Beyond the Grave: The Politicization of Death in Eighteenth-Century America

Beyond the Grave: The Politicization of Death in Eighteenth-Century America

by

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ABSTRACT

Mortality was a fundamental aspect of the American experience from the beginning of settlement, one that carried political and cultural resonance. Life itself became politicized throughout the eighteenth century because death—both the interpretation of it and the prevention of it—served to define proper bounds of government and served to legitimize non-state authorities. With the development of popular print culture throughout the eighteenth century, published accounts of dying and death influenced the way individuals lived their lives, as well as their beliefs about their relationship to governing authorities. Death was a universal concern, one that intertwined religious, scientific, and political concerns to evaluate individual lives, the worth of communities, and the well-being of the social body. Examining memorialization and news stories circulating in major American cities, this project posits that discourses of death acted as a means to diagnose society's ills, but also to evaluate and resolve them through personal behavior and collective action.

In the late-colonial era, stories of death demarcated and conveyed their sense of society and European heritage. By the mid-eighteenth century, medical and philosophical opinions emerged in discussions of mortality and debated the proper ways to define death, serving as a site of negotiation for professional and cultural influence. Attempts to manage death in the late eighteenth century intertwined with questions of the proper role of the government in the lives of the populace. With the development of popular print culture throughout the eighteenth century, published accounts of dying and death functioned to influence individual lives and beliefs along with the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Not all lives were valued equally, however. Such writings

sought to incorporate those of any race, sex, nationality, or status into the social and political body, but also to assign them a place. Ultimately, this dissertation illuminates the constant process of negotiation of societal responsibilities in response to shifting bodily knowledge, spiritual demands, and political forms in colonial and early national America.

Introduction

On January 1, 1800, physician David Ramsay declared in a speech to the South Carolina Medical Society that during the eighteenth century "the avenues of death have been contracted . . . and the apparently dead have been raised to life." Such an achievement was due to "men of the most extraordinary erudition, and unbounded philanthropy; who spent their lives in acquiring and diffusing a knowledge of the means of prolonging life, preserving health, and lessening human misery." [1] Ramsay touted the fact that that medical philosophers had learned to defend against death and promoted wellness throughout society. He referenced knowledge gained in terms of resuscitation science and disease prevention, particularly inoculation. But knowledge was only part of the achievement, and he equally celebrated the widespread implementation of medical knowledge through print culture, associational activity, and governmental policy. Achievements like these would increase the number of healthy men and women in society and create an improved and more productive population.

Benjamin Rush, Ramsay's more famous peer in Philadelphia, elaborated on how mastering death (to the degree humans could) was a significant achievement not just for medicine and the population it served, but for the nation-state as well. He insisted that "Every man in a republic is public property. His time and talents—his youth—his manhood—his old age—nay more, life, all, belong to his country."[2] In Rush's view, there were no private lives or choices in the newly-independent United States. Seemingly

[1] David Ramsay, "Review of the Improvements, Progress and State of Medicine in the 18th Century," in Robert L. Brunhouse, ed., "David Ramsay, 1749-1815 Selections from His Writings," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 55, no. 4 (1965): 215.

[2] Benjamin Rush, "An Address to the People of the United States," *American Museum* (Philadelphia, 1787).

personal preferences of profession and marriage, how a person moved and acted throughout their stages of life—youth, adulthood, old age—had repercussions for the collective American populace. The story of a life—the one that would perhaps be imparted in an obituary—reflected the moral and physical health of the entire nation. The association between life and the state by politically active and influential physicians such as Rush and Ramsay underscores the significance of health and longevity to the building of the American nation during the late-eighteenth century, connecting the well-being of the American populace with a successful government and a flourishing society. But the association between health and the body politic had not always been so clear to commentators in the public sphere. The correlation between these two things had taken fully a century to merge in policy and political culture. The development of the association between health and a functioning body politic required a century of changing attitudes and understandings towards mortality, particularly in regard to its desirability, humans' ability to manage it, and the public importance of individuals. By the end of the eighteenth century, discourses of death transcended religious belief and scientific discovery to broader concerns that mingled intersecting religious values, political principles, and philosophical inquiries at the core of issues about the nature of communal bonds and the purpose of government.

In this dissertation, I argue that mortality played a fundamental role in the definition and development of state responsibilities and institutions and functioned to delineate the boundaries of the American body politic. Colonial municipal leaders and early-national state and federal governments sought to foster a healthy population, and their methods for doing so incorporated new ways of calculating and appraising threats to

the physical and moral well-being of the populace. Trends in the knowledge and interpretation of death during the eighteenth century served as a means to diagnose society as a whole—boundaries, ills, threats against it—but also how to heal them. As authorities such as public officials, ministers, philosophers, and professionals increasingly associated mortality with population and the collective experience, they argued that it required collective efforts and solutions. Bodies became an asset of the state and behavior reflected the functioning of society; both were calculated and appraised through the dead. Mortality changed in political importance throughout the eighteenth century because it intertwined major contemporary conversations including medical philosophy, improvement activism, the nature of authority, and the place of the individual. Improving and increasing the population included protecting bodies as well as regulating behaviors, and therefore required a wide range of policies, institutions, and discourses to fully address health issues. The communal data gathered from the study of death provided a means of measuring the health of society, the success of colonies, and the viability of the nation while also serving as a signpost of good government.

I contend throughout this project that the need for collective solutions to mortal danger resulted in the building of governmental power through institutions and bureaucracies enforced through state policy, which also granted legitimacy to governments that made efforts to preserve life. As colonial efforts to decrease mortality rates and improve overall wellness gained momentum, the state took on greater authority over issues that threatened collective health and well-being which was defined in ever broader ways. With American independence, governments from the municipal to the federal levels took a proactive and institutional approach to protecting the health of the

polity. Limitations of small-scale collective action in the early decades of the century and wartime experiences convinced many leaders that a stronger authority was necessary, and in the post-war years they created an activist government on the state and federal levels to tackle issues of public health and population wellness. By the revolutionary era, emerging state and federal governments made the preservation of life a central goal of their administrations and instituted permanent offices and departments that aimed at increasing longevity. Efforts to improve health and longevity in order to better order society were not unique to United States, but the necessity of defining the American nation on the basis of popular sovereignty rather than the metaphysical authority of the British monarchy led to the forging of a rhetoric of public life that wove together concerns of environment, the economy, and the individual in fundamentally new ways. Preserving life and improving the welfare of the entire population were touted as claims to legitimacy of the revolutionary and early national leaders because they met the needs of the people and prioritized the common good. What evolved in eighteenth-century America was a means to exercise power-based control over life processes through experts and administrators who employed methods of education, medical knowledge, and voluntary associations to encourage urban residents into living the eighteenth-century version of the healthy lifestyle.

This dissertation also argues that authorities and officials employed the concept of population in order to measure the health of the body politic. With the trans-Atlantic rise of political arithmetic in the late seventeenth century, imperial, colonial and municipal leaders attempted to promote population increase rather than decline because a larger population was understood as a sign of strength. Mortality served as the initial way to

calculate and uncover trends of the population like death rates, causes of death, and longevity. This resulted in health data intersecting with governmental concerns through the emerging genre of vital statistics at the start of the eighteenth century. Population studies based on mortality rates identified what threatened to depopulate their societies, and both ordinary people and leadership figures proposed collective methods to address them. In addressing issues of healthfulness and wellbeing, the entire body politic had to mediate between individual versus communal rights. The smallpox epidemic of 1721 popularized political arithmetic in colonial discourse, along with the ideas that death could be manipulated and that population increase was desirable. Debates over inoculation in the 1720s and 1730s suggested that local governments should prioritize collective health over the individual, which would require shared solutions. At first, medical activists and improvers worked towards better public health through institutional support of private health endeavors and laws aimed at policing procedures such as inoculation and movement. Urban residents requested that their municipal governments take responsibility for improving health through funding or sponsoring health institutions such as hospitals or quarantine stations. In these instances, subjects recognized the need for centralized methods of addressing the threats of disease and strangers that threatened their vitality. By the early national era, collective rights won out and resulted in an activist government that aimed to protect and promote population growth through policy measures and oversight of behavior and space.

Finally, in this project I maintain that death practices shaped American identity throughout the eighteenth century by linking individual lives to the national project and defining the boundaries of the body politic. In the early eighteenth century, long-standing

mortuary rituals gained additional meanings as they became frequently published. With the rise of printed commemorations, news of deaths could be announced to a greater number of people—including strangers—and the loss could be interpreted as one not only to the family or neighborhood, but to the community as a whole. In the colonial setting, published commemorations such as sermons or obituaries were closely tied to place and extolled the values of the colonies. Furthermore, political bodies published funeral sermons upon royal deaths and highlighted affective connections between the colonies and Britain, ultimately working to tie them more closely (and equally) to the British Empire. In revolutionary and early national America, commemorative practices served to set Americans apart and above their former British brethren. During the Revolutionary War, Patriots' propaganda warned the audience of the inhumane deaths of civilians inflicted by the British forces. In narratives that emphasized the barbarity of the British and, conversely, American honor in respecting and protecting life, stories of good and bad death served to identify healthy versus ill civic bodies and legitimize an independent American government. Independence was won through the loss of life, and revolutionary officials used mourning rituals to highlight the humanity and sacrifices of those who died for the Patriot cause and attempted to build a national identity based on their sacrifice. The values praised as exemplary after the Revolutionary War were oriented towards political and military service to the independence cause, though the rituals highlighted unity and shared sacrifice from all Americans. This also opened opportunities for marginalized groups to push against the boundaries of the body politic by presenting cases to the public of embodied American values and patriotism. Such writings sought to incorporate those of any race, sex, nationality, or status into the social and political body,

but also to assign them a place. This process was never provided consensus, and this dissertation contends that death narratives provided a means for marginalized groups to advocate for their own humanity and inclusion and to expand the boundaries of the body politic.

This dissertation takes up the topics of discourses of death, shifting boundaries of the American population, and negotiations over state authority in the eighteenth century in order to analyze the relationship between mortality, state building, and the exercise of power. Focusing on the urban centers of Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston, it explores these topics from 1702 at the death of King William III to 1800 with the death of General George Washington. In the beginning, colonists carried with them centuries-old mortuary beliefs that took on additional meanings as they interpreted deaths in a collective context associated with the colonial setting, which coincided with the rise of popular print culture. As political arithmetic gained popularity in the early eighteenth century, officials, philosophers, physicians, and ministers had an additional way to interpret death and evaluate the health of their communities. The dead then became integrated into the colonial and later national project through their numbers and their memories; attention to numbers and memories generated both governmental authority as well as institution building. Boston, Charleston, and Philadelphia are clustered together because they share many similarities, but also maintain important differences that could influence the accumulation and exercise of power.[3] These urban centers all ranked among the most

[3] See, in particular, Gary Nash, *The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution*, Abridged Edition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986) and Emma Hart, *Building Charleston: Town and Society in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010).

populous cities in British North America, served as economically important ports, and were situated as significant political and cultural regional hubs within broader geographic regions. Because of these circumstances, the leaders and elites of Boston, Charleston, and Philadelphia participated in a shared Atlantic cosmopolitan culture that promoted medical innovation, urban improvement, and political virtue.

To be sure, since the beginning of the colonial era mortality carried political relevance. Political arithmetic and life-writing were cultural trends that emerged in seventeenth-century England and gained significance in comprehending the benefits of colonization. Numbers and people were the focal points of colonization. The ships that brought goods and people into the ports of Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston could be quantified—the number of goods, their prices, profits to be made, wages due—all had to be counted in order to understand the economic vitality of a colonial port city. Numbering went beyond financial concerns to the cultural as people were commodified with the rise of population studies, whereby the number of people in the colonies became another way to measure the wealth of the empire, and later the American state. Colonial bodies were simply another commodity that could be quantified as a form of wealth in the Americas.

The eighteenth-century definition of health differed greatly from the modern one. Early Americans held a unitary idea of health, in that it was inextricably combined with moral and mental health in addition to the physical body. It meant vigor, functionality, and orderliness. If individuals were healthy, they could contribute their labor and time to production and defense. Theorists also reasoned that physical health correlated to moral health, so healthy individuals would behave virtuously as well. Therefore, as political

leaders and medical activists instituted programs and policies to address health threats, they also hoped to improve the moral condition of the population. This largely centered on personal habits and behaviors with the rationale that if each individual fosters his or her own health, the collective body politic would operate with the same functionality and orderliness as their physiological systems. Advancements in medical knowledge influenced this shift as experts gave advice on achieving longevity and fighting against death with resuscitation and healthy habits. While some scholars interpret these attitudes towards death as a "secularization" or "medicalization," it was not such a unilateral progression in eighteenth-century America.[4] Rather, medical definitions of mortality and philosophical understandings of life and death engaged in a dialogue about meeting the physical, spiritual, and moral needs of the populace.

In examining the evolution and exercise of governmental power through the lens of death, this dissertation is influenced by Michel Foucault's theory of biopolitics. According to Foucault, modern states sought to regulate the populace through "an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations."[5] Further, nation-states have employed certain knowledge of the body and public health measures that would manage the rate and health of the population. In short, governments transitioned from exercising their authority through violence such as the right to war and to execute, to basing their authority on the responsibility to preserve health. He urged that "there is a quite subtle process, which we should try to reconstruct in detail, in which we can see how the science of government . .

[4] See Roy Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason: The Modern Foundations of Body and Soul* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 214.

[5] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Random House, 1976), 140.

. and the problem of population are all interconnected."[6] This state emphasis on managing and improving population is at the core of this project, particularly the methods, discourses, and techniques political leaders and medical philosophers implemented to manage life processes as they sought to improve the population. Thus, this dissertation incorporates the theory of biopolitics as a place where power relations, community identity, and social responsibility were determined by knowledge of the natural world and the body.

Death has been part of many fields but is rarely studied by itself. This project in particular speaks to the history of medicine, urban improvement movements, and political culture. By bringing together and building upon such a diverse array of topics, the dissertation illuminates the ways in which bodily and mental health were central to the definition of the body politic and how the exercise of power and governmental responsibility evolved over the eighteenth century, from the late-colonial era to the early national period. The traditional literature on American medicine and public health focuses on "professional" practitioners, education, and institutions. This concentration has resulted in a disregard for the colonial and early national periods in favor of early-nineteenth-century beginnings, especially sanitation efforts, educational institutions, and university-trained physicians. Some that have addressed earlier time periods such as Whitfield Bell, Jr. and R.H. Shyrock have given the impression that medical institutions and public health ideology were reactive and nascent.[7] These works suffer from the

[6] Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, and Population: Lectures at the College de France, 1977-1978*, ed. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2007), 104.

[7] See, for example: Whitfield Bell, Jr. *The Colonial Physician and Other Essays* (New York: Science History Publications, 1975); John Blake, *Public Health in the Town of Boston, 1630-1822* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959); John Duffy, *The Sanitarians: A History of American Public Health* (Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1990); Duffy*, A History of Public Health in New York*

impression that because medical practice and theory was not "modern" and did not incorporate germ theory or modern sanitation ideology, that it can be categorized simply as a precursor to American medicine. The emergence of American medical thinking and public health is solidly placed in the nineteenth century with urban sanitation projects and the diffusion of academically trained doctors. While this is a system that seems preferable to the modern eye, early American medical practitioners and public health activists sought to achieve the same goals that were prevalent in later eras: the preservation of health. In fact, they grappled with new scientific and empirical thinking that would shape nineteenth-century developments. This project takes very seriously the health-related goals of early Americans based on their contemporary knowledge and best practices.

More recently, early American scholars have attempted to rectify earlier oversights by focusing on the colonial period and incorporating medicine's social and political aspects. Simon Finger explored Philadelphia's public health initiatives in *The Contagious City*, stating that "generations of Philadelphians participated in a positive program to promote collective wellness that was connected to broader political goals of polity, security, and economy."[8] Richard Bell also found the preservation of life central to questions of society and politics in *We Shall Be No More: Suicide and Self-Government in the Newly-Independent United States*. Bell recognized the significant linkage between caring for individual lives, even in the abstract, to civil society and notions of

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City, 1625-1866 (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1968); Richard Shryock, *Medical Licensing in America, 1650-1965* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967); Richard Shryock, *Medicine and Society in America, 1660-1860 (*Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962).

[8] Simon Finger, *The Contagious City: The Politics of Public Health in Early Philadelphia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 4. See also Jeanne Abrams, *Revolutionary Medicine: The Founding Mothers and Fathers in Sickness and in Health* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Amanda Moniz, *From Empire to Humanity: The American Revolution and the Origins of Humanitarianism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

government. Issues regarding the loss of life gave rise to questions about "whether the citizens of the new Republic had sufficient virtue, self-discipline, and care for one another to foster a stable and self-governing society."[9] This dissertation builds upon Bell's work and others in the same vein that have illuminated the integral link between death and politics in early America. However, it goes beyond their focus on a single place or reform movement and seeks a broader understanding of health as a holistic and collective concept. Previous works are dominated by famous figures such as Cotton Mather, Benjamin Franklin, or William Penn. While those figures certainly have a place in this dissertation, I am interested in situating them within a broader field of actors including ordinary Americans and anonymous reporters.

In addressing questions of colonial governments' efforts to overcome environmental threats, I engage with the extensive scholarship on the transatlantic improvement efforts, in which improvers sought to rehabilitate the urban landscape to promote order, profit, and morality. The literature on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century improvement has focused on England, particularly London, in the wake of the 1666 Great Fire and plague.[10] A growing number of historians, though, have studied improvement of the colonial environment as central to understanding the movement, as the seemingly blank landscape offered improvers the opportunity to build ideal societies from scratch using the most modern theories. In this scholarship, improvement is central to colonization because improvement—the claiming and cultivation of land, the exploitation

[9] Richard Bell, *We Shall Be No More: Suicide and Self-Government in the Newly United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012) 10.

[10] Examples of this body of work include Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the "Improvement" of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Emily Cockayne, *Hubbub: Filth, Noise, and Stench in England, 1600-1770* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

of the environment, the building of public spaces, personal betterment—was the primary reason behind English colonization itself. These historians primarily focus on the roughly one century between the Restoration and the outbreak of imperial tensions in the Seven Years' War, when colonial administrators and officials implemented a policy of "deliberate urbanization" as a means to control trade and implement the most modern theories of order and space.[11]

Within studies of improvement in colonial America, most historians have emphasized the material environment, the actual building and ordering of the American landscape to appear more English. By the middle of the century, colonists wanted to push back against claims that the colonial environment was a dangerous one in which "America would take over English bodies," resulting in deformed bodies and moral degeneracy.[12] In her works on the urban British Atlantic, Emma Hart explained that colonial improvement projects were premised on the idea that "urban improvement was a vehicle for established and emerging townsmen to stake a claim to the built environment and to articulate their vision for the bettering of its inhabitants" who could be "rationalized and secured through the application of classical architecture."[13] Such

[11] Finger, *The Contagious City,* 17. Cities included in this movement were Williamsburg, Annapolis, Charleston, Philadelphia, and later Savannah.

[12] Joyce Chaplin, *Subject Matter: Technology, the Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier, 1500-1676* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 161. Other relevant works include Joyce Chaplin, *Anxious Pursuits: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730-1815* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1996); Sara Gronim, *Everyday Nature: Knowledge of the Natural World in Colonial New York* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2009); Elizabeth Milroy, *The Grid and the River: Philadelphia's Green Places, 1682-1876* (State College, Penn.: Penn State University Press, 2016); Melanie Perreault, "American Wilderness and First Contact," in *American Wilderness: A New History*, ed. by Michael Lewis (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Thomas D. Wilson, *The Ashley Cooper Plan: The Founding of Carolina and the Origins of Southern Political Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

[13] Emma Hart, "Catastrophe, the Civilizing Process and the Urban Built Environment in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic World," *Catastrophe, Gender and Urban Experience in Europe, Early*

building and urban planning projects served as "a monument to elite power," a symbol to travelers and migrants that out of the colonial wilderness and complex, hierarchical, and prosperous society emerged. The literature's focus on the physical and built environments, on buildings and technology, elides a basic yet imperative component of colonial improvement: the population as a whole. This project reveals that colonists' significant efforts to control and improve eighteenth-century environments extended to the population. In promoting increase, colonial governments took on environmental policing powers in order to master the unseen threats of the natural world.

Finally, this project participates in an extensive dialogue on early American political culture, in which scholars have thoroughly studied the social and cultural underpinnings of the political order in eighteenth-century America. Though these works use varying definitions of politics, they have shown that people and associations outside of formal political organization were as influential as law and policy in reorienting the basis for authority and the purpose of government throughout the century.[14] John L. Brooke explained that "in a new republic emerging from the furnace of revolutionary creation . . . a vast array of voluntary societies deployed in the self-conscious

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Modern to Modern, Deborah Simonton, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016): 105. Hart expressed similar conclusions in her monograph *Building Charleston,* especially chapter six "'A very essential service to this community;' The Politics of the Town," 156-184.

[14] Brendan McConville, *The Kings Three Faces: The Rise and Fall of Royal America, 1688-1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2006); Erik R. Seeman, *Pious Persuasions: Laity and Clergy in Eighteenth-Century New England* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Johann Neem, *Creating a Nation of Joiners: Democracy and Civil Society in Early National Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); Richard Newman, *The Transformation of American Abolitionism: Fighting Slavery in the Early Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of American History and Culture, 1997); Rosemarie Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

construction of public culture in the young republic."[15] The scholarship, in fact, shows that efforts to fulfill the promises of the war in the early republic took place to a great extent outside of formal political projects. According to Steven Bullock, Freemasonry and other fraternal associations "came to be seen as a key element in republican attempts to spread liberty and create virtue," particularly in the years after the Revolutionary War.[16] Yet disparate groups interpreted such aims differently and engaged in projects through distinct special interest efforts. In *Internal Improvement*, John Lauritz Larson focused specifically on transportation improvements as part of a "process of national creation" in order "to implement the promise of republican liberty" at the state and federal level.[17] One of Larson's great contributions is his consideration of the rhetorical project of advancing the public good through federal improvement projects and the disconnect between what could be accomplished and resistance to a large federal government. Though this and recent work by Steven Pincus focus on the goals of an activist federal government, they keep a narrow focus on economic activism, thereby

[15] John L. Brooke, "Ancient Lodges and Self-Created Societies: Voluntary Association and the Public Sphere in the Early American Republic," in *Launching the "Extended Republic": The Federalist Era*, eds. Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville: United Stated Capitol Historical Society by the University Press of Virginia, 1996), 275.

[16] Steven Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1996), 138, 9; John L. Brooke, "Consent, Civil Society, and the Public Sphere in the Age of Revolution and the Early American Republic," in *Beyond the Founders: New Approaches to the Political History of the Early American Republic,* eds. Jeffrey L. Pasley, Andrew W. Robertson, and David Waldstreicher (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004): 207-250.

[17] John Lauritz Larson, *Internal Improvement: National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government in the Early United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001): 2,3. Steven Pincus, *The Heart of the Declaration: The Founders' Case for an Activist Government* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); For more on formal political institutions see also Richard John, *Spreading the News: the American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); John L. Brooke, *The Heart of the Commonwealth: Society and Political Culture in Worcester County, Massachusetts, 1713-1861* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

excluding the major goals of individuals working to create a public culture geared towards the public good in an independent America.

This dissertation reveals that early American politics should be understood through its efforts to administer and police the collective or holistic whole of the population. That to understand the relationship between citizens, leaders, and the exercise of authority, the focus should be on the totality, as people of the eighteenth-century understood it. People at the time conceived of individual and collective health as dependent on intertwined issues. Efforts related to education, religion, or the environment cannot be singled out. Eighteenth-century efforts to prolong life and preserve health depended upon each of these issues being collaborative. As death became increasingly secular and medical (though never areligious) in the century, the greater expectations placed on government officials and institutions to promote longevity and health through modern means. This also helped shift the interpretation of people's lives and legacies towards more political and social implications, rather than a focus on salvation or the fate of one's soul. This project is able to zoom in on case studies that illuminate negotiations over the balance of power and how it was exercised over individuals who were sometimes resistant to the intrusion of state authority while also situating them in relation to major intellectual trends and governmental actions. Just as the physical body was a system consisting of various organs, nerves, and blood vessels, the body politic had a complex system of functioning parts. Therefore, their project to foster a healthy body politic focused on an array of methods that included individual behavior, collective knowledge, and governmental regulation.

I also reveal how authorities increased their authority by addressing the deeply personal concerns of those not in power in order to frame their governance as based in and meeting community needs. The politics of death were actually centered on life—how people lived and acted that would affect longevity, calculating death rates and improving health, evaluating what type of person and values contributed to a healthy body politic, what organizations and policies could help people live longer and make greater contributions. Sermons, toasts, living spaces, and associational membership, and many more everyday happenings imparted knowledge of American values, making "Americanness" something that was embodied rather than a legal status. Because of this, leaders urged and sometimes coerced individuals to live up to appropriate American standards of behavior and space management.

This dissertation also seeks to bridge the periodization divide between eighteenth-century colonial and early national culture and identity. Works on improvement largely fall in the colonial era, while studies of political culture are mostly confined to the revolutionary and early national periods. This dissertation aims to bridge that period divide by revealing how rituals, movements, and emergent notions of governance carried into the post-revolution years from the early-eighteenth century. The Revolutionary War certainly influenced ideas of the health of the body politic, especially since it required the sacrifice of life and drew its legitimacy from accusations of inhumane death. I seek to reveal that some methods of exercising power, defining the responsibilities of government, and categorizing individuals within American society carried on from the colonial period.

This study is a cultural history with medical and political components as it seeks to illuminate the ways in which death served as a political tool for exercising public power. Within both formal and informal communication networks, exchanging views and debating knowledge allowed reformers and intellectuals to work together on both public and private levels to promote society-wide wellness. In understanding how their goals emerged, the issue rose in importance, and their methods evolved over the century, I place writings that have been examined separately in dialogue with one another. Medical texts, political tracts, and sermons are the primary focus of this dissertation. The combination of these sources reveals how knowledge of death transformed over the century and how it was communicated to a popular audience. I also incorporate institutional records, laws, and policies in order to show methods of implementation and the growing centrality of health and wellness to the practice of government.

This dissertation consists of five thematic and roughly chronological chapters to trace the development of death as a political instrument throughout the eighteenth century. Chapter one offers background on how Anglo-American colonists encountered death at the beginning of the eighteenth century. It describes centuries-old English mortuary beliefs, then turns to how colonists applied those beliefs to their own societies. The main focus is on published forms of commemoration—an innovative genre for death traditions—and how colonists employed them to essentially dissect their communal and political bonds. In reading about the local as well as imperial deceased, death became a collective topic as life-writings publicized significant losses that allowed the audience to assess their values. Essentially, published forms of commemoration evaluated the

individual people who populated a place, celebrating the deceased's morality and the communities that produced such valuable members of society.

Chapter two builds upon the previous chapter's identification of death as a collective topic by studying how colonists undertook demographic studies and approached death as a problem to be solved, or at least mitigated. Church leaders and natural philosophers used mortality statistics to calculate whether or not their populations were flourishing or atrophying, with the understanding that a larger population meant a wealthier and stronger society. In conceptualizing death at the macro level, shared problems demanded collective solutions and urban residents appealed to their governments to implement laws and supplement urban improvement organizations that would limit death rates from common threats. Governments, therefore, took on increasing responsibility of maintaining health and protecting the population from mortal catastrophes.

In chapter three, I illuminate the ways in which a propaganda of death during the Revolutionary War served to legitimize the newly-independent government. Revolutionaries and the general American public expressed distress about the manner in which their enemies inflicted death during the fight for independence and laid the blame at the feet of King George III. From the early 1770s through the end of the war, tales of secret and inhumane death through the deliberate spread of disease and the murder of innocent civilians circulated through American publications. The stories fostered an imagined fear that British leaders sought to depopulate America, that the colonists had helped his empire flourish yet he was cutting them down. In contrast, revolutionary leaders publicized their own honorable approach to warfare. This propaganda of death

told the American audience that British leadership was no longer legitimate, but that the American government offered protection.

The fourth chapter argues that post-revolutionary political efforts to establish organizations which with to save lives aimed to permeate the daily lives of citizens through managing space and resources, hoping that the usage and recognition of such actions would reformulate civil society. Medical activists taught that many of the most common types of death could be prevented altogether, if only citizens behaved well and maintained their environments. Municipal, state, and even federal governments strengthened offices and bureaucracies in order to preserve life and expand their efforts into the daily lives of citizens. The result was permanent offices and institutions created all the way up to the federal level to address health and population threats that could be shared throughout the united nation.

The fifth and final chapter asserts that post-revolutionary death rituals helped former colonists shift from subjects to citizens, transferring their allegiance to the new nation and shaping the boundaries of a new body politic. New national leaders employed the customs of public memorialization developed in the early-eighteenth century to establish belonging and loyalty to the newly-independent United States. These out-of-doors and participatory instances of nation-wide mourning emphasized shared sacrifice and an orderly transition from colonial status to independence. Though the organizers planned for solemn and hierarchical rituals, the popular nature of them offered marginalized groups an opportunity to push for greater participation and recognition in the early republic. In particular, women and free African Americans all used political mourning as an opportunity to push for increased status in the body politic. By

understanding the performative messages and structured participation in late-eighteenth century mourning rituals, it is possible to illuminate how an ambiguous American citizenship and identity began to take shape and be practiced in the new nation.

It is precisely because death entangled so many aspects of life and community that those seeking and holding authority used the subject to enact their social and political visions. As a constant in life, interpretations and reinterpretations of dying and mortality were central to navigating the cultural disruptions of the eighteenth century. The dead were entangled with the lives of the living in eighteenth-century America, as early Americans contended with questions of the basis of authority and the exercise of power, the purpose of governments and their responsibilities towards citizens, and the definitions and boundaries of a health body politic. As the physical act of death became a problem to be solved in the early-eighteenth century, motivated government officials and community leaders interpreted it through new social and political lenses and sought innovative ways to control it. Attempts to manage death and improve the moral and physical health of the nation illuminates the importance of individual lives to the colonial and later American state projects, as well as how the state expanded its power and became intertwined with citizens' personal lives and behaviors.

Chapter 1
"Publick Blessings" and "Publick Sorrows:" Social Commemoration in Early-Eighteenth Century America

In 1729, a contributor chastised the printers of the *New-England Weekly Journal* for not giving "the Publick an account of our great Loss in the Death of that Worthy Gentleman Daniel Parker, Esq."[18] The writer took offense at this apparent slight because printed commemorations such as obituaries offered an important recognition of a decedent's life and society's loss as a whole. A decade later, another person wrote to the publisher of the *South Carolina Gazette* to correct a similar oversight. They requested that an obituary be published for Charleston merchant Charles Peronneau and praised him as "an Ornament to his Country; which has produced but few of his Equals." Peronneau led such an exemplary life, the contributor argued, that the community "[ought] to be thus publickly acquainted with the Loss it sustains by his death."[19] These contributors took pains to have their acquaintance's or relative's death publicly recognized since published commemorations conveyed important messages to the audience beyond honoring the deceased, messages such as pride of place, political values, and the moral health of society. These two obituaries focused on local men, and thus suggested that their locales produced figures worthy of celebration and emulation that the entire community should recognize as a loss. Often times, however, these types of published commemorations would be printed alongside death notices of other leading colonial figures or even royalty. In keeping with Anglo-American mortality customs, printed commemorations offered lessons on how others could lead pious lives based on stories of the recently deceased. By the early-eighteenth century, published commemorations evolved to include more than

[18] *New-England Weekly Journal*, 3 March 1729.
[19] *South Carolina Gazette*, 23 October 1740.

elite figures and beyond lessons of salvation to include major secular and political achievements. The increased availability of death narratives allowed colonists to evaluate a more diverse array of lives and to interpret death through social and political lenses, in addition to a religious one.

This chapter explores why the subject of death had so much power within the American colonies. Death was such a pervasive topic that it had elastic meanings and served a variety of cultural and political aims beyond the spiritual. I argue that commemorative mortality customs evolved beyond an individual priority to a social experience in the early-eighteenth century as colonial newspapers and other forms of popular print culture allowed for space to recognize and interpret the local deceased. The traditional ideal of a good death emphasized individual dying and salvation, yet the more accessible commemorations of the early-eighteenth century asked the audience to care about a stranger who died thereby transforming mourning into a social experience. With this expanded platform and interpretive possibilities, colonists deployed death to speak to politics, identity, and place. Centuries-old mortality traditions acknowledge death was a constant, lifelong exercise; it mandated contemplation on a life well lived, as well as on personal identities and values. Commemorative writings celebrated what was praiseworthy within a society. Royal deaths provided an opportunity to applaud the style and accomplishments of British governance, such as Protestant succession and constitutional monarchy. These instances allowed colonists to assert their connections to the empire and express a shared sense of grief with those in the metropole. In addition to exemplary imperial figures, less prestigious colonial deaths also received public attention and commemorations. These were very much intertwined with a sense of place. In

highlighting deceased colonists with extraordinary spiritual and worldly accomplishments, authors of commemorations defended the colonial reputations against accusations of backwardness and established a means to assert the specialness of the colonies.

The popularization of commemoration added to the elasticity of death because it opened up more people to commemoration. Cheap and widely available printed funeral sermons, biographies, and obituaries allowed non-elite people to be publicly praised in death. By the early eighteenth century, easily accessible print genres allowed towns, cities, or entire colonies to raise their own notables upon death. Though many publishers reprinted obituaries, sermons, and descriptions of rituals for prominent British figures from other imperial newspapers, they amended these reprints with reactions from their own regions and, in some cases, printed them alongside the obituaries of local figures. The medium of print expanded the mourning community that felt the loss. If mourning had previously been confined to family members, fellow congregants, and neighbors, obituaries invited strangers into mourning. No longer just relatives, a congregation, or a neighborhood, everyone who read a commemorative piece learned about the decedent, praised the values and identity he or she represented, and engaged in a shared recognition of their death as a loss to the community as a whole. In other words, this chapter seeks to de-naturalize the obituary and consider the historical meaning when mourning deliberately shifts from interpersonal to social and political. Obviously, this shift does not apply to the elite such as monarchs, because they were always strangers to their subjects who mourned, and mourning the loss of a political leader always had social and political components. But in that way these obituaries brought ordinary colonists into the same

position as a king or queen, as they are all valued contributing members of their communities and thereby losses to society. The ways in which death defined the community became much more frequent and powerful as printed commemoration elevated an individual death into a social experience in which the collective group could celebrate their values and identity.

Studies of mortuary customs in colonial America have largely stayed within denominational frameworks and placed emphasis on specific faith groups' understandings of death. In David Stannard's *The Puritan Way of Death: A Study in Religion Culture, and Social Change*, Stannard argued that Puritans highlighted the fear and anxiety surrounding death in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[20] Stannard followed a declension narrative of New England and traced a decrease in anxiety regarding death and an increase in the elaborateness of funerary rites as a strict Puritan faith and anxiety about death declined. Also examining death according to religious denominations, David Hackett Fischer provided a brief overview of comparative deathways with a focus on religion in *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*. Fischer agreed with Stannard's thesis of Puritan anxiety regarding death in his discussion of New England deathways, which he termed "Instrumental Fatalism."[21] While death certainly was a religious experience and often interpreted according to

[20] David E. Stannard, *The Puritan Way of Death: A Study in Religion, Culture, and Social Change* (New York, 1977).

[21] David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); See also Patrick Henry Butler III, "'Knowing the Uncertainties of this Life:' Death and Society in Colonial Tidewater Virginia (Anglican)" (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1998) and Erik Seeman, *Pious Persuasions: Laity and Clergy in Eighteenth-Century New England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), especially chapter two "She Died Like Good Old Jacob: Deathbed Scenes and Inversions of Power in New England, 1675-1775).

religious beliefs, there were also cultural, intellectual, and political events that influenced how colonists made meaning out of death.

More recent works that engage with how Anglo-Americans interpreted death in the early-eighteenth century approach the topic through the lens of medical history. Using the lens of medicine offers significant insights because it shows how emerging information about mortality entered the public sphere, though it often centers on a narrative of the medicalization of death. In *Flesh in the Age of Reason*, medical historian Roy Porter emphasized the public nature of death in the eighteenth century. Porter argues that "through such developments [as print culture], death was beginning to be taken out of the hands of God."[22] Instead, Porter found that knowledge of death was increasingly medicalized and secularized in how it was written about. Porter provides valuable insight into the intellectual history of death in the eighteenth century, but his work and others like it traced too straightforward a change in attitudes regarding death.[23] It is true that new interpretations of death were entering the public sphere but they did not immediately dominate, and scholars who write in this narrative neglect to account for reprinting of older and religious views on death.

Rather than seeing a unidirectional shift from religious authority to a secular model of death or follow a medicalization model, this chapter considers the ways in which interpretations of death expanded in a colonial setting with the rise of popular print culture. Those two factors combined granted commemorative writers and publishers—

[22] Roy Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003), 214.

[23] For examples of this school of thought, see Kelly McGuire, "Death by Inoculation: The Fashioning of Mortality in Eighteenth-Century Smallpox Pamphlets," in *Disease and Death in Eighteenth-Century Literature and Culture: Fashioning the Unfashionable*, ed. by Allan Ingram and Leigh Wetherall Dickson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016): 189-206; *Vital Matters: Eighteenth-Century Views of Conception, Life, and Death*, ed. by Helen Deutsch and Mary Terrall (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

whether they be family members, ministers, or just acquaintances of the dead—greater opportunity to focus on people deemed important to their local communities. In intertwining significant decedents with the importance of place and colonization, traditional spiritual exercises took on additional meanings and conveyed messages about the colonial population and reputation.

This chapter first explores major ideologies in Anglo-American death customs that prescribed how people should encounter and interpret death in the early-eighteenth century. Doing so reveals how Anglo-Americans understood each individual to be engaged in constantly preparing for and confronting death. The chapter next turns to the growth of printed commemoration, such as obituaries, sermons, and pamphlets, among American colonists and how the public commemoration of ordinary colonial lives led to widespread public notice. Finally, this chapter discusses colonial reactions to the deaths of British monarchs, which received sustained written attention from colonial publishers and included descriptions of metropolitan events and colonial funeral sermons.

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According to Anglo-American mortality beliefs and customs, death was not something that happened only at the end of life. Beyond a single physical moment, colonists practiced long-standing English mortuary customs which taught that preparing for death must be a constant exercise throughout life. Such teachings urged people to live a life of piety and repentance because they will inevitably die and be accountable for what they did. They confronted death through religious works and interpretations, such as devotionals, sermons, images, and even material culture promoted the themes of *ars*

moriendi, or "the art of dying," and *memento mori,* which translates to "remember you will die."

These deathways dominated European religious ideas of mortality from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, centering on observing death and achieving individual salvation. *Ars moriendi* literature dictated how to prepare for, enact, and even witness death. The tradition began with an anonymous 1415 text called *Tractatus artis bene moriendi*, which had six chapters detailing the rites and prayers to be performed at the time of death for atonement and hopes of salvation, all in order to achieve a good death. The emergence of this literature coincided with the Church's goal "to get people to think more about the fate of their own soul."[24] Though originally published in Latin, printers quickly translated the text into European vernacular languages, with the first English-language version appearing in 1450, titled *The Book of the Craft of Dying*. The book began by informing readers that:

> Therefore in this present matter and treatise, that is of the Craft of Dying, is drawn and contained a short manner of exhortation, for teaching and comforting of them that be in point of death. This manner of exhortation ought subtly to be considered, noted, and understood in the sight of man's soul; for doubtless it is and may be profitable generally, to all true Christian men, to learn and have craft and knowledge to die well.[25]

The *Craft of Dying* aimed to unveil the mysteries surrounding dying and death. Though the *ars moriendi* tradition emphasized that no one could predict the moment of death, which was ultimately up to God, writers sought to teach both clergy and laypeople how to prepare for death. Since no one but God knows the time of death, "therefore ought every

[24] Erik Seeman, *Death in the New World: Cross-Cultural Encounters, 1492-1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 30.

[25] Frances M.M. Comper, ed., *The book of the craft of dying, and other early English tracts concerning death* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1917), 3.

man . . . that desireth for to die well and surely, live in such wise and so have himself always, that he may safely die, every hour, when God will."[26]

Ars moriendi writings stressed that death was a positive, even though it may be frightening, because it signals the end of the sinful and deteriorating mortal body in exchange for possible salvation and "everlasting bliss."[27] The art-of-dying manual detailed how to resist the temptations of impiety, despair, impatience, pride, and avarice that could condemn one's soul. The guides also provided directions for those at the deathbed scene, who witnessed the final spiritual battle of the dying, and offered examples of questions to ask and prayers for the dying. Readers were instructed that the dying person should express joyful acceptance of death, show resignation to God's will, and recognize that there is a better life ahead. Mourners, acknowledging the same, should minimize their grief. According to literary scholar Nancy Lee Beaty, Jeremy Taylor's *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying* became the "artistic climax" of the English *ars moriendi* when it premiered in 1651 and served as a companion to his earlier devotional work *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living*.[28] Taylor argued that people needed to prepare for death their entire lives, particularly through good works, rather than depending on a deathbed repentance. Taylor stressed to readers the importance of reflecting on deathbed scenes to keep their own mortality at the forefront of their minds in order to live a life of piety and to prepare for a holy death. The good death conveyed a very individualistic sense of dying.

