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# VERMONT

The  
Proceedings of the  
Vermont Historical Society

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# HISTORY



FALL 1996

VOL. 64, No. 4

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## Green Mountain Insurgency: Transformation of New York's Forty-Year Land War

*The Green Mountain Boys were highly motivated social activists of significant political experience and vision. Their uncommon political acumen and audacity derived from their background as veterans of conflict in every sense of the word.*

By DONALD A. SMITH

**A**lthough they command a pivotal position in Vermont's Revolutionary history, the backgrounds of the rank and file of the famous Green Mountain Boys of the pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary era are virtually unknown. Because most available biographical information about the Boys concerns the Allens and the group's top leaders, historical portraits of the Boys assume that members' experiences replicated those of their leaders. Similarly, concentration on the leadership detracts from inquiry into the backgrounds of the rank and file, obscuring their distinctive character and their crucial role in Vermont's double revolution—a rebellion within a rebellion.<sup>1</sup>

New evidence indicates that the Boys were not Ethan Allen clones—youthful, profane, hard-drinking, irreligious adventurers; rampant land speculators; and poverty-stricken failures fleeing their creditors.<sup>2</sup> Rather, their origins, personalities, and political character differed considerably from those of Ethan Allen. Although he capitalized upon their traits, Allen neither epitomized nor originated the spirit and character of the Green Mountain Boys.

Long before their arrival in Vermont, the Boys' personalities developed in response to social forces causing deep dislocation throughout late colonial society. To cope with rapid social change, they adopted a

new type of action-oriented Yankee mentality, becoming highly motivated economic, political, and religious activists. Independent seekers on the move, they married earlier, abjured receipt of the marriage portion, and severed familial and communal ties, periodically transporting their highly mobile, self-sustaining, trigenerational families in search of one frontier after another.

More than 50 percent of the Green Mountain Boys formed their defining traits in the crucibles of religious and political controversy in eastern Connecticut and southern Massachusetts. Unlike the Allens and their associates—who migrated from western Connecticut's conservative, Anglican religious enclaves—the Boys derived their radical politics from religious dissent, not Ethan's deistic, liberal Enlightenment thought.<sup>3</sup> Far from being irreligious, they belonged to the Great Awakening's radical religious persuasions: the Separates, Separate Baptists, and New Lights.<sup>4</sup> During their trek to Vermont, they traversed Massachusetts, Connecticut, and eastern New York, leaving in their wake a trail of religious, political, and economic discord.

The Boys' leaders were mature men of substance and moderate means, consistently elected to positions of trust. As middle-class, yeomen farmers and small-scale town proprietors, they duplicated little of the speculative excesses of the Allens and their closest associates. Only the upper 17 percent of their membership engaged in extensive land speculation.

The Green Mountain Boys' aggressive political character led to the turbulence of early Vermont history. Their critical role involved the transference to Vermont of a protracted land war against feudal New York and its transformation into a successful republican revolution against both New York and Great Britain. Economic in origin, the land war against New York's manor lords was fueled by the politics of dissent. Eventually enveloping all of the Hudson River manors from northern Westchester County to the Vermont border, the war arose from grievances over freehold versus leasehold land tenure, imposition of annual quit rents upon expensive initial land purchase costs, and widespread evictions of those defaulting upon their obligations. Spanning the period from 1751 to 1766, the war was initiated by the very same type of Yankee political activists who founded the Green Mountain Boy organization. Hundreds of Yankee veterans of religious-political conflict settled that region during the second quarter of the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

During the most intense period of land rioting (1761–1766), an exodus of refugees carried the contagion of rebellion to the region later established as Vermont, known then as the New Hampshire Grants. By 1764 New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth's extralegal chartering of 132 townships in that region perpetuated the conflict. Well over 100

of Wentworth's inexpensive, freehold grants went to New York rioters as original patentees.<sup>6</sup> New York, however, claimed total dominion over the entire Grants region, causing all the grievances that precipitated the land war to resurface in Vermont.

Accordingly, the land war, as transferred to Vermont, brought with it the innovative tactics and many riotous participants that became the foundation of the Green Mountain Boy organization. Concurrent with the migratory exodus, resistance to New York rule rapidly emerged in southwestern Vermont, developing parallel to and replicating the New York movement. From 1770 to 1775 the organization matured, drawing upon the New York rioters' experiences. Strategies of riotous resistance were perfected and forged into a powerful form of extralegal government.<sup>7</sup>

Ethan Allen, then, did not singlehandedly create a unique, insurgent organization shortly after his arrival in the western Grants late in 1769. At that point the land war in Vermont, already eight years in the making, had all the ingredients necessary for its transformation. For example, prior to Ethan's arrival, over 100 New York rioters had already migrated to western Vermont. Their origins and radical religious affiliations indicate that these men were more conversant with the dissenting politics of agitation and disruption than any of the Allen brothers.

By early 1775 this seasoned organization was poised and waiting for the opportunity to renounce New York rule. Bloodshed at Lexington and Concord provided the opening, and the Boys responded by seizing Fort Ticonderoga from the British in May 1775. By July 1775 they had legitimized their insurgent status by securing national recognition as a Continental Army regiment.

Rather than interrupting the land war, the Revolution provided ideological justification for finalizing rebellion against New York. Less than two years after creating their regiment, the Boys unified eastern and western Vermont and declared independence from New York. But New York denied the inevitable, fomented counterrebellion in southeastern Vermont, blocked Vermont's entry into the federal Union until 1791, and perpetuated the land war for another fourteen years.

#### THE ORIGINS OF GREEN MOUNTAIN ACTIVISM

This composite portrait, compiled from many strands of evidence, presents a very different view of the Boys' unique character, mentality, and political motivation. The Boys' and their New York predecessors' rebellious behavior gives rise to many questions about men driven to treasonous riot, sedition, rebellion, and revolutionary activity: Who were these people, and where did they come from? What manner of men confronted the British at the Battle of Bennington and created and main-

tained an independent, unrecognized state against all odds, defying New York, New England, and the entire Continental Congress?

