The “Calamities of War”: An Examination of The Revolutionary War Diary of Quaker Margaret Morris

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Margaret (Hill) Morris: age 15, taken from a portrait on stone by A. Newsam, reproduced in Letters of Doctor Richard Hill and His Children and Margaret Morris: Her Journal with Biographical Sketch and Notes.
Margaret Morris: age 76, an engraving by Morris Smith, reproduced in *Letters of Doctor Richard Hill and His Children* and *Margaret Morris: Her Journal with Biographical Sketch and Notes.*
Introduction

The “shot heard ‘round the world” or the first shots of the American Revolution were fired in the countryside of colonial New England in 1775. It would be there where the first year of violent combat would occur – with very little of the fighting spreading to the other colonies. At first, the warfare appeared to less directly affect the rest of the colonies, like New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Their war initially consisted of less outright combat; instead, they saw their trade become more restricted and their neighborhoods divided among allegiances to their mother country or the colonies they called home. While the combat eventually spread beyond New England in early 1776, the war had developed into more than the violence between the American colonists and the British soldiers. It was the division of a country: were you a British loyalist or an American rebel patriot?1

The colony of New Jersey as a whole was home to a smattering of different allegiances, but there was no concrete, universal side amongst the people. There were many loyal to King George III – namely, officials, proprietors, landowners, physicians, lawyers, merchants, and many ordinary people. There was also an equal divide of those who aligned themselves with patriot ideals that the colonies were being treated unfairly. Among the patriots were members of the New Jersey council, merchants, ironmasters, debtors, anti-proprietary settlers and members of the poorer classes. Younger lawyers, like Richard Stockton and William Paterson, also tended to favor the revolutionary party over the loyalists. Young university students too had more patriot ideals – at Princeton (then the College of New Jersey), the students made a point to dress “only in American-made cloth at Commencement” if they were able to.

1 Throughout the thesis, I will use the terms loyalist or tory to refer to those who sided with the British and the terms rebel or patriot to refer to those that sided with the American colonists.
Religious groups were sharply divided in their beliefs as well, as the clergy sided according to their denominations. The Presbyterians and Calvinists were regarded as main supporters of the American cause, favoring independence from the British. The Calvinists, in particular, were seen as “chief fomenters of trouble” due to the influence and support they had amongst the colonists. The Anglicans and the Episcopalians instead were faithful to the Crown; their influence even led to a great number of members of their churches supporting the loyalists. In particular, the Society of the Friends, or the Quakers, preferred a neutral opinion toward the war, as they were conventionally opposed to violence of any kind. The Quakers stood firm in their decision to not engage in any politics of the war, neither participating in the violence nor taking an oath of allegiance toward either side.²

Those who lived in New Jersey became unwilling participants in an environment of constant war. First, the war between allegiances and then the actual combat itself. When the war finally arrived in colonial New Jersey, non-combatants lives were forced to change to the will of the war. The ordinary people of New Jersey were compelled to allow soldiers to quarter in their homes and to deal with the disruption of their daily lives. At the same time, they had to hope that they would not be accused of disloyalty or be hunted by the soldiers. The American Revolution is thought to have brought independence to the colonies, yet the cost was the liberty of the ordinary, non-combatant people.

Examinations of these colonists’ lives prove to be the most colorful, as they can provide more impartial point of view than those who had strong allegiances. The Revolution provides historians with a rich primary source base in the form of letters, pamphlets, diaries, and other materials of figures considered either heroic or iconic, such as George Washington or General Leonard Lundin. Cockpit of the Revolution: The War for Independence in New Jersey. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), 70-108.
Thomas Gage of the British Army. While such sources offer an important narrative of the Revolution, they lack the perspective of those that lay outside of the conflict – those whose lives were completely changed and affected by the introduction of the war. Such ‘icons’ of the Revolution that talk back to soldiers and hide known traitors, while seemingly straddling the lines between patriot and loyalist sentiments, are not usually depicted as mild-mannered, ordinary Quaker widows. This thesis will explore the life of that ‘icon,’ a Quaker woman from New Jersey, Margaret Morris. By examining a diary that she kept during the first six months of the warfare in New Jersey, one can see the perspective of an ordinary non-combatant colonist and the effects that the war placed upon people.

While perspectives of the Washingtons and Gages of the Revolution remain important, Margaret’s viewpoint is undoubtedly just as significant in understanding the war as a whole. Her Revolutionary War diary provides a unique and even rare viewpoint that is often overlooked due the seemingly unimportant role she had during the period. An ordinary colonist’s view is unusual in the discussion of the details of the Revolution. It is typical to forfeit the common, every day experience of people in order to examine the experiences of a key figure or to see the overall history of the Revolution. Margaret was neither a famous figure nor a soldier from the period, but her narrative is representative of a real, ordinary colonist. Such narratives are less commonly examined to understand the war, but their addition can demonstrate a fuller picture of a war that is generally regarded as a universal fight for liberty.

Although many historians tend to examine more than one primary source to understand a period of history, it is important to note that examining one diary can produce similar results. The American Revolution is a period of complicated, interrelated events and Margaret’s diary is but one panorama of those events. By focusing in on her words, rather than unpacking the
complicated events of the war, this thesis will explore the world of those that were most affected by them. Such an approach allows one to see the consequences of a world in peril and transformation as they happen, instead of the details of the Revolution.

This thesis intends to examine Margaret’s diary from the New Jersey campaign of the Revolution to understand the way her unique identity influences her experiences, but also to see how it provides a point of view that is representative of an ordinary non-combatant colonist. The first chapter will detail her experience and interactions with the combat itself. The second chapter addresses the way Margaret’s pre-war world was changed entirely by the conflict. The third and fourth chapters grapple with her identifications and their influence on her ideals and thoughts, politically and religiously respectively. Through these chapters, one will be able to comprehend the significance of Margaret Morris within the larger narrative of the American Revolution and the effects’ that war has on individuals.
Chapter I: An Environment of Fear

Thomas Rodney arrived in Philadelphia in December 1776 after the start of the American Revolution’s campaign in New Jersey, expecting to find a city full of life and people. Instead, he was met with a nearly deserted city. He describes this encounter in his diary entry from December 18, 1776: “When we arrived at Philadelphia it made a horrid appearance, more than half the houses appeared deserted, and the families that remained were shut up in their houses, and nobody appeared in the streets.”³ He was shocked to see the city like this – probably being more used to seeing the heavily populated area bustling with people. Rodney himself was a “passionate patriot,” a delegate of various Continental congresses in his home colony of Delaware, and a soldier in the American forces.⁴ Rodney kept a diary for the duration of his time as a soldier in the Delaware militia. In it, he discussed his visit to Philadelphia in detail. He described how he saw very little people as he traveled around the city. In one instance, he stopped at a local coffeehouse, a staple of early American cities, and found no one. A friend informed him that the people expected “the British in every moment and were afraid.” He asked another friend where all the “whigs were, and they said there were but few in town, and they expect the British” and “were afraid to be out.”⁵ Notice his emphasis on and repetition of the word “afraid” in describing these people who were nowhere to be found. The slightest threat of the war approaching Philadelphia trapped citizens in their homes and even compelled some to abandon them. The fear they felt became an omnipresent point in their lives, and they dealt with it through a departure from their standard everyday.

⁵ Rhodehamel, The American Revolution, 247.
Thomas Rodney’s experience in Philadelphia was not an unusual one. No one would venture out with the possibility of war looming. On December 20, 1776, in a walk through Philadelphia, he “found it almost deserted by the inhabitants, and looking as if it had been plundered, and scarcely a chair can be had at a public house to sit down in.”6 His description illustrates an uninhabited city, a city once full of people who were now extraordinarily afraid of what might come. The Revolution did not fall on a moral binary for the American colonists. People aligned themselves with certain ideologies, out of fear, not always moral responsibilities. This threat of combat brought the fear to the forefront. Fear of the vicious Hessians, fear of being ransacked by the Americans, fear of destruction of their towns by the war, fear of being compelled to sign allegiance to one side or another, fear of ostracism, fear of loss – fear was present within every facet of life for the people.7 Fear shrouded the entirety of the Revolution – even in New England where they are portrayed as welcoming warfare with open arms. Just like those inhabitants of Philadelphia, many people hid from it.

Rodney did not understand this fear people had; he thought there was nothing to be afraid of. In his mind, there was no chance that the war would come to them. He did not realize that he was the war. As a member of the American troops, he was part of the problem. The people he asked about were the patriots. While the patriots may not necessarily been afraid of him, there were others who were afraid of Rodney himself and his position within the war. He was a symbol of the fear that the war implanted in the citizens of Philadelphia and New Jersey.

Much like Rodney, a woman named Margaret Morris recorded the events that surrounded her experience during this period. Margaret maintained a diary to chronicle the daily occurrences of war. She lived in the small riverfront town of Burlington, New Jersey. Burlington bordered the

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6 Ibid., 249.
7 Lundin. Cockpit.
Delaware River and is located about thirty miles from Thomas Rodney and the people of Philadelphia. Although no major battle took place in the community, it became a central location from which to view the happenings of the war.

Before the war, her networks spanned beyond New Jersey as her family and friends were situated in other locations – but she was forced to minimize her networks. Her world shrank with fear and the immobility and inconvenience that war brings. Access to news and information became very specific, localized and more individual. This news was full of rumors and uncertainty, not the kind of news she was normally privy to. Margaret took up meticulously recording these pieces of news and events as she heard and experienced them. Her diary provides an unparalleled, remarkable account of the life of a woman who is surrounded by something beyond her control, and the fear that it brings.

**The Fear Within New Jersey**

That fear was no less prevalent in the little town of Burlington, New Jersey than it was in Philadelphia. Only twelve days before Rodney’s arrival in Philadelphia, on December 6, 1776, Margaret Morris wrote,

> the people there were in great Commotion, that the English fleet was in the River & hourly expected to sail up to the City; that the inhabitants were removing into the Country, & that several persons of considerable repute had been discoverd to have fomrd adesign of setting fire to the City, & were Summoned before the Congress and strictly enjoind to drop the horrid purpose.9

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9 John W. Jackson, ed. *Margaret Morris: Her Journal with Biographical Sketch and Notes.* (Philadelphia: George S. MacManus Company, 1949), 39. Note that any spelling or grammar errors are Margaret’s own from the original manuscript of her diary.
Margaret watched as her neighbors and colonists of other areas ran in fear at the news of the English arrival. This was not unusual – for rural citizens to flee at the first mention of war. The fear that accompanies war affects every community, no matter their allegiances. Such a fear crippled the movement of people or pushed them to move away from their homes.

The war in New Jersey had just begun when Margaret started writing her diary. She depicts the war as she sees it, as she hears it, and as she experiences it. Margaret wrote the diary with her younger sister, Milcah Martha Moore, in mind as she lived away from her in Pennsylvania. Their communication was limited during the war, and the diary allowed her to feel as if she was able to share her daily experiences with her sister. She lived on “Green Bank,” a hill on the bank of the Delaware River, isolated from the center of town. In her riverbank home, once owned by the Royal Governor of New Jersey - and patriot Benjamin Franklin’s illegitimate son - William Franklin, she lived with her four young children and her sister Sarah Dillwyn (and her brother-in-law George Dillwyn who was traveling during part of this period).10

The countryside of New Jersey was not the only place where citizens panicked as the Revolution approached. In the countryside outside Boston, a great fear spread after the first alarm of the war by Paul Revere and the other midnight riders. While the war in Boston and the countryside is imagined as a great moment for America’s independence, it was in fact similar to the fear that Margaret mentions within the pages of her diary. In the first few days following the alarm of war, it was perceived as a “fatal calamity, full of danger, terror, and uncertainty.” The countryside of New England exploded with panic, and people’s first impulse was to flee before the war reached them. Women, children, and the non-combatant men took to the country roads to escape, carting their possessions with them. Others hid in the woods to wait out the troops, while

10 Ibid., 33, 26.
some ran to neighbor’s homes, seeking protection, as others sought safety in their churches. Their fear was all encompassing, as rumors began to shape their perception of what was happening. This kind of fear fed on anxieties that “had nothing to do with the immediate cause,” as rumors spread of the “negroes” coming to massacre them all – even though the black people of the area were committed to fighting for the patriot side. Panic and fear gave way to confusion and uncertainty, with the people of New England privy to all kinds of rumors that shaped perceptions of what was happening.\textsuperscript{11} Although the war had not officially come to the countryside, the people launched into a mass panic that would be mirrored in other rural areas’ experiences of the war, including Margaret’s small town of Burlington.

On the same day of the first entry, she writes that she was told, “the inhabitants of our little Town were going in haste into the Country, & that my nearest neighbors were already removed.” The people of Burlington, much like the people of rural New England, did not wait when they heard the news. There was a mass exodus of the citizens to hide out, instead of staying to face the war. Margaret’s neighbor, Esther, received a letter from her husband, Colonel John Coxe of the American army, where he “warned her to be gone in haste.” Margaret does not provide any other details of why he warns her to leave, but in the same entry on December 7, 1776, she states that there was intelligence brought into town that the British were advancing toward them.\textsuperscript{12} This information was probably not seen as a baseless rumor, since the British Army had moved into New Jersey only a few days previously.

