

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

**The “Shot Heard ‘round the World” Falls on Deaf Ears:
Political Ideology and Nova Scotia’s Neutrality During
The American Revolutionary Era**

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Introduction

In the spring of 1775 a storm was brewing on the North American continent and it had been building strength for more than a decade. The exact nature of the storm was a complete unknown for everyone involved. Some thought it would simply blow over, while others were convinced the storm would wreak havoc on all those touched by its inescapable fury. Then on the morning of April 19th, 1775 the first crack of thunder resounded across the quiet Massachusetts countryside to inform everyone that the impending tempest had finally arrived, and the outcome was something nobody could have predicted.

As we know today, this brewing storm ended up being the American Revolution and ultimately resulted in the birth of a new nation. More over, that first crack of thunder was the “shot heard ‘round the world”, which was fired anonymously to start the battle at Lexington Green.¹ This unofficial first shot of the American Revolution was indeed heard all around the world, especially in what was to become the United States of America. Within days most of the thirteen colonies had received news of the battle and each had reacted in their own way. New Hampshire, after hearing “the shot”, sent a number of militiamen to Cambridge to help. On the 23rd of April, New York rioters seized the customs house along with a cache of weapons and ammunition. On May 11, almost a month after “the shot” was fired, even far-off Georgia reacted to the news with indignation and seized the gunpowder in the royal magazines of Savannah.² However, not all of the British colonies in North America reacted to the news the same way.

¹ “History & Culture,” *National Park Service*, <http://www.nps.gov/mima/index.htm> (accessed 3-5-07).

² Trevor N. Dupuy and Gay M. Hammerman, *People & Events of the American Revolution* (Dunn Loring, Virginia: T. N. Dupuy Associates, 1974), 54.

About 500 miles to the Northeast of Boston, people in Nova Scotia continued with their everyday lives; all but ignoring the fact that Britain and her sister colonies to the south were now openly at war. There were no riots or demonstrations. Nor was any effort made to seize munitions or take to arms like many of the other colonies. The major newspaper of the time, the *Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle*, only mentions the battle at Lexington through a reprint of a Salem newspaper article printed on May 9th. There is no mention of any disturbance of any kind, much less one similar to those in the other thirteen colonies.³ In essence the crack of thunder that was “heard ‘round the world”, was nothing more than a gentle breeze to most Nova Scotians. Why? Why did the American Revolution, with its principles of freedom and liberty, fail to excite any interest in Nova Scotia? This paper attempts to explain why Nova Scotia did not join the American Revolution and become the fourteenth state.

Nova Scotia as the 14th State

It is fairly typical of Americans to think it strange that anyone would not want to join the revolution. Yet, the case of Nova Scotia is unique in that its neutrality truly is a wonder. When we look at this colony during the years prior to and during the war, there are a number of elements that make Nova Scotia’s neutrality surprising. On a superficial level, the addition of Nova Scotia to the United States on a map seems to make sense.⁴ An arbitrary line is drawn between the United States and Canada northeast of Maine. The St. Lawrence River, which many automatically think of as the border between the U.S. and Canada, sweeps far north the closer it gets to the Atlantic; enveloping all of

³ *Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Chronicle*, 9 May 1775.

⁴ Appendix A. Note that present-day New Brunswick was part of Nova Scotia at the time of the Revolution. New Brunswick becomes its own colony in 1784.

Nova Scotia. A casual glance at a map would seem to dictate Nova Scotia's inclusion in the United States.

Going beyond the superficial and looking at actual research also provides a strong case for Nova Scotia's ties to the United States. A strong New England influence in Nova Scotia was the most striking feature of the colony during the decade preceding the Revolution. In 1767 almost 7,000 of Nova Scotia's 13,000 people were considered to be from America.⁵ Furthermore, the majority of these Americans came directly from New England in the years 1760-1763. These New Englanders came in response to a call made by the Governor of Nova Scotia, Charles Lawrence, for more settlers. The settlers were needed to refill the lands that were emptied when the same Governor Lawrence expelled and deported over 10,000 French Acadians five years earlier.⁶ Through hard work and some effective political promises, Lawrence was able to draw a large number of New Englanders to the colony. New Englanders continued to be the dominant demographic throughout the American Revolutionary era. Elizabeth Mancke asserts, "With approximately half of its population heralding from New England, many scholars have assumed that if any colony were to have been the fourteenth state, Nova Scotia would have been the one."⁷

In addition to common heritage, the people of Nova Scotia and New England inevitably shared a common resource; the North Atlantic fishing banks. People from both locations came together in the same waters to catch the same fish. The economies

⁵ Elizabeth Mancke, *The Fault Lines of Empire: Political Differentiation in Massachusetts and Nova Scotia ca. 1760-1830* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 35.

⁶ The people known as the Acadians should not be confused with the people we call Canadians today. More on the Acadian people later.

John Bartlett Brebner, *New England's Outpost: Acadia Before the Conquest of Canada* (Columbia University: Political Science Faculty 1927; reprint Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1965), 200.

⁷ Mancke, 66.

of both worlds depended on the sea for their livelihood; which is part of the reason why many New Englanders moved to Nova Scotia in 1760-1763. Nova Scotia was closer to the large fishing banks than colonies like Connecticut, Rhode Island, or Massachusetts. Many New Englanders and Nova Scotians, old and new, lived off the sea.⁸

Moreover, Nova Scotia and the thirteen colonies shared the experience of being under British rule when the Revolution came. Most of modern-day Canada came under British rule after the 7 Years War in 1765, but Nova Scotia was a British colony long before that. In 1710 Nova Scotia became a British Colony.⁹ Therefore, Nova Scotians and New Englanders had answered to the same king for more than sixty years when revolution became the word of the day. Moreover, Nova Scotians were subject to the same laws and taxes as the other thirteen colonies. The Stamp Act was as real in Nova Scotia as it was in Boston, but when the thirteen colonies decided they had had enough, Nova Scotia failed to join in.

Religion also serves as a link between Nova Scotia and New England. Common religion has historically been one of the strongest bonds two people can have, and Nova Scotia shared such a bond with the other thirteen colonies. Since Nova Scotia today is part of Canada, many people automatically link this province to its Western neighbors who at the time were generally French and Catholic. Yet, Nova Scotia at the time of the American Revolution was neither. For some time the French Catholic Acadians were the dominant population group in Nova Scotia, but in 1755 Governor Lawrence got rid of this Catholic influence.¹⁰ Protestant Christianity then became the dominant religion in

⁸ George Rawlyk, *Nova Scotia's Massachusetts: A Study of Massachusetts-Nova Scotian Relations 1630-1784* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queens University Press, 1973), 220-222.

⁹ Brebner, *New England Outpost*, 60.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 200.

Nova Scotia; which was made even stronger with the influx of the New Englanders in the early 1760's. Therefore, religion stands as another strong tie between Nova Scotia and the rebellious thirteen colonies to the south.

Religion, common heritage and common experiences all seem to tie Nova Scotia and New England together with a very strong bond, and yet the two took very different paths at the crossroads of revolution. Colonies like Georgia and South Carolina arguably had less in common with Massachusetts than Nova Scotia did, but Georgia and South Carolina ultimately joined the American Union while Nova Scotia sat by and watched.