The answers may be obtained only by re-creating the complete social picture of the entire 436-man Green Mountain Boy population.<sup>8</sup> Such reconstructive, individual career-line biographies include every available piece of information about their lives: migration origins and geographical mobility; church membership and religious affiliation; individual and familial demographic and kinship data; military service; all forms of political affiliation and officeholding; and all information relative to occupation, socioeconomic status, and measures of accumulated wealth.<sup>9</sup>

However, comparative analysis requires some means of showing how the Green Mountain Boys related to other contemporary Vermont leaders and populations. Consequently, this study includes a reconstruction of the lives of two other prominent political leadership groups—the pro-Yorkers and pro-Vermonters of eastern Vermont.<sup>10</sup> The pro-Yorkers were conservative, Yankee New England settlers, primarily from eastern Vermont, steadfast adherents of New York government and jurisdiction, and aggressive rioters against Vermont authority from 1777 to 1784. Conversely, eastern pro-Vermont settlers, despite their pre-1777 participation in the New York government of eastern Cumberland and Gloucester Counties, inherently disliked New York jurisdiction. They naturally gravitated toward the Green Mountain Boy cause because of similar activist religious and political principles.<sup>11</sup>

Migration origins are the foremost indicators of Green Mountain Boy activism because they reflect the geographical sources of religious and political radicalism, transcending provincial boundaries. The Green Mountain Boys' and western Vermonters' paths of migration to Vermont decisively influenced the origins of rebellion in that region. Two underlying themes characterize their migration origins.<sup>12</sup> First, the only consistent pattern in New England's westward expansion and the settlement of Vermont was the inexorable drive toward, into, and upward through eastern New York's borderlands, interconnecting eastern New York and western Vermont settlers.

Second, the greatest irony of early Vermont history is that not a few but hundreds of western Vermonters came from New York—a province of which they allegedly held a deep cultural abhorrence. Eastern manorial New York became a way station for hundreds of Yankees on their way to western Vermont. They moved to New York in search of religious freedom,<sup>13</sup> escaping persecution by the Massachusetts and Connecticut church-state establishments during the Great Awakening. Nevertheless, religious toleration in New York did not change the Yankees' perception of that government's onerous socioeconomic institutions, which they

promptly rejected by initiating a land war against the manor lords. Vermonters' hatred of New York thus arose from firsthand experience with its social institutions, not from any ingrained cultural differences.<sup>14</sup>

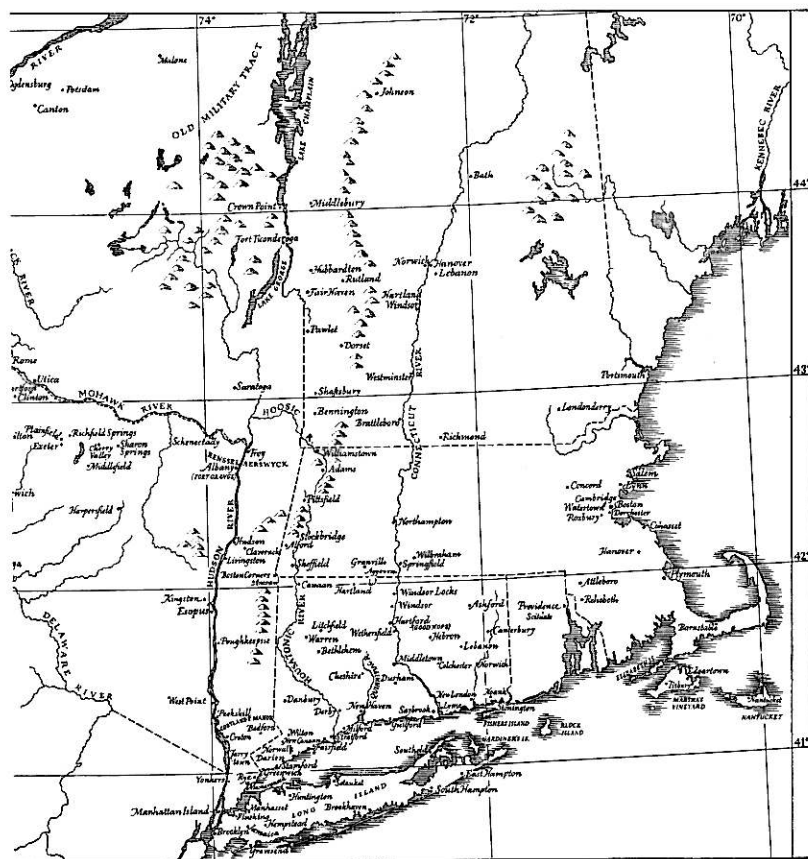
From the records of over 1,000 migrants to eastern New York and far western Massachusetts, I distilled five overall migratory paths of New York rioters and future Green Mountain Boys and western Vermonters. These Mayflower descendants and Plymouth Colony families traversed great distances over wide generational spans to distant places and nebulous jurisdictional locations in borderland New York and Massachusetts, renamed so many times over the past 200 years that their historical obscurity must be obviated.

All five migratory paths ended in two key areas in which the New York land war was concentrated, what I call the New York riot impact zones or cockpits of conflict. Genealogists have called the first region, the land riots' point of origin, the "Province Lands," after the province of Massachusetts, which claimed them and promoted their usurpation from New York.<sup>15</sup> These lands extended far west of Sheffield, Massachusetts, encroaching deep into Livingston and Rensselaerwyck manors in northeastern New York. The second riot impact zone involved all of eastern New York's Hudson River manors from Cortlandt northward, especially Beekman's and Philipse's Highland Patents.

