The Tradition of Mob Violence in the Whiskey Insurrection

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Hunter College Senior Thesis, December 2011

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Political violence brought on by an insurgent minority was an American colonial legacy, a "ritual of Revolution."[i] The reasons American colonists had for participating in politically-motivated violence stemmed from the Enlightenment ideal of natural rights, the theory of social leveling that arose during the English Civil War, the historical memory of mob-like ritual celebrations in England, and deep-seated, class-driven animosities encouraged by the disparity of wealth in the colonies. If the oppression of answering to a motherland across an ocean was the cause of colonial political violence, the American Revolution should have put an end to it on our shores. However, political violence in America did not stop with the American Revolution. It continued in the American frontier into the Early Republic era. The Whiskey Rebellion of the 1790s in western Pennsylvania offers a case study of the continuation of mob violence into the United States after the American Revolution. This paper will explore the history of mob violence during the 18th-century American colonial period, examine several instances of mob violence during the Whiskey Rebellion, and chronicle transformation of the mob from a small group of politically active citizens to an organized force during the Whiskey Rebellion.

Mob Violence as a Colonial Legacy

Ordinary American colonists had a self-activating capacity. In virtually every seaport town in the colonies in the decades leading up to the American Revolution, groups of citizens assembled to protest political policies and to bring about change. "Large groups of disaffected citizens, drawn heavily but not entirely from laboring ranks, who worked in purposeful and coordinated ways to protest British policies, had their own ideas about how an equitable society

should operate, and in many cases expressed hatred of oppressive local oligarchs."[ii] These American colonists made use of Enlightenment ideals such as the idea of natural rights and the theory of social leveling that came out of the English Civil War to reason that their liberties as British citizens were just as worthy of being upheld and protected as the rights of their countrymen across the Atlantic.

Recent and historical memories of European traditions of ritual upheaval were on the minds of most American colonists. These traditions included *Carnaval*, a celebration in which social classes swapped and a commoner could temporarily become a king. A French tradition, *charivari*, involved the ritual harassment of a married couple, and came to be used as a tool among a community to ritually shame a person who did not conform to social norms. *Charivari* made use of many forms of public shaming and harassment that were adopted as the techniques of colonial political rebels. "The person being shamed might be ducked in a pond, ridden on a rail, paraded past the gallows, or given a painful coat of tar and feathers."[iii]

Every November 5th, Bostonians celebrated the English holiday of Pope's Day in commemoration of Guy Fawkes' plot to blow up the Parliament building in England. The Pope's Day celebrations cemented in the minds of colonists the political philosophy that "being English meant being Protestant and free."[iv] Pope's Day commemorated the seventeenth-century English Revolution that made use of populist political violence to overthrow the monarch. During these Pope's Day celebrations, Bostonians made use of techniques that would become commonplace during colonial political protests. They marched around *en masse* with effigies of Guy Fawkes, the Pope, and the Devil, which they subsequently burned.[v] As well as cementing activist techniques and philosophies, the Pope's Day celebration and similar events set up a leadership structure among colonists. Eventually, this leadership structure moved from ceremonial

leadership during an annual celebration to real leadership of colonial mobs active in political violence.

The political mob has a long and important history in the 18th century on both sides of the Atlantic – in England and in colonial America. Mob violence existed during the 17th-century revolutions in England and continued there into the 18th century, employed in political battles from English/Irish labor disputes (London in 1736) to the protest of the execution of a smuggler (Edinburgh in 1736).[vi] Simultaneous to the mob violence of 18th-century Britain, mobs were breaking out in the colonies. In Massachusetts in 1747, a mob of colonists attempted to take several British naval officers hostage and stormed the Town-House.[vii] In 1764 in Massachusetts, a mob formed when a man and a woman were convicted of mistreating their child and were placed in the stocks.[viii] "Any excitement, such as the use of the whipping post or the pillory, was sufficient to bring together a rough and turbulent audience, often armed with rotten eggs and other repulsive kinds of garbage."[ix] These early Massachusetts mobs were not political, however. The origin of the political mob in the American colonies was later, due to the Stamp Act Crisis of 1765.