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[26] Comper, *Craft of Dying*, 9.
[27] Comper, *Craft of Dying*, 31.
[28] Nancy Lee Beaty, *The Craft of Dying: A Study in the Literary Tradition of the* Ars Moriendi *in England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 197.

Colonists imported and owned mortality guides that taught these traditions. *The Whole Duty of Man*, written by Anglican clergyman Richard Allestree in 1658, argued in the *ars moriendi* tradition that a life of constant, genuine piety was the best preparation for death. Though Allestree placed less emphasis on the actual deathbed scene than some earlier *ars moriendi* texts, which focused entirely on the process of dying, and more on living up to Christian virtues in everyday life, preparing his readers for death was his ultimate goal.[29] Such directness and clarity made Allestree's works "second to none in popularity" in colonial America as counted in library inventories.[30] Other English art-of-dying books circulated in the colonies as constant bestsellers. William Sherlock's *Practical Discourse Concerning Death*, originally printed in 1689, was "a perennial favorite throughout the southern colonies in all of the eighteenth century, almost rivaling *The Whole Duty of Man*."[31] Sherlock consoled his readers who feared death by emphasizing God's mercy and Christ's sacrifice for mankind's sins. However, he placed the ultimate responsibility for gaining salvation on individuals, through living a pious life, explaining that "it is his own Fault if he does not live so as to secure immortal life."[32]

The actions of the deceased provided a guide for the still-living on how to be holy and how to die well. Though the dead may be gone, they were not forgotten as their contemporaries pored over decedents' lives, values, and actions in order to interpret them

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[29] Richard Allestree, *The Whole Duty of Man*, (London: Printed by W. Norton for E. and R. Pawlet, 1704), ix.

[30] Edwin Wolf, *The Book Culture of a Colonial American City: Philadelphia Books, Bookmen, and Booksellers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 15. Richard Beale Davis also elaborates on the popularity of Allestree's *Whole Duty of Man* in Richard Beale David, *A Colonial Southern Bookshelf: Reading in the Eighteenth-Century* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1979), 83; William Sherlock, *A Practical Discourse Concerning Death*, 15th ed. (London: Printed by J.R. for Daniel Brown, 1713), 245.

[31] Davis, *Colonial Southern Bookshelf,* 83. Wolf also notes the prevalence of Sherlock's works in northeastern port cities. See Wolf, 79.

[32] William Sherlock, *A Practical Discourse Concerning Death*, 15th ed. (London: Printed by J.R. for Daniel Brown, 1713), 245.

and assign meaning. Even non-verbal mentions of death promoted this religiously-sanctioned approach to death with deaths heads and skeletons reminding the viewer of physical decay and mortality. Religious leaders wanted death to be a continuous and daily topic of thought through several modes of reminders, and they supplemented the reminders from daily life with sermons to remind people of their doom. Historian Erik Seeman explained that this was not meant to depress but functioned as "something to do to help alleviate the inevitable terror of dying."[33] According to the *ars moriendi* tradition, every time they contemplated the fate of their soul, Christians acted out the proper model of death.

Writers of *ars moriendi* literature emphasized that one should always live life with an eye towards death, and *memento mori* materials served as the reminders interwoven throughout everyday life. Literary scholar Lorna Clymer defined *memento mori* as "being mindful of death as a spiritual exercise."[34] Works on this theme tended to be shorter in length and filled with more personal stories than works like *The Whole Duty of Man*, which centered on scripture and biblical stories. They had titles such as *Piety Promoted: in a collection of dying sayings of the People called Quakers*, that conveyed they were scenes from individual lives rather than something extraordinary. The stories were meant to be ordinary and attainable, stories that people could connect with as they considered the state of their spirituality and how they might pass from living to dead. The

[33] Seeman, *Death in the New World*, 31.

[34] Lorna Clymer, "Noticing Death: Funeral Invitations and Obituaries in Early Modern Britain," in *Vital Matters: Eighteenth-Century Views of Conception, Life, and Death*, ed. Helen Deutsch and Mary Terrall (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 266.

underlying assumption of preparation for death was that it was a constant and life-long endeavor.[35]

Anglo-Americans frequently engaged with these mortuary customs in their daily lives. As colonists attended church and walked the city streets, their material surroundings provided reminders of death. Colonial churchyards were full of burials, and their grave markers incorporated *memento mori.* Through the mid-eighteenth century, artisans carved headstones with winged, blank-eyed skulls known as "deaths-heads," which were the "nearly universal style of gravestone decoration."[36] The skull, which lacked any defining features, reminded observers of the end of the corporeal body, that everyone would die and decay. Wings flanked the skull, representing the soul's rise to judgment, where the decedent would receive either eternal salvation or eternal damnation (Figures 1 and 2).

[35] Erik Seeman examined the extent of the changes in attitudes towards death after the Protestant Reformation. He found that Protestant works placed less emphasis on the sacraments of death and refuted the idea that the fate of the soul could be determined at the moment of death. Rather, Protestants were encouraged to work to ensure or find signs of their salvation throughout their lived. Overall, though, he argued that mortuary beliefs were too entrenched to be affected overly much by Protestantism. He stated that "even when most laypeople had become thoroughly Protestant—by the end of the sixteenth century in England—numerous similarities remained." See Seeman, *Death in the New World*, 39.

[36] James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life*, rev. ed. (New York: Anchor, 1996), 96.

Figure 1: Gravestone for Lydia Peronneau (d. 1734) in the graveyard of Circular Congregational Church, Charleston, South Carolina. Source: https://www.circularchurch.org/graveyard

Figure 2. Gravestone for Nathaniel Perkins (d. 1713) in the at Granary Burying Ground, Boston, Massachusetts. Source: https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/11535123/nathaniel-perkins

Brief inscriptions accompanied the imagery. Most inscriptions consisted of brief biographical details such as, "Here lies Byried the body of Mr. Thomas Baker Who Was 12 Years & 6 Mo. A Sexton of St. Philips Church in Charlestown Deceased 27 of November 1737 in the 55 year of his life." Occasionally, carvings included more explicitly *memento mori* text, with a small saying meant to remind the reader of their own demise: "Behold & see as you pass by/As you are now so once was I/As I am now you soon must be/Prepare for death and follow me."[37] New-England-crafted stones with the deaths-head design made their way as far south as South Carolina where "the implications of its form was not lost on Anglican patrons, whose early eighteenth-century theology was not far removed from that of their more northerly Protestant neighbors."[38] Philadelphia, with its Quaker roots, lacked a strong visual culture of death in the early-eighteenth century because of Quaker plainness principles. The Philadelphia Yearly Meeting forbid gravestones until the nineteenth century, declaring them "Marks of Superfluity and excess."[39] The small Anglican population in the city did mark their burials, and the few remaining examples from the early part of the century suggest their gravestones were similar to what appeared in Boston and Charleston (Figure 3).

[37] Gravestone of Capt. John Fisher, d. 1735. https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=pv&GRid=27611695&PIpi=11321624

[38] Louis P. Nelson, *The Beauty of Holiness: Anglicanism and Architecture in Colonial South Carolina* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 142.

[39] *Rules of Discipline and Christian Advices* (Philadelphia: Samuel Sansom, 1797), 59. For more information on Quaker burial and funeral rituals, see Patricia C. O'Donnell, "This Side of the Grave: Navigating the Quaker Plainness Testimony in London and Philadelphia in the Eighteenth Century," *Winterthur Portfolio* 49, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 29-54, especially 47-53.

Figure 3. Gravestone decorated with the winged death's head at the Christ Church Burial Ground, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Source: the author.

This chapter turns next to printed commemorative practices, in order to illuminate how those deemed worthy of commemoration expanded to include non-elites and adapted to colonial societies. *Ars moriendi* and *memento mori* provided the reasons for why early Americans felt the need to ruminate upon death; the next step was to raise good examples to public notice so they could be emulated. Commemoration was popularized with the rise of popular print culture in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, which allowed the stories of exemplary lives to spread further than ever before. Combining the practice of mortuary interpretation and biography, printers of increasingly available cheap printed goods such as newspapers and pamphlets published stories of both famous and mundane lives they deemed worthy of public notice. These biographies of eminent decedents were first known as "life-writing" and included many types of publications from book-length biographies to one-page deathbed scenes. Historian Andrea Walkden

found that life-writing enjoyed a "remarkable level of popularity . . . during the late-seventeenth century" in the wake of the English Civil War and was often employed in defense of England's religious and political institutions. The genre can be traced back for centuries, but works on the individual lives of "worthies" boomed in the late-seventeenth century because they were "narratives without closely articulated positions," meaning they "don't demand a reader of any considerable education or insider expertise, and they reach out to a broad literate public as well as to smaller interest groups."[40]

As they embraced this form of writing, colonists were eager to highlight American notables. Colonial ministers quickly engaged in the genre, with the first published in Massachusetts in 1663. Puritan divine John Norton wrote a biography of John Cotton, one of Boston's first ministers in order to guide those in New England towards dying well in a colonial setting. He explained "that the living speak is no wonder: but that the dead speak, is more than miraculous. . . . To preserve the memory of the blessed with the Spices and sweet Odors of their Excellencies and Weldoing, recorded to posterity, is a super-Egyptian embalming."[41] In many ways it served as an extended and more detailed funeral sermon. It had the same purpose: to inspire people to consider their own conduct with an eye towards death and judgment. Colonial ministers urged local leaders to lead exemplary lives, so that they could be held up as public examples of how to conduct one's self socially and spiritually. In a sermon honoring King George I, Reverend Prince called on members of "more publick families" to be "careful of their Principles & Conduct." If they proved themselves to be "utterly

[40] Andrea Walkden, *Private Lives Made Public: The Invention of Biography in Early Modern England* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne University Press, 2016), 5.

[41] John Norton, *Abel Being Dead Yet Speaketh; or, The Life and Death of … John Cotton* (Cambridge: Printed by Samuel Green and Marmaduke Johnson, 1663.), 3-4.

unworthy to excel" in these areas, they would be set aside and forgotten.[42] Prince argued that everyone from monarchs to parents had a societal duty to lead exemplary lives that could be imitated by their supposed inferiors.

In celebrating the morality and piety of the colonial population, colonial life-writings became a defense of place. Authors argued that religious devotion could flourish even in—and perhaps because of—their peripheral setting. They emphasized that examples of saints and worthies—the traditional focus of life-writings—could be found in the colonies, and they produced biographies of local men and women who lived and died exceptionally well. In *Magnalia Christi Americana*, roughly translating to *The Glorious Works of Christ in America,* Puritan minister Cotton Mather detailed the settlement process of New England and compiled ministerial and magisterial biographies from the region. In one such biography, Mather declared "Let it be known, that America can embalm great persons, as well as produce them, and New-England can bestow an elegy as well as an education upon its heroes."[43] It was a statement on the manners and refinement of Massachusetts Bay.[44] Even more than that, Mather's claim highlighted that God's work was happening, and they were witnessing divine triumphs in their distant setting. Mather made a clear argument that the colonies could foster people worthy of public recognition.

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[42] Prince, *Sorrowful Occasion,* 4-5.

[43] Mather, *Magnalia* v. 2, 113.

[44] Richard Bushman explained that "Refinement originated in an aspiration that had been revitalized in the Renaissance and spread first to the European courts and then to the upper middle classes. The ideal was encompassed in words like 'genteel,' 'civil,' and 'urbane' and first was the property of courtiers. Located on the margins of European society, England was among the last to embrace civility, but by the early seventeenth century the English court pursued it in all its forms. After the Restoration of 1660, the English upper middle class, the equivalent of America's greatest merchants and planters, did the same." He continued that "There were indeed practical benefits to be gained from refinement. Gentility bestowed concrete social power on its practitioners. It was a resource for impressing and influencing powerful people, frequently a prerequisite for inspiring trust." See *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), xii, xix.

Furthermore, Mather emphasized that colonists could rise to the occasion and appropriately eulogize exemplary lives according to the ideal English format. Mather and his peers believed their colonial life-writings would perpetuate the values they praised for future generations. In a prefatory essay to *Magnalia*, clergyman John Higginson argued that such biographies guided people into carrying out God's work in their province. He explained that "That the Names of such Eminent Persons as the Lord made us of, as Instruments in his hand, for the beginning and carrying on of this Work, may be embalmed and preserved, for the Knowledge and Imitation of Posterity; for the Memory of the Just & Blessed."[45] Ministers writing colonial biographies were constructing a history of provincial virtue and piety. As in the *Magnalia*, they recognized that settlement had been a long and fraught process, but their works asserted that it had not affected the morality of those involved in colonization. Not only were they spiritually strong, in the Puritan viewpoint, but they also engaged in the holy work of multiplying the land and people who worshiped God with their colonial endeavors. In their life-writings, Puritan worthies did not just persevere in their faith but spread it to new corners of the globe.

Commemorative writings for juveniles argued that the North American colonies fostered innocence and piety in those who never set foot in England itself. Such youthful subjects had not accomplished great and remarkable things, but they had lived lives of piety and virtue. Particularly important were the dying words of young people, modeled upon English books such as *Piety Promoted,* as they served "to testify of [God's]

[45] John Higginson, "An Attestation to this Church History of New-England," in Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (London: Printed for Thomas Parkhurst, 1702).

goodness for the Encouragement of the Living."[46] The deaths of children, such as Philadelphia Quaker Hannah Hill in *A Legacy for Children*, provided the readers a place at the colonial deathbed where the youngest and most innocent expressed resignation to divine will and piety in their last living moments. Hill was not worried about herself, for she was entering a better existence, and instead spent her final prayers on the future of Philadelphia, beseeching God to "yet more abundantly shower down his blessings on Philadelphia and the Inhabitants of these parts of the World."[47] Her words sent the message that Philadelphia and its people were already blessed, and the righteous among them felt affection towards the place and hope for its future. The pamphlet's message overlapped somewhat with Mather's in that both saw their societies on a holy mission to spread faith in unknown lands. At her moment of death, according to the book, she saw Philadelphia and its purpose as favored by God. Secure in the fate of her soul because of her good—yet simple and unassuming—life and death, she encouraged their mission further.

The inclusion of children was particularly important because it stressed the sincerity of colonial piety. Mather publicized the dying words of New England's children in a Boston reprint of James Janeway's *A Token for Children* in which he explained that his additions were a "Collection of Notable Things, Exemplified in the Lives and Deaths of many among us, whose Childhood hath been Signalized for what is, Vertuous and Laudable."[48] Early Americans could not expect a long life. They might never get married,

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[46] *A Legacy for Children, being Some of the Last Expressions, and Dying Sayings, of Hannah Hill, Junr*., 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Andrew Bradford, 1717), 5. See also *A Seasonable account of the Christian and dying-words, of some young-men; fit for the consideration of all* (Philadelphia: Reynier Jansen, 1700).

[47] *A Legacy for Children,* 16.

[48] James Janeway and Cotton Mather, *A Token for Children . . . :To which is added, a Token, for the Children of New England* (Boston: Printed for Nicholas Boone, 1700), 4.

raise productive children, become a minister, or serve their communities through charity work. The stories of childhood mortality stressed that life was uncertain, so one must always focus on how they would die rather than how they would advance in life. Mather also explicitly stated that part of his purpose was acclaiming the quality of people in the region, stating that "No doubt, when the Church history of New-England comes abroad, there will be found in it, the Lives of many, Eminent persons, among whose Eminencies, not the least was, Their fearing of the Lord from their Youth, and their being Loved by the Lord, when they were Children."[49] Worldly accomplishments were unnecessary when one had piety at the moment of death. These young children were innocent and genuine in their resignation to death and their belief that leaving the earthly body behind was cause for celebration. They did not have the experience to disingenuously perform a formulaic deathbed scene. Therefore, their youthful piety and submission to death was a true mark of colonial religious devotion.

With the development of death notices, interpretation of individual lives and deaths went beyond the family or a small group of people to a broader public. They helped shift publicized discussions of death from individual preparation to social mourning. The increased accessibility of newspapers and periodicals in the early-eighteenth century popularized coverage of death narratives, which fostered the rise of the obituary genre. Lorna Clymer explained that the emergence of the death notice in the mid-seventeenth century was "the result of an innovative union between emerging news media and traditional sources which had noticed death and evaluated significant lives," a simple and concise form of life-writing that did not necessarily go into great detail about

[49] Janeway and Mather, *A Token for Children*, 4.

the deceased.[50] New outlets allowed for shorter pieces to be published more frequently, leading to an increased number of and a diverse array of people recognized as well as a multiplicity of voices contributing to the interpretation and praise of individual decedents. They focused on ordinary lives from the local or regional community and effectively dissected society by examining who lived there, what they were like, and what their lives contributed. An obituary focused on an individual life and death, but especially highlighted their lives, values, and role in the community. In other words, obituaries worked to fit that one decedent into a larger picture. These reflections on death were a drastic change from funeral sermons that asked the congregation to consider their piety and future deaths. Obituaries and other commemorative writings allowed colonists to review their own societies through individual stories meant to celebrate values and achievements representative of their locale.

In the early eighteenth century, obituaries in colonial newspapers tended to focus on elites and even on British elites. The first ones printed in colonial newspapers were reprinted from London papers and focused on aristocratic Britons. Imperial death notices highlighted symbols of nobility and status, tacitly recognizing and respecting British hierarchy. The majority of obituaries announced the death of someone elite, and the highest-ranking decedents appeared in reprinted British announcements. Death notices for dignitaries reported the passing of major imperial figures and those of high rank, weaving colonial readers into the information network of the larger imperial world.[51] The

[50] Death notices combined "elements from the obit-book, a simple registry of the dead compiled by a religious order or professional organization; inscribed or printed epitaphs; religious treatises, such as contemplations of death; funeral sermons; and biographies, including saints' lives and comparative bibliographical essays." Clymer, "Noticing Death," 285.

[51] This category accounted for 18 percent of death notices in both Boston and Philadelphia to 1754, but less than one percent of those from Charleston.

first death notice printed in a provincial paper announced the death of an aristocrat, reporting that "Died the latter end of March last the Right Honourable, Henry, Earl of Rumny, late Master of the Ordnance, Colonel of the First Regiment of Foot Guards, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, Keeper of Greenwich Park, and Lord Bed-Chamber."[52] Announcements in this vein focused on titles, estates, and inheritances. They noted the extent of a decedent's property and wealth, while informing the reader who would "succeed to his estate."[53] Such was the case with the death notice of Thomas Lord Fairfax, a Scottish aristocrat, which, after announcing his death, spent several sentences describing his connections to the "Noble Family of Colepeper" and "the Ancient Estate of Leeds Castle in Kent."[54] Whether it was the death of a government official such as the clerk from the House of Commons or a member of the nobility, death notices recognized the importance and worthiness of these individuals for public remembrance, thereby reinforcing the social hierarchy and respect for British symbols of rank and gentility.

Colonial printers mingled reprinted aristocratic obituaries from British papers along with leading colonial ones in a way that equated colonial and British refinement. Though obituaries were undoubtedly submitted and printed to recognize the worthy lives and public loss, taken together the dozens printed each week carried underlying messages about their communities. Readers of colonial death notices got the sense that the decedents, and the communities in which they lived, were on par with any in England regarding moral and physical health. When Increase Mather died in 1723, the *Boston Gazette* described him as a "renowned" and "greatly esteemed" figure who had

[52] *Boston News-Letter*, 24-31 July 1704, 2.
[53] *Boston Gazette*, 16-23 May 1720, 3.
[54] *Boston Gazette*, 18-25 April 1720, 2.

"Signilized himself in many public Appearances; But Especially in an Agency for his Country at the British Court, and as President of Harvard-College." The obituary celebrated contributions that spanned an ocean, as he lived "a Life of many Services in England and Ireland, as well as New-England."[55] The paper emphasized his colonial background, noting his roots in Dorchester, his education and career at Harvard, and his decades as a local Boston minister. Reverend Benjamin Colman declared, "Eminent and useful persons" such as Mather "are the Honour of the places wherein they live, and publick Blessings to their Country."[56] Commemoration for Mather emphasized that he was a product of Massachusetts, one who not only was a leader within the colony but also one who played significant roles throughout the empire.

Elite colonists could not boast the aristocratic titles and estates held in England so newspapers filled their death notices with moral descriptions when commemorating the colonial elite dead, presenting their elite as genteel and virtuous. Most colonists, even the well-to-do, did not have the status markers of titles and high-ranking imperial positions to signify their rank. For every named decedent, obituary authors included a title or sign of status such as doctor, merchant, captain, esquire, or colonel. One described Benjamin Godin, Esq., a retired merchant, as "A Gentleman of unblemished Character for Integrity, Benevolence, and every Moral Virtue. A good Neighbour, A sincere Friend, A kind and Indulgent Husband, A tender Parent, and a valuable Member of the Community."[57] Obituaries reported the cause of death—fevers, long indispositions, or accidents—and included the age and occupations of the deceased. Commemorative death notices

[55] *Boston Gazette*, 19-26 August 1723, 2.
[56] Benjamin Colman, *The Prophet's Death Lamented* (Boston: Fleet for Belknap, 1723), 6.
[57] *South Carolina Gazette*, 27 April 1748.

themselves were symbols of honor and genteel status; to have one's name and accomplishments publicized meant they were of public import.

The few women and children mentioned were related to high-ranking men and the obituaries reflected on their influential relatives. Such was the case of Margaret Johnson, wife of South Carolina's colonial governor Robert Johnson. Upon her death in 1732, an obituary on the front page of the *South Carolina Gazette* declared "Words would at best be but slender Indications of the Regard and Duty we owe to her Memory. Let us rather study to make up, as far as lies in our Power, the Loss her Survivor sustains, and by a constant, unanimous, and ready Obedience to his Administration." The article argued that if the governor felt secure in his authority, he would not miss the support and comfort that his deceased wife offered him.[58] The appearance of this notice on the front page underscored the importance of using the governor's recent widower status and expected grief to persuade colonists to offer political consent.[59] Citing the deceased's "universal Esteem of this Province," the author urged unity and understanding rather than discord and disagreement. In extolling his deceased wife's virtues and the immensity of her husband's loss, the article communicated the governor's character in marrying and grieving such an exemplary woman, and linked his mourning and desire for calmness to circumstances that many in colonial South Carolina understood from personal experience. Most of the audience of the South Carolina Gazette never knew Margaret Johnson personally, but her death served as a civic experience. In accordance with social

[58] *South Carolina Gazette*, 8-15 July 1732, 1. An obituary describing her character and virtues on appeared on page three of the issue, and her death was also announced in *The Gentleman's Magazine.*

[59] Robert Johnson served as both a proprietary governor and as the first royal governor. Although he was well-liked in the province, he struggled to implement the Crown's instructions, particularly because of pushback from the lower house. See Richard P. Sherman, *Robert Johnson: Proprietary & Royal Governor of South Carolina* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1966), esp. 71-84.

commemoration, the obituary asked strangers to feel her loss and support her family in order to promote unity and order in the colony.

Death notices held up these social leaders as devoted to the common good through their colonial wealth and status, not pursuing their own self-interest. Lamenting obituaries extolled a diverse array of virtues as praiseworthy. One notice for a judge and representative praised the deceased for "sound judgment, piety and love of justice" making him "eminent and useful." In doing so, such announcements gave the impression of a fully formed colonial leadership class. These men had the trappings of gentility—titles, elected position, education, and access to British commerce—and their death notices argued that they exercised genteel behavior and values in their everyday lives. The *New England Weekly Journal* announced the death of John Borland, a "principal merchant of this town," and described him as "A gentleman belov'd and valu'd for his Piety, extensive Charity, and great Humility."[60] In just two sentences the obituary depicted a professionally and financially successful man, one that served his community at large not just despite, but through, his wealth and achievement. Taken together, these hundreds of commemorative death notices sought to represent a colonial world that had developed leaders and a social elite defined by commitment to improving their communities through virtuous and genteel values, rather than greed and acquisitiveness.

Finally, turning to instances of royal deaths reveals how colonists used these moments to celebrate the leadership values and culture of the nation itself. Even as commemorative practices expanded for ordinary colonists and defended colonial reputations, royal deaths received the most sustained written attention of any deceased

[60] *New England Weekly Journal*, 3 April 1727, 2.

figures in the colonial period as well as the most extensive interpretations of the dead. Post-death analysis for royal figures revealed that commemoration could easily be made political.[61] Though ministers wrote most of them, some were published at the behest of political institutions. By the time King George II died, colonists themselves produced almost all reports and interpretations of the king's death printed in Charleston, Boston, and Philadelphia, and disseminated their messages through newspapers, broadsides, public rituals, and funeral sermons.

Such moments offered opportunities for imperial reflection and connection on a sentimental level, as well as a political one, without having to delve into policy or trade issues. The news traveled from colonial port to colonial port by ship, weaving colonists and their governing bodies into imperial information networks. John Marshall, a bricklayer who lived in Boston and in Braintree, Massachusetts, recorded how the news of King William III's death reached Boston from other English ports. In late May of 1702, a full 10 weeks after the king passed, "we had news from New York of the grave blow to all Europe the death of his royall majesty King William who dyed the 8 day of March last at his Court in Kensington which was also confirmed 3 days after by a vessell from Newfoundland." Marshall mentioned the king's death again when he noted "the Generall Court then sitting on Fryday the 29 of may proclaimed the high and myty princess anne of Denmark Queen of England Scotland France and Ireland."[62] What followed was an outpouring of processions, sermons, and publications that praised the monarch and, by extension, England itself. Colonists used these events to express their

[61] Three reigning monarchs died within the first three decades of the eighteenth century: King William III in 1702, Queen Anne in 1714, and King George I in 1727.

[62] John Marshall Diary, 1702, Massachusetts Historical Society, Microfilm P-363, 6.22.

loyalty to the growing British empire, show affection and pride in royal guidance and praise their ideal leadership values.

Commemorative literature declared that in publicly acknowledging and mourning the death of a king or queen, colonists were performing their duties as full and equal subjects of the monarch. Grieving such a loss was a sign of true Englishness, according to these authors. Wadsworth asserted that "all true Protestants might be rightly affected with the sore frown of Providence, in the Death of so good a KING, so Great a Blessing."[63] A quarter of a century later, Checkley emphasized the point by instructing his audience "when God is pleased in his Providence, to remove by death, from a Nation or People, a good King, and in the midst of his Usefulness, it is their duty, duly to resent the same, and universally mourn therefor."[64] Lamenting the royal death served as an important expression of gratitude to the monarch and to God for the gift of such a good and competent leader. It revealed that those mourning were cognizant of all that the king or queen had done to promote peace, security, and affection. Joseph Sewall reiterated that it was the duty of good subjects to mourn, explaining "Now then, The Lord of Life calls us to pay our Tribute of Tears, and bear our part in the publick Sorrows of this mournful Day, in which the Light of our Israel is quenched, in the very sudden and surprizing Death of our late gracious Sovereign King George, of glorious Memory."[65] Just as it was the monarch's duty to promote the good of their people, it was the subjects' duty to acknowledge their esteem for the royal figure.

[63] Checkley, *Duty of a People*, i.
[64] Checkley, *The Duty of a People*, 4.
[65] Joseph Sewall, *Jehovah is the King* (Boston: Green for Henchman, 1727), 21-22.

Exemplary traits had very little to do with the personality of the monarch, but in what they had done for the nation and how well they had carried out their duties. In praising the deceased monarch for their performance, writers articulated the roles they expected monarchs to fill—a judicious leader, defender of the faith, and a protector of English freedoms. It was the symbolism of the monarch and the principles of constitutional monarchy that commemorative writers celebrated as much as individual attributes. In a sermon given before the Governor's Council of Massachusetts upon the death of King William III, the Reverend Mr. Benjamin Wadsworth, minister at the First Church in Boston and later president of Harvard College, declared "God has dealt thus with our Nation, has raised up a Judge, a great King, a Deliverer who delivered us when we were in sinking circumstances."[66] In Wadsworth's estimation, the king had redeemed the nation by accepting the throne and ruling constitutionally facing down threats from French forces, disagreements with Scotland, and unrest in Ireland. During William's reign, the English succeeded in establishing a constitutional monarchy and overcome threats of absolutism and Catholicism.

Colonial authors went into great detail on the monarch's virtues and merits in order to extoll their ideal leadership values and promote the relationship they expected with metropolitan authorities, particularly that of limited governmental oversight. Their commemorative literature displayed a strong pride in Britain's monarchs on the basis of what type of leadership they represented. Thomas Prince's sermon upon the death of King George I declared:

[66] Benjamin Wadsworth, *King William Lamented in America* (Boston: Printed by B. Green, 1702), 16.

> the Light of such a King is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is to us, to see so bright and feel the Influence of so warm a Sun, as long as possible. His happy people cannot but wish a longer Day: And for themselves they can't but mourn when it comes to an end. With reluctant Sorrow they then remember how greatly they Rejoyc'd & Flourish'd in his benign Light & Influence for so short a Season. Their Pangs of Grief will rise, their Springs of Tears will flow, and a sad and gloomy Night will over shade their Minds.[67]

Such lamentations represent a people in mourning for their leader, one who served as a beacon for the world. Once the author recognized the depth of the loss, their commemorations continued on to assess what made that leadership so great and what they hoped would continue.

According to these authors, serving as a leader was a God-given responsibility, because leaders held the lives and wellbeing of others in their hands. When one so great as the king or queen died, it served as a reminder to other leaders that death was the great leveler. Those lamenting the death of King George I praised "his wise & just Government," and his constant "pursuit of the Peace and Tranquility of his people."[68] It was the assurance of death that should keep leaders, as well as ordinary people, restrained in their exercise of power and honest in their lives. Sewall declared, "let Civil Rulers realize their Mortality, and Act under this view that they must shortly be call'd to give up their Account to God the Judge of All."[69] Portrayals of George I as a leader stressed that he kept in mind and worked towards the benefit of his subjects. According to Checkley, George I provided the shining example of the lesson that the prospect of imminent death

[67] Prince, *Sorrowful Occasion*, 13.
[68] *Boston News-Letter*, 17 August 1727, 3; Checkley, *Duty of a People*, 20.
[69] Sewall, *Jehovah is the King,* 25.

"should make them [officials] just, ruling in the fear of God."[70] Just like any monarch would be judged by God for how well they carried out their duties and responsibilities, so too would those in similar though less elevated positions.

More locally, Boston writers highlighted the importance of a monarch's respect for the 1691 Charter of Massachusetts Bay, which had restored representative government to the colonists of New England after the Glorious Revolution and the Dominion of New England. Though the governor, lieutenant governor, and judges were royally appointed, the charter gave colonial voters the right to elect representatives to the General Assembly, who then appointed members to the Governor's Council in order to advise the executive. Minister Thomas Prince praised George I for not interfering overmuch in the governance of Massachusetts, explaining, "We have in a great measure felt the Influence of his happy reign. Thro' his safe Protection we still enjoy those precious Charter Privileges, which our Fore-Fathers left their Native pleasant Land, and came over hither into a miserable Thicket to procure; which were solemnly confirmed to us by the Glorious King William and Queen mary of Eternal Memory; and are comprehensive of every thing on Earth that is Dear and Valuable to us."[71] According to Prince, he was "Firm and resolute to assert the Rights & Honours of the Kingdom; He was neither ambitious of larger Empire Abroad, nor of greater Power at Home."[72] Prince delivered his sermon at the request of the elected representatives of Boston, men who held power because of rights set forth in the charter. In giving such emphasis to the 1691

[70] Checkley, *Duty of a People,* 10. Brendan McConville argued that portrayals of royal death reveal shifting conceptions of royal authority, explaining that "contract theory continued to be invoked, the idea of a legally restrained monarch remained important, but over time writers elevated the king over other men." McConville, *The King's Three Faces*, 212.

[71] Prince, *Sorrowful Occasion*, 22.

[72] Prince, *Sorrowful Occasion,* 21.

Charter and the deceased king's respect for the bounds of his authority provincial politics, commemorative writers used George I's death to promote issues of particular importance to their local communities. Though commentary on the charter intertwined with broader philosophical questions of the best way to exercise authority, ministers such as Checkley, Sewall, and Prince used the transition from one monarch to the next to set forth their ideal spheres of imperial power and advertise them to their communities.

Just as the constitutional monarchy and limited exercise of power were of central importance when evaluating the value of a monarch, how well they defended the Protestant faith was equally significant. This aspect of monarchy was so important to Anglo-Americans because it was intertwined with disgraced monarchs in their own history and the threat of foreign interference. Wadsworth eulogized King William III as "the Deliverer of England from Popery and Slavery, which they were some eminently in danger of." Moreover, Wadsworth told his readers, the king took the "Noble and Generous" step in "covering . . . all men from Persecution for their Consciences."[73] According to the commemorative literature, Catholicism was a constant threat that British leaders had to fend off, especially at moments of royal succession. A poem by Mather Byles explained the uncertainty felt upon the death of William III and Queen Anne, both of whom died without direct heirs. He reminded readers of "The last black months of ANNA's gloomy reign;/ When secret treason work'd, when justice fled,/ And loud destruction threaten'd o'er our head:/ 'Twas then, by heaven ordain'd, his happy hand,/ From ruin rescued the devoted land;/ The storm was hush, the clam'rous factions laid,/

[73] Wadsworth, *King William Lamented*, 10.

And peaceful olive spread its wealthy shade."[74] Writers felt the change from one monarch to the next was a vulnerable moment in the war between Catholic and Protestant forces. Though colonists mourned the death of a monarch, they had reason to celebrate in the secure Protestant succession of the throne. Checkley concluded his sermon in honor of King George I with a prayer for "a Protestant Prince, in his full strength," asking God that "as for such as are either secret or open enemies to his Person, Crown and Dignity, and would gladly bring in, and advance a Popish Pretender to the Throne. May they all be confounded" and "may his reign over us be long and prosperous; and all his Dominions *lead under him quiest and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty."*[75] In this vein of evaluating British leadership, writers gave voice to their expectations of monarchs through the praise of what past ones had done. In focusing on Protestantism, colonists celebrated what they believed set them apart and above the rest of the world.

Each royal commemoration offered an opportunity to declare loyalty to and celebrate their new monarch as well as the bright future of England. These writings, by focusing on broad and overarching values of the royal figurehead, explained why Britain and its dominions were healthy despite the death of its leader. In this instance, colonial commemoration for royal deaths represented continuity and stability, as they signaled the smooth transition from one leader to another. Sewall ended his sermon for King George I on an optimistic note, announcing, "Let us Praise The Lord, who hath not left his British-Israel, as Sheep without a Shepherd," concluding "The King lives in his Son, and we behold our rightful and lawful KING GEORGE the Second, whom God long Preserve!

[74] Mather Byles, "A Poem on the Death of His Late Majesty" (Boston: 1727), ii-iii.
[75] Checkley, *Duty of a People,* 22.

Peaceably seated on his Throne, amidst the joyful acclamations of his dutiful people."[76] Sewall and other authors expressed hope and confidence for the next king, expressing faith that he would carry on the legacy of his predecessor, wisely and justly governing his American subjects. According to Reverend Prince, all should pray a most fervent prayer for future monarchs, "That [George II] and His Posterity may for ever send us in these American Ends of the Earth, those to Govern, that are of Sober Conversation, wise in conduct, & of generous Principles of Religion; who will value our Constitution, and our own Ministry and Churches, to be true and valid, as we do theirs. And that himself & They may for ever continue Sacred our Precious Charter."[77] These were more than the hopes of colonists, as they also served as messages of allegiance, balancing a tone of sadness and celebration. Both Boston and Philadelphia printed an account of George I's death, announcing that "Whereas it pleased Almighty God to call to his Mercy our late Sovereign Lord King George of Blessed Memory" home, the reports simultaneously rejoicing in George II's succession by declaring "To whom we do acknowledge all Faith and constant Obedience, with all hearty and humble Affection: Beseeching God, by whom Kings and Queens do reign, to bless the Royal King George the Second with long and happy Years to Reign over us."[78] Colonists expressed their welcome to the rule of a new monarch, the continuation of just and judicious rule, and hope for the future of British leadership and dominance throughout the world.

[76] Sewall, *Jehovah is the King*, 22-23.
[77] Prince, *Sorrowful Occasion,* 26.
[78] *American Weekly Mercury* (Philadelphia), 17 August 1727, 2-3. The same excerpt was printed as a broadside in Boston. See Broadside, "London 15 July 1727" (Boston: Reprinted and sold by Samuel Kneeland, 1727).

Colonial mourners were well aware they spoke from the periphery of English territory. But in weaving themselves into transatlantic commemoration, they again used royal death to celebrate the expansion of the growing British empire and their influence throughout the globe. When commemorating King George I, Thomas Prince acknowledged his audience was distant from the seat of royal power as he contemplated how "us in these far distant Ends of his Dominions" would feel and recognize the royal loss.[79] Such writings carved out space for a separate and distant American mourning population, but portrayed colonists as fully participating in and feeling the loss. Indeed, as a people cognizant of the depth of their loss, they argued it was not just appropriate, but an obligation, to mourn the deceased monarch. Samuel Checkley's sermon separated out the British isles from the American colonies, but equated their grief and loss. He instructed those on the mainland to "weep ye *British* Isles, the Crown is fallen from your Head, for this let your Heart be faint, for this let your eyes be dim." Checkley encouraged Anglo-American colonists to do the same, directing them to "Weep also ye *American* Plantations, - and O NEW ENGLAND! let not they tears be wanting on this solemn occasion - weep all ye who bare rule under him."[80] English people in the metropole and the colonies mourned the same and experienced the same royal rule. In equating their experiences as subjects and as mourners, Checkley provided commentary on the spread of the English population and style of government. Both colonists' English pride and fear of foreign threats expanded to their American shores. The proximity of their French and Spanish enemies, and Catholicism, seemed to threaten just like it did in England proper,

[79] Thomas Prince, *A Sermon on the Sorrowful Occasion of the Death of . . . King George* (Boston: Henchman, 1727), 22.

[80] Samuel Checkley, *The Duty of a People* (Boston: Printed for Benjamin Gray, 1727), 19-20.

but the expansion of limited government and English liberties represented a triumph. Therefore, these moments of royal death allowed colonists to celebrate in common because they showed colonists as fully apart of the culture and government. Much like succession, this focus highlighted the bright future of the nation because of the spread of British people, values, and influence.

Colonists knew that analyzing death and mortality provided valuable insights into their societies and could potentially highlight their strengths and their weaknesses. Commemorative practices allowed communities to essentially dissect themselves by scrutinizing the individual pieces that helped their society function in order to understand what values, institutions, and types of people contributed to their moral health and wellbeing. Late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century developments allowed interpretations of the dead to take on additional meanings, particularly a defense of place and an evaluation of political values. Commemorative writers asked their reading and listening audiences to think about more than their own preparation for death and to mourn strangers as a loss to the community. In the world that colonists portrayed through the print culture of death—the sermons, biographies, and obituaries they created to give meaning to death in a colonial setting—they lived in refined, stable communities that had developed respectable elites to lead and govern. These colonies flourished under the benevolent, wise, and prudent leadership of monarchs confined to constitutional limits, committed to defending faith, and determined to expand British superiority across the globe. Commemoration provided a traditional basis through which to evaluate mortality, yet even as these practices developed in print culture more innovative ways to analyze death came into practice. Building on long-standing customs of employing death as a lens

to diagnose society, the topic came to include demographics where individuals were not values but numbers. In the same vein as commemoration, colonists would come to use statistical information about death to evaluate expectations of local leaders and build institutions that would build strength through health.

