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The Paternal Lineage of Nathan Hale:
A Puritan Tradition

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BY ANDREW ROSSIGNOL

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Introduction

Since news spread of his premature demise in 1776, Nathan Hale has been considered an American hero. His story has been taught to countless children who have been left in awe at his selfless sacrifice. While the story of a hero's death has long followed the prestige of Hale, the full story of the young patriot has long been untold. Heroes are not made; they are born into a family. In the case of Hale, he was born to what preeminent Hale historian, George Dudley Seymour, calls "earth's best blood."¹ That is not to say that there is any evidence that Nathan displayed any interest in his family's bloodline.² Nor for that matter is there evidence that any of the Hale clan desired to live off their family name, but rather they sought to forge their own way in the world. Perhaps this desire came from biblical principles such as the idea that a man is supposed to leave his family to form a union with his wife.³ The Hales certainly were a religious family living in a religious time. Perhaps (and probably coincidentally) economic and harsh realities of the day spurred the Hales to live for the day and in pursuit of a better life for their families.

Of course, the Hales were far from perfect. Despite the Puritan society in which the Hales lived striving for godly perfection, this lofty goal remained impossible. Despite their shortcomings, the story of the Hales needs no embellishment to earn admiration. The Hales were men who did what they believed to be right, pushing with their fellow colonists further into creating a new nation from the time Robert Hale decided to sail with John Winthrop to Nathan's dying breath. Not only one Hale was a hero, but rather they all were men dedicated to their God, to a better tomorrow, and to a providential service and goal bigger than any one person could be.

¹ George Dudley Seymour, *Captain Nathan Hale, 1755-1776: Yale College 1773, Major John Palsgrave Wyllys, 1754-1790: Yale College 1773, Friends and Yale Classmates, Who Died in Their Country's Service, One Hanged As a Spy by the British, the Other Killed in an Indian Ambuscade on the Far Frontier: A Digressive History*, 3.

² *Ibid*, 17.

³ Genesis 2:24.

Regarding Nathan Hale specifically, George Dudley Seymour is the unquestionable authority on his “hero.”⁴ Since Seymour’s passing, the only new document that has been discovered regarding Hale was an account of his capture by Consider Tiffany, a Loyalist. Additionally, research by Major General E. R. Thompson and G. J. A. O’Toole has greatly added to the body of knowledge on Hale. Today, however, Seymour remains the preeminent Hale historian.

Seymour, who heard of Hale early in life, spent much of his life in Hale research and dedicated much of his time toward the preservation of his memory. Seymour was not content to leave just published works on Hale. The Nathan Hale State Forest in Connecticut was a gift from Seymour, who in 1914 purchased the Hale farm property. As the Great Depression in America set in, Seymour (to the begrudging public) set out purchasing foreclosed properties to restore the Hale farm’s original acreage in hopes of turning it back to working, cleared land to be grazed by sheep and cattle as it would have been in Hale’s youth. Fortunately, for today’s locals, Seymour saw that this task was impossible and through the advice of two friends, Dean Graves and George Cromie, turned the land into a wildlife management preserve under State of Connecticut ownership.⁵

Many have examined Hale and provided their own perspectives before and after Seymour. In the 19th century, the boy who sacrificed himself for his country was mythologized, much as like George Washington and the legend of the cherry tree. In his book, *Nathan Hale: The Ideal Patriot; A Study of Character*, published in 1902, William Partridge laments that Americans can lose the heroic memories of Revolutionary heroes. Partridge suggested, “the

⁴ George Dudley Seymour and Nathan Hale, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale: Comprising All Available Official & Private Documents Bearing on the Life of the Patriot* (Salem, Massachusetts: Higginson Book Co, 2000). 419.

⁵ State Parks, “Connecticut,” Nathan Hale State Forest, last modified 2017, accessed February 4, 2018, http://www.stateparks.com/nathan_hale_state_forest_in_connecticut.html.

heroic deeds of a people live in its monuments. Greece is preeminently great because of her sculpture, and her sculpture commemorates the deeds of her national heroes.”⁶ Partridge argues that, in order to preserve American history, Americans must embellish its heroes into more than humans, but into Greek gods! Unfortunately, like in the case of Washington’s cherry tree, Partridge was not alone in the century-and-a-half that followed Hale’s death and often elevated the myth over Hale facts. In fact, his own writing demonstrates the common treatment and deification of Hale:

Nathan Hale, when he stood under that tree, had no wrong feeling for the mob about him, for even the drunken provost-marshal who had destroyed his letter to her whom he loved and had refused his latest hours the Christian consolation of a Bible. Unstintedly [sic] and unreservedly had he given his life to his country, and amid these wretches we see him self-centered and sublime. There was no room in the Character of Nathan Hale for the pride, scorn, and pettiness of a little man. It is not where the cannon booms or the thrills of battle stir the blood, that the greatest heroes are to be found, but where men and women die in silence, with God only to witness their heroism.⁷

Recently the pushback against the deification of Hale has led to a diminishing valuation of his life and accomplishments. Some scholars have opined that Hale is remembered because he failed at his job as a spy and that there is nothing extraordinary about the young man that differentiated him from any other soldier. Nancy Finlay, who received her PhD from Princeton University, writes, “Hale was not a very good spy, but he was a patriotic and likeable young man with many good friends, who, over the years, kept his memory alive.”⁸ Rob Simmons, a former member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Connecticut’s Second Congressional District

⁶William Ordway Partridge, *Nathan Hale, the Ideal Patriot; A Study of Character*, (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co, 1902), 16.

⁷ Ibid., 106-107

⁸ Nancy Finlay, “Connecticut Humanities,” Nathan Hale: The Man and the Legend, accessed February 4, 2018, <http://connecticuthistory.org/nathan-hale-the-man-and-the-legend/>.

and colonel in the Marines concluded that, “As much as I admire Nathan Hale...he was a failure, and America can’t afford failures.”⁹

Both of these views do an injustice to the life Nathan Hale lived. He was smart, brave, likable, and an honest young man. Unfortunately, today Hale has largely been forgotten, even being ignored in school curricula where he was once a mainstay. Thomas Farnham, writing for the New Haven Colony Historical Society, argues that this loss of interest in Hale in the twentieth century “has been a reaction to the exaggerated patriotism with which the earlier century described Hale.”¹⁰ This claim is borderline superfluous in a time when only a few key players in the Revolution are commonly recalled as it can be argued that a loss of interest in history and not just lesser known figures is more prominent. Farnham is certainly correct in his assertion that Hale was not the near deity that many nineteenth century historians made him out to be, but he clearly “did represent much of the spirit and the enthusiasm of his generation.”¹¹

While Seymour’s history of Hale is unmatched, he missed an opportunity to tell a broader story, an American story through the entire Hale bloodline. To Seymour, a genealogy-based history “has no popular appeal,” and he lived in agreement with Voltaire’s statement that, “who serves his Country well has no need of ancestors.”¹² While this may be true of many family annals, the Hales certainly do not meet the tepid criteria that Seymour outlined. Robert, John, Samuel, and Deacon Hale all have stories worthy of remembrance and their appeal is equal to the death of a war hero, but also traces the birth of a nation.

⁹ Mary Beth Baker, “Nathan Hale: Icon of Innocence,” *Connecticut History* Vol 45 No 1 (Spring 2006): 2.

¹⁰ Thomas J. Farnham, *A Child I Set Much by: A Life of Nathan Hale* (New Haven: New Haven Colony Historical Society, 1975), I.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, I.

¹² Seymour, *Captain Nathan Hale, Major John Palsgrave Wyllys: A Digressive History*, 3.

They came to the shores of a new nation forsaking wealth and their lives in search of a place to call their own and live their lives in freedom. They conquered the wilderness and rose from nothing to prominence, back to nothing, and again to prominence leading to a man whom we remember today for putting faith and country before even his life. Nathan Hale's life and death are a story worthy of remembrance, but his family's story is one of greater imagery than the one that Partridge dreamed for the most famous Hale. Nathan Hale was a man who died a Patriot, his family conquered a wilderness in a new continent.

Chapter 1: Early Family: Robert, John, and Samuel

Robert Hale

On December 30, 1547, King Henry VIII of England signed his earthly signature to his last will and testament commending his soul, in Catholic tradition, to “the glorious and blessed Virgin our Lady Saint Mary, and all the Holy Company of Heaven.” He also commanded that masses be said for his soul after he departed “while the world shall endure.” Despite his strong Catholic devotion in death he left his earthly kingdom to Edward VI, who was trained during his youth by Katharine Parr and a Council of Regency. Parr is considered the most Protestant of the King’s consorts while the Council was dominated by Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford. Seymour would go on to become the Duke of Somerset, and with the assentation of Edward VI, Protestantism becoming the dominating force in England. The Duke of Somerset, along with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, determined that it would be best, to gradually immerse England in Protestantism, leading to various movements within the Protestant community to either reform the English church, which would purify it to proper Christian practice, or to remove themselves all together. Much of the Puritan or Separatists movement was in London, but it also extended to large followings to Kent and Essex.¹³

While Europeans were marking the globe, the English were aware that people survived in northern Virginia, now known as New England. What they did not know was that *Englishmen* could survive through the harsh winters of what is now present-day Maine and thrive while turning a business venture into profit.¹⁴ The early 1600’s were an age of exploration, an age of

¹³ Timothy George, *John Robinson and the English Separatist Tradition* (Macon: Mercer University Press), 9-10.

¹⁴ “1500-1667: Contact & Conflict,” Maine History Online, last modified 2010, accessed 4/18/18, <https://www.mainememory.net/sitebuilder/site/895/page/1306/print>.

taking great risks in the pursuit of glory, riches, national pride, and the pursuit of souls to be converted to the Christian faith. Sir Ferdinando Gorges, seeing that the “goodly coast could not be long left unpeopled by the French, Spanish, or Dutch” directed a party led by Richard Vines to prove that Englishmen could survive the winter in pursuit of “honor, profit...and the advancement of Religion.”¹⁵

Richard Vines was a man of energy and good judgement and had previously been to the coast of Maine. Leading his expedition during the season of 1616, Vines led Gorges and “other servants” to the mouth of the Saco River, lasting the winter in the cabins built by natives that were left uninhabited due to Indian wars and from “deadly disease against which their feeble remedies were powerless against,” a condition that Gorges attributed to plague.¹⁶ As Gorges and Vines survived, the idea of English settlement thrived and stirred the hearts of those across the Atlantic who desired riches and honor, and in others whose desire was to see their God receive glory.

While Vines was leading expeditions, English Puritans in the early 1600’s wished to fully purge worship of all “popish,” or Catholic elements. Among the issues Puritans raised and desired to purge from worship was special clothing worn by clergy, the practice of signing the cross on an infant being baptized, and the exchange of wedding rings. Additionally, Puritans wished to remove what they viewed as idolatrous paintings and statues of saints and they desired that each parish be led by a university-trained clergymen. The English monarchs and bishops, however, were unwilling to remove themselves as fully from their Catholic past as the Puritans

¹⁵ Gorges, *Sir Gorges and His Province of Maine, Including the Brief Relation, the Brief Narration, His Defence, the Charter Granted to Him, His Will and His Letters: Edited with a Memoir and Historical Illustrations*, by James Pinney Baxter Vol. 2 (Boston: The Prince Society), 41.

¹⁶ Gorges, *Sir Gorges and His Province of Maine, Including the Brief Relation, the Brief Narration, His Defence, the Charter Granted to Him, His Will and His Letters: Edited with a Memoir and Historical Illustrations*, by James Pinney Baxter Vol. 1 (Boston: The Prince Society), 100.

desired, thus the Puritans believed that their destiny, and ultimately the destiny of the church, lay with common believers.¹⁷

Among the leaders of the English Puritan movement was John Winthrop. Winthrop, who came from a lineage of Puritans, including those who had been persecuted by Mary Tudor, did not immediately aspire to prominent leadership. In fact, when he married in March 1605 at the age of seventeen, he was required to leave college, thus ending his chances of entering the ministry. Needing a way to support his family, Winthrop initially divided their time living on the lands of his wife's father and in Groton with John's parents.¹⁸ Winthrop's wife, Mary, did not share John's zeal for religion. After an attempt to convert her Winthrop solemnly recorded that he could not "prevail, not so much as to make her answer me, or to talk with me about any goodness." By the age of twenty Winthrop had a very uncertain future. He had abandoned the ministry, had a wife and two children, and a less significant estate than both his father and grandfather.¹⁹

In England, Winthrop certainly was not the most prominent leader of the Puritan movement. His status all but inhibited him from this position in Stuart England. Yet a disorganized group of like-minded religious Puritans came together from all over the countryside. Although the majority came from East Anglia, six of the eventual pilgrims came from Lancashire.²⁰ The Reverend John White, known as the "Patriarch of Dorchester" brought the Puritans together in England, planting the seed of his belief that emigration to a new country

¹⁷ Bremer, *John Winthrop: Biography as History* (Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd, 2009), 9.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 11.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 12.

²⁰ Charles Edward Banks, Charles Edward, *The Winthrop Fleet of 1630: An Account of the Vessels, the Voyage, the Passengers and Their English Homes, from Original Authorities ; with Illustrations* (salt Lake City, Utah, 1988), Map found prior to table of contents.

would ensure that their religious grievances were resolved. However, at the time it was unclear if it would also settle their growing economic complications.²¹

John Cotton, a man forbidden to preach in England, stood at the pulpit of the Church of the Holy Rood.²² His goal was to reassure the men, women, and children that would be traveling to New England that God was on their side.²³ Quoting II Samuel, Cotton reassured the Christian pilgrims that God would provide as He did for Israel, saying “moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and I will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more.”²⁴ Cotton devised that God had given the pilgrims land in America, but that through the “providence of God” they would settle this land themselves, referencing Ezekiel 20. Cotton had determined that God would not abandon the Puritan settlers and that He would cast out their enemies, give favor to the newcomers in the eyes of the natives, and provide the necessary land free of exchange. Cotton ended his sermon with a plea to not forsake their diligence in their worldly work, or in their spiritual endeavors, discerning that if the pilgrims could do this then surely they would be successful in their venture into the New World as they pursued a lasting and thriving Christian community.²⁵

Robert Hale was among the congregation listening to John Cotton as he prepared to board one of the eleven ships that set sail for the Massachusetts Bay Colony under the authority of John Winthrop. In the congregation of Puritans there was nothing extraordinary about Hale. He was devoted to his God, devoted to purifying the Church, and determined to help settle a harsh new world in the pursuit of a more perfect society built upon Christ. What was most notably different

²¹ Ibid, 50.

²² Ibid, 35.

²³ Bremer, *John Winthrop: Biography as History*, 23.

²⁴ II Samuel 7:10

²⁵ John Cotton, “Gods Promise to His Plantation (1630),” *Electronic Texts in American Studies*, Libraries at University of Nebraska-Lincoln, accessed January, 7, 2016, <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1022&context=etas>.

about Robert, however, was his position by birth. Sir Edward Hale was from the same family as Robert, distinguished by James II as Earl of Tenterden and Viscount Tonstall.²⁶ This put Robert in a group of twenty-five members who sailed with Winthrop that were from, or had ties to, nobility, a distinguishing factor in Stuart England that provided him with opportunities that were otherwise unavailable to many of his counterparts.

Despite Robert's family in England providing him with opportunities that otherwise would not have been available to many who sailed with him, his decision to leave home was firm. He traveled across the Atlantic, believing in the supremacy of his faith rather than the supremacy of his status. Robert believed in the society that the separatists were creating, a society "most equall and sweet kinde of Commerce [sic]," as Winthrop said. He gave up a familiar life of potential luxury to work in the wilderness as the Puritans sought to establish a communal society founded upon diligent labor, both in worldly and spiritual needs.

Despite the status of Roberts's family in England, he did not live with the dignities of nobility, nor did he gain any advantages typical of his status with his emigration to Massachusetts Bay. Although it is impossible to prove with the little evidence that remains, it is very probable that Robert actually shunned nobility and any "upper" society. Instead, he came as a planter, a term for a man settling in a new land as a common artisan, in his case a carpenter.²⁷ Robert's status as a planter certainly does not mean that he was uneducated, though. He was an intelligent man, highly educated by the he standards of his day. Raised a Puritan he early on learned to read and understand the Bible so that he could personally consult the Word of God.

²⁶ I.W. Stuart and Edward Everett Hale, *Life of Captain Nathan Hale: The Martyr-Spy of the American Revolution* (Hartford, 1856). 187.

²⁷ Banks, *The Winthrop Fleet of 1630*, 52.

Just three years after Hale sailed from the shores of England with Winthrop, Sir Ferdinando Gorges, a staunch Anglican at odds with the Puritans, attempted to put an end to Winthrop's American experiment, at least from a legal perspective. Gorges, fearing that the Massachusetts Bay Colony threatened the chances for a royal colony in New England, enthusiastically began encouraging settlement of what is present day Maine in 1630. Population increase, however, was slow compared to the neighboring Massachusetts Bay Colony as Gorges's settlements were scattered along the winding, rocky coast while the Bay Colony was centrally located.²⁸ Also favoring the Bay Colony was the changing political climate in England which favored Puritan control over the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Also, in 1633, William Laud attained the position of Archbishop of Canterbury, and soon afterward persecution of Puritans in England escalated. Devoted Puritans who chose not to follow Winthrop to Massachusetts Bay and had been practicing their religion in relative peace now found it necessary to flee, and they did so in great numbers.²⁹

It is a certainty that Robert Hale participated to some extent in the great political and religious controversies of his day. After all, Puritans had a strong belief in community, and Hale certainly was not one to back down from what he believed. Where Hale chose to participate and the political friends or enemies he made are largely lost to history, but what is known is that he was an intentional man who took his action upon deep conviction. What can be garnered about Robert was that what was right mattered more to him more than what was easy.

One political issue that it is clear Robert participated in, or rather did not participate in, was the taking the Freeman's Oath upon arrival in Massachusetts Bay. Despite the dangers he

²⁸ "Massachusetts Bay Colony," last modified 2015, accessed January 6, 2016, <http://www.mpbn.net/homestom/p9massbaycolony.html>.

²⁹ Patricia Law Hatcher, *Researching Your Colonial New England Ancestors*, (Provo: Ancestry, 2006) 10.

encountered traveling on the Atlantic in search of a free land in which to practice his faith, he initially chose not to take the Freeman's Oath. This decision made him a resident of Massachusetts Bay rather than enjoying the classification of a freeman. The oath was implemented for members of the new colony in 1631, allowing a freeman to become a member of the body politic, vote, and to hold office. In order to take the oath an individual had to prove his membership to the Congregationalist church upon appeal to the General Court of the colony.³⁰ The original Freeman's Oath required that the individual consent to being a subject to the General Court, and essentially required swearing fealty to the governor and his assistants as one in England would to the king. The wording to the oath that Hale rejected reads:

I, A B, etc., being, by the Almighty's most wise disposition, become a member of this body, consisting of the Governor, Deputy Governor, Assistants and a commonalty of the Massachusetts in New England, do freely and sincerely acknowledge that I am justly and lawfully subject to the government of the same, and do accordingly submit my person and estate to be protected, ordered, and governed by the laws and constitutions thereof, and do faithfully promise to be from time to time obedient and conformable thereunto, and to the authority of the said Governor and Assistants and their successors, and to all such laws, orders, sentences, and decrees as shall be lawfully made and published by them or their successors; and I will always endeavor (as in duty I am bound) to advance the peace and welfare of this body or commonwealth to my utmost skill and ability; and I will, to my best power and means, seek to divert and prevent whatsoever may tend to the ruin or damage thereof, or of any the said Governor, Deputy Governor, or Assistants, or any of them or their successors, and will give speedy notice to them, or some of them, of any sedition, violence, treachery, or other hurt or evil which I shall know, hear, or vehemently suspect to be plotted or intended against the said commonwealth, or the said government established; and I will not at any time suffer or give consent to any counsel or attempt that shall be done, given, or attempted for the impeachment of the said government, or making any change alteration of the same, contrary to the laws and ordinances thereof, but shall do my utmost endeavor to discover, oppose, and hinder all and every such counsel and attempt. So help me God.³¹

³⁰ Cyrus M. Tracy and Henry Wheatland, *Standard History of Essex County, Massachusetts, Embracing a History of the County from Its First Settlement to the Present Time, with a History and Description of Its Towns and Cities. The Most Historic County of America*, (Boston: C.F. Jewett & Co, 1878) 24.