Previous Scholarship

As you might expect, this anomaly has attracted a great deal of attention. Numerous scholars have tried to explain why Nova Scotia did not join the American Revolution. One of the best attempts was by John Bartlett Brebner in 1937, in the form of a book entitled *Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia: A Marginal Colony During the Revolutionary Years*.¹¹ Another important book, written 40 years later, also made an attempt to explain the anomalous behavior of Nova Scotia. *A People Highly Favoured of God: The Nova Scotia Yankees and the American Revolution*¹² by George Rawlyk and Gordon Stewart, written in 1972, was created as a direct critique of John Brebner's 1937 book. These books ultimately embody the work done to date on the question of Nova Scotia's neutrality.

Any scholar wishing to better understand Nova Scotia during the American Revolution needs to become especially well acquainted with John Bartlett Brebner. His

¹¹ John Bartlett Brebner, *The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia: A Marginal Colony During the Revolutionary Years* (Columbia University Press, 1937; reprint New York: Russell & Russell, 1970).

¹² George Rawlyk and Gordon Stewart, *A People Highly Favoured of God: The Nova Scotia Yankees and the American Revolution* (Hamden, Connecticut: Shoe String Press Inc., 1972).

work has long been accepted as the authoritative account of Nova Scotia's neutrality during the American Revolution. Brebner's research is in-depth and insightful; reaching far back into the annals of Nova Scotian, and North American, history. His first book on the subject, *New England's Outpost: Acadia Before the Conquest of Canada*, was written in 1927.¹³ This book discusses the people who inhabited Nova Scotia before the large New England migration in the early 1760's: the Acadians. According to Brebner, the Acadians offer insight into understanding the behavior of Nova Scotians during the Revolution.

The Acadians were the first real inhabitants of Nova Scotia, founding Port Royal (later Annapolis) in 1605.¹⁴ These people were French Catholics, but tended to keep to themselves. They were very industrious people and were basically self-sufficient. Farming was the most important part of their lives and they became experts at building and repairing the levies and dams needed to farm the tidal areas around the Bay of Fundy. For the most part, the Acadians wanted nothing to do with international politics but in the heated battle for North America during the late 17th and early 18th centuries, these peace-loving farmers found themselves in the middle of a war.

The battle lines between the British and French in North America always seemed to hinge on Nova Scotia. No matter how far north or south the two powers pushed each other, the Acadians were never far from the front lines. Even though the colony was very much a remote frontier, populated by the recluse Acadians, Nova Scotia's location at the mouth of the St. Lawrence held the key to winning North America for both the French and British. Both sides struggled to gain the loyalty of the Acadians so they could

¹³ Brebner, *New England's Outpost*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

successfully hold onto the colony as a whole. From 1670-1710, Nova Scotia was controlled by the French. The Acadians had little trouble getting along with their fellow French Catholics, but continued to remain neutral in matters of international affairs. Then in 1710, British troops and New England colonials captured Port Royal and claimed Nova Scotia for England.

For years the British tried to make the Acadians swear an oath of allegiance to the British crown, but most refused. Many Acadians were willing to take a qualified oath that would allow them to abstain from taking up arms while still remaining loyal to England. But the British government wanted nothing to do with a qualified oath; either the Acadians would take an oath of loyalty to the British crown or they would be considered enemies. According to Brebner, the Acadians were in too weak of a position to take sides at all in the conflict, and therefore chose to remain neutral. For over 50 years they were able to avoid taking the oath and thereby maintained a stance of neutrality.

The Acadians were able to stay out of European affairs for many years; yet, as the 7 Year's War began to tighten its grip on North America, the French Acadians began to look more and more like a very real threat. Governor Lawrence saw the Acadians as a French stronghold in the heart of British North America. They had continually refused to take an oath of loyalty. This was seen as completely unacceptable and the Governor worked very hard to remove the threat. Acting without the permission and against the advice of his superiors in London, Lawrence rounded up all 10,000 Acadians and shipped them away. They were dropped off all over British North America and told to never return.

The story of the Acadian expulsion is a particularly distressing one deserving more attention than can be afforded here. The importance of this event for our purposes, however, lies in Brebner's interpretation of it as related to Nova Scotia's neutrality during the American Revolution. After studying the Acadian episode in Nova Scotian history, John Brebner found it odd that two very different people opted for a neutral stance in two different conflicts. His second book explores the conditions in Nova Scotia that led to neutrality during the American Revolution as compared to the conditions that dictated the Acadian's neutrality twenty years earlier. In Brebner's opinion, it was too much of a coincidence to believe that Nova Scotia's neutrality during the American Revolution was completely unrelated to the Acadian position of neutrality.

In his second book, *The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia*, John Brebner uses the Acadian situation as a frame of reference in attempting to answer the question of Nova Scotia's neutrality during the American Revolution.¹⁵ According to Brebner, Nova Scotians at the time of the Revolution suffered from the same problems as the Acadians before them. One of the biggest problems was the topography of the colony. Brebner argues that there was in fact no single Nova Scotia, for the settlements were spread out across a rocky peninsula and surrounded by dangerous seas.¹⁶ There were no roads connecting any of the settlements, because nobody wanted to build a road through the rocky terrain. Therefore, the best way to get from one place to another was by boat; but even traveling by sea was often dangerous. The settlements were essentially cut off from each other and were thereby unable to join together in a unified resistance movement; just like the Acadians before them.

¹⁵ Brebner, *The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia*, vii.

¹⁶ Brebner, *The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia*, 298.

John Brebner goes on to argue that economics played a key role in Nova Scotia's neutrality. The colony was rather poor and "so close to an even balance in production and consumption of agricultural produce that a bad season or an unusual demand made it an importer on a total agricultural balance."¹⁷ This lack of self-sufficiency at the agricultural level translated to all levels of the economy and Nova Scotia was unable to support itself. The merchants and the farmers alike were very aware of their poverty and resulting dependence.

Brebner argues that the entire colony was continuously and completely aware of this dependence, especially the merchants in Halifax. He argues that:

The Nova Scotia merchants did not have the sense of power enjoyed by the merchants to the south of them. They were dependent, for Nova Scotia, while productive, had almost no merchant marine of its own, little potential in manufacturing, and little accumulated capital. The merchants were too conscious of their dependence to initiate or to encourage boycotts or embargoes.¹⁸

The merchants knew that they were dependent on England for their livelihoods and therefore worked hard to maintain loyalty during the Revolution. Furthermore, these same merchants who were very aware of their dependent state were the people who held much of the power in the Nova Scotian government.¹⁹ One man in particular, Joshua Mauger, ran many of the businesses in Halifax and had many friends in positions of power. He practically owned the government and had a great deal of influence throughout the colony. Brebner argues that Mauger's influence played a key role in Nova Scotia's neutrality during the Revolution.

The merchants were not the only Nova Scotians aware of their economic problems. The general public was also very aware that they did not have a very stable

¹⁷ Ibid., 144.

¹⁸ Ibid., 156.

¹⁹ Ibid., 150.

economic situation. Brebner states that “The Nova Scotian public was rendered politically impotent by their poverty.”²⁰ The scattered and isolated out-settlements were so poor that they could not afford to properly represent themselves in the government at Halifax. Seats in the Assembly were declared vacant countless times when the representatives that were supposed to be occupying them could not afford to get away from their farms or fishing boats. Because of economics, the people were unable to properly represent themselves in government and therefore had to subject themselves to the rule of a merchant class which was overly aware of the colony’s dependence on England.

The geographic isolation of the settlements and economic problems of Nova Scotia as a whole during the period of 1750-1780 are very similar to the problems the Acadians faced. According to Brebner, “The Nova Scotian settlers were weak and exposed, and knowing this, like the Acadians whom they had supplanted, asked that the belligerents treat them as neutrals.”²¹ In the eyes of John Brebner, the story of Acadian neutrality is almost the exact same as the story of the Nova Scotian New Englander’s neutrality.