Ebenezer MacIntosh, a poor shoemaker and Seven Years' War veteran, was the leader of the South End's Pope's Day Company in Boston. On August 14, 1765, during the "Stamp Act Crisis" in Boston, MacIntosh seamlessly transitioned from parade leader to "the principal leader of the mob."[x] During this August 1765 Stamp Act protest, MacIntosh's mob made use of the ritual protest techniques they had practiced during their holiday celebrations to execute real violence against British stamp collectors. This mob of angry men paraded an effigy of the stamp collector, Andrew Oliver, around the streets and subsequently beheaded it. They leveled the brick office for distributing the stamps that Oliver had built. They burned Oliver's stable house

as well as it horse-drawn carriage with the timber from the stamp building and targeted primary symbols of wealth on his property such as windows and elegant furnishings and destroyed them.[xi] The mob worked with precision reminiscent of a military unit. Although they were a general crowd with no real experience working together, they were venting years of frustrations with the disparity of wealth in the colonies. The mob was called a "herd of fools, tools, and sycophants," but their fury was targeted at a symbolic figure for a real reason, and their actions were rooted in logic.[xii]

Mob violence was rampant in Boston and in other seaport cities on the heels of the Stamp Act Crisis. The Sons of Liberty emerged as a "respectful" group of organized, middling-class merchants that meant only to protect the English liberties of the colonists and not to use violence when it could be avoided. The radical working class also mobilized, however, and they often had other ways to achieve their political objectives that were far more violent. The radical working class mobs were made up of mariners, laborers, and lower artisans, most of whom had never played any role in public life or political activism. These crowds were often made of working class men but generally looked to leaders of a higher class, in part because "deference was not yet dead" but mostly because educated men in higher ranks of society were better able to mount successful protests because they had the means, organizational skills, and literary talents.[xiii] Once unloosed, a mob with popular support is capable of almost anything. These mobs took part in "the rituals of revolution," by taking to the streets to participate in effigy-burnings, mock executions, vandalism, and other actions that were meant to defy royal authority.[xiv]

Although the radical working class mobs were of low social status and were often rowdy and violent, they were not the irrational, "irresponsible rabble-rousers" that they were often portrayed as.[xv] The mobs of the Stamp Act Crisis were generally "large groups of disaffected

citizens, drawn heavily but not entirely from the laboring ranks, who worked in purposeful and coordinated ways to protest British policies, had their own ideas about how an equitable society should operate, and in many cases expressed hatred of oppressive local oligarchs."[xvi]

The Whiskey Excise and the State of Pennsylvania in 1791

In March of 1791, the first Congress of the United States passed "An Act Repealing, after the Last Day of June Next, the Duties Heretofore Laid upon Distilled Spirits Imported from Abroad, and Laying Others in their Stead, and Also upon Spirits Distilled within the United States and for Appropriating the Same." This law placed an excise tax on spirits distilled in the United States and became the first tax ever levied by the United States on a domestic product.[xvii] The champion of this new law was Alexander Hamilton, who dedicated the federal excise to the debt owed to American investors by the United States government.

Hamilton argued that distilled spirits were not a necessity but a luxury item consumed only by those who, by logical inference, could afford to pay the excise tax. On top of that, Hamilton and his allies argued that distilled spirits had become a threat to public health. Hamilton presented a letter to Congress from the Philadelphia College of Physicians that claimed, "domestic distilled spirits, the cheap drink of the laboring classes, had become a ravaging plague requiring immediate treatment."[xviii]

The United States had a legal obligation to pay back debts to American investors who had bought bonds during the American Revolution. The only way to meet these debts was either to impose an excise tax or to resort to even more unpopular measures like a land tax, an income tax, or a wealth tax.[xix] Whether or not the U.S. Congress accepted Hamilton's public health and luxury tax explanations – though many of them did – Congress seemingly had no better other

option, and they signed off on the revenue bill that instituted the federal excise.

