How important were economic factors in influencing the beginning, direction, and results of the American Revolution? This has been an oft-studied question, with conflicting results. These studies, however, generally have not examined the effect of a specific economic attribute on a specified group of people. If such an attribute, like wealth, poverty, slaveholding, or indebtedness, were significant, then it would have tended to make the members of the group who possessed it behave in similar fashion. If, on the other hand, non-economic attributes were actually more significant, the members of the group with the same economic attribute would not have behaved distinctively. The group's behavior during the Revolution, rather, would have been fragmented on the basis of the significant non-economic attributes its members possessed.

Specifically, this paper will take an economic group—wealthy Philadelphians—and identify their public behavior before and during the American Revolution. It will seek to determine if they behaved in a similar fashion. Such solidarity would suggest that these wealthy men were indeed a "class." The further implication of such

*This is a revised version of a paper read at the Duquesne History Forum, October 1978. Helpful criticism has been given by Rudolph Bell, Deborah Mathias Gough, Owen Ireland, Jack D. Marietta, and Richard Ryerson.

1. The nature and functioning of "classes" has provoked a voluminous literature. Useful works of synthesis and analysis include T. B. Bottomore, Classes in Modern Society, (New York, 1966); Milton Gordon, Social Class in American Sociology (paper ed., New York, 1963); and Anthony Giddens, The Class Structure of the Advanced Societies (London, 1973). The present study proceeds on the assumptions that 1) "classes" are cohesive social groups, as I believe both Marx and Weber believed them to be, and not just statistical categories, for example, of men with a certain amount of property; and 2) behavior towards a major political event in a society is a useful way of seeing if such social cohesion existed.
a finding, of course, would be that the American Revolution may have been a "class conflict." Such was the view, of course, of the Progressive historians of a half-century ago. Wealthy merchants in the seaboard cities were specifically identified as having opposed independence. More recent scholarship in late colonial and Revolutionary history has focused on lower socioeconomic strata. It has tended to argue that these groups were under increasing "social strain," which was somehow relieved by the Revolution. Those at the top of the social and economic structure have served as not-too-closely-defined foils for the actions of impoverished sailors, urban workingmen, and hard-pressed farmers in declining rural areas. It has been suggested, for example, that in Pennsylvania specifically the Revolution checked a "feudal reaction" by wealthy officials.

The group selected for this study consists of the 153 wealthiest men in Philadelphia in 1775, about 2.5 percent of the adult males in the city. These men have been identified primarily from the tax lists, with the assumption that taxable wealth in the city can be taken as broadly representative of the actual wealth that was held by eighteenth-century Philadelphians. For analytical purposes, it should be


5. The tax lists used for this identification were the County Tax Assessment Ledger, Philadelphia County, 1775, City Archives, Department of Records, City of Philadelphia; the Provincial Tax, City of Philadelphia, 1774, State Archives, Harrisburg (microfilm, City Archives).
assumed that these men share only one thing in common—wealth. The point of this analysis is to see how significant this one attribute was; that is, did the possession of wealth produce political solidarity, or at least co-vary with one particular political position.6

Like virtually all British colonists in America, wealthy Philadelphians almost universally opposed the imposition of the Stamp Tax in 1765.7 John Penn, a member of 1775 elite and then Governor of the Province, reported from Philadelphia to the British authorities that “dissatisfaction” with the Stamp Act “is almost universal” and “prevails among all ranks and orders of men.”8 Wealthy Philadelphians took the lead in organizing the resistance to this legislation in Philadelphia. Their public behavior shows that, in all, sixty-five wealthy Philadelphians of 1775 publicly opposed the Stamp Act in 1765. As a Philadelphian recalled in later years, at this time “a great proportion and perhaps a great majority of the most wealthy and respectable . . . was arrayed in opposition to the ministerial claims.”9

There was a similar initial response to the Townshend Acts in 1768.10 After some initial reluctance, Philadelphia traders adopted a


boycott of British goods. But as other seaboard cities began dropping this boycott, pressure mounted for Philadelphia to resume importation as well. This agitation climaxed at a meeting at Davenport's Tavern on 30 September 1770; amid claims of irregular parliamentary procedure, the Philadelphia merchants voted eighty-nine to forty-five to resume importation of all items except tea. The minority of the group promptly walked out, and the merchant community quickly began to split into groups engaging in or denouncing trade with Britain.

