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George Robert Twelves Hewes (1742-1840): A Boston Shoemaker and the Memory of the American Revolution

Alfred F. Young

LATE in 1762 or early in 1763, George Robert Twelves Hewes, a Boston shoemaker in the last year or so of his apprenticeship, repaired a shoe for John Hancock and delivered it to him at his uncle Thomas Hancock's store in Dock Square. Hancock was pleased and invited the young man to "come and see him on New Year's day, and bid him a happy New-Year," according to the custom of the day, a ritual of noblesse oblige on the part of the gentry. We know of the episode through Benjamin Bussey Thatcher, who interviewed Hewes and wrote it up for his *Memoir* of Hewes in 1835. On New Year's Day, as Thatcher tells the story, after some urging by his master,

George washed his face, and put his best jacket on, and proceeded straightaway to the Hancock House (as it is still called). His heart was in his mouth, but assuming a cheerful courage, he knocked at the front door, and took his hat off. The servant came:

"Is 'Squire Hancock at home, Sir?" enquired Hewes, making a bow.

This essay would not have been possible without the help of a large number of scholars, librarians, and descendants and friends of the Hewes family. I acknowledge each of these at the relevant point. I wish to express my special appreciation to three scholars who read and commented on the essay in several drafts: Jesse Lemisch, Gary Nash, and Lawrence W. Towner. Michael Kammen and James Henretta also offered valuable reactions to an early draft. My debt to Jesse Lemisch is large; he helped me to work out problems too numerous to mention and provided a pioneering example of a biography of an ordinary person in "The American Revolution and the American Dream: A Life of Andrew Sherburne, a Pensioner of the Navy of the Revolution" (Columbia University Seminar on Early American History and Culture, 1975) to be published in his *The American Revolution and the American Dream*. I have also profited from the criticism of colleagues at the Conference on the "New" Labor History and the New England Working Class, Smith College, 1979; the Graduate Colloquium, Northern Illinois University; and the Newberry Library Seminar in Early American History. Research for the paper was completed on a Newberry Library-National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship.

He was introduced directly to the *kitchen*, and requested to seat himself, while report should be made above stairs. The man came down directly, with a new varnish of civility suddenly spread over his face. He ushered him into the 'Squire's sitting-room, and left him to make his obeisance. Hancock remembered him, and addressed him kindly. George was anxious to get through, and he commenced a desperate speech—"as pretty a one," he says, "as he any way knew how,"—intended to announce the purpose of his visit, and to accomplish it, in the same breath.

"Very well, my lad," said the 'Squire—now take a chair, my lad."

He sat down, scared all the while (as he now confesses) "almost to death," while Hancock put his hand into his breeches-pocket and pulled out a crown-piece, which he placed softly in his hand, thanking him at the same time for his punctual attendance, and his compliments. He then invited his young friend to drink his health—called for wine—poured it out for him—and ticked glasses with him,—a feat in which Hewes, though he had never seen it performed before, having acquitted himself with a creditable dexterity, hastened to make his bow again, and secure his retreat, though not till the 'Squire had extorted a sort of half promise from him to come the next New-Year's—which, for a rarity, he never discharged.¹

The episode is a demonstration of what the eighteenth century called deference.

Another episode catches the point at which Hewes had arrived a decade and a half later. In 1778 or 1779, after one stint in the war on board a privateer and another in the militia, he was ready to ship out again, from Boston. As Thatcher tells the story: "Here he enlisted, or engaged to enlist, on board the Hancock, a twenty-gun ship, but not liking the manners of the Lieutenant very well, who ordered him one day in the streets to take his hat off to him—which he refused to do for any man,—he went aboard the 'Defence,' Captain Smedley, of Fairfield Connecticut."² This, with a vengeance, is the casting off of deference.

What had happened in the intervening years? What had turned the young shoemaker tongue-tied in the face of his betters into the defiant person who would not take his hat off for any man? And why should stories like this have stayed in his memory sixty and seventy years later?

¹ A Bostonian [Benjamin Bussey Thatcher], *Traits of the Tea Party; Being a Memoir of George R. T. Hewes, One of the Last of Its Survivors; With a History of That Transaction; Reminiscences of the Massacre, and the Siege, and Other Stories of Old Times* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1835), 52-55, hereafter cited as Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*.

² *Ibid.*, 226-227.

George Robert Twelves Hewes was born in Boston in 1742 and died in Richfield Springs, New York, in 1840. He participated in several of the principal political events of the American Revolution in Boston, among them the Massacre and the Tea Party, and during the war he served as a privateersman and militiaman. A shoemaker all his life, and intermittently or concurrently a fisherman, sailor, and farmer, he remained a poor man. He never made it, not before the war in Boston, not at sea, not after the war in Wrentham and Attleborough, Massachusetts, not in Otsego County, New York. He was a nobody who briefly became a somebody in the Revolution and, for a moment near the end of his life, a hero.

Hewes might have been unknown to posterity save for his longevity and a shift in the historical mood that rekindled the "spirit of '76." To Americans of the 1830s the Boston Tea Party had become a leading symbol of the Revolution, and Hewes lived long enough to be thought of as one of the last surviving participants, perhaps the very last. In 1833, when James Hawkes "discovered" him in the "obscurity" of upstate New York, Hewes was ninety-one but thought he was ninety-eight, a claim Hawkes accepted when he published the first memoir of Hewes that year.³ Thus in 1835 when Hewes was invited to Boston, people thought that this survivor of one of the greatest moments of the Revolution was approaching his one hundredth birthday and on "the verge of eternity," as a Fourth of July orator put it.⁴ He became a celebrity, the guest of honor on Independence Day, the subject of a second biography by Thatcher and of an oil portrait by Joseph Cole, which hangs today in Boston's Old State House.

To Thatcher, Hewes was one of the "humble classes" that made the success of the Revolution possible. How typical he was we can only suggest at this point in our limited knowledge of the "humble classes." Probably he was as representative a member of the "lower trades" of the cities and as much a rank-and-file participant in the political events and the war as historians have found. The two biographies, which come close to being oral histories (and give us clues to track down Hewes in other ways), provide an unusually rich cumulative record, over a very long period of time, of his thoughts, attitudes, and values. Consequently, we can answer, with varying degrees of satisfaction, a number of questions about one man of the "humble classes." About the "lower trades": why did a boy enter a craft with such bleak prospects as shoemaking? what was the life of an apprentice? what did it mean to be a shoemaker and a poor man in Boston? About the Revolution: what moved such a rank-and-file person

³ A Citizen of New York [James Hawkes], *A Retrospect of the Boston Tea-Party, with a Memoir of George R. T. Hewes, a Survivor of the Little Band of Patriots Who Drowned the Tea in Boston Harbour in 1773* (New York: S. Bliss, printer, 1834), hereafter cited as Hawkes, *Retrospect*.

⁴ *Evening Mercantile Journal* (Boston), July 6, 1835.

to action? what action did he take? may we speak of his "ideology"? does the evidence of his loss of deference permit us to speak of change in his consciousness? About the war: how did a poor man, an older man, a man with a family exercise his patriotism? what choices did he make? About the results of the Revolution: how did the war affect him? to what extent did he achieve his life goals? why did he go west? what did it mean to be an aged veteran of the Revolution? What, in sum, after more than half a century had passed, was the meaning of the Revolution to someone still in the "humble classes"?

I

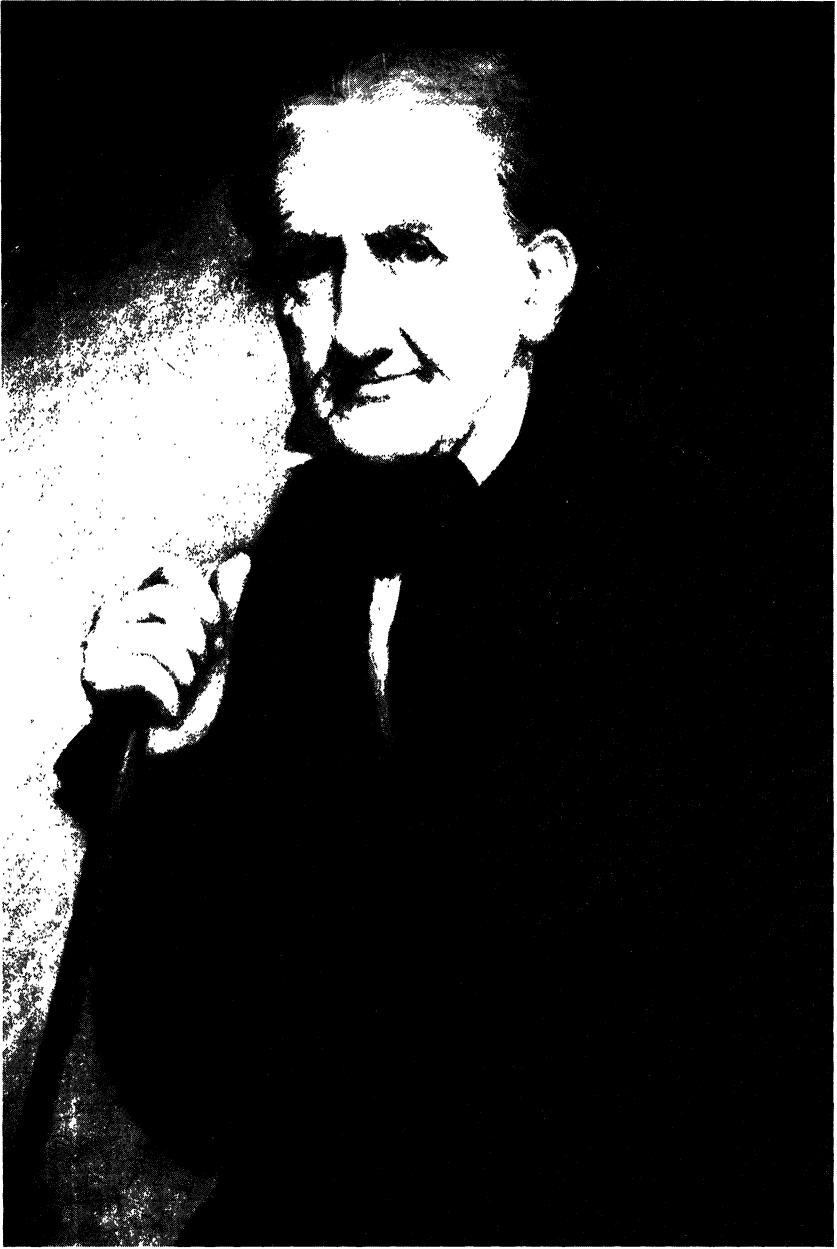
A wide variety of sources can be used to check Hewes's recollections, fill in what is missing in the biographies, and supply context. But to get at Hewes, the historian has essentially a major double task: separating him from his biographers and sifting the memories of a man in his nineties to recover actions and feelings from sixty to eighty years before. The problem is familiar to scholars who have used the rich body of W.P.A. narratives of former slaves taken down by interviewers in the 1930s and who have had to ask: who recorded these recollections, under what circumstances, and with what degree of skill? how does memory function in the aged? what is remembered best and least? how do subsequent emotions and values color or overlie the memory of events in the distant past?⁵

The two biographies of Hewes were part of "a spate" of narratives of the Revolution by ordinary soldiers and sailors that appeared in print, especially from the 1820s on.⁶ Together with the autobiographies, diaries, and journals, unpublished at the time, we know of at least 500 such first-person accounts of men who saw military service.⁷ Much of this remembering was stimulated by the pension laws of 1818 and especially of 1832 that required veterans to submit, in lieu of written records, "a very full account" of their military service. These laws produced no less than

⁵ C. Vann Woodward, "History from Slave Sources," *American Historical Review*, LXXIX (1974), 470-481. For the related problems in slave memoirs see John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South*, rev. ed. (New York, 1979), 369-378.

⁶ Michael Kammen, *A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and the Historical Imagination* (New York, 1978), 26; Richard M. Dorson, ed., *America Rebels: Narratives of the Patriots*, 2d ed. rev. (New York, 1966), 17. Dorson, defining "narrative" somewhat loosely, counted over 200 entries in the Library of Congress catalog; in his appendix he lists 37, 11 of which appeared between 1822 and 1833.

⁷ J. Todd White and Charles H. Lesser, eds., *Fighters for Independence: A Guide to Sources of Biographical Information on Soldiers and Sailors of the American Revolution* (Chicago, 1977), lists under "Diaries, Journals and Autobiographies" 538 entries, both published and in manuscript. Walter Wallace, "Oh, Liberty! Oh, Virtue! Oh,



George Robert Twelves Hewes ("The Centenarian" by Joseph G. Cole, Boston, 1835. Courtesy of The Bostonian Society, Old State House, Boston).

80,000 personal narratives—Hewes's among them—which are finally coming under the scrutiny of historians.⁸

Hawkes and Thatcher had different strengths and weaknesses. We know hardly anything about James Hawkes; he took the pseudonym "A New Yorker" and published in New York City. He may have been a journalist.⁹ He discovered Hewes by an "accidental concurrence of events" and interviewed him in his familiar surroundings in Richfield Springs over several days in 1833 around the Fourth of July. Hawkes's virtue was that he tried to take down Hewes in the first person, although more often than not he lapsed into the third person or interrupted Hewes's narrative with long digressions, padding the story. He did not know enough about either the Revolution or Boston to question Hewes or follow up his leads, and he had a tendency to use Hewes as an exemplar of the virtues of Benjamin Franklin and selfless patriotism. But in his ignorance he allowed Hewes to structure his own story and convey his own feelings. Thus the book at times has an "as told to" flavor, and when Hawkes allows Hewes to speak, we can agree that "his language is remarkable for its grammatical simplicity and correctness."¹⁰

Benjamin Bussey Thatcher, on the other hand, intruded, as the language of his account of the visit to John Hancock suggests. He could not resist embellishing Hewes's stories or inventing dialogue. He brought to Hewes the same compassion for the lowly and sense of the uses of history that he brought to other historical subjects. A Boston gentleman, reformer, abolitionist, Bowdoin graduate, and lawyer, at the age of twenty-six he had written a short biography of Phillis Wheatley, Boston's black poet of the eighteenth century, a memoir of a Liberian missionary,

My Country!' An Exploration of the Minds of New England Soldiers During the American Revolution" (M.A. thesis, Northern Illinois University, 1974), is based on 164 published diaries. Also relevant is Jesse Lemisch, "The American Revolution Bicentennial and the Papers of Great White Men," *American Historical Association, Newsletter*, IX (Nov., 1971), 7-21, as well as "The Papers of Great White Men," *Maryland Historian*, VI (1975), 43-50, and "The Papers of a Few Great Black Men and a Few Great White Women," *ibid.*, 60-66.

⁸ John C. Dann, ed., *The Revolution Remembered: Eyewitness Accounts of the War for Independence* (Chicago, 1980), introduction. For other scholars who have made use of the pension applications see the works cited in sec. VI below. John Shy and Dann are directing a project, "Data Bank for American Revolutionary Generation," William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich., based on samples from the 1818 and 1832 pension applications.

⁹ Cataloguers attribute the book to James Hawkes on the basis of the copyright entry on the overleaf of the title page. I am indebted to Walter Wallace for searching for Hawkes in the New York Public Library, unfortunately without success.

¹⁰ The body of Hawkes's book with the memoir runs 115 pages, about 27,000 words; a lengthy preface and an appendix bring it to 206 pages.

and four volumes on American Indians, two of them collections of biographies.¹¹ Thatcher talked to Hewes on the latter's "triumphal" return to Boston in 1835, walked him around town, primed his memory. He lifted almost everything in Hawkes (without attribution) but also extracted a good many new anecdotes, especially about Hewes's youth, and expanded others about the Revolution. Occasionally he was skeptical; he read old newspapers and talked to other survivors to check the background. Thatcher thus added to the record, although in a form and tone that often seem more his own than Hewes's. And while his interests as a reformer led him to inquire, for example, about schools and slavery in Hewes's Boston, they also led him to dissociate Hewes from the "mob," probably with some distortion. Thus Thatcher's portrayal, while fuller than Hawkes's, is also more flawed.¹²

Hewes's remembering, once distinguished from the overlay of these biographies, also had strengths and weaknesses. He was, to begin with, in remarkable physical condition. In 1833 Hawkes found his "physical and intellectual" powers "of no ordinary character." "I have generally enjoyed sound health," Hewes said. He showed few signs of his advanced age. His hair was light brown, salted with gray, and he had most of it. He was not bent down by his years but was "so perfectly erect" and moved "with so much agility and firmness . . . that he might be taken for a man in all the vigour of youth." He regularly walked two or three miles each day, and for his sessions with Hawkes he walked five miles back and forth to Hawkes's lodgings. He was of such an "active disposition" that Hawkes found he would hardly stay put long enough to be interviewed. When Hewes became excited, his "dark blue eyes," which Hawkes called "an index to an intelligent and vigorous mind," would "sparkle with a glow of lustre."¹³ Thatcher was impressed with "a strength and clearness in his faculties" often not present in men twenty years younger. "Both his mental and bodily faculties are wonderfully hale. He converses with almost the promptness of middle life." His mind did not wander. He answered questions directly, and "he can seldom be detected in any redundancy or deficiency of expression." He was not garrulous.¹⁴

Both men were amazed at Hewes's memory. Thatcher found it "so extraordinary" that at times it "absolutely astonished" him.¹⁵ Hewes recounted details from many stages of his life: from his childhood, youth, and young adulthood, from the years leading up to the Revolution, from

¹¹ *Dictionary of American Biography*, s.v. "Thatcher, Benjamin Bussey." See also Nehemiah Cleaveland, *History of Bowdoin College. With Biographical Sketches of its Graduates . . .*, ed. Alpheus Spring Packard (Boston, 1882), 356-358.

¹² Thatcher's book has 242 pages, about 49,000 words, plus a short appendix.

¹³ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 13-16, 85-93.

¹⁴ Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, iv, 250-253.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 250, and examples at 52, 89, 95, 112.

seven years of war. While he told next to nothing about the next half-century of his life, his memory of recent events was clear. He graphically recalled a trip to Boston in 1821. He remembered names, a remarkable array of them that Thatcher checked.¹⁶ He remembered how things looked; he even seemed to recall how things tasted. Most important, he remembered his own emotions, evoking them once again. He seems to have kept no diary or journal, and by his own claim, which Hawkes accepted, he had not read any accounts of the Tea Party or by implication any other events of the Revolution.¹⁷

His mind worked in ways that are familiar to students of the processes of memory.¹⁸ Thus he remembered more for Thatcher in Boston in 1835 than for Hawkes in Richfield Springs in 1833. This is not surprising; he was warmed up and was responding to cues as he returned to familiar scenes and Thatcher asked him pointed questions. Having told many episodes of his life before—to his children and grandchildren, and to children and adults in Richfield Springs—he thus had rehearsed them and they came out as adventure stories.

His memory also displayed common weaknesses. He had trouble with his age, which may not have been unusual at a time when birthdays were not much celebrated and birth certificates not issued.¹⁹ He had trouble with sequences of events and with the intervals of time between events. He was somewhat confused, for example, about his military tours of duty, something common in other veterans' narratives.²⁰ He also got political events in Boston somewhat out of order, telescoping what for him had become one emotionally. Or he told his good stories first, following up with the less interesting ones. All this is harmless enough. He remembered, understandably, experiences that were pleasant, and while he did well with painful experiences that had been seared into him—like childhood punishments and the Boston Massacre—he “forgot” other

¹⁶ For example, Hewes gave Hawkes, who had no way of prompting or correcting him, the more or less correct names and occupations of the five victims of the Boston Massacre, five leading loyalist officials, and half-a-dozen relatives he visited in 1821. A typical error was “Leonard Pitt” for Lendell Pitts as his “Captain” at the Tea Party.

¹⁷ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 28.

¹⁸ See Ian M. L. Hunter, *Memory* (London, 1957), esp. chap. 6.

¹⁹ According to John R. Sellers, “many [veterans who applied for pensions under the 1818 act] did not know how old they were” (“The Origins and Careers of New England Soldiers, Non-Commissioned Officers, and Privates in the Massachusetts Continental Line” [unpubl. paper, American Historical Association, 1972], 4-5, cited with the author’s permission). Sellers was able to compute the ages of 396 men in a sample of 546.

²⁰ Dann, ed., *Revolution Remembered*, xx. For examples in which narratives faulty in some respects still checked out as essentially credible, see *ibid.*, 204-211, 240-250, 268-274.

experiences that were humiliating. There are also many silences in his life story, and where these cannot be attributed to his biographers' lack of interest (as in his humdrum life from 1783 to 1833), because his memory is so good we are tempted to see significance in these silences.