Habitual subservience to London is another important part of Brebner’s argument. Although it does not fit with the Acadian theme, Brebner states that the Nova Scotian government was in essence London’s lackey. From the beginning, Nova Scotia was intended to be a “bulwark against [the] rising insubordination of New England.”²² The government was comprised of a crown appointed governor, lieutenant governor, and a council appointed by the governor. In 1758, an elected assembly was added to the

²⁰ Ibid., 290.

²¹ Ibid., 314.

²² Ibid., 208.

government in order to make the colony more appealing to the prospective New England immigrants. However, even after the assembly was added, London kept a close eye on the laws passed in Nova Scotia. John Brebner, therefore, is arguing that Nova Scotia was basically born and bred to be a loyalist colony.

John Brebner's work is no doubt convincing, but having been written over 70 years ago his ideas can definitely stand to be re-examined. This is exactly what George Rawlyk and Gordon Stewart thought in 1972 when they co-authored their book entitled *A People Highly Favoured of God*. In this book, the two authors critique John Brebner's work and attempt to find their own answers to the question of Nova Scotia's neutrality during the American Revolution. In the introduction to the book they say, "Locked into his 'neutrality paradigm,' Brebner probably placed far too much stress on the strikingly similar response of the Acadians in 1755 and the Yankees in 1776."²³ The authors do admit that the factors pointed out by Brebner did impact the Yankees and Acadians in a similar way, but they argue that these factors should not be considered the only factors at play in Nova Scotia.

Instead, Rawlyk and Stewart come up with their own answer to the neutrality issue. Their answer comes in two parts. The first part is concerned with the timing of the New Englander's migration to Nova Scotia and what they encountered when they arrived. The second part of their answer deals with how religion played into the equation of neutrality. One of the biggest drawbacks to Brebner's work, according to these two authors, is the fact that religion was not even mentioned.

First, Rawlyk and Stewart look at the New Englander's who migrated to Nova Scotia. The majority of the population in Nova Scotia in 1776 came from New England

²³ Rawlyk and Stewart, *Highly Favoured of God*, xix.

in the years 1760-1763. Therefore, these authors wonder what made the Nova Scotian Yankees act differently than their New England brethren. What they came up with can be called the “Missing Decade” theory. This theory was first touched on by Wilfred Kerr in 1941²⁴, and argues that by moving in the early 1760’s the migrants missed out on a critical period in the development of the Revolutionary American spirit.

Rawlyk and Stewart go more in-depth into this idea of the “Missing Decade”. During this early 1760’s period, the New England migrants would not have experienced that growing sense of Americanism stirred up by the events like the Stamp Act riots. The authors say that, “By missing the critical decade of ideological and political development in New England, the Yankees found themselves locked into the pre-1765 conceptual framework they had left behind.”²⁵ The Nova Scotia Yankees were confused in 1776 and were unable to understand why their friends in New England were acting the way they were. Further adding to the confusion, Rawlyk and Stewart argue, the Nova Scotia Yankees were treated much differently in Nova Scotia than they were used to being treated in New England. Once they arrived in Nova Scotia, they were in a totally different colony. The authors argue that the government in Nova Scotia was much stricter than in the other 13 colonies, and the Nova Scotia Yankees were unable to argue for their rights because they were unsure what those rights actually were. Governor Lawrence, in his effort to attract settlers in 1759, promised New Englanders that they would enjoy in Nova Scotia every right that they were presently enjoying in New England. However, the promise was never set in writing and after Lawrence died in 1760, the settlers were subject to what was often considered arbitrary rule. The government at

²⁴ Wilfred Brenton Kerr, *Maritime Provinces of British North America and the American* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1941; reprint 1970), 124.

²⁵ Rawlyk and Stewart, *Highly Favoured of God*, 75.

Halifax was accused of being “a Junto of cunning and wicked men; whose views extend no farther than their own private Emolument, and who further the Distresses of the Community in order to promote a slavish Dependence on themselves.”²⁶

Rawlyk and Stewart argue that the settlements outside of Halifax in Nova Scotia were unable to choose their own officials and therefore could not properly govern themselves like they would have been able to do back in New England. Furthermore, the authors point to a number of petitions as evidence that the Yankees were trying to establish their rights in Nova Scotia as they had experienced them while living in New England.²⁷ As we know, most townships in the thirteen colonies held their town meetings and governed themselves locally. But the authors of *Highly Favoured of God* argue that the Yankees in Nova Scotia were unable to do so.

By missing out on a critical decade the Nova Scotia Yankees did not develop the American spirit that led the other colonies to independence. Furthermore, the lack of rights under the Nova Scotian government kept them in a weak position. Unable to even establish their rights much less claim that their rights had been violated, they were driven into a state of confusion that left them wanting something more.

Therefore, Rawlyk and Stewart argue, the Nova Scotia Yankees turned to religion. Religion is the key to Rawlyk and Stewart’s explanation of neutrality. They expanded on ideas first set forth by Maurice Armstrong. In 1946, Armstrong wrote an article entitled “Neutrality and Religion in Revolutionary Nova Scotia”, which discussed a Nova

²⁶ *An Essay on the Present State of the Province of Nova Scotia with some Strictures on the Measures pursued by Government from its First Settlement by the English in the Year 1749* (Halifax, 1774). quoted in Rawlyk and Stewart, *Highly Favoured of God*, 12.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

Scotian Great Awakening.²⁸ This article laid the foundation for all that Rawlyk and Stewart wrote in *Highly Favoured of God* regarding religion. Rawlyk and Stewart took Armstrong's ideas and expanded on them by saying that religion was the essential component in understanding Nova Scotia's neutrality, not just a secondary by-product of an already established neutral stance.

Highly Favoured of God argues that the problems which the Nova Scotia Yankees encountered, regarding their rights and their new government, left them confused. This confusion left people wondering who they were. Then in 1776 a man named Henry Alline starts a decade-long religious revival. This Nova Scotian Great Awakening told people that they were God's chosen people and that they were the ones who were to carry on the pure Protestant faith. Alline claimed that New England Protestantism had gotten lost, and New England herself "was no longer deserving either of respect or allegiance."²⁹ This message, started in 1776, gained much popularity throughout Nova Scotia. People began to believe that they were in God's good graces and that they needed to be the real "beacon on a hill."

Rawlyk and Stewart assert that this belief helped a confused people in troubled times find a sense of identity. That identity was defined in terms of being different from New England. Therefore, if Nova Scotian Yankees were defining themselves as separate from New England then it would obviously be very difficult to join in their Revolution.

In sum, Rawlyk and Stewart argue in their book that the Nova Scotia Yankees had missed a critical decade in America by moving to a colony where their rights were in question. The confusing situation they found themselves in opened them up to the

²⁸ Maurice Armstrong, "[Neutrality and Religion in Revolutionary Nova Scotia.](#)" *The New England Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (1946): 50-62. Database online. Available from JSTOR History.

²⁹ Rawlyk and Stewart, *Highly Favoured of God*, 191.

influence of a religious revival. Then a Nova Scotian Great Awakening turned many people away from the conflict to the south. Therefore, the Nova Scotia Yankees, confused by their place in the world, essentially turned to religion instead of revolution.

