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"UNPRINCIPLED MEN WHO ARE ONE DAY BRITISH SUBJECTS
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THE NOVA SCOTIAN MERCHANT COMMUNITY AND
COLONIAL IDENTITY FORMATION, C. 1780-1820

presented by

Patricia L. Rogers

has been accepted towards fulfillment
of the requirements for

Ph.D. _____ degree in History


Gordon Stewart
Major professor

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VOLUME I

By

Patricia L. Rogers

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

"UNPRINCIPLED MEN WHO ARE ONE DAY BRITISH SUBJECTS
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Patricia L. Rogers

My dissertation concentrates on the merchant community in Nova Scotia, from roughly 1780 to 1820, in order to examine issues of communal identity formation in colonial cultures as well as the ultimate cohesion of the Anglo-American Atlantic world which had fostered those cultures. Nova Scotia serves as a model for understanding the ways in which the colonists of the new world created hybrid cultures, and later nations, based upon the interaction between European institutions and ideologies coupled with American environments, conditions and experiences.

Although scholars have frequently assumed that merchants do not form communities, my research on the merchants of Nova Scotia suggests otherwise. Although commerce depends on competition, it also requires cooperation from merchants in regards to various resources (such as news, credit and expertise).

The Loyalists analyzed in my dissertation quickly re-established and then maintained social, familial and commercial affiliations with their former homeland. These activities and ties served to re-secure the new United States firmly within the British Atlantic world as well as to foster

a shared Anglo-American culture. Similarly, many of the commercial networks established prior to 1776, proved to be remarkably resilient in the face of attempted imperial disruptions, such as new trade boundaries.

Through Nova Scotia, I am able to explore issues concerning the role and authority of the "center(s)" within European empires. In the post-Revolutionary era, Great Britain and the United States competed for the attention and loyalties of Nova Scotia, demonstrating the viability and reality of competing centers within a single imperial realm.

Finally, Nova Scotia has frequently been portrayed as a marginal colony and/or commercial outpost caught between two stronger and frequently domineering polities. My research illustrates the ways in which the merchant community advantageously manipulated the rivalries and tensions between Great Britain and the United States, along with their resources, to benefit the economic situation of the merchant community and the colony itself.

Through its exploitation of the American colonies, Europe garnered the fiscal resources necessary to expand increasingly outward. In later years, the imperial powers carried this Atlantic model of commerce and empire across the globe - a process which in many respects came to be one of the defining characteristics of modern history.

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For Jack and Shirley Parker

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endlessly as I constructed and de-constructed merchant communities across the landscape of Nova Scotia. Cecilia Miranda talked me through the entire process (via AT&T) from a B.A to a Ph.D., from Settle to East Lansing. Her support was unstinting, whether the end result was success or failure; while, her profound humor and wisdom made the success possible.

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Introduction: Imperial Settings

A naval empire has always given the peoples who have possessed it a natural pride, because, feeling themselves able to insult others everywhere, they believe that their power is as boundless as the ocean...This is the people who have best known how to take advantage of these three great things at the same time: religion, commerce, and liberty.¹

If he is asked, any Englishman will say of himself and his fellow citizens that it is they who rule the East Indies and the oceans of the world, who dominate world trade, who have a parliament and trial by jury, etc. It is deeds such as these which give the nation its sense of self-esteem.²

Baron de Montesquieu and G. W. F. Hegel wrote on opposite ends of the American Revolution. Both authors capture the traits which increasingly came to be seen as constituting "Britishness" in the same centuries as Britain moved towards nationhood. Great Britain envisioned itself, and its empire, as Protestant, commercial, maritime and free. At the same time that these qualities were successfully transferred to the colonies they were also contested both there and at home. According to David Armitage, the origins, transference and challenging of these four ideals (Protestantism, commerce,

¹Charles Secondat, Baron De Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), pp. 156-165, 328-329; quoted in David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 195.

²G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction*, pp. 101-103; quoted in Armitage, p. 196.

maritime prowess and freedom) demonstrate that they were an ideology before becoming an identity. And, because this was so, Britons could still romantically envision an empire of liberty inhabited by Protestant kith and kin, long after it had become a multiethnic, multiracial, and multidenominational affair.³ Both in British public imagination and in reality, the first British empire, long outlived its supposed demise at the time of the American Revolution. My dissertation looks at the ways in which elements of this ideal eventually worked their way into the cultural identities of Great Britain and its North American colonies.

During the eighteenth century, for those Britons who pondered the subject, the Atlantic colonies made up the heart of their empire.⁴ Increasingly, over that same century,

³Armitage, pp. 194-198.

⁴Recent scholarship has focused on and questioned the British public's awareness of empire during the eighteenth century. Edward Said has asserted that, while rarely acknowledged, empire figured prominently in English literature by the early part of the nineteenth century. In her review of Said's book, Linda Colley countered that the surprise was not that empire appeared in the works of authors such as Jane Austen, but rather that there seemed to be so few mentions of empire generally in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Kathleen Wilson's seminal work addresses this issue, surveying various events involving imperialism which demonstrate British interest in empire in the crucial years from 1715 to 1785. Conversely, Jacob Price in examining British attitudes towards empire on the eve of the American Revolution determined that imperial interest was largely limited to those individuals directly engaged in the Atlantic empire, as for example through trade. Most

policy-makers had come to view both the empire and commerce as the foundations of Great Britain's international power and status. Taken in this light, the American Revolution appeared not only as an imperial, but also a national, crisis. At various times, contemporaries and historians alike have viewed the Revolution as a crossroads, at which the empire broke asunder. Conversely, one of the overarching arguments here is that the Revolution ushered in and acknowledged the reality of an Anglo-American Atlantic world which had been developing over the preceding decades and had come into its own by the mid- to late-eighteenth century. Such an emphasis portrays the reality of America's dawning power within an older British Atlantic world; a power which would complicate the definition of "centers" - imperial, commercial and cultural - in the region during the coming decades. While neither novel or startling, this realization

recently, P. J. Marshall has taken up the issue by looking at British charitable campaigns directed towards America; the first in the era leading up to the Seven Years' War, and the second in the aftermath of that war. See, Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1993); Linda Colley, "The Imperial Embrace," *Yale Review* 81 (October 1993); Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Jacob Price, "Who Cared about the Colonies? The Impact of the Thirteen Colonies on British Society and Politics, circa 1714-1775," in *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); and P. J. Marshall, "Who Cared about the Thirteen Colonies? Some Evidence from Philanthropy," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* (May 1999).

often goes overlooked in the Revolutionary literature.⁵ At the same time, it seems pertinent to bring this conceptualization to the fore in light of the current scholarly interest in Euro-Atlantic studies with its emphasis on transnational histories. For an emphasis on an Anglo-American world within the larger Euro-Atlantic portrays the reality of spheres existing within spheres, or networks and interests within larger imperial realms.

An older historiography accepted the American Revolution as the logical division between the first and second British empires. Vincent Harlow successfully challenged this event-laden formulation, although his own substituted timeframe has subsequently been called into question by historians.⁶

Following recent literature, my dissertation sees the decades after the Revolution as a transitional phase in Britain's

⁵Older classics such as A.L. Burt's work took for granted the economic need for the United States to remain within the "charmed circle of the British commercial system." However, Burt and others, tended to shy away from the realization or only reluctantly admitted that (in the Atlantic) this need was reciprocal. A.L. Burt, *The United States, Great Britain and British North America from the Revolution to the Establishment of Peace after the War of 1812* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1961); also see Charles R. Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution: British Policy Toward the United States, 1783-1795* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1969).

⁶Vincent T. Harlow, *The Founding of the Second British Empire, 1763-1793*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, 1952 and 1964); and, "The New Imperial System, 1783-1815," in *The Cambridge History of the British Empire, 1783-1870*, vol. 2, *The Growth of the New Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940).

empire. It remains debatable as to whether a new empire emerged out of this stage or rather the old empire modernized to adapt to changing realities. Within this framework of shifting paradigms, my research illuminates social, familial, cultural and commercial factors which provided linkages throughout the era and across imperial boundaries. This dissertation examines the discord and ensuing reshuffling within the Anglo-American imperial nexus occasioned by the American Revolution and its aftermath in order to test a number of theses.

I focus on two groups which may be loosely defined as interest groups, the Loyalists and the Anglo-American merchant community. The Loyalists most clearly demonstrate the ultimate coherence within British North America. Even after their removal to Nova Scotia, the Loyalists retained familial, social and cultural ties to their original homeland, now situated in a new nation. All the while, the Loyalists symbolized an imperial setback. For the purposes of my dissertation, the Loyalists were ideally situated variously within, between and outside the competing polities. Through their connections, (re)actions and ideologies, the Loyalists portrayed the spectrum of an Anglo-American Atlantic culture and world. The multifaceted merchant community, on the other hand, represents one of the empire's supreme success stories. Through the merchant community, I am able to explore a number of issues pertinent to this

dissertation. Unlike much of the literature which portrays merchants as a nebulous group brought together only by trade and self-interest, I argue that these men - and those surveyed here are men - constituted an identifiable community, regulated by established and accepted customs, traditions, practices and rules.

Not surprisingly, the merchant community opens a window onto commerce, which constituted a primary rationale for empire. Commercialism, along with Protestantism and liberty, formed the distinctive qualities which Britons attributed to themselves during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Moreover, commerce integrated the empire, through which imperialism became a distinctly British trait as well. Within this context, commerce served to incorporate the western Atlantic colonies into the empire and the national imagination. The North American colonies quickly became first England's and later Britain's commercial outposts. Thus, an analysis of commerce and, in turn, commercial identity tells us much about the development of both the metropole and its colonies.⁷ Similarly the demands of

⁷*Metropolis* refers to the chief or capital city of a country, state, or region; or, a city regarded as a center of a specified activity, for example, a great business. See, *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. (Springfield: Merriam-Webster Inc., 1999). In imperial literature, the term *metropole* refers to the center of the empire. While, in the context of the British empire, *metropole* could refer specifically to London, it also frequently refers to Great Britain itself.

Atlantic commerce prompted the development of the empire which individual merchants and the larger merchant community helped to expand, develop and integrate through their day-to-day activities during the eighteenth century. Finally, similar to the Loyalists, the merchant community represents an interest group operating in the Atlantic in an era of shifting boundaries, imperial and national. By the very nature of their activities, merchants traversed - and at times, transgressed - the new imperial/national boundaries. Their movements reveal much about how contemporaries viewed these constructed barriers. And, like the Loyalists, the merchant community demonstrates the ways in which interest groups responded to the imposition of new divisions within their traditional realm.

Through a focus on Nova Scotia, I am able to analyze the relationships between the metropole and its colonies as well as those between the individual colonies themselves. Nova Scotia traditionally has been portrayed as a marginal province, colonized by the two stronger powers, Old England and New England. Here, I argue that, at crucial moments in time, factions within Nova Scotia understood how to utilize the resources of, and contests between, these two polities to gain leverage and serve the province's own needs.⁸

⁸In a recent article, Elizabeth Mancke has demonstrated the ways in which both British North America and the British empire itself can be re-interpreted by placing the colonies on the margins at the "center" and, thus, de-centering the

Unlike England's original settlement colonies, Nova Scotia exemplifies the maritime-imperial military complex which developed over the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In a number of respects, this imperial development set Nova Scotia apart from the original American colonies, on occasion creating tensions and distrust. An emphasis on Nova Scotia's interaction with the other British North American colonies, particularly New England, illuminates the variety of relationships possible within the traditional rubric of the imperial-colonial bond. As recent British historiography has shown, within the metropole port cities grew up to successfully compete with London for a portion of the colonial trade. Admittedly ports such as Bristol, Liverpool and Glasgow (to name an illustrative few) never usurped London's clear predominance as the center of the empire, nonetheless, they served to diffuse commercial and cultural influence.⁹ Simultaneously, the rise of regional centers in North America dispersed this power even further. At a moment when the issue had become near and dear to imperial official minds, these competing centers seemed to

original thirteen colonies. Elizabeth Mancke, "Another British America: A Canadian Model for the Early Modern British Empire," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 25 (January 1997).

⁹See H.V. Bowen, *Elites, Enterprise and the Making of the British Overseas Empire 1688-1775* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996).

frustrate British efforts to synthesize their empire. This leads to a discussion of what comprises a colony's "center". Within the customary imperial-colonial rhetoric, the center denoted the metropole itself in terms of power and control. While London undoubtedly maintained imperial and military command of Nova Scotia, regions in North America successfully competed to serve as rival centers of commerce and culture.

Finally, through the lens of the American Revolution, I explore issues of identity formation, both colonial (Nova Scotia) and individual. The rupture brought on by this crisis forced colonists to make political and personal choices. In the process, it also caused many of these individuals to question and define their imperial, national and/or cultural identity, often for the first time. By viewing colonial identity formation through Nova Scotia, I conceptualize my dissertation within the framework of Atlantic studies. The colonizing experiments in the Euro-Atlantic empires created common experiences among the settlers which were not shared with their fellow nationals at home.

The Atlantic empire proved to be Great Britain's first imperial success story and its first imperial "failure". Yet, in the interim, the metropole learned valuable lessons which it carried forth into an increasingly global empire. In an imperial and commercial sense, the Euro-Atlantic system provided a paradigm for the outward expansion of these

powers. Moreover, the wealth and resources garnered in the Americas helped to sustain worldwide imperialism. A focus on the Euro-Atlantic realm, therefore, sheds light on current trends in world history. Ultimately, my research proves to be transatlantic rather than transnational, for the merchants surveyed here operated within and sustained an Anglo-American Atlantic commercial world.¹⁰ Nonetheless, the merchants, their experiences and their activities, were all rooted in an Atlantic world and thus provide insight into current Atlantic studies.

Phases of the British Empire

Distinctions between a "first" and "second" - an "old" and "new", an "English" and "British" - empire have long been embedded in the study of British imperialism. As early as the 1840s, commentators compared the "old system" to the current pattern of imperial relations between Great Britain and its dependencies.¹¹ Admittedly often a matter of

¹⁰For a recent discussion of British Atlantic history within the newer and larger field of Atlantic history see, Nicholas Canny, "Writing Atlantic History; or, Reconfiguring the History of Colonial British America," *Journal of American History* (December 1999).

¹¹In his *Expansion of England* (1883), J.R. Seeley accepted that there had been two empires, where the first had been based on an "old colonial system". See P.J. Marshall, "The First British Empire," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 5, *Historiography*, ed. Robin W. Winks

semantics vice reality, the phraseology nonetheless serves to emphasize the very different nature of the nineteenth-century empire from its predecessor. While a general consensus has been reached as to the traits inherent in the first British empire, the precise date of its demise remains highly contested. According to standard usage the first empire was and is synonymous with a "commercial Empire", based upon a system of economic regulation most readily typified by the Navigation Acts. Moreover, the first imperial structure was an Atlantic empire, centered on colonies in North America and the West Indies. The geographical shift to Asia, Africa and Australasia - what Vincent Harlow deemed the "swing to the east" - announced the transition from the first to a second empire. Finally, the first empire was envisioned as one of British settlement overseas and as such carried with it constitutional arrangements. The white settlers of these Atlantic colonies enjoyed both extensive political participation and autonomy.¹²

According to C.A. Bayly, the era between the American Revolution and the Great Reform Bill, running roughly from 1780 to 1830, does constitute a second British empire. In

(Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 43.

¹²Ibid., pp. 43-44; also see, P.J. Marshall, "Britain without America - A Second Empire?," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. P.J. Marshall (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 577.

marked contrast to the relatively benign "salutary neglect" with which London ruled its original Atlantic colonies, a system of authoritative and even autocratic rule characterized this second, largely non-white, empire. Bayly builds on the work of Vincent Harlow, who first developed and sustained the notion of a second British empire. Yet, Bayly discerns and exposes a paradox within Harlow's writings. Harlow thought he recognized in this era a continuation of liberal imperialism as exemplified by Lord Durham's reforms for the government of Canada. In actuality, the substance of Harlow's chapter reveals a systematic attempt to centralize imperial power, to establish the executive at the expense of local liberties, and to remove non-British individuals from positions of significant political power.¹³ These measures, in large part, served as imperial reactions to the North American debacle in which colonial elites had vied successfully with the imperial government and the British-appointed governors, often through their local assemblies.

Bayly's analysis acknowledges the ideological underpinnings of empire which, in turn, has provided new criteria by which to define the imperial phases. He describes the era under question as an *imperial meridian* constituting a distinct stage between the first empire and

¹³C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830*, Studies in Modern History (London: Longman Group UK Limited, 1989), pp. 8-9.

the later Victorian empire. To a certain degree, Bayly complicates our understanding of periodization by demarcating a Victorian empire, separate from the second and suggesting yet a third empire. Harlow developed, and Bayly has re-interpreted, two of the features central to our understanding of a second empire, i.e. the shift in metropolitan focus in terms of both commerce and ideology. At the same time, first Harlow and later Bayly over-emphasize the degree of completeness of these two facets. Britain's economic expansion into Asia did not necessarily come at the expense of development in the Atlantic, as Harlow seemed to suggest. Even after the Revolution, British exports continued to go predominantly to the new United States, the West Indies and, increasingly during the nineteenth century, Latin America.¹⁴

Bayly's reinterpretation of Harlow accurately portrays the shift in ideological foundations of empire which began in the eighteenth century. By the early 1760s, Great Britain assumed control of two large foreign populations in Bengal and Quebec, respectively. These societies presented the metropole with novel problems in governance for which the early Atlantic empire appeared to offer no precedents. Thus, by the end of the eighteenth century, the self-governing Anglo communities no longer predominated (literally or

¹⁴For a discussion of British trade patterns in the Atlantic after the American Revolution see Peter Marshall, "The First and Second British Empires: A Question of Demarcation," *History* (1964).

figuratively) within the British empire. The constitutional model of self-government, founded in the Atlantic empire, however, proved more resilient than Bayly suggests. As early as 1837, shortly after the close of Bayly's *imperial meridian*, Canada moved toward responsible government which gave the remaining British North American colonies even more local autonomy than the pre-1776 settlers had enjoyed. The ideal of self-government, moreover, served as the model for which the remaining colonies were being groomed.

If the timing of the arrival of the second empire remains in doubt, the American Revolution has been generally acknowledged as the mortal crisis of the first. As with most profound events, the interpretations of the Revolution are varied and overlapping. In keeping with the accepted traits of the Atlantic empire, many see the friction arising from changes in the constitutional and/or commercial policies governing the colonies.¹⁵ For many historians, Edmund Burke's

¹⁵In the 1880s, J.R. Seeley described the first empire as inherently instable, in that the metropole claimed absolute authority over the colonies while simultaneously allowing for the development of local autonomies. Seeley recognized in this dichotomy the seeds of revolution. Others, as noted above, have been persuaded by Burke's emphasis on the disruption in the imperial commercial arrangements. Early historians of empire such as Lawrence Henry Gipson and Charles M. Andrews perceived that the character of the commercial empire had begun to change as a result of a series of victories in the eighteenth-century imperial wars against France. By 1748, Gipson saw indicators of a "modern imperialism" requiring the control of distant lands and foreign peoples. To Andrews the incorporation of vast new territories after 1763 meant that to "the old and well-tried colonial policy of mercantalism" would now be added a new

observations remain sound. In 1774, Burke argued that Britain was in danger of losing its colonies through a bid to replace a policy of commercial rule with territorial imperialism. A survey conducted by the historians Ian Christie and Benjamin Labaree confirms Burke's vision of an empire of commerce. According to Christie and Labaree, British views of empire in the 1760s, similar to those of the seventeenth century, centered on the belief that colonies were intended "to contribute to the economic well-being and so to the power of the metropolitan state."¹⁶ At the same time, Burke, along with many historians, recognized a shift occurring within the British political nation regarding the responsibilities and functions of empire. By the late

policy of imperialism concerned with "extent of territory and the exercise of authority." More recently, Stephen Saunders Webb has questioned the priority of commerce in colonial governance for any time period after the late seventeenth century. Conversely Daniel Baugh has argued for a change occurring in the mid-eighteenth century. At that time, the metropole matched a policy of stricter commercial regulation with the willingness and ability to enforce its decrees through military deployment. See Marshall, "The First British Empire," p. 49. Works cited here include: Lawrence Henry Gipson, *The British Empire before the American Revolution*, 15 vols. (Caldwell, Id.: Caxton Printers, 1936-1970); Charles M. Andrews, *The Colonial Period of American History*, 4 volumes (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964); Stephen Saunders Webb, *The Governors-General: The English Army and the Definition of Empire, 1569-1681* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964); and Daniel Baugh, "Maritime Strength and Atlantic Commerce: The Uses of a 'Grand Marine Empire'" in *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815* (London: Routledge, 1994).

¹⁶Ian R. Christie and Benjamin W. Labaree, *Empire or Independence, 1760-1776* (New York: Norton, 1976), pp. 20-21.

eighteenth century, British statesmen and policy-makers were questioning their role as shapers of empire in a way that their seventeenth-century predecessors had not. Particularly in light of the territorial conquests of the Seven Years' War, the determination to centralize the empire had grown stronger amongst these same men.¹⁷ Coupled with the debates and disillusionments of the American Revolution, these imperial tensions would lead, in part, to the ideological shifts identified by Bayly.

In the decades immediately following the Revolution, contemporaries most likely would have been puzzled by the historian's question as to whether there were a first and second empire. Contemporaries in the 1840s - as did Seeley in the 1880s - spoke in terms of an older colonial system vice empire. What can be visualized in these years is a transition from one phase of empire to the next, as policy-

¹⁷The Seven Years' War and its victory created profound doubts and concerns regarding Britain's imperial, amongst both policy-makers and the public. The acquisition of Canada in particular touched off fears that Great Britain was moving away from her "traditional" policy of an empire of commerce to one of territory, with all the expenses, responsibilities and national threats such an entity entailed. Of course, it was debatable (even then) whether Britain had ever solely pursued a commercial empire and, as such, these debates reveal both the ambiguous nature of the empire itself and British ambivalence towards it. The tensions surrounding these debates permeated pre-Revolutionary tensions on both sides of the Atlantic. See Philip Lawson, "'The Irishman's Prize': Views of Canada from the British Press, 1760-1774," *Historical Journal* 28 (1984); and, H. V. Bowen, "Conceptions of Global Empire, 1756-1783," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 26 (September 1998).

makers - often on an ad hoc basis - reacted and adjusted to a changing imperial and international world. Following the lead of P. J. Marshall, I argue here that the transitory phase was neither even nor did it end abruptly.¹⁸ While, undeniably, characteristics associated with the second empire were visible in the aftermath of Revolution, the structure of the first Atlantic empire, in many ways, remained sound. To comprehend these processes it may be helpful to turn our attention away from the metropole out to local communities within the empire. An examination of their reactions to a period of crisis and transition provides a better understanding of the several forces at play in the Atlantic which worked to carry an older empire forward. Ironically, one of these factors was the Loyalists.

The Loyalists

The eighteenth-century British empire was a peculiarly loose and complex structure, particularly in comparison to the other European empires of the day. While it exhibited a number of hallmarks common to European imperialism, such as a military bureaucracy and governors sent out from the metropole, London had permitted its American colonies to mature in an atmosphere of "salutary neglect", becoming more

¹⁸Marshall, "Britain without America".

or less self-regulating.¹⁹ As the century progressed, the American colonies increasingly became a force unto themselves while remaining within the confines of British imperialism. Colonial notables such as Benjamin Franklin could confidently speak of the day when "the greatest number of Englishmen will be on this Side of the Water." The metropole, however, had made no concessions, mental or otherwise, for such a geopolitical eventuality. The tensions of the 1760s escalated into a crisis due, in part, to London's inability to grasp imperial realities already apparent on the other side of the Atlantic. Metropolitan attempts to rationalize and centralize the imperial structure were based on principles no longer acceptable in the American colonies. Parliament stubbornly denied the necessary role the colonists played in sanctioning imperial policies and, more importantly, failed to understand the Americans' power to refuse to do so.²⁰

Just as the deceptively informal structure of the British empire had hidden America's growing power, it also

¹⁹For a discussion of the commonalities between the European Atlantic colonies see John H. Elliott, "Introduction: Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World," chap. in *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World*, ed. Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

²⁰D. W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*. Vol. 1, *Atlantic America, 1492-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp 299-300.

tended to mask the inherent imperial nature of the relationship from the American colonists. As Stephen Saunders Webb has emphasized, "there are no empires without armies."²¹ Responding to earlier riots, the metropole hastily gathered troops from Halifax and Ireland to dispatch to Boston in 1768. This action brought the military dimensions of imperialism starkly to the fore, awakening Americans to the potentially brutal nature of the empire in which they were a part. It also emphasized their position within this geopolitical structure. Instead of a nurturing imperial relationship between a mother country and its distant offspring, the colonists confronted an imperialism in which one people, namely the Britons who were soon to become the "other", could (and more importantly, would) use superior force to coerce another people. Through such realizations and conceptualizations the political and social tensions which had begun to foster a new American ideology would now sharpen a sense of American identity.²²

Embedded within the Revolutionary folklore is a belief that this new identity encompassed, almost exclusively, a new and radical political ideology. Indeed, the Loyalists completed the Revolutionary promise by removing an older (and presumably backward) conservative ideology from American

²¹Webb, *The Governors-General*; quoted in Mienig, p. 302.

²²Meinig, pp. 301-302.

political thought when they fled into exile. A renewed interest in Loyalist historiography, by both Canadian and American historians, has helped to correct this image. The post-Revolutionary development of British North America, including both the United States and Nova Scotia, demonstrates a spectrum of political thought ranging from conservative to radical ideology. Despite nationalistic myths to the contrary, both polities hosted and fostered viable political parties and elements embracing both ends of the continuum. Moreover, the reactions of the inhabitants of both polities to these ideologies, at times, reveals a shared and ongoing Anglo heritage.

By the mid-eighteenth century British North Americans were reacting to and coping with modernizing forces which threatened to profoundly disrupt and alter their society. One of the most pronounced amongst these was the growth of the market economy. Added to the friction caused by an evolving economy were the increasing imperial tensions, which became noticeable as early as the 1740s and 1750s. As was to be expected, individuals and communities understood and adapted to these changes differently. Many of those who would become Loyalists correctly perceived a growing tendency towards personal ambition and self-interest, which eclipsed older communitarian values. In the process, these modernizing trends were undermining institutions which the Loyalists argued provided necessary social stability. The

Loyalists believed the solution lay in bolstering the authority of such institutions as the family, the church, and particularly, the government; a concept of society and politics which was hierarchical in nature. The Loyalists of New Brunswick epitomized this ideology with their belief "that a British colony ordered on firm, hierarchical, erastian principles would flourish and become the envy of its republican neighbours."²³

Earlier national myths and histories equated this political and social conservatism exclusively with the Loyalists, which distorts our understanding of the historical landscapes of both Atlantic Canada and the United States. Many of the conservative views seemingly characteristic of the Loyalists apply equally as well to the Federalists of the United States, especially during the late 1790s. It has been estimated that, following the Revolution, as many as 90 per cent of the Tories stayed put in their homeland.²⁴

Incidents occurring in the immediate aftermath of the Revolutionary war suggest that, for many, old loyalties and sensibilities remained strong. Harold Hancock provides a

²³Quote taken from David Bell, *Early Loyalist Saint John: The Origin of New Brunswick Politics, 1783-1786* (Fredericton, N.B.: New Ireland Press, 1983); for general discussion see, Janice Potter, *The Liberty We Seek: Loyalist Ideology in Colonial New York and Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

²⁴W.H. Nelson, "The Loyalist Legacy," *Acadiensis* 15 (Autumn 1985), p. 145.

rare glimpse of these sentiments during a 1787 election in southern Delaware. Called upon by the sheriff to provide protection, a contingent of former Loyalists marched in military formation to the polling place. There, the apparently unrepentant Loyalists cursed and abused their Revolutionary enemies and "huzzaed for the King."²⁵

As in the United States, the politics of Nova Scotia defied a simplistic explanation. During the Revolutionary years, many of the politically-minded Loyalists staunchly refused to deny the sovereignty of the British crown. However, this did not mean, as many of the Tory elites and British officials inferred, that the majority of the refugees had thus forsaken self-government. In many respects, the Loyalists represented the far - although not necessarily extreme - end of the political spectrum caught up in the maelstrom of Revolution. The beleaguered Governor of Nova Scotia, John Parr, recognized the Loyalists as Americans who had been shaped by the same land and traditions which had fomented a bloody rebellion against the metropole. "[T]hey inherit a deal of that Liver, which disunited the Colonies from their Mother Country."²⁶ What later appeared to be a

²⁵Harold B. Hancock, *The Loyalists of Revolutionary Delaware*; quoted in Nelson, "The Loyalist Legacy," p. 145.

²⁶Quoted in Neil MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia 1783-1791* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986) p. 95; also see p. 118.

political battle between Parr and the Loyalist assembly leaders represented, in reality, the culmination of a long-standing conflict between the ins and outs of Nova Scotian politics. The influx of Loyalists, many settling in small outports, swelled the numbers of those outside the charmed inner circles of political power centered in Halifax. It was a combination of the Loyalists' votes and those in the pre-existing outports which ultimately successfully challenged Haligonian control of the Assembly. Parr, thoroughly exasperated by this time, saw only the rise of the troublesome Loyalists and was unable to detect the power of the outport votes behind them. Eventually, the Loyalist political legacy would confirm Parr's predictions, for the recently-settled refugees drew on their American political experience to strengthen and expand the power of the House of Assembly. Through their influence, the Assembly gained control over its membership, banned government officers from sitting in the House and even placed the control over revenue bills in the hands of the Assembly. The Loyalists reflected their American heritage and constitutional understanding by moving to reduce the prerogative powers of government while increasing those of the popularly elected Assembly.²⁷

²⁷Ann Gorman Condon, "1783-1800: Loyalist Arrival, Acadian Return, Imperial Reform," chap. in *The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History*, eds. Phillip A. Buckner and John G. Reid (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), p. 197.

Writing in 1861, the amateur historian William Canniff described the United Empire Loyalist as one "who felt as much a Briton in the colony of America, as if he were in old England." Guided by higher motives, members of "this noble class relinquished comfortable homes, rather than live under an alien flag." Embracing their life in exile, these "honest, devoted, loyal, truthful, law abiding refugees" transformed the wilderness into a fruitful landscape. Ever wary of the new nation in their midst, the "U.E. Loyalists [had] been as a barrier of rock, against which the waves of Republicanism [had] dashed in vain." Canniff, in thus writing, articulated the classic statement of what historians have termed the *Loyalist myth*, which became a powerful factor in nineteenth-century British North American politics and culture.²⁸

While Canniff's history concerned Upper Canada, his description serves equally as well for the historical image of Nova Scotian Loyalists. The tradition eventually grew to encompass a series of traits which purportedly defined - albeit with obvious variations - the Loyalist communities scattered throughout the Atlantic. These qualities included devotion to crown and empire, a pervasive anti-republicanism

²⁸William Canniff, *The History of the Settlement of Upper Canada*, 1861; quoted in Norman Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists: The Ontario Loyalist Tradition and the Creation of Usable Pasts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 14.

and/or anti-Americanism, sacrifice in the name of principle, and a conservative social and political outlook. Later generations have enlarged and broadened this cluster of traits, and at times shifted the emphasis, according to the needs and circumstances of the era. For example, the issue of class or status demonstrates the ambiguities of the Loyalist myth. In an upper-middle class rendition, the elite status of the Loyalists would have been stressed, while a popular telling most likely retained the image of hardy pioneers clearing the wilderness. The idiosyncracies within the the tradition reflect the degree to which the Loyalists have been embraced by successive generations to create a usable past. As with any national icon or figure, their story has changed to match the needs of an evolving national identity.

The Loyalists symbolize one of the defining elements of the English-Canadian identity.²⁹ In Canadian national history they have come to represent popular, sentimentalized - and thus, historically problematic - founding figures. In a similar vein, American historians, involved in their own process of national-identity building, have used the Loyalists as a convenient foil to the triumphant Revolutionaries.³⁰ In these two, often-contradictory national

²⁹Norman Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists*, p. 15.

³⁰MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil*, p. ix.

histories, the Loyalists left their homeland for good, robbing - or ridding, depending upon the audience - the new Republic of their conservative ideology. Yet, in viewing the topic through the lens of nationalism, scholars have imposed a unity and coherence on the motives, desires and beliefs of the Loyalists that obscures the reality. Later Canadian and American historians have looked past the legends to the individual Loyalists and their lives in exile. Not surprisingly, their work has challenged the idealized image of the Loyalists as a cohesive group who possessed a distinctive identity and ideology, which they then bequeathed to their heirs.³¹

My dissertation builds upon and, in turn, supplements newer historiography which has demonstrated the complex motives and rationales behind the Loyalists' decisions. At the outset of the hostilities, many Americans sought to remain loyal to the crown, if only to be left in peace. In numerous instances this proved impossible, with the misfortunes of time and place forcing most of those caught in the rebelling colonies to choose sides. While ideology

³¹Examples of this newer Loyalist literature include: Murray Barkley, "The Loyalist Tradition in New Brunswick: The Growth and Evolution of an Historical Myth, 1825-1914," *Acadiensis* (Spring 1975); David G. Bell, *Early Loyalist Saint John*; Amy Condon, *The Loyalist Dream for New Brunswick* (Fredericton, New Ireland Press, 1984); Janice Potter, *The Liberty We Seek*; David Stouck, "The Wardell Family and the Origins of Loyalism," *Canadian Historical Review* (March 1987); and, Carole W. Troxler, "A Loyalist Life: John Bond of South Carolina and Nova Scotia," *Acadiensis* (Spring 1991).

undoubtedly drove certain individuals to act, the majority of colonists based their decisions upon complex and intertwined factors including personal interests, community and family ties, as well as perceived present and future opportunities. The British people of the Atlantic world embarked upon a civil conflict which left two polities in its wake. Rather than viewing this as merely an imperial clash of interests or a political revolution, we should recognize this as a long, painful - often personal - cultural process, which reverberated through the entirety of the British Atlantic world for decades to come. The shifting of imperial boundaries did not involve simply the realignment of political territories, but the mass movements of populations as well. In the end, the American Revolution represented an internal struggle which broke apart communities and uprooted tens of thousands of people. This physical dislocation of people represented a spatial reordering of the North American continent. It also demonstrates the cultural complexities of the issues. For, even though the exiles maintained their loyalty to Great Britain in one fashion or another, they remained, in cultural terms, predominantly American. The plight of thousands of exiles seeking a home in the surviving British territories of North America reflects the truly "civil" nature of the war. Moreover, while the Loyalists typically sacrificed much in order to remain British subjects, few of them had the option of actually removing to

the home country. Of the minority who did venture there, most felt their "Americaness" all the more, wishing to migrate back across the Atlantic. Ultimately, a significant number of the exiles did return to their former homes.³²

Anglo-American Merchants

Historical assessments of transatlantic trade traditionally have concentrated on either statistical analyses and/or biographical studies. One senses that an ideal study might see the blending of the two formats. While the statistical approach adds much to our understanding of commercial and economic forces of the eighteenth century, they are often devoid of individuals, instead focusing on markets and movements.³³ Conversely, biographical accounts of

³²Meinig, pp. 301-312.

³³Key statistical works concerning North American trade include Gary M. Walton, "Sources of Productivity Change in American Colonial Shipping, 1675-1775," *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., 20 (1967); James F. Shepherd and Gary M. Walton, *Shipping, Maritime Trade, and the Economic Development of Colonial North America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); William L. Davisson and Laurence J. Bradley, "New York Maritime Trade: Ship Voyage Patterns, 1715-1765," *New York Historical Society Quarterly*, 55 (1971).

Similar studies focusing on British trade include: Ralph M. Davis, *The Rise of English Shipping Industry* (London: Macmillan, 1962); Jacob M. Price, *Capital and Credit in British Overseas Trade: The View from the Chesapeake, 1700-1776* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980); Jacob M. Price and Paul G. E. Clemens, "A Revolution in Scale in Overseas Trade: British Firms in the Chesapeake Trade," *Journal of Economic History*, 47 (1987); and Kenneth Morgan,

merchants, mercantile families and/or communities often provide in-depth character developments, while lacking the broader social context.³⁴ Certainly, valuable and insightful examples of both formats exist. John McCusker and Russell

Bristol & the Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

³⁴Studies of individual American merchant families include James B. Hedges, *The Browns of Providence Plantations: Colonial Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952); William Baxter, *The House of Hancock* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1945); and Philip L. White, *The Beekmans of New York in Politics and Commerce, 1647-1877* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1956).

Broader studies of merchant communities include Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763-1776* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1918); Virginia D. Harrington, *The New York Merchant on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935); Bernard Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955); and Oliver A. Rink, *Holland on the Hudson: An Economic and Social History of Dutch New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986). For a newer work which combines an economic and social approach see Cathy Matson, *Merchants & Empire: Trading in Colonial New York* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

For British individuals and merchants, see: Richard Pares, *A West India Fortune* (London: Longmans, 1950); Jacob M. Price, "One Family's Empire: The Russell-Lee-Clerk Connection in Maryland, Britain and India," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 72 (1977); and Price, *Perry of London* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

Works on British mercantile groups include Walter E. Minchinton, "The Merchants in England in the Eighteenth Century," in *Explorations in Enterprise*, ed. H.G.J. Aitken (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965); R. J. Wilson, *Gentlemen Merchants: The Merchant Community in Leeds, 1700-1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971); T. M. Devine, *The Tobacco Lords: A Study of the Tobacco Merchants of Glasgow and their Trading Activities c. 1740-1790* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1975); and John Sainsbury, *Disaffected Patriots: London Supporters of Revolutionary America, 1769-1782* (Kingston, Ontario: McGill-Queens University Press, 1987).

Menard's economic analysis of British America stands out as one of the best amongst the statistical analyses.³⁵ In mercantile literature, Thomas Doerflinger has avoided many pitfalls of the genre by placing Philadelphian merchants firmly within the milieu of Revolutionary America.³⁶

Recently David Hancock has sought to fill this gap in his study of eighteenth-century British merchants.³⁷ Hancock explores the commercial and social world of four highly successful merchants. The "Associates" surveyed by Hancock consisted of arrangements of wealthy London businessmen clustered (in varying levels of partnership) around four men: Augustus Boyd, Alexander Grant, John Sargent II and Richard Oswald. The careers and ventures of these four men are introduced and examined in my dissertation to serve as a model for British merchants, broadly defined. The danger in employing the Associates in this capacity lies in their extraordinary commercial and social success. The portrayal

³⁵John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789*, Needs and Opportunities for Study Series (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

³⁶Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

³⁷David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

is warranted, nonetheless, in that they underscore imperial potential. Hancock suggests that the most enduring legacy of the Associates was the advancement and integration of the British Atlantic community. In this respect, the Associates were not exceptional for that represents one of the major contributions of mercantile activity to the British empire. That same empire was significantly larger and recognizably more complex by the end of the eighteenth century due, in large part, to the commercial dealings of myriads of individuals ranging from wealthy and powerful financiers in London to small traders in Nova Scotian outports. All of these individuals, in pursuing and building trade networks, served to enhance the British empire; just as some of these same persons helped to foment a Revolution and then worked to create an American empire. Similar to the Associates, the merchants presented here ultimately expanded and developed the scope of the empire, its infrastructure and its trade. Whether they understood their role in this process is unclear since they did not dwell on the subject. Rather they focused on and spoke of ships - along with their schedules and routes - markets, cargoes, i.e., the pragmatics of trade itself.

The merchants of the eighteenth century simultaneously benefited from and promoted Great Britain's financial

revolution.³⁸ One of the major beneficiaries of the Glorious Revolution of 1688 was the commercial sector, which gained in terms of political, social and economic stability. Often times, commercial security and regulation emerged through the development of institutions which were the hallmark of the financial revolution. The Bank of England and the national debt were the foremost amongst these developments. These factors, however, were linked to broader financial innovations such as the growth of specialized merchant banks and a market in mortgages; the increasing use of bills of exchange; the rise of the stock exchange and a financial press; and the development of marine and fire insurance. These institutions produced a ripple effect on commerce. The rise of credit and commercial services advanced shipping and overseas trade through the earnings from invisibles.³⁹ In turn, the expansion of overseas commerce promoted the rise of large mercantile establishments whose resources enabled them

³⁸For discussions of the financial revolution and its significance for Great Britain see: P.G.M. Dickson, *The Financial Revolution in England: A Study in the Development of Public Credit, 1688-1756* (London: Macmillan, 1967); John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (London: Century Hutchinson, 1988); and P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, vol. 1, *Innovation and Expansion, 1688-1914*, and vol. 2, *Crisis and Deconstruction, 1914-1990* (London: Longman, 1993).

³⁹Invisibles represent profits from trade which are not seen, such as freight rates and insurance premiums. These stand in contrast to visible forms of profits from the shipping industry such as cargoes and ship building.

to generate the capital and credit for further long-distance trade.⁴⁰

By the late seventeenth century it had become apparent that high interest rates or "dear money" had disadvantaged Great Britain in its struggles against Holland. In that light, improved credit became a matter of vital interest to those concerned with national defense, international and domestic commerce, and the expansion of empire. To state the point more directly, the interests of the financial sector complemented those of the military-imperial complex. Many of the reforms within the financial sector centered on this need to provide and facilitate easy credit. The most obvious of these innovations in the 1690s concerned the foundation of the Bank of England and the creation of a national debt. Through their impressive work on the British empire, Cain and Hopkins have linked these advances to broader developments in the financial world, which they see occurring at the hands of elite gentlemanly capitalists situated in London or "the City". Such a portrayal has the effect of emphasizing the role of elite financiers and of creating a sense of separation between commerce and finance. It would be a mistake to tie the developments in credit too narrowly to this rather nebulous group of London "financiers", whom Cain and Hopkins describe as a rarefied community socially

⁴⁰Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, vol. 1, *Innovations and Expansion*, p. 60.

distinct from men of trade. Instead, during this era, developments regarding credit and its availability emerged from and remained an integral part of the more generalized world of trade.⁴¹

By comparing the functions of the emerging financial institutions to those of the much older merchant community, the integral and interdependent nature of the relationship becomes apparent. The key features of pre-corporate credit were present and active well before the establishment of banks. These elements included mortgages; bonds; bills of exchange; discount and ordinary commercial credit, both short- and long-term. Banks, similar to other products of the financial revolution, did not create these commercial fixtures but, rather, systematized, regulated and thus facilitated access to financial services. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the easy credit which resulted from this process underwrote the expansion of British exports into both Europe and the empire. Although terms such as "merchant banker" and "accepting houses" would not come into vogue until the nineteenth century, already by the eighteenth century, the great merchants, especially in

⁴¹Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, vol. 1, *Innovation and Expansion*.

London, performed many similar functions.⁴² These men remitted government funds abroad; handled subscriptions of national debt; and, accepted and processed bills of exchange relating to transactions in which they were not personally involved. It is through this realization that the significance of the merchant community for the wider economy can be seen. The commercial activities and dynamics of eighteenth-century commerce left behind a financial infrastructure which later institutions would build upon, as did the industrial revolution. This financial infrastructure involved the commercial and financial institutions already cited such as banks, clearing houses, insurance companies, the stock exchange and Llyod's exchange. Simultaneously, it spawned its own conventions such as commercial laws, practices and education along with the export of hundreds or thousands of firms overseas, staffed by members of the merchant community who carried their expertise with them into the empire.⁴³

⁴²A "merchant bank" is a specialist institution which advises clients and/or companies on financial matters such as stock issues, the stock exchange and other banking functions. An "accepting house" is most commonly a commercial bank that underwrites a commercial bill of exchange in return for a fee or discount. Christopher Pass, Bryan Lowes, Leslie Davis, Sidney J. Kronish, *The HarperCollins Dictionary of Economics* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991).

⁴³Jacob Price, "What Did Merchants Do? Reflections on British Overseas Trade, 1660-1790," *Journal of Economic History* (June 1989), pp. 278-284.

Individual merchant communities, at varying times, have represented - and, in turn, have been historically portrayed - as a loose, unorganized even divisive body. Frequently, merchants appeared to constitute no more than a broadly defined occupational group. Certainly within the competitive atmosphere of eighteenth-century Atlantic commerce there was much to separate the individuals involved. Thomas Doerflinger concentrates on the merchants of Revolutionary Philadelphia who navigated a particularly frenetic, fluid and opportunistic commercial environment. These individuals were separated by factors such as social and ethnic diversity, wealth, rapid growth of the community and a highly mobile personnel. The unstructured nature of this setting prevented an elect circle of merchants from monopolizing the city's trade since outsiders could, and did, gain ready access to commercial centers. Notable outsiders such as Stephen Girard began his career as a ship captain of limited capital yet went on to climb into the upper echelons of the merchant elite.⁴⁴ While to a degree exceptional, Girard, like the Associates, symbolized commercial and imperial potential for contemporaries and historians alike.

Concentrating on the loose or fractured nature of the merchant community obscures the degree to which it represented a viable, functioning society. Merchants relied

⁴⁴Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, pp. 11-12.

upon one another for skill, expertise, resources and information amongst other necessities. They interacted not just at a local level but throughout the Atlantic rim. Merchants and their reputations stood security behind varied and numerous commercial and financial ventures. The necessary trust, which facilitated commerce throughout the Atlantic, rested (to a considerable degree) on the understanding of recognizable communal values, practices and traditions which were also communally regulated.

An Atlantic World

Recently it has become popular to speak in terms of an "Atlantic world", which views the varied and numerous Euro-American empires as a whole.⁴⁵ Many of the scholars who write

⁴⁵J.H. Elliott first articulated the need for a comparative history of colonization within an Atlantic context in *The Old World and the New, 1492-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970). One of the earliest and most prolific writers on an "Atlantic" history has been Nicholas P. Canny, whose works include: *The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: A Pattern Established, 1565-1576* (New York and Sussex: Harvester Press, 1976); K.R. Andrews, N.P. Canny, and P.E.H. Hair, eds., *The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic, and America* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1978); Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden, *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); *Kingdom and Colony: Ireland in the Atlantic World, 1560-1800* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1988); Nicholas Canny, ed., *Europeans on the Move: Studies on European Migration, 1500-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); and, *The Origins of Empire: British Overseas Enterprise to the Close of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

and think along this vein openly acknowledge the problems and limitations inherent within this particular conceptualization. The Europeans who migrated to the Americas left countries which, by the sixteenth century, already possessed recognizably different legal and

Other works include: Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976); K.G. Davies, *The Royal African Company* (London: Longmans, 1957); K.G. Davies, *The North Atlantic World in the Seventeenth Century* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1974); Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the Atlantic Economies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973); Peggy Liss, *Atlantic Empires: The Network of Trade and Revolution, 1713-1826* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1983); Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic, 1675-1740: An Explanation of Communications and Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); David Harris Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450-1700* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Hancock, *Citizens of the World*; and Alan L. Karras and J.R. McNeill, eds., *Atlantic American Societies: From Columbus through Abolition, 1492-1888* (London: Routledge, 1992).

The best known works centering on political ideology and the Atlantic include: R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760-1800*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959 and 1964); Jacques Godechot, *France and the Atlantic Revolution of the Eighteenth Century, 1770-1799*, trans. Herbert H. Rowen (New York: Free Press, 1965); Lester D. Langley, *The Americas in the Age of Revolution, 1750-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). Also see recent articles by: Bernard Bailyn, "The Idea of Atlantic History," *Itinerario* 20 (1996); Ian Tyreel, "Making Nations/Making States: American Historians in the Context of Empire," *Journal of American History* 86 (December, 1999), pp. 1015-1044. Moreover see the articles resulting from the conference ("The Nature of Atlantic History") hosted by *Itinerario*: David Hancock, "The British Atlantic World: Co-ordination, Complexity, and the Emergence of an Atlantic Market Economy, 1651-1815"; Pieter C. Emmer and Wim Klooster, "The Dutch Atlantic, 1600-1800: Expansion without Empire"; Carla Rahn Phillips, "The Iberian Atlantic"; Silvia Marzagalli, "The French Atlantic"; and, David Eltis, "Atlantic History in Global Perspective," all appear in *Itinerario* 20 (1999).

administrative systems as well as institutional structures. Within the first half of that century, some of these same nations would also be differentiated by religion. Moreover, the settlers reached and inhabited vastly different locales and environments which molded the immigrant experience. These realizations, in part, encouraged earlier scholars to perceive a fragmented Atlantic world, comprised of such entities as Spanish-, Portuguese-, French- and English-America. Yet, certain characteristics remain peculiar to the immigration and settlement process, occasioning similarities within the emerging creole cultures, at the same time that they served to distinguish a particular colonial society from that of its metropole. Demographically, the new world created a social milieu not found in the old world. For one, the immigrants encountered and negotiated with foreign indigenous peoples. Moreover, many of the Euro-American colonies adapted slave labor (several soon after settlement), importing large numbers of Africans. The coming together of these three peoples founded a racial dynamic not present in the metropole. The European immigrants also strove to transplant their agricultural and economic practices to their new environs. Additionally, all colonial societies confronted the need to establish a satisfactory relationship with their respective metropolis. This often proved the most baffling and frustrating step as the creoles sought to adapt

imperial policies and dictates to colonial realities.⁴⁶

It is easier, of course, to cite the factors and experiences which resonated throughout these colonies than to actually demonstrate the ways in which these shared traditions shaped an amalgamated Atlantic world. From a number of vantage points this geographical region appears to have been made up of largely self-contained empires, which came together only to make war on one another. The issue becomes one of locating, within the historical record, avenues which portray interaction between foreign Atlantic societies. Moreover, in what ways did the competition between rival empires and/or polities become an internal affair which shaped the relationship between the metropole and its periphery? Commerce presents an obvious arena for investigation, seemingly bringing together peoples and communities across and throughout the Atlantic. Trade moved within - but just as easily transgressed - imperial boundaries. Smuggling, perhaps even more than legitimate commerce, demonstrated the developed and sophisticated nature of an integrated Atlantic world. Commercial exchange and its ensuing networks, whether officially sanctioned or not, worked to interweave communities together. These channels later could prove to be remarkably resilient in the face of imperial intervention. Within the British empire alone,

⁴⁶Elliott, "Introduction," in *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World*, ed Canny and Pagden.

legitimate colonial trade networks matured over the course of the eighteenth century to challenge and compete with metropolitan commercial circles. Added to this was a sense of resentment in the metropole over the seemingly ever-present illicit trade in the western Atlantic. These suspicions fostered tensions between the center and its peripheries, causing many within the metropole to call for more restrictive imperial policies. Through an analysis of these cross-boundary exchanges it may be possible to glimpse the workings of a viable and, at times, coherent Atlantic world. Such an approach may help to extend our understanding of how individuals, communities and cultures - especially those on the margins - maneuvered within a framework of multiple and competing demands and influences.⁴⁷ In this context, this dissertation delineates the construct of an Anglo-American Atlantic world, evolving within and eventually out of, the British Atlantic empire. Restricting the focus to an Anglo-American Atlantic does not deny the existence of an integral Atlantic world so much as it reflects the realities of the documents surveyed, along with the lives and movements of the individuals therein. While many of these people traversed the new political and commercial boundaries between Nova Scotia and the United States, they rarely interacted with individuals of the other Atlantic empires.

⁴⁷Hancock, "The British Atlantic World."

The uncertainties and misgivings surrounding these boundaries, as demonstrated by contemporaries, provides an insight into the cohesive nature of this region as a commercial, social and cultural entity. The question remains to be asked as to whether this inter-imperial situation provides an example of core-peripheral relationships within the broader Euro-Atlantic or Atlantic, or remains peculiar to the British empire.

The formulation of viable relationships between the various European imperial powers and their respective colonies provides another avenue by which to explore a shared Atlantic tradition. As Gilles Pacquet and Jean-Pierre Wallot have demonstrated in their work on New France, the several metropolises frequently issued idealistic even impossible decrees to their colonies.⁴⁸ Colonial responses to these measures often fell within a particular range and/or type of feasible responses which translated across colonial boundaries. In this manner, the colonists differentiated themselves from the home country and took the first steps towards becoming "Americans". In his book *Peripheries and Center*, Jack Greene has shown the difficulties inherent in forging imperial/colonial relationships by following constitutional developments within the original thirteen

⁴⁸Gilles Pacquet and Jean-Pierre Wallot, "Nouvelle-France/Quebec/Canada: A World of Limited Identities," chap. in *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World*, ed. Canny and Pagden.

colonies, from the founding of Jamestown to the writing of the American Constitution. Observing the legal maneuverings between the center and its peripheries reveals growing tensions as the two polities strove to define the nature and limits of imperial authority. For as Greene shows, the pronouncements emanating from the metropole could gain legal status or authority only through implicit or explicit acceptance on the part of the colonies. Although Parliament increasingly denied this realization, policies or doctrines from the center required local sanction from the peripheries before achieving constitutional status. Similarly, doctrines issuing from the colonies required imperial ratification, although Parliament seemed to have less difficulty accepting this latter reality.⁴⁹

After 1650, Great Britain faced increasing conflicts within its expanding Atlantic empire over the tensions inherent in the ongoing process of reconciling a balance of imperial/colonial authority. The ambiguity of British policy-makers on colonial matters permitted local officials wide latitude in determining which laws were to be applied to the peripheries. For example, legislators in Jamaica, Maryland and New York asserted early on "that all English statutes that did not specifically exclude the colonies

⁴⁹Jack P. Greene, *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Politics of the British Empire and the United States 1607-1788* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1986), p. x.

applied to them." Of course, this notion could be reversed to read that any inconvenient statute which did not explicitly refer to the colonies should not be enforced there. During the latter half of the eighteenth century colonial policy-makers appeared to manipulate English statutes to fit local and temporal needs and conditions. In so doing, the colonists gained informally what they could not acquire legally, namely, "traditional English guarantees of life, liberty, and property." They also demonstrated the mechanisms inherent in the formation of a colonial cultural identity by differentiating and preferencing their interests over those of the mother country.⁵⁰

As in the political world so in the economic spheres, the colonists played a significant role in the sanctioning of commercial statutes. By the early decades of the eighteenth century, the American colonists, for the most part, had accommodated themselves to the Navigation Acts. According to John McCusker and Russell Menard, the Americans ultimately recognized that the advantages of these Acts for their own colonial economies outweighed the disadvantages.⁵¹

Nevertheless, the colonists remained selective in their compliance to imperial economic dictates, evading and/or ignoring those regulations which, as one royal official

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 26-27.

⁵¹McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British America*.

complained, threatened "the growth and prosperity of their little commonwealths."⁵² Thus, colonial merchants nonchalantly violated such measures as the Molasses Act of 1733 which they correctly understood to preference West Indian economic interests over their own.⁵³

Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia never seemed quite normal when set alongside the string of settlement colonies up and down the Atlantic coast. It lay on the margins of the more populous colonial societies and economies between Boston and Savannah. In economic terms it functioned in many ways as a hinterland to New England whose merchants developed a coastal trade with the French settlers in the early part of the eighteenth century and, after the Acadians had been expelled, with the New England settlers who migrated to Nova Scotia in the 1760s. This northward migration of farmers and fishermen was itself a confirmation of Nova Scotia's role as a remote

⁵²Quoted in Greene, *Peripheries and Center*, p. 17.

⁵³Greene, *Peripheries and Center*, p. 17.

extension of New England.⁵⁴

Although there were extensive and longstanding connections between Nova Scotia and New England there was a fundamental difference that had a powerful shaping influence on developments on the colony in the late eighteenth century. Nova Scotia was a colony acquired through military conquest, becoming a British colony through the Utrecht peace treaty which ended the War of the Spanish Succession in 1713. Later, the French population was deported by British troops as part of the final Anglo-French struggle for imperial control of North America. Thus, the colony had been

⁵⁴The works of John Bartlett Brebner have played an influential and enduring role on the historiography of Nova Scotia. See John Bartlett Brebner, *New England's Outpost: Acadia before the Conquest of Canada* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927); *The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia: A Marginal Colony during the Revolutionary Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937); and, *North Atlantic Triangle: The Interplay of Canada, the United States and Great Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945).

For later works on Nova Scotia, see: Gordon Stewart and George Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured of God: The Nova Scotia Yankees and the American Revolution* (Toronto: Macmillan Press, 1972); George Rawlyk, *Nova Scotia's Massachusetts: A Study of Massachusetts-Nova Scotia Relations, 1630-1784* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973); J. M. Bumsted, "The Cultural Landscape of Early Canada," in *Strangers within the Realm*, ed. Bailyn and Morgan; J. M. Bumsted, *The People's Clearance: Highland Emigration to British North America, 1770-1815* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1982). Graeme Wynn, "A Province Too Much Dependent on New England," *Canadian Geography* 31 (1987), pp. 98-113; John G. Reid, *Acadia, Maine and New Scotland: A Marginal Colony in the Seventeenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981); and Elizabeth Mancke, "Two Patterns of New England Transformation: Machias, Maine and Liverpool, Nova Scotia, 1760-1820," (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1989).

acquired, and cleared for Anglo settlement, by the force of British arms. This imperial imprint was intensified when Halifax was created as a major British naval base in 1749. During the heightening tensions in the 1760s and 1770s, the British used their position in Halifax (e.g. the Vice Admiralty court) in an attempt to enforce their new policies on the American colonists. As Benjamin Franklin clearly understood Nova Scotia was distinct from the other Anglo Atlantic colonies. By the 1760s it possessed a largely English-speaking settler population; yet in political and military terms it was a base of British imperial power. Indeed, Franklin (along with other American patriot leaders) believed the British intended to implant the Nova Scotian model on the other American colonies in a grand plot to bring the colonies under closer metropolitan supervision.

My dissertation develops case studies of a number of individuals within the context of Nova Scotia - its politics (internal and imperial), its commerce and its position within a changing Anglo-American Atlantic world. Included here are: Simeon Perkins, Gideon White, Robert and George Ross, and William Forsyth. These men and their experiences embody the evolving nature of the British empire at a critical moment in time. In terms of cultural identity, they embody a motif of the Anglo community in Nova Scotia. Perkins and White were originally New Englanders, although they were separated by the Revolution. Perkins was amongst the original American

migrants to Nova Scotia in the 1760s and was thus a Planter. White, on the hand, arrived in Shelburne, Nova Scotia at the end of the Revolution and was distinctly a Loyalist. The Ross brothers (Robert and George) had migrated from Scotland to North America prior to the outbreak of imperial hostilities. Like Gideon White, the brothers also removed to the Loyalist center of Shelburne in the mass exodus of 1783. Only William Forsyth arrived in America, from Scotland, after the close of the Revolution. As such, Forsyth exemplified the metropolitan merchants who hoped to take advantage of the turbulent, yet promising, economic future facing Nova Scotia; particularly now that the Americans (supposedly) would be barred from the lucrative West Indies trade. All of these individuals retained social, familial and/or commercial linkages in their former homelands, whether that be Britain or America. Economically, the exception amongst this group was William Forsyth. Perkins, White and the Ross brothers could all be considered small (although successful) traders within the Anglo-American commercial nexus. Like Forsyth, these four men all relied upon Atlantic trade for their livelihoods; yet unlike Forsyth, their financial base was centered in North America. Only Forsyth, of the group surveyed here, could be considered a major Atlantic merchant with considerable financial resources and partners in the metropole as well as in North America. From an imperial perspective, all of these men maneuvered within an empire in

a state of flux, navigating the shifting imperial ideologies and policies as best they could.

A Marginal Colony?

Nova Scotia has often been portrayed as a "marginal colony" and/or a New England outpost.⁵⁵ Certainly the colony was enmeshed in a complicated triangle with two stronger polities which, at times, threatened to dominate Nova Scotia politically, economically and culturally. Yet an examination of this relationship provides insights into the ways in which Nova Scotia was able to maneuver within a complex and often tense imperial setting. The incident related below illustrates one of the central themes of this dissertation.

In the summer of 1805, during the Napoleonic wars, the HMS *Whiting* arrived on Nova Scotia's south shore to the dismay of its inhabitants. To allay local concerns, on July 10 Lieutenant Commander Orkney of the *Whiting* conveyed his intentions to Jonathan Hames at the customs house in Shelburne.

"In consequence of an Alarm being spread amongst the Fishermen on this Coast, by the appearance of His Majestys Schooner *Whiteing* under my Command, I

⁵⁵It is this terminology taken from Brebner's titles, portraying Nova Scotia as an "outpost" or "marginal colony", which most clearly demonstrates his legacy on the historiography of the province. John Bartlett Brebner, *New England's Outpost*; and *The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia: A Marginal Colony during the Revolutionary Years*.

do hereby give notice that it is not my intention or wish to press any Fishermen or Farmer into the Service as the same would Militate against the Instruction of the Command in Chief in this Station."⁵⁶

What the correspondence does not clarify is why Orkney immediately contradicted his own statement to Hames by proceeding to impress the men in the vicinity of Shelburne. As a result of these impressments, on August 1 a number of unnamed citizens from the town addressed a memorial (enclosing depositions) to Sampson S. Blowers, who was by then the Chief Justice of Nova Scotia. "These papers will convey but a faint Idea of the distress of the Inhabitants of this Town & Coast." The authors believed that the British sailors acted against the wishes of the Admiral at Halifax, Sir Andrew Mitchell. Under the circumstances, the citizens requested that Blowers place their petition before the governor, Sir John Wentworth, in council. After an examination of the depositions, it was hoped that "such steps will be taken, that will prevent in future such Outrageous and destructive Conduct." If assistance was not forthcoming from the colonial government, however, the authors were prepared to leave Nova Scotia.

We do not hesitate in saying That if such Conduct is permitted to be practiced as the Officers of the

⁵⁶Lieut. Commander J.D. Orkney to Jonathan Hames, Shelburne, July 10, 1784, Nova Scotia Archives and Record Management (henceforth NSARM), MG 1/952, 818.

Whiting has been guilty of along this shore and Harbour[,] the most valuable subjects [of] the Jersey Fishermen will remove to the UStates and their fathers will follow unless justice is done them.⁵⁷

In labeling themselves as the most valuable fishermen of the province, the authors may have added a hint of bravado, since Atlantic British America was dominated by fishermen, and by 1805, Nova Scotia was largely peopled by the descendants of New England fishermen, a group well-practiced in the art of fishing. Nonetheless, the fishermen understood well their advantage in being positioned - geographically, commercially and culturally - between the two rival powers; which is an understanding frequently missed by historians. The fishermen threatened to relocate to the United States if the colonial authorities did not satisfy their demands. In so doing they utilized the new nation, and all that it symbolized, to gain leverage in an imperial setting. Here they recognized and utilized a benefit open to them as British subjects residing in Nova Scotia which was not available to mariners in the home islands. The fishermen also, indirectly, demonstrated the ways in which the United States remained an integral part

⁵⁷Unnamed citizens of Shelburne to Chief Justice Blowers Halifax, August 1, 1805, NSARM, MG 1/952, 824. A subsequent draft of the letter edited the paragraph to read: "The fact is this most valuable part of the Community on the south shore of their Province will remove to the U.States, i.e. the Fishermen with their Families and the Fathers will follow unless justice is done them." Unnamed citizens of Shelburne to Chief Justice Blowers Halifax, August 1, 1805, NSARM, MG 1/952, 826.

of the British imperial imagination. The new nation presented an economic, cultural and even political orbit within a larger imperial Atlantic sphere, neither fully distinct from nor dependent on the metropole. As such, it presented an alternative base of operations within the larger Atlantic world. The American Revolution did not dissolve the British Atlantic empire so much as it called into being a reconfigured Anglo-American Atlantic commercial nexus. Given imperial determination to separate the British Atlantic world from that of the new nation, through the articulation of boundaries marking the new relationship, the working of this nexus would be contested, obscured and fitful.

Chapter 1: Commerce, War and Identity

In other words, England began her career as the greatest and most prosperous colonizing power that the world has ever known without any fixed policy, in fact, without any clear idea of what she and her people were doing.¹

Echoing John R. Seeley's famous remark, this quote by Charles Andrews reinforces the conventional wisdom that England possessed no clear design - imperial, maritime, commercial or otherwise - for its empire over much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.² Although promotional literature of the era eagerly advertised the commercial potential of the Americas, much of the early transatlantic colonization was motivated by social, economic and religious pressures. Slowly over the seventeenth century, staple crops, most notably sugar and tobacco, provided a focus and incentive for trade. Yet, there emerged no clear consensus regarding commercial and/or maritime policies for the empire until well

¹Charles M. Andrews, *The Colonial Background of the American Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1924), p. 5; quoted in Daniel A. Baugh, "Maritime Strength and Atlantic Commerce: The Uses of 'a Grand Marine Empire'," in *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815*, ed. Lawrence Stone (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 189.

²In 1883, Seeley observed that the British seemed "to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind." His comment, as shown by Andrews, has left a lasting influence on the historiography of the British empire. J. R. Seeley, *Expansion of England* (London, 1883), p. 62.

into the eighteenth century. During this era, the empire expanded rapidly, often outpacing British public imagination regarding its empire and official policy for its maintenance. By the mid-eighteenth century, however, many Britons recognized the significance of commerce in creating a powerful and prosperous empire and, in turn, the role that maritime-imperial complex played in the nation's rising international status.³ This chapter looks at the role of commerce in helping to build and promote the empire at the same time that it intertwined with imperial ideologies to influence the national identity. Next, this analysis seeks to understand the ways in which commercial identity translated into the cultures of the British colonies, in particular Nova Scotia.

Commercial Identity

A focus on the merchant community opens a window onto the transmittal and evolution of cultural identity in the Anglo-American Atlantic world. The eighteenth century witnessed the phenomenal expansion and integration of an empire many British, at home and in the colonies, considered to be a truly commercial venture. In 1755, the directory *The Present State of Great Britain* exclaimed that "Our trade is

³Baugh, p. 189.

the most considerable of the whole world. And, indeed, Great Britain is, of all other countries, the most proper for trade."⁴ A decade later William Blackstone captured this popular sentiment when he described the English as "a polite and commercial people."⁵ Media ranging from poetry and drama to Parliamentary speeches, newspapers, pamphlets and sermons proudly and endlessly proclaimed the belief that trade was "the muscle and soul of Great Britain".⁶ Trade constituted one element of commerce just as this sense of commercialism or commercial virtue comprised one aspect of British national and imperial identity. As Linda Colley has shown, events of the eighteenth century - especially the prolonged wars - were decisive in terms of formulating a newly-emerging "British" consciousness and/or identity. The growing significance of

⁴Quoted in Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 60. J. Payne wrote in a similar vein, "We are, of any nation, the best situated for trade; we are the best-provided with good harbours; and we have all the conveniences necessary to become the general mart of the world, and to prescribe laws upon the ocean..." [J. Payne], *The French Encroachment Exposed, or, Britain's Original Right to All That Part of the American Continent Claimed by France Fully Asserted...* (London, 1756), pp. 26-27; quoted in Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 57.

⁵Quoted in Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783*, *The New Oxford History of England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 1.

⁶Colley, *Britons*, p. 59.

commerce thus entered the public imagination at a formative stage. Protestantism and liberty, during the eighteenth century, intertwined with commercialism to stand as the hallmarks of British character.⁷ In turn, commerce itself became closely linked with both the Royal navy and the expansion of imperial overseas possessions. As already noted, David Armitage argues that ideologically Great Britain perceived itself as an extended polity at once "Protestant, commercial, maritime and free."⁸ By the eighteenth century, commerce was a significant indicator of the progress of Europeans in general and the modernity of Hanoverian Britain in particular. Contemporaries noted a marked improvement in the "manners, customs and habits" of the British people. As the moralist John Brown commented in 1758, commerce, along with liberty, had made the people more polite and civil, reinforcing the "Spirit of Humanity" which had always

⁷Linda Colley has argued that Great Britain was "a land of liberty because founded on Protestantism and commerce," in Colley, *Britons*, p. 103. More recently, Jack Greene has realigned the order and significance of these traits. According to Greene, both the British and their colonists understood Protestantism and commerce to be dependent upon their liberty. See Jack Greene, "Empire and Identity from the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. P. J. Marshall (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 229. It is not my intent to prove or disprove either argument, but to illuminate the degree to which these three qualities came to be seen, by historians and contemporaries alike, as peculiarly British.

⁸David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 195.

distinguished Great Britain.⁹ To a certain degree commentators accredited this refinement of manners to the growth and prosperity of the middle orders. The Scottish philosopher, John Millar, viewed the proliferation and influence of "merchants, moneyed men and farmers" as one of the most profound developments in British society since 1688. By the time of Millar's writing, the advancement of capitalism - aided by the growth of commerce - had resulted in the development of a clearly recognizable middle class with its incumbent values of gentility, affluence and industry.¹⁰ While the critics may not have fully appreciated the profound economic changes of the era, they saw the effects of British commerce in diffusing wealth and thus improving the standard of living and, seemingly, the mores of the British people. While France and Holland were seen to share in this definition of progress, Britain clearly stood at the forefront with its remarkable political and financial institutions standing alongside a vast and expansive empire. Therefore, this sense of commercialism or commercial virtue could be seen as an inherently and uniquely British

⁹John Brown, *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (London, 1758), p. 15; quoted in Greene, "Empire and Identity from the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution," p. 217.

¹⁰Langford, p. 61.

characteristic.¹¹

This commercial spirit bespoke profound changes in the nature of wealth, status and political power which did not go uncontested. Economic and social differences revealed general divisions and potential conflicts between members of the landed interest and an emerging monied class, as evidenced by the hostility directed towards the latter in the rhetoric of the "Country" ideology. The landed elite portrayed the monied interest as a threat not only to their own position but, more importantly, to the moral health of the nation. While the capitalistic spirit weathered its many critics during the eighteenth century, charges proliferated that Britain would be undermined by the schemes and stockbroking of the London financiers.¹² Despite the importance relegated to commercial prowess, political power remained affixed to landed property. Ideologies surrounding property ownership were debated extensively throughout the Anglo-American Atlantic political realm during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Land literally secured and locked the individual (or political citizen) to the state by the nature of its immobility. As such, property ownership ensured the individual's self-interest in the well-being of

¹¹Ibid., p. 2.

¹²H.V. Bowen, *Elites, Enterprise and the Making of the British Overseas Empire 1688-1775* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996), pp. 64-65.

the state. Conversely, commercial property - money, goods and ships - appeared to be the very essence of mobility, denying men of commerce the sense of stability inherent within land. Qualifications regarding property ownership barred those men men of trade and/or finance who did not invest in land from entering the legislature. During the eighteenth century, membership in the House of Commons continued to be based upon landed wealth vice personal or commercial wealth.¹³ Thus, those men of trade, finance and the professions, who possessed political aspirations, found it necessary to buy estates in order to procure entry into the legislature. As the statistics demonstrate, this did not prove a barrier for those professional men of substance with political leanings. By 1790, approximately one-sixth of all Members of Parliament (MPs) came from the commercial and/or professional classes. Although these men were increasingly able to influence policy-makers, Parliamentary politics and matters of state continued to be controlled by members of the landed elite.¹⁴ In social terms, the wealthier landowning families rarely intermarried with those families still active in trade. Nor was commerce seen as an occupation suitable for the landed elite or their children. Commerce, which was

¹³In the eighteenth century the landed wealth qualification was £600 for country members and £300 for burgesses. Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 49-51.

viewed as necessary and distinctly beneficial to the nation, clearly was not the preferred avenue to wealth amongst the aristocracy. Underlying this equivocal outlook was a conviction that merchants were admirable members of society so long as they knew - and kept - their place.¹⁵

A number of factors underlay the grudging acceptance of commerce by members of the landowning class. At a very basic level, landed men were so clearly and securely ensconced into the social and political structure that they, along with MPs, ministers and even monarchs, could afford to be tolerant of a potentially rival class. In addition, geography played a peculiar and very real role in acclimatizing the British elite to commerce. Britain was the only great power whose political capital was also its major commercial and population center. In this setting, men of state could not avoid contact with men of commerce, breeding a not insubstantial degree of familiarity between the two groups. The final rationale for the landed elite's interest in and responsiveness to commerce was both pragmatic as well as self-serving. Commerce was simply too lucrative and too necessary to the nation to do otherwise. After 1688, the commercial classes - ranging from financiers to merchants to minor shopkeepers - supplied the long-term loans which funded an average of 30 per cent of wartime expenditures. In the

¹⁵Colley, *Britons*, p. 60.