The tax on whiskey was economically burdensome to the people of the frontier. More than one fourth of the whiskey stills in the United States were located at the Forks of the Ohio in western Pennsylvania.[xx] The tax "redistributed wealth by working itself deeply into rural people's peculiar economic relationship with whiskey."[xxi] The whiskey tax was essentially an income tax for the poorest people of western Pennsylvania who used whiskey as a commodity in a barter economy. The people of the frontier were cash poor and often relied on whiskey as a means of payment – laborers were often paid in a portion of the grain they harvested and landlords took whiskey as rent payment. "Without money, or the means of procuring it, consuming their whiskey only in their families or using it as a system of barter, which, though in some respects answered the place of money, yet would not be received in pay for the excise tax, they thought it hard to pay as much tax on what sold with them but at from two shillings and six pence, as they did where it brought double that price."[xxii] Thus, the whiskey tax was not the "mere luxury-tax-with-concomitant-health-benefit" that Hamilton had presented it as to Congress; it was a tax on the tool that kept rural people free of debt and dependency.[xxiii] Adding insult to injury, the excise was to be collected by federal officers in coin, which the people of western Pennsylvania simply did not have.[xxiv]

In the early 1790s, the United States could not come to an agreement with Spain to open the Mississippi River to trade, and thus the Mississippi River remained closed to American shipping. This was only resolved with Pinckney's Treaty in October 1795. "The Mississippi problem robbed westerners of chances for the small-scale commercial development through which they longed to free themselves from depression, barter economies, and dependency on landlords and creditors."[xxv] Without the use of the Mississippi for easy shipping, the farmers of

western Pennsylvania were forced to turn their grain into whiskey to transport it cheaply east – the only place where the markets were. The whiskey excise taxed rural, western people unfairly compared to those who lived in more convenient places closer to an eastern commercial center.

National leaders generally presented the protests to the whiskey excise as “exaggerated responses to so inconsequential a tax on whiskey.”[xxvi] Those who took issue with the excise were perceived as reflections of the “paranoid style affecting politics at the time.”[xxvii] Although economic principles mattered to the people of western Pennsylvania, the tax itself was almost definitely not enough to incite violence. According to Henry Marie Brackenridge, a first-hand observer, “The major cause of violence resistance had nothing directly to do with the excise tax itself.”[xxviii]

To Henry Marie Brackenridge and others, the worst element of the federal excise was its method of enforcement. Delinquent distillers who could not pay the federal tax collectors were given trials – a fact that Hamilton used to convince Congress that this tax was not like classic excises that had infringed liberties. However, these trials were not conducted in local courts but in the federal court in Philadelphia, about three hundred miles from the homes and farms of western Pennsylvanians. Distillers who could not pay the cash excise would be compelled to travel to Philadelphia “at the sacrifice of their farms and the ruin of their families.”[xxix]

The Neville Connection

In the spring of 1791, General John Neville was appointed to enforce and collect the whiskey tax in western Pennsylvania. Neville was an ambitious, wealthy large-scale distiller. He was an English Episcopalian from Virginia in an area of western Pennsylvania where the vast majority of residents were Scots-Irish or German Presbyterians and Quakers.[xxx] General Neville

and his Virginian aristocratic wife, Winifred Oldham Neville, built their mansion on top of a hill on ten thousand acres in western Pennsylvania, calling it Bower Hill.[xxxi] It was "the fanciest home in that part of the west" and one of the only homes that was large and wealthy enough to own slaves.[xxxii]

General Neville's family business was a conglomerate of industrial, mercantile, and social interests with business centered in Pittsburgh. The "Neville Connection" worked in conjunction with other powerful families of the area to run ironworks and boatyards, broker deals, and grow grain on large plots of land. The Neville business had essentially a monopoly on any business with which it was interested, and Neville and his business partners "worked on their seaboard cronies to sew-up west-flowing patronage and trade for the Connection."[xxxiii]

Pittsburgh was staging area for military expeditions against the Indians in 1791 and 1792. The "Neville Connection" quickly realized the new market for food, drink, and supplies that had landed in its lap, and largely dominated buying and selling at the army garrison.[xxxiv] Whiskey was one of the most essential products to supply to an army, and Neville leaped at the chance to sell his whiskey to the army at a high cost. Enforcing the whiskey excise to make sure that no illegal whiskey from smaller distilleries got into the hands of the army there was suddenly in Neville's personal business interests as well as was his orders from Washington. In addition to dominating the whiskey-supply market in Pittsburgh, Neville collected a $450 annual salary and a 1% commission from all of the taxes he collected from his neighbors.[xxxv] It is easy to understand, then, why Neville was not well-liked by small-scale whiskey distillers even aside from the fact that he was the enforcer of the dreaded whiskey excise – he was also a shrewd businessman who used his power and influence to sure-up permanent markets and to push-out small-scale businesses from the Pittsburgh area.

