

Stephanie Kermes, "I wish for nothing more ardently upon earth, than to see my friends and country again': The Return of Massachusetts Loyalists" *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* Volume 30, No. 1 (Winter 2002).

Published by: Institute for Massachusetts Studies and Westfield State University

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Editor, *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*  
c/o Westfield State University  
577 Western Ave. Westfield MA 01086



**“I wish for nothing more ardently upon earth,  
than to see my friends and country again”:  
The Return of Massachusetts Loyalists**

**By**

**Stephanie Kermes**

“I wish nothing more ardently upon earth, than to see my friends and country again in the enjoyment of peace, freedom and happiness,”<sup>1</sup> wrote the Congregational minister and former Harvard librarian Reverend Isaac Smith from his exile in Enfield near London to his father in Boston. Many Loyalist refugees shared this dearest wish to return to their home country.<sup>2</sup> The Massachusetts Loyalists who returned after the War of Independence, more precisely after 1784, as Isaac Smith did, were warmly received by their neighbors. This article aims to show that the hostile attitude towards Loyalists and their return in reaction to the Peace Treaty of 1783 was the last wave of a broad anti-Toryism in Massachusetts and lasted only for one year.

From 1784 on, post-revolutionary Massachusetts was tolerant towards its conservative countrymen. The returnees recovered lost property and a few were even able to collect debts. Some of these Loyalists and their children not only moved in patriot circles but also participated in the political culture of the early Republic. In Massachusetts, returnees were able to rebuild their lives because of the Bay State’s peculiar conservative political culture and the fact that it was a “quasi” one-party state dominated by Federalists until the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Before the Revolution those Massachusetts residents who became Tories were not distinguishable from their neighbors who embraced independence. Many Loyalists were respected members of their towns, well-educated Harvard graduates, working as merchants, doctors,

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<sup>1</sup> Isaac Smith to the Reverend William Smith, Enfield near London, December 5, 1775, *Adams Family Correspondence*, II. Series, Vols. 1, ed. by H. Butterfield, Marc Friedlaender, (Cambridge: 1963).

<sup>2</sup> Mary Beth Norton, *The British Americans: The Loyalist Exiles in England, 1774-1789*, (Boston: 1972), 96-97, 122.

lawyers, distillers or ministers. Their lives were shaped by kinship and patronage networks. The chains of influence sometimes also crossed the Atlantic. When young Isaac Smith traveled to London for the first time in 1770, he moved among the best Presbyterian circles there.<sup>3</sup> Like Massachusetts Loyalists in general, those men and women who returned to Massachusetts from Great Britain did not fit in the image of the typical “Tory”, the conservative member of the older generation, who was not ready to deal with change. Rather, the Massachusetts returnees were young (in 1776 their average age was 31) native born and emotionally attached to their country.

“There could be no loyalists until there were rebels, and there were no rebels until after 1773,” Mary Beth Norton points out in *British-Americans*. It was only when independence became “the chief point of contention”<sup>4</sup> that people decided to choose the “Loyalist” or the “Patriot” side. For many this was not an easy decision. The majority of the returnees had not been engaged in politics. Some wanted to remain neutral, but they felt pushed into taking positions because of external circumstances. Boston merchant John Amory, for example, had been involved in a public action against officers of the Crown. Because he feared economic losses, however, Amory was among the merchants who protested against the “Solemn League and Covenant of 1774,” suspending all commercial business with Great Britain. A business trip to England, which he coincidentally made during the Battle of Lexington, definitely made him a “Tory” in the eyes of his countrymen.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Shipton, Clifford (ed.), “Sibley’s Harvard Graduates: Biographical Sketches of Those Who Attended Harvard College,” Vols. 13-16, Boston, 1972, here XVI, p. 523. Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, (New York: 1992), pp. 59, 77-79, 87-92.

<sup>4</sup> Norton, *British-Americans*, 7.

<sup>5</sup> Zoltan Haraszti, “A Loyalist in spite of himself,” *More books*, Vol. 22, No. 9 (Boston: 1947), 337-340. Dr. William Paine gave up his neutrality after he experienced “too many abuses” and “insults” from Patriots. See William Paine to his brother, Boston, 22 June, 1775, William Paine Papers, Vol. I, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA. See also Bernard Bailyn, “Religion and Revolution: Three Biographical Studies: Andrew Eliot,” *Perspectives in American History*, 1970, Vol. 4, 87-110.

Like Amory, Massachusetts Tories who returned chose the Loyalist side for various reasons. Abigail Adams' sister, Mary Smith Cranch, tried to convert her Loyalist cousin Isaac Smith to "patriotism," fearing his loyalty could damage his career, his father's business, and the family's reputation. He answered her: "The greatest friends of their country and of mankind, that ever lived, have frequently met with the same hard fate." Although Smith spoke of "the cruelty, the injustice, the arbitrary nature" of the parliamentary acts, he declared himself ready to calmly suffer under these "and hundred other acts...than be subject to the capricious, unlimited despotism" of his "own countrymen."

