Pennsylvania Provincial Soldiers in the Seven Years' War.

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In the late 1820s, as he composed a narrative of his life in the Continental Army during the American Revolution, an aged Joseph Plumb Martin recalled the peculiar habits, dialects and appearance that distinguished soldiers and civilians from New England and the "middle states." Martin, a Yankee himself, thought Pennsylvanians and Yankees "two sets of people as opposite in manners and customs as light and darkness." On one memorable day near New York in 1780, Martin recalled the sight of a baggage column belonging to several corps from the middle region. The scene, he recalled, "beggared all description...a caravan of wild beasts could bear no comparison." The men, women and children that straggled by on foot and horseback bore peculiar visages: there were "some with two eyes, some with one, and some I believe with none at all." Their clothing was a melange: "some in rags and some in jags but none in velvet gowns." Above all, their peculiar accents bespoke their far-flung origins: "There was Irish and Scotch brogue, murdered English, flat insipid Dutch, and some lingoos which would puzzle a philosopher to tell whether they belonged to this world or some undiscovered country."

Martin's encounters with fellow Americans who seemed utterly unlike himself paralleled the meetings of earlier generations of Yankee soldiers with equally strange fellow Britons during nearly a century of intermittent colonial warfare. In recent years, historians have closely examined the interplay of war and New England society during the colonial and revolutionary eras, offering rich insights into how generations of Martin's countrymen conceived of war, organized for defense, interacted with Indians, soldiers and sailors from across the Atlantic World, and through these experiences strengthened their conception of themselves as a unique and chosen people. But regions that lay beyond Martin's home have not attracted the same level of scrutiny. The deep cultural divisions within the Continental Army that Martin remembered in his old age had precendents in the provincial armies that served in the earlier colonial wars. This essay addresses the relative dearth of studies focusing on the wartime experience of areas outside of New England, offering a brief examination of the composition and character of Pennsylvania's provincial forces in the "French and Indian" or "Seven Years' War."

"A Country Young at War"

George Washington's early characterization of his native Virginia as a "Country young at War...never studying War or Warfare" applied equally to mid-eighteenth century Pennsylvania. Longstanding Quaker influence on government, relatively peaceful relations with the native inhabitants, and remoteness from New France had allowed the colony to develop into one of British North America's most populous and prosperous without having to establish the fortifications, public armories and mili-
tary institutions that were hallmarks of European colonization in the New World. While the proprietor and assembly periodically contributed small sums for inter-colonial defense or overseas expeditions, Pennsylvanians developed no strong martial tradition during the first half of the eighteenth century. Some men with prior military experience abroad could be found in the swelling population, particularly among German and Scots-Irish immigrants, and Benjamin Franklin's Association of 1747-48 provided rudimentary military training for several thousand volunteers. But freedom from obligatory military service and direct involvement in imperial and frontier conflicts remained a blessing of residence in Penn's colony before the 1750s.3

As local rivalries among Indians, traders, land speculators and colonial governors over control of the Ohio Valley rushed toward an open confrontation in the decade after 1745, many Pennsylvanians expressed concern over the defenseless state of the backcountry. Virginia's unsuccessful bid to head off French occupation of the Ohio Valley, culminating in Washington's defeat at the Great Meadows in July 1754, brought a round of petitions for arms, ammunition and a militia law from nervous backcountry communities. But disagreement between the Assembly and Lieutenant-Governors James Hamilton and Robert Hunter Morris over how to respond to the crisis and provide funds for defense forestalled effective leadership or support for the imperilled region. A year later, scarcely a week before British commander Edward Braddock failed in a second attempt to drive the French from the waters of the Ohio, one backcountry leader warned that "in the situation our People are [in] they cannot make any defense." Anglican minister Thomas Barton complained that among his backcountry congregations, "not a man in ten is able to purchase a gun, not a house in twenty has a door with either a lock or bolt to it."4

Unlike Virginia, which had at least a paper militia force and quickly created a provincial army to assert its western claims, Pennsylvania's backcountry communities largely bore the burden of their own defense during the initial year of the war. Morris, who succeeded Hamilton as governor in August 1754, had few resources at his disposal beyond the authority to issue military commissions, but news of Braddock's defeat on July 9, 1755 spurred nervous leaders to begin organizing defenses. When Morris received the news at Carlisle during an inspection tour, he immediately laid out a stockade fort for the inhabitants, directed another to be built at Shippensburg, and helped to organize four volunteer companies. In the absence of a militia law, local leaders, proprietary placemen, civil officials and ministers organized groups of "associators" that were reminiscent of Franklin's voluntary force of the previous decade. A trickle of arms and ammunition began reaching the backcountry from Philadelphia in August, passing the demoralized remnants of Braddock's army as it marched for winter quarters, leaving the region hopelessly unprepared for the wave of attacks that began in October. Berks County leaders soon complained: "We have scarce any strength left to write. We are all in an uproar, all in disorder, all willing to do, but have little in our power, we have no authority, no commissions, no officers practiced in war." In Northampton County, Timothy Horsfield found the inhabitants "in the utmost confusion imaginable, one flying here & the other there for safety."5

