“We Are Not Merely Soldiers—We Are Citizens,”: Baltimore’s Volunteer Militias and the Contested Republicanism of the 1790s

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John Passcue was taking a risk beginning a new trade in Baltimore during the summer of 1794. Baltimore’s port had only recently been re-opened to British trade after Congress enacted a thirty-day embargo in protest against the King’s Orders in Council of 1793. The Orders blocked the West-Indies from American trade. Britain was punishing American merchants for conducting business with revolutionary France, a republic whose every victory galvanized Republicans and terrified Federalists in the U.S. But precisely because American society was so divided within and antagonized without, “Citizen” John Passcue was optimistic about his prospects for success in America’s boom-town. He informed the militiamen of the community that he was now making and selling drums from his home on Calvert street that could “sound the voice of liberty equal, if not superior, to any made on the continent.” One could trust in “satisfaction,” for Passcue understood how crucial the militia—that “mechanism replete with public utility”—was to the maintenance of a “government, which has for its basis the rights of man.” It was only through “the consolidated exertions of a free people, formed by individual efforts” that republicanism could be guaranteed.1

Passcée’s advertisement reveals an ambiguity in the role of Baltimore’s militias in 1794. Though formally outside the state, these “consolidated” bodies built by “individual efforts,” carried out governmental functions such as policing and public works.2 In the abstract, such practices may not seem surprising given traditions of self-rule and institutional sparseness dating back to settlement. Before the emergence of formal party structures, however, these were also political associations whose drill days engendered political discussion and

1 Baltimore Daily Intelligencer, July 10, 1794.
2 And they truly were constructed by the ad-hoc organizing of individuals. An ad by James Biays seeking to build up the “Deptford Fuzileers” in early 1794 informs men to attend the next meeting so they could reach an agreement on colors and uniform. Biays also reminds men already in other companies not to attempt to have dual membership with the Fuzileers. Baltimore Daily Intelligencer, March 13, 1794.
whose parades were conscious partisan spectacles. Many scholars have analyzed these militia practices in the early republic, defining volunteer companies as proto-party organizations and important institutions in early national civil society. Often temporary, and organized by occupation or political inclination, volunteer companies acted as sites for non-elite white men to participate in republican politics through toasts and public orations.3

Yet, historians have so far failed to examine the special moment of 1793-94, when Baltimore’s volunteers acquired an enhanced public power. More importantly, scholars have not asked what it says about the Early Republican state that, for a brief period, bodies of men simultaneously performed as “repressive” and “ideological” state apparatuses in the Althusserian sense. In Louis Althusser’s model of the state, its repressive functions (courts, police, legislature, etc.) act in conjunction with “ideological bodies” which serve to reproduce key social relationships (for Althusser, primarily class). Through institutions such as churches, schools, and political parties, the discourses that mediate and justify the ruling network of social relations are reproduced and renegotiated. These Ideological State Apparatuses are unconnected, even competitive amongst one another, but in the final analysis they serve to explain society to itself, which ultimately reinforces the power of the ruling class. Crucially, though ISAs perpetuate hegemonic ideologies, they are simultaneously sites of social conflict as different groups inside these institutions renegotiate and stretch different discourses to align with their own interests4

Althusser’s model can help us understand the Baltimore militiamen of 1793-1794. Not only did Baltimore’s Volunteers perform both state roles, but they did so while being technically outside the state, and even (as we shall see) while siding with the governed community against civil authority. Until the web of state institutions could catch up with their proclaimed powers, and different

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interests bound themselves in ideologically narrow political parties, volunteer militias experienced a brief period of real political power and influence. In blurring the line between the state and governed community, they constructed a bond between them greater than any other act of “citizenship.” Yet, in being intensely ideological vessels, militias brought “the people,” to government on their own terms, and couched support for the state in a more radical republicanism than preferred by civil authority. In so doing, they were central to a transitory moment in post-Revolutionary politics in which power was more multi-faceted and negotiable.

Utilizing an Althusserian methodology reveals the term “proto-party” to be a teleological imposition by historians that ultimately naturalizes a subordinate role for workers and artisans in the republic. Historians from Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick in the Age of Federalism to David Waldstreicher in his work In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes simply assume, as Alexander Hamilton did in Federalist 10, that the lower classes would inevitably bind themselves to a section of the ruling class. Studying Baltimore’s volunteer militias in the 1790s makes clear that the emergence of a bourgeois patronage politics was contingent on the marginalization of the lower classes own political bodies.