Smith added that his position at Harvard and his profession as Congregational minister forbade him to be disobedient to his king or Parliament, because they obliged him to "liberal enquiry."<sup>6</sup> Anglican ministers like the Reverend William Walter and the Reverend William Clark, and Sandemanian pacifists such as Isaac Winslow and Joseph Stacey Hastings, also had religious reasons for their loyalty. John Amory and Benjamin Pickman, for example, also felt bound by loyalty to their sovereign.<sup>7</sup>

Some returnees feared hostile treatment or deprivation, or the exigencies of war. The Reverend William Walter reported to the Society of Propagation of the Gospel in 1774: "I see nothing But the horrors of a Civil War."<sup>8</sup> Those who had signed the addresses to Governor

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<sup>6</sup> Isaac Smith Jr. to Mary Smith Cranch, Cambridge, October 20, 1774, and Mary Smith Cranch to Isaac Smith Jr., Boston, October 15, 1774, *Adams Family Correspondence*, Vol. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Jean F. Hankins, "A Different Kind of Loyalist: The Sandemanians of New England during the Revolutionary War," *New England Quarterly*, 1987, 60 (2), 223-249. Benjamin Pickman became a Loyalist from the "purest Principles of Loyalty to my late Sovereign," Benjamin Pickman to his wife, 20 February, 1783, Benjamin Pickman Correspondence, Essex Institute, Salem. John Amory had not been able to take the Association Test and fight for the American cause because: "... I could not with a quiet conscience,...take an Oath that I would bear Arms against the King of Great Britain to whom I had already sworn Allegiance," John Amory to James Lovell, Providence, February 12, 1778, quoted in Haraszti, 338-339.

<sup>8</sup> William Clark to Joseph Pattern, Boston, August 6 1774, and to M. Fisher, Boston, August 6 ,1774, William Clark Papers, Diocesan Library, Boston.

Hutchinson and Commander Gage were vehemently attacked in newspapers and threatened with unfavorable political and economic consequences. In the summer of 1774, local committees of inspection, requested by Massachusetts's first provincial congress to examine merchants as to whether they did or did not trade with the British, soon hunted for Tories of all occupations. Increasingly, patriots boycotted all Tories, and mobs sometimes even attacked them in the streets and damaged their homes.

Moreover, the summer of 1775 was extremely hot and the siege of a Patriot army worsened the food shortage. Heat and malnutrition brought wide-spread suffering and forced 344 Tories to leave Boston for Nova Scotia and London. The following spring, when General Howe evacuated Boston, a group of 927 left. Few regarded their exodus as permanent. From his exile, Isaac Smith wrote again and again to his parents that he would return at once, when peace was made. In his first letter from England, he emphasized that his emigration "was not owing to the lack of affection to my country, or sympathy with my friends."<sup>9</sup>

As soon as the refugees arrived in Halifax and London, they used the extensive network of family members and friends as the central means for organizing their lives. The refugees provided each other with housing and money, cared for each others children, and introduced each other to influential people. In London, refugees contacted Thomas Hutchinson, moved in the Harvard Loyalist circle and attended Loyalist clubs like the Disputing Club and the New England Club. Newly arriving refugees also brought news from home, for they often carried American newspapers and private letters in their baggage. The delivery of mail was an especially valuable service in a time when it was risky and lengthy. Isaac Winslow expressed the feelings of many refugees when he stressed the importance of letters to "consider the natural boundary in these times that tear asunder the bands of society."<sup>10</sup> Boston

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<sup>9</sup> Isaac Smith to his mother, Sidmouth, March 11, 1779, and to his father, Exeter, March 18, 1783, Smith-Carter Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston. Benjamin Pickman to his wife, London, July 21, 1775, Benjamin Pickman Correspondence, Essex Institute, Salem, and Edward Oxnard in Shipton, XVI, p. 515.

<sup>10</sup> Isaac Winslow to his sister, New York, June 2, 1779, Winslow Papers, 1670-1782, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

merchant Samuel Rogers not only carried mail but served as an agent for other loyalists. William Pynchon, a Salem lawyer who had remained home, cared for Samuel Curwen's wife, who was left behind, and he even collected debts for emigrated loyalists and gave legal advice to those who were banished in 1778.<sup>11</sup>

Returnees tried to make the best of their situation. They walked through the parks and played games in Covent Garden, visited acrobatic exhibitions, theaters and the opera, and spent long hours in coffeehouses. They traveled in France and in Great Britain. The Amorys, for example, used the shore leaves on their trip from America to London for "viewing the monuments" and on a trip through England, they spent an hour in the Canterbury Cathedral.<sup>12</sup> Those Loyalists who ended up in Canada also tried to make the best out of their time in exile, even if the amusements there were not as various as in London: they spent their evenings at dances and dinners among friends. But all these activities could not take the refugees' thoughts from home. They suffered from homesickness and longed to return to their native country because they loved it no less than the Patriots did.

Thomas Hutchinson's homesickness, his love for New England and his deepest wish to return were not exceptional. He wrote in his diary on August 8, 1774, that if he had the choice, he would have preferred to live at his Milton home near Boston:

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<sup>11</sup> W.O. Raymond, ed. *Winslow Papers, 1776-1826* (St. John, New Brunswick: 1901); *The Diary of William Pynchon of Salem: A Picture of Salem Life, Social and Political, A Century Ago*, edited by Edward Oliver Fitch, Boston (New York: 1890); Jeffries diary, Jeffries Papers, Vol. 30, 31 and Jeffries Letters, Jeffries Papers, Vol. 33, MHS, Boston; *The Journal of Mrs. John Amory, 1775-1777*, edited by Martha C. Codman (Boston, 1923); Haraszti, "A Loyalist in spite of himself"; *The Diary and Letters of Benjamin Pickman (1740-1819) of Salem, Massachusetts with a Biographical Sketch and Genealogy of the Pickman Family*, edited by George Francis Dow (Newport, Rhode Island: 1928); *Journal and Letters of the Late Samuel Curwen, Judge of Admiralty, etc., An American Refugee in England, from 1775-1784*, edited by George Atkinson Ward (New York: 1842), Lorenzo Sabine, *The American Loyalists or Biographical Sketches of Adherents to the British Crown in the War of the Revolution* (Boston: 1848), Alfred E. Jones, *The Loyalists of Massachusetts* (London: 1930); Stark, *The Loyalists of Massachusetts*, and Shipton, XIII-XVII.

