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Why Did Colonial New Englanders Make Bad Soldiers? Contractual Principles and Military Conduct during the Seven Years’ War

F. W. Anderson

BRITISH army officers who served in North America during the Seven Years’ War never tired of reminding one another that the American colonists made the world’s worst soldiers. As they saw matters, provincial troops were overpaid and underdisciplined, a sickly, slack, faint-hearted rabble incapable of enduring even the mildest privations, officered by men unwilling to exercise authority for fear of losing favor with the mob. The populace as a whole seemed as bad as its soldiery: a greedy, small-minded people incapable of disinterested action in defense of the Empire. Contacts between regulars and New England provincials largely fostered this image of Americans, and the image in turn created the dominant British impression of colonial military abilities at the outset of the War for Independence.¹

Although this was a profoundly mistaken impression, it was in no sense a groundless one: provincials in the Seven Years’ War often behaved unprofessionally or in ways detrimental to the war effort. Yet their behavior was not unreasoned, nor was it merely self-interested, as the British too readily assumed. Instead, the unmilitary deportment of New

Mr. Anderson is a doctoral candidate in history at Harvard University. He wishes to acknowledge with gratitude the comments and criticism, on earlier drafts of this article, of Virginia DeJohn Anderson, Bernard Bailyn, Barbara DeWolfe, Randy Fertel, David Jaffee, Christopher Jedrey, Jon Roberts, and Helena Wall. The staffs of the Henry E. Huntington and the William L. Clements libraries provided valuable assistance. Financial support was received from Harvard University’s Charles Warren Center and from the Department of the Army Center of Military History. Materials from the Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif., are reprinted by permission.

Englanders, in every rank from general officer to private soldier, reflected an almost unfailing tendency to base arguments and actions upon contractual principles whenever they confronted what they regarded as the unwarranted pretension of superiors. These principles were explicitly articulated in the course of a seemingly minor dispute between the provincial officers of Massachusetts, headed by Major General John Winslow, and the supreme commander of the British forces, John Campbell, fourth earl of Loudoun, in the summer of 1756. Contractual principles, like the ones Winslow and his officers invoked, were applied throughout the war by enlisted men to justify much of the unmilitary behavior—the mutinousness and desertion—that so appalled regular officers. Far from being merely bad soldiers, as the British assumed and subsequent historians have agreed,\(^2\) colonial New Englanders were bad soldiers in a special way, and for reasons that help illuminate late colonial attitudes toward authority—especially the sovereign authority of the crown.

Seventeen fifty-six brought a French victory—the capture of Fort Oswego, Great Britain's main fur-trading post on Lake Ontario—and a change in the British command. In July, the earl of Loudoun, "a rough Scotch lord, hot and irascible," succeeded Major General William Shirley, governor of Massachusetts and an amateur soldier who had been commander in chief since the death of Edward Braddock.\(^3\) The change

\(^2\) For example, Stanley McCrory Pargellis maintained that provincial troops were essentially encumbrances on the British command in the Seven Years' War (Lord Loudoun in North America [New Haven, Conn., 1933], 354 and passim). Lawrence Henry Gipson's estimate of provincial performance was somewhat more favorable but mainly sought to palliate the conduct of troops who "undeniably acted badly" at Ticonderoga and elsewhere (The Great War for the Empire: The Victorious Years, 1758-1760, The British Empire before the American Revolution [New York, 1936-1954], VII, 233). Such discussions have usually taken place in the context of a venerable debate over the relative merits of regular troops versus militia, deriving from the post-Civil War writings of Emory Upton and John A. Logan. The emphasis has been on describing (or excusing) provincial misconduct, not on explaining it. A notable exception to this partisan tendency is John W. Shy's brief and influential essay, "A New Look at Colonial Militia," William and Mary Quarterly, 3d Ser., XX (1963), 175-185. Shy contended that 18th-century provincials were drawn increasingly from socially marginal groups and consequently fought with less commitment than men who believed that they were fighting for their homes and families. For reasons I hope are clear from this article, I disagree. Nonetheless, Shy's work marks an advance in the interpretation of colonial and Revolutionary military affairs without which this article would not have been possible; my debt is, I trust, evident in the very formulation of the question addressed here.

\(^3\) Francis Parkman, Montcalm and Wolfe, I (Boston, 1899 [orig. publ. Toronto, n.d.]), 412. Historians who have addressed this campaign, in addition to Parkman, include Pargellis, Loudoun, chaps. 2, 3, 5; Gipson, The Great War for the Empire:
produced an intermission in offensive military activity that left plenty of time for quarrels between regular and provincial officers. The most significant dispute concerned the rank of colonial officers and the extent of the supreme commander's authority over provincial troops; and the course of this argument showed that Loudoun and the provincial officers of Massachusetts espoused fundamentally antagonistic conceptions of military service.

Lord Loudoun took command only after the campaign of 1756, as planned by Shirley, was well under way. The centerpiece of the effort was an action against the French forts at Crown Point and Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain; the expeditionary force was composed wholly of New England and New York provincial troops under the leadership of Major General John Winslow, one of Massachusetts's most able and distinguished commanders. In order to induce the New England assemblies to contribute men and money, Shirley had given assurances that the command would be independent, that the officers would be New England men, and that the troops would serve only within a strictly bounded area in New York. By these undertakings, Shirley in effect promised that he would not try to turn the provincial troops into regulars—the sine qua non for suspicious assemblymen who feared the consequences of unlimited military service (that is, service during the pleasure of the crown), and who regarded protection from such oppression as a part of their charter privileges.

If Shirley did not in fact exceed his authority in making such commitments, he was at least offering guarantees that only he was prepared to honor. For example, by promising an independent command to Winslow,

The Years of Defeat, 1754-1757, Brit. Empire before the Am. Rev., VI, chap. 7, hereafter cited as Gipson, Years of Defeat; Thomas Hutchinson, The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts-Bay, ed. Lawrence Shaw Mayo, III (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), 33-37; Herbert L. Osgood, The American Colonies in the Eighteenth Century, IV (New York, 1924), chaps. 15, 16; and Douglas Edward Leach, Arms for Empire: A Military History of the British Colonies in North America, 1607-1763 (New York, 1973), 379-391. The most recent commentator on the events of 1756, Alan Rogers, in Empire and Liberty: American Resistance to British Authority, 1755-1763 (Berkeley, Calif., 1974), adopts Gipson's "Great War" terminology but alters his emphasis; his sixth chapter is the most complete contemporary discussion of the disputes of 1756 and their larger context. In the officers' internecine feuds he discerns one of many early indications of the rift between colonies and mother country that widened into a "chasm" (p. 67) in the years before the Revolution. I differ from Rogers principally in regarding the links between the Seven Years' War and the Revolution as indirect, rather than straightforward, an argument I am elaborating in my doctoral thesis, "War and the Bay Colony."

