

An Army of Servants: The Pennsylvania Regiment during the Seven Years' War

WARFARE WAS CENTRAL TO COLONIAL AMERICA, witnessed by each generation from the founding of Jamestown. In the past ten years historians have closely examined the social composition of the colonial armies that fought those conflicts, in particular the Seven Years' War.¹ Once viewed as the repository of the "low-lives" of colonial society, recent work has suggested that the colonial armies were composed of men who were more representative of their society. The studies of Fred Anderson and Harold Selesky of the New England forces reveal armies formed predominantly of the young sons of farmers awaiting their inheritance and independence.² The composition of the Virginia forces has been more controversial, in part because it is impossible to determine the composition of Virginia society in the mid-eighteenth century. However, John Ferling concludes that most of the men who served in the Virginia Regiment came from what he terms the "respectable" classes, "yeomen" and "tradesmen."³ The forces of Pennsylvania, however, have escaped scrutiny.

The creation of these colonial armies required much experimentation.

¹ For discussions of the centrality of war to the colonial American experience, see E. Wayne Carp, "Early American Military History: A Review of Recent Work," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* (hereafter, *VMHB*) 94 (1986), 259-84, Don Higginbotham, "The Early American Way of War" *William and Mary Quarterly* (hereafter, *WMQ*), 44 (1987), 230-73, John E. Ferling, *A Wilderness of Miseries: War and Warriors in Early America* (Westport, Conn., 1980), John W. Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence* (Ann Arbor, 1990), Douglas Edward Leach, *Roots of Conflict: British Armed Forces and Colonial Americans, 1677-1763* (Chapel Hill, 1986).

² Fred Anderson, *A People's Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years' War* (Chapel Hill, 1984), Harold E. Selesky, *War and Society in Colonial Connecticut* (New Haven, 1990).

³ John Ferling maintains that Virginia forces were relatively "representative of the colony's society," while James Titus sees the regimental forces as "outside the mainstream of Virginia Society." John Ferling, "Soldiers for Virginia: Who Served in the French and Indian War?" *VMHB*, 94 (1986), 307-28, James Titus, *The Old Dominion at War: Society, Politics and Warfare in Late Colonial Virginia* (Columbia, 1991), 78-88.

In the seventeenth century defense of the American colonies rested in theory upon the colonial militia.⁴ By the eighteenth century most colonies had realized that the militia was an ineffectual body, for it was impossible to use it offensively. To resolve this problem the New England colonies created their own unique forces composed of temporary citizen-soldiers, a "people's army," who served for one campaigning season. By the outbreak of the Seven Years' War, the New England colonies had over half a century of experience in raising such military forces and had identified the best means of encouraging enlistment.

By comparison, when war broke out on the Pennsylvania frontier in 1755 the colony had no defensive force and little experience in raising troops. The province's substantial Quaker and Mennonite population had prevented the creation of any previous military establishment, although small volunteer units had served during King George's War as frontier "guards." The task of forming a military organization in a colony where many inhabitants considered even the provision of funds for military purposes to be a violation of their religious scruples was thus a major endeavor. Any attempt to impose compulsory service, as in neighboring Virginia, was unthinkable. Yet Pennsylvania did develop the means of maintaining a large permanent military organization. This military system depended upon voluntary enlistment, not compulsory service, and was made possible by identifying and exploiting the available pool of recruits. As the war progressed, the colony realized the importance of enlisting indentured servants and ex-servants. The results were a soldiery whose motivations were similar to those of their Massachusetts counterparts but whose composition was drastically different.

When news of Braddock's defeat reached Pennsylvania's frontier settlers, they began to clamor for the creation of a defense force. Throughout the summer and fall of 1755 the governor and the assembly wrangled over the creation of such a force. They achieved nothing. The delay was the result not of the pacifism of the assembly—Quaker assemblymen quickly acquiesced to supporting volunteer units and the assembly even agreed to provide £50,000 to raise troops—but of disputes over the method of funding such a force, in particular whether the proprietors'

⁴ John W. Shy, "A New Look at Colonial Militia," *WMQ*, 20 (1963), 175-85; William L. Shea, *The Virginia Militia in the Seventeenth Century* (Baton Rouge, 1983).

estates could be taxed.⁵ In October, when the Ohio Indians attacked Pennsylvania's northern frontier at Penn's Creek, the colony was all but defenseless and a wave of panic swept through the backcountry. Over the next six months Indian parties raided at will, devastating a large swath of the province.

Even in the wake of the Penn's Creek raid the governor and assembly continued to debate the creation of a military force. Meanwhile, frontiersmen clamored that "We are all in uproar, all in Disorder. . . . We have no authority, no commissions, no officers practised in War." Some warned ominously that "if we are not immediately supported we must not be sacrificed, and therefore are determined to go down with all that will follow us to Philadelphia, & Quarter ourselves on its Inhabitants."⁶ The assembly was flooded with petitions demanding that it should "either enact a Militia Law, or grant a sufficient Sum of regular Troops as may be thought necessary to defend our Frontiers."⁷ Even the mayor and aldermen of Philadelphia sought action to provide "protection to your bleeding Country, which ought to be the chief object of all Government." They warned that if such measures were not forthcoming it would "not be possible to preserve the peace and quiet of this City."⁸

