

The Frame Behind the Walls: Tradesmen, Laborers, and the
Construction of King's College, 1754-1776

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Table of Contents

I.	Introduction.....	3
II.	Chapter 1: A Sturdy Foundation.....	10
III.	Chapter 2: Raising the Frame.....	20
IV.	Chapter 3: The Test of Time.....	33
V.	Conclusion.....	49
VI.	References.....	52

Introduction

In the wee hours of the morning on February 20, 1750, “some young Gentleman” started to make their way home from a long night of debauchery at Mr. Trotter’s dance hall on Broadway when they saw what appeared to be clouds of smoke billowing from the Charity School. Soon the loud clanging of the fire bell abruptly disturbed the quietude of pre-dawn New York as inhabitants across the city were roused by the clamor. Dreary-eyed men hastily threw on clothes before they scrambled to find the source of the blaze, using the thick clouds of smoke as their destination. The responding crowd defied characterization—as one observer marveled, “the Rich and the Poor, are alike indefatigable in preserving their Neighbour’s Property, from the devouring Flames.”¹

Unfortunately, it was quickly determined that “the Fire was at so great a Head before it was discovered, that it was impossible to save the [Charity School] House” and the responding citizens refocused their efforts on containment.² The Charity School, which was operated by Trinity Church and would later serve as the first temporary home of King’s College, was in only “a little Time” consumed by fire “with every individual thing it contained, to the great Damage of Mr. Joseph Hildreth the then School Master.”³ The strong southwesterly wind threatened to carry the fire from the Charity School behind Trinity Church to the church itself—the spire caught on four times as “large Flakes of Fire [...] were carried by the Wind.”⁴

¹ “A Proposal of some Farther Regulations, for the Speedier and More Effectual Extinguishing of Fires, That May Happen in This City,” *Independent Reflector* (New York, New York), no. VII, January 11, 1753: 25. *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.

² “New-York.” *New-York Evening Post* (New York, New York), no. 249, February 26, 1750: [3]. *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.

³ “New -York.” *New-York Weekly Journal* (New York, New York), no. 845, February 27, 1750: [3]. *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.

⁴ “New-York.” *New-York Evening Post* (New York, New York), no. 249, February 26, 1750: [3]. *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.

A large crowd assembled around the pair of burning buildings, and observed “with universal Terror, that the Engines could scarce deliver the Water, to the Top of the Roof” of the Church, let alone reach the flames atop the spire.⁵ In what would later be lauded as an incredible act of service, a handful of men decided to perilously scale the smouldering building from inside and manually extinguish the flames. They “broke Holes” in the ceiling and climbed up onto the roof from the inside of the church to be able to reach the fire.⁶ Among the men who undertook the perilous task was a young Andrew Gautier, who helped extinguish two separate fires in the steeple, including “the uppermost Flame in the Spire.”⁷ As a result of these valiant efforts, the fire “was most remarkably and providentially extinguished, (contrary to the Expectation of every [sic] one).”⁸

Just over a year and a half afterwards, the Vestry and Wardens of Trinity Church decided to “meet the Several Persons” responsible for extinguishing the fire and “Distribute amongst them the Sum of Fifty pounds as [the Committee appointed for this purpose] shall think Convenient” and “Return them the thanks of this Board for their Good Service.”⁹ For his selfless act of service to the church, the young carpenter Andrew Gautier received a handful of silver coins which he later commissioned a local silversmith to transform into a bowl to commemorate the fire, and, critically, the opportunity to make a name and fortune for himself. The son of a carpenter who moonlighted as a painter-glazier, Andrew Gautier was a member of New York’s middling-class who generally relied on the patronage of wealthy clients to earn his income. Only

⁵ “A Proposal of some Farther Regulations, for the Speedier and More Effectual Extinguishing of Fires, That May Happen in This City,” *Independent Reflector* (New York, New York), no. VII, January 11, 1753: 26. *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.

⁶ “New-York, February 26,” *New-York Gazette, or Weekly Post-Boy* (New York, New York), no. 371, February 26, 1750: [2]. *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.

⁷ 1 March 1750, Vestry Minutes, The Vestry Collection, 1694-1982, Archives Division, Trinity Church, New York.

⁸ “New-York.” *New-York Evening Post* (New York, New York), no. 249, February 26, 1750: [3]. *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.

⁹ 1 March 1750, Vestry Minutes, The Vestry Collection, 1694-1982, Archives Division, Trinity Church, New York.

four years before the fire, Gautier earned the status of freeman which gave him some political privileges and likely instilled within him a newfound sense of loyalty to the city's colonial government.¹⁰ His act of selflessness went a long way to compensate for his newly minted status as a member of the civic class and introduced a circle of wealthy potential clients who saw virtue as an advantageous characteristic for contractors.

The erection of a new building does more than just alter the natural landscape, according to Aldo Rossi. From conception to construction and eventually its occupation, a building becomes part of the urban milieu, an artifact whose meaning was discerned through its relation to the city's social structure.¹¹ The memory of a building and the people who interacted with it throughout its lifetime are stored in the materials and physical structure itself. The stories of carpenters, joiners, apprentices, itinerant laborers, and—in the case of eighteenth-century New York—slaves, are preserved in the posts and beams that hold the building together, their lives logged in the architectural record, though often divorced from their identity. Each baluster, column, and window frame are slightly different, a reflection of the moment in the life of the carpenter who made it as well as the historical context it was created in.¹² For example, an excavation of Whitehall Slip in what is now Fulton Street Seaport in New York City revealed that the Battery Wall sections were constructed at two different periods using two different types of labor.¹³ The first wall, built around 1741, was composed of individually-cut sandstone blocks that, when assembled, formed a gentle curve. Owing to the higher level of craftsmanship, it was likely constructed primarily by impressed laborers, civilian artisans, and artificers who possessed

¹⁰ List of Freemen, 1746, in *History of the City of New York*, David T. Valentine (New York: G.P. Putnam and Co., 1853), 390.

¹¹ Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, revs. Aldo Rossi and Peter Eisenman, am. ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984), 131.

¹² Christopher Alexander, *The Timeless Way of Building*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 175.

¹³ Diane Dallal, Meta Janowitz, and Linda Stone, *South Ferry Terminal Project Final Report*, vol. 1, *Text and Figures* (New York: Metropolitan Transportation Authority, 2012), 5-4.

the skill and coordination required to achieve the smooth curve in the wall. A second wall, built in 1755, was constructed more haphazardly with only rectangular stones, suggesting that less skilled labor was available than in 1741.¹⁴ Thus, to study the architecture of the building involves more than just an examination of its facade—it involves telling a story of evolution from conception to habitation as well as the stories of the architects, craftsmen, and laborers who brought it to life.¹⁵

Just as every door must be formed by an autonomous process which allows it to fit correctly within its frame and every door frame must be formed in a similar fashion to fit correctly within the wall, a building also must be tailored according to both its intended purpose and the social environment in which it exists.¹⁶ College Hall, then, was not just a structure or a space but a part of multiple overlapping communities whose interactions with the building shaped its meaning. While the relationship of King's College students to College Hall is self-explanatory and well-documented, the impact its construction had on the average inhabitant has heretofore been unexplored. This thesis pairs vernacular architecture with material culture to tease out the stories of the middling craftsmen and yeomen who built King's College. I show that not only did middling-class men play an instrumental role in the establishment of King's College, but the college itself also shaped the life trajectories of the men who built College Hall through their contact with members of New York's elite. In building a space designed to facilitate the advancement of the children of the city's upper class, master carpenters Andrew Gautier and Jonathan Hampton also carved out a place for themselves in society.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7-39.

¹⁵ William Whyte, "How Do Buildings Mean? Some Issues of Interpretation in the History of Architecture," *History and Society* 45, no. 2 (2006), 170-1.

¹⁶ Alexander, *Timeless Way of Building*, 163.

For a builder, there is no greater aspiration than to create something that will stand the test of time and be appreciated for generations to come. Indeed, a carpenter knew well that if he assembled a frame properly that the life of the timber would continue, which secured his structure a place in the landscape.¹⁷ The emphasis placed by the American colonists' on the refinement of the built environment is evidenced by the proliferation of long views in the eighteenth-century, argues Jennifer Van Horne.¹⁸ The production of images depicting a colonial city's skyline were used to communicate both its commercial success and ascension into the polite culture deemed so valuable by the metropole.¹⁹ Unattractive structures or buildings which represented more unsavory aspects of the city would sometimes be excluded from these long views altogether in an attempt to communicate a more refined and civilized landscape to viewers.²⁰ Importantly, she notes that because the funding of expensive projects to benefit the public was often done by subscription, the process of construction thus "reinforced civic obligations and the commitments of living in a civil society" and meant that each subscriber had a vested interest in the refinement of the built environment.²¹

The architecture of the American colonies was not important merely because of its communicative value in the transatlantic relationship, however. Bernard Herman contends that each individual building encompassed a myriad of stylistic and practical choices "exercised by people making and communicating a sense of self and their environment."²² The division of interior space into clearly-delineated areas brought the establishment of a social hierarchy into

¹⁷ Tedd Benson and James Gruber, *Building the Timber Frame House: The Revival of a Forgotten Craft* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), 50.