The start of the campaign in New Jersey was a slow one, as General George Washington quickly removed his troops to Princeton on December 2, 1776 and the British did not


\textsuperscript{12} Jackson, \textit{Margaret Morris}, 39-40.
immediately follow. The British Army did not pursue the Americans because Lord Cornwallis had been ordered to halt by General William Howe. They stayed behind in New Brunswick until December 7 when they marched toward Princeton. Washington ordered two brigades to stay behind and observe them, with their main base in Trenton, while the rest of the American troops retreated further into New Jersey. ¹³ It was the uncertainty of the movements of the troops that brought the reports that Margaret provided in her diary.

Colonel Coxe’s warning for his wife demonstrates the fear that came with such reports of military movement. Margaret confirmed that Esther, Coxe’s wife, did retire to the countryside to heed her husband’s warning only three days later on December 10, 1776. ¹⁴ Margaret, however, did not adhere to his warning and stayed behind in Burlington. Since Margaret and her family chose to stay instead of following Esther, she became a witness to the war. The war appeared as a frightening idea for Margaret, which did not become a reality until the campaign in New Jersey. As the campaign continued, the frequent presence of both Hessian and American troops provided an environment of fear around her community.

During the New York campaign, the British Army’s allies – German mercenaries known as the Hessians – joined the fight. The Hessians, commanded by Colonel Carl Emilius von Donop, first made an appearance in Margaret’s area when they made their way toward Burlington in the winter of 1776. ¹⁵ Their presence brought a great fear for many due to rumors of their barbarity in comparison to other troops. The Hessians were seen as “naturally fierce” troops

¹⁴ Jackson, Margaret Morris, 40.
who raised a “terror” in the “Americans, who trembled at the very name of a Hessian.” Their fear of the Hessians was not unfounded. During the campaign in New Jersey and even New York, there were reports of “indiscriminate atrocities” performed by the Hessian troops on people, including acts of rape and destruction of property. In December 1776, one Philadelphia newspaper reported a story where a New Jersey man “hearing the cries of his daughter, rushed into the room and found a Hessian officer attempting to ravish her.” The same paper gave an account where the Hessians entered the house of a local man and destroyed his “deeds, papers, furniture, and effects of every kind, except where they plundered,” and even took his horses, resulting in “£2000” of damage in less than three hours. These accounts shaped the perception of how many colonists viewed these men. Loyalists and patriots alike feared the destruction and savagery that the Hessians were said to bring to their communities.

With their arrival, the war was no longer an idea or just a piece of news – it was a real event that Margaret became a part of. These same Hessians became a presence, exacerbating Margaret’s fear as they stationed themselves nearby in Bordentown and would come into town regularly. Margaret writes of the Hessians’ presence in Burlington on December 18, 1776, “Much talk of the enemy, 2 Hessians had the assureance to appear in Town today, they askd if there were any rebels in Town, & desired to be shewn the Men of War.” As the campaign in New Jersey continued, the Hessians as well as the American troops became a fixture in

19 Ibid.
20 Stryker, Battles of Trenton and Princeton, 46.
21 Jackson, Margaret Morris, 50.
Burlington. They would pass through constantly to go north to Trenton and Princeton, or south to be closer to Philadelphia.

The presence of these troops seemed to terrify Margaret, just as they frightened others. In an entry on December 20, 1776, she recorded a conversation between her and a friend that demonstrates her fear: “a friend from Town calld in about 4 oClock -& told us they were all acoming, we askd if he had seen them; no-but he heard they were Just here we askd him how we, at this distance from Town shd know thier coming, they might popp upon us here, & Scare us out of our Witts.” This intense fear stems from her vulnerability with only young children – or as Margaret put it, “we had no Man in the house.”\(^2\)

Their household consisted of two women with her four children; they could not defend themselves against either the Hessians or the patriots. Her sister’s husband was away, and her own husband had died a decade before.\(^3\) There was no protection for them against these possibly dangerous men.

The Revolution’s arrival in Burlington brought troops not only gallivanting through the town, but also quartering themselves on its inhabitants. Quartering was a common practice, one that had angered the colonists against the British with the “Intolerable Acts” that included the Quartering Act. This act allowed local governments to enforce the housing of troops in local people’s homes.\(^4\) In Burlington, the citizens were expected to allow the troops into their home. Margaret worried about the house not looking clean or not having enough provisions to care for them. She also worried about the fact that there were only women and children in her house, continually reiterating the lack of a man in the house with them at the time. Yet, Margaret and her family got lucky when they were “give[n] a hint that the feeble & defenceless will find safety

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 52.
\(^{23}\) Ibid., 26.
& protection,” meaning since they could “rank ourselves amongst the Number having no Man with us in the house” they might be excused from quartering.\textsuperscript{25} It is a wonder how often such excusing occurred – was it truly because they had no man in the house? Or did they not need to subject every citizen to quartering? The few times that the troops were quartered on the people of Burlington, Margaret appeared to be exempt. She writes, “We were so favord as not to have any sent to our House” on one occasion of quartering, and a few weeks later again reports, “they were again quarterd on the inhabitants, & we again exempt from the Cumber of having them lodged in our house.”\textsuperscript{26} Instead of having the unwanted company, Margaret was relieved, and the soldiers quartered on her neighbor’s houses – both in James Verree’s and the empty Coxes’ house.

Her discomfort at the lack of a man in their house is quite peculiar. She had been a widow for over a decade and would have dealt with men on a regular basis as one, since she had never remarried. Yet, she still was afraid of these men entering her house. One can speculate that she may have feared for her children’s lives, after hearing stories of their brutality through the rumors of the war. Or maybe she feared unwanted sexual attention from lonely men who could take advantage of her as they took shelter in her home. The most probable reason was that these men were unlike the men who regularly entered her house. They would be spending the night under her roof, leaving her and her family vulnerable in the night to their attacks or even sexual advances. These men were not friends; they existed outside her usual networks and comfort zone. She had every reason to believe that they would be as scary as she had heard about in reports.

\textsuperscript{25} Jackson. \textit{Margaret Morris}, 53.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 58-59, 61.
If the reports of their movement sent people running, then the reports of their action would not be welcomed either. As the war moved closer, the action was brought into the forefront of their lives. Every day revolved around the movement of the war, what was happening, and what was going to happen next. The events were disheartening, as the news got more daunting. On the evening of December 11, 1776, Margaret reported a firing that occurred on the town. Apparently, the American troops – the “Gondola Men” who sailed the river – had fired, believing the enemy was in town.\textsuperscript{27} As with misinformation, the American troops had received intelligence that Burlington was housing the Hessians, but this information was untrue. Fortunately with this shooting, “Several Houses were Struck & alittle damagd, but not one liveing Creature, either Man or beast, killd or Wounded.”\textsuperscript{28} This shelling may not have hurt the townspeople of Burlington, but it did leave them nervous that they could be caught in the next crossfire. This shelling would not be the worse Margaret and her fellow neighbors would encounter.

In each passing entry, Margaret’s world began to be invaded with accounts of the awful activities of both the Americans and Hessians. In one story, it was said that “Parties of Armd Men [the American troops] rudely enterd the Houses in Town, & diligent search made for Tories, the 2 last taken releasd & sent on Shore,” while some of the infamous gondola men “broke into & pillagd R Smiths House on the bank.” Another account was much of the same as “Gondola Men in Arms, patrolling the Streets, & diligent search making for fire Arms Ammunition & tories” with another attempt to pillage R. Smith’s house again.\textsuperscript{29} These accounts portray American troops as having no respect at all for the citizens of Burlington, but the

\textsuperscript{28} Jackson, *Margaret Morris*, 44-45.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 47, 49.
Hessians were no better. “We hear that 2 houses in the Skirts of the Town were broke open & pillaged by the Hessians,” Margaret wrote. These reports portrayed a dismaying view of the men of war – violent, cruel, and disrespectful. She could not trust either side – so why would she not fear them coming into her town, when at any moment they could burst through her door and pillage her house or fire on her town and destroy her neighbor’s homes. Not all of the reports of the soldiers she was told were true however. Some of these accounts were just rumors, rumors that helped to perpetuate this intense environment of fear.

News During the Revolution

News was at the heart of Margaret’s daily life. It was how she wrote her diary entries – each entry discusses not only part of her day, but also the war’s daily events. For a member of a more rural community, as opposed to a major city like Philadelphia, news was harder to come by. There was no daily newspaper in New Jersey – the first one did not actually start until 1777. The closest papers were those of Philadelphia – the Pennsylvania Gazette and the Pennsylvania Packet. Despite that, she may have occasionally had access to papers – but within the entire diary, there is only one direct reference to a printed paper. “To day appeard in print a Proclamation of Gen Washington,” writes Margaret, “ordering all persons who had taken protections from the Kings Commissioners, to come in 30 days & swear Allegience to the united states of america, or else to repair with thier Families to the lines of the British Troops.” The only difficulty with the assumption that she received her news from a Philadelphia paper is that her entry was dated February 3, 1777, and both the Pennsylvania Packet and the Pennsylvania

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30 Ibid., 57.
32 Jackson, Margaret Morris, 67-68.
Gazette did not print this proclamation of General Washington’s until February 4 and February 5, 1777, respectively. She perhaps received the proclamation printed or in pamphlet, but there is little evidence that points toward a newspaper.

In a world with limited access to newspapers, Margaret would receive her news from friends who would deliver the news of the day to her home. The most commonly appearing figure in her diary was James Verree, a neighbor. Not much is known about Verree, except that he was a land speculator that owned property in three different states. Margaret knew him intimately, though, as he was a regular figure in her household. His name appeared in and out of the narrative of her Revolutionary diary, mostly in reference to discussing new information she had received. She once expressed that she considered him “the Wisest head on the [river] bank.” In her mentions of him, she writes, “but hark, arap at the door, that face (J V) is full of intelligence” and “more news, great news –very great news (J V).” There are other mentions of him as her diary continued, but also mentions of a male neighbor coming to tell them news. Colonel Coxe was no longer around, so while it is true that the male neighbor could be someone else, the most logical option would be Verree. This noteworthy connection between Verree and news allows for the belief that he acted chiefly as her main source of news.

Another friend of Margaret’s, Dr. Jonathan O’Dell, also provided her with news of the happenings of the war. O’Dell was a minister who had studied in England, but due to the insufficient pay of a minister, he “added to the duties of the pastorate those of a practicing

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35 Jackson, Margaret Morris, 51, 49.
physician.” Though mentioned more than James Verree, O’Dell did not come bearing news as frequently. In an entry from December 11, 1776, he is the source of a long detailed account of the Hessian’s entry into Burlington. Margaret wrote, “The Doct [Dr. Jonathan Odell] says, that he thought he observed…” before describing his account of their entry. He later informs her of a conversation he has with a Hessian soldier. His role was less significant as a news provider, but was nonetheless another source she trusted to inform her of the current events.

Unfortunately, she did not record all of her sources. The majority of her news had no source, or was told to her by a friend with no name mentioned. It is easy to speculate where she received the news she does not provide a source for. In one entry, Margaret wrote that when she got “quite in the fidgets for News,” she would “send Dick [her eldest son] to Town to collect some,” and if “he returns Newsless,” she had “good mind to send him back again.” The town seems to be her main source – if she wants news, she sends out her son to go and get it. Living on the riverbank probably left her isolated from news and the happenings of the town; therefore it probably became a common occurrence to go and retrieve news, just as one would retrieve supplies from the marketplace.

The role Verree and O’Dell play in her retelling of the Revolution allows one to speculate about the role gender played in the spreading of news. As mentioned, Margaret frequently would state a ‘male neighbor,’ Verree, or O’Dell would provide her with news. Most of her sources were a ‘friend’ or a member of the troops, with the nouns usually masculine. Women tended to provide her with very little news; instead, there is one direct reference in the form of a letter. This was from “my amiable frd EC,” the person in question her neighbor Esther Coxe, who took

36 Woodward and Hageman, History of Burlington and Mercer, 77.
37 Jackson, Margaret Morris, 41-45, 75.
38 Ibid., 53.
leave from Burlington. The letter did not deliver news on the war, instead providing her with updates on Colonel Coxe’s situation. There is one other reference to a “Woman who lodged” in the same room with two generals in the war, but her account could not be confirmed as it was largely conjecture and impossible to tell if it was true. In both cases, they were not the type of hard news Margaret was interested in. Neither of them informed her of the movements of the troops or factual events that occurred. Instead, it was primarily rumor and personal news. In some way, it partially mirrors the type of news that was provided by the men, yet she paid very little attention to either of these pieces of news and recorded them almost in passing. There is a divide in the significance of the news by gender in this diary. It could be that women had less access than the men because they were less in the public sphere. With Margaret’s reliance on men for her news, the separation of gender does seem to be a factor within the spreading of news.