Almost as if on cue, a mob of 700 frontiersmen descended on the city, denouncing the assembly. Attempting to defend their actions, assemblymen claimed that "We have the most Sensible concern for the poor distressed Inhabitants on the Frontiers . . . [but] Those who would give up essential Liberty to purchase a Little temporary safety deserve neither Liberty nor Safety."⁹ The frontiersmen, fuming at the assembly's recalcitrance, replied that "they did not know that their Liberties were invaded, but they were sure their Lives & Estates were."¹⁰

⁵ *Pennsylvania Archives* (Harrisburg, 1852-), 8th ser, 5 3933, *Colonial Records of Pennsylvania* (hereafter, *Col Recs Pa*) (16 vols, Philadelphia and Harrisburg, 1852-53), 6 518-19, 525 For a discussion of Pennsylvania politics during the period, see Theodore Thayer, *Pennsylvania Politics and the Growth of Democracy, 1740-1776* (Harrisburg, 1953) and Joseph E. Illick, *Colonial Pennsylvania A History* (New York, 1976)

⁶ *Col Recs Pa*, 6 667

⁷ *Pa Archives*, 8th ser, 5 4096-4109

⁸ "Remonstrance by the Mayor, Aldermen, etc to the Assembly of Pennsylvania," Nov 25, 1755, Ralph Boehm, ed, *British Public Record Office, Class 5 Files*, microfilm from originals in the Library of Congress (Frederick, Md, 1983), Part 1, *Westward Expansion, 1700-1783* (hereafter, *BPRO CO5*) (C O 5 vol 17), 2 714-17

⁹ *Col Recs Pa*, 6 695

¹⁰ Gov Morris to Thomas Penn, Nov 28, 1755, *BPRO CO5*, 2 794-800

With a mob hammering on their doors, the assembly, under the guidance of Benjamin Franklin, came to an agreement with Governor Robert Morris to create a military force. The act passed, however, was extremely limited and provided no more than a bare framework for allowing "such people as are desirous to be united for military purposes" to form their own volunteer units. The act stressed that the force created was a "voluntary militia of freemen" and not "mercenary standing troops." As a result, many restrictions were placed on who could serve and where and when the force could be utilized.¹¹

Despite the act's shortcomings, some Pennsylvanians formed independent companies. Their numbers were limited, however, and Indian raiding parties continued to devastate the frontier. Matters came to a crisis in January 1756 when a raiding party descended on the settlement of Gnadenhütten defended by a provincial detachment. While raiders destroyed the settlement the men cowered in a blockhouse, offering no protection to the village's women and children. The assembly's opponents were quick to lay the blame on the militia act. Richard Peters, provincial secretary and bitter opponent of the act, commented, "Perhaps there was never such a Farce acted as this . . . Militia Law, and from first to last never was seen a greater Scene of Hypocrisy and Dissimulation."¹² Even Governor Robert Dinwiddie of Virginia asserted that the law was "very inconsistent with any Rules for an Army," and predicted that there would be "many Inconveniences from it."¹³

By the spring of 1756 it had become apparent to most Pennsylvanians that a more formal military organization was needed. For over a month the assembly debated a new bill, still afraid that they would provide the

¹¹ The assembly prohibited the service of servants and anyone under twenty-one years of age without parental consent. The act also forbade service more than three days' march beyond the provinces' settlements and garrison duty without the prior consent of the men. James T. Mitchell and Henry Flanders, eds., *Statutes at Large of Pennsylvania from 1682 to 1801* (Harrisburg, 1898), 5:197-201; *Pa. Archives*, 8th ser., 6:4641; "The Organization of John Van Etten's Company," Jan. 12, 1756, Leonard W. Labaree, et al., eds., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* (28 vols., New Haven, 1959-), 6:355.

¹² Richard Peters to Thomas Penn, Feb. 17, 1756, Penn Papers, Official Correspondence, 2:29-31, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter, Penn Papers), *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Jan. 8, 1756.

¹³ Gov. Dinwiddie to Gov. Morris, Jan. 2, 1756, R. A. Brock, ed., *The Official Records of Robert Dinwiddie, Lieutenant-Governor of the Colony of Virginia, 1751-1758* (2 vols., Virginia Historical Society Collections vols. 3, 4, Richmond: 1883-84), 2:310.

governor with a basis for establishing compulsory military service. Only following frontiersmen's renewed threats to march on Philadelphia did a bill finally pass. This act (which, though slightly amended in November 1756, essentially remained in effect until the end of the war) finally established the Pennsylvania Regiment.¹⁴

Despite the creation of the regiment Pennsylvania still had to find recruits, for without volunteers the province would have to resort to compulsory service. Indeed, Governor Morris and his successor, William Denny, continued to press for the creation of a provincial militia. Their incentive in this effort was not only the defense of the province, but also the fear of continued attempts by the assembly to tax the proprietors' estates.¹⁵ A colonial militia was comparatively cheap to maintain, whereas the annual cost of sustaining the Pennsylvania Regiment was £127,285, an enormous sum for the colony.¹⁶ The fewer funds needed for defense, the less the clamor from assemblymen for the taxation of proprietary estates. Fortunately for the assembly, however, recruits were forthcoming.

