THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR SPY AS HERO
AND THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR HERO AS TRAITOR

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ABSTRACT

The words “hero” and “traitor” are at opposite ends of the spectrum. The word “hero” can be defined in an abstract or in a tangible way. Today, the word is frequently overused to describe an action or actions of a person or persons. During the American Revolutionary War the word “hero” was clearly given to someone who performed an act or acts during combat that was clearly above the normal or ordinary.

Both Nathan Hale and Benedict Arnold were American Revolutionary War heroes. This thesis examines the lives of the two Americans, and their attainment of “hero” status. The problem is why does one man, Nathan Hale remain a hero today, in fact is the official hero of the state of Connecticut, while today the other man’s name is synonymous with the word traitor? Both were Americans, born in Connecticut raised in strong maternal Christian homes, and both grew up twenty-three miles apart.

My research centered on using secondary sources, including books and periodicals. I used empirical methods to chronologically follow the lives of the two main characters. By following this process, I attempted to demonstrate how and why one man followed the road to lasting fame, and the other the road to infamy. I present information that showed that Nathan Hale, because of his strong Christian faith and willingness to
sacrifice himself became the person he was, while Arnold, sold his American birthright to the British, and promptly became one of America’s greatest traitors.

The actions of Benedict Arnold in either the uniform of a Colonial soldier or in the uniform of a Redcoat could have affected the outcome of the Revolutionary War. As a soldier for the Continental Army, he fought heroically, especially at the Battle of Saratoga. If Arnold had not engaged the British at Saratoga, the conclusion of the Revolutionary War might have well been different. As a traitor to the American cause, if Arnold had succeeded in turning over West Point to the British, this action might have turned the tide of the war in favor of the British. Arnold was a major player in the Revolutionary War, albeit a tragic player.

Nathan Hale’s life, though short in time, speaks well for him. Hale was the quintessential American patriot, hero and martyr. Hale’s life and his walk to the gallows seemed almost predestined. Born and raised as the favorite son of a strong Christian man and farmer, Hale did all the right things, from graduating from Yale University to teaching school in Connecticut. Among the first in his town to enlist, Hale was a favorite officer among his men, because he sincerely cared for his subordinates. Hale freely went on a spy mission behind enemy lines, which may have been unnecessary and possibly unfair to send such an inexperienced soldier to enter a clandestine world. Yet today, over two hundred twenty-five years after his death, the name Nathan Hale is remembered as a courageous hero who sacrificed his life for the new nation, soon to become the United States of America.
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INTRODUCTION

A CALL TO ARMS

This paper is a double case-study of Benedict Arnold and Nathan Hale and how they responded to the “Call to Arms” as the Revolutionary War began. It is the story of two contrasting bona fide American war heroes and the decisions they made that affected their immediate lives and the legacies that they left to posterity, either positive or negative.

Numerous books have been written about both men, with Arnold having more studies written about him. Both men initially had a common focus or cause, one of patriotism, devotion to duty, and loyalty to one’s own country. Both men were soldiers and knew the risks involved in this vocation. At one point early in the War, both Hale and Arnold would be considered part of a band of brothers, a ragtag group of men fighting in a literal sense and figurative sense for their country’s freedom.

Both men had the same calling to duty to one’s country, but only one Hale, remained true to this calling. This paper will contrast the similarities and dissimilarities of both men from the early part of their lives to their young adult lives and finally to the defining moments in each man’s life. This research will be a comparison of both men in the context of a grand event, the Revolutionary War.

This thesis will look at what key words such as “patriotism” and “hero” meant to both of the two personalities and if these words and others changed in the lives of these two men as they grew older. I will clarify why I decided to write about both Hale and Arnold and attempt to show how the contrast of their lives provides valuable new insight
into the American Revolutionary Era. I will demonstrate why Nathan Hale is still revered today, and why Benedict Arnold is still remembered as perhaps the most famous traitor in the United States’ two hundred and thirty-two year history. I will explore the story behind the story as to why Benedict Arnold set out to betray his country and the underlying causes that led him to flee West Point, New York on September 25, 1780 and go to the nearest British war ship, (the Vulture) and seek refuge as British subject.

Hale’s “Call to Arms,” was answered emphatically and decisively. Hale’s enthusiasm and forthrightness to the “Call to Arms,” became a call to honor and valor. Hale was dedicated to the Colonists cause so much that his whole life has become synonymous with devotion to duty and a commitment to the Nation. Hale lived and breathed the nobleness of the war as an effort for independence. Hale’s Christian upbringing helped Hale define his goals and aspirations, which led Hale quickly to join the Army. Hale’s religious faith will be examined as being one of the defining traits in his life.

Arnold began the Revolutionary War race with good intentions and also a commitment to the Colonial cause, but Arnold’s running of this race was derailed for a number of reasons. Arnold not only betrayed his country, but one of the basic tenants of humanity: loyalty, to one’s country and one’s fellow citizens. In so doing he stands in contrast to Nathan Hale’s patriotism and loyalty to America.

In his book, Whom Can We Trust Now? Brian Carso Jr. stated that Benedict Arnold has been uniquely despised. Arnold was not the first American traitor. His traitorous plot failed and it did little to harm the American cause, but what made Arnold
unique was that he was a traitor to the republic, when revolutionary zeal insisted that on the demonstration of “republican” virtues.¹ As such, Arnold tested the proposition of being true to the culture and mores of America. His actions had lasting negative consequences for all who might later disobey these “new American commandments.” The French essayist J. Hector St. John Crevecoeur stated the question another way, “What is this new man the American.” Benedict Arnold raised questions in the hearts and souls of all Americans to be as they searched for their inner being concerning this new country.

Carso wrote that the public good required its’ citizens to practice disinterestedness—an eighteenth century term that describes the ability to be unbiased and unselfish when choosing between personal advantage and the benefit of the larger community. Because a republic relies on disinterestedness and civic virtue, it is a more fragile policy than a monarchy. Corruption among its’ citizens can erode the foundation of republican government. Arnold betrayed not a king, but the American citizenry² It was in this context that the behavior of Benedict Arnold became so egregious not only to the military forces but also to the average citizen. The general public was most upset at Arnold ‘s defection to the British forces, because he left his country and all the beliefs his country stood for. By his actions, Arnold abandoned the principles, morals and beliefs that the Revolutionary War stood for.

Another viewpoint about Arnold came from a colonial period writer, Mercy Otis


²Ibid., 132.
Warren, who believed that republicanism was the central element of God’s plan for humanity, for which the Revolution had been the agent of change. In Warren’s view, Benedict Arnold’s crime was so base that only a man of the lowest character would commit it, thus explaining why Arnold’s noble deeds on the battlefield were inadequate to satisfy Arnold’s avaricious temperament. She further stated that Arnold was a man without principle from the beginning. Warren viewed Arnold as a greedy man out to acquire more personal riches. Warren would certainly support the theory that Arnold’s “Call to Arms” was for Arnold’s own personal aggrandizement. This theory and others of why Arnold defected to the British will be discussed in the conclusion of this thesis.

Immediately after Arnold’s traitorous acts were committed; on October 4, 1780, the Continental Congress ordered that the name of Benedict Arnold be erased from the rolls of the United States Army. In 1837, when a chapel was built on the grounds of the United States Military Academy that had been established at West Point in 1802, one interior wall had plaques commemorating every general officer who had served in the Revolutionary War. One plaque reads “Major General,” after which the name is absent. A date of birth is given, “1740,” but gives no date of death. This plaques acknowledges Benedict Arnold and signifies the suppression of his legacy.

Another example of the complete distaste of Benedict Arnold in the hearts of

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3 Ibid., 146.


Americans is the monument at the site of the battle of Saratoga. A 155-foot-high obelisk commemorates the battle. The four generals who commanded there names are inscribed at the base of the monument. Above three of the names stand giant figures on horseback. But the niche on the fourth side is vacant. There is not a giant figure of a general to commemorate this battle. The name appears, but the soldier is absent. The infamous Benedict Arnold is remembered a synonym of treachery.\(^6\)

In the summer of 1776, Nathan Hale joined of one of the first Special Forces groups in the American army, Knowleton’s rangers. When General Washington put out a call for volunteers to go behind the British lines to obtain information for the rebels, Hale unashamedly volunteered to serve his country, knowing that he might not return alive. Hale penetrated the British lines on Long Island, but was captured on September 21, 1776. The next day Hale was executed. “A student of literature and theater, Hale recollected some lines from his reading of Addison’s Cato, or from a speech by John Lilburne, a noted seventeenth English Leveler, which Hale addressed to his captives as his last words: ‘I regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.’”\(^7\)

According to Carso, it was not until five years after his execution, that Hale’s sacrifice and heroic last words gained attention in the United States. “On May 17, 1781, concerned over the accolades bestowed on Major John Andre, the Boston Independent Chronicler recounted Hale’s courageous behavior and encouraged Americans to


\(^7\) Ibid., 163.
memorialize Hale.”

“If the virtues of Andre were to be memorialized, then America would celebrate the memory of its own courageous and poetic spy. A strong sense of nationalism coupled Hale and Andre, and during the mid-nineteenth century, historians, civic organizations, and educators sought to instill republican virtues in the nation’s youth embraced story of Nathan Hale.”

As a young man growing up in Connecticut in the 1950’s, Nathan Hale and Benedict Arnold were part of the popular culture of the time. The tale of Hale’s bravery and sacrifice was told with vigor by my Garfield Elementary School eight-grade teacher, Miss Regina Sekorak. One of the other of my early frame work of references to Nathan Hale was Manchester, Connecticut, which is next to Coventry, Hale’s homestead. My second cousin Stephen Cavagnaro owns a restaurant in Manchester Connecticut, called Cavey’s, founded in 1934 by his father. As a thirteen year old boy, I visited Cavey’s. The Cavagnaro family had a summer cottage in Coventry, which was often visited by my paternal grandmother, Christine Cavagnaro Danieli who became a raconteur to her young grandson.

The memory of Arnold’s and his deeds of infamy have lived in the hearts of many people from the Connecticut of my youth, along with the heroics of Hale. Nathan Hale and Benedict Arnold, two legitimate Revolutionary War heroes, one who rode on to patriot status and fame, the other literally rode on to infamous and degrading immortality.

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9 Ibid.
Both men, in one sense, were then and still today, inseparable, tied together by the events of the 1770’s-1780’s. They still inhabit our national memory, the spy as hero or the hero as traitor and the larger cause in which they left their respective marks. My thesis will explore them as different individuals who are remembered in dramatically different ways.
CHAPTER I

HALE AND ARNOLD BEFORE THE WAR

On October 1, 1985, Nathan Hale by an act of the Connecticut General Assembly was named “Connecticut State Hero.” Hale’s life and death in the service of the American colonies has been remembered throughout American history, and Hale’s place in United States history is secure. Hale reputed last words, “I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country,” have been passed on for over two hundred years since 1776. Hale was and is the quintessential American hero.

In contrast to Hale’s hero status, Benedict Arnold’s name is synonymous with the word “traitor.” Arnold’s contribution to the Continental Army is legendary. Arnold’s war exploits as an American general rank only second to that of the supreme commander, General George Washington. Yet American history has not been good to Arnold since his American war exploits have been remembered secondary to his act of treason against the American colonies. Arnold’s plotting with British spy Major John Andre to surrender West Point to the British as well as Arnold’s attacks on the cities of Richmond and New London have been seen as proof of Arnold’s betrayal of America.

This chapter begins with the early lives of Nathan Hale and Benedict Arnold and follows their lives leading up to their entrance into the American Revolution.

According to M. William Phelps, Nathan Hale was America’s first spy.¹ The

sixth child in the Hale family was born on June 6, 1755 in Coventry, Connecticut. His father, Richard Hale, when asked what name he was going to give his new son, he said, “He shall be called after that righteous right and patriotic man, my kinsman Nathan, and I shall be well pleased if he has a sense of duty,” Nathan Hale lived up to his father’s early description of him by his actions and death as a revolutionary soldier. He was born into an agrarian society and life. His ancestors were the Hales and Strongs who followed Governor Winthrop from England to help break ground for the new settlements on the Charles River and the Connecticut River.²

On Nathan’s father’s side, Robert Hale was the immigrant from England of the Hales in Kent, England.³ The genealogy of Nathan’s mother’s side can be traced back to Elder John Strong, who in 1630 sailed from Plymouth, England to the English colonies in the New World. His grandson Joseph Strong represented Coventry in the Connecticut General Assembly for over sixty-five years. Joseph’s oldest daughter Elizabeth married Richard Hale and became the mother of Nathan Hale.⁴

Hale was descended from sturdy, courageous, hard-working New England stock and this excellent historical upbringing stayed with him for all his short life. Nathan’s life at the farm in Coventry was one of hard work on a daily basis. The Hales were parents of nine sons and three daughters, of which a son Jonathon and daughter died at birth.⁵ As

³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid., 8-9.
⁵ Ibid., 14-17.
soon as they were married Richard and Elizabeth Hale built a home on two hundred and forty acres of fertile land in South Coventry. Nathan was born on June 6, 1755.

Historian Benson John Lossing stated that Hale “was feeble in body at the beginning of his life.” Lossing continued that Hale despite being underweight and given very little promise of surviving the period, surprised everyone and grew into a brawny muscular child. During that “critical second year”, (Hale) rebounded into a “robust child, physically and mentally.” Lossing gave a physical description of Nathan Hale as a young man as described by a Doctor Munson. “Hale was almost six feet in height, perfectly proportioned, and in figure and deportment he was the most manly man I ever met. His chest was broad; his muscles were firm; his face wore a most benign expression: his complexion was roseate: his eyes were light blue and beamed with intelligence; his hair was soft and light brown in color, and his speech was rather low, sweet, and musical. His personal beauty and grace of manner were most charming.”

Two months before Nathan turned twelve, Nathan’s sister Susannah died, and then a short time later, Nathan Hale’s mother died from complications of giving birth to Susannah. Nathan was devastated by both losses. Nathan had spent many minutes together with his mother and he was very close to her. Two years later, Nathan’s father Richard married Abigail Adams. She had previously been married to Captain Samuel

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6 M. William Phelps, Nathan Hale, the Life and Death of America’s First Spy (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martin’s Press, 2008), 12.


8 Ibid., 5.

9 Ibid.
Adams, who had died. Two daughters, Alice and Sarah were the issue of this marriage.

After the death of his mother, her relatives, the Strongs guided Nathan in his future education. Several of Hale’s relatives were ministers and so it was decided that Nathan would become a minister and therefore would need a college education.\textsuperscript{10} In preparation for his going to Yale, Nathan had Cicero, Cato, and Horace beaten into him by the Reverend Dr. Hunnington, who also instructed Nathan on the iniquities of the Stamp Act.\textsuperscript{11}

In 1769, Nathan Hale and his brother Enoch enrolled at Yale University, located in New Haven, Connecticut. Hale’s father as a dedicated Christian, hardly ever talked or wrote to Nathan without encouraging him to continue studying God’s word. Richard Hale, Nathan’s father, in a letter to his son said to “mind the orders of college and above all, not to forget to learn Christ, while you are busy with other studies.” The elder Hale was unhappy that Nathan was not following in the family tradition by becoming a minister. Instead Nathan leaned toward becoming a schoolmaster and a tutor.\textsuperscript{12} Hale and thirty-five other young men entered Yale as members of the class of (73).

During his first two years, Hale took classes in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew along with geometry. During his last two years he took courses in philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, metaphysics, and ethics. Saturday afternoons were dedicated to the study of

\begin{itemize}
  \item [\textsuperscript{11}] Ibid.
\end{itemize}
religion. As a sophomore, Hale was chosen to be member of the Linonia fraternity. This was a secret society, meeting once a week to discuss the issues of slavery, women’s rights and other important topics of the day. It was a literary club with a social flavor. Also, Linonia was primarily a debating society. It was for Nathan, one of the first times in his life where his remarkable skills as leader began to stand out.”

Athletics were prescribed, in part, to relieve Yale scholars from stressful seven-day study week. Wrestling, a sport Nathan would excel in, was a common way for scholars to bond and, as with youth of every era, assert an aspect of their masculinity. Because of his size, Nathan surpassed most others in the sport. Nathan’s athletic ability, was honed while at home working long days in the fields. No other student among his class could best Nathan in the long jump-and a record Nathan set on the green of New Haven was ‘pointed out’ and ‘preserved’ well into the nineteenth century.

Yale University itself was known for its radical politics. Though the students were typical of the time, complaining of the poor food served in the hall, and the high cost of books, Yale students were agitated about the colonies relationship with Mother England. “One fierce loyalist, Thomas Jones, recalled bitterly of his alma mater that it

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15 Ibid., 18.

16 Ibid., 19.

was nothing but a “nursery of sedition, of faction, and republicanism,” while General Thomas Gage, commander of the British Forces in North America branded Yale a “seminary of democracy” full of “pretended patriots.”

Yale students were the first American students to organize a boycott against British-made goods, when Hale first arrived on campus. The graduating class voted almost unanimously to appear “wholly dressed in the manufacture of our own country” at their commencement ceremony.

This strong loyalty to the American colonies became a personal signature for Nathan Hale. His strong, love of his country along with the love of God was the core of Hale’s being.

After graduation from Yale in the fall of 1773, Hale sought employment. Phelps stated, that the Hale brothers Enoch and Nathan had left their home as children and had been turned into two well-educated men ready to begin adult life, no less than what Richard Hale wanted. Hale accepted a job as a school master in East Haddam, sixteen miles from the mouth of the Connecticut River. Hale’s term was a short one beginning from October 1773 to March 1774. The school was rather small, worse it was isolated, and the position paid poorly. Five months after taking this job, Hale applied to a teaching position in New London, Connecticut. New London would later be

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18 T. Jones (ed. E.F. De Lancy), History of New York During the Revolutionary War, and of the Leading Events in the Other Colonies at that Period (New York, 2 vols., 1879), I 3; and letter Thomas Gage to William Johnson, September 20, 1765, in Bishop, L.G. (ed.) Historical Register of Yale University, 1701-1937 (New Haven, 1939), 14.

19 Ibid.


attacked by British General Benedict Arnold in September 1781. The people of New London eagerly awaited the arrival of their new schoolmaster. Hale was a Yale graduate, an acknowledged scholar and had come not only to teach the classics, theology, Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, but hopefully to take charge of the school for an extended period. Soon after Hale got settled, he celebrated his nineteenth birthday.\textsuperscript{22}

Nathan soon emerged as an excellent teacher. Many of his students were from affluent families. Religion played an integral part in the students understanding of what it meant to be a colonist. Every school day began with Nathan the (teacher) leading the class in prayer. Only after the day had been given to the Lord would the class day begin.\textsuperscript{23} Nathan said, “I love my employment (and) find many friends among strangers.”\textsuperscript{24}

Nathan Hale taught basic school courses to women students, though not likely at first to teach them mathematics, writing, and the classics. He was certainly the first in Connecticut to run a structured classroom for females. Nathan Hale can be called one of the first American schoolmasters to integrate women into his classes when the practice was shunned. In this regard, he was a pioneer.\textsuperscript{25}

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\textsuperscript{23} George Dudley Seymour, \textit{Documentary Life of Nathan Hale: Comprising All Available Official Documents Bearing on the Life of the Patriot} (New Haven: privately printed, 1941), 158.

