

9-1-1986

The Disciples of Samuel Ely: Settler Resistance Against Henry Knox on The Waldo Patent, 1785-1801

Alan Taylor

Institute of Early American History and Culture

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal>



Part of the [United States History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

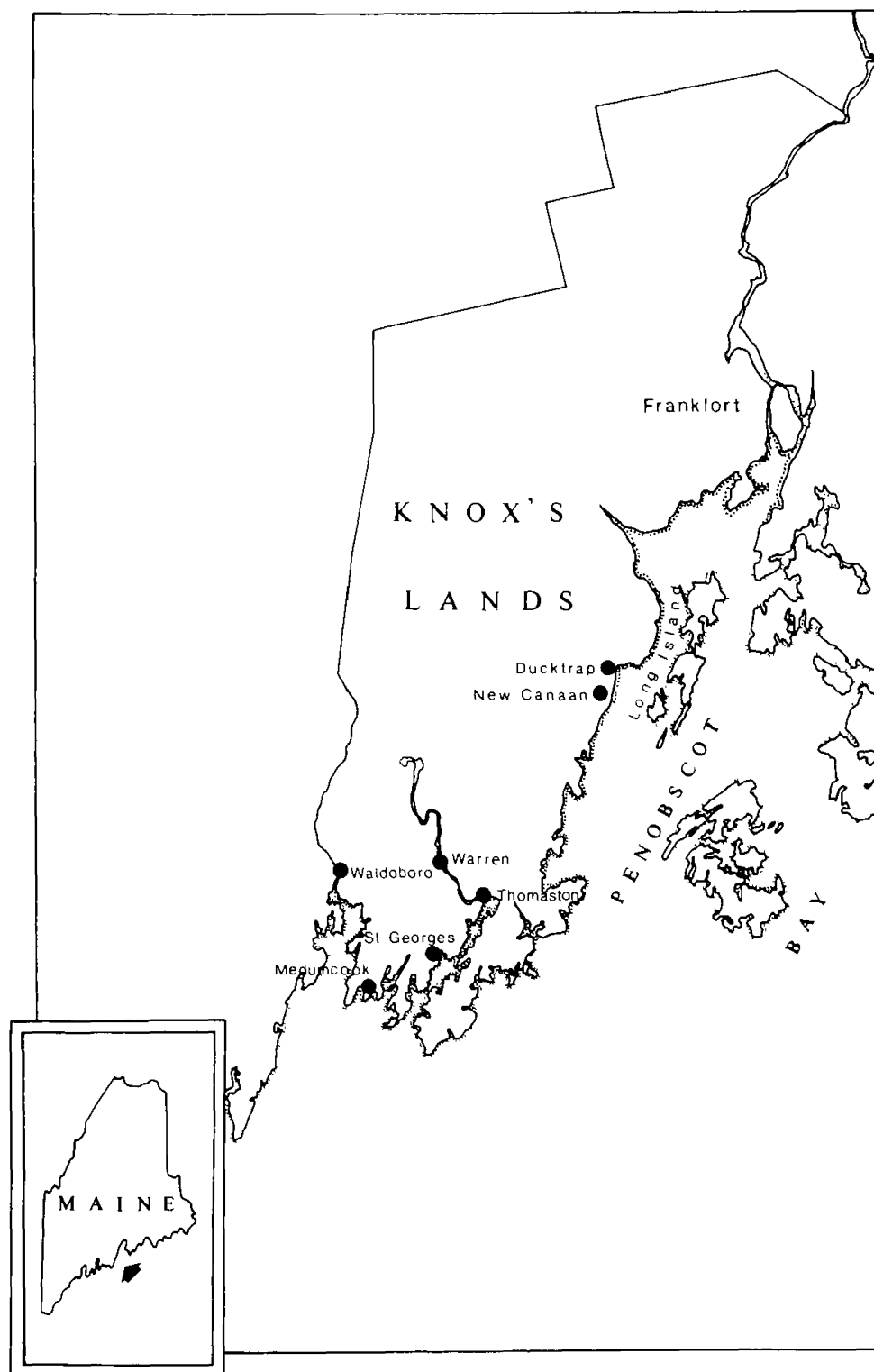
Taylor, Alan. "The Disciples of Samuel Ely: Settler Resistance Against Henry Knox on The Waldo Patent, 1785-1801." *Maine History* 26, 2 (1986): 65-100. <https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/mainehistoryjournal/vol26/iss2/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Maine History by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.

THE DISCIPLES OF SAMUEL ELY:
SETTLER RESISTANCE AGAINST HENRY KNOX
ON THE WALDO PATENT, 1785-1801

The Massachusetts General Court closed its 1785 session on the Fourth of July, the ninth anniversary of American independence. Just moments before the court adjourned, Major General Henry Knox's supporters pushed through a controversial bill confirming the Waldo Patent — a tract of thirty squares miles, or 576,000 acres of desirable land on the western shore of Penobscot Bay — to Knox and the other heirs of Brigadier General Samuel Waldo. In this manner, Knox exploited the absence of the bill's opponents, the legislators representing the more than six hundred families who had settled on the patent during the previous decade. During the Revolutionary War most of the Waldo heirs remained Loyalists, inspiring these settlers to move onto their patent in the expectation that the lands would be confiscated by the state and sold for token amounts to actual occupants. Knox's political maneuver launched the settlers prolonged, violent resistance to his land claims.¹

The hastily drafted resolve included an ambiguous proviso: "that any person who may now be in possession of any lands within the limits of said patent, and who have been in possession of the same from any time before the 19th day of April, shall be quieted in such possession, upon such terms as shall hereafter be determined upon the General Court." Quiet-ing referred to the General Court's policy of selling 100 acres for a token five dollars to those who had squatted on public lands during the Revolutionary War. Knox intended the year "1775" to follow "the 19th day of April," in order to exclude the overwhelming majority of the squatters who had settled after the war began. But in their haste his legislative servants left the year out, creating the impression that all pre-April 19, 1785,



The Knox lands and Penobscot Bay's frontier towns, focus of settler resistance in post-Revolutionary War Maine.

settlers would be quieted. At the last moment Knox's servants noticed their mistake, but fearing that any attempt to correct it would exhaust the remaining members' dwindling patience and postpone consideration for another session, and perhaps sensing that the ambiguity would lull the doubts of some members, Knox's handlers pushed the misdrafted resolve through "in great haste."²

The resolve strengthened the heirs' legal right to demand payments from the settlers for their homesteads. If a settler refused, the heirs could institute an ejectment suit in the state courts to wrest away his lot of land, including any improvements — fences, clearings, and buildings. The heirs hoped that the threat of these suits would prove sufficient to bring the settlers to terms. In 1785 almost all of those settlers dwelled along the St. George's River or along the coast stretching from Broad Bay on the west to Penobscot River on the east. There were nine communities: Waldoborough, Meduncook (Friendship), Warren, Thomaston, St. George's (Cushing and St. George's), New Canaan, Ducktrap, Long Island (Islesboro), and Frankfort, the latter an extensive town that swept northward from Belfast along Penobscot Bay and up the Penobscot River. This string of new or greatly expanded communities attested that during the Revolution the Waldo heirs had lost complete control over the settlement process — over dispensation of access to land and over extraction of part of the enhanced value produced by settler labor applied to the forest, the fish, and the land. Henry Knox meant to regain that control.

By uniting against the proprietors, the settlers sought to frustrate legal actions by the heirs. After a fruitless visit to St. George's Valley in the fall of 1785, Samuel Winslow, one of the Waldo heirs, reported to Knox, "All the people that I spoke with behaved with great decency towards me but were evidently very circumspect & it is apparent they have agreed upon one mode of treating the proprietors." In some communities the settlers chose special town committees to represent their landed

concerns; they pledged to follow the committees' lead, suffering none to seek a separate peace. By March 1786 Isaac Winslow Jr., Samuel Winslow's brother, was so "mortified at the present state of patent affairs" that he "heartily wished" that his family had never "had anything ever to do with them." Shortly thereafter the two brothers visited Long Island and were obliged to beat a hasty and ignominious retreat in "fear of rough usage." An August 1786 visit to the patent by Knox and the two Winslows did not improve relations. Knox offered to submit each settler's lot to three arbitrators — one chosen by the settler, one by the heirs, and the third by the first two — who would affix the price to be paid in three biennial payments without interest. The settlers rejected the compromise, insisting that the lands were their own and that they would pay nothing to men they perceived as wealthy parasites, most of whom had supported British efforts to "enslave" them. John Fitzgerald, an Irish-born Revolutionary War veteran who lived in Waldoborough, spoke for many when he insisted "that he had fought for the land and that he should think it a great hardship if he should be compelled to pay for it." The settlers hoped that the critical clause in the July 4 resolve would ultimately oblige the heirs to quiet every settler on the land before 1785 with 100 acres at five dollars.

Knox recognized the settlers' capacity for organized armed resistance and sensed their anxiety over the lack of warranty title to their lands. He knew that as long as the settlers stood together, the exercise of his legal power to attempt mass ejections would spark bitter and sustained violence that would deter newcomers from the region and undermine local land values. Although hoping to obtain some land payments from these settlers, the General was willing to sell already occupied lands at a reduced rate in order to put his boundary lines around settler claims and preserve the unsettled lands in the backcountry for future sale at enhanced prices to their children and to newcomers.⁴

Returning to the patent with the Winslows in late August 1788, Knox offered to sell on terms amounting to four shillings

Portrait, after Gilbert Stuart, of Major-General Knox in Revolutionary War uniform. The cannon upon which Knox's left hand rests recalls his return from Fort Ticonderoga to Cambridge in January 1776, bringing the artillery which was used during the assault on British forces in Boston. Marriage to Lucy Flucker shortly before the war gave Knox access to the extensive Waldo Patent lands in Maine. Courtesy Maine State Museum.



