

The Service of the Mashpee Indians in the American Revolution

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One group of men that fought in the American Revolution faced casualty rates approaching 95%, and although their service had a profound impact they remain largely unknown. These men all came from the same small town on Cape Cod: Mashpee. All of them were Indians. Although only a few dozen Mashpee men served in the Continental Army, there were only thirty-six male heads of household in the entire town in 1776. The service of these men fits within larger trends for colonial Indian military service, but many factors make their contribution to the war effort a profound one. And although they championed the rhetoric of the Revolution, like many minorities they found themselves disenfranchised by its outcome.

In countless histories of the American Revolution, little attention has been paid to the service of patriots of color; the black and Indian men who could be found fighting alongside their white comrades in the Continental Army. In the past few decades, the historiography surrounding the service of African American patriots has improved substantially, but that of the Native American contribution within the rank-and-file has remained largely unexamined, aside from short references in some academic works indicating that their numbers were likely underreported. Although historians Brian Carroll and Daniel Mandell have begun to shed light on this topic, and terrific work been done by the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, who published *Forgotten Patriots: African American and American Indian Patriots in the Revolutionary War*, which lists over 6,600 soldiers' names, numerous questions remain unanswered.¹ Through working in detail with the history of the Mashpee tribe and their service in the American Revolution, it is the goal of this paper to clarify Mashpee's contribution to the

¹ This number is likely high, however. *African American and American Indian Patriots of the Revolutionary War* identifies three thousand African American and American Indian participants, making this smaller number the second highest non-estimate I have found in the course of my research; Eric Grundset, Briana L. Diaz, Hollis L. Gentry, and Jean D. Strahan, *Forgotten patriots: African American and American Indian patriots in the Revolutionary War : a guide to service, sources and studies*, (Washington, D.C.: National Society Daughters of the American Revolution) 2008, iii.

American Revolution, and to involve the reader in understanding why so many Indian men from a small town on Cape Cod chose to enlist in the Continental Army. While not all the lessons from these few dozen Mashpee men can be generalized to the entire Indian population that served during the war, this paper attempts to contribute in some small way to this budding historiography.

Frustrating many attempts to uncover Indian military service, understandings of race were not clear or universal at the end of the eighteenth century. Military records provide one window into the irregular nature of racial terms and views during this period. In service records, a lack of reference to race or color typically indicates the man was an Anglo-American. However, these same Anglo-Americans were identified as “white,” “ruddy,” “sandy,” “light,” “dark,” and “brown.”² Men having a “brown complexion” could in reality also be Indian, African, or of mixed heritage. Although in the records that survive the skin color of American Indians and African Americans was most often not referenced in any way, the terms “Negro,” “mulatto,” “mustee,” and variations on these words were used to designate men of color. A particularly dark Indian may have been referred to by any number of terms we today would think were ascribed only to individuals of African descent.

While historiography has typically distinguished between the military histories of American Indians and African Americans, addressing the subjects almost in isolation, this paper instead highlights the similarities between these men, the manner of their service, and how their white contemporaries viewed them. Although Massachusetts had different enlistment policies for these groups, they were treated in a number of similar ways and faced equal exclusion from the body politic. Whether free, indentured, or enslaved, African Americans and American Indians were forced outside the role of citizen, legally distinct from their white counterparts in terms of

² Grundset, Diaz, Gentry, *Forgotten Patriots*.

the rights and privileges awarded them. Denied the rights of full citizenship, members of these groups shared in the politics to which they were admitted; local discussions of poor relief, public morality, and military service. The terms in the previous paragraph, as irregularly and imprecisely used as they were, all collapsed into the catchall group “people of color.” Indians often intermarried with free blacks, and their children proved to be distinctly aware of both their Indian and African ancestry. Additionally, African men who married Mashpee widows adopted Indian culture, living in wigwams instead of houses at higher rates than even Indian men following the American Revolution. The similar roles Indians and Africans occupied in colonial New England placed them outside the body politic, but placed them together, in a largely merged fate. Therefore, the discussion of African American patriots included in this paper is not meant to stand alone, but is included in the hope that it will shed light on the military service of “praying town” Indians such as the Mashpee tribe.³

One of the most famous pieces of evidence for this service, and often the basis for the only reference to Indian service an author will make in his history of the American Revolution, comes from a 19th century source, William Apess’s *On Our Own Ground*.

One single fact will show the devotion of the Marshpee Indians to the cause of liberty, in return for which they and their decedents were placed under a despotic guardianship, and their property wrested from them to enrich the whites. In the Secretary’s Office, of this State, will be found a muster roll, containing a “Return of men enlisted in the first Regiment of Continental troops, in the County of Barnstable, for three years and during the war, in Col. Bradford’s Regiment,” commencing in 1777. Among these volunteers for that terrible service, are the following names of Marshpee Indians, proprietors of Marshpee, viz.⁴

³ John Wood Sweet, *Bodies politic: negotiating race in the American North, 1730-1830*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 1-11, 147-162, 171-9.

⁴ William Apess, and Barry Connell. *On our own ground; the complete writings of William Apess, a Pequot*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 239-240.

Twenty-six men are named, and the document goes on to say that of those men, none survived, and in 1783, Isaac Wickham was the only Mashpee Indian to survive service in the American Revolution.⁵ At that time, according to Apess, there were seventy widows living in Mashpee.⁶

Research on this subject began as an investigation of Apess' claims, but developed into something much more. There was indeed a large number of Mashpee men who served in the military during the colonial war, more even than Apess claimed. This paper sets out to answer the complex questions surrounding that terrible service. Mashpee men left a town that was fiercely independent, and that had a strong sense of cultural identity. Although motivated economically, this was not the driving factor behind these Indians' enlistments. They chose to serve for a complex variety of motivations, including familial ties, traditional Wampanoag gender roles, and a desire to increase their political agency within colonial society. Perhaps greater than any of these motivations was how forcefully the rhetoric of the American Revolution resonated with the Mashpee Indians. Beyond the difficulties of analyzing motivation lies identifying how these patriots served. What is clear is that their service was shaped by the ways in which their contemporaries viewed them, and these views both varied and shifted throughout the war, influenced by their exclusion from the body politic. With the rhetoric of the American Revolution calling them to war, the Mashpee Indians enlisted at staggering rates for the cause of American liberty, and they did so even at the detriment of their community. The Mashpee Indians who enlisted in the Continental Army during the years of the American Revolution did so at the expense of their families and the overall welfare of the village. Decades of colonial wars and a long tradition of service had shown that Mashpee did well to keep her men

⁵ This assertion by William Apess has been disproved. Though nearly all these men from Mashpee did indeed die in the war, Daniel Pognit also lived to file a pension application; *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the American Revolution*, 14:487.

⁶ Apess, *On Our Own Ground*, 239-40.

at home. Yet these men left their homes during a period of peace within Mashpee, marked by a noticeable absence of complaints and requests for aid.

In establishing the significance of this service and its effects upon the town of Mashpee, it first becomes necessary to establish the conditions that Mashpee faced prior to 1776. At the beginning of the 18th century there existed a number of isolated and autonomous Indian hamlets in southern Massachusetts. As white settlers encroached on Indian lands and threatened their way of life, these isolated hamlets reorganized into settlements of increasing size. These larger enclaves were compact, and developed new ties with one another as they saw the common problems they now faced from aggressive and racist white settlement practices and fraudulent dealings which threatened Indian freedoms through a cycle of debt and indentured servitude. By 1720, Mashpee was the largest Indian settlement near the white towns of Barnstable and Sandwich.

