A Plan “to banish all the Scotchmen”

Victimization and Political Mobilization in Pre-Revolutionary Boston

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In the summer of 1770, at the height of the nonimportation controversy, an unremarkable Englishwoman made a remarkable allegation: the “Town or Leaders of the [merchants?]” had “resolved to banish all the Scotchmen” from Boston. The prelude, according to Ann Hulton, was the mobbing of a Scottish merchant, Patrick McMaster, for having defied the popular boycott of British imports and ignored a “warning [to] Quit the Town within 3 days, or . . . take the consequences.” The mob that seized him on the afternoon of Tuesday, June 19, had him “put into a Cart, exhibited . . . thro the Town, & were going to Tar & F[ather]: him, but . . . [instead] they forced an Oath from him, that he wod leave the place.” The crowd singled out McMaster for rough treatment, Ann Hulton reported, “in return” for the threat of some of Boston’s Scottish traders to relocate their businesses to another port after the town and its merchants had refused them permission to sell imported goods in order to raise capital for a shipbuilding project.¹

Ann Hulton readily sympathized with the unfortunate McMaster, for later that night a noisy mob visited her at the Brookline home she shared with her brother Henry and his family a few miles from where the Scot was making his escape. Henry, a commissioner of the American Board of Customs, was awakened shortly after midnight by a caller named Sears who claimed to have an urgent letter for him from New York. Alert, suspicious, and armed,

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Henry conducted an interview through a parlor window; when the would-be intruder tried to lever the sash window open, Henry slammed it shut on his hands. When this and other windows were quickly put in, Ann supposed that a mob had surrounded the house. She heard “violent blows” on the outside walls, and the “most hideous Shouting, dreadful imprecations, & threats ensued.” Henry later wrote that all indoors could plainly hear one assailant shouting, “dead or alive we will have him.” With the ladies, servants, and children hiding upstairs, the men of the house prepared to withstand a final assault that never came. How long the affray lasted is unclear, but the mob withdrew, leaving the occupants terrified and stunned. “We have reason to believe that it was not the sudden outrage of a frantic Mob, but a Plot artfully contrived to decoy My Bro’ into the hands of assasins.”

Whatever the truth of the matter, the Hultons and the families of other officials, together with Patrick McMaster, were so terrified that they sought refuge at Castle William in Boston Harbor. They remained on the island for three to four months, returning to the town only when they supposed that their personal safety was not in jeopardy. Thrown together by circumstances, unquestionably the genteel Englishwoman and the obscure Scot exchanged stories in the cramped apartments or castle grounds. McMaster and one of his brothers, observed Ann Hulton, looked like “ruind men & forlorn Wanderers.” The terror, if not her anger and anxiety, had ceased by the time she wrote of the events of June 19 five weeks later in a letter to a confidante, the wife of a Liverpool merchant.

Ann Hulton’s atavistic depiction of crowd action provides a tantalizing counterpoint to historiographical orthodoxy. This article does not aim to substantiate her accusations but to consider what they mean. It is a case study of the predicament of Britons living in pre-Revolutionary Boston and their relationships with each other and with angry colonists. The story of what happened to the Hultons and the McMasters allows some appreciation of what popular radicalism entailed for British sojourners during the imperial crisis. Ann Hulton believed that her family and the McMasters were victims of what today would be called ethnic violence or racial intimidation and revolutionary plots. These allegations are startling even for a time when racism, sectarianism, servitude, and slavery were prevalent, and community violence was a common feature of political mobilization. Immigrant Britons—from England, Scotland, or Wales—were rarely victimized on the basis of their national origins. The victimization of a genteel Englishwoman and her family and a Scottish merchant may tell us something about latent ethnic tensions.
in Boston and cultural encounters involving Britons and white colonists at a time of political unrest and uncertainty. It needs to be established whether or not the Hultons and McMasters were victims by design, but also, in a sense, if they were victims of their own circumstances—that is, if living dangerously on the periphery of empire brought them together.

The victimization of Hulton and McMaster to some extent was due to their “Britishness.” The Hultons’ status as imperial officials and the McMasters’ economic situation as merchant-shopkeepers importing British manufactures rendered them obnoxious to the Whig merchants. Moreover, because of their national origins and outsider status they were probably easy targets for radicals trying to mobilize popular support for a nonimportation movement that was under severe strain.

More interesting, however, is that their attempts to rationalize what happened to them—to make sense of their victimization—reveal an awareness of a common British identity. Alienated as they were from the political mainstream and subjected to intimidation, they reaffirmed a commitment to British imperialism and what it conveyed, or, for them, ought to convey: economic opportunity, liberty, protection, and the rule of law—all of which they believed were being jeopardized by the colonial protests.
Finally, there is the intriguing prospect that these issues may also have influenced their attackers. What drove Ann Hulton to condemn the colonists in such harsh, uncompromising terms might have been the realization that some of the rioters were rejecting her version of Britishness.

Hitherto, historians have considered the McMaster mobbing and the affray at Brookline as unrelated, minor protests: the former is notable only as an “abortive” attempt to tar and feather an importer, the latter as a demonstration of popular anger at the commissioners of Customs. Ann Hulton supposed, however, that these incidents were contiguous and linked. Her insinuation that Boston radicals mounted both attacks is not on its own of much historical significance. What is significant are the sinister motives that she ascribes to her family’s and McMaster’s assailants. Not only was the violence manifestly premeditated, but its wellspring was a source that few if any of her contemporaries have commented upon. If she was right, colonial radicalism may have encompassed—perhaps only momentarily—the insurrectionary tactics of inciting ethnic conflict and assassination.

Ann Hulton’s proposition that colonial radicalism in Boston was predisposed to victimize the British is at odds with historical interpretations. Historians generally emphasize the reformist nature of the protest movement’s aims and strategies under the leadership of colonial Whigs or Patriots, and the oppositional features of its extra-legal methods of protest. For sure, radical Whigs were often impatient with moderates, and the artisans and craftsmen among them were far better than the merchants at mobilizing popular opinion and nurturing street-level contacts with townsfolk of the “lower sort.” Crowd action was occasionally anti-institutional, but it was not until the late summer of 1774 that in disabling Massachusetts’s royal government it became overtly revolutionary, and even then massive resistance proceeded in an orderly fashion without murderous intent or ethnic violence up to and beyond the commencement of military hostilities at Lexington and Concord. With this in mind, Ann Hulton’s accusations might reasonably be considered rash, unwarranted, and inflammatory.

First—regarding the question of assassination—the harassment of imperial officials is so well documented that it is highly unlikely that any Bostonians conspired to murder an officer of the Crown such as Commissioner Hulton. Historians generally mistrust the veracity of contemporary British criticism of the colonial protest movement’s seditious tendencies, for conspiracies and counter-conspiracies were easily imagined in pre-Revolutionary Boston: from radical claims that the British were hell-bent on abridging colonial liberties to royal governors’ hysterical references to assassination plots, treasonable
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combinations, and incipient militancy. With 16,000 citizens living cheek by jowl with 4,000 British soldiers since October 1768, it was inevitable that frictions would give rise to wild accusations, especially when Ann Hulton composed her letter, in the aftermath of the infamous Boston Massacre when the British military presence was scaled down.

Second—the matter of ethnic violence—if there were a plan to expel the Scots it was never implemented. Ann Hulton’s terminology is disingenuous insofar as it implies that the Boston town meeting and/or the merchant leaders were acting corporately to expel McMaster and other Scots when in fact no such decision was ever formally taken. Neither the Scots nor any other national group were persecuted by colonial civic authorities or voluntary associations on account of their ethnicity, and none of their ilk was ever murdered by a lynch mob. National minorities never encountered state-sponsored proscription as foreigners did in Revolutionary France or, despite popular anti-Catholicism, the kind of intense religious hatred that London mobs spouted during the Gordon Riots of 1780.

The prime consideration here is to establish an historical context for Hulton’s accusations. It is not essential to develop a solid legal foundation for the investigation that follows, for the criminality of the proceedings cannot be precisely ascertained. The full “legal facts” are insubstantial since neither incident led to a prosecution; in any case, at a distance of more than two hundred years it is impossible to prove the allegations incontrovertibly. However, engagement with the “historical facts,” such as they are, allows some appreciation of the nature of the crimes committed on June 19, 1770, and their wider relevance.

The predicament of British sojourners, as the likes of the Hultons and the McMasters epitomized, can be understood within the broader context of historical research into identity formation in the Atlantic world. British imperial expansion in the eighteenth century indubitably fostered a shared sense of Britishness—of belonging to a “Greater Britain”—among the peoples of Great Britain and the American colonies. The benefits were legion: military protection, commerce, Protestantism, and the inestimable advantage of liberty. Bostonians’ perceptions of their own local, regional, and national identities comprised themes of consciousness that were concurrent and complementary, rather than contradictory: of being inhabitants of a thriving seaport, of being New Englanders proud of their Puritan heritage, and of being, culturally speaking, innately both “American” and “British.” While historians disagree over the labels and what they mean in cultural terms—whether to describe the colonists as British-Americans or British provincials—it is clear
that the imperial crisis of the 1760s and 1770 failed to meet the colonists’ political aspirations. Being British, the colonists protested, ought to confer the full “[constitutional] rights of Englishmen,” as commensurate with their status as citizens of the empire and irrespective of their provincialism; these rights, as they protested, were patently being denied them. From a colonial perspective, Britishness may have conveyed tangible benefits, but in constitutional terms it ultimately proved to be an imagined state—something that was argued over, protested, yet never attained. When it could not be secured politically, it was rejected and eventually replaced by American republican norms and labels.

Historiography is not so advanced as to assume that for the constituent nations of mainland Britain—the English, the Scots, and the Welsh—the American Revolution was a similarly epochal event or transformative process in shaping their identities. Being British was less imaginary than it was for colonial Americans, at least if we assume that these labels meant something to people. The growth of empire and war with France and America certainly allowed Britons to define their collective national identity against foreign others. Even so, for the English elites and nonelites, Britishness was often English nationalism writ large. Culturally speaking, the Celtic fringe was not any less provincial than the colonies when viewed from London, but unlike the Americans, the Scots and the Welsh did not have to engage in a political struggle to secure their constitutional rights. The Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 did not appreciably prevent the Scots from enjoying the fruits of union with England, albeit doubts over Scottish loyalty were omnipresent in political literature during the Wilkes and Liberty controversy of the 1760s.

Britishness, then, meant similar things to different groups of people. These issues do not figure prominently in political histories of Revolutionary Massachusetts. However, they are an essential corollary when considering how white native-born colonists and constituent Britons regarded their own and each other’s predicaments as imperial citizens. The problem before us is not about revisiting identity formation as such, but understanding how two Britons responded to their relocation to Boston. Perhaps that can explain why what happened to Patrick McMaster so appalled Ann Hulton. Hulton’s allegations of ethnic conflict and sedition may have been rash, but it remains to be seen if they were wholly unwarranted and inflammatory.