American Wars this figure would reach nearly 40 per cent. Such revenue was critical to a nation that was at war for much of the eighteenth century. The statistics point to fiscal realities in a political system which favored the landed elite. The propertied class typically had much less liquid capital to invest than did their counterparts in trade. More significantly, in terms of national revenue, domestic and foreign trade represented the primary source of taxation. After the War of Spanish Succession ended in 1713, due to the pressures from and the influence of the propertied classes, the rate of land taxes were allowed to drop during times of peace. Succeeding administrations recouped these funds through custom dues on imports and excise taxes levied on particular goods produced and/or distributed in Great Britain. These items typically included beer, malt, candles, soap, paper, etc. Up until the late eighteenth century, customs dues and excise taxes furnished over 60 per cent of government revenues.¹⁶

The ambivalent and often tense character of the relations between landed and commercial classes should not obscure their reciprocal interdependency. John Brewer has argued that landowners were "deeply implicated in commercial

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 62-65; also see P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism*. vol. 1, *Innovation and Expansion, 1688-1914* (London: Longman, 1993), pp. 1-100 *passim*.

society," as evidenced by the attention Parliament paid to matters of trade, commerce and empire.¹⁷ To contemporaries, this alliance reflected the realities and workings of a modernizing state and an expanding empire. Already by the late seventeenth century, Sir Josiah Child had opined that the gentry and businessmen complemented one another, so that in the realm of politics "a mixt assembly of noblemen, gentlemen, and merchants are the best constitution that can be established."¹⁸ Prior to 1775, then, most contemporaries understood that Britain had become both a landed and a commercial society. And, according to Linda Colley, up until this date that alliance was mutually beneficial for both parties. After 1775, however, a number of factors worked to create tensions between the two classes, the most important being the changing experience of war. Both the American War and the French Wars inflicted severe damage on British commerce, through attacks on and disruptions in trade, to a degree unknown in earlier wars. The realization of this fact caused the commercial classes to protest the landed elites' predominance in government.¹⁹ The objections of the merchants

¹⁷John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

¹⁸Quoted in Bowen, p. 67.

¹⁹Colley, *Britons*, p. 100.

underscore the reality that this alliance was never inevitable. A shared cause or interest was needed to ally these two powerful economic factions and empire provided one such stake. Imperialism helped to redefine economic, social and political relationships within the metropolis by providing a common interest and increased opportunities stretching across social classes. Frequently, empire provided the context for the cooperation between varied elite groups. At the same time, it focused attention away from narrower, sectional concerns onto the broader national interests. Through these types of alliances, we can understand the ways in which empire forged links across political and economic classes. In this way, imperialism shaped a national interest and through it a cultural identity, founded initially on landed interests, but increasingly exemplified by an emerging, and highly visible, commercial elite.

Recurrently over the eighteenth century, the colonies - along with the trade and resources they provided - came to be seen as key contributors to Britain's emergence as a great power. In the early decades of the century, observers would have defined the significance of empire largely in terms of military and strategic advantages. By mid-century, however, these same commentators would have numbered commercial considerations amongst the greatest, if not the premier, of imperial benefits. Writing in 1774, the political writer

John Campbell believed that "the Establishments we have made in all Parts of the World," symbolized British superiority. These colonies represented "so many distinguishing Testimonies, so many Trophies of our maritime Skill and naval Strength," which at the same time, "extend[ed] the Fame, display[ed] the Power and support[ed] the Commerce of Great Britain."²⁰ In this statement, Campbell tellingly interwove the definitive elements of the eighteenth-century perception of empire. Britain's maritime prowess, along with the Royal Navy, had secured colonies around the world, to the benefit of the home country. In turn, this empire firmly established Britain's position among the great European powers. Campbell's contemporaries may have reversed his emphasis, to assert that it was "Commerce" and the empire which supported the navy and Britain's international stature. During the century from roughly 1650 to 1750, policy-makers believed that England's wealth was dependent upon the power to defend both the nation and its trade. That same power, concurrently, rested upon commerce and wealth. Commerce, therefore, symbolized and safeguarded the wealth and security of the nation at the same time that it gave meaning to Great Britain's status as an international power. In 1735, Thomas

²⁰John Campbell, *A Political Survey of Britain: Being a Series of Reflections on the Situation, Lands, Inhabitants, Revenues, Colonies, and Commerce of this Island*, 2 vols. (London, 1774), II, pp. 563-564; quoted in Greene, "Empire and Identity from the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution," p. 220.

Lediard caught this interdependency in the preface to his book *The Naval History of England*. "That our trade is the Mother and Nurse of our Seamen; Our Seamen the Life of our Fleet; and our Fleet the Security and Protection of our Trade: And that both together are the WEALTH, STRENGTH, and GLORY of GREAT BRITAIN."²¹ In light of this interconnectedness, Daniel Baugh has termed the British Atlantic Empire a "maritime-imperial system." Prior to the Seven Years' War, policy-makers understood the dual nature of colonies. On the one hand, they threatened to become potential burdens involving the government in unwanted entanglements and expenses. As such, the acquisition of actual territory was to be avoided. On the other hand, colonies seemed to promise national advantages. From the perspective of what has been termed a "blue water policy", colonies could be seen as a stimulus to commerce by producing both commodities for export and the necessary markets to receive those goods. Moreover, colonies sustained overseas naval bases as well as creating and enlarging the pool of shipping and seamen.²² Contemporaries proudly remarked that the expansion of the empire and its related commerce had provided valuable manpower that could be called upon during

²¹Thomas Lediard, *The Naval History of England* (London: 1735); quoted in Baugh, p. 195.

²²Baugh, p. 186.

times of military conflict. This was particularly true of the number of seamen available through the merchant fleets, both at home and in the colonies.²³

In the century leading up to the French Wars, this mature trading system transformed the British Atlantic. The early economic stages of plundering and adventuring had given way to the stability of trade. This maritime-imperial system with its component parts of trade, maritime power and national wealth grew out of and at the same fostered a complex and sophisticated commercial and financial realm at home. Writing in 1757, Malachy Postlethwayt extolled the virtues of this interdependency. "Spain, indeed, has greater countries and more subjects in America, than we have, and yet does not navigate in that trade a tenth part of the shipping that we do." The Almighty had exhibited the foresight to place "the true riches of this earth" such as rice, sugar, tobacco and the like on its surface which, naturally, required and thus benefitted shipping. This, in turn, spawned "a power to defend our possession of them" without which "all wealth is precarious".²⁴ What Postlethwayt neglected to mention was that shipping then generated and

²³It has been estimated that during the 1750s, the Navy absorbed approximately 60,000 men from a pool of some 70,000-80,000 mariners. Bowen, p. 71.

²⁴Malachy Postlethwayt, *The Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce* 2d ed., 2 volumes (London, 1757), vol. II, p. 307; quoted in Baugh, p. 195.

promoted invisibles of its own such as financing and insurance. These invisibles, in turn, advanced the financial revolution within Great Britain through such instruments and services as credit, banking and marine insurance.

For all of the mercantilistic rhetoric of the century, it would be a mistake to view the British Atlantic, in the early decades, as a closed economic system. Commerce, particularly in the Americas, operated at a much more comprehensively multilateral basis than typically recognized by either contemporaries or historians. While enumerated goods were required to enter the metropole directly, other items moved legally throughout the Atlantic. Southern Europe and the Western Mediterranean especially, became important markets for British colonial merchants. As in so many instances, the major proviso to this trade demanded that it be carried on British-flag vessels.²⁵ In theory, mercantilism remained the favored economic system of the day, yet in actuality, British commerce in the Atlantic was indicative of a commercial ideology that encouraged and promoted an increased volume of trade and "traffick". It would not be until the latter decades of the eighteenth century that the British would actually attempt to systematically apply a mercantilistic ideology to the Atlantic, with disastrous results.

²⁵Baugh, p. 198.

Within the highly active, integrated and international commercial world of the eighteenth-century Atlantic, it becomes necessary to understand the definition of such words as *illicit*, *illegal* or *contraband*, when applied to colonial trade. The prohibition against particular trades and/or commodities, in many instances, was one-sided. For example, whereas English (including colonial) trade may have been forbidden by the Spaniards into Spanish America or by the French into their West Indies islands, neither of these trades was forbidden by the English Government. Daniel Baugh has argued that the thriving multilateralism of British Atlantic commerce resulted from deliberate metropolitan policies rather than as a consequence of "salutary neglect". Prior to the 1760s and 1770s, the metropole tested and revoked regulatory measures based upon their ultimate influence on the promotion of trade. Throughout the seventeenth and even into the eighteenth centuries, British commercial policy in the Atlantic was based upon a *quid pro quo*. The metropolitan government sought customs revenues, naval resources and commercial wealth to generate both credit and taxes. For their part, colonists, merchants and shippers acknowledged London's authority in exchange for naval protection and access to the Atlantic commercial world. This *quid pro quo* reflected a rough balance. If colonial protection during the early stages of empire was minimal, so was the navy's ability to enforce commercial regulations.

Later in the century, as the navy acquired the resources, capacity and expertise to more adequately protect the major trade routes it also demonstrated the capability to police its own merchants more effectively.²⁶

Reminiscent of this sense of *quid pro quo*, a mutual dependence marked the relationship between commerce and Great Britain. As already emphasized, national wealth, power and prestige accrued from Great Britain's expanding commercial activities. But to an equal, if not greater, extent the mercantile community desired and needed the services provided by the state. Domestic traders, at every level, sought political stability which promoted and secured commercial and credit transactions. Merchants trading into foreign and overseas markets required naval protection on the more dangerous sea routes. The government's investment in the navy - and through it, the expansion of the empire - made possible the phenomenal growth in overseas trade. And, the state's aggressive pursuance of colonies benefited the entire commercial community. As Linda Colley has argued, commercial self-interest provided one rationale for a burgeoning nationalism in the eighteenth century. In Great Britain, various classes and interest groups, of which merchants were only the most visible, came to see the newly-created nation

²⁶Ibid., pp. 193-195.

as a usable resource and a vehicle for their ambitions.²⁷

Historians have spoken of the "Americanization" or "Westernization" of English overseas trade during the eighteenth century, signifying the growing importance of the Atlantic to national commerce.²⁸ This should not obscure the economic reality. As late as the Seven Years War, continental Europe absorbed four-fifths of British domestic exports and re-exports as well as providing the bulk of imports; nonetheless, the colonial markets proved to be the most dynamic sector of trade.²⁹ Contemporaries recognized not

²⁷Colley, *Britons*, pp. 55-56.

²⁸Bowen, p. 117. For discussions of the "Americanization" of trade see, T. H. Breen, "'Baubles of Britain': The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century." *Past and Present* 119 (May 1988); and T. H. Breen, "An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690-1776," *Journal of British Studies* 25 (October 1986).

²⁹Colley, *Britons*, pp. 68-69. Here Colley relies on P.K. O'Brien and S.L. Engerman, "Exports and the Growth of the British Economy from the Glorious Revolution to the Peace of Amiens", in B. Solow and S. L. Engerman (eds). *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Bowen, on the other hand, states that, between 1700 and 1775, the Atlantic replaced Europe as the main destination for exported manufactures. Bowen cites W. Schlote, *British Overseas Trade from 1700 to 1939* (Oxford, 1952), p. 52; Brinley Thomas, *The Industrial Revolution and the Atlantic Economy. Selected Essays* (1993), pp. 36-39; D.A. Farnie, "The Commercial Empire of the Atlantic, 1607-1783," *Economic History Review*, XV (1962), p. 214. Jacob Price would agree that the Europe remained Britain's most important markets (for exports and re-exports), however contemporaries viewed the American markets as the most dynamic which at times has skewed their overall commercial

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only the phenomenal growth in colonial trade but also its growing importance in terms of the balance of payments. By mid-century, re-exports of colonial goods counted for almost 40 per cent of all British exports. The bulk of these re-exports entered European ports, helping to offset the cost of imports. A substantial amount of the colonial produce, however, remained in the domestic market for home consumption. This factor constituted one of the most profound aspects of cultural imperialization and/or "Americanization", as once exotic commodities became daily fare within the home islands.³⁰ Even though critics may have been unable to precisely calculate or fix the value of the American colonies' worth to the British empire, few would have denied its significance. Adam Anderson echoed a common sentiment when he defined the American plantations as "the change in our national circumstances," which had founded the Britannic Empire.³¹

Anderson's quote, by its very one-sidedness, contains

importance. See Jacob Price, "What Did Merchants Do? Reflections on British Overseas Trade, 1660-1790," *Journal of Economic History* 49 (June 1989), pp. 271-272; also see Jacob Price, "The Transatlantic Economy," in *Colonial British America: Essays in the New History of the Early Modern Era*, ed. Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984).

³⁰Colley, *Britons*, p. 69.

³¹Greene, "Empire and Identity from the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution," p. 218.

the seeds of discontent inherent within an evolving imperial relationship. Particularly in the aftermath of the Seven Years' War, the American colonists saw themselves as British subjects and fellow kinsmen, sharing the same notion of liberty which Edmund Burke claimed distinguished the British Empire from those of its European rivals. Britons such as Anderson, nonetheless, tended to view their colonies as dependent outposts of British commercial and strategic power. At the time he wrote the fourth edition of *Administration of the Colonies* in 1768, Thomas Pownall, the former Governor of Massachusetts, perceived the shift occurring in current imperial-commercial thought. According to Pownall, initially "[t]he laws of trade respecting America were framed and enacted for the regulating of mere plantations." But the spirit of commerce, progressing well beyond what either the metropole or the colonies had anticipated, or even hoped, had created a "very complex and extensive commercial interest." The pursuance of this spirit had both established and raised the metropole in commercial stature. That same pursuit, moreover, had "extended the British dominions through every part of the Atlantic Ocean, to the actually forming A GRAND MARINE EMPIRE." Pownall showed that, although not necessarily planned, a successful, lucrative and complex commercial empire had grown up in the British Atlantic. To tamper with the operation of this imperial-commercial arrangement, as a number of statesmen were contemplating,

could threaten its profitability or even viability. Pownall warned that the strict enforcement of the Navigation Acts, along with other regulations on colonial trade, would reduce the colonies, once again, to "mere plantations." If Great Britain were to reap the profits and benefits of its colonies, the government "must examine thoroughly the state of this commercial interest." Pownall believed the metropole should remodel "the laws of trade" with the aim of creating and sustaining "one great commercial dominion."³²

The political institutions of the North American colonies had matured under a state of relative autonomy, whether by "salutary neglect" or imperial intention.³³ As Pownall indicated, by the mid-eighteenth century, British

³²Thomas Pownall, *The Administration of the Colonies* (London, 1768), pp. 282-284 (italics, etc. in the original); quoted in Baugh, pp. 207-208. This passage appears first in Pownall's fourth edition; it also appears in the fifth edition (1774), essentially unchanged.

³³Edmund Burke deemed Britain's early imperial (non)policy one of "salutary neglect". London, in effect, permitted much of the crown's and metropole's power to devolve onto provincial assembles and great trading companies, not only in America, but elsewhere as in the example of the East India Company. See, Gould, *Persistence of Empire*, p. 16. Reminiscent of the earlier discussion of *quid pro quo* commercial ideologies, in an earlier era, the metropole did not have the resources or inclination to strictly control political activities in the British North American colonies, and as such granted a considerable degree of latitude (and thus autonomy) in this arena to the local assemblies. Later, during the eighteenth century, when London possessed both the bureaucratic sophistication and desire to control colonial politics, the Americans - accustomed to their political freedom - would fiercely object to metropolitan interference.

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officials had other designs for their colonies, commercially and politically. On both sides of the Atlantic, the Seven Years' War and its settlement helped to foster a pivotal divergence in perspective concerning the role of the American colonies within the empire. The war clearly evidenced the significance of the Americas in European designs, especially those of Great Britain and France. The fighting not only began in North America, but at key points, centered there as well. More importantly, during the war the Anglo-American imperial relationship was transformed in ways crucial for the continued functioning of the empire. This shift came in large part from the influence of William Pitt, who understood more fully than most, that ultimate victory over France would come in the Atlantic not on the European continent. In order to pursue a blue-water strategy, Pitt recognized that the metropole would need to secure the notoriously-recalcitrant cooperation of the colonial legislatures, especially with regards to troops and revenues. For his part, Pitt afforded the colonial assemblies a level of parity uncommon in the imperial-colonial relationship. The changes occurring on both sides of the Atlantic regarding the future of this imperial relationship were understood by few. The colonists rightfully believed that they had shouldered their share of the French and Indian War and thus expected to claim a portion of the victory as their own. As a result they looked forward to a more equitable imperial alliance in the future.

Conversely, many officials and MPs came away from the war convinced that the colonists must accept and play a much more subordinate role in the emerging empire. Colonial behavior during the war - including smuggling into the French West Indies and legislative wrangling for imperial concessions - confirmed British views that the colonists had become too independent as well as arousing fears that the Americans might seek actual independence.³⁴

For all the Parliamentary grumbling, the colonists were practicing the customary tactics of center-peripheral negotiations. Parliament could formulate and pass imperial statutes, but only the colonies could formalize these through their acceptance.³⁵ As Jack Greene has shown recently, prior to the nineteenth century empires and nations were conglomerate affairs under which the individual entities enjoyed considerable autonomy. Similarly, in these earlier eras, law did not emanate automatically outward from the center but had to be negotiated between the metropole and the

³⁴Jack P. Greene, review of *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* by Fred Anderson, in *Times Literary Supplement* (August 25, 2000): pp. 8-9; also see, Jack P. Greene, "The American Revolution: An Explanation," chap. in *Understanding the American Revolution: Issues and Actors* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995).

³⁵Jack P. Greene, *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Politics of the British Empire and the United States, 1607-1788* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986).

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localities. The actual form that law took was based on both what was customary and what would be obeyed.³⁶ Reminiscent of the *quid pro quo* relationship which operated between the British navy and the merchant community and/or colonists, a profound difference existed between what Parliament might desire and thus dictate on the one hand, and what it could enforce on the other. In the century and a half of empire, the Atlantic assemblies had proven themselves quite adept at mediating and modifying the dictates which Parliament had sought to impose. The shift in perceptions which occurred between 1754 and 1763, thus became acute for the continuance of the imperial-colonial relationship. In that same century and a half, Parliament had established, consolidated and grown increasingly jealous of its own power, which it did not intend now to share with colonials. Similarly, the American colonists would soon come to an understanding of their own power.

Benjamin Franklin, who was in London in 1759, recorded these imperial frustrations in a letter to Isaac Norris. The author related that John Carteret, the first Earl of Granville and then president of the Privy Council, had complained that the colonies slighted the king's instructions as if they were not binding in the colonies. Granville assured Franklin that those rulings were not intended as

³⁶See Greene, *Peripheries and Center*; and review of Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War*.

"little Pocket instructions" to be followed at the colonists' discretion. Franklin adduced that the prevailing opinion "among the Ministers and great men here, is, that the Colonies have too many and too great Privileges; and that it is not only the Interest of the Crown but of the Nation to reduce them." According to Franklin, imperial goals for the American colonies could be surmised through the actions of the Earl of Halifax, then president of the Board of Trade. "[I]f his Sentiments were no other ways to be known, the fruitless Experiment he has try'd at the Nation's Cost, of a military Government for a Colony, sufficiently shows what he thinks would be best for us." Here Franklin referred to Halifax's sponsorship of the colonizing of Nova Scotia with British settlers in 1749. Even though the province was established under civil government, the military presence there was unmistakable and, as evidenced by Franklin, disturbing to the Americans.³⁷ The New Englanders who migrated to Nova Scotia in the first waves of settlement perceived the administration as foreign to that which they had left and many of these early migrants eventually returned

³⁷Benjamin Franklin to Issac Norris, March 19, 1759; published in Leonard W. Labaree, ed. *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 9 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), pp. 293-294.

home in disgust.³⁸ In the aftermath of the Seven Years' War, again to the unease of the original British-American settlements, the imperial military establishment grew significantly with the occupation of Canada.

The demands of frequent wars against imperial and commercial rivals left permanent marks on the developing modern European states. War against formidable enemies necessitated more centralized and efficient bureaucracies, which produced fiscal and administrative innovations in its wake. As already noted, after 1713 Great Britain preferenced custom duties and excise taxes over land taxes. This shift in itself profoundly and permanently shaped the British state. The taxing of trade presented a huge and complex assignment. Whereas calculating and collecting land tax could be performed by a relatively small and inexperienced staff, accurately assessing and measuring commerce required a vast number of highly-specialized personnel. To some degree, the excise was truly "modern", possessing a remarkably effective administrative structure capable of regularly policing some 100,000 commercial establishments. And this

³⁸For a discussion of both Franklin's attitudes - as well as that of the early New Englanders - towards Nova Scotia, see Gordon Stewart and George Rawlyk, *A People Highly Favoured by God: The Nova Scotia Yankees and the American Revolution* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1972), pp. 5-10.

modernization process left its imprint on the British state.³⁹ Such reforms could - and often did - mold the permanent character of the developing nations. England favored the navy as its primary weapon of defense and vehicle of commerce in large part due to obvious geographical realities. The formal institutionalization of and reliance upon the navy came to define England (and later Great Britain) as a maritime power. This process helped to create a national image for external consumption as well as to reinforce domestic cultural stereotypes, all of which depended upon the sea.⁴⁰

Great Britain fought and won a series of long, costly wars against its imperial rivals during the 1700s, culminating in the stunning victory over France in 1760. It is worth stressing that these wars were European in nature even though they increasingly centered on the colonies, especially those in the Americas. In the process, war intimately linked, and even entangled, commerce with imperialism. According to the economic philosophies of the day, raw materials, commodities and markets were distinctly and woefully finite. Therefore, resources and markets

³⁹Thomas Ertman, "The Sinews of Power and European State-Building Theory," in *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815*, ed. Lawrence Stone (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp 36-38.

⁴⁰Baugh, p. 186.

acquired by an imperial rival resulted in a direct loss to the home country, eventually threatening its international stature. Not surprisingly then, the state intervened to promote and protect its commerce, which included the actual markets along with the materials to supply them and the carrying trade to service them. In these terms, the eighteenth-century wars between the Atlantic-based empires were in essence commercial wars and, increasingly, colonial wars.⁴¹ As the military action of these wars steadily shifted towards the peripheries, British public and political interest in the empire grew. At the same time, these conflicts forced the Atlantic colonists to share in Britain's international fortune. Colonial sentiment during and after the Seven Years' War demonstrates the manner in which war brought the empire home to the peripheries. As already seen, British North Americans took considerable pride in the metropole's success in 1760, convinced that they had contributed substantially to the British victory. As this suggests, the colonists could and did claim imperial victories and fates as their own, incorporating the military, maritime and commercial prowess of the metropole into their own cultural identities. This process was particularly true in Nova Scotia, where Britain's first major North American military base was located.

⁴¹Langford, p. 3.

War and Colonial Identity

As with the earlier American settlements, imperial wars intimately linked Nova Scotia to the metropole, indeed even more so given the military presence at Halifax. The task now becomes one of understanding the manner in which British cultural traits such as commercialism entered into the colonial identity of Nova Scotia. According to Armitage, one of the most popularly-held images (or *myths*) of the British empire centered on the belief that it was an empire of the seas. Britons traced this development back to the reign of Elizabeth I and the Elizabethan sea-dogs. As already discussed, this particular popular ideology was based - to a certain degree - on reality; great Britain did control a maritime empire which both the Royal Navy and the merchant community had expanded and integrated. Actual maritime mastery, however, would not be achieved until the successful completion of the Napoleonic Wars. As such, many aspects of this maritime mythology were created by - and then affixed onto the national imagination - by nineteenth-century celebrants of empire. For this process the Napoleonic Wars were crucial.⁴²

By the time he wrote in 1865, the Nova Scotian historian Beamish Murdoch had fully imbibed the maritime-imperial

⁴²Armitage, p. 100.

ideology and accepted it as a natural element of the colony's personality. In the preface to the third volume of his *History of Nova Scotia, or Acadia*, Murdoch wrote: "It is not so long ago, but that some living can remember when the doctrine was universally received, that '*Ships, colonies and commerce*' were important, nay indispensable elements in the dignity, success and security of an empire."⁴³ Murdoch reiterated the classic formulation of Britain's Atlantic empire, linking ships, colonies and commerce. Next, he admonished that it was to be "remembered that England's glory and renown has ever depended much on her navy, both military and mercantile." From a maritime-imperial perspective, Nova Scotia helped to sustain - and, as such, shared - Britain's success and glory in the Atlantic by readily supplying mariners to the empire. Moreover, in the critical years of 1793 to 1815, England's possession and control of Nova Scotia ensured that the imperial navies had a secure base "or home and resort on this side of the Atlantic."⁴⁴ Similar to the earlier response of the American colonists after the Seven Years' War, Murdoch situated Nova Scotia within the imperial victories of 1815. Murdoch wrote fifty years after these central events when a number of those still living could

⁴³Beamish Murdoch, *A History of Nova Scotia, or Acadia*, vol. 3 (Halifax, Nova Scotia: James Barnes, Printer and Publish., 1865), pp. iv.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. v.

remember the commonplace acknowledgement of the maritime-imperial system and Nova Scotia's position within it. Murdoch's history tells us as much about his own era as it does the past. In his preface, the author wrote:

In our maritime provinces we find a population so assimilated with the British, in habits and feelings, that they may be considered as identical; - and perhaps more attached subjects of the empire, more ready to exert themselves for her honor and safety, could not be found in any county of England herself, than in these the Lower provinces at a geographical distance of some 3000 miles.⁴⁵

Murdoch proclaimed Nova Scotia's imperial identity at a moment when it appeared to be challenged by the forces of nationalism via Canadian Confederation in 1867. Absorption into an inward-looking continental nation threatened elements of the Maritime Provinces' distinctive Atlantic and imperial culture. From the vantage point of Murdoch looking back, the Napoleonic Wars appeared to be a pivotal and nostalgic moment. Not only did Nova Scotia profit from the wars economically it also received a lion's share of the metropole's attention - for the last time. Through the imperial conflict, Murdoch undoubtedly mythologized the empire and Nova Scotia's role within it. Yet, he did not seriously distort the picture so much as glorify the reality. While the picture at the time was more varied, complex and distinctly less romantic, the Scottish merchant, William Forsyth, who lived through and operated within Napoleonic

⁴⁵Ibid, p. v.

Nova Scotia, would bear testimony to the fundamental accuracy of Murdoch's history. And it is through the French Wars and William Forsyth that we can begin to trace the transmittal of a commercial/imperial identity to Nova Scotia.⁴⁶

War proved to be a fickle tool for securing commerce and colonies alike. Within a decade of the humiliating defeat in the American Revolutionary War, Great Britain and its remaining colonies were once again drawn into a global conflict with imperial France via the Revolutionary and French Wars. The correspondence of the Scotsman, William Forsyth, provides a day-to-day perspective of a merchant fully enmeshed in the commercial and imperial labyrinths of the Atlantic. Forsyth's contacts extended throughout British North America, including Quebec, Newfoundland, Cape Breton and then back to Great Britain. The letters portray both the commercial and imperial vicissitudes of wartime from the perspective of the peripheries in Nova Scotia.

Simultaneously, the correspondence illustrates the degree to which the fate of the colonies was intricately bound to that of the imperial center. In his correspondence of late September and early October 1796, Forsyth recounted the

⁴⁶England (and then Great Britain) was at war for much of the eighteenth century. While the wars, in and of themselves, have received considerable attention, only recently have historians understood the centrality of war in the development of the nation, state, economy, society and identity. See H. V. Bowen, *War and British Society, 1688-1815*. New Studies in Economic and Social History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 1-4.

activities of the French navy off the coasts of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. Writing to business associates Messrs Lester and Morragh in Quebec, he told of a superior French fleet inflicting damage upon the coast of Newfoundland. Even though he concluded that the combined British fleet in the region was inferior to that of the French, Forsyth believed Halifax to be safe.⁴⁷ "We are not apprehensive of an attack upon this place, but they may do much mischief upon the Coast."⁴⁸ On the following day, September 24, 1796, Forsyth relayed specific details of the attack to Messrs Robert Livie and Company of London. "[W]e have received accounts of a French squadron consisting of 5 Ships of the line 2 frigates & 2 Corvettes having gone into the Bay of Bulls [Newfoundland] & destroyed a great deal of property."⁴⁹ One week later, Forsyth wrote to Laurence Kavanaugh of Arichat on Cape Breton Island expanding upon his original description. "When the accounts came away the French were destroying all

⁴⁷"Our squadron is cruising to the Southward & if they were here & joined Admiral Sir James Wallace they would be inferior to the French." William Forsyth to Messrs Lester and Morragh, Quebec, September 23, 1796, NSARM, MG3/150.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹William Forsyth to Messrs Robert Livie & Co, London, September 24, 1796, NSARM, MG3/150.

the property in the harbour."⁵⁰ These letters referred to the attacks launched by Admiral Richery, who had eluded the British blockade at Toulon. He then sailed to Newfoundland, where he harassed local fishing communities and seized several merchantmen before returning home.

As the Atlantic empires increased in significance over the course of the eighteenth-century, military action had followed the Anglo-French rivalry into the peripheries. During the Napoleonic Wars, rumors abounded in both the British Isles and the maritime colonies of imminent French invasions, creating a common fear for subjects in both locales. Napoleon's Army of England represented the greatest invasionary force ever assembled against Great Britain, up until that time. Those living between 1793 and 1815 could not know that the French Army would fail in their repeated promises to transfer the war across the Channel to British shores. As evidence, diaries and letters of the era reflect British fears of a violent French invasion. Those fears were heightened, throughout the war, by French expeditionary forces sent against Ireland and Wales.⁵¹ As strategic and/or

⁵⁰William Forsyth to Lawrence Kavanaugh, Arichat, October 1, 1796, NSARM, MG3/150.

⁵¹In April 1797 Forsyth wrote to Andrew Thomson in Newfoundland regarding the abortive invasion of Ireland in 1796. "The French made an attempt to Invade Ireland. This fleet were dispensed by a severe Storm. One Boat with some officers only landed & were made prisoners. The expedition was entirely frusterated but they give out that another

commercial outposts of the British empire, the maritime colonies were equally vulnerable to French naval forces during times of conflict. And since the main body of the British Fleet remained close to home, the colonists may have justifiably felt more susceptible to attack.

With Halifax seemingly safe in September 1796, Forsyth's letters reflected equal if not more concern for the general well being of commerce itself than for the maritime inhabitants. Forsyth particularly worried about the effect of current conditions on local commodities and their markets. For example, in his letter to Kavanaugh, Forsyth contemplated how the French attack on Newfoundland would influence the price of fish. "Should they destroy much of the Fish on the Island, it may probably have some effect on the price." But the larger issue was the market; a concern which placed the maritime colonies in a shared predicament and experience with Anglo-American merchants and fishermen across the Western Atlantic. "We are much at a loss to know what market to send Merchantable fish to, in case we have war with Spain, the Portuguese markets only will be open to us, & they in all

attempt will be made." Forsyth was referring to the French force under Admiral de Galles, which left Brest on December 15, 1796. The ill-fitted fleet suffered from poor management and foul weather. A portion arrived in Bantry Bay on December 21, but the weather prevented a landing and the ships turned for home. Five ships were lost in storms, while six more were captured by the British. William Forsyth to Messrs Andrew Thomson & Co., Newfoundland, April 6, 1797, NSARM, MG3/150. Also see Colley, *Britons*. pp. 286-306.

probability will be glutted." Forsyth included in his letter a request for Kavanaugh to forward the price of fish at Arichat as soon as it was fixed. He closed the letter with the hope that there was "no danger of the French paying" Arichat a visit.⁵² This letter underscores the tribulations of colonial merchants in determining markets, commodities and prices during times of conflict. War did not create the situation per se, since speculation was a normal function of the merchant's practice. However, hostilities greatly intensified and complicated the process.

The correspondence demonstrates mutual vulnerabilities, personal and commercial, between the colonies and Great Britain. For example, attacks staged against the colonies often reverberated through imperial financial circles. On October 8, 1796, Forsyth wrote to his senior partner, James Hunter, regarding the attack on Newfoundland. "[T]he destruction of so much property will be a great national loss & will be heavily felt by many individuals."⁵³ Here, Forsyth directly equated the attack on the Bay of Bulls with "national" interests and concerns in Britain. At the same time, he touched upon the commercial bonds connecting the

⁵²William Forsyth to Lawrence Kavanaugh, Arichat, October 1, 1796, NSARM, MG3/150.

⁵³William Forsyth to Messrs James Hunter & Co., Greenock, Scotland, October 8, 1796, NSARM, MG3/150.

British Atlantic world, for the partnerships of both James Hunter and Company as well as Hunter, Robertson and Company had extensive business activities in Newfoundland. In times of imperial conflict, such companies faced the disruption of business, at the least, and the actual loss of property and/or investments, at the worst.

Apprehensions on the part of both officials and the populace regarding French intentions are evident in the correspondence. In his letter to James Hunter, Forsyth "feared that the Quebec fleet consisting of 14 Sail under convoy of the Pearl Frigate has falln into the hands of the French. They went through the Straits of Bellisle, where three French frigates were cruising at the same time."⁵⁴

Nearly a year later, on September 18, 1797, Forsyth returned to the subject of the French in writing to his contact Andrew Thomson in St. John's, Newfoundland.⁵⁵ According to information received from the governor of Nova Scotia, Sir John Wentworth, the French were planning another attack upon Newfoundland and, this time, possibly Nova Scotia. Supposedly, the French intended to dispatch several small squadrons from various Atlantic ports to the Western Islands, where they would rendezvous for the assault on Newfoundland.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Andrew Thomson and Company, out of Greenock, seems to have had substantial dealings with James Hunter and Company, providing a link to Forsyth.

After reducing the colony, the French would proceed "from thence to attempt either the River St. Laurence in expectation of getting the Canadians to join them, or Halifax in case the season should be too far gone before they can leave Newfoundland." Forsyth assured Thomson that there was little likelihood of such an event, but thought "it right to communicate to you the information we receive in case it can be of any service to you."⁵⁶ Here Forsyth relays local and imperial prejudices regarding the French Canadians whom the Anglo-American population eyed warily. Evidencing their own intimate ties to the metropole, the Nova Scotians assumed or suspected that the Canadians would support a successful French invasion. In contrast, the correspondence between Forsyth and his Anglo associates in Quebec, Lester and Morrogh, makes no mention of doubts regarding Canadian loyalty.

By comparing this letter with those that follow, we can understand the uncertainties of Nova Scotians surrounding French aims. In addition, the letters highlight the confusions prevalent in heavily trafficked areas such as Nova Scotia and Newfoundland in determining the origins and nationalities - and, ultimately, objectives - of the ships sailing in the vicinity. In the October letter addressed to Hunter, Forsyth cited reports of "10 sail of the line[,] 5

⁵⁶William Forsyth to Messrs Andrew Thomson & Co., Newfoundland, September 18, 1797, NSARM, MG3/150.

Frigates & some Transport having been seen in Lat: 46 & Lon: 39[,] standing to the Westward. We hope it may be a British Fleet in quest of the French squadron," which had recently attacked the Bay of Bulls.⁵⁷ On June 20, 1798 Forsyth wrote in a similar vein to Thomson at St. John's. "It is reported that five French frigates were cruizing to the Eastward of the grand Banks, but as you do not mention it, we suppose it is without foundation." At that time, "all" of the British fleet was in harbor at Halifax, with the exception of "a few small Vessels". Forsyth concluded that the British "could have sent a squadron in pursuit of the Enemy, had there been certain information of their being upon the Banks."⁵⁸

Situated in the naval base of Halifax, Forsyth occupied a position of relative security in comparison to merchants such as Thomson located in distant ports like St. John's⁵⁹ He also had access to official and local knowledge regarding the actions of the British Navy. At the time of the attack on the Bay of Bulls, Forsyth had determined the British naval

⁵⁷William Forsyth, Halifax, to Messrs James Hunter & Co., Greenoch, Scotland, October 8, 1796, NSARM, MG3/150.

⁵⁸William Forsyth to Messrs Andrew Thomson & Co., St. Johns, Newfoundland; June 20, 1798, NSARM, MG3/150.

⁵⁹Following the October 1796 attack on the Bay of Bulls, Forsyth wrote to Thomson: "We were so long without any intelligence that we began to be apprehensive they [French] had got possession [of] St. Johns." William Forsyth to Andrew Thomson & Co., Newfoundland, October 28, 1796, NSARM, MG3/150.

strength in the area to be inferior to that of the French. Thus, in writing to Thomson on October 28, 1796, he had no answer as to why the French had not pursued their advantage in the attack upon Newfoundland. "They [French] going off & doing so little mischief is very unaccountable."⁶⁰ Forsyth's puzzlement over French actions may reflect the culmination, or even apex, of the first stages of Britain's imperial war design which, in turn emerged out of a much larger naval ideology.

The centerpiece of British naval doctrine from the 1740s onwards, remained the deployment of the Western Squadron, situating the main fleet to the westward, off the mouth of the Channel. This minimal naval policy reflected Britain's commercial (vice military) image of and designs for its Atlantic empire.⁶¹ In contrast, the French administration in North America early on exhibited a decidedly military character.⁶² By the time the British acquired Canada after the Seven Years' war, their imperial philosophy had begun to change. As a consequence, they too would install a

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹N.A.M. Rodger, "Sea Power and Empire, 1688-1793," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. P.J. Marshall (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 169.

⁶²W. J. Eccles, *France in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

recognizably military bureaucracy in Canada. But in the early decades of Britain's North American empire, mercantile objectives outweighed military considerations.

A naval policy focusing on a strategy such as the Western Squadron implicitly recognized the centrality of the European continent to British affairs. Even though the French Wars illustrate the complex nature of an imperial, global rivalry, this should not obscure the reality that, for both countries, the ultimate goal was European stability and/or dominance. In the initial stages of the French Wars, William Pitt's administration concentrated on imperial victories.⁶³ This reflected the dual and ambivalent nature of Britain's international policy and geographical position. Geographically divorced from the continent, Britain nonetheless sought commercial and political predominance there. Simultaneously, through such policies such as unilateralism, British officials and the public seemed to shun entanglements with Europe. Eventually Pitt's concentration on the peripheries would be abandoned as Europe moved to the center of British war designs. Throughout the prolonged conflict, Britain stood between two hard realities: Napoleon could not be defeated in the empire, but neither could Britain sustain its war effort without imperial resources. For these reasons, amongst others, the colonies

⁶³Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Ashfield Press, 1976), pp. 128-129.

remained a focal point of the French Wars.

Following the French declaration of war on February 1, 1793, the Home Secretary, Henry Dundas, sought to permanently remove France as a naval threat.⁶⁴ During that year, Dundas told Sir Gilbert Elliot that following a decisive blow "to the French naval power the capture of the West Indian islands will prevent their restoring it, and this he states as the principal object proposed by the war in favour of Great Britain in compensation for our charge in it." Clearly, Dundas' naval strategy mirrored Britain's own maritime-imperial ideology. In this schema, the sinews of power rested on such necessities as the wealth accrued from colonies along with skilled seamen and a soluable merchant marine to provide continual training. Dundas understood that it was crucial for Britain "to provide new and beneficial markets, as a substitute for those in which there is a temporary interruption."⁶⁵ But the imperial war strategy was also, in part, reactionary. When Dundas told Elliot that "if these great blows can be struck...this country...may probably long rest in quiet," he harked back to the American War. Reflecting upon that loss, Dundas determined to eliminate the

⁶⁴In 1794, Dundas became Secretary of State for War.

⁶⁵Dundas quoted in Kennedy, p. 129.

French naval menace which had secured Britain's defeat.⁶⁶

The establishment of a worldwide convoy system represented a pragmatic response to the demands placed upon the British navy and to the exigencies of global war on the seas. Given that Britain had staked the seas out as the primary theater of war, sheer numerical superiority in the size of its fleets could not guarantee success and the Royal navy frequently felt harrassed to perform the multitude of tasks required of it. Capital ships and frigates were needed to hold the Mediterannean, to watch French and Spanish bases on the Atlantic, to guard against the Dutch, to patrol the Baltic, to launch and assist colonial expeditions, to protect the coastal operations of British and allied troops, and, finally, to escort convoys. All of these activities severely strained naval resources and manpower at the same time that they dispersed British ships around the world.⁶⁷ At a very basic level, protective measures such as the convoy system reflected the value of British commerce to the nation and the necessity of protecting it. According to contemporary reckonings, approximately 11,000 British merchant vessels were lost or captured between 1793 and 1815. One obvious

⁶⁶Michael Duffy, "World-Wide War and British Expansion, 1793-1815," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. Marshall, pp. 186-187. Sir Gilbert Elliot's journal entry, September 8-9, 1793; quoted in Duffy, p. 187.

⁶⁷Kennedy, pp. 124-125.

result of such losses was the dramatic increase in marine insurance rates. The outcry from various sectors of the British public, including the Press, shipping and trading firms, and mercantile lobbies, forced the Admiralty to adopt protective measures. The most effective of these came through the creation of a worldwide convoy system, which the Admiralty implemented in collaboration with Lloyd's of London. Through the Convoy Acts of 1793, 1798 and 1803, the two offices - the Admiralty and Lloyd's - were able to impose the convoy system on a largely reluctant shipping industry. In hindsight, the system undoubtedly provided much needed protection on the overseas trade routes and reduced shipping losses. At the time, however, merchants and shipowners had ample cause for concern and even resentment over the delays and added cost of shipping.⁶⁸

Using the Royal Navy to convoy merchant ships across the Atlantic exemplified British commitment to both commerce and empire, which became intertwined in this instance. Concurrently, it visibly exemplified the British presence in colonial minds. From the perspective of merchants such as Forsyth, the convoys were decidedly a mixed blessing, which, at one level, echoed colonial frustrations with the imperial relationship. Forsyth showed his ambivalence towards the system when writing to Lester and Morrogh in Quebec. From

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 132.

the merchant's perspective the convoys seemed to incur costly delays without providing the promised protection. In May 1798, Forsyth commiserated with Lester and Morrogh over the "unpleasant accounts" regarding their autumn ships. "Winter convoys are of little avail." Here, the Halifax merchant recounted his own experience:

"In the fall 1794 we sent three mast Ships for the Channel, and two other Ships for Greenock, under convoy of two Frigates, and altho' our five Ships, and two transports were all the ships of war had to convoy, the whole parted about the Banks of Newfoundland & did not see each other till they arrived at their destined ports."⁶⁹

The Navy was challenged to adequately protect Atlantic trade, including that to and from North America. It was not untypical for as many as fifty to seventy merchant vessels to be guarded by a single brig or sloop on the voyage across the Atlantic. By 1804, Lloyd's protested the scarcity of escort vessels in the Maritime Atlantic trade. Moreover, merchants frequently complained that their ships became separated from the escort vessels during military engagements, leaving them unprotected. Similar separations were brought on by storms at sea, which left the merchant ships to navigate their own course across the Atlantic without benefit of escort.⁷⁰ The

⁶⁹William Forsyth to Messrs Lester & Morrogh, Quebec, May 30, 1798, NSARM, MG3/150.

⁷⁰A.C. Wardle, "The Newfoundland Trade," in *The Trade Winds: A Study of British Overseas Trade during the French Wars 1793-1815*, ed. C. Northcote Parkinson (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1948), pp. 234-237.

Royal navy's insistence upon the use of convoys illustrates official concern over the welfare of Atlantic commerce. As Forsyth's comments demonstrate, however, this attention did not center on nor take its cue from colonial merchants. Rather, this heed reflected pressure from factions involved in Atlantic trade within Great Britain, including the government, the mercantile community and Lloyds of London.

The British use of convoys, during this era, provides an insight into the shifting and seemingly contradictory imperial stance towards the role of the United States within the Atlantic empire. Simultaneously, the following incident allows us to place the Anglo-American commercial nexus within the realities of the larger Atlantic world. In September 1798, Forsyth wrote to American merchants in Boston, New York and Philadelphia on the issue of British convoys. Admiral Vandeput had suggested conducting a regularly scheduled convoy from Halifax to England each spring and fall, with the possibility of one in mid-summer. Apparently, the British navy was encouraging American merchants to join the transatlantic escorts. In a letter to Hugh Pollock and Company of New York, Forsyth wrote: "If your Government were to make application" to the appropriate British officials, "we imagine a plan of this kind would be immediately adopted."⁷¹ Admiral Vandeput's proposal highlights the often

⁷¹William Forsyth to Messrs Hugh Pollock and Company, New York, September 8, 1798, NSARM, MG3/150.

undecided nature of Anglo-American relations in the Atlantic during the post-Revolutionary years. At a time when many policy-makers argued for the total exclusion of the United States from their trading spheres, this offer, at least tacitly, recognized the nation's commercial significance to the empire. More significantly, Forsyth's letters demonstrate Britain's uncertainty regarding the future commercial role of the United States. This incertitude provided a constant source of tension into the relations between Great Britain, the United States and Nova Scotia in the decades to come. In addition, the offer may have reflected Great Britain's determination to prevent the United States from entering the Napoleonic Wars. The British may well have been attempting to favor the American government, through its merchants, in order to keep them neutral or even friendly towards their recent enemy. More broadly, the British offer of convoy services demonstrates that the Anglo-Americans operated within in an Atlantic world which developed customs and institutions of its own. Given the geographical expanse of the Atlantic, over the centuries of European imperialism, ships had traveled in convoy to offer one another protection in the face of storms. That the British navy was now stretched to provide adequate protection to its own commercial fleets merely acknowledged a situation that existed over those centuries. Moreover, in the days before steam, ships shared the Atlantic's shipping lanes to

take advantage of the most favorable winds and currents.⁷² By offering to convoy U.S. merchant ships, the British were acknowledging both the significance of the new nation to British commerce and its membership in the Atlantic world.

Colonial views and attitudes toward British involvement in the Napoleonic Wars provide a vantage point from which to observe the transmission of cultural identities from the metropole to its peripheries. As already discussed, the prolonged conflict posed commercial difficulties, real and potential, for colonial merchants such as Forsyth. Yet, reminiscent of American reaction during the Seven Years War, the colonists also demonstrated interest and involvement at a more personal, perhaps sentimental, level. In so doing, the British colonists allied themselves to the fortunes of the imperial center and, thereby, envisioned and even created a shared fate and/or identity with the subjects at home. In what proved to be a frequent refrain throughout the letterbook, Forsyth voiced colonial and British hopes for a general peace "which we trust is not too far off."⁷³ In reality, the war would continue for another two decades. In seeking, forwarding and interpreting news, Forsyth provides a

⁷²Nicholas Canny, "Writing Atlantic History; or, Reconfiguring the History of Colonial British America," *Journal of American History* (December 1999), p. 1108.

⁷³William Forsyth to Messrs Robert Livie & Co., London, June 27, 1797, NSARM, MG3/150.

glimpse into colonial opinion regarding the conflict which echoes Murdoch's imperial sentiments. For example, in November 1797, Forsyth received reports of an engagement between the British and Dutch Fleets off the coast of Holland. "A Ship arrived this morning in 32 days passage from Cork. She brings the agreeable news of Admiral Duncan having engaged & beaten the Dutch fleet."⁷⁴ This letter stands in contrast to similar correspondence, in which the merchant used the new information to speculate on markets and commodities. Here, Forsyth had written to his business associates Messrs Saidler and Waterbury in New York requesting a balance on his current account as "we shall then be closing our accounts for the season."⁷⁵ Upon completing the brief business matters at hand, Forsyth detailed the current news pertaining to the war and the British navy. In relating the naval success to his American correspondents, Forsyth clearly took obvious satisfaction from Great Britain's victory.

Along similar lines, the colonials sensed and partook of Britain's misfortunes. In March 1798, Forsyth wrote to

⁷⁴William Forsyth to Messrs Saidler & Waterbury, New York, November 18, 1797, NSARM, MG3/150. Here Forsyth referred to the Battle of Camperdown. British Admiral Adam Duncan attacked Admiral Jan Willem de Winter's Dutch fleet as it sailed out of Texel. While suffering severe damage, the British fleet captured nine vessels, including the flagship.

⁷⁵William Forsyth to Messrs Saidler & Waterbury, New York, November 18, 1797, NSARM, MG3/150.

Robert Livie and Company that the Nova Scotians were still awaiting the February mail packet. We "pray it may bring us good accounts from Europe, but we confess our fears."

Forsyth continued, "The situation of Public affairs is very Gloomy & every arrival seems to add to it....The times are perilous indeed."⁷⁶ Thus, "Public affairs" affecting the home islands had significance for the colonists. More perceptively, Forsyth understood the role played by colonies caught in imperial conflicts. In 1799, Henry Dundas declared that "Great Britain can at no time propose to maintain an extensive and complicated war but by destroying the colonial resources of our enemies and adding proportionately to our own commercial resources, which are, and must ever be the sole basis of our maritime strength."⁷⁷ In writing to Livie in 1798, Forsyth had predicted this sentiment with regards to Spain, if it were to become involved in the war. "If the Spaniards act hostile (& they dare not do otherwise) they may bid adieu to their possessions on this side of the Atlantic."⁷⁸ Nova Scotians such as William Forsyth as well as

⁷⁶William Forsyth to Messr Robert Livie & Co., London, March 30, 1798, NSARM, MG3/150.

⁷⁷Originally quoted in Edward Ingram, ed., *Two Views of British India: The Private Correspondence of Mr. Dundas and Lord Wellesley: 1798-1802* (Bath, 1970), p.206; here quoted in Duffy, p. 191.

⁷⁸William Forsyth to Messr Robert Livie & Co., London, March 30, 1798, NSARM, MG3/150.

their fellow Euro-Americans in the Atlantic world understood that, in an imperial conflict, the fate of the colonies followed that of the center.

Decades after these events had unfolded, Beamish Murdoch reiterated the imperial-maritime mythology which romanticized colonies, commerce and ships in order to bond the metropole to its peripheries. Later Victorians, such as Murdoch, developed and embellished these imperial, national and colonial images. Merchants, such as William Forsyth, through their daily activities and wartime trade, had laid the groundwork for the myths, at the same time helping to implant a commercial ideal into Nova Scotian culture.

Chapter 2: Patterns of Merchant Activities in the Eighteenth Century British Atlantic World

Finding it hard to get money, I write this advertisement: "All persons that have accounts open with me, are desired to settle them immediately. And those that have long been in my debt, either by book or note, are desired to pay their respective balance, or they may expect to be sued at the February Court. And as I determine to alter my method of dealing, I desire that no person would apply to me for any article on credit."¹

The New England merchant, Simeon Perkins, recorded the above advertisement in his diary on October 9, 1766.

Perkins had migrated to Liverpool, Nova Scotia from Norwich, Connecticut in 1764, arriving amongst the first waves of New Englanders to the now-British colony.²

Early American historiography has frequently situated Nova Scotia within a "Greater New England". This process did not begin, however, with the arrival of the American settlers to the colony. For, merchants from

¹*The Diary of Simeon Perkins, 1766-1780*, vol. I, October 9, 1766 (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1948-1978). *The Diary of Simeon Perkins* (hereafter referred to as Perkins, followed by the volume number) was published in five volumes under three editors: Harold A. Innis, D. C. Harvey and Charles Bruce Fergusson.

²In November 1767, Perkins left Nova Scotia and returned to his home in Norwich, Connecticut. By June 1769, Perkins was back in Liverpool where he cautiously resorted to the issuance of credit. At that time he wrote: "Get goods in my shop, and find quick sales. Sell principally on short credit to people I think punctual, and will pay in fish." Perkins, vol. I, June 19, 1769.

the southern colonies had earlier drawn the Acadians into their trading networks. Thus, Perkins moved into a region already familiar to New England commercial circles. Perkins himself is not remembered historically as a merchant, although his commercial success - while moderate - was not inconsequential in the harsh economic terrain of Nova Scotia. Rather, Perkins is noted as the colony's diarist. Over the course of five decades (between 1764 and 1812), seemingly little escaped the notice of Perkins' omnipresent diary. Through Perkins' recordings, detailing everything from the momentous to the mundane, it is possible to envision the ways in which Nova Scotia (a marginal colony and/or economic outpost) formed an integral part of the greater Anglo-American Atlantic commercial nexus.

Writing in the early and uncertain years of Anglo settlement in Nova Scotia, Simeon Perkins seems worlds apart on a number of planes - geographical, social, financial - from the merchant princes and financiers of Great Britain. Yet a series of commonalities served to join the wide array of individuals who maneuvered within the broad rubric of the British Atlantic commercial nexus. It is a commonplace that during the eighteenth century, merchants operated within a burgeoning empire. More significantly, it was the activities of these merchants - ranging from the gentlemanly capitalists of

London to small traders in the colonies - which served to augment, develop and integrate the empire. The increasingly global nature of that empire opened new markets and vistas to the merchants, whether in far away Asia or in the extremes of the North Atlantic in Southern Europe. All, like Perkins, accepted financial risk even if begrudgingly. With the rise of transatlantic shipping, merchants were forced to accept even longer turn around periods on their capital. As with the empire, merchants benefited from the consolidation of Britain's financial revolution even as their own dealings and resources furthered it. The availability of easy credit was key to both the financial revolution and the expansion of the commercial empire. Merchants, ranging from small colonial merchants such as Perkins to the merchant princes, provided and stimulated the development of credit. To understand the role that commerce played in both the development of Great Britain and its empire this chapter seeks to place merchants within the realm of the Anglo-American Atlantic, following the activities of Atlantic merchants from the home islands to the original North American colonies and finally to Nova Scotia. Within the context of their commercial transactions and speculations, merchants expanded and developed the economic, social, cultural and political realms of the

empire. Moving from the fringes of social and commercial power, many of these individuals employed the resources of the empire to improve their own situation. Their choices, which were shaped by a multitude of personal and impersonal factors, often operated on a number of planes with consequences for the political, economic and social arenas of the Atlantic. As imperial tensions intensified during the 1760s and 1770s, the commercial system created by the metropole and colonies alike, served to provide the original thirteen colonies with a number of options, including independence. During those same decades, Nova Scotia would also be faced with imperial decisions and its alignment helped to shape the post-Revolutionary Anglo-American Atlantic.

The Associates

Easy credit promoted the expansion of British exports in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, especially into southern Europe and the Americas. The latter region especially, with its incessant need for labor and desire for manufactured goods, sought easy credit to provide capital for both development and consumption. The English were better able to exploit this demand, since they appear to have utilized credit more readily and fully than their European competitors.

According to a partner in the Amsterdam merchant house of Hope & Company, "They [British] are of all nations the least difficult to treat with, and the most averse, through motives of personal interest, from distressing their neighbours; and thence partly their unbounded trust to one another."³ Export merchants, many of whom started from modest estates themselves, could not supply all the desired credit. Thus, from the late seventeenth century, this situation allowed for and even necessitated the introduction of substantial wholesalers - drapers, ironmongers, warehousemen and the like - who acquired goods on short or medium credit but sold for export on much longer terms. As early as the 1720s Defoe noted the wealthy "Wholesale Men of *London* ... [who] give Credit to the Country Tradesmen and even to the Merchants themselves, so that both Home Trade and Foreign Trade is in a great measure carried upon their Stocks."⁴ Defoe's comments suggest the popular perception that merchants typically provided the majority of the credit in circulation and thus, the entry of the wholesalers was seen as novel. The role of the merchants will be discussed below in more detail.

³Quoted in Jacob Price, "What Did Merchants Do? Reflections on British Overseas Trade, 1660-1790," *Journal of Economic History* (June 1989), p. 273.

⁴Quoted in Price, "What Did Merchants Do?", p. 274.

Here it is worth tarrying over Defoe's quote for the moment as it also hints at the ways in which practices and conventions within the British credit system adapted to and with the expanding world of export trade. For example, British merchants in the American trade typically bought goods from their wholesalers to sell overseas. Later, these merchants found themselves in advance when their American correspondents could not remit in a timely fashion, as happened all too frequently. Conversely, in the European markets, British merchants would not expect to be in advance for a correspondent unless special and exceptional arrangements had been made previously.⁵ In this instance, then, the realities and functionings of American trade worked a gradual shift in British commercial and financial expectations and, eventually, in the formal arrangements themselves.

Given this, adjustments materialized in the timeframes allotted for the payment of loans. Once the big wholesalers began the practice of granting long credit to exporters, they found it expedient to offer more liberal terms to the inland trade. Import merchants were increasingly pressured by competition to

⁵Price, "What Did Merchants Do?", p. 279; also see Jacob Price, *Capital and Credit in British Overseas Trade: The View from the Chesapeake, 1700-1776* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

extend easy credit to their customers, both wholesalers and manufacturers. The term of the loan, however, did not typically extend to the twelve to eighteen months granted to exporters, who required the time to cover the departure and return of overseas ventures. Instead, inland dealers routinely received and accepted six months to liquidate their stock, in rare cases, eight months. The development of new markets with novel requisites, especially those in the Americas, compelled British credit to adapt to changing conditions as can be seen through the timeframes of credit. At the end of the seventeenth century, twelve months credit had become the norm in the woolen trade which, in turn, set the standard for other trades. However, by 1775 exporters could expect, at the minimum, one year's credit and normally received more, even as high as two years.⁶ As with British commercial expectations, the American trade effected a change and lengthening of the timeframes extended to overseas loans. A focus on credit also demonstrates the multitude and diversity of individuals involved in the evolving structure of British credit over the eighteenth century. Admittedly, the great export merchants and wholesalers - many of whom could comfortably be labelled London financiers or gentlemanly

⁶Price, "What Did Merchants Do?", p. 273.

capitalists - early on coordinated key elements of the commercial process. Yet, below them operated a host of individuals who, while less prominent socially, played a critical role in British domestic and overseas commerce, especially at the eighteenth century progressed.⁷ The imperial trades in particular opened greater and more numerous economic ventures for a wide range of individuals within the commercial sector. It has become a commonplace that the empire provided possibilities for individuals on the margins - politically, socially and/or economically. The workings of credit, however, force a recognition that many of those opportunities were created by the efforts and resources of marginal members of the commercial sector placed well below the gentlemanly financiers.

The role merchants played in the evolution of the commercial/financial sectors across the Atlantic rim by observing the activities of the merchant communities in their respective locales (British and North American, including Nova Scotia). Most merchants at mid-century

⁷See P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism*. Vol. 1, *Innovation and Expansion, 1688-1914* (London: Longman, 1993); P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, "Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas: I. The Old Colonial System, 1688-1850," *Economic History Review* 39 (1986); and, Cathy Matson, *Merchants & Empire: Trading in Colonial New York* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

experienced commerce within the context of British expansion. For the majority, imperial growth ushered in business opportunities through new spheres of influence, customers and commodities. A small few in older commercial sectors were adversely affected, due to increased competition and an ensuing reduction in business, yet these merchants were in the minority. The question here becomes to what degree did imperial expansion on a global scale impress itself upon contemporary commercial mentality. Furthermore, how did this enlarged sense and sphere of commerce translate into the varied sectors of the Atlantic and the imaginations of its inhabitants? For example, the business Associates surveyed by David Hancock would easily recognize themselves as "citizens of the world", pursuing commercial activities and sustaining outlooks which were global in nature. Yet to what degree was this outlook shared by - or even feasible and/or pragmatic for - colonial merchants? The "Associates" surveyed by Hancock consisted of arrangements of wealthy London merchants clustered (in varying levels of partnership) around four men: Augustus Boyd, Alexander Grant, John Sargent II and Richard Oswald. The careers and enterprises of these four men are introduced here to serve as a model for British merchants, broadly defined. The danger in employing the Associates in this capacity

lies in their extraordinary commercial and social success. Nonetheless the portrayal is warranted in that they underscore imperial potential. Boyd, Grant, Sargent and Oswald all began their London careers as shippers and merchants, later moving into positions as mercantile middlemen where they exploited personal and commercial links available in the City and imperial center. For the Associates, a concentration on the colonial trades made sense from two perspectives. First, pre-existing social and financial connections mattered least in the peripheral trades. Second, their own commercial connections were strongest in these regions.⁸

The Associates represent a prototype of the overseas merchant who came into his own through the expansive nature of the British empire; one which was marginal, opportunistic, global and integrative.⁹ Through these characteristics, British merchants such as the Associates came to resemble their colonial counterparts in the Atlantic, particularly in the sense

⁸David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 10-11, 81.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 14.

of their "marginality". The Associates came from the geographical, commercial and social peripheries of Great Britain and, in many ways, this defined their experience. The ability to succeed in London, with its entrenched "local" elite mercantile class, depended upon the Associates' willingness to experiment with investments and enterprises embodied within a general sense of flexibility. The Associates were global overseas merchants partially out of necessity. Under normal circumstances, these men would not have been situated to compete - economically, socially and politically - against the City's mercantile vanguard without a powerful outside commercial arena. As such, the Associates, like the colonial merchants, realized their successes within the context of Britain's expanding global empire.¹⁰

Commercial expansion in the empire served to enhance and modernize British infrastructures, ranging from financial systems to shipping and its incumbent instruments, at the same time it promoted the development of similar institutions in the colonies. The construction of trading, shipping and settlement facilities such as roads, harbors, wharves, bridges and the like provided the prerequisites for the origination

¹⁰Ibid., p. 14, 25.

of new wealth in the peripheries. That merchants provided much of the original financing for these projects is neither surprising nor inconsequential. British merchants (such as the Associates) who invested and operated in the empire profited from the building and servicing of these colonial facilities which, in turn, set the stage for new wealth, for example, through access to resources and/or new markets. As Adam Smith understood, wealth flowed into the metropolis from its colonies. But portions of those profits also circulated back out into the peripheries. Those monies and credits went toward the advancement of colonial economies, the employment of white settlers along with the improvement and cultivation of agricultural lands. That wealth also served to enlarge and enrich the merchant community at home and in the colonies. Merchants coordinated sizeable amounts of these financial assets which poured into the imperial center as profits and were then reexported into the frontiers and margins of empire as investment.¹¹

In a maritime empire such as that of Great Britain, shipping represented both a symbolic as well as a crucial functional realm of the merchant community. The attention, energies and resources invested in shipping

¹¹Ibid., pp. 37-38.

stood to unite the mercantile community ranging from elite merchants such as the Associates to traders such as Simeon Perkins. As already noted, the emergence of a maritime-imperial complex focused the nation's attention on the seas, particularly the Atlantic, and through them shipping. For those Anglo-American merchants involved in shipping, the Atlantic formed not only a commercial sphere but also a well-imagined mental universe, whose patterns were dictated by currents, winds and weather. From the crow's vantage point, the whole of the Atlantic appeared open to international shipping. In actuality, the European empires shared a select number of sea lanes following the most advantageous currents and winds. Shipping, then, provides an instance where the Atlantic world moved along a trans-, multi-national trajectory. At the same time, we can imagine the Atlantic as a world unto itself, dictated by both nature and geography.¹²

Visualizing the world of ships and shipping from the perspective of the Associates provides an insight into the world of British transatlantic commerce. For transoceanic and coastal shippers alike, traveling a leg of the journey in ballast, or even partially empty, was to be avoided when possible. In the world of mercantile

¹²Nicholas Canny, "Writing Atlantic History; or, Reconfiguring the History of Colonial British America," *Journal of American History* (December 1999).

shipping, merchants and/or their commissioned agents spent considerable amounts of time and energy procuring suitable cargoes. Careful attention was paid to the outbound voyage, stocking the ship with items specifically requested by clients or agents along with speculative goods which were thought most likely to answer the destined markets. Moreover, when the opportunity arose, ships transported paying passengers. Since every imaginable imperial trade good made its way to the commercial center, London merchants had a significant advantage in procuring large and diverse cargoes. Yet, British shippers faced their own difficulties in the transatlantic trade. Ships entering ports such as London, Bristol and Glasgow from the colonies carried largely raw resources and agricultural produce, which took up enormous amounts of cargo space. The vessels involved in this trade needed to be large, in part due to the stresses of Atlantic voyages, but also to accommodate the bulky crops. With its increasing development and productivity, the number of ships embarking from the Americas for Great Britain rose steadily during the eighteenth century. At the same time competition intensified and, thus, the trick for British merchants became one of acquiring American

cargoes at reasonable prices.¹³ Once the ship was unloaded in Great Britain, the merchants' difficulties began anew as they faced the task of filling these huge vessels for the return voyage. This could be particularly daunting since the manufactured goods sought by colonists were smaller, requiring considerably less hold space. The earnings of the ship, then, had to originate primarily from the homeward voyage. Given the need and competition to fill the huge fleets of ships constantly arriving from the Americas, the situation resulted in attractive outbound freight rates. Before the American Revolution, many large firms frequently charged only 2.5 per cent of the invoice value for the outward freight in the American trades. Some firms even carried the cargo at no charge for their preferred correspondents. These low export freight rates served to integrate the Atlantic colonies, in a meaningful way, into an export "common market" for British manufacturers and traders. Similarly, the competitive rates reflected the growing significance of the Americas to the metropolitan economy.¹⁴

¹³Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, p. 132; and, Price, "What Did Merchants Do?"

¹⁴Price, "What Did Merchants Do?", p. 272. For discussions of the growing significance of shipping in British trade also see, Jacob Price, *Capital and Credit in British Overseas Trade*; and, John J. McCusker and Russell R.

Since the earnings from shipping accrued primarily from either rates charged on freight or the sale of the cargo and remittance of the profits, merchants endeavored to keep their ships under sail, although the eighteenth-century Atlantic proffered a number of challenges to doing so. Imperial wars, while almost constant during that century, remained one of the most unpredictable obstacles facing merchants. As William Forsyth demonstrates, merchants ventured into wartime Atlantic, all the while "expecting" or hoping for peace. On the other hand, privateers and hurricanes were viewed, if not as wholly predictable, at least as a constant to be expected in Atlantic trade. Finally, ships of sail were always at the mercy of the elements. London shipping "moved instep with the seasons in other parts of the globe," and, in consequence, the arrival and departure of ships "varied with the winds that blew in distant lands."¹⁵ The business decisions and dealings of the Associates illustrate a number of paradigms, customs and realities regarding British Atlantic commerce. Slightly over half (54 per cent) of all departures accounted for in the Associates' records,

Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789*. Needs and Opportunities for Study Series (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

¹⁵Quoted in Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, p. 133.

occurred between the months of October and February, while 80 per cent of arrivals were timed to reach Great Britain between July and September. This corresponds closely to Atlantic shipping patterns, where merchants and shippers attempted to keep their ships clear of the Caribbean during the peak hurricane months of August and September.¹⁶

The Associates averaged one complete Atlantic voyage per ship approximately every eleven months, whether sailing to the Chesapeake or the West Indies. This time schedule correlated with those of other British merchants although, interestingly, not with Forsyth's expectations. When writing to his London agent, Robert Livie, Forsyth complained of the effects of the convoys on his shipping schedule. "The long detention the Ships meet with in England deprives us of getting two voyages out of them in one year. But it cannot be helped in time of war."¹⁷ Forsyth's calculations of two voyages per ship per year matched those of the Glasgow tobacco merchants, who were noteworthy as an exception within transatlantic shipping. Glasgow ships sailing to and from the

¹⁶Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, p. 133.

¹⁷William Forsyth to Messrs Robert Livie & Co., London, June 2, 1797. NSARM, MG3/150.

Chesapeake averaged at least two complete voyages per year. This reflected, in part, the specialization of the trade since the ships had fewer destinations than most.¹⁸ The Glasgow sailing schedule would not account for Forsyth's expectations since, as will be seen below, this specialized routine did not apply to his customary shipping pattern. It is left open as to why he achieved (or thought he should) two voyages per ship annually. A significant factor in the overall length of a voyage was the turn around time necessary to load the ship and prepare it for departure. The ships belonging to the Associates, which again in this instance are representative, typically lay in port on the Thames for 112 days and in Jamaican ports for 95 days. Upon their return home, the ships were in port at Falmouth Harbour for approximately forty-five days before being moved back to the Thames. A small and/or old vessel threatened slower voyages and even longer stays in port due to more frequent repairs. Wealthy merchants such as the Associates who could afford to replace their ships on a frequent basis typically did so. A merchant

¹⁸T. M. Devine, *The Tobacco Lords: A Study of the Tobacco Merchants of Glasgow and Their Trading Activities c. 1740-90* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1975); Jacob Price, "The Rise of Glasgow in the Chesapeake Tobacco Trade, 1707-1775," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 11 (1954); and, J. H. Soltow, "Scottish Traders in Virginia, 1750-1775," *Economic History Review* 12 (1959).

reasoned that for the outlay of the purchase price and more expensive insurance, he gained in terms of shorter voyages and fewer repairs. Moreover, as a British contemporary, John Anderson, calculated, newer vessels "would sell for £500 to £800, when the old ship will bring in nothing." Obviously, a merchant's ability to buy newer vessels depended upon his financial resources, especially his fluid capital. Nonetheless, this was an understood prerequisite of transoceanic shipping. Between 1745 and 1779, the average age of the large, heavy ships belonging to the Associates was 7.7 years, which again was standard for the era.¹⁹

Following the investment patterns and opportunities of the Associates demonstrates the degree to which the British empire was becoming increasingly and securely global in nature during the eighteenth century. Their geographical diverse ventures stood in contrast to those of the colonial merchants surveyed here, whose funds and resources remained in the Atlantic.²⁰ Beginning in 1757, with increasing British military presence and control in that region, the Associates turned their attention

¹⁹Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, pp. 134-35; also see Gary M. Walton, "Sources of Productivity in American Colonial Shipping, 1675-1775," *Economic History Review* (1967).

²⁰Although it is not known if James Hunter and/or George Robertson, situated in Glasgow, invested funds in other parts of the empire.

towards the markets of India. These appeared increasingly attractive as political tensions heightened between Great Britain and its North American mainland colonies in the 1760s and 1770s. The Associates, along with other wealthy merchants, pursued a number of financial schemes in order to invest in the Indian trade. They purchased shares in the East India Company ships as well as shipping their own goods to India on Company ships. Additionally, they lent money to the East India Company on *respondentia* bonds.²¹ All the while, the Associates actively sought freight opportunities to India on their own ships.²² Regions notably absent from the Associates' portfolios included northern Europe and the Mediterranean, especially Italy and the Levant. Two factors stand out in their decisions to avoid these areas. First, the Associates thought commercial growth in these regions was unlikely. Next, in the Baltic and the Levant, continual war and

²¹A *respondentia* bond was an advance on the security of merchandise in a ship. See Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, p. 121.