This account of events follows Osgood, American Colonies, IV, 377-378, 382-388, the same structure of occurrences can be found in any of the general accounts cited above.
he effectively bound himself not to combine the provincial army with any regular force during the campaign, since to do so would make the provincials explicitly and unpleasantly subordinate to regular officers. The Rules and Articles of War stipulated that in cases of joint service between redcoats and provincials, colonial field officers—those holding the ranks of major and above—were to rank as "eldest captains" of the regular establishment. In practice, this meant that the admixture of so much as a battalion of regulars would reduce the whole command structure of the provincial army to a subordinate role; Winslow himself would be subject to orders from the most junior redcoat major in the field. Beyond this, the Mutiny Act of 1754 required that colonial troops serving jointly with regulars be subject to British military justice, not to the milder provisions of the colonies' mutiny acts. Applied together, the Rules and Articles of War and the Mutiny Act would virtually have achieved what the assemblies had sought guarantees against: the transformation of provincial troops into regulars.\(^4\)

Lord Loudoun, of course, in no way felt bound to honor Shirley's highly irregular promises. Indeed, as Loudoun saw it, he had been sent to America to straighten out the horrible mess Shirley had made of the war. One of the new commander's first acts, therefore, was to summon Winslow with his chief subordinates to headquarters in Albany in order to inform them that he considered a junction between regulars and provincials both desirable and well within his authority.\(^5\) The provincial major general and his officers maintained in response what they had announced even before Loudoun's arrival: that the conditions under which the provincials had been raised could not be altered without extreme prejudice to the colonial war effort.\(^6\) To Loudoun, who had engineered the confrontation to force the balky colonials to submit to his authority, their refusal to be overawed amounted to insubordination, almost mutiny. He tried to raise the stakes by requiring Winslow to make a formal response to a heavily loaded query: "I desire to be informed by you, in writing, whether the Troops now raised by the several Provinces & Colonies of New England, and Armed with His Majesty's Arms, will in Obedience with His Majesty's Commands, . . . Act in Conjunction with His Majesty's Troops and under the Command of His Commander in Chief, in whose hands he has been pleased to place the Execution of all those Matters."\(^7\)

\(^4\) Gipson, Years of Defeat, 205; Pargellis, Loudoun, 85-87; Osgood, American Colonies, IV 387.

\(^5\) Loudoun to Winslow, Aug. 5, 1756, Loudoun Papers, LO 1415, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.; Gipson, Years of Defeat, 206-208.

\(^6\) Winslow's earlier pronouncements can be found in Almon W. Lauber and Alexander C. Flick, eds., The Papers of Sir William Johnson, IX (Albany, N.Y., 1939), 484-485; Winslow to Shirley, Aug. 2, 1756, LO 1386; and "The Resolution of the Provincial Field Officers . . . ," July 25, 1756, LO 1352.

\(^7\) Loudoun to Winslow, Aug. 9, 1756, LO 1450.
Winslow's reply was carefully weighed, respectful, and completely obdurate. He had consulted with his principal subordinates, he wrote, and they all agreed that the provincials would indeed consent to being joined with His Majesty's regular troops, provided, however, "that the Terms & Conditions Agreed upon & Established, by the Several Governments to whom they Belong and upon which they were rais'd be not altered." He directed one of his colonels to write another letter to Loudoun "with the Termes, and Conditions, on which the Provincial Troops, now on their March towards Crown Point were raised." The specifications were that the commander of the expeditionary force should be an officer from Massachusetts; that the pay, bounties, and provisions of the men should be as set by the provincial assemblies; that the service would not extend south of Albany or west of Schenectady, and that its term should not exceed twelve months from the date of enlistment. The provincials, in other words, gave no ground at all.

Loudoun, who was keenly aware that he could not defend the New York frontier without the aid of his stubborn auxiliaries, now realized that he could not bully them into acquiescence. Reluctantly, he compromised. On August 12 he extracted a declaration of the provincial officers' allegiance to the king; in return he promised to refrain from bringing about a junction of forces for the time being and to allow the expedition against Crown Point to proceed under Winslow's command.

The supreme commander, of course, was hardly pleased with this modus vivendi. Once Winslow left Albany to return to his army at Lake George, Loudoun sent to Whitehall a long complaint about military affairs in America. The stubborn opposition of the provincials, he believed, came from the meddling of his predecessor, Shirley, who had raised a faction among the Massachusetts officers in the army and who even now was conspiring to thwart the whole war effort. Shirley and his accomplices had been profiting handsomely from the war, Loudoun wrote, and, fearful of being exposed, were doing their utmost to undermine the honest and efficient administration he was trying to establish.

Just as Loudoun was finishing his report—on August 19—the post brought a long letter from Shirley, enclosing among other items a letter from John Winslow that explained provincial opposition to joint service. Aware that Loudoun intended to blame him for the sorry state of the American war, Shirley had busily been gathering information, from

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8 Winslow to Loudoun, Aug. 10, 1756, LO 1462.
9 Joseph Dwight to Loudoun, Aug. 11, 1756, LO 1471.
10 Loudoun to Henry Fox, secretary of state, Aug. 19, 1756, LO 1522.
11 Ibid.
Winslow and others, with which to defend himself. Now he was writing to Loudoun in defense of his conduct, and attempting to explain the Massachusetts officers' behavior as well. Shirley's letter and the one from Winslow that Shirley had enclosed vexed Loudoun mightily; furious, he annotated both to show the "fallacious Assertions" they contained and sent them off to Whitehall with his report. In Winslow's letter he underlined the phrases that he found especially repugnant.

The grand Debate with the Officers in regard to the Junction arises from the General and Field Officers losing their Rank and Command which they were Universally of Opinion they could not give up as the Army was a proper Organiz'd Body and that they by the Several Governments from whom these Troops were rais'd were Executors in Trust which was not in their power to resign, and, even should they do it, it would End in a DISSOLUTION OF THE ARMY as the Privates Universally hold it as one part of the Terms on which they Enlisted that they were to be Commanded by their own Officers and this is a Principle so strongly Imbib'd that it is not in the Power of Man to remove it.