This divisive pattern became more pronounced during the following years. Although some wealthy Philadelphians continued to be active in resistance to Britain, and a few who had not been active joined in the resistance, many others withdrew from open opposition. They could have had numerous reasons for such action. Quakers, who comprised one-half of the wealthy group, were officially admonished to do so by the Philadelphia Monthly Meeting as the resistance turned to violence. Wealthy persons who were also political leaders began to fear that the disorder just beneath the surface in Pennsylvania politics would be unleashed if resistance to Britain went too far.11 Proprietary office-holders, in particular, feared losing their positions either to a royal authority bent on suppressing rebellious Pennsylvanians who could not be controlled by the present forms of government, or to a new set of men who were leading the resistance.

Few members of the economic elite of any persuasion actually favored the British position; even Joseph Galloway, one of the few persons anywhere to defend the legality of British actions as late as 1775, denied their wisdom.12 In April of that year an observer reported that in the city "all ranks of men, even the Quakers, were dissatisfied and displeased with the measures of administration."13 Those members of the elite who withdrew from public opposition


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to the British did so, rather, out of concern about the propriety and implications of certain resistance measures, and the people who were going to lead them.

This hesitation on the part of some interacted with the eagerness of the resistance leaders to draw as much of the population as possible into a revolutionary struggle. The result was that increasing numbers of "new men"—who had not been previously involved in public affairs—became active by joining voluntary committees. These committees aroused and managed the anti-British resistance effort in the years immediately preceding the Revolution.

While they were doing so, however, a declining percentage of their membership was drawn from the economic elite. A majority of the men on the committees opposing the Townshend Acts in March 1769 and October 1770 were wealthy in 1775. On the other hand, less than twenty percent of those chosen to the Committee of Inspection in February 1776 and the Third Provincial Conference of June 1776 were wealthy. Correspondingly, a declining percentage of the elite was active in the resistance movement: only thirty-two wealthy Philadelphians are known to have favored independence in July 1776. These thirty-two men comprised less than half of the number of wealthy Philadelphians who participated in the opposition to Britain sometime between 1765 and 1776.

This declining militancy within the economic elite paralleled the general pattern in the city of hesitation regarding an open break with Britain. The wealthy, it would seem, behaved like the general population. As the members of the Continental Congress, meeting in the city, were all too well aware, Pennsylvania in general and Philadelphia in particular was one of the laggards in deciding on independence in 1776—"a damned slow quakering nag" that ought to be "flogged and spurred" wrote one New Englander.

When the final decision had to be made, most wealthy Philadelphians did not favor independence. But they did not actively oppose

it either. Caution was their watchword; reconciliation was their hope. Indeed, it was precisely the hesitance of the economic elite to align themselves as a group for or against independence that hindered the movement of Pennsylvania towards independence by depriving the Revolution of either an important source of support, as in Virginia, or a prominent focus of opposition to rally against. The price the economic elite was to pay for this ambivalence came after independence: more so than in any other former colony, the new state constitution in Pennsylvania upset the established political culture.18 As a sage observer commented a few weeks before independence: "The gentlemen of the province were much to blame, when they should have been industrious. The people thinking inactivity in time when they were surrounded with as many dangers as the hairs of their heads, a base desertion, chose governors among themselves."19

The activity of wealthy persons during the actual war years of the Revolution adds another dimension to the analysis of their behavior. Increasing age, and in eleven cases before the end of 1776 death, meant that some rich Philadelphians would retire from public activity. But for more than three-fourths of the wealthy, the "exposed" position of the rich as prominent members of the community made it difficult for them to become inactive. Their wealth, seemingly, could have worked to make them support the newly independent state of Pennsylvania in its struggle against the British; they would have good reason to avoid providing an excuse for their property to be confiscated. But at the same time, they could have perceived the Revolution as threatening the social stability which their property required for its security; this belief could consequently have led them to support the restoration of British authority. In any event, the fighting actually served to confirm most wealthy Philadelphians in positions they had adopted before 1776. A few who had not previously been active in public affairs decided after the beginning of hostilities to show their support for the Revolution, while a few others, supporters of the resistance up to the point of independence, now became foes of the struggle against the British.

