

Graphics

F

76

.R472

v. 59

No. 3

AUGUST 2001



Rhode Island History

A RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY PUBLICATION

Volume 59, Number 3

LOWELL OFFERING

December, 1845.



Rhode Island History



Volume 59, Number 3

Published by
The Rhode Island Historical Society
110 Benevolent Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02906-3152
and printed by a grant from the State of
Rhode Island and Providence Plantations,
Lincoln Almond, Governor;
Edward S. Inman III, Secretary of State

Edward Spargo, *president*
Nancy K. Cassidy, *vice president*
Dorothy B. Derick, *vice president for development*
Barbara F. Weaver, *vice president for libraries*
Edward F. Sanderson, *vice president for museums*
David S. Lux, *secretary*
David N. Cicilline, *assistant secretary*
Diana L. Johnson, *treasurer*
Daniel Hartnett, *assistant treasurer*
Murney Gerlach, *director*
James K. Mahoney, *administrative director*

FELLOWS OF THE SOCIETY
Carl Bridenbaugh
Glenn W. LaFantasie

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE
Harrison M. Wright, *chair*
Joyce M. Botelho
Howard Chudacoff
James Findlay
Robert Allen Greene
Robert W. Hayman
James P. Marusak
Ronnie Newman
William McKenzie Woodward

STAFF
Marta V. Martínez, *editor*
Hilliard Beller, *copy editor*
Allison Cywin, *graphics editor*
Renata Luongo, *publications assistant*

The Rhode Island Historical Society
assumes no responsibility for the
opinions of contributors.

CONTENTS

Frances Whipple and the *Wampanoag*:
A Nineteenth-Century New England Factory Magazine 67
SARAH C. O'DOWD

Rhode Island's Controversial General:
Nathanael Greene and the Continental Congress, 1776-1780 85
WILLIAM P. LEEMAN

"Is Saul also among the prophets..."

A REPOSITORY
OF ORIGINAL ARTICLES, WRITTEN BY
"FACTORY GIRLS."

LOWELL: MISSES CURTIS & FARLEY.
BOSTON: JORDAN & WILEY, 121
Washington street.
1845.

THE WAMPANOAG,

AND OPERATIVES' JOURNAL.

HUMAN NATURE. }

IDLENESS and LUXURY pamper the ANIMAL; LABOR makes the MAN. }

HUMAN RIGHTS.

VOL. I.

FALL RIVER, MASS. SATURDAY, AUGUST 20, 1842.

NO. 11.

[For the Wampanoag.]

KATE ASHTON, OR THE COQUETTE OUTGENERLED.

By Frances H. Green.

'See that you do not allow yourself to be duped any longer,' said the latter, as they drew near the point of attraction. Henry answered not, for the harp and voice of Kate were pouring their combined melody on the charmed silence. He left the side of his friend; and having passed silently through a little wicker gate, stood beneath the window of her saloon. She sung 'Low waved the summer wood,' and the flood of passion he had thought to annihilate gathered back to his soul.—Then the plaintive notes of 'Isabel,' with all their appropriateness to his own condition, were murmured until thought and sense almost forsook him; and he glided into the room pale and silent as a very ghost, and stood behind her. The air was finished; and as her fingers touched the chords fitfully, the soft vibrations told she was seeking for the sweetest sounds. She started—not at the coming of Henry, for his step was noiseless; but at the entrance of Mary and Lucius by an opposite door; the latter having followed to prevent evil consequences. Miss Katy blushed as she met the ardent gaze of Henry and without speaking held out her hand. He started as if touched by a serpent. The delicate, perfect little hand he had so much admired, so devoutly loved—was blue—blue as indigo.

'Catharine!' he exclaimed, what have you done? what has happened.

'Nothing remarkable or improper. I have only made visible the mark of my order. Blues are getting into repute you know!—and she held up her hands together, and looked at them with much complacency.

'Poor old Judy,' she continued, one of the best creatures in the world? has been dying—I should rather say coloring—she has a sore finger, and I told her I would wring out the pieces for her, as she could not do so without much pain. But Mary said I should not dare color my hands while you were here!—and she insinuated a great deal more there is no truth in! I did not wait for a second daring,' but put my hands right in; here they are—they have really taken a fine color—and they become the harp admirably, I can assure you!' 'He heard no more but darted from the house in a state of mind bordering on distraction.

'Oh if I could only see her in the city, her pride would be humbled—her haughty spirit curbed—she should find that to shine in a forest, and in a drawing room, are two things!' said Henry, as he turned his horse's head from the village.

'A diamond is a diamond, and a star is a star, the world over,' coolly replied Lucius.

The summer passed and autumn—it was winter. We will now take a skip to the city—even New York. A ball was to be given within the week by Mrs. and Miss Fielding; and as Julia Fielding was a belle, and her mother a woman of the highest rank and fashion, it was

of course, expected that the assembly would be particularly brilliant—the rooms particularly crowded and uncomfortable—that mammas would be particularly on the alert—and misses, particularly agreeable. Besides, the ball was given for the presentation of a country cousin, who was variously represented by the different persons who had the good fortune to catch a glimpse of the wonder.

'You will certainly drop in at Mrs. Fielding's to-night, if no more,' said our old friend Lucius, as equipped capapie, he popped his head into the office of Henry. 'You will certainly avail yourself of the opportunity to see this newly arrived wonder—this prodigy of the mountains!'

'You certainly must know I have seen enough of prodigies, as of mountain girls!' replied Henry, biting his lips.

'Yes, for the past, certainly—but recollect the present and future are to be provided for—and this sweet little spell of excitement that has put the leaven of curiosity into the whole city!—Think of that Master Brook!—Positively, you will moulder among these everlasting parchments! Remember I am your physician; and I now prescribe a ball and a little pleasant excitement to be indispensably necessary. Mr. Jones you will attend to these papers—Gregory, drive to the hotel, and call at Mr. Thompson's in half an hour. Come, Harry.'

The friends soon found themselves passing forward with a crowd which thronged the passage to the dancing room. As they entered the company were promenading. The eyes of the friends wandered over that array of splendor, where one seemed scarcely fairer than another, in search of the stranger.

'She must be the centre of yon brilliant group, I should suppose, by the common gaze following that direction,' said Lucius; 'and, besides, there stands Miss Fielding! we will pay our respects to her.' As he spoke, several promenaders, who had paused a moment, turned off to the right and left, and discovered a girl standing apart, yet conversing in an animated and earnest manner with those near. She wore a robe of plain white muslin—a luxuriant sweep of curls, was knotted up carelessly with a green ribbon, and her girdle held a bunch of lemon flowers, delicate and sweet as herself. Her very simplicity was conspicuous as it was grateful, where the universal splendor fatigued rather than gratified the eye; and her presence was kindly as that of some fair star, to him whose gaze has been pained by the gorgeous flash of meteors. Her back was towards our friends; and just as they approached she turned with her partner to renew the promenade. Thompson gave a start—first back and then forward; and, forgetful of every thing but her presence he stood by the side of Kate Ashton.

'It is all off,' she said, with an arch look, as she laid her hand in his. He started with pain at the memory of their last interview.

'My poor hands, I trust, will never offend you again.'

'And what could there have been offensive in the fairy lineaments of this fair hand?' asked the superlative who was her escort through the fashionable mazes; as he spoke,

laying a jewelled finger, which almost rivalled the whiteness it met, across the object of his enquiry.

A dance was called, and the desired explanation was not given.

'Allow me to hope your hand for this dance is not engaged?' whispered Thompson,

'I am sorry to say it is,' replied Kate, glancing at her partner, whose attention for the instant was attracted by his own neatly-fitting little slipper.

'And for the next?'

'Disengaged;' and she glided away with her partner to her place in the set, while Henry joined his friend to observe the dancers: or rather the *one*—for he was troubled with a singular concentration of thought and vision that evening. Miss Fielding was to open the ball, and next in the set was her fair cousin. The music struck up, and the dancing began. Henry's heart throbbled audibly. Her wild movements will be out of place here, graceful gipsy though she is; thought he.

Ere the burst of enthusiasm, which the dancing of Julia had excited, had died away, a low murmur among the crowd told when her cousin moved in the dance.

Sheltered by one of the most obscure group of observers, Henry stood listening to the remarks of those around.

It is perfect; said a fair-haired romantic youth, 'she must have been taught by the fairies themselves, and practiced on the grassy lea by moonlight.'

It is like the moving of waters to the music of their own murmurings—a living and palpable harmony? sighted a young poet.

'She is propelled entirely by volition, and not by mechanical power;' said a scholar.

She is fresh and warm from the hand of nature, yet the loveliest model, of art; said a painter.

'Divine!' responded an Exquisite, as the object of these remarks whirled away in the dance. 'Incontestably divine!'

The ball went on. Harry contrived to engross the popular charm through most of the succeeding dances; and when, at a late hour, he led the little Kate to her father and whispered his good night, there was an interchange of glances that told a great deal in an instant.

A wonderful effect was produced. Miss Kate was talked of at least a week. Some pronounced the stranger exquisitely beautiful. A literary dandy called her completely unique; several simpering Misses, extremely rude and *natural*; two or three mammas, blessed with a lot of fashionable ugliness, in the shape of grown up daughters, awkward and *mauvaise honte*, but all admitted that there was a magic about her, which defied, while it challenged criticism; and Henry, while he felt that she had surpassed his imagination of female loveliness, acknowledged that a constellation is the place for a star, after all.

He called early the next day; but he was shocked to learn that urgent business had taken the Colonel to Philadelphia. Thither he first thought to follow; but he thought again and grew wise.

Winter passed—spring and summer. Many travel-

Frances Whipple and the *Wampanoag*: A Nineteenth-Century New England Factory Magazine

SARAH C. O'DOWD

During the early years of the Industrial Revolution in New England, a new type of publication emerged: the factory magazine, addressed principally, though not exclusively, to female factory workers and sometimes written and edited by them.¹ The first such magazine in southern New England was *The Wampanoag, and Operatives' Journal*, a semimonthly published in Fall River from March to October 1842.² All but the last two of its fifteen issues were edited by Rhode Island-born Frances Harriet Whipple (later Green). Although little known today, the story of the *Wampanoag* holds both historical and cultural significance as a colorful chapter in local history, one that reveals much about nineteenth-century views of social-class relationships and the place of women in society.

As Judith Ranta points out, "Since nearly half of the factory literature was written by women, it has suffered from the neglect too often associated with women's writing. The influence of factory women's experience and writing in the birth of the nineteenth-century women's rights movement has not been sufficiently appreciated."³ On the other hand, much scholarly attention has been directed at the role of women in nineteenth-century society, especially in connection with the ideology of the "separate spheres" of men and women.⁴ According to this conceptualization, as the United States was rapidly changing from an agrarian to an industrial society, men went out of the home to work in the public realm of manufacturing and commerce while women became increasingly limited to the private, domestic sphere. Certain assumptions about the essential nature of men and women paralleled the oppositions of the separate spheres: men were viewed as independent, active, competitive, assertive, and strong, while women were seen as dependent, unassertive, nurturant, emotional, moral, and unselfish. Single and widowed middle-class women often deviated from the cultural ideal of women's sphere by earning their livings outside the home (as did most poor and working-class women), but if they were to maintain their middle-class status, they generally had to limit their occupational choices to such genteel "feminine" work as teaching, needlework, writing, or editing.⁵

Although they worked in the public domain, women writers and editors were generally accepted by nineteenth-century society so long as they kept out of men's affairs and aimed their work at a juvenile or female audience. The most successful and influential woman editor of the century, Sarah Josepha Hale, followed this dictum and guided *Godey's Lady's Book* from 1837 to 1877 without once mentioning the Civil War to her readers.⁶ Hale's example notwithstanding, a woman with strong convictions such as Frances Whipple would almost inevitably find that the occupation of "editress" entailed a conflict between accepting and conforming to society's norms, as women were expected to do, and violating those norms by speaking out on significant social issues, a prerogative that only men were free to exercise.

The specific purposes of the earlier factory publications varied. For some, the stated goal was defending American workers, especially females, against prevalent middle- and upper-class prejudice. As Benita Eisler notes, "Mill girls were stigmatized by their

Courtesy of the Fall River Historical Society.

Sarah O'Dowd is an independent scholar. She would like to express her appreciation to the Fall River Historical Society for allowing her access to The Wampanoag, and Operatives' Journal in its archives, and to the staff of the Rhode Island Historical Society library for assisting her in genealogical research.

employment.” By contrast, schoolteachers, who avoided the “implied shame of labor,” were generally accorded middle-class status, even though they were usually paid less than mill girls.⁷

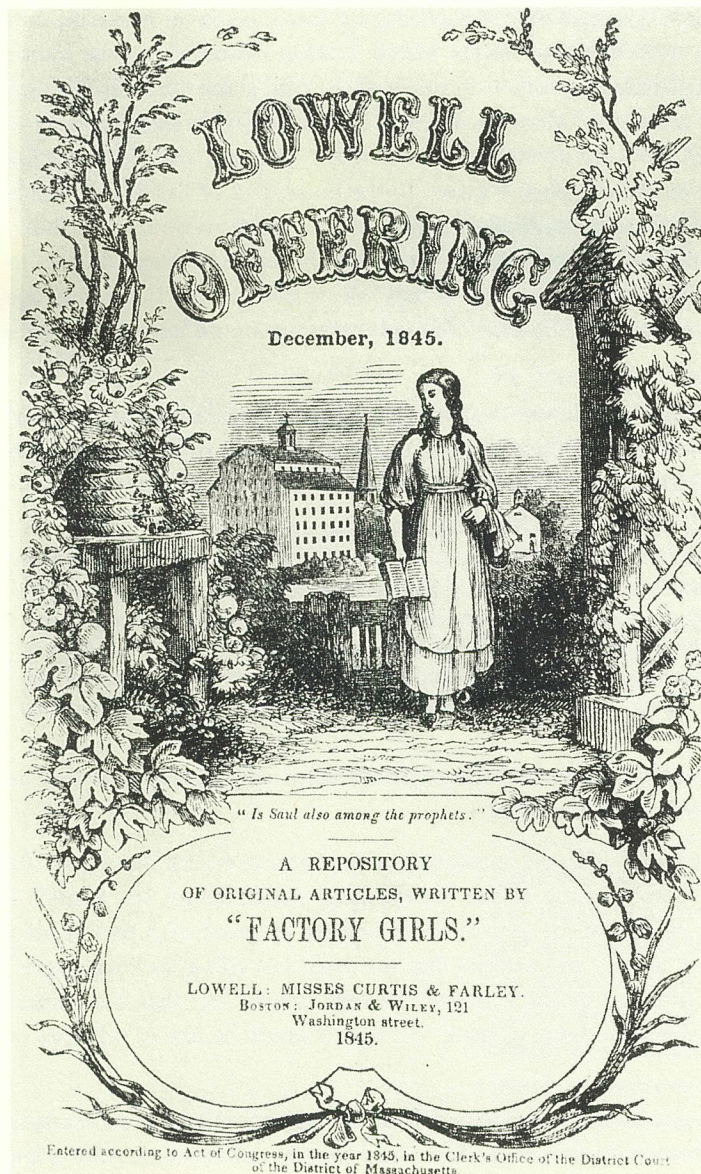
Other factory publications were motivated by the desire of middle-class reformers to “elevate” workers intellectually and morally, and thus to protect the nation’s new urban working class against the kind of degradation that had occurred in European industrial cities several decades earlier. Children under sixteen, mostly girls, constituted two-fifths of the workforce in American textile mills in the mid-nineteenth century;⁸ reformers knew that these workers were especially vulnerable to various kinds of abuse and educational neglect. Since helping and nurturing those seen as less fortunate were considered proper activities for women, a middle-class woman editor who set out to teach or uplift working-class mill girls would be acting in accord with what was allowed under the doctrine of separate spheres. In accord, too, with the times, such an effort would essentially be directed at making mill girls more educated, more moral, more genteel—and thus more like women of the middle class.