As we have seen, the explanations given for Nova Scotia's neutrality during the American Revolution to date have pointed to a variety of factors. Writing in the 1930's, John Brebner pointed to the geographic isolation and economic hardships in Nova Scotia as the main causes for neutrality. Rawlyk and Stewart synthesized a number of existing ideas into one explanation for neutrality. They argued that Brebner's work was wrong-or at least incomplete- and that the Yankees missed a critical decade, were therefore confused by the American Revolution, and as a result looked to religion for answers.

All of these explanations are good in their own right, but independently none of them can truly explain the behavior of Nova Scotia during the American Revolution. Brebner's geographic explanation is very sound, but some scholars have argued that some of the settlements in the thirteen colonies were just as geographically scattered as those in Nova Scotia but were still able to join in the revolution.³⁰ There is no doubt that the settlements were geographically isolated from each other, but this alone can not account for Nova Scotia's neutrality. Obviously Brebner recognized this fact when he added the strong argument for an economic explanation; but even an economic and geographic reasoning combined fall short of completely explaining Nova Scotia behavior.

Rawlyk and Stewart brought up another important issue in their attempt to explain Nova Scotian neutrality. Missing out on the political ideology that developed in the thirteen colonies during the early 1760's is a key part of their argument. However, the major emphasis in their book was on the religious aspect of Nova Scotian life. The

³⁰ Mancke, 67.

religious revival they discussed, however, did not start until 1776, long after the road away from revolution was paved. The Nova Scotian Great Awakening is not an explanation for Nova Scotian neutrality; rather it is an alternative to revolution. One which many people turned to *after* their neutral stance was already established. Moreover, Rawlyk and Stewart's "Missing Decade" theory is incomplete. The political ideology that allowed for revolution in the thirteen colonies did not develop out of thin air. It was inherent in the New England culture, as will be shown later in this paper. By moving when they did, the Nova Scotia Yankees did not miss out on the development of some magical "American" spirit. Rather, a political ideology already existed when they moved. Ultimately, *Highly Favoured of God* is on the right track but takes an unnecessary detour by considering Henry Alline's revival as part of the cause.

Another interesting attempt at explaining Nova Scotia's neutrality came in 2005 in the form of a book entitled *The Fault Lines of Empire* by Elizabeth Mancke. In this book the author draws comparisons between geographically isolated townships in northern Massachusetts and some townships in Nova Scotia. Mancke states that the townships in Massachusetts were just as isolated but still joined the revolution and therefore geography and topography should not be counted.

This book analyzes the political structure of these townships with relation to their connections with the top of the governmental order. In New England, people have their town meetings where they can make their own way, but in Nova Scotia the same heavy-handed government discussed by Rawlyk and Stewart keeps the people from having such power.

Fault Lines is a good historical analysis of the period and offers some valuable critiques of previous research, but by itself it cannot answer all the questions about Nova Scotia's neutrality. It falls short in the fact that it never gets down to the fundamental political beliefs. If the heavy-handed government were responsible for keeping Nova Scotians away from Revolution, one would think that logically the people would not have stood for it. Based on the political ideology that follows, it is clear that Mancke's explanation is not enough.

Political Ideology

For us to have a clear understanding of Nova Scotia's behavior during the American Revolutionary period we must weave the work of Brebner, Rawlyk and Stewart together with a clear understanding of the political ideology present in that colony. Furthermore, we must look at the way in which Nova Scotia experienced the events that led to revolution. Therefore, a synthesis of existing scholarship should be combined with an analysis of the political ideology and how the revolution-inducing events were experienced in Nova Scotia. It is only through this kind of a comprehensive analysis that we will truly be able to answer the question of why Nova Scotia did not become the fourteenth state.

In order to understand the political ideology in Nova Scotia we first need to look at the ideology which led thirteen other colonies to Revolution. In the 17th century, English revolutionaries such as John Locke, John Milton, and Algernon Sidney started a political tradition that became known as the "Real Whig" or "Commonwealthman" tradition. Greatly influenced by the Glorious Revolution in 1688, these writers were very concerned with protecting their rights as Englishmen. *Cato's Letters*, which consisted of

essays by John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, carried on this Real Whig tradition and by the 1760's were at the top of the list for required reading in the American colonies. Men like John Adams read *Cato's Letters* countless times throughout their lives.³¹

The Real Whig ideology laid out by these authors said that “government was created by the people to promote the public welfare.” This language is very familiar to Americans today. Our constitution, the highest political authority in the country, states that the government is of the people, and for the people. Whig ideology, which this statement is based on, also explains that “if magistrates failed to honor that trust, they automatically forfeited their powers back to the people, who were free and even obliged to reclaim political authority.” Furthermore, the people could do so using acts of limited resistance, or even all out revolution, if the situation called for it.³²

Throughout the 18th century people frequently called upon this right, or rather obligation as many saw it. If the local authorities failed to uphold what was best for the community, Whig ideology called for people to step in and reclaim that political power. In New Jersey and the Carolinas “massive rural uprisings” intervened to punish outlaws, secure land titles, or prevent the abuses of public officials. In Massachusetts and Virginia people rose up to protect their communities from the threat of smallpox when the actions of the local officials proved inadequate.³³ If the authorities failed to protect the common good of the community, the people were required to take action.

Resistance to imperial rule was also a frequent occurrence. Colonists resisted impressments by the Royal Navy with exceptional vehemence. In one particularly

³¹ Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 27.

³² *Ibid.*, 28.

³³ *Ibid.*, 4.

surprising episode in 1767, a number of colonists came together to protect a man who had recently been impressed into the Royal Navy and who had just escaped from his “captors.” When a few sailors came into the wharf to bring the man back, the crowd captured that boat’s officer, and threw stones at the crew. Then a few in the group went to the nearby fort and turned the guns on the King’s ship.³⁴ Another ship, the *Gaspee*, was burned when it ran aground in 1772 because of the way the crew had treated the colonists. In both situations the crowd came together to act for common good. And in both situations the local magistrates refused to or were unable to do anything against what was seen as Royal authority, so the crowds took matters into their own hands.

Citizens needed to be ever-willing to stand up for their own well-being. If a law was passed or if officials acted in a way that was not in the best interest of the community then the people needed to let officials know it. The smallest offense against the public good needed to cause alarm, according to Whig ideology, because “if it is suffered once, it will be apt to be repeated often; a few repetitions create habit; habit claims proscription and right.”³⁵ It was accepted that human error was possible in the making of laws. But even so, bad government needed to be resisted at every turn; for tyranny was “much easier to prevent than to cure.”³⁶

People had to defy bad laws and rulers because history told them what would happen if they did not resist. The past offered many examples of tyranny, and everyone knew how difficult life under a tyrant could be. They looked at despots such as Caesar, Caligula, Nero, and especially to England’s own Stuart kings. Their stories all had

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁵ Thomas Gordon, *Works of Tacitus*, I, 128, quoted in Maier, 43.

³⁶ John Locke, “Second Treatise of Government,” *Two Treatises of Government*, para. 224, quoted in Maier, 43.

common threads which acted as warning signs for future threats on freedom. Such tyrannical foreshadowing included, but was not limited to: governmental corruption, or pursuit of private interests at public cost; taxes without popular consent; arbitrary or unfair courts; Popish plots, or promoting of Roman Catholicism; interfering with the press; and standing armies. If any of these warning signs appeared, lovers of liberty needed to take notice and resist at any cost.³⁷

Yet, it would be wrong to over-emphasize the importance of resistance in Whig ideology; for resisting bad government is only half of the story. The restraint required of would-be revolutionaries is by far the most important part of Whig thought. It is easy to look at the part of Whiggism that calls for resistance and see anti-authoritarian anarchists. But in reality, a great deal of emphasis was put on the need for people to first exhaust existing avenues for seeking redress. Then, only if the offenses continued and the people were convinced that there was a tyrant in the making, could resistance be justified.