¹⁸ Jennifer Van Horne, *Power of Objects in Eighteenth-Century British America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 37.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 91.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

²² Bernard Herman, *Town House: Architecture and Material Life in the Early American City, 1780-1830* (Chapel Hill: Omohundro Institute and University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 21.

the home itself and acted as a framework through which residents structured and understood their relationships with one another.²³ In this way, the house can be understood as a microcosm of the city—just as disorderly commercial enterprises were relegated to the city’s outskirts, servants and slaves were restricted to less-visible areas of the house such as the cellar kitchen or garret. Herman argues that the creation of socially-segregated spaces within the home points to the centrality of the material world to the formation of social identity.²⁴ While the dwellings of the lower- and middling-classes were furnished simply with items acquired locally, wealthy merchants communicated their status through an assortment of objects with highly specified functions, such as dining tables and tea tables.²⁵ Such stark divisions within the home would have been familiar to the students who attended King’s College, who came from elite New York families, although few documents attesting to their time there remain. Compared to other colonial colleges like Harvard and Yale, little has been written about the early years of King’s College. The history of Columbia University detailed by Robert McCaughey focuses primarily on the development of the institution in the post-Revolutionary period, although he does provide a brief discussion on the founding of King’s College and the political orientations of early matriculants.²⁶

As is the case today, the neighborhoods of eighteenth-century New York were segregated by class. The disorderly laboring classes resided largely on the outskirts of the city or in wooden dwellings located in New York’s commercial districts. At least until the 1760s, the row of palisades erected to guard the city from a northward invasion by the French in 1745 served as a physical divider between the civilized and uncivilized inhabitants.²⁷ Notable merchants, many of

²³ Ibid., 31.

²⁴ Ibid., 38.

²⁵ Ibid., 56.

²⁶ Robert McCaughey, *Stand, Columbia: A History of Columbia University* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 44-50.

²⁷ Carl Abbott, “The Neighborhoods of New York, 1760-1775,” *New York History* 55, no. 1 (1974), 48-9.

whom descended from the early Dutch settlers of New Amsterdam, resided in the center of the city in the upper-class area of Hanover Square, where they also operated their businesses owing to the location's accessibility to the markets.²⁸ Unfortunately, aside from a small handful of eighteenth-century buildings, almost 300 years of development has robbed modern-day scholars of the opportunity to examine this architecture firsthand. Accordingly, the sparse and superficial descriptions given by contemporary visitors of King's College obscure the stories the building itself can tell. While the letters of almost exclusively wealthy colonists are undoubtedly valuable, they are ultimately a reflection of the building through their privileged lens—they had the pleasure of touring the finished College Hall in all its Georgian glory. By taking a material culture approach it becomes possible to tell the stories of the middling and lower class men through the building itself and reveal the richness of eighteenth-century New York life.

²⁸ Jeffrey Knaack, "City of Brick and Stone: New York and Hanover Square from Settlement to Revolution, 1626-1783," PhD diss., State University of New York at Albany, 2012.

Chapter 1: A Sturdy Foundation

Timber was a politically fraught resource in colonial America, especially in rapidly developing urban areas that required a steady supply of building materials. When the first Dutch colonists landed on the shores of Manhattan Island in the 16th century, they were confronted by a swath of densely forested land with little avenue for European-style settlement besides undertaking a massive effort to clear the land. In 1681, less than 15 years after the transfer of New Netherland to England, New York's governor, Sir Edmund Andros, described his arrival as grossly underwhelming, having "found the place poore, unsettled & without Trade, except for a few small coasters."²⁹ By the time the colony was under English rule, however, the basic infrastructure required to facilitate development and transport building materials such as roads, bridges, and sawmills already existed. In 1761, Cadwallader Colden attempted to make a case for domestic potash production based on the fact that "in this City where there are 2000 Dwelling Houses above 20,000 Cords of Wood are yearly burnt the ashes of which may be had at a low price."³⁰ The addition of restrictive covenants by the Crown to land patents forbidding property owners to "cut down any pine Trees fit for Masts" were met with hostility from colonial officials.³¹ They pointed out that "without cutting down Pine Trees which may be fit for masts, the Inhabitants of the Province in general cannot have boards & Planks every where necessary for their buildings," thus portending economic development.³² In order to encourage development and provide more equitable access to building materials, the leadership of the New

²⁹ Governor Andros' Answer to Mr. Lewin's Report, 31 December 1681, in *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New-York*, ed. John Romeyn Brodhead, vol. 3, 1614-1692 (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Co., 1853), 313.

³⁰ Cadwallader Colden to Peter Templeman, Esq., 6 February 1761, in *The Colden Letter Books*, vol. 1, 1760-1765 (New York: New York Historical Society, 1877), 61.

³¹ Cadwallader Colden to the Right Honorable the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations, 28 February 1761, in *The Colden Letter Books*, vol. 1, 64-5.

³² *Ibid*, 65.

York colony thought it advantageous to set aside a portion of land in the city to be reserved for public use.

This dedicated public land, known as the Commons, acted as a hub for tradespeople and day laborers searching for employment or endeavoring to purchase materials as well as grazing land for animals. An attempt by the Corporation to privatize the Commons in 1767 was met with ire from the general public. In an anonymous letter published in the *New-York Journal* opposing the sale, the author points out the valuable resources provided by the Commons and the economic consequences of denying the public access to them. “A great Advance in the Price of Bricks” would occur if the privatization moved forward since the Commons supplied “at a small Expence [sic], Earth for the Red Brick used in all our New-Buildings” as well as “the Stone [...] used for underpinning and other purposes, and affording the Employment for Carmen in Times of Slackness of other Work.”³³ A proposed change in building regulations in 1767 that outlawed the construction of wooden houses—ostensibly for fire prevention measures—only further exasperated the middling tradespeople who relied on inexpensive timber to support their trade. “This Law [would] be every Way *hurtful* to the poor and middling People, (Possessors or Leasors [sic] of unimproved Lots in this City,) and to the Increase of Tradesmen and Manufactories among us; and *beneficial*, only to a few monied Men,” lamented one New York City resident.³⁴

Master carpenters such as generally dodged the financial precarity that plagued construction projects by using their personal connections with large landholders to negotiate lower rates.³⁵ They also benefited from subcontracting out laborious or time-consuming tasks to

³³ *New-York Journal, or General Advertiser*, No. 1263, 19 March 1767.

³⁴ A Citizen of New-York, “To the Printer,” *New-York Journal, or General Advertiser* (New York, New York), No. 1256, 29 January 1767: [2], *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.

³⁵ Simon Middleton, *From Privileges to Rights: Work and Politics in Colonial New York City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 120.

journeymen or unfree laborers at one-third the price of hiring a master carpenter.³⁶ Even a simple task like chopping firewood for use during the winter could take weeks to complete, making the use of slaves advantageous both from a cost- and time-saving perspective.³⁷ Slaves trained in skilled trades could be hired out at a fraction of the rate demanded by white workingmen.³⁸ Indentured servants and slaves would typically accept nontraditional forms of payment, such as alcohol or other stable goods, in exchange for their time, reducing the master carpenter's need to acquire a loan to pay his laborers. Ships arriving from Europe carrying servants garnered announcements in the local papers advertising their availability. Commander John Anthony Adamson of the ship *George* placed an advertisement for "Irish Men, Women & Boys, [and] Servants," including "several Trades-Men" who would "take either Flower [sic] or Wheat as pay."³⁹ Slave labor could also be a lucrative option for certain tradesmen, although the rapid increase in the Black population created resentment among some artisans who saw the bondage of Blacks as a threat to their livelihood.⁴⁰

The construction of King's College was undoubtedly a massive undertaking given the sheer size of the building and the types of materials used. The leaders of Trinity Church, known as the Vestry, appointed a three-member committee "to employ a Surveyor to Stake out the Ground" and enclose a portion of the land "for Storing Materials and building a Lime House and to purchase a Quantity of Lime, stone and boards and such other materials as they shall think necessary."⁴¹ Two years later a separate committee was established to complete the foundation

³⁶ Ibid., 120.

³⁷ Vivienne Kruger, "Born to Run: The Slave Family in Early New York, 1626 to 1827," PhD diss., Columbia University, 1985, 97.

³⁸ Thelma Wills Foote, *Black and White Manhattan: The History of Racial Formation in Colonial New York City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 79.

³⁹ *New-York Gazette*, 1 July 1728.

⁴⁰ David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1999), 20.

