

Patriotic Success and Loyalist Failure in post-Revolutionary War era Westchester County

by

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Introduction:

The American Revolutionary War is perhaps the most defining period of American history. Victory on the part of American Patriots is often synonymous among Americans with the birth of our nation's democracy, freedom, and status as an independent state. But perhaps equally important as the war itself is what followed shortly after, and perhaps most importantly, in the very tense area of Westchester County. The document entitled, "The Proceedings of the Commissioners of Forfeiture, 1784-1789" is the one which best sums up this time and place. In it is the documentation of the taking of Westchester Loyalist land by Westchester Patriots. The list of Patriot names and the amounts they paid are Samuel Barnum with 200 pounds, Benjamin Titus with 415 pounds, Charles Duryea with 518 pounds, Jonathan Horton with 1,015 pounds, John Fisher with 533 pounds, Patience Bonnet with 519 pounds, and Abraham Lent with 840 pounds.¹ The most notable Loyalist whose land was auctioned off through these proceedings is Frederick Philipse III, the third and final owner of the Philipsburgh Manor. His aforementioned massive manor was taken completely away from him and auctioned off to a number of new owners, all Westchester Patriots, with one important example being Jonathan Horton, a farmer in the area.² Therefore, land forfeiture in Westchester County must be understood with a strong focus on the divide between Patriots and Loyalists. Ultimately, this was at the very core of this issue. Overall, with all things said, it becomes crucial to wonder why land forfeiture of previously Loyalist owned land proceeded in the manner that it did following the conclusion of the American Revolutionary War. There can be no denying the fact of the matter that this

¹ "The Proceedings of the Commissioners of Forfeiture". Westchester County Archives, 1784-1789. 1-141.

² "The Proceedings of the Commissioners of Forfeiture", 47.

situation was one of both enormous scale and gravity. Land forfeiture of Loyalist land in Westchester County was a bitter and nuanced predicament which manifested itself due to a variety of reasons, including Loyalists' poor standing in Westchester County, Loyalists' agitation of Patriots, the failure of Loyalist citizens and leadership, Patriots' goals for a new nation, and Patriots' spirit and swiftness.

Literature Review

My Senior Project revolves around the American Loyalists' loss of land following the conclusion of the American Revolutionary War. The primary document which serves as the basis for my paper is "The Proceedings of the Commissioners of Forfeiture" from 1784 to 1789. Though this document in and of itself contains a great deal of significant information on my topic, it has been crucial to find a substantial amount of secondary sources with the ability to provide context to this main primary document. These are the seven most important secondary sources of my project.

Sung Bok Kim's "The Limits of Politicization in the American Revolution: The Experience of Westchester County, New York" is an excellent secondary source for my Senior Project. This source is particularly helpful because it focuses very specifically on Westchester County during the American Revolution, rather than the 13 American colonies at large. The most important overarching element of this text is that it very clearly demonstrates the fact of the matter that the dynamics of Westchester County social life essentially mimicked that of a civil war of sorts. Kim details the fact of the matter that though all those who lived in the area shared the similarity of being Westchesterites, the division between Patriots and Loyalists was one of great intensity. Beyond this, another element of this source of tremendous significance to my

project is its detailing of the Patriots' very ambitious political tactics. Kim's writing on this topic certainly helps my essay because it demonstrates the long history of Patriots' ability to effectively spread their message and subsequently increase the size of their movement. This ties directly into my analysis of why the Loyalists lost so much land, as the Patriotic movement was simply one of enormous ambition.

Another secondary source of great value to my paper is *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* by Maya Jasanoff. One thing in particular which this book does very well is not underplay the intensity of this period of American history. Jasanoff writes in a very clear and unbiased manner as she details the treatment of Loyalists at the hands of Patriots, which often included moderate to severe physical violence. It is very important to read a book with a levelheaded perspective like this when attempting to understand the post-Revolutionary War land forfeiture predicament at large. To read a book with a devoutly pro-Patriot or pro-Loyalist perspective would simply not do me any good. Jasanoff's handling of this material is appropriate because it is simply an account of how things turned out during this era, rather than an account riddled with bias for one side or another. Ultimately the strength of my essay is dependent upon exactly this type of treatment of Revolutionary history, especially considering the fact that there is a certain level of complexity to the topic, and bias does nothing but muddy the understanding of the topic with confusion on the part of the reader and the writer, myself.

The book *The Other New York: The American Revolution beyond New York City: 1763-1787* by Eugene R. Fingerhut and Joseph S. Tiedemann is another one of substantial importance to my paper. One thing in particular which this source does which helps my paper is

detail legislation passed which directly impacted the Westchester County Land Forfeiture Proceedings. For instance, Tiedemann emphasizes the importance of the 1779 Act of Forfeiture which effectively stripped land from 59 prominent Loyalists, one being Frederick Philipse. Not only this, but this act was passed 4 years prior to the end of the war, and 5 years prior to the beginning of the Westchester County Land Forfeiture Proceedings. Thus, this source makes it clear to both me and my reader that Patriots in Westchester County were very forthright in their efforts to pursue the land of Loyalists in the area. When attempting to truly understand why Loyalists lost as much land as they did in Westchester, this source makes it clear that the Patriots' ability to undergo their land-taking tactics as early on as they did was a significant factor.

Generous Enemies: Patriots and Loyalists in Revolutionary New York by Judith L. Van Buskirk is a tremendously important source to my project. This book is particularly useful in demonstrating the fair bit of nuance to the predicament of Westchester County Loyalist land forfeiture at large. In order to make this apparent to the reader, Buskirk includes the evidence of the various acts passed during this time by those in power. Essentially, the most important document which demonstrated that there was a fair bit of sympathy towards Loyalists and their land in Westchester was the Treaty of Paris. This act specified that the timing of when Westchester County land was taken determined whether or not it could be sold. But this only applied to certain prominent Loyalists, and this specification was far down in the act. It is important to take in all of this information together in order to truly put things into context. There was some sympathy offered towards Westchester County Loyalists, but it was very scant and fairly hidden. Overall, this section of Buskirk's book is quite helpful in making clear the mix of sympathy and apathy on the part of Patriots towards Loyalists in the area at this time. But

Buskirk also makes clear the fact that this did not denote ambivalence of any kind when it came to the general sentiment of New York Patriots towards New York Loyalists. The overall sentiment towards Loyalists was a very predominantly negative one, to say the least. But of course, the nuance must be noted, and Buskirk does exactly that by showing both the examples of stridently anti-Loyalist behavior by Patriots as well as the examples of sympathy towards Loyalists by Patriots. It is very important to have a source like this at my disposal as one-dimensional thinking about the Land Forfeiture Proceedings does nothing but provide a false reading of history.

Another important source for my project is *Loyalists and Redcoats: A Study in British Revolutionary Policy* by Paul H. Smith. The best thing for my project which this book accomplishes is providing substantial detail on the weakness of Loyalists during this period of time. In understanding this, it makes it abundantly clear that their weakness transferred into the form of their eventual inability to maintain their land in Westchester. Smith writes of how a number of elements conducive to great success during the Revolutionary era were not present amongst the Loyalists. Some of these elements in particular were unity and a cohesive American policy. This is very important to grasp because it demonstrates that at the very core of the Loyalist cause was a weak foundation. This foundation carried on throughout the entire Revolutionary era, seen through the Loyalists' continued defeats and eventual loss of property. Smith's handling of the material is overall very professionally done and without bias, which also contributes to it being an excellent source.

