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A STRANGE UNION: SCIENCE AND POLITICS IN THE LOYALTY OF CADWALLADER

COLDEN

A Thesis
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of History
The University of Mississippi

by

KATHERINE GRAY SMITH

MAY 2011

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ABSTRACT

Cadwallader Colden remains one of the least-studied Crown officials. His reasons for remaining loyal to the Crown have not been investigated, nor has the interaction between his scientific interests and his politics. This thesis explores the relationship between Colden's loyalty and his science, primarily through study of Colden's published papers and letters, as well as the letters and papers of various other colonial officials and amateur scientists. Ultimately this thesis concludes that Colden formed his closest friendships with other amateur scientists, and that these relationships significantly affected his politics.

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INTRODUCTION

Cadwallader Colden (1688-1776) was one of the most significant Crown officials in the North American colonies. He served as a member of the governor's council in New York for over fifty years and as lieutenant-governor of the colony in 1760. In addition, he achieved international recognition for his work in botany and his account of the Native American tribes in New York. Nonetheless, Colden remains one of the least studied Crown officials and proto-loyalists in the annals of the Revolution. Given his position of colonial power and his importance as a colonial scientist this oversight seems odd. Perhaps the neglect is due in part to the fact that only in recent years have historiographical trends shifted to examine loyalists and their motives for remaining loyal. Well into the 1960s, most historians seem to have agreed with historian North Callahan, who wrote that "loyalism was in large part simply a residue of the people's long-standing attachment to Great Britain."¹ Personal or ideological reasons for remaining loyal, or the possibility of differing degrees and kinds of loyalism, received no consideration. By the mid to late 1960s, however, historians began to develop a more nuanced approach in their portrayals of loyalists. Wallace Brown in *The King's Friends: The Composition and Motives of the American Loyalist Claimants* noted that loyalists were not all the same. An American Tory from the New York countryside was not the same as a Tory from New York City. Studying claimant records after the Revolution, Brown concluded that "the picture of the typical New York loyalist which emerges . . . is of a farmer of moderate means, living in the Hudson or Mohawk Valley, equally likely to be native or foreign born (if the latter, probably from the

¹ North Callahan, *Royal Raiders: The Tories of the American Revolution*. (Bobbs-Merrill: Indianapolis, 1963), 59.

British Isles, but possibly from Germany).”² In contrast to this typical Tory, “the active Loyalist of New York City was a member of a substantial minority, was more probably wealthy than his fellow Loyalists in other parts of the state, was usually a long-standing immigrant from the British Isles, and was more likely to be a merchant or shopkeeper than anything else.”³ Brown hints that these different backgrounds gave each loyalist a different reason for remaining loyal to the Crown. No longer did historians portray Tories as a faceless, homogeneous group.

Alexander Flick’s *Loyalism in New York During the American Revolution* took Brown’s realization one step further. Loyalists were not blind followers of England. They did not hesitate to evaluate and criticize English policies with which they disagreed. Tories stopped short of the Whigs, however, in that they believed in using established channels like petitions to express their disagreements. Activities such as boycotts seemed to press the limits of properly expressing disapprobation of policies, which was why most Tories did not participate in such protests.⁴ In addition to disagreeing with the English government, loyalists sometimes disagreed among themselves about the best course of action. These differences of opinion stemmed partly from different backgrounds and motivations. Flick identified seven distinct “types” of loyalists, each with different reasons for their political choices. Royal officials, like governors, formed one type. “These persons were led [to remain loyal] by a variety of motives – self-interest, official bias, fidelity to oaths, and conviction of duty.”⁵ Large landowners formed a second type of Tory, “loyal to the crown because of received and anticipated favors, their material interests were connected with the established order of things.”⁶ Professionals such as lawyers and doctors, a

² Wallace Brown, *The King’s Friends: The Composition and Motives of the American Loyalist Claimants* (Brown University Press: Providence, 1965), 86.

³ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁴ Alexander Clarence Flick, *Loyalism in New York During the American Revolution*, Mass Violence in America Series (Arno Press and the *New York Times*: New York, 1969), 11-13

⁵ *Ibid.*, 32

⁶ Flick, 33

third group, were often allied to either large landowners or the Crown officials, and they dreaded the aftermath of a rebellion. Wealthy merchants remained loyal for business reasons as well as principles, while conservative farmers joined because they were happy with the status quo. Colonial politicians, such as Assemblymen, waffled, choosing loyalism when it seemed expedient. Finally came the conservative masses, from tenant farmers to shoemakers, by and large content with the present situation. These men joined the rank-and-file of the British army.⁷

While Flick noted that not all loyalists had the same motives, he left little room for the ideology of the tories. Patricia Bonomi sketched the ideological context of loyalism in her 1971 book *A Factious People: Politics and Society in Colonial New York*. She identified “two major lines of influence [that] established the overall context within which the colonists functioned politically and in which their political ideas evolved.”⁸ Tradition and common experience such as the Glorious Revolution and the English constitution composed one line; the unique experiences of life in the New World formed the other. Loyalists emphasized the former bond uniting all Englishmen over the latter bond among colonists. The historiography had thus expanded to acknowledge both ideological and personal reasons for loyalism. Joseph S. Tiedmann in *Reluctant Revolutionaries: New York City and the Road to Independence, 1763-1776* used this acknowledgment to explain loyalists’ failure in preventing the American Revolution. “Perhaps because the decision to become a loyalist was so very personal, the tories could not coalesce into a coherent, disciplined party capable of thwarting the Revolution.”⁹ In thirty years historians had moved from seeing loyalists as automatons incapable of severing a general attachment to and

⁷Flick, 32-35

⁸ Patricia U. Bonomi, *A Factious People: Politics and Society in Colonial New York* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1971), 283.

⁹ Joseph S. Tiedmann, *Reluctant Revolutionaries: New York City and the Road to Independence, 1763-1776* (Cornell University Press: Ithaca and London, 1997), 209.

nostalgia for Great Britain, to portraying them as men of principle with personal and ideological reasons for choosing the Crown.

While the portrayal of loyalism has grown more nuanced, portrayals of Cadwallader Colden have not. Only two published biographies of Colden exist: Alice Mapelsden Keys's *Cadwallader Colden: A Representative Eighteenth-Century Official* and Alfred Hoermann's *Cadwallader Colden: A Figure of the American Enlightenment*.¹⁰ Both books note Colden's fervent dedication to the Crown, yet neither attempt to explain the motives behind that dedication. Indeed, Keys focuses upon Colden's actions as a Crown official, but takes the reasons for his actions and choices for granted. Hoermann, in contrast, focuses upon Colden's role in the trans-Atlantic scientific community and largely ignores Colden's politics. He argues that Colden was an isolated figure in New York, set apart both by his professional positions and his scientific interests, yet tied closely to England and the Continent through those same interests and positions. He mentions briefly some of Colden's actions as a proto-loyalist acting governor. Why Colden held his political opinions, however, Hoermann does not explore. Perhaps this face-value acceptance of Colden's politics stems from the fact that Colden died in September 1776, mere months after the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Since his life did not extend into the Revolution itself, he was not a loyalist in the same manner as a Jonathan Boucher or a William Franklin, each of whom lived beyond the conclusion of the conflict and suffered voluntary exile in England for their loyalism. Nonetheless, Colden's policies as member of the governor's Council in New York and as lieutenant-governor of New York mark him as one of the staunchest supporters of royal prerogative in the colonies. By the time of his death, such actions would have marked him as a loyalist. What kept Colden so loyal to the Crown? Why did

¹⁰ Alice Mapelsden Keys, *Cadwallader Colden: A Representative Eighteenth-Century Official* (AMS Press, Inc: New York, 1967). Arthur Hoermann, *Cadwallader Colden: A Figure of the American Enlightenment*, Contributions in American History Series number 195 (Greenwood Press: Westport, CT, 2002).

his political views remain static when so many other men's opinions were undergoing such drastic changes? These questions remain unanswered.

Unexplored, too, is the relationship between Colden's political views and his scientific interests. Colden was one of the most important of the colonial scientists, engaging in correspondence with everyone from botanists Carl Linnaeus and Peter Kalm to innovator-extraordinaire and jack-of-all-trades Benjamin Franklin. A physician, botanist, amateur anthropologist, and theorizer of some note, Colden was never happier than when he was ensconced in his home, engaged in study. Could Colden's pursuit of all things scientific impact or be impacted by his politics? Historians have tended to treat these two facets of Colden's life as unrelated, much as Hoermann's work did. Even unpublished works have failed to connect the two. Stephen Steacy's dissertation "Cadwallader Colden: Statesman and Savant of Colonial New York," for instance, examines Colden's politics in minute detail in sections labeled "part one" and "part two," then scrutinizes Colden's science in the last two parts.¹¹ Steacy amasses into an impressive amount of detail, but never examines the relationship between science and politics. John Michael Dixon's dissertation "Cadwallader Colden and the Rise of Public Dissension: Politics and Science in Pre-Revolutionary New York" comes closest to examining the relationship between Colden's vocation and avocation.¹² Colden's scientific interests, Dixon argues, placed him in the world of the intellectual elite, who tried to apply scientific rationality and control to the messy affairs of politics. Dixon primarily argues that Colden was not as isolated as historians like Hoermann have suggested, but rather that he left an important legacy of an attempt at orderly and civil participation in popular politics. While Dixon credits Colden's

¹¹ Stephen C. Steacy, "Cadwallader Colden: Statesman and Savant of Colonial New York" (Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1987).

¹² John Michael Dixon, "Cawallader Colden and the Rise of Public Dissension: Politics and Science in Pre-Revolutionary New York" (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 2007).

scientific views for impacting his political style and drawing him into an elite community of the like-minded, Dixon does not try to explain why Colden remained unwaveringly loyal to the Crown, or explore whether or not this dedication was somehow related to Colden's scientific pursuits. The question remains: Can Colden's scientific interests help explain his unstinting dedication to the Crown?

While Colden's dedication to science does not completely explain his loyalism, his science and his loyalism were linked. Just as his political opinions gradually isolated him from New Yorkers, Colden's scientific interests drew him into a trans-Atlantic, scientific community nourished by detailed letters. In that community Colden formed his closest friendships. His fellow scientists, like most elite men of the day, were keenly interested in if not directly involved in politics. With these men Colden discussed both science and politics, giving and receiving criticism and affirmation for his views. These scientific friendships – especially those with James Logan, John Bartram, James Alexander, Peter Collinson, and Benjamin Franklin – seem to have affected Colden's politics, confirming his dedication to the mother country. The friendships cannot explain why Colden was such a staunch supporter of the royal prerogative upon his first entrance into colonial politics in 1718, but in that year such views were not uncommon. The Revolution was decades away, and no one in 1718 was contemplating independence from Great Britain. The friendships can help explain, however, why Colden's views did not change as the 1700s waned, for, with the exception of Franklin, Colden's closest friends did not challenge his politics. Owing his job to the Crown, isolated from most New Yorkers due to his performance of that job, and hearing almost nothing but agreement from those few people with whom he did associate, Colden had little reason to change his political position. Since those friendships came from shared scientific interests, science indirectly impacted Colden's politics.

The exact nature of Colden's political opinions – in particular, his dedication to the preservation of the royal prerogative – forms the subject of the first chapter. Colden's friendships with James Logan, John Bartram, James Alexander, Peter Collinson, and Benjamin Franklin, and their shared scientific interests and political opinions are explored in the second chapter. Before delving into Colden's politics, however, a little background on Colden's life before he entered politics is necessary.

Cadwallader Colden was born February 7, 1688, in Enniscorthy, County Wexford, Ireland. His father, Alexander, was a Scot with a master of arts from the University of Edinburgh (1675) who had been ordained a minister in the Presbyterian church in 1683. Alexander's first son, Cadwallader, was born while Alexander was serving at his first ministerial post. Alexander was apparently devout. In 1732 he noted that "I am the oldest Minister in this church in ye exercise of the ministerial function," and he continued to preach and to serve at communion even as he noted his health was failing.¹³ Of his father Cadwallader would note " [he] was acquainted with and had gain'd the Esteem of many of the Nobility and Gentry not only of those who thought as he did in respect to religious [sic] principles but likewise of those who differ'd widely from him."¹⁴ That Alexander was also a dedicated family man is without question. In 1720, for instance, Alexander wrote to his son, "Seeing providence hath deprived us of your company and conversation it does in some measure supply it to have a line from you and put us in a better capacity to know what to pray for in your behalf [sic] and what to give thanks for."¹⁵ After updating Cadwallader on the affairs of various family members, he expressed his gratefulness to

¹³ Alexander Colden to Cadwallader Colden, August 5, 1732, *The Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden, Volume II (1730-1742)*, John Watts De Peyster Publication Funds Series (Collections of the New York Historical Society Series. New York: New York Historical Society, 1918-1937), 75.

¹⁴ Cadwallader Colden to Peter Collinson, May 1742, *Ibid.*, 262

¹⁵ Alexander Colden to Cadwallader Colden, January 27, 1720, *The Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden, Volume I (1711-1720)*, John Watts De Peyster Publication Funds Series (Collections of the New York Historical Society Series. New York: New York Historical Society, 1918-1937), 110.

God, and noted that “I hope you will submit to his [God’s] good and holy will and do endeavour in all things to resigne [sic] your self and yours to his wise disposal.”¹⁶ This pattern of admonishing his son to faithfulness to God and reminding him that he was loved and prayed for at home continued throughout Alexander’s life, as his letters to Cadwallader attest. Such letters usually contained greetings from Cadwallader’s mother, Janet, as well.¹⁷

Janet Hughes Colden left behind relatively little record of herself, though she frequently sent not just her love but also packages to her son along with her husband Alexander’s letters. At the time of her death, Cadwallader’s brother James wrote to him that their mother had expressed her wishes that Cadwallader and his family inherit “half a dozen silver spoons” along with “a purse with two pieces of Gold and 3 or four rings in it.”¹⁸ Months after her death, Alexander wrote to Cadwallader, “I am daily more and more sensible of the loss of my dear and affectionat [sic] wife and do frequently dream of her.”¹⁹ Clearly the Colden family was closely-knit.²⁰

Alexander had hoped that Cadwallader would enter the ministry.²¹ Cadwallader, however, discovered that his interests lay elsewhere, and at age seventeen he began medical studies in London after completing an MA at Edinburgh in 1705.²² Maybe he was interested in the social and economic securities that medicine seemed to offer (he would have been assured of a paying job almost anywhere), or maybe he was influenced by the Enlightenment’s scientific

¹⁶Alexander Colden to Cadwallader Colden, January 27, 1720, Colden I, 111.

¹⁷ In the same letter from 1720, Alexander comments near the close that “your mother gives her sincere love to you . . . and will write.” Ibid., 113.

¹⁸James Colden to Cadwallader Colden, April 27, 1732, Colden II, 63-64.

¹⁹ Alexander Colden to Cadwallader Colden, August 5, 1732, Colden II, 72.

²⁰ Exactly how many siblings Cadwallader had remains unclear. One brother, James, wrote to him frequently, and we know from his letters that James followed Alexander into the ministry. Reference is made to at least one other brother, but what that brother did is not mentioned. If Cadwallader Colden had sisters also remains unknown.

²¹ Cadwallader wrote that “I was educated in Scotland by my parents with a view to be settled in the church there and I had as great encouragement [sic] in that way by my fathers interest who was a Minister of that Church as an young man could have . . . but my taste and Inclinations led my thoughts another way.” Cadwallader Colden to Peter Collinson, May 1742, Colden II, 262-263.

²² Alfred R. Hoermann. *Cadwallader Colden: A Figure of the American Enlightenment*. Contributions in American History Series, number 195 (Greenwood Press: Westport, CT, 2002), 2

ideal, which had heavily re-organized the University of Edinburgh's curriculum.²³ Scotland was closely linked with the Continent's educational system. Notes historian Mary Lou Lustig, "the well-educated Scot was not only expected to be proficient in Latin, Greek, French, Italian, and Dutch, but he also had read history, geography, philosophy, mathematics, and knew how to play the lute, guitar, or violin."²⁴ In particular, Edinburgh's new science program linked students to the growing scientific community of the Atlantic World, for many of the university's graduates were either from the colonies or emigrated there.

Colden's life in Edinburgh was significant to him not just as a student, but also on a personal level. The Edinburgh friendship that proved most important to him was the one he enjoyed with James Chrystie. It was most likely through James that Cadwallader met James's sister Alice. When and where Alice and Cadwallader met, and what each initially thought of the other is unknown.²⁵ Presumably each reached a favorable conclusion, however, since they married in 1715. James's early affection for Cadwallader is clear. In 1715 James wrote that "the entire friendship and Intimacy that has been betwixt us would not have allowed me to forbear correspondence I venture to Send it [the letter] tho' it Should miss you, that you may Assure your Self of that Same Steddy [sic] and Unchanged friendship that you ever knew in me; and that the broadest Seas can never Separate you from my Sincere affection and Remembrance."²⁶

²³ Hoermann, 2.

²⁴ Mary Lou Lustig, *Robert Hunter, 1666-1734: New York's Augustan Statesman*. (Syracuse University Press: Syracuse, 1983), 7.

²⁵ Alfred Hoermann claims that Colden first met and married Alice in 1715 while on a trip to visit his parents (5). Stephen Steacy, however, maintains that such a "whirlwind courtship" would have been out of character for Colden, and that "he probably arrived at an understanding with Alice [some years earlier] and went to America to make his fortune before returning to claim her hand in marriage." (12)

²⁶ James Chrystie to Cadwallader Colden, 1715, Colden I, 81.

Edinburgh and the science he studied there would leave a lasting mark on Cadwallader that would accompany him throughout his life, long after his studies were completed.²⁷

Colden completed those studies in 1710 at age twenty-two, although no record remains of his actually receiving a medical degree. Beginning a medical practice was an expensive endeavor, and competition in Scottish and English cities made the process still more difficult and costly. The Coldens lacked the money necessary for such a venture, leading Cadwallader, as of yet unmarried, to emigrate. As he himself expressed it, “as my Father’s fortune was not sufficient to enable me to push my fortune in England and Scotland I went over to Pennsylvania in the year 1710 where I had some Relations.”²⁸ That relation was Elizabeth Hill, his mother’s widowed and childless sister, who lived in Philadelphia. Philadelphia in 1710 had only 2500 residents, which no doubt seemed rural in comparison to Edinburgh, which had a population of roughly 50,000 by 1700. Practicing medicine in Philadelphia did not prove particularly lucrative, probably in part because the inhabitants of the city used folk healers or did not bother with a doctor at all. To compensate, Colden compounded and sold his own drugs and engaged in merchant activities. He traveled to Jamaica in 1711, and Antigua and Barbados in 1713, selling his own stores and working as an agent.²⁹ Among the wares he frequently sold were textile goods such as yarns and threads, food items such as sugar and flour, and some manufactured products, like stockings. Slaves also formed an important part of Colden’s trade, and he himself had at least one such

²⁷ As historian Mary Lou Lustig notes, being Scottish was in and of itself a lasting identity. “Scots were forever marked by their heritage. The continual possibility of violence, the persistent poverty, the bleakness of the treeless landscape, the deep divisions between Highland and Lowland cultures, the rain, mists, and cold damp that last year-round and brought rheumatoid arthritis, ‘the Scottish disease,’ to those who survived childhood, bred a grim fatalism in most Scots. If fatalism was one aspect of the Scottish character, the other was a persistent sense of inferiority caused by the absence of a culture judged to be worthwhile by the English. The result was that those Scots who succeeded in the English world . . . often tended to overcompensate for their presumed cultural inferiority by mastering English values and customs.” Lustig, 3

²⁸ Cadwallader Colden to Peter Collinson, May 1742, Colden II, 261-262.

²⁹ Hoermann, 4.

“servant” by 1717.³⁰ Elizabeth Hill often included her own commissions in Colden’s business dealings. Colden’s business letters reflected the travails of the marketplace, as well as the problems of trying to please both purchasers and sellers. Working as a merchant did not bring him pleasure.

Colden’s medical practice and mercantile business apparently flourished, for in 1715 he had enough money to Scotland for a visit. In an event that would haunt him and give fodder to his later political enemies, the local elites called upon Colden to raise a group of volunteers in Kelso to counter a feared Jacobite uprising.³¹ The uprising never occurred, and Colden disbanded the troops. Still, his involvement in the affair would later allow Colden’s political foes to accuse Colden of Jacobitism himself. In a demonstration of his growing scientific work, Colden also gave a paper, “Animal Secretions,” to the Royal Society.³² Of greatest lasting importance for that 1715 trip, however, Colden married Alice Chrystie on November 11, in the Presbyterian kirk at Kelso where her father, David Chrystie, was the minister. Colden and Alice’s marriage lasted 47 years, until her death in 1762, and resulted in eleven children. The union was a happy one, as Colden’s letters during their separations reveal. Alexander Colden was also clearly taken with Alice. “I still am more perswaded yt your marriage is approven and blest of god and will be so,” he wrote to Cadwallader in 1720.³³ Abandoning his typical public reserve while in New York attending Council meetings in 1744, Cadwallader wrote to Alice, “I am in hopes to see you

³⁰ Colden I, 16-17. The slave in question Colden sold to a contact in the West Indies. He described her thus: “She is a good House Negro understands the work of the Kitchen perfectly and washes well. She has a Natural aversion to all strong Liquors Were it not for her Alusive [sic] Tongue her sullenness and the Cutsome [sic] of the Country that wil [sic] not allow us to use our Negroes as you doe [sic] in Barbados when they Displeas [sic] you I would not have parted with her But I doubt not she’l [sic] make as good a slave as any in the Island after a litle of your Discipline or without it when she sees that she cannot avoid it. I could have sold her here to good advantage but I have several other of her Children which I value and I know if she should stay in this country she should spoil them.” Colden I, 39.

³¹ “The Fifteen,” as the rising became known, was an attempted rebellion by the supporters of deposed king James Stuart against the new King George I from Hanover.

³² Hoermann, 56

³³ Alexander Colden to Cadwallader Colden, January 27, 1720, Colden I, 111.

by Nacks[apparently a mutual friend] return and you cannot be more disapointed [sic] than I shall be if I do not.”³⁴ That Alice could elicit such affectionate words from a man characterized as rigid and serious suggests that she possessed a kind nature and loving personality.³⁵ Colden clearly trusted her judgment and abilities, as well. As he wrote, “I have not time to write him [their son, John] nor to any else and I must leave every concern of my family to you and indeed I have no uneasiness about it from the long experience I have had of your care.”³⁶ In Alice Chrystie, Cadwallader found a stable companion from a home much like his own.

