

NEW YORK
AT WAR

FOUR CENTURIES *of* COMBAT,
FEAR, *and* INTRIGUE *in* GOTHAM

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All of these issues would persist, under new guises. The Dutch had come to Manhattan singing a discordant medley of Calvinist hymns and lusty tavern ballads. Often, in their years of building homes and trading goods, they had found that they were singing those songs to the martial beat of a soldier's drum. That drumbeat would continue sounding, keeping time now to English rather than Dutch melodies.

CHAPTER 3

Key and Bulwark

New York in the English Empire, 1664–1774

With cannon thundering, the *Adventure Galley* neared its prey. William Kidd's crewmen readied themselves to board the targeted vessel. The date was August 15, 1697; the place was the Babs-al-Mandab, the narrow strait separating the Red Sea from the Gulf of Aden off the coast of Yemen. Kidd's vessel, almost a year out of New York, was closing in on a large Indian merchant ship, heavy with its cargo of coffee, ivory, spices, and gold, and its Muslim merchants returning home from their pilgrimage to Mecca.¹

The 150-man crew aboard the *Galley* preparing for hand-to-hand combat was a mixed group. About half were English and European sailors Kidd had hired in London. The other half were mostly New Yorkers, men like shoemakers John Burton and William Wakeman, carpenter Edward Grayham, and seaman and tavern keeper Edward Buckmaster. They were a mix of young tradesmen and mariners bent on profit and adventure and, perhaps, fleeing the hardships of a recession-plagued economy in New York. Some of them were neighbors of Kidd's from Manhattan streets fronting the East River wharves.

Kidd sailed from New York with the blessings of some of the city's (as well as some of London's) most powerful men and with two government commissions. One was a letter of marque, a certificate issued with admiralty approval legally permitting and encouraging Kidd to

attack and seize any French vessels he might encounter. England had been at war with France now for eight years, and such privateering licenses were viewed by English officials and colonists alike as useful weapons in the imperial arsenal, as well as potential sources of great profit to the ship owners, captains, and crew lucky enough to capture a well-laden French cargo vessel. The other document, arranged by Whig parliamentary leaders with the approval of King William III, directed Kidd to apprehend four pirate vessels believed to be operating in the Red Sea.²

Ironically, three of the four pirate captains named and targeted in Kidd's commission had themselves sailed from New York as privateers authorized to attack French shipping. Their letters of marque had been issued by New York's increasingly disgraced royal governor Benjamin Fletcher. Fletcher had become notorious for the friendly reception he accorded pirates—a mutually beneficial reception, since the governor pocketed a share of pirate loot in exchange for providing safe haven. Although Fletcher justified his public coach rides through Manhattan streets with one pirate captain by explaining that he was endeavoring to cure the man of his “vile habit of swearing,” London was not amused. Nor was it amused by evidence that a sizeable number of Manhattan merchants (including Frederick Philipse, one of the richest and most politically influential men in the colony) were doing a brisk trade in the looted silks, calicoes, spices, ivory, sugar, and slaves brought for sale by Indian Ocean pirates, or the fact that that these same New Yorkers welcomed the hard currency in the form of gold and silver coins the outlaws spent in town.³

Despite such local enthusiasm for his friendly stance toward pirates, Fletcher had been recalled to face inquiry at Whitehall. The man who would soon replace him as New York's appointed royal governor, Richard Coote, Earl of Bellomont, was one of the clique of English politicians and Manhattan dignitaries who had secured Kidd's commissions. In sending the *Adventure Galley* forth from its East River anchorage in the early autumn of 1696 to pursue Fletcher's old friends, these men sought simultaneously to clean up New York, rid the seas of some of the king's enemies (Frenchmen and pirates), and turn a profit by sharing in whatever riches Kidd might legally seize.

But now, eleven months later, on this day in the Babs-al-Mandab, something had gone wrong. The vessel Kidd was attacking was neither French nor a pirate. Far worse, the vessel was officially under English protection. An impatience for prize loot and restiveness among some of his more hardened and potentially mutinous crewmen had overridden Kidd's sworn commitment to do the king's bidding. But by turning pirate, Kidd and his men would also incur the wrath of the East India Company, a London-based trading firm under great pressure to do something about piracy. As luck would have it, an armed company vessel hove into view just as Kidd prepared to take his Indian prey. The *Adventure Galley* veered off and fled, its crew free to attack other ships on better days—which they did, ultimately boarding and plundering at least seven cargo vessels belonging to Indian, Dutch, and Portuguese merchants.⁴

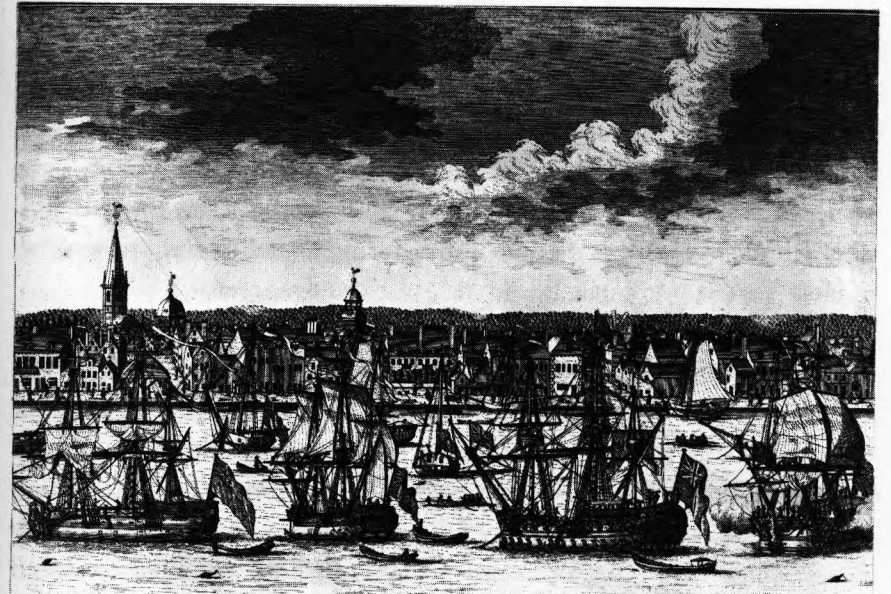
When, in June 1699, Kidd sailed into an anchorage off Long Island (after having off-loaded much of his loot in the West Indies), he evidently believed he could talk his way out of trouble. After all, New York was his town. Although a Scotsman by birth, Kidd had become a New Yorker through and through. He had married a wealthy Manhattan widow and settled down in a comfortable waterfront townhouse. He had even helped to build Trinity Church, the center of Anglican worship in the town, and on Sundays occupied a pew there. Like other New Yorkers before and since, Kidd possessed an abundant confidence in his ability to talk his way out of sticky situations: he was, in fact, well-known for his verbal “rhodomontadoe and vain glory” (one old Dutch New Yorker derided him as *de Blaas*, a “windbag”). Additionally, he counted on the colony's lax reputation as an enforcer of English regulations. Crown customs officials had previously looked the other way when confronted by smuggling or piracy, especially when their palms were well-greased, and Kidd may have believed bribery—and loot delivered to his backers—might silence critics. His trump card was a set of documents seized from one of the ships he had plundered, French passes that ostensibly proved he had been preying on enemy vessels as his privateering commission directed him to do.⁵

What Kidd did not realize was that the haven of New York could not shelter him from the aroused fury of the English Empire. Royal

Navy officers, East India Company lobbyists, and Tory members of Parliament out to discredit the Whig “Junto” to which Bellomont belonged had all made Kidd’s name anathema in London. It was only a matter of time before the net tightened around him. Desperate to salvage his own reputation and political career, Bellomont lured Kidd from Long Island to Boston (where the busy earl also filled the office of royal governor of Massachusetts and New Hampshire). There, Bellomont sprang his trap, dispatching a marshal to drag the flabbergasted Kidd off to jail just as he was knocking at the front door of Bellomont’s townhouse. Kidd was shipped to London, where he was tried, convicted of piracy and murder, and, alongside one of his crew, fellow New Yorker Darby Mullins, hanged until dead from the gallows on Execution Dock overlooking the Thames on May 23, 1701.⁶

Amid the complexities and multiple betrayals of Captain Kidd’s story are two lessons about New York City in its new guise as an English colonial port. The first is that New Yorkers had come to understand organized violence and predation, whether defined as privateering or piracy, as a source of profit for themselves and their city. (To be sure, the line between the two was decidedly blurry: one New Yorker defined “privateers” as “a soft name given to pirates.”) This connection between waging war and making money would characterize life and business in Manhattan throughout its decades as an English town and beyond. From 1689 to 1763, England and its colonies would fight five wars against France and/or Spain (King William’s War, 1689–1697; Queen Anne’s War, 1702–1713; a brief maritime war against Spain, 1719–1720; King George’s War, 1739–1748; and the Seven Years War, 1756–1763, known in its North American campaigns as the French and Indian War). As seaport, market town, military garrison, and imperial outpost, New York would play a key role in each of these conflicts. The cycle of war and peace shaped the daily lives of the city’s people, putting bread in their mouths (and sometimes withdrawing it) and filling them with a succession of emotions—pride, exultation, anger, and fear—as the fortunes of war revolved. Above all other impulses, however, the eagerness to make money from war (as well as from every other endeavor they engaged in) became a hallmark of New York’s identity, recognized by New Yorkers themselves and by English subjects elsewhere.⁷

The second lesson—that New York was now a relatively prominent outpost in a worldwide empire—had more complex ramifications. As New Amsterdam, the city had been like a lonely and neglected child, its needs largely ignored or denied by the Dutch trading company that had founded it. As New York City, it found itself with an at least sporadically attentive mother in the London-based imperial government, a mother who provided numerous siblings, places with names like Bristol and Glasgow, Dublin and Boston, Port Royal and Charles Town, Tangier and Calcutta. As the fur trade declined in relative importance, New Yorkers prospered and built their city through trade with their fellow imperial subjects in the British West Indies, shipping them lumber, horses, pork, whale oil, and, most importantly, Hudson Valley grain and flour, in exchange for sugar, molasses, dye woods, and slaves. London and the other British ports became the emporia from which New Yorkers imported the manufactures and refinements that put the finishing touches on their new identity as Englishmen.⁸



Royal Navy warships fill the East River before the “flourishing city of New York” in 1717. Engraving by John Harris, *A South Prospect of ye Flourishing City of New York in the Province of New York in America*, ca. 1719. COURTESY OF THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, WWW.NYPL.ORG.

Membership in the empire could be empowering and liberating, a source of profit and pride through commerce and war. But it could also prove confining. New Yorkers faced the obligations as well as the benefits of empire—taxes, requisitions, and trade restrictions, especially during wartime. At the same time, city dwellers usually sidestepped, ignored, or bribed their way out of enough of these burdens to keep them satisfied with their place in the imperial firmament and make any notion of serious disloyalty to the empire unthinkable. Still, being obliged to fight the empire's wars also reminded New Yorkers of their constant vulnerability to attack by the empire's enemies, which might literally make war profits—and much more—go up in smoke. The city's economy and the daily experiences of its people were tied as never before to a boom-and-bust cycle of international war. And that cycle would infest the dreams of New Yorkers with visions of new kinds of enemies within the gates, enemies even Peter Stuyvesant had never imagined.

In June 1697, a few weeks before Captain Kidd turned pirate in the *Babs-al-Mandab*, a visiting doctor from Boston named Benjamin Bullivant received a tour of Fort William at the tip of Manhattan Island from its master, the soon-to-be-replaced royal governor, Benjamin Fletcher. Like all royal governors appointed by the Crown to serve in the colonies, Fletcher's official commission included the title "captain general and vice admiral" of New York. This signified that he was the commander of a garrison devoted to the defense of the English Empire, which in this instance meant ensuring that the city and colony of New York would not fall if invaded by the French foe.

Fletcher showed Bullivant around his residence within the fort, its walls lined with "about 300 choice fire arms . . . 8 or 10 large and well cleaned blunderbusses . . . some scimitars very pretty to behold and set in good order." Moving outside, the Bostonian beheld forty cannon lining the fort's walls at a height of twenty feet above the surrounding city streets, "well disposed to make a gallant defense, if an enemy should come before it." Bullivant also noted that the governor stored 1,500 guns, bayonets, swords, drums, and "other furniture for the war" in a nearby magazine, and that Fletcher was building "a low battery of 8 or 10 guns" in front of the fort at the island's tip, facing the mouth of

the Hudson River—an emplacement that would one day give its name to the public promenade Battery Park, which today stands on its shoreline. Bullivant was duly impressed.⁹

Indeed, Fort William (the former Fort Amsterdam, to be known later as Fort Anne and Fort George, its name changing with the accession of each new English monarch) now constituted a crucial link in a chain of defenses stretching the length of the colonial coast and down into the West Indies. The garrison of redcoats on Manhattan played a special role in imperial strategy, a role dictated by the geographical significance of the colony. Situated roughly at the midpoint of the British North American seaboard, New York could play an equally useful role in operations against French Canada, Spanish Florida, and the islands of the French and Spanish Caribbean. Poised on the edge of the Atlantic, Manhattan provided an excellent base for incoming or outgoing navy fleets or troop convoys, an asset not shared by Philadelphia, located one hundred miles up the sometimes ice-bound Delaware River.