Thirty-two rich Philadelphians—twenty-one percent of the elite—openly favored independence in July 1776. They included such well-known people as Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Cadwalader, George Clymer, Henry Hill, Christopher Marshall, Samuel Mifflin, Samuel Morris, Jr., John Maxwell Nesbit, William Shippen, and John Wharton. As patriots, they were joined by three other men who, like John Dickinson, opposed the timing—not the substance—of independence, and subsequently supported the American cause during the Revolution. Fifty-six rich Philadelphians—thirty-seven percent of the elite—chose to be “neutralists;” these men are classified both positively, such as by being known to have remained in Philadelphia during the British occupation, and negatively, in residual fashion, by being found to have been active politically before the Revolution, but not after 1776. Joshua Howell, for example, a wealthy Quaker merchant, is among this group. Howell was a signer of the 1765 and 1769 non-importation agreements, and a delegate to the First Provincial Conference in July 1774; however, he withdrew from politics as independence approached and remained in the city during the British occupation. His wife’s niece described him aptly—“Uncle Howell . . . is neither Whig nor Tory.”

Another fifteen percent of the elite—twenty-two men—demonstrated that they were “mild loyalists” by cooperating with the British, such as by serving in the civilian administration of the city during the occupation. Some of these men found themselves placed under surveillance, harassed, and even arrested by the patriot authorities. None, however, suffered serious material or physical persecution. While willing to cooperate with the British, these men do not appear particularly to have desired a British victory.

Thirteen of their colleagues, representing nine percent of the wealthy, were pro-British and found themselves arrested, imprisoned, and even exiled. Quakers predominated among this group, and it is difficult to separate truly pacifistic sympathies from pro-British beliefs. Contemporaries far too often did not even attempt to make such distinctions. In this case, at any event, it does appear that pro-British sympathies predominated among this category of loyalist. For example, when Thomas Fisher’s wife received word that the British were approaching Philadelphia in September 1777, she told her diary that “it was an event I had so long wished to take place.”

21. Diary of Sarah Logan Fisher, entry for 25 September 1777, PMHB 82 (1958):449-
There was a third category of loyalists among wealthy Philadelphians. These five men were “high tories,” who took strenuous action to assist the British cause, often by joining the King’s forces, and suffered serious retribution. This group included such prominent individuals as Joseph Galloway, Samuel Shoemaker, and Andrew Allen. Their wishes during the war were expressed well by Samuel Shoemaker’s step-daughter when, hearing the rumor that “some people begin to think it probably that the British will be here in the fall,” she exclaimed “How delightful such a prospect” would be. Exile and attainment were inflicted on the wealthy Philadelphians whose views and actions placed them in this category.

It is difficult to compare the positions adopted by the members of the economic elite towards the Revolution with those of the population at large. We have only the most general idea about what the divisions were among the entire population. However, it would seem that the percentage of patriots among the Philadelphia economic elite was impressive. We do know that cities in general were strongholds of loyalist strength; that Philadelphia in particular was slow to support independence; and that about two-thirds of the residents of Philadelphia remained in the city when it was occupied by the British. Given this environment, it is revealing that twenty-one of the Philadelphia economic elite saw active military service during the Revolution in the patriot cause; this figure represents about fifteen percent of the elite, compared with a total of perhaps thirty percent of all the adult males in Pennsylvania who served in the patriot military forces. The percentage of wealthy Philadelphians fighting for independence becomes really impressive, however, when it is realized that, as a group, their age structure was considerably

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450. See also Henry Drinker to Robert and Nathan Hyde, 16 September 1774, Henry Drinker Foreign Letterbook, 1772-1788, Drinker Papers, HSP; and James Hamilton to John and Robert Barclay, 18 April 1783, James Hamilton Letterbook, 1749-1783, James Hamilton Papers, HSP.

22. Elizabeth Rawle Journal, 17 March 1781, Pemberton Papers, XXX, HSP.


higher than normal for military service. Their median age in 1775, for instance, was fifty-two years.