As Loudoun angrily perceived, Winslow saw the provincial army as the creature, not of the crown, but of the provincial governments. The army as Winslow portrayed it was organized on the basis of contractual understandings. Officers understood when they received their commissions that they would hold specific ranks and exercise the authority granted by law; privates understood when they enlisted that they would serve under the men who enlisted them. Such understandings made the army "proper"; if the conditions of the contract were violated, the army would cease to exist. Appropriately, Winslow used an everyday legal metaphor to describe his officers' position: they regarded themselves as " Executors in Trust," like the executors of an estate, men named in a will or court proceeding to settle an estate's just debts and distribute legacies. Once made, the contract could not be altered by any human agency, although it could be destroyed. Officers had it "not in their power to resign" their "Trust"; even the privates had "so strongly Imbib'd" the principle of service under "their own Officers . . . that it [was] not in the Power of Man to remove it" without dissolving the army along with the agreement. This


14 Winslow to Shirley, Aug. 2, 1756, in Corr. of Shirley, 497-498. Lincoln in an editorial comment notes that the underlinings he reproduces in Winslow's letter to Shirley were Loudoun's way of marking passages he found particularly offensive. The Loudoun Papers contain a secretary's copy (LO 1386), which is identically worded but lacks the underscorings.
was a homely argument, rooted in the officers' social experience; they were, after all, the sort of men who would be named the executors of estates, and all of them had surely seen such trustees at work. In vocabulary and conception, it suggests that Winslow and his comrades understood military relationships to be founded in principle upon contracts. Theirs was an argument especially resonant in New England, a society fairly steeped in covenants: marriage covenants binding husbands and wives, church covenants among members of congregations, the great covenant of salvation between God and his chosen people. It did not, however, particularly resonate for Lord Loudoun.

Loudoun fixed upon this passage in Winslow's letter because to him its reasoning seemed wholly, self-evidently specious. The order concerning the rank of provincial officers was the king's order; the provincial troops were royal subjects; the king or his representative might command them as he saw fit in defense of the realm. That they could characterize themselves as the "executors" of some "trust" other than the prompt execution of their superiors' commands was virtually seditious. When Loudoun thought of proper command relationships and soldierly qualities, he thought first of obedience, loyalty, and subordination. He unhesitatingly obeyed his own direct superiors, the duke of Cumberland and George II; it was quite incomprehensible to him that the bumpkins of New England could fail to understand so basic a relationship. The only reasonable conclusion, and the one Loudoun drew, was that the provincials were self-interested, perverse, and actively opposed to his (hence, the king's) authority.¹⁵

What the irascible Scot failed to understand was that the provincial field officers had had no first-hand experience with the two institutions that had fostered his ideas of proper social and military relationships: a professional army and a highly stratified social system. English society, with its elaborate clientage networks and its vast distances between the great and the humble, operated on far different assumptions and followed different rules from the much smaller-scale societies of colonial North America.

At about the time Loudoun was composing his report to Whitehall, he received a letter from Governor Thomas Fitch of Connecticut that made explicit some of the curious assumptions of the colonial world. Fitch had learned of the possibility of a junction between regular and provincial troops and was writing to register his concern. Loudoun doubtless found the letter medlesome and offensive, full of the same egregious sophistry that Winslow and his officers had employed to justify their resistance to his authority. Fitch, the elected governor of a highly insular colony, was very much a product of the same small world as the provincial officers, and the principles he articulated were their principles, too. "Your Lordship will see," he wrote,

¹⁵ "Refutations of the Fallacious Assertions . . .," [Aug. 19, 1756], LO 1461; Loudoun to Fox, Aug. 19, 1756, LO 1522.
that these [provincial] Troops were not raised to act in conjunction with the Kings Troops, as we were then [when the provincials were raised] altogether unacquainted with his Majesty’s Intentions respecting the Operations that would be Directed for annoying the Enemy; Yet are nevertheless raised for the same Service and Sent forth under the command of Officers appointed and commissioned for that purpose; it therefore seems necessary that these Troops be continued under the same Command and Employed agreeable to the Design of their Enlistments, otherwise the Contract between them and their Constituants made for promoting his Majesty’s service in this particular may be broken and their Rights violated; the Consequence of which may be greatly prejudicial not only to the King’s Interest and the Safety of the Country at this Time but may prove a great Discouragement on future Occasions.  

None of the key ideas Fitch employed—the “Rights” of the soldiers, the “Contract between them and their Constituants”—had any compelling meaning for Loudoun; yet New Englanders thought in precisely these terms. The governor was explaining that the operative relationship, so far as the provincial soldier was concerned, was between himself and the province that he understood to be his employer. Although he surely assumed that he was fighting on the king’s behalf, the soldier did not regard himself as an employee of the king; it was, after all, the colony that paid his wages and supplied him with food, according to the contract (“made for promoting his Majesty’s service”) to which he subscribed at enlistment. The idea of the king’s intervening, by virtue of his sovereign authority, to alter the terms of an agreement to which he was not a party made no sense: no contract could be changed without the mutual consent of the parties involved. An enlistment contract was no exception: any unilateral attempt to change the agreement simply nullified it and voided the soldier’s contractual responsibilities. Such thinking produced an army that was wholly alien to Loudoun’s experience: an army made up of men who assumed that soldiers’ rights and the conditions of their enlistment had a real bearing on day-to-day operations—men who behaved as if they were in fact the equals of their leaders.

To Lord Loudoun, the talk of contractual commitments and obligations was a smokescreen generated by a few provincial officers who were intent on keeping their rank and command; who were, moreover, intent on thwarting him and the war effort to promote their own fortunes and those of the master conspirator, William Shirley. Loudoun sincerely thought that the provincial privates were amenable to joint service with the regulars, and that whatever fears had grown up among them had been “industriously raised” by Shirley’s henchmen. Evidence exists, however,

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17 Loudoun to Cumberland, Aug. 20, 1756, in Pargellis, ed., *Military Affairs*, 223-230; Loudoun to Cumberland, Aug. 29, 1756, *ibid.*, 230-233; Loudoun to
to suggest that this was not the case. Numerous soldiers' diaries that survive from the war demonstrate that the men in fact agreed with their officers about the centrality of contract, although they frequently disagreed over the application of the principle. A survey of thirty journals, mostly those of junior officers and enlisted men, reveals instances of soldiers' actions that reflected motivating ideas of contract, from the beginning to the end of the American phase of the war.