In the early stages of the war many recruits into the Pennsylvania Regiment were former indentured servants and other landless laborers. They were attracted by the colony's bounty of one pistole, about sixteen shillings, and the pay of one shilling and six pence per day.¹⁷ Over the course of the war, as the demand for recruits increased, the assembly steadily raised the bounty until by 1758 it had reached five pounds.¹⁸ The bounty and pay compared favorably to those received by the Massachusetts forces: in 1756 Massachusetts forces received a higher bounty, averaging about four pounds, but only received pay of one pound twelve shillings per month, or just over one shilling per day.¹⁹

In fall of 1756 and spring of 1757 Pennsylvania faced a crisis as the terms of many troops enlisted the previous year expired. To solve this crisis the colony turned to a specific labor pool to meet the need, indentured servants. The origins of servant recruitment in Pennsylvania were, in some aspects, rather perverse. During King George's War the Quaker-

¹⁴ *Statutes of Pa.*, 5:219-21; *Pa. Archives*, 8th ser., 5:4207-09, 4221-22.

¹⁵ Richard Peters to Thomas Penn, Oct. 30, 1756, Penn Papers, 8:181-89.

¹⁶ *Pa. Archives*, 8th ser., 5:4431-33.

¹⁷ *Pa. Archives*, 8th ser., 6:4431-4433, 4590.

¹⁸ *Pa. Archives*, 8th ser., 6:4756.

¹⁹ Anderson, *A People's Army*, 225.

dominated assembly refused to provide a bounty to encourage enlistment into the forces being prepared for the expedition against Cartagena. However, while balking at the thought of encouraging enlistment, assemblymen were prepared to recompense servants' masters for the loss of their property if their servants enlisted. This provided a neat solution to the problem of finding recruits: Quakers did not have to stain their consciences with the thought that they had actively encouraged men to enlist, yet the ranks could be filled with servants.²⁰ During the 1740s over 188 servants enlisted in the British army despite bitter opposition from their masters.²¹

At the start of the Seven Years' War, moves toward the recruitment of servants in Pennsylvania met fierce hostility. However, the issue of whether servants could be legally recruited had, in Governor Morris's words, never "received an authoritative Determination."²² As early as 1755 the administration in London had proposed recruiting servants into the regular forces and compensating their masters for any loss. But this proposal had received a cool reception from Pennsylvanians.²³

Governor William Shirley of Massachusetts, who replaced General Braddock as commander in chief in North America, initially forbade the enlistment of indentured servants. Because this restriction seriously hampered recruiting, in January 1756 he informed his officers that it was their "Duty to take all Volunteers that offer, without considering whether they are Servants or not."²⁴ At once British recruiters in Pennsylvania began to encourage servants to enlist. Their activities created "the greatest Consternation, and . . . most violent Commotions throughout every Part of the Province."²⁵ In Kent County, in neighboring Maryland, settlers even rioted against the activities of the British recruiters. The assembly immediately begged Governor Morris to ask Shirley to end the practice and urged Morris to issue "a Proclamation giving power to the Masters to rescue their enlisted Servants and commending all others

²⁰ *Col. Recs. Pa.*, 4:432-43, 448-65.

²¹ Sharon Salinger, *To Serve Well and Faithfully: Labor and Indentured Servants in Pennsylvania, 1682-1800* (Cambridge, 1987), 107.

²² *Pa. Archives*, 8th ser., 5:4193-94.

²³ Proposals for Recruits for the Established Regiments [1755], Additional Manuscripts, 33,029:338-39, British Library, London.

²⁴ *Col. Recs. Pa.*, 7:39-40.

²⁵ Robert Strettell to Gen. Shirley, Jan. 24, 1756, Penn Papers, 8:25.

to be aiding them in their rescue.”²⁶ Much to the assembly’s horror, Shirley merely informed the governor that “his Majesty’s Service must suffer at this very critical Conjunction if they were restrained from enlisting such as voluntarily offer themselves.” He added that he could not believe that “the Distress arising from the enlisting a few Servants can be any thing like what the President and Council seem to apprehend.”²⁷

While Shirley debated the propriety of recruiting servants with the Pennsylvanians, Parliament itself acted. In the spring of 1756 Parliament considered the sorry state of British forces in North America. Ministers sought to improve the capabilities of the British army by creating a regiment raised in the colonies—the Royal American Regiment. To this end Parliament sought to encourage the enlistment of Americans by allowing foreign-born officers to command and, most importantly, by allowing the recruitment of indentured servants.²⁸ Ministers further hoped that the colonial assemblies would recompense masters, thereby relieving some of their opposition. Almost immediately Henry Fox, secretary of state, wrote to Governor Morris requesting him “to make Provisions out of such funds as already exist, or may hereafter be raised for the King’s Service, for repaying the masters of such Indentured Servants as shall engage in his majesty’s Service.”²⁹

Morris and the assembly had little choice but to comply with the request or risk having their servants whisked away by British recruiters without receiving compensation. An apocryphal story reveals just how unscrupulous many Pennsylvanians believed British officers were. It was rumored that some masters had imprisoned their servants to keep them away from British recruiters. When a mob of masters, angered by the activities of a particularly unscrupulous officer, challenged his commander, the commander agreed to have the offending officer arrested. As the recruiter was carried off to jail, however, his commander slipped him a pocketful of money. This allowed him to recruit, it was said, seventy servants within the prison walls!³⁰

²⁶ Richard Peters to Thomas Penn, Feb. 18, 1756, Penn Papers, 8:43.

