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THE MAKING OF A REVOLUTIONARY GENERAL
NATHANAEL GREEENE: 1742-1779

by

DAVID A. TRETLER

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

The Making of a Revolutionary General
Nathanael Greene: 1742-1779

by

David A. Tretler

By the end of the American Revolution, Nathanael Greene ranked second only to Washington as a leader of the Americans' fight for independence. How he developed the character that made him such a remarkably successful Revolutionary general, however, has never been established. Four influences seem to have been paramount in shaping Greene's character. First, his upbringing as a Rhode Island Quaker bequeathed to him a pronounced strain of self-reliance and anti-establishment and anti-authoritarian attitudes. Second, though raised a Quaker, he early began a lifelong devotion to reading in Enlightenment thought, the classics, history, literature, and legal, social, and political commentary. This reading sharpened an already impressive intellect. It also made a powerful case for reason and rationality, personal character, republican and representative forms of government, and public virtue, while discouraging luxury, ambition, and the pursuit of private interests. Third, when Greene reached his majority he became a full partner in his family's business, sharpening his managerial skills, establishing important contacts, and whetting his ambition. Finally, the colonies' worsening
relations with England radicalized Greene's political views and impelled him to begin an intensive study of military affairs. Thus he became a patriot and earned a brigadier general's commission in the Continental Army; and thus, through his energy, insight, and ability, he rose to the summit of American command. From 1775 to 1780 he served two long apprenticeships, first as a subordinate commander under Washington, and then as the army's quartermaster general, steadily refining his political and military thought. By the end of 1779, no American general understood better than Greene the need to preserve the army rather than aggressively seek battle, to protract the war and wear away British will, to establish a strong central government and standing army, and to sustain the people's support. He was ready for independent command.
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INTRODUCTION

On 14 December 1781 a fleet of 300 British ships carried the British garrison, 3,800 of their loyalist supporters, and some 5,000 of their negro slaves out of Charleston, South Carolina. The War for American Independence had ended in the south. That it ended victoriously for the Americans was largely the result of the year-long campaign waged by the troops of Major General Nathanael Greene, commander of American forces in the south. Greene had succeeded, in possibly the most challenging theater of the war, where others had failed miserably, thus solidifying his reputation as the one man, besides Washington, most responsible for American victory in the war.

Only thirty-three when the war began, Greene was one of few men to serve for the duration. He had had virtually no military experience when the rebellion began, being a partner in a modestly successful complex of iron forges, grist mills, stores and trading enterprises run by his family in East Greenwich, Rhode Island. He entered the war soon after the fighting at Lexington and Concord as commander of the Rhode Island brigade sent to join the New England army besieging Boston. Quickly proving his aptitude
for military command, Greene earned one of the eight brigadier general's commissions Congress issued for the newly-formed Continental Army in June 1775 and was then promoted to major general in August 1776. Through the campaigns of 1775, 1776, and 1777, Greene served as one of Washington's most trusted and able lieutenants, taking part in all but one of the major battles (Long Island) the army fought during this time and continually providing Washington with intelligent advice and assistance. In March 1778 Greene took over the Quartermaster General's Department and, despite the most adverse economic conditions and a storm of controversy over his methods, managed to improve the army's abysmal supply situation. The capstone of Greene's career began with his appointment to command of the southern theater in 1780. Operating with far fewer regular soldiers than the British and ridiculously inadequate logistics, Greene eventually drove the British back into a few defensive enclaves along the southern coast. In the process, he forced the British commander, Charles, Lord Cornwallis, to abandon the Carolinas and undertake operations in Virginia, thus setting the stage for Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown. This obvious failure of their southern strategy finally persuaded the British to give up the struggle to retain their American colonies. As the principal architect of this final frustration of British efforts, Nathanael Greene had come a long way from his iron
forge in Rhode Island.

Nathanael Greene's importance for students of the American Revolution, and of the revolutionary American, extends beyond his exploits on the battlefield, however. His intellect impressed his colleagues as much as his generalship. As Alexander Hamilton observed in a eulogy for Greene, had he not died prematurely in 1786, he almost certainly would have made a larger mark in the post-war political history of America than he had as a soldier in her Revolution. Intelligent and inquiring, Greene thought cogently and insightfully about most of the issues troubling Americans at that time. To further buttress his thinking and to expand his intellectual foundations, he also studied the most respected books on the subjects that interested him. Theology, political and social theory, and economic principles all drew his repeated attention and study. Not only did Greene study and think deeply about the pressing questions of his time, however, he also shared his ideas with others and entertained theirs in turn. His list of regular correspondents included military leaders as well as many of the men most prominent in state and national politics: John Adams, Joseph Reed, Gouverneur Morris, Benjamin Rush, Henry Laurens, Thomas Paine, and Alexander Hamilton, to name only a few. In other words, Greene's thoughts circulated among those Americans most responsible for shaping the new nation's principles and policies. A
diligent and unflagging letter-writer, Greene quickly
developed an effective style, making his letters some of the
most perceptive of the American Revolution. And having set
down his ideas with coherence and polish, Greene gave
posterity an especially clear presentation of one thoughtful
man's understanding of the issues of the day. Reading
Greene's correspondence, one can see how the realities of
their struggle with England and each other forced many
Americans to modify their political, social, and economic
theories as the war wore on. Nathanael Greene exemplified
the self-made American of the Revolution. Essentially
untrained for any of the positions he held, he parlayed his
native intelligence, thirst for knowledge, common sense, and
determination into the skills he needed for success.
Without him, and others like him, the American Revolution
might have ended differently.

Not surprisingly, historians already have devoted
considerable attention to Greene. The first biography of
General Greene, Memoirs of the Life and Campaigns of the
Hon. Nathanael Greene, appeared in 1819, written by Dr.
Charles Caldwell, Professor of Natural History at the
University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Caldwell based his book on a
limited selection of Greene's papers, covering only the
quartermaster years, and on a series of interviews with some
of General Greene's associates and descendants.
Consequently, Caldwell's book was too limited, as well as
being too hagiographic, to be satisfying. In 1822 a much more significant biography of Greene, William Johnson's two-volume *Sketches of the Life and Correspondence of Nathanael Greene*, appeared on the scene. Johnson, an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court, had access to many more of Greene's papers. As a result, he produced a much more detailed and better-researched biography than Caldwell's. Still, Johnson's book was not so objective or reliable as it might have been. A third biography, published in 1867-1871, came from General Greene's grandson, George Washington Greene. For his three-volume work, *The Life of Nathanael Greene: Major-General in the Army of the Revolution*, George Washington Greene diligently gathered copies of a large number of the general's papers and naturally benefitted from much family lore about his grandfather -- in his boyhood George Washington Greene even listened to stories from the general's two surviving brothers. Detailed and reasonably accurate, this work has remained a useful source today. In 1893, D. Appleton and Company published Francis Vinton Greene's *General Greene* as part of the Great Commanders series. This one-volume biography, written completely from secondary sources, focused on Nathanael Greene's military exploits and contained nothing new. The best biography of General Greene, Theodore Thayer's *Nathanael Greene: Strategist of the American Revolution*, appeared in 1960.
Thoroughly researched, well documented, and dispassionately critical, Thayer's book added tremendously to the literature on Greene. The most recent biography of General Greene, Elswyth Thane's *The Fighting Quaker: Nathanael Greene*, published in 1972, is a one-volume undocumented work written from secondary sources for the popular audience. There also is underway today a long-term project by the Rhode Island Historical Society to publish a multi-volume collection of Greene's papers. Meticulously researched and edited, these volumes, three of which already are in print, are a major contribution to the scholarship on Greene.

Despite the relative abundance of work done on Greene, however, there remains a serious gap in the literature. All of the biographies tend to be narrative rather than analytical, and they all, save Caldwell's, focus on the period of Greene's greatest achievements, his command of the southern theater from October 1780 through the end of the war. In particular, none of the scholarship undertaken to date, not even the edited collection of his papers, considers with any thoroughness Greene's early life and development. How and why was such an untrained and inexperienced Quaker businessman able to develop into a consummate revolutionary general? In examining this question, this thesis tries, first of all, to describe Greene's character, abilities, and ideas as they appeared in his writings and in his contemporaries' observations. Then,
it investigates what influences contributed to making Greene such a particularly successful American Revolutionary -- especially, where his ideas came from and how they developed and changed over time. Such an undertaking involves analyzing how his background, his books, his contemporaries' ideas, and the events of the time, shaped his thinking and actions. And while examining one man's growth to measure up to the challenges of the times, this thesis attempts as well to stimulate thought about the wide variety of often conflicting factors which shaped and motivated America's founding fathers.
CHAPTER I

FOUNDATION: 1742-1757

Nathanael Greene laid the foundation upon which he built his character during the first fifteen to twenty years of his life. As he grew to young manhood Greene drank deeply of Rhode Island's unique history and political and social climate, absorbing ideas about political relationships and rights that stayed with him throughout his life. Similarly, growing up in a family that had developed and continued to operate a variety of moderately prosperous business enterprises instilled in Greene the work habits that helped him conquer every task he was given later in life. Finally, his family's devotion to Quakerism shaped Greene in countless ways. Following Quaker practice, Greene's father educated his children only in the fundamentals of reading, writing, and arithmetic, and then restricted their reading to the Scriptures, Quaker tracts, and maybe a few practical books pertinent to the family's business. So, during these early years, Quakerism circumscribed Greene's intellectual horizons. Admittedly, it promoted some ideas he had to modify or jettison later, but at the same time it gave him some powerful concepts for
future use. In the end, Quakerism, along with the other powerful influences Greene encountered during the early portion of his life, primed him well for the role he would play later.

Nathanael Greene's ancestors came to Rhode Island in its earliest days, and so the history of this small colony forms an important part of his background. Rhode Island began as a refuge for those who could not get along in Massachusetts or Plymouth, a haven for a disparate collection of individualist religious dissenters and rebels against central authority. When the strict conformity demanded by the authorities in Massachusetts and Plymouth eventually persuaded a few Massachusetts and Plymouth settlers to leave and start their own settlements elsewhere, nearby Narragansett Bay, just south of Massachusetts and west of Plymouth, naturally beckoned. Large and relatively sheltered, Narragansett Bay offered a perfect base for maritime commerce, a vital and profitable activity for the colonists. Making it more attractive, the Bay also contained several good-sized habitable islands, the largest of which, Aquidneck Island, had a perfect natural harbor (the future site of Newport). After Massachusetts banished him, Roger Williams and a few followers established Providence, the first settlement of note in the Narragansett Bay area, in 1636 at the head of the Bay along the Seekonk River. Two years later a larger group of dissidents from
Massachusetts, devotees of the Antinomian, Anne Hutchinson, established the second major settlement at Narragansett Bay, Portsmouth, on Aquidneck Island. The volatility of these ultra-Puritan refugees from Massachusetts quickly revealed itself, however, as a group of the Portsmouth settlers under William Coddington, unhappy with the new religious establishment and eager to take advantage of the Bay's commercial potential moved south on Aquidneck Island to establish Newport. Then the Portsmouth community fractured even further as it expelled Samuel Gorton and his followers. Gorton and his adherents ended up settling an area south of Providence known then as the Shawomet Purchase, and ultimately as Warwick, in 1643. The Shawomet Purchase completed the initial settlement of Rhode Island — four highly independent and contentious communities dedicated to preserving their freedom of action.

While the four initial settlements established around Narragansett Bay shared a common distaste for the orthodox Puritanism of Massachusetts and Plymouth, they agreed on little else. Each community regarded the others as warily as it did its larger neighbors to the east and north. Unification under a single colonial jurisdiction came slowly and required several intermediate steps. One requirement was to establish a viable economy. The Rhode Island settlements began as subsistence agricultural communities, but before long each of the Narragansett Bay communities
made trade an important part of its economy. Beginning with small-scale trading networks around the shores of Narragansett Bay, Rhode Islanders soon stepped up to larger ventures to and from the other New England ports, and finally major commercial enterprises to Newfoundland, the southern colonies, and the Caribbean. A second requirement prior to unification under a single government was resolving the communities' various religious conflicts. Rigid, individualist, and anti-authoritarian, the religious zealots who founded Rhode Island's communities bickered constantly. To avoid complete fragmentation the Rhode Islanders grudgingly adopted religious toleration, leaving each group free to find its own expression of Christianity.

Finding an acceptable basis for governmental authority posed yet another problem for the new settlements. Eventually, the communities' leaders, led by Roger Williams, decided sanction by England might offer the only chance to legitimize the Narragansett Bay communities' governments. In 1644 Williams secured from Parliament (then in rebellion against Charles I) a patent authorizing a single government for all the Narragansett Bay settlements. Though the patent allowed Rhode Islanders great leeway in forming a government, this proved a difficult task. Each of the towns, particularly Newport, resisted surrendering its autonomy to a central government. At times, groups within the recalcitrant communities even allied themselves with the
efforts of Rhode Island's neighbors to seize part or all of
the Narragansett Bay area for themselves. Finally, each of
the towns decided joining with the others offered the most
security and instituted a workable central government in
1658. Rhode Island then safeguarded its future by
recognizing Charles II in 1660 and applying for a royal
charter. The charter Charles II granted in 1663 loosely and
liberally defined the form of government for Rhode Island.
It granted full sovereignty in Rhode Island to the General
Assembly, and stipulated only that the laws passed be
compatible with those of England. The Assembly combined all
powers of government -- legislative, executive, and judicial
-- into one body. Twice a year the freemen of each town
elected representatives to the Assembly, and annually they
elected a governor, deputy-governor, and ten assistants as
part of the Assembly. Rhode Island now existed as a single
colony, and while admittedly the smallest and most factious,
it proved more than able to hold its own against the
3 others.

Another important development began in Rhode Island
just as the towns established an effective central
government -- missionaries from the Society of Friends
introduced Rhode Islanders to Quakerism. George Fox and his
followers founded the Society of Friends in England in the
mid-seventeenth century, and soon afterwards the Society
sent missionaries to New England. Massachusetts acted
quickly and sternly against the Quakers, banishing Nicholas Upsall, a convert to Quakerism, in 1656. Upsall then moved to Aquidneck Island and began preaching Quakerism in the settlements there. Rhode Island proved fertile ground for the Quakers. First, it tolerated virtually any religious practice short of heathenism, licentiousness, and papacy. Second, the Antinomian sentiments of many Rhode Islanders, especially on Aquidneck, primed them to accept Quaker beliefs. As Sydney James has pointed out, Quakerism appealed to those Rhode Islanders who inclined toward mystical Christianity, the Antinomians and their kindred spirits. These men and women expected God to provide additional revelations to his followers beyond those already recorded in the Scriptures. And they counted on His giving daily ministry and guidance to all His believers.

Quakerism, with its emphasis on continuing revelation, the presence of the light or seed of Christ within every person, and pure and simple worship practices, exerted a powerful attraction on these people. Consequently, Quakerism rapidly blossomed along the shores of Narragansett Bay. Adherents of Quakerism multiplied so quickly during the 1660s that in 1672 they entered Rhode Island politics as a group and gained control of the colony's government. Events quickly proved the Quakers responsibility in office as the colony had to meet first a Dutch war threat in 1673 and then King Philip's War in 1676. In both instances, despite each
Quaker's personal commitment to pacifism, the government made full preparations for war. The Quakers lost control of the government following King Philip's War and afterward stopped participating in politics as a separate group. They remained, however, one of the principal denominations in Rhode Island, and as their numbers continued growing throughout the first half of the eighteenth century, so did their importance and influence. 6

As Rhode Island developed during the last quarter of the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth, three principal trends emerged. First, the colony's economy and society matured. The colony had grown slowly during its early years, even after establishing an effective central government and receiving a Royal charter. Then King Philip's War devastated Rhode Island and slowed its rate of development even further. For the next two decades Rhode Island remained a sparsely-populated collection of villages operating little better than a subsistence economy. Things finally began improving in 1697 when Samuel Cranston started his first term as governor, an office he held continuously until 1727. Cranston oversaw the transformation of Rhode Island into a prosperous agricultural province organized to support and aid the growth of Newport's trade. He asserted the central government's authority over the towns, tightened the government's tax-collecting power, forced resolution of
local disputes, improved transportation from the interior to the ports, opened new areas for settlement, and instituted commercial regulations designed to promote Newport's trade. As a result, Newport flourished during the first half of the eighteenth century, becoming one of the leading ports in America. And the rest of Rhode Island offered little resistance to Cranston's "Newport first" policy, because as Newport's trade boomed, the rest of Rhode Island prospered and grew as well. Unfortunately, the colonial wars of the mid-eighteenth century disrupted Newport's lines of commerce and undermined its prosperity. By this time, however, other parts of Rhode Island, particularly Providence, had played their supporting role so well they had become prosperous in their own right. So, even though Newport's prosperity faded somewhat, other Rhode Island towns and areas proved fully capable of sustaining the colony's now-vigorous economy and society.

As he worked to advance Rhode Island's development, Samuel Cranston played on another Rhode Island trait, determined resistance to attempted encroachments on its autonomy by its neighbors or London. From the colony's beginning, Rhode Islanders had been fighting off their larger neighbors' attempts to absorb parts or all of Rhode Island. This effort had involved both armed defense of the colony's borders and skillful negotiating in London. And Rhode Islanders also resisted vigorously London's attempted
inroads on their independence. In 1687 Rhode Island had lost its charter when London made the colony simply a subordinate jurisdiction under the newly-formed Dominion of New England. Rhode Islanders quickly followed Massachusetts's example in resisting the Dominion by refusing to pay taxes levied by the Royal administration. When, in the aftermath of England's Glorious Revolution, Bostonians rebelled against the Dominion in 1689 and imprisoned the Royal governor, Rhode Islanders quickly resurrected an independent government, reactivated their old charter, declared themselves loyal to the new English monarchs, and petitioned for confirmation of their charter. King William's willingness to overlook Rhode Island's indiscretions against his predecessor's authority and restore the colony's charter surely confirmed in Rhode Islanders' minds their ability to assert their autonomy even against London's control.

Samuel Cranston built on these early expressions of Rhode Island's autonomy as he struggled to maintain the colony's independence and freedom of action during the colonial wars of the early eighteenth century. London, working to generate adequate military power in America, tried to bring the colonies under some tighter controls and to tie Rhode Island's activities more closely to those of Massachusetts and Connecticut. Faced with this threat to Rhode Island autonomy, Cranston hoped to avoid accepting any
limitations on the colony's charter privileges even while appearing to cooperate fully with London. Thus he insisted on Rhode Island's equality with Massachusetts and Connecticut in joint British-colonial military operations, quietly upheld Rhode Island's *de facto* separate admiralty jurisdiction, and minimized appeals from Rhode Island's courts to the Privy Council in London. And Cranston's success in these efforts to hold London at arm's length encouraged his successors to continue them right up to the end of the colonial period. London's regulation of colonial trade provided another focal point for Rhode Island resistance. Rhode Islanders avoided onerous trade restrictions by smuggling in prohibited or highly taxed goods and by paying British customs officials generous bribes to look the other way. This circumvention of British trade regulations increased markedly after the Molasses Act of 1733, as Rhode Islanders found both the Act's restraints on their trade and London's sudden unwillingness to continue overlooking the colony's transgressions unacceptable.

Getting away with these various acts of resistance against British authority helped persuade Rhode Islanders they were an essentially independent, or at least autonomous, political entity.

While Rhode Islanders could agree on the need to defend their autonomy and freedom of action against encroachments by London or their neighbors, they apparently could agree on
little else. Throughout the colonial period, Rhode Island was a hotbed of factionalism. Rhode Island society seethed with diversity and disputes, marked much more by its contentiousness than by its unity of purpose. This led individual Rhode Islanders to band together in constantly shifting groups or factions in an effort to generate sufficient power to protect their particular interests. Religious toleration played a prominent part in fostering this factionalism. First, it attracted to Rhode Island the most individualist and dissident citizens of the other colonies, those least able or willing to subordinate their private interests to the public good. Second, it made necessary separation of church and state, and this robbed the colony's government of an influential prod to obedience and conformity, the moral sanctions of the church. Third, toleration of virtually all religious denominations greatly confused and disrupted the social hierarchy, undermining yet another force for obedience and conformity. Rhode Island's governmental structure did little to discourage factionalism, either. Rhode Island's political, economic, and social leaders could protect their interests only by ensuring friendly representation in the all-powerful Assembly. This made guaranteeing sufficient votes for the semi-annual election of representatives critical, and thus the colony's leaders concentrated on building loyal coalitions of groups by pandering to various factions' local
interests. And once started, partisan rivalries quickly gained a life of their own, soon becoming the end as well as the means of politics in Rhode Island. Rhode Island's factionalism finally culminated in the Ward-Hopkins struggle, which dominated the colony's politics from 1757 to the eve of the Revolution. Since the Greene family was closely associated with Samuel Ward, one of the protagonists in this partisan struggle, this high point of Rhode Island factionalism underlay Nathanael Greene's development, joining Rhode Island's religious toleration, Quakerism, social diversity, commercial energy, and political autonomy as the colony's legacy to Greene.

Nathanael Greene's family established itself in Rhode Island early in the colony's history. In the early 1630s, John Greene, a Puritan surgeon from Salisbury, England, came to Massachusetts seeking a better life. Apparently the orthodox Puritanism of Massachusetts did not suit Greene, however, because in 1640 he turned up in Providence, Rhode Island, as a follower of Samuel Gorton. When Providence leaders asked Gorton to leave their town not many months later, Greene followed him to Pawtuxet. After the Gortonists again made themselves unwelcome after only a short stay, Greene joined in their decision to found their own community. In 1643 the Gortonists bought a tract of land along Narragansett Bay just south of Providence known as the Shawomet Purchase and established the town of Warwick. And
in 1654 they expanded their holdings by buying from the
Indians the Potowomut peninsula, a narrow finger of land
between the Hunt River and Greenwich Bay south of Warwick.
Here the Rhode Island government incorporated a new town,
East Greenwich, in 1678. And here Jabez Greene, grandson of
John Greene, settled the Greene family in 1684 when he built
the family home on a small rise overlooking the Hunt River,
just a few miles upstream from Narragansett Bay.

It did not take the Greenes long to gain a solid
economic foothold on the Potowomut peninsula. The few
hundred acres of land Jabez Greene owned behind his new
house proved too hilly and sandy to do more than provide
food for his own family's table, so in partnership with
Thomas Hill he began building a solid commercial
establishment along the river. Before long the Greenes
operated a grist mill, iron forge, and store; later they
would add a few small ships for carrying their own wares and
some other cargoes around Narragansett Bay. After Jabez
Greene died, his sons managed the family business in
partnership, but the third son, Nathanael, steadily assumed
the principal responsibility. Under his guidance, the
Greenes' commercial enterprises prospered. And the
complexity of their business kept the Greenes in touch with
a much wider world than the Potowomut peninsula. The
Greenes brought wheat from Virginia for the grist mill, iron
from Pennsylvania and coal from Virginia for the forges, and
assorted goods for the store from England via Boston. They then sold their flour and iron manufactures through Providence and Newport. Nathanael Greene, Sr., the general's father, did so well, in fact, that in 1740 he bought out his brothers and other partners, and in 1741 he opened a second iron forge in Coventry, Rhode Island, about ten miles from the Potowomut site. Though not part of the wealthiest elite, by the time of General Greene's birth, his family had created a very comfortable existence for themselves.

Evidence found to date does not thoroughly illuminate Nathanael Greene's early life. Still, there is enough information to sketch a reasonably accurate and complete picture. And these facts reveal a comfortable boyhood in a locally prominent and influential family whose situation offered a good springboard into the higher levels of Rhode Island society. Greene was born on July 27, 1742, in the family home at Potowomut. Two half-brothers by his father's first wife, Phoebe Greene, and one full brother, Jacob, preceded him. Four more full brothers, William, Elihu, Christopher, and Perry, followed by 1749. In 1753 his mother, the former Mary Mott, died and his father married Mary Rodman, but no more children followed. As mentioned above, Nathanael's father had built the family business into one of the most prosperous commercial enterprises in the area. Nathanael's father also preached in the East Greenwich Quaker meeting, which added to his local
reputation and influence. Moreover, having been in Rhode Island for four generations, the Greenes, a fertile family, were spread throughout Rhode Island society. Seemingly at least one member of the family, however distantly related, always occupied a prominent post in the colony's government. Two of Nathanael's distant uncles, William and Philip Greene of Warwick, both represented that town in the Assembly; and William Greene would go on to serve as chief justice of Rhode Island in 1777 and as governor from 1778 to 1786. The family's most important connection almost certainly was with the Wards of Warwick. Samuel Ward, leader of the faction opposing Stephen Hopkins in the Ward-Hopkins controversy and one of the colony's most prominent politicians, served three terms as Rhode Island's governor in the mid-1760s and later represented Rhode Island at the First Continental Congress. Nathanael struck up a close friendship with Samuel Ward's son and courted one of his daughters. Nathanael's younger brother, Christopher, married another Ward daughter, and when she died, married yet another. William Greene, the future governor, married a sister of Anna Ray, Samuel Ward's wife; and Nathanael ended up marrying the daughter of another Ray sister. The Greene family was well enough connected to offer Nathanael a number of opportunities for improving his social and economic status.

It seems logical to assume two principal influences
dominated Nathanael Greene's early life, the family business and Quakerism. All the Greene boys worked full days in the fields and the mills as soon as they were able. Nathanael confirmed this in a letter to Samuel Ward, Jr.: "My Father was a Man of Industry and brought up his Children to Business. Early very early when I should have been in the pursuit of Knowledge, I was diging into the Bowels of the Earth after wealth..." Nathanael's near total involvement in laboring in the Greene family's various business enterprises left him with a dedication to hard work, a commitment to quality in all he undertook, and a conviction that hard, honest, able labor paved the road to success. Nathanael and his family epitomized that junction of the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism celebrated by Max Weber.

In addition to running a prosperous local business, however, Nathanael's father also preached in the East Greenwich Quaker meeting. No evidence pinpoints exactly when the Greenes adopted Quakerism, but they probably did so not too long after Samuel Gorton's death in the late 1670s, as Gorton's following quickly collapsed without his magnetic personality to hold it together. Quakers gave their ministers neither formal sanction nor formal training. When the Quakers met for worship, they all sat quietly in a simple, unadorned room and waited for God to inspire them. Then, as soon as one of them felt the Spirit, that person
stood and delivered the received message to the congregation. This could take the form of a sermon or a prayer. The worship ended when it became apparent no one else was going to receive inspiration that day. After a congregation had worshipped together regularly over a period of several months, a few members distinguished themselves by the frequency of their inspiration and the force of their preaching. Often, these "habitual" preachers then would sit on a separate bench at the front of the room facing the rest of the congregation. Nathanael's father fell into this category; and, while this may not have warranted the social status and respect given formally-trained ministers in other denominations, it probably said much more than a college degree about his piety and commitment. According to Nathanael, his father "was a man of great Piety, had an excellent understanding; and was govern'd in his conduct by Humanity and kind Benevolence." His devotion to his religion played an important part in his family's life.

Nathanael Greene, Sr. demanded that his family govern itself in accordance with his religion's tenets. This fact powerfully affected Nathanael Jr.'s education. Three basic ideas governed Quakers' attitudes toward educating their children. First, avoid any experiences which might corrupt one's thoughts, tastes, or actions. Second, waste no time on frivolous activities that do not contribute to serving God or one's vocation. Third, learn whatever is needed
properly to serve God and one's vocation. In keeping with these beliefs, Quakers condemned virtually all education as frivolous or corrupting. As Greene himself explained, the Quakers initially did not denounce all education; they intended only "to prohibit their Youth from reading such Books as tended to make them Fools by industry; and in the midst of an appearing profusion of Knowledge to want common Sense." When Quaker leaders in the early days of the movement encountered graduates of the clergy-dominated colleges, they saw only pedantry, false zeal, and imperiousness. Unfortunately, the Quaker leaders then "argued from the abuse to the disuse of the thing," and "soon confounded the useful with the useless Branches of Literature...." Quakers strongly supported teaching their children to read so they could study The Bible, the writings of Quaker theologians, and, possibly, material that would better prepare them for their vocations. Reading beyond this, however, certainly would be frivolous and possibly even corrupting. Quakers also tried to give their children the rudiments of writing and mathematics, considering these skills essential in all vocations. Nathanael Greene's education followed this pattern closely. He learned to read and write and do basic mathematics, but, working in the family's fields and mills allowed him little time for further education. Nathanael said his father's mind "was over shadow'd with prejudices against Literary
Accomplishments." Of his own education, Nathanael declared,

I feel the mist of Ignorance to surround me, for my own part I was Educated a Quaker, and amongst the most Supersticious sort, and that of its self is a sufficient Obstacle to cramp the best of Geniuses; much more mine. This constrained manner of Educating their Youth, has prov'd a fine Nursery of Ignorance and Supersticon, instead of piety....18

His family's Quakerism limited Nathanael Greene's early education to The Bible and a few standard Quaker tracts.

In learning to read, Nathanael Greene used a short primer written by George Fox and Ellis Hookes, Instructions for Right Spelling and Plain Directions for Reading and Writing True English. Fox, founder of The Society of Friends, wrote this small text in 1643 so that Quakers could teach their children to read and write using materials that would not waste their time or taint their minds. All the lessons in Right Spelling used religious materials, specifically Quaker theology, to make their points. Students worked through sections on basic theology, the marks of a true Christian, the names of the children of God, the names of the Devil in Scriptures, the significance of the proper names in the Scriptures, a catechism, and proverbs, to name only a few. Even the lessons on grammatical techniques used religious material. For example, in the lists of words illustrating syllabication (about twenty words per letter), almost all had direct theological connotations.

Right Spelling neatly summarized the principal Quaker
tenets. It proclaimed Christ to be the Light or Truth, the true idea of God, good, come to save mankind. This Light shines within the heart of every person, enabling anyone to manifest the Christ and so form himself into the image of God. This transformation constitutes salvation. These two notions -- that everyone has direct access to the Christ and that every person can earn salvation -- departed radically from orthodox Puritanism and made Quakerism a much more hopeful religion. Fox emphasized in this primer that God is spiritual and men must worship Him in the spirit. All the outward, material paraphernalia and practices used by other faiths, including even their church buildings, simply adulterated and confounded true spiritual worship. Along the same line, Right Spelling delineated the marks of false ministers: they preach for hire; they arrange outward means to sustain their power and position; they are proud and ambitious; they profess peace but make war when opposed; and they minister without God's inspiration. Fox insisted that Quakers followed the Scriptures more closely than any other faith. Thus, because of the Scriptures' example, Quakers used "thee" and "thou," and refused to pay and receive marks of respect such as doffing hats, bowing, and using flattering titles. Finally, throughout Right Spelling, Fox implicitly argued for egalitarianism. A theology that allowed everyone direct access to God, maintained everyone could earn salvation, condemned the pride and covetousness
of other faiths' ministers, and refused marks of respect took a long step away from the hierarchy manifest in the Puritans' concept of election. With Right Spelling as his primer, Nathanael Greene got an early introduction to ideas encouraging egalitarianism and anti-authoritarianism.

Other than Right Spelling and The Bible, Greene probably read little more than Quaker writings during the early part of his life. These included two classics: George Fox's The Journal; and Robert Barclay's An Apology for the True Christian Divinity, as the Same is Held Forth, and Preached by the People, Called, in Scorn, Quakers. In his Journal, George Fox recounts his experiences and thoughts while preaching the Quaker faith in England and on one short trip to Barbados during the latter half of the seventeenth century. Though not organized to press home a single, cohesive argument, The Journal does contain many invaluable observations and statements delineating the essence of Quaker theology. Four principal groups of ideas stand out in the The Journal: Fox's theological beliefs; his recommended religious practices; his criticisms of other faiths' beliefs and practices; and his positions on certain political and social issues. Reading George Fox's Journal introduced Greene to what was, for that time, an extraordinarily benevolent and hopeful theology. And these theological notions may have begun laying the foundation in Greene's mind for those revolutionary ideas which so
influenced him and his colleagues in later years.

George Fox preached a doctrine that offered everyone the opportunity to earn salvation and that emphasized spiritualizing one's life rather than adhering to a system of outward religious laws and practices. Fox based his theology on the notion that a portion of the Christ, the Light, or true idea of God, lodges within every person. Because of this, anyone can discern and avoid sin and ungodliness, without the intercession of a priest or minister. By following the leadings of the Light a person can make himself into a perfect expression of God's will. Thus, every sinner, no matter how depraved or hardened, can reform, and every person can gain salvation. Moreover, anyone can free himself from sin during his life on earth. Fox denied the concept of predestination, either of the elect or of the damned, and he rejected the view of man as born inescapably into sin. According to Fox, man had been perfect before Adam's fall and man would be perfect again. God had sent the Christ to destroy the Devil, and Jesus had told the people, "be ye, therefore, perfect." Man would regain perfection when he learned from the Light within, the Christ, how to become the image and likeness of God, and this could occur here or hereafter.

In Fox's theology, the leadings of the Light far outweighed any other teachings, including the Scriptures, in guiding man to salvation. Fox did not consider the
Scriptures either sacrosanct, infallible, or God's final revelation to man. He insisted man must receive and express the Christ, not just profess the Scriptures, however knowledgeably. While he accepted The Bible as the words of God, he pointed out it was not God the Word. Many other theologians argued that the Scriptures were, literally, the Spirit of God. Fox, on the other hand, maintained that while the activity of the Spirit had produced them, the Scriptures were not the Spirit itself. To understand the Scriptures, therefore, one first had to understand and manifest the Spirit. Moreover, this view of the relation between the Scriptures and the Spirit, essentially made the Spirit available to everyone, not just to those who studied The Bible. As Fox said, the gospel meant the power of God, not the New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. And God made His power directly available to anyone and everyone who reached out to embrace it.

Three characteristics typified the religious practices promoted by George Fox: emphasis on spiritual import rather than outward forms; simplicity or purity; and literal adherence to Scriptural example. Fox insisted on a pure and simple worship service so that Quakers could focus on spiritual communication with God. He maintained that seminary education could not create ministers because men were qualified as ministers only to the degree they received and manifested the Spirit, and receiving the Spirit had
nothing to do with natural, or human education. Peter and John preached the Christ more knowledgeably and effectively than any men ever had even though neither could read. Quakers, therefore, accepted as ministers those members of their congregation who best expressed the Christ, whether educated or not. Fox advocated meeting for worship in plain, simple buildings, or members' houses, or even in the open air because it helped the congregation focus on the spiritual purpose of their worship. Fox also emphasized spiritual import when he talked about the sacraments. Too much outward ceremony in the celebration of the sacraments diverted attention from their true significance and purpose. In the same manner, Fox explained fasting not as a temporary abstention from eating followed by an immediate return to normal practices, but as the continual effort to spiritualize one's life. And he encouraged his followers to ignore the fashions of this world because they diverted attention from following the Christ.

Many would view these religious practices advocated by Fox as enlightened and beneficial reforms, and well they may have been. Other practices promoted by Fox, however, based on a literal interpretation of The Bible, seemed either harmful or ridiculous. Fox insisted Quakers use "thee" and "thou" when addressing others and that they neither give nor receive this world's marks of respect and honor. He instructed Quakers to use the Scriptural names for the days
of the week and the months. Similarly, he opposed swearing oaths and marriage by priests on the grounds of Scriptural examples. These practices naturally caused Quakers considerable trouble in seventeenth-century society, and *The Journal* abounds with instances of Fox and other Quakers being hauled before the authorities for failing to show proper deference or otherwise to follow conventional practices. Though not always wise in his advocacy of religious practices for Quakers, Fox did maintain consistency, however. He always aimed at the simplest and purest worship possible.

Fox devoted almost as much of *The Journal* to criticizing other religions as he did to explaining Quaker tenets. In general, Fox chastised other faiths for their lack of spirituality, for worshipping by words rather than works; and he focused his criticisms of other religions on their ministers. He likened most ministers to the scribes and pharisees of old who adhered to the letter but not to the Spirit of the Scriptures. As mentioned earlier, Fox maintained that the New Testament declared the end of a priesthood based on temples, tithes, and offerings. In its place, Christ introduced the ministry of spirituality, love, service, and sacrifice. Preachers and ministers too often still sought the chief place in the assembly, expected men to call them master, prayed conspicuously, preached and ministered for hire, sued men for tithes, accepted the wages
of unrighteousness as gifts and rewards, made a trade of their words, and preached from their own rather than God's inspiration. Ostentatious church buildings were just another manifestation of ministers' love of recognition and status, as well as of their concentration on the form rather than the spirit of worship. Fox also blamed other Christians' persecution of Quakers directly on their ministers' lack of spiritual charity. Fox dismissed ministers' claims that they were essential intermediaries between men and God, without whom men could neither communicate with nor learn about God. Fox, instead, declared God promised to speak to men and teach them of Himself through His Christ. As did other Protestants, Fox singled out Catholicism for special condemnation. He denounced the Catholics' degeneration from the practices of the primitive church, maintaining no Scriptural foundations existed for cloisters for nuns and monks, praying by beads and images, making crosses, forbidding meats, and putting people to death for heresy. He also denied the Catholic beliefs that people could approach God only through a priest, that a priest's blessing made bread and wine actually part of the whole body of the Christ, and that God condemned many of his children to a purgatory.

Fox may have intended his criticisms of other religions primarily to point out to Quakers the need for purity in their own worship. With these denunciations of other
religions' tenets and practices, however, and especially of their ministers, priests, and associated church hierarchies, Fox also denied the foundation of much of the religious establishment's authority. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such a denial constituted an essentially revolutionary position, because, as Perry Miller has demonstrated, the religious establishment figured prominently in sustaining the authority of the state. Thus reading George Fox could have primed his followers to adopt revolutionary positions on other issues in the future.

Throughout his Journal Fox advocated a special social role for Quakers. In particular he emphasized both the separateness and benevolence of Quakerism. Fox considered Quakerism a way of life uniquely apart from the rest of the world. In keeping with this view, he declared that Quakers should marry within the faith, that they should not observe the fast and holy days of heathens and papists, and that Quakers' special integrity and forthrightness would make them prosperous businessmen. The entire Journal chronicles the trials and triumphs of a chosen people. It details how others persecuted and oppressed Quakers simply because Quaker beliefs, essentially harmless, did not coincide with reigning views. Nevertheless, even when faced with the most severe trials, Quakers persevered and stuck to their principles. Consequently, God rewarded the Quakers' steadfastness with triumph over every adversity and punished
their tormentors appropriately. Clearly, Fox believed God intended the Quakers to live apart from worldly ways and would bless them for doing so.

Fox also stressed the necessity of Quakers practicing benevolence. For example, he campaigned against the death penalty and other harsh punishments for relatively minor offenses. More importantly, he championed toleration. As an adjunct to his denunciations of other Christians' persecution of the Quakers, Fox argued for freedom of conscience, for toleration of all forms of religious expression, except, of course, papacy, prelacy, and licentiousness. And he condemned those Christian sovereigns, including the Pope, who imprisoned members of other Christian faiths. The same benevolent spirit that motivated Fox's toleration also generated his pacifism. He deplored sovereigns who professed the Christ but would not love their enemies. He declared all wars stemmed from human lusts and insisted that all Quakers live in the covenant of peace which existed before wars and strife. He clearly expected his followers not to bear arms or engage in any form of military activity. Finally, Fox's belief in the universality of the Christ led him to a rough form of egalitarianism. As he pointed out, the Light lodged within everyone, including blacks and Indians. He, himself, ministered to Indians and blacks during his trips to America and Barbados, considering them fully capable of
understanding, accepting, and manifesting Christianity. And while no radical abolitionist, Fox did urge kind treatment and eventual freedom for slaves. These social values and duties that Fox urged on Quakers would fit easily into the Revolutionary ideology Nathanael Greene accepted later in his life.

Reading Fox was intended to strengthen Nathanael Greene's adherence to Quakerism. A young mind with the intellectual power and curiosity of Nathanael's, however, could react in an entirely different manner. Quaker theology first of all freed Greene from the nagging doubts and dependence on a church establishment that were the usual lot of more orthodox Puritans. Having confidence that he already possessed the Light, and that he could win salvation through his own effort, gave Greene a freedom of thought and action not common in Puritan New England. Greene also absorbed the individualist and egalitarian sentiments that ran throughout Fox's Journal. Most important, the anti-authority and anti-establishment attitudes that permeated Fox's writings stamped Greene indelibly. Fox exhorted his fellow Quakers to stand firm in defiance of any tradition and authority that did not ring true. Ironically, his acceptance of this call to resist unreasonable tradition and authority would eventually lead Greene out of Quakerism and into a non-denominational "rational" Christianity.

In contrast to George Fox's Journal, Robert Barclay
wrote his *Apology* to present a clear, cohesive, and systematic explanation of Quaker theology. He agreed at all points with the random collection of observations Fox made in his *Journal*, but he provided much more elaboration and justification for each of the fifteen major Quaker tenets he discussed. Thus, anyone reading the *Apology* after Fox's *Journal* could still gain additional important insights about Quakerism. By the same token, Barclay tended simply to reinforce the ideas Greene had already extracted from Fox. For example, Barclay's discussion of the Light within shows how he, unwittingly perhaps, emphasized different aspects of a theological point even while agreeing fully with Fox. As did Fox, Barclay maintained the universality of God's gift of the Light within. Then, expanding on this concept, Barclay described God's Church as unitary, universal, and catholic, made up of everyone who had chosen to walk in God's Light. Within this universal Church, different denominations had chosen to approach God in their own particular ways. Membership in the one universal Church did not depend on belonging to one of the subordinate denominations, however, or even on a knowledge of the Scriptures or the history of Jesus. It resulted from manifesting the Christ, the natural product of responding to the Light within, of which Light Barclay says, "it is not in him a lazy, dumb, useless thing, but it moveth, actuateth, governeth, instructeth, and teacheth him all things
whatsoever are needfull for him to know, yea bringeth all things to his remembrance." And if man did not need knowledge of the Scriptures to gain admission to the universal Church, he certainly did not need the doctrines, ceremonies, or present ministrations of any particular church. Moreover, claimed Barclay, only direct spiritual revelation, channeled through the Light within, could give man the knowledge of God he needed to manifest the Christ. Thus Barclay's interpretation of the notion of the Light within led him to deemphasize church membership and to dismiss the standard sources of knowledge and truth—Scriptures, tradition, and reason—as merely secondary and unreliable. These were heady ideas to plant in the mind of a thoughtful teenager.

Barclay also made important observations about the qualifications of other churches' ministers, the value of good works in earning salvation, and the proper nature of worship services. Barclay criticized other churches' ministers as roundly as George Fox. He pointed out that while other churches specified natural wisdom, education, and the grace of God as qualifications for their ministers, they required (by law) only the first two of these and considered the third as simply desirable. Barclay dismissed human education as a necessary qualification for ministers. Prospective ministers needed true learning, familiarity with the inward teachings and inspirations of God's spirit.
Barclay called school divinity a monster, made up of "some Scriptural notions of Truth and the Heathenish terms and maxims; complicated far beyond the simple truth by additions of worldly wisdom because men thought the simple truth too mean a thing for their attentions." He then pointed out that the danger of establishing the clergy as a separate class qualified only by their natural accomplishments was a host of unrighteous ministers pursuing lives of idleness and pleasure. Furthermore, the Scriptures provided no basis for the hierarchies other churches established to control and administer their ministers.

On the issue of good works, Barclay disputed the arguments of both those who insisted that good works and obedience to the outward requirements of their religion earned salvation and those who maintained that faith alone won salvation regardless of works. He declared that only spiritualization of thought and motives led to sanctification; good works and obedience alone counted nothing toward salvation. At the same time, true spiritual regeneration, as opposed to mere faith, would always manifest itself in good works. Thus Barclay put Quakerism on a precarious middle ground between Arminianism and Antinomianism. Another area where Barclay offered insights beyond those in Fox's Journal was the proper nature of worship services. As had Fox, Barclay scored the Catholics and other Protestants for worshipping in outward form only,
and he echoed Fox's definition of true worship as a spiritual act, undertaken only at God's inspiration. Then Barclay went on to claim that each of the outward forms of worship merely represented different types of individual spiritualization. By this argument, he implied that these outward forms possessed no intrinsic value or necessity. Thus, in this interpretation, as in the others examined earlier, Barclay not only undermined the authority of the religious establishment, he created grounds for pursuing a full Christian life outside of any specific denomination.

As he elaborated on various Quaker tenets in the Apology, Barclay also touched on areas outside theology. Several of his statements had important implications in the realm of natural philosophy. As a corollary to the belief that man could gain a true knowledge of God only by direct inner revelation, he downplayed man's natural capacities. Man's reason played no part in gaining salvation, being totally insufficient to enable man to discover and adhere to God's laws. In fact, even man's most earnest efforts to use his natural capacities in the pursuit of salvation would end in corruption, because they could culminate only in creations of human rather than God's will. Man's reason could corrupt his efforts to serve God in another way as well. Barclay maintained that man idolized the inventions of his own brain, and once man conceived natural forms for worshipping God, these quickly dominated his practice. The
degeneration of the ancient Jews' worship illustrated how preoccupation with the form of outward worship practices could eventually efface the spiritual import of the ceremonies. Because the natural man delighted so much in his own inventions, the Jews modified and added to the religious practices God had given them, and this thoroughly corrupted their worship. For Barclay, these deficiencies in man's natural capacities made them suspect under all circumstances.

Political theory was another subject that drew some significant comments from Barclay. Pointing out that God has full power over men's consciences, he declared no government has authority to force any man's conscience. At the same time, however, men have a reciprocal responsibility to society. No man may, on the grounds of conscience, do anything to prejudice his neighbor's life or estate; nor may he do anything inconsistent with the good of society as a whole. As a corollary to the dictum that only God has power over men's consciences, Barclay also denied churches' right to control the consciences of their members. The power and persuasion of God propagated the Gospel, not whips, chains, prisons, banishings, and executions. This thought then led Barclay to make the interesting observation that constancy and quiet determination conquered opposition and persecution, excellent advice for future Revolutionaries. Barclay also engaged in some important social commentary in
the Apology. According to him, despite their abhorrence of extravagance, Quakers were not levelers. They recognized men fell naturally into several classes by virtue of their wealth, family standing, and education. Further, Quakers approved those from the more prosperous classes spending more and using finer things, so long as they did so with moderation for those of their station. After all, God gave man the things of this world to enjoy in moderation. But even as he blessed the wealthy's enjoyment of their riches, he imposed a less pleasing duty on the lower orders, contentment with their station and exaltation in their spiritual growth. Apparently, the egalitarian tendencies of Quakerism did not always triumph over the elitist attitudes of seventeenth-century society.

Nathanael Greene's early education tended toward the one-dimensional. By and large Quakerism defined what young Nathanael learned. It governed the activities of his daily life and the content of his education. And while he probably read more books than those just discussed, the subject matter remained overwhelmingly the same. As Greene digested the ideas in these books and absorbed the influences of his environment, he established attitudes and patterns of thought that served as the foundation for his perceptions and ideas the rest of his life. There was much in Quakerism that found, at best, only temporary lodging in a mind as perceptive and analytical as young Nathanael's --
ideas like pacifism, distrust of man's natural capacities, and a host of unenjoyable and impractical religious practices. Still, he accepted Quakerism's arguments for universal salvation, direct communication with God by means of the Light within, and spiritual rather than outward worship. He imbibed the Quaker heritage of conquering adversity by perseverance and adherence to principle, accepted living "apart" and in defiance of many of the majority's views, and rejected the authority of New England's religious establishment. In many ways his Rhode Island heritage reinforced the ideas he was absorbing from Quakerism. He breathed the atmosphere of Rhode Island's individualism and autonomy, enjoyed the benefits of religious toleration, and took pride in the colony's determined stands against much more powerful opponents. He also got an introduction the workings of factional politics and the beginnings of an education in how to manipulate faction to the best advantage. Finally, from his family he learned not only the value of hard work, but also the importance of all the connections that bind together a family and its web of friends and associates. Never would Greene forget the value to his own interests of helping look out for the interests of his family and friends. It was upon these influences that Nathanael Greene built his future; and, as events proved, they established a firm foundation for his career as an American Revolutionary.
NOTES


2. James, pp. 33-50, 156-57.


5. James, pp. 41-44.

6. Worrall, pp. 31-41.


11. Greene, Life of Nathanael Greene, I, 30-34; Thayer, p. 17.


15. Worrall, p. 91.


19. Thayer, p. 20; Greene, p. 5.


30. Barclay, p. 223.


CHAPTER II

EARLY ENLIGHTENMENT: 1757-1763

While Nathanael Greene easily could have settled into the life of a moderately prosperous Quaker businessman, something pushed him to reach beyond the comfortable local world his family had created. In his mid-teens he began his own personal enlightenment, reading books that offered a wider perspective on the world than that provided by his Quaker education. This began an effort at self-education that lasted Greene's entire life and carried him to the highest levels of power and influence in America. As he first moved beyond the narrowly-circumscribed circle of books allowed by Quakerism, it seems unlikely that his reading tastes would have strayed too far afield. In all probability he stayed close to theology and natural philosophy; thus, the books that influenced him most during this period were likely the classics and writings that promoted the rationalism of the Enlightenment. In Enlightenment thought Greene encountered strong arguments for a distant and impersonal God who had created the world long ago and then left it to run by itself according to the rational laws He had established. Consequently, by their
reason and not by His intervention and revelation would men solve their problems and win their salvation. As a complement to the rationalist ideas of Enlightenment thinkers, the classics offered secular approaches to securing personal happiness, social stability, and political freedom and security. These different sets of complementary ideas challenged the Quaker philosophy that had dominated Greene's earliest education and outlook. His perspectives on the world now began to change. Blending exciting ideas from the Enlightenment and the classics with those ideas from Quaker thought that still remained persuasive, he began developing a new understanding of the world and his own place in it.

Why Nathanael Greene wanted more education remains unclear. His biographers all repeat an apocryphal story told first by William Johnson. According to this story, Nathanael, in his mid-teens, met William Giles while the latter, a student at Yale, was vacationing in East Greenwich. After talking with Giles for several hours about his studies at Yale, Nathanael supposedly developed an intense desire to further his own education. Thus, he asked his father for more schooling, and his father, seeing the ultimate impossibility of denying Nathanael a broader education, hired a tutor to instruct him, mainly in geometry and Latin. At the same time, Greene began reading on his own whatever books he could get his hands on, especially taking
every opportunity to visit his uncle Judge Philip Greene in
Warwick so he could read in the Judge's extensive library.
Not long after, on a business trip to Newport, Greene
supposedly went into a bookstore and there met Reverend Ezra
Stiles, pastor of Second Congregational Church in Newport
and later president of Yale University. Stiles, discerning
Greene's confusion about what books to buy, guided his
selections and encouraged even further his desire to learn. 1

Whether this story is true or not, one fact remains
clear, someone or something did prompt in young Nathanael
Greene a tremendous thirst for knowledge. Possibly, as
Johnson asserts, Giles and Stiles were responsible. Equally
likely, people's changing attitudes about education
encouraged Greene's desire to learn more. Rationalists
argued that man's role in winning salvation centered on
improving his faculties; and even some Quakers, seeing how
college training had enabled Robert Barclay and William Penn
to advance the Quaker cause, now accepted the value of more
education for their children. A vital factor had to be
Greene's own chemistry. His correspondence reveals a
powerful intellect with exceptional curiosity, scope and
analytical ability. A mind like that needed employment, and
how better to employ it than by putting it to work digesting
new and challenging ideas. Whatever the cause, and it
likely was some combination of all the above, Greene did
receive tutoring from Adam Maxwell of East Greenwich, he did
begin reading and studying whatever important books he could find, and he did begin building his own personal library. Indeed, his biographers claim that by the time he was thirty Greene had acquired a library of between two hundred and two hundred and fifty volumes, an impressive accomplishment for a man of moderate means and virtually no formal education. Once begun, Greene's personal enlightenment progressed rapidly, and, as it did, it changed his thinking and propelled him into the mainstream of colonial affairs.

One book that helped Greene begin his personal enlightenment was Bishop Joseph Butler's *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature*. In his *Analogy* Butler provided a first step away from Quakerism toward a rationalist theology. Butler argued that a correspondence or likeness existed between the system of Christian religion and the realities of nature as man had discovered them using his God-given reason. For all the questionable issues in Christian theology, he argued, similar phenomena existed in nature, thus preventing critics from invalidating Christian doctrine on the basis of those issues. In other words, all the extraordinary processes claimed by Christianity concurred with the principles and actual processes of nature.

Specifically, Butler centered his arguments on the following points. The belief in a future life is supported by all the changes men can undergo during their human lives
without dying -- changes like growth and maturation, loss of limbs and organs, and sleep and unconsciousness. Obviously, man's living agent exists independent of matter and therefore need not necessarily die with the body's destruction or dissolution. The belief that man's happiness in his future life depends on his behavior in the present life is supported by the fact that man earns happiness or misery in the present life by his actions. Moreover, even so-called natural rewards and punishments come from God ultimately as the author of nature. The belief that God rewards and punishes righteously, or according to Christian definitions of virtue and vice, is supported by the fact that virtue prospers in the long run in the natural world. Vice may gain great material advantages, but virtue earns the superior rewards of peace of mind and others' goodwill. The belief that the present life serves as a test and discipline for future life agrees with the natural experience of youth being a test and discipline for adulthood. Furthermore, a trial implies temptations not to do what is right, and life on earth reveals many such temptations. Virtue, then, which earns God's reward, consists of foregoing those desires, temptations, whose satisfaction would produce evil consequences. Finally, the belief that Christ serves as a mediator for men's sins is supported by the great number of mediators serving men in the present life.
Butler drew some other important conclusions from his analogy between nature and Christianity. He countered the criticism that Christianity lost credibility because it had not been revealed to men uniformly and universally on the grounds that nature bestowed many of her gifts unevenly. Uneven revelation of Christianity also could serve God's trial for men by testing their faith, steadfastness, and diligence in pursuit of the truth. Butler also dismissed the notion of predestination, or necessity, on the grounds that natural experience shows men have moral choices. Furthermore, the notions that everything is pre-ordained or that every action is the necessary result of some previous event contradicted the evidence that God rewards or punishes men for their actions. Thus, Bishop Butler tried to bring Christianity in line with natural experience. As he did so, however, he took away some of Christianity's mysticism and spirituality, making it much easier for Christians not only to be a part of but to concentrate on the affairs of this world.

On one issue, however, Bishop Butler refused to compromise with rationalist theology. He would not concede any possibility that man could gain an understanding of God's system, including nature's design, through his natural capacities. He insisted that most of God's system would remain incomprehensible to man. As a result, man would often encounter seeming discrepancies between processes and
events in this world and the principles of love, truth, justice, and benevolence by which God governed his universe. In reality, however, if men could understand the entirety of God's scheme, contradictions would disappear, and men would see that things seemingly working for evil actually were working toward a greater good. Similarly, judging parts of the Scriptures as foolish, inconsistent, incorrect, or unnatural compared to the evidence of the natural world assumed a greater than possible understanding of God. Man was unqualified to judge the Scriptures. How could man presume to pass judgement on the content or form of God's revelation? Beyond a doubt, God's revelation contained many things unexpected and seemingly miraculous to natural man. At the same time, it was important to remember that those who wrote the Scriptures also understood the revelation only partially. Just as a compiler of another's memoirs cannot fully fathom his author's meanings, so the compilers of the Scriptures could not have known God's full intent and meaning. Obviously, then, men must interpret the Scriptures, and this gave each man the same potential chance to discern the truth as another. Finally, man's inability thoroughly to understand God's system raised doubts about the legitimacy of the outward church. Men must not confuse the ceremonies and laws they had designed for the outward practice of Christianity with inward morality. Whenever inner inspirations conflicted with outward practices,
Scripture and reason both demanded that men obey the inward moral impulse. Thus, while he did try to accommodate Christianity to the processes of this world, Butler refused the final step of granting man's natural reason the power to discover God's laws.

