs Affidavit to Fairfield County Court, July 25, 1820," Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

²¹⁹ "John Bulkeley Affidavit to New London County Court, June 27, 1820," Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

According to Gibbs' affidavit, his indebtedness was due to "an unexpected series of misfortune." Gibbs went on to state that in order to come to terms with his business creditors, he "resigned the whole of my property into their hands."²²⁰ Despite the different paths that led to their poverty, a comparison between Blakeley and Gibbs reveals a stark payment discrepancy. Furthermore, this example of inequitable entitlements signaled that the Office of War Department's assessment strategy was incalculable. Because assessors did not properly determine the extent of applicants' poverty, and the degree of their financial despair, the Federal Government created a hollow, and a partial way toward assessing veterans' needs.

²²⁰ "Samuel Gibbs Affidavit to Fairfield County Court, July 25, 1820," Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

AFTERWORD

When the Battle of Lexington and Concord erupted in 1775, many wealthy landholding men, such as Samuel Holden Parsons, believed that their social standing and political relationships would enable them to quickly ascend to leadership positions in the Continental Army. Parsons, a Harvard-educated delegate of the Connecticut General Assembly used his political network to his advantage and became a Major-General for the Connecticut Line in less than five years after he was appointed a Brigadier-General in August 1776. While Parsons had no military experience, his wealth and his Harvard colleagues, particularly John Adams, paved the way for his success.²²¹ On the contrary, a number of indigent citizens, such as Aaron Austin, enlisted not on the desire to elevate their social status, but to take up arms for expectations of financial stability and communal safety. While poverty-stricken farmers and mechanics undoubtedly feared that by joining the Continental Army they could jeopardize the well-being of their families and their financial security, men like Austin believed their service led to compensations in property, goods, and money. Yet, for many, service brought indigence. A close examination of Connecticut soldiers' affidavits, asset valuations, and pension records exemplified the Connecticut Line's social and

²²¹ "Letter from John Adams to Samuel Holden Parsons, June 22, 1776," Papers of John Adams, Volume 4, Massachusetts Historical Society, <http://www.masshist.org/publications/apde2/view?id=ADMS-06-04-02-0131> (accessed September 2, 2017); Hall, 43. Although there is no correspondence written by Parsons' connections explicitly persuading a member of Congress to recruit Parsons as a Brigadier-General, a letter written to Parsons from Adams on June 22, 1776 indicated that he played a significant role in promoting Parsons to his new military position. In this correspondence, Adams notes, "I acknowledge the difficulty in ascertaining the comparative merits of officers and the danger of advancing friends where there is no uncommon merit." Adams implied that Parsons deserved this position because he was a part of an elite Harvard-educated network. In addition, Adams goes on to state his ideas toward promoting friends to political and military positions by arguing, "is there not as much favoritism, as much nature, passion and prejudice in the army as in an assembly?" By fostering a lifelong friendship with Adams following their time at Harvard, Parsons locked in a key political voice to secure his ascension to Major-General of the Connecticut Line.

wealth disparities. Case study comparisons among poor farmers and urban mechanics brings to question whether or not a number of beneficiaries' entitlements were really worth the price of their blood. In a way, the inconsistencies among service entitlements personified the extent of the public's wealth gap, and the social and economic imbalances between the haves and the have-nots during the Revolution. An evaluation of the Connecticut Line's social and economic diversity allowed for a closer look at these inequities.

During the war, not all Connecticut soldiers received the same provisions as others. Joseph Plumb Martin chronicled how commanders did not equitably distribute clothing, food, and payments among enlisted men. While the Connecticut Line's commanders promised soldiers rations of meat, flour, garments, and specie, Martin noted that many enlistees, himself included, never received these assurances.²²² To make matters worse, all soldiers did not receive necessary medical treatment. Dr. Albigeance Waldo's journal entries revealed that many soldiers' sufferings were undeserved, because a number of the Connecticut Line's commanders improperly controlled the treatment of wounds and the prevention of contagious illnesses, such as smallpox. From 1775 to 1782, Continentals were vulnerable to a smallpox epidemic due to the fact that a majority did not know how to prevent the spread of viral infections without proper medical prevention.²²³ In conjunction with commanders' skewed material rationing techniques, medical inequities deprived many soldiers.

As peace with Britain started to become a reality, many poor farmers and urban mechanics struggled to escape poverty, a tight labor market, and persistent deflation. While state legislatures

²²² Martin, 245-247.