²⁷ *Col. Recs. Pa.*, 7:45.

²⁸ R. C. Simmons and P. D. G. Thomas, eds., *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America, 1754-1783* (6 vols., Millwood, 1982-), 1:138-76.

²⁹ *Col. Recs. Pa.*, 7:179.

³⁰ Leach, *Roots of Conflict*, 84.

For the British, enlisting servants proved immensely successful. In April 1757 Benjamin Franklin provided Lord Loudoun with a list of servants who had been recruited into the British army. The list contained claims for 612 servants, although Franklin himself described the list as "very imperfect."³¹ It is little wonder that when the assembly came to consider the problems faced by provincial recruiters in early 1757 they considered reversing their policy and allowing the recruitment of indentured servants. If the British army could steal the colony's servants, why not use them in the colony's service instead?

In the spring of 1757 the assembly finally reversed its position and allowed the enlistment of servants, establishing a committee of grievances to supervise compensation for masters.³² The recompense that masters received was not large, averaging only around six pounds per servant, while a new servant cost around fourteen pounds.³³ However, not only did masters receive a sum upon their servant's enlistment, but they also continued to receive half the servant's army pay for as long as he remained in the army.³⁴ Under this system of compensation the government could repay the servant's cost.

In 1755 masters had complained vocally at the enlistment of their servants. Two years later, however, their response appears to have been more muted. Perhaps this was simply a recognition of the inevitable, but there were political circumstances that also hastened their acceptance. Many masters would have been aware of the dangerous political situation the colony faced. The debates over military service had led to a bitter feud between the assembly, governor, and proprietors. This soon spilled over to Great Britain, and affairs in the province attracted the attention of the ministry and of Parliament. With increasing pressure for Quakers to withdraw from political life and fears that Whitehall might impose

³¹ Benjamin Franklin to Isaac Norris, May 30, 1757, *Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 7:227-28; Richard Peters to Thomas Penn, Oct. 30, 1756, Penn Papers, 8:181; "List of Servants Belonging to the Inhabitants of Penna. & Taken into His Majesty's Service for whom Satisfaction has not been made by Officers according to act of Parliament," April 1757 (photocopy of original in Huntington Library), Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter, HSP).

³² *Pa. Archives*, 4th ser., 2:764-67, 8th ser., 6:4555; Richard Peters to Thomas Penn, Oct. 30, 1756, Penn Papers, 8:181-89.

³³ Salinger, *To Serve Well and Faithfully*, 73.

³⁴ *Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, 7:227-28n.

compulsory military service, *any* solution to the problem of creating a military force must have been welcome.³⁵

The policy of enlisting servants quickly provided a willing pool of recruits. For men at the bottom of provincial society the outbreak of war only worsened the economic outlook. The Seven Years' War did not immediately stimulate the Pennsylvania economy. Indeed, until the fall of 1757 the effect of war was rather to dislocate the province's economy. In part this was simply the result of the Indian and French raids that destroyed a massive swath of the colony fifty to one hundred miles wide, from the upper Delaware River to the Maryland line.³⁶ Collateral damage was extensive. French reports claimed that in the summer of 1756 alone over 1,300 horses had been driven back to the Ohio and "the houses and barns . . . have been burnt, and the oxen and cows . . . have been killed wherever found."³⁷ Even in areas of the backcountry untouched by raids settlers abandoned their farms, leaving behind their crops and livestock. Philadelphia merchant Joseph Turner reported that "Women & Children who Escap'd from Immediate Death [were] in the greatest want of both Covering & Victuals & very great numbers tho' at some Distance from the Scene of action, retiring leaving their Dwellings with what Corn and Stock they had and are now in a Starving Condition."³⁸ They camped in what amounted to refugee camps in backcountry towns such as Lancaster and York. There they lived in barns and cowsheds, "Men, Women and Children who had lately lived in great Affluence and Plenty reduced to the most extreme Poverty and Distress."³⁹

The war also dislocated the economy in other ways. French privateers wreaked havoc on the colony's trade. By the fall of 1756 there were twenty-four French privateers operating out of Guadalupe alone. In a few weeks these privateers captured over sixteen British and American

³⁵ See Theodore Thayer, *Israel Pemberton, King of the Quakers* (Philadelphia, 1943), 113-22; Illick, *Colonial Pennsylvania*, 196-227.

³⁶ For details of frontier casualties see Matthew C. Ward, "'La Guerre Sauvage': The Seven Years' War on the Virginia and Pennsylvania Frontier," Ph.D. diss., College of William and Mary, 1992, 418-55.

³⁷ Abstract of Despatches from America, Aug. 30, 1756, John Romeyn Brodhead, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York* (15 vols., Albany, 1858), 10:484.

³⁸ Joseph Turner to Mrs. Ann Barclay & Sons, Nov. 14, 1755, Allen and Turner Letterbook, HSP.

