

## Pounds, Police, and Patriots:

### How Colonial Reactions to British Quartering Transformed from 1756-1774

Brandon Schwager

Of all the legislation which edged the thirteen colonies towards independence, none are as misrepresented as the Quartering Acts of 1765 and 1774. From an early age, generations of American students are still taught that through the Quartering Acts, Britain forced colonials to take red-coated troops under their roofs, feed them, and care for them. This was not the case.<sup>1</sup> In fact, the Quartering Act of 1765 was actually the first time England ever explicitly banned quartering in private homes.<sup>2</sup>

Misconceptions and oversimplifications surrounding the Quartering Acts occur inside the academic arena as well. The debate amongst historians goes well beyond whether soldiers were housed in private residences. It expands along familiar fault lines. Many scholars still lock horns over whether colonial opposition to Britain's imperial yolk was predominantly spawned from economic self-interest or whether higher minded ideological concerns were at the forefront. The issue of quartering is included in these debates. Scholars are also split as to what degree concerns over quartering can be conflated with colonial opposition to a standing army.

When analyzing British motivations for pursuing quartering practices, as well as colonial responses, it becomes clear that the truth lies somewhere in the middle for each issue. If one focuses on the Quartering Act of 1765, the dispute seemed to be mostly fiscal in nature, with little objection to the idea of the army. However, by the time the 1774 version was written, political and philosophical objections took up a larger share of the conflict. In order to demonstrate this argument, three main areas will be analyzed. First, British and colonial experiences with quartering during the French and Indian War will be discussed. Second, the motivations and reactions to the two Quartering Acts themselves will be examined. Finally, a comparison between colonial responses to the Quartering Acts and other controversial legislation will be provided.

British quartering efforts and colonial resistance during the French and Indian War is a useful starting point for the topic. The reasons are two-fold. First, examples of the varying motivations for resistance to quartering during this conflict show how complex and multi-dimensional colonial sentiment was. Additionally, studying how the topography of civil-military relations developed during this time serves as a useful backdrop for why anxieties between these groups flared up in later periods.

From the British perspective, the need for quartering, especially in private

---

<sup>1</sup> James Volo, *The Boston Tea Party: The Foundations of Revolution*, (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2012), 118.

<sup>2</sup> Woody Holton, "The Hidden History of the Stamp Act," *Humanities*, vol. 36, no. 4 (Jul/Aug. 2015): 19, EBSCOhost accessed April 7, 2017.

homes, was an issue of military logistics and financial prudence. The historian Jack Greene pointed out that in terms of barracks and public housing, no American town had enough spare beds available to shelter a force large enough to defend it.<sup>3</sup> This created a conundrum for the British military trying to wage a war over a vast frontier. Especially since the military commanders were not certain what legal rights they had to quarter soldiers in the colonies.

The Mutiny Act, first passed in 1689, banned quartering in private homes on the English mainland. However, this precedent was not a useful template for the British military in the Americas. For starters, the presence of large government barracks in England had long rendered private quartering obsolete.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, most of the provisions of the Mutiny Act did not extend to colonial territories, so there was no legal precedent to fall back on. The historian John Zimmerman noted that, such was the confusion, when General John Campbell, Earl of Loudoun, specifically asked for clarification as to his rights to quarter soldiers before he left to take control of the army in 1756, he was given no clear answer.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly enough, Campbell actually petitioned Parliament to fully extend the Mutiny Act and its protections to the American colonies, probably just to make the laws more streamlined.<sup>6</sup> Parliament refused this request, leaving the question open-ended.

In the end, Campbell interpreted this vagueness to mean that he did have the right to quarter his soldiers in private homes. His attempts to enforce this right constantly put him at odds with colonial assemblies. According to the historian Lois Schwoerer this was because an inherent bias against standing armies had been transmitted to the colonies starting in the 1720's via the writings of pamphleteers such as Trenchard and Gordon.<sup>7</sup> Schwoerer further claimed this anti-army bias was so widespread that it became a basic assumption of almost every political leader in the colonies. It is true that there was some political opposition to Campbell's attempts to get soldiers quartered. On at least three separate occasions, when dealing with New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts, Campbell had to issue ultimatums to the colonial legislatures essentially telling them to comply with orders to quarter soldiers, or else additional troops would be deliberately garrisoned in their towns as a punishment.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>Jack Greene, "The South Carolina Quartering Dispute, 1757-1758," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, vol. 60 # 4 (Oct., 1959): 193, JSTOR accessed April 7, 2017.