The mounting panic brought about by Washington's and Braddock's defeats, as well as subsequent attacks by French soldiers, Canadian militia, and Indian warriors...
carried a broad spectrum of Pennsylvania's backcountry society into arms. Even before the first direct attacks on the colony began, Susquehanna "river men" and Mingo warriors marched to Wills Creek on the Potomac to support the Virginians and Marylanders. In the wake of Braddock's defeat, veteran Indian trader George Croghan gathered traders, packhorsemen, servants, and slaves as well as Iroquois families at his house and store at Aughwick, where they erected a stockade fort. Andrew Montour, the noted métis interpreter, gathered a company of refugee traders at his house near the Susquehanna River, and together with other native emissaries shuttled between Pennsylvania and Indian towns when it still seemed possible to provincial officials that both "Red" and "White" Pennsylvanians might join to repel the invading French, Canadians, and "foreign" Indians.6

But hopes for a united stand against the French and Indian interlopers soon faded. While some Indian individuals and villages remained neutral or took up arms for the British King, provincial authorities did not act quickly or in unison to head off the French occupation of the Ohio Country, compounding the longstanding grievances of many regional Indian peoples against Pennsylvanians and their neighbors. European backcountry inhabitants—many already distrustful of all native people—soon learned that the attacks were the work of formerly well-disposed villagers from the upper Ohio region. Thus, the armed bodies that coalesced in the region during the fall and winter of 1755-56 came to be drawn predominantly from the non-Indian elements of marclands society. As refugees fled eastward after the October attacks, volunteers rushed to John Harris's ferry on the Susquehanna to counter an anticipated French invasion. Veteran Indian interpreter and provincial negotiator Conrad Weiser led several hundred Berks County men, some armed only with axes and pitchforks, to the rendezvous, while hundreds more marched from the south and west. Rumors that Lancaster had been burned by a French army that was "proceeding downwards, driving all before them" set a thousand or more militiamen from Maryland and the Lower Counties (Delaware) in motion. The French army did not materialize, but a flurry of destructive raids across the province by smaller parties of French and Indians sent the hastily-assembled units scrambling back to protect their homes.7

The associator companies that responded to the initial crisis were highly local and inclusive in character, resembling in many ways the Indian war parties against whom they marched. The sixty-eight men in Joseph Armstrong's Cumberland County company—predominantly Scots-Irish in origin—shared only thirty-five surnames, with five McCamants and Shields, four Barnets and Mitchells, three Eatons, Irwins, Swans, and Stuarts, as well as eight pairs. Many backcountry communities established local watches and fortified houses, forming a loose defensive perimeter along the inland arc of valleys and mountain ridges. In the Berks County townships of Tulpehocken and Heidelberg, thirty-two inhabitants pledged funds to pay one hundred fifty local men to range the woods for forty days, while other groups of unpaid volunteers performed similar duty up and down the frontier.8

The Militia Act of November 25, 1755 did not significantly alter the structure or character of the early backcountry companies, for it did not compel men to bear arms and left the selection of officers to popular election. Units could not be marched more than three days beyond the settled parts of the province, left in garri-
son more than three weeks, or subjected to military discipline without their consent. Pennsylvanians soon found, as had other provinces during the previous century and a half, that the pull of domestic concerns made citizen-soldiers difficult to keep in the field, for untended animals and crops, idle forges, tanneries, and work benches threatened the economic fabric of domestic, local, and regional economies. Conrad Weiser observed during one lull in the often intermittent fighting that local people “begin to be secure again, and are tired of keeping watch.” With the governor unable to compel militia units from the more protected interior to reinforce beleaguered frontier zones, a more permanent, regularly enlisted force like those that began to appear in New England and the southern colonies as early as the seventeenth century was clearly needed. In November 1755, Provincial Secretary Richard Peters echoed a common sentiment when he wished for an accord between the governor and Assembly that would allow the colony to establish “companies of rangers under regular pay all along the Blue Hills,” as well as “hire a company or two to act on the offensive to go to the Indian towns.”

Building a Provincial Army, 1755-1757

Unlike the New England colonies, Pennsylvania initially built its provincial army in relative isolation from the scrutiny of British regulars, for the provinces south of New York were largely left to defend themselves between Braddock’s 1755 defeat and the Forbes expedition of 1758. John Campbell, the Earl of Loudoun, arrived in New York in 1756 to direct the American war, carrying supplies, several regular battalions, and sweeping authority to bolster colonial cooperation and participation in the war effort. But Loudoun concentrated on attacking New France directly from New York, New England and Nova Scotia. Forced to rely primarily on a passive defense during these early years, Pennsylvania lieutenant-governors Robert Hunter Morris and William Denny, who succeeded him in August 1756, concentrated on creating a regularly enlisted provincial corps, solidifying the defensive line, and preparing the forces for the anticipated juncture with British regulars to attack the French in the Ohio Valley. Their efforts to do so aroused the opposition of assemblymen who believed that the most effective and constitutionally safe form of defense was an army of citizen-soldiers that remained firmly-rooted to their civilian identities.