Besides the various analogies he drew between nature and Christianity, Butler also advanced other arguments supporting the validity of Christian theology. First, he pointed out that the many miracles and fulfilled prophecies recounted in The Bible offer direct proof of the truth of Christianity. Moreover, the Scriptural testimony of these various miracles and prophecies appears historically correct. Second, natural religion has developed in harmony with Scriptural injunctions. In other words, the moral laws men have devised to govern their conduct in this present life conformed quite closely to the tenets of Christianity, even in societies where men knew nothing about Christianity. Lest someone brashly assume revealed religion, i.e., Christianity, was therefore unnecessary, however, Butler quickly stressed the value of revealed religion: it reinforces the principles of natural religion; it provides testimony of the power and efficacy of religion; and it details additional moral laws and duties. As a third argument supporting the validity of Christianity, Butler asserts the historical accuracy of the Scriptures. Repeated careful research has proved Scriptural history consistent
with natural history at virtually every point. Fourth, Butler offers the experience of the Jewish nation as proof of Christianity. The sad fate of a people who, though chosen by God to be His own, forsook His guidance should convince any skeptics of God's power and of His determination that men live in obedience to the laws and duties He has revealed. Finally, Butler argues that the extraordinary success of Christianity proves its truth. How could any false system have spread throughout the world and flourished for over fifteen hundred years.

In many ways Butler's arguments dovetailed with ideas Greene had taken from Fox. Butler denied predestination, he emphasized every man's responsibility to interpret the Scriptures, he implicitly accepted that salvation was available to all and attainable through individual effort, he stressed the spiritual import rather than the outward form of worship, and he consequently dismissed the necessity of a church establishment. At the same time, Butler's arguments about the analogy between religious precepts and natural phenomena directly opposed the mystical, spiritual quality of Quakerism. Though Butler insisted again and again on the superiority of revealed religion, his entire argument focused a reader's attention on the correspondence of revealed religion to natural processes and natural morality. By trying to prove Christianity's consistency with the ways of this world, Butler actually encouraged
Greene to turn further away from revealed, or spiritual, Christianity and involve himself more heavily in the processes and problems of this world.

Bishop Butler's *Analogy* provided Nathanael Greene with an easy transition from the mysticism of Quakerism to the rationalism of the Enlightenment, one of the most powerful forces shaping Americans' thinking in the mid-eighteenth century. Henry Steele Commager has argued that while the Europeans started and defined the Enlightenment, Americans put it into practice. America "not only embraced the body of Enlightenment principles, but wrote them into law, crystallized them into institutions, and put them to work. That as much as the winning of independence and the creation of the nation, was the American Revolution." At the heart of the Enlightenment lay several loosely-related ideas joined by the common denominator of rationality: belief in a universe governed by a distant God through the laws of nature he had established; faith that men could and were supposed to use the reason God gave them to discover and obey those laws; confidence that God intended for every man to win happiness; and commitment to progress and the perfectibility of man. Not surprisingly, the Enlightenment produced new theological interpretations, and Sidney Ahlstrom has neatly summarized the tenets of enlightened, or "rational," Christianity. Essentially Arminian, it argued for a large human role in redemption, stressed man's innate
goodness, and accepted man's freedom to make moral choices and thus fall from grace. It understood God as impersonal, a long-ago and far-away lawgiver. It simplified, or de-mystified, Christian faith by focusing chiefly on ethics, stressing common-sense interpretations over traditions, and by viewing the sacraments as merely symbols for worship. And it promoted optimism and faith in human progress.

One of the important books that introduced Greene to the full force of Enlightenment rationalism was John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, which incorporated most of the above principles of the Enlightenment. Locke wrote this *Essay*, he said, to "search out the bounds between opinion and knowledge; and examine by what measures, in things whereof we have no certain knowledge, we ought to regulate our assent and moderate our persuasions." Locke declared that man employs the faculty of understanding "with a greater and more constant delight than any of the others;" moreover, the joy of learning flows equally from the pursuit as from the acquisition. With this in mind, Locke cautioned his readers never to accept another's ideas untested, but always to investigate and ponder thoroughly every opinion. And the test to which Locke would subject every opinion was none other than rationality, as defined by man's natural reason working with the evidence and laws of nature. These had to be intoxicating ideas for a young man just awakening to the potential of his own mind and to the
thrill of gaining intellectual mastery over his world.

Locke divided his *Essay* roughly into four principal sections. The first dealt with how the mind acquires the ideas it is certain are true, and it centered around Locke's proposition that the mind contains no innate ideas. He based this claim on the fact that none of the ideas proposed as innate receive universal assent. In actuality, people learn certain ideas at such an early age and hear those ideas so often thereafter that they simply accept them as innate, universal and incontrovertible. Locke declared that even men's ideas about God, much less all the derivative principles about morals, virtue, and religion, are not innate. Instead, God gives man reason and other necessary faculties to discover the essential principles about Himself and His relationship to mankind. According to Locke, men received ideas from two sources, sensation and reflection. Sensation involves just what it implies, the reports of a person's senses about various objects. Reflection means the mind's manipulation of the various ideas acquired by sensation. Thus, in Locke's view, all the materials for man's knowledge come from perception, the mind's reception of sensations. Until a man has sensations, he has no ideas, and this rules out innate ideas. Locke called the ideas acquired by sensation simple ideas, which dealt with the solidity, shape, size, motion, number, color, temperature, smell, taste, and sound of objects. The ideas produced by
the mind's reflection Locke called complex ideas, which
dealt with substances, processes (or modes), and relations.
The mind produces complex ideas at first by combining,
comparing, and abstracting upon the simple ideas it has
picked up through sensation. Later, it can use the complex
ideas it has already created along with its simple ideas to
form yet more complex ideas. In this way, even though
building on a limited original source of simple ideas, the
mind enjoys virtually infinite potential to create new
complex ideas. The important point about Locke's
explanation of how man acquires ideas was that he based it
completely on man's physical capacities, on his senses and
his reason. Locke argued that man's knowledge proceeds
entirely from his own efforts; God's inspiration or
revelation plays absolutely no role. Moreover, the
fallibility of this physical capacity and reasoning process
meant that all ideas were open to question. In this way,
Locke gave Greene a powerful impetus for questioning
accepted ways of thinking about and doing things.

As he explained the origin and nature of the various
types of simple and complex ideas the mind could acquire,
Locke also delved into several aspects of God's relation to
man and the universe. Locke understood God as a divine
clockmaker, who long ago had created the universe with
absolute technical precision and then had left it to run
according to the laws He had established. God gave each
part of his creation exactly those capacities needed to fulfill its role in the intricate design, and to man He gave sufficient reason to discover the laws that governed the universe and man's proper relation to Himself. Locke also understood God as an infinite and eternal spirit. Men seldom can comprehend infinity, however, he said, because they cannot distinguish between space and body. They cannot imagine space without body, being unable to conceive of unended real space extending forever beyond the known universe. This, then, limits men's idea of God. Surprisingly, for one so focused on the workings of the natural world, Locke attributed equal reality to matter and spirit. He postulated a long chain of spiritual species ascending from man to God which can assume mortal shapes and faculties when needed. Man, in fact, consists of a spirit united with a body. Each specific union of a body and a spirit constitutes a particular man. Personal identity, however, or awareness of self, stemmed from the conscious spirit, or soul, within each each man. This spirit does not die with the body and, conceivably, could inhabit different bodies in succession. Interestingly, Locke theorized that loss of consciousness or memory caused a new personal identity.

In addition to speculating about the natures of God and man and their relation, Locke also addressed morality. He defined morality in terms of pleasure and pain, which he
explained as simple ideas that accompany every sensation or reflection man has. Absolute good and evil are simply pleasure and pain, or those actions and thoughts which cause pleasure and pain. Moral good and evil, therefore, are determined by whether one conforms to or deviates from some law. This produces either pleasure or pain, delivered by the will and power of the lawmaker. Locke identified three types of moral law: divine, which specifies duties to God; civil, which specifies crimes; and social, which specifies virtues and vices. Divine law provides the touchstone for all moral rectitude, but Locke believed that social law actually exercises more influence because its sanctions are the good or bad opinions of neighbors. Often, many of a society's virtues and vices coincide with divine law because society sees divine law as furthering its interests. At the same time, many other virtues and vices are not absolute rights and wrongs; in reality they are no more than those actions which earn social reputation or discredit. Thus Locke cast most morality in a relativistic light. Locke's views on God and man reveal both the inconsistency and the essential thrust of enlightened Christianity. Locke understood God as an infinite, omnipotent spirit. Yet he judged reality and the truth of hypotheses about man's place in God's universe by the evidence of the material world. Enlightened thinkers had no time for ethereal theorizing. They aimed thoroughly to understand and subdue the present
world.

After explaining how man acquires ideas, Locke went on to examine how man generated knowledge from his ideas and how accurate that knowledge was. He concluded man's knowledge lacked considerable certainty even under the best circumstances. Locke defined knowledge as nothing but the perception of agreement or disagreement between any of the mind's ideas; and he identified four different types of knowledge: identity, that an idea is or is not the same as another; coexistence, that an ideas does or does not coexist with another; relation, that an idea has this or that relation with another; and reality, that an idea does or does not actually exist outside the mind. Thus the certainty of knowledge depends first on the adequacy of a man's ideas. Simple ideas always conform to reality because they are produced by an object's operations on the senses, and this cannot be less than a complete reaction. Complex ideas concerning processes or relations also completely represent their originals because the originals always are conceptions of the mind. Complex ideas of substances, however, never conform to reality because they cannot include all the simple ideas which make up the qualities of an original. This failure of complex ideas to represent fully their original substances creates tremendous potential for erroneous knowledge, as substances figure in virtually all man's thinking.
Locke argued that the accuracy of knowledge also depends on the method by which the mind determines agreement or disagreement. Intuitive knowledge occurs when the mind immediately perceives agreement or disagreement upon the first presentation of ideas. The foundation of certainty, intuition conforms as much to reality as its constituent ideas. When it cannot immediately compare two ideas, however, the mind attempts demonstration, or reasoning, to generate knowledge. It employs intermediate ideas as stepping stones to help it perceive agreement or disagreement between the two original ideas. This process also provides certainty as long as intuitive knowledge makes possible each intermediate step. Knowledge gained by any thought process short of demonstration, however, constitutes opinion or faith only. Moreover, at times accidents cause the mind to establish a correspondence between two completely separate and unrelated ideas. Unfortunately, the mind incorporates these fallacious relations into some of its demonstrations and thus creates errors in knowledge men consider certain.

Locke concluded his *Essay* by emphasizing two common sources of erroneous knowledge. Far too often, he said, men accept the likelihood of a proposition based on its conformity to their own experience and the testimony of witnesses. Contrary to the common practice of venerating traditions as they grow older, however, testimony weakens
over time unless repeated. "What in one age was affirmed on slight grounds, can never after come to be more valid in future ages, by being often repeated. But the farther still it is from the original, the less valid it is...." Tradition should never be the grounds for accepting a proposition as certain knowledge. Neither should faith.

Man should acquire knowledge, Locke argued, primarily through reason. He defined reason as the discovery of certainty or probability by deduction from ideas gained from natural faculties, i.e., sensation or reflection. Faith, on the other hand, he defined as accepting a proposition not by virtue of the mind's deduction but simply because of the supposed credibility of the proposer. Thus men accept some propositions, though no natural evidence supports them, because they believe God proposed them through some extraordinary communication. Locke insisted, however, that faith should never supplant man's certain knowledge, for why would God give man a revelation invalidating the natural faculties and power of reasoning He has given man? As Locke described it, man's knowledge was far less than certain. This view required its adherents to examine skeptically every piece of supposed knowledge. It made men thinkers and theorists. At the same time it undermined the great body of traditional knowledge, as well as all the religious, social, political, and economic practices it supported. Further, it established the proofs of this world
as the only reliable criteria for certain knowledge.

Locke's "enlightened" rationalism helped pull Greene even further from the other-worldly focus of Quakerism. Locke convinced him that the world operated according to rational natural laws rather than divine intervention. Man could understand his world and solve its problems best through the application of his reason rather than by divine revelation. And Greene could accept the Enlightenment's view of the world without fearing for his soul because Fox and Barclay and Butler had already assured him he possessed within himself all he needed to gain salvation. Once Greene had accepted the Enlightenment's explanation of the universe and man's place in it, his confidence in his own natural capacities began to grow. And Locke reinforced that confidence and boosted Greene's inclination to use his natural capacities with his demonstration of the uncertainty of virtually all knowledge and his exhortation to judge critically every received opinion, tradition and practice. From this point, Greene would have had to tackle every problem he confronted with energy, enthusiasm and optimism.

While Bishop Butler and John Locke introduced Nathanael Greene to the rationalism of the Enlightenment, Horace introduced him to the classics. Richard Gummere has declared that the period from 1750 to 1775 was the high point of classical influence in America, the period when Americans most tried to imitate the ancients' examples. Men
in public service, particularly, styled themselves after the
great republicans of Rome and Greece. Colleges centered
their curricula around the classics, and those men who
educated themselves patterned their programs of self-study
after the colleges. As John Witherspoon of Princeton said,
study of the classics taught literary skill and prepared
young men for public service. Americans studied the
classics from a pragmatic point of view, aiming to draw
lessons for their own daily lives from the ancients' experiences. They viewed the classics as an excellent
source for examples of personal liberty, republican forms,
civic virtues, and heroic behavior. Americans peppered
their writings during this period with references to the
classics and used classical examples to support both sides
of virtually every political and social issue. Still, some
historians of this period question the extent of the
classics' influence. They rightly point out that using
classical examples to guide behavior required belief in the
uniformity and constancy of human nature. Many Americans,
however, believed in progress, believed their society had
advanced so far beyond the ancients that it made comparisons
impossible. Thus, how could eighteenth-century Americans
use examples from the ancient world? Other historians
maintain that only an elite minority of Americans in this
period studied the classics seriously. For the others, the
classics provided only the veneer of gentlemanly culture.
They knew the classics only superficially and used them only 24
illustratively rather than determinatively. Truth, no
doubt, lies somewhere between these two views of the
classics' importance. Even if only a few Americans studied
the classics seriously, the continuous exposure to classical
principles and values had to shape Americans' thinking to
some degree.

Classical principles and values certainly influenced
Nathanael Greene, and one of the chief vehicles was Horace's 25
Odes. Arthur Sherbo, editor of a modern edition of
Christopher Smart's translation of Horace, the same
translation Greene read, says "Horace's influence on the
writers and readers of the literature of the first three
quarters of the eighteenth century was stronger and more 26
pervasive than that of any other classical poet." Sherbo
also quotes from one of Arthur Murphy's Grays-Inn Journal
essays:

Horace is the writer of all antiquity, who
looked at life with an eye of penetration; and has
painted the manners and passions of men with the
most elegant touches of his art. . . . I have
often thought that an excellent system of morality
might be extracted out of his writings. . . . A
translation of all his excellent ethic
observations . . . would, in my opinion, be the
best collection of thoughts on various subjects,
that has ever been offered to the public.27

Horace's Odes offered Greene many lessons on
caracter. In an ode "To Virgil," after the latter's death,
Horace mourned the loss of one so "mod'rate, just and
kind." and lamented "Or where will ye his equal find, / 0
modesty, and faith, the fair allies / Of justice, and the
28
truth without disguise?" In another ode, he declared,

A man of truth and honour prov'd,
And in his great resolves unmov'd,
No clam'rous mob his principles can stir,
Nor ev'n a tyrant's threat his manly heart
deter.29

Horace urged that young men be taught steadfastness and
virtue by severe toil and training. And he praised
Regulus's behavior in the face of defeat - constancy,
unquenchable valor, and determination to resist. Soldiers
who surrender, unable to face death, forfeited their valour
and virtue:

What! shall the soldier bought and sold
Be braver when exchang'd for gold?
You add but loss unto an impious stain,
The poison'd wool its whiteness never can
regain.30

Horace argued for generosity, declaring "A vaster realm you
shall subdue, / By conq'ring of a greedy mind." And in this
admonition, "Force void of counsel rushes down / By its own
weight - but there's a crown / Of blest event for courage
mixt with care," he disparaged rashness. Throughout his
Odes Horace urged a distinctive set of values on his
readers.

Fate's unpredictability and death's inevitability lay
at the bottom of Horace's approach to life. Accepting these
as truths, he aimed to take as much pleasure out of life as
possible. Horace seldom referred to a God, writing much more often about fate and the laws of nature. Still, in a few excerpts, he expressed basic religious sentiments applicable to all men in all times. In an ode "To Himself" he regretted having been an infrequent worshipper and acknowledged the gods' omnipotence. Nevertheless, in a later ode "To Phidile," he observed that the extravagance of a man's worship did not earn the gods' favor; instead, men must entreat the gods with "a spotless hand ... mix'd with 32 good intent." Horace criticized man's presumptuous and reckless challenges to the laws of nature. He stood in awe of those who challenged the seas, lamented Prometheus's stealing fire from the gods, and mourned Daedalus's attempt to fly, declaring,

Nothing too difficult for man,  
He'll scale the skies in folly, if he can;  
Nor by his vices every day  
Will give Jove leave his wrathful bolts to stay.33

In his ode "Upon the Tree by Whose Sudden Fall He Had Liked to Have Been Crushed," Horace said man cannot foretell his fate nor anticipate his death. And, since death knocks equally at the poor and the privileged man's door, man should bear his fortune, high or low, with grace, patience, and moderation. Man should not squander opportunities for present pleasure in worries about an inevitable death, for "E'en while we speak the moments fly, / Be greedy of
34 to-day." Even lengthy grieving over a loved one's death is unnatural and unhealthy, as nature's griefs - wind, rain, and snow storms - illustrate. Because life is so brief and death so certain, Horace declared no interest in wealth or exalted position. Why should he spend his limited time on earth sunk in avarice, building up a fortune at the expense of honor, friends, family, and devotion which would mean nothing once death came? Again and again, Horace urged men to lay aside both public cares and private misfortunes and take what pleasure they could. Live as merrily as possible, reveling most when trials are most severe: "Enquire not of to-morrow's fate, / And whatsoever chance await." In essence, accept fate's unpredictability and death's inevitability and enjoy life to the fullest while you have it.

Horace devoted special attention to the evils of avarice and ambition. In "To Iccius" he criticized a fellow philosopher for abandoning his studies and enlisting as a mercenary soldier. And in "Upon the Rich and Covetous" he chastised his fellow Romans for their covetous spirit, and pointed out how their greed robbed them of ease and peace of mind:

For why? Ill-gotten goods increase -
Yet after all their toil and time mis-spent,
They have acquir'd by far too much for peace,
And far too little to insure content. 36

He deplored the Romans' luxury, and declared their
forefathers' "private fortunes were but small, / But great
the common fund of all." In his ode "To the Romans on the
Corrupt Manners of His Age," Horace condemned the
degenerating business, social, and, especially, sexual
values of his countrymen. Further, he cautioned that
dissolution weakened a society's ability to defend itself,
and pointed out, "Oft heav'n, for our neglect, has doleful
vengeance sent." As another example of the dangers of
avarice and ambition, he cites Paris's greedy determination
to have Helen of Troy, which precipitated a disastrous
war. In an ode "To Maecenas" Horace spurned
acquisitiveness, saying "The more a man himself refrains, /
The more from heav'n his virtue gains." He said he wanted
only the modest pleasures of nature and a comfortable
sufficiency. Neither riches, power, nor gratification of
every desire brings peace of mind; true contentment comes
from enjoying what one already possesses, no matter how
meager. Moderating one's tastes offers the only defense
against bribery, for "Anxiety pursues increase, / And
craving never likes to cease - ." Moreover, gold gains
access through virtually every barred door. Thus, Horace
described the virtuous magistrate as follows:

    Of greedy fraud the judge severe,
    Forbearing all attractive gold;
    ... the magistrate prefers
    Things honest to his private ends,
    And bribing villains with a look deters,
    And draws against the crowd, and his fair fame
defends.
He is not happy, rightly nam'd,
Whom large possessions still increase -
By him more truly is that title claim'd,
Who holds the gifts divine in prudence and in
peace;
Who's able hardship to sustain,
And dreads vile actions worse than death
He for his friends counts any loss a gain,
And for his country's cause will give his dying
breath.39

Horace considered ambition and avarice to be fatal character
flaws. They destroyed virtue, which underpins both personal
and social strength and prosperity.

It is quite likely Greene read more of the classics
than just Horace. His biographers claim he read Homer and
Plutarch; and the holdings of the public library in Newport
suggest Cicero, Tacitus, and Sallust as well. Thus in the
area of natural philosophy Greene no doubt discovered the
ancients' insistence that the law of nature, interpreted as
God's law in the eighteenth century, took precedence over
man's law in every case. Men always could appeal to a
higher law when dissatisfied with the workings of man's
law. Moreover, Cicero argued that nature had written her
law into every man's heart. This line of thought clearly
undermined the authority of church hierarchies and argued
for separation of civil and ecclesiastical affairs, an
explosive issue in the New England theocracies. Concerning
political theory Greene quite likely had come across the
Greeks' conception of colonies as independent of their
mother country in every way except sentiment and loyalty.
And almost without doubt he had read some account of Aristotle's explanation of the basic forms of government. Aristotle identified three fundamental types of government, monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, which he defined as rule of the one, the few, and the many. Each had its own strengths, and each could provide freedom, justice, and security for its citizens. Conversely, rulers in each type could abuse their powers, leading to tyranny, oligarchy, or anarchy. By mixing all three types in a single government, however, a society could take advantage of the strengths of all three while at the same time creating a system of separated powers to prevent abuses of power. The Roman republic at the height of its power offered a perfect example of an effectively mixed government. Classical notions such as these were widespread in the American colonies during the second half of the eighteenth century, as evidenced by their frequent mention in colonial writings. They helped shape the colonists' conceptions about private and public character, about the proper form and role of government, and about the colonies' relations with England. And Nathanael Greene shared in this educational process.

By the time he reached his twenties, Nathanael Greene's perspectives had widened considerably. He had begun his personal enlightenment in his mid-teens and quickly moved well beyond the narrow confines of his Quaker education. In
the process he effectively left Quakerism behind and threw himself headlong into the affairs of this world. Impelled in large part by his exceptional intellectual energy and curiosity, Greene flew in the face of Quakerism's strictures against excessive education and undertook a program of self-education which lasted his entire life and made him one of the most literate men of the American Revolution. During the first stage of his self-education Joseph Butler's *Analogy* added fuel to the arguments Fox and Barclay had made for rejecting the authority of the religious establishment. Butler also provided more justification for the inclination Greene had gotten from Fox and Barclay to practice Christianity outside any specific denomination. Most important, however, Butler offered Greene a partial compromise with the Enlightenment, accommodating Christianity to the realities of the material world. John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, which explained the workings of the mind and the uncertainty of man's knowledge about any subject, embraced the Enlightenment's rationalism completely. Locke drove a wedge between men and God and focused men's efforts to increase their knowledge and improve their situations completely on their natural faculties and the realities of this world. Furthermore, he undermined traditions and established systems of thought by stressing the necessity, and the joy, of questioning every bit of received knowledge. Men must acquire ideas and
formulate knowledge for themselves if they want the highest probability of certainty. Horace's *Odes* ranged over a wide variety of topics, but three general principles predominated: equanimity in the face of good or bad fortune, moderate tastes, and both personal and public virtue. As Greene read these and similar books carefully, distilling from them important ideas and lessons to guide his own life, he left behind the narrow vision and passive mentality of the provincial Quaker. He grew more and more interested in the workings of this world and in ways to change them. He took pride in his natural capacities, worked hard to develop them, and put them to use improving his situation in the material world.
NOTES


15. Locke, I, 1-3.
21. Locke, III, 100.
22. Locke, III, 126-34.


28. Sherbo, p. 73.


32. Sherbo, pp. 84, 150.


CHAPTER III

YOUNG BUSINESSMAN: 1763-1772

On Nathanael Greene's first forays outside the narrow confines of Quaker thought, he had delved into the rationalist philosophy of the Enlightenment and the humanistic traditions of the classics. As he entered adulthood, however, his interests naturally focused more and more on political ideas, and this natural interest in political matters was piqued even further by the important changes taking place in his world. The Seven Years War left England with a sizable national debt. As a first step to increase revenues, England in 1763 began enforcing the three decades-old Molasses Act. This enforcement seriously disrupted Rhode Island's economy. A year later, Parliament passed the Sugar Act and followed that the next year with the Stamp Act. These two "taxes," assessed after years of "salutary neglect," sparked surprisingly strong American resistance and a storm of political debate. The Townshend Duties of 1767-68 kept the political controversies alive and in many Americans' minds added more fuel to the fire. Thus, as Greene joined the roll of voters in 1764, began circulating in the local business world, and finally
established himself in a comfortable position as manager of the family's forge in Coventry, he found himself involved, even if only marginally, in exciting political developments.

As Greene considered in his own mind the pressing political questions of the day, his views were shaped largely by his education and experiences. He first approached those questions from the perspectives of his early background, which had primed him well for his role as a revolutionary. He had breathed deeply the air of independent action, diversity, and unconventionality that characterized colonial Rhode Island. He had accepted the challenge of flying in the face of established tradition and power that was the lot of every Quaker in Puritan New England. Equally important, he accepted the Quaker doctrine of a benevolent God Who had given every man the capacity to secure his own salvation. Believing he could win his own salvation by accommodating the "Light within" gave Greene uncommon psychological and emotional strength and stability. Greene then had absorbed the rationalism of the Enlightenment, with its conviction that man could both understand and improve his world. Finally, he had steeped himself in classical virtues — equanimity, moderation, generosity, and steadfastness. To this general foundation he then began adding important political ideas. Four books stand out as representative of the ideas influencing him at
this time: Charles Rollin's *The Ancient History of the Egyptians, Carthaginians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes and Persians, Macedonians and Grecians*; Paul de Rapin-Thoyras's *The History of England, as Well Ecclesiastical as Civil*; Sir William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*; and Cesare Beccaria's *On Crimes and Punishments*. These books brought him into contact with the set of political principles espoused by the radical Whig opposition in England, principles which, as Bernard Bailyn has pointed out, lay at the heart of America's Revolution and which fit comfortably into the philosophical framework Greene was developing, becoming the core of his own political outlook. Thus, Nathanael Greene was in the mainstream of developing Revolutionary thought.

By 1763, his twenty-first year, Nathanael Greene had grown into a capable and perceptive young man whose comfortable situation left him well-placed to advance his fortunes even further. William Johnson and George Washington Greene described him as a man with impressive physical presence. He stood five-ten and was built solidly, with broad shoulders and strong legs. An early accident had left his right knee somewhat stiffened so that he walked with a slight limp; however, it did not limit his physical activity and he remained a vigorously active man. He carried himself, if not with easy grace, then with control and self-possession. Though not handsome, he had a ruddy
and pleasant face. His most remarkable feature was his eyes, pale blue with a direct and penetrating gaze. A high-spirited man, he balanced his quick temper with a generous sense of humor. Taking into account also his striking intelligence, the overall impression Greene must have made was of a powerful personal magnetism and self-confidence.

As soon as Greene came of age, he qualified for the franchise, as a parcel of land bequeathed him by his half-brother, Thomas, who died in 1760, gave him the required property ownership of forty pounds sterling. Thus in 1764 the town of Warwick admitted him as a freeman. At about the same time, his father made him a full partner in the family business, where he joined his older brother, Jacob. Interestingly, a suit filed in East Greenwich on December 23, 1766, against one Johnathan Slocum for debts owed is the earliest document that has been found with Nathanael Greene's name on it. Accompanying it is a bill written by Greene himself. An important aspect of his new role in the family business, important because it brought him into closer contact with political issues, was his responsibility for legal matters. Apparently his father had given him some legal work to do as early as 1760, and many years later he claimed to have handled all the family's litigations before the war. Thus, as the American colonies entered a decade of political controversy, Greene entered
adulthood as a confident and competent young man with new business and political responsibilities. Chances were good those controversies would draw him in.

Virulent factionalism, spawned by the Ward-Hopkins controversy, dominated the Rhode Island political scene Nathanael Greene entered in the mid-1760s. This factionalism naturally influenced his perception of political practices and principles. The Ward-Hopkins controversy had begun in 1757 when Samuel Ward backed William Greene for governor against the incumbent, Stephen Hopkins. Greene, a distant uncle of Nathanael's, won the election but died in office. The Assembly then chose Hopkins to finish Greene's term. From that point, however, Ward and Hopkins, or their representatives, contested for the governorship every year until the Ward party finally faded after losing the 1770 election. Basically, the Ward-Hopkins dispute centered on economic competition between Providence and Newport. Ward represented the old elite of Newport and the southern Rhode Island towns that formed Newport's economic web. Hopkins represented Providence, which had established itself as the center of economic activity for the northern Rhode Island towns. The principal issues were taxation and currency reform, and on both questions each party focused on protecting its own interests, although the Ward party's proposals usually lacked coherence and thorough planning. Their determination
to protect their own vested economic interests made the Ward and Hopkins parties factions, as Madison defined the term: "a number of citizens . . . who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community." As a result, neither party saw the governor's chair as the prime objective of their contest, because Rhode Island's governor had little power or influence and enjoyed little opportunity for profit. Rather, they aimed to capture the majority of seats in the Assembly, which controlled patronage and legislation. This factional struggle brought out the worst in its protagonists. Common political practices included rhetoric, influence, coercion, lies, libel, trickery, and bribery. Maybe more important, the factional struggle bred tremendous hypocrisy, as each side piously condemned the factional practices of the other while never lessening for a moment its unethical search for every possible advantage. Young Nathanael Greene got an early education in unsavory politics.

Rhode Islanders' factional struggles stopped short, however, of the colony's relations with England. London's decision after the Seven Years War to tighten its regulation of the colonies' commerce threatened to destroy Rhode Island's economy, and both Ward and Hopkins advocated strong resistance. As a result, Rhode Island went as far as any
colony, and farther than most, in defying British controls after 1763. Rhode Island had no staple crop to generate the revenue for buying necessary manufactures. Instead, Rhode Island depended on her commerce to generate revenue, and molasses was the staple of her commerce. Rhode Islanders got their molasses from the West Indies, five-sixths of it from non-British possessions. They then traded molasses in the major colonial ports for British manufactures, for food, and for goods to exchange with the West Indies colonies for more molasses. They also distilled molasses into rum to supply the fishing and fur trades in other colonies and to barter for slaves in Africa. By the Molasses Act of 1733, England had imposed a stiff duty on molasses brought into the colonies from non-British possessions. Afterwards, though, the British turned a blind eye as the colonies evaded the molasses duty by smuggling and by bribing customs officials. During the Seven Years War, the British had tightened enforcement of the Molasses Act somewhat, but once the war ended, the colonists expected to return to pre-war practices. Meanwhile, however, the British had decided to enforce colonial trade regulations strictly in an effort to bring in more revenue. Thus, in 1763, Rhode Islanders saw the wartime naval patrol off Narragansett Bay converted into a permanent peacetime patrol for regulating commerce in the Bay area. Customs officials increased their activity and soon forced more and more Rhode Islanders to pay the
prohibitive molasses duty.

Rhode Islanders reacted to the new British policies almost immediately. They protested to London on economic grounds, pointing out that only the profits from the molasses trade enabled them to buy British manufactures and that British possessions could provide only twenty percent of the molasses they needed. They also resisted the new policies vigorously, trying every device imaginable to evade enforcement -- negligence, unobtrusive non-compliance, outright defiance, feigned ignorance, and even interference with royal officials. Moreover, the royalty-appointed admiralty judge in Rhode Island, a Rhode Islander recommended by the Rhode Island government, willingly cooperated with the colonists' efforts to avoid the British regulations. The replacement of the Molasses Act with the Sugar Act in early 1764 did little to relieve Rhode Island's dissatisfaction or to increase its cooperation with the British government. Even though this new act reduced the duties on molasses by half, the duty still remained high enough thoroughly to disrupt the colony's trade. Equally as alarming, the British plainly stated that the purpose of the Sugar Act was to generate revenue rather than to regulate trade. This admission started Rhode Islanders thinking about the disadvantages of their being taxed by an assembly in which they had no voice. Furthermore, the act established a new Admiralty Court in Halifax to hear cases
concerning violations of the new trade regulations. Having their cases tried in far-off Nova Scotia would deprive Rhode Islanders of the influence they had always enjoyed over local admiralty judges. Thus, they protested this new court on the grounds it violated their right to a trial by a jury of their peers. In this way, Rhode Islanders' efforts to protect their economy led them to raise critical political issues.

Even before Parliament enacted the Sugar Law, George III's chief minister, George Grenville, had talked of levying a tax on documents, almanacs, newspapers, and virtually every form of paper in the American colonies. Passed by Parliament in March 1765, this Stamp Act was a direct tax intended solely to raise money, and, as Gordon Wood has said, it "exposed the nature of political authority within the empire in a way no other issue in the eighteenth century ever had." More than any other event, it started Americans down the long road of political debate and resistance that eventually led to revolution. Even before the Act became law, the Rhode Island Assembly printed a pamphlet written by Stephen Hopkins, "The Rights of the Colonies Examined," outlining the colony's objections. Specifically, Hopkins claimed for Americans the right of all Englishmen to taxation only by their representatives. Therefore, he maintained, Parliament could not tax the American colonies because it did not represent them. It
represented only the people of the British Isles, while Americans had their own colonial legislatures. Hopkins even questioned the authority of Parliament to rule on other imperial matters, like regulation of trade. He argued that Great Britain constituted an imperial state of many separate, essentially autonomous, governments; therefore, no single government within the empire, no matter how much stronger it was than the others, had the right to control or tax the others. Only a body of representatives from every part of the empire could make laws or taxes affecting the empire as a whole. Hopkins used the example of the ancient Greeks' colonies, which were not controlled by their parent communities, to illustrate the degree of autonomy he claimed for the American colonies. He advocated loyalty to the King but not subordination to Parliament. Rooted in the colony's history, this position typified Rhode Island's response to the proposed Stamp Act.

Once the Stamp Act passed Parliament, Rhode Islanders opposed it in a number of ways. First, the colony simply carried on all business without the stamps as if the act had never passed. And when London instructed Governor Ward to support the colony's stampmaster, Ward forced the stampmaster's resignation and then pled inability to comply because he was not authorized to appoint a new stampmaster. And, even if he could have made the appointment, no one in the colony would have accepted the post. The Rhode Island
Assembly sent London a petition protesting the Act on the grounds of no taxation without representation. Significantly, they addressed it not to Parliament but to the King, implicitly denying Parliament's authority over them. The Assembly also adopted the following six resolutions against the Act: (1) the Rhode Island Assembly had always had the right of internal taxation; (2) the King and people of Britain had recognized this right which had never been surrendered; (3) no other power had the right to levy taxes on Rhode Islanders; (4) any attempt by another power to tax Rhode Islanders undermined their liberties; (5) Rhode Islanders were not bound to obey any law imposing an internal tax unless passed by the Rhode Island Assembly; and (6) all Rhode Island officers were to proceed as if the new Act did not exist and the colony would indemnify them against their conduct. The last two of these resolutions represented a position in advance of most other colonies. As the British intended enforcing the Act by extending admiralty court jurisdiction in the colonies, Rhode Islanders also protested violation of their rights to trial by jury and to a judicial procedure similar to that enjoyed by the residents of England. In the fall and winter of 1765 and 1766, towns all over Rhode Island formed Sons of Liberty groups to support opposition to the Stamp Act. Newport and Providence both created Committees of Correspondence, which themselves drafted resolves pledging allegiance to the King
but denying Parliament's authority over the colonies. These committees corresponded with each other and with similar committees in the other colonies. Finally, though the colony instituted no formal program of non-intercourse with England, many Rhode Islanders spontaneously refused to buy British goods.

Colonial opposition, aided by pressure from English merchants suffering from colonial boycotts, persuaded Parliament to repeal the Stamp Act in early 1766. In the Declaratory Act that accompanied the repeal, however, Parliament restated its claim to legislate for the colonies in all matters. And in 1767 Parliament fanned the flames of colonial resistance even higher by adopting the Townshend Duties, a new set of revenue-producing duties on colonial trade. Rhode Island quickly responded to the Townshend Duties. The Assembly sent the King another petition protesting Parliament's right to tax Americans without their consent. When the King rejected the petition on grounds it improperly criticized Parliament, the Assembly endorsed the circular letter Massachusetts had sent the government of each colony. This letter denounced taxation without representation and called on all the colonies to form a united front against British tyranny. All over Rhode Island, speakers and writers repeated the arguments used against the Stamp Act. Some even advanced the political debate to new levels. Silas Downer, for instance, claimed
Parliament's actions violated Rhode Islanders' natural rights. In nature all men were equal and they were not subject to laws until by their own consent they entered into a compact and formed a society. Thus the English Parliament could not legislate for Rhode Islanders because Rhode Islanders had no means (representation) of granting their consent to Parliament's laws.

Not only did Rhode Islanders protest the new duties, they also resisted them strenuously. They browbeat the newly-appointed royal customs collector, Charles Dudley, into lax enforcement of the laws. Whenever intimidation proved insufficient, they openly defied him and ignored the duties and associated regulations. Events in July 1769 clearly demonstrated the volatility of the situation in Rhode Island. In that month the British sloop patrolling Narragansett Bay, HMS Liberty, seized two ships suspected of bringing contraband in from Connecticut. Later, as the Liberty lay anchored at Newport wharf, unknown persons boarded her, cut down her mast, scuttled her hull, and set her adrift. She beached at Goat Island where another group set her afame, burning her to the waterline. The British suspected Governor Wanton of complicity in the affair but took no steps to discover the perpetrators. The only area where Rhode Island resistance faltered was in joining the other colonies in a non-consumption campaign against British goods. Rhode Islanders, especially in Newport, moved slowly
and half-heartedly to adopt non-consumption measures. They remained too concerned with protecting their personal business interests. Nevertheless, their responses throughout this whole period of tightening British controls put Rhode Island in the forefront of colonial opposition to British authority. And the political controversies this opposition generated defined the environment Nathanael Greene operated in as he began making his own way in the world.

As Rhode Islanders wrestled with the momentous political issues raised by England’s efforts to assert more authority over the colonies, Nathanael Greene was taking his place in the world of Rhode Island business and politics. And recently having exchanged the constrictions of Quakerism for the rationalism of the Enlightenment, Greene tackled the challenges of his new roles with zest. In 1768 his father put him in charge of managing the family’s forge in Coventry. Testimony to his ability, this assignment gave him a position of relatively autonomous responsibility that contributed to his growing confidence and competence. For two years he rode to Coventry every day from the house at Potowomut. Then in 1770 he moved to Coventry and built his own home there, on a rise along the Pawtuxet River looking out toward the Bay. The house, which he called Spell Hall, was a large, two-story frame house with four rooms on each floor and a captain’s walk on the roof. It remained his
family's home until after the war. As his forge employed many of the men in the village, Greene was an important man in Coventry. He was drawn steadily into public affairs and found his circle of friends and acquaintances increasing rapidly. For example, a letter dated October 10, 1768 reveals Greene was doing business with Stephen Hopkins and Company and that he had entered a partnership with Stephen, Thomas, and Caleb Potter, three brothers who all had served in the Assembly. Another example of Greene's growing involvement in public affairs is the attempt by the citizens of East Greenwich to persuade the College of Rhode Island to relocate in their town. The townsmen appointed Greene to serve along with several prominent East Greenwich men on a committee to negotiate with the college. And in another instance Greene petitioned the Assembly for exemption from the requirement to provide "fishways" in his forge's dams on the Pawtuxet River. All these and similar activities served to introduce Greene to the men, the methods, and, indirectly, the ideas of Rhode Island's political system.

Another big change in Greene's personal life occurred in November 1770 when his father died, causing him considerable personal distress and disrupting the family business. The Greene brothers kept the family estate and business intact after their father's death and managed it as equal partners. This arrangement put Nathanael more on his own responsibility and prodded his development. Thus Greene
settled in at Coventry, a locally important and moderately prosperous businessman.

The political turmoil in Rhode Island and the colony's controversies with England had to have excited Greene, especially coming at that time in his life when he was bursting with the enthusiasm and confidence of a young man just starting out on his own. And he found in his own background much to help him understand the changes underway in his world. His study of the classics gave him a solid grounding in the fundamentals of Aristotelian political theory, with its emphasis on the attractiveness of republican and representative forms of government. And his immersion in the anti-authority and anti-establishment attitudes of Quakerism, as well as Rhode Island's own heritage of dissent and political autonomy, prepared him to accept wholeheartedly resistance to England's attempted coercion of the colonies. At the same time, Greene also began absorbing contradictions from his experience that would stay with him the remainder of his life. Horace had affirmed the necessity of virtue and disinterestedness for public harmony and prosperity. Yet virtually all of Rhode Island's political experience taught the use of faction, favor and influence. Moreover, Greene's experience in the family business was teaching him to protect his own interests and, toward that end, to look after the connections binding him to friends and family. While
philosophically he could accept Horace's urgings, practically he often found himself unable to act against his own interests.

Apparently no evidence remains of Greene's political ideas during this period. It seems likely, however, that his political thought began coalescing around the radical ideas sparked in Rhode Island by the controversy with England. And these ideas were reinforced by others he encountered in the histories and political commentaries he was reading. The most important histories he read were the multi-volume works by Charles Rollin, *Ancient History* and *Roman History*, and Paul de Rapin-Thoyras, *The History of England*. Rollin's *Ancient History of the Egyptians, Carthaginians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes and Persians, Macedonians and Grecians* clearly illustrated its author's approach to history. Rollin saw history as an object lesson, "instructing us, by example rather than precept, in the arts of empire and war, the principles of government, the rules of policy, the maxims of civil society, and the conduct of life that suits all ages and conditions." Men should study history to learn how the famous empires began, rose to greatness, and then declined, and to learn the characters of the influential men and women of the past.

Equally as important as Rollin's notion of history as example was his Jansenist view of the world. Rollin understood God not as the far-away and long-ago divine
clockmaker of the Enlightenment but as an active and constant participant in man's daily affairs. Omnipotent, and mysterious, He guided every man's fate. Moreover, man's highest powers and abilities were absolutely feeble without God's aid. On his own, man could accomplish nothing. As Rollin declared, history shows

that God disposes all events as supreme Lord and Sovereign; that he alone determines the fate of kings, and the duration of empires; and that he, for reasons inscrutable to all but Himself, transfers the government of kingdoms from one nation to another.19

Worse, Jansenism regarded human nature as basically depraved. More often than not, man's passions caused him to corrupt whatever he involved himself in. Thus Jansenists expected degeneracy always to follow quickly after any earthly glory or success, and degeneration brought punishment from God. Both in his individual and group endeavors, man moved through time in cycles of rise, brief glory, and decline. And, "what seem to be the workings out of natural processes are actually the result, always, of divine intervention." Rollin's notions of inevitable degeneration and decline dominated the lessons he drew from history and had to make his readers think about the possible impermanence of their own success.

From his study of the influential men in the ancient empires, Rollin distilled a comprehensive list of desirable character traits. Men should be sober, temperate, humane, just, compassionate, forgiving, grateful, affable, and
accessible. They should forego luxury and instead pursue austerity, should lead a plain and simple life. Rollin stressed the benefits, both material and spiritual, of thoroughly disinterested generosity and gentleness toward the unhappy and unfortunate. He also urged taking an active interest in polite literature and science, as "nothing does greater honour to a person of distinction, of whatever quality or profession, than the adorning his soul with knowledge," and this sentiment was probably particularly appealing to Greene. An unusual quality Rollin marked was the art of insinuation. Men need to understand what advantages come from a single word or gesture rightly timed, from an obliging carriage, from tempering commands with reason, from giving a little praise when granting favors, from tempering refusals with concern and goodwill. Every man certainly should love honor, but, at the same time, should maintain an air of modesty and reserve, even in victory or prosperity. Rollin pointed out the need for persistent concern about others' welfare. He also advised open-mindedness - allowing associates the liberty to speak freely and honestly considering their views. Finally, he insisted on equitableness. Men should reward merit not favors. Similarly, they should seek attachments by affection rather than influence. Nathanael Greene could easily accept Rollin's definition of an ideal character as most of the qualities Rollin endorsed fit easily into the
framework of values Greene inherited from Quakerism, from the Enlightenment, or from the classics. Moreover, in distilling an ideal character from historical examples, Rollin had focused on success in public life, a criterion that steadily grew more and more attractive for Greene.

Through his interpretations and commentary about the various ancient empires, Rollin developed a comprehensive political doctrine. He based his political thinking on the belief that man naturally desires liberty. Working from this assumption, he postulated two principal requirements for legitimate governments. They must accord every citizen undisturbed liberty under the laws and must guarantee each citizen equal justice. Such governments secure men's lives, property, and honor, effectively uniting all citizens to each other and to the state. Rollin emphasized again and again that the one true end of government was to advance the public good and common benefit, "to make life easy, and a people happy." Rollin believed God had given men all the wide variety of governmental systems found in the world and that God had designed each of the various systems as a humane and just government. Still, Rollin favored one system above all the others. Monarchy, he declared, was the most ancient and most prevalent form of government, the one best suited for keeping people peacefully united and the least susceptible to revolution. Moreover, not only had God created the monarchical form of government, he had given it
"an immediate communication of his own power." Rollin did not allow monarchy free rein to exercise power, however. A just and virtuous monarch must agree to govern by the laws, "to make them the rule of his will and desire, and to think nothing allowable for him which they prohibit." Rollin applauded Cyrus of Persia's reputed description of a monarch as a shepherd for his people. "A man is born for others when he is born to govern, because the reason and end of governing others is only to be useful and serviceable to them." Another governmental system Rollin approved was mixed government, dividing governmental power among the various estates in society. Even in a republic, however, Rollin stressed keeping the balance of power with the nobles, and limiting the people's direct participation in the government.

Rollin based his political ideas on specific notions about the structure of an ideal society. As his political thinking indicates, he favored a society dominated by its upper classes. The upper classes, however, should be a natural elite, with members admitted more for their superior ability and virtue than for their wealth or family standing. Rollin approvingly cites the example of Lycurgus of Sparta who tried to redistribute the Spartans' wealth equally so they could earn distinctions only by their virtue and merit. On the other hand, Rollin fully believed those with the most ability and virtue ended up establishing
wealthy and dominant families. Thus, in practice Rollin blurred the distinction between a natural and hereditary elite, tending to assume the nobility in any society he studied had earned their position. Rollin justified the upper classes' domination of a society on the strength of their education, wisdom, experience, and willingness to serve. He also pointed out, however, that the aristocrats' wealth made them immune to corruption and that they would pursue the state's welfare because it promoted their own. Rollin regarded the lower classes, the people, much less favorably. Undisciplined selfish passions governed the people, leaving them vulnerable to base motives and corruption. Consequently, the people's participation in running their society must be limited and tightly controlled. Carthage and Athens offered excellent examples of the dangers of unrestrained democracy.

If anything, Rollin focused his history on the need for public virtue. As noted earlier, he believed God had given men a variety of ideal social and governmental systems. Sooner or later, however, man's passions led him to corrupt any system. When this happened, God punished the transgressors. Even the most powerful emperors, Rollin declared, "were in God's hand, as so many instruments, which he employed to punish the transgressions of his people." Rollin claimed the fall of Babylon, whose secular history almost exactly followed Biblical prophecy, proved how God
used the men and material of this world to punish the wicked and profane. And he endorsed the statement supposedly made by Scipio Africanus just before he destroyed Carthage:

We are taught in the Scriptures, that 'because of unrighteous dealings, injuries, and riches got by deceit, a kingdom is translated from one people to another' (Ecclesiastes 10.8). Carthage is destroyed because its avarice, perfidiousness, and cruelty, have attained their utmost height. The like fate will attend Rome, when its luxury, ambition, pride, and unjust usurpations, concealed beneath a specious and delusive show of justice and virtue shall have compelled the sovereign Lord, the disposer of empires, to give the universe an important lesson in its fall.29

Thus, Rollin blamed the fall of all the ancient empires on the degeneration of their virtue.

Rollin did not preach only gloom and doom, however. He also identified those virtuous qualities that secured a society's survival and prosperity, for as "God appointed some princes to be the instruments of his vengeance, he made others the dispensers of his goodness." He praised the Romans' "courage, zeal for the public good, love of their country, and noble emulation of glory" in the First Punic War. He spoke of the Athenians' need to learn that true liberty lay not in absolute freedom but in a "dependence upon justice and reason." He praised the Greeks' willingness before the Persian Wars to sacrifice comfort for constant rigorous conditioning and training, and commended their temperance, prudence, and love of duty. He insisted that every public official hold himself responsible for the
virtue of "all that surround and approach him." And he applauded the Spartans for their self-discipline, for their reliance on the force of positive examples rather than the restraints of law to encourage virtue among the citizenry. These were the qualities which earned God's favor and enabled nations to found brilliant empires.

Rollin promoted education as the best means for a society to increase its citizens' virtue. Because Carthage neglected education, Rollin claimed, especially "polite learning, history, and philosophy," its citizens lacked the "elegance of behavior," the "ease and complacency of manners," and the "sentiments of virtue" that were the usual fruits of a liberal education. Likewise, faulty education, emphasizing the wrong qualities, contributed to the decline of the Persian empire. Rollin supported Lycurgus of Sparta's contention that a government's greatest contribution to order and prosperity, and hence its prime duty, was educating the young. And at their zenith, at the time of Cyrus, the Persians considered educating their children the most essential task of government. Rollin declared that Cyrus, himself, owed his many admirable and virtuous qualities to his education, for not only had God given Cyrus the raw potential, He had ensured Cyrus got the education needed to develop that potential. Hannibal excelled largely because he got the most refined and polite education available. And Scipio Africanus owed most of his
admirable character to an excellent education. In passage after passage Rollin made plain his belief that a liberal education was not just desirable but essential for developing the virtuous qualities needed for success.

As Rollin reviewed the histories of the ancient empires, he not only pointed out the virtues essential for national success, he also identified the vices that undermined a society's strength. And at the root of all man's vices, according to Rollin, lay his passions, his selfish determination to gratify his desires and advance his interests. Rollin denounced luxury as the most malignant product of man's passions. Indulging in luxury enervated man, weakening his physical strength, mental vigor, and will. Thus, once the Persians began pursuing luxury, their kings became haughty and the people responded with abject submission. Another dangerous vice Rollin pointed out, one stemming from preoccupation with private interests, was lack of public-mindedness. One example he cited was the Carthaginians, who refused Hannibal the reinforcements and provisions he needed for his campaign in Italy because they were more concerned with advancing their personal prosperity. Similarly, he condemned ambition, which also led men to act contrary to the public interest. Men controlled by ambition tried to gain their ends either by force or by influence and duplicity. And while admitting the latter method usually succeeded, Rollin said nothing
could be more base than putting the mask of modesty and virtue over raw ambition. Ambition also promoted parties and factions, especially in democratic societies, and these group's efforts to secure private interests shattered national unity, witness the demise of the Greek city-states. Even with a monarchy, the Spartans had to create a Senate composed of the nobility to serve as a counterweight against the ambitions of both the Crown and the people. By siding with one, this Senate could prevent the other from gaining too much power and promoting its own interests at the expense of the state's. Finally, Rollin denounced favor and flattery. He recognized that great men were vulnerable to these two deceits because they craved praise and because both favor and flattery could be disguised easily as respect. Nevertheless, flattery and favor undermined the integrity of all involved -- the practitioner, the recipient, and society as a whole. Societies simply could not survive the vices bred by man's indulging his passions.

Many of Rollin's ideas showed up in Nathanael Greene's thinking. He certainly shared Rollin's view of history as a series of object lessons. His reading habits show this. And his efforts at self-education show he also accepted Rollin's argument that a refined and liberal education served as the best school of virtue. Greene's social thinking echoed Rollin as well. While Greene insisted on
personal liberty and a government limited by its citizens' consent, he also seemed to favor a hierarchical society dominated by a natural elite. He distrusted the lower classes, questioning their ability and virtue. He yearned for a strong central government, manned by an exceptionally able and disinterested elite. At times, this yearning even led him to speculate that monarchy might be the best governmental form. This speculation certainly followed Rollin's arguments. And, paradoxically, Greene's preference for a hierarchical society headed by a natural aristocracy of talent was to show up again and again throughout the Revolution. Rollin influenced Greene most, it seems, with his emphasis on individual character and public virtue as the keys to national strength. These were common themes at the time, with their origins in the classics, and Greene accepted them readily. Time and again during the Revolutionary War he criticized his countrymen's lack of virtue, which he saw manifested in their unwillingness to create a strong and well-supported army. He focused on the same ills as Rollin -- private interest, favor and flattery, ambition, and luxury. And while he did not involve God as directly in the process as Rollin, he was equally convinced that lack of virtue led to national ruin. As did Rollin, Greene insisted that upright individual character was the foundation of public virtue. He claimed for himself the personal qualities Rollin prized so highly, and expected
others to live up to the same standard. And while he often failed to meet his own standards of character, that did not lessen the force of his ideas about public and private virtue.

Just as many Englishmen and Americans in the mid-eighteenth century read Charles Rollin for a thorough and reliable interpretation of ancient history, many also read Paul de Rapin-Thoyras for a solid analysis of English history. In his multi-volume *History of England* Rapin tried to establish historical justification for the English people's struggles to win political rights and liberties from the Crown. He founded his arguments on the Saxons, who slowly had conquered England during the fifth and sixth centuries. According to Rapin, these Saxons brought to England a democratic system developed during their years of expansion on the Continent. Each of the Saxon tribes selected representatives to a central assembly called the wittenagemot. This wittenagemot then elected one man as king, to whom it granted specific limited powers, or prerogatives. All remaining governmental powers the wittenagemot reserved to itself, as the representative of the people and the guardian of their rights and liberties. Chief among the king's prerogatives were the rights to declare war, command the armies, appoint officials, dispense justice, and execute the laws. The wittenagemot, on the other hand, made all laws, and denied the king the power to
change the laws or to levy taxes without consent. In England, after finally winning control of the entire country late in the sixth century, the Saxons established a federation of seven kingdoms. Each of the seven had its own wittenagemot and king and each also sent representatives to a central wittenagemot which elected an overall king. Rapin maintained this Anglo-Saxon democracy functioned smoothly for several centuries, and the seven kingdoms eventually united into one, whose sovereign, King Alfred, compiled a comprehensive body of laws. Thus the Anglo-Saxons created an unshakable precedent for a limited monarchy and 34 democratic rule in England.

In Rapin's view, William of Normandy destroyed England's ancient Anglo-Saxon democracy after winning the English crown at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. And Rapin interpreted England's history from that point until the late seventeenth century as a struggle by the British people to recover from their rulers the democratic system lost after the Norman conquest. When William accepted the English crown, he took the same oath traditionally issued the Anglo-Saxon kings. Within a few years, however, William began taxing the English arbitrarily and eliminating many of their other rights and privileges. During the remainder of his reign, he steadily imposed a thoroughly feudal society on the English. William's feudal system naturally prompted resistance, especially from the English barons, and,
beginning with Henry II in 1100, many of William's successors found it necessary to issue charters promising reenactment of the Anglo-Saxon law code. They also, however, discovered ways completely to ignore the charters they issued. One particularly violent confrontation between the barons and the Crown produced the Magna Charta, signed by King John in 1215. John and his successors avoided its provisions, however, just as nimbly as their predecessors had voided all previous charters. Thus, according to Rapin, though feudalism gradually receded after the Magna Charta, the Crown retained its excessive and arbitrary powers, precipitating continual conflict with Parliament.