The Indian Problem

The settlers of western Pennsylvania had ongoing interactions with the Indians of the region, most of which were bloody and violent on both sides. "An afternoon trip to church or town could become a scene of butchery. At night a cabin could be abruptly filled with whooping warriors, swinging children by their feet to open their skulls, slicing limbs and taking scalps, disappearing into the woods with wailing captives."[xxxvi] England supported these western Indian tribes and amplified the harassment of the American settlers. To protect themselves from these galvanized Indians, the settlers of western Pennsylvania formed "posses." These groups of angry settlers sought revenge on the few Indians who terrorized them by attacking peaceful Indian settlements in violent ways, often scalping and bludgeoning peaceful Indian women and children to death.[xxxvii] The sporadic demonstrations of violence and barbarity temporarily quelled settlers' bloodlust and want of revenge but did not serve to make the problem disappear or the area any safer on a long-term basis.

The people of western Pennsylvania looked to the federal and state governments to assist them in keeping the Indians at bay, but neither government seemed concerned with the plight of the rural frontier settlers, partly because these same rural settlers rarely voted.[xxxviii] Additionally, Virginia and Pennsylvania constantly fought over who owned the western territory – both tried to collect taxes and issued competing land titles to former squatters and absentee speculators.[xxxix]

"Having two governments was tantamount to having none," and the region of western Pennsylvania went largely without government throughout the late-eighteenth century.[xl] As a response to the lack of government aid or attention, many settlers in western Pennsylvania began to talk of a single independent western state, which they called "Westylvania," despite a state

law that made it a capital crime to discuss independence.[xli] The illegality of discussions about the Westylvania regional movement prompted Americans to make use of the colonial form of extralegal assembly. In western Pennsylvania, and particularly in Washington County, citizens held meetings about the Westylvania movement and created committees of correspondence to communicate with settlers in Kentucky and western Virginia who would also make up the state of Westylvania. Kentucky even held a convention to discuss Westylvania in response to a circular letter out of the western Pennsylvania meeting.[xlii] Holding clandestine meetings to discuss the nature of government, calling conventions, and passing circular letters through committees of correspondence is an early example of the people of western Pennsylvania making use of colonial era political techniques to call attention to a political problem.

The Mob Violence of the Whiskey Insurrection

Very little blood was actually shed during the Whiskey Rebellion. The "frontier violence" of the Whiskey Rebellion was more conceptual than actual. "Although there were occasional acts of violence, there was no real threat to the established government."[xliii]

Hugh Henry Brackenridge, in his first-hand account aimed at clearing his name from associations with involvement with the whiskey rebels, charged, "The public post was robbed of the mail, the militia of the country was called out, for the purpose of seizing the garrison of Pittsburgh, and possessing themselves of ammunition and arms there."[xliv] It was not quite the "open war" that Hugh Henry Brackenridge declared it to be. The major subjects of mob violence – Robert Johnson, John Connor, and Robert Wilson – were brutally attacked but walked away with only their pride wounded permanently. The only "seizure" was of one batch of local mail.[xlv] Only one house was burned – that of John Neville. No federal officials were killed, except for

one soldier who died while defending the Neville home.[xlvi]

The Whiskey Rebellion grew out of a diverse source of grievances – the economic hardships that the whiskey excise imposed on settlers; the concept of a federal excise tax as philosophically objectionable; the lack of previous government aid or attention when it came to the Indian problem; the arrogance and economic domination of large-scale businesspeople like Neville; and even the "natural *untamedness*" of the people of the western frontier who had a peculiar history and sociology all their own.[xlvii] The Whiskey Rebellion was not one single action but a collection of minor political actions, rooted in similar causes and designed to bring about the repeal of Hamilton's whiskey excise. "It was no conspiracy, but a kind of snowball process fed by a variety of motives and encouraged by a total contempt of the powers of government."[xlviii] Although the Whiskey Rebellion was sporadic at first and marked by various causes and motives, it built momentum and became, by most accounts, a "real rebellion," – one "which aimed at resistance to government, in all its parts, and open war."[xlix]