Chapter 2
Tempest of Mortality:
Quantifying and Regulating Communal Death in the Early-Eighteenth Century

The year 1700 was one of hardship for the fledgling city and provincial capital of Charleston, South Carolina. At the beginning of the year, twin epidemics of smallpox and yellow fever hit the city. Hugh Adams, a native New Englander and recent immigrant to Charleston, wrote to his brother in February (as the epidemic died down) that: "It is hard to describe the dreadful and astonishing aspect of our late terrible Tempest of Mortality in our Charleston. […] Worse by far than the great Plague of London, considering the smallness of the Town."[81] In order to underscore the scope of loss to Charleston's population, Adams enumerated the losses: "[In a span of 4 months] there died . . . 125 English of all sorts; high and low, old and young. 37 French, 16 Indians, and 1 Negro. The distemper raged, and the destroying Angel slaughtered so furiously with his revenging Sword of Pestilence, that there died (as I have read in the Catalogue of the Dead) 14 in one day . . . So that the dead were carried in carts, being heaped up one upon another." The eighteenth-century minister and historian Dr. Alexander Hewatt recorded that the year's disasters further depleted the population because "Many of the survivors could think of nothing but abandoning a country on which the judgments of heaven seemed to fall so heavy, and in which there was so little prospect of success, health, or happiness." The colony almost collapsed because of the devastation in its urban center, with residents fleeing in favor of alternative locales. Hewatt wrote that colonists "had heard of Pennsylvania, and how pleasant and flourishing a province it was described to

[81] Diary of Samuel Sewell, Vol II, 1674-1729, 11-12. https://archive.org/details/diarysamuelsewa02sewagoog/page/n12, accessed 12 February 2019. Hugh Adams (Charleston, SC) to John Adams (Boston, MA) Feb 23, 1699/1700.

be, and therefore were determined to embrace the first opportunity that offered of retiring to it with the remainder of their families and effects."[82] Adams' numerical depiction of the mortality underscored the depth and severity of Charleston's mortality crisis, as one even worse than London's infamous plague over three decades beforehand. As Hewatt related, such a deep loss caused many to doubt the colony's future. Those that relocated were looking for growth rather than population decline and headed for a "flourishing" locale instead. These recollections of early-eighteenth century mortality through a communal lens illuminate the eighteenth-century interest in measuring population as a means of evaluating community vitality.

This chapter argues that the rise of political arithmetic in the early-eighteenth century resulted in death being understood and approached in a new light. Political arithmetic—the study of population and economic data to analyze the state and measure its strength—enabled communities to envision a macro view of death. Church officials, physicians, publishers, and amateur statisticians collected data about how people in the community died. People had discussed communal loss previously in times of disaster but political arithmetic suggested that death could be categorized and measured and that, ultimately it could be controlled by human intervention. This macro view of death prioritized the community over the individual, even if it meant sacrificing an individual life. Publishers, editors, and interested intellectuals first began to regularly publish mortality statistics in newspapers, pamphlets, and almanacs in 1704. They underscored this as more than simply interesting information; rather it was useful knowledge for readers to learn about the city or colony. Bills of mortality proliferated in colonial print

[82] Alexander Hewatt, *An historical account of the rise and progress of the colonies of South Carolina and Georgia* (London: 1779), 143.

culture through weekly, monthly, and yearly printings. Those gathering and publishing the information attempted to make meaning out of the statistics through social and regional comparisons. In other words, they sought to uncover patterns in death. The emphasis on patterns of death popularized the idea that death and dying did not solely happen on a divine timeline, nor did it have meanings just for kith and kin. Instead it was governed by discernable circumstances and indicated the health of the body politic and the economy. Given these premises, not only could human longevity be manipulated by man, but any wise government ought also to do so. This meant that managing mortality rates emerged as a public concern because decreased mortality and the physical health of a population represented community strength and growth. Operating with the idea that mortality could be controlled, demographers and statisticians tried to experiment with how they could make their populations grow. They understood increase as a sign of local vitality and interpreted a flourishing population as a positive reflection on the residents and government because they established the conditions to foster population growth, all ideas in line with political arithmetic. These early eighteenth-century depictions of quantified, communal death presented health threats as a collective problem that risked the population as a whole. This was a bold way of thinking, and statistics let colonial authorities and officials feel mastery over death was in reach.

By mid-century, colonial leaders and subjects alike considered major public health issues from inoculation to the first colonial hospital through the filter of how many lives would be saved and how health policies would affect the population as a whole. This emphasis resulted in collaborations between local governments and the general public to formulate regulations and institutions together in order to increase the

population and improve colonial and imperial vitality. Imperial officials and colonial administrators, and even ministers and medical practitioners, throughout the colonies attempted to disrupt mortality patterns and promote longevity through government policies. It was nothing new for governments to engage with health policy (with actions like quarantine existing since the fourteenth century) but in the early-eighteenth century their actions became guided by vital statistics and subject to pressure from engaged residents. On the surface, the most obvious way to achieve population increase was through immigration. However, many political arithmeticians were wary of growth by immigration because their bills of mortality indicated that migrants or "strangers" could be a source of epidemical disease. With the focus on minimizing death as measured in mortality rates, population increase was a shared goal that required collective action. The persuasive language of political arithmetic and community health guided public opinion and government policy, as seen in the smallpox inoculation debates from the 1720s through the 1750s and the establishment of the first hospitals and quarantine stations in colonial America. By the time the legislature approved the Pennsylvania Hospital in 1752, provincial governments and officials had given in to pro-public health pressures for stronger health institutions that measured success based on population growth. To be sure, these were not the organized public-health bureaucracies that would emerge after the Revolutionary War. Nonetheless, it was a half-century of unprecedented collective action that saw alliances between public officers and private individuals to work together towards an idealized population and demographic goal.

This chapter begins with an overview of the historiography of political arithmetic in the British Atlantic and then turns to an analysis of printed mortality rates and

population studies in the early eighteenth-century to understand how quantified death and vital statistics portrayed patterns of mortality. It then evaluates the use of mortality statistics during the famous smallpox inoculation controversies beginning in 1721. The published debates in Boston and Charleston through mid-century shed light on how eighteenth-century experts deployed numerical data to shift public opinion and how enmeshed the concept of population increase was in the discourse. Finally, the chapter concludes with an examination of newly developed public-health institutions founded through public-private alliances. Embracing population increase as a collective goal, many residents and officials felt that collective solutions were needed in order to minimize death. Through these early-eighteenth century cooperative endeavors, municipal and provincial governments declared responsibility for increasing the population as one of their duties.

This chapter engages with the historiography of political arithmetic, especially works that centered the application of statistical data. Most of the historiography on political arithmetic has focused on the three main practitioners (William Petty, John Graunt, and William Davenant) rather than on the broader cultural meanings and uses of their work. Works such as Ted McCormick's *William Petty and the Ambitions of Political Arithmetic* offer extensive insight into the theory of political arithmetic and the ways in which arithmeticians applied it to the world around them. As McCormick explains, this has resulted in "the division of scholarly labour among a variety of fairly narrow historical subfields" where political arithmetic is used to illuminate an unrelated

subject.[83] As a result, the bulk of political arithmetic studies are focused on tightly defined issues such as the English subjugation of Ireland, contributions to the Royal Society, or even Anglican and Catholic congregations during the Protestant Reformation. A series of early American historians have drawn from these works to study their American counterparts, meaning imperial or colonial figures who engaged with the work of Petty, Graunt, and Davenant, though not with the men directly. Histories of political arithmetic in colonial America arose from the increased interest in quantitative history. Works such as Patricia Cline Cohen's *A Calculating People* and James Cassedy's *Demography in Early America* introduce a great number of American statisticians, even before they used that title.[84] These works were incredibly valuable in introducing how Petty and Graunt's ideas, in particular, entered American discourse as well as how American practitioners circulated information and ideas among themselves.

This chapter is most influenced by recent works that have sought to understand how political arithmetic theory was applied to social and political issues, rather than focusing on practitioners themselves. Works such as Andrea Rusnock's *Vital Accounts* laid the groundwork for how political arithmetic was employed beyond an imperial scope onto the project of population.[85] Rusnock focused specifically on how medical professionals adapted the theory to their own work well beyond bills of mortality,

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[83] Ted McCormick, *William Petty and the Ambitions of Political Arithmetic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 4.

[84] Patricia Cline Cohen, *A Calculating People: The Spread of Numeracy in Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); James Cassedy, *Demography in Early America* (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1969). A more recent work by literary scholar Molly Farrell analyzes quantification in written works by figures such as William Bradford and Mary Rowlandson. See Molly Farrell, *Counting Bodies: Population in Colonial American Writing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[85] Andrea Rusnock, *Vital Accounts: Quantifying Health and Population in Eighteenth-Century England and France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

incorporating methods of calculation and scientific instruments. In her account of eighteenth-century France and England, health specialists further developed the field of statistics with their investigations and experimentations. While this chapter focuses more attention on the published and political discourses surrounding political arithmetic and minimizing mortality, Rusnock provided a valuable contribution on how statisticians were motivated by political arithmetic outside the imperial sphere.

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According to the many political theorists of the day, at the heart of the colonial project were the people: not their individual achievements, but their numbers. By the late-seventeenth century, English political economists highlighted population as a central concern of national and imperial strength, based on their fears of depopulation. British imperialists turned to the theory of "political arithmetic" in order to study how to strengthen the state through numbers, using mortality rates and death statistics to understand who was dying and what killed them.[86] Daniel Defoe summed up the logic: "the more people, the more trade; the more trade, the more money, the more money, the more strength; and the more strength, the greater the nation…. All temporal felicities, I mean national, spring from the number of people."[87] Proponents combined statistical records and calculations with policy efforts to manage the national population in a responsible and prosperous way. The worry among English theorists in the seventeenth

[86] Counting populations emerged as a discipline or trend in the mid-seventeenth century with the publication of William Petty's *Down Survey of Ireland* and John Graunt's *Natural and Political Observations Made upon the Bills of Mortality.* William Petty, one of the main proponents of English political arithmetic, declared that "The people being the first matter of power and wealth, by whose labour and industry a nation must be gainers in the balance, their increase or decrease must be carefully observed by any government that designs to thrive." William Petty, *Essays on Mankind and Political Arithmetic* (London: Cassell & Company, 1888), 150.

[87] As quoted in Daniel Statt, *Foreigners and Englishmen: The Controversy over Immigration and Population, 1660-1760* (Newark, Del.: University of Delaware Press, 1995), 49.

century, though, was that England was overpopulated with poor and indigent people and that the "multitudes, like too much blood in the body do infect our country with plague and poverty."[88] As understood by statisticians, colonies were the solution on multiple levels: they offered an outlet for England's excess population, there was (seemingly) endless, uninhabited lands for an overseas English population to dominate, and they would expand the nation's commerce. Colonies became central to these efforts to strengthen the state through population because they were "seeds of nations," as stated by theorist William Petty.[89] In a colonial context, a growing population signaled the vitality of a settlement project and also the ability to defend against enemy attack. Upon the formation of the Lords Commissioners of Trade and Foreign Plantation in 1696, imperial officials requested census information from the royal colonies enumerating the population, extent of land and holdings, and level of trade.[90] Their request signaled a desire to understand the colonies' robustness or weakness through numbers.

Colonial leaders at the turn of the century advertised their colonies as the answer to political economists' worries, as places where an English population could flourish and strengthen the empire. William Penn promised to King James II that the colony of Pennsylvania would be a "nursery of men," a place that promoted the "increase of humane stock" rather than a drain on the empire.[91] Penn was correct, as Pennsylvania proved fertile both in terms of agriculture and population. Philosopher John Locke, who

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[88] Robert Gray, *A Good Speed to Virginia* (London: Printed by Felix Kingston for William Welbie, 1609), 13-14.

[89] William Petty to William Penn, in *Papers of William Penn*, Richard S. Dunn and Mary Maples Dunn, eds. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 2:278-280.

[90] For an overview of seventeenth-century interest in imperial statistics, see Cohen, *A Calculating People*, 50-56, 66-79.

[91] "Some Account of the Province of Pennsilvania, by William Penn, 1681," in *Narratives of Early Pennsylvania, West New Jersey, and Delaware, 1630-1707*, ed. Albert Cook Myers, Original Narratives of Early American History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), 202-06.

worked consistently in colonial administration throughout the last decades of the seventeenth century, revised his second treatise to include the advice that "numbers of men are to be preferred to largenesse of dominions." It was "the great art of government" that determined the productivity and prosperity, rather than the extent of territorial holdings.[92] Locke and Penn focused on the potential numeracy of the English population in American colonies when planning for Pennsylvania and the Carolinas. From the outset of planning their colonies, these men imagined their planned communities as a place of growth based on political arithmetic. According to their designs, colonies would start with small tracts of land and a few settlers, and then flourish under wise leadership and in healthful environments. As England underwent a second phase of colony building and colonial centralization in the late-seventeenth century, administrators such as Locke rejected other nations' imperial models such as French trading posts or Spanish military forts, instead favoring settlers on the ground that improved and used the land.

For leaders living within the colonies, their interest in political arithmetic manifested itself in bills of mortality that presented useful information to the community and made it acceptable, even a point of pride, for local governments to quantify life and death. Bills of mortality were, at the most basic level, a collection of the deaths or burials within a group or organization over a certain time period. The information varied widely, but often included age, cause of death, religious affiliation, and race. The death statistics that appeared in bills of mortality were usually gathered by church administrators on a

[92] John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (London: 1688), accessed 14 April 2019, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/7370/7370-h/7370-h.htm. While writing the *Second Treatise*, he was likely assisting in revising Carolina's *Fundamental Constitutions*. For more information on Locke's connections to South Carolina at the time of his writing, see David Armitage, "John Locke, Carolina, and 'The Two Treatises of Government,'" *Political Theory*, 32, no. 5 (October 2004): 602-627.

monthly or yearly basis, though it was sometimes done on a weekly basis during times of epidemic disease. Colonial newspapers printed bills of mortality almost from their first editions, following the relatively new English practice of printing the bills of mortality after epidemics to show population recovery. Bills of mortality had become a regular publication in London due to plague epidemics during the late-sixteenth century and were printed weekly during seventeenth-century outbreaks. The London bills of mortality were broadsides that listed burials by parish on one side and listed causes of death on the other. The first colonial published bill of mortality appeared in the Boston *News Letter* in 1704. Printer John Campbell regularly printed them after that, with the preamble that "Because it may carry some useful information, we have thought it not amiss, to give the Public, the Bill of Mortality for the Three Years last past."[93] Campbell's 1704 chart included deaths only categorized by year and month but the heading noted that the count excluded African Americans and American Indians, so the calculations prioritized some demographics over others. Likewise, Benjamin Franklin began printing bills of mortality within two months of becoming publisher of the *Pennsylvania Gazette* in 1729, and they also appeared in the *South Carolina Gazette* within the first year of its existence.[94] They were placed near the list of commodity prices, ships' arrivals and departures, and advertisements. Their placement served as a reminder that as port cities traded goods and ships with other places, they also traded people and illness. Bodies were yet another object to count.

[93] *Boston News Letter*, 26 June-3 July 1704. Printers compiled and printed the information, usually with information from church officials. Death records were much more reliable than birth records because not all parents registered their children with local churches, nor did any law require them to report births, whereas the overwhelming majority of colonists would report a death to their church because they required burial services.

[94] See the *South Carolina Gazette*, 19 August 1732; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 17-20 November 1729.

A printed bill of mortality went beyond a presentation of information; it served as the start of an ongoing process that traced a community over time and offered insights into times of health versus times of sickness. Colonial bills of mortality were printed less frequently and with fewer categories than the London bills, but the information provided a snapshot of the health of the community for newspaper audiences. It was not meant to be an interesting topic or a topic of conversation, but useful knowledge and a way to understand a community more deeply. Campbell also noted "It has been observed by some, that in Times of Health, (such as we now Enjoy,) Mortality ordinarily carries off somewhat about a Fiftieth Part of the People Every year. Query How far will that Observation hold for this Town?"[95] This was the emergence of vital statistics, where bodies entered the conversation as a kind of currency. Campbell's note alluded to patterns of mortality and suggested that death was something educated experts could understand and control. Campbell concluded his first report by asking "if some other of the principal Towns in the Country, would preserve their Bill of Mortality, and Communicate it," which would provide the opportunity for readers to compare trends over time. As a data-driven exercise, interested practitioners knew quantified mortality rates were most effective with more information to calculate in order to find patterns and predictability. The audience was meant to read it, debate it, and contribute information to it, ultimately building their collective knowledge about the community. Published bills of mortality presented death in the aggregate and the abstract, where individual burials were transformed into statistical data. The frequency with which Boston, Philadelphia, and

[95] *Boston News Letter,* 26 June-3 June 1704.

Charleston's print culture covered death in the early years of colonial printing identify it as a pressing community concern.

In presenting quantified death rates, the editors and publishers categorized the community. Readers could track the rise and fall of their compatriots' mortality together, monitoring how people like themselves and other groups of people comparatively fared. Published mortality statistics also presented a weekly snapshot of social stratification. The deaths were most commonly divided first by religious groups since publishers gathered their information directly from churches. They further printed the bills of mortality divided into age groups, causes of death, and racial or ethnic groups. Doing so helped impart a sense of order and understanding to a seemingly vast and unknowable topic. The categories provided insight into who fell victim to what disease and at what time, and the numbers allowed the public to trace the rise and fall of an epidemic. The *South Carolina Gazette* printed their first burial totals in August 1732 when the city had recently experienced an epidemic which was "(by the Blessing of God) now almost over."[96] It printed the bill of mortality two weeks later: "Buried in Charlestown from the 1st of July to the 28th of August . . . Church of England 55 Men, 25 Women & 12 Children Presbyterians 12 Men, 4 Women, and 4 Children. French Church 8 Men, 3 Women. Quakers 1 Man In all 144 exclusive of Negroes."[97] The next time the burial rates appeared was when rumors circulated that "the Small Pox is in 2 Families at Winyaw."[98] Though the printer carefully divided the deceased into religious denominations, he only counted white deaths. The printer and the church officials who gave him the information

[96] *South Carolina Gazette,* 19 August 1732.
[97] *South Carolina Gazette,* 2 September 1732.
[98] *South Carolina Gazette*, 20 January 1733.

did not even note how the city's non-white population fared on the mortality front; they did not acknowledge black deaths in print at all. In contrast, the *American Weekly Mercury* counted both Black and white deaths, though it separated "Negroes" at the bottom of the article. Franklin's bills of mortality in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* were the most organized, presented in columns set off from the rest of the text. He included Black Philadelphians as a subcategory under "Strangers," then summed the total deaths in one figure. Though brought about by epidemics, vital statistics came to be a normal part of colonial newspapers as a way to provide insight and oversight of collective communities. Public interest in vital statistics made healthfulness a public concern that required or was appropriate for community oversight. By categorizing who died and the extent of mortality, the practitioners organized the population in a way that identified who was considered outsiders and members as well as which groups posed a threat.

In focusing on the macro view of death, demographers sought to uncover who or what threatened the city as a whole. Franklin stands out in the colonial period for employing long-term mortality studies to identify threats to communal health and comparative health in the British Atlantic world. When Franklin analyzed several years' worth of mortality statistics in order to predict Pennsylvania's future growth, he sought to understand what contributed to periods of mass death in order to uncover how they could be prevented. He calculated Philadelphia's population by charting burials between 1738 and 1744 and divided decedents by religious affiliation, Strangers, and "Negroes." He noted that "those Germans buried in the new Dutch Burying Ground are numbered among the Strangers," which made Strangers the largest group (1094 deaths; the next highest was the Church of England at 894) while also delineating Germans as outsiders to

Philadelphia. By, identifying them as new migrants to Philadelphia, he implied that their deaths were not a reflection of the area's environment. He explained "The Mortality among them is not owing to any Unhealthiness of this Climate, but to Disease they contract on Shipboard, they Voyage sometimes happening to be long, and too great a Number crowded together." Franklin concluded, ultimately, that "the Town is greatly increased."[99] His calculations and conclusions highlighted social outsiders as harbingers of sickness, death, and ultimately depopulation. With the theoretical underpinning arguing that population growth was the goal, categories of people that could do the opposite presented threats not only to individual health but to the security of the community as a whole.

The categorization inherent in bills of mortality sparked, in some cases, a mortal competition between places, races, and people, especially in regards to population growth. In the 17-20 November 1729 edition of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Franklin printed two sets of mortality statistics. The first recounted deaths in Boston, with the note that "the Small Pox spreads here." He then printed a list of ships leaving port, followed by a list of burials in Philadelphia over the last week. He did not need to editorialize on Philadelphia's superiority to Boston in this case, their proximity and stark contrast regarding mortal safety made the argument for him. Two years later, Franklin again highlighted Philadelphia's relative safety when he reported on a smallpox epidemic in New York, explaining "The Small-pox now spreads in this City pretty much. Buried in the City of New-York last Week, viz. Church of England 4. Dutch Church 8. French 0.

[99] *Poor Richard Improved, . . . for the year 1750* (Philadelphia: Printed and Sold by B. Franklin and D. Hall, 1749).

Presbyterians 0. Lutheran church 0. Quakers 0. Baptists 0. Jews 0. In all 12."[100] He followed that with Philadelphia's weekly burials, which totaled ten that edition. Two weeks later, sixty white New Yorkers and fourteen African Americans died in New York, while only sixteen were buried in Philadelphia.[101] By October, eighty-one people a week died in New York "most . . . of the small-pox" as compared to only six in Philadelphia.[102] Franklin painted a ghastly picture: "The Small Pox, Flux and Fever, prevail very much in this [New York] City, and many Children die of the said Distempers as well as grown Persons; and the country people are afraid to come to Town, which makes the markets thin, Provisions dear, and deadens all trade."[103] Into November, Franklin printed Philadelphia's drastically lower weekly burial rates directly next to New York's. As the epidemic in New York died down, Franklin added the weekly deaths to total 549. Far from being an exercise in early comparative statistics, Franklin communicated to his audience that Philadelphia flourished while New York suffered. It served as a caution to anyone considering trade or travel to New York while highlighting Philadelphia as the better choice.

Printed vital statistics provided a way for colonial centers to interrogate their connections with Britain and other colonies. As Franklin continued his population calculations and became the leading demographer in eighteenth-century America, he highlighted the importance of the colonies to the British empire. In several newspaper issues in 1731, he reprinted an article by Edmund Halley on how to calculate population data using burial numbers. Halley had calculated London's population numbers and

[100] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 2 September 1731.
[101] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 31 September 1731.
[102] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 21 October 1731.
[103] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 30 September 1731.

concluded that "about a 29th Part of the Inhabitants die every Year."[104] At the end of the reprinted article, Franklin reprinted Boston's annual data since its first appearance in the *Boston News Letter* in 1704 and engaged in a comparison of the population outlooks and potential for increase in the coming years. He stated "By comparing the Number of Inhabitants in Boston with the above Account, it appears, that not above a 40th Part of the People of that place die yearly, at a medium."[105] This series of articles, mortality statistics, and population calculations compared London and Boston and found Boston more conducive to the health and longevity of its population. Through quantified death, simply how many people died each year, Franklin made the case to his audience that Boston and, by extension, the colonial world flourished.

Officials and intellectuals interested in political arithmetic agreed that population increase was a beneficial trend, but questions remained on how to achieve that increase. Not all increase was good increase, after all. As bills of mortality had shown, newly-arrived migrants from some parts of the world were a threat to the health and stability of the existing population. Franklin's examinations in *Poor Richard's Almanac* and *Pennsylvania Gazette* led him to correctly assert that the colonial population increased faster than the metropolitan one. He veered from his customary usage of population calculation when he explained why, declaring "I believe People increase faster by Generation in these Colonies, where all can have full Employ, and there is room and Business for Millions yet unborn. For in old settled Countries…the Overplus must quit the Country or they will perish by Poverty, Diseases, and want of Neccessaries."[106]

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[104] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 26 August 1731.
[105] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 26 August 1731.
[106] *Poor Richard . . . 1750*.

Abundant, inexpensive land in the colonies resulted in population increase because land access meant "marriages in America are more general, and more generally early, than in Europe." Due to more marriages and at a younger age, Franklin calculated "our People must at least be doubled every 20 Years."[107] Notably, immigration—those dangerous strangers—was not necessary to increase population in this speculation. Instead, Franklin posited it could be achieved through "natural Generation" by American-born colonists "if the Laws are good."[108] In explaining it this way, Franklin refused to promote more people only for the sake of increased population. Instead, he emphasized that increased population should come about as a result of the culture and standards of colonial society and environment. Governments helped the population flourish by assuming responsibility for issues that threatened depopulation, namely the devastating diseases that could arrive in their ports at any time.

No topic better illuminates the use of vital statistics to shape public opinion and motivate government regulations better than smallpox inoculation. Both pro- and anti-inoculation factions employed political arithmetic as the language of persuasion to guide opinion and policy. Their methods prioritized communal health over the health of the individual, and each side appealed to communal health to advocate for their beliefs. The popular discourse over quantified death became the guiding post for public health decisions and the means of swaying public opinion regarding treatments. Smallpox inoculation entailed injecting a slight amount of smallpox infection (through puss or scabs) into a person, usually producing a milder case that still provided full immunity.

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[107] Benjamin Franklin, "Observations on the Increase of Mankind, 1751." https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-04-02-0080, accessed 29 November 2018.

[108] Franklin, "Observations."

Inoculation was practiced in parts of Africa and Asia, and many Europeans were familiar with the technique. Local governments and intellectual leaders debated the merits and drawbacks from the 1720s through the 1760s, and both sides used the language of vital statistics and the goal of increasing the population in order to support their positions. A host of diseases threatened colonial populations, but smallpox was the deadliest epidemic threat by the early eighteenth century. While it was endemic in Britain and other parts of Europe, the colonial population did not have acquired immunity so were vulnerable every time an infected person entered a port, town, or city by land or sea. As the colonies grew and Charleston, Boston, and Philadelphia became more crowded, smallpox became more frequent.[109] Several colonial epidemics beginning in the 1720s provided statistical dueling grounds over whether or not inoculation should be practiced or outlawed. Both pro- and anti-inoculation factions argued their through numbers of dead to argue over whether public health should prioritize the community or the individual.

Two inoculation controversies in the early-eighteenth century shaped the public debate over the legality and ethics of inoculation in colonial America. In Boston in 1721 and Charleston in 1738, pro-inoculators offered the procedure to willing patients and were immediately met with backlash from the public and city authorities. The ensuing inoculation controversies persisted until the revolutionary era and incorporated questions about the common good, medical knowledge, and the purpose of government. In April 1721, the *HMS Seahorse* arrived in Boston from the West Indies with a crewman infected

[109] For a general overview of smallpox in the colonies, see Elizabeth Fenn, *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), especially the introduction and chapter 1.

with smallpox.[110] Reverend Cotton Mather witnessed the growing number of sick in his congregation and decided it was time to experiment with inoculation, a practice that had long interested him. Mather first learned about the practice from his enslaved laborer Onesimus who underwent some type of inoculation procedure in his native Africa, then read about it further in the *Philosophical Transactions* of the Royal Society in July 1716. In a letter to Dr. John Woodward, Mather wrote "For my own part . . . if I should live to see the Small-Pox again enter into our City, I would immediately procure a Consult of our Physicians, to introduce a Practice, which may be of so very happy a Tendency."[111] Dr. Zabdiel Boylston agreed with Mather on the research and performed the procedure on his own son and two enslaved people. Within two weeks, Boylston had inoculated ten people successfully.

Municipal leaders immediately sought to end the treatment because it seemed counterintuitive to traditional epidemic protocols and contemporary medical theory. The Boston Selectmen prohibited inoculation and required that anyone who traveled to Boston for inoculation should instead be sent to a quickly-erected temporary hospital, unless they decided to leave. If any patients secretly underwent the procedure, they were to be escorted out of town. According to one testimony presented to the Town Selectmen, allowing the procedure would turn "the Town [into] an Hospital for that which may prove worse than the Small pox, which has already put So many into mourning."[112] Boston's leaders were not alone in quickly rejecting inoculation. In 1738, South Carolina suffered

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[110] *Report of the Record Commissioners*, 8:154-155, 81-83; *Boston Gazette*, 24 April 1721; *Boston News-Letter*, 22 May 1721; *Boston News-Letter*, 29 May 1721; Zabdiel Boylston, *An Historical Account of the Small Pox Inoculated in New England* (2nd ed., Boston: 1730), 1-2. The first recorded English inoculation took place in April 1721, the same month that saw the beginning of Boston's outbreak.

[111] Increase Mather, *Several Reasons proving that inoculating . . . is a lawful practice* (Boston: Kneeland, 1721), 2-6.

[112] *Report of the Record Commissioners*, 8:159.

a devastating smallpox epidemic, introduced by the slaving vessel the *London Frigate* that had carried 309 slaves into Charleston. By the end of the epidemic, 2100 people had contracted smallpox, mostly within the city of Charleston, which was roughly half of the city's population. By the time the epidemic ended in 1739, nearly 500 people died.[113] The epidemic provided self-trained physician James Kilpatrick the opportunity to implement inoculation and appeal to public opinion through a series of anonymous essays in the *South Carolina Gazette*. Charleston's political leaders were against the practice from the start, however, and tried to eradicate the practice of inoculation.

Colonial subjects were familiar with numerical data in an epidemic as it traced the rise, peak, and waning of illness. City governments did this with the intention to discover and isolate cases of smallpox in order to halt its spread, to minimize the numbers of sick and dead. The Boston Selectmen ordered searches for the sick and dead door-to-door and regularly published their results in local newspapers. Through these reports, Bostonians learned that there were 168 sick and 18 dead as of July 29, saw that number balloon to 1500 sick and 110 dead as of September 23, and then double in two weeks to 2757 sick and 203 dead just two weeks later on October 6.[114] South Carolina's General Assembly relegated this responsibility to Charleston's churches. In a 1738 act outlawing inoculation, appropriately titled "An act for the better preventing of the spreading of the infection of the Small Pox in Charlestown," the legislature mandated that churches gather and post information about the prevalence of smallpox. It required all sufferers of

[113] Narrated in Claire Gherini, "Rationalizing Disease: James Kilpatrick's Atlantic Struggles with Smallpox Inoculation," *Atlantic Studies* 7, no. 4 (2010), 421-446; *South Carolina Gazette*, 5 October 1738; See John Duffy, *Epidemics in Colonial America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 83 for estimates of Charleston's population at the time.

[114] *Boston News Letter*, 31 July, 25 September, 9 October 1721; *Boston Gazette*, 6 October 1721.

smallpox to quarantine in their homes under the oversight of guards and to place placards and white rags outside the home so sites of infection were marked and counted.[115] Colonists were familiar with counting during an epidemic to track rising and declining cases, but political arithmetic helped these numbers evolve from informative to persuasive.

With the inoculation controversies, debate over the treatment centered on whether it increased sickness and death or decreased mortality rates. Anti-inoculationists appealed to customary practice and rejected the notion of deliberately infecting a great number of people. Numbers remained at the center of public debates over inoculation, both for and against. The elected leaders of Boston in 1721 and Charleston in 1738 took a stance against inoculation because they believed the treatment would exacerbate the epidemic and increase mortality. One physician, Dr. Lawrence Dalhonde testified to the Boston Selectmen that inoculation in Europe had increased deaths. He told the Town Meeting that inoculation "has proved the Death of many Persons" and that "it Tends to spread and continue the Infection."[116] The Selectmen were persuaded that inoculation would result in greater death and tried to end the practice. They "severely reprimanded [Boylston] for spreading the Small-Pox; . . . and with high Menaces warned him against proceeding with his Practice any farther."[117] They declared that inoculation was "an Occasion of

[115] *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, Volume 3 [1716-1752], Thomas Cooper, ed. (Columbia, S.C.: A.S. Johnston, 1838), 513. James Kilpatrick (sometimes written as Kirkpatrick) did attend the University of Edinburgh from 1708-1709, but did not complete a medical degree. Afterwards, he practiced medicine in Ireland before migrating to South Carolina in 1717 and opening a pharmacy while also working as a medical practitioner. See Gherini, "Rationalizing Medicine," for more on Kilpatrick's background and medical practice.

[116] *Boston Gazette*, 31 July 1721; *Boston News-Letter,* 24 July 1721.

[117] Cotton Mather, *An Account of the Method and Success of Inoculating the Small-Pox* (London: J. Peele, 1722), 11.

Continuing a malignant Infection and Increacing it, among us."[118] As this quote reveals, inoculation seemed counter-intuitive to customary public health efforts to keep the contagion and the sick isolated from uninfected persons. Since inoculation required deliberate infection, they understood it to contribute to the spread of disease and therefore increase deaths.

Anti-inoculationists employed the logic of political arithmetic to argue against inoculation by emphasizing how it increased mortality and therefore weakened the community as a whole. Boston's only university-trained physician, Dr. William Douglass, was the most outspoken detractor of inoculation in the colonial period. He appealed to the public and to officials through the language of communal mortality and argued that allowing inoculation would kill more people in the community. Douglass estimated that the 1721 epidemic was much more deadly than the one in 1702 because of inoculation. He explained:

> In this Town several Hundreds have escaped, and it is probable many more might have escaped (as was the Case Nineteen Years ago) if Inoculation had not rendered the Infection so universal and intense. Last Small Pox the Month of the greatest Mortality (*December*, a severe Winter Month) did not exceed 80 Persons; at this Time the Month of the greatest Mortality (*October*, a favourable Autumn Month) exceeded Four Hundred burials, which is more than all that dyed of the Small Pox Nineteen Years ago. For the three Months of *September, October*, and *November* last, in which Inoculation prevailed, the Town was a meer Hospital, and we bury'd Seven Hundred and Sixty Persons. The last Small Pox spread *gradually* in the extent of ten or a dozen Months, and vast Numbers escape.

[118] *Report of the Record Commissioners*, 8:159.

Inoculation instead "set us all in a Flame."[119] In this excerpt, Douglass accuses inoculators of causing smallpox to cut down large segments of the population. His comparative data failed to account for population growth and population density in Boston but used the impact of stark differences in the numbers to argue his point that inoculation resulted in a more deadly epidemic. Douglass accused inoculators of committing a crime against the community, stating in the *Boston Gazette* that their actions should be considered as "a Propagating of Infection and Criminal."[120]

The theory that inoculation weakened and sickened the community influenced its prohibition in Charleston's 1738 epidemic. Like the leaders of Massachusetts, the leaders in South Carolina feared that inoculation would only spread the disease further and deplete their manpower. In particular, they were concerned with their ability to defend the colony from the Spanish should inoculation decrease the number of men available to fight. In light of smallpox in Charleston, the General Assembly met at Ashley Ferry and passed a bill against inoculation based solely on the city's defense needs. The body declared: "From the frequent advices received of the Spanish preparations at Havana and St. Augustine, there is just cause to apprehend that this Province . . . may be in short time invaded" and they feared that "the spreading of the infection of the small pox may prevent a sufficient body of forces from assembling together in defence of the province." Because it infected people who might have avoided smallpox otherwise and might spread from the inoculated to the non-immune, it seemed to the General Assembly that inoculation exacerbated smallpox rather than preventing it. They risked the spread of

[119] William Douglass, *The Abuses and Scandals of some late pamphlets in favour of inoculation of the smallpox* (Boston: Printed and sold by J. Franklin, 1722), 10-11.

[120] *Boston News-Letter*, 24 July 1721.

smallpox in favor of responding to what they deemed the more dangerous threat to community well-being, an attack of nearby enemies. To a governing body expecting to call up defenses at any moment, it seemed detrimental to the community at large. As long as those aspects of their colony remained dangerous in officials' minds and they might need to call up a defense, leaders refused to legalize inoculation despite its continued illegal practice in Charleston. They outlawed inoculation in 1738 and it remained legally prohibited in South Carolina until 1775.[121]

From the earliest procedures, pro-inoculators responded to the restrictions and backlash with statistics to prove the safety of inoculation over natural smallpox. Inoculation practitioners understood smallpox epidemics as opportunities to gather much-needed statistical data in support of their practices. Beginning with Boylston in 1721, advocates and practitioners kept and published meticulous records. Though the Boston Selectmen isolated all of Boylston's known patients and commanded him not to inoculate anymore, Boylston promised that his records would prove the practice's efficacy. He maintained that "in a few Weeks more, I hope to give you some further proof of [the] just and reasonable Account" of his patients. Between August and November 1721, he inoculated 170 people.[122] Within months, Boylston, Mather, and others published their inoculation accounts in pamphlets in London and Boston so that his statistics could shift public opinion in favor of the procedure. In Charleston, Kilpatrick followed the same model and wanted to present his evidence directly to the public for their judgement. He argued that anti-inoculationists had no direct knowledge of inoculation and resisted based

[121] *Statutes*, 3:513-517. For the Act's subsequent renewals in 1760 and 1768, see *Statues*, 4:106-9, 294-5.

[122] Zabdiel Boylston, *An Historical Account of the Small Pox Inoculated,* 2nd ed. (Boston: S. Gerrish, 1730), 7-27, 50.

on "suppositions . . . the most plausible and learned of which have sometimes proved fallacious and imaginary."[123] It was important that he recognized those against his inoculations were not ignorant, for they included some of the most well-educated men in the colony such as Dr. Thomas Dale. Like Mather and Boylston, Kilpatrick recognized that prevailing medical theory as well as common sense were against intentionally infecting someone, but his overall point was that anti-inoculation opinions rested in theory rather than observation. It was pro-inoculationists' mission to continue inoculation—even in defiance of the government—and gather statistical data to prove its safety and efficacy.

The earliest statistics offered favorable results that showed protection for the community as a whole. Mather reported in the *Boston Gazette* that "The Operation within these four Months past has been undergone by more than Threescore Persons, Among which there have been Old & Young, Strong and Weak, Male and Female, White & Black, Many Serious and virtuous People, some the Children of Eminent Persons among us."[124] Among these sixty, Mather argued only one died, though he assured readers that it was not because of smallpox or the procedure. Five or six others had severe cases of smallpox and survived. Mather's narrative of Boylston's patients were meant to be reassuring. He recounted a diverse array of people who had been inoculated, many of them from respectable families in Boston. Boylston and Mather frequently submitted their records to pro-inoculation newspapers throughout the remainder of 1721 in order to show the public the favorable numbers of those who underwent inoculation. Boylston

[123] James Kilpatrick, *An Essay on Inoculation, Occasioned on the Small-pox Being Brought Into South Carolina in the Year 1738* (London: J. Huggonson, 1743), 30-31.

[124] *Boston Gazette,* 23-30 October 1721.

hoped that "seeing, from time to time, in the weekly bills, numbers who have died of smallpox" would encourage inoculation.[125]

Pro-inoculation writers employed the language of political arithmetic when making their case to the public and emphasized that allowing the procedure could preserve the population. Inoculation advocates called on leaders to accept and promote inoculation, thereby fulfilling their duty to care for citizens. Mather concluded his pro-inoculation article with a warning to other locales facing smallpox: "Had this offered Mercy of a Gracious GOD been timely and thankfully received by the Town of Boston, it appears to many wise and good Men among us that some hundred of Lives might have been saved. GOD grant that other Towns, if endangered, may take warning by us, and come timely Into this Means of Preservation."[126] Mather and his allies cast their opponents as people actively working against the good of their fellow Bostonians. Inoculation offered "A Practice which we hope and trust will save Millions of Lives! And we dare almost warrant you that your Lives will be secure against the Malignity and Danger of the Worst of Plagues."[127] A contributor to the *Courant* echoed Mather and warned "O! Our Brethren in the County, Be advis'd! Come into this Safe and Easy Practice."[128] This quote reveals that Mather and his pro-inoculation allies saw it as a failure of Boston leadership to have rejected a treatment that would have saved hundreds of their citizens had they allowed and promoted it. It also reveals their motivation in publicizing the statistics: that officials in other cities might learn from Boston's mistakes

[125] Zabdiel Boylston, *An Historical Account of the Smallpox Inoculated in New England*, 2nd ed (London: S. Chandler, 1726; reprinted Boston: S. Gerrish, 1730). According to his records, Boylston inoculated 286 people in 1721-22 and 6 died (so 1 in 46 died). He contrasted that with 5759 who had smallpox the natural way, of which 844 died, or 1 out of 6.

[126] *Boston Gazette*, 23-30 October 1721.

[127] *The New England Courant*, 13-20 November 1721.

[128] *The New England Courant*, 13-20 November 1721.

and accept inoculation in order to preserve the population. Another report urged that inoculation "'Tis not only lawful, but also a Duty to practice it."[129] Pro-inoculators linked their statistical proof of safety and efficacy to calls for governments to allow the practice and therefore save lives. In their calls for its legality, government promotion of inoculation went beyond a rational decision to an obligation of governance.

As they gained data, the pro-inoculation faction presented comparative statistics which proved that their method resulted in lower mortality rates. They not only wanted to make the point that inoculation was safe, but that it offered a better chance of survival than if one naturally caught smallpox. Boylston continued inoculating throughout the 1720s and continued publicizing his numbers, in particular comparing deaths with inoculated smallpox versus deaths from "common" or "natural" smallpox. As Boston faced another epidemic in 1730 people reviewed Boylston's decade of inoculation statistics. Boylston's comparative data promoted a clear narrative that inoculated smallpox was safer than natural smallpox. Boylston counted that he inoculated 248 people in Boston during the 1721 epidemic, out of which only six died. In contrast, he counted that over 5,000 Bostonians caught smallpox the natural way and 844 of those died. In other words, those who were inoculated had a 2.4% chance of dying compared to a 16.8% chance if one caught smallpox in the common way.[130] This was a vast difference in outcome, and the pro-inoculation faction presented these stark comparisons to show the public the superiority of their method.