Since Margaret provides her diary with the names of those she receives her news from, this grants the unique opportunity to provide a history of the American Revolution from the perspective of these sources. These shape Margaret’s perception and understanding of the war in a time when the networks she once knew had shrunk considerably. In a world where news was irregular, inaccurate and full of exaggeration, Margaret sought news from these specific sources and relied on them. She maintained her friendship with Verree and saw him as someone who provided her with invaluable news.

Had she relied on her family or the newspapers, her perspective might have been completely different. One wonders how each individual during the American Revolution saw the war, and Margaret allows us to see how exactly her outlook was formed. With the news coming

39 Ibid., 65.
40 Ibid., 71.
about the dangers of the war, fear transpired. Fear restricts mobility of anyone, and that includes Margaret. She was afraid of the men coming and destroying her home or harming her family. Therefore news began to come to her – James Verree would deliver his daily news, and if not, her son would venture to town to bring her news. Margaret’s diary allows us to predict how others received their news as well. A woman in a rural area, in-person sources seemed the most common. There were very little access to newspaper or pamphlets, so her full reliance was on the interpersonal communication she maintained. Other areas may have experienced similar ways of gathering news.

Her diary’s unique point of view and news sources establishes a difference in the war in New Jersey from some experiences of the war of non-combatants in the Boston area. Harbottle Dorr, a Boston shopkeeper, relied solely on newspapers for news on the war. His version of Margaret’s Revolutionary War diary was books composed of newspapers from the period. In the midst of the Stamp Act debate, Dorr began to preserve issues of the Boston Evening-Post, Boston Gazette, and sometimes Boston Post-Boy & Advertiser. Dorr “preserve[d] each week a copy of one or another – sometimes of two – of these newspapers” and he even “commented on their contents in inked notations in the margins and between the lines.” While Margaret shared the news she received about the war and her thoughts on some events, Dorr “express[ed] himself pungently on the event on the time, identif[ied] anonymous and pseudonymous authors, [and] clarif[ied] obscure references in the political charges and countercharges.”41 Dorr organized his preserved newsprint into volumes, and then added indexes and appendixes of important documents in early American history.42 Dorr believed that “during the period of the Following

42 Ibid., 87-88.
Papers, Transactions of the utmost important respecting Liberty in general have taken place, and are recorded in them. Although not everyone had as massive of a collection of newsprint as Harbottle Dorr, his collection does give a good indication of how some Bostonians got their news.

It remains that Margaret had no reliance on newspapers for information about the war, possibly due to the fact that she lived in a rural area instead of a city like Boston. Even so, her proximity to Philadelphia could still have allowed her to receive their papers. Yet, her news came from people, not newspapers. While the Quakers – as Margaret herself was a Quaker – relied on the press to promote the spread of their religion, the war limited the spread of press into more rural areas. Newspapers were said to provide the “handiest and most immediate medium” during the Revolution for colonists to read about the news and information. Although many people were not subscribers to newspapers, colonists would go to coffeehouses and taverns to hear the latest issue being read in a public forum. These public places were expected to provide the “freshest,” or most recent news, for people with little access to newspapers.

While the subscription records for Margaret’s area are unavailable, by the middle of the eighteenth century the Pennsylvania Gazette was printing between 1500 to 2000 copies weekly of their newspaper. It is not unreasonable to assume that one of those copies made its way into the riverfront town of Burlington. Nevertheless, Margaret makes no mention of having access to a paper. This could be due to a number of reasons: perhaps, the Gazette may not have reached

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43 Ibid., 90.
Burlington; it might have been unusual to subscribe to a newspaper outside of a port city; and even this idea of newspapers being in the public sphere of coffeehouses and taverns. Margaret was a woman; therefore the last one seems most likely. During this period, women were expected to engage only in the domestic sphere, which severely limited their communication networks. Women were expected to converse in their own sphere, with no discussion of subjects like politics.\textsuperscript{48} Newspapers were part of the public sphere that was reserved for men, and as Margaret was not a man – she could not access this herself. Since the majority of news that Margaret received was from men inside her home, it is easiest to speculate that the gender norms that prevailed had forced Margaret to idly wait for news to come to her.

Since Margaret relied on news from other people, much of it consisted of rumors or false information. In many instances, she recounted information and then would later report that it was not accurate. In one case, Margaret reported the news of the morning, "we have been told of an engagement between the 2 Armies, in which it was said the English had 400 taken prisoners, & 300 killd & Wounded," and then updated her journal with, "the report of the Evening Contradicts the above intelligence, & there is no certain account of aBattle."\textsuperscript{49} Word of mouth news allows for these contradictions, as one person could have repeated a detail wrong somewhere. Margaret was aware of this because on January 14, 1777, she wrote, "the lie of the day runs thus," as she conceived the news as daily lies. She demonstrated her awareness of how her news may be wrong, which could make her a skeptic of the information she received. She then provides the "lies" she was given that day: "that the New England Men have taken long Island,- are in possession of kings Bridge, that Gen Lee is retaken by his own Men - the Regulars in a desperate condition, intrenching at Brunswick, and quite hopeless of gaining any advantage over the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[48] Brown, \textit{Knowledge is Power}, 167, 174-175.
\item[49] Jackson, \textit{Margaret Morris}, 60.
\end{footnotes}
Americans this Campaign.”⁵⁰ She is quite right when she assumes it is a lie – there is no record of such an event occurring.

There seems to be uncertainty even with those who actively participated in the war. Soldiers coming into town informed Margaret of an “engagement Yesterday at Trenton” but that these men “were not able to say which side was Victorious.”⁵¹ That entry was recorded on January 3, 1777 and the aforementioned skirmish occurred on January 2 between General Cornwallis’ troops and the American Colonel Edward Hand. There was no clear winner to the soldiers who talked to Margaret, but when looking at the records there were more wounded and killed in the British side than the Americans; 16 killed and wounded for the Americans in comparison to the 30 for British.⁵² Those soldiers passed Margaret correct news that seems incomplete to her, as battles should have winners and losers, but there was no real winner in a skirmish as small as this one.

Margaret maintains a tone of skepticism for some reports, unsure of their veracity. She seems to have a handle on determining whether what she has been told could be true or not. One person from the nearby town of Bordentown tells her of a battle on her entry from June 14, 1777, which she deems “probable, as we have heard much fireing above.” She does not take this at face value, before she considers what has happened. Earlier, she had mentioned the firing; therefore this news could come as no shock to her.⁵³ It should be noted that this news is indeed true as well, that it was a reported battle where the New Jersey militia fired on boats of the British on the Delaware River on the same day.⁵⁴ It is generally when there were multiple reports of something

⁵⁰ Ibid., 65.
⁵¹ Ibid., 61.
⁵³ Jackson, *Margaret Morris*, 71
that she seems to have “reason to believe.”\(^5^5\) Her awareness of the misinformation and deciding whether it was true or not adds to her as a consumer of this information. She was not passive in accepting what she was told; this demonstrates that she thinks more about what she was told than one would believe.

**Interaction with the War**

News is but one component of how a colonist during the American Revolution experienced the war. In an area like Burlington, that is halfway between Northern New Jersey and Philadelphia, the war was interactive. It was not just hearing about the war second-hand, it was about experiencing it first hand. In such experiences of conflict, people began to see the realities of the war, no matter their ideals. Margaret Morris saw events as they happened, and interacted with the war in numerous ways.

The Delaware River is the site of one of the most famous events of the American Revolution, when Washington crossed the river during the winter of 1776 to escape the British.\(^5^6\) While that event remains substantial in the war, the Delaware River was a chief location in the war for both economic and military reasons. Although, the river did not directly border the Atlantic Ocean as the Hudson River did, it still acted as a direct passage to important port cities, especially Philadelphia. Economic life organized itself around this river; shipments would be made to Philadelphia and then the river allowed the other port cities easy access to goods. All trade ships made their way up the river in order to deliver products to Philadelphia; therefore domination of that river was vital to controlling the area.

\(^5^5\) Jackson, *Margaret Morris*, 70.
\(^5^6\) Hackett Fischer, *Washington’s Crossing*, 133.
Although the British had a strong and powerful naval force, the Delaware was not as easy to conquer as the Hudson River had been. On the Delaware River, the “gondola men,” that Margaret spoke of, were the Pennsylvania Navy. They operated with a fleet of “thirteen low, sinister black-painted river craft variously called galleys or gondolas” that had two banks of oars and two lateen sails and armed with a very large gun. There were thirteen of these gondolas, which had crews of about thirty men.57 Their objectives were to defend Philadelphia and protect the Delaware River and the bay area to continue the trade for the colonies of New Jersey and Pennsylvania.58

Where the Hudson had played up to the Royal Navy’s strengths, the Delaware played up the Pennsylvania Navy’s strengths. These men had intimate knowledge of the area they patrolled, and there was less open water to work with than the Royal Navy had in the Hudson. Due to this, the Pennsylvania Navy controlled the river up to the area of the falls of Trenton.59 In the months following the invasion of New Jersey, this navy defended the river and was able to display themselves as a worthy enemy to the all-powerful Royal Navy. While not important to the timeline of Margaret’s diary, it was not until mid-1777 that the Royal Navy was able to conquer them and capture Philadelphia.60 The Delaware River was a vital location during the campaign of New Jersey and Philadelphia. The towns that bordered the river, like Burlington, were able to witness a major theater of war. Margaret watched the gondola’s movements throughout that winter of 1776 to 1777 as they fought to defend and protect the river from the British.

57 Ibid., 11, 32, 134-135.
59 Hackett Fischer, Washington’s Crossing, 135.
60 Paullin, Navy of the American Revolution, 384-388.
Having a house on the riverfront provided Margaret to observe the war – a front row seat to an essential arena of war. In her unique location, she could not see the occurrences of the war, but she witnessed movements made by the “gondola men.” These “gondola men” were the Pennsylvania Navy mentioned before; their boats became a regular sight for her to observe. In one entry, Margaret reported to have “observd several Boats with Soldiers & thier baggage makeing up to our Wharff.” Another evening, she sees them “saild down the River” after staying at Bristol for several days, and she believed one was “Stationd there for Winter.” She seemed to be able to see everything, writing, “One Morning, having left my Chamber at an earlier hour than usual-& casting my eyes toward the river- [I] was Surpizd to see some hundred of boats all filled with British Soldiers….” She believed, based on her information, that these British troops were on the way to burn the boats of the American forces, but in reality, the Americans had fired on the British. She even once saw “8 boats full of Soldiers saild up the River to Join the Continental forces” where she believed them to be “very Merry, with thier Drums beating & Colours flying.” She could see the war from her very own window; she did not need to leave her house to experience it in such a way. It was uncommon for her to not report the movement of the river. The gondola men and the events of the Delaware River weaved their way through her diary as the main players of the war.

Burlington’s location also allowed Margaret to hear events outside of the town. One morning on January 3, 1777, she reports hearing “very distinctly, aheavy fireing of Cannon”

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61 Jackson, Margaret Morris, 59.
62 Ibid., 62.
63 Ibid., 74.
64 Peckham, Toll of Independence, 35.
65 Jackson, Margaret Morris, 68.
between “8 & 9 oClock” that she believed to have come from the direction of Trenton. This occurred on the same day as the battle of Princeton, so the mention could be in reference to that. There is wonder if she could have actually heard that firing though, as Burlington is over twenty-five miles from Princeton. However, since there is no way to disprove her, it can be included as one of the few times she mentions firing from outside Burlington. In another entry, on June 14, 1777, she writes, “the Alarm guns at prince town, Trenton, Borden Town, & Bristol were fired, & Answerd by those below,” but does not state if she could hear them clearly. Though, she did see the fallout from this firing, as she saw “the Gondolas, & Barges, began to appear in Sight, & from that time to 9 at Night, there have gone up the River five or 6, Gondolas.” This kind of experience was atypical of many American civilians, due to her riverfront home, since she had unparalleled access that others did not have.

While seeing and hearing the events of the river was Margaret’s most frequent interaction with the war, it was not the only way she experienced the war in person. In early January 1777, General Hugh Mercer of the Continental Army died of wounds he received at the battle of Princeton on January 3. His body was brought to Philadelphia for a proper burial, where he would be buried with “military honors” and attended by those present in Philadelphia. Margaret witnessed the transport of General Mercer’s body as it traveled from Princeton to Philadelphia. “I was agood deal affected this Evening on seeing the Hearse in which General Mercers Body was conveyd over the River on the Ice to be buryd at Philada,” she writes in her diary on January 15, 1777. She revealed that Captain William Shippen’s body was also transported with

66 Ibid., 61.
70 Jackson, *Margaret Morris*, 66.
Mercer’s in order for him to be buried in Philadelphia. Shippen also fell at the battle of Princeton on January 3.\(^7^1\) She had reported their deaths earlier in her diary after the battle of Princeton,\(^7^2\) but witnessing the procession as it transported these men to be buried made it a reality. She may have seen the gondola men on the move regularly, but to see two highly esteemed men on their way to be laid to rest gave her a darker view of the war and its effects.