The Assembly voted funds on November 27, 1755 to begin constructing forts and replacing the militia with paid provincial companies. Benjamin Franklin later noted the shift in the composition of the forces in a letter to a correspondent in London, writing that “Those men posted on the frontier are not militia, but what we call our provincial troops, being regularly enlisted to serve a term, and in the pay of the province.” While militiamen continued to “follow their respective callings at home,” and stand ready in case of invasion, Franklin noted that they were “of little use in hunting Indians.” He explained that Pennsylvania, like other colonies engaged in similar conflicts, had begun to “hire men for the purpose who are fitter for it, and make it their business,” noting that such soldiers “do nothing but bear arms like your regulars.” But Franklin was premature in equating the provincials with professional soldiers, for expediency dictated that existing militia companies be taken into pay and stationed at local garrisons wherever possible. The early provincial units thus
continued to reflect the cultural landscape of the backcountry communities from which most were drawn. Captain Joseph Inslee's provincial company, drawn from Buck's County, was nearly as clannish as the associators under Joseph Armstrong, for Inslee's son served as ensign and at least thirteen groups of two or more men shared common surnames. Most units seem to have reflected the predominant ethnicity of their officers and community as well. Of the fifty-two men in George Reynolds' company, a militia unit taken into pay in 1756, about seventy percent (35) were German immigrants, just under a quarter (13) native-born (mostly German), and less than ten percent (4) Scots-Irish or English.

The cultural and sometimes physical separation of German and English-speaking communities complicated efforts to coordinate local defenses and produced tensions within the provincial forces themselves. Edward Shippen reported from Lancaster in the fall of 1755 that the "Dutch" held a separate meeting to organize themselves after the initial attacks near the Susquehanna River. Ethnic tensions among the besieged garrison of Fort Granville on the Juniata River may have hastened the fall of the post in 1756, and certainly bred trouble among the provincials stationed west of the Susquehanna River. Peter Walker, a provincial soldier present at the siege, complained that "some of the Germans flag'd very much" during the action, and after laboring for months to smooth such divisions within his battalion, Colonel John Armstrong noted that only "through divine favor we yet have peace...and carefully inculcate a good understanding and agreement betwixt the German and Irish soldiers."

The early provincial companies remained closely tied to civilian life, generally enlisting for short terms of less than six months. Such units often balked at attempts to impose military discipline, to march them away from their homes, or to integrate the numerous local commanders and corps into a more centralized and cohesive command structure. Captain Jacob Orndt encountered such difficulties when, late in the summer of 1756, he attempted to bring order to the scattered elements of his provincial company. Orndt's lieutenant, Anthony Miller, allowed a party of soldiers to fire away half of their ammunition at random, wasting precious supplies and alarming the countryside. When reprimanded by the captain for his behavior, Miller told Orndt that "I should not think that he would always do what I should command him." Determined to do as he pleased, Miller disregarded orders to remain at his post, traveling sixty miles away on personal business without informing any other officer. "Every one of the soldiers," Orndt reported, followed Miller's example and was "master by himself." About the same time, Major William Parsons found the garrison of Fort Allen in a similar state of disarray, the men following "the careless example of their officers... [who]...made a tippling house of the fort." One provincial official in Reading, moved by such widespread disorder among the companies east of the Susquehanna, remarked the following summer, "What a terrible prospect have we in this quarter. Strange officers! Surprising inactivity!"

The weak disciplinary provisions in Pennsylvania's Militia Act, common to many colonial military establishments, initially frustrated efforts by Morris and the more professional provincial officers to build an effective, cohesive corps. The act merely authorized the governor, in consultation with the elected field officers of the militia regiments, to draft a code of discipline that drew on the British Mutiny Act
Pennsylvania History

and Articles of War. But the assemblymen, echoing English antipathy to standing armies and martial law, insisted that the “the different circumstances of this province compared with Great Britain, and of a voluntary militia of freemen compared with mercenary standing troops, [be] duly weighed and maturely considered.” The printed articles were to be read to the men, who after three days could volunteer in the presence of a justice of the peace to be bound by them. A surviving “allegation of soldiers” from early 1756 merely pledged the subscribers to serve for one month and to forfeit their pay if they should “get drunk, desert, or prove cowardly in time of action.” Morris complained that such provisions hobbled the forces to such a degree that the act—which was eventually invalidated by the crown for similar reasons—“contributed very little, if anything, towards the defense of the frontiers.”

The Assembly made strides toward redressing these inadequacies with the April 1756 Act For Regulating the Officers and Soldiers Commissioned and Raised by the Governor for the Defense of this Province, which strengthened the hands of the governor and officer corps by putting the provincials under same the rules and articles of war that applied to the British regular army and provincials that served in joint operations. Unlike Massachussetts provincial officers, who strove to insulate their men from the harsh punishments meted out by “regular” military law, most Pennsylvania officers seem to have welcomed the stronger measures. “If we attempt to personate soldiers in the field,” provincial Captain Joseph Shippen lamented before the reforms took effect, “we shall soon be hissed off the military stage...[having only]...raw men unacquainted with discipline and obedience to command.” Shippen exhibited a characteristically professional attitude when, in the spring of 1757, he learned that a deserter from his company—who in the space of a year had already fled from the regular army twice and the New Jersey Regiment once—had been apprehended. “I wish by all my soul,” he wrote his father, “the fellow could be taken that I might have the pleasure of seeing him hang by the neck at Fort Augusta as a terror to the others.”