 Ideological Tension Underneath Socio-Political Unity

The men of the volunteer corps that paraded for General Otho H. Williams, a hero of the Revolutionary War, were conscious of the crudeness of the drills they performed for his review on December 2, 1793. Yet, in a hand-delivered letter which was soon printed in the newspaper, their officers begged Williams to remember that, if their skills were “wanting,” it was because “we are not merely soldiers—we are citizens, and occupied in civil duties.” Indeed, they had only “assumed the character of soldiers” because the United States was entering a “critical period” as British ships menaced American trade. Every man knew that a militia was the “proper and best defence of a free state” and so they had organized “without waiting the command of our country.” The six units that paraded had formed quickly, and elected prominent merchants and craftsmen as their officers. Regular activities of the town, such as drawing the lottery, had been postponed for the drills. Newspaper accounts served to enhance the spectacle the following day, praising the volunteers’ appearance as “truly military” and exulting them as “supporters...of benevolence, and sacred rights of man.” A review from a respected Revolutionary general was thus part of a public theater of legitimation.

Yet, Williams’ response to the volunteers’ letter, also printed in the Baltimore Daily Intelligencer, hid serious tension beneath its layers of compliment. He noted that their “object cannot be mistaken.” Their “meritorious

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6 Baltimore Daily Intelligencer, December 9, 1793. See also the Intelligencer of December 3rd.
purpose" was to "ensure dispensations of justice by countenancing the executive officers in the preservation of our police." Moreover, their maneuvers had reminded him of his "hope" that the state assembly "will not rise without passing a law to incorporate us [the city of Baltimore]; or permit us to incorporate ourselves." Williams could not have been ignorant to the fact that most of the militiamen vehemently opposed the plan of incorporation being considered in Annapolis, which would have created a two-tier city government that isolated the mayor and council from a popular vote. The Fell’s Point Volunteers included an opposition to the plan of incorporation among their toasts, and the Mechanical Society would soon play a lead role in forming the "United Committees" against the plan as then considered. Important militiamen, such as David Stodder, were simultaneously members of all these organizations.

The exchange between the militiamen and Williams, clearly intended for public consumption (the exchange was printed only days later), exposed a tension between the volunteers and the city’s elite. Volunteer companies were not new in America, but their words and actions became heavily politicized within the partisan and revolutionary context of 1793-1794. The institutions may have been structurally the same as before, but the changing society in which they were immersed transformed their function. Baltimore was still a weakly, albeit undemocratically, governed community in the early 1790s, and, in that vacuum, volunteer companies became key institutions of civil society, performing multiple roles. The French Revolution re-invigorated the radicalism of the middling and lower classes at an inopportune time for Federalists attempting to regularize American life post-ratification. Thus, Williams praised the patriotic character of these militias formed in the heat of anti-British hostility, but he attempted to counter other aspects of their role by emphasizing that they would assist the "civil magistrate...in the exercise of his important office" and by using the review to support a bill he knew they opposed.

Published toasts from the Fell’s Point Volunteers reveal how their rituals simultaneously pointed toward and against the state. After parading, the men drank and made thirteen toasts on February 22, 1794 at Beverly’s Hotel, on the corner of Market and Gay streets. The first two honored George Washington and "Lady Washington." Yet underneath this personal deference and patriarchal patriotism was a conscious political program. Three toasts praised the French republic. Three criticized the British, including a toast to "America; success and encouragement to her manufactory, and may her manufacture be preferred by her sons." This was a pointed attack on Anglophile (Federalist) trade policy to be sure, but also spoke in favor of American manufactures; the toasts contain nothing about agriculture. In fact, one of the toasts criticized slavery, though

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7 Ibid.
8 Baltimore Daily Intelligencer, February 27, 1794; Intelligencer September 12, 1794; Charles Steffen Mechanics of Baltimore: Workers and Politics in the Age of Revolution (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1984), 129.
9 Baltimore Daily Intelligencer, December 9, 1793.

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through an outward-looking pretext of praying for a “speedy relief to our friends in bondage, under Algerines and all others.” They finished with a condemnation of the plan of incorporation, approbation of the militia companies in Baltimore, and a hope for the “speedy completion of those now forming.”

The various militias “now forming” infused their politics with a masculine militarism that defined republican citizenship as active, internationalist, and communal. In so doing, they pushed the Federalists and elites general outside the republican community. Indeed, the Fell’s Point Volunteers’ February toasts contained much rhetoric about “the blood of many worthy patriots” and Tories meeting “the fate of their predecessor, Judas Iscariot.” Judas provides an important clue as to whom these coy toasts were directed, namely the Federalists: men who once fought alongside them for independence but now wanted rapprochement with England, supported the proposed plan of incorporation and were cold to revolutionary France. After all, it was before Feder and not the English that they engaged in these spectacles. When the Mechanical Volunteers asked the volunteers in the city to “never be ashamed nor afraid to assert their rights,” they had chiefly in mind freedom from “oppressive taxes [by] which they are obliged to support a set of despots and their sycophants.” While they addressed their toasts to “all our brethren of mankind,” the Mechanical Volunteers’ toasts appeared in print just as the rebellion in western Pennsylvania against the excise tax on whiskey was becoming violent. They may have cheered Washington and “the army now defending our western frontiers,” but they simultaneously proclaimed sympathy, however subtle, for a movement directed against the federal government.