As labor agitation increased during the 1840s, the major impetus for many factory periodicals became the desire to reform working conditions. Unlike earlier factory magazines, these aimed at external reform: it was the conditions of employment, not the workers, that were seen as needing to be changed.

Periodical literature was sparse but not unknown in America during the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Several publications for women had been started by then, most of them lasting only a short time. Between 1825 and 1850 however, there was an astonishing increase in all kinds of periodicals, especially those targeted at middle-class women.⁹ During this period there also appeared the earliest American paper “devoted to labor interests,” the *Journeyman Mechanics’ Advocate*, published in Philadelphia for a short time in 1827.¹⁰ Beginning in 1826, Fall River had several newspapers, but the *Wampanoag* was its first periodical edited by a woman.¹¹

As an “operatives’ journal,” the *Wampanoag* was not without precedent in New England; a handful of magazines for mill workers had been published in manufacturing towns in Massachusetts and New Hampshire during the 1830s and early 1840s. As early as 1831, for example, the *State Herald: The Factory People’s Advocate* was published in New Hampshire. Although its editor, Henry Bickford Brewster, stated that his purpose was to “show to the world that our factory Establishments are nurseries of virtue and piety, and that females employed in them are, generally speaking, some of the best in the country,” the *State Herald* in fact contained the usual material of middle-class ladies’ magazines—poems, advice, romantic stories—rather than anything that might enhance the factory workers’ reputations. Its main significance as a factory magazine is its early date.¹²

The best-known and most celebrated of all the factory periodicals, a literary monthly called the *Lowell Offering*, was published in Lowell, Massachusetts, at irregular intervals between October 1840 and December 1845.¹³ Unlike the *State Herald*, the *Lowell Offering* did highlight the abilities of mill girls, and it gained much attention both in this country and abroad because it was written, edited, and published by female mill workers themselves. It was much praised by such notables as Charles Dickens, who found Lowell and its workers a highlight of his American visit in 1842.¹⁴ The young factory women of Lowell were voracious readers; many were farmers’ daughters, attracted to work in the new Lowell mills because the town offered lectures, classes, lending libraries, and other opportunities for reading and education that were unavailable in rural communities.



Courtesy of the American Textile History Museum, Lowell, Mass. (P1292).

Their desire to see their own poems, stories, essays, and sketches published grew naturally from their love of reading.

The *Lowell Offering* emerged in a unique setting. Young mill workers gathered in the evenings around the supper tables of their boardinghouses to discuss what they had read and written. Clergymen, including Abel C. Thomas of the Second Universalist Church in Lowell, encouraged their writing and assisted them in publishing it. Mill owners approved of the *Lowell Offering* because it seemed to demonstrate that working in the harsh conditions of a cotton mill for up to fourteen hours a day, six days a week, did nothing to stifle the intellect of, or otherwise harm, their young female employees (to whom they paid half what they paid their male workers). Indeed, some skeptics suggested that the female factory workers who edited the *Lowell Offering* received special benefits from their employers in return for misrepresenting the harsh realities of mill work and the lives of the mill workers. Others charged that the female editors were merely a front for the real editors of the publication; but although the Reverend Mr. Thomas admitted that he had helped to start the *Offering*, he insisted that the girls had “done the work” themselves.

Frances Whipple was clearly thinking of the *Lowell Offering* as a model when she undertook the editorship of the *Wampanoag*. Urging Fall River’s mill workers to submit their writing for publication, she asserted in the *Wampanoag*’s first issue that “our Female Operatives will soon match those of Lowell.”

Descended from two of Rhode Island’s oldest, most established families, Whipple was born in 1805 in Smithfield, where she spent her childhood years.¹⁵ From a very young age she made her own way in life, supporting and to a great extent educating herself after her father, George Washington Whipple, had become

impoverished. This early experience of hardship may have influenced her deeply, since she identified with the oppressed throughout her life.

Despite the difficulties of her early years, Whipple soon began to achieve recognition for the poetry she published in local papers. At the age of twenty-four she edited two numbers of a local-interest periodical titled *The Original*. By 1842 she had gained a reputation as one of Rhode Island’s most noted writers and editors. Two of her poems, “Roger Williams” and “The Dwarf’s Story,” were included in the first anthology of writings by Rhode Islanders, *The Rhode Island Book* (1841), edited by Anne C. Lynch (later Botta). Orestes Brownson praised Whipple’s 1841 novel *The Mechanic* in the January 1842 issue of the *Boston Quarterly*, commending it for its affirmation of the dignity of every human soul, no matter how humble the person’s occupation might be.

In January 1842 Whipple was interviewed for the editorship of the *Fall River Gazette* by its publisher, Abraham Bowen. An eccentric businessman who referred to himself humorously as “the Graham man,”¹⁶ Bowen had begun to publish the *Gazette* earlier that month. It was a homespun and idiosyncratic sort of newspaper, populist and highly partisan in its support of labor reformers who were criticizing conditions in the mills.

Fall River was then a thriving, growing manufacturing town, partly in Massachusetts and partly in what is now Tiverton, Rhode Island. Cotton manufacture, the town's largest industry, was expanding rapidly, with much of the capital for the mills supplied by Providence County investors.¹⁷ Men, women, and children toiled in these mills six or even seven days a week, up to fourteen hours a day. On 27 January 1842 Bowen's *Fall River Gazette* printed on its front page a letter "To the Employers of Fall River," which asserted that the excessive hours required of mill workers gave them no time to think, to the detriment of their intellectual powers. The letter also appealed to employers to obey the frequently ignored law that required that "all children under 15 years of age shall attend school three months in a year." Whipple certainly would have agreed with these sentiments.

The results of her interview with Bowen—at which Whipple assured him that she could edit "as well as a man"—are not altogether clear. In the fourth issue of the *Gazette*, after the original editor had left the paper, Bowen explained the situation to readers:

We have been without an Editor this week, and shall issue our paper hit or miss. . . . The Graham man has wrote and selected some. The printer has used his liberty in selecting what he considered pure democracy,¹⁸ and what it will all amount to we don't pretend to conjecture. The ladies' editor has arrived, and will probably take charge of affairs next week. The most that we fear about it is that she will be so larned and want to dress up the paper so much, that she will hardly be willing to have it properly "Abrahamised," and perhaps want to shut out some of our friends because they are not Grammar larnt. But we hope that the time will show that our fears are altogether unfounded.

Although he seemed ambivalent about Whipple, the "ladies' editor," it is clear that he expected her to become the paper's editor.

Whipple seems to have had a different impression of her interview with Bowen. As she recounted it in the 8 October issue of the *Wampanoag*, the Reverend Mr. Russell, a friend of Bowen's, was present at the interview.¹⁹ When she inquired what sort of publication they wanted her to edit, and insisted that she could not edit a "political paper" (i.e., a paper dealing with any political issues), Russell assured her that the *Gazette* would support the "inalienable rights of man," but that it would be free of religious or political bias.

But Whipple believed (her account continued) that no agreement had been reached, and she returned to Providence, where she had many friends and relatives. After a few days she received a letter from a friend in Fall River, saying that Bowen wanted her to return immediately to take charge of the *Gazette*. When she arrived there, however, she was told by Bowen, to her great dismay, that he had not wanted her to come back at all: "It was all the girls' work," he said. "The girls" were apparently Fall River mill workers who greatly admired Whipple and wanted to bring her to their town.

Whipple would have left Fall River immediately after Bowen's rebuff, had not some of his friends assured her that he didn't mean what he had said—it was "only his way"—and Bowen himself seemed to concur with this explanation. But she now discovered that Bowen wanted the *Gazette* to remain a political newspaper, and she once again informed him that she would never edit such a paper. Whipple felt that she was ill-equipped to do that kind of editing, a belief no doubt reflecting the prevalent view that political activity—even when it was no more than expressing a personal political opinion—was highly unseemly for a woman. It was at this point that Bowen, apparently at the urging of others, decided to inaugurate a publication that Whipple *could* edit—a non-political magazine dedicated to the interests of Fall River's mill operatives. This was *The Wampanoag, and Operatives' Journal*, which published its first issue on 19 March 1842.

According to Whipple, she and Bowen agreed that she would edit about two issues of the new publication as an experiment, without any payment except for her incidental expenses. After two issues it was decided that she would continue as editor, though still without pay. Although she was encouraged by “those who felt interested in the *Enterprise*,” Bowen was dissatisfied with the *Wampanoag*. Among other reasons for his dissatisfaction, he saw his worst fears about the “ladies’ editor” (as expressed in the *Gazette*) being realized: she was “larned” and did, indeed, want to “dress up the paper.” Bowen’s populist views and deliberately unlettered style were far from the genteel literary magazine Whipple edited. There is no evidence that Whipple was ever paid for any of the work she did as the magazine’s editor.

By June 1842 it became apparent that the *Wampanoag* was exhausting its financial resources. In the 11 June issue Whipple made a direct appeal for support from middle-class patrons and subscribers: “SUSTAIN THE OPERATIVES’ MAGAZINE; and as it is for a kindred object, we might as well add—SUSTAIN THE WAMPANOAG!” The *Wampanoag* (and the “operatives’ magazine,” which she would go on to identify) had “a strong claim upon our benevolence” on the grounds of Christian duty to the worthy people who needed help, she declared. Neither she nor the mill-worker contributors expected to be paid; all they asked was that readers and subscribers support the *Wampanoag* so that it could defray expenses. Because she and others donated their services to the *Wampanoag*, she said, they had a moral claim to be supported financially: “The self-sacrificing deserve support.”

To strengthen her argument, she told a story that implied that the *Wampanoag* had begun through the efforts of mill girls. This narrative is interesting in that it suggests a link with an earlier publication in Lowell, as well as with one of its editors. Whipple explained that the idea for an “operatives’ magazine” had originated about five years earlier among some young women who had formed a mutual improvement association, but who had been forced to suspend their plans because of a lack of funds. In 1841, with the sponsorship of two unnamed gentlemen who had long been interested in helping these women, three issues of their operatives’ magazine were published. When the publishers were financially unable to continue it beyond those issues, a young unnamed female operative who wanted to “vindicate the character” of mill workers purchased the subscription list and tried to keep the magazine afloat. During that time it went deeply into debt. But now the prospects for making the magazine solvent were much better, Whipple confidently asserted—thus implying that the operatives’ magazine had been continued in the *Wampanoag*, and that her editorship would make it a success.

Whipple was not specific about where the magazine had been published, but evidence points to Lowell rather than to Fall River. We know that a publication called the *Operatives’ Magazine*, edited by mill workers Lydia S. Hall and Abby A. Goddard, appeared in Lowell in April 1841, published three issues, and was purchased and merged with the *Lowell Offering* in 1842.²⁰ A further link between the *Wampanoag* and the *Operatives’ Magazine* is suggested by Whipple’s announcement, following her story of the *Wampanoag*’s origins, that “one of the most highly-gifted young poetesses of the country,” known as Adelaide, had offered to help with the publication. This was almost certainly the self-educated mill worker Lydia S. Hall, who had coedited the *Operatives’ Magazine* and had published many poems in the *Lowell Offering* under the pen name Adelaide.²¹ Whipple did not say how they had become acquainted, but there is evidence that she had visited Lowell, and it is reasonable to suppose that she and Hall may have met there.²²

How does *The Wampanoag, and Operatives' Journal* compare to other factory magazines? The title is unique; none of the other publications for mill workers used Native American words or names in their titles.²³ Whipple held Native Americans in great esteem. "In accordance with the spirit of our name, we shall be magnanimous, bold, and determined," she wrote in the prospectus for the new publication. "Like the Wampanoag of old, our royal namesake, we hope to maintain a perfectly erect, fearless, and determined course." Her choice of the name *Wampanoag* for its connotations of boldness and determination seems unconventional, even provocative, since such "masculine" qualities could hardly have been considered appropriate for herself or her readers. Replying to a correspondent's criticism, she forcefully defended the choice in the 16 April issue:

The Wampanoags, it is well known, were a great and powerful tribe, who owned all the country between Narragansett and Massachusetts bays; and between Pawtucket and Charles rivers, extending to the farthest limits of Cape Cod on the East; but on the North the boundaries cannot be definitely determined. King Philip, or Metacomet, was called by many of the old writers "The Wampanoag." His character is well known—generous, brave, proud, magnanimous. His great design, that of dispossessing a people who he foresaw would entirely subjugate his tribes, and usurp his country, was conceived with a boldness, with a far-reaching view—a deeply-penetrating insight; and carried forward with a truth and steadiness which have won for him a place among Earth's proudest heroes—among her purest patriots! Is it a proof of very bad taste then, to hold his name, and that of his tribe, in everlasting remembrance? This great people, but for whom our ancestors had perished from starvation, passed away, leaving no books—no records—no history. A NAME was their sole legacy to posterity—and shall we let even that perish forever? It is a craven heart that could wish it! Rude and inharmonious, say you it is; and instinct with savage sound? To us there is a grandeur in those four syllables, such as invests no other word! It is THE NAME, of all other names, which we would have. It must be a sickly taste, indeed, that could prefer a "Ladies' Wreath," a "Garland," a "Rose-bud," or even a "Ladies' Pearl," to the deep and thrilling intonations that rise and swell in "THE WAMPANOAG"!