The greater size and resources of Mashpee compared with neighboring Indian enclaves such as Natick allowed the Mashpee greater autonomy in ruling themselves and greater agency in dealings with the government of Massachusetts. While Indians on Martha's Vineyard and in Natick were being pushed into agreements with white overseers and being forced to sell their land, Mashpee formed a proprietorship in 1720 that protected its own interests and reflected its Indian heritage. At this time, a significant number of Mashpee Indians, if not most, did not speak English. However, the Massachusetts General Court sought to have Anglo-American legal principles and rulings applied even to disputes between Indians living in their own enclaves. Given the general illiteracy and the rarity with which Mashpee Indians spoke fluent English, this policy was of great detriment to the affected Indians, as most ended up on the wrong end of land

rulings. However, Mashpee's proprietorship protected the community's autonomy and reflected Wampanoag principles of land ownership.⁷

An important aspect of proprietorship in Mashpee that differentiated it from other Indians enclaves was the way in which it adapted native land tenure to fit English law, and thus hold up to scrutiny in the English court. Land was divided up into parcels that could be claimed by proprietors, who were native citizens of the community.⁸ No one had the right to sell their land, which was the major method of disenfranchisement whites employed against Indians they sought to trap in a cycle of poverty and indentured servitude.⁹ All families had an equal share, and if land went unused, it would revert to the community. To further protect against disenfranchisement from outsiders, individuals marrying into the community could not hold ownership of the lands allotted to their native spouse. However, children resulting from that union would be full members of the community and could become proprietors.¹⁰ This system of land proprietorship allowed Mashpee greater political agency, giving them stronger powers of collective bargaining and preventing the resources of the community from being stripped away by white settlers. Such measures helped to keep Indian culture strong in Mashpee. Indeed, most non-Indian men who married into the community in the period shortly following the war lived in wigwams and would have been encouraged to adopt the Wampanoag culture.¹¹

This culture had a military character as well, with an established tradition of Indian service in colonial forces throughout the eighteenth century, often to the detriment of the small enclaves and towns that provided their men for battle. The high incidence of military service had

⁷ Daniel Mandell, *Behind the Frontier: Indians in eighteenth-century eastern Massachusetts*. (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 90.

⁸ *Ibid*, 89-92.

⁹ David J. Silverman, "The impact of indentured servitude on the society and culture of southern New England Indians, 1680-1810." *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 74, no. 4 (Dec., 2001), 622-666.

¹⁰ Mandell, *Behind the Frontier*, 89-92.

¹¹ Sweet, *Bodies Politic*, 174-7.

a dramatic effect on the health of the Indian communities from which these men were drawn. The enthusiastic participation of Indian men created additional economic hardships for communities already facing difficulties. Although the population of Mashpee continued to grow following King George's War, many Indian enclaves were suffering from low fertility rates and high morbidity, largely due to the impoverished conditions in which many whites sought to keep Indian neighbors in order to secure their labor.¹² However, Indian military service exacerbated such circumstances. High enlistment rates left communities with a loss of adult male labor. Continued susceptibility to disease decimated populations when a veteran returned home and carried a disease such as small pox with him from the front. The trend towards increasingly compact Indian enclaves worsened the damage done by these epidemics. However, most of the Indian men who served never returned home, with the casualty rate in some companies as high as 75% among Indian soldiers.¹³

Despite all of this, Mashpee remained a strong and autonomous native community, firmly aware of its independence from white society and the benefits self-government allowed them. Historian Daniel Mandell posits this may have been because, "Alone of all Indians, the Mashpees refused to accept subordination and fought the guardianship system from its inception."¹⁴ In 1746, the Massachusetts General Assembly appointed outside white guardians to control the lands and fortunes of Indian communities such as Mashpee, Natick, and Gay Head. Although intended to protect Indians from the illegal actions of aggressive white neighbors, these guardians were not paid a salary, few wanted the job, and, in general, corruption and mismanagement was the rule. In 1753, Mashpee men complained to the legislature that

¹² Ibid, 117.

¹³ Brian Carroll, "Pick'd Indians and other men fit for ranging the woods; The Experience of Native American Soldiers in Gorham's Rangers, 1744-1762", forthcoming in *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 85, no. 1 (March 2012), 3.

¹⁴ Mandell, *Behind the Frontier*, 156.

guardians were hiring out “surplus” lands to white settlers, and in doing so were impoverishing the community and driving many of the town’s young men away to work on whaling ships. They repeatedly appealed to the legislature seeking to regain their rights of self-government, and regained these rights in 1763 after the extraordinary measure of sending a representative to London to petition the King for relief. ¹⁵

Such strong legal action on the part of the Mashpee tribe contributed to the community’s endurance and a sense of distinct cultural identity. The Wampanoag language dominated in 1720, and although most individuals spoke English by 1750, Wampanoag was still widely spoken. Although immigrants were increasingly welcomed into the community to replace population losses from the progressively destructive colonial wars, these immigrants served to strengthen the town and were adopted into existing Indian cultural practices. Even leading into the American Revolution, most community members could still speak Wampanoag. ¹⁶ In 1762, of the 66 homes shown in the census, 60 of them were wigwams. ¹⁷ Additionally, traditional gender roles, such as basket weaving by women and hunting, fishing, and fighting by men, continued to be followed by many members of the community. The strength of the continued native culture in Mashpee Plantation and the emphasis on traditional gender roles was a double-edged sword however; the native culture that Mashpee was able to so successfully protect helped to motivate its men to go to war, where they died in astounding proportions.

That Mashpee’s men were motivated to go to war for reasons stemming from their native understandings of gender was a fact that remained as true during the American Revolution as it had for the generations of colonial wars that had preceded it. Brian Carroll, who originated the

¹⁵ Ibid, 146-7.

¹⁶ Ibid, 194.

¹⁷ Ibid, 124.

concept that “praying Indians” were motivated into certain professions because of traditional gender expectations, wrote:

Missionary teachings aimed to turn semi-migratory hunter warriors into sedentary Christian farmers. The military offered an alternate path celebrating older warrior traditions (bravery, ferocity in battle, and hunting skills), and a chance to accrue honor and prestige in a setting comparable to Indian war parties. It reaffirmed indigenous constructions of manhood while channeling the aggression of Indian men into socially condoned violence.¹⁸

It was not primarily economic motivations that drove Indian military service over the decades, but the opportunity that service provided to live out their native cultural roles and earn social capital within the tribe. As true for the Mashpee as any other Indian enclave, military service provided a means for the male Indian to escape the loathsome farming and other feminine work of the praying town, and to assert his “Native-defined hunter warrior masculinity.”¹⁹

Knowing exactly how many men from Mashpee did indeed go to war is not a simple or straightforward exercise, but William Apess was largely correct in his list of Mashpee men who went to war, and he was also correct that the Indians of Mashpee Plantation enlisted at much higher rates than their white neighbors. Although verifying the service of individuals is difficult due to an overall lack of detailed records and the non-regularized nature of spelling at the time, it is possible to verify the service of certain individuals of Mashpee. Twenty-nine Indian men from Mashpee can be proven to have served in the Continental Army.²⁰ Additional evidence exists to support the service of several others, but at present these cannot be explicitly proven to be *Indian* men from Mashpee. Working with only those men proven to have served, this still represents a full fifth of the total regiment of Barnstable County, and is a staggering number given that a 1776 census by Gideon Hawley names only eighty-one houses and three-hundred and forty-one

¹⁸ Carroll, “Pick’d Indians,” 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 39.

²⁰ See appendix A for details.

inhabitants.²¹ Even these figures may be misleading, as there were just thirty-nine male heads of household living in Mashpee in 1776.²² Regardless of the precise figures, it becomes clear Mashpee men enlisted in the Continental Army at staggering rates. No other town in Barnstable County sent such a large majority of her men to war.

The pattern of these enlistments provides one possible explanation for the staggering loss of Mashpee's men to the war - fathers, sons, and brothers all sought to serve and fight alongside or because of one another. As a result, enlistment tended to happen in clusters. Almost everyone from Mashpee who enlisted into the Continental Army originally enrolled into Col. Nathaniel Freeman's regiment, but they did not stay there. Although, some Mashpee men enlisted within days of the Declaration of Independence, repeated family names and common enlistment dates from later in the war can also be found. These factors indicated that these men were at least partially motivated by familial loyalties. At the end of 1776, Gideon Hawley reported that ten men from Mashpee had gone to fight in the Continental Army.²³ By the end of the war, the total number is estimated at between twenty-five and fifty.²⁴ (For a complete breakdown of the Mashpee soldiers of the Continental Army, refer to Appendix A.) Such a large number of men serving from this small community reinforces the notion that Mashpee men, like other Indian soldiers who fought in the American Revolution and in previous colonial wars, were motivated by kin relationships. Many men from Mashpee served together, and entire families enlisted.²⁵

²¹ Hawley Papers, Census Data, 1776; found in the records of the Massachusetts Historical Society; see Appendix B.