Loyalists and Community in North America by Robert McCluer Calhoon, Timothy M. Barnes, and George A. Rawlyk is another important source to my Senior Project essay. This

source perhaps bears the greatest amount of similarity to the aforementioned Paul H. Smith book. This source further emphasizes the fact of the matter that Loyalists during the Revolutionary era were simply very divided, therefore had little to no unity as a cohesive group. Very interestingly, he gives a reason for their lack of unity which was very much specifically of that time, the 18th century. The Loyalists were essentially too diverse of a group. This great amount of diversity did nothing to bind them together during this time, but rather separate them. Though Western society has evolved immensely since then in this regard, it is very important that the authors of this book do not shy away from this fact. It is a very key one to grasp in order to understand the land forfeiture predicament at large. On top of this, the overall Loyalist identity became considerably weaker and weaker over time during this period of American history. Thus, by the time of the Land Forfeiture Proceedings, Loyalists were, in essence, nothing more than a broken and tattered group, but were actually not much of a “group” at all.

Another source of great significance to my project is *That Ever Loyal Island: Staten Island and the American Revolution* by Phillip Papas. This book provides a considerable amount of detail on the most important time and place of my project, post-Revolutionary War era Westchester when Loyalists’ land was being taken from them. It is of great use to my paper that Papas includes thorough detail on the actual legislation that went into place to negatively impact Loyalists in the area, such as the Trespass Act of 1783. Understanding the ins and outs of this act enables me as the writer to further understand the very ambitious nature of Patriots in their endeavor to secure land previously belonging to Loyalists in the area. It is also of great use to my paper that Papas is very precise in his chronology of the events of post-Revolutionary War era Westchester. For example, he makes clear the fact of the matter that the British evacuation of

Staten Island occurred in December 1783, and then the confiscation of New York Loyalists' land occurred directly after. This is of the utmost importance to understand as it once again demonstrates that a very key reason that Loyalists in New York lost as much land following the conclusion of the war was Patriots' very quick nature, that is, their ability to "pounce" on the land of Loyalists in the area as swiftly as possible.

Section 1: The Curse of Being a Loyalist in Westchester County

At the root of this entire discussion of why Loyalists lost as much land in Westchester County as they did following the conclusion of the American Revolutionary War is the fact that, almost unanimously, to be a Loyalist in the area during this period of time was to be a man or woman in enemy territory. A Loyalist at the forefront of this entire situation was Frederick Philipse, who, as mentioned, had his entire Philipsburgh Manor auctioned off to Patriots in Westchester County.³ As the *New York Historical Society Museum & Library* website notes, in 1751, he became the inheritor of his father's lands, and his fate of having this land taken from him was directly because of the fact that his allegiances lied with the British Empire during the Revolution.⁴ Something which must not be overlooked in any way is just how prominent Philipse was because it demonstrates that prominence, more often than not, had absolutely nothing to do with one's fate of either losing or maintaining their land in Westchester County following the war. In *Life Along the Hudson* by Allan Keller, the author writes of Philipse's great-grandfather, "Between the time of his arrival in New Amsterdam around 1653 and his

³ 1-141.

⁴ "Frederick Philipse III," *New York Historical Society Museum & Library*, <https://www.nyhistory.org/exhibit/frederick-philipse-iii>. Accessed 1 May 2020.

death in 1702, Frederick Philipse acquired around 90,000 acres of land in what is today Westchester County and part of the Bronx”.⁵ This quote highlights the definite prominence of Philipse’s family in Westchester County, understood clearly by their massive stretch of land in the area. Even more significant, however, is that it demonstrates the economic status of Philipse and his family. Considering all of these facts together highlights exactly what was truly going on during the Land Forfeiture Proceedings. Westchester Patriots often showed little to no care over how much money someone had, their status in society, or the family in which they came, but rather put at the forefront the separation of those identifying as Patriots, and those identifying as Loyalists. To put it simply, in their perspective, to be a Patriot was to be associated with the fortitude of a new and burgeoning nation, but to be a Loyalist was to represent everything adverse to this, the ultimate manifestation of a traitor.

To be a Loyalist in Patriot Westchester County was certainly to be at risk of losing all of your property, and the story of Jonathan Horton, a Patriot farmer, makes this all the more clear. With all things said, Horton’s background is not a spectacularly profound one, except when analyzed in context of the events which unfolded in his life. It is clear that Jonathan Horton was a Westchester County farmer who had a decent level of wealth. This is demonstrated by the fact that out of all of the purchases of Westchester County land during the proceedings, Horton’s was the largest.⁶ However, if thought of comparatively with Philipse’s level of wealth, Horton’s certainly does not hold much of a flame. This is because of the fact of the matter that any and all purchases of land on Frederick Philipse’s Philipsburgh Manor were purchases specifically of

⁵ Allan Keller. *Life Along the Hudson* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 29.

⁶ “The Proceedings of the Commissioners of Forfeitures”, 47.

tracts of land, thereby fractions of the total mass of land which had all belonged to Frederick Philipse. The sum of all this information together provides great perspective about this situation. Land previously belonging to the upper class in Westchester County during the Revolutionary War was now being auctioned off to people of all classes, of course as long as they could afford it. Jonathan Horton's status as a Patriot in post-Revolutionary War era Westchester County paid dividends for him in his pursuit to acquire part of Philipsburgh Manor, a previously Loyalist owned land.

On a similar note, being of specific ancestral origins also bore importance if one sought to gain land during the proceedings. One ancestral background which was in particularly good standing in post-Revolutionary War era Westchester was Dutch. In *Four Centuries of Dutch-American Relations: 1609-2009* by Hans Krabbendam, Cornelis A. van Minnen, and Giles Scott-Smith, the authors write of the fact that John Adams was actually the U.S. minister plenipotentiary to the Dutch Republic until 1788. Relating to this, Adams was allies with a number of Dutch Patriots and expressed considerable interest in their political action.⁷ Thus, the Dutch were in overall good standing from the Revolutionary War era into the post-Revolutionary War era. Adams obviously had an immense amount of power in America at this time and this combined with his good terms with Dutch Patriots meant the ability for Dutch Patriots to be rewarded mightily, such as through the Land Forfeiture Proceedings. The chronology is also of great importance, in that Adams was the minister plenipotentiary to the Dutch Republic until 1788, which is almost through to the end of the Westchester County Land Forfeiture Proceedings. Dutch Patriots therefore certainly had a friend in a very high place almost through

⁷ Hans, Minnen, Cornelis A. van Minnen, and Giles Scott-Smith. *Four Centuries of Dutch-American Relations: 1609-2009* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2009), 212.

the entirety of the proceedings, who had the ability to be of great help at any given time to them. In the case of Abraham Lent, an individual who purchased some of Philipse's land, it is not only mentioned in the proceedings document that he was of the County of Dutchess.⁸ His last name, Lent, is in fact of Dutch origin, according to *Ancestry*.⁹ This is demonstrative of the fact that being Dutch in Westchester during this period was often times of substantial benefit to an individual. Because figures like John Adams were not only on good terms with the Dutch, but also actively supported the Dutch, this helped to enable someone like Lent to purchase Philipse's land in Westchester.