Two migratory paths ended in the Province Lands. The first, from south coastal Massachusetts and Rhode Island, spread into southeastern Connecticut through the Westerly-Stonington crossover route, upward into northeastern Connecticut, and thence into western Connecticut and northward into far western Massachusetts. The second path moved from west Middlesex County, Massachusetts, into southwestern Worcester County on the Connecticut border, and from there into western Worcester and far western Berkshire Counties within the Province Land townships.

Similarly, three migratory routes led to New York's eastern borderland manors. The first, a two-pronged route—the same as the first path into the Province Lands, coming straight across Connecticut—had two different points of access into Dutchess County's Beekman's and Philipse's Patents. While many migrants to those patents came into mid-Dutchess County through Sharon and Canaan, Connecticut, many others arrived from the Province Lands, spreading downriver throughout Dutchess County. Second, some migrants moved directly from southeastern Connecticut, bordering Rhode Island, and southern Worcester County, Massachusetts. The third path led from the radical Puritan and Quaker enclaves of seventeenth-century New England religious refugee settlers of Long Island and southern Westchester County, New York, from the days of Massachusetts Bay's persecution of the Quakers and Anabaptists in the 1660s





*Detail of map, "The Lands of Yankees & Yorkers and places that happen to be mentioned in the book," by Elmer Loemker. From Dixon Ryan Fox, Yankees and Yorkers. (N.Y.: New York University Press, 1940). Used with permission.*

and the Salem witchcraft trials. These families migrated straight up the Hudson River to Cortlandt Manor and Beekman's and Philips's Patents.<sup>16</sup> Table 1 depicts migration figures and origins for western Vermonters.

Divergent social experiences characterized different migration origins and lay at the heart of political diversity defining conflicting worldviews. In contrast to the Green Mountain Boys, eastern Vermont's pro-Yorker traditionalists held a hierarchical worldview encompassing social stratification, deference to natural social leaders, consensual communal homogeneity, and a deeply ingrained obsession with social harmony and order.<sup>17</sup>

TABLE 1  
Overall Migration Figures into Western Vermont, 1760-1775

Settlement Years	From Province Lands	From N.Y. Riot Zones	From Conn.	From Mass.	From Other Colonies	Overall Totals
1760	13	5	0	1	0	19
1761	2	4	12	33	0	51
1762	8	16	10	17	0	51
1763	3	20	25	6	0	54
1764	10	44	43	11	0	108
1765	10	71	31	4	0	116
1766	8	47	33	16	3	107
1767	11	49	18	15	2	95
1768	10	44	34	16	12	116
1769	7	24	12	2	3	48
1770	12	53	31	10	4	110
1771	14	44	35	7	3	103
1772	14	30	43	5	7	99
1773	30	80	68	11	7	196
1774	26	81	57	22	12	198
1775	30	89	58	14	13	204
Totals	208	701	510	190	66	1675

SUMMARY: Total from Combined Riot Impact Zones = 909  
 Total from Riot Impact Zones ca. Ethan's Arrival, 1769-1770 = 471  
 Total Joining GMB, 1770-1775 = 910  
 Total from Rio. Impact Zones v. Overall Vt. Pop. = 54.27

As well, while the Green Mountain Boys developed a progressive mentality, the pro-Yorkers resisted social change and adhered to traditional, communal, and conservative social organization.<sup>18</sup>

Accordingly, pro-Yorker migration patterns contrasted starkly with those of the Green Mountain Boys and the pro-Vermonters. Except for nine pro-Yorkers from New York City and Long Island, few came from New York and only one from the Province Lands. Few came from Connecticut, and those only from its well-established eastern regions. Rather, they migrated from the oldest Massachusetts counties and regions: the old seventeenth-century frontier of northern Bristol and Norfolk Counties; east Middlesex County on the old Suffolk County border; and the old seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century northwest frontier in Franklin, Hampden, and old Hampshire Counties.

The pro-Yorkers' migration route to Vermont progressed first into north Worcester County, Massachusetts, then southwestern New Hampshire, and from there into southeastern Vermont. Moreover, both the towns

of their origin and those of north Worcester County were the most conservative centers of New England's Old Light religious orthodoxy.<sup>19</sup> Comparative birth and migration origins appear in Table 2.

Pro-Vermonters held a transitional position between the two other groups. Migrants from Massachusetts (38 percent of the 413-man total) form a patternless geographical mix, with representatives from each of the Massachusetts counties and regions from which settlers in the other two groups migrated. Conversely, the high concentration of pro-Vermonters with eastern Connecticut origins (80 percent of those from Connecticut) links them to radical religious backgrounds.

Of all the factors differentiating the Green Mountain Boys and the pro-Vermonters from the pro-Yorkers, religious affiliation was the most pronounced and closely linked to migration origins. During the religious furor of the Great Awakening and its aftermath, eastern Connecticut became a center of radical religious agitation, stemming back to a high proportion of dissident migrants from Plymouth Colony and bordering southeastern Rhode Island. Moreover, many Green Mountain Boys—although they migrated to Vermont from western Connecticut—originated in eastern Connecticut towns plagued by religious-political factionalism. They not only promoted controversy but in their westward movement fomented further religious and political discord. Like their New Light, Separate, and Separate Baptist brethren in the east before them, they denied consensual communalism, promoted religious and political factionalism, defied elitist leaders, undermined deferential politics,<sup>20</sup> embraced and agitated on behalf of Great Awakening radical religion, and condemned and undermined the unity of church and state. Their religious and political activism became an instrument of social leverage to open closed avenues within colonial society and promote self-determination.