³⁹ "Report of Chew, Stedman, West and Shippen," April 21, 1756, Penn Mss.: Indian Affairs, 2:80, HSP.

merchantmen.⁴⁰ In the following summer Philadelphia merchants complained that the Delaware capes were "Infested with French Privateers."⁴¹ Matters had still not improved by the fall of 1758 when in one month a French frigate captured twenty Philadelphia merchantmen off the capes.⁴² The privateers' activities sent insurance rates to "an exorbitant premium" and by the end of 1756 the cost of insurance alone made trade in some items unprofitable.⁴³

These problems were exacerbated by the embargo on trade with neutral ports imposed by the British from the start of the war. The embargo destroyed the rapidly developing grain trade with southern Europe.⁴⁴ In the early years of the war merchants were unwilling to chance smuggling items to neutral ports, for they could not insure such voyages. The closing of neutral ports caused trade to concentrate on the British West Indies, with the result that markets there increasingly became glutted.⁴⁵ Because of the higher insurance rates, the loss of European markets, and the glut in the West Indies, the price of Pennsylvania produce fell steadily. In August 1755, for instance, farmers were selling flour in Philadelphia for fourteen shillings and six pence and corn for two shillings and four pence per bushel; by the end of 1757 flour had fallen to ten shillings and six pence and corn to only one shilling and six pence.⁴⁶ Prices rose again in 1758 and 1759 as demand from the army and Royal Navy increased and as French privateers were swept from the oceans, but in 1756 and 1757 backcountry farmers could not realize good prices for their produce.

The combination of the devastation of the raids and the fall in commodity prices made economic conditions in the backcountry very bleak in

⁴⁰ *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Dec. 23, 1756.

⁴¹ Gough and Carmault to William Neate, July 30, 1757, Gough & Carmault Letterbook, HSP.

⁴² Joseph Turner to David Barclay & Sons, Nov. 20, 1758, Allen & Turner Letterbook, HSP.

⁴³ Thomas Willing to Thomas Willing (a cousin of the same name in London), Dec. 17, 1755; Thomas Willing to Mayne, Burns & Mayne, Dec. 2, 1756, Thomas Willing Letterbook, 154, 241, HSP.

⁴⁴ Thomas Willing to Charles Digby, May 16, 1757, Willing & Morris Letterbook, 280-81, HSP; see also Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill, 1986), 70-71.

⁴⁵ Joseph Turner to John and William Halliday, Nov. 11, 1758, Allen and Turner Letterbook, HSP; Thomas Willing to Paul Bedford, Jan. 11, 1758, Willing & Morris Letterbook, 401, HSP.

⁴⁶ Thomas Willing to Robert Scott, Aug. 19, 1755, Thomas Willing to John Franks, Dec. 31, 1757, Thomas Willing Letterbook, 115, 400, HSP.

1756 and 1757. Even Philadelphia merchants who had dealings with the region found their customers at best unable to pay their debts, at worst disappeared or killed. In the fall of 1757 Joseph Turner claimed that many merchants were on the verge of bankruptcy due to the "great Losses by persons Liveing in the back parts."⁴⁷

For servants facing the end of their indenture or ex-servants who had completed their indentures in the early 1750s, economic opportunities were already rare. Sharon Salinger suggests that more than three-quarters of the servants indentured in mid-eighteenth-century Pennsylvania were forced at some time to rely on public assistance.⁴⁸ The war made servants' economic prospects even worse. One group of German redemptioners, for instance, who had arrived in Pennsylvania from Holland in 1754, found themselves in particularly dire straits. Joseph Turner reported that "almost all the Pallatines who came in famillys could not be Disposed off, none cared to be encumbered with them for breeding women brought charges to a family more than the Husband Earn'd[.] many such famelys were Suffer'd to go into the back parts on their own Security who now . . . are undone & some of them from any thing we know are in a Starving condition."⁴⁹ As a result, "hardly able to maintain themselves . . . the Husbands have lately Enlisted."⁵⁰

The economic opportunities opened by the war were few. There was a great shortage of seamen, but this seems to have been the result not so much of an increase in demand as a decrease in supply; men were reluctant to risk impressment into the Royal Navy or capture by privateers. Unlike New York, where many men became involved in privateering, in Philadelphia there was, according to merchant Thomas Willing, "but a very Little share of the Privateering Spirit . . . owing to a great number of our trading People being Quakers who will not be concerned that way themselves & Influence others against it."⁵¹ The main economic opportunity opened up in the early stages of the war was thus enlistment.

Enlistment offered indentured servants their only means of escaping

⁴⁷ Joseph Turner to David Barclay & Sons, Sept. 10, 1757, Allen & Turner Letterbook, HSP.

⁴⁸ Salinger, *To Serve Well and Faithfully*, 128.

⁴⁹ Joseph Turner to David Barclay & Sons, Sept. 22, 1756, Allen & Turner Letterbook, HSP.

⁵⁰ Joseph Turner to Jacob Bosanquet, September 1756, Allen & Turner Letterbook, HSP.