English Patriots also were in good standing in the post-Revolutionary War era, including through the period of the Westchester County Land Forfeiture Proceedings. This is made clear in *The Rise and Fall of Anglo-America* by Eric P. Kaufmann, when he writes of Thomas Jefferson's immigration restriction depending upon whether one was Anglo-Saxon or not. In fact, this actually helped create Anglo-Saxon study at the University of Virginia.¹⁰ Therefore, to be of English background in post-Revolutionary era America was to be at a considerable advantage. Anglo-Saxons were viewed in such good light by those in power in America at the time that it eventually led to great leniency towards them in regards to immigration and even the introduction of the study of Anglo-Saxons at the University of Virginia. This is connected to the Land Forfeiture Proceedings in Westchester County as it was a sign of the times, the late 18th century, that Anglo-Saxons were treated with a great deal of sympathy. In the case of Jonathan

⁸ "The Proceedings of the Commissioners of Forfeitures", 134.

⁹ "Lent," *Ancestry*, 2013, <https://www.ancestry.com/name-origin?surname=lent>. Accessed 17 April 2020. 1.

¹⁰ Eric P Kaufmann. *The Rise and Fall of Anglo-America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 32.

Horton, the Northeastern farmer who purchased a tract of Frederick Philipse's land, his last name, Horton, is of English descent, also according to *Ancestry*.¹¹ Horton's English background certainly paid dividends in terms of putting him in good standing for land purchase in the area.

Patriots' firm anti-Loyalist sentiment from early on in the Revolution all the way through to post-Revolutionary War era Westchester County, which sometimes manifested itself in the form of physical violence, was a major reason why Loyalists lost an enormous amount of land during the proceedings. The author Maya Jasanoff quotes the British official Guy Carleton, who, speaking about Loyalists, told the British ministry during the post-Revolutionary War era, "Almost all those who have attempted to return to their homes have been exceedingly ill treated, many beaten, robbed of their money and clothing, and sent back".¹² This quote is highly indicative of the manner in which Loyalists were treated in or near Westchester County at this time. More importantly, when thinking of this with careful relation to the Land Forfeiture Proceedings, it was precisely because of their status as Loyalists that they were treated this way. They were treated in this distinct manner because of their political beliefs, those of Loyalists. A separate quote which is key to this topic is when Jasanoff, writing of a specific Loyalist individual, states, "In Westchester County, an elderly member of the prominent loyalist Delancey family had been beaten "in a most violent manner" and told to "run to Halifax, or to his damned King, for that neither he nor one of his breed should be suffered to remain in the Country"". ¹³ Once again, it is made clear how Loyalists were treated in this area of the country during this

¹¹ "Horton," *Ancestry*, 2013, <https://www.ancestry.com/name-origin?surname=horton>. Accessed 17 April 2020. 1.

¹² Maya Jasanoff. *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Vintage, 2011), 91.

¹³ Jasanoff, 91-92.

period of time. Delancey was not only threatened, but also physically assaulted. Those who aligned with the Patriot cause in Westchester County following the conclusion of the American Revolutionary War did so with an unbelievable fervor, seriousness, and intensity. This example demonstrates a considerably low level of sympathy towards Loyalists in this county, even if they were fairly physically weak, like Delancey. Most importantly, there is a direct connection to be made from this to Frederick Philipse and other prominent Loyalists like him in the period following the War. Once again, it is made clear that one's economic or societal status of sorts had very little bearing on the fate of their land or essentially, the success of their impending life in Westchester County. DeLancey, like Philipse, was a member of a prominent Loyalist family, yet this high level of status did not affect his negative fate, specifically as he was beaten simply because of the fact that he was a Loyalist. This is a very key point to be driven home, which is that the post-Revolutionary War era Westchester County was, in a sense, a battleground of its own. These acts of physical violence make it very apparent why Loyalists lost as much land as they did following the end of the War. As the fervor of Patriots increased, so did their overall power, and their message was not purely a political one, but a physical one.¹⁴ Physical domination on the part of Patriots towards Loyalists simply can not be overlooked when analyzing the land forfeiture predicament at large.

What is also key to all of this treachery of being a Loyalist in Westchester County is the fact that part of the strength of Patriots in Westchester County going all the way through to the Land Forfeiture Proceedings and the weakness of Loyalists in the area was that power accelerated in the favor of Patriots through a many years-long endeavor to dismantle the Loyalist

¹⁴ 91-92.

regime of sorts. Philip Ranlet states on page 134 of *The New York Loyalists*, “Despite the probability that Tories were, overall, a minority in Westchester, they still were strong enough to scare the patriots. In October 1775 Nathaniel Merritt of Cortlandt Manor complained that the Patriots there “used many cruel and Oppressive Measures to [try to] compel People to fall in with Them””.¹⁵ This is remarkable when comparing it to the general relationship between Loyalists and Patriots in Westchester after the war ended. During the war, Patriots in this area could certainly be described as being on the complete defensive to Loyalists, viewing them with fearful eyes and, in turn, strongly encouraging peers to follow the Patriot cause in order to strengthen their own side against the threatening Loyalists. Then, no more than a decade later, in the period following the conclusion of the American Revolutionary War, the Patriots took the offensive whilst the Loyalists were forced to take the defensive in quite an unwelcoming area for them, pro-Patriot Westchester County. With all of this said, this makes it clear that Loyalists were certainly doomed due to the fact that Patriot forces in the area recognized considerably early on the threat which Loyalists posed. Westchester Patriots took an approach which was based in the belief that victory and domination was absolutely not a sure thing, by any means. This can be tied to some of the events which took place in other colonies during this period of time. As Colin Bonwick emphasizes in *The American Revolution*, in New Jersey and the Carolina backcountry, Loyalists often found themselves victims of mob violence.¹⁶ This is demonstrative of the fact that Patriot forces were working in a number of colonies in such a way that actively sought to physically dominate Loyalist forces. All of this together allowed Patriots to spearhead campaigns

¹⁵ Philip Ranlet. *The New York Loyalists* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2002), 134.

¹⁶ Colin Bonwick. *The American Revolution* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1991), 152.

against Loyalists which allowed them to become the massive force they were by the post-Revolutionary War era, as seen through the proceedings.