²²Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, pp. 121-122. For discussions of private British trade into India, see James G. Parker, "Scottish Enterprise in India, 1750-1914," in *The Scots Abroad: Labour, Capital, Enterprise 1750-1914*, ed. R. A. Cage (London and Dover, N.H.: Croom Helm, 1985).

conflict discouraged commerce.²³ A number of generalizations can be drawn from the Associates' commercial determinations. For one, it is noteworthy that the Associates, as savvy businessmen, recognized that greater commercial potential existed for them in other regions. Next, as already seen, merchants were willing to venture into markets threatened by war if the gains promised to outweigh the risks; yet, the Associates apparently did not deem this to be the case in the Baltic and the Levant. Finally, building on these two points is the realization that both of these regions were established and protected trading spheres of the British merchant community by the eighteenth century. Commercial newcomers, such as the Associates, would have been at a disadvantage in attempting to break into the pre-existing mercantile circles there. This underlines the Associates' resemblance to colonial merchants. All these individuals were outsiders, or marginal, to the established English and/or London trading elites. As such they constantly sought new opportunities, markets, contacts and commodities. They

²³Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, pp. 121-122. For discussions of the Levant trade, see Ralph Davis, *Aleppo and Devonshire Square: English Traders in the Levant in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1967); and Abraham Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

moved into regions, circles and goods where ties to old trading elites were less important and where they could utilize their skill, experience and aggressiveness to benefit themselves.

Colonial American Merchants

The Associates present one example of extreme success, moving from the margins of eighteenth-century Great Britain into the center of the commercial community at the heart of the empire, London. Colonial merchants maneuvered through a much more fluid and, as such, less restrictive commercial scene. By mid-century, amongst the major North American commercial centers, Boston would have appeared as the least inviting to commercial newcomers, with its older, established mercantile elite and declining economic outlook. However, expanding port cities on the imperial rim, such as New York and Philadelphia, attracted a steady flow of new business talent. These cities possessed an unsettled and competitive environment which could both benefit and ruin merchants, new and experienced. Such an atmosphere emphasized and encouraged commercial opportunism, experimentation and aggressiveness, all traits exhibited by the Associates. Moreover, many of those active in colonial commerce,

were individuals on the move - geographically, economically and socially. The rowing commercial centers such as New York and Philadelphia attracted both immigrants and the upwardly mobile, who were seeking to launch or improve their fortunes. Qualities of mobility and risk-taking frequently marked those individuals who succeeded in the frenetic commercial aura of port cities located in the imperial peripheries.²⁴

Social mobility was a pronounced feature of the American merchant community, to a much greater degree than proved true of its British equivalent. Because capital requirements were considerably lower in the colonies, entry into the mercantile sector was not overly difficult. From there it was possible for a small merchant, who borrowed from outside sources and invested wisely and/or luckily, to build a fortune rapidly.²⁵ While not typical, this scenario occurred often enough to gain common currency in the folklore of the American commercial community. A belief in rapid

²⁴Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, pp. 62-63; also see Arthur L. Jensen, *The Maritime Commerce of Colonial Philadelphia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1963).

²⁵Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), p. 127.

commercial advancement reflected a larger psychological transformation which had occurred previously in North America. As early as the seventeenth century, contemporaries remarked upon a rising sense of expectations amongst Americans, regarding their general well-being and position, social and economic.²⁶ Port cities, with their volatile and - at times - promising atmospheres, accentuated the idea of what was achievable.

The British mainland American colonies presented a diverse economic picture, ranging in degrees from the north to the south. In many ways, the southern colonies more closely resembled the West Indies with a concentration on agricultural produce, than their mainland neighbors. The New England colonies, on the other hand, very quickly turned to commerce, largely out of necessity. The mid-Atlantic colonies, while major agricultural producers themselves, followed the northern example of fostering expansive commercial centers.²⁷ Northern colonial merchants confronted a number of adverse conditions and challenges which induced, or even compelled, them to take risks. Factors such as weak

²⁶Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 5.

²⁷See McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*.

markets, high wages, scarce capital and turbulent foreign exchange markets created what Thomas Doerflinger has termed a "fabric of adversity". Those merchants hardy enough to maintain their equilibrium and/or even succeed in this environment may have been all the more willing to pursue commercially perilous but potentially lucrative new markets and/or opportunities. In retrospect, new schemes such as manufacturing, land speculation, transportation, banking and public securities may not have appeared to be any more hazardous than shipping to the West Indies, only less familiar.²⁸ From a broader perspective, these activities reinforce the merchants' role - colonial and British - in expanding and improving the empire. As was the case in Britain in an earlier era, a shortage of credit and its attendant facilities plagued the Americas and, thus, these new ventures may also be viewed as a pragmatic response to coping with that deficit. Colonial urban areas, however, were considerably more primitive and unsettled than the great port cities of Britain and, as with political and social institutions, financial innovations did not necessarily adapt readily or evenly to this foreign environment. Nonetheless, in

²⁸Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, p. 135; also see Stuart Bruchey, *The Roots of American Economic Growth, 1607-1861: An Essay in Social Causation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 54.

the era between 1750 and 1800, far-reaching changes were transforming the character of many American trading communities, eventually producing the sophisticated economic structures and centers of the nineteenth century. By that time, these centers were distinctly American, in character and nationality. The earlier process of melding imperial - in this instance, British - policies and institutions into the colonial atmosphere helped to create an American hybrid. Moreover, investment in areas such as manufacturing and iron assisted in promoting and diversifying an American economy. Such activities had been restricted under imperial rule, providing a further incentive to establish an independent American economy. In colonial Philadelphia, the general economic expansion and growth of markets concentrated unprecedented amounts of capital in the hands of the mercantile elite. In turn, this accumulation of wealth attracted even greater capital and credit now available for colonial development and expansion. As a result, the stature and power of the merchant community itself dramatically evolved and increased.²⁹

As with the Associates, we can generalize from the Philadelphian merchants surveyed by Thomas Doerflinger's

²⁹Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, p. 134.

excellent study to gain an insight into American mainland merchants as a whole. All merchants confronted the necessity of choosing their markets. The choice of commodities available locally placed obvious limitations on the exporters. For American merchants, the options increased over the eighteenth century as their shipping and financial facilities expanded along with the range of agricultural produce, but then so did their competition. The Irish market exemplifies a highly specialized market focusing on a single product (flaxseed) for the burgeoning linen industry. That Philadelphia could support such a rarefied market suggests its growing commercial sophistication and power over the eighteenth century. In Philadelphia, the trade was largely monopolized by a select number of Irish merchants, many of whom were wealthy immigrants.³⁰ The Irish community serves as an example of the ways in which ethnic merchant circles migrated and settled throughout the Atlantic empire. These merchants remained tied to commercial networks in the home country - here, I am thinking especially of England, Scotland and Ireland - while simultaneously creating distinct enclaves within the larger American merchant community.

American merchants, of course, could and did trade

³⁰Ibid., p. 103.

into sister colonies creating a strong and extensive coastal trade during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. New England, initially out of necessity, excelled in most facets of the shipping industry, making it difficult for exporters in the other colonies to profit from the growing provision trade into the northeast. The middle colonies were favorably located to supply New England's growing food deficit, yet Yankee capitalists continued to dominate the trade. In the case of Philadelphia, which can be seen as representative, New Englanders owned the bulk of the shipping involved in the provision trade to the north. Moreover, since over half of the vessels were consigned to the shipmaster, the Philadelphian merchants could not even profit from a commission for discharging the cargo. Instead, the New England captain handled the selling of the outbound cargo as well as the procurement of an homebound cargo.³¹

Neither the specialized trade to Ireland nor the routine coastal trade in North America promised profits large enough to drive the business cycles of ports such as Philadelphia, New York or Boston. In contrast, the provision trades to the West Indies and Iberia did. These markets sought precisely the goods that the

³¹Ibid., p. 104; also see, McCusker and Menard, *Economy British America*, pp. 91-116 *passim*.

mainland colonies had to offer, i.e. timber, fish, livestock and agricultural produce. Initially, the English had controlled all three legs of the southern European trade, exchanging English manufactures for New England fish. The English shippers then carried their new cargo to Spain, Portugal and the Wine Islands to trade for wine for the homebound freight. In this early trade, London merchants supplied the bulk of the credit, shipping and commercial contacts. But colonial merchants quickly broke into this triangular network, entering the two legs of the trade route open to them. New Englanders, frequently in conjunction with London partners, captured a substantial share of the trade in exporting fish to the Wine Islands as well as the shipment of wine to England and/or the colonies. The third leg, the outward voyage carrying manufactures from the home islands to the Americas, remained the preserve of English merchants. The trade with southern Europe closely resembled, and grew up simultaneously with, that of the West Indies. In the early stages these trades were comparable to the coastal trade, employing small vessels with mixed cargoes, closely overseen by the ship master and/or merchant. After their initial entry into these trades, New England merchants broadened and strengthened their positions by constantly seeking out other goods, especially timber products, to supply the

islanders and Europeans. The colonials not only earned credits in their balance of payments through the sale of goods to Atlantic markets but also earnings in the invisibles - freighting, insurance, short-term credit and varied commercial services.³²

More importantly, over the long term, colonial merchants gained the expertise needed to control their own commercial networks. In their early enthusiasm to supply the islands, the mainland colonies took their first steps towards developing their own internal shipping, market economies and, eventually, financial institutions.³³ Since, the West Indies were initially North America's most dynamic markets they quickly became the most popular destination and thus, extremely difficult to predict and exploit. Trade into the Caribbean involved dozens of small sugar islands which sought North American provisions in return for their own lucrative produce. With the steadily increasing competition streaming out of North America, the small

³²McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, pp. 100-101.

³³See Edwin J. Perkins, *American Public Finance and Financial Services, 1700-1815* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1994); George David Rappaport, *Stability and Change in Revolutionary Pennsylvania: Banking, Politics and Social Structure* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press), 1996; and, Stuart Banner, *Anglo-American Securities Regulation: Cultural and Political Roots, 1690-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

island markets could become glutted very quickly. Here, the advantages of a commissioned agent in the islands became readily apparent, as did the need and ability to be flexible. Ship captains, especially those from New England, were frequently relied upon for their knowledge of the various islands and their markets. The unsettled and hazardous conditions of the West Indies frequently proved to be a boon for northern merchants, at times promising more orders than could be filled. The hurricane seasons, with the resulting damage, typically swelled demands for foodstuffs and timber. The frequent imperial conflicts fought in and around, or even centering upon, the West Indies heightened both the dangers and the profitability of trading into the region. For example, during the Seven Years' War the presence of the British fleets in the Caribbean raised the demand for provisions. Moreover, the French islands, cut off from the mother country, sought supplies that American merchants were all too willing to smuggle into them, to the extreme irritation of the British.³⁴ By the close of the Seven Years' War, these facets of the imperial relationship entered a critical stage. At one level, American merchants demonstrated - to the British and themselves - the growing

³⁴McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, pp. 107-108.

sophistication and independence of their commercial sector. At another level, an irate metropole increasingly recognized the need to restrict American commercial and political independence.

In the late 1700s, southern Europe - Madeira, the Canary Island and the Iberian peninsula - gradually superseded the West Indies as the most dynamic market for Philadelphia. While this may not have been true to the same extent for all of the North American ports, certainly southern Europe caught the attention of colonial provision merchants and became a primary destination. The growth of these markets resulted largely from demographic expansion coupled with crop failures in Europe, which hampered the region's traditional suppliers (England, Sicily and the Levant) from meeting Iberian demands. Once the North American merchants gained entry into these markets, they quickly carved out a permanent niche for themselves as demonstrated by the growing number of port cities on clearance lists. Ports beyond the strait of Gibraltar including Leghorn, Barcelona and Genoa, which had been exceptional destinations prior to 1760, became commonplace by 1772, as would Marseilles after the American Revolution. Similar to those of the West Indies, the markets of southern Europe were volatile and difficult to predict. American merchants competed not

only against one another but also against European merchants and local producers, all of whom could rapidly saturate a market. Unlike the West Indies, however, American merchants were handicapped in their ability to react to shifts in these markets brought on by a sudden disruptions such as war or crop failures. Given the distance, a delay of four months would not be uncommon between the time Philadelphian merchants learned of a demand for flour in Lisbon and the time their ships actually arrived in Portugal. Merchants further north could expect even longer delays.³⁵ Such a realization underscores the value merchants, such as Forsyth and Perkins, placed upon current market news.

In comparing eighteenth-century British and American trade, one factor which has caught the attention of historians is the degree, or lack thereof, of commercial specialization. Traditionally, it has been held that an immature and crude economic structure prohibited American merchants from specializing in particular cargoes to select markets. Supposedly only after 1815 would economic systems evolve sufficiently to allow for such practices. This analysis appears to link commercial specialization directly to economic

³⁵Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, pp. 115; and, William S. Sachs, *The Enterprising Colonials: Society on the Eve of the Revolution* (Chicago: Argonaut, 1965).

sophistication, yet the merchants of Philadelphia (and later Nova Scotia) exhibit a much more varied picture. As a group, Philadelphia's merchants traded widely throughout the Atlantic; yet individual merchants typically traded into only one or two markets. This perspective suggests that the majority of trading activity was geographically concentrated. The consistent exception to this pattern proved to be larger mercantile firms who had the capital and credit to move into various markets simultaneously.³⁶ In colonial terms, then, specialization posits a negative since it stemmed from the lack of financial resources rather than bespeaking economic progress and sophistication.

In the larger American port cities, mercantile activities did gradually divide or specialize in a number of fashions including into two parallel distribution systems, each sphere exhibiting its own internal organization, financial structure and relationship to shipping. Those involved in the dry goods networks imported British manufactures first to the port and from there distributed them for sale into the interior. As already noted, this trade carried with

³⁶Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, pp. 76-79. Also see Thomas M. Doerflinger, "Commercial Specialization in Philadelphia's Merchant Community, 1750-1791," *Business History Review* 58 (1983); and, Stuart Bruchey, ed., *The Colonial Merchant: Sources and Readings* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966).

it twelve months' credit from the British import houses. In turn, the American importers sold these goods on several months' credit to retailers. This trade operated largely on importation in the northern American ports, since these regions produced few commodities suitable for British markets. This factor clearly differentiates the northern colonies from those in the south and the West Indies which produced crops sought by the home islands.³⁷

The second branch of the distribution system, the provision trade, involved the exportation of the northern colonies' produce - primarily timber, fish, bread, flour and flaxseed - to Atlantic markets, especially the West Indies and southern Europe. Given the nature of their business, major provision merchants were far more likely to own vessels. The very bulk of these commodities required huge cargo spaces and thus extensive shipping. Ownership of vessels greatly enhanced a merchant's flexibility as compared to the necessity of shipping by freight via other merchants. Nevertheless, most merchants, at some point in their careers, probably resorted to hiring freight to keep pace with rapidly changing business conditions. As with dry goods, issues of finance helped to structure the

³⁷Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, pp. 77-78.

provision trade. Since this trade rarely involved the imperial financial center, London, it did not operate on long-term credit. Consequently, merchants in the provision trade (and its corollary, shipping), needed greater financial resources, especially liquid capital.³⁸

The conditions of the dry goods trade illuminate a number of factors regarding the Atlantic commercial world in this era. Since this trade did not require large financial resources up front, it attracted those individuals hoping to enter commerce. This coincided with the fact that the burgeoning port cities of America attracted opportunistic, adventuresome men seeking to create or improve their fortunes. On the other side of the Atlantic, English merchants partook of a number of advantages resulting from the development of imperial and financial systems. The pertinent aspects here include the growing availability of easy credit and the low freight charges involved in the Britain-America leg of the transatlantic shuttle. The easy procurement of both British goods and credit had varying effects on individual merchants, tending to benefit new comers while disadvantaging the veterans through increased competition. David Cay, a dry goods importer in Philadelphia, complained in 1789, "Credit is as *cheap*

³⁸Ibid.

this year as it was in 1784 - The Manchester folks have made all the retail *Shopkeepers*, & merchants *apprentices* Importers!"³⁹ Confirming Cay's frustration, numerous studies have verified that English exporters aggressively extended credit throughout the post-Revolutionary decades, not only to wealthy merchants but also to minor merchants, vendue masters and shopkeepers. In the fluid commercial setting of a port city such as Philadelphia, credit was one key to social mobility. Here, we can see British financial circles continuing to play a crucial role in the structuring of American commerce. For commercial credit in the new United States would continue to be dominated by English merchants. This outside financial source served to complicate the power relationships amongst American merchants, for credit could not be monopolized by wealthy colonial merchants.⁴⁰

A merchant's specialty, i.e. dry goods or provisions, worked to color his outlook through the activities and necessities of the trade itself. Importers and retailers looked inland, a tendency which

³⁹Italics appear in the original quote; David Cay to Andrew Clow, May 31, 1789, Andrew Clow and Co. Papers, 1784-1836; quoted in Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, p. 53.

⁴⁰Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, p. 68.

was accentuated by the receding frontier. In terms of colonial development, their concern would lie with the improvement of an internal infrastructure such as roads and bridges vice the shipping infrastructure of wharfs, warehouses, etc. sought by provision merchants. At the same time, the import merchants served as a primary conduit of commercial credit into the American colonies. Thus, the importer did not operate wholly within a domestic realm since his goods and credit came largely from overseas, linking him directly back to the Atlantic economy.

The provision merchant, on the other hand, faced out onto the Atlantic. The heavy involvement in shipping, common amongst these merchants, complicated finances in this trade. Ships were voracious consumers of cash, both to purchase and maintain. As already mentioned, shipping operated largely on a cash or short-term credit basis, partially due to the absence of London's involvement and partially due to custom. To protect their capital flexibility, and thus financial stability, provision merchants tended to shy away from the numerous back-country accounts common to dry goods merchants. In this sense, the financial resources of the provision merchant were typically far more easily re-called and more liquid than those of the retailers. This financial structure highlights the fact that the

commercial focus of the provision merchant, concerned on a daily basis with ships and cargoes, centered on the waterfront, leading out onto the Atlantic.⁴¹ This outward focus onto the Atlantic was, of necessity, especially pertinent to Nova Scotia. To a far greater degree than the original British American colonies, including New England, Nova Scotia lacked a hinterland to exploit and to sustain the types of commercial development envisioned for the colony. Therefore, the province's predominant forms of economic livelihood were found on the Atlantic, ranging from commerce to shipping to fishing.

One way historians have conceptualized these colonial economies, through which all this commercial activity circulated, is to speak from an internalist and/or externalist perspective. While such terms suggest a dichotomy or polarity, actual colonial development more realistically exhibited a mixture or range of the two. In her study of pre-Revolutionary America, Alice Hanson Jones has emphasized internal foundations which, in turn, led to the creation and distribution of wealth among individuals, colonies and regions, independent of the metropole. According to Jones, late-colonial America represented one of the

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 97-101.

richer areas of the eighteenth-century world with regional differentials containing the potential for fairly large-scale capital investment.⁴² McCusker and Menard, on the other hand, adopt a much broader approach (geographically and thematically) examining all of British America in terms of production, exchange, population growth and urbanization. These two authors view the British colonies through an external lens, stressing the importance of the Atlantic market to colonial development. McCusker and Menard also note the regional differentials which distinguish the southern plantations and staple-crop economies from the quasi-metropolitan economies.⁴³ For our purposes, the internalist/externalist dichotomy introduces a number of conceptualizations which may help to explain colonial commercial development within the broader imperial nexus. Such terms also provide an insight into the changing nature of the colonial relationship, particularly as it was influenced by economic growth.

In commercial terms, transatlantic shipping, and with it the imperial nexus, can represent and infer an

⁴²Alice Hanson Jones, *Wealth of a Nation to Be: The American Colonies on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

⁴³Edward Countryman, "The Uses of Capital in Revolutionary America: The Case of the New York Loyalist Merchants," *William and Mary Quarterly* (January 1992), p. 5.

external framework. An internal approach suggests domestic development within the colonial - and eventually national - domain, with coastal shipping as a corollary. A discussion of West Indian trade immediately problematizes any neat categorization in the Atlantic world since it can be seen as an extension of the mainland's coastal trade (and thus internal), employing smaller vessels and less capital for a shorter amount of time. Conversely the West Indies often represented vital markets for eighteenth-century transatlantic trade. Within this conceptual framework, the islands may be visualized as a commercial hinge or valve, at times open and connecting the eastern and western Atlantic, at other times closed and supporting an exclusively western Atlantic commerce.

To place this discussion of internal/external perspectives within an imperial context, an analysis of colonial fortunes is instructive. In assessing the wealth of mainland merchants, we would not expect to see sums paralleling the merchant princes of Great Britain nor even the plantation magnates of the West Indies. Doerflinger placed the upper boundaries of merchant wealth in Philadelphia at "a net worth of between £15,000 and £35,000" in colonial currency. The mercantile fortunes in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware surveyed by Jones are even smaller, with the

highest figure at £11,298 in New York pounds.⁴⁴

According to Edward Countryman, fortunes substantially beyond these limits require an explanation. Countryman surveyed a select group of wealthy New York Loyalists to determine first, how and where they both amassed what were truly vast and exceptional fortunes by colonial standards; and, second, how these men utilized and invested their profits.⁴⁵ The author then broadens his discussion to determine what the decisions of these particular Loyalists tell us about American economic

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 11. These figures can be compared against the estates left behind by three of the Associates. When Augustus Boyd died in 1765 he left behind an estate worth over £50,000. At the time of his death, Sir Alexander Grant left an estate stretching from Scotland and England to Africa, Jamaica, Florida and Nova Scotia, valued at £93,000. Richard Oswald, who died in 1784, left behind a phenomenal estate worth £500,000 in land, money due him on bonds and mortgages, claims upon the Government, stocks, annuities and bank accounts. (These figures are calculated in British pounds.) See Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, pp. 383-385. According to Doerflinger, by the 1790s estates of £20,000 had become commonplace in Philadelphia. By 1794, Stepehn Girard was worth £55,211. See Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, p. 133.

⁴⁵Countryman bases the net worth of the individuals surveyed on their Loyalist claims, which he admits are most likely exaggerated to some degree. These men and the amount claimed are, respectively: Samuel Hake, £38,765; Oliver DeLancey, £108,957; James DeLancey, £95,326; William Bayard, £133,603; James Jauncey, £90,506; Hugh Wallace, £54,024; Aslexander Wallace, £15,951; John Dawson, £22,192; Isaac Low, £34,184; John Wetherhead, £36,119; and, the firm of James Perry, Thomas Hayes and Miles Sherbrooke, £100,241. The total is £729,868 or 0.39 per cent of Jones' estimate of total American wealth as of 1774. All figures are given in New York pounds. Countryman, p. 11.

development in the era of the Revolution. Countryman provides a number of generalizations about the Loyalists under study. These were primarily transatlantic, not coastal, shippers; they had little involvement with, nor apparent interest in, manufacturing; most significantly, at some time in their careers, they had secured military contracts. This latter distinction provides one predominant explanation for the disparity in wealth between the estates of these Loyalists and the fortunes of merchants elsewhere. It also helps to explain these men's orientation. During the Seven Years' War, New York served as the main port of entry for British troops and supplies, providing attractive economic opportunities for merchants sufficiently well-connected to procure military contracts. Max Weber would have labeled these men "capitalistic adventurers." This type of adventuresome capitalism flourished under European imperial expansion, especially on the margins of empire. This realization should not obscure the reality that the vast majority of the mercantile community both served and was dependent upon civilian society. Nonetheless, New York's greatest fortunes underscore the colony's dependent status and position on the imperial periphery. Simultaneously, this wealth focused and depended upon

transatlantic trade and external Atlantic markets.⁴⁶

Historians vary in their appraisals of the overall bearing of the Revolutionary War on the American economy. Writing in the nineteenth century, Richard Hildreth perceived the effects to be devastating, with wealthy merchants expatriated and other colonial merchants ruined. This class or rank of merchants were replaced in the new republic by merchants who had grown rich through such activities as privateering or speculation or "other operations not always of the most honorable kind."⁴⁷ Conversely, others have estimated that colonial merchants may have prospered from the war. This debate mirrors the duplicity of the European imperial wars which had swept up North America during the eighteenth century: invariably some merchants (the adventurers) profited from the wars while others found their trade disrupted or even destroyed. From an optimistic perspective, the Revolution promoted domestic industry for merchants, manufacturers and farmers. Moreover, colonial merchants had earlier acquired the commercial skills, resources and networks necessary in order to capitalize on the war's interruption of trade

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 13-14.

⁴⁷Richard Hildreth, *The History of the United States of America* (New York, 1849-1852), III, pp. 465-466; quoted in McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British America*, p. 365.

with Great Britain. While James B. Hedges's study of the Browns of Providence would appear to confirm an advantageous economic portrayal of the Revolution, the author qualifies this image. Hedges discovered that many of the Browns' pre-Revolutionary mercantile correspondents were "conspicuous by their absence in the 1780's."⁴⁸ In conclusion, McCusker and Menard suggest that in earlier imperial conflicts, colonial merchants possessed both greater chances for success and fewer opportunities for ruin. To no small degree, of course, this resulted from the fact that Great Britain (with its wealth of credit, resources and commercial networks) was now the enemy.⁴⁹

The Nova Scotian Merchant Community

Countryman's framework provides a convenient window into a discussion of early mercantile activity in Nova Scotia. As was the case with the Loyalist magnates of New York, Nova Scotia sought its commercial fortunes and viability from the Atlantic and military contracts, both

⁴⁸James B. Hedges, "The Brown Papers: The Record of a Rhode Island Business Family," *American Antiquarian Society, Proceedings*, N.S., LI (1941), pp. 21-36; quoted in McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British America*, p. 365.

⁴⁹McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British America*, pp. 364-366.

of which (to varying degrees) were tied into the empire. Halifax was established as a strategic counterweight to France's grand fort at Louisbourg. Many, ranging from members of Parliament through to members of the mercantile community, envisioned the new naval base as the epitome of Britain's maritime-imperial complex. Strategically, Halifax provided a northern Atlantic base which guarded the entry to the St. Lawrence. Economically, the site seemed to possess the potential to become a northerly entrepôt, capable of competing with the older American port cities. British and American merchants arrived with the navy and, along with the military personnel, quickly became central figures in the politics, society and economy of the new port. A certain percentage of these merchants came with the expectations of supplying the military and civilian establishments. These men sought the lucrative military contracts funded by Parliament and dappled in other forms of trade only as a financial sideline. Largely of English origin, many of these men departed after 1760 when Parliament sharply reduced the military grants. This group stands out from the colonial mercantile community in most fully exemplifying Weber's capitalistic adventurers, roving opportunists operating on the margins of empire. Such men actively pursued not merely mercantile wealth but the extremely valuable and

prized military contracts inherent within imperialism. While typically powerful members of society during their stay in Halifax, these men were transitory and ultimately did not shape the province in a lasting manner as did the merchant community itself.⁵⁰

These adventurers were greatly outnumbered by those "entrepreneurs" who came to Halifax anticipating a commercial boom. Although also transitory, this group of merchants far more closely resembled the opportunistic colonial merchants present in the major port cities than they did the capitalistic adventurers described by Weber. When the anticipated economic rush failed to materialize, a large percentage of these men also left. Yet a number remained to form the nuclei of a Haligonian mercantile sector. Malachi Salter is representative of these merchants. Like Simeon Perkins, Salter came north from New England where he retained familial ties and commercial networks, the latter extending at least as far south as Philadelphia. To

⁵⁰Lewis R. Fischer, "Revolution without Independence: The Canadian Colonies, 1749-1775," in *The Economy of Early America: The Revolutionary Period 1763-1790*, ed. Ronald Hoffman (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988), pp. 101-102. For discussions of the Haligonian merchants see David Sutherland, "Halifax Merchants and the Pursuit of Development, 1783-1850," *Canadian Historical Review* 59 (1978); and David Sutherland, "1810-1820: War and Peace," in *The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History*, ed. Phillip A. Buckner and John G. Reid (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

take advantage of his expanding trading spheres, Salter invested heavily in shipping, eventually becoming the most important shipowner in Halifax after the departure of Joshua Mauger, one of Nova Scotia's earliest and most successful adventurers.⁵¹ Men such as Salter and Perkins typify the "vigorous spirit of enterprise" identified by Doerflinger. They migrated north often due to constricting commercial opportunities in New England. In Nova Scotia, these entrepreneurs encountered conditions very familiar to, yet even more difficult than, those of New England. While exhibiting the opportunistic, mobile traits of their fellow entrepreneurs, these merchants also demonstrated an inventiveness and insight into domestic potential which allowed them to settle and eventually prosper - even if only limitedly - in the harsh economic landscape of Nova Scotia. Unlike the adventurers whose focus remained firmly on the metropole, this latter group of entrepreneurs were aware of and open to a choice of commercial centers.

In the early years, between 1749-1755, Nova Scotia's trade with the mainland colonies and Newfoundland accounted for 80 per cent of the ships entering and clearing Halifax and almost 75 per cent of

⁵¹Fischer, pp. 102-103.

the tonnage. New England immediately became and thereafter remained the most important trading partner. During this period about 54 per cent of the ships clearing Halifax were bound for New England, while just over 56 per cent of entrances originated there. Boston alone accounted for half of the New England trade. In comparison, the middle colonies contributed approximately 15 per cent of clearances and 12 per cent of entrances. Earlier literature has tended to exaggerate the level of trade with Great Britain during this time period. This misconception, in part, stems from the differences in vessels employed by transatlantic shipping, as already discussed. Since these vessels were consistently, and often considerably, larger than coastal craft, trade with the mother country contributed a disproportionate share of the tonnage in comparison to entrances. Brebner, in an oft-repeated claim, originally estimated that 50 per cent of ships entering Halifax originated in Britain. Yet, in no year does the British share of trade appear to be this high, whether looking at the data for entrances or tonnage.⁵² Through most of the pre-Revolutionary years, the level of trade with Britain remained stable, while that with

⁵²The claim by John Bartlett Brebner is found in *The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia: A Marginal Colony during the Revolutionary Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), pp. 8-9; quoted in Fischer, p. 113.

the mainland colonies fluctuated, with ports such as Philadelphia and New York alternately rising and declining in importance. Trade to the West Indies and southern Europe, on the other hand, showed a distinct rising trend after 1773. The volume of shipping clearing for the West Indies more than doubled between 1773-1775, while the tonnage clearing for southern Europe rose by 75 per cent.⁵³

By the mid-1770s, Nova Scotia had entered successfully into the Atlantic trades into the West Indies and southern Europe, often replicating the earlier experience of New England. Although the province had begun to earn credits through the sale of

⁵³Fischer, p. 113. For general discussion of Nova Scotia and its economy during this era see, Stephen E. Patterson, "1744-1763: Colonial Wars and Aboriginal Peoples," and J. M. Bumsted, "1763-1783: Resettlement and Rebellion," both in *The Atlantic Region to Confederation*, ed. Buckner and Reid; Graeme Wynn, "The Geography of the Maritime Colonies in 1800: Patterns and Questions," in *They Planted Well: New England Planters in Maritime Canada*, ed. Margaret Conrad (Fredericton, N.B.: Acadiensis Press, 1988); Graeme Wynn, "A Province Too Much Dependent on New England"; Graeme Wynn, "A Region of Scattered Settlements and bounded Possibilities: Northeastern America 1775-1800," *Canadian Geographer* 31 (1987); and, Andrew Hill Clark, "Contributions of Its Southern Neighbors to the Underdevelopment of the Maritime Provinces Area, 1710-1867," in *The Influence of the United States on Canadian Development: Eleven Case Studies*, ed. Richard A. Preston (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1972). Also see, James F. Shepherd and Gary M. Walton, *Shipping, Maritime Trade, and the Economic Development of Colonial North America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); and Gary M. Walton, "The New Economic History and the Burdens of the Navigation Acts," *Economic History Review* 24 (1971).

goods and shipping by that time, the other commercial activities needed time to develop. Looking forward to William Forsyth, however, suggests that by the 1790s Nova Scotian merchants had acquired the facilities and expertise to earn credits through freighting and short term credit as well. This said, Forsyth also demonstrates that Nova Scotian merchants continued to turn outward for many of their commercial - especially financial - services, both to Great Britain and the United States.

As had the New Englanders before them, the Nova Scotians needed time and credit before they could enter the costly enterprise of shipping. Throughout the pre-Revolutionary era, ships owned or registered in Halifax played only a secondary role in Nova Scotian maritime commerce, where New Englanders again predominated. Before 1760, approximately three-quarters of all vessels as well as approximately five-eighths of all tonnage entering or clearing Halifax originated in New England. The actual proportion decreased over time, yet the region's craft retained a numerical superiority throughout the period. The New Englanders were surpassed in carrying capacity, after 1773, by British vessels. The middle colonies generally, if not spectacularly, increased their share of trade in the region, while ships registered in Britain maintained a

fairly stable share of the commerce.⁵⁴

Not until 1774-1775 were Halifax vessels able to contribute substantially to the port's commerce. Even then local vessels accounted for considerably less tonnage than either New England or British owned ships. Nonetheless, these years denote a shift which originated with developments in the 1760s. One such factor was the significant improvement in cod exports beginning around 1768. Consequently a rise in Nova Scotian shipping investment commenced in 1769, indicating that local investors considered the increasing cod exports as commercially promising. Indeed this improvement signalled the fact that Nova Scotians had succeeded in securing a small but stable share of the cod trade from the New Englanders. Prior to 1764, Nova Scotians carried only a small proportion of the region's fish exports, and most of this went directly to New England, presumably for trans-shipment. Of the dried cod exported in Halifax vessels, between 1749 and 1763, only 19 per cent went directly to the West Indies, earning credits directly for Nova Scotia. The labors of Malachi Salter had an impressive influence on the general improvement which began in 1764. Between 1764 and 1775, the proportion of cod carried directly to the West

⁵⁴Fischer, p. 114. Also see McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*.

Indies or southern Europe in Halifax vessels rose to approximately 40 per cent; 92 per cent of this amount was carried in vessels in which Salter had some form of involvement.⁵⁵

For the cod trade in particular, and maritime trade in general, the years 1774 and 1775 witnessed a dramatic shift in Halifax's commercial fortunes. Commercial successes had convinced Halifax merchants to invest seriously in shipping by the late 1760s and early 1770s. This ownership of vessels then enabled the mercantile community to capitalize on interruptions in normal trade patterns. Events in the empire during these years conspired to create such commercial disruptions, to the advantage of the Halifax merchants.⁵⁶ Over a century earlier, in the 1640s, New England fishermen and shippers had benefitted commercially from the vacuum created by absent English fishermen, caught up in the political strife at home. The New Englanders were able to mobilize their fledgling fishing and shipping enterprises to quickly fill the vacuum, by catering to the Englishmen's waiting clients. In the process, the colonists secured a permanent niche for themselves within this commercial network. This expansion had

⁵⁵Fischer, pp. 116-119.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 122.

other lasting influences on the local economies. Significantly, it educated the New Englanders into the arts and skills of the maritime-imperial system. The commercial growth fostered both the fishing and shipbuilding industries, which in turn served as nurseries for New England's mariners and - more importantly - merchants. The skills learned here enabled Yankee merchants to enter and eventually orchestrate the region's far-reaching and increasingly complex commercial networks. During the 1770s, Halifax merchants stood to advance in a similar fashion from the latest Anglo civil war. Responding to the Boston Tea Party, an angry Parliament closed the city's port in 1774. While this did not halt Boston's trading activities entirely, it did substantially hinder them. The port closure resulted in a shortage of shipping tonnage in a number of the colonial trades. This led to a re-orientation of Boston's shipping energies which produced a domino-effect in the Greater New England trading arena. The Salem merchants, who had steadily been encroaching upon Boston's position in the cod trades, now shifted their assets out of Nova Scotia and into the more lucrative Newfoundland fisheries. In addition, Boston merchants shifted their vessels out of the marginal Bay of Fundy trade into more lucrative commercial areas. Halifax merchants seized the

opportunity to occupy these vacuums, securing their position in the cod trade along with the Nova Scotian grain trade funneled through the Bay of Fundy. As evidence of this commercial re-orientation, Halifax clearances for the West Indies rose dramatically in 1774 and continued to climb through 1775.⁵⁷

This realignment of New England trade helps to explain Nova Scotian commercial decisions, at the same time that it highlights certain paradoxes within the province's economic position. In no other northern colony did the coasting trade play as significant a role as it assumed in Halifax. Particularly in the pre-Revolutionary years, most of this trade was with New England. This would suggest that Halifax should have been drawn into and connected to the Greater New England trading realm, as indeed many of the small south shore outports were. Similarly, and connected to this last point, no other commercial center conducted a smaller percentage of the trade with its offshore regions - hinterlands and outports - than did Halifax. The port's mercantile elite understood that if Halifax were to become the entrepôt for Nova Scotia, regular trade must be established and monopolized with the offshore areas, especially the Bay of Fundy. To accomplish this Halifax

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 122-123.

merchants would first have to wean its outports and hinterlands from trade with New England. The mercantile elite increasingly came to see their New England rivals as the greatest obstacle to the port's commercial development. Thus, in the crucial years of the mid-1770s, Halifax merchants recognized their chances for commercial success as tied to the empire, despite seemingly close and binding coastal trade networks with New England.⁵⁸ Nova Scotian outports (with their stronger connections to New England), however, did not necessarily view the situation in the same light, which would cause tensions locally and imperially. Nonetheless, Halifax was able to utilize the Revolutionary War years to secure a hold on the outports and hinterlands in its vicinity. This returns us to the conceptualization and complexities of internal and external economic structures. Seemingly, Halifax should have been linked by its coasting trade with New England into an internalist and/or American vision. Yet, with its position on the fringes of both New and Old England, the mercantile community had a range of options, and at that moment could see greater opportunities through an

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 112-113. Also see, J. M. Bumsted, "The Patterson Regime and the Impact of the American Revolution on the Island of St. John, 1775-1786," *Acadiensis* 13 (Autumn 1983); and, W. B. Kerr, "The Merchants of Nova Scotia and the American Revolution," *Canadian Historical Review* 13 (1932).

external and/or imperial vision. This realization, and the resulting choices it inspired, helped to shape Halifax's economy in a two-fold manner. First, it helped to curb the control of the region's primary commercial rival, New England. It did not destroy this connection, however, since New England would remain an important trading partner even after the Revolution. Secondly, it tied Halifax merchants into the adventuresome capitalism which accompanied war. Although contemporaries could not foresee these events, the Atlantic Empire was poised on the brink of two revolutionary wars, spanning a period of almost four decades. These events encouraged and supported Halifax's imperial, Atlantic focus. The outpost merchants, on the other hand, frequently retained their New England networks, highlighting the paradoxes and complexities of determining imperial commercial centers.

Finally, it needs to be emphasized that Nova Scotian merchants, situated on the fringes of two empires, chose their economic paths. And in so doing, reveals ways in which societies and/or communities on the margins of greater powers might use that position to their advantage. This is not to underestimate the degree to which the merchants' activities and decisions were circumscribed by imperial power. Nor is it to infer that all Nova Scotian merchants reacted

identically, for the divide amongst the Haligonian merchants and those of the outports persisted. Nonetheless, the core of the Nova Scotian mercantile community cast their lot, as did the wealthy Loyalist magnates described by Countryman, with the empire.

Chapter 3: An Anglo-American Atlantic Merchant Community?

Upon the arrival of the *Ship Congress* in this harbour [Halifax] Mr. Reid the Master applied to us for advice & assistance, & being an entire stranger here we readily afforded him that protection which we have never withheld from any [A]merican Ship Master in the like situation.¹

William Forsyth's involvement with the *Congress* introduces a number of elements which will be examined and built upon in this chapter. Given the nature of the correspondence it is clear that the American vessel had been seized and subsequently condemned by the Vice Admiralty Court in Halifax.² Forsyth wrote to the merchant house, Messrs Gouverneur and Kimble of New York, who presumably represented the ship's owner to notify them of the actions taken. The Halifax merchant had stood security for the court expenses and paid various other legal fees as well as advancing the ship master, Reid, personal funds. Complications arose when Forsyth's agent in New York, most likely Saidler and Waterbury, had attempted to redeem Reid's bill of exchange on

¹William Forsyth to Messrs Gouverneur and Kimble, New York, February 15, 1798, NSARM, MG3/150.

²For discussions of the activities of the Vice-Admiralty Court in Halifax see David Sutherland, "Halifax Merchants and the Pursuit of Development, 1783-1850," *Canadian Historical Review* 59 (1978); and David Sutherland, "1810-1820: War and Peace," in *The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History*, ed. Phillip A. Buckner and John G. Reid (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

Hoffman and Company of the same city. "In payment of this bill Messrs Hoffman & Co. gave our agent another of their own drawing on London, which was returned protested, but before it reached New York Mr. Hoffman had absconded, & we are left without remedy except from the Creditors." Forsyth felt confident that the creditors would reimburse him.

Nonetheless, he warned Gouverneur and Kimble that, "[i]f we are allowed to suffer in this instance, it will effectually prevent our interference in [the] future in behalf of [A]merican property brought here for adjudication without a formal guarantee."³ During the Napoleonic Wars, Forsyth frequently assisted foreign ship owners (American and European) in reclaiming their property, i.e. vessels and/or cargoes. Since he charged a commission fee for such assistance, Forsyth undoubtedly fared well by these transactions. Yet, it would be a mistake to reduce Forsyth's motives to simply financial gain. In 1796, Forsyth had written to the Philadelphian merchant James Crawford, whose ship also had been condemned. Assessing the current situation, Forsyth wrote: "We cannot help thinking that the British cruisers are drawing the cord too close at the present juncture, and that the Vice Admiralty Courts are too much disposed to gratify them, contrary to the intention of

³William Forsyth to Messrs Gouverneur and Kimble, New York, February 15, 1798, NSARM, MG3/150.

the Government." Here, Forsyth illuminates the multifaceted interests operating on the peripheries of empire. The cruisers were taking advantage of the current imperial conflict to haul in any foreign vessel which could be deemed suspicious, in anticipation of the prize monies. According to Forsyth, the courts appeared too willing to accommodate the navy in contradiction to the imperial government's desires. At the same time, Forsyth recognized the merchants as a body both involved in and distinct from these proceedings. "[W]e shall upon all occasions afford American citizens every protection and assistance in our power to obtain justice, it being no more than we should expect of others were our property in the like situation."⁴ In this instance, Forsyth's trust was based upon the perceived responsibility of the merchant community to look out for and protect its members. It also shows that these mercantile interests could and did traverse imperial boundaries. Indeed, here, commercial interests took precedence over those of the metropole. Through this letter we see evidence of a broad interest group maneuvering within the imperial commercial nexus, while protecting its own needs.

Within these two letters, Forsyth makes visible that

⁴William Forsyth to James Crawford, Philadelphia, September 16, 1796, NSARM, MG3/150. For a discussion of Forsyth's role in speculating in prize ships during the Napoleonic Wars, see Davis S. Macmillan, "The Scot as Businessman," in *The Scottish Tradition in Canada*, ed. W. Stanford Reid (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976).

which has often gone unnoticed by historians, i.e. the reality of a viable and cohesive merchant community present in the Anglo Atlantic both before and after the Revolution. The ship master, a stranger to Halifax, turned immediately to the merchant community for assistance, recognizing the merchants' access to and influence upon the necessary financial, legal and imperial resources. More pertinently, Reid had undoubtedly learned through the maritime grapevine to call upon Forsyth specifically. Fulfilling Reid's trust, Forsyth provided ready capital and set the proper legal proceedings in motion. In New York, just as in Halifax, it would be merchants who attended to the details of reinstating the ship to its owner. In this context, Forsyth underscores the role of reputation within the workings of the merchant community. The awkward moment in these arrangements had come when Forsyth attempted to recoup his funds, only to find that Hoffman had skipped town. Yet he relied upon the normal functionings of the mercantile community ultimately to protect his capital. More pertinently, in warning Gouverneur and Kimble that he should not suffer from this instance, Forsyth underscored and threatened to utilize the sanctions built into the merchant community to secure his interests. Finally, Forsyth (in both letters) matter-of-factly recognized the new United States as a member of the broader Atlantic Anglo-American merchant community in which he maneuvered.

This chapter conceptualizes merchants as a recognizable community or society with shared interests, customs and regulations as well as rivalries and tensions. Merchants demonstrated the reality of their community through adherence to regulations and customs, services rendered and financial responsibility to one another. Communal forces such as gossip and mutuality served to both monitor and benefit members of the community. Through their related commercial interests, the merchants during the eighteenth century both sustained and adapted to the emerging commercial/financial structures, which produced modern institutions such as banks and insurance companies in their wake. A focus on the workings of Anglo-American Atlantic trade through the activities of agents and commissioned merchants illustrates the daily workings of a commercial community. Within this context, a discussion of paternalism and the rise of personal services adds complexity and depth to the nature of that society. In an era of intense political debates and conflicts, imperial and national polities helped to shape an evolving Anglo-American Atlantic world. The same can be said of the merchant community, which operated within and across shifting boundaries, based upon its sense of itself as a community.

A Merchant Community

While most historians have employed the term *merchant community* as a convenient and functional label, they have done so with noted reservations. In much of the historical literature merchants performed a common economic function which set them apart from other groups in society although, seemingly, they rarely acted and thought as a unified and cohesive body.⁵ More commonly, they have been portrayed as a diverse and often divided lot. It is my contention in this dissertation that merchants qualified as a viable, identifiable community, although frequently far-flung, nebulous and, at times, contentious. To a significant degree, Anglo-American commerce shared a common heritage, operating on time-honored and recognized practices, traditions and customs. Moreover, merchants adhered to established regulations, which were increasingly capable of

⁵Recent examples of this less structured construction of the merchant community include: Thomas Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); John J. McCusker and Russel R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and, Cathy Matson, *Merchants & Empire: Trading in Colonial New York* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

being enforced by the courts.⁶ Finally, as with many professions the merchants operated at one level as competitors yet at another level depended upon one another for specialized expertise, skills, resources and the like.

The merchant community in both Great Britain and the colonies encompassed a vast and heterogeneous society comprised largely of men from a broad spectrum of economic, social and political backgrounds who, geographically, spanned the North Atlantic rim. From an historical perspective, merchants represented the most visible element of a much larger commercial society, which incorporated a host of activities and services from the artisans and laborers who built the ships, to the mariners who sailed them. It included British and colonial officials who inspected both the vessels and their cargoes as well as captains and supercargoes who bought and sold goods.⁷ In contemporary British usage, however, many groups who were essential to the commercial economy, such as "artificers" or manufactures, skilled tradesmen, retailers and shopkeepers were not

⁶For the growing sophistication of the American financial system see Edwin J. Perkins, *American Public Finance and Financial Services, 1700-1815* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1994); Ian Steele, *The English Atlantic, 1675-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); and Cornelia Hughes Dayton, *Women before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995)

⁷Matson, p. 3.

considered to be merchants.⁸ Contemporary Britons and Americans could readily place these individuals into separate occupational groups. For example, merchants sold their goods to *shopkeepers* who, in turn, were general retailers. Grocers were purveyors, typically in retail, of such imported foods as coffee, cocoa, wine, lemons and pepper. Into this arena, also appeared various *distributors* or *wholesalers* including ironmongers, chandlers, tobacconists, etc. Even though the services and activities of these groups frequently overlapped, contemporaries understood these to be distinct classifications.⁹ Where the term *merchant* had once referred to anyone trading in goods, by the mid-eighteenth century the meaning had narrowed considerably.¹⁰ The changing nature of this definition, in many ways, signaled a transition within the mercantile community itself, surrounding its roles and expectations, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Timothy Cunningham qualified the definition of merchant as not "every one who buys or sells" but rather one

⁸Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, p. 10.

⁹Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, p. 17.

¹⁰The *Oxford English Dictionary* provides the original definition of the word merchant as "one who buys and sells commodities for profit." Reflecting eighteenth-century commentators, the *Dictionary* indicates that early on the word was restricted to whole sale traders, especially those engaging in overseas commerce.

who moves in the "Way of Commerce" by "Importation or Exportation," one who "makes it his Living to buy and sell, and that by a continued Assiduity, or frequent Negotiation in the Mystery of Merchandizing."¹¹ Samuel Johnson, along with most contemporaries, stressed this element of exportation, describing a merchant as one "who trafficks to remote countries."¹² On both sides of the Atlantic, the perception increasingly gained credence during these centuries that a merchant was one who engaged in wholesale trade to remote regions, either foreign and/or transoceanic. Merchants varied considerably in the economic resources available to them. What unites all of these individuals, and thus distinguishes them from those engaged in domestic trade, is the financial capacity to have the capital and profits of their goods tied up for extended time periods required for transoceanic voyages.

The Atlantic merchants constituted an identifiable, if complex and even paradoxical, community. As noted above, merchants, in different times and under varying conditions, both competed with and relied upon each other. To offset this problematic and dualistic nature inherent within

¹¹Timothy Cunningham, *The Law of Bills of Exchange, Promissory Notes, Bank-Notes, and Insurances* (London, 1761), p. 4 and n.1; quoted in Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, pp. 9-10.

¹²Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, p. 9.

commerce, factions evolved within the larger trading sphere based upon alternate ties and/or networks. Kin and co-religionists were common in these arrangements. New England merchants, throughout the seventeenth and into the eighteenth centuries, preferred to deal with overseas relatives. Quakers, Huguenots and Jews offer famous examples of co-religionists forming specialized networks within the larger Atlantic realm.¹³ From his base in Nova Scotia, William Forsyth worked through not only family members but also fellow Scottish merchants, whenever possible.¹⁴ The Loyalists utilized a visible attachment to empire to establish a newly-recognizable interest group which then served to create

¹³Steele, p. 216; Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, p. 61; also see Stephanie Grauman Wolf, *As Various as Their Land: The Everyday Lives of Eighteenth-Century Americans* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1993).

¹⁴William Forsyth benefited directly from the commercial talents amongst his family and relatives. In Liverpool, England, Forsyth's son Thomas and son-in-law William Smith operated a branch office. The Forsyths of London had valuable connections with the British Naval Contractors, while the Forsyths in Montreal were prominent in the fur, timber and corn trade. Moreover, as a Scotsman, Forsyth pursued business with fellow nationals whenever possible. In Newfoundland, he dealt with Andrew Thomson based out of Greenock. In Grenada his agents were the Scottish firm of Cruden, Pollard and Stewart. In Jamaica, he utilized the Scottish house of Bogle and Jopps. In Martinique he had the Scotsman, Alexander Brymer. In New Brunswick there was Robert Pagan in Saint Andrews and the Black family in Saint John. David S. Macmillan, "The 'New Men' in Action: Scottish Mercantile and Shipping Operation in the North American Colonies, 1760-1825," in *Canadian Business History: Selected Studies, 1497-1971*, ed. David S. Macmillan (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, Ltd., 1972), p. 73.

alliances for the merchants within the fold. But the expansive nature of Atlantic commerce outpaced these narrower interest groups. Increasingly, commercial connections centered on and were loosely guaranteed by a body of merchant customs and English laws common to the Anglo-American Atlantic.¹⁵

Toby Ditz has argued that Philadelphia merchants used a theatrical paradigm throughout their letters which both reflected and gave voice to their growing concerns over issues of masculinity during the late-eighteenth century. In part, the merchants were responding to dislocations brought on by the transformation of markets "from temporally and spatially delimited place and events into impersonal, unbounded and abstract processes."¹⁶ According to Ditz, then, theatricality was a device to cope with the fluid and dynamic nature of the market, particularly in its ability to undermine customary manners of sanctioning social rank. Moreover, the letters functioned as critical forms of self-presentation for individual merchants before their peers. In this respect, merchant correspondence often served pragmatic purposes such as seeking letters of recommendation,

¹⁵Steele, p. 216.

¹⁶Toby L. Ditz, "Shipwrecked; or Masculinity Imperiled: Mercantile Representations of Failure and the Gendered Self in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia." *Journal of American History* (June 1994): p. 55.

extensions on loans, or credit itself. Ditz is correct in emphasizing the importance of correspondence to the mercantile community, operating on a number of levels. Yet, I would argue that an examination of Forsyth's letters reveals the central importance of mercantile correspondence in linking Anglo-American merchants throughout the Atlantic and, in so doing, creating an aura of familiarity which worked to transcend the increasingly detached nature of the market. The letters routinely communicated business matters and news as well as seeking both commercial or individual services, and/or credit from fellow merchants. Concurrently, Forsyth's letters carried social courtesies, conversation and concern for his correspondents. As will be discussed below, at the same moment the market was rapidly expanding and ostensibly becoming more impersonal, merchants were being called upon to provide a growing number of personal or human services. By the late nineteenth century, the emergence of multi-regional corporations took on a disturbingly aloof character to Americans caught up in the accelerating processes of the market economy.¹⁷ During this earlier era, however, merchants - through their knowledge, services, contacts, networks and correspondence - seemingly retained an intimate element within commerce and, in the process,

¹⁷Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).

localized the Anglo-American Atlantic.¹⁸

Commerce depended upon an element of faith either in the trustworthiness of the customer or in the ability of the system to protect the merchant. This sense of dependence increased with long-distance trade. Standard rules such as those concerning commission fees, negotiating financial instruments and the settling of insurance claims, for example, facilitated mercantile transactions. The recognition and acceptance of a set of customs allowed merchants to come together and operate as a community. As the eighteenth century progressed, corporate and government bureaucracies gradually acquired the ability and mechanisms needed to police commerce as well as enforce existing and new laws evermore effectively. This realization, in part, serves as an indicator of the maturation of commercial and financial infrastructures within the Anglo Atlantic world. What we see in the decades between roughly 1760 to 1820 is a world in transition where "modern" methods and institutions are gaining ground while, simultaneously, "traditional" family networks and oral business cultures remained strong.

Over the long decades while these infrastructures developed, the merchant community often employed less formal means to attain adherence from its members. Gossip was one

¹⁸Ditz cites new historicists such as Peter Stallybrass, Allon White and John Agnew in her discussion of theatricality. Ditz, "Shipwrecked; or, Masculinity Imperiled," pp. 53-56.

of these. Merchants gossiped amongst themselves regarding a variety of matters of common interest and concern. For American merchants, a favorite topic of discussion centered on English suppliers. Colonials scrutinized and compared both the wares and the terms on which these goods were exported to America. Other staples of conversation included the fortunes of their mercantile peers, market trends in the Atlantic world and rumors of war.¹⁹ News was crucial to merchants and the gossip of local trade communities represented a vital source of current information. As such, merchants eagerly and constantly sought news regarding market trends, the credit-worthiness of their peers and the reliability of British and American houses. The information gathered in the taverns, coffee houses and streets of Atlantic port cities helped the merchants in determining how to utilize and protect their commercial interests. But gossip also served as an informal policing mechanism within commercial circles.

The word *gossip* has traditionally been linked to women and, through them, to the informal realms of society. By the late sixteenth century, gatherings at the time of childbirth were referred to as *gossipings* and the women who attended them were often labeled *gossips*. By this time, the term had acquired an additional meaning, i.e., one (typically a woman)

¹⁹Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, p. 18.

"who delights in idle talk; a newsmonger, a tattler." Women did talk as they gathered at a relative's or neighbor's childbed and, more importantly from a social perspective, that talk took place outside the presence of men. Thus, many viewed it as idle or "tattling", and distinctly feminine by nature. As such, it was assumed to be divorced from the male world of formal power. But this conception obscures the role gossip played in the public and male - in other words, formal - realms. Here, we need to look beyond its traditional association with exclusively female society, and thus its secondary status, to the significant role that gossip played within the larger society.²⁰

Gossip could be a powerful mechanism of social control, particularly for those who lacked formal power or say in a society. Thus, its traditional and intimate connection to women. In a society organized along gendered lines of power, gossip can be seen as one of the few venues available to

²⁰Mary Beth Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1996), p. 223. For further discussions of gossip see Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, "Gossip in History," *Historical Papers (Canada)*, 1985; Edith B. Gelles, "Gossip: An Eighteenth-Century Case," *Journal of Social History* 22 (Summer 1989); Karen V. Hansen, "The Power of Talk in Antebellum New England," *Agricultural History* 67 (Spring 1993); Andrew J. King, "Constructing Gender: Sexual Slander in Nineteenth-Century America," *Law and History Review* 13 (Spring 1995); Margaret Hillyard Little, "He Said, She Said: The Role of Gossip in Determining Single Mothers' Eligibility for Welfare," *Journal of Policy History*, vol. 11, 1999; and Jorg R. Bergmann, *Discreet Indiscretions: The Social Organization of Gossip*, trans. John Bednarz, Jr. (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1993).

women, through which they could attack their enemies. This was especially true since women typically owned little or no property and few economic resources through which they could be readily damaged. But most, if not all, societies contain hierarchies. And, even in all male circles, there are those whom possess immense power and influence as compared to those with relatively little of either commodity. In gendered and/or commercial societies, men are traditionally assumed to have possessed ready access to the formal reins of power in a society, including those in the political and economic arenas. An examination of the realities of the mercantile community, however, reveals the internal social and economic inequities. Admittance to the means of power was never evenly distributed throughout these circles; for example, formal institutions were weighted more heavily in favor of the mercantile elite. As such, gossip provided a mechanism by which community consensus could be formulated and in which a broad array of members could participate - to a greater or lesser degree - informally.²¹

Merchants collected information and passed judgment on individual members in order to protect themselves and the financial security of the larger community. In such estimations, the man and the merchant were inseparable. Details about a merchant's business, economic net worth and

²¹Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers*, pp. 253-277.

private life all figured into his image and reputation. Most important in formulating an appraisal was the determination as to whether the man was known for "punctuality and prudence". These terms carried relatively precise meanings for eighteenth-century merchants. All traders sought ready cash in order to invest in new ventures or unexpected market opportunities that could generate profits. If a trading partner failed to pay a debt on time or "punctually", he reduced the creditor's capital base and profit potential. Most merchants viewed debtors who were inclined to "slow pay" as a costly mistake. The debtor who went so far as to speculate with his creditor's money transgressed acceptable boundaries and was considered a grave risk. Such men gained reputations for "unmerchantable" behavior.²² In an era when much trade was "direct and oral"²³ a suspect or questionable reputation could seriously injure, if not completely destroy, a merchant's commercial viability. The mercantile community understood this and utilized gossip, at a variety of social levels, as an effective tool to maintain commercial standards.

The role of gossip illustrates a number of points concerning the Anglo-Atlantic merchant community. For one, the merchants recognized and adhered to a common code of

²²Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, p. 18.

²³Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, p. 18.

commercial behavior, exemplified by their recognition of certain types of conduct as "unmerchantable" or outside the prescribed mercantile ethics. Much of this tradition, at least initially, grew up in England and spread throughout the Atlantic trading empire. Later, the American business community would incorporate this tradition, in an adapted form, as its own. After 1783, this common Anglo-American commercial heritage allowed merchants of the new United States to operate comfortably within the Atlantic empire. Next, the multifaceted nature of gossip permitted factions to form and operate within the larger trading nexus. American merchants compared and criticized English suppliers and merchants, at times distinguishing colonial commercial circles from those in the metropole. In so doing, colonists drew particular merchants into the fold while excluding others, in the process revealing the ambiguous and divisive elements inherent within the merchant community. In time, American merchants and debtors would fuse their frustrations and animosities against their British creditors into the larger political tensions of the 1760s and 1770s.²⁴ Similarly, traits such as punctuality and financial prudence reflected the qualities of the larger Anglo-American commercial society. When British merchants accused American

²⁴See T. H. Breen, *Tobacco Culture: The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); and, Ditz, "Shipwrecked; or, Masculinity Imperiled".

merchants of being dilatory in repaying debts - in other words, of not being punctual - this criticism resonated with a British society increasingly frustrated with colonial actions. Finally, eighteenth-century commerce, in many ways, stood at the crossroads of modernization. Trade had progressed beyond the capabilities of kin and ethnic networks to fulfill all its demands. In this setting, merchants frequently were forced to judge their clients through the only tool available to them, a merchant's reputation. In a later age, more sophisticated laws and bureaucracies worked to protect commerce. The activities of merchants such as William Forsyth illuminate the ways in which the mercantile community attempted to secure itself in an era of transition.

The commercial world of William Forsyth ran from Newfoundland, extending through the Maritime Provinces and Canada, down the eastern U.S. coast, into the West Indies and finally home to London and Greenock. The men that Forsyth operated through in these various ports were all members of the Anglo-American Atlantic commercial world. He held these men to similar standards, judging their performances upon acknowledged criteria. Forsyth understood and accepted complications arising from the hazards of weather and the Atlantic, but was less forgiving of personal failure to enact his requests. That the Halifax merchant could expect and receive similar service from men separated by thousands of miles and an imperial boundary, suggests the existence and

viability of an Anglo-American commercial culture. In 1796, Forsyth embarked upon a venture to test wine in the Atlantic markets. His anticipations and subsequent exasperations provide an insight into the standards of performance within this commercial world.

In August 1796, Forsyth shipped "a quantity of claret" to his insurance brokers, Saidler and Waterbury of New York. "We rely on your making the most of this adventure for us, we had a very handsome offer for it to have shipt it to New England, & by advices from Boston we find it would do very well there, ... but we hope it will do better with you."²⁵ Shortly thereafter, Forsyth had second thoughts on the matter which reveal the difficulties inherent in assessing particular markets as confirmed by the letter to Thomas Amory in September. "If we had known the price of Claret Wine with you, before the Sale of that by the Success, or before we shipd for New York, we certainly would have prefered your market."²⁶ Undoubtedly this information only added to Forsyth's subsequent frustration with Saidler and Waterbury's inattention to the venture. For one year later, Forsyth again wrote to the insurance brokers complaining that he did not know if his wine "had gone to a good or bad market, and

²⁵William Forsyth to Messrs Saidler & Waterbury, New York, August 30, 1796, NSARM, MG3/150.

²⁶William Forsyth to Thomas C. Amory, Boston, September 3, 1796, NSARM, MG 3/150.

but for the information of others we should not have known of its arrival." The negligence of his correspondents had placed Forsyth in an awkward position, since there was to be "a sale in a day or two of prize Claret", yet without any current news of the markets he remained uncertain as to "what length to go." At this late date, the Nova Scotia merchant could only hope that the brokers would seize every opportunity to sell the wine as quickly as possible at an advantage. "We fear it will fall lower in price when peace takes place & that even appears to be at not great distance."²⁷

Forsyth's disappointment in the performance of Saidler and Waterbury suggests his sense of commercial ethics. "[P]unctuality in correspondence is essential to business & the want of it is oftentimes detrimental to it. We fear our triffling business is troublesome to you." In closing his letter, Forsyth returned to the matter of Saidler and Waterbury's inattention to correspondence. "[W]e cannot help expressing our disappointment that you should be so remiss and endifferent about giving us the information we had a right to expect."²⁸ Not only do these comments reflect Forsyth's own standards of proper business behavior, they

²⁷William Forsyth to Messrs Saidler & Waterbury, New York, September 7, 1797, NSARM, MG3/150.

²⁸William Forsyth to Messrs Saidler & Waterbury, New York, August 28, 1797, NSARM, MG3/150.

also reveal a commercial culture. Even though Saidler and Waterbury styled themselves as insurance brokers, they appear to have served in other commercial capacities, underlining the still-evolving nature of New York insurance as an institution. The wine was seemingly sent to Saidler and Waterbury without prior agreement, yet the Nova Scotian merchant assumed the partners would make full advantage of his adventure. The reference to "our triffling business," however, hints at the possibility that Saidler and Waterbury had more urgent or lucrative business dealings, which received priority. Nonetheless, commercial ethics required "punctuality in correspondence" as evidenced by Forsyth's claim that he had a right to expect as much. In the rapidly shifting world of trade, merchants sought as many methods and tools as possible to allow them to exercise some amount of control over their business. As Forsyth's comments demonstrate, the merchant community had codified behavior that reflected and respected the conditions under which commerce operated. Promptness - or punctuality - was required both in the repayment of debts as well as the transmittal of information in order that sudden market opportunities would not be wasted. The letterbook does not relate whether or how Saidler and Waterbury responded to this criticism. Forsyth, however, retained his business connection with the insurance brokers who appear to have provided primarily financial services for him, which in

itself may be a telling comment on the wine episode.

Forsyth appreciated the need for timely correspondence in order to assess a continually fluctuating market. Given the spatial and temporal dimensions of Atlantic trade, merchants could not - or did not - always await replies before pursuing new ventures. Forsyth's experimentation with the wine market throughout 1796 and 1797 shows that even with the attentive services of commissioned merchants, new ventures still represented a risk. Forsyth first wrote to Bogle and Jopps of Jamaica regarding a wine shipment in November 1796 at which time he was contemplating sending a small cargo of Madeira wine to the merchant house. "Please to favour us with your opinion of such a speculation, & say whether that quantity can easily be disposed of at Kingston, & the price there is a probability of its fetching."²⁹ If the venture proceeded, Forsyth estimated that the shipment would reach Kingston by mid-March. On January 5, 1797, Forsyth forwarded a letter to Bogle and Jopps by the brig *Halifax* currently departing for Madeira to collect a cargo of wine. "We have undertaken this voyage by way of experiment, & if we find it to answer, we propose to employ a vessel in the trade[.] We have much dependence on your exertions to make

²⁹William Forsyth to Bogle and Jopps, Jamaica, November 21, 1796, NSARM, MG 3/150.

the adventure turn out a profitable one."³⁰ The wine did not reach a favorable market in Kingston, as would prove to be the case in Halifax at a later date. Forsyth, nonetheless, appeared satisfied that the Jamaican partners had attended to his business properly. "From what you say of the price of Madeira Wine, we fear it will be a loseing speculation[.] [W]e are confident, however, that you will do the best you can for our interests & in the mean time we are much oblig'd to you for you communications on the subject."³¹ In both wine ventures, to New York and to Jamaica, Forsyth had taken risks on particular markets, relying upon the services of others to garner a potential success. In the case of Saidler and Waterbury their dilatoriness appeared to have destroyed these chances, which proved doubly frustrating since the Boston market had been promising. Conversely, the Jamaican market presented the major obstacle to Forsyth's venture, while Bogle and Jopps had performed the responsibilities expected of them, including punctual correspondence. Forsyth himself was a tireless and diligent merchant, on his own accounts and on the part of his correspondents. As such he exacted similar treatment in return. Bogle and Jopps exercised this same professional ethic, convincing Forsyth that they would

³⁰William Forsyth to Bogle and Jopps, Jamaica, January 5, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

³¹William Forsyth to Bogel and Jopps, Jamaica, April 22, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

tend to his ventures with all due seriousness. In the process, they satisfied the Halifax merchant that the merchant house would fully pursue commercial opportunities on his behalf; an assurance which was sought-after in long-distance trade.

At times, Forsyth sought news or gossip from trusted associates in order to judge potential clients. In March 1798, Forsyth wrote to his Boston agent, Thomas Amory, inquiring about a merchant house of that city. "We will likewise thank you to inform us what you know respecting the above house of N & G [Neil and Gatty]." ³² Based upon Forsyth's subsequent remarks, Amory appears to have voiced reservations about the merchants, possibly regarding their current financial situation. "We thank you for the hint you give respecting the circumstances of a certain House. We will be guarded as we can in this respect." This hesitation did not deter Forsyth entirely from doing business with the partnership as seen from the balance of the letter. "[A]t foot you have note of the Wines on board the Ship, Claimed by Neil & Gatty." ³³ In case Forsyth should purchase any portion of the wine, Amory was to note the price it was likely to bring in Boston, exclusive of duties. Here, Forsyth had

³²William Forsyth to Thomas Amory, Boston, March 21, 1798, NSARM, MG3/150.

³³William Forsyth to Thomas Amory, Boston, April 26, 1798, NSARM, MG3/150.

called upon Amory, a known and trusted contact, to assess an unknown client by reputation. From there, Forsyth used the knowledge to forge a new commercial link. Of significance here, the role of gossip - traditionally considered to be a device of oral culture - had been transferred to commercial correspondence. These letters demonstrate the ways in which the "localism" of the merchant community extended to encompass a broad geographic expanse such as the Atlantic.

Few, if any, merchants could afford to be careless in attending to their reputation. Individuals and merchants alike understood that allowing negative gossip to circulate unchecked could have detrimental effects on their personal and/or commercial lives, in both the formal and informal spheres. A New England shipper found that "severall base and scurrilous words" spoken to sailors had "discouraged them from his Service," and thus harmed his business.³⁴

For merchants what mattered most in protecting their reputations was the judgment of their peers. In other words, merchants attended to their image within a masculine world of other merchants. Issues of reputation and masculinity are played out in the scenario involving the Congress which opened this chapter. Within mercantile folklore, both Hoffman and the partners Gouverneur and Kimble represented symbolic types or dialectical caricatures of corrupt versus

³⁴Norton, p. 254.

honest merchants. Mercantile correspondence is filled with accounts of bankrupts, debtors or embezzlers such as Hoffman who absconded or fled. These figures are in stark contrast to the honorable merchants, such as Gouverneur and Kimble, who remained put and stood behind their obligations and their names. Problems arose from the fact that the "rouges", "rascals" and "knaves" such as Hoffman were not alien to or separate from the merchant community, but were an integral part of it. One way in which to distinguish, and thus exclude, corrupt merchants from within the community was to equate their misdeeds with those of sexual seduction. The fleeing villain was a common image not just amongst merchants, but even more popularly as a seducer who ran off with other men's women. Adultery threatened the standing of a husband at the same time that it questioned his masculinity, for by stealing and/or assailing the resources of his private world, it directly challenged his social position in the public sphere. Similarly, the greatest threat presented by the absconder came not from his attack on another merchant's possessions; rather, the villain threatened the honest merchant's standing among other merchants by diminishing his authority and stature amongst his peers. As with a cuckolded husband, the honest merchant feared he would be reduced to the status of an inferior man;

in other words he would be feminized.³⁵ In the case of the Congress, Gouverneur and Kimble forestalled this threat by honoring Hoffman's debts. Thus they protected, and possibly even enhanced, their own reputations.

Merchants and their houses frequently stood security for the transfer and acceptance of financial instruments, particularly bills of exchange. These activities demonstrate the vital role merchants played in helping to formulate and implement a distinct financial realm out of and within the larger commercial nexus. In an earlier era, commerce itself and the ensuing financial transactions were protected through the security afforded by family and/or kin networks. Later, merchants were protected by sophisticated institutions and practices including banks and laws, which developed out of the creation of a separate financial realm. In the transition between these two stages of commerce, the merchants provided much of the sense of protection necessary to promote and ensure trade.

The letter addressed to Saidler and Waterbury on September 7, 1797 illustrates the ways in which merchants stood security for bills of exchange passed by clients and/or fellow merchants. Forsyth had inclosed an order on Mr. Thebaud to be remitted, in the form of bills of exchange, to Hunter and Robertson in Greenoch. "As you guarantee Mr.

³⁵Ditz, pp. 59-66.

Thebaud to us," we will not receive a "Bill of Exch that you do not endorse."³⁶ In this instance, the brokers in New York ensured Thebaud's credit-worthiness and in the process accepted any financial risk involved in Forsyth's commercial transaction. If their trust proved unfounded, Saidler and Waterbury would be held liable for the debt.

The handling of bills of exchange constituted a significant element of the transactions between Forsyth and the insurance brokers, Saidler and Waterbury. Forsyth wrote to the New York firm in November 1797: "We now trouble you with our Exch. on Mr. Edward Goold pr \$914 68/100 at 10 days sight which we hope will be duly honor'd, it being for expences incurred in the trial of the Ship *Hercules*." The merchant next requested that, since the brokers had stood guarantee for Goold, they now take up his bill to Mr. Ingraham "in case of need."³⁷ While the letter does not explicitly establish a link between Goold and Ingraham, it appears that both men were involved with the ship *Hercules*, which had been sent to Halifax for trial. Similarly, in July 1798, James Dupuy's ship was sent into Halifax, at which time the master, Captain Turnbull, applied to Forsyth for

³⁶William Forsyth to Messrs Saidler & Waterbury, New York, September 7, 1797, NSARM, MG3/150.

³⁷William Forsyth, Halifax to Messrs Saidler & Waterbury, New York, November 18, 1797, NSARM, MG3/150.