The restraint emphasized by Whigs called for citizens to “judge charitably the human faults of the magistrate, to be cautious and even hesitant before refusing submission to his rule.”³⁸ It was forbidden for individuals to use force against a ruler for private injuries or personal dislike for said ruler. Moreover, if an error was made and bad legislation was passed, it did not necessarily mean that the ruler was a despot in the making. Rather than immediately taking to arms Whiggism told people to step back and give the ruler the benefit of the doubt.

Furthermore, people were to consider the general trend of their ruler’s actions. It would have been easy for people to see any single action as the act of a tyrant, but Whig

³⁷ Maier, 44-46.

³⁸ Maier, 43.

ideology told people to be hesitant of resorting to forceful resistance. They were to recall the historical indicators of despotism and thereby judge the general trend, not any single act, of a ruler. In essence, this was a failsafe which gave people time to stop and think before rushing into revolution. However, if a ruler's actions generally tended toward the tyrannical indicators of the past, then people needed to resist.

The paradox created by this contradictory call for restraint and resistance was one of the most difficult things for Whigs to reconcile. They emphasized the presence of an ever-ready willingness to resist authority, while at the same time putting even greater emphasis on restraint and order. Ultimately the decision to resist authority did not rest in the hands of a few, but rather in the hands of the masses. Most Whig writers agreed that the whole body of the people or a broad, even unanimous, consensus involving all ranks of society must be in support of resistance before any moves against the governor can be made.³⁹ Even once the masses agreed on resistance, caution needed to be exercised. John Locke wrote that “a long train of Abuses, Prevarications, and Artifices, all tending the same way” making the “design visible to the People” was necessary before they could “rouze themselves, and endeavor to put the rule into such hands, which may secure to them the ends for which Government was at first erected.”⁴⁰

By the 18th century, political thought in the American colonies was very much aligned with the writings of these Real Whig authors. Whiggism had become almost a way of life. Moreover, an understanding of this driving ideology makes it much clearer why colonists reacted the way they did in the years preceding the revolution. Without this ideological framework, the actions of the American colonies seem almost irrational

³⁹ Ibid., 35-36.

⁴⁰ Locke, *Second Treatise*, quoted in Maier, 36.

or paranoid. But the colonists were truly worried by the actions of the crown. They adhered to the Whig principles of restraint and order and appealed to the government and to the King himself, through countless petitions and peaceful demonstrations. But ultimately, the colonists became convinced that there was a despot on the throne and that they could all become slaves in the very near future.

Yet, not all the British colonies were convinced that their freedom was at stake. With Whiggism requiring an elevated level of restraint and order, there is obviously a rather high threshold to overcome before resistance and revolution can be justified. Events like England leaving a standing army in North America, the Sugar Act, the Stamp Act, the Boston Massacre, and the Coercive Acts combined with England's behavior abroad were enough to break that threshold for the thirteen colonies. Why, then, did these same events not break the threshold for the colonies like Nova Scotia? There can only be two answers to this question: either Whig ideology was not present in Nova Scotia, or the events themselves were not experienced in the same way.

With regard to the existence of Whig ideology in Nova Scotia, the presence of a large number of New Englanders serves as evidence for the fact that Whiggism was alive and well in that colony. As we have seen, Whig ideology was a very large part of every colonist's life. Whenever the common good was in danger, the colonists knew they had to act. Moreover, fully one half of the population in Nova Scotia in 1765 had come directly from New England less than five years earlier. When the Boston Stamp Act riots occurred, these Nova Scotia Yankees were less than five years removed from the hotbed of resistance; and since we know that this resistance was driven by Whig ideology, it is safe to say that they were only five years removed from direct Whig influence. Therefore,

it is impossible to believe that a philosophy as important to everyday life as Whig ideology could be all-together lost in less than 5 years.

Therefore, it is obvious that the events that led to revolution in the thirteen colonies were not enough to break the threshold of restraint in Nova Scotia. Thus the real reason for Nova Scotia's neutrality is that in one way or another these events were simply not experienced the same way as they were in the other colonies; making it impossible, based on their Whig ideology, to justify revolution. There was, of course, some localized resistance, but since Whig ideology required the "whole body of the people" to support resistance before revolution can occur, Nova Scotians were incapable of joining the American Cause.

The Events

One of the first acts of government to upset colonists was the Proclamation of 1763. This act of Parliament prohibited the colonies from establishing any settlements west of the Appalachian Mountains. Furthermore, any colonists already settled there were to return to the east immediately. After many years of war, this act was intended to ease tensions with the Native Americans. However, many saw it as an unnecessary attempt by Parliament to assert their power in the region. The Proclamation was seen as damaging to the common good and so Whigs in the affected colonies obviously took issue with it. But Nova Scotia was not one of those colonies that took issue with the Proclamation. By looking at a map, one can easily see that Nova Scotia did not share a boundary with the disputed area. While some may have had a problem with the whole principle behind the Proclamation, nobody would have felt that their own community's well-being was at risk. Moreover, Nova Scotia was largely a frontier in and of itself.

There were only a few thousand people to occupy a territory as large as New England. Many of the inhabitants had only recently settled down and consequently had no interest in moving to the area west of the Appalachians. Therefore, when Whig ideology was upset in some of the other colonies, Nova Scotia took little notice.

Furthermore, a standing army was to remain in the American colonies following the conclusion of the Seven Years' War. The British government saw it necessary to leave an army in North America in order to protect this newly acquired treasure. Of course, Whig thinkers throughout many of the colonies were not happy with the idea that a standing army would be left in their own backyard; for a standing army was considered the most important indicator of tyranny. If a government could not rely on the traditional means of maintaining order and instead needed an army to carry out its wishes, then that government was absolutely seeking arbitrary power. Thus, it is easy to understand why some colonies were put on edge by Britain's decision.

However, the army and Navy that were left in North America benefited Nova Scotia greatly and therefore did not excite Whig ideologists to the same extent. The poverty that John Brebner discussed in his explanation of Nova Scotia's neutrality helps to illustrate why the troops were not seen as that big of a threat to people's freedom. Brebner's research told us that the colony was unable to sustain itself and that the people were extremely aware of this inability. He told us that consumption and production were on such a tight balance that an unusual demand or bad year would put the colony in the deep in debt.

The impoverished nature of Nova Scotia, therefore, makes it clear that the money spent by the troops in the colony could only benefit that colony. When the troops were

called away to Boston in 1768 the governor of Nova Scotia, William Campbell, explained in a letter just how dependent the colony was on the presence of the soldiers. Many of the people in Nova Scotia were so poor that their “chief dependence was the circulating cash spent by the troops.”⁴¹ It was clear to the governor that without the money spent by the troops, the Nova Scotian economy would be in a very difficult position.

As we know, Halifax was one of the chief military stations in North America during the American Revolution. The people of Nova Scotia were in fact very poor, as Brebner stated; and as such the people of Nova Scotia saw the presence of British troops as an economic advantage, not a threat on their liberty. Some people in Nova Scotia no doubt saw the standing army as worrisome to their Whig beliefs, but given the general economic situation in Nova Scotia it is safe to say that most people would have seen dollars and cents, not a need to revolt.