Another key reason why land forfeiture proceedings in Westchester following the end of the War were as bitter as they were was a fair bit of Patriotic confusion, which could also be considered as “painting with a broad brush”. With the understanding of the treatment of Loyalists on the part of Patriots as quite anti-Loyalist, it must also be noted that there were substantial complexities of Loyalist thought in 18th century Revolutionary America. In fact, it would be simply inaccurate to consider Loyalists to be uniform in terms of them all seeking to keep the status quo in place, that is, the British empire having strong dominion over the American colonies. This is made clear by the fact that many Loyalists wanted to make changes to the relationship between Great Britain and the American colonies. These aforementioned Loyalists did not agree with Great Britain acting in an authoritarian manner towards the American colonies and were steadfast in their defense of their rights to representation.¹⁷ This is very important in terms of defining the experience of Loyalists during the Revolutionary era. Despite the clear fact of the matter that plenty of Loyalists shared some key commonalities with Patriots, this seemed to have little to no bearing on the fate of things to come in the years following the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, especially the forfeiture of their land.¹⁸ Therefore, this adds another key layer to the stories of those Loyalists whose land was taken from them during the Land Forfeiture Proceedings. Many Loyalists did not seek to keep the American colonies under the tight grip of the British Empire, but rather sought to make considerable reform to this

¹⁷ Maya Jasanoff. *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Vintage, 2011), 24.

¹⁸ Jasanoff, 24.

relationship, yet the events of the proceedings at large demonstrated very little tolerance of Loyalists by Patriots. But considering all of this together, this type of thinking on the part of Patriots about Loyalists ultimately served their own interests in terms of helping to enable large-scale land forfeiture.

Section 2: Fueling the Patriotic Flame: The Early Days of the American Revolution

The events which unfolded in the early years of the American Revolution effectively helped create grand animosity amongst Westchester County Patriots towards Westchester County Loyalists. Many elements of British tyranny, as Westchester Patriots considered it to be, were incredibly irksome to them, with one in particular being Britain's seven year occupation of New York. During this period, British soldiers, behaving in an unruly manner, would invade the homes of New Yorkers and take whatever articles they so desired. The extent of Loyalist looting of Patriot New Yorkers' homes was so extreme that it, at times, could force someone, such as one particular Anglican minister, to not be able to buy any bed at all.¹⁹ With a memory like this fresh in the minds of New York Patriots during the post-Revolutionary War era, it does not seem so shocking that they behaved the way they did with regards to the forfeiture of Loyalist lands in Westchester County. To have their property stripped from their very hands in their own homes by foreign soldiers undoubtedly left a very strong mark on any Patriots affected by this occupation. In a sense, taking the land of Loyalists from their very grasps was likely a very satisfying form of revenge for New York Patriots, especially those New York Patriots of the most vengeful, spiteful, or resentful ilk. This is demonstrative of New York Patriots' emphasis on recompense, in that

¹⁹ Judith L. Van Buskirk. *Generous Enemies: Patriots and Loyalists in Revolutionary New York* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 23.

they did not leave this issue unresolved in any which way. Another element of the British soldiers' occupation of New York during the Revolution which helps strongly demonstrate how things got more and more heated until they finally erupted during the Land Forfeiture Proceedings is exacerbation. Specifically, the British Empire having soldiers stationed in the area made worse the already existing tension and problems between Westchester Patriots and Loyalists, such as their continuing presence on Staten Island, which did not go unnoticed by Patriots in the area. Tension between Westchester Patriots and Loyalists increased substantially over time. As a result of this, there became a strong desire for retribution amongst both the Loyalists and Patriots in the area, and this helped to light the flame of violent impulses amongst them both. This manifested itself in the form of raiding and physical violence perpetrated by both sides.²⁰ Putting all of this into perspective with regards to the events of the Westchester County Land Forfeiture Proceedings, it becomes clear that the enormous amount of animosity towards Westchester Loyalists by Westchester Patriots was simply Patriots doing what they so badly desired to do, and had done for years. Also, though Patriots and Loyalists were in a similar position power-wise during the war, this was no longer the case come the post-Revolutionary War era, as seen through the Loyalists' turmoil during the Land Forfeiture Proceedings. Once Patriots had defeated the Loyalists, this enabled them to fully take the reins of their dominant position over the Loyalists and seek out great revenge for all that had occurred to them during the war. This direct link is essential to all that unfolded following the conclusion of the American Revolutionary War. Westchester County Patriots' minds were still ripe with the memories of tremendous Patriotic devastation at the hands of Westchester Loyalists. This devastation haunted

²⁰ Phillip Papas. *That Ever Loyal Island: Staten Island and the American Revolution* (New York: NYU Press, 2009), 83.

Westchester Loyalists for years to come, but very prominently from 1784 to 1789, when their land was taken from them by Westchester Patriots.

The enormous tension between Westchester County Patriots and Loyalists which manifested itself through the pillaging of Westchester Loyalist land during the proceedings also manifested itself through substantial Patriot rebellion against Loyalist forces early on during the war era. One key example of this is when, after the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence was given, in July of 1776, passionate Patriots not only pulled down, but mutilated a statue of King George III which was located on the Broad Way.²¹ To pull down and mutilate a statue of King George quite obviously demonstrates fervent disgust and a complete lack of any reverence whatsoever for the authority of King George as well as Britain at large. However, what is just as important is that this event directly followed the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence, in July of 1776. Being that this is the case, this event took place extremely early on in the timeline of the American Revolutionary War. Therefore, Patriots in New York, beginning from an early stage of the American Revolutionary War, possessed an intense hatred for the British Empire. This is important to keep in mind when jumping ahead to the post-Revolutionary War Westchester County Land Forfeiture Proceedings. In fact, it becomes quite logical why the proceedings carried on in the manner that they did. It was, in a sense, the Loyalists experiencing the years-long buildup of New York Patriots' contempt for the core of what they most often stood for and represented. The accumulation of hatred towards Loyalists, stemming from Patriots, from 1776 to the post-Revolutionary War era cannot be underestimated in any which way.

²¹ Buskirk, 18.

Section 3: Failure of Loyalist Citizens and Leadership

Both Loyalist citizens as well as Loyalist leadership share a good deal of “blame”, so to speak, for the disaster which ensued for Westchester Loyalists. Of course, when attempting to understand the issue of Loyalist leadership at large, perhaps no one individual is more culpable to the disaster than King George. Known as His Majesty, he ran the British government through the Revolutionary era and was ultimately the figurehead and leader for the Loyalist cause, as noted in *A Short History of the American Revolution* by James L. Stokesbury.²² Relating to this and at the root of this element is Loyalists’ expectations of things to come following the conclusion of the war and the failure of their leadership led by King George to deliver on these expectations. In Ruma Chopra’s book *Unnatural Rebellion: Loyalists in New York City during the Revolution*, Chopra states, regarding Loyalists, “In 1782, they anticipated that the British would negotiate terms that would shield them from the vengeance of their rebel neighbors and compensate them for the lives they had surrendered. The 1783 peace terms, which offered no compensation for past losses or future protection of loyalist property, shattered the last remnants of loyalist deference”.²³ Therefore, Loyalists during the closing portion of the American Revolutionary War hoped that their superior, the British Empire, would help them in the form of both protection and compensation because of the damage that had been done to them by the American Patriots. Also important is that it was the poor handling of affairs by the British Empire which failed to make this happen, specifically the failures inherent in the 1783 peace

²² James L. Stokesbury. *A Short History of the American Revolution* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 28.