Blackface

The tradition of blackface violence had been recently employed in the 1720s in England. There, a group of marauders commonly known as "The Waltham Blacks" painted their faces black and poached game from the landed gentry to give to the poor.[l] During this period in England, only the landed gentry could eat game from Windsor Forest, and the poor were hungry and not allowed to touch the best sources of protein.[li] The Waltham Blacks committed mob violence, but their violence was targeted specifically at those with high social standing and wealth – it was, in essence, a Robin Hood movement with populist intentions. The reason for painting their faces black seems to lie entirely with disguising identity, and has no relationship to

the later manifestations of blackface as racist stereotyping. A group of soldiers was sent to find the Waltham Blacks in August of 1723 and was told to "look out for men with masks or blackened faces," indicative that blackened faces were an alternative to wearing a mask to disguise identity.[lii] To prevent the mob violence exhibited by the Waltham Blacks, the Parliament of Great Britain passed the Black Act in 1723, making it a capital crime, punished by hanging, to appear in blackface.[liii]

Despite the Black Act enacted in England earlier in the century, mobs in western Pennsylvania made use of the blackface technique during their criminal attacks. Their motivations for using the blackface were the same as the motivations of the Waltham Blacks, simple disguise. Their motivations for committing acts of mob violence were also coincidentally similar. They fancied themselves a type of populist "levelers." The mobs that committed acts of violence in western Pennsylvania aimed their violence at collectors of the hated whiskey excise and did not attack to kill or even to really injure, they attacked rather to frighten and deter.

Tarring and Feathering

The use of tarring and feathering was a time-honored tradition, preserved as a ritual in *charivari* celebrations in France and carried-out during the colonial period. "By March 1770, at least a dozen incidents of tar-and-feathers had taken place in towns as far away as Newburyport, Gloucester, Boston, Marlborough, New Haven, New York, and Philadelphia."[liv] With its ritual European roots and continuation into the American Revolutionary period, the act of tarring and feathering was a kind of revolutionary ritual that carried symbolism and meaning beyond just physical torture, of which there was plenty. The victim of a tarring and feathering was ritually humiliated in the *charivari* tradition, made to re-enter the public sphere with the evidence of this

humiliating defeat plastered onto his body.

Robert Johnson

The first act of mob violence against a tax collector during the Whiskey Rebellion was the September 6, 1791, attack on Robert Johnson, who was Collector of the Federal Revenue for Washington and Allegheny counties in western Pennsylvania. A gang of fifteen to twenty men led by frontier farmer and hunter Daniel Hamilton snuck up on Johnson as he was walking by Pigeon Creek in the forest of Washington County.[lv] The mob seized Johnson, cut off his hair, tarred and feathered him, and took away his horse so that he was left to walk home "a considerable distance in that mortifying and painful situation."[lvi] The men of the gang were mainly farmers and hunters with some industrial skills. They employed the English tradition of blackface and disguised themselves further by wearing women's dresses.[lvii] They were armed with muskets, rifles, and clubs. Although Hugh Henry Brackenridge presented the shaving of Johnson's head as not so bad, because he "wore a wig at any rate," the fact was that the attack on Johnson was frontier violence carried out by an organized and armed mob.[lviii] Additionally, the head shaving was not the harmless prank Brackenridge made it out to be – the gang shaved Johnson's head so that the tarring and feathering process would be even more painful, as tar can sear and even permanently injure bare flesh.[lix]