²² Ibid.

²³ Daniel Mandell, "'The times are exceedingly altered': The Revolution and Southern New England Indians." In *Eighteenth Century Native Communities of Southern New England in the Colonial Context*. Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center, Occasional Paper No. 1, ed. Jack Campisi. Ledyard, Conn.: Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center, 2005. Originally presented to the Third Mashantucket Pequot Conference, September 2002 article, 13.

²⁴ Mandell, "The times are exceedingly altered," 13.

²⁵ Appendix A.

Although, knowing the exact number of men who served proves impossible due to the scarcity of records and a general lack of accuracy among the records that survive, the commonness of certain surnames, census records, patterns of enlistment stemmed largely from familial ties among the residents of Mashpee.

This heightened rate of Mashpee enlistment into the Continental Army was representative of Indian enlistment during colonial wars, which had a long tradition in New England by the War of American Independence. Brian Carroll wrote in his study of Gorham's Rangers, "Starting in King Phillip's War with the inclusion of the Mohegan and Pequot tribal units as well as special companies of Nipmuc and Wampanoag warriors led by English officers, the colonies of Connecticut and Massachusetts developed a tradition of incorporating their settlement or reservation Indians into their armed forces."²⁶ Native Americans proved central to New England's military endeavors over the century, serving in every major colonial conflict.²⁷ Previously, Indian troops had been employed by irregular units such as Gorham's Rangers, which were fearsome guerilla fighters and valued members of the colonial military. Surviving records show that in 1745, two of every five privates in the Seventh Regiment of Massachusetts were Native Americans, most of whom were Wampanoag and came from either Mashpee or the immediate surrounding area.²⁸

In understanding the significance of such Indian service, in both the American Revolution and the preceding colonial wars, it is helpful to determine how colonial commanders viewed these native soldiers. These views are often contradictory and unclear, partially because Indians received little formal acknowledgement in military records, except for the occasional complaint from commanders such as General "Mad Anthony" Wayne that his troops were one

²⁶ Brian Carroll, "Pick'd Indians and other men fit for ranging the woods", 3.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid, 14,5.

third “Negroes, Indians, and Children.”²⁹ It is likely there was no single way in which Indian soldiers were viewed. Similar to African American service in the Civil War, their social status caused most of those who did not know or fight alongside them to take their presence on the battlefield as a disgrace. Yet the men who fought alongside African Americans in the Civil War, and the men who commanded black soldiers often testified to their strength, fortitude, and bravery.³⁰ While American Indians faced racism and discrimination in general society, they may have been well received in most companies given the tradition of Native American service among the military units of New England.

The service of the Mashpee Indians, and all Indians and African Americans who served in military units was judged along racial lines. Blacks were very often assigned to work the jobs of children and hard laborer, serving as drummers, personal servants, and bearing most of the heaviest duties of the wagon train.³¹ However, qualifying the service of Indians is more difficult, perhaps because they were treated with more equality. Daniel Mandell argues that because the military records so infrequently record Indian men as “Indian,” it may point to a “relative *lack of prejudice in the war.*”³² In contrast however, while attempting to clarify the circumstances that defined the service of black and Indian soldiers, historian John Wood Sweet wrote, “To some extent men of color shared the same hardships and duties of other soldiers, but they were often also set apart and demeaned in practical and symbolic ways.”³³ Serving in integrated units, most Mashpee soldiers enlisted for terms of 3 years, putting them among the “hard core” of white soldiers who served long winters and hard campaigns and endured the brutalities such service

²⁹ John Phillips Resch and Walter Sargent. *War & society in the American Revolution: mobilization and home fronts* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007), 43.

³⁰ Joseph Glatthaar, *Forged in Battle: The Civil War Alliance of Black Soldiers and White Officers* (New York: The Free Press, 1990), 121-206.

³¹ Sweet, *Bodies Politic*, 219.

³² Mandell, “The times are exceedingly altered,” 10.

³³ Sweet, *Bodies Politic*, 211.

implied.³⁴ Whether or not there existed true equality among the ranks, there was equality of pay in the Continental Army. All evidence suggests that men of equal rank received equal pay, equipment, bounties, and duties for their service in the Continental Army.³⁵

The tasks assigned Indians serving in the Continental Army likely reflected the different ways in which superiors viewed them. The members of the Mashpee tribe were no exception to this. While Washington and other notable American generals dismissed them as the dregs of society, many Continental Army officers who had served previously in New England prized Indian soldiers for their usefulness in guerilla warfare, and their “skulking ways.”³⁶ During multiple colonial wars, “Paul Mascerene, General James Wolfe, and especially, Lord Jeffery Amherst, the commander of the colonial forces during the second half of the [Seven Years’ War], all despised Indians but tolerated their presence in the army because of the fear they elicited among Indians and Canadians.”³⁷ During these colonial wars, Indians were encouraged to perform acts of savagery by their officers. “Indian units,” which were in fact made up of a large portion of white soldiers, tortured, scalped, and killed captives, drove enemies from their homes, and burned entire settlements. This was brutal and unlimited warfare which many generals were glad to exploit, and were even gladder to be able to attribute atrocities to “savage” Indian allies. Before and during the American Revolution, Indian soldiers were assigned tasks according to their commanders’ perception of them.³⁸

Although the experiences of battle and the development of familiarity could change these perceptions, commanders went to war with an understanding of Indians shaped by the views of

³⁴ Ibid, 217.

³⁵ George Quintal. *Patriots of color: "a peculiar beauty and merit": African Americans and Native Americans at Battle Road & Bunker Hill*. (Boston, Mass.: Division of Cultural Resources, Boston National Historical Park; 2004), 22.

³⁶ Carroll, “Pick’d Indians and other men fit for ranging the woods.”

³⁷ Ibid, 32.

³⁸ Ibid, 31-33.

white colonial society. The time of the American Revolution saw three forces fighting to shape the colonial Americans perception of Indians. The first was that of old, idealized, King Tammany. The “noble savage” who personified the idealized Indian of Whig propaganda, King Tammany invoked the essence of true liberty, but was unyielding and as a result was “always already disappearing because he refuses to submit to the domination of English settlers, who embody historic progress.”³⁹ In contrast to this was the frightening, brutal and exaggerated Indian presented in frontier tales and colonial newspapers. This representation of the Indian colonists and frontiersmen encountered was as “savage, cruel, violent, and, during the war, allied with the British.”⁴⁰ Behind these two symbolic figures stood the actual Indian. In Mashpee, as in most of southern New England, this meant a woman or child more likely than a man. As a result, the Indian of reality did not fit either stereotype and so stood drastically at odds with white society’s perceptions of them.

These perceptions contributed to the low esteem in which Indians, including the Mashpee, were typically held. Perhaps as a result of their economic status and perhaps as a result of their fringe position in colonial society, Indians faced discrimination and the possibility of forced servitude when debts could not be paid. When things were good, because they were able to live by hunting, fishing, and farming, Indians from “praying towns” such as Mashpee did not require many manufactured goods, the most common demand being European-style clothing.⁴¹ As a result, they did not typically have reason for full time employment among white society. This led to a perception of Native Americans by their white contemporaries as lazy and the effectiveness with which less-than-honorable white creditors and employers turned some into alcoholics did little to add to this reputation. A survey of court-sentenced servitude to pay off

³⁹ Sweet, *Bodies Politic*, 191-3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 191.

⁴¹ Silverman, “Indentured Servitude,” 626-30.

debts provides insight into the white valuation of Indian time, and therefore the white valuation of the Indian. Between 1700 and 1748, the average male colonist's labor was assessed at £12 4s. 8d. per year. The average Indian man was assessed at below half this value; £4 9s. 3d. per year, and the average Indian woman fared even worse, at £3 9s. 3d. per year.⁴² While colonists did not value Indian time or labor as much as that of other whites, they may have had more respect for the Indian as a warrior.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, as racial theories continued to be formed and popularized, an understanding of the Indian as the heir of a brutal and effective martial culture became a part of the white colonial consciousness. This conception of the Indian as somehow bred for battle was a major driver behind their attractiveness to military commanders and recruiters. The notion that Indians were predisposed to military service, both racially and inherently, was shared by Indian commanders like Graham, multiple generals of note, and by civil servants, such as Charles Lawrence, the British governor of Nova Scotia. In speaking of his preference for Indian soldiers, Lawrence commented, "that Service [ranging] Can Never be so well performed by any as by real Indians."⁴³ The preference of some commanders continued into the Revolutionary War and was the major driver behind a plan to create an all-Indian corps in 1778. In proposing this plan, George Washington addressed the Committee of Congress with the Army, saying, "Would it not be well to employ two or three hundred Indians against General Howe's army...Such a body of Indians, joined by some of our woodsmen, would probably strike no small terror into the British."⁴⁴ The perception of Indians as particularly fit for battle *because*

⁴² Ibid, 638,9.