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assistance. In order to provide the necessary help, Forsyth required that a second party stand security for the shipowner. Since Forsyth had not the pleasure of Dupuy's correspondence, "[a] letter of guarantee will be acceptable from some of our friends in your City. Messrs Gouveneur & Kimble, John Murray & Son, or Saidler & Waterbury Insurance Brokers are amongst the number of our correspondents in New York."³⁸ These letters depict merchants seeking a form of protection in an expanding and changing commercial landscape. Fellow merchants provided this to the community as a whole through their reputations, willingness to accept risk and financial wherewithal to cover bad debts or the commercial power to force their payment, when necessary. In so doing, the merchants served as the channels through which commerce was secured and transacted.

The customs and rituals practiced by North American merchants to garner security conformed to those of their British peers. Forsyth wrote to Robert Peel of Manchester, England to obtain samples of the manufacturer's printed cottons. Peel was to forward copies of the invoice both to Forsyth and to Hunter and Robertson, billing the latter for the goods. This was the firm's first order to the Manchester company and as such Forsyth realized that Peel would require mercantile guarantees. "As you may be unacquainted with

³⁸William Forsyth, Halifax to Mr. James Dupuy, New York, July 23, 1798, NSARM, MG3/150.

Messrs Hunter[,] Robertson & Co. we refer to Messrs Richard Scholes & Sons, Messrs Thos Philips & Co. or Messrs Samuel Mather & Co. of your City for information respecting them."³⁹

These cases exemplify the manner in which the mercantile community relied upon its members to stand security over commercial transactions and in the process honored their word and reputations. Moreover, these arrangements provided the necessary element of faith which allowed commerce to advance into new and unknown regions. Finally, this transaction mirrored those occurring routinely on the opposite side of the Atlantic, reflecting a shared commercial heritage. While this sense of commercial trust amongst individuals may have originated in Great Britain and spread outwards to its Atlantic colonies, it was the expansive nature of that empire that forced the issue during the eighteenth century. Thus, while the empire played upon pre-existing practices it accelerated their development due to the pressures of imperialism.

The negotiations concerning the schooner the *Three Sisters* underscores the complexities of a multilateral transaction when several of the individuals were unknown to one another. Moreover, the proceeding demonstrates the ways in which merchants could utilize established commercial relationships and/or networks to facilitate such dealings.

³⁹William Forsyth to Robert Peel, Manchester, England, November 9, 1796, NSARM, MG 3/150.

In this instance, Forsyth called upon Andrew Thomson whom he wrote to on January 2, 1798. "Capt Underhill has purchased the Schooner *Three Sisters*, & we have put on board some articles agreeable to Mr. Bells orders, the whole amounting to £950.19.5 Sterling for which we have drawn on Messrs Cunnigham[,] Stevenson & Co. at 30 d/St. to the order of Messrs Hunter[,] Robertson & Co." In the presence of unfamiliar clients, Forsyth took what he deemed to be the necessary precautions. "Altho' we have every reason to believe that we are perfectly safe in this transaction[,] yet as these Gentlemen are entire strangers to us we have taken a bill of Sale to the schooner and have got her registrate in our names." Through his next statement, Forsyth underscored the degree of commercial familiarity within the Maritime ports as well as the rationalization for including Thomson in the proceedings. "As you must be acquainted with Mr. Bell & his connections & must know how far we are safe with them, we have enclosed a power of Attorney authorising you to convey to them, by Bill of Sale, the said Schooner[.] [B]ut if you apprehend any danger, you will please to continue her in our names taking care that Insurance be done upon her thro' our Greenock friends, till you hear that the Bill on Cunnigham[,] Stevenson & Co. are paid." Here a single transaction incorporated several individuals and commercial locales into a complex commercial web. In order to accommodate Mr. Bell, Forsyth had sunk a considerable sum of his working capital

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and Hunter and Robertson's funds into the cargo and/or vessel. To secure this capital, Forsyth conveyed the schooner to Andrew Thomson, a known associate, under the power of attorney. Thomson was to retain the vessel in Forsyth's name until Mr. Bell's bill had been honored by his drawers, Cunningham, Stevenson and Company. As such, Bell's order connected merchants and merchant houses from Newfoundland to Nova Scotia and across the Atlantic to Scotland. Moreover, Forsyth drew upon the services of the legal community to uphold his commercial venture. The letter suggests that, to a degree, Forsyth's measures may have appeared extraordinary, for he wrote: "We make no apology to Mr. Bell for taking the Bill of Sale in our names as the Law requires an owner being on the Spot to take the Oath."⁴⁰ The merchant attributed these actions to the requirements of the law. Ultimately, however, Forsyth benefited from this legal technicality since it placed the vessel - a highly mobile and liquid commodity - in his name, until the time of payment. This transaction involving the *Three Sisters* portrays the ways in which individuals unknown to one another could conduct business, protected not only by law but more importantly by the practices and regulations of the merchant community. On a day-to-day basis, these types of dealings built and sustained the expansive Atlantic commerce.

⁴⁰William Forsyth to Andrew Thomson, Newfoundland, January 2, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

The professional arrangements and transactions between William Forsyth and Joseph de Franca, Esquire provide a number of insights into Anglo commercial culture, ranging from class identity to mercantile monopolies. De Franca, representing the House of Messrs J. S. de Franca and Company, came to North America - apparently Halifax - sometime in 1795. Given his class status and subsequent activities, it would seem that de Franca was financially established, which would make sense in terms of his professional association with Forsyth, one of Halifax's leading merchants. De Franca had come to America to establish contacts and correspondence "with the principal Town on this continent" which he thought he had accomplished by August 1797. At that time Forsyth wrote to his London agent, Robert Livie, to announce that de Franca had left "for England with Mrs. De Franca, who is an agreeable little woman."⁴¹ Since his own House did not have an agent in London, de Franca hoped to process his financial arrangements through Livie. Forsyth did not suppose that Livie would object to the arrangement since the business would result in a commission. This promised to be a longterm arrangement as de Franca wished to continue his London business through Livie.

Unfortunately, de Franca's wine venture to Nova Scotia did not fare well. Shortly after de Franca had left Halifax,

⁴¹William Forsyth to Robert Livie & Co., London, August 12, 1797, NSARM, MG3/150.

Forsyth wrote to him in London concerning the cargo of wine which had arrived on the *Elizabeth*. Ever conscious of ships' schedules, Forsyth had contacted de Franca's clients only after he had seen to the discharging of the vessel. In this letter, as in others, Forsyth felt it necessary to counsel de Franca. "It is not to be expected that Gentlemen not accustomed to business, would take the drudgery of settling the duties at both offices[.] [W]e were therefore under the necessity of releaving them of it."⁴² Forsyth's remarks provide a telling commentary about both de Franca and his customers. A specialty item such as Madeira wine, most likely, would have been consumed by those in the upper echelons of Halifax society. While well-to-do merchants would have constituted a percentage of this group, it is clear that a number of de Franca's customers were "not accustomed to business," and, thus, could not be expected to undertake the drudgery associated with attending to duties. This left Forsyth with the responsibility of "releaving" de Franca's clients by performing the task himself. The correspondence suggests that de Franca was not fully attuned to the world of commerce since he had overlooked the issue of customs, which Forsyth scrupulously did not. Conscientious merchants, British and colonial, might differ in their approach to customs, ranging from ready obedience to

⁴²William Forsyth to Jos Sebm. De Franca, Esqr., London, September 11, 1797, NSARM, MG3/150.

deliberate evasion, but few carelessly ignored them. Next Forsyth informed de Franca that most of the clients had received their wine, yet a number had not determined whether to keep it or not. In these circumstances, Forsyth had delayed collecting payment especially since "the cost exceeds the price you charged."⁴³ Forsyth closed by assuring the Madeiran that every measure would be taken in his interest. What emerges from this letter, and the one that follows, is a realization that de Franca was not thoroughly schooled in the ways of Anglo-Atlantic trade. Forsyth, who appears to have been on friendly terms with de Franca, nonetheless felt the need to lecture and educate the island merchant in the art of commerce.

By August 1798 Forsyth understood de Franca's venture to be failing. Addressing his letter to London, Forsyth wrote:

You must recollect what we often told you, not to depend on this market for the Sale of any quantity of Madeira Wine. What has injured the sale of that by the *Elizabeth* is the inferior quality, and the arrival of Messrs Cochrans Brig from Madeira with a larger quantity than we understood at first[.] [A]nd a ship from Madeira & Fyall with a larger parcel consigned to Fourman[,] Grassie & Co. which they have been selling or offering at Vendue at reduced prices.⁴⁴

As Forsyth had initially suspected, the limited Halifax market had quickly become saturated. Furthermore, de Franca

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴William Forsyth, Halifax to J.S. De Franca, Esqr., London, August 15, 1798, NSARM, MG3/150.

had suffered due to an ill-timed cargo, which Forsyth had attempted to halt by sending word in advance of the ship's departure. In his counsel, Forsyth demonstrates the dialectical nature of the commercial world. "If your House had been upon good terms with their neighbors, they would have received our letters of advice by Messrs Cochran's Vessel."⁴⁵ Forsyth purposely chastised de Franca for not establishing, even minimally, a working relationship with the surrounding mercantile houses. In de Franca's eyes the adjoining houses may have represented no more than competitors. Forsyth certainly understood such prejudices, but also could see beyond them to view the surrounding merchants as "neighbors" who could render valuable services. The letter itself contains an example of the commercial mutuality de Franca should have fostered. Forsyth had sent word to the Madeira merchant via Cochran's vessel, which had traveled south to collect the shipment of wine ultimately so damaging to de Franca's own cargo. It is not clear whether the Cochrans knew the exact contents of the letter, although they may have guessed at the nature, since the commercial alliance between Forsyth and de Franca would have been known throughout Halifax.⁴⁶ Moreover, de Franca had solicited

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶The Cochran brothers (Thomas, James and William) were Halifax merchants who had migrated to Nova Scotia from Ireland in 1761 with their father Joseph. The brothers were

customers in advance, amongst a clientele undoubtedly well known to the Cochrans. A letter discouraging de Franca from the venture stood to benefit the Cochrans and thus their willingness to deliver the letter would make sense. If they did not know the letter's content, however, they may have been taking a commercial risk to provide a professional courtesy or service to Forsyth. This makes the scenario all the more noteworthy since Forsyth and the Cochrans appear to have been business rivals. Here the Halifax merchants had moved beyond the ever-present rivalry to cooperate with and assist one another, no doubt for a variety of reasons, including selfish ones. Forsyth's counsel to de Franca reveals an accepted code of conduct amongst merchants, while his behavior in conjunction with the Cochrans demonstrates a level of cooperation which united merchants as a community.

The letter by Robert Ross to his clerk Robert Thomson complicates the argument developed above, both underscoring elements of Forsyth's business ethic as well as contradicting it. This incident more fully depicts the competition and wariness typically associated to merchants. In October 1792 Ross, who was at that time in St. John's, wrote to Thomson in

successful in commerce and influential in Halifax society. Thomas was elected to the House of Assembly to represent the township of Liverpool in 1775. He was speaker of the Assembly in 1784; and in June 1785 became a member of the executive council. William at one time represented the township of Halifax in the Assembly. See Perkins, vol. II, p. 1n.

Burin, Newfoundland providing instructions as how to best maneuver around the merchant community on Placentia Bay. Thomson, as an interloper, could expect "to meet with every opposition and obstruction from the established houses on the Bay," and therefore should pay no heed to their advice. Ross was anxious to hear that Thomson had arranged the sale of bread to Mr. Spurrins, a member of one of the respectable merchant houses. Such merchants offered definite financial advantages to newcomers such as Ross and Thomson, since their bills of exchange would be known to be safe. At the same time, Ross cautioned his clerk against these houses. In trading directly with the boatkeepers, Thomson needed to be certain to receive their fish, oil or bill immediately upon delivering his goods, "for mostly all are indebted[?] to Mr. Spurrins or others who will watch their conduct and seek to secure[?] themselves on your property." Next, Ross advised Thomson as to the marketability of his goods as well as preferred commodities to receive in exchange. The merchant predicted that the bread in bulk would be the most "troublesome" to unload, and, as such, Thomson should refuse no "tolerable price". As payment Thomson should endeavor to procure oil or bills of exchange, all the while exercising caution. "Without having recourse to the merchants you will find means to inform yourself of the goodness of such Bills as may be afford to you." Finally, Ross acknowledged that it would be difficult for Thomson to forward mail to St. John's,

it being usual for the merchants to forbid their boatmasters receiving any from one in your situation. Write therefore under cover to Hart & Eppes who are the correspondents of Mr. Spurrins and Mr Sounders; And on such occasion write a few lines to H & E appologysing for the liberty you have taken on troubling them in the inclosed &c.⁴⁷

Ross understood and illuminated the difficulties of commercial newcomers operating amongst an established mercantile community. Simultaneously, he provides a critique of William Forsyth's business ethic or sense as seen in his warnings that Thomson both be wary of the merchants houses at the same time that he sought out their trade. At one level, particularly in terms of financial instruments, the houses were to be trusted and Thomson should attempt to procure their bills. For the merchant houses of Placentia Bay understood that the credit-worthiness of their bills, regardless of who possessed them, reflected their commercial reputation. At another level, regarding trade itself, Thomson should expect the merchants to hamper, even injure, his commercial viability in the region. For instance, the merchant houses could be expected to curtail and/or prevent, Thomson from corresponding with Ross in St. John's. The level of cooperation fostered between Forsyth and the Cochrans clearly was not extended by or expected from the merchants of Placentia Bay. Yet, Thomson represented an interloper in the eyes of the established mercantile

⁴⁷Robert Ross to Robert Thomson, Bureen, [Newfoundland], October 7, 1792, NSARM, MG 100/215.

community and de Franca may have been viewed similarly by the merchant houses of Madeira. Forsyth and the Cochrans, on the other hand, were prominent and stable members within Halifax commercial circles. They were known to one another and thus, seemingly, had created a means - very likely tenuous but nonetheless serviceable - by which they could and would serve one another despite their rivalry. The correspondence of Forsyth and Ross illustrates the discrepancies between the options and avenues open to established merchants as compared to newcomers. At the same time, it shows the possibilities through which rivals could, frequently out of self-interest, form communities. Such communities, obviously, serviced their members variously, frequently based upon wealth, status and position.

The Role of Agents

When conducting business in foreign ports, Forsyth typically relied upon the efforts of agents or merchants houses. It is not possible, in all cases, to ascertain the exact commercial arrangements involved between Forsyth and his contacts, although at times the relationship becomes apparent from the types of services performed. Agents, as well as commissioned merchants, provided a variety of shipping, trading and financial services for their clients, who could include merchants as well as planters. Agents were

expected to correspond regularly with their principals, forwarding current price lists, advising on commodities to send as well as the availability of return cargoes. An agent could see to the unloading of the ship's cargo, either selling the goods immediately or storing them in the hopes that market prices would rise. Moreover, with adequate forewarning of a vessel's arrival, agents could assemble both a cargo and freight in advance. These measures served to lessen port times and operating costs for the vessels. An agent earned an income by charging a fee or commission for every service performed.⁴⁸ At the same time, agents gained experience and frequently traded on their own accounts. Novice agents were well advised to take care in deciding "how to sell ... & to buy goods in the best manner."⁴⁹ Veteran agents who had mastered this art wielded considerable influence over their clients' trading concerns by suggesting what commodities should be shipped and when, and then managing their sale. The relationships between agents and

⁴⁸In the sugar trade, English commission agents received a 3 per cent commission during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. See Steele, p. 217. However, during the latter portion of the eighteenth century, commission fees ranged anywhere from 1.5 per cent to 2 1/2 per cent of the value of the transaction. The rates also varied according to geography: 1.5 to 2 per cent prevailed in the Holland and Hamburg trade; 3 per cent in the Levant trade; and 5 per cent in the Caribbean trade. Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, p. 125.

⁴⁹Quoted in Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, p. 125.

their principals exemplify the complexities of commerce since the same individuals, at given times, operated various accounts with each other, including reciprocal agency arrangements.⁵⁰ The balance of this chapter will follow the activities of agents and commissioned merchants, especially Thomas Amory of Boston and Robert Livie of London, both of whom served as operatives for William Forsyth. In turn, Forsyth's own activities in the commission line will merit attention. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a discussion of the changing and expanding nature of the role of agents, commissioned merchants and merchant houses.

The rise of agents as an integral part of the British commercial scene inspired heated debates, as exemplified in 1759 by Joseph Massie's report on the sugar trade. According to Massie, British merchants had dwindled "into the diminutive Characters of Agents, Factors, &c. instead of appearing as PRINCIPALS in the TRADE of their OWN COUNTRY," resulting in the mother country's declining commerce. Unlike the entrepreneurs of earlier generations, Massie continued, London merchants no longer shipped "on their own account," but instead acted on behalf of other merchants and planters, earning commissions for their services and acting as little

⁵⁰For discussions of agents see Steele, pp. 216-217; Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, p. 98; and, Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, pp. 125-126.

more than servants to the colonists.⁵¹ In actuality, Massie was not so much predicting a process of professional realignment as he was reacting against one already well under way. Yet, Massie's polemic created a false dichotomy, which has served to skew historical understanding of the commercial arena. British merchants had not "dwindled" or reduced their commercial efforts, but conversely had expanded and diversified their portfolios. Large-scale overseas merchants, such as Hancock's Associates, marketed their own goods along with those of their clients. On the outbound voyage, this often meant that British merchants bore the risk of transatlantic shipping and marketing. Again, on the more profitable homebound voyage, the merchants shared their ship holds with "other Gentlemens crops." For larger merchants factorage represented a complement to their own shipping and trading.⁵² These merchants, and the diversifying nature of their activities, demonstrate the growing complexity of the Atlantic commercial world and the intricacy of the markets therein.

In Boston, Forsyth operated through Thomas Amory; in London, he maneuvered through Robert Livie. When writing to James Dupuy of New York, Forsyth had identified several

⁵¹Joseph Massie, *A State of the British Sugar-Colony Trade* (London: 1759), pp. 48-49; quoted in Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, p. 130.

⁵²Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, p. 130-131.

merchant firms as contacts in that city. Yet, the letterbook suggests that most, if not all, of his dealings in New York were handled by Saidler & Waterbury. This specialization of agents and merchant houses appears to have been standard practice for Halifax merchants as evidenced by Forsyth's reply to Robert Sinclair of London. Forsyth acknowledged the goods sent by Sinclair which were to be paid for by Hunter and Robertson. Next Forsyth addressed the possibilities for securing clients in Halifax. "We should be happy if we could render you any services in the Commission line but every body here, that is worth corresponding with, has their fixed agents in London, & the business done in that line with this Country, is but triffling."⁵³ The pattern of his correspondence bears out this geographical concentration in that Forsyth tended to negotiate with one primary agent or merchant in each locale.⁵⁴

The profile that emerges from the correspondence to Forsyth's principal agent in Boston, Thomas Amory, suggests that the latter fit the role of the stereotypical agent,

⁵³William Forsyth to Robert Sinclair, London, September 3, 1796, NSARM, MG 3/150.

⁵⁴The major agents, merchants and/or merchant houses with whom Forsyth corresponded include: Andrew Thomson of St. John's, Newfoundland; Lester and Morrogh of Quebec; Thomas Amory of Boston; Saidler and Waterbury of New York; Joseph Anthony of Philadelphia; Bogle and Jopps of Kingston, Jamaica; Robert Livie of London; and, Iver and Peter McIver of Liverpool, England.

utilizing the profession to earn income and gain contacts while pursuing his own mercantile interests on the side. Forsyth held his contacts to exacting standards and at times resorted to lecturing Amory when his performance fell short of these measures. That much said, Forsyth was not unkind and appears to have been educating the Bostonian in the demanding realm of Atlantic trade. In December 1796, Forsyth, who was in the process of closing out the yearly accounts wrote to Amory, stipulating that in the future Amory should charge the amount of each invoice in one line, "as we find it exceedingly troublesome to collect the different items in your account that compose the Invoices." As a result, Forsyth's office was "obliged to have recourse to every Invoice & each separate charge in it on comparing our accot. with our Books."⁵⁵ The letter suggests that the professional relationship between the two men was relatively new and that Forsyth was taking the first opportunity to counsel Amory in accounting practices appropriate for the Halifax office.

Thomas Amory's responsibilities were multifaceted, including financial and shipping services as well as current market information and advice. Earlier that year, Amory had shipped tar to Halifax which was "received in very bad order, some of the Barrels scarcely half full, & all wanting a few

⁵⁵William Forsyth to Thomas C. Amory, Boston, December 17, 1796, NSARM, MG 3/150.

gallons." The twenty Barrels of tar sent in actuality equalled just over sixteen barrels. Forsyth cautioned the agent, "You will therefore have to charge the person you bought them of with 3 3/4 Barrels & with the freight & charges on them." The Halifax office would forward the inspector's certificate by the first conveyance and in return needed the invoice for the tar. Forsyth next ordered ten barrels of pitch, when an opportunity arose.⁵⁶ The following April, Forsyth wrote to Boston stating that he had "thoughts of giving you an order to purchase 2 [to] 300 Barrels of Naval Stores for us to be delivered at Passamaquaddy."⁵⁷

These letters reveal the standard tasks of agents residing in port cities. In the first instance, Amory believed he had successfully discharged the order for tar, yet now found himself with the additional chore of obtaining credit for the missing quantity. This itself was a common enough occurrence which highlights the need of having an agent on the spot who could attend to correcting the charges immediately. At the same time, Amory learned a lesson in attending to measurements which would benefit him in the future when he traded on his own account. Noteworthy in these letters are the orders for naval supplies, including tar and pitch. To

⁵⁶William Forsyth to Thomas C. Amory, Boston, October 1, 1796, NSARM, MG 3/150.

⁵⁷William Forsyth to Thomas C. Amory, Boston, April 13, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

fulfill the demands of his contract with the British naval yards in Halifax, Forsyth frequently turned to markets in the United States, particularly Boston. In these instances, Forsyth would have had little difficulty in importing even enumerated goods from foreign markets such as those of the United States. Amory's position in a shipbuilding center, along with the importance of Boston's markets for Maritime fish, made him a crucial factor for the Halifax merchant. More broadly, these orders demonstrate the continuing role of the United States in the Maritime economy. Of particular and possibly ironic note, is the fact that Forsyth called upon the resources of the former colonies to supply the imperial navy.

In May 1798, Forsyth received an order from "our House in Greenock for a Cargo to be ship'd in any of our Vessels that we might have unemployed." The ensuing letter addressed to Amory provides a number of insights into Forsyth's commercial sense. The *Windsor* travelled south specifically to "procure thro'" Amory the necessary cargo, indicating the importance of fulfilling the order requested by the senior Scottish partners. Forsyth had determined to send Captain Robertson to Scotland in the *Cato*, which could carry approximately 200 tons. If Forsyth's son-in-law, William Smith, had not yet arrived, Amory was to "immediately set about purchasing the articles mentioned in the order, Keeping in view what the Ship will carry & not purchase more than a

loading for her." This letter does not detail the type of goods to be forwarded, although Forsyth was specific in regards to the cost of the cargo. "It may happen that some of the articles have advanced in price or may be difficult to be got, in that case you are to diminish or increase quantities according as you may think for our interest."⁵⁸

Although Smith was enroute to Boston, if not already there, Amory was not to await his arrival but was to begin assembling the cargo, signaling Forsyth's trust in the agent's ability to choose the necessary and appropriate goods. These instructions demonstrate the necessity confronting overseas merchants to employ competent agents in crucial locales, whose capabilities and knowledge were known and trusted. The letter also indicates that Forsyth was operating under a budget in procuring the desired goods. Either he and/or Hunter and Robertson had a sense of the price of these goods in the Boston market and had placed a ceiling on the cost of the cargo.

Forsyth next advised that "it will be well that your intentions are Kept secret 'till you have effected the purchases."⁵⁹ Since Forsyth did not explain this last request, it may be surmised that Amory understood the

⁵⁸William Forsyth to Thomas C. Amory, Boston, May 16, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

⁵⁹Ibid.

instructions. A number of rationales may be posited for the desire for secrecy in assembling the cargo. It may be that Forsyth feared that advanced knowledge of the shipment might rise local prices. Or it may have been that Forsyth understood the mercantile information circles. Merchants commonly relied upon direct correspondence and news to keep up-to-date with the markets. Saavy merchants, however, could also read more subtle clues to help predict market opportunities, including the export activities from their own ports. Other indicators included embargoes, convoys, spells of calm or conversely contrary winds, and local prices for export goods.⁶⁰ Hunter and Robertson, along with Forsyth, may have hoped to obtain an edge on a market opportunity in Scotland before other merchants supplied similar American cargoes. From Amory's perspective, discreetly assembling a cargo would be no easy task in a port city such as Boston, with its established ranks of merchants, merchant houses and agents. More importantly, these mercantile circles possessed well-developed and active news networks, which circulated through Boston's coffeehouses and merchants houses. At the destination port confidentially would also be difficult to maintain since Greenock merchants were well represented in the greater New England region. The *Greenock Advertiser* reported in 1805 that no fewer than fifty-eight firms in

⁶⁰Steele, p. 215.

Greenock, Glasgow, Port Glasgow and Saltcoats were dispatching vessels to Halifax, or importing consignments from there.⁶¹

William Forsyth's letter to Andrew Thomson in January 1798, while demonstrating mercantile networks, also displays the exceptional and seemingly unending duties of a dedicated agent such as Thomas Amory, who also served the Newfoundland merchant. Buried in the midst of an otherwise unexceptional business letter, Forsyth wrote, "It is with much concern we mention to you the loss of your Ship *Renown* in Boston Bay, the 17th Ulto. The Seamen were all saved, but Capt[.] Burns unfortunately stayed too long in the Ship & was lost." The placement of such disastrous news following routine business matters jars the modern reader. Forsyth, however, had several issues to convey to his correspondent, all of which were important to Thomson's commercial well-being in their own way. Moreover, ship wrecks, while often tragic, were not uncommon events in ports on the Atlantic. Forsyth continued his letter, "Mr. Amory writes us that he hoped part of the Cargo, & of the Ships materials would be saved. He wrote us at 3 O'C. on the morning after, at which time he was setting out to go to the place where the accident happened."⁶² Amory

⁶¹Macmillan, "The 'New Men' in Action," p. 73.

⁶²William Forsyth to Andrew Thomson & Co., Newfoundland, January 2, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

most likely found an opportunity to relay news of the mishap via one of the many ships which plied the leg between Boston and Halifax on a frequent basis. From there, Amory relied upon the Halifax merchant to convey the information north. In this instance Amory reciprocated a sense of trust in Forsyth, whom he knew to be conscientious, at the same time that the agent relied upon the working relationship between the two Maritime merchants.

The duties of Robert Livie in London resemble those to Thomas Amory, although possibly on a grander scale. Occupying a central location in London, Livie was well-placed to service Forsyth's metropolitan needs. The convenience of, or even need for, a London-based agent remained constant for North American merchants well into the nineteenth century. Many of the services provided were financial in nature but, like Amory, Livie performed a host of activities involving all aspects of overseas trade. In December 1796, Forsyth troubled Livie "with an order for some stationary[.] [P]lease send it to Lukyn & Eindbolt St[.] Paul['']s Church Yard, & cause them [to] have the articles ready to ship in the first vessel for this place in the spring." Likewise, Livie was to procure, on good terms, "some Watches & other small articles for Mr. Benj. Etter," which also were to be sent by the first vessel sailing for Halifax. By the same vessel, the *Hope*, Forsyth had shipped a quantity of furs and pelts which Livie was to sell at "the best advantage & pass

the Nett proceeds to the Credit of H.R. & Co."⁶³ As portrayed by this letter, agents on both sides of the Atlantic provided basic commercial services for their clients. Livie was instructed to both dispose of a cargo as well as begin the process of assembling a new one, in anticipation of the spring sailings. Located in the imperial commercial center, Livie had access to both ready markets for colonial resources such as furs as well as access to every imaginable good, at competitive prices. Forsyth acknowledged this ready availability of manufactures when he ordered several small items for Benjamin Etter of Halifax, who, in turn, had utilized the merchant's commercial links to the metropole to procure the desired goods. Atlantic merchants in the eighteenth century participated in and promoted the burgeoning consumer revolution made possible, in part, by Great Britain's expanding empire.⁶⁴ Merchants in the colonies - and significantly, the new United States - served as the conduits which supplied North American consumers with fashionable British goods. London agents played a crucial role in helping American merchants to meet these demands. In

⁶³William Forsyth to Robert Livie & Co., London, December 10, 1796, NSARM, MG 3/150.

⁶⁴For discussions of the consumer revolution see, T. H. Breen, "'Baubles of Britain': The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century." *Past and Present* 119 (May 1988); and T. H. Breen, "An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690-1776," *Journal of British Studies* 25 (October 1986).

Forsyth's case, Livie helped the merchant to obtain specialty items for his favored clients. In the above letter, Forsyth wrote, "We want for our Commissary General, 40 Boxes [of the] best London Mould Candles 4 - to be shiped in the Spring[,] marked G."⁶⁵ The Halifax merchant always took care to provide services for the military bureaucracy, who, after all, controlled his lucrative naval contract. Here he was aided by the London agent in procuring candles, which were ever in short supply in Nova Scotia.

Attention to ships and their cargoes constituted one of the agent's most important tasks, since a successful or profitable voyage depended upon economical use of the vessel. William Forsyth wrote to Livie in September 1797 regarding two ships which were soon to arrive in England. "The *Britannia* stops at Portsmouth & the *America* at Plymouth, where we trust their cargoes will be received, as it is attended with great expence to move such ships from one port to another."⁶⁶ At the time, Forsyth did not request any specific assistance in handling the vessels. Instead, he appears to have been updating the agent on the vessel's anticipated arrival in case problems arose later. Such

⁶⁵William Forsyth to Robert Livie & Co., London, December 10, 1796, NSARM, MG 3/150.

⁶⁶William Forsyth to Robert Livie & Co., London, September 17, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

advance notification would allow the London agent to keep an eye out or an ear cocked for information concerning the ships. The following August, Forsyth again forwarded advance knowledge of the *America's* voyage. "The *America* has a fine Cargo on board[.] We wished her to be convoyed to the Downs, but we fear Capt[.] Lechmore will stop at Spithead & leave the *America* to be convoyed round by a small Ship. How soon you hear of her arrival you will please take measures to have her immediately convy'd round to Woolwich, where we have reason to expect a favourable Survey."⁶⁷ The agent was to intercede in the handling of the vessel in the case that the captain failed to follow through with the merchant's original instructions. The role of shipping will be discussed in greater detail below, however, as with the correspondence to Thomas Amory, these letters illustrate the range of an agent's responsibilities. At the same time, the letters illustrate the agent's need for access to information, since Livie would need to keep abreast of ships arriving in various ports.

Just as the merchant was forced to rely on agents, fellow merchants and captains, the agent himself had to work through various persons involved in shipping and transatlantic trades, such as suppliers. Not surprisingly, the system did not always work smoothly. In August 1797

⁶⁷William Forsyth to Robert Livie & Co., London, August 15, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

Forsyth complained to Livie of the late arrival of a shipment. "The *Neried* arrived the 4th Inst. [T]he goods are not yet landed. The lines, twine & nets cannot be sold before next Spring when they will in all probability fall 50 pr Ct. We cannot understand how goods charged in January at Bredport should not be shipped in London before April."⁶⁸

Forsyth did not blame Livie for the delay nor, apparently, did he expect the agent to take direct action. Yet, presumably, the agent would utilize the information in making future purchases. Forsyth's irritation provides a sense of mercantile expectations regarding reasonable timeframes for the delivery of transatlantic shipments. Clearly, the lag between the time Forsyth was charged for the goods in January and the moment they were shipped in April, struck the merchant as unacceptable. As shown in the letters above, Forsyth understood the necessity of waiting for the spring departures from Britain, although he apparently had reason to hope that these goods would arrive in time for the fishing season. His frustration stemmed, in part, from the likely discount the goods would face when they finally reached next year's market. More significantly, the merchant now had liquid capital tied up in goods which could not be sold before the next fishing season.

Forsyth himself performed activities associated with the

⁶⁸William Forsyth to Robert Livie & Co., London, August 12, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

role of a commissioned merchant, although the precise nature of the financial arrangement is not readily apparent, in all circumstances. In his dealings with certain correspondents, it becomes clear that Forsyth received payment for his services. On the other hand, for all the services rendered Andrew Thomson of Newfoundland as well as Lester and Morrogh of Quebec, there is no evidence of a commission, making it difficult to define the commercial relationship. Forsyth seems to have had a partnership or association - similar in style to those of the London Associates described by Hancock - with Laurence Kavanagh of Arichat on Cape Breton island. In November 1796, Forsyth sent the *Lucy*, under Captain Robertson, north to Arichat to collect "a Cargo of Merchbt1 [merchantable] Codfish on your & our joint account. Having your assurance that they will be of the first quality, we shall say nothing on that subject. We will allow you Eighteen Shillings Currency pr quintal, which is fully higher than we could have purchased for here[.] & put the one half to our Credit on receipt of the Bills of Lading."⁶⁹ In this particular commercial alliance, Kavanagh attended to procuring the necessary cargoes of fish from local fisherman and merchants, before dispatching the vessel, typically provided by Forsyth. The Halifax merchant, for his part,

⁶⁹Merchantable is defined as "marketable". A quintal denotes a hundredweight or 100 pounds in the United States. William Forsyth to Laurence Kavanagh, Arichat, November, 1796, NSARM, MG 3/150.

determined the prospective market and often saw to the selling of the cargoes, at which time he credited Kavanagh's account. Forsyth had a choice of markets, obviously, with some better than others. At the time he wrote to Kavanagh, he had not decided where to ship the cargo since the international political scene, which had a decisive influence on the merchant's choice, remained unstable. The prospect of peace with Spain did not appear sanguine, making war with that country seem inevitable. "Both powers were taking each other's Vessels when the packet sailed [from Great Britain]. If the French are successful it is feared that Portugal will be obliged to shut its port against us. In this situation our friends recommend send[ing] our fish to Boston[,] without we should receive more favorable accounts from Europe."⁷⁰

Forsyth had narrowed his prospective markets down to two sites, Portugal - being his first choice - and Boston, if necessary. He was awaiting further information before making a final decision. First, he hoped to receive later news regarding the situation in Europe, all the while hoping that the prized Portuguese ports would remain safe. Secondly, he sought information on the current price of fish in Boston, which Amory could provide. Failing additional instructions, Captain Robertson had been ordered to return the *Lucy* to Halifax from Arichat, before sailing for the ultimate

⁷⁰Ibid.

destination.

For Forsyth, this venture required that he provide the vessel, procure insurance for the cargo and presumably the ship, coordinate and interpret information from various locales, choose the market and arrange for selling the fish. The previous month, Forsyth had disposed of cargoes on Kavanagh's account. "Michl. Bourdrot delivered us One Hundred & ten quintals W. India fish, & Victoire Ferria Two hundred & ten quintals, both which parcels we have sold at 16/pr quintal. We have paid both their freights & charged the amount to your debit."⁷¹ Both letters portray the responsibilities incumbent upon Forsyth in this partnership. While we do not have a detailed account of Kavanagh's duties, it seems reasonable to assume they were equally as involved. Kavanagh benefited, through this relationship, by having a correspondent positioned in the Maritime center of Halifax, who was also connected to the wider Atlantic trading realm.

The two letters which follow, addressed to William Postlethwaite of Grenada, provide representative examples of Forsyth's responsibilities as well as his talents as a commissioned merchant. In the first letter, the Halifax merchant apologized that their first commercial transaction had not fared well. At the time of writing, Forsyth doubted whether he would be able to complete the sell of

⁷¹William Forsyth to Laurence Kavanagh, Arichat, October 10, 1796, NSARM, MG 3/150.

Postlethwaite's goods in Halifax nor would he be able to assemble the desired return cargo. "We have sold the Coffee by the *Sarah* and the greater part of the Molasses, but have not yet been able to dispose of a single Cask of the Rum." Given current market conditions, the rum would have sold only at a price greatly under cost and charges. "As you recommended our Keeping it on hand if there was prospect of its rising, we were hopeful that might be the case, as there was then an appearance of the war continuing. Since that time several parcels of Rum have dropt in from the W. Indies which have glutted the market, & as there is now an appearance of peace taking place soon we are puzzled how to act."⁷² This incident graphically demonstrates the risks of storing goods in anticipation of better markets. When these did not materialize, the owner assumed the additional costs of storage, to no advantage. Merchants such as the London Associate, Alexander Grant, discouraged his West Indian clients from the practice for this very reason. Forsyth, in marketing his own goods, also seemed to frown on storing goods, unless unavoidable.⁷³

⁷²William Forsyth to William Postlethwaite, Grenada, August 7, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

⁷³In December 1796 Forsyth shipped, by the *Lucy*, 2000 Quintals of "Prime fish" to Thomas Amory in Boston. In the instructions the merchant specified, "It is our wish that the fish be sold immediately & without storing." William Forsyth to Thomas Amory, Boston, December 15, 1796, NSARM,, MG 3/150. A later cargo of cod fish shipped to Amory included

Continuing the letter, Forsyth broached the delicate issue regarding control over the cargo. "Had it been left in our option, either to take out the cargo here or send it to another port, we should have forwarded the *Sarah* to NewfdLand where we are of [the] opinion the cargo would have answered better, & fish could have been procured on lower terms[.] But we had no alternative."⁷⁴ According to Forsyth's assessment of the situation, Postlethwaite would have gained from transferring more control of the cargo over to the commissioned merchant, who better understood the northern markets. But this was always a difficult decision and a risk, which Forsyth understood and appreciated. Lacking this flexibility, however, Forsyth was limited in his ability to meet Postlethwaite's requests.

The *Sarah* once again sailed north from Grenada in 1797, arriving in Halifax in November. On this occasion, however, the ship was initially destined for Newfoundland, suggesting that Postlethwaite had heeded Forsyth's earlier recommendations. The *Sarah* had encountered inclement weather during the voyage, causing the Captain to sail for Halifax

similar directions. "We wish the fish to be sold from the Vessel to avoid the expence of storing." William Forsyth to Thomas Amory, Boston, December 9, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

⁷⁴William Forsyth to William Postlethwaite, Grenada, August 7, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

rather than continuing on to Newfoundland. Once in Halifax, Captain Barrow objected to proceeding north, and since Forsyth "had a prospect of disposing of the Cargo," he did not force the issue. Still, Forsyth would have difficulties in disposing of the *Sarah's* goods. "The old Rum would sell for no more than the new. Strength & not age makes Rum of value here. People who keep Grog Shops are the principal purchasers of Rum, and that [which] will bear [the] most water is most saleable[.] Provide[d] it has no bad taste[,], fine flavour is not looked for, it being used only by the lower orders."⁷⁵ Moreover, "the Salt you sent was very bad, & the measure short[.] A Wine pipe could not possibly contain 23 Bushels[.] [A] Winchester bushel holds more than 8 Gallons[.] Salt will never bear the expence of Casks." Once again, Forsyth called upon his expertise to instruct a newcomer into the realities of Martime market conditions. Forsyth also highlights the difficulties arising in Atlantic trade from the lack of standardized measurements. As a postscript, Forsyth recommended that, in the future, the Grenada merchant ship only good rum and molasses. Since there was a large quantity of prize Havana sugar in Halifax at the moment, the price of sugar would not be encouraging from Postlethwaite's perspective. Next, Forsyth addressed his inability to provide the return cargo sought by

⁷⁵William Forsyth to William Postlethwaite, Grenada, January 12, 1798, NSARM,, MG 3/150.

Postlethwaite. "Having no previous notice, we could not adhere more closely to your order than we have done in this shipment. Such a cargo as you ordered could not be procured without being purposely prepared in the summer, & even then the quantity of Scalefish could not be had."⁷⁶ This last comment reinforces the impression that William Postlethwaite was unfamiliar with the northern markets in terms of both selling his goods there and in recognizing the seasonal availability of cargoes.

Up to this point in the letter, Forsyth's actions and recommendations represent standard fare for commissioned merchants. A much graver issue, to Forsyth's mind, came from the suitability of the brig's Captain. "We are sorry to inform you that the man you have appointed Master of the *Sarah* is totally unfit for the charge, having no authority over his people, & being addicted to liquor. We never were witnesses of such carelessness & inattention in the management of a vessel, & had we been possessed of authority from you, we should have long since dismissed both Master & Mate."⁷⁷ These concerns underscore the complex and crucial role of a commissioned merchant and/or agent. The situation presented Forsyth with a dilemma. Attuned as he was to the difficulties and expenses of shipping, he regretted leaving

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid.

Captain Barrow in command of the vessel. Yet the merchant did not have the necessary power from the owner to relieve the Master. The gravity of the issue becomes clear from Forsyth's next statement. "Indeed we are very doubtfull if we shall be able to get the vessel out of the harbour yet, without turning Barrow off & appointing another Master."⁷⁸ Even though he lacked the official authority of the owner, Forsyth was contemplating placing the vessel under the command of a new Master. As a fellow merchant, Forsyth based his actions on his concern for the owner's interests, including the vessel and cargo. This instance is suggestive of a mercantile culture within the Atlantic trade world, in which colleagues understood and protected one another's property and interests.

The commercial arrangement with Captain Alexander Cunningham of Grenada appears to have been a straightforward instance of Forsyth's services as a commissioned merchant. The eventual terms of this transaction, however, provide a better understanding of the actual role. Cunningham had left a quantity of rum with Forsyth to be sold in Halifax. In January 1798, at the same time that he was conveying his concerns to William Postlethwaite, Forsyth wrote to Cunningham. Along with the letter, the merchant enclosed a current account of sales

⁷⁸Ibid.

which showed a balance in Forsyth's favor of "£96.10.3 this Currency or £86.17.3 Sterling, which you will please to pay to our friends Messrs Cruden [,] Pollard & Stewart."⁷⁹ In setting out his expectations, Forsyth reveals the complexity involved in his role as a commissioned merchant. "We have charged no commission on the Sales, nor Interest on the money we have lain so long out of, for a great part of the rum is not paid for yet[.] [A]s the money was advanced merely to oblige you, we expect you will on receipt of this pay the balance due us, to our said friends."⁸⁰ This passage appears to raise a number of speculations and/or inconsistencies. Apparently, Forsyth had advanced Cunningham credit which was to be re-paid, at least in part, through the sale of the rum. At this later date, Forsyth had determined not to charge a commission since much of the rum had not sold. In so doing, Forsyth would forfeit any fee for his services. More importantly, Forsyth also forfeited the opportunity to charge

⁷⁹William Forsyth to Captain Alexander Cunningham, Grenada, January 15, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150. Forsyth's remarks highlights the need for Atlantic merchants to calculate the value of the myriad currencies and bills of exchange circulating through the imperial and extra-imperial trade. The currencies of the West Indies, especially the Windward Islands, could be especially problematic. Yet, as shown by Forsyth, merchants became adroit in the practice. For a discussion of Atlantic currencies see John J. McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America, 1600-1775: A Handbook* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978).

⁸⁰William Forsyth to Captain Alexander Cunningham, Grenada, January 15, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

interest on the monies he had advanced to Cunningham, even though that amount could have been more profitably invested elsewhere. There are a range of possibilities behind Forsyth's largesse. It may be simply a matter of courtesy to Cunningham, a ship captain with whom Forsyth had developed a working and/or social relationship. Forsyth may have been obliging the merchant house, Cruden, Pollard and Stewart, through his consideration to the captain. This may be an instance of the famous Scottish kinsmanship operating to serve its far-flung members. Or, it may have been an example of the intimate workings of a mercantile community, which was broad enough and flexible enough to incorporate all of these explanations. A passage in a letter to Fraser and Thom of Miramichie may shed light on the situation. Forsyth wrote, "We will charge no commission on Sales of Fish & timber made for you If the proceeds go in payment of goods sent you from our own Stores."⁸¹ Thus, the commission fee would be waved so long as the proceeds from the sale were used to purchase goods from Forsyth, which in itself would generate profits. Here Forsyth evidences the reciprocal nature of commerce as seen through the activities of agents and commissioned merchants. These transactions also suggest a sense of mercantile reciprocity at play in the Anglo-American Atlantic trade realm.

⁸¹William Forsyth to Messrs Fraser & Thom, Miramichie, February 20, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

This culture of reciprocity played a significant role in the commercial relations between individual merchants. It can be seen in numerous incidents recorded in Forsyth's letters to his agent Thomas Amory as well as to the merchant houses of Lester and Morrogh in Quebec and Andrew Thomson and Company in Newfoundland. A typical example occurred when the British frigate *Ceres* hauled in two vessels registered in Boston and bound for Havana. A number of the "gentlemen" on board the vessels applied to Forsyth and from them he learned that Amory had property on board one of the ships. "We will take care & look after your property."⁸² The letterbook portrays a greater level of mutuality between Forsyth and the two merchant houses which makes the precise commercial understanding amongst these men more difficult to ascertain. Andrew Thomson and Company, a Greenock-based firm, maintained several branches throughout Newfoundland. David Macmillan labeled the firm Forsyth's "Newfoundland agents," with the term *agent* encompassing the services of a commissioned merchant house.⁸³ The letterbook itself does not notate any specifics regarding the charging or receipt of commissions, leaving us to guess at which services warranted such. What the correspondence does suggest is an exchange of services

⁸²William Forsyth to Thomas Amory, Boston, October 6, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

⁸³Macmillan, "The 'New Men' in Action," p. 73.

between two mercantile firms, each of which was strategically, financially and commercially positioned to benefit one another. Forsyth wrote to Andrew Thomson in August 1797 assuring the firm of his willingness to comply with their requests. "Brine has sold his fish at 4 dollars pr[.] quintal & Barns talks of going up the country to purchase some Cattle. Should they want our assistance either pecuniary or other, it will be afforded them in compliance with your desire."⁸⁴ From the letter it appears that Thomson had applied to Forsyth at some earlier date regarding the two men. Should Brine and Barns require aid, they were to turn to the Halifax merchant who had knowledge of and contacts in the region along the wherewithal to provide money, if necessary.

When opportunities arose, Forsyth called upon Thomson to repay, in kind. Lieutenant General Ogilvie assumed the office of Governor of the Counsel, traveling to Cape Breton in May 1798. Ogilvie hoped to utilize Forsyth's commercial contacts by ordering port wine for himself through Thomson. The Halifax merchant accordingly wrote to Newfoundland to inform Thomson of the business. "We are under obligations to the General & will be glad [if] you take the trouble of any business he wants done at St. John[.] [T]he payt. may

⁸⁴William Forsyth to Andrew Thomson & Co., Newfoundland, August 9, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

be made thro' us or in any other way he wishes it."⁸⁵ Once again, Forsyth called upon the services of fellow merchants/agents to accommodate his clients. In both of these instances, the reciprocity was based upon commercial courtesies extended to fellow merchants who were conveniently placed geographically and financially to assist. In neither example is there evidence, one way or the other, regarding the charging or receipt of a commission.

The following incident not only demonstrates the high-level of mutuality within the Maritime mercantile community, but also underscores the pragmatic commercial necessities behind it. In late spring 1798, Thomson had shipped a large quantity of fish to Halifax for Forsyth to sell. Unfortunately for the Newfoundland firm, the fish reached a "very bad market." After trying "everyone" involved in the West Indies trade, Forsyth finally contracted with Messrs Lyon and Emslie to take approximately 1,000 quintals of the fish "or as much as their schooner can carry." This agreement, however, came with attachments. "When we prevailed on Lyon & Emslie to take the fish, we promised to relieve them of 50,000 [?] Lumber which they had contracted with Fraser & Thom for, at Miramichi."⁸⁶ These negotiations

⁸⁵William Forsyth to Andrew Thomson & Co., Newfoundland, May 1, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

⁸⁶William Forsyth to Andrew Thomson & Co., Newfoundland, May 18, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

assume a circuitous aura as the major trading firms of the Maritime region transferred commodities amongst themselves. Lyon and Emslie were willing to take Thomson's fish under the condition that he contract for a portion of the lumber that the partnership had purchased from Fraser and Thom in Miramichie. In the process, Forsyth had entered into a bargain which placed his professional reputation on the line in Thomson's behalf. Thus, the latter merchant was expected to honor the transaction. "When you send there [Miramichie] for a Cargo of Lumber, let this quantity be considered in it, that we may not be censur'd for the transaction."⁸⁷ The marketing of one load of seemingly-lowly fish entailed a complex multilateral affair, which ultimately benefitted the owner, but at a price. At one level, these men had kept commerce itself in motion through the routine give-and-take of negotiation. From a broader perspective, these arbitrations illuminate the complex nature of the day-to-day Atlantic trade realm.

Agents and commissioned merchants of the eighteenth century executed an extraordinary array of services for their clients. In part, this reflected changing expectations on the part of the clientele. As a result, merchants and agents increasingly performed functions which may be defined as "human concerns" for their customers. According to David

⁸⁷Ibid.

Hancock, this rise in an "intimate social relationship" between the commissioned merchant or agent and his client was new to the eighteenth century. For example, the Associates attended to the needs of friends and relatives of their clients who visited the City; they handled legal services such as legacies; and provided their clients with fashionable goods.⁸⁸ A representative example of such attention can be seen through an order sent to Livie to purchase consumer goods for Forsyth's family and friends, which the London agent was well-placed to fill. Thus, in December 1796 Forsyth voiced his appreciation for the "cottons" recently sent by Livie. "[T]he Ladies are much obliged to you for taking the trouble of choosing them."⁸⁹ Similarly, Andrew Thomson frequently was in a position to assist Forsyth by virtue of his geographical locale. "Capt[.] Henry Jacobs left with some person at St. John's two miniature pictures set in gold[.] [W]e will thank you to endeavour to procure them, & send them to us by the first safe conveyance."⁹⁰ These two examples represent mundane examples of professional courtesies which had come to be expected of commissioned

⁸⁸Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, pp. 128-129.

⁸⁹William Forsyth to Robert Livie, London, December 20, 1796, NSARM, MG 3/150

⁹⁰William Forsyth to Andrew Thomson & Co., Newfoundland, July 14, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150

agents by the end of the eighteenth century.

Paternalism and the Merchant Community

This chapter now returns to a focus on the inner workings of a mercantile community via specific actions by commissioned merchants and agents. Here, I wish to explore the ways in which the merchant community employed and practiced modes of paternalism. While notions of paternalism speak to the broader ideology of the merchant community, they also connect commercial networks at the level of human concern. The sense of paternalism exemplified in the incidents related here was imbued with not only - or even primarily - notions of gender, but also with ideas of class and hierarchy. At the time of the American Revolution, British society still adhered closely to a hierarchical and paternalistic mentality which required provision for women and children as well as the poor.⁹¹ The workings of hierarchy would have been complex and problematic within an anomalous entity such as the Atlantic merchant community with its varying and fluid levels of stratification.

⁹¹Janice Potter, "Patriarchy and Paternalism: The Case of the Eastern Ontario Loyalist Women," in *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History*, 3rd ed., ed. Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1997), pp. 62-63.; also see Janice Potter, *The Liberty We Seek: Loyalist Ideology in Colonial New York and Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

The commercial communities of both Great Britain and North America grew to maturity, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in a social climate characterized by hierarchy and paternalism. Any number of factors emerged over the course of the eighteenth century to challenge individuals' roles within these constructs, including those emanating from the merchant community itself. As Doerflinger has emphasized, wealthy American merchants were conscious of their loss of power and prestige to English merchant houses who undercut the Americans' ability to provide credit to the local community. In so doing, the overseas merchant houses challenged the commercial authority and stature of the colonial - and later United States - merchants.⁹² This same concern arose, in the pre-Revolutionary years, amongst the Virginia planters. According to Marc Egnal and Joseph Ernst, the rise of the great Glasgow tobacco houses in Virginia between 1745 and 1775 challenged the economic sovereignty of the resident planter elites. The Scottish factors' habit of dealing directly with the small tobacco producers usurped that role from the planter elite, who previously had handled these accounts. In the process, the Scots threatened the planters' sense of sovereignty, economic and otherwise. At the same time, similar to the well-to-do merchants in Philadelphia, the intervention of the Scots in Virginia

⁹²Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, pp. 171-173.

challenged the social supremacy of the planters and, thus, their paternal role.⁹³

The first incident to be described here began with Andrew Thomson in an attempt to assist a ship owner, Michael Mara, yet eventually involved both William Forsyth and Thomas Amory. While the exact connection between Thomson and Mara is unknown, the involvement of Forsyth and Amory stems from their professional association with Thomson. Thomson had forwarded papers authorizing Forsyth to claim a portion of the schooner *Endeavour* on behalf of Mara. The vessel had indeed entered the harbor at Halifax, but had subsequently sailed for Boston before Forsyth could act; thus, the need to involve Amory. The rationale behind Thomson's request becomes apparent in Forsyth's letter to Boston. "Mara is represented as a poor man, & we should be glad if something could be done for him." Forsyth, in turn, had inclosed the necessary documents for Amory and concluded the letter in the hopes that the agent might "be able to do something with them."⁹⁴ This episode offers a closer examination of the

⁹³Marc Egnal and Joseph A Ernst, "An Economic Interpretation of the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* (January, 1972). This idea is much more fully developed in Breen, *Tobacco Culture*. Also see the discussion of commerce in Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), pp. 325-346 *passim*.

⁹⁴William Forsyth to Thomas C. Amory, Boston, August 3, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150

workings and culture of a merchant community. While, the precise relationship between Thomson and Mara can only be hinted at, is it noteworthy that Mara is described as a "poor man", which is distinctly different in mercantile parlance from that of a fellow merchant who had entered hard times. The scenario resembles any number of examples in which ship captains or traders sold their only viable property, their vessels, in a bid to raise capital. As a local ship owner in Newfoundland, Mara would have been aware of Thomson's financial and commercial prowess. Moreover, Mara also would have understood the responsibilities incumbent upon Thomson within a hierarchical and paternalistic society. As a poor man, applying to a wealthy merchant, Mara may have been availing himself of a broad sense of paternalism inherent within a hierarchical Anglo-American society and the merchant community derived from that culture. We can only surmise what Mara owed Thomson in return.

A mixture of motives, ranging from personal to paternalistic, guided William Forsyth in his handling of the affairs of the widow Mrs. Holmes. Simultaneously, the steps taken to settle the estate reveal the growing interplay between the commercial, financial and legal realms on both sides of the Atlantic. At the time of his death, Captain B. N. Holmes appears to have been in command of a brig belonging to Forsyth, the *Industry*. In what appears to be a rare incident of intrigue in the letterbook, Forsyth voiced his

misgivings to Livie over actions taken in London regarding the Holmes' estate. "The matter being settled, it is too late to make any observations on it, only we cannot help remarking that T. Folger, having been the avowed enemy of Holmes & his family, was a very improper person to apply to. [B]ut this you could not know." The correspondence leaves us to speculate as to the relationship between Holmes and Folger, as well as to the latter's official capacity. Forsyth's own financial interests become clear from the subsequent remarks. "We think he [Folger] has under valued the *Industry*. As Holmes's estate owes us about the sum on your hands you will please to retain it till we adopt some means of securing it. It may be well not to mention that you hold the money in case of demands from other quarters."⁹⁵

Forsyth, thus, moved as quickly and discretely as possible to secure his own resources from further claims on the estate.

In March 1798, Forsyth again wrote to the agent in London. "In a separate cover we send you a certificate from the Judge of the Court of Probate of Wills, that Mrs. Holmes is the sole Adminstratix to her late Husband." This power, then, worked to Forsyth's benefit as he moved to recoup his property. "Under the same cover we send you a power of attorney signed by Mrs. Holmes, to be signed by your Mr. Livie Senr, authorising our correspondent[,] Mr. William

⁹⁵William Forsyth to Robert Livie, London, November 18, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

Harrington of the Island of Antigua[,] to receive from the Register of the Court of Admiralty at St. Vincents what remains in his hands from the Sale of the unfortunate Brig *Industry* & Cargo."⁹⁶ The incidents related thus far serve to emphasize Forsyth's stake in the *Industry*, as well as in the estate of B. N. Holmes. As the balance of the letter reflects, however, the relationship between Forsyth and Mrs. Holmes became symbiotic. For his part, Forsyth both required and benefited from Holmes' power of executorship. At the same time, he provided crucial assistance to the widow through his financial expertise and commercial networks. As already shown, it had become increasingly common by the late eighteenth century for merchants to assume legal duties for their clients. This signalled, at least minimally, the growing expectations on the part of clients which were becoming codified into customs. In this instance, Forsyth saw to the handling and transmittal of the necessary legal documents. Mrs. Holmes' reliance on Forsyth recognized the merchant's commercial knowledge which, of necessity, now included that of law and finances. Several institutions matured and transformed during the frenetic eighteenth century and the legal system was one of these. Where

⁹⁶This last clause hints at the possibility that the *Industry* and its master may have fallen victim to privateers, since the Admiralty was in possession of funds from the sale of the vessel and its cargo. William Forsyth to Messrs Robert Livie & Co., London, March 8, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

seventeenth-century American courts were concerned with the entire gamut of community affairs, by the next century the legal system concentrated evermore on issues associated with the vast networks of credit. This shift profoundly altered the complexion of the courts from institutions that served and processed all members of the community, including women, to those that focused primarily on propertied men involved in commerce. At the same time that the legal population itself narrowed, the actual volume of courtroom traffic grew exponentially.⁹⁷

The value of Forsyth's commercial experience, both financial and professional, becomes apparent through later statements. When writing to Robert Livie in March, Forsyth enclosed Holmes' bills of exchange "on your Mr. Livie Senr. pr £266.3.8 Stg[.] being the balance of acco[un]t Currt betwixt her decease[d] Husband and Mr. Livie."⁹⁸ At this stage, Forsyth called upon his commercial ties to the Livies to assist Mrs. Holmes in collecting the monies owed to her deceased husband's estate. In so doing, he spoke both for and through the widow. "Mrs. Holmes expects that as so large a sum is charged for Interest in the acco[un]t Currt., you will have no objections to allow her interest for the Balance

⁹⁷Dayton, pp. 8-9

⁹⁸William Forsyth to Messrs Livie & Co., London, March 8, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150

during the time it has been in your hands." Forsyth added his assurance that "her situation requires it."⁹⁹ Once Robert Livie, Senior had determined the amount of interest to be allowed, he was to pass the funds to the credit of Hunter and Robertson. The geographical and financial complexities of the estate reflect, to some degree, Captain Holmes' involvement in an Atlantic sphere, with agents and monies housed in London. Under the circumstances, Mrs. Holmes greatly benefited from the services of a transatlantic merchant, entrenched within this commercial realm.

The letters detailed above portray a degree of mutuality between Mrs. Holmes and Forsyth as they moved to settle the estate. Holmes held the power of executor over the estate; however, Forsyth possessed the all-important expertise, contacts and information necessary to prosecute the executorship. The letter written to Livie in December 1797 introduces a more classically paternalistic air as Forsyth, along with other male members of the Halifax community, attempted to assist Mrs. Holmes. "Some of the Friends of the late Mr. Holmes wish to do something for his Widow, who is left with four Girls, in rather a destitute situation. They wish her to open a Millinary Shop, as she is well calculated

⁹⁹Ibid.

for it."¹⁰⁰ In accordance with this design, Forsyth inclosed an order for what were deemed the appropriate goods, to be shipped to Halifax. The letter included the names of a number of merchant houses which Forsyth had determined would probably offer the best terms. The goods were to "be shipt at a Credit of 12 Mo. & if paid sooner the Interest to be allowed. The purchaser to have the drawback, without which several of the articles would come too high." Forsyth's instructions reveal his expertise as a commercial contact in this situation. Stationed in Halifax, the merchant was able to call upon an agent in London. Forsyth also had inside knowledge as to where to turn to purchase the required goods, economically. Moreover, he understood the practices surrounding commercial credit. Livie was to insist upon a set of stipulations in the application of the interest, which Forsyth's wording suggests might not be offered otherwise. Yet, Forsyth realized that without this advantage many of the goods would ultimately prove to be too expensive, underscoring his knowledge of the Halifax market. Through the services of Forsyth, Mrs. Holmes was able to avail herself of a well-developed commercial network extending from Halifax to London. This, in turn, enabled her to access the best terms on both prices and credit, which would be sorely needed for her to make a success of a millinery shop in

¹⁰⁰William Forsyth to Messrs Robert Livie & Co., London, December 23, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

Halifax.

Still, a more distinctly paternalistic dialogue emerges from within Forsyth's text. The letter does not reveal Mrs. Holmes' own inclinations in regards to opening a shop; although within two weeks of this letter, Mrs. Holmes herself submitted an order to Livie for goods, through Forsyth.¹⁰¹ Moreover, the description of the widow as "well calculated" to business bespeaks confidence in her capabilities in the endeavor. And yet, Forsyth frames the situation as a desire on the part of "Friends of the late Mr. Holmes" to help "his Widow." Here Mrs. Holmes is subsumed within the identity of her late husband, Captain Holmes - indeed, as she remains to us, who do not know her maiden name. Since the unknown individuals were identified as friends of Mr. Holmes it may be inferred that most - if not all - were men. This action displays at least a limited recognition that the welfare of Mrs. Holmes now rested on the male associates of Captain Holmes. Such a realization bespeaks a paternalism in which male members of a community protected the deserving poor, such as widows and children; and with four dependent daughters, Mrs. Holmes is a classic representation of such need. That Mrs. Holmes would be situated in a millinery shop reflects the gender and class expectations of the proper role of women within commerce. In fulfillment of a paternalistic

¹⁰¹William Forsyth to Messrs Robert Livie & Co., London, January 6, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

ideology of mutual responsibilities, Mrs. Holmes would be expected to operate the shop, most likely with the assistance of her daughters.

Forsyth had involved Hunter and Robertson in the small enterprise through an order for textiles, which he notated in writing to Livie. "We desired our friends to send us in the Spring 100 pr [?] Russia Duck, to be shipt from London."¹⁰² Nonetheless, Forsyth carefully specified that "[t]he goods for Mrs. Holmes are not to be charged in H.R. & Cos. account, we will remit for them to yourselves." That Forsyth would settle the invoice from his accounts suggests that the assistance to Mrs. Holmes was a community affair based upon a local paternalism, designed both to protect the widow and the community itself.

In both episodes, first between Thomson and Mara and then between Forsyth and Holmes, the merchants stepped into provide services to members encompassed within the broad rubric of the mercantile community. These men possessed qualities and attributes necessary to maneuver within a commercialized world. Both merchants had extensive contacts in the Maritime Provinces as well as throughout the Atlantic. Moreover, they moved comfortably and knowingly through

¹⁰²At the same time, Forsyth instructed Livie, "if any of this article [duck cloth] is to be sold a/ public Sale you might purchase for us 200 pr [?] and ship it along with our goods in the Spring." William Forsyth to Messrs Robert Livie & Co., London, December 23, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

financial and legal realms. Indeed, these worlds were in a process of adapting to their needs, the terms of commerce. While these two incidents emphasize the personal nature of Forsyth's letterbook and, more broadly, mercantile services, they also are representative of the commercial dealings described above. Forsyth's daily business demonstrates the multilateral complexion of trade conducted across the broad and complex expanse of the Atlantic, where trusted contacts and networks were critical. Merchants relied upon one another for resources (material and financial), markets, security and expertise which, by its nature, could only be procured through a merchant community. The merchant community was interdependent, supportive and functional at the same time that it was inherently competitive. In this sense, the merchant community mirrored regional, national and imperial societies which frequently balance shared needs, desires and goals against diverse and competing interests in order to endure.

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"UNPRINCIPLED MEN WHO ARE ONE DAY BRITISH SUBJECTS
AND THE NEXT CITIZENS OF THE UNITED STATES":
THE NOVA SCOTIAN MERCHANT COMMUNITY AND
COLONIAL IDENTITY FORMATION, C. 1780-1820.

VOLUME II

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Chapter 4: Nova Scotian Merchants and Their Activities

In the present critical situation of public affairs we cannot fix the destination of the *Halifax* after her arrival at Jamaica. [B]ut our wishes are these. If peace has taken place or that the negotiations are at an end & a prospect of the war continuing another campaign, in that case, the *Halifax* to be loaded with Rum for this port, applying the proceeds of the 120 Pipes Wine to the purchase of it; but if negotiations are still pending we would not wish to have a Cargo of rum shipt on our account, ... In this case therefore you will please to procure a freight for the Brig to Britain or Ireland, preferring the ports in St George's Channel, & particularly Greenock - if possible avoid London. If the Brig should not return here with a Cargo of Rum you will please to remit the proceeds of the Wine to Messrs Hunter[,] Robertson & Co. Greenock in good Bills of Exch[.]¹

In this letter to Bogel and Jopps of Jamaica, Forsyth once again attempted to ascertain market opportunities within the context of the ongoing imperial war. The *Halifax* was then en route from Madeira to Jamaica. The question became one of determining how best to employ the vessel once it had discharged its cargo. If the current political negotiations had been resolved in one fashion or another - resulting in either peace or a renewed military campaign - then the ship should return to Halifax with a cargo of rum. If the negotiations were still in process, however, Forsyth hesitated to import a cargo of rum bearing artificially high wartime freight and insurance rates, particularly since he

¹William Forsyth to Messrs Bogel & Jopps, Jamaica, January 5, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

calculated that once the campaigns ended the price would fall. Under those circumstances, Bogel and Jopps were to load the *Halifax* with freight - i.e. the cargoes of other merchants which would garner shipping fees - and send the ship to the home islands. The profits from the sale of the wine were to be remitted to Hunter and Robertson in the form of bills of exchange.

Excluding the uncertainties brought on by war, this incident exemplified a common scenario for transatlantic merchants. Assessing the best markets, keeping their ships under sail and arranging forms of payment comprised key functions of merchants such as Forsyth, in war and in peace. At the same time, the letter confirms the necessity of maintaining seasoned and energetic agents and commissioned merchants in overseas ports, for the success of the venture often times rested on their efforts. This chapter will focus on two elements introduced in the letter above - shipping and bills of exchange - to portray the day-to-day activities of Atlantic merchants. The purpose in so doing is to situate the merchant community of Nova Scotia within the broader context of an Anglo-American Atlantic. The details surrounding and demands of shipping as well as bills of exchange embodied routine, if time-consuming, functions of merchants and agents alike, and as such provide a window into the Atlantic mercantile world of the eighteenth century. Shipping in many ways constituted the backbone of Atlantic

trade while bills of exchange would appear merely as a financial instrument to facilitate that trade. Yet both served as tools to expedite the greater goal of Atlantic commerce. Moreover, both shipping and bills of exchange were complex commercial entities in and of themselves which could generate profits on their own. By the late-eighteenth century, shipping and bills of exchange reflected the maturity and sophistication of the commercial-financial Atlantic realm. Most importantly, both shipping and bills of exchange worked to develop, integrate and sustain the Anglo-American Atlantic commercial nexus. This chapter, then, seeks to illuminate the role of Nova Scotian merchants in that process through an observation of their daily activities.

Bills of Exchange

To illustrate the workings of bills of exchange during the late eighteenth century, we can create a purely fictional scenario using familiar names. In our imagined transaction, Simeon Perkins - a resident of the Nova Scotian outports - owes a debt of £100 to the law firm of Messrs Douglas and Shaw of London. Perkins possessed a number of options by which to settle his debt. He could assemble a cargo of the goods available to him, primarily fish and timber, to sell in London, using the proceeds to pay the lawyers. There were

problems with this scheme, including the most obvious factor being that these commodities were not sought by the metropole and thus would be difficult to sell there. The unpredictability of market prices would serve to compound Perkins' task of assembling an appropriate cargo. Alternately, Perkins could collect specie amounting to £100 sterling and ship it to Douglas and Shaw in London. The fact that specie was in perennially short supply in the colonies, coupled with the added expenses of shipping and insuring the money, made this plan problematic as well. From Perkins' perspective then, buying a bill of exchange would appear to be the most convenient and pragmatic approach.²

A traditional transaction involved four parties: the *drawer*, the *drawee*, the *payer* and the *payee*. The *payer* (or *buyer*) set the transaction in motion by approaching the *drawer* (or *seller*), asking that the latter's correspondent (the *drawee*) deliver a specified sum of money to the

²For the model involving bills of exchange on which my example is based, see John J. McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America, 1600-1775* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), pp. 20-22, in which he constructs a similar analogy around Benjamin Franklin and the London merchants Thistlethwayt and Jones, purveyors of kites. For more general discussions of the workings of bills of exchange see Joseph Chitty, *A Practical Treatise on Bills of Exchange, Checks on Bankers, Promissory Notes, Bankers' Cash Notes, and Bank Notes*, 10th ed. (Springfield: G & C. Merriam, 1842); Jacob Price, *Capital and Credit in British Overseas Trade: The View from the Chesapeake, 1700-1776* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980); and, Edwin J. Perkins, *American Public Finance and Financial Services, 1700-1815* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1994).

individual (*payee*) designated by the *payer*. In other words, Simeon Perkins, residing in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, needed to secure £100 sterling payable in London. To accomplish this, he would most likely need to operate through Halifax, which had direct financial ties with the metropole. Being cautious, the trader would turn to a reputable merchant with transatlantic networks, and most importantly, funds in London. In our fictitious instance, Perkins (the *payer*) would approach William Forsyth (the *drawer*) to purchase a bill of exchange. At that time, Perkins would receive several copies of the bill of exchange, known as a "set", which would be mailed to the payees upon separate opportunities, to protect against loss in the mails; the payment of any one of these bills canceled out all remaining copies. Upon receiving payment, Forsyth would instruct his correspondent, Robert Livie (the *drawee*) to pay the appropriate funds to Douglas and Shaw (the *payees*). Once the lawyers, Douglas and Shaw, received the bills of exchange they would present one of them (typically the first of exchange, or the first copy in the set) to Livie for payment. Often times, as would be the case between Forsyth and Livie, the monies that the drawer instructed the drawee to pay came from a line of credit held in the drawer's name by the drawee. In our simple example, the London funds belonged to Forsyth, who authorized Robert Livie to honor the bill (or, in essence the agreement between Perkins and Forsyth) by

remitting the £100 sterling to Douglas and Shaw.³

For all its basic simplicity the illustration detailed above nonetheless hints at the manner in which bills of exchange served to link colonial commerce to that of the metropole. Particularly in the Atlantic commercial world, bills of exchange represented one of the most expedient forms of payment. Theoretically, one bought a bill of exchange to satisfy a debt in a distant locale. During the middle ages,

³The illustration becomes even more complicated in determining how much Perkins actually paid to purchase his £100 sterling bill of exchange. During our period, the par of exchange (or commercial rate of exchange) in Nova Scotia was £111.11 Halifax currency to £100 pounds sterling. The par of exchange signified the comparative value of the moneys of account of a colony (in this instance, Nova Scotia) and England based on the price in each for the Spanish piece of eight, or peso. In these terms, £111.11 Halifax currency equaled £100 sterling, the former representing the sum we would expect Perkins to pay Forsyth for his bill. Other factors, of course, complicated the calculation of the final price. By paying the £111.11 immediately, Perkins in effect lent Forsyth this sum of money for an extended period, until such time as the bill would be remitted in London. Bills had to be paid within a certain prescribed period after they were first presented by the payee to the drawee. This period, called the usance of the bill, was largely determined by commercial and local custom. New York bills on London were normally drawn (or written) to be paid from thirty to forty days after "sight", or after first presented to (and seen by) the drawee; Virginia bills were drawn at sixty days. This variable pattern coincides with European tradition regarding bills of exchange. Moreover, some locales provided a few days grace period beyond the customary usance time. All this, plus the time required for the bill to travel across the Atlantic to London, meant that Forsyth might have the use of Perkins' money for as long as three months before actually being called upon to release his own funds. Perkins, then, could expect to benefit financially from the "loan" of his money by paying less than par for a £100 bill of exchange. The difference in Perkins' favor was viewed as a type of interest earned.

bills of exchange expedited European trade by providing a widely recognized and accepted form of payment.⁴ The European imperial powers later carried these instruments out into their respective Atlantic empires. In viewing British practice, we can distinguish between inland and overseas bills of exchange. This latter group can again be divided between foreign exchange and colonial exchange. A foreign, or European, exchange involved two different monies of account. Conversely, the colonies operated in the same currency as the home country. Thus, a colonial transaction utilizing a bill of exchange involved paying an agreed upon premium in colonial currency for the value of a certain sum in the metropolis or visa versa.⁵ Since the bills were negotiable, a number of factors worked to increase or decrease their value. Bills of exchange on London were negotiable throughout Great Britain as well as the Atlantic empire. While there was typically a demand for London bills in the British outports, the reverse was not necessarily true (i.e., that a steady demand existed in London for bills on Bristol, Liverpool, Glasgow and the like). Accordingly, a small differential normally applied in London's favor.