<sup>4</sup>William S. Fields and David T. Hardy, "The Third Amendment and the Issue of the Maintenance of Standing Armies: A Legal History," *The American Journal of Legal History*, vol. 35, no. 4 (Oct., 1991): 415, JSTOR accessed March 29, 2017.

<sup>5</sup>John Zimmerman, "Governor Denny and the Quartering Act of 1756," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 91, # 3 (Jul., 1967): 268, JSTOR accessed March 29, 2017.

<sup>6</sup>Hyun Wu Lee, "Living with the Redcoats: Anglo-American Opposition to the Quartering Acts, 1756-1776" (master's thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2008), 14, Google Scholar, accessed March 29, 2017.

<sup>7</sup>Lois Schwoerer, *No standing armies! The antiarmy ideology in seventeenth-century England*, (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press), 1974, 196.

<sup>8</sup>Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766*, (New York: Borzoi Books, 2000), 181.

There are other historians, such as Hyun Lee in his masters' thesis, who attempted to argue that colonial resistance to the quartering attempted by General Campbell during the French and Indian War was not serious, simply because these colonial protestations were not always successful.<sup>9</sup> However, this interpretation downplays the significant degrees to which quartering was resisted in certain areas. It also ignores the fact that by the end of the war, the colonies were universally successful in wresting the authority to quarter away from the military, and into the domain of their own legislatures.<sup>10</sup>

However, just because opposition existed, did not mean it necessarily rose from objections to a standing army as Schwoerer assumed. The historian Alan Rogers claimed that when most colonists spoke out against forced quartering during the French and Indian War they were often using the rhetoric of broader concerns as a masquerade to hide economic selfishness.<sup>11</sup> The evidence seems to vary by colony as to whether Rogers or Schwoerer is more correct. General Campbell certainly appeared to believe that colonial objections were simply thinly veiled frugality. In a letter expressing his frustrations over struggles to get his troops quartered in Albany, he wrote, "[t]he delays we meet with in carrying on the service, from every part of this country are immense. They have assumed to themselves what they call rights and privileges, totally unknown in the mother country, and made use for no purpose but to screen them from giving any aid... ."<sup>12</sup>

South Carolina's experience with quartering serves as an example which affirms Campbell's notions. Greene wrote that South Carolina was actually compliant in constructing a barracks, providing provisions, and allowing officers to be quartered in private homes.<sup>13</sup> If indeed South Carolinians had harbored a deep fear of standing armies, it is unlikely their legislature would have assented to those policies. South Carolina was clearly concerned with the monetary cost of such policies and made several efforts to defray the expenses incurred. In particular, they refused to equip the barracks with furniture or utensils, and demanded the officers reimburse homeowners for their quarter, rather than footing the bill to the assembly.<sup>14</sup> In fact, it was only after Colonel Henry Bouquet specifically ordered his officers not to pay for their housing arrangements that South Carolina took a 'principled' stand against private quartering altogether.<sup>15</sup>

However, not every colony's objections were so miserly. Fields and Hardy point out that for many colonies, the construction of a barracks was a symbolic concession that standing armies had a permanent role to play in North America.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Lee, "Living with Redcoats," 3-4.

<sup>10</sup> John Shy, *Toward Lexington: The Role of the British Army in the Coming of the American Revolution*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 167-168.

<sup>11</sup> Alan Rogers, "Colonial Opposition to the Quartering of Troops During the French and Indian War," *Military Affairs*, vol. 34, #1 (Feb., 1970): 7, JSTOR accessed April 7, 2017

<sup>12</sup> Fred Anderson, *A People's Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years' War*, (Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina University Press, 1984), 177.