Of equal importance for its military role, New York was an unambiguously royal colony, secured for the Crown by James Stuart, Duke of York, who had become King James II in 1685. The same could not be said for such colonies as Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, or Maryland, which continued to belong to private proprietors or chartered bodies, or resented the imposition of royal dominion. Garrison commanders in those colonies sometimes looked over their shoulders, wondering whether the most hostile force they might confront would be the local populace. New York, in fact, which Bellomont hailed as "the key and bulwark of all His Majesty's colonies," would be the only North American province to have troops stationed in it over the entire period of British rule, an emblem of its centrality and fealty within the empire.¹⁰

To be sure, New York had its own prolonged moment of turmoil. In 1689, a German-born merchant and former WIC soldier named Jacob Leisler became the leader of a faction of the city's middling and poorer Dutch residents, who resented the second-class status they felt they were being handed by newly arrived English officials and by the dominant clique of wealthy Dutch merchants who cozied up to them. Leisler

and other staunch Calvinists were also outraged that the English king James II had openly embraced Roman Catholicism; they feared an international Catholic conspiracy whose agents might be found among new English colonists and other Manhattan residents. Leisler seized Fort James (as it was then named) at the head of a band of militia and made himself dictator of the colony. When a new (and Protestant) English king, William III, dispatched an army and a new governor to New York to restore stability in 1691, Leisler refused to relinquish authority, forcing a stand-off and an exchange of gunfire in which several men were killed. Upon Leisler's surrender, his local enemies made sure that he was convicted of treason, hanged until dead, and then decapitated (supporters sewed his head back on before burial). The lasting legacy of Leisler's Rebellion was the rise of partisan politics in Manhattan: for twenty years, embittered factions of his supporters and detractors fought their battles in acrimonious campaigns for election to the representative assembly King William sanctioned for the colony in 1691. But while legislators denounced each other in debates and pamphlets, Crown control of the colony was secured. New Yorkers would not threaten royal authority so drastically again for another seven decades.¹¹

Another factor besides its loyalty and its coastal primacy made New York a strategically critical province of English America: the city's location at the mouth of the Hudson, the great highway into the northern interior. No other river played so important a role, for the Hudson led directly from the open ocean and the shores of Manhattan to the heartland of two critically powerful entities: the Iroquois Confederation and, beyond it, French Canada. Both proved to be troublesome to British strategists, albeit in different ways. By the time the Earl of Bellomont replaced Benjamin Fletcher in Fort William, the Iroquois of the northern frontier had become adept at playing the French and English against each other, squeezing gifts and trade concessions out of both sides, deigning to ally with one side or the other momentarily, while preserving their long-term independence.¹²

But it was the French in Canada, able to muster the support of various frontier Indian allies, who posed the most ominous threat. Unbeknownst to New Yorkers, in 1689, at the start of King William's War

between England and France, the French king Louis XIV approved a plan to send 1,600 Canadians and French regulars from what is now Quebec Province down Lake Champlain, Lake George, and the Hudson to seize Albany and New York City, where they would be aided by two warships sailing in off the Atlantic to secure Manhattan. Most Protestants would be expelled, and New York would become part of Catholic New France. Poor coordination and a raid on Montreal by hostile Iroquois kept the plan from getting off the ground, but the following year, a force of French Canadians with Algonquin, Sault, and pro-French Iroquois warriors did descend on English settlements, destroying the town of Schenectady and sparking fear of a combined French and Indian assault down the Hudson.¹³

The proximity of the French scared New Yorkers. At the onset of the French and Indian War in 1755, no less a personage than the Reverend Samuel Johnson, president of King's College (later to become Columbia University), noted that "things look somewhat terrifying. . . . How God will deal with us he only knows." After news arrived of the defeat of General Braddock's redcoats (including detachments from Fort George) by French and Indians in Pennsylvania, Johnson commented that "this put us yesterday in a great panic." Until 1760, when Britain wrested Canada from the French, Manhattan residents remained painfully aware that the Hudson River, their prized artery of commerce, might also prove an effective road for an onslaught of Frenchmen and Indians bent on spreading havoc and terror to the very shores of their Upper Bay. A chill perhaps ran up the backs of spectators when, in June 1753, they watched a delegation of seventeen Mohawk sachems march from their encampment on the city's outskirts (near what is now the exit ramp from the Holland Tunnel) down Broadway to confer with Governor Clinton at the fort, carrying, as one spectator later recalled, "a number of human scalps, suspended on poles, by way of streamers, which scalps they had taken from the French and Indians, their enemies."¹⁴

Just as frightening was the idea that the French or Spanish—or worse yet, a combined force of French *and* Spanish—could sail a fleet in off the Atlantic to blockade or besiege the port. On a modest scale, New Yorkers got repeated and unpleasant tastes of what this might

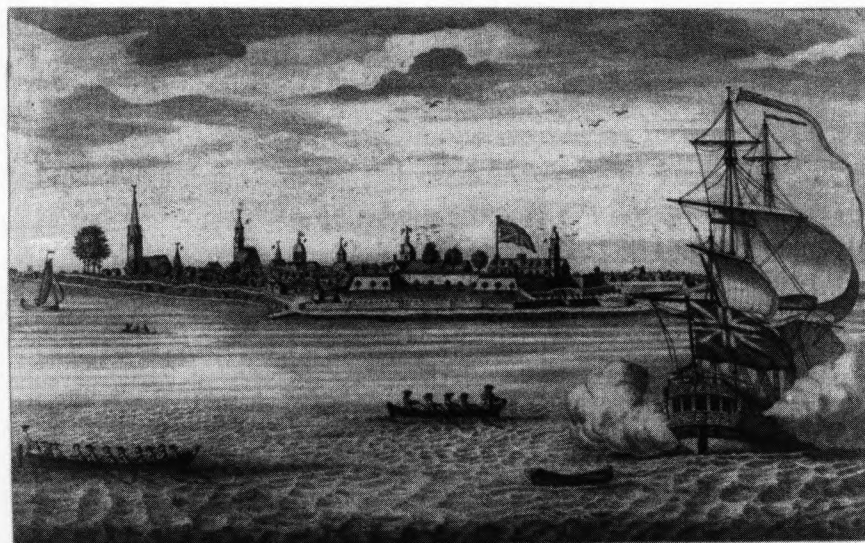
mean for the city. At least sixteen times between 1690 and 1760, enemy privateers from the French or Spanish Caribbean prowled between Sandy Hook and the waters off eastern Long Island. In 1704, a French privateer with fourteen guns stopped an incoming ship off Sandy Hook, intercepting letters from the Lords of Trade in London to New York's Governor Cornbury. In 1758 another French predator seized the supply ship bringing in the baggage and clothing of the Forty-seventh Royal Regiment. More tempting to enemy privateers were the vessels carrying commercial cargoes into or out of New York port, a number of which they captured during the successive colonial wars.¹⁵

New York sent out naval vessels, hastily commissioned "coast guard" sloops, and its own privateers to defend the city's ocean gateway. On some occasions this produced spectacular outcomes. In 1748, Captain John Burges sailed the *Royal Catharine* out past Sandy Hook and engaged the French privateer *Mars* in a running battle that resulted in the enemy's surrender; when Burges escorted the defeated *Mars* into New York harbor, the city's relieved merchants subscribed 100 pounds as a reward to the victorious captain. But coastal defenses were porous, and the enemy was unpredictable. In 1704, a French raiding party came ashore at Navesink on the New Jersey shore, a mere twenty miles from the city, where they burned several houses before rejoining their privateer. Such a raid seemed a foretaste of what the city might expect should a French fleet ever arrive in force.¹⁶

The sense of vulnerability felt by many in the city was compounded by a virulent and anxious anti-Catholicism that Protestant New Yorkers imbibed almost with their mother's milk. Like the Dutch colonists before them (and from whom many were descended), New Yorkers saw the battle against Spain and France not merely as a global clash of dynasties and empires but as a Protestant crusade against the forces of the Vatican. While few overt Roman Catholics actually lived in New York (and no Catholic church would be allowed to open in the city until after the American Revolution), many Protestants saw themselves living in a besieged world, one where French and Spanish Papists would gleefully massacre defenseless Protestants and where Canadian priests might unleash cannibal Indians to collect Protestant scalps and feast on Protestant flesh.

The fear and hatred of Catholicism—a presence that continued to loom in English politics, with Catholic Stuart "pretenders to the throne" launching rebellions against the Protestant monarchy in 1715 and 1745—shaped popular consciousness at every turn in eighteenth-century New York. The monarch's orders to royal governors extended "freedom of conscience" to Protestants and Jews but not to Catholics, who could be expelled from New York without question, while "Jesuits and Popish missionaries" could be jailed for life. Manhattan crowds celebrated Guy Fawkes Day, which marked the triumph of English Protestants over a Catholic plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament in 1605, by burning effigies of the pope and his companion, the Devil. When, in 1753, plans were underway for King's College, lawyer William Livingston argued that the school should be a bastion for the "equal toleration of conscience" but should, "for political reasons, exclude Papists from the common and equal benefits of society." Such hatred and fear only reinforced the expectations of New Yorkers that their port city, a bulwark in the line of defense against Catholic France and Spain, needed to be fortified by and for the English Empire.¹⁷

Yet despite New Yorkers' hopes for security against foreign foes, the truth was that New York's defenses were a house of cards. Governor Fletcher could put on a good show for the sight-seeing Dr. Bullivant, and Englishmen on both sides of the Atlantic might talk themselves into believing that Manhattan was the bulwark against the French and Indians for all the colonies west and south of the Hudson. But anyone taking the time to make a careful inspection would have found the port's defenses beset with problems, just as they had been under the Dutch. For all the majesty of the fort's walls and cannons, its sod ramparts were endlessly crumbling, its gun carriages decaying, and its barracks in a perpetual state of disrepair. Outside the fort, defenses remained minimal: the battery of guns at the island's tip, the "half moon" (a semicircular artillery emplacement) on the East River waterfront, and a few other clusters of cannon placed here and there. The weakness of the city's defenses surprised visitors. Viewing the unfortified Governors Island in 1744, Alexander Hamilton, a Maryland doctor (and no relation to the later New York statesman of the same name), thought that "an enemy might land on the back of this island



British New York in the 1730s. The shoreline in front of Fort George holds the artillery battery that later provided the name for Battery Park. Engraving by John Carwitham, *A View of Fort George with the City of New York from the SW.*, 1736. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

out of reach of the town battery and plant cannon . . . or even throw bombs from behind the island.”¹⁸

As in Dutch days, money—or more precisely, the lack of it—remained at the root of most of New York’s defense difficulties. For all of Parliament’s high-sounding phrases about safeguarding the empire, funding for defense was often meager and slow in coming. Many in Parliament opposed the notion of a standing army and especially in peacetime found ways to skimp on the military budget. Moreover, when royal councilors thought about the defense of America, they focused on protecting the Newfoundland fishing banks (seen as a training ground for seamen and hence the “nursery of the navy”) and the lucrative sugar-producing Caribbean islands, and less on funding troops to guard the fur and cereal trade of the Hudson or the city that channeled those goods to the rest of the empire.

While the troops defending New York were better behaved than their Dutch predecessors, moreover, they were no better treated. The fort at Manhattan’s tip was the headquarters for four independent companies of fusiliers and grenadiers raised in Britain and accountable

to the governor. Their total number fluctuated between about two and four hundred men as successive governors dispatched contingents to outposts at Albany, Schenectady, Oswego on Lake Ontario, and Fort Hunter on the Mohawk River. Service as a foot soldier in the king’s army was the lot of poor men, recruited or forcibly enlisted in Britain’s cities and countryside, where the alternatives were often hunger and joblessness. Pay was low and sometimes literally took years to arrive from London. Basic supplies were often nonexistent; one observer in New York described soldiers “lying in their red coats and other clothes on the bare boards or a little straw.” Common soldiers may also have been at least partly aware that everyone from the governor on down to their own officers were skimming off as much of their pay as they could get away with. Governor Bellomont boasted to London in 1699 that he could feed and clothe a soldier for 12 pence sterling a day—only 3 pence more than it cost him to similarly accommodate a slave imported from the Guinea Coast of West Africa.¹⁹

Exploiting armed men is always a risky proposition, and tensions exploded in October 1700, when a newly arrived contingent of 129 redcoats from Dublin—“a parcel of the vilest fellows that ever wore the King’s livery,” Bellomont claimed—mutinied on the parade ground in front of the fort, demanding their pay and clothing. “Damn me! Don’t stir a man,” the soldiers shouted when ordered to march. Their cry was answered by a sentry on the fort’s ramparts: “Gentlemen, don’t march till you have your pay for now is the time to get it. O! God! . . . I can’t be with you but my heart is with you.” Bellomont promptly called out the city militia—in effect, the adult male population of the city, who were required by law to arm themselves and drill in preparation for any emergency. Two hundred militiamen obeyed, outnumbered the mutineers, and faced them down. The only shots fired were those of Bellomont’s firing squad after his court-martial reached its verdict. Two men were executed, and two others were “severely whipped,” while four were kept for a month in an isolation tank in the fort known as “the hole.”²⁰

In the future, desperate soldiers learned to mutiny by using their feet rather than their muskets; their desertion rate was steady and high, not surprising given the wages such men could make as artisans or common laborers in the colonial economy. Other redcoats, as well as

sailors from the Royal Navy "station ship" in New York harbor, gained permission to live in rented quarters in the town, where they could find part-time work and sustain families.²¹

While a succession of royal governors repeatedly implored London for more soldiers and more funding, they also wrangled over defense matters with the elected colonial assembly. The tug-of-war over appropriations that had beset Stuyvesant's relationship with his burghers now took on a distinctly English cast. Governors and their appointed councils demanded or cajoled military funds from assemblymen who, as "free-born Englishmen," insisted on their right to determine whether defense expenditures were the responsibility of the colonists or the Crown. The city government, now consisting of an appointed mayor and an elected common council of aldermen and assistants, also entered the fray, turning debates over military spending into three-way struggles.