Going into the spring of that year it seemed that at least on one issue the Federal Government was bringing its policy into greater agreement with the politics of the militiamen of Baltimore. The harbor at Fell’s Point—like other American ports—was closed to British trade by an act of Congress. For thirty days, all British ships were turned away. The embargo was intended as a temporary protest, more symbolic than punitive, against Britain’s Orders-in-Council of late 1793, which barred the West Indies from trading with the United States. The militias fervently responded to this measure, and stretched the meaning of the embargo. Indeed, many Baltimoreans hoped the embargo might be lengthened. The embargo opened up a space for the volunteer companies to play a heavily publicized civic function by leading the work of harbor fortification. In studying how the militias took advantage of the embargo, we can see the ideology that covered them like a glue, and stuck them equally to the surface of the state and the hands of the people.

Fortifying the harbor was not simply a matter of public works, it was political theater. On the stage that was the old Whetstone Point fortress, the whole town of Baltimore was simultaneously actor and audience. Countless citizens volunteered when they could, marching en masse to the fort and using

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10 Baltimore Daily Intelligencer, February 27, 1794.
11 Ibid.
12 General Advertiser (Philadelphia), May 12, 1794
newsprint to pressure their neighbors into participating.\textsuperscript{13} The volunteer companies marched in military formation, with tools instead of guns, to work on the fort \textit{as militiamen}. One observer noted that "the [Fell's Point] volunteers in particular, manifested an anxious desire" to ratchet up the "patriotic resolve" of the community. He noted with pride that "the other companies are following their example in rotation with similar cheerfulness." The next day, the Independent Company marched "under the command of Thomas McElderry, esquire" to perform the work of fortification. The \textit{Baltimore Daily Intelligencer} exclaimed that the militia's contributions "plainly evince the heroic, republican and liberal sentiments" of Americans. Well into July of 1794, volunteer militias such as the Baltimore Sans-Culottes could be seen marching "with a number of our Citizens animated with the recollection of our late glorious struggle for Liberty and Independence" to improve the fort. In so doing, they hoped to secure "the same blessings for us and our posterity." That harmonious attitude "ever distinguishes" the "true "Sans-Culotte."\textsuperscript{14}

Broadly utilizing a discourse of revived public virtue, militiamen were using the act of fortification to stretch republican ideology toward a specific political program. By marching to the fort, and leading unassociated citizens, volunteers were consciously rallying the community around a republican ideal and a militaristic patriotism, both of which stressed the attachment of people to the state. Militias led Baltimoreans in making, quite literally, an Anti-British monument that was the Whetstone Point fort. Yet, the significance of a militia calling itself the Sans-Culottes—the social basis of the Jacobins—building a military installation cannot be overlooked. Militias in awe of the French Republic were attaching the people to a state that was officially neutral toward the Revolutionary Wars in Europe (but tacitly pro-British). In so doing, they were consciously applying political pressure to Federalist elites.

To repair a cannon is to imagine it might be used—and there was no secret that in such a case its ball would lob itself into the hull of a British ship. By engaging in a militaristic pageantry against Britain, the militiamen effectively otherized the Federalists while simultaneously making fealty to a federal government in which the Federalists dominated. Thus, the harbor fortification hints at a tension in the ideology emanating from the militias. These voluntary organizations, animated so much by the French Jacobins, were \textit{stretching} the meaning of what the federal government intended and were drawing people towards the state through an ideology not entirely contained in the government itself. Given the double function of the militia as both an ideological and repressive apparatus, it is no surprise this tension would eventually break out into the open. A mob action that spring fully revealed the discord, in ideology and practice, between the volunteers and civic authority.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Baltimore Daily Intelligencer}, May 28, 1794; \textit{Massachusetts Mercury} (Boston), May 20, 1794

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Virginia Chornicle} (Norfolk), May 5, 1794; \textit{Baltimore Daily Intelligencer}, April 29, 1794; \textit{General Advertiser} (Philadelphia), July 28, 1794