John Connor

By the next month – October of 1791 – word had reached Philadelphia about the attack on Robert Johnson. The federal government sent a deputy federal marshal, Joseph Fox, to serve federal warrants to Daniel Hamilton and to a few others whom Johnson had recognized as his

attackers.[lx] However, Fox understood that the main motivation of this gang was to attack federal officers, and devised a plan to send a proxy to deliver the warrants to the gang on his behalf, while he remained out of harm's way. The proxy that was sent by Fox and approved by General Neville was John Connor, an old man who was "widely considered stupid if not senile."[lxi] Connor met the exact, inevitable fate that Fox had predicted – Daniel Hamilton's gang attacked him. As they had done with Johnson, the gang whipped his naked body, tarred and feathered him, seized his money, warrants, and horse, and left him blind-folded and tied up in the woods.[lxii]

Robert Wilson

In a particularly unfortunate incident in October of 1791, a mob attacked Robert Wilson, an intellectually disabled man – Alexander Hamilton calls him "an unhappy man" who was "manifestly disordered in his intellects."[lxiii] Wilson had made inquiries about the various whiskey stills in town. It seems that Wilson imagined himself to be a clandestine agent that was sent to recover information for the Treasury Department, but he was not a spy nor was he connected with the government in any way. Unfortunately, Wilson's imaginary position as government auditor fooled the people of western Pennsylvania, and he became the target of an attack carried-out by Daniel Hamilton's gang. As with the attacks on Wilson and Connor, Daniel Hamilton's gang was in blackface. They took Wilson out of his bed and marched him five miles away to a blacksmith's shop, where they stripped him naked and prodded him with the blacksmith's hot iron, which burned him in several places, before they tarred and feathered him.[lxiv] Sadly, Wilson's dedication to his imaginary position was such that he refused to renounce the tax or ask for mercy "no matter how horrific the pain."[lxv] Because Wilson was not actually affiliated with the government, despite his willingness to die for their cause, he had no one to take his

grievances to or to report this harassment to. Alexander Hamilton used the attack on "the unhappy sufferer" as proof that Daniel Hamilton's gang was ruthless and was willing to target even those who were not affiliated with the excise.[lxvi] However, it is clear that the mob of frontiersmen were convinced that Wilson was involved with the government.

The Change in the Mob

The end of the year 1791 seems to mark the end of the beginning phase of the mob violence. After 1791 the attacks were less spontaneous and more organized. The mobs began to specifically target people of more importance than John Connor or Robert Wilson. The goal shifted from venting anger to frustrating the establishment – to intimidate officers and tax collectors into stopping enforcement of the whiskey excise. In August of 1792, Captain William Faulker was attacked because he had allowed his house to serve as an office of inspection for the Inspector of Revenue in Washington County.[lxvii] In April of 1793 and again in November of the same year, an armed mob in the traditional disguise attacked the home of Benjamin Wells, a tax collector in Fayette County, demanding that Wells surrender his official books and his commission and publish his resignation.[lxviii] A gang of twelve armed and blackfaced men attacked John Lynn, in whose home the tax office for Washington County was kept, in his house in June of 1793. As was the ritual they had become accustomed to, the men cut off Lynn's hair, tarred and feathered him, and "swore him never again to allow the use of his house for an office, never to disclose their names and never again to have any sort of agency in aid of the excise."[lxix] Faulker, Wells, and Lynn were not crimes of convenience – they were targeted attacks on people who had the power to put a serious hold on the collection of the whiskey excise in western Pennsylvania, or whose attacks at least had the power to frighten the federal government.

The mob made its ultimate transition from a spontaneous gang imitating a colonial tradition to an organized army with leadership and power when they organized into The Mingo Creek Association and perpetrated an internal takeover of organized militias. The Mingo Creek Association formed out of informal meetings at the Mingo Creek Church, at the geographically convenient spot where the four westernmost counties of Pennsylvania converged.[lxx] The Mingo Creek Association was made up of the same men who had formed posses to fight the Indians in the 1760's, who talked of the Westylvania independence movement in the 1780's, and who perpetrated the attacks on Robert Johnson, John Connor, and Robert Wilson in the 1790's. Instead of small, roving bands of marauders, this gang now numbered 500 men and was well organized. The Mingo Creek Association held regular extralegal meetings to discuss the problems and reaction to the whiskey excise. The men of Daniel Hamilton's original gang of 20 had morphed into "ordinary people, operating an extralegal court, regulating an entire region, challenging the prominent on the nature of their commitments."[lxxi]