While it is tempting to dismiss Ann Hulton (d. 1779) as an unreliable historical witness, her letters can be read as testimony to cultural tensions between New Englanders and the British imperial elite of senior Crown officials and
their families. Like many sojourning Britons caught up in the imperial crisis, she peppered her private correspondence with cavalier condemnations of the American colonists. She had come to Massachusetts in early 1768, accompanying the wife and baby son of her thirty-seven-year-old brother Henry (1730/1–1790). She was particularly close to Henry, as much through circumstances as affection: unmarried and dependent upon her older brother (with whom she lived after his return from the Antigua Customhouse in 1766), she was nonetheless excited by the opportunity of leaving London that Henry’s promotion from the Plantation Office afforded. Henry was less enamored of the prospect of returning to the colonies to take up a post that he “never solicited” but for which it seems he was considered admirably suited.\footnote{13} Henry Hulton arrived in November 1767 as the senior commissioner to the new American Board of Customs based in Boston, whose principal function was to enforce the trade and revenue laws; it proved to be the most unpopular imperial agency ever foisted upon the colonists.

Ann soon found reason to resent her new situation. She once professed to be ill-suited “by nature or inclination” to polite society in Bath or London,\footnote{14} which, for someone from her upper-middling background, may be indicative of social insecurities. On joining the imperial elite she affected disdain for colonial provincialism, complaining to her confidante of the want of good servants and good schools as well as the expense of having to import stylish Wedgwood ware and “elegant cutlery” from England. “Here we follow the fashions in England & have made great strides in Luxury & Expence within these three years,” she sniffed, attributing this progress largely to the assemblies that the commissioners organized to curry favor with the Boston gentry. As for the country folk, she supposed that their civility to “us Strangers” was a ruse “to make us pay more handsomely for every thing.”\footnote{15}

The Hultons’ assumption of cultural superiority and awareness of the social distinctiveness that their official position conferred were compounded by the imperial crisis that fostered popular resentment of British officials responsible for enforcing the hated Townshend Acts. She worried what the colonists’ “Republican . . . & levelling principles” might bring upon her family.\footnote{16} Twice, when mobs took to Boston’s streets, the Hultons and other officials and their families (more than sixty persons in total—the core of the imperial establishment) thought it prudent to leave their homes for the safety of Castle William, the Crown’s fortress in Boston Harbor. The first retreat, occasioned by the Liberty Riot of June 10, 1768, lasted five months (including nine days spent on board HMS Romney.) Soon afterward the Hultons purchased a house belonging to the colony’s most eminent lawyer and former Masonic Grand
Master, the recently deceased Jeremiah Gridley; set in thirty acres of orchards in the village of Brookline, it was on the road to Cambridge five miles clear of Boston and its hostile crowds—or so the Hultons presumed. The second retreat, two years later, was altogether more frightening for Ann, for it shattered the illusions of peace and privacy that she cherished when she went to bed on the night of June 19.

Status anxiety, frustration, disappointment, fear of the mob, the catharsis of recalling traumatic events—all of these shaped Ann Hulton’s worldview in the summer of 1770. Her siege mentality did abate by the autumn of that year when the troubles subsided, but until then she was primed to reach out to other Britons in distress.

Recent research has added much to the little that has been known about the victim of the Boston riot. Patrick McMaster was born on March 19, 1741, at Currochtrie farm in Kirkmaiden parish in the Rhinns of Galloway, a few miles north of Scotland’s most southerly point; that same day, he was baptized in the local Presbyterian church, likely because he was sickly. He was the fourth of eleven children born to John McMaster and Jannet McGeoch. For the most part (from 1737 to 1746 and 1749 to 1754, and beyond) the family lived at Challoch, near Dunragit, in the parish of Old Luce, seven miles east of the port town of Stranraer. Challoch Farm belonged to the Hays of Park, local gentry, and Patrick McMaster’s father, John McMaster, was likely a tenant farmer or “gudeman”—occupying a rung above that of the humble cottar but below the Hays’ tacksman from whom he would have leased the farm.

A paternal uncle, also Patrick McMaster (a father of ten children), was a modest property holder in the nearby village of Glenluce, and another relative, Thomas McMaster, was a merchant in Stranraer. It is tricky to explain the subtle social gradations of early-modern rural Scotland in modern terms, but in view of his father’s tenancy, his own literacy, his family’s connections, and his relatives’ property portfolio, our victim Patrick McMaster could be said to have been of a lower-middling status.

What persuaded the McMaster brothers to leave Galloway were limited life opportunities (as was the case with Galloway’s most famous son—John Paul Jones [b. 1747].). The local, agricultural-based economy was slowly improving, largely as a result of new farming techniques encouraged by landowners and longer leases given to progressive tenants; farmers who grew oats, barley, and wheat were diversifying into rearing black cattle for beef markets in central Scotland and northwest England. The economic condition of the peasantry, however, remained dire in the short term. In the seventeenth century, the peasantry sustained the Covenanter rebellions; in the eighteenth
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century, their anger at the mass evictions that accompanied early attempts to enclose land for beef cattle was vented in the Levelers’ Rising of 1724–1725, and latterly found a safety valve of sorts in emigration. Many years later, a local minister reported on how little impact the improvers had made in Old Luce and that the local population was declining. By the time of the Revolutionary War, when Scottish emigration to the American colonies was at its peak, nearly thirty men, women, and children had left the parish for the New World.20

With no property likely to come their way from either their father or uncle, Patrick McMaster and three of his four surviving brothers joined the exodus. Sailing from the port of Leith, near Edinburgh, John McMaster entered Boston on September 22, 1765. He soon established the business that James, the oldest brother, took over a year later; twenty-six-year-old Patrick arrived from Glasgow on August 17, 1767, with a “large” cargo of goods; and they were aided by the youngest brother, Daniel, then just thirteen years old.21 James McMasters & Co. imported linen, silk, textiles, and tobacco from Glasgow and London, which they sold in their Boston shop and distributed to other shopkeepers in the province.

It is a mystery how or from whom the McMaster brothers managed to acquire capital to set up shop in America. They may have been financed by their uncle Patrick or by his social superiors among the Galloway elites, many of whom had substantial interests in the slave trade and colonial commerce. It is also likely that they were factors for firms operating out of Glasgow, a town becoming prosperous from trade with the Chesapeake region. Scottish trade with North America had been growing since the Act of Union between Scotland and England (1707), which allowed Scots full access to the English colonies—and to lucrative tobacco markets in Virginia and Maryland. The McMaster brothers were aiming to profit from developing trade links between Scotland and New England, which were relatively minor in the larger scheme of transatlantic commerce and did not take off until the mid 1760s, just as they were relocating to Boston.22

The McMasters were to weather the vicissitudes of nonimportation rather better than some of their colonial counterparts. Later, they claimed to have imported around £15,000 worth of British manufactures annually between 1769 and 1774, a figure that, if taken at face value, would mean that McMasters & Co. dominated the Massachusetts market in Scottish imports.23 They also set up a distribution network from and acquired property in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. A whiff of snobbery can be detected in Ann Hulton’s condescending depiction of Patrick McMaster as “an honest industrious Trades-
man,” though it was a common descriptor, and a start of surprise on learning he and his brothers had amassed “$3$ or $4,000$ £ sterl & . . . more in outstand debts.”

The McMasters’ commercial aspirations go a long way to explaining their reluctance to submit to the nonimportation agreements drawn up by Boston’s merchants between March 1768 and October 1769 and endorsed by the town meeting. Their firm received at least seven consignments of British imports while the boycott was in force. The firm consistently refused to bow to pressure from the merchants, and it endured twelve months of petty abuse: the frontage of their home and adjoining shop was smeared with “filth,” their characters “reviled” in the local newspapers and at town meetings, and their doors and windows regularly broken. Eventually, local people were exhorted to boycott their shop, a method both legal and highly effective.

The ostracism of the McMasters is not enough to explain why Patrick was subsequently attacked, although they did not stand alone. They were among a group of up to fourteen merchant-shopkeepers, including recent immigrants and “young, newly established merchants,” who, according to historian John Tyler, viewed nonimportation as a scheme by prominent Whig wholesale merchants to drive importing retailers from the congested market in British goods. Scottish traders James and Robert Selkrig and the printer and Edinburgh-born publisher John Mein were also prominent refuseniks. In response to his own proscription, John Mein sensationaly published in his *Boston Chronicle* over several months the cargo manifests of consignments arriving for 285 Boston firms—to the considerable embarrassment of those Whigs who were named; he was acting on official information supplied by another Scot, Thomas Irving, the inspector general of Customs.

Of concern to the merchants was the possibility that the importers’ defiance might encourage defections within a movement already straining with internal tensions. Consequently, from the autumn of 1769 through the following summer, persuasion gave way to coercion. The story of John Mein’s “drubbing” by Whig merchants on October 28 requires a brief retelling here. The mobbing was spontaneous, arising out of a contretemps in King Street between the printer, together with his Scottish business partner, John Fleeming, and some merchants whom he had caricatured in the *Boston Chronicle*. Bruised but not badly hurt, Mein was so disturbed by shouts of “Kill Him” coming from the gathering crowd that he panicked and brandished a pistol before reaching the safety of the guard house. The pistol went off accidentally without injuring anyone, but had someone been killed in the mêlée it is
conceivable that Mein and Fleeming would have been lynched. As it was, a local justice pursued Mein for illegally discharging a firearm and his creditors hounded him out of Boston and sent him fleeing to England. In the wake of this and other minor fracases, the “Body of Trade” mobilized hundreds of ordinary Bostonians—merchants, artisans, tradesmen, women—to visit the homes and shops of the principal importers. These visits passed off peacefully enough during January. The fatal shooting of five townspeople by British soldiers on the night of March 5 was not directly connected to the nonimportation controversy, but the withdrawal of the British regiments from the town afterward left importers and Britons feeling extremely vulnerable. To Scots loyalists such as James Murray, a retired North Carolina sugar merchant and one of the few proponents of the hated Stamp Act, the town teetered on the verge of civil disorder: Murray had vainly tried to read the Riot Act to the townspeople that sorry night, and subsequently he worked hard to collect evidence for the soldiers’ defense.
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Pages 12 and 13 from A State of the Importations from Great-Britain into the Port of Boston, Mein and Fleeming. Boston, 1769. Collections of the MHS.
The mobbing of McMaster was not indicative of civil disorder but can be viewed as a logical progression from verbal abuse to physical intimidation, in keeping with the escalation of controlled violence and the mobilization of popular support that characterized the nonimportation movement. In punishing malefactors like McMaster, the radical Whigs aimed to curtail dissent more generally. However, leaving aside the mobbing of John Mein, no other importer was targeted with such a level of violence. And Patrick McMaster was the only importer to be threatened with the humiliation of tar and feathers.