Letters from the Chrystie family tell of a clan just as dedicated to each other and as sad to be parted as the Colden family. Alice’s mother, Alison Hamilton Chrystie, for instance, addressed her daughter as “my derest [sic] Life,” and expressed her hopes that they might someday visit, since such a thing “would be a great mines [sic] to both your father in laws family and your fathers and me to Renoue [sic] our olde Agge [sic] agean [sic] like the dayes [sic].”³⁷ In the meantime, Mrs. Chrystie promised her daughter that “I recommend you to the protection and care of the allmightey God who is hade [sic] a spashall [sic] care of you ever since ye came into the world that he may sand [sic] his holey [sic] angeles [sic] to garde [sic] youer [sic] dire [sic] hosabent [sic] and you and all your conerserens [sic] wher ever you shal [sic] go by sie [sic] or by land.”³⁸ The Chrysties lamented the time between letters and wrote often with news and

³⁴ Cadwallader Colden to Alice Chrystie Colden, September 8, 1744, *Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden, Volume III (1743-1747)*, John Watts De Peyster Publication Funds Series (Collections of the New York Historical Society Series. New York: New York Historical Society, 1918-1937), 74.

³⁵ Following the reports of his contemporaries, historians have noted Colden’s dedication to duty and the chill that dedication cast, at least publicly. “At home, Colden was warm and cheerful, always gracious to friends and interested in family. In politics, however, he was conservative and portrayed as unattractive,” notes Alfred Hoermann (184). Likewise, Patricia Bonomi paints Colden thus: “Always a man of serious mien and intensity of purpose, Colden seems to typify the dour Scot His ‘indefatigable diligence’ and ‘rigid’ sense of justice made him a trusted servant of the Crown and a zealous administrator, though these same qualities also made it difficult for him to see the other side of almost anything.” (153)

³⁶ Cadwallader Colden to Alice Chrystie Colden, August 4, 1746, Colden III, 238.

³⁷ Alison Hamilton to Alice Chrystie Colen, February 2, 1716, Colden I, 88.

³⁸ Ibid.

encouragement.³⁹ Whatever Colden's public persona, he clearly embraced and was embraced by the Chrysties. James Chrystie, Alice's brother, was already friends with Colden due to their University of Edinburgh connections. Another brother, David, addressed Colden as his brother and, when updating Colden about his own marriage and children, mentioned an ongoing joke between the two: "You see our Spirite [sic] can be as lively to get Children in our cold rocky country, after we begin[sic] to it as perhaps the most people in your hot and fine country, even – suppose, I remember sometime agoe [sic] Brother Cadw: would attribute it to our cold Country that I did not marry, sooner after having pitcht [sic] on my wife, thinking thereby that the cold climat [sic] had immuned my spirits, No no therein he was mistaken."⁴⁰ Family ties bound both Colden and his wife firmly to Scotland, even though they travelled to Philadelphia immediately after the wedding.

The Coldens' first child, Alexander, was born in 1716. Young Alexander was clearly doted upon by both sets of grandparents, who called him Sandie.⁴¹ Alexander Colden, writing to Cadwallader, offered a prayer for Sandie. "We desire to bless God greatly [sic] for the continuance of . . . grand child's health . . . and yt our grand child continues in so firm health and makes such proficiencie [sic] in learning to know the gret [sic] letters I confess I have scarce heard of any so young come yt lenth [sic] may the Lord spare him for his service and your comfort and may he hear your and our prayers for him and bless your daily endeavours for his

³⁹ As was often the case, letters from the colonies to Scotland at best took months to arrive, and at worst never arrived at all. David Chrystie, Alice's brother, lamented the situation in 1721. "It is not only the great loss we are at being at such a great distance . . . but it is yet greater loss, that we should never be able to hear from One Anothr: It seems you have never directed your letters right that I have not seen a word from you these sevel years; I am as great a Stranger to your way of living As the person that never knew you." David Chrystie to Cadwallader Colden, November 27, 1721, Colden I, 124-125.

⁴⁰Ibid., 125-126

⁴¹ David Chrystie, Alice Chrystie Colden's father, wrote in early 1720, "I am glad to hear ye Sandie is such a thriving child, and a good scholar, I pray the Lord bless him, and preserve him to you for yor comfort, and mine also." David Chrystie to Cadwallader Colden, January 30, 1720, Ibid., 108.

godly education, yt is the best provision you can make for him.”⁴² Colden continued in Philadelphia for two more years, pursuing medicine and the mercantile business. In 1718 he met Governor Robert Hunter, a fellow Scot and governor of New York. Three conversations later, Colden and Hunter were firm friends. It was this friendship that brought Colden to New York and into politics. Colden’s political career would be tumultuous and distinguished by his dedication to the preservation of the royal prerogative.

⁴²Alexander Colden to Cadwallader Colden, January 27, 1720, Colden I, 110.

CHAPTER 1

COLDEN AND THE ROYAL PREROGATIVE

Support for royal prerogative forms the overwhelming theme of Cadwallader Colden's political statements and actions. Throughout the course of his fifty-eight years in politics, his dedication to the Crown's rights and power remained unwavering. This obsession with royal prerogative was one of the three constants in Colden's life, along with dedication to family and interest in all things scientific. In the early part of the eighteenth century such a stance on royal prerogative often created tension between Crown-appointed officials and locally-elected assemblymen. At that time, however, no one was thinking of independence from England, so those tensions remained just an ordinary part of local political existence. Yet by the 1760s such a reverence for the Crown was beginning to attract attention, reflecting a larger discontent spreading throughout the thirteen colonies. Colden's devotion to the Crown and to the royal prerogative was certainly noteworthy. In particular, his dedication to the preservation of the royal prerogative manifested itself throughout the decades in his stance on land grants, Native American affairs, conflicts between the Assembly and governor's Council, and the Stamp Act.

Cadwallader Colden's development as a staunch supporter of the Crown and the royal prerogative began to flower in 1718, when he moved to New York. Early that year, he journeyed there, for unknown reasons. While in the colony, he met Governor Robert Hunter, a fellow Scot. Hunter had begun his career in the army, but was something of an intellectual. He was friends with Jonathan Swift, Joseph Addison, and Richard Steele, and dabbled in poetry himself. After a

successful military career, he was appointed governor in Virginia.⁴³ On his way to assume the role of governor-in-chief of Virginia in 1707, the French captured his ship. The French subsequently held him prisoner for months. After his ransom, the king offered him the position of governor of Jamaica, but requested the post in New York instead, arriving there in 1710.⁴⁴ Hunter and the Council operated smoothly together, but Hunter clashed frequently with the Assembly. Colden learned much from Hunter, and such clashes marked Colden's entire fifty-five years in New York government.

To a man of Hunter's tastes and background, Colden was of immediate interest. The two men had several conversations during Colden's stay in New York. To Colden's surprise and pleasure, he received a letter from Hunter shortly after returning to Philadelphia. In Colden's words, "he gave me an Invitation to settle in New York with an offer of his Friendship, which I accepted."⁴⁵ Such an offer provided an opportunity to rise in society, as well as to earn more money, so the Coldens left Philadelphia. Hunter arranged for Colden's appointment as Surveyor-General of the colony of New York, as well as weighmaster of the Port of New York and, in July 1719, ranger of Ulster County.⁴⁶ Though the move isolated him somewhat socially, culturally, and intellectually (New York City was smaller than Philadelphia, and consequently had not developed into an intellectual center yet), Colden had made a firm and powerful friend in his new home and fit in well with other members of Hunter's social group, many of whom were

⁴³ Hunter technically held the post, despite his imprisonment, until 1709. Edmund Jennings acted as governor in his absence.

⁴⁴ Martha Lamb and Mrs. Burton Harrison. *History of the City of New York: Its Origin, Rise, and Progress, Volume I* (A.S. Barnes Company: New York, 1877), 481-483. Lamb says that "Robert Hunter was unlike any of his predecessors. He was a strong, active, cultivated man of middle age, with refined tastes and feelings, combined with genial and persuasive manners; and he was a model of morality. His attainments were such that he had for many years enjoyed the warm personal friendship of Swift, Addison, Steele, and other distinguished literary men in England. He was something of a poet himself. . . . He was fond of men of learning, and encouraged the arts and sciences wherever and whenever he had an opportunity." (481)

⁴⁵ Cadwallader Colden to Peter Collinson, May 1742, Colden II, 262-263.

⁴⁶ A position he would hold by himself until 1751, at which point his son Alexander became his joint surveyor-general.

Scottish by birth and not of noble origins.⁴⁷ Among these men were James Alexander and James Logan, both of whom became staunch allies of Colden. Notes historian Mary Lou Lustig, “although Hunter, Logan, Colden, and their circle were all consummate politicians, the true basis of their friendship was their interest in literature and science.”⁴⁸ Colden was poised to thrive in this tiny, trans-Atlantic cultural community, and he immediately set about creating a home in New York.

Owning land was an important part of success in early eighteenth-century America. Colden, like all upwardly mobile men of the time, was eager to obtain property of his own. On October 6, 1718, he, James Kennedy, and James Alexander petitioned for 6,000 acres in New York, part of the estate of Captain John Evans, whose lands had been possessed by the government.⁴⁹ Colden received 2,000 acres in the precinct of Hanover in April 1719, which he promptly christened Coldenham. He received an additional 1000 acres in 1727. Colden’s experience with land thus began with his own property. It was in his office as surveyor-general and official land dealings, however, that his political sentiments became clear.

New York land grants were a messy affair. As historian Patricia Bonomi notes, “vacant lands, overlapping colonial boundaries, unextinguished Indian titles, and an unsympathetic government all conspired to make New York land titles among the most assailable in North America.”⁵⁰ As surveyor-general, Colden quickly became acquainted with all of the aforementioned problems. His assessment of the the problems and the solutions he proposed

⁴⁷ Hoermann 10; Lustig, 145-146.

⁴⁸ Lustig, 147. Such pursuits were common for elite men of the time. “Hunter, Logan, and Colden were representatives of an era when many politicians were actively involved in scientific explorations. During this period, men of affairs formed the majority of the members of the Royal Society. . . . Laymen were able to contribute to scientific knowledge because the state of learning was still at such a level that a physician, such as Colden, could understand and apply Newton’s theories.” Ibid., 147.

⁴⁹ Steacy, 13

⁵⁰ Bonomi, 211.

never won him any affection from most colonists.⁵¹ His alienation of New Yorkers and support of the king's property rights began in 1721. By that time, Colden had served as surveyor-general for two years under two different governors, Hunter and William Burnet. That year he recommended that New York's joint-tenancy lands, border regions, and large private estates be re-surveyed. The land boundaries for many of these estates were unclear, and as a result tenants could deny the extent of their acreage and thus argue about the amount of taxes they owed.⁵² Moreover, the conflicts over the boundaries meant the inhabitants did not improve the land to its fullest extent, since they could not decide who owned the property. The bill Colden recommended, entitled *Act of New York for facilitating the partition of lands in joint tenancey or in common promoting the settling [sic] and improving thereof and rendring [sic] the payment of the quit-rents due thereupon certain and easy*, passed the Assembly with modifications and then went to the Council for more adjustments. In July Colden wrote to Burnet, responding to critics of the bill, who did not want re-surveyals. According to Colden, many of the jointly-owned property boundaries accepted in New York had not been approved by a Crown official, but had been decided upon by the grantee. This practice resulted in thousands of acres of land lying uncharted, with no way of collecting the quitrents due the Crown, since none of the officials knew how much land the grant encompassed or in what counties the land lay. In Colden's opinion, this inability to collect the taxes meant that the Crown was being cheated out of money rightfully its own. Moreover, allowing such irregular land grants to stand could set a dangerous precedent for royal prerogative, and create a diminution of royal power in the colony, from

⁵¹In some cases, this dedication to the Crown resulted even in the governor's disapproval, as Colonel Morris noted to the Marquis of Lothian in a 1735 letter. Governor Cosby, who was by all descriptions merely interested in his own pocketbook, had taken a dislike to Colden. Morris said that "the Strict adherence to his Duty [in land grants and as a member of the Council] renders him [Colden] Obnoxious to the Governour." Colonel Morris to the Marquiss of Lotian, March 26, 1735, Colden I, 126.

⁵² Many of these lands were grants from former colonial governors to individual colonists. The grants often carried a quit-rent, a feudal form of tax paid to the government.

which the Crown might never recover. Even worse, the colonists might encroach upon lands clearly outside their grants, lands that specifically belonged to the Crown. As Colden explained, “H.M. interests may suffer very considerably if the subjects be allow'd to lay out the lands granted them by patent by such persons as they themselves shall appoint. Many of these very large tracts held in joint tenancy are bounded by lands still in the Crown, the quit-rents of which when granted according to H.M. late Instructions will amount to above a hundred times the value of the quit-rents of the same quantity of land granted before these Instructions. It may therefore justly be fear'd, that if the people be empower'd to lay out these lands for themselves they will encroach upon the adjoining lands of the Crown, etc., and in time it may become the general interest of the inhabitants to defend these acquisitions (for the greater part of the Province is held in joint tenancy) and it may become impossible for H.M. to recover his rights or very inconvenient to endeavour it.”⁵³ Clearly Colden felt that the sooner his concerns were addressed, the better for the power of the Crown. While the bill passed, however, it did not fully solve the problem, probably due to the modifications the Assembly imposed upon it.

In November 1721 Colden returned to the topic yet again, noting that the unsurveyed land grants permitted the colonists to cheat blatantly upon the payment of their quitrents, by possessing small amounts of acreage on paper, but much more in practice. He gave two specific examples of such abuse to the governor. “The patent of Salisbury grants after this manner 400 acres and the Patentees now claim about 70,000 for which they only pay half a bushel of wheat quit-rent. One Lokerman likewise obtain'd a grant for 300 acres by virtue of which he now

⁵³ “Memorial of Cadwallader Colden, Surveyor General, to Governor Burnet, July 19, 1721,” From: 'America and West Indies: November 1721', Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America and West Indies, Volume 32: 1720-1721 (1933) 481-496. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=74129> (Accessed: 01 April 2011).

claims [that is, actually holds] above 10,000.”⁵⁴ The colonists also took advantage of the Native American names for landmarks listed in the grants. Since they rarely knew which hills are rivers these names specified, Colden complained, they applied them to any hill or river they chose, thus expanding their property holdings. The indigenous population confirmed that this was the case. “For tho' the bounds of the patents are generally express'd in the same words with those in the deeds of sale giv'n by the Indians yet those Indians affirm that they did not sell near the quantity of land which the patentees now claim and they likewise say that the patentees every year claim more than they did in the year preceding.”⁵⁵ Such encroachments infuriated the Indians and cheated the king. Colden appraised the financial issues of the property problems succinctly: “I have calculated the contents of eight patents according to their present claim and find that if they alone were to pay at the rate all the lands likely patented do, 2/6 per 100 acres, the yearly rent of them would amount to £4176 tho' now they only pay £17 17s. 6d.”⁵⁶ Despite such obvious corruption, the situation was far from irreparable, though it needed immediate attention. It could, Colden felt, be solved in a manner satisfactory to colonists and king alike. “I believe it will not be impossible to raise from the lands of this Province a sufficient revenue to support the Government without doing injustice or any hardship to anybody but a great deal of justice to the King.”⁵⁷ The importance of preserving the monarch’s power and preserving the royal prerogative was thus clearly on Colden’s mind from an early date.

In 1732, Colden once again felt compelled to comment upon the land problems in New York, this time in a pamphlet entitled *State of the Lands in the Province of New York*. In the

⁵⁴ “Memorial of Cadwallader Colden, Surveyor General, to Governor Burnet, November 30, 1721,” From: ‘America and West Indies: November 1721,’ Calendar of State Papers Colonial, America, and West Indies, Volume 32: 1720-1721 (1933), 481-496, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=74129> (Accessed: 01 April 2011).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Memorial November 30.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

pamphlet Colden summarized the process of the governor and the Crown granting lands in New York from the time of the English takeover in 1664 to the present. As he had noted in 1721, the process rarely included any actual surveys. Rather, the governors granted as much land as they pleased and specified boundaries according to landmarks like hills and trees. Colonists then took advantage of the vague boundaries to possess more land than they had actually been granted. Again, Colden noted that the Native Americans suffered repeated encroachments as a result, although he thought they themselves were partially to blame. “It is too well known that an Indian will shew [sic] any place by any name you please, for the small reward of a Blanket or Bottle of Rum.”⁵⁸ Such irregular grants of course cheated the king of his quitrents. But other negative consequences resulted from these practices. For one, granting large tracts of land – tens of thousands of acres, in many cases – impeded the improvement of the land. No one owner could develop that much land, and none could easily find tenants, since many immigrants had left their native countries in order to own land, not to work for someone else.⁵⁹ New York suffered in comparison to Pennsylvania by having so many uncultivated acres. Colden worried too about the prospect of a class of large landowners, who might develop notions of independence. “It may perhaps deserve the consideration for those who are more capable of Political foresight than I am, whether, if these large Grants take place . . . and become great Lordships with large dependancies and revenues, whether this will secure or indanger [sic] the Dependancy of the Colonies on their Mother Country. I think few instances can be given where great changes were brought to effect, in any state but when they were headed by rich and powerful men; any other

⁵⁸ Cadwallader Colden, *State of the Lands in the Province of New York*, in *The Single Tax Review, Volume 16, January-February 1916*, editor Joseph Dana Miller (Joseph Dana Miller: New York, 1916), 34.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 35.

commotions generally produced only some short lived disorders and Confusions.”⁶⁰ Yet all hope of ending such consequences was not lost.

The king had been in all cases, Colden claimed, deceived.⁶¹ While revoking all the grants might seem the best recourse, that would create too much upheaval. Colden proposed that instead the government abolish the old quitrent system, re-confirm all but the most “extravagant” of the land grants, and install a new, uniform system of rent based on every hundred acres. The amount would not be so exorbitant as to discourage land ownership, but would certainly be unfeasible for those possessing several tens of thousands of acres.⁶² This solution should please the colonists. “The Quitrents would in this case be sufficient to support the Government, and if they were applied to that purpose, I believe would give a general satisfaction, because it would be as equal a Taxation as could well be contrived.”⁶³ The policy would be to the monarch’s satisfaction, too, for the quitrents could fund the governor’s salary. Colden had proposed this use for quitrents once before, in 1726, to general disapprobation.⁶⁴ He anticipated protests once again with his 1732 re-proposal. “The chief objection . . . is that if a perpetual revenue be Granted, then the Governors will be free’d from that dependance on the People, and check on their behaviour that is necessary in all well ballanced Governments and which is the only check which the poor people have in America and that without such check the people for the Plantations may become a prey to Rapacious Tyrannical Governors or other officers, tho the people do not doubt of their obtaining relief from the King.”⁶⁵ The assembly controlled the governor’s salary, and often used that control as a bargaining tool when dealing with what it deemed recalcitrant executives.

⁶⁰ *State of the Lands*, 35.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁶² *State of the Lands*, 36.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁶⁴ Bonomi, 153.

⁶⁵ *State of the Lands*, 37.

Colden did not have an easy solution to that criticism, though he did realize that some sort of compromise would need to be made to ensure the passage of his proposed land policy.

“Therefore unless some effectual solid check be given to the people, in lieu of what they have at present . . . it cannot be expected that ever they will consent to a perpetual Revenue of any kind, or that they will be easy under it.”⁶⁶ Colden seemed to see the colonists as a group to be appeased, although while the king’s interests and prerogative took priority over all. Land grants were just one way in which Colden expressed his idea of royal prerogative.⁶⁷ Indian affairs, already a factor in land grants, proved another venue of expression.

Native American affairs were an important part of New York politics. The government was vitally interested in the lucrative fur trade, which was centered in Albany. So were large merchants, many of whom held seats in the Assembly or on the Council. On an imperial level, the ongoing tensions between Great Britain and France in the first half of the eighteenth-century kept colonial officials focused on the trade between their Indian neighbors and French Canada.

As surveyor-general and as Council member (Governor Burnet had appointed him to the Council in 1721), Colden too had a particular interest in the fur trade. As a landowner, he had further

⁶⁶*State of the Lands*, 37.

⁶⁷ While Colden was a clear supporter of the king’s prerogative, he did engender some suspicion for his own habits of buying land. He bought land in his children’s names, including 4,000 acres each for Alice and Jane, and 2,000 for Catherine. Son Cadwallader II received a 525-acre farm upon his marriage in 1745. Cadwallader also indulged in some speculation, buying land cheaply from obliging officials and then selling it for profit. As historian Eugene Fingerhut says, “The critic of land grabs was not above making a deal for himself as well as for his political and personal friends.” Eugene R. Fingerhut, *Survivor: Cadwallader Colden II in Revolutionary America* (University Press of America: Washington, DC, 1983), 7. Stephen Steacy notes that “In that perhaps less hypocritical age, these men viewed themselves as, and were viewed as, men of probity, who were merely adhering to the custom of the day in using their public positions to enrich their estates.” (105). Colonel Morris’s letter certainly indicates that that was the attitude of the day: “it may perhaps be Objected against him [Colden] that in his Office of Surveyor some persons names have been made use of in Trust for him in the Grants of Lands or that he has taken a part of the Lands Granted for his fees. I don’t know that this is or can fairely be Objected but to this is Answered that if it be true it is no crime the Governour and all the Officers have done and dayly [sic] do the same nor it is more Criminalln[sic] for Colden to take a Grant of Land from the Crown paying the usual Quit Rents fees and Services for the Land than for any Body else but I think Colden has more to Say for himself in this case than other Folks for he has no Sallary [sic] annexed to his office the profit of it consist only in Fees and if those who take up Land are willing to pay him A share or part of the Land for his Fees which it is an Ease for them to do I can See nothing in reason or good conscience that can hinder him from taking of it.” Colonel Morris to the Marquiss of Lothian, March 26, 1735, Colden II, 127.

interests, for Indian war parties sometimes raided areas near his home. As with land grants, Colden took an imperial perspective on the management of Native American relations, looking to preserve the king's power and impress native peoples with the power of Great Britain.