<sup>12</sup> *The Journal of Mrs. John Amory*, June 24, 1775.

I can't help thinking that nature alone has done as much in some parts of America as nature and art together have done in England, and I should prefer even my humble cottage upon Milton Hill to the lofty palaces upon Richmond Hill, so that upon the whole I am more of a New England man than ever, and I will not despair of seeing my country and friends again, though I fear the time for it is farther off than I imagined when I left.<sup>13</sup>

Many returnees felt the same as Hutchison. Sarah Troutbeck found life in Great Britain boring in comparison to her life in Massachusetts. Isaac Smith assured his parents that he still retained a great affection for his native country: "There is nothing in E[ngland] which can attach me to it, in preference to my own country." Even the amusements did not help against the melancholy caused by the homesickness. "London affords me very little amusements. As to plays and public places, I do not frequent them,"<sup>14</sup> he complained. The patriotic feelings of these refugees sometimes led them to help imprisoned Americans. Merchant Henry Gardner left money with an agent in Salem, whom he instructed to pay taxes and to be generous to the poor while he was abroad.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> August 8, 1774, *The Diary and Letters of his Excellency Thomas Hutchinson, Esq.*, edited by Peter Orlando Hutchinson, 2 Vols., Vol. 1 (Boston: 1884-1886), 219-220. Quoted in Bernhard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Cambridge: 1974), 299; Bailyn, *Ordeal*, 301, 327, 343, and Philip James McFarland, *The Brave Bostonians: Hutchinson, Quince, Franklin, and the Coming of the American Revolution* (Boulder, Connecticut: 1998), 59, 98, 243.

<sup>14</sup> Isaac Smith to -- , London, October 2, 1775, Isaac Smith Letters of 1775, in *MHS Proceedings 1925-1926*, Vol. 59, 129. Isaac Smith to his father, London, October 25, 1775; *ibid.*, 131. Samuel Curwen wrote in 1777: "nothing but the hopes of once more revisiting my native soil, enjoying my old friends within my own little domain, has hitherto supported my dropping courage," *Journal and Letters of the late Samuel Curwen*, 161.

<sup>15</sup> Isaac Smith wrote to his parents that he was obliged as a countryman to help imprisoned Americans. Isaac Smith to his father, Sidmouth, January 7, 1778, Smith-Carter Papers. During his exile in Newfoundland, Gardner lent money to captured Americans. John Adams informed Oliver Wendell that he had met

The longer these Loyalists had to live in exile, the more discouraged they were with the length of their absence from home. News from America had not given them much hope. Eighteen of the thirty-seven returnees mentioned in this article were among the 308 individuals proscribed by the Banishment Act of 1778, which forbade them forever from returning to Massachusetts. A second attempt to return would be punished with death. Although the state confiscated only a handful of estates between 1778 and 1781, news about plunder and false claims against absentee estates might have made them worry about the fate of their own properties.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, urged by friends at home to come back, they carefully planned their return to Massachusetts, often with help from kin and patrons. Those without relatives or patrons asked influential Americans such as John Adams or Congressman James Lovell for help.<sup>17</sup> They consciously tried to show their affection for the new

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Thomas Brattle, a refugee, who was a well-known Boston merchant, in Paris and that “Mr. Brattle expressed on all occasions, the best affection to the American cause,” that he also had heard of Brattle in London “of his Piety to his Country, and the Charity to many American Prisoners.” John Adams to Oliver Wendell, n.p., November 14, 1779, *Papers of John Adams*, Vols. 8-10 edited by Lint, Gregg L., and Robert Taylor (Cambridge, London: 1989), Vol. 9.

<sup>16</sup> State of Massachusetts Bay. *Act to prevent the return to this state of certain persons therein named, and others, who have left this state, or either of the United States, and joined the enemies thereof* (Boston: 1778), Early American Imprints, 1 st series, No. 15909. For the complicated history of confiscation in Massachusetts from 1776-1783, see David Edward Maas, “The Return of the Massachusetts Loyalists”, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1972, published in New York, 1989, 271-337, and Maas, “The Massachusetts Loyalists and the Problem of Amnesty, 1775-1790”, in Calhoun, Robert M. et al (eds.), *Loyalists and Community in North America* (Westport, CT: 1994), 65-74.

<sup>17</sup> John Amory to James Lovell, Providence, February 12, 1778, quoted in Haraszti, 338-339, and W.T. Franklin to John Jeffries, Papy near Paris, 19 May, 1785, Jeffries Letters. Jeffries had asked Franklin to hand out a letter to John Adams asking whether he could work as a physician for his family. In July 1784, William Walter called on Abigail Adams to welcome her in London and they became friends, Abigail Adams to May Smith Cranch, “On Board the Ship Active, July 24, 1784, Abigail Adams to Elizabeth Smith Shaw, London, July 28, 1784, *Adams Family Correspondence*, Vol. 5. On a visit to Auteuil, in France, in 1785, Benjamin Pickman was invited for dinner at Abigail Adams’



United States, especially the state of Massachusetts. In December 1786, three years before he returned, Dr. John Jeffries assured John Adams “that having been honored by my birth, education & many years residence in the capital of the same state [Massachusetts], I feel myself really interested in the rising honour & future welfare of it.” To express his new loyalty to Massachusetts, Isaac Smith spent his last evening in London at the Franklin Club rather than with other Loyalists.<sup>18</sup>

Although individual Loyalists were able to return during the war and were well received,<sup>19</sup> others feared they would be treated badly and stayed away until 1784. The Peace Treaty provoked a last wave of anti-Toryism in Massachusetts. During the spring election of 1783 Boston newspapers were full of articles opposing their return. Abigail Adams reported to her husband in Paris: “The spirit which rises here against the return of the Refugees is violent, you can hardly form an Idea of it.”<sup>20</sup> Bostonians condemned British influence fearing that the returnees would destroy public virtue, advance episcopacy, and support

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house and later he delivered mail for her, Abigail Adams to Mary Smith Cranch, Auteuil, March 8 and 13, 1785, *Adams Family Correspondence*, Vol. 6.