And yet, perhaps acknowledging the publication's dual editorial voice—crying out against the wrongs in society with masculine boldness, like that of the Wampanoag, while charitably "uplifting" the mill workers, as a benevolent female should—Whipple may have added *Operatives' Journal* to the title to suggest that the magazine had a more "feminine" side. One purpose of the *Wampanoag* was similar to that of some other early magazines for female mill workers: to develop the operatives' minds and talents while counteracting prejudice against the working class and affirming the dignity of labor. A main stated goal of the *Wampanoag* was to publish original writing by factory workers, as the *Lowell Offering* did; Whipple insisted that she would always give such submissions preference. In fact, however, she rarely found any that met her literary standards, and thus most of the original work in the *Wampanoag* consisted of writing by Whipple herself or by other published writers among her acquaintances, such as Anne Lynch Botta or Sarah Helen Whitman.

Each issue of the *Wampanoag* contained a "Popular Sketch," an original story by Whipple focusing on a particular kind of worker, such as "The Seamstress," "The Factory Girl," or "The Mechanic." These were presented as idealized types, in tales that emphasized a number of characteristically "uplifting" themes. "The Factory Girl," for example, is a didactic sketch that illustrates the worth and dignity of labor, and the values of self-education, loyalty, and perseverance, in its story of a young woman named Martha Ray. After working for three years in a mill, Martha has saved enough money to pay for a year at an excellent school, where she triumphs over 150 pale, languid, fashionable young ladies to win the top prize, a gold medal. She is then courted by many gentlemen of high social position, but she remains true to her first suitor, a young mechanic named Frank. (At Martha's suggestion, Frank had sought to improve his mind by taking lessons in botany; the couple had fallen in love while studying botany in their village.) Martha and Frank eventually marry and live happily together. Romantic

stories as contrived as this one are not at all unusual in popular nineteenth-century literature; what is very unusual, however, is Whipple's denouement: the mill girl rejects her chance for upward mobility, refusing to yield to the enticement of moving into a higher social class.

In "The Factory Girl," Whipple celebrated the working class while prescribing for them the middle-class value of education. That idea was a consistent theme of the *Wampanoag*: factory workers should develop themselves intellectually as much as possible, using their few moments of free time to study such subjects as botany. Botany was, in fact, a subject that Whipple herself taught. She believed that studying the plants of this world revealed the glories of God, and that, in turn, directed one's thoughts to the higher world. She included botany lessons in the *Wampanoag*, and she offered both male and female operatives free botany and composition classes if they would agree to form a mutual improvement association. Such a group was organized in July 1842, but it apparently was unsuccessful, since Whipple stopped announcing its meetings after the 23 July issue.

In addition to its Popular Sketches, the *Wampanoag* included a recurrent feature called "Original American Tales," a series reprinted from the *New York Mirror*. This series, offering "A Glance at the Early Settlers in 1675," consisted of eight chapters of sentimental tales written by Whipple in a style slightly suggestive of Washington Irving. As Judith Ranta notes, the inclusion of "much serious nonfiction material, such as essays on history, science, and labor, and transcendentalist essays and poems," set the *Wampanoag* apart from other factory magazines.²⁴ The *Wampanoag* also reprinted book reviews, news, and various items from other publications, which was common practice in magazines and news-papers of the time.

In the *Wampanoag*'s first issue, Whipple stated her intention to expose the abuses that workers suffered "at the hands of the more opulent classes." Although relatively little space was subsequently devoted to this cause, the *Wampanoag* did occasionally refer to evils associated with child labor. For example, in a story by Whipple in the 20 August issue, a young boy who has escaped from toil at a mill recalls the hardships of the children still working there: "my poor little companions are going on—on—on—in their weary slavery, the whirling wheels always whizzing—and not a pleasant sight, nor cheering sounds, to make a variety. Their bare feet on the hot boards; and to be pattering through

Courtesy of the Fall River Historical Society.

THE WAMPANOAG

Edited by Frances Harriet Green.

Fall River, Saturday, August 20, 1842.

☞ For the address to Correspondents see 3d column of 83d page.

the cold mud at night, to their close, dirty homes, where they wont be let sleep long enough to get up refreshed for tomorrow's toil."

Whipple's basic conviction, expressed in other stories in the *Wampanoag* and elsewhere, was that workers would not be abused if they stood up for themselves and displayed self-respect. Her sketch of "The School Mistress" in the *Wampanoag's* third issue reveals something of an exception to her usual way of thinking: Whipple finds it strange that the schoolteacher is compelled to occupy a "subordinate position in society," but she places the onus for this situation not on schoolteachers but on the highly intelligent people who put their children "in the hands of persons whom they refuse to admit into their own society upon equal terms." If mill operatives had been writing and editing the *Wampanoag*, it is doubtful that it would have included this expression of indignation at the affront to the middle-class schoolmistress.

By the time the *Wampanoag* began publication in 1842, agitation for the ten-hour workday was increasing throughout New England's manufacturing towns.²⁵ Factory periodicals with a very different viewpoint from that of the *Lowell Offering* were appearing, expressing discontent with prevailing wages, hours, and conditions of employment. In 1842, for example, a New Hampshire paper, the *Factory Girl*, was providing its readers with strong class-conscious editorials demanding labor reform. In December 1845, with such publications as Fitchburg, Massachusetts's *Voice of Industry* campaigning against the *Lowell Offering's* generally idyllic picture of factory life, the *Offering* would publish its last issue.²⁶ Although articles advocating labor reform did occasionally appear in the *Wampanoag*, they were not the main focus of the magazine.

In July 1843 Whipple wrote with uncharacteristic frankness to her friend John Neal, a Maine editor and novelist who had given encouragement to new American authors, including Edgar Allan Poe. She and her husband, Charles Green, were in serious financial straits,²⁷ and she wanted Neal to help her sell her writing to magazines. "You know the *Wampanoag* is dead and I suppose you saw how scurrilously the publisher treated me," she told him.²⁸

How did *The Wampanoag, and Operatives' Journal*, which began with such high hopes, end so disastrously? At least three factors were probably responsible for the magazine's short existence. First, the editor and publisher were at odds in their goals for the publication from the beginning, and none of their goals were ever fully met. What Bowen wanted was a counterpart to the *Fall River Gazette*. Bowen's *Gazette* was an informal, often jocular local newspaper that printed marriage and death notices, stagecoach schedules, and advertisements for canary seed next to serious antislavery articles and petitions to Fall River employers to improve the conditions in their factories. Bowen never hesitated to criticize and offend the Establishment, from mill owners to members of Congress, but he was able to appeal to enough ordinary readers to pay his publishing expenses.

Whipple's prospectus for the *Wampanoag* expressed one purpose that Bowen, with his "democratic" propensities, must have agreed with: the *Wampanoag* would speak out boldly against any wrongs inflicted on the workers of Fall River. But Whipple devoted most of the publication to a second purpose, more congruent with her role as a female editor: she wanted to "elevate" the workers—primarily female mill operatives—intellectually and morally. This was a goal that would no doubt have been acceptable to mill owners and the middle class generally, but not to Bowen, whose sympathies lay with the working class. What Whipple intended as a lofty moral tone, Bowen detested as snob-

bery and middle-class affectation. Because their aims diverged so greatly, the two never worked together for the *Wampanoag's* success.

Whipple and Bowen each saw the failure of the magazine differently, and they presented their conflicting accounts in its last issue. Bowen's comments there about "the girls" who "did much in getting [him] into the scrape" of publishing the *Wampanoag* with Whipple as its editor sound misogynistic; "But it is not uncommon for the daughters of Mother Eve to get—And also to get the sons of Father A. into trouble and difficulty," he wrote. In the 17 September issue Bowen had criticized Whipple for having said that "she could edit a paper as well, or better, than any man." Responding to this in the 8 October issue, Whipple claimed that she had been misunderstood. "I told him that I neither *could*, nor *would*, edit a political papaer," she protested, "but that *such a one as I described*, I could edit as well as a man—But I never said that I could 'edit a paper as well or better than any man'—except in contradistinction to a political paper, which I felt myself both unable and unwilling to conduct. This it will be perceived, entirely alters the meaning of the declaration." She was apparently chagrined at the suggestion that she had claimed editorial skills equal to those of a man. Bowen nevertheless used her remark as a basis for his sarcasm about "lady editors."

Although Whipple and Bowen both belonged to the middle class, their relationship was unequal, for most of the power was on Bowen's side. This, of course, was largely because he had the money to pay the printer, and she did not; but Bowen's patronizing attitude makes it clear that gender roles also played a part in their inequality. From an objective viewpoint, Bowen should have been pleased to have a "lady editor" who would do the job as well as a man, and without pay. Instead, he was offended by what he perceived as her claim that she "could edit as well as a man." Bowen leveled other complaints against her as well in the 17 September issue: that her articles were long and "do not amount to much," and that she had not made the *Wampanoag* a profitable enterprise.

Bowen also complained that Whipple had not included enough humor in the *Wampanoag*; but Whipple felt the magazine had a higher purpose.²⁹ In her prospectus she had said that she held it a "crying sin" to wear out pens and ink, or to waste time, in writing or reading nonsense. But by nonsense, she explained, she did not mean a well-written tale, "nor yet a good joke; nor a well-pointed epigram or anecdote. Laughing, as an anti-dyspeptic remedy, is almost equal to Graham Bread; and should by no means be despised in these days. We like a good hearty laugh ourselves, when there is just reason for it; and we hope to persuade our neighbors, occasionally to try the effect of this same remedy upon their own digestive organs. But we shall never forget the grand truth that 'THERE IS WORK TO DO'; nor transcend any well-determined boundaries of the 'Time to laugh.'" Whipple's earnest style may, in fact, have been a factor in the disappointing number of subscribers to the *Wampanoag*. Although there were certainly many completely serious publications in the mid-nineteenth century, they were not publications aimed at an audience of mill workers.

Another possible source of discord between Whipple and Bowen had been created when Whipple unwisely allowed herself to become the *Wampanoag's* nominal publisher, as well as its editor, after the first issue. She had agreed to the arrangement, she said, at the urging of some who felt that it might make the magazine more attractive to potential subscribers. Bowen seems to have taken a hands-off attitude toward the enterprise at this point; Whipple claimed that when it was suggested that she be listed as publisher, Bowen was "nowhere to be found." "I was entirely inexperienced; and did not know that the money for subscriptions being paid in advance, it would be difficult to refund it; and that I was involving myself in a web, from which I could not escape," Whipple wrote in

the final issue. "I certainly expected, when I commenced, to have some assistance from the publisher. But I had none; and I struggled on alone." Responding to this account in the same issue, Bowen confirmed that he was indeed the sole publisher: "Mrs. G. would have it understood that she was not the top and bottom and all sides of the *Wampanoag*. We acknowledge to our — that we have published her *Wampanoag*."

In addition to her difficulties in dealing with Bowen, Whipple—and the *Wampanoag*—faced a second problem: she had misjudged in expecting that Fall River operatives would be as interested and involved in the *Wampanoag* as Lowell operatives were in the factory publications of that city. In the 23 July *Wampanoag* she issued a challenge to the operatives of Fall River: "In Lowell two Periodicals [the *Lowell Offering* and the *Operatives' Magazine*] are written—or the matter is furnished, by the Female Operatives alone—And is the successful exercise of the mental powers *peculiar* to the young ladies of Lowell? We believe not; and we trust to see a practical contradiction of that question; for we know there is talent here—and we are determined, if possible, to get at it."

But the mill girls of Lowell formed an unusual community, closely knit and highly motivated. Many had in fact been brought to "the Athens of North America" by their love of learning. They pooled their money to rent books from lending libraries and even hired teachers to give them lessons in the evenings in subjects such as foreign languages and botany. They used their evenings also for attending lectures, discussing their reading, or sharing with one another the essays, poems, and stories they had written. Most lived together in boardinghouses, which were somewhat like the college dormitories of today. "Lowell had the air of an enormous Female Academy," Arthur Eno comments in a history of the city.³⁰

Most of Fall River's mill workers, on the other hand, were young people who had grown up on nearby farms. After work they returned not to talk-filled communal boardinghouses like those in Lowell but to their family homes. Fall River also lacked the extraordinary educational opportunities that drew many daughters of Yankee farmers to Lowell, a much larger town; most Fall River mill workers were there not to improve their minds but to earn money. When Bowen referred to "the girls" who "did much in getting [him] into the scrape of publishing the *W.*," he was presumably referring to Fall River operatives, but we have no indication of who they were or how many were actually interested in the *Wampanoag*. Apparently few of them submitted original work to the magazine, and subscribers were hard to find. In the issue of 17 September—the last she edited—Whipple lamented that "Fall River has never received and sustained THE WAMPANOAG, as it should, and as it might have done."

Yet even in Lowell, with approximately 6,000 female factory workers, only about 70 contributed writing to the *Offering*, and only about 120 (one in fifty) subscribed to it. The early issues sold from three thousand to more than five thousand copies, but much of the magazine's financial support came from interested parties outside Lowell. Harriet Farley, one of its editors, noted that the *Offering* had three hundred subscribers in New York State alone, exclusive of New York City.³¹ A detractor of the *Offering*, Amelia Sargent, claimed in 1845 that only 52 female operatives supported it, and that its real patrons were agents of the company, some of whom subscribed for twenty-five copies.³² Mill owners certainly benefited from the success and celebrity of the *Lowell Offering* and had every reason to support it, since it gave a generally favorable picture of life in the mills.

What attracted many subscribers to the *Lowell Offering* was the apparent novelty of young women who could work both manually and mentally. This contradicted a common nineteenth-century assumption—that one worked with either hands or mind, but not with both. As Nicholas Bromell explains it, "Work [in pre-Civil War America] was

understood primarily by way of a distinction between manual and mental labor, which in turn rested upon an assumed dichotomy of mind (and soul) and body.”³³ Since it was Whipple, and not mill workers, who wrote and edited most of the *Wampanoag*, it proved far less interesting to the public than the *Lowell Offering* did.

Whipple herself attributed the financial troubles of the *Wampanoag* to a third factor: political events in her home state, Rhode Island. In the 17 September issue Bowen complained that Whipple

informed us that she had a large number of influential friends about the country, who would take her paper and use their influence with others in her behalf. In a word she declared that if we would undertake the publication of her *Wampanoag*, that we should not lose by it, and moreover that we should have half of the profits (after paying the expenses) which she seemed to think would be something considerable, if not more. But how has it turned out. The paper has been printed only six months, and the office is at least *one hundred and fifty dollars in debt*, besides wear and tare.