Colden's policies were, for the time, rather progressive. He wanted lands surveyed in the presence of their Indian owners, and contracts fully explained, to prevent the sort of fraud he continually encountered as surveyor-general. Indians should further be able to testify in court, and the commissioner for Indian affairs should have a regular salary that would prevent bribes from traders and merchants.⁶⁸ As a scientist, too, he had respect for Native Americans, trying Indian cures and accepting their descriptions of flora and fauna.⁶⁹ In fact, though no details about the event survive, Colden was apparently adopted by the Mohawk Indians in 1726.⁷⁰ Colden treated the Native Americans as allies to be treated well in the best interests of the mother country. This viewpoint he made clear in one of his earliest and most influential works, *History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada, Which are Dependent on the Province of New York, and Are a Barrier between the English and the French in that Part of the World*, published in 1727 as a corrective to the "false" accounts of Native American speeches and customs published by the French in Canada.

In *History of the Five Indian Nations*, Colden made clear that the Native Americans were not savages. "The Five Nations are a poor, and generally called, barbarous People . . . and yet a

⁶⁸ Hoermann, 160. "Some law ought to be passed, whereby the Indians, on their Complaints, may get justice don [sic] them speedily, by summary process. And that, in all dealings between Indians and Christians, Indian evidence be allowed. They, who are acquainted with the Indians and the Indian traders, I am confident, will allow that the Indians have the telling a lye in evidence as much in abhorrence, as traders have the swearing a falsehood." Cadwallader Colden to Governor George Clinton, August 8, 1751, *The Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden, Volume IV (1748-1754)*, John Watts DePeyster Publication Fund Series (New York: New York Historical Society, 1920), 282.

⁶⁹ Cadwallader Colden to Joh. Fred. Gronovius, December 1744, Colden III, 89-90.

⁷⁰ Cadwallader Colden, *History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada, which are Dependent on the Province of New York, and are a Barrier between the English and the French in that Part of the World, Volume I* (A.S. Barnes and Company: New York, 1904), 1.

bright and noble Genius shine through these black Clouds. None of the greatest Roman Heroes have discovered a greater Love to their Country, or a greater Contempt of Death . . . when Liberty came in Competition.”⁷¹ It was true that the Native Americans indulged a “cruel Passion, Revenge”; but, as Colden noted, such indulgence was part of their honor code.⁷² Moreover, Europeans had only contributed to the problem. “We have indeed Reason to be ashamed, that these Infidels, by our Conversation and Neighbourhood, are become worse than they were before they knew us. Instead of Virtues we have only taught them Vices, that they were intirely [sic] free from before that Time.”⁷³ Though he remained firmly in line with his times in espousing a need to “civilize” the Indians, he at least recognized that Europeans often failed to act properly themselves, usually in the name of “private interest.”⁷⁴ Such private interest needed to be stopped, by the governor, for the good of the colony and of the empire. “If these Practices be winked at, instead of faithful Friends, that have manfully fought our Battles for us, the Five Nations will become faithless Thieves and Robbers, and join with every Enemy that can give them any Hopes of Plunder.”⁷⁵ Thus in the very dedication of his book, Colden was again expressing his fervent belief in the need for a strong executive who interfered in local affairs for the good of England as well as the colony. The reference to “private interests,” meanwhile, revealed a hint of Colden’s hatred of factions and his distaste for what he considered prejudiced local leadership. As he readily noted, “The chief Reason, in my Opinion . . . of the French having so far succeeded beyond the English is, that the Indian Affairs are the particular Care of the Governor and other principal Officers in Canada, who have the greatest Knowledge and Authority; whereas those Affairs in New-York are chiefly left to the Management of a few

⁷¹ *History of the Five Indian Nations I*, x

⁷² *Ibid.*, xi

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *History of the Five Indian Nations I*, xi

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, xi-xii.

Traders with the Indians, who have no Care for, or Skill in publick [sic] Affairs, and only mind their private Interest.”⁷⁶

History of the Five Indian Nations contained some of the principal treaties between New York and the Native Americans, as well as copies of official documents concerning the Albany fur trade in 1723. These fur trade documents contain further evidence of Colden’s concern for royal prerogative and the power of England. In particular, they show that he had supported one of his governor’s more controversial acts in 1723. In that year, Governor Burnet had attempted to renew an expired bill from 1720, *An Act for Encouragement of the Indian Trade, and rendering it more beneficial to the Inhabitants of this Province, and for prohibiting the selling of Indian Goods to the French*. The bill proposed exactly what its title suggested: the cessation of all trade between New York merchants and French traders who brought Native American goods and furs to Albany to sell. The governor reasoned that by eliminating the French middlemen, the English Crown would make more money, while the Native Americans would be drawn away from their alliance with France and into a union with England, since they would have greater contact with the English through trips to Albany. Should a war break out between England and France, both the money and the alliance would prove useful. New York’s merchants and their colleagues in England protested the bill in letters to the Lords of Trade and to the king himself. They claimed that Albany was too far away from many of the Indian tribes’ homes for the Indians to come to town to trade themselves; and travelling into French-ruled Canada would be dangerous for the English. Thus without the French to carry the goods between the tribes and New York, the Indian trade would falter. Moreover, the French were in the habit of trading their furs for English goods, especially woolen items. While the governor claimed that ending the fur trade would cripple the French-Canadian economy, the merchants claimed that the French-Canadians would instead

⁷⁶ *History of the Five Indian Nations I*, 22

simply import goods from France, rendering Canada independent of the English colonies and subsequently more likely to attack them.

Cadwallader Colden considered these protests incorrect and saw them as the result of the merchants' personal interests, not their concern for the mother country. In November 1724 he wrote to Governor Burnet in support of the newly-enforced trade blockade, assessing and dismissing the merchants' protests one point at a time. To the charge that the Canadians would obtain their goods directly from France he noted that the passage down the St. Lawrence, the river the French used to get goods to and from the Continent, was so dangerous that the French-Canadians attempted such voyages only once a year.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, the woolen strouds (blankets popular with the Native Americans) they traded the English for came only from England. To obtain them in France would involve a long wait and much more expensive prices. In fact, all the goods the Canadians used in the Indian trade were less expensive if purchased from the English and could not be readily produced by France.⁷⁸ English traders, Colden argued, could purchase the goods at a cheaper price and transport them into Canada faster and with less expense than the French-Canadian middlemen.⁷⁹ The new fur trade policy was eventually enacted, a fact Colden

⁷⁷ *History of the Five Indian Nations I*, 40

⁷⁸ "The most considerable and most valuable Part of their Cargo consists in Strouds, Duffils, Blankets, and other Wollens, which are bought at a much cheaper Rate in England than in France. The Strouds (which the Indians value more than any other Cloathing) are only made in England, and must be transported into France before they can be carried to Canada. Rum is another considerable Branch of the Indian trade, which the French have not, by reason they have no Commodities in Canada fit for the West Indian Market. This they supply with Brandy, at a much dearer Rate than Rum can be purchased at New-York, tho' of no more Value with the Indians. Generally, all the Goods used in the Indian Trade, except Gun-Powder, and a few Trinkets, are sold at Monreal for twice their Value at Albany. To this likewise must be added, the necessity they are under of laying the whole Charge of supporting their Government on the Indian Trade." Cadwallader Colden, *History of Five Indian Nations which are dependent on the Province of New York, and are a Barrier between the English and the French in that Part of the World, Volume II* (A.S. Barnes and company: New York, 1904), 42.

⁷⁹ "Whoever then considers these Advantages New-York has of Canada, in the first buying of their Goods, and in the safe, speedy, and cheap Transportation of them from Britain to the Lakes, free of all manner of Duty or Imposts, will readily agree with me, that the Traders of New-York may sell their Goods in the Indian Countries at half the Price the People of Canada can, and reap twice the Profit they do." *History of Five Indian Nations II*, 46-47.

made sure to note, along with the aside that the trade blockade had proven highly successful in bringing the Natives to Albany and in generating revenue for the Crown and the colony.

Colden's staunch support of the governor and a policy that would benefit the Crown first and foremost won him no friends among the New York merchants. Coupled with his earlier estrangement of the landed class through his insistence upon resurveying the lands, Colden had managed to alienate most of the elite New Yorkers through his insistence upon the preservation or restoration of the royal prerogative. Yet Colden was not one to be swayed by popular opinion. In a letter to Governor Clinton in 1751, he returned to the issue of Native American affairs once more. The commissioner of Indian affairs at that time was Sir William Johnson. He had held the post since 1746, and in that office had accrued a significant amount of work-related debt. Governor Clinton asked that the Assembly pay these debts, since Johnson had acquired them through the performance of his duties as commissioner. The Assembly, however, refused to do so, and Johnson subsequently felt forced to resign his position. Colden's letter addressed Johnson's problems and the Assembly's decisions directly.

Johnson had been a good commissioner, Colden thought, though his ability to persuade the Native Americans to fight on the side of the British in the war with the French in the 1740s had partly come through the presents the governor had enabled him to give to the tribes.⁸⁰ Thanks to the Assembly's refusal to cover Johnson's expenses, "Coll Johnson found himself disabled to carry them on without great prejudice to his private fortunes."⁸¹ Without Johnson the execution of Native American affairs had returned to the hands of the factious Assembly, where

⁸⁰ "At that time Mr Johnson distinguished himself among the Indians by his indefatigable pains among them, and by his compliance with their humours in his dress and conversation with them that he was the chief Instrument, under your Excellency, in persuading them to enter into the War against the French; but that is was principally effected by the very large presents publickly made to them, by your Excellency at that time, and continued through Mr Jonsons hands from time to time till the peace was concluded and for some time afterwards." Cadwallader Colden to Governor George Clinton, August 8, 1751, Colden IV, 272.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 272-273

the elites exploited the fur trade to their own best advantage, regardless of royal prerogative. “The Faction in the Assembly took a method in favour of their friends at Albany which had been often before practised even with Governors themselves, to induce them to comply with the humours of an Assembly, to the prejudice of the prerogative.”⁸² To remedy this situation, Colden suggested the appointment of “one Single person of sufficient ability as superintendent of Indian affairs who shall not be allowed to trade in any shape, directly or indirectly.”⁸³ He argued that the superintendent should be given “an allowance, sufficient to encourage a gentleman fitly qualified for these purposes.”⁸⁴ Finally, “the Superintendant ought constantly to correspond with the Board of Trade, and with all the Governors on the Continent of North America, to give and receive intelligence and advice.”⁸⁵ Once again, Colden expressed his interest in the restoration and preservation of prerogative, this time through the appointment of an individual not affiliated with the Assembly and in close contact with the other Crown officials. These statements on Anglo-Indian relations allowed Colden to express his firm belief in royal prerogative. They also revealed something about the biggest conflict in Colden’s political life: the Assembly versus executive authority.

Colden’s clashes with the Assembly began in 1721 and lasted until he resigned the lieutenant governorship in 1776. His first taste of the tension between Assembly and governor came in the administration of Robert Hunter. Colden was spared the brunt of the disagreements, since he was only the surveyor-general, but what he witnessed left a lasting impact on him, for

⁸² Cadwallader Colden to Governor George Clinton, August 8, 1751, Colden IV, 274.

⁸³ Ibid., 282. Colden hammered home the point of private interests another time: “For all the abuses and negligencies in the management of these affairs have arisen, from the private views the Commissrs of Indian have had, to promote their own trade, and to lay the other traders under difficulties and disadvantages. This of the trade raises perpetual Jealousies among the people employed in it and likewise without neighbouring Colonies and brings the Commissrs into Contempt among the Indians many instances of which can be given, and are well known to all who have any knowledge of the Indian affairs. If these Frauds and abuses in Trade be not effectually prevented, it will be impossible otherwise to preserve the affections of the Indians.” (282)

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Cadwallader Colden to Governor George Clinton, August 8, 1751, Colden IV, 283.

he and Hunter were good friends. Hunter had entered a colony still divided from the Leislerian Revolt of 1688.⁸⁶ Economic division between merchant and landowner had created two opposing blocks of families. Commercial leaders included the Philippses, Van Cortlandts, DeLanceys, and Schuylers. From 1675-1725 they directly opposed landed interests represented by the Morrises and Livingstons. The New York landed were not agrarians in the sense that their southern neighbors were, though. Historian Louis Wright says they were “concerned less with agriculture than with the investment aspects of their land.”⁸⁷ As the economy diversified -- colonists began producing some goods of their own, and building mills -- this observation especially held true. These families formed interest groups more than actual political parties, and their hold on power and place shifted with their feelings toward individual governors and their stance on specific issues.⁸⁸ Intermarriage could also blur these family divides. In general, however, the DeLanceys and the Livingstons would remain opposed to one another for the next seven decades of New York history. These family divisions impacted Colden, who chose to ally with the Livingstons, and thus immediately alienated the DeLanceys. The alienation had tremendous consequences for Colden’s tenure as lieutenant-governor. As the families strove for supremacy in the Assembly,

⁸⁶ New York in 1688 was quite heterogeneous, divided among Dutch, English, and native-born colonists. When news of the Glorious Revolution arrived, chaos erupted. The current head of government, Lieutenant Governor Francis Nicholson, fled the colony in 1689. According to Patricia Bonomi, at that point tensions already present in the uneasy Anglo-Dutch alliance erupted. Jacob Liesler, merchant and militia captain, took over the colony. He headed the colony for nearly two tumultuous years, refusing to step down until he was finally hanged as a traitor May 16, 1691. (76) The succeeding governor, Benjamin Fletcher in 1692, succeeded in rending the colony further through his strict anti-Leislerian stance. Fletcher’s successor, the Earl of Bellomont, tried to correct the situation by allying with the Leislerians. Since the anti-Leislerians contained some of the most prominent families in the colonies, such as the Van Cortlandts, the Livingstons, and the Philippses, Bellomont was under constant attack. John Nanfan, the next governor, was also pro-Leislerian, but he did not retain his governorship long, and his successor, Viscount Cornbury, was decidedly anti-Leislerian. Bonomi notes that thus from 1689-1709 New York experienced continual political conflict, “making factional strife an almost endemic condition of the colony’s public life.” (78) The elite further learned that allying with the governor, or learning how to negate him and his policies, usually through the assembly, was essential.

⁸⁷ Louis Wright, *The Cultural Life of the American Colonies, 1607-1763*, New American Nationa Series (Harper and Brothers: New York, 1957), 21.

⁸⁸ Hoermann, 176.

that body naturally grew quite “factious.” Factious or no, however, members of the Assembly always managed to band together in opposition to the governor.

This clash between legislative and executive powers was a problem not just in New York, but throughout the thirteen colonies, and ultimately led to revolution. The English colonists were enormously fond of the English mixed government, composed of the monarchy, the aristocracy, and Commons. According to historian Bernard Bailyn, by the eighteenth century colonists felt that they had succeeded in replicating this mixed government in America, with colonial assemblies serving as Commons, the governor’s Council as Lords, and the governor as the king’s representative.⁸⁹ In fact, the colonies had not quite succeeded in recreating this government. On the one hand, the colonial governors retained powers that had been limited in England. Governors could prorogue the Assembly, veto legislation, and dismiss judges and create courts.⁹⁰ Yet while the governor was in those matters stronger than the king in England, in terms of patronage, he was increasingly weak. Governors had strict orders from England which they had to follow, and in most colonies the assemblies had learned how to check their influence by appointing their own choices as heads of treasury. Moreover, the governor’s tenure was by no means secure. Subject to political vicissitudes in England, governors were never sure how long their tenure in a colony might last. In a colony already destabilized by conflict between the men who thought themselves natural leaders – such as the DeLanceys and Livingstons – strife was nearly unavoidable.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Bernard Bailyn. *The Origins of American Politics*, The Charles K. Colver Lectures, Brown University, 1965 (Vintage Books of Random House: New York, 1967), 61.

⁹⁰Ibid., 61-69.

⁹¹ Bailyn, 72-105.

One large problem faced Hunter when he assumed the governorship in 1710: that of the control of public money and funding for the government.⁹² To solve those problem, Hunter eventually allied himself with the Morris-Livingston faction in the Assembly.⁹³ The Assembly worked out an agreement in the years 1715-1717 that promised Hunter five years of tax revenues in exchange for his promise to spend public funds according to the Assembly's wishes.⁹⁴ While Hunter was by all accounts successful in achieving his goals and formed an efficient and able Council, he was nonetheless ready to resign by 1720 and return to England. Despite his eight years of squabbles with the Assembly, the legislative body actually praised him upon his departure. Nonetheless, Hunter would go on to remark that New York politics was a story of elite factions whose power could lead to rebellion. Notes historian Alfred Hoermann, "Colden seems to have imbibed much of the same opinions."⁹⁵ These opinions came to the fore especially during the governorships of William Burnet, William Cosby, George Clinton, and Colden's own lieutenant-governorship.

Colden's experiences once Governor Hunter's successor, William Burnet (governor 1721-1728) appointed him to the Council, must have confirmed his low opinion of factions and the Assembly itself and the need to support executive prerogative. As a Councilor, Colden was immediately embroiled in controversy. Burnet had allied himself, like Hunter, with the Morrises,

⁹² Michael Kammen, *Colonial New York: A History*, Vol.13, History of the American Colonies in Thirteen Volumes Series (Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, 1975), 185.

⁹³ Martha Lamb says that Hunter attempted to be conciliatory to all factions within the Assembly, to no avail. Upon his arrival in the colony, "Said he, 'Let every man begin at home, and week the rancor out of his own mind: leave disputes of property to the laws, and injury to the avenger of them, and like good subjects and good Christians, join hearts and hands for the common good.' But this Assembly, like many another before and after it, was cold and suspicious and backward about raising the necessary allowances for the government. The excuse was the former misapplication of the revenue, which had involved the country in debt; and a little later, the poverty of the people was pleaded, which had been caused by the tax to defray the expenses of the late expedition to Canada. Some of the members openly denied the right of the queen to appoint salaries for her colonial officers. No one made more forcible arguments to that point than Stephen DeLancey." (487)

⁹⁴ Kammen, 187. Since Colden had not yet arrived in New York at the time, no record remains of his thoughts on this compromise.

⁹⁵ Hoermann, 11.

which alienated the “opposition” in the Assembly, the Phillipse-DeLancey faction. Four Phillipse supporters resigned from the Council when Burnet refused to call for new Assembly elections. Burnet subsequently appointed Colden to take one of their places. This act did not ingratiate Colden with the Philipse-DeLancey controlled Assembly.⁹⁶ Colden then entangled himself still further with his aforementioned calls for resurveying land and with his support of the blockade of trade with Canada. Both were policies advanced by Burnet and staunchly supported by Colden, regardless of Assembly opinion. When John Montgomerie replaced Burnet in 1728 and seemed to align himself with the DeLancey-Philipse faction, who supported more powers for the legislative body, along with the mercantile interests Colden so scorned, Colden temporarily retired to his country estate of Coldenham. Of his retirement he wrote “I hope I am now settled for some months free from the troublesome broils which mens passions occasion in all publick affairs. . . . A man that has for sometime been tossed upon the Dunghill of mens Passions gratifies all his senses greedily with the quiet and innocent pleasures that Nature freally offers in every step that he treds [sic] in the woods and fields.”⁹⁷

The temporary respite seemed to reinvigorate Colden, since it gave him more time for his hobby of natural science and for his large family.⁹⁸ Life at Coldenham was a bit isolated but comfortable nonetheless. Writing of the estate to his friend Peter Collinson, Colden said that “I have made a small spot of the World which when I first enterd [sic] upon it was the habitation only of wolves and bears and other wild Animals now no unfit habitation for a civilized family so that I may without vanity take comfort of not having been entirely useless in my

⁹⁶ Historians have generally agreed that Burnet sorely lacked the tact that Hunter possessed in managing the tricky political situations of New York. Notes Stephen Steacy, “All these arbitrary removals resulted in antagonism and bitterness on the parts of men the government could not afford to alienate. Moreover, it turned the council from a relatively efficient deliberative body, as it had been under Hunter, into a cockpit of party chieftains.” (39)

⁹⁷ Cadwallader Colden to William Douglass, undated, Colden I, 271-272.

⁹⁸ Daughter Elizabeth was born in 1719, followed by Cadwallader, Jr. in 1722, Jane in 1724, Alice in 1725, Sarah in 1727, John in 1729, Catharine in 1731, and David in 1733. In addition, Colden and Alice had lost two other children as infants.

Generation.”⁹⁹ The Coldens had various slaves to work inside the house and out in the fields, while the sons supervised their efforts.¹⁰⁰ Colden also built a canal linking his property with the Hudson River.¹⁰¹ The idyll at Coldenham did not last, however. Montgomerie established at least a superficial peace with all factions in the Assembly and Council, and Colden felt comfortable enough to return to city. The peace proved temporary. Montgomerie was replaced in 1732 with William Cosby, whose tenure would elicit some of Colden’s strongest statements yet on royal prerogative.

William Cosby entered the colony in serious debt.¹⁰² His previous lieutenant-governorship in Minorca had been a disaster, and Colden viewed his appointment with disgust, believing the king had been deceived into appointing such a man. “How such a man after such a flagrant Instance of Tyranny and Robbery came to be entrusted with the Government of an English Colony and to be made Chancellor and keeper of the Kings Conscience in that Colony is not easy for a Common understanding to conceive without entertaining thoughts much to the Disadvantage of the Honour and Integrity of the Kings Ministers.”¹⁰³ Almost Cosby’s first act as governor was demanding half the salary of Councilor and acting governor Rip Van Dam. Van Dam was understandably upset by the request, and suggested that Cosby in turn share half of the salary he had already earned in England for the position. The squabble soon boiled over into a

⁹⁹Cadwallader Colden to Peter Collinson, May 1742, Colden II, 262-263.

¹⁰⁰ The exact number of slaves Colden owned is unknown, though he referred to at least one who helped his wife, and three more who worked in the fields. The children clearly grew up with slaves. Colden admonished son David by age ten to act as an adult and not play with the slave children. Fingerhut, 5-6.

¹⁰¹ In fact, he was an early proponent of the canal line later followed by the Erie Canal – for which his grandson Cadwallader David was very supportive as a New York state legislator.