The next major incident that Whig ideologists took issue with was the so-called Sugar Act passed in 1764. This Act was put into practice to help pay off the massive debt England had acquired fighting the Seven Years’ War. The most troublesome part of the Sugar Act was the establishment of a 3d. per gallon tax on foreign molasses⁴². This act actually brought the tax down from 6d. per gallon, which was established by the previous regulatory laws. Although the Sugar Act did bring down the price of the tax, enforcement would be much stricter; therefore having the same effect as actually raising the tax. Colonists had been able to avoid paying the 6d. tax by smuggling molasses in at

⁴¹ Campbell to Hillsborough, September 12, 1768, MS Volume 43, no. 49: *Report on Canadian Archives*, 1894, 290, quoted in Emily P. Weaver, “Nova Scotia and New England During the Revolution,” *The American Historical Review* 10, no. 1 (October 1904): 60.

⁴² 3d. means 3 pence.

a cost estimated at around 1.5d per gallon. Parliament, in hopes of raising more money, set the tax at a level they thought the colonies could afford, while increasing anti-smuggling efforts.⁴³ This was intended to make the colonists pay the duty to England, rather than giving that money to smugglers.

Many in the thirteen colonies were upset by the economic damage these taxes would bring. The 3d. tax was too high for anyone to pay, and the tougher smuggling enforcement meant that the price of smuggling also went up. When this economic blow was coupled with the other trade restrictions-on foreign indigo, sugar, coffee and textiles-as well as with the already present economic depression, many colonies found themselves in a very tough spot. They were worried that these increased efforts to earn revenue off colonial trade would endanger their livelihoods.

The difficult situation brought on by the Stamp Act is a perfect example of a perceived threat to the common good, against which Whig ideology urged action. It was clear to many in the colonies that this act would hurt the well-being of their communities, and so they needed to do something. Furthermore, unfair taxes were another key indicator of tyranny. Since the duty was set at a price too high to pay, people were obviously upset and thereby started questioning the fairness of the tax itself. Did Parliament even have the authority to tax the colonies? Should the ability to tax not be left to the colonial Assemblies? These questions were only raised because the effect of the Act was too severe. Some have argued that many colonies would have “been content to overlook it had the duty been set at 1d. a gallon instead of 3d.”⁴⁴ If the colonies had

⁴³ Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953), 26.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

not been so threatened economically by the Sugar Act, they would not have been as inclined to resist authority.

Furthermore, the Sugar Act is one of the first, and arguably most important, events that led to the revolution. It was in reaction to this Act that the question of unfair taxes was first raised in that critical decade prior to the revolution. This is one of the key first steps down the long trail that brought Whig ideologists to believe in a despotic plot. If this first step was not taken, then the colonists' reaction to later revenue acts, like the Stamp Act, might have been very different.

Naturally, this leads us to the question of how the Sugar Act affected people in Nova Scotia. If we examine how the act impacted other colonies, then we can better understand what effect it had on Nova Scotia. Rhode Island provides an excellent example because, much like Nova Scotia, she was very dependent on her distilleries for profit. Rhode Island had more than 30 distilleries whose high demands could only be satisfied by importing more than 4/5 of its supply of molasses--the key ingredient in making rum--from foreign ports.⁴⁵ The sheer number of distilleries in Rhode Island is what necessitated the import of so much foreign molasses. Obviously the new laws would hurt the economy of Rhode Island, and realizing so she was one of the first to cry out against the Sugar Act.

Nova Scotia, on the other hand, had only two distilleries needing to import molasses.⁴⁶ Furthermore, these two distilleries were owned and operated by a man named Joshua Mauger, who in many ways ran Nova Scotia. John Brebner discussed the importance of Joshua Mauger and his control over the rum industry in his book, *Neutral*

⁴⁵ Ibid., 27.

⁴⁶ Francklin to Hillsborough, July 11, 1768, *Report on Canadian Archives*, 1894, 287, quoted in Weaver, 56.

Yankees. But he argued that Mauger was able to use his influence in Nova Scotia to directly steer her clear of Revolution. There is no doubt about the importance of Mauger or his impact on the rum industry, but it would be too generous to say that one man had enough influence to make Nova Scotia neutral by himself. Instead, Joshua Mauger is important because he changed the way Nova Scotian Whigs saw the Sugar Act.

Most important of Joshua Mauger's characteristics is his close tie to London. He was Nova Scotia's chief influence on the firm of Watson and Rashleigh, which almost monopolized London's exports to Halifax. Second, he was able to convince John Pownall and the Board of Trade that he was the one reliable guide on Nova Scotian affairs.⁴⁷ This influence in London would have been sufficient to obtain favorable trade agreements for his distilleries. He was very interested in protecting his investments, at whatever cost,⁴⁸ and would have fought hard to supply his distilleries with the cheapest molasses possible. Because there were only two distilleries in Nova Scotia, the need to import foreign molasses would have been significantly lower. Whatever limited demand these two distilleries had, could easily have been satisfied by the cheaper English molasses; which would have benefited Mauger, who would pay less, as well as London, who would receive more money from an increase in the payment of duties.

In addition to having good connections in London, Joshua Mauger also controlled much of Nova Scotia. In Nova Scotia, Joshua Mauger was *the* distiller and had a great deal of influence over the merchants. Furthermore, it was mainly the merchants and the distillers who cried out against the Sugar Act in the thirteen colonies. But in Nova Scotia, there was no outcry from the distillers, because Mauger was the distiller, and there was

⁴⁷ Brebner, *The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia*, 150.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

no outcry from the merchants, because many of them answered directly to Mauger.

Therefore, what Brebner said about Joshua Mauger's influence is true, but only part of the story.

Through his connections in London and his influence in Halifax, Mauger was able to change the way Nova Scotia experienced the Sugar Act. Ultimately, what was good for Joshua Mauger and his distilleries was also good for warding off a Whig plan to revolt.⁴⁹ Joshua Mauger was not able to just convince everyone to be loyal because of his level of influence. Rather, in trying to protect his distilleries and a weak Nova Scotian economy, he was able to make the Sugar Act appear less threatening. In the other colonies merchants became angry because the Sugar Act threatened their business and community. But in Nova Scotia, Joshua Mauger made it so that the tax on molasses was not seen as a complete outrage. Mauger effectively shielded the rest of the colony from the most troublesome part of the Sugar Act, the tax on molasses. Therefore, Whig ideology told people to be hesitant in resisting the law, because it only posed a limited threat to the community's well-being.

Another important aspect of the Sugar Act was the redefinition of the judicial system in the colonies. As part of its increased efforts to stop smuggling and thereby increase revenue, Parliament clearly defined the jurisdiction of existing admiralty courts to include cases involving Acts of Trade. For years smugglers were able to avoid the admiralty courts, which tried cases by rule of a judge instead of a jury, by taking advantage of an ambiguity in a statute from 1697. Instead they were able to have their case heard by a local court with a trial by jury. Then, finding themselves in front of a

⁴⁹ Ibid., 150-152.

largely sympathetic jury, smugglers would often get off free. The Sugar Act redefined the law so the admiralty courts could legally try all smuggling cases.