⁴¹ 11 November 1755, *Early Minutes of the Trustees*, vol. 1, 1755-1770 (New York: Columbia University, 1932), 76.

for the north side of the college and agreed that it “be built of Grey Stone.”⁴² The college was envisioned as a stone monolith symbolizing great wealth and affluence placed in the bowels of the colonial city. While homes belonging to the middling class continued to be built in the minimal Dutch style, stately Georgian architecture was the preference of New York’s elite by the 1760s.⁴³ The architectural style desired by the Trustees was an extension of their social identity—by adorning College Hall with materials inaccessible to the general public they communicated not only their difference but their superiority to European audiences.⁴⁴ The language used in the initial instructions given to the planning committee reflect the College’s concern of perception, as the selected men were to “Consider the Proper ways and means for the Erecting suitable Edifices for the College and for promoting the Interest thereof.”⁴⁵

Although the Trustees desired the exterior walls of the college be made of stone, the internal structural frame included the commonly used building material of timber. In fact, demand for timber in New York City was so great that “many yachts [went] during the whole summer [from Albany] to *New York*, having scarce any other lading than boards.”⁴⁶ The timber trade was so lucrative that “the greater part of the merchants at *Albany* [had] extensive estates in the country, and a great deal of wood” and those merchants fortunate enough to have “a little brook” never “fail[ed] to erect a saw-mill upon it.”⁴⁷ Compared to their counterparts on the opposite shores of the Atlantic, the American colonists enjoyed relatively unencumbered access to quality and affordable lumber which is reflected in the bill of scantling for College Hall.⁴⁸ The

⁴² 22 February 1757, *ibid.*, 94.

⁴³ Stephanie Grauman Wolf, *As Various as Their Land: The Everyday Lives of Eighteenth-Century Americans* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 61.

⁴⁴ Herman, *Town House*, 37.

⁴⁵ 13 May 1755, *Early Minutes of the Trustees*, vol. 1, 94.

⁴⁶ Peter Kalm, *Travels into North America*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (London, 1773), 100.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Daniel Richter, *Before the Revolution: America’s Ancient Past* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 338.

committee responsible for constructing the first structures on King's College's land agreed with two "yeomen" from Elizabethtown (now known as Elizabeth), New Jersey⁴⁹—Samuel Williams and Jonathan Miller, Jr.—to supply the "Pieces & Parcels of Wood Timber and materials" that was to be used according to stated specifications.⁵⁰

From available documentation it appears both Williams and Miller came from families of modest means. Samuel Williams was the eldest son of Miles and Phebe Williams of Essex County, New Jersey. In his will, "yeoman" Miles Williams directed his executors to divide his estate between his sons Samuel, John, and Joshua and one of his daughters (other daughters were mentioned but not named).⁵¹ Although no tax assessment or detailed inventory is included, Samuel's father owned "land joining lands of James Hinds, Samuel Scudder, and Joseph Williams" and a tract purchased from attorney John Halstead.⁵² Samuel Williams' will, prepared in 1770, indicates that he was unmarried and without living heirs as he divided his estate among his two brothers, two sisters, mother, nephew, and brother-in-law.⁵³ On May 10, 1770, after Williams' death, an inventory conducted listed the value of his estate at £40.3.0, a sum consistent with his status as a yeoman—£175 was the average value of inventory probated in New Jersey during the 1760s.⁵⁴ Jonathan Miller, Jr. was relatively well-off when compared to his partner Samuel Williams. Jonathan Miller, Sr. owned the family homestead at Rahway "with land on both sides of the Rahaway [sic] River" which included 100 acres of woodland and 12 acres of

⁴⁹ List of Freeholders in the County of Essex, 1 September 1755, in *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society*, vol. 13, second series, 1894-1895 (Paterson: Press Printing and Publishing Company, 1899), 28-9.

⁵⁰ Committee on Timber for the College Building, 5 March 1757, box 1, Columbia College Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York.

⁵¹ Will of Miles Williams, 17 October 1747, in *Archives of the State of New Jersey*, ed. A. Van Doren Honeyman, vol. 30, 1st series, *Calendar of New Jersey Wills, Administrations, Etc.*, vol. 2, 1730-1750 (Somerville: Unionist-Gazette Association, 1918), 532.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Will of Samuel Williams, 5 February 1770, in *Archives of the State of New Jersey*, ed. A. Van Doren Honeyman, vol. 33, 1st series, *Calendar of New Jersey Wills, Administrations, Etc.*, vol. 4, 1761-1770 (Somerville: Unionist-Gazette Association, 1928), 481.

⁵⁴ Thomas Purvis, "Origins and Patterns of Agrarian Unrest in New Jersey, 1735 to 1754," *William and Mary Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (1982), 614.

salt meadow.⁵⁵ The property was inherited by Jonathan Sr. and his two brothers but Jonathan Sr. bought them out to assume full ownership. In addition to this property, he also purchased a tract of land “between the roads to Elizabeth Town [sic] and to Conecticut [sic] Farms” from the Elizabeth Town Committee and a third 20-acre plot from Samuel Mills.⁵⁶ While it is unclear which property Jonathan Miller, Jr. inherited from his father, the fact that he was engaged in the timber trade strongly suggests that he received at least partial ownership of the large Rahway River tract given the sheer size of the contract with King’s College. By 1740, Miller’s neighbor John Radley built a saw mill on his property, which meant any necessary processing of lumber could have quite literally been done next door.⁵⁷

The document, dated March 1757, directed Williams and Miller to acquire, process, and deliver the requested timber to Whitehall Slip in three stages, presumably to correspond with the building’s progress and to prevent theft. A constant demand for lumber meant that it would be vulnerable to theft if left unguarded, which is why many carpenters and house joiners carried their tools in fitted, lockable chests especially when working on a crowded job site.⁵⁸ The logic behind the Committee’s demand for a staggered delivery was likely intended to both protect their financial investment and hedge the contractors’ risk of nonpayment, ultimately to the mutual benefit of both parties. The first shipment consisted of “130 Beams of white Oak” measuring 29 feet long, “eight beams of white Oak eighteen feet long,” sixteen “door Jambs of white Oak” roughly 10.5 feet long, and eight “door heads of white Oak five feet six Inches long” and was to be delivered by the 20th of the following April. A month later, Williams and Miller were slated

⁵⁵ Will of Jonathan Miller, 18 August 1727, in *Archives of the State of New Jersey*, ed. William Nelson, vol. 23, 1st series, *Calendar of New Jersey Wills*, vol. 1, 1670-1730 (Paterson: Press Printing and Publishing Co., 1901), 320.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Will of Joseph Kellsey Sr., 13 February 1740, in *Archives of the State of New Jersey*, ed. A. Van Doren Honeyman, vol. 30, 1st series, *Calendar of New Jersey Wills, Administrations, Etc.*, vol. 2, 1730-1750 (Somerville: Unionist-Gazette Association, 1918), 279.

⁵⁸ James Gaynor and Nancy Hagedorn, *Tools: Working Wood in Eighteenth-Century America* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1993), 34.

to supply “one half part of all the Beams & Studs therein mentioned with Twenty five Partition Sills and Plates and eighteen Linkills.” The committee requested that the “remaining half of all the said Timber and materials” be in the College’s possession by June 20, 1757. The choice of white oak lumber for the structural bones was likely strategic as it is a hard wood able to withstand heavy stress. Mature white oaks have internal structures in the wood called tyloses which render it impervious to moisture, making it the choicest lumber for projects vulnerable to the elements.⁵⁹ That said, the added weight coupled with the massive amount of timber that needed to be transported rendered the logistics of shipment more complex.

Williams and Miller were apparently unable to meet these demands. The Committee sent Miller a letter two years after the pair entered into the agreement to forcefully remind them of their obligations. The men were made aware that the Committee expected them to “punctually Comply with [their] part” as the workmen responsible for constructing the college required the outstanding lumber to proceed.⁶⁰ The tone of the letter makes it clear that the Committee was frustrated with their contractors—they “insist[ed] upon it that [the workmen] may not be Delayed through [Williams and Miller’s] neglect so beware of the Consequence.”

Understandably, the Governors of the college were concerned that the late delivery of timber would throw them off schedule. By the mid-eighteenth century, most workers no longer received regular wages but instead were hired for a short period of time, typically by the day.⁶¹ The pages of local newspapers were filled with advertisements for tradesmen offering their services. One New York “Street-paver” who recently arrived from London placed an advertisement in the

⁵⁹ Roy Underhill, *The Woodwright's Shop: A Practical Guide to Traditional Woodcraft* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 16.

⁶⁰ Committee on Timber for the College Building, 25 April 1759, box 1, Columbia College Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York.

⁶¹ Wolf, *As Various as Their Land*, 185.

paper to hire himself out “either by the Day or by the Yard.”⁶² If the Governors hired a group of carpenters and laborers in anticipation of the shipment’s arrival only for it to be delayed, they may have needed to pay them regardless or, at the very least, deal with a group of angry workers. In addition to tradespeople, carters and their subcontracted day laborers and free black workers would have been needed to transport the lumber from Whitehall Slip to the building site.⁶³ From Williams and Miller’s perspective, not holding up their end of the bargain meant risking nonpayment, something which could spell financial ruin for men of the middling class.