Defending herself in the *Wampanoag*'s final issue, Whipple claimed that her obligations to the magazine had been fulfilled, since “more than two thirds of the actual number of subscribers were obtained” through her influence or that of her friends. She had been prevented from obtaining as much support as she had expected, she said, by the “troubles in Rhode Island”—the Dorr Rebellion.³⁴

For Whipple, the Dorr Rebellion had presented problems that went beyond the sheer turmoil in Rhode Island during 1842. Although she had previously insisted that she would not edit a political paper, she had commented editorially on the rebellion when she felt she could no longer remain silent. There were two major reasons why it was risky to do this. First, in speaking out against the conservative side, she must surely have alienated some friends and family who might otherwise have been her supporters (for example, her cousin, lawyer John Whipple, was a prominent anti-Dorrite). Whipple expressed bitter disillusionment in the 20 August *Wampanoag*: “It is always mortifying and distressing to think less well of our friends than we have hitherto done. There is so much pleasure in admiring what we love, in the belief that perfection exists where we have placed our esteem or affection, that it cannot be foregone *without pain*.” From the context of this passage, it is almost certain that the friends to whom she referred were people who turned against her after she had spoken out about the Dorr Rebellion.

Second, Whipple's involvement in political debate violated nineteenth-century conventions about “women's place.” With politics defined in masculine terms, in images of conflict and warfare, the political arena was obviously no place for a woman.³⁵ This was made clear in an anonymous poem in the 10 March 1804 *Providence Gazette*, one stanza of which put the case succinctly:

Trust me, dear girl, 'tis not for you
In *Politics* to rave and bite;
The cheek that glowd with crimson hue,
Rancour should never turn to white.

The editors of the *Lowell Offering* explicitly refused to accept articles on politics or sectarian religion. But Whipple—who had named her magazine *The Wampanoag* to express boldness and courage—could not remain editorially aloof from the conditions in Rhode Island. Her decision to speak out on the conflict contrasts sharply with Sarah Josepha Hale's decision that *Godey's Lady's Book* would take no notice of the Civil War.

Whipple wrote about the rebellion, with increasing fervor, four times during the summer of 1842. When the first number of the *Wampanoag* appeared in March, the political

conflict in Rhode Island was already nearing a crisis. Her first commentary appeared in the magazine's 30 April issue, shortly before Thomas Wilson Dorr was to be inaugurated as the People's governor in defiance of the Charter government's repressive "Algerine Law." In this volatile situation Whipple urged Dorr's suffragist supporters to be resolute but restrained. It was her hope, she said, that "the People will not sully their high and holy cause by any act of violence"; in exercising their rights, they should be willing to suffer the Algerine Law's harsh penalties, going to jail, if necessary, for their beliefs.

By 28 May, when she next turned her attention to events in Rhode Island, the situation had changed. Dorr's abortive assault on the state arsenal in Providence ten days before had alienated many of his supporters, and the People's governor had fled the state. Whipple put a remarkably favorable spin on Dorr's humiliation:

The Free Suffrage party, finding that they could not sustain their principles, without endangering the peace and welfare of the whole country, have withdrawn from the field. . . . Surely this noble renunciation of all selfish considerations, for the sake of PRINCIPLE, deserves a better name for those who manifest it, than the "offscourings of the Earth," the "Rabble," & c. & c. We think as we have often said before that the Free Suffrage cause is a good one. That it has been injured by the imprudence and bad management of its advocates we clearly see, and fully believe. But the day will come—"the Hour and the Man,"—and Truth and Liberty will triumph.

In late May and early June the Charter government increased its arrests under the Algerine Law. On 25 June, when Dorr returned to Rhode Island in an attempt to reconvene the People's legislature at Chepachet, the General Assembly declared martial law throughout the state; two days later, with a large Charter army ready to march on Chepachet, Dorr once again fled, leaving his supporters at the mercy of the advancing Charter force. The rebellion was over. On 5 July the Charter government halted its arrests, but the brutal treatment of already imprisoned Dorrites kept alive much public sympathy for them and their cause.

In the light of these events, Whipple's earlier optimism changed to outrage in the 23 July issue of the *Wampanoag*. She began by justifying her participation in the "masculine" arena of public controversy: "We regard the question which now agitates our neighbor State, not as one of Politics, but as one of HUMAN RIGHTS; and, as such, we consider it as coming rightfully within our legitimate sphere of action." She then presented a dramatic portrayal of conditions in Rhode Island:

When in one of the freest and most enlightened states of the world, a DESPOTISM is introduced, in reply to the people's long and earnest cry for liberty—a cry which had been long smothered, but which could be smothered no longer—and at length burst forth with irrepressible power—it is time to awake. When the Press is muzzled, and kept silent—when every mouth that dares give utterance to an honest thought, is gagged—when men are threatened with imprisonment—and sometimes imprisoned for opinion's sake—when property is seized and destroyed—liberty lost, and life put in jeopardy, on the barest suspicion of treasonable designs—when work is withheld from the laborer—and, consequently, bread from the hungry—because the Employed dares to think differently from his Employer—when shooting down unoffending citizens in the street is threatened at open mid-day, for the expression of a dissenting opinion,—and gravely and coldly talked of, without a shudder;—when delicate and high-bred ladies discourse, not only of hanging and quartering, but of *roasting a man*, and *eating a piece of his heart*—or of rejoicing to see his head carried through the streets on the point of a spear—when an expression of the spirit of Murder is so common that no one feels surprised at it—it is time, if there be a free Press in the land, that it should give utterance to its indignation—fearlessly, boldly—if there be a free soul, that it should speak out without regard to loss, or danger!

Opposite page

In the Wampanoag of 20 August 1842, Whipple condemned the Dorrites for "excluding their colored fellow citizens from the rights and privileges, which they were seeking for themselves." Courtesy of the Fall River Historical Society.

Whipple soon began to pay the price for her unwomanly outspokenness. A number of subscribers asked to have their names removed from the *Wampanoag's* subscription list. On 20 August she acknowledged that her 23 July article had "been the occasion of some small excitement; and we have moreover, been accused of having *party prejudices*—

RHODE ISLAND.

UNDER this now ominous caption, we put forth an article, a few weeks since, which has been the occasion of some small excitement; and we have moreover, been accused of having *party prejudices*--which is far from being the fact. With the FREE SUFFRAGE PEOPLE, as *a party*, we could never go; not because they go too far; but because they do not go far enough. In excluding their colored fellow citizens from the rights and privileges, which they were seeking for themselves; after having promised that they should be equal partakers, they forfeited the esteem and confidence of all the true and consistent friends of freedom. The word "WHITE," standing, as it stands in their constitution is a *black* mark against them, which only its entire erasure will remove; and this, our view of the subject, stands expressed in print, in the note to a little poem published in the Fall River Archetype of December 9, 1841, as follows:

"When this article was written, the odious 'WHITE' Constitution had not been framed. I venture to publish this, in its original form, hoping that Rhode Island will be true to herself; but if that Constitution is accepted, I shall blush and weep for my native land: and the spirit of Roger Williams, which has been almost like a sensible presence,—guarding the liberties of the State, astonished and shocked at the deed, shall flee away, leaving us to the degradation and ruin of the tyrannical and the selfish."

which is far from being the fact.” She could never affiliate with the Free Suffrage party, she insisted, “not because they go too far; but because they do not go far enough.” With their People’s Constitution—their “odious ‘WHITE’ Constitution,” as she called it—the suffragists had sought to extend the voting franchise to non-property-holding *white* Rhode Islanders, but not to blacks, thereby forfeiting “the esteem and confidence of all the true and consistent friends of freedom.” But despite her limited sympathy for the suffragists, she was incensed at the repression and persecution they were enduring at the hands of the victorious Charterites: “During this state of things we made a short stop at Providence, and saw, and heard, enough to convince us that there could hardly be an exaggeration of the existing evils.—Under the influence of this feeling we penned the offending paragraphs.”

By the 17 September issue the demise of the *Wampanoag* was in sight. Writing in that issue, Bowen complained that the magazine had lost money, but he proposed that if Whipple would continue to edit it without pay, he would continue to publish it awhile longer. In response, Whipple declared that she had resigned as editor but would go on providing articles because her “whole heart” was committed to the “social elevation of the Laboring Classes, and the moral emancipation of man.” If she were paid so that she could afford to live in Fall River while performing her editorial duties, she said, she “would die rather than let the paper die.”³⁶

In the 8 October issue Whipple and Bowen were openly at odds. Whipple expressed regret that she had allowed herself to become the *Wampanoag*’s nominal publisher; she had done this, she said, in the belief that it would increase the magazine’s popularity. In his own statement Bowen acknowledged that he had always been the actual and sole publisher, but he also accused Whipple of renegeing on her responsibilities. He would continue to publish the *Wampanoag* if it were financially possible, he went on to say, but since it was not, the present issue would be the last.

Although Whipple was aware of the injustices suffered by the women of her time, she did not often publicly advocate causes (such as property rights for women) favored by the nascent feminist movement. This may seem inconsistent with her outspokenness about human rights in general, but it should be noted she was not alone in this regard; as Judith Fetterley observes, “On the subject of women’s oppression, the collective voice of mid-nineteenth-century American women writers is essentially muted and indirect.”³⁷ Subjected to the social ideal of female selflessness, women did not find it easy to speak out on their own behalf. For Whipple, inveighing against the suppression of the Dorrites’ free speech was apparently less problematic than protesting her society’s restrictions on her own free speech. Like many women of her time, Whipple struggled to express her autonomous identity within the gender constraints of her society rather than to attack those constraints directly.³⁸

The price she paid for her forays into the masculine sphere did not go unrecognized by her contemporaries. Whipple appears among the approximately 2,500 women profiled in Sarah Josepha Hale’s monumental *Woman’s Record; or, Sketches of All Distinguished Women, from the Creation to A.D. 1854*. Hale, who strongly urged women not to express political views, cited Frances Whipple Green as an example to prove her point: “Mrs. Green is an original and often a powerful writer. . . . but we fear she has wasted her fine talents on sectarian and political discussions; and thus failed of doing the good or enjoying the success her philanthropy deserves, and her genius should effect.”³⁹

Ironically, Whipple is perhaps best remembered today for her 1844 *Might and Right*, a highly partisan account of the Dorr Rebellion.

Hale's assessment of Whipple was probably shared by many of their contemporaries. A more sympathetic view was expressed in a tribute to Whipple, written after her death in 1878, in a Boston spiritualist paper: "During her whole literary career, of nearly half a century, she was the consistent friend of the poor, the oppressed and the fallen, ready for any work that might inspire their hopes, strengthen their hands, and smooth before them the rugged ways of life. Few, indeed, have made such personal sacrifices for their principles."⁴⁰

The Wampanoag, and Operatives' Journal was the only Fall River periodical published for female mill workers in the nineteenth century. Unlike the *Lowell Offering*, it was written and edited professionally, though it was originally intended to provide a showcase for the workers' own writing. Unlike such labor reform periodicals as the *Voice of Industry*, it paid relatively little attention to the harsh conditions of factory work, despite Whipple's announced intention to expose the abuses inflicted on factory workers by "the more opulent classes." What the *Wampanoag* represented most of all was a middle-class reformer's view of what would best "elevate" mill workers above the mind-deadening drudgery of their daily toil. Although Whipple intended to keep it free from political involvement, she eventually used the *Wampanoag* to publicly express her reactions to what she considered the shocking political events in Rhode Island, thereby alienating a significant number of her patrons and damaging her own reputation.

After examining the short, difficult life of the *Wampanoag*, we should not be surprised to learn that the next female-edited Fall River publication was a conventional ladies' magazine titled *The Tea Leaf*, published by the Atheneum Young Ladies Circle at irregular intervals for a brief period beginning in 1849.⁴¹ Mill girls at midcentury were probably more interested in the contents of such popular ladies' magazines as *Godey's Lady's Book* and *Graham's Magazine* than in the *Wampanoag's* exhortations to self-improvement.⁴² If any were interested in reading about labor reform issues, they could find ample material in Thomas Almy's Fall River paper *The Mechanic*. With more and more immigrants, many of them illiterate, making up the workforce in northeastern textile mills in the late 1840s, the days of magazines for young female operatives had ended.⁴³ The *Wampanoag* may today seem like little more than a historical curiosity, but by providing insight into the attitudes, motives, and struggles for self-expression of its pioneering editress, it can help us understand what it meant to be a white middle-class woman in mid-nineteenth-century New England.