²³ Ruma Chopra. *Unnatural Rebellion: Loyalists in New York City during the Revolution*. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 226.

terms, and this put the Loyalists at a considerable disadvantage. Thus, the forces of the British Empire were partially at fault for Loyalists losing their land to Patriots in post-Revolutionary War era Westchester. Loyalist citizens are therefore not solely at fault, because the British Empire had the ability to positively impact the lives of Loyalist citizens, in terms of protection and compensation, and they simply did not do so.²⁴ This demonstrates a solid layer of complexity to the issue of the forfeiture of Loyalist land in Westchester County. It was no one singular Loyalist individual or force, nor event which caused it, but rather the work of various key elements contributing to the downfall of Loyalists in the area.

Loyalists in Westchester County's almost universal fate of losing their land can stem back even as far as the early stages of the American Revolutionary War. Paul H. Smith writes, "As plans to use the Loyalists fluctuated easily, the absence of an over-all loyalist policy became a liability, and officials were unduly influenced by conditions at a particular moment, or by advisers with specific interests in the war".²⁵ Therefore, even going back to the state of the Loyalist cause early on in the war, they seemed to always lack a fair bit of organization. The most crucial manifestation of this lack of organization was Loyalists not having an overarching Loyalist policy. This became detrimental to Loyalists as they acted simply "by the moment", rather than having a pre-ordained plan. With this lack of planning and organizational unity, Loyalists were certainly not the strongest cohesive group. Their weakness as a socio-political group during the American Revolutionary War carried over into the period following the war. In lacking appropriate unity necessary for building measures to protect one's land in the colonies,

²⁴ Chopra, 226.

²⁵ Paul H Smith. *Loyalists and Redcoats: A Study in British Revolutionary Policy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 58.

Loyalists lost everything through the Land Forfeiture Proceedings. Without an overarching Loyalist policy, this ultimately weakened their fight at large, both during the war and following the conclusion of the war. This weakness on the part of Loyalists when it came to policy can go even further back. In the critical period directly after the Coercive Acts, 1774 to 1775, the entire American policy of Britain was very uncertain.²⁶ Thus, Loyalists and Britain's strength overall was, for a large portion of the Revolution, not where it needed to be to support the protection of their lives and property. The fact that policy was consistently uncertain and lacked cohesion set in place a weak standard for Loyalists, one which went hand in hand with their complete disaster of losing their Westchester County land.

This lack of unity amongst Loyalists eventually contributing to their loss of land in Westchester was evident in other areas as well. Robert McCluer Calhoon, Timothy M. Barnes, and George A. Rawlyk write of the common bond between Loyalists. Essentially, there was not much of a bond at all. This could be chalked up to a number of factors, with a few being a mix of many different economic levels, degrees of power, and education level. Therefore, this grand diversity was not exactly a help to them, but rather a great source of division.²⁷ Thus, in this era, diversity was not considered in the light it is today. During the Revolutionary era, to have a diverse group of people in a new land was not something which often worked to one's benefit. In the case of the Loyalists this is particularly prevalent. The substantial diversity amongst Loyalists in the American colonies of the Revolutionary era set the grounds for a solid lack of unity and cohesion amongst this socio-political group. This extends to the post-Revolutionary War era

²⁶ Smith, 11.

²⁷ Timothy M. Barnes, Robert McCluer Calhoon, and George A. Rawlyk. *Loyalists and Community in North America* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 210.

America in that Loyalists were ultimately a fairly weak and divided people as a whole. However, they could not be thought of as “a people” at all, considering their scattered weak nature. The Land Forfeiture Proceedings were very specific in their goal to separate Loyalists from their land in Westchester County. Patriots granted both very little leeway and sympathy to their primary enemy, the Loyalists.²⁸ To be as divided as they were, due to the abundance of diversity of their people meant they lacked that strong core unity which the Patriots in post-Revolutionary War era Westchester, for the most part, possessed. Relating directly to this is how this lack of unity amongst Loyalists essentially snowballed as time went on during the Revolutionary era. Specifically, Loyalists’ identity becoming weaker was a part of their ultimate acceptance that they had lost the Revolutionary War.²⁹ Therefore, the war, of course monumental, also had the effect of lessening the identity of Loyalists. This socio-political group was already one which was lacking in a strong core unity by which they could feel confidence by and operate firmly during the war. It is thus clear that losing the war effectively helped to all but deteriorate an already flailing group, the Loyalists.

Another important thing to note on this topic which ultimately contributed to Patriot success is the fact that hostilities between Patriots and Loyalists were particularly heightened in 1775. During this year, there were some prominent physical confrontations which occurred between American and British troops at Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts. As a result of this, there was a significant increase in armed conflict in the colonies and this all led to great

²⁸ Jasanoff, 91-92.

²⁹ Barnes, Calhoun, and Rawlyk 211.

politicization and polarization.³⁰ Therefore, 1775 marked a year in which tensions between Patriots and Loyalists reached an unprecedented level. Physical violence in Massachusetts meant a substantial uptick in animosity amongst both sides, and this nastiness was at the core of Patriots' fervent pushback against Loyalists in the area. This physical domination propelled by years-long nasty tension helped completely dismantle the Loyalist forces. This all harkens back to the Westchester County Land Forfeiture Proceedings. The Loyalists' sense of identity, unity, and strength became progressively worse from the beginning of the Revolutionary era to the end. By the time of the Land Forfeiture Proceedings, Loyalists could not only be seen as a substantially weak group. They were essentially the dying calls of a long defeated group. But they may not have even been able to be considered a group at all, especially in comparison to the unity of the Patriots. In not being united behind clear, common goals or understanding who they were as a people, this deterred Loyalists from achieving any true sense of longevity. It is quite difficult for a group, in this case the Loyalists, to realize one's goals when first and foremost, they are not a people at all, and second, they do not know what they stand for. Patriots in Westchester County differed in nearly every way from the flimsy and unified Loyalists. Many Patriots, as noted, presented a clear justification for their actions, which was that many Loyalists' core belief, being loyal to the British crown, was antithetical to everything which the new nation stood for.

Further stark contrast between the flimsy, un-unified nature of the Loyalists and the firmness of the unified Patriots demonstrates why the Loyalists failed to remain intact from the

³⁰ Sung Bok Kim. "The Limits of Politicization in the American Revolution: The Experience of Westchester County, New York." *The Journal of American History* 10.3 (1993): 874-876. <https://academic.csuohio.edu/humphreyt/History601/601%20Readings/Kim.pdf>. Accessed 4 Apr. 2020.

war to the period following the conclusion of the war when they lost their land. Fred Halliday emphasizes in *Revolution and World Politics: The Rise and Fall of the Sixth Great Power* the firmness of the Patriot cause. Specifically, Patriots were part of the then new intellectual movement, in that its core ideology took great inspiration from John Locke's English liberalism. It perceived itself as being part of a "broader international process". The most important facet of the Revolutionary Patriot cause was not only their advocacy of a new social order which was independent of the rule of the British regime, but their implementation of said new social order.³¹ Thus, Patriots knew exactly what they wanted and took strong and firm steps to accomplish their goals. They were grounded in ideologies which were inspired by already well-established ideologies of other thinkers, notably those of John Locke. Therefore, this gave Patriots a strong foundation by which they could spread and operate their message. Loyalists were simply nowhere near achieving this kind of intellectual strength and firmness of message. Their scattered nature in opposition to the firm Locke-inspired message of the Patriots did not bode well for them in any which way. Also key to this scattered nature were the problems with communication in the 18th century world. This is made clear in *Revolutionary Networks: The Business and Politics of Printing the News, 1763-1789*, in which Joseph M. Adelman writes of the constraints of the 18th century post office in the colonies, emphasizing that "its structure and design limited its effectiveness as a tool of communication. Most importantly, the post office connected primarily the coastal towns in the colonies. Further inland, communication relied on the British Army, Native Americans, traders, and other personal messengers".³² Therefore,

³¹ Fred Halliday. *Revolution and World Politics: The Rise and Fall of the Sixth Great Power*. (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 1999), 68-69.

