The following reading is an excerpt from a book written by a Revolutionary War soldier. War diaries are rare, but especially this one since it dates back to the Revolution.

Weekly Reading #9: Article 1

I traveled, however, nearly a mile and a half without seeing the least sign of a house. At length, after much fatigue, I came to an old house, standing, as the Irishman said, out of doors. I made up to it and knocked at the door. "Who's there?" cried an old woman from within. "A friend," I replied. "What do you want?" said she. "I want to rest here tonight." "I cannot entertain you," said she. "I am alone and cannot let a stranger in." I told her I could not and would not go any further. After some inquiring on her part and answering on mine, she condescended to admit me. She need not to have feared me, for had she been a virgin and as beautiful as Helen, I should have had no inclination to have soiled her chastity that night; I had something else to
I arrived at my good old grandsire's about eight or nine o'clock in the morning, with a keen appetite for my breakfast, although I had ate one that day. I believe the old people were glad to see me. They appeared to be much so, and I am quite sure I was glad to see them and all my other friends, if I had any. I had now an opportunity of seeing the place of my boyhood, visit old acquaintance, and ramble over my old haunts; but my time was short, and I had, of course, to employ every minute to the best advantage.

I remained at home till my furlough had fully expired. I intended my country should give me a day to return to camp. The day before I intended to set off for the army, my lieutenant arrived at home to spend a week with his family. He called upon me and told me that if I chose I might stay and accompany him to camp, and he would be responsible for me. I did not want much persuasion to comply with his desire, and accordingly remained another week and then went with the lieutenant to camp and had no fault found.

I had not been at camp more than a week before I was sent off with a large detachment to New London to guard the fortifications in and about that town. On our march we passed through the place of my residence when at home. The detachment tarried a night there, so I had an opportunity of being at home another night.

We marched in the morning and remained the following night at New Haven. I was quartered for the night in a house in the skirts of the town. There was a young lady belonging to the house, who, as it was Sabbath eve, had gone out to see the "daughters of the land," like Dinah of old. Just as we were about to lie down, I went to the back door of the house, where was a small field of dry cornstalks. I met the young lady with a gallant, just at the door. The moment he saw me he left his sweetheart and went off through the cornstalks, making as much noise as if a whirlwind had passed through them. I thought he was a brave fellow, thus to leave his mistress in the power of those he was afraid of himself, and not stop so long as to ask quarters for her, but, upon the first alarm, to desert her to save his own four quarters from receiving damage. Many pretended heroes have done the same, perhaps worse.

We went by easy marches and nothing of consequence occurred until we arrived at New London. Here we were put into houses, and here, too, we almost starved to death, and I believe should have quite starved, had we not found some clams, which kept us from absolutely dying. We had nothing to eat except now and then a little miserable beef or a little fresh fish and a very little bread, baked by a baker belonging to the town, who had some villainous drug incorporated with it that took all the skin off our mouths. I sincerely believe it was done on purpose to prevent our eating. I was not free from a sore mouth the whole time I stayed there.

Just before we left this place a privateer brig arrived from a cruise. She was hauled up and dismantled. One day I went on board her, and in the bread room I found one or two bushels of sea biscuit. At night I again went on board and filled my knapsack, which was a relief to my hungry stomach. But this bread had nearly as much flesh as bread, being as full of worms as ever the dry sapwood of a white ash pole was. Consequently, it required a deal of circumspection in eating it. However, it was better than snowballs. The other men in my room, likewise, used to avail themselves of the opportunity to procure some, after I had told them where it might be obtained.

Several funny and some serious accidents occurred while I remained here, but as they would be tedious to narrate and perhaps uninteresting to the reader, I shall pass them by unnoticed.

