Forming American Politics

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Some Comparative Dimensions of Political Structure and Behavior

By mid eighteenth century, New York and Pennsylvania possessed political cultures of considerable complexity. There were a multitude of ways in which provincial politics intersected both with institutional features of government and with habits of social behavior to contour society in both the Hudson and Delaware River colonies. In the interests of analysis, however, it is necessary to simplify. We may derive important observations about the political cultures of the two colonies by viewing them from the following four perspectives: the imperial politics of place, which centered on Crown and proprietary appointments; the organization of electoral politics; the confluence of local government and provincial politics; and the relationship between observable social values and provincial politics in each society.

The politics of place and of electoral practice were the two areas of public activity most obviously connected with each colony’s political culture. The former of these, which encompassed each colony’s connections with Great Britain, the character of their respective governors’ offices, and the nature of the two provincial councils, had some influence in shaping political life in both New York and Pennsylvania. But as significant as these factors were, they were clearly overshadowed by the institutionalization and practice of electoral politics. The profiles of highly contested elections reveal important
patterns of political behavior, not the least of which was the overwhelming prejudice in favor of popular government in each colony. In addition, the organization of political campaigns, the mobilization of voters, and the long-range consequences of such activities reveal a good deal about the relatively stable, competitive political conditions that constituted such an important part of political culture in New York and Pennsylvania.

Beyond the boundaries of imperial and electoral politics, there were two other major determinants of political behavior. The respective relationships between local government and provincial politics in the two colonies constituted one of these: in New York, a hardy tradition of local exceptionalism and independence had numerous ramifications; in Pennsylvania, a greater sense of standardization and provincial communalism left its mark. The second had to do with the way in which articulated social values impinged on politics. Upper-class emphasis on hierarchy in New York and the Quakers’ embrace of equality in Pennsylvania each had a significant impact on political life. Converging on some grounds, diverging on others, the political cultures of the two colonies attest, not only to the intricacies of each, but also to the tremendous vitality of the collective political personalities present in mid-eighteenth-century colonial America.

The Politics of Place

The most obvious structural feature of colonial government in New York and Pennsylvania was one they shared with other contemporary settler societies in America: their subservience to old-world monarchs. In all the new-world empires, including that of Great Britain, the fundamental means of demonstrating colonial submissiveness was through the institutionalization of political dependency. The British claimed, and their colonists accepted, an ongoing metropolitan right to have some say in the running of provincial governments. The way in which that was done obviously had implications for colonial politics.

In New York and Pennsylvania, the particular relationship of the respective colonies to Great Britain encouraged somewhat different tendencies in provincial politics. As a royal colony, New York had little to buffer it from the demands of English politicians who viewed North American affairs primarily as an opportunity to strengthen their influence at home. They tried to achieve their ends by securing as many provincial appointments (such as governor, attorney-general, provincial secretary, or naval officer) as they possibly could for their slavering relatives and political allies. The fact that the most important patronage decisions relating to New York were made in England did not, however, turn leading provincials into mere
bystanders. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, New York politicians frequently tried to play off different groups of British relations, friends, business connections, and political acquaintances, hoping thereby to turn the tables on the British and put pressure on court notables, who much preferred to settle patronage matters unobtrusively among themselves. New Yorkers pursued such tactics in order to protect their own provincial interests, ranging from minute details of patronage to large constitutional issues. In either case, New Yorkers willingly contributed to a continuing interpenetration of British and provincial politics.

The most easily observed result of the close linkage between high-level provincial and metropolitan politics was its occasional tendency to encourage factionalism in New York. After cabals of New Yorkers met with local defeat, they could play their English card. A classic example of this was the Cosby/Morris dispute. When Governor Cosby fired Lewis Morris as chief justice, Morris went off to England to seek reinstatement. The political cohesion of Morris's New York confederates, which had remained reasonably strong through the first months of Morris's absence, was noticeably strengthened in November 1735, when Governor Cosby on his deathbed suspended Morris's ally, Rip Van Dam, from the provincial council. Cosby's purpose was to prevent Van Dam from asserting his right as senior councillor to take charge of New York government on the governor's death. By suspending Van Dam, Cosby opened the way for a moderate ally, George Clarke, to become president of the council and titular head of the colony. The questionable nature of Van Dam's suspension inspired the Morris/Alexander faction to defy Clarke's authority by having Van Dam appoint his own slate of New York City officials in September 1736, as if Van Dam were running the provincial government. What made the dissidents willing to risk what Clarke called treason was the expectation that Lewis Morris would bring news of his own reinstatement and a repudiation of Clarke from London. Only when the English card had been fully played—that is, when a disappointed Morris returned in October and Clarke's leadership was confirmed with a lieutenant-governor's commission—did the crisis in New York politics begin to abate.

While such episodes illustrate how royal government could exacerbate political factionalism in a colony, too much can be made of them. Close connections between British and New York politics did not always provoke factionalism. There were occasions when provincials were able to mobilize their British influence in order to consolidate their power and prevent local opposition from escalating into a significant threat. And although conventional wisdom has it that the truncated powers of New York's governors encouraged factionalism, that is by no means clear. In a society in which "Governors . . . [could] neither draw nor drive Assemblies, or people, from
their Obstinate Wayes of Thinking,” increased gubernatorial powers, short of the impossible goal of attaining a full panoply of British “prime ministerial” powers, would most likely have intensified rather than diminished political factionalism. The very weaknesses of New York’s governors gave factions of the popular and provincial Whig varieties the opportunity to come to terms with each other. They were far more comfortable with the uncertainties of popular politics than with the unpredictable egocentricity of governors with increased executive power.

While New York’s status as a royal colony did, if in limited measure, encourage New York’s factional proclivities, Pennsylvania’s peculiar relationship with Great Britain had a somewhat different effect. Because Pennsylvania was a proprietary colony, most administrative positions in the province were filled by the chief proprietors. William and Hannah Penn and their sons, John and Thomas, were careful to use their influence at Whitehall to oppose any ministerial encroachment in matters of policy and personnel vigorously. Frequently there were differences between the proprietors and individual placemen, and occasionally a considerable gulf developed between the Proprietary Party and the proprietors. But there was no alternative source of overseas power to which discontented Pennsylvania officials might turn in order to further their ambitions. Rather than encouraging factionalism, the transatlantic structure of Pennsylvania’s proprietary government worked to curtail it.

Pennsylvania’s old-world Quaker connections also tended to reinforce structure in Pennsylvania politics. During the early eighteenth century, British Quakers developed one of the most highly organized and effective outsider political lobbies of the day. With the death of William Penn, “the last of the seventeenth-century generation of great individual lobbyists,” the London Meeting for Sufferings “hesitantly” began to intercede in British politics to gain important political and religious rights for Quaker colonists. Beginning in the early 1740s, however, as Pennsylvania Friends came under attack for their wartime policies, and as the second generation of Penns drifted away from Quakerism, spokespersons for the London Meeting threw their full weight behind Pennsylvania’s Quaker Party against proprietary and Proprietary Party attacks. There was always some tension between Pennsylvania and British Friends, but leading London Quakers did, in fact, shield Pennsylvania’s Quaker Party from the vagaries of British ministerial policies. The protection they offered encouraged Quaker Party leaders to stand firm against proprietary demands, thereby facilitating the structuring of Pennsylvania’s provincial politics along Quaker/Proprietary party lines.

Just as the general character of New York and Pennsylvania’s transatlantic connections had some long-term effects on the patterns of political behavior
in both colonies, so did the peculiarities of each province’s governorship. As the chief administrator and political connection between Whitehall and the colonies (and, of more relevance, in the case of Pennsylvania, between the Penn family and their proprietorship), the governor was always one important focus of provincial affairs. Beyond the broad structural similarities that membership in a common imperial enterprise entailed, the most significant feature of the New York and Pennsylvania governorships was the disparity in their incomes and in their powers, both formal and informal. The New York governor enjoyed an income bloated by fees and graft from the colony’s commerce, land grants, and military affairs. Numerous patronage possibilities lay close by if the governor could exploit them, and the powers of proroguing or dissolving the assembly were largely in his hands. In Pennsylvania, on the other hand, proprietary government brought the colony’s chief executive little cream with his morning’s milk. Although fees grew substantially during the late colonial years, the governor’s income was largely dependent on the assembly’s annual salary grants. There was relatively little opportunity for graft or patronage, and little control over annual assemblies convinced that they could adjourn themselves at will.

As important as these contrasts were in contributing to the different temper of politics in New York and Pennsylvania, we should not lose sight of the way in which royal and proprietary regimes simultaneously fostered political convergence. In New York a distended prerogative incited provincials to strip away those claims and develop an encompassing political culture centering on popular representative government; in Pennsylvania, the weakness of the governor determined colonists to keep his office that way. The fact that in both colonies governors were almost always British place­men and not provincials further animated popular predilections. Rather than serving as the cement of empire, the governorship—whether royal or proprietary—was frequently a catalyst for provincial self-awareness. And that self-awareness, formed in part by reference to colonial neighbors, tended, as the eighteenth century wore on, to encourage a common high level of popular political prejudice.

The imperial connection and the transatlantic patronage connection notwithstanding, politically aware New Yorkers and Pennsylvanians forged their own sets of provincial relationships, which were most important in bequeathing their distinctive characters to the two colonies. Of the various provincial institutions in which colonial politicians were represented, the British intended the governor’s council to have a high profile and an important hand in shaping provincial politics. In New York, the council was composed of no more than twelve appointees, who served as a privy council, an upper legislative house, and a high court of appeal. Despite the council’s reduced prominence (after being New York’s sole governing body prior
to the establishment of representative government in 1691), many well-established New Yorkers aspired to membership throughout the colonial years. There were numerous reasons for this, not the least of which was the cachet that membership continued to confer. As Admiral Peter Warren pointed out, councillorship was one of the few ways New Yorkers could demand a "little rank above the commoner sort." After all, councillors were advisors to the Crown's representative, and in their legislative capacity, they could claim some functional similarity to England's peers. The most status-conscious councillors and their wives emphasized the precedence (after the governor, lieutenant-governor, and president of the council) they enjoyed on social occasions. Others, however, were more appreciative of the opportunities membership brought. Council membership placed them at the center of public affairs, intimates to all that contemporaries recognized to be of public import. And it could bring them advantage: some say over commercial regulations; insider knowledge about impending public policy; influence over patronage appointments; the opportunity to land lucrative government contracts; and the clout to acquire licenses allowing themselves and their friends to purchase Indian lands. Although the community denied councillors the kind of public trust assemblymen enjoyed, there was an offsetting advantage. Once appointed, councillors were relatively secure; they could savor their place, knowing they would never have to confront the "uncertain" "breath" of the people.