The pair eventually delivered the remaining timber and presumably received the outstanding sum owed to them by the Governors as specified in their contract. Little is known about the course of either Williams or Miller’s lives after the fulfillment of their contract with King’s College, although it appears Williams got involved in public affairs. At a town meeting held in the courthouse at Newark on March 11, 1766, Samuel Williams was chosen as one of town’s “Overseers of the Highways.”⁶⁴ Although an inauspicious title, highway overseers played a crucial role throughout the American colonies in the creation of new roads, particularly in New Jersey. Unlike most other provinces, New Jersey allowed the government to seize privately-owned lands for public works without compensation and a year before Williams assumed his position, an Act was passed appointing commissioners to draft a plan for four new highways.⁶⁵

Much as Williams’ appointment as highway overseer represented his assumption of control over part of the landscape and its people, the hewn timber represented the victory of the

⁶² The New-York Gazette, 23 June 1760, in *The Arts and Crafts in New York: Advertisements and News Items from New York City Newspapers*, ed. Rita Gottesman, vol. 69 (New York: J. J. Little and Ives Company, 1938), 186.

⁶³ Middleton, *From Privileges to Rights*, 115.

⁶⁴ Minutes of a Newark town meeting, 11 March 1766, in *Records of the Town of Newark, New Jersey: From Its Settlement in 1666, to Its Incorporation as a City in 1836* (Newark: New Jersey Historical Society, 1864), 148.

⁶⁵ John F. Hart, “Takings and Compensation in Early America: The Colonial Highway Acts in Social Context,” *American Journal of Legal History* 40, no. 3 (1996), 293.

individual over the natural environment—Williams, Miller, and their cadre of laborers spent months painstakingly toppling, processing each piece of raw timber by hand.⁶⁶ From pine and oak trees securely rooted in the soils of the family property to the final processed lumber being loaded into a sloop for transport to Whitehall Slip, Williams and Miller oversaw the transformation from raw material to finished product.

To “read the building fabric” of College Hall means dissecting the stories of these materials and finishes in addition to the architecture itself.⁶⁷ In the case of vernacular architecture, the timber cannot be divorced from the relationships between site, structure, and materials that came to determine the function of the building.⁶⁸ Samuel Williams and Jonathan Miller were tasked with preparing and providing the timber that was later used for framing what would become, when completed, a space reserved for men of wealth—a college for the children of merchants like their employers, inaccessible to sons born into middling class families. The timber hewn and supplied by Williams and Miller was used to create defined polite and domestic work spaces within the building and encode the social hierarchy into the architecture of College Hall.⁶⁹ Their hands—as well as the hands of innumerable other yeomen, day laborers, sawyers, joiners, carpenters, apprentices, and, most probably, slaves—touched and shaped each piece of timber that formed the mostly invisible structural skeleton of the building and each beam thus reflects the cumulative human experience of a collection of individuals from a wide cross section of the lower strata of New York society. While the typical one- or two-room hall and parlor

⁶⁶ Henry Glassie, “Architects, Vernacular Traditions, and Society,” *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 1, no. 2 (1990), 11-2.

⁶⁷ Thomas Carter and Elizabeth Collins Cromley, *Invitation to Vernacular Architecture: A Guide to the Study of Ordinary Buildings and Landscapes* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2005), 40.

⁶⁸ Daniel Maudlin, “Crossing Boundaries: Revisiting the Thresholds of Vernacular Architecture,” *Vernacular Architecture* 41, no. 1 (2010), 10.

⁶⁹ Bernard L. Herman, “Tabletop Conversations: Material Culture and Everyday Life in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World,” in *Gender, Taste, and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830*, ed. John Styles and Amanda Vickery (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 47.

house occupied by these craftsmen and free laborers “might have permitted tension between function and authority as discrete publics had no place to form,” the towering three-story edifice with dozens of rooms which was College Hall “separated the two, allowing the formation of a multiplicity and hierarchy of publics” which simultaneously reinforced the importance of social hierarchy.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Jessica Kross, “Mansions, Men, Women, and the Creation of Multiple Publics in Eighteenth-Century British North America,” *Journal of Social History* 33, no. 2 (1999), 388.

Chapter 2: Raising the Frame

In 1767, the Vestry hired a young carpenter named Jonathan Hampton to make all necessary repairs to the newly-built College as he saw fit. Little is known about Hampton's early life, but it appears that his contract with King's College jump-started his career as a master carpenter. In the mid-18th century tradesmen such as Hampton relied heavily on their social network to secure themselves work. The fact that the Vestry and Trustees of the college were composed of wealthy and politically-connected individuals likely enabled Hampton to establish himself as a reputable contractor among influential circles in New York.⁷¹ Indeed, less than a year after Hampton was brought on as the designated repairman of King's College he obtained a lucrative government contract with fellow master carpenter Andrew Gautier to oversee repairs to Fort George.⁷² Gautier would later be hired by the Vestry to build St. Paul's Chapel, perhaps indicating that Hampton facilitated Gautier's employment. The pair's employment by the Governors of King's College reflected the larger changes in the overall demographics of New York. Until his family became parishioners of Trinity Church in 1724, the Gautiers were members of the Huguenot church, L'Église du St. Esprit.⁷³ As Huguenot refugees began to gain social and economic prominence in the community, many made the switch to the more well-known churches attended by New York's upper stata, such as Trinity.⁷⁴ Their decision to

⁷¹ Middleton, *From Privileges to Rights*, 99.

⁷² An Act for the Payment of Salaries of the several Officers of the Government, and of other Services, and for the better securing the Public Funds of this Colony, 13 January 1768, in *The Colonial Laws of New York from the Year 1664 to the Revolution*, vol. 4 (Albany: James B. Lyon, 1894), 967.

⁷³ Theodore West Mason, *Family Record in Our Line of Descent from Major John Mason of Norwich, Connecticut* (New York: Grafton Press, 1909), 50.

⁷⁴ Bertrand Van Ruymbeke, "Minority Survival: The Huguenot Paradigm in France and the Diaspora," in *Memory and Identity: The Huguenots in France and the Atlantic Diaspora*, eds. Bertrand Van Ruymbeke and Randy J. Sparks (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 9.

switch was thus strategic rather than spiritual, and as such represented a search for status which was found in Trinity's pews.

The Governors of the College recognized that more was at stake in the construction of College Hall than simply creating a functional structure. Beyond serving as a space for students and faculty, the edifice would act as a visual assertion of the privileged status of its residents.⁷⁵ While many northern colonists opted to build their homes entirely out of wood as a matter of both ease and frugality, they would attempt to emulate the opulent Georgian architectural style with differing degrees of success. Ingenious colonists mimicked the masonry construction favored by the elites across the Atlantic by chamfering the edges of wide wooden boards to have the appearance of masonry joints or painting the exterior in muted earth tones to look like stone.⁷⁶ As members of the social elite in New York, the Governors were "brokers of taste and fashion" who imported and adopted the choicest styles from Europe.⁷⁷ Masons and builders—well aware of the preferences of potential clientele—cleverly advertised their services to "Gentlemen" desiring a building constructed "after the London Taste."⁷⁸ They commissioned Trinity Vestryman Robert Crommelin—who was the architect of the recently completed St. George's Chapel—to draft the plans for College Hall.⁷⁹

In 1752, Crommelin designed the new merchant exchange at the foot of Broad Street. Although undoubtedly built in accordance with British tastes, the exchange also included a nod to the city's Dutch heritage with its brick walls and gambrel-roof.⁸⁰ Arched doorways and

⁷⁵ Stephen Hague, "Building Status in the British Atlantic World: The Gentleman's House in the English West Country and Pennsylvania," in *Building the British Atlantic World: Spaces, Places, and Material Culture, 1600-1850*, eds. Daniel Maudlin and Bernard Herman (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 235.

⁷⁶ Mark Gelemer, *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in Their Cultural and Technological Context* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 83.

⁷⁷ James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life* (New York: Anchor, 2010), 62.

⁷⁸ *The New-York Mercury*, March 11, 1765, in *New York Newspaper Advertisements and News Items: 1777-1779*, ed. Jeffery Triggs (Oxford: University of Oxford Text Archive, n.d.)

⁷⁹ McCaughey, *Stand, Columbia*, 31.