³² Joseph M. Adelman. *Revolutionary Networks: The Business and Politics of Printing the News, 1763-1789*. (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2019), 43-44.

Loyalists were constrained to the times, in that the colonial post office was considerably limited in its communication abilities. Not only this, but the fact that the colonial post office was quite heavily based on location of course meant difficulty for communication and unity amongst people, such as the Loyalists. Being that they already lacked unity, this scattered nature of theirs was not helped by the colonial post office being as disconnected and location based as it was in the Revolutionary world. Another thing important about this issue is the fact that Patriots perceived themselves as being part of a “broader international process”, as Halliday states.³³ Thus, in believing this about themselves, they thought of themselves in a sort of bold and confident manner, in such a way that they felt just as important as any other international power in the world at that time. This obviously paid dividends when considering their positive outcome in the Revolutionary War. All of these elements together laid the groundwork for a fiercely confident and new rising power, the Patriots, to upend a fiercely declining old power, the British regime and the Loyalists, over the course of the Revolution into the post-Revolutionary War era Westchester County Land Forfeiture Proceedings. Also worth noting on the subject of the new rising Patriot power is the diversity of their side, which in their case, unlike for the Loyalists, proved to effectively help their cause. In fact, diversity of thought and idea in general was a key tenet which made the Patriots far more developed than the Loyalists. This can be seen through the new governments formed in the post-Revolutionary War era America which emphasized operating in an independent, Republic form of government. Nothing was more key to this element than the fact that all colonies permitted freedom of worship.³⁴ Therefore, in allowing

³³ Halliday, 68-69.

³⁴ Bonwick, 165.

freedom of religion, Patriots placed a certain solid level of emphasis on diversity in general which strengthened their efforts to develop a new nation with the idea of a Republic at the very core of their thinking.

Perhaps the most nuanced reason why the Loyalists lost land is that they were ignorant about certain laws which had the potential to help them secure their land in Westchester County. But it must also be noted that Loyalist ignorance was combined with a fair bit of Patriot strategy. This is made clear by the fact that there were scant circumstances in which a Loyalist had the ability to keep their land in the area. The Treaty of Paris was a document which played a significant role in determining the fate of Loyalist lands in New York. Specifically, a Loyalist property could only be sold if it was attained before November 30, 1782, which was in accordance with said treaty. The American legislature had buried this significant piece of information about Loyalist land considerably far down in the Treaty of Paris, in articles 33 and 34. Therefore, this treaty offered the opportunity for certain Loyalists of prominence during this time to buy back their property.³⁵ This demonstrates a significant level of nuance to this issue of Loyalist property in Westchester County following the American Revolutionary War. Patriots in Westchester County did at times grant some sympathy towards Loyalists when it came to land forfeiture at large. Their bit of sympathy towards Loyalists manifested itself in their decision to only allow Loyalist land attained before November 30, 1782 to be sold. Also crucial is that a Loyalist's status could in fact sometimes bear some bit of significance in determining the fate of their land. The Treaty of Paris outlines that certain prominent Loyalists could regain their city

³⁵ Buskirk, 187.

real estate through buying it back. But with all this, there must also be great consideration to the other so-called end of the spectrum of this issue, which is the dominant one.

The Treaty of Paris must not be simply thought of as an historical document which provided cushion for Loyalists seeking to hold on to their land, but rather again demonstrate why Loyalists lost the amount of land they did following the war. When describing this document and its history, author Judith L. Van Buskirk is intentional in describing the fact that the aforementioned specification which allowed certain prominent Loyalists to regain their land was “buried” in articles 33 and 34.³⁶ Also, as the language of the document makes clear, the price of the real estate which Loyalists would have to pay would need to be determined by appraisers.³⁷ When considering this, it is clear that only a Loyalist, and specifically one of prominence, who was well versed on the Treaty of Paris had the ability to defend the right to their land in accordance with this document. Also, the necessary element of an appraiser determining the price added another bit of difficulty for Loyalists in their pursuit to regain their land in the area. The Treaty of Paris does demonstrate the slightest bit of sympathy towards Loyalists and the protection of their land, but ultimately it once again is proof that the Patriots in Westchester County following the American Revolutionary War treated the Loyalists in an extremely careful manner. Loyalists did not educate themselves greatly on this crucial legislation, but in the late 18th century, it was nowhere near as easy to have access to documents like this as it is in the 21st century, especially if one lacked a certain degree of status, as made clear in *Handwriting in*

³⁶ 187.

³⁷ 188.

America: A Cultural History by Tamara Plakins Thornton.³⁸ This made it all the more difficult for Loyalists to be able to gain the knowledge of these terms. Overall, it is entirely understandable why this happened, as the Treaty of Paris was written incredibly strategically, in a way which made Patriots able to play “both sides” of the field, so to speak. In putting this into writing, they could make the case that they were acting with sympathy towards Loyalists who sought to maintain their land, but a Loyalist needed to, by some very unlikely circumstance, have access to and read the entire document to be able to defend their rights. Because Patriots acted extremely skillfully to accomplish seizing as much Loyalist land as they could, and Loyalists did not have a tremendous amount of access to the Treaty of Paris, this posed disaster for Loyalists and unbelievable success for Patriots.³⁹

Section 4: Patriot Goals: Land and the Birth of a New Nation

What cannot be stated enough when analyzing the issue of land forfeiture in Westchester County and why it unfolded in the manner that it did was the long-term goals of Patriots in their pursuit of building a new nation. At the very core of this was their tremendous emphasis on land itself. On pages 17 to 18 of *Whose American Revolution Was It?: Historians Interpret the Founding* by Alfred F. Young and Gregory Nobles, the authors reference a section of a lecture by Franklin Jameson, entitled *The Revolution and the Land*, in which he speaks of the rapidly changing America of the late 18th century. Jameson specifically stated that this revolution was about a liberation of the soil of America from the feudal land-law, but also about “the breaking

³⁸ Tamara Plakins Thornton. *Handwriting in America: A Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 17.