Radical religious affiliation was also a paramount trait among representatives to the political conventions that prepared the way for and finally established Vermont independence in the year and one-half after the capture of Fort Ticonderoga. In the five Dorset and three Westminster convention sessions held between April 1775 and mid-January 1777 (the time of Vermont's actual declaration of independence from New York), as well as the June and July 1777 Windsor constitutional conventions, the representatives presented a stark distinction between Old Light/Arminian conservatives and Evangelical radicals.<sup>21</sup> Of the 221 representatives from both sides of the mountains who sat at one or all sessions, the Evangelicals accounted for 85 percent and the Arminians only 13 percent. However, in the forefront of the Vermont independence movement, as in the Green Mountain Boy organization, were the most radical Evangelicals: the Separates and Separate Baptists, who accounted for

TABLE 2  
Birth and Migration Patterns of Three Leadership Groups

	<i>Pro-Vermont</i>		<i>Pro-New York</i>		<i>Green Mtn. Boys</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>Provincial Birthplaces of Three Leadership Groups</i>						
New York	1	0.24	5	1.17	39	8.94
New Jersey	0	—	1	0.24	7	1.61
Conn.	153	37.05	34	8.23	229	52.52
Mass.	137	33.17	252	61.02	123	28.21
N.H.	13	3.15	7	1.64	3	0.69
R.I.	13	3.15	7	1.64	11	2.52
England	8	1.94	10	2.35	3	0.69
Unknown	88	21.31	110	25.82	21	4.82
Total known	325	78.69	316	74.18	415	95.18
Totals	413	100	426	100	436	100
<i>Migration Origins, Last Residence Prior to Vermont</i>						
New York	4	0.97	9	2.11	147	37.16
New Jersey	0	—	0	—	0	—
Conn.	198	47.94	59	13.58	157	36
Mass.	157	38.01	319	74.88	122	27.98
N.H.	28	6.78	11	2.58	4	0.92
R.I.	10	2.42	10	2.35	6	1.38
British Isles	3	0.73	1	0.23	0	—
Unknown	13	3.15	17	3.99	0	—
Total known	400	96.85	409	96.01	436	100
Totals	413	100	426	100	436	100
<i>Massachusetts Migration Origins, Last Residence Prior to Vermont</i>						
Coastal Mass.	23	14.65	9	2.82	2	1.64
Old Mass.						
SW Frontier	6	3.82	47	14.73	1	0.82
E. Middlesex County	0	—	10	3.18	0	—
Old Mass. Ctrl & SW Frontier	70	44.58	29	9.09	49	40.16
North Worc. County	16	10.19	111	34.08	1	0.82
Old Mass. NW Frontier	38	24.2	122	38.24	12	8.2
Mass. Province Lands	4	2.55	1	0.31	57	46.72
Total from Mass.	157	38.01	319	74.88	122	27.98

over 50 percent of the conventioners. They propelled the movement toward political separation from New York.<sup>22</sup>

Conflicting religious influences were part of the cultural baggage all migrants carried to Vermont. Such differences were perpetuated well into the Revolutionary period, as demonstrated by overall religious affiliation statistics for the era. Evangelical religious affiliation encompassed a total of 78 percent of the pro-Vermonters and 74 percent of the Green Mountain Boys. In contrast, 82 percent of the pro-Yorkers were Old Light/Arminians. Table 3 provides a full breakdown of religious affiliation.<sup>23</sup>

In Revolutionary Vermont there was a definite causal connection between religious and political affiliations, their activist principles permeating all facets of the Green Mountain Boys' and pro-Vermonters' lives. Radical religion became radical politics, producing the most republican (some prefer "democratic") constitution among the American states. That constitution was on a par with and partially patterned after that of Quaker Pennsylvania. Religious and political separatism were but different sides of the same coin. And certain sporadic statements by local politicians were sufficient to mark the tendency. For example, in the late spring of 1775, Charles Phelps, resident of the eastern Vermont town of Marlboro, noted that Separate religious-political agitators in the east fomented rebellion against New York, claiming that its corrupt institutions should be supplanted by the biblical law of God and "ought to be treated with a Holy Contempt as becometh Saints."<sup>24</sup>

High geographical mobility rates prior to their arrival in Vermont indicate the Green Mountain Boys' inherent activism, as they migrated from one center of conflict to another. Indeed, they traversed the entire width and breadth of Massachusetts and Connecticut into eastern manorial New York, covering long distances over an equally long time. Some were youthful, but many more were mature, independent seekers of greater religious, socioeconomic, and political freedom. Conversely, the pro-Yorkers' relative immobility attests to their inherent traditionalism. Pro-Vermonters fell between the extremes. The Green Mountain Boys had an overall 66 percent mobility rate based upon removals beyond the category of only one move prior to entry into Vermont. The pro-Yorkers demonstrated the reverse tendency, with a mobility rate of only 31 percent. Finally, at midrange, the pro-Vermonters had a mobility rate of 47 percent and a stability figure of 53 percent.<sup>25</sup>

Like migration origins and mobility rates, the Boys' individual and family demographics indicate their activist life patterns. Although there are few striking variations among the groups relative to age and average Vermont settlement age, the differences in average marriage age and generational family structure reinforce conclusions about the Boys' migra-

TABLE 3  
Religious Affiliation of Three Vermont Leadership Groups

	<i>Pro-Vermont</i>		<i>Pro-New York</i>		<i>Green Mtn. Boys</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Old Light	17	4.12	291	68.31	1	0.23
Old Side	5	1.21	35	8.22	2	0.46
Anglican	5	1.21	21	4.93	41	9.4
Nominal Anglican	0	-	0	-	12	2.75
Deist	0	-	0	-	1	0.23
Quaker	0	-	0	-	5	1.15
Quaker Background	0	-	1	0.24	10	2.29
Freewill Baptist	1	0.24	1	0.24	1	0.23
Arminian						
Subtotal	28	6.78	349	81.92	73	16.74
New Light	82	19.85	2	0.47	65	14.91
New Side	100	24.21	0	-	15	3.44
Separate	69	16.71	0	-	180	41.28
Sep. Bapt.	72	17.43	3	0.7	61	13.99
Total known	351	84.99	354	83.1	394	90.37
Total unknown	62	15.01	72	16.9	42	9.63
Group Total	413	100	426	100	436	100

tion origins, mobility rates, and overall religious and political predilections. At the outbreak of the Revolution, the average age in each group was about thirty-six, which implies an expected level of maturity and experience for social leaders. As well, all three groups appointed as representatives to critical political conventions those who were an average of forty-one to forty-three years old.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, average Vermont settlement ages differed little among the three groups, with the Boys and pro-Yorkers at about age twenty-nine and the pro-Vermonters two years older.<sup>27</sup>

The Green Mountain Boys' marked independence and mobility were products of their familial structure, especially marriage age—the point where families naturally began. Since the family was the basic unit of economic production, that age predetermined all future economic activity. Earlier marriage age was a reliable predictor of subsequent removal to a new frontier, where couples attempted to replicate the middle-class status of their forebears.