The crux of the pro-inoculation argument remained the same for the next several decades: yes, inoculation was deliberate infection with smallpox but that it resulted in

[129] *The New-England Courant*, 20-27 November 1721.
[130] Boylston, *Historical Account*, 32, 50.

less severe cases and therefore fewer smallpox deaths. Though Boylston and Mather's experimentation and statistics were not readily accepted in Boston in the 1720s, their work impressed many observers interested in the subject. Even William Douglass conceded that inoculation was safe for individuals. He stated that inoculation was "a considerable improvement in Physick" and that he believed it was safer than contracting smallpox naturally, but he was still against the practice because it could potentially spread the smallpox.[131] In Charleston, Kilpatrick had kept a watchful eye on the data coming out of Boston. In a series of pro-inoculation essays printed in the *South Carolina Gazette*, Kilpatrick reported that "In Boston 900 died out of 5000 that were naturally infected, and six out of 300 that were inoculated."[132] He continued that "comparing the greatest mortality by inoculation, to the ordinary deaths in the natural way, the difference is easily found."[133] Kilpatrick faced down public and political disapproval by using Boston's numbers, but one of his allies praised the outcomes of Kilpatrick's own inoculations. A supporter calculated that "not one single white person of above fifty that have taken the distemper by inoculation has died under it, or been in any eminent Danger, and but two or three of a still greater Number of Negroes . . . while at least one in Five has died of all those (Whites and Blacks) who have taken it in the natural Way."[134] For Kilpatrick and his allies in Charleston, inoculation was the result of God-given reason. He pronounced "it is clear that our best reasonings upon this subject, must be taken from observations on the common appearances of the distemper itself, the general effect of

[131] *Boston News-Letter*, 5 March 1730.
[132] *South Carolina Gazette*, 8 June 1738.
[133] *South Carolina Gazette*, 8 June 1738.
[134] *South Carolina Gazette*, 6 July 1738.

remedies, and the event of symptoms."[135] Pro-inoculationists were confident their data proved that inoculation decreased smallpox deaths, a truth that even their most ardent opponent recognized. Debate over the procedure continued, but pro-inoculators circulated a wealth of statistical data to support its effectiveness. They emphasized that inoculation was a gift to humanity, and it was an irresponsible and dangerous disregard for life to reject it.

As a teen, Benjamin Franklin observed the inoculation controversy in Boston. By the time he faced down smallpox Philadelphia in the 1730s, he celebrated inoculation as a triumph of statistics. Reports of Philadelphia in the 1730s indicate that inoculation had become a widespread practice there. Even the *Boston Gazette* reported on its popularity in Philadelphia, printing "We hear from Philadelphia that the Small Pox prevails very much there, and that for preventing its spreading in the Natural Way, they Inoculate with great success."[136] The *Gazette* reported that city leaders had invited Dr. William Barnet to establish a private inoculation hospital to prepare patients for the procedure and supervise them afterwards, improving the chances of a safe outcome for the individual and the community as a whole.

Franklin used his popular publications and extensive network to circulate pro-inoculation information throughout the colonies. His own son had died from smallpox in 1734, and he was enthusiastic that others should prevent needless deaths through inoculation which he described as "Life's great preservation."[137] A 1746 letter to William Vassall of Boston, Franklin communicated the success of inoculation in Philadelphia. He

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[135] *South Carolina Gazette*, 8 June 1738.
[136] *Boston Gazette*, 15-21 November 1736.
[137] *Poor Richard's Almanack for the Year of Christ 1737* (Philadelphia: Printed and Sold by B. Franklin, 1736).

reported: "By the best Informations I have been able to procure, and which I believe are pretty near the Truth . . . between 150 and 160 Persons (mostly Children, the Small Pox having gone thro' this place twice within these 15 Years) have been inoculated since the 10th of April last, when the Distemper began to spread here; of which Number one only died. . . . Of the Rest who recovered or are on the Recovery, none have had so much as one dangerous Symptom." He assured Vassall that medical experts supported the procedure: "Our Physicians however agree, that those who have taken the Infection in the Common Way here, have not generally had the Distemper so light as those that were inoculated."[138]

When advocating for inoculation, Franklin recognized that it was initially understood as a dangerous procedure, but evidence and time had proven it wise and shifted public opinion. He understood it as a triumph for community health: "Tho' at first it was reckoned by many to be a rash and almost impious Action, to give a Distemper to a Person in Health; . . . it now begins to be thought rash to hazard taking it in the common Way, by which one in seven is generally lost; and impious to reject a Method discovered to Mankind by God's good Providence, whereby 99 in 100 are saved."[139] As a man with an avid interest in political arithmetic, Franklin prioritized the protection and growth of the community over that of the individual. In the preface for British physician William Heberden's inoculation manual, *Some Account of the Success of Inoculation for Smallpox in England and America*, Franklin wrote that increase "has indeed been more obstructed by that distemper than is usually imagined. For the loss of one in ten [the approximate

[138] Benjamin Franklin to William Vassall, 29 May 1746, accessed 12 January 2021, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-03-02-0035.

[139] *Poor Richard's Almanac*, 1750.

death rate for colonial smallpox epidemics] is not merely the loss of so many persons, but the accumulated loss of all the children and all the children's children the deceased might have had, multiplied by successive generations."[140] Failure to take advantage of the procedure of the knowledge of inoculation and to practice it widely was a matter of future strength, according to Franklin. He hoped that the statistics printed throughout the colonies and British Atlantic would convince people that undergoing the procedure was a way to preserve themselves and their families as well as contributing to the strength of their communities.

By mid-century, local surveys revealed that urban populations embraced inoculation despite their governments' position. The accumulation of statistics that proved lower mortality rates through inoculation changed public opinion as revealed by statistical studies in later epidemics. Smallpox reappeared in Boston in 1752 and Charleston in 1760. In both cities, leaders ordered studies of the numbers of sick, dead, and inoculated. The selectmen calculated that there were a total of 7,653 cases during the epidemic. Out of that number, 5,545 contracted smallpox naturally and 2,124 chose to be inoculated. A total of 535 died, 504 from natural smallpox and 31 who had been inoculated.[141] This was a massive increase from the 247 inoculated in 1721 and the 400 inoculated in 1730, the last time smallpox made an appearance in Boston.[142] By this time, Bostonians seemed to have developed a positive opinion of inoculation and rushed to have it done. Charlestonians were equally approving of inoculation in 1760, despite it

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[140] Franklin, "Preface" in William Heberden*, Some Account of the Success of Inoculation for Smallpox in England and America* (London: W. Strahan, 1759).

[141] *Boston Weekly News-Letter*, 30 July 1752; Thomas Prince, "An Account of the Burials in Boston, in New England," *Gentleman's Magazine* 23 (1753), 413-14.

[142] "Account of burials and baptisms in Boston, from the year 1701 to 1774," Massachusetts Historical Society, *Collections* 1, vol. 4 (1795): 213-215.

still being officially outlawed. The *Boston News-Letter* printed a report from Charleston stating "since last Monday, upwards of 2,000 persons have been inoculated for the Small Pox in this Town. One gentleman alone we are informed has upwards of 600 Patients."[143] Thirty years after the initial experimentation and controversy over smallpox inoculation, it was widely accepted by the public and leaders shifted their focus to regulating the practice.

Leaders recognized the success of inoculation in decreasing mortality and preserving the population and worked to incorporate it into a model of communal health by inoculating as many people as possible while also keeping them safe. Essentially, the people had been convinced that inoculation was the best protection against smallpox, and governments had to work to promote it while avoiding its worst consequences. When another smallpox epidemic hit Boston in 1764, only 699 people caught it naturally compared to 4,977 who got it by inoculation. The city's "Gentlemen of Distinction" invited Dr. Barnet to practice in Boston and the popularity of special inoculation hospitals grew.[144] In February the General Council and Selectmen arranged housing for the inoculated in the Chelsea neighborhood and coordinated with several Boston physicians to practice there. Public opinion supported this compromise. One letter to the newspaper wrote: "Now there is an Opportunity for all such very zealous Persons to receive the Small-Pox . . . without making the Town an Hospital for five or six Months."[145] A few weeks later, Governor Thomas Hutchinson added space by making the barracks at Castle

[143] *Boston News-Letter*, 13 March 1760.
[144] *Boston Gazette*, 23 January 1764, 13 February 1764.
[145] *Boston Evening-Post*, 20 February 1764.

William available to any physicians and patients who wished to undergo inoculation.[146] Officials could not deny the effectiveness of inoculation and wanted it to be practiced, so they shifted their attention to managing how it was practiced. While allowable, officials felt it needed oversight to truly protect the community. The statistical evidence gathered over the previous decades proved that inoculation, while a risk to individuals by deliberately infecting them with smallpox, minimized the overall mortality rates. Boston's new inoculation policy illustrates the effectiveness of the persuasiveness of political arithmetic and the language of population as it changed how local officials approached the issue of smallpox.

Political arithmetic theory and the use of quantitative mortality rates elevated health as a social and political concern. Inoculation had ceased to be a matter of individual preference and became a question of what was best for the most people. Municipal governments by no means took over health decisions or enacted far-reaching regulations about how people lived their lives, but they shifted towards creating a health safety net that prioritized communal health and population increase. Colonial officials intermittently tried to strengthen public health laws such as quarantine and port restrictions. In the early eighteenth century, urban colonists themselves began to appeal to their leaders for stronger health institutions that would build a social safety net.

Prior to the rise of political arithmetic, issues of public health largely consisted of quarantine measures and were ad hoc special orders responding to specific circumstances. The target of seventeenth and early-eighteenth century colonial public health regulations were people and goods entering through the ports. This was in line with the information

[146] *Boston Gazette*, 27 February 1764.

found in the bills of mortality, that strangers and new arrivals seemed the main culprits in introducing sickness. In the 1710s, the governments of Massachusetts and South Carolina approved measures to establish pesthouses. The pesthouses (also known as lazarettos or quarantine stations) were holding spaces for infected passengers or goods arriving by ship. South Carolina's government built the first pesthouse in 1712 on Sullivan's Island where it could be used for any incoming sick ships. They worried particularly about the human cargo entering Charleston and refined their regulation of Sullivan's Island to focus on slave ships. Asserting that slave ships and arriving enslaved persons carried contagion more often than other merchant vessels, the General Assembly declared "that no ship or vessel ... shall arrive or come into this province over the bar of the harbour of Charlestown, with negroes from the coasts of Africa or elsewhere ... before all the negroes imported or brought in such ship or vessel shall have been landed and put on shore on Sullivan's Island aforesaid, and there shall have remained for the space of 10 days."[147] By mid-century, however, Sullivan's Island's purpose was very clear as a stopping ground for incoming slave ships. The Assembly limited the importation of enslaved Africans following the Stono Rebellion of 1740 and noticed "that since the importation of negroes and slaves from the coasts of Africa into this Province hath been prohibited, this Province in general and Charlestown in Particular, hath been much more healthy than heretofore it hath been." In Boston, the legislature approved a measure to create a structure that would hold infected people arriving from sea. In 1717, the government built the pest house on Spectacle Island. The General Court then required

[147] *The Statutes at Large of South Carolina*, Volume 4 [1752-1789], Thomas Cooper, ed. (Columbia, S.C.: A.S. Johnston, 1838), 81. Joseph I. Waring, *A History of Medicine in South Carolina* (Columbia, S.C.: South Carolina Medical Association, 1967), 30.

any ships experiencing contagion to anchor near the island and remove anything—people or cargo—that could possibly spread sickness. In addition to this mandate, no goods or passengers could disembark without permission from the Governor or two Justice's of the Peace and the Boston Selectmen. Violators were threatened with six months in jail or a fifty-pound fine if they circumvented the rules. The General Court gave management of the hospital on Spectacle Island to the Boston Selectman, at the colony's expense.[148]

Colonists wanted a government that claimed responsibility for a healthy body politic. Colonial governments' efforts to minimize death through public health regulations and institutions were not strong enough to satisfy their populations, as evidenced by several examples where residents appealed for greater health support for people. By considering death at the macro level, people realized that individual behavior had very little effect on community health. To achieve population increase and widespread well-being, collective action was necessary. The regulations and institutions lacked uniformity and permanence, and they were unenforceable. It was not uncommon for quarantine or inspection laws to lapse or be disregarded in favor of strong commerce and trade. Residents desired something stronger and asked for governmental assistance in improving the health of the population. In 1734, Charleston residents petitioned the head vestryman of St. Philip's parish, asking "[we] humbly Pray your Excellency and Honour that you would be pleased to give Leave to bring a Bill For appropriating as much of the Square Piece of Ground belonging to the Public in Charles Town, as may be necessary whereon the erect Proper Buildings for the use of a Public Workhouse and Hospital and

[148] *The Acts and Resolves . . . of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay,* Vol. 2, (Boston: Wright and Potter, Printers to the State, 1869), 91-92. Quarantine laws in Massachusetts Bay Colony dated back to the 1630s. See *Acts and Resolves,* 1:376-377.

for authorizing your Petitioners to erect such Buildings on the same at their own proper cost and Charge…."[149] St. Philip's parish had a semi-civil identity, was supported by public funds, and performed works on behalf of the local government. The parish had a history of supporting the sick. Vestry records show that soon after the church's completion in 1723, the vestry covered expenses for nursing, charity to the sick, and medicines. According to the petition, however, this assistance was clearly not meeting the community's needs and a stronger collective response was needed. The petitioners were successful and by 1738, the parish constructed the combined workhouse and hospital for sick inhabitants on the Old Burying Ground to care for sick sailors and the indigent. It was meant to be an institution where patients could receive expert medical care while remaining useful members of society. St. Philip's also sponsored several parish doctors who were obliged "to visit, attend, take proper care of, and supply with good and proper Medicines, the poor of the Said Parish at the Workhouse of St. Philip's Parish."[150] The focus of these efforts in 1730s Charleston was to help those who could not otherwise afford medical care. Helping the sick and poor who had no one else to care for them helped all of society because it prevented sickness from spreading by caring for patients in one location and aimed to return them to health as a productive resident.

Like Charlestonians, German settlers in Philadelphia appealed to provincial leaders to fund and manage a lazaretto. Their petition explained to Lieutenant Governor George Thomas that "for want of a convenient house for the reception of such of their countrymen as on their arrival here labored under diseases contracted in a long voyage, they were obliged to continue on board the ships which brought them, where they could

[149] Minutes of St. Philip's Parish, 27 November 1734, Special Collections, College of Charleston.
[150] Minutes of St. Philip's Parish, 4 May 1741, Special Collections, College of Charleston.

get neither attendance or conveniences suitable to their condition, from whence many have lost their lives." In conveying this message to the Provincial Council, Thomas proposed the "Erecting of a proper Building at the publick Expence" in order to "prevent the future Importation of Diseases into this City, which has more than once felt the fatal Effects of them." In his explanation Thomas felt he was not only meeting the needs of his constituents, but reducing mortality rates and protecting the population of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia had recently experienced a smallpox epidemic, and this seemed a way to improve the colony's future health. Thomas even emphasized that "Irish & German Strangers" would be the groups that made use of the lazaretto, echoing Franklin's statistical conclusion that migrants were the major health threat in Philadelphia.[151]

The lazaretto sparked a fierce debate between Thomas, the Provincial Council, and Assembly on whether the public health institution should be a priority of government since the colony already had quarantine laws. Thomas reminded everyone he had called for a lazaretto since 1738 for years and appealed to the Assembly again to establish and fund one "for the interest of the Province and the Health of this City." Doing so, he concluded, was "an Effectual security for the future."[152] He did not want reports of the unhealthfulness of the city to deter migration because "every industrious Labourer from Europe is a real addition to the wealth of this Province, and . . . the Labour of every foreigner in particular is almost so much clear Gain to our Mother Country." Thomas argued to the Assembly that failure to establish a lazaretto as requested by the German colonists would hurt the colony two-fold with his reasoning centered on ideas of increase and political arithmetic. Firstly, sickness would enter and spread more easily and

[151] Minutes of the Provincial Council, 4:508.
[152] Minutes of the Provincial Council, 4:508.

secondly, less migration would limit population growth. Either way, the colony would fail to maximize its population potential and therefore not reach full strength.

The Assembly, at odds with Thomas, resisted the argument. They wanted to strengthen the inspection system, but promised to consider it at their next session because it was "also of benefit to the inhabitants."[153] The governor and Provincial Council blamed the Assembly for sicknesses entering the city, due to their political meanness: the "present mortality [was] chiefly owing to the conduct of that Assembly, who . . . exposed the Health and Lives of the Inhabitants to imminent Danger."[154] Thomas informed Philadelphia's Germans that the "Condition indeed of such as arrived here lately has given a very just alarm" and again shifted the blame to the Assembly, explaining "had you been provided with a pest-house or hospital, in a proper situation, the Evils which have been apprehended might . . . have been entirely prevented."[155] In early 1743, shamed by the Lieutenant Governor Thomas and repeated calls from Philadelphians, the Assembly crafted a bill which dedicated Province Island and the buildings as part of a trusteeship to found a lazaretto "for such sick Passengers as shall be imported into this province, and to prevent the spreading of infectious distempers."[156] The Assembly had caved to public opinion about collective responses to health and population threats. The officials recognized that there was a need in society, a common threat to their health, that could be mitigated through government action.

A turning point in colonial public health was the Pennsylvania Hospital, focused exclusively on healing and on people in order to strengthen Pennsylvania as a whole. The

[153] Minutes of the Provincial Council, 4: 509-16.
[154] Minutes of the Provincial Council, 4:497, 4:510-16.
[155] Minutes of the Provincial Council, 4:315.
[156] Minutes of the Provincial Council, 4: 626-29.

Pennsylvania Hospital was the largest colonial public health institution, the first of its kind in British North America, and signaled a significant expansion of the government's role in fostering population health and growth. Benjamin Franklin and Dr. Thomas Bond conceived of the project and, in order to achieve the lofty goal of building the first hospital in the colonies, they established a plan where private donations would be matched by government funding in order to build and fund the institution. In writing to the Penn family asking for a piece of land on which to build, Franklin emphasized that it was only possible with the cooperation of city and provincial officials and the citizens of Philadelphia. He wrote "The Interest of the Proprietaries and People are so nearly connected, that it seems to us self-evident that they mutually share in whatever contributes to the Prosperity and Advantage of the Province…."[157] With this appeal, Franklin and his allies established the framework for debate over the hospital. Their main point was that it would benefit the entire province, and that since both the government and the population would be reaping the benefits of expanded access to medical care, both parties needed to contribute.

Those in support of the hospital publicly appealed to citizens and officials alike by arguing that neither group could improve wellness alone because community health necessitated community involvement. In making this public appeal, Franklin wrote in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* that "the Good particular Men may do separately in relieving the sick, is small, compared to what they may do collectively, or by a joint Endeavour and

[157] Benjamin Franklin, *Some Account of the Pennsylvania Hospital* (Philadelphia: Franklin and Hall, 1754), 10. The Penns agreed and responded: "You may inform the Directors of the Hospital at Philadelphia, that we sent Orders to the Governor . . . to grant them a Piece of Ground to build the Hospital upon…."

Interests."[158] In other words, it was too ambitious and expensive an endeavor for individuals to take on themselves and the hospital could only be useful if established in partnership between charitable individuals and humane officials. Their official petition for the hospital stated that "the Expence of erecting a Building sufficiently large and commodious for the Purpose, it was thought would be too heavy, unless the Subscription could be made general through the Province, and some Assistance could be obtained from the Assembly"[159] They emphasized the sense of community effort, of the need for a collective solution for a collective problem. This was largely because of the scale needed in their calculations. Individuals could save one or two lives through personal charity, but to save hundreds and eventually thousands, Franklin and Bond believed government support was absolutely necessary. In order to actually prevent the deaths of numerous sick individuals, medical care needed to be offered on a large scale at a central location.

To gain the support of Pennsylvania officials, hospital advocates built on the precedent set by the lazaretto and previous public health efforts. In their petition to the Pennsylvania Assembly, Bond and Franklin began by praising "the good Laws of this Province [that] have made many compassionate and charitable Provisions for the Relief of the Poor" but concluded that "something farther seems wanting."[160] This gap, they proposed, was a permanent, centrally-located hospital that would treat ill (but not incurable) patients free of charge. According to the plan, the sick from all across Pennsylvania would be able to receive the best and most modern medical care at the hospital. Once they began to recover but were not yet healthy enough to leave, the

[158] Franklin, *Some Account*, 19.
[159] Franklin, *Some Account*, 3-4
[160] "Petition to the Pennsylvania Assembly, 23 January 1751" in Franklin, *Some Account*, 3.

planners expected those patients to work caring for others in the hospital in order to keep costs down. The authors argued that this similar to the lazaretto and they expected full support from the legislature since "the kind Care our Assemblies have heretofore taken for the Relief of sick and distemper'd Strangers, by providing a Place for their Reception and Accommodation, leaves us no Room to doubt their shewing and equal tender Concern for the inhabitants."[161] They seem to ask the question: if you have done it before for unknown migrants to the province, why not the inhabitants as well? Their appeal was successful, and the legislature granted a charter to the Pennsylvania Hospital immediately. The next year, they allocated 2,000 pounds sterling to the hospital so it could begin treating patients at a temporary location.

In granting the charter for the Pennsylvania Hospital in 1751, the Assembly fully embraced their role in promoting public health and preventing death. The Act for Establishing the Pennsylvania Hospital proclaimed that "Whereas the saving and restoring useful and laborious Members to a Community, is a Work of publick Service."[162] The act interpreted health care as a way of making a locale safe for the inhabitants. The legislature had assumed the responsibility of community-wide health, inasmuch as a government could. Their support of the public hospital was justified by its widespread effects. They explained that "some probably perish, that might otherwise have been restored to Health and Comfort, and become useful to themselves, their Families, and the Publick, for many years after."[163] The language reveals the many considerations at play in supporting and building the hospital. On the one hand, there was

[161] "Petition," Franklin, *Some Account*, 4.
[162] Franklin, *Some Account*, 7.
[163] Franklin, *Some Account*, 3.

a clear humanitarian and benevolent aspect of improving lives and preserving families, but there was also a clear recognition that it benefits the colony as a whole to have these members persevere. Each life saved was that of a potential laborer, taxpayer, or soldier. Even though it was a great expense, those who supported and approved of the hospital agreed that those lived saved ultimately strengthened Pennsylvania.

As laborers began to construct a permanent hospital in 1754, Franklin published a short history of the hospital to celebrate its success during the first year and a half. His first point, as a man dedicated to population statistics, centered on numbers. He bragged that in the period between February 1752 and May 1753, the temporary hospital had received 117 patients, of which 71 were considered "cured" or "relieved."[164] Some required further evaluation and 16 remained, but the greatest success was the small number of dead, which he put at 10. Franklin concluded that everyone involved should feel a great deal of satisfaction "which naturally arises in humane Minds from a Consciousness of doing Good [and] . . . Health restored."[165] Franklin interpreted these numbers not as almost 10% mortality of patients, but of 90% of lives preserved from death. His account of the hospital's history ended with an image of healthy formerly sick patients striding out of the hospital "sound and hearty," ready to continue their lives as productive and useful members of society. Ultimately, the emphasis of the hospital and its main achievement, in the mind of its main advocate and founder, was not the human misery it prevented but the population it built in Pennsylvania.

The growing awareness of political arithmetic in Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston in the early-eighteenth century as calculated through bills of mortality

[164] Franklin, *Some Account*, 36.
[165] Franklin, *Some Account*, 38.

portrayed death as a collective problem which required collective solutions. As interest in bills of mortality and demographics entered colonial popular discourse, counting the dead and calculating the population prioritized the health of the community. In colonial debates on the validity of smallpox inoculation and what was needed to foster health, vital statistics served as the main way to sway public opinion and measure success. This approach offered a new means to understand death, one dominated by patterns and natural law rather than divine plans. Embracing the idea that humans had some measure of control over mortality, colonists wanted their officials to make decisions and lead in such a way that minimized mortality. Working together to foster population increase categorized community mortality as a political and social concern, thereby making it an appropriate duty of the government. By the time the Pennsylvania Hospital was established through both public and private efforts, provincial officials had taken on the duty of providing a health safety net. This differed from earlier laws and regulations in that it was focused on healing rather than isolation or inspection. Residents had asked their governments to work together to save lives. As Charleston, Philadelphia, and Boston officials accepted that responsibility for health assistance, protecting and preserving the population became a duty of government. As colonial Americans entered the revolutionary period, care for a healthy population as a whole offered a means to judge the legitimacy of civil authority.

Chapter 3
"Wrongs at the Point of a Bayonet:"
Propaganda of Death and Imagined Fear in the American Revolution

Near the conclusion of the revolutionary war, the *Philadelphia Packet* reprinted a troubling report from New York. The audience read that "our implacable enemies effected that which they could not do by violence, in sending out of New York the pestilence which walketh in darkness. It has been the more than hellish practice of these enemies to God and man during this barbarous war, to stab promiscuously in the dark, and to murder by secret ways, those they cannot kill openly."[166] The story offered its readers a chilling warning about inhumane British behavior targeted at civilians, but it was a narrative with which Americans were familiar by 1782. During the revolutionary era, American propaganda told of insidious British efforts to target civilians and spread death beyond the customary military targets. From the early 1770s through the end of the war, American publications and correspondence circulated tales of extreme violence by British soldiers, intentional efforts to incite violence by enslaved populations and Indians, the deliberate spread of disease, and the murder of innocent civilians. It is impossible to know whether these events ever occurred as reported, but they served to rile the public with stories of invisible dangers, threats that could not only invade the home but could also turn the domestic space itself into the source of threatened danger. Significantly, as they told these stories of secret and insidious death, they deployed the language of population, which emphasized the nefariousness of British actions because their alleged goal was widespread death and destruction rather than achieving military victory. The

[166] *Pennsylvania Packet or, The General Advertiser*, 26 January 1782.

danger lay not in expected and accepted battlefield death, but in death by secret means on a scale that threatened the population itself.

American propaganda depicted a British government and military that sought to destroy the American population through invisible and unexpected weapons. This chapter argues that revolutionary leaders disseminated propaganda which fostered an imagined fear of mortal threats to civilians and communities inflicted secretly by the British, essentially applying the language of population to fearmongering stories and reports. British actions seemed to threaten depopulation by expanding their death and destruction beyond military engagements and accidental civilian casualties. The stories varied: British soldiers offered no quarter to surrendering Continentals, the British government supported violence by enslaved persons, the British army burned towns to harm civilians, Loyalists murdered women to prevent the birth of any more patriots. These stories propagated the message that no one was safe, no matter how far removed from the military or sites of conflict, to escape the death and destruction of the war because British inhumanity was an ever-present and invisible threat that came from unexpected places. Published letters, newspaper accounts, and congressional reports disseminated stories of British cruelty against soldiers and civilians alike which made even their homes and communities a place of threat. This was not a logical appeal based on natural rights or republican ideologies but promoted an unsubstantiated fear of the unseen and unknown. In such narratives, the British extended the scope of war to civilians and made even their homes—no matter how distant from a battlefield—a theater of war. This was an incredibly powerful tactic, because the threat could come from anyone at any time and violate even the most intimate of spaces. An interaction with an enslaved laborer, caring

for a sick stranger, or riding through the woods all carried the threat of death by the British and their allies, unseen and unexpected. As they portrayed the British as secret, inhumane murderers (or, at the very least, sponsors of such savagery), American authors and printers applied the language of sensibility and fellow-feeling to extend the impact such reports had on American readers. Incidents throughout the war allowed leaders to communicate that colonists had a choice: the British who sought to destroy them with invisible weapons or the Americans who fought for their cause with honor. Leaders, including representatives to the Continental Congress, expected this to be effective because they returned to it again and again.

The propaganda of secret death extended beyond accusations of British atrocities, also disseminating stories of the revolutionary government respecting and protecting life. The Continental Congress along with military leaders deployed a strategy of transparency by printing letters and reports in which officers mandated the humane treatment of enemies and in which leaders deliberated but ultimately resisted the use of violence. They sought to make known to the public their own honor in order to build up America's burgeoning national reputation. Stories of their own behavior advertised that, even when violence may have been acceptable under the rules of war, American officials chose humaneness and benevolence in the face of British death and destruction.[167] This

[167] In thinking about a "strategy of transparency," my research was much informed by the work of Joanne Freeman. In *Affairs of Honor*, Freeman expanded upon the public nature of building authority and reputation in the late-eighteenth century. She wrote that "Honor was also entirely other-directed, determined before the eyes of the world; it did not exist unless bestowed by others." Honor was central to legitimate authority because it connoted "bravery, self-command, and integrity—the core requirements for leadership." In publicizing and spreading news of their own virtuous behavior and regard for life, American authorities portrayed themselves as caring and contemplative even in the face of a fierce war. In this chapter, propaganda serves as a form of the "political gossip" and "whisper campaigns" that could destroy reputations and political careers. Joanne B. Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), xvi, xx.

coalesced in the Asgill Affair at the end of the war, in which Washington and Congress debated executing a British soldier chosen at random as retribution for the death of a Continental soldier. Letters from Washington, French officials, and even Asgill's relatives made their way into American newspapers debating the justness and morality of the decision. When Congress decided against the execution, it was celebrated as a triumph of virtue and of sympathy: America did not have to spare his life, but chose not to punish an innocent party for someone else's actions. The incident served as a reflective moment for American writers, who lamented that the British had not shown as much care and honor throughout the war.

According to pro-American narratives, British authorities connived to use unexpected weapons such as smallpox, Black Americans, and American Indians as means of warfare, weaponizing colonial vulnerabilities to not only defeat them but to depopulate them. The propaganda that warned of death in secrecy alluded to the ideology of political arithmetic, particularly the emphasis on population growth versus depopulation, which gave these reports a veneer of science and reliability. Colonists had become familiar with political arithmetic and population studies through newspapers, almanacs, and pamphlets over the past half century. They knew that the topic was based on numbers and calculations, which was the most modern form of evidence at the time. The print mediums that had carried statistics on the success of smallpox inoculation or America's flourishing population now carried stories of how biological warfare and domestic uprisings threatened entire communities. Deploying their propaganda through the lens of population studies elevated it to something beyond rumor and attached it to a form colonists understood as authoritative and scientific. This allowed the authors,

printers, and purveyors of such propaganda to appeal to a sophisticated audience, particularly the professionals, physicians, and church vestrymen who filled the ranks of local public positions. Even as it could inspire widespread fear and resentment, it employed an effective language to attract middling and elite colonists to support the American cause.

This chapter first examines the rise and fall of the subject of propaganda in the historiography of the Revolutionary War. Though works on propaganda date back almost a century, the past fifty years has seen historians turn away from the study of propaganda to a large extent in favor of political ideology. Next, the chapter analyzes rumors of British-inflicted or British-sponsored death that circulated during the war. I explain how these accounts depicted death beyond the battlefield and emphasized the threat of violence—even depopulation—to civilians in their homes and communities. There is a particular focus on accusations that the British connived to use smallpox, enslaved peoples, and American Indians as weapons. Revolutionary leaders at the highest levels gathered and propagated these narratives through newspaper accounts, pamphlets, and printed correspondence. Next this chapter examines how American military officials and politicians sought to juxtapose their behavior and values against British actions by publicizing their treatment of the enemy. Published letters informed the audience of directions given by military commanders to treat enemy prisoners well and told of British servants who chose to stay with American forces for safety purposes. Revolutionary leaders had a strategy of apparent transparency: they displayed their adherence to the rules of war and aversion to unnecessary violence. According to writers and speakers,

these incidences were proof that the United States exhibited the most honorable and responsible leadership during the war by resisting violence and protecting the population.

The scholarship on propaganda in the Revolutionary War stretches back nearly a century, though historians' attention to it and the seriousness with which they consider it has fluctuated in that time. The earliest works date to midcentury, particularly the publication of Philip Davidson's *Propaganda and the American Revolution*. In this seminal work, Davidson portrays the rise of anti-British and pro-independence sentiment to a small group of politicians who used propaganda to "awake and rouse" ordinary citizens. He presented the Revolution as the work of minority leaders who turned to propaganda to build support and unify the masses behind their positions. Carl Berger delved deeper into the propagandistic stories themselves and interpreted the Revolutionary War as a "war of words as well as gunpowder"[168] In a quote that represents the dominant interpretation of these scholars, Arthur Schlesinger concluded that "the patriots exhibited extraordinary skill in manipulating public opinion, playing upon the emotions of the ignorant as well as the minds of the educated."[169] According to these scholars, propaganda was not an unintended consequence of resentment towards British policies. Rather, it was deliberately employed by revolutionary elites to marshal public opinion behind independence. Consequently, most revolutionaries were not

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[168] Carl Berger, *Broadsides and Bayonets: The Propaganda War of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961), 10. Berger clarified that the term propaganda "is used without evil connotations." The totalitarian regimes of World War II had blackened the term propaganda, particularly Nazi Germany's Ministry of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment which was overseen by Joseph Goebbels. In the latter-half of the twentieth century, it became associated with the world wars, the Cold War, and even modern-day corporate advertising. The deployment of propaganda also became affiliated with mass delivery systems and centralized offices that operate said systems. By the time Berger published his work, the term had gained an immense amount of cultural baggage which would partly discourage future historians from broaching the subject.

[169] Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Prelude to Independence: The Newspaper War on Great Britain, 1764-1776* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Press, 1958).

supporting ideals about representation and taxation, but were responding to stories intended to evoke their emotions and gain their support.

Neo-Whig historians of the mid- and late-twentieth century turned their focus to ideological causes and motivations of the American Revolution, consequently turning away from an interest in propaganda. This school of thought began with the publication of Edmund Morgan's *The Stamp Act Crisis*, which stressed the centrality of genuine arguments about constitutionality to the outbreak of revolution.[170] A foundational work in this group of historians is Bernard Bailyn's *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. Bailyn explained that he focused on pamphlet culture to prove that colonists' warnings about a tyrannical empire were not "mere rhetoric and propaganda."[171] Instead, he was able to identify "a comprehensive theory of politics" in revolutionary print culture that represented a unified ideological outlook based on republicanism.[172] This approach was furthered by scholars such as Gordon Wood, Jack Greene, and Pauline Maier, who explored the ideological foundations of the American Revolution more extensively. These scholars interpreted the independence movement as one based on intellectual forces that provided the new nation a framework for republican government and social characteristics. The goal to identify a uniform ideology among revolutionaries resulted in these scholars dismissing propaganda as incoherent and unmeaningful.[173] Instead of

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[170] Edmund S. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953).

[171] Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), viii.

[172] Bailyn, 54.

[173] See also: Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1992); Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), Jack P. Greene, *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Polities of the British Empire and the United States, 1607-1789* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990); Greene, *The Constitutional*

being manipulated and deceived by revolutionary leaders, the American population was persuaded by the righteousness and justness of the independence movement.

More recently, historians have continued to grapple with the role of propaganda in the American Revolution. Social historians such as Sylvia Frey, Judith VanBuskirk, and Terry Bouton studied revolutionary-era propaganda as a medium through which patriots and loyalists stoked anxieties about military attacks and social outsiders.[174] Recent scholarship, however, has wrestled more with whether or not to categorize "war stories…[that] accomplished a great deal of political work" as propaganda or something else.[175] In *The Common Cause*, Robert Parkinson refused to refer to persuasive and emotionally-laden stories as propaganda. He felt that "'propaganda' fits awkwardly with the American Revolution" because it was not a term known at the time and because of its affiliation with totalitarian disinformation campaigns. Instead, he cast newspaper stories and printed reports as efforts at "propagation," or concerted efforts to grow support for their cause.[176] In contrast, literary scholar Russ Castronovo deliberately highlighted propaganda as a concept in his work because of its ability to spread and grow at a rapid

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Origins of the American Revolution (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). In recent years, historians have begun to complicate the republican synthesis by studying competing ideologies. For works in this vein, see: Robert Ferguson, *Reading the Early Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006) and Andrew Trees, *The Founding Fathers and the Politics of Character* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). For an excellent overview of this historiography, see Andy Doolen, "Early American Civics: Rehistoricizing the Power of Republicanism," *American Literary History* 19, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 120-140.

[174] The aforementioned social historians incorporate propaganda into their research, but it is not the main focus. See: Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy: "The People," the Founders, and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Sylvia Frey, *Water From the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Holger Hoock: *Scars of Independence: America's Violent Birth* (New York: Random House, 2017); and Judith L. Van Buskirk, *Generous Enemies: Patriots and Loyalists in Revolutionary New York* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

[175] Robert Parkinson, *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 21.

[176] Parkinson, 17-18.

rate as well as evoke strong emotion. He dated the emergence of the term to the Vatican in the seventeenth century and argued that "historians of early America have concentrated on falsity at the expense of messaging, disregarding the erratic but complex system of communication that is intrinsic to the concept."[177] In analyzing the propaganda of the American Revolution, Castronovo sought to reveal the communication systems that underpinned revolutionary propaganda and contributed to the decentralized circulation of viewpoints and the mobility of information. Furthermore, Castronovo declared the connection between propaganda and popular assent to the new government as one of the main revolutionary features of the American Revolution.

This chapter seeks to reclaim the subject of propaganda from its historiographical absence or minimization. In efforts to cast the American Revolution as ideological (along with noble and highbrow), historians have interpreted the motivations and ideas of the founding generation as based in the logic of natural laws and rights. By focusing on propaganda, especially with a focus on rumors of death or death by secret means, I move away from the logic of the revolution to the illogical fear of the unseen and invisible as an effective narrative and motivating factor. According to modern studies, the atrocities and massacres that filled propaganda pages are doubted to have taken place, or to have happen to the extent claimed by American reports. Though false or exaggerated, they spoke to colonial fears about the disease environment and dangerous social groups within their homes and communities. By introducing the illogic of revolutionary propaganda back into the scholarship of the American Revolution, this chapter seeks to illuminate the

[177] Russ Castronovo, *Propaganda 1776: Secrets, Leaks, and Revolutionary Communications in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 11, 5.

wartime experiences of ordinary Americans as they endured the years of war.[178] I aim to highlight wartime messaging that were deeply personal and highly contingent in their efforts to sway loyalties and legitimize the revolutionary government. Beyond works on political philosophy, people living through the war were inundated with reports that, although unable to be proven, inspired strong emotions and resentment towards the British.

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Accusations of British cruelty aimed at Americans emerged from the first deaths at the Boston Massacre, setting the narrative of unnecessary and excessive deaths inflicted by the British. At the time, Henry Prentiss cast the conflict as "a scene the most Tragical, of any that ever the Eyes of Americans beheld . . . to see the blood of our fellow Citizens flowing down the gutters like waters."[179] Paul Revere's famous image furthered this message by depicting the British firing indiscriminately into a crowd of seemingly respectable men and women. Broadsides, parades, and eyewitness accounts emphasized death through coffin and skull-and-bones imagery, while describing a scene in which the British fired unprovoked. The fifth of March became an anniversary during the war for Americans to revisit the first incident in their violent, ongoing war. General Joseph Warren remembered it as the same on the event's five-year anniversary, writing: "I

[178] In this vein, my work builds on a recent study of the lived experiences of ordinary Americans under British military occupation in the American Revolution. Donald Johnson analyzed they ways in which the presence of the British military both benefited and caused suffering among various social classes throughout the war. In doing so, he portrayed the Revolution as "and intense and prolonged personal struggle." Johnson and I diverge on are the timing of "accounts of abuses and atrocities" aimed at the British which he situated in the postwar period, compared to this chapter's focus on such propaganda during the war. Donald Johnson, *Occupied America: British Military Rule and the Experience of Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 1, 195.

[179] As quoted in Benjamin L. Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots: The Boston Tea Party and the Making of America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 42.

mourn over my bleeding country: with them I weep at her distress, and with them deeply resent the many wrongs which she has suffered from the hands of cruel and ungodly men."[180] Warren's speech attempted to bond Americans through their suffering at the hands of the British and sympathy at the loss. All knew that war was a violent endeavor and to expect loss, but American orators continued to highlight reports and rumors of the British inflicting death beyond the normal battle fronts. The early battles of the war would further grow this narrative and rumors maintained it in the coming years, offering revolutionaries an emotional rhetoric on which to reject British rule and attract supporters to the American cause.