³⁹ Thornton, 17.

up of large estates”, and extending, at least in the Northern United States, “that system of small or moderate farms”, which were run by the owners of the farms themselves. Jameson further emphasized land’s prominence in America by stating that “political democracy came to the United States as a result of economic democracy”.⁴⁰ Therefore, American Patriots at this crucial point in our nation’s history viewed land as essentially the entire backbone of our nation. There was of course an absolutely direct connection to the British Crown in all of this. As Jameson emphasized, this land revolution was about taking the land and freeing it from being under the control of Great Britain, the feudal land-law. This was the very first and essentially most important step in the Patriots’ land revolution. Before anything else could be done with the land, it of course had to no longer be under the control of Britain, but instead entirely belonging to American Patriot forces. From there, there is a direct connection back to not only the Land Forfeiture Proceedings at large, but also specifically Frederick Philipse’s Philipsburgh Manor. As Jameson states, the land revolution emphasized the breaking up of large estates, and of course Philipse’s Philipsburgh Manor was one large estate which was broken up, as evidenced by the proceedings which listed many new owners of various tracts of land previously owned by Philipse.⁴¹ Keeping this in mind, it is quite obvious why Loyalists, especially a Loyalist who owned a large estate like Philipse, lost their land in Westchester County during the post-Revolutionary War era. It was an important goal of the Patriots to dismantle large estates and subsequently make them the new property of the United States. Furthermore, Patriots’ seeking to extend in the Northern United States the system of small or moderate farms run by the owners of

⁴⁰ Gregory Nobles, and Alfred F. Young. *Whose American Revolution Was It?: Historians Interpret the Founding* (New York: NYU Press, 2011), 17-18.

⁴¹ “The Proceedings of the Commissioners of Forfeiture”, 1-141.

the farms themselves bears connection back to Jonathan Horton, one of the then new owners of the Philipsburgh Manor. This is because of the fact of the matter that Jonathan Horton was a farmer situated in the Northern United States at this time.⁴² Therefore, Horton as a Northern farmer was in good standing amongst those who auctioned off Philipse's manor due to the general sentiment amongst Patriots at this time on small or moderate farming in the Northern United States. Perhaps the most important element of this lecture by Jameson which directly connects to the Land Forfeiture Proceedings at large is his assertion that the prominence of land in America at this time was due to the fact that "political democracy came to the United States as a result of economic democracy".⁴³ Thus, at this very early stage of America in which the nation was coming into a form of its own, politics and economics were crucially tied together. Land was an extremely important economic tool which extended into politics. This certainly encouraged Patriots to enact their Land Forfeiture Proceedings in Westchester County in the manner they did, as seen through their successful seizure of Loyalist land. American Patriots were certainly looking to the future, and as such, understood that land represented political and economic longevity for a new nation. This all directly relates to the manner in which Patriots treated Loyalists who had owned land in Westchester County in the years leading up to the Land Forfeiture Proceedings. It could be said that, for the Patriots, their greatest potential obstacle of obtaining more and more land in order to form a strong nation was Loyalists who did everything they could to maintain their land in the area. The Patriots' treatment of Loyalists during this

⁴² 6.

⁴³ Nobles and Young, 17-18.

period was due in great part to their desire to fulfill their motivations of developing their new nation into a powerful democracy.⁴⁴

Section 5: Patriot Spirit and Swiftess of Action

Both the spirit in Patriots as well as their ability to swiftly act upon their goals in Westchester County were elements which contributed mightily to the takeover of Loyalist land in the county. In particular, the Northwestern section of Westchester County underwent considerable change during the Revolution in terms of their enthusiasm for the Patriot cause. Also, out of all places in this section of the county, Peekskill was perhaps the most glowing example of this. Prior to 1775, Peekskill was full of many people whom either Loyalists or Patriots referred to as “apathetic” people. This year marked great change in this general sentiment due to the growing prevalence of politics at large in this area. Peekskill was like no other town in that in the first six months of 1775 there were three political addresses delivered to those living there. Some figures of note in this push for influencing citizens to join the Patriot cause in this area included Pierre Van Cortlandt, Gilbert Drake, and Samuel Drake. Not only did these men take the lead in putting together political and military organizations, but in doing so, effectively influenced other county towns to do the same. But their complete determination to realize their goals did not end there, as Van Cortlandt also “ordered the North Battalion of the Westchester County Minutemen to suppress Loyalists’ organizing activities”. But, as Sung Bok Kim goes on to state, while this fueled some to become passionate Patriots, it also created

⁴⁴ 17-18.

alienation in others to the point of causing them to support the Loyalist cause.⁴⁵ Thus, 1775 overall was a year in which the enthusiasm for the Patriot cause skyrocketed, in some ways. This was, in great part, due to the passion of Van Cortlandt and Gilbert and Samuel Drake. These men did virtually everything they could to lift nonpartisans out of their then apathetic state and into a new state of great support for the Patriot cause. But of course, in the process, some turned away from this and became Loyalists due to feeling alienated. Ultimately though, this does not diminish the fact that these three Westchester Patriot figures had a tremendous impact in terms of increasing the enthusiasm, spirit, and passion in Westchester inhabitants for their cause. This would prove to pay great dividends over time for the Patriot cause, as clearly seen during the Westchester County Land Forfeiture Proceedings.⁴⁶ That same level of passion which these three figures, as well as those they inspired, had for the Patriot cause, was equally seen in Patriots when they vied passionately for the acquisition of Loyalist land in Westchester County. But also important to emphasize is the great prevalence of political speeches in Peekskill in the first six months of 1775, something which no other town had experienced. This as well had great impact with regards to generating strong spirit for the Patriot cause. This tactic of almost bombarding the area with the same message in a relatively short period of time, by the standards of that time, proved to be quite effective. Furthermore, the suppression of Loyalists' organizing activities in Westchester County was effective in the sense that it was a step ahead of Westchester County Loyalists. All of these elements together helped create great support for the Patriot cause in Westchester. Therefore, the spirit of Westchester County Patriots which so strongly drove them to

⁴⁵ Kim, 875-876.

⁴⁶ "The Proceedings of the Commissioners of Forfeiture", 1-141.

acquire land previously belonging to Loyalists in the area is yet another example of how the power of Patriots in post-Revolutionary War era Westchester County was not power which took hold in a short period of time. The Westchester County Land Forfeiture Proceedings took place from 1784 to 1789, while this period of great politicization in Westchester resulting in the strong increase in Westchester inhabitants' fervent support for the Patriot cause occurred in 1775, a decade prior. This was a key way in which Westchester County Patriots were able to establish dominance over Westchester County Loyalists. Their strong united support for the Patriot cause was one which kept increasing and increasing in power as time went on, in great part because those like Van Cortlandt and Gilbert and Samuel Drake understood that their message of support for the Patriot cause needed to be delivered to the people as soon as possible, in fact, even before the Declaration of Independence, of 1776.⁴⁷ On the other side of this is the fact that Loyalists' spirit simply did not match that of the Patriots. It could be said that the Loyalists were essentially "too little, too late". This is made clear by the fact of the matter that the three political addresses to Peekskill citizens in the first six months of 1775 were all Patriot addresses. Therefore, Westchester Patriots were led by figures who sought, with great focused determination, to strongly influence those in the area to get behind their cause with tremendous spirit. This contrast between Westchester Patriots and Westchester Loyalists meant great doom and gloom for the Loyalist cause, all the way from 1775 to 1784, when their land was taken from them during the proceedings. The spirit of Westchester County Patriots which drove them to "get the word out" about their cause was clearly not very evident in Westchester Loyalists, and Loyalists ultimately suffered considerably as a result during the Westchester County Land Forfeiture Proceedings.