Marriage age differences among the three groups reveal significant contrasts in familial structures.<sup>28</sup> Recent demographic research in colo-



nial American history applies to Vermont. Demographers claim that an average age of twenty-six or more was a significant indicator of traditional seventeenth-century English and colonial American practice. They link later marriage ages to three conservative tendencies: (1) longer dependence of sons upon the family patriarch; (2) later realization of the marriage or inheritance portion; and (3) an overall sociocultural reluctance to countenance out-migration and thereby loosen familial and communal ties. All these characteristics prevailed in the traditional, consensual communities pro-Yorkers replicated in southeastern Vermont.

The Boys' family structure reflected their activism. They married earlier, declared their independence, and struck out for the frontier. The Boys' average marriage age was 22.96 years, pro-Vermonters' 24.69 years, and pro-Yorkers' 26.04 years.<sup>29</sup> This difference of more than three years between the Boys and the pro-Yorkers underscores two phenomena: the Boys' earlier independence and a much more traditional, less independent marriage arrangement for the pro-Yorkers.

Another demographic factor, the Boys' trigenerational versus the pro-Yorkers' bigenerational family structure, significantly benefited the Boys' political organization and detracted from that of the pro-Yorkers. The Boys settled Vermont as loosely connected, nuclear-family households of sons, fathers, and grandfathers living on separate but nearby farms. First-generation grandfathers were the Connecticut first-born descendants of Plymouth Colony and Mayflower descendants who fled Massachusetts' oppression, escaping into borderland Rhode Island, extreme southeastern New York, and Long Island. They were veterans of numerous religious and political conflicts. Simple average ages reveal that the pro-Yorkers—although they had reasonable numbers from the higher age ranges—lagged far behind the Boys in this regard. They were heads of bigenerational families of fathers and sons. In the age range of forty-five to sixty-five years, the pro-Yorkers had at least fifty fewer seasoned, elder, third-generation leaders. Combine that figure with the fifty or more Tory Court Party leaders of the southeast, who were excluded by the Revolution, and the pro-Yorkers had an insurmountable leadership void. By contrast, elders predominated in Green Mountain Boy leadership and were preponderant in the political conventions preparatory to and establishing Vermont independence.<sup>30</sup> Age distribution figures are presented in Appendix 1.

#### GREEN MOUNTAIN SOCIOECONOMIC STRUCTURE: MIDDLE-CLASS REPUBLICANS

Like their geographical origins, the socioeconomic status of the Green Mountain Boys has long been obscured by conflicting accounts. The Boys' enemies depicted them as lower-class rabble, social upstarts, latecomers,

interlopers, and wildcat speculators who operated on the margin like the Allens. According to some accounts, the Boys allegedly acquired numerous large-scale town proprietorships by rampant speculation in illicit New Hampshire Grant lands.<sup>31</sup> By contrast, the Boys' pro-Yorker enemies portrayed themselves as socially preeminent and wealthy. They claimed to deserve land grants in the region by virtue of their service in the last French and Indian War and accused the Boys of contributing virtually nothing to the military effort.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, later Vermont historians accepted these claims, concluding that landed wealth was concentrated in eastern, not western, Vermont.<sup>33</sup>

Evaluation of the socioeconomic evidence reveals what all three leadership groups became and their achievements in Vermont. It underscores the insignificant differences in age categories bearing upon economic viability, social and occupational status, and military service and, conversely, the significant differences in overall landownership, proprietary interests, tax structure, and officeholding patterns.

To indicate the socioeconomic realities of the era, I divide the information into four categories: (1) economic viability as drawn from specific age comparisons, (2) relative occupational information, (3) social status or rank, and (4) French and Indian War military service. I supplement that data with four measures of comparative economic status: (1) total landownership statistics for all three groups, (2) land accumulation figures, (3) town proprietary data, and (4) comparisons of Grand List tax rates.<sup>34</sup>

Significant facts of economic viability (and even political maturity) may be projected from age comparisons. For example, all three groups moved to Vermont nine to ten and one-half years after marriage. Comparative settlement ages presented in Table 4 demonstrate that the Boys were not poverty-stricken failures gambling upon one last roll of the dice. Similarly, there was a seven-year differential between the Boys' settlement ages and rebellious activity and nearly thirteen years between their marriage age and Green Mountain Boy membership. The Boys thus did not pursue rebellion immediately upon arrival in Vermont. Likewise, although the pro-Yorkers viewed the Boys as interlopers, comparative settlement dates and ages reveal that they were not newcomers to Vermont. Rather, by an overwhelming majority, they were the earliest *permanent* Vermont settlers.<sup>35</sup>

The earliest Vermont settlements were begun in the southeast and southwest during the 1740s and 1750s. All were closely associated with the maintenance of the military presence of Massachusetts in those regions (i.e., Fort Dummer and other numbered forts on the Connecticut River in the east and Forts Massachusetts and Hoosic in the west). While the military forts were fairly permanent, the adjacent civilian settlements—