Why, then, single out a Scotsman—if indeed that was what was intended? Comments by Sir Francis Bernard and Henry Hulton deserve inspection. When two shiploads of “Scotch and North Country goods” came in, Bernard observed, “It is remarkable that the Scotch Merchants, who are a considerable Body, are all, to a Man, Importers.” A year later, Henry Hulton pronounced, “To the honor of Scotland her sons have kept free from the general contagion, they have not joined either at home or abroad, in the defection from Authority, but proved themselves good subjects, and supporters of Government, and order.” Both observations imply that the Scottish traders were solidly against nonimportation, from which it can be deduced that the number of Scots opposing the scheme was greater than the few who were publicly condemned—John Mein, the McMasters, James Murray, and James and Robert Selkrieg, who had also recently arrived in Boston.

The Scots were one of four principal immigrant groups in the American colonies, but they “largely ignored” New England before the War of Independence closed off mass emigration to the colonies, preferring to go to Virginia, the Carolinas, Pennsylvania, or New York as indentured servants or head to the backcountry as pioneer farmers. Scottish migrants to the colonies—and to Boston—maintained communities of interest based on commerce and preserved more than a semblance of a distinct national identity, irrespective of acculturation processes. Political and economic tensions between Scottish immigrants and their American-born neighbors were noticeable if not pronounced. Conflicts occurred in frontier communities where Scots were a dominant social group; in the North Carolina backcountry of 1774, Gaelic-speaking Highlanders aroused colonial suspicions; and in tidewater Virginia, local merchants resented the operations of Scottish factors. The patent unpopularity of the Scots in the Revolutionary era, however, derived not from conflicts of interest or ethnicity per se but largely from the loyalism of many Scots who arrived on the eve of the Revolution. Even so, the Scots were as divided in their allegiances as any other national group.
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Boston’s Scots were a small, recognizable minority. There were no large concentrations of Scots in New England or sustained immigration from Scotland during the eighteenth century. Massachusetts’s Scottish-born population was somewhere between 4 and 10 percent of the total, and by the mid 1760s, there were about 3,330 adult male Scots in the province. Prisoners taken by the Cromwellian regime during the Covenanting rebellions of the mid seventeenth century were among the first emigrants from Scotland, while Scottish merchants began operating out of Boston in the 1650s. By the late seventeenth century, Boston’s Scots had built up substantial overseas connections with Britain, the West Indies, and other colonies. The Scots Charitable Society, of which the McMasters and the Selkrigs were members, sustained an informal, independent social and economic network. However, there were no appreciable conflicts of interest between established Scots incomers and native-born Bostonians before the Revolution.

It was not until the imperial crisis that the activities of Boston’s Scottish merchants exhibited partisanship. Twenty out of the twenty-seven remaining members of the Scots Charitable Society became loyalists in 1775. Also notable is the fact that, in addition to the McMasters, around thirty other Scots merchants eventually became loyalists, and of these about half arrived in Boston during the 1760s. With fewer local attachments than their colonial neighbors, these newly arrived Scots merchants were more inclined to embrace loyalty. Otherwise, it should not be presumed that the Scots as a whole were predisposed toward loyalism: for every Scottish loyalist in Boston there were probably ten times as many taxpayers in the town of Scottish origin whose allegiances are as yet unknown.

Patrick McMaster’s predicament, if not his ordeal, helps to illuminate the socio-economic aspects of loyalism. A young, arriviste trader, his profile matches that of the other importers described by John Tyler who resisted nonimportation. Immigrant enterprise explains why Patrick McMaster was so determined to defend what he had ventured and what he had gained to the point where, in view of what his defiance brought upon him, his resilience became foolhardy. Two other aspects of that development deserve closer examination, however. The first is cultural inasmuch as it concerns the prevalence of anti-Scottish propaganda. The second is political, insofar as the McMasters themselves, like Mein, tried to sow seeds of disunion among the townsfolk and Whig merchants in order to advance the shipbuilding scheme. Both of these can explain why a Scotsman, and Patrick McMaster in particular, was subsequently targeted.
Mein’s subterfuge may well have fanned resentment of Boston’s Scottish merchants. Boston was not awash with anti-Scottish propaganda in the way that London was during the short-lived unpopular administration of the Scottish aristocrat John Stuart, the earl of Bute (1762–1763). Londoners, unsettled by the Scots’ descent on the metropolis, reveled in polemicist John Wilkes’s satirization of the Scot as a duplicitous crypto-Jacobite, always ready to sacrifice the principles of the Glorious Revolution and surrender Liberty, Protestantism, and Empire to the Tyranny of Rome and a Catholic Pretender. Colonists who kept a close eye on the antics and tribulations of this controversial English reformer could be forgiven for imitating his Anglo-centrism.47 The lawyer John Adams, who was prone to xenophobic outbursts, remarked that despite the achievements of the Scottish Enlightenment the Scots “have not the most worthy ideas of liberty.”48 Whig propagandists were able to contrast the avarice of the “Jacobite” importers with the selflessness of Boston merchant John Hancock in financing the return of imported goods to Britain.49 Nonetheless, colonial Whigs seeking relevant analogies to their own struggles frequently cited Scottish history, from the civil wars and sectarian strife of the mid seventeenth century to the failed Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, and not always negatively.50

An affected provincial-centrism—localism rather than wanton prejudice—characterized most attempts to tarnish the Scots’ reputations. These themes resonate in one rare pamphlet by a “Gentleman descended from a good Family, of the first Settlers of New-England” that mercilessly lampoons James Murray:

That, Sir, is a Bretton, that made the best of his way out of Scotland very soon after a certain affair that took place in 1745. He lived obscure, and intimate with poverty for several years in one of our southern colonies, and is now here a hanger on,\ upon a worthy sister that advantageously married to a superannuated gentleman of fortune: He is now of the quorum, and one of Verres’s [Thomas Hutchinson] private council, and nocturnal informers, ready, and waiting to receive any little favour that the Com—rs [American Board of Customs Commissioners] or his Ex—cy procure him; for which he is (Culloden out of the question) a very staunch prerogative man, Sir, braying out passive obedience in the true broad Scottish accent.51

This short profile contains all the principal elements that in Patriot propaganda distinguish good American Whigs from Scots “Tories.” First, language:
to colonial ears Murray spoke English like (and even after thirty years in the colonies, as incomprehensibly as) a Breton rather than a North Briton (the moniker assumed by metropolitanized, learned Scots anxious to divest themselves of their “Scotticisms” in speech and manners). Second, poverty: want had bred unbridled ambition and fed the deviousness that had brought Murray into the sanctum of colonial government. Third, proto-loyalism: Murray allegedly hankered after Jacobitism and subscribed to the discredited Tory doctrines of passive obedience and nonresistance long associated with Stuart despotism.

Deriding McMaster instead of Murray would have been equally simple, had the radicals chosen to do so. His business partnership with his brothers would have been exposed as an example of the clannishness for which the Scots were popularly condemned on both sides of the Atlantic. McMaster’s Galloway dialect would also have elicited comments like those directed at Murray, for it would have been unfamiliar to New England ears. McMaster’s commercial activities during the boycott were the most potent affront to community sensibilities, as his proscription in the town records of October 4 attests. The McMasters, Mein, and other importers had patently disallowed an agreement “approved by all Orders as legal [and] peaceable,” preferring “their little private advantage to the common Interest of all the colonies.” The town “unanimously” voted to appoint a committee of inspection to undertake a “strict enquiry” into their activities, and by the end of the month had voted to continue nonimportation until the Townshend duties were lifted.52

The most prominent of the Scots merchants, then—James Murray, John Mein, the Selkrigs, and the McMasters—were, as they would have said, weil-kent faces by 1770. All of them had crossed the line dividing supporters (the reluctant and the committed) from opponents of the protest movement: Mein, by provoking the Whig merchants; Murray, by helping the defense counsel at the Boston Massacre trial; and the Selkrigs and the McMasters, for their wanton defiance of the common weal. One of them had been attacked and another publicly ridiculed, but in the course of a few months the others would also encounter their own furies.

What set the Scottish merchants on a collision course with the Whig merchants was the latter’s insistence that the boycott applied to all traders and consumers irrespective of whether they were residents, either permanent or temporary, or recent arrivals. By the autumn of 1769, as we have seen, non-cooperation was regarded as a tacit refusal to abide by a community decision. While a few native Bostonians continued to advertise imported goods for
sale, the defiance of the Scots drew attention to the apparent willingness of “strangers” to flout the moral authority of the boycott. On October 2, two days before the proscription of McMasters & Co. and John Mein in the town records, the *Boston Evening Post* published an “advertisement” that purported “to convince our Brethren in the other Governments” that the non-importation agreement was being “strictly . . . adhered to” despite Mein’s “false and malicious insinuations.” Perhaps not wishing to offend Boston’s more established Scottish residents, the printers rejected the imputation that the condemnation of the Scots importers was owing to “any prejudices against the Scotch as a People, to many of whom we are sensible that the cause of Liberty is much indebted.”

The substance of the advertisement comprised a letter dated August 23 and composed by five Scottish shipbuilders requesting leave from the merchants and town to sell their goods. The five subscribers (Richard Hunter, Alexander Auld, Patrick Bogle, Robert Park, and Hugh Brown) had been “sent and employed” by Glasgow merchants to supervise a shipbuilding project; the wages of the carpenters, shipwrights, caulkers, and laborers were to be paid from monies raised from the sale of “Scotch manufactures” they had brought with them. Six ships, totaling between eleven and twelve hundred tons, were already under construction in yards at Boston and Charlestown. Most vessels constructed in Boston were for the North American coastal trade, but the average tonnage of the ships being built by the Scots is typical of the larger vessels that plied the Atlantic. The project, however, was doomed, the shipbuilders’ protested, unless they were given dispensation to sell their wares.

This is the shipbuilding scheme that Ann Hulton believed was at the root of the attack on Patrick McMaster and the alleged plan “to banish all the Scotchman.” The involvement of the McMasters and the Selkrights can be inferred from the shipbuilders’ allusion to anonymous “Gentlemen” who were ready to conduct business on their behalf “at any time.” These gentlemen were expected not only to broker the sale of the shipbuilders’ “Scotch manufactures” but to intercede with the merchants and the town selectmen on their behalf, because as nonresidents Hunter and his colleagues did not have the right to petition the town meeting. (The gentlemen may also have invested in the scheme.) The Whigs would have welcomed neither prospect. The decision to raise their concerns in another public forum—the *Boston Evening Post*—was prompted not only by the likelihood of being rebuffed but by a desire to break the Whig stranglehold.