⁴³ Carroll, "Pick'd Indians," 31.

⁴⁴ This author also argues that Amos Babcock and David Hatch, both of Mashpee, were transferred from their regular units to an all-Indian company; Washington to the Committee of Congress with the Army, January 29, 1778, found within Richard Walling, *Nimham's Indian Company of 1778: The Events Leading up to the Stockbridge Massacre of August 31, 1778*, <www.americanrevolution.org/ind2.html>

of their race, instead of in spite of it, stood at odds with racial concepts stemming from the formation of an all-white body politic that dismissed the Indian as lazy and inherently inferior. These contradicting perceptions, together with the reality of Indian service, battled within the minds of those men they fought alongside and served under. However, the service in the Continental Army may have caused the understanding of the Indian as inheritor of a martial culture to loose ground in the eyes of their superiors.

The traditional use of Indian soldiers in the military units of colonial New England differed substantially from the roles they were made to play as regulars in the Continental Army. In ranger regiments and as detachments of more traditional European military units, Indians had been employed as sharpshooters and scouts. They were encouraged in hit-and-run tactics, and in Graham's ranger regiment, even taught white rangers to move with more stealth through the woods and to fire from positions of cover. Gorham's rangers, most of whom were Wampanoag Indians from Mashpee and other parts of Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket, were exceptionally skilled in water-borne operations, and frequently used whale-boats to outmaneuver their opponents. However, in the Continental Army, Indians serving as members of the rank and file would not have been able to employ their traditional talents. The European-style, disciplined force General Washington sought to forge centered on the very linear massed-infantry tactics ranger units deployed. The open-field battles, tight formations, and the manner of relatively un-aimed firing in large volleys must have seemed not only strange but idiotic to the experienced Indian soldier of New England, who by 1776 had seen four generations of effective irregular warfare.⁴⁵ The shift from valued and knowledgeable Indian warrior to a "colored" member of the rank and file of regular regimental units in the Continental Army devalued the tradition talents of the Indian warrior.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 14.

As the restricting style of service in the Continental Army prevented the “settled” Indians of New England from applying the “skulking” craft that made them so valuable, they were simply relegated to the status of “colored persons” and held no special respect among white commanders. As a result, it seems to have been common for Indian and African American soldiers to form bonds of particular friendship. Such relationships may have stemmed from a shared treatment of these groups as being both outsiders and somehow less-than-equals, given that in the Continental Army, the Indian soldier could not set himself apart or exploit the talent base he reportedly possessed for irregular warfare. These men of color may have therefore received similar treatment and assignments from their white comrades. As John Wood Sweet writes, “Many black and Indian soldiers served alongside their white peers, though probably disproportionately in the auxiliary roles of drummer or fifer or in the support positions of teamsters, wagoners, and servants to officers.”⁴⁶ Even if all men were treated identically within the military unit, the similar status of these groups within colonial society led to a tendency for cohesiveness between these groups, showcased in the verifiable friendships between Indian and black servicemen.⁴⁷ The story of Daniel Allen shows that close friendships did develop between non-white servicemen, even prior to the American Revolution. Daniel Allen was a free black man who had served in the Massachusetts army in Maine, before he fell ill and was discharged in

⁴⁶ Sweet, *Bodies Politic*, 206.

⁴⁷ One such apparent friendship was that between Indian Isaac Wickham, African American John Francis, and “mullatoe” James Keeter; see “The pension application of Isaac Wickham”, also known as Isaac Weycope. Found on www.fold3.com, accessed 12/1/11. A hard copy can be found in the National Archives, “Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files,” publication number NARA M804, NACID: 300022; “Case files of pension and bounty-land warrant applications based on Revolutionary War service, compiled ca. 1800 – ca. 1912, documenting the period ca. 1775 – ca. 1900.” Group 15. Pension number S 34534.; *Massachusetts soldiers and sailors of the revolutionary war*. (Boston: Wright and Potter printing co., state printers, 1896/1908.); vol. VI, pp.8, “Francis, John.”; vol. XVII, pp. 294, “Wickham, Isaac.”; vol. IX, pp. 25, “Keeter, James.”; In a qualitative note on perceptions of race, it becomes clear when working with these documents that race was not a definite concept. Racial theories were beginning to develop, but Indian, any type of “half-bloods,” and African Americans could be described by a wide and inconsistent range of terms, the most common being “colored.”

1741. Before he left the regiment, his friends, apparently from Mashpee or some other part of Cape Cod, had told him to go to their community, where he would be welcomed. Unfortunately, Daniel Allen was stopped in Braintree, where he was placed with a white family and died only ten days later.⁴⁸ Although he never succeeded in his journey, Allen provides personification of the growing trend whereby African Americans were being welcomed into Indian towns.

Indian participation, like the service of free blacks, was discouraged and restricted in a number of ways. Although some served in militia units, blacks and Indians were generally barred from such service, which while embodying for many Americans the ideal of the citizen-soldier, actually provided militia men much easier terms of service and carried with it a lighter burden than that shouldered by the men of the Continental Army. Despite regulations to prevent their service, a 1777 Rhode Island census shows that a substantial number of black and Indian soldiers were serving in militias.⁴⁹ The regulations varied by state, but by January of 1776, Massachusetts had formally banned all non-whites from its militia. In early 1777, Massachusetts prohibited “men of color” from entering the Continental Army even as substitutes. However, as volunteerism declined and more men were needed to fill the ranks, many states removed such restrictions. Men of color were not recognized as full citizens and were exempt from the drafts issued to try to fill the rebel ranks, but as states eased restrictions to fill troop numbers, an increasing number of black and Indian men volunteered to serve as replacements for white draftees.⁵⁰ Even before the war ended, states began to reinstate these racial restrictions, creating an all-white fighting force by 1785.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Mandell, *Behind the Frontier*, 162.

⁴⁹ Sweet, *Bodies Politic*, 203.

⁵⁰ According to John Wood Sweet, 500 “colored” men served from Massachusetts, 300 for Connecticut, and 600 for Rhode Island; *Bodies Politic*, 202.

⁵¹ Sweet, *Bodies Politic*, 223.

The decision to restrict and largely discount Indian and black service was an effort by the populous to protect the ideal of the white citizen-soldier and increase the racial rigidity of the body politic. Jeremiah Olney, who would command Rhode Island's black regiment, declared,

“It has been found from long and fatal experience that Indians, negroes and mulattoes do not (and from a total want of Perseverance and Fortitude to bear the various Fatigues incident to an army cannot) answer the public service, they will not therefore on any account be received... Experience also confirms how little reliance we can place on Foreigners.”⁵²

This was not based on any factual evidence that these groups made for poor soldiers, and such regulations often flew in the face of both a distinguished record of military service and logistical concerns for troop numbers. For Olney, as for many white Americans, Indians and blacks were aliens, foreigners, and outsiders; persons who did not have a place in their society. They were discouraged from serving because they were outside the body politic, not because they did not make good soldiers.

Discouragement from white elites did not necessarily mean that these “colored patriots” of the Revolution were treated unfairly or dismissively within their regiments. In the organized regiments of the Continental Army, Native Americans may have lost the ability to fight in the way that so terrified the colonists, but records of individuals service in integrated regular units points to something of an equality among whites and a relative success by the Indian in gaining greater political agency. Take for instance the case of Joseph Paugenit,⁵³ an Indian from Natick, who had enlisted into the company of Capt. Thomas Drury, in Col. John Nixon's regiment on April 24, 1775.

⁵² Ibid, 209.