Americans digested the unexpected brutality of their former compatriots, which hinted at fighting tactics that would go beyond the customary rules of war. As they processed their early losses, colonists railed against British brutality and interpreted it as a sign of a declining civilization. It is through Warren's own death at the hands of the British at Bunker Hill that we get a glimpse of the raw, emotional response these events could provoke. His brother Doctor John Warren unleashed a passionate tirade against the British in his diary: "stay your bloody hands still warmed with the purple fluid and ask yourselves if you are not sated with the inhuman carnage, if your hearts long since inured to view these shrieking scenes without emotions, go on then ye dastard butchers let desolation and destruction mark your bloody steps where'er your brave opposers are by fortune destitute of proper arms for their defense, but give up forever your pretensions to

[180] Joseph Warren, "Oration Given on 5 March 1775 in Honor of the Boston Massacre," John Collins Warren Papers Ms. N-1731, Volume 1a, Massachusetts Historical Society.

Honour, Justice or Humanity!"[181] It is not surprising that British actions evoked such an emotional response to the losses of battle. What stands out is how this is cast as a civilizational failure. Revolutionary leaders knew these were poignant and powerful stories that painted the British in a brutal light, not based on ideological concerns of taxation, representation, or rights. Rather, these narratives provoked outrage at their behavior, at their treatment of American brethren and the insult they showed to Americans by disregarding their lives.

While incidents from the early 1770s focused on specific events, in *Common Sense* Thomas Paine argued more broadly that continued British governance would expand the scope of war and endanger everyone. Paine warned that "Everything that is right or reasonable pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature, cries, 'tis time to part." *Common Sense* widened the threat of British cruelty to anyone in the colonies, not just those armed against the British. Paine sent a message that those who were still reticent should be concerned by British violence, because they could be the next victims. Those that had escaped suffering so far were lucky, Paine argued, and emphasized that it was just a matter of time until the British targeted them: "But if you say, you can still pass the violations over, then I ask, Hath your house been burnt? Hath your property been destroyed before your face? Are your wife and children destitute of a bed to lie on, or bread to live on? Have you lost a parent or a child by their hands, and yourself the ruined and wretched survivor? If you have not, then you are not a judge of those who have. But if you have, and can still shake hands with the murderers, then you are unworthy of the name of husband, father, friend, or lover; and whatever may be

[181] John Warren, "John Warren Revolutionary War diary," 19 April 1775-11 May 1776 (transcription, John Collins Warren Papers Ms. N-1731, Volume 1a), Massachusetts Historical Society.

your rank or title in life, you have the heart of a coward and the spirit of a sycophant." Paine's words included a warning and a judgement. For those who had escaped British wrath thus far, their turn was coming if the British were not expelled from America. For those who were victimized but remained loyal, they did so because of fear and greed. His message was that any upstanding citizen (man, in particular) would seek independence rather than remain under British rule. *Common Sense* popularized the message that this was not cruelty only in battles such as Bunker Hill but would be applied to all American colonists if they did not end British rule. It offered an ominous warning that would continue in American propaganda of an enlarged scope of conflict from which no one would escape. From the beginning, death seemed to come from unexpected places and in unexpected ways.

The danger from the British was not just on the battlefields, but to the American population as a whole in their communities. Propaganda articles disseminated reports of attacks on civilians with the message that the British hoped to depopulate the colonies. After the British burned coastal cities such as Falmouth, Massachusetts, and Norfolk, Virginia, a report in *New England Chronicle* declared "The savage and brutal barbarity of our enemies in burning Falmouth is a full demonstration that there is not the least remains of virtue, wisdom, or humanity in the British court; and that they are fully determined with fire and sword, to butcher and destroy, . . . the whole American people."[182] This report raised an alarm about British methods and goals. It declared their destruction was not aimed at soldiers but at the American population. It also put the blame for such amoral tactics at the top of British leadership. A letter from the American Colonel Robert

[182] *New England Chronicle* (Boston), 23 November 1775.

Howe to the Virginia Convention described a scene of confusion and fear when the British attacked Norfolk. In a narrative that was reprinted in newspapers and broadsides throughout the rebelling colonies, he told of "the melancholy consideration of the women and children running through a crowd of shot to get out of the town, some of them with children at their breasts: A few have, I hear, been killed." He left further details of the scene vague, so that the audience could use their imagination to ponder the fear and confusion of those women and children. His depiction was a call to action as he ended that paragraph with "Does it not call from vengeance both from God and man?"[183] In highlighting the threat to women and children—the building blocks of the American future—Howe hoped his account of brutality would turn more against the British government.

Revolutionaries understood attacks on civilians as particularly egregious because it undercut their population, revealing that propaganda was used to speak to ideas of political arithmetic. The colonies felt they had made Britain strong with their flourishing population and helped build its illustrious reputation for civility, humanity, and civilization. General Warren narrated the early years of colonization on the fifth anniversary of the Boston Massacre, describing a time when colonists "held the virgin earth teeming with richest fruits – a grateful recompense for their unwearied toil: the fields began to wave with ripening harvests, and the late barren wilderness was seen to blossom like the rose." It was through colonial toil that both societies on either side of the Atlantic were "flourishing and happy; Britain saw her commerce extended, and her wealth increased; her lands raised to an immense value: her fleets riding triumphant on

[183] Broadside, "Extract of a Letter from Col. Howe" (Philadelphia: Dunlap, 1776).

the ocean; the terror of her arms spreading to every quarter of the globe." Colonists had contributed wealth and people to Britain, partly through uneasy and oftentimes violent relationships with indigenous and enslaved peoples. But Britain was now turning "the terror of her arms" against the people who contributed to their fearsomeness.[184]

Propaganda that employed notions of political arithmetic reported that the British inflicted death by insidious means, particularly in encouraging perceived domestic enemies to attack Americans. As rumors spread through all colonies of the British encouraging enslaved people to abandon their plantations, eventually realized through decrees such as Dunmore's Proclamation, leaders were enraged about the British willingness to enlist enslaved people. A commenter in Philadelphia opined that "Hell itself could not have vomited anything more black than this design of emancipating our slaves."[185] These narratives were particularly effective and resonant because the stories overturned the natural order of things. They turned household against household, with an enslaved person or dependent pitted against the master of the household. In such a landscape of war, it would be impossible for Americans to know when and where to expect danger.

Likewise, entire communities were under threat by the rumored British alliance with American Indians. American propaganda expressed outrage that the British allied with indigenous populations and seemed to encourage their attacks on American populations.[186] Combined with menaces from the enslaved population, it seemed that

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[184] Warren, "Oration."

[185] As quoted in Gary B. Nash, *Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early North America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 264.

[186] Fear of American Indians was nothing new to colonial Americans. Peter Silver termed this the "anti-Indian sublime" which served to unite diverse European groups into a unified identity, revealing how powerful and motivating this fear of indigenous peoples could be. Especially relevant is his second chapter,

British leaders were sponsoring the potential annihilation of families and communities. Thomas Paine's *The Crisis* accused the British of "an undeclared war let loose upon [Americans] and Indians and Negroes invited to their slaughter." He used the voice of slain American General Montgomery from beyond the grave to declare: America's enemies "have done their worst. [Enlisting] Savages-and Negroes to assist them in burning your towns—desolating your country—and in butchering your wives and children."[187] With these rumored developments, this was war from unexpected corners. It emphasized unseen dangers, coming from their homes and their communities. People that English colonists considered their dependents and inferiors, who they felt were under their control or they had defeated in the past, suddenly seemed emboldened by the British. These rumors of death and destruction cast their entire communities as both threatening and under threat.

Warren warned that the Patriots faced a landscape "swarming with savages who threatened death with every kind of torture."[188] The story of Jane McCrea spread in American newspapers and correspondence, disseminating the story of a young, vibrant woman slaughtered by American Indians at the behest of British troops. American Major General Horatio Gates wrote to British Lieutenant General John Burgoyne detailing the supposedly gruesome scene:

> Miss McCrea, a young lady lovely to the sight, of virtuous character and amiable disposition, engaged to be married to an officer in your army, was, with other women and children, taken out of a house near Fort

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"Barbarism in the American Revolution," which explores the relationship between the British and American Indians during the Revolutionary War and American reaction to it. Peter Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian Warfare Transformed Early America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008).

[187] Thomas Paine, *A Dialogue Between the Ghost of General Montgomery and an American Delegate* (Philadelphia: R. Bell, 1776), 14-15.

[188] Joseph Warren, "Oration Given on 5 March 1775 in Honor of the Boston Massacre," John Collins Warren Papers Ms. N-1731, Volume 1a, Massachusetts Historical Society.

> Edward [New York], carried into the woods, and there scalped and mangled in the most shocking manner. Two parents, with their six children, were all treated with the same inhumanity, while quietly residing in their once happy and peaceful dwelling.[189]

Gates portrayed Jane McCrea as a respectable young woman on the cusp of marriage to a British officer who was, along with other innocent women and children, mercilessly savaged by British-allied American Indians. His letter, which was published in the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* along with Burgoyne's denial, placed blame fully on the British for supporting such brutality. He implied that such behavior was to be expected from American Indians as it was "neither new nor extraordinary." What the public would find so shocking, Gates stated, was that a respected British officer "should hire the savages of America to scalp Europeans and the descendants of Europeans; nay more, that he should pay a price for each scalp so barbarously taken, is more than will be believed in Europe, until authenticated facts shall, in every Gazette, convince mankind of the truth of the horrid tale." Gates' words reveal his awareness that this was a sensational tale that would spread throughout the information network to become well-known, yet another infamous sign of British cruelty. He recognized many would be skeptical that such a well-respected officer, gentleman, scholar, and politician would lower himself to harm women and children (especially one engaged to a British officer) but that the details printed in "every Gazette" would persuade the public of the truth of British barbarity. Gates concluded his portion of the letter related to McCrea by linking it to a larger pattern: "Upwards of one hundred men, women, and children have perished by the hands of ruffians, to whom, it is asserted, you have paid the price of blood." In other words, the

[189] "Major General Horatio Gates to Lieutenant General John Burgoyne, September 2, 1777," *Pennsylvania Evening Post* (Philadelphia), 16 September 1777.

story of Jane McCrea was not unique or extreme because she was one of dozens who have been killed in such a manner. The British had sunk so low as to side with the killers of a woman engaged to one of their own.

Finally, Americans believed the British targeted them with an invisible weapon that was one of their most terrifying vulnerabilities: smallpox. Smallpox was one of the most feared experiences and a major weakness of the Americans. John Adams described the disease throughout the war as "Cruel Smallpox! Worse than the sword!"[190] Rumors that the British were deliberately inflicting it on Americans first surfaced around Boston in 1775. Aide-de-camp Robert Harrison wrote to the Massachusetts Provincial Council in December that "four 'British' deserters have just arrived at headquarters giving an account that several persons are to be sent out of Boston . . . that have lately been inoculated with the smallpox, with the design, probably, to spread infection to distress us as much as possible."[191] The next day, Washington informed Congress that he had heard rumors of the same: "By recent information…General Howe is going to send out a number of Inhabitants…. A Sailor says that a Number of these coming out have been inoculated with the design of Spreading the Small pox through the Country and Camp."[192] To the more vulnerable colonial population, smallpox was an invisible weapon that could hardly be contained. Because of its contagiousness, it would not only be aimed at soldiers but would enter the civilian population as well.

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[190] Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams, 16 June 1776, *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive* Massachusetts Historical Society, accessed 3 November 2021, http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/.

[191] "Robert H. Harrison to the president of the Council of Massachusetts Bay, 3 December 1775" in Peter Force, *American Archives*, series 4, vol. 4 (Washington: M. Clair Clarke and Peter Force, 1843), 168, Accessed 3 November 2021, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015027756454&view=1up&seq=14&skin=2021.

[192] George Washington to John Hancock, 4 December 1775," *Founders Online,* National Archives, accessed 10 October 2021, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-02-02-0437.

Smallpox was a weapon that American soldiers could not fight against and leaders feared it would doom the entire war for independence only months into the conflict. Soldiers, officers, and politicians blamed British General Guy Carleton's deliberate use of smallpox as a major reason for Americans' defeat in the Quebec campaign. American Captain Hector McNeal reported to Congress that "The smallpox was sent out of Quebeck by Carleton, inoculating the poor people at government expense for the purpose of giving it to our army."[193] General Gates provided Washington with more details, albeit dire ones. He wrote: "Everything about this army is infected with the pestilence; the cloathes, the blankets, the air, and the ground [the troops] walk on. To put this evil from us, a general hospital is established at Fort George, where there are now between two and three thousand sick, and where every infected person is immediately sent. But this care and caution have not effectually destroyed the disease here."[194] John Adams served on a committee in the Continental Congress to determine the reasons for defeat in Canada and laid the blame on smallpox: "Our misfortunes in Canada are enough to melt a heart of stone. The small-pox is ten times more terrible that Britons, Canadiens, and Indians together. This was the cause of our precipitate retreat from Quebeck; this is the cause of our disgraces at the Cedars."[195] The idea that the British used smallpox as a type of weapon was understood by revolutionaries as particularly threatening. It could seemingly wipe out towns of Americans and throw the army into disarray. It was a major hurdle for

[193] *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* Vol. V, ed. by Worthington Chauncey Ford (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), 474.

[194] "Horatio Gates to George Washington, 29 July 1776," *Founders Online,* National Archives, accessed 10 October 2021, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-05-02-0369.

[195] "Extract of a letter from John Adams, 26 June 1776," in Peter Force, *American Archives*, series 4, vol. 6, (Washington: M. St. Clair Clarke and Peter Force, 1846), 1083, accessed 3 November 2021, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015019226755&view=1up&seq=11&skin=2021.

military leaders, in particular, as fear of smallpox inhibited recruitment and threatened the fighting ability of troops they did have.

Stories circulated that the British would deliberately spread the disease to civilians by tricking them into caring for contagious persons. In 1776, the *Boston Gazette* reported that a young indentured servant reported being inoculated and, rather than following the required quarantine period that would prevent the non-immune from getting sick, was required to board a ship with Patriots fleeing British occupation, thereby infecting and quite possibly killing fellow passengers.[196] Colonists were leaving their homes for safety, but unknowingly spread death and suffering courtesy of the British army. Another newspaper article, this time from Philadelphia, recounted a grim story: "our friends which have the misfortune to fall into their hands, are immediately crowded into prison ships, and there confined until two thirds of them perish with the goal fever, and the surviving being effected therewith are sent out to spread death and desolation thro' our borders."[197] This author summarized the effectiveness of revolutionary propaganda of death. It told stories of the British trying to spread death by secret means and through non-combatants. In this particular case, American civilians' compassion for a released sick prisoner was potentially deadly. The British could therefore defeat most of a town without ever raising arms against them. The threat had infiltrated their homes and communities, meaning they could be secure in nothing, nor could they escape the destruction of war. This was powerful rhetoric to inspire fear and resentment towards British governance.

[196] *Boston Gazette*, 12 February 1776.
[197] *Pennsylvania Packet or, The General Advertiser*, 26 January 1782.

Whether or not the British deliberately spread smallpox to soldiers and civilians is impossible to know, but in addition to inspiring fear it showed colonists that the British considered them inferior and rejected their former bonds of affection. What is clear, however, is how effective these stories of inhumane death were at demonizing British leaders and their actions, representing to the American audience how low the British had sunk in terms of benevolence and humanity. A British officer seemed to take joy in American sickness when he gleefully reported that "smallpox does havoc among" Americans and that "'tis a deadly infection in Yanky veins."[198] Eighteenth-century rules of war prohibited the use of poison weapons against enemies in a just war. According to Elizabeth Fenn, this included biological weapons such as smallpox. The exception to this was when fighting against "savages" or "barbarians." In *Law of Nations*, Emmerich Vattel explained that "nations are justified in uniting together as a body with the object of punishing, even exterminating, such savage peoples." The terminology of "extermination" would raise alarms of depopulation, which potentially added fuel to fears of British goals. In the colonial experience, such treatment was justified against the indigenous population but particularly insulting when aimed at themselves. Doing the same to American revolutionaries was categorizing them on the same level as American Indians rather than as English brethren. Colonists received it not only as a tactic of fear, but an insult to colonial civilization and standing, as well.[199]

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[198] Sheldon S. Cohen, ed., *Canada Preserved: the Journal of Captain Thomas Ainslie* (New York: New York University Press, 1968), 31. Smallpox appeared periodically in epidemic proportions in the colonies, whereas the disease was endemic in most of Europe. Mortality of smallpox epidemics ranged from 15-50%. See John Duffy, *Epidemics in Colonial America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1953) 18.

[199] Emmerich Vattel, *The Law of Nations; Or Principles of the Law of Nature: Applied to the Conduct and Affairs of Nations and Sovereigns* (London: J. Newberry, 1760), 246. For an excellent overview of biological warfare in early America, see Elizabeth Fenn, "Biological Warfare in Eighteenth-

These narratives—in newspapers, pamphlets, broadsides, plays, diaries, correspondence, and congressional records—culminated in a message to the American audience: the British are not simply trying to defeat us or break the American will; they are trying to depopulate the American colonies and deplete the economy, power, and the health of the civic body. When fires forced women and children to flee, when refugee civilians were deliberately infected with smallpox, when enslaved men and women within their homes turned traitor, when American Indians were encouraged to attack, the message was that the British sought to inflict maximum mortality among soldiers and civilians alike. The Philadelphia report that told of the British attempting to spread smallpox through a released prisoner concluded that "if there is no redress of this intolerable evil, this town . . . must be depopulated." Likewise, the same sentiment was echoed among the leadership when General Nathanael Greene worried that "this Country will be depopulated . . . as neither Whig nor Tory can live."[200] A report in the *Pennsylvania Journal* proclaimed a Hessian prisoner told of the Brits' "hellish intention . . . to slay from twelve years old and upwards, every American, and to extirpate the wretches."[201] So when a reader or listener encountered the story of a Southern Loyalist entering the house of a patriot and his wife, then continuing to "[stab] her with bayonets, cut open her breasts, and in her own blood wrote on the wall, 'thou shalt never give birth to a rebel,'" they had a frame of reference for it beyond the violence on the surface (though that is adequate enough).[202] Beyond the story of the brutal wartime murder of a

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Century North America: Beyond Jeffrey Amherst," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 4 (Mar. 2000): 1552-1580.

[200] Nathanael Greene to the President of Congress, 28 December 1780, in the *Papers of Nathanael Greene*, Dennis Conrad, et al., eds. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), 7: 9.

[201] *Pennsylvania Journal*, 2 February 1777.

[202] As quoted in Hoock, *Scars of Independence*, 320.

woman and her unborn child, it is the British attempting to cut off the future of America, to stop the nation's growth and flourishing and fecundity in its tracks.

Allegations of British atrocities came to public awareness through newspapers, images, and word of mouth, but national politicians sought to control the narrative. From the early years of the war, members of the Continental Congress collected stories of British atrocities and planned to distribute printed accounts. In April 1777, they created a committee to "enquire into the conduct of the enemy." In a preliminary report, the members found "That, in every place where the enemy has been, there are heavy complaints of oppression, injury, and insult, suffered by the inhabitants."[203] The committee was to proceed in collecting affidavits concerning four categories: "First, the wanton and oppressive devastation of the country, and destruction of property: Second, the inhuman treatment of those who were so unhappy as to become prisoners: Third, the savage butchery of many who had submitted or were incapable of resistance: Fourth, the lust and brutality of the soldiers in abusing of women."[204] Preliminary investigation proved to committee members that "the cry of barbarity and cruelty is but too well founded; and as, in conversation, those who are cool to the American cause, have nothing to oppose to the facts, but their being incredible."[205] This passage reveals that Congress found the stories both believable and useful in that they could inspire sympathy for the American cause. Congressmen hoped that disseminating these stories would cause passionate backlash against the British, as had happened following the Boston Massacre. In July 1777, they decided to publish "4,000 copies in English, and 2,000 in German"

[203] *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 1774-1789 vol. VII, ed. by Worthington Chauncey Ford (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1907), 276.
[204] *JCC*, VII, 277.
[205] *JCC*, VII, 279.

that were to be "distributed through the several states."[206] In doing this, committee members hoped that "the melancholy truths which they have been obliged to report" would "[fill] this whole Continent with resentment and horror."[207] Though it does not appear that the planned book ever materialized, congressional reports, newspaper accounts, and publicized correspondence appeared in American newspapers to detail American suffering and British crimes. Political leaders at the highest levels planned a propaganda strategy to disseminate these rumors of secret and inhumane death.

Revolutionary leaders hoped that narratives of inhumane death would become foundational understandings of the causes and events of the Revolutionary War. In 1779, Benjamin Franklin and the Marquis de Lafayette even planned a book of prints intended for children which would highlight British cruelties. The list included the burning of several coastal cities such as Falmouth and Norfolk, which would incorporate details such as "The Houses partly in Flames…The Inhabitants flying out of it carrying the Sick and Aged, Women with Children in their Arms. Some kill'd as they go off, and lying on the ground." Franklin and Lafayette also suggested prints such as "Dunmore's hiring the Negroes to murder their Masters Families," "Savages killing and scalping the Frontier Farmers and their Families," and "Another Right honorable Captain Going out on a detachment an [sic] killing defenceless people."[208] With twenty-six suggested illustrations total, the book of prints was sure to provoke antagonism towards the British in America and an emotional response to continued British governance. These plans

[206] *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 1774-1789 vol. VIII, ed. by Worthington Chauncey Ford (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1907), 565.

[207] *JCC*, VII, 279.

[208] "Franklin and Lafayette's List of Prints to Illustrate British Cruelties, [c. May 1779]," *Founders Online,* National Archives, accessed 10 October 2021, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Franklin/01-29-02-0477.

make it clear that American leaders wanted rumors and whisperings of British mistreatment to be amplified to sway minds and hearts. They hoped that publicizing such stories far and wide would discredit British officers and officials, including the king himself. These stories shared a message that the British were eager to spread death and destruction throughout the American colonies.

The atrocities inflicted on American civilians were not random choices by British ministers or officers, American authors argued, but rather a signal of inhumanity and corruption at the top of the British Empire. The creators placed blame completely on King George III, the "ROYAL CRIMINAL."[209] By placing responsibility with the monarch rather than corrupt ministers or officers, patriots identified Great Britain as a bad and unhealthy body politic. The Declaration of Independence claimed that his leadership resulted in "works of death, desolation, and tyranny." The king's lack of regard for preserving the American population, for in fact working against rather than nurturing their increase and prosperity, meant he had abdicated his right to rule over them. One Bostonian recorded in his journal that cruelties were "done by the Ministerial Army, and their associates, under the auspicious Reign of His Most Sacred Majesty, King George the 3d: of blessed memory." His conclusion was: "My Dear Sons of America! Put not your trust in Princes."[210] Newspapers proclaimed: "The inquisition of Spain and Portugal, and the cruelties at [Cambooya], are not equal to this lingering inhumane death, inflicted by these Britons, and all done at the instance of their mighty religious humane king." To continue America's pre-revolutionary flourishing, a new form of government

[209] Thomas Paine, *A Dialogue Between the Ghost of General Montgomery and an American Delegate* (Philadelphia: R. Bell, 1776).

[210] John Leach diaries, 1757-1776, v. 2 (1775-76), Ms. N-1567, Massachusetts Historical Society.

was needed. What Americans were witnessing, according to reports, went beyond a group of bloodthirsty, uncaring, unworthy leaders to the decline of the British empire. Peter Timothy, publisher of the *South Carolina Gazette* proclaimed that British behavior represented a "grand epoch in the History of Mankind . . . An Epoch, that in all Probability will mark the Declension of the British Empire!"[211] King George III's actions had nullified Britain's right to authority, which seemingly left a vacuum of good governance. It was almost as if there was a sickness in their civilization. Under the theory of political arithmetic, leaders were supposed to protect their populations and establish an environment in which they flourished. By depicting King George III as a ruler who at best disregarded their protection or at worst ordered violence be done to them, revolutionaries argued against his government as one that is defective and should be cast off.

The revolutionary government contrasted themself and their own treatment of subjects and enemies alike with a strategy of transparency that highlighted their honor in war. Propaganda was useful to revolutionary leaders in making Americans fear death by secret means carried out by the British and their allies. They also found it useful to juxtapose British depopulation tactics with publicized efforts by American officials and officers to prioritize humanity over violence amid a fierce war. For every accusation of British abuse, cruelty, and illegitimacy, American leaders used the opportunity to highlight the humanity and protection embodied by their own revolutionary government through printed letters and reports. Where the British sought to deviously depopulate America through the deliberate spread of disease, the American government was

[211] Peter Timothy, "A Circular Letter [No. 11] to the Committees in the Several Districts and Parishes of South-Carolina," Supplement to the *South Carolina Gazette*, 30 June 1775.

preserving lives—even at great expense—by protecting health. One of the new government's first priorities was protecting Americans—particularly soldiers—from the deliberate spread of disease by the British. John Adams excitedly recorded that the Continental Congress passed legislation to expand the Army's Hospital Department. He noted that it was costly legislation, but "A most ample, generous, liberal provision it is. The expense of it will be great, but humanity overcame avarice" in allocating the money.[212] According to Adams, increased funding for medical care went beyond strategic considerations to provide a symbol of the American government's moral superiority. Taking care of soldiers cost money but was a necessity of good government.

Printed correspondence from General Washington also highlighted America's deliberately humane and morally superior treatment of the enemy. In his correspondence with British General Thomas Gage, which was subsequently published in newspapers as ordered by Congress, Washington portrayed his soldiers as much more benevolent. He opined that "not only [British] Officers, and Soldiers have been treated with a Tenderness due to Fellow Citizens, & Brethren; but even those execrable Parricides (Loyalists), whose Counsels & Aid have deluged their Country with Blood, have been protected from the Fury of a justly enraged People."[213] According to Washington, his soldiers exhibited higher standards and regard for British officers, regulars, and Loyalists even though it was not reciprocated. For the audience, this compared a healthy civic body seeking to preserve lives and care for subjects with an unhealthy civic body bent of violence and

[212] Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 7 - 11 April 1776, *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive,* Massachusetts Historical Society, accessed 15 August 2021, http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/.

[213] Written 19 August 1775. *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1795, 900-901.

destruction. Publicness was a strategy, as they disseminated stories of how they resisted violence in favor of humaneness and sympathy.

In his accusatory letter to Lieutenant General Burgoyne on the death of Jane McCrae, Major General Horatio Gates made a stark contrast between British treatment of Americans versus American treatment of Britons, even captured ones. He told Burgoyne that he included letters from wounded British officers who were now prisoners of war which would inform Burgoyne "of the generosity of their conquerors." One servant of a dead officer was offered passage back to the British camp but "he was afraid to run the risk of being scalped, and declined going."[214] This information was a jab at Burgoyne and the alleged wave of violence and barbarity they unleashed on the American countryside by the British-American Indian alliance. Even a servant of the British did not feel safe from the threat of savagery. The story of the captured British servant revealed a broader choice that American leaders wanted to highlight to the public: everyone had a choice between British cruelty and American care. This anecdote offered the perfect illustration of the contagious violence allegedly unleashed by Britain. Not only had their American Indian allies murdered a young woman with Loyalist ties, even someone who had worked within the British Army was afraid of the savagery that Britain supported—it seemed unstoppable and without limits, causing unintentional destruction of its own people in addition to enemies. The alternative to this, American officers highlighted, was safety and security on the side of the revolutionaries.

With these tales of atrocities and depopulation, politicians, officers, and elites hoped to inspire sympathy for those suffering and thereby gain support for their cause.

[214] Horatio Gates to John Burgoyne, 2 September 1777. Printed in P*ennsylvania Evening Post* (Philadelphia), September 16, 1777.

Ultimately, the reports of British cruelty were calls to arms and to aid. That is not to say they did not represent genuine emotions, fears, and beliefs. After all, rebellious Americans were facing off against a powerful professional army that was victorious across the globe, and they certainly feared its presence and power. But nearly each and every writing that described inhumane death and invalidated the king's government begged the audience to turn their fear and anger into action. In the Continental Congress' "Address to the People of the United States," the legislature condemned British "rapine and devastation [and] the wanton conflagration of defenceless towns. Their victories have been followed by the cool murder of men, no longer able to resist." It urged sympathetic Americans to "Arise then! To your tents, and gird you for the battle! It is time to turn the headlong current of vengeance upon the head of the destroyer."[215] A poem in the *Independent Chronicle* admonished readers who were outraged by British "wickedness and brutality" to "Nobly step forth, to guard their wives and children! And sheath a dagger in the villain's heart/Who rob'd us of our peace, our all, our honour!"[216] This call-to-arms sought to evoke the fear of their homes filled with wives and children under attack in order to motivate men to fight. The speakers did not lay out well-reasoned

[215] "Address to the People of the United States," *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789,* vol. XI, Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., eds. (Washington, DC: 1904-37), 476.

[216] *Independent Chronicle* (Boston), 30 January 1777. Such rally cries depended on the audience being emotionally moved by these stories. They were intended to inspire fellow feeling so that men would become soldiers to defend the lives and avenge the deaths of people he did not know. My reading of sensibility and fellow feeling during the American Revolution is taken from Sarah Knott, *Sensibility in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009). Knott defined sensibility as "naturally sensitive, briskly responsive, and thoroughly holistic self" which was "expressed in social interaction by sensations of sympathy and fellow feeling." (Knott, 5.) She explained that eliciting fellow feeling was a particularly useful way to create bonds during the American Revolution, though she primarily studied correspondence and oration among middling and elite figures such as officers and merchants. She stated: "Bonds typically experienced in small groups could be abstracted and made mobile, rhetorically extrapolated to a larger whole." (Knott, 190.) Her conclusions are still applicable here, however, because most of these call to arms came directly from governmental bodies and educated cultural authorities that were immersed in the culture of sensibility.

rights-based arguments to why Americans deserved independence, nor did they speak of constitutionalism or liberalism. It focused wholly on insidious threats to civilians far away from the battlefield. In this way, propaganda that appealed to political arithmetic attempted to not only defend the population, but unify it through emotion and fear.

The war drew to a close with a trans-Atlantic controversy over the acceptability of revenge executions presented to the public through newspaper correspondence between grieving women, sympathetic French officials, and a humane George Washington. In late March of 1782, American soldiers killed a Loyalist prisoner-of-war named Philip March as he attempted escape. In April, the Board of Associated Loyalists in Monmouth, New Jersey executed Captain Jack Huddy of the Continental Army in retaliation. What followed was an eight-month controversy over retaliation and justice, with the right to kill captives at the core of the debate. In response to the death of Huddy, Washington wrote "The enemy, persisting in that barbarous line of conduct they have pursued during the course of this war, have lately most inhumanely executed Capt. Joshua Huddy, of the Jersey State troops…. In consequence, I have written to the British Commander-in-Chief, that unless the perpetrators of that horrid deed were delivered up, I should be under the disagreeable necessity of retaliating, as the only means left to put a stop to such inhuman proceedings."[217] He placed Huddy's execution in line with alleged British atrocities earlier in the war and asked that British officers hand over the Loyalists who executed Huddy to be tried and punished. Washington was adamant that he would get justice or exact retaliation because this was not the first unjust execution in the war. The previous

[217] "George Washington to Moses Hozen, 3 May 1782," *Founders Online,* National Archives, accessed 10 October 2021, https://founders.archives.gov/?q=Correspondent%3A%22Washington%2C%20George%22%20Correspondent%3A%22Hazen%2C%20Moses%22&s=1111311111&r=63.

year, American Captain Isaac Hayne was executed by the British while he was also a prisoner of war. After Hayne's initial capture, British Colonel Nisbet Balfour paroled him on the condition that he not take up arms against the British again. When Hayne led a raid against the British again, he was recaptured and hanged for breaking the terms of his parole. Several women in Charleston—led by the sister of his deceased wife—petitioned Colonel Balfour to spare his life for the sake of his children, but Balfour rejected their appeals. For Washington, Huddy's death was not unique but a continuance of unjust murders for which the British were never punished.

What followed had the potential to be an international scandal over justified death and acceptable violence during war. When the British refused to turn over the Loyalists that executed Huddy, Washington decided to execute a British prisoner-of-war in retaliation. In explaining his decision, Washington expressed sympathy for the unknown man who was essentially a pawn, but also expressed commitment to the action in order to protect American lives. He wrote to Colonel Elias Dayton that "You may…inform the gentlemen, that while my duty calls me to make this decisive determination, humanity dictates a tear for the unfortunate offering, and inclines me to say that I most devoutedly wish his life may be spared. This happy event may be attained, but it must be effected by the British Commander-in-Chief. He knows the alternative which will accomplish it, and he knows that this alternative only, can avert the dire calamity from the innocent, and that in this way alone, the manes of the murdered Captain Huddy will be best appeased."[218] According to the letter, Washington felt sorry for the British soldier who was to be executed but made it clear that only the British could stop the proceedings at that point by

[218] "George Washington to Brigadier General Elias Dayton, 4 June 1782," *Writings of Washington* vol. 24, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1938), 306.

turning over those who had executed Huddy. British Captain Charles Asgill, nineteen years old and from a wealthy family, was chosen by lot for the retaliatory execution. In order to get justice for questionably-killed or executed Americans, Washington and his officers had chosen a man completely at random to exact retribution.

Washington's writings to officers and politicians throughout the summer of 1782 conveyed dread for the execution because Asgill was a random target. Though he demanded Asgill be treated well as he awaited execution, Washington seemed conflicted over the rightness and humaneness of his decision. He ordered that "Captain Asgill [must be treated] with every tender attention and politeness…which his rank, fortune and connections, together with his unfortunate state demands."[219] However, Washington felt that it was important to stand his ground against the British officers as a point of national strength and pride. He reiterated to Dayton that "my resolutions are not to be trifled with" and that only British action could halt the proceedings.[220] Ultimately, however, Washington passed the issue on to Congress before Asgill was executed. He wrote to Congressman James Duane that the issue "work[s] too powerfully upon my humanity not to wish, the Congress would chalk a line for me to walk by in this business."[221] He asked Congress to make the final decision on whether executing Asgill was an allowable act of justified retaliation or whether it was inhumane revenge. American leaders had boasted that they resisted violence in the face of British atrocities and Washington feared carrying out the execution would sink the United States to the same level.

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[219] "Washington to Dayton, 4 June 1782," *Writings of Washington*, 308.

[220] "Washington to Dayton, 11 June 1782," *Writings of Washington*, 318.

[221] "George Washington to James Duane, 30 September 1782," *Founders Online,* National Archives, accessed 12 October 2021, https://founders.archives.gov/?q=Correspondent%3A%22Washington%2C%20George%22%20Correspondent%3A%22Duane%2C%20James%22&s=1111311111&r=41.

As Congress debated the issue, Asgill's mother mounted a public letter-writing campaign to the French foreign minister, Count de Vergennes, asking for her son to be spared on the basis of humanity. Lady Theresa Pratviel Asgill depicted herself as a woman despondent over the loss of her only son to a purely symbolic execution, his only crime in being a British soldier. Lady Asgill begged to Vergennes: "Permit me once more to entreat the interference of your high influence, in favour of innocence, and in the cause of justice and humanity."[222] She recounted that her husband fainted at the news of their son's fate and how her daughter entered a period of delirium. Her letter encouraged Vergennes to "Let your feelings…suggest and plead for my inexpressible misery! A word for you, like a voice from heaven, will save us from distraction and wretchedness."[223] Lady Asgill constructed an emotional and ethical entreaty to Vergennes that she hoped he would pass along to Washington. In describing the family's suffering, Lady Asgill tried to appeal to Vergennes' and, by extension, Washington's focus on humane action and leadership throughout the war. Her letters cast not just her son, but her entire family, as the victims of this retaliatory act for an incident unrelated to her son. According to her, Asgill's execution would spread the suffering beyond those involved in the war to a bereaved father and grieving women. Carrying out this act would result in the death of an innocent man, destroy a family, and harm innocent civilians, echoing American claims of British actions.

Vergennes was moved by Lady Asgill's letter and carried on the rhetoric of humaneness and Washington's reputation for such in order to change the general's mind.

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[222] *Boston Evening Post*, 21 December 1782. The letter was originally written and sent on 18 July 1782.

[223] *Boston Evening Post*, 21 December 1782.

He began by flattering Washington's virtues and particularly his character: "I sincerely wish, sir, that my intercession may meet success, the sentiment that dictates it, and which you have not ceased to manifest on every occasion, assures me that you will not be indifferent to the prayers and to the tears of a family which has recourse to your clemency through me. It is rendering homage to your virtue to implore it." He described the suffering of the family to Washington and emphasized their innocence in the whole matter. Vergennes recognized that, in theory, Washington was in the right to execute Asgill in retaliation for Huddy. However, he emphasized to Washington that being in the right did not equate to showing humaneness to others. Vergennes stated that "I feel, sir, that there are cases where humanity itself exacts the most extreme rigour." In other words, being humane meant a stricter code of conduct than the correct rules of war. In Vergenne's estimation Asgill's execution was an acceptable decision for a military commander, but not for one who considered themselves humane.[224] It was an opportunity for the United States to show their humanity and superiority to Britain. Vergenne's letters were published in American newspapers, putting pressure on Washington and Congress as they decided the best course of action. Throughout the war, American propaganda cast the British as the ones who inflicted death on innocent parties on a whim. With the Asgill affair, some could interpret America as doing the same in choosing who to execute at random. And just like British actions had threatened the lives and livelihoods of women and children, the execution of Asgill would seem to destroy his family as well.

Congress decided in November of that year to release Asgill, and Washington's letters reflect his relief that American leaders made the morally superior choice. In a

[224] "Translation of COUNT DE VERGENNES's Letter to GENERAL WASHINGTON," *Boston Evening Post*, 21 December 1782. Originally written 29 July 1782.

response to Vergennes, Washington highlighted the extraordinary nature of the American decision saying that Asgill had been spared "which he had no right to expect from the very unsatisfactory measures which had been taken by the British Commander-in-Chief to atone for a crime of the blackest dye, not to be justified by the practices of war, and unknown at this day amongst civilized nations."[225] Even as he expressed happiness and relief at Congress' action, Washington maintained the narrative of British cruelty and American humanity that had dominated so much of the American Revolution. Washington's message to Asgill was similar. He wrote of the "singular pleasure" he felt at releasing Asgill and assured Asgill that:

> in whatever light my agency in this unpleasing affair may be received, I never was influenced through the whole of it by sanguinary motives, but by what I conceived a sense of my duty, which loudly called upon me to take measures, however disagreeable, to prevent a repetition, of those enormities which have been the subject of discussion, and that this important end is likely to be answered, without the effusion of the blood of an innocent person.[226]

As Vergennes had suggested in his letter, Washington recognized he felt conflicted between his duty as a commander and his values as a humane leader. Washington's published letter to Asgill subtly made a distinction between British and American actions, to the favor of the United States. He identified his plans for a retaliatory execution as a necessary response to unjust murders by the British, thereby justifying his initial decision. However, as he referenced Asgill's innocence and his relief at Congress' decision, Washington implied that humanity won out over military rules of war. Washington's printed words highlighted the disparate choices the Americans and British had made.

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[225] "George Washington to Vergennes, 21 November 1782," *Founders Online,* National Archives, accessed 12 October 2021, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/99-01-02-10002.

[226] *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 29 November 1782.

While the British indiscriminately spread terror and bloodshed, revolutionary leaders had considered violent retaliation but ultimately turned against it. In the broader context of the propaganda of secret death, Americans felt they had no need to carry out death in secret because their adherence to the ethics of war guided them to morally superior behavior.