<sup>13</sup> Greene, "South Carolina Dispute," 198.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>16</sup> Fields and Hardy, "Third Amendment," 415.

The historian John Shy expanded upon this point, partially agreeing with Schwoerer, Fields, and Hardy by mentioning that over the past century the English had developed a political distaste for standing armies. For Americans, he argued, this natural distaste was not just inherited, but amplified due the pains of trying to shelter and feed large forces on sparsely settled land.<sup>17</sup>

These political hesitations served as a counter-weight to South Carolina's example, and can best be seen played out by the colonies of Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. From the very beginning, they both entrenched against Campbell's demands. For a time, Pennsylvania even refused to allow private housing to be used in winter, forcing over 300 troops to sleep in the snow in Philadelphia.<sup>18</sup> Pennsylvanians invoked a 'slippery slope' argument as their rationale for refusing the soldiers quarters, stating, "...if necessity warranted quartering on private houses by force, contrary to law; they might say it was necessary to quarter the whole army, not only in one city, but in one square, or one street; and thereby harass the inhabitants excessively."<sup>19</sup> When Governor Denny pleaded with the legislature to give at least the officers' quarters, Benjamin Franklin went so far as to call him a Turkish 'Bashaw', implying that he was trying to set up a military dictatorship.<sup>20</sup>

Massachusetts provided perhaps the strongest case for a principled stand against quartering during this time. Although Massachusetts' actions seemed to have been taken out of an idea of colonial solidarity, rather than an objection to a standing army. When General Campbell resorted to threats in order to force Pennsylvania and New York to allow soldiers into private homes, Governor Pownall and the Massachusetts legislature took offense that they were not being given the same rights afforded Englishmen under the Mutiny Act. They both publicly condemned Campbell, and out of spite, decided to construct their required barracks on Castle William; an island located miles off the coast.<sup>21</sup> The effects of constructing the barracks there would have unintended rippling consequences over a decade later. Additionally, Massachusetts followed the example set by New York and Pennsylvania and passed their own ban on quartering soldiers in private houses. Unlike the other colonies, they never yielded this ban, even when pressured in similar ways by Campbell.<sup>22</sup>

When discussing the narrative of resistance to quartering, Shy mentions an important caveat: it was only a theme during the early campaigns of the war. By the later stages, the politics of quartering itself were no longer relevant as the British had internally resolved many of their logistical and supply chain issues.<sup>23</sup> The army remained active on the frontier long after the French and Indian War concluded. The dissipation of quartering protest after the financial issues had been resolved strongly implies that economic concerns were more important to most colonists than opposition to a standing army in peacetime.

---

<sup>17</sup> Shy, *Lexington*, 165.

<sup>18</sup> Fields and Hardy, "Third Amendment," 415.

<sup>19</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, December 23, 1756.

<sup>20</sup> Rogers, "Colonial Opposition," 8.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>23</sup> Shy, 145.

Nonetheless, even with the friction of quartering removed, the presence of British troops in the colonies set the backdrop for future resistance to the Quartering Acts in other important ways. Anderson notes that the French and Indian War was the first time many colonists were exposed to the harsh traditions of military corporal punishment and developed a negative predisposition towards the moral behavior of many British regulars.<sup>24</sup> The adverse feelings were mutual, as redcoats regularly observed that when supply chains broke down or pay was delayed, many provincial soldiers would readily mutiny or desert.<sup>25</sup> The regulars' perceptions of the American civilian populace were just as negative. They saw colonials generally as a greedy and small-minded people who were incapable of true sacrifice in defense of the empire.<sup>26</sup> These same tensions would return, with disastrous effects in later conflicts over quartering.

Having examined some of the angles of resistance to quartering during the French and Indian War, the background is set to begin discussion of the official Quartering Acts. The causes and conflicts which orbit the first Quartering Act, passed in 1765, best support the view of those who prefer an economic interpretation. To start, British motivations for passing the first Quartering Act revolved around taxation and revenue generation.