⁵¹ Thomas Willing to Christopher Scandril, Sept. 29, 1757, Willing & Morris Letterbook, 356, HSP.

from an often exhausting and impoverished life. In addition, joining the Pennsylvania Regiment was more enticing than enlisting in the regular army; service in the regular army was for life, whereas service in the Pennsylvania Regiment was for a limited term, between one and three years. In 1756 many servants may have joined the British army; in 1757 those who remained flocked to the Pennsylvania Regiment.⁵²

The surviving muster rolls of the Pennsylvania Regiment allow an examination of the composition of the force during the Seven Years' War and reveal the influence that the recruitment of servants and former servants had upon the regiment.⁵³ Unfortunately, these records are not consistent in the information they contain. Some rolls contain only a soldier's name and date of enlistment; others contain additional information, such as place of birth and pre-enlistment occupation. Considering this inconsistency, it is possible that the data may be biased; place of birth, for instance, may be recorded only for those who were born outside the colony. However, the categories of data appear to vary more by company than by individual. Consequently, it seems probable that any difference is the result of the recording officers' selections, not of differing troop backgrounds.⁵⁴

There are three basic categories of information that help to determine the composition of the colonial forces: age, occupation, and birthplace of the recruits. The average age of Pennsylvania recruits was not notably different from those in the New England forces (Table 1). Pennsylvania troops had a mean age of 25.2 years compared to a slightly higher figure of 25.8 for Massachusetts troops. The median and modal ages of the troops, however, reveal a greater discrepancy; the median age of the Massachusetts troops was twenty-two, whereas the median age of the Pennsylvania forces was twenty-four. Similarly the modal age, the most

⁵² Salinger maintains that the decline of servant numbers in Philadelphia was due almost entirely to recruitment into the British army. While the provincial forces were not recruiting servants in 1756 when numbers first plummeted, the final decline of numbers in 1757 probably represents the recruitment of servants into the Pennsylvania forces rather than the British forces. Salinger, *To Serve Well and Faithfully*, 60.

⁵³ The surviving muster rolls have been collected and published in *Pa. Archives*, 5th ser., 1:31-275.

⁵⁴ Most of the more complete listings come from the latter years of the war, particularly the recruitment drive in April and May of 1758. Altogether information is provided for nearly 1,000 recruits.

Table 1: Average Ages of Privates in the Provincial Forces

COLONY	N	Mean	Median	Mode
Massachusetts	1734	25.8	22	18
Pennsylvania	878	25.2	24	22

Table 2: Age Cohorts for All Provincial Troops

AGE COHORT	MASSACHUSETTS ^a		VIRGINIA ^b		PENNSYLVANIA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
14-19	591	24.7	73	10.2	131	14.3
20-24	758	31.7	279	39.1	367	40.1
25-29	395	16.5	163	22.9	211	23.0
30-34	208	8.7	75	10.5	120	13.1
35-39	158	6.6	34	4.8	57	6.2
40-44	117	4.9	47	6.6	24	2.6
45-49	87	3.6	24	3.4	6	0.7
50+	77	3.2	18	2.5	0	0

^a Anderson, *A People's Army*, 232.
^b Ferling, "Soldiers for Virginia" 322.

common age, of Massachusetts troops was only eighteen, whereas the modal age of the Pennsylvania forces was twenty-two.

These differences reflect the comparative absence of young men below the age of twenty in the Pennsylvania Regiment. This is more apparent in an examination of the age cohorts of the provincial forces (Table 2). Nearly one-quarter (24.7 %) of the men in the Massachusetts forces were under twenty years of age compared to only 14.3 percent of the Pennsylvania recruits. In addition, the Massachusetts forces contained more men aged over forty. Over one in ten (11.7 %) of the Massachusetts forces were over forty years of age, but only 3.3 percent of the Pennsylvania forces. These older men were frequently officers. Indeed, in the Pennsylvania forces the average age of officers was only 26.3; in Massachusetts it was 32.8.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Anderson, *A People's Army*, 237.

Table 3: Pre-enlistment Occupations of Privates in the Provincial Forces.

OCCUPATION	MASSACHUSETTS ^a		VIRGINIA ^b		PENNSYLVANIA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Farmer	335	20.7	472	42.6	33	4.4
Laborer	621	38.4	32	2.9	338	45.3
Artisan	579	35.7	475	42.9	330	44.2
Seafarer	62	3.8	55	5.0	35	4.7
Non-manual	21	1.3	74	6.7	10	1.3

^a Anderson, *A People's Army*, 232.
^b Ferling, "Soldiers for Virginia" 322.

The occupational origins of the forces reveal a larger discrepancy between the troops of the different colonies (Table 3). The Massachusetts forces came from a wide range of occupations. Over one-third could be categorized as laborers, another third as artisans, while one in five were farmers.⁵⁶ In Connecticut, like Massachusetts, according to Selesky most soldiers were "farmers, husbandmen, and laborers. . . . The rest were artisans who helped to run a rural, agricultural economy."⁵⁷ Over 40 percent of the Virginia forces were farmers, while another 40 percent were artisans. What is most notable about the Pennsylvania forces is that only 4 percent were farmers—a category that includes recruits described as "planters" and "farmers." Many more Pennsylvania troops seem to have come from occupations unrelated to agricultural production and more urban in nature; over 45 percent of the recruits were laborers (which may reflect agricultural workers as in Massachusetts), however, another 45 percent were artisans. While these recruits included many craftsmen whose skills were again related to agricultural production, such

⁵⁶ So that information for the three colonial forces may be easily compared, the categories used are those defined by Anderson. These categories are extremely broad, in part because military commanders were exceptionally vague in defining a man's occupation. The term "laborer" includes any casual unskilled manual occupation, while the term artisan includes any manual occupation that requires some experience. It need not necessarily imply a great deal of skill. For instance, John Fitzgerald was described by his commanding officer as a "smith" even though he was only fifteen years of age. Anderson, *A People's Army*, 53-56.