⁵³ For this individual, this last name was also listed as Pognot, Pognit, and Pognet. The “Pognit” family of Mashpee, whose name can also be found under a half-dozen spellings, was quite large and had multiple heads of household. This man may have been a relative, as the Indian town of Natick was not far from Mashpee. A more in depth examination of the Pognit name can be found in Appendix A.

“Twelve days before the Battle of Bunker Hill he, with others in his company, signed a petition to Gen. Artemis Ward ‘stating that they had enlisted to serve in Col. Nixon’s regiment, but had been shifted to Col. [Thomas] Gardner’s regiment, and requesting that they might be permitted to continue in Col. Nixon’s regiment’. Their protest was evidently heard...”⁵⁴

This act of petition, and the signatures on it, demonstrate that Paugenit had at least some political agency within the regiment, likely as much as any other private. Pointing to a positive experience, after serving in the New York Campaign in 1776 and receiving honorable discharge, Paugenit reenlisted on February 12, 1777. Following this reenlistment, he fought under Capt. John Holden at Saratoga, dying on November 15, 1777. Such repeat service and death was common among the Mashpee Indians who enlisted into the Continental Army.⁵⁵

The equal pay of privates, regardless of race, the lack of negative descriptions of Indians by members of the rank and file, and the shared hardships that all soldiers faced, all point to the possibility of a mutual respect and equality among Indian and white enlisted men. However, this may not always have been the case, and both the experiences of soldiers and the views of their officers varied greatly. The frequency with which Indians created lasting friendships with black soldiers indicates that white soldiers may have treated these groups in similar ways, and this treatment was shaped by the perceptions of Indians and blacks among general society. It is likely that views and treatment of Indian soldiers by the enlisted men of the rank-and-file would have varied, and just as views varied greatly among military leaders. However they were treated by their comrades, Indian service was judged along racial lines, and was contested by powers outside their immediate companies.

Answering, “Why did the Mashpee go to war?” is not a strait-forward pursuit; no Mashpee Indian wrote an account of their reasoning that has been preserved for the modern

⁵⁴ Quintal, *Patriots of Color*, 169.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

record. While economic factors must be considered, they must not be overly relied upon. The rhetoric of the revolution would have found strong support among the Mashpee, given their history of oppression and their persistent struggles for liberty and equality. Moreover, the Indian culture of Mashpee, like that of many Indian communities of New England, continued to promote the hunter-warrior ethos among the adult males that had contributed to the towns long history of enlistment in colonial wars. Lastly, Mashpee Indians may have sought to capitalize on the turmoil of the Revolution, and reasoned that through their contribution they could gain the political agency they had long been denied in colonial society.

War drew men of all races for a variety of reasons, and in the case of many of the New England Indians who enlisted, economic necessity may have been primary among these motivations. Brian Carroll writes, “The generous wages and incentives offered by provincial recruiters proved irresistible to Indian men facing discrimination, mounting debts, and grinding poverty.”⁵⁶ Land sales to pay debts incurred during periods of sickness were often the mitigating factor, and effectively forced families and entire enclaves into cycles of debt, poverty, sickness, and indentured servitude. As David Silverman writes, “English land purchases had so effectively restricted Indian movement that the natives’ mixed subsistence base of corn-bean-squash agriculture, fishing, shell-fish gathering, and hunting had been seriously compromised.”⁵⁷ Since many of the traditional methods of feeding themselves had been compromised, Indians many Indians were forced to buy food, and in doing so incurred more debt. As a result, children were increasingly sold into indentured servitude and because adult Indians looking for work in white

⁵⁶ Carroll, “Pick’d Indians,” 4.

⁵⁷ Silverman, “Indentured Servitude,” 626.

communities were so poorly received and paid, many were attracted to the possibility of enlistment.⁵⁸

However, the Mashpee Indians, although still subject to these same economic factors, felt the pull of economic necessity less strongly than most of their Indian contemporaries. War may have been a way to escape poverty for many Indians, but Mashpee tended to be better off than most other Indian enclaves in Southern Massachusetts. The isolation of Mashpee and the system of land-proprietorship developed there helped prevent the town from following the same path to impoverishment as so many other Indian enclaves.⁵⁹ Therefore, the question of ‘why did they enlist’ remains for the Mashpee, and although economic motivations must be acknowledged, a more complete answer must be sought.

The gender roles that may have motivated Mashpee men to seek out war were shared among other Indian groups, such as the Stockbridge-Housatonics, but these groups exhibited motivations for war that the Mashpee did not share. Daniel Mandell was all too correct when he said, “Most histories of the war identify the Stockbridge Indians as the only New England tribe to fight for the colonists.”⁶⁰ These Indians maintained a higher level of autonomy than most of the more eastern Indians who lived in praying towns. Having served as valuable allies for Massachusetts during the Seven Years’ War, the Stockbridge Indians were carefully courted by Congress and Massachusetts. In giving their support, a representative said, “Brothers, when ever I see your blood running, you will soon find me about you, to revenge my brothers blood.”⁶¹ However, the motivations of the Mashpee differed greatly from those of the Stockbridge Indians.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 622-34.

⁵⁹ Mandell, *Behind the Frontier*, 125.

⁶⁰ Mandell, “The times are exceedingly altered,” 9.

⁶¹ Ibid.

It was traditional motivations of “honor, kinship, and revenge” that drew the Stockbridge-Housatonics to war.

What cause did the Mashpee have to go to war with Great Britain along the traditional motivations which pulled the Stockbridge Indians into the war? The Mashpee Indians had repeatedly clashed with their white neighbors, and no doubt had more animosity between colonists than they had with the British. How much love could have been lost between the Indians of Mashpee and their white neighbors in Sandwich, given that, “New Englanders held Indian populations living in their midst in great contempt and scorn, seeing them as culturally inferior and marginalizing them within New England society”?⁶² In fact, in 1757, Mashpee took the extraordinary step of sending a representative to petition the King for relief from the “guardians” appointed by the Massachusetts General Court. In 1760, the Royal Council ordered the Bay Colony’s royal governor to argue Mashpee’s case before the General Court, and to demand justice for all the Indians of Massachusetts.⁶³ Additionally, Gideon Hawley, the white missionary to the Mashpee, was a loyalist, and they received aid in the form of blankets and other sustenance items every year from supporters in England.⁶⁴ The extent to which Mashpee’s affections favored the British can be seen in a letter written two weeks before the battles of Lexington and Concord;

“If I Shou’d take up Arms against his Majesty, and the People of Europe, I shoud by verily guilty black Ingratitude; for said I all Presents that we Indians receive from beyond the great Lake...[I]t is they that send us Books, 7 do really appear friendly, but as for these People among whom we dwell, what have they done for us? Any good, or no? They have taken away most of our Lands, and doubtless they wou’d, many of them to have poor Indians for slaves.”⁶⁵

⁶² Ibid, 4.

⁶³ Mandell, *Behind the Frontier*, 156-7.

⁶⁴ Gideon Hawley to Governor John Hancock, from the Hawley Papers in the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, July 8th 1791.

⁶⁵ Letter from David Fowler to Guy Johnson, 1775; excerpt included on page 8 of “Pick’d Indians...” by Daniel Mandell.

If the men of Mashpee were intent on going to war, they could have enlisted into the British army. It was difficult to make it over ground to British controlled areas, but not impossible.⁶⁶ Why did they choose instead to fight for the colonists with whom they had had so much trouble?

The American Revolution was conceived of and popularized on highly idealistic terms that resonated deeply with the Indians of Mashpee who had struggled for autonomy, independence, and liberty since the creation of the town as an Indian reserve. The Mashpee Indians, in their post-war struggle for independence, demonstrated that not only had they heard and understood the ideas that had sparked the Revolution, but championed these concepts of liberty and the rights of man. In multiple appeals, petitions, and speeches, they wielded the words and images of the Declaration, Constitution and Article I of the Bill of Rights. One such protest, given in formal language and sounding tired and cynical, spoke to how much Mashpee had sacrificed for the cause of liberty, and how little she had received in return.