¹⁰² According to Colden, Cosby was already y for his poor management of finances, as his tenure on the island of Minorca showed. “He was sent Lt Governor to Minorca where he govern’d in a very Arbitrary manner and acted as if he thought no measures unlawfull or dishonorable [sic] that could serve to make his Fortune and as if the Government were only given him to make money by any means that his absolute and Despotie power in that Island could give him.” Cadwallader Colden. *The Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden, Volume IX: Additional Letters and Papers, 1749-1775, and Some of Colden’s Writings*, John Watts DePeyster Publication Fund Series (New York: New York Historical Society, 1937), History of Governor William Cosby’s Administration and of Lieutenant-Governor George Clarke’s Administration through 1737, 283.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 286.

legal battle, which Cosby proceeded to win by appeal.¹⁰⁴ The governor then decided to remove the current chief justice, Lewis Morris, and replace him with James DeLancey, without asking the Council's advice.¹⁰⁵ This action joined Colden to the ranks of the unhappy. With old friends William Smith, Sr., and James Alexander, and political ally Lewis Morris, Colden wrote a series of letters criticizing Cosby for mismanaging the colony, exercising power over the courts that only the king had, and worrying only about the state of his own purse. John Peter Zenger, editor of the *New York Weekly Journal*, published Colden's and his friends' critiques. The articles proposed giving the Assembly more power, letting freemen elect mayors and holding Assembly elections at least every three years. The suggestion that the Assembly's rights be expanded out of character for Colden, given his distaste for the Assembly and its usurpation of executive prerogative. As historian Stephen Steacy notes, however, "None of these . . . were efforts to remove from the council and the governor legislative or administrative power. Rather, this was only an effort to regularize and to engrave on the tablets of statutory law conditions that usually obtained."¹⁰⁶ Though Colden was writing in support of the Assembly, he was attempting to preserve the king's power by limiting the influence of a man who he thought was damaging the Crown's image. He also noted that the *Weekly Journal* "among other well wrote papers published several that could not be justified and of which perhaps the Authors upon more cool

¹⁰⁴ Says William Smith, Jr., of this breach of protocol, "He did not ask their opinion or advice on this unguarded measure, which added fresh oil to the flame, already spread through the colony, and excited the fears of the multitude." William Smith. *The History of the Province of New-York, Volume I: From the First Discovery to the Year 1732*, ed. Michael Kammen (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 1972), 7.

¹⁰⁵ According to Colden, Cosby announced this removal ex post facto. "We were sat in Council when he said that he had removed Mr. Morris and appointed Ja De Lancey in his room and thought this the most proper place to give the first notice of it Upon which I said Then your Excellency only tells us what you have allready done to which he answer'd yes and I replied It is what I could not have advise and He very briskly return'd to it I do not ask your advice. This put his having the Consent of the Council out of the Question." Colden IX, *History of Governor William Cosby's Administration and of Lieutenant-Governor George Clarke's Administration through 1737*, 298.

¹⁰⁶ Steacy, 79.

reflexion are now ashamed for in some of them they raked into mens private Weaknesses and secrets of Families which had no Relation to the publick.”¹⁰⁷

In November 1734, Cosby decided the paper had gone too far, and issued an order to burn publicly the issues containing what he deemed “libel.” Zenger was soon thereafter arrested for publishing the articles. William Smith, Sr., James Alexander, and Andrew Hamilton served as Zenger’s defense attorneys. Zenger was ultimately acquitted because the court ruled that he had only printed the truth about the governor, meaning he had not printed libel. Lewis Morris, meantime, sailed to England to complain about the governor’s abuses in general. Cosby did not live to see what happened in England, however, for he died March 10, 1736. As William Smith, Jr., commented, by the time he died he was “almost universally detested.”¹⁰⁸

Cosby had suggested his own successor, George Clarke. Clarke had obviously been an ally of Cosby, but at least he did not give Colden reason to worry about diminution of the Crown’s power during his administration. Colden managed to reside fairly peacefully on the Council until 1743, when the king appointed a new governor, George Clinton. Clinton arrived to face an Assembly stronger than it had been under his predecessors. By 1740 the governor’s powers were limited somewhat. No longer, as in the days of Hunter and Burnet did his salary come in a lump sum along with money for other expenses. Thus the governor had to cooperate more with the Assembly, or the legislature would delay payment. The Assembly was fashioning itself into something more akin to Commons, with parties and with power over finances. The opposition party of Philipse-DeLancey acquired the name of the Court party – it had been in control of the Assembly since 1728 – while the Morris-Livingston party was called the Country

¹⁰⁷ Colden IX, *History of Governor William Cosby’s Administration and of Lieutenant-Governor George Clarke’s Administration thorough 1737*, 319.

¹⁰⁸ William Smith. *The History of the Province of New-York, Volume II*, ed. Michael Kammen (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 1972), 22.

party.¹⁰⁹ Clinton initially allied himself with the Court party and relied upon James DeLancey as his chief adviser. But the two experienced a falling-out in early 1746, however, during a night of drinking. The precise nature of their argument remains unknown, but the evening ended with DeLancey threatening to make Clinton suffer.¹¹⁰ Historian Allan Russell Raymond speculates that DeLancey had probably grown more independent of Clinton due to the appointment as chief justice. At the same time as his split with DeLancey, Clinton had to attend an important meeting with the Native American tribes in Albany. Council members were, by tradition, supposed to accompany the governor on such trips, but they all, regardless of faction, pleaded poor health, family concerns, or prior engagements for this particular trip. Colden too claimed illness and a reluctance to leave his family, but he nonetheless attended. His attendance turned out to be to his and the governor's advantage, since Clinton fell ill during the trip, and Colden had to take his place in the talks with the Indians. From that moment forward, Clinton would rely upon Colden as his right-hand man, even having Colden write his speeches for him. In turn, Colden staunchly defended Clinton's decisions and his prerogative, as the king's representative. He had plenty of opportunities to do so.

The ever-more-powerful Assembly proved especially restive during Clinton's governorship. One immediate controversy arose from Clinton's aforementioned 1746 trip to Albany for the meeting with the Indians. Colden wrote an account of the trip, which had resulted in a new treaty between New York and the Native Americans. The Assembly read the account and immediately objected to Colden's statement that no one had wanted to travel with the governor. They then published their complaints and demanded that the account of the councilor's

¹⁰⁹Kammen, 200-203. Why they received these names is unclear, although John Michael Dixon speculates that Colden named the parties thus during Cosby's tenure, when he (Colden) and his allies were in opposition to the government, much as the Country party in England had been.

¹¹⁰Raymond Allan Russell, "The Political Career of Cadwallader Colden," (Ph.D. diss, Ohio State, 1971) 58.

avoidance be removed. Colden claimed that the councilors had indeed tried to avoid the trip, and that the Assembly simply objected to the treaty itself, not to the circumstances surrounding it. Such an objection was petty enough, but it was not the real problem. Rather, the Assembly's publication of its grievances before its spoke to the governor seemed to threaten the government itself. "I must observe to your Excellency," wrote Colden to Clinton, "that the method, which these Gentlemen have taken to censure this Paragraph, cannot be justified by any precedents in Parliament (unless it were in the worst of times when there was a settled design to distroy [sic] the Constitution of Government) thus to apply to the People by publication, without any address or application to your Excellency, or to any other superior Authority."¹¹¹ To decide whether or not to censure the paragraph, Colden suggested using the Council as a sort of court. "My reason for saying this enquiry was more proper for the Privy Council was, That in the present case we are all parties, but in the Privy Council Your Excellency from your own Knowledge could judge of the Truth or Falsity of it, as you are indifferent between us."¹¹² Clearly Colden thought the Assembly was behaving rebelliously and exercising power not properly its own.¹¹³

The Assembly's exertion of power continued. When Clinton asked it to finance a military expedition, without revealing the details of the expedition, the Assembly refused. Troops went unpaid, leading to riots both in New York and in its sister colony New Jersey in 1747. A concerned Colden instructed his wife that "you must keep yourself and the children in readiness to come away for this place [New York City] in case you have any account of the Mutineers marching downwards form Albany for they have openly threatened to take their pay in

¹¹¹Cadwallader Colden to Governor George Clinton, January 19, 1747, Colden III, 343-344.

¹¹²Ibid., 342.

¹¹³ Colden's loyalty to the crown and his defense of executive prerogative earned him Clinton's loyalty, at least in this instance. Wrote Clinton, "I can only assure you as you entered vollontarly with me and took my part against a Haughty Insolent sett [sic] of people you may be assurd I will niver [sic] drop you." Governor George Clinton to Cadwallader Colden, January 22, 1747, Colden III, 357.

plunder wherever they go.”¹¹⁴ Officially, Colden fumed about the Assembly’s disrespect to the king and to the monarch’s authority. “Perhaps this Province may be forced to pay this money with Interest and their ungratefull [sic] and undutyfull [sic] behaviour to the King in the Character of his Governour be one reason why they may not be consider’d so graciously as otherwise they might hope to be.”¹¹⁵ The consequences of such actions, he noted, would affect everyone. “If this should happen [the money be due with interest] to be the case we who have been most averse from these dissensions and contentions may suffer equally if not more then they who are most guilty.”¹¹⁶ In an anonymous pamphlet, *Address to the Freeholders*, Colden defended Clinton and sought to impress the people of New York with the gravity of refusing to pay the troops. “The Govr says that he has risqued the whole of his Estate in drawing Bills for the payment of the forces at Albany after the Assembly had refused to advance money for that purpose. . . . The County of Albany may be destroy’d and the inhabitants murdr’d if the Governor will not assist them at the risque of his private fortune.”¹¹⁷ When Clinton suggested that the matter ultimately be decided by the monarch, the Assembly objected and, Colden thought, headed into open rebellion. “When your Excellency in answer to the Resolves of the 8th of Novr said that as you differ’d from them in opinion you would refer the Matter to his Majesty and his Ministers and punctually put in Execution what orders you shall receive on that head The assembly in their Replication resolv’d that who ever advised that answer are enemies to the constitution of this Government which seems to imply that by the Constitution of this

¹¹⁴Cadwallader Colden to Alice Chrystie Colden, June 7, 1747, Colden III, 401.

¹¹⁵Address to the Freeholders and Freemen of the Cities and Counties of the Province of New York on Occasion of the ensuing [sic] Elections for Representatives in General Assembly, Colden III, 315.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 316.

¹¹⁷Address to the Freeholders, Colden III, 314.

Government the King has no authority to interpose in Differences between a Governor and an assembly of this Province and seems to be a claim of Independency. [emphasis added]”¹¹⁸

Colden’s alarm at the liberties and powers the Assembly assumed only grew with time. The issue of independent salary for Crown officials, such as governor and Indian superintendent, continued to plague him. In 1749 he wrote that “this unmeasurable increase of popular power by which the proper Ballance of power essential to the English Constitution is entirely distroy’d in the northern Colonies is wholly owing to the Governors having no subsistence but from the Asemblies in their respective Governments.”¹¹⁹ Lack of funding forced the governors to comply with the Assembly; when they tried to rely upon the monarch’s ministers for support, they received none. Thus the government grew further unbalanced. “I can give several instances,” Colden wrote, “since I came into America where Governors have for several years stood firm to the Kings Instructions in support of his prerogative and in that time waited for assistance from the Kings Ministers and after all were obliged to comply with the usurpations of the Assembly or starve or be sunk in debt and some of their families remarkably suffer’d on yt account without any relief from ye Crown.”¹²⁰ Clearly the Crown, or at least the ministers, were not blameless. Yet Colden still felt that the English form of mixed government was best, and that the ultimate problem lay with the Assembly and the factious people it housed. Indeed, the family connections which so ruled New York created conflicts in any government office they touched. No doubt Colden was thinking of James DeLancey when he wrote that “the office of Chief Justice has more influence on the public affairs in this Country than can well be imagined. No man that has any Property can think himself independent of the Courts of Justice however carefull his behaviour in life may be. . . . When then a Chief Justice puts himself at the head of a party in this

¹¹⁸ Cadwallader Colden to Governor George Clinton, January 5, 1747, Colden III, 329-330.

¹¹⁹ Cadwallader Colden to John Catherwood, November 21, 1747, Colden IV, 161.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

Country he becomes as formidable at the head of the Laws as the Popes were in the days of Ignorance at the head of the Monks and friers [sic].”¹²¹ The solution to this problem turned, once again, upon English intervention. “Chief Justices born in this Country have fallen into these party disputes either threw [sic] ambition or family interests and therefor [sic] it seems most for the due administration of Justice that the Chief Justice (at least) should be sent from England as was the practise formerly till about the year 1715.”¹²² While English officials did not always offer reliable assistance to all the problems, as the comment upon governors’ salaries reveal, they at least offered a better solution than New York’s families presented.

Colden’s dislike of James DeLancey only increased when the king appointed DeLancey lieutenant governor in 1747. Colden had hoped to be appointed himself, since he had served on the Council for decades and since DeLancey was already the chief justice, as well as the head of a powerful anti-Clinton faction. Clinton was so disgruntled by the appointment that he refused to allow DeLancey’s appointment until he (Clinton) left New York in 1753.¹²³ Upon Clinton’s return to England, DeLancey became lieutenant governor, a position he would hold until his death in 1760.¹²⁴ At that point, Colden, as oldest member of the Council, finally became

¹²¹Cadwallader Colden to Governor William Shirley, July 25, 1749, Colden IV,124-125.

¹²²*Ibid.*, 125.

¹²³ Clinton wrote to Colden of the appointment, “I have a new Scar to open to you at wch I am greatly moved. The day before Yesterday Waddle arrived from London and brought me a Notification from ye Dukes of Newcastle that Chief Justice DeLancey was appointed Leut Governr of this Province and by a latter from sr Peter I find it was obtained by his means who has insinuated so far to His Grace yt we were upon good tirms [sic] together, and by ye means of a Defamation wch has been lodged agst you in England by their Faction and their Partys here, which has Succeeded so far, yet I am wholly disappointed in Thy Expectations of what I was confident I could Secure to you.” Governor George Clinton to Cadwallader Colden, January 31, 1747, Colden IV, 10. Clinton then wrote to the Duke of Newcastle about DeLancey’s appointment. “I must again earnestly recommend it to your Grace that Cadwallader Colden who is now the first in his Majesty’s Council be apointed [sic] Lt Govr and yt such encouragement be given to him as I formerly desir’d He has under all the difficulties which have been most inperiously thrown upon me assisted me with his advice and tho he has been 25 years in the Council and enjoy’d the personal friendship of all the proceeding Govrs (Mr Cosby only excepted) since he came into this province this verulent party are not able to fix any one definite charge against him.” Governor George Clinton to Duke of Newcastle, May 30, 1747, Colden III 392.

¹²⁴ Clinton returned to England because he felt that the office of governor had been so overrun by the Assembly that it had no real power left. His successor Danvers Osborne observed the personal affronts the governor received and then committed suicide the day after his inauguration. Hoermann, 179.

lieutenant-governor of New York. Four times (1760-1762, 1763-1765, 1769-1771, and 1774-1775) he was called upon to serve as the acting governor, while awaiting the appointment and arrival of the official appointee. What should have been a relatively peaceful time for an aging man became instead a stressful series of years due to events beyond Colden's control. It was in these final two decades of his career that Colden could finally be identified as a loyalist.¹²⁵

New York in the 1760s was a troubled place. North America had been embroiled in conflict with France since 1754, and as the colonists participated in the war, they grew ever more aware of their own identity, separate from Great Britain. The army distinguished between colonists and Englishmen, refusing officer positions to colonists such as George Washington. Meanwhile, at the end of the war, the English government issued the Proclamation of 1763, which forbade English colonists from settling beyond the Appalachian Mountains. Land-hungry colonist resented the proclamation, which they felt favored the Native Americans, who had complained of land encroachments, but did not help the colonists themselves, who wanted and needed more land. The English government seemed to be ignoring colonial desires and needs. Moreover, Parliament passed a new series of taxes on the colonies at the end of the conflict. The legislature reasoned that since the war had been fought primarily to protect the colonists (after all, the war had broken out in the colonies), the least the colonists could do was pay for the expense of the conflict. They also should pay, Parliament reasoned, for the maintenance of English troops stationed on the frontier as a bulwark against Native Americans and the remaining French in Canada. Many colonists, however, felt that they had already contributed to the war by fighting in the battles. Moreover, many did not see the need for the army to remain in North

¹²⁵ By the late 1750s these tensions were already clear. "The 1750s were to witness the rise of a legal fraternity that increasingly dominated political affairs in the colony. When he assumed public office, in 1760, Colden would hold them responsible for many of the problems he encountered in his own administration and thereafter made them the particular object of his loathing and scorn." Hoermann, 178.

America. Colonists had just proven themselves capable of dealing with enemies. Most importantly when it came to taxes, colonists maintained that they did not have representatives in Parliament. Taxes might be endured, if only those to be taxed had representatives.

In such a climate, a governor who thought the king should assert his power more frequently was doomed to unpopularity. Of course, Colden was not alone in his political beliefs. In fact, during the Revolution New York became famous for its large loyalist population. Yet Colden's uncompromising personality and repeated attempts to strengthen royal prerogative at all times alienated even fellow supporters of the Crown. By the end of Clinton's tenure he had managed to alienate the Livingstons, those with whom he had formerly sided, and his great friend and political support in the Assembly, James Alexander, was dead by the time Colden took office. Much like the Crown, Colden refused to compromise during the 1760s and 1770s, when compromise had become a necessity.

Colden's first controversy as lieutenant governor involved the replacement of James DeLancey, whose death in 1760 had left the office of chief justice vacant. Instead of appointing someone within the colony to fill the position, he wrote to the prime minister, Lord Halifax, asking that he choose the replacement. Boston lawyer Benjamin Pratt received the office, "at the pleasure of the king."¹²⁶ The appointment of an outsider whom the Assembly could not remove outraged a number of New Yorkers. The situation only went further down hill from there. Colden acted as governor while he waited for the arrival of new governor Robert Monckton in 1761. In November of that year, the Livingstons crafted a bill in the Assembly that gave governors and judges a salary, but only if judges were commissioned for good behavior. The "good behavior" clause would allow the Assembly to remove judges who acted in a fashion of which they disapproved, or to block any attempts to remove a judge of whom that body did

¹²⁶ Lamb II, 690-691.

approve. Of course Colden disliked this clause. He had already been hard at work, to ensure that judges would serve “at the king’s pleasure,” meaning they would be reviewed by the governor and Council for possible recall at any time.¹²⁷ The bill, however, placed Colden in an untenable position. He could veto the bill and thus his salary or sign it and earn a scolding from his superiors. He signed it, along with an accompanying bill to protect judges from arbitrary removal. Monckton defended Colden’s actions, but by then the Assembly was already irate at Colden’s actions.¹²⁸

Colden’s actions in support of royal prerogative did not stop there, however. In 1764, again acting as governor in Monckton’s absence, he outraged the legal community by permitting one Cunningham of the court case *Forsey v. Cunningham* to appeal his case to the provincial council. Cunningham had been convicted of assault and battery against Forsey and fined £1500. This fine Cunningham considered excessive, and thus he appealed to the Council for a reassessment of the verdict. Previously, appeals could occur only when the court was shown to have committed an error, not simply when the defendant disliked a verdict. This practice preserved the sanctity of trial by jury, according to common thought.¹²⁹ Colden, however, rejected this tradition. “An error, I conceive, runs through all the Arguments I have heard on this subject, in not distinguishing between the Laws and the execution of them. The executory judicial powers are certainly in the Crown,” he declared.¹³⁰ Moreover, English law specifically permitted the Privy Council to hear appeals, and in the colonies, the governor and Council were the equivalent of the Privy Council. “It is evident, from what has been said, that no writ of Error

¹²⁷ Hoermann, 179-180.

¹²⁸ Tiedmann, 52.

¹²⁹ For a more complete discussion of the case and its implications, see *The Albany Law Journal: A Weekly Record of the Law and the Lawyers, Conducted by Isaac Grant Thompson. Volume XIX, January to July 1879* (Weed, Parson, and Company: Albany, 1879), 432.

¹³⁰ Cadwallader Colden, Opinion on Appeals. *Letters and Papers of Cadwallader Colden, Volume VII (1765-1775)*, John Watts DePeyster Publican Fund Series (New York: New York Historical Society, 1911-1938), 1.

can by Common Law lye in the Colonies because they are no Parcel of the Realm of England. No Act of Parliament has extended Writs of Error to the Colonies. The king has not given Authority to the Governer [sic] and Councill for this Province to hear and determine on Writs of Error but has given the Authority to hear and determine on appeals.”¹³¹ Ultimately, the question of the appeal came down to a matter of prerogative. “In all the Colonies appeals to the King lye [sic]. This is essential to the Prerogative of the Crown, without which the dependence of the Colonies cannot be preserved.”¹³²

Colden’s attempts to protect the governor’s power coincided perfectly with two new policies from Parliament: enforcement of the Navigation Acts, and the Sugar Act. The enforcement of the Navigation Acts, which banned smuggling and required all trade to be conducted in English ships, probably would have generated little protest from merchants had it been enforced by itself. Instead, first Minister Grenville simultaneously suggested the 1764 Sugar Act. This act, designed to to stop the sugar trade between North America and the Spanish and French West Indies did not raise the sugar tax, but simply enforced the existing one. Moreover, it lowered the duty on molasses. The reduction did not set well with North American merchants, however, since they relied upon molasses as a trade item, and lowering the duty meant merchants had to charge less for molasses and thus make less money when they traded. The navigation and sugar bills were then followed by the Currency Act, which forced the colonial assemblies to cease printing paper money. The assemblies had printed quite a bit during the war, to the point of devaluing the legal tender. Banning paper currency, however, just made it more difficult for colonists to purchase necessary items. While England saw these policies simply as a method of recouping losses from the French and Indian War, and to reign in colonial

¹³¹ Cadwallader Colden, Opinion on Appeals, Colden VII, 4.

¹³²Ibid., 2

excesses, the colonists felt that a conspiracy to suppress their liberties was afoot. On October 18, 1764, the New York Assembly officially lodged a protest with the English government. In three petitions they argued for the finality of trial by jury (important in light of the Forsey case), restoration of West Indies trade (a response to the Sugar Act), the need for paper money and bills of credit (a response to the Currency Act), and the right of the Assemblies to consent to new taxes.¹³³ The British ministry continued to attempt to re-assert control over the colonies, however, despite protests. In 1765, the most widely-protested policy thus far arrived: the Stamp Act.