Resisting a governor's insistence on raising war monies proved to be good politics, combining as it did appeals to English freedom and sheer opportunism. No New Yorker wanted to pay higher taxes, and most had also imbibed English political ideas, sincerely believing that the duty of the colonial legislature was to manifest its fealty to the Crown while opposing anything that smacked of royal encroachment on popular liberties, including the right of the assembly to determine how the people's money would be spent. As for the governors, their conviction that the crown was doing its share by providing sheer manpower—soldiers and sailors whose duty, after all, was to defend the colonists' homes, property, and lives—often spurred them to fury toward what they viewed as "a selfish niggardly people."²²

Typical were the disputes over protecting the Narrows, the mile-wide channel between Staten Island and Long Island that served as the main passage from the ocean to the city and the Hudson. In April 1703, during Queen Anne's War and in the face of rumors of an impending French naval attack, Governor Cornbury and the assembly agreed to erect batteries of guns on both sides of the Narrows. Next came wrangling over who should pay for the batteries. Assemblymen asked Cornbury to press Queen Anne or neighboring colonies for the money, which the governor refused to do. In June the assembly agreed to impose a special defense levy on New Yorkers. Three years later, however, the batteries remained unbuilt. Charging that the assembly

had never collected the tax, a seething Cornbury reminded New Yorkers that the city "yet lies very open, naked and defenceless." In 1756, during the French and Indian War, Governor Charles Hardy advised that heavy guns be placed at the Narrows. After half a century and three wars, the batteries did not yet exist.²³

Legislators were not always so evasive. Many recognized the need for defense and voted to provide funds for protection, as well as to underwrite the provisioning and quartering of royal troops and enlistment of local volunteers for wartime campaigns. During Queen Anne's War, King George's War, and the French and Indian War, the legislature sponsored an early-warning system of shoreline "beacons"—tall poles topped by barrels filled with pitch, to be lit by militiamen or local residents to alert the city at the first sighting of an enemy fleet. In 1745, when the city again feared a French invasion from the sea, officials built a protective wall of cedar logs from river to river on the city's outskirts at what is now Chambers Street to stave off an attack from the north. The colonists, however, sought to subsidize these works on their own terms, doing their best to hold out for the maximum funding from London before committing themselves to the full expense.²⁴

This frugal strategy seemed shrewd when English monies arrived. Manhattan pedestrians could only gape in wonder when, in August 1756, they watched as twenty-four cartloads of gold and silver coins worth 115,000 pounds sterling, the English government's "reimbursement" to the northern colonial legislatures for monies spent against the French and Indians, trundled up their streets from the wharfs. Ultimately, however, such subsidies, most of which were earmarked to feed, clothe, and arm troops on the frontier, could not pay the bill for city defense. As New Yorkers worried about preventing invasion while safeguarding their liberties and purses, legislative frugality impeded preparedness just as surely as royal and parliamentary parsimony did. Pitch-filled barrels might be cheaper than cannon at the Narrows, but they were no substitute.²⁵

New Yorkers spent their own money on defenses with great reluctance, but it was another story entirely when it came to profiting from war. In each of the colonial wars, New York City became the marshaling yard, supply depot, and jumping-off point for British expeditions aiming to

wreak havoc in the French and Spanish Caribbean and French Canada. The first two wars, King William's and Queen Anne's, brought mixed results at best to the city's economy: Manhattan-based privateers gleefully plundered cargo ships belonging to the Catholic foe, but war also disrupted New York's markets in the Caribbean, slowing trade in a period when mounting rivalry with Philadelphia was already hurting profits in the city's all-important grain and flour trade.

It was King George's War and the French and Indian War that brought prosperity with them, as Westminster and Whitehall sought to strike ever more decisive blows in the Americas. The city and its harbor, stuck in economic doldrums before the outbreak of each war, became a crossroads and a staging ground for military missions whose size dwarfed anything colonists had ever seen before. Fleets of men-of-war and transports came and went, filling the skies of the port with sails and disgorging hundreds of redcoats from Gibraltar and Cork sent to Manhattan in preparation for attacks on Cartagena, Louisbourg, or Martinique, or buckskin-clad militiamen from Virginia and Maryland on their way up the Hudson by sloop for assaults against Canada. Officers, troops, and sailors brought money to spend, to the profit of the city's tavern keepers, artisans, and clothiers, as well as the prostitutes who cruised the Battery after dark.²⁶

Big money was to be made during wartime by those with the right connections. Leading gentlemen like Oliver De Lancey and John Watts, already enriched by large landholdings or by trade links to England, got richer by providing war loans of hundreds or even thousands of pounds at 5 and 6 percent interest to the provincial government, or contracted on a grand scale to provide the troops and militias with food, clothing, and supplies. Others, less established, found war a stepping stone into the ranks of well-heeled traders. Except for the two groups—African slaves and Roman Catholics—who were banished from equitable treatment in New York society, war proved an equal opportunity employer, bringing profit to enterprising Englishmen, Scotsmen, Irishmen, Dutchmen, Huguenots, Germans, Jews, and others in Manhattan's increasingly diverse population. Complaining of the way pious and puritanical New Englanders viewed New York during wartime, a city newspaper, the *Mercury*, carped in 1756 that "they constantly speak of us . . . as a

province whose whole politics consists in forming schemes to enrich ourselves, at the expense of every thing, that ought to be held sacred amongst men." But neither self-consciousness nor the sincere patriotism of most New Yorkers impeded the moneymaking.²⁷

The most controversial and covert financial opportunity war offered was that of trading with the enemy. From the inception of their commerce with the West Indies, New York merchants had recognized that Jamaica, Barbados, and other English islands were not the only markets beckoning to them. New Yorkers exchanged their flour, grain, and lumber for sugar, molasses, and slaves on Spanish and French islands, often for better prices than they could get in the English colonies and in flagrant disregard of English measures that sought to regulate or prohibit such trade. War turned such smuggling into a form of aiding the enemy, of outright treason in the eyes of English admirals and parliamentarians, but skyrocketing prices on the enemy's islands proved too tempting to Manhattan businessmen like Thomas Lynch, James de Peyster, Waddell Cunningham, and dozens of others. To the north, supplying the French at Louisbourg on the Canadian coast with food, canvas, and gunpowder also proved profitable. But by doing so, a writer in the *New-York Mercury* complained in 1756, Manhattan merchants were providing the French "with everything necessary for our destruction."²⁸

Some also found a useful cover for trade in the prisoner exchanges fostered by both mid-century wars. Each conflict brought a stream of prisoners of war to Manhattan: French and Spanish sailors, French troops captured in Canada, Catholic families expelled from Nova Scotia. Each enemy prisoner was poised to collect information about the city's defenses, and local officials were eager to rid themselves of potential spies who, moreover, had to be fed and housed. But in authorizing New York shipowners to carry prisoners to Saint Domingue and to bring back British prisoners of war, royal governors sparked a lucrative trade in which captains filled their holds with valuable trade goods. A small group of French merchants, who managed to stay in the city despite fears of wartime subversion and espionage, covertly provided ship captains with passports and licenses facilitating this trade with the enemy.²⁹

The fortunes of war did not lift everyone equally. Higher wartime insurance rates on shipping cut into profits from overseas trade, hurting

some merchants (including smaller traders) while benefiting those who sold insurance. Wartime inflation burdened the city's poorest people—widowed, orphaned, ill, disabled, or aged laborers, servants, seamen, soldiers, lesser tradesmen, and their families. "What must our poor suffer!" the *New York Post Boy* lamented during the winter of 1747, after noting steeply rising prices for poultry, butter, and firewood. Carpenters and shipwrights, meanwhile, hated being "impressed" by the army to build bateaux (small boats used in the Canadian campaigns) at fixed prices. The threat of actual impressment, however, was very real: most despised and feared in both war and peace was the press gang, the detachment of Royal Navy sailors who rounded up seamen, waterfront workers, and even landsmen for forced labor on His Majesty's warships at low pay under miserable conditions for what might become a lifetime of service.³⁰

War drained off some of the city's poorer or transient men, like nineteen-year-old German-born tailor Jacob Murweis, twenty-year-old stonecutter and native New Yorker Mathew Sindown, forty-seven-year-old laborer Walter Murphy from Dublin, and forty-year-old Scotsman John Ramsey, who wryly described himself to a recruiter as "an old smuggler." In 1759 these men enlisted in newly formed colonial regiments that the legislature raised for one of the repeated assaults on Canada. High bounties and wages attracted enlistees. So did patriotism, which motivated at least some of the seven hundred men who enlisted for frontier duty after news arrived in town of the disastrous loss to the French at Fort William Henry on Lake George in 1757. But the prospect of risking one's life to French bullets, Indian tomahawks, or disease in a remote wilderness clearly deterred many men who had something to live for in New York City.³¹

For rich and poor, privateering was one of the most attractive opportunities the wartime city offered. As the scale of each successive imperial conflict grew, so did the number of privateering vessels sailing from East River docks: from seventeen during Queen Anne's War to seventy-three during the French and Indian War, the latter number unrivaled by any other port. In a given year, a thousand men might be on board New York privateers. "The country is drained of many able bodied men," Lieutenant Governor James De Lancey explained to

William Pitt in 1758, "by almost a kind of madness to go a privateering." Members of some mercantile families, like the Beekmans and Van Hornes, got into the habit of launching privateers from war to war and generation to generation. They recruited crewmen through word of mouth on the waterfront or through advertisements in that new urban vehicle of information, the newspaper (New York's first weekly, the *Gazette*, had begun publication in 1725). For seasoned seamen, accustomed to low pay, hard labor, and the hazards of life at sea, privateering made obvious economic sense. The only group kept from privateering was that half of the population consisting of women: when, in 1743, a woman trying to pass as a man was discovered shipping out on the *Castor and Pollux*, the crew ducked her in the water from the yard arm and then tarred her "from head to foot."³²

Once furnished with an official letter of marque from the royal governor, New York sloops and brigs, well-armed with cannon and men, usually headed south for the cruising grounds north of Hispaniola and Puerto Rico, where they had the maximum chance of catching rich French and Spanish prizes. But privateering could be dangerous. Out of 108 New York privateering vessels in the two mid-century wars, 25 never returned home; hundreds of crewmen died, were wounded, or ended up languishing in French and Spanish prisons.³³

In the face of the many risks that accompanied privateering, crew members focused on the rewards. Privateers returned to New York harbor with captured cargo ships loaded with European textiles, wine, and hardware. Even more lucrative were the ships seized while carrying sugar, molasses, rum, coffee, cocoa, or indigo from the West Indies to Europe. Enslaved Africans were another valuable commodity ripe for pillaging. The return of privateers with their prizes was a stirring event that brought thousands of New Yorkers out to the wharves along Dock Street to look and cheer. Merchants now learned whether their investments had paid off (indeed, the speculative trading of shares in privateers, driven by news of the shifting fortunes of given vessels still plying the Caribbean, became one of New York's earliest securities markets). Sometimes the results were spectacular, as in the Great Capture of August 1744, when the privateers *Royal Hester*, *Polly*, *Clinton*, and *Mary Anne* entered the harbor with six captured French vessels

and their freight valued at 24,000 pounds sterling. The vessels "saluted the town with near 50 guns to the rejoicing of the inhabitants."³⁴

Once anchored off Manhattan, prize vessels and their cargoes had to be "condemned" in the city's Vice Admiralty Court, where Justice Lewis Morris Jr., a friend of the merchants through thick and thin, ensured that most prizes quickly became the legal property of the New Yorkers who had captured them—an outcome that also guaranteed hefty fees to Morris and a small army of attorneys, registrars, and appraisers, as well as to the auctioneers who offered the looted merchandise for sale. Most privateering contracts stipulated that, after costs, the vessels' owners would receive one-third of prize revenues, with the remaining two-thirds divided among officers and crew.³⁵

As in Captain Kidd's day, a thin line separated privateering from its unsavory half-brother, piracy. Like pirates of old, some privateers raided neutral ships or beat and tortured captured crew and passengers, especially when they thought rough treatment would force captives to reveal where treasure was hidden aboard ship. One New York privateer captain, John Lush, gained a special reputation for his piratical behavior. Lush's sloop *Stephen and Elizabeth*, manned by one hundred men, prowled the Caribbean in 1739–1740 for Spanish prizes, which he towed into Charleston and Manhattan, where the proceeds from the looted cocoa, indigo, slaves, and pieces of eight were distributed among the captain and crew. Lush took part of his largesse in human cargo; nineteen "negroes and mulattoes" seized by him were condemned as prizes by Judge Morris. Rumors soon surfaced that Lush had tortured a Spanish crewman in order to get him to divulge the location of gold on his ship; when confronted with the allegation, Lush dryly responded that he "had not realized that you could use a Spaniard too cruel." Other charges would soon circulate as well: allegations that the seized "slaves" had in fact been free sailors before their capture. Regardless of the stories passing from mouth to mouth on the East River docks, the captain played his role to the hilt. "When Lush landed," the *New York Weekly Journal* reported in April 1740, "he was rowed to shore by his men in rich laced and embroidered clothes taken from the Spaniards." As successful businessmen who embodied wartime prosperity, Lush and other privateers found

their alleged breaches of honor and humanity were quickly forgotten by most townspeople in the streets and auction rooms of Manhattan.³⁶

In the late winter and spring of 1741, as privateering sloops came and went in the waters of the Upper Bay, and at a moment when hundreds of redcoats and militia volunteers were off fighting the Spaniards in a major Caribbean offensive, a strange and disturbing series of events began to unfold in New York City. Ten fires, at first seemingly random and accidental, broke out over the course of three weeks in March and April. While no lives were lost, several homes and warehouses were badly burned. Hardest hit was Fort George, where on March 18 the barracks, chapel, and governor's house burned to the ground despite the efforts of a bucket brigade and the city's two water-pumping fire engines. Next to the little-understood smallpox and yellow fever epidemics that periodically swept the city, nothing struck fear in the hearts of New Yorkers like fire: with hundreds of buildings and roofs at least partly constructed of wood, the town could become an inferno in a matter of minutes.

By April 5, uneasiness was turning into panic. While looking out her window onto Broadway that day, Abigail Earle overheard Quack, the slave of butcher John Walter, laughingly exclaim to a fellow slave, "fire, fire, scorch, scorch, A LITTLE, damn it, by-and-by." When four blazes broke out the following day, furious mobs ran through the streets yelling, "The Negroes are rising!" Then, on April 21, Mary Burton, a white teenage servant in a waterfront tavern popular among slaves and soldiers from Fort George, offered authorities a remarkable confession: her employer, John Hughson, was the head of a slave conspiracy "to burn the whole town . . . the Negroes were to cut their masters' and mistresses' throats; and when all this was done, Hughson was to be king, and Caesar [a local slave] governor."³⁷

New York had been a slave-owning city from its inception, but New Yorkers had never resolved the complications of owning other human beings. Enslaved African men and women toiled in households and workshops for their white masters; most lived in their owners' homes, sleeping in kitchens or garrets. Some wed slaves of other owners and created families that were spread between different neighborhoods. As

they served their owners, African New Yorkers concealed their own customs, ethnic traditions, and resentments. In 1712, the resentments exploded: a group of about thirty slaves, many of them belonging to the Coromantee (Akan) people of Ghana, who were known for their military tradition, rebelled, killing nine whites and wounding six before they were captured and executed. The rebellion brought harsher laws, designed to keep blacks under constant scrutiny by whites. But the need to move around the city, often beyond the purview of watching eyes, was essential to the daily labor that masters expected their enslaved servants, laborers, and assistants to perform, thus defeating the intent of the laws. In 1741, one in every five New Yorkers—a total of two thousand men, women, and children—was enslaved. Present in about half the city's white households, dwelling in every part of town, slaves made up almost one-third of New York's workforce. In short, slaves were everywhere.³⁸

Armed with Burton's allegations against the tavern owner and his cohorts, the city's judicial authorities swung into action, commencing a roundup of slave suspects that continued through the spring and summer months. As New Yorkers erected shoreline beacon poles at Rockaway and the Narrows to warn of possible Spanish invasion that spring, eleven slaves convicted of arson were burned at the stake; five other prisoners, including the white "king" Hughson and his wife, were hanged after being convicted of conspiracy.