The first meeting called to discuss local feelings against the whiskey tax was held at Redstone, Old Fort (now called Brownsville) on July 27, 1791. After the meeting in Brownsville, there were meetings on "the third Tuesday of August next" (August 23, 1791) in Westmoreland, Washington, Allegheny, and Fayette counties, in which each county committee formally elected delegates for county conventions.[lxxii] According to Hugh Henry Brackenridge, these August 23rd meetings were "adopted of a violent nature with regard to the law in question."[lxxiii] The self-appointed committee of prominent men from the four western counties in Pennsylvania met on "the third Tuesday of September next" (September 7, 1791) in Pittsburgh at the Sign of the Green Tree Tavern. At the Sign of the Green Tree Tavern, they created a petition in the form of a circular letter and general address to the neighboring counties in Pennsylvania. This circular

letter was part English rhetoric on infringement of liberty and part frontier rhetoric insisting that the excise tax favored the rich and hit westerners hardest. The committee also published, "a set of resolutions expressing the sense of their constituents on the subject of the excise law" in the *Pittsburgh Gazette*.[lxxiv]

The Mingo Creek Association had the most success in setting official militias at odds with the government. The Mingo Creek Association gradually took over the state-created body of the militia, appealing largely to disappointed war veterans. In the very essence of the term, the assumption of local militias brought the Mingo Creek men from radical to militant. On July 17, 1794, the Mingo Creek Association and the local militias demonstrated the new nature of their "mob" – large, organized, armed, and militant. The Mingo Creek Association and their militias numbered 600 rebels in a formal muster at General Neville's home at Bower Hill. "No blackface now, no wild disguise. This wouldn't be a raid by a gang but an expedition by a large, disciplined fighting force, mobilized without order from any legal authority, offering to do battle with a division of the U.S. Army."[lxxv] The battle at Bower Hill was not a small act of mob violence but an all-out war. Both sides opened fire in earnest; gunfire raged at Bower Hill and the ad-hoc army of rebels made a massive bonfire of General Neville's furniture and belongings, igniting it ironically with the general's whiskey. There was only one casualty of the battle at Bower Hill – Captain James McFarlane, a local hero of the American Revolution who was a militia major and the leader of the Whiskey Rebels' Bower Hill operation, who was probably shot accidentally when he came out from behind a tree.[lxxvi] "By August 1794, western Pennsylvania's Whiskey Rebels had their own flags, their own army, and their own martyr: Captain James McFarlane."[lxxvii]

Conclusion

Mob violence in colonial and post-colonial America was a legacy imported from England. Going well beyond civil disobedience or extralegal assembly, the mob was more than just a political statement – it was a dangerous group of angry men who often employed violent means to get their point across. Tarring and feathering was a painful process, not simply a means of ritual humiliation. The use of blackface was indicative of criminals who wanted to disguise themselves, not men who were proud of their activism against the government.

The colonial mob corollary is evident in the structure and purpose of the Whiskey Mobs. The mobs of the Whiskey Rebellion arose in the same manner and for the same reason colonial mobs arose – to protest and affect a government policy that infringed on Constitutional rights of citizens (first the English Constitution, then the American). Whiskey Mobs employed the same tactics as colonial mobs, predominantly attacking powerful people in an effort to frighten them and their peers into changing the government policy and to demonstrate that the people had some amount of agency when it came to government policy. The mobs that arose during the Whiskey Rebellion illustrated the unreasonableness of Hamilton's excise tax and the unacceptability of the tax for many frontiersmen of western Pennsylvania. The fact that the mob structure was already existent in western Pennsylvania is a sign that these men were used to being ignored by both the state and federal government and had become self-sufficient, making the excise tax all the more painful and the mob response all the more organized. The tipping-point difference between colonial mobs and Whiskey Mobs came when the Whiskey Mobs organized into a veritable fighting force by assuming the existent structure of local militias. It was this critical formalization from mob into a militia that instigated the singular, extreme federal reaction of a U.S. president leading troops into war against its own citizens. Were it not for the violence that

necessitated such an extreme response by the federal government, the Whiskey Rebellion may have been known as the Westylvania Revolution.

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