⁸⁰ Constantine Green, *The Rise of Urban America* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1966), 43.

numerous windows lined the sides of the building, and perched atop the slanted roof was an elegant cupola. The completion of the merchant exchange led to Crommelin securing a contract with the Vestrymen of Trinity Church to design a new chapel for far-flung parishioners. At a time when most colonists lived in small houses under 1,000 square feet alongside four to six family members, size was of the utmost importance to architects designing buildings for the urban social elite.⁸¹

The Vestrymen handled the extensive landholdings of the Church. Trinity sought and received a massive land grant from the British Crown encompassing a large portion of lower Manhattan. Known as King's Farm, this property quickly became a source of revenue for the Church, with the Vestry renting out subdivided plots of land to tenants. Although all tenants signed leases binding them to certain terms, including limits on the amount of timber allowed to be cut down, not all abided by them. A humble cartman who learned his trade from his father, Cornelius Cosine was one of 75 carters—roughly a third of all licensed carters in the city—residing on the Church's Farm.⁸² In May 1738, a committee assembled to “Enquire into Mr. Cosynes [sic] Lease and what Covenants he [had] broke” reported that Cornelius Cosine (alt: Cousine) “Committed [sic] great Waste on the Churches Farm, particularly by Cutting down Trees and Timber to repair or make all or Very great Part of the Houses.”⁸³ In addition to this offense, he also “plowed and sowed the Ground much oftener than by his Lease” which led to the committee recommending that “prosecutions [...] be Commenced” against Cosine. The Vestry subsequently agreed to give the investigatory committee the “power to agree with and take a Surrender of Mr. Cosynes Lease.” In July 1741, the committee stated that they had “taken a

⁸¹ Jessica Kross, “Mansions, Men, Women, and the Creation of Multiple Publics,” 387.

⁸² Graham Russell Hodges, *New York City Cartmen, 1667-1850* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 46.

⁸³ Minutes of the Vestry, 2 May 1738, Vestry Minutes, The Vestry Collection, 1694-1982, Archives Division, Trinity Church, New York.

surrender of the said Lease” and that they agreed to lease Cosine’s land and two other plots near the Bowling Green to Adam Vanderburgh “for the term of Ten years at the Annuall [sic] rent of forty pounds.”⁸⁴

Cosine paid the price for violating the terms of his lease, as did many other tenants. Despite the ostensibly pious objectives of the church, the Vestry did not hesitate to pursue legal action to protect their property or make way for future development. On August 17, 1747, the Vestry appointed John Chambers, John Moore, and Joseph Reade to “Receive the possession of the House” and land that was “forcibly Enter’d into and Detained by the Browsers [sic] and others.”⁸⁵ In addition to the existing house, Cornelius Brouwer built a second home on the land out of wood, a common practice among the middling classes. After cordial negotiations presumably failed, the committee resorted to mendicancy and forcefully took possession of the Brouwers’ house and “pulled [it] down.”⁸⁶ Despite having destroyed their house, the Vestry extended them the ‘courtesy’ of letting them “have the materialls [sic] of the house [...] if they would fetch it away.”⁸⁷ A long legal battle unfolded in which the Vestry attempted to challenge the Brouwer’s claim to ownership by proving the original deed to be invalid. They claimed that the 1667 grant upon which the Brouwer’s based their title was nonexistent as “no original has Ever been produced.”⁸⁸ Even if the plaintiffs were to be able to locate the original grant, the Vestry argued, it would be invalid due to the fact that the deed was executed during the period of Dutch rule and therefore “the Lands were Vested in the Crown again” after New York became part of the British empire.

⁸⁴ Vestry Minutes, 7 July 1741, Vestry Minutes, The Vestry Collection, 1694-1982, Archives Division, Trinity Church, New York.

⁸⁵ Vestry Minutes, 10 August 1747, Vestry Minutes, The Vestry Collection, 1694-1982, Archives Division, Trinity Church, New York.

⁸⁶ Vestry Minutes, 24 November 1747, Trinity Church Archives, New York.

⁸⁷ Vestry Minutes, 24 November 1747, Trinity Church Archives, New York.

⁸⁸ Cornelius Brouwer v. the Rector of Trinity Church, 1747?, Duane Family Papers, New York Historical Society Library.

While the lowly tenants of the Church lacked the ability to select the most advantageous site for their homes, Trinity Church and King's College had the freedom to take aesthetics into account. Surrounded by three open blocks in a rapidly expanding city, the architectural grandeur of Trinity Church combined with its sweeping view of the North River was a stark contrast from the ramshackle wooden dwellings inhabited by the city's working class.⁸⁹ The land grant from King George II for the college included a plot "on the west side of the Broadway, in the west ward" fronted easterly to Church Street with 440-feet "between Barclay and Murray street [...]. And from thence running westerly between and along the said Barclay street and Murray street, to the North river."⁹⁰ At the time, the proposed site was on the outer fringes of the city, with most of the area to the north remaining unoccupied and undeveloped.⁹¹ While the situation of the College created physical distance between the students and the social elite who resided further south in the North Ward, the acquisition of waterfront property imbued the otherwise unexceptional parcel with a whiff of luxury. Opponents of the use of government money to fund the College latched onto the possible granting of waterfront property and were "of the Opinion that it [was] not probable" that "the Building of the College on the North River" would proceed.⁹² Evidently, want of money ended up delaying the start of construction as the Governors continued to solicit funds from "People generously disposed to promote so Laudable an Undertaking" both at home and abroad.⁹³ Despite receiving possession of the grounds when the

⁸⁹ Kyle Bulthuis, *Four Steeples Over the City Streets: Religion and Society in New York's Early Republic Congregations* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 19.

⁹⁰ Original Charter of Columbia College in *The Original Charter of Columbia College, in the City of New-York, October 31st 1754; with the Acts of the Legislature Altering and Amending the Same*, ed. E. B. Clayton (New York: Columbia College, 1836), 3.

⁹¹ Carl Abbott, "The Neighborhoods of New York, 1760-1775," *New York History* 55, no. 1 (1974), 39.

⁹² Letter from William Smith Jr. to Rev. Silas Leonard, 20 January 1755, MssCol 2796, Papers Relating to the College of New York and the College of New Jersey, Correspondence and Documents, William Smith Jr. Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.

⁹³ Letter from Joseph Murray to the Governors, 2 June 1755, box 1, Series I: King's College Papers, 1703-1784, Columbia College Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University.

King signed the royal charter in 1754, work on developing the lot did not commence until roughly four years later.

Although Robert Crommelin drafted the architectural plans for the new College Hall, it is unlikely that he remained engaged throughout the construction process. Instead, master carpenters likely oversaw the day-to-day operations of other tradesmen and laborers employed in bringing Crommelin's design to life. In 1768, the New York Assembly paid Andrew Gautier and Jonathan Hampton just over £303 "for Carpenters Work" performed by the pair at Fort George and the barracks near the Battery and entrusted them with an additional £218 to distribute to the other workmen. The largest portion of the outstanding funds went to William Winterton, who received £69.9.10 "for Mason's Work and Materials." An additional £7.11.8 went to Daniel Ten Eyck for "Smiths Work," £11.10.2 to Gilbert Forbes for "his Account of Ironmongery," and £25.2.7 to Daniel Ebbets for "Painting and Glazing."⁹⁴ Although no direct record exists of the individuals involved in the building of College Hall, both Gautier and Hampton were separately hired by the Governors to perform work on the College after its completion. Additionally, given the importance of existing social connections for the middling classes in securing work at the time, it can reasonably be assumed that the placement of Gautier and Hampton on retainer was the result of their performances on prior projects. Finally, a few years before construction began on the college, when Gautier risked his own life to put out a fire in the steeple of Trinity Church that spread from a fire at the New Free School, he received £50 in silver coins from the Vestry as a token of their gratitude.⁹⁵ In 1754, Gautier commissioned silversmith Adrian Bancker to melt the coins and use them to cast a commemorative bowl. The vessel, made of pure silver and

⁹⁴ An Act for the Payment of Salaries of the several Officers of the Government, and of other Services, and for the better securing the Public Funds of this Colony, 13 January 1768, in *The Colonial Laws of New York from the Year 1664 to the Revolution*, vol. 4, ed. (Albany: James B. Lyon, 1894), 967-968.

⁹⁵ Frances Gruber Safford, "Colonial Silver: In the American Wing," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 41, no. 1 (1983), 43.

depicting the Trinity schoolhouse which served as the temporary first home of King's College, was lost for over 150 years before it was found on a storage shelf by workers at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.⁹⁶

Compared to the average eighteenth-century house which was small and simple enough for people like Cornelius Brouwer to construct with assistance of a handful of family or friends, the construction of College Hall entailed a massive undertaking.⁹⁷ Building commenced on August 23, 1756 with New York Governor Sir Charles Hardy laying “the first stone” of the College.⁹⁸ The fledgling student body and tutor Leonard Cutting gathered at Edward Willett's house before making their way “to the house of Mr. *Vanderburgh*, at the *Common*.” At this point they were joined by Governor Hardy and proceeded to follow his chariot to the building site. In stark contrast to the physically demanding work laborers would soon begin, the groundbreaking ceremony was a formal and jovial affair which culminated in a “very elegant Dinner” at Willett's residence “where all the usual loyal Healths were drank [...] with the utmost Decency & Propriety.”

Unlike the then-undeveloped northern region of Manhattan, the topography of the lower portion undulates significantly, with the bedrock far below the surface in some parts.⁹⁹ Lots in close proximity to the water proved especially tricky for builders, as “the Weight of Brick and Stone Buildings require[d] that the foundations should be very firm and strong.”¹⁰⁰ The college ground consisted of earth later characterized as “mere quicksand” that would make quick work

⁹⁶ “Columbia Heirloom Discovered On Shelf in Metropolitan Museum,” *Columbia Daily Spectator*, 30 October 1953.