Notes

- The word "magazine," which originally meant a storehouse, was first used as a publishing term with reference to a periodical's contents rather than its format. During the early nineteenth century it was not unusual for an unbound eight-page publication such as the *Wampanoag* to be called a magazine. See Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines, 1741-1850* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1957), 6-7. According to Judith A. Ranta, *Women and Children of the Mills: An Annotated Guide to Nineteenth-Century American Textile Factory Literature* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999), xi, textile factory work was dealt with in some way in a wide variety of nineteenth-century literature, including "newspapers, magazines, labor and story papers, mainstream publishers' monographs, pulp publications, and Sunday school tracts," the largest number of which appeared between 1841 and 1850. The present article focuses on publications primarily intended for female factory workers.
- The Fall River Historical Society has a complete set of the *Wampanoag* in its archives. According to Ranta, the Boston Public Library and the Massachusetts Newspaper Project have the *Wampanoag* on microfilm.
- Ranta, *Women and Children*, x.
- See, for example, Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Norma Basch, *In the Eyes of the Law: Women, Marriage, and Property in Nineteenth-Century New York* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982); and Janet Gray, ed., *She Wields a Pen: American Women Poets of the Nineteenth Century* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997).
- In the 1840s only 10 percent of all women were wage earners outside the home, and "those were predominantly young, poor, black, immigrants, or widows." Susan Coultrop-McQuinn, *Doing Literary Business: American Women Writers in the Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 24. In 1836 Harriet Martineau said that only seven occupations were open to women in the United States: teaching, needlework, keeping boarders, working in cotton mills, typesetting, bookbinding, and domestic service. Roger Levenson, *Women in Printing—Northern California, 1857-1890* (Santa Barbara: Capra Press, 1994), 36. Martineau must have been aware of, but did not distinguish, the different social statuses of these occupations. "The seamstress was a working woman with whom the middle class could sympathize because her occupation was both feminine and genteel," according to Teresa Anne Murphy, *Ten Hours' Labor: Religion, Reform, and Gender in Early New England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 198 n. But note Whipple's complaint in "The School Mistress" (discussed below) that female teachers, whose occupation was also "feminine and genteel," were not accorded equal status by some within the middle class.
- Thus Hale not only stayed within the sphere allowed to editresses but also cannily avoided offending readers from either section of the country. Gray sees Hale as the leader of a "female public sphere" from about 1820 to 1870. "Its mission complemented that of the male public sphere but adopted values associated with women's lives to public discourse." Gray, *She Wields a Pen*, xxxiii.
- Benita Eisler, ed., *The Lowell Offering: Writings by New England Mill Women (1840-1845)* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1977), 183-84.
- Ranta, *Women and Children*, x.
- Mott, *History of American Magazines*, 340.
- Frank Luther Mott, *American Journalism: A History, 1690-1960* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1964), 205.
- The first Fall River newspaper was *The Monitor*, a weekly which began in January 1826 and continued until 1897. It was a political paper, but it contained poetry and essays on morality in addition to political, commercial, and foreign and domestic news. Several other papers also appeared before *The Wampanoag*, and *Operatives' Journal*. *Fall River Herald News*, 29 Dec. 1972.
- Bertha Monica Stearns, "Early Factory Magazines in New England: The Lowell Offering and Its Contemporaries," *Journal of Economic and Business History* 2 (1930): 692.
- For information on Lowell and the *Lowell Offering*, see Stearns, "Early Factory Magazines"; Harriet H. Robinson, *Loom & Spindle, or Life among the Early Mill Girls* (Kailua, Hawaii: Press Pacifica, 1976); Benita Eisler, *The Lowell Offering*; Susan Lank Tolbert, "Reading Habits of the Nineteenth-Century New England Mill Girls," 1995, online, available from <http://www.tetranet.net/users/stolbert/research/millgirl.html>; *Autobiography of Abel C. Thomas: Including Recollections of Persons, Incidents, and Places* (Boston: J. M. Usher, 1852), 257-67.
- Charles Dickens, *American Notes* (New York: Modern Library, 1996), 90.
- The first Whipple known to have settled in Rhode Island was Captain John Whipple (1617-1685), who came to Providence around 1658. Many of his numerous descendants were farmers or merchants in the Providence and Smithfield areas. His great-grandson Joseph (1734-1816), a Smithfield farmer, married Sarah Mawney (1735-1820), and they had at least twelve children, including George Washington Whipple (1776-1842), the father of Frances Harriet Whipple (1805-1878). Her mother, Ann Scott (1784-1823), was descended from Richard Scott of Smithfield, an associate of Roger Williams. See genealogical documents at the Rhode Island Historical Society library.
- The life of Frances Harriet Whipple is poorly documented, and biographical details are scanty beyond the information in a letter by S. B. Brittan in the 24 August 1878 *Banner of Light*, a Boston spiritualist newspaper, and a sketch of her life and writings in the 30 October 1878 *Providence Daily Journal*. The *Journal* piece is reprinted in Sidney S. Rider, *Bibliographical Memoirs of Three Rhode Island Authors* (Providence: S. S. Rider, 1880).
- Apparently Bowen (1803-1889) was a follower of Sylvester Graham, who is credited with inventing the graham cracker as the staple of a healthy diet.
- Fall River's population was 6,738 in 1840, 8,109 in 1843, and 11,000 by 1846. See Fall River Historical Society, *Proceedings of the Society from Its Organization in 1921 to August 1926* (Fall River: Fall River Historical Society, 1927). Orin Fowler, a Fall River clergyman, noted in 1841 that the town's population was quite young (half under twenty years of age), and with not enough older women to take care of the children of working women, "many a mother took her little child to the mill to play about the weave room floor," a dangerous situation. Alice Brayton, *Life on the Stream* (Newport, R.I.: Wilkinson Press, [1962?]), 77. There were several dozen mills along the Quequechan River, all of them (until 1846) "small, about 100 by 40 or 50 feet, and two or three stories high." A large part of the town, including a number of mills, was destroyed in the great Fall River fire of 1843, which caused losses exceeding a half million dollars, not counting insurance. Frederick M. Peck and Henry H. Earl, *Fall River and Its Industries: An Historical and Statistical Record of Village, Town, and City* (New York: Atlantic Publishing and Engraving Co., 1877), 56, 218.
- The printer was Thomas Almy (1810-1882), a prominent Fall River businessman who had himself begun several newspapers. He later published a labor newspaper, *The Mechanic*.
- This was almost certainly the Reverend P. R. Russell, the pastor of the First Christian Church of Fall River, where Bowen may have been a parishioner. See Orin Fowler, *History of Fall River* (Fall River: Almy & Milne, 1862), 80. Russell may have been one of those who encouraged the founding of the *Wampanoag*, with Whipple as its editor.
- Ranta, *Women and Children*, 53.

21. Lydia S. Hall was an interesting woman. Sometime after leaving the Lowell mills, she journeyed west on horseback to be a missionary to the Choctaw Indians. An account by Harriet H. Robinson (who had also worked in the Lowell mills) claims that Hall was the first female secretary of the U.S. Treasury. According to this account, Hall began studying law after experiencing some difficulty with property rights in Kansas; later she went to Washington, obtained a clerkship at the Treasury, and at one point served as acting U.S. treasurer in the male Treasury secretary's absence. Robinson, *Loom & Spindle*, 92-93. Little of the writing in the *Wampanoag* can be attributed to Hall, and it is impossible to determine what her editorial contributions might have been.
22. Whipple was married to Charles Green in Lowell twenty days after this issue of the *Wampanoag* was published. The officiating clergyman was Abel C. Thomas, a Universalist minister who had helped the Lowell mill girls publish the *Lowell Offering*. It is likely that Whipple was acquainted with Thomas before this time, but no evidence of this has been found.
23. Each issue of *The Wampanoag, and Operatives' Journal* consisted of two sections, one under the full title and one under the heading *The Wampanoag*. There is no ascertainable difference in content between the sections.
24. Ranta, *Women and Children*, 54.
25. Murphy dates the labor-reform movement in New England to 1831, when Providence machinists organized to demand a ten-hour workday. Murphy, *Ten Hours' Labor*, 33.
26. Stearns, "Early Factory Magazines," 700.
27. Available evidence suggests that Whipple married abruptly, on 1 July 1842, after remaining single for thirty-seven years. She may have wanted to end her spinsterhood, in part, because she felt vulnerable: Rhode Island was nearing a state of civil war, the *Wampanoag* was not doing well, and she had few sources of income. Unfortunately, Charles Green proved to be a poor husband rather than a source of security, and after five years she divorced him on grounds of desertion and nonsupport.
28. Frances H. Green to John Neal, 7 July 1843, bMS Am (1949) (121), Houghton Library, Harvard University. Quoted by permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.
29. Apparently the *Wampanoag's* printer, Thomas Almy, agreed with Bowen. "Our Printer is continually calling for WIT," Whipple wrote testily in the 23 July issue. "If he wants wit let him make it. Our Wit, if we have any, is altogether a matter of accident, and does not draw on demand. If our Printer wants wit, then, in these serious times, let him manufacture it, himself."
30. Arthur L. Eno, *Cotton Was King: A History of Lowell, Massachusetts* (Somersworth, N.H.: New Hampshire Publishing Co., 1976), 221.
31. Ranta, *Women and Children*, 47.
32. Stearns, "Early Factory Magazines," 699.
33. Nicholas K. Bromell, *By the Sweat of the Brow: Literature and Labor in Antebellum America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 7.
34. She had, in fact, been able to rely on her extensive social network for considerable financial support for her *Memoirs of Eleanor Eldridge* (1838), reputed to have sold thirty thousand copies.
35. In 1848 Jane Grey Swisshelm was attacked when she began editing and publishing the antislavery *Pittsburgh Saturday Visiter* (her spelling), "not so much because she was an editor but because she dared to comment directly on politics, a topic perceived to be the domain of men only. . . . She assumed that men associated her speaking on politics with her wanting to be—or to be equal to—a man." Patricia Okker, *Our Sister Editors: Sarah J. Hale and the Tradition of Nineteenth-Century American Women Editors* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995), 16-17.
36. This is a change from her earlier statement that neither she nor the contributors expected payment. She and her new husband were residing with a family in Groton, Connecticut, where Charles Green painted portraits of the family's children—possibly to pay for the newlyweds' board, since the Greens seem to have had no other means of support. Whipple must have spent a great deal of time and money on stagecoaches, steamboats, and trains during her six months of editing the *Wampanoag*, traveling between Fall River and Providence, Lowell, and Groton.
37. Judith Fetterley, ed., *Provisions: A Reader from 19th-Century American Women* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985) 12.
38. She was willing to move outside of convention in some respects, however. In an era when 9 out of 10 women married and the average age for marriage was twenty-three, Whipple remained single until the age of thirty-seven, devoting herself to her career as a writer and editor. One study suggests that a sense of the "deviancy of spinsterhood" may have led the nineteenth-century single woman to "immerse herself in self-sacrifice . . . as if to expunge from her record her self-centered, vocational drive." Lee Chambers-Schiller, "The Single Woman: Family and Vocation among Nineteenth-Century Reformers," in Mary Kelley, ed., *Woman's Being, Woman's Place: Female Identity and Vocation in American History* (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1979), 341. Whipple clearly regarded editing the *Wampanoag* as self-sacrificing work. It was also unconventional, for few women at that time were editors. Although Okker found more than six hundred American women who edited periodicals during the entire nineteenth century, Robinson writes that in 1843, according to the *Lowell Journal*, there were only five women editors in the country, including Frances Whipple Green. Apparently editing had become a much more common occupation for women by the end of the century than it had been in 1843. See Okker, *Our Sister Editors*, 4; Robinson, *Loom & Spindle*, 65.
39. Sarah Josepha Hale, *Woman's Record; or, Sketches of All Distinguished Women, from the Creation to A.D. 1854* (New York: Harper & Bros, 1855), 828.
40. *Banner of Light*, 24 Aug. 1878. Whipple spent the last part of her life as a spiritualist writer and lecturer in California.
41. *Fall River Herald News*, 7 Nov. 1978.
42. Stearns, "Early Factory Magazines," 700.
43. *Ibid.*, 705.



His Ex^{ty} *NATHANIEL GREEN* Esq; —
MAJOR GENERAL of the AMERICAN ARMY

Rhode Island's Controversial General: Nathanael Greene and the Continental Congress, 1776-1780

WILLIAM P. LEEMAN

In any war the relationship between government officials and generals in the field is of crucial importance. During the Revolutionary War the Continental Congress struggled to manage the affairs of government while at the same time trying to maintain its control over the American military. Continental army generals faced the daunting task of achieving victory against the British army with meager resources for feeding, supplying, and equipping their soldiers. Under such circumstances it was only natural that congressional politicians and army generals would disagree over how best to manage the American war effort. The controversial relationship between Rhode Island's Maj. Gen. Nathanael Greene and the Continental Congress is an example of this politician-soldier conflict.

Nathanael Greene served in the Continental army from 1775 to 1783. While he earned the respect of his fellow officers and the soldiers under his command, his relationship with the Continental Congress from 1776 to 1780 was confrontational. During the early phases of the war he disagreed with several of Congress's policies, and his relationship with Congress deteriorated significantly after he was appointed quartermaster general of the army in 1778. Greene's resignation from that post in 1780 sparked a storm of controversy, during which Congress considered dismissing him from the army altogether. But despite the hostility between Greene and Congress during his tenure as quartermaster, the relationship between the two turned cordial after his appointment as commander of the Southern Department, a position in which he distinguished himself as one of the outstanding American generals of the war.



Believing that Congress failed to realize the gravity of the American military situation, Greene criticized its handling of the war throughout 1776. He was convinced that Congress was overestimating the capabilities of the American forces and underestimating the strength of the British forces they were facing. According to Greene, Congress lacked a detailed plan for managing the war effort, in part because of its continuing hope for reconciliation with the mother country. Greene specifically criticized Congress's faith in state militias and its consequent policy of keeping the size of the Continental army to a minimum; that policy, he said, was "the most absurd and ridiculous imaginable." In contrast, he favored the establishment of a large Continental army composed of men who would enlist for the war's duration, an army that could be professionalized through rigorous training and strict discipline. Only such a force—not the unreliable militias—could defeat the British, he believed.¹

*Engraving by John Norman, Boston, circa 1783.
RIHS Collection (RHi X3 7329).*

*William Leeman is a doctoral student in history at
Boston University.*

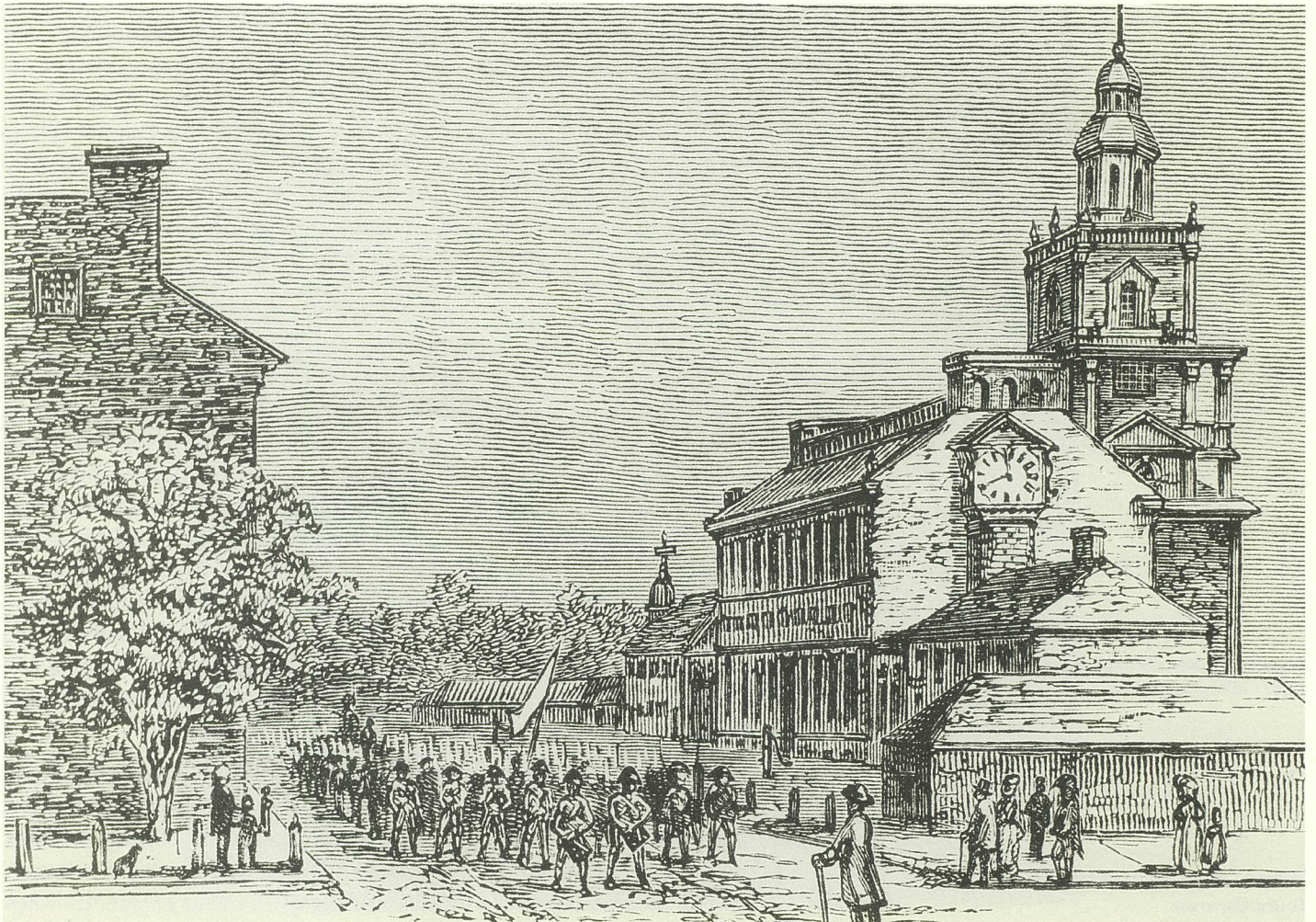
Although Greene himself was awarded a promotion from brigadier general to major general in 1776, he did not hesitate to criticize some of Congress's other promotion decisions. He particularly questioned the promotions of Lord Stirling (William Alexander) and Thomas Mifflin, both of whom he felt were undeserving of advancement. Greene also accused Congress of discriminating against New Englanders when