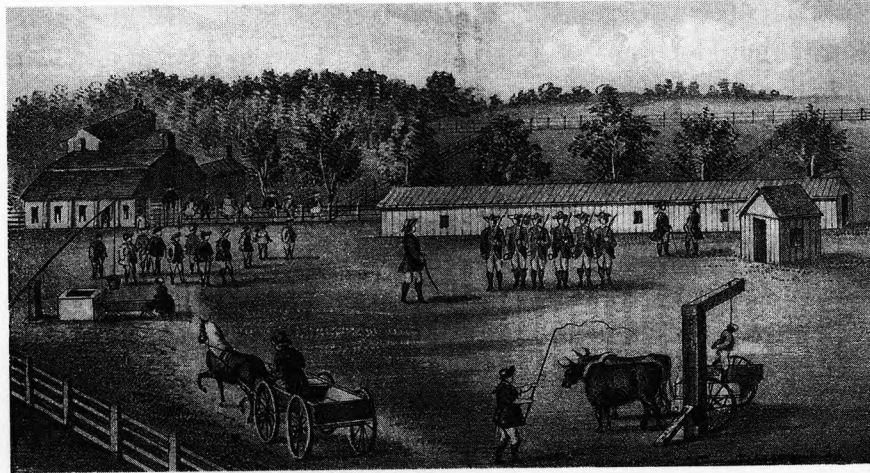
As the jail in City Hall filled with dozens of suspects, however, it became clear that those slaves who confessed to complicity in the plot, and named other coconspirators, often had their lives spared. Suspects quickly learned the advisability of cooperating with their interrogators. By midsummer, details of an "unparalleled and hellish conspiracy" were emerging from the testimony of numerous slaves. Some prisoners testified that the plotters had calculated that a Spanish and French invasion was imminent and, arming themselves with stolen swords and guns, had planned to turn over the city to the invaders; when no invasion fleet materialized, they had decided to "kill all the white men, and have their wives for themselves." Prosecutors and judges focused on the alleged treachery of the "Spanish Negroes," who stubbornly insisted in court that they had been free Spanish sea-

men before being captured by Lush and other privateers. Witnesses reported that Hughson had promised "to tie Lush to a beam and roast him like a piece of beef."

For many frightened New Yorkers, the pieces were all falling into place. The New York plot—"one of the most horrid and detestable pieces of villainy that ever Satan instilled into the heart of human creatures," Judge Daniel Horsmanden called it—was no doubt part of a global Catholic conspiracy to incite these "latent enemies amongst us," "these enemies of their own household," to literally stab their masters in the back.³⁹

Horsmanden, one of three Supreme Court Justices, refused to believe that black slaves—"these silly unthinking creatures"—or a mere tavern keeper like Hughson was capable of launching such a shrewd plot. "There is scarce a plot but a priest is at the bottom of it," Horsmanden concluded, and the city authorities began a roundup of suspected secret Catholics. Four Irish-born soldiers from Fort George were arrested; to save himself, one of them "confessed" that a plot was afoot to burn down Trinity Church, the city's bastion of English Protestantism. John Ury, an eccentric teacher of Latin and Greek recently arrived in the city, was arrested and accused of being a secret priest and the true ringleader of a diabolical Spanish or French plot, launched with Vatican approval, to burn New York. Horsmanden, for one, persuaded himself that a joint Catholic-slave uprising, originally planned for St. Patrick's Day, had been coordinated by "our foreign and domestic enemies" to destroy the seaport and prevent the city's ships from bringing food and supplies to British armies and navies fighting Spain in the West Indies. Ury's protests of innocence could not save him from conviction or the gallows. By the time he was hanged on August 29, he joined thirty black men, two white women, and one white man (Hughson) who had already met their end; eighty-four other slaves, including many who had confessed, were ultimately banished by being sold outside the colony.⁴⁰

We will never know fully the true nature and extent of the "Negro Plot" of 1741. Some scholars have argued that militant slaves probably did plan an uprising, to coincide with a hoped-for Spanish or French invasion. More likely is the possibility that a small number of



"Latent enemies amongst us." An enslaved African is hanged on the eighteenth-century city's outskirts. Lithograph by George Hayward, *Ye Execution of Goff ye Neger of Mr Hochins on ye Commons*, 1860. AUTHOR'S COLLECTION.

slaves set some of the fires as limited acts of resistance, rather than hatching the murderous plot imagined by panicking whites and sworn to by coerced suspects. Engaged in an imperial, global, and ultimately religious war, protected by flimsy local defenses, ever mindful of enemy privateers and the attacking fleets they might lead into the harbor, propertied white New Yorkers found it easy to detect enemies all around them: plebeian Irish soldiers in the fort, lowly tavern keepers on the waterfront, hidden priests, their own duplicitous slaves. An unrelenting Daniel Horsmanden continued to insist that the lesson of 1741 was "to awaken us from that supine security . . . lest the enemy should be yet within our doors."⁴¹

Over the two decades following the events of 1741, New Yorkers would enjoy only seven full years of peace, as the British Empire fought and concluded one war against the Spanish and French, and then in 1756 commenced another one. By late 1760, however, British victories had settled the fate of Canada, vanquishing the looming French presence to the north. As redcoats and sailors left New York City by the hundreds in 1761 and 1762, off to conquer the French is-

lands of Martinique and Dominica and to besiege Havana, New Yorkers could congratulate themselves on having survived five colonial wars without ever setting eyes on an enemy armada sailing up the bay or down the Hudson.⁴²

Yet for all New Yorkers' relief, the end of the cycle of imperial wars left the city an abruptly poorer place. The removal of troops and fleets was one key factor in an economic slump that now hit New York and the other colonial ports hard. To make matters worse, Parliament decided to reorganize and increase its taxation and commercial regulation of the colonies in order to recoup some of the war's expenses and to fund the continued British military presence on the frontier.⁴³

Like other American colonists, New Yorkers now brought a range of escalating grievances to their concerns about their place in the empire. Merchants and lawyers championed "smuggling" as free trade, arguing that freedom of the seas was a social good Parliament dare not strangle. Militiamen who had felt the disdain of British regulars on the Canadian front returned home to view redcoats with new eyes. Men who had learned how to fight on privateers—New Yorkers Alexander McDougall, Isaac Sears, and George Clinton among them—had taken the measure of British allies as well as French foes. McDougall and Sears would soon be leading a group called the Sons of Liberty. And young Clinton would go on to serve as New York's revolutionary governor and under Thomas Jefferson and James Madison as vice president of a nation no New Yorker could yet imagine at the conclusion of five wars for the empire.⁴⁴

CHAPTER 4

Demons of Discord

The Revolutionary War, 1775–1783

Accompanied by officers and sentries, George Washington inspected his army's handiwork in lower Manhattan's narrow streets. It was mid-April 1776, and New York was swarming with thousands of soldiers pledged to fight king and Parliament. Log barricades now extended across Wall Street, Crown Street, and a dozen other waterfront thoroughfares, while redoubts of freshly turned earth sheltered artillery batteries along the wharves and on the crests of hills beyond the city's outskirts. Washington's second in command, General Charles Lee, had followed his orders conscientiously, arriving in Manhattan with a thousand Continental soldiers and militiamen in order to turn the city into "a disputable field of battle against any force." Lee, known for his political radicalism and his hatred of British loyalists, had ordered New York City's male population to help in the effort. Mustered every morning by a fife and drum corps, one thousand civilians—leather-aproned artisans, merchants and shopkeepers, slaves delivered up by their masters—took their turn at the shovel and the axe. One of Washington's generals noted approvingly that the wealthiest men "worked so long, to set an example, that the blood rushed out of their fingers."¹

If Washington feared that these defenses might prove flimsy against the full brunt of the British Empire's might, he most likely kept those fears to himself. The general was still learning to command

an army whose ranks were filled with amateur soldiers. One year earlier, in April 1775, war had broken out when British troops had faced minutemen at Lexington and Concord. Two months later, Washington assumed command of the American troops surrounding Boston's peninsula, where the British commander, General William Howe, had entrenched his army after the Battle of Bunker Hill. When Howe put his troops on transport ships and sailed away in March 1776, Washington strongly suspected that Howe's next landfall would be Manhattan Island. By that time, Washington had already sent Lee south to prepare New York City for invasion. In fact, Howe's destination was Halifax, Nova Scotia, but Washington's foreboding was correct: Halifax was merely a provisioning station and rendezvous for the grand expeditionary force Howe was mobilizing for an assault on Manhattan.

Washington had consulted with the Continental Congress before marching and shipping his entire army two hundred miles south from Massachusetts. Washington believed strongly that New York City was crucial to American victory in the war. Congress agreed. Writing to the general from Philadelphia, John Adams concurred that New York was "a kind of key to the whole continent." In believing this, Washington and Adams were merely echoing what had been obvious in North American and European strategic thinking for a century. Whoever controlled the Hudson River between its southern terminus at New York City and its northern borderland in Canada not only possessed one of the continent's great water highways but also held the natural boundary separating New England from the Middle and Southern colonies. For Howe to seize New York City would raise the specter of an impregnable British line stretching from Manhattan to Montreal and Quebec, geographically cutting the revolution in two and making it that much easier to quash.²

With congressional consent secured, Washington made New York his new base of operations. By his own arrival there on April 13, over fourteen thousand American troops—most of them veterans of the Boston campaign—had already filled makeshift camps in and around the city, while thousands more were making their way on foot or by boat from Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Jersey, Long Island, and the Hudson Valley. The city awed

Washington's soldiers, most of them farm boys who had never encountered a place so large or so cosmopolitan. Ensign Caleb Clap from Massachusetts was intrigued by the services he attended in the city's synagogue and Lutheran church. Clap's commanding officer, Colonel Loammi Baldwin, a young land surveyor from Woburn, wrote to his wife of another of the city's attractions: the "bitchfoxy jades, jills, hags, strums, prostitutes" he encountered while on duty in the city's brothel district west of Trinity Church. The soldiers commandeered houses, many of them abandoned by fleeing civilians, and hunkered down in barns and tents from Paulus Hook on the New Jersey shore to Red Hook on the Long Island shore. "Our tent living is not very pleasant," wrote Philip Fithian, a young army chaplain with a New Jersey regiment stationed at Red Hook. "Every shower wets us. . . . But we must grow inured to these necessary hardships."³

By the 1770s, New York was a city of over twenty thousand, home to a jostling array of peoples and interest groups; its rural environs across the harbor and in northern Manhattan consisted of tidy farms and small hamlets linked to the city by roads and waterways. The town had continued to grow through the mid-century cycle of war and peace, extending north beyond Stuyvesant's old defensive wall, which had fallen into disrepair by 1699 and soon disappeared as New Yorkers used its wood and stone for new buildings. On some blocks, elegant brick townhouses had replaced wooden Dutch cottages; church steeples and the masts of cargo ships now towered over wharves and winding thoroughfares. "Here is found Dutch neatness, combined with English taste and architecture," an admiring immigrant observed. In Manhattan's streets one saw Germans and Jews and heard English spoken with a Scottish burr or Irish brogue; newcomers mingled with the native sons and daughters of intermarried Dutch, English, and French Protestant families.⁴

But the city Washington and his troops entered had become a deeply divided community. For a decade, while the city continued to grow, New Yorkers had grappled with a succession of parliamentary enactments many viewed as economically burdensome, as affronts to their tradition of self-determination within the British Empire, and

ultimately as proof of an English plot to force Americans "to wear the yoke of slavery, and suffer it to be riveted about their necks," as John Holt's weekly *New York Journal* put it. In response, New Yorkers had taken to the streets in a series of demonstrations, besieging Fort George in protest against the Stamp Act in November 1765, trading blows with angry redcoats at Golden Hill near the East River in January 1770, and dumping tea into the harbor in emulation of Boston's patriots in April 1774. "What demon of discord blows the coals in that devoted province I know not," an exasperated William Pitt commented in 1768 after reading a petition denouncing Parliament's trade policies signed by 240 Manhattan merchants.⁵

The Sons of Liberty—the semisecret society of patriots who, from 1765 onwards, organized the street rallies in New York and elsewhere—drew most of their numbers from the craftsmen, seamen, and laborers of the city's workshops and wharves. The leaders of these "Liberty Boys" were Isaac Sears and Alexander McDougall, privateer captains during the French and Indian War. Sears and McDougall were men on the make, individuals aspiring to wealth and influence. But they were also heirs to a vernacular tradition that posited the common laboring people, the "hewers of wood and drawers of water," as the true source and ultimate repository of virtue. While artisans and seamen were well aware that men of their station were expected to leave decision making to their "betters," some Liberty Boys brought to the patriotic movement a willingness to confront men who sported powdered wigs and knee breeches.⁶

For their part, patrician merchants and lawyers—"men of sense, coolness and property," as one of them put it—looked on uneasily. Also angered by British policy, such men sought to channel and contain the boisterous energies of the Liberty Boys. Temporary boycotts, formal petitions, newspaper essays and pamphlets, letters to lobbyists in London: these were the weapons wielded in New York's elite circles, not tar and feathers or hurled stones. The lingering perception that class interest might split the patriot movement in which they themselves were invested, and even threaten the established social order, troubled patricians in New York. The wealthy young lawyer and landholder Gouverneur Morris, a devoted patriot but also a social

conservative, noted privately in 1774 that "the mob begin to think and reason. . . . They bask in the sunshine, and ere noon they will bite, depend on it. The gentry begin to fear this."⁷