³¹ Franklin H. Andrews, *List of Freeman, Massachusetts Bay Colony from 1630 to 1691: With Freeman's Oath, the First Paper Printed in New England*, (Exira: Exira Print. Co, 1906) 9.

On May 14, 1634, the General Court decided that the original Freeman's Oath should be revoked, "so far as it is dissonant from the oath of freemen hereunder written; and that those that received the former oath shall stand bound no further thereby, to any intent or purpose, than this new oath this those that now take the same."³² Hale's reasons for refusing to take the original Freeman's Oath can be speculated upon, although without definitive evidence. Based upon his history of fleeing aristocratic privilege, including his own family's tradition, it can be postulated that Robert refused to voluntarily place himself under the same subjection that he was under in his home country. It is also possible that he was not in favor of Governor Winthrop, and thus refused to acknowledge loyalty to him out of principle. What is certain, though, is that the day the General Court altered the Freeman's Oath to remove reference to loyalty to an individual but to the government itself, Robert signed his name to the pledge.³³

Robert Hale's life in Massachusetts Bay was very different from his early life in Essex. Sir Ferdinando Gorges's political rabble-rousing and oaths were not the only issues he had to attend to in his new homeland. Essex was a wealthy town in England. Massachusetts Bay, although better off than neighboring Plymouth, was a poor colony. Everyday life for Hale and his fellow colonists revolved around grappling with their grim economic reality: procuring food and shelter through great toil.³⁴ Outside of the daily struggle for necessities Robert was exposed to the many hazards of life in seventeenth century Massachusetts. Any travel was accomplished by foot, a very hazardous undertaking. Any explorers faced onslaught by natives, as well as from the environment. In 1653, a jury found that a Plymouth man, Thomas Bradley, died while

³² Ibid, 9.

³³ Ibid, 21.

³⁴ Eugene Aubrey Stratton, *Plymouth Colony, Its History & People, 1620-1691*, (Salt Lake City: Ancestry Pub, 1986), 207.

walking to Rhode Island from the extreme heat. Nathaniel West died when he fell through the ice and drowned. Henry Drayton died while hunting.³⁵

For the first two years that Robert spent in Massachusetts Bay, the natives lived in relative tranquility with the colonists. In 1631, what appears to be the first recorded instance of “cultural misunderstanding” between the Puritans and Natives occurred. The Narragansets and their chief, Miantonomi, were invited to Boston where they were treated well and fed a formal dinner. The visitors, however, broke into a home during “sermon hour.” Despite the apparent (and understood by the English) larceny by the Narragansets, it is also entirely probable that they were simply acting upon their cultural belief that dwellings remain open and strangers and friends were allowed to come and go as they pleased. In this respect, Roger Williams wrote, “they are remarkable free and courteous, to invite all strangers in; and if any come to them upon any occasion they request them to come in, if they come not in of themselves.”³⁶ In 1632, a quarrel broke out over the boundaries of land, which the colonists contested they had fairly purchased, but “the Lord soon puts an End to this Quauarel, by smiting the Indians with a sore Disease, even the Small-Pox; of which great Numbers of them Die.”³⁷

Although the citizens of Massachusetts Bay found themselves better off than their neighbors in the Plymouth colony, they were nonetheless a poor farming community living with the necessity of providing clothing, feeding, and shelter for themselves. Within this community of hard workers Robert Hale made his life. In 1638, the town of Charlestown recorded the possessions of its inhabitants. For a farmer and carpenter, Hale had modest possessions. He is

³⁵ Ibid, 210.

³⁶ Robert S. Grumet, *Northeastern Indian Lives, 1632-1816*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts press, 1996) 21.

³⁷ Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society: Vol. VII of the Second Series*, (Boston: Nathan Hale, 1826) 69.

recorded as owning one-quarter acre for his house and garden, seventeen-and-a-half acres of usable land, five acres of woods, and fifty-six acres of swamp land.

Of Hale's land, eight-and-a-half acres was considered meadow, which was land that had been repurposed and what had remained from the native farmlands, which were left vacant after disease and warfare reduced the natives from the Bay settlement by approximately ninety-five percent. Of the remaining working land, Robert designated seventeen-and-a-half acres for pasture use, where livestock and cattle were set to graze. On the modest quarter-acre where his house was, Hale also would have cultivated a kitchen garden where he would have grown vegetables and herbs to be used for cooking, ornamentation, and for family medicine.³⁸ The remainder of Hale's land consisted of five acres of woods, which had a few obvious functions for him and his family as the woods would have provided food as well as lumber to support his craft as a carpenter. To a colonist like Hale, the swamp land that he owned would have come in great value. First it would have provided food, but nearly as important the swamp would have yielded clothing, as before the flax could be spun into fabric it required a period of rotting, the stench of which would have made it unwelcome next to a home.

To say that Robert Hale led an easy life would be drastically mistaken. He was born into a tumultuous time in a country percolating with religious tensions. Raised in a town ravaged with bloody persecution less than two generations prior by Queen Mary and with instability in the empire thereafter, Hale was among the pilgrims fleeing all he knew in search of a land where he could practice his Puritan faith with his fellow believers. In his most famous sermon, *A Model of Christian Charity*, John Winthrop mentioned the persecutions brought upon them in England, but like Robert Hale, he saw a future of prosperity if the group of pilgrims chose life,

³⁸ George Christie, "Agriculture in New England." Accessed December 20, 2015, http://www.historicnewengland.org/school-youth-programs/k-12-programs-resources/pdfs/ne_agriculture.pdf.

“that we and our seed may live, by obeying His voice and cleaving to Him, for He is our life and our prosperity.”³⁹

Life in Massachusetts Bay would not have been any easier for Hale. He still had to fear death at the hands of aggressors, except no longer for religious differences but from hostile natives unhappy with the Puritans for real or perceived differences. A day’s work was also survival. The colony was dependent upon itself to produce all necessities. What it did not produce through hard labor, with few exceptions, they went without. Despite these hardships, Robert Hale survived, and could be said that he thrived for the sixty-seven years of his life, forty-seven of which were spent as a pilgrim in a distant land that he made his own.

John Hale

John Hale was the first child born to Robert Hale in 1636, two years older than his closest sibling and one of five of Robert’s children. Undoubtedly, John grew up in the Puritan tradition, hearing the Bible read to him on a daily basis until he was schooled enough to read God’s word himself while striving to live a life of temperance and hard work devoted to his faith. The Hale family, although not wealthy, was not in need and his father was respected by the colony, often finding work as surveyor appointed by the General Court.

John Hale is remembered today for his role in the Salem witch trials. Hale likely, with the advantage of years to ponder the events, would have called this problematic connection providential, yet probably unfair to a successful leader with other noteworthy accomplishments. An unfair remembrance in the lives of the Hales is a common occurrence, unfortunately. It is said that history is comprised only of events worth remembering, but a better definition is, at least as it pertains to the Hales comes from a nineteenth century hymn, “only remembered for

³⁹ John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity,” accessed December 19, 2016, http://winthropsociety.com/doc_charity.php.

what we have done.”⁴⁰ John seemed destined to be remembered for his role in the witch trials no matter his other achievements, as at the age of just twelve years old he was introduced to the witch trials and the capital punishment of those convicted.

The deemed guilty was Margaret Jones, hanged as the first casualty of the trials. John Winthrop presented the evidence against Jones to the General Court. Winthrop was not without a bias, as he was one of ten members, which included his son, which comprised the General Court, which heard the case. To obtain evidence, Winthrop used the recently published manual, *The Discovery of Witches* by English witch hunter Matthew Hopkins, saying that her imp was seen in “the clear day-light.”⁴¹ According to Winthrop, the accusation of Jones first came from her patients to whom she was a midwife. They accused her of telling them they would not heal without taking her medicine, and when their injuries did not heal the curse of witchcraft was pronounced on Jones in 1648.⁴²

Of the charges that led to the conviction and death of Margaret Jones were:

1. “Malignant touch, as many persons...she stroked or touched...were taken with deafness, or vomiting, or other violent pains or sickness.”
2. “She practicing physic [sic]...had extraordinary violent effect.”
3. She would curse patients so that they would be “beyond the apprehension of all physicians and surgeons.”
4. “Some things she foretold came to pass accordingly.”
5. “She had, upon search, an apparent teat...as fresh as if it had been newly sucked; and after it had been scanned, upon forced search, that was withered and another began on the opposite side.”
6. “In the prison, in the clear day-light, there was seen in her arms a child” which ran into another room and when followed vanished. “The child was seen in two other places to which she had no relation, and one maid that saw it, fell sick upon it, and was cured by the said Margaret, who used means to be employed to that end.”⁴³

⁴⁰ Horaatius Bonar, *Only Remembered*. 1870. <http://www.hymntime.com/tch/htm/o/n/l/onlyreme.htm>.

⁴¹ Justin Winsor and C.F. Jewett, *The Memorial History of Boston, Including Suffolk County, Massachusetts. 1630-1880*. Ed. by Justin Winsor, (Boston: J.R. Osgood and Co, 1880), 135.

⁴² Rebecca Beatrice Brooks, Margaret Jones: First Person Executed for Witchcraft in Massachusetts, last modified January 15, 2013, accessed December 21, 2015, <http://historyofmassachusetts.org/margaret-jones-first-person-executed-for-witchcraft-in-massachusetts/>.

⁴³ *Ibid*.

Winthrop, whose journal contains the only list of her accusations, continued to describe Jones at the trial, saying that she was “intemperate, lying notoriously, and railing upon the jury and witnesses, ext., and in the like distemper she died.” Winthrop also reiterated the charge that Jones was a witch by stating that “the same day and hour she was executed, there was a very great tempest at Connecticut, which blew down many trees, ext.”⁴⁴ John Hale’s account of the trial does provide another story, however, relating the only other remaining account of Margaret Jones’s trial and subsequent execution. John’s words are clear in concise, although with forty-nine years of hindsight to ponder the events:

Several persons have been charged with and suffered for the crime of witchcraft, in the governments of the Massachusetts, New-Haven, or Stratford and Connecticut, from the year 1646, to the year 1692.

The first was a woman of Charlestown, Anno 1647 or 8. She was suspected partly because that after some angry words passing between her and her neighbors, some mischief befell such neighbors in their creatures, or the like; partly because some things supposed to be bewitched, or have a charm upon them, being burned, she came to the fire and seemed concerned.

The day of her execution. I went in company of some neighbors, who took great pains to bring her to confession and repentance. But she constantly professed herself innocent of that crime: Then one prayed her to consider if God did not bring this punishment upon her for some other crime, if she had not been guilty of stealing many years ago?

She answered, she had stolen something, but it was long since, and she had repented of it, and there was grace enough in Christ to pardon her that long ago; but as for witchcraft she was wholly free from it, and so she said unto her death.⁴⁵

While Hale’s true feelings at the time of the death of Margaret Jones are unclear in the immediate aftermath of the trials as he did not record his account until after the witch hysteria was settled, it is clear he did not believe Jones to be a witch and therefore thought the

⁴⁴ Justin Winsor and C.F. Jewett, *The Memorial History of Boston, Including Suffolk County, Massachusetts. 1630-1880*, 135-136.

⁴⁵ John Hale, *A Modest Enquiry into the Nature of Witchcraft and How Persons Guilty of That Crime May Be Convicted: and the Means Used for Their Discovery Discussed, Both Negatively and Affirmatively, According to Scripture and Experience* (Bedford: Applewood Books, 2008), 17.

punishment of death was unjust. Conversely, Hale did not bemoan the death of Jones in his account of her trial. Perhaps this indicates that he believed her punishment was just. The better theory, however, is that John Hale was a seventeenth century man living in Puritan society accustomed to death and with a firm belief in the afterlife for those who found salvation in Christ, thus making death in this life a natural event for the Christian man of his era.

Before Hale was able to enter the pulpit he first graduated from Harvard in 1657 with a degree in theology, which was the norm for Harvard graduates as the school was founded to train ministers to “be plainly instructed and consider well that the main end of your life and studies to know God and Jesus Christ.”⁴⁶ The president of Harvard while John attended was Charles Chauncy, a gifted communicator and a minister who preached the great sin of man and the great salvation of God.⁴⁷

After graduating from Harvard, Hale spent the next few years serving as a tutor and teacher until he received an invitation to preach at a newly formed congregation, the First Parish Church in Beverly at the Bass River community of Salem, Massachusetts.⁴⁸ Upon his initial invitation, he preached alongside Joshua Hubbard and Jeremiah Hubbard, and after an extensive three-year interview process John was invited with unanimous consent to pastor the new congregation on June 23, 1667.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Peter Greer, *Mission Drift: The Unspoken Crisis Facing Leaders, Charities, and Churches* (Grand Rapids: Bethany House Publishers, 2014), 16.

⁴⁷ Of all the presidencies of Harvard, no student body listened to more sermons than those who attended under Chauncy, who embraced religious orthodoxy as well as scientific curiosity. Chauncy, though, was not above reproach and as a man of conviction found himself in prison once during the reign of Charles I in England. This was before his immigration to Plymouth, he insisted on the total immersion of infants in baptism.

⁴⁸ K. David Goss, *The Salem Witch Trials: A Reference Guide* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008) 106.

⁴⁹ Charles E. Wainwright, “The Founding of the Church at Bass River Syde,” accessed 12/28/15, <http://history.firstparishbeverly.org/archives/327>.

The path to Hale becoming the pastor of the Beverly church was not yet completed, as he was still required to submit a formal petition to the Great and General Court for Bass River to formally be set apart from Salem and established as its own independent town, which was granted July 21, 1667.⁵⁰ Then on August 28, 1667, John formally accepted the call to the office of pastor, with his full letter reading:

When I look at the weight of the work you call me unto of which. Paul cried out ‘who is sufficient for these things?’ I then looking upon my own manifold infirmities & indisposition of spirit thereunto I see many discouragements: butt when I duly consider the Lords sovereignty over me & all sufficiency for my succor (assistance) I desire where I see his work and call to say with Essiah here I am send me; and in particular when I observe the remarkable providences of God in bringing me hither and paving out our way hitherto and the room the Lord hath made for me in their hearts, which I acknowledge with thankfulness to God & yourselves. I do look at the Call of God in the present call to me being the more confirmed herein by the concurrence of our apprehensions, which hath appeared in those things we have had occasion to confer about, concerning our entering into & proceeding our Church affairs, which I hope the Lord will enable me to practice accordingly.

“Wherefore while you walk according to God’s order of the gospel, & ill the steadfastness of the faith in Christ, and I see that with a good conscience and freedom of spirit I can carry on my work and discharge my duty to God and man & those that are under my care according to the respective relations I may bear unto them: so long as the Lord is calling me to labor in this part of His vineyard; I desire to give up myself to the Lord & his service in the work of the Ministry in this place. Requesting you to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me that it may redound to his glory, your Edifying & of every soul that shall dwell amongst us and for our Joyful account in the day of Christ’s appearance.

By me, John Hale⁵¹

Hale’s writing gives insight into his character as a young man entering the pulpit. It can be concluded that he was a man of great humility, with an obvious concern to do the will of God and to be “sent” for His purpose. Most importantly, Hale understood his charge as a Christian minister to care for those under his care, which was understood to see that they lived godly lives

⁵⁰ Goss, *The Salem Witch Trials: A Reference Guide*, 107.

⁵¹ Charles E. Wainwright, “The Founding of the Church at Bass River Syde.”

themselves, and that he did his best to remove all forms of vice from their community. This, as it turns out, would be a critical part of Hale's oath as it related to the forthcoming witch trials.

Despite John's formal acceptance as pastor of the new congregation, Massachusetts Bay politics still required another formality, as exercise of civil rights was directly linked to church membership and John was still a member of the Charlestown congregation. His requested release was granted upon September 20, 1667 and the twenty-two men and twenty-seven women officially became a new congregation. With the guidance of their new pastor the new congregants made their confession of faith in Jesus Christ and their Puritan tradition official through a written document and made the following covenant:

We do in the presence of the Eternal God & for our own comfort renew our covenant with God, Joining ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten wherein we do heartily accept & avow the Lord this day to be our God, & to walk in his ways, desiring to turn to him by unfeigned repentance for all our sins, & by faith receiving Jesus Christ for our only Lord and Savior, and his spirit for our comforter, do take him for our portion according to the tenor of the covenant of grace wherein he hath promised to be a god to the faithful & their seed after them in their generations, promising through the grace of God a constant & sincere endeavor of obedience to all Gods commands delivered us in his written Word, and to resist the temptations of Satan, the world, and our own deceitful hearts and this unto the death:

We do also, in the fear of the Lord and presence of his people, engage to give up our selves, & our seed to the Lord, and to one another by the Will of God in our Fellowship together as a particular church of Christ: or congregation of the faithful, promising each of us to continue faithful & steadfast in our communion together in the public worship of God, & to submit to the order, discipline & government of Christ in this his church and to the ministerial, teaching, guidance & oversight of the elder, or elders thereof, and to the brotherly watch of fellow members: promising to walk towards them in love & faithfulness, and in all offences to follow the rule of Christ, to bear and forbear, give and forgive as he hath taught us, so long as by the rules of God's Word we shall continue in this our relation together, desiring also to walk with all regular & due communion with other churches of Christ, for the Glory of God, our furtherance & growth in Christ: and mutual Edification.

And all this not by any Strength of our own but by our Lord Christ assisting us, whose blood we desire may sprinkle this our covenant made in his name, Amen.⁵²

⁵² Ibid.

The covenant, displays not only the zeal of the town, but also repeated Hale's quest to provide for a "mutual edification" of the whole town. Hale, it can be argued, had to only the task of bringing Christ into the town, but keeping Satan out. While this does not excuse his future actions, it certainly gives reasoning behind the actions taken by Hale and his fellow Puritans.

Of the three surviving records of John Hale's writings, this entry into the records of the First Church of Beverly probably gives the greatest insight into John. What is clear about his theology is that he was a firm believer in Puritanism and therefore Calvinism. Hale affirmed central tenants of his faith, which required hard work as a prerequisite to keep one's self pure as well as to keep in line with Scripture. Puritan doctrine dictates that by works and pure living evidence is given of salvation, which can only come to the elect. It is clear about Hale that his desire, much like the covenant of the new congregation, was to live by the "rules of God's Word" and to live "for the Glory of God."

John's desire to live for God certainly was not uncommon in Massachusetts Bay. After all, the colony was founded by Puritans in search of a land where they could worship free from the restraints and the perceived evils of the Church of England. The colony that John's father helped form was one where the Bible was the driving force behind all laws. Massachusetts was, as some have deemed it, a "Bible Commonwealth." In the soon-to-be-absorbed Plymouth colony, William Bradford stated that laws were designed to have people "ruled by the laws of God's Word." Cotton Mather would mark his Bible margins with commentary for every law he proposed.⁵³ The Massachusetts Body of Liberties, published in 1641, additionally makes it clear

⁵³ J. Stephen Lang, *1,001 MORE Things You Always Wanted to Know About the Bible* (Nashville, 2001).

that the colony laws were designed to promote the “free fruition” of Christianity through the “stability of churches.”⁵⁴

The area where John differed from his father in his personal pursuit of living for God was that he desired to give himself “to the Lord and his services in the work of the ministry” and felt that the Lord called him to do so. Additionally, John had the personal traits necessary for accomplishing his goal. He was smart, eloquent, mild tempered, and was trusted by his congregation. As a sign of that trust, his congregants honored him with 200 acres of shoreline pasture.⁵⁵ These traits, which were the basis for his garnering the position of pastor for the new congregation, would certainly serve him well as he encountered the witch trials that encompassed Massachusetts Bay and made John Hale a recognized figure to this day.