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The Conflict Revealed

On May 1, 1794 a sea captain named Ramsdell was tarred and feathered for reversing an American flag and hoisting it up the mast of his ship. He had refused to set the flag right and, after much argument, a crowd dragged Ramsdell from his ship docked in Fell’s Point. Although David Stodder, a master ship-builder and captain of the Fell’s Point Volunteers, stated that he had tried to negotiate the man’s release and restore order, Ramsdell was ultimately subject to “a temporary coat of TAR and FEATHERS.” The next day, a man named Senton, who had allegedly defended Ramsdell, endured the same punishment. This crowd action is not surprising given the tense political atmosphere of that spring. It took place during the height of anti-British hostility and the fortification of the harbor. Not surprisingly, both Ramsdell and Senton were accused of being “in the service of England.” The Federalists likewise accused the rioters of being influenced by “the fatal effects” of French “intrigues.”

Following the riot, Samuel Chase, judge of the Baltimore Court of Oyer and Terminer and a Federalist, issued warrants for the arrest of a number of prominent gentlemen he accused of inciting the riot, including Captain David Stodder. Stodder refused to hand himself over, and the militias of the city refused to bring him, or any of the other accused for that matter, to jail. While officers in the volunteer companies initially promised to help Chase, after “they had consulted their men, [they then] declared they would not oppose their fellow citizens.” Even more frightening to Chase was that “the privates of the volunteer companies would not turn out to prevent the rioters being rescued,” after a crowd in front of the court house announced it would tear apart the jail if Stodder was arrested. The militia agreed with the community that Chase was attempting to “gaol the friends of America,” and they refused to lend a hand. Whereas building the fortifications was a civic participation drawing people toward the state, the militia’s public rebuke of Judge Samuel Chase defied “proper” authority and exposed the fragility of its legitimacy.

Indeed, the opposition of volunteer companies challenged the Court’s legitimacy so strongly that Chase had to assure the public he had never criticized them. Chase issued a broadside pleading with the public not to interfere with his efforts to deal with Stodder and attempted to quell rumors that he had insulted the militias. He assured the people that he had never uttered any “opprobrious reflections on two companies of the militia in this town: I solemnly declare that this tale is false and only calculated to excite against me their resentment.” Yet, having already garnered their resentment, Chase was rendered legally

16 Samuel Chase to Governor Thomas Lee, May 6, 1794. Emmett Collection, NYPL. Samuel Chase broadside, To the Citizens of BALTIMORE-TOWN
17 Ibid.
ineffectual, and had to resort to negotiating with Stodder. After much push and pull, Stodder eventually gave security that there would be no more disturbances, essentially posting bail against future riots.

The significance of this event is not just that it exposed the contradictory role of the militia—that it could act both for and against the state. It is just as important to note that the city government thought it could rely on the militias. In fact, according to a municipal law passed in October of 1793, the militia was legally obligated to prevent just what it had supported. Even more remarkably, these volunteer companies defied the Court just when the state of Maryland was planning to regularize the independent militias. Thomas Lee and the Council were in the process of locating which volunteer units were fit for incorporation into the state militia and appointing "the proper officers," for the state units. Yet, the volunteer companies and at least one officer, David Stodder, sided with the community against the court, even though by such action they risked being dissolved as a company in the aftermath. Just at the moment when the state and city governments were legislating the militias a more formal repressive function, the volunteer companies sided with the rioters over Samuel Chase and the Court of Oyer and Terminer.

Volunteers abandoned their role as a repressive state apparatus out of a sense of republicanism, thus bolstering their role as an ideological apparatus. Their inaction was a statement of solidarity with the direct action of the crowd against persons they deemed hostile to republicanism. The militias were bathed in a militaristic patriotism that pervaded the artisans and mechanics of Baltimore in 1794. This ideological current utilized a rhetoric of action and strength, and was animated by the vigor of the revolutionary army of France. Many Baltimoreans felt the riots exemplified "the republican spirit of our citizens to revenge an insult," as opposed to the "meekly disposed scribblings" of the Federalists. Indeed, one citizen writing to the Baltimore Daily Intelligencer meant it as an insult when he called opponents of the riot "ye friends of peace." It was "the peacable agents throughout the union" that were the "speculators in the gold of their royal majesties." A true republican was "irritated," not