But the most urgently troubling social division in New York by mid-decade was that separating those who contemplated war from those who recoiled from the prospect of breaking the empire. Despite its demons of discord, New York was the most loyal of the colonial seaports. Fort George at Manhattan's tip remained the headquarters for the British Army and "the grand Arsenal of America"—the closest thing the Crown enjoyed to an administrative center for the colonies, and a source of patronage and employment for hundreds of New Yorkers. For many, a final breach with the mother country was unthinkable, a catastrophe that would turn the world upside down. But by September 1774, William Smith Jr., lawyer and member of the royal governor's council, a man who loved American liberty and the British crown equally, noted that respect for the king was waning in the streets of Manhattan. "You now hear the very lowest orders call him a knave or a fool," he observed. "The first act of indiscretion on the part of the army or the people . . . would light up a civil war."⁸

By the time Washington arrived in April 1776, New Yorkers had already gotten their first tastes of such a war. The previous summer, a popularly elected Provincial Congress and a new revolutionary city government had wrested power from the old colonial authorities and raised militia regiments loyal to the Continental Congress. To avoid ambush, the hundred redcoats in Fort George evacuated to new quarters aboard the sixty-four-gun man-of-war *Asia* out on the Upper Bay. In August, when patriot militiamen (including a young King's College student, Alexander Hamilton) confiscated artillery from the royal Battery at the island's tip, the *Asia* fired some retaliatory cannonballs and grapeshot into lower Manhattan, damaging several buildings and spurring a mass panic in which eight thousand people—a third of the population—fled the city for safer environs elsewhere.⁹

As the situation grew tenser, revolutionaries decided that the intimidation of suspected loyalists should be a central tactic in the port's defense. Militia officer Isaac Sears gladly assisted in rounding up, disarming, and interrogating Tories in Queens, where his men demanded

that they take an oath of loyalty to the Continental cause, which, as he put it, "they swallowed as hard as if it was a four pound shot that they were trying to get down." Unrepentant loyalists faced rougher treatment. A friend watched in horror as architect Theophilus Hardenbrook "was taken from his house by a desperate mob, who tore all his clothes from his body, rode him round the city in a cart, pelted and beat him with sticks" until he was almost dead. Patriot authorities made sure that some of the more recalcitrant Tories were sent to the dreaded Simsbury mines, a warren of subterranean tunnels in Connecticut once mined for copper and now converted into a prison for loyalists.¹⁰

While the patriots' harsh measures intimidated some loyalists, they also had a potent opposite effect, pushing many New Yorkers to throw in their lot with the king. Some of the city's ablest and most influential men had already removed themselves and their families to country houses beyond the easy reach of city radicals. Much of the farmland across the water in Queens, Kings County, and Staten Island, moreover, remained home to loyalists and neutrals—Anglican congregations devoted to the king, conservative Dutch farmers wanting no part of changes promoted by city hotheads, "skulkers" in the coastal marshes waiting to make quick money supplying goods or information to the king's troops. Washington realized that his army would "have internal as well as external enemies to contend with."¹¹

In late June, a group of over a dozen Tories and two of Washington's own soldiers were detected in a plot to kidnap or possibly assassinate the general. New York's mayor David Mathews, an alleged plotter, was arrested and sent to Connecticut, but never tried; Thomas Hickey, one of Washington's bodyguards, was quickly court-martialed and hanged. To be sure, beyond the perimeter of Washington's own quarters as well as within it, sincere patriots populated the city and its hinterland. But so did spies, saboteurs, and eager recruits waiting to participate in an English invasion. Civil war might indeed be the outcome of these deepening fault lines.¹²

George Washington did not know New York City or its surrounding terrain; neither did most of his officers. By the summer of 1776, his ragtag army supposedly numbered over 30,000 men, but it was seriously

weakened by continual desertions, the withdrawal of soldiers returning home after fulfilling their enlistment terms, a dearth of experienced and competent officers, a woeful lack of supplies and armaments, and diseases the soldiers had carried with them from Massachusetts, plus new ones (including syphilis) they contracted in New York. The discipline and training of the average soldier left much to be desired; most, their commander noted, "regarded an officer as no more than a broomstick." The army's strength in men fit to fight fluctuated between about 13,500 and 23,000. Washington seriously questioned the ability of this underdisciplined citizen soldiery to withstand fire from the world's finest professional army.¹³

Sure that Howe was coming, but uncertain where and when the British would attempt a landfall, Washington spread his troops out across Manhattan and its adjoining territories, placing some of them in the array of outlying fortifications begun by Lee and completed by generals Israel Putnam and Lord Stirling. (Stirling, a New Jersey patriot whose given name was William Alexander, sported the noble title in support of his dubious claim that the Crown owed his family vast tracts of colonial land.) American troops now occupied trenches, earthworks, redoubts, and batteries on Governors Island, at Red Hook on the nearby Long Island shore, at King's Bridge overlooking the Harlem River, and at the fortresses (soon named Fort Washington and Fort Lee) placed high above each bank of the Hudson to prevent the British from sailing up the river. Washington also made sure that Fort Stirling, the wood and earth stockade his troops built on the plateau known as Brooklyn Heights, was well equipped with artillery. The Heights commanded lower Manhattan across the mouth of the East River, as well as the entire expanse of the port's harbor.¹⁴

At the beginning of July, a Maryland private named Daniel McCurtin happened to be peering out from the upper story of a Manhattan townhouse when he saw a sight that astounded him: "The whole Bay was full of shipping as ever it could be. I declare that I thought all London was afloat." General Howe's force was finally arriving; no longer would the king be represented in New York only by the handful of redcoats cooped up on ships in the harbor. By August, 32,000 soldiers—British redcoats and German mercenaries hired by George III from the principality of Hesse-Cassel—plus about 8,000 sailors and

2,000 royal marines would be on Staten Island and aboard the armada of thirty warships and four hundred transports crowding the bay, preparing for battle. It was the largest expeditionary force ever mounted by a European nation up to that time, larger than the Spanish Armada. Loyalists flocked to their standard. Staten Island's militia pledged fealty to the king en masse; five hundred men, well versed in the local terrain and roads, switched sides in an instant by raising their right hands.¹⁵

As New Yorkers chose sides, a rider galloped into the city on July 6, bearing momentous news from Philadelphia. The Continental Congress had declared the colonies to be independent states, a move Washington had been pressing for some time. In compliance with Congress's instructions and his own elation, the commander in chief had all regiments drawn up, and on July 9, 1776, the Declaration of Independence was read aloud to the army. The troops responded "with loud huzzas." That night, a crowd of soldiers and civilians gathered at Bowling Green outside the northern wall of Fort George and toppled the gilded lead equestrian statue of George III that New Yorkers had erected in 1766 in gratitude for the repeal of the Stamp Act. Most of the lead was carted off to Connecticut to be turned into musket balls; one patriot quipped that the king's troops "will probably have melted majesty fired at them."¹⁶

A moment of rebirth was at hand; soldiers would now be fighting for their own country. But no rebirth strengthened the ailing, ramshackle American army. "The time is now near at hand which must probably determine whether Americans are to be slaves or freemen," General Washington told his soldiers in a written address. "The fate of unborn millions will now depend (under God) on the courage and conduct of this army. . . . We have therefore resolved to conquer or die." Only one thing was certain as Washington and his men watched and waited: the next battle would be fought, for the first time in history, by the army of the United States of America. Whether the new nation would survive that battle was an open question.¹⁷

On the pleasant, sunny morning of August 22, 1776, fifteen thousand British and German soldiers boarded flatboats along the Staten Island shore for the short passage across the Narrows to the beach at Gravesend in Kings County. Here the troops lined up in formation, awaiting



New Yorkers topple the statue of George III at Bowling Green, July 9, 1776. Engraving by John C. McRae, *Pulling Down the Statue of George III by the "Sons of Freedom," at the Bowling Green, City of New York, July 1776*, ca. 1875. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

further orders. One after the other, the regiments peeled off and marched briskly up the farmer's path called the King's Highway, each unit distinguished by its insignia, flag standards, and brightly colored uniforms: English regiments of foot in their red wool jackets and white leggings, Black Watch Highlanders with their blue wool bonnets (officers sporting black ostrich feathers in theirs), Hessian Jaegers (riflemen) in their smart green jackets faced with red. Bringing up the rear was a baggage train of wagons carrying the army's supplies: ammunition, food, rum, tents, cooking equipment, bedding, and furniture for a mobile fighting force superior in numbers to all but the largest American towns. A few lines of American skirmishers took shots at the advancing enemy, then melted away into the countryside. "They climb trees, they crawl forward on their bellies for one hundred and fifty paces, shoot, and go as quickly back again," a Hessian officer complained, but this morning the resisters did little damage. Conducted with exemplary discipline and textbook precision, General Howe's invasion of Long Island was underway.¹⁸

Five miles to the north, on the long brush-and forest-covered ridge known as Gowanus Heights (stretching from what is today Sunset Park east to Bushwick), several hundred American soldiers waited nervously. Here the uniforms were even more varied, to the point of confusion: some companies of a single Massachusetts regiment wore blue jackets, other companies green or gray. Many wore no uniform at all, but a medley of ragged and threadbare civilian garments. These men, spread along five miles of the ridge's crest and the three principal roads that cut through it, constituted a first line of defense.

Behind Gowanus Heights lay the inner line of American fortifications on Long Island: a three-mile network of trenches, earthworks, and stockades manned by another five thousand soldiers, stretching from Fort Defiance at Red Hook to Fort Greene near Gowanus Creek and on to Fort Putnam overlooking Wallabout Bay on the East River, all of them protecting Fort Stirling on the summit of Brooklyn Heights above the shoreline village of Brooklyn, facing Manhattan. While the outer line of troops would hope to keep any attacking British forces well away from this interior line of fortifications, the string of forts was Washington's last true defense for the heights that commanded Manhattan. Now Howe's army was on the march toward them all, across the fields and farms of Kings County.

By that evening, British and Hessian regiments under Charles Lord Cornwallis had taken the village of Flatbush, where Dutch farm families welcomed them with open arms and the Dutch Reformed pastor invited them to raid the wine collection of David Clarkson, one of the few local "rebels." Over the next three days, Pennsylvania riflemen sent out from the American lines skirmished inconclusively with the enemy around Flatbush.

Washington remained wary. Convinced that the Long Island assault might well be a feint to divert him from an impending main attack on northern Manhattan, he redeployed some regiments from Manhattan to Kings County but continued to spend most of his time at his command center in a townhouse at No. 1 Broadway, in the shadow of Fort George. On August 25 he replaced his Long Island field commander, General John Sullivan, with his own second-in-command, Israel Putnam. All three generals were convinced that defending Gowanus

Heights and three of the roads that passed through its center was the key to holding Long Island and preventing Howe from approaching Manhattan from the east. If held back here, the redcoats would never threaten the interior line of fortifications that stood precariously close to the city itself. "At all hazards prevent the enemy's passing the wood and approaching your works," Washington ordered.¹⁹

But Sullivan, Putnam, and Washington had committed a fatal blunder, one that exposed their near-total inexperience as battlefield commanders. They had posted troops on three roads—the Martense Lane Pass, the Flatbush Pass, and the Bedford Pass—that ran through Gowanus Heights toward the villages of Brooklyn, Bedford, and the inner defensive line. But somehow they had neglected to position more than a light patrol on a fourth road, the Jamaica Pass, "a deep winding cut" that also ran through Gowanus Heights, further to the east.²⁰

One officer did perceive how the Jamaica Pass utterly jeopardized the American hold on Gowanus Heights and the inner line behind it. Unfortunately for the Continental army, that officer was General Sir Henry Clinton, Lord Howe's second in command. Moody and petulant, Clinton quarreled often with Howe and other staff officers over campaign strategy. As the son of a former royal governor of New York Colony, Clinton had spent part of his youth in the city, and he felt that his superior knowledge of the city's terrain and surroundings entitled him to direct the New York campaign. Clinton argued doggedly for a main assault against northern Manhattan to cut the rebels off from the mainland—the assault Washington feared—but he failed to convince the cautious Howe, who preferred an offensive through Kings County to secure Brooklyn Heights and the commanding artillery positions that could sweep the city.

Now, with the Long Island campaign in motion, Clinton was the first to see an opportunity for a brilliant victory—one that might even end the war in a single sharp blow. Clinton grasped that the unguarded Jamaica Pass exposed Washington's army to a classic textbook maneuver. If Howe's troops could get through the pass undetected and then move west behind the backs of the Americans on Gowanus Heights, they would flank the Continental regiments there, cut them off from their inner line of defenses, and subject them to a total rout.

Taking the wooden stockades at Fort Putnam and Fort Greene would then be a mere mopping-up operation, leaving the door wide open for an assault on the vulnerable Fort Stirling. Clinton lobbied hard for his plan, this time finally managing to sway the skeptical Howe. The assault was set for the night of August 26. Sir Henry himself would have the honor of leading an advance guard of four thousand through the Jamaica Pass.²¹

By 9 that evening, under a full moon, Clinton's force, followed by corps commanded by Howe, Hugh Earl Percy, and Cornwallis, started moving up the King's Highway from the hamlet of Flatlands toward the Jamaica Pass. Fourteen thousand men were on the march; their column, complete with baggage wagons and horse-drawn field pieces, stretched along the road for two miles. Behind them they left campfires burning to deceive the distant Americans. Tory scouts from the nearby village of New Utrecht guided the army off the road through adjoining fields so as to minimize the risk of being discovered by American pickets or patrols.