⁹⁷ Paula Stoner Reed, “Building with Stone in the Cumberland Valley: A Study of Regional Environmental, Technical, and Cultural Factors in Stone Construction,” PhD diss., George Washington University, 1988, 39.

⁹⁸ *New-York Gazette, or the Weekly Post-Boy*, 30 August 1756.

⁹⁹ Diane Dallal, Meta Janowitz, and Linda Stone, *South Ferry Terminal Project Final Report*, vol. 1, *Text and Figures* (New York: Metropolitan Transportation Authority, 2012), 5-12.

¹⁰⁰ *New-York Journal, or General Advertiser*, No. 1256, January 29, 1767.

of compromising the structural integrity of any shoddily constructed building.¹⁰¹ To overcome this environmental challenge, the likely first task of Gautier and Hampton was to employ a skilled mason to lay a partially sunk stone foundation. The Governors resolved that “the College be built of Grey Stone,” likely referring to a form of sandstone available locally.¹⁰² At the time, stone foundations were relatively uncommon as builders opted for the cheaper, although inferior, option of wood sills resting directly on the ground.¹⁰³ The city’s mercantile class, however, spared no expense when it came to constructing their homes, desiring 2-foot-thick foundations of “blue stone.”¹⁰⁴ The well-to-do also had the luxury of being able to design a customized floor plan alongside an itinerant master carpenter or builder whereas ordinary citizens often had no choice but to accept the standard floor plan he offered.¹⁰⁵ Fortunately for both the Governors and the tradesmen and laborers they employed, King’s College could afford materials and talent inaccessible to the vast majority of the city’s inhabitants. As the son of a respected carpenter in the city, Andrew Gautier quite literally inherited the skills and tools of his father. Records show that Daniel Gautier exhibited a high degree of occupational flexibility in catering to the city’s elite—in addition to typical orders of tables, stools, and nails, he also “[altered] the Cloth or Carpet for the Common Council Table” and performed “Painting[,] Blacking[,] and Gilding [sic].”¹⁰⁶ Andrew Gautier undoubtedly apprenticed with his father as was typical at the time

¹⁰¹ Clipping from the *Journal of Commerce*, 22 September 1847, box 1, folder 1, Series I: Park Place Campus, Buildings and Grounds Collection, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York.

¹⁰² 22 February 1757, in *Early Minutes of the Trustees*, vol. 1, 94 (for the quotation); For a description of locally-sourced building stones used in 17th- and 18th-century Manhattan construction see Diane Dallal, Meta Janowitz, and Linda Stone, *South Ferry Terminal Project*, 7-3.

¹⁰³ John Bedell and Gerald Scharfenberger, “Ordinary and Poor People in 18th-Century Delaware,” *Northeast Historical Archaeology* 29, no. 1 (2000), 30.

¹⁰⁴ Description of Properties at Maiden Lane and Pearl Street, undated, MssCol 230, box 31, folder 23, Bayard-Campbell-Pearsall Families Papers, New York Public Library.

¹⁰⁵ David Freeman Hawke, *Everyday Life in Early America* (New York: Perennial, 2003), 51.

¹⁰⁶ For a list of the work performed by Daniel Gautier for the Common Council see An Act to Apply the Monies Granted for the Support of this Government, as well as for Discharging the Salaries & Contingencies that have accrued already, as those that will become Due by the first Day of September One Thousand Seven Hundred Forty, 17 November 1739, in *The Colonial Laws of New York from the Year 1664 to the Revolution*, vol. 3 (Albany: James B. Lyon, 1894), 42; For the quotation see Warrant No. 581, 15 March 1734, in *Minutes of the Common Council of*

which provided him the strong technical background and professional connections necessary to oversee such a massive construction project.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, it is known that Gautier himself had at least one apprentice by 1761—less than a year after the completion of College Hall—who almost certainly assisted his master on the construction of King’s College.¹⁰⁸ To that end, Gautier and Hampton likely contracted a mason they worked with in the past or whose work they were familiar with—the lack of the clear designations between master craftsmen and journeymen afforded the middling class greater social mobility than was the case in England and placed an outsized emphasis on workers’ production quality.¹⁰⁹

Aside from the physically strenuous work, masons also had to contend with long hours. One mason employed by Robert Livingston at Ancram complained of working “whole day[s]” with only Sundays off.¹¹⁰ Upon arrival at the building site, the contracted masons would assess the grounds before acquiring the necessary materials. Because the building was to have a low basement, Hampton and Gautier first had to employ laborers to dig a massive rectangular hole in the ground measuring roughly 180 feet in length, 30 feet wide, and 5 feet deep which meant laborers removed 21,600 cubic feet of earth.¹¹¹ To construct the foundation itself, the masons first needed to ascertain the quantity of stones needed as well as the proper dimensions for the stone blocks. Quarriers then extracted and roughly shaped the grey sandstone to the specified size before sending it to the building site for further refinement by “rough masons” who dressed the

the City of New York, 1675-1776, vol. 4, *January 24, 1730 to September 19, 1740* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1905), 205.

¹⁰⁷ Jacquellann Killian, “United by water: Cabinetmaking traditions in the Delaware River Valley, 1670-1740,” PhD diss., University of Delaware, 2015, 115.

¹⁰⁸ *Seventeenth Annual Report, 1912, of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society* (Albany: Argus Co., 1912), 607-8.

¹⁰⁹ Samuel McKee, *Labor in Colonial New York, 1664-1776* (Port Washington: Ira J. Friedman, 1935), 22.

¹¹⁰ Account of Masonry Performed for Robert Livingston, September 21 to November 12, 1767, Livingston Family Papers, Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC03107.03134.

¹¹¹ Olof Cervin, “The So-called Colonial Architecture of the United States,” in *The Georgian Period: A Collection of Papers Dealing with ‘Colonial’ or XVIII-Century Architecture In the United States Together with References to Earlier Provincial and True Colonial Work*, ed. William Rotch Ware (New York: American Architect, 1909), 18.

blocks and cut simple, straight moldings.¹¹² To protect the materials from theft, the Governors ordered a part of the College ground be enclosed “for Storing Materials and [built] a Lime House” to protect the unfinished supplies from degrading due to exposure.¹¹³ Laborers then sunk the building stones slightly into the ground before masons applied lime mortar to bind them together. The lime mortar was probably purchased locally, as excavations of contemporaneous structures reveal that New York’s builders used sand collected from Manhattan—and sometimes from the building site itself—as binders to enhance the strength of the mortar.¹¹⁴ Additionally, because lime mortar only remains plastic for a handful of hours once it is mixed, a cadre laborers would typically be employed in continuously mixing together new batches on an as-needed basis.¹¹⁵ Once all the stones were arranged and the mortar applied, the workmen likely received a slight reprieve from the strenuous physical labor. Lime mortar took weeks or months to set completely and hastily starting on the framing before the stone foundation set could easily compromise the structural integrity of the entire building, especially when on top of sandy soil.¹¹⁶ Unused materials were likely placed back into the enclosed area until the masons felt confident that the mortar was set.

The first shipment of timber arrived at Whitehall Slip on the East River “on or before the Twentieth day of April [in 1757]” per the Governors’ agreement with Jonathan Miller and Samuel Williams.¹¹⁷ Consisting of 130 29-foot long beams of white oak measuring 5 by 12 inches, eight 18-foot long measuring 8 by 12 inches, 16 white oak “door Jambs,” and eight “door

¹¹² Reed, “Building with Stone in the Cumberland Valley,” 39.

¹¹³ 11 November 1755, in *Early Minutes of the Trustees*, vol. 1, 78.

¹¹⁴ Dallal, Janowitz, and Stone, *South Ferry Terminal Project*, 7-4.

¹¹⁵ Harley McKee, *Introduction to Early American Masonry: Stone, Brick, Mortar and Plaster* (Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1973), 65.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Committee on Timber for the College Building, Articles of Agreement with Jonathan Miller and Samuel Williams, 5 March 1757, box 1, Series I: King's College Papers, 1703-1784, Columbia College Papers, 1703-1964, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York.

heads of white Oak,” transporting the delivery from the wharf up to the building side undoubtedly required significant manpower and coordination. Each of the 29-foot long beams weighed just shy of 750 pounds—far too heavy to be carried on foot.¹¹⁸ Familiar with the heavy loads of cargo unloaded at New York’s slips daily, carters positioned themselves on nearby streets in the hopes of snagging a job. One or more of these enterprising but economically depressed men were likely employed by Hampton and Gautier to assist with carrying the timber to the building site, dragging the beams behind them on carts pulled by oxen or horses. The entire process of unloading the timber from the ship, loading it onto carts, and taking it up the Broadway probably unfolded over multiple days given the sheer volume of material. Workmen were stationed on the College grounds in advance of the shipment’s arrival to assist with unloading and stacking the timber to prepare for framing. Any excess timber that the builders did not plan on using immediately were likely stored elsewhere, most probably at the boardyard Hampton maintained on Beekman Street.¹¹⁹ The timber would then be sorted into different groups according to their purpose—for example, separate piles for trusses, joists, and beams—before the most senior carpenter on the job site, likely Hampton or Gautier, took inventory to ensure there were no missing pieces.¹²⁰ Workers then marked the reference faces of each piece of timber using a pencil or chalk to indicate its intended orientation in the frame which served to prevent future mishaps.¹²¹

The first task which Hampton and Gautier undertook was assembling and securing the sill timbers horizontally to the stone foundation. This was undoubtedly made more challenging

¹¹⁸ American Hardwood Export Council, *Structural Design in American Hardwoods* (London: American Hardwood Export Council, 2005).