⁴See James Steven Rogers, *The Early History of the Law of Bills and Notes: A Study of the Origins of Anglo-American Commercial Law*. Cambridge Studies in English Legal History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁵McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America*, p. 19.

Colonial merchants were conscious of this disparity when purchasing bills. A Pennsylvanian, William Pollard, wrote in 1772, "Our excha[nge] is ruled by bills at 30 days on London but if a person wants a bill to remit to London and I can only draw on Liverpool, he will not take my bill, unless he has it lower than he can get a bill upon London for, and therefore I must either draw upon London sometimes or sell my bills lower by half or one per cent."⁶ As Pollard's commentary shows, bills of exchange on ports other than London could prove difficult to spend in the colonies and the owner would be forced to sell at a reduced price. The options for merchants, as for Pollard, were to either accept a lower price for their bills and/or regularly transact at least some business through London in order to obtain the desired bills.⁷ Also inherent within Pollard's complaint is the continuing centrality of London to the Atlantic commercial system. As was so common throughout the eighteenth century, however, metropolitan activities spawned commerce in distant locales that often took on a life of its own, connected to and at the same time independent from the metropole.

In actuality, the handling of bills of exchange was far

⁶Quoted in McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America*, p. 32.

⁷McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America*, pp. 31-32.

more complex and as such helps to bring into relief the workings of the Atlantic imperial/commercial nexus.

Throughout the Anglo-American Atlantic, bills of exchange frequently represented (and settled) either debts owed or credits earned in the metropole. Therefore, many bills of exchange on Britain traveled home before they were finally cashed out, while often serving as a means of exchange in the colonies in the interim. For example, it would not be uncommon for a tobacco planter in the Chesapeake to initiate a bill of exchange drawn in North America on his London correspondent for the estimated value of the yearly crop recently shipped homeward bound. The planter might then transfer the bill of exchange to a local merchant to settle an existing debt. The merchant could hold onto the bill until it matured, but might just as likely pass the bill to a local retailer to purchase desired goods. The retailer, at that stage, might forward the bill to the British merchant house from whom he typically procured goods, to pay off an existing balance. The British merchant house would then present the bill to the original London correspondent for payment.

The circuitous route of this one bill of exchange provides an insight into the complex world of Anglo-American Atlantic commerce. Beyond highlighting the obvious imperial linkages, the illustration shows the ways in which consumer demand in the metropole - along with the funds to finance it

- stimulated production in the colonies. The growing of such crops depended upon colonial labor - free and non-free - and thus promoted its expansion. The sale of these staple crops, and the profits they engendered, created commercial opportunities for merchants, and eventually more specialized entrepreneurs such as retailers. It was this process which helped to develop colonial commerce. The bill of exchange facilitated this activity by providing a readily available and easily transferrable circulating medium. All of this underscores the ways in which metropolitan finances undergirded economic activity in the colonies.

Simultaneously, it suggests the avenues through which those economies could mature into independent commercial entities. What is not as transparent, yet nonetheless embedded in the handling of bills of exchange, is the commercial faith bestowed upon these financial instruments and, more importantly, the merchants standing behind them. The reputations of the merchants and merchant houses involved influenced the price of bills. It happened - and by the indicators in Forsyth's correspondence, all too frequently - that bills were not honored by the individual responsible for dispensing the funds. The potential delays and commercial hassles threatened by such a situation induced many individuals to purchase their bills through reputable and financially sound mercantile firms, even at a higher price. These types of assessments, and actual commercial decisions,

served to localize the Anglo-American Atlantic world as British merchant houses were aligned with and became familiar to colonial laborers, planters, merchants and retailers. In this light, bills of exchange represented not only economic transactions, but complex social, political and imperial relationships.

The inherent advantages of bills of exchange as a medium of circulation in the empire are apparent in the discussion above. These commercial benefits, however, came at a price as the processing of the bills lent itself to numerous pitfalls causing merchants, planters, creditors and debtors any number of headaches. One of the most common aggravations involved with bills of exchange occurred when the drawee either could not or would not honor the bill of exchange, in other words refused to dispense the required funds. For example, merchants could find themselves financially embarrassed when a number of debts, expected and unexpected, came due at one time. In such instances, the merchant would not have the necessary funds to remit when the bill of exchange came due. On a different note, the drawee might refuse to pay out funds. For example, in July 1797 Forsyth dispatched a number of bills of exchange to Thomas Amory including a returned bill of Macgray on Macgray. "The latter does not owe the drawer any thing."⁸ It was just such

⁸William Forsyth to Thomas C. Amory, Boston, July 20, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

potential difficulties - and the range was limitless - that induced those who purchased bills of exchange to act through well-established and reputable mercantile firms.

The following correspondence between Forsyth and Amory demonstrates the complications associated with these financial instruments at the same time that it underscores the trust involved in tendering bills of exchange. Furthermore, the process calls into the open the available options, or lack thereof, for an agent such as Amory when he could not rely upon the most commonly used medium of exchange. Forsyth wrote to Amory in November 1796, hoping that Mr. Waldo's returned bill had been recovered with damages. Amory was to have subsequently "remitted the amount to Messrs Hunter[,] Robertson & Co. in an undoubted good bill."⁹ In early December 1796, Forsyth returned to the issue of the protested bill. "[W]e cannot help feeling disappointed at your not having recovered Mr. Waldo's returned Bill & at the prospect of payment appearing to be distant."¹⁰ This particular bill continued to plague the correspondence, ultimately involving Hunter and Robertson. In May 1797 Forsyth received word from Hunter, Robertson and Company by the April packet, then in the harbor at Halifax.

⁹William Forsyth to Thomas C. Amory, Boston, November 18, 1796, NSARM, MG 3/150.

¹⁰William Forsyth to Thomas C. Amory, Boston, December 2, 1796, NSARM, MG 3/150.

As a consequence, the merchant wrote to Amory quoting Hunter and Robertson verbatim. Once again, Mr. Waldo's bill was being returned to Amory under protest. "It will answer no good end[,] Mr. Amory taking another bill from the same man." This, unfortunately, was just the beginning of Amory's headaches. "By this packet likewise Pomeroy on Dickason & Co. £500 goes out with protest to Mr. Amory, & the bill remitted us by him on account of Fraser & Thom will go out when due. Mr. Amory should be more careful whose bills he takes."¹¹ This last admonishment seems particularly hard since Fraser and Thom were amongst the largest mercantile firms in the Maritime colonies, as well as being correspondents of Hunter and Robertson. Indeed, it highlights an agent's and/or merchant's vulnerability in accepting bills of exchange, since in the confusion of bills continually crossing the Atlantic, the odds were that even those drawn on reputable firms stood a chance of being rejected. Simultaneously, Amory was limited in the forms of payment he could remit to Scotland. The situation also demonstrates the dilemmas posed to colonial agents in attempting to maneuver through a much more fluid commercial environment while at the same time attempting to satisfy metropolitan expectations.

The letter from Greenock placed Forsyth in the position

¹¹William Forsyth to Thomas C. Amory, Boston, May 23, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

of pressuring the agent to secure payment for the bills of exchange. "On your [Amory] receiving these bills we beg no time may be lost in recovering them. It is a large sum to be laying in this awkward situation, & we shall not be easy 'till we hear you have recover'd the whole. As formerly mentioned we wish no more bills to be remitted on our account from Boston, as we find they are not to be depended on."¹²

The conclusion to Hunter and Robertson's letter underscores the issue of trust inherent within bills of exchange. Here, the Scottish partners did not question Amory's own integrity but rather his judgement. We are left to guess how Forsyth and Amory settled accounts in the future, although there was no outward indication that their commercial arrangement would end. Indeed, the association did survive with only a few minor misgivings either from Halifax, Greenock or both. A year later, Forsyth wrote to the agent in Boston. "When good Bills on England can be purchas'd on terms to leave us 4 per Ct or more clear that is under par - we wish you to buy for us. But you will observe by good bills we mean those drawn by British Paymasters or Naval storekeepers or such bills as you will endorse. Let them be remitted to Messrs Hunter[,] Robertson & Co. Greenock on our account."¹³ In this instance,

¹²Ibid.

¹³William Forsyth to Thomas C. Amory, Boston, March 21, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

Forsyth (and/or Hunter and Robertson) were dabbling in bills of exchange as a means of securing a profit on their monies. At the time, Boston must have presented a favorable market for bills of exchange, causing the Scottish merchants to overcome their misgivings regarding Amory's judgement, within carefully prescribed boundaries.

Thomas Amory's experience with the bill drawn on Fraser and Thom exemplifies the perplexing and frustrating nature of bills of exchange. While they clearly facilitated commerce, the system did not always run smoothly. It also underscores the fluid and shifting state of merchant's capital liquidity. Fraser and Thom may have experienced an unanticipated number of demands upon their capital resources causing them to reject this particular bill, to safeguard their liquid assets. Forsyth wrote to Amory in October 1797, apparently after the usance period had passed on the troubled bill. "We suppose the bill you remitted on account of Messrs Fraser & Thom, that we were informed was noted, must have been paid, as we have heard nothing of it since."¹⁴ Once again we are left to speculate as to what transpired after late-May to induce the drawee to pay out on the bill of exchange when it fell due. If funds suddenly materialized at the end of the usance period or if pressures were brought to bear on Fraser and Thom before that time, the correspondence does not

¹⁴William Forsyth to Thomas C. Amory, Boston, October 6, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

reveal; nor did Forsyth appear particularly interested. His immediate concern was to assure that his accounts were settled. The incident graphically demonstrates one of the primary advantages of financial institutions which emerged later in the nineteenth century, with their larger staffs and bureaucracies capable of monitoring clients' accounts.

The workings, peculiarities and mishaps of bills of exchange emphasize the functioning of the mercantile community itself. In order for multilateral trade to take place over the broad expanse - geographical, temporal and social - of the Atlantic, merchants relied upon a culturally determined sense of trust. Merchants had to maintain a sense of faith in the circulating media available to them, foremost bills of exchange. When this medium faltered, merchants accepted that as a temporary commercial setback, not a failure in the system. Given the absence of institutions capable of effectively policing the system, the community utilized culturally encoded and accepted practices to force its participants to comply. When these proved inadequate, agents such as Amory and merchants such as Forsyth might ultimately be forced to suffer the financial loss. In so doing, in assuming the risk initially, members of the community sustained commerce itself. The risks of bills of exchange to the commercial community should not be over-emphasized. The most common parallel to a bill of exchange is the modern check. Even with sophisticated financial

institutions and laws in place, modern businessmen accept the risk of receiving a bad check, for which they may ultimately lose money. In the eighteenth century, the advantages of a universal circulating medium in the Atlantic world, far outweighed its disadvantages.

By examining the role of the merchant community within the economic infrastructure, we can begin to situate Halifax, and Nova Scotia more generally, within a broader Atlantic context. In a port such as Philadelphia, for example, the richest merchants controlled a substantial percentage of the community's total resources.¹⁵ The financial power of the greater merchants could reverberate throughout the commercial community, providing economic security for members of the middling ranks. A large shipping firm, owning several vessels, would require the services of a host of artisans, i.e. blacksmiths, sailmakers, caulkers, carpenters and the like. Similarly, large importers operated through, and thus helped to finance, several retailers. While the power of the greater merchants is more obvious, this was the function of the merchant community as a whole.¹⁶

In Halifax, many of the economic roles frequently

¹⁵Thomas Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), p. 133.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 38.

dominated by merchants in general, and merchant princes in particular, were instead occupied by the military bureaucracy. As the mercantile community matured into a position of commercial strength, this situation created a janus-faced relationship of mutual benefit between the commercial community and military officialdom coupled with competition. For many of the financial services typically provided by merchants - and thereby garnering to their community commercial and social prestige - were, in Halifax, often performed by military officials. Joseph Gerrish, originally a New England merchant, portrays the commercial power possessed by the military bureaucracy in the early years of Halifax. As the naval storekeeper between 1757 and 1772, Gerrish issued some £193,000 in bills of exchange to supply the navy. This made the naval storekeeper one of the principal quasi-bankers in the colony. The others were the paymasters to the troops throughout Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, in other words all were government men. During these early years, the actual wealth of Halifax (or even Nova Scotia itself) was often insufficient to meet Gerrish's cash needs. Under these circumstances, Gerrish raised the necessary capital by selling navy bills of exchange in Boston and New York.¹⁷

¹⁷Julian Gwyn, *Excessive Expectations: Maritime Commerce and the Economic Development of Nova Scotia, 1740-1870* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), p. 19.

The situation seems to have been changing by the 1790s, when the navy could arguably have raised the required sums within the province. Based on the following incident, it would appear that the military had come to relish its freedom from the local mercantile community. Responding to Amory in February 1798, Forsyth was "surprised to find Bills drawn by Mr. Brymer the pay master here, selling with you at 4 1/2 pr Ct under par. He has sold none of his Bills here under 2 1/2 pr Ct above par."¹⁸ Thus, with par at £100 sterling, Brymer was selling his bills for [£95.50] in Boston at the same time he sold them in Halifax at [£102.50], or a 7 per cent difference. As Forsyth's later comments attest, Brymer was not selling his bills of exchange at a discount in Boston out of a need to raise cash. "We suppose it is a scheme of Mr. Brymers, with the approbation of the Commander in Chief, to keep up the Exch here, altho' they reduce it in the States. It makes the public Offices here more independent of the Merchants for money." The Halifax merchant was not privy to the paymaster's reasoning, so could only hypothesize as to what was transpiring. Forsyth, nonetheless, was an astute merchant, well-placed within Halifax commercial circles and thus serves as an able guide through the labyrinth of local politics. As such, he read the situation as a scheme on the part of the military to reduce its dependency on the merchant

¹⁸William Forsyth to Thomas C. Amory, Boston, February 20, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

community, by turning elsewhere for the needed cash.

Forsyth's hypothesis reveals a number of factors regarding the evolving economic structure of Halifax, and Nova Scotia more broadly.

From its beginning, the Nova Scotian economic sphere was dominated by outsiders, whether they be New Englanders, the British military, or transplanted British merchants.¹⁹ Due to its strategic significance during years of intense imperial conflict - from its founding in 1749 down to 1815 - the economy was predictably and heavily influenced by metropolitan government public spending. This alone would serve to attract a number of merchants to Nova Scotia. Other factors were also present in the highly-volatile years between 1763 and 1815. In large part, the imperial tensions between Great Britain and the original thirteen colonies would first and foremost deter New England merchants from migrating north after 1776. At the same time, the internal imperial conflict would disrupt New England's hold on Nova Scotia. Into this unsettled and changing atmosphere moved British merchants, who were set on remaining within British North America and thus chose Nova Scotia. The reactionary revival of mercantilism after 1783 seemed to promise imperial-based mercantile fortunes from Nova Scotia, and more particularly, Halifax. The 1780s, therefore, saw the arrival

¹⁹Gwyn, p. 18.

of British merchants such as William Forsyth, who brought metropolitan financial connections with him. Simultaneously, the resolution of the Revolution forced or, at least, prompted a number of Loyalist merchants - such as Robert and George Ross - to relocate to Nova Scotia, all the while retaining their financial links to the new United States. In the process, all these men brought new sources of capital and credit to Nova Scotia, whether linked to the home country or the new United States. The wealth of outport merchants such as the Rosses never rose to challenge British military control over the provincial economies. By the 1790s, however, the resources of British merchants, with their metropolitan backing would appear to have presented a challenge, real or not. Into this hierarchical, military milieu had moved not only commercial contenders, but those schooled in and backed by the metropole itself. By English standards, a Scottish merchant such as William Forsyth represented a provincial. But imperial settings had the distinct ability to highlight the very real levels of provincialism and, thus, a William Forsyth set amongst colonials took on a very metropolitan air, after all.

While Forsyth may not have appreciated Brymer's schemes, the merchant was willing enough to capitalize on them. Thus, Forsyth wrote to Amory, "[W]e should have no objections to take any sum of Mr. Brymer[']s drawing, as we do not

entertain a doubt about them."²⁰ The logistics of the situation came down to arranging payment for the bills of exchange. "We should have a considerable sum of money in the hands of Messrs Saidler & Waterbury of New York, provided they have not remitted lately to our partners in Scotland[.] [I]f you could negotiate Bills on N. York & invest the money in Bills drawn by Mr. Brymer the pay Master or by Mr. Livie the Naval storekeeper under par[,] after allowing you a small Commission it will be agreeable."²¹ As was customary, the bills were to be sent by "difft. opportunities," to Hunter, Robertson & Company in Greenock "& advise us." Simultaneously, Forsyth had written to Saidler and Waterbury in New York to notify them of the impending transaction. Clearly, Hunter and Robertson were speculating in bills of exchange, emphasizing the ability of these instruments to generate profits of themselves. During the eighteenth century, this type of financial venture remained a specialized activity whereas the majority of bills of exchange were drawn on the basis of real transactions.

This incident provides an insight into the financial operations of Nova Scotia within the much broader context of an Anglo-American Atlantic commercial world. A power play,

²⁰William Forsyth to Thomas C. Amory, Boston, February 20, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

²¹Ibid.

meant to secure local financial hegemony or independence for the military bureaucracy, inadvertently escalated into a multilateral transaction encompassing the North Atlantic financial world. Forsyth, and through him Hunter and Robertson in Scotland, were able to benefit from Brymer's ruse due to their commercial contacts in the United States, and even these involved multiple locales. Amory, in Boston, was to call upon the firm's funds held by Saidler and Waterbury in New York. At one level, this demonstrates the sophistication of Anglo-American financial world by the end of the eighteenth century, for funds could readily be transferred between such distant locales as Halifax, Boston, New York and Greenock. At the same time, Brymer's clever scheme unwittingly emphasizes the centrality of the United States in both the commercial mentality and reality of the British official and mercantile communities. Brymer sought to secure the funds necessary to make his play operable through the financial resources of the new nation, just as Forsyth was able to outwit the military official by utilizing his mercantile networks within the United States. Ultimately, and seemingly classically, the actual funds were to return to the metropole. As was so often the case of seemingly "imperial" dominance, the procedure itself actually served to foster the continued financial development of both its current and former colonies. In setting his financial play in motion, Brymer - almost certainly unintentionally -

called attention to the infeasibility of a British return to a closed mercantile system, if ever such a state had existed. The new nation figured prominently throughout this incident as well as in a myriad of others. Within the commercial realms of the Atlantic, which were becoming increasingly and distinctly financial, the United States remained an integral member. Finally, the incident portrays the ability of merchants in the peripheries or margins, to play upon and utilize the services and resources of greater polities and/or commercial entities to their own advantage. Both Brymer and Forsyth fully understood and moved to take advantage of this relationship to the United States.

Disruptions in the normal flow of commerce can serve as particularly valuable indicators by which to assess a commercial realm. Yellow fever struck the east coast of the United States during the Summer of 1798. The epidemic brings into relief the workings of and relationships within the Anglo-American Atlantic commercial nexus, emphasizing the role of the various economic players. Following the correspondence of William Forsyth, once again allows us to situate Nova Scotia - along with its multifaceted ties to the United States - within the Atlantic economy. As the disease moved through all three of the major ports in which Forsyth conducted business, he sorely felt its repercussions. Forsyth voiced his concern to R.P. Bail of Philadelphia in September 1798. "We are much concerned to find that the

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yellow fever is again making such havock in your city. We hope the weather will soon get cool & give a check to it, & that you & your family may return to your home in health & safety."²² Yellow fever and smallpox represented the two most feared epidemics in colonial America. In reality, smallpox presented a much more sustained and deadlier threat to colonial populations than the yellow fever ever did. Yet, like smallpox, yellow fever seemed to come on mysteriously, killing randomly and disrupting entire communities. Throughout the eighteenth centuries, people lacked an understanding of what caused yellow fever and the mechanism by which it spread, making it impossible to effect a cure which only added to the popular horror of the disease. Indeed, the persistent colonial references to yellow fever have given the disease a prominence in American history out of proportion to its actual influence. This much said, the terror and devastation visited upon communities by individual epidemics were real enough and should not be discounted.²³

²²William Forsyth to R. P. Bail, Philadelphia, September 20, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

²³Yellow fever, first appearing in the 1690s, had tapered off in America by the mid-eighteenth century. After an outbreak in Philadelphia in 1762, the fever vanished for over thirty years. It suddenly reappeared there in the summer of 1793, ushering in a ten-year period of renewed epidemics up and down the eastern seaboard. The yellow fever epidemic that struck Philadelphia in 1793 left a frightful and lasting impression on contemporaries and the historical record alike. In part, this resulted from the thirty-year grace period, which had allowed an entire generation to be raised without

Contemporaries, without understanding the full implications, could make the connection between yellow fever and port cities. From the earliest times, then, colonial cities had devised quarantine laws. Not surprisingly, the major objections to those laws often came from the commercial sector, dependent upon trade. A rigid system of inspection delayed the entry of goods from a ship's hold. Moreover, a firm quarantine could stall a ship for thirty to sixty days before it could discharge its cargo, which would prove excessively costly to importers and shipowners who might opt to avoid the port all together. This, coupled with the sailors' own fear of yellow fever, could seriously interrupt a port's commerce.²⁴

It is this sense of disruption in the region's commerce that first becomes noticeable in Forsyth's correspondence and

experiencing its effects. This is evidenced through the realization that although cases of the fever first appeared in Philadelphia early in the month, it was not definitely diagnosed until August 19, 1793. Even then people were reluctant to believe it had returned. While quarantine laws were in place, after a thirty-year interim there were no actual funds to support the authorities. As late as September 5, 1793, ships from the West Indies, where the fever rampaged, were still entering the port uninspected. Moreover, the 1793 epidemic was particularly severe, killing over 5,000 residents of Philadelphia in less than four months and virtually paralyzing the city. See John Duffy, *Epidemics in Colonial America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1953), p. 163; and John Duffy, *The Sanitarians: A History of American Public Health* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), pp. 10, 23, 38-9.

²⁴Duffy, *Epidemics in Colonial America*, p. 49.

only gradually do we understand that the renewed epidemic of yellow fever lies at the root of the problem. Financial difficulties had already begun by August 8, 1798 when Forsyth wrote to Amory. "We are concerned to think that you should be in advance so much for us[.] [M]ake yourself easy on this score by drawing on our friends in Britain, if it can be done at par. If not try if Mr. Geyer will give you Cash for Bills on Halifax & we will pay Mr. Brymer here."²⁵ The problem persisted, as shown in a subsequent letter. "It is a pity you cannot dispose of Exchange on London[.] [P]lease to send us a state of the accot. Currnt. for purchases, & we must adopt some method of having you remitted."²⁶ As with this next letter to John and Alexander MacGregor of New York, it becomes clear that the form of payment itself presented a problem in paying Amory. "Inclosed is A/ Sales of the Rice pr the Greyhound Nett Proceeds £169.14.9 1/2 curry or £152.15.3 stg, for which we inclose you our 1st of Exch on Messrs Hunter[,] Robertson & Co. Greenock at 30d/St. We could not procure a bill on London without paying a premium of 2 1/2 pr Ct. We hope the other will answer your

²⁵William Forsyth to Thomas C. Amory, Boston, August 8, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

²⁶William Forsyth to Thomas C. Amory, Boston, August 20, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

purpose."²⁷ From this we can discern that the market for bills of exchange drawn on London had been upset, for some reason. As a result, Amory is unable to dispose of the London bills in Boston forcing Forsyth to seek a different method of payment. Simultaneously, the price of London bills of exchange had risen in Halifax. As such Forsyth could not buy the bills for less than 2 1/2 above par, an interest rate which appeared untenable. In consequence, Forsyth paid his debt to the MacGregors in bills of exchange drawn on Greenock. As noted in the earlier discussion on bills of exchange, bills drawn on London typically were preferred over those on the outports given their universal spending power. Forsyth, in essence, acknowledged this financial reality by explaining his dilemma to the MacGregors, hoping that the Greenock bills of exchange would answer. Certainly Greenock was one of the major outports trading into the greater New England region during this era, nonetheless it was not the metropole.²⁸

²⁷William Forsyth to Messrs John and Alexander MacGregor, New York, September 4, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

²⁸Forsyth had also written to Saidler and Waterbury on September 4, 1798, enclosing a bill of exchange drawn on Greenock. "We have received payment of your draut. on Mr. Prescott \$1200, & inclosed is our 1st of Ex. on Messrs Hunter[,] Robertson & Co. for the same say £270 Stg at 30 d/ St." William Forsyth to Messrs Saidler and Waterbury, New York, September 4, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150. It is interesting to note that Forsyth is roughly calculating the value of the Greenock bill of exchange in comparison to New York or U.S. currency. This helps to emphasize the ways in which par was

Throughout early to mid-September, Forsyth found it difficult to pay his debts to Amory due to "the great fall of Exchange." Forsyth was sincerely concerned that Amory should be in advance for the Halifax firm. "[B]ut as it has so happened, we will most chearfully allow interest till you are in cash." The willingness to pay interest on the debt owed to Amory stemmed from Forsyth's consistent desire during the current financial straits to protect his bills of exchange. "We are much obliged by your not drawing at the present discount[.] [W]e should be very unwilling to sacrifice so much, if it can possibly be avoided."²⁹ Placed in the same predicament, the New York insurance brokers had reacted differently. Thus, Forsyth wrote to Saidler and Waterbury on September 15, 1798: "It is unfortunate for us the fall of exchange[.] [W]e hope you will soon receive a payment from Mr. Ustick, & that you may not have occasion to draw again at the present unfavourable exchange."³⁰ Again, Forsyth did not wish the brokers to be in advance for the Halifax firm, but

calculated and the reason that the rate of exchange fluctuated. At the same time, it underscores the relative unfamiliarity of the Greenock bills of exchange in comparison to those drawn on London, which Forsyth did not calculate for his correspondents, assuming their knowledge of the rate.

²⁹William Forsyth to Thomas C. Amory, Boston, September 5, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

³⁰William Forsyth to Messrs Saidler and Waterbury, New York, September 15, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

should that occur he would gladly allow interest. In offering to pay Amory, and subsequently Saidler and Waterbury, interest on the delayed funds, Forsyth acknowledged the commercial inconvenience of being out liquid capital. It also demonstrates the financial loss Forsyth faced if the bills were drawn currently, as Saidler and Waterbury had already done. Under these circumstances, paying interest, in effect for the extended use of the Americans' funds, appeared to be the more economical solution.

In both of these instances, Forsyth sought alternative methods of payment to satisfy his debts. It appears from the accounts, along with others, that these commissioned merchants and agents held operating funds for Forsyth in their respective ports. In New York, Forsyth hoped to resolve his outstanding debts by applying the expected payment from Mr. Ustick, to the account of Saidler and Waterbury. In Boston, the situation would prove to be much more complicated. Although Forsyth trusted that conditions would improve soon, should that not prove to be the case, the merchant would "immediately adopt some method" to see Amory remitted. "We expect soon to have a large sum to receive in Philadelphia. Could bills on that City be negotiated with you?" Forsyth, stationed in Halifax, was attempting to juggle his various American accounts and resources to alleviate his financial embarrassment. The remarks above

illustrate the lesser significance of the Philadelphia market to Forsyth's commercial operations. His dealings with Joseph Anthony and Company of that city had only infrequently been integrated with those of the port's sisters cities, in contrast to those between Amory in Boston and Saidler and Waterbury in New York. The unfamiliarity in regards to the financial relations between the ports surfaced when Forsyth asked Amory if bills of exchange drawn on Philadelphia could be negotiated in Boston. The merchant confirms the stronger commercial ties, in his own accounts, between the other two port cities in explaining to Amory that there are no funds available in New York and in the process casually recognized the negotiability of New York bills of exchange in Boston. This lack of New York funds, of course, shortly thereafter caused the insurance brokers there to cash the British bills of exchange to Forsyth's detriment. Throughout, Forsyth attempted to marshal and/or maneuver various American funds to settle his accounts. Similarly, he called upon Scottish resources and bills of exchange in a move to protect the London bills.

Forsyth identified the source of the financial predicament in his letter to Amory. "We hope the [yellow] fever may have abated by this time, & that business may have revived, & created a demand for Exchange, so as to enable you

to obtain par."³¹ Shortly thereafter, in writing to Saidler and Waterbury, Forsyth expressed regret "for the distressed situation" of the city. "We hope people are more alarmed than there is any real occasion for, & we trust we shall soon hear of the disorder having disappeared."³² In actuality, this proved to be one of the worst bouts of the epidemic to strike New York city, killing approximately 1,500 to 2,000 residents. At the receiving end of a long train of information, Forsyth had heard reports of illness along the coastal United States. "The accounts from Philadelphia are melancholy indeed, & we have reports of its being very sickly in Boston, & some other of the eastern towns."³³

While Forsyth's estimation that the fever had curtailed or even halted trade appears accurate, it does not explain the complex influence the epidemic appears to have asserted on commerce. To understand the possible ramifications, it is helpful to return to the definition of the rate of exchange.

³¹William Forsyth to Thomas C. Amory, Boston, September 5, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

³²William Forsyth to Messrs Saidler and Waterbury, New York, September 15, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

³³Ibid. Forsyth used similar terminology when writing to Joseph Anthony in Philadelphia two weeks later. "We are truly distressed at the melancholy accounts we receive from Philadelphia and New York. We sincerely hope that you & your family have escaped the dreadful calamity." William Forsyth to Joseph Anthony, September 28, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

This signified the price paid in one currency to purchase that precise amount in another, which fluctuated with market conditions.³⁴ The routine bargaining, along with the ever-changing conditions which allowed for this negotiating, over the actual price of bills of exchange kept the rate in a constant state of fluctuation. Under normal conditions, the difference would not be expected to be prohibitive or even great. During the yellow fever epidemic, the rate of exchange had exceeded acceptable boundaries. The single most important influence in determining the commercial rate of exchange was the state of the market for bills of exchange. If there were more sellers than buyers, the price of bills of exchange dropped. Conversely, if there were more buyers than sellers, the price rose.³⁵

The yellow fever, which gripped the U.S. east coast throughout August and September 1798, presented a formidable and sustained challenge to the market place. Given the comments to Amory, and Saidler and Waterbury, it becomes apparent that bills of exchange were being drastically discounted in their respective cities. Under those circumstances, should Amory sell Forsyth's bill of exchange on London for say £100 sterling, the agent could

³⁴McCusker, *Money and Exchange in Europe and America*, p. 19.

³⁵*Ibid.*, p. 22.

expect to receive considerably less than the face value. This correlates back to the determining factors regarding the commercial rate, i.e. when there were more sellers than buyers the rate declined. The appearance of the yellow fever often caused commercial havoc in the regions under attack through quarantines, residents fleeing the city and sailors seeking to avoid the port. At this time, the fever had temporarily disrupted Atlantic trade suggesting a normal level of goods were not entering the city, leaving the circulating media to lie idle. Therefore, ports such as Boston and New York had a surplus of bills of exchange drawn on London which they could not spend. As Forsyth understood this would remain the case until business revived, creating "a demand for Exchange."

Forsyth himself confronted precisely the opposite condition in attempting to purchase bills of exchange on London, which could not be obtained for less than 2 1/2 per cent above par. This suggests that more buyers existed than sellers in the wider market in which Forsyth sought bills, in part because a large number remained idle in the eastern United States due to the downturn in trade. The situation also graphically illustrates the centrality of the new nation to the equilibrium of the British imperial/commercial nexus. The irony of the situation becomes apparent when it is realized that Boston and New York had the London bills of exchange available at all-too-cheap rates, but Forsyth could

not access them due to his lack of a suitable circulating medium. As a result of the high premium on bills of exchange, the merchant resorted to alternatives. As seen, in September he remitted payment to both Saidler and Waterbury, and the MacGregors in bills of exchange drawn on Greenock. With Amory, Forsyth attempted to shift funds, particularly U.S. specie, to cover his debts. On September 10, 1798 Forsyth wrote to the agent: "When the packet (now expected) arrives from New York, we expect to procure a draut. on that place for \$4000 which we shall remit you."³⁶ Now that Forsyth had American currency available, the problem became one of conveying the specie to Boston. "If the *Earl of Moira* or any of the Men of War should go to Boston, we would send a remittance in specie, but we are unwilling to risk it in these little coasters." By the time of this letter, the merchant betrayed a mild sense of exasperation at the continuing situation. "We are sorry for the continued stagnation of business with you. It surely cannot continue much longer, as cool weather must be approaching, which will put a stop to the fever." As demonstrated by Forsyth's prediction, even though contemporaries did not fully comprehend the cause of yellow fever they understood its intimate connection to the weather. This letter, written on September 28, also suggests that New England, and possibly

³⁶William Forsyth to Thomas C. Amory, Boston, September 10, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

the east coast in general, was experiencing an unusually long summer. With fall expected soon, the situation would improve, and with it commerce. "We are still in hopes that Exchange will take a rise."³⁷

The yellow fever epidemic of 1798 portrays the vulnerabilities of the Anglo-American Atlantic financial world at the same time that it demonstrates its ultimate resiliency. Bills of exchange drawn on London served as the primary and universally accepted circulating medium in this trading realm. When difficulties arose over the use of this form of payment, it could temporarily upset the entire system. Forsyth exemplifies the merchant community's dependency upon these financial instruments and the ensuing headaches when this medium, even momentarily, failed to answer commercial needs. The diversity of payment options available to Forsyth, seemingly so bothersome and confusing in day-to-day trade, was in actuality the system's very strength. Forsyth had at his disposal bills drawn on different locales along with varied currencies with which to pay his debts. Many, if not all, of these were transferrable throughout the Anglo-American commercial world. As Forsyth's concerns underscore, some were far more economical than, and thus preferable to, others. With a reasonable amount of bargaining and negotiating, however, most methods could and

³⁷William Forsyth to Thomas C. Amory, Boston, September 28, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

would service. The success of the Atlantic financial system, much like that of western Europe, lay in the security and flexibility it offered merchants, emphasizing its role as a tool of and adjunct to commerce.

This analysis of bills of exchange, in their multifarious processes and uses offers glimpses into the world of Atlantic trade within an Anglo-American context. Through the bills we can see the significance and centrality of the United States in a supposedly British imperial trading sphere. Moreover, it shows the ways in which merchants and officials in a supposedly marginal colony could, to their own advantage, call upon the resources of a stronger partner and/or polity. Finally, through the bill's routes, it is possible to envision the financial networks of the Anglo-American Atlantic world.

Shipping

Great Britain and a number of its Atlantic colonies prided themselves on a maritime-commercial culture and empire. Shipping represented the foundation and embodiment of that Anglo-American imperial-maritime complex. For merchants, the requisite activities involved with shipping often comprised the core of their energies and resources. As the North American mainland economies grew and matured, opportunities arose for entrepreneurs to specialize and

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divisions arose amongst the merchants of Philadelphia between those who specialized in retailing and others who sunk their resources into shipping. For Nova Scotian merchants, these types of options were often missing. Most noticeably, the province lacked a rich and exploitable hinterland which helped to sustain the Pennsylvanian retailers operating on the frontier.³⁸ Regional topography and resources, thus, dictated that much of Nova Scotia's commercial attention would turn outward toward the Atlantic. In this respect, Nova Scotia most closely resembled Old and New England.

William Forsyth's letterbook provides an insight into the world of Atlantic shipping. In particular, this section will focus on the movements of the vessel, the *Trelawney*.³⁹

³⁸The exception in Nova Scotia was the trade funneled out through the Bay of Fundy. Particularly under the Acadians, this region had produced surplus crops which were traded into both Fort Louisbourg and New England. In their condescending bias towards the original French inhabitants, many of the early Anglo Planters disdained the agricultural practices and methods through which the Acadians had produced a surplus. For discussions of both the Acadians and subsequent Planter settlement see George Rawlyk, "1720-1744: Cod, Louisbourg, and the Acadians"; J. M. Bumsted, "1763-1783: Resettlement and Rebellion"; and, Ann Gorman Condon, "1783-1800: Loyalist Arrival, Acadian Return, Imperial Reform," in *The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History*, ed. Phillip A. Buckner and John G. Reid (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

³⁹It is not possible to determine actual ownership of the of the vessels discussed in the letterbook. While it is certain that these ships belong, at least in part, to Hunter and Robertson, it is not clear as to whether Forsyth himself owned an interest in the vessels. In keeping with the assessment that William Forsyth served as a junior, colonial partner to the Glasgow firm, I treat the ships as belonging

Throughout 1797 and 1798, the firm of Hunter and Robertson suffered a series of misfortunes regarding their transatlantic vessels which served to complicate Forsyth's life. Not only was the merchant forced to find ways to compensate for the loss of these vessels, the situations under which they were lost often demanded his attention. In 1797, French privateers seized the *Halifax* and soon thereafter a French frigate took the *Brunswick*. At the end of the year, in November, the *Princess Amelia* was shipwrecked off Sable Island. Finally, the brig, the *Industry*, was lost sometime during 1797. Continuing the firm's run of bad luck into 1798, French privateers captured the *Earl of Mansfield* off the Western Isles of Scotland in May, while in June the *Britannia* was lost during its approach to Passamaquaddy. In August, Forsyth wrote to Robert Livie, this time enclosing the Master's protest to cover any insurance made in London on the *Britannia* and its cargo. At that time, the merchant voiced his frustration, which understandably must have mounted along with the number of ships lost. "What a rascally business it is to appoint a Vagabond for a pilot, & authorize him to board & take charge of a valuable Ship & to

to Hunter, Robertson and Company. For an overview of Forsyth's activities (including shipping) see David S. Macmillan, "The 'New Men' in Action: Scottish Mercantile and Shipping Operations in the North American Colonies, 1760-1825," in *Canadian Business History: Selected Studies, 1497-1971*, ed. David S. Macmillan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972).

cause her away in the manner she has been done."⁴⁰ The number of vessels captured and wrecked over the course of these two years may have been expected to financially cripple or even ruin Atlantic merchants of lesser stature. For the firm of Hunter and Robertson - and for Forsyth, in particular - the primary concern became one of curtailing the damage a lack of shipping could impose on present and future commercial ventures. That these men could sustain such losses over a short period of time attests to both their financial resources and their skill in protecting them.

Following the movements, proposed and actual, of the ship *Trelawney* allows for an examination of transatlantic shipping patterns and the position of Nova Scotian merchants within them. At the same time, the narrative of the *Trelawney* will be compared to the movements and activities of Forsyth's other ships. The voyage of the *Trelawney*, in the midst of Forsyth's numerous disasters, also illustrates the complications that war inflicted on shipping and commerce, more generally. The correspondence began with a letter to Bogle and Jopps of Jamaica in April 1797. "We have received an order from the Navy Board to ship a Cargo of Masts for

⁴⁰William Forsyth to Robert Livie, London, August 15, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

Jamaica, & propose sending them in our Ship *Trelawney*.”⁴¹

While informing Bogle and Jopps of the recent order, Forsyth casually alluded to the presence of the maritime-imperial complex. The Naval Board in Nova Scotia intended to transfer needed resources from one maritime colony to another. In the process, imperial merchants stood to profit from the freight charges on the masts. As other letters attest, however, Forsyth would not necessarily realize these gains easily. Natural resources such as timber readily filled the holds of even large ocean-going vessels. Masts, due to their length, proved particularly difficult to transport. Earlier, in September 1796, Forsyth had written to Thomas Amory regarding an order for timber to be sent from Boston. Captain Pates, who had already delivered a portion of the cargo consisting of timber and pitch, now proposed to return to Boston from Halifax. At that time, Forsyth hoped Amory could convince the captain to take on board the remainder of the timber. “There is no prospect of getting a large vessel to carry it. It must therefore be cut to the size that Pates can take on board.” While not ideal, in this instance the timber could be altered to conform to the demands of the vessel, which was not typically an option with logs intended for ship masts. Given the difficulties involved in conveying the commodity, Forsyth cautioned Amory that in the future “[y]ou will please

⁴¹William Forsyth to Messrs Bogle and Jopps, Jamaica, April 22, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

not to engage any timber or plank without you have a vessel to cary it."⁴² Despite this seeming admonishment, the order for timber originated in Halifax. On September 5, Forsyth wrote to Joseph Anthony in Philadelphia via the same brig, the *Friendship*. Anthony had not been able to procure the necessary timber in time to be included with the first cargo carried north by the brig; a possibility which Forsyth had foreseen. "To guard against a disappointment we ordered the same quantity from Boston & a part of it has arrived." Nonetheless, the Halifax merchant was prepared to honor his order. "The owner of the *Friends[hip]* proposed returning her to Philadelphia & will bring what of the Timber & Plank you may have prepared[.] [B]ut as it might be difficult to find a Vessel to carry the remainder, we should not wish any to be procured after the *friends[hip]* may leave your City."⁴³ Given the nature of the cargoes and his rush to receive them, as evidenced by the two separate orders, it may be assumed that Forsyth was attempting to meet a naval contract with supplies available in the States. By filling the order in this manner, Forsyth chanced receiving, through considerable effort and expense, a surplus of the commodity and he now moved to contain the extent of the order.

⁴²William Forsyth to Thomas Amory, Boston, September 3, 1796, NSARM, MG 3/150.

⁴³William Forsyth to Joseph Anthony, Philadelphia, September 5, 1796, NSARM, MG 3/150.

An ideal within the shipping industry was to utilize ships built to carry specific resources and/or cargoes. Yet, even for a large shipper such as William Forsyth this was not always feasible or even desirable. Due to the special demands of transporting timber, only a small number of vessels, if any, could be devoted solely to shipping that particular resource. Plagued by numerous calamities in 1797 and 1798, Forsyth's shipping dilemmas continued to mount. Writing to Livie in June 1798, Forsyth voiced his frustration over the loss of the ships *Britannia* and *Earl of Mansfield*. "We have five Cargoes of as fine sticks as ever were sent from this Country, but have only one ship, the *America*, that is fit to carry Masts."⁴⁴ The *Trelawney* was also capable of carry masts but, at this date, had not yet returned from its prolonged voyage to Jamaica and Great Britain. By August, Forsyth had partially resolved his shortages through the purchase of one British built ship and the prospects of chartering another.⁴⁵

The letter to Bogle and Jopps regarding the *Trelawney's*

⁴⁴William Forsyth to Messrs Robert Livie & Co., London, June 21, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

⁴⁵In August, Forsyth wrote to Amory, "We have purchased one British built Ship & have in view another to charter on better terms than those offered from the States[.] [T]hey each carry 5 to 600 Tons...These Ships will take nigh as much as the two we have lost, so that we shall not have occasion to Charter any foreign." William Forsyth to Thomas Amory, Boston, August 8, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

proposed voyage, dated April 22, 1797, suggests the advantages of employing vessels in a wide array of capacities. Forsyth intended to gain his profits from this transaction, or more properly series of transactions, largely through freight charges; first through the naval contract which would take the *Trelawney* to Jamaica; and from thence to the home islands carrying commercial freights. "The *Trelawney* is so well known in the Jamaica trade, that we have sanguine hopes of your procuring a freight for her to England."⁴⁶ Again, one of the ideals of Atlantic shipping centered on placing vessels on a regularly scheduled shuttle such that they attracted potential freight customers by their very predictability. There is no evidence to suggest that either Forsyth or Hunter and Robertson maintained ships in such stable patterns. Forsyth, nonetheless, relied upon the *Trelawney's* reputation to attract freight. To a certain degree, Forsyth's expectations were based upon the realization that standing behind the vessel, were the commercial wealth, power and reputations of Forsyth, and ultimately Hunter and Robertson. Added to this would be the considerable efforts of Bogle and Jopps who, notified of its impending arrival, could begin to hustle freight for the vessel. More interestingly, Forsyth counted upon the familiarity of the *Trelawney* itself within the transatlantic

⁴⁶William Forsyth to Messrs Bogle and Jopps, Jamaica, April 22, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

shipping community. This in part reflects a sophisticated and knowing communication network in operation in the Anglo-American Atlantic. At the same time, it attests to the localized nature of the Atlantic community in which individual ships were recognized.

When writing to Robert Livie on June 2, 1797, Forsyth still intended to send the *Trelawney* to Jamaica as soon as possible.⁴⁷ By the end of that month, however, Forsyth had determined against sending the vessel south at that time of year. Accordingly, Forsyth notified Livie of his change in plans. "The *Trelawney* first discharges at this yard & then proceeds to Jamaica with another Cargo. If she had gone first to Jamaica she would have been there in the height of the Huriceane season. It will be over before she now can reach that Island."⁴⁸ Curiously, the merchant waited until mid-August to notify Bogel and Jopps of the ship's altered schedule. "Admiral Vandeput having dissuaded us from sending the *Trelawney* to the West Indies during the hurricane months[,] she has discharged the Cargo intended for Jamaica at the yard here." The vessel was currently en route to New Brunswick "to load a second cargo, which we intend for your

⁴⁷"The *Trelawney* is there [Saint John, New Brunswick] loading for Jamaica & will go under convoy." William Forsyth to Robert Livie, London, June 2, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

⁴⁸ William Forsyth to Robert Livie, London, June 27, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

Island."⁴⁹ As shown by Forsyth's comments, the *Trelawney's* proposed journey was delayed due to the approach of hurricane season. The folklore, contemporary and historical, surrounding shipping in the Atlantic has established clearly defined seasons. The West Indies suffered from epidemics in the midsummer months and hurricanes from August to October, while, in the North Atlantic, the winter brought on severe gales - all of which were to be avoided. Clearly shippers and merchants showed a considerable respect for Atlantic conditions. As Ian Steele as shown of an earlier era, while shipping into the West Indies may have been curtailed by the hurricane season it was not halted. In a sample year of 1699 to 1700, which was untouched by the dictates of convoys, just over half of the clearances from Barbados departed for home in the spring, ahead of both the epidemic and hurricane seasons. But this leaves almost half of the vessels not conforming to this schedule and thus departing for Great Britain in every month except January.⁵⁰ The decision to delay the *Trelawney's* departure illustrates the difficulties, if not actual impracticalities, of settling ships into a

⁴⁹William Forsyth to Messrs Bogle and Jopps, Jamaica, August 19, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

⁵⁰Steele looked at the departures of 167 vessels, of which 86 departed for Britain during the spring. Ian Steele, *The English Atlantic, 1675-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 25-26.

routine commercial schedule. Conditions such as those experienced by Forsyth which included weather, existing contracts and a shortage of available vessels could easily disrupt the best-intentioned shuttles. For commissioned merchants such as Bogle and Jopps, who had the chore of assembling the outbound freight, the most crucial element was advanced notification of intended and actual departure dates.

As previously noted, the West Indies markets along with those in southern Europe could drive the actions of merchants in northern ports due to the potential profits involved. In these letters to Bogle and Jopps, Forsyth voiced interest in the current favorable market conditions in the West Indies, yet was forced to balance this consideration against existing commitments. For example, in his April letter to the Jamaican merchants, Forsyth had expressed disappointment that he had "no vessel here at present to send your way with a cargo of Fish, the price is encouraging."⁵¹ These conditions remained favorable into August, but there appeared to be mitigating factors which worked against the pull of the market. As Forsyth wrote to Bogle and Jopps, even though the market for fish remained tempting, "the expectation of peace & the arrival of several cargoes of W.I. Produce from the Windward Islands have occasioned a rapid fall, particularly in the price of Rum, which is now nearly as low here as in

⁵¹William Forsyth to Messrs Bogle and Jopps, Jamaica, April 22, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

the W. Indies."⁵² These comments, along with those that follow, allow for an examination of Forsyth's analysis of the current market conditions and its potential. The Halifax merchant confirmed his shortage of available vessels when writing to Lester and Morrogh of Quebec in May. "Two Ships & a Brig belonging to our concern, were captured last fall, which occasions our having fewer Vessels to charter." Nonetheless, the prospects for shipping in Quebec appeared favorable and Forsyth had "some intention of sending our Ship *Neptune* your way." The *Neptune*, which had arrived in Halifax the day before, was "not well calculated for carrying Staves, but would answer well for wheat."⁵³ Forsyth, situated in Halifax, surveyed his potential markets along with his available resources. While the market for fish in the West Indies remained appealing throughout the spring and summer months, Forsyth had reason to believe that employing his vessel in Quebec would be more beneficial over the long-term. His rationale, in part, is explained by the August letter to Bogle and Jopps. The favorable West Indies markets had indeed served to pull Nova Scotian merchants south, returning home with island cargoes which resulted in an overabundance of the produce, especially rum. Forsyth, early on, may have

⁵²William Forsyth to Messrs Bogle and Jopps, Jamaica, August 19, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

⁵³William Forsyth to Messrs Lester and Morrogh, Quebec, May 5, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

foreseen the influence of the West Indies markets on Nova Scotian merchants, opting instead to employ his scarce vessels in the wheat markets of Quebec. A shrewd merchant such as Forsyth studiously analyzed favorable market conditions, recognizing the limits of their profitability. Ultimately, the firm of Hunter and Robertson possessed the resources to respond to a prize market opportunity, even in the face of a temporary shortage of vessels. Doerflinger has demonstrated the huge profits to be made by some merchants when the swollen grain orders from southern Europe hit the Philadelphia market. Had Forsyth recognized this type of opportunity and/or profits in the current markets of the West Indies, he had the necessary means to take advantage of it; that he did not, reflects not only the availability of resources (or lack thereof) but his assessment of the situation. The merchant's hesitation, to a degree, also underscores the risks involved in securing profits from the volatile market conditions of the West Indies, especially given the multitude of small traders who relied upon the islands both for the sale of their goods and for return cargoes.

West Indian market conditions continued to attract Forsyth's attention and measure his actions. With the *Trelawney* delayed during the hurricane season, the merchant wrote to Bogle and Jopps in September anticipating the ship's departure. "We are informed there is a large proportion of

last [year's] crop in Jamaica unshipped off[.] [T]his makes us the more anxious to get the *Trelawney* dispatched & we expect to get her off by the 10th of October."⁵⁴ Forsyth hoped now to capitalize on both the plentiful produce and the *Trelawney's* favorable reputation to procure freight for Great Britain. In determining the movements of both the *Trelawney* and the *Neptune*, Forsyth appeared more intent on the home market than that of Nova Scotia.

One of the attractions of a predetermined sailing route was that it provided the shipowner with a greater sense of control over his vessel and cargo. Without an established schedule, merchants of necessity devolved considerable control onto other individuals such as agents, commissioned merchants and/or ship masters. While this occurred, within limits, on any given voyage, a set route seemed to offer some relief from the uncertainties of the typical voyage. New Englanders, more so than most trading communities, functioned through their ship captains, entrusting these men with substantial discretion over the ship's movements. In contrast, the middle colonies tended to rely more heavily on the services of agents, commissioned merchants and merchant houses.⁵⁵ At times, Forsyth appears to have utilized the

⁵⁴William Forsyth to Messrs Bogle and Jopps, Jamaica, September 18, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

⁵⁵Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, pp. 108, 122.

services of all these factors, frequently trusting the judgment of his captains but arranging for the services of agents and merchants should complications arise. At other times, Forsyth called upon agents to ensure that captains fulfilled their orders. For example, as noted previously, Livie in London was instructed to intercede should Captain Lechmore attempt to leave the *America* at Spithead rather than convoying the ship around to Woolwich.⁵⁶ Through these techniques, Forsyth sought to marshal voyages which typically traversed the expanse of the Atlantic over the course of several months. More importantly, through his trust in and reliance upon individuals such as ship captains, agents and commissioned merchants, Forsyth recognized the limits of his control in the vast spatial and temporal realms involved in a transatlantic voyage. Indeed, Forsyth's commercial relationship with Hunter and Robertson explicitly acknowledged these differentials and their inherent liabilities. By posting a partner on the opposite side of the Atlantic, Hunter and Robertson sought to diminish the uncertainties attending to trade over these vast expanses and to safeguard their investments. Forsyth then extended this pattern by utilizing the services of individuals geographically placed and professionally capable to cope with unforeseen complications, always with an eye to the

⁵⁶William Forsyth to Robert Livie & Co., London, August 15, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

successful completion of the ship's journey.

Forsyth's letter to Captain Benjamin Carlisle demonstrates the range of responsibilities placed upon ship captains along with the mercantile community's faith in their abilities. Carlisle sailed the *Tartar* to the Caribbean in June 1798 with instructions to sell the vessel there. This transaction came in the midst of a series shipping casualties for Forsyth and thus, on the surface, his decision to sell the *Tartar* appears surprising. The reasoning behind this decision becomes apparent in the letter to Carlisle. "The *Tartar* is not a suitable Vessel for this northern Climate or we would not part with her."⁵⁷ Further instructions demonstrate the tension between a desire to dictate the terms of the sale and the necessity of devolving authority onto the captain. Carlisle sailed for Martinique where he was to sell both the vessel and its cargo. If, however, he were to learn "from good information" that a better price could be had at another island, Carlisle was to "lose no time in proceeding thither[.] [B]ut we would not have you leave Martinique without a certainty of Your doing better elsewhere."⁵⁸

⁵⁷William Forsyth to Capt Benjn Carlisle, Halifax, June 22, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

⁵⁸Ibid. Forsyth had provided for this option when he wrote to Thomas Amory to procure insurance on the cargo. "[T]he present is to request you will get insurance effected on dry and pickled fish & staves shipt on board the Schooner *Tartar*[,] Benjn. Carlisle Master[,] at and from this port to Martinique and any one more of the windward islands." At

Although contacts were available in Martinique through Alexander Brymer, Forsyth did not utilize these, but left Carlisle to attend to all necessary details. A sense of controlling the captain's actions from afar, nonetheless, comes through in Forsyth's caution that Carlisle not leave Martinique unless he was certain of a better market elsewhere.

Once the vessel and cargo had been sold, the captain would need to invest the proceeds. If Carlisle could "find an opportunity to ship produce for this place," he should sink the funds "in good high proof Rum with 10 or 20 Barrels of good Sugar."⁵⁹ Upon adopting this measure, Carlisle was to write Hunter and Robertson by the packet, enclosing the invoice and bill of lading "to govern them as to insurance." As a precaution, customary amongst merchants, Carlisle was to send copies of all these documents by two separate opportunities. If, on the other hand, Carlisle found that an immediate opportunity to ship produce to Halifax was unlikely he was to purchase bills of exchange. Government bills of

that time Forsyth described the ship to Amory. "The *Tartar* is almost new, launched last Autumn ... She is compleatly fitted in every respect, she carries 8 four pounders, besides small Arms. She will not have fewer than twelve Men, perhaps fifteen. She has Letters of Marque, but orders not to cruize." William Forsyth to Thomas Amory, Boston, June 19, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

⁵⁹William Forsyth to Capt Benjn Carlisle, Halifax, June 22, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

exchange were preferred, but if those were unavailable, the captain should invest "in private Bills taking care that they are drawn or endorsed by some respectable house." Once again the bills were to be remitted to Hunter and Robertson in Greenock by packet, with another set shipped "by a separate opportunity and the third you will bring with you." The nature of these instructions shows Carlisle acting in very much the manner of an agent, with responsibilities ranging from the selling of the vessel to procuring a new cargo to investing in bills of exchange. In all these respects, Carlisle - as an Atlantic ship master - can be presumed to have brought a range of experiences and talents to the task.

As a ship master - and Forsyth's employee - Carlisle presumably had a working knowledge of the West Indies, both in terms of the geography and the commercial community. Carlisle would require such a familiarity in order to fulfill Forsyth's directives. The captain would need to assess information regarding the best markets for vessels such as the *Tartar*. Moreover, Carlisle would need such knowledge of the community as to determine where to turn in purchasing good bills of exchange. In a broader Atlantic tradition - and a greater New England one, in general - Carlisle would possess experience in selling and procuring cargoes in the West Indies. More importantly, he would have an intimate understanding of the worth of the *Tartar* when it came time to sell the vessel.

Forsyth concluded by cautioning the captain that if the vessel could not be sold "without making too great a sacrifice," Carlisle was to "load her with the Cargo before mentioned for this place, and as we do not intend to have any waste freight, let her be filled up and for this purpose you will employ Cargo."⁶⁰ Individuals paying for freight on the *Tartar* were then to draw upon Hunter and Robertson. Forsyth's instructions and limitations regarding the sale of the *Tartar* illustrate the ways in which vessels were viewed as a source of available capital. The vessel represented a major expenditure for any merchant, not only by tying up its purchase price but also in maintenance. Shipowners, then, resorted to selling their vessels at various times in their careers. Their reasoning could range from financial need to the unsuitability of the vessel based upon various factors. For Forsyth, the *Tartar* did not seem appropriate for a northern climate. If feasible, vessels were routinely sold once they began to show signs of age. All ship owners had to attend carefully to their liquid capital. Thus, the merchant balanced the usefulness of a particular vessel against the need or desire for ready cash. In this light, ships represented one more merchant good and a potential source of ready capital.

Where Carlisle appears to have had sole control over

⁶⁰Ibid.

the *Tartar*, the letter to Captain Neil Kennedy, master of the *Trelawney*, portrays Forsyth utilizing the services of various operatives. The *Trewlaney* was to sail south, in October 1797, under convoy of HMS *Maidstone*. Kennedy was to cheerfully comply with the directions of the Admiral at the Jamaica station, however, at the same time he was expected to protect the interests of his employer. "It would not answer to discharge a part of the cargo, in order to come at particular sticks, & have it to take on board again. If this should be attempted, you will consult with Messrs Bogle & Jopps' agent, & endeavour to prevent it."⁶¹ Forsyth understood all too well that to partially discharge the ship's hold, only to reload it, would significantly increase the time in port causing costly delays. To forestall such an event, Kennedy was to seek the assistance of the agent to Bogle and Jopps. If a delay was occasioned in this manner or any other, especially awaiting convoy, Kennedy was to "protest in order that we may be enabled to recover of the Navy Board." Should the entire cargo be discharged at the Cape, Forsyth felt confident Kennedy could procure a freight for England. "[F]ailing that you will follow the directions of Messrs Bogle & Jopps, to proceed to some port in Jam[aica]." While entrusting many of the details of the voyage to the captain, Forsyth nonetheless provided Kennedy

⁶¹William Forsyth to Capt Neil Kennedy, October 17, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

with recourse in the form of the merchant house of Bogle and Jopps. Notably, throughout the letter Kennedy appears to have had full care of the vessel itself, while the partners and their agent were to be involved in matters relating to the cargoes, both inbound and outbound. Forsyth anticipated that Kennedy could gain useful leverage when dealing with the Admiral of the Jamaican station by utilizing the agent of Bogle and Jopps. This realization provides some insight into the workings of the overall maritime-imperial system, which involved the Royal Navy and the Atlantic merchants in an intimate partnership. Merchants held considerable power in regards to the functioning of this maritime-imperial complex, as both sides understood the Navy's dependence upon the Atlantic trading nexus. While both stood to benefit from the relationship, ultimately the merchant community was the more flexible and pervasive, and thus independent, of the two partners. Forsyth's role as a naval contractor denotes official acknowledgement of their reliance upon the mercantile community. The incident also suggests the status of Bogle and Jopps within West Indian commercial and naval spheres, since Forsyth appears to have relied more heavily upon their influence than his own in dealing with the Admiral of the Jamaican station.

Forsyth anticipated that Kennedy would have no difficulties in assembling an outbound cargo "[a]s a great

part of last year's crop [is] said to remain on hand."⁶² If Kennedy emptied the vessel at the Cape, Forsyth trusted him to procure an appropriate cargo for the voyage to England. This would save the time and expense of moving the now-empty vessel from one locale to the other. If this proved to be impossible, Kennedy was referred to the merchant house of Bogle and Jopps. Upon the occasion of an unavoidable delay, Kennedy stood to gain from the knowledge and networks of the merchants, who understood the Jamaican market. In this manner, Bogle and Jopps could help speed the *Trelawney* on its way. Moreover, the merchants were on hand should any unforeseen complications arise which, indeed, proved to be the case for the unfortunate *Trelawney*.

Upon arriving in British waters, Kennedy was to carefully attend to his choice of ports. "The Clyde & Liverpool are to be preferr'd to London, even if the freight should be considerably lower."⁶³ This comment echoes a frequent refrain in Forsyth's instructions to ship captains, agents and/or commissioned merchants. For example, in the above-mentioned letter to Lester and Morrogh, Forsyth

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid. In writing to Bogle and Jopps regarding the *Trelawney*, Forsyth had used almost identical wording. "We formerly mentioned that we would prefer any port to London, Liverpool in particular, altho the freight should be lower." William Forsyth to Messrs Bogle and Jopps, Jamaica, September 18, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

discussed potential destinations for the *Neptune*, including Greenock, Liverpool or Bristol. "We would not let her go to London or a port in the Channel."⁶⁴ In the several letters reiterating this particular preference, Forsyth offered no concrete explanation for the request. His correspondents, presumably, understood his rationale and thus needed no clarification, unlike those of us who are eavesdroppers into the letterbook.

A host of factors may account for Forsyth's hesitation in entering London and/or the Channel. Included amongst these are expensive docking fees and/or long turn-around times in harbor. Additionally, as Peter Linebaugh's work demonstrates, Forsyth would have had valid reasons to be concerned over dockyard crime.⁶⁵ An alternative explanation presents itself in an October 1797 letter addressed to Captain Archibald Kelso, master of the *Cato*. Upon arriving in Great Britain, he was to call upon the merchant house of Messrs Iver and Peter McIver of Liverpool, where Kelso would find instructions from Hunter and Robertson "informing you to whom the Cargo is to be consign'd."⁶⁶ At that time, Kelso was

⁶⁴William Forsyth to Messrs Lester and Morrogh, Quebec, May 5, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

⁶⁵Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Allen Lane, 1991).

⁶⁶William Forsyth to Capt. Archibald Kelso, October 5, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

to write to the Greenock firm, notifying the partners of his arrival. "They will instruct you with regard to your further proceedings." Since the *Cato* was initially destined for Liverpool, the need to warn the captain off of London did not arise. Yet, the Halifax merchant closed his letter to Kelso by recommending "your going the north channel as there is less risk there of interruption from the enemy." With this in mind, it seems plausible that a significant rationale for avoiding London and the Channel, more generally, may have been fear of the French. It would be difficult, historically, to determine in which region of the Atlantic the French posed a greater threat. Certainly, as Forsyth's own experiences throughout 1797 and 1798 demonstrate, the effectiveness of the French was very real throughout the Atlantic. In the western Atlantic, the French privateers had the advantage of numerous islands to use as bases as well as a lesser presence of the British Navy. As the imperial and commercial center of the British empire, London presented a formidable temptation to powerful corsairs well-stationed off the coast of France. Here, however, the corsairs would have encountered the Western squadron of the British Navy which eventually succeeded in curtailing their privateering activity. At the time of Forsyth's writing, however, the French corsairs stationed off the imperial metropole still posed a menacing challenge and it may have been this factor

that informed Forsyth's instructions.⁶⁷

Up until now, the discussion of the *Trelawney's* intended voyage had been routine. Beginning in August 1797, however, Forsyth's letters involving the *Trelawney's* proposed voyage carried a new and troublesome thread. At that time, Forsyth had written to Bogle and Jopps informing them of the *Trelawney's* movements, as the vessel was enroute to New Brunswick to collect a load of timber. The cargo was intended for Jamaica, but first it would be necessary to persuade the crew to sail the *Trelawney* there. "They have expressed an utter aversion to the voyage, & a determination not to proceed in the ship to any of the W. India Island[s]."⁶⁸ Barring complications, the *Trelawney* would be ready to sail by early October, however, Forsyth anticipated difficulties "in persuading the crew to proceed in her."

A month later, when writing to Robert Livie, the merchant once again predicted problems in prevailing upon the crew to sail south in the *Trelawney*. In consequence, Forsyth had requested "H.R. & Co. to procure a protection for her

⁶⁷See Michael Duffy, *World-Wide War and British Expansion, 1793-1815*," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. P.J. Marshall (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); and, Daniel Baugh, "Maritime Strength and Atlantic Commerce: The Uses of a 'Grand Marine Empire'" in *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815* (London: Routledge, 1994).

⁶⁸William Forsyth to Messrs Bogle and Jopps, Jamaica, August 19, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

Crew & to send it to Messrs Bogle & Jopps Jamaica."⁶⁹ Not until a December letter addressed to Bogle and Jopps, after the ship had already sailed, does the correspondence finally reveal the crew's aversion to the voyage. "We hope the *Trelawney*['s] crew may not have been impressed from her[.] [O]ur friends in London write us that they were to send out a protection for her." The sailors' fears and Forsyth's concerns stemmed not from the French (i.e., privateers or Navy) but from the British Royal Navy. It might be argued that as the Maritime colonies housed the major naval base in North America the sailors routinely faced the threat of impressment. Several factors may have mitigated the actual danger within Nova Scotia. As residents of the area, the sailors were known in the regional communities and thus had contacts to call upon should they be impressed. Forsyth himself, as a prominent merchant and naval contractor, would be an obvious source of protection for the sailors in his service. The sailors would not necessarily be able to call upon these forms of protection once they ventured out of their own territory, especially into a region such as the West Indies. This connection between merchants and mariners highlights the nature of commercial paternalism. Within the context of a paternalistic relationship, the seamen served the mercantile community and as such the latter had a

⁶⁹William Forsyth to Messrs Robert Livie & Co., September 19, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

responsibility to provide protection. The ability of a merchant to do so was often circumscribed by individual influence within and across regions and/or boundaries. As a result, merchant's such as Forsyth called upon the instruments and networks made available to them by the mercantile community, to extend this sense of paternalism across the Atlantic.

The influence of a given war on seamen's fortunes varied upon the particular circumstances. If the war curtailed or halted maritime trade, mariners' wages plummeted. In the western Atlantic, however, the ongoing wars of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries increasingly promoted privateering. This activity served to create a financial boom for ordinary sailors due to the size of crews necessary to man the privateers. Where merchant ships typically employed five to ten crew members, the heavily armed privateers sailed with a crew of a hundred or more. This meant that mariners and their services were in high demand for vessels of all types, merchant as well as privateer. Seamen also benefited from less or no unpaid layover time in port. In peacetime, mariners often had to wait weeks for vessels to complete a cargo. Now, fully loaded merchant vessels awaited crews.⁷⁰ Both of these factors worked to

⁷⁰Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 36, 102.

increase mariner's wages as well as their professional leverage. As shown above, Forsyth was forced to negotiate with the *Trelawney's* crew in order to gain their services.

Forsyth's letters during these years reflect the pressures placed upon the maritime commercial community by its participation in privateering. In September 1797 Forsyth notified Amory of the impending arrival of the frigate *Wentworth*. Amory was to procure a cargo of "200 Bbl [barrels] of Tar, & 100 Barrels Pitch with some White Oak Hhd [hogshead] Staves & Heading to be delivered at that place [Jamaica]." The agent was given the significant and added chore of securing the crew. "We hope there will be no difficulty in procuring some good Seamen for the *Elizabeth* now the *Wentworth*. [W]e are told that Men are plenty at Boston, which is not the case here."⁷¹ A similar theme runs through the correspondence in 1798 between Forsyth and Andrew Thomson. The latter sought assistance in locating a new vessel for purchase. Forsyth had forwarded the request to John Black in Saint John and in June relayed the results of the inquiry back to Thomson. While there were no vessels immediately available, if Thomson wanted "one of those on the Stocks," it could "be purchased to launch in August." Forsyth warned Thomson, however, "[i]f you should approve of this purchase it would be necessary to send a Master[,] Mate

⁷¹William Forsyth to Thomas Amory, Boston, September 18, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

& some hands from Newfdland, as they are very difficult to be got at st. [sic] John."⁷² In this economic climate, even those mariners not directly related to privateering stood to gain financially and professionally by the wartime activity.

It is not possible to precisely pinpoint the *Trelawney's* exact schedule based upon the fragmentary information in the correspondence. Still the *Trelawney's* journey allows for a limited commentary on the actual duration of a transatlantic voyage - and mercantile expectations of such - given the multitude of activities necessary for its completion. The ship's passage had begun in late March 1797 when it left Greenock. Forsyth noted that the ship arrived in Halifax on May 3, after a passage of thirty-seven days. The merchant did not view this timeframe as remarkable, as confirmed by the arrival of the *Neptune* on May 4 after a thirty-day crossing from Liverpool, England.⁷³ To mariners the voyage from London to Boston seemed very much an uphill struggle while the return home could just as appropriately be viewed

⁷²William Forsyth to Andrew Thomson, St. Johns, Newfoundland, June 2, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

⁷³"The March Packet not arrived but our Ship *Trelawney* arrived the 3d Inst. from Greenock & the *Neptune* yesterday from Liverpool[.] [T]he former had 37 days & the later 30 days passage." William Forsyth to Messrs Lester and Morrogh, Quebec, May 5, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150. Similarly, in November Forsyth wrote to Saidler and Waterbury: "A Ship arrived this morning in 32 days passage from Cork." William Forsyth to Saidler and Waterbury, New York, November 18, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

as a downhill journey. In viewing the voyages of the *Trelawney* and the *Neptune*, the ships appear to have benefited from a number of advantages which account for their relatively quick passage eastward. The ships left northern ports, well away from the Channel waters whose currents often had the effect of becalming the ships. From there, the two ships entered what Steele has termed the "narrowest" route of the English Atlantic, running from Britain to Newfoundland. Moreover, the ships departed in late winter or early spring when the westerlies would have been at their least daunting. During this season, ships could hope to take advantage of northeasterly winds or, at least, expect an interruption in the westerlies, which often hindered their progress.⁷⁴

When writing to Bogle and Jopps in late-April, Forsyth had anticipated the vessel's arrival and already begun to seek employment for it. Throughout May and into June, Forsyth still intended to send the *Trelawney* to Jamaica, on schedule. But first the *Trelawney* would need to be discharged and serviced after its voyage out from Greenock, even before proceeding to New Brunswick to collect a cargo. Once there, time was required to load the timber onto the ship, before it returned to Halifax in final preparation for the passage to the West Indies. Interestingly, Forsyth clung to his initial scheme until Admiral Vandeput discouraged him

⁷⁴Steele, pp. 49-91, *passim*.

from it sometime after early June. By examining the actual itinerary of the *Trelawney* it is possible to project dates had the vessel actually continued on its intended schedule. On June 2 the *Trelawney* was in Saint John, or so Forsyth assumed, loading timber. By August, the ship was once more en route to New Brunswick, having discharged the first load of timber. Forsyth disdained allowing his ships to lay idle, thus it may be assumed that the *Trelawney* was occupied between early June and mid-August in freighting, loading and unloading the timber from New Brunswick. As Hancock as shown, most of the time consumed in these voyages was due to lengthy port times.⁷⁵ The time consumed by the *Trelawney's* shuttle between Saint John and Halifax roughly coincides with the ship's later movements. It subsequently sailed south on October 19, two months after Forsyth informed Bogle and Jopps that the ship had embarked for Saint John for a second cargo of timber. Based upon this time table, had Forsyth adhered to his initial scheme, the *Trelawney* would have sailed for Jamaica approximately two to two and half months after Forsyth's first letter dated June 2, or around early- to mid-August. This would have placed the ship in the West Indies,

⁷⁵Regarding these activities Forsyth provided written instructions to Captain Gideon Ellis who was embarking to Madeira for a cargo of wine. "[T]he wine will be brought off in the same manner, twenty working days are allowed for unloading & loading, but we expect it will be done in less time." William Forsyth to Captain Gideon Ellis, Halifax, January 6, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

and more importantly found it departing there, during the peak hurricane months. This confirms Ian Steele's realization that the Anglo-American Atlantic remained an active commercial highway throughout each year.