Wealthy Philadelphians were not strongly overrepresented in the loyalist categories, either, when compared to the rest of the population. Four wealthy Philadelphians (2.7 percent of the elite) were formally attainted. This figure is somewhat higher than the 0.5 percent of the entire adult male population which was attainted, but is not great in absolute numbers. Nor is it striking when we consider that wealthy Philadelphians were more likely to be attainted than other Philadelphians because of their public prominence and greater property holdings. In general, the last two varieties of loyalists just identified comprised fourteen percent of the members of the economic elite whose position on the Revolution is known; this percentage should be compared with Wallace Brown's estimate that somewhere between thirteen percent and thirty percent of all Americans were "active loyalists."

Furthermore, it seems that wealthy Philadelphians left the city during the occupation, and thus displayed at least some degree of hostility to Britain, at the same rate as the general population, about thirty-five percent. Finally, it seems that the economic background of all outright loyalists in Philadelphia was broadly similar to the entire population. Specifically, the distribution of the tax assessments of attainted persons from Philadelphia and the suburbs whose property was sold by the state, when compared with the distribution of the tax assessments of the entire population, shows only a slight bias in favor of people with moderate amounts of property, as opposed to wealthy or poor Philadelphians.

What caused wealthy Philadelphians to adopt these positions? Temperament, chance, and other such highly individualistic factors must account for much of the explanation of why Americans, including wealthy Philadelphians, took the position they did on the Revolution. However, various social background characteristics had such sharp influence among the wealthy that it is possible to examine an

25. See the data on Seibert, *Loyalists of Pennsylvania*, p. 58. It is assumed that about eighteen of the seventy-six persons attainted in Philadelphia County were residents of Southwark and the Northern Liberties, suburbs that are considered part of the city for the purposes of the present study.


27. This estimate is calculated from data in Anne M. Ousterhout, "The Forgotten Antagonists: Pennsylvania Loyalists" (Ph.D. diss., Michigan State University, 1972), pp. 261-278.
individual's characteristics and predict with a high degree of accuracy whether he was a loyalist, neutralist, or patriot. The social background characteristics provide weights for an equation which, in this instance, correctly predicts the behavior of almost sixty percent of the 1775 Philadelphia economic elite. Religion, father's socioeconomic status, previous political affiliation, and birthplace contributed most of the power to the equation that did this predicting. They associated opponents of the Revolution with Quakerism, fathers of high socioeconomic status, supporters of the Assembly Party in colonial Pennsylvania politics, and individuals not born in Philadelphia.\(^{28}\)

Religion was probably the most important characteristic influencing the position of the wealthy towards the Revolution. As Table 1 indicates, not surprisingly, Quakers were disproportionately numerous among the neutralist and loyalist categories. Upstanding Quakers comprised forty-three percent of the economic elite, but only seventeen percent of that part of the elite which was patriot. Correspondingly, wealthy Baptists and Presbyterians tended to support the Revolution. Within these two denominations support for the Revolution was over fifty percent, compared to just nine percent within the Quakers. On the other hand, wealthy Anglicans, members of the most socially amorphous and least religiously demanding denomination in the city, displayed no particular trend in behavior during the Revolution.

Ethnicity was a factor related to religion. Wealthy Presbyterians, for example, had their tendency toward the patriot position reinforced by the Scotch-Irish background most of them shared. The most clear-cut preference for the Revolution, however, was found among wealthy Irishmen, forty percent of whom supported the