²²³ Amy Lynn Filsinger and Raymond Dewek, "George Washington and the First Mass Military Inoculation," *Library of Congress*, February 12, 2009, <https://www.loc.gov/rr/scitech/GW&smallpoxinoculation.html> (accessed November 27, 2017).

attempted to ameliorate private creditors' debt burdens, droves of impoverished veterans were forgotten. The lack of specie in circulation led a number of Connecticut veterans to sell preemptively under-valued government bonds to profit-hungry speculators. To augment the Connecticut state legislature's abrupt attempt at monetary contraction, the state's regressive tax system inflated ordinary Americans' debts. As consumer purchasing power contracted, and deflation persisted, a number of poor farmers and urban mechanics descended into further impoverishment, and failed to receive any financial support until the passage of the Federal Pension Act of 1818. And while the Commutation Act eventually failed, Congress's haphazard effort to allocate service payments only to Continental officers brought social standing into the limelight for future entitlement statutes.²²⁴ Following the ratification of the Revolutionary entitlement legislation, men like Edward Fuller and Justus Blinn proved their poverty, under oath, in written testimony that discussed their poor health and economic instability. Yet these men, along with many others, received insufficient payments for their services due to assessors' inability to properly evaluate their needs, and understand their deserved remunerations.

An aggregation of thirty-six Connecticut Continentals' pension records reveal that the Office of War Department failed to properly allocate entitlements to the elderly, indigent farmers and urban mechanics. While the public assistance legislation for aged and impoverished veterans was unprecedented, the execution of the act was partial in that a number of the most poverty-stricken beneficiaries received insubstantial benefits. Following the passage of the 1818 entitlement legislation and the apparent inequities among recipients, Congressional delegates debated whether or not Revolutionary veterans' pensions should be interpreted by policymakers as a legally binding debt, or munificence. In a speech to Congress on April 1, 1820, New

²²⁴ Jensen, 63.

Hampshire Representative Clifton Clagett appealed to his fellow Congressmen concerning this quandary. Regardless of whether or not they believed a soldier's pension was a legally binding contract that had to be properly indemnified by the Federal Government, Clagett argued that a veteran had "a vested right in his pension for life."²²⁵ While a number of surviving soldiers persistently demanded more substantial payments, and many Congressional delegates advocated that service pensions should be interpreted as a contractual obligation with surviving veterans, revisions to the 1818 act failed in large part due to the Panic of 1819 and growing sectional politics.²²⁶ Eventually, in May 1828, a divided Congress ratified the Pension Act of 1828, a revision of the 1818 statute that authorized full pay for life to surviving officers and soldiers. This new statute did not require applicants to demonstrate poverty, and entrusted the allocation of benefits from the Office of War Department to the Treasury Department.²²⁷ Despite these legislative efforts to bestow more equitable entitlements among surviving Continentals,

²²⁵ "Revolutionary Pensions, April 1, 1820," *Annals of Congress, House of Representatives, 16th Congress, 1st Session, Library of Congress, 1714*, <https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llac&fileName=036/llac036.db&recNum=217> (accessed November 4, 2017).

²²⁶ Jensen, 108; "Revolutionary Pensions, March 18, 1820," *Annals of Congress, House of Representatives, 16th Congress, 1st Session, Library of Congress, 1653*, <https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llac&fileName=036/llac036.db&recNum=188> (accessed November 4, 1820). As sectional politics began to coalesce following the War of 1812, Congressional partisanship affected the way policymakers viewed the moral, and legal features of the pension legislation. For example, on March 18, 1820, Senator James Barbour of Virginia argued that the service entitlements were not a "vested right." Rather, Barbour insisted that his fellow Congressmen interpret the service gratuities as a "gratuitous bounty, and not of justice." According to his appeal, Barbour did not believe that the service entitlements should be understood as an interminable contract with surviving veterans, because the Federal Government's expenditures on social entitlements neared \$3,000,000, while the Fifteenth Congress set the maximum expenditure in 1818 to \$200,000. As commodity prices in the South, especially Virginia, plunged during the Panic of 1819, and Congress's ratification of the Tariff of 1824, many Southern policymakers believed that the tax on British imports, as well as the growing social policy expenditures toward Revolutionary veterans, further impaired the South's fragile economy.

²²⁷ "An Act for the Relief of Certain Surviving Widows of Officers and Soldiers of the Revolutionary Army, July 29, 1848," in *Public Acts of the Thirtieth Congress of the United States, Passed at the first Session, which was begun and held at the City of Washington, in the District of Columbia, on Monday the 6th Day of December, 1847, and ended on the 14th Day of August, 1848*, ed. U.S. Congress. 265-266. <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/30th-congress/c30.pdf> (accessed December 6, 2017).

Congressional delegates failed to create a just entitlement program for nearly forty-five years after the Revolutionary War.

The Office of War Department's inability to objectively assess applicants' degree of financial indigence led to middling men like Elias Stevens receiving greater pension payments than impoverished veterans, such as George Batterson. Men like Batterson suffered far more than Stevens from inflationary market forces, and the lack of financial assistance. By the time Congress devised a service entitlement act that sought to compensate soldiers for the remainder of their lives, without demonstrating the extent of their poverty through asset valuations, the majority of poverty-stricken farmers and mechanics neared the end of their lives.