Hale had a brief time away from his community while he was serving as a military chaplain in Canada. He served the militia and was briefly captured during the Battle of Quebec. Upon his return, Hale once again occupied the pulpit of his church in Bass River, maintained by his son Robert in his absence.⁵⁶ While he was away, the witchcraft hysteria took hold of the Boston area, populated by Puritans who epitomized religious strictness, simplicity, and austerity in all manners of their life. Witch hunting, although often associated with Salem, certainly was not new or foreign to the Puritans, whose native England had long dealt with witchcraft and its punishments. King James I wrote *Daemonologie* in 1597, arguing that witches bear the image of the devil and are purposed to direct people to him, “being the enemy of man’s Salvation.” James demanded that all convicted of witchcraft should be put to death “according to the Law of God,

⁵⁴ Hanover College Historical Texts Project, “The Massachusetts Body of Liberties (1641),” last modified March 8, 2012, accessed January 4, 2016, <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/masslib.html>.

⁵⁵ Gross, *The Salem Witch Trials: A Reference Guide*, 107.

⁵⁶ Harriet Ruth Waters Cooke, *The Driver Family: A Genealogical Memoir of the Descendants of Robert and Phebe Driver of Lynn, Mass.: with an Appendix Containing Twenty-Three Allied Families, 1592-1887* (New York, New York: H.R.W. Cooke, 1889), 333.

the civil and imperial law, and the municipal law of all Christian nations” believing that the witch was consumed by the devil, which cannot be “casten out.”⁵⁷

James was far from the only one in England concerned with witchcraft. Matthew Hopkins’s book, *The Discovery of Witches*, was a manifestation of Parliament appointing him as Witch Finder General in 1644.⁵⁸ The period between 1550 and 1650 in England is often referred to as “the burning times” because of the mass executions of accused witches. Hopkins was directly responsible for the execution of over 300 witches. Cotton Mather helped stoke the witchcraft hysteria with *Memorable Providences of Witchcraft*, published in 1688 and widely circulated throughout New England. Mather detailed the account of Goody Glover, concluding that she bewitched children and upon her conviction was hanged.⁵⁹ Mather also argued that witches were the “devil’s instruments,” a strong accusation in Puritan New England.⁶⁰ In contrast to England, only twenty people were put to death in America for the crime of witchcraft, and only forty were executed in all the English colonies between 1650 and 1710.⁶¹

John Hale’s entrance into the witch trials came in 1692, when he was called into Salem Village by Samuel Parris, minister of the Salem congregation. After a year of congregational fighting between Parris and his parishioners, his children had begun to act strangely in February. Suspecting witchcraft, Parris called Hale and other “worthy gentlemen from Salem” to observe his daughters. After the group had “enquired diligently into the sufferings of the afflicted” they

⁵⁷ King James I, *Daemonologie*, chapt. 6 (Project Gutenberg Ebook) accessed September 7, 2016, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/25929/25929-pdf.pdf?session_id=1b689df855a30424095f643de4ee2af351ea256e, 39.

⁵⁸ John S. Morrill, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, “Matthew Hopkins: English Witch-Hunter.” accessed January 6, 2016, <http://www.britannica.com/biography/Matthew-Hopkins>.

⁵⁹ Cotton Mather, *Memorable Providences, Relating to Witchcrafts and Possessions (1689)*, accessed September 8, 2016, http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/ASA_MATH.HTM.

⁶⁰ George Bancroft, *History of the United States from the Discovery of the American Continent* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co, 1846), 85.

⁶¹ Jackie Wellman, *Spiritual Clarity* (Baltimore: Publish America, 2005), 112.

“concluded they were preternatural, and feared the hand of Satan was in them.” The advice that Hale, along with the other magistrates, gave to Parris was that he “should sit still and wait upon the Providence of God to see what time might discover; and to be much in prayer for the discovery of what was yet secret.”⁶² In the case of Tituba, who was enslaved to the Parris family and was the first executed in the trials, Hale accused her not of witchcraft, but of “covenanting with the Devil.” Additionally, John described the witnesses who had “fits” while confessing as being “molested by Satan.”⁶³

It can be easy criticize Hale for his role in the trials, but a few key points must be remembered when addressing his role. First, John was the pastor of his church, a body that Mather called a “spiritual corporation,” designed to ensure that all congregants live by “all the rules of the incontestable piety” of the gospel.⁶⁴ He charged the accused with covenanting with the devil, the driving force behind witchcraft. In this respect, Hale was upholding his duty to remove all aspects of ungodliness from his congregation while promoting godliness. To accomplish his task in regards to witchcraft Hale relied on and consulted “learned writers about witchcraft,” naming specifically “Keeble on the Common Law, Chapt. Conjurat[i]on, (an Author approved by the Twelve Judges of our Nation.) England and Ireland, in the years 1658, 61, 63, 64, and 81. Bernards Guide to Jurymen, Baxter and R. Burton, their Histories about Witches and their discoveries. Cotton Mather's Memorable Providences relating to Witchcrafts, Printed Anno 1689.”⁶⁵

⁶² Hale, *Modest Enquiry Into the Nature of Witchcraft*, 25.

⁶³ Hale, *Modest Enquiry Into the Nature of Witchcraft*, 27.

⁶⁴ Cotton Mather and Increase Mather, *Ratio Disciplinae Fratrum Nov-Anglorum.: A Faithful Account of the Discipline Professed and Practised; in the Churches of New-England. : With Interspersed and Instructive Reflections on the Discipline of the Primitive Churches* (Boston: Printed for S. Gerrish in Cornhill, 1726), 8-9.

⁶⁵ Hale, *Modest Enquiry Into the Nature of Witchcraft*, 28.

These authors, like James I and Hopkins, held nothing but ill feelings toward witchcraft. Bernard flatly calls for their execution, citing Exodus 22:18, which reads: “Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.” Like Hale, Bernard agrees that witchcraft is of the spiritual realm, coming from the devil.⁶⁶ When the trials are examined from a spiritual perspective, good versus evil, it is easy to see where the judgment of death would be executed in light of Salem being a Puritan settlement focused on the battle of good versus evil in everyday life. Whether posterity deems Hale correct in his participation in the trials or not is a legitimate debate. It must be remembered that Hale was as thorough as he could be and stayed true to his mission in life of propagating the Gospel of Christ and striving to shepherd those under his pastorship.

If Hale is to be criticized for his role during the trials, it also must be remembered that he had a significant hand in their conclusion. Fortunately for Hale, he married well, and his wife Sarah was a woman for Puritan women to model themselves upon. This did not prevent her from suffering the accusation of witchcraft. If John had previously struggled with convicting men and women of witchcraft, the accusation against Sarah solidified his belief that the trials were nothing more than theater at that point. Knowing the innocence of his wife, he became an advocate for ending the trials and also questioned the wisdom of using testimony of the afflicted children.⁶⁷

Seeing his error, Hale departed from his normal stoic stance with hindsight of the trials and the subsequent events. Hale’s repentant attitude toward the trials is clear, saying:

I am abundantly testified that those who were most concerned to act and judge in those matters, did not willingly depart from the rules of righteousness. But such was the

⁶⁶ Richard Bernard, *A Guide to Grand-Iury Men: Divided into Two Books : in the First, Is the Authors Best Advice to Them What to Doe, Before They Bring in a Billa Vera in Cases of Witchcraft, with a Christian Direction to Such As Are Too Much Giuen Vpon Euery Crosse to Thinke Themselves Bewitched : in the Second, Is a Treatise Touching Witches Good and Bad, How They May Bee Knowne, Euicted and Condemned, with Many Particulars Tending Thereunto.* (London: Printed by Felix Kyngston for Edw. Blackmore, and are to be sold at his shop, 1630), 84-85.

⁶⁷ Gross, *The Salem Witch Trials: A Reference Guide*, 107.

darkness of that day, the tortures and lamentations of the afflicted, and the power of former precedents, that we walked in the clouds, and could not free out way. And we have most cause to be humbled for error on that hand, which cannot be retrieved. So that we must beseech the Lord, that if any innocent blood hath been shed, in the hour of temptation, the Lord will not lay it to our charge, but be merciful to his people whom he hath redeemed.⁶⁸

John Hale took great care in choosing his works when writing *A Modest Inquiry Into the Nature of Witchcraft*. Controversy, having found Hale, made him determined to clarify his actions. Hale believed in fighting for what he deemed to be right, which was the work of God and serving his congregation. Even though he never denied the existence of witches he certainly concluded that the trials and subsequent deaths were wrong and consequently he humbly sought forgiveness from God and for posterity to be easy in the judgement of his actions and those of his counterparts.

Samuel Hale

Samuel Hale was not Robert Hale; he did not courageously leave the known world behind him, nor did he cast aside social status in a society where opportunity depended upon one's name, nor did he brave the ocean in search of a new homeland based upon religious conviction. Likewise, Samuel Hale was not his father, John Hale. He is not remembered as either a major actor in one of the most vilified periods in American history, nor as contributing to the ending of an evil in America's past. Samuel Hale is not remembered as part of one of the most celebrated movements in American history nor is he a giant of American history remembered for great deeds. In fact, Samuel Hale is forgotten to history. But, despite his life being less than noteworthy, perhaps Samuel contributed more to the adoption of the American spirit than either of his previous, noteworthy generations.

⁶⁸ Hale, *Modest Enquiry Into the Nature of Witchcraft*, 167-168

Samuel was born August 13, 1687 to John and Sarah Hale. For roughly the first five years of his life Samuel spent only limited time with his father, who was off at war in Canada. When his father returned home to Beverly, he was preoccupied with the witch trials in the neighboring town. Also, it meant that Samuel was born the fourth child of John Hale, his third son. As it turned out, however, Samuel inherited many Hale traits passed onto him by his father and grandfather before him. Samuel had courage, and was willing to explore the unknown in search of a better tomorrow.

Hale left his home in Beverly when he came of age. The ultimate reason for the Hales to once again move from their home was not differences in political matters or religious opportunity, but rather the influx of people into a society still dominated by the remnants of a feudal system.⁶⁹ The influx of immigrating Puritans that started with the persecution in England during the time of Robert Hale continued to swell the area around Boston. In fact, just a few years after John Hale's birth the colony was already twenty times bigger than what Robert Hale experienced in his first few years in the colony.⁷⁰ The practice of dividing land quickly saw tracks of land large enough to support a family vanish.

What Samuel did not have was sufficient land upon which to earn a living. Although Massachusetts Bay certainly did not engage in the practices of Europe, in early colonial New England families desired to pass on their land holdings to their children, adopting a practice of multigeniture, or distribution among multiple bloodline heirs.⁷¹ Samuel was not alone in his generation as an heir without enough land to survive. For many other New England farmers, this

⁶⁹ Hatcher, *Researching Your Colonial New England Ancestors*, 10.

⁷⁰ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Massachusetts Bay Colony," last modified May 11, 2015, accessed October 3, 2016. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Massachusetts-Bay-Colony>.

⁷¹ Yvonne Pitts, *Family, Law, and Inheritance in America: A Social and Legal History of Nineteenth-Century*, (Kentucky, 2013), 19.

practice turned into a family concern as families were tasked with the decision to live without enough food, or move.

Although land was plentiful, the early Puritans were principled people who largely sought to treat others honorably. In 1676, Governor Josiah Winslow attested to this Puritan behavior by stating:

I think I can clearly say...the English did not possess one foot of land in this colony but what was fairly obtained by honest purchase of the Indian proprietors. We first made a law that none should purchase or receive of gift any land of the Indians, which out the knowledge of the court. And lest they should be straitened, we ordered that Mount Hope, Pocasset, and several other necks of the best land in the colony, because most suitable and convenient for them, should never be bought out of their hands.⁷²

Despite the abundant land, the Puritan settlers were not materially wealthy, making the purchase of land more difficult. Additionally, the land that was purchased was not always adjoining, nor was it suitable for a home or crops. Robert Hale, for example, had the greatest of his landholdings in swamp land, which would have been of little use divided up for family dwellings.

Land was also difficult to cultivate, and the climate was new to the Englishmen. In fact, despite owning substantive landholdings, it was uncommon for families to have more than ten acres of land suitable for growing at any particular time.⁷³ Thus, a common concern arose when the practice of multigenerational and subsistence farming combined as families simply did not own enough usable land to pass along to their children. As the third son of John Hale, Samuel certainly encountered this difficulty forcing him to make difficult decisions for himself and his family.

⁷² James Thacher, *History of the Town of Plymouth, : From Its First Settlement in 1620, to the Present Time: : with a Concise History of the Aborigines of New England, and Their Wars with the English, &C* (Boston: Marsh, Capen & Lyon, 1835), 138.

⁷³ Brian Donahue, *The Great Meadow: Farmers and the Land in Colonial Concord* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 88.

One of the few surviving records of Samuel's life is that of his marriage to his wife, Apphia Moody, in May 1714 and his subsequent relocation to Newbury, Massachusetts about eighteen miles north of his father's farm in Beverly, Massachusetts.⁷⁴ Undoubtedly this move originated out of the necessity for land, pushing Samuel out of the comforts of his childhood home. When Newbury was founded, it was a frontier town far from what would be considered the comforts and the protection of the Boston area where Samuel grew up. In fact, when First Parish Church was founded in 1635, the church acted as the town government, school, and tavern indicating the small size of the municipality. Additionally, law mandated that all houses were required to be located near the church due to the danger of "Indians and wild beasts." In fact, animals and Indians were of such a concern one group of families formally requested to be released from worship for fear of a wolf attack, as they would need to travel at night. Even church services were not a place of safety. The town was forced to take preventative measures in the form of armed sentries around the church during services for fear of a sudden Indian attack.⁷⁵

Despite the fact that there exists no written account explaining Samuel's faith, it is clear that his Puritan beliefs were extremely important to him, as was the case with his father and grandfather before him. In fact, Apphia was even the daughter of an elder in the church.⁷⁶ As congregants of the First Parish Church in Newbury, Massachusetts, which was on their third building due to expansion by the time the Hales arrived, the couple was part of a church distinguished by liberal views regarding congregational fellowship and discipline.⁷⁷ Perhaps this

⁷⁴ John Farmer, *A Genealogical Register of the First Settlers of New-England, Etc.*, (Lancaster, MA: Carter, Andrews, & Co., 1829), 132.

⁷⁵ First Parish Church of Newbury. "History of the First Parish Church of Newbury," last modified 2016, accessed September 27, 2016, <http://firstparishofnewbury.org/about-us/history/>.

⁷⁶ Ezra S. Stearns, William Frederic Whitcher, and Edward E. Parker, *Genealogical and Family History of the State of New Hampshire: A Record of the Achievements of Her People in the Making of a Commonwealth and the Founding of a Nation* (New York, Chicago: Lewis Pub. Co, 1908). 1742.

⁷⁷ First Parish Church of Newbury. "History of the First Parish Church of Newbury."

break with traditional Puritan worship was because Newbury's frontier conditions inspired the citizens seeking the pragmatic rather than the theologically acceptable.

Without surviving records of Samuel, it is impossible to say for certain if his religious views sided more with the liberal congregation of Newbury or with his parents' conservatism. It is a fair assumption that Samuel was not fully in agreement with the liberal nature of Newbury for three reasons. First his father, the Reverend John Hale, was certainly not a religious liberal opposing the Puritan tradition that formed the early settlements. The second reason was his children, who were clearly taught the fundamentals of Puritan faith that would have been practiced by John Hale.⁷⁸ It only stands to reason, therefore, that if his parents were religious leaders with conservative values and so were his children that Samuel would have been as well. The third reason is probably most telling, but certainly the least verifiable. Samuel and Apphia did not remain in Newbury, opting to move to Portsmouth, New Hampshire sometime between the birth of Richard in 1717 and Samuel in 1718.⁷⁹

Why the Hales decided it best to move to New Hampshire cannot be ascertained. Perhaps Samuel and Apphia thought the liberality of their church was a detriment to their faith. Perhaps they grew weary of the frontier mentality, and despite New Hampshire being even further removed from the comforts of Boston, Portsmouth at least offered access to the ocean. Possibly the couple sought economic opportunity, possibly in terms of land. This is plausible considering the land requirements necessary to sustain a family and with raids a constant threat it is possible that Hale believed it safer to not expand his holdings in Newbury. Either scenario is just speculation, as no record remains. If speculation is warranted, however, the motivation to

⁷⁸ Henry Phelps Johnston, *Nathan Hale, 1776: Biography and Memorials* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1914), 5-7.

⁷⁹ No records exist of Samuel's move. This information is based upon the places of birth of the Hale children.

leave was probably in both concerns, as Samuel sought economic gain for his family's posterity and to serve his faith in the best way he knew how.

Perhaps history best remembers Samuel Hale for being a father. Whether it is fair to remember a man for his children or not, Samuel probably would be content with this classification. Puritans were not dedicated to life on earth, but life eternal and the propagation of the gospel of Christ, especially among their own children. Additionally it was a trait of Puritan parents to raise their children to be independent adults, with parent-child relationships marked by warmth, sympathy, and love.⁸⁰ Perhaps his most ambitious and famous son also bears his same.

Although Samuel may have desired to refrain from the spotlight that his father garnered as a founding minister and protagonist of the witch trials, that simple ambition was not common to the Hale bloodline. Samuel's brother, Dr. Robert Hale, the firstborn son of John Hale, became a prominent lawyer in Beverly. His other older brother, James Hale, followed his father into the ministry, being ordained in 1718 and pastoring the church in Ashford, Connecticut until his death in 1742.⁸¹ His son, Samuel, had no intentions of blending into society like his father. As part of the graduating class of Harvard in 1740, Samuel was an educated man.⁸² His career choice would require this knowledge, as he chose to become a teacher at the Latin grammar school in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Samuel was a motivated reformer of not only education, but of the philosophy of religion as well. Unique to his era, Samuel believed that studies should be done in common English familiar to his pupils instead of Latin. In fact, he required that his students' supplies included an

⁸⁰ Judith S. Graham, *Puritan Family Life: The Diary of Samuel Sewall* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000), 4.

⁸¹ Charles Phelps Noyes, *Noyes-Gilman Ancestry; Being a Series of Sketches, with a Chart of the Ancestors of Charles Phelps Noyes and Emily H. (Gilman) Noyes, His Wife* (St. Paul: Printed for the author by the Gilliss Press, New York, 1907), 265.

⁸² Farmer, John. *A Genealogical Register of the First Settlers of New-England, Etc.* (Lancaster: Carter, Andrews, & Co., 1829), 132.

English dictionary and an English grammar book and their studies were based upon the memorization of geography, arithmetic, trigonometry, measuring timber, board gauging, tonnage of vessels, and, of course, English.⁸³ During his almost forty years at the school many of Samuel's students would go onto college. It is said that he "never offered a candidate for admission to college who was rejected."⁸⁴ He also carried this belief to the pulpit, perhaps developed living among frontier people of less education than him and his family.

In his faith, and despite his public advocacy for changes in how religion was taught, it was reported in his day that Samuel became a member of the South Church early in life, meaning he had made an early profession in Christ. Samuel continued in life being "highly respected for his piety, integrity, learning and talents."⁸⁵ Undoubtedly the faith of Samuel points to his father, who in Puritan society was the unquestioned authority, religious and otherwise in the home. As the English Puritan, William Gouge, stated:

A family is a little Church, and a little Commonwealth, at least a lively representation thereof, whereby trial may be made of such as are fit for any place of authority, or of subjection in Church or Commonwealth. Or rather it is as a school wherein the first principles and grounds of government and subjection are learned: whereby men are fitted to greater matters in Church or Commonwealth.⁸⁶

Not content solely as a reformer in religion and education, Samuel also turned his attention to politics, where prior to the outbreak of the Revolution, he could have been described as a political moderate. In 1764, he was appointed to a committee named to instruct representatives to oppose the Stamp Act. Additionally, in 1773 Samuel was a member of the Committee of Safety, where many of his Tory friends convinced him not to sign the Association

⁸³ Bishop, Barry. *Nathan Hale: The Life of a Colonial Freedom Fighter*. (Pittsburg: RoseDog Books, 2013), 24.