When General Thomas Gage proposed the idea of the Quartering Act to Parliament, like General Campbell before him, the complexities of military logistics were his paramount concern. Specifically, Gage was concerned that if he had to march troops long distances between forts or major cities, there would not be enough barracks or public houses to support his soldiers.<sup>27</sup> Wanting to avoid the same headaches Loudoun had encountered earlier, Gage specifically wanted Parliament to pass a law allowing him to quarter troops in private houses on the frontier.

Unfortunately for Gage, the Grenville administration had financial stress, not military expediency on its mind. The French and Indian War had saddled England with a debt of over 150 million pounds, and a recurring cost of over 2 million pounds a year to maintain its current army.<sup>28</sup> As a result, when Grenville received Gage's request for an expansion of quartering, Grenville went much further than what Gage asked for. Grenville's draft was a bill that allowed for soldiers stationed in cities as well as the frontier to be quartered since that would ultimately save the crown more money than only quartering in countryside homes.<sup>29</sup>

Even worse for Gage, there were many in Parliament who thought that the provisions of Gage and Grenville's proposed act would needlessly alienate American colonists. There were fierce arguments, especially in the House of Commons, where it was recorded in their proceedings that even after the Quartering Act was "...totally disarmed of its offensive clause, the quartering of soldiers...upon private houses, [it]

---

<sup>24</sup> Anderson, *A People's Army*, 112, 116-117.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>27</sup> Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 648.

<sup>28</sup> Volo, *Boston Tea Party*, 106.

<sup>29</sup> Shy, *Lexington*, 189.

was yet battled clause by clause...”.<sup>30</sup> The end result was a fairly long Act, which refused Gage the one thing he had asked for: the right to quarter soldiers in private homes. The Act itself had many provisions intended to douse any potential ire the colonists might feel about it. Specifically, article IV established a mechanism of appeal where citizens could lodge complaints if they felt a soldier or officer had abused or violated the Act.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, article I made it explicitly clear that public buildings could only be used for quarters only after all the barracks provided by the colonies were full.<sup>32</sup> Finally, Anderson notes that in the first iteration of the Act, soldiers still had to pay for most provisions and transportation, albeit at discounted rates.<sup>33</sup> He does admit however, as the Quartering Act was amended and renewed each year, later articles required the colonies to provide those same services for free.<sup>34</sup>

These pacifying provisions worked tremendously well. The overall response to the first Quartering Act was a story of compliance. It took over a year before there was enough serious opposition to the Quartering Act that Gage had to start demanding appropriations from colonial assemblies.<sup>35</sup> While only Pennsylvania adhered to the Quartering Act to the letter of the law, every colony except Massachusetts eventually complied with most of its statutes.<sup>36</sup> There was even one occasion where Thomas Gage was delighted to hear that the assembly of New Jersey even paid extra money than what was required to help repair existing barracks.<sup>37</sup>

This cooperation with quartering firmly refutes the notions of some historians, such as Benjamin Carp, or Fields and Hardy who argued that Americans were suspicious of any laws that made it easier to house troops in their midst, and such suspicion was intrinsically linked to fears of a standing army.<sup>38</sup> In reality, what opposition did exist was fairly light, and in the first couple years it was usually couched in terms of bemoaning a burdensome tax, rather than fears of lost liberty. One example of this type of protest was published in the *Boston Evening-Post* in which the author warned that, “...it was legal to quarter troops...in Scotland before the Union, and it never having been altered by law since, troops are to this day in that country quartered at discretion, on those who neglect or refuse to pay the land tax...this is now urged as a precedent for like measures in America...”<sup>39</sup>

South Carolina continued its tradition of financially conditional cooperation. At one point, Gage recorded how the assembly refused to provide for his troops

---

<sup>30</sup> R.C. Simmons and P.D.G. Thomas, eds. *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America: 1754-1783*, vol. 2, (Milwood: NY: Kraus International Publications, 1984), 51.

<sup>31</sup> The Quartering Act of 1765.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 650.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Shy, *Lexington*, 255.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 256.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Gage, *The Correspondence of General Thomas Gage*. Edited by Clarence E. Carter, Vol. 1, 1763-1775, (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1969), 243.