After the Magna Charta, Parliament steadily gained importance and power, partially as a result of finally allowing the lower classes representation in 1258. By the time of Henry VIII, English kings no longer could ignore or run roughshod over Parliament. Instead, they had their way by making Parliament subservient to the Crown, by rigging elections and bribing representatives. Still, during the reigns of Elizabeth I and the first two Stuarts, Parliament continued growing stronger and more independent. The Stuarts' determination to practice absolute monarchy and to deny Parliament any right to limit the Crown's prerogatives finally precipitated civil war in 1646 and the overthrow of the monarchy. Cromwell's Protectorate failed to create an acceptable alternative government, however, and so
Parliament restored the monarchy. But the basic conflict between Parliament and the Crown remained. Catholicism was the immediate issue separating Parliament and the last two Stuarts. More important for Rapin, however, both Charles II and James II still insisted on the Crown holding more prerogatives than Parliament wanted to yield. And James II lost his crown in the Glorious Revolution because he tried exercising prerogatives Parliament did not recognize to make England a Catholic nation. Rapin maintained that the Glorious Revolution, with its attendant Bill of Rights, finally restored in England the ancient democracy of the Anglo-Saxons. Once again Englishmen would be governed by a limited monarchy according to democratic principles.

Rapin's *History of England* was most important to eighteenth-century readers because of the political ideas it contained. First and foremost, as already described, throughout his history Rapin promoted the government of limited monarchy and democratic principles that Britons' struggled to reestablish after the Norman Conquest. He emphasized Parliament's role as the linchpin of the entire system. And he maintained there were only two ways to destroy English liberties: by totally abolishing Parliament; or by bribing its members to sacrifice their country to their ambition and avarice. Throughout, Rapin also implicitly echoed Rollin's view that government existed solely to benefit its citizens. One specific principle
Rapin hammered home again and again, undoubtedly because the English kings violated it so often, was the injustice of taxation without consent. The Saxons had established this as one of the fundamental rights of citizens in a democratic system, and it remained one of the principal limitations on the Crown's power. Another issue which drew Rapin's frequent attention was the relation of the army to the state. Rapin endorsed the Saxon practices of electing their general-in-chief and of relying on a militia for defense as precedents for at least some civilian control of the military and a non-professional army. He pointed out the dangers associated with professional standing armies, vividly illustrated by King John defying the Magna Charta with mercenaries, Cromwell establishing a military dictatorship, or Charles I raising a standing army to defy Parliament. And he tried to show that military expenses quite often tempted the Crown to seek excessive or even arbitrary taxes. Rollin even touched on the nature of the Britons' loyalty to the King, supporting the argument of a group of Henry III's opponents that the people owed allegiance only to the office of the Crown and not to the King personally. This was so because the Crown and the state were identical in England; therefore, the Crown's power and authority must be used to further the public interest. Whenever the King separated his interests from the public's, he lost the royal prerogatives and his claim
on the people's loyalty. With these and other observations, Rapin advanced the cause of democratic forms and limited monarchy.

England's history gave Rapin fertile ground for examining the evils which corrupted democratic political systems. Rapin's interpretations clearly show he considered interest -- concern for one's personal welfare and benefit -- the root of all political ills. Rapin insisted the finest principles became dangerous when executed by men swayed by interest, and he offered the actions of the Catholic Church as evidence. Over and over in his history Rapin pointed out examples of England's kings abusing the people's rights and privileges in their quest for ever greater power. He also, however, maintained that interest fueled the barons' opposition to the Crown which eventually returned England to a democratic and limited monarchy.

Speaking of the barons' campaign against excessive Crown power he said,

This [interest] usually is the motive which stirs up the zeal of the great men. This is what makes them such mighty sticklers for the good of the public. If their own private interest was not joined to that of the kingdom, in vain would it be expected that the nobles would expose their lives and fortunes, in defense of the liberties of an injured people.

Interest not only tempted English kings into domestic aggression, it also led them into foreign adventures. Discussing King Egbert, generally lionized as a great warrior, Rapin said "it is a lamentable thing, that
ambition, by which princes are inclined to invade the
property of others, should pass in the world for a
virtue." He deplored those kings throughout English
history whose ambition had led them to attack, variously,
Wales, Ireland, Scotland, and several Continental
countries. Interest and ambition could lead even the most
wise and prudent king into despicable actions, witness
Edward III's attack on Scotland and France.

Rapin believed that men swayed by interest and ambition
naturally engaged in harmful political practices, and he
filled his history with examples of how these had corrupted
the English political system. Most prevalent, most
insidious, and most dangerous in Rapin's view was the
combination of undue influence, favoritism, and flattery.
Throughout her history, England's kings often had fallen
under the influence of flattering favorites, yielding these
men, or women, almost sole authority over Crown policies and
decisions. Unfortunately, the Crown's favorites seldom
acted in the country's interest. Speaking of Thomas Wolsey,
favorite minister of Henry VIII, Rapin said, "Wolsey, like
most others [favorites], grew odious, chiefly because his
counsels were always self-interested." Moreover, Rapin
offered several examples of favorites who had promoted
absolute monarchy, and even despotism, because it increased
their own field of action.

Another malady of the English political system Rapin
exposed was the creation of factions and parties to promote private rather than public interests. Rapin saw this evil more in the latter periods of English history, the Stuart reigns, probably because Parliament's influence and importance had grown so significantly. Rapin focused his concern with factions on how they undermined Parliament's purpose and effectiveness. As he described it,

these assemblies become sometimes very dangerous, when influenced by popular factions or by the cabals of an ambitious Prince. Accordingly it has often happened, that instead of procuring the good of the realm, they have produced nothing but confusion, and the subversion of the laws. At which time the evil is so much the harder to be cured, as what is done by the Parliament is supposed to flow from the unanimous consent of the whole nation.43

Hand in hand with parties and factions, in Rapin's view, went the corrupt methods the Crown used to gain support. Rapin reported numerous instances, again most prevalent during the Stuart reigns, of the Crown controlling Parliament by rigging elections and by bribing members with pensions and places, the promise of influence, or simple flattery. The rise of factions and parties not only bred corruption, dissension, and the pursuit of private in place of public interests, it also generated intrigues and conspiracies. Rapin's most alarming examples of this were Charles II's "Cabal" to foist Catholicism on the British and the opposition's counterplots to foil the Crown's designs. These various political maladies — interest, influence, faction, corruption, conspiracy — made up the heart of
Rapin's history, and his most important message was that unless these maladies were controlled, democratic systems would suffer the same fate as the British had from 1066 to 1688.

One other area that drew Rapin's repeated attention was the role the Catholic and Anglican Churches played in England's history. Invariably, Rapin disapproved Church activities on a national scale. While Christianity came to England soon after the death of Christ, according to Rapin, the Catholic Church did not arrive until 597. Yet, even though the Gospel had been preached in Britain, successfully, for nearly six centuries, "the Church of Rome had made several innovations in the celebrating the Divine Service, to which they pretended all other Churches ought to conform." Moreover, Rapin said, the Christianity to which the Catholics converted the Anglo-Saxons had already sunk from primitive Christianity to superstition by the addition of many false practices. Rapin admitted the Catholics had founded their Church on fine principles. But, he declared, a self-interested clergy twisted and corrupted those principles to serve their own ambitions for temporal power. One way this manifested itself was in churchmen gaining undue influence over the government. Speaking of one such instance, Rapin declared,

When once a prince suffers his conscience to be governed by his ghostly father, he will find it very difficult not to let him have the management of his temporal concerns, there being hardly any
one thing but what may be made to relate to religion in some respect or another.46

Rapin reported numerous instances during English history when first Catholic and then Anglican churchmen gained excessive influence with the English Crown. The pursuit of temporal power also led the clergy to violate the moral principles they supposedly promoted. Rapin saw this beginning with the Pope, as witnessed by his supporting King John against the Magna Charta, and by his blessing Henry II's subjugation of Ireland. And it continued with Anglican leaders, witness Thomas Cromwell, Archbishop of Canterbury, using a campaign of terror against his political opponents. Rapin even chastised the Puritans for the excesses they committed in the pursuit of temporal power during the Interregnum. Catholicism remained Rapin's special target, however, and his almost instinctual revulsion for the Catholic Church showed plainly in the way he condemned the last two Stuarts' attempts to Catholicize England. Still, in Rapin's view, all the Christian churches, though not the Christian faith, brought more evil than good into the world.

Nathanael Greene reflected many of Rapin's ideas in his own thinking. This is not surprising, because the themes in Rapin's history complemented those emphasized by Charles Rollin. Both men argued for a limited and disinterested monarchy, and both stressed public virtue as the most vital component of national strength. Nevertheless, there were
important differences in tone and outlook between Rollin and Rapin, and on these Greene followed the latter. Unlike Rollin, Rapin stressed the desirability of democratic government. He also built a strong case for every Englishman's right to a democratic government and promoted the idea of constitution as a set of principles defining the nature of government. These three principles underlay all of Greene's political thinking. Rapin spent little time on public virtue as a positive force, instead, he focused on the specific political vices that had undermined England's democratic system. Since the English political system was the model for Americans, it is not surprising that Greene filled his own political commentary with denunciations of interest, influence, faction, and corruption, mirroring Rapin's thoughts. Rapin also analyzed history from a different theological perspective than Rollin. First, he deprecated organized religion, a view Greene echoed. Second, he did not understand God as a nearby daily participant in man's activities. Rapin explained events in terms of "natural," or human, processes; thus, political vices "naturally" produced their own punishments. This focus on the processes of this world and consequent lack of concern with God's action also found lodging in Greene's thinking. Rapin furnished Greene with an extremely persuasive explanation of Anglo-American political behavior.

When Nathanael Greene's father began assigning him
legal duties for the family business, it prompted him to read some prominent legal works, such as William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England* and Cesare Beccaria's *On Crimes and Punishments*. These books contained more than just legal theory, however. They also included a great deal of important political and social commentary that helped shape Greene's understanding of the momentous events taking place around him. Of the two, Blackstone's *Commentaries* was by far the more comprehensive. Blackstone began, logically, by discussing the source of law, man's inherent natural rights, and the origin and purpose of society. Blackstone asserted that the universe was founded by God on law and reason. Law was the rule governing all action. It began with God and proceeded downward, operating on many lower levels. Thus, the existence of laws in society was both natural and necessary. Turning then to man's state in nature, Blackstone made two important points. First, God gave man certain absolute natural rights and natural liberty, which Blackstone defined as the "power of acting as one thinks fit, without any restraint or control, unless by the law of nature." Second, man possessed an inherent ambition to extend his power. These two characteristics made society necessary. Man's fears and wants drove him to join with others for security. When he joined society, man retained his absolute rights but surrendered some natural liberty.
In turn, he received society's pledge to protect each of its members. In joining society, man also agreed to obey the will of the whole, because unless each individual submitted to the whole, society could not guarantee to protect any. Thus, the laws restricting natural liberty in some way actually promoted general freedom because they supported "that state of society which alone can secure our independence. . . . for where there is no law there is no freedom." At the same time, Blackstone declared,

every wanton and causeless restraint of the will of the subject, whether practiced by a monarch, a nobility, or a popular assembly, is a degree of tyranny: nay . . . even laws themselves, whether made with or without our consent, if they regulate and constrain our conduct in matters of mere indifference, without any good end in view, are regulations destructive of liberty.49

Blackstone also carefully distinguished between those laws founded on natural rights or imperatives and what he called civil laws, those intended to regulate the conduct of man as a member of society. No moral injunction bound a man to obey civil laws. He simply had to be willing to pay the established penalties for his transgressions.

After discussing in general the origin and purpose of society and its laws, Blackstone went on to examine the foundation of Great Britain's social and political system. Three qualities characterized good government: wisdom, to discern the community's true interests; goodness, to pursue only those true interests; and power, to carry wisdom and intention into effect. Of the three basic forms of
government, aristocracy manifested the most wisdom, democracy the most goodness, and monarchy the most power. Happily, the English had managed to combine all three forms into one governmental system. Blackstone emphasized the limits on the English monarchy's power. The Crown's prerogatives, he said, were only those "necessary for the support of society; and do not intrench any farther on our natural liberties, than is expedient for the maintenance of our civil." At the same time, the King's duties, specified in his oath, reflected the ancient agreement by which the people promise subordination in return for protection. Thus the King swore to govern according to law, to execute judgement with mercy, and to maintain the established religion. Of Parliament Blackstone declared that it

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\text{hath sovereign and uncontrollable authority in the making, confirming, enlarging, restraining, abrogating, repealing, reviving and expounding of laws, concerning matters of all possible denominations, ecclesiastical, or temporal, civil, military, maritime, or criminal; this being the place where that absolute despotic power, which must, in all governments, reside somewhere, is entrusted.}
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And while theoretically the people retained sovereignty, in reality, no way exists for controlling Parliament short of revolution. Blackstone also, however, declared that "the distinction of rank and honours is necessary in every well-governed state." It rewarded eminent services, acted as a spur to ambition, and provided examples of outstanding citizens. Thus, at the same time he founded the British
political system on democratic principles, he also argued for a hierarchical society led by an enlightened aristocracy.

Blackstone admired the English political system more than any other, and he explained why in some detail. He began by noting that the English system was

perhaps the only one in the universe, in which political or civil liberty is the very end and scope of the constitution. This liberty, rightly understood consists in the power of doing whatever the laws permit; which is only to be effected by a general conformity of all orders and degrees to those equitable rules of action, by which the meanest individual is protected from the insults and oppression of the greatest.53

To achieve their precious civil liberty, the English had created a mixed government, giving the three estates of the realm and the Crown a role in Parliament. Thus, each of the fundamental classes in English society participated in creating the laws, and each could block the actions of the others. This, Blackstone said, was the true excellence of the British system. At the same time, Blackstone insisted that the legislative and executive powers must remain separated. Where a single magistracy had both legislative and executive authority, it could "enact tyrannical laws, and execute them in a tyrannical manner." The English system wisely gave legislative power to Parliament and executive power to the Crown. A single hand should hold all executive power for the sake of unanimity, strength, and dispatch. And in exerting his lawful prerogatives, the King
should have absolute authority. This did not preclude, however, limiting the number of prerogatives given the Crown, as the English had. Blackstone admitted that an elective monarchy seemed most democratic, but, he cautioned, each monarch's election would create fertile ground for faction, corruption, and even violence. Consequently, he endorsed England's hereditary monarchy, where Parliament had the right to set aside the normal hereditary succession in favor of another.

Blackstone defined Parliament's role as the guardian of the English constitution. England's legislators were "the makers, repealers, and interpreters of the English laws; delegated to watch, to check, and to avert every dangerous innovation, [and] to propose, to adopt, and to cherish any solid and well-weighed improvement." Blackstone ridiculed the common notion that every man was born a legislator, insisting legislators must know the law to be effective. Addressing himself to the composition of Parliament, Blackstone observed that "in a free state, every man who is supposed a free agent, ought to be in some measure his own governor; and, therefore, a branch, at least, of the legislative power should reside in the whole body of the people." In England, the people entered government through representatives in the House of Commons. It was critical, however, that these representatives served for the whole realm and not just for their particular constituency.
Blackstone opposed binding instructions for representatives. In elections for representatives, property qualifications should deny the right to vote to those too poor to resist selling their votes. Beyond this qualification, elections must be free. Allowing private parties or the Crown to buy voters or candidates would "cut up the government by the roots, and poison the very fountain  
57 of public security." To guarantee themselves a full and accurate voice in the government, the people also should elect new representatives frequently, say every three years, and insist that Parliament meet frequently and regularly. Finally, Blackstone maintained that England's constitution benefitted not only from the separation of legislative and executive power, but also from establishing a separate judiciary. This prevented manipulation of the judicial power and avoided dangerously expanding one of the other power's sphere of action.

In addition to carefully explaining the English political system, Blackstone also commented generally on several other political issues. On the question of a proper judicial system, he declared every individual had the right to expeditious justice. In free countries, however, justice often was slowed by personal and property rights; yet, "the trouble, expense, and delays of judicial proceedings are the price that every subject pays for his liberty." Punishments for crimes, Blackstone argued, should have only one
objective, preventing future crimes. Such prevention was accomplished either by amending the offender, creating an example to deter future crimes by others, or divesting the offender of the ability to repeat the crime. Any punishments exceeding these guidelines were unjust. Thus Blackstone argued for minimal use of death penalties.

Freedom of religion and freedom of the press both drew Blackstone's qualified support. Societies should grant freedom of conscience and worship, but only after taking steps to protect Christianity and the established Church. And freedom of the press meant freedom only from prior restraint. To punish authors after they published writings judged pernicious, offensive, or dangerous was "necessary for the preservation of peace and good order, of government and religion, the only solid foundations of civil liberty." The military's role in society also drew Blackstone's attention. He believed, first of all, that war was legitimate, "an appeal to the God of hosts, to punish such infractions of public faith as are committed by one independent people against another: neither state having any superior jurisdiction to resort to upon earth for justice." He disapproved, however, professional standing armies, preferring instead a militia system for defense. Standing armies posed a constant threat to the people's liberties.

In a land of liberty, ... no man should take up arms, but with a view to defend his
country and its laws; he puts not off the citizen when he enters the camp; but it is because he is a citizen, and would wish to continue so, that he makes himself for a while a soldier.62

Other political points Blackstone made included the right to taxation only by consent, the injustice of slavery, and the desirability of providing the impoverished with productive work rather than outright welfare. All these principles combined to form a comprehensive scheme for a free and democratic government modeled on the excellent system the English had created.

Blackstone no doubt appealed to Greene, providing a cogent political theory that offered satisfactory answers to his growing political concerns and that fit nicely with his steadily maturing thought. Blackstone's arguments for inalienable natural rights, minimum restrictions of natural liberty, democratic and representative government, separation of government powers, participation in government of each social class to check and balance the others, limited executive prerogative, and a constitution presaged the majority views of the American revolutionaries. He also implicitly condemned as dangerous to a free and democratic system the political vices that concerned Americans most: interest, ambition, lack of public-mindedness, corruption, faction, and influence. Beyond these obviously attractive ideas of Blackstone's, however, Greene found other points equally appealing. He certainly endorsed Blackstone's advocacy of a hierarchical society, with prestige, power,
and rule belonging to the upper, or elite, classes. He accepted Blackstone's teachings on humane punishments with positive objectives. He would not muzzle the press before the fact but would punish authors for publishing dangerous writings, and he insisted, as had Blackstone, that representatives serve the national rather than local interests. Significantly, despite his Quaker heritage, he accepted war as a legitimate alternative for two nations unable to reconcile their differences any other way. Some of Blackstone's thinking did not stick with Greene, however. While he would pride himself on being the model of the disinterested citizen soldier, during the Revolution he eventually came to see a standing army as vital to America's strength. In his view a standing army drawn from a virtuous population would be benign. Greene also disagreed with Blackstone's advocacy of an established religion. His views of any religious establishment remained those of Rapin. Despite these differences, however, Greene's political views reflected Blackstone's almost perfectly.

While Blackstone's Commentaries was an exhaustive explanation of the laws of England, Cesare Beccaria's On Crimes and Punishment was no more than a brief essay analyzing the nature of law in general that agreed with Blackstone in all its general points. Beccaria wrote his book to promote laws based on enlightened reason rather than traditions or prejudice. And he grounded his own "rational"
analysis of law on the common notion that self-interest motivates virtually all of man's actions. Thus, in forming society, men reluctantly surrender only the least possible portion of their natural liberty. And men surrender this liberty not for the public good but only to earn society's protection. Moreover, each individual continually tries "not only to withdraw his own share [of surrendered liberty] but also to usurp for himself that of others." To discourage these usurpations, society creates laws and punishments "to prevent the despotic spirit, which is in every man, from plunging the laws of society into its original chaos." For, "that force, similar to gravity, which impels us to seek our own well-being is restrained in its operation only to the extent that obstacles are set up against it." Beccaria pointed out, however, that societies should not design laws solely to control men's excesses. Too often in the past, reliance on this criterion alone led to laws that were the tools of passions or expedient answers to accidental and temporary needs. Societies must design their laws according to the principle of "the greatest happiness shared by the greatest number." This alone will produce both just and efficient laws.

After establishing the necessity and purpose of laws, Beccaria went on to discuss the proper scope of law and its just administration. He argued that "the moral and political principles that govern men derive from three
sources: revelation, natural law, and the established conventions of society." Thus, three codes of virtue and vice existed. None of the three codes should contradict the others; however, the divine moral code requires more of man than the natural, and the natural more than the social. Working from this concept, Beccaria insisted that human law could never extend beyond upholding the moral code based on the conventions of society. Both the divine and the natural moral codes were the province of God alone. As Beccaria declared,

> it is of utmost importance to distinguish what results from convention, that is, from the expressed or tacit compacts of men, for therein lies the limit of the power that can legitimately be exercised by one man over another, without a special mandate from the Supreme Being.

He then emphasized the changeable nature of the moral and legal code based on the conventions of society, expressing as it did simply "the relation between a given action and the ever varying condition of society." At the same time, he stressed the need to ground social morality on the people's sentiments. Otherwise it lost legitimacy and force.

Beccaria agreed with Blackstone about the purpose and severity of punishments for crimes. He also pointed out that certainty rather than severity determined the effectiveness of punishments. Beccaria opposed anything other than a literal application of the laws. Allowing judges to interpret law invited them to practice interested,
prejudiced, and tyrannical justice. The magistrates should rewrite laws that were too rigid or severe. Likewise, society must deny its magistrates authority to detain suspects at their pleasure. Law should establish rules and necessary evidence for detaining and investigating a suspect. The decrees of a magistrate "are always contrary to political liberty when they are not particular applications of a general maxim included in the public code." Beccaria argued for trial by a jury of peers on the grounds that the feelings which inspire inequality must be silent for an impartial judgment. Besides, since no man can reach moral certainty, which is better felt than exactly defined, "ignorance judging on feeling is more reliable than science judging on opinion." Beccaria also opposed confiscations as punishment. They threatened liberty by enticing the powerful unjustly to strip the weak of property, imposing the punishment of the guilty on innocent relatives and associates, and forcing innocent victims to crimes to support themselves. Finally, Beccaria denounced secret accusations, calling secrecy "tyranny's strongest shield." And he argued that "every government, republican as well as monarchical, ought to inflict upon the false accuser the very punishment that the accused is supposed to receive." Concern for equitable, rational justice filled every page of Beccaria's essay.

Nathanael Greene came of age during the period from
1763 to 1772. As he did so, he began developing a political and social philosophy that dovetailed nicely with the principles that precipitated and fueled the Revolution. He naturally took a greater interest in the workings of the world around him. Entering the Rhode Island business world he came in contact with people, events, and issues that broadened his horizons and sparked his curiosity. His reading intensified his curiosity. Each book opened up new worlds and raised new questions, encouraging him to explore farther. And the magnitude and importance of the political contentions between the colonies and Great Britain during this period had to tempt every perceptive colonist to stretch his political thinking to its farthest limits.

Both his experience and his reading supported the radical political ideas blossoming in the colonies at this time. As a Rhode Islander he shared in that colony's bitter resentment of the dents Britain's tougher regulation of colonial commerce made in the colony's prosperity. Since the Greene family dabbled in seaborne trade along New England's coasts, it too fell prey to the British customs officials. The Greene's joined other Rhode Islanders in both ignoring and actively resisting the various British trade acts during this period, weakening their respect for British authority with every violation. And they read, listened to, and no doubt debated the political arguments that denied Parliament's authority to legislate for them,
that emphasized their natural right to a free and representative government, that decried the apparent determination of the British government to deny them the same, and that even toyed with the idea of independence. Greene's reading, typified by the histories of Charles Rollin and Paul de Rapin-Thoyras and the political commentaries of William Blackstone and Cesare Beccaria, complemented the political arguments growing out of the Americans' resistance to British control. Charles Rollin insisted that government existed only to promote the welfare of the people. Paul Rapin praised free and democratic government, and he built a strong historical argument for Englishmen's right to govern themselves. William Blackstone and Cesare Beccaria both argued that God gave men certain natural and inalienable rights that governments could not abridge justly. They also stressed that men surrendered only the least possible amount of their natural liberty when they joined together for the security inherent in a society. Blackstone went on to specify civil liberty as the proper aim of government and then described all the institutions, practices, and principles necessary to establish and maintain civil liberty. Rollin gave example after example from ancient history of how a society's strength, and even survival, depended on its virtue, emphasizing disinterestedness, plain living, sacrifice for the state, and obedience. Conversely, Rapin highlighted the
political vices that had undermined Englishmen's liberties throughout their history, and gave example after example of the English Crown's tendency to abuse and increase its power at the people's expense. These ideas all dovetailed with those Rhode Islanders and other American colonists were using to justify opposing British control.

There were, however, some incongruities in Greene's developing thought. Intellectually he seemed to have accepted Horace's arguments for virtue and disinterestedness, arguments echoed in Rollin and Rapin. His experience worked against those intellectual arguments, however. Rhode Island's politics were dominated by faction, and Greene daily learned more about how to use and benefit from factional politics. As well, his business activities centered around the protection and advance of private interests, both his own and those of his family and friends, to whom he was inextricably connected. Another incongruity in Greene's thought was that despite the egalitarian strains in Quakerism, in Rhode Island society, and in the radical political ideas of the day, Greene retained an affinity for a hierarchical society headed by a natural elite, an elite to which, it would eventually turn out, Greene himself wanted desperately to belong. And Greene found support for a hierarchical society from writers such as Rollin and Blackstone. Though Greene was developing political and social ideas that in many ways fit Revolutionary principles,
he also was absorbing contradictions that would affect his thought and actions throughout the coming war.
NOTES


2. Showman, I, 3-4.

3. Greene, Life of Nathanael Greene, I, 24; "To
Christopher Greene," 22 April 1778, Greene Papers, II, 351.

4. James, pp. 297-308; Lovejoy, pp. 5-29, 147-53.

5. James Madison, "Federalist #10," cited in Lovejoy,
p. xxx.


7. Lovejoy, pp. 19, 31; James, pp. 314-22.


9. Bernard Bailyn, David Brion Davis, David Herbert
Donald, John L. Thomas, Robert H. Wiebe and Gordon S. Wood,
The Great Republic: A History of the American People (Boston

10. Lovejoy, pp. 71-77.


14. Showman, I, 8-9; Greene, Life of Nathanael Greene,
I, 36-37, 39.

15. Thayer, p. 30; "Memorial to the Corporation of
Rhode Island College," before 16 November 1769, Greene
Papers, I, 9-10; "Memorial to the Trustees and Fellows of
Rhode Island College," before 7 February 1770, Greene
Papers, I, 11-13; Showman, I, 73.

16. Greene, Life of Nathanael Greene, I, 21, 55;
Thayer, p. 24.

17. Charles Rollin, The Ancient History of the
Egyptians, Carthaginians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes and
Persians, Macedonians and Grecians, trans. from the French
(New York: George Long, 1830), I, xxx.


29. Rollin, I, xxx.


32. Rollin, I, 420, 308-9, 357, 243-44, 260-64.


37. Rapin, II, 177-94; I, i-xi; XV, 236, 280-87; I, 342-48, 374; III, 229; XIV, 38, 60, 109, 147, 356; XIII,
1-95; II, 19-20, 34-40; X, 282-307; III, 446.


40. Rapin, I, 302.

41. Rapin, VII, 93-4.

42. Rapin, III, 282-99; IV, 125-26, 154-56, 192, 452-53.

43. Rapin, IV, 434.


45. Rapin, I, 82, 157-58, 234, 282-83.


48. Greene, Life of Nathanael Greene, I, 24, 55; Thayer, pp. 21, 117; "From Major John Clark," 8 November 1776, Greene Papers, I, 342.


56. Blackstone, I, 158.


62. Blackstone, I, 408.


65. Beccaria, pp. 4-6, 10-13.

CHAPTER IV

RADICALIZATION: 1772-1775

On May 1, 1775, Nathanael Greene was just a forgemaster in Coventry, Rhode Island, a partner in a locally-prosperous family business. Only thirty-two, his prominence seemingly extended no farther than the area around Coventry and East Greenwich, and even there marked him as no more than one of the middle crowd of young gentlemen. Never had his community elected him to any office. Yet, on May 8, 1775, the Rhode Island Assembly commissioned him as brigadier general in command of the 1500-man brigade it was raising to send to Massachusetts's aid. Few men, even during the tumultuous weeks when the colonies raised their first Revolutionary armies, experienced so radical a transformation as Greene.

Two obvious questions about Greene's appointment beg for answers. First, what made him a dedicated enough Revolutionary to accept a post in the army? Nothing about his life so far marked him as a staunch patriot. If he had read various books that argued for the very political ideas the patriots espoused, reading did not necessarily make him an energetic revolutionary agent. Did he undergo some
dramatic change of heart? Did he hesitate at all about joining the Revolutionary cause, or question its validity? Second, what prepared him for successful military command? In part, the answers to these questions lie in Greene's reactions to the critical events of 1772-1775 -- the Gaspee affair, the Tea Act and Boston Tea Party, the Coercive Acts, and the First Continental Congress. And the coverage Rhode Island's newspapers gave these events in all likelihood helped shape Greene's perceptions of the deteriorating relations between the colonies and Great Britain and of the proper colonial responses. Additionally, Greene continued reading important books on political and social affairs -- David Hume, Adam Ferguson, and The Spectator, to name a few. And finally, as the colonies' dispute with England approached the point of war, Greene joined a volunteer militia company and began reading military theory. Together, his experience and his reading during this critical period completed the preparations needed to launch Greene on his remarkable Revolutionary career.

Apparently the Gaspee affair, in the spring of 1772, served as the catalyst for Nathanael Greene's radicalization, or at least the overt expression of it. Prior to 1772 no evidence exists of Greene making any statements or taking part in any actions against the British administration. In early 1772, however, the coercive hand of British control touched Greene and his brothers directly
and immediately. On 17 February 1772, HMS Gaspee seized the Fortune, a commercial sloop owned by the Greenes, as it lay anchored in Narragansett Bay with a cargo of illegal rum, Jamaican spirits, and brown sugar. The Gaspee's commander, Lt. William Dudingston, fearing trouble in Newport, sent the Fortune to Boston's admiralty court for disposal. The loss of the Fortune's cargo hurt the Greenes financially, and the ill treatment accorded their relative, Rufus Greene, who captained the Fortune, aroused their ire even further. On 22 February 1772, the Greenes filed a suit against Lt. Dudingston for irregularities in both the capture of the Fortune and the disposal of her cargo. Dudingston, however, avoided being served the suit by never leaving the Gaspee. Not surprisingly, this whole chain of events generated considerable unrest among Rhode Island's merchants. On 9 June 1772, the Gaspee ran aground on a bar seven miles south of Providence. That night a group of colonists forcibly boarded the grounded ship, wounded Dudingston in the process, removed him and the crew, and set the ship afire, burning it to the waterline. Three days after his capture, as he lay convalescing in a Providence home, Rhode Island authorities arrested Dudingston in connection with the Greenes' suit. A judge subsequently ruled in favor of the Greenes, ordering repayment of the full value of the Fortune's cargo. Dudingston appealed the verdict but lost.

With justice done the Greenes, Rhode Islanders might
soon have forgotten the Gaspee affair. King George, however, decided not to let this attack on British authority pass unpunished. His strong reaction to the Gaspee affair made it a rallying cry for American liberties not only in Rhode Island but throughout the colonies. It also hardened Nathanael Greene's attitudes toward the British administration. When the King learned of the Gaspee's burning, he appointed a royal commission to find and prosecute those responsible. He also offered substantial rewards for the two ringleaders and their immediate accomplices. Moreover, word quickly spread throughout the colonies that the commission would send suspects to England for trial. When the Virginia House of Burgesses learned of this last provision, which denied the defendants their right to a local trial by a jury of their peers, they voted to establish a standing Committee of Correspondence and invited the other colonies to do the same. These committees would exchange and coordinate ideas about ways to resist growing British oppression. By mid-summer all the New England colonies and South Carolina had taken up the Virginia suggestion. The charter of the King's Gaspee commission naturally incensed Rhode Islanders in particular. Not only did it violate their natural right to a trial by jury, it also undermined the independence of their local judicial system, which had historically protected Rhode Islanders' interests whenever threatened by the Crown's authority.
Nathanael Greene soon found himself directly involved with the Gaspee commission as a suspect. Apparently at least one of Greene's cousins had participated in the affair, and someone, knowing at least one Greene had been present, mistakenly accused Nathanael. Other testimony soon cleared him, but not in time to blunt his anger and indignation. Speaking of his accuser, Nathanael said he was tempted to "let the Sunshine through him if I could come at him." More than this, the Gaspee commission prompted Greene's first recorded commentary on contemporary politics, a blast at the British government. In a letter to Sammy Ward on 25 January 1773, he said,

The Institution of this Court when taken in the obvious view of all its consequences is Justly Alarming to every Virtuous Mind and Lover of Liberty in America. . . . I fear the Privileges and Liberties of the People will be trampled to Death by the Prerogatives of the Crown.4

Obviously the Gaspee affair crystallized Greene's thinking about the colonies' relations to Great Britain and pushed him toward the position of the radical opponents of British control. And this was the long-term result of the Gaspee affair throughout the colonies. Though the Gaspee commission never found sufficient evidence to bring any suspects to trial, London's heavy-handed handling of the affair made many open opponents of British rule.

After the Gaspee affair, resistance to British rule grew steadily in Rhode Island. Rhode Islanders vigorously protested passage of the Tea Act in May 1773 and applauded
the Boston Tea Party in December that same year. The news of the Boston Port Bill in May 1774 outraged them, and when the Rhode Island Assembly met in June it issued the first call for a Congress of all colonies as soon as possible, declaring a "firm and inviolable union" essential. The Rhode Islanders went on to advocate an annual convention of representatives from all the colonies to consider the best means for preserving the "rights and liberties of the colonies." The remaining Coercive Acts and the Quebec Act, passed in the spring and early summer of 1774, simply added more fuel to Rhode Island's opposition. Rhode Islanders quickly organized financial relief and shipments of supplies for the beleaguered citizens of Boston. Typical was the effort in August 1774 by a group of East Greenwich citizens to buy provisions for their "distressed Brethren" in Boston, recognizing that tame submission to the Ministry's coercion could lead to subjection of the entire continent.

When the First Continental Congress convened in September 1774, Rhode Island sent its two most prominent politicians, Stephen Hopkins and Samuel Ward. And Rhode Islanders eagerly adopted the Articles of Association recommended by the Congress for non-importation and non-consumption of British goods. Towns throughout Rhode Island began revitalizing their militia units, and the more militant men organized new volunteer companies. Thus, in August 1774, a group of East Greenwich men formed the
Kentish Guards "to repair and revive that decayed and necessary Spirit of regular Discipline at this alarming crisis." By the end of 1774, newspapers in Rhode Island were arguing that Parliament had no authority in the colonies, that the colonies ought to form a permanent union, that the colonies were joined to Great Britain only by a covenant with the King which would cease to bind the colonists if the King violated its terms, that the King had power only to act in the right, and that therefore the colonists could legitimately resist any time the King acted in the wrong. More and more, in fact, the political commentary in Rhode Island criticized the King rather than just his ministers or Parliament. When fighting finally erupted at Lexington and Concord, a majority of Rhode Islanders had convinced themselves they had to fight to protect their freedom.

As for Nathanael Greene, what is known of his activities during the last three years before the war reveals a young man still trying to order his life and his ideas. The period started off badly for him. Not only did he suffer through the anguish of the Gaspee affair, but in August 1772 the forge in Coventry burned down. The Greenes won approval from the Rhode Island Assembly for a lottery to raise the money for rebuilding the forge, but it took them until May 1774 (and a second lottery) to get enough money to complete the rebuilding. On top of these two business
misfortunes, Greene also suffered a personal setback in the summer of 1772. Anna Ward, Samuel Ward's daughter, rebuffed a courtship Nathanael had hoped would lead to marriage. In combination, these three events depressed him for a time, but he soon shook off his gloom and moved on to other affairs. A January 1773 letter shows Greene still involved in legal affairs to some extent, defending a man named Wood for the town of Coventry against a suit filed by one Aldridge. In early July 1774 Greene surprised his friends with the announcement of his intention to marry Catherine Littlefield on the twentieth. Catherine was the daughter of John and Phebe Littlefield of Block Island, and two of her mother's sisters were married to William Greene and Samuel Ward, thus tying Nathanael even closer to these two prominent Rhode Island families. Greene's religious life also underwent some significant changes in this period. In October 1772 he went to hear Reverend John Murray preach in East Greenwich and then dined with him at James Varnum's house afterward. Murray's universalist ideas impressed Greene and further encouraged his move away from Quakerism. Then in September 1773, he and Sammy Ward attended some type of large military gathering in Plainfield, Connecticut. When the East Greenwich Quaker Meeting learned of this, they voted to suspend Greene for having been at a "Place in Connecticut of Public Resort where [he] had No Proper Business." He remained a suspended member of the East
Greenwich Meeting until he severed his association with the Quaker church in 1777, but his beliefs had moved beyond Quakerism. Just how far he had moved beyond Quakerism was shown by the fact that soon after his wedding he joined with other East Greenwich men in forming the Kentish Guards.

Important changes, such as the ones Nathanael Greene was experiencing, usually indicate considerable intellectual development as well. Fortunately, Greene also began writing letters at this time and so left some evidence of the directions his thinking was taking. As already indicated, one area where Greene was reordering his ideas was religion. His reading had introduced him to rational, or "enlightened," Christianity, undermining many of the Quaker beliefs taught Greene in his youth. His friends reinforced this process. Stephen Potter, a frequent business associate, was a noted critic of formal religion. James Varnum, the Greenes' lawyer in their suit against Lt. Dudingston and a close personal friend of Nathanael's, favored Deism. He accepted God's existence only on natural and rational grounds, and believed that after God created the universe and established its natural laws He took no further part in its functioning. And John Murray argued persuasively for universal salvation, maintaining that a loving God could not reserve salvation for only an elect group of his children. Instead, Murray argued, God gave salvation to all men, though some might have to serve a
limited period of preliminary punishment in the afterlife before their souls were purified. This "enlightened" notion of salvation fit easily with the theological arguments Greene had encountered in Barclay, in Butler, and in Fox, and he made Murray's view of universal salvation the foundation of his own religious beliefs.

Then, though he continued attending Quaker meetings even after his suspension from the East Greenwich meeting, he began criticizing the established Churches, including the Quakers, aiming particularly at the foibles and pretensions of ministers. Again, however, this anti-establishment bias had a solid foundation in the theology Greene had studied. And the criticisms Butler, Barclay and Fox had leveled at church establishments had been reinforced by Greene's readings in Enlightenment thought and in histories such as Rapin's. In May 1773 he wrote Sammy Ward approving of a play put on in Providence in defiance of a 1762 ordinance banning stage plays, interludes, and other theatrical entertainments. Moreover, he mocked "the Priests and Levites of every Order [who] cries out against it as subversion of Morallity, and dangerous to the Church." In the same vein, in December he reported attending a Quaker meeting where a "vain conceited Minister" preached, a man who had little to say yet belabored his meager point, boring the congregation. Neither the mysticism of Quakerism nor the pretensions of formal religion satisfied Greene any
longer.

Most of Greene's surviving letters during this period were to Sammy Ward, and they ranged over a number of philosophical issues. In general, Greene professes adherence to traditional Christian and classical values. In fact, Greene's comments on character read almost like he had taken them directly from Horace or from Rollin. At times, however, Greene seemed much more intent on protecting his interests than on practicing virtue. Greene maintained that men naturally inclined toward virtue and piety. Vicious customs came from men directing their passions, or desires, toward improper objects, for men modeled their passions after those objects they studied. And man's passions determined his emotions, or values. For himself, Greene claimed humility and benevolence, saying he "never presumed to have any accomplishments to entitle him to people's regard except Gentleness of Manners, Humanity of Soul and a Benificeint temper." When Anna Ward rejected his courtship, Greene declared he harbored no resentment because no man has a claim on another's regard simply by virtue of his own affection and esteem. Friendship and loyalty held special value for Greene. He maintained the essence of friendship was faithfulness, declaring that in true friendship there seemed "but one soul occupying two Bodies, and we are so deeply interested in Each others Happiness that one cannot be affected without the others feeling a Sensible pain." On
the other hand, Greene excoriated flattery, saying "a
flaterer or Sycophant that blows up the Mind of a Person
into a Tympany was like a Physician that administers Poison
and then demands a large fee for it." Greene gave education
the most prominent role in forming men's values. He urged
study of the choicest books and association with the best
company, asking, "Have you not felt upon seeing or reading
of noble Deeds and generous Actions pleasant Emotions mixt
with Desires of Immitation?" He encouraged Sammy Ward to
study history, especially that relating to the improvement
of the human mind, the advances of the sciences, and the
vicissitudes of learning and ignorance. At the same time he
cautionsed Ward to include discussion as part of his
education, because "interchanging our thoughts with one
another has always been represented by moral writers as one
of the noblest priviledges of Reason, and it is that which
more particularly sets Mankind above the Brute Creation."

In practice, Greene did not always live up to the
admirable set of values he claimed for himself. When he
asked his uncle, William Greene to serve as director for the
lottery to rebuild the Coventry forge, he first said this
mainly would benefit two financially troubled relatives who
were partners with the Greene brothers in the Coventry
operation. Then Greene let self-interest creep in by
pointing out that without this assistance, John and Griffin
Greene would never recover sufficiently to repay significant
debts owed Greene and his brothers. Greene's preoccupation with protecting his own interest also showed in the difficulty he always had accepting criticism and opposition with equanimity. Even as he claimed he would harbor no resentment toward Anna Ward for her rejecting him, he also declared most men would think his resentment fully justified. In August 1772 he had an exchange of letters with Sammy Ward wherein he evidently unintentionally offended and hurt Ward in one letter and then apologized and reasserted the fidelity of his friendship in another. At the same time, however, he reproached Ward for being offended! He scolded Ward for being offended by Greene's words rather than trusting Greene's actions as the true test of friendship. In the same series of letters he also protested the implication that he resented and criticized the influence of Ward's patron. A more serious instance of Greene's overreacting to criticism occurred in October 1774 when the Kentish Guards first failed to elect him an officer and then some members implied he was a blemish to the company because of his limp. In a long letter to James Varnmum, who was elected one of the company's officers, Greene poured out his resentment at being humiliated in public and petulantly declared he did not join the Guards to satisfy any ambitions and would quit if the others wished. Criticism of his limp evidently touched a quite sensitive nerve. This inability to take criticism or opposition in
stride lay behind many stormy episodes in Greene's Revolutionary career.

Greene's increasing correspondence after 1771 also gives a reasonably complete picture of how his political thinking had coalesced by the eve of the war. His criticisms of the established churches portended more than just religious differences. They smacked also of a distinct anti-establishment bias, since, in New England especially, the ministry of the established churches remained a powerful part of the social and political establishment. This willingness to oppose the ruling establishment naturally could extend to the government in London as well. After the Gaspee affair, Greene began expressing his opposition to British control openly. When Lt. Dudington seized the Fortune, Greene protested the illegality of sending the vessel to Boston for condemnation when the British statute called for disposition in the local admiralty court. As noted earlier, Greene condemned the Gaspee commission as an example of the British tyranny threatening American liberties. He also feared, however, "such a universal declension of Publick and Private Virtue throughout the Nation" that Americans would not oppose the commission. In particular, he warned that the Rhode Island Assembly "seems to have lost all that Spirit of Independence and Publick Virtue . . . and sunk down into a tame submission and intire acquiescence to Ministerial Mandates." For Greene, public
virtue remained the key to national strength and vitality. When Rhode Island appointed Samuel Ward a delegate to the First Continental Congress, Greene observed that "the mean motives of Interest or Partial distinction of Ministers of State will have no influence upon his Virtuous Soul; like Cato of old, heel stand or fall with the Liberties of his 16 Country."

In July 1774, Greene's statements show he held little hope for a reconciliation: "The Ministry seems to be determined to embrace thier accursed hands in American Blood, and that once Wise and Virtuous Parliament, but now Wicked and weak Assembly, lends an assisting hand to 17 accomplish thier hellish schemes." Directing his attention then to the British Army, he declared:

the Soldiers in Boston are insolent above measure. Soon very soon expect to hear the thirsty Earth drinking in the warm Blood of American sons . . . How is the design of government subverted. That [that which was instituted for the increase of the happiness of individuals and for the preservation of society in general should be made an instrument to rob us of one and destroy the other.18] As Greene explained briefly to James Varnum on his joining the Kentish Guards,

I thought the cause of liberty was in danger and as it was attackt by a military force it was necessary to cultivate a military spirit amongst this People, that they might be prepared to check it in its first sallies.19

Greene had joined, in thought at least, the ranks of the
radicals, those who soon would become active Revolutionaries.

While the steady drift of the majority of Rhode Islanders into vehement opposition to British control helped pull Greene into the ranks of the Revolutionaries, other influences pushed him in this direction as well. Greene could not escape being influenced by the flood of writings from England condemning the despotic tendencies of the King and his ministers. Whether he read any of these works or not, the ideas they espoused circulated freely in colonial pamphlets, newspapers, and discussions. Americans gave inordinate weight to the ideas of a small group of radical opposition Whigs in England, a group Caroline Robbins called the Commonwealthmen. These men argued that the King and his ministers were destroying English liberties by aggrandizing their own power and corrupting Parliament with bought elections, patronage, places, and pensions. In many ways, the radical Whigs' arguments were a resurrection of Rapin's description of the corruptions of English politics before the Glorious Revolution. This corroboration by Rapin quite likely made the radical Whigs' arguments even more attractive to Greene.

While differing on specific proposals, the radical Whigs generally agreed on a common set of fundamental beliefs. They based their ideas on the equality of all men in nature. In their view, each man had certain natural
rights which no other man or government could take from him. Men formed societies and governments by compact, voluntarily surrendering some natural rights in the process; therefore, governments existed and functioned only by the consent of the governed. Conversely, men had the right to dissent and, when government violated the compact, to revolt. The right of consent also meant that governments established by conquest had no legitimacy. The radical Whigs held a pessimistic view of human nature, and this view guided their ideas about the most desirable form of government. They believed man's nature, inherently restless and selfish, induced him constantly to try to increase his power within society. This pursuit of power naturally threatened other men's liberties. To counter this constant threat, men needed mixed governments that balanced the interests of the King, the aristocracy, and the commons. Rule of law must always prevail, both for the ruled and the rulers. Parliament should stand for frequent elections, meet regularly and often, and exclude civil officeholders. Standing armies must be minimized. To control the evils of faction and influence, civil officeholders must rotate frequently, and a rough social equality must prevail. And while not all the radical Whigs advocated complete abolition of monarchy, most did agree the Crown must surrender powers like declaring war and peace, control of the militia, appointment to office, control of expenditures, and calling
and proroguing Parliament. These ideas constituted a powerful revolutionary rationale.

Colonial newspapers also seem to have influenced Greene significantly. He was too committed to self-improvement and knew too much about current European affairs not to have read regularly one of the two prominent weekly papers then published in Rhode Island, the Providence Gazette or the Newport Mercury. With few exceptions, both Rhode Island papers urged an extremely radical set of attitudes on their readers, largely echoing the arguments of the radical Whigs. The line of thinking generally taken by the Providence Gazette ran as follows. At the heart of the problem lay the steady decay of British society and government, for as the Gazette declared,

Luxury and avarice, a more fatal and cruel scourge than war, will ere long ravage Britain, and ultimately bring on the dissolution of that once happy kingdom. Ambition, and a thirst for arbitrary sway, have already banished integrity, probity, and every other virtue, from those who are entrusted with the government of our mother country.

Already, Britain's ministers relied so heavily on buying friends and influence to govern that the bulk of the state treasury went to supporting their corruption. All the colonies were dissatisfied with the "present corrupt and abominable administration," and they were not "such stupid asses as to crouch down and patiently bear the unconstitutional burthen which modern tyrants laid upon them." Liberty had taken firm root in America, and "that
these colonies will, in some future time, be an independent state, is morally certain." The Gazette cautioned, however, to "let it be the study of all the colonies, to establish the union between them, which is the sure foundation of freedom." Step by step, the British government was stripping the colonists of all liberties, reducing them "to a state little superior to that of slaves." The King and his ministers aimed to subordinate the colonies "securely and quietly" by purchasing the submission of men of interest in every colony. Thus the Gazette applauded this toast by the Friends of Liberty in Boston:

May all the Sons of America, (who for the Sake of a Post, Place, or Pension, for themselves or friends) have meanly betrayed their Country, either in Thought, Word, or Deed, by suporting a corrupt, arbitrary and abandoned M____Y, or their tools, meet the Fate of a Corsican Executioner.24

Even criticism of the King himself mounted: he was irresolute, inconsistent, absolutist, and tyrannical. Absolute monarchy was condemned as unstable and the cause of slavery. But, as the paper declared, "God and the constitution having declared us free, no man, or men on earth have a right to make us slaves."

Radical arguments in Rhode Island's newspapers and the ideas promoted by the radical Whig opposition in England formed the intellectual environment in which Nathanael Greene solidified his political thinking during the three years before the war. And to these powerful influences
Greene continued to add a variety of important books. One he encountered was Adam Ferguson's *An Essay on Civil Society*, which complemented the thinking of the Commonwealthmen. Ferguson founded his analysis of social institutions and practices on his understanding of human nature. As did the Commonwealthmen, Ferguson recognized that interest was a principal motivation for man's actions. He also pointed out, however, that passions, or desires, were equally powerful motivators, often prompting men to act against their interests. He acknowledged that men are naturally contentious, and will invent oppositions even where no antagonisms or conflicts of interests seemingly exist. For this reason, Ferguson saw war as both natural and moral. And he admitted that man naturally desires personal power, and seeks to increase it at every opportunity. At the same time he accepted these relatively pessimistic views of man's nature, however, Ferguson also believed that love of society, of friendship, and of public affection, as well as kindness, gratitude, a sense of equality and justice, courage, eloquence and penetration were all inherent original qualities of man. This more generous view of human nature naturally colored Ferguson's analysis of society.

Ferguson judged a society not by its particular form, but by its ability to meet its citizens' needs. All governments should have certain objectives in common --
security, justice, and prosperity for all its citizens — however, societies may adopt different institutions, laws, and procedures for pursuing these objectives. While he considered a republican form of government the freest and most nearly perfect, he did not dismiss other forms out of hand. He emphasized that certain conditions favored particular social and governmental forms, and he admitted that even monarchies could establish healthy societies. Any society functions healthily when its members make the public good their principal concern and when the community, in turn, repays this dedication to the public good by guaranteeing its members the greatest enjoyment possible. Societies flourish when their governments ensure prosperity, security, and freedom. Governments can induce men to work hard and practice prosperous vocations by appealing to their interest. The government must guarantee to the worker the fruits of his labor and assure him of independence. Governments should limit their intervention in economic affairs to protection against physical destruction and suppression of frauds, extortions, embezzlements, etc., for "the event has shewn, that private interest is a better patron of commerce and plenty, than the refinements of state." Happy and secure merchants and traders make virtuous citizens — industrious, punctual, liberal, faithful, intelligent, and enterprising. Society prospers to the same extent individuals do. Population increases
naturally and the more money an individual makes, the more wealth he adds to the state. Thus the individual and society exist in a relationship of mutual benefit, each promoting the welfare of the other.

Surprisingly, Ferguson did not insist on an egalitarian society. He disputed the claim that men are absolutely equal in nature. Instead, he argued men have equal rights only to preservation and the opportunity to use their talents. He realistically acknowledged that inequalities of rank, privilege, and power existed in every society; in fact, he even applauded inequality. Societies needed some degree of hierarchy and subordination to comply with nature's design and to allow effective government. Men's varying abilities fit them for different stations, and they suffer no prejudice to be classed accordingly. Genuine ability to solve life's problems, however, rather than just learning and refinement should form the basis for this distinction. Ferguson also pointed out that unequal distribution of property, which flowed naturally from private ownership, also created grounds for unequal status. And while ideally societies should reward men only on the value of their labor, in reality societies needed excess wealth to encourage production, needed men working in non-producing "professional" occupations, and needed an idle rich class providing an incentive.

Ferguson did not even fear the appearance of parties in
society. As a society progressed, changing conditions and manners created a variety of ranks and parties, all of which naturally contended for privilege, power, and precedence. The pretensions of any one, unchecked, could lead to tyranny. And as they contended for precedence, parties could easily overlook the public interest. Having acknowledged this danger, however, Ferguson then laid it to rest:

The public interest is often secure, not because individuals are disposed to regard it as the end of their conduct, but because each, in his place, is determined to preserve his own. Liberty is maintained by the continued differences and oppositions of numbers, not by their concurring zeal in behalf of equitable government.°

Occupational specialization, a natural product of social progress, posed more serious problems. The social stratification created by occupational specialization usually left the lowest orders unfit for participation in democracy, because those whose daily pursuits did not extend above scraping out a living were unsuited to rule, and perhaps even to deliberate or vote. Ferguson emphasized the baseness, the corruptibility of the lower orders in a society that had progressed to an advanced stage of commercial arts. All their actions, he said, were governed by "an admiration of wealth unpossessed, becoming a principle of envy, or of servility; a habit of acting perpetually with a view to profit, and under a sense of subjection." And he warned of "the crimes to which they are
allured, in order to feed their debauch, or to gratify their avarice." Ferguson considered social stratification both proper and beneficial; at the same time, he pointed out the inherent dangers which societies needed to control.

Ferguson generally followed Montesquieu's thinking about particular political forms. Thus he defined a republic as a state in which the people possess the sovereign power and a monarchy as one in which one man is sovereign. Republics may be either democracies or aristocracies. The guiding principle of a democracy must be virtue. Its citizens must love equality, respect the rights of their fellow citizens, share common affection for the state, be content with recognition earned by ability, work for the state without profit, and avoid creating personal dependencies. Without this virtue, democracy becomes dangerous. An aristocracy divides society into two classes, with one always subject and the other always sovereign, and class and condition modify each citizen's rights. The guiding principle of an aristocracy must be moderation. Those in the upper class must moderate their superior status and strive to be worthy of their exalted status, while those in the lower class must willingly defer to their superiors. In a monarchy, there usually are great inequalities in the distribution of property and therefore many social ranks or classes. The desire for preeminence dominates in a monarchy, and each rank asserts its precedence. Thus, the
guiding principle in a monarchy is honor. Despotism, however, occurs whenever a single man rules without law, by whim and caprice. Despotism is nothing more than monarchy corrupted, where the king and court remain, but every subordinate rank has been destroyed. The guiding principle of despotism is fear. In reality, all governments combine aspects of each of the ideal types, and virtue, moderation, honor, and fear all play their part in society. Moreover, while ideal democracy and despotism define the two extremes of a spectrum, in reality both just despotisms and corrupt democracies can exist. All the above except despotism are acceptable forms of government. Which form evolves in a particular state depends on the state's size and situation, as well as the nature and preference of its citizens. Whatever the form, however, a state must operate by a code of laws to limit the powers of government and protect the estates and persons of its citizens.

Ferguson carefully considered the related questions of why states prosper and why they decline. Put simply, he believed a state became prosperous because its citizens diligently practiced virtue, and that it then declined when their prosperity led its citizens to turn to vice. As he explained,

the virtues of men have shown most during their struggles, not after the attainment of their ends. Those ends themselves, though attained by virtue, are frequently the causes of corruption and vice. Mankind, in aspiring to national felicity, have substituted arts which increase
their riches, instead of those which improve their nature. 33

States decline simply because their citizens cease pursuing with the necessary dedication and vigor those objects essential for elevating the nation. Once a society gains its initial objects, the people must seek new challenges rather than relax. Ferguson pointed out that once a people gained prosperity, many things led them to rest on their accomplishments. They began concentrating on learning what others have taught rather than remaining discoverers themselves. Their prosperous commerce tempted them to focus entirely on profit. Increasing occupational specialization forced them into narrow perspectives, and growth of the state inhibited their comprehension of the national interests. Laws for public order too successfully stifled the voice and spirit of activity. And the state protected individuals' rights, estates, and persons so well that they devoted their entire attention to personal contentment and avarice, and no longer thought they needed to exercise resolution and vigor to preserve individual and national rights. Ferguson emphasized that no constitution or set of laws will protect a people's liberty. Only continual exercise of a resolute and vigorous spirit to maintain liberties will suffice.