\textsuperscript{24} Letter, Nathan to Major Samuel Hale, September 24, 1774 (Groton School, Massachusetts).

\end{flushleft}
M. William Phelps, one of Hale later biographers said, “whenever he (Hale) achieved a chosen goal, he immediately set higher standards for himself. He was rarely ever satisfied with an accomplishment for long and put considerable pressure on himself to continually seek bigger and better things, always searching for a new opportunity to prove himself-and the conflict on the horizon would soon prove the chance he was looking for.”

A short thirteen months later, after beginning to teach in New London, “the shot heard around the world,” as Ralph Waldo Emerson said, was fired. The American Revolution had begun, and Nathan would soon become involved in this deadly war. During these same years, Benedict Arnold also became involved in the brewing conflict between the Colonists and England.

On January 14, 1741, Benedict Arnold was born to Benedict and Hannah Arnold in Norwich, Connecticut. As Claire Brandt noted, his given name means “blessed,” from the Latin “benedictus”. The surname Arnold derives from an ancient German word meaning ‘the eagle’s power.’

Arnold’s father was a Rhode Islander from a distinguished family (his great-grandfather had been one of the colony’s original proprietors), who migrated to Norwich in the 1730’s leaving his vocation of barrel-making to become a trader. Arnold’s mother was a born Puritan, from a devout Connecticut family, that belonged to God’s predestined elect and that if Benedict followed the beliefs of the Puritan covenant with God, nothing he could do, would ever

26 Ibid., 54.


28 Ibid.
deprive him of everlasting paradise.29

Arnold and his sister Hannah attended the First Church of Norwich, where the family sat in a pew, in the most fashionable section of the church.30 His mother’s Christianity was a part of his life. “Nobody,” she admonished her son, can be anything … but what God permits them to be. Fix your dependence on Him alone, who is all in all.”31 Arnold mother’s admonishment was similar to what Nathan Hale’s father had told to his sons, Nathan and Enoch, to stay close to God. Arnold was taught in his early years to have a fear and respect for God. Yet, in his later years he turned against God and against his country.

Benedict’s early years were spent in the elegant Arnold home. There were servants including slaves to wait on him and make his life pleasant. Arnold’s home was near the Yantic River where he swam in the summer and ice-skated in the winter. Mohegan Indians still lived in the area of Norwich, and Arnold learned many things from the last remnants of the Mohegan Indians.32 A friend of the Arnold family, Benjamin Uncas, was chief of over two hundred Mohegan Indians, and he taught Benedict to fish, paddle a canoe, and stalk deer.33


31 Ibid.


There were three events that occurred during Arnold’s early life that influenced it. The first one was the Great Awakening which swept across the American colonies in the 1740’s and 1750’s. The Great Awakening preachers stated that an ordinary person would be able to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and obtain eternal salvation by his or her profession of faith in Christ. The town of Norwich was split into two groups. The “New Lights” tried to break away from their own congregations, while the “Old Lights” were determined to maintain their religious status quo.34 “The itinerant preachers, among them the charismatic George Whitfield, began to proclaim the vitality of the new-birth message in communities throughout New England, prompting a sudden rush of conversions.”35 Reasserting themselves, the Old Lights had attempted to outlaw the Great Awakening by passing and enforcing laws against itinerant preachers, such as George Whitefield.36

The second event were the killer epidemics that struck portions of New England. When Benedict Arnold was twelve years old, (1752), a yellow fever epidemic swept through Norwich. Arnold’s mother reminded him, “Pray, my dear, whatever you neglect, don’t neglect your precious soul which, once lost, can never be regained.”37 Here was a correlation between the Christian spirituality of Richard Hale, Nathan’s father, and

34 Ibid., 31.
Arnold’s mother Hannah. Within a month Benedict’s eight-year old sister, Mary, was dead. Before the epidemic ended, Elizabeth, Arnold’s baby sister also died leaving Benedict and his sister Hannah as the only surviving children.\(^{38}\)

During this period, Benedict Arnold Sr., alcoholism worsened. For years, Hannah Arnold battled to stave off the continuing collapse of her husband’s business. There is evidence that she even tried to sail with him, hoping to keep him sober enough to trade profitably.\(^{39}\) In the course of his inexorable decline, Benedict’s father lost control of his business affairs, when Arnold was fourteen, and his well-ordered world became shattered. His father lost his shipping and trading business. The family floundered and the money for Arnold’s education and inheritance disappeared. He was removed from Dr. Cogswell’s private school in Canterbury, Connecticut and in 1756 was put to work as an apprentice in the apothecary shop of his mother’s kinsmen, the Lathrop brothers Daniel and Joshua.\(^{40}\)

Arnold apprenticeship was for seven years, and Arnold was successful in the apothecary business. Arnold sailed across the Atlantic and the seas of the Caribbean purchasing goods as an agent for the Lathrops. He learned to deal with men of all ranks, colors and nationalities; he saw what money could buy; he sampled exotic tastes and acquired cosmopolitan appetites; and he enjoyed the company of women which was

\(^{38}\)Ibid., 6.


against his religious training.\textsuperscript{41}

Arnold’s mother had died when he was eighteen. His father continued in his demise from alcohol abuse and intoxication, dying in 1761. The impact on Benedict was enormous.” These events undetermined rather than strengthened him. His self-esteem was devastated. The space inside him where self-assurance and self-respect should have developed was empty.\textsuperscript{42}

Soon after his father’s death, Arnold made a clean break with Norwich, where because of his name, he felt could never be separated from his father’s disgraceful history. Borrowing money from the Lathrops, Arnold rented a shop in New Haven Connecticut, where he hung out a sign proclaiming himself-

\begin{center}
B. Arnold Druggist  
Book-Seller, &c  
From London  
\textit{Sibi Totique}  
\textit{“Sibi Totique”} - “For Himself and for all.”\textsuperscript{43}
\end{center}

These Latin words were the benchmark that Arnold would follow and adhere to, all of his life, with the “Himself” perhaps the more important part of the motto.

The third event that influenced Arnold’s early life was the French and Indian War. In 1754, the French and Indian War broke out in the Ohio River Valley and the fighting lasted for ten years. Benedict Arnold wanted to fight the French, since he had been taught all through his youth that the French were the hated enemy. Also, Benedict became bored

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., 7.  
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 7-8.
with just working with pill bottles daily. In 1757, the French-led Indians invaded the Champlain Valley between New York and Vermont and attacked Fort William Henry capturing and massacring its garrison of fifteen hundred. Daniel Lathrop gave the sixteen year old Arnold permission to accompany the Norwich troops to Fort William. By the time the Norwich troops reached Fort William Henry, the battle was over and Arnold returned to Norwich having had his first taste of military life.44

In early spring of 1758, Benedict left Norwich and walked the Post Road to New York, where on March 30, 1758 he joined Captain Reuben Lockwood’s company of Westchester Militia. The military then marched to the Hudson River to take part in the British attack on Fort Ticonderoga, the main French bastion on the New York-Canadian frontier.45 Arnold became a British soldier.

When his mother learned that Benedict had joined the British Army, she asked Norwich minister Dr. Benjamin Lord to intervene in bringing her son home which Dr. Lord did.46 The young man remained determined to be a soldier, so a year later Benedict left the Lathrop’s apothecary shop again and signed up with his old platoon leader, Captain James Holmes, as he prepared an attack on Fort Ticonderoga. While still a teenager, Arnold impressed his fellow soldiers with ability to shoot, wrestle, march long distances without apparent fatigue, and still be able to handle routine military life.47

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45 Ibid., 32.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid., 33.
He became familiar with the British Army.

At the same time, the young Benedict, always worried about his mother’s health and soon learned she was gravely ill. Arnold left camp without permission and quickly returned home. Hannah died on August 15, 1759. Benedict handled all the arrangements himself. Almost a year later on March 26, 1760, later Arnold returned to his unit but was not punished. The conflict was soon over late in 1760 with the British taking most of the spoils of this war, especially the French territories. Benedict Arnold had seen no action, but he had come to know the Army’s discipline and enjoyed its camaraderie.  

New Haven was considered one of the most beautiful towns in New England, if not America, and also the fastest growing town in Connecticut. Bankruptcy had destroyed Arnold’s early life; money would now become Arnold’s shield. “To Arnold, money meant far more than financial security; it was also a crucial ingredient of self-respect. For a young man who had overcome many obstacles, his inner reservoir of self-esteem was astonishingly empty.”  

Arnold had become dependent on the outside world for conformation of his own self-worth. He also believed money was the tangible expression of the world’s regard, and he craved it not so much for its own sake, but for its ability to confirm his own self-worth to himself and to the world.

Wealth became Benedict Arnold’s most valued goal in life. If he could be

48 Ibid., 34.
50 Ibid., 109.
51 Ibid.
successful as a businessman, than he would be successful in life. Money would ease
the demons in Arnold’s mind that stemmed from his father’s disgraceful behavior. The
name of Arnold would be restored to respect. This desire would become for the
remainder of his life, and along with it military glory, the basis of his personal.

On one of his visits to Norwich in late 1763, Arnold revealed a strongly ho
tempered personality. This occurred because his sister Hannah who was nineteen, lived in
her parents old home in Norwich and Hannah was being courted by a young French
dueling instructor. As a product of a New England culture, Arnold greatly distrusted the
French in particular and Catholics in general. He reacted negatively when the Frenchman
ignored his warnings to stop calling on his sister. One night Arnold waited outside the
Norwich house, and when one of Arnold’s friends knocked on the front door, the
Frenchman jumped out a window. A crack shot, Arnold fired a shot at his sister’s
erstwhile suitor. Arnold’s shot missed, but the Frenchman was never seen again
in Norwich.  

With a local partner in New Haven, Arnold entered his first business adventure.
He bought a forty-ton sloop 1764, and began a trading career. The sloop’s name was
Fortune, and in another two years at age twenty-five, Arnold owned a total of three
ships.  

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52 Willard Sterne Randall, Benedict Arnold, Patriot and Traitor (New York: William Morrow and

53 Dave R. Palmer, George Washington, and Benedict Arnold, A Tale of Two Patriots
Caribbean.\textsuperscript{54} Leaving transatlantic trade to larger vessels out of larger ports, he sailed his sloops and brigantines which were less than 100 feet over-all, through estuaries and coastal waters from Canada to the West Indies.\textsuperscript{55} In Quebec and Montreal, he traded his goods for horses that he would take to the West Indies the following spring. “When a few years later he appeared in Canada commanding an invading army, the ballad-makers of Quebec remembered him as ‘that famous horse jockey.’”\textsuperscript{56}

The French and Indian War left the British treasury depleted, even though the British won the war. In order to reduce this deficit, the leaders of Britain decided to enrich their coffers by taxing the thirteen colonies. Money was raised by passing new taxes on the colonies. The Stamp Act of 1764 passed and Arnold and other ship owners began to sail their ships into harbors clandestinely in order to avoid having to pay taxes to the British government. Arnold did not pay much attention to British law. Like John Hancock, the bulk of Arnold’s profits came from smuggling, which was widely winked at by traders and merchants of the time.”\textsuperscript{57} For the people of New Haven, a person such as Benedict Arnold, who was a smuggler and defiled British authority, was a courageous defender of liberty.\textsuperscript{58} Having just celebrated his twenty-fifth birthday the future general

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\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
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had exhibited his skills in inspiring, mobilizing, and leading groups of people.\textsuperscript{59}

Arnold was not afraid to fight or defend his honor if need be. At the Bay of Honduras, he failed to attend the party of a British trader, Captain Croskie. When Arnold attempted to apologize, Croskie cursed him. A duel was agreed upon for the next morning. Croskie who had the first shot missed. Arnold’s shot wounded Croskie. Arnold bluntly told Croskie if the duel continued, he would kill him. Croskie capitulated and apologized.\textsuperscript{60}

While all this occurred and his trading company flourished, Arnold slowly gained social status in New Haven. One step Arnold took to establish respectability was to join the Masons. Freemasonry was new to America, but it attracted many leading citizens including Benjamin Franklin and George Washington. In Benedict’s case, being a member helped him climb up the social scale by widening his circle of influential intimates.\textsuperscript{61} “Eighteenth-century Freemasonry placed a high value on religious toleration, while rejecting the kind of unforgiving, interventionist deity worshipped by Arnold’s mother.”\textsuperscript{62} Mason’s worshipped the creator “Divine Providence,” and did not believe in the trinity.\textsuperscript{63} Arnold was beginning to move away from the conservative Christian

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
teaching of his youth.

A fellow lodge member, Samuel Mansfield, the county sheriff, and a well to do merchant, took a liking to Arnold and became of his business partners. Mansfield had a daughter named Margaret with whom Arnold fell genuinely in love with.\textsuperscript{64} They were married in February 1767 when she was twenty-two and he twenty-six.

Margaret would bear him three children, and his love for her remained ever strong. He surrounded her with luxuries and built for her one of the finest mansions in New Haven with a fine view of Long Island Sound, a defiant assertion that his abilities were not to be determined by having a failure for a father.\textsuperscript{65} In this way Benedict Arnold attempted to demonstrate to his fellow Yankee associates that he was a successful Businessman, an important member of the New Haven community. The fact that Arnold’s father-in-law was county sheriff of New Haven helped him in his efforts to build up again the Arnold family name.

As Arnold was trying to pay off his debts, and raise a family, the context in the colonies shifted dramatically. The British government attempted to exercise control over its’ colonists by instituting a series of laws or acts. The Stamp Act was followed by the Declaratory Act of 1766, the Townsend Act of 1767 and the Intolerable Acts of 1774 were designed to help a financially ailing Great Britain as well as to punish the Americans in their disrespect for English authority. The Boston Massacre of 1770 and the


Boston Tea Party of 1773, also had helped inflame the negative dialect and rebellious ideas that were taking place in the hearts of colonial men and women.

When Arnold was at sea, often a peaceful time for him, he received word of the Boston Massacre. He said, “Good God! Are Americans all asleep and tamely giving up their glorious liberties, or are they turned all turned philosophers, that they don’t take immediate action on such miscreants.” 66 In December 1774, the sons of the leading New Haven families banded together to form a company of the elite Governor’s Foot Guard or a state military unit and invited Benedict Arnold to join them, thus launching him on a military career.67

Nathan Hale and Benedict Arnold differed in many ways before the war began and each followed different paths as the Revolutionary War unfolded. Nathan Hale was tall, well educated, and considered handsome. He came from a strong moral, and faith-based family. The Hale children were taught to believe in and have faith in an all powerful and loving God. Hale’s family were farmers making a living off of their two hundred forty-acre farm in Coventry, Connecticut. Hale had a strong belief in America’s ideals and future. He was an exceptional teacher and school master, instructing both young men and women. His personality was peace loving and congenial. Nathan Hale placed his country first in his life and in his future.

By contrast, Benedict Arnold emerged as a self-centered man, mainly concerned about his status in his community and in the military. Arnold had a sense of daring and


67 Ibid.
adventure as a businessman who sailed his own ships to the Caribbean as well as across the Atlantic. Arnold had no qualms about smuggling goods into America to avoid being taxed by the British. Arnold usually acted or engaged in a venture with a specific selfish purpose. When the American Revolution began, he was one of the wealthiest men in New Haven 68 Like Hale, family roots went back to early colonial times. He was often a flammable man, ready to challenge anyone who interrupted his self-seeking mission, by using swords, pistols or fists.69 He was loyal to himself above everything else, consistent with his personal motto of self-advancement before all.


69 Ibid.
CHAPTER II

NATHAN HALE AS A REVOLUTIONARY WAR HERO

On April 22, 1775, Nathan Hale was in his schoolhouse in New London, when news reached him that shots had been fired between the American minutemen of Lexington and Concord and British soldiers. According to Phelps, “for Nathan, a new opportunity had arrived: a call to serve. Many colonists saw the call as God’s will more than simply a question of politics.”¹ A town meeting was held the evening of April 22, and Nathan asked for an opportunity to be heard. He explained that he wanted to march as a volunteer to Boston with Captain Coit’s company. Nathan felt in his heart that he wanted to serve with other colonial citizens against the British. “Nathan finished his speech with a powerful, heartening message: ‘Let us march immediately and never lay down our arms until we obtain our independence.’”²

Many nineteenth-and twentieth-century scholars and historians later argued, that Hale’s actions probably represented what would become commonplace: colonists who announced that they would fight for independence from Britain. Such individuals were not only protesting sanctions and taxation.³ Nathan’s actions showed his love and commitment to his native land, the American colonies. Only nineteen years old at the time of this speech, Hale was the town’s schoolmaster, thus people gave credence


² Letter from Leverett W. Saltonstall to Cyrur P. Bradley, January 17, 1837, in Seymour, George D. Documentary Life of Nathan Hale, Comprising All Available Official and Private Documents Bearing on the Life of the Patriot (New Haven: privately printed, 1041), 47.

³ Ibid.
to his words. Here was a young man who was not afraid to speak out against the injustices shown by the British government toward the American colonies. Moreover, Hale was well versed in the classics and knew the struggles of conquered peoples from ancient times to the present, 1775. Hale studied the conquering forces of the Assyrians, Persians, Babylonians, Greeks, and Romans while at Yale University. Hale knew from his Bible readings that the Romans conquered Palestine and ruled over the native Jews. As a Christian he believed in the equality of all men; he had a strong faith and belief that God was with him in everything he did.

The next day Nathan addressed his students and explained that he would leave his position as schoolmaster, to enlist in the army instead of seeking safety in Boston as many colonists had been doing. Joining hands with his students, Hale knelt and prayed alongside his students. He then addressed each one personally, extending a firm handshake good-bye.4

Hale was commissioned a lieutenant in Colonel Charles Webb’s Connecticut Seventh Regiment mainly because he was well-educated, and could read and write. Nathan wrote, “A man ought never to lose a moment’s time. If he put off a thing for one minute to the next, his reluctance is increased.”5 This quote was Hale’s way of saying that he was anxious to serve and defend his country.

Although Nathan and other colonial officers were recruiting men to join their

4 M. William Phelps, Nathan Hale, The Life and Death of America’s First Spy (New York: Thomas Dunn Books, St. Martin’s Press, 2008), 69, as found in Stuart, I.W., Life of Captain Nathan Hale, the Martyr-Spy of the American Revolution (Hartford: F.A. Brown, 1856), 44-45.

5 Ibid., 70.
regiments. Mostly, funds were lacking to pay for salaries, rifles, ammunition and other supplies that the colonials needed to fight the British soldiers. Terms of enlistment for the colonial men represented another problem as the Revolutionary War began. Often in the midst of a major battle, some men would leave the battle because their enlistments to serve were completed. Spring planting and harvest time would sometimes thin the ranks of the colonials.