As the war progressed Margaret’s interaction with the troops became more personal. No longer was there an odd sighting here and there of the gondola men and the Hessians. Her fear that had once been at arm’s length now confronted her in person as she was forced to deal with the troops head on. She wrote in detail of one interaction between her family and the American troops:

My incautious Son catch’d up the Spy Glass, & was running to the Mill to look at them. I told him it w’d be liable to misconstruction, but he prevail’d on me to let him gratify his curiosity, & he went, but return’d much dissatisfy’d, for no troops cou’d he see, as he came back poor Dick took the glass & rested it against a tree, took a view of the fleet—both of these was observ’d by the people on board, who suspected it was an Enemy that was watching their Motions—they manned a boat & sent her on shore—aloud knocking at my door brought me to it—I was a little flutter’d & kept locking and unlocking that I might get my ruffled face, a little compos’d, at last I opend it, & half a dozen men all arm’d, demanded the keys of the empty house—I asked what they wanted there they said to search for a D—- d tory who had been spy’d at them from the Mill.\(^7^3\)

It was one thing to observe this event through a spyglass as a passive onlooker, but her family became active participants to the troops as the very thing they observed came face-to-face with them. This demonstrates a meshing together of the idea of a distant perception of war; one second she is looking at these men and the next it becomes very personal. She did know that every little action could be misconstrued by the troops, even something as small as her young

\(^7^2\) Jackson, *Margaret Morris*, 62.  
\(^7^3\) Ibid., 47-48.
son looking at the river through the spyglass. Even so, she allowed her son to take the chance. Though, her son is only repeating what she did occasionally in observing the riverfront movement – a satisfying activity for non-combatants who were surrounded by such action. As she predicted, these men suspected spying and came to her house. Her family was the most important thing in her life, already having lost so much in her past. The mere possibly that these men could wrongful attack her son shook her to the core, that she recorded this entire moment in time. At the same time, she was housing a suspected Tory, her friend Jonathan O’Dell, so both things she cherished so deeply were threatened.

While O’Dell’s safety mattered to her, her family came first and she defended them when these men came knocking. When she finally answered the door, these men “demanded the keys of the empty House” to search for a “d---d tory who had been spyg at them from the Mill.” She questioned if they were “Hessians, say good Men are you the Hessians?” and they responded, “do we look like Hessians?” Margaret might actually have never seen a Hessian before, as fear kept her in her home, but she probably would have know that these were American troops. It seems in order to protect her family (and O’Dell), she informed them she did not know the difference - “no, [in reference to seeing a Hessian before] never in my life but they are Men, & you are Men & may be Hessians for any thing I know.” She does divulge that her son was the one that they saw, “tho indeed it was my Son at the Mill, he is but aBoy & meant no harm, he wantd to see the Troops.” Margaret was not sure what these troops would do with such facts, in lieu of the way they have treated people in the stories she had been told by others. She made sure to include that he meant no harm to reiterate that these men should have no problem with her young boy or family. These troops still searched her neighbor’s house, not suspecting anything at her own home after her words. Unfortunately for her, one soldier confiscated the spyglass,
“which I [Margaret] was very sorry for – as I often amus’d myself in looking thro it.”

If Margaret was not wary of the war and its soldiers before, this was sure to scare her.

This entry spanned over three pages in the manuscript of her diary, and most of the entry for the 16th of December, demonstrating this as a significant moment for her. This was one of the negative experiences that she recorded, and no doubt influenced her opinion of the war. To Margaret, any man of war was a threat to her family – American or Hessian alike. The idea that they could threaten her family made them all the more violent in her eyes than any piece of news could have.

As the war developed, she saw a different side of the soldiers that was not based off brutality and warfare. As indicated, Margaret was exempt from quartering, but still had to provide the soldiers with the keys to her absentee-neighbor, Colonel Coxe’s home. On one occasion, she reported providing a “Man who seemd to have some Command over the Soldiers” when he “civilly ask’d for the keys of Col Coxs house” where they took over for the night and she describes them as being “very quiet.” She even provided the soldiers with food provisions, instead of letting them fend for themselves. The following morning, the same soldiers departed from Colonel Cox’s house and they “stopt to bless, & thank me for the food I had sent them.”

These soldiers are quite the opposite of those who had confronted and threatened her and her family. She began to regard them as more than violent “men of war,” viewing them as human beings like herself. When she looked at these men, checking on them in the night to ensure the fires were safe, her “heart was melted with Compassion to see such anumber of my fellow

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74 Ibid., 48-49.
75 Jackson, Margaret Morris, 59-60.
76 Ibid., 50.
Creatures lying like Swine on the floor fast aSleep, & many of them without even aBlanket to cover them.”  She could not reconcile them with the image that she had built up in her mind.

Among the infamous gondola men was the man who thanked her by contacting her family in Philadelphia and brought her supplies. To her, he was the rare, kind gondola man, who wanted to thank her for “her kindness” when she had treated his wife from illness. Margaret was a known physician in Burlington, and refused to let people down. It was Margaret’s own goodwill and kindness that protected her as the war continued. These men began to respect her for helping their families despite her feelings on the war. She was even told by a friend that some of the Hessians desired to fire their guns at her house, after shooting “2 or 3 of thier great guns” through the walls of Colonel Cox’s house. Her friend pointed out her house, and said, “in that house lives a Woman to whom I am indebted for my life- She shelterd me when I was driven from my own home.” It was these kind acts that enabled her to survive in a climate where she certainly could have had her house ransacked and destroyed by either enemy.

Even with the change in her view of these men, she still did not trust them fully. When the gondola men asked for her help with the sick civilians, Margaret first believed “they might have a design to put atrick upon me & get me aboard of thier Gondolas -&then pillage my house, as they had done some others.” She may have felt sorry for the men who slept on the floor of an empty house, but she did not let her guard down. These still were the men who fought in warfare and pillaged innocent people’s houses so they could not be trusted. She only went with them

77 Ibid., 61.
78 Ibid., 73.
80 Jackson, Margaret Morris, 75.
when she was told that the sick were lodged in the “governor house.”\textsuperscript{81} Despite the fear that she originally felt, Margaret would never deny helping another human being.

Although Margaret acted as a non-combatant in the war, her experience of the war became very personal through her direct interactions with the combat of the American Revolution. Living riverfront provided her with a viewpoint that was unparalleled in other people’s experiences of the Revolution. At the same time, such a viewpoint can mirror the possible experiences of other colonists in areas surrounded by warfare. As her interactions with the war increased and the combat continued, her personal networks decreased and changed the pre-war world that she once knew.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 72.
Chapter II: Margaret’s Shrinking Networks

Margaret Morris’ world was turned upside down by the American Revolution, just as other non-combatants’ worlds had. She incorporated the war into her daily life as she experienced a massive shift in her regular interactions and personal networks. The shift materialized first in a self-isolation from the town of Burlington. Her diary makes very few references to her going into town, other than going to treat sick patients in her duties as a “doctress.”82 She seemed to often remain at her home, instead of venturing out. Her friends would visit her with the news, namely James Verree, and even any direct interaction with the war that she had took place from her property.

On the night of December 11, 1776, there was commotion occurring in Burlington as the gondola men fired on the town, but her “peaceful [river] Bank [was] ignorant of the Occasion of the fireing.” They instead were left wondering the cause of the firing and “unsuspecting of danger” because they were “quietly pursuing our Business in the Family.”83 It was not until a neighbor came over to inform them of the details of such occasion that Margaret and her family had any clue what was happening. The town and Margaret’s riverbank were separate entities and the distance, no matter how little between the two, kept Margaret seemingly in the dark about some events of the war.

Not only did her localized networks of news diminish, her globalized networks shrunk considerably. The life that she had previous to the war was drastically different from the one depicted in the pages of her diary. The war forced her and her young family into an isolation that

82 “Doctress” is a term that her grandson used to refer to her doctoral duties in his recollections; Smith, Recollections, 242.
83 Jackson, Margaret Morris, 45-46.
she had never faced before – providing her with little access to her extended family, who had always been essential to her life.

Isolation was not befitting to a woman like Margaret, as it was not something she was used to. It must be said that her father was the reason for her globalized relations in the years before the war. Margaret Morris’ father, Doctor Richard Hill, was a wine merchant in Madeira in his later years. Madeira was an island colony in the North Atlantic Ocean, located off the coast of Northern Africa and Portugal. Before his removal to Madeira, Dr. Hill resided in South River, Maryland, where he married his wife, Deborah Hill (née Moore). Both came from extensive Quaker backgrounds, with connections to Thomas Lloyd – friend of William Penn and first governor of Pennsylvania. Dr. Hill was later described to have “lapse[s]” in his “own religiosity,” that could explain his unusual activity for a Quaker.

Dr. Hill practiced medicine and also dabbled in “mercantile transactions” for many years of his life in Maryland. That is until such transactions resulted in massive debt for Dr. Hill due to “losses at sea, bad debt and tradition says by privateers.” Instead of facing embarrassment and debtors prison that were certainly to come, Dr. Hill, along with his wife, chose to escape the piling debt by exiling themselves to Funchal on the island of Madeira. Margaret was only two at the time of her parent’s exile – having been left in the colonies under the care of her sixteen year old sister Hannah Moore, who had recently married their cousin, Dr. Samuel Preston Moore. Dr. Hill and his wife, Deborah, then transplanted part of the family to Madeira, including two of their daughters, and had a third while on the island. Her older brothers, Richard Jr. and

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86 Hancock, Oceans of Wine, 211.
87 Smith, Letters of Doctor Richard Hill, x.
Henry, too would follow their parents to Madeira, later on, in order to help run the business, as would her older sister Deborah.\textsuperscript{88} It troubled Dr. Hill to leave his children behind. In an early letter written to Richard Jr., he states that, “none of the effect of my misfortunes gives me so much trouble as parting with thee so young.”\textsuperscript{89} Yet, he was forced to stay away from his children to save himself from the debt.

While not much is known of Margaret’s childhood, she lived in South River, Maryland, with her parents until their departure in 1739. After that she was raised in Philadelphia with her other siblings and even was thought to have received an education at one of the best schools. At least one of the Hill siblings was taught by ardent abolitionist and teacher, Anthony Benezet. One could speculate that it was Margaret due to her intense interest in writing and the accuracy she displayed in grammar within her journals.\textsuperscript{90} For a brief period in the 1750’s, Margaret was quite sick – delaying her marriage to William Morris, Jr. until 1758. William was born in 1735, a direct descendant of Anthony Morris that arrived in America during the time of William Penn.\textsuperscript{91} William himself was a merchant, a man of “fine intellectual ability and attainments” with an active interest in the institutions of Philadelphia. Like Margaret, he was part of the exclusive circle of Quakers, the Society of Friends. William died young in 1766, leaving Margaret behind with their four children.\textsuperscript{92}

Madeira was one of the central exporters for wine in the colonies; it was unusual to import wine directly from Europe or elsewhere. Vineyards scattered the island, as growing

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., x-xiv.  
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 19.  
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., xiv; Robert Vaux, eds. \textit{Memoirs of The Life of Anthony Benezet} (Philadelphia: James P. Park, 1817).  
\textsuperscript{91} Smith, \textit{Letters of Doctor Richard Hill}, xix.  
conditions were quite favorable, except in the mountainous terrain. Between 1675 and 1815, there was an estimated 25,000 pipes of wine to have been produced on the island. The exporters would then buy it from the cultivators and remove it to their locations in Funchal in order to sell it. The American colonies were Madeira’s top importers, as they received over 76.1 percent of their wines from there.

In order to export the wine, customer networks were key to selling and competing with other exporters. Usually, exporters appealed to their personal connections to establish customer relationships to do business. During Dr. Hill’s time in Madeira, the company’s main focus was Philadelphia and the Quaker community he still maintained friendly relations with. Many companies would export elsewhere to places like England and the West Indies. Exporters would also send their partners to create better connections with customers and even create new ones; Dr. Hill was sent back to America in the 1750’s to procure wine orders “from old and new customers” in order to trounce the competition. He explored other colonies besides his home in order to make new contacts before returning to Madeira years later. While Madeira was a Portuguese colony, exporting to the colonies did suffer during the American Revolution due to the closure of the ports to all Atlantic trade.

In Madeira, Dr. Hill set up shop as a wine merchant, part of Lamar, Hill, Bisset & Co. business that he had helped to establish. This company heavily interacted with North America, specifically the mid-Atlantic colonies, as well as the upper Southern colonies. It became a partial family business as Dr. Hill kept in contact with his family in the colonies in order to ensure trade.

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93 Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, 199, 44-45.
94 Ibid., 63, 117.
95 Ibid.,145-154.
96 Ibid., 163, 120.
97 Ibid., 154.
while bringing his sons into the company as well. William Morris, Jr. – Margaret’s husband – may too have been involved with Dr. Hill’s trading in Madeira. After their marriage in early 1758, Dr. Hill wrote to William, “I shall write thee in a few days concerning the Madeira trade, which may be worth thy while to be moderately concerned in.” Though, there is no record of the two ever actually working together. Even so, Dr. Hill’s firm was mildly successful. It was Dr. Richard Hill’s actions in the company that “created new economic and social contexts by improving commercial communication across the ocean, providing a model for commercial success, and instructing his customers on how to use wine to portray themselves as ladies and gentlemen.” When his son, Henry, took over after his death, the company continued to develop, spreading into more places besides Philadelphia and the surrounding areas.