All in all, we are the beneficiaries in Hewes of a phenomenon psychologists recognize in "the final stage of memory" as "life review," characterized by "sudden emergence of memories and a desire to remember, and a special candour which goes with a feeling that active life is over, achievement is completed." A British historian who has taken oral history from the aged notes that "in this final stage there is a major compensation for the longer interval and the selectivity of the memory process, in an increased willingness to remember, and commonly too a diminished concern for fitting the story to the social norms of the audience. Thus bias from both repression and distortion becomes a less inhibiting difficulty, for both teller and historian."²¹

On balance, Hewes's memory was strong, yet what he remembered, as well as the meaning he attached to it, inevitably was shaped by his values, attitudes, and temperament. There was an overlay from Hewes as well as his biographers. First, he had a stake, both monetary and psychic, in his contribution to the Revolution. He had applied for a pension in October 1832; by the summer of 1833, when he talked to Hawkes, it had been granted. He had also become a personage of sorts in his own locale, at least on the Fourth of July. And when he talked with Thatcher he was bathed in Boston's recognition. Thus though he did not have to prove himself (as did thousands of other veterans waiting for action on their applications), he had spent many years trying to do just that. Moreover, he had to live up to his reputation and had the possibility of enhancing it.

Secondly, he may have imposed an overlay of his current religious values on the younger man. He had generally been "of a cheerful mind," he told Hawkes, and Thatcher spoke of the "cheerfulness and evenness of his temper."²² There is evidence for such traits earlier in his life. In his old age, however, he became a practicing Methodist—composed in the assurance of his own salvation, confident of his record of good deeds, and forgiving to his enemies. As a consequence he may well have blotted out some contrary feelings he had once held. One suspects he had been a much more angry and aggressive younger man than he or his biographers convey.

²¹ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford, 1978), 113 and chap. 4. For a remarkable example of this in a black sharecropper interviewed in his 85th year see Theodore Rosengarten, *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw* (New York, 1974). See also John Neuenschwander, "Remembrance of Things Past: Oral Historians and Long-Term Memory," *Oral History Review*, VI (1978), 45-53.

²² Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 93; Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 251.

Finally, in the 1830s he lived in a society that no longer bestowed the deference once reserved for old age and had never granted much respect to poor old shoemakers.²³ In the Revolution for a time it had been different; the shoemaker won recognition as a citizen; his betters sought his support and seemingly deferred to him. This contributed to a tendency, as he remembered the Revolution, not so much to exaggerate what he had done—he was consistently modest in his claims for himself—as to place himself closer to some of the great men of the time than is susceptible to proof. For a moment he was on a level with his betters. So he thought at the time, and so it grew in his memory as it disappeared in his life. And in this memory of an awakening to citizenship and recognition from his betters we shall argue—a memory with both substance and shadow—lay the meaning of the Revolution to George Hewes.

II

In 1756, when Hewes was fourteen, he was apprenticed to a shoemaker. Why did a boy become a shoemaker in mid-eighteenth-century Boston? The town's shoemakers were generally poor and their prospects were worsening. From 1756 to 1775, eight out of thirteen shoemakers who died and left wills at probate did not even own their own homes.²⁴ In 1790, shoemakers ranked thirty-eighth among forty-four occupations in mean tax assessments.²⁵

It was not a trade in which boys were eager to be apprentices. Few sons continued in their father's footsteps, as they did, for example, in prosperous trades like silversmithing or shipbuilding.²⁶ Leatherworkers, after

²³ See David Hackett Fischer, *Growing Old in America*, expanded ed. (New York, 1978), esp. chap. 2.

²⁴ Based on a computer print-out of all wills at probate entered at Suffolk County Court, kindly loaned to me by Gary B. Nash. For analysis of the context see his "Urban Wealth and Poverty in Pre-Revolutionary America," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, VI (1976), 545-584, and *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1979), chap. 7. Before 1735, eight shoemakers on the probate list ended up in the top 10% of wealthholders (albeit most at the bottom of that bracket), but from 1736 to 1775 only one did.

²⁵ Allan Kulikoff, "The Progress of Inequality in Revolutionary Boston," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., XXVIII (1971), 375-412; James A. Henretta, "Economic Development and Social Structure in Colonial Boston," *ibid.*, XXII (1965), 75-92. The 1771 tax assessment does not list occupations; the 1780 assessment, which does, is incomplete; the 1790 list is the first point at which occupations can be measured for wealth.

²⁶ In Nash's list of 61 shoemakers, 1685-1775, 7 names are repeated, appearing twice; after 1752, no name is repeated (see above, n. 24). For examples of trades passed down within families see Esther Forbes, *Paul Revere & the World He Lived In*

mariners, headed the list of artisans who got their apprentices from the orphans, illegitimate children, and boys put out to apprenticeship by Boston's Overseers of the Poor.²⁷ In England, shoemaking was a trade with proud traditions, symbolized by St. Crispin's Day, a shoemakers' holiday, a trade with a reputation for producing poets, philosophers, and politicians, celebrated by Elizabethan playwrights as "the gentle craft."²⁸ But there were few signs of a flourishing shoemaker culture in Boston before the Revolution. In children's lore shoemakers were proverbially poor, like the cobbler in a Boston chapbook who "labored hard and took a great deal of pains for a small livelihood."²⁹ Shoemakers, moreover, were low in status. John Adams spoke of shoemaking as "too mean and dimi[nu]tive an Occupation" to hold a client of his who wanted to "rise in the World."³⁰

Where one ended up in life depended very much on where one started out. George was born under the sign of the Bulls Head and Horns on Water Street near the docks in the South End. His father—also named George—was a tallow chandler and erstwhile tanner. Hewes drew the connections between his class origins and his life chances as he began his narrative for Hawkes:

My father, said he, was born in Wrentham in the state of Massachusetts, about twenty-eight miles from Boston. My grandfather having made no provision for his support, and being unable to give him an education, apprenticed him at Boston to learn a mechanical trade. . . .

In my childhood, my advantages for education were very limited, much more so than children enjoy at the present time in my native state. My whole education which my opportunities permitted me to acquire, consisted only of a moderate knowledge of reading and writing; my father's circumstances being confined to such humble

(Boston, 1942). For a family engaged in shipbuilding over six generations see Bernard Farber, *Guardians of Virtue: Salem Families in 1800* (New York, 1972), 104-108.

²⁷ Lawrence W. Towner, "The Indentures of Boston's Poor Apprentices: 1734-1805," Colonial Society of Massachusetts, *Transactions*, XLIII (1966), 417-468. The maritime, shipbuilding, and leather trades each accounted for about 8% of the boys; about 40% went into husbandry. From 1751 to 1776, 26 boys were put out to cordwainers, 6 in Boston, 20 in country towns.

²⁸ Eric Hobsbawm and Joan Scott, "Political Shoemakers," *Past and Present*, No. 89 (1980), 86-114, which the authors kindly allowed me to see in MS. See also Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1978), 38-39.

²⁹ *The Most Delightful History of the King and the Cobler . . .* ([Boston, 1774]), reprinted from an English chapbook; and also printed in *Crispin Anecdotes; Comprising Interesting Notices of Shoemakers . . .* (Sheffield, Eng., 1827).

³⁰ John Adams, June 17, 1760, in L. H. Butterfield *et al.*, eds., *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, I (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), 135.

means as he was enabled to acquire by his mechanical employment, I was kept running of errands, and exposed of course to all the mischiefs to which children are liable in populous cities.³¹

Hewes's family on his father's side was "no better off than what is called in New England *moderate*, and probably not as good."³² The American progenitor of the line seems to have come from Wales and was in Salisbury, near Newburyport, in 1677, doing what we do not know. Solomon Hewes, George Robert's grandfather, was born in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in 1674, became a joiner, and moved with collateral members of his family to Wrentham, originally part of Dedham, near Rhode Island. There he became a landholder; most of his brothers were farmers; two became doctors, one of whom prospered in nearby Providence. His son—our George's father—was born in 1701.³³ On the side of his mother, Abigail Seaver, Hewes's family was a shade different. They had lived for four generations in Roxbury, a small farming town immediately south of Boston across the neck. Abigail's ancestors seem to have been farmers, but one was a minister.³⁴ Her father, Shubael, was a country cordwainer who owned a house, barn, and two acres. She was born in 1711 and married in 1728.³⁵

George Robert Twelves Hewes, born August 25, 1742, was the sixth of nine children, the fourth of seven sons. Five of the nine survived childhood—his three older brothers, Samuel, Shubael, and Solomon, and a younger brother, Daniel. He was named George after his father, Robert after a paternal uncle, and the unlikely Twelves, he thought, for his mother's great uncle, "whose Christian name was Twelve, for whom she appeared to have great admiration. Why he was called by that singular name I never knew." More likely, his mother was honoring her own mother, also Abigail, whose maiden name was Twelves.³⁶

The family heritage to George, it might be argued, was more genetic than economic. He inherited a chance to live long: the men in the Seaver line were all long-lived. And he inherited his size. He was unusually short—five feet, one inch. "I have never acquired the ordinary weight or size of other men," Hewes told Hawkes, who wrote that "his whole

³¹ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 17-18.

³² Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 11.

³³ For a very full genealogy and family history of the several branches of the Hewes family see Eben Putnam, comp., *Lieutenant Joshua Hewes: A New England Pioneer and Some of his Descendants . . .* (New York, 1913).

³⁴ William B. Trask, "The Seaver Family," *New-England Historical and Genealogical Register*, XXVI (1872), 303-323.

³⁵ Will of Shubael Seaver, Suffolk Co. Probate Court, LII, 20-21, a copy of which was provided by Gary Nash.

³⁶ Trask, "Seaver Family," *NEHGR*, XXVI (1872), 306; Putnam, comp., *Joshua Hewes*, 318.

person is of a slight and slender texture." In old age he was known as "the little old man."³⁷ Anatomy is not destiny, but Hewes's short size and long name helped shape his personality. It was a big name for a small boy to carry. He was the butt of endless teasing jibes—George Robert what?—that Thatcher turned into anecdotes the humor of which may have masked the pain Hewes may have felt.³⁸

"Moderate" as it was, Hewes had a sense of family. Wrentham, town of his grandfather and uncles, was a place he would be sent as a boy, a place of refuge in the war, and after the war his home. He would receive an inheritance three times in his life, each one a reminder of the importance or potential importance of relatives. And he was quite aware of any relative of status, like Dr. Joseph Warren, a distant kinsman on his mother's side.³⁹

His father's life in Boston had been an endless, futile struggle to succeed as a tanner. Capital was the problem. In 1729 he bought a one-third ownership in a tannery for £600 in bills of credit. Two years later, he sold half of his third to his brother Robert, who became a working partner. The two brothers turned to a rich merchant, Nathaniel Cunningham, who put up £3500 in return for half the profits. The investment was huge: pits, a yard, workshops, hides, bark, two horses, four slaves, journeymen. For a time the tannery flourished. Then there was a disastrous falling out with Cunningham: furious fights, a raid on the yards, debtors' jail twice for George, suits and countersuits that dragged on in the courts for years. The Hewes brothers saw themselves as "very laborious" artisans who "managed their trade with good skill," only to be ruined by a wealthy, arrogant merchant. To Cunningham, they were incompetent and defaulters. Several years before George Robert was born, his father had fallen back to "butchering, tallow chandlery, hog killing, soap boiling &c."⁴⁰

The family was not impoverished. George had a memory as a little boy of boarding a ship with his mother to buy a small slave girl "at the rate of two dollars a pound."⁴¹ And there was enough money to pay the fees for his early schooling. But beginning in 1748, when he was six, there was a series of family tragedies. In 1748 an infant brother, Joseph, died, followed later in the year by his sister Abigail, age thirteen, and brother

³⁷ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 18, 86.

³⁸ Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 26-33. Hewes did not volunteer these anecdotes to Hawkes.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 129, 132. Warren was his grandmother's sister's son.

⁴⁰ Petitions by Nathaniel Cunningham and George and Robert Hewes, 1740-1743, MS, Massachusetts Archives, Manufactures, LIX, 316-319, 321-324, 334-337, 342-345, State House, Boston. I am indebted to Ruth Kennedy for running down Hewes and his family in a variety of legal and other sources in Boston, and to Gary Nash for his help in interpreting the sources.

⁴¹ Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 38.

Ebenezer, age two. In 1749 his father died suddenly of a stroke, leaving the family nothing it would seem, his estate tangled in debt and litigation.⁴² George's mother would have joined the more than one thousand widows in Boston, most of whom were on poor relief.⁴³ Sometime before 1755 she died. In 1756 Grandfather Seaver died, leaving less than £15 to be divided among George and his four surviving brothers. Thus in 1756, at the age of fourteen, when boys were customarily put out to apprenticeship, George was an orphan, the ward of his uncle Robert, as was his brother Daniel, age twelve, each with a legacy of £2 17s. 4d. Uncle Robert, though warmly recollected by Hewes, could not do much to help him: a gluemaker, he was struggling to set up his own manufactory.⁴⁴ Nor could George's three older brothers, whom he also remembered fondly. In 1756 they were all in the "lower" trades. Samuel, age twenty-six, and Solomon, twenty-two, were fishermen; Shubael, twenty-four, was a butcher.

The reason why George was put to shoemaking becomes clearer: no one in the family had the indenture fee to enable him to enter one of the more lucrative "higher" trades. Josiah Franklin, also a tallow chandler, could not make his son Benjamin a cutler because he lacked the fee.⁴⁵ But in shoemaking the prospects were so poor that some masters would pay to get an apprentice. In addition, George was too small to enter trades that demanded brawn; he could hardly have become a ropewalk worker, a housewright, or a shipwright. Ebenezer McIntosh, the Boston shoemaker who led the annual Pope's Day festivities and the Stamp Act demonstrations, was a small man.⁴⁶ The trade was a sort of dumping ground for poor boys who could not handle heavy work. Boston's Overseers of the Poor

⁴² Letter of Administration, Estate of George Hewes, Suffolk Co. Probate Court, 1766, Docket No. 13906.

⁴³ Alexander Keyssar, "Widowhood in Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts: A Problem in the History of the Family," *Perspectives in American History*, VIII (1974), 98, 116-119. A census of 1742 showed 1,200 widows, "one thousand whereof are in low circumstances," in a population of 16,382 (Nash, *Urban Crucible*, 172).

⁴⁴ Petition of Robert Hewes, Nov. 1752, MS, Mass. Archs., Manufactures, LIX, 372-374. He is not to be confused with Robert Hewes (1751-1830) of Boston, a highly successful glassmaker (*DAB*, s.v. "Hewes, Robert"), or the father of this man, also Robert, who migrated from England c. 1751. See petitions of Robert Hewes to the General Court, May 25 and June 8, 1757 (in a different hand from that of Uncle Robert), Mass. Archs., Manufactures, LIX, 434-435.

⁴⁵ Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree et al. (New Haven, Conn., 1964), 57.

⁴⁶ George P. Anderson, "Ebenezer McIntosh: Stamp Act Rioter and Patriot," *Col. Soc. Mass., Trans.*, XXVI (1927), 15-64 (hereafter cited as Anderson, "Ebenezer McIntosh"), and "A Note on Ebenezer McIntosh," *ibid.*, 348-361.

acted on this assumption in 1770;⁴⁷ so did recruiting officers for the American navy forty years later.⁴⁸ The same was true in Europe.⁴⁹ Getting into a good trade required “connections”; the family connections were in the leather trades, through Uncle Robert, the gluemaker, or brother Shubael, the butcher. Finally, there was a family tradition. Grandfather Shubael had been a cordwainer, and on his death in 1756 there might even have been a prospect of acquiring his tools and lasts. In any case, the capital that would be needed to set up a shop of one’s own was relatively small. And so the boy became a shoemaker—because he had very little choice.

III

Josiah Franklin had known how important it was to place a boy in a trade that was to his liking. Otherwise there was the threat that Benjamin made explicit: he would run away to sea. Hawkes saw the same thrust in Hewes’s life: shoemaking “was never an occupation of his choice,” he “being inclined to more active pursuits.”⁵⁰ George was the wrong boy to put in a sedentary trade that was not to his liking. He was what Bostonians called “saucy”; he was always in Dutch. The memories of his childhood and youth that Thatcher elicited were almost all of defying authority—his mother, his teachers at dame school, his schoolmaster, his aunt, his shoemaker master, a farmer, a doctor.

Hewes spoke of his mother only as a figure who inflicted punishment for disobedience. The earliest incident he remembered could have happened only to a poor family living near the waterfront. When George was about six, Abigail Hewes sent him off to the nearby shipyards with a basket to gather chips for the fire. At the water’s edge George put the basket aside, straddled some floating planks to watch the fish, fell in, and sank to the bottom. He was saved only when some ship carpenters saw the

⁴⁷ The Overseers of the Poor first put out Thomas Banks, age eight, to a farmer, William Williams. In 1770 Williams informed the Overseer that Thomas “is now seventeen years . . . old and about as big as an ordinary Country boy of thirteen . . . and scarcely able to perform the service of one of our boys of that age,” and so he placed him with a cordwainer. Williams to Royal Tyler, Jan. 23, 1770, in Towner, “Boston’s Poor Apprentices,” Col. Soc. Mass., *Trans.*, LXIII (1966), 430-431.

⁴⁸ James Biddle to David Conner, Aug. 9, 1813, Fourth Auditor Accounts Numerical Series, #1141, Record Group 217, National Archives, kindly brought to my attention by Christopher McKee.

⁴⁹ Hobsbawm and Scott write that “there is a good deal of evidence that small, weak or physically handicapped boys were habitually put to this trade” (“Political Shoemakers,” *Past and Present*, No. 89 [1980], 96-97).

⁵⁰ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 23-24; Franklin, *Autobiography*, ed. Labaree *et al.*, 57. For a boy whose threats forced his parents to allow him to go to sea see Lemisch, “Life of Andrew Sherburne,” sec. III.

basket without the boy, "found him motionless on the bottom, hooked him out with a boat hook, and rolled him on a tar barrel until signs of life were discovered." His mother nursed him back to health. Then she flogged him.⁵¹

The lesson did not take, nor did others in school. First there was a dame school with Miss Tinkum, wife of the town crier. He ran away. She put him in a dark closet. He dug his way out. The next day she put him in again. This time he discovered a jar of quince marmalade and devoured it. A new dame school with "mother McLeod" followed. Then school with "our famous Master Holyoke," which Hewes remembered as "little more than a series of escapes made or attempted from the reign of the birch."⁵²

Abigail Hewes must have been desperate to control George. She sent him back after one truancy with a note requesting Holyoke to give him a good whipping. Uncle Robert took pity and sent a substitute note. Abigail threatened, "If you run away again I shall go to school with you myself."⁵³ When George was about ten, she took the final step: she sent him to Wrentham to live with one of his paternal uncles. Here, George recalled, "he spent several years of his boyhood . . . in the monotonous routine of his Uncle's farm." The only incident he recounted was of defying his aunt. His five-year-old cousin hit him in the face with a stick "without any provocation." George cursed the boy out, for which his aunt whipped him, and when she refused to do the same with her son, George undertook to "chastise" him himself. "I caught my cousin at the barn" and applied the rod. The aunt locked him up but his uncle let him go, responsive to his plea for "equal justice."⁵⁴

Thus when George entered his apprenticeship, if he was not quite the young whig his biographers made him out to be, he was not a youth who would suffer arbitrary authority easily. His master, Downing, had an irascible side and was willing to use a cowhide. Hewes lived in Downing's attic with a fellow apprentice, John Gilbert. All the incidents Hewes recalled from this period had two motifs: petty defiance and a quest for food. There was an escapade on a Saturday night when the two apprentices made off for Gilbert's house and bought a loaf of bread, a pound of butter, and some coffee. They returned after curfew to encounter an enraged Downing, whom they foiled by setting pans and tubs for him to trip over when he came to the door. There was an excursion to Roxbury on Training Day, the traditional apprentices' holiday in Boston, with fellow apprentices and his younger brother. Caught stealing apples, they were

⁵¹ Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 17-18. For a boy in the laboring classes who fell into a cistern of rain water and was rescued from drowning see Isaiah Thomas, *Three Autobiographical Fragments* . . . (Worcester, Mass., 1962), 7.

⁵² Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 18-26.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵⁴ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 21-22.

taken before the farmer, who was also justice of the peace and who laughed uproariously at Hewes's name and let him go. There was an incident with a doctor who inoculated Hewes and a fellow worker for smallpox and warned them to abstain from food. Sick, fearful of death, Hewes and his friend consumed a dish of venison in melted butter and a mug of flip—and lived to tell the tale.⁵⁵

These memories of youthful defiance and youthful hunger lingered on for seventy years: a loaf of bread and a pound of butter, a parcel of apples, a dish of venison. This shoemaker's apprentice could hardly have been well fed or treated with affection.