18 *Baltimore Daily Intelligencer*, November 1, 1793
19 *Act to Regulate and Discipline the Militia of this State* passed by the General Assembly of Maryland in November of 1793, 11. *Baltimore Daily Intelligencer*, June 12, 1794. This regularization was Maryland's compliance with the Federal Militia Acts of 1792.
20 Indeed, a collection of republican songs published that year, the Democratic Songster (Baltimore: Printed for Keatinge's Bookstore), contains many war-themed songs, including an English translation of the Marseillaise (25–28) complete with a final verse that says "virtuous actions" on the part of America could end France being "the sport of factions." While other book sellers in Baltimore at that time, J. Rice & CO, and James Keddie carried a wide range of literature, George Keatinge chose to promote mainly republican literature: Tom Paine's *Age of Reason*, tracts by Robespierre, etc. I would argue that, because of the militaristic patriotism animating republicans that year, it is no coincidence that Keatinge was also the only one of the three to advertise a wide selection of army manuals, such as *Steuben's Military Discipline*

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peaceful. Militaristic patriotism gave a glow to the volunteer companies, and made everything they did an expression of republicanism. As Charles Steffen has noted, Volunteer patriotism was not synonymous with nationalism; instead it was centered on “participating in a worldwide struggle against oppression.” In the Ramsdell-Senton riots, the militiamen decided that to side with the “friends of America” necessitated defying the legally constituted authorities of an American city.

By contrast, according to Chase, the officers had initially been willing to defend the jail against the crowd. Typically being prominent craftsman or merchants, this is not so surprising. Nevertheless, given how politically charged the crowd and militia’s response to Stodder’s arrest was, it is remarkable how much he tried to depoliticize the situation. In a response to Chase’s broadside, Stodder attributed Ramsdell’s actions to alcohol—not politics—and portrayed himself as a mediator who simply “wished the peace of the town.” Stodder was a “man of property, and great influence,” whose booming shipbuilding operation at Fell’s Point would soon make him an important contractor with the federal government, and whose business was steady enough to own at least seventeen slaves by 1800, a considerable amount for that craft, even in Baltimore. Additionally, as the Governor began to regularize the militia in 1794, he “expect[ed] to be appointed to [an] important command,” in the city.

Despite Stodder’s wealth and local popularity, Samuel Chase estimated he was nevertheless “greatly influenced by the advice of others,” and had refused to give security largely because he was just as “fearful” of the people as Chase was. In other words, Stodder was just as conflicted as the other officers. Stodder was in the complicated position of being a middling patron, equidistant from the lower sort and the planter elite who wielded the real power in Maryland. In this respect, his status differed little from other volunteers’ officers like the merchant George Lindenberger or Shipjoiner and Mechanical Society officer James Biays. The volunteer militia companies served to enhance and express the influence these merchants and artisans had within their

21 Ibid., May 2, 1794.
22 Steffen, Mechanics of Baltimore, 147.
23 Steffen’s book provides biographical descriptions of a lot of these figures, like David Stodder and James Biays.
24 Baltimore Daily Intelligencer, May 7, 1794.
25 T. Stephen Whitman, The Price of Freedom: Slavery and Manumission in Baltimore and Early National Maryland (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1997), 182. Fellow militia captain and shipbuilder James Biays owned twenty-one slaves. The steadily growing market for ships and a large pool of term slaves allowed half of Baltimore’s shipbuilders to invest up to a quarter of their wealth in slaves from the 1790s through the 1830s. See pgs. 20, 168–169.
26 Samuel Chase to Thomas Lee, May 6 1794.
27 Ibid.
28 Federal Intelligencer/Baltimore Daily Gazette, July 13, 1795; Federal Gazette, September 27, 1798; Massachusetts Spy, May 29, 1788.
communities. Yet, as the Ramsdell–Senton riots show, in times of instability the militias themselves could reveal a divergence of class interests—the officers had to navigate a safe path between their men, the community, and the state. Part of the militias' structural importance was that it bound socio-economically stratified white male citizens together in a project of ideological production that simultaneously expressed opposing interests. Despite (or perhaps because of) their unstable and contradictory purposes, Volunteer militias politically mediated increasingly tense social relations as Baltimore developed into a modern capitalist urban space.

This suggests the limited timeframe in which these volunteer companies could be politically significant. These volunteer companies emerged just as planters in Annapolis were losing their power over Baltimore, but before proper party structures solidified. The height of their influence was 1793–1794, which was exactly when Baltimore experienced its first genuine labor strikes. Seventeen seventy-four was also the year Baltimore County (which the town was still part of at the time) regularized apprenticeships under the county Orphan Court. The law spoke not only to the growing number of homeless children in the city but the deterioration of the craft system in general. It is not coincidental that Fell’s Point was home to the city’s major tradesmen and workers, and also the most active volunteer company. As the cash nexus increasingly stratified Baltimore, the militia units became vessels for lower-class and middling white men to express their frustrated interests in the language of republicanism, and to do so with the aura of authority that came with being a semi-state body.