Virtually every private's diary begins with a formalized entry. For example: "April 5 1758 I Lemuel Lyon of Woodstock Inlisted under Captain David holms of Woodstock in newingLand For this present Cannody Expordition—I Received of Captain Holms £2.0s.0d." Or this one, by Jonathan French of Andover: "there Being Orders By the great and Generall Court or Assembly to raise 1800 Men Under the Command of His Excelency ye Right Honle the Earl of Loudoun; for the Defence of His Majestys Colonies and for the anoyance of His Majties Enemies in North America and upon Consideration of Six dollars Bounty and Some other articles I inlisted in Sd Service William Arbuthnot of Boston being appointed Capt of a Company in the Rigm Comanded by Coll Joseph Fry." Such entries record the undertaking of an agreement (enlistment), its parties (the soldier and the enlisting officer), and the receipt of a consideration by which the contract was confirmed. The province, of course, kept muster lists and payrolls—official records of service that conveyed the same information—so the diarists did not in fact need to record the data they habitually placed in their initial entries. That they did so with great consistency suggests that the soldiers were consciously keeping track of the bargain between themselves and their province, as well as its fulfillment—a written record to which they could refer in case

Cumberland, Oct. 3, 1756, *ibid.*, 239-243. Loudoun averred that the suspicions of the privates had been "industriously raised" in his report to Fox, Aug. 19, 1756, LO 1522.

18 Lemuel Lyon, Apr. 5, 1758. This and subsequent references are to sources in Appendix 1, cited by author's name and date of entry.

19 Jonathan French, initial entry. See also Joseph Nichols, Mar. 27, 1758; Obadiah Harris, Apr. 14, 1758; Samuel Morris, Apr. 4, 6, 1759; Gibson Clough, Apr. 4, 1759; Enoch Poor, Apr. 6, 1759; James Hill, Apr. 18, 1755; David Holdin, Feb. 20, 1760; and Constantine Hardy, Apr. 2, 1759. A variation on what is otherwise an almost formulaic beginning, but one that nevertheless preserves the same information, is found in Luke Gridley's diary:

March 29 Ad 1757
Luke Gridly His Book
April 8th this Day was musterd and took our oaths
Mondy the 18th Day: this Day Received Wages: Bounty first month wages
& Biliting: 3=18=9=0

Gridley apparently purchased the book on Mar. 29 but recorded nothing other than the date and his name until he was mustered, sworn, and paid.
their employer reneged on any part of its obligation. Hence the frequent notations concerning the issue and quality of provisions take on additional significance, since the province agreed to supply the men with stated quantities of food and rum each week, as well as specified articles of bedding and clothing.\(^{20}\)

The province sometimes failed to keep its soldiers supplied with the articles it had promised; conveying huge volumes of provisions and other necessaries across vast stretches of wilderness was always difficult and frequently impossible.\(^{21}\) When the logistical system broke down, the diaries reveal that the troops often took concerted action in the form of mutiny or mass desertion to register their discontent with what from their perspective looked like an employer that was failing to live up to its end of the bargain. The fourteen instances of troop disorder mentioned in the diaries indicate that Winslow and his fellow officers were not in the least exaggerating their warnings to Loudoun.\(^{22}\) Once they became convinced that the province had broken faith with them, provincial soldiers did not hesitate to show their dissatisfaction by refusing to work or by marching off. Furthermore, these instances of willful disobedience demonstrate remarkable consistencies in causation and in the actions undertaken by the protesting troops.

The causes the diarists ascribed to each of the mutinies and desertions (and they invariably gave each incident a cause) fall into three broad categories. In about a third of the cases, the soldiers were convinced that the army had failed to fulfill its obligations to provide food and rum; half of the instances reflect the soldiers’ conviction that they were being forced to serve longer than they had agreed at the time of enlistment; in the remainder, the troops sought assurances that they would be additionally compensated for work not covered in their initial understanding.\(^{23}\) In

\(^{20}\) See, for example, David Holdin, May 16, 20, 26, 1760; John Frost, May 26, 27, June 17, 1760; John Burrell, Aug. 5, Oct. 1, 1759; Luke Gridley, May 5, June 2, Sept. 22, 1757; John Woods, Sept. 11, 28, 30, 1759; William Henshaw, June 19, July 10, 17, 1759; Obadiah Harris, Aug. 20-22, 1758; James Hill, Nov. 6, 9, 14, 1755; and Lemuel Lyon, June 16, 26, July 4, 1758.

\(^{21}\) As John Shy has pointed out, the problem of supply was paramount in the Seven Years’ War, in which even the small forces deployed in the wilderness were “huge in terms of logistical effort” (Toward Lexington [Princeton, N.J., 1965], 88).

\(^{22}\) These 14 “disorders” were not, of course, all of the mutinies and desertions among provincials during the war but only the ones that happened to be recorded in the diaries. For a summary, by date of occurrence, see Appendix 2.

\(^{23}\) In 4 of the 14 cases, the cause ascribed was a deficiency in supply. See Elisha Hawley, Sept. 1, 1755; James Hill, Nov. 14-17, 1755; Samuel Chandler, Nov. 22, 1755; Lemuel Lyon, July 22, 1758; and Caleb Rea, July 22, 1758.

In 7 cases, troops rebelled as a consequence of the expiration of their term of enlistment or the fear that they would be retained beyond the end of their term. See Nathaniel Dwight, Nov. 11, 20, 1755; Lyman to Loudoun, Oct. 6, 1756, LO 2855; John Woods, Oct. 27-Nov. 4, 1759; Samuel Morris, Nov. 1, 1759; William Henshaw, Oct. 29-31, 1759; and Gibson Clough, Sept. 30, Oct. 31-Nov. 3, Dec.
every case, the grievance was essentially a matter of contract, and each collective action bespoke the soldiers' concern for their compensation. This in turn suggests that provincial troops were motivated at least in part by the expectation of monetary gain.24

The intermingling of contractual and pecuniary concerns in the common soldiers' reactions to deficiencies in supply comes through clearly in Private Obadiah Harris's description of a near-mutiny among Massachusetts troops in Colonel Timothy Ruggles's regiment a few miles north of Albany in August 1758:

the 20th Day The Saborth Nothing Remarcable but full of fatigue and our Provision Grows Short—
the 21 Day—We Eate up all Clean that was in our Tents and whare to get the Next Mouth full we Know not but hope that Providence will provide for us Now men are so Cross and tachey that they Cant Speak to one and other what Shall we do for Sumthing to Eate is the Crye The old Saing is a days Life is hunger and Ease and used to Compare it to a Soldiers Life but hunger and toyl is our Present State.

Such grousing is common enough in the soldiers' diaries; but Harris, uniquely, continued his complaint in fourteeners, New England's traditional ballad meter:

And Now when times are Grown so bad
and our Provision Dun
Let Every one take up his Pack
and Make a March for home
for if we stay within the Camp
and on our Wages Spend
We Shall have Nothing for to take
When our Campane will Eand

The next day, supplies arrived, grumbling ceased, and Harris commemorated the event with twelve more couplets.26 That he had taken the time

22, 1759. (For a parallel incident among civilians employed by the military, see Nathaniel Knap, Mar. 19-20, June 17-18, and July 1-3, 1759.)
In the remaining 3 cases, troops protested by refusing to work unless paid additionally for extra duty. See Obadiah Harris, July 1, 1758, and Enoch Poor, June 14, Oct. 17, 1759.