⁵⁷ Selesky, *War and Society in Colonial Connecticut*, 173.

as coopers and millers, they also included many others who possessed skills less tied to agriculture, such as tanners and saddlers. Some even possessed more exotic and "industrial" skills, such as glass blowers, linen printers, watch gilders, wig makers, and fiddle makers.

Anderson argues that the occupational background of the Massachusetts forces reflects the presence of many young men from rural communities. The occupational background of the Pennsylvania forces reflects many more slightly older men from a more urban background. This is a surprising conclusion in a colony where the only sizeable town was Philadelphia, where in the 1750s only one in ten Pennsylvanians lived.⁵⁸

The birthplace of Pennsylvania recruits is even more exceptional. The most striking feature of the Pennsylvania forces was that the men who fought for the colony were not "Pennsylvanians." Unlike the Massachusetts forces, in which less than one in ten of the men had been born abroad, or the Virginia forces where nearly half were born abroad, the Pennsylvania Regiment was composed principally of immigrants (Table 4).⁵⁹ Nearly three-quarters of the men who served in the regiment had been born in Europe, while less than one in six had been born in Pennsylvania. This is significantly different from the four out of five Massachusetts troops who had been born in the Bay Colony itself.

Two of every five Pennsylvania troops had been born in Ireland (370, or 40.7%), and a substantial proportion came from Germany (154, or 16.9%). Scotland, England, and Wales provided another 120 (13.2%). Smaller numbers came from countries as diverse as the East Indies, Sweden, and Hungary. Only 133 (14.5%) had been born in Pennsylvania, while another 38 (4.2%) had been born in Delaware. Indeed, only one in four recruits in Pennsylvania had been born in North America.

The presence of so many foreign-born recruits in the Pennsylvania forces reflects the presence of indentured servants and former servants.

⁵⁸ Anderson, *A People's Army*, 35-38, 53, Salinger, *To Serve Well and Faithfully*, 68

⁵⁹ Selesky claims that Connecticut's soldiers were "overwhelmingly" born in the province, and estimates actual figures at between 80 and 90 percent. Selesky, *War and Society in Colonial Connecticut*, 173. The terms used for defining the birthplace of Pennsylvania troops in Table 4 are generalized. This is to allow a direct comparison between the forces of Massachusetts, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. The exact birthplaces of troops in the Pennsylvania Regiment were: Antigua 1, Barbados 2, Delaware 38, East Indies 1, England 77, France 2, Germany 154, Holland 2, Hungary 1, Ireland 370, Maryland 38, New England 10, New Jersey 22, New York 2, Pennsylvania 133, Portugal 1, Scotland 28, Sweden 6, Switzerland 2, Virginia 5, Wales 15.

Table 4: Birthplace of Privates in the Provincial Forces

BIRTHPLACE	MASSACHUSETTS ^a		VIRGINIA ^b		PENNSYLVANIA	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Same Colony	2,013	82.4	504	42.0	171 ^c	18.8
Neighboring Colony	183	7.8	79	6.6	61	6.7
Other N. American ^d	22	0.9	36	3.0	15	1.7
Other G.B. Colony ^e	12	0.5	0	0.0	4	0.4
British Isles ^f	193	7.9	554	46.2	490	53.9
Continental Europe ^g	19	0.8	26	2.2	168	18.5

^a Anderson, *A People's Army*, 232.
^b Titus, *The Old Dominion at War*, 83.
^c This figure includes troops born in the "Lower Counties" of Delaware as well as Pennsylvania.
^d Includes all mainland North American colonies.
^e Includes other British colonies in the West Indies, Bermuda, Africa and East Asia.
^f England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland.
^g All continental European countries including the German states, France, Sweden and Hungary.

As many as two-thirds of the immigrants to the colony in the mid-eighteenth century arrived as indentured servants.⁶⁰ Those who migrated as indentured servants, almost by definition, lacked financial resources. Those who had greater resources would not have considered indenturing themselves for several years simply to pay for their passage. Service in the provincial forces was equally unattractive to these men with greater wealth. Thus it is reasonable to conclude that if two-thirds of all immigrants in Pennsylvania were indentured servants, over two-thirds of the foreign-born recruits in the Pennsylvania Regiment were servants or former servants.

Consequently, as many as half the troops in the Pennsylvania Regiment may have been servants and former servants who had spent only a few years in the colony. Indeed, the early 1750s saw a peak in servant migration to the colony. Sharon Salinger suggests that between 1750 and 1755 1,126 servants emigrated to Pennsylvania from the British Isles—mainly

⁶⁰ Abbot Emerson Smith, *Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America, 1607-1776* (Chapel Hill, 1947), 285; Salinger, *To Serve Well and Faithfully*, 8.

from Ireland—while another 1,773 migrated from Germany. Many German immigrants came as redemptioners rather than indentured servants, meaning they had paid part of their passage and were often accompanied by their families.⁶¹ For these servants, with shorter indentures and greater family ties, service in the provincial forces would have been less attractive. This may account for the smaller contingent of German-born compared to Irish-born recruits.