Passed by Parliament on March 22, 1765, the Stamp Act placed a tax on all printed goods, such as newspapers, legal documents, and playing cards. The money would be used to pay for troops stationed along the western border of the colonies. Colonists objected because the tax did not address external trade as the Sugar Act did, but rather was a direct tax, and one that would pay for troops they did not feel they needed. Most objectionable of all, colonists thought, was the fact that they were being taxed by Parliament without having representation in that body. The “virtual representation” Parliament claimed the colonists had – that colonists were represented by all the members of the body, who worked for the good of the entire empire – no longer seemed sufficient to colonists. As if the tax were not enough, Parliament passed the Quartering Act March 24, 1765, requiring colonists to house and feed the troops stationed in their boundaries. The Assembly by this time had had enough. Led by the Livingstons, William Smith, and the rather radical John Morin Scott, the Assembly immediately opposed the acts. They authorized delegates to attend the Stamp Act Congress, which insisted that the Act was

¹³³ Kammen, 350.

unconstitutional and monetarily impractical.¹³⁴ Resistance could not, however, prevent the stamps from coming to New York. Colden, watching the situation in Boston, where protests against the Act had already grown violent, requested extra troops in July for Fort George, New York City's chief stronghold. General Gage agreed to send troops if the situation seemed to demand it. Ultimately, new troops did not come to the fort. Nonetheless, Colden, the perpetual supporter of king's prerogative, was determined to enforce this new law in the absence of newly-appointed governor Henry Moore. To oppose Parliament, after all, was to oppose the king's ministers and proper rule and authority. By September Colden was consulting the Council about how to address any possible violent protests of the Stamp Act, a possibility he deemed likely in light of Boston protests and the complaints already circulating in New York's newspapers and pamphlets. Colden told the Council that "it must give every well wisher to his Country the greatest Pain and Anxiety to see, the Publick Papers crammed with Treason; the Minds of the People disturbed, excited and encouraged to revolt against the Government, to subvert the Constitution and Trample upon the Laws."¹³⁵ Despite Colden's concerns, the Council and the mayor of New York City saw no need to worry about riots and counseled against any additions to the fort's barriers, troops, or supplies. Colden remained unconvinced that the populace would remain peaceful, but he agreed to abide by the Council's advice

The stamps arrived in New York on October 24, 1765. A mob threatened the ship bearing the stamps, making authorities move them to Fort George. While New Yorkers allowed the stamps to travel to the fort without incident, they forced the ship captain to supply his own sloop for transporting the stamps. The stamps arrived safely by sloop at the fort, but pamphlets calling

¹³⁴ Becker, 26-28. According to tradition, Parliament did not levy taxes directly to raise revenue. Parliament instead regulated trade and left internal taxes for revenue to the approval of colonial assemblies. The Stamp Act, however, was clearly an attempt to raise revenue directly without colonial approval. Colonists also argued that, without paper money, they could not pay the tax, even though it was inexpensive.

¹³⁵ Colden VII, 59.

for a gathering to protest the stamps began circulating, signed “Vox Populi.” On October 31, merchants called a meeting for all New Yorkers, at which participants agreed not to sell or import English goods until the Act was repealed. Some sailors and boys then paraded the streets and broke windows. Real mob behavior began, however, on November 1, distribution day.¹³⁶ That day, for reasons unclear, Colden took an oath to uphold the king’s law under all circumstances. He then received a threatening, anonymous letter: “The People of this City and Province of New York have been inform’d yt you bound yourself under an Oath to be the Chief Murderer of their Rights and Privileges, by acting as an Enemy to your King and Country to Liberty and Mankind in the Inforcement of the Stamp-Act which we are unanimously determined shall never take Place among us, so long as a Man has Life to defend his injured Country. . . . If you dare to Perpetrate any Such murderous Act, you’ll bring your grey Hairs with Sorrow to the Grave, You’ll die a Martyr to your own Villainy, and be Hang’d, like Porteis, upon a Sign-Post, as a Memento to all wicked Governors, and that ever Man, that assists you, Shall be, surely put To Death.”¹³⁷ A mob gathered that night outside the fort and burned Colden in effigy – it had “The Drummer,” an allusion to his role in Scotland in 1715, written on his back, a stamped paper in one hand, and a devil whispering in his ear – and broke into his coach house and burned his sleds, carriage, and coach house furniture on the lawn of the fort.¹³⁸ In addition, they dared the fort to fire upon them. Colden and Major James refused to respond, instead watching the fire until the crowd grew bored and ended the night with a riot through the streets, culminating at a brothel.¹³⁹ The next day, many property owners were rather appalled by the mob’s actions. These more conservative men, including one of the Livingstons, met with Colden

¹³⁶ Becker, 28-31.

¹³⁷ Colden VII, 84-85.

¹³⁸ Hoermann, 181-182.

¹³⁹ Philip Ranlet. *The New York Loyalists* (The University of Tennessee Press: Knoxville, 1986), 15-18.

and the Council. The Council advised Colden not to enforce the Act until Governor Moore arrived. The very next day, November 3, Colden received a warning of further threats to his family and any other supporters of the Act.¹⁴⁰ The Council's advice must have seemed sound in light of such threats, yet Colden held out for two more days, trying to quiet the mob simply by sending the stamps back to the ship. When that did not work, and anarchy seemed to prevail in the form of the mobs, he finally heeded the Council's advice. On November 5, Colden gave the stamps to the mayor of New York City in return for a receipt, and agreed that he would not enforce the Act until Governor Moore arrived. General Gage gave his hearty approval of this decision via letter, noting that any other action probably would have resulted in a civil war in New York. An unhappy Colden waited for the new governor's arrival, and when Moore landed, defended his actions and then returned to his estate at Flushing. Still lieutenant governor, he continued to support the Crown's authority, as his actions in the 1770s reveal. His boldest statements in support of the king's prerogative, however, had been made by the time of the Stamp Act.

By the 1760s, Colden had proven himself to be a devoted supporter of royal prerogative. Through his stance on land grants and Native American affairs, his support of the executive rather than the Assembly, and his actions as lieutenant governor, Colden demonstrated a firm belief in the importance of the Crown's authority and right. Such dedication ultimately isolated

¹⁴⁰ The note, simply signed Benevolus, read as follows. "Sir, As one who is an enemy to Mischief of all kinds, and a Well wisher to you and your Family I give you this Notice that Evil is determined against you and your adherents and will in all human Probability take Effect [sic], unless Speedily prevented by your public Declaration upon Oath, That you will never, in any Manner, countenance, or assist, in the Execution of the Stamp Act, or anything belonging to it; and also, that you will, to the utmost of your Power, endeavour to get it repeal'd in England, and meanwhile prevent its taking Effect here. Your life may depend upon the Notice you take of this Advice. P.S. I well know the Guides of the People would only shew you that they may dare also; but don't incense them, for God's Sake, by an impolitical Contempt! Your are not safe at Flushing." Anonymous Warning Sent to Cadwallader Colden, Colden VII, 88.

him, with the exception of family and a few firm friends. These friendships and their role in developing and supporting Colden's politics, remain to be explored.

CHAPTER 2

THE CONVERGENCE OF SCIENCE AND POLITICS

Cadwallader Colden's political beliefs were, as discussed, decidedly royalist. His unwavering commitment to royal prerogative led to isolation and, eventually, threats against his life. While his dedication to the Crown has been well-explored by historians, the reasons for this dedication have not. Colden never directly stated why he felt so strongly about the royal prerogative. Rather, his writings simply always emphasize the fact, which historians have taken at face value. Also taken at face value is Colden's passion for science. Historians have emphasized his fascination with various specialties, as well as his contributions in botany and other fields. These two facets of Colden's existence – his political beliefs and scientific interests – did not exist independent of one another, however. The link between the two is the friendships Colden formed through shared scientific interests.

A review of Colden's letters reveals several close friendships maintained throughout his adult life. James Logan, John Bartram, James Alexander, Peter Collinson, and Benjamin Franklin were all steadfast friends of Colden by 1742. These men were first drawn together through mutual fascination with all things scientific. Colden formed other friendships based on a mutual interest in science – he wrote frequently to Boston physician William Douglass, for instance, along with army officer John Rutherford, as well as botanists Peter Kalm and Carl Linnaeus – but it was with the aforementioned five men that he discussed his scientific pursuits most fully. Their letters discussed topics ranging from cartography, to optics, to botany, to medical conditions, to astronomical observations. Through letters they maintained a network of

Enlightenment thought that extended across the Atlantic. While science formed the foundation of their friendships, politics also entered the equation. Each man was, as befitting Enlightenment gentlemen, interested in, if not directly involved in, the political events of the day.

Unsurprisingly, news items and controversial topics received mention in the letters among the men. Here Colden could express his outrage at the Assembly and receive honest feedback not just about his latest experiments but also about his political decisions. With the exception of Benjamin Franklin, Colden's scientific correspondents shared his beliefs; and even Franklin shared them until late into the eighteenth century. It is not much of a leap to say that these shared beliefs reinforced Colden's dedication to the royal prerogative. While friendship alone cannot account for Colden's loyalty to the Crown, it can help explain why this loyalty never wavered. In this way, Colden's science influenced his politics.

Many branches of science, from astronomy to physics, intrigued Colden. Botany formed one of Colden's first avenues of scientific exploration. Upon his arrival in Philadelphia in 1710 he immediately began exploring the flora of his new home. Colden's explorations reflected the fact that botany had been growing in importance in Europe for several decades before his arrival in the colonies. A large part of the reason for botanical pursuits was, of course, the usefulness of plants in medicine. Many physicians served as their own apothecaries, and thus they kept "physick gardens," small plots filled with a variety of helpful herbs. By the seventeenth century, medical schools realized that students could profit from studying plants firsthand, so they began making efforts to establish gardens for study.¹⁴¹ The Society of Apothecaries in Chelsea, England, created a public apothecary garden in the 1670s. Oxford created its first botanical garden and hired its first professor of botany in the 1680s; Cambridge followed suit with a chair

¹⁴¹ England was actually a little behind in this movement. The Senate of Venice established the Green Garden as a supplement to the medical school in Padua in 1545. Raymond P. Stearns. *Science in the British Colonies of America* (University of Illinois Press: Chicago, 1970), 47.

of botany in 1724. The city of Edinburgh saw a need for a garden by 1676, and it and the university there established three within the decade.¹⁴² Part of this new fascination with plants came from the colonization of North America. According to Raymond Stearns, the discovery of plants previously unknown in Europe helped bring an end to the simple herbalist and created separate, specialized fields such as pharmacy and zoology.¹⁴³ Colden's lament that he was not well-versed enough in botany stemmed partly from the plethora of new plants, and partly from the old system of classification still in use in England. John Ray in 1686 had published *Historia Plantarum*, classifying plants through comparing characteristics such as seed, flower, and habitat. Classification according to that system took a long period of time, since the plant needed to be observed from flowering to seeding, while the comparisons were not always readily apparent.¹⁴⁴ Colden thus rejoiced when a new system appeared.

In 1735 Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus published his new system of classification in *Systema Naturae*. Linnaeus' system classified plants according to reproductive organs in plants. This method was much simpler and quicker. Colden was the first person in the colonies to apply the Linnaean system to local plants. As he wrote to Linnaeus in 1748, "When I came into this part of the world near forty years since I understood only the Rudiments of Botany and If found so much difficulty in applying it to the many unknown plants that I met with that was quite discouraged and laid aside all attempts in that way near 30 years till I casually met with your Books [Colden exaggerates a bit here, since he did infrequently mention botanical issues even after he ran into problems with Ray's classification.] If then I have been able to do any

¹⁴² Hoermann, 3.

¹⁴³ Stearns, 46.

¹⁴⁴ Andrea Wulf. *The Brother Gardeners: Botany, Empire, and the Birth of an Obsession* (Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 2009), 52.

thing worth your notice it is intirely [sic] owing to the excellency of your method.”¹⁴⁵ It took a few years for Linnaeus’ system to reach the colonies, and then the system did not go unchallenged, as various people held to Ray’s methods. As late as 1742 Colden would lament that “few in America have any taste of Botany and still fewer if any of these have ability to form and keep a Botanical Garden without which it is impracticable to give compleat Characters of Plants. In short I may positively assert that not one in America has both the power and the will for such a performance. Such a work is necessary and will be a lasting benefite [sic] to mankind it has all the motives to it which can incite a good man to any performance attended with trouble.”¹⁴⁶

For a time Colden thus had to rely upon his contacts in Europe for discussion about plants. He and Linnaeus became semi-regular correspondents, with Colden sending him plants or descriptions and classifications of North American plants. Nor did Colden hesitate to mention his confusion with various aspects of Linnaeus’ methods, or to offer his suggestions for improving the system.¹⁴⁷ Linnaeus eventually named a specimen after Colden – *Coldenia*, “a genus of borginaceous herb of the tribe *ehreticoe*” – and called Colden the *Summus Perfectus*.¹⁴⁸ Another correspondent was John Frederick Gronovius of Leyden, who had encouraged Linnaeus to publish *Systema Naturae* in the first place, and who later published the botanical work of colleague John Clayton, *Flora Virginica*. Gronovius wrote to Colden that “in reading now en [sic] than [sic] for a moment Your Characters I am (without any flattery [sic]) surprised, how you in such a Short time could have such ideas of Linnaeus way in making up the rotas

¹⁴⁵Cadwallader Colden to Linnaeus, February 9, 1749, Colden IV, 95-96.

¹⁴⁶Cadwallader Colden to eter Collinson, November 13, 1742, Colden II, 28.

¹⁴⁷ He wrote to Linnaeus that “I still find myself at a loss in a fundamental point in Botany What it is that certainly distinguishes on Genus from another of the Same Class so as not to be in danger of confounding plants of different Genera by reducing them into one or making different Genera of such as are really one.” February 9, 1749, Colden IV, 95-96.

¹⁴⁸Hoermann, 20.

characteristicas.”¹⁴⁹ While Colden was the first colonist to master this system, he would not be the last. Botany, indeed, helped introduce Colden to two men who would prove very significant in his scientific and political development: James Logan and John Bartram. Botany also drew him into the circle of Englishman Peter Collinson, Fellow of the Royal Society, who corresponded with seemingly every colonist interested in any type of science, and who helped disseminate Colden’s scientific pamphlets. As historian Arthur Hoermann notes, “Botany together with other sciences soon served to create that Atlantic community which sustained numerous intellectual and cultural exchanges throughout the eighteenth century between the Old World and the New”¹⁵⁰

In addition to botany, medicine formed a lifetime pursuit. Colden ceased active practice after he moved to New York, but he ordered medical texts for the rest of his life, continued to correspond with fellow physicians in the colonies and abroad, generated theories for the functions of the body, and tried to improve the state of medicine and craft better training for colonial doctors.¹⁵¹ Among the numerous scientific treatises Colden wrote were many speculations on medical problems. One of his more successful papers expounded the virtues of tar water and advocated its use to cure fevers.¹⁵² Colden also studied the “throat distempers” of 1735-1740; his observations and proposed treatment – forced perspiration and sage tea – were published in the *Medical Observations and Inquiries of London* in 1763.¹⁵³ Of course, not all of his activities were so well-grounded on experience: he proposed to provide information on the causes and treatment of yellow fever, for instance, without ever actually seeing a case.¹⁵⁴ While

¹⁴⁹ Gronovius to Cadwallader Colden, August 6, 1743, Colden III, 32.

¹⁵⁰ Hoermann, 21-22.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

¹⁵² Hoermann, 57-59.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 53-56.

¹⁵⁴ Hoermann, 48-53.

such a proposal in the seventeenth century might not have garnered much criticism, the eighteenth century's growing emphasis upon experimentation and personal observation made the suggestion seem a bit peculiar. Part of Colden's difficulties in his medical studies and experiments sprang from difficulties in acquiring proper medical supplies. He repeatedly ordered various scientific instruments and books from London, always requesting that they be carefully packaged.¹⁵⁵ In an experience many other elite colonists shared, these orders and his packaging instructions were not always filled to his satisfaction. "Your Servants neither us'd me nor you well in ye Parcel of Medicines I bot [sic] of you," he wrote to one London apothecary, "for tho' you charg'd to me Pots and glasses in your acct for ever thing that requir'd them they put every thing in paper that could be contain'd in paper so that some things were rendered entirely useless."¹⁵⁶ No doubt such problems made conducting research frustrating. Difficulties aside, Colden continued to speculate about various medical problems, corresponding infrequently with prestigious John Fothergill in England, and William Douglass in Boston. More significantly, Colden maintained a brisk correspondence with Benjamin Franklin and James Alexander that frequently addressed medical topics.

Postulating and writing theories was not enough for Colden, however. The state of medicine in the colonies was deplorable, with very few university-trained physicians available, and numerous folk healers and charlatans. In an effort to combat these problems, Colden proposed a government allowance for a physician to the poor of Philadelphia, along with a fee that would fund medical lectures. After he moved to New York, he advocated for an inter-

¹⁵⁵ A sample from a letter to his cousin Richard Hill in London reads "Please to enquire for Dr Graham at Mr Hunters Apothecary at the Bell in Princes Streets and tell him that I desire he woud buy me a good Barometer and Thermometer and doe you pay for it out of the first of the Bill. Pray let them be put up with the greatest care." Colden I, 33.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 36.

colonial medical society and a hospital in New York City.¹⁵⁷ The society and hospital were eventually formed, although it was years after Colden's suggestion, while the proposal for a government-funded physician to the less fortunate received no serious interest. Colden's efforts and his failures reveal the deficiencies of the colonies. While New Yorkers of the mid 1700s were eager to promote learning, they had yet to achieve it.¹⁵⁸

While botany and medicine played important roles in Colden's intellectual life, overarching scientific theory seemed to be his siren song. After reading Newton's *Principia* and studying his theory of gravitation, Colden grew fascinated with what he perceived as gaps in Newton's works, especially concerning the theory of gravitation and the earth's motion. As he explained, "I did not suspect that the Theory and that the best Tables of Equations for the Earths Motion were defective."¹⁵⁹ In particular, Colden felt concerned with explaining the force of gravitation. Newton had not explained the cause, admitting that he himself did not know. Colden's musings resulted in what he regarded as his magnum opus, *An Explication of the First Causes of Action in Matter and of the Cause of Gravitation*. The work was to "give an entire Theory of the Earths motion from the Principles in this treatise I propose to explain the Phenomena from those principles and some of which tho principle Phenomena in the earths motion not so much as attempted by Sr Is. Newt."¹⁶⁰

Newton had suggested in *Opticks* that the force of attraction between bodies might be explained by the medium ether, which could vary in density, making objects move from the

¹⁵⁷ Hoermann, 41-45.

¹⁵⁸ Thomas Bender. *New York Intellect: A History of Intellectual Life in New York City, from 1750 to the Beginnings of Our Own Time* (Alfred A Knopf: New York, 1987), 13-14.

¹⁵⁹ Cadwallader Colden to Peter Collinson, June 20, 1745, Colden III, 118.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

denser to the less dense.¹⁶¹ Newton was quick to note, however, that such speculations were simply that: speculations. Colden came to a different conclusion. He decided that the medium of ether was indeed spread throughout the universe, but that areas of greater or lesser density did not exist. Rather, “after a tortuous course of logic and mathematics he concluded that two bodies in ether would encounter less force on the sides facing each other than on all other sides, because there was less ether between them than surrounding them. The resultant force would cause them to move together.”¹⁶² Colden further theorized that light was the source of all energy and movement, responsible for the motion of the planets. As Brooke Hindle notes, such conclusions were not Newtonian at all, yet “he never comprehended how unacceptable his whole complex of ideas was to an informed Newtonian. Indeed, he believed that every part of his work represented the fulfillment of a design sketched by Newton himself.”¹⁶³ Before publication in 1745, Colden sent drafts of the book to various scientifically-minded friends, requesting their feedback. Their responses were somewhat less than stellar, as will be further discussed. Colden was not to be discouraged in his pet project, however. As he wrote to his friend Reverend Samuel Johnson, “After reflecting again and again on the subject and considering every objection that has been made I remain as fully perswaded [sic] of the truth of it as of day light after the sun is up and that it is more than an Hypothesis I am perswaded [sic] that what ever reception this piece may have in my life time the Doctrine I deliver will be receiv’d when I shall be dead and rotten and perhaps forgot.”¹⁶⁴ Colden published an expansion of *Explications* in 1755, including an essay on fluxions, an early form of calculus that he thought helped explain his conclusions on planetary

¹⁶¹ Brooke Hindle. “Cadwallader Colden’s Extension of the Newtonian Principles.” *The William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series, Vol. 13, No. 4* (Oct., 1956): 464, (Accessed: 18/04/2011).

¹⁶² Hindle article, 465.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 467.

¹⁶⁴ Cadwallader Colden to Dr. Samuel Johnson, November 19, 1746, Colden III, 281. Colden carried through on this claim, since he published an expanded edition of the work in 1751, re-titled *Principles of Action in Matter*.

motion. This expanded version did no better than the first, but again Colden was not to be dissuaded. As late as 1762 he wrote to Dr. Robert Whytt of the University of Edinburgh, asking him to accept and preserve yet another expanded edition of *Explication* in the hope that it would someday receive proper scientific vindication.

Colden's theories ultimately proved untrue, and he did not go down in history, as he seems to have wished, as the great expounder of Newton. What Colden had done was help create a trans-Atlantic scientific community of letters. While his scientific pursuits had isolated him from most New Yorkers in the same way his politics had, those same interests had also drawn him into an elite group with firm ties to England and to the Royal Society. Science was not the only topic of discussion in this group. Politics too came into conversation. While Colden's political views isolated him in New York, they did not isolate him among his scientific colleagues. With one exception, Colden's closest scientific colleagues shared his politics, helping reinforce Colden's dedication to the preservation of the royal or executive prerogative.

One of Colden's earliest friends in the colonies was James Logan (1674-1751) of Pennsylvania. Logan was born in Ireland to Scottish parents. His father, Patrick, had an MA from the University of Edinburgh and was an Anglican minister. Much like his scholar father, Logan showed a fascination with languages and mathematics at an early age, learning Hebrew, Latin, and Greek before his teens. Despite the pleasures of academia, Logan's early life was far from easy. His father converted to the Society of Friends after listening to a Quaker minister. The English government considered Quakerism a type of nonconformity, and accordingly Quakers could not hold certain offices. This discrimination left the Logan family often struggling to make ends meet. They were forced to apprentice James at age thirteen to a draper in Dublin. In 1689 the Logans moved to Bristol, England, where James's father served as schoolmaster of the Friar

Meetinghouse School. The Logans must have broken the apprenticeship, since James accompanied them to Bristol. By 1693 he had taken over the position of schoolmaster from his father. Sitting on the board of the school was William Penn. He was so impressed with young James that he invited James to accompany him to Pennsylvania as his personal secretary in 1699.