Pennsylvania provincial officers were willing to impose strict discipline on their men in part because they shared the widespread ambition—with George Washington and others—to secure commissions in the regular army. Joseph Shippen’s elder brother Edward, a Philadelphia merchant, encouraged their father to send the young man to Massachussetts Governor William Shirley, then British commander-in-chief in North America. “If my dear brother Joseph has an inclination to go into the army,” Edward observed, “there was never a better opportunity, and perhaps never will be so good a one as now.” Shirley would admit Joseph as a volunteer until a vacant commission became available, which would no doubt be soon, for, he noted, “young fellows of less merit and much fewer friends are continually promoting.” Joseph was in fact “desirous to go into the army in earnest,” accompanying his father and Governor Morris on an extensive tour of the backcountry over the winter of 1755-56 and then accepting a provincial commission. But the young Shippen did not drop his interest in the red coat. Soon he joined James Burd and other newly commissioned provincials in lobbying for places in the Royal American Regiment, a British corps that recruited heavily in the province. The young men’s hopes were dampened by Lord Loudoun’s arrival in New York with a large train of British volunteers, mostly fellow Scots, who joined the nearly one hundred Americans already seeking preferment. Nevertheless, modest numbers of provincial officers continued
to enter the regular army throughout the war, creating a strong incentive for the aspiring subaltern to pay close attention to the punctilios of command. But even with stronger disciplinary authority after 1756, provincial officers did not have free reign to shape the discipline of their corps. Periodic exchanges between the various Pennsylvania governors and assemblies revealed conflicting ideas about the relationship between provincial soldiers and Pennsylvania society. Most parties agreed that paid, regularly enlisted troops were preferable to unpaid militia as the primary means of provincial defense. In an address to Morris in the spring of 1756, the Assembly acknowledged that “the marching of the militia to the frontier on every alarm...would be less effectual for its defense, and much more expensive and burdensome to the people, than their proportion of a tax for the maintenance of standing guards.” But Morris and Denny, as well as many provincial officers, wished to model the corps on the regular army, instituting long enlistment terms and vesting the selection of officers in the hands of the governor rather than popular election. Morris made some progress in 1756, maintaining control of officers’ appointments west of the Susquehanna, but elected officers continued to serve east of the river. Denny, an experienced British officer, later lamented the ubiquitous short-term enlistments as well—”in some instances for three months, in others for six and in almost all only for a year.” Denny pressed the provincial commissioners to raise the enlistment bounty for men who would sign up for same terms of three years or “the war” offered by the regular army. Although later developments proved them wrong, the commissioners refused Denny’s request with the assurance that the provincials would reenlist willingly.

Discussion of the relative merits of short and long-term forces took on a more urgent tone when, in the spring of 1757, large numbers of soldiers, discontented with arrears in pay and inadequate supplies, left Fort Augusta—the province’s largest fortification—dangerously undermanned. As spring approached, when their enlistments would begin to expire, Denny warned the Assembly that the surly “Augusta Regiment” was in no mood to continue in the service. The remoteness of the post, constructed at the old Indian town of Shamokin on the upper Susquehanna River, made it impossible to dispatch replacements quickly. Fresh rumors of a French and Indian invasion heightened the tension. Through a combination of threats, entreaties and promises of reward commander James Burd persuaded most of the garrison to remain an extra month, but no more than thirty of the four hundred men consented to remain thereafter. As parties of discharged men set off down the river, Denny seized on the widespread discontent among the provincials over inadequate pay, provisions and arms to persuade the commissioners to raise the enlistment bounty from a pistole to five pounds. He then ordered recruiting parties to sign only men under thirty-five and for a minimum term of three years. Most provincial officers greeted the development heartily. During the reenlistment crisis at Fort Augusta, Captain Thomas Lloyd swore at an officer’s meeting that “By God, I will not be Captain of a twelve-months company.” Shortly thereafter, Major Burd penned a proposal for reorganizing provincial defenses that called for life enlistments, “as all the King’s troops are,” observing that armies raised anew each year were composed largely of recruits, which were “always esteemed inferior to old disciplined soldiers.”