awarding promotions, a curious accusation in light of the fact that all four officers then promoted to major general, and half of those promoted to brigadier general, were from New England.² Congressional delegate John Adams responded to the latter accusation by stating that Congress had “endeavoured to give Colonies General officers in some Proportion to their Troops.” Adams also defended the promotions of Stirling and Mifflin: “Lord Sterling was a Person so distinguished by Fortune, Family, and the Rank and Employment he had held in civil Life, added to his Experience in military Life that it was thought no great uneasiness would be occasioned by his advancement. Mifflin was a Gentleman of Family and Fortune in his Country, of the best Education and abilities, of great Knowledge of the World, and remarkable activity.”³ Although Adams did not directly reprimand Greene for doing so, one could argue that Greene had indeed overstepped his bounds as a military officer in his criticism of Congress on this occasion.

In March 1777, while the Continental army was encamped at Morristown, New Jersey, Gen. George Washington sent Greene to Philadelphia to report to Congress on problems facing the army, including shortages of manpower, food, and supplies, and difficulties in dealing with an outbreak of smallpox. Greene was also to make Congress aware of the army's dire financial straits. It was Greene's first visit to Philadelphia and his first face-to-face meeting with Congress.⁴

In the building now known as Independence Hall, Greene answered questions posed by members of Congress and met with a special congressional committee charged with reporting on the army and making recommendations as to how to improve its operation.

Independence Hall, Philadelphia. From Charles Carlton Coffin, The Boys of '76: A History of the Battles of the Revolution (New York, 1876). RIHS Collection (RHi X3 7327).



His interaction with Congress on the issues of supply and finance was both frustrating and unsuccessful. Congress was unwilling to ask the states for more administrative power and a greater ability to raise funds. In regard to manpower issues, Greene, in accordance with his instructions from Washington, requested that Congress appoint three lieutenant generals (Washington himself was then the only officer holding that rank). Congress refused to grant such appointments, believing that they were unnecessary. Moreover, members of Congress, especially John Adams, were very reluctant to cede to Washington and his senior generals any of the authority to appoint and promote officers—a reluctance in effect asserting the principle of civilian control of the military.⁵

Greene's overall impression of the delegates to Congress was less than positive, a fact that added to his frustration over Congress's chilly response to Washington's requests. Greene felt that there was too much talk and not enough action in Congress, with members seeming more concerned with showing off their rhetorical skills than with working for the success of the American cause; there was "so much deliberation and waste of time in the execution of business before this assembly that my patience is almost exhausted," he commented.⁶ The festive atmosphere of Philadelphia also earned his disapproval. Greene was put off by the number of elaborate dinner parties, concerts, and other social events in the city. Greene's dislike for most of the delegates in Congress "was intensified," as one historian puts it, "when he saw the extravagant style of living in Philadelphia, the pursuit of pleasure to the postponement of business," in comparison to the hardships of army life experienced by the soldiers.⁷



In the summer of 1777 several senior army officers, including Nathanael Greene, clashed with Congress over the issue of foreign officers in the Continental army. Greene and others felt it was unwise to appoint foreigners to high-ranking army positions; if the service of foreigners was necessary, it was argued, they should be given commands of secondary importance. In Greene's view, the most effective Continental army officers were "firmly attacht" to the new nation, an attachment that foreigners obviously lacked.⁸ Washington agreed with Greene in this regard; foreign officers, he said, "have no attachment or ties to the Country, further than interest binds them, they have no influence, and are ignorant of the language they are to receive and give orders in . . . our officers think it exceedingly hard, after they have toiled in this service, and probably sustained many losses, to have strangers put over them, whose merit, perhaps, is not equal to their own."⁹ Washington suggested that Congress employ greater care in appointing foreign officers in the Continental army. He was speaking here of line officers—those who commanded troops in the field—rather than officers in military engineering, an area in which foreigners possessed the expertise that Americans lacked.

The issue of foreign officers came to a head with the so-called Ducoudray Affair. The Chevalier Ducoudray was a French officer who had previously served as adjutant general in the French army and had played a major role in the transfer of French weapons to America. When American officers heard that Congress was about to appoint him as commander of the Continental army's artillery and engineers, replacing Brig. Gen. Henry Knox, with the rank of major general, the American officers were outraged. According to the rumored provisions of Ducoudray's contract, the French officer would be responsible only to Congress and to Washington. Because Ducoudray would outrank them by the terms of his appointment, Greene, Knox, and Maj. Gen. John Sullivan were the most vocal critics of the appointment.¹⁰

Although Greene came to respect and admire several foreign officers during the course of the war, he resented the appointment of a foreigner senior to him. In addition, the fact

that Ducoudray would replace Knox, a friend of Greene's from before the war, made Greene even more resentful.¹¹ "The impropriety of putting a foreigner at the head of such a Department must be obvious to every body," Greene wrote to John Adams. "Besides the Impropriety, you will deprive the Army of a most valuable officer, universally acknowledged as such. The exchange will be much against you, besides the injustice you will do to a man who has serv'd you with Fidelity and Reputation."¹² Washington echoed Greene's comments when he reported to John Hancock, president of the Continental Congress, that the artillery command was too important to be given to a non-American. Washington also warned that should the highly respected Knox be replaced, the army would lose the services of many capable officers who would resign in protest.¹³

In July 1777 a rumor circulated through the ranks of the senior American army officers that Congress had approved the Ducoudray appointment. Upon hearing the rumor, Greene, Knox, and Sullivan each wrote to Congress, informing the delegates that if the rumors about Ducoudray were true, they would be resigning their commissions immediately.¹⁴ In his letter to Hancock, Greene declared that his sense of honor would prevent him from serving in an inferior position to a foreigner in to the army: "A report is circulating here at Camp that Monsieur de Coudray a French Gentleman is appointed a Major General in the service of the United States, his rank to commence from the first of last August. If the report is true it will lay me under the necessity of resigning my Commision as his appointment supercedes me in command. I beg youl acquaint me with respect to the truth of the report, and if true inclose me a permit to retire."¹⁵

Upon receipt of the three letters, Hancock was incensed. He described the letters as "highly derogatory to the honor and justice of Congress" and declared that the actions of the three generals were not only inappropriate but also designed to influence congressional deliberations. Sharing Hancock's outrage, Adams expressed extreme disappointment with all three men, to whom he had previously shown favor in regard to promotion. Some congressional delegates called for the outright dismissal of the generals from the army, while others favored ordering the three men to appear before Congress to answer for their insubordination.¹⁶ From the point of view of Congress, most of whose members believed that the generals had known perfectly well that the Ducoudray matter had not yet been decided, the letters represented a conspiracy by high-ranking military officers to interfere with the deliberations of Congress, an interference that posed an unacceptable challenge to the principle of civilian control of the military. "This is judged to be a military attempt to influence our free deliberations," wrote one member. "For it is certain, they knew we had not settled the matter or General Washington would have rec'd the Resolves."¹⁷

Adams expressed his anger in a letter to Greene:

I never before took hold of a Pen, to write to my Friend General Green, without Pleasure, but I think myself obliged to do it now upon a Subject that gives me a great deal of Pain. . . .

. . . In the midst of these Deliberations [on the Ducoudray appointment], the Three Letters are received, threatening that if We fullfill the Contract, Three Officers, on whom We have depended, will resign in the Midst of the Campaign when the Attention of every officer ought to be wholly taken up in penetrating the Designs of the Enemy, and in Efforts to defeat them. . . . I must be excused my Friend in Saying that if you . . . had seriously considered . . . the Necessity of preserving the Authority of the Civil Powers above the military, you never could have written such Letters.

. . . It was universally considered, as betraying the Liberties of the People, to pass [the letters] by uncensured—some were even for dismissing all three of you instantly from the service—others for ordering you to Philadelphia, under Arrest to answer for this offence.¹⁸

Adams concluded his letter by advising Greene to submit an apology to Congress stating that he did not intend to influence its deliberations or defy its authority. If he was unwilling to issue that apology, said Adams, he should, indeed, resign from the army. This tension between Adams and Greene seriously strained their friendship and effectively ended their personal correspondence until 1781.¹⁹

Greene eventually decided that he had gone too far in his letter to Congress. "I confess it was [a] matter of infinite surprise to me that an interpretation of so deep a complexion should be put upon a meaning so innocent and inoffensive as that contained in those letters," he wrote to Hancock. He had not been trying to coerce Congress, he said; he had simply been requesting permission to resign from the army if Ducoudray was given a superior position, for such an appointment would be an offense to his own reputation. He went on to state that he had "all the respect for Congress a free Citizen ought to have for the representatives of himself and the collective body of the People, and that it [was his] glory and happiness to serve [his] Country under the authority of those delegated by her to direct her councils and support her interests." He concluded with an assertion of both his sense of duty to his country and his sense of his own honor: "In my military capacity I have and will serve my Country to the utmost of my ability while I hold it, but I am determined to hold it not a moment longer than I can do it unsullied and unviolated."²⁰

While his letter to Hancock probably cannot be viewed as an apology, Greene was more compliant than were Knox and Sullivan, who sent no statement whatever to Congress regarding their actions in the Ducoudray Affair. The matter was resolved in August 1777 when Congress appointed Ducoudray as inspector general of ordnance and military manufacturing with the rank of major general.²¹ Knox (who retained his command of the American artillery forces) and Sullivan continued to serve in the army.



The hardships of the 1777-78 winter at Valley Forge highlighted the need for a more efficient army supply system. In February 1778 Congress asked Greene to take over the Quartermaster Department as quartermaster general of the Continental army. The quartermaster general was responsible for army transportation, the procurement and distribution of supplies, the establishment of encampments, and the provision of living quarters for personnel. Greene's predecessor as quartermaster general, Thomas Mifflin, had resigned in October 1777, claiming that poor health prevented him from continuing his duties. By that time he had in fact largely neglected his duties, hoping to be transferred to a field command. By the spring of 1778 the Quartermaster Department was in complete disarray.²²

Congress appointed Greene quartermaster general on 2 March 1778. Greene did not want the position. He wanted, rather, to retain his field command, a preference inspired by his powerful ambition for fame and an honored place in history; as historian E. Wayne Carp explains, "It was [Greene's] feverish desire for laurels above all else that made him so reluctant to serve as quartermaster general."²³ Greene's acceptance of the post, despite his reluctance, can be explained by his belief that the army's ability to conduct an effective campaign in 1778 would be in danger, because of the lack of a working supply system, if he did not accept the position. In addition, he was personally asked to accept the appointment by George Washington.²⁴ Greene was nonetheless jealous of officers who held field commands. "All of you will be immortalising your selves in the golden pages of History," he wrote to a fellow officer, "while I am confined to a series of druggery to pave the way for it."²⁵ Greene was also concerned that his rank of major general made his service as quartermaster, a position usually held by colonels, "derogatory" to his reputation.²⁶

Congress looked upon Greene's first months on the job relatively favorably and saw no need to interfere in the affairs of his department in any significant way. That changed in October 1778, when a member of Congress announced that he had been made aware of fraudulent and dishonest activities in both the Quartermaster Department and the

Commissary Department. In addition, in early November Washington reported to Congress that there were several problems relating to a lack of supplies for the army. With Greene himself acknowledging problems in his department and asking Congress for its assistance in dealing with them, Congress now saw the need to take a more active role in supervising the army's two supply departments. A committee was formed to investigate the situation in November. A second committee, succeeding the first the following January, was charged with devising a plan to address the problems in the Quartermaster Department. In May two additional committees were formed, one to investigate the expenses of the Quartermaster Department and the other to devise a new system of departmental expenditure.²⁷

Greene was involved in private business dealings throughout his service during the war. This was quite common in the army, especially for officers in supply departments who had been merchants prior to the war. Greene's involvements included such private business ventures as shipping, privateering, real estate, ironwork, and manufacturing, and he apparently promoted the interests of Jacob Greene and Company, a merchant company owned by his brother, in which he had an investment. As quartermaster general, Greene came under suspicion of using his position for his own personal financial gain and that of his friends and relatives. Like many officers, Greene believed he was entitled to engage in business during the war and earn some profit as compensation for the sacrifices entailed by his military service. He did not consider granting army contracts to friends and relatives as unethical as long as the supplies obtained were of high quality and cost no more than the market price. He apparently came under suspicions of wrongdoing when it became known that a relative of his had asked him to send army wagons to transport private goods through Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey, a scheme that would have avoided payment of state taxes and restrictions on the movement of goods. Despite rumors to the contrary, there is no evidence that Greene actually participated in this scheme.²⁸