Corruption and luxury played prominent roles in Ferguson's explanation of why states declined. Corruption Ferguson defined as deviation from man's most excellent
state. In his view corruption sprang from the discontinuance of those conditions in society which promoted virtuous talents -- from the absence of challenges, the abundance of comforts, and twisted opinions of what constitutes rank and honor. When men became corrupt, they sacrificed their virtuous qualities to avarice and vanity, often because they had accepted dependence on another individual. Corrupt men subordinated the community good to personal profit, spurned the spirit of cooperation for competition and an animal instinct to self-preservation, and trampled the rights of others while at the same time often surrendering their own. Consequently, corruption soon led to despotism because the rules of despotism were perfect for governing corrupted men. Interestingly, Ferguson did not link corruption directly with luxury, a common connection for political writers at that time. He pointed out that either virtue or corruption could exist at both ends of the scale of national wealth.

Ferguson believed luxury was relative and that the degree of physical opulence mattered far less than an individual's state of mind. He defined luxury as

[a] complicated apparatus which mankind devise for the ease and convenience of life. Their buildings, furniture, equipage, clothing, train of domestics, refinement of the table, and, in general, all that assemblage which is rather intended to please the fancy, than to obviate real wants, and which is rather ornamental than useful.36

The real danger lay in vanity and in preoccupation with
trifles of adornment and enjoyment. Thus, he explained, "The use of morality on this subject, is not to limit men to any particular species of lodging, diet, or cloaths; but to prevent their considering these conveniences as the principal objects of life." A high degree of luxury contributed to corruption only as it provided ease and security to focus on personal gratification, introduced false grounds of precedence and estimation, and induced subordination where not merited. Through all this clearly ran the notion that public virtue anchored state success and prosperity; when virtue declined, so did the state.

Nathanael Greene's comments about political affairs both during this period and after reveal his general agreement with the ideas of Adam Ferguson and the radical Whigs. He accepted the argument that society and government were founded on a contract between men essentially free and equal in nature. Thus government functioned only by consent of the governed, and individuals retained the right to dissent and even rebel whenever government violated the contract. He believed in rule by law, applicable to both the governed and the governors. He would dispute Ferguson's contention that interest is not the principal motive of man's actions, but he would agree that gratifying physical appetites did not bring happiness. Instead, happiness came from practicing virtue. And virtue remained, as it had throughout history, the foundation not only of personal
success and happiness, but of social strength and prosperity as well. Like Ferguson, and most of the radical Whigs, he acknowledged that any of the three basic forms of government -- democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy -- could produce a happy and healthy society. He favored a hierarchical society, based of course on ability and merit, because as Ferguson said not all men were fitted for the same station. At the same time, however, he resisted any but the most essential encroachments on his own personal freedoms and expected a voice in government. When Greene looked down at the masses he considered below him in ability, talent, and virtue he thought as an aristocrat. But when someone tried to make him look up and acknowledge a superior rank, he thought only as a democrat. As a businessman, he seconded Ferguson's insistence that government guarantee the individual his profit and limit its involvement in individuals' economic affairs to protecting the rights of property. Regarding the dispute with England, he accepted the argument that the King and his ministers, aided finally even by Parliament, were deliberately trying to destroy American liberties. He considered the King a tyrant and denied that any political body in England had authority over the American colonies. He argued that the colonies must resist British oppression or accept slavery. To effectively resist, they needed to form a union to increase their strength; and they should aim at independence as their
ultimate objective. In every way, Greene sympathized with the radical ideology that motivated the Revolution.

Three other books Greene read deserve mention. Two were written by David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* and *The History of England: From the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688*. The other was *The Spectator*, a series of daily commentaries on life and letters written in London by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. Greene must have found much to admire in the commentaries on personal and public character contained in *The Spectator*. *The Spectator*’s admonitions on personal character followed classical lines, reinforcing the precepts Greene had encountered in Horace and in Rollin. As had Horace, Addison and Steele urged their readers to practice moderation in all things. Moderate tastes, expectations, and behavior led to individual satisfaction and happiness. One particular manifestation of moderation, disinterestedness, drew special attention from Addison and Steele. The truly virtuous individual approached life as selflessly as possible; this especially applied to all public activities. As *The Spectator* declared, "the Motive truly glorious is, when the Mind is set rather to do things laudable than to purchase Reputation." Addison and Steele also discussed some of the desirable traits of public character in *The Spectator*. Party and faction drew unqualified condemnation, being the public results of
preoccupation with private interests. Hand in hand with party and faction went the evil of flattery, and Addison and Steele remarked on the insincerity currently infecting English society, "so full of Dissimulation and Compliment." They warned also of the dangers of luxury. When societies gained prosperity and security, the people fell naturally into the pleasures of luxury. And to support the expense of their luxury, they developed all the methods of rapaciousness and corruption.

In *The Spectator* Addison and Steele described the ideal "Enlightened" society. This society ran by itself, rather than by God, according to unchanging natural laws and principles that man could discover and conform to. Men of reason peopled this society, moderate, disinterested, benevolent, dedicated to progress. A natural hierarchy of ability prevailed, with every man happy to keep his place until by merit he could raise himself. This society guaranteed every man his fundamental natural rights and liberties; at the same time, however, each man voluntarily restrained his rights as necessary to prevent harming other individuals or the society as a whole. Nathanael Greene could easily accept this picture of the ideal society. *The Spectator* described the kind of society he, and many other Americans, wanted. Increasingly, however, events persuaded him that the British government had too badly corrupted and twisted colonial society and that an "enlightened society
could appear in America only in independent states.

David Hume provided a different perspective on many of the issues Greene was wrestling with. Hume approached life with considerable skepticism, and this colored his interpretations of political and social affairs. He emphasized how easily the mind could form incomplete and inaccurate ideas and insisted that men could judge the truth or certainty of phenomena only on the basis of observation and experience. Because of this he advocated skepticism as the greatest aid to educating oneself. Skepticism preserved impartiality and tempered prejudice. Hume's skepticism naturally led him to dispute many tenets of Christianity, and he condemned religious zeal as destructive of civil harmony and the spirit of compromise. Hume's skepticism also influenced his interpretation of English history. He wrote *The History of England* to correct the misunderstandings about the British constitution that largely had been introduced by the Whig interpretation of English history, and he especially disliked Rapin's history, then the standard work. Saying he based his history on rational investigation and analysis of the historical evidence rather than on the dictates of abstract political, religious, or philosophical theories, theories almost totally dependent on transcendental revelation, Hume maintained that the English constitution resulted largely from fortuitous accident, with a little wisdom and foresight
thrown in. He emphasized the role private interest played in shaping English political forms. In Hume's view, the principal actors throughout British history had intended to serve only their own interests.

Hume exhibited a surprising toleration toward absolute monarchy. His disdain for abstract principles led him to argue that any government's legitimacy rested only on the approval of its citizens, not on its adherence to any particular political theory. Thus he condoned the Tudors' institution of absolute monarchy as necessary, legitimate, and benign because approved by the people. At the same time he countenanced absolute monarchy as potentially benign, Hume also criticized the proponents of liberty for tyrannical excesses on behalf of their cause. Parliament's intransigence, especially their refusal to grant funds for legitimate expenses, brought on the Civil War. Then once Parliament gained full governmental power during the Civil War, it displayed its own tyranny — abusing its own prerogatives, loading the people with a multiplicity of taxes, running roughshod over laws and liberties, and allowing its supporters to pursue private interest at the expense of the public good, all in the name of liberty and enthusiastic piety. To Hume, the proponents of liberty had proved as dangerous to individual rights and freedoms as had the most corrupted absolutists. David Hume preached a fundamentally conservative political and social philosophy,
emphasizing the conservative values of steadfast loyalty, obedience, and deference. And he closed his History with a plea for moderation in both political debate and practice, for neither extreme liberty nor extreme monarchy. He pointed out that "a regard to liberty, though a laudable passion, ought commonly to be subordinate to a reverence for established government." Men ought to praise not only those who seek "the perfection of civil society," but also those who maintain "those maxims that are essential to its very existence."

Despite his growing affinity for radical political thought, Greene found much to admire in what Hume said. As did Hume, Greene approached life skeptically. He had little use for abstract principles, preferring to base his ideas on the concrete evidence of this world. This showed clearly in his move away from Quakerism into the realm of informal, non-denominational Universalism. Greene also approved the conservative values that underlay Hume's interpretation of English history. Here Hume had struck a harmonic chord with conservative ideas Greene had found in Horace, in Rollin, in Blackstone, and in Ferguson. Though devoted to the rights and liberties of the individual, Greene, also emphasized the value to society of loyalty, obedience, and deference to superior authority, which were the prime components of public virtue. In Greene's ideal society, government would guarantee to its citizens their essential rights and
liberties. Rule of law would govern the actions of all, both in and out of power. At the same time, however, each citizen would practice sufficient discipline and self-restraint to avoid harming other citizens or the society in general. Greene took to heart Hume's warnings of the dangers of excessive liberty and democracy, and he viewed monarchy as potentially as benign as any other governmental form, with the specific virtue of providing strong central government. Without question, Greene favored revolution; he wanted independence and self-government. He remained, however, like so many other Americans at the time, a strangely conservative revolutionary.

Prior to 1772, Nathanael Greene's readings had introduced him in abstract to the fundamental political and social principles that motivated the American Revolutionaries. Then the events and ideas of 1772-1775 made Greene an ardent Revolutionary, and if not a leader, then at least a vigorous supporter. Greene's growing dissatisfaction with what he viewed as British oppression also led to his active involvement in military affairs, the most important development of his life. His military career put Greene on the national stage, and his exceptional competence eventually made him a leader of the Revolution. Greene's military career abounds with important questions,
questions that bear directly on the nature of the Revolution, as well as on the nature of military command. Why did the Rhode Island Assembly choose a relatively obscure and militarily inexperienced forge owner to command the Army of Observation it sent to Massachusetts's aid in the summer of 1775? Once chosen, how did Greene manage to develop such exceptional ability? How did he prepare himself, and how did that training suit him to command in the Revolutionary Army? Was his training responsible for his success or did he bring qualities to the job that lay outside the realm of military training? Were the skills he manifested generally applicable to military command or was the Revolution such a unique challenge it required unique abilities and qualities? The answers to these questions, as usual with Greene, begin with his reading.

No evidence shows Nathanael Greene involved in military activities of any sort before September 1773, when he and his cousin, Griffin Greene, supposedly attended a military parade in Plainfield, Connecticut. Tradition maintains that from this time on, Greene remained intensely interested in military affairs. As mentioned earlier, in August 1774 he joined with fifty or so other men from the East Greenwich area to form an independent volunteer militia company, the Kentish Guards. Once incorporated by the Rhode Island Assembly, the Kentish Guards flourished. They reached a high of sixty-four members in January 1775, and always had a
core of forty or so men who diligently attended meetings. They equipped and uniformed themselves well and hired a former British soldier, William Johnson, to drill them two or three times a week. Their dedication paid off; throughout the war they provided the Continental Army with two generals, at least three colonels, and many field and company officers. Nathanael Greene apparently was among the most active of the Guards's members. Though bitterly disappointed at being overlooked when the company elected its officers, he swallowed his considerable pride (after venting his hurt in a long letter to James Varnum, who had been elected captain of the company) and took his place as a private. Tradition maintains that after joining the Guards Greene made several trips to Boston, and there he watched the British soldiers parading and mastered all the details of regular army drill. He also supposedly frequented the Boston bookstore owned by Henry Knox, an avid student of military affairs. Knox, the story goes, guided Greene to the numerous books on military history and practices that formed the foundation of Greene's military knowledge, and, as a friendship developed between the two, they discussed military affairs, thus sharpening each other's skills. Though no hard evidence supports this story, it seems plausible. Greene did acquire military books from somewhere and begin making himself as expert as possible at his new vocation.
Even before he began reading strictly military books, Greene undoubtedly absorbed some knowledge of military affairs from the other books he read. He apparently had a natural interest in things military, and so the comments on military issues and operations in the histories and the political and social commentaries he read would have made more than a passing impression on him. The reading he had done outside the purely military field offered him a changing interpretation of war's role in society. George Fox, in urging his readers to join the covenant of peace that had existed before strife and wars, declared that wars arose out of men's lusts. Horace implied very much the same thing when he condemned Paris for letting his desire for Helen start the Trojan War. Horace regretted war because it weakened the state's social, political, economic, and moral fabric, thereby permitting a variety of corruptions and vices to flourish. At the same time, Horace used Rome as an example of how dissolution and the degeneration of public virtue sapped a nation's strength, eventually leaving it defenseless. Thus he praised Regulus's refusal to surrender even when faced with defeat, praised his constancy, unquenchable valor, and determination. He derided those who surrendered to and accommodated the enemy. Society could never again trust soldiers who had once surrendered; they had forfeited their valor and virtue. While Fox declared war immoral, Horace labeled it simply
tragic. Moreover, Horace saw at least one redeeming feature in war, it offered men the chance to act honorably and thereby win glory. This was a qualification that probably made a strong impression on a young mind.

When Greene began reading histories and political analyses written by more contemporary authors, he encountered a different conception of war. William Blackstone provided a logical justification for war. He condoned war as "an appeal to the God of hosts, to punish such infractions of public faith as are committed by one independent people against another; neither state having any superior jurisdiction to resort to upon earth for justice." Adam Ferguson concurred. Pointing to man's inherent contentiousness, he said war was natural and therefore moral. Ferguson did, however, acknowledge that some forms of warfare were more civilized than others. He chided the ancient Greek republics for aiming to wound the enemy state by destroying its members, desolating its territory, and ruining its property. On the other hand, he commended his fellow Europeans for limiting war to an operation of public policy not popular animosity, for striking at public rather than private interests, and for limiting bloodshed. Ferguson also addressed some of the general considerations with which societies should concern themselves when waging war. Regardless of its other advantages, "a nation consisting of degenerate and cowardly
men, is weak; a nation consisting of vigorous, public-spirited, and resolute men is strong." He pointed out that since military operations require unified command even democracies might find it necessary to grant nearly dictatorial powers to a single executive in times of war. He insisted that societies that practiced equality could raise the strongest national force, as well as guarantee a succession of able leaders. And he warned of allowing too great a distinction and separation to develop between soldiers and civilians. Nothing could be worse than if "one set of men were to have an interest in the preservation of civil establishments, without the power to defend them," while the other set "were to have this power, without either the inclination or the interest." Ideas like Ferguson's provided a basis for Americans' confidence they could field a military force strong enough to defeat the British.

Other than the strictly military books Greene began reading during the one or two years before the war, perhaps the greatest source of military knowledge for him was the histories of Charles Rollin. Rollin wrote his histories to explain the rise and fall of empires. He carefully analyzed which individual and national qualities led to a state's success or failure. He even discussed the specific strategies and tactics used by military and political leaders. Rollin implicitly accepted war as natural. Rollin based his interpretations of warfare on the conviction that
public and personal virtue determined success or failure, declaring that "The field of battle is a tribunal without partiality and cabal." Thus he praised the admirable characters of great leaders like Cyrus of Persia and Hannibal of Carthage, and he repeatedly stressed that the valor of troops outweighed their numbers in importance. In his view, the Persian Army degenerated after Cyrus's death because the Persians became addicted to luxury. The Persian army then lost its severity, order, and discipline, forcing the Persians to rely on mass rather than skills. The Greeks, on the other hand, though they could raise only small armies, fielded soldiers "accustomed to temperance, whose bodies were inured to toil and labour, and rendered both robust and active by ... exercises." Rollin likened the Greek armies to "strong, vigorous bodies, that seem to be all nerves and sinews, and full of spirits in every part." And, Rollin said, the success of these relatively small Greek armies against the much larger Persian forces showed "what infinite resources and expedients are to be found in prudence, valour, and experience; in a zeal for liberty and our country, in the love of our duty, and in all the sentiments of noble and generous souls." Only virtue could provide the necessary foundation for national strength and prosperity.

Rollin did not argue that virtue alone guaranteed military victory; he also stressed the importance of good
leadership. Quoting Euripides, Rollin wrote, "one wise head is worth a great many hands." The superior leader can revive the courage of an army and a people and thereby defeat an enemy thought invincible. Throughout his histories, Rollin emphasized the qualities demonstrated by exceptional commanders. The Greek generals, said Rollin, possessed courage and intrepidity. Not allowing insurmountable odds or misfortunes to deject or disconcert them, they "compelled victory to declare on the side of merit and virtue." Cyrus's success stemmed in large part from taking to heart his father's advice on the most important elements of generalship: to keep the army well supplied and equipped; to train and condition the troops thoroughly; to look after their health; to earn their respect and admiration; and to gain their obedience. Concerning this last point, Cambyses, Cyrus's father, observed that ordinary generals forced their men's submission, rewarding the obedient and punishing the transgressors. A great general, however, won his men's willing obedience by demonstrating he knew best what was to their advantage. To demonstrate this, a general must have acquired superior skill and knowledge through constant, diligent study and preparation. Military expertise did not flow automatically from natural genius. Rollin used Hannibal's career to illustrate another important quality of generalship, the necessity of learning the enemy commander's
character and abilities. This done, the general can tailor his operations to the enemy's weaknesses and strengths. Rollin also pointed out frequent examples of generals resorting to unexpected actions to unbalance and thereby defeat their opponents. Thus in these and other examples, Rollin offered a set of general, timeless principles that outlined the requirements of successful military command.

Nathanael Greene also could pick up specific military methods and strategies from Rollin that remained applicable in his own time. Cyrus's campaigns illustrated the value of seizing the strategic offensive. By carrying the war to the enemy, a commander disconcerts his enemy while boosting his own troops' morale. He reaps all the advantages of surprise, and subjects the enemy's rather than his own country to the devastations of war. Rollin reinforced this injunction to seize the offensive with Scipio's observation that troops often fight with more inspiration when attacking than when defending. Cyrus's campaigns also taught the importance of never driving a powerful enemy to extremities, of always leaving him a way out. As another example of this, Rollin told of the Roman general, Regulus, who conquered most of North Africa during the First Punic War and then laid siege to Carthage. When the Carthaginians sued for peace, however, Regulus offered only the most severe terms. The Carthaginians then decided to resist to the death. Cyrus also treated prisoners and the enemy's
defeated allies leniently, never wishing to forfeit potential supporters. Rollin contrasted this policy with the Spartans' harsh treatment of conquered peoples, which only provoked resentments that festered and eventually erupted in rebellions. Finally, Cyrus’s operations showed the value of painstaking preparations, thoroughly supervised down to the smallest detail.

Rollin pointed out that an army needs both skill and discipline to be effective. Constant training and conditioning gave soldiers the necessary skills. Discipline depended on first inspiring the troops with love for their country, their fellow citizens, and their honor, and then attaching them to the army command by generosity and liberality. Rewarding only merit rather than favor played a vital part in the process. Rollin also promoted various strategies throughout his histories. In a section particularly appropriate to the situation the Americans found themselves in during their Revolution, he praised the strategy Quintus Fabius used against Hannibal. Recognizing Hannibal’s superior strength, Fabius refused battle on Hannibal’s terms. He always maintained a favorable geographic position. And while he stayed in constant touch with Hannibal’s army he would engage only in skirmishes, and in those only when he had the advantage. He aimed to keep his smaller army undefeated while wearing out Hannibal’s army both physically and emotionally. Rollin also
complimented Agathocles, general of the Syracusan Greeks on Sicily. When a vastly superior Carthaginian force invested Syracuse, Agathocles, knowing the Carthaginians could beat him in a direct confrontation, successfully defended Syracuse indirectly, by himself attacking Carthage.

Interestingly, during his Revolutionary campaigns, Nathanael Greene showed an appreciation of both the Fabian strategy and of the sort of indirect strategy Agathocles had employed.

When Greene finally devoted himself to studying purely military books, he no doubt read everything he could put his hands on. Unfortunately, little record of the books he read remains. William Johnson, in his biography, mentions Sharp's *Military Guide* and the memoirs of Marshall Turenne. No doubt Greene read at least one of the several manuals available at the time detailing the accepted rules of drill and tactics, most likely Humphrey Bland's. In his papers, however, Greene refers to only three of the purely military books he read. Fortunately, the three mentioned, Caesar's *Commentaries*, Maurice de Saxe's *Mes Reveries*, and Frederick the Great's *Instructions to His Generals*, were the principal writings on the art of war at that time. Consequently, they no doubt contributed most of the ideas Greene incorporated into his own understanding of the art of war.

In his *Commentaries*, Caesar described his campaigns against the various tribes in Gaul and then against Pompey
and Pompey's successors during the Civil War. And while Caesar kept the *Commentaries* strictly narrative, the interested reader can easily distill from Caesar's accounts of his operations the principles Caesar followed in conducting war. First and foremost, Caesar emphasized the offensive, seizing and maintaining the initiative. During his conquest and governorship of Gaul, Caesar reacted immediately to every threat. This way he dictated the pace of the fighting against the various Gallic tribes that resisted his rule, making possible the defeat of several numerically superior enemies with a far smaller force.

Likewise, as soon as he realized he would have to fight his opponents in Rome to maintain power, Caesar, who was at Ravenna with only one legion, did not wait for reinforcements from Gaul. He immediately moved to seize the initiative and the most advantageous positions in Italy. He relied on celerity and audacity to unbalance his enemy.

Pompey's caution and defensive-mindedness contrasted unfavorably with Caesar's aggressiveness. When Pompey evacuated Italy and sailed to Illyricum, Caesar ignored him and turned instead against Pompey's forces in Spain, defeating them as Pompey waited cautiously in Illyricum. Then Caesar turned his attention back to Pompey. Though Pompey's superior navy controlled the Adriatic and the winter season made a crossing extremely difficult, Caesar decided to sail across immediately, thus negating Pompey's
superiority by the unexpected. Once in Illyricum, Caesar pushed and probed at Pompey until he finally forced an open battle at Pharsalus. In this battle, the two commanders remained in character. Pompey stood on the defensive, believing his soldiers would fight more effectively not having been fatigued and disordered by charging. Caesar, on the other hand, believing the martial ardor induced in men by charging more than compensated for the attendant fatigue and disorder, attacked and routed Pompey's army. The Illyricum campaign illustrates another principle that governed Caesar's operations. He acted on the premise that armies decided the issues of a war through battle. Caesar stayed on the offensive not only to maintain the initiative, but also to force a battle where he could beat the enemy into submission, into accepting dictated rather than negotiated terms of peace.

In addition to Caesar's emphasis on offensive operations and decisive battles, the Commentaries show other, more sophisticated, ideas at work, as well. Caesar clearly recognized the need to adapt his style of warfare to social and political conditions. In the Gallic Wars he aimed to cow the resisting tribes by force. Caring little about winning their loyalty, he used harsh repression to control rebelliousness and showed no mercy toward prisoners. In contrast, when fighting Pompey, Caesar showed he understood it was more important in a civil war to win
the people's allegiance than to impose his will on them. He also realized the importance of subverting Pompey's soldiers, causing their desertion to himself, rather than destroying them. In his campaign against Pompey's lieutenant, Afranius, in Spain, Caesar declined battle and instead forced Afranius's surrender by maneuvering him into an untenable position. In this way, Caesar avoided wasting valuable soldiers of his own, recruited many of Afranius's soldiers into his own army, and impressed the Roman people with his leniency. In all his campaigns, Caesar showed little regard for seizing geographical objectives as a means of winning the war. When he moved to take control of Italy at the beginning of the Civil War, he ignored Rome and instead focused on Pompey's army. Caesar believed defeating the enemy army always was the key to victory. And throughout the Commentaries, Caesar makes it plain he relied heavily on superior training and discipline, on superior execution of essentially standard forms rather than on new methods or organizations, and on psychologically unbalancing his enemies by confronting them with the unexpected.

The Commentaries also contained numerous examples of relatively specific military methods and strategies which Greene no doubt filed away for future use. When Caesar first arrived in Gaul, he operated cautiously to compensate for his own inexperience and lack of familiarity with his troops. Because he usually commanded relatively small
forces, Caesar developed many methods and strategies for dealing with numerically superior enemies. When the Swiss threatened to invade Gaul he offered to negotiate. He then used the delay to raise and prepare the forces needed to defeat them. In another instance, when the Averni rebelled and marched against the Roman province of Cisalpine Gaul, Caesar responded not by defending the Province passively but by invading the Averni's home territory, forcing them to hurry home in its defense. Usually outnumbered, Caesar at times enticed his enemies into attacking him in strongly prepared positions by pretending fear and disorder. And even when Caesar found himself bottled up and besieged by a superior force, he stayed on the offensive tactically to keep the initiative and steadily to disadvantage, discourage, and weaken his enemy. On the offensive Caesar strove to bring his enemies to battle. Most often, he would threaten a point his opponent could not refuse to defend. He also tried to choose these points so that his enemy was forced to fight at a disadvantage. Thus, against Scipio in Africa, Caesar threatened a town whose loss would fatally damage Scipio's prestige. At the same time, the town was located in terrain unsuited for cavalry and light troops, Scipio's most effective troops. Occasionally, the Commentaries even recorded skillful strategies used by Caesar's opponents. Thus, Vercingetorix, discovering his forces could not stand up to the Romans in open battle,
reverted to a campaign of attrition. He avoided pitched battle and instead concentrated on destroying Roman convoys and foraging parties, as well as any surplus crops and livestock, hoping to starve the Romans into defeat.

A critical reader of the Commentaries could also see mistakes Caesar made. Throughout his career, he inclined to rashness. Because he was supremely confident of his own abilities, he gambled aggressively and at times even acted impulsively. His first campaign against England, a near disaster, clearly illustrated the dangers of impulsive operations undertaken without thorough planning and careful consideration of all contingencies. Repeatedly he pushed his luck to the limit by brashly throwing his army into operations without adequate preparations. Ironically, Caesar condemned rashness in other commanders. When one of his lieutenants in Africa, acting on thin intelligence, rushed into an enemy trap and had his army annihilated, Caesar declared the man had been led astray by "youthful ardour, greatness of mind, former success, and dependence on his good fortune." Clearly, he expected his subordinates to exercise prudence and caution. In his own case, however, unshakeable faith in his abilities blinded him to his own rashness and led to a whole series of campaigns where he placed his army in mortal danger. Still, in each case he not only survived, he triumphed. And so each of those campaigns illustrated not only the dangers of rash,
insufficiently prepared operations, they also showed how skillful and aggressive leadership, coupled with iron determination, could extricate an army from a seemingly disastrous situation.

Leadership, or command ability, played a major role in Caesar's success, and he emphasized this in the Commentaries. He portrayed himself always providing a positive example for his men. In Africa, when leading units made up of apprehensive new levies against a superior enemy, he purposefully put on an air of unconcerned gaiety to quiet the men's fears. And more than once he showed himself wading into the thick of a desperate battle to restore his men's order and to boost their confidence and determination by the example of his personal courage. Caesar worked hard to sustain his troops' confidence. When an enemy's reputation for fierceness disquieted them, he calmed their fears with praise of their own abilities and accomplishments. Before abandoning the siege of Cleremont, he launched a limited attack aimed at winning a small success that would keep his soldiers' spirits from dropping too far as they withdrew. When his army suffered a limited defeat at Pompey's hands, he led his men off to conquer some easy towns to restore their confidence. Caesar also took pains not to ask his men to undertake operations they were not trained for. Thus, he refused to split his army into detachments to chase after Germans in the dangerous forests
of that country. Instead, he recruited small groups of Gauls for the task. And when in Africa he encountered an enemy using cunning new tactics and formations, he avoided battle until he had reequipped, reorganized, and retrained his own troops to counter the enemy's new methods. His care to conserve his men and sustain their confidence did not blind Caesar to the fact that he must remain their commander, however. He approvingly reported the response of one of his young commanders who, when told by his lieutenants he must withdraw because the Roman troops were about to desert to the enemy answered, "The obedient and loyal soldier should never think he is mistrusted; nor the refractory know he is feared; which serves only to increase the arrogance of the one and alienate the affections of the other." And when his own soldiers mutinied in Africa, Caesar faced them down by audaciously agreeing to their demand for discharge and then declaring he would recruit new troops and conquer Africa and all its booty without them. Caesar commanded; and his ability both to inspire his troops and to win their respect, loyalty, and obedience carried him to the greatest heights.

Another important book on military theory Greene read was Maurice de Saxe's *Mes Reveries*. Saxe, a Marshal in the French Army whose long and illustrious career spanned the first half of the eighteenth century, wrote *Mes Reveries* to explain his own unorthodox ideas about waging war. And,
though Saxe presented his ideas in a rambling way and left important questions untouched, *Mec Reveries* was the most comprehensive treatise on the higher art of war available in the eighteenth century. Saxe's philosophy of warfare differed markedly from Caesar's. Whereas Caesar sought battle as the proper means for settling the issue in war, Saxe preferred gaining victory by the least violent means possible. In *Mec Reveries* he described a method for occupying and controlling Poland that emphasized using influence and persuasion to defeat the Poles rather than brute force. This method contrasted sharply with Caesar's operations in Gaul. General engagements, battles that pitted the whole of each commander's army against the other, held little attraction for Saxe. He saw all the potential disasters inherent in risking general engagements.

Moreover, as he said,

"... it is possible to make war, without trusting anything to accident; which is the highest point of skill and perfection, within the province of a General.... I am persuaded that an able General might avoid them [general engagements], and yet carry on the war, as long as he pleased."

Saxe did not condemn battle categorically, however. He insisted commanders must never pass up good opportunities to engage the enemy at a distinct advantage. He simply favored, when fighting was necessary or advantageous, a series of small, limited engagements to wear the enemy down and discourage him. And he even acknowledged the propriety
of general engagements in some circumstances. No commander should pass up the opportunity to force a general engagement when he had "all imaginable reason to expect the victory." In both limited and general engagements, however, Saxe argued for eschewing brute force in favor of psychologically unbalancing the enemy as the surest and least costly way to victory. Unexpected maneuvers and mobility bred consternation, "which is the unavoidable effect of sudden and unexpected events: this is a general rule in war, and is what determines the fate of the day in all actions: it is the irresistible impulse of the human heart." For Saxe, the governing principle of warfare was "how irresistibly weak mortals are governed by mere, momentary caprice and opinion."

Saxe's distaste for battle stemmed in part, no doubt, from his understanding of the uncertainties inherent in war. As he declared in his preface, "War is a science so obscure and imperfect, that, in general, no rules of conduct can be given in it, which are reducible to absolute certainties." Saxe criticized anyone who "supposes men to be the same at all times, and does not consider that bravery is a variable and uncertain quality of the mind; . . . . which can be only ascribed to the weakness and imperfections incident to human nature." Thus, Saxe condemned "slavish adherence to custom," which he maintained proceeded only from ignorance. Instead, he praised the Romans who "studied
the art of war with indefatigable attention, and judiciously relinquished all old customs, whenever experience threw better in their way."

In his preface, Saxe emphasized that before anyone could profitably study the "sublime," or grand strategical, parts of the military art, he must master the details of the organization, administration, and maneuver of troops, which formed the foundation of any general's success. Consequently, Saxe devoted a significant portion of *Mees Reveries* to these very subjects. Saxe's ideas on army organization differed markedly from standard eighteenth century practice, and represented a real advance in thinking. Saxe favored relatively small field armies, approximately fifty thousand men exclusive of reserves. In his view, larger numbers only created crippling problems of control, mobility, and logistics. Within the army, Saxe recommended the legion as the basic tactical formation, and, in doing so, moved away from the eighteenth-century conception of armies as indivisible organic wholes. Saxe's legions joined together four regiments, and, in another important departure from current practice, each regiment contained infantry, cavalry, and artillery forces. Thus, each of Saxe's legions comprised a miniature army, similar, although much smaller, to the divisions of today. These legions could fight independently or join with others in any combination, allowing commanders to abandon the rigid linear
formations that characterized eighteenth-century warfare. Saxe argued his legions would dramatically improve an army's flexibility, adaptability, and maneuverability on the battlefield.

Saxe turned his attention next to the various types of forces in the army. He disapproved of grenadier units, feeling this used up the better soldiers too quickly and robbed the other units of valuable leavening. Of the two types of cavalry Saxe favored, heavy cavalry and dragoons, only the dragoons would have been appropriate for America's rough and heavily wooded terrain. Essentially mounted infantry, expert in both cavalry and light infantry maneuvers, dragoons could perform a variety of vital supporting duties. Nathanael Greene, in fact, would find dragoons of inestimable value in his campaigns in the South. Regarding artillery, Saxe cautioned against sacrificing any more mobility than absolutely necessary. An army should have no larger nor more abundant artillery than absolutely essential. As in all his organizational precepts, Saxe emphasized flexibility and mobility.

Next to organizing troops properly, Saxe put discipline and training as the most important tasks of a commander. As he declared,
then even its declared enemies.64

Interestingly, Saxe tied military discipline to both public virtue and state security:

when a state so far degenerates, as to suffer the discipline of its troops to be neglected; or convenience to supply the place of use, one may venture to foretell, without the gift of prophecy, that its ruin is approaching. . . . The Romans conquered the universe by the force of their discipline; and in proportion as that declined, their power decreased.65

To establish proper discipline, Saxe urged commanders to issue as few orders as possible and then to enforce them rigidly, promptly, and without distinction. At the same time, commanders should avoid overly severe punishments. These actually undermined discipline by prompting troops and officers to forgive offenders. Saxe centered his ideas on training around conditioning. Training should inure soldiers to hard labor. "Continual exercise makes good soldiers, because it qualifies them for martial enterprises; and by being habituated to pain, they insensibly learn to despise danger." The Romans strove to make their legions indefatigable, and viewed ease and indolence as public enemies. They even employed their soldiers on useless and unnecessary public projects just to keep them busy. Rest enervated, made work seem despicable, and softened the soul. In keeping with these views, Saxe considered practice in the manual of arms much less important than exercising the troops' legs. Troops should both practice the evolutions and maneuvers used on the battlefield and
condition themselves for marching long distances at a rapid pace. Interestingly, Saxe was one of the first to recommend using a cadence and music to maintain order and cohesion on the march, and especially while maneuvering or changing speeds.

In thinking about preparing an army Saxe also concerned himself with the troops' morale, fighting spirit, and welfare. As a first consideration, Saxe wanted the highest quality men possible for the army. To this end, he far preferred raising troops by conscription over either volunteering or any form of impressment. Saxe would draft men between twenty and thirty years old and require five years service. For conscription to work, however, the system must eliminate all loopholes; the rich, privileged, and noble must be equally liable with the poor. Saxe condemned the practice of raising new regiments of raw levies as replacements for battle losses. These units never achieved proper seasoning and were destroyed in a few campaigns. He preferred using new recruits to bring veteran regiments back to full strength. In this way, the new recruits benefitted from the experience, steadiness, morale, and fighting spirit of the veterans that surrounded them.

Once raised, the troops must be paid adequately to sustain their morale and reliability, even if this meant maintaining a smaller army. "A handful of men well subsisted and disciplined is superior to a multitude of such
as are neglected in those important particulars; for it is the goodness, and not the number of troops, on which victory depends." Saxe also argued for liberal pay for officers:

Aeconomy is commendable, while confined within certain limits, but in exceeding those, it degenerates into sordid parcimony: unless your appointments for the officers, are such as will support them genteely, you must dispose of them, either to men of fortune, who serve only for their pleasure; or to indigent wretches, who are destitute of spirit. 68

Officers' honors and pay should increase as they advance in rank and responsibility, and officers should earn higher posts on their ability rather than their connections. Not surprisingly, Nathanael Greene heartily endorsed these views. Other practices Saxe recommended to sustain morale and welfare included: using battalion standards and colors to aid organization and promote morale, esprit de corps, and fighting spirit; designing functional and inexpensive uniforms to promote the troops' health and facilitate their fighting; appointing regimental cooks and sutlers to relieve men of the added burden of mess duties at the end of long days of marching or battle; and adding one or two drops of vinegar to the men's drinking water to protect their health. Interestingly, Greene recommended this last practice to Washington.

Saxe offered a number of recommendations about particular tactics and methods of command, and in general these emphasized a degree of flexibility not usually found in eighteenth century warfare. Thus, Saxe criticized the
fortification systems used by acknowledged masters like Vauban and Coehorn as too elaborate, too costly, and relatively ineffective. He proposed a simple system of his own design that an army could build quickly and inexpensively using earth, wood, and water. He also questioned the value of entrenchments against superior or even equal numbers, pointing out that often only a small penetration causes a general collapse. Instead, he argued for building redoubts out in front of the main body of the army. These required disproportionate numbers to reduce and disordered and weakened an attacking army. Saxe likewise took issue with the eighteenth-century precept that winter operations were to be avoided at all cost. He argued that winter operations were neither impossible nor abnormally destructive, and he encouraged commanders to undertake winter campaigns both when necessary and when particularly advantageous. Saxe carried his arguments for greater flexibility and energy to the battlefield as well. He rejected the linear formations of the eighteenth century for semi-columns of eight ranks with considerable intervals between. This increased flexibility and maneuverability, as well as the power of a charge. Small-arms fire should be aimed and fired at will, rather than unaimed volley fire. Once two forces closed with each other, however, soldiers should cease firing and concentrate on driving home a bayonet charge. Saxe also pointed out the necessity of
properly combining the various arms in action. Commanders must deploy their various forces of infantry, cavalry, and artillery so they reciprocally sustain each other or they will be defeated. And once a commander had broken the enemy army, Saxe argued, he should pursue. Commanders who rested content with holding the field at the end of a battle sacrificed the full fruits of victory. Finally, he advised commanders to free themselves from routine responsibilities and devote themselves, instead, to studying questions of strategy. Saxe urged commanders to break away from many of the rigid practices of the eighteenth century. He did not, however, argue for a less restrained style of war, which put him in sharp contrast to Caesar.

A third important and widely influential military book Nathanael Greene read was Frederick the Great's Instructions to His Generals. Though Frederick was an eighteenth-century general, his style of warfare resembled Caesar's more than his contemporaries in its emphasis on offensive action and on battle as the deciding event in war. Frederick cautioned his generals against viewing war as an exact science with precise and unchanging principles that, if adhered to, guaranteed success. Instead, he said, war is full of unforeseen and unavoidable hazards and misfortunes that can defeat even the most skillful and prudent plans. A general must remain alert to misfortunes and readily abandon designs gone wrong. This appreciation of the hazards of war, in
part, underlay Frederick's preference for the offensive. He considered an absolute defense impractical because so many things could go wrong. Thus, why not risk the offensive, where the potential gains were great and the potential losses no worse than if forced to retreat from a defensive position? Frederick argued that whichever commander first adopts a credible offensive forces the other onto the defensive and into reacting to his opponent's moves. Even when forced onto the strategic defensive, commanders should take every opportunity to launch tactical offensives. And they should not resist yielding ground to set up a tactically offensive blow.

Hand in hand with the offensive went battle. "War is decided only by battles, and it is not finished except by them. Thus they have to be fought, but it should be done opportunely and with all the advantages on your side." In planning and conducting battles, generals should remember "a battle is lost less through the loss of men than by discouragement." Moreover, speed was the key factor in battles. Both cavalry and infantry should attack at a rapid pace. As Frederick said:

It is not the greater or lesser number of dead that decides an action, but the ground you gain. It is not fire, but bearing which defeats the enemy. And because the decision is gained more quickly by always marching against the enemy than by amusing yourself by firing, the sooner a battle is decided, the fewer men are lost. My system is based on the idea that it is up to the infantry to expel the enemy and to push him, so to speak, off the field of battle.
Frederick did admit that means other than battle had a place in war. Thus, at one point he declared that starving the enemy exhausts him "more surely than courage and you will succeed with less risk than by fighting." Still, battle remained the culminating and necessary event in war.

Frederick devoted relatively little space in his Instructions to considerations regarding raising, training, and supporting an army. Still, what comments he did make are interesting for how they compare to Caesar's and Saxe's views on the same subjects. Unlike Saxe, Frederick emphasized the importance of numbers. He stressed the importance of generals devising efficient recruiting methods, making this a criteria of good generalship, and insisted his generals conserve their troops. On one topic, the importance of superior discipline and training, Frederick agreed with both Caesar and Saxe. "The greatest force of the Prussian army resides in their wonderful regularity of formation. . . . in exact obedience and in the bravery of the troops." He pointed out that superior discipline multiplied his troops' combat capability dramatically, allowing them to maintain better order and achieve greater speed and maneuverability under the most trying circumstances. And to establish proper discipline, Frederick urged commanders to practice both kindness and severity, being solicitous of their men's needs and morale but harshly punishing any infractions of orders. And
logistics concerned Frederick greatly. He told his generals, "Understand that the foundation of an army is the belly. It is necessary to procure nourishment for the soldier wherever you assemble him and wherever you wish to conduct him." As a first precaution, commanders should ensure they could control their army's subsistence. Offensive operations, especially, required secure logistics for their success. And to Frederick, logistics did not mean skillful and energetic foraging; it meant well-stocked depots and wagon trains accompanying the army with three weeks' supplies.

Frederick also recommended several interesting tactics and principles of command. Commanders, he said, should always maintain maximum concentration of their forces. This principle needed close attention especially on defense, where there was a tendency to disperse to guard every point. Frederick said, "Petty geniuses attempt to hold everything; wise men hold fast to most important points. They parry great blows and scorn little accidents. ... he who would preserve everything, preserves nothing."

Nathanael Greene would make this very point when the governor of Rhode Island asked him how best to defend the colony against the British. Frederick encouraged commanders of inferior forces to use broken ground and artifices to prevent the enemy commander from bringing his whole force to bear. On the other hand, commanders of superior forces
should try to engage on open ground so they could bring the whole weight of their army against their enemy. When attacking an army in a set position, generals should aim for the weakest spot or for where the terrain worked against their enemy. If attacking a stronger army, generals should weight one wing of their army much more heavily than the other and then attack with the strong wing while withholding the other, aiming to roll up the enemy's flank. This was Frederick's famous "oblique order." Like Saxe, Frederick discounted the value of entrenchments, pointing out they tied the defender's troops to the ground while the attacker could freely maneuver. Moreover, defenders tied to entrenchments usually fought with less spirit and easily panicked at the first penetration of their lines. Finally, Frederick urged commanders to pursue a beaten enemy and do him all the harm possible. In doing so, commanders had only to remember to halt pursuit at the first defile, avoid overextending their troops, and guard against a false sense of security.

Frederick's most important instructions, by far, dealt with the talents necessary to a successful general. Frederick considered anticipation a key quality:

a general in all his projects should not think so much about what he wishes to do as about what his enemy will do. . . . [He] should never underestimate his enemy, but he should put himself in his place to appreciate difficulties and hindrances the enemy could interpose. . . . [His] plans will be deranged at the slightest event if he has not foreseen everything and if he has not
devised means with which to surmount the obstacles.76

Commanders must both respect their opponent's capacities and remain skeptical of his intentions. Frederick emphasized repeatedly the importance of ruses and stratagems: "the art of war is divided between force and stratagem. What cannot be done by force, must be done by stratagem." Generals should use every deception and indirect approach possible to mislead an opponent about their intentions and to guide him into actions they want him to undertake. And, as Frederick said, "Everything which the enemy least expects will succeed the best." Frederick urged his generals to present a calm and undisturbed exterior to their troops. They must hide their fears and apprehensions; in fact, while privately respecting their enemy, they should disparage him to their men. Generals must know how to use terrain effectively:

Knowledge of the country is to a general what a rifle is to an infantryman and what the rules of arithmetic are to a geometrician. If he does not know the country he will do nothing but make gross mistakes. Without this knowledge his projects, be they otherwise admirable, become ridiculous and often impracticable.77

When evaluating ground, generals should consider all the alternative actions available to both the enemy and themselves. They also must remember that ground changes characteristics with the seasons. Finally, Frederick cautioned his generals to conserve their men, neither leading them to slaughter nor fatiguing them needlessly. In battle, however, supporting attacks well and pushing them
with utmost vigor spared soldiers' blood by keeping time from augmenting their losses. Though ever solicitous of his soldiers, Frederick still saw a vigorous and well-planned offensive as the most economical means of war because it promised swift victory and a short war.

Essentially untrained in the military arts, Nathanael Greene founded his uncommon ability as a general on the books he read. Yet the principal authors Greene read, Caesar, Saxe, and Frederick, the most popular military authors in the mid-eighteenth century, gave their readers a confused strategic heritage. On the one hand, Caesar, and to some extent, Frederick, emphasized gaining victory by destroying the enemy army, principally through battle. Saxe and other Continental writers, on the other hand, stressed reducing the enemy through skillful maneuver while avoiding risk of battle. This conflict of styles of war manifested itself in Greene's strategic thinking throughout the war. During the first year and a half of the war, Greene favored offensive operations, thinking the Americans could meet and destroy the British army in battle. After the second half of 1776, however, when the British soundly drubbed the Americans in and around New York City, Greene realized the full extent of American weaknesses. Thenceforth he acknowledged the need to follow an essentially Fabian strategy, avoiding battle with the main British army. But, at the same time, he remained one of the quickest to urge
offensive action, including battle, whenever it appeared the Americans had a distinct advantage. Thus, he came around to Saxe's style of war, but with more emphasis on seizing opportunities to fight and without Saxe's conviction that a skillful general could gain victory without battle. And he carried these views all the way through the war.

Besides a confused strategic heritage, other ideas from the books Greene read characterized his generalship. He emphasized discipline and training as much or more than any other American general. He prepared thoroughly for every operation and tried to anticipate every possible contingency. He developed real skill at using terrain to his advantage. He eschewed brute force whenever possible, instead relying on stratagems and the unexpected to give his forces the advantage. And he drew on his knowledge of military history to help him see opportunities and methods for unbalancing his enemy. His books served him well.

By the eve of the war, Nathanael Greene's maturation had prepared him better than most Americans for the challenges of the Revolutionary. Raised a Quaker, Greene got an early education in dissent. He responded readily to the anti-authority and anti-establishment attitudes that permeated Quakerism, and he showed no hesitancy about accepting a Quaker's role as an opponent of the most
powerful social institution in New England, the established church. Quakerism made this stand possible, in large part, by giving its adherents confidence in their ability to win salvation through their own efforts to manifest the Light God had imparted to each of His children. Never did Greene reveal any of the nagging doubts and guilt that seemed to haunt so many of New England's Puritans. He was comfortable with the status of his soul, and this gave him an uncommon freedom of thought and action.

Quakerism itself, however, did not hold Greene for long. Early in his teens he began reading in Enlightenment thought, in rational Christian theology, and in the classics. The explanations of the universe and man's place in it that Greene encountered in these writings proved much more satisfying to him than Quakerism. He accepted the Enlightenment view of a rational universe governed by natural law rather than divine intervention. And he believed wholeheartedly that God had given man the power of reason needed to discover the natural laws of the universe and to conduct himself in accordance with those natural laws. Greene left the mystical other-worldliness of the Quakers behind and plunged headlong into mastering the "natural" world. And this was made easier by the fact that classical and Enlightenment writers had provided him with "natural," secular justification for traditional Christian moral values.
Raised in Rhode Island, the most diverse, contentious, and independent-minded of the colonies, Greene reflected the almost inherent rebelliousness of his fellow citizens. And once he took his place in the Rhode Island business and political community and experienced first-hand British coercion, he quickly gravitated to the radical political ideas growing out of the colony's disputes with England. Rhode Island always was at the forefront of the opposition to British control, and Greene easily fell in step. He also, at least to a certain extent in practice, fell in step with the factionalism that dominated Rhode Island politics. His entire political experience up to the war was with his colony's party politics, and so it should be no surprise to discover that, during the war, he tended to interpret politics outside of Rhode Island in terms of faction, and to rely on the techniques of factional politics himself. One other aspect of Greene's Rhode Island heritage needs mention. Rhode Island's tiny size seems to have heightened Greene's sensitivity to the fact that none of the colonies could afford to take individual stands against England. To defeat the British, Greene believed, required union and cooperation, and he would become one of the strongest advocates of uniting the states' efforts.

Politically, Greene's thought was dominated by the ideas that characterized the thinking of the English radical Whigs, ideas that were reinforced by his reading -- by
histories such as Rollin's and Rapin's, by legal commentaries such as Blackstone's and Beccaria's, and by social commentaries such as Ferguson's and The Spectator's. He believed men possessed inalienable natural rights and liberties and that they formed societies and governments to secure those rights and liberties. He also believed that power corrupts and that therefore government must mix together the separate orders of society to balance the interests of each order against the others. He agreed that republican and representative government was the most desirable, and insisted that a constitution and rule by law were essential. Finally, he accepted the prevailing view that the Crown and the ministry had given in to their ambition for power, had corrupted Parliament, and now aimed to enslave the English people and the American colonists. Greene concurred with the full body of Revolutionary political ideology.

At the same time, he manifested some interesting conservative tendencies. Like most thoughtful men of his day, Greene accepted the notion that public virtue was the cornerstone of state prosperity and strength. This had been a recurring theme in Horace, Rollin, Rapin, Ferguson, The Spectator, Rhode Island's newspapers, and, quite likely, many other books Greene read. During the war, Greene would preach again and again the need for greater virtue in the American public, fearing that Americans' declension would
eventually bring the collapse of the war effort. An essential part of public virtue for Greene was each man’s willingness to accept his place in society and defer to those of higher station. Instinctively, Greene was attracted to the arguments in Rollin, Blackstone, Ferguson and Hume for a hierarchical society headed by a natural elite of talent and virtue. And here Greene was caught in a paradox. Quakerism and many of the radical political ideas circulating in the colonies implicitly promoted egalitarianism, and Greene, certainly, whenever he was dealing those nominally above himself in station, demanded egalitarianism. When dealing with those nominally below himself in station, however, Greene expected deference. And though inconsistent, his views on social hierarchy were not so uncommon.

In large part, what drove Greene's views on social hierarchy, was his own monumental ambition. Greene craved not just success but progress. He wanted to advance beyond the station into which he was born. His business and political contacts made him aware of circles of far greater influence, power and prestige, and he wanted to join those circles. Greene wanted to be accepted as a gentleman, a man of high station and social dignity. Recognizing this desire makes clearer his constant carping during the war for greater compensation and perquisites for the Continental officers. And never were his complaints more telling than
when he insisted officers' compensation did not allow them to live as gentlemen. Throughout the war, he worried incessantly about his status and his reputation. What could this indicate other than a preoccupation with securing his place in the pantheon of Revolutionary heroes? Greene was one of the few men to serve in the army for the duration of the war. Though patriotic, he never exhibited the kind of selfless dedication to the cause that would have made it possible to bear the strains and sacrifices of seven years of revolutionary war. What other reason could there be for his persistence than the recognition that there lay his best chance to solidify his reputation?

Greene did not limit his ambition, however, to fame. He also wanted fortune. He had been supervising a major part of the Greene family's enterprises, the Coventry forge, since he was sixteen. Could he have avoided imbibing a healthy dose of the businessman's preoccupation with profits during this time. His wartime experience would reveal him undertaking a surprising number of private business deals even while helping command a struggling army operating on the scantiest resources. And when, as quartermaster general, the opportunity for more numerous and more extensive private investments arose, he quickly acted. Moreover, Greene's involvement in a family business that depended heavily on its connections with members of the extended family and with friends for its success shaped his
whole approach to life. He could not escape the conviction bred by his experience in the family business that the most effective way to secure his own interests was to help look after the interests of those with whom he had vital connections. And this outlook affected his activities both inside and outside the army.

In all probability, Greene's ambition also helped fuel his hypersensitivity to criticism and opposition. On more than a few occasions Greene already had overreacted when others found fault with his conduct, lashing out bitterly at those he believed had wronged him. The classic case was his outburst over not being selected for an officer's billet in the Kentish Guards. During the war, as both his responsibilities and his self-importance grew, his lack of equanimity at times reached almost manic proportions. More than once his reaction to lack of support or censure bordered on paranoia. This was his least attractive trait, and it baffled his friends and associates at times. But for a man with a near-overpowering desire for both fortune and fame, was it such a surprising characteristic?

Underlying all Greene's activities and giving them an extraordinary drive and effectiveness was his exceptional intelligence. His letters reveal a mind that had remarkable energy, scope, analytical power, and expression. Repeatedly, Greene grasped the essentials of the slippery problems bred by the Revolution better than those around
him. He also had an unusual ability to synthesize, either to draw information from a variety of sources into a single coherent body or to generate new insights out of old data. This intellectual power is most likely what drove him to undertake his own education, helped him break the hold of Quakerism, fueled his ambition, and powered his success in business. It also quite probably drew the attention of more powerful men. Of all Greene's qualities, his intellect is the one that makes him stand out most in the company of his peers.

Finally, by the eve of the war, Greene had made himself into a relatively knowledgeable military theorist as well. Applying to his military studies the same energy, analytical power, and pragmatic judgment he had brought to bear on prior problems, Greene prepared himself as well or better than any other American to fight the war that threatened. All that remained was to test his character, intelligence and preparation in the crucible of war.
NOTES


5. Lovejoy, pp. 166-71; James, p. 344.


12. Showman, I, 4-6, 14, 81; "To Samuel Ward, Jr.," 10 July 1774, Greene Papers, I, 65.


14. Letter to Catharine or Mary Ward, 4 July 1772, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, R.I.; "To


24. Providence Gazette, 22 August 1772, p. 3.

25. "From the London Packet of 1 May 1772," Providence Gazette, 12 September 1772, pp. 1-2; "Letter from Millions


28. Ferguson, pp. 57-62, 250-1, 135-44.


30. Ferguson, p. 128.


32. Ferguson, pp. 63-73, 121-6, 154-67.

33. Ferguson, p. 206.

34. Ferguson, pp. 154-67, 204-24, 261-72.

35. Ferguson, pp. 237-43.

36. Ferguson, p. 244.

37. Ferguson, pp. 244, 249-55.


41. Thayer, p. 40.


44. Fox, I, 11-12.


46. Blackstone, II, 1263.

47. Ferguson, pp. 20-5, 192-203, 147-9, 225-32.


50. Rollin, I, 318-20, 323, 26, 189, 86.


52. Johnson, pp. 18, 345; Greene, Life of Greene, I, 14; Thayer, p. 24; "To Deputy Governor Nicholas Cooke of Rhode Island," 22 June 1775, Greene Papers, I, 90; "Letter to Clement Biddle," 10 August 1779, Rhode Island Historical Society.


54. Fuller, pp. 38, 193-206; Caesar, pp. 232-45; Fuller, pp. 208-10; Caesar, pp. 272-5; Fuller, pp. 218-33; Caesar, pp. 312-13, 315-19.
55. Fuller, pp. 181-2, 132, 55, 193-206; Caesar, pp. 232-45, 206-17; Fuller, p. 81.