Under Pennsylvania's 1701 Charter of Privileges, the office of councillor was considerably less attractive than it was in New York. Although the council's advisory role gave incumbents the opportunity to become perpetual insiders in public affairs (and membership conferred the same social precedence as it did in New York), the fact that the council had no legislative role under the Pennsylvania constitution diminished its prestige. The public's perception that the councillors were largely a collection of proprietary cronies whose primary obligation was to protect proprietary privilege and implement unpopular proprietary policies brought hostility rather than respect. Moreover, council membership failed to bring the kind of tangible benefits it could provide in New York. Patronage appointments were more dependent on timely good relations with men such as Richard Peters, William Allen, Benjamin Chew, and Thomas Penn than on council service to the governors. And given Thomas Penn's determination to grant a substantial number of appointments to Quakers, councillors could sometimes end up in line behind their political opponents. Land grants did not so easily come their way either, because the land office was an administrative entity separate from the council. Again, friendship with land office officials, including deputy surveyors, was more important in gaining access to prime Pennsylvania land than was faithfulness at the council table. As for govern-
ment contracts, the assembly had far more patronage at its disposal than did
the chief executive. All of these circumstances were reflected in the constant
difficulty the Penns faced in finding strong individuals who would sit in
council.25

In neither New York nor Pennsylvania did the provincial council play a
determinative role in provincial politics. In New York, it is true, councillors
could develop a good deal of influence, but they were able to do so primarily
because of the power their friends and relations wielded in the assembly, and
that they themselves could exercise, in one or two cases, as supreme court
justices. In fact, most councillors gained their appointments because of
sponsorship by popular leaders;26 a few placemen aside, the complexion of
the council usually reflected divisions among popularly elected politicians.
To the extent that the council directed political affairs during the 1740s, as
some historians have argued, it did so within parameters dictated by assem­
ibly politics.27 In Pennsylvania the council was much more one-sidedly parti­
san than in New York; and it was on the wrong side. Stigmatized by its pro­
proprietary complexion, the council was frequently irrelevant to the course
of popular politics and thus marginalized to a degree that its New York
counterpart was not.28 Different as the New York and Pennsylvania councils
were, however, to an overwhelming extent both were limited and shaped by
the forces of popular politics. And these forces frequently depended on the
outcome of electoral contests.

Electoral Politics

The chief distinguishing feature of colonial government in the first British
empire was the prominent role elected representatives played in public
affairs. While representation was a basic English right, it was also a very
important means of reconciling colonials to the operation of provincial,
county, and township government. The idea of representation, the fact that
many individuals served the community in a wide variety of local offices, and
the sense of inclusion that representative government extended to the many
males eligible to vote fostered feelings of loyalty among each colony’s body
politic and promoted the legitimacy of their respective systems of govern­
ment. Of the various levels of representative government in New York and
Pennsylvania, by far the most important was the provincial. Once provincial
houses of representation were established, assemblymen quickly gained a
preponderance of power in both provincial governments, and they also
controlled the circumstances under which many of the local officers of
government carried out their responsibilities. Because of the important role
assemblymen played in the colonial political structure, the electoral politics
that placed them in power was one of the most important features of the colonies’ political cultures.

An obvious place to begin a search for insight into electoral politics is with those colonial elections in which voter turnout was particularly high. These were the critical moments of electoral politics in which candidates and their closest supporters scrambled for popular support; in doing so, they encouraged provincials to enter actively, if briefly, into public affairs. Because of the way these intense political experiences cut through apathy and roused colonials to testify to their sense of community integrity, the concerted competition and considerable voter participation of the day reveal a good deal about the structures of provincial politics.

In New York, two of the three instances of largest electoral turnout took place in 1737 and 1761. The former case was a by-election between the popular Whig leader Adolphe Philipse and the provincial Whig Cornelius Van Horne. The fact that Philipse’s immediate political fortune was at stake identified the contest as a pivotal one; both factions, still hot from the general election three months earlier, poured all of their resources into the fray. The 1761 election had important competitive dimensions as well. In the early stages of the election, a group of political managers organized a four-man ticket, including three assembly veterans and young Captain James DeLancey. There was little disagreement over the choice of the three incumbents, but Captain DeLancey was a controversial choice because of his youth, his educational and career-related absences from the city, and his familial association with the old DeLancey/Jones popular Whig coalition. Unwilling to see a new DeLancey grab the brass ring so soon after an asthma attack had rid New Yorkers of his father, the provincial Whig John Morin Scott announced his own candidacy. He was followed by William Bayard, a moderate, who apparently sensed some distaste for a DeLancey/Scott restaging of yesteryear’s political wars. The result was an enthusiastic three-cornered contest among old popular and provincial Whigs and those who wanted to escape the shadows of the past.

Why, we might ask, did the 1737 and 1761 elections occasion the largest voter participation rate in New York’s colonial history? The answer to that question has to do with the character of New York politics during the mid-eighteenth century. This was a period in which the distinctions between popular and provincial Whig factions gave a clearer, more sustained structure to provincial politics than at any other time. Voters were attracted to candidates, not just as personalities in their own right, but as individuals who either represented familiar currents of political thought and behavior or, as in the case of Bayard in 1761, rejected the traditional lines of polarization. Of course, voters were drawn into election-day activism because of the intense huckstering of the candidates’ friends, but many were simul-
taneously willing participants. And although the intense localism that distinguished New York politics continued unabated, a broader dimension of political understanding was clearly evident. The electorate was salted with individuals who shared some sense of inclusion in the ongoing political debate between popular and provincial Whigs. However haltingly, these men believed that participation in current provincial politics was a worthwhile dimension of community life and felt convinced that New York’s peculiar traditions of political discourse allowed them to understand and identify with the positions that their chosen candidates represented. That was more the case during the midcentury decades than earlier or later, and the consequences were clear at the polls.

Just as in New York, the highest voter turnout in Pennsylvania elections took place when the contending candidates represented clearly differentiated positions. In 1764 and 1765, debate centered on the fundamental question of whether or not Pennsylvania should seek royal government. From 1740 through 1742, defense preparations and executive power were the issue. In each of these two situations, the issues transcended personalities and encouraged potential voters to respond to the cajolery, enticements, and posturings of party organizers. Debate was more focused in these Pennsylvania elections than in their New York counterparts, but given the sharp differences between the proponents of civil Quakerism and its critics, compared to the frequent assonances of New York’s popular and provincial Whig dialects, that should hardly be surprising.

If there was a similarity in the way in which relatively structured oppositional politics encouraged voter participation in New York and Pennsylvania, there was also one very important difference in the character of these high-turnout contests. The New York City and County elections featured competing individuals, while the Pennsylvania contests favored opposing slates of candidates. Despite the potential for the development of competing slates of candidates, which its four-seat assembly representation gave New York, only twice (in 1699 and 1769) did such a development take place (see map 3). Other than in those two instances, contested elections were between two or three serious candidates for one or possibly two seats. Politically engaged New Yorkers might be eager participants in the public debates between popular and provincial Whigs, but they refused to push their partisanship to the point of offering two clear-cut tickets where the winner might take all. This behavior suggests that despite continuities in factional strife and traditions of ideological differences, many politically active New Yorkers resisted too great an explosion of divisive electoral politics. It was one thing for a handful of high-profile factional leaders to risk themselves; they could always make a comeback. But others wanted no part of a polarization that might significantly reduce their ability to cut deals
should they have the good fortune to be elected. Respect for that way of thinking was reflected in the actions of factional leaders who, rather than pressing for complete tickets, practiced the electoral strategy of first attempting to knock out a key opponent or two and then trying to lead the assembly “over to a right way of thinking” by personal persuasion. The circumstances of a given election were a related consideration. Prominent factional adherents recognized that the advantage in an election always lay
with the Whig faction that could most convincingly portray itself as the champion of popular rights. In the one or two cases in which both popular and provincial Whig factions felt they had good title to such a claim, public interest became deeply engaged and the number of voters soared. But these occasions were few. Determined to maintain their viability, New York's popular and provincial Whig factions avoided frequent all-out electoral contests that might have exposed their fragilities and hastened their disintegration.

In contrast to New York, Pennsylvania's high-turnout elections invariably featured contests between opposing slates of candidates. One of the reasons for this was structural. The size of both the counties themselves and of the delegations of representatives from each of the old counties (eight) invited cooperative election campaigns (see map 4). And unlike in New York, where a citizen might legitimately vote for fewer candidates than there were electoral vacancies, in Pennsylvania incomplete tickets were deemed spoiled ballots. The reluctance of individuals to vote for either a political adversary or an undeclared fill-in just to validate their ballot encouraged party managers to organize complete tickets. More important, however, were the preference of Quakers for consensus and their belief that politics should reflect the shared purpose that underlay their colonial venture. Friends always preferred a common approach to public issues, be they religious or civil.

Because of the cohesion incumbent assemblymen in Pennsylvania usually displayed, and because of the popularity of the tenets of civil Quakerism, opponents saw little hope of gaining legislative power through piecemeal action. The New York strategy of electing two or three leading dissidents, who might then bring the assembly around to their views was useless in Pennsylvania. The Proprietary Party notable William Allen found that out during his lonesome years in the House of Representatives in the late 1750s and early 1760s. A few other members would drift in Allen's direction when it served their immediate purposes, but just as surely they floated away again with a slight change in the political breeze. As a consequence, the serious critics of both the incumbent Quaker factions of early Pennsylvania history and the Quaker Party of later decades usually restricted their electoral efforts to occasions on which they felt they could organize widely enough to win a majority of the assembly. That required issues, and the recruitment of slates of candidates to meet the tickets of their opponents. As Sir William Keith demonstrated in his futile attempts during the 1720s to take over the assembly with his ten out of twenty-six seats, there was little opportunity for compromise once outsiders decided to take on the Quaker monolith. The challengers had either to win an immediate majority (which none ever did) or to give up the fight.

Hard-fought campaigns that produced a high voter turnout were not the only kind of election contests that took place in New York and Pennsylvania. There were others in which the public’s response was less than optimum. In New York, these contests took various forms. Some were county elections in which pairs of candidates faced off against each other;40 others were three-cornered competitions in which a trio of candidates tried to eliminate one of their number;41 some involved larger numbers of participants—six or seven
individuals competing for four seats, or five hopefuls for two seats—and some fewer. In Schenectady, in Westchester Borough, and twice in a manor, the rivalry was always (so far as we know) between two aspirants for the single assembly seat. In Pennsylvania there was variety as well. Perhaps as many as six or seven candidates might vie for the last three seats of an eight-person delegation; or perhaps two aspirants might fight it out for the one available seat both in counties entitled to one representative and in those with two, four, or eight seats in which incumbents had a lock on the rest. The most important observation to make here is that such single-slate competition took place within the ranks of early popular Quaker factions or of the Quaker Party, not between these groups and their proprietary rivals.

When we look at these elections, it is clear that a number of circumstances could explain why they occasioned only mild to moderate voter interest. Managers were less adept at getting out the vote, the candidates were less attractive than they might have been, or perhaps “Cloudy or Rainy Weather,” a “cold Morning,” or “some trifling business” kept folks at home. But it is also likely that constituents perceived the elections neither to be crucial to their rights nor so closely aligned with, or symbolic of, the main political fissures in their respective colonies.

No matter how parochial some election contests seemed to be, the fundamental predisposition of voters in both New York and Pennsylvania was to support candidates who at any moment seemed the most believable exponents of popular rights. There were numerous indicators of this in New York. If we look at the rate of turnover of assemblymen in New York, we find that the lowest rate of change took place in elections between 1743 and 1752 (average 23 percent) and in 1769 (22 percent), when as a body the assembly was closely identified (through its confrontations with provincial governors) with the cause of popular rights. Conversely, the highest rates of turnover occurred in 1726 (46 percent), 1737 (48 percent), 1759 (63 percent), and 1768 (48 percent), after assemblies of seven to ten years’ duration in each case. During these long periods, legislators were tempted to grow fat, grazing on the eminence and patronage power they enjoyed. Once elected, many assemblymen seemed to forget their earlier concerns for frequent elections, and the very partisanship that gained them office all too often seemed to narrow into capriciousness rather than broaden into disinterested service. Popular skepticism of incumbent legislators grew quickly during the days of Fletcher and Cornbury, and reached an apogee in the early 1720s. The excesses legislators committed were epitomized in the infamous “long assembly” (1715–1726), during which assemblymen paid off themselves and their friends under the provincial Debt Acts, gobbled up local patronage appointments, and stood off constituent demands that they
submit to reelection. Currents of constituent distrust ran through all of New York’s prominent communities thereafter.