24 For wage rates see The Acts and Resolves, Public and Private, of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay, XV (Boston, 1908), 442, 454-455. These represented a rate about double that at which regulars were paid, even if the provincials' bounties were not included. See Pargellis, Loudoun, 281-285. A private's wages were almost the same as those a civilian agricultural laborer would receive, according to wages quoted in William B. Weeden, Economic and Social History of New England, 1620-1789, II (Boston, 1891), 896-898.

26 Obadiah Harris, Aug. 20-22, 1758.
and effort necessary to turn his complaint into verse, however, and that he had not obviously been uneasy about seditiously advocating that "Every one take up his Pack / and Make a March for home," imply that he thought little of subordination and service to the cause once the provisions ran out. Similarly, the candor of diarists in recording their participation in mutinies and desertions, and the very frequency and openness of such rebellions, indicate that ideas of duty and loyalty mattered less to provincial soldiers than equity, once they concluded that they were being abused. Such considerations justified resistance and protest of a sort that was, by military definition, irresponsible.

Beyond their consistency in cause, the mass desertions and mutinies show a strikingly consistent pattern of action—what might be characterized as a protocol of protest governing the behavior of the rebels and the responses of their commanders. Two cases from the diaries, one an account of a mutiny, the other of a desertion, exemplify provincial patterns of resistance.

Gibson Clough was a private soldier who served at Louisbourg in 1759 and 1760. A native of Salem and a mason by trade, Clough had lived at home until he enlisted at age twenty-one in Colonel Jonathan Bagley's regiment, one of the units that garrisoned the fortress. He and his fellows joined in April for what they thought would be the standard eight-month tour. A month before their enlistments expired, they began to worry that they would not be allowed to go home as promised.

[30 September 1759] Cold weather—hear a great talk of things uncertain and thus time spends a way and so we spend our days....[C]old weather is coming on apace which will make us look round about us and put [on] our Winter Clothing and we shall stand in need of good Liquors for to keep our Spirits on cold Winter's days, and we being here within Stone walls are not likely to get Liquors or Clothes at this time of the year and although we be Englishmens Liberty therefore we now see what it is to be under Martial Law and to be with the regulars who are but little better than slaves to their Officers; and when I get out of their [power] I shall take care how I get in again.

At the end of October, the provincials' worries were realized.

31 [October] And so now our time has come to an end according to enlistment, but we are not yet got home nor are like to.

NOVEMBER

1 The Regiment was ordered out for to hear what the Coll. had to say to them as our time was out and we all swore that we would do no more duty here so it was a day of much Confusion with the Regiment.

26 John Woods, Oct. 27-Nov. 4, 1759; Gibson Clough, Oct. 31-Nov. 3, 1759.
In effect, what happened on November 1 was that the soldiers of Bagley's regiment determined to go on strike. Since their term of service had expired, they felt no particular responsibility to perform their duties. They may indeed have reasoned that to serve without a new agreement might obligate them to service over which they could exercise no control at all. At any rate, the regiment struck as a unit, and as a unit accepted the consequences.

2nd [November] The Regiment was turned out for duty and we all stood to it that we would not do any duty at all, for which we was all sent to the Guard house prisoners, but myself and three men were released because we belonged to the Kings works [Clough had recently been detailed to the engineers who were at work refurbishing the fortifications], and there was a letter read to the regiment which came from the governor and Council [of Massachusetts] which informed us that we were to Stay here till the first of December or till we have news from Genl Amherst which I hope will be very soon for our Redemption from this Garrison.

There were obvious problems with imprisoning a whole regiment, amounting to a quarter of the complement of the fortress, and the command soon decided to compromise by releasing some of the men to return to Massachusetts. This, in combination with a carefully orchestrated show of force, was enough to break the strike:

3rd [November] The Regiment was turned out for to hear their doom for denying their duty and for sending a round robin [petition] to the Coll desiring him to get us sent home according to enlistment, which they say was mutiny but it was all forgave by the Genl [Brigadier General Edward Whitemore, military governor of Louisbourg] and a detachment of 140 embarked on board of the Ship Oliver, a transport bound to Boston and the three Regular regiments was drawn up on the grand parade, so was our regiment all but the prisoners and they were brought up by four files of men and place in the centre and the General made a speech to them ye articles of war was read to us and the letter that come from Boston, and then the Coll. made a speech to us and told us that we was to stay one month more at least and more if wanted.

On December 5, a brig and two schooners arrived from Boston, with word that the regiment would be required to remain all winter. Bagley thereupon promised the remaining troops that he would carry their cause to the General Court; three weeks later, he and another officer left for Boston. This plunged Clough into gloom: “and now the Major [Ezekiel
Goldthwait] takes command of the Reg't here according to orders and we are all like to be here all winter and God Help us."27

Clough's experiences in many ways typify mutinous resistance among provincial troops. A similar response was desertion, an option not readily available to the members of a garrison on the isolated northeastern tip of Cape Breton Island. The constraints of isolation, however, did not apply in the case of John Woods, a private from Worcester who in 1759 was serving in Colonel Abijah Willard's regiment at Fort Ticonderoga. Like Clough, he had enlisted at the beginning of April for an eight-month tour of duty. On October 27, Woods mentioned "a great Stir a Bout going home," but noted no further unrest until

Nov. 1 This morning a Pertition Carried in to the Coll Willard for a Discharge the Coll agreed to send to the General [Amherst] for one—So then went back to work & to our duty

2 Last night the Sargent Came back from the Gene'l with orders we should no go of. . . .

2 This morning Draw'd up to hear what the Gen. orders was when heard all agreed to go of all got there packs went on to the perade Leut French march't us off march't one mile made a halt, Came three officers and Said they were coming after us to bring us back But not minding Kept on our march a Bout Twelve miles Then Came Three more officers and would have us come back & that the Coll had sent to Coll Lyman & that he had sent 3 hundred men & one hundred highlanders Down the South Bay to Stop us But Refused to go back A good Day. . . .

3 This morning Cloudy but march't off Soon began to Rain & held all Day met with nothing worse than the mountains went about twelve then Campt

4 About three oClock Cle'd of Cold & look like A fair day about Sun Rise set out & made a fine march this day met with Nothing to scare us at all.