While Nathan was preparing to go to Boston in the summer of 1775, he wrote his father a note explaining why he was leaving his post as a school master to join the rebellion. His father, Richard Hale had sent five of his eight sons to Boston. Richard Hale had raised a small group of deeply patriotic men who were more than glad to defend the honor of God, Coventry, Connecticut, and their colony. After explaining to his father his decision to enter the army, Nathan summed up his feelings: “A sense of duty urged me to sacrifice everything for my country.”

Nathan and his regiment comrades missed a great battle that was fought on June 17, 1775. The British general William Howe put to flight the American militia from their fortified positions atop Bunker and Breed’s hills. By the time Hale arrived, the two armies were in stalemate.

Under Colonel Charles Webb’s command, the Connecticut Seventh Regiment gathered in New London on or about September 21, 1775, in preparation to march north

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6 Ibid., 76.
7 Ibid.
and join the main body of thirty thousand troops amassing near Roxbury and Cambridge. Upon arriving there, the regiment was assigned to General John Sullivan’s brigade at Winter Hill; Hale was promoted to captain-lieutenant, and signed up for another contract of service for 1776 at a time when many refused to enlist when their terms were up. Hale’s regiment was renamed the “Nineteenth Foot in the service of the United Colonies,” as part of Washington’s effort to mold his ragtag militias into a professional volunteer force.

Hale and his regiment set up camp in Roxbury, Massachusetts. In camp, a soldiers’ life often became one of waiting for the next battle to begin. Hale keep a diary when he enlisted in the colonial army, and at the Roxbury camp, Hale wrote in his diary that life was uneventful and dull. Hale’s diary is one of the primary resources about the life of Nathan Hale. Hale occupied his hours on duty drilling, sorting out pay disputes, organizing supplies, setting pickets, listing guard rosters—all the humdrum of army life.

While on his free time, which was plentiful, Hale played checkers, watched the men wrestle, drank wine at Brown’s tavern, read whatever books came his way, and listened to chaplains give sermons. According to M. William Phelps, as the soldiers marched, Nathan earned his soldiers’ respect by being conscientious about the soldiers

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10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., 10.

12 Ibid., 9.
welfare and well-being.\textsuperscript{13}

Nathan had always thought ahead, which was one of the reasons why his superior officers viewed him as such an important addition to their command. These same officers included him in much of the American strategy because they believed that he could not only keep quiet about it, but Nathan would offer essential advice otherwise he would never have been invited to dinners and meetings with generals and colonels.\textsuperscript{14} Nathan conducted himself as a professional soldier and exhibited his leadership skills in everything he did. There is not any record of any disciplinary action against him, nor is there a record of any complaints directed against him by any of his subordinates. He was well liked by his peers and superiors alike. Hale was a true leader who led his men by example. His personal life was unsullied and he expected his men to behave as he did.

Just a month at war had changed Nathan from a modestly practiced young man, eager to prove his devotion to his country, into a pragmatist who knew war was more mundane and tedious, wrapped around quick flashes of savage bloodshed, than anything else. He was surprised and disquieted by the perils of war and how violent and merciless men could be to one another.\textsuperscript{15}

General Washington had a problem with some of his troops not re-enlisting or just deserting as the winter of 1775 began. Nathan noted in his diary that, “A Sergeant Major deserted to the Regulars…a sergeant left and deserted.”\textsuperscript{16} Several officers believed that there would be no American army to speak of. Nathan Hale was one of the few officers

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\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 86-87.
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\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 90.
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\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 92.
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who could claim a zero desertion rate and fatality rate among his men.\textsuperscript{17} When several of his men announced that they were going home because they could not get raises, he split his salary among them to increase their wages to keep them.\textsuperscript{18} While at camp, Hale obtained some food for his men, including a load of hay, a few head of cattle, and several pounds of poultry.\textsuperscript{19}

To keep his army together, during the coming winter of 1775-1776, General Washington made a promise: A soldier who reenlisted would be granted a furlough at some point during the winter. “By mid-November Nathan was given the good news that his men would be allowed furloughs within the next few weeks. Although ‘not more than 50 (men) at a time’ could go home, it was comforting news to the soldiers on the verge of psychological collapse. Then Congress approved a raise for everyone.”\textsuperscript{20} Nathan began to give his men leave as December 1775 began. However, Nathan was unable to get leave because his commanding officer Colonel Lattimore knew that Nathan was dedicated to the Colonials cause, that Hale wanted to please General Washington and that Hale would never quit the army. \textsuperscript{21} So Hale remained at his post and waited to receive word about his leave request.

In mid-December of 1775, Nathan Hale spent several days in his tent recovering

\textsuperscript{17}Nathan’s Army Journal, October 12 through November 1, 1775, located at the Connecticut Historical Society, West Hartford, Connecticut.

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., 97.

\textsuperscript{19}Ibid., 100.

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., 103.

\textsuperscript{21}Ibid., 104.
from flu-like symptoms or a slight case of smallpox. A week later he traveled to
Cambridge to see about the furlough he had hoped for. While at Cambridge he met his
old friend Sergeant Stephen Hemstead. On December 23, Nathan was told that he could
finally take leave, but he had to return to duty within thirty days.\textsuperscript{22} This leave was
important to Hale since he had not been home in many months, and because he came
from a close-knit family.

Nathan arrived in Coventry and spent thirty days at home with his father and
brother. Anxious to get back to Boston and take control of his men, Nathan left Coventry
with his childhood friend Asher Wright, who would work as his personal assistant.\textsuperscript{23}
While Nathan was on leave, Congress appointed Hale captain of the Nineteenth
Regiment of Foot, a brigade under the command of Colonel Charles Webb, his
superior.\textsuperscript{24}

In mid-March 1776, short of supplies and awed by Washington’s artillery newly
emplaced atop Dorchester Heights, the British finally evacuated Boston and
departed for Nova Scotia, to recuperate under their new supreme commander,
General Howe.\textsuperscript{25}

On March 19, Hale’s regiment left Roxbury, Massachusetts, sailed across Long
Island sound and disembarked at Turtle Bay in Manhattan, at the foot of what is now East
Forty-fifth Street. Through out May, Nathan and his men were stationed on the west side

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., 106-107.
\textsuperscript{23}Ibid., 109.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 110.
of the Bowery. 26

The Declaration of Independence was proclaimed on July 4th, 1776, and was received with applause and enthusiasm by the American troops. By August 20, 1776 Nathan was writing his last dispatch to his brother. He said, “For about six or eight days the enemy has been expected hourly whenever the wind and tide in the morning. We keep a particular look out for them this morning. The place and manner of attack must determine. The event we leave to Heaven.” 27 Another example of Nathan’s strong religious faith.

The summer of 1776 yielded one of the most reduced harvests the New England colonies had seen in years, not because of drought or poor fertilization, but because of the loss of laborers. The men of the various communities were off to war, and this fact put a tremendous strain on the women of each farming household. 28 The women whose husbands had gone to fight the British had to perform the duties of their husbands as well as their own chores and family responsibilities.

Nathan and his regiment dug in on Long Island near Brooklyn and prepared for an invasion by the British army. According to historian William Phelps, ever since Hale saw General Washington at Cambridge, Nathan wanted to prove his merit to the general. 29 Nathan devised a plan to secure a load of much needed provisions for his regiment.

26 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
“Nathan was smart enough to know that he needed to take on the role of provider and show his men that a competent, dedicated soldier dealt with circumstances presented, as much as shouldering a weapon and mounting a charge.”  

When Nathan had sailed into Long Island from Boston via the East River, he made a note of a British sloop near the mouth of the Atlantic that was guarded by the man-of-war, Asia. Nathan conceived a plan to capture the sloop loaded with provisions. Nathan chose a few good men from his unit and set out for the ship. Leading his men, Hale stepped quietly through the shallow water and climbed up on the deck of the sloop and took control of the tiller and headed toward the American side of the river, thus becoming the hero of his unit and earning his first taste of action in the Revolutionary War. Nathan enjoyed the opportunity to be involved in the war. Nathan was not fighting for money or fame, or even to protect the rights he felt so deeply about; instead, he was on the front lines because he believed, beyond anything else, that it was what God wanted and expected from him.

The next battle with the British was the battle of Long Island which began on August 27, 1776. Nathan’s regiment did not participate in the battle of Long Island. The British soundly defeated the colonials killing and capturing many rebels. Washington lost about eleven hundred men, with two thirds of them being captured.  

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31 Ibid., 124.

32 Ibid., 129.

30th, General Washington abandoned Brooklyn and withdrew to Manhattan.

Nathan wished to fight the British and while Hale his men may have been spared from combat duty, scurvy, yellow fever, and famine was spreading among the rebel camps. The militia was a diversified group of ragged men and children, a majority of whom were untrained in hand-to-hand combat or battlefield tactical maneuvers of any kind. Howe’s troops had fought in several wars, were dressed in sharp-colored red uniforms, and firing the most advanced weaponry. The Continentals dressed in civilian clothes and shot long hunting rifles and squirrel guns.34 Both the British and the Americans used muskets as their rifles, with the British Army having some of the newer and more accurate long muskets.

While Hale wished for battlefield experience, Thomas Knowlton, a lieutenant colonel in the Continental Army had enlisted as a soldier at age fifteen for service in the French and Indian War. Knowlton’s early age enlistment in the French and Indian War could be compared to Benedict Arnold’s enlistment in the same war as a sixteen year old. In 1775, Knowlton won his reputation as a soldier near Bunker Hill Massachusetts. Outnumbered by British soldiers, Knowlton and his small unit fought the British and caused them to flee the battlefield. Knowlton rose up the chain of command quickly, was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, then commissioned to form Knowlton’s Rangers, the army’s first elite unit, similar to the Green Berets. Knowlton took his orders directly from Washington and he sent his men out on reconnaissance missions to scout where the

34 M. William Phelps, Nathan Hale, The Life and Death of America’s First Spy (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martin’s Press, 2008), 132, as found in Kindead, Eugene, Our Local Correspondence : Still Here, New Yorker June 23, 1776.
British were stationing troops.\textsuperscript{35}

This ranger body was composed of one hundred and thirty men, with twenty officers. This group was divided into four companies with only the best officers and men selected. A captain was in charge of each company. The selection of officers and men came mainly from Knowlton’s home state of Connecticut. It is unknown if Nathan Hale was recruited for this unit or if he volunteered and was accepted.\textsuperscript{36} M. William Phelps stated that, “Knowlton had likely chosen Hale as a ranger because he knew him personally and had already selected two of Nathan’s brothers for the special forces unit.\textsuperscript{37} Also, two of Nathan’s older brothers were in the Colonial Army, and the Hale name was well respected tracing its history to the early roots of America.

George Washington’s troops were stationed in the area of what is now Wall Street on the island of Manhattan. British General Howe’s army occupied Staten Island, Long Island and Brooklyn. In a letter to Congress, on September 8, 1776, Washington admitted that he did not know what General Howe’s next move would be, but Washington knew that Howe was planning a major assault.\textsuperscript{38} Washington wanted to demonstrate that the Revolutionary War should be fought defensively and that on all

\textsuperscript{35} Charles Coffin, \textit{The Lives and Services of Major Genera John Thomas; Colonel Thomas Knowlton; Colonel Alexander Scammell; and Major General Henry Dearborn} (New York: Egbert, Hovey, and King, Printers, 1845)

\textsuperscript{36} Henry Phelps Johnston, \textit{Nathan Hale 1776, Biography and Memorial} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1914), 102.


\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 137.
occasions to avoid a general action with the British. Washington sought information about Howe’s troop movement and in hope of finding out where the attack would come.

Washington contacted Lieutenant Colonel Knowlton, since Washington felt that Knowlton and his rangers would be able to obtain the information that he needed about the British troop locations and their possible movements. Hale was already a member of Knowlton’s Rangers. Up until this time Washington had used “couriers,” men who trafficked in information swapping. This information was dependent on timing, and if the courier could not make it back to the rebel lines, the information would be useless. Washington wanted regular intelligence about the enemy’s movements. Washington asked Knowlton to find a spy from his rangers who he could trust to go behind enemy lines and find out what Howe was doing. Washington knew that the British Army outnumbered the Continentals in soldiers as well in supplies, armaments and certainly ships, so any pertinent information obtained about the British Army would be valuable to him and his commanders.

Knowlton’s first choice for this mission was James Sprague, a former soldier with Knowlton in the French and Indian War. Sprague refused his old friend, giving the popular opinion among rebel soldiers that spying was the work of a scoundrel, a charlatan, or a fool. The prevailing philosophy among the rebel soldiers was that a spy was someone who acted clandestinely behind enemy lines, was not in uniform, and if

39 Ibid.
40 Ibid., 138.
41 Ibid., 138-139.
caught was immediately sentenced to hanging.

Nathan was part of a group of Knowlton’s rangers stationed near the tip of New York. Nathan had contacted influenza and as a result of this disease was very weak. Hale had seen very little combat action and thought that he had not contributed to the rebel cause. Hale believed that if he would be more powerful to the rebel cause if he went undercover as a spy. “He had a lot of time to think, read, the Scriptures, analyze the battlefield, and recognize the his new place in it-all which undoubtedly contributed to the decision he was about to make.”

Nathan Hale volunteered to undertake a mission behind enemy lines as a spy. Hale discussed his mission with a fellow Yale classmate Captain William Hull who warned Hale not to undertake this mission. Captain Hull, who later became General Hull, advised Hale of the hateful service of a spy, of Hale’s own unfitness for the role, and of Hale’s openness for deceit and evasion. Hull predicted that if Hale undertook such a mission, his promising career would close with death. Hale replied,

I am fully sensible of the consequences of discovery and capture in such a situation. But for a year I have been attached to the army, and have not rendered any material service while receiving a compensation for which I make no return. Yet I am not influenced by expectation of promotion or pecuniary reward; I wish to be useful, and every kind of service, necessary to the public good, becomes honorable by being necessary. If exigencies of my country demand a peculiar service its claims to perform that service are imperious.


44 Ibid., 106-107, as found in Campbell, Maria, *Revolutionary Services and Civil Life of General William Hull* (New York: 1848), 33-45.
Nathan Hale had made up his mind to undertake this dangerous, almost impossible mission in the service of his country. His strong Christian faith, feelings that he had not yet performed any worthy service since enlisting in the army, and his family heritage, led him make this decision. Hale truly believed that the Revolutionary War was in its essence the cause of freedom. His commitment to his fellow Americans fueled the fire that burned inside him. Hale did not make any excuses for the mission he was about to take. He knew the risks and yet he agreed to undertake this mission, even he was still weak from influenza.

Sergeant Stephen Hempstead, one of Nathan’s trusted friends, accompanied Hale on the first part of his mission. Hale was dressed in a plain suit of brown clothes, and since he had taught school for two years, he would assume the role of a Dutch schoolmaster. Nathan carried his Yale diploma with him, which would authenticate his role as a schoolmaster looking for employment. 45 Wright Asher, a friend of Hale, said that Hale had marks on his forehead so any body would know that powder had flashed in his face. 46 Any perceptive British soldier or Tory, upon meeting Hale would ask, “Why does a Dutch schoolmaster, the identity Nathan was said to have taken, have a powder flash on his face that only soldiers in the military who had recently fired a musket would have?” 47


Sergeant Hempstead and Nathan Hale left Harlem Heights about September 12, 1776, looking for a safe place to cross Long Island Sound. Hale and Hempstead could not find a way to reach Long Island until they came to Norwalk and found the armed American sloop *Schuyler*, captained by Charles Pond. The *Schuyler* took Nathan Hale aboard and dropped him at Huntington, Long Island.48 What Hale did not know—and there was not a chance of getting word to him at this point—was that the mission he had undertaken was of no value to Washington and the rebel army, who were retreating from Harlem Heights and bailing completely out of New York City.49 Lacking that information, and believing his efforts still needed, moved Westward fifty miles to Brooklyn, in order to gather whatever information he could along the way and then try to reach the American lines.50

Nathan worked his way to Brooklyn on or about September 18, 1776. Nathan had spent five months in New York City, although he had been sick for a better part of that time. Nathan’s position was a dangerous one, being a member of the Continental Army and in civilian clothes in British occupied territory. Also, a friend of Nathan’s Elisha Bostwick described Hale as walking with the posture of a well-trained soldier.51 After making his evaluations in Brooklyn, Nathan headed east towards Huntington and his

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rendezvous with Sergeant Hempstead.

It was at this part of Hale’s foraging behind enemy lines that the climax of his journey unfolds. Nathan Hale was captured by the British. Some accounts claim that Hale had already departed Manhattan for Long Island, stopping at the Widow Chichester’s inn in Huntington where an alert loyalist recognized him and spread the alarm. Other sources stated that an approaching band of British soldiers and sailors from a warship mistakenly signaled by Hale, arrested him on Long Island’s north shore. Another version blames Hale’s cousin Samuel Hale, a British-employed loyalist, as his betrayer. These theories fully cannot be verified. 52

This thesis, instead, assumes that Nathan’s arrest and capture had to do with British Lieutenant Colonel Robert Rogers. Born in New Hampshire, Rogers as a young man fought on the British side in the French and Indian War. In August 1776, British General Howe empowered Rogers to raise a battalion of Rangers, known as the “Queens American Rangers”. Rogers insisted on appointing his own officers and choosing his own men. The Rangers’ patrol area was Long Island, especially along the sound. When Nathan Hale landed in Huntington Long, Island, he landed in Rogers patrol area. Rogers and his Rangers had been aboard the British warship Halifax and had missed Hale’s landing by a few hours. 53

After Hale arrived back in Huntington, he began to speak to local merchants,


tavern owners and local people. Hale was trying to find out whether the people of Long Island were friendly to Patriot cause. This seemed to be a risky question to ask since Hale had obtained information about the British already and he was getting ready to meet the Schuyler to return to American territory. When Rogers heard that Nathan was asking questions of people in town, he thought that the Dutch schoolmaster might be up to something besides teaching. Rogers had observed Nathan Hale for some days and he came up with a plan to use Hale’s inexperience against him.

Hale had rented a room for the night at a local Tory owned tavern. Nathan was sitting at a table in the tavern when Rogers approached Nathan and introduced himself as a fellow American soldier. Rogers said that he was spying on the British troops, and asked Nathan to drink a toast to the health of Congress. Nathan began to tell Rogers his true mission and business. William Phelps speculates that Nathan Hale having a penchant for alcohol, might have been drunk when he told a stranger the extent of his spy mission. Rogers and Hale agreed to meet the next day, Saturday.

Sometime that Saturday morning Nathan Hale arrived at Roger’s quarters. Rogers was there with three of his men. After breakfast Nathan and Rogers began the same conversation that they had the previous evening.

At last, Rogers gave the signal and Hale was seized and taken into custody.

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55 Ibid., 172-173.