The results of this charge to New York’s political atmosphere was apparent in numerous instances. Given a clear choice, New Yorkers always voted for the outsider of the moment. During the late 1720s, the electorate supported the most credible champions of popular rights, the Philipse faction. Once that group had begun to consolidate its power, Lewis Morris became the outspoken champion of New Yorkers’ liberties, and he easily won the well-known Westchester by-election of 1733. When the Morris/Alexander faction gained a dominant position in the 1737 election, the just-discredited Adolphe Philipse immediately regained enough acceptance as the standard-bearer for popular rights to prevail in the 1737 New York City and County by-election. The same dynamic operated out in the hinterlands. Untoward efforts to exploit patronage power immediately before an election always worked to the disadvantage of those currently holding power.49 And if a sitting member clearly proved himself more attentive to the cause of popular rights than to the perquisites of his office, his constituents were not only effusive in their praise but also enthusiastically returned him to the next assembly session.50

In Pennsylvania, the public’s support for popular rights was apparent at every turn. The antiproprietary legislative factions of Pennsylvania’s early years and the Quaker Party of the mid to late colonial decades dominated provincial politics because they were widely perceived as synonymous with popular liberties. As Governor George Thomas observed, “the people . . . [were] always fondest of those that opposed the Gov’t.”51 When there was some political disagreement over how Pennsylvanians’ rights should be protected (such as occurred during the mid 1760s), citizens turned out in numbers to vote protection for their provincial heritage. Equally significant was the degree to which other less-noticed political contests also turned on the issue of popular rights. One of the county officers of government who was of “great importance” was the sheriff, and unlike the situation in New York and other major North American colonies, Pennsylvania’s sheriffs were elected. Not only was the sheriff “the very chief weight whereby all . . . [was] moved and turned in the courts,” he was also the critical figure in the running of elections.52 Because of the political sensitivity of this office, one of the voters’ major considerations was the candidate’s ability to “Shew good inclination to Select a few persons that can Oppose a Certain Interest if Occasion . . . [should] require.”53 A properly disposed sheriff would make sure that election inspectors, and jurors sitting on proprietary land suits, were firmly antiproprietary. It should not be surprising, then, that on occasion the contest that “drew the greatest numbers to . . . [an] election”
was that for sheriff, not the one for assemblymen. And because the sheriff held the position for three years, it was important to select those whose popular disposition would wear well in office. In quiet times, the sheriff’s election served as a periodic refresher course on the fundamentals of popular politics.

If widespread concern for popular rights characterized high-turnout elections, it did not automatically lead to political mobilization. Citizens might eagerly attend “a Merry Making, a Husking, a Christening or what they call a ‘Bee,’” but if they thought their neighbors would satisfactorily tend to elections or that political affairs would take care of themselves, they would as often stay at home as turn out to vote. The result was that candidates for political office often had to overcome their constituents’ apathy. They had to induce countrymen to travel to the county seat and city dwellers to mingle intimately in the election-day crowds.

The mobilization of the electorate began with the conscious decision on the part of the office seekers to “make” interest. Everyone, of course, had an “interest” by their potential to influence family, friends, acquaintances, and even strangers. The trick was for the candidate to enlist as many and as influential backers as he could as active supporters. One of the best examples that we have of this process of “making” interest is a letter of the Chester County, Pennsylvania, notable John Morton to his old acquaintance Joseph Pennock, Sr., in which he admitted being “prevailed on in favour of . . . [Morton’s] Kinsman Mr Philip Ford,” who “[had] a Mind to Use his [Ford’s] own Interest and that of his friends to procure him the Office of Sheriff.” Morton went out of his way to assure Pennock that Ford was “A Steady friend to Liberty & the Constitution.” To colonials in New York and Pennsylvania, that assurance was always of great importance, but it also meant vastly different things, depending on the circumstances in which it was used. In Chester County’s political parlance of the hour, it meant that Ford was of an antiproprietary bent, that he would respect tender-conscienced Quakers in carrying out his official duties, and that he supported the continuation of Pennsylvania’s constitution rather than the current campaign for royal government. Pennock could also find confidence in Morton’s declaration that Ford’s “Principles . . . [were] honest” and that he would grace office with “Candour Generosity and Integrity.” Morton knew that Pennock had “not Troubled . . . [himself] to Attend Elections some years past,” and he did not ask the old gentleman to do so. What Morton requested was Pennock’s “Interest respect and opinion about home when Opportunity Suits”—that is, “to drop Something now and then for him [i.e., Ford].” Morton went on to say that “if . . . [Pennock’s] family . . . [could] be Engaged in his favor . . . [Ford felt he would be very] Strong in . . . [their] Quarter.” Finally Morton reassured Pennock that no election-
day embarrassment lay down the road, for Morton "believe[d] that Ford's "Interest . . . [was] good throughout the County."57

There were few variants of this first level of "making" interest. Once a candidate decided, in consultation with his politically minded friends, to stand for election, or was drafted by them to participate on a ticket, the candidate and his political associates and managers turned to their family and friends to tout their cause. Those "connections" in turn reached out to others.58 Some, like Robert Livingston, Jr., could on occasion round up considerable support. In 1761, Livingston felt he could deliver fifty to eighty votes downriver from his manor to his political friends in Albany.59 But in tight contests, even small gains were valuable. In one instance, Arent Stevens, a business acquaintance whom Sir William Johnson had pressed into service to round up support for the candidates of Johnson's choice, reported the results of a hard morning's lobbying: "I have prevail'd with Nicholas Velie to Vote but he must be taken care of, and not suffer'd to be talked to by the other side."60

The continuities of factional and party politics facilitated the process of making interest in New York and Pennsylvania. Because of ongoing allegiances in both colonies, the candidates who were acceptable to any faction or party immediately fell heir to a preexisting network of political influence. In Pennsylvania, in particular, where Quaker Party allegiances were rock-solid, the number of representatives from some of the old counties was large, and party candidates were occasionally not agreed upon until the eve of the election, a relatively stable core of party loyalists in each county bore the brunt of interest-making. It was thus possible for some candidates, such as John Smith and Isaac Norris, Jr., to play the diffident gentlemen—above soliciting office or votes on their own behalf—even during contested elections and still win seats.61 They could do so, however, because they were unqualified partisans. Because of past associations and active interest-making at earlier stages in their lives, they had legions of the party faithful out working for them. Far more characteristic of affairs in both New York and Pennsylvania were candidates who played a leading role in reactivating and trying to extend the interest networks of their respective factions and parties. The veteran New York politician Henry Beekman kept himself in the forefront of interest-making in Dutchess County, New York. Despite his ascetic side, Beekman's son-in-law, Robert R. Livingston, did the same.62 The New York lawyer John Morin Scott benefited from his close association with longtime provincial Whigs, but that was not enough; he tried to strengthen his interest by adding an element of street politics to his appeal, going "in Person, from House to House, to solicit votes."63 In Pennsylvania, all of the major party leaders (with the exception of Isaac Norris, Jr.) took pains to be in the forefront of electioneering, tirelessly trying to extend
and consolidate their electoral support. Out in the provincial hinterlands, relatively unknown candidates tried to do the same. In the Northampton County election of 1754, James Burnside went “from place to place” bawling his support for the Quaker Party and “beating his breast” to prove his determination to “serve the County to the utmost of his power.”

The testimony of James Burnside’s opponents is a reminder that not all interest-making was through private correspondence and quiet conversation. Speeches and pamphlets were an important facet of election campaigns. In Philadelphia, Israel Pemberton, Jr., “harangue[d]” the crowd, while in New York, Oliver DeLancey traveled up the Hudson to Esopus in Ulster County, bringing with him “all the songs & faction papers” of the day to “read . . . in the tavern.” Such prelection efforts were important, not only because they encouraged voters to turn out on election day, but also because the writings continually extended into rivalries of the moment the various political discourses and interpretive frameworks that colonists used to make order of public affairs. New Yorkers and Pennsylvanians turned out large numbers of screeds and editorials during the eighteenth century, and each wave of electioneering material provided context for succeeding conflicts. Political partisans did their best to manage the news—to spread both information and disinformation in ways that would benefit them come the next election. In Pennsylvania, the party proponents of civil Quakerism commanded the “ears” of the country people; in New York, factional contests for the public mind were much more common. At one point in 1747, Henry Beekman, a popular Whig, was in the assembly with a number of others “when [it was] not siting.” Cornelius Van Horne was railing at Governor Clinton’s orders to send New York City troops to Albany, and about the unwillingness of the detachments to go without an act of assembly, when Beekman apparently interjected in a “Jocular Manner” that Oliver Cromwell had gotten his men to march by shooting one or two. The next thing Beekman knew, Dutchess County politicians who had ties with the remnants of the old Morris/Alexander faction of provincial Whigs were trotting the anecdote around the county to prove that Beekman was not as friendly to the people’s rights as he and his associates professed to be. In New York, it was hard to tell: little incidents could turn out to be significant in future electoral battles.

Connection, argument, and propaganda all played an important part in mobilizing voters, but partisan politicians were rarely willing to let it go at that. Making interest involved not only polite overtures to friends but also attempts to use the leverage that socioeconomic power provided. The existing sources for New York and Pennsylvania suggest that contemporaries were well aware that the power wielded by trustees of the loan office, supreme court judges, justices of the peace, lawyers, creditors, business
partners, employers, and the socially preeminent could be turned to political ends. At their subtlest, these relationships could find expression in the offering of a vote as “Recompense” for “Private Favours.” They could also take the form of blunt threats. One of the “GREAT MEN (as they are called)” had “come into our neighborhood” pushing a particular ticket, complained one Philadelphian, and if the complainer and his neighbors did not fall in line, “he threatened to sue some of us.” In New York, one well-known resident, Peter Van Schaack, told of an acquaintance who wrote “a Number of Letters to his Tenants or Debtors or Dependants . . . in order to intimidate them to vote as he wanted them to.” At its extreme, intimidation could become outright violence. Twice, county elections in Pennsylvania erupted into violence when one side determined to drive its opponents from the polls. But these were aberrations in what was normally a well-ordered scene. Lynford Lardner, a relative of the Penns, reported that election riots, “such as happen at almost every Election in England, . . . [were] here too rare not to be made the most of by the opposite party.”

On balance, however, politicians recognized that the carrot was more attractive than the stick. Candidates and their close supporters offered loans to individuals, donated money to charities, promised transportation or to stand travel expenses to bring voters to the polls, and paid naturalization and freemanship fees to those who would pledge their support. Most commonly, they treated all comers to food and drink. Overall, the most cost-effective bribe was alcohol, the chief lubricant of all election machines. Votes were bought and sold in taverns; when, in highly contested elections, party and faction runners brought in “The Deaf, the Blind, the Young and the Old,” their price was most frequently not that of the “Stockings,” “Shoes,” and “Breeches” of which the poor were in need, but enough drink to dull the aches and bitterness that the hard turns of life had brought their way.