The removal of her father and mother to the island of Madeira allowed Margaret’s world to function on a global scale. Her father and mother would write her letters to ensure contact between the family members continued. Dr. Hill always expressed his joy at receiving letters from the family, “I should be glad to receive letters from all my dear girls….” The letters became a constant in their lives, each expecting letters from the other and were disappointed when they did not come. Dr. Hill wrote to his son Richard Jr. in 1741, “I have good reason to believe that the people here think I have neither son, friend, or relation that cares for me… and as few or no letters come here….” Deborah Hill insisted her letters were a form of keeping her children close to her. In one letter to Richard Jr., she wrote, “Pray write very long letters, to make up for thy not coming, for I do not now expect to see thee here, but shall comfort myself

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99 Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, xix.
101 Ibid., 24.
with the cause of thy staying.’”102 Their correspondence was a perpetual back and forth as Dr. Hill and Deborah wrote to the elder children regularly to inform them. While there is not as many letters from the younger children that were preserved, it seems that Hannah and her husband kept the two up-to-date on the happenings of their children’s lives, as seen within Dr. Hill’s letter to Hannah in 1752 where he states, “I received thy affectionate letters.”103

As Margaret and her siblings got older, her familial network grew even larger. As Margaret married a member of the Philadelphia Morris family, three of her siblings married abroad. After moving to Madeira, her older sister Deborah married a merchant of the area, one in their father’s company, Robert Bisset. Mary, who originally had moved with their parents, married Thomas Lamar of Madeira, later removing to London.104 Harriet, another one of the sisters that relocated to Madeira with their parents, married a merchant of the region, John Scott.105 The married Scotts later removed to England, as did Margaret’s other sister Deborah. Even Sarah Dillwyn traveled abroad with her husband and would send Margaret letters during her time in England and Ireland.106 Her sisters’ residence in England made Margaret’s network spread even further across the Atlantic.

The family that Dr. Richard Hill and Deborah Hill created was one that might have been locally based – if not for the extenuating circumstances. Yet with the fortunes of Dr. Hill forcing the move to Madeira, the Hills’ lifestyle expanded Margaret to have a more global network of familial relationships. While it was not uncommon of the period to have relations overseas, Margaret was an example of an American whose network was completely changed by the war.

102 Ibid., 33.
103 Ibid., 74.
104 Ibid., xvii, xli.
105 Hancock, Oceans of Wine, 141; Smith, Letters of Doctor Richard Hill, xvii.
106 Smith, Letters of Doctor Richard Hill, xiv, xvii, xx.
The letters from her sisters abroad decreased during the period of the war, as Margaret received little to no correspondence from them. Some time after the war ended, Margaret’s correspondence with her sisters began again. In a letter to Margaret from her sister Harriet Scott in 1785, she discussed how the war had affected their correspondence: “now that there is free communication between countries, I entreat I may hear from my dear sisters.”107 The American Revolution isolated Margaret in every sense of the word – from her family, from her town, from her neighbors. The world she presents in her diary is the one very opposite from the world she was used to.

**A World of Restricted Supplies**

The war continued to change every aspect of Margaret’s life. With the war, trade was disrupted and even restricted. Margaret had less access to items and supplies that she was used to having. Things that were common before the war became highly coveted items. There was a shortage of many supplies and civilians had to make do with what they had.

As colonies of the British Empire, the majority of America’s imports were from England. The Atlantic trade network for the American colonists consisted of two tiers: an economy of exchange between England of raw materials for European imports and a lesser economy that focused on an exchange with the West Indies. Though trade with the West Indies was common in some ports, it was not as regular as the trade across the Atlantic. The first towns in the colonies were placed along the Atlantic Ocean – Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Charleston – that developed into commercial port cities. Along the way other smaller port towns, like Baltimore and Newport, became important in the Atlantic trade network, but none as essential as

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107 Ibid., 257.
those four because of their domination in overseas trade of importation and exportation. These cities normally handled more imports than they did exports, as they became centers of commodities from the greater Atlantic trade network.\textsuperscript{108}

These commodities from the Atlantic became a significant part of the consumer culture of the American colonies. The colonists enjoyed the goods that they received from England even taking “their cues from the mother country” about the latest fashions.\textsuperscript{109} The Atlantic trade network forced America to become completely dependent on their mother country to receive all goods that they were unable to produce themselves. The British Empire’s implantation of the Navigation Acts forced this dependency as the acts “reserved all commerce between the colonies and Europe” to Britain. Therefore, all colonial products could only be exported to England, where they would then re-export them.\textsuperscript{110} The Atlantic trade network was not by convenience or choice, but due to the nature of the relationship between mother country and the colonies it controlled.

This relationship caused negative repercussions in the light of the American Revolution. Prior to any combat fighting, the colonists began to boycott English goods, instead making their own products or doing without. By 1774, the first Continental Congress launched a continental “nonimport, nonexport, and nonconsumption association” on all English goods. It was a self-imposed ban on all imports from England and the British West Indies.\textsuperscript{111} While Congress quickly realized that they would not survive without trade, the Royal Navy created a blockade to stop

\textsuperscript{111} Buel Jr., \textit{In Irons}, 31.
trade with non-English sources. They seized any vessels headed toward port cities, like Boston, that were carrying provisions.\textsuperscript{112}

Such a blockade of American port cities proved to disrupt trade dramatically. The Royal Navy and Congress’ non-consumption association sealed the colonies from the rest of the world.\textsuperscript{113} The colonies were forced to look to a domestic market of agricultural products, like the flour and wheat industries. It also discouraged the rice and tobacco economies of the South, putting a strain on their ability to export. The shut down of the Atlantic trade network brought consequences that the colonists were not ready to face. Occasionally, there would be vessels that would make landfall in America and the cargo would be transported over long distances in carriages in order to send supplies to other colonies.\textsuperscript{114} Access to supplies and specialty goods dwindled dramatically, and many people had not experienced such a shortage in their lifetime.

Margaret experienced these consequences of the disruption of the Atlantic trade network first hand. Not only did it make contact with her family overseas much more difficult, she dealt with a shortage of supplies. Margaret talked of such “reports of the great scarcity of provisions in town,” the town being Philadelphia.\textsuperscript{115} If Philadelphia, one of the major port cities in the colonies was short on supplies, then there was an even greater shortage in rural towns like Burlington.

Margaret did not speak in detail about the shortages, but the small glimpse that she wrote in her diary speaks enough to demonstrate the significance of the disruption of the Atlantic trade. As a token of gratitude for her help, one of the gondola men wanted to repay her by sending things to any relations she may have in Philadelphia, like a letter or provisions. While she was suspicious of his motives, she hated being unable to contact her family so she took the chance.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 32-33.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 43.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 7-19, 25-26, 114-116.
\textsuperscript{115} Jackson, Margaret Morris, 76.
She sent her family in Philadelphia “a Quarter of Beef- some Veal- fowls -&flour.” When the “honest” gondola man returned to Burlington two days later, he brought her a “letter – abushel of Salt – a Jug of Molasses – a bag of Rice – some tea Coffee & Sugar -& some Cloth for a Coat for my poor boys.” These two sets of supplies are quite telling about the shortages that both Philadelphia and Burlington underwent. Burlington appeared to have higher access to various kinds of meat due to their position near the countryside that people could have easily hunted. Since Philadelphia was more of an urban center, they did not have the same convenience.

As for the supplies that she received from her family in Philadelphia, her reaction displayed more about the shortage than any assumption could. She called the items such “seasonable Supplys” that made her “so rich” with provisions that others did not have. These supplies appeared to be unavailable in the Burlington area, providing the assumption that Philadelphia was still able to get some specialty goods that were imported like tea, coffee and sugar. The letter may demonstrate that even those were rare from Philadelphia because of how she makes note of it in the collection of other more extraordinary items for the wartime. Even the mention of cloth is curious because Margaret certainly could have made her own or found those who made some in town. Perhaps she preferred a thicker material for coats, as she did say it was for her sons’ coat. The item she seemed to be most excited about was the bushel of salt. Due to her direct reference to salt, it seemed to be the most significant item that many people were missing. She felt it was her “duty” to hand out some to those around them “who were mourning for want of Salt” and provided every person who asked her with a pint. After doing so, she felt that she still had plenty for her family and that her “little Store encreasd by distributing of it,”

116 Ibid., 73-74.
perhaps referring to how it allowed her to receive more items in return for her kindness. While Margaret did not struggle like others may have during the war, her perspective adds a personal view of the direct effects of this disruption of trade.

Margaret certainly may have suffered more than she let on in the pages of her diary, but from the little that she provided one can clearly see the effects of war on trade. Civilians, like Margaret and her neighbors, and soldiers alike felt the consequences more heavily than anyone else. The shortage hit the rich and the poor, the Americans and the British – it was crippling for those living or stationed in America. The American army was especially short of supplies, even worse than Margaret was. She described seeing the soldiers sleeping “without even a blanket to cover them” and even referred to the troops as “ragged” and stated that they would not receive more clothing to cover them for at least a month. If Margaret lacked supplies, then these soldiers had even less than her as they were constantly on the move.

The soldier’s perspective of the shortages can be seen in the diary of Joseph Plumb Martin, a young man from New England that enlisted in the American troops in 1775. While serving in the army, he discussed the hunger and lack of supplies he encountered. He spoke of not remembering whether “we had any other victuals besides the hard bread” and how other soldiers complained of thirst. His diary is filled with mentions of the soldiers looking for food or having “empty” stomachs. The soldiers were not allowed more than their daily allowance of flour, and many times would use it to trade with the inhabitants of the area in order to get other

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117 Ibid., 74.
118 Ibid., 61, 55.
kinds of food like milk. Martin quickly learned to eat food he normally would not have “to be a soldier” like burnt corn and raw beef because the soldiers had to make do in even worse conditions than Margaret did. Another instance, he was forced to beg for food from a butcher and it became all the food he had for two to three days. On one occasion, Martin discussed how Congress always supplied them with arms and equipment, but did not help with their struggle for food, drinks, or clothing. While his diary recorded the events of the war and his experience of it, it also recorded the thoughts of a starving man. Provisions were limited and most often, there was none. Soldiers, like Martin, struggled to stay fed and clothed properly as they fought the enemy. Martin’s diary, like Margaret’s, demonstrates the chilling effect that the disruption of trade had for soldiers fighting in the war. Had there been a more readily supply of food and goods, the men fighting may not have starved as often as they did during the war.

While Margaret did not face the same hardships that Martin did, the Atlantic trade network still affected them both quite intensely. Every experience of the war was different, from a civilian to a soldier. Margaret allows a unique perspective with her globalized relations and close proximity to a major port city. The war changed how she saw her world: Margaret lost touch with the family that she craved to keep in contact with, and the goods that she was used to dwindled down. Martin may have experienced the ultimate sacrifice for his country in the form of hunger, but Margaret too sacrificed the life she knew and cherished before the war.

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120 Ibid., 28, 31.
121 Ibid., 43, 50, 63.
Chapter III: Allegiance

A party of Tory hunters was on the look out for Jonathan O’Dell in mid-December 1776. Margaret Morris wrote that he “retired to a place of safety” after learning of this information.

That place of safety was Margaret’s own home. Three days later, American troops came knocking in search of the enemy,

They Mannd abot & sent her on Shore- aloud knocking at my door brought me to it- I was alittle flutterd & kept locking and unlocking that I might get my ruffled face, alittle composd, at last I opend it, & half adozen Men all Armd, demanded the keys of the empty House- I asked what they wanted there they said to Search for a D---d tory who had been spyg at them from the Mill- the Name of a Tory so near my own door seriously alarmd me- for apoor refugee dignifyd by that Name, had claimd the shelter of my Roof & was at that very time conceald, like athief in an Auger hole122 - I rung the bell violently, the Signal agreed on, if they came to Search-& when I thought he had crept into the hole- I put on avery simple look & cryd out, bless me I hope you are not Hessians.123

After their search was completed, he was nowhere to be found by Margaret, seemingly able to escape unseen from his hiding place without harm. That same evening, she procured other accommodations for him – no doubt afraid that the troops might come back to search again.124

The “Tory,” Jonathan O’Dell, whom Margaret had willingly allowed to stay in her house, was a known loyalist of the British crown in the town of Burlington. She described him as being “esteemed by the whole family & very intimate in it.”125 As a younger man, he had served in the British Army as a surgeon and was stationed in the West Indies. He was later ordained as a minister in England.126 As a minister, he swore the oath of supremacy, which was a sign of

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122 The diary’s editor describes the auger-hole as a “secret chamber, entered from a room at the end of a long entry, through a closet, whose selves had to be removed and the back pried open with a knife”; op. cit., Jackson, Margaret Morris, 91-92.
123 Jackson, Margaret Morris, 47-48.
124 Ibid., 48-49.
125 Ibid., 47.
126 Woodward and Hageman, History of Burlington and Mercer, 76-77.
allegiance to the monarch of the Church of England. Such reasons condemned him as a tory by society’s standards, despite not being condemned by the Provincial Congress in 1775. Yet, his intercepted correspondence would later place him among the ranks of suspected loyalists. O’Dell remained an influential figure in the Burlington community as a minister and friend to many. Margaret wrote of his attempts with other men in the town to orchestrate a way to allow Burlington to become a neutral community throughout the combat. Yet regardless of his attempts, he was still identified with the tory beliefs by many during the Revolution.