56. Fuller, pp. 105; Caesar, pp. 2-14, 130-4; Fuller, pp. 133-4; Caesar, pp. 101, 290, 324-43, 135, 291-2.

57. Caesar, p. 270.


60. Caesar, p. 262; Fuller, p. 262.


63. Saxe, pp. 76, 24-41, 142-8, 44, 61-3, 77.

64. Saxe, p. 79.


66. Saxe, pp. 79-81, 121, 14-17.


69. Saxe, pp. 74-5, 4-11.


72. Frederick, pp. 93, 95, 99-100.

73. Frederick, p. 31.

75. Frederick, pp. 51-2, 82-4, 87-9, 78-81, 93.

76. Frederick, p. 33.

77. Frederick, p. 47.

78. Frederick, pp. 47-50, 57.

RICE UNIVERSITY

THE MAKING OF A REVOLUTIONARY GENERAL
NATHANAEL GREENE: 1742–1779

by

DAVID A. TRETLER

Volume II
CHAPTER V

COMMAND APPRENTICESHIP: 1775-1777

In the spring of 1775, Rhode Island offered Nathanael Greene a rare opportunity to test how well he had prepared himself for the possibility of war. Word of the fighting between British troops and Massachusetts militia at Lexington and Concord on 19 April spread quickly to Rhode Island. On 22 April, the Rhode Island Assembly met in emergency session and resolved:

At this very dangerous crisis of American affairs; at a time when we are surrounded with fleets and armies, which threaten our immediate destruction; at a time when the fears and anxieties of the people, throw them into the utmost distress, and totally prevent them from attending to the common occupations of life; to prevent the mischievous consequences that must necessarily attend such a disordered state, and to restore peace to the minds of the good people of this colony, it appears absolutely necessary to this Assembly that a number of men be raised and embodied, properly armed and disciplined, to continue in this colony, as an army of observation, to repel any insult or violence that may be offered to the inhabitants.1

Two weeks later, on 3 May, the Assembly, offering a four dollar bounty to each, voted to raise 1500 men organized into three regiments that would form a single brigade. Then, on 8 May, the Assembly took the step that launched one of the more remarkable military careers in American
history. It commissioned Nathanael Greene a brigadier general and appointed him to command of the newly-authorized brigade, the Rhode Island Army of Observation.

Why the Assembly chose Greene remains uncertain. Rhode Island had a number of men more prominent or more experienced than Greene. As Richard Showman points out, Greene's connection with Samuel Ward no doubt played a part in his selection; and his brother, Jacob, was a delegate to the Assembly from Warwick, chairman of the Kent County Committee of Safety, and a member of the colony's five-man Committee of Safety. Still, Showman believes that "it is more likely that like the winner of a lottery" the leaders of the Rhode Island Assembly "simply picked the right number." Yet, there was far more to Greene that might have argued for his selection. His exceptional intelligence must have stood out. How could friends and associates who dealt with him not have noted the ability quickly to grasp the essentials of a problem, formulate a solution, and articulate his ideas that stands out so clearly in Greene's correspondence? As well, Greene's military studies must have marked him. In all likelihood, few if any other men in Rhode Island had read Caesar, Saxe and Frederick. Greene's familiarity with military theory must have impressed the men he met. And though he was by no means a prominent man in Rhode Island, he did have contacts with many members of the colony's power structure. Among the members of his
widespread family, among his friends, and among his business
associates were many politically powerful men. And probably
those who had observed Greene's talents firsthand spoke with
their own associates. Moreover, Rhode Island was a tiny
colony, which meant that men of genuine ability stood out
more sharply and rose more rapidly. All things considered,
selecting Greene could have been the most obvious and
sensible course.

As he accepted the commission fortuitously offered him,
Greene could not have anticipated he would serve
continuously for eight and a half years, participate in all
but three of the army's major campaigns, and rise to the
second highest position in the army. While Greene may have
benefitted from fortune in receiving his appointment, he
earned his subsequent successes with hard work and
exceptional ability. Moreover, his success did not occur
overnight. He began as the youngest and most junior
brigadier general in the Continental Army. Serving under
Washington, Greene steadily earned his commander's respect
and confidence. By the end of 1776, Washington had made
Greene, now a major general, his most trusted division
commander, a position Greene held throughout the campaigns
of 1777. Then, during the 1777-78 winter at Valley Forge,
with the army's supply system collapsing, Washington asked
Greene to take over the quartermaster general's department.
Greene accepted reluctantly, and for the next two and a half
years ran the department as well as anyone could have. Finally, after five and a half years of service under Washington, after thorough apprenticeships in both command and staff positions, Greene received his reward, independent command of all American forces in the South. There, faced with meeting the last major British offensives, Greene blossomed, proving he had developed into an exceptional revolutionary general.

What made Greene so successful? Many would say natural genius, and certainly an inherent aptitude for military command played its part. The full answer, however, lies in those periods of apprenticeship, and in how Greene combined his experience in the war with the preparations he had undertaken before the war began.

Greene quickly established himself as a permanent member of the nascent American command. As soon as he received his commission, he began organizing, equipping, and training his troops. Then, in early June, he moved the brigade to its assigned area, Roxbury-Dorchester, on the extreme right of the American lines outside of Boston. On 22 June, Greene received his first promotion. Congress, having decided to create a Continental Army out of the various colonial contingents at Boston, awarded Greene, the senior officer from Rhode Island, the last of the eight brigadier general's commissions it issued for the new army. Then in early July, 1775, the troops around Boston received a new
commander, George Washington, appointed by Congress to command the Continental Army. Washington reorganized the army into three divisions under Artemas Ward, commanding the right wing, Israel Putnam, commanding the center, and Charles Lee, commanding the left wing. Greene's brigade, now made up of seven regiments, the three original Rhode Island regiments plus four Massachusetts regiments, was assigned to Lee's division on the left wing, around the area of Prospect Hill. Steadily over the next several months, the conglomeration of colonial contingents besieging Boston coalesced into a single whole, responding to one head and one set of policies and directions. As Greene played his part in forming this new Continental Army, his performance in camp and in Washington's councils of war steadily earned him a reputation with his fellow officers and with Washington as one of the army's more capable generals.

For Greene, the Boston campaign unfolded uneventfully. His brigade arrived outside Boston just two weeks before the 17 June battle at Bunker Hill and, being posted at the extreme right of the American line, had no part in the battle. Then, after Washington's arrival, the army saw little action, spending its time training, perfecting its organization, building fortifications, and enduring sporadic and largely ineffectual British artillery fire. Washington wanted to attack Boston but could never persuade himself he had sufficient strength. Finally, in February 1776 he
decided to force the British commander's hand by occupying Dorchester Heights, just southeast of Boston Neck. As part of this operation, Greene and John Sullivan were to have their brigades ready at Cambridge for an assault across the Bay against Boston proper if the British created an opportunity by trying to drive the Americans off Dorchester Heights. As it turned out, General Sir William Howe decided not to contest possession of Dorchester Heights and opted instead for evacuating Boston. After having negotiated with Washington safe passage for his ships and men in return for a promise not to burn the city, Howe embarked his troops on 17 March. The Americans entered the city the next day.

Washington showed his growing confidence in Greene by appointing him commander of Boston. This assignment lasted little more than a week, however, because on 29 March, anticipating the next British move, Washington began moving the main body of the army to New York City, sending Greene with five regiments in the van. The Boston campaign had ended.

Despite the relative lack of action during this first campaign Greene already was displaying many of the traits that would make him such a successful and influential Revolutionary general. He showed immediately he had not missed the lessons on discipline in his histories and treatises on the art of war. Arriving in Roxbury a few days after his brigade, Greene found his troops severely
disordered because of "a want of government." He then "made several regulations for introducing order, and composing their murmurings." A few weeks later he complained to his brother, Jacob, that "Regularity and Discipline are much wanting. Our People are raw, irregular, and undisciplined yet bad as they are they are under much better Government than any Troops round about Boston." Greene had to instruct his troops in the most fundamental precepts of army government. Men failed to heed the general orders governing discipline and regular duties Greene issued daily, often because they had not had the orders read to them. Sentries dozed on duty or made so much noise they revealed their positions to the British. Soldiers failed to observe the most basic rules of sanitation. Liquor flowed too freely through all the camps, and the resulting high incidence of drunkenness posed a serious problem for American commanders. Civilians living near the camps complained of pillaging and other abuses by the soldiers. Moreover, soldiers failed to heed all manner of regulations, from the requirement for neat and orderly appearance to remaining in quarters after taps. Greene dealt with all these disciplinary problems firmly; soldiers must obey the regulations or face severe punishments.

At the same time he dealt severely with disciplinary problems, however, Greene also saw to his men's welfare. He pressed the commissary officers to ensure his troops
received their full allowance of rations. And he took steps to prevent profiteering by civilians selling fresh provisions directly to the soldiers. He consistently recommended adequate pay for the men to compensate them for their sacrifices and to provide support for their families at home. Whenever the brigade's manning permitted, he granted furloughs leniently, and he responded sympathetically to any furlough requests made necessary by personal emergencies. He also assured his men their grievances would be heard and, if valid, redressed, providing the men registered complaints through the proper channels. In essence, Greene apparently took to heart Frederick's instruction to be solicitous of the men's needs and morale but to harshly punish any infractions of discipline.

Greene often found the task of disciplining and training his troops complicated by the incompetence of his officers. Baron von Steuben later would say of American officers,

captains and colonels did not consider their companies and regiments as corps confided to them by the United States for the care of the men as well as the preservation of order and discipline. The idea they had of their duty was that the officers had only to mount guard and put themselves at the head of their regiment or company when they were going into action.

Aside from lack of training and experience, the quality of American officers suffered most from their being selected by popular vote of the troops. Too often, personal whims and
petty jealousies governed these elections. This system produced ill-disciplined, undignified, dishonorable, and cowardly officers. Officers frequently were loath to exercise authority for fear of being voted out of commission, and the troops felt little obligation to obey superiors of their own creating. In June 1775 Greene wrote his brother Jacob that "There are some captains and many Subaltern officers that neglect their Duty, some through Fear of offending their Soldiers, some through Laziness and some through Obstinance." And he wrote Governor Cooke urging careful selection of Rhode Island officers in the future, "for there are many inconveniences that arise from the bad conduct of Officers that you cannot conceive off." Greene repeatedly admonished his officers to carry out their responsibilities, threatening to break all incompetents. And he found it necessary to instruct them carefully in the most obvious duties concerning the discipline and training of their troops. Throughout his instructions, however, he maintained the spirit of Frederick's advice, directing his officers to "treat the Troops that behave well with all the gentleness and Humanity that they Can wish or Expect, but Punish the Refractory and Seditious with Exemplary Punishment."

As a member of the army's high command, Greene naturally took part in formulating strategy. And during this first campaign he revealed a preference for the
offensive, reflective of Caesar and Frederick, coupled with a naive overestimation of the American Army's ability. Early in September 1775, Washington asked his council of war, made up of all generals, to begin thinking about plans for attacking Boston, as well as the proper size and organization of the army. Greene thought an army of 13,130 men, organized in twenty-five regiments would suffice for a winter campaign. That this estimate was well below the council of war's eventual recommendation for an army strength of 20,000 men was likely a result of Greene's 11 inexperience and overconfidence. Then, at a council of war meeting in mid-October, Greene's fellow generals all considered attacking Boston out of the question at that time. Greene, however, maintained the Americans could take Boston if they could land 10,000 men at the city. Here again Greene revealed his inexperience and overconfidence, and he also displayed a clear preference for offensive action. He later showed a bit more caution about attacking Boston when in November he wrote Governor Cooke that "the best of Veterans are required to Storm a Town. What success might attend an Irregular Attack without great superiority in numbers, requires no spirit of Prophecy to foretell." And he also acknowledged the wisdom of the experienced officers' opinion that the Americans gained greatly by keeping "the Enemy hencoop't up within their lines." Thus, when Washington insisted in January 1776 that the Americans
must attack before the British received reinforcements in the spring, Greene now joined with the other generals in agreeing to an attack only if the army received significant reinforcements and sufficient arms. Greene still felt the lure of offensive action, however. He told Jacob that while "an attack upon a town garrisoned with 8,000 regular troops, is a serious object, and ought to be well considered before attempted," still he thought an attack with 20,000 men could succeed. Declaring he "would be glad to see the attempt made," he argued that surely the American army contained 8,000 brave and effective soldiers who could prove more than a match for the British. Greene could not escape the conviction that offensive operations promised the quickest and most complete victory.

Greene's thoughtful nature and extensive study of history and military doctrine prodded him to think beyond the situation at Boston, however. He began considering American prospects overall and even deliberated on questions of general military doctrine. At times Greene generated uninspired, worthless, or even harmful ideas, and at other times, he simply accepted the incorrect thinking of others. Thus, in November 1775 he wrote Jacob, echoing conventional American wisdom about the value of conquering Canada, that Montreal had fallen and that Quebec hopefully would soon follow, for Quebec was "the Key of America," a view that eventually proved incorrect. But more often than not,
Greene did produce valuable insights into the nature of the war. In January 1776 he told Samuel Ward America could conquer Britain in Europe just as Britain had conquered Canada in Germany during the last war. America should ally herself with France and Spain, not for their armies but for their navies, their commerce, and their military stores. He also emphasized the importance of New York City to both sides and insisted the Americans must either garrison the city or burn it. In the same letter, he explained that British strategy must be to destroy the main American army, thereby forcing all detachments to die on the vine. Consequently, the Americans must form a large army, superior to any force the British could bring against it, and an army thoroughly national, "under one Commander raised and appointed by the same Authority, subjected to the same Regulations, and ready to be detachd where ever Occasion may require." Discussing the prospects of an attack on Boston with Jacob in February 1776, Greene showed he appreciated the political impact of military operations. Defeating that garrison would "damp the spirits of Great Britain, and give ours a new spring," probably ending the war. Moreover, "it would heal all the divisions among ourselves; silence the Tories, and work a general reformation throughout the continent." He also showed he understood British vulnerability to large losses. After Bunker Hill, he wrote Governor Cooke: "As Marshal Saxe said once upon obtaining a
victory being complemented on the Occasion, said a few such
Victories would ruin him, so a few such victories would ruin
them [the British]." Time and again Greene demonstrated he
had an unusually clear grasp of the essence of the war.

Manpower and recruiting problems troubled Greene
greatly during the Boston campaign, as they would throughout
the war. Enlistments of all the colonial contingents
generally expired at the end of December 1775, so Washington
and his lieutenants worked hard to reenlist as many men as
possible in the newly authorized Continental Army units.
Greene waxed alternately hopeful and pessimistic about the
success of the recruiting effort. In the end, the
vicissitudes of recruiting led him to argue for a large,
long-service, essentially professional army, an idea at odds
with the Revolutionary ideology. An early indication that
Greene would favor a regular over a militia army came in
June 1775 when he turned down an offer from Governor Cooke
of additional Rhode Island militia, saying, "we already have
as many of the Province militia as we know what to do
with." In early October 1775, Greene argued for a one-year
enlistment term, maintaining men would not bear indefinite
"confinement." By late December, he favored enlisting men
for the duration. He also stressed the need for sizable
bounties, attractive pay, comfortable quarters, and abundant
clothing to entice men into the army. As he wrote Ward,
"this is no time to disgust the Soldiery when their aid is
so essential to the preservation of the Rights of Human
Nature and the Liberties of America."

Local prejudices and attachments played a big part, in
Greene's view, in obstructing recruiting for the Continental
Army. The regiments that colonies raised for home defense
presented one of the greatest obstacles to recruiting, for
men much preferred to serve at home than to endure the
discomforts, loneliness, and dangers of the field. By the
end of December, then, Greene had written Samuel Ward that
the army must have a Continental bounty and long-service
troops. Then the army could pick the best men, rapidly
recruit the authorized strength, establish proper
discipline, and maintain good order and government in the
army. Under the present system, the army had to relax "the
Sinews of Military Government and give a latitude of
Indulgence to the Soldiery incompatible with the security of
the Camp or Country." Congress should raise an army of
70,000 Continental soldiers, with all forces raised in the
colonies incorporated into the Continental Army and all
forces stationed for the security of particular provinces
detached from the Continental army. And a single
commander-in-chief should have complete disposal and
direction of the entire force.

More than military questions drew Greene's attention,
however. He was, after all, a revolutionary, and the
revolution required continual wrestling with political and
social concepts. Public virtue loomed large among Greene's concerns. Here he showed the influence Horace, Rollin, Rapin, Ferguson, and the radical Whigs had had on his thinking. On their virtue depended the Americans' strength, and thus their success. Clearly the Americans had right on their side, for, as Greene wrote Samuel Ward, God had decreed the British empire would fall and that America would raise "an Empire of Permanent Duration supported upon the Grand Pillars of Truth, Freedom, and Religion." Thus, the Americans would triumph not "from our discipline and military knowledge, but from the Justice of the cause and virtue of America." Unfortunately, the recruiting difficulties the army encountered made Greene question Americans' virtue. Perhaps, he told Nicholas Cooke,

> our Vanity led us to attempt what we had not Virtue to execute. . . . Where is that Enthusiastic Love of Liberty that has ever been the distinguished Characteristic of a New Englandman? If neither Love of Liberty nor dread of Slavery will rouse them . . . , and they persist in quitting the Service, they will deserve the curses of the present and future generations.19

People in New England had such exaggerated notions of liberty they bordered on licentiousness, making orderly government nearly impossible. Moreover, Greene had to admit New Englanders' long involvement in commerce had left them avaricious, governed almost solely by interest. Many men based their acts only on the principles of narrow policies, influenced by party and prejudice. Thus, the Rhode Island
commissary sent its troops at Boston rations unfit for consumption. And the soldiers' relatives lobbied against reenlisting. But "the importance of the contest should banish every private consideration which may rise in competition with the public good."

Active involvement in the war effort quickly crystallized Greene's political thinking. While the essence of radical Whig ideology formed the foundation of his political values, the more practical concern of how to generate sufficient power to defeat the British shaped the policies he advocated. Greene's grounding in radical Whig ideology showed clearly in early statements about why he felt compelled to serve. On 2 June 1775, he wrote his wife, Catharine:

It had been happy for me if I could have lived a private life in peace and plenty. . . . But the injury done my Country, and the Chains of Slavery forging for posterity, calls me forth to defend our common rights. . . . Slavery shuts up every avenue that leads to knowledge, and leaves the soul ignorant of its own importance; it is rendered incapable of promoting human happiness, piety, or virtue. . . . I am determined to defend my rights and maintain my freedom, or sell my life in the attempt.21

Nevertheless, Greene temporarily seemed open to an accommodation with Great Britain, telling Nicholas Cooke in September, "If we can preserve our freedom and continue our connexion I should be very glad of it." Then, in December, news reached America of a speech King George had made on 26 October 1775 declaring his determination to crush the
rebellion and force the Americans back into due subordination. This news hardened many Americans' attitudes, not least Greene's. On 20 December he wrote Jacob,

George the Third's last speech has shut the door of hope for reconciliation between the Colonies and Great Britain. . . . We have no reason to doubt the King's intentions. We must submit unconditionally, or defend ourselves. . . . We are now driven to the necessity of making a declaration of independence. We can no longer preserve our freedom and continue the connection with her.22

Thus Greene anticipated many of the Revolution's leaders by already extending the argument of revolution to its ultimate conclusion, independence. At the same time, however, this early willingness to call for independence was simply a logical extension of political attitudes that had prospered in Rhode Island since that colony's founding.

Independence formed only one part of Greene's rapidly crystallizing political thought. He also began promoting much greater centralization of power and unity of action among the colonies. Thus he urged Congress to create a single large Continental army not only to improve military efficiency but also to "unite and cement the whole strength of the several colonies." Rather than stressing their differences, Greene argued, the colonies must focus on their "one common interest and one common wish; to be free from parliamentary Jurisdiction and Taxation." Jealousies, senseless because "the interest of one Colony is in no way
incompatible with that of another," would "sooner or later sap the foundation of the Union and dissolve the connexion." Moreover, if they did not operate as a single union, combining their forces to defend whatever area the British threatened, some colonies by virtue of their more vulnerable situation would bear a disproportionate share of sustaining the rebellion. The inconsistency of the American effort appalled Greene. He especially deplored the fact that while some port cities refused to supply British ships with any fresh provisions, many others, including Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, gave the British everything they needed. "These separate treaties," he wrote to Jacob, "weaken the chain of connection and injure the general interests of the Continent. We must expect to make partial sacrifices for the publick good." 'If," he asked Samuel Ward, "we are to be considered as one People and they as a common Enemy upon what principles are they so differently treated in different Governments?" Not surprisingly, Greene also detested the Tories for the divisions they created, calling the Tory faction a "many-headed monster" and deriding Tories for their willingness to "bow down their necks with base submission to the galling yoke of tyranny."

Greene also aimed some strong criticisms at Congress for its timidity. Writing to Samuel Ward in December 1775, he praised Congress's regard for economy and avoiding the
waste of public property. "But," he pointed out, "if you starve the Cause, you'll protract the dispute." Congress must exert its "whole force at once, give every measure an Air of decision. . . . Our preparations in all parts of the United Colonies ought to be so great as to leave no Room to doubt of Intentions to support the Cause or else Obtain our conditions." By acting vigorously, Greene argued, Congress would draw in the weak and reinforce the people's minds against small setbacks. In January 1776 he warned Ward of two things Congress must avoid. First, "want of Decision," he said, "renders Wisdom in Council insignificant. . . . It is no time for Deliberation. . . . Resolves, Declarations, and all the Parade of Heroism in Words will never obtain a Victory." Second, he insisted that "Frugality, a most amiable Domestick Virtue, becomes a Vice of the most Enormous kind when opposed to the common Good." How could anyone balk at the expense when "our whole Property, our dearest Connexion, our Liberty, nay Life itself is at Stake?"

Greene also tacitly encouraged the centralization of power in Congress's hands. Thus, after criticizing merchants and wealthy planters for extorting the highest possible prices for goods and provisions, he insisted Congress must do something "to render the poorer Sort of People as easy and happy under their present circumstances as possible." Made desperate by high prices, the poorer
people might go over to the British. As a possible remedy, Greene suggested forming bodies of Continental troops out of the unemployed in every maritime town. Greene also showed his growing appreciation of the need for a more powerful and more centralized government when he justified detaining arms that were private property, an act he admitted violated "many Principles of Civil and Natural Law," on the grounds of "the Great Laws of Necessity." Thus, even in its earliest stages, the war steered Greene's political thinking toward the conservative elements in his readings, toward writers like Hume and Rollin who favored benevolent yet strong government.

During this first campaign Greene also revealed some of the conflicting motives that drove him to play such a large role in the Revolution. Nathanael Greene was a complex man, and he did not serve the Revolution solely out of selfless patriotism and single-minded devotion to individual liberty. As mentioned earlier, Greene seemingly followed radical Whig ideology in deploiring instances of other men sacrificing the public good for private interest. He wrote repeatedly to Nicholas Cooke and Samuel Ward lamenting the divided spirit in Rhode Island. Preoccupation with party, prejudice, and private interest threatened to dry up the patriotic spirit. Every man had to sacrifice private for public interests, and the true test of any measure was whether it advanced the general rather than local
interests. Applying this line of thought to the army, Greene insisted that Americans become soldiers not to gratify private ambitions but to advance public security. Thus he condemned other officers' resentments over missed promotions or rewards. At the same time, however, he showed himself susceptible to ambition's lure. His own ambition led Greene to seek the advantages of influence whenever possible. He continually cultivated connections with powerful men, especially in the Continental Congress. He carried on a voluminous correspondence with Samuel Ward until Ward died of smallpox in March 1776. And after meeting John Adams for the first time at a conference at army headquarters in January 1776, he began a regular correspondence with that powerful politician. Greene did not hesitate, either, to use what influence he had for seemingly questionable purposes. Thus, in August 1775 he asked the army's Commissary General, Joseph Trumbull, to appoint Greene's cousin, Griffin, as baker for the four Massachusetts regiments in his brigade. He also showed no hesitation about taking advantage of the opportunities the war offered for advancing his own fortunes. In November 1775 an American privateer captured the sloop, Speedwell, owned, it turned out, by Jacob Greene and Co., of which Nathanael Greene was a major partner. Like many men, Greene's preachings and his practice about ambition, private interest, and influence seldom concurred.
Greene portrayed himself as both humble and long-suffering. Soon after arriving at Boston he wrote Jacob that, while he had the other generals' respect, he knew his own defects and would consider his colleagues' deference to be to his position rather than to his person. "My task is hard and fatigue great," he wrote, "But hard as it is if I can discharge my Duty to my own Honor and to my country's satisfaction, I shall go through the toil with 30 Cheerfulness." Despite his efforts at self-effacement, however, Greene's ambition, coupled with an abundance of ego, made him extremely sensitive to any criticism and opposition. Early in the war, Greene displayed this sensitivity most often in relations with his family. Complaining to his brother Elizhe in December 1775 that he had not heard from any of the family for months, he said "Was you abroad and I at home I should not Neglect you." The next month he chided his wife that he had not heard from her or other members of the family for months. "Surely," he hoped, "my friends have not forgot me." But, he observed with evident bitterness, "the much greater part of ones friends hang upon the stem of success, and drop off in the first storm of adversity." Greene showed how much opposition angered him when he learned of a dispute between his wife and her aunt, Catharine Ray Greene, who had raised her. Writing to his brother Christopher, he accused the aunt of persecuting his wife and trying to ruin her in the
opinion of her own father and family. "If God spares my life," he said, "and gives me an opportunity to see her I shall unfold my mind with that freedom which injured friendship demands." Greene also lashed out at people beyond his family circle. When the people of East Greenwich tried to block a commercial venture of Jacob's, he consoled his brother with the opinion that the people of East Greenwich were tyrannical, narrow, confined, dishonorable and unjust. Moreover, he accused them of wielding arbitrary power to maintain extortionate prices, restrict trade, and eliminate competition from newcomers. Greene's tendency to assign the blackest motives to every critic and opponent often distorted his view of events and affected his reactions to various incidents throughout his career.

By the end of the Boston campaign, Nathanael Greene's development as a Revolutionary general had progressed rapidly and his star had risen considerably. He had proved himself bright, energetic and knowledgeable, and Washington revealed his growing confidence in the young Rhode Islander when he gave Greene command of newly-liberated Boston and then assigned him to lead the army's van to New York City. Throughout the Boston campaign, Greene's military expertise had impressed all who observed him. He placed a premium on disciplining, training, and caring for his troops, and displayed a marked preference for long-service professional troops. Though his penchant for offensive operations and
his judgment of American troops' capabilities was too optimistic, he nevertheless displayed a much-needed aggressiveness and willingness to come to grips with the British. He also showed an early understanding of the need for far greater unity of action among the colonies and far greater consolidation of power and authority in the central government. Much of the impetus for Greene's ideas came from the challenges facing the American Army. At the same time, Greene could find considerable support for his views in the reading he had done -- in Caesar, Saxe, Frederick, Rollin, and others. Though his thinking on military affairs always was thoroughly pragmatic, Greene's thinking also remained reflective of his books.

Greene's evolving political thought also showed the influence of both his experience and reading. His declamations against the public's waning virute were a product both of lukewarm support for the war effort and of the exhortations of Horace, Rollin, Rapin, Ferguson and the radical Whigs. His call for independence was grounded not only on the necessity of shoring up Revolutionary spirit but also on his Rhode Island heritage and on the arguments of Rapin, Blackstone, Ferguson and the radical Whigs. His insistence on a stronger and more centralized national government stemmed from both the weaknesses evident in Congress's efforts to manage the war and the arguments for a strong yet benevolent government advanced by more
conservative writers such as Rollin and Hume. Greene's political thought also began to show the contrasting influences that shaped him. Thus his radical beliefs in republican and representative governments, individual rights, rule by law, limited executive prerogative and the right to revolution were balanced by more conservative beliefs in the necessity of public virtue, a strong national government, and a professional standing army.

Finally, during the Boston campaign, Greene unveiled further some of the contradictory and less savory qualities in his character. Ambition ruled Greene too often and in too many ways. He cultivated the friendship and favor of powerful men. He continued pursuing private business enterprises. He reacted angrily whenever anyone dared question his motives or actions. And overarching all his other activities, he reflected his experience in Rhode Island's factional politics and in the Greene family business as he carefully looked after the interests of family, friends and associates in order to protect and advance his own interests. He wanted victory in the Revolution as much for his personal benefit as for the good of the public.

Seventeen seventy-six brought the first real test of Greene's command ability, and his early performance earned
mixed reviews. By the end of the year, however, he had solidified his position and reputation. In the first important action after Boston, the defense of New York City, illness kept Greene out of the decisive engagement, even though his command bore the whole brunt of the fighting. After the British withdrew from Boston, Washington correctly surmised they would next strike at New York City, a major port and commercial center, a loyalist stronghold, and the controlling terminus of the Hudson River, which divided New England from the remainder of the colonies and connected with the Lake George-Lake Champlain route from Canada. To block an anticipated British thrust at New York City, Washington began transferring his army to New York as soon as he had reestablished American control and order in Boston. On 29 March 1776 he sent off the first contingent, five regiments under Greene's command, and shortly thereafter followed with the balance of the army. In late April, Washington organized his forces around New York City into five brigades, with Greene commanding the one assigned to Manhattan. Soon after, when John Sullivan was sent to Canada, Washington showed how much he valued Greene's abilities by entrusting him with Sullivan's old command, the defense of Long Island, the key to New York City. Ironically, Sullivan also testified to Greene's growing reputation when he wrote Washington from Canada, "I should ... Rejoice to see General Green here with his Brigade, if
he can be Spared from New York." In August, Congress added its voice to the general approval of Greene by awarding him one of four promotions to major general in the Continental Army. As Congressman William Williams explained to Joseph Trumbull, Congress had intended to award only three major general's commissions. As there were three brigadiers senior to Greene, however, and he "was so worthy and high in Esteem," Congress promoted four instead.

After taking over command on Long Island, Greene set about strengthening its fortifications and increasing his troops' discipline and readiness. Greene's preparations seemed thorough, but he never got the chance to test them or his own command ability in battle, as he fell violently ill just a few days before the British struck at Long Island. Brooklyn Heights on the east end of Long Island dominated the approaches to Manhattan and seemed to Washington a key to his defense of New York City. Unfortunately, however, Washington did not have sufficient force to defend Long Island itself adequately. The island's large area and long coastline ruled out any attempt at preclusive defense. For this reason, Charles Lee, whom Washington had sent to New York in January 1776 to begin laying out defenses, decided to base Long Island's defense on a series of fortifications encompassing the little town of Brooklyn and its high ground. This was the defensive scheme Nathanael Greene inherited when he moved his brigade onto Long Island in late
April.

Commanding a force with more militia than Continentals, Greene had to devote considerable attention to improving his troops' discipline. His daily general orders during this period are filled with injunctions against going to New York City without permission, falling out of fatigue parties, sleeping on guard duty, drinking excessively, abusing the civilian inhabitants of the area, and otherwise neglecting duty. And he did not shy from harsh punishments to uphold the regulations, as evidenced by the thirty-nine lashes and drumming out of the army awarded one soldier for sleeping on guard duty. As at Boston, however, he also attended to the men's welfare. He strove hard to maintain camp sanitation, tried to improve the men's diets and cooking habits, and did all he could to provide adequate medical care. As he told Washington, "improper or inadequate care will adversely affect morale in the whole unit." Finally, Greene tried to ready his troops for the coming battle. He put men to work daily improving the fortifications around Brooklyn, demanded his officers familiarize themselves with the terrain for miles around, tightened security in and around the camps, and exhorted everyone to conduct himself as though the "Enemy was Encamped in the Neighborhood." Steadily, and in every way possible, he pushed preparations.

For two months Greene and the rest of the American commanders prepared their defenses in splendid isolation.
Then, in late June, the British began sailing into New York harbor. By mid-August, General Howe had 32,000 British and Hessian soldiers in his camps on Staten Island, supported by a fleet of thirty warships and hundreds of transports. Opposing this formidable force, Washington had only 19,000 men, scattered in and around New York City, and no naval support. On Long Island, the point Howe would almost certainly attack first, Greene's forces numbered only about four thousand, the majority of them militia. The situation facing Greene had all the makings for a disaster. Nature intervened, however, before Greene could test himself, his men, and his preparations against this challenge. Sometime around 15 August Greene contracted a fever that steadily worsened. By 20 August his condition had deteriorated so badly Washington turned his command over first to the recently returned John Sullivan, and then, two days later, to Israel Putnam. Greene's doctor moved him to Manhattan, and for several days he remained in serious condition. While there, he missed the battle for Long Island. On 22 August Howe landed 15,000 troops on Long Island, and five days later these troops shattered the greatly outnumbered Americans in a battle along the Gowanus Heights, a few miles to the front of the Brooklyn fortifications. Only Howe's caution before the fortifications around Brooklyn, a storm that kept the British fleet out of the East River, and the yeoman work of a regiment of Marblehead lobstersmen allowed
Washington to skillfully evacuate Long Island on 29 August. Henry Knox and others, including Greene himself, argued that Greene's presence would have made a difference at Long Island. Greene could only have moderated the defeat, however, for Washington had placed the forces on Long Island in an untenable position in the face of overwhelming British superiority both on land and at sea. And events were to show this held true for the remainder of the New York campaign as well.

After his victory on Long Island, Howe elected to maneuver the Americans out of the remainder of New York City, using his complete control of the waterways surrounding the city to full advantage. Washington, at Congress's urging, tried to hold all of Manhattan against the British. Unavoidably, however, this attempt spread his limited forces too thin, especially against an enemy whose complete control of the sea made possible assaults anywhere around the perimeter of the island. Greene's condition had improved considerably by 1 September, and Washington now gave him command of the "centre division" on Manhattan. Until Greene completely recovered his strength, however, Washington specified that Joseph Spencer would act as temporary commander of Greene's division. On 15 September, Howe landed a large force between Kip's and Turtle Bays, about halfway up the East River side of Manhattan. Washington hastily evacuated the lower half of the island.
and set up new defensive lines along the Harlem Heights. There, the following day, the Americans gained a measure of revenge by besting the British in a sharp skirmish. The fighting took place in the area held by Greene's division, and even though he was not yet commanding, this skirmish marked his first taste of battle as he, Joseph Reed, and Israel Putnam rushed to the scene to lend encouragement and example to the men. Howe then declined an all-out assault against the American defenses along Harlem Heights, and instead spent nearly a month planning how to maneuver the Americans out of their positions. Finally, on 13 October he again took advantage of the British fleet to outflank the Americans, landing a large force at Throg's Point, on the mainland just to the northeast of Manhattan. With his line of retreat from Manhattan now threatened, Washington called a council of war on 16 October. This council voted unanimously to withdraw north to White Plains, but to leave forces both in New Jersey and at Fort Washington, on the northern tip of Manhattan, in the hopes of keeping the Hudson River closed to the British. This decision set the stage for the last act of the New York campaign, probably the most inglorious episode of Nathanael Greene's career.

When Washington and the main army withdrew to White Plains, Greene got his first chance at independent command. Characteristically, he took on the challenge with tremendous energy, confidence, and aggressiveness. On 17 September,
the day after the skirmish at Harlem Heights, Washington assigned Greene to command all American forces in New Jersey. Essentially these forces comprised the rapidly dwindling four or five thousand six-months militia of the Flying Camp, which Congress had established under General Hugh Mercer at Perth Amboy in June, and an assortment of Continental, state, and militia units totalling about 3,500 men stationed directly under Greene at Fort Lee. Greene made Fort Lee his headquarters. The Americans had built this post, perched on the Palisades of the Jersey shore of the Hudson River, and Fort Washington, directly across the river on the northern end of Manhattan, to control passage up the river. Each fort mounted batteries for firing at ships in the river, and between the forts the Americans had sunk several old ships and constructed some sort of barrier. Washington had left General Israel Putnam in command of the American forces remaining on Manhattan, essentially those at Fort Washington. In practice, however, Fort Washington actually fell under Greene's overall command. Thus keeping the Hudson closed to British ships became one of Greene's primary responsibilities. Greene's other major responsibility was to keep open the line of communication and retreat for the main army between White Plains and Philadelphia. That Washington trusted Greene with these vital tasks testifies to the high regard Washington had for Greene's abilities. Tench Tilghman, one of Washington's
aides, wrote to William Duer in October that Greene "is, beyond doubt, a first-rate military genius, and one in whose opinions the General places the utmost confidence."

Seemingly, the energy with which Greene took on his command in New Jersey justified Washington's confidence. Characteristically, one of the first areas Greene concerned himself with was discipline, including schooling his officers in their duties and responsibilities. Private John Adlum recorded that when Greene took command at Fort Lee "there was immediately a great change with respect to the discipline of the troops which before that was very lax."

He also displayed impressive foresight and initiative in tackling the two missions Washington had given him. He established a line of supply magazines from Fort Lee down to Philadelphia sufficient to support an army of 20,000 men for three months, and even gathered significant amounts of abandoned supplies he discovered at the site of evacuated Fort Independence, on the mainland just north of Manhattan. Toward the British, Greene displayed an aggressive, confident, and combative spirit, worthy of Caesar or Frederick. Thus, when he learned of Howe's landing at Throg's Point, Greene immediately offered to lead three brigades of his troops in New Jersey to Washington's aid. Likewise, when three British ships ran past his forts up the Hudson River to Tappan Bay on 11 October, he remained determined to hold the forts. On 24 October he sent a few
hundred men to reinforce Fort Washington and then, a few
days later, glowingly reported an action between the
batteries at Fort Washington and a British warship that came
up the river to challenge the fort. According to Greene,
the Americans holed the British ship several times and
eventually forced it to retire, no doubt with many
casualties. Greene admitted the withdrawal of the main army
to White Plains left Fort Washington isolated and exposed,
dispiriting the men. Still, he remained confident and ready
for a fight, declaring on 5 November that he wished he had
enough men to attempt a diversion in Howe's rear.

Unfortunately, Greene's unbridled optimism and
aggressiveness led him into one of the worst American
defeats of the war. When Washington withdrew the main army
to White Plains Howe followed. There the two armies fought
an indecisive limited engagement on 28 October. Howe, seeing
Washington had taken a strong defensive position and having
no desire for a major frontal assault, turned his attention
back southward. Greene, meanwhile, reinforced Fort
Washington, hoping to hold as much of the ground surrounding
the main fort as possible. On 7 November, Washington wrote
Greene that Howe had withdrawn southward from White Plains,
probably intending to attack Fort Washington; and he
directed Greene to give the commander of the fort, Colonel
Robert Magaw, every possible assistance. In a letter to
Greene the next day, however, Washington sounded much less
decided about defending Fort Washington. Referring to the three British ships that had sailed up the Hudson past the forts, Washington wrote:

If we cannot prevent Vessells passing up, and the Enemy are possessed of the surrounding Country, what valuable purpose can it answer to attempt to hold a post from which the expected Benefit cannot be had. I am therefore inclined to think it will not be prudent to hazard the Men and Stores at Mount Washington, but as you are on the Spot leave it to you to give such Orders as to evacuating Mount Washington as you judge best, and so far revoking the Order given Colo Magaw to defend it to the last.41

Washington's caution did not dent Greene's optimism, however. He wrote back to Washington that even though the British had exposed the insufficiency of the river defenses, still Fort Washington created an invaluable diversion from the main British effort, forcing them to use "double the number of men to Invest it, that we have to Occupy it."

Moreover, Greene stated, "I cannot conceive the Garrison to be in any great danger. The men can be brought off at any time. ... Col Magaw thinks it will take them [the British] till December expires before they can carry it." A few days later, he wrote to John Hancock, then President of the Continental Congress, that the British seemed frustrated and at a loss what to do next. "I expect General Howe will attempt to possess himself of Mount Washington but very much doubt whether he'll succeed in the attempt." 42

In the event, Greene misjudged both Howe's indecision and Fort Washington's strength. Early on 15 November, only
three days after Greene had written optimistically to Hancock, the British handed Colonel Magaw an ultimatum demanding he surrender Fort Washington at discretion within two hours or they would put every man to the sword. Magaw replied the Americans would defend the post to the last man and immediately sent word of the ultimatum and his response to Greene at Fort Lee. Greene approved Magaw's response, ordered him to defend the fort until told otherwise, and sent him further reinforcements. He then reported his actions to Washington, who, a few days earlier, had ridden down to Fort Lee from White Plains. Obviously, Greene expected Magaw could repel the British attack. The defenses of Fort Washington did not warrant this confidence, however. Israel Putnam had laid out the fort at the top of a narrow hill one mile long and 230 feet high. It was only a simple five-sided open earthwork, with no buildings and no underground shelters. It rested on solid granite and had no sources of fuel or water. Only a few primitive and incomplete outerworks protected the approaches to the fort proper. Yet, Putnam, Thomas Mifflin, Magaw, and others confidently touted the fort's strength; and Greene echoed these judgements. He was about to learn not to trust the judgements of men hardly more knowledgeable of the art of war than himself.

On 13 November, Greene and Washington had met at Fort Lee and discussed whether to evacuate the fort. Despite his
apprehensions, Washington had not overruled Greene's desire to maintain the post. Now, it was too late. Howe attacked at seven in the morning on the 16th with about 8,000 men. Magaw, as a result of the various reinforcements Greene had sent him over the past few weeks, had about 2,900 defenders. For the most part, the Americans fought courageously, but they were outmanned and outgunned. By afternoon, the British had forced all the Americans back into the fort. With no water supply, with no shelter from British artillery, and with nearly 3,000 men crammed into an open earthwork designed to hold only 1,000, Magaw saw no choice but to surrender his entire force to Howe. Though the Americans suffered fewer casualties than the British, 155 killed and wounded compared to 452, their loss in prisoners made Fort Washington one of the most costly American defeats of the war.

Greene then compounded his errors of judgment at Fort Washington with a further bit of uninspired generalship at Fort Lee less than a week later. The loss of Fort Washington had rendered Fort Lee useless, so Washington instructed Greene to remove all the stores from Fort Lee and then evacuate the post. Greene did not act quickly enough, however, and General Charles, Lord Cornwallis almost bagged him and his entire garrison. Early on 20 November, Cornwallis crossed the Hudson six miles north of Fort Lee with about 5,000 troops and marched directly against the
fort. Greene learned of the British advance just in time to evacuate his men, but they escaped with only their muskets and the clothes on their backs. All the remaining stores at Fort Lee, a considerable quantity of invaluable munitions, equipment, and supplies, were lost. For a second time, 46 Greene had failed.

Greene's errors of judgment concerning Fort Washington made him the center of criticism for the first time, and he quickly showed how little he could tolerate others' disapproval or accept his own shortcomings. To his credit, Washington did not lay all the blame for the loss of Fort Washington on Greene, admitting his own complicity in the decision to defend the fort. At the same time, he let it be known through his reports that he thought Greene had exercised the discretion Washington had given him unwisely. Others did not treat Greene so gently, however, and he reacted bitterly. The day after the battle, he wrote Henry Knox that he was "mad, vex, sick, and sorry," and asked Knox what was "said upon the Occasion." He then implied the fort was lost because of disorganized and desultory efforts by the troops, as well as Magaw's failure to build a redoubt recommended by Knox and himself. A month later he wrote Nicholas Cooke that "The lines were too extensive for that number to defend, and when they retreated into the Garrison so much confusion, disorder and dispiritedness prevaild that Col Magaw who commanded the
Garrison could not get the Troops to man the outworks." Two weeks later he defended himself to Cooke even more vigorously about Fort Lee:

I am told some malicious reports propagated industriously about me respecting the loss of Baggage and Stores at Fort Lee. They are as malicious as they are untrue. I can bring very good vouchers for my conduct in every instance, and have the satisfaction to have it approved by the General under whom I serve.48

Here was another example of Greene's sensitivity to criticism and his unwillingness to admit errors clouding his judgment and warping his perception of events.

Fortunately, despite his mistakes at forts Washington and Lee, Greene did not forfeit all of Washington's confidence, and remaining one of Washington's principal lieutenants, he was able to demonstrate anew his competence and value during the army's retreat across New Jersey. After the fall of Fort Washington, Washington's army was grouped in three principal contingents. Charles Lee had three divisions, with about 5,500 men present for duty, at White Plains; William Heath had an oversized division, about 3,200 men, at Peekskill; and Washington had about 5,400 men, including Greene's division, with him in and around Fort Lee. These numbers dwindled rapidly after Fort Washington fell. The enlistments of many of the troops, especially the militia, expired either 1 December or 1 January. The series of American setbacks beginning at Long Island and ending with the disasters at forts Washington and Lee persuaded
many of these men to desert the army and go home early. Confronted with the apparent British intention to advance south toward Philadelphia and his own army's rapidly fading strength, Washington saw no choice but to retreat back through New Jersey in front of the British. So, leaving Heath at Peekskill to forestall any British attempt to move up the Hudson River, Washington sent word to Lee to move south to rejoin the "main" army and began withdrawing. By 8 December, the British had pushed Washington's troops across the Delaware River, only thirty miles from Philadelphia. At this point, however, Sir William Howe gave in to caution and put his army into winter quarters. Throughout the American retreat, Greene, by default, served as Washington's chief lieutenant, and did so quite competently. And he continued serving effectively in that capacity as Washington regrouped his forces west of the Delaware.

Once Howe surrendered the initiative, Washington almost immediately began considering an offensive stroke against the now dormant British. On 20 December, John Sullivan led the 2,000 men that remained of Lee's force into camp. Lee, himself, had been captured by the British on 13 December after spending the night at a tavern about three miles away from his troops. Sullivan's troops, plus another 1,500-2,000 from various other sources, raised Washington's strength sufficiently -- to about 6,000 men -- to persuade him to attack the British garrison Howe had posted at
Trenton, New Jersey, just across the Delaware River from the Americans' positions. How or when the attack on Trenton was planned remains as yet unknown. Greene, however, now the second-ranking major general in camp behind Sullivan, supported an audacious stroke against the British, probably encouraged Washington to attack, and, as some of his biographers imply, may even have been a principal architect of the plan. And whatever misgivings Washington may have had about Greene's performance a month earlier, he had regained sufficient confidence in Greene to entrust him with command of one column in the attack itself, while Sullivan led the other. Washington did, however, choose to march with Greene's column. In the event, Greene's division carried off its part in the attack without a hitch, and the stinging defeat Washington dealt the garrison at Trenton restored some of the Americans' self-respect and enthusiasm.

Immediately after their victory at Trenton the Americans recrossed the Delaware. Greene, however, according to his biographers, vigorously urged Washington to go back into New Jersey and wreak more havoc with the British outposts. Washington took the army back across the river and into Trenton on 31 December. Once there, however, he found his army the target of a powerful British force of 8,000 men under General Cornwallis marching down from Princeton only twelve miles away. Left with insufficient
time to recross the Delaware again, Washington sent Greene's division to delay Cornwallis on the road north of Trenton while he withdrew the rest of the army across Assunpink Creek to the east of Trenton. That night, as Cornwallis waited only for daylight to move against Washington, the Americans left their campfires burning and slipped away east and then north to Princeton behind Cornwallis. Early the next morning, units of Greene's division, which was moving directly up the road toward Princeton won a short sharp engagement with the three regiments Cornwallis had left behind in Princeton. Following this success, Washington apparently toyed momentarily with the idea of pushing further north to Brunswick to seize the British war chest. But knowing his men were near exhaustion and that Cornwallis would soon be storming up the road from Trenton, he decided instead to take his little army into safe winter quarters 50 behind the mountains at Morristown. Thus ended the campaign of 1776, on a high note for both the Americans in general and for Greene personally.

Throughout 1776, Greene's development as a Revolutionary general had progressed steadily. Other than his errors of judgment at forts Washington and Lee, he had shown a sure and steady touch in command of his division and as an advisor to Washington. This was especially so in the area of strategy, where Greene began slowly evolving a sophisticated revolutionary strategy in place of his early
simplistic preference for offensive operations. He clearly saw the strategic difficulties of defending New York City. Manhattan's size forced Washington to spread his troops too thin; and the British Navy's unchallenged control of the waters around Manhattan made it possible for Howe quickly to throw a fortified line all the way across the island at any point, thus trapping any American troops below the line. Greene also argued that when the Americans evacuated New York City they should burn it. Once the British occupied the city, the Americans would need a superior naval force to retake it, an unlikely prospect. Thus the British would gain a secure and prosperous base area. Greene insisted New York held no real value for the Americans and pointed out that more than half the property in the city belonged to Tories. He urged Washington to "Remember the King of France when Charles the fifth, Emperor of Germany, invaded his Kingdom, he laid whole Provinces waste; and by that policy he starved and ruined Charles army and defeated him without fighting a Battle." Here was an early statement of a strategy tailored to some degree to the realities of the American situation. What Greene failed to appreciate fully yet was the detrimental effect burning New York City would have on patriot opinion, a vital ingredient in revolutionary war.

Greene did begin to appreciate, however, that the primary aim of American strategy should be to preserve the
army rather than to defend territory. When the loss of Long Island alarmed Rhode Island's leaders, Greene privately advised Nicholas Cooke that Rhode Island was safe from any invasion by a detachment of the British forces so long as Washington's army "is able to make any stand." As it turned out, after chasing the Americans across New Jersey, Howe sent General Sir Henry Clinton with 10,000 men to occupy Newport. Greene then advised Cooke on how best to oppose the British in Rhode Island. Cooke should drive the livestock away from the coasts and cover the "capital objects." He should not, however, try to cover all the country - "tis an endless task" - nor attempt any operations unless certain of success. "By too great a division of your force you'll be incapable of making any considerable opposition where ever they may think proper to make a descent." Thus Greene's experiences in the war were bringing him around to a more circumspect revolutionary strategy - defend only the most essential points, avoid battle except on your own terms, and ensure the survival of the army.

Greene's developing theory of war often ran against the common grain. The scope and intensity of war in the eighteenth century was limited. To a great extent the factors that caused this were beyond the control of military commanders. But commanders also deliberately tried to limit the violence and destructiveness of warfare, especially respecting war's impact on the civil population. Greene,
however, pushed by the exigencies of the Revolutionary War, partially abandoned this attitude. Thus, during the New York campaign, Greene willingly removed livestock and wheat from the Long Island coast, seized civilian homes for military purposes, and destroyed excess stock, forage, and provisions in areas of potential British operations. Though aware these actions were alarming citizens, Greene still wrote Washington, "those measures however cruel in appearance were ever my Maxims of War in the defense of a Country; in attacking they would be very improper." Greene also understood war as a specialized activity requiring men trained and disciplined to meet its particular challenges. This conviction was in stark contrast to the common American view that fielding a victorious army was simply a matter of sending out brave, determined, and patriotic men. Too many Americans believed the colonies needed nothing more than their militiamen to defeat the British. Greene, however, forcefully stated the case against relying on militia in a letter to Nicholas Cooke:

The Americans possess as much natural bravery as any People upon Earth, but habit must form the Soldier. He who expects men brought from the tender scenes of domestick life can meet danger and death with a becoming fortitude is a stranger to the Human Heart. There is nothing that can get the better of that active Principle of self Preservation but a proper Sentiment of Pride, or being often accus'tom'd to danger. As the Principle of Pride is not predominant enough in the minds of the common Soldiery, the force of habit must be called into its aid to get the better of our Natural fears ever alarmed at the Approach of danger.
In essence, Greene argued here for a professional army, thoroughly trained and strictly disciplined.

Concerning specific command techniques Greene proved to be more conventional but equally thoughtful. He became particularly sensitive to the human and psychological dimensions of war. Thus he declared that "Detach'd Guards never defend a place equal to troops stationed at a particular Post," that units stationed together for some time would fight harder to support each other, and that officers, "knowing a post to be committed to their trust, and that the whole disgrace falls upon them if any misconduct happens will be much more likely to take every necessary precaution to avoid so great an Evil." Echoing Saxe, Greene stressed that commanders must free themselves from administrative duties so they could not only issue orders but see to their execution. "The science of War," he declared, "requires a freedom of thought and leisure to reflect upon the Various incidents that daily occur, which cannot be had where the whole of one's time is engrossed in Clerical employments." At the same time, Greene also emphasized the importance for effective command of attending to the smallest details. "It is a Mistaken Notion," he said, "that the Manutia of Military Matters is only an employment for little Minds." Men with such notions revealed their ignorance of "the Necessary Dependence and Connection of one thing upon another." Throughout 1776 Greene also
displayed impressive foresight and preparation, clear
recognition of Washington's need to coordinate the
operations of all his forces, and an unbounded optimism that
caused him to exaggerate the American army's fortunes.
Slowly, Greene's own particular style of generalship
coalesced.

Revolutionary generalship, especially, encourages
military commanders to heavy involvement in politics, and
Greene spent as much time, it seems, worrying about how
Congress and the states were managing the war effort as he
did contemplating military doctrine and strategy. In 1776,
Greene believed Congress was taking the war too casually.
In June he cautioned John Adams that Congress was playing a
dangerous game by trying to be too economical about the war
effort. Congress underestimated British strength and
overestimated the capabilities of American forces. Not only
had Congress failed to assess the situation realistically,
it also remained beguiled by hopes of reconciliation and
undecided about any "Systematical plan" for prosecuting the
war. The states compounded Congress's parsimony by delaying
too long in raising the forces Congress required of them.
Congress kept the regular forces it raised small in part
because it believed the colonial militia could bear a major
share of the fighting. Greene thought this policy "the most
absurd and ridiculous imaginable." His experiences in 1776
convinced him the militia quickly broke in battle and came
and went as it pleased throughout the campaign. Greene also regretted the short-term enlistments given many of the so-called regular troops. One reason Washington had had to retreat so precipitously through New Jersey, he argued, was that the many men whose enlistments expired at the end of the year began going home early in droves. Greene continued to believe only a large army of men enlisted for the duration of the war and thoroughly trained and disciplined could give America the military might needed to defeat the British. People's awareness of the dangers and hardships of army service, however, Greene said, kept many from enlisting. Congress must, therefore, offer desirable bounties, generous pay, and disability pensions to give men sufficient motive to risk army service. As Greene wrote John Adams, "The desperate game you have got to play and the uncertainty of War may render every measure that will increase the Force and strength of the American Army worthy 58 consideration."

In Greene's mind, Congress's parsimony not only affected the strength of the army but also the quality of its leadership. "Good Officers is the very Soul of an Army;" Greene said, "the activity and Zeal of the Troops entirely depends upon the degree of animation given them by their officers." Good Officers were scarce, however. In June 1776, after the latest round of promotions to brigadier general, Greene wrote his brother, Christopher, that, "I
wish it was easy to send men equal to the command as it is to appoint them." Greene believed the American soldier's bravery, fighting ability, and determination equalled that of the soldiers of any other nation. Thus, if only "the officers were as good as the men . . . , America might bid Defiance to the whole World." By its niggardliness, however, Congress risked losing those good officers the army did have. Good men had accepted commissions at the beginning, Greene said, without any thought of pay or length of service. But at present pay, the war's duration would force those officers without independent fortunes to quit the service to attend to their family concerns. And their replacements would naturally lack the skills and experience of their predecessors.

