



# **A Proper Sense of Honor: Service and Sacrifice in George Washington's Army**

*Caroline Cox*

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Starting with the decision by patriot leaders to create a corps of officers who were gentlemen and a body of soldiers who were not, Caroline Cox examines the great gap that existed in the conditions of service of soldiers and officers in the Continental army. She looks particularly at disparities between soldiers' and officers' living conditions, punishments, medical care, burial, and treatment as prisoners of war. Using pension records, memoirs, and contemporary correspondence, Cox illuminates not only the persistence of hierarchy in Revolutionary America but also the ways in which soldiers contested their low status.

Intriguingly, Cox notes that even as the army reinforced the lines of social hierarchy in many ways, it also united soldiers and officers by promoting similar conceptions of personal honor and the meaning of rank. In fact, she argues, the army fostered social mobility by encouraging ambitious men to separate themselves from the lowest levels of society and giving them the means to enact that separation. At a time when existing social arrangements were increasingly challenged by war and by political rhetoric that embraced the equal rights of men, Cox shows that change crept slowly into American military life.

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