The proof is that Hewes tried to end his apprenticeship by the only way he saw possible: escape to the military. "After finding that my depressed condition would probably render it impracticable for me to acquire that education requisite for civil employments," he told Hawkes, "I had resolved to engage in the military service of my country, should an opportunity present." Late in the 1750s, possibly in 1760, as the fourth and last of England's great colonial wars with France ground on and his majesty's army recruiters beat their drums through Boston's streets, Hewes and Gilbert tried to enlist. Gilbert was accepted, but Hewes was not. Recruiting captains were under orders to "enlist no Roman-Catholic, nor any under five feet two inches high without their shoes." "I could not pass muster," Hewes told Hawkes, "because I was not tall enough."⁵⁶ As Thatcher embroiders Hawkes's story, Hewes then "went to the shoe shop of several of his acquaintances and heightened his heels by several taps [;] then stuffing his stocking with paper and rags," he returned. The examining captain saw through the trick and rejected him again. Frustrated, humiliated, vowing he would never return to Downing, he took an even more desperate step: he went down to the wharf and tried to enlist on a British ship of war. "His brothers, however, soon heard of it and interfered," and, in Thatcher's words, "he was compelled to abandon that plan." Bostonians like Solomon and Samuel Hewes, who made their living on the waterfront, did not need long memories to remember the city's massive resistance to the impressment sweeps of 1747 and to know that the British navy would be, not escape, but another prison.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 29-47. Thatcher presented this story as occurring shortly after Hewes became 21, which might make it 1764, the year of a massive smallpox inoculation campaign in Boston.

⁵⁶ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 23-25. See also *By His Excellency William Shirley, Esq. . . .* (Boston, Apr. 17, 1755), with the eligibility requirement, and *By His Excellency Thomas Pownall . . .* (Boston, Apr. 10, 1758, and Mar. 14, 1760), broadsides, Lib. Cong.

⁵⁷ Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 47-49. For the anti-impressment riots of 1747 see Jesse Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., XXV (1968), 371-407, and John Lax and William Pencak, "The Knowles Riot and the Crisis of the 1740's in Massachusetts," *Perspectives Am. Hist.*, X (1976), 163-214.

About this time, shoemaker Downing failed after fire swept his shop (possibly the great fire of 1760).⁵⁸ This would have freed Hewes of his indenture, but he was not qualified to be a shoemaker until he had completed apprenticeship. As Hewes told it, he therefore apprenticed himself “for the remainder of his minority,” that is, until he turned twenty-one, to Harry Rhoades, who paid him \$40. In 1835 he could tell Thatcher how much time he then had left to serve, down to the month and day. Of the rest of his “time” he had no bad memories.⁵⁹

Apprenticeship had a lighter side. Hewes’s anecdotes give tantalizing glimpses into an embryonic apprentice culture in Boston to which other sources attest—glimpses of pranks played on masters, of revelry after curfew, of Training Day, when the militia displayed its maneuvers and there was drink, food, and “frolicking” on the Common. One may speculate that George also took part in the annual Pope’s Day festival, November 5, when apprentices, servants, artisans in the lower trades, and young people of all classes took over the town, parading effigies of Pope, Devil, and Pretender, exacting tribute from the better sort, and engaging in a battle royal between North End and South End Pope’s Day “companies.”⁶⁰

Hewes’s stories of his youth, strained as they are through Thatcher’s condescension, hint at his winning a place for himself as the small schoolboy who got the better of his elders, the apprentice who defied his master, perhaps even a leader among his peers. There are also hints of the adult personality. Hewes was punished often, but if childhood punishment inured some to pain, it made Hewes reluctant to inflict pain on others. He developed a generous streak that led him to reach out to others in trouble. When Downing, a broken man, was on the verge of leaving for Nova Scotia to start anew, Hewes went down to his ship and gave him half of the \$40 fee Rhoades had paid him. Downing broke into tears. The story smacks of the Good Samaritan, of the Methodist of the 1830s counting his good deeds; and yet the memory was so vivid, wrote Thatcher, that “his

⁵⁸ This may have been the great fire of 1760. I find no record of a Downing in the claims filed by 365 sufferers in “Records Relating to the Early History of Boston,” *Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston* (Boston, 1876-1909), XXIX, hereafter cited as *Record Commissioners’ Reports*, but the published records are incomplete.

⁵⁹ Thatcher spelled his name Rhoades (*Memoir of Hewes*, 49-50). Henry Roads is listed as a cordwainer assigned an apprentice Oct. 30, 1752, in Towner, “Boston’s Poor Apprentices,” *Col. Soc. Mass., Trans.*, XLIII (1966), Table, [441]. If the apprenticeship ran the customary seven years, Rhoades (or Roads) would have needed another one in 1760, which would fit Hewes’s story.

⁶⁰ Alfred Young, “Pope’s Day, Tar and Feathers, and Cornet Joyce, Jun: From Ritual to Rebellion in Boston” (unpubl. MS, Anglo-American Labor Historians’ Conference, 1973). See also Thomas, *Three Autobiographical Fragments*, 22-25, for one apprentice’s near-fatal participation.

features light up even now with a gleam of rejoicing pride." Hewes spoke later of the "tender sympathies of my nature."⁶¹ He did not want to be, but he was a fit candidate for the "gentle craft" he was about to enter.

IV

In Boston from 1763, when he entered his majority, until 1775, when he went off to war, Hewes never made a go of it as a shoemaker. He remembered these years more fondly than he had lived them. As Hawkes took down his story, shifting from the third to the first person:

Hewes said he cheerfully submitted to the course of life to which his destinies directed.

He built him a shop and pursued the private avocation of his trade for a considerable length of time, until on the application of his brother he was induced to go with him on two fishing voyages to the banks of New Foundland, which occupied his time for two years.

After the conclusion of the French war . . . he continued at Boston, except the two years absence with his brother.

During that period, said Hewes, when I was at the age of twenty-six, I married the daughter of Benjamin Sumner, of Boston. At the time of our intermarriage, the age of my wife was seventeen. We lived together very happily seventy years. She died at the age of eighty-seven.

At the time when the British troops were first stationed at Boston, we had several children, the exact number I do not recollect. By our industry and mutual efforts we were improving our condition.⁶²

Thatcher added a few bits to this narrative, some illuminating. The "little shop was at the head of Griffin's Wharf," later the site of the Tea Party. Benjamin Sumner, "if we mistake not," was a "sexton of one of the principal churches in town." His wife was a "washer-woman" near the Mill Pond, assisted by her five daughters. Hewes courted one of the girls when he "used to go to the house regularly every Saturday night to pay Sally for the week's washing." The father was stern, the swain persistent, and after a couple of years George and Sally were married. "The business was good, and growing better," Thatcher wrote, "especially as it became more and more fashionable to encourage our own manufactures."⁶³

The reality was more harsh. What kind of shoemaker was Hewes? He had his own shop—this much is clear, but the rest is surmise. There were

⁶¹ Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 50-52. For another anecdote about a gift of food during the siege of Boston see *ibid.*, 204.

⁶² Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 26-27.

⁶³ Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 58-64.

at that time in Boston about sixty to seventy shoemakers, most of whom seem to have catered to the local market.⁶⁴ If Hewes was typical, he would have made shoes to order, "bespoke" work; this would have made him a cordwainer. And he would have repaired shoes; this would have made him a cobbler. Who were his customers? No business records survive. A shoemaker probably drew his customers from his immediate neighborhood. Located as he was near the waterfront and the ropewalks, Hewes might well have had customers of the "meaner" sort. In a ward inhabited by the "middling" sort he may also have drawn on them. When the British troops occupied Boston, he did some work for them. Nothing suggests that he catered to the "carriage trade."⁶⁵

Was his business "improving" or "growing better"? Probably it was never very good and grew worse. From his own words we know that he took off two years on fishing voyages with his brothers. He did not mention that during this period he lived for a short time in Roxbury.⁶⁶ His prospects were thus not good enough to keep him in Boston. His marriage is another clue to his low fortune. Sally (or Sarah) Sumner's father was a sexton so poor that his wife and daughters had to take in washing. The couple was married by the Reverend Samuel Stillman of the First Baptist Church, which suggests that this was the church that Benjamin Sumner served.⁶⁷ Though Stillman was respected, First Baptist was not "one of the

⁶⁴ My estimate. There were 78 shoemakers in Boston in 1790, when there were 2,995 people on the assessment rolls in a population of 18,000 (Kulikoff, "Progress of Inequality," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., XXVIII [1971], 412). I count 26 shoemakers in 1780, when there were 2,225 on the assessment rolls in a population of less than 15,000 and at a time when poorer men were apt to be at war (Boston Assessing Dept., *Assessors' "Talking Books" of the Town of Boston 1780* [Boston, 1912]). If the population of Boston was 20% smaller in 1774 than in 1790, with a proportional loss of shoemakers, it would have included 63 shoemakers. For comparisons of occupational breakdowns see Jacob Price, "Economic Function and the Growth of American Port Towns in the Eighteenth Century," *Perspectives Am. Hist.*, VIII (1974), 176, 181.

⁶⁵ See Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 39-40, 85, for evidence that he made and repaired shoes. Griffin's Wharf was in the area of the tenth and eleventh wards where in 1771 the mean tax assessment was £193 and £254, twice as high as the mean in the crowded North End wards but considerably below the mean of £695 in the center of town (see Kulikoff, "Progress of Inequality," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., XXVIII [1971], 395, map).

⁶⁶ Putnam, comp., *Joshua Hewes*, 335.

⁶⁷ "Boston Town Records," in *Record Commissioners' Reports*, III, 65; "Boston Marriages, 1752-1809," *ibid.*, XXX, 65; and Samuel Stillman, "Record of Marriages from the Year 1761" indicate marriage by Stillman. The records of the First Baptist Church, including the Minutes, List of Adult Baptisms and Pew Proprietors Record Book, do not show the names of either the Sumners or the Heweses as members or of Sumner (or anyone else) as sexton (MS, Andover Newton Theological Seminary, Andover, Mass.). Researched by Elaine Weber Pascu.

principal churches in town," as Thatcher guessed, but one of the poorest and smallest, with a congregation heavy with laboring people, sailors, and blacks.⁶⁸ Marriage, one of the few potential sources of capital for an aspiring tradesman, as Benjamin Franklin made clear in his autobiography, did not lift Hewes up.

Other sources fill in what Hewes forgot. He married in January 1768. In September 1770 he landed in debtors' prison. In 1767 he had contracted a debt of £6 8s. 3d. to Thomas Courtney, a merchant tailor, for "making a sapped coat & breeches of fine cloth." The shoemaker bought this extravagant outfit when he was courting. What other way was there to persuade Sally's parents that he had good prospects? Over the three years since, he had neither earned enough to pay the debt nor accumulated £9 property that might be confiscated to satisfy it. "For want of Goods or Estate of the within named George Robt Twelve Hewes, I have taken his bodey & committed him to his majesty's goal [*sic*] in Boston," wrote Constable Thomas Rice on the back of the writ. There may have been a touch of political vindictiveness in the action: Courtney was a rich tory later banished by the state.⁶⁹ Who got Hewes out of jail? Perhaps his uncle Robert, perhaps a brother.

Once out of jail, Hewes stayed poor. The Boston tax records of 1771, the only ones that have survived for these years, show him living as a lodger in the house of Christopher Ranks, a watchmaker, in the old North End. He was not taxed for any property.⁷⁰ In 1773 he and his family, which now included three children, were apparently living with his uncle Robert in the South End; at some time during these years before the war they also lived with a brother.⁷¹ After almost a decade on his own, Hewes

⁶⁸ The First Baptist Church had "not 70 members" before 1769 and about 80 more during the next three years (Isaac Backus, *History of New England, with Particular Reference to the . . . Baptists*, III [Boston, 1796], 125-126). See also Nathan Eusebius Wood, *The History of the First Baptist Church of Boston (1665-1899)* (Philadelphia, 1899), 266-267. After the great fire of 1760 the church gave £143 to charity compared, for example, to £1862 from Old South and £418 from Old North. See Franklin Bowditch Dexter, ed., *Extracts from the Itineraries and Other Miscellanies of Ezra Stiles . . .* (New Haven, Conn., 1916), 120.

⁶⁹ Writ of Attachment on George Robert Twelves Hewes, including Hewes's note of indebtedness to Courtney, Sept. 3, 1770, Suffolk Co. Court, Case #89862. Ruth Kennedy discovered this document. For Courtney see E. Alfred Jones, *The Loyalists of Massachusetts: Their Memorials, Petitions and Claims* (London 1930), 103.

⁷⁰ Bettye Hobbs Pruitt, ed., *The Massachusetts Tax Valuation List of 1771* (Boston, 1978), 14-15. Hewes is listed only for one "Polls Rateable." Christopher Ranks is listed as the owner. Stephanie G. Wolf brought this publication to my attention. Ranks is listed in the Thwing File, Massachusetts Historical Society, as a shopkeeper in 1750, a clockmaker in 1751, and a watchmaker in 1788.

⁷¹ Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 84, 204.

could not afford his own place. In January 1774 he inadvertently summed up his condition and reputation in the course of a violent street encounter. Damned as “a rascal” and “a vagabond” who had no right to “speak to a gentleman in the street,” Hewes retorted that he was neither “and though a poor man, in as good credit in town” as his well-to-do antagonist.⁷²

The economic odds were against a Boston shoemaker thriving these years. Even the movement “to encourage our manufactures” may have worked against him, contrary to Thatcher. The patriot boycott would have raised his hopes; the Boston town meeting of 1767 put men’s and women’s shoes on the list of items Bostonians were encouraged to buy from American craftsmen.⁷³ But if this meant shoes made in Lynn—the manufacturing town ten miles to the north that produced 80,000 shoes in 1767 alone—it might well have put Hewes at a competitive disadvantage, certainly for the ladies’ shoes for which Lynn already had a reputation. And if Hewes was caught up in the system whereby Lynn masters were already “putting out” shoes in Boston, he would have made even less.⁷⁴ Whatever the reason, the early 1770s were hard times for shoemakers; Ebenezer McIntosh also landed in debtors’ jail in 1770.⁷⁵

As a struggling shoemaker, what would have been Hewes’s aspirations? He does not tell us in so many words, but “the course of his life,” Hawkes was convinced, was marked “by habits of industry, integrity, temperance and economy”; in other words, he practiced the virtues set down by “another soap boiler and tallow chandler’s son” (Thatcher’s phrase for Benjamin Franklin). “From childhood,” Hewes told Hawkes, “he has been accustomed to rise very early and expose himself to the morning air; that his father compelled him to do this from his infancy.” (“Early to bed, Early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.”) “I was often . . . admonished,” said Hewes, “of the importance of faithfulness in executing

⁷² *Massachusetts Gazette and Boston Weekly News-Letter*, Jan. 27, 1774, discussed below, sec. V.

⁷³ See *At a meeting of the Freeholders . . . the 28th of October, 1767* (Boston, 1767), broadside, Mass. Hist. Soc.

⁷⁴ Blanche Evans Hazard, *The Organizations of the Boot and Shoe Industry in Massachusetts before 1875* (Cambridge, Mass., 1921), 128, chap. 6, and appendices on 256-264. Lynn shoes were being sold in Boston at public auctions by the hundred pair, dozen pair, or single pair. Moreover, there were several hundred petty retailers, predominantly women, who would have been driven to the wall by the boycott and eager to sell such items. See Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 139-140, for a reprint of a newspaper notice, Feb. 14, 1770, from Isaac Vibert implying a putting-out system.

⁷⁵ *Peter Oliver’s Origin & Progress of the American Rebellion: A Tory View*, ed. Douglass Adair and John A. Schutz (San Marino, Calif., 1961), 54-55. Similarly in 1771, one in six Philadelphia shoemakers was on poor relief (see Billy G. Smith, “Material Lives of Laboring Philadelphians, 1750 to 1800,” *WMQ*, 3d Ser., XXXVIII [1981], 163-202).

the commands of my parents, or others who had a right to my services." Thatcher also reported that "he makes it a rule to rise from the table with an appetite, and another to partake of but a single dish at a meal." ("A Fat kitchen makes a lean will, as Poor Richard says.")⁷⁶

Poor Richard spoke to and for artisans at every level—masters, journeymen, and apprentices—whose goal was "independence" or "a competency" in their trade. What he advocated, we need remind ourselves, "was not unlimited acquisition but rather prosperity, which was the mid-point between the ruin of extravagance and the want of poverty. The living he envisaged was a decent middling wealth, which could only be attained through unremitting labor and self-control."⁷⁷ Hewes's likely goal, then, was to keep his shop so that his shop would keep him.

But he could no more live by Poor Richard's precepts than could Franklin. "Industry" must have come hard. He was in an occupation "never of his choice." How could he "stick to his last" when he was "inclined towards more active pursuits"? "Avoid, above all else, debt," counselled Poor Richard, warning that "fond pride of dress is sure a very curse; E'er Fancy you consult, consult your purse." But Hewes surrendered to pride and as a consequence to the warden of the debtors' jail. "Economy"—that is, saving—produced no surplus. And so he would succumb, when war presented the opportunity, to the gamble for sudden wealth. He was as much the object as the exemplar of Poor Richard's advice, as indeed was Franklin himself.

If Hewes's memories softened such realities, in other ways his silences spoke. He said nothing about being part of any of Boston's traditional institutions—church, town meeting, or private associations. He was baptized in Old South, a Congregational church, and married by the minister of the First Baptist Church; there is no evidence that he took part in either.⁷⁸ In his old age a convert to Methodism, a churchgoer, and Bible

⁷⁶ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 20, 89, 92; Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 251-252; Richard Saunders, *Poor Richard Improved: Being an Almanac and Ephemeris . . . for the Year of Our Lord 1758 . . .* (Philadelphia, 1758), also appearing as *Father Abraham's Speech . . .* (Boston, n.d. [1758, 1760]), a compilation of aphorisms from the previous 26 almanacs. See Leonard W. Labaree *et al.*, eds., *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, VII (New Haven, Conn., 1963), 326-355.

⁷⁷ J. E. Crowley, *This Sheba, Self: The Conceptualization of Economic Life in Eighteenth-Century America*, The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, XCII (Baltimore, 1974), 84. See especially James A. Henretta, "The Study of Social Mobility: Ideological Assumptions and Conceptual Bias," *Labor History*, XVIII (1977), 165-178.

⁷⁸ Hewes is listed in the baptismal records of Old South as having been christened on Sept. 26, 1742 (O.S.). See Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 255. There is no other trace of Hewes in Old South records, searched by Elaine W. Pascu. I am indebted to Charles W. Akers for help in identifying and locating Boston church records.

reader, he reminisced to neither biographer about the religion of youth.

Nor does he seem to have taken part in town government. He was not a taxpayer in 1771. He probably did not own enough property to qualify as a voter for either provincial offices (£40 sterling) or town offices (£20 sterling).⁷⁹ Recollecting the political events of the Revolution, he did not speak of attending town meetings until they became what patriots called meetings of "the whole body of the people," without regard to property. The town had to fill some two hundred minor positions; it was customary to stick artisans with the menial jobs. Hewes's father was hogreeve and measurer of boards. Harry Rhoades held town offices. McIntosh was made a sealer of leather. Hewes was appointed to nothing.⁸⁰

He does not seem to have belonged to any associations. McIntosh was in a fire company. So was Hewes's brother Shubael. Hewes was not. Shubael and a handful of prosperous artisans became Masons. Hewes did not.⁸¹ It was not that he was a loner. There was simply not much for a poor artisan to belong to.⁸² There was no shoemakers' society or general society of mechanics. Shoemakers had a long tradition of taking ad hoc collective action, as did other Boston craftsmen, and Hewes may have participated in such occasional informal activities of the trade.⁸³ Very likely he drilled in the militia with other artisans on Training Day (size would not have barred him). He seems to have known many artisans and recalled their names in describing events. So it is not hard to imagine him at a South End tavern enjoying a mug of flip with Adam Colson, leatherworker, or Patrick Carr, breechesmaker. Nor is it difficult to imagine him in the streets on November 5, in the South End Pope's Day company captained by

⁷⁹ Chilton Williamson, *American Suffrage: From Property to Democracy, 1760-1860* (Princeton, N.J., 1960), 13, 16. See *Notification to Voters*, William Cooper, *Town Clerk*, May 1, 1769, publicizing the property requirement, and *Notification*, Mar. 17, 1768, warning that "a strict scrutiny will be made as to the qualification of voters" (broadside, Lib. Cong.). The average total vote in annual elections at official town meetings from 1763 to 1774 was 555; the high was 1,089 in 1763 (see Alan and Catherine Day, "Another Look at the Boston Caucus," *Journal of American Studies*, V [1971], 27-28).