Yet, the authors of the Act were concerned that the judges in the existing courts were too open to local influences. To remedy this situation, a new admiralty court in Halifax was established to try cases where the prosecutors were concerned with the judge's local biases. Therefore, the court at Halifax had jurisdiction over all of the British North American colonies and anyone caught for smuggling could be shipped off to Halifax to be tried. If the defendant did not show up, a guilty verdict was automatically handed down.⁵⁰

Obviously, Whig ideologists in many of the colonies were concerned over the establishment of unfair courts. The judicial fallout from the Sugar Act was extremely threatening to the common good which Whigs pledged to defend. Redefining the jurisdiction of the vice-admiralty courts to include smuggling cases was indeed scary, but by far the most threatening aspect of the judicial reconfiguring was the establishment of the new court in Halifax. The threat of being sent to Nova Scotia for smuggling no matter where you were caught was extremely scary for many colonists. Moreover, as we have already seen, a threat to the well-being of the community translated into a justification for Whigs to resist the perceived threat on their liberty.

However, this threat on liberty was not as apparent in all colonies. The establishment of a new court in Halifax was in no way threatening to Nova Scotians. It could only bring money to an impoverished colony. This situation is comparable to modern cities who lobby hard for the Olympics to be held in their arenas. While it can be an expensive endeavor to host the Olympics, the benefits often outweigh the costs.

⁵⁰ Morgan and Morgan, 24.

Similarly, a new court in Nova Scotia would require the people to potentially sacrifice part of their freedom for the chance to have a profitable new institution established in their capitol.

Furthermore, the new court in Halifax provided a local court that might be more lenient than a court in Boston. If Parliament had decided to give the vice-admiralty court in South Carolina jurisdiction over all of the colonies, then Nova Scotia may have been more upset. But they did not, and people in Nova Scotia were more likely to be called to Halifax for court than to some other far-off colony; which would definitely offer Nova Scotians with a different way of seeing the judicial part of the Sugar Act.

Again, we have to remember that Whig ideology was first concerned with the well-being of the community, and when this was threatened the question of resistance was raised in order to ward off despotism. Since the establishment of a court in Halifax was bound to bring money into the colony, the community's well-being was not being threatened. In addition, the court in Halifax provided an alternative to being tried in Boston, saving Nova Scotians a long and sometimes dangerous trip. Thus, Nova Scotia could only benefit from the establishment of a court at Halifax, making it even more difficult for people to get upset over the Sugar Act.

Obviously there were some hard-core Whigs in Nova Scotia who would have been upset with the idea of the Sugar Act based on Whig ideology's concern of unfair taxation and unfair courts leading to despotism. But overall, the Sugar Act did not mean the same thing in Nova Scotia as it did to South Carolina or Rhode Island. If Nova Scotians were not as economically threatened by the Sugar Act, they would definitely not have brought up the question of the act's legality or fairness. Furthermore, the fact that

the new courts benefited Nova Scotia kept Whigs from worrying about the well-being of their community. Therefore, Whig ideologists would have been less inclined to join the resistance movement in the other colonies. And since resistance to the Sugar Act paved the way for increased resistance to the numerous revenue acts that followed, missing out on the Sugar Act would be a big blow to any build-up of momentum toward revolution.

Momentum toward revolution took a big step forward in the thirteen colonies with the Stamp Act of 1765. By 1765, many of the colonies in British North America had already taken issue with British authority several times over. Whig thinking had told people to be wary of Royal rule, based on what had happened in the last few years. A standing army had been left in North America; a seemingly arbitrary line had been drawn through many of the colony's back yards and they were told not to cross it; an economically devastating duty on molasses and other trade goods had raised the question of Parliament's right to tax the colonies; and the judicial system had been changed to include a new "unfair" court in Halifax. All of these events told Whigs that something may be wrong with their government in London. Then the Stamp Act was passed.

The Stamp Act of 1765 is often considered the first time the thirteen colonies really resisted British authority. This may be, but reaction to the Stamp Act can only be understood by first acknowledging the importance of the events that preceded it. Because of the way many of the colonies had experienced the events mentioned above, Whigs were already worried about having to protect their freedoms by the time the Stamp Act came to be. The widespread resistance, as seen in the Stamp Act riots in the fall of 1765, did not develop on their own. It would have been impossible for Whigs to have developed a level of opposition as strong as they did in 1765 if they had not first been put

on alert by the standing army, the Sugar Act, and the Proclamation of 1763. If any of the thirteen colonies had not been so affected by these events then they would never have been so concerned with passage of the Stamp Act; because Whig ideology put great emphasis on restraint and urged people to judge the general trend of the laws, not just one or two of them independently.

Therefore, Nova Scotia's reaction to the Stamp Act would be different simply because they had not experienced the events preceding it in the same fashion. The Stamp Act angered colonists not just because it was the first time they would have to pay taxes directly to England, but also because it was another step in a long line of grievances. Yet in Nova Scotia those previous steps were not as grievous, making the Stamp Act appear less threatening. Therefore, in 1765, when other colonies were already well down the road toward revolution, Nova Scotia was already a few steps behind. And in the other colonies each additional grievance was compounded by the others before it, so the need for resistance and revolution grew exponentially, leaving Nova Scotia behind.

Even though the Stamp Act was seen as less threatening because of the limited impact of the events before it, Nova Scotian Whigs did take issue with it to a certain extent. On October 13, 1765, an effigy of the Halifax stamp-man was found hanging from a tree; much like that found of Andrew Oliver hanging from the "Liberty Tree" in Boston two months earlier.⁵¹ Yet this was the extent of the resistance in Halifax. Despite the best efforts of the printer of the *Halifax Gazette*-who printed accounts of the Stamp Act riots in other colonies on a weekly basis-no popular uprising took place in Nova Scotia. In the paper for the week of November 14 the *Halifax Gazette* stated:

⁵¹ Massachusetts Gazette, November 21, 1765, quoted in Wilfred B. Kerr "The Stamp Act in Nova Scotia," *The New England Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (September 1933): 557.

We have no more news relating to public Affairs, only, that the Stamp Act Works are going forward, though much against the inclination of the people in general, who wait with great impatience to hear the happy news of the Stamp Act being repealed, which would fill the breast of every loyal subject, and friend of Liberty, with joy and Gladness!-May the happy day be near at Hand.⁵²

Then when news of the repeal of the Stamp Act reached Nova Scotia, there was much rejoicing, just as the *Gazette* had predicted. A merchant at Yarmouth, one of Nova Scotia's out-settlements, wrote that there was a party and a large bon-fire, which "continued all night, and part of next, carousing."⁵³ There was obviously some concern over the Stamp Act, yet not enough to start a strong resistance movement. Part of the explanation is the limited impact of the events of 1763-1765, but also the Stamp Act itself was not experienced in the same way as in the other colonies.

First we must look at the kind of people who were the most upset by the Stamp Act in the other colonies. In colonies like Massachusetts, it was the manufacturers and the merchants who were most impacted by the Stamp Act. Nova Scotia, however, had a limited number of manufacturers and merchants. A letter from the Lieutenant-Governor, Michael Franklin, listed the total number of manufacturers in Nova Scotia as five in number, two of which were Mauger's distilleries. And if the number of manufacturers is an indicator of the number of merchants, then we can assume this important part of revolutionary culture was also rather limited in number. As a result, the segment of society that was most severely impacted by the Stamp Act in the other colonies was not as important in Nova Scotia. Therefore, it is clear that the number of people in Halifax impacted by the Stamp Act would have been rather small, making it very difficult for the Whigs there to have experienced this important event in the same way.

⁵² *Halifax Gazette*, 14 November-21 November 1765.

⁵³ *The Diary of Simeon Perkins, 1766-1780*, ed. Harold A. Innis (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1948), 3.