Not surprisingly, when colonial politicians were prepared to make such strenuous efforts on their own behalf, they were also determined to seek every advantage they could at the polls. The key figure in any effort to control an election was the sheriff. In New York, the sheriff’s office was an appointed one; because New York’s governors abandoned all but minimal efforts to have their own men in local administrative posts, county politicians could, under favorable circumstances, have great influence over their sheriff. That was apparent in the way sheriffs tilted the scales toward one faction or another. As overseers of elections, they could disallow votes on technicalities; they could raise questions about the qualifications of some voters and overlook the shortcomings of others; they could give brief notice of an impending poll to some townships and ignore others; they could arbitrarily change the election venue; and they could shut down a poll
quickly or keep it open until distant precincts had sent in their last man.\footnote{78}
No wonder William Corry smacked his lips at Sir William Johnson’s claim to renewed influence with Lieutenant-Governor James DeLancey in 1757: “you can now get us a sheriff—that is the first grand point.”\footnote{79}

While Pennsylvania’s sheriffs were just as embroiled in partisan politics as sheriffs in New York, their elective status gave them a consistent political bias that their northeasterly counterparts did not share. With only one or two exceptions during the late colonial years, Pennsylvania sheriffs were antiproprietary politicians in their own right. That meant that anti-Quaker challengers faced uphill battles, for in Pennsylvania, too, the sheriffs could influence the choosing of election inspectors or close the ballot box down prematurely.\footnote{80} Because of the regularity of Pennsylvania elections, along with the tradition of holding elections at county seats, Quaker colony sheriffs had less latitude for creative politics than New Yorkers. But in both colonies, active politicians recognized that the circumstances of the election could be as important in determining the outcome as voter turnout, and representatives of all parties and factions wanted to avoid election losses because of the “wrong management” of their campaigns.\footnote{81}

As exciting as electoral battles might be, as fulfilling as partisanship might feel, and as sweet as victory could taste, political veterans always viewed contested elections with considerable ambivalence. “Unforeseen . . . turn[s] of popular humor” were always a threat, and the best-laid plans could fall afoul of poor management.\footnote{82} The result of these fears (reinforced in Pennsylvania by the Quaker distaste for overt conflict) was that leading politicians often wished to avoid a contest. As Abraham Ten Broeck pointed out when election writs reached Albany in early 1768, “Every body is averse to a poll.”\footnote{83} In New York City, and in Pennsylvania generally, during the mid 1740s and early 1750s, there were virtually no contested elections, largely because of the overwhelming popular antagonism to Governor Clinton in New York and to the Proprietary Party in Pennsylvania. But these exceptions aside, the available evidence suggests that political cleavages were usually too great to bridge, for electoral competition of some kind—within the Quaker Party, among locally oriented county notables in New York, or between clearly identifiable representatives of the two colonies’ respective factions and parties—was most characteristic of politics on the Hudson and Delaware rivers. There was certainly no pattern of dramatic shift from contested to uncontested elections similar to that in England in the 1720s, which historians have associated with the seismic cultural shudders that preceded a relatively stable political landscape in Great Britain through 1832.\footnote{84} And the number of uncontested elections in New York and Pennsylvania seems likely to have been considerably less than the 65 percent Virginia experienced between 1728 and 1775.\footnote{85}
That does not mean, however, that New York and Pennsylvania were without some structural stability in their respective political systems. One indicator of this is the rate of turnover of colonial assemblymen. In both New York and Pennsylvania, there was a significant drop-off in the turnover of legislators during the early eighteenth century, a change that suggests the emergence of a more "settled, coherent and predictable" political environment. In the case of New York, the duration of assemblies tended to reinforce that development. During the first twenty-five years of royal government, New York had sixteen assemblies, but during the next forty-five, only twelve. During the turbulent turn-of-the-century decades New York politicians were divided by their own quarrels, frequently at odds with their governors over fundamental constitutional issues, and felt encouraged by the English Triennial Act to expect frequent elections. But as the main outlines of an acceptable provincial constitution began to emerge, factions became more cohesive and governors less willing to subordinate their personal financial interests to a defense of strict prerogative claims. Most important, the dominant political factions found that it was possible to work out compromises with governors and still, because of the gains in power the assembly had made, not entirely forgo the public esteem they needed in order to secure reelection.

Finally, there were two important structural features of electoral politics that underline the functional integrity of the respective political systems of both colonies. The first of these is the pattern of voter turnout in provincial elections. The high points of voter participation fell in clusters, as far as we know, during the middle decades of the eighteenth century, when the factional and party structures of New York and Pennsylvania were most clearly defined. It is, of course, possible to emphasize the absolute number of voters that participated in elections and use that record of slow growth to argue for a linear model of political development in the colonies. But a much more revealing indicator of political behavior is the record of voting percentages. Despite a fast-growing population, New York experienced no appreciable percentage gain in voter turnout between the 1730s and the early 1760s. And despite Philadelphia's unparalleled growth, the percentage of voters who turned out between 1750 and 1775 in the county elections actually declined slightly, to an average of 23.2 percent (down from 25 percent between 1725 and 1750). What we have, then, is not a linear model of voter mobilization but an episodic one. Voters tended to turn out at what contemporaries perceived to be crucial political junctures, both in response to their own sense of public priorities and to the promptings and inducements of competing politicians. The considerable willingness of settlers to take an active hand in politics when significant issues and symbolic confrontation distinguished elections suggests they were members of well-
integrated political systems, in which many residents tended to identify with and incorporate themselves within their respective provincial political cultures. The second structural feature of electoral politics is the extent to which members of the early established, or charter, ethnoreligious groups in New York and Pennsylvania shaped traditions of vital, competitive popular political activity. The heirs of seventeenth-century immigrants formed the bulk of the mobilized electorate in the older counties. Members of the Dutch Reformed church had a lock on New York City politics throughout the colonial years, and when the elections of 1761, 1768, and 1769 took place, members of the Dutch Reformed church turned out in higher proportion than any other denomination for which we have records. The Anglicans may have matched them, but the Presbyterians, who have so often been identified with the politicization of late colonial politics, were among the least active voters. In Albany, too, it is clear that rivalry among various Dutch factions was what brought out the vote. Rather than always practicing cozy, paternalistic politics, the Dutch joined with the offspring of some of New York's early British settlers to engage periodically in the competitive electoral episodes that strongly influenced the political texture of the province's two most important centers of population. While there are no Pennsylvania voting records that reveal the participatory patterns of provincial voters, there is every reason to believe that early residence in given areas spawned stable traditions of polarization. Even in Philadelphia, where Quakers were quickly outnumbered, Friends and their German allies formed the core of the Quaker Party. Despite the sporadic participation of voters from one election to the next, the patterns of political participation that developed in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in both colonies imparted a continuity to electoral politics that continued throughout the pre-Revolutionary years.

**Government and Politics**

Just as it is essential in assessing the character of popular politics in New York and Pennsylvania to have some understanding of the relationship of the imperial authorities to the colonies, of the place of the council in provincial affairs, and of the tenor of electoral politics, it is necessary to know something about local government in the two colonies in order to come to grips with the subtleties of their respective expressions of colonial American political culture. In both societies, the character of county and local government contributed to the legitimation of colonial regimes. Colonists most frequently came into contact with their governments through the adminis-
trative procedures of caring for the poor, developing a transportation sys
ystem, providing for public buildings, licensing taverns and public houses,
probating wills, registering claims to land and chattels, and the legal pro
cesses of the civil and criminal courts. By participating in parochial public
affairs, whether as petty officials, interested parties, or observers, New York
ers and Pennsylvanians recognized their governments’ claims to their alle
giance and thereby imparted strength to them.97

But if the processes of legitimation were similar in each colony, their ex
pression was often somewhat different. Compared to Pennsylvania’s, the
most important feature of New York’s local government was its varied and
parochial character. During the sixty-seven years of European settlement
prior to the establishment of representative government in 1691, “localism
took root . . . [in ‘random’ fashion] and flourished in all parts of the
colony.”98 On Long Island, the dozen and a half Dutch and English towns
“began with completely different forms of government, and were given
different degrees of autonomy.”99 Even among English towns there were
variations, depending upon their early status as either New York or Con
necticut possessions. Up the Hudson River, almost a dozen towns were
scattered in Westchester, Dutchess, and Albany counties, each with its own
sense of propriety and community identity.100 In addition to the towns,
there were the two prominent city corporations of New York and Albany
and the handful of well-known Hudson Valley manors. The characters of
the two cities were distinct, and there was considerable variation in the
manorial ethos of the colony’s great estates.101 With the establishment of
representative government in 1691, all these areas were included in counties,
and there was subsequently some effort to standardize. Established towns
and manors, as well as the precincts into which most newly settled sections
of the counties were divided, were all to elect supervisors. These officials,
with the assistance of elected assessors, collectors, constables, and overseers
of the poor, were intended to take over the administration of the bulk of
local affairs from county court officials.102 But this process was never more
than a compromise with the forces of individuation. Some manors resisted
integration;103 some county courts refused to hand over all their administra
tive responsibilities to the supervisors;104 and most towns retained an insti
tutional, and possibly a sociopolitical coherence unmatched by precincts.105
Moreover, New Yorkers continued to tolerate exceptions, allowing the cre
ation of new towns and the granting of assembly seats to favored towns and
manors.106 In New York, the traditions of localism persisted strongly
throughout the colonial period.

Pennsylvania, of course, had nothing like New York’s tangled thickets of
hardy localisms. Areas on the Delaware dominated by pre-Pennsylvania
settlers had either been sloughed off with the Lower Counties in 1704 or
swamped by the new arrivals who poured into the colony beginning in 1682. Although William Penn professed to prefer the establishment of closely knit agricultural villages, what he got was dispersed settlement. There were no strong towns and town officials, no proprietary control over township lands, and no clear congruence between township boundaries and religious congregations. Penn’s manors had no effective jurisdictional integrity, and when it appeared that areas such as Germantown or the Welsh tract might possess a social base predisposing them toward significant local autonomy, powerful Pennsylvanians would have none of it. They revoked the Germantown charter in 1707 and divided the Welsh tract by redrawing the Chester-Philadelphia county line in 1691. Philadelphia had a strong corporate identity and assembly representation of its own, of course, but the City of Brotherly Love was a singular place. Of the three other municipalities that gained charters, and the half dozen county towns that Thomas Penn laid out during the last quarter century of the colonial period, none rose to distinction save as administrative centers for county affairs. As county seats, they anchored a uniform system of county government that was by far the most important focal point of local affairs. From the first days of Pennsylvania settlement, all townships were included within extensive counties, with each county run largely by a handful of county justices and then, increasingly after 1718, by three popularly elected county commissioners and their half-dozen assessor associates. (While some conflict accompanied this change, it was a change from one relatively centralized and uniform system to another.) There were no pockets of townships whose existence antedated the counties, and hence no communities determined to assert the kind of special privilege that institutionalized parochialism in New York. In Pennsylvania, as new areas became settled, new townships were established, with exactly the same powers as the first ones on the shores of the Delaware River. And as clusters of townships formed far to the west, they constituted new counties similar to the old ones. Each county was in itself a powerful unit serving as a major focal point for local activities. But with the single and very important exception of assembly representation for the counties, Pennsylvania’s organization of local government was a far more standardized system than its counterpart on the Hudson.