In April 1779 Greene threatened to resign as quartermaster general on the grounds that he could not carry out his duties under the constant pressure of being suspected of dishonesty. He had expected his administration of the Quartermaster Department—particularly the improvements he had brought about in the army's supply system—to be recognized and suitably commended, but instead he had become the target of accusations of dishonesty. "I am willing to serve the public," he wrote to Washington,

but I think I have a right to choose that way of performing the service which will be most honorable to my self. . . . I believe it has been a received opinion that I was so very fond of the emoluments of the quarter Masters office, that nothing but absolute necessity would induce me to quit it. I will not deny but that the profits is flattering to my fortune but not less humiliating to my Military pride. . . . No body ever heard of a quarter Master in History as such or in relating any brilliant Action.²⁹

Facing similar accusations of dishonesty, Commissary General Jeremiah Wadsworth also complained of their baselessness, and by June he had twice threatened to resign his position.³⁰ In response to the resignation threats of Greene and Wadsworth, on 7 June Congress issued a unanimous resolution "That Congress have full confidence in the integrity and abilities of the quarter master general and commissary general; . . . although there is reason to believe that abuses have been committed by inferior officers in their respective departments."³¹

Although Greene felt that continuing as quartermaster would damage his reputation, he also believed that resigning would cast doubt on his reputation as an American patriot and a virtuous gentleman, and he allowed Congress and Washington to persuade him to remain on the job.³² But amid continuing charges of excessive expenditures by his depart-



The Continental Congress, 1776. Engraving by Denison Kimberly, 1840, based on John Trumbull's 1819 painting Signing of the Declaration of Independence. RIHS Collection (RH1 X3 1255).

ment, his dissatisfaction grew. "I found [the Quartermaster Department] in distress," he wrote to the Board of War in July 1779. "I have put it in good order; I engaged with reluctance, and I shall quit it with pleasure, and could I leave the Department without injury to the operations of the Campaign, nothing should detain me in it an hour longer."³³

Both Greene and Wadsworth proffered their resignations from their respective departments in the fall of 1779. Wadsworth's resignation was accepted, but because Congress felt that turnovers in both supply departments would be disastrous, Greene's was denied. Both men wanted to resign not only because of the accusations of dishonesty against them but also because of the tremendous difficulties they experienced in requisitioning needed supplies for the army, difficulties caused by the Continental government's disorganized financial structure and the depreciation of Continental currency.³⁴ "For Gods sake," wrote Greene to one of his assistant quartermasters general in October 1779, "contrive ways and means with the Treasury Board to give us greater supplies of money or all is ruin and confusion. . . . If they do not furnish the necessary sums to keep the department upon a reputable footing so as to answer the expectations of the General and the Army, I wish they would give me a discharge from it."³⁵



While Congress was fumbling with reform and reorganization plans for his department, in early 1780 Greene was trying to prevent the Quartermaster Department from falling apart. He reported to Washington that the department was heavily in debt and that army contracts were going unfulfilled because the department could not afford to pay its suppliers. Greene believed that the problem was not that the country lacked provisions (which were actually more plentiful in 1780 than at any other time in the war); the problem was that there was no appropriate and efficient way for the army to obtain them. Apparently agreeing with Greene, Continental Congress president Samuel Huntington dispatched a circular letter to the states calling for a greater effort on their part in securing supplies for the army.³⁶

In February 1780 Congress adopted a resolution for the procurement of supplies from the states under a method that would allow the army to be supplied without the use of money. The plan called for a quota to be assigned to each state based on that state's available resources; with taxes collected from its residents, the state would gather such items as beef, salt, rum, flour, corn, hay, and tobacco and store them within the state at a central depot specified by General Washington.³⁷ Greene was not satisfied with the plan, which he considered "calculated, more for the convenience of each state, than for the accommodation of the service." Collecting the supplies in a central depot was dangerous, he argued, because it would attract the attention of the British. In addition, the depots would have to be located in the interior of the country, and that would add to the cost of transporting the supplies to army units. The depots would also have to be guarded, which would mean removing valuable troops from the army's lines. As an alternative to the plan, Greene recommended that the army depend on "the resources of the Country" where it was then located; that is, that it essentially live off the land by foraging.³⁸ Besides his specific criticisms of the plan, Greene disliked it because it took control over supplies out of the hands of army agents and gave it to state-appointed officials, who would naturally be more concerned with local interests than with the needs of the Continental army.³⁹

After Congress adopted its plan for supplying the troops, Greene drew up a plan of his own for reorganizing his department in a way that would make the new system more efficient. Although Greene's plan was endorsed both by Washington and by a committee of congressional delegates sent to Washington's headquarters to serve as a liaison between Congress and the army, Congress rejected it, claiming that it was simply an instrument to give Greene more power. Factional politics played a major role in the rejection. There were two main factions in the Continental Congress, one that favored strict congressional control over the war effort and one that favored greater independence for the military in its conduct of the war. The committee at Washington's headquarters was controlled by the latter group, but it was the former—which would be suspicious of any plan devised by a general—that then held the majority in Congress.⁴⁰

Having rejected Greene's plan, Congress formed a committee to draft a new set of proposals for reorganizing the Quartermaster Department. Thomas Mifflin, Greene's predecessor as quartermaster general, played a major role in the committee's work. Greene despised Mifflin, whose poor management had left the department in disarray, and he was outraged when he learned that Mifflin was the principal author of the proposed new plan.⁴¹ The day after it was presented to Congress, Greene wrote to Washington to state his displeasure with the plan, which he felt was too complicated and would prove unworkable. Arguing that "the best people in Congress" thought that the plan "will be found totally incompetent to the business," Greene added his suspicion that Mifflin was intentionally trying to hamper Washington's army as a means of discrediting its commander in chief.⁴²

To find a better system for organizing the Quartermaster Department and supplying the army, Greene now asked Congress to send a new committee of its "best informed Members" to Washington's headquarters to consult with Washington, other generals, and the heads of departments in an effort to formulate "a plan properly adapted to the service, and the nature of the Country."⁴³ Despite its reluctance to share its authority with the military, Congress appointed a committee of three of its members—Philip Schuyler of New York, John Mathews of South Carolina, and Nathaniel Peabody of New Hampshire—to work with Washington in devising reforms for the army's supply system and overseeing their implementation. After Schuyler presented the committee's plan to Congress in June 1780, Congress debated it for a few weeks and then released its revised plan on 15 July.⁴⁴

The new reorganization plan reduced the number of personnel assigned to the Quartermaster Department; the number of assistant quartermasters general was cut, as was the number of deputy quartermasters general. In addition, Greene was deprived of some of his authority to fill posts within the department, and the pay of many of the department's officers was reduced. Greene strongly opposed the personnel cutbacks, arguing that the elimination of needed subordinates in his department would prevent him from adequately administering his command. He particularly resented Congress's allowing him to keep only one assistant quartermaster general, whereas, at the time of his appointment, he had been promised two. He argued against the pay cuts on the grounds that they would make it much more difficult to recruit men to serve as officers in the department, and would probably prompt several resignations by officers already serving in the department as well.⁴⁵

But what Greene most objected to in Congress's plan was its assignment to him of responsibility for the expenditures of his subordinates. While Congress had still been considering the plan, Greene had received a series of letters from the Treasury Board that seemed to imply that he was responsible for such disbursements. Concerned, he questioned that implication in a letter to Congress president Samuel Huntington: "They [the letters] imply a responsibility in me for the expenditure of public money, by persons of my appointing, that neither law or reason will warrant; and such as neither the Committee of Congress, the Commander in Chief, or myself ever had in contemplation at the time of my appointment." It was his duty only to show that an appointment within his department was needed, he said, and then to declare that the person he chose to fill the position was trustworthy; "A greater responsibility than this would deter any man from holding the office, or making a single appointment however necessary for the public service." If an official is to be considered liable for the accounts of his subordinates, "he would become interested in concealing frauds and misconduct, instead of assisting in bringing delinquents to justice." Once again feeling that his reputation was at stake and that the sacrifices he was making to serve his country were not sufficiently appreciated, Greene concluded his letter with a renewed threat of resignation: "I hold the office of Quarter Master General, not of choice, but with a view of obliging the public; and I cannot think of exposing myself to so many unnecessary embarrassments, and mortifications as beset me, in my present standing."⁴⁶

Despite his objection, Congress now stipulated that Greene, as quartermaster general, was to be personally responsible for all the finances of his department and for any fraudulent activities within it. The new system required that he keep strict accounts of the expenditures made by his subordinate quartermaster officers. Greene believed that fulfilling such a requirement in a department as extensive as his was practically impossible; in his view, the requirement was simply another example of Congress's complete ignorance of the workings of the military, particularly the operations of the Quartermaster Department.⁴⁷

Responding to Greene's criticisms of its reorganization plan, Congress adopted a resolution on 24 July reaffirming its position that the quartermaster general was to be personally responsible for the expenditures of his subordinate officers. "Congress, conceiving it to be essential to the public interest, as well as incident to the nature of all offices entrusted with the disbursement of public monies, that those who exercise them should be responsible for such disbursement, whether it be made immediately by themselves or by agents appointed by and responsible to them, cannot, consistently with their duty to their constituents, by any general resolution, hold up a contrary maxim," the resolution declared. Congress tried to reassure Greene by adding to its resolution a statement that any investigation of expenditures within the Quartermaster Department would be conducted with all possible justice to the quartermaster general.⁴⁸

But the new plan, together with the resolution reasserting his responsibility for all of the Quartermaster Department's finances, gave Greene the excuse he was looking for to finally resign as quartermaster general. His resignation came on 26 July 1780. "I do not choose to attempt an experiment of so dangerous a nature, where I see a physical impossibility of performing the duties that will be required of me," Greene wrote to the president of the Continental Congress. "Wherefore I am to request Congress will appoint another Quarter Master General without loss of time." Had Greene ended his letter with that simple statement, he probably could have avoided much of the controversy that followed. But he decided instead to take a parting shot at Congress: "Administration seem to think it far less important to the public Interest to have this department well filled and properly arranged than it really is, and as they will find by future experience."⁴⁹

Greene's letter of resignation provoked a firestorm of outrage when it arrived in Philadelphia. Specifically, Greene's use of the word "administration" to describe Congress deeply offended the members of that body, since the word was commonly associated with the oppressive British government. "The idea that a general would resurrect images of the hateful administration of England seeking to coerce the colonists and apply it to the American Congress infuriated many of the delegates," historian Dennis Michael Conrad explains.⁵⁰

Greene's resignation also caused controversy for another reason: it coincided with consideration of a proposed military campaign to be led by Washington, whose forces were to join French troops under the command of the Comte de Rochambeau at Newport, Rhode Island, in preparation for an attack on the British in New York. Many members of Congress, including those in the promilitary faction, were especially angry with Greene for resigning immediately before a major campaign.⁵¹ Joseph Jones, a delegate from Virginia and a strong supporter of Washington, offered the commander in chief an explanation of the sentiment in Congress:

If General Greene thought that the new system wanted amendment, and had he pointed out the defect, Congress would have considered the matter, And I doubt not, would have made the necessary alteration. But the manner of these demands, made in such peremptory terms, at the moment of action, when the campaign was opened, the enemy in the field, and our ally waiting for cooperation has lessened General Greene not only in the opinion of Congress, but, I think of the public.⁵²

Given its previous response to Greene's criticisms of its reforms, however, it seems unlikely that Congress would have made any alterations to its reorganization plan. But Jones's comments do show that the timing of Greene's resignation was an important factor in the subsequent controversy.

On 5 August a resolution was introduced into Congress stating that "the Commander in Chief be directed to inform Major General Green that the United States have no further occasion for his services, and that it is expected he will proceed immediately to the

settlement of his accounts.⁵³ Two days later John Cox, Greene's assistant quartermaster general, apprised Greene of the situation in Congress:

I am informed that the word *Administration* in your Letter of Resignation was so highly offensive to Congress, that some of the worthy members immediately on the Letter being Read moved the House instantly to disrobe you of all Military Rank, at the same time that they accepted of your Resignation as Quarter Master General. Others more moderate, tho not at bottom more friendly, objected to a measure so violent, but at the same time proposed that Congress should immediately desire the Commander in Chief to signify to you that your future



George Washington (standing, center rear) presides over a meeting of his generals in this anonymous bronze relief. Nathanael Greene is seated in the foreground at the extreme right. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 7330).

services in the Line would be dispensed with until your Accounts in the Quarter Masters Department were settled; neither of which proposals tho warmly urged by your Enemies, were carried into Resolves, nor do I believe they dare, great as they are, seriously to attempt any thing of the kind, tho some of your Friends have been not a little alarmed on the occasion.⁵⁴

Congress continued to discuss Greene's fate as the month of August went on, but it could reach no decision on the matter. According to one member, the resolution "was taken up every day for a week, but nothing determined. At length it was agreed to postpone the report for the present."⁵⁵

Upon learning of the resolution to dismiss Greene from the army, Washington dispatched a letter to Congress on Greene's behalf. If Congress was actually considering a resolution "to suspend [Greene] from his command in the line (of which he made an express reservation at the time of entering on the other duty) and it is not already enacted,

let me beseech you to consider *well* what you are about before you resolve,” urged Washington. “I shall neither condemn, or acquit Genl. Greens conduct for the act of resignation,” he went on, “because all the antecedents are necessary to form a right judgment of the matter, and possibly, if the affair is ever brought before the public you may find him treading on better ground than you seem to imagine.” Washington concluded by implying that Greene’s dismissal would result in mass resignations by officers at the end of the current military campaign.⁵⁶

In the end, Greene was not dismissed from the army, and Congress turned its attention to other matters. There are several reasons why Congress let the matter drop. The letter from Washington and the possibility of mass resignations from the officer corps were major deterring factors. Congress must also have realized that it was not in the new nation’s best interests to lose the services of an officer of Greene’s ability. In addition, the traitorous activities of Maj. Gen. Benedict Arnold, which were discovered in the fall of 1780, made Greene’s indiscretion seem almost trivial in comparison.



Greene brought about major improvements in the operations of the Quartermaster Department during his tenure as quartermaster general; Washington noted that the Continental army was better supplied under Greene’s administration than at any previous time since the start of the war.⁵⁷ Following his resignation Greene was able to make amends somewhat with Congress by agreeing to stay on as quartermaster general until the end of September so that he could help Timothy Pickering, his successor, become acquainted with his new duties. It appears that Greene had learned his lesson from the controversy over his resignation; he never again used insulting language in his correspondence with members of Congress, and (in Dennis Conrad’s words) was “much more polished” in his dealings with that body.⁵⁸ Greene apparently realized that he had gone too far with Congress this time, and he certainly had no wish to cause any further trouble for Washington.