TABLE 4  
Settlement Dates for Three Vermont Leadership Groups

	<i>Pro-Vermont</i>		<i>Pro-New York</i>		<i>Green Mtn. Boys</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
1740s-1759	21	5.08	33	7.75	15	3.44
1760-1766	63	15.25	98	23	206	50.59
1767-1770	100	24.21	111	26.06	87	19.95
1771-1775	129	31.23	105	24.65	128	29.36
Post-1775	100	24.21	79	18.54	N.A.	-
Totals	413	100	426	100	436	100

Realty Under 1,000 Acres

	<i>Pro-Vermont</i>		<i>Pro-New York</i>		<i>Green Mtn. Boys</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
1-99	40	13.76	53	18.4	34	11.76
100-199	79	27.15	86	29.86	67	23.18
200-299	25	8.59	64	22.22	12	4.15
300-399	43	14.78	32	11.11	86	29.76
400-499	30	10.31	14	4.86	32	11.07
500-599	23	7.9	10	3.47	12	4.15
600-699	20	6.87	9	3.13	13	4.5
700-799	16	5.5	12	4.17	20	6.92
800-899	9	3.09	5	1.74	10	3.46
900-999	6	2.06	3	1.04	3	1.04
Totals	291	100	288	100	289	100

because of repeated French and Indian incursions—were not. Some of the male settlers, who later belonged to all three Vermont leadership groups, manned these forts. However, permanent settlement on both sides of the Green Mountains did not resume until late 1760 and early 1761.

Other categories of social standing show minimal variation, reflecting that the leadership groups differed little in social status. For instance, in occupation the majority (from 58 to 63 percent) were middle-class yeoman farmers, with some diversification of the pro-Vermonters into the trades. Likewise, divergence in social status in the gentleman category is insignificant at only 2 percent. These figures preclude the pro-Yorker claim of social preeminence.<sup>36</sup> Finally, the Boys' French and Indian War service record exceeds that of the other two groups by 6 to 7 percent.<sup>37</sup>

TABLE 5  
Overall Landownership Figures

	<i>Pro-Vermont</i>		<i>Pro-New York</i>		<i>Green Mtn. Boys</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
1-999 acres	291	70.46	288	67.61	289	66.28
Low-level spec. (1,000-3,999 acres)	52	12.59	51	11.97	56	12.84
High-level spec. (4,000-33,000 acres)	16	3.87	13	3.05	20	4.59
Subtotal All specs. 1,000 acres	68	16.46	64	15.02	76	17.43
Total without land	54	13.07	74	17.37	71	16.28
Total landowners	359	86.92	352	82.63	365	83.72
Totals	413	100	426	100	436	100

Summary of Land Accumulation Statistics

	<i>Pro-Vermont</i>		<i>Pro-New York</i>		<i>Green Mtn. Boys</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percent</i>
1-999 acres	95,944	27.75	73,187	22.97	92,480	21.1
Low-level spec. (1,000-3,999 acres)	88,367	25.56	97,234	30.52	89,584	20.44
High-level spec. (4,000-33,000 acres)	161,396	46.69	148,220	46.51	256,170	58.45
Subtotal (1,000-33,000 acres)	249,763	72.25	245,454	77.03	345,753	78.9
Total engrossed land	345,705	100	318,641	100	438,233	100

The economic data are very complex and differ from that regarding social status. Overall landownership data for all three groups show three natural statistical demarcation points (i.e., mathematical positions where the figures dropped off significantly). The first demarcation comes just

below the 1,000-acre level, indicating at most some combination of three 320- to 360-acre proprietary rights. The second point of divergence comes at the 1,000–3,999-acre range of landownership, while the third covers the 4,000–33,000-acre range, with a mean somewhere between 7,000 and 10,000 acres.<sup>38</sup> See Tables 4 and 5 for comparative land tallies.

The significance of these natural categories is paramount, for they differentiate the masses from the land speculators and provide concrete, calculable categories of comparative landed wealth. For example, the majority of landowners among all three groups were concentrated within the 1–999-acre range. Moreover, the pro-Yorkers' average, overall landownership figures demonstrate a within-range, per capita figure of 82 acres less than the Green Mountain Boys. Over 75 percent of the Boys owned more than 100 acres, and throughout the 300–900-acre range the Boys' land tallies exceeded those of the pro-Yorkers.

Land speculation is the most controversial topic of early Vermont history. But the critical question is how much land was owned and by whom? At the outset, the data show that the Boys' accumulated land purchases did not mirror those of the Allens. In this respect the natural categories of landownership above the 1,000-acre level are most pertinent, for they define land speculation. Accordingly, the lower-level land speculators fell within the range of 1,000 to 3,999 acres, while the most affluent, higher-level speculators held anywhere from 4,000 to 33,000 acres. All the Allen brothers were in this category.

The ultimate reality of early Vermont land speculation is its limitation to the upper 15 to 17 percent of all three leadership groups. Speculative mania cannot be attributed to all early Vermonters, especially not the Green Mountain Boy majority. As Table 5 demonstrates, total land speculators from 1,000 to 33,000 acres comprised a mere sixty-four pro-Yorkers, sixty-eight pro-Vermonters, and seventy-six Green Mountain Boys.

Nevertheless, the Green Mountain Boys benefited from accumulated land purchases under New Hampshire titles. Land accumulation data demonstrate how the Boys surpassed the pro-Yorkers and pro-Vermonters in overall landownership in all but the 1,000–3,999-acre range. They outdistanced the pro-Vermonters by 97,000 acres and the pro-Yorkers by 120,000 acres. However, the top twenty individuals of the seventy-six-man group of Green Mountain Boy speculators engrossed the massive figure of over 256,000 acres, far beyond what their own and other political groups held.

The political motivation behind such land accumulation is evident. Yet there is no logical explanation for the political affinity in rebellion among the landed rich, the middle class, and poorer members of these avid political groups. Furthermore, landed wealth in the form of improved

and unimproved lands was concentrated in western, not eastern, Vermont. Table 5 presents overall land engrossment figures.