Moving slowly and quietly, with frequent stops so paths could be cleared through underbrush using saws rather than noisy axes, the column reached Jamaica Pass by 3 AM, when the redcoats easily surprised and captured the only American force posted to defend the crucial passage—five mounted officers. The cold night march exhausted and irritated its participants, who could hardly believe that the Americans would not discover the maneuver and ambush them. Captain James Murray of the King's Fifty-seventh Regiment of Foot complained of "halting every minute just long enough to drop asleep and to be disturbed again in order to proceed twenty yards in the same manner." But as the sun rose at 5:30, the army, having covered eight miles, reached its destination: the village of Bedford, directly in the rear of the still-oblivious front line of Continental regiments spread along the crest of Gowanus Heights.²²

By then, as the sound of distant cannon and musket fire told the tired British regiments, the battle had already begun. Howe and Clinton had decided on a three-pronged assault. As Clinton's main assault force flanked Gowanus Heights, five thousand troops under Major General James Grant would divert the Americans by attacking the right

(western) end of their forward line near the Martense Lane Pass, while General Philip von Heister would launch a similar feint by leading Hessian and Highlands regiments in a frontal assault on the American center ranged along the Heights. The gunfire must have initially puzzled Howe and Clinton, for the three attacks were supposed to commence simultaneously, in response to signal cannons to be fired at 9 AM. But Grant's troops had literally jumped the gun. During the night, hungry scouts from one of his regiments had been spotted by American pickets as they hoisted watermelons from a field next to the Red Lion Tavern, just west of the Martense Pass. By dawn, Grant's men had been exchanging fire with Pennsylvanians in the woods on the American right flank for several hours.²³

In the townhouse at the foot of Broadway, George Washington awoke that morning to the "deep thunder of distant cannon" drifting over the East River from Long Island. Continuing British troop movements from Staten Island to Long Island had finally convinced him that Howe's invasion of Kings County was the main event. He had already begun to redeploy regiments from Manhattan to Brooklyn, and now, on the morning of the twenty-seventh, he ordered over more troops as he prepared to cross the river himself. One of the soldiers making the passage was a sixteen-year-old Connecticut private named Joseph Plumb Martin, who later recalled stuffing his knapsack withhardtack from casks standing by the Maiden Lane Ferry, just north of Wall Street, as he boarded a small boat bound for the Brooklyn shore. "As each boat started, three cheers were given by those on board, which was returned by the numerous spectators who thronged the wharves," Martin remembered. Unbeknownst to Washington or Martin, the reinforcements from Manhattan were stepping into the trap Clinton and Howe were ready to spring on them.²⁴

At 9 AM on August 27, with the firing of the British signal guns, the Battle of Brooklyn (also known as the Battle of Long Island) began in earnest. As Grant's troops intensified their musket and cannon fire against the right flank of the American forward line, and as von Heister's Hessians and Scotsmen marched with fixed bayonets on the American center, Clinton's grenadiers and light infantry surged west

New Yorker fought New Yorker, as the British threw Tory militia against local Continental units. Stirling came to see that the stand was hopeless and resolved on a holding action that would, he hoped, permit the bulk of the army to escape back to the inner line of defense. Leading four hundred of his best-trained troops, the Fifth Maryland Regiment (the "Dandy Fifth," for its elegant scarlet and buff uniforms and the tidewater aristocrats who peopled its ranks), Stirling charged Cornwallis's front six times, each time enduring a withering fire of canister and grapeshot "like a shower of hail." One American participant remembered how the British cannon fire wreaked havoc, "now and then taking off a head." Behind them, other Americans tried to make their escape, many of them plunging west and north across Gowanus Creek and the eighty yards of the marshy millpond. Arriving with his regiment too late to be thrown into the fray, Joseph Plumb Martin watched from the far bank: "such as could swim got across; those that could not swim, and could not procure any thing to buoy them up, sunk. . . . When [the survivors] came out of the water and mud to us, looking like water rats, it was truly a pitiful sight." Watching the Marylanders' last-ditch effort from a temporary command post on the rise called Cobble Hill behind the inner line of fortifications, Washington allegedly exclaimed, "Good God, what brave fellows I must this day lose!"²⁸

All the survivors of the American forward line now retreated to the inner fortifications, running or limping into the trenches and stockades of forts Greene and Putnam and the line of redoubts connecting them. By early afternoon, it was over. "Long Island is made a field of blood," a Manhattan minister wrote to his wife. Only gradually did the full horror of the disaster become clear to Washington and his battered army. The commander concluded that he had lost over a thousand men (modern estimates place American losses at about three hundred dead, several hundred more wounded or missing, and over one thousand taken prisoner). Howe reported total British and Hessian casualties as fewer than four hundred. Among Howe's prisoners were generals Stirling and Sullivan; a third general, Nathaniel Woodhull, had been mortally wounded by his captors, allegedly after he refused their demand that he say, "God save the King." And now

Howe's army stood poised at the gates of forts Putnam and Greene. In many instances the Americans had fought bravely, but they had been outgeneraled, outmaneuvered, and outfought. The Continental army's first full-fledged field engagement was over. The question now was whether it could survive another one.²⁹

But General Howe hesitated, to the disbelief of the spent Americans and the consternation of his own officers. Rather than following up his triumph with a decisive blow, Howe ordered his sappers to begin digging trenches toward the American lines, a sign that he intended to besiege the enemy in his lair rather than breach his walls with a frontal assault. Howe's caution remains puzzling more than two centuries later. Why not follow through with another charge and defeat Washington's army once and for all? The answer, however, is not hard to find. Howe was by nature deliberate and careful, traits that served him poorly during the New York campaign. Just as inhibiting, perhaps, was his long-standing hope that he and his brother, Admiral Richard Lord Howe, could serve as peace commissioners, persuading the American leaders to see the wisdom of ending the rebellion and resuming their proper place in the empire. Even the brief respite that siege preparations required, following the drubbing the Americans had received on Gowanus Heights, might give Congress the time it needed to come round. But the general had miscalculated—gravely. Washington had blundered at the Jamaica Pass; now it was Howe's turn.

By the evening of the twenty-ninth, Washington had made up his mind. As a driving rain soaked his troops and as Howe's trenches snaked slowly forward, the American commander had conferred with his generals, most of whom argued that Brooklyn was a trap whose jaws would spring shut once the British coordinated their land attack with a cannonade from Admiral Howe's warships sailing up from their Staten Island anchorage.

One by one, the American regiments manning the line from Walabout Bay to Red Hook on the night of the twenty-ninth were ordered to stand down and began an orderly but hasty march to the ferry landing at the foot of Brooklyn Heights, opposite the Manhattan shore. "We were strictly enjoined not to speak, or even cough, while on the march,"

Joseph Plumb Martin recalled. "What such secrecy could mean we could not divine." At water's edge, the soldiers encountered a surprising sight: a flotilla of small craft—rowboats, flatboats, sailboats, sloops—that had been hastily gathered from around New York harbor and piloted to the Brooklyn shore by two Massachusetts regiments.³⁰

The Massachusetts men—almost all of them seamen and fishermen from Marblehead, Lynn, and Salem, including several dozen black mariners—began a methodical evacuation, rowing boatfuls of soldiers half a mile to the Manhattan shore near Peck Slip, then shuttling back across for more. One rower later remembered making eleven round trips through the night. General Alexander McDougall, the old Son of Liberty and seasoned mariner, directed the embarkations from the Brooklyn ferry steps. Washington had gambled that prevailing winds would keep Admiral Howe's ships from entering the mouth of the East River. American luck held when a southwesterly breeze, favorable to the Royal Navy, did not produce the feared onslaught of grapeshot-spewing frigates from the Upper Bay. So far, the British seemed completely oblivious to the evacuation.³¹

But as dawn broke on the morning of the thirtieth, thousands of troops still waited on the Brooklyn beach, and nerves began to fray. Soldiers started a disorderly stampede into the boats. Washington, a man who had spent a lifetime learning to master his formidable temper, now displayed it to good effect. Hoisting a large rock from the shore and balancing it above his head with both hands, he loomed over an overcrowded boat and threatened to "sink it to hell" unless the men cleared it. Order was restored, and the embarkations, aided by a morning fog that concealed them from potential British observers, continued. By 7 AM, as the fog lifted, the last of some nine thousand American soldiers climbed out of boats onto the Manhattan shore. At 8:30, looking across the East River, they saw the red jackets of British soldiers on the ramparts of Fort Stirling. Tory informers and British scouting parties had detected the retreat in progress by 4 AM, too late to alert and move Howe's forces with sufficient speed to surround Washington's regiments. A mere hour or two kept Howe from ambushing the Continental army and, arguably, ending the American Revolution on the bank of the East River.³²

Almost miraculously, George Washington had saved his army. It had been his turn to execute a flawless maneuver. The Americans also recognized that they had been phenomenally lucky. "General Howe is either our friend or no general," snorted Israel Putnam. But in lower Manhattan, Ewald Shewkirk, pastor of the Moravian Church, peered into the faces of weary and demoralized soldiers. "The merry tones of drums and fifes had ceased," he wrote. "Many looked sickly, emaciated, cast down."

Savoring good fortune was a luxury the Continental army could not afford. Washington redeployed his battered army up and down the length of Manhattan to await Howe's next move. But Howe continued to hold back. On September 11, his brother the admiral hosted a secret conference on Staten Island at which he tried to persuade congressional envoys Edward Rutledge, John Adams, and Benjamin Franklin to negotiate toward peace. When it became clear that Congress would not revoke the Declaration of Independence, the Howe brothers gave up further talks as futile. Warfare would resume. Once more, Washington's men were forced to watch and wait.³³

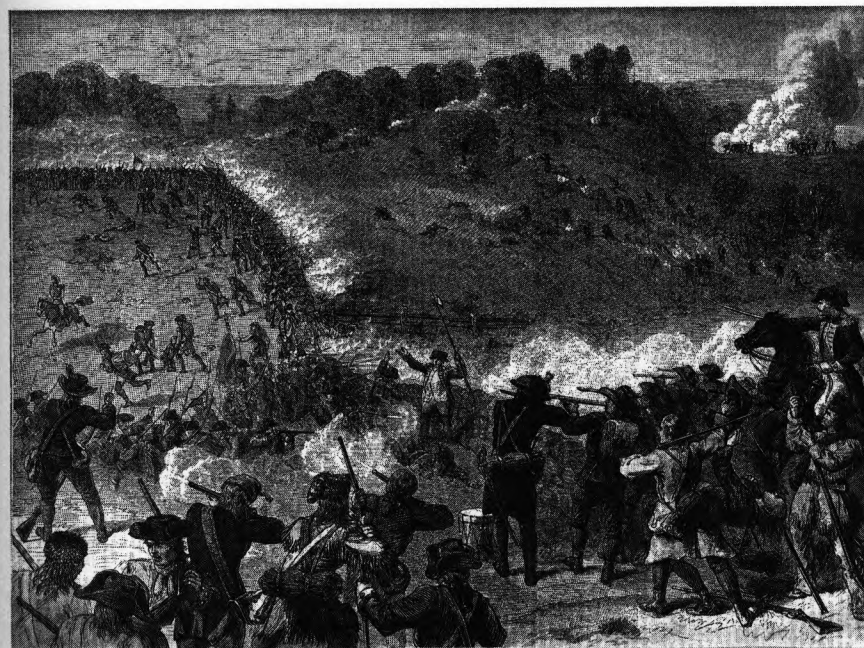
This time the Continental army did not have to wait long. In the early afternoon of September 15, the British launched an amphibious assault at Kip's Bay, a sandy cove on the Manhattan shore of the East River some three miles north of the city. The previous night, as American sentries along the shore called "all is well" to each other, sailors on one of His Majesty's frigates plying the river had called back, "We will alter your tune before tomorrow night." In the morning they made good on their promise. Two forty-gun ships and three frigates opened up with a deafening broadside barrage aimed at American positions inland from the cove. The "peal of thunder" stunned Joseph Plumb Martin: "I made a frog's leap for the ditch, and lay as still as I possibly could, and began to consider which part of my carcass was to go first." By the time the British forces—4,000 redcoats and Hessians—landed from flatboats, Martin and his 1,500 comrades had fled.³⁴

Hearing the artillery fire from his new command post on Harlem Heights four miles further north, Washington galloped south to find the regiments he had posted to the middle of the island retreating in disarray. Officers and enlisted men ran together, leaving guns, ammunition,

coats, and knapsacks strewn across the fields and dirt roads. Stories of Hessian atrocities at Gowanus Heights had played on many minds. "Take the walls! Take the cornfield!" Washington bellowed from his steed, to no avail. When he failed to rally his fleeing troops to fire at pursuing Hessians, the general grew so enraged that he nearly allowed himself to be captured before an alert aide guided his horse to safety. "Are these the men with which I am to defend America?" he muttered in despair as his army retreated north toward Harlem Heights.³⁵

Once again, luck and Howe's leisurely pace favored the Americans. The king's army moved west across what is today midtown Manhattan, seeking to bisect the island and cut off the remaining Americans who were now retreating northward from the city. But they moved too slowly, allowing Israel Putnam's troops (guided along back roads by Major Aaron Burr) to slip through their fingers and join Washington on Harlem Heights. Nevertheless, the day had brought another near-catastrophic humiliation for the Americans. At one point during the retreat, Adjutant General Joseph Reed recalled, "the enemy appeared in open view, and in the most insulting manner sounded their bugle horns as is usual after a fox chase. I never felt such a sensation before. It seemed to crown our disgrace." Looking ahead, Washington could see only misery. "In short, it is not in the power of words to describe the task I have to perform," he wrote to his brother John. "Fifty thousand pounds would not induce me again to undergo what I have done."³⁶

By nightfall on the following day, Washington's men could finally enjoy a flash of pride. On the sixteenth, about four hundred Americans managed to beat back several British detachments in a wooded gully in northern Manhattan. This so-called Battle of Harlem Heights was not much more than a prolonged skirmish, but its positive outcome bolstered the morale of Washington's badly dispirited force. "You can hardly conceive the change it has made in our army," the general's aide, Joseph Reed, wrote to his wife. "The men have recovered their spirits, and feel a confidence which before they had quite lost." The victory also restored some of their commander's badly shaken faith in his men. "They find," Washington wrote, "that it only requires resolution and good officers to make an enemy (that they stood in too much dread of) give way." Morale, Washington and his officers knew, was an



Harlem Heights, September 16, 1776. Engraving by A. R. Waud, *The Battle of Harlem Heights, September 16, 1776*, 1876. AUTHOR'S COLLECTION.