Several characteristics of the troops' activity in these cases were apparent in virtually every rebellion. In the first place, there was nothing secretive about the actions of the discontented soldiers, and they made no attempt to conceal their identities. Unlike the classic desertion—an individual soldier slipping away from an encampment under the cover of

27 Gibson Clough, Dec. 22, 1759. Col. Bagley succeeded in obtaining an additional bounty for the men detained over the winter but did not himself manage to return until June 13, 1760, two weeks ahead of the replacement troops for his regiment. In the meantime, on Apr. 1, Clough and his remaining comrades had all, more or less unwillingly, reenlisted for the 1760 campaign. Clough finally returned to Salem on Jan. 1, 1761, overjoyed at the end of what he had come to regard as his captivity.
darkness or ducking out of the line of march—the provincial desertions occurred in broad daylight, and usually after some notice had been given, either informally or by a petition to the commanding officer. Furthermore, they were always corporate, involving from a score or two of men to several hundred. Provincial mutinies did not resemble the classic mutiny in regard to the participants’ disposition toward authority; rather than seeking to overthrow or kill their commanders, the rebellious troops apparently either behaved with respect toward them or treated them with simple indifference. In this it would seem that the mutineers were in effect informing their commanding officer that they no longer acknowledged his authority, and that they would not do so until he had made a proposal that they as a group found acceptable. Their actions also bespoke a sharp limitation in their goals: rather than permanently rejecting the leadership of their officers, they did so only until the grievance had been rectified or until they were forced by superior strength to submit. In line with these characteristics, it is noteworthy that the mutinies were nonviolent in every case; although the soldiers retained their arms, there is no mention of any use or threatened use of them.

Mutinies seem sometimes to have been led by junior officers, and the band of deserters to which John Woods belonged marched under the leadership of one “Leut French.” This suggests, at the very least, a degree of identification between company officers and enlisted men that would simply have been incomprehensible in the British or any other European army. In a larger sense, the actions of mutineers and deserters seem to reflect an achieved consensus not dissimilar to that of a small town meeting. Clough and his fellow mutineers “all swore” that they “would do no more duty,” and “all stood to it that [they] would not do any duty at all” when threatened with the stockade; Woods’s deserters “all agreed to go off[?]” together. Another diarist, Private Enoch Poor of Newbury, noted in June 1760 that everyone in the three provincial companies that garrisoned Fort Frederick, in Nova Scotia, “was of One Mind [and] That was Not To work with thout Pay” for extra duties not comprehended in the enlistment understanding. Evidence that whole units, like Clough’s regiment, submitted to imprisonment after being given the opportunity to reconsider-

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28 See also Elisha Hawley, Sept. 1, 1755; Seth Pomeroy, Sept. 1, 1755; Nathaniel Dwight, Nov. 1, 1755; Lemuel Lyon, July 22, 1758; Caleb Rea, July 22, 1758; and William Henshaw, Oct. 30-Nov. 1, 1759.
29 See also Elisha Hawley, Sept. 1, 1755; Seth Pomeroy, Sept. 1, 1755; Nathaniel Dwight, Nov. 1, 1755; Lemuel Lyon, July 22, 1758; Caleb Rea, July 22, 1758; and William Henshaw, Oct. 30-Nov. 1, 1759.
30 See also Elisha Hawley, Sept. 1, 1755; Seth Pomeroy, Sept. 1, 1755; Nathaniel Dwight, Nov. 1, 1755; Caleb Rea, July 22, 1758; Samuel Morris, Nov. 1, 1759; and Enoch Poor, June 14, Oct. 17, 1759.
31 See also Enoch Poor, Oct. 17, 1759.
32 Enoch Poor, June 14, 1760; see also Samuel Morris, Nov. 1, 1759.
er their conduct suggests that the solidarity of the mutineers could be sustained under considerable stress. 33

The discontented soldiers often acted in richly symbolic, even theatrical ways. Several diarists note that participants in mass desertions marched off with "clubbed arms": they carried the muskets over their shoulders, grasping the weapons at the muzzles, not by the buttsstocks—a posture that, in contemporary drilling conventions, signalled the completion of duty. 34 Furthermore, the fact that the men marched off carrying arms that were for the most part crown property indicates an additional measure of defiance, a signal that the rebels intended to appropriate their own compensation.

The sequence of events in the mutiny and the desertion described above, and indeed in most of the other rebellions for which a good record of events exists, closely paralleled the sequence described by Nathaniel Knap of Newbury in his account of a refusal to work at Louisbourg in 1759. Significantly, Knap was not a soldier but a civilian artificer employed as a ship carpenter at the fortress. Although he worked directly for the military and was, to a degree, subject to military discipline, he was explicitly a contract worker, employed under a twelve-month agreement. The striking similarity between the dispute he described and the mutinies and desertions discussed above suggests the great extent to which New Englanders' military behavior derived from civilian patterns of response that were clearly governed by reasoning from contractual principles. When soldiers and civilian workers were confronted with the expiration of their contracts, their reactions were not merely parallel: they were

33 See also Samuel Morris, Nov. 1, 1759. These collective actions by soldiers show obvious affinities to those of civilian crowds in the late colonial and Revolutionary periods, as described in a now-voluminous secondary literature. The deserters and mutineers do not seem, however, to have been acting to extend the authority of the community by extra-legal means, nor were they expressing explicit class (or proto-class) antagonisms. In their motivation by principle, they were behaving in much the same way as English crowds that sought to enforce their conceptions of "moral economy," but differed from the English case in that they appealed to a principle on which colonial New Englanders of every social station agreed.

34 Seth Pomeroy, Sept. 1, 1755; Samuel Chandler, Nov. 22, 1755; Caleb Rea, July 22, 1758. Rea: "[July] 22nd ... This Day the Regt of Royal Hunters [the nickname of Col. Oliver Partridge's regiment] Clubbed Muskets and were marching out of the Camp by reason the allowance of Provision (which at this time was very mean thro' the whole Camp) had been detain'd one Day or more, but Col. Preble [Jedediah Preble of Massachusetts] persuade'm to stop (after they had march'd near a mile) and he wou'd see they had the allowance immediatly, which they had and returned."

I am grateful to Gregory J. W. Urwin of the University of Notre Dame for pointing out the exact nature of the clubbed muskets' symbolism to me; see Humphrey Bland, A Treatise of Military Discipline ... (London, 1746), 8-9, 16-17, 27-28, 160-161, for contemporary instructions on the practice.
identical, and reflected identical assumptions. Knap's account of the event begins:

Monday the 19th [of March 1759] this Day fair Weather & it being Our Freedom Day we all kept a holiday & Gave the Day to the King the Govenor [Edward Whitemore] would not let but three men go home & we Draw'd Lots & I got a Blank

teusday the 20th this Day fair Weather went to work on Mr Lasly's Scooner Capt herriman Sail'd to Day & Isaac Ridgway & frances Holiday & Rd Lowell went home with him they got the Lot to go home & the Govenor Said that we Should all be Discharg'd in three Months if we would stay

Three months later, Knap and his fellow carpenters found that Whitemore still required their services.