⁸⁰ For the father see Putnam, comp., *Joshua Hewes*, 321, and for McIntosh see Anderson, "Ebenezer McIntosh," 26-28. I find no record of Hewes in "Records Relating to the Early History of Boston," in *Record Commissioners' Reports*, XIV-XX. For the wealth of leaders of the town meeting see Edward M. Cook, Jr., *The Fathers of the Towns: Leadership and Community Structure in Eighteenth-Century New England*, The Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science, XCIV (Baltimore, 1976), chaps. 2, 3.

⁸¹ For Shubael see Putnam, comp., *Joshua Hewes*, 332, and for McIntosh see Anderson, "Ebenezer McIntosh," 25.

⁸² For the low level of associations see Richard D. Brown, "Emergence of Voluntary Associations in Massachusetts, 1760-1830," *Journal of Voluntary Action Research*, II (1973), 64-73.

⁸³ Mary Roys Baker, "Anglo-Massachusetts Trade Union Roots, 1130-1790," *Labor Hist.*, XIV (1973), 335, 362, 365-367, 371, 381-383, 388, 394.

McIntosh. After all what else was there in respectable Boston for him to belong to? All this is conjecture, but it is clear that, though he lived in Boston proper, he was not part of proper Boston—not until the events of the Revolution.

V

Between 1768 and 1775, the shoemaker became a citizen—an active participant in the events that led to the Revolution, an angry, assertive man who won recognition as a patriot. What explains the transformation? We have enough evidence to take stock of Hewes's role in three major events of the decade: the Massacre (1770), the Tea Party (1773), and the tarring and feathering of John Malcolm (1774).

Thatcher began the story of Hewes in the Revolution at the Stamp Act but based his account on other sources and even then claimed no more than that Hewes was a bystander at the famous effigy-hanging at the Liberty Tree, August 14, 1765, that launched Boston's protest. "The town's-people left their work—and Hewes, his hammer among the rest—to swell the multitude." The only episode for which Thatcher seems to have drawn on Hewes's personal recollection was the celebration of the repeal of the act in May 1766, at which Hewes remembered drinking from the pipe of madeira that John Hancock set out on the Common. "Such a day has not been seen in Boston before or since," wrote Thatcher.⁸⁴

It is possible that Thatcher's bias against mobs led him to draw a curtain over Hewes's role. It is reasonable to suppose that if Hewes was a member of the South End Pope's Day company, he followed McIntosh who was a major leader of the crowd actions of August 14 and 26, the massive processions of the united North and South End companies on November 1 and 5, and the forced resignation of stampmaster Andrew Oliver in December. But it is not likely; in fact, he may well have been off on fishing voyages in 1765. Perhaps the proof is negative: when Hewes told Hawkes the story of his role in the Revolution, he began not at the Stamp Act but at the Massacre, five years later. On the night of the Massacre, March 5, Hewes was in the thick of the action. What he tells us about what brought him to King Street, what brought others there, and what he did during and after this tumultuous event gives us the perspective of a man in the street.

The presence of British troops in Boston beginning in the summer of 1768—four thousand soldiers in a town of fewer than sixteen thousand inhabitants—touched Hewes personally. Anecdotes about soldiers flowed

⁸⁴ Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 68, 72. For crowd events in Boston the most reliable guide is Dirk Hoerder, *Crowd Action in Revolutionary Massachusetts, 1765-1780* (New York, 1977). Hoerder has generously shared with me his detailed knowledge. I also draw on my forthcoming book on the laboring classes in Boston in the Revolutionary era.

from him. He had seen them march off the transports at the Long Wharf; he had seen them every day occupying civilian buildings on Griffin's Wharf near his shop. He knew how irritating it was to be challenged by British sentries after curfew (his solution was to offer a swig of rum from the bottle he carried).

More important, he was personally cheated by a soldier. Sergeant Mark Burk ordered shoes allegedly for Captain Thomas Preston, picked them up, but never paid for them. Hewes complained to Preston, who made good and suggested he bring a complaint. A military hearing ensued, at which Hewes testified. The soldier, to Hewes's horror, was sentenced to three hundred fifty lashes. He "remarked to the court that if he had thought the fellow was to be punished so severely for such an offense, bad as he was, he would have said nothing about it." And he saw others victimized by soldiers. He witnessed an incident in which a soldier sneaked up behind a woman, felled her with his fist, and "stripped her of her bonnet, cardinal muff and tippet." He followed the man to his barracks, identified him (Hewes remembered him as Private Kilroy, who would appear later at the Massacre), and got him to give up the stolen goods, but decided this time not to press charges.⁸⁵ Hewes was also keenly aware of grievances felt by the laboring men and youths who formed the bulk of the crowd—and the principal victims—at the Massacre.⁸⁶ From Hawkes and Thatcher three causes can be pieced together.

First in time, and vividly recalled by Hewes, was the murder of eleven-year-old Christopher Seider on February 23, ten days before the Massacre. Seider was one of a large crowd of schoolboys and apprentices picketing the shop of Theophilus Lilly, a merchant violating the anti-import resolutions. Ebenezer Richardson, a paid customs informer, shot into the throng and killed Seider. Richardson would have been tarred and feathered, or worse, had not whig leaders intervened to hustle him off to jail. At Seider's funeral, only a week before the Massacre, five hundred boys marched two by two behind the coffin, followed by two thousand or more adults, "the largest [funeral] perhaps ever known in America," Thomas Hutchinson thought.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 84-87. Bostonians were "shocked by the frequency and severity of corporal punishment in the army" (John Shy, *Toward Lexington: The Role of the British Army in the Coming of the American Revolution* [Princeton, N.J., 1965], 308).

⁸⁶ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 31-32. My statement on the composition of the crowd is based on my analysis of participants, witnesses, and victims identified in the trial record, depositions, etc., and is supported by Hoerder, *Crowd Action*, 223-234, and James Barton Hunt, "The Crowd and the American Revolution: A Study of Urban Political Violence in Boston and Philadelphia, 1763-1776" (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1973), 471-479.

⁸⁷ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 43; Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 88-95. Hewes told about the event after he recounted the Massacre. He correctly remembered Seider,

Second, Hewes emphasized the bitter fight two days before the Massacre between soldiers and workers at Gray's ropewalk down the block from Hewes's shop. Off-duty soldiers were allowed to moonlight, taking work from civilians. On Friday, March 3, when one of them asked for work at Gray's, a battle ensued between a few score soldiers and ropewalk workers joined by others in the maritime trades. The soldiers were beaten and sought revenge. Consequently, in Thatcher's words, "quite a number of soldiers, in a word, were determined to have a row on the night of the 5th."⁸⁸

Third, the precipitating events on the night of the Massacre, by Hewes's account, were an attempt by a barber's apprentice to collect an overdue bill from a British officer, the sentry's abuse of the boy, and the subsequent harassment of the sentry by a small band of boys that led to the calling of the guard commanded by Captain Preston. Thatcher found this hard to swallow—"a dun from a greasy barber's boy is rather an extraordinary explanation of the origin, or one of the occasions, of the massacre of the 5th of March"—but at the trial the lawyers did not. They battled over defining "boys" and over the age, size, and degree of aggressiveness of the numerous apprentices on the scene.⁸⁹

Hewes viewed the civilians as essentially defensive. On the evening of the Massacre he appeared early on the scene at King Street, attracted by the clamor over the apprentice. "I was soon on the ground among them," he said, as if it were only natural that he should turn out in defense of fellow townsmen against what was assumed to be the danger of aggressive action by soldiers. He was not part of a conspiracy; neither was he there out of curiosity. He was unarmed, carrying neither club nor stave as some others did. He saw snow, ice, and "missiles" thrown at the soldiers. When the main guard rushed out in support of the sentry, Private Kilroy dealt Hewes a blow on his shoulder with his gun. Preston ordered the townspeople to disperse. Hewes believed they had a legal basis to refuse:

reported as "Snider" by Thomas Hutchinson and other contemporaries. His recollection is borne out in essentials by Hoerder, *Crowd Action*, 216-223. See Hutchinson to Thomas Hood, Feb. 23, 1770; to Gen. Gage, Feb. 25, 1770; and to Lord Hillsborough, Feb. 28, 1770, Hutchinson Transcripts, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

⁸⁸ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 31-32; Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 96-99. For verification by another contemporary see "Recollections of a Bostonian," from the *Boston Centinel*, 1821-1822, reprinted in Hezekiah Niles, *Principles and Acts of the Revolution in America* . . . (Baltimore, 1822), 430-431. For the fray at the ropewalk, accepted as a precipitating cause by contemporaries on both sides, see Richard B. Morris, *Government and Labor in Early America* (New York, 1946), 190-192.

⁸⁹ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 30-31; Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 118-119. For the trial see L. Kinvin Wroth and Hiller B. Zobel, eds., *Legal Papers of John Adams* (Cambridge, Mass. 1965), III, 50, 52, 56, 93-94, 108.

"they were in the king's highway, and had as good a right to be there" as Preston.⁹⁰

The five men killed were all workingmen. Hewes claimed to know four: Samuel Gray, a ropewalk worker; Samuel Maverick, age seventeen, an apprentice to an ivory turner; Patrick Carr, an apprentice to a leather breeches worker; and James Caldwell, second mate on a ship—all but Christopher Attucks. Caldwell, "who was shot in the back was standing by the side of Hewes, and the latter caught him in his arms as he fell," helped carry him to Dr. Thomas Young in Prison Lane, then ran to Caldwell's ship captain on Cold Lane.⁹¹

More than horror was burned into Hewes's memory. He remembered the political confrontation that followed the slaughter, when thousands of angry townspeople faced hundreds of British troops massed with ready rifles. "The people," Hewes recounted, "then immediately chose a committee to report to the governor the result of Captain Preston's conduct, and to demand of him satisfaction."⁹² Actually the "people" did not choose a committee "immediately." In the dark hours after the Massacre a self-appointed group of patriot leaders met with officials and forced Hutchinson to commit Preston and the soldiers to jail. Hewes was remembering the town meeting the next day, so huge that it had to adjourn from Fanueil Hall, the traditional meeting place that held only twelve hundred, to Old South Church, which had room for five to six thousand. This meeting approved a committee to wait on the officials and then adjourned, but met again the same day, received and voted down an offer to remove one regiment, then accepted another to remove two. This was one of the meetings at which property bars were let down.⁹³

What Hewes did not recount, but what he had promptly put down in a deposition the next day, was how militant he was after the Massacre. At 1:00 A.M., like many other enraged Bostonians, he went home to arm himself. On his way back to the Town House with a cane he had a defiant exchange with Sergeant Chambers of the 29th Regiment and eight or nine soldiers, "all with very large clubs or cutlasses." A soldier, Dobson, "ask'd him how he far'd; he told him very badly to see his townsmen shot in such a manner, and asked him if he did not think it was a dreadful thing." Dobson swore "it was a fine thing" and "you shall see more of it." Chambers "seized and forced" the cane from Hewes, "saying I had no

⁹⁰ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 29. For the event itself see Hiller B. Zobel, *The Boston Massacre* (New York, 1970), in conjunction with Jesse Lemisch, "Radical Plot in Boston (1770): A Study in the Use of Evidence," *Harvard Law Review*, LXXXIV (1970), 485-504, and Pauline Maier, "Revolutionary Violence and the Relevance of History," *JIH*, II (1971), 119-135.

⁹¹ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 29-32; Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 110-112.

⁹² Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 30.

⁹³ Zobel, *Boston Massacre*, 206-209; Hoerder, *Crowd Action*, 232.

right to carry it. I told him I had as good a right to carry a cane as they had to carry clubs."⁹⁴

The Massacre had stirred Hewes to political action. He was one of ninety-nine Bostonians who gave depositions for the prosecution that were published by the town in a pamphlet. Undoubtedly, he marched in the great funeral procession for the victims that brought the city to a standstill. He attended the tempestuous trial of Ebenezer Richardson, Seider's slayer, which was linked politically with the Massacre. ("He remembers to this moment, even the precise words of the Judge's sentence," wrote Thatcher.)⁹⁵ He seems to have attended the trial of the soldiers or Preston or both.

It was in this context that he remembered something for which there is no corroborating evidence, namely, testifying at Preston's trial on a crucial point. He told Hawkes:

When Preston, their captain, was tried, I was called as one of the witnesses, on the part of the government, and testified, that I believed it was the same man, Captain Preston, that ordered his soldiers to make ready, who also ordered them to fire. Mr. John Adams, former president of the United States, was advocate for the prisoners, and denied the fact, that Captain Preston gave orders to his men to fire; and on his cross examination of me asked whether my position was such, that I could see the captain's lips in motion when the order to fire was given; to which I answered, that I could not.⁹⁶

Perhaps so: Hewes's account is particular and precise, and there are many lacunae in the record of the trial (we have no verbatim transcript) that

⁹⁴ Deposition No. 75, in *A Short Narrative of the Horrid Massacre in Boston . . . To Which is Added an Appendix . . .* (Boston, 1770), 61. Thatcher reprinted this in *Memoir of Hewes*, 116-118. Hewes's deposition testified to the soldiers' threats to kill more civilians and to someone entering the Custom House at the time of the Massacre, both themes emphasized by whig leaders.

⁹⁵ Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 95. Thatcher did not give the words. I suspect that what Hewes remembered was the verdict brought in by the jury after a dramatic trial repeatedly interrupted by what Peter Oliver called "a vast concourse of rabble." The verdict was "Guilty of Murder," at which "the Court Room resounded with Expressions of Pleasure" (*Oliver's Origin & Progress*, ed. Adair and Schutz, 86). The judges delayed the sentence until the crown granted a pardon. The case aroused a furor. See Wroth and Zobel, eds., *Legal Papers of Adams*, II, 396-430, and Zobel, *Boston Massacre*, chap. 15, and 423-426. For the way in which the killing of Seider and the killings of the Boston Massacre were linked politically see *A Monumental Inscription in the Fifth of March Together with a few lines on the Enlargement of Ebenezer Richardson Convicted of Murder* [1772], broadside, Mass. Hist. Soc.

⁹⁶ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 32. Thatcher does not even mention this claim of Hewes, possibly because he was skeptical.

modern editors have assiduously assembled. Perhaps not: Hewes may have “remembered” his brother Shubael on the stand at the trial of the soldiers (although Shubael was a defense witness) or his uncle Robert testifying at Richardson’s trial. Or he may have given pre-trial testimony but was not called to the stand.⁹⁷

In one sense, it does not matter. What he was remembering was that he had become involved. He turned out because of a sense of kinship with “his townsmen” in danger; he stood his ground in defense of his “rights”; he was among the “people” who delegated a committee to act on their behalf; he took part in the legal process by giving a deposition, by attending the trials, and, as he remembered it, by testifying. In sum, he had become a citizen, a political man.

Four years later, at the Tea Party on the night of December 16, 1773, the citizen “volunteered” and became the kind of leader for whom most historians have never found a place. The Tea Party, unlike the Massacre, was organized by the radical whig leaders of Boston. They mapped the strategy, organized the public meetings, appointed the companies to guard the tea ships at Griffin’s Wharf (among them Daniel Hewes, George’s brother), and planned the official boarding parties. As in 1770, they converted the town meetings into meetings of “the whole body of the people,” one of which Hutchinson found “consisted principally of the Lower ranks of the People & even Journeymen Tradesmen were brought in to increase the number & the Rabble were not excluded yet there were divers Gentlemen of Good Fortunes among them.”⁹⁸

The boarding parties showed this same combination of “ranks.” Hawkes wrote:

On my inquiring of Hewes if he knew who first proposed the project of destroying the tea, to prevent its being landed, he replied that he did not; neither did he know who or what number were to volunteer their services for that purpose. But from the significant allusion of some persons in whom I had confidence, together with the knowledge I had of the spirit of those times, I had no doubt but that a sufficient number of associates would accompany me in that enterprise.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Wroth and Zobel, eds. *Legal Papers of Adams*, III, has no record of Hewes at the trial, but see L. H. Butterfield’s “Descriptive List of Sources and Documents”: “This operation has been a good deal like that of an archeological team reconstructing a temple from a tumbled mass of architectural members, some missing, many mutilated, and most of them strewn over a wide area” (*ibid.*, 34). For Shubael Hewes see *ibid.*, 176-177, 224-275, and for Robert Hewes *ibid.*, II, 405, 418.

⁹⁸ Hutchinson to Lord Dartmouth, Dec. 3, 1773, Hutchinson Transcripts. For Daniel Hewes see Francis S. Drake, *Tea Leaves: Being a Collection of Letters and Documents Relating to the Shipment of Tea . . .* (Boston, 1884), xlvi.

⁹⁹ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 36-37. Hewes’s account is verified in its essentials by Hoerder, *Crowd Action*, 257-264, and is not inconsistent with the less detailed

The recollection of Joshua Wyeth, a journeyman blacksmith, verified Hewes's story in explicit detail: "It was proposed that young men, not much known in town and not liable to be easily recognized should lead in the business." Wyeth believed that "most of the persons selected for the occasion were apprentices and journeymen, as was the case with myself, living with tory masters." Wyeth "had but a few hours warning of what was intended to be done."¹⁰⁰ Those in the officially designated parties, about thirty men better known, appeared in well-prepared Indian disguises. As nobodies, the volunteers—anywhere from fifty to one hundred men—could get away with hastily improvised disguises. Hewes said he got himself up as an Indian and daubed his "face and hands with coal dust in the shop of blacksmith." In the streets "I fell in with many who were dressed, equipped and painted as I was, and who fell in with me and marched in order to the place of our destination."

At Griffin's Wharf the volunteers were orderly, self-disciplined, and ready to accept leadership.

When we arrived at the wharf, there were three of our number who assumed an authority to direct our operations, to which we readily submitted. They divided us into three parties, for the purpose of boarding the three ships which contained the tea at the same time. The name of him who commanded the division to which I was assigned was Leonard Pitt [Lendell Pitts]. The names of the other commanders I never knew. We were immediately ordered by the respective commanders to board all the ships at the same time, which we promptly obeyed.

But for Hewes there was something new: he was singled out of the rank and file and made an officer in the field.

The commander of the division to which I belonged, as soon as we were on board the ship, appointed me boatswain, and ordered me to go to the captain and demand of him the keys to the hatches and a dozen candles. I made the demand accordingly, and the captain promptly replied, and delivered the articles; but requested me at the same time to do no damage to the ship or rigging. We then were ordered by our commander to open the hatches, and take out all the chests of tea and throw them overboard, and we immediately proceeded to execute his orders; first cutting and splitting the chests

account in Benjamin Woods Labaree, *The Boston Tea Party* (New York, 1964), chap. 7. For analysis of the participants see Hoerder, *Crowd Action*, 263-264, and Hunt, "The Crowd and the American Revolution," 481, 485.

¹⁰⁰ Joshua Wyeth, "Revolutionary Reminiscence," *North American*, I (1827), 195, brought to my attention by Richard Twomey.

with our tomahawks, so as thoroughly to expose them to the effects of the water. In about three hours from the time we went on board, we had thus broken and thrown overboard every tea chest to be found in the ship; while those in the other ships were disposing of the tea in the same way, at the same time. We were surrounded by British armed ships, but no attempt was made to resist us. We then quietly retired to our several places of residence, without having any conversation with each other, or taking any measures to discover who were our associates.¹⁰¹

This was Hewes's story, via Hawkes. Thatcher, who knew a good deal more about the Tea Party from other sources, accepted it in its essentials as an accurate account. He also reported a new anecdote which he treated with skepticism, namely, that Hewes worked alongside John Hancock throwing tea overboard. And he added that Hewes, "whose whistling talent was a matter of public notoriety, acted as a boatswain," that is, as the officer whose duty it was to summon men with a whistle. That Hewes was a leader is confirmed by the reminiscence of Thompson Maxwell, a teamster from a neighboring town who was making a delivery to Hancock the day of the event. Hancock asked him to go to Griffin's Wharf. "I went accordingly, joined the band under one Captain Hewes; we mounted the ships and made tea in a trice; this done I took my team and went home as any honest man should."¹⁰² "Captain" Hewes—it was not impossible.

As the Tea Party ended, Hewes was stirred to further action on his own initiative, just as he had been in the hours after the Massacre. While the crews were throwing the tea overboard, a few other men tried to smuggle off some of the tea scattered on the decks. "One Captain O'Connor whom I well knew," said Hewes, "came on board for that purpose, and when he supposed he was not noticed, filled his pockets, and also the lining of his coat. But I had detected him, and gave information to the captain of what he was doing. We were ordered to take him into custody, and just as he was stepping from the vessel, I seized him by the skirt of his coat, and in attempting to pull him back, I tore it off." They scuffled. O'Connor recognized him and "threatened to 'complain to the Governor.' 'You had better make your will first,' quoth Hewes, doubling his fist expressively," and O'Connor escaped, running the gauntlet of the crowd on the wharf. "The next day we nailed the skirt of his coat, which I had pulled off, to the whipping post in Charlestown, the place of his residence, with a label upon it," to shame O'Connor by "popular indignation."¹⁰³

A month later, at the third event for which we have full evidence,

¹⁰¹ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 38-39.