In the fall of 1780 word of the disastrous defeat of Maj. Gen. Horatio Gates, commander of the American Southern Department, at Camden, South Carolina, reached Washington and Congress. Well known for his political connections, Gates was a favorite of the faction advocating strict congressional control of the military. He had been appointed to the southern command by Congress—which was then controlled by that faction—without any consultation with Washington, who had wanted Greene to fill the post. By appointing Gates instead, Congress intended to express its displeasure with Washington for his apparent inability to defeat the British.⁵⁹

After the embarrassing and costly defeat of its appointee, Congress decided to give Washington complete power to name Gates’s successor as commander of the Southern Department. There were two reasons for this decision. First, because of Gates’s defeat, the promilitary faction had gained the upper hand in Congress. Second, if the new commander should also prove to be a failure, it would be Washington, and not Congress, who would bear the blame.⁶⁰ Washington immediately chose Greene to command the American forces in the South.

The orders that Congress now issued to Greene revealed a sharp contrast to Congress’s earlier attitude toward him. Greene was given wide latitude in the command of his forces: “You Sir are . . . authorized to organize and employ the Army under your Command in the Manner you shall judge most proper, subject to the Controul of the Commander in Chief; and it is earnestly recommended to the Legislatures and Executives respectively in that Department to afford you every necessary Assistance and

Support, and you are authorized to call for the same.”⁶¹ In giving Greene the authority “to organize and employ the Army” as he saw fit, Congress was rescinding the requirement that he call a council of war among his senior officers to make decisions on strategy.⁶² Congress president Samuel Huntington concluded the orders on a cordial note: “Be assured Sir my best Wishes accompany you, that your Command may be attended with desired Success, to the Satisfaction of your Country and your personal Honor.”

Greene’s antagonistic relationship with the Continental Congress essentially ended when he assumed command in the South. In addition to his more respectful demeanor in his dealings with Congress, his successful southern campaigns earned him the admiration of the country and a widespread reputation as an extraordinary general. Even Congress participated in the acclaim; following his victory at the Battle of Eutaw Springs in September 1781, Congress expressed nothing but admiration for him. A military aide of his who had just reported to Congress on the battle informed Greene that only Washington stood higher in the opinion of Congress than Greene did.⁶³

In the fall of 1781 Congress approached Greene to gauge his interest in becoming minister of war, a new administrative position that would be based in Philadelphia. Congress had considered creating the position for some time and decided that one of the Continental army’s generals should fill it. Although Greene had nearly unanimous support in Congress, he respectfully declined the offer, not wishing to become entangled in politics. He also claimed to lack the qualifications for the office and expressed a strong desire to remain in active military service.⁶⁴

Greene’s campaigns pushed His Majesty’s forces out of the deep South and set up the ultimate defeat of the British at Yorktown. After the British surrender in October 1781, Greene received praise in a number of speeches, and a proposal was introduced in Congress to promote him to lieutenant general.⁶⁵ In addition, Congress ordered that two cannons captured from the British be presented to him in public recognition “of the wisdom, fortitude, and military skill which distinguished his command in the Southern Department, and of his eminent services which, amid complicated difficulties and dangers and against an enemy greatly superior in numbers, he has successfully performed for his country.”⁶⁶

Greene’s relationship with Congress had been fully healed by the end of the war. Following Greene’s death in 1786, Congress ordered a medal to be struck in his honor and adopted a resolution to erect a monument to him in the new nation’s capital. The medal was issued in 1786; the statue, located in Stanton Park in Washington, D.C., was dedicated in 1877.⁶⁷ In 1870 a statue of Greene was placed in the Capitol’s Statuary Hall to represent the state of Rhode Island.



Greene’s personality was clearly a factor in his confrontations with Congress. Distinguished by efficiency rather than by charisma, Greene was (as Conrad puts it) “not nearly as polished as Washington” in his dealings with Congress.⁶⁸ Greene was arrogant, had a considerable ego, and was obsessive in his ambition and sense of honor. Because of his egotism, he was intolerant of criticism, even when it came from Washington, his friend and mentor. Greene’s ambition and desire for recognition, which drove him to achieve greatness as a military leader, strained his relationship even with John Adams, one of his most influential supporters in Congress. Never able to fully appreciate the enormous difficulties that Congress faced during the war, Greene was impatient with the slow pace of political deliberation.⁶⁹ His personality might well have led to his dismissal from the Continental army, a result which—judging by his success



Henry Kirke Brown’s marble statue of Nathanael Greene, presented to the United States by the State of Rhode Island in 1870, stands in the east central hall of the United States Capitol. RIHS Collection (RHi X3 7328).

as commander of the Southern Department—would surely have been detrimental to the American cause.

Also contributing to Greene's conflicts with Congress was his strong belief that he possessed the revolutionary virtue that historian Charles Royster defines as putting the public good ahead of one's own personal gain.⁷⁰ By serving in the Continental army, Greene saw himself as sacrificing his own personal interests and well-being for the public good and the cause of American independence. As Royster notes, many American officers prided themselves on their service in the war and came to feel that they personified American patriotism.⁷¹ Greene was certainly such an officer. Like others in the military, he saw the officer corps as an elite group that deserved privileged status and recognition in American society. To the many politicians wary of standing armies, this was a dangerous view. John Adams, for example, frequently argued that officers cared more about rank, promotions, and honors than they did about serving the public good. Adams was well aware of the contradiction in Greene's thinking—a contradiction between his belief in his own self-sacrificing revolutionary virtue and his belief that officers like himself should be accorded special privileges.⁷²

Greene held a generally low opinion of most of the delegates in Congress, whom he considered more concerned with making elaborate speeches and enjoying extravagant living than with administering the war effort. Greene regarded Congress as completely lacking in knowledge of how to prosecute the war effectively, as well as indifferent to the hardships that officers were enduring in the service of their country. Upon hearing that some politicians had suggested that the officers were prolonging the war for their own personal gain, Greene angrily declared such politicians "very ill principaled and ignorant of our sufferings."⁷³

Although Congress may have been antagonized by Greene's abrasive manner, it was fundamentally its preoccupation with maintaining strict civilian control over the military that motivated it in its clashes with Greene. Such control was seen as a guiding principle during the Revolutionary War, as it still is today. "Only [by controlling the military] could self-government protect itself against the inevitable tendency of power to grow," Royster explains. "An army required special, explicit checks because its armed strength, its size and expenditures, and its importance to the survival of the country made it uniquely dangerous."⁷⁴ From Congress's point of view, Greene represented a challenge to the principle of civilian control of the military, a challenge that simply could not be tolerated.

Greene failed to appreciate the problems facing Congress—a lack of funds, inability to gain the cooperation of the states, and internal squabbling among its own factions. Similarly, Congress failed to appreciate Greene's situation as quartermaster general. In many ways ignorant of Greene's difficulties in obtaining supplies for the army, Congress proposed a number of confusing and seemingly inefficient reorganization plans for the Quartermaster Department that probably would have tried the patience of almost any officer. Nathanael Greene's personality, his sense of his own revolutionary virtue, and his disrespect for Congress, in the face of Congress's fear of losing civilian control of the military, made the clash between the soldier and the politicians inevitable.

Notes

1. David A. Tretler, "The Making of a Revolutionary General: Nathanael Greene, 1742-1779" (Ph.D. diss., Rice University, 1986), 263-64.
2. Theodore Thayer, *Nathanael Greene: Strategist of the American Revolution* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1960), 98.
3. John Adams to Greene, 4 Aug. 1776, *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, vol. 1, ed. Richard K. Showman, Margaret Cobb, and Robert E. McCarthy (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Rhode Island Historical Society, 1976), 273.
4. Elswyth Thane, *The Fighting Quaker: Nathanael Greene* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1972), 100; Thayer, *Nathanael Greene*, 161.
5. Thayer, *Nathanael Greene*, 161-62.
6. *Ibid.*, 163; Greene quoted in Tretler, "Making of a Revolutionary General," 298.
7. Thane, *The Fighting Quaker*, 101; quotation from Francis Vinton Greene, *General Greene* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1893), 125.
8. Greene to John Adams, 7 May 1777, *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, vol. 2, ed. Richard K. Showman, Robert E. McCarthy, and Margaret Cobb (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Rhode Island Historical Society, 1980), 71.
9. George Washington to Richard Henry Lee, 17 May 1777, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick, vol. 8 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1933), 75.
10. Thayer, *Nathanael Greene*, 185; Edmund Cody Burnett, *The Continental Congress* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), 243; Tretler, "Making of a Revolutionary General," 301.
11. F. V. Greene, *General Greene*, 71.
12. Greene to John Adams, 28 May 1777, *Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, 2: 99.
13. Thayer, *Nathanael Greene*, 186.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Greene to John Hancock, 1 July 1777, *Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, 2:109.
16. Thayer, *Nathanael Greene*, 186.
17. James Lovell to William Whipple, 7 July 1777, *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress*, ed. Edmund C. Burnett, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1923), 403.
18. John Adams to Greene, 7 July 1777, *Papers of John Adams*, ed. Robert J. Taylor (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1983), 5:238-40.
19. Thayer, *Nathanael Greene*, 186-87.
20. Greene to John Hancock, 19 July 1777, *Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, 2:123-25.
21. Thayer, *Nathanael Greene*, 187, 455 n. 39.
22. James A. Huston, *Logistics of Liberty: American Services of Supply in the Revolutionary War and After* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991), 70, 72.
23. E. Wayne Carp, *To Starve the Army at Pleasure: Continental Army Administration and American Political Culture, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 164.
24. *Ibid.*, 157.
25. Greene to Alexander McDougall, 28 Mar. 1778, *Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, 2:326.
26. Theodore Thayer, "Nathanael Greene: Revolutionary War Strategist," in *George Washington's Generals*, ed. George Athan Billias (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1964), 118.
27. Burnett, *The Continental Congress*, 395-97.
28. E. James Ferguson, "Business, Government, and Congressional Investigation in the Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 16 (July 1959): 310; Thomas L. Wells, "An Inquiry into the Resignation of Quartermaster General Nathanael Greene in 1780," *Rhode Island History* 24 (April 1965): 47; Tretler, "Making of a Revolutionary General," 269, 386; Thayer, "Nathanael Greene," 119.
29. Greene to George Washington, 24 Apr. 1779, *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, vol. 3, ed. Richard K. Showman, Robert E. McCarthy, and Elizabeth C. Stevens (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Rhode Island Historical Society, 1983), 426-27.
30. Burnett, *The Continental Congress*, 397.
31. Resolution, 7 June 1779, *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, vol. 14 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909), 695.
32. Carp, *To Starve the Army*, 164-65.
33. Greene to the Board of War, 28 July 1779, *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, vol. 4, ed. Richard K. Showman et al. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Rhode Island Historical Society, 1986), 275.
34. Burnett, *The Continental Congress*, 399.
35. Greene to John Cox, 20 Oct. 1779, *Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, 4:481.
36. Burnett, *The Continental Congress*, 403.

37. Resolution, 25 Feb. 1780, *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, vol. 16 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), 196-97; Huston, *Logistics of Liberty*, 133.
38. Greene to George Washington, 8-12 Mar. 1780 [conjectural date], *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, vol. 5, ed. Richard K. Showman et al. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Rhode Island Historical Society, 1989), 450-51.
39. Carp, *To Starve the Army*, 179.
40. Dennis Michael Conrad, "Nathanael Greene and the Southern Campaigns, 1780-1783" (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1979), 8-9.
41. *Ibid.*, 10.
42. Greene to George Washington, 28 Mar. 1780, *Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, 5:482; Burnett, *The Continental Congress*, 400-401.
43. Greene to George Washington, 3 Apr. 1780, *Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, 5:502.
44. Burnett, *The Continental Congress*, 446-47, 461.
45. Carp, *To Starve the Army*, 193-94.
46. Greene to Samuel Huntington, 19 June 1780, *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, vol. 6, ed. Dennis M. Conrad, Roger N. Parks, and Elizabeth C. Stevens (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Rhode Island Historical Society, 1991), 25-27.
47. Burnett, *The Continental Congress*, 461-62; Conrad, "Nathanael Greene and the Southern Campaigns," 10.
48. Resolution, 24 July 1780, *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789*, vol. 17 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1910), 658.
49. Greene to Samuel Huntington, 26 July 1780, *Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, 6:156-57.
50. Conrad, "Nathanael Greene and the Southern Campaigns," 12.
51. Wells, "Inquiry into the Resignation," 45-46. The proposed campaign against New York was never carried out.
52. Quoted in Conrad, "Nathanael Greene and the Southern Campaigns," 15-16.
53. Resolution, 5 Aug. 1780, *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 17:697.
54. John Cox to Greene, 7 Aug. 1780, *Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, 6:187.
55. Ezekiel Cornell to Greene, 13 Aug. 1780, *Letters of Members of the Continental Congress*, ed. Edmund C. Burnett, vol. 5 (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1931), 323.
56. George Washington to Joseph Jones, 13 Aug. 1780, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick, vol. 19 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1937), 367.
57. Wells, "Inquiry into the Resignation," 41.
58. Conrad, "Nathanael Greene and the Southern Campaigns," 15-16.
59. *Ibid.*, 6-7.
60. *Ibid.*, 6, 18-19.
61. Samuel Huntington to Greene, 31 Oct. 1780, *Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, 6:451.
62. M. F. Treacy, *Prelude to Yorktown: The Southern Campaign of Nathanael Greene, 1780-1781* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 55.
63. Thayer, *Nathanael Greene*, 380-81.
64. *Ibid.*, 391-92.
65. Thane, *The Fighting Quaker*, 268.
66. Congress quoted in F. V. Greene, *General Greene*, 304.
67. Thayer, *Nathanael Greene*, 446.
68. Conrad, "Nathanael Greene and the Southern Campaigns," 11.
69. Thayer, *Nathanael Greene*, 224; Tretler, "Making of a Revolutionary General," 307-8, 428.
70. Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 23.
71. *Ibid.*, 88.
72. Tretler, "Making of a Revolutionary General," 296.
73. Greene to Nicholas Cooke, 23 Jan. 1777, *Papers of General Nathanael Greene*, 2:12.
74. Royster, *Revolutionary People at War*, 51.

Rhode Island History
110 Benevolent Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02906-3152
USPS no. 464-780

PERIODICALS
POSTAGE PAID AT
PROVIDENCE, RI

Cover

*Published in Lowell, Massachusetts, the
Lowell Offering was written and edited by
female factory workers. Courtesy of the
American Textile History Museum, Lowell,
Mass. (P1292).*