(\$.67) per acre in three payments spread over five years, without interest. Moreover, instead of insisting upon scarce cash, he promised to accept payment in commodities such as lumber, cordwood, spars, staves, grain, or cattle, an important concession in the cash-short region. Knox promised to deliver a warranty deed once a settler met the first payment, taking a mortgage on the lot as security for the remaining two. The price — \$67 per hundred acres — greatly exceeded the \$5 that the “quieted” settlers on public lands paid, but the easy terms of credit, the ability to pay in commodities, the heirs’ winking at parents signing for an additional lot or two for adolescent sons, the prospect of cherished warranty deeds, and the option of buying over one hundred acres were all tempting features. These terms particularly appealed to the most prosperous settlers who wanted to secure large tracts of especially valuable land. For instance, George and Philip Ulmer preserved their control over Ducktrap harbor and much of the Ducktrap watershed by buying 1,165 acres from Knox. The few with such

large claims had little to gain from the quieting alternative which would limit them to 100 acres. The General shrewdly designed his proposal with the small settler elite in mind; he knew that when influential and economically pivotal men like the Ulmers embraced his terms many of their poorer neighbors would soon follow.⁵

Knox presented his proposed terms in a manner that pressured wavering settlers to accept quickly. He played on settler anxieties with hints that these were the best terms that would ever be extended. When the patent passed into the hands of the heirs' creditors or offspring, Knox intimated, the inhabitants would face harsher landlords. The General also exploited the poor communication between settlements by telling each in succession that the other communities had already embraced his terms, when frequently that was not true. Finally, Knox seems to have hinted that the terms would only stand if the General Court declined to mandate better quieting terms for the settlers. This led many to conclude that they had nothing to lose by signing on these terms; they still might avoid paying more than five dollars for a hundred acres.⁶

Feared isolation from their compatriots and worse terms in the future, 289, or about half of the 600 squatter families, embraced the heirs' offer. In all, Waldo Patent settlers signed for 32,784 acres, which at four shillings an acre promised the heirs a return of \$21,856. Most of the holdouts dwelled in Islesborough and in predominately German Waldoborough. Apparently lacking a land committee and more vulnerable to misinformation because of their poverty and greater isolation, the settlers of Ducktrap and New Canaan proved particularly ripe for Knox's tactics. Although Knox initially found them the patent's "most hostile" settlers, in the end almost all grudgingly followed the Ulmers' lead in accepting the heirs' offer. When most of Ducktrap's settlers signed on September 24, their harder-line New Canaan neighbors anxiously asked for another meeting with the heirs. On September 30 they too embraced the proffered terms. Knox's special promise to allow

the local leading men to retain their mill seats seems to have loomed large in breaking down settler resistance. In Ducktrap and New Canaan a total of 81 residents with possession claims to New Canaan lots signed for a total of 13,837 acres, which, at four shillings an acre, promised the heirs \$9,225 from those two communities alone. Since the 1790 census found only 87 families in the two communities, virtually all the residents in 1788 must have signed for their land.⁷

Knox left the patent satisfied with the terms secured and the division wrought in settler ranks. To encourage further doubts, the departing agents circulated a public "Notification" assuring the holdouts with calculated exaggeration that the heirs had "compromised with the great majority on terms highly advantageous to themselves & their families." The heirs enhanced the price for subsequent sales to between six and ten shillings (\$1.00-1.67) per acre and promised another price increase in the near future. This placed psychological pressure on the holdouts and assured the signers that they had made a good bargain and that their interests lay with the proprietors in seeking a continued rise in local land values.⁸

But the ink on the agreements had scarcely dried when at least fifty residents of Ducktrap and New Canaan — over half the adult signers in those two settlements — took renewed stock of their poverty, their hopes of a General Court intervention, and their capacity for resistance. On October 18, 1788, they wrote to the heirs:

We are each and every one of us very uneasy — that when we survey our naked families hear our creditors allso and [have] little or no provision to support us through the approaching winter and that we have to pay for the land that most of us payed largely for before [to original possessors] we find our difficulties to be such as is not equalled in any part of the Eastern Country (except in your Honrs. Patent) and we did not understand the true circumstances of the matter when we signed your Honr's obligation (for want of time to consider).

They asked “as children to a parent” either for a release from their agreement or for a much lower price. At the same time they protested to the court that the General’s skill at stretching the truth had stampeded them into signing: “We think we are imposed upon by his representing things all in his own favour and taking advantage of the people’s fears and ignorance by threatening to bring us to a federal court &c he knowing our circumstances to be very low indeed.”⁹

Aware that such a release would encourage widespread remission from the heirs’ terms, Knox flatly refused. The General dashed off a reply to the Ducktrap and New Canaan dissidents. He assured them it was utterly futile to expect any relief from the General Court, and for proof he enclosed a fresh copy of a new resolve “explaining” the 1785 document’s vague but pivotal “quieting” clause. With half the settlers brought to terms, Knox concluded that the ambiguity in the clause had outlived its usefulness. In November 1788, exploiting the absence of the settlers’ principal legislative spokesmen, Deacon Samuel Brown of Thomaston and Waterman Thomas of Wal-doborough, the General obtained an explanatory resolve from the General Court that set 1775 as the year intended to follow “the 19th of April.” This denied quieting to the great majority of Waldo Patent squatters: those who arrived either during or after the Revolutionary War. In this measure Knox’s legislative servants violated the usual General Court practice of hearing both parties to a dispute, often through repeated extensions spanning several sessions, before holding a floor vote. By pushing through this “explanation,” Knox meant to deprive hold-outs of any hope that the General Court would intervene in their favor for a price lower than that offered by the heirs.¹⁰

Adding to settler apprehension, in the spring of 1789 several of the lesser Waldo heirs acting independently of Knox and the Winslows commenced trespass suits against all the settlers on Orphan Island (Verona) at the mouth of the Penobscot River. Many inhabitants regarded this as a precursor to massive ejectments brought by all the heirs against settler

holdouts throughout the patent. Consequently, the late 1788 and early 1789 petitions to the General Court protested that Knox had practiced bad faith in securing an "explanation" utterly contrary to their understanding of the original resolve and to his repeated public assurances that he would seek no alteration. Waldoborough's settlers insisted that unless the General Court rescinded the explanation, they would "have nothing to hope for but to be slaves to a set of men (The Honorable H. Knox excepted) which have attempted to bring us into bondage." The petitioners argued that the four shilling price per acre would entail lifelong hardship:

We have no lumber but cordwood which (to get one cord to market) will take one man and four oxen two days and then fetch but three shillings which ye petitioners want to purchase clothing for their children or pay their taxes which is more than they are able to pay, that with an addition of twenty pounds will involve many families in distress & misery, as they have no other resource, many having but one cow, and some not as much as a cow and large families of small children.¹¹

In the General Court, Deacon Brown and Waterman Thomas conducted a passionate campaign for the explanatory resolve's suspension. On the floor of the House, Deacon Brown furiously insisted that the General had "cut the throats of the people by obtaining that explanation." Brown and Thomas told Knox's representative, General Henry Jackson, that "a *revolution* would *certainly* take place on the patent unless they were *quieted* in their possessions up to April 1785." Knox countered that the settlers had simply misunderstood his words and added, "The explanation can only affect the obstinately unjust. Those who have compromised are not in the least affected by it."¹²

Knox's legislative handlers rallied their supporters, particularly in the State Senate, a bastion of great property's interests, which to the General's delight not only rejected the settlers' petitions, but ordered two of them burned as a demonstration of their disgust at the aspersions they cast on the



Land-poor settlers petitioned the General Court in Boston, arguing that if Knox's claims were upheld they would have "nothing to hope for but to be slaves." *Harpers Monthly*, 1872.

character of a fellow gentleman. In the House, Knox and his legislative allies practiced a strategy of delay, enlisting the support of House Speaker Dr. William Eustis of Boston to bottle up subsequent settler petitions in committees dominated by proprietary interests. When Waterman Thomas finally succeeded in June 1794 in securing House passage of a bill to send an investigative committee to the patent to hear settler complaints, Knox's servants used their greater strength in the State Senate to procure a continuation.¹³

Although triumphant in the legislature, the heirs' position among the settlers in the patent continued to erode. Land payments ground to a halt. In 1789 Knox's agents took in £262 in settler land payments; that plummeted to £35 in 1790; £33 in 1791; and £18 in 1792. From Ducktrap, George Ulmer wrote to the General in May 1790: "Your affairs here have not a verry pleasing prospect . . . Almost every one is flusht with the idea of getting their land for nothing. Circulating letters are sent from Penobscott to Waldoborough and St. Georges; and from them,

there are others sent to Penobscott and to this settlement.” Community pressure restrained the few who remained willing to make payments to the heirs. In August 1791 Vose feared that “the unfriendly” settlers would cut away Ulmer’s boom retaining the spars turned in on land account by some of his neighbors, “for there are many people in that quarter that are very angry that any person attempts to pay for their land.”¹⁴

Few of the newcomers honored Knox’s claim by applying for permits. On August 5, 1795, George Ulmer wrote to Knox: “The country settles much faster than it ever has done before; there are perhaps double the number on the land without permits to them that have them.” In fact, Ulmer underestimated the number of new squatters without permits. During the decade 1790-1800, Ducktrap-New Canaan’s combined population more than doubled from 87 to 206 families. During the same decade Ulmer issued only twenty-two permits. Knox faced not only the defection of most of the 1788 signers but a growing majority of new squatters in defiance of his claim. His prolonged absence, revived settler hopes of free land, and local population growth all combined to undermine Knox’s fleeting control over the ongoing occupation of wild lands within the Waldo Patent.¹⁵