Greene argued, however, from a markedly un-egalitarian view of the officers. John Adams spoke for many other political leaders when he complained to Greene about American officers' extravagances and aristocratic pretensions. Greene defended the officers. All his acquaintances economized diligently, but, Greene said in a telling comment, "the expences of the Officers runs very high, unless they dress and live below the Gentlemen. Few . . . will be willing to decend to that." And he complained to his brother, Jacob, of the expense of living in New York City "in Charactor equal to my Rank . . . , and if one dont live up to their Rank they are dispisd by both Soldiers and
Citizens." One measure Greene strongly urged on Adams to compensate the officers for their sacrifices was a casualty and disability pension. By passing such a measure, Congress would "inspire the Army with love and gratitude towards the Congress for so generous an Act." Greene saw the officers as not only a privileged but also a separate body, with its own standards and rules of conduct. Thus he bitterly opposed Congress's determination to reward merit by granting officers promotions out of the normal sequence. Congress could not know the true merit of every officer. More important, Congress could not appreciate the sensitivity of rank and promotion in the service. Greene showed his own elitist feelings with this comment to John Adams:

Where one officer is promoted over the head of another, if he has spirit enought to be fit for service, it lays him under the necessity of quitting it. It is a publick intimation that he is unfit for promotion and consequently undeserving his present appointment. For my own part I would never give any Legislative body an opportunity to humiliate me but once.60

Greene's comments on purely political matters continued to reveal a curious blend of radicalism and conservatism. When, on 4 May 1776, Rhode Island became the first of the colonies to declare its independence from Great Britain, he wrote, "Tis nobly done. God prosper you, and crown your endeavors with success." Yet, on other issues Greene was remarkably conservative. His elitist views concerning the officer corps in large part grew out of the fondness he had developed for a hierarchical society headed by a
meritocracy. His conservatism shone through most, however, in his conviction that the American states must unite themselves under a strong central government. He, as much as any of the Revolutionaries, conceived of a "national" interest that was superior to any local concerns or objectives. And he believed that defending the "national interest" required granting the central government impressive powers. This no doubt was fueled in large part by the frustrations he shared in trying to put a respectable military force in the field. When the American cause reached its nadir, in the month before the Battle of Trenton, Greene, echoing perhaps Adam Ferguson, recommended that Congress give Washington considerably greater powers "to promote the Establishment of the New Army." As Greene pointed out, it was then "a serious Truth that the present existence of the Civil depends upon the Military Powers." He insisted he was "no advocate for the Extension of Military Power." He asked Congress to remember, however, "the Policy of the Romans (a People as tenacious of their Liberties as any on Earth), when their State was invaded they delagated full Powers to exert their whole Force." This was a time, Greene made plain, when "If you intend to support your Independance, you must not be too delicate in the Choice of Means." To its credit, Congress, on 27 December, did grant Washington broad powers for six months to deal with the emergency. Evidently, Greene was not the only
Revolutionary who appreciated the need for conservatism in some matters.

Given his strong feelings about independence and about the need for union among the American states, it is not surprising that Greene did not advocate much benevolence toward the loyalists. During the Long Island campaign Greene joined with several other American generals in complaining to Washington that the local committee of safety was treating the captured loyalists too leniently -- "discharging them on their giving bonds as a Security for their good behavior." In November, Greene reported from Fort Lee that some New York militia had refused duty, General Howe having beguiled them with promises of "Peace, Liberty and Safety," and a few weeks later he declared,

The Tories are the cursedest rascals amongst us, the most wicked, villainous, and oppressive. They lead the relentless foreigners to the houses of their neighbors and strip the poor women and children of everything they have to eat or wear; and after plundering them in this sort, the brutes often ravish the mothers and daughters, and compel the fathers and sons to behold their brutality; many have fallen sacrifices in this way. The Tories have done us more harm than they can repair during their generation. 63

In late December, he warned John Hancock that Howe's policy of punishing rebels and rewarding loyalists was encouraging disaffection. Consequently, Congress must institute punishments for the disaffected -- for shirking militia duty, refusing Continental currency, and withholding supplies from the army. Greene's alarm over the growing
loyalist problem transcended a military man's concern with additions to his enemy's strength. In his mind, Toryism sprang from failing American virtue - from unwillingness to sacrifice personal for community interests and to serve a set of higher ideals. And he believed this lack of public virtue would exact a fearful price. If not virtuous, he declared, "the People must submit to the servitude they will deserve."

Paradoxically, though Greene preached the need for public virtue, his own actions continued to show him as concerned with private as with public interests. Frequently he used the influence and special knowledge of his position to advance his own or his friends' interests. Even after entering the army Greene retained his partnership in the family business. The Greene brothers, as did most merchants at the time, quickly took advantage of the additional opportunities for profits created by the war. They undertook providing various services and supplies to the army and they invested in privateers, and Nathanael used whatever influence and knowledge he had to further these private commercial enterprises, interceding with army officials on behalf of his brothers and advising his bothers about potentially profitable investments. Not surprisingly, however, his willingness to use his influence on friends' behalf at times caused trouble. On 16 September 1776, Congress had authorized 88 new Continental battalions,
enlisted for the duration of the war and apportioned among
the various states according to population. Selection of
officers for these new battalions was left to the states,
and Governor Cooke asked Greene for his recommendations on
officers for the two battalions levied from Rhode Island.
When the list of new officers was announced, however,
several Rhode Island officers accused Greene "of partiality
to his connections and townsmen, to the prejudice of men of
manifestly superior merit." Strangely, Greene insisted he
had asked the two senior Rhode Island colonels, James Varnum
and Daniel Hitchcock, to prepare the recommendations, which
he then gave to Washington. Moreover, when Greene forwarded
to Cooke the list of recommended officers Washington had
approved, he wrote he hoped "no popular prejudices nor
family connexion will influence the House in the Election of
the Officers" because the "Reputation of the Army altogether
depends upon the Establishing a good Core or Corps of
Officers." Though the truth remains hidden, this dispute
shows to some extent the role interest, influence, and
connection played in the Revolutionary Army. And Greene
certainly was no stranger to this game.

He also was no stranger to ambition. When it served
his purposes, Greene would play down his abilities and
insist he was but a humble servant of the cause. Periodic
self-effacement could not hide Greene's great ambition and
ego, however. How else can the following excerpt from a May
1776 letter to Washington be explained?

It appears absolutely necessary that there should be an augmentation of the American forces in consequence of which I suppose there will be several promotions. As I have no desire of quitting the service, I hope the Congress will take no measures that will lay me under the disagreeable necessity of doing it. . . . Every man feels him self wounded where he finds him self neglected, and that in proportion as he is conscious of endeavoring to merit attention. I shall be satisfied with any measures that the Congress shall take that has not a direct tendency to degrade me in the Publick estimation. A measure of that sort would sink me in my own esteem and render me spiritless and uneasy in my situation and consequently unfit for the service. I feel my self strongly attacht to the cause, to the Continental Congress, and to your Excellency's person, and I should consider it a great misfortune to be deprivd of an opportunity of taking an active part in the support of the one and in the promotion of the other.67

What Greene lobbied for so assiduously here was the promotion to major general he got on 9 August.

Seventeen seventy-six was an up and down year for Greene. In his first real chance at command in combat, at Fort Washington and Fort Lee, he stumbled badly. Afterward, however, continuing as one of Washington's principal subordinates, he handled himself and his troops well during the retreat across New Jersey. And in the year's final operations, at Trenton and Princeton, he performed superbly. He first helped urge the limited offensive strike Washington launched against the British, and then he led one wing of the attack on Trenton and commanded the division that bore the brunt of the fighting at Princeton. Though Greene had erred seriously at forts Washington and Lee,
Washington had not hesitated to trust him again, probably because none of his other senior officers could match Greene's intelligence, energy, aggressiveness and skill. And Washington's confidence paid off handsomely in the end.

Throughout 1776 Greene continued his maturation as a Revolutionary general. Foresight and careful preparation emerged as two of his most valued traits. He also revealed an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the nature of revolutionary war, believing that the war's outcome depended heavily on the human, or psychological, dimension, that the stresses and horrors of war demanded specially trained and disciplined troops as opposed to a citizens' militia, and that revolutionary war required the civil population to bear an uncommon level of violence. Most important, Greene's strategic ideas began changing. Though he retained his aggressiveness and willingness to close with the British, Greene also began to understand that the American object was not to protect territory but to protect the army, that the object was not to destroy the British army outright but to wear the British down while preserving American strength. Greene's experience was slowly pushing him away from the bold strategic views of Caesar and Frederick, although he continued to follow their dictum to retain the tactical initiative even when forced to adopt the strategic defensive. Instead, Greene began leaning more and more toward a Fabian strategy that paralleled Saxe's vision of
limited prudent warfare that relied on maneuver and pressure rather than on battle.

Greene's political views also continued maturing. He remained preoccupied with the public's declining virtue, with the states' localism and lack of cooperation, and with Congress's unwillingness to seize and wield greater power. He also became more outspoken in his criticism of Congress's failure to support the war effort adequately, a not surprising development given his Rhode Island heritage. As the war progressed it seemed to draw out the conservative strains in Greene's thought. Public virtue, union, a stronger central government, and a powerful national army all were essentially conservative ideas. So too was Greene's growing promotion of a hierarchical society, evidenced both by his emphasis on deference as an ingredient in public virtue and by his insistence that the officer corps should constitute an elite within American society. The pressures of the war were reinforcing the conservative arguments Greene had encountered in Horace, Rollin, Blackstone, The Spectator and Hume.

As the war progressed, Greene's ambition also grew. His arguments for greater status and compensation for officers probably were rooted largely in his desire for personal fame and fortune. Likewise, his blatant lobbying for promotion to major general was the product of ambition and self-importance. Finally, ambition continued to fuel
his energetic efforts to promote both his own and others' private business interests. Yet, despite its unsavory nature, his ambition might have provided the extra spark needed to drive Greene to the heights he would reach in the Revolution.

When the American army marched into Morristown in January 1777 to take up winter quarters, it hardly looked able to survive the winter much less another campaign against General Howe's army. Washington's army proved much more resilient than it appeared, however, and it came out of winter quarters in May 1777 with renewed strength and determination. The winter started badly. After Trenton and Princeton the army quickly dwindled to just a couple of thousand men, most of them short-term militia. Provisions and clothing were extremely scarce, and smallpox ran through the camp like wildfire. But beneath the misery were seeds of hope. The victories at Trenton and Princeton provided just enough boost to Americans' confidence to keep the army from disbanding and the cause from foundering. And within the army, these victories generated considerable optimism. The American army had been able to follow these victories with other, smaller ones against British outposts at Elizabethtown, Newark, Hackensack, and Fort Lee, thus pushing the British back into just two garrisons in New Jersey, at Brunswick and Amboy. With these successes, and
aided by British inactivity, American recruiting slowly began to make good the losses of the previous campaign. By mid-May, Washington had forty-three Continental regiments with approximately 8,500 men in camp. These troops he organized into five brigades under Major Generals Sullivan, Greene, Stephen, Lincoln, and Stirling. To this core of "regulars," which hopefully would keep increasing, Washington could add an ever-shifting number of short-term state troops and militia.

Washington also could rely on a more experienced and capable group of officers than he had had in 1776 to command his troops. The campaign of 1776 had served as a trial by fire, helping Washington weed out incompetent officers and identify those with special skill. It also taught those that remained important lessons they would apply in future campaigns. Greene, after his questionable performance at forts Washington and Lee, had finished the 1776 campaign in strong fashion. As the American Army prepared to take the field in 1777, he established himself as one of Washington's most capable and trusted subordinates. The second-ranking major general in Washington's army (behind Sullivan), he functioned as much as anyone as the commander-in-chief's right-hand man.

Washington showed his renewed confidence in Greene during this period in many ways, but perhaps the most striking was when he sent him to Philadelphia in mid-March
to confer with Congress on the state of the army. In a letter introducing Greene to Congress, Washington praised him as "a Gentleman in whose abilities I place the most intire confidence. ... I can illy Spare so useful an Officer at this time." And in a letter to the President of Congress, Washington said,

This Gentleman is so much in my Confidence, so intimately acquainted with my ideas, with our strength and our weaknesses, with every thing respecting the Army, that I have thought it unnecessary to particularize or prescribe any certain line of duty or enquiries for him. I shall only say, from the rank he holds as an able and good Officer, in the estimation of all who know him, he deserves the greatest respect and much regard is due to his opinions in the line of his profession.69

Whether because of Howe's sluggish temperament, concerns about American strength, conservative views about winter campaigning, sympathy for the American cause, or a combination of all these, the British army remained relatively quiet through the spring and early summer of 1777. This British inactivity naturally worked to the Americans' advantage, giving Washington more time to recruit and ready his troops. The Americans kept the British off balance with harassing attacks against any parties that ventured out of camp. Local militia were especially active in this role, and they hampered British foraging significantly. The British responded with raids against American storage centers at Peekskill, New York on 23 March and Danbury, Connecticut on 25 April.
These raids persuaded Washington to anticipate a full-scale offensive up the Hudson River, and in May he sent Greene and Henry Knox to inspect and report on the defenses around Peekskill. Soon after this, however, Howe began assembling his army at Brunswick, New Jersey. Convinced now that Philadelphia was Howe's true objective, Washington asked Greene to lay out a fortified camp at Middlebrook, New Jersey, which was closer than Morristown to the British line of march from Brunswick to Philadelphia. In mid-June, Howe tried enticing Washington into open battle on the plains between Brunswick and Middlebrook, but Washington declined. Failing in his designs, Howe withdrew to Amboy and then to Staten Island, leaving New Jersey completely free of British troops by 30 June.

Through the summer of 1777, Washington had great difficulty discerning Howe's plans and objectives. Early in May, General Sir John Burgoyne had arrived in Canada with an army of several thousand men, obviously intending a campaign down Lake Champlain, Lake George, and the Hudson River. Burgoyne's arrival raised the question of whether Howe intended advancing north from New York City along the Hudson River to meet Burgoyne, thus severing New England from the rest of the colonies. At the same time, however, Washington kept receiving intelligence indicating that Howe intended mounting an amphibious campaign against Philadelphia. Burgoyne began moving south in mid-June. A few weeks later,
on 8 July, Howe began embarking his troops at Staten Island. Burgoyne made steady progress at first, and on 6 July, the American commander at Fort Ticonderoga, Major General Arthur St. Clair, abandoned the fort without offering battle. When news of Ticonderoga's surrender reached Washington several days later, it both depressed and alarmed him. Convinced now that Howe must be intending to move up the Hudson, he moved his army north to Ramapo, New Jersey, a good position from which to intercept any move by Howe up the Hudson. Then, on 24 July, Washington got word Howe's fleet had sailed, but with southern pilots on board. Quickly Washington moved the army back to the Delaware river just north of Philadelphia. A week later, Washington heard that someone had sighted Howe's fleet off the Delaware Capes, obviously readying to enter the Delaware River and move against Philadelphia. The next day, however, Howe's fleet had disappeared. Now Washington thought Howe had only feinted southward and really did intend supporting Burgoyne. Immediately Washington started his army north again. Howe's fleet did not reappear, however, and for three weeks Washington hovered uncertainly between Philadelphia and northern New Jersey. Finally, on 22 August John Hancock sent word the British fleet was halfway up the Chesapeake Bay, probably intending to land Howe's troops at the northern end of the Bay from whence he could move overland against Philadelphia from the south. Washington now consolidated
his own troops and moved south of Philadelphia to oppose Howe.

In the battle that ensued, known since as the Battle of Brandywine, the American army took a beating but proved its mettle. On 25 August, Washington heard Howe was disembarking at Head of Elk. After a couple of weeks of preliminary maneuvering, Washington posted his troops at Chad's Ford, where the Nottingham road to Chester and Philadelphia crossed Brandywine Creek. The next day Howe moved his troops up to Kennett Square, just six miles down the Nottingham Road from Chad's Ford and the stage was set for one of the largest battles of the war. Washington had about 14,000 men opposing probably 15,000 under Howe. Greene commanded the American center -- his own division plus Wayne's brigade and some additional artillery -- guarding Chad's Ford itself. To Greene's right were Sullivan's, Stephen's, and Stirling's divisions, covering the fords farther up the Brandywine. Sullivan exercised overall command over this wing. To Greene's left, the terrain was extremely steep and rugged, making any crossing of the Brandywine quite unlikely. Here Washington stationed only a thousand Pennsylvania militia. Howe had his army divided into two grand divisions, one under Cornwallis and the other under the Hessian general, Wilhelm von Knyphausen.

Early on 11 September, Knyphausen's division moved up to within a few hundred yards of Chad's Ford itself.
Meanwhile, Howe accompanied Cornwallis's division on a long circuitous march around the American right. About two in the afternoon, to the Americans' complete surprise, Cornwallis's division appeared off Sullivan's flank and rear. Washington ordered Sullivan's wing to redeploy to face this threat and placed Greene's division in reserve to aid either the right or center as circumstances dictated. The British attacked on the right before the Americans were fully set and broke the American line in several places. Washington then ordered Greene to reinforce Sullivan. Greene's men covered the four miles in only forty-five minutes and arrived just as the last American units began giving way. Greene's two brigades held the British for about an hour as the rest of the Americans withdrew and then retreated in good order. Cornwallis's men, now exhausted, did not follow. Meanwhile, Knyphausen had attacked the little American force left to guard Chad's Ford. These troops resisted tenaciously but the sheer weight of British numbers forced them steadily to give ground. Fortunately darkness brought an end to the British advance. The entire American army, now little more than a disorganized mob, streamed back toward Philadelphia, finally regrouping at Chester.

Howe had beaten the Americans badly, but he had not completely destroyed them, not gained the decisive victory he thought might end the war. The Americans, though they
had made mistakes, had fought bravely and well. Most important, they remained an army and had no intention of yielding to the British. Greene could even view the battle positively. He commended his own division for "Spirited and Soldierly behavior . . . . under so many disadvantages," and he applauded his men's "firmness and alacrity . . . . upon every occasion." In a letter to his wife he speculated that Howe's losses had been so severe that another such victory would ruin the British. He said he looked forward to another action in a few days, as many reinforcements were coming in; "I have full confidence," he said, "the Lord of Hosts will give us Victory."

Washington soon got another chance to test his army against the British, and this time the Americans fared better. Washington let his troops rest at Chester for a few days and then moved them seven or eight miles north of Philadelphia near Germantown. He still hoped to keep the British out of Philadelphia, but Howe outmaneuvered him over the next two weeks and ended up occupying Philadelphia without a fight on 26 September. Congress, with the British so close, had already moved to Lancaster, Pennsylvania on 18 September. Howe encamped the main body of his army at Germantown, but Washington soon learned that Howe had left several brigades to garrison Philadelphia proper, detailed 3,000 men to transport supplies overland to Philadelphia, and formed another detachment to begin operations against
the American forts on the lower Delaware. This left Howe only 9,000 men in the camp at Germantown, which the British had not bothered to fortify. Seizing this favorable opportunity, Washington and his council of war decided on 3 October to attack Howe the next day. Unfortunately, Washington and his lieutenants adopted an intricate plan that demanded considerable coordination. In essence, the American plan called for the army to attack in four columns, along four widely-separated roads. Each column was to march independently to its own jump-off point and then attack simultaneously with the others. Greene led one of the two center columns of regulars, with over half the total attack force in his column. Sullivan led the other. Militia made up the two outer columns.

In the event, the plan proved too complicated for the inexperienced Americans. Sullivan's column stumbled into a British picket and started the fighting prematurely. Greene's column took a wrong turn and arrived late. The two militia columns never made it to the battle at all. A dense fog aggravated the Americans' poor communications and coordination. Though initially surprised and forced to give ground, the British took advantage of the Americans' confusion and, with heavy fighting, eventually repulsed the American attack. Paradoxically, though the American army had suffered greater casualties and been driven from the field in a shambles, Germantown boosted American morale and
confidence. Even Congress was pleased. Washington had
given the British all they could handle and, had fortune
been kinder, might even have won a victory. And American
spirits were lifted even further just a week after
Germantown when news of Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga
reached Congress and the army.

After the battle at Germantown, both the British and
the Americans focused on the importance of the lower
Delaware River. There the Americans had three small forts
preventing the British from using the river to transport
supplies to Philadelphia. As the Americans could easily
interrupt supplies coming overland to Philadelphia, the
outcome of the battle for the lower Delaware bore heavily on
whether the British could hold the American capital. Though
both Howe and Washington kept the bulk of their armies
concentrated around Philadelphia, each sent sizable
detachments across the Delaware into lower New Jersey, with
Cornwallis eventually commanding for the British and Greene
for the Americans. The campaign lasted only two months and
ended in British victory, but in this second opportunity at
independent command Greene showed solid judgment and
admirable caution.

Beginning early in October, the British took two of the
American forts with relative ease. The third, Fort Mercer
at Red Bank, proved a tougher nut to crack. Thus, on 20
November, Howe sent Cornwallis across the Delaware with
2,000 reinforcements. Cornwallis's arrival gave the British a total of 5,000 men in lower New Jersey. At the same time, Washington sent Greene, with two additional brigades, to take command of all American forces in New Jersey. Greene's force totalled only 3,000 men, however. And before Greene could consolidate his force, the American commander at Fort Mercer, faced with Cornwallis's overwhelming strength, evacuated the fort. The Delaware was now open and under control of the British fleet. Greene spent the next week trying to create an opportunity to attack part or all of Cornwallis's force to advantage. At the same time, he kept clearly in mind the need to preserve his own force, to attack only if success was assured. Cornwallis refused to oblige Greene, keeping his force united and in strong defensive position. Then, his mission complete, Cornwallis rejoined the main army on 26 November. Greene followed the next day. Despite his lack of success, Greene had handled himself and his command skillfully. Most important, he showed he had tempered his earlier aggressiveness with an appreciation of the need to preserve American strength.

Meanwhile, Washington and Howe had also been sparring without any real effect. About mid-October, Washington had moved the army close to Germantown again, apparently intending to attack the British encampment there a second time. Before Washington could act, however, Howe evacuated Germantown and moved into Philadelphia, behind strong
fortifications. A few days later, Washington planned to attack a detachment Howe had sent to the west side of the Schuylkill, but the British withdrew the night before the attack was to take place. Though neither of these larger offensive moves worked out, the Americans did manage to keep up continual harassing attacks against British supply trains and foraging parties. And Washington kept the army on the move often, apparently seeking some advantageous opening against Howe. When Howe sent Cornwallis into New Jersey, Washington queried his council of war about the feasibility of attacking Howe in Philadelphia. The majority, including Greene who wrote from New Jersey, voted against an attack. After Greene returned from New Jersey, Washington again asked his generals whether the army should attack Philadelphia. This time they unanimously agreed an attack would be unwise. Now it was Howe's turn to probe. On 4 December, Howe marched out of Philadelphia and confronted Washington at the American camp at Whitemarsh. Washington chose to hold his strong defensive position, whereupon Howe decided not to attack and the next day marched his army back to Philadelphia. The campaign of 1777 had ended, and on 19 December Washington marched the army into winter quarters at Valley Forge.

As Greene's experience increased throughout 1777, his ideas on military affairs kept maturing. Strategically, he demonstrated an impressive understanding of the challenges
confronting both the British and the Americans. Through the spring and early summer, he too puzzled over whether Howe intended to move north up the Hudson or south against Philadelphia. If Howe moved to join Burgoyne at Albany and then invade New England, Greene reasoned, the British would have the advantage of operating against only a portion of the American army and could reap the harvest of a great conquest. On the other hand, a campaign against Philadelphia would have the advantage of naval support and the aid of the numerous loyalists in eastern Pennsylvania. And by capturing Philadelphia, the British could impress Europe with a splendid prize. Greene vacillated between believing the Hudson or Philadelphia was Howe's true object. At one point, he even suspected Howe of aiming to establish himself in Newport and then move overland against Boston. Despite his uncertainties about Howe's intentions, however, Greene never doubted that defense of the Hudson was more important than Philadelphia. At all costs, the army must maintain the connection between New England and the other states, which meant controlling the Highlands on the Hudson River above New York City. He disagreed with the view that the American cause was lost if Philadelphia fell. "There is great affection paid to this city [Philadelphia]. It is true it is one of the finest upon the continent but in my opinion is an object of far less importance than the North River." Furthermore, Greene believed Philadelphia was
virtually indefensible against a land attack. Philadelphia had so many approaches, only superior numbers could defend it, an unlikely prospect for the Americans. In Greene's opinion, losing Philadelphia would hurt but not cripple the Americans. Consequently, he argued the Americans were devoting too much effort to its defense. Greene was beginning to understand that the Revolution had broken to a certain extent with the typical eighteenth century practice of campaigning for a few prominent cities or fortresses.

Throughout the 1777 campaign, Greene retained the optimism that had characterized his view of the war from the beginning. At the same time, however, he appreciated the need for caution. As early as April, Greene was predicting to John Adams that if Howe moved north up the Hudson it would give the Americans their best opportunity to ruin him. And he agreed with General Philip Schuyler that the British would find it difficult, if not impossible, to penetrate the country by way of Ticonderoga. Not even the loss of Ticonderoga in early July did much to blunt Greene's optimism. He seemed much more concerned with the possibility that treachery had played some part in its loss than with the blow to the Americans' strategic position. In August he even wrote his brother speculating that Burgoyne's early and fortunate successes may "lead him on to his total ruin." After the British landed at Head of Elk, Greene calmly accepted the possibility of a battle, hoping "if
Providence dont think proper to punish us further with the calamities of war to give General Howe a deadly wound."

Despite this optimism, however, Greene did not gloss over the seriousness of British intentions. Believing Howe's first objective had to be to destroy the American army, Greene did not necessarily expect an outright American victory. Instead, he hoped merely to inflict damaging losses on Howe's army. Apparently he had accepted the principle, especially important in revolutionary war, that the true object is not to win battles but to hurt the enemy badly enough that he either cannot or will not continue. A corollary to this principle is to guard against deadly wounds to your own army. Once the British had occupied Philadelphia, Greene showed he had also accepted this corollary. At least five times, Greene voted against attacking Howe in Philadelphia. The prospective costs were too high and the chances of success too low. Greene had learned to temper his optimism with reality.

Overall, Greene's military thought showed increasing sophistication and awareness of the particular characteristics of warfare in the Revolution. And as he refined his thinking, Greene reflected more of Saxe's caution and less of Caesar's aggressiveness. Against those who criticized Washington's dilatoriness, Greene defended his chief with the admonition to consider how well things had turned out. Washington knew he must drive the British
from America, but he was best placed to judge the 
practicability of action at any particular time. "The New 
Army in its infancy, we unable to support misfortunes, great 
cautions is necessary to preserve our standing." Greene 
expressed the same sentiment in answering one of 
Washington's queries about attacking Philadelphia. From a 
study of the possible good and bad consequences, from a 
historical perspective, and from his own experience during 
the war, he could not, he said,

think there is that degree of probability of 
the attempt succeeding that will warrant the 
undertaking. ... The reputation of the Army and 
the happiness of the country loudly call for it, 
but in consulting our wishes rather than our 
reason we may be hurried by an impatience to 
attempt something splendid into inextricable 
difficulties.04

Greene believed both Washington and Howe had followed 
proper strategies. As the invader, Howe had avoided 
skirmishes and sought a decisive general engagement, while 
Washington, the defender, had avoided a general engagement 
and sought advantageous skirmishes instead. With the two 
armies confronting each other, Greene proposed the Americans 
send out small scouting parties to remain active, learn the 
ground, and harass the British. If the British attacked, the 
Americans should "attack them with light Troops on the Rear 
and upon the flanks Avoiding a General Engagement unless we 
can attack them on some advantageous ground, where they cant 
bring but part of their Troops to act." Whatever the 
situation, the operating principle for Greene was to ensure
an American advantage. Thus, in late April, when the army was still in winter quarters at Morristown, Greene proposed an attack on the British at Brunswick. He thought the chance of victory slight, but believed an attack worth the risk because while an American victory would hurt the British badly, an American defeat would not produce great losses because the troops could easily withdraw back into the mountains around Morristown. By 2 May, however, Greene had reconsidered and voted against attacking Brunswick because the Americans would suffer losses and the British could easily withdraw only to return again at their leisure. In both cases, the important point is that Greene concerned himself not with the prospect of victory for either side, but with whether the Americans could gain an advantage, regardless of victory or defeat.

Other topics Greene touched on in his writings also show how he was developing into an accomplished military theorist. Thus in December he advised Washington against attacking Philadelphia with a reference to Frederick the Great.

The King of Prussia, the greatest General of the age, strongly protests against attacking troops by storm in villages, much more in large regular brick cities. He observes, it often piques the ruin of the best part of an army; this was verified in several attacks he made upon towns and villages last war.

In the same letter he also revealed a fine sense of the near impossibility of expecting steadfastness from untrained
citizens.

Men who are brought from home with all their family feelings about them, commanded by officers who in general have little or no ambition for military glory, are not fortified for such scenes of carnage as are generally exhibited in attacks made upon towns defended by a large body of veteran troops.86

Regarding America's defenses Greene argued that fortifications would cost too much to build and equip, disperse American forces, create a false sense of security, and give the Americans only limited protection and control of the country. Moreover, the British could easily take the fortresses, and fortresses were precisely what the British needed to control the country. The security of America "must depend upon our superiority in the field." And Greene also began to show an appreciation for the advantages that accrue to well-led disciplined troops standing on the defensive. In March he criticized a resolution by the Rhode Island Assembly calling on General Spencer to attack the British at Newport. The Americans should not attack, he explained, unless certain of success. People unacquainted with war think superior numbers guarantee victory. In fact, however, well-trained troops in defense can withstand three or four times their number, especially if the attackers lack order, method, or discipline. "It signifies nothing for a few spirited officers to rush upon danger, when they have little or no hope of being well supported. Spirit is essential in an Officer, but prudence is more so."
Prudence was becoming the most marked characteristic of Greene's maturing military thought.

As Greene himself had noted the previous year, fine theories about war availed nothing if an officer neglected the minutia of command. Greene, however, showed both concern and wisdom about the practical details of command. He continued to emphasize the importance of preserving the troops' health. Beyond questions of humanity, the expense of raising and equipping troops was wasted if their health was not preserved. Further, sickly troops negated whatever skills the general might possess, and allowing a large number of sick troops lowered morale. Practical methods for guarding the men's health recommended by Greene included regular inspections of hospital facilities, strict enforcement of the use of latrines, frequent collection of filth around the camp, and liberal issues and use of soap. He also advocated adding generous doses of vinegar to the men's diet to offset the fevers induced by their eating too much meat. Apparently Greene believed the vinegar could serve in lieu of vegetables to counter putrefaction in meat, a remedy recommended in Saxe's Memoirs. Questions of logistic support also concerned Greene. Insufficient stockpiles, inefficient contractors, and uncooperative citizens often left the army short of necessary supplies, equipment, and transportation. These problems forecast the troubles Greene would later endure as quartermaster general.
for the army. At this point the only solutions he could offer were properly stocked magazines where possible and impressments where necessary. As Washington pointed out, however, one of the problems during this period was ineffective management by the heads of both the quartermaster and commissary departments. Attention to practical details like those discussed above never was a strong suit of the Americans. And as Greene had noted, this undermined the army's combat capability.

One aspect of the war Greene seemed to understand better than most of his fellow generals was the mutual dependency between the army and the people. This was a new phenomenon. Traditionally in the eighteenth century an army existed solely as an instrument of the king and was used to advance and protect his interests. Greene recognized, however, that in the Revolution, the army was the instrument of the people, the extension of their desire for political and social change. Consequently, without the people's support, the army would evaporate. This perception led Greene to emphasize the army's responsibility to maintain good relations with the people. The army should take care not to insult or abuse the citizenry and should neither seize nor damage private property willfully. Moreover, the army should guard against the "Prevalence of Dissipation, Debauchery, Gaming, Prophaneness, and Blasphemy" if it wanted citizens to trust their sons to the army's care.
Public opinion also affected the army's operations. The people required and expected protection and support, and the army had to provide them to the limit of its ability. As Greene said, "It is the country that feeds, cloaths, and furnishes us with troops. If the substance of the inhabitants is destroyed, they will be incapable of giving us the necessary aid." And, as Greene observed in another letter, "The People will be afraid to be connected with those who can only afford them a temporary ... security." The people also expected the army to end the war as quickly as possible by engaging at every opportunity. They demanded fighting and needed victories to sustain their spirit. This posed a delicate problem for Washington. He had to avoid general engagements to preserve the army and the cause, while at the same time fighting just enough to sustain the people. As much as any man, Greene recognized this dilemma caused by popular participation in the war. And while he usually counseled caution, at times he realized the army must fight to sustain public spirit. Thus in August 1777 he told Washington the army must defend Philadelphia -- even though he had earlier declared the city virtually indefensible -- because "the prejudices of the people in the surrounding States [is] so strong in its favour."

As the army's existence depended so heavily on the people's support, Greene had even more reason to be concerned about the people's virtue. And in 1777 he found
little evidence for confidence. On 30 November 1776, General Howe had issued a proclamation promising a full and free pardon to any Americans who swore an oath of loyalty to the King. A few months later Howe supplemented this offer with the promise of a cash reward to any American soldier who would desert the army and a large land grant for any American willing to serve two years in the British army. These enticements worried Greene because, as John Adams wrote, too many Americans, including Continental soldiers, lacked sufficient ties and loyalty to the cause. Washington tried countering Howe’s proclamation with his own declaration, giving those who had sworn allegiance to the King thirty days to return to the American cause or withdraw "themselves and families within the enemy lines."

Nevertheless, Howe’s offer undoubtedly helped undercut American support for the Revolution. Recruiting for the army went very slowly in 1777, and as early as April Greene argued for a draft. Voluntary recruiting was at an end, he said, even when supplemented by bounties. Bounties only encouraged men to wait for an even higher reward. All in all, Greene regretted "that the cause of freedom rests upon the shoulders of so few." In late April he wrote his wife:

0 that the Americans were but Spirited and resolute! . . . I am sure America will be Victorious finally, but her sufferings for want of Union and publick Spirit may be great first. There is no People on Earth that ever had so fair an opportunity to establish their freedom at so easy a rate if the opportunity had been properly improv'd.92
As before, however, though Greene preached the need for virtue in the people at large, he remained equally if not more concerned with protecting and advancing his own interests. This showed most in 1777 in his concern for the privileges and status of the officer corps. He pushed for recognition of meritorious officers, praising Congress's decision to erect statues honoring Richard Montgomery, Dr. Joseph Warren, and Hugh Mercer. He then suggested creating medals as another "Species of honors to Animate the living to great and worthy actions." Patriotism, he said, "is a glorious Principle but never refuse her the necessary Aids."

In promoting special privileges and honors for the officers, Greene found himself at odds, however, with most members of Congress. After Greene wrote in early March criticizing Congress's latest promotions, Adams sent him a stinging reply:

This delicate Point of Honour, which is really one of the most putrid Corruptions of absolute Monarchy, I mean the Honour of maintaining a Rank Superior to abler men, I mean the Honour of preferring a single step of Promotion to the Service of the Public, must be bridled. It is incompatible with republican Principles.93

Adams even went so far as to suggest Congress should appoint generals only for annual terms, to encourage them to place the interests and honor of the state above their own. "I am much mistaken," he said, "if the nice Feelings, the Pride, the Vanity, the foppery, the Knavery and Gambling among too many of the Officers do not end in Endeavors to set up a
Tyrant sooner or later." For his part, Greene did not see the issue from the same perspective. He insisted the officers needed increased pay in order to subsist — in the proper style, of course. Because the officers could not maintain themselves, many would quit, he said, once the 1777 campaign ended. Moreover, officers resented how the states and Congress had degraded military rank by awarding it to people of all orders so that officers "find themselves often reduced to a level with persons they despise." Military rank was losing its high esteem and value, a matter of personal concern to Greene, despite his own protestations on behalf of republican principles.

Finding an acceptable role for the officer corps in American society formed only one part of the larger problem of finding the proper place for the army in the overall political, social, and intellectual revolution. As John Adams recognized, republican principles did not accommodate themselves to a professional army such as the war was forcing Americans to create. Greene had schooled himself in and fundamentally accepted the same republican principles as the other American Revolutionaries. The necessity of order, hierarchy, and discipline for an effective military instrument, however, impelled Greene to reorder his thinking. In a May letter to Greene, John Adams pointed out the Revolutionaries' fundamental position on the army's place in the new American system. There was no doubt, Adams
wrote, that Congress had authority to direct the army; it would, however, leave that direction to the generals as much as possible. Greene did not dispute Adams's view, having written Adams a few days earlier that the army would do "everything in our power to aid and assist the Congress in carrying into execution every necessary resolve as far as our influence extends." And when in late May he heard rumors Congress might appoint General Philip Schuyler President of Congress while he continued to hold his military command, Greene reaffirmed his adherence to the principle of civilian control of the military.

No free people ought to admit a junction of the Civil and Military; and no men of good Principles, with virtuous intentions, would ask it or ever accept of an appointment which may be improv'd by corruption to the prejudice and injury to the Rights of a free people.95

At the same time, however, Greene deplored the difficulties civilian control caused the army. After spending a few days in late March discussing various army matters with Congress as Washington's emissary, Greene wrote back extremely critical of the way Congress did business, declaring there was "so much deliberation and waste of time in the execution of business before this assembly that my patience is almost exhausted." What Congress needed, he said, was more plain honest businessmen.

The Congress have so many of those talking Gentlemen among them that they tire themselves and everybody else with their long labourd speaking that is calculated more to display their own talents than promote the publick Interest. One man
of business that executes what he proposes and proposes nothing but what he means to execute will promote the Publick service more in one hour than a Captious, disputeing fellow will in a month.96

And the final result of Congress's inefficiency was that it too often left the army with either confused directives or none at all.

More damaging even than Congress's inefficiency, however, was its meddling in military affairs. This was particularly true with respect to Congress's handling of the army's generals. To Nicholas Cooke, Greene wrote,

A General Officer is in a very disagreeable situation, subject to the censure and reproach of every little dirty Politician ignorant of every circumstance necessary to form a right Judgement; but such is the disposition of Mankind that success only marks the man of wisdom while the unfortunate are execrated without any allowances for Providential interpositions or human accidents.97

Adams's reply to this kind of thinking was that success should be the measure of ability and misfortune the indicator of misconduct. After all, if generals get the glory for victories why not the condemnation for defeats? Greene had an answer for that argument.

The liberality with which you confer Favors on some and fix Stigmas on others must make men of real merit somewhat cautious how they put themselves in a situation where they may be reduced from the highest pitch of Glory to the Lowest state of contempt. It was ever the policy of the Romans to be cautious whom they trusted and how they disgraced those they had once honored.99

At the heart of this seemingly petty debate was Greene's almost obsessive concern for personal rank and status, a most unrepUBLICan sentiment. Thus he bristled most whenever
anyone suggested that some officers might put gathering honors above serving the cause.

Some amongst you, I am told, are uncharitable enough to charge the Army with a design of protracting the War for their own private advantage. The Bosom that can harbour such a thought must be very ill principled and ignorant of our sufferings. . . . yet I am told there are some ungody tongues among you (whose greatest Virtues dont equal the Generals very Vices) give themselves a latitude of censure.

He, himself, did not want to continue serving longer than needed. He would gladly give his place, he said, to any man more deserving. Fortunately for the Revolution, no one ever challenged the sincerity of this offer, quite possibly because there was no more deserving man.

A classic example of Greene and a few other officers' excessive concern with their "reputations," and of the tensions between the officer corps and Congress was the du 101 Coudray affair. Philippe Tronson du Coudray was a French army engineer to whom Silas Deane, Congress's agent in France, had promised a commission as major general and the post of chief of artillery for the American army. And in the late spring of 1777 du Coudray arrived in America to claim his position. Du Coudray's appointment, in and of itself, was not unusual. Almost from the beginning, Congress had turned to commissioning foreign officers as one means of offsetting the American army's lack of experience and technical skill. Some American officers, Greene among them, questioned this practice. The foreign officers served
their own rather than the Revolution's interests; they could prove easy targets for British bribery. Du Coudray's was an especially irritating case, however. On 28 May, Greene, hearing rumors Congress was about to appoint du Coudray to the positions promised him by Deane, wrote John Adams. It was foolish, Greene said, to appoint a foreigner to head such an important department as the artillery and to risk depriving the army of the services of an officer as valuable as the current head of the artillery, Henry Knox.

Then, in late June, Greene heard that Congress had commissioned du Coudray a major general in the Continental Army with a date of rank of 1 August 1776. This infuriated Greene, John Sullivan, and Henry Knox because it made du Coudray senior to the three of them. After discussing their options, the three decided to write separate letters to Congress stating their intention of resigning if Congress had indeed given du Coudray a rank superior to their own. These letters in turn infuriated Congress. As it turned out, Congress had actually not taken action on du Coudray's appointment yet, and most Congressmen assumed the three generals knew this and were trying to influence Congress's decision. This sentiment led to a Congressional resolution declaring the letters "an invasion of the liberties of the people." Furthermore, Congress expected the three generals "to make proper acknowledgements for an interference of so dangerous a tendency; but if any of those officers are
unwilling to serve their country under the authority of Congress, they shall be at liberty to resign their commissions and retire." Washington delivered this Congressional admonition to his three generals but did not personally upbraid them. Congress did not give du Coudray the post Deane had promised, making him instead Inspector General of the army with the rank of major general effective the day of the appointment. Greene, Sullivan, and Knox neither apologized nor resigned, and fortunately Congress took no further action. The whole incident simply showed the tensions existing between the Revolution's republican principles, the army's need for hierarchy, and personal ambitions. One unfortunate side effect of this affair was that John Adams wrote Greene scolding him for his interference in Congress's business. This letter ended Adams and Greene's friendship and correspondence.

Just as inconsistencies marked Greene's attitudes about public virtue versus his own private practices, so too they cropped up in his other political views. On the one hand he could staunchly defend the rights of the individual. Responding to Congress's resolution against himself, Sullivan, and Knox in the du Coudray affair, he pointedly reminded Congressmen they were only the people's representatives. While he had "all the respect for Congress a free Citizen ought to have for the representatives of himself and the collective body of the Public," he reserved
the right to serve his country in a manner and under conditions he chose. Individualism also provided the rationale for his trumpeting the cause of free trade. As he explained to Nicholas Cooke, trade regulations and embargoes destroy "the security and confidence in the public faith plighted to every individual, to protect him in the enjoyment of personal liberty and the free disposal of his property." Yet while insistence on individual rights best served his purposes on some occasions, on others he preferred emphasizing the power of the state. Thus in June he commiserated with his brother who had just been voted out of a local political office. "The state of Rhode Island is too democratic for the happiness of the people; there is very little or no executive force in its government. Passion and prejudice have too much influence in administration to preserve the best and happiest line of conduct." Even more conservative was his insistence on the need for a strong army and strong central government. Writing John Adams, Greene complained of the "Prejudice, Caprice, and Vanity" that flourished in "the confusion of the times" and that raged "in proportion as the dispute grows more or less doubtful." Then he advised Adams:

If you wish to give a proper tone to every State; If you wish to silence all the little factions that wrestless Spirits may produce; If you wish to be feard abroad and lovd and respected at Home, establish your Army in its full force. Nothing can give you so much Authority, weight and dignity as an Army at your command superior to all your foreign and domestick Enemies. The prospect
of safety will be a pleasing circumstance to the People, and conciliate and reconcile them fully to your Administration. 105

In fact, Greene believed the need to strengthen the hand of government constituted the most powerful argument for the army to stand and fight. A strong and successful army could counter "the powers of Government not being fully acknowledged and many wishing to give a stop to the powers of Congress and the present modes of Government in the different States." 106

Another manifestation of Greene's support for a strong central government was his continual urging for more national feeling and union among the various states. Lack of union was particularly evident in recruiting efforts. In Greene's view, the states were spending too much effort and money raising forces for their own individual defense. The proliferation of local forces naturally inhibited recruiting for the Continental forces. Greene argued that all standing forces should be Continental. All the states must depend on the union of states for their protection rather than their individual efforts. Otherwise, the British could easily defeat each state in turn. Greene also criticized the New England states' decision to offer a bounty for enlistment in the Continental army. This would inhibit recruiting for the Continental army in other states. "Every State in taking any public measure shou'd pay some regard to the affect it will have upon others least the measure should be more prejudicial than beneficial to the Community." 107

Beyond
recruiting, Greene found evidences of lack of union in other areas, as well. He criticized Rhode Island for raising interest rates without regard for how this action affected other states' efforts to raise money and fight inflation. And he spoke out particularly against the embargoes and regulations of trade enacted by the various states.

"Nothing will sour the inhabitants of the different States against each other so effectually [as] the prohibitory laws restraining a free commerce amongst the neighboring States."

He deplored the states' unwillingness to share common strains or to help relieve the unique troubles brought to some states by their accidental location as the principal theaters or targets of war. Greene wished "more Liberal and generous Principles" might motivate the various states' councils to help create a "Reigning harmony" among all the states. The several states, he said, should "consider themselves as one great body, and the different States as so many Limbs of the same body, each essential to the happiness of the whole, that they may cultivate a good understanding among one another." Greater union, however, meant a stronger central government and less individual freedom. Again, Greene was tampering with the republican principles of the Revolution.

Part of the explanation for the inconsistencies in Greene's views lies in his personal ambition and determination to protect and advance his private interests.
He claimed to have no ambitions beyond serving the cause as well as he was able, insisting, "I value the freedom and happiness of America so much higher than I do my own personal glory, that I am ready at all times to give place to a better man." The catch was he would not admit to there being a better man. Arguing with Adams that there were several men in both Congress and the army "that America might sensibly feel the loss off at this time," Greene implicitly included himself in that group. His reaction to du Coudray's near appointment also testifies to his high opinion of himself. Why else would he choose to resign rather than be superseded? Not surprisingly, Greene also proved quite jealous. When Horatio Gates's popularity and reputation soared after his victory over Burgoyne at Saratoga, Greene complained that Gates had taken command just in time to reap the benefits of Schuyler's preparations. Though the accomplishments of Gates's army seemed greater, in Greene's view Gates's skills could not begin to match Washington's, whose army had faced a much stronger enemy and much more disadvantageous circumstances. Greene implied Gates used his friendships with influential Congressmen to advance his reputation. Yet he, himself, never hesitated to cultivate and use friendships with powerful politicians and private citizens -- witness his correspondence with John Adams. Throughout the war, Greene served his own interests as diligently as he did the
American cause. Given alternatives, he often would have chosen the course that best suited his private interests rather than the country's had someone not ordered otherwise. And he protected his private interests in other ways as well. He devoted considerable attention and effort to the Greene family business, asking questions, making recommendations, and checking that he received his fair share of the profits. He even stooped to such petty matters as directing his wife to look after her spelling when she wrote to Lucy Knox, a woman of education. Never did Greene want to appear in a bad light or miss an opportunity to advance himself.

No doubt it was Greene's ambition and ego that also made him so resentful of any opposition or criticism. As did any public figure, Greene drew criticism from a variety of sources. He reacted to each instance as a personal insult, however. After the losses of forts Washington and Lee he wrote his brother Christopher, "I have served my Country with as much fidelity and attention as any mortal breathing yet I am informed it is insufficient to screen me from the attacks of calumny and reproach, but conscious of virtuous intentions I despise the shafts." The relative insignificance of the offending remarks made no difference to Greene. Thus when William Bradford, the deputy governor of Rhode Island, accused Greene of making "partial" recommendations for officers in the new Rhode Island
battalions, Greene lashed out at Bradford. "I despise Doctor Bradford and his little dirty malice. His resentment is without injury and his abuse unmerited. I hope to see this mighty Son of Mars in some future day when I shall have an opportunity to see whether his deeds are as bold as his language is scurvy and clamorous." Nor did it matter if the offending party was a supporter and confidant. Greene took Nicholas Cooke to task for showing the Rhode Island Assembly a private letter from Greene criticizing Rhode Island policy. And by the end of this admonition he had worked himself into enough of a huff to declare: "I don't wish to offend any public body, but I have no favours to ask of any. If I am not useful and necessary for the common good, in public employments, I shall cheerfully retire." Greene could not even accept criticism from Washington, his commander and the man he most respected and admired. When he thought he had "felt the Lowr of your Excellency's Countenance" for his part in the battle of Germantown, Greene wrote: "It is out of my Power to command success but I trust I have ever endeavoured to deserve it. It is mortifying enough to be a common sharer in misfortunes but to be punished as the author without deserving it, is truly afflicting." Greene did not limit his sensitivity to public matters either. He took his family to task for failing to write and support him often enough; he harshly criticized his friend, General James Varnum, for some slight against
Mrs. Greene; and he took pains to defend the quality of his friendship to an aggrieved acquaintance in Rhode Island. This inability to receive criticism and opposition equably remained one of Greene's least attractive qualities, and it would cause him endless trouble during the next stage of his career.

Many of the influences that initially shaped Nathanael Greene's character played critical roles in his further development during his command apprenticeship. His native intelligence, sharpened and honed by reading, was in all likelihood the most important factor in both his selection for command and his subsequent success and advancement. As well, the energy and resourcefulness inculcated by his work in the Greene family business were essential elements in his impressive abilities. As a Rhode Islander he favored political independence, or at least autonomy. And as a reader of the more liberal political tracts of his time, he favored republican political principles. Writers such as Rapin and the radical Whigs also had convinced him that the English Crown and ministry were embarked on a deliberate campaign to destroy American liberties and enslave the colonies. At the same time, in part as a result of his experience during the Revolution and in part as a result of having read Rollin, Hume and others, he advocated fundamentally conservative ideas such as union, strong central government, order, and hierarchy. He was especially
insistent about the need for a strong army both to defend
the Revolution and to bolster the government, and about the
need for public virtue -- for subordination of private to
public interests. Yet he put his own interests on at least
a par with those of the cause. He was ambitious, and it
became more and more evident as the war progressed. He
wanted fortune, and, drawing on his experience in the Greene
family business, he carefully cultivated the contacts and
goodwill necessary to allow him to pursue his own private
business enterprises. He also wanted fame reputation, and
he lobbied aggressively both for his own advancement and for
establishing the officer corps as an American elite.
Moreover, whenever anyone criticized or opposed his actions,
thereby threatening his position and reputation, he struck
back viciously. His ambition drove him unmercifully.

Finally, though he never ceased claiming to be only a
citizen in arms, he became a well-read and skilled military
professional. He absorbed the fundamentals of command --
discipline, training, foresight, preparation -- from reading
Rollin, Caesar, Saxe, and Frederick. He also sifted these
writers' ideas through his own experiences to develop a
military theory appropriate for the war he was fighting.
Moreover, his lack of professional training and experience
probably made it easier for him to recognize the
revolutionary characteristics of the war and adapt. Thus he
abandoned to a great extent the strategy of the offensive
and the decisive battle for a strategy that emphasized avoiding battle whenever prudent and preserving American strength. He also began to recognize the psychological dimensions of the war, as well as its uncommon impact on the civil population. And he became thoroughly convinced that, its revolutionary character notwithstanding, the war could not be won by an army made up of militia. The war required well-trained, well-disciplined, and well-equipped long-service troops. Greene's greatest strength as a commander was not his tactical skill but his strategic vision. Though his dispositions in battle usually were pedestrian, he understood the larger issues and factors in the war. He saw clearly what the Americans had to do in the largest strategic sense to defeat the British. And this was his greatest contribution to the Revolution, first as Washington's lieutenant and then as autonomous commander in the south.
NOTES

1. Showman, I, 79.


4. "To Deputy Governor Nicholas Cooke," 4 July 1775, Greene Papers, I, 94; Showman, I, 91, 103.


14. "To Jacob Greene," 30 November 1775, Greene Papers, I, 158; Showman, I, 159.


November 1775, Greene Papers, I, 154-5.


28. Showman, I, 233, 219;


31. "To Elizur Greene," 11 December 1775, Greene Papers, I, 162; "To Catharine Greene," 20 January 1777,


35. Alden, pp. 267-72; Higginbotham, pp. 159-62; Thayer, pp. 106-113; Showman, I, 301-2, 316, 319.


39. "To Governor Nicholas Cooke," 11 October 1776, 
Greene Papers, I, 315; "To George Washington," 12 October 1776, 
Greene Papers, I, 316; "To George Washington," 24 October 1776, 
Greene Papers, I, 320-1; "To General Thomas Mifflin," 27 October 1776, 
Greene Papers, I, 322-3; "To John Hancock," 28 October 1776, 

40. "To George Washington," 29 October 1776, Greene Papers, I, 325; "To George Washington," 31 October 1776, 
Greene Papers, I, 328-9.

41. "From George Washington," 7 November 1776, Greene Papers, I, 339; "From George Washington," 8 November 1776, 
Greene Papers, I, 342-3.

42. "To President John Hancock," 12 November 1776, 
Greene Papers, I, 349; "To George Washington," 9 November 1776, Greene Papers, I, 344.

43. "From Colonel Robert Magaw," 15 November 1776, 
Greene Papers, I, 350-1; "To George Washington," 15 November 1776, Greene Papers, I, 351.

44. Showman, I, 354-6.


46. Showman, I, 363-4; "To Governor Nicholas Cooke," 4 December 1776, Greene Papers, I, 360-1.

47. "To the President of Congress," 16 November 1776, 


50. Alden, pp. 282-3; Higginbotham, pp. 168-71; Thayer, pp. 146-52; Showman, I, 379-80; "To Governor Nicholas Cooke," 10 January 1777, Greene Papers, II, 4-5.


52. "To Governor Nicholas Cooke," 17 September 1776, Greene Papers, I, 301; "To Governor Nicholas Cooke," 21 December 1776, Greene Papers, I, 375.


54. "To Governor Nicholas Cooke," 11 October 1776, Greene Papers, I, 313.


64. "To President John Hancock," 21 December 1776, Greene Papers, I, 374; "To Catharine Greene," 4 December 1776, Greene Papers, I, 364-5.


68. Alden, pp. 284-6; Thayer, pp. 152-61; "To Thomas Paine," 9 January 1777, Greene Papers, II, 3; "To Governor Nicholas Cooke," 10 January 1777, Greene Papers, II, 4-5.


70. Thayer, pp. 156-69; Showman, II, 52, 66.

71. "From George Washington," 12 May 1777, Greene
Papers, II, 78-9; Showman, II, 91, 107; Thayer, pp. 166-75.

72. Alden, pp. 286-97; Higginbotham, pp. 176-84; Thayer, pp. 175-83; Showman, II, 107, 115, 120, 128-9, 130-3, 140, 146-8.


74. Thayer, pp. 192-6; Showman, II, 158-62.


82. "To John Adams," 5 April 1777, Greene Papers, II, 51; "To Jacob Greene," 13 July 1777, Greene Papers, II,
119-20; "To Jacob Greene," 11 August 1777, Greene Papers, II, 138.


100. "To Governor Nicholas Cooke," 23 January 1777, Greene Papers, II, 12.


CHAPTER VI

STAFF APPRENTICESHIP: 1778-1779

By the end of 1777 Nathanael Greene had become one of George Washington's most able and trusted lieutenants. Despite a few errors of judgment and performance during the first two and a half years of the war, he had proved himself both as a field commander and as an adviser. In the process he had risen from the most junior brigadier general commanding the small Rhode Island brigade to one of the senior major generals commanding one of the three main divisions of Washington's army.

Seventeen seventy-eight would bring Greene fresh challenges. When the American army withdrew into winter quarters at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, in December 1777, its supply services already verged on total collapse. Washington and the Continental Congress, casting around for someone who could put the army's supply service right, naturally fastened on Greene, who had demonstrated considerable foresight and administrative ability in each of his field commands. Thus the self-made forgemaster from tiny Rhode Island now found himself entrusted with the army's most sensitive and challenging staff responsibility.
He had gained a post of tremendous power and influence, a post from which he could take excellent care of his own, his family's, and his friends' private interests. How would Greene handle the temptations of power he now confronted? Even more intriguing, how would he manage his new responsibilities and the greatly increased public attention that went with them? Which elements in his character would be emphasized by the stresses of the new position, and which traits would stand him in the best stead? How Greene handled the unfamiliar challenges of his new job would be the key ingredient in the final stage of his development as a Revolutionary general.

On December 19, 1777, Washington's army went into winter quarters at Valley Forge and entered the period one historian has called the "crucible of victory." From the beginning of its stay at Valley Forge, the army was plagued by inadequate supplies. As early as 3 January, Greene had written to his brothers, Jacob and Christopher, and to Nicholas Cooke about the men's lack of clothing and shoes. Already the shortages were severe enough that, in Greene's view, they would prevent winter campaigning. The army's supply problems steadily worsened as the winter wore on. On 12 February James Varnum wrote Greene that the troops had been without meat for a few days, that the horses were dying for lack of feed, and that the army had exhausted the surrounding countryside's resources. Varnum believed the
army must leave Valley Forge or perish. And late in February Greene wrote Henry Knox that the army had been in "great distress" since Knox had been away. "The troops are getting naked, and they were seven days without meat and several days without bread." Greene laid the blame for these deficiencies squarely on the shoulders of the staff officers responsible for the army's supply -- the quartermaster general, commissary general, and clothier general -- whose departments he insisted must be altered. The clothier general, James Mease, was too inattentive, the commissary general's department had not operated efficiently since Joseph Trumball resigned, and Thomas Mifflin had the quartermaster general's department in "wretched condition" because he was never with the army, being too caught up in political intrigues. In Greene's view, the staff departments employed too many officers and had adopted too complicated a system to govern their operations. Moreover, many staff officers were unprincipled, dishonorable, or dishonest. Consequently, not only were the staff departments inefficient, they were rife with fraud.