⁸⁴ Brewster, Charles W. "Major Sam Hale: Patriot's Teacher." last modified 2000, accessed February 2, 2016, <http://www.seacoastnh.com/brewster/46.html>.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ William Gouge and Greg Fox. *Of Domestic Duties*. (Pensacola: Chapel Library, 2006). 11.

Test, which would have pledged his name to those who would oppose the British when and if the necessity came.⁸⁷

Despite his acts against the British, Samuel advocated for both sides in the political discussion. In fact, Samuel played his hand so well he received a land grant of 1,215 acres upon the “advice of our Trusty & well beloved John Wentworth Esq, our Governor & Commander in chief of our said Province of New Hampshire [sic]” from King George III.⁸⁸ Naturally, royal authority expected a quid pro quo in return with Samuel and outlined the following conditions:

1. Cut clear and make passable for Carriages, ext. a road of three rods wide through the said tract.
2. Shall settle or cause to be settled two families in five years from the date of this grant.
3. That all white and other pine trees fit for masting our Royal Navy be carefully preserved for that use and none to be cut or felled without our special license.
4. Yielding and paying therefore to us our Heirs and Successors on or before the 25th day of March 1774, the rent of one ear of Indian corn only if lawfully demanded.
5. That the said Grantee, his Heirs, and Assigns shall yield and pay unto us, our Heirs and Successors yearly and every year for ever from & after the expiration of five years from the date of this grant; one shilling proclamation money for every hundred acres he so owns, settles, or possess.⁸⁹

Despite his connections with the court, Samuel did not sink into the political shadows after the Revolution; in fact, he was one of the first representatives in New Hampshire’s General Court.⁹⁰

Although the few remaining pages where the elder Samuel’s name survives only remember him as a man who lived in Newburyport, Massachusetts and Portsmouth, New Hampshire, had five children, and was married to Apphia Moody, as with any individual his contribution and worth were much more. Samuel persevered and continued the dreams of his father and grandfather. He attained and preserved a better future for his children and contributed

⁸⁷ Bishop, *Nathan Hale: The Life of a Colonial Freedom Fighter*, 24.

⁸⁸ New Hampshire, Nathaniel Bouton, Isaac Weare Hammond, and Albert Stillman Batchellor. *Provincial and State Papers*, vol. 25. (Concord, N.H.: G.E. Jenks, 1860), 70.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 70-71.

⁹⁰ Seacord, “Samuel Hal’s Location Leaves His Mark on Posterity,” accessed 2/1/2016, <http://www.examiner.com/article/samuel-hale-s-location-leaves-his-mark-on-posterity>.

to a growing community shifting from a religious community to one increasingly seeking economic opportunity while maintaining its religious identity. History may not remember Samuel for great deeds like his grandfather and father, but in his own way he was able to live up to the Hale family reputation.

It is easy to picture Samuel sitting near the fireplace with his wife and children on a cold winter night passing down the traditions of his family teaching the Bible, his faith, as well as his family's history. Perhaps it was the stories of Samuel that he passed to his children and who would also pass to their children that would influence a young Nathan Hale. Perhaps it was a desire to contribute to the call of action that permeates the Hale bloodline.

Chapter 2: Coventry and Deacon Hale

Coventry

New England has many defining characteristics. The summers are short, and the winters are long and cold. Similarly, the growing seasons are short and unsuitable for growing the staple crops that made colonies in the southern parts of North America wealthy. Additionally, the soil, although rich in nutrients, is littered with rocks of all sizes that must be removed before planting a crop for subsistence. The climate is harsh and unforgiving, not suitable for the unhardened soul. The people of colonial New England, likewise, had many defining characteristics. They were bred from a stock willing and prepared for hard work, proving capable to endure the harsh climate. They were devoutly moral, devoted to their Puritan faith, and they centered their lives on their God, their families, and their community. These were characteristics shared by nearly all early New Englanders.

The first settlers of Massachusetts were not like the settlers of Virginia. Europeans came to Virginia in search of wealth and status, often not even bothering to build solid housing in expectation of returning to England wealthier in coin and status. When Robert Hale traveled to the Massachusetts colony shortly after the original settlers arrived at Plymouth, he left status for a hard life and little chance for the material wealth that was available him in England. His goal, along with his fellow Puritans, was to establish a lasting home to benefit his posterity and serve his God.

Connecticut's founding was out of the Massachusetts Puritan tradition that would have been familiar to Robert Hale. The key difference, however, between the two pietistic colonies was that compulsory taxes. In Massachusetts, all were compelled to pay taxes to support the ministry. In Connecticut, the cost of erecting meetinghouses and maintaining ministers was met

through voluntary contributions of the faithful.⁹¹ Certainly, though, Connecticut did not lack any of the religious fervor held in Massachusetts. The Puritan faith remained strong, and the church's command on society still permeated, so much in fact that the early settlers of Hartford, Windsor, and Wethersfield lived more than two years without any form of civil government outside of ecclesiastical governance. Connecticut's Puritan roots were so strong that many prominent leaders left for England to fight on behalf of the Parliamentary leader, Oliver Cromwell who was a Puritan, during the English Civil War.⁹²

Despite Connecticut not requiring non-congregants to pay a tax to support the ministry, the colony lawfully required all to attend services in order to elevate the moral condition of society. In an effort to persuade all citizens to attend church services and to restrain vice Connecticut enacted a ten-shilling fine to those who did not participate in "publick [sic] worship" on the Sabbath.⁹³ In fact, early towns that were established in Connecticut were founded as an "Ecclesiastical Society."

One example of this is the town of Andover, which was founded upon the formation of the First Congregational Church of Andover. Andover's land was taken from a portion of Coventry's land in 1743 as inhabitants on the fringes of Coventry, Hebron, and Lebanon Crank (present day Lebanon and Columbia) sought a place to hold worship services. These residents considered this proposed congregation especially critical when the weather created travel hardships. The Ecclesiastical Society was not intended to leave the jurisdiction of their previous town's governance; in fact they remained under their jurisdiction until Andover officially

⁹¹ Robert J. Taylor, and M. Klein Milton, *Colonial Connecticut: A History* (Millwood, N.Y.: KTO Press, 1979), 108.

⁹² Nancy Finlay, Connecticut Humanities, "The Importance of Being Puritan: Church and State in Colonial Connecticut," accessed February 19, 2016, <http://connecticuthistory.org/the-importance-of-being-puritan-church-and-state-in-colonial-connecticut/>.

⁹³ Alice Morse Earle, *Sabbath in Puritan New England*, ([Place of publication not identified]: Tredition GmbH, 2011), 250.

became a town in May 1747.⁹⁴ As the community coalesced upon the foundation of church patrons the town of Andover was formally recognized.

During the century leading up to the Revolution, perhaps no colony was as free and independent as Connecticut. As Thomas Hooker said of the citizens of Connecticut in 1638, “by a free choice, the hearts of the people will be more inclined to the love of the persons chosen, and more ready to yield to obedience.”⁹⁵ When Hooker made this claim, it was well known that he referenced the medieval allegory of the civil body as an organic entity. Hooker understood that the General Court would act as the organ of understanding, while the people would act as the heart, the motivation behind the state. In fact, to Hooker only a close union between the civil government and the citizens was acceptable for man in his fallen condition, as laws were to be based upon God’s will and yielded to upon obedience to the chosen magistrates.⁹⁶ As the General Court was assembled upon the will of citizens and acted upon their will, the people were given the ultimate freedom of self-government in Connecticut.

Hooker’s words, however, were spoken during the early stages of the colony when matters of religion were almost universally agreed upon following a Congregationalist model. When the Revolution broke out in the colonies, Connecticut had an alternative religious voice causing a divide. This voice was especially strong in the southwestern corner, specifically in the towns of Redding and Newtown where Anglicanism had taken hold. The 1774 census agrees that citizens who practiced Anglicanism were also very likely to identify as Tories. The data from the census lists that there were 25,000 males in Connecticut between the ages of sixteen

⁹⁴ John Scarchuk, *The Early History of Coventry, Connecticut*, (1995), 23, <https://ct-coventry.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/196>.

⁹⁵ J. Hammond Trumbull, *The Memorial History of Hartford County, Connecticut, 1633-1884*, (Boston: E.L. Osgood, 1886), 27.

⁹⁶ Frank Shuffelton, *Thomas Hooker, 1586-1647* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016), 232.

and fifty, and only 2,000 identified as Tory. Almost all of the Tories were located in Fairfield County, a stark contrast compared to the strong patriotic feelings emanating in the remaining parts of the state.⁹⁷

Before the Revolution, there was a common fear of the growth of Anglicanism and its supporters, who were seemingly hostile to civil and religious liberty, favoring the monarchial government in England rather than the freedom long enjoyed in Connecticut. In part, these fears were well founded. The Anglican Church's influence on political persuasions shows evident in the examples of two preachers, John Beach and James Nichols, both of the Fairfield region.

Reverend Beach was the pastor in Newtown and is recorded as one of the most energetic Loyalists in the state, protesting with pretension "that he would do his duty, preach, and pray for the King till the Rebels cut out his tongue."⁹⁸ Boasting of his loyalty in 1781, Beach wrote that Newtown and part of Redding remained loyal to the Church of England and were the only parts of New England that refused to comply with Congress.⁹⁹ While Beach was preaching loyalty to the Crown, Nichols, a 1771 Yale graduate, was inciting action. The state records on Nichols behavior read:

They had been much under the influence of Nichols, a designing church clergyman who had instilled into them principles opposite to the good of the State; that under the influence of such principles they had pursued a course of conduct tending to the ruin of the country and highly displeasing to those who are friends of the freedom and independence of the United States.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ G. A. Gilbert, "The Connecticut Loyalists," *Oxford University Press on behalf of the American Historical Association* Vol. 4, No. 2 (Jan 1899): 278.

⁹⁸ William Stevens Perry, *The History of the American Episcopal Church 1587-1883*. (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1885), 460.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 279.

¹⁰⁰ Connecticut General Assembly, *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut From October, 1776, to February, 1778, inclusive, with the Journal of the Council of Safety from October 11, 1776, to May 6, 1778, Inclusive, and an Appendix*. (Hartford: Press of the Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, 1894), 260.

The actions of Nichols and his followers caused the General Assembly to label their “frequent incursions” as being “made by the enemy.”

While a small section of Connecticut displayed their Loyalist attitudes in Coventry citizens were staunchly pro-patriot. It is possible that neither Beach nor Nichols had even heard of Coventry. After all, even today the town of Coventry is inconsequential in the grand scheme of economics in the state. There is no major industry and the town does not sit on a major waterway to support great trade. That is not to say, however, that Coventry is of little consequence in the state, but what defines the town is not its economic power, but peaceful living. In Monticello, the home of Thomas Jefferson, there hangs today a map he purchased in 1803 from Aaron Arrowsmith in preparation for the Lewis and Clark expedition.¹⁰¹ At the time this map was considered the most accurate representation of the United States, yet despite this, the little town Coventry, Connecticut is located roughly thirty miles southwest of its true location to the east of both Hartford and Norwich. It is most likely that Jefferson never noticed this error. In fact, it is highly questionable whether even today many Connecticut residents would notice the inaccuracy.

The story around the genesis of Coventry and its history prior to the Revolution is not too much different from that of the state of Connecticut at large. Like any colonial province, farming was critically important to the survival of the population. Situated in the Coastal Slope in the southern Eastern Uplands, Coventry has many distinguishing characteristics, including rough terrain with thin and rocky soil that results in fewer of the grand farms characteristic of the

¹⁰¹ “Composite: United States,” David Rumsey Historical Map Collection, last modified 2018, accessed 4/30/2018, https://www.davidrumsey.com/luna/servlet/detail/RUMSEY~8~1~26055~1110376:-Composite-of--A-map-of-the-United?qvq=w4s%3A%2Fwhen%2F1802%2F%3Bq%3AMap+Of+The+United+States+Of+North+America%3Bsort%3APub_List_No_InitialSort%2CPub_Date%2CPub_List_No%2CSeries_No%3Blc%3ARUMSEY~8~1&sort=Pub_List_No_InitialSort%2CPub_Date%2CPub_List_No%2CSeries_No&mi=4&trs=5.

majority of the Eastern Uplands. Because of the thin soil and over-farming many of the farms in this region were abandoned in the 1800's as the soil became unproductive and were instead populated with thick forests now familiar to residents of eastern Connecticut.¹⁰² Today this includes the Nathan Hale State Forest. Because of the practices of over-farming and that the practice of rotating crops and letting soil lay idle were not employed during the colonial era, by 1860 the lack of quality, arable land led to an exodus from the state, with many Coventry residents choosing to move to either Vermont, New Hampshire, or New York.¹⁰³

Harsh farming conditions were not the only hardship with which the original settlers of Coventry had to cope. Thirty years after Connecticut's founding, Native Americans outnumbered settlers twenty to one. Coventry was no exception to this rule as residents confronted the Nipmuck Indians, who sparsely populated the region, as well as the Pequots, a warlike tribe whose name means "destroyers," who roamed just south of Coventry.¹⁰⁴

Early residents of Coventry were accustomed to hearing of Indian attacks. The town records detail the death of Henry Woodward, who was traveling and ambushed on June 26, 1756 at thirty-six years old, as just one example.¹⁰⁵ In fact, frontier towns were accustomed to Indian raids, and on occasion residents were required to flee their homes for the protection of crowded forts. Solomon Stoddard even went as far as to call for English soldiers to be "put in a way to hunt the Indians [sic] with dogs," knowing that "it might be looked upon as inhuman to peruse them in such a manner...if the Indians were as other people are." To Stoddard and many

¹⁰² Scarchuk, *The Early History of Coventry, Connecticut*, 3.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 4.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 12.

¹⁰⁵ J.R. Cole, *History of Tolland County, Connecticut, Including Its Early Settlement and Progress to the Present Time, a Description of Its Historic and Interesting Localities; Sketches of its Towns and Villages: Portraits of some of its Prominent Men, and Biographies of Many of Its Representative Citizens* (New York: W.W. Preston & Co. 1888), 372.

Englishmen on the frontier, the Natives were not like normal people. They were cruel in their attacks and their style of battle was foreign to the gentle Englishmen. To Stoddard and many of the English, the Indians acted “like wolves, and are to be dealt withal as wolves.”¹⁰⁶

Despite the attack in 1756, Coventry, and the Connecticut colony as a whole, was much better off during the lifetime of Nathan Hale than its sister colonies. After a 1637 war between the Puritan settlers, Mohegans, and the Narragansetts versus the Pequots, Indian incursions became much scarcer. Noted historian Alden T. Vaughn stated of the aftermath of the Pequot War:

The effect of the Pequot War was profound. Overnight the balance of power had shifted from the populous but unorganized natives to the English colonies. Henceforth [until King Philip's War] there was no combination of Indian tribes that could seriously threaten the English. The destruction of the Pequots cleared away the only major obstacle to Puritan expansion. And the thoroughness of that destruction made a deep impression on the other tribes.¹⁰⁷

The first pastor of what remains the First Congregational Church of Coventry was Reverend Joseph Meacham, of Enfield, Connecticut.¹⁰⁸ What history has recalled most about Meacham is not his time in the pulpit or even any of his deeds. Rather, Meacham has been most remembered as the man that married a woman who, along with her siblings, was carried to Canada as a captive in the Deerfield, Massachusetts Indian raid of 1703. Esther Williams, later to be married to Meacham, was taken captive but unfortunately her two younger brothers and mother were killed in the attack.

¹⁰⁶ John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1994), 12.

¹⁰⁷ “1637 – The Pequot War,” The Society of Colonial Wars in the State of Connecticut, last modified 2011, accessed May 23, 2018, <http://colonialwarsct.org/1637.htm>.

¹⁰⁸ William Richard Cutter, *New England Families, Genealogical and Memorial; A Record of the Achievements of Her People in the Making of Commonwealths and the Founding of a Nation* (New York: Lewis Historical Pub. Co, 1913), 1258.

Esther was thirteen years old at the time of the raid.¹⁰⁹ Her sister, Eunice, was only seven and despite her father's best efforts, who through force of persuasion reclaimed his other children and even gained the same opportunity for Eunice, never returned home. This turn of events, however, was not of anybody's doing except Eunice. She was given the choice to return to the society of her birth; evidence even points toward Jonathan Edwards pleading with her to return home.¹¹⁰ Eunice refused, as she converted to Catholicism while in captivity and the native lifestyle. To the Puritans, this would have been a terrible blow on two fronts, as they not only lost their sister to the "savages," but also to the Pope.

Despite his fame being in his wife's family, Meacham led a full life dedicated to his congregants in Coventry, where he remained pastor until his passing. The best description of Meacham remains on his gravestone, which reads in full:

The Rev. Mr. Joseph Meacham was near 40 years ye learned, faithful and painful pastor of ye church in Coventry. He was a man of God, fervent in prayer, zealous and plain in preaching, sincere in reprovng, holy and prudent in conversation; a kind husband, tender father, sincere friend; a lover of Christ and souls. Tired with ye labors of ye World, his body to rest here till Jesus come. Sep. 15th, 1752 in ye (sic) 67th year of his age.¹¹¹

The most important minister who influenced Nathan Hale was Dr. Joseph Huntington, who lived just four miles from the Hale farm on the corner of present day South Street and Cross Street. In fact, Huntington had such an impact on the town that he was honored with his name

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 1258.

¹¹⁰ Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America*, 212-213.

¹¹¹ Maude Gridley Peterson and Ruth Amelia Higgins, *Historic Sketch of Coventry, Connecticut*, (Coventry, Connecticut: 1912), accessed June 22, 2016, https://archive.org/stream/historicsketchof1912pete/historicsketchof1912pete_djvu.txt.

By 1811, the congregational church in Coventry was in turmoil. The congregation consisted of only twenty-nine members, twenty-one of which were women. The Reverend Chauncey Booth, whose name has since been lent to the local library, changed the direction of the church in Coventry. Booth was the driving character in a series of revivals that added nearly 300 members to the church. The church in Coventry was in turmoil again by the middle of the 19th century, and in 1848 a split occurred with the First Church remaining in its location across from the town green and a new congregation, meeting at the Village Church. In 1866, the two congregations reunited as members of the dissenting First Church passed away and the church united under Reverend Nestor Light at the current location of the First Congregational Church of Coventry on Main Street in South Coventry.

being lent to a road, which has since been renamed Snake Hill Road.¹¹² According to Hale biographer George Dudley Seymour, Huntington was “a man of attractive appearance, and personality, graceful, urbane, witty.” In fact, Seymour credits Nathan’s good manners, easy address, and interest in the classics to Huntington’s influence.¹¹³ Huntington certainly influenced Hale’s manners and but likely these traits were taught by the stern hand of Deacon Hale. Huntington’s greatest influence on Hale appears to be in the classics, which Hale adored until his death.

Born in Scotland Parish, now the town of Scotland, Huntington was familiar with politics. His father, Nathaniel, helped found the town of Windham. Nathaniel was not wealthy but oversaw a large farm, and saw that his eldest son, also Nathaniel, went to Yale to study for the ministry, as well as Joseph. Nathaniel’s second son Samuel stayed home to work on the farm. Perhaps ironically, it was Samuel who gained the most intellectual prominence after studying with the Revered Ebenezer Devotion when time was spared from his daily chores. Samuel arose to many prominent positions during his professional career. Among these was the appointment as an Assistant Judge of the Supreme Court of Errors, and an appointment to the Continental Congress in 1776, where he served as President from 1779-1781 and signed both the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation.¹¹⁴ Huntington’s son, also named Samuel, also rose to prominence in politics, becoming the third governor of Ohio in 1808 as well as Chief Justice of Ohio.¹¹⁵ Another one of Huntington’s brothers, Enoch Huntington

¹¹² This information is found in numerous older town maps.