56 Ibid., 174-175.

57 Ibid., 178-179.
Rogers accused Hale of being a spy, which Hale denied, but as Rogers dragged him out of the tavern, several passerby pointed him out and said they knew him as a Hale of Connecticut and a known rebel.\textsuperscript{58} As Hale continued to claim he was not a continental soldier, he was placed in the brig on the Halifax, which would transport him to New York City. Nathan was transported to the Beekman mansion near Fifty-First Street to face General Howe and to answer the accusations against him.\textsuperscript{59}

In Nathan’s heart, which was made clear by his writings over the years, and those anecdotes his peers later shared about him, he believed he was right in his actions.\textsuperscript{60} Nathan was under the impression when he left camp on his mission that, in the eyes of his commanders, he played a much larger role in the effort than he did, when as a prisoner of war, he saw more than one thousand American prisoners of war the British were holding.\textsuperscript{61}

Nathan’s execution for espionage was a forgone conclusion. Fires were burning in parts of New York City, set by unknown person(s). General Howe was in a campaign fighting General Washington and the Colonials. This, the taking of an American spy had to be dealt with firmly and severely. Nathan was captured behind enemy lines in civilian clothes and carrying with him extenuating documents. The penalty for these


\textsuperscript{60} Letter, Gilbert Saltonstall to Nathan Hale, November 27, 1775, located at the Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
actions/activities was death, usually by hanging.

When Hale arrived at General Howe’s headquarters, the Beekman mansion, he was detained in the Beekman greenhouse under the guard of the provost marshal, sixth-year-old William Cunningham, a red-haired drunk and notorious bully. 

Cunningham, who in 1791 would be hanged for forgery, confessed upon the scaffold that he had caused the deaths of two thousand rebel prisoners by starving them, by putting poison in their food, and by selling their food for his own benefit.

When Hale was taken before Howe, he acknowledged his rank and purpose as a spy. Nathan firmly and respectfully told of his success in getting information in the British camps and expressed his regret that he had not been able to serve his country better. Benson J. Lessing stated that a British officer who was present at this interview said, “that the frankness, the manly bearing, and the evident disinterested patriotism of the handsome young prisoner, sensibly touched a tender chord of General Howe’s nature; but the stern rules of war concerning such offenses would not allow him to exercise even pity.”

Howe ordered Nathan Hale hung without a trial. Major John Andre, a British spy who worked with Benedict Arnold, and admitted his identity, was tried by a board of generals. The next morning, Sunday, September 22, 1776, Captain John Montresor, the

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64 Ibid., 20.

65 Ibid.
chief engineer for General Howe, asked Provost Marshal Cunningham to permit Hale to sit in his tent while Cunningham was making the necessary preparations for the hanging. Cunningham agreed to this request. Montresor said that Captain Hale entered his tent calm and bore him with gentle dignity, in the consciousness of rectitude and high intentions. 66 Apparently, Nathan had resigned himself to death, accepting it as the cost of the war.67

George Dudley Seymour stated that, “Nathan had placed this day in God’s hands. Based on his daily habit of prayer and Bible readings, it is likely that Nathan and thought deeply about people he was leaving behind.”68 Nathan asked for writing materials as he wanted to write two letters: one to a family member, and a second to his commanding officer Thomas Knowlton. Captain Montresor furnished Nathan with several pieces of paper, a quill, and an inkbottle.69

One of the letters was addressed to his brother Enoch. The other letter was written to Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Knowlton, Nathan’s commanding officer. Nathan had written a final report to his commanding officer and did not know that Colonel Knowlton had perished just days before during the battle for Harlem Heights.70 John Bakeless stated that Hale wrote two letters, one to a brother officer, and the other one to his

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66 Ibid., 120.


69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.
Montresor also admitted that Hale had asked for a clergyman to attend him but this request was refused. Hale then requested a Bible, but this request was also refused by Hale’s jailer, William Cunningham. George Seymour said of Montresor, “his humane, gallant, and courageous befriending of Hale that Sunday morning is the one redeeming feature in the tragedy.”

On September 22, 1776, at 10:30 A.M., Nathan Hale walked to his death from Montresor’s tent, to an apple orchard not too far away. Historians disagree on exactly where Nathan Hale was hanged. A British soldier and a ship workman reported that Nathan was executed at Rutgers apple orchard, about four miles south of the Beckman mansion, near Duane and Vesey streets (present-day) City Hall. Rutgers orchard was one of many apple orchards in New York City at this time.

Nathan’s hands were tied behind his back, and he was outfitted with a coarse white gown trimmed with black—which would be used for as a winding-sheet for his corpse—over his brown suit, plus a rough, woolen cap, also black-trimmed. At the site, the noose was swung over a rigid horizontal branch about fifteen feet up, and Hale climbed the ladder that would be soon kicked away for the drop. Next to the tree there

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was a freshly dug grave awaiting Nathan’s body.\textsuperscript{75}

At the top of the ladder, Nathan was given the traditional opportunity for a condemned man to say his last words. There remains to this day, the controversy as to what were Nathan Hale’s last words. Benson J. Lossing stated that Hale said, “I regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.”\textsuperscript{76} Alexander Rose argues that Hale did not say, “I regret that I have but one life to lose for my country.” That phrase, lifted from Joseph Addison’s contemporary play \textit{Cato}, was put into Hale’s mouth many years later by William Hull and other friends. Hull could not have known what Hale said in his final moments, though he did remember that Hale had been struck by \textit{Cato} when at Yale, and that Hale, Hull, and Tallmadge had talked of its brilliance.\textsuperscript{77} Phelps quotes the \textit{Essex Journal}, which said claimed that Hale’s last words were, “You are shedding the blood of the innocent. If I had ten thousand lives, I would lay them all down, if called to do it, in defense of my injured, bleeding country.”\textsuperscript{78}

After Nathan had finished speaking, William Cunningham, the Provost Marshall, said, “Swing the rebel off.”\textsuperscript{79}

British lieutenant Fredrick Mackenzie, who was stationed in New York at the

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.


time of Hale’s execution, paid tribute to Nathan in his diary.

He (Hale) behaved with great composure and resolution, as he said, “I thought it the duty of every good officer, to obey any orders given by his Commander-in-Chief: and desired the spectators to be at all times prepared to meet death in what ever shape it might appear.”

Nathan’s body hung for three days, his flesh rotting in the unseasonably hot September sun as his corpse was mocked and spat upon before a slave cut his body down and buried it, unclothed. His body was interred, without ceremony or formal prayer into a shallow, unmarked grave.

The first the Americans heard of Nathan’s death was on the evening of the September 22, 1776, when Captain John Montressor, of the Engineer Corps and aide-de-camp to General Howe, approached an American outpost in northern Manhattan under a flag of truce. Montressor’s main purpose for meeting the Americans was to give them a letter for General Washington from Howe offering an exchange of high-ranking prisoners. The Americans present to receive the letter were Joseph Reed, Washington’s adjutant general, General Israel Putnam, and Captain Alexander Hamilton. After passing over the letter, Montressor said that Nathan Hale had been executed that morning.

After Nathan’s death, no one made an effort to tell Hale’s family what had happened. It wasn’t until September 30, 1776, that Enoch, Nathan’s brother, wrote in his

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81 Ibid.

diary that Nathan was taken by the British and was sentenced to hang as a spy.\textsuperscript{83} It was not until October 26, when Enoch rode to White Plains to talk to officers of Nathan’s old regiment that Nathan’s death was confirmed.\textsuperscript{84}

Enoch, while speaking to Nathan’s old commander Colonel Webb, heard something that troubled him. According to Webb, a female acquaintance of Nathan’s said that Nathan’s executioner had left him hanging for several days after his death, and that indignant British soldiers had ridiculed Hale, treating his remains with disrespect. Some reports said that Nathan’s corpse had been spat upon by British soldiers and that the Redcoats made fun of Washington, to Nathan’s chest as if it were a bulletin board by attaching a sign to it.\textsuperscript{85}

Later, E.E. Hale, Nathan’s grand-nephew would write that of this moment, “The disgrace of his being hanged rested on the whole Connecticut household from which he came. The method of his death was what they grieved for.”\textsuperscript{86} On July 6, 1777, Enoch, Nathan’s brother, wrote in his diary his final written words about his brother, and would not discuss the life of the Hale’s family most celebrated military hero. Enoch would die in 1837, at age eighty-four, having named his first-born son Nathan, a name that would

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 34.

\textsuperscript{84} Henry Phelps Johnston, Nathan Hale, Biography and Memorials ( New Haven: Yale University Press, 1914 ), 131-132.


\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., as found in Hale, E. E., Dairy, October 26-29, 1776.
carry on in the Hale family to the present day.\textsuperscript{87}

Nathan’s death left the family with the loss of their favorite son. The pain and sorrow associated with his death will probably never be known. To have the Hale family’s shining star taken from them was catastrophic. The manner of his death, his age when he died, and the public humiliation of his corpse, drove the pain even further into the Hale’s hearts. The Hale family had the consolation that Nathan Hale was a believer in Jesus Christ, and that his faith in God helped him through his final moments on earth. Though the recognition of Hale’s sacrifice was not fully understood for many years, his death assured he would have a special even unique place in American history.

CHAPTER III

BENEDICT ARNOLD AS REVOLUTIONARY WAR TRAITOR

“Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears; I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones.” These words written by William Shakespeare in his play, *Julius Caesar*, could be applied to Benedict Arnold. The good that he did in his life has been forgotten, or has become a silent part of the evil reputation which he is remembered by.¹

In May 1779, when Benedict Arnold made his first overtures to Sir Henry Clinton, British Commander-in-Chief, Arnold was neither the first renegade nor the last. He is remembered in history as the classic traitor of the Revolution, because he was the most dangerous, conspicuous, sinister, and skillful of all traitors.² Had his plot not failed, West Point in British hands could have influenced the outcome of the war.

What evil design got inside of Arnold’s mind and changed his whole personality from dedicated patriot to traitor and deserter of his native land? Why did he take the path that led him to give up his Colonial uniform in favor of a British uniform? What led Arnold on April 22, 1776 to lead his Connecticut Governors’ Second Company of Foot Guards to march to Boston to four years later in September 1780 to abandon his command at West Point in order to escape to the British ship *Vulture*? These and other


questions will be explored as Benedict Arnold’s life unfolds in this thesis.

As Captain Benedict Arnold and the Foot Guards mustered on New Haven Green on April 22, 1776, hundreds of people turned out to wish them well. Reverend Jonathan Edwards Jr. prayed for God’s special blessings in guiding and protecting these citizen-soldiers as they began a great crusade to preserve human liberty. Then, Captain Arnold attired in a bright blue uniform, reviewed his troops. Arnold then marched his troops to a nearby tavern where New Haven’s Board of Selectmen and the committee of safety were meeting. Arnold needed arms and ammunition for his troops, and since the New Haven’s Selectmen controlled the powder magazine, Arnold demanded that they give him the keys to the powder magazine or his troops would force their way into the powder magazine and take what arms and ammunition they needed. The keys were given to Arnold. Once equipped with guns and ammunition from the New Haven central powder magazine, the Foot Guards were on their way to Cambridge, Massachusetts to fight the British.  

What was in the minds of Arnold and his troops as they marched to Massachusetts? They were thinking about the dangers that lay ahead as they would become involved in armed conflicts with the British. Probably, these citizen soldiers were thinking about their families that they left behind and their families safety. Probably they were thinking about not being able to harvest all their crops before winter set in. James Kirby Martin said, “that the Colonial troops fervently believed in a guiding Providence that would nourish and sustain them, no matter how difficult the struggle in their holy

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Somewhere north of Hartford, the Foot Guards came upon Colonel Samuel H. Parsons a Connecticut assemblyman who was returning from a visit to the American front lines. Parsons said that the Redcoats were confined inside Boston by a collection of colonial militia units that were thinly stretched throughout the Boston suburbs. The British could not be starved out as long as their ships controlled the harbor, and they could not be dislodged without artillery, since the British controlled most of the artillery in the thirteen colonies. Arnold informed Parsons that approximately eighty pieces of heavy artillery that were located at Fort Ticonderoga. Arnold took leave of Colonel Parsons and he continued to march toward Cambridge.\(^5\)

When Arnold and his troops reached Cambridge, he sought out Doctor Joseph Warren, chairman of the Massachusetts Committee of Safety. Arnold spoke with Doctor Warren about his plans to capture Fort Ticonderoga and confiscate its cannon. Doctor Warren submitted a resolution through his committee appointing Benedict Arnold a colonel in the Massachusetts militia with orders to enlist up to four hundred men in the western part of the colony and to proceed to Fort Ticonderoga, capture the fort and its cannon, and dispatch the cannon to Boston.\(^6\) The capture of Fort Ticonderoga was important since it controlled a part of the Hudson River.

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6 Ibid., 23.
With his orders in hand, Colonel Arnold said goodbye to the Foot Guards and rode westward with a small group of captains who were to recruit companies for the regiment. Arnold’s primary concern was getting his regiment enlisted in time to seize Ticonderoga before British reinforcements arrived. 7 A letter had been circulating in Cambridge for several weeks urging that Ticonderoga be taken as soon as hostilities commenced. The author of the letter was John Brown, a Yale educated lawyer from Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Brown had just returned from a reconnoitering expedition into Canada. Brown had engaged the services of Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys to attack Ticonderoga. The Green Mountain Boys, also known as the Onion River Company were a group of land speculators who had organized into a guerrilla band in the early 1770’s to defend their holdings in the New Hampshire Grants against people from New York. 8 Benedict Arnold would soon join this group of soldiers to attack Fort Ticonderoga.

Traveling across Massachusetts in just three days into the New Hampshire Grants, Arnold discovered John Brown, Captain Edward Mott, and some of Ethan Allen’s lieutenants in a tavern conducting a council of war. Arnold introduced himself to the assembled group. Arnold explained that he should be in command of the group about to attack Ticonderoga since he was the highest-ranking officer. The recruits said that they wanted to be led by their own officers. Finally upon conferring with Ethan Allen, Arnold

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and Allen grudgingly agreed to a joint command.\footnote{Ibid, 24-26.}

Early on Wednesday May 10, 1775, the colonials began their assault. The first step was to cross Lake Champlain. After eighty-three colonials had crossed Lake Champlain, Allen and Arnold decided to attack the fort with the soldiers that they had. Allen and Arnold quickly found the commander of the fort, Captain William Delaplace who surrendered the fortress. After securing the fortress, Allen’s men began to plunder, and ransack the fort, including drinking the rum supply that was found.\footnote{James Kirby Martin, \textit{Benedict Arnold, Revolutionary Hero, An American Warrior Reconsider} (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 70-72.}

Arnold was dismayed at the Green Mountain Boys’ behavior. Colonel Allen refused to order his men to stop looting the private property of prisoners, but stripped Arnold of his joint command at gunpoint. When Arnold still insisted on an end to the looting, reciting military law to the looters, one of them leveled his musket against Arnold’s chest, saying he would kill Arnold if he interfered. Arnold stared the man down. The man lowered his gun and went reeling off.\footnote{William Sterne Randall, \textit{Benedict Arnold, Patriot and Traitor} (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1990), 97.} Disgusted, Arnold confined himself to the officers’ quarters, waiting for more of his recruits to arrive. Writing to the Massachusetts provincial congress, Arnold told them that the plan was falling apart for Allen and his henchmen were governing by “whim and caprice.”\footnote{Ibid.}

Throughout the early days at Fort Ticonderoga, Benedict Arnold’s inner turmoil was masked by his excellent performance as a military officer. Seventy-two hours after
the capture of the fort, scouts reported that a British ship was docked at St. Jean at the far northern outlet of Lake Champlain, loaded with supplies and ready to sail to counterattack Ticonderoga. Arnold thought that the best way to save the fort was to attack the enemy by boat. That afternoon Arnold’s assistant arrived at Ticonderoga with fifty recruits aboard a small ship that they had captured. By sunset Arnold had armed the ship, rechristened it the *Liberty*, provisioned her and set sail for St. Jean without telling Ethan Allen or any of the others.\(^{13}\)

Arnold anchored the first night off Crown Point, site of a British fort that had been consumed by a fire and explosion two years ago. The second night Arnold was within thirty miles of St. Jean. Next, he transferred half of his men to one of the small boats that he had towed. Silently and under the cover of darkness, his men rowed to St. Jean and captured the British ship docked there, which was loaded with supplies.\(^{14}\) Arnold who had conceived and helped lead the first American offensive by invading another sovereign province, now led the first naval attack in American history.\(^{15}\)

Arnold retreated to Crown Point with his spoils. However, his short lived triumph turned to apprehension on receipt of the news that Massachusetts had resigned its responsibility for the Ticonderoga expedition to Connecticut, thus depriving Arnold of the protection and support of Joseph Warren. The Massachusetts Congress in thanking


\(^{14}\) Ibid., 31.

Arnold for his service omitted any specific personal praise for his accomplishments.\textsuperscript{16}

This was the first time but certainly not the last time in Arnold’s military career that he was not given the acknowledgement and praise he deserved for his military prowess and successes. This was the first Congress, though it was the Massachusetts Congress, that underestimated the military intelligence and success of Benedict Arnold, thus not according him the accolades he should have received. Arnold would remember all the actions in his career that he felt were injustices to him.

Arnold writing under the name of “Veritas,” explained in a newspaper essay that one of his perpetual antagonists, James Easton, behaved in a cowardly manner in the assault on Ticonderoga. Arnold was hoping that the insults offered by “Veritas” would lead Easton to challenge Arnold to a duel. Easton avoided this risky challenge.\textsuperscript{17} Arnold was ready to defend his honor as necessary. A few hours later, Arnold received word that the Continental Congress ordered both Allen and Arnold to abandon Ticonderoga and Crown Point, to retreat to the southern end of the Lake Champlain, and to take with them all available supplies and cannons.\textsuperscript{18}

Arnold replied back to the Continental Congress that Ticonderoga represented the key to the Champlain region of New York and approximately five hundred families would be left to the whims and desires of the British and their allies if Ticonderoga were evacuated. Arnold also complained about Ethan Allen and all the negative actions that he

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
and his Green Mountain Boys did. Arnold’s actions left an ambivalent impression. Some members of Congress saw Arnold as an officer of intelligence, resourcefulness, and enterprise; others saw a braggart, a complainer, and a troublemaker. Views of Arnold remained deeply divided, even after he had proved himself to be one of their greatest officers.\footnote{Ibid., 35.}

On June 13, 1775, Arnold drafted an invasion plan for Canada. Arnold reasoned that the Colonials should attack Montreal first, where the gates would be opened by the friends of Congress. In short order, St. Jean, Chambly, and Quebec would soon surrender, unless massive British reinforcements arrived. Arnold’s proposal appealed to Congress, but they were not ready to trust Arnold with putting the plans into effect. On June 27, 1775, Congress committed itself to the invasion of Canada, but gave command of the invading army to Major General Philip Schuyler.\footnote{George F.G. Stanley, \textit{Canada Invaded} (Toronto: Samuel Stevens Hakkert and Company, 1977), 27-28.}

As Arnold was drafting this plan, on June 19, 1775, Margaret Mansfield Arnold, Benedict’s first wife, died. Three days later, Arnold’s father-in-law, “Papa” Mansfield who was regaining his strength after a serious illness, had a sudden relapse, most likely because of the death of his daughter, and died. Arnold returned home and asked his sister Hannah to care for his three children as well as to continue to run his various businesses ventures.\footnote{James Kirby Martin, \textit{Benedict Arnold, Revolutionary Hero, An American Warrior Reconsidered} (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 101-103.} Soon after visiting with his sister and his children, Arnold returned to
military business.

