



# **Becoming Men of Some Consequence: Youth and Military Service in the Revolutionary War (Jeffersonian America)**

*John A. Ruddiman*

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Young Continental soldiers carried a heavy burden in the American Revolution. Their experiences of coming of age during the upheavals of war provide a novel perspective on the Revolutionary era, eliciting questions of gender, family life, economic goals, and politics. "Going for a soldier" forced young men to confront profound uncertainty, and even coercion, but also offered them novel opportunities. Although the war imposed obligations on youths, military service promised young men in their teens and early twenties alternate paths forward in life. Continental soldiers' own youthful expectations about respectable manhood and their goals of economic competence and marriage not only ordered their experience of military service; they also shaped the fighting capacities of George Washington's army and the course of the war.

*Becoming Men of Some Consequence* examines how young soldiers and officers joined the army, their experiences in the ranks, their relationships with civilians, their choices about quitting long-term military service, and their attempts to rejoin the flow of civilian life after the war. The book recovers young soldiers' perspectives and stories from military records, wartime letters and journals, and postwar memoirs and pension applications, revealing how revolutionary political ideology intertwined with rational calculations and youthful ambitions. Its focus on soldiers as young men offers a new understanding of the Revolutionary War, showing how these soldiers' generational struggle for their own independence was a profound force within America's struggle for *its* independence.

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