“At the Commencement of the late Revolution, when a high sense of civil liberty, and the oppressive policy of an arbitrary Court roused the Citizens of America to noble and patriotic exertions in defense of their freedom, we anticipated the time when a liberal and enlightened spirit of philanthropy should extend its views and its influence to the increase of liberty and social happiness among all ranks and classes of mankind. We supposed a just estimate of the rights of man would teach them the value of those privileges of which were deprived, and that their own sufferings would naturally lead them to respect and relieve ours.”⁶⁷

In addition to the concepts of freedom, liberty, and equality, propagandists pushed the notion that the military struggle was a matter of character, rather than munitions and manpower.⁶⁸

Perhaps in an effort to exploit this propaganda, participation in war provided Indian and African American participants increased political agency. In many colonial wars previously, Native American leaders had hoped that by serving and proving their loyalty they could gain

⁶⁶ Sweet, *Bodies Politic*, 211.

⁶⁷ Mandell, *Behind the Frontier*, 205.

⁶⁸ Sweet, *Bodies Politic*, 188.

future assistance in land and legal disputes and recognition of tribal sovereignty.⁶⁹ Indeed, in a 1753 appeal to the General Court they said that their sacrifice in King George's War had afforded them land rights equal to those of the English.⁷⁰ The extension of this line of thought has traction among a wide range of historians, such as Walter Sargent, who suggested that Joshua Pockemet and other Massachusetts Indians may have fought to establish their right to an equal place in Massachusetts society.⁷¹ Historically, military struggles offer opportunities for groups who exist largely outside the body politic to reopen negotiations on personal and political rights. In the case of the American Revolution, this negotiation happened in the newspapers of wartime propagandists, in policy debates over recruitment, and in experiences of non-white soldiers.⁷²

With so many men going to war from such a small community, no matter the individual motivations, the number of men who died in that terrible service had a drastic effect on the health of Mashpee. But why did they die in such high proportions? Sickness seems to be the overwhelming killer, although a cause of death cannot be found for most. The impact of disease among American Indian populations is well known to have been incredibly devastating. An epidemic of smallpox contributed to the 75% casualty rate among the Indians serving in Gorham's Rangers from 1745-1747.⁷³ However, we must not be too quick to attribute this drastically high mortality rate to sickness and what many previous historians have written off as a natural susceptibility to disease among Indians. Such "genetic determinism" does not have a foundation in modern science. Instead, working with a more modern disease model, a variety of

⁶⁹ Carroll, "Pick'd Indians," 4.

⁷⁰ Mandell, *Behind the Frontier*, 156.

⁷¹ Resch and Sargent, *War & society in the American Revolution: mobilization and home fronts*, 65.

⁷² Sweet, *Bodies Politic*, 185.

⁷³ Brian Carroll, "Pick'd Indians and other men fit for ranging the woods", forthcoming in *The New England Quarterly* 85, no. 1 (March 2012), 26.

factors such as malnutrition and a breakdown of relied upon social structures could lead to immunodeficiency.⁷⁴ In the Continental Army, many more men died from disease than combat. Additionally, although I have been able to disprove the repeated claims that all but one of the Mashpee Indians enlisted in the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War, only two of these Indian men lived to file pension applications. John Wood Sweet may have stumbled across an alternative explanation; “It was often the men excluded from the militias who were most likely to be sent off to the front lines.”⁷⁵ However, the possibility that Indians were assigned to the front lines and were misused or more liberally ordered into battle by commanders has not been verified. While the distinct reason remains unknown, patriotism may have contributed to the extraordinary casualty rates of the Mashpee soldiers. The prevalence of three-year terms of enlistment would have increased the likelihood that Mashpee soldiers would not survive the war.

No matter the direct cause, the American Revolution took a severe toll on Mashpee and left in its wake widows, orphans, and economic hardship. Gideon Hawley reported in 1783 that “At that time, there were no less than seventy widows on the plantation.”⁷⁶ His writing makes it clear that most of these widows had lost their husbands during the war.⁷⁷ To make matters worse, yellow fever had hit the town in 1776. Additionally, Mashpee had received periodic aid in the past from Hawley’s British supporters. However, the Revolution put an end to this aid. The rapid loss of population caused Mashpee Indians to open their borders, allowing a larger number of outsiders into the community than had ever been seen in Mashpee’s history. The adoption of outsiders to replace lost manpower following war was a traditional practice among many Indian cultures, and would not have been a novel idea to the Wampanoag Indians of Mashpee.

⁷⁴ David Jones, “Virgin Soils Revisited,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 60, 4 (October 2003); 703-42.

⁷⁵ Sweet, *Bodies Politic*, 199.

⁷⁶ Frederick Freeman, *The History of Cape Cod: Annals of the Thirteen Towns of Barnstable County* (Boston: W.H. Piper Co., 1869), 1:692.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

This economic situation was helped somewhat by the influx of African American and even Hessian men into Mashpee following the war. The census data produced by Gideon Hawley showed that between 1776 and 1788, the population of Mashpee changed from only four percent “negro” to seventy percent “mixed.” While these numbers were almost certainly exaggerated as Hawley became increasingly fixated with race, Mashpee certainly did experience a significant period of immigration. One 1788 account testifies to the new population of “Black Inhabitants” and numbers them at four-hundred. However, it is clear that he is reporting individuals of mixed heritage as black, not Indian.⁷⁸ The influx of these outsiders brought a much-needed source of new blood and human resources to the community. The black population in Massachusetts had an imbalance that resulted in a large number of unmarried men. In Indian enclaves adult women outnumbered adult men two to one. The children of Mashpee were able to grow healthier thanks to the now heterogeneous nature of Mashpee’s inhabitants. However, these immigrants transformed the material culture of Mashpee. They brought with them the Anglo-American material culture and tastes that had not previously been popular within the community. In only two decades, most of the wigwams had been replaced with houses. The Wampanoag language, which had been dominant in Mashpee at mid-century, was now falling out of use. Although a good portion of this “Anglicization” was the result of the renewed efforts of Gideon Hawley, the immigration boom following the war robbed Mashpee of much of its cultural identity.⁷⁹

The loss of so many of its adult males, even though assuaged somewhat by a new immigrant population, combined with the reinstatement of the guardianship system following the war to force Mashpee into a state of severe economic distress, similar to that faced by many smaller Indian enclaves, such as those in Natick and Dedham. For these Indian communities, the

⁷⁸ Samuel Savage to Shearjashub Bourne, “Mashpee, 15th December, 1788.” Samuel P. Savage Papers. 1703-1848; bulk 1703-1829. Massachusetts Historical Society.

⁷⁹ Mandell, *Behind the Frontier*, 180-6.

American Revolution and the subsequent statewide implementation of Indian guardianship laws resulted in the wholesale death of the enclave. Mashpee's health throughout the eighteenth century could be largely attributed to the refusal of the Indians there to submit fully to any white overseer and to keep white culture at arm's length. At midcentury, when the New England Company offered to provide them with an English schoolmaster, they declined "because we cannot understand him, only a few can."⁸⁰ The prevalence of the Wampanoag language and supremacy of an Indian material culture was undermined by the tremendous burden Mashpee bore for the revolution. Gideon Hawley's reinstatement as overseer following the end of the war made conditions even worse, for the first time allowing land to be sold to outsiders. These land sales followed a pattern, which temporarily relieved Indian debts but over time impoverished all of the Indian enclaves of Southern Massachusetts. When Mashpee's Indians formally announced their estrangement from Hawley's church and formed a new Baptist congregation under the Indian John Freeman, citing his "preaching up the doctrines of liberty and equality," Hawley persuaded the Massachusetts General Court to take away the enclaves autonomy, which they had enjoyed without incident since 1763.⁸¹ With its decision in 1789, the legislature reinstated the guardianship system that had served the Indians so badly previously.⁸² Hawley and his fellow guardians evicted many of the African Americans from the population whose marriage to Indians they found distasteful. Also, the guardians had the ability to "bind by indenture, the children of the poor of the said proprietors to suitable persons, of sober life and conversation, as they the overseers or guardians may judge necessary and convenient."⁸³ The loss of the ability to govern themselves, and the ability of a "guardian" to expel residents and assign their children to

⁸⁰ Ibid, 125.

⁸¹ Ibid, 194-5.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Francis Hutchins, *Mashpee: The Story of Cape Cod's Indian Town*, (West Franklin, N.H: Amarta Press, 1979), 92-3.

indentured servitude left Mashpee in a worse position than the loss of all of her soldiers could possibly have.