The differences in the historical development of local government in New York and Pennsylvania had important concomitants in political affairs. One of the most significant of these was the character of patronage politics in county government. Conditioned by their sense of regional autonomy, and prompted by their belief that local power should be protected, New York’s assembly representatives tried to gain as much control over the appointment of justices of the peace, militia officers, and other local officials as they possibly could. By 1715 they had had considerable success. Their ability
to “make and unmake Officers in their several Counties” soon became so well recognized that county residents frequently referred to “the sitting members” as “the present administration.” The security of that privilege varied from time to time and place to place. On occasion a governor might try to regain some of the power his predecessors had traded away. And councillors such as Cadwallader Colden and Sir William Johnson were sometimes successful in their efforts to channel appointments through themselves. Yet even in such circumstances, the elected county representatives were rarely shut out, and certainly they never relinquished their claim to appointive influence.

The devolution of patronage authority in New York had important consequences. One was that having control of county appointments strengthened local politicians and inflated their sense of self-importance. With influence on both the elective and appointive side of the political ledger, assemblymen easily came around to the view that their county was their fiefdom. And the cumulative effect of that was to reinforce the parochial basis of provincial politics at the expense of the tendencies toward centralization that accompanied the province’s growing experience with representative government.

A second consequence had to do with the way in which assemblymen used their “right” over local appointments to consolidate their political support. In the case of militia appointees, they demonstrated a modicum of restraint. Senior militia appointments were of some importance: although such officers had lost a considerable power they enjoyed early in the century, that of choosing which troops might be sent on duty to the frontier, and although it was widely recognized by the mid eighteenth century that the officers did little even in wartime, the title of “colonel” or “captain” could carry some prestige. Assemblymen occasionally tried to procure these titles for themselves, and much more frequently for their friends. But in doing so, and in appointing lesser officers, the legislators were constrained by practical considerations. Citizens would only cooperate with officers who had their trust, and the number of commissions was limited by demographic constraints.

In the case of justices of the peace, however, local politicians abandoned all pretense of evenhandedness. Justices were to “herd with the common people,” to “hail fellow well met with them over a mug of ale,” and, with the influence they gained thereby, to bring them to the polls in support of the incumbents at the next election. In order to increase their political support, provincial politicians expanded the commission of the peace as much as they could. Henry Beekman’s 1744 list of thirty-nine appointees for Dutchess County provided a justice for roughly one hundred sixty people. By comparison, Berks County, Pennsylvania, had a ratio of jus-
tics of the peace to residents of approximately 1:1,300 in 1769. Put another way, the thirty-nine magistrates Beckman proposed to name in one year were only nine short of the total number of justices commissioned for Chester County, Pennsylvania, for all the twenty-five years between 1729 and 1755.

Dependent as they were on political goodwill, the lifetime of New York magistrates’ commissions could be very short. William Smith, Jr., claimed to know of one situation in which the county commission was changed three times in one year. If assemblymen perceived their judicial appointments to be lacking in loyalty, the justices could quickly be stripped of their office and “superseded” in another extensive list. When Deputy Provincial Secretary Goldsbrow Banyar was asked for information on justices of the peace, he threw up his hands in disgust. He had no idea where the current justices resided within their counties, or if they had even qualified to serve. Not only did the structure of New York’s patronage politics promote localism, it also clearly exacerbated the rivalries that centered on county affairs.

The fact that Pennsylvania had nothing like New York’s historically entrenched local governments was reflected in the character of the patronage relationships that did emerge in the Quaker colony. One of the most important sources of patronage in provincial government was the Pennsylvania loan office. It was a highly centralized institution. A small group of four or five assemblymen, headed by an acting trustee, looked after the allocation of mortgages and the valuation of property offered for security throughout the entire province. There was some regional representation, for the committee was composed of one representative from the backcountry and at least one from each of the three old counties. But the assembly as a whole decided who those individuals should be. When New York undertook to establish a similar institution in 1737, its organizational structure contrasted sharply with its Pennsylvania counterpart. Each New York county had its own loan office representative, and that officer was chosen, not by the assembly, but by the township supervisors with the concurrence of three justices of the peace. While New York’s politicians gave the ponies of parochialism their head, Pennsylvania’s Quaker Party was adept at keeping them pulling along well-rutted roads. In Pennsylvania, such appointments were highly partisan, of course, but that partisanship was overwhelmingly provincial in its orientation.

The comparative degree of centralization that distinguished the Pennsylvania Assembly’s patronage also characterized the judicial appointments for which the proprietors bore responsibility. Unlike the situation in New York, the composition of the commission of the peace was always decided in Philadelphia by the chief proprietary advisors, with the usually perfunctory concurrence of the governor. Although Pennsylvania magistrates always
carried the stigma of being proprietary placemen, proprietary officials, prompted by Thomas Penn, refused to indulge their partisan proclivities overly much when making up the commission. They took seriously names suggested by the existing members of the county bench. They solicited the opinions of those who, like Reverend Samuel Finley, “care[d] not what party they [the justices] belong[ed] to.” Finley, a Presbyterian, recommended both a Presbyterian and a Quaker, the former “a man of strong judgment, firm purpose, strict justice and impartiality,” the latter “a good natured, candid, sensible man.”

Knowing of Thomas Penn’s conviction that Quakers as well as other religious groups should be represented in the ranks of the magistracy, that the majority by far of well-qualified individuals were Quaker, and that Quaker politicians frequently knew country personalities better than themselves, proprietary officials sought the advice of their political opponents as well as their friends. Proprietary advisors showed no inclination at all to debase the judicial coin by flooding the country with men who could easily be bought. On the contrary, they believed that the only way to further the proprietary interest was to appoint magistrates who knew “how to maintain the dignity of . . . [their ‘place’] by the proper exercise of authority.” Occasionally there were minor purges of a county commission, but when those occurred, they were as likely to be the result of delinquency of duty or less-than-exemplary personal conduct as of political opposition to the Proprietary Party.

Unlike in New York, where town governments antedated the provincial assembly and local peculiarities continued to be granted institutional and statutory expression well into the eighteenth century, local interests in Pennsylvania were either subordinate to or well integrated with the more centralized notions of what the Quaker experiment entailed. Stalwarts of both the Quaker and Proprietary parties were imbued with this expansive provincial perspective, which counteracted many of the centrifugal political forces occasioned by parochial loyalties. With respect to patronage appointments, the results were clear: a brake both on the autonomy of regional spokespersons and on partisanship of a distinctly local kind.

Given the character of settlement patterns in New York, and the perceived legitimacy of local concerns, it is not surprising that assemblymen from various counties, towns, and manors frequently shared their constituents’ belief that local problems were unique and required legislation speaking directly to their needs. A good part of a representative’s public reputation depended on his ability to hear and respond to the right combination of local interest groups. Attentiveness to the “little interests of the particular counties” was a far more efficacious way of demonstrating self-importance than was searching out similar problems and suggesting colonywide solutions. Even for those who did have broader horizons, there was a compel-
ling logic behind solicitude for local interests. While acknowledging that specific community demands pandered to parochialism, it also brought legitimacy to and acceptance of the provincial government. And in a society that had a tradition of viewing central authority as an intrusive force, that was an important consideration.

The results of parochial power and the thinking that accompanied it were evident in the New York statutes. There were separate laws providing for the extirpation of wolves in Albany, Dutchess, and Orange counties.\textsuperscript{136} Regulations for laying out highways required special treatment in Suffolk, Albany, Ulster, Westchester, and Dutchess counties.\textsuperscript{137} Kings County required a particular act to safeguard its sheep;\textsuperscript{138} Hempstead one to prevent rams from running loose and breeding at random;\textsuperscript{139} and Claverack precinct in Rensselaerswyck Manor one to protect local property from foraging swine.\textsuperscript{140} Another indication of New York legislators’ concern for their locale was the number of place-specific acts. Between 1701 and 1770, 117 acts were specifically aimed at New York City. (During the same period, fewer than a third as many Pennsylvania acts dealt only with Philadelphia.)\textsuperscript{141} In their demonstrable solicitude for local self-importance, New York assemblymen offered the same public gesture of respect for parochialism to their towns and districts that British legislators frequently extended to the entrenched private and quasi-public interests of their idiosyncratic constituencies.\textsuperscript{142}

New Yorkers’ concern for local interests had other important consequences when the issue of taxation arose. Rather than adopting a uniform tax rate for the province, legislators willingly jumped into battle with their peers in order to assign quotas to the various counties.\textsuperscript{143} All shared the same motive of trying to push as much of the tax burden as possible onto other counties, and thus ingratiate themselves with their constituents. Nor did that competitive mode of behavior stop at the provincial level. A county’s share of taxes was in turn distributed by quota among towns, manors, and precincts during a free-for-all among their supervisors.\textsuperscript{144} That kind of rivalry injected an irascible element into New York localism, ruffling relationships among provincial politicians and increasing the difficulties they faced in forging a consensus among their disparate constituent communities.

While New Yorkers put a premium on their local roots and traditions, Pennsylvanians emphasized their participation in a shared new-world experiment. Most Quaker leaders had no desire to promote an order of settlement and local government at odds with the kind of rationality that the gridlike plan of Philadelphia symbolized. New Yorkers felt the need to extend assembly representation to nine counties and manors in 1681 in order to respect community variety, but Pennsylvanians originally set out only three coun-
ties to encompass all their townships. The large size of the counties, the equality of representation accorded each, and a sense of shared purpose, encouraged Pennsylvania assemblymen to form large legislative committees that cut across differences rather than give legislative expression to idiosyncrasy. Decades later, when the new backcountry counties were badly underrepresented, the tradition of having large legislative committees continued. Politically, of course, that was a means of maintaining Quaker control, but it also had the effect of continuing the kind of legislative standardization that distinguished many of Pennsylvania's statutes on local affairs. In New York, the practice of accepting one- or two-man legislative committees served parochial interests, and also encouraged them. In Pennsylvania, the refusal to accept such narrowly based committees worked against the proliferation of highly individualized acts of legislation.

Pennsylvania's relative preference for the simplicity of statutory standardization was obvious. When Quaker assemblymen provided bounties for wolves, they did so, not in individual county acts, but in one paragraph of the Act for Raising County Rates and Levies. Laws covering matters of intense local concern, such as the laying out of highways, and irritations like foraging swine were always given uniform applicability. When nearly a dozen Anglican churches scattered throughout the colony needed help raising funds, the assembly dealt with all of them in one enabling act. A related feature of Pennsylvania legislators' behavior was their refusal to slide into the kind of antagonistic parochialism that distinguished New Yorkers' negotiations over taxes. When provincial taxation was necessary in the Quaker colony, representatives set a rate that applied to all eligible provincials, irrespective of their place of residence. On the local level, there was no direct pitting of township against township. Given the size of the counties (Lancaster and Chester counties, for example, had thirty-three and fifty-two townships respectively in 1759), negotiations among township representatives over tax quotas would have been impractical. It was up to the small number of justices of the peace and, later, county commissioners to make tax decisions to conciliate the many local communities within their jurisdiction. If these men hoped to maintain their positions and reputations, they could not afford to be open or overeager advocates for any township, village, or borough.