There is an additional indication of the presence of many servants and former servants. About half the Pennsylvania Regiment was enlisted in Philadelphia, which contained the greatest concentration of indentured servants. While only one in ten Pennsylvanians lived in Philadelphia, almost two in three servants resided there.⁶²

A far higher proportion of the men enlisted in Philadelphia were foreign born than was the case for the rest of the regiment (Table 5). Nearly one-quarter of these recruits were from Germany and over half were from the British Isles. Rural recruits were quite different. These men were less likely to be immigrants and more likely to be native-born Pennsylvanians. Only one in twenty rural recruits were German, while over one in four of the recruits from Philadelphia came from Germany.

The occupational backgrounds of the troops were also quite distinct. Nearly two-thirds of the men recruited in Philadelphia were artisans, compared to only one-third of the rural recruits. Over half the rural recruits were laborers. In addition, the men recruited in Philadelphia were significantly older than their rural counterparts. Urban recruits were 26.4 years of age, compared to 22.3 for those enlisted in rural districts. This difference in composition reflects the larger presence of servants and former servants among the Philadelphia recruits.

It is possible to deduce a general pattern of enlistment from these figures. Recruits into the Pennsylvania Regiment came from several backgrounds. Those who enlisted in Philadelphia were largely servants and ex-servants; servants and ex-servants accounted for, possibly, three out of four of the city's recruits. Those who enlisted in the rural districts of Pennsylvania were also often ex-servants, perhaps as many as half the rural recruits, but rural recruits also included many free laborers who had not yet established economic independence. Most of these men were

⁶¹ Salinger, *To Serve Well and Faithfully*, 179; Smith, *Colonists in Bondage*, 20-22.

⁶² Salinger, *To Serve Well and Faithfully*, 69.

Table 5: Pre-enlistment Birthplace and Occupations of Privates by Place of Enlistment.

BIRTHPLACE BY PLACE OF ENLISTMENT				
Birthplace	<u>Enlistment Outside Philadelphia</u>		<u>Enlistment in Philadelphia</u>	
	N	%	N	%
Pennsylvania	77	28.2	32	13.9
Neighboring Colony	15	5.5	7	3.0
Other N.America	6	2.2	2	0.9
Other G.B. Colony	0	0.0	3	1.3
Great Britain	159	58.2	133	57.6
Continental Europe	16	5.9	54	23.4

PRE-ENLISTMENT OCCUPATION BY PLACE OF ENLISTMENT				
Occupation	<u>Enlistment Outside Philadelphia</u>		<u>Enlistment in Philadelphia</u>	
	N	%	N	%
Artisan	91	34.1	116	58.9
Farmer	21	7.9	0	0.0
Laborer	149	55.8	66	33.5
Non-Manual	4	1.5	2	1.0
Seafarer	2	0.8	13	6.6

recruited from the lower levels of Pennsylvania society, men who had been unable to acquire property and financial security.

The Seven Years' War forced the American colonies to form their own military establishments. Massachusetts and the New England colonies recruited their surplus population to serve in the colonial forces. Virginia resorted to drafting those who could not afford to avoid service. In Pennsylvania drafting men was not an option. The Pennsylvania assembly, while denouncing what it regarded as the "mercenary Troops of the Crown," came to the solution of creating a military force in many ways more mercenary, an army composed largely of immigrants, serving the

colony out of economic necessity or a desire to escape the terms of servitude.⁶³

The composition of the Pennsylvania Regiment was superficially very different from that of the other colonies. The New England forces were composed of young, landless farmers' sons, whereas the Pennsylvania forces were composed of recent immigrants. Yet in both New England and Pennsylvania men enlisted for identical reasons: the quest for economic independence. The sons of New England farmers sought to use their recruitment bounty and wages to purchase land and pay off debts. Pennsylvania recruits sought freedom from their indentures and money to purchase land or tools. The motivation of the colonial authorities in both New England and Pennsylvania was also identical: the need to entice potential recruits to avoid the challenges to provincial society that compulsory service would have entailed. In Virginia, compelling some men to serve in the provincial forces did not threaten the fabric of colonial society. Yet even the Old Dominion, as the demand for troops increased in the later stages of the war, increased the bounty and wages and returned to a system of voluntary enlistment.⁶⁴ The actions of the Virginia authorities, and the motivations of many of the recruits, again paralleled those of New England and Pennsylvania.

During the Seven Years' War the American colonies' success in mobilizing forces depended upon recognizing the manner in which troops could most easily be raised in each colony. Perhaps more than any other colony in North America, it was important that Pennsylvania should do this quickly and smoothly. Faced with devastating frontier raids, a substantial pacifist community, and a deepening political crisis, both in the colony and in London, the creation of an effective and voluntary military force was essential. The efforts of British recruiters highlighted the possibility of recruiting servants. Once servants' masters had been appeased Pennsylvania was able to keep the ranks of the provincial forces filled until the end of the war by tapping into this pool of potential recruits.

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⁶³ *Pa. Archives*, 8th ser., 6:4579.

⁶⁴ Titus, *The Old Dominion at War*, 122, 140-41, 143.