Sunday June the 17th 1759—this Day fair Weather . . . we went to the Govenor to Day for our Discharge but we Could not Get a Direct Answer he wanted us to tarry till we had Relief sent us from Boston. . .

Monday 18th this Day fair Weather We all Concluded not to Do any work and was still trying for a Discharge Coln Bagley is our Agent and he Came and told us that if we would stay one fortnight Longer that the Govenor would pay us our wages and pay our Passage home and allows us 14 Day Pay and 14 Day Provisions all this on the Govenors word and honour.

Once again, they returned to work. Two weeks later, Whitemore again proved unwilling to dismiss the homesick artisans. As before, they refused to work without an agreement.

Monday July the 2 1759 this Day fair Weather none of us Did any work the Govenor said that there should be but 12 men Go home and that the Married Men Should go which is 8 that Desir'd to go and 4 young men then there was 4 of them that Came from Snt Johns allow'd to go

teusday the 3 this Day foul Weather I am one that's to go home and I am a getting Ready

Teusday the 3 this Day foul Weather the Govenor Rather than Come under a Bond he said that all the Compe mite go home & we ware a Geting Ready to go home.

No soldier, of course, could ever threaten to make his commander execute a bond for the fulfillment of an agreement, as the carpenters evidently threatened to make Whitemore do—the tactic by which they secured their release. Because the governor was compelled to deal with
the carpenters as civilians, not soldiers, he was unable to coerce them by applying force, as a military commander might apply it to stubborn soldiers. The carpenters' repeated strikes and Whittemore's hapless attempts to renegotiate their work contract thus offer exceptionally clear examples of the process at work in the mutinies and desertions of provincial troops. In military cases, the commander's duty and legal right to suppress the rebellion by force of arms (if not his actual ability to do so), complicated the pattern; but the important fact is that the rebellious troops' behavior reflected assumptions identical to those of the carpenters. In case after case, the aggrieved soldiers notified their commander that they intended to take independent action if the commander did not remedy the grievance. Sometimes an officer responded as Governor Whittemore did, agreeing to the demands of the rebels or offering a compromise. More often, the leader responded by reminding the soldiers of his authority and threatening them with severe punishment should they carry through their threats. Despite such warnings, troops persisted: like the carpenters, they waited until the agreed deadline and then refused to work, or they proceeded to muster themselves without orders and march out of camp in a body. Here the soldiers acted out their defiance symbolically—openly disregarding orders, clubbing muskets, and so on—a dramatized version of the carpenters' repeated refusal to go to work. Commanders reacted to these challenges in several ways: by trying to reason with the mutinous men; by offering to represent their case to the next higher commander; by giving in; or by trying to suppress the disorder by force. This was the point at which the command generally performed its own symbolic counter-theater, to give point to its power—perhaps by surrounding the rebellious troops with regulars, bayonets fixed, and beating the prisoners' march; perhaps by seizing and summarily punishing a ringleader, if one could be identified and caught. Finally, the mutinous soldiers determined whether to accept the conditions offered or to continue to resist. The most frequent solution was to accept the commander's offer; the most frequent outcome was some form of accommodation. In only one instance was a troop rebellion crushed by force (and that without bloodshed); every other incident either ended peacefully, with some degree of success for the rebels, or circumstances changed in such a way as to eliminate the grievance.35

35 Diarists other than Clough and Woods who give a complete account of this sequence are Nathaniel Dwight, Nov. 11, 20, 1755; James Hill, Nov. 14, 16, 1755; Samuel Merriman, Oct. 23, 1759, with Samuel Morris, Nov. 1, 1759 (an account that parallels that of Woods, above); William Henshaw, Oct. 29-Nov. 1, 1759; and Enoch Poor, June 14, Oct. 17, 1759.

The mutiny crushed by force was described by Samuel Morris, Nov. 1, 1759: "Novembr the 1 Thursday 1759 Att Crown Point this Day the Jersey Blewes Stood Out and would Not go on the Workes because there time was out this day and the bay men and Hampshiers and Yorkers—and this Day the Newjerseys they all as one went Under Guard and This Day the Regulars Came and Surroundd their
New England provincial officers and enlisted men conceived of military service in terms that were worlds apart from those familiar to British professional officers. The New Englanders for the most part lacked a military ethos recognizable to officers like the earl of Loudoun, who identified loyalty, subordination, discipline, and regularity as the primary martial virtues. When defining their relationship to military and civil authority, provincials seemed instead to regard themselves as employees of their provinces, contracted workers whose work consisted of bearing arms against the French and Indians. Accordingly, they conducted themselves exactly as civilians would when confronted with the expiration of a work contract or when faced with an unacceptable alteration in the terms of their employment.

To Loudoun and those like him, the provincials looked like incredibly bad soldiers and, given their professional perspective on the matter, the New Englanders were bad. On the other hand, the provincials believed they were adequate (if not perfect) soldiers, whose actions were above all consistent, sensible, and necessary. From their point of view, anyone who tried singlehandedly to alter previously agreed arrangements was behaving in a dangerously unacceptable way. The truth, of course, is that the regulars and provincials were operating from contradictory premises about society, warfare, and military service. Colonials and regulars, without realizing it or even having a name for it, were culturally different from each other; and because they did not recognize that the premises from which they reasoned differed so profoundly, each believed the worst about the other.

Camp With fixd Bayonets and they Beat the Prisoners [possibly Pioneers?] mar[ch] for to see who wold Work & who would not and they all concluded to go to Work but 5 they went Under the Provost Guard." The instance of seizure and summary punishment of ringleaders was recorded in the diary of William Henshaw, Nov. 1, 1759: "1st Novr. Thursday Fort Edward ... This morng. the Officers in the Garrison up by Dawn of Day to stop the Men in Case they should attempt to Desert; at 8 oClock, 18 or 20 of the New Jersey Regt. March'd out of the Barracks with their Firelocks & Havearsacks: 6 or 7 was stop'd before they got out of the Sally port, 3 or 4 Officers Headed the Rest & Drove them into the Fort One was whip'd Imediatly: 3 or 4 more Confin'd but Soon after Releas'd—A party of our Men took about 20 of Colo. Willards Regt. that Deserted from the Lake Sent them back by a party of our men: Lt Stiles Comanded them as soon as they Ariv'd at the Lake they was Imediatly sent over the Lake to go to the Genll.