On August 1, 1775, Arnold presented himself before the Massachusetts Provincial Council to collect the pay he was due, since he had been relieved of his command at Fort Ticonderoga. After receiving his back pay, Arnold met with General Washington to discuss the invasion of Canada by a second force via the Maine wilderness. Washington gave his blessing to this military adventure which was to be led by Arnold. The plan was to make a surprise attack on Quebec, marching through the Maine wilderness to Quebec. The conquest of Canada was important, since if conquered, Washington would not have to worry about the British attacking him through New York State.

During his meeting with Washington, Arnold offered his services as a volunteer, but also communicated his desire to Washington to secure a Continental officer’s commission—at a rank comparable to his vacated Massachusetts colonelcy so as not to compromise his honor. Washington did offer Arnold a colonel’s commission in the Continental army. Honor and respect played a large role in Benedict Arnold’s psyche. His military actions were based on a desire to win the conflicts, but always his personal honor was involved, almost as an afterthought. Throughout his adult life, Arnold was always trying to improve the Arnold name in response to his father’s actions and failings.

On Tuesday September 5, 1775, Washington called for volunteers from among patriot soldiers in camp to report to Colonel Arnold for further instructions. The men who

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22 Ibid., 105-107.
came forward were to be “active woodsmen,” well acquainted with bateaux, small flat bottomed boats, and was not to have served with the Green Mountain Boys. Approximately, one thousand men answered the call. Before Arnold began this journey, Washington issued his final orders to Arnold reminding him to keep a tight reign on his troops and to remind Arnold of his status and rank. Arnold was upset because he believed that General Washington had heard reports of Arnold’s behavior at Ticonderoga and decided that Washington concluded that Arnold was extremely defensive in matters of rank and control.

Beginning on September 11 through September 13, 1775, Arnold’s men left Cambridge and began the first leg of their journey to Newburyport, Massachusetts. On Sunday Arnold led his troops to the First Presbyterian Church as patriotic citizens lined the streets and cheered enthusiastically. The troops listened to Reverend Spring’s sermon titled, “If thy Spirit go not with us, carry is not up hence.”

On Tuesday Arnold’s men boarded ships to take them to the Kennebec River. Going up the Kennebec River the small army reached Gardinerstown, Maine. Arnold had ordered two hundred bateaux from Reuben Colburn’s shipyard. Arnold needed a boat that was both light for portage and heavy for carrying supplies. Colburn’s bateaux were made hurriedly put together and were made of green pine.

The journey through the Maine wilderness for Arnold’s men had become one of pain and suffering. Walking in waist deep water, carrying the heavy bateaux over land,

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23 Ibid., 114-116.

24 Ibid., 117-119.
and facing a food shortage all helped to hinder Arnold’s march. Some of Arnold’s men chopped up pieces of rawhide, boiling it and drinking the juice. Others boiled shaving soap, candles, and finally their moccasins. Eventually they slaughtered and ate their pet dogs, skin, feet, and all.  

With Arnold’s army was on the verge of disintegration, he summoned all powers of mind, spirit, and instinct in order to preserve the one thing that was keeping his men going: their courage. During this process, Arnold demonstrated for all time that he was a leader of men. First, Arnold sent all with the exception of the able bodied men of Colonel Enos’ group back to Norridgewock to bring back the remaining provisions. Secondly, Arnold himself would lead a small detachment of men on a forced march to the French settlements along the Chaudiere River to obtain provisions and send them back.  

Arnold and his seven men finally reached the St. Lawrence River, crossed it, and managed to gain the heights of the Plains of Abraham outside Quebec City. Their spirits were revived when news reached them of the fall of Montreal, and a supply of clothing, ammunition, and guns captured by General Montgomery arrived along with Montgomery himself. Montgomery was impressed with Arnold’s ragged corps finding them to be an exceedingly fine one. Arnold who was always thinking of the welfare of his troops, distributed new clothing to his troops. The clothing was mostly British military uniforms,  


26 Ibid., 53.  

but even if dressed in the garb of enemy soldiers, this troops appreciated having garments that were not rotting off their bodies.\textsuperscript{28}

The Battle of Quebec City began on a snowy morning December 31, 1775, at 2:00 A.M., since of many of the enlistments of Montgomery and Arnold’s troops would expire on January 1, 1776. The plan was to attack an entrance in the lower city, and then move to attack the British positions in the upper city. A deserter warned the Quebec City commander, Sir Guy Carleton of the impending attack by the Americans.\textsuperscript{29}

General Montgomery moved his men from the Plains of Abraham toward the fortified lower city. In an effort to surprise the defenders, Montgomery led seventeen men in a mad dash to storm the barricades. The position was in reality an ambush with artillery and musket fire killing General Montgomery and several of his men. Meanwhile, Arnold and his men were moving along the walls through the St. Roque gate. As Arnold moved forward, his advance was fired upon by riflemen posted atop the walls. Arnold was wounded with a shot to his leg.\textsuperscript{30} Captain Daniel Morgan assumed command. Morgan and his men attacked the barricades, only to be surrounded by British troops. Morgan surrendered while Arnold escaped to Montgomery’s command center outside of Quebec City. Carleton’s victorious British retained control of Quebec City while the Americans occupied their trenches in the cold winter weather. Despite the disaster,


\textsuperscript{29} Theodore P. Savas, and David J. Dameron, \textit{A Guide to the Battles of the American Revolution} (New York: Savas and Beatie, 2006), 33.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.,35.
Benedict Arnold was promoted to brigadier general on January 10, 1776. On Friday, April 12, 1776, Arnold quietly left Quebec, thinking of what might have been, and knowing that a major British counterthrust was sure to happen.\textsuperscript{31}

Even though Benedict Arnold and the American troops lost the Battle of Quebec, Arnold attained hero status because of leading his men on a long march through the Maine wilderness and his valiant fighting in attempting to conquer Quebec City. Arnold in this battle and in every other battle that he fought in, whether for the Americans or for the British, always took charge and led the way for his troops. Arnold’s leadership in the Battle of Quebec was exemplary because of his bravery under fire. He was not afraid to personally lead the attack, giving no or very little thought to his safety.

When Arnold left Quebec he rode to Montreal. A group of congressional commissioners were coming up from Philadelphia to help oversee the patriot martial affairs in Canada. Arnold had asked his superior Major General John Thomas if they were bringing hard money. Thomas said no; all they were bringing was good will. The commissioners had hoped to allay some of the fears of the Canadian citizens. Arnold replied that without money, he was not sure how many more days the cause of liberty had left in Canada.\textsuperscript{32} Another reason the commissioners arrived was to determine why the Canada expedition failed.

On Monday April 29, 1776, the commissioners arrived in Montreal. Benjamin Franklin led the delegation which included Samuel Chase and Charles Carroll both from


\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 202.
Maryland. Carroll was the scion of perhaps the wealthiest Roman Catholic family in North America. One of the other men who accompanied the commissioners was Father John Carroll, a cousin of Charles and a Jesuit priest. Father Carroll had agreed to joined the group to convince church officials and local priests that the patriots were not necessarily intolerant toward Roman Catholicism.

Early next morning the commissioners attended a council of war to brief them on military affairs in Canada. It was decided to fortify the town of Deschambault with artillery pieces. Before closing the meeting, Arnold announced his intention to travel to Fort Chambly and assist Colonel Moses Hazen in speeding up the construction of the armed boats designated for possible combat against the British at the Richelieu Rapids.33

Arnold was concerned about an attack by the British on rebel held Montreal. With the warmer weather coming, the British were amassing troops in Quebec, and Arnold feared that the Continental army in Canada might be defeated. He took another verbal slap at Congress for their repeated promises to “our friends in this country” about making an all-out effort. Congress had dallied when it should have acted decisively-back in the autumn of 1775- and they did not send, not even a penny’s worth of hard money with the commissioners.34

Smallpox was a common denominator as the Continental army retreated from Quebec on May 5, 1776. Small battles with the British led by Captain George Foster at the Cedars resulted in the Americans surrendering their troops who were led by Major

33 Ibid., 203.

34 Ibid., 206. as found in a letter from Benedict Arnold to Philip Schuyler, Montreal May 10, 1776, AA, 4ser., 6:452
Isaac Butterfield and Major Henry Shelbourne. Arnold gathered his troops together and pursued Captain Foster. Colonel Moses Hazen joined Arnold and along with most of the Arnold’s council of war advised him to not to attack the British. A truce which included an exchange of prisoners was made. During the war discussions, Colonel Hazen considered Benedict Arnold an enemy, as he would soon join up with John Brown and James Easton, men who were set on destroying Arnold’s reputation and rank.\textsuperscript{35}

The Commissioners reported to Congress on July 30, 1776. They generally avoided criticizing particular officers. They listed three main reasons why the Canada expedition failed: scarcity of hard money, short enlistments, and smallpox. However, they did react to a flurry of anti-Arnold accusations from John Brown and James Easton.\textsuperscript{36}

On July 8\textsuperscript{th} the general officers, except for Arnold left Crown Point. He remained there to direct the evacuation process. On July 20, 1776, Arnold arrived at Fort Ticonderoga,\textsuperscript{37} a new assignment was waiting for him. General Gates appointed Arnold as head of the Lake Champlain fleet. Arnold had experience before the war as a ship’s captain, plying merchant ships in the Caribbean. Arnold put his heart and soul into preparing the colonial ships for battle against the enemy, even though he had to prepare for the court martial of Colonel Moses Hazen. Again, this incident would reflect on Arnold’s character.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 213-214.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 231, as found in Tue., July 30, 1776, JCC, 5:617-20.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 237-239.
Colonel Hazen, though on trial for his military action shifted the trial from himself to Benedict Arnold, accusing Arnold of stealing from his troops while stationed at Chambly, Canada. Arnold answered these accusations by attacking the court itself. Hazen was acquitted, but the court issued an arrest warrant to Arnold. General Gates dissolved the court because of the court’s actions in issuing a warrant for Arnold’s arrest.38

Arnold evoked feelings of either for or against him in many of his subordinate officers. Arnold was direct in dealing with his junior officers. He was concerned with getting the job done, and in the process would sometimes rub officers’ wrongly. Arnold like Nathan Hale respected the men who served under him. That alone should have kept him from stealing from his own men’s supplies. Brandt acknowledged that Arnold’s craving for money was deep rooted in his personality. Money helped stave off his childhood fears; it meant respectability and security. Without it he knew no inner peace.39

Arnold wanted satisfaction from the junior officers who sat on the court martial for Colonel Moses Hazen. He wanted satisfaction because they had maliciously attempted to destroy his good name, a family name he intended to restore to its rightful status. Arnold believed that he was aggrieved because of his many personal sacrifices in Canada. He still limped from a leg wound, while dealing with rheumatism. Arnold had given of his own money to provide for the welfare of his troops, including the imprisoned famine–veterans. Arnold began to wonder if the cause of freedom was worth fighting


39 Ibid., 97.
since there were so many obstacles put into his path. The Board of War investigated and dismissed Hazen’s charges of stealing by Arnold in the Spring of 1776.  

Arnold, still hurting over the charges brought against him Colonel Hazen, explained his injured feelings to General Gates:

> I cannot but think it extremely cruel when I have sacrificed my ease, health, and a great part of my private property in the cause of my country, to be calumniated as a robber and thief—at a time too, when I have it not in my power to be heard in my own defense.

Arnold would still serve the Revolution, but there were question marks in his mind. Arnold had begun to ask himself whether the cause of liberty with all of its rhetoric was more hollow than genuine—perhaps not worthy of his continued sacrifice. This incident, undermined Arnold’s commitment to the American position in the Revolutionary War as did the fact that he had been passed over for promotion to major general. These developments began to take place in Arnold’s mind as he took up his new assignment; that of protecting Lake Champlain from the British.

Arnold was given the task putting together a small navy for the Colonials. Arnold’s collection of boats would be the beginnings of an American naval force. He had become the quintessential colonial officer, both an army officer and a naval officer. Arnold received authorization to patrol as far as Isle aux Tetes, located above the New York-Canadian border.


41 Ibid., 244-245.

42 Ibid., 245.
Under his command, Arnold assembled nine gundalows—flat bottoms, single-masted craft that carried fixed square sails and could cruise only by wind power. Also in his fleet were three row galleys, on cutter, one sloop, and three schooners. Altogether, Arnold would have seventeen vessels to fight the British. Also, Arnold’s crews would be from the Continentals at Ticonderoga inexperienced seamen at best. By comparison, the British under General Carleton would have experienced mariners to man their boats. Also, the British would probably have superior firepower with twenty-four pounders cannon compared to Arnold’s eighteen pounders cannon.\textsuperscript{43}

Arnold began to train his new sailors on Lake Champlain. One day as Arnold was doing his trial runs with his new fleet, gale-force winds and monsoon rains were about to strike, and Arnold ordered his boats to flee southward. One of the gundalows, the \textit{Spitfire}, did not react in time, and waves began to push the boat landward. When Arnold saw what was happening, he jumped into a small boat and told his oarsmen to row towards the stricken boat. As Arnold got close to the endangered boat, he told the \textit{Spitfire} crew to trim their sails. Soon the \textit{Spitfire} swung about and was able to avoid destruction.\textsuperscript{44} This was an example of Arnold’s leadership abilities.

As the battle with the British on Lake Champlain was about to begin, Arnold’s thoughts turned toward his sister Hannah, and his three sons. Arnold had just received a letter from Hannah. Arnold thought whether he lived or died, his sons were going to be proud of their father. As his sons grew older, he hoped that they would come to

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\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 247-248.
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\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 254.
\end{flushright}
appreciate their father for the selfless patriot he aspired to be, a man who in spite of being criticized, had not flinched in the face of the enemy.\footnote{Ibid., 267, 268, as found in a letter from Hannah Arnold to Benedict Arnold, New Haven, August 17, 1776, AAS.} At this point in time, Arnold was thinking of his image, of clearing his family name, and of the upcoming battle.

Arnold had intended to keep his fleet facing southward in a tightly grouped, crescent-shaped formation to concentrate its fire against the British. Also, Arnold would have to initiate the action.

Finally, on the morning of October 11, 1776, the British saw the American fleet and the Battle of Valcour Island began. Both sides began firing at each other, with the British seeking the rebel ship, \textit{Royal Savage}. The battle continued through the afternoon. The battle of Valcour Island ended in as a standoff, with neither side overwhelming the other, even though the British had superior firepower.\footnote{Ibid., 275.}

With ammunition running low, Arnold devised a plan to escape from the British. Under the cover of a thick fog, his boats made a run from the British. By early morning the rebels were eight miles south of Valcour Island. In writing to Gates that morning, Arnold called the escape “very fortunate;” and he expressed “great reason to return our humble and hearty thanks to Almighty God for preserving and delivering so many of us from our more than savage enemies.”\footnote{Ibid., 280, as found in a letter by Benedict Arnold to Horatio Gates, Oct. 12, 1776, AA,5 ser.,2:1038.}

Arnold and his wounded ships made it to Schuyler’s Island, where repairs were
made to them. Now Arnold had ten vessels that were seaworthy. Arnold led his ships south towards Crown Point. The British caught up with the American fleet near Split Rock, where Arnold intended to make a stand. Arnold in his ship Congress acted as buffer between his ships and the British fleet. Arnold wanted the other American ships to escape. However, Arnold’s second in command, General David Waterbury in his ship the Washington struck his colors and surrendered to the British. 48

The British warships Inflexible, Maria, and the Carleton moved alongside Arnold’s flagship Congress, spraying her decks with grapeshot that ripped apart rigging and bodies while cannon balls smashed their way through Congress’ porous hull. Arnold knew that he had to escape, if not his entire crew would be killed or captured.

In a great display of seamanship and leadership, Arnold ordered his remaining ships to turn into the wind and make a run past the British for Buttonmould Bay, Vermont. The British could not sail into the wind nor come close to shore, probably because of their larger ships. Once on shore, Arnold stripped his ships of everything of value and then he marched his men to Crown Point. Arnold could not hold that position, so he continued his march to Fort Ticonderoga arriving there at 4:00 A.M. on October 14, 1776.49

What Arnold accomplished was amazing. The fact that he was able to build a credible flotilla and stall the British offensive for so long, turned the tactical defeat in

48 Ibid., 281-282.

America’s first major naval battle into a major colonial victory. Arnold almost single handedly protected America’s interests on Lake Champlain. He fought the British with their superior naval fleet on his terms and at his time. The American fleet could have easily been defeated, but was not because of Arnold’s leadership and dedication to duty. If gamblers were to bet on this naval battle, the British would probably have a fifty to one ratio on winning. Instead the American underdog and their untrained sailors held off the British fleet.

On November 1, 1776, while at Crown Point, Carleton ordered his troops back aboard their ships, and gave the order to return to Canada. The British invasion had been halted by the fierce winter, and by Benedict Arnold. Carleton’s withdrawal temporary relieved pressure on Ticonderoga, and General Gates was able to send Washington troops, which arrived in time to take part in the successful attack on Trenton, on Christmas night. Arnold had lost a battle and a fleet, but by building a fleet, he had forced the British to do the same, imposing a year’s delay in on the British strategy to divine the colonies and conquer.

The relative success of Arnold’s engagement with the British naval force on Lake Champlain brought mixed reactions from different military corners. Arnold was a general in the Continental Army, but also a Commodore in the American Navy. The fact that Benedict Arnold had survived the first full-scale American naval battle, but that two thirds of his fleet had been destroyed set off a year of infighting in the Continental Army

50 Ibid., 75.

and in the Continental Congress. Arnold had saved the nation and blunted the British divide-and-conquer strategy while teaching both sides that Americans could turn and fight even when outnumbered and outgunned which was apparent to the highest ranking generals and to the common people. The middle rung of politicians and officers made him vulnerable to the attacks of a growing number of enemies.

The British offered some kind words. Sometimes, in war, even an enemy who fought valiantly is respected. A British officer who commanded a gunboat in General Carleton’s fleet, wrote that the rebel retreat up Lake Champlain “did great honor to General Arnold.”

Now Arnold began to fight the second battle of Valcour Island, the issue of his conduct and decisions. The greater a military hero Arnold became, the more his enemies attacked him. Arnold’s old nemeses John Brown and Moses Hazen had filed charges with General Gates against him. Hazen accused him of defamation of character, and Brown listed thirteen alleged misdemeanors ranging from the outlandish-that Arnold was personally responsible for the spread of smallpox in the Canadian army-to the breathtaking-that in 1775 at Ticonderoga, he made “a treasonable attempt to make his escape…to the enemy.”

At the time Brown’s charges were frivolous and of no substance however his

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52 Ibid., 318.


thoughts were prescience with him knowing.