¹⁰² Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 180-181, 261. Maxwell's reminiscence is in *NEHGR*, XXII (1868), 58.

¹⁰³ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 40-41; Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 182-183.

Hewes won public recognition for an act of courage that almost cost his life and precipitated the most publicized tarring and feathering of the Revolution. The incident that set it off would have been trivial at any other time. On Tuesday, January 25, 1774, at about two in the afternoon, the shoemaker was making his way back to his shop after his dinner. According to the very full account in the *Massachusetts Gazette*,

Mr. George-Robert-Twelves Hewes was coming along Fore-Street, near Captain Ridgway's, and found the redoubted John Malcolm, standing over a small boy, who was pushing a little sled before him, cursing, damning, threatening and shaking a very large cane with a very heavy ferril on it over his head. The boy at that time was perfectly quiet, notwithstanding which Malcolm continued his threats of striking him, which Mr. Hewes conceiving if he struck him with that weapon he must have killed him out-right, came up to him, and said to him, Mr. Malcolm I hope you are not going to strike this boy with that stick.¹⁰⁴

Malcolm had already acquired an odious reputation with patriots of the lower sort. A Bostonian, he had been a sea captain, an army officer, and recently an employee of the customs service. He was so strong a supporter of royal authority that he had traveled to North Carolina to fight the Regulators and boasted of having a horse shot out from under him. He had a fiery temper. As a customs informer he was known to have turned in a vessel to punish sailors for petty smuggling, a custom of the sea. In November 1773, near Portsmouth, New Hampshire, a crowd of thirty sailors had "genteely tarr'd and feather'd" him, as the *Boston Gazette* put it: they did the job over his clothes. Back in Boston he made "frequent complaints" to Hutchinson of "being hooted at in the streets" for this by "tradesmen"; and the lieutenant governor cautioned him, "being a passionate man," not to reply in kind.¹⁰⁵

The exchange between Malcolm and Hewes resonated with class as well as political differences:

Malcolm returned, you are an impertinent rascal, it is none of your business. Mr. Hewes then asked him, what had the child done to him.

¹⁰⁴ *Mass. Gaz. and Boston Wkly News-Letter*, Jan. 27, Feb. 3, 1774. Hewes told this story to Hawkes essentially as reported in this paper but with only some of the dialogue. He may have kept the clipping. Thatcher added dialogue based on the account in the paper but also extracted additional details from Hewes not in either the *Gazette* or Hawkes.

¹⁰⁵ Frank W. C. Hersey, "Tar and Feathers: The Adventures of Captain John Malcolm," *Col. Soc. Mass., Trans.*, XXXIV (1941), 429-473, which also reprints the documents. The full letter, Hutchinson to Lord Dartmouth, Jan. 28, 1774, is in K. G. Davis, ed., *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770-1783*, VIII (Shannon, Ireland, 1972), 25-27.

Malcolm damned him and asked him if he was going to take his part? Mr. Hewes answered no further than this, that he thought it was a shame for him to strike the child with such a club as that, if he intended to strike him. Malcolm on that damned Mr. Hewes, called him a vagabond, and said he would let him know he should not speak to a gentleman in the street. Mr. Hewes returned to that, he was neither a rascal nor vagabond, and though a poor man was in as good credit in town as he was. Malcolm called him a liar, and said he was not, nor ever would be. Mr. Hewes retorted, be that as it will, I never was tarred nor feathered any how. On this Malcolm struck him, and wounded him deeply on the forehead, so that Mr. Hewes for some time lost his senses. Capt. Godfrey, then present, interposed, and after some altercation, Malcolm went home.¹⁰⁶

Hewes was rushed to Joseph Warren, the patriot doctor, his distant relative. Malcolm's cane had almost penetrated his skull. Thatcher found "the indentation as plainly perceptible as it was sixty years ago." So did Hawkes. Warren dressed the wound, and Hewes was able to make his way to a magistrate to swear out a warrant for Malcolm's arrest "which he carried to a constable named Justice Hale."¹⁰⁷ Malcolm, meanwhile, had retreated to his house, where he responded in white heat to taunts about the half-way tarring and feathering in Portsmouth with "damn you let me see the man that dare do it better."

In the evening a crowd took Malcolm from his house and dragged him on a sled into King Street "amidst the huzzas of thousands." At this point "several gentlemen endeavoured to divert the populace from their intention." The ensuing dialogue laid bare the clash of conceptions of justice between the sailors and laboring people heading the action and Sons of Liberty leaders. The "gentlemen" argued that Malcolm was "open to the laws of the land which would undoubtedly award a reasonable satisfaction to the parties he had abused," that is, the child and Hewes. The answer was political. Malcolm "had been an old impudent and mischievous [*sic*] offender—he had joined in the murders at North Carolina—he had seized vessels on account of sailors having a bottle or two of gin on board—he had in other words behaved in the most capricious, insulting and daringly abusive manner." He could not be trusted to justice. "When they were told the law would have its course with him, they asked what course had the law taken with Preston or his soldiers, with Capt. Wilson or Richardson? And for their parts they had seen so much partiality to the soldiers and customhouse officers by the present Judges, that while things remained as they were, they would, on all such occasions, take satisfaction their own way, and let them take it off."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ *Mass. Gaz. and Boston Wkly News-Letter*, Jan. 27, 1774.

¹⁰⁷ Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 132; Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 33-35.

¹⁰⁸ *Mass. Gaz. and Boston Wkly News-Letter*, Jan. 27, 1774. For other comments from the crowd see *Boston-Gazette, and Country Journal*, Jan. 31, 1774.

The references were to Captain Preston who had been tried and found innocent of the Massacre, the soldiers who had been let off with token punishment, Captain John Wilson, who had been indicted for inciting slaves to murder their masters but never tried,¹⁰⁹ and Ebenezer Richardson, who had been tried and found guilty of killing Seider, sentenced, and then pardoned by the crown.

The crowd won and proceeded to a ritualized tarring and feathering, the purpose of which was to punish Malcolm, force a recantation, and ostracize him.

With these and such like arguments, together with a gentle crouding of persons not of their way of thinking out of the ring they proceeded to elevate Mr. Malcolm from his sled into a cart, and stripping him to buff and breeches, gave him a modern jacket [a coat of tar and feathers] and hied him away to liberty-tree, where they proposed to him to renounce his present commission, and swear that he would never hold another inconsistent with the liberties of his country; but this he obstinately refusing, they then carted him to the gallows, passed a rope round his neck, and threw the other end over the beam as if they intended to hang him: But this manoeuvre he set at defiance. They then basted him for some time with a rope's end, and threatened to cut his ears off, and on this he complied, and they then brought him home.¹¹⁰

Hewes had precipitated an electrifying event. It was part of the upsurge of spontaneous action in the wake of the Tea Party that prompted the whig leaders to promote a "Committee for Tarring and Feathering" as an instrument of crowd control. The "Committee" made its appearance in broadsides signed by "Captain Joyce, Jun.," a sobriquet meant to invoke the bold cornet who had captured King Charles in 1647.¹¹¹ The event was reported in the English newspapers, popularized in three or four satirical prints, and dramatized still further when Malcolm went to England, where he campaigned for a pension and ran for Parliament (without success) against John Wilkes, the leading champion of America. The event confirmed the British ministry in its punitive effort to bring rebellious Boston to heel.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 44; Zobel, *Boston Massacre*, 102.

¹¹⁰ *Mass. Gaz. and Boston Wkly News-Letter*, Jan. 27, 1774.

¹¹¹ See Albert Matthews, "Joyce, Jun.," *Col. Soc. Mass., Pubs.*, VIII (1903), 89-104, and Young, "Pope's Day, Tar and Feathers," sec. VI.

¹¹² For the newspaper accounts and prints see R.T.H. Halsey, *The Boston Port Bill as Pictured by a Contemporary London Cartoonist* (New York, 1904), 82-94, 121n, 132-133; Mary Dorothy George, comp., *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires . . . in the British Museum*, V (London, 1935), no. 5232, 168-169; and Donald Creswell, comp., *The American Revolution in Drawings and Prints*; A

What was lost to the public was that Hewes was at odds with the crowd. He wanted justice from the courts, not a mob; after all, he had sworn out a warrant against Malcolm. And he could not bear to see cruel punishment inflicted on a man, any more than on a boy. As he told the story to Thatcher, when he returned and saw Malcolm being carted away in tar and feathers, "his instant impulse was to push after the procession as fast as he could, with a blanket to put over his shoulders. He overtook them [the crowd] at his brother's [Shubael's] house and made an effort to relieve him; but the ruffians who now had the charge of him about the cart, pushed him aside, and warned him to keep off." This may have been the Good Samaritan of 1835, but the story rings true. While "the very excitement which the affront must have wrought upon him began to rekindle," Hewes conveyed no hatred for Malcolm.¹¹³

The denouement of the affair was an incident several weeks later. "Malcolm recovered from his wounds and went about as usual. 'How do you do, Mr. Malcolm?' said Hewes, very civilly, the next time he met him. 'Your humble servant, Mr. George Robert Twelves Hewes,' quoth he,—touching his hat genteely as he passed by. 'Thank ye,' thought Hewes, 'and I am glad you have learned *better manners at last.*'"¹¹⁴ Hewes's mood was one of triumph. Malcolm had been taught a lesson. The issue was respect for Hewes, a patriot, a poor man, an honest citizen, a decent man standing up for a child against an unspeakably arrogant "gentleman" who was an enemy of his country.

Hewes's role in these three events fits few of the categories that historians have applied to the participation of ordinary men in the Revolution. He was not a member of any organized committee, caucus, or club. He did not attend the expensive public dinners of the Sons of Liberty. He was capable of acting on his own volition without being summoned by any leaders (as in the Massacre). He could volunteer and assume leadership (as in the Tea Party). He was at home on the streets in crowds but he could also reject a crowd (as in the tarring and feathering of Malcolm). He was at home in the other places where ordinary Bostonians turned out to express their convictions: at funeral processions, at meetings of the "whole body of the people," in courtrooms at public trials. He recoiled from violence to persons if not to property. The man who could remember the whippings of his own boyhood did not want to be the source of pain to others, whether Sergeant Burk, who tried to cheat him over a pair of shoes, or John Malcolm, who almost killed him. It is in

Checklist of 1765-1790 Graphics in the Library of Congress (Washington, D.C., 1975), nos. 668-670. For the impact on the king and his ministers see Peter Orlando Hutchinson, comp., *The Diary and Letters of His Excellency Thomas Hutchinson . . .*, I (London, 1883), 164.

¹¹³ Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 132.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 133.

keeping with his character that he should have come to the aid of a little boy facing a beating.

Nevertheless, Hewes was more of a militant than he conveyed or his biographers recognized in 1833 and 1835. He was capable of acting on his own initiative in the wake of collective action at both the Massacre and the Tea Party. He had "public notoriety," Thatcher tells us for his "whistling talent"; whistling was the customary way of assembling a crowd.¹¹⁵ According to Malcolm, Hewes was among the "tradesmen" who had "several times before affronted him" by "hooting" at him in the streets.¹¹⁶ And the patriots whose names stayed with him included Dr. Thomas Young and William Molineaux, the two Sons of Liberty who replaced Ebenezer McIntosh as "mob" leaders.¹¹⁷

What moved Hewes to action? It was not the written word; indeed there is no sign he was much of a reader until old age, and then it was the Bible he read. "My whole education," he told Hawkes, "consisted of only a moderate knowledge of reading and writing."¹¹⁸ He seems to have read one of the most sensational pamphlets of 1773, which he prized enough to hold onto for more than fifty years, but he was certainly not like Harbottle Dorr, the Boston shopkeeper who pored over every issue of every Boston newspaper, annotating Britain's crimes for posterity.¹¹⁹

Hewes was moved to act by personal experiences that he shared with large numbers of other plebeian Bostonians. He seems to have been politicized, not by the Stamp Act, but by the coming of the troops after 1768, and then by things that happened to him, that he saw, or that happened to people he knew. Once aroused, he took action with others of his own rank and condition—the laboring classes who formed the bulk of the actors at the Massacre, the Tea Party, and the Malcolm affair—and with other members of his family: his uncle Robert, "known for a staunch Liberty Boy," and his brother Daniel, a guard at the tea ship. Shubael, alone among his brothers, became a tory.¹²⁰ These shared experiences

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 181, 263; *Oliver's Origin & Progress*, ed. Adair and Schutz, 74-75.

¹¹⁶ Hutchinson to Lord Dartmouth, Jan. 28, 1774, in Davis, ed., *Documents of the Revolution*, 25-27.

¹¹⁷ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 42-44.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 87. Hewes made an allusion to having brought with him what could only have been *Copy of Letters Sent to Great Britain, by His Excellency Thomas Hutchinson, the Hon. Andrew Oliver, and Several Other Persons . . .* (Boston, 1773). See Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), 222-224. For Dorr see Bailyn, "The Index and Commentaries of Harbottle Dorr," *Mass. Hist. Soc., Proceedings*, LXXXV (1973), 21-35, and Barbara Wilhelm, *The American Revolution as a Leadership Crisis: The View of a Hardware Store Owner*, West Georgia College Studies in the Social Sciences, XV (Carrollton, Ga., 1976), 43-54.

¹²⁰ Robert Hewes attended the 1769 dinner commemorating the Stamp Act action of 1765 (see "An Alphabetical List of the Sons of Liberty who Dined at

were interpreted and focused more likely by the spoken than the written word and as much by his peers at taverns and crowd actions as by leaders in huge public meetings.

As he became active politically he may have had a growing awareness of his worth as a shoemaker. McIntosh was clearly the man of the year in 1765; indeed, whigs were no less fearful than loyalists that "the Captain General of the Liberty Tree" might become the Masaniello of Boston.¹²¹ After a shoemaker made the boot to hang in the Liberty Tree as an effigy of Lord Bute, "Jack Cobler" served notice that "whenever the Public Good requires my services, I shall be ready to distinguish myself." In 1772 "Crispin" began an anti-loyalist diatribe by saying, "I am a shoemaker, a citizen, a free man and a freeholder." The editor added a postscript justifying "Crispin's performance" and explaining that "it should be known what common people, even *coblers* think and feel under the present administration."¹²² In city after city, "cobblers" were singled out for derision by conservatives for leaving their lasts to engage in the body politic.¹²³ Hewes could not have been unaware of all this; he was part of it.

He may also have responded to the rising demand among artisans for support of American manufacturers, whether or not it brought him immediate benefit. He most certainly subscribed to the secularized Puritan ethic—self-denial, industry, frugality—that made artisans take to the nonimportation agreement with its crusade against foreign luxury and its vision of American manufactures. And he could easily have identified with the appeal of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress of 1774 that equated the political need "to encourage agriculture, manufacturers and economy so as to render this state as independent of every other state as the nature of our country will admit" with the "happiness of particular families" in being "independent."¹²⁴

Liberty Tree, Dorchester, August 14, 1769," MS, Mass. Hist. Soc.). "Parson Thatcher" called Robert "a great Liberty Man" in 1775 (see Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 217). Daniel Hewes was a guard at the tea ships, Nov. 30, 1773 (see Drake, *Tea Leaves*, xlvi). For Shubael Hewes, who testified for the defense at the Massacre trial, see Putnam, comp., *Joshua Hewes*, 331.

¹²¹ See Alfred Young, "The Rapid Rise and Decline of Ebenezer McIntosh" (MS, Shelby Cullum Davis Center, Princeton Univ., Jan. 1976).

¹²² "Jack Cobler," *Massachusetts Gazette* (Boston), Feb. 20, 1776; "Crispin," *Massachusetts Spy* (Boston), Jan. 16, 1772.

¹²³ For derogatory references in New York, Baltimore, and Savannah see Philip S. Foner, *Labor and the American Revolution* (Westport, Conn., 1976), 120, 197, 151, and for Charleston see Richard Walsh, *Charleston's Sons of Liberty: A Study of the Artisans, 1763-1789* (Columbia, S.C., 1959), 70.

¹²⁴ Edmund S. Morgan, "The Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., XXIV (1967), 3-43, esp. sec. II; "Declaration of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, Dec. 8, 1774," in Merrill Jensen, ed., *English Historical Documents: American Colonial Documents to 1776* (New York, 1955), 823-825.

But what ideas did Hewes articulate? He spoke of what he did but very little of what he thought. In the brief statement he offered Hawkes about why he went off to war in 1776, he expressed a commitment to general principles as they had been brought home to him by his experiences. "I was continually reflecting upon the unwarrantable sufferings inflicted on the citizens of Boston by the usurpation and tyranny of Great Britain, and my mind was excited with an unextinguishable desire to aid in chastising them." When Hawkes expressed a doubt "as to the correctness of his conduct in absenting himself from his family," Hewes "emphatically reiterated" the same phrases, adding to a "desire to aid in chastising them" the phrase "and securing our independence."¹²⁵ This was clearly not an afterthought; it probably reflected the way many others moved toward the goal of Independence, not as a matter of original intent, but as a step made necessary when all other resorts failed. Ideology thus did not set George Hewes apart from Samuel Adams or John Hancock. The difference lies in what the Revolution did to him as a person. His experiences transformed him, giving him a sense of citizenship and personal worth. Adams and Hancock began with both; Hewes had to arrive there, and in arriving he cast off the constraints of deference.

The two incidents with which we introduced Hewes's life measure the distance he had come: from the young man tongue-tied in the presence of John Hancock to the man who would not take his hat off to the officer of the ship named *Hancock*. Did he cast off his deference to Hancock? Hewes's affirmation of his worth as a human being was a form of class consciousness. Implicit in the idea, "I am as good as any man regardless of rank or wealth," was the idea that any poor man might be as good as any rich man. This did not mean that all rich men were bad. On the contrary, in Boston, more than any other major colonial seaport, a majority of the merchants were part of the patriot coalition; "divers Gentlemen of Good Fortunes," as Hutchinson put it, were with the "Rabble." This blunted class consciousness. Boston's mechanics, unlike New York's or Philadelphia's, did not develop mechanic committees or a mechanic consciousness before the Revolution. Yet in Boston the rich were forced to defer to the people in order to obtain or retain their support. Indeed, the entire public career of Hancock from 1765 on—distributing largesse, buying uniforms for Pope's Day marchers, building ships to employ artisans—can be understood as an exercise of this kind of deference, proving his civic virtue and patriotism.¹²⁶

Thatcher dwelled on the patriot promotion of American manufactures without, however, attributing such ideas to Hewes (*Memoir of Hewes*, 58-60).

¹²⁵ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 62, 64.

¹²⁶ Charles W. Akers, "John Hancock: Notes for a Reassessment" (unpubl. paper, Univ. of Michigan-Flint Conference, Oct. 1976), which the author kindly allowed me to read.

This gives meaning to Hewes's tale of working beside Hancock at the Tea Party—"a curious reminiscence," Thatcher called it, "but we believe it a mistake."

Mr. Hewes, however, positively affirms, as of his own observation, that *Samuel Adams and John Hancock were both actively engaged in the process of destruction*. Of the latter he speaks more particularly, being entirely confident that he was himself at one time engaged with him in the demolition of the same chest of tea. He recognized him not only by his *ruffles* making their appearance in the heat of the work, from under the disguise which pretty thoroughly covered him,—and by his figure, and gait;—but by his features, which neither his paint nor his loosened club of hair behind wholly concealed from a close view;—and by his voice also, for he exchanged with him an Indian *grunt*, and the expression "*me know you*," which was a good deal used on that occasion for a countersign.¹²⁷

Thatcher was justifiably skeptical; it is very unlikely that Hancock was there. Participants swore themselves to secrecy; their identity was one of the best-kept secrets of the Revolution. In fact, in 1835 Thatcher published in an appendix the first list of those "more or less actively engaged" in the Tea Party as furnished by "an aged Bostonian," clearly not Hewes.¹²⁸ Hancock was not named. More important, it was not part of the patriot plan for the well-known leaders to be present. When the all-day meeting that sanctioned the action adjourned, the leaders, including Hancock, stayed behind conspicuously in Old South.¹²⁹ Still, there can be little question that Hewes was convinced at the time that Hancock was on the ship: some gentlemen were indeed present; it was reasonable to assume that Hancock, who had been so conspicuous on the tea issue, was there; Hewes knew what Hancock looked like; he was too insistent about details for his testimony to be dismissed as made up. And the way he recorded it in his mind at the time was the way he stored it in his memory.

Hewes in effect had brought Hancock down to his own level. The poor shoemaker had not toppled the wealthy merchant; he was no "leveller." But the rich and powerful—the men in "ruffles"—had become, in his revealing word, his "associates." John Hancock and George Hewes breaking open the same chest at the Tea Party remained for Hewes a symbol of a moment of equality. To the shoemaker, one suspects, this above all was what the Revolutionary events of Boston meant, as did the war that followed.