¹¹⁹ "Advertisement," *New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury* (New York, New York), no. 1124, February 15, 1773: [3]. *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.

¹²⁰ Tedd Benson and James Gruber, *Building the Timber Frame House: The Revival of a Forgotten Craft* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1980), 114.

¹²¹ Michael Beaudry, *Crafting Frames of Timber* (Montville: Mud Pond Hewing and Framing, 2009), 99.

by the sheer size of the building—the front of College Hall spanned 180 feet and 6 inches, a length which far eclipsed that of any singular tree. Instead of attempting to construct a single sill to support the entire building, Hampton and Gautier opted to create multiple sills that were later joined together. The six sills corresponded to the dimensions of the six bays and were likely attached by mortise and tenon joints which could withstand the stress of a massive, three-story stone-clad building. While the gables at the east and west ends were composed of singular 29-foot long boards measuring 5 inches by 12 inches, the builders needed to join multiple pieces of timber together to form the north and south sides of the sill.

The process of fitting the timber into frames to prepare for raising was the most time consuming and tedious part of the construction process.¹²² Even for a modestly-sized dwelling house, framing could take many hundreds of hours to complete, let alone for a three-story building close to 200 feet in length.¹²³ Laborers, under the direction of Hampton or Gautier, arranged the heavy timber posts and beams on the ground into the sides of the frame.¹²⁴ Assembling the frame brought men from across the strata of New York society together and necessitated cooperation between skilled and unskilled workers as well as communication between craftsmen and their employers, the Governors. They not only joined pieces of wood together, but the act of building united disparate classes to achieve a common goal—although occupying different positions on the social hierarchy, each role was equally necessary. Gautier and Hampton could not erect such a massive structure by themselves and needed the strength of a veritable army of unskilled laborers to realize the Governors' grand Georgian vision. Similarly, the middling- and lower-class men they supervised relied on the expertise and skill of trained

¹²² Benson and Gruber, *Building the Timber Frame House*, 112.

¹²³ Jack Sobon and Roger Schroeder, *Timber Frame Construction: All About Post and Beam Building* (North Adams: Storey, 1984), 173.

¹²⁴ Harold Shurtleff, *The Log Cabin Myth: A Study of the Early Dwellings of the English Colonists in North America*, ed. Samuel Eliot (Gloucester: P. Smith, 1967), 17.

master carpenters and other artisans in the building trade—if a man wanted to build an average-sized house, he sought out the assistance of a builder whom he would labor alongside of for the duration of the project.¹²⁵

While the Governors were undoubtedly less involved in the construction than the typical middling-class worker, they were never entirely divorced from the process and made it a point to closely monitor the contractors' progress. In this way, College Hall encapsulated the intertwined social and labor network of eighteenth century New York that prohibited the segregation of the genteel from those they employed, indentured, or enslaved. Less technical tasks such as sawing boards to the correct length or drilling mortise holes likely fell on the shoulders of Gautier's apprentice and other contracted carpenters. The workers also shaped wooden pegs, either of oak or pine, to the necessary width and length for each joint. These men, under the supervision of Gautier and Hampton, learned how to read the building fabric—each log had to be dealt with individually according to its intended position and physical characteristics. Through hands-on technical experience, low- and middling-class men gained a practical education by working on College Hall, a strategy not dissimilar to that taken by the college's professors who also emphasized repetition and practice.

¹²⁵ Henry Glassie, "Architects, Vernacular Traditions, and Society," *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 1, no. 2 (1990), 12.

Chapter 3: The Test of Time

When finally completed, College Hall loomed large over the horizon, featuring prominently in artists' depictions of the New York shoreline with its distinctive cupola rising above the smattering of stout surrounding buildings. Situated on an expansive grassy plot dotted with sycamores, College Hall projected an image of gentility that the majority of laborers who assisted in its construction could only dream of. Ornate porticos framed by sashed windows marked the entrances to the building, operating as symbols of the privileged status of those permitted to enter. All south-facing windows had unobstructed views of the North River owing to the Governors' decision to purchase the adjacent water lots in order to block future construction efforts. Taken together, the stone edifice King's College occupied recreated the same markers of class and status that formed the backbone of New York's social order.

For Andrew Gautier and Jonathan Hampton, the completion of College Hall did not mark the end of their involvement with King's College, as both were employed to perform repairs and make improvements to the building in the subsequent years. The grandiose stone building required extensive upkeep both to preserve the building's integrity and make stylistic upgrades. Excluding the main hall and library, "which if converted into Rooms would contain nine Students," the College was "capable of receiving 48 Students allowing to each a private Study."¹²⁶ In May 1763, the Governors ordered the committee which was previously appointed to oversee the construction of the college "to inclose the College Ground with a Fence of Posts and Rails."¹²⁷ While the building's upper-class occupants and benefactors were not preoccupied by geographical isolation from the lower- and middling-classes, the evolution of the area around the

¹²⁶ The usual bill of fare in King's College, 1763-4, box 1, Columbia College Papers, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York.

¹²⁷ *Early Minutes of the Trustees*, vol. 1, 1755-1770 (New York: Columbia University, 1932), 223.

College Ground into a notorious hotbed of prostitution necessitated a certain level of protection from undesirable elements.¹²⁸ Temptations abounded for the young scholars who called King's College home and the Governors, aware of the questionable moral compass of teenage boys, decided to physically block off the grounds from the debauchery on the street. "For the security of [the students'] morals" the building was surrounded by a tall fence and "porter [who] constantly attend[ed] at the front gate."¹²⁹ Although the contractor to be employed is not mentioned, the following May the Governors ordered that three members of the aforementioned committee "examine Mr. Gautier's Account and make Report at the next meeting."¹³⁰

Employed by the Governors to serve as the repairman on retainer for the College, Jonathan Hampton likely made frequent visits to the property from his house—conveniently located on nearby Church Street—to fix common problems such as a leaking roof or uneven floors. Evidently, Gautier and Hampton developed a strong personal and professional rapport because in 1765, the pair joined together with Hampton's father and two other men to petition the colonial government "for a grant of a tract of 25,000 acres of land east of the township of Pultney, in lieu of the Township of Orwell, formerly granted under New Hampshire."¹³¹ The petition was successful and the following July the group of five men were granted title to the land.¹³² In January 1768, less than a year after he retained his repairman position at King's College, Hampton joined forces with Gautier to secure a municipal contract. The General

¹²⁸ Clifton Hood, *In Pursuit of Privilege: A History of New York City's Upper Class and the Making of a Metropolis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 33.

¹²⁹ Copy of "Aitken's General American Register, and the Gentleman's and Tradesman's Complete Annual Account Book, and Calendar, for the Pocket or Desk, for the Year of Our Lord, 1773," box 1, folder 1, Series I: Park Place Campus, Buildings and Grounds Collection, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University, New York.

¹³⁰ *Early Minutes of the Trustees*, vol. 1, 1755-1770, 255.

¹³¹ Petition of Andrew Gautier, Benjamin Blagg, Robert Boyd, Jonathan Hampton Sr., and Jonathan Hampton, Jr., 27 November 1765, in *Calendar of N.Y. Colonial Manuscripts Indorsed Land Papers; in the Office of the Secretary of State of New York, 1643-1803* (Albany: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1864), 391.

¹³² New York Council Minutes, 18 July 1766, in *Documents of the Senate of the State of New York*, vol. 8, Nos. 32 to 36, *Inclusive* (Albany: Argus, 1903), 519.

Assembly hired the pair to perform repairs to Fort George, which seems to have jumpstarted Hampton's career. With the close of the Seven Years War in 1763, contracts with the city government were highly desirable and afforded a number of middling class tradesmen including carpenters, blacksmiths, and carters the opportunity to make good money in an otherwise credit-starved city.¹³³ He diversified his income stream by working as a middleman, selling excess lumber in the city on behalf of merchants residing elsewhere. Captain John Roff of Albany contracted with Hampton in November 1768 to sell a shipment of 133 pieces of pine timber "at the Rate of Eight Shilling p[er] piece on Condition that [Jonathan Hampton] is to Do his utmost Endeavours [sic], to Sell them as fast as he Can."¹³⁴ Not coincidentally, the witness to the agreement was none other than Hampton's apparent business partner, Andrew Gautier. Evidently, the General Assembly found Hampton's work to be satisfactory, and in January 1770 he was paid for completing additional work on Fort George.¹³⁵ The combination of his hefty municipal contracts, service to King's College, and supplementary income from working as a middleman in the lumber trade afforded Hampton a newfound social and economic mobility, ascending the subtle gradations within the working class.¹³⁶ Although far from rivaling the immense fortunes of his employers, Hampton accumulated enough money to live comfortably.