<sup>18</sup> John Jeffries to John Adams, London, December 15, 1786, Jeffries Letters. Edmund Jennings wrote to John Adams about John Amory, whom he met in Brussels: “There is a Mr. Emmery here, a refugee Merchant from Boston...He is one of the proscribed -- but at the same time a Moderate and Candid Man -- when He speaks of your Excellency He does it with much Respect,” Edmund Jennings to John Adams, Brussel, July 21, 1780, *Papers of John Adams*, Vol. 10, p. 20.

<sup>19</sup> Like Henry Gardner, who returned to traditionally Tory-friendly Salem in 1781, *Gardner Memorial: A Biographical and Genealogical Record of Descendants of Thomas Gardner* (Salem, Massachusetts: 1933), 122-123. Gardner was a particular case, because he had paid taxes for the years 1776 to 1780.

<sup>20</sup> Abigail Adams to John Adams, n.p., May 7, 1783, *Adams Family Correspondence*, Vol. 5. Richard Cranch to John Adams, Boston, June 26th, 1783, *ibid.*, *Boston Evening Post*, 19 April, 1783, *Independent Ledger*, 5 May, 1783, and *Boston Gazette*, 5 May, 1783. In Salem the anti-Tory minister Nathaniel Whitaker preached against returning Loyalists, Nathaniel Whitaker, “The Reward of Toryism”, Salem, 1783.

an aristocracy.<sup>21</sup> However, upper-class citizens such as John Adams and Theodore Sedgwick propagated a friendly attitude towards Tories as early as 1783. They saw that prosperous and well-educated citizens like the loyalists would encourage Massachusetts's economy and they feared an unfair treatment placed the young republic in a bad light.<sup>22</sup>

When the Loyalists moved back to Massachusetts between 1784 and 1789, there was nothing left of the old hostilities and fears. They were heartily welcomed and very kindly received by old friends and foes alike. William Pynchon noted in his journal that Loyalist "Dr. [John] Prince is graciously received here by all ranks, even by the intolerant G.W.'s and T.M.N.," when he returned to Salem on August 19, 1784. Dr. Jeffries landed in Boston on November 11, 1789, and was "very politely received, congratulated on my arrival by the company met on the warf -- where my friend Mr. Geyer met & welcomed me." Frederick William Geyer, a former Boston merchant who had recently returned, then accompanied Jeffries to "pay respect to his Excellency Governor Hancock."<sup>23</sup> The governor had, according to an act from March 24,

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<sup>21</sup> Myron F. Wehtje, "Fear of British Influence in Boston, 1783-1787," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*, 1990, 18 (2), 154-163, here 154; Maas, "Return", chapter 9, 429-455.

<sup>22</sup> Cotton Tuft to John Adams, Weymouth, October 6, 1785, *Adams Family Correspondence*, Vol. 6. John Adams to Richard Cranch, Paris, Sept. 10, 1783, *ibid.* Vol. 5. Oscar Zeichner, "The Rehabilitation of the Loyalists in Connecticut," *New England Quarterly*, 1938, 11, 307-330, here 327-328.

<sup>23</sup> *The Diary of William Pynchon of Salem*, August 19, 1784. November 10, 1789, and November 11, 1789, Jeffries Diary, Jeffries Papers, Vol. 31. Isaac Winslow wrote: "I...found everybody vividly glad to see me," Isaac Winslow to his wife Polly, Boston, May 5, 1784, Isaac Winslow Papers, 1783-1854. See also *The Diary and Letters of Benjamin Pickman*, p. 62. Francis writes in Salem that William Paine "was received with special favor, in the town where he had been well known as a student," p. 401. Samuel Curwen's report on his return was exceptional. He wrote to Captain Michael Coombs: "On Sunday... I left for this place, where I alighted at the house of my former residence, and not a man, woman, or child, but expressed a satisfaction seeing me," *Journal and Letters of the Late Samuel Curwen*, Letter to Captain Michael Coombs of London, Salem, October 9, 1784. Only four of the 37 returnees studied here came back between 1780 and 1782, and only one in 1799. "Toryism became a dead issue," as Maas put it in Maas, "Return", 469. Wehtje argues that antipathy to Loyalists diminished between 1784 to 1787, but did not disappear; Wehtje, 159-163.