**An American Thermidor**

By 1798, however, the situation had changed dramatically. The formation of volunteer units had petered out after the militia regularized at the end of 1794. Regularization was not just a product of Maryland’s compliance with the 1792 Militia Acts, however. It was not simply a legal procedure. **Regularization was very much a social process.** How volunteer companies were subsumed or formed into formal militias, and who would lead them, was the governor’s call. Annapolis elites thus had the legal means to garner the obedience of militia captains. Nor should it be forgotten that this process was concurrent with the Whiskey Rebellion. At the end of 1794, many of Baltimore’s volunteer companies had heeded Washington’s call and gone west to help suppress the Whiskey Rebellion. While the evidence is sparse, it appears that partaking in the campaign socially connected the Volunteers’ to the federal government and the state of Maryland. When Baltimore militiamen burned liberty poles in Carlisle, while “on duty at the President’s,” they may have been

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wedding themselves to federal power in a profound way.\textsuperscript{30} Returning \textit{in early December} from that "glorious and bloodless," campaign, the Volunteers were greeted by the 5\textsuperscript{th} Regiment of the Maryland Militia, the company in which many of them would later be subsumed. Marching into town and seeing rows of soldiers firing blanks and beating drums to "pay due honor to our citizen soldiers," must have been a moving experience — and enhanced the attachment of the Volunteers’ to official authority.\textsuperscript{31}

The regularization of the militia changed the context of the repressive function local volunteers could (or pretended to) perform, and connected men together in the service of Maryland, and the United States, not \textit{ideas} such as republicanism, or ideals such as the Sans Culottes. In fact, the Baltimore Sans Culottes, now part of the 5\textsuperscript{th} Regiment of the Maryland Militia, changed their name to the Independent Blues during the Quasi-War.\textsuperscript{32} The mitigation of the Volunteers’ communal orientation was furthered by a strengthened local government when Baltimore finally incorporated \textit{into a city} in 1797. The new city was \textit{divided} into wards carved by a governor’s commission, and the municipal government was set above the community with a barrier of high property qualifications to vote and hold office.\textsuperscript{33} A reduced civic function in the face of an institutionally-strengthened state engendered a decline in the volunteers’ ideological influence.

These volunteer companies were also becoming redundant as genuine political parties became more organized and open. Many historians have analyzed this process, but in describing it as simply a transfer of functions, they have failed to note that it also came with a loss of leadership for many of Baltimore’s artisans and mechanics.\textsuperscript{34} Once a firm political voice for the tradesmen in Baltimore during ratification and the early 1790s, James McHenry, who served as secretary of war under Washington and Adams, became a staunch Federalist partisan as the decade wore on. James Winchester, who "in the days of the Democratic societies, [had been] not only a member, but a violent one," had turned into the voice of Baltimore’s increasingly conservative merchant class.\textsuperscript{35} David Stodder, Captain of the Fell’s Point Volunteers, won the commission to construct the first \textit{USS Constellation}, and was, as a result, in

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\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Baltimore Daily Intelligencer}, October 25, 1794.
\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Worcester Intelligencer}, December 16, 1794; \textit{Federal Intelligencer}, November 29, 1794; See also \textit{Federal Intelligencer}, April 3, 1795.
\textsuperscript{32} Thomas Scharf, \textit{The Chronicles of Baltimore: Being a Complete History of "Baltimore-Town" and Baltimore City from the Earliest Period to the Present Time} (Baltimore: Turnbull Brothers, 1874), 247–248.
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Ordinances of the Corporation of the City of Baltimore: Passed at the first Session, held, February 1797} (Baltimore, Printed for Philip Edwards, 1797).
\textsuperscript{34} See footnote #3 for the historiography this paper is built upon.
\textsuperscript{35} James Ash to James McHenry August 24, 1798, in \textit{Maryland: The Federalist Years} by L. Marx Renzulli, Jr. (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 1972), 205–206. See also pgs. See also Steffen, 87–88, 155.
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constant contact with the Washington and Adams administrations. By the final years of the decade, many of the democratic figures of Baltimore had been won over to a strengthened state and, with the simultaneous thermidor in France, radical republicanism atrophied.

Yet, at the end of June a new volunteer company conspicuously began reviving “that military spirit which seemed to be dormant in Baltimore for some time past.” It was not to be in the same spirit as 1793–1794, however. The City Company, as it was called, was composed of volunteers too old to serve in the actual militia. Professing the necessity of mobilization in the midst of the Quasi-War with France, this quasi-militia’s real purpose was to ramp up nationalist and Federalist sentiment in the lead-up to the congressional election that fall. Federalist James Winchester was challenging sitting Republican congressman Sam Smith, a General in the state militia. The language used in newspapers to celebrate the City Company shows that it had a very different function than the volunteer militias of 1793–1794. In contrast to the earlier militias, the City Company had the goal of narrowing political ideology and offering a stage for political theater by Baltimore’s elite.