The Asgill controversy had an impact on the American public because to them it represented consideration and sympathy that Americans were not afforded. A relative of Colonel Hayne, who was executed by the British in South Carolina the previous year, wrote an open letter to Lady Asgill after her son's release comparing their feelings. The author wrote that they "sincerely rejoiced" at Asgill's release while they wished to offer "a few remarks on the opposite conduct of your nation. All the horrors of distress which you have felt, have been experienced by many mothers, wives and sisters on this side of the Atlantic."[227] They also acknowledged her son's good traits but asked Lady Asgill to recognize that America "has produced some characters as brave and as respectable, who, though equally innocent, have been put to death by the order of your officers." Much as she was despondent over her son's condemned state, "the southern states are filled with widows, orphans, and bereft mothers, made so by British executions." As the author found similarities between Lady Asgill's emotions and those of the Hayne family, they attempted to make create an emotional impact by highlighting the differences. Lady Asgill was one woman who suffered, as compared to the countless American women who faced similar losses throughout the war. Another difference was the reaction of leaders. The article's author excerpted part of the petition to Colonel Nisbet Balfour pleading for

[227] *Pennsylvania Packet*, 28 December 1782.

the life of Isaac Hayne on account of his female relatives and children whose mother had just died. However, unlike the Asgill case, the British officers were "able to withstand such melting arguments." They categorized the conundrum in the same way Washington did, as one between military policy and humanity, writing "on your side of the ocean…this barbarity was dictated by policy; but they who know all its circumstances are convinced that it proceeded from low, mean, pitiful revenge." That the British officers chose revenge revealed greater truths about the states of Great British and its subjects:

> Your nation was once brave, and they were also humane, but how they are changed! A noble lord hangs where he cannot conquer, and breaks through the tenderest ties of human nature, to make some reparations for his lost honour. Contrast this conduct with that of the Americans. I can assure you that the tear of generous sympathy flowed from many eyes on behalf of your son, when destined to an untimely end. The conduct of our rulers, in sparing his life, is generally approved, though many think that the finer feelings, national honour and character, are thereby sacrificed to the finer feelings of humanity…. The contrast must strike you in the most forcible manner. May my country build her fame on the noble and exalted virtues of generosity and humanity! May your's [sic] repent of her many deliberate murders.[228]

Signed with the pen name "An American," the author of this editorial claimed that the Americans exhibited mercy and humanity in the nearly-concluded war, not the famed British. American publications of their own behavior, particularly the treatment of Loyalists or British prisoners had fostered this understanding of British versus American actions: the British lashed out wanting to annihilate rebellious Americans, while American leaders calmly and rationally considered their actions and how well they aligned with the virtues of humaneness. Americans proclaimed this virtuous dynamic not just as a set of choices in warfare, but as part of their national identity. According to this thinking, British actions meant they abandoned all pretense to be the moral and civilized

[228] *Pennsylvania Packet*, 28 December 1782.

leaders of the Atlantic World, instead displaying barbarity and a lack of concern for human life. In this saga over life-or-death decisions made by leaders, American authors cast the revolutionary powers as the side bringing renewed civilization to the world. Because of their inhumanity, Britain's time as the dominant global power was over and the American Revolution had introduced a new one to the world. It was now the Americans who possessed humanity and honor that would serve as an example to the world.

Propaganda that employed the language of population and warned of extermination permeated the years of the Revolutionary War. Communicated through printed correspondence, congressional addresses, or anonymous reports, they warned of a fog of death that expanded the scope of the conflict to include towns and homes to claim the lives of civilians. Though there was little proof of the truthfulness of these accounts, they inspired fear within the American audience which worked to turn them against Britain. It was not just the violence of the war they found unacceptable, but the engagement with enslaved peoples and American Indians as well as the deliberate spread of disease. As revolutionary leaders happily propagated these stories, the revolutionary government sought to differentiate themselves from the British government and people through a strategy of publicness. Their printed reports and correspondence brought British crimes to light while also showing American leaders as honorable and benevolent. In these accounts, the American government carried on the mantle of civilization and humanity that the British had abandoned by their alleged cruelty and disregard for American life itself. Ultimately, this contrast of British depopulation efforts and American humanity offered an outlet for American understandings of healthy and ill civil

bodies. In condemning merciless British actions and attitudes, American leaders articulated a protective approach to government that set themselves apart as benevolent and humane leaders worthy of loyalty.

Chapter 4
"Guardians of . . . Health and Lives:"
Preserving Life and Policing Health in Post-Revolutionary America

In 1783, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* published a letter from "A Citizen" which reminded the city's leaders to "consider that the *Lives* of your fellow citizens are committed to your care, as well as their liberties and property. In vain do you defend them by laws from violence, while you permit every element to arm itself with poison against them."[229] The writer implored municipal authorities to implement changes and prioritize policies that would prevent accidents and illnesses, rather than just responding to threats. A writer in Boston added that governments needed to take action over more than crime and property rights, asking "are not the carcasses of cats and dogs, with the refuse of gardens suffered to putrefy in the streets, to the disgrace of every one concerned in the government in the town?"[230] In the years following the Revolutionary War, medical reformers embraced optimism about what could be accomplished regarding human life. The possibility of preventing premature death and minimizing mortality encouraged leaders to consider how a healthier and stronger population could be achieved through good government and social responsibility. This motivated politicians and health activists to build a public health infrastructure that would preserve life and promote longevity through government-sponsored institutions, permanent offices, and oversight of living conditions. These visions of an active and responsive local government reflected the optimism of Enlightenment and revolutionary-era connections between health and morality. Most importantly, they heralded a new vision of a strong, good government.

[229] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 27 August 1783.
[230] *Columbian Centinel* (Boston), 12 March 1791.

Assigning political leaders the responsibilities of preserving life marked a shift in the obligations of government in post-revolutionary America, as they assumed broader responsibility over individual lives. Municipal and state authorities worked through both private benevolent and public political institutions to motivate every resident to participate in public health through the exercise of knowledge, control over space, and prescribed behavior. Health-oriented voluntary associations and allied officials argued that institutions should implement modern scientific knowledge to keep people alive and healthy and work towards improving the cleanliness and safety of the urban landscape. There was a good deal of overlap between the members of health reform organizations and influential citizens including politicians, ministers, and merchants which resulted in a lack of friction between the public and private supporters. Advocates predicated their work on the emerging belief that causes of death could be addressed through knowledge of the body and reforming the environment. The belief that such actions would stimulate the longevity of the entire population—which would benefit society and the nation as a whole—motivated their work. Their efforts at public health involved fundamental questions regarding the obligations of government and social order, as well as the size and pervasiveness of government in the wake of the Revolutionary War. Medical reformers and their allies were eager to apply revolutionary and Enlightenment ideals of natural law in regards to political philosophy, human nature, and life itself to the societies in which they lived and worked, turning cities and their institutions into laboratories of governance.

This chapter argues that post-revolutionary governmental authorities, in alliance with voluntary associations, established a lasting public health infrastructure aimed at

promoting longevity and wellness. In doing so, they exercised strong political authority that expanded the reach and regulatory power of pre-revolutionary governments. Achieving health and longevity became such an important goal that leaders created some of the first long-term political offices, institutions, and policies aimed at disease prevention and the promotion wellness in the early years of nationhood. Due to the increase in medical and anatomical knowledge in the Atlantic World throughout the eighteenth-century, politicians, reformers, and intellectuals alike were optimistic about the ability to alter the course of death. Doing so, they believed, required government action since individuals themselves could not harness the resources or expertise to protect entire populations, and governments would reap the benefits of a healthy populace. Governmental support for, and absorption of, voluntary efforts delineated the social and political obligations between residents and governments. The activists and officials employed a democratized language of universality that stressed the value of every life and the usefulness of every resident. The offices and institutions created to promote public health entailed reforming the urban environment, and how citizens engaged with each other, and individual behavior, meaning that a core component of improving healthfulness entailed exercising control over the environment and behavior of urban residents. Thus, the origins of post-revolutionary public health were rooted in the regulatory and activist nature of early-national governments.

This chapter intersects with, and draws upon, a vibrant scholarship on governmental power and the state in the post-revolutionary United States. Americans had rejected the legitimacy of the British imperial government, but what would they construct themselves? The answer to this question has been fiercely considered by groups of

scholars that debate the strength of government following the American Revolution. In recent decades, political historians have traced institution-building and the state to portray early national governments at the state and federal levels as active and strong. In *Conceived in Crisis*, historian Christopher Pearl argued that the weakness of colonial governments was actually a contributing factor to the independence cause.[231] This meant that the Revolutionary War and "a continuing dialogue about republican governance during that war pushed the states to new heights of power and authority." In this school of thought, local, state, and federal governments were centralized and active, shaping seemingly non-political facets of life such as transportation and communication, in addition to formal governmental aspects of commerce and the law.[232] Scholars in this vein frequently engage with the concept of the "fiscal-military" state to explain state power—with an emphasis on military campaigns, taxation, and economic regulation—and emphasize the ways in which officials measured control and enforced dominance.[233] While incredibly significant, this leads the historiography to emphasize interactions with groups seen as outside the American body politic such as American Indians engaged in conflict over land and commerce or foreign mercantile trading partners. This chapter contributes to this vital literature but with a focus on how the government was present in

[231] Christopher R. Pearl, *Conceived in Crisis: The Revolutionary Creation of an American State* (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 2020), Introduction.

[232] To this day, the premier works on institutions that represent the active and visible state in the lives of Americans are Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995) and John Lauritz Larson, *Internal Improvements: National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government in the Early United States* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

[233] The dominant works in this vein are Max M. Edling, *A Revolution in Favor of Government: Origins of the U.S. Constitution and the Making of the American State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Other significant works are Steven Pincus, *The Heart of the Declaration: The Founders' Case for an Activist Government* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2016). See also Ira Katznelson, "Flexible Capacity: The Military and Early American Statebuilding," in *Shaped by War and Trade: International Influences on American Political Development*, ed. Katznelson and Martin Shefter (Princeton: N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), 82-110.

the daily lives of ordinary citizens in the urban landscape and promoted behavior. Considering the coercive and regulatory power of preservation of life institutions, offices, and regulations illuminates how officials expanded state power at a local or regional level.

In order to pinpoint how leaders envisioned, expanded, and enforced state authority, this chapter engages with the ideology of police power as a justification for strong government. Leading scholar of the concept Christopher Tomlins defined police power as an "ideology of collective responsibility for the reproduction of the well-ordered community, an ideology expressible in a political language giving pride of place to an ideal of the public good or happiness."[234] Gary Gerstle, in *Liberty and Coercion: The Paradox of American Government from the Founding to the Present*, explained that governments operating under police power (as American state governments do, in his argument) "held the power of public good in higher esteem than private right."[235] Overall, police power granted local governments greater authority over individuals and their private lives, if their personal behavior was deemed a danger to the common good. This is by no means a new concept to the study of urban politics. Emma Hart explored the ideology of police power in colonial and revolutionary Charleston, where she found that urban residents cited the desire for an "internal police" in order to enforce social order, regulations, and safety. Police power, according to Hart, "created a firm basis for

[234] Christopher L. Tomlins, *Law, Labor, and Ideology in the Early American Republic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 47. "Police power" and "policing" are terms that are used frequently in modern social and political discourse but, to be clear, Tomlins and the other scholars discussed here do not relate the ideology of police power in the eighteenth century to a law enforcement body.

[235] Gary Gerstle, *Liberty and Coercion: The Paradox of American Government from the Founding to the Present* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2015), 56. Gerstle further points out that the ideology of police power is similar to republicanism in that "this principle of governance put its faith in the ability of responsible, virtuous citizens to determine and agree on the public interest or *salus populi*, the people's welfare." Gerstle, 56-57.

active citizenship that relied on the principles of internal police" as early as the 1740s.[236] Simon Finger considered policing of health as a component of the 1793 yellow fever epidemic and subsequent quarantine debates.[237]

This chapter situates the ideology of policing power in a broader set of public health and preservation of life initiatives. Governmental institutions, regulations, and officers, as well as health reform associations, sought to manage living and working conditions as well as personal behaviors in order to promote healthy cities. Local authorities strived to teach poor and laboring residents learned values of cleanliness and sympathy, to reform private spaces and behavior, and to enact regulations and build governmental institutions. Studying post-revolutionary public health through the lens of police power reveals how state power infiltrated the lives and spaces of ordinary Americans.

This chapter begins by analyzing municipal efforts to publicize preservation of life methods and values to the broad public, particularly through regulatory laws and reform efforts meant to modify the spaces and values of the lower sort. It then turns to the establishment of the first long-lasting public health positions and offices in early America in response to yellow fever epidemics to proactively promote longevity and wellness through the prevention of mortality crises. Finally, the chapter concludes with an examination of how leaders at the federal level understood and debated the nation's healthfulness, through population studies and public health laws.

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[236] Emma Hart, "City Government and the State in Eighteenth-Century Charleston," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 50, no. 2 (Winter 2017): 199.

[237] Simon Finger, *The Contagious City: The Politics of Public Health in Early Philadelphia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2012), chapter 9, but especially 138-141.

In the years following the Revolutionary War, officials and reformers worked on broader efforts to promote health and longevity through removing the conditions and behaviors that caused death and sickness. This contrasted with pre-revolutionary efforts which sought to prevent death through minimizing epidemics and increasing the population as guided by vital statistics. Late-eighteenth century activists identified urban living and working conditions as the cause of general unhealthfulness. Activist politicians and reformers focused on regulating streets, ports, and behaviors while also trying to inculcate values that emphasized health and usefulness. At the core of this was filth. A Boston cleanliness supporter decried "the noxious vapours of the docks," and asked the reader to imagine themselves among the poverty and misery in some parts of the city. He wrote:

> To know what many suffer, it is only necessary in a sultry day, to walk through . . . crevices, almost debarred the free air and light of heaven—and then ask yourselves the sober question—How could I live in such a place as this, where the comfort of a refreshing breeze can never come—how can these miserable people bear this stench and filth—what if I should be reduced to the sad necessity of leaving my pleasant, airy, and elegant habitation, and condemned to live where I can scarcely see to read the superscription of the letter to this poor sick woman—and then, if such a fever should come as almost depopulated Philadelphia, or such sickness and fires as have desolated Charleston, what hope of life or property could remain . . . ? Why should not these blessings of which all ought to be partakers, and which it is in our power to dispense, why should they not be more equally diffused to all parts of the town, and the benefits of free air and green and shady walks be enjoyed as easily and as cheap by one as another?[238]

The observer wanders through parts of the city socially beneath him and sees cause for improvement everywhere. And for this author, it was not a problem unique to Boston as

[238] *Columbian Centinel* (Boston), 16 November 1796.

it affected other major cities such as Charleston and Philadelphia through fires and fevers. Each major city had the conditions to foster an epidemic or mortality crisis.

The urban neighborhood provided the central focus for activists who wanted to prevent death and general unhealthfulness. Writers and commentators complained of the filth that seemed to cause sickness and decay in urban populations and urged stronger municipal regulations on the environment. An article in the *Massachusetts Centinel* echoed the sentiments of the opening author and succinctly declared: "our streets are not kept so clean as they ought to be kept." The solution, the author argued, was that "Some good regulations for cleaning our streets and abating some nuisances, with the appointment of proper subordinate officers to inspect, and see that the laws are duly executed, with a more punctual attendance on publick business, seems to be all we want to put us on as good a footing as were our wise ancestors."[239] The author traced a decline in public cleanliness from earlier decades and placed blame on a lax government. Residents came to expect sanitation as a responsibility of municipal government because cleanliness would benefit the entire city.

Creating a healthful environment was a continuous joint project between officials and residents. "Respectable" residents of Charleston complained of the rancid air coming from the sailors at the Marine Hospital, and appealed to the City Council for help. They wrote "We present as a grievance, the Marine Hospital being kept in its present situation—this on the representation of a respectable committee of the inhabitants of that neighborhood, who say that during last summer, mortality was more experienced in that

[239] *Massachusetts Centinel* (Boston), 24 May 1785.

part of the city than any other."[240] Government officials desired for their constituents to bring these issues to their attention, because reform and regulation relied on community observation. Boston city commissioner and physician Charles Jarvis implored Boston residents to report cleanliness violations to municipal officials. He wrote that filth "if not removed, by contaminating the Air, must contribute to produce the Most fatal disorders among the Inhabitants.—And in Order the more effectually to remedy this mischief It is earnestly enjoined upon the Inhabitants to give the earliest information to the proper Officers of all or any Nuisances that the proper and legal Methods may be forthwith taken for their removal."[241] Post-revolutionary urban authorities regulated cleanliness and sanitation, but enforcing these regulations was another matter. Surveillance of possible violations required participation from residents themselves and cooperation with municipal health efforts.

Calls for politicians to address and solve life-threatening issues resulted in new endeavors, such as committees to evaluate cleanliness and official positions to oversee the efforts. The attention paid to managing death began to see concrete expression in incremental legislative changes, as local governmental bodies made concrete efforts to promote the health and protect the lives of citizens through laws, regulations, and officers. Boston's General Court enacted laws in 1785 in order to prevent fatal maladies resulting from the environment. One such effort was to inspect burial grounds. The city appointed funeral porters and named superintendents to each burial ground in the city. They were to ensure that "that no bones or parts of Skeletons are suffered to remain on

[240] *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser* (Charleston), 22 June 1797.

[241] Boston Records Commissioners, *A Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston: Boston Town Records*, vol. 7 (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1887), 302.

the surface or Tombs [and] Graves left open to injure the health or the feelings of the Inhabitants, or to offend the Eye of a Stranger who may incline to take a view of our Burial Places."[242] Likewise, the 1789 charter of Philadelphia granted the City Council the authority to pass "such and as so many laws, ordinances, regulations and constitutions . . . as shall be necessary and convenient for the government and welfare of the city." Councilmen immediately hired physicians to work in municipal institutions such as the jail and workhouse. They also passed a number of regulations aimed at mitigating the unhealthy effects of markets and noxious trades such as tanners and butchers to the outskirts of the city. Officials declared these spaces "become a common nuisance, injurious to the health of the inhabitants" and therefore tried to remove them from the most populated areas and enforce stricter cleaning requirements.[243]

An essential component of this was expert opinion, and professional physicians' groups emerged to provide advice on public health. The 1780s saw the foundation of the Massachusetts Medical Society in 1781, the College of Physicians of Philadelphia in 1787, and the South Carolina Medical Society in 1789. Each association took responsibility for collecting local health information and advising local officials. In short, these physicians wanted to make their cities and states healthy places to live and work through consulting with civil government. The College of Physicians declared their purpose was to "advance the science of Medicine, and thereby to lessen human misery, by investigating the diseases and remedies which are peculiar to our country."[244] As they offered suggestions for officials, physicians reminded leaders that they served as

[242] Boston Record Commissioners, *Report*, 305-306.
[243] Minutes of the Philadelphia City Council, Philadelphia City Archives, 48: 8.
[244] "Constitution of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia," *American Museum and Repository*, vol. 5 (Philadelphia: Mathew Carey, 1789): 449.

"guardians of the Health and Lives, no less than of the liberties and morals of their constituents."[245] According to their words, the members of these professional organizations believed that government action could promote a healthy citizenry and that physicians' knowledge was a vital component of realizing that goal. They were optimistic that advancements in medical and anatomical knowledge could be applied to reforming social relationships, the environment, and the treatment of disease so that the nation as a whole would be healthy. Moreover, their language highlights the eighteenth-century connection between moral and physical wellness which combined efforts at cleanliness reform with moral reform. They theorized that a physically healthy citizenry would also be a morally healthy citizenry because the people would display the virtues of sympathy, moderation, and humaneness. The activism of these medical practitioners reveals that preserving life and promoting longevity were not simply about the physical body but about inculcating citizens with the behaviors and values that would promote well-being overall.

Public health activists described efforts to promote life as a sign of progress and a triumph of Enlightenment values, because it replaced ignorance with useful knowledge. After more than a decade of vigorous public-health activism, physician, politician, and founding member of the South Carolina Medical Society, David Ramsay, touted the dissemination and implementation of knowledge to combat fatality as a central achievement of American physicians in the eighteenth century. He wrote "medical philosophy, in the eighteenth century, has been successfully employed in devising the

[245] "Memorial on Temperance, Addressed to the Congress of the United States, December, 1790," in *An Account of the Institution and Progress of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia*, ed. William S.W. Ruschenberger (Philadelphia: William J. Dornan, 1887): 186.

most effectual means of preserving the health of men in general, and particularly in cities. . . . Physicians, by writing in a popular style . . . have enlightened their fellow-men on the subject of cleanliness, on the necessity of pure water, of wholesome air, and free ventilation."[246] Echoing Ramsay, one article praised medical experts' "triumph over the grave," explaining "It was reserved for . . . the eighteenth century, to remove the veil of ignorance and superstition, as well as to convince mankind of the practicability of awakening the apparently dead into the enjoyments of intelligent and animated existence."[247] According to these physicians, the spread of knowledge and insight into the mechanisms of mortality eradicated ignorance and symbolized a significant accomplishment. No longer would people have to needlessly die due to lack of knowledge or the hazards of life in a port city.

Local officials allied with medical activists to infiltrate the most dangerous areas and reach the most unlearned residents. Municipal authorities supplemented their own regulations with the work of medical reform efforts aimed at promoting health and longevity. For example, Charleston's City Council absorbed the efforts of the Humane Society (a reform organization that operated under the Charleston Medical Society) when they passed a city ordinance to coerce cooperation with the group's methods at preventing unnecessary deaths. Charleston's *City Gazette* published the ordinance on August 20, 1793, mandating that "all licensed retailers of spirituous liquors are hereby compelled to receive into their house, by night as well as by day, the bodies of persons apparently dead, from drowning or other causes, which shall be brought to their houses

[246] David Ramsay, "Review of the Improvements, Progress and State of Medicine in the 18th Century," in Robert L. Brunhouse and David Ramsay, "David Ramsay, 1749-1815 Selections from His Writings," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, New Series 55, no. 4 (1965): 209.

[247] *Columbian Centinel* (Boston), 30 March 1791.

within three hours from the time of the accident, and shall also furnish with all speed, all such articles as may be necessary to assist in restoring to life all such bodies which may be brought as aforesaid to their houses." There are several possible reasons why municipal leaders might have burdened tavern owners with this responsibility. Firstly, leaders may have associated this type of establishment as convenient and well-known public places near the ships that laborers (probably the assumed victims) could easily find. Secondly, the spirits could be used to reanimate the apparently dead by injection into their bodies. For their troubles, tavern owners would be reimbursed the cost of the attending physician and rewarded twenty shillings. Even unsuccessfully attempting to reanimate someone would be rewarded whereas failing to do so would cause the proprietor to lose their license. Furthermore, it was required that "every licensed retailer of spirituous liquors, shall constantly keep in public view, printed directions for restoring persons apparently dead to life, which directions, drawn up by the medical society of South Carolina, shall be given them gratis." All this, the ordinance repeatedly stated, should be done under medical oversight. To receive one's reward, they must "produce a certificate of their services to the city council, signed by the attending physician or surgeon."[248] This reveals two things about the new nation: first an optimism that all citizens were able to be inducted into public health efforts. And second, even as the state expanded its visions of good government, it did so by extending its reach into private spaces such as businesses and homes.

What Charleston's city ordinance attempted to do was coerce or motivate behavior to further public health goals. It established that municipal leaders had provided the

[248] *City Gazette*, 20 August 1793, Charleston, SC. A transcribed version can be found at http://charlestontimemachine.org/2014/10/27/apparently-dead/.

resources of equipment, instructions, and a monetary incentive, so people needed to engage with them. Officials recognized that personal behavior was a necessary component of this and focused their efforts on the impoverished and laboring sections of cities. Reformers preached that urban residents needed to internalize the value of cleanliness in order to promote health. One newspaper contributor, in highlighting cleanliness as the paramount preventative against death, claimed:

> unless individuals (especially the poorer class of citizens) feel the propriety and necessity of abstaining from that negligence and uncleanliness in persons, in clothing and in bedding; that dirtiness in their dwelling houses, and that filth and nastiness in the yards and avenues adjacent, which too frequently prevail amongst them, and generate and emit contagion, and unavoidable bring on disease and death. No position is more demonstrable, than that cleanliness is not only conducive, but absolutely necessary to health; and, surely cleanliness is within the reach of every person, be he rich, or be he poor.[249]

According to activists, adopting these personal habits was not just a matter of pleasing sights and scents. It was a matter of life and death.

Reforming behaviors and beliefs, activists believed, would have a positive effect on the person as a whole. Physician and politician Benjamin Rush argued before the American Philosophical Society that "the cultivation of the moral faculty" customarily resided with parents, religious leaders, and educators but the "intension of this principle should be equally the business of the legislator—the natural philosopher—and the physician" because philosophy, of which medicine was a part, had alleviated smallpox, fevers, tetanus, and cancer. He elaborated further that "medicine has done more—it has penetrated the deep and gloomy abyss of death—and acquired fresh honors in his cold embraces.—Witness the many hundred people, who have lately been brought back to life,

[249] *Columbian Centinel* (Boston), 4 May 1799.

by the successful efforts of the humane societies."[250] In this instance Rush spoke in favor of humane societies, a transatlantic benevolent movement that appeared in major eighteenth-century port cities. Humane societies were voluntary associations that began with a focus on reducing accidental drowning deaths by promoting knowledge of resuscitation methods. They became a significant component of municipal public health efforts as their goals expanded beyond drowning to include resuscitating those who met with unfortunate accidents such as lightning strike or drinking too-cold water.

Humane societies attracted a diverse array of respectable citizens to their cause, including physicians, ministers, lawyers, and entrepreneurs, and offered a bridge between the regulatory health efforts of local officials and private reform efforts aimed at environment and behavior. Though their initial goals were narrow—to resuscitate drowning victims—the members developed a broader objective of protecting life itself in the 1780s and 90s. The Humane Society of Philadelphia (HSP) was the first of its kind organized in North America. Upon its establishment in 1780 the HSP enacted its goal to circulate information related to reanimation, or bringing the apparent dead back to life. The humane society movement gained momentum after the Revolutionary War with the formation of the Humane Society of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (MHS) in 1785, and a Charleston humane society (CHS) born out of the South Carolina Medical Society sometime after 1789.[251] In her work on transatlantic humane societies, Amanda Moniz argued that the "resuscitation movement" was significant in the eighteenth century

[250] Benjamin Rush, *An Oration, Delivered before the American Philosophical Society . . . on the 27th of February, 1786* (Philadelphia: Cist, 1786), 36.

[251] For a more detailed account of the foundation of humane societies, see Amanda Moniz, "Saving the Lives of Strangers: Humane Societies and the Cosmopolitan Provision of Charitable Aid," *Journal of the Early Republic* 29, no. 4 (Winter, 2009): 607-640. For a mention of Charleston's Humane Society, see Ramsay, "State of Medicine in the Eighteenth Century," 206.

because "for people who could often not swim but who routinely traveled, worked, or played on or by oceans, rivers, streams, and wells . . . watery deaths were an ever-present danger."[252] Society records of Boston and Philadelphia reveal the membership consisted of both physicians and laymen, with ministers taking an especially active leadership role. In Boston, John Adams, Paul Revere, and John Hancock joined in the efforts. Only in Charleston, where the humane society was a branch of the Medical Society, did physicians dominate the association's activities.[253] Humane societies were significant urban cultural projects that connected a variety of urban elites in a common project of protecting the lives of their fellow citizens. Their methods of infiltrating the spaces of the "lower sort," enlisting their cooperation, and gaining legislative support set the standard for how leaders would implement later health reforms.

Humane societies wanted to make knowledge of resuscitation widespread and incorporate the public in their efforts, which they accomplished through public orations and newspaper accounts. To begin, they announced their foundation in newspapers, which served to attract supporters and introduce the public at large to their goals. Such a description of their society provided the background and success of their methods, while also emphasizing how their end goal benefited society at large. Through almanacs, broadsides, and newspaper articles, the urban audience could learn the old-fashioned method of warming a body and rolling it over a barrel in order to stimulate circulation while others advocated for applying friction and administering chest compressions. The

[252] Amanda Moniz, *From Empire to Humanity: The American Revolution and the Origins of Humanitarianism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016) 131.

[253] Humane Society of Philadelphia Minutes, vol. 1, Pennsylvania Hospital Archives, Philadelphia, PA. MHS members were listed in many publications. For example, see *The Institution of the Humane Society of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts* (Boston, 1786).

method considered most modern by members of humane societies, however, involved introducing stimulating airs to the body, particularly were tobacco enemas which were done using bellows supplied to local establishments by the reformers. Upon promoting their foundation in 1786, the MHS explained that their actions would "frequently be enabled to restore to full life, and the enjoyments of it, a beloved friend, or a valuable member of society.[254] John Bartlett explained years later, in a discourse presented to the MHS, that "knowledge and humanity are the leading principles of well instituted societies . . . and the only bases upon which we can build that happiness which is reserved for the enjoyment of cultivated people."[255] Bartlett's message reveals that saving people's lives, extending care and attention to strangers, was centered on virtuousness.

Through advertising their methods and tools in broadsides and newspapers, institutions penetrated the occupational and living spaces of the lower sort. A requirement for successfully preserving life was to infiltrate the most lethal places, which were often those that housed the occupational, social, and private lives of the lower sort. Humane societies strived to disseminate their knowledge to wharves and taverns through print culture and access to equipment. In printed accounts of their aims and activities, societies sought to provide instructions, information about the location of the equipment, and the possibility of rewards in order to encourage the application of this knowledge. Charleston's Humane Society announced that "an apparatus for the recovery of persons suffering under suspended animation was purchased by the society, and lodged near the

[254] *Massachusetts Centinel* (Boston), 8 March 1786.
[255] John Bartlett, *A Discourse on the Subject of Animation* (Boston: 1792), 5.

most frequented wharves with direction how to treat the sufferers."[256] Broadsides emblazoned with "Sudden Death" were posted around waterways with instructions on how to revive someone who suffered an accident and appeared dead. Humane society leaders boasted that "the contents of these directions are now diffused to all classes of People, and therefore even those who cannot read, are acquainted with the nature of them, and seeing them on the [water] pumps act as a constant caution to beware of death." The HSP advertised that "eighteen complete sets have been lately provided and deposited in suitable places, and a person is appointed under salary to their care" and noting their placement at specific ferries and wharves.[257]

In describing the methods of preserving life, stories placed the learned observer in an inferior environment, imparting a sense of class distinction between the rescuer and the victim based on knowledge and willingness to help. Reports of resuscitation relayed events from the view of the rescuer, as stories of "relief from drowning afforded to a stranger, by a citizen." The savior observes others doing nothing to save the drowning victim, until he himself intervenes and applies his superior knowledge. The story attributed to Anderson Wilkison follows him as he notices a man struggling in the river near Arch Street. He said: "I immediately desired that some of them [around] would jump in, and endeavor to save the man, but every one refused—I therefore relying on the goodness of my cause, plunged in." Wilkison left the scene "with the pleasing reflection of having, under divine providence, evidently snatched one of my fellow creatures from

[256] David Ramsay, *The History of South Carolina, from its first settlement in 1670, to the year 1808, volume II* (Charleston: Published by David Longwirth, for the author, 1809), 59.

[257] Benjamin Say, *An Oration Pronounced before the Humane Society of Philadelphia on the Objects and Benefits of Said Institution, the 28th Day of February 1799* (Whitehall: Printed for William Young, 1799), 12.

an untimely grave."[258] Rescue stories followed a formula of a passerby happening upon a potentially fatal scene mostly by happenstance, observing no one else trying to assist, and so performing the rescue themselves. He is a learned man in an unlearned space, and his presence there improves the lives of everyone involved. In this way, efforts to preserve life were not based in universal benevolence as activists claimed. Rather, promoting the resuscitation of the apparently dead, along with other life reforms, advocated for the dispersal and acceptance of learned knowledge among the lower sort.

A major goal of humane societies was to pass that knowledge along to those of the lower sort, so that they could behave in ways that would save lives as well. Advertising successful resuscitations promoted humane societies as a cooperative endeavor that encouraged those believed to be unlearned and unlikely to absorb modern knowledge and values to participate in the societies' endeavors. Humane society leaders were optimistic that their outreach could prevent accidental deaths caused by conditions among the lower sort, whether it be drowning or drinking cold water when overheated. Society records in Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston shed some light on public participation. They paid out rewards and awarded medals to people from all walks of life. The records indicate the rescuers consisted of immigrants, mariners, laborers from diverse professions such as carters and corders, and several Black Americans.[259] This, of course, cannot ultimately prove that humane societies succeeded in spreading their values and methods to the poor and marginalized groups of each city. However, it does reveal that reform efforts were visible and somewhat known among these groups. Dr. Benjamin

[258] *Aurora General Advertiser* (Philadelphia), August 6, 1795.

[259] For a quantified study of rewards handed out by the Royal Humane Society, Humane Society of Philadelphia, and Massachusetts Humane Society, see Moniz, "Saving the Lives of Strangers," 619-630.

Say, President of the HSP, advertised that the organization was saving the lives of citizens in many ways everyday. As proof, Say offered the story of an overheated laborer who, "being violently heated, proceeded to a Pump just by, with a vessel in his hand to procure a drink of cold water, but when there, his attention was immediately called to these printed directions; the words 'sudden death' being in very large type' after pausing a short time he filled his cup, and proceeded in the cautious manner therein recommended, and then retired satisfied and unhurt."[260] According to eighteenth-century thought, drinking cold water when one was hot could shock the bodily systems and cause immediate death. In order to prevent this, humane societies posted broadsides near water pumps so that potential drinkers would know the supposed dangers. This story represented a small behavior with significant implications. The laborer's impetuous behavior was checked and he behaved more moderately than he initially intended, thereby avoiding dire consequences.

The stories printed in almanacs and newspapers of fantastical reanimations emphasized the point that it was something all people could accomplish with only a bit of basic knowledge and the will to help others. Although the instructions were attributed to physicians of various humane societies or famous doctors such as Alexander Johnston or Samuel Tissot, audiences were told that successful resuscitations "prove it to be in the power of everyone to give that aid" of restoring life. The author further explained that "even under the prejudice that none but medical men can administer relief in such critical situations, as it is a sad apology for the loss of a life, that the medical assistance came too

[260] Say, *Oration,* 12.

late."[261] Broadsides from humane societies offered advice on common causes of sudden death and how someone suffering could be helped before the arrival of a physician. One such document, created by the HSP in 1791, offered straightforward instructions on how to save someone who was drowned, in shock from cold drinks, or passed out from the sun.[262] People assisting those in distress needed only to find somewhere dry and moderately warm to place the victim and access basic items such as bread, liquor, or even ashes to warm and stimulate the body to reanimation.

The emphasis on pervasive, ready access to information that anyone could follow promoted a sense of moral responsibility to strangers. Humane societies even offered rewards to rescuers who implemented this knowledge. The rewards handed out reflected the diversity of the cities in which they were located, echoing the associations' desire to transcend race, ethnicity, nationality, and gender when saving lives. HSP records show that a variety of Philadelphians received recognition for saving people, including a woman, teenaged boys, one nine-year old boy, at least two men of African descent, and a Portuguese man.[263] Likewise, the MHS advertised that "This Society also adjudges premiums to those who by signal exertions shall save others from death, or who shall first discover, and endeavor to recover Persons apparently dead, or bring the first intelligence to one of the Physicians of the Society of such accidents as produce apparent death."[264] While it is impossible to tell whether or not these rescues actually adhered to the instructions set forth by the humane societies, these various instances suggest that

[261] Richard Saunders, *Poor Richard Improved, 1786* (Philadelphia: Printed and sold by Hall and Sellers, 1785).

[262] Broadside. Humane Society of Philadelphia, "Directions for Preventing Sudden Death" (Philadelphia, 1791).

[263] Humane Society of Philadelphia Minutes, vols. 1 and 2, Pennsylvania Hospital Archives, Philadelphia. For a quantification of Humane Society Cases, see Moniz, 626.

[264] *A Pocket Almanack for . . . 1787* (Boston: Printed & Sold by T&J Fleet, 1786).

individuals may have been familiar with some sort of resuscitation methods and were aware of their ability to save someone from death.

The possibility of conquering more causes of death motivated humane societies to investigate how they could alleviate fevers. Because of the repeated devastating epidemics of yellow fever in the 1790s, physicians understood fevers in general as a problem that needed to be solved. As humane societies believed they had success in saving the apparently dead from drowning, accidents, and possibly even stillborn infants, they appealed to their members to discover the origins or causes of the disease. The MHS proposed the idea, and newspapers communicated the appeal to other organizations. The request read:

> The preservation of life being the great object of this society, the formidable epidemic which has lately made its appearance in the United States, and which threatens with depopulation some of our fairest and most flourishing cities, is justly comprehended within the views of the institution. Therefore voted, that a piece of plate, of the value of 50 dollars, be given for the communication of the greatest number of important and well substantiated facts, instrumental in giving origin to the yellow fever in the United States. These may respect the circumstances of importation, the situation of places in which it appeared, the waters used by the inhabitants, the diet and occupations of the persons most affected by the disease, the state of the atmosphere previous to and at the time of its prevalence, together with all such accidental causes as may have occurred in the generation of the epidemic.[265]

No humane society ever publicized any new discovery of yellow fever or ways to treat it, and the disease continued to plague American cities in the following years. The MHS's call for information reveals what they understood about the greater context of disease and causes of death—contagiousness, environment, and types of people infected. Notably, their optimism did not spring from a hope to cure the disease itself but a hope to prevent

[265] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 27 March 1799.

outbreaks by understanding what factors contributed that could be regulated and controlled. Despite their confidence that they had successfully preserved life when the appearance of death consigned victims of drowning and other accidents to an early grave, yellow fever was one cause of death they were unable to conquer.

This chapter turns next to the yellow fever epidemics of the 1790s and local governments' institutional response. It took a series of disastrous epidemics for leaders to build aggressive and powerful institutions committed to prioritizing the preservation of life. As a time of "such anxiety and distress as was never before known in America," the decade of epidemics was a challenge to newly-formed governments on how to protect the lives of its people.[266] Philadelphia was especially devastated by successive epidemics throughout the decade, and immediately responded by appointing community leaders and physicians Board of Health established by the General Assembly to address the city's struggles. When yellow fever reached epidemic proportions, the city's governmental and social support networks failed to meet the needs of its citizens. Federal politicians fled the city, residents with means moved to the countryside, and business and economic activity came to a standstill while approximately 5,000 remaining inhabitants perished. Other American cities watched the epidemic unfold in fear, wondering if and when something similar could happen in their local communities. The fear engendered by the epidemic and the breakdown in support networks that were meant to keep the city functioning and assist the ill motivated Philadelphia's officers and those other

[266] Susan Dillwyn, 1793, as quoted in Eve Konfeld, "Crisis in the Capital: The Cultural Significance of Philadelphia's Great Yellow Fever Epidemic," *Pennsylvania History* 51, no. 3 (July 1984): 197.

municipalities to create institutional changes in order to endure and, ultimately, prevent such disasters in future.

Efforts to protect the health and very lives of American citizens differed greatly from how pre-revolutionary governments addressed epidemic diseases because 1790s officials aimed to establish permanent institutions to address health threats with an eye towards preventing severe epidemics rather than alleviating them. Philadelphia's mayor and a group of volunteers convened in September to form a committee to address the city's issues. Immediately their goal was "that this subject be laid before the citizens at their next meeting, in order that some steps may be taken to bring the subject before the Legislature, that the evils now experienced may be avoided in future, by suitable and comfortable provision for those who may suffer a similar affliction."[267] By the time the epidemic had concluded in early 1794, the committee met with the governor about "taking the necessary steps to prevent as much as possible a future calamity in the city and suburbs," the most important aspect of which they felt included cleaning the docks, continuing earlier arguments that the best efforts to prevent sickness and preserve life meant reforming working class spaces.[268] One important aspect of the committee's work was to be accountable to the city's citizens in their efforts. They agreed to "draw up a report of the proceedings of this committee, to be laid before their constituents, [and] produced an Essay - which being considered and having undergone some alterations was agreed to."[269] Boston's selectmen, fearful of their city suffering the same disorder as Philadelphia, immediately moved to prevent yellow fever from entering their city. In

[267] Minutes, Committee to Attend to the Malignant Fever, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 5.
[268] Minutes, Committee, HSP, 207.
[269] Minutes, Committee, HSP, 230.

September, the same month Mayor Clarkson organized Philadelphia's volunteers, Boston officials appointed a Health Officer and enacted quarantine measures in order to "[prevent] as far as prudence will suggest, the reception of the malignant Distemper raging at Philadelphia."[270]

Municipal powers steadily grew during the 1790s with the aim of protecting the lives of citizens and social order within their cities. In 1794, Philadelphia's legislature created a quarantine station, a Health Office, and a public hospital, all under the control of two-dozen "Inspectors of the Health Office."[271] Never during the decade was the Health Office dominated by the city's medical professionals. Instead, limits were placed on how many members could be physicians and officials attempted to appoint members considered respectable citizens, whether they be merchants, ministers, or physicians.[272] Because of arguments over the nature of the contagion and difficulty identifying the disease, not to mention getting the public to participate in their efforts, the Health Office never capably managed to prevent or eradicate yellow fever until the early years of the nineteenth century. However, the city government never abandoned their attempts to successfully intervene in the progression of yellow fever on behalf of their citizens. Rather than abandoning the Health Office, city leaders constantly recalibrated to better enforce quarantine and sanitary regulations in the hope of reducing the city's mortality. Like Philadelphia, Boston's leaders responded to the massive loss of life by expanding municipal powers in an attempt to escape yellow fever. Physician Isaac Rand wrote "The

[270] Record Commissioners, *A report of the record commissioners of the city of Boston: containing the selectmen's minutes from 1787 through 1798* (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, City Printers, 1896), 231.

[271] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 9 July 1794.