¹²⁷ Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 192-193.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 261-262.

¹²⁹ L.F.S. Upton, "Proceedings of Ye Body Respecting the Tea," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., XXII (1965), 298. The standard sources are dubious. See Edward L. Pierce,

VI

Hewes's decisions from 1775 to 1783—his choice of services and the timing and sequence of his military activities—suggest a pattern of patriotism mingled with a hope to strike it rich and a pressing need to provide for his family.

After the outbreak of hostilities at Lexington and Concord in April 1775, Boston became a garrison town; patriot civilians streamed out—perhaps ten thousand of them—Tory refugees moved in, and the number of British troops grew to 13,500 by July. Hewes sent his wife and children to Wrentham—his father's native town—where they would be safe with relatives. His brother Daniel did the same; Solomon went elsewhere; Shubael alone stayed with the British, as butcher-general to General Gage. George himself remained—"imprisoned," as he remembered it—prevented like other able-bodied men from leaving the city. He made a living as a fisherman; the British allowed him to pass in and out of the harbor in exchange for the pick of the day's catch. He was in Boston nine weeks, was harassed by soldiers on the street, witnessed the Battle of Bunker Hill from a neck of land far out in the bay (he "saw [Joseph Warren] fall"), and saw the corpses of British soldiers "chucked" into an open pit at one end of the Common. One morning he bade good-bye to Shubael, hid his shoemaker's tools under the deck of a small boat borrowed from a tory, and, after a narrow scrape with British guards, made good an escape with two friends to nearby Lynn. The Committee of Safety took him to Cambridge, where General Washington plied him with questions about conditions in Boston—an interview we shall return to. Then he made his way south to Wrentham.¹³⁰

Hewes's record of service thereafter can be reconstructed with reasonable accuracy by matching what he claimed in his pension application in 1832 and told his biographers against information from official records and other contemporary sources.¹³¹ After some months, very likely in the

"Recollections as a Source of History," *Mass. Hist. Soc., Procs.*, 2d Ser., X (1896), 473-490, and Labaree, *Boston Tea Party*, 144, and chap. 7.

¹³⁰ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 59-62; Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 198-220. For verification of the context see Richard Frothingham, *History of the Siege of Boston . . .* (Boston, 1849), and Justin Winsor, ed., *The Memorial History of Boston, Including Suffolk County Massachusetts . . .*, III (Boston, 1881), chap. 2. The Hewes family was not listed among the 5,000 or more Boston families who received charity from the Friends, although over a score of shoemakers were (see Henry J. Cadbury, "Quaker Relief during the Siege of Boston," *Col. Soc. Mass., Trans.*, XXXIV [1943], 39-179).

¹³¹ Hewes claimed five separate stints, two as a privateersman and three in the militia, in his Pension Application and Statement of Service, Military Service Records, MS, No. 14748, Nat'l Archs., hereafter cited as Pension Application. The two privateering expeditions can be verified from corroborative evidence (see

fall of 1776, he enlisted on a privateer at Providence on a voyage north that lasted about three months. He returned to Wrentham and a year later, in the fall of 1777, served in the militia from one to three months. In late August 1778 he served again, most likely for one month. In February 1779 he made a second privateering voyage, this time out of Boston, an eventful seven-and-a-half-month trip to the South and the West Indies. In 1780 he very likely was in the militia again from late July to late October, and in 1781 he definitely was in the militia at the same time of year. That was his final tour of duty: in the closing years of the war, to avoid the Massachusetts draft, he hired a substitute. All these enlistments were out of Attleborough, the town immediately south of Wrentham.¹³² All were as a private; he did not rise in the ranks.

Several things stand out in this record. Hewes did not go at once, not until he provided for his family. He remembered that he did not make his

below, nn. 144, 145). Of his three claims for militia service, two are verified in Massachusetts Secretary of the Commonwealth, *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors in the Revolutionary War*, (Boston, 1896-1908), VII, 792-793, s.v. "Hewes, George" and "Hewes, George R. T.," hereafter cited as *Mass. Soldiers*. This compilation attests to one of the three months he claimed for 1777 (Sept. 25-Oct. 30) and more than the three months he claimed for 1781 (July 23-Nov. 8). Using unnamed "official records" that could only have been the as-yet-unpublished MS records in the Mass. Archs., Putnam found evidence for four separate enlistments, one more than Hewes claimed, two of which (1777 and 1781) are printed in *Mass. Soldiers*, VII, and two of which (Aug. 17-Sept. 9, 1778, and July 28-Oct. 21, 1780) are not (see Putnam, comp., *Joshua Hewes*, 335-336). Putnam's 1778 finding verifies Hewes's pension claim for three months in 1778 for dates he did not specify (but which places him at the Battle of Newport Island at the right period). Hewes did not claim the 1780 stint Putnam found. There is corroboration for his pension claims in the Attleborough records (see below, n. 132). There is thus good evidence for his two privateering claims, direct verification for two of his militia claims, and evidence for two more he did not claim.

¹³² George Hewes's name is not on the militia musters for Attleborough reprinted in John Daggett, *Sketch of the History of Attleborough from its Settlement to the Present Time* (Boston, 1894 [orig. publ. Dedham, Mass., 1834]), 134-145. In his petition of 1832 Hewes indicated several times that he returned to his family at Wrentham but enlisted at Attleborough. The explanation may be that "these lists comprise all the town enlistments, not individual enlistments of certain citizens elsewhere in which the town would have no monetary interest" (Daggett, *Sketch of Attleborough*, 143n). The Attleborough evidence, however, corroborates Hewes's claims: (1) The town's units were in the three campaigns Hewes claimed in 1777, 1778, and 1781. (2) Caleb Richardson, the officer Hewes listed twice as his captain, served in the Attleborough militia. He is listed as captain for six tours of duty, the dates of two of which (1778 and 1780) coincide with Hewes's claims (*Mass. Soldiers*, XIII, 230). (3) Luke Drury is listed as Lt. Col. Commandant for the service at West Point that Hewes claimed under "Col. Drury" in 1781 (*ibid.*, IV, 987).

first enlistment until “about two years after the battle of Bunker Hill,” although actually it was closer to a year or fifteen months.¹³³ He served often, twice at sea, at least four and possibly five times in the militia, but not at all in the Continental army, which would have meant longer periods away from home. For almost all of these stints he volunteered; once he was drafted; once he sent a substitute; he drew these distinctions carefully.¹³⁴

This record, put alongside what we know about other Massachusetts men in the war, places Hewes a good cut above the average. He served at least nine months in the militia and ten-and-a-half months at sea—about twenty months in all. In Concord, most men “were credited with under a half a year’s time”;¹³⁵ in Peterborough, New Hampshire, only a third did “extensive service” of over a year.¹³⁶ Hewes served less than the thirty-three months of the average man in the Continental army.¹³⁷ He was not one of the men whom John Shy has called the “hard core” of Revolutionary fighters, like the shoemaker “Long Bill” Scott of Peterborough. But neither was he one of the sunshine patriots Robert Gross found in Concord who came out for no more than a few militia stints early in the war. He served over the length of the fighting. Like others who put in this much time, he was poor; even in Concord after 1778, soldiers in the militia as well as the army “were men with little or nothing to lose.”¹³⁸ Hewes was in his mid-thirties; he and Sarah had four children by 1776, six by 1781. He spent most of the years of war at home providing for them, doing what, he did not say, but possibly making shoes for the army like

¹³³ In his Pension Application Hewes said he went on board the privateer *Diamond* “about two years after the battle of Bunker Hill,” adding, “sometime in the month of April.” This would have made it in 1777. But the two vessels whose names he remembered as prizes were taken in Oct. and Dec. 1776. If it was a three months’ voyage, as Hewes remembered, this would have meant the *Diamond* sailed about Sept. 1776. See below, n. 144.

¹³⁴ The clerk wrote that Hewes “enlisted as a volunteer on board of a privateer”; he “volunteered into a company of militia”; “he again volunteered into a company of militia”; but finally, “he enlisted . . . into a company of militia” (Pension Application). Hewes also told Hawkes that in “a hot press for men to go and recapture Penobscot” from the British “I volunteered to go with a Mr. Saltonstall, who was to be the commander of the expedition, which for some cause, however, failed” (*Retrospect*, 72). This was the naval expedition of July-Aug. 1779, led by Capt. Dudley Saltonstall, which ended in disaster.

¹³⁵ Robert A. Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World* (New York, 1976), 149.

¹³⁶ John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for American Independence* (New York, 1976), 171.

¹³⁷ John Resch to author, May 29, 1980, based on research cited in n. 166 below.

¹³⁸ Gross, *Minutemen*, 151.

other country cordwainers.¹³⁹ His patriotism was thus tempered by the need for survival.

Going to war was a wrenching experience. When Hewes told his wife he intended to "take a privateering cruise," she "was greatly afflicted at the prospect of our separation, and my absence from a numerous family of children, who needed a father's parental care." Taught from boyhood to repress his emotions ("I cannot cry," Thatcher reported him saying when punishment loomed), Hewes cut the pain of parting by a ruse.

On the day which I had appointed to take my departure, I came into the room where my wife was, and inquired if all was ready? She pointed in silence to my knapsack. I observed, that I would put it on and walk with it a few rods, to see if it was rightly fitted to carry with ease. I went out, to return no more until the end of my cruise. The manly fortitude which becomes the soldier, could not overcome the tender sympathies of my nature. I had not courage to encounter the trial of taking a formal leave. When I had arrived at a solitary place on my way, I sat down for a few moments, and sought to allay the keenness of my grief by giving vent to a profusion of tears.¹⁴⁰

Why was privateering Hewes's first choice? Privateering, as Jesse Lemisch has put it, was legalized piracy with a share of the booty for each pirate.¹⁴¹ Under a state or Continental letter of marque, a privately owned ship was authorized to take enemy vessels as prizes. The government received a share, as did the owners and crew, prorated by rank. During the seven years of war, the United States commissioned 2,000 privateers, 626 in Massachusetts alone, which itself issued 1,524 commissions. In 1776, when Hewes made his decision, Abigail Adams spoke of "the rage for privateering" in Boston, and James Warren told Samuel Adams that "a whole country" was "privateering mad."¹⁴²

War for Hewes meant opportunity: a chance to escape from a humdrum occupation never to his liking; to be at thirty-five what had been denied at sixteen—a fighting man; above all, a chance to accumulate the capital that

¹³⁹ For example, see the petition of Sylvanus Wood of Woburn, Mass., in Dann, ed., *Revolution Remembered*, 8.

¹⁴⁰ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 62-63.

¹⁴¹ The phrase and analysis are from Lemisch, "Jack Tar Goes A'Privateering" (unpubl. MS). I am indebted to Christopher McKee for sharing his unrivaled knowledge of naval sources.

¹⁴² Gardner Weld Allen, *Massachusetts Privateers of the Revolution* (Mass. Hist. Soc., *Collections*, LXXVII [Boston, 1927]), 716-717; James Warren to Samuel Adams, Aug. 15, 1776, in Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris, eds., *The Spirit of 'Seventy-Six: The Story of the American Revolution as Told by Participants*, II (New York, 1958), 965; Abigail Adams to John Adams, Sept. 29, 1776,

could mean a house, a new shop, apprentices and journeymen, perhaps a start in something altogether new. He was following a path trod by tens of thousands of poor New Englanders ever since the wars against the French in the 1740s and 1750s.¹⁴³ As an economic flyer, however, privateering ultimately proved disastrous for Hewes.

His first voyage went well. He sailed on the *Diamond* out of Providence, attracted possibly by an advertisement that promised fortune and adventure. They captured three vessels, the last of which Hewes brought back to Providence as a member of the prize crew. He said nothing about his share; by inference he got enough to whet his appetite but not enough to boast about. He also nearly drowned off Newfoundland when a line he and two shipmates were standing on broke.¹⁴⁴

His second voyage was shattering. He went on the Connecticut ship of war *Defence*, commanded by Captain Samuel Smedley and sailing from Boston with the *Oliver Cromwell*. The *Defence* and the *Cromwell* captured two richly laden vessels and later, after a layover in Charleston, South Carolina, two British privateers; on the way home, the *Defence* stopped a ship and relieved the tory passengers of their money. The prize money from the two privateers alone was \$80,000.¹⁴⁵ But Hewes got nothing. His share was supposed to be \$250, "but some pretext was always offered for withholding my share from me; so that I have never received one cent of it." When he asked for his wages, Captain Smedley "told me he was about fitting out an expedition to the West Indies, and could not, without great inconvenience, spare the money then; but said he would call on his

in L. H. Butterfield *et al.*, eds., *Adams Family Correspondence*, II (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), 135.

¹⁴³ Nash, *Urban Crucible*, chaps. 3, 7.

¹⁴⁴ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 64-67; Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 220-226. William P. Sheffield verifies Hewes's recollections of the vessel, commander (Thomas Stacey), owner (John Brown), and the names of the captured prizes: the *Live Oak*, listed as taken in Dec. 1776, and the *Mary and Joseph*, listed as taken Oct. 1776 (but by the *Montgomery* under Stacey) (*Privateersmen of Newport* [Newport, R.I., 1883], 64).

¹⁴⁵ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 67-72; Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 227-237. Hewes's recollections of the details of this voyage are verified in Louis F. Middlebrook, *History of Maritime Connecticut during the American Revolution* (Salem, Mass., 1925), I, 44, 51-52, 65, II, 285-286, 303-304, 306-310, 313-316. Hewes is not on the crew list, I conclude, because Capt. Smedley, who did not give him his wages, eliminated his name (*ibid.*, I, 70-73). For other vivid details of the encounters of the *Defence* verifying Hewes, see the diary of a sailor on the accompanying ship *Cromwell* in Samuel W. Boardman [ed.], *Log-Book of Timothy Boardman. Kept on Board the Privateer Oliver Cromwell . . .* (Albany, N.Y., 1885), entries Apr. 7-30, 1778. For additional verification see the petition of Abel Woodworth, also on the *Cromwell*, in Dann, ed., *Revolution Remembered*, 319-320. See also Gardner W. Allen, *A Naval History of the American Revolution*, I (New York, 1913), 321-323.

way to Providence . . . and would pay me; but I never saw him afterwards. Neither have I, at any time since, received a farthing, either of my share of prize money or wages."¹⁴⁶

There was an adventurous side to privateering. His stories stress the thrill of the chase, the intrepid maneuvering of his ship in battle, the excitement of a boarding party. They also deal with the prosaic. He remembered manning the pumps on the leaking *Defence* "for eight days and eight nights to keep us from sinking." He remembered before battle that "we sat up all night . . . we made bandages, scraped lint, so that we might be prepared to dress wounds as we expected to have a hard time of it."¹⁴⁷ The man of tender sympathies did not become a bloodthirsty buccaneer.

Most important of all was the memory that at sea he had participated in making decisions and that the captains had shown deference to their crews. On his first voyage, the initial agreement was for a cruise of seven weeks. "When that term had expired," said Hewes, "and we had seen no enemy during the time, we were discouraged, and threatened to mutiny, unless he would return." Captain Stacey asked for one more week, after which he promised to sail home if they saw nothing, "to which we assented." On the second voyage, when the *Defence* sighted enemy ships and Captain Smedley "asked us if we were willing to give chase to them, we assented, we were all ready to go and risk our lives with him." In Charleston, their tour of duty legally over, Smedley proposed a five-day extension when the British privateers were sighted. "Our Captain put it to a vote, and it was found we were unanimously agreed to make the cruise."¹⁴⁸ One hesitates to call this process democratic: even the captain of a pirate ship could not function without the support of his crew. What Hewes remembered was that the captains deferred to him and his mates, not the other way around.

This is the motif of his encounter with George Washington in 1775. When Hewes and his fellow escapees from Boston were taken to Washington's headquarters at Craigie House in Cambridge, the Reverend Peter Thatcher recognized him as the nephew of the "staunch Liberty Man" Robert Hewes. Washington invited Hewes into his parlor—"with him, alone. There he told him his story, every word of it, from beginning to end, and answered all his questions besides." Washington, in Hewes's words, "didn't *laugh*, to be sure, but *looked amazing good-natured* you may depend." Washington then treated him and his companions to punch and invited them and Thatcher to a meal. All this is entirely possible. Washington was considering an invasion of Boston; he would have

¹⁴⁶ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 71-72. Ira Dye has very kindly checked for Hewes in the computerized naval records of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789, Nat'l Archs., but without success.

¹⁴⁷ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 68.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 65, 68.

welcomed intelligence from a street-wise man just out of the town, and as a Virginia planter he knew the importance of the gesture of hospitality. Hewes also claimed that "Madam Washington waited upon them at table all dinner-time," but this is improbable, and Thatcher the biographer erred in stating that she was "known to have been with her husband at the date of the adventure."¹⁴⁹

In military duty on land there was no recognition of this sort from his betters, though he was in the militia, by reputation the most democratic branch of service. Even his adventures were humdrum. The "general destination" of his units, he told Hawkes, was "to guard the coasts." He saw action at the Battle of Newport Island in August 1778 under General John Sullivan. He remembered "an engagement" at Cobblehill, "in which we beat them with a considerable slaughter of their men." He remembered rowing through the darkness in silence in an attack on a British fort that had to be aborted when one of the rowers talked. He remembered the grim retreat from Newport Island, crossing the waters at Howland's Ferry. On duty at West Point in 1781 he went out on forays against the "cowboys," lawless bands pillaging Westchester County. In all this activity he claimed no moment of glory; there was a lot of marching; a lot of sentry duty; much drudgery.¹⁵⁰ If he mended shoes for soldiers, as did other shoemakers in the ranks, he did not speak of it. And military service did not kindle in him an ambition to rise, as it did in a number of other shoemakers who became officers.¹⁵¹

After all this service it hurt to be subjected to an inequitable draft. As Hewes explained to Hawkes with considerable accuracy, Massachusetts required all men of military age to serve "or to form themselves into classes of nine men, and each class to hire an able bodied man, on such

¹⁴⁹ Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 216-220. Hewes did not tell this story to Hawkes, who reported Hewes as saying, "I went on shore at a safe place, and repaired straitway to my family at Wrentham" (*Retrospect*, 61). Thatcher elicited the story as he did several others about famous people. For the Washingtons at Cambridge see Douglas Southall Freeman, *George Washington: A Biography*, III (New York, 1951), 405, 477, 580-581. Hewes spoke of being in Boston nine weeks, which means his escape would have been late Aug. or early Sept., about the time Washington was considering an attack on Boston. Martha Washington did not arrive until Dec. 11, 1775. Thatcher reported one other encounter with a famous man during the war, an episode at the Newport Island action, Aug. 1778, in which Hewes claimed he rescued James Otis, who was "roaming about the lines in one of his unhappy spells of derangement" (*Memoir of Hewes*, 238). I have not been able to prove or disprove this incident.

¹⁵⁰ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 73-74; Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 237-240.

¹⁵¹ For shoemakers as officers see Don Higginbotham, *The American War of Independence: Military Attitudes, Policies, and Practice, 1763-1789* (New York, 1971), 400, and Shy, *People Numerous and Armed*, 163-179. For shoemaker officers mending shoes see the Baroness von Riedesel's comments cited in Forbes, *Paul Revere*, 336.

terms as they could, and pay him for his services, while they were to receive their pay of the state." Attleborough instituted such a procedure early in 1781. Why did Hewes refuse to go? He was frank with Hawkes: the "extreme exigencies" of his family and the "pressure of his circumstances" forced him to "withdraw his services from the army." The decision was painful, and it was costly. Hewes's substitute "demanded . . . specie while we received nothing of the government but paper money, of very little value, and continually depreciating."¹⁵²

Thatcher was right: his service was "poorly rewarded." Hewes was one of "the mass of people, at large; such as had little property to fight for, or to lose, on one hand, and could reasonably expect to gain still less, either in the way of emolument or distinction on the other."¹⁵³ Instead, the inequities of civilian life were repeated on an even crasser scale. The rich could easily afford a substitute; the men who had already fought paid through the nose for one. The ship's officers got their share of the prize; the poor sailor got neither prize money nor wages.

But the war meant more than this to Hewes. It left a memory of rights asserted (by a threat of mutiny) and rights respected by captains who put decisions to a vote of the crew, and of the crew giving assent. It was a memory, above all, of respect from his betters: from General Washington at Cambridge, from captains Stacey and Smedley at sea, as from John Hancock in Boston. For a moment, it had been a world that marched to the tune of the old English nursery rhyme supposedly played at Cornwallis's surrender, "The World Turned Upside Down." Then "in a trice" Hewes's world came right side up—but little, if any, better than before.

VII

For thirty-three years, from 1783 to about 1815, George Hewes almost eludes us. We know that at the end of the war he did not return to Boston but stayed in Wrentham; that he produced a large family; that after the War of 1812 he moved to Otsego County, New York. But we hardly know what he did these years. His biographers were uninterested.