Proprietary considerations (i.e., ownership of one or more 320–360-acre shares in one or more Vermont townships) are consistent with figures of overall landownership. The data in Appendix 4A show that the Green Mountain Boys and pro-Vermonters were small-scale, middle-class proprietors who held one or two rights at most. In the one-town proprietor category, for instance, the Boys' total surpassed that of the pro-Yorkers by seventy-six men.

The final piece of socioeconomic information is based on Grand List tax data, which reveal significant differences between the pro-Yorkers and the Green Mountain Boys.<sup>39</sup> Appendix 4B presents comparative tax figures, illustrating the pro-Yorkers' rather stratified, deferential society. Major differences appear in the higher tax bracket of £51 to £170 (a natural breakoff point) of taxable property. This tax bracket contained less than 19 percent pro-Yorkers, 27 percent pro-Vermonters, and 33 percent Green Mountain Boys. Coupled with their restrictive officeholding figures in the period from 1777 to 1784 and speculative landownership figures in the 1,000–3,999-acre range, the pro-Yorker tax figures demonstrate the concentration of wealth at the top of their social structure. Conversely, Green Mountain Boy tax figures and officeholding patterns reveal more social fluidity and greater avenues for social advancement.<sup>40</sup>

#### ORIGINS AND TRANSFERENCE OF THE LAND WAR TO WESTERN VERMONT, 1761–1769

New York's forty-year land war originated in extensive migration of activist Yankees to its eastern borderlands. Migration was fueled by a number of powerful forces: a population explosion in New England during the second quarter of the eighteenth century that exhausted the land system, causing soil depletion and erosion; inflation, evidenced by the creation of land banks and widespread demand for paper money; military disruption caused by the last two French and Indian Wars; and the religious turmoil of the Great Awakening.<sup>41</sup> In the territory adjacent to Massachusetts and Connecticut all along the Hudson River, immense, feudal, manorial domains had been established by New York's powerful ruling elite families.<sup>42</sup> These manors represented an impediment to New England expansion because the land, which belonged to the manor lords, was subject to rental fees and could not be purchased outright.

Both the manor lords and the New York government derived their power from the duke of York's 1664 proprietary charter. However, while the manor lords never pressed their land claims in far western Massachusetts prior to the 1750s, the New York government always claimed ter-

ritorial jurisdiction in New England right up to the west bank of the Connecticut River. By 1700 that claim included all the territory up to the river boundaries within Massachusetts and Connecticut, including what later became the state of Vermont, known in pre-Revolutionary days as the New Hampshire Grants.<sup>43</sup>

New York officials conceded little to British efforts to resolve boundary disputes between New York and Massachusetts and Connecticut in the 1720s and 1730s. Consequently, Massachusetts leaders rushed to establish actual possession in the border region by granting townships throughout the Housatonic River area. They granted well over eighteen townships in the region called the Province Lands.<sup>44</sup> Residents of these townships played a large role in the New York land war, and many of them purchased land in western Vermont in the early 1760s.

The culmination of Yankee westward expansion into the Hudson River region and the borderland territory claimed by both New York and Massachusetts occurred in the 1750s. Hundreds of Yankee settlers occupied the Province Lands. They staked out homesteads and fenced in farmlands within New York's northeast manor lands—specifically, Livingston and Rensselaerwyck manors, called the Claverack District. Since Yankee land tenure was freehold and that of New York leasehold, quitrent tenure, Yankee renters and squatters were soon mired in controversy with New York's manor lords.

The first phase of New York's land war spanned the period from 1751 to 1761 and was confined to northeastern Albany County in the Claverack District of the two major manors in that region. The Claverack model of rioting was the direct progenitor of early Green Mountain Boy organization in the 1760s. For the most part, the rioting was instigated by prominent members of the Massachusetts General Court, and it was above all strictly a military organization, both structurally and operationally. Frequent bloody confrontations with New York authorities arose from the organization's intense militarism. Escalating violence involved opposing posses, roving bands of armed rioters, and organized militia companies who attacked fortified houses and positions. County courts, sheriffs, constables, and, eventually, government officials of both provinces became embroiled in the border warfare. Wielding court-issued ejectment writs, arrest warrants, and trespass notices, the Livingstons and Van Rensselaers gathered armed posses of tenant retainers to drive the Yankees from the land.<sup>45</sup>

Riot and counterriot ensued. Rioters organized Yankee militia companies with commanding officers commissioned by Massachusetts. The companies mustered, trained, constructed forts armed with cannon in Nobletown in the Taconic Mountains, and deployed to ambush New York

posses. Massachusetts fueled the controversy by confirming land grants issued by the Stockbridge Indians to riotous Yankee settlers in the region.<sup>46</sup> Jails in Albany County, New York, and Hampden County Massachusetts, filled up with sheriffs, constables, and rioters who had been captured by opposing forces and awaited interprovincial hostage negotiations. Homes were burned and destroyed, fields laid waste, and lives lost on both sides.<sup>47</sup>

The necessity for intercolonial cooperation during the height of the last French and Indian War (1757–1761) merely slowed the pace of the conflict but did not deter it.<sup>48</sup> The rioters proceeded with town subdivisions under their Indian grants and refined organizational structure. With the virtual cessation of hostile British and French military operations in 1761, rioting resumed, marking the initiation of the second riot phase, from 1761 to 1766.

Resistance intensified and spread downriver into southern Dutchess County, where Albany County rioters recruited prospective riot leaders in Cortlandt Manor and Philipse's Patent in 1761 and 1762.<sup>49</sup> Recruiters benefited from the Philipse family's aggressive ejectment suits against Yankee squatters and rent defaulters in the Highland Patent.<sup>50</sup> From 1762 to 1766 the two riot groups often acted in concert. Moreover, during that period the Philipse rioters built upon the Claverack experience, adding to that model numerous political and legal innovations.