Clare Brandt said:

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\ldots \text{that as the weeks passed Arnold clung more desperately than ever to the image of his better self, the genuine, but unstable, Patriot-Hero. He came to deny any aspect of his being that did not conform to the image. Eventually, his habitual avoidance of introspection became pathological. He would admit no failing, take no responsibility for any of his problems. The potency of his image was thereby preserved—but his grip on reality slipped and weakened with every passing day.}^{55}
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With Fort Ticonderoga and the Hudson valley safe until spring, Arnold and Horatio Gates were ordered to march south with the bulk of the northern army to reinforce General Washington troops as he was trying to control his troops who were retreating through New Jersey. A week before Christmas, Arnold and Gates passed through Nazareth, Pennsylvamia, and lodged at the Sun Tavern in Bethlehem. While there Arnold received an urgent order from George Washington to proceed to Rhode Island and defend it from a large British fleet seen off the coast.\(^{56}\) Washington’s confidence in Arnold never wavered. Washington knew that Arnold was a great recruiter of local militia volunteers and a solid general.

On the way to assume his new command in Rhode Island, Arnold stopped in New Haven to see his family. He visited with his sister and three sons. Arnold was welcomed by most citizens of New Haven as a military man of heroic stature. Arnold welcomed the community veneration. Arnold believed that the Revolution held the promise for a republic organized on the principle that ability, achievement, and virtuous service should be the measure of every citizen’s worth. He believed that the Revolution would help

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 113.

\(^{56}\) Ibid., 113-115.
Arnold’s enthusiasm for the Revolution and his contribution to it soon waned after Arnold learned that he was passed over for promotion to major general. On February 19, 1777 delegates from the Congress selected five major generals of which senior brigadier Arnold was not among those selected.

Congress was determined to keep general officers subordinate to civil authority. Arnold’s meritorious service in several battles on land and on water spoke highly of his commitment to the Colonials cause. However, the numerous allegations of misconduct against him hurt his reputation and candidacy in the delegates’ eyes. Another point working against Arnold was that Connecticut already had two major generals and Congress was very concerned about not slighting any state. General Horatio Gates could have spoken up to support Arnold, but Gates was upset because Washington had chosen Arnold as second in command to Major General Joseph Spencer. Gates had hoped to obtain an independent line command like the Rhode Island assignment. By the end of 1777, General Gates would endeavor to destroy Benedict Arnold’s military career.\(^\text{58}\)

Washington wrote to Arnold cautioning him about any attack on Newport, and telling him that he had been passed over for promotion. Washington promised to


\(^{58}\) Ibid., 306-307.
investigate the matter and advised Arnold not to take any hasty steps.\textsuperscript{59}

Arnold wrote back and said:

Congress have doubtless a right of promoting those, whom, from their abilities, their long and arduous services, they esteem the most deserving. However, by elevating junior officers over him, the delegates had chosen a very civil way of requesting my resignation, as unqualified for the office I hold.\textsuperscript{60}

Arnold called for a court of inquiry into his conduct that would investigate and clear his name of every false allegation. Again, Arnold wanted to clear his name of the actions that caused his non-promotion.\textsuperscript{61}

During this process, Arnold made three points. The first point was Congress was nothing more than a body of men who governed by whim and caprice. The second point he made was that the Revolution seemed destined to fail, unless Congress mustered the courage to recognize and advance its most illustrious officers.\textsuperscript{62} Congress was no different than from his Mother’s vengeful Calvinist God or the people of Norwich of his youth who had been so full of harsh judgment at the time of his father’s tragic decent into an alcoholic’s death. So now as soon as he had informed General Washington, he would resign his commission, persist in his demand for a court of inquiry, and attempt to clear his name.\textsuperscript{63}

On Saturday April 26, 1777, a large British force had landed at Compo Beach,

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 308, as found in a letter from George Washington to Benedict Arnold, Morristown, Mach 3, 1777, \textit{Writings of George Washington}, 7:233-234.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 309.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 310.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., 311.

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 314.
Westport, Connecticut with the intention of destroying the rebel supplies at Danbury, Connecticut. While at home with his family in New Haven, Arnold received word of this invasion and had to decide if he was going to leave his family and fight or not. He decided to fight for the Colonials. Arnold gathered farmers as he set out on his way to meet at Redding, Connecticut with Brigadier General Gold Sellect Silliman who was bringing four hundred militiamen from Fairfield, Connecticut. At Bethel, Connecticut Arnold and Silliman’s company joined Major General David Wooster with his two hundred men from the New Haven militia.64

By dawn on April 27, 1777, the British were quickly leaving Danbury and heading towards Ridgefield. The British commander Major General William Tryon hoped to avoid meeting Benedict Arnold in combat, as the British were well aware of Arnold’s military exploits. As the British stopped to prepare a meal, General Wooster and his troops engaged the British force. Wooster was able to take prisoners and cause considerable damage. As the British raiders fled to Ridgefield, General Wooster attacked them again, receiving a mortal wound.65

Silliman and Arnold were busy gathering men they encountered as they headed to Ridgefield. Arnold reputation as a fighting and successful general brought followers ready to serve with him. Arnold and Silliman reached Ridgefield and had their men erect a hasty barricade across the narrowest section of Main Street.66

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65 Ibid., 41.

66 Ibid., 42.
Near three o’clock, General Tryon’s troops met the Colonials behind their barricades. The Colonials were heavily out numbered but held their line steady. As the British outflanked the Colonials, the citizen soldiers started to break ranks and run. In desperation, General Arnold brandished his sword and rode back and forth trying to form a rear guard to protect his fleeing column.” Suddenly Arnold’s horse collapsed, having been hit by nine musket balls. Arnold was pinned to the ground under his horse. A British soldier rushed forward with a bayonetted musket in his hand, reported saying, “Surrender you are my prisoner!” “Not yet was Arnold’s alleged reply as he retrieved a pistol from his saddle holster, and killed his adversary with one shot. Arnold freed himself from his horse and fled toward to nearby swamp with enemy musket balls flying all around him.  

This battle was another example of Arnold’s bravery as he fought the British. While Tyron was stopping for the evening to tend to his wounded and bury his dead, Arnold was busy working through the night to gather people to fight. As General Tyron and his troops fled south to their ships, Arnold was planning to attack his flanks and rear. Arnold employed hit and run tactics as the British headed for Compo Beach and their ships. Arnold was always in the thick of the fighting ignoring the enemy’s fire. The British after sending four hundred from the ships to fight and hold the Colonials escaped to their ships and sailed away. As the ships sailed away, Arnold was disappointed with the citizens of Connecticut for not turning out in greater numbers and when they did turn out, the militia was usually ineffective in their fighting.  

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The members of Congress quietly absorbed the news of General Tyson’s Danbury raid. Some even felt embarrassed about not promoting Arnold, until one delegate suggested on May 2, 1777, that the Continental army would be able to use another major general. After the ballots were taken, Benedict Arnold was promoted to the rank of Major General. Congress disclaimed its criterion of state troop quotas.  

Arnold’s promotion to major general did not include the restoration of his seniority over men who had been promoted in May. Arnold decided that this was the time, because of his military reputation to go to Philadelphia to appeal the decision in person. On May 20, 1777, John Brown’s thirteen charges against Arnold were given a formal reading in Congress. At the Board of War hearing, Arnold presented his paperwork to the delegates. The Board of War absolved Arnold of Brown’s charges. However, they did not restore Arnold’s seniority over five men who were promoted over him in February 1777, nor did they settle the monies that were owed Arnold, since Congress was “broke.” Also, Arnold was appalled to learn that Congress was going to publish John Brown’s charges as part of their public report.

While Arnold was waiting for Congress to give him redress of his grievances, British General John Burgoyne had taken Fort Ticonderoga and was heading towards Albany. American General Philip Schuyler wrote John Hancock asking whether Congress was free dealing with Benedict Arnold that they should order him to the

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68 Ibid., 321.
69 Ibid.
northern army as an aide to General Schuyler. Congress agreed with Schuyler and dispatched orders for Arnold to proceed to Washington’s headquarters and then to the northern army. However, before Arnold received his orders, he submitted his resignation to Congress because Congress had promoted junior officers over him. Arnold wrote:

I therefore hope that Congress will do me the favor to accept my resignation, upon my honor I do not ask from a spirit of resentment (though my feelings are deeply wounded), but from a real conviction that it is not in my power to serve my country in the present rank I hold.\(^{71}\)

Arnold accepted his orders and arrived at Fort Edward on July 22, 1777.

As General Burgoyne’s troops continued to advance south, Arnold under the command of General Horatio Gates, outlined his plan for a battle in a location known as Bemis Heights. With Arnold giving instructions, Colonel Tadeusz Kosciuszko, the Colonials army chief engineer, built breastworks and redoubts, to protect the Americans. Arnold wanted to attack the oncoming British, but General Gates wanted to fight the British behind the American breastworks.\(^{72}\)

For two years, Benedict Arnold had endured a series of martial failures against the British forces in the north. Now he felt the decisive battle coming and he was looking forward to getting rid of his frustrations and defeating Burgoyne.\(^{73}\)

On Wednesday, September 17, 1777 General Gates called a meeting of his general officers to discuss the Americans’ present situation. General Arnold asked to take

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\(^{71}\) Ibid., 124-125.


his troops and to go out and assess the enemy’s strength. General Gates finally agreed to Arnold’s request, but warned Arnold not to engage the British in a general engagement. If General Burgoyne should do so, Arnold was to keep the British troops pinned down, until Gates could move up with additional forces.\footnote{Ibid., 374.}

The next day, a company of Arnold troops attacked unarmed British soldiers and women scavenging a potato field near Burgoyne’s main army. The Americans killed fourteen and took a few prisoners before a relief force drove them off. Arnold had no qualms about attacking unarmed soldiers and civilians since Burgoyne’s Indians had attacked and killed unarmed American civilians. At no point did General Arnold try to force a battle. He pulled his troops back to Bemis Heights and advised General Gates of the days events. Arnold’s believed that the enemy would attempt an assault on Bemis Heights within forty-eight hours by attacking Arnold’s left flank.\footnote{Ibid.}

Just as Arnold had predicted, after the fog lifted on Friday, September 19, 1777, General Burgoyne ordered three signal guns fired, and his army began marching towards Bemis Heights in three columns as he tried to outflank the Americans. Arnold again pleaded with Gates to let him attack the British troops before they dug in, but Gates refused to do so. However, since he already had permission for a reconnaissance force, Arnold sent out General Morgan’s long rifle force, and General Dearborn’s light infantry to make contact with the British.\footnote{Willard Sterne Randall, \textit{Benedict Arnold, Patriot and Traitor} (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1990), 356.}
When Morgan’s men reached the southern edge of Freeman’s farm, they saw British pickets relaxing in the high weeds around the firehouse. Morgan’s men opened fire on the British guard killing all its officers. As Morgan pressed the attack, they ran into the center of Burgoyne’s army, which was composed of all British troops. As the British began firing volley after volley, Morgan’s troops broke and ran back across the clearing into the American side of the woods. General Burgoyne ordered his three thousand redcoats to line up by regiment with their field artillery. On the American side, Morgan and Dearborn gathered their men and ordered them to open fire on the Redcoats lined up before them.77

When Arnold received word that Morgan was in trouble, he sent General Ebenezer Learned’s and Colonel Enoch Poor’s brigades into the battle. During the battle, Arnold ordered seven regiments into the conflict. Arnold himself rallied his men by personally leading charges into the center of the British line. Meanwhile, General Gates was securely ensconced behind his breastworks, over a mile away from the main fight. Arnold again asked General Gates for more troops, but no troops were sent. At last Arnold finally persuaded Gates to send General Learned’s entire brigade, but Gates refused to let Arnold lead the attack. All afternoon Arnold was anxious to get into the fray General Gates refused to let him go. As the battle came to an end, the British left behind six hundred and twenty dead or dying men, while the Americans had three hundred men killed or wounded.78 Captain Ebenezer of Major Dearborn’s light infantry had no direct ties with any of the principal leaders of the battle stated:

77 Ibid.
78 Ibid., 358.
Arnold was not only the hero of the field, but he won the admiration of the whole army. Gates by comparison had cost his own force the opportunity to ‘have utterly routed the whole British army’ by not backing Arnold and sending out enough troops in timely fashion.²⁹

Wakefield said that this commonly held perception among officers and soldiers was so damaging to Gates that as an excuse to save himself from verbal attack, he said that store of powder and ball supplies had been exhausted in the camp, and that the none could dispute this, yet no one believed it.³⁰

Arnold was definitely one of the outstanding American generals in the first battle of Saratoga as well as his service in the other battles that he fought in. His leading his troops by example, and his expertise on the battlefield or water, far outshined all other generals of his time. His command of all the variables of an ongoing battle gave the Americans a level of superiority even against a larger force. Yet, Arnold was constantly harassed by innuendos, and by unsubstantiated charges being placed against him either formally or informally, by unscrupulous subordinates, as well as by superior ranking officers. Pure jealousy, and outright hatred of Arnold by these individuals made Arnold’s life one of frustration and misery. He constantly had to defend himself either before Congress or on the battlefield. Yet, the troops that served under Arnold were very supportive of his leadership and decisions. Arnold was the soldiers’ hero

The question is asked why? Was it Arnold’s personality or was it just pure


³⁰ Ibid.
jealousy and hatred? Or was it a combination of various anti-sentiment feelings against him? Arnold took seriously any attack against his honor or reputation.

Three examples of these attacks against Arnold were when after the first battle of Saratoga, Gates and his staff were surprised at the loss of his popularity. Lieutenant Colonel James Wilkerson, a Gates staff officer, wrote a letter to General Arthur St. Clair, in hopes that St. Clair would pass this letter along to members of Congress. In the letter Wilkerson wrote, “that General Arnold was out of camp during the whole action.” This letter lied about Arnold’s involvement in the battle of Saratoga.81

Next General Gates removed Colonel Daniel Morgan’s sharpshooters from the command of General Arnold. This action was taken to make it seem that Arnold had not performed his duties correctly.82 Lastly, Gates in his after action report to Congress, reported that he had countered General Burgoyne’s movements and had quickly reinforced Colonel Morgan. As a result of his actions the British suffered greatly at Gates’ hand. There was not any mention of General Arnold’s part in this battle. Gates Contrary to established customs, Gates did not single out any individual for recognition. Gates did this to show that all his troops so admired him and everyone was worthy of commendation.83

Arnold was dumbfounded when he found out about Wilkerson’s and Gates

81 Ibid., 384, 385, as found in James Wilkerson’s letter to Arthur St. Clair, Camp Bemis Heights, September 21, 1777, St. Clair Papers, 1:143.

82 Ibid., 385, as found in General Order, September 22, 1777, James Wilkerson’s Memoirs, 1:253-254.

83 Ibid.
actions. At a meeting with Gates, he engaged in a shouting match with his former friend. Arnold complained about Gates’ self-serving report to Congress. Gates in response, questioned Arnold’s status as Major General, since Arnold had given his resignation to Congress. Gates said that he was going to place General Benjamin Lincoln in charge of Arnold’s left wing since Arnold was of no value anyway. Arnold was upset and asked General Gates for a pass to Philadelphia to speak to General Washington.84

Arnold was sure he knew why Gates resented him. General Washington recognized Arnold as being a natural military leader. Gates wanted to be the general that Arnold was, but even though he was formally trained in the art of war, his military skills could not compare to Arnold’s.85

Gates continued to take personal, his battle with Arnold. On September 25, 1777, General Gates announced that he assigned General Benjamin Lincoln to take the right wing and Gates himself would take the left wing. Thus, Arnold became a general without a command.86

Arnold again attempted to work with Gates. On October 1, 1777, in a letter to Gates, he said that Gates’ treatment of him proceeds from a spirit of jealousy. However, Arnold said that he was determined to sacrifice his feelings for the public good, and continue in the army at this critical juncture. Arnold again showed his willingness to put their differences aside and concentrate on fighting the war, even though he was

84 Ibid., 387., as found in letter of Benedict Arnold to Horatio Gates, Camp Stillwater, September 22, 1777 James Wilkerson’s Memoirs, 1:256.

85 Ibid., 389.

86 Ibid., 391.
stripped of his dignity and personal honor. Arnold would not be stopped in achieving a victory over General Burgoyne, not even by General Gates.\textsuperscript{87}

The second battle of Freeman’s Farm occurred on October 7, 1777. The first phase of the battle began around 3:00 P.M. Soon after the first shots were fired, Arnold rode through part of the battlefield surveying it as traveled. Arnold met up with Brigadier General Ebenezer Learned, who after a failed charge at the British, gave up his command to Arnold, who rallied his troops for a second attack. Arnold and his troops attacked the British. As the enemy began to retreat, Arnold hoped to take advantage of the enemy’s confusion. As Arnold led his troops toward the British line called “Balcarres’s Redoubt,” the British stopped the Americans.\textsuperscript{88}

Arnold attacked the British and Hessian soldiers his troops and those of Colonel Daniel Morgan’s sharpshooters. Arnold would attack in the name of the fallen Montgomery, the name of George Washington and in the names of other brave patriots. Just as Arnold started to charge, a platoon or retreating Hessians fired in his direction. A musket ball penetrated his left leg, and his horse was shot dead to the ground. Arnold sustained multiple fractures of his left leg. From his prone position, Arnold continued to give orders. General Burgoyne continued to retreat, finally surrendering his army near the village of Saratoga.\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid., 391., as found in a letter from Benedict Arnold to Horatio Gates, Camp Stillwater, October 1, 1777, James Wilkinson Memoirs, 1:259-260.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 396-398.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 400., as found in Dearborn, Henry, A Narrative of the Saratoga Campaign, “1815, Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum, 1 (1928-1929): 8-9.
Arnold’s victory at the second battle of Bemis Heights or Second Freeman’s Farm was an American military benchmark. This American victory prompted France to recognize the American colonies as an independent nation, to declare war on England and to commit money, ships, arms, and men to the rebellion.\textsuperscript{90}

Arnold again showed his bravery in the face of danger. His leadership easily excelled on the battlefield. Disregarding his personal safety, Arnold on horseback, constantly rallied his troops in battle. The action of the commanding American general was one of hesitation and reluctance to engage the British. If Arnold had followed those traits and had not engaged the enemy, the Americans could have lost this battle. Arnold almost singlehandedly won the second battle of Saratoga. If he had been shot through the heart on the battlefield as he had wished, Arnold would have been remembered as one of the greatest military hero’s in American history. Arnold would have many months to heal, and would have many months to think. Arnold had choices to make as he recuperated; the choices he made defined his life and legacy.

After Arnold was wounded, he was taken to a field hospital thirty miles away in Albany, New York. Arnold fought with his doctors not to have his leg amputated, and his leg was not amputated. His doctors worked to save his leg and hasten his healing. Arnold would spend five months at the Albany field hospital.