A close reading of the open letter reveals that the shipbuilders’ plea for exemption was not a benign proposal but a direct challenge to the Whig mer-
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Their letter urges “Gentlemen, Tradesmen, and others concerned” to ask the town meeting to review the boycott’s applicability to nonresidents and to clarify that matter publicly. In addressing an audience beyond the merchants’ committees and town officials, the shipbuilders not only mirrored the activities of the Whigs themselves in mobilizing popular support to enforce the boycott through the “Body of the Trade” but sought to undermine their influence. Their target group was Boston’s workers—the artisans and laborers who constituted the foot soldiers of the Body. The letter begins with a statement clarifying the shipbuilders’ status in an economic hierarchy: as clients of wealthy men in Glasgow, they absolved themselves from any blame in having to exhort Boston’s workers to face up to a bitter truth—the consequences of losing the employment that the Scots promised. With the Scots prevented from raising capital, how were the tradesmen they had already engaged going to be paid?

Every person employed in ship business must know, that considering the circumstances of the tradesmen, it would be almost impossible for them to maintain their families if they were to be wholly paid in Goods, and their difficulties will be still greater, if the building the Scotch ships here be wholly withdrawn, by means of prohibiting the sale of Scotch manufactures sent for the payment of their ships.

The community, the letter continued, “must be sensible of what an effect the want of such a beneficial trade must have upon the laboring Poor of the town.”

It was not uncommon for imperial officials to raise the specter of social conflict to frighten Whig leaders, but in this instance the Scots exposed a thorny question about skilled and unskilled workers’ commitment to the protest movement. Thomas Hutchinson once remarked that Boston’s workers were “so infatuated” with nonimportation as to appear oblivious to the impact that the boycott was having on their own families and the local economy. Boston’s unskilled laborers were not oblivious, of course: the penury of the unemployed and under-employed undeniably worsened during nonimportation, which may be why the direct involvement of these people in the movement was sporadic and closely monitored by Whigs. Skilled workers, such as shipwrights and craftsmen, whose participation is clearer, continued to demand high wages from shipbuilders, much to the irritation of Governor Bernard and the Scots; nonimportation, it seems, despite impending hardship, had lowered neither expectations among skilled workers nor demand for their labor. Thus, in theory at least, Scots shipbuilders could have tempted
skilled and unskilled workers to abjure their commitment to the boycott had they been able to persuade the town to give themselves preferential treatment. It was a lot for any outsider to ask, let alone expect, in hard times.

The shipbuilders demanded an answer in fourteen days, but they were left to sweat for six weeks. It is possible that the merchants persuaded the printers of the Boston Evening Post, Thomas and John Fleet, by no means committed Whigs, not to publish the shipbuilders’ controversial letter. That can explain why, when the letter was published on October 2, the accompanying editorial said nothing about its real importance. The Fleets’ denial that Bostonians were prejudiced towards the Scots was also probably intended to defuse the Whigs’ anger, for the Whigs were already having to react to events that they labored to control. The arrival of fresh consignments of goods, including one brought in by a nonresident Englishman, Patrick Smith, on October 3 raised again the question of what to do with nonresidents. This time around, the town meeting and the merchants insisted that nonresident traders as well as residents deposit the banned imports in common stores. Only four firms refused, including McMasters & Co. and John Mein, and the following day they were proscribed in the town records.

It might be said that the shipbuilders and their backers never had a chance so long as the radicals held the upper hand in the town, if not always among the merchants. However, despite the commitment of Boston’s workers to the boycott, there was a substantial minority who regretted losing an opportunity of making money. To the radicals’ and merchants’ consternation, the shipbuilders ran up a petition for exemption that more than seventy artisans signed.58 When it was peremptorily dismissed, one Tory supposed that upwards of £30,000 in future trade with Scotland was at stake for Boston; this was an exaggeration, but Bernard was probably closer to the mark in supposing that the neighboring ports of Salem, Newburyport, and Marblehead would one day reap the benefits of Boston’s patriotism.59

Because of this the Scots did not abandon their scheme. At least two Scottish shipbuilders moved to Newburyport to construct 230 tons of shipping.60 They may have been the Selkirk brothers, who, having first bowed to pressure to desist trading, managed to recruit enough local tradesmen to prompt a response by the “Body of Trade”: on May 5, 1770, the Body refused the Selkriks permission to finance the building of two ships, preferring that they should be “out of business.”61 Indeed, it might have been James Selkirk instead of Patrick McMaster who was mobbed on June 19. At noon that day, a mob assailed Selkirk at the town dock, shouting “no Scotchman could Tell the Truth.” His ready compliance to cease trading altogether, together with
the fact that his daughter was dying, most surely saved him from rougher treatment. There is no evidence to connect the radical Boston representative Samuel Adams with James Selkraig’s assailants, but the Scot would have later enjoyed Adams’s discomfort during the Boston Massacre trials: the depositions of Selkraig and fellow Scot William Hunter were the principal sources for the strange case of the “tall gentleman in a red Cloak” and white wig, whose identity was never established, but whom they saw directing the crowd on the night of the Massacre.

There is also the case of Robert Jamieson, a Marblehead schoolteacher, who refused to subscribe to the town’s nonconsumption and nonimportation agreements. He petitioned acting governor Thomas Hutchinson for protection, fearing “approaching danger.” Jamieson was ruined when parents removed their children from his school and he was pursued by his Whig creditors; his last known residence was Salem gaol, which he “indeavour’d to bear with that Magnanimity of Mind which becomes a North Brittan.”

The McMaster brothers were as obdurate as Jamieson but noticeably lacking the Selkraits’ acumen. James McMaster was “highly insolent” to a committee of inspection, a Whig source reported, telling them to “do as they pleased,” having “found they intended to make a Riot, which he should be very glad to see.” On November 15, the McMasters received their largest consignment yet—twenty-five containers of silk, ribbons, millenary, cambrics, and other items. McMasters & Co. was again proscribed in the town records on March 16, yet a month later the Whigs learned that James McMaster had been selling imported goods up in Portsmouth.

The most provocative of all their activities hitherto, however, was their participation in a nascent countermovement. Dissent and discontent with the continuation of the boycott among the merchants and shopkeepers of Boston and other colonial ports had grown quickly since news arrived of the North administration’s partial repeal of the Townshend Acts. The McMasters participated in meetings of dissident merchants held on May 1 and 23 at which they called for an end to general nonimportation. Boston’s nonimportation agreement, however, remained operational until October, and the boycott on tea was to continue indefinitely until the duty on the commodity was lifted.

It is inconceivable that the mobbing of Patrick McMaster was unconnected to this power struggle. There is no firm evidence of a conspiracy to “banish” the Scots, but the weight of circumstantial evidence outlined above and the narrative that follows point to a determination to make an example of the McMaster brothers. The friend of government Nathaniel Coffin, who was nonetheless able to move freely in Whig circles, reported that at one town
meeting “one of our principal Demagogues” taunted “Are not we . . . able to humble a few obstinate importers?”

The humbling of Patrick McMaster was swift and brutal. On the evening of Friday, June 1, “hundreds of Men and Boys” led by “one Doctor Thos. Young” visited the McMasters’ shop to deliver a cacophony of “threatening Declarations.” The scene the McMaster brothers depicted in a petition to Governor Hutchinson recalls the Body’s behavior at the homes and premises of other importers, notable for the sheer size of the gathering, the noise, and the absence of serious physical violence. What was different this time, however—and this was the reason why the brothers subsequently sought Hutchinson’s protection—was that Young “commanded” the McMasters “in a Magisterial tone . . . ‘To keep their House and stores shut and to depart the Province with all their Effects and property, at, or before 6 O’Clock on Monday following [June 4], or else to expect the consequence.’” Never before had a “warning out” to importers carried so precise a timetable for its execution.

Young’s recent rise to prominence owed much to his ability to mobilize artisans and laborers, and he likely supposed that a show of force would be enough to cow the McMasters. By way of a compromise, the McMasters, evidently—perhaps on Monday, June 4—proposed to shut-up shop and reship imported goods “or do any thing else that the Committee should direct.” These concessions the brothers deemed “repugnant to their inclinations and injurious to their real Interest,” and in their petition to Hutchinson of June 5 they asserted their determination to remain in town. It is uncertain if the brothers had decided to test the Whigs’ resolve come what may, having “no reason to expect equitable Terms from prejudicating Multitudes,” or if they were stalling for time in order to “collect their respective demands.” Whatever, they did not leave.

The protection that Hutchinson was willing and able to afford at short notice would not have amounted to very much. British soldiers had never been used to protect importers, and, with feelings running high after the killings of March 5, any company of soldiers assigned to guard the McMasters’ shop would have been in for a rough time. Instead, Hutchinson “mentioned the case to a Gentleman of character and influence desiring him to inquire into the affair and use his good offices for the protection of these people.” The McMaster brothers were reputedly “satisfied” that this gentleman would procure them immunity from further harassment. If that is so, then they
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The Bostonians Paying the Excise-Man or Tarring & Feathering. Lithograph by David Claypoole Johnston (Boston: Pendleton, 1830) copied on stone from an original print published in London in 1774 by Phillip Dawe.

This is one of several mezzotints propagandizing Boston’s most infamous episode of tarring and feathering: the abduction and assault of John Malcom, a British customs officer, on January 25, 1774. Here, in the aftermath of the Boston Tea Party, the victim is portrayed as the hapless target of colonial radicals.

Patrick McMaster’s account of the mobbing identifies his assailants: Elija Story, John Ballard, Samuel Franklin, and “Divers others.”

Memorial to Thomas Hutchinson, Castle William, June 27, 1770, enclosed in Hutchinson to John Powell, Boston, August 29, 1770. The National Archives of the UK: Public Record Office, CO 5/759, f 273.
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A New Method of Macarony Making as Practised at Boston. Lithograph by D. C. Johnston (Boston: Pendleton, 1830) copied on stone from an original print published in London in 1774.

This British print presents the victim as bravely awaiting the next stage of his ordeal. The text at the foot of the print reads, “[?] Custom House officer’s landing the Tea / They tarr’d him and feather’d him, just as you see / And they drenched him so well, both behind and before, / That he begg’d for God’s sake they would drench him no more.”

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woefully miscalculated. What happened on June 19 was as unexpected as it was shocking.