<sup>38</sup> Benjamin Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots: the Boston Tea Party & the Making of America*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 194; Fields and Hardy, “Third Amendment,” 395.

<sup>39</sup> *Boston Evening-Post*, June 17, 1765.

unless the colony was given permission to use its own paper money.<sup>40</sup> According to Shy, all of the early complaints to the first Quartering Act were focused on taxation, rather than any objection towards a standing army.<sup>41</sup>

Even New York's famous initial refusal to fully comply with the Quartering Act was explicitly stated as a plea to alleviate the financial strains of the Act. In a letter from the New York Assembly to Governor Henry Moore published by the *New York Mercury*, the Assembly asserted, "in the Provision we made last Session for quartering...we loaded ourselves with a Burden much greater than any of the neighboring governments...this Expense would become ruinous and insupportable; And, therefore, we cannot...put in the Power of any Person...to lay such a burden on them."<sup>42</sup> Eventually, Parliament had to draft a law threatening to suspend the New York legislature in order to force them to appropriate the requisite funds to satisfy the Quartering Acts. However, as the historian Claude Van Tyne pointed out, New York actually caved to the pressure and appropriated funds before the punitive Restraining Act could take place. As a result, the "Restraining Act had never in fact operated for a day."<sup>43</sup>

Still, once the public became aware that Parliament was willing to suspend assemblies to force compliance with the law, resistance both amplified and transformed in language. Even John Dickinson, at the time a former assembly representative for Pennsylvania, who was one of the more cautious and conservative revolutionary minds, felt compelled to protest. In his widely circulated, *Letters from a Farmer to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies*, he chastised Parliament saying that the suspension of the New York Assembly was, "...as injurious in its principle to the liberties of these colonies as the Stamp Act was..."<sup>44</sup> Dickinson was not the sole future founding father to speak out. Benjamin Franklin renewed his passionate rhetoric against quartering in defense of the New York Assembly. In a letter to Lord Kames, Franklin threatened if similar acts of oppression continued they would, "lessen greatly, if not annihilate the Profits of your Commerce...and hasten their final Revolt: For the Seeds of Liberty are universally sown there, and nothing can eradicate them."<sup>45</sup>

Even many in England had become aware of colonial bitterness regarding the threatened suspension of the Assembly. The increased tenor of American malcontent was demonstrated in an article originally published in the *London Chronicle* which explained, "...by taking away from the Province of New-York...all the powers of legislation...the language of such an act seemed to them to be, Obey implicitly the laws made by Parliament...or you shall enjoy no rights or privileges at all."<sup>46</sup> In many ways, Parliament's attempt to enforce the Quartering Act was more damaging to colonial relations than the Quartering Act itself.

---

<sup>40</sup> Gage, *Correspondence*, 240.

<sup>41</sup> Shy, *Lexington*, 142-143.

<sup>42</sup> *New York Mercury*, December 29, 1766.

<sup>43</sup> Claude Van Tyne, *The Causes of the War of Independence: Being the First Volume of a History of the Founding of the American Republic*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1951), 279.

<sup>44</sup> National Humanities Center, *Letters from a Farmer*.

<sup>45</sup> National Humanities Center, "Letter to Lord Kames."

<sup>46</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 4/28/1768.

Despite the controversy, many historians have argued that the Quartering Act likely could have survived this crisis. At least, if the redcoat's function had remained reserved to policing the frontier, a role the colonists were generally appreciative of.<sup>47</sup> As American protests swelled against the Townshend Duties, particularly in Boston, the British regulars in North America took on a new role which reignited the unease between civilians and the army that was originally exposed during the French and Indian War. According to Lee, the drama that unfolded in Boston in 1768 was the main turning point where opposition to quartering shifted from financial to ideological opposition.<sup>48</sup>

An article published in Sam Adams' patriot propaganda diary, the *Journal of Occurrences*, described the foreboding scene of the arriving British troops: "So that we now behold Boston Surrounded at a Time of profound Peace, with about 14 Ships of War, with springs on the Cables, and Broad Sides to the Town!"<sup>49</sup> The conflict between the town and the soldiers sent to police it began even before the soldiers could fully disembark. General Gage explained the predicament in a letter he wrote to the Earl of Hillsborough: "The Council inferred that no quarters could be had in the town, til the barracks in Castle Island were filled; and further that the business of quartering did not come properly before them...they returned for answer, that the act did not require them to quarter troops."<sup>50</sup>