In Pennsylvania Logan rapidly advanced in the hierarchy. Penn returned to England, leaving Logan basically in charge in his absence. Upon Penn's departure Logan officially served as secretary of the colony, deputy governor, commissioner of property, receiver general, and member of the Council. Logan's offices and appointments all placed him firmly on the side of the proprietor, often placing him at odds with the Pennsylvania Assembly. According to historian Frederick Tolles, Logan's "temperament . . . political philosophy, and the nature of his duties all tended to align him on the side of a proprietary prerogative, [and] made him an object of suspicion and distrust to those in the provincial Assembly and out of it who were disaffected toward the proprietor, and who, from principle or self-interest, exalted the privileges of the people."¹⁶⁵ Like Colden, Logan was in charge of establishing land boundaries and collecting the taxes upon these lands. The task proved extremely difficult, as Pennsylvania's land owners were evidently reluctant to have their lands resurveyed or to pay their taxes.¹⁶⁶ Again mimicking the situation in New York, the Council proved quite supportive of Logan's efforts, while the Assembly protested. As Logan wrote to Penn in 1704, "I have boldly defied some malicious men, who have this assembly attempted to impeach me of wronging the people, not high fees I assure thee, for I have never yet been charged for that; but of being too severe in some points in

¹⁶⁵Frederick Tolles, *James Logan and the Culture of Provincial America*, Library of American Biography (Little, Brown, and Co: Boston, 1957), 27.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 19-21.

thy behalf, which I cannot now desire thee to believe whilst returns come in no faster.”¹⁶⁷ Office problems aside, Logan continued to advance both personally and professionally. He managed to acquire a good bit of land, where he built an estate named Stenton and raised four children with wife Hannah Read. He became mayor of Philadelphia in 1723 and was appointed Chief Justice of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in 1731. These government appointments did not completely distract Logan from his love of academics. He owned the colonies’ first copy of Newton’s *Principia*, and upon his death in 1751 had a library, “probably the finest in the colonies,” totaling 3000 volumes on everything from ancient history to botany to mathematics.¹⁶⁸ Logan’s academic interests created friendships with Peter Collinson, John Bartram, Robert Hunter, Benjamin Franklin, and Linnaeus. In 1749 he supported the formation of the Academy of Philadelphia, later to become the University of Pennsylvania.

Exactly when Logan met Colden remains unknown. Logan was a cousin of Colden’s wife Alice, so it is entirely possible that met as soon as Colden moved to Philadelphia in 1710. Colden’s published letters reveal that the two were in correspondence by March 1720, but it is evident that the two met earlier, as Colden’s letter from that year reveals. “I was very glad to finde by your Letter to my wife that you was willing to forgett what was past.”¹⁶⁹ Exactly what quarrel the two had experienced is also unknown, but Colden was clearly glad to see it end. He went on to note that “since that time I have earnestly desired something which might engage you in a correspondence for I do not forgett the pleasure and advantages I enjoyed in your

¹⁶⁷James Logan to William Penn, March 26, 1704, William Penn, *Correspondence between William Penn and James Logan, Secretary of The Province of Pennsylvania, and Others, 1700-1750. From the Original Letters in Possession of the Logan Family. With Notes by Mrs. Deborah Logan And edited by Edward Armstrong. Volume I.* Publications of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania (J.B. Lippincott and Company: Philadelphia, 1870), 291-292.

¹⁶⁸Jean O’Neill and Elizabeth P. McLean, *Peter Collinson and the Eighteenth-Century Natural History Exchange* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2008), 91.

¹⁶⁹Cadwallader Colden to James Logan, undated, Colden I, 45.

conversation . . . my hope is in the fondness you have to encourage Philosophicall Speculations.”¹⁷⁰ Evidently mutual interest in all things scientific cemented the men’s friendship.

Colden’s and Logan’s scientific discussions were varied and continued until Logan’s death in 1751. Often they passed information to each other through their mutual friends. In 1744, for instance, mutual friend Benjamin Franklin noted that he had shown two of Colden’s essays, on one fluxions and one on matter, to Logan. Logan had studied the works for several days, then given his honest opinion: “he thought you had not fully hit the Matter . . . there are several Mistakes in it, two of which he has mark’d in Page 10. . . the Method of Shewing what Fluxions are, by squaring them is entirely Wrong.”¹⁷¹ As for the essay on matter, Logan said that “it must necessarily have some further Meaning in it than the Language itself imports, otherwise I can by no means conceive the Service of it.”¹⁷² Logan then balanced his honesty by calling Colden “the ablest Thinker” in the colony.¹⁷³ Evidently Colden took the honesty in good spirit, writing in reply to Franklin that “I think and I hope Mr Logan will believe me in good earnest when I say that there cannot be a stronger and surer mark of Friendship than showing to me the mistakes I may have fallen into as it may prevent my exposing my weakness and Ignorance [sic] to others.”¹⁷⁴ Two years later Colden sent a draft of *Explications* to Logan, along with several others, for comment. Again Franklin was the first to communicate Logan’s thoughts, perhaps because Logan was already suffering some health issues.¹⁷⁵ Logan expressed his inability to understand the text then “added, that The Doctrine of Gravity’s being the Effect of Elasticity was originally Bernouilli’s, but he believ’d you had not seen Bernouilli.”¹⁷⁶ This simple statement

¹⁷⁰ Cadwallader Colden to James Logan, undated, 45.

¹⁷¹ Benjamin Franklin to Cadwallader Colden, October 25, 1744, Colden III, 77.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Cadwallader Colden to Benjamin Franklin, December 1744, 93.

¹⁷⁵ James Alexander had called it “palsy” in 1744.

¹⁷⁶ Benjamin Franklin to Cadwallader Colden, October 16, 1746, Colden III, 274.

revealed Logan's breadth of learning, as he cited an earlier scientist. It is also clear that Logan and Colden had a strong relationship, for Logan to feel so comfortable in offering frank assessments of Colden's ideas.

Politics occasionally entered Colden's and Logan's correspondence. Logan had been good friends with New York governor Robert Hunter, for instance, and in late 1720 he wrote to Colden to express his pleasure in the arrival of Hunter's successor, William Burnet. Said Logan, "he [Burnet] comes with one of the greatest Characters from one of ye ablest Judges his excellent Predecessor, who has been pleased to favour me with some affectionate Lines on His acct. You will have the happiness of enjoying nearly what I Shall have the Satisfaction of hearing of only at a distance, yet some time or other I may endeavour to be personally a witness of it."¹⁷⁷ Judging from Logan's support of Hunter and Burnet, it seems a reasonable assumption that he supported their political policies, and, probably, Colden's enforcement of royal prerogative. Certainly in his own political career Logan unwaveringly supported the executive prerogative.

It is Logan's personal career that most clearly reveals his political opinions. His repeated struggles to collect quit-rents and properly survey lands echo many of Colden's difficulties. Considering he did his best to ensure the collection of taxes – much to the alienation of Pennsylvanians, as he noted in his letter to Penn – Colden would not have heard a dissenting opinion from Logan about the enforcement of new surveys and quitrent collections in New York. Indeed, Logan complained to Penn in 1705 that the people were ungrateful and worried only about their own interests, not understanding the need to respect their executive. "The baseness and ingratitude of some seems to me to lie in this, that they will not weigh what is truly thine and their interest, that each is under obligation to support the other, and that they can scarce be truly happy whilst thou art otherwise; when, instead of this, they lay hold on thy own grants . . . tho'

¹⁷⁷ James Logan to Cadwallader Colden, July 22, 1720, Colden I,106.

they have no value for the thing contended for itself . . . they are for having, to thine and their own destruction, the last especially.”¹⁷⁸ In short, the people pushed for more rights while having no concept of responsibility or proper government. “In privileges they are for straining the strings till they break Their sense, as their soul, is narrow and never designed or settled for one thought squaring with the true spirit of government.”¹⁷⁹ Logan’s views on the obligations of the people and the need to limit their perceived rights brought him into direct conflict with David Lloyd, speaker of the Assembly. Led by Lloyd, the Assembly drew up charges to impeach Logan, arguing that Logan had urged Penn to veto bills and prorogue the Assembly, and that he had been dishonest in his actions as land officer.¹⁸⁰ Clearly Logan was as staunch a supporter of the proprietary prerogative (the equivalent of executive prerogative in Pennsylvania) as Colden was of the royal prerogative through the office of the governor.

In supporting the proprietor, the king’s representative in Pennsylvania, Logan struck much the same stance as Colden, defending the royal prerogative in New York by defending the governor’s power. While few letters between Logan and Colden referencing politics survive, it is probable, though not certain, that the two did discuss politics in conversation or through oral reports from mutual friends like Alexander and Franklin. As often as Logan, Colden, and their network corresponded, passing references to news items of the day were bound to appear. Colden would have known of Logan’s struggles in Pennsylvania, as well as his opinion on proprietary prerogative. While Logan’s emphasis upon the executive cannot fully explain Colden’s dedication to royal prerogative, it does help explain why Colden’s political beliefs were so unwavering. His friendship with Logan most likely would have reinforced his beliefs. He would have known he had Logan’s support, and the two men would have approached most topics

¹⁷⁸ James Logan to William Penn, 1705, Penn and Logan II, 11.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Irma Jane Cooper, *The Life and Public Services of James Logan*. (New York, 1921), 17-22.

from the same worldview. Logan would have posed no challenge to Colden's fundamental political beliefs, sharing them until his death in 1751 of the same "palsy" from which he had suffered for years. Science and politics united the two men.

A similar unity existed between Colden and another scientifically-minded friend, John Bartram (1699-1777). Bartram was born in Pennsylvania in 1699 to Quaker émigré parents from Darby, England. Unlike Colden and Logan, Bartram had little formal education. He was, however, very intelligent, studied Latin and Greek whenever possible, and showed an early interest in both botany and medicine.¹⁸¹ According to his son William, John "had a very early inclination to the study of physic and surgery. He even acquired so much knowledge in the practice of the latter science, as to be very useful: and, in many instances, he gave great relief to his poor neighbors, who were unable to apply for medicines and assistance to the physicians of the city. It is extremely probably that, as most of his medicines were derived from the vegetable kingdom, this circumstance might point out to him the necessity of, and excite a desire for, the study of botany."¹⁸² Bartram did not enter into a serious study of botany, though, until adulthood. Probably this was due to the fact that his farm, a family inheritance and the source of his livelihood, demanded nearly all of his attention.¹⁸³ Somehow he came to the attention of James Logan, who gave him his first books on botany, and in 1728 he created the first botanical garden in the colonies. Bartram experienced some difficulties with learning all the details of the subject, since he had not mastered Latin, the language of science, as an adolescent. Bartram never entirely mastered the language as an adult, although he certainly learned the rudiments

¹⁸¹ One letter indicates that he was interested in plants by age 12. William Shainline Middleton, "John Bartram, Botanist," *The Scientific Monthly*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Aug., 1925):191-216, 193. William Darlington. *Memorials of John Bartram and Humphry Marshall* (Lindsay and Blakiston: Philadelphia, 1849), New York Public Library E-book, <http://www.archive.org/details/memorialsjohnb00darl>, 38.

¹⁸² William Bartram, quoted in Darlington, 193-194.

¹⁸³ Wulf, 24-32.

Fortunately his better-educated friends were happy to translate for him, and his talents of observation made up for the rest. Historians vary on exactly how Bartram came to the attention of Peter Collinson. That James Logan and Joseph Breitnall, another friend, were responsible, everyone agrees. Whether that happened in 1730 or 1733 remains open to debate.¹⁸⁴ Regardless, by the early 1730s Bartram was in regular correspondence with Peter Collinson, who was famous in England for his garden, and who assiduously and continuously sought new specimens for that garden. Collinson urged Bartram to collect plants native to the colonies and send them to England in return for payment. Through Collinson's efforts, Bartram came to the attention of botanists throughout England and the Continent. These botanists made it possible for Bartram to make annual trips through the wilds of North America, collecting plants. Collinson's and Bartram's relationship was not always smooth. At times Bartram complained that Collinson had not sent sufficient payment for his plants.¹⁸⁵ Further, Collinson's tone in writing was sometimes condescending, such as when he advised Bartram on the proper manner of dress for a trip to Virginia. In Collinson's defense, the patronizing tone seems unintentional, and probably stemmed in part from the fact that he was a good bit older than Bartram. Andrea Wulf portrays the evolution of their relationship, from Bartram's acceptance of his role in the patron-client system to his demands for equal treatment, as an interpersonal example of the evolution of the relationship between the North American colonies and Great Britain. Regardless of the occasional testy tone, Collinson and Bartram corresponded cordially for decades, and certainly Collinson's efforts in promoting Bartram were mutually beneficial. Bartram, for instance, came

¹⁸⁴ Paul Sivitz, "John Bartram, Cadwallader Colden, Peter Collinson, and Benjamin Franklin: Accumulating and Disseminating American Scientific Knowledge, 1734-1754," (MA Thesis, Temple University, 2006); Darlington, 40; Middleton, 195.

¹⁸⁵ For instance, Bartram wrote in 1738, "Thee supposes me to spend five or six weeks in collections for you, and that ten pounds will defray all my annual expenses; but I assure thee, I spend more than twice that time, annually; and ten pounds will not, at a moderate expense, defray my charges abroad – beside my neglect of business at home, in fallowing, harvest, and seed time." John Bartram to Peter Collinson, May 1738, Darlington, 119.

to the attention of Linnaeus, with whom he would correspond, and he and Collinson each crafted gardens their neighbors considered exotic, filled as they were with plants unavailable on their particular continent. Eventually, through Collinson's promotion, Bartram gained the post of botanist to the King, which came with a stipend that enabled Bartram to travel further still in search of flora. Age eventually stopped most of Bartram's travels, and he passed some of the work to his son William, who would become a respected botanist in his own right. Nevertheless, Bartram retained a keen interest in botany and in his correspondence with like-minded friends. Colden, of course, was one of these friends.

Colden and Bartram met in 1742. They were introduced via a letter to Colden from Collinson in 1741, which contained the following post-script: "If an Ingenious Man and a great teacher unto Nature Named John Bartram of Pensilvania [sic] should wait on you please to give him what Information you can on those things he may inquire of You, he has been a Considerable Traveller in yr World and Is employed by a Sett [sic] of Noblemen and others to Colect [sic] Seeds and Curiosities for them."¹⁸⁶ Bartram did indeed eventually appear at Coldenham, a year later in summer 1742. Colden evidently took an immediate liking to the botanist, writing to Collinson that "It is really surprising what knowledge that man has attain'd meerely by the force of Industry and his own Genius He has a lively fancy and a surprising

¹⁸⁶Peter Collinson to Cadwallader Colden, March 5, 1741, Colden II, 208. Collinson further described Bartram: "a wonderful Natural Genius considering his Education and that He was never out of America but is an Husbandman and lives on a Little Estate of his own at 5 or 6 miles from Philadelphia on the River Skullkill. He really Surprised Mee with a Beautifull [sic] Draught on a Sheet of paper of the falls of Mohocks River wch He took when he was there with a P[ar]ticular account of It and also a Mapp of His own Making of Hudsons River Delaware Katskil and the bay which takes in the provinces of New York, Jerseys, Pensilvania, Maryld and Virginia for He has travelled all over these Countrys ye Uninhabited P[ar]ts beyond the Mountains as well as the Inhabited P[ar]ts along the Bay and the Sea Shores form the Capes to yr province His observations and accounts of all Natural productions that happened in his Way (and I belivd few Escape Him) – are much Esteem'd Here for their [sic] Truth and He wants not terms to Express himself wth Some accuracy and I have procured Him Some assistance form Some Curious P[er]sons Here to Enable Him to make Further Discoveries," Peter Collinson to Cadwallader Colden, March 7, 1742, Colden II, 247.

Memory and indefatigable Disposition.”¹⁸⁷ Bartram entertained just as high an opinion of Colden, writing shortly after his visit to Coldenham, “I received thy kind letter . . . which was all very agreable Amusement to me as well as A demonstration of thy generous and Communicative disposition with so much Sincerity as if thee designed rather to inform they friend by rational Conclusions from acurate and mature observations of facts then to impose upon him with incredible and wonderful relations from ye reports of those whose observations penetrated no deeper than ye superficies of nature.”¹⁸⁸ This friendship would extend over the next three decades.

Most of the correspondence between Bartram and Colden centered, unsurprisingly, on botany and medicine. In January 1743 Bartram sent Colden some walnuts, along with very specific directions on the planting and care of the plants, thanking Colden for “ye New Edition of Lineups Characters Plantarum.”¹⁸⁹ Bartram expressed enthusiasm for his latest collecting trip to the Catskills, along with his hopes for a successful new trip, and for Collinson’s success in locating some new sponsors.¹⁹⁰ Since such trips often took him to the frontier, Bartram was also keenly interested in Native American affairs. Describing an upcoming trip in summer 1743 he said that “I have lately received orders from London to travail [sic] to gather ye seed of ye balm of Gilead cones and other species of ever greens; ye duke of Norfolk hath subscribed 20 Guineas ye duke of Richmond and another Gentleman fifteen more besides our Proprietor hath sent me orders to procure some Curiosities for him – I am now providing for a Journey up Susquehana with our interpreter in order to introduce A Peacable understanding between ye Virginians and

¹⁸⁷ Cadwallader Colden to Peter Collinson, November 13, 1742, Colden II, 280.

¹⁸⁸ John Bartram to Cadwallader Colden, October 23, 1742, Colden II, 274.

¹⁸⁹ John Bartram to Cadwallader Colden, January 16, 1743, Colden III, 5.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3-6.

ye Five nations we suppose ye meeting will be in ye Onondagues Countrey [sic].”¹⁹¹ Bartram did not hesitate to ask for Colden’s assistance both with plants or with updates on the current state of Indian affairs. Nor did he hesitate to share his own knowledge. “In intend to send ye seeds of ye Saururus and starrroot when it is ripe in ye fall ye roots of ye first is commonly called Brest root from it excelent [sic] vertues [sic] in curing sore brests being made in to A poultise [sic] I allso [sic] knowed A man that had been long affected with A grievous pain of his back and brest with great weakness and could not find any relief from medicines until a Palatine man gave him ye leavsn [sic] of this herb in powder.”¹⁹² Colden, a decade older than Bartram, often took the tone of an older sibling, offering assistance with translations and suggesting that Bartram publish his discoveries. “I shall have the greatest pleasure if I can be a means of persuading you to make your knowledge more publickn [sic] and of consequence more usefulln[sic] and I perswade my self it will not be difficult for me to perswade you to it for the greatest pleasure a good man can have is in being usefull [sic] to the community and in what I am about to propose I likewise hope that you’ll find a private advantage to it. It is to communicate your knowledge of our American plants to the publick [sic]. This I believe may be done with most advantage to your self by publishing it by Subscription in monthly papers of about one shilling Value and to take Gronovius’ Flora Virginica for the Foundation of your work and method. . . . I will very cheerfully contribute whatever shall be in my power and give you my thoughts as to the Method of prosecuting your design after I shall know that you are resolved to undertake it.”¹⁹³ Colden’s wish that Bartram share his knowledge with a wider audience was eventually fulfilled, through Bartram’s official appointment as royal botanist and through his role in assisting Benjamin

¹⁹¹John Bartram to Cadwallader Colden, June 26, 1743, Colden III, 24.

¹⁹²John Bartram to Cadwallader Colden, July 15, 1745, Colden III, 130.

¹⁹³Cadwallader Colden to John Bartram, December 1744, Colden III, 94-95.

Franklin in the founding of the American Philosophical Society. While Franklin and Bartram were close, however, their politics differed.

Most of Bartram's published letters focus on botany, not politics. Perhaps he felt about politics as he did about religion: "I have little respect for apologies and disputes about the ceremonial parts of religion, which often introduce animosities, confusion, and disorders in the mind – and sometimes body too."¹⁹⁴ Nonetheless, Bartram did occasionally mention things political, and when he did, it was usually to the detriment of the colonists. One of the few published times that he and Colden exchanged political news, it was to agree about the fact that colonists had plenty of opportunity for justice, perhaps in fact too much. Wrote Colden, "I believe you may have often heard a complaint of the Expenciveness [sic] of Lawsuits that Justice must in a manner be bought at a Dear rate They have no reason for complaint of this sort in Connecticut for I believe no where are lawyers fees and other Courts charges lower than there but such is the misfortune of all human affairs that the avoiding of one evil generally occasions twice as many. As in no place a law suit can be carried on so cheap so in no other place do they abound in them so much. . . . This occasions a litigious [sic] humour among the People a perpetual caballing and attendance on their Courts An avocation of their Minds from their Business and the Interest of their Families and a great Defect in their Industry. Besides tho' every man allmost [sic] in that Colony thinks himself a Lawyer yet perhaps hardly one man in it thoroughly Understand the Principle of the Law. We may learn from this that nothing more prevents the advancement of any Art or Science than that of making it cheap and mean."¹⁹⁵ In response, Bartram wrote that "I am pleased with thy remarks on ye Law . . . in Connecticut: its very true ye expence of ye Law makes many people bear many affronts and strive to live more

¹⁹⁴ John Bartram to Peter Collinson, July 6, 1742, Darlington, 159.

¹⁹⁵ Cadwallader Colden to John Bartram, 1743, Colden III, 26.

peasable than they are naturally inclined to rather than venture a certain expence for an uncertain satisfaction – and often where there is ye greatest talk and pretence religions and ye mind is take up with a zeal in ye Performance of ye Ceremonial part and ye substantial part which is Love Resignation and humility to ye Eternal Power is often Neglected.”¹⁹⁶ Apparently Bartram, like Colden, felt that the colonists often brought trouble on themselves.

While Bartram did not express devotion to the royal prerogative quite like Logan and Colden, his assiduous courting of royal favor suggested that he respected the government and thought it could best provide for him, even if he sometimes found problems with it. Writing to Collinson in 1743, he thanked Collinson for “recommending me to our proprietor. If he would please to be so honourable as to allow me an annual salary, worth while to furnish his walks with all natural productions of trees, shrubs, and plants, which grow in our four governments, I would undertake to do it.”¹⁹⁷ Apparently Bartram did not obtain the position he sought, and he noted in another letter that the proprietor “is almost as crafty as covetous.”¹⁹⁸ The proprietor’s refusal to grant him a salary was not the only thing that garnered Bartram’s disapproval. He continually worried about Anglo-Indian relations, as well as the French, since his trips were frequently affected by colonial wars. He wrote in 1756, “I want much to come to the Carolinas, to observe the curiosities toward the mountains; but the mischievous Indians are so treachorous, that it is not safe trusting them, even in their greatest pretence of friendship. They have destroyed all our back inhabitants. No travelling, now, to Dr. Colden’s, nor to the back parts of Pennsylvania, nor Maryland, nor Virginia.”¹⁹⁹ Three years later Bartram wrote to Collinson that “perhaps now, and only now, is the critical time offered to Britain to secure not only her old possessions but her so

¹⁹⁶ John Bartram to Cadwallader Colden, September 17, 1743, Colden VII, 340.