The town of Burlington was home to both loyalists and patriots during the American Revolution. When the war came to Burlington, there were conflicting ideas of “patriotism and public duty.” The Quakers – the “Society of Friends” that Margaret belonged to – believed in respecting the current government of the colonies through engaging in non-resistance and peace instead of violence. The town was home to a number of well-known loyalists that belonged to the Church of England, just as O’Dell did. Among the other prominent loyalist members of the town was Judge John Lawrence. Margaret wrote that Lawrence and other men in town were imprisoned because of their beliefs. They were offered oaths to free themselves, but some refused such oaths preferring imprisonment. Besides the loyalists and the Quakers, many members of the Burlington community maintained “martial spirit.” The Revolution’s entry into New Jersey brought mixed emotions in the community – eagerness by the patriots and a fearful inquisitiveness from the tories.

127 Schermerhorn, History of Burlington, 189-190,75.
128 Jackson, Margaret Morris, 42-43.
129 Schermerhorn, History of Burlington, 68.
130 Jackson, Margaret Morris, 70.
131 Schermerhorn, History of Burlington, 68-69.
The Revolution in New Jersey caused many citizens to flip-flop their positions in the war. Loyalists could be forced into signing oaths of allegiance, just as patriots could. A signer of the Declaration of Independence and fervent patriot, Richard Stockton, was forced into signing an oath of allegiance to the king of England.\textsuperscript{132} Even the neutrality of some Burlington Quakers had lessened. Several Quakers served in the militia, others would give “aid and comfort” to the enemy or secretly supplied the American troops.\textsuperscript{133} Allegiance was difficult to pin down, as one could change their mind – or be forced to change their mind – within a second.

Just by association with O’Dell, one would believe that Margaret herself was a loyalist as well. The chronicle of her lodging a wanted tory in her home is what she is most well known for. Her recounting of that night has been reprinted and used as evidence in many sources about the American Revolution. She is described as a “lady of Tory feelings and prejudices” and how she – a “Quakeress” – was charged with “Toryism.”\textsuperscript{134} However, allegiance during the war was not as transparent as the spectacle of the American Revolution leads us to believe. Who one sided with was a matter of their familial relations, their religion, their moral system, and even their region. To accuse Margaret of being a loyalist based on this story alone appears to be a little overzealous.

From the pages of her diary, it is difficult to distinguish where her true feelings remained though. While she never out rightly indicated any leaning, her words and actions can provide reference to her identity within the war. Margaret straddled the lines between both loyalist and patriot sentiments – having moments where she seemed to align herself with both sides. As a

\textsuperscript{133} Schermerhorn, \textit{History of Burlington}, 71.
\textsuperscript{134} Woodward and Hageman, \textit{History of Burlington and Mercer}, 25-26; Stryker, \textit{Battles of Trenton and Princeton}, 44.
member of the Quaker faith, she was to remain neutral since the Quakers did not believe in violence. Quakers had originally supported the Americans in their pre-Revolutionary peaceful tactics of nonimportation, but the introduction of violence compelled them to take a more neutral and pacifist stance. They maintained their refusal to fight or to sign allegiance to one side or another.\textsuperscript{135}

Despite the expectations Margaret had placed upon her by her religion, one can still examine her words and actions in the diary to determine how closely she followed this. The idea of loyalism did not frighten Margaret as much as those who hunted for them, as the story with O’Dell above demonstrated. Margaret was more afraid of the soldiers that fought in the war rather than the ideals behind either side. She did not speak of the ideals of loyalists or patriots – focusing on the events and brutality of the warfare as opposed to the beliefs.

Her own beliefs were rarely displayed through her writing, as she was not forthcoming with which side she favored. As seen in the O’Dell story, Margaret was identified as a loyalist simply due to her relationship with him. Yet, her diary has very little to no discussion that demonstrates or identifies her as such. She referred to “Tory Hunters” as “the spirit of the Divil [Devil]” when they arrived in town and repeatedly discussed their searches. Not only did she assist Jonathan O’Dell, she also described hearing of “adesign to seize on the person of a Young Man in town, as he was deemd atory” and warning a friend of his so that he could escape in time. Even the mention of a proclamation where General Washington ordered an oath of allegiance to the United States by those in dissent caused her to worry about the fate of O’Dell.\textsuperscript{136} She appeared unyielding in her protection of known loyalists, which to any outsider would make her

\textsuperscript{135} McCluer Calhoon. \textit{Loyalists in Revolutionary America}, 170-173; Lundin, \textit{Cockpit of the Revolution}, 105.

\textsuperscript{136} Jackson, \textit{Margaret Morris}, 47, 49, 67-68.
seem to favor the loyalists. These people that she protected were friends rather than allies in beliefs. It is possible that she shared their sentiments, but there is not one direct discourse of loyalism beliefs and if her beliefs matched them at all.

In the same respect, Margaret’s diary can be examined to attempt to determine her devotion to the patriot cause. The focus of her discussions centered specifically on the American troop’s actions within the war. She refers to them as “rebels” and “Hessian Hunters” various times, possibly to demonstrate how their beliefs defied the British and possibly differed from her own. Yet, she still seemed to feel a kinship with the American people. Her neighbor, whose family she maintained friendly relations with, was a member of the American army.\(^\text{i37}\) In many of her references to the Americans, she frequently used the word “our” to describe them: “amongst our People”; “the Hessians say our Men run so fast”; “The loss on our side is not known”; “we hear to day that our Troops have driven the English to Brunswick.”\(^\text{i38}\) The constant repetition of “our” reveals how Margaret maintained this sense of connection to the American side. There was an undercurrent of approval in various mentions of “our” as they were preceded by successes of the American troops.

She did not explicitly state any opinion negative or positive of their cause, so it is hard to tell from this simple wording if she agreed with their beliefs or not. Although she may not have directly supported them, the mere fact that she considered herself part of a collective “our” of American people allows for the possibly that she shared a positive affinity toward the people who shared her country. The location seems to be key as she wrote, “What sad Havock will this dreadful War make in our Land” – the “our” again referring to the collective.\(^\text{i39}\) Though, such

\(^{137}\) Ibid., 52, 55, 40, 65.
\(^{138}\) Ibid., 39, 57-63.
\(^{139}\) Ibid., 62.
evidence is so little that there can be no direct correlation between Margaret and patriot inclinations. She may not have completely agreed with those that identified themselves as patriots, but the place she felt closest to was the land she was born on. She had never been to England personally, so the kinship she felt was not to a king or a nation but to those around her.

Nevertheless, she did have a connection to the patriot cause through her own familial relations. Over the years, she maintained a relationship with the majority of her siblings and her parents until their death. Henry Hill, one of her older brothers, joined her parents in Madeira later in his life. He eventually became a partner in his father’s business, succeeding his father to help run Lamar, Hill, Bisset & Co. He then returned to Philadelphia to maintain the company in the colonies, and was said to have been a very wealthy, but “prominent and valuable citizen.” He must have cared for his sisters deeply because after his death in 1798, he bestowed his wealth to his sisters and their children.¹⁴⁰ Their connection appeared to continue throughout their lives, which means they could have influenced one another’s beliefs. Before the war, their father did most of his business with the Philadelphia area because that was where his family was located. When Henry took over, he “attempted to run the British blockade of North American coast” in order to supply the colonists with wine.¹⁴¹ While his loyalties are uncertain, the fact is that he did attempt to assist colonists during a blockade of trade from the British. Such evidence could point to an inclination toward support for the American cause and that may have influenced Margaret’s perspective on how she viewed those in favor of the war. Even if she did not out rightly state her beliefs, she could have been influenced by the close relationship she maintained with Henry. Perhaps her brother’s desire to help (and probably profit) gave her a more favorable view of the American’s struggle, as it was her own struggle as well.

¹⁴¹ Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*, 154.
No matter how Margaret felt about the war’s divisions, she favored loyalty to one’s belief as an essential attribute to have. To abandon one’s beliefs was irresponsible and almost seemed to lessen her opinion of them. In one rather eye-opening report, she discussed that Colonel Joseph Reed and Colonel John Cox had once thought about abandoning the Americans to join the British because they thought they had no chance in victory:

We were told by a Woman who lodged in the same room where Gen: Read & Colo Cox took Shelter when the battle of Trenton dispersd the Americans that they, Read & Cox - had laid awake all night consulting to gather about the best means of Secureing themselves, & that they came to determination of setting out next day as soon as it was light, to the British Camp-& Joining them with all the Men under thier command-but when Morning came, an express arrived with an account that the Americans had gaind a great victory… this report put the Rebel Gen & Col into high Spirits & they concluded to remain firm in the cause of America.

Margaret appeared to lose respect for them due to this rumor, which very well might have been true. The two men came to see her and she wrote “in my heart I despised them” and almost told them off for such disloyalty, but thought better of it. She may have claimed to be neutral, but to garner anger at men, who might have abandoned the Americans in order to join the British, tips her allegiance in favor of the Americans slightly. Although, she could just have felt they were disrespectful to those that were counting on them and that they must be devoted to their cause if they are fighting for it. It is impossible to tell for certain, but it does present a unique view of desertion.

For the most part, Margaret maintained her Quaker identity with neutral ideals throughout the war. She too seemed to abhor the violence of the war, disliking what it did to people, even describing it as a “horrid Art” that was able to “change the Nature of Man.” She clung to the hope that Burlington would be declared a neutral area as the townspeople

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142 Jackson, Margaret Morris, 71-72.
143 Ibid., 65.
desperately sought to make that a reality. She consistently spoke of neutrality’s importance to the neighborhood, “wish[ing] with great earnestness it may be allowed.” The town of Burlington appealed to both the Hessians’ general – Count von Donop – and the Americans in an attempt to reach an agreement for their community. Unfortunately, their request was denied,

the Gentlemen who went last to the Count de Nope [Count von Donop] with a request that our Town might be allowed to be a Neutral one, are returned, & report that he had too many affairs of greater Consequence in hand, to attend to them, or give an Answer.-144

It is a wonder if the request was denied because their admission of neutrality was not accepted. Perhaps the Hessian general felt that it was impossible for them to be neutral in this war, or that they were hiding the Americans in their homes.

Although neutrality was denied, Margaret attempted to not align herself closely with either side. She examined both troops as though they were the enemy. She may have identified herself with the Americans in a collective “our,” but she separated herself from their beliefs. In a conversation with a friend about the pillaging of Hessians, Margaret clearly states, “I said they pillaged none but the Rebels-& we were not such, we had taken no part against them.”145 Evidently, she did not consider herself a “rebel,” but she never referred to herself as a loyalist either. Her allegiance rested with neither the Americans nor the Hessians that she barely knew. Many people were judged on their actions alone, and allegiance was not as transparent as Margaret demonstrated. There was no clear choice for Margaret; instead, she straddled the lines between the two, but maintained a neutral viewpoint toward the war.

An important note, worth repeating, about Margaret’s diary is that she wrote it for her younger sister, Milcah Martha Moore, who lived in Philadelphia at the time. Since her correspondence was limited, she wrote it in place of their regular communication. This begs the

144 Ibid., 53-54.
145 Ibid., 52.
question of whether or not Margaret portrayed herself in a particular light, if she knew that other people could read this and form opinions about her from it. Diaries come with a warning, since they act as a performance of the self and how one views the self. Margaret certainly could have constructed herself to be thought of exactly the way she wanted to – a more neutral leaning citizen, aligned with her Quaker counterparts. This idea though seems to be easily dismissed by Margaret’s own words in a letter to her sister about the diary:

   I have not yet collected all the scraps of my late diary into one piece; when I have, I shall send it to thee, and thee will observe as thee reads it, that it is by no means fit for mix companies or general communication. Part of it was written in a serious, others in a waggish mood, and most of it after the family were abed, and I sat up to keep guard over my fences, &c, while the soldiers were next door, for fear they should pull them down to burn… I shall have no objection to thy reading it out to our own family, provided you turn the critic out of doors, and let only the partial friends hear the thoughts of my heart at the time I wrote them.146

Margaret knew that what she said within the pages of her diary might have been considered controversial, such as her view of the war and her associations with both her American and loyalist neighbors. It appears as though she wrote the diary with every intention of being truthful in her feelings. There is a page missing of the manuscript of the original diary – possibly removed due to the controversial thoughts or events she recorded. In the original printed copy of the diary, published by her grandson, he had omitted another page that involved the earlier story of Colonel Joseph Reed. It is believed that it was removed in order to maintain the loyalty of Reed to the American cause during the war and not to destroy his reputation. The addition of this information admits that Margaret indeed may have been very forthcoming and devoted to

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chronicling her deepest feelings within her diary – so much so that it needed to be censored by before allowing others to read it.\textsuperscript{147}

Even with her forthcoming nature, Margaret’s allegiance is still very muddled. She housed a known Tory during the war, but interacted with her neighbor that she cared for in the American army. She did not talk ill of either of those men and did not talk ill of either sides’ beliefs, preferring not address them. While her neutrality seems to be the best estimation of allegiance in the war, an argument can be made that she straddled the lines between identification with both loyalist and American sentiments due to the importance of the relationship between her and her neighborhood. Her grandson states that Margaret did not apologize for her political bias, because she “possessed [things] in common with too many of countrymen, both good and great.”\textsuperscript{148} Margaret was a woman devoted to her community. A community made of mostly neutral Quakers, but a community also made up of loyalists like O’Dell and patriots like Colonel Coxe.