While the different local government experiences of New York and Pennsylvania in some measure explain the plethora of parochial statutes in the former case and their comparative scarcity in the latter, they do not come close to accounting for the very great disparity in the number of acts that the two colonies promulgated. Between 1701 and 1770, New York averaged a little over eighteen acts per year, and Pennsylvania averaged a little under half that. This pattern was consistent for the number and duration of
periods in which no legislation was passed. In New York there were only four such times, all less than two years long. In Pennsylvania, there were a dozen hiatuses in legislative enactments, three of which were from three and one half to five years long, three from two to three and one half years, and six from one to two years. How can that disparity be explained? What do these differences tell us about the character of government and politics in each society?

In the case of New York, the legislative record indicates that despite some heated differences between assembly and governor, political leaders shared an underlying belief that their society required constant regulation. Because New York’s frontiers demanded militia vigilance, but no chief executive could be trusted with an open-ended militia law, annual renewals had to be authorized. The colony’s complex of revenue acts needed continual refinement and updating. Fortifications needed tending, and annual governmental salaries had to be paid. Above all, most assemblymen believed that duly passed laws were the primary means of establishing the legitimacy of their colonial government, for statutes were the primary symbols of provincial authority. Regulation by statute was the most secure validation local interests could gain, and acceptance of a claim to regulate was the strongest confirmation of the right of provincial leaders to govern. In a society such as New York, with a past checkered by conquest and a present plagued by frontier foes, yet peopled by settlers who in large measure preferred order to uncertainty, the desire to prove legitimacy through legislation was one that all assemblymen shared.

Pennsylvania differed considerably. The early years of settlement brought flurries of legislation, as Quaker legislators established the administrative, political, and legal framework for their experiment. But thereafter their perceived need for regulation diminished. The justices of the peace and county commissioners assumed much of the responsibility for the pressing local matters that accompanied rapid population growth and economic development. Quaker pacifism meant that there was no need for annual militia laws and constant attention to colonial defense. Provincial taxation was infinitesimal during the early decades of settlement, and when provincial needs increased, the loan office and excise provided ample income, with only periodic statutory change. The power of the House of Representatives and its financial resources meant that much provincial business could be dealt with by assembly resolve rather than by legislative act.

More important even than these practical considerations in constricting the volume of Pennsylvania’s laws was Friends’ attitude toward their government. Whereas to New Yorkers the essential means of establishing and proving legitimacy was the exercise of legislative power, to Quakers the sources of legitimacy were largely internal. Friends believed that in the past
the exercise of civil authority had almost always been an impediment to truth, and would remain potentially so in Pennsylvania even under Quaker custodianship. Worldly demands, including those of legislators and magistracy, would constantly threaten the purity of the Inner Light. Only by keeping secular voices to a minimum and by periodically stilling them, both in meeting and in civic affairs, could Quakers fulfill their larger obligations to God. Morality, good order, and civility were dependent, not on external regulation, but on internal commitment to “holy conversation,” to Quaker testimonies to truth, to a family life suffused with charity, and to the mutual forbearance that adherence to the golden rule produced.\textsuperscript{153}

The results of these beliefs were the antithesis of the kind of extensive regulation our acquaintance with Puritan New England has accustomed us to expect from colonials of intense religious conviction. Reckoning that power was dangerous, Quaker legislators accumulated it to prevent its abuse, while simultaneously expressing their ethic of self-denial by refusing to use it.\textsuperscript{154} Knowing that the legitimacy of the Pennsylvania experiment rested on internal sources, not external ones, they were under no compulsion to prove their authority by the frequent exercise of the law. When disputes with governors eluded settlement or brought legislative paralysis to the provincial government, Quaker representatives felt under little pressure to compromise for the sake of social order. They knew that county government and the courts would answer most local government needs, that the established framework of provincial law never required much in the way of immediate change, and that society was in no danger of disintegration. Proof of this lay in the colony’s past. Had not the community been able to continue an orderly life with no provincial constitution at all?\textsuperscript{155} Could not the courts function smoothly without legislative sanction?\textsuperscript{156} Proof lay, too, in the character of the colony’s social relations. Had not many Pennsylvanians, regardless of their religion, become Quakerized, clearly sharing Friends’ attitudes toward government and accepting the right of Quakers to lead the way?\textsuperscript{157} Only when the problem of war wracked the colony did the Quakers’ authoritative aura dim and the interior pillars of public legitimacy show signs of crumbling.\textsuperscript{158}

More than the politics of place and the patterns of electoral behavior, the structure of local government in New York and Pennsylvania and the attitudes of their respective citizens toward the sources of governmental authority reveal something of the individual character of the two colonies’ political cultures. Were we to look no further than to the strictly political and governmental, however, we would miss a number of other important insights into the process of sociopolitical individuation that operated in New York and Pennsylvania. Some of the most telling features of the two colonies’ respective political cultures were neither narrowly institutional nor directly politi-
cal, but were related rather to the broader social values current in each province. These can be found only by focusing on the conjunctive relationship between politics and society.

Between Politics and Society

One of the most important characteristics of New York society was the emphasis many prominent colonial leaders placed on emulating the English. In a conquered province with a sizable Dutch population and tough-rooted traditions of local diversity, self-conscious anglicization was the obvious and easiest way for leading colonists to emasculate the foreign element that threatened to dwarf them, and to create a larger sense of provincial coherence. That New York was a royal colony after 1685, that it soon became well integrated into the British patronage network, and that it occupied a critical geographical location in Britain’s North American rivalry with France all encouraged emphasis on a cultural transfer from mother country to colony.

There were numerous illustrations of New Yorkers’ intense efforts to structure their society along English lines. They reacted to doubts about the character of their provincial constitution by exaggerated assertions of its comparability to the British model.¹⁵⁹ The New York bench and bar stressed their faithfulness to English models and argued that their province would show greater “Sense and Prudence” if only provincials would be more determined in adopting “the Laws of England for a Pattern.”¹⁶⁰ Those families with close connections to powerful English and Scottish politicians, those recent arrivals from Great Britain whose traditional values remained strong, and those who needed to prove their colonial world by old-world standards all stressed the need to establish another “new” England on the Hudson.

One of the local circumstances that encouraged New York Anglophilia was the colony’s late seventeenth-century land policy. Early New York governors granted immense tracts of land to favorites in order to bolster executive power.¹⁶¹ By the early eighteenth century, however, the governor’s position had changed markedly with the increase in assembly power, and New York’s large landowners became far more concerned with consolidating their patent and manorial land claims, and with expanding their own bases of popular power, than with showing gratitude to the Crown. The establishment of large landed estates in various New York counties created one of the most highly visible underpinnings of an old-world style gentry; that was a social image that had immense appeal to the large landowners and to their political allies. New York’s land-rich were acutely aware of how
unscrupulous their forebears had been in expanding the boundaries of their land grants, how the sanctity of their landed property depended on their own continuing influence and political power, how new and unformed their society was, and how uncertain its rules were. Analogies between themselves and the hallowed English gentry distracted attention from the questionable sources of their wealth and fostered the legitimacy that New York's "grandees" needed for long-term survival. Not surprisingly, conscious self-promotion of their gentry status was pervasive among the province's large landholders. The proprietors of Rensselaerswyck were referred to as "patroon," "lord," or "lord patroon"; proprietors of manor lands promoted themselves as "lord proprietor"; and Robert Livingston (of Clermont), was known as "King" Robert. The close association of "Sir" William Johnson and "Admiral" Peter Warren with New York emphasized an apparent transferability of English social distinctions from the Old World to the New, and in so doing encouraged colonial defenders of social hierarchy. The predilection of prominent New Yorkers to think this way is best illustrated by the Long Islander William Hick's reference to the Pennsylvanian Thomas Wharton, a Quaker Party stalwart, as the "duke of Wharton," and Robert Hunter Morris's tendency to see Pennsylvania politics largely in terms of localized "interests and connections." On the rare occasions on which New Yorkers considered Quaker colony leaders, they rendered Pennsylvania's political culture comprehensible, not by attempting to untangle its subtleties, but by transforming its political personalities into caricatures and describing its features in ways that made sense within the context of their own system of politics.

The notion that New York's political culture was, and should be, similar to England's was reinforced by two important features of the province's political organization. The first of these was the fact that, unlike other major British North American colonies, New York had a number of anomalous units of provincial representation along with its standard counties. The manors of Rensselaerswyck, Livingston, and Cortlandt, and Westchester Borough had much in common with those English pocket boroughs in which one or two patrons could frequently decide who would represent the community. The second was that, like England, New York had viva voce voting. Voters in a given constituency were required to declare the candidates for whom they wished to vote openly in front of the assembled freeholders.

The effect of large landholders' gentry pretensions, along with the existence of provincial pocket boroughs and of viva voce voting, was to encourage leading New Yorkers to think of their provincial politics in terms of the patron/client relationships that were central to the English sociopolitical order. According to the old-world canons of hierarchy, status was in
part determined by the number of dependents an individual or family might have.\textsuperscript{168} New York landowners and merchants who cared about their public personas were thus acutely aware of their influence among their tenants and the tradesmen, retailers, entrepreneurs, and laborers with whom they dealt. A good part of the trick for New York’s upper classes was for them to act like patrons and thereby assert the influence they felt they should have by right. Such behavior was most regularly in evidence among the members of New York’s manor families, because tenant status so clearly symbolized the kind of dependency upper-class provincials liked to envision for less prominent mortals. But patronal attitudes existed elsewhere in New York in various situations in which individuals accumulated large concentrations of socio-economic power. Some of the best examples that we have of these sentiments come from the Mohawk Valley, where Sir William Johnson set the standard for patron/client relations.\textsuperscript{169} Johnson fostered strong ties between himself, his tenants, laborers, and business associates, and at election time, he voiced his anticipation that they would “all as one Body . . . Stand by me.”\textsuperscript{170} The same sort of assumptions informed the lesser landlords within Johnson’s sphere of influence. Just before one important election, an old acquaintance, William Corry, assured Johnson that Corry had “directed my people to vote on your side.”\textsuperscript{171} In the minds of New York’s upper classes, political affairs should be settled by those who could speak of “my folcks.”\textsuperscript{172} And in turn, those “folcks” should cooperate.

Another good illustration of how patron/client relationships were intertwined with politics occurred in Dutchess County during the 1730s and 1740s. There, the landed magnate Henry Beckman tended his patronal influence with both private attention to detail and considerable extravagance. Beckman took a personal hand in the selection of such local officials as justices of the peace, militia officers, coroners, and supervisors;\textsuperscript{173} he impressed on his county lieutenant, Henry Livingston, the need always to heed Beckman’s personal philosophy, never “sli"8" 0 * or be “forgitfull” of “your frends”;\textsuperscript{174} he cultivated the county sheriffs assiduously, for he understood that their goodwill was essential for the “artful . . . Joabbing” necessary to fill juries with friendly clients whose brand of justice would reflect Beckman’s county dominance.\textsuperscript{175} The other side of Beckman’s behavior was his ability and willingness to play an expansive, openhanded role as regional patron. At election time, he entertained the county with barrels of cider and rum, “100 Loves” of bread and “Beef, Porck & Backin . . . Buylt a Day or 2 before ye Election.”\textsuperscript{176} The motivation for such entertainment was less one of bribery (although food and drink could serve that purpose in the country as well as in the city) than it was Beckman’s desire to show hospitality commensurate with his assumed patronal stature. Like English magnates of an earlier era, Beckman may have thought of himself as not so much “persuading electors . . . [as] acknowledging supporters.”\textsuperscript{177} Beckman the be-
nevolent country gentleman complemented Beekman the local fixer. Each role facilitated the other. Together they made Henry Beekman one of New York's high-profile politicians, an exemplar of gentry leadership.