The long-term, standing forces—later dubbed the “Old Levies”—that were
organized in 1757-58 moved away from the clannish character of the earlier, locally-raised units. Wherever possible, Denny continued to replace elected officers with men who were not dependent on the good will of their soldiers for their positions. Recruiting officers had to search widely for men willing to serve longer terms, in part because, as Joseph Shippen observed, the countryside was "almost drained" of young men by the regular army. Among the five companies of Old Levies for whom muster rolls survive, soldiers shared far fewer surnames than in the earlier units, suggesting fewer kinship ties and a heterogeneous composition more typical of regular corps. None of James Burd's fifty-one men shared a surname, while only five names were common to two or more men in James Patterson's company, four to those in Nicholas Wetherholt's, and one each to James Armstrong and Joseph Shippen's recruits. The larger groupings of men sharing uncommon names—those most likely to have been related—like James, John, Robert, and George Smiley of Shippen's company and the four Peirson men under James Patterson, generally disappeared from the rolls. The exigencies of recruiting brought a highly diverse mixture of men together in some companies; roughly one-third of Burd and Shippen's recruits had been born in German principalities, about one-third in Scotland or Ireland, and the remainder in England, Wales, or Pennsylvania, together with a few New Englanders and men from New Jersey. But officers still recruited primarily among their own countrymen. Nearly all of Wetherholt's company, for instance, were Germans or native-born sons of Germans.

Expansion and Evolution, 1757-1760

Denny's victory on the enlistment question proved to be short-lived, as debate continued over the relationship of provincial soldiers and society. When Lord Loudoun issued an urgent call in August 1757 for reinforcements to prevent French General Montcalm from invading New York following the fall of Fort William Henry, the Assembly renewed its call to vest provincial defense in the hands of local volunteers. Doing so, they argued, would free the scarcer and more expensive standing troops for offensive operations. The issue lay fallow when Montcalm failed to press his victory, but came to head the following spring as British strategy in the region shifted from local defense to a third attempt on the French in the Ohio Valley. The Pitt Ministry called for fresh levies to support Brigadier-General John Forbes and two battalions of regulars, placing heavy demands on the pool of young men already severely reduced by the land and sea services. Pitt promised to provide arms, ammunition, tents, and provisions, and to push for parliamentary reimbursement of the cost of clothing and pay. Freed from the heavy financial burden of maintaining troops, the Assembly voted in March 1758 to add twenty-three companies of short-term "New Levies" to the standing forces, bringing the strength of the Pennsylvania line up to 2700. But the representatives, noting the dearth of young single men in the province, seized upon Pitt's recommendation that the provincial governors give commissions to gentlemen whose "zeal for the service" and "weight and credit" would enable them to quickly raise men. "We know from experience," they argued, "that unless the officers are such as are agreeable to the people, no bounty that the province is able to pay will procure the number of men wanted in time."

Given the difficult recruiting market and time constraints, Denny resorted to
the practice of "recruiting for rank," whereby aspiring officers received a commission in return for producing a quota of soldiers, ranging from around ten for ensigns to a thirty or more for captains and field officers. In order to spread the patronage of military commissions as well as the burden of active service as evenly as possible, a proportion of the twenty-odd new companies were assigned to each county and to the city of Philadelphia. Because quick recruiting took precedence over military experience in forming the New Levies, most of the new officers were novices to the martial profession. In 1758, only three field officers of the twenty-three companies had previously held a provincial commission, and a few more had served briefly with associate units. The province resorted to the same combination of Old and New Levies for the 1759 campaign, after which most of the force was disbanded and then raised again in 1760. Three hundred men remained in arms for the 1761 campaign, and a small garrison remained at Fort Augusta until the Anglo-Indian war of 1763-64 brought a final round of enlistments for the Ohio and Susquehanna Valley campaigns.

Despite the Assembly's expectations, recruiting the New Levies for rank did not generally bring armed communities back into uniform. The provincial companies raised during the Ohio campaigns drew largely on the same pool of young wage laborers and artisans that had filled the Old Levies and regular regiments earlier in the war. Muster or description rolls recording the names, ages, occupations, and places of birth—and sometimes physical characteristics, prior service and the date and place of enlistment as well—survive for about half of the 1758 and 1759 levies. Although frequently incomplete and not entirely satisfying as a statistical source, they offer a suggestive glimpse at the social composition of the forces raised during the height of Pennsylvania's mobilization.

Scots and Irish brogues were undoubtably the most common accents among the Pennsylvania forces raised for the Ohio campaigns of 1758 and 1759. About half of the more than one thousand men represented in the surviving rolls were born in Ireland or Scotland, with most—about forty-five percent—Ulster Scots. Many of the native-born Pennsylvanians, Marylanders, and Lower County (Delaware) men—who comprised nearly thirty percent of the levies—hailed from Scots-Irish backgrounds as well. Thus, Scots, Ulstermen, and their progeny carried arms in far greater numbers than their relative proportion of Pennsylvania society-at-large, estimated at no more than one-third. They were the most numerous single group in all but a handful of companies, and their general adherence to Church of Scotland principles moved a group of thirty-three New Levy officers to petition for a Presbyterian chaplain in 1758. "There are very few of any other religion among us," the petitioners noted, and recommended Andrew Bay, a minister whose "well-known eloquence, Martial Spirit and Appearance would," they added, "have a proper effect on his Hearers."