And these really were the city’s elite. Mayor James Calhoun chaired the founding meeting and merchant George Grundy was the recording secretary. The planter and civic patron David Harris, who was also a shareholder in the Maryland Susquehanna Canal Company, was elected Captain. Readers of the Federal Gazette were informed that it was because of the “opulence” and mercantile interests of members such as Harris that the City Company was “truly sensible” of how damaging to “free trade” the “piratical depredations” of the French really were. As if to highlight their wealth, these influential characters marched in intricate buff and blue complete with white stockings, each “soldier” paying for their own attire.

In their inaugurating resolutions these “gentlemen” stated that the “crisis in our political affairs” necessitated that they move to defend “our government, which we admire.” Absent from the announcement is any mention of republicanism, brotherhood, or rights. Instead, the City Company’s justifying narrative is one of a patriotic defense of “our country.” The Volunteers of 1793–1794 had expressed their love for the United States, but always in political terms, understanding the U.S. as a bastion of republicanism and bulwark against monarchical tyranny. The City Company instead evoked an unconditional love of place, a nationalism very dissimilar from the patriotism which had animated the Baltimore Sans-Culottes.

In emphasizing nationalism over republicanism, David Harris and others were attempting to speak an apolitical American identity into being. The City Company, much more so than the Volunteers of 1793–1794, used words

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36 See the collection of letters to and from Stodder in the War Department Papers, accessed online at: http://wardepartmentpapers.org/person.php?id=5318
37 Federal Gazette, June 25, 1798.
38 Ibid.; Federal Gazette, November 8, 1798.
39 Federal Gazette, June 23, 1798.
and rituals to construct a national community in ways similar to the nationalization processes studied by David Waldstreicher. When Federalist newspapers wrote about the City Company marching out to greet Washington, “the chief who unites all hearts,” as he passed through town in 1798, they were actively constructing nationalism. The patriotism of the City Company appealed to (white, male) Americans as people with national characteristics and values, not as people united by political principles of liberty and republicanism.

While the City Company did utilize some rights talk, they more often relied on an emotional and gendered discourse, less overtly political than that used by the Volunteers from the middling and lower sorts a few years prior. These elites were, of course, concerned about the preservation of liberty, but they were equally worried that “the honor and chastity of our wives and daughters will be sacrificed to brutal lust, if ever French ruffians are permitted to gain a footing in this country.” The only way to deter the French, they argued, was to cease being a “divided people,” and bring the nation under “one sentiment.” The French would be shown this American unanimity by “every man,” wearing “an American cockade” at all times. The City Company, with their “manly fortitude,” led by example. By framing patriotism in terms of male guardianship over women, the City Company was promoting a gendered construction of the public sphere that objectified women as a thing to be defended or stolen. The City Company hollowed out the revolutionary traditions within patriotism by framing it in terms of a defense of subservient dependents instead of a universal emancipatory project of which the United States was ostensibly at the center.

Yet, by defining women as things at stake in society, instead of people with a stake in society, the City Company had to address women themselves and impress upon them their Post-Revolutionary role. In so doing, the Company performed a key ideological function. Thus, they told the “fair of America,” to “bestow their smiles and beauty only on the patriots and soldiers.” Young men who were not sufficiently nationalist should be denied affection, and the City Company hoped that women would use their sexuality politically, by offering “smiles” only to ardent nationalists (Federalists, really). By pushing for such an overtly patriarchal public sphere, the City Company sought to enforce a new politically sterile form of patriotism.

The nationalist toasts of the City Company for July 4, 1798, stood in stark contrast to those offered by the republican volunteers of 1793–1794. As noted earlier, the toasts of the Fell’s Point or Mechanical Volunteers triumphed ideas, policies, and a kind of republican internationalism. Their patriotism was political, not centered on place. Institutions were more important than the soil. Yet, besides a nod that militias were the “bulwark of a free republic,” the only

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41 Federal Gazette, June 25, July 3, 1798.