It is fair to state that Margaret’s allegiance was to that community that she had become so fond of. She cared about the people that lived in her town, as a constant worry about the state of her community was present throughout her diary. She wanted the community to be neutral and worried about the effect of combat, like the firing on their homes. It is not uncommon to feel a kinship to those around you. Margaret had loyalty to the people that she had known previous to the war, the people who would be around after the war too. The beliefs of the Revolution’s warring factions may have been too general or too much for Margaret to understand, but she could understand a sense of loyalty to those she trusted and lived among.

\textsuperscript{147} Jackson, \textit{Margaret Morris}, 34-35, 105-106.  
\textsuperscript{148} Smith, \textit{Letters of Doctor Richard Hill}, 209.
This idea of allegiance to one’s community is in direct opposition to how many communities during the war operated. Communities, instead, tended to turn on one another—they would not warn each other of possible groups on the search for them. Their only goal was to keep themselves safe from any uncertain harm. In the town of Poughkeepsie, New York, the town had turned on each other quite easily. The loyalist sheriff gathered groups to “help him teach the rebels a lesson” for not being faithful to the king. When the patriots had eventually overrun the town, they banished loyalists unless they took an oath of allegiance to the American cause. Many of the townspeople had lived in the town over a decade, and known their neighbors for just as long. Yet, they turned on one another instead of favoring neutrality. What was so telling about this community was how easily the patriots allowed the loyalists back in the community. Despite their differences, the “destruction of their community, as they knew it, was not a price they would pay for victory” in the Revolution.149

The latter quote mirrors how Margaret appeared to feel about her community. Even after presenting the evidence of her diary, it is still uncertain whether she truly had a political allegiance that was clearer than a stance of neutrality. Her diary may have been forthcoming, but it lacks the transparency that is needed to make a clear-cut decision about her allegiance. Though, what is transparent is how she felt about the population of Burlington. Her goal too may have been to save herself and her family from harm, but she also applied this same feeling to the community. These people lived alongside her and went to the same meetings with her and believed in the same God that she had. The only evil in the world of Margaret’s diary was the Revolution and violence it brought—not her neighbors that had dissenting opinions. She never

spoke ill of those around her, instead her focus remained on the war solely, as she would talk ill of the generals that were involved. Burlington became her home during the years at war; with no extended family to lean on, she leaned on these people and helped them as they helped her. No matter if patriot, tory, neutral or not, Margaret aligned herself with the ones that represented the community that was the cornerstone of her experience during the conflict and would continue to be after the war had finished.

\[150\] She negatively spoke of Count von Donop after his refusal of the town’s neutrality; she made a comment about General Lee’s capture; and she disliked Colonel Shippen who almost shot at her son; Jackson, *Margaret Morris*, 54, 62.
Chapter IV: Religion

The American colonists, like Margaret, were forced to accept the war into their lives as it moved throughout the colonies. The Revolution had an overwhelming effect on almost every aspect of Margaret’s life and altered the world she once knew. The war crept its way into her news, relationships, and surroundings – everything Margaret held dear was threatened. Her beliefs were tested on a daily basis, politically and religiously, as her life became intertwined with the spectacle of war and the violence it brought. Yet, as the Revolution transformed her world, she maintained one constant in her life: the devotion and confidence in her faith.

Margaret played many roles throughout her life: daughter, sister, healer, wife and mother – but her most important role seemed to be as a Quaker. The Society of Friends was and remains a specific sect of Christianity, originating in the teachings of George Fox in the seventeenth century in England. During the English Civil War, Fox claimed to have an experience where he heard the “audible voice of God” that changed his view of Christianity. He perceived religion as an “inner experience” that was deeply personal and focused on the idea that “Christ was within everyone.” God was to reveal himself to everyone as they approached true repentance and saw the “Inner Light” within.\(^{151}\) Quakerism has its roots in equality, as God spoke to all and not just a chosen few. It was up to an individual to conduct their relationship with God and to express their religion.\(^{152}\) Just as significant as the private worship is the meetings or group worship, held on a


\(^{152}\) Ibid., 29.
regular basis for the community. When it had spread to the colonies, Pennsylvania had become a haven of Quakers, as well as New Jersey and parts of Delaware.\footnote{Thomas D. Hamm. Quakers in America. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 64-65; Arthur J. Mekeel. The Relations of The Quakers to the American Revolution. (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, Inc., 1979), 1-3.}

The Society of Friends played an essential and ever-lasting role for Margaret. She was raised in the faith as a child and it had remained meaningful to her throughout her entire life. Her family even had connections to William Penn – the most famous Quaker in America, as her mother was the daughter of Thomas Lloyd. Lloyd had joined the Society of Friends in the mid-seventeenth century and had become a close friend of Penn.\footnote{Smith, Letters of Doctor Richard Hill, vi.} Her religion influenced her life in every way and shaped the person that she would become.

While Margaret’s diary is presented as a wartime narrative, her innermost thoughts speak within the references to her religion. Her relationship to God is omnipresent throughout the pages, as her spirituality appeared to guide her and her thoughts about the war. Such thoughts are usual amongst the entries in her diary, but they are scattered and inconsistent. In these references, Margaret seems to share her intimate worries and beliefs instead of reporting second-hand information. This functions as a way for her to truly express herself and signifies how essential her identity as a Quaker was to her character.

The initial glimpse into Margaret’s religious thought appears within her very first entry. When she had reported rumors of the British arrival and a plot to set fire to a city (which could either be referring to Burlington or Philadelphia), she wrote, “when I heard the above report my heart almost died within me, & I cried surely the Lord will not punish the innocent with the guilty, & I wishd there might be found some interceding Lotts & Abrahams amongst our People.” After the news, her immediate thoughts turned to God and prayers for those that could
have been negatively affected. God was consistently present within her thoughts, and her outlook on life. Later in the entry, Margaret talked of her family and her concerns for them because she was not with them while these rumors loomed. Her concern was quashed when she considered her connection with God, “I felt an humble Confidence, that he, who had been with me in six troubles would not forsake me now-While I cherishd this hope my tranquility was restord, & I felt no Sensations but of humble Acquiescense to the Divine Will.”155 With one thought, Margaret went from a woman with many worries to content and hopefulness. She maintained a private connection with God, as the Quaker faith dictated, and it was significant to how she viewed these events. Her spirituality allowed her to come to terms with events that were out of her hands, like her family’s well being, and seemed to dictate how she perceived and reacted to negative news.

The references to her spirituality and God are infrequent, but many of them mirror the words of the first entry. Margaret repeatedly stated how her “trust in Providence [remained] still firm” and she would not risk moving her children because of that. She believed God had saved her and her children from being fired upon by troops, as he “took us into his Safe keeping, & preservd us from danger” and hoped that she would remain humble and thankful for this “favor” that saved her family. Another entry detailed a family member asking her to flee from her house for safety, but she believed in staying where “providence has cast my lot-he has preservd us in great danger & I dare not distrust his future care.”156 Such entries demonstrate how centered her personal connection with God was on the care and protection provided for her and her family.

The devotion and gratitude Margaret applied to her religious life seem – from her perspective – to benefit in positive ways. She privately hoped that her children “may learn to trust in the God

155 Jackson, Margaret Morris, 39-40.
156 Ibid., 40, 46, 51.
of thier Mother” since He had provided preservation from any danger and kept them from running to unsafe places.\textsuperscript{157} This reflects the intersection of the two most important things within her life: family and religion. While the two are not mutually exclusive, they both are extremely essential to her identity. Her spirituality was not just a simplistic belief in religion; it was a personal relationship that she vehemently believed was responsible for the good in her life, including the safety of her family.

Mostly, her spirituality affected the outlook she had on the events of the Revolution. Her response to the surprise attack by the American troops on Christmas had a disapproving tone – not at the engagement itself, but at how the Hessians had spent their time. She reported that the Hessians were “getting drunk on the eve of that great day which brought peace on Earth & good Will to Men,” which was customary for their country. The Hessians did not possess this good will or peaceful nature that she spoke of. Instead, she felt their actions were disrespectful and un-Christian:

\textit{but oh, how unlike Christians is the Manner in which they Celebrate it, can, we call ourselves Christians, while we act so Contrary to our Masters rules - he set the example which we profess to follow, & here is arecent instance that we only profess it, instead of good will, envy & hatred seem to be the ruling passions in the breasts of thousands.}\textsuperscript{158}

Margaret looked down upon those who lived contrary to how God expected them. Christmas was not a day of drunkenness and feasting; it was representative of something intangible - peace. The mere fact that a violent event could take place on such a tranquil day probably bothered Margaret more than she spoke about, but violence had become so regular in her life that it appeared less important. Even so, the Hessians’ actions disturbed her since they were so disrespectful on such a noteworthy religious day.

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., 64.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 58.
Her disapproval was not reserved only for the Hessians, but the Americans as well. She reported that General Howe had requested a cessation of arms in the war in order that they may take care of their wounded and bury the dead after a series of battles. Washington allegedly denied the request and Margaret appeared again stricken that men could act so disrespectful. She writes, “What a Woeful tendency War has, to harden the human heart against the tender feelings of humanity… I thought that even Barbarous Nations had a sort of Religious [religious] regard for their Dead.” Her outlook on war and violence mirrored that of her Quaker counterparts, as she despised what it did to people. She had strong regards for those that died in battle during the Revolution, writing, “My heart sinks when I think of the Numbers unprepard for Death, who will probably be sent, in a few days, to appear before the Judge of Heaven.”159 She felt troubled for those who died at the hand of violence, and the information that Washington had denied them a proper send-off really struck at the spiritual person that she was. This decision was not one of a good Christian, like herself, but one of a cruel nature. Just because the violence was inescapable for these men did not mean they deserved such treatment. The idea was not compatible to Margaret who cherished the idea that the men who die would meet God in heaven. While the decision itself lacks empathy on Washington’s part, he may have seen it in a different light than Margaret. She based her decisions on emotional, spiritual feelings rather than rational thought that Washington had to possess in order to command an army. Her dislike of war and violence as a devout Quaker shaped how she saw such acts, probably quite different from those less invested in their religion.

Despite the various glimpses into Margaret’s religiosity, her diary lacked a constant flow of these thoughts. Her thoughts normally were not of a religious nature, instead thoughts about

159 Ibid., 65-66, 59.
the war or news. However, the preview that a reader does get is significant as it sticks closely to the ideals of Quakerism. Her experience can be seen as exemplary as a member of the Society of Friends’ during the Revolution, as she struggled to reconcile her identity as a child of God with her identity as an American colonist and watched as those around her acted in a manner that was quite contrary to what she believed in.

Her diary kept during the American Revolution was not her only one, as she was an avid writer. Yet, only two of her diaries manuscripts were saved and archived. The other diary was one from the pre-war period, as Margaret grew through life. This diary begins in 1751, when Margaret was at the age of fourteen, and continues intermittently until 1768 (though there are a few entries past that date). It reveals an examination into the life that she led before the war. This diary was the polar opposite of her wartime diary due to the constant references to religion. The diary is less a diary than a prayer journal, with very little focus on outside events in her life unless they directly affect her religious thought. It appears as almost a conversation between Margaret and God; each entry details her prayers, wishes, and even disappointments. Her mind was consistently on the duty she had to God and how she could improve herself.

While the wartime diary allows a small peek into Margaret’s head, her private journal permits her identity to be examined more fully. Her happiness, her fears, and worries all can be seen within its pages. Her entries tend to be lengthy messages to God, where she questions certain aspects of her life. In an early entry from September 1754, Margaret shared her excitement over her father’s return from Madeira:

Let me, Lord, give thanks to thee for this great favour bestowed upon us. How shall I find words to express my gratitude for this long-wished for favour! And am I permitted to know the dear person to whom I owe my being! Is it a dream! or have my eyes indeed beheld my parent! Oh, blessed certainty! I do not dream; I have seen my parent. For this

greatest favour I ever asked, oh, Lord! let me praise and magnify thy name. Let me never forget it. Suffer me not to abuse thy blessings, but oh, be pleased to make me very humble. Let thy arm, oh, Lord, protect my parent by land as well as by sea.