all but exhausted commodity in the Continental army, one that had to be sustained at all costs, by small successes if not by large ones, in order for the army to continue to exist.³⁷

On the night of September 21, John Joseph Henry, an American prisoner of war aboard HMS *Pearl* some four miles distant from the city, noticed "a most beautiful and luminous, but baleful sight," seemingly "the size of the flame of a candle . . . to the east of the battery and near the wharf." The conflagration New Yorkers feared was finally upon them. Fanned by a stiff southeasterly wind coming off the harbor, the flames quickly jumped from house to house, sparked by embers that floated from one cedar-shingled roof to the next. The wooden steeple of Trinity Church soon "resembled a vast pyramid of fire." The British, who had been in control of the city since their offensive of the fifteenth, threw soldiers and sailors into fighting the blaze. But their bucket brigades proved largely ineffectual, and the city's hand-pumped

fire engines malfunctioned. By daylight the next morning, nearly five hundred buildings stretching through the heart of the city's west side—a quarter or more of New York's housing stock—had been reduced to ash.³⁸

Thanks to prompt fire alarms and the diminished size of the city's population, few lives were lost. Most of the handful of people who did perish during the fire were, in fact, summarily executed. The redcoats fighting the flames strongly suspected American sabotage, and they caught several men and one woman acting suspiciously during the fire—carrying matches dipped in “rosin and brimstone,” cutting the handles of water buckets, darting out of houses that soon were ablaze. One suspect was grabbed, bayoneted, and then hung by his feet from a tavern signpost. English soldier Lee Ashton later remembered helping to push another man, allegedly caught red-handed with matches, “into the flames.”³⁹

Whether or not patriotic free agents decided to help amplify the destruction, the fire probably started accidentally in a tavern or outbuilding near Whitehall Slip on the East River waterfront. To be sure, Washington had pondered carefully the question of burning New York, once the city had fallen to Howe. Among his own staff and in Congress, some, including General Nathanael Greene and John Jay, himself a lifelong New Yorker, had strongly advocated torching the city in order to deprive the British of winter quarters and a “general market.” But Congress, reasoning optimistically that the Continental army might recapture the city, forbade it. “Providence, or some good honest fellow,” Washington confided in a letter to a cousin after the fire, “has done more for us than we were disposed to do for ourselves.”⁴⁰

American soldiers encamped in the woods of northern Manhattan may have smirked grimly at news of the partial destruction of Howe's city, but the autumn only brought them more defeats. In mid-October, the Americans did manage to repel redcoats and Hessians who came up the East River in flatboats and landed at Throg's Neck and Pell's Neck in the Bronx in an attempt to cut Washington off from his escape route into Westchester County. The attacks convinced Washington of the folly of keeping the main body of his army on Manhattan, and in late October he evacuated most of his men over the Harlem



New York's great fire of September 21, 1776, as imagined by a Parisian artist. Redcoats bayonet and beat suspected American arsonists. Engraving published by Chez Basset, *Representation du feu terrible a Nouvelle Yorck*, ca. 1778. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

River to the hills at White Plains. There, on October 28, Howe administered another defeat, driving the Americans from the hills, but again without gaining a decisive victory. Washington retreated further north to a more defensible position on hills near the village of North Castle.

Howe's control of Manhattan now sealed the fate of the nearly three thousand soldiers the American commander had unwisely left at Fort Mifflin, overlooking the Hudson near the island's northern tip. On November 16, English, Scottish, and German regiments scaled the ridges (today's Washington Heights) on which the fort perched and, after a prolonged musket and artillery barrage, secured its surrender; 2,800 hungry men and boys, many clad in rags, marched out into captivity. This time, although many of the prisoners were beaten and looted, there were no bayonetings. The Hessians instead found themselves laughing in disbelief at the forlorn appearance of their prisoners. “A great many of them were lads under fifteen and old men,” reported an English officer, “and few had the appearance of soldiers.” Four days earlier, Washington had led his Westchester survivors across the Hudson. Soon they were heading toward the Delaware River, at a healthy

distance from Howe's victorious main army, but with a confident Cornwallis hard on their heels.⁴¹

It was an inglorious and dismal end to the New York campaign for the Americans. Despite the smoldering ruins of the city's west side and Howe's failure to corner Washington once and for all, the British army could find satisfaction in its successes, and assurance that the war was nearly won. Major General James Grant judged the campaign "a cheap and complete victory." In private, the Continental leaders did not disagree with Grant's assessment. "We all think our cause is nearly ruined," Israel Putnam confided to a correspondent. Tories embraced Howe's arriving troops with open arms; a neighborhood woman had been the first to enter Fort George in September to grind the American flag underfoot in the mud. As fall turned into winter, the presence of thousands of American prisoners of war—ill, filthy, depressed, crowded into makeshift prisons scattered throughout the city and floating on its waterways—was a daily reminder of imperial triumph and rebel ineptitude.⁴²

One of the luckier prisoners was John Adlum, a seventeen-year-old Pennsylvanian who had been captured at Fort Washington. Confined to a private house in the city, Adlum was permitted to run errands, a privilege that allowed him to move through the streets and make covert contact with patriot civilians who now found themselves having to conceal their true allegiance. Late on Christmas day, a grocer pulled Adlum into a back room and, while trying to say something to him, stood speechless, overcome with emotion. "I looked at him and thought him crazy or mad," Adlum wrote, "but as soon as he could give utterance to his word he says to me, 'General Washington has defeated the Hessians at Trenton this morning and has taken 900 prisoners and six pieces of artillery!'" As news of Washington's victories at Trenton and Princeton was spread through town by riders crossing the Hudson, British expectations of a quick victory abruptly evaporated, and Adlum's fellow prisoners took heart. Only one thing now seemed sure: the war that George Washington had nearly lost in Brooklyn, and William Howe had nearly won, would go on.⁴³

By the end of 1776, then, New York was, once again, an outpost of the British Empire—indeed, it was *the* outpost, the command center for all

of the king's military operations in North America. Each tide seemed to mark the arrival or departure of another fleet of warships or troop transports, carrying the war to the rebel enemy wherever he lurked—in Connecticut, the Delaware Valley, Rhode Island, the Chesapeake, Martha's Vineyard, northern New Jersey, the Carolinas. The Sons of Liberty and their allies were gone, having fled to safer quarters or joined the rebel army. Taking their place was a continuous influx of loyalist refugees from Boston, Newport, Philadelphia, Norfolk, and Savannah, cities held by the insurgents. They settled into houses formerly owned by rebel families—dwellings confiscated by British authorities who, as in some Old Testament chastisement, marked their front doors or lintels with the initials "G.R." (George Rex) before distributing them to refugees.⁴⁴

Once again, civilian New Yorkers got into the martial spirit, especially when lured by the prospect of profit. "Seldom a day passes without a prize by the privateers," boasted William Tryon, New York's wartime royal governor, in March 1779. Over 180 vessels sailed forth to prey on rebel maritime traffic, returning with fortunes in flour, sugar, tobacco, and gunpowder, all of which flowed through the city's shops and auction rooms. Perhaps six thousand men and boys, including deserters from Washington's army, crowded onto the privateers in order to strike a blow for the empire while filling their pockets. Even loyalist ladies got into the act. In 1779, several well-heeled Manhattan women agreed to fit out a "fast privateer" christened *The Fair American* (later renamed *The Royal Charlotte*, after the queen) to "aid in chastising the rebels."⁴⁵

Other forays against the rebel enemy were fueled more by hatred than by profit taking. As displaced Tories flooded into the city, they joined New York loyalists in military units raised to wreak vengeance on their persecutors. They did not have to travel far, for a sporadic but deeply bitter guerilla war persisted just beyond the city's outskirts. The Continental Congress continued to control much of the territory surrounding the city, including parts of northern New Jersey, the Hudson Valley, eastern Long Island, and coastal Connecticut. As a result, the so-called neutral ground of farmland lying between the British and American lines became a zone of recurrent skirmishes, pillaging, kidnapping, and terrorist raids conducted by partisans of both sides, as

well as by apolitical marauders who used the war as a cover for plundering. Tory dragoons and irregulars known as "cowboys" rode at night through southern Westchester and northeastern New Jersey, punishing alleged pro-rebel farmers by stealing their livestock and burning their homes. Patriot "skinners" responded in kind. In their boldest retaliation, a band of New Jersey rebels crossed the Hudson in dead of night and ransacked the suburban mansion of Brigadier General Oliver De Lancey, one of the city's leading Tories, a few miles above the city.⁴⁶

One community of loyalists had an added incentive for crushing the revolution. In November 1775, Lord Dunmore, the royal governor of Virginia, had issued a proclamation offering freedom to any slave who ran away from a rebel owner in order to aid His Majesty's forces in putting down the rebellion. Nine months later, Dunmore was on Staten Island, recruiting additional runaways to join the "Ethiopian Regiment" he had brought north to take part in Howe's New York campaign. Sir Henry Clinton, who replaced the unsuccessful Howe as British commander in North America in 1778, repeated Dunmore's promise, making New York City a mecca for hundreds of slaves who fled patriot masters in order to gain their liberty by serving the king. Patriot families who had fled the city for refuge in New Jersey or the Hudson Valley learned to their consternation that their bondsmen preferred to slip back into Manhattan in order to become black Tories.⁴⁷

But the influx into New York also included refugees from farther afield, men with names like Ralph Henry (lately the property of the patriot who had declared, "Give me liberty or give me death!") and Harry Washington (who viewed British Manhattan with emotions different from those of his recent master, the rebel commander in chief). British warships raiding the Chesapeake and the Carolinas brought back whole extended families of runaways from rebel plantations. In Manhattan, the men enlisted as foragers, teamsters, woodcutters, seamen, and soldiers, while their wives found employment as laundresses, seamstresses, and hospital orderlies. Fugitive slaves and free blacks understood that the British offer of emancipation was opportunistic and one-sided; loyalist masters were permitted to keep their human property, and slave auctions continued on the wharves of British Manhat-

tan. But they also recognized that serving the British was their best hope for freedom. A revolution led by Virginia planters was most decidedly not going to provide their ticket to emancipation.⁴⁸

For all their determination to sustain the empire, loyal civilians faced another, bleaker side of wartime New York, one that threatened to overwhelm them. With the British army in residence consuming enormous quantities of local foodstuffs, hay, and firewood, supplies plummeted and retail prices skyrocketed, staggering even well-to-do civilian families. Overcrowding and homelessness also became endemic. Hundreds of poor squatters—workers and seamen, British enlisted men, refugee families, prostitutes—hunkered down in the charred ruins of the city's burned district, where they scavenged fragments of ship's sails and spars to raise roofs over their heads. To respectable New Yorkers, "Canvass-town" stood as an open sore, but it was also a vivid proof of the war's lingering disorder.⁴⁹

Tories grew increasingly unhappy with the way the British military was managing the city's affairs. The refusal by Clinton and royal governor William Tryon to reinstate civil courts and a representative assembly was an affront to some of the Crown's most ardent local allies. So were the bribes, kickbacks, and padded contracts that made a mockery of honest dealing in the army's local provisioning system. New Yorkers inundated the army's courts-martial with charges of theft, assault, and rape against marauding redcoats; officers often let their accused men off lightly. Those New Yorkers with open eyes and open consciences were, perhaps, also appalled by the condition of the thousands of rebel prisoners of war—sick, hungry, "mere walking skeletons . . . overrun with lice from head to foot," as one captive put it—who were crammed into poorly adapted warehouses, confiscated churches, and decrepit "prison hulks" that the British kept anchored in Wallabout Bay and the harbor. (As many as 18,000 of these prisoners may have died in and around Manhattan from diseases aggravated by hunger, cold, and abuse, dwarfing the war's 6,800 American battlefield deaths and making them the largest group of human beings to perish during the city's entire military history.) So disenchanting had the king's loyal New Yorkers become by March 1782, one of them

claimed, that if George Washington attacked with his army, half the city's populace "would receive him with open arms."⁵⁰

The failure of the British military to bag the fox, to bring Washington to ground and end the rebellion, was the single most aggravating topic of conversation in Manhattan's taverns and drawing rooms. The fox himself had New York on his mind more or less constantly. He had learned on the ridges and farms of Brooklyn that he would lose the war if he tried to fight the king's army in conventional open-field battles with inferior numbers, armaments, and supplies. "The war should be defensive," Washington wrote nine days after the East River evacuation. "We should, on all occasions, avoid a general action . . . unless compelled by a necessity into which we ought never to be drawn." Let the British get frustrated and weary, Washington argued, by avoiding battle when it offered the enemy the prospect of a decisive victory. Let the war drag on until Parliament and the English people got tired of it. The lesson Washington learned from the near disaster in Kings County was the lesson he would hew to through the seven years of war that followed.⁵¹

Washington also recognized the city as a prize to be retaken. "New York is the first and capital object upon which every other is dependent," he wrote. "The loss of the army and fleet there would be one of the severest blows the English nation could experience." The question was how to do it while avoiding a "general action" in which his forces would be hopelessly outnumbered and crushed. The answer was to enlist the revolution's French allies in a coordinated attack on Manhattan. Three times between the summer of 1778 and the summer of 1780, Washington sought to enlist the French navy for a joint assault on New York. Twice, Admiral Charles-Hector, Comte d'Estaing, drew near the port with a fleet of warships and transports carrying troops, as Washington prepared his main army, encamped in the hills around White Plains, for an attack on Manhattan. But each time, d'Estaing sailed away, evidently daunted by the prospect of facing Admiral Howe in the city's Upper Bay. A third time, in 1780, the Marquis de Lafayette attempted to convince General Rochambeau that New York, "the pivot on which turn the operations of the enemy," warranted conquest. But Rochambeau concluded that a vast fleet and

thirty thousand fit men would be required to win a siege of Manhattan, a number even the combined Franco-American forces could not muster, and Washington had to acquiesce—for the time being.⁵²

The persistent threat of an American or French attack rattled many in New York, both in and out of uniform. Howe and Clinton had already turned Manhattan and its environs into an armed camp, a place girdled by fences made of intertwined tree trunks and branches, earth embankments bristling with sharpened stakes, and hilltop artillery batteries. Despite the fortifications, many expected Washington to make a bold move sooner or later. It was now the loyalists' turn to fear enemies within the gates—covert rebels and spies who watched everything and reported it to the rebel foe.