¹⁹⁷ John Bartram to Peter Collinson, June 21, 1743, Darlington, 165.

¹⁹⁸ John Bartam to Peter Collinson, January 30, 1748, Ibid.,180.

¹⁹⁹ John Bartram to Alexander Garden, March 14, 1756, Darlington, 394.

much boasted new acquisitions, by sending us sufficient supplies to repel effectually those barbarous savages.”²⁰⁰ Bartram’s discontent seemed not so much with the government itself as with the idea that the government would not allow the colonists to destroy completely the native Americans and thus ensure peace. In light of the Proclamation of 1763, which prohibited English expansion beyond Appalachians for fear of upsetting Native American allies, Bartram wrote to Collinson, “Pray say no more about our great British empire, while we must not be a farthing the better for it.”²⁰¹

Bartram clearly wanted the best for himself and for the colonies. Yet he never hinted that that best could be found anywhere outside the monarch. He eagerly sought the position of royal botanist, writing again to Collinson in 1764 that he was sending a box of American plants and seeds to the monarch. He also eagerly sought patrons in England. “My good old friend, I am well assured that thee is well acquainted with many of the nobility, some of whom, no doubt, are men of curiosity. Could not they be prevailed upon to enable me to travel a year or two through our King's new acquisitions, to make a thorough natural and vegetable search, either by public authority, or private subscription?”²⁰² Bartram held the position of royal botanist for a little over a decade, ending with his death in 1777. How he felt about the conflict, he did not say, beyond indicating that he found the interruption of his travels as a result of the conflicts rather inconvenient. While it would be too much to say that Bartram had the same level of devotion to the Crown that Colden did, he was certainly no revolutionary. It is unlikely that Colden’s views would have received much challenge from Bartram during Bartram’s visits to Coldenham. As

²⁰⁰ John Bartram to Peter Collinson, October 23, 1763, Darlington, 256.

²⁰¹ John Bartram to Peter Collinson, March 4, 1764, Ibid., 262.

²⁰² John Bartram to Peter Collinson, October 15, 1764, Darlington, 267. Bartram eventually received the ultimate noble patron, as Collinson informed him. “I have the pleasure to inform my good friend, that my repeated solicitations have not been in vain; for this day I received certain intelligence from our gracious King, that he had appointed thee his botanist, with a salary of fifty pounds a year; and in pursuance thereof, I received thy first half-year's payment of thy salary, being twenty-five pounds to Lady day last, which I have carried to thy account.” Peter Collinson to John Bartram, April 9, 1765, Ibid., 268.

with his friendship with Logan, Colden's friendship with Bartram would not have tested Colden's political views.

Colden's friendships with Logan and Bartram centered on science and provided an indirect affirmation of Colden's political views. Colden's relationship with James Alexander (1691-1756), in contrast, equally encompassed both science and politics. James Alexander was born in 1691 in Muthill, Stirlingshire, Scotland. He showed an early facility for mathematics and science, talents his father encouraged. In 1715 he supported James Stuart, the deposed Stuart king known as the Old Pretender, in the first Jacobite Rising against the accession of the house of Hanover to the British throne. Alexander served as an engineer in the Pretender's army. Unfortunately for Alexander, "the Fifteen" failed, and George I of Hanover became king of England. Alexander fled Scotland in the aftermath of the failed rebellion and came to New York in 1716.²⁰³ Alexander had, by his own record, been admitted to the bar in 1715 in London, and he quickly traded upon this knowledge, as well as his connections with the duke of Argyle, to gain position in the colonies. He had chosen to settle in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, which was then, like New York, under the governorship of Robert Hunter. Alexander quickly gained the friendship of Hunter and the influential Lewis Morris. In 1718 he was appointed surveyor of New Jersey. From there he went on to hold the positions of recorder-general of Perth Amboy, deputy secretary of New York, and commissioner to survey the New York-New Jersey boundary. In 1721 William Burnet appointed him to the Council of New York, and by 1723 he

²⁰³Most historians seem to agree with this version of events. Historian James MacCracken, however, writes that Alexander was part of the 1708 Jacobite rising, which ended that same year without event. After that Alexander studied for a time at Glasgow University, then worked teaching navigation to sailors aboard the ship *Arundel*. He got into trouble for a short time by refusing to take a loyalty oath in 1712, subsequently leaving the ship and reading law for a time in London. While studying the law, MacCracken claims it was "possible" that Alexander worked for Board of Proprietors of New Jersey. This connection apparently led Alexander to head to the colonies in 1715 in yet another display of independent spirit. James MacCracken. *Prologue to Independence: The Trials of James Alexander, American, 1715-1756* (J. H. Heinemman: New York, 1964), 2-4.

was also admitted to the New Jersey bar. He served as the colony's attorney-general for the next five years, and worked closely with both New York and New Jersey land affairs.²⁰⁴

Alexander and Colden would have met at the latest when Colden moved to New York in 1718, and at the earliest when Colden visited Governor Hunter during the summer of that year. Both men had caught Hunter's attention through their interest in science. That topic formed a large part of the conversations between Colden and Alexander, as well. One of the earliest published letters of Alexander to Colden (1719) records a short trip of Alexander, in which Alexander noted that "we arrived all Safe and Sound and this morning we observed Lucida Aquile in which plummet cut 95° 49' 30" fid Edge 62° 35' 30" which makes us guess we are 15 ½' to the Southward of our Latitude."²⁰⁵ Like Logan and Bartram, Alexander was also friends with Collinson, and he joined in the circle of scientific correspondence among the men. He asked in 1743 that Colden inform him of the latest improvement in scientific instruments from England. "I beg you would Send me a Cobby of what Collinson and Graham wrote Concerning the quadrant and particularly the price, I thought I had taken a Cobby but cant find it, if I have; I think now by Bryant's return of Sending for Such a Quadrant, and to have it made under the care and Direction of Mr Grahame, and to have it carefully Examined by him after its made, to Discover and Certify the Errors if any be. If you can think of any particular method of Examination and what points are most carefully to be examined and Certified, I should be glad you would favour me with it, to recommend to Collinson . . . to recommend to Graham."²⁰⁶ Other comments reveal that Alexander kept up with the latest information on science from England. "I have now Got over by the Oswego the 8th and Ninth Vollumes [sic] of the

²⁰⁴ MacCracken, 1-20; Paul Nelson, *William Alexander, Lord Stirling* (University of Alabama Press: University, 1987), 4-8.

²⁰⁵ James Alexander to Cadwallader Colden, June 25, 1719, Colden I, 99.

²⁰⁶ Cadwallader Colden to James Alexander, undated, Colden III, 35.

Abridgements of the Philosophical [sic] Transactions of the Royal Society which bring them to 1744. And I have Got the particular transactions since the Abridgement's End."²⁰⁷ Science seems to have provided Alexander with relief from political problems. Again writing to Colden, he said that "your former amusements in Philosophy I think are a much more agreeable Employment of your Spare hours, and will produce more Lasting Satisfaction to your own mind."²⁰⁸ Clearly Alexander and Colden shared a similar view of their scientific hobby, and like Logan and Bartram, Alexander became a founding member of the American Philosophical Society.

Alexander's encouragement led Colden to send him part of his *magnum opus* for comment. Like Logan, Alexander struggled to understand Colden's theories. After detailing some of his confusion, he said that "I don't know that that Difficulty has arisen from any improper Expressions used by you. . . . I own I am not master of the thing as yet but have more faith that the thing is right, and I am everyday more and more reconciled to it."²⁰⁹ Colden acknowledged his appreciation for Alexander's comments, adding that "it is impossible for me to explain to you the reasons on which I form this process without explaining the principles of my Theory and which could not be don within the compass of a letter." He promised further explanation of the topic, and meantime admitted his reliance upon Alexander when it came to the mathematical tables to support his theories. "I am in hopes that Parker may have finished the printing of what remains [of his book] before you go to Jersey if not it must stop till you return unless he can suffer the letters to stand till he send up the proof sheet to me to examine because what remains where numbers or algebraical characters are used require the greatest correctness

²⁰⁷ James Alexander to Cadwallader Colden, March 7, 1748, Colden IV, 18-19.

²⁰⁸ James Alexander to Cadwallader Colden, March 29, 1748, Ibid., 30.

²⁰⁹ James Alexander to Cadwallader Colden, February 23, 1746, Colden III, 198.

and I know of none capable of supplying your place where these are used.”²¹⁰ Colden clearly thought a great deal of Alexander’s knowledge and valued his opinion in science. The same could be said for Alexander’s knowledge of politics, the other topic the two men avidly discussed.

Alexander and Colden were early allies in the factional world of New York politics. The alliance made practical sense from the standpoint of the two men’s backgrounds. They were both Scottish, both men of science, both good friends with Robert Hunter and with Hunter’s successor William Burnet. In light of Alexander’s participation in the Jacobite rebellion against King George, the union might seem a little more peculiar. Jacobites, however, were not opposed to the institution of the monarchy, but rather to the specific king, George of Hanover, whom they felt was not a legitimate successor. Alexander supported the man he thought, dynastically, to be the true king of England. Respect for the law formed a theme in Alexander’s political life, and once convinced of a person’s or policy’s legality and utility, he supported that institution or person vigorously. Alexander’s support of Governor Hunter placed him squarely in the Morrisite faction, along with Colden. Moreover, like Colden Alexander ascended to the New York governor’s Council in 1721 after the resignation of four Philipse-DeLancey faction members. His replacing these men did not endear him to that mercantile faction, but did give him yet another thing in common with Colden. Just as circumstances united the two men, so too did specific issues.

One of the first problems Alexander attempted to untangle was land disputes between New York and New Jersey. As surveyor-general of New Jersey, he re-surveyed the contested border between the two colonies. Like Colden, Alexander did not hesitate to suggest that land be re-surveyed. Alexander also supported Burnet’s blockade on the French trade. In 1728 he and

²¹⁰ Cadwallader Colden to James Alexander, March 7, 1746, 201.

Colden co-authored a series of “Letters to the Ape,” pamphlets deriding the politics of Aldolph Philipse (hence “Ape”), member of the DeLancey-Philipse faction that opposed the Morrisite group. The Assembly was being reelected that year, and Philipse, the speaker, hoped that his speaker would gain full control of the house. Colden and Alexander thoroughly opposed this idea. Alexander personally disliked the man for pandering to the public and seeking only his own interests. He expressed a cautious optimism about the upcoming election to Colden, noting of Philipse that “tho his voice has for Some time past for and been allowed to be the voice of the people yet he may not be Sure that his voice shall continue so to pass, for the people are good and knowingly would not do or Countenance an ill thing and if their Eyes should happen to be opened to See his aims and views were not what he pretended the interest of the Country but his own and to deprive the people of their just and apparent rights and for That purpose had Endeavoured to make them burn their fingers they’ll not only not Let his be their Voice but may Suitably resent his past impositions on them by abuseing the Confidence they had in him.”²¹¹

Alexander expressed a great faith and interest in the people, but he was not an advocate of democracy. His great concern was that the English government was becoming unbalanced through the efforts of the Assembly, which sought ever more power. This lack of balance might, he worried, lead to independence. He expressed this fear to Colden in 1729, after hearing news that the Barbadian assembly had insisted upon power of the purse and the right to examine all warrants. “So many steps being now taken by So many Several assemblys tending to independency or at Least to Engross the whole powers of Government in their hands must awaken our Superiors at home and to think of Some proper measures to prevent that growing Evil.”²¹² While Alexander did not continually express a concern for royal prerogative as Colden

²¹¹James Alexander to Cadwallader Colden, May 5, 1728, Colden I, 259.

²¹²James Alexander to Cadwallader Colden, April 14, 1729, Ibid., 279.

did, in practice he upheld that prerogative and by his own words scorned the Assembly's attempts to gain more power. Alexander's concern with an unbalanced government did not lead only to his deriding the Assembly, however. Some of his greatest statements and actions concerning the powers of government came through his opposition to Governor William Cosby.

Like Colden, Alexander had been disgusted with Cosby's replacement of Lewis Morris as supreme court justice with James DeLancey and with his demands for money. Alexander's dislike of Cosby was apparently mutual. Cosby wrote in 1732 to the Duke of Newcastle that "There is one, James Alexander, whom I found here in both the New York and the New Jersey Councils, although very unfit to sit in either, or indeed to act in any other capacity where His Majesty's honor and interest are concerned. He is the only man that has given me any uneasiness since my arrival. . . . In short, his known very bad character would be too long to trouble your Grace with particulars, and stuffed with such tricks and oppressions too gross for your Grace to hear. In his room I desire the favor of your Grace to appoint Joseph Warrell."²¹³ Alexander, along with William Smith, Cadwallader Colden, and a few others decided to take his complaints to the press, encouraging John Peter Zenger to print these anonymous critiques of the governor's actions. The articles, as already discussed, drew the governor's ire and landed Zenger in prison. Alexander and Smith initially worked as Zenger's defense. Their assertion that DeLancey could not be unbiased in the hearing, since he owed his position to Cosby, got them both disbarred from the court.²¹⁴ Alexander did not cease working the case, however. He persuaded colleague Andrew Hamilton to take over the defense, which resulted in Zenger's release and verdict of not guilty. Alexander's goal had not been the diminution of the governor's powers. Rather, he hoped to preserve English liberty by reigning in the governor's excesses. One of the anonymous articles

²¹³ Cosby, quoted in Vincent Buranelli, "Peter Zenger's Editor," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Summer, 1955), 176.

²¹⁴ Buranelli, 180.

in the Weekly Journal, perhaps written by Alexander, made this point clear. The author wrote that spreading libel as “a practise . . . ought to be discouraged.”²¹⁵ To label anything negative as libel, however, was just as dangerous as spreading libel. That practice under the Tudors had made “the Bulwark of the English Liberty . . . the great Engine to enslave the Nation: there was no safety in Writing or Speaking; and by the most strain’d constructions, the most innocent expressions were made Libeling, and punished with the utmost Cruelty and Barbarity.”²¹⁶

The success of the Zenger trial relieved both Alexander and Colden. After Cosby’s death Alexander was restored to the bar and resumed his law practice. He and Colden continued to correspond continuously on all political matters, often commenting upon the Assembly’s attempted encroachments on executive authority. While Colden’s theme was the preservation of royal prerogative, Alexander’s theme was that of balanced, mixed government. Had Alexander lived beyond 1756, this difference might have created problems between the two men. Certainly Alexander was quicker to criticize both sides of government, executive and legislative, than Colden was.²¹⁷ Whether this staunch aversion to any encroachments upon the constitution would have led Alexander to become a patriot in the Revolutionary War is debatable. Certain it is, however, that in the four decades of Alexander’s and Colden’s friendship, these men worked together in almost complete agreement, writing critiques of the government and struggling to establish and maintain English government in the colonies. After Alexander’s death, Colden never found another friend to replace this political ally and scientific colleague. Alexander had

²¹⁵ Colden IX, 320.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 321.

²¹⁷ In 1745, for instance, he wrote to Colden that “We Lately got a Cobby here of the bill brought into the house of Commons last Session of parliament, to prevent all paper bill in the plantations to be issue hereafter from being tenders, and to our great Surprize found two clauses foisted in at the End of it, making the instructions of the King or of any by his authority Obligatory on the Govrs Councils and assemblys in the plantations and al Laws orders etc by them to the Contrary to be void – which if past would Subject the plantations to the kings absolute will. Never was there so nearly an union in any place as there was in this agt these clauses.” James Alexander to Cadwallader Colden, undated, Colden III, 101.

supported Colden's politics and challenged his science. While Alexander might not have become a loyalist had he lived, he probably helped Colden along that path by confirming Colden's political views.

In the background of these relationships but the forefront of their correspondence looms Peter Collinson, probably Colden's most significant English contact. Peter Collinson was born in London on January 28, 1694 to Quaker parents. By his own testimony, Collinson fell in love with flowers as a two-year-old toddling about his grandmother's garden.²¹⁸ That idyllic reference aside, life in the Collinson household was not always peaceful. Peter's father, a mercer and haberdasher, was an alcoholic with a tendency to rowdiness that resulted in a brawl with another Friend, and subsequent church discipline. Peter's mother, meantime, could not understand her son's academic interests and disapproved of his habit of studying at night.²¹⁹ Because English universities at the time required an oath of loyalty to the Crown to gain entrance, and Quakers did not believe in taking oaths, Collinson's chance for higher education was limited to what he himself could learn. Upon his father's death, Peter and his brother James took over the haberdasher-mercenary business, and Peter married a Quaker lady of some means named Mary Russell. Their marriage was a happy one and Collinson was grief-stricken at her death.²²⁰ Limited formal education did not keep Collinson from a successful side career as an amateur botanist and all-around naturalist. Part of this was due to his incessant reading, and part of this came from his business and religious contacts. Collinson's first connections to the colonies came from the Quaker brethren in Pennsylvania and Maryland. His love of flowers led him to ask that his correspondents send him any plants or "curiosities" they might find. Collinson filled his garden at Mill Hill with these plants, making him famous and attracting visitors from throughout

²¹⁸ Norman G. Brett-James, *The Life of Peter Collinson* (London, 1925) , 25-26.

²¹⁹ O'Neill, 8.

²²⁰ Brett-James, 26-34.

Europe and the colonies.²²¹ Collinson's business further created contacts around the globe, as he shipped fabric throughout Europe and the colonies. His friendly personality further endeared him to a variety of Englishmen, including noblemen such as Sir Hans Sloane, a scientist whose collections formed a base for the British Museum. Collinson's work in botany and connections secured him a spot in the Royal Society in 1728 and on the Royal Society Council in 1732.²²² From his position, he worked tirelessly to promote scientific knowledge.

Collinson was instrumental in circulating scientific information across the Atlantic to the colonies and back to England, a process historians Jean O'Neill and Elizabeth McClean call a scientific "colonial exchange."²²³ As mentioned previously, Collinson was in touch with James Logan, John Bartram, James Alexander, and Benjamin Franklin. He also wrote to amateur botanists John Clayton, John Mitchell, and Alexander Garden, all of the colonies. Among his accomplishments was alerting Franklin to the electrical experiments being performed on the Continent and bringing Bartram and his plants to the attention of numerous European scientists, such as Linnaeus.²²⁴ Collinson was like a benevolent spider with an ever-expanding web of

²²¹ Brett-James, 37.

²²² Ibid., 170-171.

²²³ Jean O'Neill and Elizabeth McClean describe the information sharing as follows. "This scientific relationship has been described as a 'colonial exchange,' corresponding to the economic function of the colonies. . . . in the scientific realm, the colonists supplied raw material to be refined into scientific knowledge. They dispatched specimens, descriptions, and drawings, and sent vernacular English names, or those derived from the Native American languages. The way Collinson encouraged his correspondents to send him 'curiosities; of all kinds places him at the heart of this exchange. In due course this data would be 'processed' in the mother country by the recognized authorities and turned into systematic knowledge. Subsequently, their findings, couched in Latin, would be disseminated in learned books and journals and returned to the colonies to enable the colonists to further their scientific studies." (79)

²²⁴ To Franklin Collinson wrote in 1747, "The Inclosed Account came form a very Ingenious Frd of Mine and being the first that I have heard, in which Electricity has proved of Benefit to mankind I believe it would be Entertaining to you – but before Wee can rely on the experiment It must be confirm'd per many Successively – It is amazing to what a pitch the Electrical power is carried, I am well Informed that In Germany they knock'd down an Ox Several Men have been Struck down at London, one was an Irish Bishop a Lusty Strong Man and yett cold not Surmount the Shock – I presume by this Time the aparatus is got into the Colonies for there is no discribing the Electrical power unless a p[er]son feels it himself." Peter Collinson to Benjamin Franklin, April 12, 1747, Colden III, 371.

scientific information and contacts, capturing amateur scientists around the Atlantic and placing them in contact with one another. By 1741, and perhaps earlier, Colden was a part of that web.²²⁵

Colden's and Collinson's friendship lasted until Collinson's death in 1768. Exactly how they came into correspondence remains unknown. Collinson already had numerous contacts in the colonies by the 1730s, so it is possible that one of these contacts mentioned Colden to Collinson, leading to correspondence. As per usual with Collinson, the two regularly discussed botany. Like Colden, however, Collinson was interested in almost everything scientific, so the letters discussed anything and everything. In 1741, for instance, Collinson wrote of Colden's designs for a quadrant, sharing that a fellow astronomer did not believe the design would work. He then added "wee are in hopes you will oblige the Curious wth the other p[ar]t of the History of the Five Nations the first gave such an Idea of the Nature and Constitutions of them which are very informeing and Entertaining the Second no Doubt will Further Illustrate that matter."²²⁶ In response Colden wrote that "if your Judgement be in my favour you'l [sic] draw upon your self a request that will give you more trable that is to correct the faults [in Five Nations] by striking out superfluous words helping obscure or languid expressions which I believe every man is less sensible of in his own writing. . . . You cannot do me a greater pleasure than by imploying me in any thing that can be usefull to you or contribute in any manner to your amusement that I may thereby in some measure merit the continuance of your Friendship."²²⁷ Colden, often isolated in New York (it is instructive that of his many scientific colleagues only James Alexander was in New York) was delighted to correspond with Collinson. "I look upon it as one of the happy incidents in my life that I have had the good fortune to fall into a correspondence with you

²²⁵ The editors of the Colden letters speculate that two unsigned letters from London dated April 1728 were from Collinson. These letters contain a laundry list of the latest news from the Continent and from England, such as the recovery of the king of Spain and the capsizing of a ship off the coast of Ireland. See Colden I, 254-257.

²²⁶ Peter Collinson to Benjamin Franklin, March 5, 1741, Colden II, 207.