36 I wish to reiterate that they regarded themselves as such in legal or formal terms. There is also abundant evidence that New Englanders were motivated by a sense of millennial mission in opposing the French and Indians, whom they identified with Antichrist. See Nathan O. Hatch, The Sacred Cause of Liberty: Republican Thought and the Millennium in Revolutionary New England (New Haven, Conn., 1977), 21-55. Here I have meant to address the question of how they in practice defined their position with regard to military and civil authority, not the larger question of their motives in joining the army.
The behavior of the provincial officers in opposing Loudoun in 1756, and of provincial troops in their various mass desertions and mutinies throughout the war, demonstrates that contractual ideals were not only deeply held but broadly shared among men of all the social standings represented in the colonial forces. Contractual relations had been much more central to their social experience than either royal authority or highly deferential social relationships. The cultural context of a covenant-ed society and the demands of the provincial economy made contracts a part of everyday life and talk, while notions of royal sovereignty and of a naturally superior, titled elite remained for the vast majority of the colonists rather distant and abstract. The long-standing practice of fighting wars against the French without direct aid from the mother country had generated at all levels of New England society assumptions of autonomy that complemented this home-grown contractualism. New Englanders, accustomed to having their own governments raise, direct, supply, and pay the provincials, automatically identified the colonial assemblies as the agencies responsible for defense. For the soldier, the locus of authority was the annually negotiated contract of enlistment that tied him to his government, specifying the service he would render and the care and compensation he would receive in return.

The Seven Years' War transformed the scale of colonial military conflict and introduced the immediate participation and command of professional British soldiers. It also brought a sharp and unexpected confrontation with New England's tradition of a contract-based soldiery. No matter how hard they tried, however, British officers found that they could not prevent provincial soldiers from acting on ingrained notions about the contractual nature of military service. The result was twofold. On one hand, regular officers concluded that New Englanders (and by extension, all Americans) lacked the character to make good soldiers. Ultimately, their belittling of Americans' martial virtue would lead to one officer's famous boast in 1774 that he could take a thousand grenadiers to America "and geld all the Males, partly by force and partly by a little Coaxing." On the other hand, the war eventually put under arms a third or more of all men in New England who were eligible to serve, and directly exposed them to imperial authority, even as it graphically illustrated the divergences between British and American thinking. Just as the regulars drew conclusions from the war about Americans, so New Englanders drew their own conclusions about the British. The war was an education for both sides, and the lessons each learned would inform the crucial decisions made in the years that followed the Peace of Paris.

37 Benjamin Franklin to William Strahan, Aug. 19, 1784, quoted in Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1979), 10. Royster surmises that the officer was probably Gen. Thomas Clarke, aide-de-camp to George III.
APPENDIX I

The sources consulted, by year of composition, are as follows.

1754


1755


1757


1758


1759

Lt. John Frost: *The Diary of John Frost, Jun.’r, Eliot ...* (Eliot, Me., 1899)

1760


APPENDIX 2

In chronological order, the fourteen provincial “troop disorders”—mutinies and mass desertions—were as follows (sources in parentheses):

September 1, 1755: Thirty to fifty men attempted to desert from the Massachusetts provincial camp at Lake George because they were denied their overdue rum issue. They marched four or five miles from the camp with clubbed muskets before being overtaken and returned. (Elisha Hawley, Sept. 1, 1755; Seth Pomeroy, Sept. 1, 1755.)

November 10, 1755: Five hundred to seven hundred Connecticut provincials made known their intention of deserting from Lake George; they agreed to remain for a few days on the promise of prompt dismissal. On November 20 they attempted to desert; they were dissuaded with difficulty by the personal appeal of Phineas Lyman, their commander. (Nathaniel Dwight, Nov. 11, 20, 1755.)

November 11, 1755: Thirty New York troops deserted from the camp at Lake George with guns and packs; they were convinced that their enlistment term had expired. (Nathaniel Dwight, Nov. 11, 1755.)
November 16-17, 1755: A company of carpenters at work on fortifications at Fort William Henry ceased work in protest over short rations. An additional allowance was made and they returned to work. (James Hill, Nov. 14-17, 1755.)

November 22, 1755: An unspecified number of men clubbed arms and marched from Fort William Henry as a result of short rations; they returned, apparently in a body. (Samuel Chandler, Nov. 22, 1755.)

About September 26, 1756: A mixed body of about 150 provincials at Fort Edward deserted on the basis of a rumor that, having accepted an issue of rations from the king's stores, they were now liable for service during the king's pleasure; they were overtaken, reassured, and returned to service. (Phineas Lyman to Loudoun, Oct. 6, 1756, Loudoun Papers, LO 2855, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.)

July 1, 1758: Soldiers detailed to work with civilian carpenters refused to obey orders unless they received additional pay; they required a written assurance from the commanding general before “part” of them returned to work. (Obadiah Harris, July 1, 1758.)

July 22, 1758: The Massachusetts provincial regiment commanded by Oliver Partridge deserted from Fort William Henry with clubbed muskets in protest over short rations; they returned after receiving their full allowance. (Lemuel Lyon, July 22, 1758; Caleb Rea, July 22, 1758. See n. 34, above, for a transcription of Rea’s account.)

November 1, 1759: New Jersey’s provincial regiment refused to work beyond the term of enlistment at Crown Point; they were surrounded by regular troops and acquiesced, except five men who persisted in refusal and were made prisoner. Similar disorders, which did not apparently need to be suppressed by force, occurred among the regiments from Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New York. (Samuel Morris, Nov. 1, 1759; see transcription above, n. 35.)

November 1, 1759: A group of Massachusetts provincials, perhaps an entire regiment, deserted the command of Colonel Abijah Willard at Fort Ticonderoga when their enlistment term expired. (John Woods, Oct. 27-Nov. 1, 1759; see above, p. 408.)

November 1, 1759: A score of New Jersey troops attempted to desert from Fort Edward following the expiration of their enlistments; the men were captured and returned. (William Henshaw, Oct. 29-Nov. 1, 1759; see transcription above, n. 35.)

November 1-3, 1759: The Massachusetts provincial regiment of Colonel Jonathan Bagley, garrisoning the fortress of Louisbourg, refused to perform duty when their enlistment term expired. Accommodation was achieved by a combination of negotiation and coercion. (Gibson Clough, Sept. 30, Nov. 1-3, 1759; see above, pp. 406-408.)

June 14, 1759: Three provincial companies garrisoning Fort Frederick, Nova Scotia, refused to perform fatigue duty without additional pay; the provincial commander acquiesced in their demand and the troops returned to work on his promise of reimbursement. (Enoch Poor, June 14, 1759.)

October 17, 1759: A woodcutting party under two lieutenants at Fort Frederick (probably amounting to about fifty men) refused to work without additional pay; the colonel commanding the fort gave personal reassurances that they would be paid, and the party returned to woodcutting. (Enoch Poor, Oct. 17, 1759.)