[272] Bureau of Health, Minutes, Philadelphia City Archives, 27:1.

causes of disease can be obviated by wise laws, energetically executed. . . . It, therefore, requires the united efforts of the patriotic, the opulent and wise, in carrying into execution such regulations as may militate with the present interest of some, the prejudice and avarice of others."[273] As argued by Rand, the creation of a committee specifically aimed at preserving the lives of citizens and managing the response to mass mortality was not just humane, but a sign of devotion to one's government. When Boston's politicians "[acted] upon the report of a committee of eleven prominent citizens, the town in December 1798 requested the General Court to authorize a Board of Health consisting of one man elected annually in each of the twelve wards. The Board should investigate, with a search warrant if necessary, all nuisances and other conditions injurious to health."[274] When the board was approved, it was the "first time, except in connection with noxious trades and unwholesome foods, [the city] provided legislative sanction for sanitary measures."[275] When the time came to elect officers to the Board, Bostonians chose men based on "their standing as citizens rather than for any special competence in the field of public health," including members from differing political parties and business men.[276] The President of the Board of Health, Paul Revere, addressed their constituents in March and informed them that, though inhabitants' "feelings and sensibility have been keenly wounded in consequence of the fatal sickness that pervaded the capital" he hoped "that

[273] Isaac Rand, *On the Epidemic Lately Prevalent in Boston* (Boston: 1800), 477.

[274] *Columbian Centinel* (Boston), 3November 1798. The measure was approved February 13, 1799.

[275] John Blake, *Public Health in the Town of Boston, 1630-1822* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 161.

[276] Blake, *Public Health*, 167.

the prompt and decided concurrence and support that will be afforded up by our Constituents in general, will render [our duties] easily agreeable."[277]

These cautious public health institutions reacted strongly to new yellow fever threats, even in the face of disputes between leaders and economic downturns. In 1795, the Board of Health notified Pennsylvania's Governor Thomas Mifflin of the presence of fever in New York City. Mifflin swiftly wrote to Governor John Jay to enquire after the situation. Just days later, Mifflin implemented a proclamation that "the safety and health of the citizens of Philadelphia require a stoppage of intercourse" with suspected contagious cities.[278] The proclamation suspended trade with New York City (as well as Norfolk, Virginia) by land and by sea. In order to enforce this, Mifflin declared that guards should monitor the roadways, rivers, and ferries so that no one traveling from infected cities within the past ten days could come within five miles of Philadelphia. In his correspondence with Governor Jay, Mifflin emphasized that such strenuous restrictions were required "to prevent the extension of so great a calamity." He was aware of the negative impact on business but assured Jay that "the consideration of interest as well as every motive of duty, justice and humanity will prompt me to seize the earliest moment, in which the prohibition contained in my proclamation may be safely revoked."[279] Jay rejected the notion that his city suffered from epidemic-levels of disease, but the Board of Health were confident in their knowledge. After further research, the Board of Health informed Mifflin that "we think it will be readily admitted that the

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[277] *Columbian Centinel* (Boston), 30 March 1799.

[278] Richard Tittermary to Thomas Mifflin, 31 August 1795. Printed in Mathew L. Davis, *A Brief Account of the Epidemical Fever* (New York: Mathew L. Lewis, 1795), 26-27. http://tei.it.ox.ac.uk/tcp/Texts-HTML/free/N21/N21690.html.

[279] Thomas Mifflin to John Jay, in Davis, *Brief Account*, 45. Mifflin wrote to Jay that he lifted the embargo on 21 October 1795.

disorder now prevalent in the city of New York, is of the same nature with that which prevailed in Philadelphia in the year 1793, and that in certain situations and circumstances it is also contagious: if these facts are admitted, we think they will sufficiently justify the measures we recommended."[280]

Pennsylvania officials soon recognized that enforcing an embargo took extraordinarily broad and powerful measures. Health officers learned that ship captains found a loophole: they could evade the embargo by making an emergency stop at another port city along the journey. To prevent this, the Board of Health recommended an expanded embargo that included ships from Bloomfield, New Jersey. They acknowledged it was a "disagreeable necessity of stopping all intercourse by both land and water between you and us." Mifflin requested that the New Jersey governor also place an embargo on ships from New York City, but he refused so Mifflin had no choice but to declare an embargo against ships from the two ports. This was an expansion of power because it allowed city officials to reject vessels from a variety of ports, not just ones known to experience infection.

The limits of post-war efforts to preserve life were revealed through Charleston's lack of policies because of their racial demographic. Unlike Boston and Philadelphia, Charleston did not create a Board of Health, municipally-supported public hospitals, or legislative measures to promote health and cleanliness in the city. Benjamin Allen Concannon Smith examined why South Carolina's public health policies took a different path from other American cities, particularly why both city and state governments never passed strict quarantine laws. Smith revealed through an examination of personal

[280] Robert Smith/Board of Health to Thomas Mifflin, 16 September 1795, in Davis, *Brief Account*, 48.

correspondence that Charleston's Medical Society advised against strict quarantine laws to prevent yellow fever from entering the city because of their desire to re-open the slave trade in their port. He argued that "the Medical Society of South Carolina was the only professional medical body in the country so steadfastly anticontagionist in viewpoint that it encouraged state officials to employ less restrictive entry requirements for the port of Charleston" because they "imprudently put public health at risk to facilitate commerce and the reopening of the slave trade in 1803."[281] Physicians fiercely debated the sources of yellow fever in the 1790s and never reached a consensus on whether it was imported or of local origins. Despite not reaching a consensus, most physicians and politicians promoted quarantine laws in order to guard against the illness as much as possible. The pervasiveness of slavery and the slave-trade debate, however, limited efforts to address public health issues.

The issue of race obstructed many more governmental efforts to care for the lives of citizens in Charleston, beyond a response to yellow fever. Despite an influential Medical Society headed by physician and politician David Ramsay, Charleston boasted no Board of Health by the end of the eighteenth century. Other institutions oriented towards the preservation of life also lacked governmental oversight and resources. The City Council exercised only intermittent supervision of the Marine Hospital, which came under the federal government's jurisdiction in 1798 due to the Seaman's Act which created the federal Marine Hospital Service.[282] The city's population was not considered

[281] Benjamin Allen Concannon Smith, "Impatient and Pestilent: Public Health and the Reopening of the Slave Trade in Early National Charleston," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 114, no. 1 (January 2013): 30.

[282] Joseph I. Waring, *A History of Medicine in South Carolina, 1670-1825* (Charleston: South Carolina Medical Association, 1964), 110.

a unified entity because the majority of inhabitants were enslaved. Whereas Boston and Philadelphia, and numerous other towns and cities in the early republic, established organizations and enacted to policies to protect and improve the lives of citizens, Charleston's leaders felt no need to do so because the majority of the city's downtrodden were not recognized as human beings rather than property. Their owners were responsible for their well-being, so the city did not have to assume those obligations. Health-oriented institutions that provided services for the city's African-American population took the form of private hospitals, which were advertised in the newspaper.[283]

Charleston's (and South Carolina's) relatively underdeveloped public health measures were not completely accepted. Governor Charles Pinckney argued for stronger executive power in order to enact quarantine policies. He claimed that the causes of yellow fever epidemics were irrelevant because:

> It is a melancholy truth, that for some years past several of our large cities have been visited with disorders that have required the utmost vigilance, in places uninfected, to guard against their introduction. As the health of our citizens is of the first importance, I would advise, on the revision of the law on this subject, the raising of penalties for the breach of it; the authorizing the governor, when necessary, to employ armed boats to remain at night among the vessels under quarantine."[284]

Pinckney's efforts to establish greater governmental power through which to enforce quarantine laws, even at the expense of Charleston's trade, never saw fruition, and boats carrying expensive human cargo sailed in and out, unimpeded. Though Ramsay maintained his anticontagionist views that supported the continuation of the slave trade, he lamented the limited influence Charleston's physicians had on effecting laws that promoted health among the city citizens. When he spoke to the Medical Society at the

[283] See *South Carolina Gazette*, 19 July 1799.
[284] *City Gazette* (Charleston), 29 November 1797.

dawn of the nineteenth century, he urged "let such of our members, as may be decently invited to seats in the city council, not refuse them, but cheerfully join in aiding to introduce such regulations, as may promote the health of the city."[285]

Like many municipalities, the federal government believed it was its duty to promote the health and longevity of Americans. Federal leaders believed their republican style of government promoted a thriving and healthful populace. Many national political and medical figures disseminated the idea that the newly-independent United States was healthier than other parts of the world, that American healthfulness correlated with their form of government. In representing the progress of the American population less than a decade after the Revolutionary War, physician William Currie concluded "that the probabilities or chances of enjoying health, and prolonging life, is much greater in the City of Philadelphia, and some other parts of the United States, than in other districts of the World, containing a proportionable number of inhabitants."[286] Currie argued that the nation's circumstances were superior for fostering the well-being and health of the people. Poet Philip Freneau echoed the same sentiment. He celebrated the new nation as a place of "happy people, free from toils and death. . . . No fierce disease, No fevers, no slow consumption, ghastly plague."[287] He extolled healthfulness as a national virtue, one supported by government efforts to maintain public health. Benjamin Rush spoke extensively about the connection between form of government and longevity. In a lecture that argued the idea that physical and moral health resulted from good government, Rush

[285] Ramsay, "Review of the Improvements," 217.

[286] William Currie, *An Historical Account of the Climate and Diseases of the United States of America* (Philadelphia, 1792), 192-193.

[287] Philip Freneau, *Poems Written and Published during the American Revolutionary War* (Philadelphia: Lydia R. Bailey, 1809), 78.

declared that "there is an indissoluble union between moral, political, and physical good" and "the human life exists in the greatest quantity, and for the longest time, in a republican state."[288]

Prominent national politicians boasted of American increase and linked it to potential American strength, echoing political arithmetic ideology from the early-eighteenth century. John Adams wrote that "the Americans are, at this day, a great people, and are not to be trifled with. Their numbers have increased fifty per cent since 1774. A people that can multiply at this rate, amidst all the calamities of such a war of eight years, will in twenty years more, be too respectable to want friends."[289] Adams echoed Benjamin Franklin's calculations on American population from more than three decades before, and he was careful to point out that Americans had achieved this level of increase despite the years of death and destruction. Thomas Jefferson explicitly linked population increase to American prosperity. He opined that "A century's experience has shown, that we double our numbers every twenty or twenty-five years. No circumstances can be forseen, at this moment, which will lessen our rate of multiplication for centuries to come. For every article of the productions and manufactures of this country then, which can be introduced into the habit there, the demand will double every twenty or twenty-five years."[290] Both Jefferson and Adams, despite their disagreements in many other areas, expressed similar viewpoints about population growth. They perpetuated

[288] Eric T. Carlson, Jeffrey L. Wollock, and Patricial S. Noel, eds., *Benjamin Rush's Lectures of the Mind* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1981), 163.

[289] John Adams to Mathew Robinson, Jr., 2 March 1786. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-01-02-0545.

[290] Thomas Jefferson to Count de Montmorin, 23 June 1787. Printed in Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 2, ed. H.A. Washington (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 190.

Franklin's increase calculations and highlighted that their numbers made the country strong.

The first step for federal leaders was to understand the scope and demographics of the population. The Constitution mandated that "Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which may be included within this Union, according to their respective numbers." In order to calculate this "the actual enumeration shall be made within three years after the first meeting of the Congress of the United States, and within ever subsequent term of ten years, in such manner as they shall by law direct."[291] Thus, the federal government implemented the first national census in 1790. They could not turn to the states for this information because vital statistics were never standardized during or after the Revolutionary War. Each state had their own methods of collecting vital statistics, if they chose to do so, and much of the information still came from church registrations of births and deaths as they did in the early-eighteenth century.

The federal government needed reliable information because the population census impacted not only representation but also national reputation. Washington expected the information to "help project the image of an ever-stronger America to the rest of the world." Alexander Hamilton expanded upon this sentiment to Canadian politician George Beckwith, arguing that "Our government acquires daily strength and consistence in the public mind . . . I am persuaded when our Census is completed we shall have at least three Millions and a half of people; at this time we are capable of making considerable exertions, even Maritime ones, if from circumstances it became a

[291] United States Constitution, Article I, Section 2. https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/articlei.

measure of government to encourage them."[292] Though it was constitutionally required, Washington and Hamilton expected the census to have farther-reaching consequences of improving the standing of a newly-independent America on the global stage. The population exceeded Hamilton's expectations. Over eighteen months, state and territorial governors and seventeen U.S. Marshals gathered data for the census and counted a total population of 3,929,214. James Madison crafted six categories to be included in the census: heads of family, free white males over sixteen years of age, free white males under sixteen years of age, free white females, other free persons, and slaves. He wanted to add information on occupations because this was "the kind of information extraordinarily requisite to the Legislator, and much wanted for the science of Political Economy."[293]

While the census was about representation, public discourse surrounding the numbers provided an imaginative vision of future authority. American authors were quick to celebrate the population to global audiences. Tench Coxe, commissioner of the revenue in Philadelphia, wrote a rebuttal to Englishman Lord Sheffield who opined that the United States would always be dependent on Great Britain, despite independence. Coxe refuted Sheffield's sentiments that were "very unfavourable to the United States" in part by highlighting the population. He listed the census data from several states and pointed out that "The population of Pennsylvania appears to have increased, in 23 years [1770-1793], nearly in the proportion of from 39 to 91; though the whole term of a

[292] Alexander Hamilton, "Conversation with George Beckwith," 15-20 October 1791. https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-07-02-0111.

[293] James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 14 February 1790. As quoted in Daniel R. Headrick, *When Information Came of Age: Technologies of Knowledge in the Age of Reason and Revolution, 1700-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 77.

revolutionary and invasive war of seven years was included." This was more than a doubling of the population, and Coxe connected the large population with the ability to prosper in manufacturing, agriculture, and trade, as well as "public happiness."[294] Authors argued that their population was a point of pride for Americans. William Barton declared:

> Must not the mind of every American citizen be impressed with gratitude, and glow with emotions of a virtuous pride, when he reflects on the blessings his country enjoys? Let him contemplate the present condition of the United States, --enjoying every advantage three million of the freest people on earth—. . .let him, also, contrast this situation of his country, with the condition in which it was found by our ancestors, scarcely two centuries ago; and it will be impossible for him not to experience, in an exalted degree, those sensations, which patriotism and benevolence ever inspire.[295]

The American population in numbers alone represented progress and optimism. Patriotic pride in the population focused not only on past growth but also potential: how many in the future would contribute economically, participate commercially, and stand up for its defense. For these writers and the multitudes of Americans who celebrated their multitudes, the nation had escaped the pessimistic outcome of overpopulation to achieve a growth that would see them rise in prominence and respect.

As successive waves of yellow fever ravaged in nation in the 1790s, though, national leaders—like municipal and state ones—recognized that growth was not assured unless they took action to promote health. As national leaders witnessed epidemics, they considered what authority they possessed to regulate health measures. As previously mentioned, some states such as Pennsylvania and Massachusetts responded with public

[294] Tench Coxe, *A View of the United States of America* (London: J. Johnson, 1795), 112, v.
[295] William Barton, *Observations on the Progress of Population and the Probabilities of the Duration of Human Life, in the United States of America* (Philadelphia: R. Aitken & Son, 1791), 31.

health efforts that regulated movement and cleanliness, while others like South Carolina had only weak or even no laws on the books. Federal officials asked themselves if they had any authority to oversee health laws that would protect the nation as a whole. In 1796, Representative Samuel Smith from Maryland proposed a bill that allowed the president to determine quarantine policy in the nation. The aim of the bill, ultimately, was to override the confusion caused by conflicting state policies and actions. The bill mandated "That the President of the United States be . . . authorized to direct at what place or station in the vicinity of the respective ports of entry within the United States, and for what duration and particular periods of time, vessels arriving from foreign ports and places may be directed to perform quarantine."[296] It further allowed the president to use federal resources, particularly customs officials and revenue cutters, to enforce health laws. The first representative to speak, Benjamin Bourne of Rhode Island, spoke in favor of the entire bill. He set the tone of the debate by declaring it was in "the nature of a commercial regulation, to which, by the Constitution, Congress alone were competent."[297]

Those in favor of the act argued epidemics were so calamitous that they required a strong government response. One representative contended that even if not a question of commerce the law did not infringe on state authority, but would actually strengthen it because local officials like the Governor and Board of Health of Philadelphia could order "quarantines to be performed, but they could not force any vessels to observe their

[296] *Annals of the Congress of the United States, 1795/1796* (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1849), 1349.

[297] *Annals*, 1795/96, 1350.

directions, without the aid of the General Government."[298] James Hillhouse of Connecticut added an emotional appeal, telling the chamber that "if gentlemen had been as near infectious disorders as he had been, they would have been convinced of the necessity of making some such regulations as were now proposed."[299] For these men the human cost was devastating enough to warrant a federal response.

Representative William Smith of South Carolina combined the arguments of commerce and public health to argue in favor of the bill. Hailing from one of the unhealthiest states with the weakest public-health laws, he urged his peers to "consider how epidemical diseases, imported, affect the United States at large." He continued "They do not merely affect the city where first imported, but they obstruct the commerce of all others; they not only embarrassed the commerce, but injured the revenues of the United States." Smith declared that quarantine was square within the duties of the federal government because "it was their business to protect the health of their fellow-citizens, as much as their property; because if the performance of quarantine was neglected, such neglect naturally tended to affect the lives as well as the revenue and commerce of the citizens throughout the United States."[300] These quotes reveal that, in the minds of those in favor of federal quarantine powers, it was the duty of the federal government to enforce public health laws and violations if individual states would not because poorly-regulated locales could spread suffering and death to those that made greater efforts to preserve health. If one port city or state failed in their duty to protect public health, other cities and states would suffer the human and economic consequences. Therefore, the

[298] *Annals*, 1795/96, 1350.
[299] *Annals*, 1795/96, 1352.
[300] *Annals*, 1795/96, 1356-7.

federal government should use their authority to implement nation-wide regulations to protect every person and place.

Opponents of the act argued that, if passed, the federal government would overstep its constitutional authority. A main component of their argument was that most states already had health laws, so it was an internal matter. Pennsylvania's Albert Gallatin argued that "quarantine had nothing to do with commerce. It was a regulation of internal police. It was to preserve the health of a certain place, by preventing the introduction of pestilential diseases, by preventing persons coming from countries where they were prevalent."[301] Gallatin rejected the notion that the federal government "had the sole right of . . . making health laws for the individual States."[302] In supporting Gallatin, William Lyman of Massachusetts pointed to inoculation. He opined that "In the town of Boston the small-pox was considered as a pestilential diseases, and they certainly had a right to make their regulations accordingly." [303] Therefore, Lyman argued, "quarantine was not a commercial regulation, it was a regulation for the preservation of health. If commerce was incidentally affected, it ought so to be, when the object was the preservation of health and life."[304] According to these representatives, defining quarantine as a commercial consideration would overstep federal authority and impinge upon states' abilities to make their own public health law. In this viewpoint expanding federal power in such a way was ultimately more dangerous because it could negatively affect local health efforts beyond quarantine.

[301] *Annals*, 1795/96, 1353.
[302] *Annals*, 1795/96, 1353.
[303] *Annals*, 1795/96, 1352.
[304] *Annals*, 1795/96, 1354.

In the end, the House of Representatives compromised in 1796 and only allowed the federal government to provide assistance, rather than direction, in local quarantine measures. On 27 May 1796, both chambers of Congress passed "An Act relative to Quarantine" which declared "That the President of the United States . . . is hereby authorized, to direct the revenue officers and the officers commanding forts and revenue-cutters, to aid in the execution of quarantine, and also in the execution of the health-laws of the states."[305] This was a much more limited bill. It allowed the federal government to assist in enforcing state public health measures, particularly quarantine, yet stopped short of allowing national officials to supersede any state laws. The law declared definitively that the duty of public health resided in the states.

Another half decade of yellow fever made Congress reconsider, however, and in 1799 it passed a stronger quarantine law that granted national officials more authority. In February 1799, "An Act Respecting Quarantine and Health Laws" replaced the 1796 law and granted federal authorities greater powers in quarantine and public health measures. The later law reiterated that the Department of Treasury could provide assistance to enforcing state quarantine and health laws. However, it took this power further to allow the Treasury to revise the length and specifics of local quarantine regulations. The act read "when a conformity to such quarantines and health laws shall require it, and in respect to vessels which shall be subject thereto, to prolong the terms limited for the entry of the same, and the report or entry of their cargoes, and to vary or dispense with any other regulations applicable to such reports or entries."[306] Significantly the 1799 law did

[305] *The Laws of the United States of America*, v. 3 (Philadelphia: Richard Folwell, 1796), 315.
[306] *Public and General Statutes Passed by the Congress of the United States of America* (Boston: Wells and Lilly, 1828), 564.

not take away from state authority over health laws, but added decision-making powers that did not exist prior.

A second section of the 1799 act granted the federal government unprecedented emergency powers related to epidemics. These sections permitted federal officials, particularly the Secretary of the Treasury and federal judges, to remove goods and people in danger from "the prevalence of any contagious or epidemical disease."[307] In practice, this meant that customs officers and prisoners could be removed from an unhealthy area to a safe location established by federal authorities. This section also established how the federal government should proceed if the nation found itself in the midst of an epidemic. It explained a chain of command regulating where the seat of government would move and who would make that decision in times of epidemic disease. Federal officials had watched waves of epidemics ravage American cities in the 1790s and though they were hesitant to override state authority, by the end of the century officials grew their powers beyond assistance to direction and enforcement.

At roughly the same time, national authorities under the direction of President John Adams established a federally-supervised institution to manage public health. In 1798, Adams signed the Seaman's Act that created the Marine Hospital Service, a network of hospitals located along major waterways throughout the United States.[308] Like it had in the 1799 quarantine act, the federal government began to supersede local public-health efforts. The act read that "the President of the United States is hereby authorized . . . to provide for the temporary relief and maintenance of sick or disabled seamen, in the hospitals or other proper institutions now established in the several ports of the United

[307] *Public and General Statutes*, 565.
[308] *Public Statutes at Large*, 636.

States." In this case, the federal government assumed control over public hospitals located in port cities such as Boston and Charleston. With the Seaman's Act, mariners paid a type of proto-insurance out of their monthly wages to employers that contributed to hospital care, with the national government covering the remainder of the expenses. Congress had explored the avenue of mariners' hospitals for nearly a decade before it was enacted, and its passage inspired praise from physicians and politicians.

Adams and others believed such hospitals were necessary because they protected the health of sailors, who contributed to the economic and commercial health of the nation. They traveled from port to port while performing a dangerous occupation, especially since most believed that ships themselves and the docks were the unhealthiest environment. In the opinion of federal officials, seamen were simultaneously a potentially undesirable population that might be enfeebled and impoverished should they become ill, but also the life's blood of American commerce and prosperity. Physician Samuel Latham Mitchill celebrated "the authority of the General Government" in protecting "the youngest and stoutest seamen in the merchant service." Dr. Mitchill contended that "the excellency and utility of this regulation is universally admitted" by the general public and that it immediately improved the health of a vulnerable yet important population since "the seamen of the United States are daily experiencing the advantages of it."[309] Federal officials remained respectful of local authority regarding public health, but they were so committed to preservation of life efforts and believed

[309] "Pilots to Pay Hospital Money for their Apprentices," in *American State Papers: Documents, Legislative and Executive, of the Congress of the United States*, vol. VII (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1832), 571.

health threats needed such strong governmental response that they claimed new federal powers to promote well-being throughout the nation.

When mortality crises devastated the populations and institutional framework in the years after the Revolutionary War, municipal governments incorporated public health efforts into their duties towards inhabitants by creating institutions and offices to prevent future catastrophes and keep citizens healthy. Such efforts would require people to reform their personal behavior, their urban environments, and their interactions with other residents. Through governmental and associational leaders' institutional policing efforts to promote health and longevity, central government institutions and ideals touched the lives of many individuals and communities throughout the country by providing tangible and necessary services to the citizenry. Early Americans understood that government-supported health measures were a mandatory component to the health of the population and national strength. Political leaders, medical philosophers, and ordinary citizens recognized that shared threats to life required collective action to coordinate resources, staff them properly, and implement expert opinions. The healthfulness of which so many Americans boasted and its connection to their form of government would not have been possible without decisive government actions to minimize epidemics and maintain public health.

Chapter 5
"Mingling Tears With Each Other:"
Rituals and Citizenship in the Late-Eighteenth Century

In his eulogy for Benjamin Franklin, given in 1790 before an audience of President George Washington, Congress, and assembled citizens, Reverend William Smith proposed an annual day of remembrance. He declared: "We should make, at least, an annual pause; and consecrate a day to the review of past events, the commemoration of illustrious characters who have borne a share in the foundation and establishment of our renown." What purpose might this annual holiday serve? Honoring the dead, of course, but also fostering a pervasive American identity and character while also strengthening the government and nation. Smith linked this proposal to past republics such as Greece and Rome, who "in the best days of their Republics . . . not only . . . celebrate[d] the names and actions of their departed worthies, but . . . embalm[ed] their bodies, that they might long be kept in public view, as examples of virtue."[310] While Smith's idea for a yearly holiday to remember those lost in the war never came to fruition in the early republic, the ritualistic mourning of American dead offered opportunities to transform colonists into Americans. State-sponsored funerals and mourning like the one for Franklin happened frequently in the last quarter of the eighteenth century as leaders central to the independence movement and new government passed away. At times ordered by Congress and at others by the president, such rituals served as a way to define American belonging and the boundaries of the American body politic. Rituals such as funeral processions, public grieving, and acts of remembrance were the first rites of American citizenship as leaders sought to transition their allegiance to the new American

[310] William Smith, *Eulogium on Benjamin Franklin* (Philadelphia: Bache, 1792), 5.

union. As they reoriented loyalty and affective connections to the American government, funeral processions, sermons, and mourning fostered widespread participation in creating a new national identity through shared sacrifice and service to the nation. Even before the Declaration of Independence and widespread elections, moments of death engaged the broad public in expressing devotion to an independent American government.

This chapter argues that late-eighteenth century mourning rituals helped transform the populace from British subjects into American citizens by emphasizing shared sacrifice and purpose, creating an American memory and a new pantheon of American heroes, as well as serving as performances of popular support for the new union of former colonies. Eulogies, funeral processions, and the like worked as "civic texts" that established and enforced a new political hierarchy by using familiar forms to highlighting consent to this new ruling order. Congressional mourning and funeral processions during the Revolutionary War were acts of political participation and support. With the Revolutionary War and in the years following, former British subjects had to learn to conceive of themselves as Americans. No one knew yet exactly what this meant, only that it had to be different from what came before. In the early-eighteenth century, colonists were familiar with the celebration of the lives of British figures, whether the birth of a royal child or the death of the monarch. As discussed in chapter one, colonists were well-versed in making political meaning out of commemoration that celebrated local values and emphasized bonds of unity with Britain. Mourning rituals such as funeral processions and dressing in black offered culturally familiar forms through which revolutionary and eventually national leaders could replace honored British figures with revered American ones and establish reverence for sacrifice to the American nation.

From state funerals for political and military figures in 1775 through national mourning for George Washington, rites and rituals in honor of fallen Americans fostered an explicitly American identity.

Revolutionary leaders understood that an independent America needed a different structure that embodied the natural rights and demands for representation they used to justify resistance and independence. Public rituals offered scenes in which the general public could attend and mourn together. With the first funerals organized by the Continental Congress, anyone in Philadelphia could witness military officers, national and local political leaders, learned men, and ordinary people processed through the city in organized ranks to honor the life of a lost American. Instead of binding colonies to the empire, they sought to create a union out of diverse social groups and disparate colonies through a sense of common loss. By 1800 and the death of Washington, easily the high point of mourning rituals in the early national era, commemorative speakers and writers recognized an American tradition starting with the Revolution to honor the nation and express loyalty through funeral processions and public mourning for lost leaders. By marching according to rank along a planned route, leaders visually communicated their leadership as well as their unity with subordinate groups. Ordinary people, including elite and middling white women and free people of color, could join the crowds of thousands to mourn in common, and an untold number more learned of the mourning rites through newspapers, pamphlets, and broadsides. In the late-eighteenth century, regular Americans could participate in politicized activities to a greater extent than ever before. These post-revolutionary rituals modeled how to be American to each group participating. The best of men, the ones admired and praised as patriotic Americans, were men who oriented

their lives to politics and military service. They set an example of sacrificing individual desires and safety for the public good and, together, the performance of these rituals assigned everyone a place, which ultimately gave shape to the new nation's body politic.

Ultimately, these rituals promoted widespread participation yet still sought to impose a strong sense of order and hierarchy on the newly-independent society, ultimately fashioning a definition of full citizenship that was white, masculine, and even militarized. The new American notables, the ones worthy of praise and reverence, were all military and political figures, and the ones actually processing and directed to mourn were military or political men. Processions and public mourning included national, state, and local politicians, Continental soldiers and the militia, along with professional men. Everyone else watched from the sides or listened from afar. These subtle distinctions between processing and observing, between being included in the ranked procession or relegated to the sidelines reinforced the distinction of who could exercise their citizenship. It also defined what types of behaviors and sacrifices were most desirable—political or military service, which was only open to a subsection of society. By the time of national mourning for Washington in 1800, however, it is clear that the broad nature of participation had given marginalized groups room to push for more active roles in these civic rituals. Rather than just being seen, they expressed the desire to actively participate in the processions in order to display their own patriotism and belonging. In Charleston, a group of well-to-do women were denied to right to walk in a mock funeral procession. In Philadelphia, the free Black community attempted to organize their own procession in order to display their love of country. By asking to walk in the ranks, they asked for

inclusion in the body politic. Black Americans were denied, but white women were pushed into private or domestic mourning for Washington.

This chapter begins with a review of relevant literature related to popular festivals and parades during the revolutionary era and how they related to political culture and issues. It then turns to an analysis of congressionally-planned rituals honoring the deaths of prominent military and political leaders during the war. Congress planned funeral processions for famous figures to encourage mourning in common, so that Americans from all parts of the new nation felt connected to and respect for their government. Predating the Declaration of Independence and the formation of distinctly American institutions, leaders marched through streets as thousands watched in what were some of the earliest opportunities to show support for the American union and heroes. Next, the chapter analyzes national mourning and commemoration for Washington. As the most famous American, he was celebrated as the greatest American of the age and an exemplar of virtue. The federal government ordered local ceremonies and a national day of mourning which was intended to honor Washington and the government he fought for and created, thereby ultimately celebrating the federal government itself. The mock funeral processions and displays of mourning allowed a wide variety of the population to participate and declare themselves citizens who embodied Washington's own values, and mourning goods entered shops, homes, and schools. By working on needlepoint dedicated to Washington or watching a mock funeral with one's children, a diverse group of Americans learned that they could all belong to the American nation and practice their Americanness in distinct ways. The final section of this chapter turns to examples of marginalized groups pushing for expanded roles in these rituals to prove their public

worthiness. However, resistance to their playing more than supportive or sidelined roles reveals ways in which full citizenship and belonging to the American body politic were enforced in nation's earliest decades.

Over the past decades, social historians have built an extensive knowledge of popular political culture, with particular emphasis on American nationalism as expressed through festival culture, education, novels, and religion, to name a few. As John L. Brooke explained, such things served as "the cultural and structural glue that [bound] the citizen to the state." Scholars in this vein argue that "An American nation was more imagined than governed; it was less a nation of laws than a nation in sentiment and imagination, and even that national imagining was thin. A cultural politics, of print culture, of sensibilities, of religion, of reform—a constructed, artificial ethnicity—had to define American nationalism."[311] According to David Waldstreicher in *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes*, this sociocultural approach to nationalism "attempts to comprehend the everyday interplay of rhetoric, ritual, and political action that permitted the abstractions of nationalist ideology to make real, effective, and practical sense."[312] In other words, it is less about how Americans conceived of politics ideologically and more about how they engaged with political ideas in the everyday. According Waldstreicher and others that focus on popular political culture, festivals and parades celebrated holidays and fraternal

[311] John L. Brooke, "Cultures of Nationalism, Movements of Reform, and the Composite-Federal Polity: From Revolutionary Settlement to Antebellum Crisis," *Journal of the Early Republic* (2009): 3, 11.

[312] David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 3. Other significant works on festival and parade culture include Carolyn Eastman, *A Nation of Speechifiers: Making an American Public after the Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Benjamin Irvin, *"Clothed in Robes of Sovereignty:" The Continental Congress and the People Out of Doors* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Simon Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997); Mary Ryan, *Civic Wars: Democracy and Public Life in the American City during the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997);; Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

organizations even as they contested political values and authority. These works have significantly enriched our understanding of American nationalism by presenting a broader view of society focused on the process of building American identity and defining the body politic in the years and decades after the Revolutionary War. As Douglas Bradburn explored in *The Citizenship Revolution*, the Revolutionary War and independence raised a host of questions about what it meant to be American, the limits of equality and rights, and the legitimate exercise of power over others. These questions had to be negotiated, and popular political culture offers an important avenue through which to explore these questions. Bradburn argued that "the political and legal construction of the Union, and its relationship to a national American people, only gradually took shape in the years following Independence."[313] Bradburn further contended that to fully understand the development of American citizenship in the late-eighteenth century, scholars must consider how elite and popular culture engaged with one another, who laid claim to rights and equality, and the ways in which leaders attempted to distance themselves from British governance and traditions.

Women's historians, building on the informal political practices of women, have called for the roles of women (and other groups without formal political rights) to be taken more seriously than just a symbolic presence. In *Revolutionary Backlash*, Rosemarie Zagarri criticized such works' treatment of women stating that when they did include women, "they tend to do so in a separate discussion, parallel to the main

[313] Douglas Bradburn, *The Citizenship Revolution: Politics and the Creation of the American Union, 1774-1804* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 3.

narrative."[314] Taking politically-oriented women seriously in the early republic required a reimagining of what it meant to be politically active and a citizen. Just as the works of Waldstreicher, Newman, and the like expanded understandings of political activity in the early republic, works by women's historians such as Zagarri and Linda Kerber expanded the definition of citizenship. This understanding of citizenship is one that goes beyond formal political rights such as military service and voting to include loyalty to the state and a sense of belonging to American society.[315] More recently, Teresa Anne Murphy refined our understanding of women's relationship to citizenship (as well as that of other historically excluded groups) with the concept of "differentiated citizenship" which allows for white women's inclusion in the American body politic while recognizing they were not allowed formal political rights.[316]

This study builds on works of popular political culture and citizenship to focus more deeply on the process of shaping American citizenship with a particular emphasis on expressions of loyalty to the new union and political hierarchy through the public spectacles of state-sponsored mourning and funerals. This approach illuminates how old traditions were given new meaning after independence, as Americans adapted centuries-

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[314] Rosemarie Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 3.

[315] This is a foundational definition of citizenship for Linda Kerber in *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1999). She listed five: loyalty, avoiding vagrancy, paying taxes, jury service, and military service. Mary Kelley's work has also contributed a great deal to breaking down the binary between women associated with the private and men with the public. *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

[316] Murphy explained that women's citizenship "encompassed activities that ranged far beyond specific legal rights for women to their broader terms of inclusion in society, the economy, and government." In explaining the ambiguities of women's citizenship, Murphy recognized the deep literature from Kerber, Zagarri, and Jan Lewis on the concept of Republican Motherhood and the Republican Wife and identified them as late-eighteenth century forms of differentiated citizenship. *Citizenship and the Origins of Women's History in the United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 3-4.

old rituals in order to learn a new way to exist together and define themselves. Because moments of mourning can serve as a tool of self-definition, it provides deep insight into how the American people crafted their relationship to the nation and American leaders. Honoring the American dead through rituals helped former colonists conceive of themselves as loyal Americans by having them participate in common with American officers and officials, inculcating a sense of service and sacrifice for the new nation, and offering a new narrative of popular memory that replaced revered British figures and traditions with revolutionary American ones. Preceding the Declaration of Independence and Fourth of July celebrations, mourning national figures became a duty of citizenship as it built affective ties to the nation and a sense of belonging and uniformity among the populace. Analyzing citizenship and identity through the lens of mourning rituals, which brought together all types of Americans, also offers insight into the negotiation of "differentiated citizenship." As public events which allowed everyone to at least attend, the emphasis on ranking and distinction between observer and marcher enforced subtle yet strong boundaries around who could exercise their citizenship to the full extent.

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Like all wars, the American Revolution demanded the sacrifice of life to further the cause of independence. Among the tens of thousands who died for the cause, national leaders raised only a few political and military officials to widespread public notice as exemplars of service to the nation and love of country. Congress employed long-standing death rituals to create new civic traditions that inspired widespread participation, celebrated an independent American union, and enshrined new heroes into American memory. By sponsoring published funeral sermons, public funeral processions, and

dictating signs of mourning, founders sought to shift ties of loyalty and implement the social and political hierarchy of an independent America. Three well-known revolutionaries died within a six-month period in the winter of 1775-1776. Peyton Randolph, former president of the Continental Congress and Speaker for Virginia's House of Burgesses, died in October 1775. This was followed by General Richard Montgomery, who died during the disastrous invasion of Quebec in December 1775. The final death in this trio was Samuel Ward in March 1776, a former governor of Rhode Island and Congressional delegate. All three events took place before the Declaration of Independence was signed and the Fourth of July became an annual celebration. Instead, it was these deaths which offered Congress the first opportunities to bring people together in order to engage with the American government and publicly perform their loyalty. Congress took advantage of these high-raking decedents and organized large funeral processions to march through Philadelphia.

The thousands of official mourners, compounded by thousands of observers, promoted a shared experience of loss in the revolution. Josiah Bartlett, serving as New Hampshire's delegate to the Continental Congress, proclaimed the first of these spectacles for Randolph as "the greatest Funeral that Ever was in America."[317] Americans as colonists were familiar with commemorating the deaths of high-ranking political leaders, as they had read or heard funeral sermons for royal and imperial figures for the last century. Observers of the processions for Randolph, Montgomery, and Ward, however, emphasized that these funerals were the grandest and most sentimental in

[317] "Josiah Bartlett to Mary Bartlett, Philadelphia, 25 October 1775," in *The Papers of Josiah Bartlett*, ed. by Frank C. Meyers (Lebanon, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1979), 20; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 30 October 1775.

American history. The funerals for Randolph, Montgomery, and Ward made visible the social and political order of the new nation by bringing people together to engage in the sacred experience of remembering a life and laying them to rest. Each included a vast procession that included clergymen, politicians from every branch of government, members of prominent institutions, wealthy citizens, and commoners. They processed from the statehouse to a place of worship, where the audience heard a sermon that was later published. These funerals represented transformation: life to death, earthly to heavenly, and British subject to American citizen. The public and spectacle aspects were significant components because they centered American authorities, celebrated sacrifice for the nation, and allowed the public to participate in an official event alongside their leaders.

The state funeral for Randolph displayed the pomp and circumstance as well as the public support that American leaders could harness in the early years of the Revolution. Observers estimated that Randolph's procession included 2,000 mourners in addition to 12,000 to 15,000 inhabitants who watched or followed along. Militia men led the procession followed by clergymen. This was months after the first battles of the Revolutionary War at Lexington and Concord, as well as Bunker Hill. Leading with a group of well-organized militiamen offered a show of might; that the revolutionaries could muster and train their own forces to resist the British army. After the militia came Randolph's pall accompanied by six magistrates. Following the pall in the most prominent and honored position of the funeral procession were members of Congress with President John Hancock in the lead. The Pennsylvania Assembly came next, then the committee of safety, the mayor and various local officials, followed by physicians

and professors of the city.[318] The procession was a show of power and of unity, demonstrating that a leader of the independence movement could bring together a variety of martial and civic bodies. Incorporating 2,000 men from local political organizations to the Continental Congress, from legislative, judicial, and executive positions, from civilians to soldiers, highlighted that leaders from all levels and different institutions respected Randolph and his position. Congressmen's prominent placement in the funeral procession behind the pall placed them at the front of the political section in a position traditionally reserved for family. In this case, they were a new national family. Followed as they were by local and state officials, it was a visual representation of the new political hierarchy: the national body took precedence. The presence of at least 12,000 ordinary participants offered a significant show of support for their authority and the revolutionary cause. Participating mourners signaled their respect for the man, his position, and the Continental Congress. In addition to a religious ritual, the procession was a political act that displayed support for American independence and represented ordinary people's engagement with their new government.