Resistance to Knox hinged upon three issues: the apparent injustice of a wealthy man demanding pay from the land’s poor possessors; the suspect quality of Knox’s title to the land; and the high price he charged for it. Nathan Knight of New Canaan insisted, “the state was rong in suffering any one man to possess so large a quantity of land.” Knox recurrently promised, but just as recurrently failed, to deliver warranty deeds to those settlers who had made their first land payment. This aroused old suspicions of the Waldo Patent’s legal bankruptcy, along with new fears that Knox’s notorious financial difficulties would soon place his claim in the hands of creditors or heirs who would not honor his deeds. This was a frightening prospect to settlers intent upon safeguarding their children’s status as land-holding free men. Finally, the poorer settlers particularly felt that they could not afford Knox’s steadily

rising price without entailing prolonged sacrifices and suffering on their families. By 1796 Knox sought twelve to eighteen shillings (\$2-3) per acre for his land, a rate at least three times that paid by the 1788 signers. Upon visiting the Waldo Patent, Alexander Baring, Knox's partner in another land speculation, the Bingham Purchase, concurred that the General was far "too enthusiastic" in his enhanced price; Baring considered it at least twice what the settlers could afford to pay.¹⁶

Knox's agents were especially concerned over the growing influence of the Reverend Samuel Ely of Ducktrap (in the portion that is now Northport). During a peripatetic career that mixed evangelical religion with an uncompromising populism, Ely acted throughout New England as the most consistent and forthright proponent of the Revolution as an opportunity for the common yeomanry to escape exploitation by their genteel rulers. He expressed a profound conviction that great men naturally sought to "enslave" the common folk. Timothy Dwight, the president of Yale College and voice of the Congregational and Federalist establishment in Connecticut, knew and detested Ely as a menace to genteel principles of good order: "He declared himself everywhere the friend of the suffering and oppressed and the champion of violated rights. Wherever he went he industriously awakened the jealousy of the humble and ignorant against all men of superior reputation as haughty, insolent and oppressive."¹⁷

Samuel Cullick Ely was born in the rural Connecticut town of North Lyme on November 6, 1740. He studied for the Congregational ministry at Yale, graduating in 1764. During the next year he began to preach in the northeastern Connecticut town of Somers. Dismissed on October 9, 1773, Ely patched together a modest living as an itinerant preacher in several of the new hill towns in Vermont and in western Massachusetts's Hampshire County, returning periodically to his wife and young daughters in Somers. In January 1782 he emerged as the principal leader of "Ely's Rebellion" in western Massachusetts among hill farmers tired of heavy wartime taxation, expensive

government that seemed to benefit only the wealthy, and numerous debt suits brought by mercantile creditors. He insisted that these genteel rulers had perverted the Revolution for their own benefit and deprived the poor soldiery of their just pay by embezzling tax receipts. The county magistrates moved to behead the rebellion, arresting, trying, and convicting Ely of "treasonable practices." In March 1783 the General Court ordered Ely's release upon his posting a substantial bond, with his father and brother as sureties. The court stipulated that Ely would forfeit the sum if he did not keep quiet and stay out of the Commonwealth.¹⁸

Ely disappeared from sight until the 1790 Federal Census, which detected his presence with wife and daughter in Pownalborough's North Parish (Alna), a community long troubled with great proprietors. By June 1792, Ely had moved eastward, settling on the north side of "Ely's Brook" (now Shaw's Brook) at Ducktrap's (now Northport's) Saturday Point. Again he lived as an itinerant preacher among new and poor settlers, learning, in the process, of his new neighbors' hardships, hopes, and grievances — all so similar to what he had known among the hill folk of Vermont, northeastern Connecticut, and western Massachusetts. Conjoined with the settlers' frustrations, Ely's personal antipathy to great men proved explosive.¹⁹

Ely encouraged his neighbors to drive off Knox's surveyors and discipline those in their midst who spoke for the great proprietors. Ducktrap and New Canaan became the focal points of the conflict, as Ely's growing influence challenged the authority of George Ulmer, the area's wealthiest settler and preeminent proprietary supporter. In February 1793 Ulmer physically assaulted his new neighbor and then challenged him to a duel. In April Ely and his supporters exacted vengeance by tearing down the Ulmers' mill dam on the Ducktrap River, depriving the brothers of waterpower in the midst of the all-important sawing season. In June 1793 George Ulmer arrested Ely on charges of illegally performing two marriage ceremonies. A year later Ely escaped sentencing by presenting a letter of pardon from Governor Samuel Adams. In July 1793

one of Knox's land surveyors reported a threat from Micajah Drinkwater, "one of the GREAT SAMUEL ELY'S disciples who among others are going to prevent our surveying the seashore by Duck Trap &c, knock us on the head, break our instruments, moor us in Owl's Head Bay ... and ... say that even Genl. Knox himself will share the same fate if he attempts to take an active part in [the] enterprise." In September 1793 the Hancock court of General Sessions of the Peace convicted and fined Ely ten shillings for assaulting Job Pendleton, one of Knox's few supporters in Islesborough, "with a large stick."²⁰

Ely also assumed the leading role in promoting the latest petitions from Ducktrap and New Canaan to the General Court. In October 1793 he drafted a forceful petition and secured 156 signatures from Ducktrap, New Canaan, and Islesborough. The petition informed the General Court that over two-thirds of the settlers were "so poor in purse and property that 'tis beyond their present ability & to human probability will remain so during their lives, to purchase or pay for their present premises." Ely carried the petition to Boston and lobbied the General Court on its behalf during the June 1794 term.²¹

Petitions from Ducktrap and New Canaan between 1788 and 1796 measure the local opposition to Knox's claim. The vast majority of the settlers in Ducktrap and New Canaan signed one or more of the following: the October 1788 letter to Knox for remission; Ely's October 1793 petition to the General Court and February 1796 letter to Ducktrap plantation's assessors; and Joseph Coombs's May 1796 petition to the General Court. Ely's petition alone claimed the allegiance of 103 settlers in the two communities, including nearly two-thirds of the 1788 signers (53 or 82) still there in 1790. A total of 112 adult males can be identified who persisted in the two communities during the years 1793-1797 when unrest peaked. Four out of every five (90 of 112) went on record against Knox's control.²²

Two influences — prior frontier experience and relative poverty — played important roles in separating the ninety who chose Ely's path from the twenty-two who did not. The 1800

Federal Census for Northport and Ducktrap-New Canaan identify the place of origin for eighty-four of the former and twenty of the latter. Two-thirds (55 of 84) of the resisting settlers came either from elsewhere in mid-Maine, principally the Lincoln County coast, or from Nova Scotia, compared to but half (10 or 20) of those who stood by Knox. Prior frontier experience apparently taught men to distrust proprietors and encouraged settlers to trust in their ability to successfully resist proprietary power.

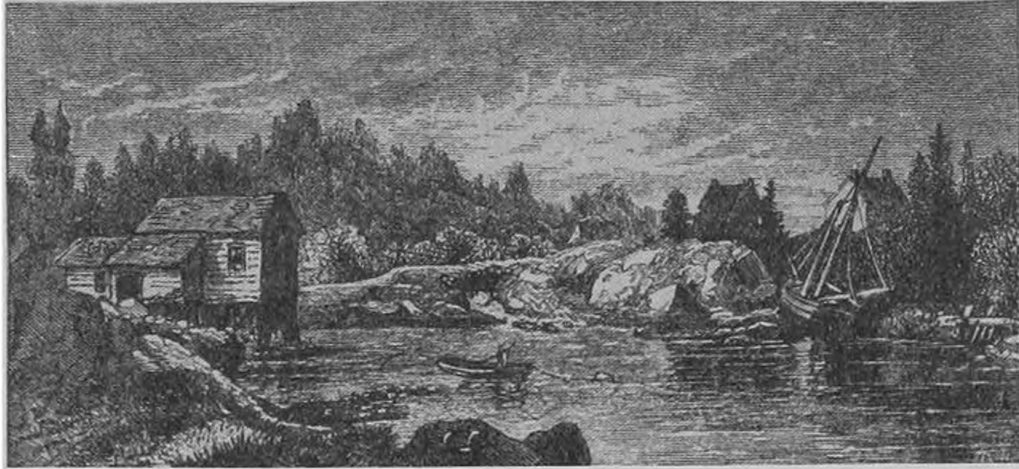
The resisting settlers were significantly poorer than those who declined to sign their petitions. The 1798 Federal Direct Tax returns provide property-holding evidence for seventy-seven resisting settlers and twenty collaborating settlers. Since all 112 lived in the two communities when the tax was taken, the fifteen who do not appear on the tax rolls apparently were considered without taxable dwellings and improved land. Thirteen of those fifteen were resisting settlers. Moreover, on average, those resisting settlers who possessed taxable property held less than half as much as the collaborators: \$78 to \$192 in average house value and \$343 to \$690 in real estate value. The two Ulmer brothers' combined \$7,947 assessment represented 45 percent of the property value held by collaborators; but when they are excluded, the remaining eighteen were still 28 percent wealthier than the tax-paying resistors (\$538 for the former and \$421 for the latter). Those who could least afford to pay an outsider for title to their lands, and particularly those schooled by frontier experience to believe such payments were unnecessary and unjust, comprised those who defied Henry Knox.²³

The settlers were further alarmed by the simultaneous efforts of the Kennebeck Proprietors, Twenty Associates, and Waldo heirs to extend their often overlapping survey lines deep into the backcountry. A series of proprietary surveys during the late fall of 1795 struck the inhabitants as a collusive effort to seal their fate. In Ely's words, "This chafed the minds of the people as a bear bereaved of her whelps." Armed settler bands, some reputedly involving up to three hundred men, intervened to order several survey parties to depart from the backcountry.