Evidence of New Yorkers' efforts to replicate some of both the substance and the style of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English patron/client politics took various forms. In the manors, in the relatively insulated county of Suffolk, and periodically, in quiet times in other constituencies, New York elections might show signs of what they had been in early seventeenth-century England: a ritual in the social ordering of the community as much as a political event.\(^{178}\) Vestiges of the English past might also be seen even in such vigorously competitive locales as New York City and County, where, on the rare occasions in which unanimity prevailed, confirmation of those agreeing to stand for the assembly was by "shout," "three Huzzas" from the assembled crowd signifying the electors' consent.\(^{179}\) More prominent, however, were provincial practices that reflected more current English electoral politics. Extravagant donations to charitable causes, promises to forgo payment as assemblymen, purposeful lobbying for votes, and intense cultivation of select constituents, were all prominent characteristics of New York electioneering with English counterparts.\(^{180}\)

One of the most important reasons why leading New Yorkers put as much emphasis on their patronal influence in political affairs was that viva voce voting held that influence up to public scrutiny. The ability to mobilize a retinue of supporters who would speak out for their patron at the poll was a measure of the man. Robert Livingston, Jr., for example, was a proud man when it turned out that some eighty voters agreed to follow him to Albany in 1759. But when Livingston's candidates refused to force a poll, robbing him of the chance to head such a parade, his pride turned to bile. His allies' failure to push for a vote not only cost him a triumphal role in Albany politics but could also be interpreted as reflecting his allies' doubts whether he could deliver the Kinderhook vote.\(^{181}\) That, Livingston felt, was a public affront. Ordinary freeholders, as putative clients, did not have as much at stake as recognizable patrons. But there is some indication that considerations of honor were important to them too. As one participant in the 1768 pre-election campaigning in New York City put it:

> Since sundry moneyed Gentlemen of this City, have been generous enough to open the Strings of their Purses, to furnish Belly-Timber during the present Election: Let us Eat heartily, tho' temperately; Drink liberally, tho' cautiously; Sing jovially, tho' modestly; applaud disinterestedly, tho' generously: And under the protection of Bacchus, let those Gentlemen know, that we love their Bread and Wine, but despise the Imputation of being influenced by either.\(^{182}\)

Come the day of choice, there were those who were quite ready to "Stand by" their man and openly profess their political allegiance.\(^{183}\) As one Richmond County freeholder put it, he welcomed the opportunity "to shew his
Integrity." Many New Yorkers believed that demonstration of civic integrity could best be accomplished through the celebration of both clientism and independence that viva voce voting occasioned.  

Because of the open nature of voting, and the desire of patrons to flaunt their influence, sanctify the electoral process, and make it easy for freeholders to join their cadres, New Yorkers put a great deal of emphasis on ceremony and public display. The best-described example we have of this is the Westchester by-election of 1733. That episode gives us some idea of the nature of election-day drama. In this contest, Lewis Morris, Sr., ran as a provincial Whig seeking to reenter the assembly after losing his seat five years earlier. Because Morris was running in his own backyard and had already staked out appealing positions on the questions of the day, the outcome was a foregone conclusion. The opposing Philipse faction put up a relatively weak candidate, an Anglican schoolteacher, William Forster. The Morris entourage entered the Eastchester green “at Sun rising” on the day of the election: “first rode two Trumpeters and 3 Violines: next 4 of the principal Freeholders, one of which carried a Banner; on one Side of which was affixed in gold Capitals, KING GEORGE, and on the Other, in like golden Capitals LIBERTY & LAW; next followed the Candidate LEWIS MORRIS Esq: late Chief Justice of this Province; then two colors.” Later Forster arrived: “next him came two Ensigns, born by two of the Freeholders, then followed the Honorable JAMES DELANCEY, Esq; Chief Justice of the Province of New York, and the Honorable Frederick Philipse, Esq: second Judge of the same Province and Baron of the EXCHEQUER ... and . . . they entered the Green on the East side, and riding twice round it, their Word was No Land-Tax.”  

The pageantry at this election was by no means singular. Other contests had their parades, their slogans, their songs, their banners, and their drums. Their purpose was twofold: to accentuate the impression of patronal power, and to encourage freeholders to join in the excitement of events and, in doing so, validate the colony’s sociopolitical order.  

In retrospect, what stands out most markedly about New York political leaders was their exaggerated efforts to be “gentry” and to try to replicate in their various locales the kind of patron/client relationships they associated with English society. Much of their self-consciousness stemmed from the fact that they were never entirely what they thought they should be, and they rarely gained the kind of unchallenged local hegemony they felt they should have. By the standards of the Chesapeake Bay gentry, many New Yorkers were “aggrandized upstarts,” overly assertive of their assumed status because they had neither the “opportunity” nor the “capacity to observe the different ranks of men in polite nations, or to know what it . . . [was] that really constitute[d] . . . that difference of degrees.” Looked upon with some condescension by their southern counterparts, New York’s upper
classes were made more sensitive by their patronal shortcomings. Some elections, for example, laid bare their pretensions by proving that the outright purchase of votes was far more effective than any of the subtle ties of patron/client relations. In 1761, Robert Livingston, Jr., reported that many of the Hudson River German freeholders, who had a long association with the Livingston family, would follow his lead in the Albany election only if they received forty shillings a head. Although such bribery was a feature of the eighteenth-century English electoral scene, and thus was and is capable of being explained as simply more evidence of anglicization, in fact, there was a very important difference between the two societies. In England, what were soon to be called “rotten boroughs,” with their tiny electorates, were the centers of bribery. In New York, however, a few comparably small manor and county seats are the best examples we have of peaceful, patron-dominated constituencies. It was the large counties that were centers of the commercial politics of vote buying. And these were the constituencies that were the backbone of New York’s political system. Convinced that an anglicized colonial order was essential, but faced with uncertainties of status and attenuated patronal influence, New York’s gentry reacted with intense and repeated affirmations of their belief in a hierarchical society, and used whatever means they could to try to demonstrate their leading place in it.

In comparison with New Yorkers, Pennsylvanians’ sense of sociopolitical identity depended far less on English standards. They had their own charter, their own constitution, their own political tradition and their own sense of place and purpose derived from the province’s proprietary/Quaker past. Which is not to say that Pennsylvania politics were completely idiosyncratic. Obviously they were not. Electoral competitions in the Quaker colony shared many features with their New York counterparts. Old seventeenth-century English practices, such as deciding the winners of elections “by view” of the candidates’ supporters, occasionally emerged in vestigial form in Pennsylvania in the choosing of election inspectors. Other British concerns, such as maintaining personal honor in public affairs, also characterized politics in Pennsylvania and New York. But there were also a large number of distinctive features in Pennsylvania politics that gave the province a rather different profile from that of New York.

To begin with, there was nothing in Pennsylvania comparable to New York’s manor families and large patentees. Pennsylvania’s proprietors, of course, held immense tracts of land, but most of their acreage was for sale. There were many Pennsylvanians who bought and sold either unsettled or improved land, and some real estate barons, merchants, and professionals did develop country estates. But gentility status did not have the baronial connotation it had in New York. Granted, Pennsylvania had its “great men,” but unlike in New York, where the provincial “grandees” frequently were the
leading provincial politicians, the term “great man” was usually employed in
the Quaker colony to dismiss or diminish proprietary supporters who were
already at the periphery of popular politics. Patron/client relationships
were always a part of colonial society, but there were no Pennsylvania pa-
trons with the highly visible reach that some of the New York magnates
appeared to possess. Although numerous, tenants in Pennsylvania were
perceived as being autonomous, clearly expected to be treated as such, and
in many cases were very independent. No Pennsylvania landlord that we
know of instructed his people how to vote or marched them to the polls;
only in the peripheral counties was there even a hint of the kind of one-
family influence that distinguished the manors and other small, or isolated,
constituencies in New York. There is no indication, either, that patrons in
Pennsylvania ever ventured beyond the admittedly flexible standards of
“treating” to consider purchasing votes. Nor did Pennsylvanians organ-
ize the kind of processions, rallies, and celebrations that occurred in New
York. An individual or two might harangue a crowd, but there was little in
the way of public preening and parading. The one exception to this was a
telling one. In 1726, former Governor Sir William Keith celebrated his
election to Pennsylvania’s House of Representatives amid “Mobs, Bonfires,
Gunns [and] Huzzas—a Keith for Ever,” organized “Itinerations and pro-
cessions,” so his disgruntled opponents claimed, of “Butchers, porters &
Tagrags,” and a fortnight later headed a cavalcade, some eighty strong, into
Philadelphia preparatory to his bid to become speaker of the assembly. But Keith was a British outsider, insensitive to Quaker norms and unpersua-
sive in his innovations. His English-modeled electioneering practices de-
parted with him.

Another important and obvious reason why the character of Pennsylva-
nia politics differed markedly from New York’s was that Pennsylvanians
voted by ballot rather than viva voce. Quakers believed that voting was a
public matter, but that the choice should be private. And the adoption of the
ballot was a repudiation of precisely the kinds of political patronalism that
distinguished Great Britain, and that some principals tried to foster in New
York. In theory, the ballot was an endorsement of a voter’s right to
exercise freedom of choice without pressure or threat of reprisal. In
practice, however, secrecy could not easily be achieved. Ballots were fre-
cently written out in advance of the election to be distributed by faction or
party insiders, and presumably they were identifiable. Still, various voters
indicated that they did exercise the freedom to make a “private decision” by
writing out their own tickets, and on occasion large numbers of freeholders
crossed out one or two names and added substitutes. Others “pre-
tend[ed] they vote[d]” for one candidate while actually casting a ballot for
another, a strategy some German voters allegedly refined into something better:

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But the Dutch was so wise, they put on Disguise,
To deceive those poor Tools in their Folly,
Themselves they did provide, with Tickets on both Side,
Tho' . . . it drove those poor Slaves melancholy.
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Given the evidence, it is quite possible that colonial Pennsylvania had the closest thing to a secret ballot that any colony or state enjoyed prior to the adoption of the Australian ballot in the United States in the late nineteenth century. The direct results of this were two. First, there was little public parading of the patron/client hierarchy, and second, voter intimidation took very direct and immediate forms. One Philadelphia freeholder reported such an experience: "I stood amazed at the Tann'd Impudence of a Fellow two Years ago, who stood upon the Stairs [leading to the ballot box] with Heaps of prepared Tickets: . . . he took . . . [mine], look'd on't, and then told me it was not right, would have kept it; and offer'd me another, as it seems he had managed several." But the fact that the voter "with some Trouble . . . got" his ticket back "again" and used it as his ballot also shows how ineffective even such brazen interference could be. The only way one party could be sure of carrying an election was, literally, to drive anyone who was not a known supporter away from the ballot box. That, and the fact that the Quaker Party's pacifism made its members easy targets for thugs, explains why, on occasion, election-day riots took place in Pennsylvania rather than in more raucous New York.