Yet, despite the fact that the total expenditure for this social policy was estimated at \$5,368,275 by start of 1833, Congress continued to expand the entitlement legislation to widows, and eventually orphans.²²⁸ On May 2, 1850, Lucy Clewley Martin, the widow of Joseph Plumb Martin, started to receive a payment of \$96 per year from the Department of Treasury. According to her pension record file, monthly payments of \$8 arrived at her residence in Belfast, Maine until her death on April 30, 1857. A closer look at Joseph Plumb Martin's 1820 affidavit allows for a careful analysis as to whether or not Lucy's entitlement was adequate. Prior to appearing in court to receive a service pension, Martin voyaged to Maine and was one of the first settlers of Prospect. After entering into a land dispute battle with Henry Knox, the first Secretary of War, Martin was unable to pay a land appraisal, and eventually fell into financial despair.²²⁹ On July 7, 1820, Martin

²²⁸ Jensen, 117.

²²⁹ "Resolve Appointing Commissioners to Settle Differences with Residents on the Waldo Claim, March 9, 1797," in *Acts and Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, ed. General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Boston: Young and Minns), 1896, 318-319; Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men and the Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement of the Maine Frontier, 1760-1820* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press), 1990, 247 -249.

appeared before the County Court of Hancock, and stated that he had “no real nor personal estate nor any income [whatsoever].”²³⁰ Besides his “necessary bedding and wearing apparel,” two cows, six sheep, and one pig, the sixty-year old did not have any other possessions. Ultimately, the court administrators valued Martin’s assets at \$52. Because of his age, and his “infirmity,” Martin was unable to earn a living as a farmer, support his “sickly and rheumatic” wife, nor look after his five children. While Martin could have hoped for a monthly entitlement sum greater than \$8, he was grateful for the service payment granted by the Office of War Department, and stated that the entitlement allowed him to provide more support for himself and his family.²³¹

On September 3, 1850, the seventy-four year old widow appeared before Honorable Joseph Miller, probate judge for Waldo County, and sought to receive a widowhood pension. On July 29, 1848, Congress enacted legislation that sought to recompense “the widows of all officers, non-commissioned officers, musicians, soldiers, mariners, or marines, and Indian spies” who served in the Revolutionary War. According to the statute, a widow could legally receive her deceased husband’s monthly payment.²³² Lucy received a per annum payment of \$96 from 1850 until her death in 1857. While there are no personal records of Lucy’s experience as a pension recipient, her determination to meet with the Probate Judge for Waldo County and activate her entitlement claim revealed that her family’s stability depended on her husband’s pension. By receiving the same pension rate as her deceased husband, perhaps Lucy was able to receive some short-term

²³⁰ “Joseph Plumb Martin Affidavit to Hancock County Court, July 7, 1820,” Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² Thirtieth United States Congress, “An Act for the Relief of Certain Surviving Widows of Officers and Soldiers of the Revolutionary Army, July 29, 1848,” 265-266, <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/statutes-at-large/30th-congress/c30.pdf> (accessed December 6, 2017).

relief for her rheumatism, as well as protect her children if they were to fall into financial despair.²³³

Despite this unprecedented revision to the United States' social policy legislation for Revolutionary veterans, it is difficult to dismiss the fact that these entitlements were far overdue. In addition to the inequitable allocation shortcomings of the Pension Act of 1818, legislators neglected the financial state of many ordinary Americans in order to secure economic and political sovereignty. State legislatures, and the Continental Congress, struggled to pay for the war against Great Britain due to the lack of domestic and private creditors, as well as the existence of no domestic banks. The Continental Congress's introduction of paper money, known as "continentals," in 1774 allowed state legislators to rely on a fiat currency to stimulate commerce, and as a microcredit mechanism to tax colonists indirectly.²³⁴ However, the value of paper money degraded. Due to early British victories along the Hudson Valley in 1776, many citizens lost confidence in this paper money and believed that specie was a more dependable, yet scarce, medium of exchange. In an effort to impede the hyperinflation caused by the continual issuance of continentals in circulation, Congressional delegates and state legislators eventually restricted the supply of fiat currency to pay off the war debts. However, legislators' reduction of bills of credit brought on regressive taxes, unyielding deflation, and an undependable medium of exchange.²³⁵ As specie remained scarce throughout the late-eighteenth century, a number of low-to-middle

²³³ "Lucy Martin Declaration in Order to Obtain the Benefit of the Act of Congress of the 29th July 1848, September 3, 1850," Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, (NARA microfilm publication M804, 2,670 rolls), Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, Record Group 15, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (accessed www.ancestry.com on August 31, 2017).

²³⁴ Sharon Ann Murphy, *Other People's Money, How Banking Worked in the Early American Republic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 2017, 36.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

income Connecticut veterans faced unsettling tax burdens. Despite Congressional efforts to restore the nation's public credit, many poor farmers and urban mechanics struggled to escape the Continental Army's skewed rationing techniques, a debilitating recession, and entitlement inequities. While the Federal Government eventually established a banking system that allowed the United States to build its economy, a number of impoverished farmers, blacksmiths, and day laborers, remained neglected.