In late November a delegation of Balltown (Jefferson and Whitefield) settlers warned surveyor Benjamin Poor that “they were determin’d that no surveyor should run any line there at present” because the inhabitants were Revolutionary War veterans who had “fought” for the land once, “and were determined to fight for it again.” In December, Clinton’s leading settler, Simon Brown, demanded that Gershom Flagg cease his survey for the Plymouth Company, “as the land was the people’s and not the company’s,” adding that “he had been in the service 6 years and fought for the land, and would have it.”²⁴

The most important incident concerned settler opposition to Ephraim Ballard’s attempt to survey the Plymouth Patent’s southeastern corner. This took Ballard’s party into the heart of the new settlements founded by men and women who had moved up the Sheepscot and Damariscotta valleys in search of a refuge from the proprietary claims to Lincoln County’s coastal lands. During early November in Newcastle and again in Nobleborough armed settlers turned Ballard’s party away. A third attempt brought the persistent survey party to Balltown, the backcountry settlement where resistance was best organized. On November 12 they camped beside a brook north of Damariscotta Great Pond. In the middle of the night nine to ten armed men burst upon the campsite awakening the frightened survey party with shots into the air. Pressing a loaded musket to Ballard’s chest the leader demanded, “deliver up, deliver up all, God damn you, deliver the compass, deliver up the papers, deliver up the cannister, God damn you, taking nothing out, if you do you are a dead man.” Ballard delivered. To prevent resumption of the survey, the “Indians” smashed his compass and withdrew into the darkness, bearing away his map and survey notes.²⁵

In the morning, six townsmen, all belonging to the household of Jonathan Jones, ventured out to guide Ballard’s shaken men to safety. Jones was a local land speculator and the principal proprietary supporter in Balltown. Ballard described him as “a man of handsome property in that vicinity & who appears well attached to the government & laws.” For this and other acts of assistance to Ballard’s party, on the night of



Penobscot Bay scene, *Harpers Monthly*, 1877.

November 15 the insurgents burned Jones's two barns filled with grain and hay. Confident that no one would testify, the county magistrates decided not to risk arresting any suspects in the assault on Ballard's party or the burning of Jones's two barns.²⁶

The absence of Knox and Ulmer in Boston for the winter inspired further militance throughout the region. Referring to the Balltown episodes, on February 10, 1796, an alarmed Thomas Vose wrote Knox, "The people's success in that undertaking seems to have given rise & encouragement to the inhabitants along thro' the back country to [New] Canaan & Ducktrap to plot & to covenant with each other, to pay you (as their expression is) a Jones' visit." He found that the settlers had collected "all the powder & lead in that country with a pretence of hunting." But, Vose noted, "Fire appears to be their favorite assistant." They reportedly hoped to drive Knox from the region by burning down his new Montpelier complex in Thomaston. Rumor held that several Balltowners involved in burning Jones's barns offered their expertise to the Ducktrap and Canaan people for driving out Knox and his agents. The new militance reached across the Penobscot River to the town of Penobscot (now Castine) where the lawyer Isaac Parker reported the settler resistance was "fast travelling east." A nocturnal fire badly damaged proprietor Leonard Jarvis's sawmill in Penobscot and an anonymous notice warned his agent-brother, Philip, to depart.²⁷

In early February a mass meeting reportedly involving 200 men from New Canaan and nearby settlements subscribed to a written bond drafted by Ely. In a letter to Knox, Thomas Vose alleged that the settlers committed themselves, "under the most solemn obligations to extirpate you & and your agents from this country — [and] to abide by each other until the accomplishment of it, at the risk of their lives." Abner Milliken, captain of New Canaan's militia company, agreed to turn out his men to rescue any settler arrested for participating in the resistance. Referring to George Ulmer, Vose reported, "they pronounce him a traitor and propose to treat him accordingly when he returns." The settlers forwarded word to Ulmer that he must immediately remove himself and his effects from Ducktrap or suffer a "Jones visit."²⁸

In the spring of 1796 the Ducktrap-New Canaan settler militance collapsed as suddenly as it had crested in the winter. On March 12 George Ulmer returned home armed with a new commission, secured with Knox's influence, as a justice of the peace; this invested Ulmer with enhanced prestige and power to arrest and imprison men suspected of riotous proceedings. He also bore a proclamation from Governor Samuel Adams denouncing the resistance and an order for Samuel Ely's arrest. Ulmer found that in New Canaan, Ducktrap, and Islesborough, "the combination was general with a few exceptions." But Ely's courage failed, and he took precipitous flight on the eve of Ulmer's return. This disheartened and confused the settlers, who consequently failed to carry out their threat to Ulmer.

Making the most of settler confusion, Ulmer immediately set about restoring his vigorous presence among the people. In a March 18 letter to Knox, he wrote, "I have endeavoured to mix in all the company I possibly could since my arrival, without the least fear and if they continue to shrink from their resolutions of opposition as they now appear to, by the time you arrive there will not be a man found that will own that he was in the least dissatisfied." As the new center of local attention,

Ulmer achieved a rapid reorientation of the oral exchanges upon which community consensus rested; settler conversation took on a new tone, stressing a love of order rather than a readiness to fight. Within a month Ulmer confidently informed Knox, "All is intirely tranquil ... amongue the people, there is not a person that appears to be the least opposed to your intrist, and but few that will own that they ever were." Knox's summertime return to Montpelier completed the transformation of public talk.²⁹

George Ulmer took advantage of Ely's absence; when the parson failed to appear at the Hancock County Court on Common Pleas in April to answer the Ulmer brothers' suit against him for destroying their dam, the court automatically ruled for the brothers, awarding a ruinous sum of \$349 in damages and legal costs, an amount twice what Ely possessed in real property. Ely briefly reappeared at his Northport home in September but again vanished before Knox's servants could arrest him.³⁰

Why the dramatic shift in settler attitudes? The turning seasons contributed to the change from resistance to accommodation. Early winter was a season of relatively slack work and frequent visiting when settlers felt most closely knit to one another and could afford to attend meetings to exercise their anger. In early winter their larders were most full, nourishing a greater sense of independence from the credit nexus that tied them, through their leading men, to the external market. But late winter and spring were seasons of intense work and hunger that dispersed the settlers and discouraged attention to anything other than efforts to obtain food for their families. In addition, late winter's pinching circumstances restored the settlers' sense of vulnerability and dependence on provisions obtained on credit through leading men. George Ulmer noted the seasonal element in the ebbing resistance, labelling it "the reverse of the Philadelphia [yellow] fever: when the warm weather comes on wee shall hear no more of it."³¹

Joseph Thomas's new deed proved of equal importance with the onset of the heaviest work season and the renewed

presence of social authority. On March 11, 1796, the day before Ulmer's return, Thomas Vose delivered to Thomas a warranty deed for 200 acres, Knox's first warranty deed to a lot of land in either New Canaan or Ducktrap. Vose exhorted Thomas to show it among his neighbors as evidence that the General did indeed dare to warranty his deeds. "Since Thomas has got his deed," George Ulmer reported, "they talk quite differently."³²

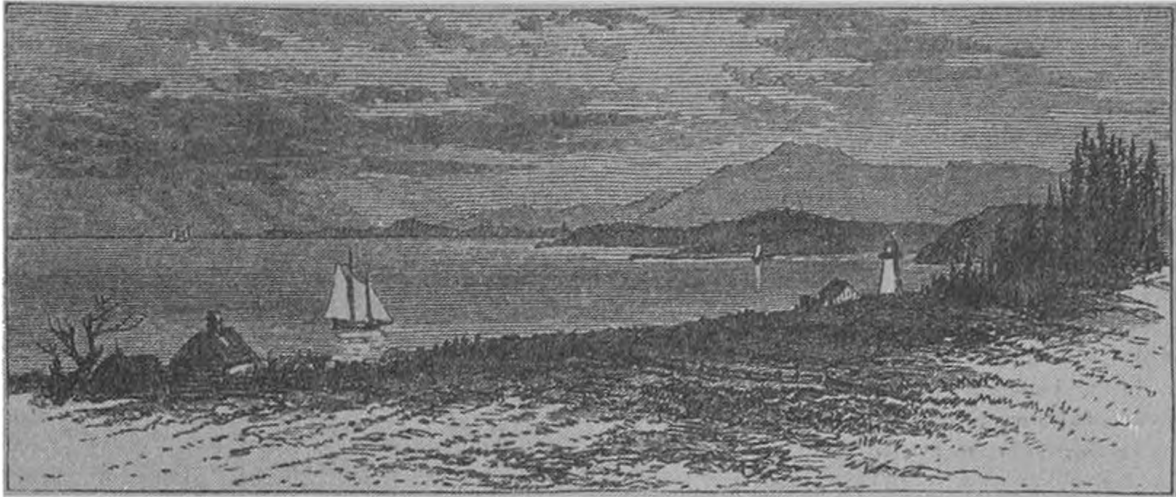
Joseph Thomas was a very useful man to receive the first deed. First, unlike a George Ulmer, he was a rough-hewn man whose life was similar to that of his aggrieved neighbors. He began life in coastal Scituate, Massachusetts, and migrated to Jeremy Squam Island (a leading source of New Canaan's earliest settlers) at the mouth of the Sheepscot. Thomas married at Jeremy Squam in 1773 and during the Revolution moved eastward to become one of New Canaan's original settlers. Although he had been one of the October 1788 "revolvers," unlike the great bulk of his neighbors he soon returned to Knox's fold and during what Ulmer called "the winter disorder of disaffection" continued to speak out in the General's favor. Consequently, Thomas's deed attested to the material benefit — warranty security — that accrued to those who stood by the General. Moreover, Thomas stood in the midst of an extensive kin network that promised to disseminate the deed's good effects to maximum advantage. Three other New Canaan settlers were his brothers and through their wives the Thomas clan was connected to the important Miller, Knight, and Higgins families. The Millers and the Knights ranked with the Thomases as the earliest and most influential families among the people and had been among Samuel Ely's most zealous disciples; their conversion promised to carry great weight among the rest of their neighbors.³³