Second we must look outside the capitol at the out-settlements. By 1765, the out settlements had developed a rather unofficial way of ruling themselves. Officially, Halifax was in control of legal matters-- like land distribution, title allocations, etc-- in many of the settlements. But people in those townships had learned that they could unofficially take care of their own business, as long as they did not cause too much trouble. If they started to cause too much commotion, however, officials at Halifax could step in at any time and enforce the laws forbidding townships from fulfilling those duties.⁵⁴ Therefore, with their unofficial self-rule at risk, they would have seen the Stamp Act as something that was not worth getting upset about.

As we can see, the Stamp Act did not mean the same thing to Nova Scotians. First, they had not been upset by the events before it, which kept Whigs from seeing a general trend toward tyranny in the first place. Therefore, even before the Stamp Act controversy had started, it was a foregone conclusion that Nova Scotians would see it differently. Second, the manufacturers and merchants in Halifax were too few in number to cause any general concern in the minds of Whigs throughout the colony. Third, the out-settlements were too caught up in maintaining their precarious self-rule to risk causing trouble over the Stamp Act. All of these conditions together made it impossible for Whigs to resist the Stamp Act in Nova Scotia.

Considering the way events unfolded in the thirteen colonies, this belief perfectly explains why Whigs justified resisting British authority. The way events unfolded in Nova Scotia *also* fits precisely with Whig political thought. Neither the standing army, the Proclamation of 1763, the Sugar Act, nor the Stamp Act affected Nova Scotia enough to excite Whig resistance; therefore, the blueprint for revolution was never complete. At

⁵⁴ Mancke, 72.

the risk of over-simplifying a very complex situation we can look at the American Revolution as a mathematical equation. The end product is obviously the revolution itself, but on the other side of the equal sign would be all the events that worried Whigs enough to call for revolution, such as: a standing army, unfair taxes, unfair courts, and so on. In the colonies that ultimately joined the revolution, all of these events were experienced in such a way as to worry a number of Whig thinkers enough to call for resistance. Each event added to the one before it brought the equation that much closer to revolution. Ultimately, all of the events filled the equation, resulting in revolution. However, if one or two of those events were missing, the equation would be thrown off and the end product would be something other than revolution.

In the case of Nova Scotia, the revolutionary equation just did not add up. A number of the events needed to justify revolution were experienced in a totally different way. Whig ideology told people to be hesitant in disobeying authority, thereby making it clear that everyone needed to be totally convinced of wrong-doing before resistance could be justified. Pauline Maier put it best when she said:

Naturally, the Real Whigs' justification of resistance could reinforce the colonists' tendency to condone uprisings where authorities were unresponsive to public needs. In fact, however, the Whigs' contrary emphasis on order and restraint counteracted any tendency toward a too-ready resort to force.⁵⁵

Since the events in Nova Scotia were not as threatening to the well-being of the community, the threshold of restraint could not be broken and the "contrary emphasis on order and restraint" took over. Even by 1765 Nova Scotia was too far behind to catch up to the soon-to-be revolutionaries to the south. Whigs in the thirteen colonies were

⁵⁵ Maier, 28.

already on the alert for indicators of a despotic plot, while Nova Scotian Whigs still needed more convincing.

It is important to note that this explanation is not saying that these events were all seen in a totally different way by all Nova Scotians. The people of Nova Scotia were not completely ignorant of the events as they were experienced outside their own colony. And therefore, they would have been aware of the fact that the events they were experiencing were actually very upsetting to some like-minded people. There is no doubt that many of these events did in fact upset many people in Nova Scotia. But, it is the argument of this author that, in general, these events were experienced in a manner just different enough to allow for the Whig ideal of order and restraint to prevent Nova Scotia from joining the Revolution. Even if only one or two of these events were experienced in a slightly different manner, it would still have been impossible for Whig thinkers in Nova Scotia to have allowed for revolution.

Throughout the next decade, Whigs in the thirteen colonies grew increasingly worried with the actions of the Crown. Events unfolded exactly as called for by Whig ideology: petitions and peaceful protests grew into mass uprisings; uprisings grew into armed resistance; then on April 19, 1775 armed resistance turned to all-out revolution. Ever-ready to take that next step in protecting their freedom, Whigs still called for restraint and order. But, because of the way Nova Scotia experienced the events in the early 1760's, she was stuck on the call for restraint and order. By the time war was declared, Nova Scotia was too far behind to justify joining the Revolution.

Conclusion

History is all about understanding how the world has come to be the way it is today. Moreover, most historians hope that their scholarship will significantly add to this general understanding. Answering the question of why Nova Scotia did not join the American Revolution does in fact significantly enhance our understanding of the world today. It is obviously important for the people living in Nova Scotia to understand why their province responded the way it did during those volatile years. Anyone living there today can look back at how Nova Scotia acted during the American Revolution and better understand who they are as Nova Scotians. Similarly, Americans can look at this episode in history as a way to better understand why the United States came to be the way it is today. But the importance of this topic is even greater than just that.

In today's global community, every individual around the world is impacted by the actions of everyone else. What if the way Nova Scotia experienced the Revolutionary era was the norm in the thirteen colonies and not the exception? What if there had been no American Revolution? Without a United States, as we know it today, what would the world be like? Everyone around the world today has been impacted by the United States or Canada in one way or another. And if some of the events that led to revolution in the thirteen colonies were experienced differently, as they were in Nova Scotia, then maybe there would never have been a United States. It is essential that everyone knows who they are the way they are today, and by examining Nova Scotia during the 1760's and 70's we can better appreciate the American Revolution as the important piece of living history that it is. Everyone has been touched by this event in some way, making it one of the most important chapters in all the history books.

Historians like John Brebner, George Rawlyk and Gordon Stewart realized the importance of understanding Nova Scotia's behavior during the American Revolution. They worked hard over the last seventy years to try and explain why this colony, so similar to New England, did not unite with the other colonies. Their work brought us very close to a complete understanding of the situation, but after analyzing all their research it becomes clear that something is missing. This paper was written in hopes of discovering and explaining that missing piece.

Ultimately, it has been made quite clear that the piece missing was the ideology that led to revolution in the other colonies. This ideology gives us a clear lens through which Nova Scotia's experiences can be seen. Once we understand how Nova Scotia's experiences fit into their political ideology we can understand why they did not join the revolution. Yet this paper is only a starting point. Much more research is needed before we can understand how events like the Sugar Act, or the Stamp Act were experienced in Nova Scotia. The lack of records from the time period makes it rather difficult to analyze the exact impact of such events, but minutes from town meetings or petitions to Halifax, if found, could offer some important insight. There is a great deal that is waiting to be discovered and we have by no means exhausted all possibilities.

In summary, we have seen that previous research, while significant, could not explain why Nova Scotia did not join their New England brethren in the fight for independence. None of the pieces were sufficient by themselves. But we have seen the need to weave this previous scholarship together with an understanding of Whig ideology in order to understand how important events were experienced in Nova Scotia. Only through such a comprehensive analysis will the behavior of Nova Scotia during the

American Revolution make sense. This paper serves as the first step toward truly understanding why the 'shot heard round the world' fell on deaf ears in the colony of Nova Scotia.

APPENDIX A



Map of New England and Nova Scotia from “Google Maps.”

<http://maps.google.com/maps?ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&hl=en&tab=wl&q=>
(accessed 4-19-2007).



Map of Nova Scotia and the American Colonies during the Revolution.
<http://www.loyno.edu/~seduffy/MapImages/AmericanRevolution-display.jpg>

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