42 Federal Gazette, July 5, 1798.
institutionally-centered toast offered by the City Company was to “the people and government—United they prosper, divided they perish.” In other words, elites called to the people for loyalty, much different from the revolutionary republican ideology the '94 Volunteers used. “Real Americans,” elites claimed, could never be “diverted from a love of country, by either Ca Ira, or God Save the King.” With unintentional irony, the City Company declared first that republican sentiments (Ca Ira, a French song supposedly inspired by Benjamin Franklin) were oppositional to patriotism, and then redefined the American Revolution as guided by nationalist, not ‘political’ sentiments.43

Accompanied by the Cincinnati society, the Volunteers also toasted the youth, their often intended audience. To “stimulate the youth of our country,” may have partially been a way to justify a cadre of old men—clearly in no condition to actually perform repressive functions—dressing as soldiers and conducting martial exercises. Yet, reaching out to the new generation was probably the most efficient method of executing the ideological function of volunteer militias. Elites changed what the Revolution meant in historical memory, and what patriotism stood for ideologically in the hope of inculcating young citizens with an emotional—not political—attachment to the United States. The City Company was clearly anxious that the rising generation did not appreciate the “freedom” they “inherit from their ancestors.” Yet, given the emphasis on nationalism and “honor,” one suspects the allusion to ancestors and inheritance was more important than the value of “freedom.”44

The City Company proselytized the people of Baltimore with this intellectually vapid ideology chiefly as part of the Federalist offensive in an election year. They formed in June of 1798 and disappeared after November. Yet, the regular militiamen who overwhelmingly supported sitting Republican Congressman Sam Smith did not offer a counter-posing view. In the absence of a progressive alternative in France and in the face of stronger civil authority, the artisans and mechanics did not have the momentum to organize into independent companies. Lacking strong volunteer militias, opposition was now expressed in the far less public-performative practice of voting for a candidate. The men who made up the regular militia rallied behind Smith, but they did so as a group to be patronized.

Support from the militiamen was a major aspect of both candidate’s campaigns in 1798. Winchester alleged that Smith had been disparaging of the militiamen under his command during the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794. In reality, Smith had only urged Congress in 1795 to pass an act providing better training, the necessity of which was shown by the general unprepared state of the militia during the “western expedition.”45 At first glance, this may appear as evidence that the Baltimore militia still had a viable political-ideological

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43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.; most of the other sources cited in the City Company section similarly mention young people. It is of course significant that these toasts were made alongside the Cincinnati—the aristocratic pretenders of the new nation.
45 Federal Gazette, August 17, 1798.
function. But to be a patronized constituency is different from being an independent social institution. The militiamen rallied for Smith as their General, and their units had none of the ideological functions possessed by the Volunteers a few years earlier. When hundreds of militiamen marched to Smith's house to "pay the major-general of the division certain compliments," Smith returned the favor by having his servant bring out "brandy and water."46

While supporters assured people that "the General," possessed no intentions of having "undue influence," in reality, Smith was carrying out one of the classic practices of patronage politics: the ritual of elite condescension and gift-giving to "friends" that welded the electorate to the elites who stood for office.47 The "mechanics, who are very numerous, and...act systematically" carried Smith to another term, but they did so by voting.48 While there were some performative aspects to their support (marching to Smith's house, for example), this was to perform support, not a general ideology of their own. With the disappearance of the 1793—1794 volunteer companies, the common artisans and mechanics of Baltimore were no longer attached to an institution that made and reproduced republican ideology. With their integration into a state militia system, their units lacked occupational or community identity, and lost that autonomy of action which had allowed them to withhold their repressive function from the state during the Ramsdell--Senton riots. They no longer mediated between the state and the governed community—they were wholly the governed.

That moment in which militiamen could mediate that relationship, when they were both in and outside the state, represented a brief and unique event in the Early Republic. Insofar as these militias straddled both state functions, Althusser's model of the state has to be modified to allow for such hybrid institutions. Yet, in another way, Althusser's model has provided a way to understand just how different this moment in 1793—1794 was for republicanism in Baltimore. Since Althusser analyzed the state dialectically, deconstructed its ideological institutions as sites of conflict and social reproduction, and understood the repressive apparatus as mutually dependent upon ideological apparatuses, his model allows us to appreciate the centrality of these companies to a period of more negotiable political power in the city. Neither a narrow governmental view of the state nor a preoccupation with public and private "spheres" can capture just how state-like these companies were for a little over a year. Nor can public sphere models account for how different institutions could be contradictory: acting as sites of social conflict while producing a binding (or at least cohesive) republican discourse.49 The

46 Federal Gazette, August 8, 1798.
48 Federal Gazette, October 5, 1798.
49 This is, of course, a reference to the diagramming of state and society popular with many of the historians influenced by Habermas.
institutional sparseness, the revolutionary example in France, and labor tension in the city had opened a space for volunteer militias to take on functions that corresponded to both "ideological" and "repressive" state apparatuses, as defined by Althusser. As semi-state institutions which performed ideology, the white men in these units had a degree of agency larger than their formal electoral power. It was a transitory moment of a more informal and negotiable—one cannot say more democratic—state power.
"We Are Not Merely Soldiers"

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