In sum, spring 1796 brought a sudden and dramatic reversal of the conditions that had promoted plans to drive Knox and his agents from the region. The effects of revived authority can be read in the reduced number and shifting distribution of signatures on Joseph Coombs's new petition to the General Court. Where 103 men signed Ely's October 1793 petition, only

fifty-seven Ducktrap and New Canaan residents endorsed Coombs's. Thirty "holdovers" signed both; seventy-one "defectors" endorsed only the first, and twenty-seven "new signers" subscribed to only the second. Population turnover accounted for about a third (27 of 71) of the defectors, leaving forty-four 1793 signers who were still in the area in 1796 and so chose not to sign.³⁴

It seems that most of the settlers who could afford to pay for their land — those for whom quality of title had been the chief reservation — were sufficiently impressed by Joseph Thomas's deed to withdraw from the resistance. Those least able to pay, and so more concerned with Knox's price, persisted in their opposition and were joined by other poor folk: their maturing sons and newcomers. More than ever, poor men of frontier origins predominated in the remaining opposition to Henry Knox. Where 68 percent of the 1793 signers (47 of the 69 whose place of origin is known) hailed from either mid-Maine or Nova Scotia, that proportion rose to 78 percent (21 of 27 holdovers and 18 of 23 new signers whose place of origin is known) of the 1796 signers. In short, a disproportionate number of defectors originally came from non-frontier areas with less of a tradition of resisting the authority of great men. The defectors also tended to be slightly more prosperous than holdovers; the thirty-nine defectors found on the 1798 Federal Direct Tax rolls owned an average of \$426 in real estate compared to \$377 for twenty-six holdovers. While the slightly more prosperous tended to drop out, still poorer men took their places: the twenty-two new signers on the 1798 tax list possessed an average of only \$317. These men were poorer because, as a rule, they were either newcomers or young men just starting to develop their lots. On average, the 1796 signers were 16 percent poorer than the 1793 signers (\$350 versus \$407).³⁵

That trend helps to account for the greater secrecy and desperation evident in settler behavior after Ulmer and Knox returned and Ely decamped. Although overt talk of "Jones' visits" lapsed, in late March George Ulmer noted, "Some still



Coastal farm clearing near Camden Hills, *Harpers Monthly*, 1877.

persist in heaving out threats, but in such a manner that it would be verry difficult to take hold of them." One day a group visited Ulmer's store and "after drinking freely" dropped hints that Knox "would sicken and die soon." Ulmer feared an attempt to poison the General, but it seems more likely that some frustrated and bitter settlers found recourse in a psychological war of suggestion. More tangibly, on the morning of July 15 George Ulmer awoke to look out toward Long Island and see "drifting about the bay" hundreds of spars that he had stored for Knox in two floating booms. In early September Ulmer and Knox again lost hundreds of spars through similar mischief.³⁶

In March 1797 Knox's allies found still graver cause for concern. Evidence indicated that a few dissidents planned to take exemplary revenge on Knox and his leading supporters. Harris Ransom, a longtime boarder with Ely's family at Saturday Point, dropped alarming hints that led Ulmer to arrest and question him. Ransom testified that during Ely's last visit in September, eighty-two men joined with the parson in written bonds "to burn yours and many other people's houses, rob the stores, and burn the goods before the owners' faces, poison their cattle by mixing poison with salt, and putting in their fodder, and many other matters were to be done." Ely and his associates had planned to act in September, but held off until spring hoping that the General Court would pardon Ely and finally

respond to the settlers' repeated petitions. Ransom confessed and entered a guilty plea "in order to prove himself a good fellow as he term'd it" but refused to name any conspirators. Ulmer hustled Ransom across the bay to jail in Castine, Hancock County's shire town. Ulmer's fears of a rescue riot went unfulfilled, and Ransom was eventually released, apparently without trial.³⁷

Ely's complete disappearance probably accounts for the failure of his latest scheme. During the winter, while Ransom and his associates held onto the written bond, Ely mounted an unsuccessful campaign to secure a pardon from the General Court. His last recorded words appeared later that year in a pamphlet entitled *The Deformity of a Hideous Monster Discovered in the Province of Maine by a Man of the Woods, Looking after Liberty*. The publication was devoted to assailing Knox, the Plymouth Company, the frontier's leading men, and Governor Samuel Adams. Ely expected martyrdom: "let me have a high scaffold that all may see a martyr die for the common cause of the people pleading for justice and true liberty." With that, Ely disappeared from sight. Two Ely family genealogies suggest that he died in Connecticut in 1795. Although the year is patently incorrect, it is possible that Ely did depart the Commonwealth to spend his remaining years in the state of his birth. In 1856 John L. Locke of Belfast recorded a tradition that Ely was drowned in Northport but gave no year. Destruction of Northport's vital records in the last century frustrates confirmation. Evidence from land deeds indicates that Ely's wife, Temperance, remarried in 1800 suggesting that the Parson died in 1799 or early 1800. For her second husband, Temperance took Islesborough's sixty-nine-year-old Shubael Williams, one of the island's earliest settlers and one of Samuel Ely's staunchest supporters. On July 16, 1803, Henry Knox conveyed title to Ely's eighteen-and-a-half acre lot on Saturday Point to Temperance for \$87.50, punctuating the local demise of the resistance. No document survives to record what the General and his antagonist's widow thought or remembered on that occasion. Ironically, George Ulmer witnessed when Shubael Williams wrote his will on August 30, 1803.³⁸

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THOSE, WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

THE *Subscriber* has agreed, with all the *settlers*, seated on his back LANDS, and sold LANDS in the same quarter to numerous and respectable *Emigrants* from the *States Westward*, on principles promising them great prosperity and the establishment of harmony and *good order* throughout that fertile region. He conceives therefore, that this is the proper moment to announce in the most public and solemn manner that in future, *No usurpation of his lands will be tolerated.*

AS the LAND is, and will be surveyed into lots, no hope of impunity will arise from any supposed secrecy in the offence. Every regular *settler* has bound himself to discountenance and discover such lawless persons—It would be deemed madness among *Farmers* to suffer a WOLF to enter and remain among their sheep, much more so would it be for regular settlers after having *legally* engaged to pay a valuable consideration for their LANDS to suffer an audacious usurper to enter and remain amongst them, SCATTERING THE SEEDS OF DISCORD, MISERY AND REBELLION WITH BOTH HANDS.

ANY Person therefore, who shall in defiance of this notice, and in defiance of the laws, usurp lands of the *Subscriber* will be prosecuted for the damages that may ensue; suffer the utter loss of his labor and fixtures, and be refused Land at any price whatever.

BUT the Young, Industrious and orderly yeomanry and Artists throughout New-England, are invited to view the LANDS of the *Subscriber*, lying west of PENOBSCOT-RIVER, and extending to within 15 miles of Kennebec-river, and contiguous to a line, on which it is in contemplation to open, and establish a Turnpike-road from river to river.

THESE rich LANDS are considered by impartial Judges, soil situation and climate combined, as affording as many at least, if not more advantageous, to young Agriculturists, than any other within the United States.

THESE lands are to be sold for actual and immediate settlement either for money or upon credit.

A perfect title and deeds of Warranty will be given on payment.

TIMBER and CORD-WOOD STEALERS throughout the PATENT, strip and waste men who instead of honestly cultivating the soil, attempt meanly and infamously to gain property by this species of theft, will incur, and receive all the punishment, and pay all the damages, which the law shall inflict; and also all those, who shall AID and ABET them in their unlawful conduct.

HENRY KNOX.

Montpelier, Vermont,
St. George's River, Nov. 27, 1801

Not in Charles Knapp's, 1801

*not in
25*

Knox's proclamation to the settlers, 1801. Courtesy Boston Athenaeum.

In 1797 a special commission proposed by Henry Knox and mandated by the General Court put an end to the speculation that the Commonwealth would eventually intervene to quiet the settlers. As Knox intended, the Waldo Patent Commission mollified enough settlers to bring the resistance to a halt. Henry Knox's lawyer, Nathan Dane, chaired the three-man "impartial" commission that set prices on a lot-by-lot basis. Each settler who had not already contracted with Knox to buy his lands could refer up to 100 acres of land already under his improvement; this intentionally excluded the 1788 signers.³⁹