The Bostonian position was technically correct. According to the law, General Gage could not quarter troops in any public houses until the island barracks built during the French and Indian War were full. Everyone involved, including General Gage and the commanding officer at the scene, Colonel William Darlymple, knew full well that stationing troops on the island would entirely defeat the purpose of their deployment. So the troops got stuck in a limbo; many camping outside on the Boston Common while others took shelter in the town hall.<sup>51</sup> As some troops started to die from the poor conditions, General Gage and the Governor worked to build barracks or hire quarters at their personal expense.

However, even these efforts were often stiffly opposed. Van Tyne recounted how many Bostonian laborers refused to work on the construction of barracks inside the town. Also, many local merchants refused to sell lumber.<sup>52</sup> In some cases Gage had to purchase lumber from as far away as Nova Scotia, and even when it arrived, local patriots would sabotage it.<sup>53</sup> These obstructionist behaviors were clearly more than just financial protest. They were signs that the populace was becoming opposed to the army's presence no matter the circumstances.

Eventually, Gage was successful in getting troops quartered upon the town, but they were haphazardly placed with very little organization. As a result of this

<sup>47</sup> Shy, *Lexington*, 190, 192.

<sup>48</sup> Lee, "Living with Redcoats," 2.

<sup>49</sup> Armand Lucier, ed. *Journal of Occurrences: Patriot Propaganda on the British Occupation of Boston, 1768-1769*, (Bowie: MD: Heritage Books, 1996), 1.

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Gage, *Correspondence*, 202.

<sup>51</sup> Van Tyne, *War of Independence*, 286.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 418.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*



spread-out command, it was enormously difficult to enforce discipline.<sup>54</sup> Soldier's behavior was generally poor, with many examples of public lewdness, drunkenness, as well as some cases of rapes, assaults, and theft.<sup>55</sup> *The Journal of Occurrences* characterized the situation as such: "The quartering of Troops in the Body of a Town is as ruinous to the Soldiery as it is distressing to the Inhabitants: Every Day furnishes out Instances of their Debaucheries and Consequent Violence."<sup>56</sup> *The Journal* also outlined problems that paralleled those observed during the French and Indian War, such as public disgust at the harsh lashings soldiers would receive, as well as frequent desertions.<sup>57</sup> Despite the frequent brawls and disorder, Middlekauf argued that what was more distressing to Bostonians than the violence and disorder was the atmosphere of lost liberty. The very idea that citizens could be challenged or regulated by a soldier on the street as they went about their business symbolized what they felt was wrong about the whole ordeal.<sup>58</sup>

After the chaotic occupation of the town came to a head in the event known as the Boston Massacre, many of the Townshend duties were repealed and the Quartering Act was allowed to expire. The publicized propaganda surrounding the 'Massacre' as well as the occupation in general had gone a long way towards dismantling colonial loyalty for the army. General Gage reflected on this decreased loyalty in multiple letters to the Earl of Hillsborough written in 1770 and 1771 in which he informed the Earl that many legislatures, even those which had cooperated with the Quartering Act in the past such as New Jersey, were no longer appropriating funds on their own.<sup>59</sup>

Seeing as how the landscape of American attitudes towards quartering were fundamentally changed by the occupation of Boston, it should come as no surprise that when the British attempted to institute a new Quartering Act in 1774, it did not enjoy any of the early success of its 1765 cousin. Americans appeared to genuinely be more nervous about tyranny than taxes for once. The historian Bernard Bailyn asserted that after the Boston Tea Party it was difficult to see how constitutional issues could continue to be dismissed as mere window dressing for economic ones.<sup>60</sup>

To illustrate his point, Bailyn referred to Thomas Jefferson's *Summary View of the Rights of British America* which was presented before the first Continental Congress in 1774. In the work, Jefferson argued that what were once isolated acts of tyranny had grown into a series of oppressions. Jefferson stated that this implied that there was a deliberate and systematic plan being executed by the British to reduce the colonies to slavery.<sup>61</sup> Admittedly, since the Continental Congress was a public and

---

<sup>54</sup> Robert Middlekauf, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution 1763-1789*, (Oxford: Oxford

University Press, 2005), 200.