When the indentured servitude and reduction of natural resources that had occurred under the guardianship system prior to 1763 resumed after the war, it resulted largely in a breakdown of the cultural identity Mashpee had been able to hold onto for so long. The men and women continued to work traditional crafts, but did so increasingly for the benefit of white colonists. With the universal reinstatement of Indian guardianship, the end of the eighteenth century left most Indians of southern New England indebted and dependent upon Englishmen, and were therefore constantly in the bonds of indentured servitude. This bonded service often produced and compounded hardship, further impoverishing Indian communities. Although some Indian men may have volunteered to go aboard whaling ships, demand for crew exceeded supply and whaling captains eagerly bought Indian indenture contracts, which could be created by a judge, Indian guardian, or even creditor. In addition to impoverishing many, by taking children away from their native communities, these methods of indenture in effect destroyed the Wampanoag language. While most Mashpee had spoken Wampanoag in 1750, only a few older Indians could understand their native language in 1821. The death of the Wampanoag, Massachusetts, and Pequot languages did not go unnoticed, and was a source of distress for many Indians. How was it that a community which had given so much to the fight for American freedom, had ended up in poverty and bondage?⁸⁴

The proprietors of Mashpee, a town that had demonstrated its yearnings for autonomy, independence, and self-government, was not satisfied to live in a position by which they were legally akin to children, and denied the rights of citizens. Reverend Hawley's death in 1807 provided an opportunity for change in the system of governance, yet the petitions and appeals of

⁸⁴ Silverman, "Indians and Indentured Servitude," 623-4, 662-5.

the Indians of Mashpee went unanswered. The Massachusetts General Court and Harvard College appointed Phineas Fish the minister of Mashpee's Congregational Church, and chose to remain the oppressive structure that robbed the Mashpee of many of their rights. It wasn't until William Apess, a Pequot Indian preacher from Connecticut, visited Mashpee in 1833 that things began to change. In May, one hundred and two Mashpee residents signed a statement that resolved the "tribe" would rule itself and has "the right to do so because all men are born free and equal."⁸⁵ The inclusion of another resolve in this statement that white men will not be permitted to carry away the resources of Mashpee without the permission of the residents demonstrates the wholesale misuse of the overseer system and the abuse to which the town of Mashpee was being put. Additionally, the use of the word "tribe" has peculiar significance.

Francis Hutchins writes,

In declaring themselves to be a 'tribe,' Mashpee's proprietors were asserting that if the Commonwealth of Massachusetts would not yield to their demand for equal rights under Massachusetts law, they would 'nullify' Massachusetts law and begin governing themselves in the manner of one of the independent Indian polities of the American west.⁸⁶

Their declaration, and the peaceful yet forceful and armed actions of more than one hundred Mashpee residents, followed by jail sentences for some, did finally provide Mashpee what it had lost in the backlash following the Revolutionary War: status as an unincorporated district of Massachusetts, complete with the power to elect its own officers. However, this small town's fight for inclusion into the body politic did not cease, for like African Americans, Indians could not vote until the 1860's, nearly a full century after they had sent so many of their men to die in the fight for American liberty.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ From the declaration by the Mashpee found in Hutchins, *Mashpee*, 105.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 106.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 95-111.

For two hundred years following the war, the public had continued difficulty honoring the service of African American and Indian patriots. Even as Massachusetts outlawed slavery, white society became increasingly concerned with race and imposing a social hierarchy. As a result, the continental regiments in which these men had fought were made all white by the end of the war, assisting the white American population in idealizing the all-white citizen-soldier and in forgetting the contributions of the black and Indian soldiers and allowing for the continued political and societal marginalization of persons of color.⁸⁸ The result is that even today, in most histories of the American Revolution, even those focusing on the composition of the rank and file, do not acknowledge or understand the contribution of the American Indian. Yet many did serve, and with the rhetoric of the American Revolution calling them to war, Mashpee Indians enlisted at staggering rates for the cause of American liberty, and they did so even at the detriment of their of community. These few dozen Indian men served exceptionally long enlistments, despite the variety of conflicting prejudices they faced and numerous barriers to their service. In fighting for liberty, almost all received death. The story of the Indian soldiers of Mashpee deserves to enter the larger historiography of the Revolution, especially given the attention the tribe is currently receiving.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ Sweet, *Bodies Politic*, 223.

⁸⁹ In the past year there have been numerous newspaper articles and documentaries on the Mashpee Wampanoag. In 2005 they won a 32-year battle for recognition as a sovereign nation, a battle that in reality has been much longer than a few decades. The Wampanoag language is also experiencing a revival, thanks to the work of a female scholar from MIT. For examples, see Terrence Doyle, "Reviving respect," *The Cape Codder*, 11/25/11; Kaimi Rose Lum, "Seashore exhibit celebrates Wampanoag past and present," *The Cape Codder*, 11/25/11.

Appendix A: The Soldiers of Mashpee by Regiment

A. Col. Brewer's Regiment

1. Captain John Chadwick's Company

- a. Abel Hoswit, served May 10, 1778 – January 1780.
- b. Jacob Keeter, enlisted January 22, 1778.
- c. Joseph Keeter, enlisted January 22, 1778. Entry here indicates there were either two Joseph Keeters, or that he reenlisted after his capture and supposed death on December 1, 1777.
- d. Samuel Moses, enlisted for a period of three years, beginning January 22, 1778. Reported deceased April 1, 1779.
- e. Daniel Pognit, enlisted for a period of three years, beginning June 10, 1777.
- f. Job Rimmon, enlisted for a period of three years, beginning June 10, 1777, reported deceased
- g. Francis Webquish, enlisted for a period of three years, beginning February 26, 1777..

2. Captain Ward Smith's Company

- a. Hosea Pocknet, enlisted May 10, 1778, term to expire January 1780.
- b. James Rimmon, enlisted May 10, 1778, term to expire January 1780.

B. Col. Gamaliel Bradford's Regiment

1. Captain Joseph Wadsworth's Company

- a. Joseph Ashur, enlisted for a period of three years, beginning June 10, 1777.
- b. David Hatch, served from June 10, 1777 – January 10 1778.
- c. John Pearce, enlisted for a period of three years, beginning June 10, 1777.
- d. James Rimmon, enlisted for a term of 3 years, beginning June 10, 1777. Apparently transferred to Col. Brewer's regiment.

2. Captain John Russell's Company

- a. Joseph Ashur, enlisted for a period of three years, beginning June 10, 1777, Apparently served under Capt. Wadsworth as well.
- b. Elisha Keeter, enlisted for a period of three years, beginning June 10, 1777.
- c. James Keeter, enlisted February 15, 1777, on May 28, 1777 reported died on May 18.
- d. George Shawn, enlisted for a period of three years, beginning February 10, 1777.

C. Col. John Bailey's Regiment (1st)

1. Captain Seth Drew's Company (5th)

- a. Joshua Pocknet, enlisted March 20, 1777. Died September 1, 1777. Served at Valley Forge.

2. Captain George Dunham's Company (8th)

- a. Church Ashur, enlisted for a period of three years, beginning March 29, 1777. Died March 1, 1778.
- b. Gideon Tumpum, enlisted for a period of three years, beginning May 18, 1777. Died July 5, 1778.

D. Col. Putnam's Regiment (5th)

1. Captain Benson's Company
 - a. Amos Babcock, enlisted for a period of three years, beginning April 15, 1777.
2. Major Knapp?
 - a. Isaac Wickham

E. Col. Ebenezer Sprout's Regiment (12th)

1. Captain J. Mean's Company
 - a. Jacob Keeter, served January 1, 1780 – December 31, 1780. Appears to have reenlisted after serving in Col. Brewer's Regiment.
 - b. Joseph Keeter, enlisted January 1, 1777. Entry here indicates there were either two Joseph Keeters, or that he reenlisted after his capture and supposed death on December 1, 1777.
 - c. Samuel Moses, enlisted February 16, 1777, died April 1, 1779. Appears to have transferred to Col. Brewer's regiment.