²²⁷ Cadwallader Colden to Peter Collinson, April 9, 1742, *Ibid.*, 251.

because I take you to be one much of my own taste such as I have often wished for to communicat [sic] some thoughts in natural philosophy . . . for we scarcely have a man in the country that takes any pleasure in such kind of Speculations. Your communicating to me your private manner of life is the strongest instance of your friendship and in some measure makes up the loss of a personal acquaintance.”²²⁸

That Colden trusted and valued Collinson’s opinions is clear. He sent Collinson a copy of *Explications* to read; indeed, Colden relied upon Collinson to secure the printing and publication of the manuscript. Collinson wrote to Colden in early 1747 “your *Essay on the Causes of Gravitation and to Investigate it, is the Work for a Mans Life* – I have distributed the Books to our Greatest People on these Studies both at Home and Abroad in Holland, Germany, Paris, Sweden, Scotland, Dantzick, etc. . . . I have besides made a p[re]sent of a Book to the Royal Society.”²²⁹ He added that “I wish I was sufficiently Skilld in Mathematical Studies to be Some Judge of r System of Gravitation. To mee it seems Rational but I hope some Men of Skill will give you theer thoughts on it.”²³⁰ To Franklin Collinson confided that the initial reaction had been mixed. “It is mch admired by Some and those of most abilities have told mee that it was no triefleing affair but required some great Consideration but one was so mean Spirited as to Say he did to believe it was Doc Coldens Work but that the Ship wrack papers of Some Ingenious european had fell into his hands I am much ashamed for the p[er]son that wrote it.”²³¹ As the chief disseminator of Colden’s work, Collinson understood Colden’s disappointment that the treatise did not garner much praise. He tried to be honest with Colden but soften the blows of the critiques. “I ommitted giving a hint of th Malevolent Temper of a Certain great matehatn amongs

²²⁸ Cadwallader Colden to Peter Collinson, May 1742, Colden II, 261.

²²⁹ Peter Collinson to Cadwallader Colden, March 27, 1747, Colden III, 368.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 369.

²³¹ Peter Collinson to Benjamin Franklin, April 12, 1747, Colden III, 371.

us on Reading thy Tract on Gravitation – He sayes – I am amazed how this Book got to New York, for I am satisfired it came originally from Hence and was once under a Cover with other things – and the pacquet has been Guted – This poor Man is a Little touched in his pericranium So That, I hope will Excuse Him.”²³² Collinson continued to encourage Colden in his scientific endeavors, proving himself a loyal friend and colleague.

When politics entered Colden’s and Collinson’s correspondence, Collinson further proved himself a faithful friend of Colden and supporter of the Crown. Writes historian Norman Brett-James “Collinson quite early found himself puzzled by the growing sense of independence among the colonists It was not easy for the average man in England to appreciate the point of view of men three thousand miles away.”²³³ Collinson’s comments to Colden reveal Collinson’s sense that the monarch was placed in his position by God, as part of the orderly system of nature. As such, Collinson was no supporter of rebellions against the king. He wrote in 1744 concerning a Jacobite rising that “att this Juncture Wee are greatly Embarressed with an Intended Invation from Dunkirk with the pretenders Son att the Head – and there is Reason to Suspect Some plotting att Home from whome the French hoped to Reap great advantage Butt Wee have confidence in the Good hand of providence to Frustrate all their Designns, by the Vigilance of the Government att Home and Our Fleet in the Channel.”²³⁴ Disturbances to the order upset Collinson. In June 1765, watching the protests over Prime Minister Grenville’s policies, he wrote to Colden that “it gives mee concern to See our Unsetledness at the Helm under Such Perturbations the Publick Weal must Suffer. The Amore Patriae Seems to have too Little Share in these Contests, but Courtiers Jockeying one another to Gett the most Lucrative

²³² Peter Collinson to Cadwallader Colden, August 3, 1747, Colden III, 411.

²³³ Brett-James, 139.

²³⁴ Peter Collinson to Cadwallader Colden, March 9, 1744, Colden III, 52.

Employments.”²³⁵ The Stamp Act riots later that year earned his greatest disapproval. Worried for his friend Colden, he wrote, “It gives Mee great Satisfaction yt you have made a Safe Retreat to your little Town where you can calmly look back on the Late Mad and Tumultuous Scenes that Distress your Mind, and embarrassed your Governmt Our newspapers are full of the Frantick Tricks of a Rioutuss Mobb.” He then expressed his further approval of Colden’s actions during the Crisis. “I was truly concern’d for you, yett I was persuaded of your unshaken Mind, in persueing the paths of Equity and Moderation. . . . I think it highly reasonable that Governms and officers, that have Suffer’d from a Rebellious Crew of Banditi should be Indemnified. I have heard it hinted that Instructions will be Sent to every Governmt where Such ravages have happen’d that the province shall make good the Damages.”²³⁶ Collinson hoped for a peaceful resolution to the problems, however. “As the Act is repealed, I hope all Animosities wil Cease and Trade and Business be restored to its right Channel.”²³⁷ Subsequent events made Collinson less hopeful. After the Assembly refused to compensate Colden for the loss of his carriage and accoutrements, Collinson was outraged. “I find by your Sons Letter the Scandelous Useage you have Mett with from your refractory Assembly, who Dare to refuse the Kings Commands . . . what Redress can a Gentleman Hope for from Such a Sett of Violent Obstinate People.”²³⁸ Colden thus explicitly received Collinson’s support for his policies and his political views. It would be impossible to trace a direct link from this support to Colden’s dedication to royal prerogative, but certainly direct affirmation of his political actions would only have strengthened his loyalty. Collinson openly disagreed with the actions of the colonists in New York in the 1760s. As many New Yorkers were beginning to question the Crown and to take part in

²³⁵Peter Collinson to Cadwallader Colden, June 24, 1765, Colden VII, 43.

²³⁶Peter Collinson to Cadwallader Colden, March 20, 1766, Ibid., 104-105.

²³⁷Ibid., 105.

²³⁸Peter Collinson to Cadwallader Colden, February 12, 1767, Ibid., 117.

protesting “taxation without representation,” receiving letters from Collinson confirming that such actions were mad probably comforted Colden and reminded him that the people he trusted thought his political beliefs and actions were correct. Collinson, like Logan, Bartram, and Alexander, supported Colden and offered no challenge to Colden’s proto-loyalism. Interestingly, almost the exact same thing could be said of Colden’s other scientific colleague and correspondent, Benjamin Franklin, at least during the years in which the two men corresponded.

Benjamin Franklin was one of Colden’s most famous correspondents, even during their time. Today he remains so well-known as to make biographical details seem almost superfluous. Nonetheless, a brief portrait of his life prior to meeting Colden is not out of place. Franklin was born January 17, 1706 to Josiah and Abiah Franklin of Boston. He displayed an early love of reading and learning, but since his parents could not afford to send him to school, he was apprenticed instead at age twelve to his older brother James, a printer. When Benjamin was fifteen, James began writing and publishing the *New England Courant*, the one newspaper in Boston that did not simply re-publish news from abroad. Benjamin, wanting a bigger role in the paper, began writing letters under the pseudonym “Silence Dogood,” an elderly widow full of advice on all topics. The letters were a great success, and the public clamored to know the true identity of Silence. After sixteen letters, Benjamin admitted that he was the author. James was not impressed; in fact, he was jealous and continued to treat Benjamin like an upstart young apprentice in need of discipline. The situation only grew worse when James was imprisoned for making fun of local ministerial family the Mathers over the issue of inoculation. The Franklins thought inoculation only harmed the patient, but the Mathers were advocates of the practice. During James’s imprisonment, Benjamin ran the newspaper. When James returned, however, he

did not acknowledge Benjamin's efforts, but went right back to beating him and treating him like a lazy servant. Benjamin had finally had enough, however, and in 1723 ran away to Philadelphia.

Franklin worked for a time as an assistant printer in Philadelphia, a job that brought him to the attention of Governor William Keith, who promised to back a private printing venture for Franklin. Franklin went to London to acquire the materials, only to discover that the governor had changed his mind. He stayed in London until 1726, at which point he returned to Philadelphia and worked for Thomas Denham as a clerk, bookkeeper, and shopkeeper. Upon Denham's death, he returned to printing, acquiring the Pennsylvania Gazette in 1729. This newspaper would make Franklin famous, containing his observations on the political situations of the time. In 1730, Franklin acknowledged an illegitimate son, William, whose mother's name is unrecorded. Franklin's new wife, Deborah Read, took William in and raised him as her own, along with the two children she and Franklin had, Francis (who died as a child) and Sarah. Professional success followed Franklin's newly-established domesticity. In 1733 he began printing Poor Richard's Almanac, containing the pithy proverbs for which he remains famous. Always curious and hoping to improve society, Franklin's adulthood was filled with a multitude of philanthropic endeavors. In 1736 he helped found one of the first volunteer firefighting regiments in the colonies, while in 1743 he became a founding member of the Academy and College of Philadelphia, the forerunner of University of Pennsylvania. By the 1740s Franklin had already acquired quite a reputation as a political thinker, philanthropist, and amateur scientist. It was this interest in science that cemented a friendship with Colden.

Franklin and Colden met by chance on a post road in 1743. Exactly what they discussed remains unknown, but they apparently enjoyed one another's company and began a correspondence weeks later. The earliest letter from Franklin in Colden's published papers dates

November 4, 1743. In it Franklin writes, “I cannot but be fond of engaging in a Correspondence so advantageous to me as yours must be: I shall always [receive] your Favours as such, and with great Pleasure.”²³⁹ Franklin also alludes to his plan for founding a scientific society, crediting Colden’s interest in the scheme for reviving his (Franklin’s) interest in pursuing it. Scientific matters, especially theories and experiments, filled many of the two men’s letters to each other in the years to follow. As mentioned earlier, Franklin sometimes served as a courier for Colden to Logan and Bartram, communicating their ideas and passing their own treatises or news items on to Colden. Colden’s and Franklin’s letters touched on a variety of topics. In one exchange, Colden and Franklin debated the manner in which the heart made the blood flow, while in another they questioned the cause of water spouts in the ocean. Of their theorizing, Franklin wrote in 1752, “’Tis well we are not, as poor Galileo was, subject to the Inquisition for Philosophical Heresy. My Whispers against the orthodox Doctrine in private Letters, would be dangerous; your Writing and Printing would be highly criminal. As it is, you must expect some Censure, but one Heretic will surely excuse another.”²⁴⁰ Colden and Franklin took pleasure in the other’s success, with Colden sending one of Franklin’s stoves to Gronovius, noting in the accompanying letter that “I send with this a curious and new Invention for warming a room with a small fire more effectually than can be done by a large fire in the common method and is free of the inconveniencies which attend the Dutch and German Stoves; because by this contrivance there is a continual supply of fresh warm air. It may be particularly usefull to you and R. Lenneus, by preserving your health while it keeps you warm at you studies It is the Invention of Mr Benjamin Franklin of Philadelphia the Printer of it, a very Ingenious man. Experience

²³⁹ Benjamin Franklin to Cadwallader Colden, November 4, 1743, Colden III, 34.

²⁴⁰ Benjamin Franklin to Cadwallader Colden, April 23, 1752, Colden IV, 323.

confirms the benefit of it.”²⁴¹ Meanwhile, Franklin wrote to Colden of Linnaeus’ naming the plant *Coldenia*, “I congratulate you on the Immortality conferr’d on you by the learned Naturalists of Europe. No Species or Genus of Plant was ever lost, or ever will be while the Word continues; and therefore your Name, now annex to one of them, will last forever.”²⁴² Clearly the two respected each other as scientists and enjoyed corresponding.

As he had with his other correspondents, Colden sent a copy of *Explications* to Franklin for comment. It took Franklin some time to read the document, in part because Colden’s ideas were dense. Franklin reported that “I deliver’d one [copy], as you directed, to Mr Evans; another to Mr Bertram. The former declares he cannot understand it; the latter told me the other Day, that he could not read it with the necessary Attention till after Harvest, but he apprehended he should find it out of his Reach. . . . Two other Gentlemen to whom I gave each one, have not yet given me their Opinions; and In Truth I think you are somewhat too hasty in your Expectations form your Readers in this Affair. There are so many Things quite new in your Piece, and so different from our former Conceptions and Apprehensions, that I believe the closes and Strongest Thinker we have amongst us, will require much longer Time than you seem willing to allow before he is so much a Master of your Scheme, as to be able to Speak pertinently of it.”²⁴³ Franklin never added much more, personally, to his comments on Colden’s magnum opus. Weeks later he wrote to say “I am sorry that I have so little to tell you relating to your Treatise, that may afford you any Satisfaction. Seven or eight our our Gentlemen, have, within my knowledge, read more or less of it. . . . And all I can learn of their Sentiments concerning it it, that they say they cannot understand it, it is above their Comprehension. . . . tho’ you should get no Praise among us, you are like to escape Censure, since our People do not seem to Suppose that you write unintelligibly,

²⁴¹ Cadwallader Colden to Gronovius, December 1744, Colden III, 91.

²⁴² Benjamin Franklin to Cadwallader Colden, October 16, 1746, *Ibid.*, 275.

²⁴³ Benjamin Franklin to Cadwallader Colden, July 10, 1746, Colden III, 226-227.

but charge all to the Abstruseness of the Subject, and their own Want of Capacity.”²⁴⁴ Franklin thus left the implication that Colden’s work was too much for him, a charge Colden seemed to accept with good grace. Certainly their friendship continued, with Peter Collinson noting in 1766 that Franklin was at his house for a visit, and the two were drinking Colden’s health.

It may seem remarkable, given Franklin’s future adherence to the patriot cause and Colden’s death as a staunch supporter of the Crown in 1776, that the two men were still friendly in 1766. In truth, Franklin’s development as a patriot took time, something his letters to Colden reveal. In 1747, after the New York Assembly refused to pay the salaries of the troops Governor Clinton had ordered to defend the border against a Native American and French threat, Franklin sounded much like Colden, writing that “the violent Party Spirit that appears in all the Votes of your Assembly seems to me extreamly unseasonable as well as unjust, and to threaten Mischief not only to your selves but to your Neighbours. It begins to be plain, that the French may reap great Advantages from your Divisions: God grant they may be as blind to their own Interest, and as negligent of it, as the English are of theirs.”²⁴⁵ One of the first hints of Franklin’s faith in and emphasis upon colonial control came in 1754, when he proposed the Albany Plan of Union. This plan would unite all the colonies under a President General and create a legislative body with representatives from each colony for the defense of the colonies against the French. Franklin sent a copy of his plan in a letter to Colden, asking for Colden’s opinion. Colden noted several areas of concern in light of royal authority, such as whether or not the proposed legislative body would have executive powers. Meetings for this legislature were another issue. “It may be thought dangerous to have fixed meetings of the Grand Council of all the Colonies at certain times and places. IT is a Privilege which the Parliament has not nor eth Privy Council and may be thought

²⁴⁴ Benjamin Franklin to Cadwallader Colden, October 16, 1746, Colden III, 273-274.

²⁴⁵ Benjamin Franklin to Cadwallader Colden, November 27, 1747, Ibid., 431.

destructive of the Constitution.”²⁴⁶ The plan was never put into action, as most colonial assemblies resented the diminution of their power implied in the plan, and as England, like Colden, looked upon the proposal as a potential violation of the constitution and Crown and parliamentary authority. Franklin realized the plan would probably not win approval from Pennsylvania’s assembly, but he stood by both the plan and the Assembly’s right to reject it. “Popular elections have their Inconveniencies, ins some Cases; but in Establishing new Forms of Government, we cannot always obtain what we may think the best; for the Prejudices of those concern’d, if they cannot be remov’d, must be in some Degree comply’d with.”²⁴⁷ Franklin then went on to anticipate the looming conflict between the colonists and France, in which he thought England should be careful to respect the colonists’ wishes. “I am of Opinion, that hen Troops are to be rais’d in America, the Officers appointed must be Men the know and approve, or the Levies will be made with more Difficulty and at much greater Expençe.”²⁴⁸

Despite Franklin’s tendencies to support more colonial initiative than Colden would, Franklin was still not a patriot in the 1750s. In fact, he travelled to England in 1757 at the behest of the anti-proprietary party in Pennsylvania, which wanted the colony converted from a proprietary colony to a royal one. The party felt that this change would better ensure their rights and stop the encroachments the proprietor was making upon their rights as English citizens, such as the right to veto the Assembly’s legislation or to exempt himself from taxes. It is instructive that rather than throwing off the system of appointed officials altogether, the anti-proprietors and Franklin wanted to be directly administered by the Crown. This desire reveals faith that the Crown would ensure rights and treat all subjects fairly. While Franklin was more liberal than Colden, he far from a radical. The shift to radicalism did not occur until the passage of the Stamp

²⁴⁶ Cadwallader Colden to Benjamin Franklin, June 20, 1754, Colden IV, 450-451.

²⁴⁷ Benjamin Franklin to Cadwallader Colden, August 30, 1754, *Ibid.*, 463.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Act in 1765. Franklin was living in London at the time, and while he protested the Act, he ultimately accepted its passage and sought the position of stamp distributor for a friend of his. Only when he received letters threatening the destruction of his home for betraying colonial interests did Franklin realize just how unhappy Pennsylvanians and other colonists were with the new law. He lobbied earnestly for its repeal, stepping forward as a defender first and foremost of colonial rights. About that time, he ceased correspondence with Colden. Colden's actions as lieutenant-governor, in light of Pennsylvanians' protests, must have drawn his disapprobation. The last mention of him in Colden's published letters is a reference from Peter Collinson in 1768, noting that Franklin was quite popular in England but was thinking of returning home. It was upon his return that Franklin became an identifiable Whig.

While Franklin became a patriot and opposed Colden's views on royal prerogative, that development took years. Franklin was not an early fire-breathing revolutionary. While his differences from Colden in retrospect seem obvious – i.e. their differing thoughts on the Albany Union—at the time they probably seemed no larger than the differences hinted at in Alexander's and Colden's relationship. By the time Franklin really felt the need to push Colden, Colden was already lieutenant-governor and enforcing the Stamp Act. Franklin's challenges to Colden before that time period were probably minimal, and his despair over the factious nature of the Assembly and his attempts to make Pennsylvania a royal colony suggest respect for the British government. For two decades Colden and Franklin had a harmonious and mutually beneficial friendship. By the time that changed, Colden was already elderly and established in his politics. Interestingly, Franklin did not challenge him on the Stamp Act. Rather, correspondence between the two simply ceased. Franklin in his *Autobiography* did not even mention Colden, perhaps because Colden was so unpopular by the time Franklin was writing the book in 1771, Franklin did not

want to advertise their former association. Certainly if he had, it would have emphasized Franklin's own slow transformation into a revolutionary. In short, when Franklin and Colden were correspondents, Franklin was not yet the revolutionary that history now remembers.

Cadwallader Colden's friendships are instrumental in explaining why his dedication to the preservation of the royal prerogative never wavered in an era in which many men cut ties to the mother country. James Logan, John Bartram, James Alexander, and Peter Collinson either offered words of direct support to Colden, or simply conducted themselves politically in a fashion that agreed with Colden's own actions. Even Benjamin Franklin, in the two decades in which he and Colden corresponded, did not sound much like a revolutionary. These friendships alone cannot explain Colden's proto-loyalism, of course. The fact that his livelihood depended upon the Crown and that he came to the colonies as an adult who maintained strong connections to Scotland and the Continent probably explain a large part of his political beliefs. But in an era in which those beliefs were rapidly changing, the fact that Colden's views did not change can perhaps be explained by the fact that the people with whom he chose to associate did not challenge his fundamental dedication to the preservation of the royal prerogative, and in some cases actively supported it. Colden's science had a role in his politics, as well, for those supportive friendships began in shared scientific interests. Thus Colden's scientific interests affected his loyalty.

EPILOGUE

In the aftermath of the Stamp Act, Colden's weariness with government, as well as his unpopularity, increased. Parliament and England's chief ministers censured him for having agreed not to enforce the Stamp Act until Governor Henry Moore arrived. They also refused to compensate him for his loss of property in the riots outside the fort. Governor Moore, upon his arrival in the colony in late 1765, distanced himself from Colden. In response, Colden chose to retire to Spring Hill, the country estate he had purchased in 1762, located near Flushing, New York. Colden was tired. His beloved wife had been dead for three years, as had one of his daughters. He was 77 years old and had been a public servant for nearly fifty years. It was time for rest and correspondence with family and friends. Son David and David's family joined Cadwallader at Spring Hill, while the other children remained nearby and in active correspondence with their father.

Colden's political career was not quite at an end, however. In 1769 he once again acted as governor while New York awaited the arrival of new governor Lord Dunmore. This time his tenure was mostly without incident, and he finished his term in 1770 under much better conditions than he had in 1765. Colden's final time in office – he served as acting governor for a few months from 1774-1775 during Governor William Tryon's tenure – passed similarly without incident. By that time, however, the revolution Colden had feared was about to erupt. On April 19, 1775, British forces clashed with American militia at Lexington and Concord.

Colden retreated once more to Spring Hill, where his published correspondence reveals that he kept abreast of the news, with letters from such dignitaries as the Earl of Dartmouth, Governor Tryon, and General Thomas Gage. In August 1776, he devised his last will and testament, leaving all his possessions to his children. Colden left no written record of his

thoughts concerning the Declaration of Independence, written just a month earlier, but considering that his entire political career had focused on the preservation of the royal prerogative, he must have been horrified. With the exceptions of John Bartram and Benjamin Franklin, Colden's friends had predeceased him, isolating him further still in the time of turmoil.²⁴⁹ On September 20, 1776, Cadwallader Colden closed his eyes on the spectacle of revolution and died at age 88.

That Colden had been a faithful servant of the Crown, dedicated to the support of the Crown's authority and power, is clear. Throughout his political career, Colden sought to uphold and strengthen the royal prerogative. In fact, the preservation of the royal prerogative formed one of the themes of his life. In an era in which many men cast off their allegiance to England, Colden's politics remained unwavering. Part of this dedication and focus, to the point of alienating many New Yorkers, came from his scientific interests. Colden's great avocation in life, the pursuit of all things scientific, drew him into a small, elite community of like-minded thinkers. James Logan, John Bartram, James Alexander, and Peter Collinson all supported, either by word or deed, Colden's dedication to the Crown. Even Benjamin Franklin offered little challenge to Colden. Colden had little reason to change his political views, and he died a staunch supporter of the Crown. Colden's sons, most notably David and Cadwallader II, continued his legacy of loyalty. David remained at Spring Hill after his father's death. In 1783 the New York state legislature confiscated the property as punishment for David's loyalism. David died in England in 1784, unable to recover his estate. Cadwallader's son Cadwallader II, who had inherited Coldenham, suffered imprisonment in 1776 and 1777, as well as exile to New York City in 1778, for his political beliefs. At the war's end, he returned to Ulster County, New York,

²⁴⁹ And by this time, Franklin and Colden were not longer corresponding, although Franklin did write to Colden's son David in 1773, mentioning his intention to write to Cadwallader soon. (Colden VII, 185). Adding to Colden's grief, his oldest son Alexander died in 1775.

but according to historian Eugene Fingerhut, he never truly adapted to the new world created by war. Clearly Colden's sons had inherited his stubborn dedication to the Crown. In Colden's case, that dedication can partially be understood through a convergence of science and politics.

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