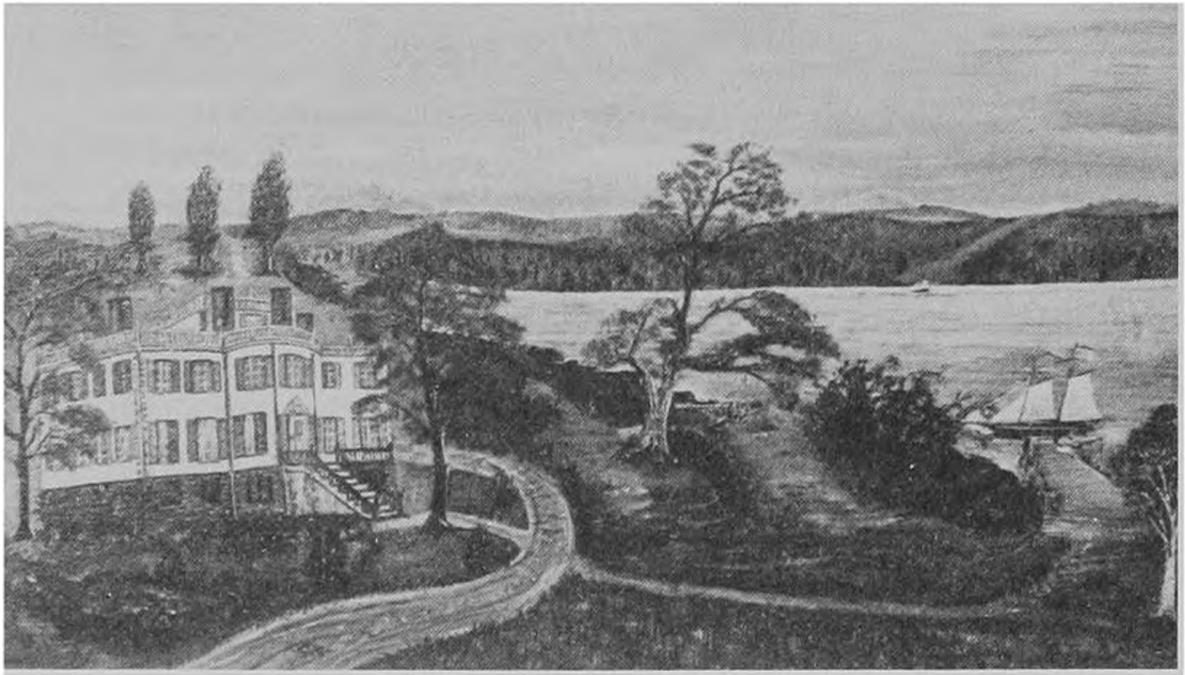
As a solution to the settlers' grievances, the Waldo Patent Commission fell far short of a blanket quieting act providing settlers with 100 acres for five dollars. Indeed, this measure was less favorable to the settlers than Knox's 1786 offer to have "mutually chosen" arbitrators set lot-by-lot prices. Prospect's land committee protested the commissioners prices: "It may be objected that the *rise* of land [values] has made these possessions worth more than in the period [1780s] before mentioned; but we beg leave to ask who was instrumental in the *rise* of these lands, or who made these lands more valuable than when in the state of nature? Was it not the settler?"⁴⁰

As the October 1, 1797 deadline for submission drew nigh, many settlers concluded that the commission was their last best chance to obtain their lands at a relatively low price. In New Canaan, Ducktrap and Northport, forty-two settlers — roughly half the squatters who were newcomers since the 1788 signings — submitted, most during the final week of eligibility. The submissions were largely younger men or newcomers. As such, they tended to be poorer men who had previously opposed Henry Knox's claim. Twenty-seven appeared on the 1798 Direct Tax where, on average, they possessed a meager \$299 in real property (\$409 was the average in that poor area). Three in five had signed petitions against Knox and most (22 of 42) had signed the most recent petition in 1796.⁴¹

Once they had submitted, these settlers remained reluctant to hasten the day when the commissioners would assess payments. Knox's surveyors enjoyed little cooperation in completing the necessary survey plans of the submitted lots. By year's end, surveyor John Harkness had surveyed only half of the submitted lots in Northport-Ducktrap-New Canaan because so many settlers "war indefinite and delayed and said that they would have them surveyed another time." When early winter again removed Knox from the area and brought settlers into closer contact with one another, their talk again turned against the General and his agents. On February 4, 1798, George Ulmer informed Knox, "the winter disorder of disaffection so much prevails among our fickle inhabitants that I don't think I could collect two hundred dollars." But this residual disaffection was confined to delayed surveys and laggard payments from the 1788 signers; no one talked openly of "Jones' visits."⁴²

With completion of the long-delayed surveys, the commissioners issued their awards on May 24, 1800. A total of 151 settlers throughout the patent received awards, 42 of them in Northport-Ducktrap-New Canaan. The settlers were to pay the amounts of their awards and interest (starting June 1, 1800) by October 1, 1801. Northport-Ducktrap-New Canaan submittees bought a total of 4,099 acres for \$3,349, an average of \$.82 per acre, a third to a fourth of the prevailing price Knox sought for his title in that area, but a bit more than what the 1788 signers had agreed to pay. In short, the commissioners acceded to Knox's wishes not to undercut the 1788 price and so increase discontent among the 1788 signers. The commission functioned as a face-saving measure that enabled Knox, on a one-time basis, to lower his official price sufficiently to further diminish the ranks of those opposed to his claim.⁴³

Naturally, the settlers still did not much like the idea of paying a wealthy outsider for lands they considered their own, but the notion was more bearable amidst the new climate of confidence that every tomorrow would bring still higher land values for those with title. Even the poorest settlers, hardest



Situated on the St. George River, Montpelier was to be headquarters for Knox's many projects. Here, after years of acrimony, settlers converged to post notes and mortgages to receive warranty deeds to their lands. Maine Historical Society Collections.

pressed to scrape together the necessary payments, could sell their possessions and "right of signing" (the right to a Waldo Patent Commission award price) to more prosperous newcomers or local speculators eager to buy Knox's title at what were fast becoming bargain rates. Settler deeds in Northport-Ducktrap-New Canaan reveal that about half of the 1788 signers and Waldo Patent Commission submitters sold out their rights to others, who paid the General and received his title. This removed many poorer men, those who had comprised the body of the resistance from the area.⁴⁴

In the fall of 1801 the last holdouts trooped to Montpelier to post notes and mortgages as double security for warranty deeds to their lots. Those squatters without signings, awards, or permits paid Knox \$3.33 per acre. By 1804 Knox had disposed of title to most of the lands in the coastal towns. An investigation in that year found only 6,600 of Lincolnville's roughly 20,000 acres unsold. Some squatting persisted; 600 of

those acres were, in Knox's words, "recent usurpations, which are to be attended to." But such a small number of dispersed squatters posed no threat to Knox's control. Although their days of resistance were over, the inhabitants of Northport-Ducktrap-New Canaan continued to oppose Henry Knox vicariously by openly sympathizing with the backcountry folk who attacked Knox's survey parties in Lincoln Plantation (Thorn-dike) in 1800-1801. Writing from Ducktrap on July 9, 1801, George Ulmer informed Knox, "The people this way favour the insurgents very much and but few will take an active part against them."⁴⁵

Knox's early supporters shared a portion of his spoils. They secured extensive tracts of valuable lands, including the most strategic combinations of timber, mill seats, and access to navigation, all for per-acre prices lower than those paid by their poorer neighbors for their less valuable lots. During the decade after 1794, when Knox issued deeds in Northport-Ducktrap-New Canaan, Philip and George Ulmer bought 3,668 acres for \$5,230. Although the brothers obtained 18 percent of all the land Knox sold in those communities, they paid only 14 percent of the money Knox received for the land sales, amounting to just \$1.42 per acre, compared to the average of \$1.85 per acre paid by all others.⁴⁶

With the cessation of hostilities against Henry Knox, the American Revolution came at last to an end for the inhabitants of the Waldo Patent. Contrary to their hopes, the Revolution had not wrought free wilderness lands for the poor man who got there first. Nonetheless, the terms obtained from Henry Knox did not represent a complete defeat. To break down resistance Knox had been obliged to offer terms that in price and warranty title compared favorably to those extended by Maine's other proprietors (although they were not nearly as good as those received by the squatters on state land). Once the Waldo Patent settlers acknowledged their dwindling options, they could conclude that they had protected their homesteads at a bargain rate. Knox, on the other hand, had established the limits of the coastal settlers' claims and had secured control

over the unsettled interior lands to the north and west — for which he planned to charge five to six dollars an acre. Consequently, the settlers' many children faced Knox's complete control over the wild lands that lay within a day's travel of their parents; if they wished to remain nearby, they stood to pay far more than their parents had to obtain smaller lots. Many would have to move beyond the Waldo Patent to find cheaper land.⁴⁷



NOTES

¹July 4, 1785, resolve in *General Court Resolves, 1785* (Boston, 1786, Evans no. 19090), p. 61; William Wetmore to Henry Knox, August 19, 1785, Henry Knox Papers (HKP hereafter) 51: 86, Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS hereafter).

²July 4, 1785, resolve in *General Court Resolves, 1785*, p. 61; William Wetmore to Henry Knox, August 19, 1785, HKP 51: 86, MHS.

³Samuel Winslow to Henry Knox, November 23, 1785, HKP 51: 97, MHS; Knox to Nathaniel Fales, March 1, 1785, HKP 51: 71, MHS; Knox to Warren's selectmen, August 26, 1786, HKP 51: 112, MHS; Knox to Thomas-ton's selectmen, August 26, 1786, HKP 51: 114, MHS; Knox to Philip and George Ulmer, August 29, 1786, HKP 51: 115, MHS; Knox to Mrs. Horwood January 13, 1789, HKP 52: 9, HKP 52: 9, MHS; James Hall to Knox, February 16, 1786, HKP, Box 1, Maine Historical Society (MeHS hereafter); October 4, 1788 entry in the second of Henry Knox's "Three Books on the Waldo Patent," MHS; Jasper Jacob Stahl, *History of Old Broad Bay and Waldoboro* (Portland, Maine, 1956), vol. 1: 533. For Fitzgerald's comment see September 18, 1788 entry in the first of Henry Knox's "Three Books on the Waldo Patent," MHS.

⁴Henry Knox to Mrs. S. L. Flucker, May 15, 1788, HKP 22: 41, MHS; Francois Alexandre Frederic, Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Travels through the United States of North America* (London, 1799), vol. 1: 422.

⁵Henry Knox to Mrs. Horwood, January 13, 1789, HKP 52: 9, MHS; Lower Neck agreement, September 10, 1788, HKP 51: 144, MHS; Thomaston agreement, September 12, 1788, HKP 51: 148, 149, MHS; Ducktrap and New Canaan agreement, September 23, 1788, HKP 51: 154, MHS; Frankfort agreement, September 27, 1788, HKP 51: 161, MHS; Owl's Head agreement, October 2, 1788, HKP 51: 164, MHS; the second of Henry Knox's "Three Books on the Waldo Patent," MHS; for a somewhat distorted version see Alexander Baring to Hope and Company, December 3, 1796, in Frederick S. Allis, ed., *William Bingham's Maine Lands* (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1954), 37: 767.