While Arnold was in the hospital, General John Burgoyne surrendered to General Horatio Gates on October 17, 1777. Arnold was not pleased that he had missed the surrender ceremony. Gates’ terms of surrender would allow Burgoyne’s army to be sent

\textsuperscript{90} Theodore P. Savas, and J. David Dameron, \textit{A Guide to the Battles of the American Revolution}, (New York: Savas Beatie, 2006), 150.
back to England on ships and not fight again in the war. Congress was not pleased with this arrangement for the defeated British army, and changed the terms of the surrender covenant, allowing Burgoyne and two aides to return to England while imprisoning Burgoyne’s army in Virginia.91

Arnold was also upset that his adversary General Gates would be given credit for the victory at the battle of Saratoga. Congress did vote to cast a gold medal as “a symbolic representation of eternal gratitude from the American Congress to Horatio Gates the gallant leader.” 92 However, on at least one social occasion, General Gates had to listen to the vanquished British General Burgoyne extol the praises of General Arnold for his bravery as well as his military prowess. General George Washington did give Benedict Arnold and Benjamin Lincoln eloquent sets of French epaulets, and sword knots as a token of his appreciation for their service. On October 17, the Burgoyne surrender date, the passwords in Washington’s camp were “Arnold and Lincoln.”93

According to Clare Brandt, while Arnold was in his hospital room, at the mercy of his own thoughts, he became prey to a painful question that rose from his depths: were the Continental Army and Congress of the United States worthy of his sacrifices and exertions? Arnold was not the first nor the last Continental officer to ask himself this question, even Washington had his dark moments, but Arnold was the only Continental


92 Ibid., 407.

general to contemplate the dire condition and the ineptitude and pettiness of Congress, and the only general officer to become a traitor.\textsuperscript{94}

Brandt’s continues saying that most of the other officers were sustained by a deep commitment to the crusade for freedom and by a deep personal honor, which Arnold lacked. Benedict Arnold wanted a hero’s reward: a secure place at the top of the heap in a peacetime world. Arnold’s personal crusade was more important to him than that of his country.\textsuperscript{95}

Yielding to popular pressure, Congress authorized General Washington to restore Arnold to his old seniority. When Arnold wrote his thanks to Congress on January 11, 1778, for restoring his seniority, Arnold was able to sit up in bed. Arnold still could not walk, but he was about to try his weight on a crutch. In February 1778, as Arnold was making the long trip home to New Haven, he stopped in Middletown, Connecticut where he received a hero’s welcome.\textsuperscript{96}

Arnold continued on to New Haven after staying in Middletown for two months. On May 4, 1778, Arnold returned to New Haven where he received a hero’s welcome on the Green with a thirteen-gun salute. He saw his sister Hannah, who reported that Arnold’s finances were not good. Arnold left New Haven and arrived at Valley Forge on May 20. Many of the men at Valley Forge who had fought with Arnold at Bemis’s Heights were there and he received a hero’s welcome. Arnold still on crutches was assigned to remain

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 143.

\textsuperscript{95} Ibid.

behind in Philadelphia as military commandant after the British withdrawal.  

This would be a challenging assignment for Arnold, since Philadelphia had the largest population of Tory Loyalists of any city in the country.

Brandt stated,

that somewhere along the road to Valley Forge or perhaps immediately after his arrival there, something inside Arnold had snapped. Seven months of unremitting disillusionment and physical agony had taken their toll. Perhaps the final nail in the coffin of his rectitude was the sight of his old comrades going off to war without him. Perhaps it was the continued silence of Betsy Dubois. Perhaps it was the odor of financial ruin wafting up from Hannah’s account books. Perhaps it was time for Benedict Arnold to start looking out for himself. He now consciously severed any shred of devotion that ever tied him to the cause of his country.

Arnold took the loyalty oath that was required of all Continental Army officers and pledged his allegiance to the United States of America. Arnold did not yet contemplate treason, but he did begin to commit treason against himself.

On June 18, 1778, three weeks after his appointment as military governor, the last British soldier sailed across the Delaware River toward New York. Arnold was already a controversial figure before he reached Philadelphia as he was distrusted by powerful men on both sides of the states’ rights controversy. As the commandant, he was obliged to please everyone and doomed to please no one. For Arnold a man with no talent for politics, it was hell.

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98 Ibid., 146-147.

99 Ibid., 147.

100 Ibid., 156.
Arnold entered Philadelphia in a horse drawn coach, and saw a scene of devastation. The British had turned the city into a British camp, with virtually whole neighborhoods burned or dismantled for firewood. The Philadelphians who lined the route that Arnold took into the city looked gaunt and hungry. The freshly filled trenches near present-day Washington Square held the bodies of two thousand American prisoners of war that had died in the city that winter.\textsuperscript{101}

On June 19, 1778, Arnold issued a proclamation establishing martial law and closing all stores throughout the city. Congress had already passed a resolution ordering the army to suspend all business transactions once the city was reoccupied. Also Congress had passed a resolution forbidding any molestation or pillaging of the Inhabitants. It would be Arnold’s most difficult duty to see that this order was carried out.\textsuperscript{102}

Arnold was living at the Penn Mansion, formally occupied by British General Howe. Arnold refurbished the mansion with funds from his own pocket. Almost instantly Arnold was accused of living beyond his means. Arnold did not receive a salary for three years, and yet as military governor he had to pay for the social engagements that he had. To underwrite his financial situation, Arnold pursued a number of highly profitable business schemes.\textsuperscript{103} Arnold entered into a number of financial dealings or adventures with a number of entrepreneurs using the power of his important office to help with these


\textsuperscript{102}Ibid., 409.

\textsuperscript{103}Ibid., 411.
adventures or schemes. Arnold’s purpose was to reestablish business activities and order out of chaos.

In his new role, he began to entertain at his house. His official guest list included ambassadors, congressmen, and his unofficial guest list included members of Philadelphia high society. His responsibilities were immense: he was expected to cooperate with both the Congress of the United States and the Supreme Executive Council of the state of Pennsylvania. Lacking any power of taxation, Congress was dependent on the goodwill of the several states to carry out the War, particularly the larger states such as New York and Pennsylvania.¹⁰⁴

During this very period of time in Philadelphia, met courted and wed Margaret “Peggy” Shippen. At first, Arnold’s sister Hannah managed his household. She served as his social planner, and arranged many of the social events that he attended. Arnold’s sons had moved from New Haven and were with him.¹⁰⁵ Some of these socials were attended by Peggy Shippen, who was almost twenty years his junior and young, pretty, vivacious, docile, sensual and solidly upper class.¹⁰⁶

Peggy was also a theatrical, and flirtatious Tory. She was the daughter of Edward Shippen, the product of old money, high class presumptions and very familiar with the British colonial system. Judge Shippen was however a friend of General George


¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

Washington, who ironically had known Peggy from her childhood. Peggy regularly entertained British officers during their occupation of Philadelphia. One of the officers, John Andre painted a famous portrait of her, complete with sparkling eyes and hair piled high in the style favored by upper-class ladies of the day.

Arnold pursued Peggy Shippen throughout autumn and into winter. He was deeply in love, and she satisfied all of his desires: social, sexual, and emotional. Arnold needed a woman to admire him, to accept, and support him unquestioningly. Peggy fulfilled all these needs, even if his actions involved illegal or questionable activities. Arnold had now landed on a road that he was unsure where it would end. To do this he desired traveling companion who would stick by his side no matter what happened in his life. Clearly, Peggy Shippen was that companion.

Peggy’s father at first refused Arnold’s offer of matrimony with his daughter. Peggy worked behind the scenes to show the man she loved how to out maneuver her father. Two things convinced Judge Shippen that Arnold was worthy of his daughter: Arnold’s protection of persecuted Quakers and Loyalists and his purchase of a magnificent ninety-acre estate, known as Mount Pleasant, which he deeded the house over to Peggy Shippen. Edward Shippen gave his permission and on April 8, 1779,

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108 Ibid.

109 Ibid.

Arnold married Peggy Shippen in Philadelphia.

About this time, Arnold had been considered giving up the military for a business career. In late 1778, he was weighing the purpose of purchasing a large tract of land that had been offered at a bargain price by some admirers. He seriously considered this option, but political intrigue forced him back to Philadelphia to defend himself against new charges brought by the Radicals, also a political faction.111

The political leaders of the Pennsylvania council, composed of many members of the Radical faction believed that they had cornered Arnold. They objected to his arrogance, and in his strutting around like a British lord. They objected to the Tory friends he had including the Shippens, and his proposed marriage to Peggy Shippen. They objected to his friendship with a Declaration of Independence signee, James Wilson, who was now suspected of using a shortage of goods to justify raising prices.112

The Radicals, resenting Arnold’s military authority purposely smeared his name by filling eight charges against Arnold with the United States Congress. Arnold was determined to clear his own name and he demanded a court of inquiry. In May 1779, Arnold wrote to Washington asking him to get on with the proceedings. Then he composed these words:

Having made every sacrifice of fortune and blood, and become a cripple in the service of my country, I little expected to meet the ungrateful returns I have

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112 Ibid., 152.
received from my countrymen; but as Congress has stamped ingratitude as the current coin, I must take it.\textsuperscript{113}

A few days later, using his wife’s contacts with Major John Andre, Arnold penned his first treasonous letter.\textsuperscript{114} James Flexner went so far as to say that Peggy, was a convinced Tory and that the first serious suggestion that they change sides probably came from her.\textsuperscript{115}

When Arnold finally received a military hearing in January 1780, Arnold could not believe the results. He was absolved of six of the eight charges but found guilty of two charges: permitting a trading vessel, the \textit{Charming Nancy}, in which he had become an investor, to clear the port of Philadelphia when other craft could not, and employing public wagons for moving private goods. Congress instructed Washington to reprimand him. Washington did but in temperate terms. To an astounded Arnold, it appeared that even Washington had abandoned him. If Arnold was harboring any reservations about joining the British, they now vanished.\textsuperscript{116}

Washington’s reprimand stood as the ultimate proof for Arnold that thanklessness was all he could expect to receive from the Revolution, despite his labors and sacrifices. He would never gain the enduring respect of the community of Revolutionary patriots; rather for him, his reward was a crushing sense of rejection-even disgrace- from that


\textsuperscript{114} Ibid. as found in a letter from Benedict Arnold to George Washington, Philadelphia, May 5, 1779.


\textsuperscript{116} Ibid. as found in \textit{Proceedings of the General Court Martial of Major General Benedict Arnold}, New York, 1865.
community.\textsuperscript{117} This court hearing only deepened his growing anger over what he perceived as to be disloyalty to him and his efforts in behalf of the Patriots cause. Even, the British *Royal Gazette*, in its February 17, 1779 issue, published in New York City, praised Benedict Arnold for being more distinguished for valor and perseverance than any other American, including General Washington, and asked the question of why he was allowed to fall into the hands of the executive council of Pennsylvania?\textsuperscript{118}

Arnold forsook the cause to which he had given so much of his himself. As he had done so many times before, he stood in defiance of those persons who he felt had falsely wronged him, and in turn he rejected the movement they represented in favor of giving his allegiance to the British empire, he believed to be completely tyrannical only a few years before. Arnold would provide handsomely for his family in a British uniform, but his idealistic ideas of helping to mend the war between \textsuperscript{119}

At this point in his life, Arnold’s treason did not demand that he switch allegiance since he had no deep allegiance to either side. Arnold approached the British to see how much his services were worth. Arnold’s emissary was Joseph Stansbury, a purveyor of fine china to Philadelphia society, and a staunch Loyalist, with access to British intelligence. At Stansbury’s initial meeting with Captain Andre, which took place in New York on May 10, 1779, he elicited a firm guarantee that the British intended to pursue the

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  \item \textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 428-429.
\end{itemize}
war. This was conveyed to Arnold through Andre. When asked by Stansbury how much money might be need for Arnold’s switching sides, Andre would not give a price.\textsuperscript{120}

Andre and Sir Henry Clinton, the British Commander in America, were intrigued by Arnold’s offer to discuss coming over to the British side, but they were suspicious. Was Arnold with his impeccable revolutionary credentials really interested in working for the enemy? To test him, Clinton let it known that he did not want Arnold to defect, but to work as double agent, feigning fidelity to the Americans, while feeding intelligence to the British. To prove his sincerity, Arnold went along with the scheme, while trying to wring out of Clinton a promise that he would be given ten thousand pounds if he defected.\textsuperscript{121}

After meeting with General Washington, Arnold gave British General Clinton the details regarding the Continentals summer campaign against the British. Arnold told Clinton that a large French fleet was expected to arrive off the coast of Rhode Island. In order to protect his main army in Manhattan, General Clinton called off an attack on the main Rebel army in Morristown, and withdrew his troops from New Jersey.\textsuperscript{122}

Inadvertently, Arnold helped the Continentals by furnishing Clinton wrong information. Arnold also informed the British that shortly he would be given command of West Point This was his own little fabrication designed to lure General Clinton into

\textsuperscript{120} Clare Brandt, \textit{The Man in the Mirror, A Life of Benedict Arnold} (New York: Random House, 1994), 177-178.

\textsuperscript{121} Barry R. Wilson, \textit{Benedict Arnold, A Traitor in our Midst} (Montreal; McGill-Queens University Press, 2001), 156.

making a firm offer. General Washington did not have any intention of giving a stationary command to his best fighting general, whose leg was much improved. On June 15, 1780 Arnold visited West Point to obtain relevant information that he could pass on to General Clinton. Arnold again tried to reach a deal with General Clinton. He wanted a substantial amount of money to go forward with regards to his claim that his appointment to West Point was imminent.

On Arnold’s trip back to Philadelphia, he stopped at New Haven, to raise money by selling his home and other possessions at a steep discount. He stopped to observe the main fort in New Haven that bore his name, Fort Arnold. As soon as Arnold could find some privacy, he wrote in his codebook an assessment of the fort. Again Arnold was trying to tempt General Clinton with information that would raise the level of Arnold’s worth to the British. Arnold was so intent on deserting to the British, and hurting his fellow Americans that the fact the fort was named after him did not matter.

Believing he held a stronger hand in the negotiations with General Clinton, Arnold, raised his price for his help by asking for twenty-thousand pounds sterling, with an immediate advance of one thousand pounds. Arnold wrote Major Andre informing him that any correspondence would have to be forwarded to him by his wife Peggy until Arnold was established in his new assignment. Major Andre responded to Arnold confirming that General Clinton had agreed to Arnold fee for delivering West Point,

121 Ibid., 193.

however Arnold did not receive this information until a month later.\textsuperscript{125}

On July 31, 1780, Benedict Arnold met George Washington on the shores of the Hudson near Stony Point. Washington was delighted to see Arnold, and welcomed him warmly. After Arnold welcomed Washington, he asked him if he had any assignment for him. Washington told Arnold that he wanted him to have a “post of honor” serving under him in the coming campaign. Recalling the encounter later, Washington said, me or expressing any pleasure at the appointment, never opened his mouth.”\textsuperscript{126}

General orders for the next day announced that Major General Arnold would command the left wing of Washington’s army. Arnold could not believe what was happening to him. When his wife Peggy heard about the great honor paid to her husband she went into hysterics. Arnold’s wound to his leg suddenly took a turn for the worse.\textsuperscript{127}

Washington learned that the French would not support him in attacking the British in New York City. The Continental Army would have to disperse again. This freed up Washington to let Arnold go to West Point. On August 3, 1780, Washington announced that General Arnold would take command of the garrison at West Point.\textsuperscript{128}

After arriving at West Point, Arnold had much to do. He wanted to establish communications with his new headquarters to General Clinton, now only fifty miles away. Secondly, he arranged for his wife Peggy and their new son to join him, so he

\begin{footnotes}
\item 125 Ibid, 325.
\item 126 Ibid., 326.
\item 127 Ibid., 327.
\item 128 Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
would have someone to confide in. Also, he had to have her with him in case their scheme unraveled and they would have to flee. Lastly, he had to present himself as actively involved in defending West Point.129

Clare Brandt wrote that after Arnold’s months of uncertainty and disappointment, his way was clear. He had not felt so sure of himself since when he had ridden alone into the battle on Bemis’s Heights in defiance of Horatio’s Gates orders. Now he rode on again, in defiance of the United States and all who served the new country. The money he would receive would be secondary. Arnold wanted to start over clean. The American-Patriot-Hero was dead; long live the British-Turn coat-Hero. Arnold desired money not so much for it as for the respect it commanded and implied. He made the decision not turn back.130 Anything to gain respect would work for Arnold, whether it be money or prestige. In the process of doing this, he believed he would also have a better chance of by over to the British who would help him obtain these goals.

On August 25, 1780, Arnold received Major Andre’s letter written one month earlier. As Arnold decoded the letter, he became ecstatic. If he succeeded in turning over West Point to the British, along with three thousand soldiers and all the artillery and equipment in the fortress, the British would pay him twenty thousand pounds. However, in order to proceed, Arnold would have to meet with a representative of General Clinton,

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129 Ibid., 330.


Using Mary McCarthy as a courier to New York City, Arnold sent a letter to the royal governor of New York, General James Robertson. Inside the outer letter was another letter addressed to Major John Andre. The letter to Andre requested him to come to Continental headquarters in Westchester County in civilian clothes using the name of John Anderson. If Andre was caught behind enemy lines in disguise, he would be tried as a spy, rather than as a prisoner of war, and probably hanged. General Clinton would not permit his adjunct to take such a risk, but this was what Arnold wanted, to get Clinton’s respect. Arnold would later write detailed plans of West Point to give to Andre, not because Andre needed them, but because Arnold wanted to plans to be documented. That carrying these plans would increase Andre’s peril, but Arnold did not care, as all he cared about was his own security.\footnote{Clare Brandt, The Man in the Mirror, A Life of Benedict Arnold (New York: Random House, 1994), 209.}

At the beginning of September, 1780, General Washington’s excellent intelligence network had detected signs of British preparations for an expedition. Washington believed that possibly the British were aiming at attacking West Point. Washington alerted General Arnold about a possible attack on West Point. Arnold knew what the British objective was and he did everything in his power to lower the resistance of West Point to an armed attack. Also, Washington received reports of a rumor that a senior American general was about to defect to the British. Another example of Arnold’s
traitorous behavior was when General Washington asked for assistance in crossing the Hudson River on the evening of September 19, 1780 in order to meet with the French general Rochambeau at Hartford, Connecticut. Arnold promptly sent a note to British General Clinton advising him of Washington’s plans.  

The week from September 18 to September 25, 1780 was a momentous time in the history of the American Revolution. The events of that week had a consequential impact on the founding of the United States. These events affected the course of the war itself and they affected the lives of Benedict Arnold and George Washington.

Finally, on September 22, Arnold and Andre had worked out the logistics and met. Under the cover of darkness, the British warship *Vulture* with Andre aboard sailed up the Hudson river docking two miles south of Haverstraw, New York. A rowboat with Andre on board disembarked Andre on a narrow beach. The meeting last three hours with Andre accepting Arnold’s plan for attacking West Point, as Arnold began negotiations about the money he was to receive.

As dawn the *Vulture* received canon fire from the shore and had to retreat south to avoid the range of the shore guns. Andre and Arnold had taken shelter in a “safe house.” Arnold advised Andre to remove his British major’s uniform, which he did, and dress in civilian clothes which were given to him. Arnold issued two passes to Andre, one

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134 Ibid.,349.

for land and one for sea, as well as plans for the capture of West Point. Andre would depart and travel by land to reach the Vulture. By giving the West Point plans to Andre, Arnold wanted to be sure that he would establish his worth with the British.