At 3:00 PM the house and store of the McMaster brothers were “Surrounded by Numbers of the Inhabitants”—“some hundreds” strong, Nathaniel Coffin recalled. Only Patrick McMaster was at home; according to his account “dreadful imprecations” ensued, and a few “swore my immediate destruction.” After tearing down the signboard above the front door, several of the assailants forced entry. Patrick was promptly “seized” from his hiding place and “draged away.” He certainly struggled, for he had to be manhandled outside, where he was bundled into a waiting cart containing buckets of tar and feathers “previously prepared for that purpose.”

A common prelude to administering tar and feathers was to exhibit the victim to public ridicule. McMaster was duly carted through the “principal streets,” whereupon he was exposed to “everey mark of cruelty and Disgrace amidst the loud acclamations of innumerable Spectators.” McMaster was so terrified that he “Sunk down Speechless.” Coffin thought he had fainted in terror, for the Scot was taken to a nearby apothecary and there revived with smelling salts. McMaster was actually thankful for the “Compassion” of these people, whom he believed had saved him from a severe beating; however, their intercession could not stay the “clamerous” mob, which was anxious to resume and quite prepared, he later concluded, to let its human quarry “die without any Assistance.” Back in the cart he went, “Suported” (probably tied into) in a chair; he was then beaten, spat upon, and “reviled with the most Abusive Epithets.”

The next stage of the ritual invariably involved stripping the victim naked before applying the coat of tar and feathers. Coffin was in no doubt that this was intended. McMaster’s collapse, however, had prompted the intervention of “some prudent persons present,” and at their “earnest Request,” Coffin reported, McMaster was spared the hot tar and kept his clothes. A lengthy punishment still awaited the Scot, however, and a smaller crowd carted him across Boston Neck and two and one half miles out to Roxbury. There he was obliged to forswear that he or his brothers would ever return to Boston, on pain of death. His assailants then formed a “Line primitive,” escorting him out of the cart and across the town boundary into Roxbury. McMaster was “no sooner dismissed,” Coffin notes, than a Roxbury mob desired to have the “same amusement” with him. McMaster does not specify what these “similar preparations” were that “compelled me to fly by”—and may again have involved tar and feathers and a mock gallows—but it was a “hair breadth Escape” according to Coffin.
By then it was dusk, and somehow McMaster evaded pursuit from “detached parties” by hiding in ditches and hedges until around 10:00 PM. At some point during the next two hours he set out for Castle William. He does not mention how he managed to get there or if he had assistance; if he took the quickest route, by way of Dorchester Neck, he would have had to have been ferried across (unless of course he stole a boat). We can be sure, however, that he arrived disheveled, bruised, dirty, and ashamed. One of his brothers (we do not know which) was run out of Marblehead and Salem but managed to reach the castle; he believed that the mob was “diligently” searching for the other two, and it was at least one week before Patrick learned that they were unscathed.  

The McMaster mobbing would appear to correspond to recognizable patterns of extra-legal community action. By ignoring the “warning out” the McMaster brothers had exposed themselves to the retributive justice of the *posse comitatus,* in this case the Body of Trade. The search of the house and store was a symbolic inversion of customs officers’ authority to locate contraband, and it links this incident to New England’s tradition of “rescue riots” wherein crowds reclaimed impounded goods. When McMaster was dragged outside, murder was not uppermost in anyone’s mind—except perhaps the traumatized victim’s; punishment was, however. Community violence was not indiscriminate and punishments were tailored to intimidate rather than to injure seriously.  

Tarring and feathering was an extreme form of retribution. Tories and importers were not tarred and feathered with impunity, as might be assumed from contemporary English prints or reading Nathaniel Hawthorne’s marvelous and influential short story “My Kinsman, Major Molineux.” Usually the threat of tar and feathers was enough to ensure a victim’s compliance. The reticence to empty the buckets was due to the fact that it was a potentially life-threatening punishment, and, with the emasculated victim being exhibited to public ridicule and carted to a gallows, carried for political leaders unwelcome anti-authoritarian overtones. In the most recent case prior to the McMaster incident, on May 18, the victim, Owen Richards (a Welshman and a tidesman in the Customhouse), was nearly blinded by tar before being carted through Boston’s streets for upwards of four hours, without any magistrate intervening; sixty-seven witnesses were forthcoming and five indictments were brought against Richards’s assailants. A precedent of sorts, then, was in place for humiliating McMaster with the “indignity of this modern Punishment,” as one Whig put it.
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The anti-authoritarian aspects of the McMaster mobbing might easily be overlooked because the quick intervention of “prudent persons” spared the Scot the tar and feathers. The intercessors’ influence would have had to have derived from some strong prior association, such as through the Body. Thomas Young, though clearly to the fore in the prelude to the mobbing, may not have directed any of the proceedings on June 19. As McMaster observed, the intercessors, whoever they were, could not prevent the crowd exacting a lengthy punishment, even though the Scot was probably ready to recant his transgressions the moment he regained consciousness. The crowd's independent-mindedness is reminiscent of the raucous forms that community violence could take: McMaster was a quarry, taken from his den to be taunted and tormented. Neither the McMaster nor the Richards cases should be thought of as lynchings, for no one was murdered. Instead, they are similar to a “rogue’s march” or “skimmington,” a long-established form of community action in the Atlantic world for ostracizing social deviants. However, the mobbings were not just punishments but spectacles of community power. As will be seen, those who transgressed the law had nothing to fear from those who enforced the law, even if witnesses could be found to give evidence.

What were McMaster’s assailants celebrating? Intriguingly, McMaster was able to identify the ringleaders: “Elija Story Jr, Ballard & on[e] Mr Samuell Franklin”; there were “Divers others” and “many persons well known.” It was John Ballard who administered the oath at the Boston-Roxbury line, “Vowing to revenge my refusal [to leave Boston] with instant death swearing that my Brothers should be equally treated.” Nothing much else is known about them except one other important fact: Ballard was “a Wharfinger to the Memorialist.” Ballard—a principal felon—was not only personally acquainted with the victim, he was the victim’s most important business contact in Boston. Ballard was either the proprietor or the manager of a wharf that received and handled the imports arriving for McMasters & Co. We cannot be sure if their relationship predated nonimportation and ended with the boycott; if so, Ballard could be described as a local businessman or key skilled worker who had been radicalized before the proscription of an important customer. That may be unlikely in view of the fact that McMaster used the present tense when describing Ballard’s occupation; thus Ballard might even have been receiving the McMasters’ cargoes of imported goods during the past year. If that is so, then Ballard was a more recent convert to nonimportation. Ballard’s motives in leading the mob may have been personal, of course, but they were certainly political when he ended his commercial cooperation with the McMasters.
Did Ballard demonstrate his newfound patriotism by abusing a Scot who was a principal source of his income? Was that what he and his fellow Bostonians were celebrating? The evidence is ambiguous as to the extent to which Ballard, Story, and Franklin acted independently of their political leaders in punishing an errant Scot. All the same, we might speculate that their political identity was being reconfigured by a form of radicalism that manifestly victimized outsiders like McMaster.

Incandescent with rage not only at his ordeal but also at having been betrayed by a man whom he had patronized, McMaster railed at the how he could be so “treated and wantonly Deprived” of his trade and “privileges which the British Constitution grants every peaceable Inhabitant. Yet the Memorialist is rendered affugitive reduced to Abandon our own Dwelling and Leave Our Friends and Fortune to the Fury of a Lawless unrelenting Mob Who have Arrogated to themselves the sole power of Governing others while they commit every species of outrage with impunity.”

Thus did the emasculated Patrick McMaster find a solace of sorts: not so much in his Scottish roots but in the belief that his ordeal arose from a conspiracy to deny him the liberties British imperialism conveyed.

Hitherto, we have considered the McMaster mobbing as being separate from the incident at Brookline later that night, but it is likely they were linked. The most intriguing aspect of that affray is the absence of a trigger. Before the mob arrived, Henry Hulton had been conducting the business of the Customs Board at home. The Hultons later accused Henry’s estranged colleague John Temple of willfully procuring the mob—of being an accessory before the fact. (The Boston-born Temple had gotten too close to the Whigs for the other commissioners’ liking after his marriage to the daughter of wealthy councilor James Bowdoin.) It is most unlikely that Temple had anything to do with the affair, although it is possible that he may have said something to leading Whigs about Hulton working from home.

Leaving Temple aside, what brought the mob to Brookline? The Whig-leaning Boston Gazette stressed that after chastising the Scot, McMaster’s “numerous attendants peaceably returned” home—a claim that could be interpreted as willful dissociation from the Brookline incident. Timing is important here. By his own account, McMaster was seized at 3:00 PM; the carting in Boston lasted several hours, and it was getting dark when he was brought to Roxbury, around 8:00 PM, and he emerged from hiding after 10:00 PM to make his way to the castle. Four hours elapsed between the Bostonians delivering McMaster to the Roxbury mob and the attack on the Hulton place. Did the Bostonians deliberate what to do next? Doubtless some would have re-
A Plan of Boston in New England with its Environs, including Milton, Dorchester, Roxbury, Brooklin, Cambridge, Medford, Charleston, Parts of Malden and Chelsea, with the Military Works Constructed in those Places in the Years 1775 and 1776.


Collections of the MHS.
turned home, but, on a warm summer evening, perhaps others stayed awhile and quenched their thirst. Knowing Henry Hulton was at home, did they resolve to pay a visit to the commissioner’s house just two and one half miles along the road to Brookline? The mob arrived at Brookline after midnight, its leaders armed with clubs and sporting a disguise of white night caps and blackened faces; they were reported to have come by the Boston road. What better way to end the day’s events than with another celebration of community power?

With respect to motives, all that can be said for certain is that the numerous and noisy mob succeeded in terrifying the occupants of the Hulton house. While there is a prima facie case for forced entry, unlawful assembly, and riotous behavior, there is no evidence of a determination to assassinate Henry. The hotheads present were not bold enough to risk shedding their own blood, nor did the Hultons make any mention of them having buckets of tar and feathers (though they would not have been able to tell from indoors). In these respects, the Brookline affray, like the McMaster mobbing, is akin to a skimington (especially if we can imagine colonists satirizing Hulton as a wife-beater or ministerial whore). As the drama unfolded, Henry realized that his family, at least, was unlikely to be harmed. In the early hours of June 20, Hulton and his wife sought refuge in a neighbor’s house and spent the next two nights with a friend at Cambridge; yet the children remained at Brookline with their aunt until June 22, when Henry and Commissioner William Burch took their whole families to Castle William.

McMaster’s and the Hultons’ assailants probably returned home satisfied with having vicariously punished the British imperial establishment. If that is the case, the McMaster mobbing and the Brookline affray, as community-based actions, condemned British imperial authority and British imperial identity embodied by the victims.