¹¹³ Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 491.

¹¹⁴ “Samuel Huntington: Governor of Connecticut, 1786-1796,” last modified 2007, accessed August 11, 2016, <http://ctstatelibrary.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Samuel-Huntington.pdf>.

¹¹⁵ John Warner Barber, Asaph Willard, and Benjamin L. Hamlen, John Warner, *Connecticut Historical Collections, : Containing a General Collection of Interesting Facts, Traditions, Biographical Sketches, Anecdotes, &C. Relating to the History and Antiquities of Every Town in Connecticut, : with Geographical Descriptions* (New Haven, Printed by B.L. Hamlen, 1836), 545.

prepared Timothy Dwight for Yale and Dwight would later go on to become the eighth president of that institution.¹¹⁶

Joseph Huntington was a man of considerable intellectual heft, although this was not the course his father originally had planned, as Huntington was not enrolled into Yale College until he was twenty-one years of age. This advanced age made him an unusual student at the time, but his father's chosen profession for young Joseph was that of a clothier, or a maker and seller of clothing. Huntington was an unequivocally pious man, but of equal importance to the young mind of Nathan was his studious nature, not only of theology, but also of history and the world around him.¹¹⁷

With his intelligence, Dr. Huntington was a man of great conviction and the spiritual leader of the town of Coventry. Among his strongly-held principles was the necessity for moral living and dedication to Christ, and Huntington was not one to shy away from vocalizing his beliefs nor did he refrain from convicting others. Nathan's brother, Enoch, was ordained on September 29, 1779 during a ceremony that Dr. Huntington presided over. In his ordination sermon Dr. Huntington summed up Christian truth in this world by stating,

If we understand the atonement of Christ and its true import, we cannot err in any essential point. On the other hand, if we mistake the doctrines of the cross of Christ, the door is then open for us to rush into all the above mentioned errors, and all manner of delusion and heresy. The doctrine of atonement...is the capital truth, with which all truth is connected.

The conviction that Dr. Huntington was referring to was all encompassing: that every truth that a person may come upon is ultimately from God and that every non-truth is delusion and heresy stumbled into through embracing mistaken biblical teachings.

¹¹⁶ Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 491.

¹¹⁷ Jean Christie Root, *Nathan Hale* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1915), 115.

Huntington was a Puritan by denomination and his sermons bore this out. He could trace his lineage to the English persecutions of the Puritans in the early 1600's. Despite his family's history Huntington clearly was not a vengeful man, lamenting on the "tragical [sic] death" of Charles I of England, a man who persecuted his great-grandfather and like-minded individuals to the point of immigrating to Connecticut, landing in either Saybrook or Lyme (which were one town at the time).¹¹⁸ It is also clear that Huntington was a very loyal individual, willing to stake his reputation for those in which he believed.¹¹⁹

In colonial Connecticut, education was publically upheld as a foundation of society, where the spirit of the *Old Deluder Satan Act* was upheld in society, encouraging citizens to gain an education to attain the ability to read and study the Bible. The family farm would be the first school for a child's education; certainly, most were familiar with *The New England Primer*. Those who could afford the financial burdens and the loss of valuable farm hands would often seek formal tutelage for their children. In Coventry in the mid-1700's, Dr. Huntington would be sought out by Richard Hale to prepare his boys, Nathan, David, and Enoch, for university.

During the Revolution, Coventry and Connecticut were active players. In February 1778, the General Assembly directed that Jeremiah Ripley of Coventry to carry "two tun [sic] of fine powder now under his care" to Ezekiel Cheevers, the commissary of artillery at Springfield, Massachusetts. Not only was Ripley's venture sponsored by the state, but the General Assembly also commissioned a "proper guard" to support him.¹²⁰ Even from before the war began, Coventry was strongly pro-patriot in its support, even passing a resolution calling for those loyal

¹¹⁸ New England Historic Genealogical Society, *The New England Historical & Genealogical Register: Published Quarterly, Under the Patronage of the New England Historic Genealogical Society for the Year 1851*, Volume 5, (Boston: Samuel G. Rake, Publisher, 1851), 163.

¹¹⁹ Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 7.

¹²⁰ Connecticut General Assembly, *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut From October, 1776, to February, 1778*, 568.

to England to be treated with “contempt and total neglect” while labeling them “unworthy of friendship, natural enemies,” and “vile anathemas.”¹²¹ Coventry was far from the only town in Connecticut that viewed those loyal to England harshly, and those Loyalists had to fear espionage committees aligned with the Patriot cause. If these committees, normally consisting of about fifteen to thirty members, found somebody disloyal to their cause they would seek a public disavowal of their Loyalist sentiments. If the offending party refused their names would then be printed in four newspapers; the *Connecticut Gazette*, the *Connecticut Courant*, the *Connecticut Journal*, and the *Norwich Packet* with the following line:

“PERSONS HELD UP TO PUBIC VIEW AS ENEMIES TO THEIR COUNTRY, (NAME)”¹²²

The Hale family, even if they wished to be silent in matters of politics, it would seem, was caught in the middle of impending firestorm. Their state government was actively pushing insurrection against their commanding country. Their town was engaging with the state in its acts, and not only with Ripley who was one of the towns leading citizens. The Hales, however, were never silent observers, but were rather always leaders in society who followed the path that they deemed correct.

Deacon Hale

Nathan’s father, Deacon Richard Hale, lived from 1717-1802 and made a good life for himself and his family as a farmer, among other pursuits. Even today, Richard is still called Deacon Hale for his role in the town’s church, a sign of respect of his authority, as well as his extremely pious nature. Richard was a good family man who had to endure many of the same hardships of his kinsmen. The course of his life, however, marked a distinct shift in the Hale

¹²¹ Gilbert, *The Connecticut Loyalists*, 280.

¹²² Gilbert, *The Connecticut Loyalists*, 281.

mentality. Instead of seemingly having a singular focus on God and the eternal, Richard blended the spiritual with the temporal.

His road to Coventry was not that dissimilar from the one his father's path. Land was necessary to survive, and to Hale it seemed that opportunity lay outside of the life with which he was familiar. The immediate stop prior to Coventry was Newbury, Massachusetts. Hale had family in Newbury at the time, but he chose to leave nonetheless at the age of twenty-eight in search of prosperity.¹²³ Hale bought the original land for the farm, 240 acres, in 1745 from the original proprietors of the Coventry tract.¹²⁴

Nathan's mother, Elizabeth Strong, lived between 1727 and 1767, meaning she married Richard at seventeen and died when Nathan was just twelve years old. She was a descendant of Elder John Strong (1605-1699), who was English-born, arriving to the New World in 1635 as part of the *Hopewell* voyage. Strong would go on to act as a founder of both Northampton, Massachusetts and Windsor, Connecticut. Strong's descendant, Justice Joseph Strong, moved the family to Coventry in March 1716. Joseph Strong was a leading citizen, a man of property and respect. Strong family historian, Benjamin W. Dwight, summed up Strong's civic responsibilities by saying:

He held various town offices of importance, as a town treasurer in 1716; selectman for six years; and justice of the peace for many years from 1723 onwards. In 1721, the first year that Coventry was represented in the Colonial Legislature, he was sent to it as the representative of the town. There were two sessions yearly of the Legislature, in May and October, until 1819. Justice Joseph Strong was for fifty-two times elected a member of the Legislature and including extra sessions was during sixty-five sessions a member of the General Assembly of Connecticut. He was moderator of the first town-meeting held April 24, 1718, and often afterwards of others, holding the office for the last time April 11, 1763, when 90 years old. He was a member of the Colonial Legislature for the

¹²³ Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 318.

¹²⁴ Johnston, *Nathan Hale, 1776: Biography and Memorials*, 9.

last time in May, 1762, when 89 years old, his son Phinehas being the other representative with him from Coventry.¹²⁵

If his legislative achievements are indicative of the public's perception of Strong, than it must be argued that Strong was a man of the people, and a man imminently trusted. Dwight would continue his description of Strong, stating:

He must have been a man of remarkable physical vitality, and a fine specimen of the "*Sana mens in sano corpore.*" There seems to have been a good deal of town pride taken in sending such a venerable man to the Assembly. "He and his sons," says Dr. Porter, "were persons of property and standing."¹²⁶

Elizabeth's generation produced three ministers, all Yale graduates. The Strong's were an obviously attractive family to Richard.¹²⁷ Elizabeth was undoubtedly introduced to Richard while visiting her cousin, also a Strong, who grew up on a farm neighboring the Hale's property.¹²⁸ The Hale family, like most of the era, was a large one, as Richard and Elizabeth Hale had nine sons and three daughters. Also, they were no exception to the colonial rule that families lived in close proximity to each other, and succeeding generations often lived on neighboring farms or with the family. Nathan had the opportunity to live under and learn from not only his grandmother, but his great-grandfather as well.¹²⁹

Unfortunately, little is known of Elizabeth, although she likely possessed many of the same traits as her mother, especially in light of how she referred to a young, often sick Nathan.

While in the army, Nathan wrote to his brother, Enoch:

¹²⁵ Benjamin W. Dwight, *The History of the Descendants of Elder John Strong, of Northampton, Mass.* (Albany, N.Y.: J. Munsell, 1989), 309.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 309.

¹²⁷ Seymour, *Captain Nathan Hale, 1755-1776: Yale College 1773, Major John Palsgrave Wyllys, 1754-1790: Yale College 1773, Friends and Yale Classmates, Who Died in Their Country's Service, One Hanged As a Spy by the British, the Other Killed in an Indian Ambuscade on the Far Frontier: A Digressive History*, 15.

¹²⁸ Scarchuk, *The Early History of Coventry, Connecticut*, 5.

¹²⁹ Johnston, *Nathan Hale, 1776: Biography and Memorials*, 5.

Forget not frequently to visit and strongly to represent my duty to our good grandmother Strong. Has she not repeatedly favored us with her tender, most important advice? The natural tie is sufficient, but increased by so much goodness, our gratitude cannot be too sensible.¹³⁰

Based on the evidence available, and as a woman of her time and place, she was likely wise, tender-hearted, and kind, qualities that commanded a soldier's special respect.

Despite her untimely passing, Elizabeth and Richard had nine sons and three daughters. Despite Nathan's national recognition, he was not the only Hale to contribute to the war effort. In fact, a total of six Hales took part in the Revolutionary War. Samuel, John, and Joseph each responded to the Lexington alarm and marched toward Boston. John was captured at Fort Washington, November 16, 1776, and was later released upon prisoner exchange. John would become a major of militia but while in captivity he was held off the coast of Jersey for a time and would later pass from consumption.¹³¹

Richard would wait about two years before remarrying, this time to Abigail Adams from Canterbury, Connecticut, about two months before Nathan and Enoch left the farm for Yale. Abigail was a widow and brought with two daughters into the Hale home. Alice, one of Abigail's daughters, was believed by many Hale historians to have had a romantic relationship with Nathan. More recent historians correctly point out that Alice's struggle with depression was a personal battle rather than a deep-seated depression over the loss of a lover after Hale's death. This is not to say that Nathan and Alice were not close friends; the two corresponded

¹³⁰ Ibid, 7.

¹³¹ Seymour, *Captain Nathan Hale, 1755-1776: Yale College 1773, Major John Palsgrave Wyllys, 1754-1790: Yale College 1773, Friends and Yale Classmates, Who Died in Their Country's Service, One Hanged As a Spy by the British, the Other Killed in an Indian Ambuscade on the Far Frontier: A Digressive History*, 18.

regularly while Nathan was at Yale.¹³² The marriage of Richard and Abigail did bring together two of their other children, however, as Sarah Adams would later marry John Hale.¹³³

The home in which Richard finally ended his life, which still stands today, unfortunately was not the home in which Nathan spent his childhood. In fact, he never would have seen the Georgian home that most would have considered a mansion upon completion. That certainly is not to say that Nathan would have been unfamiliar with the grounds. The barn, the fields, and the woods all would have been familiar to him. He would have been well-acquainted with the well, which still resides outside the home. He would have brought up water many times, not so much for drinking, but for cooking and for the crops as often Englishmen found their beverage of choice to be ale, while often also drinking abundant wine or cider. The well shows the Hale's knowledge of the land and how to best use it to their advantage. The well was carefully planned and designed, surrounded by a three-foot wall to keep young children from falling in, as well as planted trees nearby so that the water table would remain high, preventing the Hales from having to dig the well any deeper than necessary.¹³⁴

The Hale mansion that stands today, even as late as the early 20th century, was difficult to date for many historians and locals.¹³⁵ The dates conceived for the age of the home conflict with the only recorded date of real importance, which is located in the diary of Enoch Hale, who was a habitual recorder of the daily events and gives no reason to doubt his accuracy. He points to April 17, 1776 as the date construction began. The Hale home also presents a lesson in construction history. The romanticized notion of a single man or small family raising their barn together is not how New Englanders built their homes or barns. Often the whole community

¹³² Phelps, *Nathan Hale: The Life and Death of America's First Spy*, 14.

¹³³ Root, *Nathan Hale*, 29.

¹³⁴ Bishop, *Nathan Hale: The Life of a Colonial Freedom Fighter*, 8.

¹³⁵ Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 428.

participated, as was the case with the Hales, who hired masons, for example, to build their chimney and “joiners” to construct the clapboard siding. That is not to say the Hale family hands were not involved in the construction of their home. Enoch records on April 26, 1776 having to ride to Glastonbury for nails but that he was only able to attain ten. Surely disappointed, he recorded again on April 28, 1776 that he went to Windham, but again was disappointed to find no nails there either.¹³⁶

In colonial New England, the family ran the farm, unlike Virginia, which relied mostly on slave labor to make a profit and to grow food crops. The key difference in New England was that Puritans sought community where they could act out and monitor their neighbors’ faith, deeming slave labor less necessary than in the South, which sought large tracks of land for profit. Men, women, and their children, had a role to play in daily farm life. On the colonial farm, individual autonomy was not an option, since the agricultural system necessitated all family and community members working for the welfare of the whole.¹³⁷ Farm life in Connecticut proved to be of significant importance, not only to the Hale family for survival, but also to the cause of the American Revolution. W. Storrs Lee reported during the Revolution that; “And down the Thames from Norwich plied scores of small craft, low in the water from their heavy cargo. Sacks of wheat and dried peas from the farms of Mansfield, barrels of kiln-dried corn from Pomfret, tierces of ham from Coventry, casks of pickled pork and beef from Norwich...”¹³⁸

Despite the many children on the farm, seasons of ease would have been rare for the typical New England farm family, as all were expected to do their part in the daily life of a farm family. Little survives of the daily life and chores of the Hale family specifically, unfortunately.

¹³⁶ Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 467.

¹³⁷ Lisa Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man: The Domestic Life of Men in Colonial New England*, (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 1999), 1.

¹³⁸ Sarchuk, *The Early History of Coventry, Connecticut*, 4.

Based upon the conformity of Connecticut farm life, the Hale's daily routines can be reconstructed. The average Connecticut farm home had six children and work was expected from sun-up until sundown, for males and females alike. Connecticut farmers had to gather crops, thresh grain, hatchel, clear field of rocks and stumps, and produce a constant supply of wood for buildings and firewood for the long winters. The farms would also be self-sufficient in Connecticut. Livestock needed to be cared for daily and food preparation would have been an hours' long chore entrusted to the farm's women three times a day.¹³⁹

While the Hale children were expected to accomplish their daily chores and work hard, despite this there was still plenty of time for children to play. Nathan, for example, is remembered as an accomplished athlete, being remembered for his "broad jump" on The Green at Yale University, long before his time as a Revolutionary War hero. Besides his athletic prowess, Hale and his brothers, like most young men of the time, were fine shots with their rifles and Nathan is remembered as a fine swimmer.¹⁴⁰ Undoubtedly, these traits were honed as a young boy on the farm where the Hale boys would hunt, fish, or swim in their free time.¹⁴¹ Children on New England farms also had a desire for fashion and material possessions, much like twenty-first century children. Enoch Hale, Nathan's younger brother, wrote to him on May 10, 1774 to send a "pair of breaches," asking that they be purchased "with Noyes and get as good and fashionable as you can but not too costly: for it is for every day, therefore cheaper the better, and likewise trimmings."¹⁴²

The main chore of the Hale boys would have been to keep a constant stock of firewood to be used for both cooking and heating purposes. It is also very likely that the Hales would have

¹³⁹ Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut: A History*, 181.

¹⁴⁰ Root, *Nathan Hale*, 13.

¹⁴¹ Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, XXV.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, 17.

felled trees with the intent of making lumber, although the process of cutting the trunks into boards would have happened off-site after they brought the logs to the mill. During the winter season, mending fences would have been the boy's second most important job to gathering firewood.¹⁴³

Nathan's sisters, Elizabeth and Joanna, would have had different daily tasks from the boys, outside of gathering fruits, nuts, berries and dandelions. Instead of working to maintain the farm, the girls would have worked to maintaining the workers. Cleaning the home and helping with meal preparation was expected. The girls also would have aided the household by making candles and making clothing through the entire textile process.¹⁴⁴ The "kitchen garden" was also kept by the women in the house, which is likely the rock area on the side of current house that is just a little smaller than a modern football field.

The farm was where life occurred for Richards's family, as was the case for other colonial Connecticut families. It was their Puritan faith, however, which emanated into all aspects of life. The Hales were just one example of nearly every family in colonial Connecticut who demonstrated Puritan religious tradition. Education was just one trait of this tradition, as in the spirit of the *Old Deluder Satan Act*, Connecticut Puritans held learning in the highest esteem so that they could grow closer to God through a better knowledge of Him. Despite that Richard Hale was not college-educated himself, he came from a line of educated men and the Stronges were certainly educated. Hale saw that his children were educated and prepared to be leaders of society. In a time when higher class families sought to send one son to college, Hale sent Enoch,

¹⁴³ Biship, Nathan Hale: The Life of a Colonial Freedom Fighter, 7.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 8.

Nathan, and David all to Yale.¹⁴⁵ In his elder years, Hale was able to look upon his children with pride. They grew up to be heroes in the case of Nathan, and for his other children leaders and good Puritan citizens. In 1794, Hale even had a cenotaph erected in honor of Nathan, careful to include his title of Esquire and that he “received the first honors of Yale College Sept. 1773” even before the inscription of his sacrifice for his country.¹⁴⁶

Nathan and his siblings enjoyed tutelage on the farm. It was commonplace in New England households that once children graduated from infancy they required careful guidance to assure proper character development. It was at this point that the New England family would distinguish the roles of the mother and father as well as begin training boys to be men and girls to be women. Connecticut adopted the practice from Massachusetts that required parents and masters to see that their children received an education so that they could understand Puritan principles of religion, as well as the laws of the colony. Connecticut took the Massachusetts strictures further in the Code of 1650, mandating that families catechize their children and servants once a week.¹⁴⁷

Fathers had the responsibilities of directing all religious duties in the household, and ultimately were held responsible by the community for the religious upbringing of their children. Additionally, fathers taught their children secular truths, such as farming information that would one day be needed to support their family.¹⁴⁸ Secular truths and religious matters, it must be stressed, were not wholly separate. In 1778, Sheriff Ezekiel Williams of Wethersfield, Connecticut said bluntly, “Above all things a Religious Education is the most important.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Seymour, *Captain Nathan Hale, 1755-1776: Yale College 1773, Major John Palsgrave Wyllys, 1754-1790: Yale College 1773, Friends and Yale Classmates, Who Died in Their Country's Service, One Hanged As a Spy by the British, the Other Killed in an Indian Ambuscade on the Far Frontier: A Digressive History*, 19.

¹⁴⁶ Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 549.

¹⁴⁷ Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut: A History*, 142.

¹⁴⁸ Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 126.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 129.

Along with his training at home, Nathan and his siblings attended dame school, which was where colonial children in Connecticut learned basic spelling, writing, simple arithmetic, and the alphabet. In an era of expensive print and paper shortages, two books dominated children's education as they learned to read and write: the Bible and the *New England Primer*.¹⁵⁰ It was not, however, the high cost that drove colonists to use these two sources, but the content that they provided.