⁴⁷ Kim, 875-876.

The swiftness by which the Westchester Patriots operated in regards to their ultimate goal of pursuing as much land as possible from Loyalists in the area must not be underestimated. The case in point is that New York Patriots acted both quickly and effectively directly following the conclusion of the Revolutionary War. Specifically, after the British evacuated Staten Island in early December of 1783, the state of New York not only took the properties of the Loyalists Christopher Billow and Benjamin Seaman, but also sold at auction these properties.⁴⁸ What is very key to consider in light of all this is the fact of the matter that the American Revolutionary War ended in September of 1783. Therefore, it was only a matter of months before New York Patriots went with full force towards the land of Loyalists in the area. This very pervasive swiftness was undoubtedly an enormous asset for Patriots seeking to obtain as much land as possible in this very rapidly changing nation, America. Another key example of extreme quickness exhibited by Westchester Patriots is the Trespass Act of 1783. Very important to note is the fact that this act was of course also passed in the final year of the American Revolutionary War. The essence of this act was that it was designed to punish Loyalists. In accordance with this law, if you were a Whig who had fled areas of New York state which were British-occupied, you had the ability to sue Loyalists. This law justified the act of suing Loyalists by stressing Loyalists' "unauthorized occupation of and damage" to the property of Patriots during the war, as Phillip Papas emphasizes.⁴⁹ In this sense, not only were Patriots absolutely one step, if not many steps ahead of Loyalists, demonstrated by their anti-Loyalist measures, but also, Westchester Patriots were so strongly motivated to accomplish the seizure of an enormous amount of Loyalist

⁴⁸ Papas, 107.

⁴⁹ 107.

land in Westchester that they very clearly articulated their justification for doing so within the Trespass Act of 1783. This is indicative of the Westchester Patriots' very savvy political nature. They understood the fact of the matter that it was not good enough to simply take land from Loyalists. They needed to make it clear why they were taking that land as that would provide the justification for doing so. Therefore, not only were Patriots extremely swift in "getting to work" on removing Loyalists from their homes and subsequently selling these properties to new owners, but they also came up with a clear justification which they could at anytime articulate to defend their position.⁵⁰ While this spelled massive success for Westchester Patriots, it certainly meant great loss for Loyalists in the area as they, more often than not, saw themselves removed from their homes by anti-Loyalist, pro-Patriot forces.

Legislation passed by Patriot forces in Westchester County are also strong examples of both the spirit and swiftness of Patriots leading to their takeover of Loyalist land following the War. There were a number of acts passed by those in power, especially those in and around the New York City area, which had a very direct impact upon the Land Forfeiture Proceedings of Westchester County. Perhaps the most important one, and a considerably early example of such, was the 1779 Act of Forfeiture passed by the New York State legislature. This act effectively stripped land away from 59 New York Loyalists of considerable prominence, one of importance being Frederick Philipse.⁵¹ Thus, Loyalists like Philipse and others clearly were on the losing end of land proceedings in New York following the war directly because of the 1779 Act of Forfeiture. Not only this, but the Act of Forfeiture was passed fairly early on in the grand scheme

⁵⁰ 107.

⁵¹ Eugene R. Fingerhut and Joseph S. Tiedemann, *The Other New York: The American Revolution beyond New York City: 1763-1787* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 122.

of the latter part of the Revolution. The War had not ended until 1783, which makes the adoption of this act four years prior. Therefore, part of why Loyalists lost as much land as they did can again be brought back to the bold, united, and firm nature of the Patriot cause. They were certainly “quick” when it came to taking the measures necessary to defending their cause. Being firmly anti-Loyalist manifested itself in the fact of the matter that they, the New York State legislature, passed measures to remove Loyalists from their land in the area before the war had even ended. This strategy proved to be quite effective when considering the grand land losses experienced by the Loyalists towards the end of the war into the post-Revolutionary War era and the land gains of the Patriots during this period. Thus, as is again made clear, in this case by the 1779 Act of Forfeiture, the united strength of the Patriots also lay in the fact that they were essentially not only a step ahead, so to speak, of the Loyalists, but rather way far ahead.⁵²

Another act passed by Patriot forces during this period which effectively helped dismantle the Loyalists and seize an enormous amount of their land in Westchester was “An Act to Preserve the Freedom and Independence of this State, and for other purposes therein Mentioned”. This act substantially negatively impacted people who decided to live in British New York. Specifically, because of this law, if either you served in a pro-British military unit or privateer, or if you lived behind enemy lines following July 9, 1776, you would not only be denied voting privileges, but also have no ability to ever hold public office in the United States.⁵³ This act is another piece of legislation with its core theme being strong Patriotic support for fellow Patriots and strong anti-

⁵² Fingerhut and Tiedemann, 122.

⁵³ Buskirk, 188.

Loyalist sentiment towards Loyalists. This act denied rights, such as voting and holding public office, to Loyalists in the area explicitly because of their support for the Loyalist cause.

Conclusion:

The Land Forfeiture Proceedings of Westchester County which dealt with the taking of land from Westchester Loyalists was a predicament of both bitterness and nuance, which took place because of a number of key factors, including Loyalists' poor standing in Westchester, the agitation of Patriots by Loyalists, the failure of Loyalist leadership and citizens, the goals of Patriots for a new nation, and Patriots' spirit and swiftness. It cannot be stated enough that this post-Revolutionary War era was one of momentous impact. In a sense, it laid the groundwork for Westchester County as it established the area as a stridently pro-Patriot one. Thinking about this period of time in American history is helpful in terms of both analyzing with clarity our current world as well as predicting future events. Throughout societies around the world, American society particularly, citizens will perhaps always be divided, and sometimes sharply, along ideological, political, or social lines. In the end, what is perhaps more significant than the differences themselves is the way in which society adjusts to these differences and incorporates them into society. Westchester Patriots' reaction to the division in Westchester, especially following the Revolutionary War, could be seen as drastic to some, but it must also be viewed in light of the situation then. To Westchester Patriots, anything they saw as adverse to their own cause was seen as tyranny. Loyalists represented the core of the establishment they rebelled against, the British Empire. Thus, Loyalists simply could not coexist with Patriots, in the perspective of Patriots, in the post-Revolutionary Westchester world. Bringing this all full circle,

what is ultimately more clear than anything else is simply that governmental solutions in the face of competing ideologies in society are not always easy to find. Those in power must take into account many factors in order to determine the most effective manner to at least attempt to govern in a way that will be conducive to the needs of the vast majority of that nation's citizens. Only time will tell how all of this will play out through the future of our American nation. It is up to, very importantly, not merely some far away individual of power making decisions for all of us, to ensure this success, but rather citizens themselves, who are, of course, not only a crucial part of our government, but actually, the government itself.

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