The punishment of an obnoxious Scot and the abusing of a senior official carried little prospect of retribution, yet it went a long way in reminding Britons of their distinctiveness and vulnerability. No one was ever prosecuted for involvement in these incidents. That in itself is not unusual, given that colonists who protested British policies by rioting were rarely subject to legal sanctions on account of two systemic problems: a chronic failure by the king’s law officers to collect evidence sufficient to warrant controversial prosecutions in the Superior Court and the political hostility of the magistracy and colonial juries to any such initiative. The unreliability of the provincial magistracy was a subtext to the Governor’s Council’s response. The Council agreed with Hutchinson’s suggestion that the attorney general should be directed to bring
prosecutions against McMaster’s and the Hulton’s assailants, though in the latter case the “Tenor of Government . . . required the exercise of their power and authority”—to wit, a proclamation was to be issued promising a reward of £50 and a pardon for information leading to the “discovery” and “conviction” of the “offenders.” The Council met Hutchinson’s specific request to provide for the Hultons’ “security” by inserting a clause in the proclamation that the civil magistrates should “exert themselves in the discovery of these offenders and preventing the like disorders and outrages for the future.”

Such clauses are to be found in most other proclamations concerning rioting: to councilors and magistrates it was a legal formality; for Hutchinson, councilors doing their duty in such a prosaic manner bespoke of gesture politics. Before reluctantly agreeing to the proclamation, Hutchinson reported, two Whig councilors, James Bowdoin and James Pitts, alleged that Henry Hulton had “procured people to make this Assault in order to have a pretence for removing to the Castle and rendering the Town obnoxious,” and that this would be revealed by any investigation.

The adverse political repercussions from any prolonged investigation might have deterred Hutchinson’s pursuit of the principal felons and abettors such as Thomas Young, particularly with the Boston Massacre trial looming or in the unlikely event of Britain prosecuting rioters for treason. Moreover, support for the continuation of the boycott among the merchants began to crumble when Philadelphia and New York suspended nonimportation. McMaster and the Hultons were bemused by the patent inconstancy of senior law officers in pursuing rioters, but the alternative of bringing civil suits against their trespassers under common law was an unsettling prospect for any victim of mob violence. Colonial institutions and protest, which had effectively nullified the enforcement of obnoxious imperial laws and the judicial pursuit of colonists, now denied beleaguered Britons the protection of the law.

As sure as revolutions have their victims, empires need their collaborators, and in Patrick McMaster and Ann Hulton the British had staunch defenders. Neither Ann Hulton, a disdainful metropolitan sojourner, nor Patrick McMaster, an aspirational Lowland Scot, were culturally creolized to any significant degree, and both were agents of imperial authority, albeit in different ways.

Well might Ann Hulton lament of “the want of protection” afforded officials and importers who tried to withstand the “Tyranny of the Multitude.” It is understandable why she disparaged the colonial protest movement at every opportunity, and why, after meeting McMaster, she should suppose
that there was a conspiracy against imperial officials and Boston’s Scots. The Scots shipbuilders had given cause enough for resentment when they tried to divide the community by appealing to workers to think not of their country—Massachusetts—but of their empty pockets. The principal rationale for the community action taken against Patrick McMaster was that it quashed dissent, but for some of the rioters it was a means to evince their patriotism. Although there is no firm evidence of a movement to expel the Scots, Ann Hulton’s accusations nevertheless illuminate the circumstances that brought together Scottish merchants and English imperial officials. Both were victims of political radicalism and political mobilization. Ann Hulton returned to Brookline in the early autumn, and when the troubles returned she was only too pleased to leave for England in 1775.

Boston provided fewer economic opportunities for Scottish migrants than other parts of the colonies, yet for the McMaster brothers it had been a gateway to an empire of opportunity. When that gateway closed they quickly sought others. First at Castle William, they defiantly conducted business as usual from a temporary “warehouse”—no doubt with the aid of those Bostonians who “Joyfully received” the brothers on their return to Boston when the boycott ended. For the next five years the McMasters concentrated on building up their business at Portsmouth, out of which they ran the ship Glenluce (of which they owned three-quarters) in the American coastal trade. On July 5, 1775, Patrick McMaster joined the fourth company of the Loyal American Association with Daniel and a handful of other Scots merchants. The following year he left Boston with the British evacuation fleet that sailed for Halifax, Nova Scotia. The McMasters settled in Penobscot, from whence they joined the loyalist exodus to New Brunswick; they succeeded in reestablishing the family business and, after receiving several Crown grants of land, went on to acquire substantial landholdings in Charlotte County, where their descendants remain.100

At their journey’s end, the McMaster brothers sought and won compensation for their losses from the British government—but only after reminding the royal commission of how much their loyalty was a fusion of their Scottish and British imperial identities. The brothers’ memorial stands as a badge of honor to the “unblemished reputations and unshaken loyalty” of their Galloway “ancestors,” whose world was blighted by the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, and to their own tribulations in an Atlantic world beset by revolution. Even if, like most loyalists, the brothers exaggerated the value of their losses, their estimates of £8,808 New England currency for debts due to the business at Boston and £7,561 for Portsmouth indicate that the McMasters
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were substantial, successful traders. The *Glenluce* and her cargo, together worth some £4,000 currency, were also lost. Eventually the brothers received £405 sterling for a claim of £569 (the sixth highest among Boston’s Scots) with respect to property confiscated by New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

Despite Patrick McMaster’s ordeal one cannot assume that the loyalism of the Scots derived from deep-seated ethnic antagonisms. More significantly, the McMaster brothers were not so much conscious of their minority status as assertive of a possessive individualism that they believed their imperial identity legitimized. We might think it unfortunate that they arrived at politically inopportune moments; the less charitable contemporary Bostonian view is that the acquisitive Scots all too readily embraced British imperialism for their own ends. Had McMaster been tarred and feathered it is conceivable that this savage ritual could have been iconized in the popular prints as a treatment peculiarly suitable for greedy Scottish merchants.

In considering what life was like for Britons in pre-Revolutionary Boston, it would be churlish to suggest that Revolutionary historians are inattentive to issues pertaining to contemporaries’ identities. But the victimization of obnoxious Britons on June 19, 1770, is likely indicative of a divergence of British identities at a local level. On the one hand were two very different Britons, a Scot and Englishwoman thrown together by circumstances and experiences, who found common ground in their enunciation of British imperial identity. On the other were the provincials—Whig merchants, radical democrats like Thomas Young, and over-eager footsoldiers like John Ballard—whose unity of purpose was cemented by their condemnation of threatening outsiders and their renunciation of a type of Britishness embodied by their victims.

Notes

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1. Ann Hulton to [Mrs. Lightbody], July 25, 1770, in *Letters of a Loyalist Lady: Being the Letters of Ann Hulton, Sister of Henry Hulton, Commissioner of Customs at Boston, 1767–1776*, ed. Ann Hulton (Cambridge, Mass., 1927), 26–27. The editorial interpolations in roman type are the source editor’s, while those in italics are my conjectural readings. The rendition of “[merchants?]” fills an intriguing lacuna in the published transcript, likely indicating an illegible word in the original manuscript, which has not been found.


5. I am certainly not the first to suggest that crowd action encapsulated ethnic hostility toward the British. Dirk Hoerder remarked on how Scots merchants were “used as scapegoats” when, in facing “social unrest,” Whig leaders “undertook to direct it against outsiders” including the McMasters. Dirk Hoerder, *Crowd Action in Revolutionary Massachusetts, 1765–1780* (London, 1977), 236. According to Richard Maxwell Brown, during the imperial crisis there were some 44 major riots in the colonies of a “broadly...anti-British” character (which term he did not define), 7 in Massachusetts, though not including attacks on importers like McMaster. Richard Maxwell Brown, “Violence and the American Revolution,” in *Essays on the American Revolution*, ed. Stephen G. Kurtz and James H. Hutton (Chapel Hill, 1973), 81–120, at 85–102.


7. One neo-imperial interpretation rationalizes such outbursts as extreme responses to a redistribution of political power that was occurring in the provincial legislature and towns after the Stamp Act Crisis, which left the provincial administration in a perilously weakened state and struggling to enforce contested imperial authority and unpopular imperial laws. Colin Nicolson, *The “Infamas Govener”: Francis Bernard and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Boston, 2001), 167–197.

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9. Patrick McMaster, Memorial to Thomas Hutchinson, June 27, 1770, enclosed in Hutchinson to John Pownall, Boston, Aug. 29, 1770, The National Archives of the UK: Public Record Office (PRO), CO 5/759, f 273. There is also “hearsay” evidence comprising a report in the Boston Gazette, June 25, 1770, and a letter written by Nathaniel Coffin, the deputy cashier and paymaster of Customs, who had remained in town and may have been an eyewitness to McMaster’s carting through Boston, if not to his actual abduction, and learned more details on visits to the castle. Coffin to Charles Steuart, June 29, 1770, Ms. 5026, ff. 74–76, Charles Steuart Papers, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.


12. Exceptionally, John Tyler has pointed to a determination on the part of radical Whigs and merchants to make examples of Scots importers like Patrick McMaster during the nonimportation controversy. Tyler, Smugglers and Patriots, 121–127, 131–132, 157–158.


15. Hulton, Letters of a Loyalist Lady, 48, 45, 36.


17. The baptismal records for Patrick and his ten siblings give Challoch as their parents’ residence. Elizabeth (bap. Mar. 3, 1734); James (bap. July 28, 1735, d. 1804); William (bap. May 2, 1737); Andrew (bap. Oct. 7, 1743, d. Jan. 31, 1746); Jean (d. 1740); John (bap. June 26, 1746); Thomas (bap. Mar. 19, 1749, d. Sep. 26, 1759); Ann (bap. Sep. 28, 1751); Grace (bap. Apr. 15, 1758); Daniel (bap. Jul. 21, 1754). Indexes to Old Parochial Registers, Dumfries Archives; Old Parochial Registers, for Old Luce and Glenluce, 894/1: 7, 11, 16, 38; Kirkmaiden, 890/1: 58, National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh.
18. John McMaster and his wife were not among the indigent poor, “fornicators,” and other transgressors called to account in the Kirkmaiden Kirk Session Minutes, 1716–1779, CH2/15/1/2–3, Dumfries Archives. Challoch Farm was acquired by John Dalrymple (1749–1812), the laird of Dunragit and a scion of the Stairs, the most powerful aristocratic family in the region, through marriage to Susanna Hay (b.1764), daughter of a Hanoverian veteran, Sir Thomas Hay (ca.1715–1777/8), third baronet of Park. Dalrymple fought in the American War of Independence and was created first baronet Dalrymple-Hay of Park in 1798. In 1792, John Dalrymple, sixth earl of Stair (1749–1821), leased Challoch Farm to his tacksman John Ross for 19 years, with a rent of 1,000 Scots merks. The tacksman invariably sublet properties to tenants: the McMaster family may have rented Challoch continuously from the mid eighteenth to the early nineteenth century, when the farm was divided in two. East Challoch farm, comprising 220 acres in 1872, was reckoned “a very good farm worth £300,” and occupied by one William McMaster in 1899. J. Lockhart Smith, Wigtownshire Agriculturalists and Breeders (Stranraer, 1894), 121–129; Abstract from the Tacks of the Rt. Hon. the earl of Stair’s Estates in the Shire of Wigton, GGD 316/12; G. A. Grey, “Report on the Estates of Park and Dunragit,” May 10, 1861, GGD 316/10; Dunragit Rent Roll, 1899, GGD 316/6, in John McQuaker’s Collection of Papers on Galloway Farms, Dumfries Archives.