Provincial authorities were less successful in mobilizing the German-speaking elements of Pennsylvania society. Natives of various German and a handful of other European states comprised just under fifteen percent of the levies. Most clustered in just a few companies, brought into uniform primarily by the relatively small number of their countrymen who held provincial commissions in the New Levies. This may be attributed in part to the earlier recruiting success of the Swiss and German offi-
cers of the Royal American Regiment, which targeted “foreign Protestants” in Pennsylvania and Maryland. Composed as it was of a heterogeneous collection of peoples, with pacifist and non-pacifist elements, the Pennsylvania “German” community was less active than the Scots-Irish in carrying arms, but still outnumbered the English, who contributed less than ten percent of the levies. The remainder, less than ten percent, were natives of other colonies. This stands in striking contrast to the Massachusetts provincials, among whom all but ten percent of the 1756 levies were native-born New Englanders, primarily from the Bay Colony.24

Despite the Assembly’s faith in the system of recruiting for rank, the Pennsylvania provincial levies of 1758 and after did not bring the high levels of community mobilization that were seen earlier in the war in both Massachusetts and the Pennsylvania backcountry. The governor and council of Pennsylvania chose nominees carefully to ensure that they would attract widespread support in their districts. While the tight-knit groups of kin and kith that the Assembly expected to return to the service largely failed to materialize, the New Levy officers had little trouble completing their companies. Recognizing the importance of sending recruiting officers among their own countrymen, the governor and council reserved some commissions for distinct “German” and Irish” companies, and in other cases formed units with a mixture of officers to ensure widespread appeal to the diverse inhabitants of a district. Magistrate George Stevenson, for instance, reported from York County in May, 1758 that Lieutenant James Ewing of Robert McPherson’s company was hard at work among the “Irish” in Donegal Township, while Ensign Peter Meem “recruits amongst the Germans in and about York.” The composition of individual companies thus continued to reflect the ethnicity of the officer corps even as closely related groups of soldiers became rarer.25

Overall, the greatest number of recruits in the surviving muster rolls—nearly sixty percent—were listed as laborers in civilian life. Skilled artisans, practising nearly seventy distinct trades, filled most of the remaining ranks, with farmers and those engaged in service and other nonmanual pursuits accounting for less than five percent of the total. Most artisans fell into a handful of trades, with weavers (63), cordwainers (46), mariners (43), carpenters (31), coopers (27), tailors (28) and blacksmiths (23) the most common. About a third of all skilled workers were associated with cloth production and clothing-related trades such as weavers, fullers and tailors. Another fifteen to twenty percent each worked at either wood or leather-related trades. They were followed in number by mariners, metalworkers, masons, food processors, and manufacturers of consumer goods—each around ten percent or less of the skilled ranks in the provincials.

Some distinctions may be drawn between Philadelphia recruits and those from outlying counties, for the places of enlistment for about five hundred men can be determined. The economic boom that would boost the fortunes of Philadelphia’s laboring people during the later stages of the Seven Years’ War had not yet begun when recruiting officers began to beat their drums in 1758 and 1759. Artisans, mariners, and laborers alike probably still felt the effects of the earlier slump in work brought about by factors such as the destruction and dislocation of communities in the hinterland, the swelling ranks of refugees seeking employment, and the embargo on the shipping of foodstuffs out of the province imposed by Loudoun in 1756.
Under such circumstances, the prospect of generous enlistment bounties, regular pay, and post-war land grants must have bolstered whatever religious or patriotic motives attracted men to the service.

Most recruits from Philadelphia fell within the lowest segments of the city's working population. About forty percent of the nearly two hundred and fifty men in the sample were laborers, men who Billy G. Smith has estimated made up perhaps five percent of the city's workforce in the 1750's. Their presence in such large numbers highlights the humble origins of most provincial soldiers. A wide range of skilled and semi-skilled artisans were represented as well, encompassing forty-five distinct trades. In Robert Eastburn's company alone, raised in the city in 1758, recruits claimed twenty-four separate trades. Nevertheless, most artisans clustered at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy, with mariners (20%), cordwainers (13%), carpenters (7%) and coopers (6%) the most numerous. These provincial soldiers reflected the bustling port's cosmopolitan character as well, including in their ranks men from the farthest corners of the world; from Antigua, Barbados, Portsmouth, Glasgow and London as well as Sweden and the East Indies. Germans and Scots-Irish, among the poorest immigrant groups in eighteenth century Pennsylvania, were the most numerous recruits, at around twenty and thirty percent respectively, followed closely by native-born Pennsylvanians at about twenty and English and Welsh at nearly fifteen percent. The remainder hailed from a scattering of European countries and North American colonies.

As was the case throughout the province, provincial officers in the city concentrated their recruiting efforts among their own countrymen. Captain Robert Eastburn's German and Irish subalterns, Ezekiel Dummey and Cearly Campbell, helped to build a company in 1758 that contained about a third of each group. The company that Captain John Singleton, Lieutenant John Emmit, and Ensign John Jones raised, on the other hand, contained only two Germans and a Scot to dilute the fifty Irish-born recruits. Nevertheless, officers who recruited in the city were often forced by the diverse character of the manpower pool to accommodate many peculiar accents and habits. Captain Robert Blackwood, who commanded one of the most diverse New Levy companies in 1758, informed Richard Peters during their march to join Forbes's army that after days of struggling to establish common ground among the men and himself, "I think they are now so well satisfied with me that I have reason to expect every reasonable duty from them with the greatest cheerfulness."