⁶Henry Knox to Thomas Vose, January 10, June 21, 1789, HKP 23: 70, 24: 58, MHS; September 23, 24, 29, 30, 1788 entries in the second of Henry Knox's "Three Books on the Waldo Patent," MHS; copy of Ducktrap and New Canaan petition, n.d., c. January 1789, HKP 47: 42, MHS.

⁷For Ducktrap and New Canaan lists of signers see "Agreement at Ducktrap, 1788," HKP 52: 5, MHS; "Lists of Names who have signed General Knox's Proposals Since he left Ducktrap" in HKP Box 11, MHS; and "Subscribers in New Canaan, Northport & Ducktrap" in Henry Knox's Land Records Book, MHS.

⁸Henry Knox to Mrs. Horwood, January 13, 1789, HKP 52: 9, MHS; Waldo heirs to Captain George Ulmer, September 29, 1788, HKP 51: 162, MHS; Waldo heirs' "Notification," October 1, 1788, Eastern Lands Committee (ELC hereafter) Papers, Box 53, Massachusetts State Archives (MA hereafter); on Knox's shrewd psychology see Alexander Baring to Hope and Company, December 3, 1796, in Allis, ed., *Bingham's Maine Lands*, 37: 767; on Knox's plans for a further price rise see Knox to Isaac Winslow, Jr., June 28, 1789, HKP 24: 68, MHS.

⁹Ducktrap residents to Henry Knox, October 18, 1788, HKP 22: 164, MHS.

¹⁰Henry Knox to New Canaan's settlers, November 1788, HKP 51: 174, MHS; Henry Jackson to Knox, June 28, 1789, February 7, 1790, HKP 24: 66, 25: 127, MHS; Isaac Winslow, Jr., to Knox, June 21, 1789, HKP 52: 18, MHS; Resolve VIII, November 1, 1788, *General Court Resolves, 1788* (Boston, 1789, Evans no. 21248), p. 41.

¹¹On the Orphan Island suits see 1791 Supreme Judicial Court (SJC hereafter) Record Book, July 1791, 194-195, 1794 Record Book, July 1794, 159, 167, Clerk's Office, Suffolk County Courthouse (SCCH hereafter), Boston, Massachusetts; on Knox's disassociation from those suits see Joseph Pierce to Knox, June 3, 1794, HKP 35: 130, MHS; Orphan Island petition to the General Court, June 18, 1789, *Maine Documentary History (MDH hereafter)*, second series, vol. 22: 38-40; Nathaniel Palmer's petition to the General

THE DISCIPLES OF SAMUEL ELY

Court, December 1788, *MDH*, 2d ser, vol. 22: 131; John Simonton et al. petition to the General Court, May 28, 1790, *MDH*, 2d ser, vol. 22: 362; the Waldoborough petition quoted is Waterman Thomas et al. to General Court, January 2, 1789, HKP 52: 7, MHS; David Fales to Henry Knox, April 3, 1789, HKP 23: 152, MHS; Isaac Winslow, Jr., to Knox, June 7, 1789, HKP 24: 42, MHS.

¹²Isaac Winslow, Jr., to Henry Knox, June 7, 1789, HKP 24: 42, MHS; Henry Jackson to Knox, June 28, 1789, HKP 24: 66, MHS; Knox to Thomas Vose, June 21, 1789, HKP 24: 58, MHS.

¹³Isaac Winslow, Jr., to Henry Knox, June 14, 21, 1789, HKP 24: 44, 52: 18, MHS; Henry Jackson to Knox, January 17, February 7, March 7, 1790, HKP 25: 100, 127, 162, MHS; Knox to Thomas Vose, April 18, 1790, HKP 27: 54, MHS; Dr. William Eustis to Henry Knox, March 6, 1790, HKP 25: 158, MHS. On the continued legislative stalemate see Henry Jackson to Henry Knox, February 13, 20, March 6, 1791, HKP 27: 140, 148, 156, MHS; Joseph Pierce to Knox, February 15, 1791, HKP 27: 142, MHS; Samuel Breck to Knox, February 20, 1791, HKP 27: 149, MHS; on Knox's strategy to bottle up settler petitions see Joseph Pierce to Knox, June 22, 29, 1794, HKP 35: 139, 145, MHS.

¹⁴For figures on the declining land payments see John Gleason Accounts, 1789-1794, HKP, MeHS; for the effect of petition continuations on payments see David Fales to Henry Knox, April 3, 1789, HKP 23: 152, MHS; Thomas Vose to Knox, September 9, December 14, 1789, HKP Box 1, MeHS and HKP 52: 28, MHS; Henry Jackson to Knox, November 15, 1789, HKP 25: 43, MHS; Isaac Winslow, Jr., to Knox, September 27, 1789, HKP 24: 175, MHS; Vose to Knox, March 30, 1790, HKP 26: 12, MHS; Jackson to Knox, July 4, 1790, HKP 26: 93, MHS; Isaac Winslow, Jr., to Knox, August 22, 1790, HKP 26: 153, MHS; George Ulmer to Knox, May 8, 1790, HKP 26: 45, MHS; on fears that Ducktrap's settlers would set Ulmer's spars adrift see Vose to Knox, August 22, 1791, HKP Box 2, MeHS.

¹⁵George Ulmer to Henry Knox, August 5, 1795, HKP 37: 159, MHS; the figures are a result of comparing names on the 1790 Federal Census returns with the names on the 1800 Federal Census returns for Northport and Ducktrap; on Knox's plans to prosecute see Knox to Isaac Winslow, Jr., June 28, 1789, HKP 24: 68, MHS; and Knox to Ulmer, October 1, 1795, HKP Box 3, MeHS.

¹⁶Nathaniel Knight's conversation is repeated in Thomas Vose to Henry Knox, March 6, 1796, HKP 38: 158, MHS; Moses Copeland to Henry Knox, April 2, 1789, HKP 23: 151, MHS; Knox to Thomas Vose, April 18, October 17, 1790, HKP 27: 31, 54, MHS; Vose to Knox, December 14, 1789, June 20, 1792, HKP 52: 28, 31: 150, MHS; Henry Jackson to Knox, May 1, 1791, HKP 29: 45, MHS; Vose to Jackson, May 14, 1794, HKP 35: 106, MHS; Samuel Ely, *The Unmasked Nabob of Hancock County or the Scales Dropt from the Eyes of the People* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 1796, Evans no. 31477), pp. 3-8;

The Appeal of the Two Counties of Lincoln and Hancock from the Forlorn Hope, or Mount of Distress; to the General Court, or to All the World (Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 1796, Evans no. 31477), pp. 20-21; Thomas Vose to Henry Knox, March 5, 6, 12, 1796, HKP 38: 155, 158, 37: 48, MHS; George Ulmer to Knox, April 7, 1796, HKP 39: 23, MHS. On price as an object see Thomas Vose to Knox, February 13, 27, 1796, HKP 38: 129, 144, MHS; John Rynier to Henry Knox, December 31, 1797, HKP Box 4, MeHS.

¹⁷Robert E. Moody, "Samuel Ely: Forerunner of Daniel Shays," *New England Quarterly* 5 (1932): 105-34; "Samuel Ely," in Franklin B. Dexter, *Yale Graduates*, vol. 3: 67-69. The Dwight quote appears in Timothy Dwight, *Travels in New England and New York* (New Haven, Connecticut, 1821), vol. 2: 189.

¹⁸Dexter, *Yale Graduates*, vol. 3: 67; Moody, "Samuel Ely," pp. 105-16; Dwight, *Travels*, vol. 2: 188-89.

¹⁹Pownalborough return for the 1790 Federal Census; on Ely preaching in Belfast for one summer see Joseph Williamson, *History of the City of Belfast in the State of Maine* (Portland, Maine, 1877), p. 229; and John L. Locke, "Sketches of the Early History of Belfast," *Republican Journal* (Belfast), May 29, 1856; on Ely's impact on his neighbors see James Nesmith to Isaac Parker, March 7, 1796, HKP 38: 160, MHS.

²⁰On Ulmer assaulting Ely see Oliver Parker's Justice's Court record, April 13, 1793, in Hancock County Court of General Sessions of the Peace Files (CGSP hereafter), Box 77, Maine State Archives (MeSA hereafter); on the destruction of the Ulmers' dam see Philip and George Ulmer v. Samuel Ely, April 1796 in Hancock County Court of Common Pleas (CCP hereafter), Record Book, II: case no. 197; on Ely's pardon for performing irregular marriages see June 16, 1794 entry, Council Records, 32 (1793-1797): 184; see also Moody, "Samuel Ely," p. 123; and Commonwealth v. Samuel Ely, July 1794, in 1794 SJC Record Book, 176, SCCH; George Ulmer's account for June 1793 in Hancock County CGSP files Box 76, MeSA; Ebenezer Jennison's survey journal, July 2, 1793 entry, HKP 52: 53, MHS; on Ely's assault on Job Pendleton see Commonwealth v. Ely, September 1793 in Hancock County CGSP files Box 77, MeSA; see also Henry Knox to George Ulmer, September 5, 1793, HKP 34: 89, MHS.

²¹Waldo Patent petition, October 8, 1793, HKP 52: 50, MHS; Joseph Pierce to Henry Knox, June 3, 1794, HKP 35: 130, MHS.

²²The names were collected from Ducktrap Plantation residents to Henry Knox, October 18, 1788, HKP 22: 164, MHS; Waldo Patent petition, October 8, 1793, HKP 52: 50, MHS; Samuel Ely et al. to Ducktrap Plantation assessors, January 27, 1796, HKP 38: 105, MHS; and Joseph Coombs et al. to the General Court, May 1796 in Related Papers filed with resolve of March 9, 1797, MA. The 112 men are those who appear on at least one of three listings for inhabitants of Ducktrap-New Canaan, 1788-1793 (the 1788 signers, the 1790 Federal Census, the November 10-12, 1793 list recorded in Hancock

THE DISCIPLES OF SAMUEL ELY

County Deeds, October 4, 1794, III: 24) and on at least one of three listings for said inhabitants, 1797-1800 (1797 Waldo Patent Commission Submissions, vols. 1 and 2, MA; the 1798 Federal Direct Tax Returns; New England Historical and Genealogical Society (NEHGS hereafter); the 1800 Federal Census returns).