The correspondence provides only fragmentary details regarding the time necessary for the *Trelawney* to sail from Halifax to Jamaica. The instructions to Captain Kennedy were dated October 17, 1797 and the ship appears to have sailed two days later. The next mention of the vessel comes on December 17, in a letter addressed to Bogle and Jopps. While not conclusive, it appears that Forsyth believed the ship had already arrived in Jamaica. Up until now, the *Trelawney's* movements had roughly conformed to Forsyth's revised schedule. In mid-September, he had anticipated being able to dispatch the ship by October 10, 1797. In sending the ship south in early to mid-October, Forsyth hoped that Bogle and Jopps would be able "to procure her a cargo for England to go by the February Convoy."⁷⁶ This timeframe allowed close to four months for the *Trelawney* to sail to Jamaica, unload the Navy's timber at the Cape and then take on a new cargo for Great Britain. Extensive and/or unforeseen repairs and servicing would, obviously, threaten such a schedule. Ultimately, the *Trelawney* remained in Jamaica much longer than intended due to the loss of officers and crew members.

⁷⁶William Forsyth to Messrs Bogle and Jopps, Jamaica, September 18, 1797, NSARM, MG 3/150.

In June 1798, Forsyth informed Robert Livie that, "The *Trelawney* delivered a Cargo of Masts at the Cape and Jamaica last fall, and owing to the death of most of the Officers and Crew, was not able to leave Jamaica till this Month."⁷⁷ Beyond this, Forsyth provides sketchy information of the vessel's long-overdue voyage home. In the same letter addressed to Livie, Forsyth noted that upon leaving Jamaica, he expected that the *Trelawney* had "sailed for England."⁷⁸ Finally in a letter dated August 13, 1798 to Bogle and Jopps, Forsyth wrote: "The *Trelawney* & *Wentworth* were in the fleet that pass'd this coast last month, and we hope will arrive safe. It was fortunate that you got a freight for Liverpool to the *Trelawney*."⁷⁹ Thus, by July 1798, sixteen months after its departure, the *Trelawney* had embarked upon the downhill journey home. Given that English shippers considered roughly eleven months as the length of an average voyage, the ship was long overdue.

The *Trelawney's* journey demonstrates the seemingly endless responsibilities attending a voyage as well as the extraordinary demands imposed by imperial war. Over the

⁷⁷William Forsyth to Messrs Robert Livie & Co., London, June 21, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

⁷⁸William Forsyth to Messrs Robert Livie & Co., London, June 21, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

⁷⁹William Forsyth to Messrs Bogle and Jopps, Jamaica, August 13, 1798, NSARM, MG 3/150.

broad expanse of the Atlantic, covering a period of months, neither Forsyth nor Hunter and Robertson could retain sole control of their vessels. As such they delegated authority to trusted individuals to look out for the firm's best interests. Within this context, it is possible to view the complex and integral workings of the merchant community which utilized sophisticated and far-reaching practices (along with traditional customs) to protect its members and facilitate trade. At the same time, the activity of this community, highlights the localized nature of the Anglo-American Atlantic.

Chapter 5: The Loyalists and the Acknowledgement of an Anglo-American Atlantic World

So you are going to leave and I suppose the education of your family to be the object[,] but take care that your Boys are not Republicans[.]¹

Are we never again to see you in the Old Colony[?] ... Have you almost become a republican[?] When you look at our wise institution & the wisdom with which it is administered you cannot but draw in your mind unfavourable conclusions relative to the old aristocracies of Europe.²

Both of the excerpts above, come from letters addressed to the Loyalist, Gideon White, residing in Shelburne, Nova Scotia. White, along with his friends and family, help to illuminate the Loyalist experience in North America and Great Britain. The two quotes hint at a number of the issues and concerns which occupied the Loyalists, at the same time that they helped to define the Loyalist community. In the first letter, John Sargent of Barrington, Nova Scotia alludes to White's persistent ambitions to educate his numerous children. It is unclear where the rumor of White's imminent departure originated. However, as events showed, it ultimately proved unfounded for White remained in Shelburne until his death in 1833. Writing in 1801, Sargent also revealed his Loyalist suspicions of the new United States in

¹John Sargent to Gideon White, Shelburne, April 18, 1801, NSARM, MG 1/949.

²Henry Warren to Gideon White, Shelburne, June 9, 1819, NSARM, MG 1/953.

warning White to protect his sons from becoming republicans. The author of the second letter, Henry Warren of Plymouth, Massachusetts wrote to his old and dear friend Gideon White in 1819. As shown by his letter, Warren clearly differed in his views of republicanism from those of both Sargent and White.³ Yet Warren and his neighbors who remained put in Plymouth, did not appear to differ radically in their thinking from White, either politically or culturally. Over time, however, the infrequent letters from Warren do suggest that the two friends (and by comparison, the two polities) were growing apart, politically and ideologically. With the fervor of the Revolution receding in the States, its republican ideology came to be seen as less radical and more commonplace. Simultaneously, amongst the Loyalist community, republicanism represented the very antithesis of their ideology and anti-republicanism came to be seen as synonymous with anti-Americanism. As the decades passed, the Loyalists increasingly defined themselves against the political philosophy of the United States and, in the process, against their former homeland itself. At the same time, both letters

³Henry Warren appears in the diary of Martha Ballard, bearing a military title, although it is unknown whether he fought in the Revolutionary War. According to Ballard's diary, Elijah Davis claimed that "Major Henry Warren of Plimouth in the county of Plimouth," could testify that Davis had been in Winslow at the time of the assault on Rebecca Foster. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (New York, A. Knopf, Inc., 1990), p. 124.

imply the central ambiguity of the North American Loyalist community. For both letters underscore Gideon White's ready access to the United States, whether temporary or permanent.

The end of the American Revolution forced tens of thousands of North Americans into exile. This movement, however, did not prove to be a conclusive or solitary event. Rather it instigated a process of migration throughout the Anglo-American Atlantic world which continued for generations. This movement often involved boundaries which could incite imperial anxieties. Similar to commerce, the Loyalist exile held the potential to integrate communities within the Atlantic nexus, both national and foreign. As did the merchants, the Loyalists operated along existing channels while developing new - but not necessarily exclusive - ones. Over the long term, then, the Loyalist exile served not so much to divorce the new nation from the British empire, but (in some ways) to accelerate its presence into the Maritime Atlantic colonies. Ironically, the expulsion of the Loyalists helped to ensure the continuity of an Anglo-American Atlantic well beyond the Revolution.⁴

This chapter views the Loyalist experience through the correspondence of Gideon White, along with that of his extended familial and social networks. At one level it

⁴J. M. Bumsted, "The Cultural Landscape of Early Canada," in *Strangers within the Realm*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

examines both the limitations and the opportunities set loose by the Revolution. Ranging across the Anglo-American Atlantic, the correspondents reveal the process by which the Loyalists created new homes in areas often unfamiliar to themselves. Yet, many of these regions were already inhabited and the influx of Loyalists frequently created both imperial and local tensions. Over time the concerns of the Loyalists shifted to establishing their children either in the province or in the Atlantic and/or empire. Ever visible in the Loyalists' options and calculations loomed the growing presence of the United States. White's decisions (and those of his children) often acknowledged, albeit reluctantly, the Loyalists' continued dependence on and attachment to the new republic. Simultaneously, the correspondence demonstrates the degree to which the Loyalists willingly (and rapidly) moved to re-assert and sustain pre-Revolutionary social/familial ties. Central to the argument of this chapter is the realization that the United States remained integral to the Loyalist community, over the years of exile and resettlement. Moreover, through their continued relations with family, friends and commercial associates, the Nova Scotian Loyalists both broadened and problematized the conceptualization of imperial boundaries. In this light, we see the evolution and reality of an Anglo-American Atlantic world which outlived the Revolution. This chapter follows the career of White's brother-in-law, Nathaniel Whitworth, to

explore the Loyalists' experience in the larger context of the British Atlantic world, as well as to examine the role of the United States in their social, commercial and cultural spheres. In the coming years, the inheritance left by Nathaniel Whitworth served to occupy Gideon White's time, imagination and ambitions probably well beyond its eventual benefit. The activities surrounding the estate open a window into the Loyalist community in exile in London, at the same time that they provide insight into White's goals for his sons. Through these, the chapter returns to a focus on the elite Loyalist community in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Finally, the ambitions and actions of White's children themselves portray the continuity of a greater New England Atlantic.

The First Generation of Loyalists

Gideon White embodies the ambiguities inherent within the Atlantic Loyalist communities. White represents one of those who remained fiercely loyal to Great Britain, while simultaneously bettering his lot through the Revolution. White often showed great antipathy towards the new United States, yet he continued to communicate with and visit family and friends in Massachusetts. At times, White viewed himself - and indeed styled himself - as a "true Englishman" yet, in reality, a sense of "Americaness" represented one of his most

distinguishing characteristics. The lives and families of individuals such as Gideon White and fellow-Loyalist Ward Chipman reveal the overwhelming difficulties inherent in creating an imperial boundary between peoples who, until recently, were accustomed to seeing themselves as one. Just as commerce moved throughout the Anglo-American world, so families and friends regularly traversed the line between the Maritime colonies and the United States. In their own lives, these people often struggled with the changing definitions of political identity brought on by the imperial rift. For British subjects in the metropole, this divide was not nearly so profound. During the Revolutionary years, the talk in Great Britain identified the Americans as "our kinsmen" and "fellow subjects".⁵ By the outbreak of the Revolution, however, Great Britain and America represented two separate cultural identities. In the aftermath, it was the Americans

⁵See Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); and, "American Independence and Britain's Counter-Revolution," *Past and Present* (154), pp. 107-141. For extended discussions of the effects of the Revolution on the British public see: Stephen Conway, *The British Isles and the War of American Independence* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and, Kathleen Wilson, "Empire of Virtue: The Imperial Project and Hanoverian Culture c.1720-1785," in *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689-1815*, ed. Lawrence Stone (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

who actually had to effectuate an often-painful divorce.⁶

Gideon White was born in Plymouth, Massachusetts sometime between 1752 and 1754.⁷ The White family was amongst the oldest in the colony. In 1821, the Pilgrim Society of Plymouth named Gideon White an honorary member as a

⁶For discussions of migrations during and after the American Revolution see D. W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*. Vol. 1, *Atlantic America, 1492-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp 299-300. For discussions of the Loyalists and their views of the United States, as they changed over time, see Neil MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia 1783-1791* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986) and Neil MacKinnon, "The Changing Attitudes of the Nova Scotia Loyalists towards the United States, 1783-1791," *Acadiensis* (Spring 1973); also see Ann Gorman Condon, "1783-1800: Loyalist Arrival, Acadian Return, Imperial Reform," chap. in *The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History*, eds. Phillip A. Buckner and John G. Reid (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Ann Gorman Condon, *The Envy of the American States: The Loyalist Dream for New Brunswick* (Fredericton, N.B.: New Ireland Press, 1984); and Ann Gorman Condon, "The Family in Exile: Loyalist Social Values after the Revolution," in *Intimate Relations: Family and Community in Planter Nova Scotia 1759-1800*, ed. Margaret Conrad, pp. 42-53 (Fredericton, N.B.: Acadiensis Press), 1995.

⁷The documentary evidence regarding Gideon White's year of birth is confusing and contradictory. Gideon's youngest son, Thomas Howland White, circa 1892, wrote a short family in which he listed his father's date of birth as March 28, 1752. The family papers also include an anonymous family tree which puts the birthdate on March 26, 1754. The author of the essay on Gideon White in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, seems to have split the difference, noting the date of birth as March 1753. Mary M. Harvey, *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6 (1821-1835), ed. Frances G. Halpenny and Jean Hamelin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), pp. 813.

"descendant of the first born child of New England."⁸ The reference here was to Peregrine White born on board the *Mayflower* in Cape Cod Bay in 1620. Gideon White sent a reply to express his "heart-felt delight" at the honor bestowed upon him. "The pride of my life has ever been to know I was born in the Old colony of Plymouth and no distance or change of things ever will or can alter the highest regard I have for every descendant of Our Forefathers."⁹ White's letter reveals his sincere affection for the natives of his old colony and the current Pilgrim Society, which also included John Quincy Adams as an honorary member. The statement also hints at the miles, literally and figuratively, the Loyalists had traveled in the years since the Revolution. Loyalist animosities towards the new United States had waxed and waned more than once since their initial departure. In the early years, the Loyalists frequently spoke bitterly of the Patriots, eagerly prophesying the demise of the new nation. Yet as early as 1787, the animosities appeared to be easing. For example, the North British Society of Halifax, which boasted a sizeable Loyalist membership, invited brethren from New York and Philadelphia to attend their annual St. Andrew's

⁸Pilgrim Society to Gideon White, Shelburne, March 21, 1821, NSARM, MG 1/954, 1118.

⁹Gideon White to Pilgrim Society, Plymouth, March 21, 1821, NSARM, MG 1/954, 1118.

Day banquet. Moreover, many of the familial and social ties to the United States, while tried and strained during the upheaval, ultimately survived. As the 1780s progressed, both correspondence and visits to American relations increased.¹⁰ Indeed, White made his first visit back to Massachusetts in 1787. At the time of his mother's death in 1811, White could contemplate moving back to Massachusetts to be near his sister.¹¹ The War of 1812, however, rekindled old wounds for White and numerous others. In June 1815, Gideon wrote to his son Cornelius, then a merchant in Halifax. "I do think you must have Enjoyed your Voyage to the U.S. Do the Yankees look kindly towards us British Nova Scotians? They have escaped the rod I had hoped would have made them Smart to the quick. But so it is!"¹² While his anger was sincere, it was

¹⁰Neil MacKinnon, "The Changing Attitudes of the Nova Scotia Loyalists," pp. 47-48.

¹¹In May 1811 White wrote to his sister, Hannah White, regarding the estate left by their mother. At that time Gideon asked Hannah to relocate to Nova Scotia. "You would add to my family's happiness to have you with us, as long as God my spare us. And if this country should not please you[,] it may be that I and my tribe would settle in the good old town of Plymouth." Interestingly, White concludes by stating, "I cannot write all I wish to as this goes via Passamaquady." In other words, White was afraid that the letter might be censored due to the current tensions between the United States and the British empire, which would result in the War of 1812 and a renewal of White's animosities towards the United States. Gideon White to Hannah White, Plymouth, Massachusetts, May 20, 1811, NSARM, MG 1/953, 948.

¹²Gideon White to Cornelius White, Halifax, June 9, 1815, NSARM, MG 1/953, 1013.

forced to co-exist with the reality that New England remained an integral part of White's and his family's lives. At the same time, White acknowledged his distance and distinctness from the Americans by referring to himself as a "British Nova Scotian."

Gideon White originally had surveyed the commercial potential of Nova Scotia shortly before the outbreak of the Revolutionary hostilities, when he appeared in the seemingly all-encompassing diary of Simeon Perkins. At that time, White was bound for Halifax to register his vessel.¹³ He returned to Liverpool at the end of the month with news of the engagement at Bunker Hill.¹⁴ White continued his mercantile activities through much of the war, although, given his politics, he could not remain in New England. Between 1775 and 1782, White traded out of Nova Scotia, New York and, lastly, Charleston, South Carolina where he also served in the local militia. Finally, in July 1782, White

¹³In June, 1775, Simeon Perkins wrote: "A schr. Capt Shirtliff, from Plymouth, with Mr. White, a merchant on board, and also owner, arrives, bound to Halifax to register his vessel." Perkins, vol. 1, June 3, 1775.

¹⁴Perkins' entry at that time offers an insight into the exaggerated reports which must have circulated throughout the Atlantic during the conflict. "Capt. White, Plymouth, arrives from Boston with an officer and sergeant on board. He brings news of an engagement between the King's troops and the Provincialists at Bunker Hill, Charlestown, and that Charlestown is burnt to ashes....The Provincials lost in killed, 300, the King's troops, 140." Perkins, vol. 1, June 27, 1775.

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returned to New York, where he fought with the British Army until the end of the war.¹⁵

White's career as a Loyalist, in certain respects, resembled that of his peer Ward Chipman. Ward Chipman was born in 1754 in Marblehead, Massachusetts and graduated from Harvard in 1770. Half way through his academic career, Ward's father, John Chipman, died leaving his son financially destitute. "My prospects were then trully distressing. Unable to remain at College, too young to undertake any business, unwilling to descend to the lowest offices of life, I knew not how to turn nor where to look."¹⁶ At that moment, Chipman had the good fortune to be taken under the wing of Attorney General Jonathan Sewall, who would go on to be one of the most eminent and influential Loyalists exiled in North America. After the evacuation of New York, Chipman sailed for England where Sewall's connections helped him to secure a prominent position in the newly-created New Brunswick bureaucracy. Even though Jonathan Bliss beat him out for the position of Attorney General, Chipman received the post of Solicitor General. The ambition and arrogance evident in Chipman's early quote endured and followed him back to North

¹⁵Mary M. Harvey, "Gideon White," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, pp. 813-814.

¹⁶Massachusetts Historical Society, *Proceedings*, LIV, p. 331-332; quoted in Clifford K. Shipton, ed., *Sibley's Harvard Graduates*, Vol. XVII (1768-1771), p. 369.

America. The New Brunswick grandees, Chipman included, became notorious in Loyalist historiography for their elitist structuring of the province and the greed with which they pursued lucrative offices. Despite numerous prestigious positions - many of which paid little - and a successful law practice, Chipman (like Gideon White) struggled economically.¹⁷ Both men, however, were able to parlay their wartime records, generous land grants and/or military half-pay to create and solidify influential and prominent positions in their new societies.

Gideon White can also be usefully compared to the Planter, Simeon Perkins. A number of the similarities and differences between these latter two men point towards the tensions that developed in Nova Scotia in the wake of the Loyalist settlement. Both Perkins and White were New England traders. However, Perkins had emigrated to Nova Scotia in 1764, which placed him among the original New England settlers to the colony, whereas White arrived during the Revolutionary tensions. Upon settling in Nova Scotia, White hoped to retire from trade and turn to farming as a livelihood. This desire may have represented White's vision of himself as a propertied gentleman. Perkins, on the other hand, showed no signs of abandoning trade for another career. In this sense, Perkins simply may have been more pragmatic

¹⁷See Shipton, *Sibleys*, vol. 17 (1768-1771); also see, Ann Gorman Condon, *The Envy of the American States*.

than White, since the soil of the south shore supported very few farms. Again in terms of comparison, both Perkins and White became prominent members of their small communities, filling several local offices, including that of magistrate. The difference in their outlooks may be best expressed through the men's ambitions for their children. Simeon Perkins trained his sons (and, occasionally, nephews) to become ship captains and traders. In this line of work, the younger generation followed family tradition, which included Perkins, his brothers and uncles. Like White, Perkins struggled to educate his children under inadequate local conditions. For the most part, both men sought practical educations for their sons which would train them for commerce, thus emphasizing such skills as reading, writing and bookkeeping. However, White was more conscious of placing his sons in merchant houses, which held out the promise of rising within the mercantile community. Moreover, through the inheritance left by Nathaniel Whitworth, Gideon White had the opportunity to formally educate one of his sons. This occasion lays bare White's determination to place at least one son within the elite social circles traveled by the Ward Chipmans of British North America. This pursuit graphically demonstrates Gideon White's determination to parlay his Revolutionary war career into social advancement. Clearly, Whitworth's estate financed White's dreams. Nonetheless, it was the Revolution that had placed White in

the company of the Whitworths and it was the aftermath that positioned him, as well as Ward Chipman, within the upper echelons of the new society. To some degree the unsettled nature of a semi-frontier setting allowed White to advance in society. This had been true earlier throughout American settlement; however, as New England became more established this type of social mobility became more difficult to achieve. Thus, one of the cherished myths of the American Revolution - the ability of the common man to rise in rank - was playing out in Loyalist Nova Scotia.¹⁸ However, both Gideon White and Ward Chipman had their eyes on elitist positions much more in fitting with the British imperial setting. Perkins also was able to rise socially in the early days of Nova Scotian settlement. And, like so many of the Planters, he managed to commercially exploit the arrival of the Loyalists. Given the post-Revolutionary political tensions and rhetoric present in the colony, however, Perkins was forced to justify his political loyalties in a way that White was not, for the latter's seemed self-evident.

Gideon White married Deborah Whitworth, whose brothers had also fought for the British in New York. In many ways, both Gideon White and Ward Chipman hoped to emulate a charmed career-path such as that of Nathaniel Whitworth. Instead,

¹⁸For a discussion of the American Revolution and the myth of the "self-made man" see Alan Taylor, *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1995).

White and Chipman struggled through the much more tenuous, and more commonplace, existence of early Loyalist Nova Scotia. The Loyalist circles scattered across the Atlantic, at times, exhibited qualities of a tight-knit community. The career of Nathaniel Whitworth appears unusual in moving through and touching upon Loyalist communities throughout the Anglo-American Atlantic. After the Revolution, Whitworth re-established his position in Massachusetts all the while remaining in contact with the Loyalist community in Nova Scotia and Great Britain; eventually, he relocated to London. From this vantage point, it is possible to explore the Loyalists' experience in the larger context of the British Atlantic world, as well as to examine the role of the United States in their social, commercial and cultural spheres. Whitworth appears to have adjusted well to British society, although given the nature of his death there is room for doubt. Again Whitworth appears unusual, as many Loyalists who removed to Britain at the end of the Revolution were made to feel their "Americaness", inspiring several to return across the Atlantic.

Mrs. Henry Barnes, a Loyalist in London at the end of the Revolution, thought the war left the refugees "in a very unsettled state, not knowing where, or how to dispose of

themselves."¹⁹ While referring to the Loyalist community in Great Britain, Barnes undoubtedly spoke for exiles throughout the Atlantic world. A myriad of options faced the refugees in 1783, although the opportunities were not necessarily easy or pleasing to many. Barnes thought most of her compatriots in England would "shudder at the thoughts, of repairing to the Wilds of Nova Scotia." And, indeed, it seemed to a Loyalist contemporary of Barnes, Mrs. Jacob Duche, that the only viable solution for most would be to remain in England. Conversely, Loyalists such as Jonathan Sewall viewed the remaining British North American colonies as the "American New Jerusalem." In the months following the signing of the peace treaty thousands of Loyalists left New York directly for Nova Scotia and Upper Canada. Others traveled a more circuitous route, seeking opportunities in various sectors of the British Atlantic empire such as the West Indies. Eventually many of these exiles also immigrated to British North America.²⁰

According to Mary Beth Norton, only a limited number of Loyalists were able to secure even minor posts in the British government. Benjamin Thompson, whom a contemporary described as one of the "wonders" of his age, "solicited in vain" for

¹⁹As quoted in Mary Beth Norton, *The British-Americans: The Loyalist Exiles in England, 1774-1789* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1972), pp. 235-236.

²⁰Norton, *The British-Americans*, pp. 235-236.

an official position in the British Isles. He must have voiced the frustrations of a host of his peers when he concluded that England was "not a place for a Loyalist to make his way." Frequently, it proved easier for the colonials to find positions outside of the home country, particularly in the remaining British Atlantic possessions. During the 1780s, several southern refugees obtained positions with customs and the civil service in the British West Indies, although the number and availability of such offices were scarce. In the end, the Atlantic Maritime colonies held out the greatest promise for office seekers, since the sudden influx of settlers created its own demand for an expanded bureaucracy.²¹

During the Revolutionary War, the exiles in Britain spoke constantly of going home, yet few returned while the hostilities raged. Rumors circulated regarding those individuals who did venture back to the rebelling colonies, frequently telling of general mistreatment, arrests and deportations. Not surprisingly then, most Loyalists who contemplated journeying to North America consulted friends and relatives first. The replies were not encouraging. In 1783, a correspondent warned Robert Auchmuty not to journey to Boston until "a different temper prevails among the people

²¹Ibid., p. 236.

at large, and in our general Court in particular."²² This advice generally reflected one mood of the American public who, in the immediate postwar period, were "extremely opposed" to the return of the "Tory villains." Yet, the complexities and ambiguities of the situation are evidenced by the realization that even the passage of a relatively short time period seems to have eased some of the more intense passions. As early as the spring of 1784, both New York and Massachusetts relaxed the universal prohibitions against the return of Loyalists. By December of that year, a Connecticut resident believed that, "the vindictive Spirit of the Country is almost totally altered in the space of year past..."²³

In April 1783 Nathaniel Whitworth wrote to his brother Charles from the British garrison at New York, recounting many of the popular Loyalist suspicions. Nathaniel had received letters from their sisters in Massachusetts who were anxious to see the brothers. "But be assured Charles, the rascally acts that are daily established will prevent us from ever being subjects in either of the thirteen Provinces." At the same time existence within the garrison was becoming problematic as the Americans moved to consolidate their

²²Robert Auchmuty to Lord Hardwicke, August 11, 1783; quoted in Norton, *The British-Americans*, p. 242.

²³Norton, *The British-Americans*, pp. 243-246.

victory. Nathaniel complained that the garrison was "so infested with a sett of Rebel Rascals" that it had become a nuisance.²⁴ Gideon White echoed Nathaniel's disgruntlement when writing to Lieutenant Paget that same month. "There are now in the Garrisons about 1500 Hundred of the subjects of Congress come in to take possession and Speculate in Trade. Any man comes in as he pleases." Continuing, White assured Paget, "The Rebels are determined not to allow the Loyalists to return to take possession of their Estates. A circumstance many of us hope will be the cause of damning[?] them Yanks."²⁵ Whitworth and White confirm the confusions and frustrations of the moment. Three years later doubts still reigned regarding American responses to Loyalist claims. When, in June 1786, Mr. N. Ford arrived in New York to see to his property, he wrote to Gideon White at Shelburne. "[I] am going to [New] Jersey this week, where I shall have a disagreeable Job, before I settle my affairs to my mind; and whether I shall ever be able to do it, God only knows. If I Receive any money it will be in their Dam'd Paper Currency

²⁴Nathaniel Whitworth to Charles Whitworth, April 18, 1783, NSARM, MG 1/948, 182.

²⁵Gideon White to Lt. Paget, April 14, 1783, NSARM, MG 1/948.

which will be out in a week or two."²⁶ Ford's letter lends credence to Loyalist concerns over their property in America. It also reveals the difficulties attending to a satisfactory settlement of property and commercial claims. While Ford did not appear fearful for his safety, which was a real concern in the early years, neither was he sanguine that the inhabitants of New Jersey would be sympathetic to his demands. Furthermore, he recognized that any payment would be made in the form of New Jersey currency which would be difficult to dispose of elsewhere and then subject to a discount. Indeed, the first run of currency had already depreciated locally. Ford's expectations illustrate the harsh reality of the Loyalists' predicament.²⁷ Even those cases which were settled frequently cost the claimant dearly, while most Loyalists never collected at all from the Americans.

Given the circumstances above, Nathaniel Whitworth's experience seems all the more exceptional. In what appears to be a startling shift of both fortune and attitude, Nathaniel wrote on November 1, 1783 that he had just returned to New York from Boston, "where I was confind, tried and

²⁶N. Ford to Gideon White, June 8, 1786, NSARM, MG 1/949, 416.

²⁷See Carole Troxler, "A Loyalist Life: John Bond of South Carolina and Nova Scotia," *Acadiensis* (Spring 1991).

acquitted of all charges inhibited against me and admitted as a Citizen without taking any Oath."²⁸ Contrasting Whitworth's experience to the reports circulated amongst the Loyalists in England exposes the confusions and uncertainties attending to the actual situation in North America at the war's end.

Whereas the rumors of general harassment may have been accurate, or, at least seemed to be to many Loyalists, there were obviously exceptions. As related above, upon returning home, Whitworth experienced confinement and trial.

Nonetheless, shortly thereafter, he procured citizenship in Massachusetts. This proved to be fortuitous for his future career, since it allowed Whitworth freedom of movement throughout the now Anglo-American Atlantic world.

Nathaniel's activities reveal much about the paradoxes surrounding Loyalist treatment in the United States, in general and in Massachusetts, in particular. Both the protection and confiscation of property was one means by which the patriots could authenticate their new political order as well as their authority. The Americans viewed the security of property as one of the hallmarks of their new polity and thus the orderly transfer of land - through exchange, sale or inheritance - was an activity which served to empower the new polity. However, the patriots did not feel obligated to oversee the transfer of Loyalist property.

²⁸Nathaniel Whitworth to Charles Whitworth, November 1, 1783, NSARM, MG 1/948, 234.

Indeed, in denying the Loyalists this protection, the patriots defined the latter as "others", explicitly outside of the new order. Virtually all the new states demanded a commitment to the new order through a fairly routine set of statutes which linked treason, oaths of allegiance and a system of confiscation. While all states carried such statutes, these varied considerably in their wording and enforcement. Compared to its sister states, Massachusetts showed particular care to include women within these stipulations.²⁹

No small portion of the Whitworth family's good fortune during and after the Revolution came from their residence in Massachusetts and its interpretations of these statutes. As shown, Nathaniel gained citizenship in the new state without taking an oath. Plausible explanations range from local opinion to family influence to personal popularity. Of particular significance to the family was Massachusetts' rendering of the statutes. When writing to Charles in April, Nathaniel had alluded to their sisters in Massachusetts. Mrs. Miles Whitworth also appears to have been in the state throughout the conflict. According to David Maas, leaving a wife in Massachusetts was the surest method by which Loyalists could safeguard their property. Moreover, as a

²⁹Linda Kerber, "The Paradox of Women's Citizenship in the Early Republic: The Case of *Martin vs Massachusetts*, 1805," *American Historical Review* (April 1992), pp. 357-361.

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widow, Mrs. Whitworth had the protection of her dower, which most of the state legislatures honored. This was due partially to long-established tradition and partially to a desire to prevent the widows and children of Loyalists from becoming burdens on the public charity. Finally, Massachusetts did not adopt a sustained campaign to confiscate Loyalist property, making it feasible for Tories to return and claim their land.³⁰ The experience of the Whitworth family, however, may be usefully contrasted with that of Rufus Chandler, who would eventually serve as Nathaniel's executor. As a Loyalist, Chandler "was banished and proscribed the the State of Massachusetts, and his estate confiscated." The estate amounted to £820 after the General Court set aside a portion for the support of Rufus' wife, Elizabeth Putnam Chandler.³¹ Here we may surmise that the wealth and connections of the Whitworths had worked to protect their estate. Confirming Maas' assessment, Chandler had managed to protect a portion of his estate by leaving his wife in Massachusetts after he fled to New York. The attitude of Massachusetts may reflect the overall integration of the Loyalists and their ideology, at some level, prior to the war. Certainly, as will be seen in the correspondence of

³⁰Ibid., p. 359.

³¹Clifford K. Shipton, ed., *Sibley's Harvard Graduates*, vol. 16 (1764-1767), (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1972), p. 331.

Gideon White, their conservative political ideology did not quit the former colony after the Revolution, for the Federalist culture and ideology remained strong in Massachusetts, even predominating between 1790 and 1812. Similar to this older political ideology, the dower represents a British legacy which continued on in the new nation, into the next century. These types of institutions demonstrate the difficulties involved in actually attempting to transform former neighbors and kin into an "other".

What seems particularly striking in the correspondence of, and about, Nathaniel Whitworth is the range of options - geographical, commercial and social - open to him. Other members of the family also appeared to be socially and geographically mobile. The fortunes of the Whitworths suggest that while in many ways this was a privileged family, it was simultaneously star-crossed. Nathaniel was the son of Dr. Miles Whitworth, a prominent member of Massachusetts society and a surgeon for the British Army.³² The records

³²There is little information available regarding Miles Whitworth. *Sbiley's* records that in 1773, John Foxcroft ran off with "Twenty-year-old Sally Whitworth, daughter of Dr. Miles Whitworth of Boston." Foxcroft, who graduated from Harvard in 1758, as a Tory and a Loyalist was nonetheless able to remain in Massachusetts. The entry continues that after the Revolution, "Foxcroft lived on the northwest corner of Dunster and Winthrop streets 'in luxurious idleness,' which was something of a scandal in Puritan Cambridge." According to the *American Quarterly Review*: "He is well remembered ... as among the last specimens of the idle gentleman of birth and fashion, of a former generation." Significantly, Foxcroft was able to maintain this genteel livelihood due to the estate inherited by Sarah Whitworth

refer to four siblings, including sisters Sarah [Sally] Whitworth Foxcroft and Deborah Whitworth in Cambridge Massachusetts, and the aforementioned brother, Charles. There are also vague references to a brother, John.³³ Through his own letters, Nathaniel appears to have been witty, well educated, socially adept, financially astute and distinctly ambitious. In the references to Nathaniel by others, it is possible to ascertain that he was charming, popular and highly regarded. In many ways, Whitworth typifies the image of a wealthy, elite Loyalist from New England - an embodiment of the Loyalist myth.³⁴ The point to be emphasized here, however, is that many of his activities do not fit that model. This seems particularly true of his extensive dealings in and with the new United States, beginning in the immediate aftermath of the war. Through a highly talented individual such as Nathaniel Whitworth, it is possible to view the commercial and cultural integration of an Anglo-American Atlantic world.

In June 1783 Whitworth spoke of removing to St. Thomas

Foxcroft. Shipton, *Sibley's Harvard Graduates*, vol. 14 (1756-1760), (1968).

³³Charles Whitworth to Mrs. [Sarah] Foxcroft, Cambridge, August 12, 1784, NSARM, MG 1/948, 304.

³⁴See discussion in Norman Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists: The Ontario Loyalist Tradition and the Creation of Usable Pasts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

in Tortola. By March 1784, he was in Kingston, Jamaica en route to England. It is doubtful that he spent any amount of time there, since his correspondence places him in New York the previous November. Sometime prior to December 1784, Whitworth returned to Boston and appears to have remained there for the entirety of 1785, attending to family and business matters. By September 1786 Whitworth had relocated to England, where he maintained his residence until his death in 1798.

Letters addressed to family members also shed light on Nathaniel's activities. William Parker wrote to Charles Whitworth in June 1784, stating that he had seen Nathaniel, who was on his way to "partake of some, if not all of the pleasures of old England."³⁵ Based upon the dates of the correspondence, Parker appears to have encountered Nathaniel during his journey through the West Indies en route to England. Writing to Charles in 1785, Nathaniel intimated that he would soon visit Nova Scotia.³⁶ The following year, Stephen Millidge of Digby, Nova Scotia wrote to his friend

³⁵William Parker, Lymington, England to Charles Whitworth, June 1784, 1784, NSARM, MG 1/948, 283.

³⁶Complaining of the behavior of Champion and Dickason of London, Nathaniel wrote from Boston requesting that Charles drop "all connections with them untill my Arrival with you, which shall be in the Course of a month or six Weeks." Nathaniel Whitworth to Charles Whitworth, Shelburne, July 2, 1785, NSARM, MG 1/949.

Gideon White in Shelburne, telling of an encounter with Nathaniel, who had recently "purchased a Tract of Land some with very handsome Improvements in the vicinity of St. Johns [New Brunswick]." According to Millidge, Whitworth intended "to return with his Sister [Deborah] to this Country & to settle in the Province of New Brunswick."³⁷ In the context of his social status and preferences, it would make sense that if Nathaniel had chosen to remain in British North America it would be amongst the elitist circles of Loyalist New Brunswick. Shortly thereafter, however, Nathaniel seems to have opted to relocate to London. Given subsequent remarks, this decision appears to have been more suitable. In September 1791, Nathaniel wrote to Gideon White - who by then had married Deborah Whitworth - regarding the financial settlement against Charles. Nathaniel asked in frustration, "What am I to do with the wilderness he has thought proper to Assign me? ... Shall leave the management of it entirely to you - whether to sale or not as you may think proper - only must request that it may not involve me in a farthing [of] expense."³⁸

These letters hint at the extensive level of knowledge regarding the Loyalist community which circulated throughout

³⁷Stephen Millidge to Gideon White, Shelburne, March 18, 1786, NSARM, MG 1/949, 406.

³⁸Nathaniel Whitworth to Gideon White, September 5, 1791, NSARM, MG 1/949, 540.

the Atlantic world. This knowledge highlights the cultural integration of North America into a British Atlantic world, facilitated by associations such as the Loyalists. Through the maintenance of commercial, social and kinship networks, tying the new nation to British North America and Great Britain, the exiles actually fostered the success of the United States within the Atlantic empire. The Whitworth correspondence demonstrates the added ability of the Loyalists, as a smaller community within a greater commercial society, to obtain finances, contacts and resources from the metropole. This process worked to expand and strengthen the Anglo-American commercial nexus in the Atlantic, while enabling Britain to shore up its imperial and commercial peripheries by consolidating its position in Nova Scotia. One example of such networks can be seen when Nathaniel used his social acquaintances to arrange a business venture between Charles, newly established in Shelburne, and William Parker's brother, George, in England. Nathaniel's activities, real and proposed, display both the uncertainties and opportunities confronting the Loyalists as they sought to re-establish their lives in the postwar era. Frequently their decisions proved to be infeasible and/or impermanent, which resulted in further relocations. This process perpetuated the demographic shifting set loose by the Revolution well into the nineteenth century.

By March 1784, Charles Whitworth had arrived in Nova

Scotia where he determined to establish a business with his brother's financial backing. Nathaniel gave as freely of his business advice as he gave of his funds. Writing to Charles from Jamaica, Nathaniel stated that, based upon his limited knowledge of "that Country", he would "recommend Port Roseway, alias Shelburne, as your place of residence, where you will establish a House under the name of Messrs Charles & Nath Whitworth." To launch the business, Nathaniel advanced Charles "two thousand Pounds Sterling with the addition of two thousand Pounds more upon Credit from the House of our correspondence Messrs Champion & Dickason[,] merchants in London, the whole amount of which I have order'd to be Ship'd to your address in Halifax or Port Roseway." The letters depict the economic process involved in drawing Nova Scotia more closely into the sophisticated commercial networks of the Anglo-American Atlantic. The extent and flexibility of this trade nexus are evidenced by the ability of Nathaniel, temporarily positioned in Jamaica, to readily forward funds to Charles in Nova Scotia, via the merchant houses of London. At that time, Nathaniel was en route to England. Once he arrived, he promised to inform Charles "of the usual Credit given to merchants in America which will be a guide to you in your remittance."³⁹ In an harbinger of the future, and possibly as an experience from the past, Nathaniel had

³⁹Nathaniel Whitworth to Charles Whitworth, March 15, 1784, NSARM, MG 1/948, 264.

already begun the process of nudging Charles on the issue of remittances. Nathaniel's comments underscore the evolving imperial identity of Nova Scotia, which was now no longer a marginal colony but the potential center of gravity for British North America. Nathaniel next recommended that Charles not be too hasty in entering the fisheries. Rather, he should wait in order to gauge the success of others. "Should you have any concerns in that line [fisheries] before my Arrival, I think the American Market will be the most eligible as you may Judge from the fluctuating Prices here [Jamaica], and at the Windward Islands."⁴⁰ Throughout the letter, Nathaniel acknowledged the continuing economic influence of the United States on Nova Scotia. Directly, he called attention to the centrality of the American market for Nova Scotian fish, the colony's primary export. More intricately, Nathaniel called attention to the role of custom in British financial policy. Charles was to gauge his payments based upon the customary credit rates allowed in the "American" trade. As already noted, British credit terms had adapted to the temporal and spatial dictates of Atlantic commerce. By default, this Anglo-American credit tradition continued to service, and did not differentiate, a region which now housed two entities: the United States and British North America.

⁴⁰Ibid.

Finally, Nathaniel suggested that Charles also bide his time before the construction of a new store, unless a water front lot were available. "I think its more than probably youll be able to purchase a Store already compleated, as many people have reduc'd themselves to the last shilling in building and have not at present wherewithal to support themselves."⁴¹ Nathaniel's comments evidence a ready access to reliable news throughout the Atlantic, at the same time they demonstrate his own commercial acumen. For Nathaniel, stationed in Jamaica, had heard enough to recognize the economic difficulties facing Shelburne.⁴²

The continuing correspondence evidences the friction between the metropole and its commercial peripheries in the aftermath of the American Revolution, when American merchants and their practices were regarded in London with some suspicion. In this context, the Whitworths thought they were unfairly caught between the two worlds. In a letter sent

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²For an astute analysis of the long-range economic viability of Shelburne, see Charles Wetherell and Robert Roetger. "Notes and Comments: Another Look at the Loyalists of Shelburne, N.S., 1783-1795," *Canadian Historical Review* 70 (1989). For more general descriptions of the conditions (during the early years of Loyalist settlement) in Nova Scotia, in general, and Shelburne, in particular, see Condon, "1783-1800: Loyalist Arrival, Acadian Return, Imperial Reform"; Graeme Wynn, "A Province Too Much Dependent on New England," *Canadian Geographer* (1987); and Graeme Wynn, "A Region of Scattered Settlements and Bounded Possibilities: Northeastern America 1775-1800," *Canadian Geographer* (1987).

from Boston, dated July 2, 1785, Nathaniel chastised Charles over his lack of attention to business matters. "I am apprehensive you have been unfortunate and not able to make any remittance. My suspicion arises from your saying nothing on business." Because Charles had not sent the required remittance, Nathaniel's London agents, Champion and Dickason, had sold a number of his bills on the market, at a considerable loss. Nathaniel found the behavior of his London agents both unexpected and unpardonable. "But the fact is simply this, they make me pay for the Rascally Conduct of the Merchants in General in these States."⁴³ Here Nathaniel illustrated the dilemmas involved as British trading circles attempted to decipher and establish an appropriate role for the United States in an altered Atlantic imperial world. According to the precise dictates of commercial policy, Champion and Dickason had operated within the prescribed boundaries. An informal Anglo commercial etiquette, however, led Whitworth to believe that he should have been awarded a grace period, before his bills were sold on an inopportune market. William Forsyth understood, and

⁴³Nathaniel Whitworth to Charles Whitworth, July 3, 1785, NSARM, MG 1/948. According to Toby Ditz, merchants frequently used such epithets as "rogue," "knave," "rascal," and "vagabond" to describe corrupt or dishonorable merchants. Toby L. Ditz, "Shipwrecked: or, Masculinity Imperiled: Mercantile Representations of Failure and the Gendered Self in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia," *Journal of American History* (June 1994), p. 59. Among the merchants surveyed here, the term "rascal" was by far the most popular.

attempted to manipulate this ethos as late as 1798, during the yellow fever epidemic. Saidler and Waterbury, nonetheless, had responded by cashing out one of his bills of exchange at a loss, while Amory honored the bills throughout the crisis. Forsyth's experience demonstrates that this ethos was neither automatic nor foolproof; rather it represented a gentlemanly courtesy performed for fellow merchants based upon commercial goodwill and trust. It is not clear why Champion and Dickason denied Nathaniel this professional courtesy, but his expectations may serve as a guide. Whitworth attributed the partners' new-found strictness to a general sense of British mistrust regarding the American commercial sector. At one level, the newly reinstated Anglo-American trading network appeared to be familiar commercial territory. At another level, it now operated under new imperial and national rules. As such, British merchants moved cautiously as they tested traditional Anglo-American commercial practices on a new scene. In Whitworth's case, particularly, he smarted under the realization that by British standards he was considered to be an American - a sensation strangely missing from most of his correspondence, but all-too-common for most Loyalists. As such, Champion and Dickason may have been signalling that American merchants had not been fully admitted back into the commercial fold.

Nathaniel's letters apparently had the desired effect,

at least temporarily, for in December 1785 he once again wrote from Boston to say that Champion and Dickason had acknowledged Charles' last remittance. At the same time, however, they gave "another friendly hint of the amount of your last Invoice being due, which I hope my dear Charles will stimulate you to make the payment with all possible dispatch and prevent the remainder of my Bills falling at sacrifice."⁴⁴ While Nathaniel's warnings may indeed have stimulated poor Charles, they apparently did not inspire the economy of Shelburne, for his financial difficulties continued. By November 1790, Nathaniel had placed his brother-in-law and the Sheriff and Shelburne, Gideon White, in the truly unenviable position of foreclosing on Charles and seizing his property.⁴⁵

The erratic and highly unstable economic situation present in Shelburne destroyed large numbers of merchants, including many who were more savvy than Charles. Amongst those who did eventually survive, Gideon White and the Ross brothers were experienced and shrewd merchants before

⁴⁴Nathaniel Whitworth to Charles Whitworth, December 22, 1785, NSARM, MG 1/949, 398.

⁴⁵In November 1790, Gideon wrote to Charles, "Nothing could be more distressing to me than this commission ... You can feel for my situation. I really do for yours. And I am the confidant of your Brother Nat - and I dare not deceive him. You will join with me in saying Nath Whitworth is a Man of uncommon generosity - as a Friend and Brother no Man can boast of a more Worthy One." Gideon White to Charles Whitworth, November 29, 1790, NSARM, MG 1/949, 528.

arriving in Nova Scotia. Moreover, clues run throughout the correspondence that Charles may have been amongst the least likely to succeed in such a frenetic frontier atmosphere. What emerges from the letters between Nathaniel and Gideon White is a sense that Charles was not mature enough to manage a mercantile enterprise independently. In September 1791, Nathaniel fumed to Gideon White, "Let him first act the Man in a bankrupt state (that is by coming fairly forward with the Wreck of his possessions) before he presumes to stipulate in any pecuniary [?] settlement from the small Remains of my (already) too exhausted finances."⁴⁶ While Nathaniel's patience may have been exhausted by this stage, his funds were not, particularly in comparison to those Loyalists truly struggling to provide for themselves and their families. It is telling of their relationship, however, that having failed in his enterprise, Charles now expected Nathaniel to support him financially. One year later, White was still attempting to reconcile Charles' accounts.

"I cannot at this time state you an account of what Ch's property will Nett. [T]he debts he Both not knew. [H]e was so long lost - and ever incorrect that - Only One Account have yet been settled. ... I have now got them at my House. [A]nd hope with the aid of Charles to have them so as to make out account against certain persons - who say that Ch.

⁴⁶Nathaniel Whitworth to Gideon White, Shelburne, September 5, 1791, NSARM, MG 1/949, 540.

owes them."⁴⁷

A few months earlier, Gideon had sent Charles to Boston to retrieve Deborah White and her children home from their visit to Massachusetts. Gideon had decided upon this course in Halifax, where he and Charles had lodged together. "I was happy to find he had in a great degree - recovered his health - and had become more regular and cautious in his manners."⁴⁸ Gideon anticipated Nathaniel's surprise at this action and offered an explanation.⁴⁹ "I made him look as much like Charles Whitworth as you ever saw him. I roused his ambition. He was as much pleased with the Voyage as any Child ever was with a Toye. And tho' his nerves are weak Yet he had the Appearance of a Gentleman."⁵⁰ Gideon's comments portray the ambivalence in which he held Charles. White treated - and at some level, perceived - Charles as a child

⁴⁷Gideon White to Nathaniel Whitworth, November 6, 1792, NSARM, MG 1/949, 561.

⁴⁸Gideon White to Nathaniel Whitworth, 1792, NSARM, MG 1/949, 560.

⁴⁹"You no doubt was surprised to hear that I sent him up to Boston ... To wait on his Sister & children - I thought wou'd rouse his ambition & Visiting a Town he was born in, and seeing Men of his Owne standing doing well - I say those considerations led me to think the Voyage wou'd have a good Effect." Gideon White to Nathaniel Whitworth, November 6, 1792, NSARM, MG 1/949, 561.

⁵⁰Gideon White to Nathaniel Whitworth, 1792, NSARM, MG 1/949, 560.

and, thus, wrote to Nathaniel, "Your brother lives with men and hath ever since Mrs. White returnd from Boston. He is grown Astonishingly hearty & fatt. I treat him as a Child - and exercise his Body & mind gently. And I assure you he is a better Man than you or I cou'd ever expecte'd to have him."⁵¹ Under the proper circumstances, then, Charles could present the image of a gentleman or even appear a better man than anticipated. Like a child, however, Charles could not fully attain, nor accept the responsibilities, of manhood, particularly not in the harsh realities of post-Revolutionary Nova Scotia. As such, Gideon White could accept his paternalistic duty to protect and oversee Charles, so long as the latter appeared amenable and childlike.

Although he little knew it, Gideon's trials involving the men of the extended Whitworth family were only just beginning. The family exhibited a strain of instability which would occupy White's energies as he attempted to raise his own large family, at the same time securing a viable economic position in Shelburne. In May 1795, White received a letter from William Shipman of New York relaying information regarding Charles. "Mr. John Hughs shew'd me a Letter he Received this day from Charles, who is in Jamaica and well. [H]e has got a birth in the company Department which I hope may be a means of reestablishing his

⁵¹Gideon White to Nathaniel Whitworth, November 6, 1792, NSARM, MG 1/949, 561.

respectability in Life."⁵² Similar to Nathaniel, Charles exhibited a mobility brought on by the chaos of revolution, as men and their families embarked upon new enterprises in different locales. Like Charles, many did not succeed immediately and thus repeatedly moved on to newer or better opportunities. As D. W. Meinig has shown this process helped to keep the Atlantic in a state of flux, with the reshifting of the Loyalists coupling with the resurgent migration across the Atlantic to North America.⁵³ Many Loyalists never satisfactorily re-created their pre-Revolutionary existence. Gideon White remarked upon Charles' death in a letter to Rufus Chandler in 1801. "I mention to you in my last that Charles Whitworth died in Kingston Jamaica above one year ago. [H]e went as his Brother John did. I have been call'd uppon to pay Docters Bill[,] Funeral Charges[,] &c. Which I must do as Mrs. White is delicate in those things."⁵⁴ Although he died prematurely, Charles was the last surviving brother of the Whitworth family, as both John and Nathaniel had preceded him in death.

⁵²William Shipman to Gideon White, Shelburne, May 2, 1795, NSARM, MG 1/949, 580.

⁵³D. W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America*, Vol. 1, pp. 323-325.

⁵⁴Gideon White to Rufus Chandler, London, April 17, 1801, NSARM, MG 1/959, 1544.

During the interceding years, Nathaniel had relocated permanently to London, which he referred to as "the Paradise of the World." Based upon the comments to his brother-in-law, John Foxcroft of Cambridge, Massachusetts, Nathaniel apparently moved comfortably through the City's society. Whitworth urged Foxcroft to write to a mutual acquaintance of theirs by the name of Complin, "as a little attention of that kind will please the Old Fellow, and mayhap may give me an additional Dinner this Week. I am now at the receipt of two, which give me leave to tell you is a matter of consequence in London."⁵⁵ This particular letter provides a number of insights. First, it shows Nathaniel's ready acceptance of patronage. His attitudes on the subject may be contrasted against those of a number of Loyalist contemporaries who viewed the patronage system as a corrupt and restrictive influence within British society. In this instance, British institutions and culture compared unfavorably to those of America, which were purportedly based upon meritocracy.⁵⁶ This observation serves as an illustration of the "American" values of the Loyalists. Next, Whitworth related his apparent success within London society. Finally, and most importantly, the letter acknowledged the continuity of an

⁵⁵Nathaniel Whitworth to John Foxcroft, September 18, 1786, NSARM, MG 1/949, 432.

⁵⁶Samuel Sewell to Gideon White, March 1, 1811, NSARM, MG 1/953, 943.

Anglo-American culture. Whitworth referred to, and indeed based his expectations upon, social and commercial networks established prior to the Revolution. In asking John Foxcroft, situated in Massachusetts, to press his influence with Complin in London, Whitworth recognized and evidenced the ongoing viability of those relationships, despite the imperial rift. Whitworth continued to be enamored of his adopted society in another letter to Foxcroft dated March 13, 1791. There, he stated his desire to provide an English education for Gideon and Deborah White's first born son, Miles Whitworth White.⁵⁷ Eventually, and possibly ironically, a portion of Nathaniel's estate went toward the education of his namesake, Nathaniel Whitworth White, who used the money to attend Harvard. By that time, Nathaniel's Loyalist peers in Great Britain no longer shared his positive view of English society, if indeed they ever had.

The surviving correspondence from Whitworth lapses between 1792 and the date of his death in November 1798; however, the last letter reveals the success of his ambitions as the wars with France opened up opportunities. At that time, Nathaniel was Paymaster General for the British forces which were just then in the process of taking Minorca. Given the difficulties North Americans faced in obtaining British offices, Nathaniel's success in securing such a position

⁵⁷Nathaniel Whitworth to John Foxcroft, March 13, 1791, NSARM, MG 1/949, 530.

seems no small feat, although, the French Wars would have created numerous offices and posts unavailable in the immediate aftermath of the American Revolution. While there is no detailed information in the correspondence to indicate how Whitworth procured the position, his final letter voiced concern over not fully meeting the "approbation of the men who have patronized me." It was not clear to his friends why Whitworth chose to commit suicide. In his final letter, which was addressed to Arthur Baynes, Esq. of London, Nathaniel wrote, "You cannot but have observed at times - incidents of concern and uneasiness of my Countenance. It proceeded from a consciousness of my incapability of Executing to the satisfaction of the best of men, the duties imposed on me."⁵⁸ It would be convenient to romantically construe Nathaniel's death as a result of, and reaction to, the burdens of being a Loyalist and a North American striving to succeed in British society. Yet, all the men who voiced sincere bewilderment at Nathaniel's suicide (with the possible exception of Baynes) were Loyalists, suggesting that his death had no connection to the Loyalist predicament.

Education and Careers

To his ongoing dismay, fellow Loyalist Rufus Chandler

⁵⁸Nathaniel Whitworth to Arthur Baynes, November 12, 1798, NSARM, MG 1/959, 1543.

served as one of two executors for Whitworth's involved and long drawn-out estate. The other executor was Chandler's partner, Samuel Sewell, with whom Nathaniel had lived for sometime upon arriving in England.⁵⁹ Shortly before his suicide, Whitworth provided Chandler specific instructions regarding the handling of the estate, in case any "unfortunate Accident" should occur. Under such circumstances, Chandler was to "write my Dear Sisters and request Gid White to come immediately Home in order to settle my Concerns as speedily as possible."⁶⁰ It is possible to sympathize with Chandler, for whom the estate proved

⁵⁹In July 1787, Whitworth wrote to his sister, Sarah Foxcroft: "Our little party at this palace consisting of Harrison Gray [?], W. Lerins, Sammy Sewell and Capt Kane. [A]re very happy, indeed, its one of the first Water Views in England, situated at the Entrance of the Thames. Nathaniel Whitworth to Sarah Foxcroft, Cambridge, Massachusetts, July 31, 1787, NSARM, MG 1/949, 460. Samuel Sewell, like Jonathan Sewell, changed the spelling of the family name from the original American spelling, "Sewall". Apparently, Jonathan and Samuel reasoned that any ancestor "fool enough to emigrate to America probably wouldn't know how to spell his own name." Samuel graduated from Harvard in 1761. Like Chandler, his estate in Brookline, Massachusetts was confiscated by the Patriots. In this respect Sewell was at a disadvantage, since he was unmarried. However, a small portion of the property which had been overlooked by the Whigs was returned to his Sister Hannah Wolcott at the time of Sewell's death in 1811. Samuel Sewell fled to London after the Revolution where he remained until his death. Clifford K. Shipton, ed., *Sibley's Harvard Graduates*, vol. 15 (1761-1763), pp. 105-107.

⁶⁰Nathaniel Whitworth to Rufus Chandler, London, November 12, 1798, NSARM, MG 1/959, 1543.

unendingly troublesome. His frustrations surfaced in a letter written to White in 1810 regarding the estate's numerous entanglements.

"[W]e have paid to the Treasurer of Chelsea Hospital all the Money remaining due on Account of our Prize Agency concerns, which I consider a most fortunate Circumstance, for I am heartily tired of being called upon respecting that Business, and of holding Money which no prudent Man could make any Profit from...God Knows I have quite enough of that [trouble] in settling Mr. Whitworths Affairs. He little thought that his Executors would be cursed with Five Public Accounts..."⁶¹

From an historical perspective, however, the correspondence generated by the estate and its many entanglements, provide an invaluable insight into the Loyalist community in exile on both sides of the Atlantic. The estate also ensured Gideon White's attention and involvement over the years, as funds were earmarked specifically for the education of his second son (and Nathaniel's namesake), Nathaniel Whitworth White.

Through their attention to education, the Loyalist upper-ranks such as Gideon White revealed the values and expectations brought with them from the former colonies. The Loyalists came to a colony which, by the standards of many, provided a wholly inadequate educational system. Their efforts to establish schools and colleges, over the following decades, reflected both the importance they placed upon a good education and their determination to secure such for

⁶¹Rufus Chandler to Gideon White, Shelburne, April 3, 1810, NSARM, MG 1/953, 929.

their children. White's experience portrays the struggles endured by the Loyalists as they attempted to cope with the lack of educational facilities. As with any frontier society, schools developed over time with settlement. What distinguished this phase of colonial development in Nova Scotia and even more so in New Brunswick was the large numbers of well-educated, elite men amongst the early settlers. These men were impatient to establish educational systems to provide for their children. Education held the dual advantage of conveying the elite's own cultural values to the next generation as well as protecting it from the dangerous and unrefined impulses of the frontier. Understandably, the educational facilities of New Brunswick lagged behind that of Nova Scotia. In 1785, the New Brunswick council approved a charter for a provincial college. The British government, however, refused to provide the articles of incorporation and, just as importantly, the necessary funding. The decision reflected the government's indecision regarding an educational policy for the colonies. By 1790, the Pitt government had determined to establish King's College in Halifax, which was intended to service the students in all the remaining British North American colonies. This choice emphasized the pre-eminence of Halifax in the British official mind. Despite the entreaties of Governor Carleton of New Brunswick, the British government refused to finance a second North American college in that

province.⁶²

The issue of education not only illuminates the desires of the Loyalists themselves but also those of the British government concerning their second empire. In the pre-Revolutionary era (and later in exile), the Loyalists had sought to bolster familiar institutions, especially the family, to anchor a rapidly changing American society. The metropole came to a similar conclusion in the aftermath of revolution as it sought to assert authority over its remaining empire. One way to exert its influence, particularly in the Atlantic empire, was to bring colonial institutions into greater conformity with their British counterparts. Lieutenant Governor John Simcoe of Upper Canada argued in June 1791:

"The utmost Attention should be paid that British Customs, Manners, & Principles in the most trivial as well as serious matters should be promoted & inculcated to obtain their due Ascendancy to assimilate the Colony with the parent state & to bear insensibly all their habitual Influence in the Support of that British Constitution which has been so wisely extended to that Country."⁶³

In pursuit of this goal, London envisaged the English church as the partner of government in the colonies. The Church of

⁶²Condon, *The Envy of the American States*, chap. 8; and, MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil*, chap. 10.

⁶³Simcoe to Henry Dundas, 30 June 1791, in E.A. Cruikshank, ed., *The Correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe* (Toronto, 1923), vol. 1, p. 27; quoted in Judith Fingard, *The Anglican Design in Loyalist Nova Scotia, 1783-1816* (London: Northumberland Press Ltd., 1972), pp. 1-2.

England seemed a particularly apt vehicle for imperial reform since, by its nature, it would promote and strengthen the principles of authority and hierarchy, both of which would work against the excess of radicalism and republicanism. Similar to the Loyalist elite, the government viewed education as another means through which to exert influence and even control over the colonists. And, during the the early years of Loyalist exile the only system of charity schools in Nova Scotia was under the jurisdiction of the Anglican Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (S.P.G.).⁶⁴

As C. A. Bayly has shown the role of education in the empire contained an even more insidious nature. The Revolution had starkly demonstrated, to some observers within the metropole, the need for greater imperial authority. Institutions such as Haileybury college and Fort William college in Calcutta, along with the Anglican universities in Nova Scotia and Upper Canada, were designed to inculcate a new ethos in imperial service. At one level this served to professionalize the imperial civil service, imparting a distinct sense of patriotism. At another level, however, colleges such as Fort William were designed to train a master race, distant from the "habitual dissipation and corruption of the people of India." This education was designed to Anglicize the service, putting an end to the involvement of

⁶⁴Fingard, p. 134.

facilities in the early decades of Loyalist settlement. This was particularly true in the outports such as Shelburne. In what became a frequent refrain, Gideon White lamented to Rufus Chandler regarding the expense of educating his large family. At one point, Chandler dismissed White's complaints by reminding the latter that "as a Man of Property, you was in duty bound to support and Educate your Son entirely at Your own expence untill he Entered Colledge."⁶⁸ Chandler adopted a British understanding of the social value and responsibility of property-ownership. In Great Britain, a landed gentleman - such as Gideon White styled himself - would be expected to possess the wherewithal to educate his children. In a frontier society, land in itself did not guarantee wealth, especially in the early days when the land required intensive labor before it could yield produce.

In fairness to White, he did not shirk the responsibilities of educating his children. As suggested in John Sargent's quote which opens this chapter, by 1801 White may have considered leaving the colony in pursuit of better educational opportunities for his children. During that time period White wrote to Lynde Walter of Boston for help in securing a school master to open a grammar school in Shelburne. Walter replied apologetically that he did not know where to "find such who is not very advantageously

⁶⁸Rufus Chandler to Gideon White, July 31, 1807, NSARM, MG 1/952, 869.

settled. It would give me pleasure to render your community such a Service."⁶⁹ Finally in 1803, White succeeded in hiring Robert Rogers of Cambridge, Massachusetts as the school master for Shelburne. Rogers had been promised £150 for the first year and traveling expenses to Shelburne.⁷⁰

The employment of Robert Rogers sheds light on a number of issues regarding Nova Scotian education, in general. While White's efforts reflect concern over his own children, the intention and result were to open a grammar school in Shelburne. Similar to the Loyalist leaders of New Brunswick, White sought educational opportunities for the community, at large. This goal was in keeping with White's vision of his role in Shelburne. As the holder of several offices in the county, White represented a prominent citizen and as such he had an obligation to the members of the society. Undeniably, White benefited financially from his offices, just as he benefited personally from a local grammar school. At the same time, however, the community overall gained from his efforts. Within this context we can view the politics surrounding colonial schooling along with an assessment of its actual availability. In 1792, William Morice, the secretary for the S.P.G. in London wrote to the minister of

⁶⁹Lynde Walter to Gideon White, May 24, 1802, NSARM, MG 1/949, 732.

⁷⁰Deposition of Robert Rogers at Shelburne, November 22, 1803, NSARM, MG 1/951, 778.

the Anglican church in Shelburne. "If a School be necessary, & the B[isho]p shd think so, the Socy are ready to give their assistance: but tis observed that there are already 12 Schools in the place."⁷¹ The bishop in question, Charles Inglis, agreed that the S.P.G. should not carry the expense of charity schools in locales where the inhabitants were capable of paying for a school master. Twelve seems an unduly high number of schools for Shelburne, thus we should question the nature of these institutions. Many of these may well have represented small private schools, run by exiles attempting to eke out a livelihood. This appears particularly likely given the role of Shelburne as the Loyalist center attracting, as it did, the largest influx of exiles. The years surrounding 1792 were crucial in the town's development, after which the center rapidly declined. In the aftermath, Gideon White was left to cope with a diminishing or non-existent educational system.

Secondly, Rogers represented an obvious and continued association with New England. In a seemingly innocuous and mundane fashion, Rogers carried his New England customs and culture north, to educate a new generation of Anglo-Americans. Given the lack of educational facilities in the colonies with which to train professionals, British North Americans were, for a period, dependent upon the United

⁷¹Quoted in Fingard, p. 134.

States and Great Britain for such individuals. Nonetheless, Lynde Walter, writing in 1802, suggested the antidote: "W. Prescott tells me that the Winsor College [at Horton, Nova Scotia] is now on so good a footing that many Lads from Hfx are gone up to that Seminary."⁷² Within twenty years of the Loyalist onslaught, Nova Scotia had its own college, which could begin the process of educating professionals locally. Indeed, a number of the Loyalist scions of New Brunswick educated their sons there. Walter's comment serves to broaden and complicate Bayly's vision of colonial education. While Bayly sees it as an institution to extend and solidify the authority of empire, Walter understood its capacity to develop and mature the colony itself. This aspect of education demonstrates, as so many American enterprises before it, the ability of locals and colonists to manipulate imperial desires, policies and institutions to their benefit. While Bayly is correct to detect an heightened desire for authority on the part of the metropole, he over-emphasizes the actual success in the Maritime colonies. In part, this resulted from the American character of the populace which, even in exile, was not ready to renounce their sense of republicanism.

Significantly, White went to considerable effort and expense to educate his daughters. By 1803, the two oldest

⁷²Lynde Walter to Gideon White, May 24, 1802, NSARM, MG 1/949, 732.

daughters - Joann and Deborah, ages fifteen and twelve years old, respectively - had completed grammar school.⁷³ Even amongst the well-established cities of the United States, girls rarely advanced beyond a grammar school education. As such, the education of the White daughters would have appeared respectable to contemporaries, even by the standards of the United States.⁷⁴ Given the educational limitations of Nova Scotia, it appears all-the-more noteworthy. Through education, we can see the ways in which status and gender intertwined. As noted, the Tory scions of New Brunswick understood the role of education in maintaining their position in society. When it became clear that Great Britain would take no active role in the province's educational system, a number of leaders developed schemes of their own. George Leonard solicited English philanthropists to become patrons of the Fredericton academy and to endow a public library. Leonard confided his fears to Ward Chipman that unless educational facilities became available soon, "the girls" would have no choice but to marry the "Common

⁷³Gideon White to Rufus Chandler, London, May 9, 1803, NSARM, MG 1/951, 765.

⁷⁴See Sally Schwager, "Educating Women in America," *Signs* 12 (Winter 1987); and Joel Perlmann and Dennis Shirley, "When Did New England Women Acquire Literacy?" *William and Mary Quarterly* 48 (January 1991).

peasantry of the Country."⁷⁵ The dilemma cut both ways.

Without adequate provincial schools, only a handful of boys would have an opportunity to be educated. As this generation grew to adulthood, women of the middling and upper ranks would share diminished opportunities of marrying educated, local men, as was befitting their ranks. On the other hand, the girls themselves would be faced with decreased opportunities for education, which could endanger their potential to marry well, within their class. In both instances, men of the middling and well-to-do classes could feel the lack of educational resources as a potential threat to the social status of their descendants.

The pinnacle of Gideon White's educational ambitions rested on his second son, Nathaniel. Even though the Whitworth estate remained unsettled, White could draw upon it to pay for Nathaniel's educational expenses once the boy began college. Issues as to when and, more importantly, where to send Whitworth's namesake were discussed in the numerous letters crossing the Atlantic between White and Chandler. In 1807, when Nathaniel was fourteen years old, Chandler wrote to Gideon regarding the amount then available for education. Chandler assumed the boy would enter college at the age of sixteen years old. Apparently in response to an earlier letter, the executor asked, "Would he not be

⁷⁵Leonard to Chipman, October 28, November 6, November 13, 1794, Hazen Collection; quoted in Condon, p. 195.

better educated at Your Loyal Nova Scotia Colledge than at Cambridge [Massachusetts] which is a dissipated place? I have often observed that Young men Educated at Nova Scotia turn out better than any others."⁷⁶ While sharing Chandler's reservations, White nonetheless announced his determination to exhibit his son at Cambridge during commencement in August 1807. "I should have Educated him at our Nova Scotia college had it been what I and every other Loyal Subject wished. In fact it has been neglected."⁷⁷

Based upon the correspondence, Nathaniel began Harvard at the start of term in 1807. As late as September 1808, however, White felt compelled to justify his decision to his fellow Loyalist. "[H]is Education ... could not be had in this Town - and to be honest - not in Nova Scotia. Properly I am not singular in this Opinion. My friend Ward Chipman & many other worthies of this and the neighbouring Provinces have educated the[ir] Sons at Cambridge." Earlier in the decade, Ward Chipman had sent his son, Ward Chipman, Jr., to

⁷⁶Rufus Chandler to Gideon White, March 16, 1807, NSARM, MG 1/952. Chandler's unfavorable opinion may have rested upon his own experience at Harvard in the 1760s. Apparently Chandler's conservative politics were noticed by his fellow undergraduates. By way of critique, the students hanged two effigies, bearing the names of Colonel John Chandler (Rufus' father) and a classmate, Mr. Hale, on the elm tree between Harvard Hall and Holden Chapel. Shipton, ed., *Sibley's Harvard Graduates*, vol. 16, 1972 p. 329.

⁷⁷Gideon White to Rufus Chandler, May 17, 1807, NSARM, MG 1/952.

Harvard with the financial assistance of his brother-in-law, William Gray, a wealthy Boston merchant. White clearly intended that his son should move in the same social circles as the Chipmans and their peers. "I am delivered my Son should have the best opportunity."⁷⁸ White completed his letter to Chandler with a regret that he had been unable to visit Nathaniel since his departure for college. Friends had advised White not to visit the United States, given the current political hostilities between that country and Great Britain, brought on by the Napoleonic Wars. White's letter portrays the paradoxical nature of the United States within the world of the Loyalists. At one level, the new republic offered greater accessibility to opportunities than did the metropole. As such, both Ward Chipman and Gideon White availed themselves of resources in the United States to benefit their sons. At another level, as shown by White's concluding remarks, political tensions between the United States and Great Britain created barriers for the Loyalists. Under the circumstances, White could not travel freely between the British colony and the new nation. At this juncture, the United States presented both linkages and barriers to the Loyalist community. The ambiguous nature of the relationship would serve, to a degree, to re-ignite Loyalist animosity towards the new republic.

⁷⁸Gideon White to Rufus Chandler, September 22, 1808, NSARM, MG 1/952.

Throughout the post-Revolutionary years, Loyalists such as Gideon White and Ward Chipman frequently echoed Chandler's distrust and dislike of involvement with the United States. Yet these men were forced to recognize that they could not procure satisfactory educations for their sons in British North America. For various reasons - financial, cultural, familial - they chose to keep their sons in North America. In White's case there were obvious financial and social advantages to educating his son in the United States vice Great Britain. Certainly it proved more economical to send his son to Massachusetts. More significantly, by choosing Harvard, White was sending his son into a well-established circle of family and friends. The northern colonies had traditionally educated their sons at home rather than sending them to Great Britain as was common in the West Indies.⁷⁹ In the aftermath of the Revolution, those Loyalists who could afford to do so, often sent their sons to Britain. Even though White and Chipman sent their sons south to college, they fully expected the young men to return to the British empire.

Gideon White had been forced to contend with his contradictory views regarding the United States, earlier as he moved to establish his eldest son, Miles. This does not

⁷⁹W. L. Schase, *The Colonial American in Britain* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1956); and, Edmund S. Morgan, *Virginians at Home: Family Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg, 1952).

necessarily suggest that he resolved those contradictions. In November 1803, Gideon White wrote to Rufus Chandler in London regarding opportunities for Miles, who was then fourteen years old. "Do you know of any Merchant in London who would take such a Lad in his Counting House or Store?" As a recommendation, White stated that his son possessed an exceptionally good hand, arithmetic and, moreover, he was a good "Grammar Schollar." Miles was also described as good tempered and "pure in principal."⁸⁰ Chandler appeared less than enthusiastic regarding Miles' prospects in the City and expressed surprise that White, who had recently been to London, would think the notion feasible. "For you must know its not possible to be done for so small a sum as 1000 Guineas & probably the loss of his Health & principals." In what became a constant thread running through Chandler's correspondence, the ex-Bostonian lawyer advised White to place his son with a respectable merchant in Nova Scotia.⁸¹ Chandler and White present us with the image of two Loyalists who permanently left the original thirteen colonies, one to London and the other to Nova Scotia. Over the years, both experienced the hardships and disillusionment of relocation to a land seemingly similar in culture, but in reality

⁸⁰Gideon White to Rufus Chandler, November 6, 1803, NSARM, MG 1/959, 1544.