\(^{28}\) The saliency of various independent variables in predicting whether a wealthy person was a loyalist, neutralist, or patriot was done by discriminant function analysis, based on eighty cases for which sufficient information was known, using Rao's method. The resulting discriminant function had a canonical correlation of .49; a Wilks-Lambda statistic of .61; and a chi-square which was significant at the .04 level. The group centroids were -.81 for loyalists, .43 for neutralists, and .27 for patriots. Standardized discriminant function coefficients were -.70 for religion (coded on a sect-church scale), -.59 for father's socioeconomic status (coded from high to low), .55 for political affiliation (coded from unaffiliated to Proprietary to Assembly), and -.87 for birthplace (coded from far-to-near-Philadelphia). Of the reduction achieved in Wilks-Lambda, 27.2 percent came from political affiliation, 19.9 percent from religion, 12.6 percent from father's socioeconomic status, and 15.6 percent from birthplace. Age, ethnicity, and officeholding added 16.1 percent more, and occupation (merchant vs. non-merchant), education, residence, and year of immigration another 8.7 percent.
TABLE 1
EFFECT OF RELIGION ON BEHAVIOR TOWARDS
THE REVOLUTION, 1775 ELITE
(Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revolutionary Position</th>
<th>Upstanding Quaker</th>
<th>Anglican</th>
<th>Presbyterian</th>
<th>Baptist</th>
<th>Other &amp; Unknown</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patriot</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>30.4</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutralist</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalist</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Died and Unknown</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[n = \begin{align*} 
65 & \quad 46 & \quad 8 & \quad 7 & \quad 27 & \quad 153 
\end{align*}\]
patriot cause, and wealthy Germans, thirty percent of whom were patriots. On the other hand, no wealthy Scotsmen were patriots, and forty percent were loyalists. Among the English, the largest and most amorphous nationality group in the city, no particular trend emerged.

That religious and ethnic factors were most important in dividing wealthy Philadelphians during the Revolutionary years is not surprising when it is understood that they had been the most important factors in political divisions in colonial Pennsylvania politics on both the mass and elite levels. Quakers, with some other pietistic groups and some Germans, squared off against Anglicans and Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. The Revolution highlighted the pre-existing tendency for divisions to be along ethno-religious lines, rather than producing new lines for division. The pull of these traditional loyalties may even have been increased by the uncertainties and upheavals associated with the revolutionary conflict.

Time of settlement in Philadelphia also affected political behavior at the time of the Revolution. However, the standard belief that recent immigrants were more likely to be loyalists seems to be only partially correct in this specific situation. Immigrants who were wealthy Philadelphians did indeed tend to be disproportionately loyalist—28.2 percent versus 25 percent among the native born. However, they were disproportionately patriot in orientation as well—30.4 percent to 23.1 percent. Accounting for this pattern was the strong tendency of native-born Philadelphians to be neutralists; 42.3 percent of the Philadelphia-born became neutralists, compared to 28.2 percent of the immigrants. While the ties to the mother country may have been strong enough among more recent immigrants to tilt them toward Britain in the revolutionary struggle, at the same time these men would be less “established” in Philadelphia and less fearful of the local consequences of a revolution.

The source of a man’s wealth also affected his position on the Revolution. Individuals with inherited wealth tended to be loyalists; newness to wealth, on the other hand, as with newness to the city, seems to have encouraged support for the Revolution. As Table 2 suggests,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revolutionary Position</th>
<th>Father's SES</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low SES</td>
<td>Moderate SES</td>
<td>High SES</td>
<td>No Information</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patriot</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutralist</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalist</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Died and Unknown</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ n = \]

\[ 28 \quad 20 \quad 65 \quad 40 \quad 153 \]
there seems to have been a distinction in late eighteenth-century Philadelphia between established and arriviste wealth. But when religion is held constant by examining each denomination separately, this pattern exists among Anglicans, but not among Quakers. It would seem that Quakerism was strong enough to affect an individual despite a material consideration, such as father’s socioeconomic status, but Anglicanism—where a looser community existed—was not. When time of settlement is held constant, on the other hand, this distinction in behavior based on source of wealth is always present. “Age” of wealth had the same effect on newcomers as longtime Philadelphia residents. The time of settlement analysis actually testifies to the strength of religion, which could show influence while time of settlement could not.

Partisan affiliation in colonial Pennsylvania politics also made a difference in how a wealthy man would react to the Revolution. As Table 3 indicates, adherents of the Assembly Party tended to oppose the Revolution. Their opponents in the Proprietary Party were less likely to be loyalists. This factor of political allegiance was complicated by the influence of officeholding in colonial Pennsylvania. Wealthy men who had held public office before the Revolution tended to be either loyalists or patriots, but not neutralists. Overall, over forty percent of the wealthy non-officeholders were neutralists, compared to less than thirty percent of the officeholders. From temperament and the exposed position of their offices, public officials found themselves taking a stance on the struggle, one way or the other. The type of office a wealthy man held also made a difference. Among individuals who held office on the proprietary patronage, for example, sixty-five percent were loyalists; among those who sat in the Assembly or held Assembly-controlled offices, fifty percent supported the crown; and of the local officeholders, only thirty-nine percent favored the British.