Richard Hale took his duties of educating his children seriously, more than the common father of his time. Hale believed in education, but he wanted the family name to prosper as well. He certainly led his family by example in this field of endeavor. Also, he was eminently qualified for the positions he attained. A survey of Hale's writings show his grasp of language and his ability to put pen to paper. In fact, with his use of consistent form and the eloquence in his writing, it could be argued, that Hale was the linguistic equal to the most known and celebrated scribes of his day. Hale's private library, although it paled in comparison to Jefferson's, showed the importance of knowledge to him and how he believed in the continuing evolution of one's knowledge, even outside of religious studies. The volumes belonging to Hales included a book of poetry and prose, one in which Hale practiced his penmanship on the front cover by signing his name and place of residence multiple times. In fact, Hale often marked his books "Richard Hale's book."¹⁵¹

Books, it must be remembered, were expensive and even though Hale was prosperous, he would not have spent his money on wall decorations. His intent was to read and study the content in these books, thus every volume he owned gives a glimpse into the nature of the man.

¹⁵⁰ Kathleen Tracy, *The Life and Times of Nathan Hale*, (Hockessin, Delaware: Mitchell Lane Publishers, 2007), 21.

¹⁵¹ References to Hale's book collection are from the Hale collection at Connecticut Landmarks, 59 South Prospect Street, Hartford, CT 06106.

Two other examples of the books that Hale owned are *Sermons to Young Persons* and *Elements of Geography; Containing a Concise and Comprehensive View of that Useful Science, as divided into 1. Astronomical 2. Physical, or Natural 3. Political Geography*.¹⁵²

Hale was a Puritan to his core. No subject was more important to him than that of his and his children's relationship with God. For this reason, Hale looked for guidance from authors, the church, and most importantly the Bible. Additionally, the Hale family was one of great academic strength with profound intellectual curiosity. Hale, like his son Nathan, had a great interest in general knowledge. As Nathan would eventually become a teacher, Richard was a teacher in his home. This passed to the family history as well. Surely, Richard was aware of how his family came to Massachusetts Bay. Likewise, he also was aware that he had a relative who had accused of being a witch. Seymour states that the Salem "great delusion," was "no doubt, a terrifying but fascinating topic in Deacon Hale's own household in Coventry."¹⁵³ This certainly was not a topic that the religious Hales would have bragged about as they likely still carried the shame that John Hale carried. More probably, the Hales told the story of the witch trials to warn of sins and to encourage godly living.

Once children in colonial Connecticut had learned the religious and secular duties expected from them, caring fathers (and ones with the financial means available) sought formal instruction. Richard Hale was no exception, as he sought out the formal tutelage of Dr. Joseph Huntington. Reverend Huntington was one of the most influential men in his children's lives, especially Nathan. Living just four miles from the Hale farm, also located on South Street in

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Seymour, *Captain Nathan Hale, 1755-1776: Yale College 1773, Major John Palsgrave Wyllys, 1754-1790: Yale College 1773, Friends and Yale Classmates, Who Died in Their Country's Service, One Hanged As a Spy by the British, the Other Killed in an Indian Ambuscade on the Far Frontier: A Digressive History*, 6.

Coventry, Dr. Huntington was Hale's pastor, serving at the First Congregational Church, as well as private teacher.

As was the case for all New England children, the church played a key role in the Hales' upbringing. Their father served as a deacon alongside his grandfather on his mother's side. The Hales grew up surrounded by all which Puritan Congregationalists sought to influence their children. One historian, Henry Phelps Johnston, even hinted that Nathan's birthplace was on the church grounds overlooking the Wampanoag lake.¹⁵⁴ Outside of home-bound education, the Hale boys, Enoch, Nathan, and David, had the opportunity to be tutored by Dr. Huntington upon Richard's desire to secure a first-rate education for his boys. Considered one of the "elite" of Coventry, Hale had a desire to see his children brought up gentlemen of the finest culture, and thus sought the tutelage of Dr. Huntington to train his boys to enter Yale. Nathan recognized the importance of Dr. Huntington in his life, and valued his correspondence and wisdom even after completing his formal training with him. In his diary, dated December 27, 1775, Nathan wrote that upon visiting home he visited Dr. Huntington, and in another letter wrote, "I always with respect remember Mr. Huntington and shall write to him if time permits."¹⁵⁵

As Dr. Huntington was of the utmost importance to Nathan's development, his case was not an anomaly across New England. Pastors were the most educated individuals and besides the immediate family, exerted the most influence on a child's life. What was perhaps an anomaly was the tremendous respect Nathan had for Dr. Huntington, a man who acted as his mentor. When Timothy Green, a proprietor of The Union School of New London, needed words of

¹⁵⁴ Johnston, *Nathan Hale, 1776: Biography and Memorials*, 13.

¹⁵⁵ Root, *Nathan Hale*, 118.

affirmation for Nathan to continue in his position as school teacher, he received a letter from Nathan and Dr. Huntington, whose words on Nathan's behalf saved his position.¹⁵⁶

The Hales had the opportunity to tutor with Dr. Huntington because of his family's status, as they were of good reputation and comparatively wealthy in Connecticut. Despite the egalitarian society of Puritan New England, they were still English, thus it was of little surprise that the "elites" of society continued to be trained as elites. The difference in New England, however, was that if one was not of the ruling class upward movement was possible.

Richard may have had one eye on the future, but he certainly had the other on the present. While it can be argued that his predecessors were content to blend into society, Richard possessed the ambition to improve his family's stake. It can be argued that from the time the Hale family came to the New World they were content in their status and in building a promising future. Hale marked a shift in that mentality, desiring prestige, where even the most accomplished in his bloodline desired peace and accomplishments cast upon Christ. Not content to be merely a resident, Richard desired to elevate the Hale name. Recent Nathan Hale biographer, M. William Phelps, summed up Hale as an "affluent deacon and farmer."¹⁵⁷ This perhaps best describes the dichotomy of Hale. He was affluent through ambition and his farming prestige, yet his faith guided him as he sought the best for his family.

In his personal life, Richard certainly gained the prestige he desired, attaining a large cattle business that resulted in personal wealth. He was an outstanding member and deacon of his church, a man trusted in the community for his sterling reputation and intelligence. Hale even held political office, serving sixteen terms in Connecticut's General Assembly, as well as a

¹⁵⁶ Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 7.

¹⁵⁷ M. William Phelps Phelps, *Nathan Hale: The Life and Death of America's First Spy*, (Lebanon: University Press of New England, 2008), 1.

justice of the peace, a local committeeman responsible for raising supplies for Washington's soldiers, a Church Society moderator, and founder of the village library.¹⁵⁸

Despite the wealth and prestige that Richard had acquired in his life, he certainly would not have been considered abundantly wealthy. It must be noted that money in the colonies was always in short supply, and even though Richard had much he did not have a significant account to his name. Nothing displayed this better than Nathan and Enoch's college experience, which Hale could not afford outright. At the time, Yale tuition was twelve shillings per year per pupil, which Richard did not have the necessary cash reserves to pay. Instead, Hale was required to secure bonds for each of his sons, an early type of student loan.¹⁵⁹

As in all Puritan households, as the father, Hale was the leader of all activities that occurred on his farm. It was said of him, "never a man worked so hard for both worlds as Deacon Hale."¹⁶⁰ Serving his church as a deacon, a town judge, and a few successive terms in the Connecticut Assembly, Richard was active in public service, instilling the value of an active public life into all of his children.

Hale's true value was seen in the home and in raising his children in Puritan faith. The Calvinistic tradition of hard work was not lost upon him. He was awake daily at four a. m. and expected the same ethic of his children. While at Yale, Nathan took his father's work ethic with him, carrying the motto, "A man never ought to lose a minute." The younger Hale carried the work ethic of his father through his short life, writing in his diary while in the army; "A man ought never lose a moment's time. If he put off a thing from one minute to the next, his

¹⁵⁸ Seymour, *Captain Nathan Hale, 1755-1776: Yale College 1773, Major John Palsgrave Wyllys, 1754-1790: Yale College 1773, Friends and Yale Classmates, Who Died in Their Country's Service, One Hanged As a Spy by the British, the Other Killed in an Indian Ambuscade on the Far Frontier: A Digressive History*, 4.

¹⁵⁹ Phelps, *Nathan Hale: The Life and Death of America's First Spy*, 7.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 11.

reluctance is but increased.”¹⁶¹ Richard ensured that the Sabbath was strictly observed in the Hale house, starting on Saturday evening, as was Puritan tradition, as “The evening and the morning were the first day.” The rest of Connecticut practiced this Sabbath tradition along with the Hales, with Hartford never having a store open on Saturday night until 1855.¹⁶²

Like his Puritan predecessors, Deacon Hale was posterity-driven. His children and grandchildren constituted the legacy that he left behind, and how they lived their lives (and how he reacted to their decisions) reveals much about Richard himself. The death of Nathan was especially hard on Hale. Of his death, Hale wrote that Nathan was “a child I set much by, but he is gone. I think the second trial I ever met with.”¹⁶³

To understand the enormity of this statement from a grieving father three important factors must be remembered, the first being that this letter was not written immediately after Nathan’s death, but is dated March 28th 1777. Hale learned of the death of his son from Enoch, who was informed of Nathan’s capture and hanging on October 16th 1776.¹⁶⁴ Hale’s statement, therefore, was considered and pondered upon for some time. Nathan, it seems, was truly the apple of Richard’s eye and the jewel of the Hale family. It also must be remembered that at this point Hale had already experienced great loss, namely that of his first wife, Elizabeth. This loss was not only that of a spouse, but also his helper in life, as at the time Hale had eight children as well as a successful farm to manage. Of course, Hale would later remarry, but the loss of Elizabeth cannot be understated regarding its effect on her husband.

¹⁶¹ Root, *Nathan Hale*, 54.

¹⁶² Earle, *The Sabbath in Puritan New England*, 256.

¹⁶³ “A Father’s Sadness,” *Nathan Hale: Yale 1773 On the 250th Anniversary of His Birth*, last modified 2009, accessed April 24, 2017, http://www.library.yale.edu/mssa/exhibits/hale/RevolutionaryWar_item08.html.

¹⁶⁴ Phelps, *Nathan Hale: The Life and Death of America’s First Spy*, 200.

Hale clearly writes “second.” The Hartford Courant published this line as “severest.” Seymour anticipates that Hale meant to write “sores trial” or potentially that he saw Nathan’s death as his second great affliction. Whatever the case the meaning behind “second” is lost but the author’s speculation is that Hale is referring to the death of his first wife.

Most likely, the dominant factor determining the enormity of Hale's statement was his attitude towards death at the time. It cannot be denied that man has always questioned the necessity for death, oftentimes questioning the "fairness" of the Almighty. However, in American history this was not necessarily the case until the mid-19th century. To the Hales and their Puritan co-religionists, Philippians 1:21 was truth, being that death "is gain" to be with Christ. Additionally, death was just a matter of life.

Hale acted with sternness and determination to see his children instructed in the matters of the Puritan faith. Despite his great desire to see the Hales elevated, his main concern, as always, was their souls. Laura Maria Ripley, pondering Joanna Hale's satin wedding slippers, disdainfully described Hale's sternness by saying the slippers, "whose high heels must have worn a carnal look to her puritanical father."¹⁶⁵ If Richard was upset about Joanna's slippers, he must have been livid when Elizabeth, his eldest daughter, wound up working in a tavern in town after her second husband could not find work in the ministry.¹⁶⁶ To Hale this would have been not only a personal disgrace for Elizabeth, but also a family scandal. To be certain, Hale was serious about his faith, modesty, and Puritan dictates and saw that his family lived by the same beliefs that he held sacred.

Upon the death of Deacon Hale in 1804, Nathan's brother, David, assumed the mantle of patriarch of the Hale clan. David had graduated Yale like Nathan, but unlike him sought a career in the ministry, but with frail health he was advised to decamp to an open-air life. Having learned from his father the traits that made a successful farm that would provide for a large family, as well as earn the respect of men who worked his land and cared for the animals, David proved to be a successful farmer. Of his animals it is said "he would never suffer a dumb animal

¹⁶⁵ Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 489.

¹⁶⁶ Phelps, *Nathan Hale: The Life and Death of America's First Spy*, 11.

to be abused.”¹⁶⁷ David also assumed the mantle of spiritual leader of the Hale household. He conducted devotional exercises and practiced the Saturday start of the Sabbath, inviting all farm hands to supper with the family or releasing them early enough to reach their home before sundown. Like his father before him, Hale’s upbringing led him to seek order and law in the house, continuing the Puritan heritage of generosity and charity passed down from generation to generation.

In a Puritan tradition after the death of John Hale in 1804, his wife bequeathed one thousand pounds (about \$4,000) to the First Congregation Church in what became known as the “Hale Donation.” This donation was used, as was the case with all formal scholastic training in New England, in order to train ministry.¹⁶⁸ Richard Hale may have been adequately aware of his position in society and actively sought to enhance his family status. In the end, though, his children remained when he was gone and the legacy from his fathers before him continued.

¹⁶⁷ Johnston, Nathan Hale, 1776: Biography and Memorials, 11.

¹⁶⁸ “A Brief History of the First Congregational Church of Coventry,” History, last modified, 2018, accessed April 25, 2018, <http://www.firstchurchcoventry.org/history/>.

Chapter 3: Nathan Hale

Colonial New Englanders were family and community oriented, with the former as the driving catalyst of life. This certainly does not mean that New Englanders did not help others in need. As all members of the family contributed to farm life, colonial Connecticut society dictated that members of the larger society contributed to its betterment. In fact, a strong Puritan virtue was to help the needy in the community. In Connecticut, this willingness to help was not solely the duty of the individual or the church; the government also played a key role in the uplifting of those who fell upon hard times. In 1750, Elijah Hammond of Coventry proposed that the state recompense James Penniman who had lost his house in a fire, as well as “two three-pound bills of the new tenour (Connecticut currency) of this Colony that were consumed in the same flames,” to which the Assembly resolved to pay the sum of twenty-one pounds of old tenour (Massachusetts Bay currency) “out of the public treasury of this Colony.”¹⁶⁹

Despite a lesser degree of the intermingling of church and state than in Massachusetts, Connecticut made no attempts to distinguish the two, making the case of James Penniman one that would not have been uncommon. In fact, the church activity acted in conjunction with the state and the state had direct power to push citizens to the Puritan church. In the Code of 1650 the General Assembly made this clear saying: “thee Civill Authority heere established hath both power and Libberty to see the peace, ordinances and rules of Christe bee observed in every Church according to his word.”¹⁷⁰

It was into this small part of the world and this type of structure that Nathan Hale was born. He had good parents who taught him well and provided for him. He was disciplined and

¹⁶⁹ Connecticut General Assembly. *The Public Records of the State of Connecticut from May, 1744, to November, 1750, Inclusive. Transcribed and Edited in Accordance with a Resolution of the General Assembly* (Hartford: Press of the Case, Lockwood & Brainard Company, 1876), 4.

¹⁷⁰ Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut: A History*, 113.

corrected, taught how one ought to live. He was also loved, and shown the virtue in giving to others in need. While in the army, Nathan wrote to his brother, Enoch, saying; “This will probably find you in Coventry; if so, remember me to all my friends, particularly belonging to the family.”¹⁷¹

Of Hale’s physical appearance there are three reliable primary accounts of which are reliable, none of which portray him as a child. The first, which least reliable, is also the most curious, is a sketch of Hale hidden on an old pine door located in his father’s house. The likeness was only brought to light in 1914 after George Dudley Seymour scrapped away three layers of paint, with the aid of Hue Mazelet Luquins, a New Haven portrait painter, to find Hale’s silhouette.¹⁷²

The silhouette is the only known portrait of Hale, but without Seymour’s adoration of Hale it is likely that this drawing never would have come to light. Seymour was aware of the existence of a letter which was dated March 15, 1856 by Hale’s niece, Rebeckah, who was seventy-six years old at the writing. Part of the letter reads:

“...The portrait of Capt. Nathan Hale on the chamber door, was merely a profile on the inner side of the only door opening into the north chamber, - near the middle of the upper pair of panels, extending partly on each panel, about the height of a man standing. It was simply a head showing the front features of the face in profile, drawn about the size of life as though by means of a shadow on the door from a distant light...”¹⁷³

In Seymour’s haste to find the portrait, he neglected to attain permission to visit the Hale mansion, as at the time it was not in his possession. Trespassing and vandalism certainly did not

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 7.

¹⁷² Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 416.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 421.

stop him, and in fact he even lit a “fine fire” in the bedroom in question. Then, upon finding the trace he removed the door from its hinges and brought it home with him for close inspection.¹⁷⁴

Upon full revelation of Seymour’s hero, which was done in the company of Bela Pratt who proposed the Hale statue on Yale’s campus, Seymour dejectedly stated, “Don’t you see that the nose is too small for the size of the head? Bela, that is what troubles me. I am a broken-hearted man. The nose is certainly too small for the nose of a hero.” Pratt laughed and assured Seymour, “If you were an artist you would understand the reason for that. It is clear to me that as the drawing of the shadow progressed, Hale became so curious that he turned his head more and more toward the door, which brought his temple bone into prominence and reduced the size of his nose. Any artist could see that.”¹⁷⁵

The remaining two accounts of Hale’s appearance have much more accuracy than the outline, which cannot be said with certainty if it is even of Hale. If it is, the shadow certainly enlarged and shrunk his features. The first account is a description by Lieutenant Elisha Bostwick:

I was with him in the same Regt. both at Boston & New York & until the day of his tragical death; & although of inferior grade in office was always in the habits of friendship & intimacy with him: & my remembrance of his person, manners & character is so perfect that I feel inclined to make some remarks upon them: for I can now in imagination see his person & hear his voice – his person I should say was a little above the common stature in height, his shoulders of a moderate breadth, his limbs straight & very plumb: regular features – very fair skin – blue eyes – flaxen or very light hair which was always kept short – his eyebrows a shade darker than his hair & his voice rather sharp or piercing – his bodily agility was remarkable...his mental powers seemed to be above the common sort – his mind of a sedate and sober cast. & he was undoubtedly Pious; for it was remarked that when any of the soldiers of his company were sick he always visited them & usually prayed for & with them in their sickness.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 417.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 419-420.

¹⁷⁶ Seymour, *Captain Nathan Hale, 1755-1776: Yale College 1773, Major John Palsgrave Wyllys, 1754-1790: Yale College 1773, Friends and Yale Classmates, Who Died in Their Country's Service, One Hanged As a Spy by the British, the Other Killed in an Indian Ambuscade on the Far Frontier: A Digressive History*, 29-31.

The second account is of his boyhood friend and fellow soldier, possibly the last friendly combatant Hale encountered, Asher Wright. Wright's description was given at eighty-two years of age, still clearly distraught by Hale's death and described in his time as "shattered in intellect by the tragedy of Hale's death."¹⁷⁷ He went on to testify:

He had on a frock, when I last saw him, made of white linen, & fringed, such as officers used to wear. He was too good looking to go so. He could not deceive. Some scrubby fellows ought to have gone. He had marks on his forehead, so that anybody would know him who had ever seen him, having had powder flashed in his face. He had a large hair mole on his neck just where the knot come. In his boyhood, his playmates sometimes twitted him about it, telling him he would be hanged.¹⁷⁸

What is glaringly missing from the list of Hale likenesses is the many statues that exist of him. The reason for this is simple: they are not in fact of Hale. The town green in Coventry, for example, erected a bronze statue to celebrate the town's 300th anniversary and used a model to depict him in a dignified pose. All Hale statues, in fact, are artist renderings.¹⁷⁹

The purpose of colleges in colonial New England is often misunderstood and are believed to have been established primarily to train ministers. While this is largely true, the true mission of colleges, Yale included, was to train leaders. In Puritan New England, all men were expected to be ministers of a kind according to their own ability. All were expected to raise their children in Puritan ideals, such as Richard did, and were expected to live godly lives worthy of the Christian title, which the Hales did. College was meant to separate those who had already accomplished these feats from those who would lead a Christian society, whether that be in ministry or in public service.¹⁸⁰ Yale, while preparing men for leadership was training its

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 31

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 32

¹⁷⁹ Bishop, *Nathan Hale: The Live of a Colonel Freedom Fighter*, 100.