The joy that radiates from this entry is almost unmistakable, mirroring the happiness that Margaret presents in her wartime diary when it comes to the protection of her family. The entry remains a letter to God as she is unsure how to express her gratitude. She rejoiced in God’s name for this “favour” that He granted her. The favor was substantial, as her mother had died three years previous, and she had not seen her or her father since their departure for Madeira in 1739. The favor is that of seeing her other parent, a dream she had held since her mother’s death. Yet even with Margaret’s joy, she attempted to admonish herself so she would not “abuse thy blessings” and aspired to be humble about the gift she was given. An examination of the entry permits one to see how near and dear both her family and God were to her heart. While this is no different than her wartime diary, it portrays a woman with more positivity in her outlook on life.

Margaret applied the same tone to the birth of her children, as she thanked God for the gift of life. She celebrated her happiness of the health of both herself and the “perfect child.” She stated her thanks multiple times, almost as if she felt that she needed to demonstrate how appreciative she was for the baby. She even prayed for the future child to “love and fear thee, and that she may bring no dishonor to thy name.” The duty she felt toward God had to be passed to her child in her mind. Her child’s future relationship with God was as significant as her own because God allowed her the opportunity to mother and care for the child. Her most positive entries usually were the result of happiness within her family and religious life. The intersection between them reflected Margaret’s happiness, when she felt most confident in her religious life and family life.

161 Ibid., 338.
162 Ibid., 346.
While many of her entries are positive, some are more negative – but not toward God, toward her self. She prayed for God to help her stay away from wicked temptations because it is in her “nature to sin.” The sin she believed she was unable to stop was that of anger, as it was a “passion which besets me before I know where I am.” She realized that she was not perfect and sought improvement from God. She called herself “his unworthy creature” due to how she perceived herself as ungrateful for the blessings he continued to give her. Her self-confidence was quite low; God seemed to boost the confidence in her. One entry, she wondered about why God had granted so many favors on “a worthless object.” Her view of self could be linked to how she perceived her relationship with God, as she stated that she “longs for a more near acquaintance with thee, and an intimate union, whereby I shall be able to prize thy mercies as I ought.”\textsuperscript{163} Maybe God had not revealed himself to her, as Quaker beliefs stated, and she believed that it was because she was not as worthy of his consideration and her duty to him had not been as fulfilled.

Margaret’s life was marked by a significant amount of loss; her mother had died young, as did her husband, a few of her siblings, and also two of her children. In an entry from the late 1750s, she questioned her life, “Each day I see others carried to the silent grave, while I am spared; and for what am I spared?” She seemed to not understand God’s decisions, left in wonder about her own mortality. She pondered how she continued to survive because she felt like a “worthless creature” that “can bring no additional honour to thy glorious name.”\textsuperscript{164} She did not insult God, even though she questioned his decision. Her devotion remained strong even when she appeared to have her doubts, instead resulting in her own insecurities about her own faith and importance.

\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 348, 356, 343.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., 341.
These entries are vastly different from the Margaret presented in her wartime diary. The woman in that diary is strong and confident in her devotion to religion and sense of self, not questioning her own purpose in life. In its place, she questioned the war’s purpose and effects on the world around her. She consistently thanked God for protection and did not question His actions. Young Margaret had less confidence in her own faith and importance to God, only questioning the reasons why she has received such favors when in her opinion she remained unworthy. While Margaret certainly could have grown out of her insecurity about her devotion, it seems more likely that Margaret left out her darker thoughts out of the Revolutionary diary. In an entry dated 1774 – just two years before the war spread to New Jersey – Margaret was still questioning her own devotion to God:

I very often fear my heart is not right towards God, or else I should be enabled to overcome the vile sin that easily besets me on some occasions, viz. peevishness and anger, which I strive against, and my wet pillow at night can bear witness of the tears I shed for my omissions of duty in the course of the day. I sin and repent, but what good does it do me; the next occasion that occurs throws me off my guard. Oh, Lord! help the poor creature who has no might of her own.\textsuperscript{165}

Evidently, Margaret continued to have negative thoughts about her self and devotion – but did not present them in her Revolutionary diary. Perhaps because that diary was written for her sister’s pleasure, she remained more positive in her thoughts, whereas the personal diary was private and the place she recorded her deepest confessions. Despite her issues with how she may have viewed God, she never objected the greatness of God, only the sincerity of her devotion.

Margaret’s personal diary also reflected some of her views on certain matters that she may not have felt as comfortable discussing in her wartime diary. The topic of slavery was one

\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., 363.
that she touched upon in her private diary. Having received a slave from her father’s will, she reflected on the idea of slavery:

I received as a gift of my dear deceased parent a negro boy; but, how inconsistent with true Christianity is the barbarous custom of keeping in slavery any one of our poor fellow creatures; it has ever been a burden to my mind the thoughts of it, and I have endeavoured all in my power to make it an easy servitude - a slavery it shall never be - may the Almighty be graciously pleased to enlighten his mind as well as others.166

Margaret had no interest in retaining a slave; it went against her every idea that she believed in. It was her duty to help people, not put them in harm’s way. In fact, her beliefs were in line with her faith since Quakers were one of the first religious institutions to fully “grapple with the morality of slavery.” During the eighteenth century, many Quakers became increasingly anti-slavery. One such reason was the idea of the ‘Inner Light’ that was a more democratic process, where God could talk to anyone – including slaves. Quaker support for anti-slavery varied, but they increasingly moved toward supporting the abolition movement.167 Margaret appeared uneasy in the idea of owning another person, feeling that it was cruel punishment to subject someone to such a life. Her religion again influenced her opinion toward such matters, as it probably was as un-Christian of a thing to her as Washington not allowing time to bury the dead. She could not separate religious beliefs from her beliefs on anything, it dictated how she viewed certain matters and shaped her as a person.

Margaret’s duty to God remained her most important identity, which she seemed to attempt to fulfill in her relationship with others. As seen in her opinion on slavery, Margaret was extremely caring person that did not want others to suffer and would help if she could. Following in the footsteps of her father, she had witnessed his practice and even was “considered as

166 Ibid., 350.
possessing a natural family gift for healing.” Her grandson stated that she was one of the first recorded female physicians, though no evidence to suggest the truthfulness of that is presented.\textsuperscript{168} During the Revolution, she was called upon many times to help people in need. As sick and wounded people were brought into Burlington, Margaret said that she was called upon “to extend a hand of Charity toward them.” She would help anyone who asked, regardless of belief, because she could not ignore requests for her assistance. Margaret recounted a story of the gondola men and their wives sick, and looking for a doctor, “[there was] no Doctor in Town to apply to, and they were told Mrs M – was a Skillful Woman - & kept Medicines to give to the poor.” Despite her dislike for them, due to the threats they placed on her son, she went with them to treat those that needed her.\textsuperscript{169} Though, not stated explicitly, one can connect her interest in helping others to her duty in proving her worth to God. In order to be worthy, she must help others just as he helps others – and her role as a doctor fulfills that duty. This role supplemented her religious duties to God, but was never more important than her role as a Quaker.

To fully understand Margaret, one must understand the true implications of how she regarded religion and God. Her personal diary allows a glimpse into how she perceived her identity. If Margaret were to consider the core of her innermost self, she probably would reveal that God and her religion shape her identity the most. What she seemed to believe about her inner self was that her most fundamental identification was as a child of God. Her identities as a mother, a daughter, a sister, a woman, a widow, an American, or resident of Burlington all come second to that identity. The identity that she has as a Quaker overrides them all. They may even overlap and be interconnected, but the way she sees herself is imperative to note. All of the elements that formed the person Margaret was could be boiled down to a child of God.

\textsuperscript{168} Smith, \emph{Recollections}, 242.
\textsuperscript{169} Jackson, \emph{Margaret Morris}, 62, 72.
Her personal diary has little to no focus on the events in her life, except how they relate to that identity. She was not defined by the life that she led, but rather the identity that she carried as a Quaker. Her innermost self is reflected in the pages of that diary and they act as a reminder that Margaret provides a completely different perspective from others of the time period. While the Revolution defined people based on allegiance, Margaret’s only allegiance was in her duty to God. Her innermost self was defined by that relationship she had with God, and it would shape the person seen in the entries of her Revolutionary War diary.

Margaret’s connection to religion is much greater than this chapter allows for because of how significant of a role it plays within every facet of her life. While the war may have changed her outlook on her community, it did not alter her relationship in God and His protection. Margaret presents a unique perspective of Quaker woman, however she also provides an experience that could be related to the wider spectrum of Quakers who struggled to reconcile their relationship with God and their status within the war.
Conclusion

The narrative of Margaret Morris’ diary provides a small glimpse into the colonial world throughout the New Jersey campaign of the American Revolution. Her experience within the pages of the diary was troubled by fear, isolation, and ideals of allegiance, politically and religiously. Margaret’s experience provides insight into the larger world of those who were forced to transform their everyday lives in order to deal with the Revolution.

Such ordinary colonists, like Margaret, are not equally represented in source material for historians, as diaries and letters of these colonists may be more unusual to uncover or study in-depth. Instead, the majority of material from the American Revolution belongs to people that had an active stake in the war, either a soldier, the wife of soldier, or notable patriots and loyalists. Of course, there is material from ordinary colonists that remains; yet, it usually presents a less interesting or incomplete narrative for historians to examine. Those that do remain can demonstrate a Revolution possibly quite different from the one that Margaret depicts.

A comparative diary to Margaret’s is Sarah Wister, a fifteen-year-old Quaker girl that lived outside Philadelphia. Though they were geographically close to one another, Sarah’s diary instead details a more pleasant war, with no focus on the negative effects, through her experiences with soldiers. She flirts with the men that quarter in her house and is sad to see them leave. Yet, she was young, so she saw the war and quartering as a way to find a potential mate rather than scary environment. The two diaries present incompatible experiences, but that can most likely be explained by a difference in age. Margaret was much older than Sarah, thirty-nine during the period of her diary. Therefore, her outlook was more mature, concerned about the safety of her family and the war’s effect on them rather than her possible romantic interests.

Sarah is but one case of the numerous diaries that detail experiences of the American Revolution that may differ from Margaret. There are many instances of women getting more involved in the war, rather than adhering to the ideals of society. These instances discuss various experiences for women that lack the fear and isolation that clouded Margaret’s diary. One example was the experience of New York women who would cross military lines to gather information, even though that was not their goal. Such events provide accounts of “impressive information networks” that women would form by writing and transporting letters, and making personal visits, which consisted of “military information, political rumors, and personal news.”

Again, such experiences differ from Margaret due to the probable motive within the actions. They may not have intended to create such a network of information, but the information was essential to the combat and tended to benefit some over others. Margaret provided no information network; instead her news came to her second-hand from in person reports. She acted as a neutral non-combatant with no real stake in the outcome, forced to cope with a world that had been transformed before her eyes.

One must remember that diaries and other primary materials always provide a distinctive perspective with their crafting as they present the world through the eyes of the writer. There is no denying that Margaret too presents a viewpoint that was developed through the experiences in her life. Those experiences vastly differ from the women that would risk their lives to help the American cause or a young girl who suddenly was surrounded by young, attractive men. The world of the Revolution brought many extraordinary experiences for the American colonists, as some were put in unique circumstances that they dealt with in different ways. Margaret did not perform extraordinary actions, but continued to live the life she led before the war as much as

she could. Therefore, Margaret’s viewpoint can parallel more of an ordinary colonist’s life than such narratives may be able to.

Despite her distinctive background and the religious belief she held, she can still serve as a way to examine the Revolution’s effect on non-combatants. Her diary speaks to the fear that spread throughout the colonies with the combat, and how one deals with the components of a fear-based environment, like rumors, counter-rumors and even the direct interactions with warfare. Her world shrinks with the war, just as many others experienced either through cut off correspondence or the divisions of allegiance. She provides an insight into the complicated nature of allegiance that colonists had to confront during the Revolution. Her own religiosity was quite unique, due to her own dedication to God – but such an identity helped to shape her outlook and allowed her to experience the war in this way.

Although Margaret Morris’ diary ends before the American Revolution, she did continue to live in Burlington for the remainder of the war. Perhaps her diary originally extended beyond the final entry of June 14, 1777 but the fragments were never recovered or destroyed. While her location can be accounted for, it is unfortunate that there is nothing to examine her experience during the rest of the war. If they remained, it would be interesting to see how Margaret coped and if her outlook changed any further throughout the progression of the war. The only other personal log of hers that remains after the Revolutionary period was a “Gardening Memorandum,” which details the nature of her garden in 1804; beyond that only letters of hers remain until her death in 1816.¹⁷² Though, what is preserved from her Revolutionary diary still remains a critical commentary by a non-combatant surrounded by the events of the Revolution.

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