⁸¹Rufus Chandler to Gideon White, March 19, 1804, NSARM, MG 1/952, 789.

foreign to their homeland in numerous and various ways. For all of the hard-earned wisdom brought on by exile, both men tended to romanticize the other's new-found home, perceiving opportunities and options which often did not exist. These idealistic inklings are complicated, however, by the realization that both men sojourned in the other's new homeland and both came away from the experience disenchanted. At the end of the Revolutionary war, Chandler left New York for England. Apparently disparaging of the opportunities there, Chandler and his father, Colonel John Chandler, next sailed for Halifax in 1786. After the first winter, the prospects for Rufus Chandler in Nova Scotia appeared grim.

"It is now more than six months since I arrived in this disagreeable country, the weather has been so Extreme Cold that we have continued froze up the whole time and are heartily tired of Nova Scotia. I shol'd not be surprised if my father returned to England ... This Province being overstocked with starved Lawyers, I do not consider my Profession worth a farthing, and am as much at a loss what to do with myself here."⁸²

By 1790 both father and son had returned to London. As will be seen in the next chapter, White ventured to London for some months to attend to Nathaniel Whitworth's estate. He also came away somewhat disabused of his romanticized notions of the metropole. It would appear that time had mellowed each man's memory of the other's new homeland; this proved

⁸²Rufus Chandler, *New England Historical General Register*, XXVI, p. 247; quoted in Shipton, ed., *Sibley's Harvard Graduates*, vol. 16, (1972), p. 331.

particularly true for Chandler.

If the issue of education presented a very real difficulty for the Loyalist elite and those aspiring to join their ranks, securing suitable careers for their sons often posed an even greater challenge. White momentarily accepted Chandler's advice not to send Miles to England. It is not clear from the correspondence who was eager to see Miles relocate, the father or the son himself. For next, Gideon sent Miles to the care of old friends in Boston hoping to land a position with a local merchant there. Gideon White must have taken this step with misgivings. In a letter addressed to Chandler the previous year, White wrote that he did not wish to send his son to the United States. "The Manners of that Country are so changed that a young mind can receive no real good from that People."⁸³ References to "that Country" and "that People" served to distance White from his former homeland. Through such discourse, White could imagine its inhabitants as the "other", although such a position was fraught with ambiguities for White. By the time he wrote to Chandler in 1803, White had firmly re-established social and familial ties in the United States. Moreover, as his children grew to adulthood, the United States would open doors in terms of economic opportunities not readily available to them in Nova Scotia.

⁸³Gideon White to Rufus Chandler, November 6, 1803, NSARM, MG 1/959, 1544.

There are few surviving letters which touch upon Miles' stay in Boston and none regarding his decision to return to Nova Scotia. While it must have afforded Gideon considerable relief to have his son back in the province, the return did nothing to alleviate the need to place Miles in a suitable career. Miles next surveyed the range of possibilities in Halifax. In September 1807, Lawrence Hartshorne, of Hartshorne and Boggs in Halifax, wrote to Gideon approving of Miles' decision against enlisting in the navy. The present moment seemed particularly bad to embark upon a naval career, since Hartshorne anticipated peace soon, which would not allow Miles enough service time to be promoted to Midshipman. In a peacetime navy, it would require even greater effort to attain such a rank. Hartshorne spoke highly of Miles' abilities and manners, adding that he hoped to keep the boy on at the merchant house. However, Hartshorne's partner may have already promised the position to the son of John Sargent of Barrington, and thus, the matter would remain unsettled until Boggs' return.⁸⁴ Even though White was well known amongst the official and commercial circles, he did not have the necessary connections to place his sons in the much-sought after civil offices of Halifax. White, nonetheless, intended to see his sons enter into the middling and professional classes of society. Since

⁸⁴Lawrence Hartshorne to Gideon White, September 25, 1807, NSARM, MG 1/952, 876.

he could not afford to educate his sons beyond grammar school, an education in a merchant's house or business would provide such opportunities.

Career opportunities in Halifax were distinctly less plentiful than those in the rapidly expanding cities of the United States. In contrast to New Brunswick, however, Halifax - with a developed mercantile center and lucrative connections to the navy - offered far more potential. The Loyalist scions of New Brunswick, like their counterparts in Nova Scotia, were confronted with the dilemma of placing their sons in suitable positions. A number of the elite sent their sons out into the empire to seek fortunes. Edward Winslow encouraged two sons to join the British Army and a third son to enter the British East India Company. The sister British North American colonies provided another avenue. Jonathan Bliss, who looked upon New Brunswick as a "wretched country", sent one son to England where he eventually became the agent for New Brunswick. Closer to home, Bliss sent another son to Nova Scotia, where he went on to sit on the supreme court. Jonathan and Stephen Sewell (sons of Jonathan Sewell) held distinguished law careers in Lower Canada. At roughly the same time (circa 1795) that the younger Sewells departed for Quebec, Gabriel V. Ludlow left for a career in New York. These young men quickly understood that the best positions and clients were still held by their

father's generation.⁸⁵ Many of the men amongst this original generation had grown to manhood in British America just as its commercial potential was coming to be widely recognized. Accordingly, these men held high expectations for their own future and careers. The Revolution disrupted - and for many, severely circumscribed - these expectations. Often the Tory elite's own sense of frustration mingled with anxiety when they contemplated their sons' futures. The fact that the United States, with its seemingly endless promise, continued to loom large in their world, only added to the sense of bitterness.

By 1806, White had begun the search for a suitable apprenticeship for his third son, Gideon Jr. who was then twelve years old. As can be seen through the experiences of the two older boys, Miles and Nathaniel, White tended to embark his sons upon their careers at the age of fourteen years old. This may have struck even his contemporaries as young. Chandler had assumed and then recommended that Nathaniel not be sent to college before the age of sixteen, however, White remained adamant. In attempting to place Gideon, Jr. at the age of twelve, White may have anticipated significant competition in finding desirable positions. Charles Hill confirmed such concerns in his reply to White. "I fear in this Town [Halifax] where we raise so many Boys it

⁸⁵Condon, *The Envy of the American States*, p. 196.

will not be easy to procure a good place for yours, but I shall enquire."⁸⁶ James Ewing, a fellow New Englander and Halifax merchant, appeared more optimistic in his reply, two years later. He had considered writing for some time with regards to Gideon's offer. "I have now made up my mind, and if you will Send him [Gideon Jr.] on the same terms as Master Miles is with Messrs Hartshorn & Boggs." Ewing further assured White that he had established himself in business and was not likely to leave the country soon, hinting at the mercantile difficulties in succeeding in Halifax.⁸⁷ The delay in placing Gideon Jr. would appear to justify White's strategy.

White must have accepted Ewing's terms since by October Miles was writing to his parents regarding Gideon Jr., who had garnered "the affection of all who yet knows him."⁸⁸ For reasons unknown Gideon Jr. did not remain with Ewing until he became of age, as was originally planned. By 1811, Gideon Sr. was once again writing to contacts in Halifax, this time to Joseph Prescott of Prescott, Lawson and Company. The

⁸⁶Charles Hill to Gideon White, October 14, 1806, NSARM, MG 1/952, 846.

⁸⁷James Ewing to Gideon White, August 26, 1808, NSARM, MG 1/952, 897.

⁸⁸Miles White to Gideon and Deborah White, October 4, 1808, NSARM, MG 1/952, 904.

merchant replied that the firm was in the process of restructuring, but that it might be possible afterwards for the remaining partners to take Gideon Jr. into their counting house.⁸⁹

During that same year, White made his final bid to place Miles in London. White had written to Samuel Sewell to secure a government position for his son. Sewell proved no more sanguine about career opportunities than his partner, Rufus Chandler, had been seven years earlier. According to Sewell, White himself had remarked upon the primary barrier against securing such a post, i.e. "the greediness of People of this Country, after all such things, for their own families." Sewell did not have the necessary contacts to procure such an office for Miles. Beyond that, he warned, in such a career Miles would remain little more than a "labouring, writing clerk" earning only enough to keep him above want. If it were his own son, Sewell would prefer to keep him in Nova Scotia where, with "a good character, and industry," he could advance in the world.⁹⁰ Despite paternal misgivings, Miles finally launched himself as an independent merchant in Halifax in 1811. At the time he felt the need to console Gideon Sr. "You view, my dear Father, the dark side.

⁸⁹Joseph Prescott to Gideon White, April 24, 1811, NSARM, MG 1/953, 947.

⁹⁰Samuel Sewell to Gideon White, March 1, 1811, NSARM, MG 1/953, 943.

Things do not wear so gloomy an aspect as you suppose."⁹¹

Also in 1811, Gideon Jr. sailed for Lisbon on his first voyage out of Massachusetts. While neither may have realized it, both sons had entered the careers they would maintain for the rest of their short lives.

All told, four of Gideon White's six sons entered commerce and all seemed to have entered the craft via both the family store in Shelburne as well as an apprenticeship in Halifax. Of these four, only Gideon Jr. and later Deane, actually sailed and captained ships like their father before them. Significantly, it would be these two who left Nova Scotia to work out of New England. It would not be unreasonable to assume that their careers as ship captains gave them the economic mobility to relocate which their brothers, Miles and Cornelius (as settled merchants) did not possess. The entry of the younger Whites into commerce reflected both their heritage as well as the economic realities of Shelburne in particular and Nova Scotia, more generally. Gideon White had intended to leave commerce for farming after the Revolution, yet the continued reliance on the Shelburne store demonstrates his inability to do so.

⁹¹Miles White to Gideon White, October 22, 1811, NSARM, MG 1/954.

The Next Generation

The lives and choices of Gideon White's children dramatically illustrate the degree to which the United States remained an integral entity within the Loyalist community, albeit a presence fraught with tensions. All three of Gideon's daughters relocated to New England, marrying and remaining in Massachusetts for the rest of their lives. Deborah White had moved to Cambridge sometime before 1803 to live with her maternal aunt Sarah Whitworth Foxcroft and her husband, John Foxcroft. As was common amongst childless couples, the Foxcrofts had adopted Deborah.⁹² This also evidenced the strong relationship between between Deborah Whitworth White and her sister, Sarah.⁹³ Deborah White Foxcroft returned to Shelburne, probably after the death of her aunt in 1801. By July 1814, however, Deborah was back in

⁹²At the time of Foxcroft's death, White fumed to Rufus Chandler "I am all anxiety to get to Boston. John Foxcroft I wrote you was dead. I heard this Day he made a Will and gave his Estate to Phillips Family & his Brothers Children. Not a penny even to my Daughter - Deborah Foxcroft, which he adopted." Gideon White to Rufus Chandler, May 9, 1803, NSARM, MG 1/951, 765.

⁹³In July 1787, Nathaniel Whitworth wrote to his sister, Sarah Whitworth Foxcroft, from London, celebrating Deborah's engagement to Gideon White. "I only regret your being deprived of a Sister who till this winter has never [been] out of your sight." Nathaniel Whitworth to Sarah Foxcroft, Cambridge, Massachusetts, July 31, 1787, NSARM, MG 1/949, 460.

Cambridge and married to Reverend Thomas Beattie Gannett.⁹⁴

Joann traveled to Boston with Miles in October, 1804, at which time Gideon wrote to Lynde Walter. Joann was to remain in Boston for only a few days before leaving for Plymouth to visit family and friends. It is not clear if and when Joann returned to Shelburne, however, she eventually married William Davis, Jr. of Plymouth, whose family were close friends of Gideon.⁹⁵ Deborah White Foxcroft Gannett died in early 1823.⁹⁶ At that time, Sarah White traveled south to

⁹⁴In July, 1814 Nathaniel wrote to Miles, "I am sorry to hear such dismal reports of the new fledged pair of Gannetts. However, we must ascribe his bodily imbecility and coldness to fatigue and anxiety of mind." Nathaniel White to Miles White, July 16, 1814, NSARM, MG 1/953, 990.

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Jr. appears to have been plagued - and would continue to be so - by economic difficulties. Here his experience was representative of the economic hardships of Nova Scotia, and particularly Halifax, brought on by the peace between Great Britain and France. This time the move to the United States proved to be permanent for Gideon Jr. By this time, the circle of family and friends in Massachusetts included his sisters Joann in Plymouth and, shortly thereafter, Sarah in Cambridge. During the years between his departure in 1823 and 1826, Gideon Jr. continued to inform Cornelius of his progress in Boston. In 1824, Gideon Jr. entered an extremely beneficent commercial partnership with one of the elder Davis', who was a close friend of Gideon Sr. and one of Joann's in-laws.

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¹⁰⁴Gideon White, Jr. to Cornelius White, July 26, 1824, NSARM, MG 1/954, 1157.

shore.¹⁰⁵ Instead, he would continue "on for the present with the occupation I came up to pursue in which if life & health should be spared will be the means of gaining knowledge, forming connections and establishing a character..."¹⁰⁶ In so speaking, Gideon Jr. recognized New England as both the economic and cultural center which he had deliberately gravitated towards or "come up to." Out of a sense of kinship with his father, the old friends of Gideon White Sr. moved to embrace the son within the community. This sense of care and responsibility to the elder White's children demonstrated the social and familial kinship which did not recognize political boundaries.

As Gideon Jr. moved to establish himself in New England, he exhorted Deane to follow suit. As early as 1815, Nathaniel had remarked upon Deane's intentions to relocate. Nathaniel assured his father that, no doubt, Deane's removal would be advantageous, "as it will enlarge his share of actions and at the same time rid him of the drudgery incident to the counter. But how can he reconcile himself to an oath

¹⁰⁵"The idea held out for my remaining on shore after the last Voyage has vanished, for the present although M. Davis is quite willing to assist me in any way." Gideon White, Jr. to Cornelius White, [no date], NSARM, MG 1/954, 1174.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

necessarily suggest that he resolved those contradictions. In November 1803, Gideon White wrote to Rufus Chandler in London regarding opportunities for Miles, who was then fourteen years old. "Do you know of any Merchant in London who would take such a Lad in his Counting House or Store?" As a recommendation, White stated that his son possessed an exceptionally good hand, arithmetic and, moreover, he was a good "Grammar Schollar." Miles was also described as good tempered and "pure in principal."⁸⁰ Chandler appeared less than enthusiastic regarding Miles' prospects in the City and expressed surprise that White, who had recently been to London, would think the notion feasible. "For you must know its not possible to be done for so small a sum as 1000 Guineas & probably the loss of his Health & principals." In what became a constant thread running through Chandler's correspondence, the ex-Bostonian lawyer advised White to place his son with a respectable merchant in Nova Scotia.⁸¹ Chandler and White present us with the image of two Loyalists who permanently left the original thirteen colonies, one to London and the other to Nova Scotia. Over the years, both experienced the hardships and disillusionment of relocation to a land seemingly similar in culture, but in reality

⁸⁰Gideon White to Rufus Chandler, November 6, 1803, NSARM, MG 1/959, 1544.

⁸¹Rufus Chandler to Gideon White, March 19, 1804, NSARM, MG 1/952, 789.

foreign to their homeland in numerous and various ways. For all of the hard-earned wisdom brought on by exile, both men tended to romanticize the other's new-found home, perceiving opportunities and options which often did not exist. These idealistic inklings are complicated, however, by the realization that both men sojourned in the other's new homeland and both came away from the experience disenchanted. At the end of the Revolutionary war, Chandler left New York for England. Apparently disparaging of the opportunities there, Chandler and his father, Colonel John Chandler, next sailed for Halifax in 1786. After the first winter, the prospects for Rufus Chandler in Nova Scotia appeared grim.

"It is now more than six months since I arrived in this disagreeable country, the weather has been so Extreme Cold that we have continued froze up the whole time and are heartily tired of Nova Scotia. I shol'd not be surprised if my father returned to England ... This Province being overstocked with starved Lawyers, I do not consider my Profession worth a farthing, and am as much at a loss what to do with myself here."⁸²

By 1790 both father and son had returned to London. As will be seen in the next chapter, White ventured to London for some months to attend to Nathaniel Whitworth's estate. He also came away somewhat disabused of his romanticized notions of the metropole. It would appear that time had mellowed each man's memory of the other's new homeland; this proved

⁸²Rufus Chandler, *New England Historical General Register*, XXVI, p. 247; quoted in Shipton, ed., *Sibley's Harvard Graduates*, vol. 16, (1972), p. 331.

particularly true for Chandler.

If the issue of education presented a very real difficulty for the Loyalist elite and those aspiring to join their ranks, securing suitable careers for their sons often posed an even greater challenge. White momentarily accepted Chandler's advice not to send Miles to England. It is not clear from the correspondence who was eager to see Miles relocate, the father or the son himself. For next, Gideon sent Miles to the care of old friends in Boston hoping to land a position with a local merchant there. Gideon White must have taken this step with misgivings. In a letter addressed to Chandler the previous year, White wrote that he did not wish to send his son to the United States. "The Manners of that Country are so changed that a young mind can receive no real good from that People."⁸³ References to "that Country" and "that People" served to distance White from his former homeland. Through such discourse, White could imagine its inhabitants as the "other", although such a position was fraught with ambiguities for White. By the time he wrote to Chandler in 1803, White had firmly re-established social and familial ties in the United States. Moreover, as his children grew to adulthood, the United States would open doors in terms of economic opportunities not readily available to them in Nova Scotia.

⁸³Gideon White to Rufus Chandler, November 6, 1803, NSARM, MG 1/959, 1544.

There are few surviving letters which touch upon Miles' stay in Boston and none regarding his decision to return to Nova Scotia. While it must have afforded Gideon considerable relief to have his son back in the province, the return did nothing to alleviate the need to place Miles in a suitable career. Miles next surveyed the range of possibilities in Halifax. In September 1807, Lawrence Hartshorne, of Hartshorne and Boggs in Halifax, wrote to Gideon approving of Miles' decision against enlisting in the navy. The present moment seemed particularly bad to embark upon a naval career, since Hartshorne anticipated peace soon, which would not allow Miles enough service time to be promoted to Midshipman. In a peacetime navy, it would require even greater effort to attain such a rank. Hartshorne spoke highly of Miles' abilities and manners, adding that he hoped to keep the boy on at the merchant house. However, Hartshorne's partner may have already promised the position to the son of John Sargent of Barrington, and thus, the matter would remain unsettled until Boggs' return.⁸⁴ Even though White was well known amongst the official and commercial circles, he did not have the necessary connections to place his sons in the much-sought after civil offices of Halifax. White, nonetheless, intended to see his sons enter into the middling and professional classes of society. Since

⁸⁴Lawrence Hartshorne to Gideon White, September 25, 1807, NSARM, MG 1/952, 876.

he could not afford to educate his sons beyond grammar school, an education in a merchant's house or business would provide such opportunities.

Career opportunities in Halifax were distinctly less plentiful than those in the rapidly expanding cities of the United States. In contrast to New Brunswick, however, Halifax - with a developed mercantile center and lucrative connections to the navy - offered far more potential. The Loyalist scions of New Brunswick, like their counterparts in Nova Scotia, were confronted with the dilemma of placing their sons in suitable positions. A number of the elite sent their sons out into the empire to seek fortunes. Edward Winslow encouraged two sons to join the British Army and a third son to enter the British East India Company. The sister British North American colonies provided another avenue. Jonathan Bliss, who looked upon New Brunswick as a "wretched country", sent one son to England where he eventually became the agent for New Brunswick. Closer to home, Bliss sent another son to Nova Scotia, where he went on to sit on the supreme court. Jonathan and Stephen Sewell (sons of Jonathan Sewell) held distinguished law careers in Lower Canada. At roughly the same time (circa 1795) that the younger Sewells departed for Quebec, Gabriel V. Ludlow left for a career in New York. These young men quickly understood that the best positions and clients were still held by their

father's generation.⁸⁵ Many of the men amongst this original generation had grown to manhood in British America just as its commercial potential was coming to be widely recognized. Accordingly, these men held high expectations for their own future and careers. The Revolution disrupted - and for many, severely circumscribed - these expectations. Often the Tory elite's own sense of frustration mingled with anxiety when they contemplated their sons' futures. The fact that the United States, with its seemingly endless promise, continued to loom large in their world, only added to the sense of bitterness.

By 1806, White had begun the search for a suitable apprenticeship for his third son, Gideon Jr. who was then twelve years old. As can be seen through the experiences of the two older boys, Miles and Nathaniel, White tended to embark his sons upon their careers at the age of fourteen years old. This may have struck even his contemporaries as young. Chandler had assumed and then recommended that Nathaniel not be sent to college before the age of sixteen, however, White remained adamant. In attempting to place Gideon, Jr. at the age of twelve, White may have anticipated significant competition in finding desirable positions. Charles Hill confirmed such concerns in his reply to White. "I fear in this Town [Halifax] where we raise so many Boys it

⁸⁵Condon, *The Envy of the American States*, p. 196.

will not be easy to procure a good place for yours, but I shall enquire."⁸⁶ James Ewing, a fellow New Englander and Halifax merchant, appeared more optimistic in his reply, two years later. He had considered writing for some time with regards to Gideon's offer. "I have now made up my mind, and if you will Send him [Gideon Jr.] on the same terms as Master Miles is with Messrs Hartshorn & Boggs." Ewing further assured White that he had established himself in business and was not likely to leave the country soon, hinting at the mercantile difficulties in succeeding in Halifax.⁸⁷ The delay in placing Gideon Jr. would appear to justify White's strategy.

White must have accepted Ewing's terms since by October Miles was writing to his parents regarding Gideon Jr., who had garnered "the affection of all who yet knows him."⁸⁸ For reasons unknown Gideon Jr. did not remain with Ewing until he became of age, as was originally planned. By 1811, Gideon Sr. was once again writing to contacts in Halifax, this time to Joseph Prescott of Prescott, Lawson and Company. The

⁸⁶Charles Hill to Gideon White, October 14, 1806, NSARM, MG 1/952, 846.

⁸⁷James Ewing to Gideon White, August 26, 1808, NSARM, MG 1/952, 897.

⁸⁸Miles White to Gideon and Deborah White, October 4, 1808, NSARM, MG 1/952, 904.

merchant replied that the firm was in the process of restructuring, but that it might be possible afterwards for the remaining partners to take Gideon Jr. into their counting house.⁸⁹

During that same year, White made his final bid to place Miles in London. White had written to Samuel Sewell to secure a government position for his son. Sewell proved no more sanguine about career opportunities than his partner, Rufus Chandler, had been seven years earlier. According to Sewell, White himself had remarked upon the primary barrier against securing such a post, i.e. "the greediness of People of this Country, after all such things, for their own families." Sewell did not have the necessary contacts to procure such an office for Miles. Beyond that, he warned, in such a career Miles would remain little more than a "labouring, writing clerk" earning only enough to keep him above want. If it were his own son, Sewell would prefer to keep him in Nova Scotia where, with "a good character, and industry," he could advance in the world.⁹⁰ Despite paternal misgivings, Miles finally launched himself as an independent merchant in Halifax in 1811. At the time he felt the need to console Gideon Sr. "You view, my dear Father, the dark side.

⁸⁹Joseph Prescott to Gideon White, April 24, 1811, NSARM, MG 1/953, 947.

⁹⁰Samuel Sewell to Gideon White, March 1, 1811, NSARM, MG 1/953, 943.

Things do not wear so gloomy an aspect as you suppose."⁹¹

Also in 1811, Gideon Jr. sailed for Lisbon on his first voyage out of Massachusetts. While neither may have realized it, both sons had entered the careers they would maintain for the rest of their short lives.

All told, four of Gideon White's six sons entered commerce and all seemed to have entered the craft via both the family store in Shelburne as well as an apprenticeship in Halifax. Of these four, only Gideon Jr. and later Deane, actually sailed and captained ships like their father before them. Significantly, it would be these two who left Nova Scotia to work out of New England. It would not be unreasonable to assume that their careers as ship captains gave them the economic mobility to relocate which their brothers, Miles and Cornelius (as settled merchants) did not possess. The entry of the younger Whites into commerce reflected both their heritage as well as the economic realities of Shelburne in particular and Nova Scotia, more generally. Gideon White had intended to leave commerce for farming after the Revolution, yet the continued reliance on the Shelburne store demonstrates his inability to do so.

⁹¹Miles White to Gideon White, October 22, 1811, NSARM, MG 1/954.

The Next Generation

The lives and choices of Gideon White's children dramatically illustrate the degree to which the United States remained an integral entity within the Loyalist community, albeit a presence fraught with tensions. All three of Gideon's daughters relocated to New England, marrying and remaining in Massachusetts for the rest of their lives. Deborah White had moved to Cambridge sometime before 1803 to live with her maternal aunt Sarah Whitworth Foxcroft and her husband, John Foxcroft. As was common amongst childless couples, the Foxcrofts had adopted Deborah.⁹² This also evidenced the strong relationship between between Deborah Whitworth White and her sister, Sarah.⁹³ Deborah White Foxcroft returned to Shelburne, probably after the death of her aunt in 1801. By July 1814, however, Deborah was back in

⁹²At the time of Foxcroft's death, White fumed to Rufus Chandler "I am all anxiety to get to Boston. John Foxcroft I wrote you was dead. I heard this Day he made a Will and gave his Estate to Phillips Family & his Brothers Children. Not a penny even to my Daughter - Deborah Foxcroft, which he adopted." Gideon White to Rufus Chandler, May 9, 1803, NSARM, MG 1/951, 765.

⁹³In July 1787, Nathaniel Whitworth wrote to his sister, Sarah Whitworth Foxcroft, from London, celebrating Deborah's engagement to Gideon White. "I only regret your being deprived of a Sister who till this winter has never [been] out of your sight." Nathaniel Whitworth to Sarah Foxcroft, Cambridge, Massachusetts, July 31, 1787, NSARM, MG 1/949, 460.

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The arrangement was clearly made to assist Gideon Jr. financially. At the time, Davis had expressed his desire that Gideon Jr. remain on shore vice captaining the brig, however, the latter had no desire to become "altogether dependant." By the time of his next letter to Cornelius, Gideon Jr. had ruled out the feasibility of remaining on

¹⁰⁴Gideon White, Jr. to Cornelius White, July 26, 1824, NSARM, MG 1/954, 1157.

shore.¹⁰⁵ Instead, he would continue "on for the present with the occupation I came up to pursue in which if life & health should be spared will be the means of gaining knowledge, forming connections and establishing a character..."¹⁰⁶ In so speaking, Gideon Jr. recognized New England as both the economic and cultural center which he had deliberately gravitated towards or "come up to." Out of a sense of kinship with his father, the old friends of Gideon White Sr. moved to embrace the son within the community. This sense of care and responsibility to the elder White's children demonstrated the social and familial kinship which did not recognize political boundaries.

As Gideon Jr. moved to establish himself in New England, he exhorted Deane to follow suit. As early as 1815, Nathaniel had remarked upon Deane's intentions to relocate. Nathaniel assured his father that, no doubt, Deane's removal would be advantageous, "as it will enlarge his share of actions and at the same time rid him of the drudgery incident to the counter. But how can he reconcile himself to an oath

¹⁰⁵"The idea held out for my remaining on shore after the last Voyage has vanished, for the present although M. Davis is quite willing to assist me in any way." Gideon White, Jr. to Cornelius White, [no date], NSARM, MG 1/954, 1174.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

of allegiance to such a despicable mobocracy!"¹⁰⁷ The mobocracy of which Nathaniel spoke undoubtedly referred to the United States. The letter also touched on another ongoing source of contention within the family, i.e. the family store. Nathaniel returned to the subject in January 1818, at which time he admonished Gideon Sr. "Do not, my dear father, keep Deane in the shop in Shelburne, but let Miles take him as was determined last Autumn." Contrary to his previous policy of sending the boys out to be apprenticed, Gideon appeared set upon keeping Deane in Shelburne, much to Nathaniel's consternation. The latter fumed, "It will be the ruin of him if he remains in Shelburne & I want [to] see that damn! petty shop rooted out altogether."¹⁰⁸ In terms of the shop itself, Gideon prevailed. With Miles and Nathaniel already embarked upon successful careers and Gideon Jr. looking south, it would be Cornelius who eventually assumed control of the store. Sometime in the early 1820s he returned from Halifax to Shelburne. The documents are silent, however, as to exactly when and why this occurred, as well as to Nathaniel's reaction. Deane, however, fulfilled Nathaniel's wishes for him by moving to Halifax.

¹⁰⁷Nathaniel White to Gideon White, November 23, 1815, NSARM, MG 1/953, 1023.

¹⁰⁸Nathaniel White to Gideon White, January 27, 1818, NSARM, MG 1/953.

From Boston, Gideon Jr. continued to prompt Deane to quit Nova Scotia for New England. When writing to Cornelius in July 1824, Gideon Jr. sympathized with Deane's reluctance to do so.

"But as there are no kind of prospects in that Country, he must not look back or even give it one thought. He must commence the pursute at once with a firm determination of pushing forward by his won exertions which I can assure are always noticed. And more particularly in this country where he will find friends..."¹⁰⁹

Despite his brother's insistence Deane remained in Halifax employing himself in the maritime trade. Over the years, Cornelius and Deane developed a mutual commercial relationship between Halifax and Shelburne. Once again, in 1826, Gideon Jr. wrote to Cornelius advising that Deane wait no longer before commencing his future career. Any delay would "be very prejudicious in the eyes of all our good old puritanical friends & more particularly to his own interests."¹¹⁰ Although the United States appeared to offer a greater range of economic opportunities which Gideon Jr. felt Deane should pursue, the older brother continued to struggle economically in New England. Ultimately, Deane remained in Nova Scotia until 1835, several years after Gideon Jr.'s death.

¹⁰⁹Gideon White, Jr. to Cornelius White, July 26, 1824, NSARM, MG 1/954, 1157.

¹¹⁰Gideon White, Jr. to Cornelius White, November 22, 1826, NSARM, MG 1/954, 1186.

As he reported back to Cornelius, Gideon Jr. was not alone in migrating south from Nova Scotia during the troubled economic years following the Napoleonic wars. During a voyage to New York in 1826, Gideon Jr. informed Cornelius that, "[s]ince my stay here I have seen a number of our Shelburne friends ... Rowlands, James Braine, Dones &c. &c."¹¹¹ The U.S. markets obviously possessed far greater sustained potential than those of Nova Scotia, yet they also proved to be highly volatile in the early nineteenth century. To the dismay, and frequently surprise, of many Nova Scotians employment often was not readily available. The experiences of Cornelius' close friend Edward L. Brinley echoes the economic struggles faced by Gideon Jr. Brinley wrote to Cornelius from New York in November, 1826 just weeks before Gideon Jr. encountered his Shelburne friends there. Initially, Brinley had not anticipated difficulties in securing employment, once he reached the United States. "When I left Nova Scotia, the idea that I had was that in the United States of America I need only apply for a situation and would be gladly accepted."¹¹² By this date, he no longer held out much hope of finding work in New York and had recently written to a wealthy relative in Boston. Brinley's

¹¹¹Gideon White Jr. to Cornelius White, November 22, 1826, NSARM, MG 1/954, 1186.

¹¹²Edward Brinley to Cornelius White, November 4, 1826, NSARM, MG 1/954, 1185.

miscalculation of the harsh New York economic environment may have reflected the misperceptions of Nova Scotians in general regarding opportunities in the United States. Not coincidentally, Brinley, like Gideon Jr., turned to family connections as a last resort.

"American" Values

At times, the letters of Gideon Jr. describe a set of values which he prized as both positive and necessary for success, particularly in the new United States. As noted above in his 1826 letter to Cornelius, many of the traits apparent in their "good old puritanical friends" seemed to stem from puritanical New England. Gideon Jr., in his recommendations to Deane, emphasized industriousness, drive and ambition. Most especially, Gideon Jr. stressed that personal initiative was always noticed "particularly in this Country." In so doing, he had hit upon the cultural admiration of individual merit which was increasingly distinguishing American society from that of Great Britain. Samuel Sewell had identified the distinction as well when he wrote to Gideon Sr. in 1811 regarding the possibility of a civil post for Miles. According to Sewell, White himself had recognized the greediness of the English in regards to patronage. On the other hand, Nathaniel Whitworth - a contemporary and friend of both Sewell and the elder White -

had readily availed himself of the system and benefits of patronage. What these individuals show us is the evolving differences between American and British societies, heightened by ideological tensions of the Revolutionary years and increasingly solidified by the triumph of republicanism in America. As the pre-Revolutionary debates intensified, Americans came to equate patronage - as symbolized by the monarchy - with corruption. In this sense, powerful men promoted their own private interests at the expense of the public good and eventually, so it was believed, the colonists' liberty. Through their understanding of patronage as described by the political pundits, Americans blended the political with the social. According to Gordon Wood, the great protagonists of the era may, most usefully, be labelled courtiers and patriots. Courtiers gained their positions from above, typically through hereditary or personal connections. Conversely, patriots acquired their position and rank through natural talent and from those below, i.e. from the recognition of the people. As such, a patriot was free of dependent connections and influence, and thus, "independent". Within this context, the growing disdain for patronage, especially amongst the American middling classes, can be understood.¹¹³

Within Wood's terminology, the courtiers, of course,

¹¹³Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), pp. 174-176.

represent the Loyalists. As Wood cogently discerns, it was not merely the displacement of large numbers of Loyalists which had such a momentous, long-term effect on American society. Rather, the displacement of significant numbers of well-to-do Loyalists, who held crucial social and economic roles in their communities, created vacuums. These vacancies were quickly filled, but the newcomers could not provide the stability of their predecessors nor did they share the same values. This parallels Edward Countryman's discussion of the Loyalist grandees of New York, all of whom fled the rebelling colonies. In part, through the expulsion of this upper economic tier, the Revolution opened avenues to those who sought to develop America's own domestic potential. By removing the top echelons of the Loyalist elite, then, the patriots radically changed the American social and economic scene. Henceforward, positions or rank must be gained through personal talent and the will of the people. Otherwise, they smacked of dependency.¹¹⁴

Assessing our group of individuals, ranging from Nathaniel Whitworth to his nephew Gideon White Jr. sheds light on a number of issues. Most obviously, Nathaniel epitomizes the courtier, imbibed in patronage, but who

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 176-177; and, Edward Countryman, "The Uses of Capital in Revolutionary America: The Case of the New York Loyalist Merchants," *William and Mary Quarterly* (January 1992), pp. 26-28.

removed his values and influence from American society. The views of Gideon Jr. demonstrate the democratization and radicalization of American culture - including, to some degree, Nova Scotia - in the ensuing generation. The personal ideologies of Samuel Sewell and Gideon White Sr. prove more problematic and thus illustrate the transition. Both men were friends and contemporaries of Whitworth and shared his exile, at the same time, they spoke disparagingly of British patronage in 1811. Their biases suggest that a favoring of individual talent and merit had already established itself amongst the middling ranks of American society prior to the Revolution and these Loyalists carried this tradition into exile with them. Finally, through the young eyes of Gideon White Jr., the qualities so esteemed by new England society - individualism, ambition, industriousness - seemed to have been passed down seamlessly over the generations. Yet only the latter of these traits could be described as "puritanical". Individualism and ambition were attributes favored and enhanced by the market economy which had so disrupted pre-Revolutionary America and against which the Loyalist elite, in part, had reacted.

The children of Gideon White demonstrate both the similarities between the new republic of the United States and the British colony of Nova Scotia. In an obscure statement written in 1801, Henry Warren chided Gideon Sr., "I feel as if I ought to congratulate even you who are about to

participate in the blessing of Republicanism."¹¹⁵ Warren well understood that the reference to republicanism would rankle his old friend. One of the most apparent differences between the two American polities was their stance on republicanism. As Gordon Wood has shown many of the highest-ranking Tories left the United States at the end of the Revolution, taking both their political and cultural influence with them. But, as the correspondence of Gideon White demonstrates, many Tories remained in the new republic, accommodating their political views to the changed situation, although not necessarily disavowing them. The political scene of the new United States, therefore, was more complicated and varied than once believed. Similarly, Nova Scotia's perception of republicanism is equally checkered. Over the succeeding generations, Loyalist Nova Scotians prided themselves on their anti-republicanism and/or anti-Americanism. At the same time, the Loyalist influence in the provincial assembly assured that Nova Scotia would remain more republican than England. Both Gideon White and his sons exhibit the transition in thought that was occurring between the colony and the new nation. Nathaniel White wrote to his brother Miles from Harvard. Apparently, Miles had thought his brother would come home if war erupted between the United States and Great Britain, although Nathaniel did not see that

¹¹⁵Henry Warren to Gideon White, Shelburne January 26, 1801, NSARM, MG 1/949, 681.

it would make a difference to him. "But by this you need not think that I would give up the English government for the American. But on the contrary as soon as I get out of College, I don't care how soon I leave America."¹¹⁶ In this letter Nathaniel appears to show his "Britishness" while bringing to light issues of identity and empire, which are the subject of the next chapter. Through his brother, Gideon Jr., however, we perceive the influence and confirmation of both republican and market values, or a growing sense of "Americaness". Gideon White Sr., had himself imbibed these values before leaving the Old Colony of Massachusetts, thus preserving the traits in the next generation. As such, Gideon White's children could, and did, move comfortably through a greater New England cultural, social and familial network. Plotted along a political spectrum, Nova Scotia appeared, once again, to be poised between Great Britain and the United States. With the children of Gideon White, we see the ways in which the Loyalists utilized this positioning to their advantage.

¹¹⁶Nathaniel White to Miles White, Halifax, February 29, 1808, NSARM, MG 1/952, 884.

Chapter 6: Identity Formation at a Colonial and Personal Level

We do all of us profess to be true Friends & Loyal Subjects to George our King. We were almost all of us born in New England, we have Fathers, Brothers & Sisters in that Country, divided betwixt natural affection to our nearest relations, and good Faith and Friendship to our King and Country, we want to know, if we may be permitted at this time to live in peaceable State, as we look on that to be the only situation in which we with our Wives and Children, can be in any tolerable degree safe.¹

Mrs. Sabatier appears to me to be an Uncommon Sensible woman....[A]nd like every other American Lady which I have met in England prefers America (her owne County) to this. And I really must Acknowledge that my owne Observations are such as to think she is right."²

The two quotes above span the cultural and temporal breadth of the American Revolution. Within the context of each quote can be seen a shifting sense of identity brought on by the civil and disruptive nature of the conflict. In the first quote, the inhabitants of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia petitioned the authorities in Halifax to allow them to remain neutral throughout the approaching hostilities. Their memorial is bitterly reminiscent of that proffered decades earlier by the

¹Memorial to Halifax signed by the Inhabitants of Yarmouth on December 8, 1775. Quoted in John Bartlet Brebner, *The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia: A Marginal Colony during the Revolutionary Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), p. 255.

²Gideon White, London, February 26, 1800, NSARM, MG 1/959, 1548.

Acadians, who were forcibly deported for their seeming lack of loyalty. While spared a similar fate, the inhabitants of the small outports - including Yarmouth and Liverpool - fell under imperial suspicion based upon their New England origins. The second quote recorded by Gideon White in 1801, while in London, portrays the aftermath for those individuals displaced by the Revolution. Sabatier, and ultimately White, sensed that they were trapped between identities which involved not only culture, but politics and locale as well. In this light, Nova Scotia appears to have been caught between older polities which had the power to culturally imperialize the colony. Its inhabitants, such as Simeon Perkins and Gideon White, however, demonstrate the ways in which imperial and national plans and intentions frequently were molded to local needs.

This chapter explores the ways in which colonial and individual identities are shaped within the context of a fluctuating Anglo-American imperial world. At some level, the empire itself - through policies, events, relationships, expectations and the like - worked to influence and mold these sundry identities. To examine these notions, this chapter will focus on cultural identity formation at an individual level through the experiences of Gideon White and Simeon Perkins. During the lifetimes of these two men, the British North American empire broke apart around them. The dramatic event and its aftermath questioned - and at times

forced both men to question - their imperial/colonial identity. At the same time, these events helped to define both men's identities. Moreover, this chapter will examine the role of the Deputy Naval Officer and what that says about both cultural and colonial identity formation.

The exigencies of the American Revolution confronted Gideon White and Simeon Perkins (along with many of their generation) with the issue of what we would now term cultural identity. The labels each man chose and rejected to identify himself, at particular points in time, say as much - if not more - about personal desires and cultural perceptions as they do about social reality. The geographical nomenclature "British North America" exposed the conundrum of the Revolutionary generation as they sought to define and categorize individuals of the Anglo Atlantic world as Americans and/or British. Such labels often reflected a bygone era, as for example when Americans obfuscated British identity under the hegemonic cultural term "English". Similarly, the nomenclature "American" was now forced to stand-in for peoples belonging to two separate polities.³

At the moment of the Revolution, it seemed to many observers (in North America and Great Britain) that the

³Here, I am restricting the discussion to Britain's North American colonies (past and present). Obviously, the terms becomes even more complex and confused when all of the Americas are taken into account. In that arena, the United States has demonstrated its sense of hegemony by claiming the name "American" as its own.

strongest cultural links served to connect the individual colonies back to the metropole rather than from one colony to another. Pessimistic observers fretted that a separation from Great Britain would sever the limited and fragile cultural ties which bound the colonies together. In their bleaker moments, these critics could not recognize the signs of an hardening American character; rather they saw inhabitants attached first to their colony and next to Great Britain.⁴ Those contemporaries forced to confront the question more directly, however, frequently perceived the cultural distinctions between the two polities. The experience of the Loyalists such as Gideon White proves illustrative. The vast majority never left North America, but many of those who did travel to the home islands found the British to be aloof and foreign.⁵ Similarly, in his moments of frustration, Governor Parr saw the exiles to Nova Scotia less as loyal British subjects than as simply Americans. Within this broader paradigm, Parr could discern regional variations caustically viewing the New Englanders to be the most bothersome. Parr wrote to Evan Nepean, Lord

⁴See Jack Greene, "Explaining the American Revolution: Questions Resolved and Unresolved," and "The American Revolution: An Explanation," chaps. in *Understanding the American Revolution: Issues and Actors* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995).

⁵See Mary Beth Norton, *The British-Americans: The Loyalist Exiles in England, 1774-1789* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1972).

Sydney's secretary in London, "what an expecting troublesome Being a New England Refugee is."⁶ Benjamin Marston, as deputy surveyor for the province of Nova Scotia, added substance and definition to Parr's commentary of the Loyalists. The surveyor bitterly complained of the refugees continual habit of resorting to the democratic process while parceling out land. "This cursed republican, town-meeting spirit has been the ruin of us already, and unless checked by some stricter form of government will overset the prospect which now presents itself of retrieving our affairs."⁷ Ultimately, it was this perceived sense of republicanism which most consistently marked the Americans, distinguishing them, in general, from Britons. Significantly, a number of the more skeptical Patriots, such as John Adams, often saw the colonists as merely regional variations of British subjects. On the other hand, Parr - the Briton - recognized regional variations within a distinct and identifiable rubric of

⁶Parr to Nepean, August 13, 1784, CO 217; quoted in Neil MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil: The Loyalist Experience in Nova Scotia 1783-1791* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1986), p. 95.

⁷W.O. Raymond, "The Founding of Shelburne," *Coll. NBSH* 8 (1909): 268; quoted in MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil*, p. 118.

"American".⁸ As with so many other forces, the Revolution accelerated a cultural process already in motion. Over the decades and centuries, the workings of colonial identity formation had served to establish an American character, distinct from that of the metropole, that was then honed and finally acknowledged during the Revolutionary debates.

Simeon Perkins

Simeon Perkins confronted the paradox of contested identities brought on by the civil strife of the Revolution. Whereas Gideon White encountered situations which caused him to define his cultural identity, Perkins found his imperial identity or loyalty impugned by others. In the aftermath of an imperial rupture, loyalty to the metropole was at a premium in Nova Scotia and it often became conflated with

⁸Parr had an experienced eye for the regional distinctions and gradations amongst the empire's subjects. During 1784, Parr wrote to his patron, Lord Shelburne. "[W]e are not without our private Cabals here, indeed My Lord it would be an impossibility to be otherwise where almost the whole of the people is composed of Scotch, and a very bad addition of the Yankee Race ..." Here Parr portrays his English prejudices against both the Scots and the Americans. According to Linda Colley, the Scots gained prestige through their loyalty to the Crown during the American Revolution. However, not enough time had passed for this improving reputation to have entered the estimations of men such as Parr. Parr to Shelburne, July 26, 1784, *Public Archives of Canada Report*, 1921, App. E.; quoted in MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil*, p. 95. Also see, Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 139-141.

imperial/cultural identity. The allegiance of Loyalists such as White appeared to be self-evident. On the other hand, that of the New England Planters appeared, at best, dubious. Similar to the experience of the Loyalists in the rebelling colonies during the Revolution, the Planters often found themselves caught between warring factions. After the peace, the Planters' position within the new hyper-sensitive imperial atmosphere would be called into question by Loyalists and British officials alike.

The arrival of the Loyalists in a province settled - and to a significant degree culturally dominated - by the Planters underscores the ambiguous and fluid nature of the identifier "American". As noted, Parr had immediately sized-up the Loyalists as "Americans" despite their insistent claim to be loyal subjects of the British crown. As J.M. Bumsted as cleverly shown, on the eve of Revolution, the demographic predominance of the American Planters was about to be superseded by British immigrants to Nova Scotia, holding out the potential for a cultural shift to British control.⁹ Ironically, it was the arrival of the Loyalists that secured American cultural hegemony in Nova Scotia, confirming Parr's convictions. Nonetheless, the two groups of Americans eyed

⁹J. M. Bumsted, "The Cultural Landscape of Early Canada," in *Strangers within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

one another warily.

Imperial officials had previously cast a skeptical eye on their New England populace as the revolutionary tensions heightened during 1775. Halifax understood its ambiguous position within the shifting imperial setting. It represented the pre-eminent British military base in North America at the same time that it was surrounded by a population who had only recently migrated from the rebelling colonies. Under these circumstances, the bureaucracy moved quickly to assert imperial control. On July 5, 1775 Governor Francis Legge issued a proclamation "forbidding all intercourse with New England rebels."¹⁰ In a similar vein, Perkins (as one of the Justices of Liverpool) received word from the Provincial Secretary, Richard Bulkeley, "to take special care that there be no opposition to the Government," from the general public.¹¹ Accordingly, the Liverpool court began administering the "oath of allegiance, abjuration and supremacy" to the residents, beginning with thirteen persons who had recently arrived from New England.¹² The oaths, which continued into January 1776, appear to have had little immediate effect in allaying official doubts. As one of the

¹⁰Perkins, vol. I, July 5, 1775.

¹¹Perkins, vol. I, July 14, 1775.

¹²Perkins, vol. I, July 19, 1775.

original New England plantations in Nova Scotia, Liverpool received particular scrutiny from Halifax. Both its population and their activities ensured that official attention would remain on the small community. During the stressful month of July 1775, Perkins received news that "we have been represented to the Government as a lawless and rebellious people, and the plan is laid to annex this town to Lunenburg, and to remove the Courts to Yarmouth."¹³ It is significant here that the government intended to incorporate Liverpool into nearby Lunenburg which had been settled largely by Germans, who apparently seemed more trustworthy to the imperial authorities than the rebellious New Englanders.

The plans to disenfranchise Liverpool never materialized, possibly due to the fact that imperial loyalties remained in question throughout the New England communities of Nova Scotia. There were several factors by which British officials could, and did, attempt to gauge the obedience of its citizens, including issues of neutrality, militia and smuggling. It may have been Yarmouth's famous and elegant plea for neutrality, opening this chapter, that dissuaded the government from transferring Liverpool's courts to that jurisdiction. At the time, however, Yarmouth's earnestness pleased neither the British nor the Americans. Much like Liverpool, Yarmouth found itself disadvantaged on

¹³Perkins, vol. I, July 26, 1775.

both sides during the war. Halifax distrusted the inhabitants while American privateers preyed upon them. Liverpool fell under even greater imperial scrutiny due to its not unwarranted reputation for smuggling. The inhabitants imported their own contraband goods as well as trading in those smuggled north by American fishermen. An incident surrounding the HMS *Senegal* in February 1776 suggests the prevalence of smuggling in Liverpool as well as Halifax's grasp of the situation. On February 27, the master of the *Senegal*, Captain Duddington, responding to tips from Halifax, entered Liverpool with thirty-five sailors and marines. Duddington called upon Perkins to obtain a warrant to search the stores and warehouses of William Freeman, Robert Stevenson and Perkins himself. The sailors found what they were looking for, i.e. contraband molasses and cocoa nuts shipped north by Captain Nowell. Anticipating a reward for their seizure, the officers and sailors celebrated in Liverpool that night. According to Perkins' diary, "The officers behaved very civilly, and invited myself, and Capt. Freeman to dine with them at Mr. Doggett's [tavern]." ¹⁴

Despite the fraternization of the evening before, Perkins awoke the next morning to find sentries posted at each of the three stores. To a certain degree, the incident reveals the commonplace nature of smuggling within Atlantic commerce as

¹⁴Perkins, vol. I, February 27, 1776.

the smugglers could candidly celebrate with British officials. At the same time, it demonstrates the factors behind imperial frustrations with the American colonists when civil magistrates were themselves smugglers.

Service in the Nova Scotian militia was imbued with significance at a number of levels which the government and the colonists understood. The Planters' reaction toward the militia at times reflected the civil nature of the Revolutionary conflict. In October 1775, Perkins recorded that Ebenezer Harrington had arrived from La Have, Nova Scotia. "He says their militia company mustered last Monday to draft 35 men - about 1/3d of that company for readiness in case of need. All refused to be drafted, or to enlist."¹⁵ The message was clear to Perkins and Halifax that the men of La Have - and elsewhere - would not bear arms against their countrymen in the American colonies. At this juncture, the Nova Scotians could still envision themselves as fellow Americans, but as events unfolded both sides would begin to postulate and enforce definitions which would place Nova Scotia outside the new American political order.

During the 1760s and 1770s, both Americans and British argued heatedly over what benefits and/or responsibilities entailed from the imperial relationship. In the process, contentions arose regarding the nature and definition of

¹⁵Perkins, vol. I, October 5, 1775.

concepts such as "citizenship" and "subject". As these issues were debated between the metropole and its original colonies, other Atlantic colonies took note. In the broad and loose construction of the British North American empire, the question ensued as to which polity or center the colonists owed obligations, such as taxes. Parliament repeatedly asserted its right to tax the American colonists, who just as adamantly reserved that function to their local assemblies. Within the context of imperial tensions, the Patriots had begun the process of severing the American colonists from Great Britain, transferring political allegiance first to the individual colonies and later to the nation. One of the most basic claims of the citizen upon the state was, of course, suffrage, which the Americans insisted they were denied by having no representatives in Parliament. In terms of responsibilities, the rudimentary expectations of the citizens included payment of taxes, patriotic loyalty, and military and jury service.¹⁶ Implicitly, the debate centered on the question as to whether the Americans were citizens or subjects. Into this confused ideological atmosphere entered the colony of Nova Scotia, with its population (at least, for the moment) dominated by New Englanders. From the perspective of Halifax, a populace that

¹⁶Linda Kerber, "The Paradox of Women's Citizenship in the Early Republic: The Case of *Martin vs. Massachusetts*, 1805," *American Historical Review* (April 1992), p. 350.

sought neutrality and refused to enlist in the militia could be perceived as denying the empire the basic requirements of British subjects. Yet, as will be shown shortly, military protection - professional and local - was multifaceted, with obligations running in both directions.

As already noted, another issue of key importance in asserting state power surrounded property. Within the Anglo-American world property held political, social and ideological significance. During the Revolution, the Patriots effectively used the transmission of property to demonstrate the validity of their power.¹⁷ Perkins notated in his diary on January 9, 1776 that Captain Bapson had entered Liverpool from Barrington, Nova Scotia, bringing news of a schooner arrived there from Plymouth, Massachusetts. "[H]er business principally to invite Mr. Thomas Davis to return home, as the Colonies have come into a Resolution that all the estates of persons absconding and do not return by the 20th of April next [will be confiscated]."¹⁸ Through the confiscation of property, the Patriots could assert their own ultimate authority at the same time graphically demonstrating the Loyalists' lack thereof. In demanding that Thomas Davis return home to Massachusetts, the Patriots were labelling the Nova Scotians as outside the boundaries of their new

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 357-359.

¹⁸Perkins, vol. I, January 9, 1776.

political order. In the eyes of the American Patriots, then, the Planters became British and/or Loyalists by default.

In regards to professed loyalty to the empire during the early stages of the Revolution, Nova Scotia exhibited the court and country divide so prevalent in later provincial politics. Halifax, not surprisingly, enthusiastically proclaimed its fealty in contrast to the outports, many of whom sought neutrality. Sitting in the provincial capital, the officials and merchants had a vested interest in promoting and securing their ties to the metropole. Just as importantly, as the premier military base, Halifax had naval protection from American privateers, while the outports did not. Tellingly, the inhabitants of Yarmouth submitted their memorial only a week after two American vessels had entered the harbor and carried away the militia officers. According to the Yarmouth petitioners, the Americans "offer'd no abuse to anyone else, and say they will offer none provided we do nothing against them, but in case we take up Arms against them, threaten us highly."¹⁹ In the case that Halifax should deny Yarmouth's petition, the residents saw no choice other than to retire to Halifax or New England. The government viewed the petition for neutrality to be "utterly Absurd and

¹⁹Quoted in Brebner, *The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia*, p. 271.

Inconsistent, with the duty of subjects."²⁰ In the tense imperial atmosphere, Halifax ignored any notion of the rights accruing to the residents of the outports as citizens, instead focusing on their responsibilities as subjects. The interchange demonstrates the degree to which both Halifax and the outports found themselves juxtaposed between the metropole and its rebelling colonies. As the provincial capital, the officials of Halifax were responsible to the metropole to guarantee the loyalty of the province's inhabitants. On the other hand, the residents of the outports were subject to the power of the American privateers which the British proved incapable of controlling.

With its excellent harbor just south of Halifax, Liverpool was especially vulnerable to privateer activity. Perkins, as commander, rallied the militia to protect the small community from such raids, with some success. All realized that the only feasible protection for the south shore must come from the Royal Navy, which came only late in the war. The issue of military service and protection thus illuminates the responsibilities of colonists not only to the state or empire, but, as in the case of the Liverpool militia, to their local communities. Simultaneously, it underscores the obligations of the state to protect its inhabitants from foreign invasion. Perkins found himself

²⁰Quoted in Brebner, *The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia*, p. 272.

caught between warring factions and, of necessity, forced to take sides. But his remarks, at times, show that he did not consider the affair to be his fight. Moreover, he felt entitled to protection from the government which was not forthcoming. During the night of October 16, 1776, American privateers stole one of Perkins' vessels, the *Betsey*, from his wharf. "This is the fourth loss I have met with by my countrymen, and are altogether so heavy upon me I do not know how to go on with much more business, especially as every kind of property is so uncertain, and no protection afforded as yet, from Government."²¹ Perkins' lament portrays his sense of a dual betrayal. He exhibited bewilderment and dismay at those whom he deemed his "countrymen" for inflicting economic warfare upon him. Moreover, he faulted the government for failing in its most basic of responsibilities, the protection of property. Here, Perkins exhibited the fluid and confused nature of imperial identity during the Revolution. He continued to ally himself with the Americans, labelling them his "countrymen", at the same time that he looked to the British government to guard him from the actions of marauders who operated outside the legal/imperial system. In the process of promoting a very successful privateering campaign, American mariners placed

²¹Perkins, vol. I, p. 134.

Nova Scotians outside the new political order, defining them as the "other". In his expectations of governmental protection, Perkins recognized the validity of the imperial government as the legitimate political order in Nova Scotia.

After almost two years, the situation had not improved. In June 1778, American privateers ran a vessel aground in Liverpool harbor and then proceeded to loot the ship over the next three days with no interference from the Royal Navy. "Thus our coast is guarded after all the promises we have had from Government. Our people are much Discouraged, and seem to be looking out to leave the place."²² The residents of the outports who quietly returned to the rebelling colonies during the Revolution, validated the power of the new American state, largely unbeknownst to the Patriot government. The privateers, operating independently, secured for the new political order a minor victory based upon commercial warfare.²³ This reinforces the thesis throughout

²²Perkins, vol. I, p. 203.

²³American privateers, of course, did not limit their activities to Nova Scotia. In June, 1777 Lord Macartney, governor of Grenada, claimed that "our Seas swarm with American Privateers". By the end of the Revolutionary War, the Americans had captured British prizes valuing almost £18,000,000 pounds sterling. Moreover, the monetary figure does not fully portray the disruption to British trade along with the immense burdens placed upon an already over extended British Navy. Inadvertently, Perkins' laments against the government and navy reveal this latter factor. Lord Macartney quoted in Stephen Conway, *The British Isles and the*

this dissertation that commerce identified and molded the Anglo-American Atlantic world.

The Deputy Naval Officer

As noted in the introduction, the Euro-Americans confronted a number of situations which were replicated in other Atlantic colonies but not necessarily in the respective metropolises. The Atlantic colonies of the imperial powers (i.e., Britain, France, Spain and Portugal) created identities and institutions which were deliberately modeled after those of the metropole but, ultimately, distinct. Particular stages of the colonial identity formation demonstrate the various issues at play, between the center and its peripheries, in an imperial relationship. As already described, the colonies practiced a spectrum of strategies in response to imperial policies and dictates, ranging from complete obedience to open defiance. Within this range of options, the colonists exercised such tactics as feigned ignorance and/or evasion in dealing with imperial doctrines. In the process, they provided insights into the development

War of American Independence (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 48. For discussion of the influence of American privateers see both Conway, pp. 47-48; and, John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789*. Needs and Opportunities for Study Series (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), pp. 362-363.

and workings of their own colonial identities. In their work on Canadian identities, Gilles Paquet and Jean-Pierre Wallot define various dimensions of identity formation which provide a convenient bridge to Jack Greene's work on colonial/imperial relations.²⁴ It is the first dimension or stage of identity formation, as described by Paquet and Wallot, that concerns us here. In this stage, the colonists shaped an identity by "eluding the metropolitan planning process that previously constrained them." During the course of imperial rule, the colonists attempted to escape or evade inconvenient, impractical plans as well as to reconfigure transplanted metropolitan institutions to existing realities. Along with the adaptation of imperial institutions, the colonists also tried to actively mold their sociocultural and socioeconomic environments to best suit their own interests. Paquet and Wallot see this dimension as applying primarily to the French Canadian population, or the *canadiens*. As this chapter seeks to demonstrate, however, that particular development applied to the British American population of

²⁴Gilles Paquet and Jean-Pierre Wallot, "Nouvelle-France/Quebec/Canada: A World of Limited Identities," in *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 97-102; and Jack P. Greene, *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Politics of the British Empire and the United States 1607-1788* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1986).

Nova Scotia as well.²⁵

Paquet and Wallot describe the original European settlers to North America as actors in an unwritten plan devised by the metropole. The metropolitan officials or "planners" appeared to be persistently and complacently ignorant of conditions in the colonies; a state which frequently caused policy-makers to formulate schemes which proved to be idealistic, at best. Consequently, the colonists or "plannees" were forced to adapt and/or recast these imperial measures before they could be implemented. In the molding and reshaping of metropolitan regulations, and later imperial institutions, the colonists were visibly demonstrating the mechanism necessary to create an unique colonial culture.²⁶ This new culture was both a reflection and a product of the environment out of which it grew. Moreover, the emerging culture was distinctly American in that it blended an European heritage with the reality of the new world.²⁷

²⁵Paquet and Wallot, "Nouvelle-France/Quebec/Canada" in *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World*, ed. Canny and Pagden, pp. 97-102.

²⁶Ibid., p. 98.

²⁷It is worth noting that while historians increasingly detect similarities amongst the various American colonies, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century contemporaries often did not share this sense. Deane White wrote to his parents, Gideon and Deborah, from Bahia, Brazil where he had loaded a

Finally, it is worth remembering in any historical analysis that no society remains static. Within the imperial/colonial connection both cultures evolved over time, often independently of and at variance with one another. This holds equally true for the development of the individual Atlantic communities, even though perceptible similarities existed. Nevertheless, each of these new American societies underwent a series of place- and time-specific experiences which would indelibly and uniquely shape its cultural identity.²⁸

An observation of the tensions and arguments surrounding the position of the Deputy Naval Officer over the course of one fitful decade provides an insight into these mechanisms of colonial identity formation. These incidents cited below (which involved first Simeon Perkins and Winckworth Tonge, and later Gideon White and William Cottnam

cargo of sugar and tobacco for Genoa. "I have been here upwards of five weeks & am quite sick of the filthy City & polite Portuguese. No person that has sence enough can help enjoying good health in this truly fine climate; but Europeans are extremely decipated and many suffer justly from it." Thus, to the eyes of a North American and Nova Scotian, the people of Brazil appeared European not American. Deane White to Gideon and Deborah White, Shelburne, December, 17 1829, NSARM, MG 1/954, 1228.

²⁸Jack P. Greene, "Changing Identity in the British Caribbean: Barbados as a Case Study," pp. 214-215; and, Anthony Pagden and Nicholas Canny, "Afterword: From Identity to Independence," pp. 275; both in *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World*, ed. Canny and Pagden.

Tonge) shed light on a number of broader issues of cultural identity formation faced by the Nova Scotians, including those within the imperial/colonial relationship and those created in contrast to an outside "other", i.e. the new United States. Through the incidents related below, the Naval Office can be understood as a representative example of an imperial position or plan, instituted by the metropole at a much earlier date and then essentially forgotten and/or neglected. Thereafter it fell to the colonists or "plannees" to adapt and mold the office to Nova Scotian realities. In the decades following the Revolution, imperial-colonial tensions flared over the issue of "legitimate" trade. The situation was aggravated by the indecisive nature of Britain's commercial stance towards its former colonies.

By 1788 Britain moved to eliminate the United States from Nova Scotian trading networks, much to the dismay of Simeon Perkins. On May 10, Perkins wrote in his diary:

"It is reported that an Act of Parliament is Arrived at Halifax in the *Dido* Frigate, prohibiting all Trade with the United States of America, except a Proviso that when any particular Article is wanted, that the Governor may give License to a particular Vessel to go there for it, but nothing to be Carried there. This Regulation of Trade will Materially Affect us in this place, Particularly those that Carry on the Salmon & Mackarell Fishery, as Boston & other parts of the United States is the Best Market for them Articles at present."²⁹

²⁹Perkins, vol. II, May 10, 1788. For a discussion of imperial policy see A.L. Burt, *The United States, Great Britain and British North America from the Revolution to the Establishment of Peace after the War of 1812* (New York:

While the implications of the new act appear ominous, and indeed struck Perkins as so, an examination of his subsequent shipping activity belie the ability of the metropole to enforce the new policy. Throughout the remainder of 1788 and the entirety of 1789, Perkins continued to fit out his ships with cargoes of fish destined for markets in the United States.³⁰ It is important to emphasize this reality, in order to fully understand the developments recounted below.

In light of Liverpool's reputation for smuggling, the harbor came under particular scrutiny during 1789. The confrontations, brought on by the unwanted imperial attention, called into question notions and definitions of colonial identity, especially in regards to political and commercial loyalty. In the imperial official mind, conceptualizations of "Yankee" frequently became conflated with smuggling. Illicit commercial activity had been one of the metropole's historical grievances against the American colonists, and as any number of colonial fortunes could attest, the criticism was not without foundation. The New Englanders carried this suspect reputation north with them when they migrated to Nova Scotia, although the Americans were hardly alone in this activity. As David Macmillan has

Russell & Russell, 1961).

³⁰See entries in Perkins, Vol. II, 1788-1789 *passim*.

argued, the Scots all-but turned smuggling into a national pastime in the Maritime colonies, where the numerous small outports and endless miles of shoreline were often beyond the reach of the Royal Navy.³¹ The following incident regarding Liverpool, as recorded by Simeon Perkins, demonstrates imperial British prejudices against the New England populace of Nova Scotia. While Perkins and others would deny this representation of their community, a culture's persona is not shaped solely through self-image. Rather, the world at large - whether it be a colony, nation or empire - juxtaposes its stereotypes against a society's activities, creating a new and often dialectical portrayal.³² This external persona, whether internalized by the host community or not, enters into the culture's identity. In the case of Liverpool, its professed political loyalty must be (and was) weighed against its enduring commercial ties with the United States.

Imperial efforts to crack down on smuggling began in earnest when the HMS *Brisk*, under the command of Captain Buller, stationed itself off the harbor of Liverpool. On June 10, 1789 the *Brisk* sent in her cutter to board all the

³¹David S. Macmillan, "The 'New Men' in Action: Scottish Mercantile and Shipping Operations in the North American Colonies, 1760-1825," in *Canadian Business History: Selected Studies, 1497-1971*, ed. David S. Macmillan (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, Ltd., 1972), pp. 45-48.

³²Greene, "Changing Identity in the British Caribbean, in *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World*, ed. Canny and Pagden, pp. 214.215.

vessels in the harbor, taking down the names of the owners and listing their cargos.³³ The *Brisk* returned on June 22, searching two fishing schooners, one local and one from Connecticut, at which time Perkins commented, "Very close indeed, found nothing that would hurt them."³⁴ In so writing, Perkins confirms that British imperial suspicions were not without merit. The contest which ensued between the imperial officials and the locals eventually involved the position of Deputy Naval Officer for Queen's county. The post was held by William Johnstone, who Perkins and his associates wished to see retain the position.³⁵ Buller, however, supported John McAlpine, a Loyalist who had resided in Halifax before coming to Liverpool.³⁶ The differences between Johnstone and

³³Perkins, vol. II, June 10, 1789.

³⁴Perkins, vol. II, June 22, 1789.

³⁵"His Majestys Ship, the *Brisk* comes in, and I understand has brought Letters to William Johnstone Esq., from Government, requiring him to forbid the American Fishermen making Fish in this Harbour. They are to take what they have made and Depart. It is rumoured that Mr. Johnstone[']s conduct respecting them is Disapproved and that he is displaced, but I hope it is not the case, as he is old & and had no other way of Subsisting." Perkins, vol. II, July 4, 1789.

³⁶Perkins reported on July 7 that McAlpine had traveled to Halifax. "[I]t is Supposed, he is gone to Sollicit Mr. Johnstone[']s Place, as Capt. Buller Says Mr. Johnstone is Superseded, tho Johnstone Sayes he is not." Perkins, vol. II, July 7, 1789.

McAlpine expose the issues at stake in what had become a local/imperial contest. Johnstone represented a member of the community who shared the commercial ethos of the local merchants and fishermen. McAlpine exemplified an outsider who sensed opportunity through upholding imperial policy in contradiction to local practices, which he did assiduously to the horror of Perkins and others.³⁷ Although, McAlpine's activities appear to have antagonized the local populace, it is not clear that being a Loyalist necessarily worked against him. Nor is there any evidence that Buller favored him for that specific reason. Nonetheless, it did mark McAlpine as a newcomer to the Planter settlement.

As the event unfolded, it exposed the levels of imperial/ colonial power, the avenues opened to various individuals and officials, and the underlying tensions within the imperial relationship. The over-arching authority directing the action appeared to be metropolitan as symbolized by the officers of the Royal Navy. In response to this pressure, the locals such as Perkins sought redress through the colonial government at Halifax. McAlpine as a

³⁷William Johnstone was originally from North Britain. He held a number of offices in Liverpool, Nova Scotia including: collector, justice of the peace, justice of the inferior court of common pleas, collector of impost and excise, and collector of land tax. Johnstone died on April 2, 1800, at the age of 87 according to Perkins' calculations. See Perkins, vol. II, p. 38n. John McAlpine was born in Scotland and originally fled to Shelburne after the Revolution. On January 29, 1784, McAlpine married Rebecca Gammon Barss of Liverpool. See Perkins, vol. II, p. 207n.

colonial officer shows us most clearly the ways in which colonial authority could be mitigated at both the imperial and local levels. Theoretically, the metropole held ultimate power, which colonial officials could call upon for support. The metropole, however, had numerous concerns and was far away; the locals were not.

Captain Buller of the HMS *Brisk* embarked upon a policy of inspecting all vessels sailing in and out of the Liverpool harbor, paying close attention to the fishing ships. To the consternation of many Nova Scotians, the Treaty of Paris had granted the United States fishing rights off the Grand Banks. Many, particularly in Halifax, had hoped to see the Americans barred access to the fishing waters in order that the Maritime colonies could capitalize on the valuable trade.³⁸

But as Perkins demonstrates, many individuals in the outports had no desire to see the American fishing trade end; and as imperial naval officials understood, their economic motives were mixed. From the perspective of the navy, the issue surrounded not just fishing rights but smuggling, since American fishermen routinely carried contraband goods north to trade amongst the outports. The matter became further

³⁸For discussions of imperial commercial policy involving the new United States see Burt, *The United States, Great Britain and British North America from the Revolution*; and Charles R. Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution: British Policy toward the United States, 1783-1795* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1969).

complicated in terms of regulating this illicit activity since there were any number of legitimate reasons for the fishing vessels to enter harbors such as Liverpool, including inclement weather and repairs. On July 6, 1789, two American fishing vessels entered the harbor. Mr. Abijah Nickerson from Boston entered a protest to repair his rudder, which Perkins granted. Buller eyed the transaction suspiciously, threatening to seize Nickerson "if he does not go out Directly after he floats."³⁹ Later that day, Buller took into custody a vessel belonging to Samuel B. Hempsted of Norwich, Connecticut, which was sent to Halifax the following day. At the time, Hempsted asked permission to procure provisions of Mr. Cobb and in the process admitted to having landed goods there earlier. Buller obtained the necessary warrant to search Cobb's premises from Perkins. "Mr. Bangs went with him [Buller], and Searched [Cobb's] Fish House, & Cooperage. Mr. Cobb denyed having any other Store in his Occupation. They found nothing."⁴⁰ Less than two weeks later, Perkins recorded, "The Connecticut Schooner, Cap. Barns, that was Searched by the *Brisk* Some time ago, comes in, & goes out again, & I believe has quit Fishing, as Capt. Buller

³⁹Perkins, vol. II, July 6, 1789.

⁴⁰Ibid.

threatened to tak him."⁴¹ Based upon the scenarios described above, the naval officers could easily become convinced that their suspicions were valid. The locals, as witnessed by Perkins' entry, recognized the potential disruption of their trade. In these incidents can be seen the divide between court and country (of Halifax and the outports) that was so prevalent in Nova Scotia. For Halifax and the metropole there appeared to be economic benefits from driving the Unites States out of their commercial networks, but for the outports the new republic remained their principal trading networks and markets.

The residents of Liverpool vented their growing frustration on McAlpine, who also attempted to zealously harass the fishermen, but with less success than Buller. According to McAlpine, he had been instructed to require passes - and thus fees - of the fisherman on a bi-monthly or even monthly basis. The indecision over the duration of these passes, coupled with Perkins' unfamiliarity of them, suggests that they were a new development. McAlpine had received his orders from Winckworth Tonge, the Naval Officer in Halifax, who appears to have been implementing a new revenue-raising stratagem.⁴² The position of Naval Officer

⁴¹Perkins, vol. II, July 17, 1789.