Though Greene correctly judged the inefficiency of the supply departments, the army's supply breakdowns stemmed from other problems as well. Even Greene admitted as much when he wrote to Washington that "Money is the sinews of war;" the lack of money to assure adequate logistical support might ruin the American cause. Richard Showman agrees that
the incompetence of the heads of the supply departments, coupled with the inefficient design of the supply systems, helped produce the "virtual collapse" of the army's supply. But he also cited the lack of transport, the necessity of competing for supplies with the British who could pay in specie, and the people's weariness of sacrificing for the Revolution as equally important factors in this collapse.

In mid-February Washington sent Greene on a foraging expedition that clearly illustrated the variety of problems that bedeviled the army's supply. Greene's orders directed him "to take, carry off and secure" the horses, cattle, sheep and forage of the inhabitants in the area around Valley Forge. In exchange, Greene was to give the inhabitants certificates stating the number and value of the livestock and provisions taken. Supposedly, the army's quartermaster and commissary departments would then notify those holding certificates when and where they could redeem them. Greene's orders also directed that he destroy any stock and provisions that he could not remove from the Delaware River islands to deny their use to the British. Greene put these orders into effect diligently, as the following instructions to Colonel Clement Biddle show: "You must forage the country naked, and to prevent their complaints of the want of Forage we must take all their Cattle, Sheep and Horses fit for the use of the Army."

Despite Greene's determination to forage the country bare,
however, his efforts produced little success. The countryside already was "very much drain'd," largely because the people had taken their livestock and provisions into the British market in Philadelphia. What stock or provisions the people did have they usually hid from the army, along with their wagons. Greene wrote Washington that "the Inhabitants cry out and beset me from all quarters, but like Pharoah I harden my heart." He also proposed that those who resisted his efforts be arrested and punished severely as an example. To make the army's supply problems even less bearable, Greene also reported advertisements in the Boston papers for blankets, shoes, and other items the army needed and could not get.

Ironically, even as Greene struggled to squeeze forage, provisions, and livestock out of the citizens around Valley Forge, a special committee from Congress was working with General Washington to get Greene appointed quartermaster general. On 10 January, with Washington's support, Congress had sent a committee composed of Francis Dana, Joseph Reed, Nathaniel Folsom, John Harvie, and Gouverneur Morris to Valley Forge to help Washington develop a plan for correcting the army's problems. The five arrived in camp late that same month, and on 28 January made their first recommendation, that the appointment of a quartermaster general was "a Matter of great Importance and immediate Necessity." Congress had created the quartermaster's
department in June 1775. Following the British model, the quartermaster was responsible for purchasing and distributing all supplies excluding food, clothing, arms, ammunition, and medicine. He also was responsible for transporting all supplies and moving and encamping the army. Washington had appointed Thomas Mifflin quartermaster general in August 1775. Mifflin worked hard at the post for a year and a half, but after December 1776 was hardly with the army. In October 1777 Mifflin had finally resigned, and the department had floundered along since. For two weeks, the committee sifted through a host of candidates for the quartermaster's job, but rejected them all for one reason or another. Finally, on 12 February, with Washington's permission the committee opened discussions with Greene about the possibility of his taking the post.

Greene was very reluctant to accept the quartermaster's post. On 26 February he wrote Henry Knox: "I hate the place, but hardly know what to do. The General is afraid that the department will be so ill managed unless some of his friends undertakes it that the operations of the next campaign will in a great measure be frustrated." Two principal reservations nagged at Greene. The first was genuine concern whether he could rectify the abysmal condition of the quartermaster's department. In a 25 February letter to Congress, the committee reported that Greene hesitated at entering "this large Field of Business."
After all, he had been only a small businessman in Rhode Island. As he wrote General George Weedon, he regretted ever having encouraged the committee's desire to appoint him quartermaster for he was convinced that his "greatest efforts and utmost industry will not give satisfaction, every thing in the department is in such a bad train, and the resources of the Country so inadequate to the demand of the Army." Greene's second reservation about accepting the appointment as quartermaster was that it would remove him from line duty, or, as he put it to Joseph Reed, from "the line of Splendor." And this was no romantic affectation on Greene's part. He felt keenly the loss of opportunity to earn glory and reputation on the battlefield. How could a student of the classics have felt otherwise? When he complained to General Alexander McDougall that "All of you will be immortallising your selves in the golden pages of History while I am confind to a series of druggery to pave the way for it," he was genuinely bitter about the turn his military career had taken.

On 2 March Congress appointed Greene quartermaster general, and despite his reservations Greene accepted the appointment. Two considerations persuaded him: the committee and his colleagues all insisted that the cause was doomed unless someone of his ability took the post; and Washington, to whom he was fiercely loyal, made it plain he wished Greene would accept. Even so, Greene stipulated some
conditions that Congress had to meet before he would accept. First and foremost, Greene insisted that Congress appoint as his principal deputies Charles Pettit and John Cox. Cox was a Philadelphia merchant and Pettit the New Jersey secretary of state, and Greene obviously hoped they would give him the expert advice and assistance he needed to manage so "large a Field of Business." Both, apparently, had come to his attention through Joseph Reed, as Cox was Reed's uncle and Pettit was Reed's brother-in-law. But despite any play of favoritism in their appointments, both Cox and Pettit proved to be first-rate assistants and contributed significantly to Greene's success as quartermaster. Greene also insisted that he appoint all officers in the department and that Congress allow him to retain his line rank of major general in the army.

Only one major issue remained to be resolved, the question of what compensation to give Greene and his deputies. Greene had offered to fill the post for a year at his major general's pay. Both Pettit and Cox, however, held lucrative positions in civilian life. To ask them to settle for a major general's pay or less was unrealistic. At the same time Congress could not reasonably afford to pay Greene a salary commensurate with Pettit's and Cox's civilian earnings, nor could it ask Greene to settle for only a major general's pay while it paid his deputies salaries equivalent to their civilian earnings. To resolve this dilemma,
Congress fell back on a traditional expedient; it would give the three men a one percent commission on all the quartermaster department's purchases, which they could divide as they saw fit. The committee recognized that the three men could abuse the commission, but argued that determined men could abuse any system. The only protection was to appoint honest public-spirited men, which the committee believed it had done.

Greene insisted that he, Pettit, and Cox divide the commission equally so each would be equally interested in the department's business. He had "no objection to . . . any . . . Gentlemen belonging to the department reaping any advantage from their honest industry," but said he cared little himself about the profits of the office. He cared only that the public business was well done and wished more officers in every department were "more attentive to the public good and less so to their private gain." Greene's statement was an admirable reflection of the classical dedication to serving society selflessly that abounded in Horace's and Rollin's writings. But given the energy that Greene had devoted to pursuing his private business interests during the first three years of the war, it is questionable whether his expressed sentiments were entirely sincere. Intellectually he may have believed in his own disinterestedness, but practically he displayed devotion to a far different set of values. In the event, Pettit and Cox
agreed they should divide the commission equally with Greene. They also stipulated, with Greene's concurrence, that the commission should be computed from the entire business of the department throughout America, that Pettit should remain at headquarters and look after the department's cash and accounts while Cox managed purchasing, transportation, and distribution, and that Pettit would serve as acting quartermaster general when Greene was on detached duty. Congress accepted all these conditions, and so on the above basis the three men accepted their appointments. Washington could not have been more pleased. On 12 March he wrote Governor George Clinton that "A change is taking place in the Qur. Master's and I hope if the Gentleman [Greene], who is in nomination, accepts that there will be a considerable reform."

After accepting appointment as quartermaster general, Greene plunged headlong into his new responsibilities in typical fashion, and for the next three months he worked vigorously at bringing the department to hand. He retained the department's basic organization and mode of operation. Under Greene and his two principal assistants were a host of deputy quartermasters, each responsible for purchasing, transportation, and distribution within a particular geographic area. These deputies saw to the needs of the forces within their areas, plus helped meet the needs of the main army as well. Purchasing actually was done by
innumerable agents or contractors hired either by Greene, his assistants, or his deputies. The whole system was quite loose and poorly-defined. Greene's first efforts after taking control of the department, therefore, centered on contacting his deputies, arranging for regular reports from them, clarifying where necessary their areas of responsibility, and confirming the lines of communication and control. And as he learned more about conditions in his department, he did not hesitate to issue detailed instructions to his deputies on a wide variety of topics.

Two pressing problems dominated Greene's earliest efforts as quartermaster general. First he had to coordinate the department's operations with Washington's plans for the upcoming summer campaign. In particular, he concentrated on establishing a chain of magazines northeastward into New Jersey to support the army's movements. Second, he had to address the public's rapidly declining confidence in his department. On 28 March he issued a proclamation "To the Inhabitants of the United States" acknowledging their loss of faith in the department and their complaints of mistreatment. He attributed the people's doubts and complaints to the department's lack of order and regularity, its unavoidably hasty business, and the proliferation of deputies, many of whom were not fit public servants. He assigned first priority to rectifying the department's problems with punctual payment for goods
purchased or impressed. Since cash was scarce, he explained, the department would pay with certificates redeemable at short intervals and convenient locations. To preclude abuses, the certificates would have a regular form; and, to allow their use as cash, they would be redeemable by anyone once endorsed by the original recipient.

As he bent his best efforts to improving the army's quartermaster support, however, Greene quickly encountered virtually insuperable obstacles. Probably the biggest obstacle was the shortage of money. At least twice in April and once in May Greene had to ask for emergency appropriations, twice from the Treasury Board and once from the New Jersey treasurer. His deputies clamored for money and reported that people would no longer accept redeemable notes for contracts. At least one deputy was forced to pledge his own private funds as a bond in order to get men to sign contracts for supplying the army. And in the spring of 1778 the haste with which the department had to prepare for the upcoming campaign combined with extensive demands and scarce resources to aggravate the money shortage. Moreover, the steady depreciation of Continental currency was driving prices ever higher. Thus Greene wrote Henry Laurens on 28 March that the department did not have the liberty to make the most advantageous contracts and would necessarily need a large and immediate supply of cash. As Greene indicated in his 28 March proclamation, the
department tried to issue certificates for future payment in lieu of cash. These certificates created their own problems, however. They were easily forged, were hard to redeem, and were undermined by inflation. As a result people refused to sell to the army for certificates. In early May the Executive Council of Pennsylvania reported numerous complaints that the army was giving citizens only certificates to pay for the use of their wagons. This in turn had persuaded the people not to hire or sell their wagons to the army voluntarily. The army then resorted to taking what it needed by force, which "increases the dislike and sours the minds of the people." By June the department's financial troubles had so disgusted Greene that he already had threatened resignation unless the department's contracts could be met honorably.

Though easily the most troubling, the money shortage was only one of the obstacles Greene faced. Another critical shortage was land transportation. The army lacked usable roads, vehicles, draft animals, tack, and even drivers. Most important of all, the army could not find enough forage, and, just as a modern army moves on oil, an eighteenth century army moved on forage. The department was having particular trouble hiring wagonners despite offering what Greene thought were liberal wages, as well as exemption from militia duty and fines. Greene's deputies also reported considerable abuse among the wagonners. They
wasted time loading and drawing provisions, stopped at every
tavern along their route, drove at breakneck speed to make
up for their diversions, and usually covered only 9-10 miles
a day instead of the 20 miles they ought to be able to do. 17

Finding competent, reliable men willing to serve the
public good proved to be one of Greene's biggest problems.
This extended even to the ranks of his deputies. Captain
John Gooch resigned as a deputy quartermaster because the
ingress of the job exceeded his pay. "I'm as ready and
willing as any man to sacrifice to my Country," he wrote
Greene, "but there can be no Virtue in starving." Two other
valuable deputies, Colonels Hugh Hughes and Udney Hay,
resigned because Congress ruled that staff officers could no
longer hold military rank unless they had been commissioned
in the line prior to assuming their staff positions. And in
Hughes's case, he also resented subordination to "Men
[Pettit and Cox] who were never of the line nor Staff before
me, let their Merit be what it may." This inability to hire
and retain able public servants crippled the department. As
decentralized and dependent on public confidence as it was,
the quartermaster's department needed capable men of
integrity to run effectively. 18

One final set of obstacles centered around confused
responsibilities and conflicting lines of control for the
quartermaster's function. Greene's greatest problem in this
area was coordination with Congress, and it began with
Congress's failure to keep him fully informed of all the directives governing his office. In June he finally wrote President Henry Laurens asking Congress to take some measure to make Greene aware of all the acts of Congress. He was certain many of the acts "contain important Directions for the conducting of my Office, and therefore ought to be known and clearly understood by every person acting in my Department." Greene also had problems with Congress interfering in quartermaster business. Thus in April Greene directed Colonel Henry Hollingsworth to buy as many horses in his area as he could only to find that Congress had empowered Major Henry Lee to take by force any horses he needed for his dragoons from Hollingsworth's area. In May he had to resolve a dispute between his cousin Griffin Greene, to whom he had given a contract to purchase canvas duck for the army, and Thomas Chase of Boston, who had been contracted to do the same by Congress's Board of War and who was bidding against Griffin. And later the same month he had to set straight Morgan Lewis, deputy quartermaster for the Northern Department, who believed that because his appointment was from General Gates and confirmed by Congress he was not subordinate to Greene. State governments often caused Greene as much difficulty as the poor coordination with Congress. In April the Chief Justice of Pennsylvania, Thomas McKean, jailed deputy quartermaster Robert Hooper for libelling and assaulting a member of the Pennsylvania Safety
Council. When Greene petitioned that Hooper be released on bond because the army was about to move through Hooper's district and his attention to his quartermaster duties was essential to the army's easy movement, McKean brusquely denied the request, explaining he "should be very sorry to find, that the execution of criminal law should impede the operations of the army in any instance, but should be more so to find the latter impede the former." Greene also suffered from his predecessor's uncooperative attitude. Mifflin never gave Greene an adequate accounting of the department's personnel or accounts, and he and his staff refused to help Greene and his deputies set the department's old business straight. Unfortunately, Greene never overcame the confusion of responsibilities and lines of control that hampered the department's operations. In many ways, it was remarkable that Greene provided for the army as well as he did.

While it might seem his quartermaster duties would absorb virtually all of Greene's attention and energy, he still found time to involve himself heavily in other important issues. He always had had exceptional intellectual curiosity and broad interests, and once he reached the upper echelons of the American command, he relished every opportunity to influence policy. Washington had to have appreciated Greene's willingness and ability to tackle a wide variety of thorny questions. At the same
time, Greene's versatility spread him thin, and probably on more than one occasion diverted his attention from an issue that should have had his full concentration.

One issue that drew more and more of Greene's attention was the structure of the army and its place in American society. In particular, the treatment of the Continental officer corps concerned him in two ways: promotions and compensation. In early 1778 Greene believed more and more officers' felt themselves "materially and essentially injured in their rank . . . from being superceded by those who had served in subordinate stations." While the officers had entered the service out of patriotism, they did so expecting to be awarded rank and promotions "according to the rules which prevail in all well regulated armies."

Promotions had to follow a consistent and uniform system to control "boundless ambition, to discourage art and circumvention, and excite a laudable emulation and spirit of enterprize." To Greene this meant promotion by date of rank except for those few individuals whose exceptional merit or other circumstances unarguably dictated otherwise -- Lafayette, for example. Historically, promotion by seniority had been "a sufficient motive to a faithfull discharge of duty and a forcible argument to great and noble actions." Some might believe the officers' concerns with rank petty, or argue that rank is important only as it is connected with command, but in truth rank is "one of the
strongest motives to great and dignified actions the human breast is capable of feeling. The hopes of obtaining and the fear of loosing it, is a continual spur to ambition and military enterprize."

Greene also argued that it would be best if promotions of all ranks could be determined for the entire Continental Army as a single body. This would create a spirit of union among men from different states, reduce jealousies between the various state contingents, and lessen the temptation for officers to play to powerful interests within their home states. Unfortunately, political realities precluded this system. As a compromise, general officers should be promoted in the Continental line, field officers in the state line, and company officers in the regimental line. Congress should also try to keep the number of each state's general officers proportional to the number of regiments it fielded. Finally, Greene argued against awarding staff officers military rank as then rank ceased to be an "extraordinary mark of respect . . . given . . . to the [line] Officers [because of] . . . the dangers of their 23 profession." In all these arguments it is easy to see Greene's attachment to the notion that officers represented a special class of gentlemen due exceptional honor and respect.

Compensation for officers also troubled Greene. Early in January he wrote Nicholas Cooke that depreciation of the
currency "has reduced their [officers] Pay to almost a Cipher so that far from being able to lend their Families any assistance, they can scarcely subsist themselves." And, as Greene pointed out, "there are but few men who can serve with alacrity and cheerfulness, when their Families are in want of the common necessaries of Life." Later in the month he wrote Alexander McDougall that, discouraged by the severity of the last campaign, their great expenses, and their bleak prospects after the war, many officers already were resigning. This disproved the common sentiment that patriotism and the thirst for glory would always supply more than enough officers. Those motivations counted for nothing when officers found they must sacrifice "all the solid comforts of life" for no more reward than "empty sounds and then sink into contempt the rest of life." Officers questioned why they should be made a sacrifice for the 24 common good; all should share the burden together.

Greene embraced completely the view that officers belonged to a special class of "Gentle Men who have a certain character and appearance to maintain through life." For this reason, he recommended to Washington that Congress put officers in the Continental line on a regular establishment of half-pay for life, similar to the British system. When his brother Jacob objected to the officers' request for half-pay for life, Greene pointed out that the officers had rushed into service at the beginning of the war.
without any provisions for their families or fortunes, expecting the war to end quickly. Now, with the war dragging on for years, what would become of the officers once it ended?

Out of business, out of credit, without connexion in the way of trade, Military distinctions or characters to maintain, numerous acquaintances contracted without the means to be civil to them; hereafter must render the condition of the officers infinitely more wretched than other parts of society. Is it reasonable that men should be exposed to all the hardships of war, be constantly exposed to sudden death and broken bones without any compensation? Is this making the business of Society equal?

If Congress would not put the officers on half-pay for life, "Officers will not continue to serve under such a hopeless prospect. All the Citizens of America like those of Rome must agree to serve in turn or else satisfaction must be given to those that are now engaged."

Greene's advocacy of half-pay for life for officers was just another manifestation of his support for a professional military establishment. Since early in the war Greene had been arguing the necessity of a strong national government defended by a powerful regular army. The Americans necessarily had begun their defense by the "temporary expedient" of relying on militia, and the militia had served the cause well. To continue relying on militia for the bulk of the effort, however, would be foolish. Militia jealously observed their short terms of service, experienced much higher rates of sickness and desertion than regulars, and
wasted arms, ammunition and supplies. Because of their lack of discipline and training, the army would require twice as many militia as regulars and would lose the advantage of developing veterans. Militia could repel sudden attacks and temporarily block the enemy's advance, but they could not hold the field for any length of time. They could not oppose a formidable body alone; they must have regular troops to rally around. Moreover, calling out a sufficient number of militia "stagnates all kinds of business and deprives society of many of its most useful members." Echoing Saxe, Greene argued for "a cleaver little snug Army, well clothed, well fed, and well diciplind." A small but well-trained and well-led army "will be able to do infinitely more than a great unwieldy mass of people without order or connection." He also followed Saxe's line in urging conscription. He wanted the states to draft men rather than depend on voluntary enlistments, which would not keep pace in an emergency. And drawing in part on the ideas of Rollin and Hume, he reconciled a professional army of long-service conscripts with the radical politics of the Revolution. He considered a draft "perfectly consistent with the strictest principles of liberty, where all are put upon the same footing, and everybody must allow that Society has a claim to the personal services of every individual." He also dismissed the "groundless jealousies" of Congress toward establishing a regular army. "A standing Army is
undoubtedly an enemy to Civil Liberty, but when the Liberties of a people are invaded from abroad there is no other alternative but to submit to one or establish the other." In his view it was better to "trust the Liberties of the People in the hands of our own Army than in that of the Enimies."

Another example of the breadth of Greene's vision was his advocacy of elite units for the Continental Army. He argued that in every action only a small fraction of the army was engaged, while the remainder of the men stood by ready to lend support. Given this, as well as the fact that victory usually went to those who push their advantages most vigorously at the first of an action, Greene advocated forming a corps of elite troops. These troops could, by acting together, often turn the tide of battle at the critical moment. To do this, however, the elite troops must be organized in separate units, "light companies," rather than left dispersed throughout the various regiments. Each light company could operate either within its regiment or unite with other regiments' light companies to form temporary light regiments, or even brigades. This was the direction developments in tactical organization were going, and Greene was keeping pace.

As Greene's comments about the discontent of Continental officers indicate, by 1778 the American cause was losing support. The strains of the war pulled
remorselessly at what little cohesion American society had. Self-interest, intrigue, and factionalism increased as the war dragged on with little prospect of success. In the winter of 1777-78 these tendencies produced a series of events known as the Conway Cabal that convulsed the army and distracted the energies of most of its officers, including Greene. According to Washington's supporters, the Conway Cabal was an attempt by a group of army officers and Congressmen to replace Washington with Horatio Gates. Recent scholarship, however, has found no evidence to support the existence of a plot and instead argues that any plot existed solely in the eyes of the beholders. Men in the eighteenth century had a predilection to see all forms of opposition as the result of a "party" or "cabal," both of which Samuel Johnson defined as "A body of men united in a design." Conspiracy was a favorite culprit when men looked to explain adversity. Rapin had emphasized conspiracy in his interpretation of English history, and the writings of the radical Whigs had ensured it would figure prominently in the Revolutionaries' explanations of their need to break with England. During 1777, as frustration with the course of the war mounted, so too did criticism of Washington. This naturally angered Washington's staunchest supporters, among whom was Greene, and they began to see conspiracy behind the criticisms. With this frame of mind, it was easy for these men to weave a series of essentially circumstantial events
into a plot to depose their commander.

Disappointed by the results of the campaigning around Philadelphia in the summer and fall of 1777, many officers and politicians began grumbling about Washington's leadership, especially after Gates's victory at Saratoga in mid-October. Soon after Saratoga, Thomas Conway, a talented French colonel who had been commissioned a brigadier general in the Continental Army in May 1777 and who was commanding a brigade in Washington's army, wrote a letter of congratulations to Gates. One of Gates's aides, Colonel James Wilkinson, saw Conway's letter and "quoted" sections of it that criticized Washington's army to an aide of Lord Stirling, who passed the comments on to his commander, who, in turn, passed them on to Washington. On 9 November Washington wrote Conway a curt letter stating he knew Conway had written Gates that "Heaven has been determin'd to save your Country; or a weak General and bad Councillors would 32 have ruin'd it." The opening salvos in the dispute had been fired. Meanwhile, on 6 November Congress, acting on Gates's strong recommendation, had promoted Wilkinson to brigadier general over the heads of many more senior colonels. The following day, Congress appointed General Thomas Mifflin, one of Washington's sternest critics, to its Board of War. Mifflin, in turn, nominated Gates for the presidency of the Board, and Congress confirmed Gates's appointment in late November. Finally, on 13 December Congress appointed Conway
inspector general of the army and promoted him to major
general over the heads of several more senior brigadier
generals. To Washington's supporters these events clearly
argued the existence of a cabal plotting their chief's
displacement.

Greene fully accepted the notion of a conspiratorial
party plotting to replace Washington with Gates, and he
corresponded freely about it with like-minded
acquaintances. As early as 3 January he wrote his brother
Jacob complaining of "Men of great ambition, and without
principle or virtue, [who] will sacrifice every thing to
their private views." In particular he singled out Mifflin,
Conway, and Wilkinson. About a week later he heard from
Major John Clark, a former aide, that "Various reports have
been circulated thro' this Country to prejudice the People
against his Excellency and you. You are said to lead him
into every measure and that he had wrote if he fell, to have
you appointed to the command of the Army." Allegations
like these played directly on Greene's extreme sensitivity
to criticism and his natural tendency to see conspiracy
behind any opposition. Thus on 25 January he wrote
Alexander McDougall criticizing Conway harshly and passing
on his version of Conway's slight to Washington - "God
almighty favoured the American Army or else they must have
been destroyed, for there never was an instance of such a
weak General at the head of an army, aided by such ignorant
council, that did not fall a sacrifice." With every repetition Conway's disloyalty grew. Greene then told McDougall that a faction had formed under Gates and Mifflin "to supplant his Excellency from the command of the Army and get Genl Gates at the head of it." Moreover, he wrote, "Mifflin and his creatures have been endeavoring to wound my reputation," saying "I govern the Genl and do everything to damp the spirit of enterprize." Several more of Greene's letters during this period contain references to the cabal's efforts against both Washington and himself, and even though alarm about the Conway Cabal was fading by May, Greene's firm conviction that conspiratorial factions were on the rise colored his dealings with his opponents in the army and in Congress for the rest of the war.

Greene's reaction to the supposed Conway Cabal was part of his larger conviction that America's public virtue was on the wane. One evidence Greene saw of Americans' declining virtue was their growing fondness for luxury. Early in January he wrote Washington that "The foundation of American liberty would be more sure, and the superstructure with far less difficulty erected if the love of ease, pleasure and wealth were not so predominant." A month later he wrote Jacob that "Money becomes more and more the Americans' object. You must get rich, or you will be of no consequence." And in May he explained to Jacob that with the gloom lifting from Americans' minds it was natural for
"pleasures and diversions to succeed," which could be dangerous if they led to luxury. He thought "all ranks and orders of men are relaxing too fast from the republican oeconomy; and slideing into Monarchical extravagance. The great Fortunes that some has made and the great plenty of money circulating gives birth to abundance of extravagance." The second evidence Greene saw of declining public virtue was the growth of ambition. "Ambition," he wrote to Washington, "is a noble principle, under proper restrictions, but becomes dangerous to the happiness of mankind when left at liberty to seek its object without principle or virtue for its guide." Greene believed ambition, a "seven-headed monster, was rising, and should it prevail, he wrote William Greene, "we have everything to fear, for the publick good is always sacrificed to gratify private resentment." And speaking of the Conway Cabal, he asked Alexander McDougall,

Could you have conceiv'd that Ambition was so predominant among people struggling for life and everything that is dear and valuable? We seem to have imbib'd the conception of European Politicks, without the least pretention to their policy. God grant us more wisdom and virtue or else I shall begin to despair of our cause.

Like Horace and Rapin, Greene saw the evils of luxury and ambition reaching even into America's governing councils. It is true that Greene intuitively distrusted government and politicians in general. Thus he could write his brother Christopher that "Ignorance, confidence and
obstinacy are the true characteristicks of the spirit and genius of Administration." Early in 1778, however, Greene began commenting not just on politicians' incompetence but on their "corruption" as well, another theme underlying the Revolution. "It is an antient proverb," he wrote Christopher on 5 January, "that when the political Pot boils the scum rises, and I am told there are many that have jumpt into surprising fortunes of late who are creeping into Government, determined not to crawl out of life with the same degree of obscurity they entered it." Even Congress seemed to have "an eye more to the gratification of individuals than to the common interest of the Continent."

And if not motivated by personal interest, Congressmen too often were influenced by an "Illiberal attachment to favourites and flatterers." The result was squandered funds and jealous intrigues to ruin "great and good characters." Greene feared "a mystical darkness" had "spread over the Councils of America." Prospects for vigorous governmental action looked "languid and sickly" due to "The Sloth of the 38 Congress, [and] the inattention of the States."

While Greene saw himself in a much nobler light, sacrificing his family, his personal financial security, and his health to serve the cause, in truth he used his position to look after his personal interests as diligently as any man. By the end of 1777, impelled by growing concerns for his postwar financial situation and by increasing
opportunities to improve those finances -- in only two months as quartermaster Greene earned over $13,000 in commissions, which was more than he had earned in any previous two years -- he began taking a more active interest in his own and the family's business affairs. During the spring of 1778, a time when his new quartermaster duties needed his full attention, he became embroiled in a breakup and equitable division of the family business that was caused at least in part by his own dissatisfaction with how his interests were being cared for. He, Jacob, and their cousin Griffin then formed their own company, the affairs of which soon began consuming a considerable amount of Nathanael's attention. Moreover, he quickly began passing information and advice on the company's affairs that drew directly on his knowledge of army affairs and business. Griffin asked him to please give the company a first refusal on any quartermaster business it was equipped to handle, and early in April Greene actually appointed Jacob a contractor, or agent, for the quartermaster department. Admittedly, actions like these were common at that time. Nevertheless, Greene's actions bordered on the same type of impropriety he himself was willing to condemn others for.

Greene also continued using his influence in behalf of his friends. Thus he asked Samuel Chase, an influential member of Congress from Maryland, to help Greene's former aide, Major John Clarke gain an appointment. Likewise, he
gently chided Colonel James Abeel, one of his deputy quartermasters, for not acting more energetically to help Abraham Lott, a wealthy New York merchant who had befriended Greene, sell a cargo of sugar Lott had speculated on. Greene wanted Abeel to prevail upon Dr. Johnathan Potts to purchase the sugar for the Continent provided Potts would "give a price that will answer Mr. Lott's wishes and the Continent be no sufferer." Also on behalf of Abraham Lott Greene asked Jeremiah Wadsworth, the new commissary general, to issue a military waiver to the state embargo laws preventing movement of goods across state borders so that Lott could move a cargo of rum and salt from Boston to New Jersey. In fairness to Greene, he always saw himself acting honorably. When asking Chase to support Clarke's effort to secure an appointment, he insisted Chase do so only if it would not be "inconsistent with the publick good." I am, Greene said, "an enimy to court party and favoritism; they are so destructive to the true interest of the Continent and so convulsive to the Army, that I cannot help thinking an application upon such principles dishonorable and criminal." And when Griffin asked for tips about army business, Greene answered "You may be assured I will give you all the information in my power that I can consistent with my public station. Nothing shall ever induce me to depart from the line of honor and truth in any business committed to my care." Regardless, Greene's
actions again cut close to the line that he insisted others not cross.

Even though he had transferred to the army's support staff, Greene continued to play an important role in planning and executing the army's operations. Washington obviously trusted Greene's ability and loyalty, and wanted him involved in these deliberations. Throughout the spring of 1778 Greene continued giving future operations the careful thought that was his hallmark, and as the time for the summer's campaign drew closer, he participated directly in planning its strategy. One of Greene's great strengths was to see the nature of the Revolutionary War clearly and to devise strategies firmly based on that understanding. By the spring of 1778 Greene had come to understand that the Americans must fight a war of protraction. The American army had proved its resilience in the face of repeated defeats. Thus the British would act on the established European maxim that "the longest purse wins." Unable to defeat the Americans by superior force, the British would draw on their superior resources of money and military stores and try to defeat the Americans by the length of the dispute. To win, the British had to capture American cities, distress trade, destroy stores, and coerce Americans into supporting them. They already were following the example of the Romans, who "did not always make rapid conquests, but . . . always took care to secure their
advantages: and partly by force and partly by distress compelled the people to submit to their yoke." And as the people's distress mounted, they became less willing to oppose the British and more willing to collaborate.

Yet, Greene argued, while the Americans could not "conquer the British force at once, . . . they cannot conquer us at all. The limits of the British government in America are their out-sentinels." To deprive the British of victory the Americans must reverse the impression of conquest the British had created. They must "dispossess [the British] of some of the places they now hold," or at a minimum take a position that would block further British conquest. Greene recognized that the war would not be won by holding territory but by holding the loyalty and confidence of the American people. "It is not the real value of Cities as places that gives the public a good or bad impression but the imaginary estimation given them."

The vital key was for the American army to remain a credible force in being, for in doing so it held the loyalty of a great many Americans and thereby blocked further British conquest. At the same time, however, the army could not constantly avoid battle. "People expects something from us and our strenth demands it. I am by no means for rash meaures but we must preserve our reputation." Since the American objective should be to maintain an army strong enough to threaten the British and hold the people's
loyalty, Greene argued against any divisions of the army and diversionary operations that were not absolutely necessary or did not promise both success and great returns. Thus in the spring of 1778 he opposed both a proposed campaign against Canada and an operation to dislodge the British force that had occupied Newport, Rhode Island. Finally, Greene also understood how the American Revolution fit into the workings of European affairs. He recognized that European political developments could exert tremendous pressure on England, and advised Washington in June that the "Favorable trends of European politics . . . argues against taking unnecessary risks. He also recognized the possibility that France would enter the war against England, although he cautioned against basing American planning on that prospect. The Americans had to build up sufficient strength for victory whether France declared war or not. 45

Beginning in April Washington initiated a series of discussions with his senior generals to lay plans for the upcoming summer campaign. Greene played a key role in these deliberations and shaped his strategic recommendations to fit his understanding of the war. On 20 April Washington asked his generals for their views concerning three possible plans for the summer: attacking the British in Philadelphia; transferring the war northward by an enterprise against New York City; or remaining in camp until the British began operations and then governing their own operations
accordingly. Greene responded that Philadelphia, while "the grandest object," was too difficult an objective. The advantages in terms of increased recruiting, discipline, and training of remaining in camp were attractive, but he thought the most promising plan was an attack on New York City using about 4,000 regulars from Valley Forge and 10,000 New England militia, thus leaving a sizable force at Valley Forge to control the countryside. The other generals split about evenly in favor of Washington's three alternatives, but Washington apparently was resigned to remaining at Valley Forge and waiting for the British to move.

On 8 May Washington convened a council of war and again asked his generals to recommend an plan of operations for the upcoming campaign. This time Greene joined with nine of his colleagues in recommending that the army remain on the defensive unless "the future circumstances of the enemy should afford a fairer opportunity than at present exists for striking some successful blow." The only offensive actions that promised significant results were attacks against either Philadelphia or New York City, but both would be too difficult. And while the potential gains from either operation were great, the losses from a defeat would be devastating. On the other hand, standing pat and avoiding further losses would have the beneficial effect of increasing American strength in preparation to counter British operations. As this recommendation coincided with
Washington's inclination, the army remained at Valley Forge awaiting further developments.

Further developments were not long in coming. In mid-April Sir Henry Clinton had replaced Sir William Howe as commander of the British forces in America and received instructions for a new British strategy, made necessary by the recent alliance the French had signed with the Americans after Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga. Clinton was to send 5,000 of his men to St. Lucia and another 3,000 to Florida and then move his army to New York City, at which time the British government intended to switch the focus of its operations to the southern states. Clinton decided, however, to yield his transports to Philadelphia's large population of loyalists, who were clamoring for evacuation by sea, and to march his entire army overland through New Jersey to New York City.

On 17 June, Washington called another council of war and told his generals there was "the strongest reason to believe the enemy design speedily to evacuate Philadelphia." Clinton had already moved part of his army into New Jersey, and Washington thought it probable the British were moving to New York City, either through New Jersey or by sea. He then asked his generals' opinions of what actions the Americans should take. Most of the generals believed Clinton would head either west or south and advocated staying at Valley Forge until Clinton's objectives were
clear. Greene, however, argued for moving northeast toward the Delaware River to cover New Jersey; if the army remained at Valley Forge until the British completely evacuated Philadelphia, the Americans would never catch the British in New Jersey. He also recommended that Washington keep the army united in the presence of the British and avoid a general battle unless the Americans enjoyed some great advantage from the terrain or the manner of attack. At the same time, he cautioned Washington that an army of observation in the neighborhood of the enemy can always be brought to a general battle or forced to retreat when the enemy is determined to force an action.

Now that he had decided his own course of action, however, Clinton moved quickly and set in motion a chain of events that quickly led the Americans into the general battle all the American generals had been cautioning against. On 18 June, the day after Washington's council of war, Clinton moved the remainder of his troops into New Jersey and started for New York City. Washington learned of the British move at 11:30 the morning of the 18th and immediately ordered his army after the British. On 23 June the army encamped at Hopewell, N.J., only a few miles off the left flank of the British who, slowed by a ten-mile long baggage train, had traveled only twenty miles in three days. In large part it was Greene's advance preparations of magazines and rudimentary campsites that allowed the
American army to cover a far greater distance in three days
than the British. At Hopewell, Washington called another
council of war to decide the best course of action. The
council recommended avoiding a general attack. Instead,
Washington should send a detachment of 1,500 men to
cooperate with General William Maxwell's brigade and the
various militia units that were already harassing the
British left flank and rear, while keeping the main body of
the army at Hopewell. Once the council of war had ended,
however, Greene urged Washington to attempt a partial
attack, even if it ended up drawing the Americans into a
general battle. "I cannot help thinking we magnify our
difficulties beyond realities," he said, insisting that "If
we suffer the enemy to pass through the Jerseys without
attempting anything upon them, I think we shall ever regret
it." The army and the people, Greene said, would lose
confidence if "We have come with great rapidity and we got
near the Enemy and then our courage faild and we halted
without attempting to do the enemy the least injury."

Lafayette also wrote Washington after the council of war
urging a partial attack with the main army in position to
support, and claiming the support of Generals von Steuben,
Wayne, Duportail, and Paterson.

As it turned out, Washington followed the essence of
Greene and Lafayette's strategy, thus bringing on the battle
of Monmouth, the last major battle of the war in the
northern theater and a psychological victory for the Americans. The British had arrived at Monmouth Courthouse, only about fifteen miles southwest of Sandy Hook, on 26 June. Clinton encamped his army around the courthouse and remained there the next day as well to rest his men and horses. This created an opportunity for Washington, who, in the evening of 27 June, had ordered General Charles Lee forward with about 4,000 men to attack Clinton's left flank and rear the next morning. At the same time he had moved the main army into position about three miles behind Lee's force to support the attack if circumstances warranted. Washington had also given Greene temporary command of Lee's division, which remained with the main army, while Lee was off leading the detachment against Clinton. In the morning of the 28th, Clinton started a portion of his army on the road to Sandy Hook and then turned his attention to Lee. Lee finally made contact with what he thought was the British rearguard late in the morning, but within an hour found he was battling the main body of Clinton's troops.

Hard-pressed, Lee began pulling back to a ridgeline about a mile to his rear. Washington, meanwhile, having heard of Lee's withdrawal had ridden forward. Furious over Lee's retreat in the face of what he thought was only the British rearguard, Washington ordered Lee to hold the ridge while he brought the main body of the army forward. Then, with Lee's exhausted troops falling to the rear and Stirling's and
Greene's divisions manning the front, the Americans turned back a series of determined British assaults during the remainder of the afternoon. Late in the afternoon Clinton withdrew to some high ground to the east, and, though artillery from both sides continued to fire for a couple of hours, the battle was over. That night Clinton put his army on the road for Sandy Hook unmolested, as the Americans were too wearied to mount a pursuit. Though they suffered as many casualties as the British and failed to prevent Clinton's move to New York City, the Americans could count Monmouth as an important psychological victory. They held the field at the end of the day, and the Continentals had fought the British on equal terms. Despite, or maybe because of, all its trials, the American army was coming of age.

After allowing Clinton to withdraw his army from Monmouth unchallenged, Washington spent a few days resting his troops, caring for his wounded, and burying his dead. Then on 1 July he began moving the army to the Hudson Highlands. This area around West Point, about forty miles north of New York City, was arguably the best spot from which to watch an enemy force based in New York City. From the Highlands Washington could not only guard the line of communications between New England and the Middle Colonies, but also move with equal facility to meet a threat in either of those areas. In the heat of the summer, the army moved
slowly, encamping for several days at both Brunswick and Paramus, New Jersey. During this march Greene remained fully occupied with his quartermaster duties -- arranging transportation, replacing horses and wagons, gathering forage and provisions, and selecting and preparing campsites. Then, as his army trudged into Paramus, not far short of the Highlands, Washington received exciting news that caused him to throw Greene back into the thick of operations. A French fleet under the Comte d'Estaing had arrived off Sandy Hook with twelve ships of the line, five frigates, and about four thousand French soldiers.

Greene needed a diversion because his excessive sensitivity had set him brooding over increasing criticism of his conduct. In truth, Greene was performing admirably. His exertions as quartermaster had put that department back on a sound footing and made possible the army's quick response to Clinton's evacuation of Philadelphia. And, as both Alexander Hamilton and Lafayette would later write, at Monmouth he "led the first line very capably" and earned "great honor." Unfortunately, Greene was discovering that success and a position in the highest levels of command bred envy and criticism as often as they did praise. Criticism of Greene's conduct and his influence over Washington had increased steadily during the 1777 campaign, and, as seen earlier, had figured prominently both in the actions of the supposed Conway Cabal and in Greene's reaction to them.
This criticism already had prodded Greene into asking his friends their opinions of his relations with Washington, his conduct at the battle of Germantown, and the public's view of the operations of the quartermaster's department.

Then in July a critical comment from Washington cut Greene to the core. As the army approached the Highlands, Washington asked Greene to undertake a reconnaissance that kept him away from headquarters for several days at the very time Washington was trying to decide how best to cooperate with Admiral d'Estaing and wanted Greene's advice. Frustrated, Washington then took Greene to task for neglecting his duties at headquarters. This rebuke prompted a long letter of rebuttal from Greene in which he defended his actions, reminded Washington of his sacrifices for the cause and his services as quartermaster, protested his unswerving loyalty, and declared his willingness to resign if Washington was displeased with his efforts as quartermaster. Washington tried to mollify Greene with assurances of his continued faith, but Greene remained rankled.

Showman contends that Greene's surprisingly strong reaction to Washington's criticism was rooted in accumulated frustration over lack of recognition for his contributions over the past year. A letter Greene wrote to Henry Marchant a few days after responding to Washington's censure bears this out. Greene claimed that without the improvements he
had made in the quartermaster's department the army would still be at Valley Forge, and he hoped Washington "will do me the justice to say I have done my duty." But, he told Marchant, Washington never praises his friends for fear of appearing partial. Thus Greene's excellent service at both Brandywine and Germantown had gone unrecognized. He reminded Marchant of his many sacrifices for the cause and then declared:

But men and actions have been so miscolored that little benefit is to be expected from a series of good actions. Refined policy is too prevalent for merit to be in much estimation. I expected when we were first formed into an army, that we were going upon a truly republican principle, that merit only was the criterion; but I find a few friends at court is of much greater consequence than all the services a man can perform in the field.56

On 3 August Washington did write a letter to Congress commending Greene's efforts since taking over as quartermaster. This might have assuaged Greene's feelings somewhat, but his extreme sensitivity to criticism and opposition continued to torture him. For the next month, however, active campaigning would occupy fully Greene's attention and energies.

Washington's determination to undertake a joint operation with the French soon had Greene heavily involved in a campaign in Rhode Island. Almost as soon as d'Estaing anchored his fleet off Sandy Hook, Washington opened communications with him by letter and through visits of Washington's French-speaking aides and began trying to
hammer out a joint plan of operations. Washington favored a joint attack on New York City, but d'Estaing declined taking on Lord Howe's fleet in the New York City harbor. Instead, Washington and d'Estaing agreed to an attack against the British force in Newport, R.I. Thus on 22 July Washington sent word to General John Sullivan that the French fleet was sailing to Newport and that he was sending two Continental brigades under Lafayette to join Sullivan for a campaign against Newport. The British had occupied Newport in December 1776, using that excellent harbor as one of the main bases for their fleet in America. Washington had sent General Joseph Spencer to organize Rhode Island's defenses, but he gave Spencer no troops. By October 1777 Spencer had raised enough troops, mainly militia, for an offensive, but a ten-day storm delayed the attack, the militia began drifting home, and the whole effort collapsed, with Spencer resigning his command in January. In March Washington appointed John Sullivan to replace Spencer. By the time Washington and d'Estaing decided to undertake a campaign against Newport, Rhode Islanders had grown quite restive. They felt Washington and the Congress were asking their tiny state to shoulder a disproportionate share of the Continent's defense. In their view, it was high time the other states and the Continent came to Rhode Island's defense. Greene naturally was excited by the prospect of a campaign against Rhode Island and envied Sullivan his
command. And he was even more pleased when, on 24 July Washington told Greene he was sending him to Rhode Island to command one of Sullivan's two divisions, with Lafayette to command the other. Washington was sending a strong team against the British in Newport.

Despite the apparent strength of the force Washington had sent, the initial attempt to retake Newport misfired because of an unfortunate series of events. When d'Estaing arrived off Narragansett Bay on 29 July Sullivan had only 130 Continentals and about 2,000 militia. Another 2,000 Continentals were on the way, however, and militia were arriving daily. D'Estaing was disappointed by the delay but had to accept postponing the campaign until 10 August. Meanwhile, the British had sent another 2,000 men to Newport, raising the strength of their garrison on Aquidneck Island to about 6,500 men, and Lord Howe, reinforced by several ships of the line and now only a little weaker than d'Estaing, had sailed for Newport on 6 August. With the American troops already on the north end of Aquidneck Island, d'Estaing began disembarking his troops there on the morning of the 10th only to have his lookout spot Howe's fleet on the horizon. Unwilling to fight the British fleet in Narragansett Bay, d'Estaing reembarked his soldiers and postponed the assault on Newport. The following morning he sailed out to meet Howe's fleet. Howe first drew the French away from Narragansett Bay and then on the 12th began
maneuvering to gain the weather gauge for a battle. In mid-afternoon, however, a storm of near-hurricane strength hit and continued battering the two fleets for the next two-and-a-half days. Both fleets sustained considerable damage, and after the storm abated a few isolated combats between individual ships resulted in further damage to both fleets. Howe took his fleet back to New York, and d'Estaing's captains urged him to sail directly to Boston, as his orders directed should he encounter trouble. D'Estaing insisted, however, that he must go to Rhode Island first to inform Sullivan.

Meanwhile, back on Aquidneck Island, Sullivan had decided to attempt an assault without French support. Late-arriving militia had raised the American strength to 10,000 men, and even though the same storm that battered d'Estaing's and Howe's fleets caused many of the militia to desert, Sullivan pressed on since his force already was poised on the island. On 15 August, with Greene commanding the right wing and Lafayette the left, the Americans moved forward to within two miles of the British lines. They erected a battery, which began firing on the 19th, and started digging approach trenches. Then, on the 20th, d'Estaing reappeared. American hopes soared, but the following day d'Estaing sent word he was taking his fleet to Boston for repairs. Suddenly, the Americans, who the previous day were confidently pressing their assault without
the French, insisted they must have French support to continue their attack. Sullivan sent Greene and Lafayette to plead with d'Estaing on board his flagship, the Languedoc, and Greene reported that while it seemed he had persuaded d'Estaing to stay, the admiral apparently could not resist the unanimous pressure from his captains to sail to Boston in keeping with his instructions. Greene then put his arguments in writing for d'Estaing, possibly for the admiral to use with his captains. The Americans, Greene said, undertook the campaign against Newport only because they expected cooperation from the French, and Rhode Islanders had gone to great expense and effort to prepare for the attack. Moreover, Providence harbor was more secure and could provide all the materials, labor, and facilities needed to repair the French fleet. D'Estaing must not risk irreparably damaging the health and reputation of the as yet untested French-American alliance. Despite Greene's remonstrance, however, d'Estaing sailed his fleet to Boston on the 22nd.

Understandably, the suddenly unfortunate turn of events disappointed Sullivan bitterly, and he put all that disappointment into a written protest, signed by all his generals, that reached d'Estaing in Boston. The protest repeated the same arguments Greene had used on d'Estaing, although in a much harsher tone, and then closed with the inflammatory declaration that d'Estaing's action was
"derogatory to the honor of France, contrary to the Intention of his most Christian Majesty and the Interest of his nation and destructive in the highest degree to the welfare of the United States of America, and highly injurious to the Alliance formed between the two nations." Sullivan followed this blast with a general order to his army issued on 24 August that closed with the insulting observation that "the Event will prove America able to procure that by our Arms which her Allies refuse to assist in Obtaining." The Alliance had gone rather quickly from the prospect of a likely victory in its initial operation into very rocky waters. Sullivan's statements offended Lafayette greatly, and after reading the general order of 24 August, Lafayette vigorously protested to Sullivan. Sullivan, recognizing he had spoken too impetuously, published an apologetic order on the 26th. Greene, meanwhile, had tried to serve as peacemaker. Lafayette wrote Washington on 25 August that he had received a letter from Greene "very different from the expressions I have Right to complain of, and that he seems there very sensible of what I feel." And on the 28th Greene reported to Washington that he had done "everything in my power to cultivate and promote a good understanding both with the Count [d'Estaing] and with the Marquis [Lafayette]." Sullivan had, Greene said, acted "imprudently" in publishing an absolute censure of d'Estaing, but since then had issued a mollifying order.
Things were smoothing over and Greene thought some chance existed that d'Estaing might even rejoin the campaign.

After d'Estaing's departure, Sullivan tried salvaging something from his campaign. On 23 August he asked his generals for their opinions of three options -- continue their siege of Newport, attack immediately, or retreat. Three of the seven generals voted to retreat, but the other three agreed with Greene's recommendation to try taking the town by surprise. Continuing the siege was out of the question, Greene said, because militia were too impatient for siege operations. On the other hand, retreat offered several advantages -- conserving strength, protecting stores, and guarding against a demoralizing defeat now that the French had gone. Still, since they already had troops collected, positioned, and prepared, Greene favored an attempt on the town, not by assault, but by a stratagem. The Americans should attack at night with the untried militia staging a diversionary frontal assault while the Continental troops and those militia with experience followed a picked body of three hundred men through a weak spot in the British flank. Apparently the plan intrigued Sullivan, but in the event had to be abandoned for lack of enough experienced troops.

Then, on the 24th, Washington sent word that one hundred British ships were on the way to Rhode Island. Sullivan's generals voted to withdraw to the north end of
Aquidneck and wait to see if d'Estaing returned. On the 26th Layagette left for Boston to try persuading d'Estaing to return to Rhode Island, and on the 28th the Americans pulled back to the north end of the island. The British pursued immediately, and on the morning of the 29th there was brisk fighting between the leading British units and Sullivan's outposts. After this fighting died down in mid-morning, Greene urged Sullivan to launch an all-out counterattack. Sullivan, however, declined, and Greene later admitted Sullivan had "taken the more prudent measure." About two in the afternoon the British launched a determined attack against the Americans' right wing. Greene led the defense and dealt the British a sound beating. Both sides held their positions the following day, and that evening (the 30th) the Americans withdrew with all their stores to the mainland. The Rhode Island campaign, which had begun with such promise, ended as another American failure.

After the Rhode Island campaign, military operations in the north waned as the British redirected their efforts toward the southern states and the Americans remained too weak to attempt an attack on the strong British position at New York City. Clinton ordered raids against the New England coast and toyed with the idea of trying to take Boston, but these raids and plans served mainly to confuse the Americans about Clinton's intentions. Then in early November Clinton
finally put into motion the southern strategy London had instructed him to carry out back in late spring. He sent General James Grant with 5,000 men to take St. Lucia in the West Indies and General Archibald Campbell with 3,000 men to take Savannah, Georgia. The main British fleet, now under Admiral John Byron, also sailed south to support these operations. By February 1779, both these operations had succeeded, and the southern strategy of the British was off to a promising start.

Throughout the fall and winter of 1778-79, Washington remained uncertain of Clinton's intentions. This uncertainty, coupled with an appreciation of his own army's weaknesses, led Washington to adopt a strictly defensive posture after the Rhode Island campaign, waiting for an unmistakable sign of Clinton's next move. Early in the fall, Washington's chief concern was that Clinton might attempt capturing Boston. Then his attention shifted to how best to winter the army so as to assure its comfort and security while still covering the country. Acting largely on Greene's recommendation, Washington decided to station detachments at West Point and Danbury and then quarter the remainder of the army at Middlebrook, N.J. That way the army could enjoy the more plentiful supplies of northern New Jersey and northeastern Pennsylvania, gain maximum security and discipline by staying largely in one body, and, with the detachments at West Point and Danbury, cover virtually all
the country around New York City. The army began its move to Middlebrook on 25 November. Meanwhile, Washington was wrestling with a proposal to mount a winter or spring expedition against Canada. Washington thought the proposal feasible enough to direct that preparations in the way of gathering supplies and equipment be started for a winter campaign. Then supply and transportation difficulties convinced him a campaign against Canada was impractical, and on 1 January Congress agreed to cancel the expedition. A new proposal already had arisen, however, to capture Washington's attention and even to make use of many of the preparations underway for the Canadian expedition. A recent spate of Indian depredations along the New York and Pennsylvania borders, coupled with the army's limited resources, persuaded Washington to propose in mid-January a campaign against the Indians and to initiate the necessary plans and preparations. The next year would be one of greatly reduced operations in the north.

Despite the relative inactivity of the American army, Greene found himself fully occupied with his quartermaster duties after returning to the main army from Rhode Island in mid-September. All the marching and countermarching from the Hudson highlands to the east that Washington directed as he tried anticipating the next British move drew heavily on quartermaster support. Then, beginning late in October, Greene had to undertake all the preparations and support
activities needed to establish the army in winter quarters
at Middlebrook, N.J., with detachments at West Point and
Danbury. At the same time, in keeping with Washington's
orders, Greene also had to begin stockpiling supplies and
equipment in northern New York first for the proposed
Canadian expedition and then, once that project fell
through, for the Indian expedition undertaken in its stead.
Given the scarcity of supplies and equipment in that
relatively undeveloped area and the difficulty of
transporting the needed items in from other areas, this
posed a tremendous problem for the quartermaster department,
one that absorbed a major portion of the department's
attention and energy for nearly a year.

On top of these already formidable challenges to his
managerial and leadership skills, Greene also was handed
three special projects. On 16 October Congress decided to
move the Convention army, the 5,000 prisoners taken when
Burgoyne surrendered at Saratoga, from Boston to Virginia,
where supplies were more plentiful. Arranging
transportation, logistic support, and encampment during this
move fell naturally to the quartermaster department. Then,
early in February, just after the Convention army completed
its move, Congress directed that the several hundred men of
Count Casimir Pulaski's Legion move from Delaware to South
Carolina to join General Benjamin Lincoln's southern army.
Once again the quartermaster department bore most of the
burden for supporting the Legion's move. Finally, early in January, the department also assumed responsibility for transporting ten thousand casks of surplus rice Congress had purchased from South Carolina to aid New England, which was critically short of flour and meal. Arranging shipping for a thousand mile sea journey in the face of the British blockade and the South Carolina embargo proved another staggering challenge that stretched over six months.

As if the challenges of these various responsibilities were not enough, Greene also was vexed by a number of problems that greatly hampered his department's operations. He continued to suffer from incompetent subordinates, little cooperation from his predecessors, and a lack of horses, wagons, and responsible wagonners. But the most vexing problems were a scarcity of forage, depreciation of the currency, and widespread dissatisfaction with his and his two assistants' profits. Forage steadily had grown more scarce throughout the war. As Greene explained to Washington in October 1778, the ravages of the war had reduced harvests in the area of army operations severely, requiring the transport of forage from other areas. The tremendous increase in land transportation, however, then accelerated the need for forage. It was a vicious circle, and neither Congress nor the states seemed willing or able to help the army. On 26 October Congress passed a law forbidding the use of wheat for forage except in cases of
absolute necessity. Enacted to protect food supplies, the law reduced even further the supplies of forage available to the army. Even more troubling was the people's reluctance to sell forage to the army at reasonable rates. Greene argued for government intervention to prevent outrageous prices. "The People," he declared, "must agree to submit to some seeming arbitrary Edicts or else diminish their Army." Congress asked the states to give the army whatever help it needed to obtain forage at reasonable prices; but while some states passed laws authorizing impressment of forage when necessary, other states did nothing. Moreover, even in those states with impressment laws, local magistrates were extremely reluctant to issue warrants against their friends and neighbors. Or, in at least one case, a local justice advertised for forage at prices more than double what the army offered, apparently so that he could set as high a price as possible if forced to issue impressment warrants.