¹⁵² Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 74-75; Daggett, *Sketch of Attleborough*, 128; Jonathan Smith, "How Massachusetts Raised Her Troops in the Revolution," *Mass. Hist. Soc., Procs.*, LV (1921), 345-370.

¹⁵³ Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 242-243. How much Hewes made can only be guessed: in privateering, very little on his first voyage, nothing on his second. For militia duty in 1777 Attleborough paid £3 a month plus a £2 bounty; in 1778, £2 8s. a month and £5 a month bonus (Daggett, *Sketch of Attleborough*, 124, 126). Thus if Hewes served nine months, he might have earned £27 in pay and perhaps the same as a bounty. As a resident of Wrentham he might have been attracted to Attleborough by extra pay for nonresidents. Had he wanted to make money from land service he could have enlisted in the Continental army; in 1778 Attleborough was offering £30 a month plus a bounty of £30 for army enlistments.

Hawkes said he was in "laborious pursuits either in some agricultural or mechanical employment." Later lore had it that he returned to the sea and "for many years" was "a mate on merchant vessels in the West Indies trade," lore that has been impossible to verify.¹⁵⁴ Legal documents refer to him in 1796-1797 as a "yeoman" and in 1810 as a "cordwainer."¹⁵⁵ These clues are not inconsistent. Wrentham in those years was a small inland farming town of about 2,000 people, no more than a good day's walk to the port of Providence.¹⁵⁶ If Hewes was a cordwainer, he would have had to be a farmer too, as were most country shoemakers. If he went to sea, he would have had to fall back on landlubber pursuits, especially in his later years. There were few "old salts" in their fifties or sixties.

All we may say with certainty is that he came out of the war poor and stayed poor. By 1783, he had turned forty, and had very little to show for it. That he did not go back to Boston, that he did not visit there more than a few times until 1821, tells us how small a stake he had in his native city. In this he was like at least a thousand other Bostonians—for the most part "the poorest and least successful"—who migrated elsewhere.¹⁵⁷ "The shop which I had built in Boston, I lost," he told Hawkes. British troops "appropriated it for the purpose of a wash and lumber house, and eventually pulled it down and burnt it up."¹⁵⁸ He owned no real estate. After seven years of war he could hardly count on customers waiting at his door. There was really nothing to go back to. Uncle Robert had died. His brothers were still there: Solomon was a fisherman and Daniel a mason, but Shubael could list himself as gentleman. Hewes bore his loyalist brother no ill will; he named a son Shubael in 1781. But his own low estate, compared to his brother's success, must have rankled.

¹⁵⁴ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 74-75; James G. Wilson, "The Last Survivor of the Boston Tea Party," *American Historical Register*, N.S., I (1897), 5, hereafter cited as Wilson, "Last Survivor." See Ira Dye, "Early American Merchant Seafarers," *American Philosophical Society, Proceedings*, CXX (1976), 331-360. After 1796 the federal government issued protection certificates to merchant seamen who requested them. Dye has generously checked for Hewes in abstracts of the surviving certificates, but without success. Providence, however, was not checked.

¹⁵⁵ See a will of Joseph Hewes [1796] summarized in Putnam, comp., *Joshua Hewes*, 327-338, and in Bristol County Northern District Registry of Deeds Record Book, two conveyances dated Mar. 18, 1797, in Book 76, p. 126, and Sept. 10, 1810, in Book 91, p. 453, copies of which were kindly provided by Alfred Florence, Assistant Register of Deeds, Bristol County, Taunton, Mass.

¹⁵⁶ Jordan D. Fiore, *Wrentham, 1673-1973: A History* (Wrentham, Mass., 1973), 136-140.

¹⁵⁷ Kulikoff, "Progress of Inequality," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., XXVIII (1971), 402. "By 1790, 45 per cent of the taxpayers in town in 1780 had disappeared from tax lists." Of 2,225 individuals on the assessors' books in 1780, 1,000 were missing in 1790. The rate of persistence was only 42% for those paying no rent, and 52% for those paying from £1 to £20, but 66% for those paying from £100 to £199, and 74% for those paying over £200 (*ibid.*, 401-402).

¹⁵⁸ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 72.

There is no evidence that he acquired land in Wrentham. The census names him; the records of real estate bought and sold do not.¹⁵⁹ The town's tax records of the 1790s list him only as a "poll rateable," owning neither real nor personal taxable property. In 1796, at the age of fifty-four, he was assessed thirty-three cents for his Massachusetts poll tax, seven cents for his county tax, fifty cents for his town tax.¹⁶⁰ He may possibly have been joint owner of property listed in someone else's name; more likely he rented or lived on a relative's land.¹⁶¹ His uncle Joseph, a Providence physician who died in 1796, willed George and Sarah one thirty-sixth share of the estate—\$580.25. The windfall helped keep him going. In 1810 he finally became a property holder in Attleborough: a co-owner, with eighteen others, of "a burying yard."¹⁶²

That Hewes stayed poor is also suggested by what little we know about his children. Sarah Hewes gave birth to fifteen, it would seem, of whom we have the names of eleven, three girls and eight boys, possibly all who survived birth. Six were born by 1781, the rest by 1796 at the latest. The naming pattern suggests the strength of family attachments: Sally for her mother; Mary and Elizabeth for aunts, Hewes's father's sisters; Solomon, Daniel, and Shubael after his brothers (and Solomon also for his grandfather, Shubael also for Sally's relative). One son was named Eleven, and the last-born, George Robert Twelves Fifteen.¹⁶³ What can we make of this?

¹⁵⁹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Heads of Families at the First Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1790: Massachusetts* (Washington, D.C., 1908), Wrentham, 210, lists a George Hewes; Laraine Welch, comp., *Massachusetts 1800 Census* (Bountiful, Utah, 1973), Norfolk County, 174, lists George R. L. Hewes; Ronald Jackson *et al.*, *Massachusetts 1810 Census Index* (Bountiful, Utah, 1976), does not list Hewes. Anne Lehane Howard, a title examiner, of Quincy, Mass., finds no record of Hewes buying or selling real estate in Suffolk or Norfolk counties in the Suffolk Co. Registry of Deeds, 1695-1899.

¹⁶⁰ The Wrentham tax records, incomplete and in disarray, were examined at the Assessor's Office, Wrentham, with the cooperation of Lois McKennon, Assessor, by Gregory Kaster and Patricia Reeve. Hewes is listed only as a poll rateable for 1791, 1792, 1794, 1796, and 1797; he does not appear in the other available tax lists for 1780, 1798, 1799, and 1817. Daniel Scott Smith helped interpret these data. Kaster did not find Hewes in "Massachusetts Direct Tax of 1798," MS, New England Historical and Genealogical Society, Boston. This was a dwelling tax.

¹⁶¹ One tax list, for 1793, lists Solomon Hewes for £1 4s. under commonwealth real estate assessment and £5 4s. 5d. town tax. He is listed immediately above George R. T. Hewes. This possibly is Solomon his eldest son (1771-1834), who entered his majority in 1792 and would marry in Wrentham in 1794. However, Anne Lehane Howard finds no record of a Solomon Hewes buying or selling property in the Suffolk Co. Registry of Deeds after the death of grandfather Solomon Hewes (1674?-1756).

¹⁶² See Bristol County Conveyance, n. 155 above.

¹⁶³ Putnam, comp., *Joshua Hewes*, 334-335, 353-357, lists nine children, leaving space between Robert and Eleven for three unnamed children, and between Eleven and Fifteen for three more. A relative sent in the names of two "missing"

A mischievous sense of humor? His own long name, the subject of teasing in his youth, after all had been a way of getting attention. Perhaps the only inheritance a poor shoemaker-farmer-seaman could guarantee—especially to his eleventh and fifteenth children—was a name that would be a badge of distinction as his had been.

Hewes could do little for this brood. Solomon, the first-born, became a shoemaker—undoubtedly trained by his father. Robert became a blacksmith. For the other sons we know no occupations. Of the daughters, two of the three married late—Elizabeth at twenty-two but Sarah (also Sally) in her mid-thirties and Mary at thirty-two—understandable when a father could not provide a suitor with dowry, position, or a sought-after craft skill.¹⁶⁴

For a while the Heweses lived in Attleborough, but the only trace they left is the share of the “burying yard.”¹⁶⁵ Attleborough was not much different from Wrentham; a farming town closer to Providence, it also had a few of the mills that dotted southern New England these years. For opportunity the family would have to move much farther away. And so they did, like tens of thousands of families who left New England in the 1790s and early 1800s, and like a large number of New England veterans.¹⁶⁶ Robert, Sally who married William Morrison, and Elizabeth

children as Asa and Walter (*ibid.*, Addendum, 601-602). Fifteen was identified as the fifteenth child in a newspaper account (*Providence Journal* reprinted in *Columbian Centinel* [Boston], July 1, 1835). For the significance of child-naming practices see Daniel Scott Smith, “Child-Naming Patterns and Family Structure Change: Hingham, Massachusetts, 1640-1880” (Newberry Papers in Family and Community History, No. 76-5, Jan. 1977), and Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York, 1976), chap. 5.

¹⁶⁴ *Vital Records of Wrentham, Massachusetts to the Year 1850*, II (Boston, 1910), 321, lists Sarah Hewes, born about 1769, marrying William Morason (*sic*), Nov. 27, 1806. *Vital Records of Attleboro, Massachusetts . . . to 1849* (Salem, Mass., 1934), 456, lists Eliza (*sic*) Hewes, born 1773, marrying Preserved Whipple, “both of Attleboro,” Mar. 19, 1795, and Mary Hewes “of Wrentham,” born 1777, marrying Abel Jillison of Attleborough, Jan. 21, 1809.

¹⁶⁵ The clerk put down that Hewes “resided in Wrentham and Attlebury [*sic*] since the Revolution” (Pension Application, Oct. 16, 1832). The only evidence for Hewes’s residence at Attleborough is Elizabeth’s marriage record of 1795 (see above, n. 164). The conveyance of the “burying yard,” Mar. 10, 1810 (see above, n. 155), lists Hewes as a “cordwainer of Wrentham.” I have not conducted a search of the tax records of Attleborough.

¹⁶⁶ For the migration from Attleborough see Daggett, *Sketch of Attleborough*, 664-665. John Resch found in a sample of applicants under the 1818 pension law that “a third of the total no longer lived in the regions where their units originated and another 20 per cent appeared to have moved to a different state within the same region” (“Poverty, the Elderly and Federal Welfare: The 1818 Revolutionary War Pension Act” [unpubl. paper, Organization of American Historians, 1980], 9). For another veteran who went west see Lemisch, “Life of Andrew Sherburne,” sec. XII.

who married Preserved Whipple moved to Otsego County, New York. George Fifteen went first to Connecticut, then to Richfield Springs, finally to Michigan. Solomon also moved to Otsego County for a while, then went down east to Union, Maine, where he acquired twenty-eight acres. Eleven went to Kentucky.¹⁶⁷

What had become these years of George Hewes, the citizen? We have only one thing to go on. According to family tradition, during the War of 1812 he tried to enlist in the navy as a boatswain but was turned down; tried to ship out on the frigate *Constitution*; then tried to join Commodore Perry's fleet on Lake Erie. There is even a story that he walked to Braintree to enlist ex-President John Adams's support.¹⁶⁸ Two sons we know saw service, Eleven in the Kentucky militia, under General Henry Clay, and George Fifteen in Connecticut. Such patriotism in Wrentham, where there was "no rush of men" to arms, would have been extraordinary.¹⁶⁹ It meant that the War of 1812 was a second War of Independence to Hewes; and to have sons who responded meant that the father had passed on well the heritage of the Revolution.

At the end of the war, perhaps before, George and Sarah Hewes went west to Richfield Springs. George was seventy-four, Sarah sixty-five. His family was dispersed, but three or four children were already in Otsego County or accompanied him there. Did he mean to spend his declining years in retirement with his family? He was still vigorous. One suspects he went in search of the "living," the "independence," that had eluded the artisan and the recognition that had eluded the citizen. He had gone from city to sea to small town; now he would try again in a place where at the least he would be with sons and daughters. And so he left Wrentham about 1815, as he had left Boston in 1775, probably with not much more than the tools of his trade. Only this time he had an old soldier's uniform as well.

VIII

In New York, Hewes did not find independence either for himself or through his children. For the last decade of his life he did not even have the haven of family. He did find recognition.

¹⁶⁷ Putnam, comp., *Joshua Hewes*, 353-357.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 339; Wilson, "Last Survivor," 5. Wilson heard the story of the walk out in Otsego County. There S. Crippin, the clerk who endorsed Hewes's pension application at Richfield Springs in 1832, wrote on it: "He was a soldier in the Late War as well as in the Revolution." Hewes himself made no such claim to Hawkes or Thatcher. Hewes's name does not appear on any of the checking lists in the Adams Papers, Mass. Hist. Soc., for either John or John Quincy Adams, kindly checked for me by Malcolm Freiberg.

¹⁶⁹ Fiore, *Wrentham*, 100. The War of 1812 pension applications of Eleven and George Fifteen are reported in Putnam, comp., *Joshua Hewes*, 357-358.

Richfield Springs, sixty-five miles west of Albany and eighteen north of Cooperstown, was no longer frontier country after 1815. Otsego County had been opened up in the 1790s by Judge William Cooper, the novelist's father, who boasted of settling 50,000 families. The pioneers were already moving away to find more fertile land on better terms in western New York or the Old Northwest. Richfield Springs was located in a beautiful area of rolling hills and low mountain peaks, of streams and lakes. In the 1820s, after mineral waters were discovered, it became a resort town. But its prosperity was uneven. It did not get a post office until 1829.¹⁷⁰

What did Hewes do these years? We have more to go on for the last twenty-five years of his life than for the three decades before: Hawkes's account is supplemented by some fascinating reminiscences by Hewes's contemporaries collected in 1896 by the historian James Grant Wilson. According to "an old jesting rhyme attributed to James Fenimore Cooper who knew honest Hewes,"

Old Father Hewes, he makes good shoes,
And sews them well together
It has no heels but those he steals
And begs his upper leather.¹⁷¹

Hewes, then, was once again a shoemaker.

He and Sally lived in "a small house which his son Robert had built for him" on Robert's land.¹⁷² Sarah Morrison was nine miles away in German Flats and Elizabeth Whipple was also in the area, each with a large and growing family. Fifteen lived nearby for a time, a property holder; so did Solomon. As before, their father had no house or land of his own.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ Duane Hamilton Hurd, *History of Otsego County, New York* (Philadelphia, 1878), 298-306, *passim*, W. T. Bailey, *Richfield Springs and Vicinity . . .* (New York, 1874), *passim*. I am indebted to Ethylyn Morse Hawkins, local historian, for sharing her knowledge with me, and the following friends of the Hewes family for answering inquiries: Vern Steele of Las Vegas, Nev., and Harry B. Carson of Golden, Colo.

¹⁷¹ Wilson, "Last Survivor," 5.

¹⁷² Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 94. "New York State Census for 1820: Otsego County," the handwritten takers' book, 163, lists George R. T. Hewes as living with his wife, and Robert Hewes below him with his family, and, 160, George R.T.F. Hewes, that is, Fifteen. The 1830 census lists only Robert Hewes but with one free white male "of ninety and under one hundred" living with him, confirming Hawkes.

¹⁷³ For running Hewes down assiduously in the property records, vital records, and newspapers of Otsego County I am especially indebted to Marion Brophy, Special Collections Librarian, New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown, as well as to Wendell Tripp, Chief of Library Services, and Wayne Wright, Edith R. Empey, and Susan Filupeit of the library staff. Marion Brophy found no record of Hewes's owning property but found Fifteen owning land in Richfield Springs, corroborating Hawkes.

He can hardly have prospered. The clue is that when Daniel, his last surviving brother, died in 1821, Hewes travelled with Robert to Boston for five days in a one-horse wagon to secure their legacy. For the third time in his life a will loomed—Grampa Shubael left £2 17s. 6d. in 1756, and Uncle Joseph, \$580.25 in 1796—a windfall so important when there were no other prospects of accumulation. George's brother Solomon had died in 1816, Shubael in 1813. Daniel left an estate that came to \$2,900 after expenses; he willed a third to Hewes and his children. Hewes considered his share "a considerable sum," but it could not have stretched very far. "For some years," Hawkes wrote in 1833, Robert had "contributed what was necessary" to support his father and mother.¹⁷⁴

Sarah died in 1828, aged 87 years and 9 months, the tombstone said. Actually she was 77. It is difficult to bring Sarah out from her husband's shadow. He spoke of her with affection: "we lived together very happily," he told Hawkes; he expected to see her in heaven. He had hardly married her for money; he had courted her for two years. He was grief-stricken when he left her in wartime. He called her Sally, not Sarah, certainly not Mrs. Hewes. What was her role? A washerwoman before she was married, she labored a lifetime as a housewife, without servants. She bore, it seems, fifteen children and raised eleven of them. She was illiterate; unlike her husband, she signed her name with a mark. A daughter of a sexton, she may well have been religious. Certainly, she was apolitical; had she been a "Daughter of Liberty," Thatcher, who dwelt on the subject, would have caught it. When George got home from the Tea Party and told her his story, " 'Well George,' said she, at the end of it, '*did you bring me home a lot of it?*' " "We shouldn't wonder," Thatcher added, "if Mrs. Hewes was more of a tea-drinker than a Whig." Or, we might add, more of a woman struggling to make ends meet on a shoemaker's income.¹⁷⁵

After she died, it was all downhill. George moved from one child to another, each so poor they could not long provide for him. At first, he lived with Robert, who soon after, "having met with some misfortune, was obliged to sell his house" and move farther west. For a while he was "a sojourner among friends." Then he moved in with his daughter and son-in-law, the Morrises, but stayed only a year. "Morrison and his wife had several children," wrote Hawkes, "and were, as they are now very poor . . . Morrison not being able by his manual [*sic*] services to provide for his family but a mere subsistence." Hewes had a "severe sickness." Next he took up "a short residence with a son who resides near Richfield Springs," very likely George, Jr. Soon after, he "fell down a stairway on some iron ware," severely lacerating both legs. He healed with remarkable speed for

¹⁷⁴ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 77-78, 94; Will of Daniel Hewes, recorded July 16, 1821, Suffolk Co. Probate Court, and Aug. 5, 1822, Record Book 120, 129, for the final sum, \$2,904.79, located by Ruth Kennedy.

¹⁷⁵ Tombstone, Lakeview Cemetery, Richfield Springs. For Sarah's signature as a mark see the 1797 conveyances above, n. 155. For the Tea Party see Thatcher, *Memoir of Hewes*, 186, and for Hewes on her age see Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 27.

a man his age, but a son with eight children to feed could not provide "for his comfortable support." Finally, a "worthy gentleman" in the neighborhood took the old man in, and it was there that Hawkes found him in 1833, "pressed down by the iron hand of poverty" and "supported by the charity of his friends." His children had failed and, in the classic style of poor pioneers, were moving on to greener fields. They and his grandchildren would scatter, most to the Midwest, some to California, some still in mechanic trades in Boston.¹⁷⁶

In the fall of 1832 Hewes applied successfully for a veteran's pension. He may have applied earlier, for Hawkes spoke of a "long and expensive process" begun about fifteen or twenty years before. If true, Hewes must have been frustrated: he would not have been eligible until the 1832 law required no more than six months' service in any branch.¹⁷⁷ Hewes's application, in the hand of the county clerk to which a local judge and county official attested, gives minute details of his service. A clerk in Washington disallowed three of the months he claimed at sea, listing him for seven months', fifteen days' service as a seaman and nine months in the militia. It added up to sixteen months, fifteen days, or less than the two years required for a full pension; he was therefore prorated down to \$60 a year, with \$150 in arrears retroactive to 1831. It was, Hawkes thought, a "miserable pittance of a soldier's pension."¹⁷⁸

Meanwhile, Hewes was winning recognition of a sort. A "venerable lady" whom James Grant Wilson spoke to in 1896 said she first met Hewes in 1820 at a "house raising" where she saw "an alert and little old man with the cocked hat and faded uniform of a continental soldier, who charmed the young people with the account of the destruction of the tea in Boston in December 1773, and his stories of battles on land and sea." Another woman, who attended school in Richfield Springs with one of Hewes's granddaughters, said she was always delighted to listen to the old soldier's stories and to see him on the Fourth of July, "when he would put

¹⁷⁶ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 94-97. See also Putnam, comp., *Joshua Hewes*, 353-357. I am grateful to Catherine Wilson of Des Moines, Iowa, a descendant via Solomon, for copies of letters by Virgil Hammond Hewes, George's grandson.