There were other important differences in the temper of political affairs in New York and Pennsylvania that had little to do with any specific institutional variation in the colonies. Whereas New York's upper classes constantly spread the gospel of social hierarchy, Pennsylvania's social leaders articulated a considerably more complicated set of community values. No matter how worldly leading Friends became, and no matter how pervasive the values of England's "better sort" became in other mainland provinces, Pennsylvania society was shot through with Quaker egalitarianism. The sense of partnership that William Penn had cultivated with his first purchasers, and the feelings of religious fraternity that drew Friends together were unique. Try to imagine Robert Livingston or some other early New York proprietor speaking to his friends, but social inferiors, as William Penn addressed Robert Turner—as a man "whose shoes lachets I am not worthy to unloose"? And the communal purpose that the first settlers had emphasized in order to strengthen their control of the province lived on in Pennsylvania's public ethos. That was most obvious in Pennsylvanians' re-
jection of pretense and their distaste for various manifestations of authority. Andrew Hamilton expressed this very well. On the one hand, Hamilton was a gentleman who believed in prerogatives for wealth and status when capacity earned them; on the other, he despised posturing and empty ritual in public affairs. Despite being Pennsylvania's leading public figure in the 1730s, "it was not . . . [Hamilton's] natural disposition to be on the side of those who . . . [were] accounted Great or in Power." Although his own temperament was one that could not "easily brook" slights, Hamilton "hardly . . . [uttered] a sentence without Dog, Rogue be Damn'd and the Like" and "he took pains to Unmask the Hypocrite, and boldly censured the Knave, without regard to Station, or Profession."

Hamilton's disregard for authority and his questioning of the icons of political tradition were far from unique to him. Despite the pains proprietary leaders took to recruit respected citizens as magistrates, Quakers harbored a deep distrust of dependent judicial officers, an "inveteracy . . . against the Magistracy" that never abated. Friends constituted the vast majority of those well enough educated and of sufficiently strong local reputation to merit appointment as justices of the peace, but as the eighteenth century wore on, fewer and fewer were willing to compromise their popular reputation and their scruples for a questionable judicial appointment. In other situations, expressions of irreverence might appear in a much more haphazard manner. The Bucks County Quaker William Biles dripped contempt for authority when he dismissed the newly appointed Governor Evans as "but a boy . . . not fit to be . . . Governor. We'll kick him out."

Benjamin Franklin both reflected and emphasized leading Pennsylvanians' willingness to poke fun publicly at English standards that their New Yorker counterparts would never have questioned. "A pecuniary gratification," Franklin puckishly wrote, "is offered to any of the learned or unlearned, who shall **mathematically** prove, that a Man's having a Property in a tract of land, more or less, is thereby entitled to any Advantage in point of understanding over another fellow who has no other estate, than the **air . . . to breathe in**, the **earth . . . to walk upon**, and all the **rivers of the world . . . to drink of**." Irreverence for old-world cultural traditions, whether seriously or humorously expressed, was a vital part of the Pennsylvania perspective.

The highly original twist that Quaker thinking gave to Pennsylvania society is clearly observable in the character of the provincial legal culture. Whereas the contemporary system of English law legitimated upper-class rule by the public dramaturgy developed around the concepts of majesty, justice, and mercy, the Pennsylvania legal system institutionalized a very different set of values. Rather than emphasizing the majesty of the law with court-day "spectacles" of judicial haughtiness, so as to "by word and
gesture . . . fuse terror and argument into . . . [an] amalgam of legitimate 
power,” the early Pennsylvania courts brought their proceedings down to a 
common level of understanding and experience with simple pleadings, few 
lawyers, unschooled judges, and unpretentious courthouses.\textsuperscript{219} Rather than 
trying to enhance “Justice” as “a power with its own claims” on the basis of 
“punctilious attention to forms” and an “absurd formalism,” Quakers 
worked to “demystify the law” by eliminating legal fictions, simplifying 
procedures, and making the courts easily accessible.\textsuperscript{220} Rather than trying 
to enhance the “psychic force” of the law by juxtaposing the terrors of 
“exemplary hangings” under a harsh and extensive criminal code with paterno-
listic pardonings as “acts of grace,” the Pennsylvania court system cut 
down on capital punishment and “presented incentives for the accused to 
show repentance, confession, and reformation.”\textsuperscript{221} In short, “the legal ide-
ology of the Delaware Valley prized substance over form, simplicity over 
complexity, and reform over retribution.”\textsuperscript{222} Even though the influence of 
the established English legal ideology began to seep into the Pennsylvania 
legal system by the second decade of the eighteenth century, the Quaker-
built foundation of the provincial legal culture remained solid.\textsuperscript{223} Compre-
hension, rationality, and simplicity were more the guiding norms in Penn-
sylvania courts than in those of any of Britain’s other North American 
colonies.

Other revelations of the differences between the political cultures of New 
York and Pennsylvania took place on the infrequent occasions in which they 
came into contact. One of these incidents occurred in the early 1750s when 
William Smith, Jr., who was trying to build a political coalition against 
James DeLancey, approached Queens County Quakers for their support. 
Smith did get a sympathetic hearing, but in the process he revealed how 
little he understood the moral imperative that underlay the “Plain Stile” of 
Quaker language and Friends’ unwillingness to compromise honesty for the 
sake of the silky compliments that upper-class New Yorkers viewed as but-
tressing social order.\textsuperscript{224} About the same time, Thomas Penn appointed a 
member of one of the oldest “gentry” families in New York and east New 
Jersey, Robert Hunter Morris, as governor of the proprietary colony. Penn-
sylvania haters Morris’s haughtiness, his contemptuous dismissal of Quak-
er ways, his duplicity, and his authoritarian attitudes. Anyone with Hudson 
River or east “Jersey Airs” was ill suited to deal with the much more matter-
of-fact and self-confident provincial culture that had developed on the west 
side of the Delaware.\textsuperscript{225}

The unique character of Pennsylvania’s sociopolitical order was some-
thing observers occasionally sensed, and it could make them feel quite 
uncomfortable. Most tended to respond by dismissing Pennsylvania as be-
ing too “republican.”\textsuperscript{226} That was a reassuring stock answer, for it placed the
Quaker colony on a spectrum of political behavior that was widely known; and certainly some important features of Pennsylvania's political behavior were best understood in those terms. But telling, too, were the commentators who strove to dismiss Friends in gender-related terms, as individuals ill fitted for public leadership because their religious society encouraged much of what current male orthodoxy defined as feminine weakness. In taking this tack, such critics pointed out an important perspective on the ways in which Pennsylvania differed from New York.

In both provinces, of course, women occupied a central place in the domestic and religious life of their respective families. Beyond that, it is possible to argue that an apparent favoring of the economic interests of children and creditors over those of widows in Quaker Pennsylvania, versus a Dutch cultural elevation of women's property rights and a more active female presence in business affairs in early New York, granted a greater sense of individual empowerment to New York women than to their Quaker counterparts. But if this was so, any large-scale sociopolitical consequence of this tendency is difficult to perceive. On the other hand, it is certain that Quaker women in Pennsylvania occupied an extremely elevated social position, which was clearly discernable and had an observable impact on public affairs. Historically, Friends' belief in the universal accessibility of the Inner Light, along with the prominent exemplary leadership of Margaret Fell, prompted early English Quakers to accept both women's meetings and female ministers or "public Friends." As women ministers built reputations traveling through the various Anglo-American societies, they gained the kind of experience, worldly wisdom, and aura of authority that could not easily be dismissed. And within local communities Quaker women carved out important areas of supervision and discipline among themselves. In doing so they became "vital partners in the activities of their inner faith," which were perceived as the "primary business of the Society as a whole." Because the moral imperatives of Quakerism extended to all aspects of community life, and because Friends placed so much emphasis on maintaining the unity of their collective socioreligious experience, barriers between the political and the religious, between the public and the familial, were consistently breached even as they were created. Governance in all its dimensions was based on interlocking gender relations, for "women had no power independent of the men," but neither did "men claim . . . authority separate from women." As "spiritual mothers" within this partnership, then, women could have considerable influence on the politics of the day.

The conjunctive authority of Quaker women and men was something that many colonials found deeply offensive and threatening. While most critics focused their attention on Quaker pacifism as entirely inappropriate
for public affairs, it is clear that the issue was also a powerfully symbolic one at the visceral level, going far beyond the principle involved. Pacifism was a feminine characteristic, and its influence in public policy both reflected the influence of Quaker women in social affairs and represented the tendency of Friends consciously to extend values born of religious and family experience into the larger public arena. Although pacifism was the most obvious example of the organic connection between domestic life and larger community values among Quakers, there were others. Friends’ emphasis on love-centered marriages, on ensuring the independence of their children, and on recognizing that the pursuit of Truth in some cases required youth to rebel against adults—all conspired to offend by propagating an air of social egalitarianism in public, as well as in private life, that contradicted a number of dominant Anglo-American social assumptions. Because of the ubiquity and tenaciousness of paternalistic values even in the Quaker colony, the influence of Quaker women was never all that it might have been. But it was enough to raise the ire of many of the more orthodox, and to play a part in distinguishing Pennsylvania from its neighbors.

The point is that Pennsylvania’s Quaker women played a part in public affairs that had no counterpart in New York society. Nor was it anything like the role that women played in English elections, where property ownership, family patronalism, social-inversion rituals and the vote-getting efficacy of sexual enticement occasionally involved women in electioneering. In Pennsylvania, Quaker women were power brokers, not a titillating side-show, and they were power brokers, not because of a familial property right in some rotten borough, but because they were part of a mixed male/female network of respected public leaders. Various women participated in the traffic of political confidences along with their male acquaintances: women such as Jane Hoskins of Chester County were involved in negotiating county tickets prior to elections; and on one occasion that we know of, the well-known Susanna Wright of Lancaster County took a “stand . . . in an Upper Room in a public House and . . . [had] a Ladder erected to the window and there distribute[d] Lies and Tickets all day of the election.” A further example of how women entered into public affairs occurred in 1755 when Catherine Peyton, an English public Friend, insisted on a ministerial meeting with Quaker assemblymen, and was among those ministers with whom the legislators met for advice as Pennsylvania stood on the brink of war.

The assembly, of course, was the most respected institution in both Pennsylvania and New York. And to whom provincial representatives, as a group, would listen, is an important indicator of provincial values. In the case of Pennsylvania, not only did Quaker legislators give a hearing to Peyton and her near allies, but also in 1748, the assembly (including non-
Quakers) opened its doors to the Quaker minister John Churchman to listen to his concerns about public policy.\textsuperscript{243} Compare that to New York, where legislators lampooned pacifism, strutted a macho image with their titles as militia colonels and captains, and would invite only city lawyers to advise them in the assembly chamber.\textsuperscript{244} Male and Anglophile, representing social hierarchy and pleading prescription, the New York City bar personified the most prominently paraded public values of provincial New York. New York leaders might envy Pennsylvania’s economic success and relative autonomy, but they clearly found nothing seductive about the aura of Quakerization that crowned their Delaware River neighbor.

The contrast between New York and Pennsylvania is most marked in the ill-understood twilight zone between social behavior and politics. Taken by itself, of course, the distinction between the New York emphasis on hierarchy and Pennsylvanian solicitude for equality can be misleading, for the two societies were complex. But only when we appreciate the respective sociopolitical temperaments of the colonies is it possible to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each regime in the changing politics of the late decades of the colonial period.