Closely related to the forage problem was depreciation of Continental and state currency that fueled inflation and drove prices sky-high. Lacking either the power to tax, in the case of Congress, or the will to tax, in the case of the states, American governments had only limited means for raising the money needed to pay for the war. Consequently, both the Congress and the states turned to printing money. This was especially true for the Congress, and the steady increase in paper money soon led to rapid and radical
depreciation of the currency. The value in specie of a Continental dollar went from sixty-seven cents in January 1777, to thirty-seven cents in January 1778, twelve-and-a-half cents in January 1779, and two-and-a-half cents in January 1780. To counter the spiraling price increases that accompanied depreciation, beginning late in 1776 the New England and middle states tried mandatory price regulation. Early attempts at price regulation proved ineffective; the states simply did not have the necessary degree of control over their populations to enforce the regulations in face of the pressures to evade the laws created by commodity scarcities and the overprinting of money. Still, when in November 1777 Congress asked the states to meet to consider methods for curbing inflation, the best the states could recommend was price regulation. The delegates recognized that the problem was the flood of money and that the proper solution was taxation, but they also knew that taxation was just not an option.

Greene scoffed at the notion that general price regulation could curb inflation. Again and again he argued that only taxation could reduce the money supply and bring prices back within reason, and many of his correspondents agreed with him. Then in October 1778 his arguments began taking a different tack as the price increases began seriously hampering the army's ability to purchase goods. As he told Governor George Clinton of New York, "I am well
persuaded from the feeble influence of money that both the
Commisaries and the quarter masters department will stand in
need of the aid of Civil Government to procure sufficient
supplies for the Army." This conviction led Greene to write
the governors of Rhode Island, Connecticut, and
Massachusetts asking them for legislation regulating the
prices of all goods purchased by the army. That as
dedicated a disciple of free trade as Greene would advocate
even partial price regulation shows how serious he believed
the problems had become. The people's greed led them to
raise their prices as the army's needs grew, and, as he
wrote Washington, "If there is not some thing done to check
the extravagence of the People there is no funds in the
Universe that will equal the expense." At Greene's urging
Washington also wrote the governors of the New England and
middle states asking them to regulate the prices of hay and
grain. Nothing ever came of these requests, however, and
the army steadily struggled more and more to feed and equip
itself.

Currency depreciation also led directly to the third
serious challenge facing Greene as quartermaster after he
returned from Rhode Island -- public dissatisfaction with
the department's expenditures and profits. Toward the end
of 1778 criticism of the quartermaster department in
general, and even of Greene and his two principal
assistants, began steadily growing. Greene received
intimations of this criticism from correspondents at Congress like Henry Marchant, Gouverneur Morris, and Joseph Reed. In early November, Congressional dissatisfaction with the operation of the army's supply services led to the creation of a Congressional oversight committee to supervise the operations of the quartermaster and commissary departments. The gist of these criticisms was that the department's tremendous expenditures indicated it was squandering the public's money and that some of the department's agents were deliberately paying high prices to boost their commissions. Greene's involvement in operational matters and subsequent inattention to the department's business from June through August also fueled criticism. No doubt some of the criticism was justified. Almost all Greene's deputies were former merchants and businessmen, a group he once had described as "a body of People whose God is Gain, and their whole plan of Policy is to bring Publck measures to square with their private interest." Many of these men remained active in private business even as they served the public, and at times their private interests did conflict with the public welfare. Nevertheless, it was merchants and businessmen who had the skills needed to manage the quartermaster's business, and their largely selfless and honest efforts kept the army operating under extremely difficult conditions.

Rather than corruption and greed, the principal cause
of the department's exorbitant expenditures and commissions was the depreciation of the currency. This led to outrageous prices and, hence, equally outrageous commissions. Still, even in its specie equivalent, Greene's income was impressive. In the spring of 1779, the department spent $8,000,000 Continental, the equivalent of an annual expenditure of 240,000 pounds sterling. Greene's one-third of one percent commission thus was the equivalent of 2,400 pounds sterling, which was considerably greater than a major general's pay. But even though Greene was earning handsome commissions, he was paid in rapidly depreciating Continental dollars. The only way to protect his income was to invest his commissions quickly. Unfortunately, investment opportunities were rare during the Revolution, being limited mainly to ships, land, and business ventures, and their security was governed almost entirely by fortune. Greene invested heavily during his tenure as quartermaster, but proved almost universally unlucky. Consequently, his seemingly exorbitant commissions yielded little profit. In October 1780, just a few months after resigning as quartermaster, Greene estimated his total worth as only five thousand pounds sterling plus a farm bequeathed him in Rhode Island.

The mounting concern over the department's commissions, however, led Congress to instruct Greene on 20 October to put his deputies, including Pettit and Cox, on salaries.
Greene's first reaction was negative, declaring to Cox he would resign if the salaries proposed were "unequal to the trouble and fatigue, or if the Terms we shall have to offer to the Deputies will not engage good men." But then he quickly reconsidered, observing to Pettit, "I think we shall be very delicately situated. To refuse a reasonable sallary will expose us to the cry of the People; but there is no sallary that the Congress dare give that will bear any proportion to the fatigue and difficulties incident to the Office." Thus, in February, Greene, Pettit, and Cox offered to continue in office for an annual salary each of three thousand pounds sterling, paid quarterly in sterling, specie, or French currency. They would, Greene said, either accept the above proposal, continue under their old arrangement, or resign. The proposal was preposterous, probably designed to force Congress to drop the issue. The three were asking for a salary well in excess of their current commissions and greater than almost anyone else in America, and for payments in hard cash. Not surprisingly, Congress allowed the three to continue under their current commissions and dropped the salary question for the time being. But the issue of exorbitant profits remained and continued to haunt Greene and his assistants.

Greene's extraordinary sensitivity to criticism made him particularly vulnerable to the mounting campaign against his department, souring even further his relations with
Congress and many of his colleagues. This was especially unfortunate as he had performed admirably during the Rhode Island campaign, and without the albatross of the quartermaster's department around his neck he might have received the fulsome praise from all quarters he thought he so richly deserved. As it was, it must have seemed that, other than the few friends and supporters who acknowledged his able services, the entire country wanted only to harp on the inadequacies of the quartermaster's department. And, unable to rise above the incessant sniping at him and his department, Greene reacted petulantly. In his mind, only his herculean efforts had set the department right and made possible the army's strong showing at Monmouth. "The appointment is flattering to my fortune," he wrote William Greene, "but humiliating to my Military pride. I am persuaded I save the public Millions of dollars. Yet I am told some thinks my merit less than my reward."

Greene resented what he viewed as unjustified criticism of his department, declaring that quartermaster agents

are nearly in the same predicament that Lord Chesterfield says ministers of state are. They are not so good as they should be, and by no means as bad as they are thought to be. A charge against a quartermaster-general is most like the cry of a mad dog in England. Every one joins in the cry, and lends their assistance to pelt him to death. Greene longed for praise, recognition, and status. Thus when Henry Marchant chided him for complaining about lack of recognition he replied, "I freely confess I have ever had an
honest ambition of meriting my country's approbation; but I flatter myself I have not been more solicitous to obtain it than studious of deserving it. . . . but I have sometimes thought my services has deserved more honorable notice than they have met with." Probably the best expression of his sense of long-suffering sacrifice and wounded pride is a long rambling letter he wrote to John Brown of Rhode Island on 6 September in response to a letter Brown had written Sullivan criticizing the Rhode Island campaign:

These [critical insinuations] are the rewards and gracious returns I am to expect for years of hard and dangerous service, where every sacrifice of Interest, ease, and domestic pleasure has been given up to the service of my Country. But I flatter myself I am not dependent upon the State of Rhode Island for either my character or consequence in life. However, I cannot help feeling mortified that those that have been at home making their fortunes, and living in the lap of luxury and enjoying all the pleasures of domestic life should be the first to sport with the feelings of Officers who have stood as a barrier between them and ruin.81

Greene's petulant reaction to criticism of him and the quartermaster's department also was tied closely to pessimism about his countrymen's public virtue. "The loss of Morals and the want of public spirit leaves us almost like a rope of sand," he wrote James Varnum. And Varnum and many other correspondents agreed with Greene. They condemned the people's growing love of luxury, avarice, and dissipation, especially prevalent in Philadelphia. They also marked the prevalence of faction and excoriated its depredations. "Factions," Greene said, "I dread, the secret
fomentors often lies conceal'd, and makes tools of those, to effect their designs, who in principle would abhor their measures if they could but see their views."

He readily admitted that in republican governments all public officials must expect criticism and opposition. He called this a "tax generally laid by all free Governments upon their Officers, . . . however meritorious." But there was a limit, and he believed it was "a malevolent age. A season wherein envy, malice, and detraction are very predominant." The vulgar and disaffected were watching prominent men carefully. And the people, taking their sentiments from a few demagogues, were easily led into biased opinions against prominent men. While he knew it was foolish to heed the public's vulgar criticisms, he could not help dwelling on the injustice of men entitled to honor and reward for the sacrifices they had made in public service being "wounded by the Shafts of reproach." There was more than a trace of bitterness in his acknowledgement that "Public gratitude . . . is a monster in politics and he that expects an adequate compensation for the Time and sacrifices made in their employ, will find himself greatly disappointed." Even Congress was falling prey to excessive jealousy of the army, letting the actions of a few injudicious officers sully everyone's reputation and putting too much stock in the lesson of Cromwell and the British Parliament. "I am persuaded," Greene argued, that "a
generous confidence and a just conduct towards the American Army will forever keep it from swerving from the laws of honor or honesty." A master should trust the fidelity of a servant; otherwise, he undermines the servant's pride and confidence.

Despite his increasing fulminations about Americans' declining public virtue, Greene's own behavior remained questionable. He had no qualms about defaming the characters of his perceived enemies. Thus he cheered the wounding of Thomas Conway in a duel with General John Cadwalader, declaring "I wish every such restless discontented spirit may meet with such a seasonable check."

Deriding General Gates's decision to take the command in Boston, Greene said of Gates, "He had rather be the first in a Village than the second man in Rome." And taking aim at Thomas Mifflin he insinuated that Mifflin had turned legislator hoping for the chief seat in government because he had failed to gain command of the army. "He is a restless spirit and like Belzebub would rather be chief in H--- than a servant in Heaven." Clearly Greene's own virtue did not extend to honoring all who served and sacrificed for the cause. Greene also continued to have no qualms about using his privileged position to aid his own and his friends' interests. He passed information to his family about goods that were selling to the army at a profit; asked Congress to appoint his brother Jacob as an
agent for disposing of captured British property; asked one of his deputies to advance his cousin Griffin cash or letters of credit for some business Griffin was engaged in "to the Westward;" asked Jeremiah Wadsworth to consider buying rum from Griffin and Jacob, his two business partners; and asked Governor Clinton to waive New York's embargo so Griffin could move some flour from New York to Rhode Island. Admittedly, Greene believed all his actions were justified by his position and his sacrifices, but so did most other Americans as they studiously protected and advanced their private interests. If American public virtue was declining, even the staunchest Revolutionaries, like Greene, had a hand in its fall.

Greene's own transgressions of the public virtue he so vigorously espoused actually were more typical than not of all the Revolutionary leaders. It was a time when men in public service had to look after their own interests because the state had neither the organization, the resources, nor the inclination to do so. So despite his self-aggrandizement, Greene remained an especially valuable member of the Revolutionary leadership. By the fall of 1778 he had become an experienced and polished Revolutionary general who had adapted his ideas about military policy and strategy to fit the particular circumstances of the war he was engaged in. With respect to military policy, he stressed the importance of well-trained, well-disciplined
"regular" troops and a professional officers corps. America
could not win its Revolution relying solely on militia and
elected officers. Greene also saw that the Revolution had
brought a new relation between the army and the people.
Unlike the great armies of Europe during the eighteenth
century, the Americans' Revolutionary army came from and
belonged to the people, and without the people's support,
the army would wither and die. Understanding this
relationship, Greene argued for taking every possible care
against abusing and alienating the civilian population.
With respect to strategy Greene advocated caution, insisting
repeatedly that the Americans should not engage in battle
unless circumstances clearly favored them. Moreover, within
their defensive posture, the Americans' principal concern
should be to maintain an army in being rather than to
protect territory. To defeat the Americans, the British
must destroy the American army, for the army was what gave
strength to the Americans' resistance. The British had
already discovered that taking cities and marching through
states would not produce victory. The British army, Greene
said,

...is like a Ship plowing the Ocean; they have
no sooner past than the scene closes and the
people rise anew to oppose them. This will ever
be the case while the grand Army is considered as
capable of giving support to the peoples
endeavors. But destroy this Army and the
confidence of the people will sink and nothing but
that can overcome us. For the degree of
opposition will ever be in proportion to the
peoples confidence in their own strength and
security. I think therefore this Army may be considered the Stamina of American liberty.87

An interesting corollary to Greene's development into a skilled and knowledgeable Revolutionary general was the parallel solidification of his religious beliefs into an essentially non-denominational, undogmatic, and casual Protestant faith in God. In many ways Greene became the very antithesis of his common characterization by historians as the "Quaker general." By 1779 he had left Quakerism, and in fact any formal religious practice, far behind. His early enlightenment had made many Quaker precepts seem ridiculous, and his experience in business and then in the army convinced him that religious zeal usually hindered worldly success. Moreover, he detested the hypocrisy and pretension he saw in so much of the religious establishment. The mean and base acts practiced under "the mask of religion," he said, "would almost make one suspect it is all a farce, and only calculated to give the wicked an advantage over the weak." He and his family would "serve the Lord," but by "a noble and generous practice" rather than by precept. "It is that which gives luster to a character and merit to profession. Those that are weighed and found wanting in the ballance will receive little advantage from high pretensions."88

His non-conformity was most evident in his continued support of Reverend John Murray, founder of Universalism in America. Greene asked Murray to serve as chaplain for the
Rhode Island brigade in May 1775, and later defended his friend against "the priests" of Gloucester, Massachusetts, who objected to Murray's sermons on "universal salvation." Even though he dissociated himself from any formal church, Greene kept his faith in God. As he wrote John Adams in May 1777, "I am not one of those fine Gentlemen who despises all moral rectitude and Religious duties. Altho I am no enthusiast, I nevertheless most devoutly believe in the observance of Religious duties." A measure of his continuing faith was his strong support for the army's chaplains and occasional declarations like the following comfort offered to his wife Catherine on the eve of the Newport campaign: "Remember the same good Providence protects in all places, and secures from harm in the most perilous situation." Not surprisingly, his faith also had a chauvinistic cast. Greene assured himself and others that since their cause was righteous God would advance it. Thus after the battles of Trenton and Princeton he could declare "My heart overflows with Gratitude to divine Providence who hath smote our enemies with very great pannick and worked wonders in our favor." In part this stemmed from the natural inclination of all men to claim divine protection for their endeavors. No doubt it also was largely a carryover from having grown up in Puritan society, constantly exposed to the Puritans' conviction that God had sent them on an "errand into the wilderness" to create a
model society founded on piety and virtue.

Greene's development entered an important new phase with his appointment as quartermaster general. The department he took over was in a shambles, and bringing at least a semblance of order and effectiveness to the department's operations tested Greene's management skills to the fullest. That he proved himself worthy of the challenged was testified to by the army's ability to sustain its operations throughout 1778. As quartermaster, Greene learned firsthand of the almost insuperable obstacles blocking the army's supply. He also learned the ways those obstacles might be partially got around, invaluabale knowledge once he took over his own army in the south. He also learned firsthand the difficulties of working directly with Congress, difficulties that, because of his own pride and sensitivity, he never learned fully how to surmount. As he wrestled with the myriad problems that confounded the army's staff agencies, however, he became a more well-rounded and knowledgeable Revolutionary general.

Not surprisingly, Greene explained the quartermaster's problems largely in terms of the public's failing virtue. Luxury and ambition were sapping the Americans' strength and determination. Moreover, Americans' greed and self-centeredness led them into malevolent attacks on the very men who were sacrificing their all for the cause. One product of the public's fallen virtue in Greene's view was
the Conway Cabal. Another product was the mounting criticism against the quartermaster department in general for its expense and against Greene and his two principal deputies in particular for their profits. Typically, Greene pined for recognition and loudly protested his own innocence and virtue. And the growing threat to his reputation made him wish he could be free of the job. Still, Greene himself remained a classic example of one of the principal paradoxes of the Revolution. Even as he lamented the declining virtue of the people, he himself remained extraordinarily self-interested -- castigating his opponents, promoting his reputation, pursuing his private fortune, and smoothing the way for his friends.

His new job also fed Greene's conservatism. As he wrestled with the inefficiency of government at every level, the powerlessness of Congress, and the parochialism of the states, he became even more convinced of the need for strong central government and a powerful national army. And as he found himself increasingly under attack, he stepped up his calls for a deferential and hierarchical society in which the officer corps would hold an elite position.

Even as he struggled with the unfamiliar and unpleasant challenges of the quartermaster's job, Greene continued to grow as a Revolutionary strategist. He began to understand that the war would be protracted, making it even more imperative for the Americans not to squander their
strength. At the same time, he also began to understand that the American army drew its strength from public support. Consequently, it must secure enough success to sustain public confidence and determination. While he urged prudence at the broadest strategic level, he tempered his caution with periodic calls for offensive operations at the tactical level, pointing out that the people demanded some show of activity from their army. This recognition of the intimate link between the army and the people in revolutionary war was one of the most important elements in Greene's development. Finally, during the Rhode Island campaign Greene showed a fine sense of the techniques of coalition warfare. He recognized not only the value of French support but also the need to carefully coordinate American and French efforts and the subsequent need to bend at times to accommodate the idiosyncrasies of an ally. In all likelihood, Greene's own frustrations with the lack of cooperation among the states made him sensitive to the special demands of coalition warfare. And this awareness of the need to coordinate closely all the threads of American power would play a vital part in his success in the south.

Seventeen seventy-nine proved to be a year of limited action for Washington's army. France's entry into the war, coupled with their own inability to gain a decisive victory
over Washington's army, already had convinced the British to shift the focus of their operations to the West Indies and the southern states; and in November 1778 Clinton dispatched expeditions against Georgia and the French-held island of St. Lucia. The British enjoyed early successes in both the West Indies and Georgia, but the French and the Americans fought back tenaciously in each theater. Then late in the spring of 1779 Spain entered the war against Britain, and during the summer the British waited breathlessly as an intended Franco-Spanish attack against England disintegrated for lack of coordination between the two new allies and inadequate logistic support. Given the extent of the British effort in the south and against her European enemies, Clinton was content to keep the British forces in New England and the middle states sitting tight in New York City and Newport.

Other than several raids against New England towns, which, interestingly in light of his later promotion of guerrilla warfare in South Carolina Greene condemned as "predatory war" and "a most hellish plan [that] will soon degenerate into all kinds of barbarity on both sides," the British undertook only one significant action in the north during all of 1779. In late May Clinton moved out of New York City with six thousand men against two forts Washington was building across the Hudson River from each other at Stony Point and Verplanck's Point, just a few miles south of
Peekskill. Clinton easily took the two forts, hoping to draw the Americans into a general engagement, but Washington simply deployed in a strong defensive position farther upriver, between Peekskill and West Point, and waited for Clinton's next move. Clinton, not strong enough to attack Washington, soon retired to New York City. Unable to produce decisive action in the north, Clinton turned south again. Taking advantage of three thousand reinforcements he received in August, and evacuating Verplanck's Point, Stony Point, and Newport in October to free even more troops, he sailed from New York City in late December with eight thousand troops bound for Charleston, South Carolina. The war in the north had ended.

In the face of British inactivity, Washington was content to remain on the defensive. Three and a half years of war had sapped American strength and will, leaving Washington with hardly more than ten thousand troops, too few to undertake major offensive operations against the strong British positions at New York City or Newport. Greene fully supported Washington's decision to remain on the defensive. Exhausted resources, a weary population, and depreciated currency all made necessary "a contracted plan and a breathing spell for the People" in 1779. Moreover, forced to divide their meager forces to protect the Hudson River, New Jersey, and Connecticut, the Americans could not concentrate sufficient force to attack either of the British
strongholds, especially given the greater ease with which the British could concentrate their forces to meet an attack. Greene would have preferred the offensive, he said, but given the Americans' weakness, "to attempt what is not in our power to accomplish will only serve to expose our weakness and add new difficulties to our present distresses." The only offensive action Greene supported was an expedition against the Indians in central and western New York. The Americans could remain on the defensive, Greene believed, because the entry of France and Spain into the war prevented the British concentrating the necessary force to destroy the American army, which was the only route to British victory. Not even the reportedly large British reinforcements enroute to America would turn the tide.

In keeping with this advice and his own inclinations, Washington undertook only limited operations in 1779. In May Sullivan started off with about four thousand Continentals and militia on a four month campaign that devastated the Iroquois territory in central and western New York, destroying forty Indian villages and 160,000 bushels of corn. Then in mid-July General Anthony Wayne stormed Stony Point in a nighttime bayonet attack, killing or capturing the entire British garrison Clinton had left behind when he had withdrawn from the Hudson Highlands a month or so earlier. Finally, in mid-August Colonel Henry Lee led a similar attack against the British post at Paulus Hook, New
Jersey, and killed or captured all but forty of the two hundred man garrison. Following these limited successes Washington put Greene to work finding suitable winter quarters, and by December the main body of the army had settled in at Morristown.

With the relative lull in the war, Greene found increased opportunity to involve himself in peripheral concerns. One area that seemed to draw more of his time was his personal business and finances. No doubt the hefty commissions he was earning as quartermaster also encouraged his increased business activity. He invested in a share of the Batsto Furnace in New Jersey, in a pair of burned frigates being salvaged, and in several privateers; and he also continued passing advice to his family about selling goods to the army for a profit. In all these activities Greene revealed sensitivity to the propriety of having his private business overlap the business of the quartermaster department. After telling his brother Jacob about investing in Batsto Furnace, he cautioned Jacob to tell no one other than their cousin Griffin. Knowledge of his investments would, he said, "only serve to raise the spight and envy of those who don't wish me well. . . . It is not only necessary to be honest; but it is necessary to give no grounds for suspicion." Otherwise people would accuse him of misappropriating public monies. An even clearer sign that Greene recognized he was walking a knife edge concerning
conflict of interest in some of his activities occurred in early April, when he agreed to form a commercial partnership with Jeremiah Wadsworth and Barnabas Deane. He told Wadsworth he did not want it known he was involved in the venture, and he cautioned Wadsworth to keep his own involvement secret as well. He insisted that Wadsworth keep their correspondence on the subject secure, and heartily approved a code Wadsworth suggested for just such a purpose. Greene even suggested they use fictitious names when writing about the partnership! Just as he had explained to Jacob, Greene wrote Wadsworth that they must appear free of any connection that could lead to a misapplication of public money. The people, he said, had "taken up an Idea that Principle lays no restraint upon a man when his interest demands a violation." In Greene's case, the people may not have been too far off the mark.

Another interest Greene had more time for was his fascination with the ills of American society and their effect on the war effort. The growth of factions and their single-minded pursuit of party interests at the expense of the public good concerned him most. And he deplored the accompanying spread of jealousy and distrust, for, he said, "The loss of confidence in one another is a fatal evil. Union of councils and Union in measures are the strength and Sinews of a nation." An interesting dimension of Greene's advocacy of social harmony and unanimity was his attitude
toward the loyalists, revealed in a series of letters he exchanged with Rhode Island leaders late in 1779. He advised great moderation in punishing loyalists, cautioning that "proscription and confiscation are rather to be considered as misfortunes than benefits to Government. ... Nothing tends more to unhinge Government and destroy the morals of society." In his view, no loyalist should "fall a sacrifice but such as may be dangerous hereafter, or ... necessary to deter others from a similar conduct."

Greene's fears about the evils brewing in American society were powerfully colored by the public's apparent neglect of the army. Inadequate pay, depreciation of the currency, jealous attacks against prominent officers, and too great a haste to find fault without due consideration of past services all were signs of an ungrateful public. But along with concern for the cause, there also was more than a touch of imperiousness in Greene's attitude toward the public, as well as a definite leaning toward a strong central government. When a Mr. Arnold of Morristown objected to Greene's using his house for winter quarters, Greene replied that if necessary he would quarter himself without Arnold's permission. This would be disagreeable, Greene said,

but the officers of the Army will not lodge in the open fields for fear of putting the Inhabitants to a little inconvenience. ... If the Citizens become barbarous and inhuman and the Magistrates cruel and unreasonable, the Army of the United States will not forget what is due
What is most ironic, of course, is that one of the specific grievances leading to the Americans' revolution was the quartering of British troops in private homes. Clearly the Revolution was changing Greene's political ideas; and Greene was not alone, for Washington fully supported his actions concerning Mr. Arnold.

While in the absence of hard campaigning Greene did find more time to pursue strictly personal concerns, circumstances forced him to devote the greatest bulk of his time to the increasingly difficult and distasteful duties of the quartermaster's department. What made his job most difficult was the critical shortage of money. Unable to tax, Congress had been printing paper money steadily since the beginning of the war. Now, as emission piled on top of emission, the value of Continental currency plummeted (to two-and-a-half cents by the end of 1779), and the corresponding rise in prices made it impossible for the Treasury Board to keep any of the supply departments adequately supplied with cash. Pleas for money filled Greene's correspondence in 1779, and his desperation is shown by the following, written to Pettit in mid-October:

What are we to do for want of Cash? ... For God's sake contrive ways and means with the Treasury Board to give us greater supplies of money or all is ruin and confusion. There is not a department in the whole military machine but what is calling upon us for an extensive transportation and the people are refusing to start a single load without their pay. How are we to get on the Stores in this situation when all
our Agents are out of Cash and Credit and now largely, very largely, in debt?96

As Greene told President Samuel Huntington, depreciation dried up all the sources of supply. This meant Greene had to employ numerous agents to ferret out the needed supplies, burdening the public with expense and aggravation, and creating suspicion, resentment, and jealousy. The differing conditions in each locality imposed unequal burdens on the people, and the states' parochial concerns for the benefit of their own inhabitants led magistrates to overzealous protection of citizens against impressment of forage and provisions. People had even begun to sue quartermaster agents. The whole situation prompted Greene to report to Washington at the end of the year that there was little hope the quartermaster's department could provide the army's requirements in winter quarters, much less prepare for the coming campaign.

Making the whole situation even less tolerable was Greene's conviction that Congress was acting incompetently in dealing with the money shortage. Repeatedly Greene and his confidants lamented that Congress had acted unwisely regarding the currency and that proposed actions held no more promise than past policies. Greene criticized Congress's lack of industry and its unwillingness to delegate responsibilities to outside boards and committees. The business of Congress, he pointed out, is "too complex and Multi-form to digest . . . into method and order." He
and his advisors also suspected that a variety of parties and factions were hamstringing Congress's efforts to rectify the country's finances, either by deliberately aiming to destroy the currency, or by involving Congress in party disputes that prevented its effective action on critical questions. The root of the problem, however, Greene saw, was the inability or unwillingness of Congress and the states to take the necessary steps to restore the currency. In Greene's view, only taxes and loans would cure the evils of overprinting and depreciation, but Congress did not have the power to tax and both Congress and the states were unwilling to pay the political price for taxes. After all, tax burdens were virtually non-existent in the American colonies and British taxation had been another of the specific causes of the Revolution. Congress made an effort in the direction of taxes and loans in 1779 - asking the states to contribute sixty million dollars to the Continental treasury by January 1780 and calling for a surge of public spirit to support the currency. But as Greene and his friends observed, these measures lacked the vigor and force needed to turn the situation around.

While the money shortage may have been what made his job as quartermaster most difficult, what made it most distasteful was the department's steadily deteriorating relations with Congress. Not surprisingly, Congress was growing increasingly restive over the department's continued
inefficiencies, its rapidly escalating expenditures, and the correspondingly exorbitant commissions Greene, Pettit, and Cox were earning. Many Congressmen insisted that at least some of Greene's deputies were corrupt, and no doubt a few questioned Greene's integrity and competence. For his part, Greene reacted to these criticisms with all the righteous indignation one might expect. He accused Congress of a "stupor . . . so great that nothing can alarm their fears or promote a spirit of industry," and he claimed that at least some members of Congress were deliberately trying to discredit the department in the eye of the public. He vigorously defended his integrity and economy, and pointedly reminded Congress not only of the abysmal conditions under which he had to conduct his business but also of what he had accomplished despite those disadvantages. Moreover, he reminded Congress of his long service to the cause and of how he had sacrificed a high line command to "descend" to the quartermaster's post. So wounded did Greene feel by the "injurious imputations" and "evil Reports" that he asked Congress "to signify their Sense of our Conduct." Thus on 7 June Congress passed a resolution expressing confidence in the "integrity and abilities of the quarter master general and commissary general" but also asserting there was reason to believe "abuses have been committed by inferior officers in their respective departments."

What little comfort Greene might have drawn from this
resolution, however, had already been compromised by the creation on 28 May of a Congressional committee to "make strict enquiry into the establishment and contingent expenses of the respective boards and departments; and to consider and report the retrenchments and reformations which shall appear to be practicable and expedient." And it did not help that one of the three members of the committee (along with John Dickinson and Nathaniel Scudder) was Roger Sherman, whom Greene called that "midnight politician which we have often talked about for his duplicity," and who, according to Pettit, had suggested that Greene and his assistants serve for nothing and then remarked: "instead of these exertions in behalf of a sinking Country, we [Greene, Pettit, and Cox] fold our arms and float with the tide, go which way it will; snug and easy in our own emolument amidst the ruin and distress of our fellow citizens." Relations with Congress obviously were not getting better; in fact they had deteriorated so far that just a week after the Sherman committee was formed Wadsworth had tendered his resignation as commissary general because of "unmerited abuse and slander indiscriminately heaped on my Department 100 by every petty scribler in the United States."

Sherman's committee was only the first step taken to act on a Treasury Board report published 27 April calling on Congress to put the supply departments "on a different footing with respect to the expenditures of public money."
The report declared Congress could not allow the "present enormous expenditures" of the quartermaster's and commissary's departments to continue and insisted that the commission system was a major cause of the country's financial problems. The second step Congress took to act on the Treasury Board report was a resolution passed on 9 July asking each state's executive to investigate the conduct of all employees of the quartermaster's and commissary's departments working in their states and dismiss those suspected of misbehavior. The states were then authorized to appoint replacements for any officers dismissed for misconduct. The resolution also asked the states to examine the number of quartermaster and commissary employees working in their jurisdictions and dismiss any they considered unnecessary. Greene considered the act a disaster, declaring it would "give the last finishing stroke to our Department." Not only were the states largely unqualified to supervise the department's activities, but no worthy men would consent to serve in the department on "such a precarious footing, subject to the persecution of every envious and interested person." Late in July Greene wrote Pettit that the resolution "has created such jealousies and distrust among the people that it has become very difficult and I fear will soon be impossible to carry on the business. The Agents are so embarrassed and perplexed by the prejudices of the people that most of them are tird of
the service." And in August he asked John Collins, a Congressman from Rhode Island, about Congress's intentions for the quartermaster department: "Is it their wish to throw it into a state of confusion? Is it their interest to bring the Army into a greater degree of distress? Have they in view the reformation of public abuses or only that of serving party purposes?"

As if Congress's attacks on the department were not enough, Greene also had to suffer the parochial policies of the different states. New Jersey no doubt was the worst, passing two laws in late spring and summer of 1779 that seriously obstructed the operations of his department in that critical state. First, New Jersey set up a system of county committees to set the prices of goods purchased by the army. As Greene pointed out to Moore Furman, the deputy quartermaster for New Jersey, this law guaranteed a diversity of prices as each committee responded to local conditions and pressures. This diversity quickly would spark jealousy, resentment, and resistance. Moreover, local committees would "act from popular Motives and in general . . . be inclind to gratify the people in their exorbitant demands." The state could fix prices efficiently only by appointing a single committee to act for the whole state. More serious was the New Jersey law taxing staff officers working in the state, which Greene called "one of the most tyrannical Acts that ever disgrac'd a free Government."
Greene wrote a strong letter of protest to President John Jay denouncing the law as an arbitrary and unprincipled attack on the quartermaster's and commissary's departments that would drive every worthy staff officer out of the service. Congress took no action, however, and one Congressman described Greene's letter as being "of a very insolent nature." It was clear to Greene that he and his department were under direct attack at both the national and the state levels.

With Congressional and state attacks already making his job as quartermaster intolerable, in late July Greene received yet another jolt. Congress published its latest listing of the command structure of the army, leaving Greene with no position in the line. His reaction was immediate. As he wrote Pettit, "If I am to be excluded from the honors of the line, I shall quit the Department immediately. For I would not hold it upon such terms for $200,000 a year. My rank is reserved by act of Congress and I conceive my claim to be just." He quickly wrote to several other general officers expressing his dismay at being left off the list of line officers and asking their opinion of whether, having reserved his line rank at the time of his appointment as quartermaster general, he had the same right to line command in time of action as if he was not quartermaster general. He also pointed out that "If an Officer is to lose his command and be totally excluded from the honors of the line,
in consequence of being appointed Quarter Master General, it will be a bar against any officer of rank accepting the appointment." Unfortunately, only about half his fellow generals supported his position; the others believed he had surrendered his right to line command. More importantly, Washington also disagreed with Greene. Greene had written asking Washington's views on 29 July, and Washington reluctantly replied on 3 September. Washington said he understood Greene's reservation of line rank to be not a guarantee of permanent line command but a way around the Congressional resolution preventing any officer from holding two commissions simultaneously. This allowed Washington to assign Greene to temporary line commands when needed (i.e., the Monmouth and Newport campaigns) and also guaranteed Greene's right to resume line command if he resigned as quartermaster. In Washington's view, Greene's standing as quartermaster should be the same as quartermasters in other armies, who did not exercise permanent line commands but were asked by their commanders at times to assume a line command for special purposes.

By the end of 1779 Greene had reached the end of his tether as quartermaster. The insuperable obstacles confronting his department, the mounting attacks on himself
and the operations of his department, and now the denial of his right to line command all combined to persuade him to resign the quartermaster's post. He had threatened resignation off and on almost from the time he had taken over as quartermaster, but he had issued these threats merely to pressure Congress into some favorable action. In 1779, however, his talk of resignation took on a new tone. His first serious mention of resigning came in early March when in a letter to Jeremiah Wadsworth he speculated that the growing criticism of the quartermaster's department was the work of some Congressional party and declared that "the moment I can reduce it to a certainty I will leave the 106 department." From this point on Greene's intention to resign steadily took shape. Late in April he told Washington he would step down unless the committee from Congress gave him some satisfaction, and three months later he wrote the Board of War he would resign immediately if he could do so without hampering the present campaign. By mid-August he had reached a firm decision, writing Pettit that he was determined to resign "as soon as I can get out of the business without exposing myself to ruin or disgrace." And in September he wrote John Collins he would stay until the end of the present campaign and then find a way to quit without injuring the army. Finally on 12 December he sent President Samuel Huntington formal notice of his decision to resign contingent on two conditions: the
approbation of Congress; and the security of the army.

The die was now cast. It would take another eight months and considerable recriminations back and forth before his resignation actually took effect, but Greene was closing another chapter in his development as a Revolution general. And while his experience as quartermaster had added new dimensions to his expertise, it also had exposed weaknesses and vulnerabilities in his character.

Greene's second year as quartermaster general was filled with as much turbulence as the first, and Greene became increasingly dissatisfied with his position as time went on. Though the army undertook only peripheral operations, the difficulties of supply continued to mount. Worsening money shortages and increasingly strained relations with Congress and the state governments made Greene's job a nightmare. The army's waning strength reinforced Greene's growing strategic caution, although he still retained his preference for offensive action whenever prudent. The army's troubles also reinforced his condemnation of the public for its vices and its unwillingness to bear the sacrifices necessary for a strong army. Frustrated by the weakness of the American effort, Greene seemed to find compensation in throwing himself even more zealously into his private business affairs. By the end of the year his private activities had crossed the line of propriety so far that he had to urge his associates to
secrecy. At the same time, the public's dissatisfaction with the costs, inefficiencies and profits of the quartermaster department was reaching a fever pitch. Congress determined to take a hand in bringing the department under tighter control, and Greene, his integrity and reputation under serious attack, set in motion his resignation.

Though at the time he had no special prospects for command, within a year the conjunction of events had placed him command of all American forces in the south. There he would demonstrate that over the course of his apprenticeships as commander and staff officer he had built upon his earlier education experience the skills and insights that made him an exceptional Revolutionary general.
NOTES


18. "From Captain John Gooch," 7 April 1778, Greene Papers, II, 333-4; "From Colonel Hugh Hughes," 23 April 1778, Greene Papers, II, 352; Showman, II, 353; "To President Henry Laurens," 1 May 1778, Greene Papers, II, 370; "From Colonel Hugh Hughes," 3 May 1778, Greene Papers,
II, 374-5.


31. Quoted in Higginbotham, p. 221.
32. Showman, II, 277-9; Higginbotham, p. 217.

33. Showman, II, 253, 277-9; Higginbotham, pp. 216-22.


50. Showman, II, 446.


57. "To the President of Congress," 3 August 1778, Writings of Washington, XII, 277.

58. Showman, pp. 457, 14, 249, 272.


60. Showman, II, 482-5.

61. Showman, II, 484-6.


66. Showman, II, 511, 503-4; "To George Washington," 31


70. "To George Washington," 5 October 1778, Greene Papers, II, 541; Showman, III, 35.

71. Showman, III, 52, 234, 134.


73. Showman, III, 479.

74. Showman, II, 76, 88-9, 300.


CONCLUSION

By the end of 1779, Nathanael Greene had risen to the first rank of military leadership in the American Revolution. Only Washington exceeded him in importance or overall ability. During his command apprenticeship he had repeatedly proved his ability to handle his troops in battle and in camp with a sure and steady hand. During his tenure as quartermaster general he had shown a clear grasp of the logistical problems that bedeviled the American army and had done all within his power to stretch ridiculously slim resources to cover the army's minimum needs. And throughout both periods, in his correspondence and in Washington's councils of war, he revealed an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the unique nature of the Revolutionary War and of the methods and strategies the Americans needed to pursue to win the war. Of all Washington's subordinates, Greene was best suited and prepared to make a success of a major independent command. That largely is the reason why, once he had freed himself from the quartermaster department, Congress, in October 1780, gave him command of American forces in the south. And there, in a theater where the challenges proved too severe for the abilities of men like Benjamin Lincoln and Horatio Gates, Greene cemented the
reputation he had pursued so assiduously.

Greene had followed an unusual path to the summit of the American command. Who could have suspected that the young Nathanael, growing up in a devout Quaker home with little formal education, would one day play such a leading military role in America's revolution? The foundations of his character were rooted in his Rhode Island heritage, in his work in the family's fields and mills and shops, and in his education in Quaker theology. Rhode Island's unique history promoted in her citizens dedication to political autonomy, toleration of diversity, and the determination to resist any form or degree of coercion. As much as any colony, Rhode Island was born out of dissent and rebellion, and not many of her citizens could have escaped having their views colored by these attitudes. The Greene family ran a complex of locally-prosperous business enterprises that required the full employment of every able-bodied member of the family. Combined with the family's firm grounding in Puritan social values, this labor in the family business instilled in Greene a dedication to hard work and vocational excellence. His study of Quaker theology taught Greene of man's right to direct inner communication with God's spirit, of the primacy of spiritual worship over mere outward human ceremonies, and of salvation available to everyone, regardless of church membership. More importantly, Quakerism fostered in Greene anti-establishment and
anti-authoritarian attitudes that, combined with Rhode Island's own heritage of dissent, left him primed to reject the hold of any Puritan church establishment, the most powerful institution of social and political control in New England. Ironically, in the end, it even led to his abandoning Quakerism. Greene's willingness to think independently and to dissent, coupled with his genuine confidence about his personal salvation, gave him the self-assurance, freedom of thought, and strength of character essential to his success as a Revolutionary general.

Nathanael Greene had an impressively powerful intellect and an active, questioning, analytical mind -- all evident in the quality of his insights and arguments in his correspondence. That kind of mind needed employment, and early in his teens Greene put his mind to work digesting important books on theology, literature, natural philosophy, history, and political theory. His early enlightenment focused on "rational" Christianity, Enlightenment thought and the classics. Rational Christianity and Enlightenment thought worked hand in hand to demystify men's understanding of God and the universe and to downplay the importance of formal church establishments. Rational Christianity and the Enlightenment downplayed divine revelation and intervention and instead insisted on man's responsibility to use his God-given reason to discover the rational laws that governed
the universe and to work out his own salvation. As well, Enlightenment thought stressed the uncertainty of all knowledge and insisted that men think for themselves and subject every idea to careful scrutiny. The classics complemented Enlightenment thought by offering purely secular arguments for the value of equanimity, moderation and virtue. Greene's early enlightenment separated him from the essentially passive Quaker mentality that kept men partially withdrawn from the physical world, looking inward, and waiting for God's inspiration before thinking or acting. Instead, Greene grew more and more interested in the workings of the world. He took pride in his natural capacities, worked hard to improve them, and began putting them to work to improve his world.

As Greene entered adulthood his interests naturally turned more and more toward political questions, and this natural inclination was reinforced by the growing tensions between the colonies and England. England's decisions to begin enforcing the Molasses Act and to enact the Sugar Act and the Stamp Act came within a two-year span and generated tremendous political turmoil in the colonies. Greene's views on these issues were shaped not only by Rhode Island's history of political autonomy and resistance to coercion, but also by the histories and political theory he had begun reading. These books promoted republican and representative forms of government, hammered home the need for private and
public virtue, and warned of the corrupting influence of ambition, luxury and the pursuit of private interest. As his own colony put itself in the forefront of resistance to greater British control, Greene embraced the radical political ideas in his books and made them the foundation of his personal political philosophy.

Greene's thinking and character were not without contradictions, however. Despite his preference for republican and representative forms of government, in keeping with most of the histories and political commentaries he read, he favored a hierarchical society based on a natural aristocracy of talent and virtue. He wanted a deferential social order and feared the excesses of democracy. His reading extolled the benefits of public virtue -- of disinterestedness, equanimity, service, sacrifice and moderation. At the same time, he got a first-hand education in the virulent factional politics that predominated in Rhode Island. His direct exposure to battles for colonial power like the Ward-Hopkins dispute taught him well the techniques of party politics. And while the evils of faction drew some of his sharpest denunciations, he did not forget those methods that had proved successful in Rhode Island's turbulent politics. Likewise, as a young partner in a tightly-knit family business, Greene learned the importance of cultivating those connections that tied his family and its associates together in a network of profit.
Greene was an ambitious businessman, anxious to make his fortune, and throughout the war he spent an extraordinary amount of time pursuing his private business interests. And as a corollary to satisfying his financial ambitions, he also invested great care and effort in helping advance his family's and friends' interests. Ambition, in fact, may have been the single greatest influence in Greene's life; for not only did he crave fortune, he also craved honor and glory. Honor and glory were respected classical values when combined with disinterestedness. Greene's desire for reputation and for a loftier social standing, however, was almost lustful. His pride and concern for his reputation were so strong, in fact, they led to an extreme sensitivity to criticism and opposition that bordered at times on paranoia.

Strangely, the contradictions in Greene's character actually contributed to his effectiveness as a Revolutionary general. His preference for a hierarchical society led him to push for a much needed degree of order in Revolutionary American society. As well, the conservative strains in his political thought quickly led him once the war began to argue for union, a strong central government, and a powerful national army -- each of which could have increased American strength. His experience in factional politics allowed him to operate effectively in the rough and tumble politics that characterized the Revolution at both the national and the
state levels. Despite their preachings against faction and party, the Revolutionaries depended heavily on both. Despite its seamier side, Greene's ambition was what drove him. It was his craving for both fame and fortune that pushed him to serve the Revolution for the duration. Greene must have seen clearly that the Revolution created the opportunity for social, political and economic mobility. Finally, even his sensitivity to criticism served a positive purpose, helping create in him an uncommon sensitivity to how Revolutionary policies and operations affected public opinion.

It took the events of 1772-1775 to complete Nathanael Greene's radicalization and to propel him toward the role he would play in the war. The Gaspee affair affected the Greene family directly and pulled Nathanael into the ranks of opponents of English "oppression." As the intensity of Rhode Island resistance rose steadily in response to the Gaspee affair, the Boston Port Bill, and the remaining Coercive Acts, it swept Greene along with it. And his reading reinforced this process. He encountered the ideas of the English radical whigs in pamphlets and in Rhode Island's newspapers, and he read complementary political and social treatises like Adam Ferguson's *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* and *The Spectator*. His acceptance of Revolutionary ideology strengthened his commitment to the cause. More importantly, perhaps, understanding
Revolutionary ideology helped him see how to tap the new social and political forces released by the Revolution.

As relations with England worsened, Greene joined with other East Greenwich men in forming a volunteer militia company, the Kentish Guards, and practiced the rudiments of military drill. He also pondered the ideas on military affairs he had encountered in various histories and political commentaries. Most importantly, he began studying the standard military treatises of his day, absorbing important lessons on the methods of command and leadership, as well as the contradictory strategic legacy of mid-eighteenth century Europe -- a strategic legacy that included both the offensive war of Caesar and Frederick and the war of maneuver of Saxe.

All in all, Greene had prepared himself remarkably well for his unexpected role as Revolutionary general. He had honed his intellectual powers through extensive careful reading. His business experience had sharpened his managerial skills and given him faith in his natural capacities. He both understood and embraced the Revolution's political ideology. The emphasis on public virtue in his histories and political commentaries helped him realize how much military strength depended on sustaining the link between the army and the public. Finally, his military studies had given him as much technical skill as anyone who was not a professional soldier
could have hoped for.

Serving as a subordinate commander under Washington for the first three years of the war, Greene quickly proved his competence both as a commander and as a member of Washington's council of war. His energy, initiative and intelligence impressed Washington so much that even after Greene had erred badly during the Fort Washington-Fort Lee campaign, Washington continued to rely on him as one of his principal lieutenants. The discipline and training of Greene's troops always impressed observers, and his leadership got the most out of his men in battle, on the march, and in camp. Greene's greatest strength, however, was his strategic vision. Though he began the war emphasizing the strategy of bold offensives and decisive battles associated with Caesar and Frederick, he soon understood that the unique nature of revolutionary war demanded a Fabian strategy concentrating on preservation of American strength and steady attrition of British will that was more reflective of the prudence of Saxe.

The strains of war highlighted particular facets of Greene's character and forced changes in others. His deep-seated desire for status and reputation surfaced repeatedly, both in his energetic pursuit of private business interests and in his bitter reactions to opposition and criticism. This contrasted with his constant declamations on the decline of American public virtue. But
however hypocritical his preoccupation with public virtue might seem, it probably was the most critical ingredient in his exceptional appreciation of how completely the army's strength was rooted in public support. This is especially true in revolutionary war, and Greene's continued reflection of the evils attending a decline in public virtue must have sensitized him to this fact. The war also emphasized the conservative elements in his thinking. His calls for a strong central government and a powerful standing professional army became common. And his pleading for better pay and status for the officer corps was rooted as much in his predilection for a hierarchical society as it was in the practical need to sustain good officers in the army.

Early in 1778 Greene gave up his line command to take over the quartermaster department, thus entering the final stage of his preparation for independent command. Though he despised the job and took it only because Washington believed it essential, he performed with his usual energy, initiative and skill, managing an almost hopeless situation with as much success as could be hoped for. Despite his shift to the staff, he remained in Washington's council of war, and his comments there and in his correspondence show the continuing maturation of his strategic ideas. Now he not only saw the necessity of preserving American strength but also recognized that that aim must be balanced against
the need to undertake just enough action and win just enough success to sustain the public's confidence and determination. Greene found his efforts as quartermaster hamstrung by Congressional mismanagement of both his department and the currency and by the public's growing war-weariness and apathy. Moreover, criticism of Greene's department from both Congress and the public steadily grew as the costs of the war spiraled. This prodded Greene into ever more strident denunciations of the public's and Congress's lack of virtue and of Congress's mismanagement of the war effort. The virulence of Greene's reactions revealed an extraordinary, almost irrational, sensitivity to criticism and opposition. At the same time, Greene found himself enticed by the generous commissions he received as quartermaster general to try turning a greater profit. He involved himself in a wide variety of private business deals and used his influence and special knowledge of army affairs to provide investment advice to his family and friends. All in all it was not the most savory period of Greene's service. Still, his introduction to the nearly insuperable obstacles bedeviling American logistics, to the problems of working directly with Congress and the states, and to the sensitive demands of coalition warfare put the finishing touches on his preparations for independent command. He had combined his pre-war studies and preparation with extensive periods of apprenticeship in both command and staff duties
to ready himself for whatever challenges Congress and Washington chose to give him.

Nathanael Greene remains an exceptional example of revolutionary generalship. Lacking any professional military training or experience, he parlayed his superb intellect, diligent study, managerial expertise, and political acumen into impressive military ability. His accomplishments speak for themselves. At the same time, however, he also clearly revealed some of the dangers of bringing men straight from civilian life to command in wartime. His was a complex personality, often operating from confused, hidden and contradictory motives. What else could explain his extolling democracy and yet longing to be part of an hierarchical elite, or preaching public virtue while assiduously pursuing his private interest, or praising equanimity and moderation while reacting with near paranoia to criticism and opposition? Fortunately, his ability rose far above the weaknesses in his character, making him a superb example for all time of an American Revolutionary — and of a revolutionary general.
APPENDIX A

A NOTE ON METHOD

A better understanding of Nathanael Greene's development does not come easily. Seldom did contemporaries write specifically to characterize Greene; most conclusions must be inferred from documents written for other purposes. Always spotty, the records brightly illumine some aspects of Greene's life but leave others almost completely in the dark. The written records also contain serious inaccuracies. Greene and his contemporaries often produced documents to serve their own or others' interests rather than to leave accurate records of events, opinions, or policies. And even when those documenting the events and ideas of Greene's time tried to create accurate records, they frequently did not understand the issues or did not have all the necessary evidence.

General Greene's papers naturally formed the primary source for this thesis, and, while certainly plentiful, Greene's papers cover the general's life unevenly, both in terms of time and topics. In 1972 the Rhode Island Historical Society initiated a project to collect and edit General Greene's papers. Since then, the staff of the
Nathanael Greene Papers has collected copies of approximately ten thousand Greene documents, published three volumes of edited correspondence, and is preparing others for press. The contents of the three published volumes clearly illustrate one dimension of the problem: Volume I contains Greene's correspondence during the ten-year span from 1766 to 1776, Volume II contains his papers for the twenty-two-months from January 1777 to October 1778, and Volume III covers the eight-month period from October 1778 through May 1779. Less than fifty of the Greene documents found to date originated before his appointment to command the Rhode Island brigade on 8 May 1775, and this lack of evidence makes it difficult to determine precisely what values and ideas Greene accepted or rejected during the years before the war. At the same time, the evidence from his much more voluminous correspondence once the war began is nowhere near complete either. While some of Greene's letters expounded at length about politics, economics, social structure, public and private character, military doctrine, and other issues important at the time, many others dealt only with routine military, business, or personal matters. A great deal of interpretation was still necessary to piece together as complete a picture of Greene's character as possible.

Deciding what influences shaped Greene's development proved even more tenuous than determining what kind of man
he was. Nowhere in his papers does he pinpoint the influence of specific events, personal contacts, or books. It is safe to argue, however, that two primary influences governed Nathanael Greene's development: his experiences and his reading. Greene's Quaker upbringing and concomitant lack of any formal education, his Rhode Island heritage, his work in the Greene family business, his reaction to British efforts to regulate New England trade and taxes, and then his part in the struggle to mount an effective military resistance out of extremely scarce resources and a reluctant population all helped form his character, shape his ideas, and develop his abilities.

He supplemented his education in the school of life, however, with a healthy self-administered dose of theoretical and practical readings. All his biographers have noted his dedication to books and self-improvement. Early in his life he developed an intense thirst for knowledge, and from his early teens he dedicated the remainder of his life to becoming as well-read as possible. Greene's biographers claim he eventually acquired a personal library of over two hundred books, all of which he read. And although neither Greene's library nor a complete inventory of his books survived his death in 1786, the staff of the Nathanael Greene Papers at the Rhode Island Historical Society has compiled a list of forty-one books/authors mentioned in letters to, from, or about
Greene. Additionally, Greene's biographers mention other titles and authors he supposedly read; and when these claims come from conscientious biographers close to Greene in time, like William Johnson, or in family relation, like George Washington Greene, they ring true. Taken together, current evidence offers an interesting sample of the books Greene read: theoretical writings on theology, natural philosophy, geometry, social systems, law, politics, and economics; the classics; histories of the ancient world, England, and contemporary Europe; military doctrine; novels and poetry; and practical writings on bookkeeping, business practices, oratory, elocution, and science. Greene's biographers also testify he did not read casually; he studied his books carefully and thoughtfully. Consequently, it is most likely the ideas in his books powerfully influenced his thinking. His papers bear this out, being filled with well-informed, thoughtful, and perceptive commentary on a wide variety of topics, as well as occasional references to prominent books or quotes from well-known authors. Greene's reading played as large a role in his development as his experience.

Some fundamental assumptions were essential in interpreting how his books shaped his character. First, for reasons given earlier, I accepted the notion that Greene absorbed ideas from his reading. Second, I assumed Greene actually read those books mentioned in his papers or by his biographers. Third, I assumed the books mentioned fairly
represented the sum of the books he read. And fourth, I postulated what seemed a logical order for Greene to have read his books, based on his background, interests, and activities. From his birth in 1742 until his early teens, Greene, still heavily influenced by his father, almost certainly read nothing beyond the standard Quaker works. Then, Greene's first explorations beyond the tightly restricted world of Quaker education probably were hesitant and stayed close in subject to ideas he already had encountered -- theological writings by non-Quakers, a few of the classics, Euclid's *Geometry*, and some natural philosophy such as John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Once he reached manhood and entered the wider world of Rhode Island business and politics, Greene's reading tastes naturally would have broadened markedly. At that point he likely began reading histories like Charles Rollins's fifteen-volume *Ancient History*, practical books on business methods, science, and effective writing and speaking techniques, lessons on character such as Lord Shaftesbury's *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times*, Laurence Sterne's novels and Alexander Pope's poetry, and current affairs as reported by the *Providence Gazette* and the *Newport Mercury*. After the *Gaspee* affair in the spring of 1772, which directly involved the Greene family, Greene took a much more active and radical interest in Britain's efforts to bring the American colonies under tighter
control. From mid-1772 to the beginning of the war, he read works by the English radical Whigs, legal theory by William Blackstone and Cesare Beccaria, political and social commentaries like Adam Ferguson's *Essay on Civil Society*, and military theory by Caesar, Maurice de Saxe, and Frederick the Great. The war undoubtedly forced Greene to cut back his reading drastically. Nevertheless, he apparently continued reading pertinent political, social and military commentary whenever possible.

Using this hypothetical progression of Greene's self-education to determine when he encountered various ideas, and combining that information with his experiences and the events of the time, gives a reasonable picture of what influences affected Greene at the various stages of his life. And since his papers reveal, with some enlightened inferences, the nature of his thoughts and character at each stage, putting the two together produces a credible explanation of how Nathanael Greene developed into the skilled revolutionary general he had become by 1779.
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