F. Col. Josiah Whitney's Regiment

1. Captain Samuel King's Company
 - a. Demps Squeires, served June 4, 1776 – August 1, 1776.

G. Col. John Jacob's Regiment

1. Captain Joseph Griffith's Company
 - a. Obed Wicket, served June 10, 1778 – January 1, 1779. Appears to have reenlisted by July 17, 1780, serving for a period of six months under Capt. Abner Howard and Brig. Gen. John Glover.

H. Col. Angel's Regiment

1. Captain Olney's Company
 - a. Joshua Pognit, enlisted for a period of three years, beginning June 10, 1777.

I. Col. Shephard's Regiment

1. Captain Pope's Company
 - a. Hosea Pognit, enlisted for a period of three years, beginning June 10, 1777.

*This Appendix is the result of detailed work within *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War*, which can be found in numerous print and online editions, but maintain volume configurations and content. The names as they appear above are the names as they appear in *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors*. Moreover, this appendix is a culmination of research from *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors; African American and American Indian Patriots of the Revolutionary War*. Washington, D.C., National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, 2001; Red Shell, a Cape Cod Indian Historian, "The Old Wampanoag Indian Churches," from a series of articles published in the *Independent* in 1928, under the title *The History and Legends of the Cape Cod Indians*; and the base point for this research was William Apess, *On Our Own Ground*.

* A note on method: Where multiples spellings of various phonetically similar names appear, I have investigated the service of those individuals. For some, it seems the individual was transferred, as in the case of James Rimmon. In other cases, where service is recorded in multiple companies simultaneously, it demonstrates there were in fact a larger number of these individuals than originally thought, as is the case with Joshua Pocknet (Pognit).

* The Keeter family seems to have been a large clan in Mashpee. It is entirely possible there were two men named James Keeter. James Keeter seems to have served under Captain John Lamont's company in Col. Bradford's regiment. He has a second entry in Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors stating that Isaac Wickham, one of only two Mashpee Indians known to have filed a pension application, testified Keeter was a colored man of Mashpee who had been regularly discharged at Newburgh, New York, and that his widow, Mercy Keeter, was a resident of Mashpee. John Francis was also mentioned in this deposition, a black man from Mashpee who enlisted during the war into Capt. Smart's Company, 3rd Massachusetts Regiment.

* On Joshua Pocknet. The record of his service in Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors is long compared to other Mashpee Indians. He is listed as Joshua Pognit by William Apess in *On Our Own Ground* and referred to as Joshua Pockmet on page fifty-two of *War and Society in Revolutionary America*, which refers to his service in Seth Drew's company in the Northern Department during the Burgoyne invasion. Research I have done in *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors* evidences the service of Joshua Pocknet in Captain Drew's company, from March 20, 1777- his death at Valley Forge on September 1, 1777.

The Wampanoag Indian historian Red Schell lists Chief Joshua Poquet among the Mashpee veterans of Colonial American wars. His relatives in Mashpee who also served in the American Revolution include Daniel Pognit (also Pocknit or Pocknitt) and Hosea Pognit (also Pocknet).

Primary source work within the Hawley papers has shown there were at least 4 heads of house named "Pognit" living in Mashpee in 1776. Additionally, an Indian named Joseph Paugenit originally of Natick fought at Bunker Hill at age 20, then in the New York Campaign, and then died in service at age 22 at Saratoga, "probably at Albany (NY) Military Hospital," according to the research of George Quintal Jr. This would fit the other record that places his service at Valley Forge and his death there in Sept. 1 1777. All of these references to the same person may be misleading. Joshua Pocknet was in Seth Drew's company at the same time Joshua Pognit was enlisting for a term of three years into Capt. Olney's company in Col. Angel's regiment.

In "The times are exceedingly altered': The Revolution and Southern New England Indians" Brian Carroll included the following reference to this family:

"Like their white neighbors, Indian relatives often served together. The most striking example is the three Pocknets (or Pognets) from Mashpee: Hosea, David, and Joshua. All three were mustered on March 4, 1777, for three years of service (receiving state and Continental bounties) in Barnstable County. Three months later, they went, together with many other Mashpee men, into the Continental Army unit formed from Colonel Freeman's First Barnstable Regiment. Somehow all three obtained an early discharge, as less than a year later, on May 10, 1778, they were enlisted into the Continental Army as part of draft required by the state from the town of Barnstable, their service to end in January 1780. (MSS XII, 486-88) Apparently all of the Native

warriors from the region fought for the Revolution; I could not find any listed in loyalist regiments.”

* We can be confident of the service of Isaac Wickham, as his name appears in multiple secondary sources and he was granted a pension application. However, his application is very unclear as to the regiment he served in. Daniel Pognit reportedly filed a pension application as well (MSS:14:487).

Appendix B: Reproduction of the 1776 Census Data for Mashpee Plantation

Number of the Indians mulattoes and Negroes belonging to Mashpee June 24th, 1776.	Shingled Houses	Wigwa ms	Married Couple	Married and un- married	Widows	Negroes	Whole Number
David Sunkansin			1				2
James Sunkansin			1	1			3
Widow Sunkansin	1			1	1		2
Widow Francis	1			4	2		6
Cato Black			1	2			4
Sam'l Moses	1		1	5	1		8
Isaac Sussex	1		1	2	1		5
Jacob Keeter	1		1	2		1	4
Jacob Keeter 2d.			1	1			3
Eli Moses	1		1	1			3
Widow Amy	1				1		1
Casco Black		1	1	3		1	5
Tom Ceaser	1		1	2			4
Phil. Webquish		1	1	2	1		5
Joe Wepquish	1			2	1		3
Amos Badcock	1		1	3			5
James Keetoh	1		1	4			6
Jo. Porter	1		1	3		1	5
Widow Beck		1			1		1
Timo. Right	1		1				2
Widow Cain		1			1		1
Widow Keetoh	1				1		1
Old Fortune	1		1	2		3	4
George Chipy			1				2
Widow Fortune		1		3	1		4
Matthias Amos	1		1	3			5
Elisha Keetoh		1	1	1			3
Widow Penah		1		3	1		4
Simon Nedd	1		1	5			7
John Squawn		1	1				2
Widow Squawm	1				1		1
Deacon Penah	1		1	4			6
Widow Attiquin		1		2			3
Newport Mye	1		2	1		1	5
Ceasar Mingo		1	1	2			4
Widow Job		1		1	1		2
Micah Tumpum	1		2	1			5
Abra. Tumpum	1		1	1			3
Widow Messerich	1			2	1		3

Widow Popmonet	1			2	1		3
Deacon Job	1	1	1	3			5
Widow David					1		1
Tom Remon		1	1	4		1	6
Hosea Moses		1	1	2			4
Jos. Borridge		1	1	4			6
Simon Keetoh		1	1	6			8
Widow Patience		1			2		2
Adam		1	1	5		1	7
Ceasar Cobb	1		2	2		1	6
John Pognit		1	1	3			5
Aaron Ralph		1	2	4			8
Lame Joe			1	2		1	4
Lame George			1				2
Sam'l Richard	1		1				2
Will. Richard	1		1				2
Widow Simon		1		3	1		4
Widow Richard	1				1		1
Dagon		1	1				2
Gid'n Tumpum	1		1	4			6
Widow Tumpum	1			1	1		2
Abra. Squib	1		1	4			6
Joe Asher	1		1	4			6
Job Squib	1		2	3			7
Dan'l Pagnit	1		1	2			4
Tim Right Junior	1		2	1			5
Noah Wepquish		1	1				2
Dives	1		1	6			8
Widow Amos		1		4	2		6
Widow Eunice		1					1
Widow Briant		1			2		2
Negroe		1	1			1	2
Moses Pognit		1	1	5			7
Widow Susanna	1			1	2		3
Old Dick		1	1	2		1	4
Joe. Richards	1		1	1			3
Johu Horton		1		3			5
Widow Caleb		1			1		1
Hosea Pognit		1	1	3	1		6
Widow Moses		1		1	1		2
Great Will		1		4	1		5
Desire Job		1		1			1
Betty Keetoh	1			1			1
James Mye and Sipple	1		2			1	4

Joel Will	1		1				2
Vagrant Indians estimated at							8
Three Wigwams							14
TOTAL	42	39	64	159	33	14	341

* Gideon Hawley, 1776 Census, The Hawley Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

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