<sup>55</sup> Middlekauf, *Glorious Cause*, 201.

<sup>56</sup> Lucier, *Journal of Occurrences*, 171.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 12, 67.

<sup>58</sup> Middlekauf, *Glorious Cause*, 202.

<sup>59</sup> Gage, *Correspondence*, 262, 301-302.

<sup>60</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), 118.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 119-120.

politicized arena, Jefferson could easily have dramatized his concerns for effect. However, private correspondence echoed Jefferson's sentiments. The aspiring lawyer William Bradford sent a personal letter in August of 1774 to his friend James Madison in which Bradford expressed fears that even if the Intolerable Acts were repealed, that Britain would simply replace them in a short time with new oppressive laws.<sup>62</sup>

In fairness, one of the reasons why colonists may have suspected sinister intent beyond new laws from Britain was because British attitudes had shifted as well. As one of the Coercive Acts, the Quartering Act of 1774 was deliberately crafted as a piece of punitive legislation rather than as an attempt to tax. Contrary to the political climate when the first Quartering Act was passed, very few members of Parliament were sympathetic to the colonies. Any sympathizers that remained had already expended their political capital on other issues and stayed silent. The legislation passed with zero debate in the House of Commons and only one oppositional speech was given in the House of Lords.<sup>63</sup>

The new Quartering Act was only a paragraph long and it did not include any methods for appealing abuse, nor did it include instructions on what order buildings were to be taken for housing. Furthermore, article II added the broad discretionary clause that in addition to public buildings, the governor had the right to seize any "...other buildings, as he shall think necessary to be taken."<sup>64</sup> This clause is largely interpreted to mean that quartering could have been forced upon private houses. However, the historian Don Gerlach pointed out that there was no evidence that the full authority of this clause was ever exercised.<sup>65</sup> In fact, Shy mentioned that General Gage quickly realized that the new Coercive Acts were not enforceable. Instead of trying to enforce the Coercive Acts, Gage mostly seemed interested in postponing conflict. He hoped to avoid antagonizing the colonies any further than necessary in order to protect his men.<sup>66</sup>

One cannot get the full context of colonial opposition to the Quartering Acts without at least some understanding of how Americans felt about quartering compared to the other issues of the day. A few historians, such as Volo have claimed that the second Quartering Act, along with the Quebec Act were the two Intolerable Acts which mattered most to the colonies as a whole, as they potentially impacted everyone equally, and not just Massachusetts.<sup>67</sup>

Benjamin Franklin certainly felt the Quartering Act was still worth discussing as he attempted to avert the crisis that was developing between Britain and the colonies. In 1775, Franklin prepared a set of notes for himself prior to a diplomatic meeting with Lord Catham so Franklin could remember what points he wanted to get across. Among the notes he jotted down, Franklin argued that the current iteration of the Quartering Act was not sustainable and needed to be revised as it could be wielded

---

<sup>62</sup> James Madison, *The Papers of James Madison*, eds. William T. Hutchinson, William M. E. Rachal, and Robert Allen Rutland, Vol. 4, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 118.

<sup>63</sup> Middlekauf, *Glorious Cause*, 237.

<sup>64</sup> The Quartering Act of 1774.

<sup>65</sup> Don Gerlach, "A Note on the Quartering Act of 1774," *The New England Quarterly*, vol. 39, iss. 1 (Mar., 1966): 80, JSTOR accessed March 29, 2017.

<sup>66</sup> Shy, *Lexington*, 411-412.