⁴²Colonel Winckworth Tonge had arrived in Halifax from Louisboug in 1749, at the moment of Halifax's creation into a British naval base. He was appointed Naval Officer in

was unknown to the British themselves and originally had been created for the American colonies. As will be described below, the British had paid little attention to the office after passing it off to the peripheries. As such, the duties of the office provided any number of confusions, conflicts and, conversely, opportunities for the colonists. Winckworth Tonge's schemes provided the basis for later tensions regarding the role of the Naval Officer which his son William Cottnam Tonge and Gideon White faced in their time. At the present moment, as McAlpine explained the new passes, Perkins retorted that the fees were oppressive and "I would not Submit to if I had ten Fishing Vessels." Undaunted, McAlpine continued to pursue his duties rigorously. Early on July 20, McAlpine sought Perkins' assistance in removing the sails and rudder of a ship seized for loading salt without the necessary papers. Perkins told McAlpine that "he proceeded with too much Violence, & would Set the place in Confusion, & would do more harm to the place than he would do good."⁴³ Later, Perkins moved to resolve the situation, instructing the owner of the shallop, Mr. Coffin of Barrington, to give bonds for the return of his vessel. Possibly sensing that he had been outmaneuvered and/or unsure of his own power, McAlpine dropped the complaint, allowing the ship to sail.

December 1772.

⁴³Perkins, vol. II, July 20, 1789.

Perkins concluded the entry by commenting that "a General uneasiness prevails among the people on account of this Appointment."⁴⁴

The prevailing uneasiness, convinced a number of the men to communicate with the Governor and the Naval Officer in Halifax, in the hopes of having McAlpine dismissed. Over the coming week, Perkins drafted his memorial to Governor Parr while various town magistrates wrote letters to officials in Halifax, including Thomas Cochran, Sampson S. Blowers and Richard Uniacke. Presumably to intimidate McAlpine, and thus resolve the issue locally, Joseph Tinkham informed the Deputy Naval Officer of the memorial.⁴⁵ McAlpine, however, declined to resign "without it is the Governor[']s pleasure."⁴⁶ Thus in late July, colonial officials in Halifax became directly involved in Liverpool's disputes, although initially they attempted to handle the situation informally. The first recognition of the memorial came on the evening of August 21 when Perkins noted that the Governor's yacht had sailed into the harbor. The following day, Governor Parr came on shore

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Joseph Tinkham was a merchant in Liverpool. He served as a lieutenant in the militia and in 1783 was appointed as sheriff for Queen's County. Tinkham was also a friend and business associate of Gideon White and appears infrequently in White's correspondence.

⁴⁶Perkins, vol. II, July 21, 1789.

where he and Perkins "had much conversation" about McAlpine. "He dos not Incline to Dismiss [McAlpine] without Some Charge of misconduct."⁴⁷ By early September, Perkins had received a letter from Tonge reiterating Parr's decision. Tonge added the significant proviso that "the governor does not think proper to advise to [McAlpine's] Dismission, as he was recommended by Capt. Buller."⁴⁸ The various levels of imperial control, working down from the metropole through the various locals in the peripheries, can be seen in these discussions between Perkins and Halifax. Parr and his officials, caught between the metropole (as represented by Buller) and a local community, aspired to uphold imperial wishes at the same time pacifying local tensions. Perkins, also a member of the local and colonial bureaucracy, endeavored to mediate between the settlement and the colonial bureaucracy in Halifax. For the moment the imperial authority held the upper hand.

Tensions heightened significantly in late September when Captain Buller returned to Liverpool, accompanied by Captain Browell of the HMS *Weasel*. The ensuing confrontations between Perkins and the two officers, reveal imperial suspicions and prejudices. Within the context of these disputes, notions of cultural identity rose to the surface.

⁴⁷Perkins, vol. II, August 22, 1789.

⁴⁸Perkins, vol. II, September 2, 1789.

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When the two ships arrived at Liverpool, the officers sent out their cutters to board and inspect "most of the Vessels in the Harbour."⁴⁹ Two days later, on September 21, Perkins and Hallet Collins called upon Captain Buller on board the *Brisk*, where he received them "Civilly." Buller signalled Captain Browell, on board the *Weasel*, to join the men. Perkins proceeded to question Buller regarding the role of the Naval Officer. "Capt. Buller did not pretend to define the Duty of the office, only Col. Tonge[']s Instructions, &c., which I told him was not Law. We wished to Know what was Law."⁵⁰ The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of a seaman announcing that the *Seaflour*, which had been cleared out by Johnstone for Bermuda, had sprung a leak and returned to harbor. Buller proceeded to seize the vessel with the intention of sending it into Halifax. In the flurry of activity surrounding the *Seaflour*, Perkins did not receive - or, at least, did not record - the answers to his questions. The conversation between Perkins and Buller reflects the multiple confusions over the role of the Naval Officer. Given his understandable unfamiliarity with the office, Buller cited his source as the colonial Naval Officer, Winckworth Tonge. Perkins, for his part, sought to manipulate the uncertainty regarding the office to local

⁴⁹Perkins, vol. II, September 19, 1789.

⁵⁰Perkins, vol. II, September 21, 1789.

advantage. Thus, the office became a political tool in the imperial/colonial conflict which both sides strove to utilize. In this respect, they played upon not only the confusion surrounding the position, but more importantly on the well-established tradition of negotiating imperial policy.

The following day, the two naval officers came on shore and shortly thereafter boarded Perkins' ship, the *Polly*. Perkins followed close behind, "and there had Some warm words about the Business of Seizing, &c." In response, "Capt. Browell made use of very indecent expressions to me, Signifying that I was a Rebell. I answered him that I was a Magistrate, & that Such expressions were not proper."⁵¹ At this stage, Buller entered the fray, condemning the *Polly* as an American bottom which was to be sent into Halifax. After setting the guard, the two officers left the ship. In the course of the day, Buller, who had earlier determined to send the *Seaflour* into Halifax, became convinced that the vessel's leaking was too severe. He was thus forced to seek Perkin's assistance in arranging to unload the ship at a local wharf. According to his diary, Perkins had more warm words with Browell after the *Seaflour* had been hauled to Captain Dean's wharf. "Near my Store Browell Said it was a Damned Business alltogeather. Capt. Buller then went on board Robert

⁵¹Perkins, vol. II, September 22, 1789.

Foster[']s Schooner, and James Knowles['] Schooner, McAlpine Standing on the Wharf. Buller marked the Mast of Each, with his Finger, & Said he took them in the King[']s Name."⁵²

Throughout the altercations occurring that day, the naval officers exerted their authority by seizing a number of ships in the harbor for either carrying contraband goods or because they were deemed to be American built ships. Amongst the current changes in imperial-commercial policy, Britain had determined to bar the Americans from the Nova Scotian trade. To protect the imperial-maritime complex, American built ships would no longer be permitted to carry goods in British waters. The heated exchange between Browell and Perkins exposes the imperial biases at play. To Browell, Perkins (and the populace at large) were "rebels" or Americans, and thus outside the imperial fold. From the perspective of the British officers, Perkins represented a New Englander in very much the sense that Parr would have recognized for, the Planter seemingly-naturally presumed his right to question and confront imperial authority. Here Perkins exhibited his republicanism or democratic leanings which cast him, in the eyes of the imperial officials, as a rebel. For the British officers the label "rebel" took on dual meaning since it also denoted smuggling, which was intimately linked to the Americans. Perkins countered by insisting that such

⁵²Ibid.

accusations were unbefitting a magistrate, establishing his own legitimacy and position. In his understanding of the imperial/colonial relationship, Perkins was within bounds to negotiate metropolitan power and policies. Moreover, he had not supported the revolutionary movement and thus should not share in their disrepute. Just as the American privateers culturally and ideologically attempted to place the Nova Scotians outside the new nation, the British officers placed them outside the empire. In both instances, the issues centered on access to or exclusion from a commercial center. The Nova Scotians of the outports, however, claimed their role within this commercial nexus refusing to be sequestered to one sphere.

Perkins' subsequent comments and activities demonstrate both the economic integration of this region as well as the inhabitants' position within the empire. At the end of the tense day, Perkins wrote, "These movements Seem to give great Concern to the people in General to see So much property seized, & the Business of the Place wholly Stoped, as the Fishing boats are interrupted & Stopped from going out, on one pretence or other."⁵³ In so writing, Perkins invalidated the officers' actions by labeling them a "pretence". Nonetheless, throughout this entire affair, Perkins continued to fit out his ships for American ports, in direct

⁵³Ibid.

contradiction of recent imperial policy. Perkins could justify his behavior as a member of an older New England commercial nexus which remained viable. In this light, the British naval officers were the intruders, attempting to disrupt the economic status quo. In instances such as this, the residents of the outports continued to recognize the United States as a viable commercial center, while metropolitan authorities attempted to force the Nova Scotians to adhere to an exclusively imperial-economic orbit.

The inhabitants of the outports could not petition the metropole directly, but they did have access to Halifax. Under the circumstances, it was determined that some of the "principal people" of Liverpool should travel to Halifax "to defend the Character of the Town in General".⁵⁴ The need to do so is telling of Liverpool's history. On September 23, 1789 Perkins sailed for Halifax with Benajah Collins and Joseph Tinkham on Joseph Barss' schooner. As the schooner left the harbor, it moved under the stern of the *Brisk* where Buller signalled the men to come on board. In an act of interdependency that William Forsyth and the Cochrans could appreciate, Buller treated the men politely while he wrote a letter for them to carry to the Admiral in Halifax.

The men were in Halifax several days before finally meeting up with the Governor. During that time Perkins

⁵⁴Perkins, vol. II, September 23, 1789.

engaged an attorney, both to press suit against Buller and for the trial of the *Polly*.⁵⁵ Perkins, accompanied by Thomas Cochran, was granted an interview with Governor Parr on October 8. The Governor received Perkins "Very Cooly," and quickly moved into a discussion of the situation at Liverpool. "Speaking many hard words concerning the Conduct of the people in Respect of Smuggling, and Setting up Mr Johnstone as an Officer, &c." To corroborate his point, the Governor summoned the Collector, disputing the validity of Johnstone's position as Deputy Naval Officer of Liverpool, since it was "Signed by Commissioners at Boston." This move proved a mistake on the Governor's part, working very much to Perkins' advantage. In his response, the Collector demonstrated the degree to which Nova Scotia continued to carry its New England heritage, since even its current officials had been appointed by commissioners of that region. The Collector allowed for Johnstone's commission "as the Greatest part of the Officers in the province acted under the

⁵⁵Upon arriving in Halifax, the men had called upon the Attorney General, Sampson Blowers, who appeared to Perkins to be very "agreeable". Blowers advised the men to "engage Mr. Wilkins, as an Attorney to Carry on Suite against Capt Buller, or whoever had been in the wrong in Seizing & detaining Our Vessels, &c." During these decades, following the Revolution and in the midst of the French Wars, Halifax appeared to be creating a cottage industry for its numerous attorneys through the cases engendered by seizing ships. Perkins, vol. II, September 26, 1789.

Same Authority."⁵⁶ These types of disputes, frustrating as well as common for the colonial and imperial officials on the spot, underline the degree to which the Anglo-American Atlantic persevered in a very real manner in the decades following the Revolution. For the moment, the intervention of the Collector appeared to defuse the tensions. Parr concluded the meeting by requesting that Perkins draft a petition outlining the town's complaint. Perkins presented his petition the next day, at which time he was treated "Politely". The Governor acknowledged that "Some things had been wrong," but promised to call a council to look into the matter.⁵⁷ Colonial officials, such as the Parr and Perkins, had been left by events to disentangle the government and economy of Nova Scotia from its American forbearers; a process which would prove difficult in both instances.

Although not immediately recognizable at the time, the situation began to improve during the coming winter months. For one thing, the British ships left the harbor.⁵⁸ Moreover, the residents of Liverpool received gratification from the

⁵⁶Perkins, vol. II, October 8, 1789.

⁵⁷Perkins, vol. II, October 9, 1789.

⁵⁸Perkins noted in his diary for October 4 (while still in Halifax), "The *Brisk & Weasel* Arrive this, or Monday morning." Given the confusion of dates, Perkins appears to have filled in his diary after he returned to Liverpool. Perkins, vol. II, October 4, 1789.

petition presented to the Governor by Perkins. Back in Liverpool, Perkins noted that the council were in agreement that McAlpine was exacting higher dues from the coasting and fishing vessels than were warranted. "This I produce to the Gentlemen on my Arrival, which gives Some Satisfaction. It is at Least a Blow struck against the unwarrantable exercise of that Officer."⁵⁹

With the navy gone, the unfortunate McAlpine was left to face the hostility of his neighbors alone. While not violent or vicious, their behavior aggravated and hindered the Deputy Naval Officer.⁶⁰ The most grievous offense came when neighbors fenced McAlpine off of their property, denying him access to his house when the common road was blocked.⁶¹

⁵⁹Perkins, vol. II, October 15, 1789.

⁶⁰On October 22, Perkins received news from Stephen Collins and James Doliver, who had just arrived from Halifax, "the Agreeable News that the Schooner *Polly* was finally acquitted." The two men also reported "that McAlpine was Still at Halifax, & Could not git a Passage home." The following day, Mr. Bane of Yarmouth came into the harbor from Halifax. He also reported that "McAlpine was Still there, & wanted a Passage with him." Bane's refusal to accommodate McAlpine suggests that the latter's behavior had antagonized the residents of the surrounding outports. Finally on October 31 Perkins received word from Captain Freeman that McAlpine was on his ship, "with a letter from Tonge to Reconcile matters." See Perkins, vol. II, October 22, 1789; Perkins, vol. II, October 24, 1789; and Perkins, vol. II, October 31, 1789.

⁶¹In the late fall, Perkins wrote, "E. Freeman has built up a high fence, I understand on his own Land, to fence John McAlpine from his Territorys." Perkins, vol. II, November 27, 1789. Then in January, Perkins received a letter from

McAlpine took his complaint to Halifax where, one can imagine by now, the officials were either amused, bemused and/or exasperated by the local antics. Back in Liverpool, McAlpine insisted that Attorney General Blowers had judged Elkaneh Freeman to be beyond his rights in fencing off the approach to the house.⁶² Perkins, however, wished that Blowers had placed this decision in writing for the benefit of the local magistrates. The local officials now found themselves in an awkward position, but Perkins concluded it would be difficult to complain, as it "Seems the Current is against us in Halifax."⁶³

Secretary Bulkeley regarding McAlpine's memorial to the governor. "He complains of ill usage from Some of the people of Liverpool, and in one Very material particular, they have fenced in his House, by which means he is deprived of a way to, & from it, and the Common road is Blocked up." Perkins, vol. III, January 18, 1790.

⁶²Sampson Salter Blowers (1743-1842) was a Loyalist born in Boston. He was educated at Harvard College and later studied law under Governor Thomas Hutchinson. Upon returning from England in 1777, Blowers was commissioned as judge in the Court of Vice-Admiralty in Rhode Island. As conditions worsened during the Revolution, Blowers - similar to many other Loyalists - fled to New York. In 1780 he returned to England where he was appointed Solicitor General for New York. In 1783, Blowers joined the evacuation to Nova Scotia, specifically Halifax. In Nova Scotia Blowers was a member of the Assembly from 1785 to 1788, representing Halifax County and he also was speaker of the House during that period. Other offices held by Blowers included Attorney General from 1785-1797; a member of the council of Nova Scotia, 1788-1833; Chief Justice 1797-1833; and judge of the Court of Vice-Admiralty. See Perkins, vol. III, p. 7n.

⁶³Perkins, vol. III, January 19, 1790.

In actuality, Halifax and/or imperial officials appear to be moving to alleviate the situation in Liverpool; and although Perkins did not realize it, the matter would play itself out over the course of the summer. On May 10, 1790, Perkins received word that all the Deputy Naval Officers had been dismissed. "So we conclude McAlpine is now out of Office, to the Great Joy of the Settlement."⁶⁴ Three weeks later, Captain Buller, on board the HMS *Dido*, returned to Liverpool, however this was his last hurrah. As before, Buller immediately sent out his cutter to examine the vessels in the harbor.⁶⁵ The next day, Buller and his wife went into town apparently to call upon McAlpine. Instead he found Mr. Darrows residing in the former Deputy Naval Officer's house. According to Perkins, Buller requested that Darrows pay his compliments to the gentlemen of the town and "tell them they were Damned Rascals." Later that day, Mr. Bangs went on board the *Dido* seeking the doctor for his wife, who was seriously ill. At the time, Buller asked Bangs if McAlpine had been driven out of Liverpool. Receiving the noncommittal answer that McAlpine was gone, the Captain replied that if it "were in his Power, he would Drive us all to Hell, or words to that purpose." Ever pragmatic, Perkins wrote, "It is well

⁶⁴Perkins, vol. III, May 10, 1790.

⁶⁵Perkins, vol. III, May 31, 1790.

he has not the Power.”⁶⁶

This was Liverpool's last confrontation with Buller, although not the Royal Navy, for a week later, a more congenial replacement appeared in the harbor. While the imperial officials appeared set on policing Liverpool, they also appeared desirous of defusing local tensions. On June 7, the HMS *Ratler* sailed into harbor under the command of Captain Beale. Perkins, along with Joseph Tinkham, Benejah Collins and Hallet Collins called upon Beale on board the ship. Perkins found the Captain civil but reserved. Beale intimated that he had heard of the collector being driven out of Liverpool. The locals quickly corrected Beale, explaining that McAlpine was a Deputy Naval Officer, all of whom had been removed from the outports. Perkins concluded by his wariness that Beale must have received word from Buller. "Something to our Disadvantage, as Capt. Buller Seems to have an *Antipatha* against the place."⁶⁷ Nonetheless, the visit remained friendly. Beale and his officers joined the gentlemen and dined on shore the following day before leaving Liverpool. Perkins' reactions to the three officers - Buller, Browell and Beale - depict his understanding of his commercial and cultural position within the empire and the Anglo-American Atlantic. Perkins appeared bemused by

⁶⁶Perkins, vol. III, May 31, 1790.

⁶⁷Perkins, vol. III, June 7, 1790.

Buller's antipathy towards the Planter settlement; a bewilderment that Buller, most likely, would have met with cynicism. Perkins routinely traded with U.S. ports throughout these months, in direct violation of imperial policy. Buller perceived this as smuggling, while Browell attributed it to the inhabitants' rebel or American heritage. Perkins viewed the imperial policy as negotiable and to be balanced against the realities of Atlantic trade, which included the United States. In this Perkins was colonial or "American" in the broader sense of the word.

Beale did not return to Liverpool until late September, when once again Benajah Collins, Tinkham and Perkins paid their respects. In the course of the visit, during which the men were treated "Very Civil," Beale informed them that "he was Sent there to make us Honest, as we had had a great name for Smuggling." Perkins continued in his diary, "He expects to remain here for Some time."⁶⁸ Events elsewhere, however, called the *Ratler* away sooner than expected. As early as June 9, Perkins recorded rumors of a European war, involving Great Britain. The rumors continued throughout the fall. Perkins received newspapers on October 11, reporting that the English and Spanish fleets were at sea.⁶⁹ On October 31, Perkins recorded that the *Ratler* had sailed unexpectedly "for

⁶⁸Perkins, vol. III, September 29, 1790.

⁶⁹Perkins, vol. III, October 11, 1790.

Halifax, as I Suppose."⁷⁰ Ultimately the locals prevailed, in part due to the exigencies of war. While war could not be seen as a constant in the imperial-colonial dialogue it, nonetheless, is representative of the multifarious demands facing the metropole. More generally, these encounters demonstrate the role of the peripheries in implementing and sanctifying metropolitan designs as well as the ways in which New Englanders, like Perkins, negotiated adjusted identities.

In 1796, Gideon White, as Deputy Naval Officer of Shelburne, re-opened a discussion of the office in his letters to William Cottnam Tonge, who had succeeded his father as Naval Officer in Halifax.⁷¹ As with the earlier disputes, the correspondence between White and the younger Tonge illuminates the ways in which the colonials maneuvered through the labyrinth of imperial policy and, in the process, constructed a colonial identity. Tonge's advice to White often is reminiscent of the manipulations by colonial legislatures as they interpreted imperial policies to their best advantage. Just as the colonial legislators appropriated to themselves the benefits from imperial rulings

⁷⁰Perkins, vol. III, October 31, 1790.

⁷¹William Cottnam was born in 1764 at Windsor, Nova Scotia. He was commissioned as Naval Officer in 1792, upon the death of his father, Winckworth Tonge. In 1795, he was authorized and empowered to be searcher and examiner of ships and vessels; and seizing officer of ships, vessels and goods liable to forfeiture. See Perkins, vol. III, p. 6n.

which did not expressly exclude them, Tonge assumed fees or compensation where they were not specifically prohibited. At a higher level, the Naval Officers could, after a fashion, monitor and regulate the coasting vessels so long as they did not overreach local perceptions of their authority, which could bring the case to a Court of Law. Tonge's letter also reveals that colonial authority and power were not merely contested by the metropole, but were also challenged at the local level. This serves as a reminder that the imperial/colonial relationship was worked out on a number of levels and fronts.

In April 1796, Tonge prefaced his response to White's earlier memorandum by cautioning that "[w]hat follows immediately is in the Confidence of Friendship." Apparently, White had written to Tonge with questions regarding the authority of the Naval Office. In response, Tonge attempted to calm White's self-doubts by stating that, "a little more acquaintance with its duties will convince you that the weakness of the Naval Office is owing to [it] having been instituted by Law at a remote Period..." As it was not "an establishment known in Great Britain," it had not been "constantly recognized by the Laws enacted since." In other words, Parliament had not seen the need to update or revise the office since its inception. With this in mind, Tonge counselled White that it would be dangerous to submit "some of the rightfull claims of the office to a legal decision."

For instance, it seemed just as reasonable to restrain "vessels employed in the coastal trade as every other description of vessel."⁷² As we have seen, the control or power of the Naval Office had been challenged during Winckworth Tonge's tenure, in part due to local political in-fighting. At the present time, it would have been unwise for the Naval Officers to test their authority or power in a Court of Law over such regulations as clearing out vessels at the Naval Office. These letters suggest, especially on the part of Tonge, a tactic to secure the power of the office locally, through its imperial role. In this instance, smuggling would have been of crucial importance. As such the coastal vessels that regularly sailed up and down the coast of North American came under particular scrutiny. Coastal trade, however, traversed the line between imperial and local power. At this time, Tonge understood that he must move cautiously as not to arouse local jealousies.⁷³ Tonge concluded his discussion of this particular subject at the close of the letter. "Although we cannot at present compell the Coasters to enter & clear yet we have without doubt the right of examining them at all times to see whether they are

⁷²William Cottnam Tonge to Gideon White, Shelburne, April 8, 1796, NSARM, MG 1/950, 593.

⁷³See MacKinnon, *This Unfriendly Soil*, pp. 124-125.

duly registered & navigated according to Law."⁷⁴

While the discussion of clearing out coastal vessels appears to have addressed White's initial inquiry, Tonge also took the opportunity to explain the fees charged by the Naval Office. The antiquity of the regulations regarding the Naval Office presented the officers with a number of obstacles, although none that were insurmountable by Tonge's reckoning. Thus, he wrote to White, "the Table for our Guidance was made so long since that some of the Services for which Fees are allowed are grown out [of] use, & for other Services more common no Fees are specified." Indeed here, in Tonge's view, was where the general rule of law could be made to work in their favor. Where legal services were required, and it was not expressly specified that they should be gratuitous, the officers could expect to be compensated. The "best measure" for assessing the fee was to be based on the amount the law expressly notated for equal services in similar cases. While the law specifically prohibited the taking of "any other or greater Fees," for particular services, it did not prevent the officers from charging a "reasonable consideration" for duties performed.⁷⁵

Tonge identified and discussed a series of fees, most of

⁷⁴William Cottnam Tonge to Gideon White, Shelburne, April 8, 1796, NSARM, MG 1/950, 593.

⁷⁵Ibid.

which applied to the bonds covering enumerated goods. Since the colonial trade in enumerated goods was restricted to the mother country, the ship master was forced to give bond assuring that all of the specified articles would be landed in England. Depending upon the situation, the Naval Officer could be responsible for recording, issuing or taking the bond. This issue was particularly applicable to ships from the West Indies, since "nine vessels in ten" sailing from there contained enumerated articles.⁷⁶

Tonge returned to the topic of colonial trade in a letter dated May 4, 1796. Along with the letter, Tonge enclosed his deputation and instructions for the collection "of the Light Duties from the Americans," which he expected to be "a valuable Business," for Gideon White. Tonge instructed White to "be very particular & early in reporting any [Americans] that refuse[d] to pay." As the Deputy Naval Officer, White had the power to demand and examine any ship's papers from which he should be able to obtain all necessary information. By way of conclusion, Tonge commented that he expected White would be traveling to Barrington soon. It would give Tonge great pleasure if White were to catch the "Yankies" there at their usual practices "whether they were Americans or our own Lads. There is a Mr. Nehemiah Kinney who has often cheated the Naval Office & I believe Seldom

⁷⁶Ibid.

comes from the States without a few little odd notions."⁷⁷

Tonge's last comment provides insight into a number of pertinent issues, including that of identity. In Tonge's mind "Yankee" appeared to symbolize smuggling, whether performed by an American or Nova Scotian. Moreover in referring to the lively and successful smuggling operations into and out of Nova Scotia as the Yankee's "usual practices," Tonge aptly reflected official frustrations. His instructions to White illuminate the complexities and dilemmas for British and colonial officials as they attempted to create two separate trading spheres which threatened to violate the commercial interests of both Nova Scotians and Americans. To broaden and complicate the economic picture, both Tonge and White stood to gain financially by capitalizing, officially, on the smuggling.

In his original letter, Tonge had commented that now was not the time to enter into contests to resolve doubts regarding the authority of the Naval Office. Before his death, Winckworth Tonge had sought "an act of Parliament to

⁷⁷William Cottnam Tonge to Gideon White, Shelburne, May 4, 1796, NSARM, MG 1/950, 597.

settle all these Difficulties."⁷⁸ Yet, according to his son, "the Peculiar Circumstances at Home ever since forbid all Hope of their attending to an object so comparatively trivial to the important concerns which occupy their attention." Even though others now infringed upon the benefits of his office, William Cottnam Tonge had concluded that he must wait for a more favorable time to take up the questions at hand with the home government; one in which his claims "may be preferred with better Hopes of Success."⁷⁹

Tonge also illuminates the imperial suspicions that Nova Scotia, as both an Atlantic and a North American colony, invariably faced. The newly-recognized United States had proven that an Atlantic community could resist metropolitan authority successfully. In like manner, Great Britain had demonstrated the price of such resistance. The Revolutionary

⁷⁸William Cottnam Tonge to Gideon White, Shelburne, April 8, 1796, NSARM, MG 1/950, 593. Perkins sentimentally noted the death of Winckworth Tonge in his diary. "Capt. Bradford Informs me that Col. tonge, the Naval Officer, is dead, as he heard at Lunenburg. He was member of the House of Assembly the first time I attended that House in May 28, 1765, and was the only member of that House except myself, that had a Seat in the present House.... They were a very reputable body. What wonderfull goodness & mercy of God that I am Still alive, when almost the whole of that body of the first Charicters in the Country are gone the way of all the Earth." Perkins, vol. III, March 18, 1792.

⁷⁹William Cottnam Tonge to Gideon White, Shelburne, April 8, 1796, NSARM, MG 1/950, 593.

War had served as a blunt warning that open defiance of the metropole could and would be met with armed intervention.⁸⁰ As is common in upheavals, certain Nova Scotian factions understood the potential to gain economically from the imperial rift. For instance, many of the wealthier Halifax merchants anticipated economic benefits to accrue from the metropole's determination to exclude the United States from the British Atlantic empire. Further adding to their post-Revolutionary trials, in 1793 Great Britain had embarked upon the long years of the Napoleonic Wars, turning its attention back to the European Continent. On the one hand, the Nova Scotians were wary of provoking metropolitan apprehensions regarding disgruntled colonials. On the other hand, given the current "Peculiar Circumstances," the colonists could not expect resolutions to matters so "comparatively trivial to the important concerns" occupying the metropole. In the meantime, the Naval Officers, and indeed colonial policy-makers in general, would continue to interpret and implement imperial policies within an acceptable spectrum, and seek their own best advantage when possible.

⁸⁰P. J. Marshall, "Empire and Authority in the Later Eighteenth Century," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* XV (1987): pp. 105-06; also see, C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780-1830*, Studies in Modern History (London: Longman Group UK Limited, 1989).

William Cottnam Tonge's letter demonstrates colonial understanding of a limited maneuverability within the context of an imperial plan. However, the limitations on their actions and/or authority did not appear to greatly hinder the day-to-day operations of colonial administration. The letter also shows that under the right circumstances, colonial officials such as Winckworth Tonge assumed the right to petition Parliament for ratification of antiquated or inadequate offices or policies. In the strained imperial atmosphere following the American Revolution, Nova Scotians may have seen their opportunities to sway British policy-makers as temporarily diminished; yet the situation did not appear to be either unmanageable or intolerable. Many even thought their chances had improved in the sense that imperial officials would now rely upon the remaining colonists to shore up the British connection.⁸¹

Gideon White

Based upon the instructions in Nathaniel Whitworth's last letter, Rufus Chandler requested that Gideon White come "home" to attend to the estate. Accordingly, White traveled to London in late 1799, where he remained several months

⁸¹See Judith Fingard, *The Anglican Design in Loyalist Nova Scotia, 1783-1816* (London: Northumberland Press Ltd., 1972); and Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*.

attempting to resolve matters pertaining to Whitworth's inheritance. In the loose but telling discourse of the Anglo-American Atlantic, colonists commonly referred to Great Britain as *home*. For those who had never actually resided in the metropole, the term embodied the sentimental nature of the imperial bond. The Loyalists, if by habit of speech or sentiment, often retained the terminology in the post-Revolutionary age; although, many of those who traveled to Great Britain were quickly disabused of the notion. More than a decade after the war, White arrived in London with many of his romanticized notions intact. The people and events that he encountered there, at times, seemed to challenge his ideals yet, ultimately, did not diminish his regard for Britain or the empire.

While in England, White frequented coffee houses, art galleries and Parliament; he attended court sessions and walked in the fashionable parks, often moving in the company of fellow Loyalists. White's observations provide an insight into his cultural perceptions and identity. As a member of the British empire, Gideon White perceived himself to be a constituent part of the metropole's accomplishments and institutions. In the diary he kept while in London, White described Chelsea College as a noble building which was "a Credit to the Country - & its Institutions truly Political

and Humane."⁸² The tone of the entries such as this one, suggest that White was conscientiously reflective about his experiences while in the metropole. From White's perspective, metropolitan architecture confirmed an idyllic vision of British culture and politics. Similarly, White aligned himself with the Britain delineated by Justice Grice in his instructions to the grand jury of Middlesex. To impress upon the jurors the seriousness of their deliberations, Grice cautioned the grand jury that it acted in behalf of "the Metropolis for the first Nation in the World." During the pre-Revolutionary tensions, many of the Loyalists - especially the elite - had heralded this vision of Great Britain and its empire, arguing that America's best interest lay in remaining an integral part of it.⁸³ But Grice's statement also revealed the dualistic nature of the great metropolis.

"A Metropolis which abounded with the most opulent and most indigent, the most virtuous and most vicious, the most industrious & most idle Class of Men, all of whom were liable to be led away by the violence of their Passions, & the seduction of the various blandishments and vices with which the

⁸²Gideon White, London, April 26, 1800, NSARM, MG 1/959, 1548.

⁸³Janice Potter, *The Liberty We Seek: Loyalist Ideology in Colonial New York and Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

luxury of such a Metropolis abounds."⁸⁴

Grice understood the contradictions of his era and thus exposed the threat seemingly unrivaled power posed to Britain. Within this configuration, the empire loomed large for it supplied the nation with both its luxuries and its pre-eminent power. And, like Grice's metropolis, the empire possessed an ambivalent character. As Linda Colley has shown, Britons traditionally viewed their empire through shifting and often contradictory lenses. At one level, they could glory in the wealth and prestige it produced. At another level, the insular Britons mistrusted and even feared the foreign influences and entanglements attached to empire.⁸⁵

When Grice spoke of the seduction of luxuries he unwittingly echoed the American colonists who prophesied Great Britain's downfall, brought on by the spoils of the eastern empire. The profound victories of 1763 had starkly illuminated British uncertainties regarding empire. Many, including statesmen, felt overwhelmed by the immensity of imperial gains and joined the Americans in forecasting doom. Great Britain's victory in 1815 eclipsed even that of 1763. By that later date, however, British statesmen had accepted their roles as imperialists and no longer accepted Rome's

⁸⁴Gideon White, London, May 13, 1800, NSARM, MG 1/959, 1548.

⁸⁵Linda Colley, "The Imperial Embrace," *Yale Review* 81 (October 1993), p. 95-97.

fall as Great Britain's fate.⁸⁶ Contemporaries of 1800, such as Justice Grice and Gideon White, could not foresee these swings. In the midst of the Napoleonic Wars, the empire retained its janus-faced image. Many Britons must have viewed the empire as a profound liability in a time of world war, while others recognized, at some level, that the same empire held the means of their victory. Similarly, the Loyalists seemed to embody the dialectical essence of empire. They exemplified the success of the first empire through the supreme fealty and dedication of distant British kinsmen and subjects to the metropole. Yet, by their very presence in Britain, the Loyalists presented a constant reminder of imperial defeat.

The journal entries regarding the Lord Mayor's Day celebration reveal the tensions between White's perception of British values and reality. The reactions to the opulence of the occasion may well denote White's American heritage, in particular that of a New Englander. As the American port

⁸⁶For discussions of the changing attitudes towards empire (between 1763 and 1815) see Colley, *Britons*; P. J. Marshall, "Empire and Authority in the Later Eighteenth Century"; Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Eliga H. Gould, "American Independence and Britain's Counter-Revolution," *Past and Present* 154; Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of American Revolution* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); and, Conway, *The British Isles and the War of American Independence*.

cities prospered, they gave rise to a class of wealthy merchants, many of whom sought to imitate the lifestyles of their British peers. Certainly, the wealth of the American merchant elite did not permit the grandiose standards of Britain's merchant princes. This fact alone worked to curtail the opulence of the American commercial elite. Even within this setting, however, Boston's merchant elite often appeared the least conspicuous. This evidenced, in part, Boston's economic decline in comparison to its rival port cities of Philadelphia and New York. As economic hard times continued in Boston, a developing sense of class awareness and difference also reacted against ostentatious displays of commercial wealth.⁸⁷ In Boston, a burgeoning sense of class awareness coupled with the intensifying popular politics in a colony known for its levelling tendencies. White, no doubt, had encountered these social and economic ideologies while retaining an elitist, hierarchical outlook. From this perspective, membership in the British empire appeared a more palatable option than that in the increasingly democratic American nation. White's exposure to British society, however, frequently forced the contradictory nature of his beliefs to the surface.

During the day of November 9, 1799 Gideon White strolled

⁸⁷Gary Nash, *The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 166.

down to the Thames, along with Rufus Chandler, Samuel Sewell and Samuel Payne, to view the procession in honor of the Lord Mayor's Day. As the activities on the river wound down that evening, White and Payne followed the crowds into the city. White had marvelled at the spectacle of the flotilla of ships and barges on the Thames, just as he now admired the parade of the city officials - sheriffs, aldermen, etc. - with their standards and carriages. Altogether they produced "a show of Riches beyond any thing I could conceive of." The parade was attended by huge numbers of spectators which formed a "Crowded Mob" extending for miles such that the affair took on the appearance of "a mere Harlequin show." Here, the tone of White's commentary shifts from one of awe to an air of disdain. White recorded his astonishment that Englishmen would be pleased by such ostentation. "It is not like the true character of my countrymen - real Englishmen. It has to me the Appearance of the French Nation too."⁸⁸ The nature of the crowd itself points to one explanation for the change in tenor of White's viewpoint, for he thought that aspects of the parade might be designed to "feed the vanities of the Cockneys." The general disparagement of the celebration provides a number of insights into White's understanding of cultural identity. For one, White placed himself within a British identity by referring to *my* countrymen, whom he

⁸⁸Gideon White, London, November 9, 1799, NSARM, MG 1/959, 1548.

insisted upon labelling "Englishmen". In so doing, White conflated the dominate English identity on top of the whole of Britain. Moreover, White projected his ideal of British mores onto the nation and thus rationalized that the ostentation, of which he disapproved, ran against the people's true character. Finally, White explained the phenomenon through the contaminating effects of foreign influence. Naturally, White identified the culprit as France. Here, White reflected his Anglo-American heritage where mistrust of France had a long history on both sides of the Atlantic. Although French involvement in the American Revolution would improve their reputation with the Patriots, the heightening violence of the French Revolution would revive old animosities and prejudices for many Americans. As British subjects, the Loyalists had seen no reason to ever change their views of the French.

White confided to his diary in May 1800 that "[n]o man Admires the English character more than I do." Yet, he also confronted this disjuncture between a romanticized conceptualization of British culture and reality on a daily, mundane level through the people's mannerisms. In the same entry, White wrote flatteringly that he thought the English to be a "different People" from all others. It may be surmised from his subsequent comments that many of the English themselves were under the same impression and here lay the rub. White observed that, in general, "these

Islanders" carried in "their Countenance an Air of Challenge[,] of defiance," such that no one wished to show greater "Honors and Civilities" than he received. This air of haughtiness seemed especially pronounced, and thus possibly more offensive, amongst the young men. Certainly, White thought in public a youth should "Issue the first Advances of salutation." Yet, those whom White passed acted as if it were "the very Characteristick" of an Englishmen to deny such courtesies. White's response is indicative of his sense of identity. "I feeling myself my English Blood found it very hard to bring my self to pull of[f] the Hat first, but it is the duly way to be upon any good terms with these we meet with."⁸⁹ White's analysis is difficult for us to decipher. On the surface, White's insistence upon his own "Englishness" is obvious. Possessing, as he believed, "English Blood", White thought of himself as an insider in metropolitan society, but his bewilderment at contemporary British mannerisms suggests that he was not.

Moreover, White's appraisal seems to contradict prevailing attitudes regarding British and American societies which, given his biases, must be viewed with a jaundiced eye. Gordon Wood has demonstrated the accelerating effects of

⁸⁹Gideon White, London, May 25, 1800, NSARM, MG 1/959, 1548.

democracy - or "levelling" - upon American society.⁹⁰ Under its influence, Americans - and men, in particular - became increasingly unwilling to show deference to the upper classes or their "superiors".⁹¹ On a day-to-day basis this might take the form of refusing to perform acts of deference such as removing one's hat first, just as White has described above. Yet it cannot be clear from White's description what was transpiring. For one, White himself was an American and thus should have been accustomed to a dwindling sense of visible deference. Within that context, however, we know that White occasionally possessed elitist pretensions and that he left America at the end of the Revolution, an event that accelerated the levelling tendencies in society. Moreover, White was reacting to the disjuncture between his expectations regarding British etiquette and the actuality. As such, White may be demonstrating his role as an outsider to British society and its norms. Finally, a keener eye, such as that of Rufus Chandler, may have understood that the British were reacting to White as a colonial. Afterall, many North Americans, prior to and after the Revolution, grumbled of being treated as "lesser" British subjects. As Benjamin

⁹⁰Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1992).

⁹¹For additional discussions of the changing nature of American society and culture during the Revolutionary era, see Alfred F. Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).

Franklin had explained to the British in 1768, Americans wished to be regarded as fellow subjects rather than as "subjects of subjects."⁹²

At times, such as those above, White evinced an almost-blind determination to include himself as an Englishman. Simultaneously, he never regretted nor denied his Americaness. In White's mind the relationship between American and British might be distinct but it was not exclusionary as, of course, it became for many Patriots after the Revolution. Shortly after arriving in London, White interviewed Whitworth's housekeeper, Ann Hunter, from whom he learned that his brother-in-law had promised to pay £20 per year to Henry Liddle, an elderly servant. Generously, and informally, Whitworth had allotted Liddle the annual allowance, although the nature of the connection between the two men is not clear. At the time of the arrangement, Whitworth had remarked to Hunter "that it was very singular that Mr. Liddle should beg of him Charity - when he had been the Old servant of the Coffin Family who were Rich - and it

⁹²Benjamin Franklin to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, January 1768; quoted in Jack Greene, "Empire and Identity from the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution," in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. P. J. Marshall (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 224.

was their duty to take care of him."⁹³ Since the Coffins seemed unwilling to uphold their obligation, however, Whitworth, had concluded that he could spare the £20 per year to Liddle. White clearly admired Whitworth's generosity and sense of duty, which he attributed to the deceased's American heritage. "I have learned enough of this Country [Britain] to say that they in general want one Virtue (which Americans, I believe possess) a Love for their domestics, or rather Family Connections." White could be thankful, as he wrote to his brother-in-law John Foxcroft that "our Brother Nat" had preserved this "American virtue." In labeling domestics as family connections, White demonstrated an older, patriarchal thinking in regards to both servants and employment. Servants had begun to move outside the household, both physically and mentally, in the pre-Revolutionary era. Responding to market forces, servants began to hire themselves out for wages. Later, employers understood the economic advantages of this arrangement and accelerated the trend.⁹⁴ White's comments evidence the changing nature of the Anglo-American Atlantic world and the ensuing confusions for the generations living through the era. At one level, White could see Americans upholding older customs regarding

⁹³Gideon White to John Foxcroft, Cambridge, Massachusetts, November 17, 1799, NSARM, MG 1/959, 1544.

⁹⁴Nash, p. 166.

appropriate behavior towards domestic servants, just as the Patriots believed they were upholding the older, true values of the British constitution. At another level, however, the Patriots saw themselves as politically modern and farsighted while the Loyalists were reactionary and backward-looking. These varied, and often contradictory perceptions, highlight the rapid changes within the Atlantic world, many of which were brought on by the successful emergence of the market economy.

Gideon White and Simeon Perkins illuminate the ways in which encounters, contests and individuals in the peripheries could shape and foster colonial identity formation. Undoubtedly, the metropole devised and dictated its plans to the colonies. Moreover, the events described here occurred within an imperial setting. The Nova Scotians involved, however, retained their American conceptualization of imperial power and brokerage, under which metropolitan policies were expected to be negotiated and molded into a colonial reality. By carrying these imperial ideologies north, both the Planters and the Loyalists assured that the autocratic authority desired by some policy-makers (and described by C. A. Bayly) would be difficult, at best, and most likely, impossible.⁹⁵ At the same time, White and Perkins represent the influence that the revolutionary

⁹⁵Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*.

movement had on the generation that lived through it. The choices made during the Revolution often forced individuals to assess and re-define their personal, cultural identities. The tensions surrounding colonial and cultural identities as well as personal loyalties persisted in the post-Revolutionary decades as the metropole determined to implement a commercial boundary between the United States and Nova Scotia.

Chapter 7: Boundaries - An Imperial Desire

The *Dreadnaught* Arrives from a Cruise with two sloops from Connecticut, Capt Williams of Weatherfield and Capt. Calder of Hartford, Loaded with Grain & Flour. They report that a Pacquet Arrived at New York last Thursday week with the News of Peace (from England), & that America is to have a free Trade to all parts of the British Dominions. We waite Impatiently to hear the News Direct from England.¹

The diary entry of Simeon Perkins, written in April 1783 during the final stages of the Revolution, acknowledged the reality of the post-Revolutionary Anglo-American Atlantic world well before the British themselves did. At the same time, it suggested the confusions and tensions that would beset the commercial nexus during the coming decades. Perkins could not foresee that British commercial policy in regards to the new nation would prove highly contested and fickle in the immediate aftermath of revolution. Although Perkins awaited anxiously the official sanctioning of trade between the British empire and "America", the American sloops did not. Despite imperial desires and calculations, the two Connecticut sloops present us with the immediate economic reality. Imperial policy, as already shown, was never implemented in a vacuum. The colonists (past and present) took an active and often critical role in validating metropolitan measures. At differing moments in the coming

¹Perkins, vol. II, April 20, 1783.

imperial debates, diligent efforts were made - on both sides of the Atlantic - to create two separate trading spheres out of one. Individuals such as Simeon Perkins illustrate the complexities and dilemmas in doing so, for both Nova Scotians and Americans alike had vested interests in sustaining the pre-existing commercial order. Into this charged atmosphere, moved the ubiquitous mercantile community.

This chapter sums up the ways in which a multifarious and resourceful merchant community adapted to imperial efforts to establish political and commercial boundaries through their traditional trading sphere. In this context, the Anglo-American mercantile community may be described as a powerful and well-placed interest group navigating within and without the restructured British Atlantic empire. For our purposes, we should conceptualize a world which included spheres of interests operating alongside, and at times overlapping, imperial boundaries. Within this world, the Nova Scotians occupied and negotiated a number of spheres - social, familial, political, commercial - which possessed the potential for conflict, particularly in an era of shifting political boundaries. Here, the emphasis will be on commercial spheres, which highlight economic tensions and opportunities for Nova Scotian merchants at a moment when imperial policies and ideologies sought to circumscribe their existing orbits.

In discussing the notion of "spheres", I wish to suggest

that individuals or even communities balance associations, activities or interests which may well extend beyond the official confines of a given polity. These spheres may be defined or described as familial and social circles, churches and religious sects, merchant networks and the like. Particularly in regions on the political frontier or margins, the day-to-day maintenance of these spheres may transgress boundary lines, creating an obvious source of tension in times of political (or in the case of Nova Scotia, imperial) crisis. The American Revolution has aptly been portrayed as a civil war erupting across the entirety of the British Atlantic Empire, dispersing exiles throughout the Atlantic rim but primarily to Nova Scotia and Canada.² British efforts to formally reconfigure their imperial borders with regards to the Greater New England region occurred just as many of these exiles and their host societies set about re-creating and re-establishing the networks or spheres of their former lives. The metropole sought to formally and effectually sever local relations with the United States by drawing an imperial boundary around the new nation. However, British attempts frequently collided against entrenched spheres of interest which forcefully resisted the solidification of such boundaries. The ensuing tensions, coming in an era of

²D.W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History*, vol. 1, *Atlantic America, 1492-1800* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986).

contested loyalties, called into question Nova Scotia's alignment to an imperial center. While politically the province had affiliated itself with the metropole, there remained crucial interests - family, friends, commercial networks - which pulled the colonists into the orbit of the new United States. Nova Scotians demonstrated the play of concentric loyalties, in which the populace recognized obligations and responsibilities to a local and/or ethnic community as well as to a larger state or empire into which they had been incorporated. In this sense, one allegiance need not be exclusive.³ Moreover, the fealty either owed or paid to one entity or the other might fluctuate over time and under particular circumstances.

The Anglo-Atlantic commercial world, in this era, may be imagined as a series of interwoven webs representing trade networks, many of which overlapped and intersected with a variety of others. Ideally, the web would have emanated outwards from the center, with wheel-like spokes connecting it directly and exclusively to the peripheries. In mercantilistic theory, the colonies were designed to serve the metropole while simultaneously being dependent upon it. Initially, in fact, British, or specifically London,

³T. C. Smout, "Problems of Nationalism, Identity and Improvement in Later Eighteenth-Century Scotland," in *Improvement and Enlightenment: Proceedings of the Scottish Historical Studies Seminar, University of Strathclyde 1987-88*, ed. T. M. Devine (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1989), pp. 2-3

merchants did exercise substantial control over colonial trade. Yet very quickly, the strands of the web compounded and diversified. Within the home country itself, ports such as Liverpool and Bristol as well as those along the Clyde in Scotland, rose up to challenge London for the lucrative colonial trade.⁴ Additionally, over the course of the eighteenth century, colonial merchants increasingly commanded a leading role within their own economies. This development occurred throughout the British colonies, but most noticeably in New England. By the outbreak of the Revolution, American coastal trade had begun the process of consolidating the mainland economies.⁵ More grievously, perhaps, from an imperial standpoint, American port cities had emerged which threatened to gain economic ascendancy over other British colonies. For example, the Atlantic Maritime provinces were drawn into New England's sphere of influence, while Connecticut and Quebec entered that of New York.⁶ The growth

⁴See H.V. Bowen, *Elites, Enterprise and the Making of the British Overseas Empire 1688-1775* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996), pp. 20-21.

⁵See John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789*. Needs and Opportunities for Study Series (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); and, Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).

⁶Meinig, p. 87.

of this inter-colonial trade did not violate the Navigation Acts *per se*, although, at times, it could appear to challenge the interests of the metropole. In this light, the economic development of each colony can serve as one indicator of the existing relationship between the center and the periphery. It also calls into question the ways in which colonies aligned themselves, not only in conjunction with the metropolis but also in the context of sister colonies. Such decisions often rested on overlapping spheres of influence, including commercial, social and cultural ties. The question remained to be resolved as to which economic center would draw the margins and frontiers into its orbit.

As a colony matured, it increasingly manifested interests independent of the metropole, which may be envisioned as a series of concentric, parallel and even diverging circles, which encompassed colonial goals and desires. An analysis of one colony such as Nova Scotia exposes the multi-layered tiers embedded within imperial relationships through its alliances with both the metropole and neighboring colonies. While theoretically such inter-colonial ties did not appear to challenge the imperial model, in reality New England's economic influence over Nova Scotia threatened metropolitan ambitions. From the inception of British colonization, Nova Scotia was pulled vigorously into the orbit of the older colonies through both immigration and commerce. New England colonists were amongst the first

British subjects to settle the colony. Similarly, New England traders, already accustomed to trading with Fort Louisbourg and the Acadians on the Bay of Fundy, moved quickly to establish new and properly "British" connections. Nova Scotia has frequently been portrayed as a marginal colony within the greater New England commercial nexus. This assessment hints at the colony's imperial placement between two stronger commercial and cultural polities. Yet, it neglects the manner in which Nova Scotia benefited from its own period of tutelage in the decades from the 1760s through the 1780s. To some degree, Nova Scotia replicated New England's experience under the auspices of the Navigation Acts. Similar to their colonial predecessors, Nova Scotian merchants used what can be viewed as an economic grace-period to establish their own Atlantic trade networks. Even though many of these alliances would prove awkward in the turmoil of the post-Revolutionary era, British North American merchants took advantage of imperial uncertainties to re-open and solidify pre-existing contacts with the now United States. Moreover, once Great Britain entered into hostilities with France, Nova Scotians finessed their position on the fringes of New England to utilize shipping out of the still-neutral United States. This realization helps us to reconfigure our image of Nova Scotia as merely a marginal player trapped between and exploited by two stronger powers. Instead, we begin to see how colonies and economic sectors on the fringes

or peripheries of empires were able to manipulate the resources and facilities of stronger and/or more advanced polities to their advantage.

Just as the focus on one colony reveals the complexity of imperial relations, the merchant community presents the diversity of interests within the polity itself. For one, the mercantile community personifies the role of an interest group residing within a larger society or polity. The group itself was variegated by such factors as ethnicity, wealth, markets, region, etc. In Nova Scotia, the scope of the commercial sector ranged from small traders such as Simeon Perkins in Liverpool to wealthy overseas-merchants such as William Forsyth. Moreover, the Anglo-American trading circles in Nova Scotia included British (especially Scottish), North American or Planter, and Loyalist members. One dominating and unifying force resulted from the need of most merchants to ply their trade on the Atlantic. In pursuing commerce, the merchants routinely crossed national and/or imperial boundaries. Depending upon the political climate of the moment, this may or may not have transgressed imperial policies.

The partnership of Hunter, Robertson and Forsyth provides one example of common commercial interests, linking merchants and markets across the expanse of the British Atlantic empire, which naturally encompassed a vast array of mercantile interests and communities. Although never an

absolute in itself, proximity to the center must be counted as one criterion for determining mercantile choices and decisions and, in turn, relations with the metropole. Moreover, the varying circumstances of merchants such as William Forsyth and the Ross brothers calls into question the role of such factors as locale, status, wealth and position in situating oneself with regards to imperial policy. Outwardly, the three men seemed quite similar. William Forsyth migrated from Scotland to Halifax in 1784. Robert and George Ross, had left Aberdeen, Scotland earlier, landing in the mainland colonies. They arrived in Shelburne in 1783 with the final waves of refugees fleeing the rebelling colonies. While all three men were prominent members of their respective communities, Forsyth clearly outranked the Rosses in wealth and status. Moreover, whereas Forsyth operated in the established provincial and military capitol, the Rosses maneuvered within the frenetic atmosphere of the rapidly, even uncontrollably, fluctuating Loyalist center.

William Forsyth moved within the elite societies of Halifax. He belonged to the North British Society, was appointed a Magistrate and Overseer of the Poor, and in 1801 became a member of Governor John Wentworth's inner circle as a Member of the Council.⁷ His connections to colonial and

⁷David Sutherland, "William Forsyth," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 5, ed. Frances G. Halpenny and Jean Hamelin, (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1983), pp. 327-328.

imperial power helped to secure and protect his economic networks and ambitions, for example the valuable government contracts. The desire to maintain his social and commercial position becomes apparent in his approach to imperial policy. For instance, Forsyth was extremely particular in his instructions regarding the collection and/or sending of Customs stamps and certificates. On a pragmatic level, Forsyth needed the Custom certificates in order to claim the provincial draw backs. Thus, he wrote to Alex Brymer of Martinique,

"[A]t the same time we will thank you to return us the Permit that accompanied the Wine by the [Two] Brothers, & let the landing of it be certified on the back & signed by your Co. House Officers. To this we request your particular attention as the want of a certificate prevents our receiving the drawback of the duty."⁸

At another level, Forsyth sought to avoid complications with Custom officials. In July 1797, Messrs Saidler and Waterbury of New York were asked to load onto the *Mary Ann* a cargo of tobacco, which was allowable into the colonies by an Act of Parliament. Forsyth took the precaution of authorizing Saidler and Waterbury to give the Captain "bonds of

⁸William Forsyth to Messrs Alex Brymer & Co., Martinique, February 6, 1797. Apparently Brymer failed to send the necessary certification, for Forsyth wrote again in January 1798: "[W]e once more earnestly request that you will take the trouble to send us a Certificate of the landing of the Wine pr *Two Brothers*. We are threat[e]ned with having our Bond for the duty on this Wine put in suit, & if we are obliged to pay it, we shall be under the necessity of charging it to you." William Forsyth to Messrs Alexr. Brymer & Co., Martinique, January 16, 1798, NSARM, MG3/150.

endemnification", should he have any objections. "If there were any risk in doing it, we would not on any account order the Tobacco."⁹ As will be seen below, Forsyth's attitudes towards the Custom House would seem to stand in sharp contrast to those of the Ross brothers.

Robert and George Ross provide an alternative model by which to assess the interplay of personal and imperial interests. In the immediate post-war era, Nova Scotians such as the Ross brothers and Simeon Perkins closely watched British commercial deliberations, looking for and taking advantage of loopholes, such as equivocal imperial policies or a lack of customs officials, to maintain trade networks with the new nation. While varied, the reactions of all of these men - Forsyth, Perkins and the Ross brothers - reflect their colonial setting. Nova Scotian merchants observed and obeyed British commercial policies when it was economically feasible or, even better, beneficial. Colonial merchants, however, also proved to be selective in their compliance, evading and/or ignoring economic measures which they correctly understood to preference imperial commercial interests other than their own.

In a series of letters to Messrs Brymer and Belcher of Halifax, the Ross brothers complained of their numerous difficulties in procuring the proper certification from the

⁹William Forsyth to Messrs Saidler and Waterbury, New York, July 29, 1797, NSARM, MG3/150.

Deputy Naval Officer at Shelburne. Repeatedly, the issue came back to the store on MacNutts Island, which the Rosses routinely included under the certificates issued for the store in Shelburne. In their letter to Brymer and Belcher, dated December 16, 1788, the brothers condemned a recent decision declaring "that our Store on the Inside of MacNutts Island is not within the harbour of Shelburne." They were not "prepared for so barefaced and impudent an assertion," for otherwise, they would have obtained a certificate from "the Collector and Comptroller of this port that the Inside of this Island forms a part of this harbour."¹⁰ Not surprisingly, the British had cause to be suspicious of the warehouse on MacNutts Island which the Ross brothers attempted to allay by diverting attention to the Shelburne site. On March 23, 1789, Robert and George Ross gave their instructions to Captain Robert Gray, before he sailed to Philadelphia to collect a cargo from John Ross. After receiving the goods, Gray was to return to Shelburne. "You will endeavour to enter this harbour in the evening and should you have goods not fit to be brought up to Town you will put them on Shore at our Store on MacNutts Island taking care to be gone from thence before daylight."¹¹ The

¹⁰George & Robert Ross to Messrs Brymer & Belcher, Halifax, December 16, 1788, NSARM, MG1/3632.

¹¹George & Robert Ross, Shelburne, to Capt Robt Gray of Schr *Lorence*, March 23, 1789, NSARM, MG1/3632.

instructions to Captain Gray represent one colonial response - albeit a familiar one - to the Navigation Acts. Nova Scotian merchants, during these decades, moved to safeguard their trade against official designs intended to restrict access into the United States. Through their reactions, we begin to see the ways in which colonial economic interests overlapped and diverged from those of the metropole. The Ross brothers remained solidly, and deliberately, within the British empire. Their actions, nonetheless, show that they distinguished, and elevated, their interests over those of the metropole, as represented by British and colonial officials. In so doing, they acknowledged their difference from the subjects at home. Similarly, in attempting to elude the Navigation Acts they helped to foster a local cultural identity.

In the confusion following the Revolution, British policy-makers debated the role of the new United States within their Atlantic trading empire. The Earl of Shelburne (William Petty) and his circle hoped to maintain the existing status quo by granting the independent nation preferential or "colonial" standing within the Atlantic trading nexus.¹²

Opposing Shelburne during the 1780s, many British

¹²Shelburne's views regarding the role of the United States within the newly-configured British Atlantic empire, frustrated and angered many of the Loyalists at Shelburne. Ironically, the settlement, originally called Port Roseway, had been renamed in the Earl's honor, much to the later chagrin of those same Loyalists.

politicians, still smarting from their recent defeat, favored the mercantilistic policy propounded by Lord Sheffield (John Holyoke), which called for the commercial exclusion of the United States. The Navigation Acts which for so long had attempted to contain the original thirteen colonies within the imperial realm, would now be used against them, as the British moved to construct an economic boundary between Nova Scotia and the United States. Following the prescriptions of Lord Sheffield, the British Government intended to gradually edge the United States out of the Atlantic commercial empire. Sheffield argued that, over time, Nova Scotia could assume the role of supplying the British West Indies with food stuffs and timber products, promising a return to the ideal of a closed mercantilistic system. The United States would be allowed to continue its trade into the islands only until Nova Scotia had developed the agriculture base, infrastructure and shipping needed to service the region.¹³

In the British imagination, Nova Scotia came to symbolize a young - and loyal - United States, rich in resources and capable of sustaining the prized sugar islands. In reality, the Maritime colonies proved incapable of feeding themselves,

¹³For discussions of the debates between Shelburne and Sheffield and their respective circles see, A.L. Burt, *The United States, Great Britain and British North America from the Revolution to the Establishment of Peace after the War of 1812* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1961); and, Charles R. Ritcheson, *Aftermath of Revolution: British Policy Toward the United States, 1783-1795* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1969).

quite apart from the Caribbean colonies. For most of the 1780s, American grain, livestock and lumber were permitted into Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, where they were either consumed locally or traded into the West Indies.¹⁴ The situation in the Western Atlantic would appear to have discredited any serious consideration of enforcing the Navigation Acts. Not only did the Maritime Provinces suffer frequent and continued shortages, but the contraband trade flourished there thanks to the scores of American fishing vessels which returned every season.¹⁵ Factions existed, however, in both the metropole and the colonies who insisted upon promoting and even strengthening the Acts. Once again, the Ross brothers provide a dissonant view.

In a reply to Messrs Sheddin Patrick and Company of New York, the Ross brothers acted out the process of colonial

¹⁴See Ann Gorman Condon, "1783-1800: Loyalist Arrival, Acadian Return, Imperial Reform"; and, Graeme Wynn, "1800-1810: Turning the Century," both in *The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History*, ed. Phillip A. Buckner and John G. Reid (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994). Also see, Graeme Wynn, "A Province Too Much Dependent on New England," *Canadian Geography* 31 (1987); and, Graeme Wynn, "A Region of Scattered Settlements and Bounded Possibilities: Northeastern America, 1775-1800," *Canadian Geography* 31 (1987).

¹⁵See Burt, *The United States, Great Britain and British North America from the Revolution to the Establishment of Peace*.

identity formation as defined by Pacquet and Wallot.¹⁶

Sheddin had inquired concerning the legality of shipping pitch and tar to Nova Scotia, on which point the Rosses were reassuring. Where "it appeared that the introduction of Naval Stores was allowed in the Islands & prohibited in N[ova] Scotia & N[ew] Brunswick, the distinction was thought to proceed from a belief at home that in these provinces there was manufactured a sufficiency for their own consumption[.]"¹⁷ Here, distant metropolitan officials had written trade regulations which coincided more with preconceived notions of the availability of colonial resources than with reality. The brothers' recommendations to Sheddin illuminated both colonial frustrations with and solutions to their predicament.

"Should you determine on trying a Cargo of Naval Stores from Bermuda to Halifax we conceive it might be proper to cause the Vessel [to] touch here[,] putting ashore a few casks & proceeding with a fresh clearance to Halifax[.] But in sug[g]esting this we do not mean to insinuate that there would be the smallest Risk in going directly to Halifax, but from the rapacity of the Customh[ouse] & the iniquity of the court of admiralty an uncommon

¹⁶Gilles Paquet and Jean-Pierre Wallot, "Nouvelle-France/Quebec/Canada: A World of Limited Identities," in *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, ed. Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

¹⁷George & Robert Ross, Shelburne, to Messrs Sheddin Patrick & Co'y, [New York], May 23, 1788, NSARM, MG1/3632.

degree of caution is necessary."¹⁸

Clearly, the Ross brothers were instructing Sheddin in the art of smuggling the goods into Shelburne harbor, thus avoiding the duties. In their disparagement of the Custom House, the brothers asserted - and to some degree accepted - their innocence in the matter. The brothers were careful not to blatantly confront or contest British officials, but rather practiced a familiar tactic of evading metropolitan decrees. The American Revolution provided clear and disconcerting evidence of the consequences of openly defying metropolitan authority. Therefore, the Ross brothers sought to protect their commercial interests in both a colonial and individual fashion by eluding the Navigation Acts.

The twin issues of the Navigation Acts and smuggling serve to highlight concentric interests. Within the Nova Scotian commercial community, Halifax merchants were traditionally the most adamant in their support of the Navigation Acts. To no small degree, this underscored their ambition to dominate their surrounding hinterland along with the neighboring provinces. First, it would be necessary to wean these regions from American influence. Simultaneously, Halifax merchants sought the enforcement of a closed mercantilist system in order to secure their own place in the West Indies trade. These measures both agreed with and

¹⁸Ibid.

depended upon the prevailing imperial ideology. Here, colonial commercial interests coincided with those of the metropolis, exemplifying one ring within a layer of bands or imperial designs. Conversely, large sections of the mercantile community, particularly those in the smaller outports, recognized that their immediate economic interests lay in continued trade with the United States. For these traders and merchants, smuggling represented a pragmatic - and by now proven - response to imperial decrees. In this instance, commercial interests conflicted with and took precedence over imperial wishes, depicting separate, yet coexisting disks within a larger sphere. As the indefatigable Ross brothers illustrate, however, individual mercantile interests were not easily compartmentalized. Rather, they frequently diverged, at times complementing imperial desires, at other times contesting them. To add to the general confusion, imperial measures themselves and, more significantly, the ideology behind them fluctuated during this era. The brothers actively pursued trade throughout the British Atlantic empire from Newfoundland to the West Indies. On one level, they stood to benefit if Great Britain successfully expelled the United States from the North Atlantic fisheries and the West Indian trade. On another level, Robert and George Ross in Shelburne commonly received shipments from their brother John in Philadelphia which frequently contained enumerated goods from the States. In

the Spring of 1788, Messrs Cunningham and Cleland of Montego Bay, Jamaica had inquired into the costs of having a ship built in Nova Scotia. The brothers were thorough and precise in calculating the price of both materials and labor. As to the availability of certain goods, the brothers wrote: "The iron, naval stores, cordage, Sales &ca may be procured from the States & tho' not admissable by law may be introduced without dif[f]iculty or risk."¹⁹ Robert and George Ross linked the commercial sector of Jamaica to that of Nova Scotia. As is shown in this transaction, the United States served as an intermediary, due to its resources and manufactures. In this instance, the larger sphere of the Atlantic commercial world contained three parallel and, at vital junctures, intersecting circles, representing Nova Scotia, Jamaica and the United States. The letters of George and Robert Ross and William Forsyth demonstrate the continued integration of U.S. markets and financial institutions into what had become an Anglo-American commercial world in the Atlantic. This, in part, reflects the continuity and versatility of colonial as well as British mercantile interests, which sought to recapture previous American networks as well as establish new ones, even as policy-makers sought to circumscribe this trading world. It also shows, in

¹⁹George & Robert Ross, Shelburne, to Messrs Cunningham and Cleland, Montego Bay, Jamaica, May 31, 1788, NSARM, MG1/3632.

part, the significant trading role played by the United States within the British Atlantic empire, which threatened to create an economic vacuum if removed.

By drawing an imperial barrier around the United States, the metropole exposed the complexities and even impossibilities of separating a people who, until recently, had seen themselves certainly as trading partners or even as kin. The crux of the matter is captured in the remarks of Nova Scotian Attorney General, Richard Uniacke, who, at the time, complained bitterly of American smuggling into the Maritime Provinces.²⁰ The Attorney General expressed imperial frustrations when he commented: "We are surrounded by ... unprincipled men who are one day British subjects and the next citizens of the United States, as it best suits their interests."²¹ At the turn of the nineteenth century, imperial officials were attempting to implement and enforce a new

²⁰Richard John Uniacke was born in Castletown Roche, County cork, Ireland in 1753. He studied law in Dublin before migrating to British America. He traveled from St. Kitts to Philadelphia and arrived in Nova Scotia shortly before the Revolution. Uniacke was admitted to the bar of Nova Scotia early in 1781. He sat in the House of Assembly between 1783 and 1806 representing successively the township of Sackville, the county of Halifax and the county of Queens. Uniacke was Speaker of the House from 1789 to 1793 and again from 1799 to 1805. He served as Solicitor-General from 1781 to 1791 and as Attorney-General from 1797 to 1830. He was also a member of the council of Nova Scotia from 1808 to 1830. Perkins, vol. II, p. 118n.

²¹Quoted in Graeme Wynn, "1800-1810: Turning the Century," in *The Atlantic Region to Confederation*, ed. Buckner and Reid, p. 219.

definition of the people in the North American regions. Whereas, Uniacke denotes a clear difference between British subjects and American citizens, to the individuals themselves the distinction did not always appear to be that obvious. While both Planters and Loyalists acknowledged the imperial division, they did not necessarily accept this as a permanent or valid rupture of their commercial, social and familial interests. It would be tempting to imagine that the British immigrants and sojourners to North America perceived the differences, yet to Governor Parr the Loyalists appeared to be as "American" as the Patriots. Moreover, throughout the Napoleonic wars, British press gangs ignored the fine distinction between British and American citizenship when it served their purposes to do so. As Uniacke had resentfully come to understand, concrete interests frequently took precedence, over vague senses of nationality for Americans and British alike.

Commerce played a key role in both sustaining and defining Great Britain's Atlantic empire. Moreover, it helped to characterize the colonial societies as well as their relationship to the metropole. Therefore, it is not surprising, that commercial interests would prove resistant to the creation of a new boundary which intruded upon traditional Anglo-American trading spheres. In his analysis of political boundaries and their influence on the development of cultural identities, Peter Sahlin has

suggested that borders or boundary lines do not necessarily represent actual geographical or physical barriers.²² Instead, they symbolize political (or for our purposes, imperial) desires which, with time, may become solidified into the cultural imagination or consciousness of a people or society. The very process of establishing a boundary line may help to fashion peripheral identities, as individuals and communities come to define themselves in relation to a border. This is accomplished, to some extent, by distinguishing themselves from those that fall on either side of the divide, i.e. by creating a cultural "other". This proved especially problematic and paradoxical in Nova Scotia, which shared an Anglo-American heritage. Equally difficult to execute were British policies which sought to secure Nova Scotia within the imperial domain - politically, socially and commercially - through the exclusion of the United States. It should be emphasized that political or commercial allegiance to a metropole could not be dictated from the

²²Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989). Also see Meinig, *The Shaping of America*; Jack P. Greene, *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Politics of the British Empire and the United States 1607-1788* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1986); Jean Gottmann, "Confronting Centre and Periphery," in *Centre and Periphery: Spatial Variation in Politics*, ed. Jean Gottmann (London: Sage Publications, 1980); and, Robert Mitchell, "The Colonial Origins of Anglo-America," in *North America: The Historical Geography of a Changing Continent*, ed. Robert D. Mitchell and Paul Groves (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991).

center, but had to be negotiated with those people living in the borderlands and/or colonies, who possessed abilities to challenge and contest imperial authority. As with nation states, metropolises could not simply impose their values and boundaries on their colonies. A political boundary may have appeared in the borderland due to national or imperial designs; however, the shape and viability of that boundary was constructed out of social relations in the borderland. For it was the dialogue between local and national interests which produced the boundaries of national territories. Ultimately, national identity resulted less from direct state intentions than from the local process of adopting and appropriating the nation without abandoning local interests, sense of place, or identity.²³ As already indicated, Nova

²³Sahlins, pp. 7-9. For discussions of the interplay between local and national loyalties and/or identities, see Smout, "Problems of Nationalism"; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992); Linda Colley, "Britishness and Otherness: An Argument," *Journal of British Studies* 31 (1992); and, Alexander Murdoch, *British History 1660-1832: National Identity and Local Culture* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998).

Also see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). Anderson's depiction of the ways in which nation-states incorporated local societies into the larger polity exemplifies the process occurring throughout the new United States in the post-Revolutionary decades. For example, see Henry Steele Commager, "The Search for a Usable Past," *American Heritage* (1965). Similar forms of inclusion were also open to empires. On the other hand colonists such as Beamish Murdoch could sentimentally conceptualize themselves as part of the larger imperial community and use this portrayal to serve local purposes and desires. See Beamish Murdoch. *A History of Nova Scotia, or Acadia*, 3 vols.

Scotia had aligned itself politically with the center during the imperial crisis, in part due to metropolitan power. Additionally, there were perceived economic advantages to membership within the empire. Thus, segments of the Nova Scotian mercantile community allied themselves with the British markets, sensing that these offered the greatest potential. Conversely, a substantial number of merchants saw their economic livelihood tied to the United States. This sector maintained and pursued commercial and financial activities in the new nation. Here, the issue of a population's or community's extended spheres serves to complicate and problematize the construction of a political boundary. In this instance, commercial spheres reveal the limitations of these boundary lines to restrict movement between a colony and a new nation. This in turn underlines the actual fluidity and permeability of boundaries.

In the late eighteenth century, a formalized political border between Nova Scotia and the United States was coming into being. However, an effective commercial boundary remained much more of an imperial desire than a reality. Through their activities, the merchant community demonstrated

(Halifax: James Barnes, Printer and Publish., 1865). Great Britain appears to have been the most successful of the European colonizing powers in instilling a romanticized image of the mother country into its colonists, as evidenced by contemporary celebrations of "Empire Day" in the Commonwealth countries.

the economic and cultural integration of an Anglo-American Atlantic trading community which shared a similar heritage as well as familiar commercial customs, practices and institutions.

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