¹⁸⁰ Taylor, *Colonial Connecticut: A History*, 149.

students to be better Christians through their services, devotions, and studies sought to accomplish this mission, and if Nathan's life is evidence, they accomplished their goal.

It was on a September day in 1769, at the age of fourteen Nathan Hale and his older brother Enoch saddled their horses at the family farm and said goodbye to their family. Having graduated from the tutelage of Dr. Huntington the Hale brothers began the two-day horse ride, from their Coventry home to New Haven, Connecticut to attend Yale. Undoubtedly comfortable on horseback, the Hale boys likely spent the approximately sixty miles in excited conversation about the awaiting opportunity while suppressing emotions about leaving home for the first time. In 1769, Yale consisted of just two buildings, the college and the chapel.

The years that Nathan spent at college created a great amount of stress for Richard Hale over the condition of his boys. Hale would often open his letters to his children by assuring them that the family was well by "Divine Goodness." Richard, though, was not entirely pleased with Nathan as he entered Yale, as he desired for him to study for the ministry. Nathan had other plans for his life, seeing the ministry as too sacred for him and directed his studies towards the law.¹⁸¹ As a good Puritan patriarch, Richard would write to Nathan and Enoch compelling them to "carefully mind your studies that your time be not lost and that you will mind all the orders of College with care." Richard would also encourage his boys to not forget their devotions, attend chapel, and "shun all vice, especially card-playing."¹⁸² Perhaps the elder Hale had received word of the "vice" that a freshman Timothy Dwight, of the graduating class of 1769, had fallen into. According to Reverend Anson Phelps Stokes, Dwight was caught card playing. Fortunately for

¹⁸¹ Bishop, *Nathan Hale: The Life of a Colonia Freedom Fighter*, 21.

¹⁸² Johnston, *Nathan Hale, 1776: Biography and Memorials*, 25.

Dwight and future generations of Yale students, Dwight was corrected and redeemed by his tutor, Stephen Mix Mitchell.¹⁸³

Staunch Richard would not allow his boys to attend an institution less than favorable to Puritan traditions and the religious fervor on campus must have eased his stress. Scripture was frequently read publicly, the Sabbath was strictly observed, and regular devotion services were required.¹⁸⁴

Despite his keen interest in women and athletic prowess in college Nathan would not have disappointed his father. As in everything he turned his hand to the trait of doing all things as well as possible and engrossing himself in his task was the attitude that Nathan displayed in college. Nathan's days would start with the college bell ringing for prayers at 4:30 am in the summer and 5:30 am in the winter, followed shortly thereafter by mandatory chapel.¹⁸⁵ He was a good student, and was involved in many groups on campus, rarely missing gatherings of Hale's many extracurricular scholastic activities.

Yale would have been an outlet for Nathan to indulge his bibliophile interests as well as cultivate his expanding curiosity. Hale, despite his many advantages as Richard's son and Huntington's pupil, undoubtedly never saw a city like New Haven. Most likely the largest town he saw prior to college was Willimantic, Connecticut while traveling with his father to buy supplies. Windham County, which encompasses Willimantic, had a population of 3,528 while New Haven had 8,295 people congregated just around Yale's campus in 1774.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 458.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 22.

¹⁸⁵ Root, *Nathan Hale*, 14.

¹⁸⁶ "Connecticut Population by Town 1756-1820," Connecticut: Department of Economic and Community Development, last modified 2002-2014, accessed October 23, 2017, <http://www.ct.gov/ecd/cwp/view.asp?a=1106&q=250670>.

Besides a large population to which Hale was unaccustomed, New Haven offered many new experiences. By the colonial standards of the day, New Haven was a very modern city. The roads were cobblestone, compared to the compacted earth of Coventry, and whereas Coventry included many fine farms, New Haven functioned as a significant port engaged with commerce with Europe and was thus situated to be at the cutting edge of European style. Hale would have seen men with wigs and some without, and even some with ties in their wigs. The better off in town even wore fine jackets, silk shoes, and silver buckles. This stood in sharp contrast to the homespun clothes in which the Hale boys arrived. New Haven also opened Hale's eyes to a considerable tavern scene, as well as coffee houses that certainly sported the readily available commodities of furniture, china dishes, paintings, and many volumes of books.¹⁸⁷ New Haven also boasted a variety of churches, including two Congregationalist churches and an Episcopal church just a short walk away from the Congregationalist-run college.¹⁸⁸

Nathan took to his new city and flourished, enjoying city life compared to that of the farm. Hale was, after all, extremely comfortable around people and the spotlight always shone on him, which he did not avoid. His athletic prowess, for example, made him a campus hero long before he became a national hero. Generations of students after Hale celebrated, but could not equal, his "broad jump," which is said to have taken place on "The Green." So impressive was Hale's jump that for many years the spot was distinguished with a marker in New Haven. Even when his memory was slipping into obscurity after his death "Hale's jump" was still remembered on campus.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Bishop, *Nathan Hale: The Life of a Colonial Freedom Fighter*, 18-19.

¹⁸⁸ Phelps, *Nathan Hale: The Life and Death of America's First Spy*, 7.

¹⁸⁹ Root, *Nathan Hale*, 12.

Today Yale's Sterling Memorial Library houses a section named for the Linonian Society (also called Linonia society), a secret student fraternity on campus founded in 1753 "for the promotion of Friendship and social intercourse and for the advancement of literature."¹⁹⁰ For Nathan and Enoch their freshman year was very quiet. Almost no record remains of their first year, in fact. The Hale boys, however, began to make a name on campus when Enoch was elected to the Linonian society on November 7, 1771, followed by Nathan on November 20, 1771. Just two weeks after becoming a member, Nathan was elected scribe, and as Seymour states was "from that time forward until after the fraternity's Anniversary celebration, April 15, 1773, Nathan was, it is not too much too say, the outstanding figure in the fraternity."¹⁹¹ Seymour's supposition is not at all wrong, after all Nathan organized, or possibly even founded the Linonia Library and at various times during his tenure held all of the offices of the fraternity.¹⁹²

The Linonia Minutes have several meaningful connections to Hale. First, many of the minutes were written by Hale himself. In addition, the minutes show what was debated in the meetings, the stances that Hale took, and the great debating ability of the young intellectual.¹⁹³ It was here that Hale would perfect his public speaking abilities, once arguing that "the best Historians inform us...she retired into Afric [sic], and built Carthage, an 142 years, after the Building of Solomon's Temple, which was 289 Years after the Destruction of Troy...So that we must pay no regards to Virgils making of her Cotemporary [sic] with Aeneus."¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 108.

¹⁹¹ Seymour, *Captain Nathan Hale, 1755-1776: Yale College 1773, Major John Palsgrave Wyllys, 1754-1790: Yale College 1773, Friends and Yale Classmates, Who Died in Their Country's Service, One Hanged As a Spy by the British, the Other Killed in an Indian Ambuscade on the Far Frontier: A Digressive History*, 20.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, 20-21.

¹⁹³ Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 108.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 128.

Of Hale's many college debates the one that is predominantly important to modern readers is the one given on the day of his commencement when he debated "Whether the Education of Daughters be not without any just reason, more neglected than that of Sons?" Unfortunately, no record of the debate remains, but Seymour writes: "As for Hale, we can't help wishing we had a synopsis of his talk, which, as is asserted by tradition and as we have no doubt, favored the education of the daughters. It will be observed that many of the speakers were of the Linonia Brotherhood."¹⁹⁵ No one can determine the position Hale took in the debate; however, a reasonable assumption is that Hale's personal preference was that women deserved all the educational rights that were bestowed upon men. It is easy to see the fostering of these beliefs on Richard's farm with his sisters, but the most direct evidence is the young ladies Hale taught in the early mornings before his all-boys classes arrived for their day's lessons while he was a school teacher.

Upon graduation from Yale, the eighteen-year-old Hale took the post as a school teacher in the village of Moodus, part of East Haddam, Connecticut. Moodus was a town of wealth and business ventures, established on trade in 1662 when the land was purchased for thirty coats from four Native American kings by a group of twenty-eight men from around Hartford. As time passed Moodus would prove to be prosperous, with its proximity to Long Island and its fortunate location near the Connecticut River.¹⁹⁶

For Hale, Moodus consisted of days in his one-room school house, which served the town from 1750 to 1799. He had thirty-three pupils, aged six through eighteen, both males and females. School days were work for his students, with Hale bringing the vigor to the classroom that was learned from many long days on his father's farm, teaching from seven in the morning

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 155.

¹⁹⁶ Phelps, *Nathan Hale: The Life and Death of America's First Spy*, 34.

until nine in the evening with only an hour off for lunch.¹⁹⁷ According to the testimony of Hannah Pierson who knew Hale during his time in East Haddam “he (Hale) was happy, faithful and successful in his office of teacher. Everybody loved him. He was so sprightly, intelligent, and kind, and so handsome!”¹⁹⁸

Unfortunately for Hale, Moodus was in its infancy, and proved to have little to stimulate his intellect or appeal to his social instincts. Despite Hale’s good nature, for him East Haddam quickly turned to a place perceived as “inaccessible, either by friends, acquaintance or letters.”¹⁹⁹ To Hale, Moodus was the country and he yearned for the city and the life he left in college with its invigorating interaction. Desperate for a more robust life, he turned to his tutor and mentor, Dr. Huntington, seeking advice and requesting him to use his connections to find a new position.²⁰⁰ Fortunately for Hale, Huntington had connections in the port town of New London, namely Timothy Green. Thus, after only five short months, Hale left his post.

On December 21, 1773, Green wrote to Hale stating that he had:

Shewed Mr. Huntington’s Letter and the Sample of your writing enclosed in it, to several of the Proprietors of the School in this Town; who have desired me to inform you that there is a Probability of their agreeing [sic] with you to keep the School; and for that Reason desire that you would not engage yourself elsewhere till you hear further from them.

Two days later, Green again wrote to Hale of an opportunity that could be available in three months’ time in Norwich, Connecticut, but urged him to come to New London as “it might be to your advantage.”²⁰¹ Hale’s intelligence and persona as well as Green’s influence won him the position, extended in a February 4, 1774 letter from Timothy Green which reads in full:

¹⁹⁷ The Connecticut Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, “Nathan Hale Schoolhouse in East Haddam,” last modified July 14, 2009, accessed November 15, 2017, <http://www.connecticutsar.org/sites/2009/07/nathan-hale-schoolhouse-in-east-haddam.html>.

¹⁹⁸ Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 157.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 15.

²⁰⁰ Phelps, *Nathan Hale: The Life and Death of America’s First Spy*, 37.

²⁰¹ Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 7.

Sr.

Since my last to you, the Proprietors of the New School House in this Town have had a meeting, and agreed that you shou'd take the School for one Quarter, at the Rate of 200 Dollars per Ann. to be paid at the End of the Q.tr of which I am desired to acquaint you- Am not able to inform you when Mr. Tracy's Quarter will expire, but this I will do when I'm acquainted by a Line from you wheter we may depend on your takin gthe School, which you will please to write me pr. first Oppo-

It is the desire of the Proprietors that you wou'd come down two or three Days before Mr. Tracy's Quarter expires that they may be certain of the School's being immediately supplied with a Master-In which Case it is agreed that your Wages shall commence from the Time of your arriving here.

I am Sr,

Your mo Hble Servt.

Timo Green²⁰²

With the opportunity to move back to a port city and start anew in New London, Hale was bristling with excitement. The town also anticipated his arrival, hoping for a long-term instructor of the Classics, theology, Greek, Hebrew, and Latin for their children. The school house was so new upon Hale's arrival that it was not yet officially recognized by the Connecticut General Assembly and would not be until October 1774. Nathan had found his school home in a thriving city on State Street with large maple trees over hanging the freshly painted (red) school house set in Colonial style.²⁰³ When not in the classroom he was full of life. According to Colonel Samuel Green, Hale was "exceedingly active-would jump from the bottom of the one hogshhead up and down into a second and from the second up and down into a third like a cat-used to perform this feat often-would put his hand on a fence high as his head, and jump over it-a vigorous, robust, healthy man-form symmetrical-social-sprightly-steady."²⁰⁴

The nature of the young Hale in the classroom would be lost to history but for the work of biographer I. W. Stuart, who in the 1840's had the privilege of interviewing Colonel Samuel Green. Green, nearly three quarters of a century prior, had been a student under Hale when he

²⁰² Ibid, 14.

²⁰³ Phelps, *Nathan Hale: The Life and Death of America's First Spy*, 43.

²⁰⁴ Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 158.

attended the Union School in New London while Hale was the schoolmaster. As Green's recorded notes are few and important in the sketch of Hale all are included below as they appear in *Captain Nathan Hale, Major John Palsgrave Wyllys: A Digressive History*, by George Dudley Seymour, which had never before been printed:

“Testimony of Col. Samuel Green Respecting
Nathan Hale-Given to me [Isaac W. Stuart] ; and by me taken down in the
Historical Hall. January, 1847.

“Went to school to Capt. Hale at a school in N. London, called the Union School-
so called because about twenty gentlemen united & built a fine school house, to
accommodate thirty or forty scholars. About thirty went to Hale-a select school-

“Was there when Hale left for the army-Hale a man peculiarly engaging in his
manners-scholars old & young exceedingly attached to him-respected highly by all his
acquaintance-fine moral character-

As is the case with the whole of Green's testimony, the initial impression that he gives of Hale verifies the story that has been passed down by tradition. He acknowledges that Hale was a gentleman, and extremely well liked by all. Moreover, Green speaks of the morals by which Hale lived. No historian has ever questioned Hale in this facet. While a case could be made that war made even the strongest of Puritans question their faith, Hale's morals and how he carried himself never was.

“Was exceedingly active-would jump from the bottom of one hogshead up and
down into a second and from the second up and down into a third like a cat-used to
perform this feat often-would put his hand on a fence high as his head, and jump over it-a
vigorous, robust, healthy man-form symmetrical-social, sprightly-steady-

No account of any length exists of Hale's life that does not mention his athleticism. Perhaps this trait could have served him well as a spy, but unfortunately his good mannered nature and lack of training were bigger deterrents than his physical strength.

“In nature & education every way equal-about my height-face full of intelligence
& benevolence-manners mild and genteel-a face & appearance that would strike anyone
anywhere-face indicative of good sense & good feeling-warm & ardent-captivating to all
who saw him-

“Taught the classics & English-the school owned by the first gentlemen in the city-recommended by the faculty of Yale College probably-children all loved him for his tact and amiability-

“Went first from New London to see his parents-then to Cambridge-had been in the school about a year before he left-wonderful control over boys-without severity-

“The report of the day was that he was hung up like a beast by his heels & had his throat cut-was betrayed, twas said by a near relative of his in the British army. His fate made an indelible impression upon deponent, as upon all the boys of his school-deponent can never think of an Englishman with any complacency, from the impression the fate of Hale, and the spectacles he saw at Fort Groton, made upon his mind-

“Everybody that knew Hale was attached to him- ‘that’s the fact.’”²⁰⁵

Green’s account, while nearly three quarters of a century after he sat in the classroom, does much to confirm what is already surmised about Hale. Also, it confirms that Hale was a man many looked up to.

Fate, or as the Hales would have said, Providence intervened while Hale was working in his chosen profession. The political climate was tense. Following the French and Indian War, Britain had taxed the colonies to pay off debts and to further their defenses. The Quartering Act and the Boston Massacre outraged Massachusetts and alarmed other colonies. In fact, during Hale’s first spring in New London, Thomas Gage set sail to Boston while Samuel Adams began organizing the Sons of Liberty. New London, to Nathan’s pleasure, was not idle, and seeing a need for service, and with the exuberance of youth, Hale enlisted to fight for the patriot cause.

During his time in the Continental Army, it may be fair to say that Hale asked himself many of the same questions that young soldiers have been asking themselves since the beginning of war: Where is God or is He on our side? Much of Hale’s war diary lacks the expected references to God from a Puritan of traditional upbringing. What is not surprising is the contents, which included discussion of local livestock butchered for meals, quarrels within the

²⁰⁵ Seymour, *Captain Nathan Hale, 1755-1776: Yale College 1773, Major John Palsgrave Wyllys, 1754-1790: Yale College 1773, Friends and Yale Classmates, Who Died in Their Country's Service, One Hanged As a Spy by the British, the Other Killed in an Indian Ambuscade on the Far Frontier: A Digressive History*, xv-xvii.

ranks, supplies, and even the weather. What is curious, however, is when Hale departs from his normal pattern of listing each day of the week followed by the date. He only does this for Sundays, and labels them “Sabbath Day.” Only on occasion did Hale take this approach, and when he did he always begins by describing the day’s church services, followed by the day’s minutiae.

Nobody can know for certain the intent behind Hale’s alteration, but the lack of frequent entries mentioning his faith seem to indicate that Nathan was asking himself the traditional questions of a soldier. His entry on “Sabbath Day 19th” of November 1775 seems to indicate this:

Mr. Bird pr. one Service only beginning after 12 O’C. Text Ester 8th. 6. For how can I indure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I indure to see the destruction of my kindred? The discourse very good, the same as preach’d to Gen Wooster, his Officers and Soldiers at New Haven and which was again preach’d at Cambridge a Sabbath or two ago. – Now preach as a farewell discourse.²⁰⁶

This is not the only indication that Hale had religious questions during his time in the army. On one occasion his diary reads “Evening prayers omitted for Wrestling.” The next day’s entry reads, “Wednesday – no letters.”²⁰⁷ It can be no doubt from the reading of Hale’s diary that he was questioning, but also felt homesick and alone in a world that had saw him grow up within a tight knit community with the moral support of a town and a close family living a hard working, farm life. When Hale entered the army as a young man, familiarity was removed, and he was forced to answer life’s questions utilizing his own intellect and experiences.

Hale may have had creeping doubts that even the most ardent of battle-hardened soldiers must undoubtedly entertain, but in the end, he was a Christian in the Puritan tradition.

Lieutenant Elisha Bostwick, who stated that Hale was “undoubtedly Pious” tells that:

²⁰⁶ Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 190.

²⁰⁷ Johnston, *Nathan Hale, 1776: Biography and Memorials*, 244.

One day he accidentally came across some his men in a bye place playing cards – he spoke – what are you doing – this won't do, - give me your cards, they did so & he chopd [sic] them to pieces, & it was done in such a manner that the men were rather pleased than otherwise – his activity on all occasions was wonderful – he would make a pen the quickest. & the best of any man.²⁰⁸

General William Hull was a friend of Nathan Hale. hailing from Derby, Connecticut and was just one class ahead of Hale at Yale. He also appears in Hale's diary and army accounts.