²³The 1798 Federal Direct Tax returns for Northport and Ducktrap-New Canaan survive at NEHGS.

²⁴Samuel Ely, *The Deformity of a Hideous Monster, Discovered in the Province of Maine, by a Man Looking after Liberty ...* MHS; Gershom Flagg to Joseph North, December 27, 1795, in Related Papers, February 27, 1796 resolve, MA; Benjamin Poor deposition, November 25, 1795 in related papers, January 29, 1799 resolve, MA.

²⁵Ephraim Ballard to the Kennebeck Proprietors, January 1, 1796, Kennebeck Proprietors Papers (KPP hereafter), Box 4, MeHS; Philip Bullen deposition, January 1, 1796, in related papers, January 29, 1799 resolve, MA; Ephraim Ballard to the General Court, December 31, 1798 in related papers, February 1, 1799 resolve, MA; Ephraim Ballard deposition, November 20, 1795, Jonathan Jones, Jr., et al. deposition, January 5, 1796, both in related papers, January 29, 1799 resolve, MA.

²⁶Jonathan Jones's petition to the General Court, n.d., c. January 1796, Jonathan Jones, Jr., et al. deposition, January 5, 1796, Thomas Trask, Jr., and Jonathan Trask depositions, June 9, 1797, all in related papers, January 29, 1799 resolve, MA; Ephraim Ballard to Jonathan Jones, November 18, 1795, KPP Box 4, MeHS; Jonathan Jones to the Kennebeck Proprietors, February 3, 1802, KPP Box 5, MeHS; on the decision not to seek arrests see Daniel Cony to James Sullivan, November 21, 1795, in related papers, February 27, 1796, resolve, HKP, MA.

²⁷Samuel Waldo to Isaac Winslow, February 10, 1796, HKP 38: 123, MHS; Thomas Vose to Knox, February 10, 1796, Council Files Box 10 (March 1795-February 1797), MA; Isaac Parker to Henry Knox, March 1, 1796, HKP 38: 149, MHS.

²⁸Thomas Vose to Henry Knox, February 10, 1796, in Council Files Box 10 (March 1795-February 1797), MA; Vose to Knox, February 13, March 5, 1796, HKP 38: 129, 155, MHS; Isaac Parker to Knox, March 1, 1796, HKP 38: 149, MHS; George Ulmer to Knox, March 18, 1796, HKP 38: 171, MHS.

²⁹George Ulmer to Henry Knox, March 18, April 7, 1796, HKP 38: 171, 39:23, MHS; Ulmer to Thomas Vose, March 18, 19, 1796, HKP 38: 172, 173, MHS; see also Knox to Ulmer, July 6, 1796, HKP Box 4, MeHS.

³⁰Thomas Knowlton and James Nesmith to Henry Knox, March 15, 1796, HKP 38: 169, MHS; George Ulmer to Knox, March 18, 1796, HKP 38: 171, MHS; Thomas Vose to Knox, March 19, 21, 1796, HKP 38: 173, 174; on Ulmer's suit see Philip and George Ulmer v. Ely, April 1796, Hancock County CCP Record Book, II: case no. 197; on Ely's return see Ulmer to Knox,

September 10, 1796, HKP 39: 142, MHS; Knox to Ulmer, September 27, 1796, HKP 39: 158, MHS; Knox to Richard Hunnewell, September 27, 1796, HKP Box 4, MeHS; Hunnewell to Knox, October 1, 1796, HKP 39: 162, MHS.

³¹On the absences of Knox and Ulmer see Thomas Vose to Knox, February 13, 1796, HKP 38: 129, MHS; Henry Knox to Thomas Vose, February 28, 1796, HKP 38: 147, MHS; George Ulmer to Knox, March 18, April 7, 1796, HKP 38: 171, 39: 23, MHS.

³²Thomas Vose to Henry Knox, March 12, 21, 1796, HKP 37: 48, 38: 174, MHS; George Ulmer to Knox, April 7, 1796, HKP 39: 23, MHS; Knox to Joseph Thomas, recorded July 25, 1797, Hancock County Deeds (HCD hereafter) 39: 173, Hancock County Courthouse (HCC hereafter).

³³Joseph Miller, "Historical Sketch of the Town of Lincolnville," typescript, NEHGS; on Joseph Thomas's seeking a release from his signing see Ducktrap Plantation settlers to Knox, October 18, 1788, HKP 22: 164, MHS; on Joseph Thomas's vocal loyalty to Knox see George Ulmer to Knox, March 18, 1796, HKP 38: 171, MHS; for Thomas's genealogical connections I am indebted to Mrs. Priscilla Jones's Waldo County genealogical collection.

³⁴Waldo Patent petition, October 8, 1793, HKP 52: 50, MHS; Joseph Coombs et al. to the General Court, May 1796, related papers, March 9, 1797 resolve, MA; 27 of the "defectors" cannot be found on either the 1797 list of submittees, the 1798 Federal Direct Tax returns, or the 1800 Federal Census; the 30 "holdovers" and 71 "defectors" add up to 101 rather than the 103 total signers to the 1793 petition because two of the names on the document are illegible.

³⁵The 1798 Federal Direct Tax returns (NEHGS) or the 1800 Federal Census returns for Northport and Ducktrap-New Canaan provide the place of residence.

³⁶George Ulmer to Henry Knox, March 18, July 15, September 10, 1796, HKP 38: 171, 39: 112, 39: 142, MHS; Knox to Ulmer, July 17, 1796, HKP Box 4, MeHS; Knox to Ulmer, September 14, October 12, 1796, HKP 39: 144, 167, MHS.

³⁷George Ulmer to Henry Knox, March 3, 1797, HKP 40: 72, MHS; George Ulmer's J.P. Court, March 1, 1797, Hancock County CGSP files Box 77, MSA.

³⁸Samuel Ely to the General Court, January 2, 1797, HKP 40: 42, MHS; Henry Knox to George Ulmer, March 12, 1797, HKP 40: 80, MHS; Ely, *Deformity*, p. 16; on the genealogies see Moody, "Samuel Ely," p. 134; Locke, "Sketches"; on Ely's Saturday Point property see George Ulmer to Henry Knox, July 15, 1803, HKP Box 7, MeHS; Ulmer to Knox, December 22, 1800, HKP Box 6, MeHS; on Williams's support of Ely see George Ulmer to Knox, March 18, 1796, HKP 38: 171, MHS; for Williams's August 30, 1805 will see Hancock County Probate, vol. 1: 415-16; John P. Farrow, *History of Islesborough, Maine* (Bangor, Maine, 1893), pp. 298-99. Farrow erroneously gives Shubael Williams's second wife's name as "Mrs. Temperance Easton."

THE DISCIPLES OF SAMUEL ELY

³⁹Resolve LX, March 9, 1797, *General Court Resolves, 1797* (Boston, 1797, Evans no. 32449), p. 72; Nathan Dane compiled a L21,13.5 account in legal work done for Knox April 1793-March 1796, HKP Box 4, MeHS; John Sprague of Lancaster and Enoch Titcomb, Jr., of Newburyport were the other two commissioners.

⁴⁰Prospect Land Committee to WPC, February 16, 1798, ELC Box 53, MA.

⁴¹Noah Miller to the WPC, August 14, 1797, ELC Box 53, MA; the list of settlers and their dates of submission can be found in Waldo Patent Commission Submissions, vols. 1, 2, MA.

⁴²John Harkness to the WPC, January 1, 1798, ELC Box 53, MA; George Ulmer to Henry Knox, February 4, 1798, HKP Box 5, MeHS.

⁴³For a community-by-community breakdown of submissions see Waldo Patent Commissions Submissions, vols. 1: 1, 2: 1, MA.

⁴⁴On rising prices see George Ulmer to Henry Knox, August 5, 1795, HKP 37: 159, MHS; Knox to George Washington, January 15, 1797, in Francis S. Drake, *Life and Correspondence of Henry Knox, Major General in the American Revolutionary Army* (Boston, Massachusetts, 1873), p. 114; Knox to Ulmer, November 13, 1801, HKP Box 6, MeHS. On these transactions see La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, *Travels*, vol. 1: 429-30.

⁴⁵George Ulmer to Henry Knox, July 9, 1801, HKP 44: 22, MHS. The results of the Lincolnville investigation appear in the May 18, 1804, entry of Henry Knox's "Journal," Montpelier, Thomaston, Maine.

⁴⁶The 137 deeds issued by Knox to Northport and Lincolnville lands, 1795-1804, sold a total of 20,475 acres for \$36,335.

⁴⁷For fuller discussion of these themes see Alan Taylor, "Liberty-Men and White Indians: Frontier Migration, Popular Protest, and the Pursuit of Property in the Wake of the American Revolution," Ph.d dissertation, Brandeis University, 1985.

A native of Maine, Alan Taylor graduated from Colby College in 1977. He received his Ph.D. in 1986 from Brandeis University for his dissertation, "Liberty-Men and White Indians," a study of the Maine frontier after the Revolution. He holds a postdoctoral fellowship at the Institute of Early American History and Culture. He is grateful to Robert A. Gross, Marvin Meyers, and Laurel Thatcher Ulrich for reading and criticizing this article, to Isabel Maresh, Betsy Moshier, the Honorable David Nichols, Danny D. Smith, and especially the late Priscilla Jones for genealogical assistance, and to Karen Bowden and Julia Walking of the Maine Humanities Council for the council's generous support, moral and financial.