19. McMaster was and is a common surname throughout Galloway. This Patrick McMaster married Grizel Adair and owned the Bridge Stone house and land in Glenluce vennel, whose feuar was the earl of Stair. Wigtown Sasines, 1782–1860: 462–463, 492, Dumfries Archives; Dumfries Weekly Journal, July 28, 1778.


22. In 1765, imports to Scotland from New England amounted to £29,754, by far the largest figure for any single year in the eighteenth century (six times the average), and constituted 17 percent of Britain’s imports from the region; in 1766 they were worth £15,809 (10 percent of all British imports) and in 1767, £19,309 (13 percent). Jacob M. Price, “New Time Series for Scotland’s and British Trade with the Thirteen Colonies and States, 1740–1791,” William and Mary Quarterly, 3d ser., 32(1975):307–325.
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23. McMaster et al., Humble Petition, AO 13/51, f 136. The value of imports to New England from Scotland had also increased but fluctuated less dramatically than the value of exports from New England to Scotland. Imports from Scotland were valued at £17,404 in 1765 (twice the average), £9,773 in 1766, £10,105 in 1767, ca. £11,000 in 1768, and ca. £15,700 in 1769. This does not mean that nonimportation had little effect on trade with Scotland, for the figure for 1766 was a postwar low point. The McMaster brothers would have been responsible for a large proportion of this trade. The boycott impeded New England exports to Scotland, including timber for ships’ masts and bowsprits: values fell to £9,429 in 1768, increased to £13,422 in 1769, and dropped again, to £9,432, in 1770; when trade recovered exports never exceeded £12,775 before the cessation brought on by the war. These figures do not take account of cargoes returned by merchants or delay in resale occasioned by the boycott. Price, “New Time Series.”

24. Hulton, Letters of a Loyalist Lady, 29. The McMasters’ middling social status as merchant-shopkeepers and creditors is confirmed by the province tax list of 1771, which noted that Patrick and James had £600 of merchandise and recorded the assessed annual rental of their shop and house at £26, well above the median (£18–19) for Boston, and placing them in the top 50 percent of property holders. Colin Nicolson, “Governor Francis Bernard, the Massachusetts Friends of Government and the Advent of the Revolution,” Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society 103 (1991): 24–113, at 36, 90.

25. John Mein, A State of Importations from Great-Britain into the Port of Boston, from the Beginning of January 1770 to Which Is Added an Account of All the Goods That Have Been Re-Shipt from the Above Port for Great-Britain, since January 1769: The Whole Taken from the Custom-House of the Port of Boston (Boston, 1770).

26. The petition of James, Patrick and John McMasters [sic] of Boston to Thomas Hutchinson, June 5, 1770, enclosed in Hutchinson to John Pownall, Boston, Aug. 29, 1770, PRO, CO 5/759, f 271.


31. James Murray (1713–1781), originally of Unthank, Lanarkshire, came to Boston in 1765, having been a successful planter and slaveholder at Wilmington, North Carolina, and with business interests at Charleston, South Carolina. He further irritated Bostonians by renting out his sugar house to British soldiers—though Whigs also profited from the Regulars. His sister Elizabeth married the Boston merchant James Smith, with whose death in 1769 Murray became trustee for the 300-acre Brush Hill estate at Milton and a house in Boston. Edward A. Jones, The Loyalists of Massachusetts: Their Memorials, Petitions and Claims (London, 1930), 216; James H. Stark, The Loyalists of Massachusetts and the Other Side of the American Revo-
lution (Boston, 1910), 255; Nina M. Tiffany and Susan I. Lesley, eds., Letters of James Murray, Loyalist (Boston, 1901); Papers of John, William and James Murray, American merchants, G.D. 219, Murray of Murraythwaite Muniments, National Archives of Scotland.


34. Bernard to the earl of Hillsborough, May 8, 1769, PRO, CO 5/758, ff 116–117.


36. Originally of Shotts, Lanarkshire, Alexander was the first of the three Selkirk brothers to make his way to Boston, in 1765, where they ran a dry goods business. Robert Selkirk arrived from Glasgow in Sept. 1766, three months after Alexander’s wife and child; James Selkirk may not have accompanied the other members of his family, but his membership in the Scots Charitable Society indicates that he was present in 1766; Robert again entered Boston on Aug. 17, 1767, and James on Oct. 27, 1768. Hugh Edward Egerton, ed., The Royal Commission on the Losses and Services of American Loyalists, 1783 to 1785, Being the Notes of Mr Daniel Parker Coke, M.P. One of the Commissioners during That Period (Oxford, 1915), 145; Whitmore, Port Arrivals and Immigrants to Boston; David Dobson, Scots in New England, 1623–1873 (Baltimore, 2002).

37. Bernard Bailyn with Barbara DeWolfe, Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution (New York, 1986), 150–151, 205. The others were the English, the Germans, and the Scots-Irish from Ulster. Of the ca. 275,000 immigrants to North America and the West Indies from Britain and Ireland in the eighteenth century, some 80,000 were from Scotland. T. M. Devine, Scotland’s Empire and the Shaping of the Americas, 1600–1815 (Washington, 2004), 94–118.


39. This conundrum is not so much a paradox as a consequence of research that has failed to test thoroughly whether the Scots exemplify the long-standing thesis that the loyalists were “conscious minorities.” William H. Nelson, The American Tory (Oxford, 1961); Devine, Scotland’s Empire, 182–183; William R. Brock, Scotus Americanus: A Survey of the Sources for Links between Scotland and America in the
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*Eighteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 1982), 259. For several colonies, including Massachusetts, Scots formed the largest group of non-American-born loyalists who submitted compensation claims to the British government. From this it has been inferred that Scots loyalists numbered as many as 160,000, or 30 percent of all loyalists. Wallace Brown, *The King’s Friends: The Composition and Motives of the American Loyalist Claimants* (Providence, 1965), 21, 250, 261.


43. The Scots’ Charitable Society was founded in Boston in 1657, the first of its kind in North America. Up to 1763 it admitted some 789 Scotsmen and their sons who resided in Boston. Dobson, *Scots in New England*, 141, 197; Scots’ Charitable Society of Boston, Records, 1657–1952, F73.1/S36/R43/1979 microfilm, New England Historic and Genealogical Society, Boston. Provincial freemasonry did not have the same role, despite its Scottish roots. The influential St. Andrews Masonic Lodge was chartered by the Grand Lodge of Scotland in 1756, from which was created the Grand Lodge of Ancient Masons in 1769, a rival organization to the “modern” St. John’s Grand Lodge, chartered by the Grand Lodge of England in 1733. The two lodges united in 1792. Radical colonists were prominent as office-bearers in the “ancient” lodge, including Grand Master Paul Revere, who was keen to cut all ties with Scotland after the Revolution. Despite the Scottish connections, only one Scot belonged to the St. Andrews Lodge (William McAlpine, a bookbinder and bookseller), while another, James Selkirk, belonged to St. John’s Grand Lodge. Steven C. Bullock, “The Revolutionary Transformation of American Freemasonry, 1752–1792,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 47(1990):347–369; Alan I. McInnes, Marjory-Ann Harper, and Linda G Fryer, eds., *Scotland and the Americas, ca. 1650-ca. 1939: A Documentary Source Book* (Edinburgh, 2002); Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, *Proceedings in Masonry: St. John’s Grand Lodge, 1733–1792; Mas-

44. This paragraph owes much to Marsha Hamilton, “As Good Englishmen”: British and Atlantic Networks in Early Massachusetts (forthcoming), chap. 3.


46. There were approximately 60 Scots loyalists in Massachusetts, of whom 45 resided in Boston. Of the 34 whose occupations are known, only 2 were not involved in commerce as merchants, shopkeepers, factors, distillers, and booksellers. Dates of arrival in Massachusetts can be ascertained for 32, of whom 17 arrived between 1764 and 1770. Based on Jones, The Loyalists of Massachusetts; Whitmore, Port Arrivals and Immigrants to Boston; David E. Maas, Divided Hearts: Massachusetts Loyalists, 1765–1790: A Biographical Directory (Boston, 1980); Nicolson, “Governor Francis Bernard, the Massachusetts Friends of Government and the Advent of the Revolution”; Dobson, Scots in New England; Tyler, Smugglers and Patriots.


50. Other prominent Patriots who did so were Samuel Adams and Benjamin Franklin; despite his negative comments about the Scots, John Adams also drew these analogies. For Samuel Adams, see Colin Nicolson, “‘McIntosh, Otis & Adams are our demagogues’: Nathaniel Coffin and the Loyalist Interpretation of the Origins of the American Revolution,” Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society 108(1996–1997):173–114, at 100; for Benjamin Franklin, see Hook, Scotland and America, 18–26, and Franklin to Lord Kames, Apr. 11, 1767, Franklin Letters, G.D. 24/1/562, National Archives of Scotland; for John Adams, see his Novanglus (Boston, 1850–1856), 101, 122–158.


52. Record Commissioners of the City of Boston, Reports of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston, 38 vols. (Boston, 1876–1909), 16:297–298.

53. Boston Evening Post, Oct. 2, 1769. Unfortunately, nothing else is known about these shipbuilders. Their names are so common in the west of Scotland that without additional information it is impossible to find authoritative biographical information in vital records. Patrick Bogle, however, was not a scion of the wealthy Bogles.
of Glasgow. John Innes Harle, *The Bogle Family History Glasgow* (n.p., 1976). Privately printed and originally circulated to family members only, this volume is not widely available, but there is one copy at the Glasgow City Archives. The identities of the Glasgow backers are also unknown. One possibility is William Cuninghame and Co., prominent tobacco merchants with Galloway connections, who, in 1771, contracted one Mr. Anderson, possibly James Anderson of Boston, a future loyalist, to build two ships in Boston, one of them a “small vessel for the West India trade.” Anderson paid up front the cost of tradesmen, craftsmen, and materials supplied by local timber merchants, for which he would have been reimbursed by the Glasgow firm, an arrangement similar to that operated by Boston’s Scottish shipbuilders in 1769–1770. James Robinson and T. M. Devine, eds., *A Scottish Firm in Virginia, 1767–1777: W. Cuninghame and Co.* (Edinburgh, 1984), 97. There are several references to one Hugh Brown in the cash book of Alexander Speirs (TD 131/1, Speirs of Elderslie Papers, Glasgow City Archives), while one Robert Park, a Scottish factor in Virginia in 1772, was a correspondent of Alexander Wilson (Letterbook of Alexander Wilson, TD 1/1070, Smith of Jordanhill Papers, Glasgow City Archives).