Congress had no body to bury upon the death of General Montgomery, as he had died and was buried in Canada. Since Montgomery was a military officer rather than a legislator, it was not always assumed that Congress would organize the funeral procession. However, he was the first Continental general to fall in the line of duty, so Congress chose to organize a procession and funeral sermon to honor his sacrifice. John Adams recorded that "[Ward's] Funeral was attended with the same Solemnities as Mr. Randolphs." There was indeed a great deal of similarities between the two events:

[318] *Pennsylvania Packet*, 30 October 1775.

members of Congress along with the militia marched from the statehouse to the German Calvinist Church, where clergymen and college faculty joined and heard the funeral sermon given by Anglican minister William Smith.[319] The organized procession emphasized that the military persisted and the government remained united. The revolutionary effort had just suffered a disastrous defeat in Canada and Montgomery's funeral offered an outlet for the grief and sadness of that loss. South Carolina Congressman Thomas Lynch noted that sense of widespread grief, recording that "every person seemed to have lost his nearest relative and heart friend" and "the whole city of Philadelphia was in tears" upon hearing news of Montgomery's death.[320] In mourning one man, participants could mourn the loss of their own loved ones and recognize the potential for loss in the fight to come.

The presence of a select group of women at Montgomery's funeral emphasized the sense of shared grief and loss. The funeral was so highly attended that tickets were required to enter the church. Out of all the attendees, newspapers noted the conspicuous role of women mourners in the church. An unknown number of "principal ladies" had received tickets to the service and these "Circle of Ladies" were seated in a prominent position so "that they might take every Advantage for the Indulgence of Griefe on so melancholy an Occasion."[321] The reference to the women as "principal ladies" implies that they were respectable middling or elite women and their placement suggests that their grief was intended to be seen and observed, making it clear that these women had an

[319] *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 22 February 1776.

[320] The Lynch letter is printed in *The Letters of Josiah Bartlett,* 174. Sarah J. Purcell has shown that Montgomery reached great fame in death. She examines elegies, poetry, and plays that helped transform him into a hero of the American Revolution. See Sarah J. Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 24-37.

[321] *Pennsylvania Evening Post*, 22 February 1776; *Pennsylvania Packet*, 26 February 1776.

important role to play in the proceedings. As female mourners, they represented the outward sentiment and emotion of Montgomery's death, and the toll of war more broadly. Women's grief was a reminder of the required sacrifice of war: brave men risked their lives in order to protect their country, possibly leaving families and loved ones behind. Though the "principal ladies" appeared at Montgomery's funeral, their mourning represented the shared sacrifice that all Americans would endure in the fight against Britain. Their position offered a reminder for what was at stake in order to fight for the American cause.

The final state funeral in the trio was for Samuel Ward, a figure who represented the rejection of power and personal gain in favor of the common good and just values. Formerly a governor of Rhode Island and Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court, Ward succumbed to smallpox while a delegate to the Continental Congress. He was not as renowned as Randolph and Montgomery, yet Congress followed their commemorative pattern and staged a public procession. On 27 March 1776, Congress marched to the Arch Street Meeting House and heard the funeral sermon from Reverend Samuel Stillmen, then escorted the corpse to the burial ground.[322] Ward's obituary emphasized the faith his American compatriots put in him and heaped a sense of dignity on Congress: "So highly was he esteemed by his countrymen, that they conferred on him their greatest honors…. [When] a Continental Congress became necessary, he was appointed one of the Delegates. A striking proof of this, of the esteem of his fellow citizens, seeing everything dear to America was at stake."[323] Ward was a figure who was highly successful in the colonial administration, reaching the pinnacle of colony-wide

[322] *Pennsylvania Packet*, 8 April 1776.
[323] *Pennsylvania Packet*, 8 April 1776.

power. In death, he represented an elite figure who had turned his back on British authority (even though he had been successful) in favor of the right and justness of American independence. The funeral and commemoration celebrated his commitment to the values of the new nation and crafted the image of an ideal citizen: one who sacrificed their own power and success for the public good. Honoring Ward in death also meant honoring his cause and the governmental body on which he served. When taken together, these funerals celebrated the service and mourned the loss of three American heroes. They spanned decedents from three regions and three denominations, but all were bonded by their service to American independence and commitment to the political and military institutions of the new nation. With one from Virginia, one from New York, and one from Rhode Island, they honored men from different regions who had contributed to the revolutionary cause, ultimately communicating that each region contributed and sacrificed in common. Congress' conspicuous presence at the center of the funeral processions highlighted their leadership and exalted their duties and offices. They occupied the most prominent positions in the rituals and directed the funeral sermon. Each aspect elevated them as the group with greatest authority, with others following behind as support, both literally and figuratively. The observers and marchers were unified as Americans and as mourners honoring fallen compatriots. These early ceremonies provided one of the first opportunities for Americans to display their connection to American leaders and to engage with American political values.

Public recognition of the American dead helped shape an American identity and perpetuate an American consciousness separate from Britain. Employing public spectacle to honor the lives of officers and politicians closely linked formal service to one's

country as the measure of an ideal citizen. These were not just passing deaths that it was useful for Congress to commemorate in the moment, but the ushering in of a new group of American heroes to be remembered by generations to come. In a remembrance pamphlet for the war dead, Hugh Henry Brackenridge posited "It is the high regard of those who have risked their lives in a just and necessary war, that their names are as sweet in the mouths of men, and every age shall know their actions."[324] He continued that "Posterity shall quote them for parallels, and for examples. When they mean to dress the hero with the fairest praises, they shall say he was gallant and distinguished in his early fall, as [Joseph] Warren; he was virtuous, and prudent, and intrepid, as Montgomery; he was young, and faithful, and generous, as Macpherson; he fell in the bold and resolute advance, like Haslet and like Mercer."[325] Recognizing the deaths of men like Randolph, Montgomery, and Ward—all closely linked to the American independence movement—on such a grand public scale built a new common memory of the American past and of honorable American leadership. It also encouraged actions that every single citizen could embody and put into practice. The duty carried on beyond the days and weeks of a funeral, though, and it became a responsibility of all Americans to continue honoring their memories in daily life. The state-sponsored funeral processions raised them to widespread notice and Americans were tasked with perpetuating the memories and values.

Women, again, were elevated to roles as prominent representatives of public sentiment because they could serve as conduits of revolutionary memory. Philadelphian

[324] Hugh Henry Brackenridge*, An Eulogium of the Brave Men Who Have Fallen in the Contest with Great-Britain* (Philadelphia: F. Bailey, 1779), 7.

[325] Brackenridge, *An Eulogium*, 13.

Anna Young wrote and published a poem mourning the Americans killed at Lexington and Concord. She wrote that "Your memories, dear to every free-born mind/Shall need no monument your fame to raise/Forever in our grateful hearts enshrin'd/And blest by your united country's praise./But O permit the muse with grief sincere/The widow's heart-felt anguish to bemoan/To join the sisters, and the orphans tear."[326] According to Young, women had a duty to grieve the sacrifices men made to fight for independence and the union. Like the women at Montgomery's funeral, women's sentiment emphasized common sacrifice. It also gave women a responsibility towards the nation: to convey this American memory and patriotism to future generations.[327] After Joseph Warren's death, another poet predicted that "Mothers shall lead their babes to Warren's tomb!/And there beneath the Cypress solemn gloom/Shall tell their list'ning offspring of his fame/And fire their souls with love to Warren's name."[328] There is a tension within these roles for women in revolutionary mourning rituals. They were assigned great responsibility in representing grief and shared sacrifice and were certainly public figures in these spectacles. Women could not directly emulate the patriotism of Warren, Montgomery, Randolph or any other officer or official as they were excluded from military and political institutions. However, they were not without responsibility and duty in the new

[326] Anna Young, "An Elegy to the Memory of the American Volunteers Who Fell in the Engagement Between the Massachusetts-Bay Militia, and the British Troops, April 19, 1775," *Pennsylvania Magazine* 1 (June 1775): 279.

[327] Historians have long known that women's position in post-revolutionary America centered on domestic virtues as they, through their roles as wives and mothers, were thought to bear responsibility for inculcating good virtues in their male relatives. Women became central in a society supposedly "bound by love" rather than force or fear. This shift, defined as "Republican Motherhood" or "Republican Womanhood" has revolved around studies of education, marriage, and reform movements, but everyday practices raised women on this pedestal on the daily to a broad audience. Jan Lewis, "The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic," *William and Mary Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (October 1987): 695. See also Rosemarie Zagarri, "Morals, Manners, and the Republican Mother," *American Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (June 1992): 192-215.

[328] Broadside, "An Eulogium on Major General Joseph Warren," (Boston: 1781). Major General Joseph Warren died at the Battle of Bunker Hill.

nation. These mourning verses told women they were still patriots and could play an active role by passing these values and stories along to future generations. Public, government-organized mourning and commemoration during the Revolutionary War offered national leaders a means to elevate a revered group of American leaders, build allegiance to the new government, and inspire widespread participation in political rituals. By focusing on deceased officials and officers through public spectacle and remembrance, they sought to create a sacred link between the public and the nation. Honoring these decedents was a political act which supported the independence movement, crafted an American identity, and communicated that all had some sort of role in the American body politic.

This chapter next turns to national mourning for General George Washington, which was the pinnacle of mourning rituals in eighteenth-century America. Washington's commemorative events celebrated his image as the ideal citizen who had devoted his life to public service. He was the most popular and experienced leader at the time of his death on 14 December 1799, and American officials and media immediately focused on the occasion like they had with royal deaths in decades prior. As news of Washington's death spread throughout the nation, writings, events, and images celebrating his character and service followed at the local, state, and national level. President John Adams and a joint congressional committee declared a period of mourning which encompassed the sixty-nine days between his death and next birthday on 22 February 1800, which would be a day of national mourning. Adams' proclamation declared that "Fellow Citizens, of all

denominations . . . will then unite in like Services, so that the whole People, with one Heart and one Voice" could honor Washington on the day of mourning.[329]

Commemorative writers agreed that Americans had a duty to mourn Washington as a way to ultimately honor good government. In the intervening sixty-nine days, mourning for Washington closed businesses, inspired state and local governments to publish memorial sermons, and was recognized through mock funeral procession throughout American cities and towns. Local civic groups and political bodies sponsored processions, delivered public eulogies, donned mourning garb, and published funeral sermons for Washington to express their grief. A sermon for Washington published for a Masonic lodge in Wilmington, Delaware linked mourning for Washington within a broader American commemorative custom dating back to the Revolutionary War. Gunning Bedford, the oration's author, wrote that "Congress early in our revolution resolved, that funeral orations should be delivered in honor of General Montgomery, and those officers and soldiers who magnanimously fought and fell with him, in maintenance of the principles of liberty."[330] Bedford identified this as an American ritual that began with the Revolutionary War and that brought Americans together to honor their government. Both commemorative authors naturalized national grieving for a leader and carried on the revolutionary tradition of political mourning. Reverend Hezekiah Woodruff used similar language, telling his audience that when "the fathers of the people [fall], it becomes a whole nation to put on garbs of the deepest humiliation."[331] To not

[329] Broadside, "A Proclamation. By the President of the United States" (Boston: Young & Minns, 1800).

[330] Gunning Bedford, *A funeral oration upon the death of General George Washington* (Philadelphia: James Wilson, 1800), 5.

[331] Hezekiah Woodruff, *A Sermon Occasioned by the Death of General George Washington* (Boston: Samuel Trumbull, 1800), 10.

mourn Washington, according to another eulogy, was to be outside of the national community. Samuel Bayard, a lawyer in New York, informed his audience that "through the channel of our public prints, we learn that our country mourns the departure of her first and favorite son." Not joining in had negative connotations, according to Bayard. He continued: "Not to mingle our tears with those of the American people on the present melancholy occasion, would argue a reproachful want of social sympathy."[332] When members of the public attended mock funeral processions or heard orations, they joined their fellow Americans in honoring Washington's leadership and, more broadly, honoring the nation he helped create.

Though Washington was buried at his home of Mount Vernon, the federal government took charge of public rituals and mourning. Congress ordered a state funeral to be held in Philadelphia for Washington on 26 December 1799, which began with a funeral procession from Congress Hall to the German Lutheran Church. A mounted trumpeter led the procession, followed by officers, federal troops, and local militia. After the uniformed soldiers were two military men who wore black scarves and led a riderless white steed draped in black gauze, with boots reversed in the stirrups. General Alexander Hamilton and his staff on horseback accompanied the bier and its empty coffin, on which was placed Washington's hat and sword.

Military figures had led the procession through the city, befitting the loss of their Commander-in-Chief, but the national government was centered as the main authority in the processional and funeral sermon. The bier and coffin were followed by congressmen walking in pairs, with the heads of federal executive departments and the justices of the

[332] Samuel Bayard, *A Funeral Oration, Occasioned by the Death of Gen. George Washington* (Philadelphia: Printed by Abraham Blauvelt, 1800), 3.

Supreme Court behind them. By walking together in the procession, the three branches of government were all represented and demonstrated their unity. Freemasons and members of the Society of the Cincinnati, both organizations to which Washington belonged during his life, followed the national officials. Next came the mayor of Philadelphia and municipal officials. The procession concluded with ordinary citizens, their position in line symbolizing their deference to the local and national hierarchy as they were guided by their leaders. President John Adams and his wife met the procession at the German Lutheran Church where the bier was brought inside and placed on an elevated platform. President Adams and other political authorities sat in the center, while soldiers filled the pews on the sides.[333] Major General Henry Lee, newly elected as a Federalist congressman representing Virginia, gave the eulogy in which he famously celebrated Washington as "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen." Lee highlighted Washington's greatest accomplishment as guiding America from wartime to a stable peacetime government, crediting his political leadership with "realiz[ing] the vast hopes to which our revolution had given birth."[334] As much as Washington's state funeral was in honor of the man himself, it was also a display of power and authority for the national government he had helped create. Echoing the funeral procession for Peyton Randolph twenty-five years prior, national officials held the most prominent position: the head of the political marchers just as they were the head of the political hierarchy.

[333] Descriptions of Washington's state funeral appeared in many American newspapers, including the *Aurora General Advertiser*, 28 December 1799; *Columbian Centinel and Massachusetts Federalist*, 4 January 1800; *Claypoole's American Daily Advertiser,* 27 December 1799; and *Philadelphia Gazette & Universal Daily Advertiser*, 31 December 1799.

[334] Henry Lee, *Funeral Oration on the Death of General Washington* (Boston: Printed for Joseph Nancrede and Manning & Lorning, 1800), 14, 8.

Respectable women were encouraged to be visible and active mourners for Washington. Abigail Adams, wife of President John Adams, hosted salons for her fellow political wives. She deferred it one week upon hearing of Washington's death. A newspaper announcement declared that it would next be held on 27 December, "when the Ladies are respectfully requested to wear white, trimmed with black ribbon, black gloves and dans, as a token of respect to the memory of the late President of the United States. The Ladies of the officers of the general government will please to wear black."[335] After the event, she reported that reported that "Last Friday's drawing room was the most crowded I ever had. Upwards of a hundred Ladies and near as many Gentlemen attended, all in mourning. The Ladies grief did not deprive them in taste of ornamenting their white dresses."[336] Her record-breaking attendance indicates that women were eager, along with men, to be active mourners for Washington. No descriptions include them as a presence in the procession organized by Congress, but they clearly wanted to honor his memory in some way. Adams' salon provided a public and political site in which to participate in national mourning for Washington. On a more local level, women were encouraged to display their grief for Washington. In an article explaining the mock funeral procession on the national day of mourning, the editor of the *Columbian Centinel and Massachusetts Federalist* added that "We hope the ladies will adopt some appropriate designs of sorrow, to be called the Washington mourning."[337] This mirrors the pattern of the state funeral and Adams' salon. Women were not walking in the procession yet were expected to be

[337] *Columbian Centinel and Massachusetts Federalist,* 8 January 1800.

present and visible in their sentiment. They clearly had a place in the public sphere in which to express their devotion to Washington's memory and appreciation of his service.

After the national commemoration, federal politicians wanted to tie Washington's memory permanently to the government. President Adams sent Martha Washington a copy of the Congressional resolutions and requested her "assent to the interment of the remains of the General under the marble monument to be erected in this capitol, at the City of Washington to commemorate the great events of his military and political life."[338] The internment of Washington along with a monument in the Capitol would forever link Washington and the national government he had shepherded into independence. Furthermore, it would display him as the ultimate in leadership and the major guiding force in the war for independence. This was a traditional style of monument, a marble figure placed at the center of power, that almost presented him as a monarch by closely associating an individual leader with authority rather than the people or citizenry. Martha initially consented to his burial in Washington, but made the point that "I cannot say what a sacrifice of individual feeling I make to a sense of public duty."[339] In describing this decision as a sacrifice of her personal wishes for the public, Martha contributed to the nation in the way that she could. As a woman she could not join the military or serve in the government, but she could put the nation's best interests above what she wanted, as was expected of a good American. General Washington was buried in a tomb at Mount Vernon and, though Martha had consented, his body was never moved to the Capitol

[338] "John Adams to Martha Washington, 27 December 1799, Philadelphia" in *"Worthy Partner": The Papers of Martha Washington*, comp. Joseph E. Fields (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994), 328.

[339] "Martha Washington to John Adams, 31 December 1799, Mount Vernon.," in *Worthy Partner*, 332.

building in the city named in his honor. In 1832, Congress directed President Andrew Jackson to ask John Augustine Washington for permission to finally move and bury the remains in Washington, D.C., along with those of Martha Washington. John Augustine Washington refused, and the sarcophagus under the Capitol's rotunda remained empty.[340] It was, at heart, a disagreement over who could claim to continue Washington's legacy at a time of growing national conflict: the federal government he helped create or the southern plantation he called home. His life was already quite tied to the American government through his military service and position as the first president, regardless of his burial site. However, because of the near-universal approval and regard for Washington at the time of his death and for decades after, national leaders wanted his body to rest in a federal government building to be permanently tied to his memory in order to be seen as the bearer of his legacy, as well as a claimant to the respect and affection his memory evinced.

Washington's memory became a public commodity, as immediately the American people demanded mementos through which to honor him. The American people clearly desired a personal connection with Washington that could be in their homes, schools, or on their person to display their grief but also to engage with his memory. In this way, mourning Washington was a long-term practice that Americans continued with beyond the period of prescribed mourning. Part of their responsibility in mourning him was shaping their lives on his values and service in whatever way their lives allowed, and material culture would help them fulfill that duty. Printers quickly offered memorial prints lamenting the loss of Washington and emphasizing Americans' commitment to his

[340] See *Worthy Partner*, 328 n. 1.

immortal influence. British artist William Russell Birch lived in Philadelphia at the time of Washington's state funeral. His print image of the procession depicts a solemn, orderly affair in which a relatively diverse audience look on and honor Washington (figure 4).

Figure 4. William Russell Birch, "High Street, From the Country Market-place Philadelphia," 1800. Princeton University. Accessed March 7, 2022, https://graphicarts.princeton.edu/2016/07/28/birchs-views-of-philadelphia/.

In Birch's depiction, the archway frames the procession with the funeral bier at the center and flanked by both military and political marchers. These highlight the two main avenues of Washington's service to the United States and may also be read as commentary on civilian oversight of the army. A length of black scarf blows in the wind from someone following the bier, identifying this as a scene of mourning. The image is

from the viewpoint of an observer, which also serves to highlight the many Philadelphians watched the procession. Most apparent are a few young working men who stand or sit under the archway, along with a young woman and child. The figure of the woman stands out in an orange dress. A black scarf blowing in the wind over her shoulder identifies her as someone mourning as well while the child at her side points to the procession. This duo could be read multiple ways. Perhaps he points at the military and political leaders to indicate his future opportunities for service? Another possibility is that he is asking his mother what is happening, which would offer her the opportunity to explain Washington's life and values to the boy. This is perhaps the more meaningful interpretation because it aligns with American mourning patterns that gave women the responsibility to instill the knowledge of American heroes from one generation to the next. In the background buildings, figures are lined up at windows and doorways watching the procession pass, and indication of the mass attendance at such events. One figure in the background is notable. In a third-floor doorway, a Black person stands and watches the spectacle. This figure is the only obviously non-white one in the entire image, which begs the question of why he or she would be included, even so subtly. It is entirely possible that this is a subtle reference to Washington's emancipation of a few Mt. Vernon enslaved persons in his will which, along with the Farewell Address and other speeches, was frequently reprinted in the wake of Washington's death.[341] When the observers are all considered together, though, they represent the ways in which diverse

[341] Francois Furstenberg explained that "Unveiled soon after his death, the will was widely republished and quickly became a celebrated document. In 1800 alone, Washington's will was published as a pamphlet in thirteen separate editions, included in the compilations of Washington's writings published after his death, added as an appendix to innumerable printed eulogies and proliferating biographies, published in newspapers throughout the country, and reprinted in many collections of Washington's writings." Francois Furstenberg, *In the Name of the Father: Washington's Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), 84-85.

groups could recognize and feel the loss of Washington. The image does not suggest that all felt and participated in mourning equally; some are clearly off to the side and minimized. Even so, it depicts a solemn and respectful scene with near universal recognition of the loss.

Prints were intended to remind observers of his values, helping them perpetuate his memory and example as the first citizen. Within seven weeks of Washington's death, James Akin and William Harrison, Jr. of Philadelphia published their memorial print. Depicting an obelisk on top of a tomb, a mourning female figure representing America, and a distressed eagle, the caption reads: "America lamenting her Loss at the Tomb of/General Washington/Intended as a tribute of respect paid to Departed Merit & Virtue, in/the remembrance of that illustrious Hero & most Amiable man who died Decr. 14. 1799."[342] In advertising the print, Akin and Harrison informed readers that "Having taken considerable pains to engrave an Elegant Design in remembrance of the late illustrious General Washington [they] now offer it for public patronage." The creators specifically intended the print to be sold solo and used for domestic purposes. They explained that it "is admirably calculated to ornament the parlour, or hang as a centre-piece, between any two other prints—it will also suit to enrich the labours of the needle upon white satin, and will be found an agreeable pastime for the Ladies."[343] Another example is a design created by Samuel Folwell depicting a similar scene. Two young women flank a monument topped by an urn, one's head bowed in grief while the other adorns it with flowers. A third, younger girl seems to frolic in the background as a cherub flies towards

[342] Print by James Akin and William Harrison, Jr., Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[343] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 23 January 1800. The same advertisement appeared frequently throughout late January and February 1800.

the monument carrying a laurel wreath. The scene is set beneath a weeping willow tree and the marble base reads “Sacred to the memory of the illustrious Washington” (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Embroidered Mourning Picture, “Sacred to the Memory of the Illustrious Washington,” Philadelphia, circa 1800. Accessed 5 March 2022, https://americanhistory.si.edu/es/node/47204.

Folwell’s wife Elizabeth directed a young ladies academy in Philadelphia, where such embroidery would have been practiced. As they were working on the pieces, the girls could ruminate on why Washington was so worthy of praise. More than that, however, the image situated young women as the mourners of Washington. The figures flanking

the monument ponder the inscription, perhaps shedding a tear, while another one decorates it with flowers. It highlights young women as the keeper of his sacred memory, continuing the exhortation for women to pass along his values to the new generations as they raised future citizens. It is also notable that this is a domestic piece of art that would hang in a home or a bedroom. Whenever one passed such a print hanging in a place of honor, or worked on needlework of the image, or used a handkerchief with the image, the observer should be inspired to remember Washington and what he stood for. In doing so, men and women fulfilled a duty to model themselves on Washington and put his example into practice in their own lives.

The widow Washington even received requests for personal mementos from her husband such as locks of hair to serve as relics, highlighted Americans' sacred connections to Washington. Doctor John Warren, Paul Revere, and Josiah Bartlett wrote Martha Washington on behalf of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts requesting one such lock of his hair. They explained to her that they had ordered that "a golden Urn be prepared as a deposit for a lock of hair, an invaluable relique of the Hero and the Patriot whom our wishes would immortalize."[344] In another instance, "A Society of Females" wrote her expressing their grief for General Washington. They explained that "Our Fathers fought with Washington! They taught our Infant beings to repeat His name and since have shewed to us the vast volume of his worth. He defended our Mothers from the Tomahawk of Savage barbarity and warded from their Breasts the [threat] of more refined cruelty." The young ladies quoted Lee's eulogy then requested "a lock (however small) of his invaluable hair" as they intended to "wear it as a charm to deter us from ill

[344] John Warren, Paul Revere, and Josiah Bartlett to Martha Washington, 11 January 1800. Published in Fields, comp., *"Worthy Partner*," 343-344.

and while gazing on it, think on the bright perfections of its former owner, till by degrees we engrafted them on our own Nature."[345] Their request is notable for many reasons. Firstly, it indicates a belief in the continued power of Washington; that he could protect from beyond the grave. Secondly, these young women expressed the belief that they could exhibit the same virtues as Washington even though they did not aspire to lead an army or a nation. Even so, they could be of service as Americans. Using the language of Republican Motherhood, they concluded their request with the assurance that "We will then bequeath to our Children the sacred talisman of virtue – With sentiments of the most profound respect and prayers for your happiness." Mourning Washington both publicly and privately was an act of patriotism which Americans could carry out on a small scale that, they believed, would inspire them to follow Washington's example of virtue, service, and love of country. On both the federal and the local levels, women felt comfortable engaging in similar acts of mourning and expressions of citizenship as men. Recognizing, celebrating, and emulating his example as the ideal citizen was a possibility for all Americans.

A few instances related to mourning rituals, particularly mock funeral processions, illuminate that there were limits to marginalized groups' participation and placement in these events. Some women and free Black Americans pushed for more active and visible roles which would move them from the sidelines to center stage. An analysis of these examples reveals that the strict boundaries of the body politic were still

[345] "A Society of Females" to Martha Washington, 14 February 1800. In Fields, *"Worthy Partner,"* 351-352. The authors added a postscript: "Would it not be in presumption, we would also (in behalf of a society of Females) request a lock of your hair. altho we have not the happiness of being personally acquainted with you Madam, yet the chosen Friend of Washington, will ever be dear to our hearts."

being constructed and the ways in which differentiated citizenship was enforced for non-white and non-male groups. In the mock funeral procession in Charleston, South Carolina, women desired a more prominent role in the commemoration process than displays of public grief and domestic talents. To achieve this, elite women took it upon themselves to join a mock funerary procession as marchers. A writer "Camilla" asked: "Why should the sons of America show more respect for their departed hero than her patriotic daughters?"[346] This was a bold question that broke from many of the mourning rituals that took place across the country. Camilla and the other women of Charleston wanted equal participation in their local rituals, to be included actively rather than just as ornaments. Another lady, who signed her letter "S.R." announced that women would organize their own procession: "A number of Ladies of the first respectability in society, beg leave to suggest to the sex in general, the propriety of meeting together at the appointed hour of ten in the morning at the Orphan-House, in order to rank themselves in the procession to take place this day. They deem in a just tribute to the greatest virtues that were ever united, the last tear due to their departed protector and friend."[347] Their demand to honor the virtues and example of Washington were in line with acceptable methods of female mourning, but they wanted recognition as equal patriots and as important social and political figures in the city. S.R. called the local women to take up a conspicuous space in publicly mourning Washington and expressed her displeasure at women not being invited in the first place: "[I], with heartfelt sorrow, cannot refrain from observing the remissness and inattention paid to [ladies] by the committee appointed by the community at large, in not having assigned them a proper station in the procession."

[346] "Camilla," *City Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, 7 January 1800.
[347] S.R., *South Carolina City Gazette*, 10 January 1800.

By identifying as ladies of the city, one can assume that the women making these demands were white and relatively elite, making some claims to respectability and public standing. Because of their status in the city along with their sentiment for Washington, they felt they were slighted in not being initially included. By demanding placement according to their proper rank in the procession, the Charleston women demanded that they had a place in the social and political hierarchy.

The ladies of Charleston recognized that they did not hold the same place of equal status in national politics as men. Furthermore, in terms of demands for equality, this was not very radical. They did not claim the right to engage with the other duties and obligations of citizenship such as voting, jury duty, or military service. They simply asked to be included and recognized as equal patriots who were capable of just as much loyalty to the country as the respectable men of the city. One, identified as "A.J." acknowledged "It is true we can summon no societies; we can form no committees . . . but let us, by one general badge of sorrow . . . testify our grief for the venerable Cincinnatus."[348] S.R. said the same, writing that the women "are aware, that a measure of this nature is unprecedented and not customary."[349] But Washington was "their departed friend and protector."[350] In mourning Washington, they could be equal to their male compatriots. They claimed Washington as a friend of women, and therefore claimed a right to mourn his death and celebrate his virtues with the same participation Freemasons, Society of Cincinnati, public officials, and war veterans had. These women declared that, though they did not fight or hold office, they were had the right and responsibility to

[348] A.J., *South Carolina City Gazette*, 7 January 1800.
[349] S.R., *South Carolina City Gazette*, 10 January 1800.
[350] S.R., *South Carolina City Gazette*, 10 January 1800.

mourn Washington in equal fashion. A.J. called on her fellow Charleston women to serve as examples to the rest of the nation. She urged: "Far be it from us, my country women (who have ever been distinguished for their patriotism!) Let us set the example to our sister-states; let us step forward, like the mothers, the wives, the daughters of the citizens, the patriots, who mean to distinguish themselves on the solemn occasion."[351] A.J. recognized women held largely private roles within the family, but she also highlighted a tradition of women's political and patriotic actions. In all likelihood, their mothers two decades before had boycotted British goods and managed the property and household as their fathers, husbands, and sons went off to war. For the ladies of Charleston, the women of their generation could prove their patriotism and political support through their grief over Washington. A.J. ended by identifying the women participating in Washington's memorial as equally patriots, who were distinguishing themselves as such in a very public manner. By marching, these women proclaimed their own dedication to the nation, asserted themselves as heirs of Washington's virtues, and insisted his legacy applied to American women as well as men.

Mourning for Washington also created an opportunity for Black leaders to argue for a more racially inclusive body politic. Upon Washington's death, Bishop Richard Allen delivered a eulogy at Bethel Church in Philadelphia which was then reprinted in mid-Atlantic and northern newspapers. As a prominent free Black minister in Philadelphia, Allen sought to create an interracial alliance of reformers, statesmen, and citizens that would defeat racial injustice in the new nation. Allen strove to make Black Americans active participants in mourning communities, thereby highlighting their ability

[351] A.J., *South Carolina City Gazette*, 7 January 1800.

to internalize and exhibit the traits so valued by white Americans. He proclaimed that mourning Washington was "an event in which we participate in common with the feelings of a grateful people." He further explained to his audience that "Your observance of these short and comprehensive expressions will make you good citizens — and greatly promote the cause of the oppressed and shew to the world that you hold dear the name of George Washington." Allen recognized the disruptive potential in wide-spread mourning rituals. Anyone could participate as viewers and the events simply demanded that attendees express their own grief for the decedent. Therefore, according to Allen, public mourning rituals offered a potential to elevate the status of Black Americans through their mourning in common. It could signal an important moment of inclusion and belonging, as one printer prefaced the eulogy with the remarks that "the African race could participate in the common events of our country, rejoice in our prosperity, and mourn in our diversity." Like the women of Charleston, Black Philadelphians' presence and participation would declare Washington a friend of their cause and lay claim to part of his legacy. These sentiments promoted Black civil participation and highlighted the prospect of Black citizenship—"love your country," he instructed his audience.[352] Allen sought to include Black Americans in the body politic, as fellow countrymen and patriots. But any actual interracial commemoration appears not to have materialized (at least according to the documentary record). If Allen's congregation or other free people of color participated in the city-wide funeral procession, the moment is lost to history, scrubbed from national memory of the first national day of mourning. Nonetheless, Allen's exhortation offers an intriguing insight into efforts to integrate Black Americans

[352] "Continued Testimonies of Sorrow!," *Independent Chronicle* (Boston), 13-16 January 1800.

into the body politic, as well as a chance to instruct their audience on how they, too, could lay claim to a place in American society.

As they were building a new national government, officials and authorities employed commemorative ritual to unify newly-independent Americans and allow performances of loyalty and belonging. Before even the Declaration of Independence, funeral processions and mourning garb emphasized patriotism as a condition of shared emotions and shared sacrifice. The funeral processions, eulogies, and acts of mourning over the following twenty-five years offered a visual representation of the political and social hierarchy and consent to the new national order. Therefore, engaging in these rituals was one of the first and most consistent duties of citizenship in the new nation. "American citizen" had a fairly expansive and ambiguous meaning in the wake of independence so displays of belonging, engagement with the government, and praise for a new groups of American heroes and values played a significant role in defining who belong and in what way they could express citizenship. Remembrance and honoring the dead was a political act that was less rigidly limited than other responsibilities of citizenship such as military service or voting. Even though this rather inclusive claim to citizenship was occasionally a source of tension over inclusion versus equality, they provided ordinary and elite Americans, those with and without formal rights, a way to engage with politics and the national government in the late-eighteenth century.

Conclusion

A March 2022 article in *The Atlantic* informed readers that "the United States reported more deaths from COVID-19 last Friday than deaths from Hurricane Katrina, more on any two recent weekdays than deaths during the 9/11 terrorist attacks, more last month than deaths from flu in a bad season, and more in two years than deaths from HIV during the four decades of the AIDS epidemic."[353] As I conclude this dissertation, the world still suffers through the COVID-19 pandemic and the United States is on the brink of one million deaths. A number of journalists, politicians, and the public have expressed shock at the sheer number of deaths and the lack of public and political recognition of such widespread loss. In addition to high number of dead, the American government and population must also contend with interrupted or delayed mourning, economic instability, and even population concerns. In 2021, "the U.S. population grew at the slowest rate in history" because of deaths exceeding births in a record number of locales along with restrictions on legal and immigration.[354] These are both newer developments that join a decades-long decline in American birthrates due to the high cost of housing, childcare, and education. Along the political spectrum, politicians and voters have sounded the alarm over local, state and the federal government's excessive restrictions or over their lack of action. In 2022, eighteenth-century worries became devastatingly relevant to the twenty-first century.

[353] Ed Yong, "How Did This Many Deaths Become Normal?" *The Atlantic*, 8 March 2022. Accessed 1 April 2022, https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2022/03/covid-us-death-rate/626972/.

[354] Derek Thompson, "Why U.S. Population Growth is Collapsing," *The Atlantic*, 28 March 2022. Accessed 1 April 2022, https://www.theatlantic.com/newsletters/archive/2022/03/american-population-growth-rate-slow/629392/.

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020 brought issues of government action, public health, and national values to the fore again. As new variants have caused resurgences of hospitalizations and deaths, the federal and local governments have battled over removing mask mandates, vaccine requirements, and social distancing measures that sparked so much resistance and protest. At the core of resistance to lockdown measures and criticism of government response are questions of civil liberties. On a visit to Maine, former President Trump referred to Governor Janet Mills as a "dictator" because she resisted reopening in summer 2020 due to fears that arriving tourists would increase infection rates.[355] Conservative articles condemn mask-wearing as a sign of weakness and worry that required masks provide a way to "weaponize the virus against American liberty." Citizens have echoed this, describing lawmakers who implement mandatory-mask laws as "stomping on our constitutional rights."[356] Anti-protest signs employ revolutionary-era rhetoric by mentioning tyranny, constitutional rights, and freedom with Gadsden flags in the background. A *Newsmax* article by legal scholar Stephen B. Presser went so far as to ask if George Washington would wear a face mask in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and ultimately proclaimed that public health restrictions could rationally be viewed as violations of America's founding values of liberty and individualism.[357]

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[355] Gabrielle Mannino, "Trump: 'She's like a dictator' Talks shift to Mills and reopening Maine amid roundtable in Bangor," NEWS CENTER Maine, 5 June 2020. Accessed 18 June 2020, https://www.newscentermaine.com/article/news/politics/trump-shes-like-a-dictator-talks-shift-to-mills-and-reopening-maine-amid-roundtable-in-bangor/97-dfe61b12-7041-49f8-b074-bc0a0e612f64.

[356] Molly McCann, "Mandatory Masks Aren't About Safety, They're About Social Control," *The Federalist*, 27 May 2020. Accessed 18 June 2020, https://thefederalist.com/2020/05/27/mandatory-masks-arent-about-safety-theyre-about-social-control/.

[357] Stephen B. Presser, "Would George Washington Wear a Face Mask?" Newsmax.com, 28 May 2020. Accessed 31 May 2020, https://www.newsmax.com/stephenbpresser/left-right-founders-framers/2020/05/28/id/969430/.

In reality, far from being contradictory to the founding ideals of the United States, early Americans understood that government-supported health measures were a mandatory component to the health of the population and national strength. In debating the spread of yellow fever with British physicians in 1802, Philadelphia physician Charles Caldwell declared that "Resolved on independence, in all its relations, we feel disencumbered of the weight of provincial shackles, no less in the science of medicine than of government. For the latter we do homage to the memory of a WASHINGTON, for the former posterity will do justice to the genius of a RUSH." In this instance, Caldwell resented European physicians for what he described as the "empty pretensions of foreigners, who attempt to teach us what they themselves do not understand." Instead, he aimed to "vindicat[e] the right which [the] United States have to think and decide for themselves, respecting the diseases of their own country."[358] He elevated an epidemiological debate to the political level by associating medical knowledge and authority with independence and freedom from British influence. The references to Washington and Rush raised them up as American luminaries who had brought about this age of American glory. By the end of the eighteenth century, prominent Americans such as Caldwell felt secure in the nation's superior intellect and government, and that the two were intertwined.

The ideologies and events that brought these two topics together into common consideration highlight the importance of studying the development of political authority and government through efforts to regulate life and promote wellness, as it emphasizes

[358] Charles Caldwell, *A Reply to Dr. Haygarth's "Letter to Dr. Percival, on infectious fevers," and his "Address to the College of Physicians at Philadelphia, on the prevention of the American pestilence"* (Philadelphia: Printed by Thomas and William Bradford, 1802), 10-11, 1.

governing for the collective body. Municipal and colonial governments expanded their responsibilities towards inhabitants by enacting bold and innovative policies and institutions to protect and improve the population. With the advent of political arithmetic in the early-eighteenth century, deaths could be analyzed on the communal level. This introduction of a macro understanding of death offered cultural and political authorities insight into what harmed their communities: who were dangerous groups, seasons of high mortality, and categorized causes of death. It also prioritized the health of the community as a whole over that of the individual. The resulting institutions and policies expanded the authority of government and allowed them to police the environment and individual behavior. From the early eighteenth-century's slow acceptance of inoculation and establishment of joined public and private health institutions, the state and eventually federal government sought to reform behavior, living and working spaces, and interpersonal connections to promote longevity and population increase. Minimizing mortality and increasing the population represented much more than major topics of medical knowledge and political theory in the eighteenth century; they represent the growing responsibility towards and authority of governmental offices and officials in the eighteenth century.

The preservation of life and caring for the health of citizens became an expected duty of good governments. The expectation that leaders would enact policies, oversee institutions, and guide efforts to address causes of death and ultimately protect the population, highlighted throughout this dissertation, offered a means by which Americans argued for the legitimacy of their own governments. In the revolutionary and early national eras, this distinction served as an effective means to differentiate themselves

from British leaders and to cast doubt on British governance. Propagandized fearmongering during the Revolutionary War attempted to turn political arithmetic against the British by arguing that King George III had lost his right to rule over American colonists because of inhumane death and attempts at depopulation. In contrast, revolutionary leaders sought to gain support for their own governance by publicizing stories of honorable treatment and protection of life. This was celebrated as a triumph of modern knowledge and political ideology, as physicians, reformers, and officials had collaborated to master death and decrease human suffering. By the late-eighteenth century, policies and offices that promoted health and longevity represented the achievements of government by and for the people.

On another level, death is about individuals: their passing and their remembrance. Beginning with the growth of printed commemoration in the early decades of the century the deaths of individuals, when taken together, were applied to social and political ends. Aggregating the exemplary dead together defined a community through their shared values and culture, while also fostering bonds between the people and their leaders. Raising local dead to widespread notice praised common values and passed judgement on what was deemed useful to the community. In the colonial era, commemoration was an outlet for local authorities to improve colonial reputations from savage to refined. In the last quarter of the century, notable deaths offered American leaders an opportunity to bring out popular support for the cause and nation, while the common recognition of American heroes, values, and sacrifices gave form to an emerging national identity. Between leaders and ordinary people, public mourning displayed support for the governing administration and their values. These practiced continued throughout the

entire century but, in the post-revolutionary period, they brought American citizens and the national government together in common—though still hierarchical and socially divided—ritualized displays of patriotism and mourning.

Exploring the development and growth of government through the lens of knowledge and interpretations of death offers a starting point from which scholars of early America can illuminate connections between conceptions of the collective "people," increasingly active governments, and reciprocal responsibilities between the governing and the governed. Ultimately, the politics of death are about life. Increasing population, advancing longevity, and the quality of the American dead served as signs of a healthy nation because they represented a responsive government and well-ordered society.

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