1784, the power to grant a licenses to those who sought to return to Massachusetts. In July 1784, for example, he licensed seven people, but others returned without a license.<sup>24</sup>

The returnees' first stop was to their friends and family. The daughter of Thomas Robie, a merchant, who had remained in Halifax when his family returned to Marblehead in the summer of 1784, explained to her father, "but we have been so much engaged in receiving the congratulations of our friends here on our return," that she neglected to write promptly. Even in a traditional anti-Tory town like Marblehead, the Loyalists were kindly received. Robie's wife Mary assured him, "you need be under no concern about my treatment here for the Queen of Sheba when she made her visit to King Solomon could not be better treated."<sup>25</sup>

In somewhat more realistic terms, Timothy Pickering welcomed Mehetabel Higginson in 1782:

I persuade myself you will meet with very little trouble, except from such worthless characters as a 'certain -----' who conscious of their infamy, greedily seize every opportunity of acquiring some little popularity...to cover their reproach. But these efforts of such wretches

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<sup>24</sup> George Spooner, John Amory, Thomas Oxnard, Nathaniel Chandler, Thomas Brattle, David Greene, and Isaac Winslow were licensed to reside in Massachusetts in 1784, Act of July 7, 1784, *Acts and Resolves of Massachusetts, 1784-1785*, Massachusetts State Archives, Boston. Sarah Gould Troutbeck, Nathaniel Whithworth, Mary Robie, and Dr. John Prince returned even in 1784 without a license; Maas, "Return", 490. After the repeal of all laws contradicting the Peace Treaty of April 30, 1787 a return license was no longer required in Massachusetts.

<sup>25</sup> Mary Robie to Thomas Robie, Marblehead, August 1 and August 20, 1784, Robie-Sewall Papers. Robie's daughter wrote "you may return here without any difficulties, nothing disagreeable will be mentioned, but buried in total oblivion, we hear every day of people who wish you return, but of none that objects to it," Miss Robie to Thomas Robie, Marblehead, August 1, 1784. Later his wife told him "indeed all the people here are so glad to see us that I almost wish to live, tho I am so weak I think I cannot long, however I have got my wish if I die it will be amongst friends," Mary Robie to Thomas Robie, Marblehead, November 1, 1787.

will be fruitless against the powerful support such numbers of gentlemen of the first characters & influence in Massachusetts, who are your friends.<sup>26</sup>

Shortly after the returnees arrived, they sought to recover their property. Most of the men who fled Massachusetts in 1776 left their property with their wives or relatives. David Edward Maas concluded “since 86.6 percent of the real estate had never been legally confiscated, most returnees could quietly recover their lands.”<sup>27</sup> Only seven estates, of the 37 returnees studied here, had been legally confiscated, and two of these cases were dropped when the Suffolk Court of Common Pleas dismissed all suits against houses or lots that were still pending in April of 1784. The court also ruled that if an estate was legally confiscated and sold during the war, the previous owner could profit from the sale.<sup>28</sup> If property was illegally seized, the Supreme Judicial Court ruled that it

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<sup>26</sup> Timothy Pickering to Mehetable Higginson, Philadelphia, June 19, 1782, Robie-Sewall Papers.

<sup>27</sup> Maas, “Return”, 318. Maas stresses the contradictions of Massachusetts confiscation policy and the reason why only a few estates were legally confiscated: private citizens helped themselves to Tory properties, but the fear to leave abandoned relatives of absentees on public charity prevented confiscation and often even occupation. Samuel Curwen also moved back into his own house, which had been saved by his wife; 25, September, 1784, *The Diary of William Pynchon*, 195. The Robies moved finally back into their own house when Thomas Robie returned in 1791, Mary Sewall to Mrs. Steams, Marblehead, September 1, 1791, Robie-Sewall Papers.

<sup>28</sup> The property of John Amory, Henry Gardner, Frederick William Geyer (in 1780), Isaac Winslow (in 1781), William Walter (in 1778), John Troutbeck, and Gibb Atkinson had been confiscated, “Estates of Absentees,” Massachusetts State Archives, Vol. 281. The cases against the properties of John Amory and Isaac Winslow were dropped, Charles Cushing, Clerk of the Suffolk Court to Robert Treat Paine, 1784, Robert Treat Paine Papers, 1783-1787. It must be mentioned that to reclaim real estate was not a real success because until 1787 the law required the Tories to resell within three years, and the prices for land were low at this time. In 1792 the General Court granted Frederick William Geyer’s petition to get all the money from Nathan Frazier, that he had received from the sale of Geyer’s real estate in 1780, *Acts and Resolves of Massachusetts*, 1790-1791, p. 448, Massachusetts State Archives.

must be returned to its legal owner. For this reason, Thomas Brattle won his suit against William Foster, who during the war had occupied two acres at the Boston Common owned by Brattle. Frederick William Geyer also moved back in his former home on Summer Street; he had rented it from its new owner. A few returnees, like David Greene or William Paine, took over their father's homes.<sup>29</sup>

Those returnees who did not recover their former homes bought huge and distinguished new houses. William Walter, whose confiscated estate was sold in 1783, bought a house on Charter Street in the Boston North End, which "was the finest house in that part of Boston, with a yard so large that a generation later nineteen houses were built on."<sup>30</sup> Compensation from the British government helped some returnees to buy new homes or to recoup their losses. The Loyalist claims commission in London disallowed only one of the eight claims made by Massachusetts residents. The British also paid Anglican ministers, such as William Walter and William Clark, an annual pension up to 180 pounds till their deaths.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Thomas Brattle vs. William Foster, Records of the Supreme Judicial Court, Massachusetts State Archives, file 103455, and *Independent Chronicle*, Boston, September 9, 1784, Maas, "Return", 501.

<sup>30</sup> Shipton, XIV, 118. This is only one example: John Jeffries bought the big house of Thomas Amory, Mr. Sears to James Bowdoin, Boston, July 6, 1806, Winthrop Papers, Bowdoin and Temple Papers, MHS. Samuel Rogers bought a house in Atkinson Street, Boston, Shipton, XVI, 212. John Amory owned a house in Orange Street, Boston, title deed, February 21, 1793, Amory Papers. He also bought one at Newbury Street corner West Street in Boston, Meredith, 239. After Isaac Winslow's death his house and distillery were for sale. The advertisement for sail said "Valuable BRICK DISTILLERY, and out Houses, situated in Cole-Lane, Boston ... Also, one undivided fifth of a Building situated in Middlestreet at the North part of the town," September 14th, 1797, Isaac Winslow Papers.