On early Saturday morning, September 23, 1780, accompanied by Joseph Hett Smith, Andre started out either for the Vulture or for the British lines. After several miles along the way, Smith stopped and informed Andre that he could cover the rest of the journey by himself as the British lines were close by.\textsuperscript{136}

Andre, on horseback, continued on his journey, when shortly before ten o’clock, he was stopped by three men with muskets pointed at him. When Andre was searched, the three men found the concealed documents. Andre was taken to Lieutenant Colonel John Jameson at North Castle and then taken on to a secure site at South Salem, while a note describing what happened would be sent to Benedict Arnold in the morning.

On Monday September 25, 1780, General Washington and his aides returning from their meeting with Rochambeau in Connecticut stopped at West Point to inspect it and then would ride two miles to the Robinson house where Benedict Arnold had his headquarters. Washington sent two officers on ahead to notify Arnold that he would soon be arriving at the Robinson house. When the officers arrived at Arnold’s headquarters, Arnold offered them breakfast. As the officers ate, a messenger from Lieutenant Colonel Jameson arrived and gave Arnold two letters. The letters explained Andre’s capture, the concealed documents and Arnold’s signed pass.\textsuperscript{137} Arnold knew that his time as an


\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 365.
American general had expired. His efforts had a part where they must be played out with himself playing the leading actor.

Arnold left the breakfast table, ordered his horse saddled and went upstairs to speak with his wife. He quickly explained what happened and told Peggy that she would have to remain behind with their son. Also, he told her that she would not be suspected of being involved in this affair. Arnold left his wife and then rode to the dock, where he boarded a small boat with crew and ordered them to row south to meet the British sloop, Vulture which he reached at noon.

When Washington reached the Robinson house, he was informed that Arnold had left for West Point. After breakfast, Washington returned to West Point, but Arnold was not there. Washington again inspected the fort and saw that West Point was in a far weaker state that he had imagined. While Washington was gone from the Robinson house, Peggy Arnold had broken her silence, erupting in screeching hysterics. Lieutenant Colonel Varick, with help from Major Franks and a doctor were able to calm Peggy down and return her to bed. Whether Peggy was acting or really in a depressed state, the effect of her hysterics diverted all suspicion of Arnold’s actions from her.

When Washington returned to the Robinson house, Hamilton gave him a set of papers which had just arrived. The Marquis de Lafayette found Washington holding the documents in trembling hands. “Arnold,” he cried has betrayed us!...Whom can we trust now?”

138 Ibid., 366, 367.

“Whom can we trust now,” now became the mantra for Washington and his men at the Robinson house. He knew that Arnold’s actions would have serious consequences in the Revolutionary War. He knew that General Clinton with Arnold’s help might be planning to attack the Americans at any moment. Suspicions about other possible defectors were discussed in Washington’s small group. Probably, the biggest question that Washington asked himself was, why Arnold had acted as he did? Washington was hurt inside, as he thought, “why would a man born and raised in Connecticut, a hero for the Colonials, defect to the British?

In the coming days and weeks news that Benedict Arnold had defected to the British after plotting to surrender West Point set off a series of attacks on Arnold from his old friends and from the newspapers. At West Point, the name of the main fort was changed from Fort Arnold to Fort Clinton after American general George Clinton. An angry mob rushed into the cemetery in Arnold’s home town of Norwich, Connecticut and destroyed both his father’s and his infant brother’s grave markers in an attempt to obliterate the name of Benedict Arnold. All over America, men swore that they would cut off the leg of Arnold wounded in the service of the nation’s service at Quebec and Saratoga, bury it with full honors, and then hang the rest of Arnold.140

Benjamin Franklin said:

Judas sold only one Man, Arnold three million. Judas got for his one Man thirty pieces of silver, Arnold got not a halfpenny a head.
A miserable bargain.141


141 Ibid., 564, as found in Smyth, B.F., Writings of Benjamin Franklin, 8:251.
Arnold’s first act on the Vulture was to write a letter to his wife Peggy. Next he wrote a letter to General Washington. He said:

. . . the heart which is conscious of its own rectitude cannot attempt to palliate a step which the world may censure as wrong. I have ever acted from a principle of love to my country.\textsuperscript{142}

Almost immediately after his defection to the British, Arnold defended his actions as being done for love of England. Arnold after looking out for himself, then thinking about his wife, he wrote a letter to insure her future safety. Once safely in British hands Arnold was still giving orders to his former comrades. The future of Major John Andre, an accomplice of Arnold, was still to be decided by General Washington. General Washington sent a courier to British General Clinton, a Colonel Aaron Ogden, who after speaking with the Marquis de Lafayette, advised Clinton that if General Arnold was released to the Colonials, than Major Andre would be released immediately. Clinton was tempted to release Arnold back to the Continentals, but he said, “a deserter is never given up.”\textsuperscript{143}

Andre, the tragic figure in this Arnold scenario, was hanged by Washington. British General Clinton appealed to Washington to spare his aide. Arnold wrote a letter to Washington saying that if Andre was executed, American blood would flow. Both pleas did not sway Washington. Andre fared well in history as a sensitive figure caught in

\footnote{\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 560.}

Arnold’s web, as he is commemorated in London’s Westminster Abbey.\footnote{144}{\textit{Barry K. Wilson, Benedict Arnold, A Traitor in our Midst} (Montreal: McGill-Queen University Press, 2001), 160-161.}

Washington put a price on Benedict Arnold’s head. Arnold stayed in America for over a year, often at the front lines. Yet he was never captured. Arnold put a price on his own head once he arrived in New York. Arnold wanted ten thousand pounds and a commission in the British Army. Arnold received six thousand pounds and three hundred fifty pounds for expenses-more than two hundred thousand dollars in modern United States currency. He was also made a brigadier general at a salary of six hundred fifty pounds for annually and given a stipend of two hundred twenty-five pounds for life.\footnote{145}{Ibid., 161.}

After months of agitating, Arnold was given command of a troop authorizing him to recruit men who were defecting from the American military. His American legion did not have many accomplishments, but eventually, he was put in charge of a force to fight in the American South.\footnote{146}{Ibid.}

In December 1780, having received orders from General Clinton, Arnold led a force of sixteen hundred troops by sea to Virginia. General Arnold attacked and captured the city of Richmond, reducing the flow of patriot supplies to the Carolinas for use by General Nathaniel Green’s Southern Department. In late summer 1780, General Clinton asked Arnold to lead a strike against New London, Connecticut, about twelve miles south of Norwich, where Arnold was born. The plan was to divert Washington from going after British Lord Cornwallis and to eliminate a group of patriot, privateering vessels. On
September 6, 1780, Arnold attacked with seven hundred troops. One column of his troops attacked Fort Griswold and murdered many rebel defenders after they had surrendered. Fires were set by Arnold’s troops, which destroyed most of New London. Ultimately, Arnold was held accountable for the burning and bloodshed. Arnold made more enemies from people who knew him, as well as from the British Army who had lost many troops. General Clinton had concluded that any further trust placed in Arnold would encourage disunion in his own ranks, and angry unanimity from the Rebels.

On October 24, 1781, Lord Cornwallis surrendered the British Army to General George Washington at Yorktown, Virginia. On December 8, 1781, Benedict Arnold and his family left America and set sail for England. Arnold was going to England to persuade the government to reinvigorate the war effort by committing the money, ships and manpower necessary to win the war. This was more than military and political effort on Arnold’s part; to him it was a matter of life and death. If the British won the war, Arnold’s deeds would be vindicated and his stature affirmed. If the British lost, he would be nothing.

A few weeks later, speaking to King George III, Arnold told them that the majority of Americans wanted the British to continue as a renewal of the royal government and reunion of the empire. Arnold advised the king to have Parliament send

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an enterprising commander, a fleet and fifteen thousand men to America in the Spring. If that happened, Arnold would guarantee victory.\footnote{Ibid., 254.}

However, shortly after Arnold had met with the King, Parliament had already put in motion the mechanisms necessary to end the Revolutionary War by granting independence to the United States of America. A month later Parliament voted to end the war and Arnold refused to accept it.\footnote{Ibid., 255.} Arnold could not let go in trying to justify his defection to the British, as well as continuing to enrich his family name.

The following years did not go well for Arnold when he arrived in England, he was not well received and the anti-war sentiment worked against him. His gamble had failed. The people in London generally ignored him. Outside of the royal court and the upper classes, few people considered him a hero. The mood had changed of trying to force the colonies into staying. Arnold and his presence reminded people of England’s failed foreign policy.\footnote{Willard Sterne Randall,\textit{ Benedict Arnold, Patriot and Traitor} (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1990), 594-599.}

While in England, Arnold attempted to win an army command but failed, partly because the British Army was dominated by upper-class officers who had purchased their commissions. Also, it was a form of class snobbery since Arnold was American born. This was a factor in Arnold being rejected by the East India Company with whom he had sought employment.\footnote{Barry K. Wilson,\textit{ Benedict Arnold, A Traitor in our Midst} (Montreal, McGill-Queen University Press, 2001), 162.}
Arnold was still trying to find himself when in 1784 he heard about the new Loyalist colony that was being built in the forests of Nova Scotia. In 1785, Arnold left his wife and family and sailed to Halifax, Canada seeking to improve his financial state. Settling in St. John, Arnold established himself as a trader. Arnold went back to the occupation he practiced as a young man. In 1787, Arnold brought his wife Peggy and their three children to Saint John Canada. Arnold was trying to provide for his family so that after his death, they would be cared for. This gathering of the Arnold family marked the first time they had lived together as a family since the American Revolution.\footnote{Ibid., 162-163, 166, 189.}

In 1792, Arnold and his wife were back in London. Arnold’s last years were filled with his obsessions with his reputation and a long string of business adventures and misadventures. In 1793, the “Reign of Terror” began in France. Arnold saw a chance to redeem his honor. He outfitted his own privateering ship to attack French shipping trading in the Caribbean as he patrolled. In 1795, Arnold returned to London for a long vacation with his family. In April, 1798, Arnold because of his service in the British Army, applied for and received thirteen thousand five hundred acres in Upper Canada for his family and himself.

Toward the end of 1800, Arnold’s legs began to swell from “a general dropsy and a disease in the lungs,” and his difficulty in breathing was at times so great that he could scarcely lay down. With his creditors finally at the end of their patience, Arnold and his wife were forced to return to London to sell the lease of their house on
Gloucester Street.\textsuperscript{155}

In late February 1801, his health suddenly declined. He did have any ambition to fight anymore. Arnold had developed a chronic cough in the tropics which weakened him. His gout worsened and he developed asthma, which kept him from swallowing. On June 10, 1801, Arnold became delirious. Four days later on Sunday morning, Arnold died at age sixty-six.\textsuperscript{156} As Clare Brandt concluded:

The Patriot-Hero was gone. Not the real Patriot-Hero, of course (who had been dead for nearly a quarter of century, since moment in the Continental camp at Valley Forge when he had consciously severed himself from the cause of the country and signed an oath of allegiance that was a lie) but the phantom Patriot-Hero, who had lived on as a shining image inside his creator’s heart, sheltered from the truth by sheer willpower and courage. Finally, when the image cracked, the heart that had nurtured it cracked as well. It was a mighty heart.\textsuperscript{157}

Benedict Arnold, the chameleon of the Revolutionary War passed from this world to the next, leaving behind a complex, even contradictory legacy of confusion, and treachery, mixed with bravery, and courage.

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CONCLUSION

NATHAN HALE AND BENEDICT ARNOLD: THEIR LEGACIES OVER TWO CENTURIES

Today, Nathan Hale is remembered as a true hero, while Benedict Arnold, is recalled as an individual whose name is synonymous with the word “traitor.” Yet Arnold was not the only Revolutionary War hero who went over to the British. There were other Americans who left their positions in America to fight or aid the British cause. Joseph Galloway, a member of the First Continental Congress, attempted to raise a group of Pennsylvania loyalists to seize Congress. American Major General Charles Lee, who before the Revolutionary War had served in the British Army, was ordered to attack the British Army at Monmouth, New Jersey. Instead of attacking Lee retreated. Lee’s relationship to friends in the British Army influenced his decision not to attack, which was in fact, treasonous behavior.¹ As fortunes ebbed and flowed, men’s loyalties often switched with them. American General Ethan Allan made secret offers to the British to deliver Vermont.²

Why are Benedict Arnold’s actions and deeds remembered above all others? In 1780, Phillip Freneau began writing a play, which he never finished, called The Spy. In it Freneau dissected Arnold’s treachery by asking two related questions: “What it meant to Americans and what boundaries separated loyal from the Loyalists?”³ Arnold’s treason,

² Ibid.,139.
his actual attempt to turn West Pont over to the British and his other actions can be
looked at through the eyes of these two questions.

When the Arnold’s treachery was revealed, his fellow citizens were shocked by
his actions. Many asked why would an American general born and raised in Connecticut
turn against his own country. The shock soon turned to anger over such actions especially
as the word it was for money. Overnight, Arnold became the most reviled man in
America. All across the land, on village greens in many towns, citizens filled the streets
to burn, hang or dispatch effigies of Arnold. Arnolds became known as “the traitor,” a
man who had betrayed his country.

Arnold’s acts of betrayal soon gave new life to revolutionary zeal. In his efforts to
defeat the patriot cause, Americans saw heavenly intervention on their behalf. Nathaniel
Greene told his soldiers that Arnold’s acts, affords the most convincing proof that the
liberties are the object of divine protection.” The Congress approved a day of
thanksgiving and prayer to mark the role of “Almighty God” in saving the nation at the
moment of when treason was ripened for execution. General Washington summed up an
awakened national emotion of thanksgiving:

In no instance since the commencement of the war, he solemnly proclaimed, has
the interposition of Providence appeared more conspicuous than in the
rescue of the post and garrison of West Point from Arnold’s perfidy.

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5 Dave R. Palmer, *George Washington and Benedict Arnold, A Tale of Two Patriots* (Washington,

6 Ibid., 374.
It is an irony that Arnold managed to do what no one else had done. Arnold’s actions helped strengthen the Revolution.  

Arnold’s name is on a memorial stone in the small church of St. Mary’s Battersea in London, but his bones lie mixed there with others in a common grave. At the spot where he was wounded as he attacked the British line during the Second Battle of Saratoga stands a memorial: a disembodied leg, clad in a military boot. This strange monument recognizes his extraordinary deeds in the battle and the crippling wound he sustained, but he is neither represented or named.

In Arnold’s eyes, the American civil authorities, whether the Massachusetts General Court, the Continental Congress or the Council of Pennsylvania, had discredited themselves. As a result, he had suffered from their decision and pronouncements. The British offered Arnold gold as opposed to Continental dollars from which this saying came from, “it’s not worth a continental.”

Arnold lost what character he had when he made his first overtures to the British. Arnold was not the only American general that had issues with Congress. George Washington was always trying to obtain more supplies and better equipment for his troops. Always wanting to justify his actions, and to put a spin on everything, after Arnold defected to the British, he wrote a letter to “the Inhabitants of America.” In his letter, Arnold said he supported the redress of grievances against England, but once the

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7 Ibid.
8 Ibid., 385, 386.
British have granted those grievances, the war should be over.\textsuperscript{10}

Arnold’s accomplishments on the battlefield were brilliant. His march to Quebec, through the Maine wilderness brought a comparison to the great warrior Hannibal as crossed the Alps. Though losing the Battle of Quebec, Arnold did his best to win. The battles of Valcour Island, Danbury, and Saratoga established Arnold’s place in the Revolutionary War as one of its greatest military general. In the early years, Arnold saved the American Revolution more than once, but those positive accomplishments could not out weigh that he became was also one of America’s greatest traitors.

Arnold’s treason went right to the heart of every loyal American citizen. If one America’s greatest generals would defect to the British, what does that say for the general character of the American. Since a republic relies on disinterestedness and civic virtue, it is more fragile than a monarchy. Corruption among its citizens could destroy the foundation of the republican government. Republicanism placed a heavy burden on every citizen.\textsuperscript{11} Arnold’s acts undetermined the trust that the American people placed in him or believed about themselves. Arnold’s treachery went to the heart and questioned the moral fiber of every loyal American. “As the Revolution receded into history, Arnold’s treason took on the characteristics of a creation myth, illustrating not just the fall of a man, but the fall of \textit{man.”} \textsuperscript{12}

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\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 166-167.
In the case of Nathan Hale, a very different response emerged to J. Hector St John De Crevecour’s seminal question “What is an American?” Nathan Hale’s personality and being were contrasted enormously with that of Benedict Arnold’s being. After the Boston Independent Chronicle in 1781 mentioned Hale’s courageous act, people in the United States began to become more aware of Hale’s sacrifice. They turned to him as a hero they could immortalize. Many years later in 1819, in the Gazetteer of the States of Connecticut and Rhode Island, authors’ John Pease and John M. Niles, asked the question, “what has our country done for the memory of Hale.” Hale’s old acquaintances, Stephen Hempstead and Asher Wright found themselves roused from obscurity and their memories and letters were soon again in hug demand.

In November 1837, sixty-one years after Hale’s sacrifice, the citizens of his home town formed the “Hale Monument Association” for the purpose of raising funds to erect a monument to the memory of the young patriot. The monument was completed in 1846 at a cost of three thousand seven hundred and thirty-four dollars. The composition was in Quincy granite, with a height of forty-six feet.

By the mid nineteenth century, historians, educators, and civic organizations used the story of Nathan Hale to instill republican virtue in the nation’s youth. His fame was further advanced in an 1853, a poem celebrating the centennial of

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Yale’s Linonian Society, to which Hale once belonged:

From Fame-leaf and Angel-leaf
From monument to urn
The sad of Earth, the glad of heaven
His tragic fate shall learn;
And on fame-leaf and Angel-leaf
The name of Hale shall burn!\(^{16}\)

As the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth century, the memory of Hale’s deeds remained alive as new efforts were made in Hale’s honor. Hale’s schoolhouses at East Haddam and New London were preserved and two bronze statues were erected in Hartford and others were erected in New York, New Haven, besides the Department of Justice in Washington D.C. and outside the Central Intelligence Headquarters in Langley, Virginia.\(^{17}\) Hale’s bust at the Central Intelligence Agency is meant as a reminder that Nathan’s a model for all to follow.

When the British hanged Nathan Hale, they did so to end his role in the American war effort. And yet, this act on their part gave birth to what became a national icon of liberty and patriotism. Nathan, during his life was a captain in the American Continental Army willing to risk everything for the good of his country, a soldier ill-prepared as a spy, but with a heart that led him to fulfill his duty. His death made him a martyr, a hero, and someone to o celebrate and honor.

As William Phelps noted, in concluding his legacy of Hale, When the call came, he thanked God, and eagerly went, which is why we should commemorate his memory.


Not because he stood up to his captors and pledged his life for his brethren, but because his will could never be broken, no matter what he faced.  

Yale graduate, schoolmaster, soldier, son, brother, devout Christian, captain, and volunteer for a dangerous mission, led a much more simple life than the legend would lead us to believe; and yet, over time Nathan has become a major heroic figure. His name is now synonymous with patriotism, liberty, freedom, and sacrifice.  

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18 Ibid., 231-232.
19 Ibid., 231.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