At least sixteen veterans of provincial or regular corps were present among the Philadelphia recruits. John Ewald, a thirty-six year-old German laborer, and John Fleming, a twenty-one year-old German shoemaker, both enlisted with Blackwood for the Forbes campaign, despite their previous experience at Fort Augusta during the winter of 1756-1757. Former soldiers from the New Jersey provincials and veteran redcoats from four regiments also enlisted in the New Levies. The actual proportion of veterans was probably greater than the surviving returns indicate because deserters made great efforts to conceal their identity upon reenlistment. To prevent these men from absconding again when their corps were joined with the regular army, British commanders periodically issued general pardons on the condition that soldiers remain with their corps during the campaign. More than twenty came forward
among the Old Levies early in 1758, and the practice became so widespread that on one occasion in 1760 British officers watched redcoats openly desert in Lancaster to enlist in the provincials, believing they would once again be pardoned.28

The surviving muster rolls identify more than three hundred men from six companies who enlisted in the outlying counties of Lancaster, Chester, Bucks, and York in 1758 and 1759. An even greater proportion than the urban recruits—more than sixty percent—were laborers before their enlistment in the provincials. Rural artisans in the ranks practiced only twenty-four trades, about half as many as the urban recruits. Richard Walker's Bucks County company included only eight skilled tradesmen in 1758, and aside from David Barr, a thirty-year old Irish sailor, the carpenters, cooper, masons, shoemaker, blacksmith, weavers and wheelwright reflected the occupational needs of an agricultural community. But thirty-five of Walker's fifty soldiers, or seventy percent, were listed as laborers at the time of their enlistment, as were almost sixty percent Captain Charles McClung's Lancaster County recruits, who were joined by six weavers, two shoemakers, two blacksmiths and single practitioners of six other trades. Laborers constituted almost sixty percent John Haslett's 1758 recruits as well, and that figure rose to eighty-four percent in the company he raised for the following year's campaign. While more than half of the men that Captain George Reynolds had raised in 1756, and about twenty percent of James Burd's company the following year, had been farmers, only slightly more than two percent of the New Levies were identified as such, highlighting how far short of the Assembly's wish for a citizen army the provincial levies of the later campaigns fell. Far more prevalent were the landless wage laborers and artisans who were a growing segment of Pennsylvania's rural population in the late eighteenth century.29

Provincial recruits from the hinterlands were less diverse in origin than the Philadelphians. The proportion of Scots and Scots-Irish, more than half of the sample, was greater than in the urban companies. Native-born Pennsylvanians followed at just over a quarter of the whole, Englishmen at about five percent and Germans less than ten. This latter figure may be somewhat low, for several German subalterns recruited for companies whose rolls have not survived. But given the much higher proportions of Germans and English in Pennsylvania society-at-large, these groups would still have been a minority even if none of the native-born men had been Scots, Welsh or Scots-Irish. A cursory glance at the surnames of Pennsylvania-born recruits strongly suggests that the general underrepresentation of Englishmen and Germans among foreign-born men held among the native sons as well.

Although the acts establishing the provincial forces stated expressly that "nothing herein-contained shall extend or be construed...to authorize the enlisting of indentured servants or apprentices," the widespread recruitment of unfree labor by the regulars and legal wrangles over whether the King had the right to the service of all his subjects left the matter sufficiently ambiguous to allow many to join the provincial forces. Petitioners from Hanover Township in Lancaster County in early 1757 pleaded for a garrison of troops after the widespread enlistment of both their servants and young men left the neighborhood exposed to attack. At Fort Augusta in 1756, a party of Indians shot and scalped private James Patton, a servant belonging to James Pagan of Lancaster County. Some servants arranged to have part or all of their pay turned over to their masters in order to settle debts, as Captain John Potter, the com-
mander of Fort Loudoun in Cumberland County, noted on several occasions in his company account book for 1757. Potter paid private Nathaniel Burges’ wages to his former master, and held back five pounds from George Lennox’ pay. But master-servant relations were more often strained to the breaking point by the practice of releasing men from their indentures upon enlistment. Private George Parham’s master seized the eighteen-year old Welsh laborer’s bounty money and pay after a year of service under Captain James Armstrong in 1759, leaving the young man penniless. Masters frequently locked their servants in jail on false charges (usually debt) to prevent them from enlisting with regular and provincial officers, no doubt exacerbating the already tumultuous relations that characterized the institution of indentured servitude in eighteenth century Pennsylvania.30