<sup>31</sup> William Walter claimed 930 pounds for lost property, and got 293. His annual pension was 180 pounds, Jones, p.289. John Jeffries claimed 6,015 pounds, and got 500 (Audit Office 12/109), quoted in Jones, 181. Daniel Murray claimed 2,493 pounds, and got 1,200 (A.O. 12/109), Jones, 216. William Paine claimed 1,440 pounds, and got 300 (A.O. 12/109), Jones, 229. Thomas Robie claimed 2,500 pounds, and got 50 (A.O. 12/109), Jones, 243. Sarah Troutbeck claimed 3,043 pounds, and got 769 (A.O. 13/24), Jones, 280. Isaac Winslow claimed 847 pounds, and got 200 (A.O. 12/109) Jones, 302.

The returnees also were able to collect debts. Very soon after her return from Canada, debtors voluntarily paid their debts to Mary Robie and two years later the town of Salem paid her the pre-war debts it owed to her family. Some Loyalists had won cases against debtors while they were in exile. However, the success in collecting debts varied greatly. Although the Charlestown Court allowed Elijah Williams to collect his debts in Keene, New Hampshire, most of his debtors were not willing to pay.<sup>32</sup>

Other returnees moved comfortably into Massachusetts society, because they had the needed skills or capital. Doctors like John Jeffries and William Paine, for example, both of whom had substantial medical practices were always needed. Mary Robie told her husband that merchants with capital would be welcomed. She claimed that people in Marblehead wanted him to reopen his retail store.<sup>33</sup>

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Samuel Hirst Sparhawk's claim of 900 pounds was disallowed (A.O. 12/109), Jones, 265.

<sup>32</sup> Miss Robie to Thomas Robie, Marblehead, August 1, 1784, Robie-Sewall Papers. She wrote: "Mama desires you will send her the book accounts, as she thinks she can collect many of the debts." Then she counts two men, who already had paid and a third, who was not able to pay, because Mrs. Robie did not have the books. For the collection of the debt owed them by the town see Miss Robie to Thomas Robie, Marblehead, October 29th, 1787, *ibid.* When they both were still living in Nova Scotia, William Walter won two suits against debtors before the Supreme Court in 1786, and Elijah Williams won against a certain John Ransom in 1787, William Walter vs. Israel Hobarth, and William Walter vs. Joseph Curtis, Records of the Supreme Judicial Court, Massachusetts State Archives, f. 104416, 104598, Massachusetts State Archives, Elijah Williams vs. John Ransom, *ibid.*, f104721. Frederick William Geyer vs. Peter Osgood, *ibid.*, f. 104959, 107190. Geyer could collect debts from 1774, while he was still living in London. So could William Clark, William Clark vs. James Smith, *ibid.*, f. 105049. On Elijah Williams before the Charlestown Court see Shipton, XVI, p. 114. The Supreme Court granted John Jeffries 639 pounds, which the state of Massachusetts owed him for his work as a physician to the provincial poor in 1774 and 1775, after John Adams sent a letter to James Bowdoin on Jeffries' behalf, Act of April 30, 1787, *Acts and Resolves of Massachusetts*, 1786-1787, pp. 984-985, Massachusetts State Archives.

<sup>33</sup> Maas, "Return," 495, Francis, 401, Mary Robie to Thomas Robie, Marblehead, August 8, 1784.

Women played an important role in the process of emigration and return. Those who remained behind during the war protected the family property from seizure and confiscation. Thomas Brattle's sister, for example, saved the family estate on Brattle Street in Cambridge. Although absentee estates were legally liable to confiscation, abandoned members of Loyalist families were not driven out of their homes, because they should not become dependent on patriot public charity. The women worked hard to manage the family concerns on their own. Mary Robie, who returned to Massachusetts years before her husband, not only collected debts, she also opened a dry-goods store. In her correspondence with her husband she showed self-confidence requesting him to send her the book of debts, mailing him lists of goods to send her from Halifax, and contradicting him about the prices.<sup>34</sup>

Returnees attributed the ease with which they rebuilt their lives, to the fact that the Revolution had changed Massachusetts very little. William Clark wrote in 1796:

I don't see any peculiar Privileges this country enjoys by its separation from England...There seems to be a good Inclination towards England, in a majority of our Rulers, and the body of the people..The Loyalists of the late time begin to grow popular...They are readily set into places of Power and Trust...The older Church people Say, it seems a little like old times.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Edward Doubleday Harrison (ed.), *An Account of some of the Descendants of Capt. Thomas Brattle* (Boston: 1867), 43-44, as one among many examples in the Robie Papers; see Thomas Robie to Mary Robie, Halifax, July 13, 1784, and July 26, 1784, Robie-Sewall Papers. Sarah Gould Troutbeck is another example for a women returnee, who took on tasks which were "male" business during that time. Her husband, the Anglican clergy man John Troutbeck, died still in exile in 1778. Sarah returned to Boston in 1785 to recover some property and debts. Although she moaned about how difficult it was, she was able to restore most of her holdings, Mary Beth Norton, "Eighteenth-Century American Women in Peace and War: The Case of the Loyalists", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 1976, 33 (3), 386-409, 391-392, and Jones, *Loyalists of Massachusetts*.