It seems that in both parties in colonial Pennsylvania politics, but especially among the Proprietary group, political leaders, as represented by officeholders, were somewhat out of step with the rank-and-file. It is no wonder, then, that after 1768 the traditional party structure in Pennsylvania dissolved, and was unable to channel the rise of opposition to British colonial policies. Among the wealthy, the politicians who most strongly opposed British policies were the younger adherents of the Proprietary Party, who were mostly non-officeholders. Of the wealthy Proprietary supporters under age forty-
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TABLE 3

EFFECT OF PREVIOUS POLITICAL AFFILIATION ON BEHAVIOR TOWARD THE REVOLUTION, 1775 ELITE

(Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revolutionary Position</th>
<th>Assembly Party</th>
<th>Proprietary Party</th>
<th>Unaffiliated</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patriots</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutralists</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>43.0</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyalists</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Died and Unknown</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ n = 16 \quad 44 \quad 93 \quad 153 \]

Five, fifty-seven percent were patriots; among their political comrades over forty-five, only twelve percent supported the Revolution.

In general, age was a secondary factor influencing position on the Revolution. Like immigration, its relationship to position on the Revolution was curvilinear—younger men tended to be patriots or loyalists, but not neutralists. Of the men born after 1730, 33.3 percent were patriots, and 33.3 percent were loyalists; overall, only 22.9 percent of the elite were patriots and 26.1 percent were loyalists. Caution toward political activity in general, therefore, as indicated by neutrality in the Revolution, quite understandably seems to have accompanied increasing age.

Finally, the occupation of a wealthy man made some difference in what position he took toward the Revolution. Wealthy merchants, however, did not tilt in either direction—24.7 percent were patriots and 23.4 percent were loyalists, almost identical to the percentages in the entire elite. The greatest support for Britain during the Revolution came, rather, from wealthy Philadelphians who were lawyers or who lived on unearned income. Among craftsmen and builders, on the other hand, the preference was support for the Revolution.

In their response to the Revolution, wealthy Philadelphians were influenced by the same pressures as was the rest of the population. Among the general population of the middle colonies, at least, Quakers tended to be loyalists, Baptists patriots, and Anglicans badly divided. Irishmen were patriots, Scotsmen loyalists, and Englishmen fragmented in preference throughout all strata in all colonies. Officeholders also tended not to be patriots. Prominent lawyers were
sympathetic to the crown everywhere. Rich Philadelphians seemed to have behaved just like anyone else with their particular social characteristics, whether they were wealthy or not.

Each of these social characteristics played an independent role in influencing the behavior of rich Philadelphians. When inheritance is held constant by analyzing separately those men with fathers with rich, moderate, and lower and unknown backgrounds, for example, age is still significant in each strata; correspondingly, when age is held constant inheritance continues to have an effect. For the purposes of this study it is not necessary to identify all such factors influencing behavior on this issue, measure their effect, rank order them, and explain their origins. Indeed, it is impossible to do so.

What is significant, rather, in this analysis is the realization that the members of the economic elite were deeply divided about an all-important development in their society, and failed to act towards it in a cohesive fashion. These wealthy men responded to the same pressures and influences, it seems, as did the rest of the population. Mere knowledge about possession of wealth, therefore, would be a poor predictor of behavior by a Philadelphian during the Revolutionary years. He would have been influenced by a variety of factors, suggesting the lack of strongly developed class divisions in eighteenth-century Philadelphia. Even such a soul-wrenching event as the American Revolution, it would seem, could not bring out such divisions. An implication of the last finding, of course, is that the Revolution, in Philadelphia at least, was not precipitated by class hostility or class conflict.


32. An exception already noted is when religion is held constant and father’s socio-economic status is examined. There was a similar pattern involving religion and occupation. Also, when the effect of previous political affiliation is examined holding age constant, Assembly-Proprietary divisions appear regardless of age among the Assembly Party members, but not—as noted in the text—among Proprietary Party supporters.