Both participated in the siege of Boston and both were deployed to New York together. Of Hale, Hull lamented “there was no young man who gave fairer promise of an enlightened and devoted service to his country, than this my friend and companion in arms.”²⁰⁹

While Washington was in desperate need of information, Hale had been recently transferred to the command of Colonel Thomas Knowlton. This made him astutely aware of the need for intelligence. After Hale volunteered to become a spy for Washington, Hull provides a glimpse into Hale's mind, emotions, and sense of duty;

After his interview with Colonel Knowlton, he repaired to my quarters, and informed me what had passed. He remarked, ‘That he thought he owed to his country the accomplishment of an object so important, and so much desired by the Commander of her armies, and he knew of no other mode of obtaining the information, that assuming a disguise and passing into the enemy's camp.’ He asked my candid opinion. I replied, that it was a serious action which involved serious consequences, and the propriety of it was doubtful; and though he viewed the business of a spy as a duty, yet, he could not officially be required to perform it...his nature was too frank and open for deceit and disguise, and he was incapable of acting a part equally foreign to his feelings and habits...(Hull to Hale attempting to convince him not to take the position of spy) But who respects the character of a spy, assuming the garb of friendship but to betray? The very death assigned him is expressive of the estimation in which he is held. As soldiers, let us do our duty in the field...and not stain our honor by the sacrifice of integrity....He replied, ‘I am fully sensible of the consequences of discovery and capture in such a situation. But for a year I have been attached to the army, and have not rendered any material service, while receiving a compensation, for which I make no return. Yet, I am not influenced by the expectation of promotion or pecuniary reward; I wish to be useful, and every kind of service, necessary to the public good, becomes honorable by being

²⁰⁸ Seymour, *Captain Nathan Hale, 1755-1776: Yale College 1773, Major John Palsgrave Wyllys, 1754-1790: Yale College 1773, Friends and Yale Classmates, Who Died in Their Country's Service, One Hanged As a Spy by the British, the Other Killed in an Indian Ambuscade on the Far Frontier: A Digressive History*, 30.

²⁰⁹ Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 307-308.

necessary. If the exigencies of my country demand a peculiar service, its claims to perform that service are imperious.²¹⁰

Despite there being great evidence of Hale's movements in the army, very few facts survive regarding his capture. Much of the Hale story that is remembered from this point until his death has been inferred rather than confirmed. Two former professional intelligence officers, Major General E. R. Thompson and G.J.A. O'Toole have concluded that there are only three pieces of "hard intelligence" consisting of three statements by British soldiers.

1. An orderly book reported that Hale was "apprehended last night," i.e., Sept. 21, confessed and was hanged on the 22nd at 11am.
2. An entry in the diary of a British officer, Lt. Frederick Mackenzie, confirmed the above facts and added the significant information that Hale was captured on Long Island, which has been confirmed by Lafayette.
3. A diary entry by Captain William Bamford of the 40th Regiment of Foot, which added more information: Hale "was taken by Major Rogers."²¹¹

For his part, Seymour acknowledges the fact that Hale was playing the role of a schoolmaster and that he took his college diploma with him on his mission to further his cover. Seymour also casts doubts upon other theories of his capture, specifically that he mistook an enemy ship for a friendly. To his credit, Seymour does not attempt to speculate what occurred that led to his capture, only that it is "reasonably certain that (Major Robert) Rogers or his men apprehended Hale somewhere in this locality (near Flushing) on the young spy's way out from New York with information and maps for General Washington."²¹² Of Hale's time on Long Island Seymour writes:

Nothing of Hale's roustabouting in the British lines is known, but the preponderance of available evidence indicates that, after accomplishing his mission, he crossed over from Long Island to New York, where, on September 21st, within a short distance of his own picket

²¹⁰ Ibid, 308-309.

²¹¹ James Hutson, "Nathan Hale Revisited: A Tory's Account of the Arrest of the First American Spy," Library of Congress, accessed December 5, 2017, <https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/0307-8/hale.html>.

²¹² Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 544.

lines, he was apprehended as a spy and taken before General Howe, whose headquarters were then in the Beekman Mansion-Always thereafter associated with Hale's fate.²¹³

Seymour drew upon the best evidence he had to come to his conclusion, for he was unaware of Consider Tiffany's account, which came to light when it was donated to the Library of Congress in 2000. Tiffany was a storekeeper in Barkhamsted, Connecticut, as well as a fierce Loyalist. Tiffany's account of Hale reads:

[Rogers] detected several American officers, that were sent to Long Island as spies, especially Captain Hale, who was improved in disguise, to find whether the Long Island inhabitants were friends to America or not. Colonel Rogers having for some days, observed Captain Hale, and suspected that he was an enemy in disguise; and to convince himself, Rogers thought of trying the same method, he quickly altered his own habit, with which he Made Capt Hale a visit at his quarters, where the Colonel fell into some discourse concerning the war, intimating the trouble of his mind, in his being detained on an island, where the inhabitants sided with the Britains against the American Colonies, intimating withal, that he himself was upon the business of spying out the inclination of the people and motion of the British troops. This intrigue, not being suspected by the Capt, made him believe that he had found a good friend, and one that could be trusted with the secrecy of the business he was engaged in; and after the Colonel's drinking a health to the Congress: informs Rogers of the business and intent. The Colonel, finding out the truth of the matter, invited Captain Hale to dine with him the next day at his quarters, unto which he agreed. The time being come, Capt Hale repaired to the place agreed on, where he met his pretended friend, with three or four men of the same stamp, and after being refreshed, began the same conversation as hath been already mentioned. But in the height of their conversation, a company of soldiers surrounded the house, and by orders from the commander, seized Capt Hale in an instant. But denying his name, and the business he came upon, he was ordered to New York. But before he was carried far, several persons knew him and called him by name; upon this he was hanged as a spy, some say, without being brought before a court martial.²¹⁴

Despite the plausibility of Tiffany's account, it must also be noted that this is the only account of its kind. No others can substantiate all of his details. It is, however, the only detailed account that remains of Hale's capture outside of conjecture. What is known about Hale's capture is that in all probability he was betrayed. Evidence indicates that Nathan's cousin,

²¹³ Seymour, *Captain Nathan Hale, 1755-1776: Yale College 1773, Major John Palsgrave Wyllys, 1754-1790: Yale College 1773, Friends and Yale Classmates, Who Died in Their Country's Service, One Hanged As a Spy by the British, the Other Killed in an Indian Ambuscade on the Far Frontier: A Digressive History*, 26.

²¹⁴ James Hutson, "Nathan Hale Revisited: A Tory's Account of the Arrest of the First American Spy."

Samuel Hale of New Hampshire was the betrayer. Samuel Hale was nine years older than Nathan, and undoubtedly they had met previously. Samuel opposed the revolutionary movement and became a fierce Loyalist in his native Portsmouth, New Hampshire. In 1776, Hale marched with Howe to New York and became Deputy Commissary of Prisoners. Before the war had ended, the *Essex Journal* printed that he had betrayed his cousin to his death. Hale's response was to flee to England without ever returning for his wife and son.²¹⁵ Hale did write a response to the *Essex Journal* on September 10, 1777 to his wife after fleeing to England. What he does not do in this letter is refute the claim that he had betrayed Nathan. He addressed the topic by blaming the publication, stating that "attachment to the old Constitution of my country is my only crime with them-for which I have still the disposition of a primitive martyr."²¹⁶ For his part, Richard Hale believed that his son was betrayed by his brother's son. Writing to the elder Samuel, Hale wrote that:

You have doubtless seen the Newbery Port paper that gives the account of the conduct of our kinsman Samuel Hale toward him in York as to our kinsman being here in his way to York it is a mistake but as to his conduct toward my son at York Mr. Cleveland of Cape Ann first reported it...A Child I sought much by but he is gone...²¹⁷

Perhaps Seymour speculated correctly that accusing Samuel of betraying Nathan is too harsh an accusation, choosing rather to label him as the identifying party. Seymour's reasoning is as follows:

As Deputy Commissary of Prisoners under Sir William Howe, Samuel Hale must have been well known in the British army in and about New York, and when a young man carrying a diploma in the name of Nathan Hale was apprehended and brought in, it is altogether likely that Samuel Hale was sent for and confronted with the prisoner. If that was the case, it must be admitted that Samuel was in a tight place and that he can hardly be said to have betrayed Nathan in the usual sense of the word.²¹⁸

²¹⁵ Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 304.

²¹⁶ *Ibid*, 305.

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, 449.

²¹⁸ *Ibid*, 304-305.

While Seymour's theory is plausible, it is also likely that Samuel never saw Nathan before his death. There is, in fact, no reference of his being at the scene, and of greater importance it is less than likely that he was stationed with Howe at the time. Due to Nathan's quick demise after capture, it is equally less than likely that Samuel would have been able to be summoned in time before Howe's verdict could be delivered. Despite the potential of Seymour's theory being correct, it is equally plausible that, because of Hale's name recognition, and possibly that his cousin had previously accused him of being a patriot spy prior to his capture, this alignment of circumstances ultimately led to a speedy capture and execution of Nathan. However, it must also be noted that Samuel still could have acted as the identifying party, which would help substantiate Tiffany's story that several knew Hale and called him by name.

Upon capture, Hale was brought before General Howe. He had upon his person sketches and other valuable military information that he had gathered. In light of this foreboding evidence, Hale declared his name, rank, and objective coming within the British lines. Thus, with his declaration of being a spy, Howe, without form of a trial, gave orders for his execution the next morning.²¹⁹ General Hull's account of Hale's last hours tells us that "on the approach of death asked for a clergyman to attend him. It was refused. He then requested a Bible; that too was refused by his inhumane jailer."²²⁰ Hale was able to write a few letters, but they too were destroyed so "that the rebels should not know that they had a man in their army who would die with so much firmness."²²¹ Much speculation revolves around the addresses of Hale's last letters, among which are his mother (who was deceased), his stepmother, and a lover. Enoch Hale

²¹⁹ Ibid, xxxi.

²²⁰ Ibid, 310.

²²¹ Seymour, *Captain Nathan Hale, 1755-1776: Yale College 1773, Major John Palsgrave Wyllis, 1754-1790: Yale College 1773, Friends and Yale Classmates, Who Died in Their Country's Service, One Hanged As a Spy by the British, the Other Killed in an Indian Ambuscade on the Far Frontier: A Digressive History*, 140.

confirms in his diary that the two letters were addressed to his commanding officer and Enoch. Enoch came to this knowledge through Major Wyllys, who saw both of Hale's letters.²²²

Hale's attributed last words, "I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country," are much debated. It is unclear if Hale ever actually said these words, or if he did utter the patriotic phrase if the oft-credited *Cato* was the inspiration. For his part, Seymour firmly believed that Hale's last words were the patriotic prose and that:

Hale's last words were undoubtedly derived from Addison's tragedy of 'Cato,' where Cato says "What pity is it that we can die but once to serve our Country." The writer (Seymour) cannot place Addison's tragedy in Hale's hands but it was in the College library in Hale's undergraduate days, and Hale's quotation from it shows that he was familiar with it. No theme could have interested him more than its theme!²²³

In addition to Hale very likely having studied Cato at Yale (and to a lesser extent with Dr. Huntington) he also taught the classics as a school teacher. In a letter from Betsey Hallam, whom Hale likely taught in one of his "morning classes of young ladies," she quotes nine Cato lines to him, which are as follows:

Remember O my friend the laws the rights
The generous plan of power delivered down
From age to age by your renown'd forfathers
So dearly bought the price of so much blood
Oh let it never perish in your hands
But piously transmit it to your Children
Do thou great liberty inspire our souls
And make our lives in thy possession happy
Or our deaths glorious in thy just defence [sic].²²⁴

Despite Seymour's conviction, the truth will forever be unknown. In fact, the earliest version of Hale's words appeared in the Boston *Independent Chronicle* on May 17, 1781 as "I am so satisfied with the cause in which I have engaged, that my only regret is, that I have not

²²² Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 298.

²²³ Ibid, XXXII.

²²⁴ Ibid, 85.

more lives than one to offer in its service.” In 1799, Hannah Adams’s survey of New England history relied on William Hull, whose account reads that “his dying observation, ‘that he only lamented that he had but one life to lose for his country.’” The abridged version of this work written by Abiel Holmes changed the wording to “I only lament, that I have but one life to lose for my country.”²²⁵

Despite the contention surrounding Hale’s final words, it is clear that prior to his death Hale made a spirited speech, which if he uttered the famous quote attributed to him, would have served as his closing. Unfortunately, despite the American mythology surrounding Hale’s last words, there is no verifiable proof that he did make his famous statement. After all, his heroic words were not reported for five years and Hull’s account can be scrutinized as his account was given only after being accused of cowardice and neglect of duty for surrendering Fort Detroit in 1812, was ordered shot, and was only spared due to a presidential pardon by President Madison.²²⁶

Despite the circumstances and impending death, Hale was prepared for such an important moment and lecture. While at Yale he had trained to speak to an audience and to sway hearts and minds during the Linonia debates. Perhaps it is this very reason that Hale’s story endures and why Montrossor admired the young “traitor” so. Most likely, there is an element of truth in the story to confirm Seymour’s conviction. The best that can be said with certainty is that Hull provided the best explanation in a simple statement that provided inspiration only to patriotism and not to any more profound meaning; that Nathan Hale was a man who had no regrets regarding giving his life for his country and would do it all again if given the opportunity.

²²⁵ F.K. Donnelly, "A Possible Source for Nathan Hale's Dying Words." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (1985): 394-96.

²²⁶ New England Historical Society, “William Hull Tries to Save Nathan Hale,” last modified 2016, accessed July 26, 2016, <http://www.newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/william-hale-tries-to-save-nathan-hale/>.

Spy work was not glorious. In fact, spying was looked down upon. Hale suffered the humiliation that beset spies after death. He was hung on September 22, 1776 and his body was left hanging as a warning to other spies, as was custom. Additionally, Enoch Hale writes that his body was hung by a flag, likely as an insult to his perceived treachery.²²⁷ Most likely his body was moved from his place of death in Artillery Park to a more prominent location. Undoubtedly, Hale's status as a spy is the reason why no tradition regarding the place of his burial exists. We can be certain that he was eventually buried in New York, without the dignity of a coffin, in an unmarked shallow grave. One account of Hale's execution from a British officer is:

We hung up a rebel spy the other day, and some soldiers got, out of a rebel gentleman's garden, a painted soldier on a board, and hunt it along with the Rebel; and wrote upon it – General Washington – and I saw it yesterday beyond headquarters, by the roadside.²²⁸

Upon his death word of Hale's demise quickly spread to the Americans. Under the pretense of a truce it fell upon Captain Montessor, a British engineer, to deliver a letter from Howe to Washington regarding an exchange of prisoners. Montessor was met by three Americans: Adjutant-General Joseph Reed, General Israel Putnam, and Captain Alexander Hamilton. Two days later, Washington sent a reply to Howe, dated September 23rd, by Samuel B. Webb and Captain William Hull, Nathan's friend and compatriot.

To give a human side to the exchange of the news of Hale's execution, George Dudley Seymour pondered the events of the time, perhaps correctly saying that:

I conceive that Montresor singled out Hamilton to receive the grim bit of information...I conceive too that Hamilton, knowing of Captain Hull's intimacy with Hale, in turn conveyed the news to Hull, and that on the occasion of the second meeting with Montresor, Hull actually questioned the British officer about Hale's death and thus obtained what he called "the melancholy particulars" – details that Montresor had not imparted to Hamilton. It even seems to me highly probable that Hull himself sought the

²²⁷ Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, 297.

²²⁸ *Ibid*, 302.

assignment to accompany Washington's flag, but in any case it seems plainly to have been from Hamilton that he had the first word of his friend's tragic fate.²²⁹

In his memoirs, Hull outlines the discussion he had with Montrossor. Most critically, Hull provides the only remaining account of Hale's last hours, including his last words that have immortalized him in American lore. While Hull may have borrowed upon a popular narrative to attribute Hale's last words, evidence also points to the rest of his account being accurate.

In summing up the life of his fallen comrade and friend, Hull laments that "there was no young man who gave fairer promise of an enlightened and devoted service to his country, than this my friend and companion in arms. His naturally fine intellect had been carefully cultivated, and his heart was filled with generous emotions; but, like the soaring eagle, the patriotic ardour [sic] of his soul winged the dart which caused his destruction."²³⁰

The news of the execution of Nathan Hale spread through both the American and British armies. Four years and one day after Nathan's death, Major André was captured with secret papers connecting him with Benedict Arnold's attempt to turn over West Point to the British. André asked Benjamin Tallmadge, who recognized Andre, what should be his fate, Tallmadge referred to Hale's fate, with which André was familiar. Seymour sums up the connection between Hale and André thus:

The death of the unfortunate and much lamented Major Andre being industriously represented to the public, as a cruel and unprecedented stretch of power on the part of the Americans, a person who was in the English army, and at that period serving under General Howe, things proper to state to the public, and recall to the minds the story of Major Hale.²³¹

²²⁹ Ibid, 531.

²³⁰ Maria Campbell and James Freeman Clarke. *Revolutionary Services and Civil Life of General William Hull* (New York: D. Appleton, 1848), 34.

²³¹ Seymour, *Documentary life*, 300.

Conclusion

The life that Nathan Hale gave granted him national immortality. Like other American heroes, Hale's story has often been embellished. There is evidence that parts of his story were entirely fabricated. For Hale, it can be argued that his story in the greater American annals deserves embellishment. Certainly, the story of Washington and the cherry tree is a fabrication to portray the first president's unshakably strong moral convictions.

Did Hale truly say that he regretted that he had "but one life to lose for his country?" The best that can be said is that he could have. That is the point, Hale certainly could have. Such a gesture was in keeping with his character. He was well-educated and an excellent orator. He was not afraid of death but welcomed the opportunity to meet his Lord. Duty, the civic good, his family, and his brothers-in-arms unquestionably crossed his mind. This is who Hale was, a young man of great conviction; a product of his father's raising and the time in which he was raised; and a fulfillment of his remarkable potential.

As Hale was the man Americans with a traditional patriotic bent wish him to be, it can be deemed that history has treated him fairly. Be that as it may, Hale's reputation has been under attack in more recent years. Former Reagan administration director of the Central Intelligence Agency William J. Casey provides the best example as he famously stated that he would prefer to remove the statue of Hale outside of the Central Intelligence Agency headquarters in Langley, Virginia and replace it with a statue of Hercules Mulligan.²³² Casey's reasoning was that Hale was an unsuccessful spy. Although true that Hale was caught while on his first mission, it is a rather unfair assessment. E. R. Thompson correctly points out that Hale "was given no secret link, no code or cypher, nor was he given any training." Additionally, he was "ill-suited for the

²³² Frederick Hitz, *Why Spy?: Espionage in an Age of Uncertainty*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2018), 2.

job of agent,” as he naturally drew attention, his face had gunpowder scars, and his cousin was with Howe’s forces. Hale did not even have a cover story provided by his superiors.²³³

What Hale did for his country was offer his services unselfishly. He did the job that was necessary. The Central Intelligence Agency’s Nathan Hale Institute quotes him stating, “I wish to be useful, and every kind of service necessary to the public good becomes honorable by being necessary.”²³⁴ Hale firmly believed in sacrificing his own desires for the greater good and bettering himself for every occasion. His time in the army was no different from his time at Yale where he perfected the art of debate and enlarged his scope of knowledge. He understood his shortcomings and sought to correct them.

The Hale contribution to the United States goes much beyond Nathan and his sacrifice. In all, six of Deacon Hale’s sons participated in the Revolutionary War. Samuel, John, and Joseph all marched to Lexington’s aid and marched to Boston. Of Nathan’s five brothers who fought, three would die due to consumption from lingering effects of war. John was held captive on a prison ship off the coast of New Jersey where he suffered in the infamous conditions and contracted the same disease. Richard and Billy also succumbed to the same sickness.²³⁵

The Hale story is the story of this nation. The Hales, through sacrifice and dedication, helped establish the precedent for the country that is enjoyed today. They came to the New World with nothing more than faith and hope. They led through troubled times and prospered. Nathan Hale’s death was not unique; many made the similar sacrifices during the struggle for

²³³ James Hutson, “Nathan Hale Revisited: A Tory’s Account of the Arrest of the First American Spy.”

²³⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, “The Nathan Hale Institute,” last modified June 15, 2010, accessed November 22, 2017, <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP90-00806R000200720004-6.pdf>.

²³⁵ Seymour, *Captain Nathan Hale, 1755-1776: Yale College 1773, Major John Palsgrave Wyllys, 1754-1790: Yale College 1773, Friends and Yale Classmates, Who Died in Their Country's Service, One Hanged As a Spy by the British, the Other Killed in an Indian Ambuscade on the Far Frontier: A Digressive History*, 18.

independence. Nevertheless, his exceptionalism lay in his strength of character, a character forged by generations of American Hales.

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