<sup>35</sup> William Clark to Reverend Dr. Morice, n.p., September 30, 1796, William Clark Papers. The bad financial situation of William Clark and Samuel Curwen were exceptions for most returnees were wealthy. Curwen had lost everything

However, Hitty Higginson contradicted Clark. She carefully circumscribed her Salem social sphere: "We do not live in the Great World, but are made happy by the Company of a Friend," she commented in 1784. Returnees in Salem spent Monday evenings at "the Club," as they had done before the war. The "Club" was an enlightenment society, where people met to discuss religion, politics, science and literature. In spite of the high percentage of Tory members, the society had survived the war and continued its activities.<sup>36</sup>

In Boston returnees were thought to dominate the Boston Tea Assembly, a group that met every other week for dancing and card playing. The establishment in 1785 of the "Sans Souci Club," as it was called, caused an outcry against "luxury, prodigality and profligacy," and the imitation of British manners. In the almost two month public uproar, signs of luxury and refinement were attacked as antitheses of American virtue. The satire *Sanssouci, Alias Free and Easy: Or an Evening Peep in a Polite Circle* criticized the acceptance of former Loyalists into the circle and drew an image of them as snobs, who were destroying American virtue and ruining American economy with such an extravagant life. One of the characters in the play, Mr. Pert, was meant to represent Isaac Winslow, who appealed to young Bostonians to "damn the old musty rules of decency and national character, Spartan virtues -- republican principles -- all your buckram of Presbyterianism," and to

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when he returned after nine years, not because of confiscation, but because his wife's nephew had spent all of Curwen's trading stock with drinking and women. William Clark had already lived in poverty before the war, and nothing changed after his return, William Clark to Reverend William Morice, Quincy, September 30, 1800, William Clark Papers.

<sup>36</sup> Hitty Higginson to Mehetabel Higginson, Salem, July 20, 1784, Robie-Sewall Papers. When Mary Robie was just married to Joseph Sewall she wrote to her father, "since my return from Boston, the attention of my friends to me, left me no opportunity of writing till now," Mary Sewall to Thomas Robie, Marblehead, November 8, 1788, *ibid.* See also *The Diary and Letters of Benjamin Pickman*, 55, also 22 January, 1781, and 12 November, 1787, and 4 February, 1788, *The Diary of William Pynchon*. The following returnees were members of the Salem club: Benjamin Pickman, Dr. John Prince, Thomas Robie, Samuel Curwen, Samuel Hirst Sparhawk and William Paine.



rejoice at joining the club.<sup>37</sup> Finally, the public became bored with the discussion and the Tea Assembly disbanded even before the debate ended.

Thomas Robie's daughter, Mary, shared the aversion for displays of superiority and aristocratic manners. When she accompanied Mrs. Hancock, the aunt of her husband Joseph Sewall, to John Hancock's funeral parade in 1793, both women felt disgusted by the pomp of the ceremony.<sup>38</sup> Drs. Jeffries and Paine celebrated the traces of aristocratic manners, however. In 1790, Jeffries left Massachusetts and plunged successfully into the social life of the new nation. Using his Massachusetts ties, he socialized in New York City with Vice President John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, Fisher Ames, many congressmen and the Secretary of War, General Henry Knox, whom he accompanied to one of Martha Washington's levees. Jeffries became physician of the Adams' and many other Patriot families.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Samuel Adams as "The Observer", Friday, January 14, 1785, quoted in Gordon Wood (ed.), *The Rising Glory of America, 1760-1820*, 1st edition, 1971 (Boston: 1990), 137-139, here 138. *Sanssouci, Alias Free and Easy: Or an Evening Peep in a Polite Circle* (Boston: 1785). Charles Warren, "Samuel Adams and the Sans Souci Club," MHS Proceedings, 1926-1927, Vol. 60, 318-344. T.A. Milford, "Boston's Theater Controversy and Liberal Notions of Advantage," *New England Quarterly*, March 1999, 61-88.

<sup>38</sup> Mrs. Sewall to Mrs. Steams, Boston, October 16, 1793. Five years before, Mary Robie had been enthusiastic about the plain nature of Marblehead theater assemblies: "We have assemblies in Marblehead for the first time since the War, and I assure you very agreeable ones, too, and what is extraordinary for me ... there is little of that stiffness and ceremony which generally prevails in public places," Mary Robie to Hitty Robie, Salem, January 28, 1788, Robie-Sewall Papers. For sentiments against displays of superiority see Wood, *Radicalism*, 241.

<sup>39</sup> July 30, 1790, August 7, 17, 18, 19, 1790, Jeffries Diary, Jeffries Papers, Vol. 31. When he was back in Boston, Jeffries asked his friend General Knox to talk to Washington about permission for him to work as a physician, John Jeffries to General Knox, Boston, August 29, 1790, Henry Knox Papers. But Jeffries was not the only returnee who moved in Patriot circles: Thomas Brattle was well known by the famous anti-Tory lawyer James Sullivan, Sabine, 173-174. Isaac Smith kept also closer contact with his relatives the Adamses, Shipton, XVI, 530. Brattle and David Greene were good friends of Samuel Quincy, Samuel Quincy papers, 1758-1789, MHS.