Conclusion

Pennsylvania provincial soldiers, unlike their New England counterparts, seldom found an unbridgeable gulf between themselves and the regular army, for both bodies drew heavily from the cultural margins of the British empire. The regulars that served in the trans-Allegheny west during the decade-long conflict were by no means stereotypical redcoats. English officers and men were often the exception rather than the rule, for Braddock’s two regular corps were composed almost entirely of Scottish, Irish and American recruits. In Forbes’ 1758 army, “John Lobster” was likely to speak English as a second language if he spoke it at all, for a battalion of Gaelic-speaking Scottish Highlanders were joined by four companies of the Royal American Regiment, nearly half of whom were Germans recruited in Europe and the colonies. Most of the more than nine thousand men who joined the regular army in North America before 1758, many serving in the Ohio Valley campaigns of 1758-1764, came from Pennsylvania and Maryland as well.31

The pluralistic character of Pennsylvania’s provincial forces highlights the need for much additional work on the “Southern” Seven Years’ War. The general cultural homogeneity of the New England corps in which Joseph Plumb Martin and his predecessors served during the colonial wars and Revolution stood in marked contrast to the composition of provincial corps in the trans-Allegheny west and other parts of British North America during the eighteenth century. During the decade-long conflict, Pennsylvania’s provincial forces included seasoned veterans serving long-term enlistments; short-termers who moved freely between regular and provincial service; displaced backcountry farmers and Indian traders, servants, laborers, artisans and sailors. German, Scots, Irish, English and native dialects, customs and expectations mingled, often challenging commanders who wished to forge a community of interests among this diverse community. British Brigadier-General John Forbes expressed an oft-repeated observation about the character of British military society in the American war when he complained in 1758 to Lieutenant-Governor Francis Fauquier of Virginia that his little army was composed of officers and soldiers “collected from all parts of the globe, from the Highlands of Scotland, Germany & ca...to South Carolina.”32
Notes
7. Delaware attacks, Timothy Horsfield to Robert Morris [Bethlehem], 26 November 1755 and Conrad Weiser to William Parsons, 11 February 1756, APS Horsfield Papers; On general outbreak of the war, see Francis Jennings, Empire of Fortune: Crowns, Colonies and Tribes in the Seven Years War in America (New York: Knopf, 1988).
8. “A Number of the Inhabitants of Cumberland...
County Heartily Joined as a Company," 7 August 1755, PA 5th ser., vol. 1:37-38; “Petition of 32 Inhabitants of Tulpehocken and Heidelberg Townships,” 9 January 1761, PA 8th ser., vol. 6:5172; Edward Shippen to Morris, 4 November 1755, PA 1st ser., vol. 2:436-64; For recent methodological considerations of attributing ethnic or religious attributions to surnames, see works cited in Schwartz, “Mixed Multitude,” 305, n.1; for this essay, I avoid such attributions about native-born men, but I do assume that the likelihood of kin connections increases with the relative proportion of surname groupings.


15. Joseph Shippen to Edward Shippen, 4 March and 6 June 1757, HSP Shippen Papers; Hunter, Frontier Forts, 201-2; Anderson, A People’s Army, 111-141.


19. Joseph Shippen to to Edward Shippen Sr., Lancaster, 14 June 1757, HSP Shippen Papers; Muster rolls for Patterson PA 5th ser., vol. 1:85,
Wetherholt PA 5th ser., vol. 1:118, Shippen PA 5th ser., vol. 1:194-5, Burd PA 5th ser., vol. 1:92-3; for Armstrong see microfilm of the Potter Papers, series PP; Lyman C. Draper Papers, Historical Society of Wisconsin; also Hunter, Frontier Forts, 204, 440.

20. Pitt to Denny, Whitehall, 30 December 1757, PA 8th ser., vol. 6:4745-48; Denny to the Assembly, 22 June 1757, PA 8th ser., vol. 6:4588-93; Message of the Assembly to Denny, 8 August 1757, PA 8th ser., vol. 6:4612.

21. For Pitt's policy, see Lawrence Henry Gipson, The British Empire Before the American Revolution: The Victorious Years, 1758-1760 (New York: Knopf, 1949) 7:175-178; Message of the Assembly, 24 March 1758, PA 8th ser., vol. 6:4756-7; Sir John St. Clair to George Stevenson, Lancaster, 5 May 1758, Papers of John Forbes, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville; provincial officers' experience calculated from muster rolls in PA 5th ser., vol. 1:3-368.

22. Except where noted, all statements about the composition of the levies have been drawn from the printed muster rolls in PA 5th ser., vol. 1. For a more detailed discussion of the Pennsylvania provincial muster rolls, see my forthcoming dissertation, "Military Society in the Trans-Allegheny West, 1754-1765" (University of Virginia).

23. Petition, Carlisle Camp, 4 July 1758, Dalhousie Muniments, Scottish Records Office (hereafter SRO), Edinburgh, General Deposit 45/2/33/2; John Armstrong to [Richard Peters], Carlisle, 8 July 1758, PA 1st ser., vol. 3:446-8.

24. Unlike Pennsylvania, Massachusetts society was predominantly English in origin; Anderson, A People's Army, 232; on German enlistment see Schwartz, "Mixed Multitude", 237-40.


32. John Forbes to Francis Fauquier, Loyalhannon, 5 November 1758, SRO GD 45/2/51/2.