¹⁷⁷ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 94-96, 114. See also Putnam, comp., *Joshua Hewes*, for a story from "a near relative" that Hewes walked 10 miles to visit ex-President John Quincy Adams to ask for help on his pension, possibly a variant of the story about Hewes's walk to ex-President John Adams to get into the navy. For the laws see Resch, "Poverty, the Elderly and Federal Welfare," 1-7. Resch clarified a number of points for me. See also Robert George Bodenger, "Soldiers' Bonuses: A History of Veterans' Benefits in the United States, 1776-1967" (Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 1971), 26-42, and Lemisch, "Life of Andrew Sherburne," secs. XII, XIII, for one veteran's long bitter battle for his pension.

¹⁷⁸ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 114; Pension Application. The clerk disallowed the three months on the *Diamond*, probably because it was a privateer, but allowed the seven months and fifteen days on the *Defence*, also a privateer but officially a ship of war in the Connecticut navy, under a naval officer.

on his ancient uniform, shoulder his crutch, like Goldsmith's veteran, and show how fields were won."¹⁷⁹ By the late 1820s, possibly earlier, Hewes had become a figure at Fourth of July observances. In 1829 the local paper reported that he "walked three miles on foot to join in the festivities," and "after mingling in the enjoyments of the occasion, with a fine flow of spirits returned in the same manner thro' the wet to home." In 1833 the celebrants toasted him as "the last survivor of the tea party," and he toasted them in turn.¹⁸⁰

The "venerable lady" also claimed to have seen "the old soldier in conversation with James Fenimore Cooper who invited Hewes to his home in Cooperstown where he was quite a lion at the author's table." This is entirely possible. The novelist, who returned to his family home at intervals, was always mining old timers for the lore of the sea and the Revolution. Later he would invite Ned Meyers, an old salt, to spend five months at Cooperstown while he took down his life. Hewes's tales of the "cowboys and skinners" of Westchester could have added to Cooper's store of information for *The Spy*; his adventures at sea would have confirmed Cooper in his idealization of American privateersmen, a theme in several of his sea novels and his naval history.¹⁸¹

This recognition, it can be argued, had a price. The old man had to dress up in his uniform and tell stories. He was trotted out once a year on Independence Day. He had to play a role; perhaps this may have contributed to his "remembering" himself almost ten years older than he was. And the already-quoted "jesting rhyme," whether Cooper's or not, suggests that if children sat at his feet to hear his tales, they also poked fun at "Old Father Hewes."

Hawkes captured a mood in Hewes that bordered on alienation, especially as he talked about his reactions to Boston in 1821, when he went there to receive his legacy. Hewes spoke of the experience in haunting, poetic language. As he walked around town, he looked for old friends.

But, alas! I looked in vain. They were gone. Neither were those who once knew them as I did, to be found. The place where I drew my first breath and formed my most endearing attachments, had to me become a land of strangers.

¹⁷⁹ Wilson, "Last Survivor," 5-6.

¹⁸⁰ *Freeman's Journal* (Cooperstown, N.Y.), July 13, 1829; Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 90.

¹⁸¹ Cooper's occasional residence in Cooperstown, 1816-1840, may be established from James F. Beard, *Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960-1964), I-IV, *passim*. Beard kindly answered my inquiry about Cooper's sources. See Cooper, *The Spy: A Tale of the Neutral Ground* (New York, 1821), and *Ned Meyers; or, a Life Before the Mast* (Philadelphia, 1843); and Thomas Philbrick, *James Fenimore Cooper and the Development of American Sea Fiction* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), chaps. 2, 4.

He looked for familiar places.

Not only had my former companions and friends disappeared, but the places of their habitations were occupied by those who could give no account of them. The house in which I was born was not to be found, and the spot where it stood could not be ascertained by any visible object.

The physical city of 1775 was gone.

The whole scenery about me seemed like the work of enchantment. Beacon hill was levelled, and a pond on which had stood three mills, was filled up with its contents; over which two spacious streets had been laid and many elegant fabrics erected. The whole street, from Boston Neck to the Long Wharf, had been built up. It was to me almost as a new town, a strange city; I could hardly realize that I was in the place of my nativity.

As he stood in the market, an "aged man" stared at him, then asked,

Was you not a citizen of Boston at the time the British tea was destroyed in Boston harbour? I replied that I was, and was one of those who aided in throwing it into the water. He then inquired who commanded the division to which I belonged in that affair; I told him one Leonard Pitt. So he did mine, said he; and I had believed there was a man by the name of Hewes aboard the same ship with me, and I think you must be that man.¹⁸²

They had a "social glass," reminisced, parted. "I found he as well as myself had outlived the associates of his youthful days." Hewes did his legal business, saw his nephews and nieces, and after three days headed home.¹⁸³

Sometime in his declining years Hewes became a Methodist. He was known to the children of the village as "The Old Saturday Man," Wilson reported, because "every Saturday for several years he walked into

¹⁸² Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 77-80.

¹⁸³ Wilson repeated a tale that Hewes had attended the laying of the cornerstone of the Bunker Hill Monument in Boston in 1825 ("Last Survivor," 6). Hewes said nothing of this to Hawkes or Thatcher, and Hawkes said he "had made but one visit," that of 1821 (*Retrospect*, 76). Wilson's tale mixed images of the 1821 and 1835 trips. *Freeman's Jour.*, May 30, June 27, July 11, 1825, and *Cherry Valley Gazette* (N.Y.), June 28, Aug. 9, 1825, say nothing of Hewes in reports of the observance. Benson J. Lossing garbled the story further by claiming that Hewes was at the ceremony for the completion of the monument, June 17, 1843, three years after his death (*Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution; or, Illustrations by Pen and Pencil . . .*, I [New York, 1851], 501-502).

Richfield Springs for the purpose of being present at the services of the Methodist Church of which he was a member."¹⁸⁴ This lore seems trustworthy. He had become a Bible reader ("he can still read his Bible without glasses," a grandson wrote in 1836), and Hawkes found that he "often expresses his gratitude to a kind providence, for the many favours with which he has been indulged." He was also known for his temperance, a badge of Methodists. It stuck in the memory of the "venerable lady" that at the house-raising Hewes was "perhaps the only man present who did not drink the blackstrap (a mixture of whiskey and molasses) provided for the occasion."¹⁸⁵

Hewes had not been a member of any other church in Richfield Springs and could hardly have been a Methodist before moving there.¹⁸⁶ But it is not surprising that he became one. Methodism had a growing appeal to poor, hard-working people low in status, whether among shoemakers in Lynn, Massachusetts (a center of Methodist missionaries), textile workers in Samuel Slater's mill in Webster, Massachusetts, or rural folk in the west.¹⁸⁷ Richfield Springs had no fewer than three Methodist chapels scattered around the township, none of which could sustain a minister; circuit riders or laymen served them. Many things about the Methodists would have attracted Hewes: a warm atmosphere of Christian fellowship; a stress on sobriety and industriousness, the Franklinian virtues he had been raised on; the promise of salvation without regard to rank or wealth.¹⁸⁸ This was also a church that stressed lay leadership; shoemakers could serve as stewards, "class" leaders, and lay preachers. Hewes's Methodism seems late blooming; he may have found in the fellowship of the chapel the wholehearted acceptance of himself as a person that was missing in the Fourth of July kind of recognition from the village.

¹⁸⁴ Wilson, "Last Survivor," 6. Marion Brophy reports that "there are no Methodist church records for the 1830s or 1840s in Richfield unless they are hidden in an attic somewhere. The local officials instituted a search and found nothing" (letter to the author, July 17, 1978).

¹⁸⁵ Wilson, "Last Survivor," 6; Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 93-94. He was not a total abstainer; Hawkes indicated that he used "stimulating liquors" when needed.

¹⁸⁶ The clerk wrote on Hewes's petition for a pension that there was "no clergyman residing in his neighborhood whose testimony he can obtain pursuant to the instructions from the War department" (see above, n. 178).

¹⁸⁷ See Paul Gustaf Faler, "Workingmen, Mechanics and Social Change: Lynn, Massachusetts, 1800-1860" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1971), chap. 2; Barbara M. Tucker, "Our Good Methodists: The Church, the Factory, and the Working Class in Ante-Bellum Webster, Massachusetts," *Md. Historian*, VIII (1977), 26-37; and Charles G. Steffen, "The Mechanic Community in Transition: The Skilled Workers of Baltimore, 1788-1812" (unpubl. MS), chap. 6.

¹⁸⁸ Bailey, *Richfield Springs*, 148. For the character of early western Methodism see Frank Baker, *From Wesley to Asbury: Studies in Early American Methodism* (Durham, N.C., 1976), chap. 11, esp. 195-197, and George Peck, *Early Methodism within the Bounds of the Old Genesee Conference from 1788 to 1828 . . .* (New York, 1860), *passim*.

IX

For Hewes, the publication of James Hawkes's *Retrospect* in 1834 led to recognition in New England. There is no sign that the book caused a ripple in Richfield Springs or Otsego County, but in Boston it paved the way for the return of one of the "last surviving members" of the Tea Party. Hewes's attraction was his age, supposedly almost one hundred, combined with his role in a symbolic moment of the Revolution. In 1821 Hewes had been ignored. By 1835 a change in historical mood made Boston ready for him. Angry veterans forced from the pension lists in the 1820s helped bring old soldiers into the public eye, leading to the more liberal act of 1832. At the laying of the cornerstone of the Bunker Hill Monument in 1825, Daniel Webster and Lafayette shared the honors with forty veterans of the battle and two hundred other veterans of the Revolution. In the 1830s Ralph Waldo Emerson interviewed survivors of the fight at Concord Bridge, and in 1831 Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote "The Last Leaf," a poem about an aged survivor of the Tea Party.¹⁸⁹

Workingmen demonstrated a special identification with the artisan republicanism of the Revolution. The Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics Association—masters all—toasted "our revolutionary mechanics" in 1825. On the Fourth of July, 1826, a shoemaker offered a toast to "the *Shoemakers of the Revolution*—they risked their little *all* upon the great *end* and gave *short quarters* to the foe, in 'the times that tried men's soles.'" Meanwhile Seth Luther, asserting the right of journeymen and factory operatives to combine against masters, asked "was there no *combination* when Bostonians . . . made a dish of tea . . . using Boston harbor for a tea pot?" In May 1835, when Boston journeymen house carpenters, masons, and stone cutters went on strike, they claimed "by the blood of our fathers shed on our battle fields on the War of the Revolution, the rights of American Freeman."¹⁹⁰

In 1835 Hewes returned to New England on a triumphal tour of sorts accompanied by his youngest son, Fifteen. At Providence he was interviewed by the local newspaper, and the merchant patriarch Moses Brown called on him. On the way to Boston he stopped at Wrentham, perhaps to visit, perhaps to crow a bit. In Boston the papers noted his arrival, printing

¹⁸⁹ Auguste Levasseur, *Lafayette in America in 1824 and 1825*, II (Philadelphia, 1829), 202-206; Kammen, *Season of Youth*, 21, 26, 120; Oliver Wendell Holmes, *Complete Poems* (Boston, 1836).

¹⁹⁰ Joseph Buckingham, *Annals of the Massachusetts Charitable Mechanics Association* (Boston, 1853), 202, reporting a toast at a dinner for Lafayette in 1825; shoemaker toast, 1826, in Kammen, *Season of Youth*, 44-45; Seth Luther, *An Address to the Working-Men of New-England . . . Delivered in Boston . . .* (Boston, 1832), 27. For documents of Boston labor organizations, 1825-1835, see John R. Commons *et al.*, eds., *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, VI (Cleveland, Ohio, 1910), 98, 73-100.

an excerpt from Hawkes's book. He was a celebrity. He stayed with his nephew Richard Brooke Hewes, Shubael's son, a politician who doubtless made the arrangements for his uncle's visit. Thatcher interviewed him for his biography, reliving his life in Boston. He sat for a portrait by Joseph G. Cole, Boston's rising young painter, which within a month would be on display at the Athenaeum Gallery, entitled "The Centenarian." A group of ladies presented him with a snuff box.¹⁹¹

The highlight, of course, was the Fourth of July. He was the featured guest at South Boston's observance. "In a conspicuous part of the procession," according to the newspaper, "was the venerable Mr. Hewes, in a barouche, drawn by four splendid greys," accompanied by the lieutenant governor and his entourage. There was a church service and a dinner. When the orator of the day reached the Tea Party and "alluded to the venerable patriot," Hewes "arose and received the united and enthusiastic congratulations of the audience." He was supported on one side by Major Benjamin Russell, for forty years a leader of the mechanic interest as printer and publisher, and on the other by Colonel Henry Purkitt, who had been a cooper's apprentice and, like Hewes, a Tea Party volunteer. The orator was fulsome in his tribute to Hewes, "formerly a citizen of Boston," now "on the verge of eternity": "Though you come to the land of your childhood, leaning upon a staff and feeling your dependence on the charities of a selfish world, you are surrounded by friends who feel that their prosperity is referable to the privations sacrifices and personal labors of you and your brave associates in arms." At the dinner after the toasts it was Hewes's turn. "Under the influence of strong emotion he gave the following toast, 'Those I leave behind me, May God Bless them.'"¹⁹²

When the celebrations ended, Hewes made his way to Augusta, Maine. Solomon, his eldest, had died there the year before, and his wife had just died, but there were grandchildren to visit. He also went to Portland, perhaps for more family. From Maine, back to Boston, and thence home to Richfield Springs.

Several things struck those who saw Hewes. The first, of course, was his age. Not surprisingly, people came forward from all around—Wrentham, Attleborough, Boston, Maine—to testify, as they had in Richfield Springs, that he was indeed one hundred, if not more. The second was his remarkable physical condition. Third was his wonderful mood. A correspondent of the *Boston Courier* who rode the stagecoach to Augusta was astonished that "he bore the ride of fifty-eight miles with very little apparent fatigue, amusing himself and his fellow passengers occasionally upon the route, with snatches of revolutionary songs, and by the recital of

¹⁹¹ *Columbian Centinel*, July 1, 9, 1835; *Evening Mercantile Jour.*, July 1, 8, 1835; *American Traveller* (Boston), July 28, 1835. I am indebted to Helen Callahan for making a search of the Boston newspapers for July 1835.

¹⁹² *Evening Mercantile Jour.*, July 8, 1835; *Am. Traveller*, July 7, 1835.

anecdotes of the days which tried mens souls." He was in his glory. And lastly, there was his demeanor. Hewes's Providence interviewer found him "even at this age, a brave, high spirited, warm hearted man, whose tongue was never controlled by ceremony, and whose manners have not been moulded by the fashion of any day. His etiquette may be tea party etiquette, but it was not acquired at tea parties in Beacon Street or Broadway."¹⁹³ Hewes, in short, was still not taking his hat off for any man.

The remaining five years in Richfield Springs were no different than the previous twenty. Thatcher's biography appeared late in 1835, but there is no sign that it was read any more than Hawkes's. "The Old Saturday Man" continued to walk to church. The veteran continued to be a guest on the Fourth of July. His family was dispersed; there were more than fifty grandchildren, and occasionally one visited him. In 1836 George Whipple, Elizabeth's son, found him "pretty well, and very jovial. He sang for me many old songs and told over all the incidents of the 'scrape' in Boston Harbor. His memory is uncommonly good for one of his age. He jumped about so when I made myself known to him he liked to have lost his drumsticks." The old man clearly was starved for company. A visit from a grandchild only underscored his isolation. In 1836 he sat for a portrait by a local artist, commissioned by a grandson. He looked smaller, shrunken.¹⁹⁴

On July 4, 1840, as Hewes was getting into a carriage to go to the annual observance, the horses bolted and he was seriously injured. He died on November 5, Pope's Day, once the "grand gala day" of Boston's apprentices. He was buried in what became the Presbyterian cemetery, where his wife already lay. There seem to have been no obituary notices, no public memorial services.

From mid-century on, Hewes began to make an occasional appearance in histories of the nation, the Revolution, Boston, or the Tea Party.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ *Boston Courier*, July 22, 1835; *Providence Jour.*, reprinted in *Columbian Centinel*, July 1, 1835.

¹⁹⁴ Putnam, comp., *Joshua Hewes*, 362-363, 439, reported this as an oil by Charles Palmer of Richfield Springs, done Jan. 1836 on a board 2'1" × 2'6", in the possession of David Hewes, Robert Hewes's son. Wilson reprints this, "redrawn from a photograph by Mr. Sidney Waldman" ("Last Survivor," 3). I have been unable to locate painting, photograph, or drawing. Hawkes's *Retrospect* has a drawing in the frontispiece, which could have been made from life, and Thatcher's *Memoir of Hewes* has still another drawing, most likely copied from the Cole portrait. Sometime after Hewes's death there was a second printing of Hawkes's *Retrospect* with a new frontispiece drawing of Hewes and 16 illustrations of events of the Revolution, copied from other engravings.

¹⁹⁵ Lossing, *Pictorial Field-Book*, 499n, 501-502; with numerous inaccuracies repeated in *Appletons' Cyclopedia of American Biography*, ed. James Grant Wilson and John Fiske, III (New York, 1887), 190; William Cullen Bryant and Sidney Howard Gay, *A Popular History of the United States*, III (New York, 1883), 374; Henry C. Watson, *The Yankee Tea Party* (Philadelphia, 1851), Drake, *Tea Leaves*,

Descendants also kept his memory alive. Children and grandchildren named sons after him; one great-grandson bore the distinctive George Twelves Hewes (1861-1921). The generation that matured late in the nineteenth century rediscovered him as some compiled a mammoth genealogy and others applied to patriotic societies.¹⁹⁶ In 1896 his remains were exhumed and reinterred ceremoniously in the Grand Army of the Republic plot in Lakeview Cemetery, Richfield Springs. The inscription on the tombstone reads "George R. T. Hewes, one who helped drown the tea in Boston, 1770, died November 5, 1840, aged 109 years 2 months."¹⁹⁷ If anyone in town knew the truth, no one wanted to destroy the myth. The next year James Grant Wilson published the first article devoted to Hewes, perpetuating the notion that Hewes was the last survivor of the Tea Party.¹⁹⁸

In 1885 a great-grandson gave the Cole painting to the Bostonian Society, which has displayed it ever since at the Old State House. In the opinion of contemporaries, it was "an admirable likeness."¹⁹⁹ It shows a happy man of ninety-three in his moment of triumph in Boston. He wears Sunday clothes, nineteenth-century style, and leans forward in a chair, his hands firmly gripping a cane. His face is wrinkled but not ravaged; his features are full, his eyes alert. He has most of his hair. There is a twinkle in his eyes, a slightly bemused smile on his lips. The mood is one of pride. It is not a picture of a man as a shoemaker, but we can understand it only if we know the man was a shoemaker. It shows the pride of a man the world had counted as a nobody at a moment in his life when he was a somebody, when he had won recognition from a town that had never granted it before. It is the pride of a citizen, of one who "would not take his hat off to any man." The apprentice who had once deferred to John Hancock lived

cxv; Samuel Adams Drake, *Old Landmarks and Historic Personages of Boston* (Boston, 1873), 269-270, 282-283; Bailey, *Richfield Springs*, 98-99. Esther Forbes is the only modern historian to have used the memoirs extensively.

¹⁹⁶ Putnam, comp., *Joshua Hewes*, 353-358, 601-602. I am indebted to the registrar general of the Daughters of the American Revolution for providing me with copies of five applications by Hewes's descendents.

¹⁹⁷ The end of the century had "an obsession with transplanting Revolutionary heroes to more suitable graves" (Kammen, *Season of Youth*, 65).

¹⁹⁸ David Kinneson, who died in Chicago in 1848, seemingly was the last survivor (see Lossing, *Pictorial Field-Book*, 501-502).

¹⁹⁹ *Am. Traveller*, July 28, 1835, wrote of the portrait that "it is an admirable likeness—everything about it—the coloring, expression &c. even to the cane, are true to life." The Bostonian Society acquired the portrait in 1885, according to an article by D.T.V. Huston, its secretary (*Boston Weekly Transcript*, Jan. 26, 1886). For Cole (1803-1858) see William Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, III (New York, 1834), 136, who said that the Hewes portrait was "among the best of his portraits." The dating of the portrait is confirmed by Mary Leen, Librarian, Bostonian Society (letter to the author, Aug. 16, 1977).

with the memory that Hancock had toiled side by side with him, throwing tea chests into Boston harbor. The man who had to defer to British officers, royal officials, and colonial gentry had lived to see General Washington, ship captains, and now lieutenant governors, educated lawyers, and writers defer to him.

It is the pride of a survivor. His enemies had all passed on. His "associates," the patriots, had all gone to their graves. He had outlived them all. Fortified by his religion, the old man could rejoice that he would soon join them, but as their equal. "May we meet hereafter," he told his Independence Day well-wishers, "where the wicked will cease from troubling and the true sons of Liberty be forever at rest."²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ Hawkes, *Retrospect*, 91, citing a toast of July 4, 1833.