In the spring and summer of 1766, however, the movement met an ignominious end when British regulars armed with cannon and muskets dispersed bands of rioters at Quaker Hill and again at Nobletown in the Province Lands. Many rioters were injured, some killed, and others captured. The captives were imprisoned, convicted of high treason for levying war against a Crown colony and usurping its governmental prerogatives, and sentenced to death—only to be reprieved at the last minute.<sup>51</sup>

For subsequent Vermont history, the major significance of these early phases of the land war derives more from the transference to western Vermont of former rioters and the tactics of resistance than from the riots themselves. When the Dutchess County rioters began to organize, in 1761 and 1762, a stream of refugees from the riot impact zones of the Province Lands and eastern New York manors had already begun its steady movement into western Vermont. As speculation in New Hampshire Grant land titles spread among 100 or more New York rioters, the deeds came into the hands of future Green Mountain Boys and western Vermonters as they moved northward.<sup>52</sup>

Early migration to Vermont from the riot impact zones led directly to the emergence of similar resistance to New York in western Vermont and had far-reaching influence upon the development of the future Green



Mountain Boy organization. Future Green Mountain Boys were integrally connected to the New York rioters by a complex web of riot participants, their close kinsmen (because of their interfamilial migration origins), and former rioters who became the Boys' neighbors in western Vermont. Among the rioters were over 100 western Vermonters, thirty-six of whom became prominent Green Mountain Boys.<sup>53</sup> Although not documented as Green Mountain Boys, sixty-five other rioters were early western Vermont settlers and avid supporters of Vermont's cause. As well, sixty Green Mountain Boys were closely related to the New York rioters.

Overall, the migration figures show that far from moving to Vermont to avoid conflict, increasing numbers of Yankee migrants embraced the movement. A total of 471 refugees from the riot impact zones had settled in western Vermont by the time of Ethan Allen's arrival; 324 of them came from the New York manors alone. Moreover, the periods of greatest migration from those zones into western Vermont coincided directly with the emergence of Green Mountain resistance, 335 men arriving from 1764 to 1769. Of another 910 settlers who arrived from 1770 to 1775—the most violent years of Green Mountain Boy insurgency—336 had come from the riot impact zones. Two hundred and fifty were from the New York manors, and fifty-two became Green Mountain Boys.<sup>54</sup> These migrants came to join the Boys and thwart New York.

From the outset of early western Vermont settlement, signs of Green Mountain Boy resistance to New York quickly appeared. Patterned after the Claverack model of conflicting mobs and sheriffs' posses operating under competing jurisdictional legal authorities, settler evictions and land riots reappeared in three southwestern Vermont towns beginning in 1761.<sup>55</sup> The Bennington Mob, as it was called, led the way.

In 1760–1761 Separate religious leader Deacon Samuel Robinson led a migratory movement of religious refugees from Norwich, Connecticut; Amenia, New York; and Hardwick, Massachusetts, to Bennington, Vermont.<sup>56</sup> Robinson not only held numerous New Hampshire Grant shares in Bennington and many surrounding southwestern Vermont towns, but both he and his son Samuel were commissioned as constables by New Hampshire governor Wentworth.

Under those commissions and with the assistance of resident New Hampshire Grants proprietors from the towns of Arlington, Bennington, and Pownal, Robinson and his men proceeded against earlier New York settlers in those towns from 1761 to 1764. They forcibly evicted Dutch settlers of New York's Hoosic Patent, which impinged upon those southwestern Vermont towns. The Van Rensselaers claimed both the Hoosic Patent and the Vermont towns included within it. During one of these ejection actions, Samuel Robinson Jr. was captured by the Albany County

sheriff and imprisoned for two months. New York officials also issued arrest warrants for the other rioters, causing the town of Bennington to establish its own militia company in 1764 to resist New York authorities.<sup>57</sup>

Political developments forced a hiatus in the evolution of the Green Mountain Boy organization. The 1764 king's order in council confirming New York jurisdiction over Vermont prompted two developments: New York partially suspended its land grant objectives in western Vermont, awaiting royal clarification of land grant instructions; and in late 1766 Deacon Robinson sailed for England to present the grantsmen's cause to the king and council.<sup>58</sup> He carried to London petitions signed by hundreds of western Grants residents and nonresident proprietors, a strategy similar to the petition movement being conducted by former rioters in Beekman's and Philipse's Patents. Robinson died of smallpox in London nine months later. Soon thereafter, because of the negligible results of the Robinson mission to England—and like the Philipse and Claverack rioters before them—the Benningtonites organized a subscription movement to repurchase their lands from the Wappinger Indians.<sup>59</sup>

The year 1769 was crucial to Green Mountain Boy organizational development. It marked the arrival of Ethan Allen on the western Grants and the accession in September of Cadwallader Colden to the office of New York lieutenant governor. Thereafter, New York's waiting policy ceased, New York land grants in western Vermont resumed, and New York surveyors returned to the western grants. On October 19, 1769, the Albany County sheriff and New York surveyors arrived at the Bennington farm of James Breakenridge to subdivide his lands under the authority of New York's 1739 Wallumschack Grant. Like the Claverack and Noblestown rioters of the 1750s, large numbers of Bennington militiamen gathered, fortified Breakenridge's house, and forced the Yorkers to depart.<sup>60</sup> After a five-year interruption, the land war with New York resumed, but with substantial influence from New York rioters well established in the region.

#### TRANSFORMATION OF NEW YORK'S LAND WAR: GREEN MOUNTAIN INSURGENCY, 1770–1775

No immediate successor to Deacon Robinson appeared, and Ethan Allen was an unlikely replacement. Allen, a well-known deist with Anglican religious origins, claimed leadership among devout Calvinist Separates. He applied natural rights Enlightenment philosophy to a cause already endorsed by men whose political dissidence and radical republican politics had unique religious origins dating back to the Puritan revolution of the 1640s.

Furthermore, Ethan Allen was neither elected nor acclaimed as mili-