Indeed, these hidden enemies did exist within the city, and George Washington used every opportunity to employ as many as he could secure. The commander took a personal hand in creating a network of spies inside New York City, men who could report on troop and ship movements, regimental strength and location, and the state of provisions and morale. Washington, who relished playing the role of spy master, corresponded directly with several key agents. One network ran from a Peck Slip store from which shopkeepers Amos Underhill and Robert Townsend wrote coded letters (some in an invisible ink) carried by courier to agent Abraham Woodhull at Setauket, Long Island. Woodhull sent the letters across Long Island Sound to a command post in Connecticut, from which riders carried them to wherever Washington's headquarters happened to be.⁵³

His preoccupation with the city also led Washington to grasp a useful truth: so long as New York remained the British center of power, it could also be made a burden on the British war effort. Clinton's need to protect the city forced him to keep troops there who might more effectively be used in aggressive campaigns against the rebels elsewhere. Washington wanted to keep it that way, so repeatedly during the war his army launched raids into British-held territory daringly close to the city—at Paulus Hook (today Jersey City) in 1779, Staten Island in 1780, and Washington Heights in 1781. These hit-and-run attacks accomplished their goal of keeping numerous regiments of redcoats, Hessians, and Tory militia tied down in defensive positions, as well as

reminding Manhattan's loyalist populace that their enemy remained cunning and close.⁵⁴

Even more critically, the prospect of an American attack on New York City repeatedly led the British to deplete their forces in the field to reinforce Manhattan, thereby seriously hampering the king's military effort throughout the colonies. "The most powerful diversion that can be made in favor of the Southern states will be a respectable force in the neighborhood of New York," Washington wrote in March 1781, and he now kept the bulk of his army in a ring of encampments around the city's periphery, from Morristown in New Jersey and West Point on the Hudson to King's Bridge on the Bronx side of the Harlem River and Danbury in Connecticut.⁵⁵

For the fourth time, the prospect of a concerted Franco-American assault on New York surfaced in the spring of 1781, when, in a conference in Connecticut, Washington and Rochambeau agreed that the attack should be attempted, provided that an expected French fleet commanded by Admiral de Grasse made its landfall near the port. Once again, Washington believed that, at the very least, a French naval blockade of the harbor might frighten Clinton into recalling thousands of troops from Virginia, where they were enjoying success against Continental forces. Not until mid-August did dispatches arrive from de Grasse, explaining that he would make his landfall with twenty-eight ships and three thousand men in the Chesapeake rather than near the mouth of the Hudson. Washington and Rochambeau abandoned the plan to attack New York, agreeing instead that six thousand Continental and French soldiers encamped in Westchester would march south to cooperate with Lafayette's southern army and de Grasse in bottling up British troops on the Virginia coast.⁵⁶

Once more indulging his taste for covert operations, Washington planned an elaborate ruse to conceal his true intentions from Clinton. Continental regiments attacked British outposts near the city, as if in preparation for a major assault; in reality, Washington left a mere 2,500 men near the city to keep Clinton's 14,500 soldiers pinned down. The Americans and French left fires burning in largely empty camps in the New Jersey meadows, much as Clinton's men themselves

had done during the Battle of Brooklyn; army bread ovens were set up to convince Clinton's spies that a siege was in the offing. Meanwhile, by crossing the Hudson from Westchester and marching to the west and south of the city, the Continental and French armies slipped away. Not until the last week of August did New Yorkers learn that they had been spared—and that Washington's true target was the 7,000-man army operating in coastal Virginia under the command of General Charles Lord Cornwallis.⁵⁷

As Washington's army and de Grasse's fleet closed in on Cornwallis at Yorktown, the British field commander sent tense dispatches to Clinton, pleading for reinforcements to withstand the enemy siege; if they did not arrive, he warned, he would leave the field to the enemy and retreat toward New York. Leading Tories in the city were beside themselves with anxiety. "A week will decide perhaps the ruin or salvation of the British Empire!" William Smith Jr. wrote upon hearing of the situation at Yorktown. On September 5, de Grasse fended off a British fleet sent from New York in the waters off the Virginia Capes. Cornwallis, however, sat tight, persuaded not to evacuate by letters from Clinton promising that additional troops were making their way to him.⁵⁸

But Cornwallis's situation on the Yorktown Peninsula was getting desperate; the relief force of five thousand men that Clinton now organized seemed to be taking an agonizingly long time to leave the East River and Upper Bay. Finally, on October 19, the fleet set sail. Four days later, New Yorkers were stunned by news carried into the city by a group of redcoats arriving from New Jersey as part of a prisoner exchange: Cornwallis had surrendered on the very day the relief force had sailed forth. Many refused to believe it; Smith felt it was probably another rebel ruse. But as other travelers arrived with confirmation, hearts sank throughout loyalist New York.⁵⁹

On the afternoon of November 25, 1783, General George Washington, mounted on a white steed and accompanied by General Henry Knox and New York State's revolutionary governor, George Clinton (no relation to Sir Henry), led a triumphal procession down Broadway to mark the conclusion of the British evacuation from the city and

thus the end of the War for Independence. For the thousands of “rebels”—now confirmed citizens of the United States of America—who had flocked back to their old homes in New York City, Washington’s entry represented the victorious end of an eight-year struggle that had repeatedly brought chaos to the island of Manhattan. On the whole, only minimal friction attended Washington’s reentry. The reason for the generally tranquil mood was starkly clear: not only had the bulk of the British army and navy already withdrawn, but thousands of Tories had also left the city to begin new lives as refugees from their homeland.⁶⁰

In early 1782, when a majority in Parliament had supported resolutions to end “a fruitless war” and concede American independence, the dark hour that loyalists had been dreading descended upon them. “Never was despair and distraction stronger painted than in the countenances I momentarily see,” noted an Englishman in Manhattan. Writing in his diary, William Smith Jr. was more succinct: “We are slighted and cast off as beggars.” While some loyalist New Yorkers received pensions and honors from the British government, many never fully made peace with their sense of abandonment and betrayal or the bitterness of exile.⁶¹

By March 1782, wealthy loyalists had begun putting their suburban estates on the auction block and making arrangements to immigrate to England or the British West Indies. By autumn the British government had offered to transport loyalists, free of charge, to land set aside for them in Nova Scotia. By the spring of 1783, flotillas of brigs, sloops, and schooners were beginning to shuttle back and forth between the East River and the Bay of Fundy. New York became the designated embarkation point for this mass migration, and loyalist families flooded into Manhattan from all points in the colonies. The city became host to one of the greatest out-migrations in American history. In sum, twenty-nine thousand civilians left, as did twenty thousand redcoats and German mercenaries. Some nine thousand loyalists settled at Port Roseway, almost overnight turning that Nova Scotian outpost into a frontier replica of Tory Manhattan. Three thousand black loyalists left New York to take up the king’s offer of land in Nova Scotia, although the racism and poverty many experienced there eventually led some to

the abolitionist colony of Sierra Leone. Other black Tories accompanied the king’s army back to England; Bill Richmond, born a slave on Staten Island, became one of the British Isles’ most renowned bare-knuckle boxing champions.⁶²

The patriots who flooded into New York City in the wake of the British evacuation by and large wanted to put the war and its miseries behind them. New Yorkers of all political views heeded the toast that returning patriots offered at a banquet at Cape’s Tavern honoring Washington: “May an uninterrupted commerce soon repair the ravages of war.” True to form, Isaac Sears and Alexander McDougall, once leaders of the leather aprons, embraced the city’s revived spirit of commerce: Sears as a merchant in the incipient China trade, McDougall as first president of the Bank of New York. Manhattan was back in business; indeed, thanks to its many wartime industries, it had never really been out of business, even at the war’s most critical moments.⁶³

Yet despite the rebounding of the city’s economy, the war’s handiwork lingered, as did an awareness of how the city’s vulnerability to attack had opened the door to occupation, chaos, and devastation. In the incised letters “G.R.” adorning doorposts, in the weed-sprouting earth embankments surrounding the city, in the charred shambles of Canvastown, in the unmarked graves of countless war prisoners, and in memories of neighbors, friends, and enemies gone forever, the Revolutionary War, the single most destructive sequence of events in the city’s history, remained omnipresent. Little did New Yorkers suspect that another revolution would soon slow the healing of their own wounds and open new ones.

44. "From the 'Korte Historiae' . . . by de Vries," in Jameson, ed., *Narratives*, 234.
45. Merwick, *The Shame*, 220–222; Ellis, *Epic*, 67–69.
46. Ellis, *Epic*, 67–69; Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 68–70.
47. This, however, is not to suggest that the Lenape ceased to be a military presence, albeit a diminished one. As late as the 1760s, British colonial authorities had to take into account the belligerence of Lenape groups in Pennsylvania, in New Jersey, and on the New York frontier. See Grumet, *Munsee Indians*, 75–79, 140–141, 190–191, 197–198, 224, 226, 227, 239–240, 261–267.

Chapter 2

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2. Stokes, *Iconography*, 4:133.
3. *Ibid.*, 4:138–139; Henri and Barbara van der Zee, *A Sweet and Alien Land: The Story of Dutch New York* (New York: Viking Press, 1978), 232.
4. Stokes, *Iconography*, 4:146.
5. *Ibid.*, 4:149.
6. *Ibid.*, 4:133–135; "Report on the Surrender of New Netherland, by Peter Stuyvesant, 1665," in Jameson, ed., *Narratives*, 460.
7. Van der Zee, *A Sweet and Alien Land*, 150–157; Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 41–42.
8. Edward Robb Ellis, *The Epic of New York City: A Narrative History* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1966), 41; van der Zee, *A Sweet and Alien Land*, 159; Stokes, *Iconography*, 4:118–119; "The Representation of New Netherland, 1650," in Jameson, ed., *Narratives*, 331, 342–343, 347, 352.
9. Van der Zee, *A Sweet and Alien Land*, 28.
10. *Ibid.*, 139, 213, 219–222.
11. Stokes, *Iconography*, 4:212; *ibid.*, 314.
12. Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 40; van der Zee, *A Sweet and Alien Land*, 89–93.
13. Jaap Jacobs, *New Netherland: A Dutch Colony in Seventeenth-Century America* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 305–312; Stokes, *Iconography*, 4:142; Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 59–61.

14. Michael Kammen, *Colonial New York: A History* (New York: Scribner, 1975), 60–63.
15. Van der Zee, *A Sweet and Alien Land*, 239–242, 249; Stokes, *Iconography*, 4:147.
16. Van der Zee, *A Sweet and Alien Land*, 383, 445.
17. *Ibid.*, 242–243.
18. *Ibid.*, 383–384.
19. *Ibid.*, 381–383; Russell Shorto, *The Island at the Center of the World: The Epic Story of Dutch Manhattan and the Forgotten Colony That Shaped America* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 285–288.
20. Introduction, "Letter of the Town Council of New Amsterdam, 1664," in Jameson, ed., *Narratives*, 449–450; van der Zee, *A Sweet and Alien Land*, 447–450.
21. "Letters of the Dutch Ministers to the Classis of Amsterdam, 1655–1664," in Jameson, ed., *Narratives*, 414; Kammen, *Colonial New York*, 72.
22. Van der Zee, *A Sweet and Alien Land*, 450–458.
23. Stokes, *Iconography*, Volume 4, 201.
24. Van der Zee, *A Sweet and Alien Land*, 274–275, 431.
25. *Ibid.*, 455, 457; "Report by Stuyvesant, 1665," in Jameson, ed., *Narratives*, 460; Stokes, *Iconography*, 4:239.
26. Stokes, *Iconography*, 4:240; van der Zee, *A Sweet and Alien Land*, 459.
27. Van der Zee, *A Sweet and Alien Land*, 459–460; Stokes, *Iconography*, 4:240; Kammen, *Colonial New York*, 71–72; Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 73.
28. Stokes, *Iconography*, 4:243–244; Kammen, *Colonial New York*, 71–73; van der Zee, *A Sweet and Alien Land*, 460–461; Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 73.
29. Stokes, *Iconography*, 4:244; "Report by Stuyvesant, 1665," in Jameson, ed., *Narratives*, 465.
30. Van der Zee, *A Sweet and Alien Land*, 461–462.
31. Stokes, *Iconography*, 4:244; Kammen, *Colonial New York*, 71–72; van der Zee, *A Sweet and Alien Land*, 463, 473–474.
32. Jacobs, *New Netherland*, 185–186; Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 82; Donald G. Shomette and Robert D. Haslach, *Raid on America: The Dutch Naval Campaign of 1672–1674* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 165–169, 172–175.
33. Shomette and Haslach, *Raid*, 311–313.

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2. *Ibid.*, 50–55, 64–65.
3. *Ibid.*, 113–116, 282; Jacob Judd, "Frederick Philipse and the Madagascar Trade," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (October 1971): 354–374;

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4. Lydon, *Pirates, Privateers*, 39–47; Ritchie, *Captain Kidd*, 132–135.
5. Ritchie, *Captain Kidd*, 39, 78, 251 n28.
6. *Ibid.*, 210–211, 222–227.
7. Cathy Matson, *Merchants and Empire: Trading in Colonial New York* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 63.
8. *Ibid.*, 99, 135, 159, 184–187, 275; Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes, *The Iconography of Manhattan Island* (New York: R. H. Dodd, 1915–1928), 4:453.
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15. *Ibid.*, 4:451, 702.
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19. Pargellis, “Four Independent Companies,” 96, 100–123.
20. Leder, “‘Dam’me . . .,” 261–283.
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23. *Ibid.*, 4:444, 445, 456, 684.
24. *Ibid.*, 4:472, 568–569, 572, 590–591, 664–665, 667, 669, 685–686, 692.
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27. Nash, *Urban Crucible*, 177, 235–236, 257; Matson, *Merchants*, 156, 157–158, 266–270.
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35. Swanson, *Predators and Prizes*, 15, 40–41, 47; Lydon, *Pirates, Privateers*, 110–125.
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Chapter 4

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