<sup>67</sup> Volo, *Boston Tea Party*, 178.

as a political weapon against colonies that were not in favor.<sup>68</sup>

Despite the Quartering Acts being a central issue to some, most historians have appeared to agree with Lee that American opposition to quartering definitively took a back seat to other issues; especially issues related to taxation.<sup>69</sup> For example, while the first Quartering Act and Stamp Act were passed the same year, only the colony of New York engaged in any form of meaningful protest against the Quartering Act. On the other hand, with the Stamp Act, the Parliament-issued stamps had to spend at least some time protected by the royal navy in every colony due to fears that the stamps would be destroyed by rioters immediately after distribution.<sup>70</sup> There was a similar level of concern regarding the Tea Act. An example of this could be seen by John Adams' letter to James Warren written in the aftermath of the Boston Tea Party. In it, Adams expressed fear that colonial rioters would destroy the tea at every port in which it made landfall, and actually suggested that ships carrying tea be turned back for their own protection.<sup>71</sup>

Even during the most volatile moments in the occupation of Boston; outside of the city itself, the rest of the colonies were far more concerned with repealing the Townshend duties than they were with removing the Quartering Act. Alexander Hamilton did not even find the Quartering Acts worth mentioning as one of the key grievances against the British. In February of 1775, Hamilton published *The Farmer Refuted* in which he identified the Stamp Act as the commencement of colonial misfortunes, followed by many other events including the Revenue Act and the blockade of Boston.<sup>72</sup> But he did not cite the Quartering Acts as one of the major offenses.

Hamilton's failure to specifically recognize the Quartering Acts as an offense was not unusual at the time. Lee claimed that after the Intolerable Acts were passed there was not a single American newspaper which decried the second Quartering Act specifically.<sup>73</sup> Rather, most opposition was levied against the Intolerable Acts in general. Some of the other Intolerable Acts were offensive enough to colonists enough to warrant being singled out though. George Washington noted how the Quebec Act was particularly offensive to Virginia where Richard Henry Lee, on the floor of the Virginia legislature, denounced it, stating that it was the most outrageous act of them all.<sup>74</sup>

Still, it is important to avoid dismissing the Quartering Acts when assigning

<sup>68</sup> Benjamin Franklin, *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, edited by William B. Wilcox, Vol. 21, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978), 461.

<sup>69</sup> Lee, "Living with Redcoats," 4.

<sup>70</sup> Volo, *Boston Tea Party*, 113.

<sup>71</sup> John Adams, *The Papers of John Adams*, edited by Robert J. Taylor, Vol. 2, (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), 1.

<sup>72</sup> Alexander Hamilton, *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton*, Eds. Harold C. Syrett, and Jacob Ernest Cooke, Vol. 1, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 133-135.

<sup>73</sup> Lee, "Living with Redcoats," 64.

<sup>74</sup> George Washington, *The writings of George Washington from the original manuscript sources, 1745-1799*, edited by John C. Fitzpatrick, Vol. 3, (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 87-88.

primacy to which offenses contributed most significantly in pushing America towards rebellion. Too often, when debates of primacy occur, the causes are treated like parallel bars on a graph: whichever one is the tallest should get the lion's share of the 'credit' for inspiring an event. The course of history however, flows much more like a river. If the stream of events were to get dammed up, even at one of its shallow points, the river would cease to run the same course.

The analogy holds true when weighing the importance of colonial opposition to quartering. For example, if Massachusetts had never constructed the barracks at Castle William during the French and Indian War, then the occupation of Boston in 1768 would likely have gone over more smoothly. If that period of occupation had taken place with less unrest, then crucial sparking events such as the Boston Massacre or the Boston Tea Party possibly would not have happened. In addition, if universally punishing acts such as the Quartering Act of 1774 were not passed with the remainder of the Coercive Acts, then it is possible that the southern colonies might have let Massachusetts stand alone against the British. On and on such consiliences of history can ripple outward.

Overall, this argument is not trying to suggest that the Quartering Act should supplant the Stamp Act or the Boston Tea Party, or any other event, in terms of its importance to colonial history. Rather, it is trying to show that the impacts of the Quartering Acts are sometimes overly simplified or misunderstood. By delving deeper into the complex web of motivations behind their passage as well as their opposition, a more rounded picture of the roots of the American Revolution can develop.