56. Hutchinson to the earl of Hillsborough, Jan. 24, 1770, PRO, CO 5/759, f 36.

57. The most important disincentive to prospective shipbuilders and manufacturers located in Boston, Gov. Bernard observed on the eve of the boycott, was the “Price of Labor” for both “Workmen” and craftsmen. Ships’ carpenters were refusing to work for less than 3s. per day (a rate equivalent to the highest weekly wage of a laborer.) Unfortunately, we do not know if the Scots shipbuilders offered such inflated wages to entice shipwrights to work for them or lowered wages for unskilled laborers in view of the shortage of work occasioned by the boycott. Bernard to the earl of Hillsborough, May 21, 1768, PRO, CO 5/757, ff 107–108.


63. This was more politically than legally important: Samuel Adams feared that the “Scotch witnesses” had given the British sufficient information with which to blame Bostonians for inciting the riot, but that line of argument was not pursued by John Adams in his successful defense of the soldiers against murder charges. Captain Preston and his soldiers were acquitted of murder in early December, with two soldiers being found guilty of the lesser charge of manslaughter. The King v.


69. Coffin to Steuart, May 22, 1770, Ms. 5026, ff.56–59, Charles Steuart Papers.

70. McMaster et al., petition to Thomas Hutchinson, June 5, 1770, enclosed in Hutchinson to Pownall, Aug. 29, 1770, PRO, CO 5/759, f 271.

71. Coffin to Steuart, June 29, 1770, Ms. 5026, ff.74–76, Charles Steuart Papers.

72. We can only speculate as to the identity of this person, who must have been someone high up in the protest movement to have influenced Thomas Young, perhaps councilor James Bowdoin. At a Council meeting on June 21, Hutchinson refers to having been contacted by the McMasters about a week previously. Council executive records, 1692–1774 (GC 3–327), 16:487–488, Massachusetts Archives Collection, Massachusetts Archives (cited hereafter as Council executive records, 16:##, Mass. Archives).

73. Ann Hulton, however, gives 12:00 noon as the starting time, and the *Boston Gazette* 2:00 PM, on June 25, 1770.

74. McMaster, Memorial to Thomas Hutchinson, June 27, 1770, enclosed in Hutchinson to Pownall, Aug. 29, 1770, PRO, CO 5/759, f 279; Coffin to Steuart, June 29, 1770, Ms. 5026, ff.74–76, Charles Steuart Papers.

75. Coffin to Steuart, June 29, 1770, Ms. 5026, ff.74–76, Charles Steuart Papers; McMaster, Memorial to Thomas Hutchinson, June 27, 1770, PRO, CO 5/759, f 279. Hoerder (*Crowd Action*, 236) states that McMaster was taken to a gallows, but the Scot does not mention this in his memorial, as might be expected had it happened.

76. Hoerder, *Crowd Action*, 236; *Boston Gazette*, June 25, 1770.


78. According to Alfred F. Young only 3 out of 10 or 11 incidents in Massachusetts can be considered major episodes: the carting of the seaman and informer George Grailler on Oct. 28, 1769, after the “drubbing” of Mein; the assault of Owen Richards on May 18; and the notorious and brutal abduction of John Malcom on Jan. 25, 1774. Young, “English Plebeian Culture and Eighteenth-Century American Radicalism,” 209n.
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80. Richards was involved in a nighttime “fracas” with Bostonians when it became known that he had alerted the Customhouse to smuggled goods. A chase through Boston’s narrow streets ended with Richards’s capture and an exacting punishment: hot tar was “smeared” over his naked body, and feathers tipped over him, before he was dragged to the cart. Nicolson, “‘McIntosh, Otis & Adams are our demagogues’, ” 89–90; Watkins, “Tarring and Feathering in Boston in 1770,” 36; Council executive records, 16:481, Mass. Archives.


82. As a radical, a democrat, and an advocate of popular resistance in Boston and New York, this second-generation Scots-Irish physician certainly fits the bill as an intercessor. Young, “English Plebeian Culture and Eighteenth-Century American Radicalism,” 209n. However, the documentary evidence does not firmly establish Young’s involvement on June 19. Surely McMaster would have mentioned that Young was leading the mob—if of course he could see him—given that Young was present on June 1; conversely, if Young was an intercessor, it is equally likely that McMaster would have chosen not to mention any act that might have mitigated Young’s previous aggressiveness.


85. McMaster, Memorial to Thomas Hutchinson, June 27, 1770, enclosed in Hutchinson to Pownall, Aug. 29, 1770, PRO, CO 5/759, f. 273. McMaster left a blank space into which he subsequently wrote the names of his assailants. Ballard he
evidently knew, but he may have sought advice as to the identities of the others, perhaps even from Hutchinson, who endorsed the memorial on July 27 (CO 5/759, f 273). One John Ballard served on minor town committees in 1766 and 1767, and on an important committee formed to elicit a subscription to support the town manufactory house during the boycott; in 1769 he was voted a town warden but excused duty. *Reports of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston*, 16:172, 197, 206, 215, 239, 266. One other or others of the same name married Martha Williams in Boston on Dec. 5, 1751, and Mary Coats in Boston on Dec. 25, 1777. *Early Vital Records of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to About 1850* (Wheat Ridge, Conn., 2002), CD-ROM data-file for Suffolk County.

86. McMaster, Memorial to Thomas Hutchinson, June 27, 1770, enclosed in Hutchinson to Pownall, Aug. 29, 1770, PRO, CO 5/759, f 273.

87. Henry Hulton thought that they were connected: having discussed the McMaster mobbing he proceeds to introduce the Brookline affray thus: “That same night of the 19th. June after my family were all in bed. . . .” *Some Account*, 167.

88. Formal meetings of the Board had been suspended in the aftermath of the Boston Massacre because of fear of retribution arising from rumors that shots had been fired from the Customhouse window on the night of the Massacre. The Board did not convene at the Boston Customhouse until December.

89. Hulton, *Letters of a Loyalist Lady*, 39. It was beyond Hutchinson’s comprehension that Temple would have stooped to raising a seditious mob, but the suspicion remained—though it was never proven—that he had alerted, perhaps inadvertently, “the Sons of Liberty his most intimate acquaintances” to Hulton’s movements and whereabouts on June 19, 1770. Thomas Hutchinson to John Pownall, n.d.; Hutchinson to the earl of Hillsborough, June 29, 1770, Hutchinson Letterbooks, 26:417–419, 513, Mass. Archives.

90. *Boston Gazette*, June 25, 1770.

91. At least 20 Brookline residents later told the Hultons that they had encountered the mob coming down the Boston road but did not warn of its approach. Such studied passivity may have been intended to deflect attention away from any locals who had joined the mob. Henry Hulton, Letterbooks, MS Can 16, vol. 1, Feb. 5, 1770, p. 15, Houghton Library, Harvard College Library. Ann Hulton noted caustically that any inquiries—“any further stir about the matter”—were firmly discouraged. Hulton, *Letters of a Loyalist Lady*, 24.

92. Colonial crowds usually numbered between 50 and 100 persons. Gilje, *Rioting in the Revolution*, 25. Had the crowd that mounted a “formidable attack” been any larger, Coffin might have used “multitude” or “large mob” instead of “Gang.” Coffin to Steuart, June 29, 1770, Ms. 5026, ff.74–76, Charles Steuart Papers.

93. The rapping on the external walls was also commonplace during Boston’s Pope’s Day parades of Nov. 5, whereby a charivari of lower orders enticed donations from wealthier citizens. A parallel scenario in the Hulton case would have been if, after apprehending the commissioner, the mob had tried to exact an abjuration from him regarding his duty to uphold imperial law.
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94. Coffin to Steuart, June 29, 1770, Ms. 5026, ff. 74–76, Charles Steuart Papers; Hulton, Some Account, 170. The customs officers who had been staying with the Hultons took lodgings at Jamaica Plain, wherefrom Lady Amelia Bernard reported that “all the Gentlemen” in the area left their homes fearing “that a search for Officers was intended.” Hutchinson to Sir Francis Bernard, June 26, 1770, Hutchinson Letterbooks, 26:514, Mass. Archives.

95. Maier, “Popular Uprisings,” 20–24, 28, 31; Reid, In a Defiant Stance, 124; John Philip Reid, In a Rebellious Spirit: The Argument of Facts: The Liberty Riot and the Coming of the Revolution (University Park, Pa., 1979), 41–51.


100. John McMaster received a 200-acre lot reserved for loyalists in Kingston township, New Brunswick, while Patrick McMaster was granted 2,000 acres in the Passamaquoddy Bay area. Land Grants in New Brunswick: NS-2, p. 60 (Patrick McMaster); NS-A, p. 109 (John McMaster), Index to New Brunswick Land Grants, 1784–1997, Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, http://archives.gnb.ca/APPS/GovRecs/RS686/?L=EN (accessed Mar. 17, 2006). The brothers were sufficiently wealthy for Patrick in 1786 to purchase Deer Island, to the south of the town of St. Andrews, and, with James, to lend £500 to a fellow loyalist, John Jones. Jones’s one-third share in Grand Manan Island, at the entrance to the Bay of Fundy, was provided as security for the loan, which James’s widow and five children tried (unsuccessfully?) to acquire in 1807, when they were “considerably embarrassed in their circumstances.” Hugh Mackay to Edward Winslow, Suther Hall, Aug. 20, 1807, in W. O. Raymond and Edward Winslow, Winslow Papers, A.D. 1776–1826 (Boston, 1972), 588–590. In 1795, the brothers purchased Hardwood Island, Long Island, and Hog Island in Passamaquoddy Bay. Daniel McMaster inherited the bulk

101. McMaster et al., Humble Petition, AO 13/51, ff 136–138; List of Debts due to James McMaster, Patrick McMaster & Co., [1786], PRO, AO 13/51, ff 146–158. Gallovidians were ardently anti-Jacobite, for which see Andrew Agnew, The Hereditary Sheriffs of Galloway: Their “Forebears” and Friends, Their Courts and Customs of Their Times, with Notes of the Early History, Ecclesiastical Legends, the Baronage and Place-Names of the Province, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1893), 2:301–305.