We stayed here, starving, until the first of May, when we received orders to march to camp and join our regiments. The troops belonging to New Hampshire marched sometime before we did. While on our march, we halted in a village. Here I went into a house, with several other soldiers, which happened to be a deacon's. While there some of the men chanced to swear (a circumstance extremely uncommon with the soldiers), upon which the good woman of the house checked them. "Is there any harm in it?" said one of them. "Yes," said she. "Well," said he, "may I not say "swamp it"?" "No," said she, "nor maple log roll over me, neither." She then turned to me and said, "I do not like you soldiers." I asked her why. "Because," said she, "there came some along here the other day and they stole every morsel of my dinner from the pot, while it was boiling over the fire, pudding bag and all." I told her that her case was, upon the whole, rather a calamitous one, but, said I, "I suppose the soldiers thought your pot could be easier replenished than their kettles." She made me no answer, whatever she thought.

\* Except for minor demonstrations, Clinton did not disturb the Americans during the winter. However, Washington, apprehensive of a maritime raid on New London, ordered Putnam to place four hundred men there as a guard.
THE FATE OF THE LOYALISTS

Loyalist refugees endured bitter privations in the Canadian wilderness. New York state made $3.6 million selling confiscated loyalist property. There were 21 loyalist regiments in the British army.

Most of the United States rejoiced at the glad tidings of victory. But one group of Americans was plunged into despair—the loyalists. No one knows the exact number of these dissenting Americans. The best estimates range between 75,000 and 100,000. At least 60,000 and perhaps 80,000 left the United States during and after the Revolution—a larger exodus, on a per-capita basis, than the flight of royalists from France after the French Revolution.

Contrary to myth, loyalists—a name they gave themselves—were not all wealthy aristocrats. Among the loyalists who fled Boston with the British army in 1776 were 382 farmers, traders and mechanics. Most of those who could afford it retreated to England, where they experienced massive disillusionment. Samuel Porter of Salem, seeing the prostitutes thronging London’s streets, dubbed England “Sodom.” They hated the climate. Several commented caustically on having to wear winter clothing in August. Worst of all, they were desperately homesick.

Some loyalists tried to return to America immediately after the signing of the peace treaty in 1783. Prosper Brown of Saybrook, Connecticut, was seized by a mob in New London, hung by the neck aboard a dockside ship, whipped with a cat-o’-nine-tails, tarred and feathered, and thrown on a boat to New York. At the settlement of Ninety Six, in the South Carolina backcountry, a loyalist named Love was hanged by his embittered ex-neighbors. With the passage of time, however, most people relented, and many loyalists who had not actively fought against the Revolution were able to return unmolested.

When it became apparent that the Americans had no intention of honoring the clause in the peace treaty calling for compensation for loyalist losses, the British Parliament appointed a commission that examined 4,118 claims from loyalists who had had their property confiscated and their houses wrecked or looted by the rebels. Eventually the royal government paid out almost £3.3 million to the claimants.

A few loyalists won pensions or government jobs. But there were not enough places on the civil list; the standard British solution to loyalist pleas was a grant of land in Canada. Most—about 35,000—settled in Nova Scotia. Along with grants of land, the Crown gave them warm clothing, farm supplies and equipment, and cash grants for the first two years. Overall the British spent an estimated £30 million to succor the loyalists.

At first life was desperately hard for the Nova Scotia refugees. “We have nothing but His Majesty’s rotten pork and unbaked flour to subsist on,” one Connecticut loyalist cried. Filer Dibbie, once a prosperous lawyer in Stamford, Connecticut, became so depressed he cut his throat, leaving his wife, Polly, and their children to plead for help from her loyalist brother in London. Many Southerners soon retreated to the Bahamas and other West Indian islands.

More than 3,000 ex-slaves who had joined the British also settled in Nova Scotia. After seven years they were so disgusted by the local government’s failure to give them decent land—and its insistence on segregating them and in several cases re-enslaving them—that 1,000 blacks persuaded the Crown to transport them back to Africa, where they helped create the British colony of Sierra Leone.

No matter where they went, most loyalists remained American to the end of their days. No one summed up the divided state of their souls better than Massachusetts’s leader of the lost cause, Thomas Hutchinson. Not long before his death, he wrote in his diary: “I would rather die in a little country farmhouse in New England than in the best nobleman’s seat in Old England.”