Paine was ambivalent about the emerging American republican culture. He watched President Washington's entry into Salem on his tour through the states in 1789, and was very impressed by the president's noble manners and the way in which the president sat on his famous white horse. Like many contemporaries, he recognized even aristocratic features in Washington's appearance. "We have lately had a great parade, on account of the President," he wrote:

The procession ... was extremely well conducted, and with which I am told he [Washington] was much pleased. How could it be otherwise? for all Ranks of People viewed with each other, in endeavoring to show him every possible Respect. There is something in his looks, that is very noble and interesting, his situation, he fills with Dignity and in his Manner, he is very like Lord Dorchester: which in my opinion is paying him a handsome compliment.<sup>40</sup>

Their admiration for Washington did not lead returnees to participate actively in politics, but some did participate in the performance and creation of a new political culture. In 1785, just two years after his return from Great Britain, where he had been educated, John Gardiner, the son of the well-known Loyalist Sylvester Gardiner, was chosen by Boston selectmen to give the Fourth of July oration. Speaking from the balcony of the Boston state house, Gardiner created a cult of local Patriots. To the assembled Bostonians he called out to John Adams, John Hancock and James Bowdoin:

Illustrious friends of liberty, rejoice! distinguished patriots, hail! -- when'er, in future times, the faithful page of history shall unfold, your names shall shine resplendent as the planets, while every generous mind

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<sup>40</sup> William Paine Papers. Richard Norton Smith, *Patriarch: George Washington and the new American Nation* (Boston: 1993), 128-129.

will shrink abhorrent from spiteful, impotent proscriber.<sup>41</sup>

Similarly, Benjamin Pickman Jr., a son of a returnee, praised President Washington in a Salem speech. Pickman praised Washington as President in the typical way of the early republic's compound of colonial monarchy and republican patriotism, as the "benefactor" and "the most illustrious friend" of his country and portrayed him as a father-figure. As a Federalist, like his father, Pickman stressed that Washington, "our ever watchful guardian and friend," had freed his people from British oppression, but had, moreover, saved the United States with his "wise and temperate measures" from the evils and horrors of the French Revolution, from the cruel deeds of such people like the "monster ROBESPIERRE."<sup>42</sup> While Democratic-Republicans used national celebrations to honor the French Revolution and idealized the American Revolution as the starting point and origin of an international democratic revolution, Federalists tried to create an American identity by using the character of the new French republic as an anti-thesis of the American republic. William Clark wrote in 1803:

I am thankful that in this state, as also in Connecticut and New Hampshire, the Jacobins are by much in the Minority, and are seldom able to carry their point in any Election...Mr. Jefferson, by sending for that impious Blashemer Thomas Paine, to come to this country...has lost Favour with many of his own "sect" and it seems

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<sup>41</sup> John Gardiner, *An Oration Delivered, July 4, 1785, at the Request of the Inhabitants of the Town of Boston in Celebration of American Independence*, Boston, 1785, 30. Travers writes "the speakers selected for the town orations were supposed to give strictly patriotic speeches evoking the 'feelings, manners, and principles, which led to this great event,'" Travers, 157. For regional and local understanding of nationalism and differences in celebrating the Fourth, *ibid.*, 152.

<sup>42</sup> Benjamin Pickman, *An Oration, pronounced, February 22, 1797, Before the Inhabitants of the Town of Salem, in Massachusetts, assembled to commemorate the Birth-Day of George Washington*, Salem, 1797, quotations: pp. 5, 8, and 10.

likely that he will not secure his Election a second time.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, when historical societies were founded in Massachusetts in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the returnees became proud members.<sup>44</sup> William Paine became the vice-president of the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester. On October 23, 1815 he gave a speech for the society's third anniversary in King's Chapel in Boston, which is an example of the attempt to create an American identity by inventing a national history. He described the struggles of the colonies with the Native Americans, the French, and the British as proof of God's protection and favour, which was due to collective American characteristics as "piety, and patriotism, righteousness and sobriety," and the colonists as victims of Indian and English jealousy. The former Loyalist told his audience that the purpose of studying history was to identify the characteristics of their ancestors, their "American ancestors," of course, in order to enable them to imitate those and thus remain in God's favor.<sup>45</sup>

As creators and performers of early republican culture, convivial, skillful and stabilizing members of society the returnees were so completely integrated in post-Revolutionary society that when they died,

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<sup>43</sup> William Clark to Morice, n. 1., October 20, 1803, William Clark Papers. In 1800 he had been afraid of a Republican victory: "Since Mr. Washington's Death, and as the new Election of a President is drawing near, it is to be feared, by this means, the choice may fall upon one who is supporter, and perhaps not without Truth, to be strongly attached to the Gallican Republic, and to the modern Philosophy prevailing in Europe," William Clark to William Morice, Quincy, September 30, 1800, *ibid.* In 1806, he wrote: "A Flood of Jacobinism and rank Democracy has almost overflow'd us for about 2 years; the Tide seems to be now turning, and more moderate Republicanism seems likely to prevail," William Clark to William Morice, n. 1., December 1st, 1806, *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Brattle became member of the Massachusetts Historical Society in 1797, Thomas Brattle to Jeremy Belknap, Cambridge 28, 1797, Jeremy Belknap Papers, MHS. Isaac Smith was a member of the American Antiquarian Society, Smith-Townsend Papers, MHS.

<sup>45</sup> William Paine, *An Address to the Members of the American Antiquarian Society, Pronounced in King's Chapel*, Boston, 1815, quotations: pp. 7, 23.

they were not remembered as Tories, but as educated, esteemed, benevolent and patriotic citizens.<sup>46</sup> Massachusetts' policy of favoring Loyalist re-integration was a success.

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<sup>46</sup> Obituary of Benjamin Pickman, *Salem Gazette*, May 12, 1819, Obituary of the Reverend Isaac Smith, Broadside, Boston, 1929, and Obituary of David Greene, *Continental Journal*, Boston, July 26, 1781.