In March of 1770, Hampton's luck expired as he watched his house and workshop go up in flames in what was "said to have been the greatest [fire] that ever happened in this City."¹³⁷ The fire started in "a large wooden building" on "Scotch Street"—modern-day Ann

¹³³ Hodges, *New York City Cartmen*, 51-2.

¹³⁴ Agreement between Captain John Roff and Jonathan Hampton, November 30, 1768, MssCol 230, Box 6, Folder 6, Bayard-Campbell-Pearsall Families Papers, New York Public Library.

¹³⁵ Votes and Proceedings of the General Assembly of New York, 21 Nov 1769 - 27 Jan 1770, CO 5/1219, National Archives, London, UK, accessed via Adam Matthew Digital.

¹³⁶ Cornelia Dayton and Sharon Salinger, *Robert Love's Warnings: Searching for Strangers in Colonial Boston* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 37.

¹³⁷ "New-York, March, 12," *Boston Chronicle* III, no. 12, March 19, 1770: 91. *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.

Street—owned by Hampton “where some Carpenters had been at work” and owing to the flammability of the workshop and surrounding structures, spread to multiple buildings. The nearby area consisted of “all wooden houses,” an indication of the lower- and middling-class demographic of the residents. Indeed, a contemporaneous newspaper account of the fire noted that “what [made] the Loss greater, [was], that the sufferers in general [were] in very indigent Circumstances” and required the “liberal” assistance of the city’s “opulent” inhabitants to survive. Among the victims was Daniel Amar, who lost two houses in the blaze, including one he rented out to “James, a Pilot.” Amar was a fellow carpenter whose brother John served as “master carpenter to the Board of Ordnance” and likely leased out his second home to itinerant laborers to supplement his income.¹³⁸ Although quick-thinking residents alerted the officers and soldiers of the nearest regiment upon seeing the smoke, efforts to extinguish the flames were “much baffled by the narrowness of the Streets [and] a Scarcity of water.” Onlookers watched in awe and fear and the flames from Hampton’s house “extended across the Street, and burnt with great fury” while the helpful citizens attempted to douse the building with water. After many hours of strenuous firefighting, the fire was put out, but not before extensive damage was done to both Hampton’s property and the surrounding houses. In all, the fire destroyed sixteen buildings, including three houses occupied by widows, “Adrian Bogart’s Bolting-house,” and a “Store-house belonging to Walter Franklin, with a quantity of Logwood therein.”

The unfortunate loss of his workshop and primary dwelling crippled Jonathan Hampton financially. Although there is no conclusive evidence regarding the source of the fire, authorities apparently concluded that it likely started in Hampton’s workshop due to the simple fact that it was the first building to burn. It is also unclear whether or not Hampton himself was present at

¹³⁸ Will of John Amar, 19 September 1781, in *Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1901*, vol. 10, *October 23, 1780–November 5, 1782* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1902), 136.

the time of the fire or if the carpenters were working unsupervised, but regardless, he may have been held liable for the damages. Whether or not the victims of the fire were able to rebuild their homes is similarly unclear, but it is known that Hampton managed to begin construction on a new house on the Ann Street lot, although he was unable to finish it before declaring bankruptcy. The house was “built upon the whole breadth of the lot” which measured “about 70 feet deep, and about 24 feet wide, from front to rear, including a gangway in the front” and adjoined a second lot in the rear.¹³⁹ Made of brick, the house had eight rooms in total, with three on the first floor and five on the second as well as “a large garret” and “an excellent cellar under the whole house.” Although not the exact house Hampton resided in prior to the fire, he likely rebuilt it in the same fashion both out of convenience and attractiveness to potential buyers. The inclusion of a garret in the floorplan is telling as garrets typically housed the servants’ or slaves’ rooms and would have been a necessity for Hampton as he owned at least one male slave up until the liquidation of his estate.¹⁴⁰ By constructing an entirely separate—and inferior—living space for his slave in what would otherwise be unused space, Hampton recreated the same architectural social distancing he previously included in his construction of College Hall. Tasked with crafting a space for the progenitors of the New York mercantile elite, Hampton and Gautier both took care to physically separate the College’s privileged residents from the uncivilized antics of the surrounding working-class neighborhood. High fences placed along the perimeter of the College’s grounds allowed passersby to admire the Georgian-inspired stone monolith through the wooden slats, a teasing glimpse of unattainable prosperity. The architectural design of King’s College deliberately protected against unwanted interaction between insiders and outsiders, a

¹³⁹ "Advertisement," *New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury*, no. 1120, April 12, 1773: Supplement [1]. *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.

¹⁴⁰ Stephen Hague, “Building Status in the British Atlantic World: The Gentleman’s House in the English West Country and Pennsylvania,” in *Building the British Atlantic World: Spaces, Places, and Material Culture, 1600-1850*, ed. Daniel Maudlin and Bernard Herman (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 240.

dynamic Hampton adapted and applied to his own property. Although not of the same stature as the students he indirectly served, Hampton amplified and defined his own social status by creating a Prospective buyers were informed that the house

Hampton apparently claimed bankruptcy and was found insolvent because on October 13, 1772, the “Assignees” of Hampton’s estate—John Reade, Francis Lewis, and Daniel Dunscomb—held a public sale of household and kitchen furniture as well as “a Negro Man and some Timber” owned by Hampton.¹⁴¹ The advertisement of the liquidation of Hampton’s assets by his creditors reveals as much about the carpenter’s ascent as it does his downfall. In the rapidly expanding and affluent urban landscape of New York, a sentiment existed that “*Thrift, Diligence, and Method in Business, seldom fail to raise a Man’s Fortune in every Condition of Life.*”¹⁴² Evidently, Hampton took these values to heart as he climbed his way up to the pinnacle of the traditional productive triad of master, journeyman, apprentice, and slave(s).¹⁴³ The close of the Seven Years War in 1763, however, ushered in an economic depression that sent shockwaves through the city. As the British troops left the province, small merchants and artisans experienced a decline in their earnings with the loss of lucrative wartime government contracts. For Hampton and other members of the middling class, decreased economic opportunity coupled with a decline in credit necessitated declarations of insolvency.¹⁴⁴

Unlike the British bankruptcy practice, which automatically declared bankruptcy against a defaulter, the colonial American system almost exclusively relied on the defaulter—rather than his or her creditors—to initiate insolvency procedures.¹⁴⁵ Additionally, debtors in British

¹⁴¹ "Advertisement," *New-York Journal*, no. 1553, October 8, 1772: 747, *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.

¹⁴² “The Ways to raise a Fortune; or, the Art of growing Rich, from a late Magazine,” *New-York Gazette, or Weekly Post-Boy*, June 25, 1750, pg. 1.

¹⁴³ Marcus Rediker, “‘Good Hands, Stout Heart, and Fast Feet’: The History and Culture of Working People in Early America,” *Labour/Le Travail* 10 (1982), 131.

¹⁴⁴ Hodges, *New York City Cartmen*, 51.

¹⁴⁵ Peter J. Coleman, *Debtors and Creditors in America: Insolvency, Imprisonment for Debt, and Bankruptcy, 1607-1900* (Washington, D.C.: Beard Books, 1999), 12.

America were rarely imprisoned for insolvency, though imprisonment persisted as the most common punishment for insolvent debtors in the metropole.¹⁴⁶ Attitudes towards insolvency varied widely and some critics characterized it as an excuse for laziness. For example, one commentator theorized that if people “laid up all those little Sums they [...] spent at the Tavern, or other Places of chargeable Resort, they would have found themselves [...] Masters of a competent Fortune, rather than in need of an Act of Insolvency.”¹⁴⁷ Facing increasingly dire financial straits, Hampton chose to take advantage of this more lenient colonial bankruptcy system to cut his losses and default to his creditors.

A second sale was held by the assignees of Hampton’s estate hoping to collect on their debts a month later, on November 3. Up for auction were two lots, “one lot [...] in Chapel-Street” that “[ran] through to the back Street, containing two Houses” and a second fronted William Street and contained four houses.¹⁴⁸ In the advertisement publicizing the auction, the assignees also urged “All Persons who [had] Demands on [...] Hampton, or [were] indebted to him [...] to apply to the said Assignees” for relief, suggesting that there may have been additional outstanding debt beyond what the assignees anticipated. Although the status of the property on William Street is unclear, apparently no one purchased the lots on Chapel Street because one of Hampton’s creditors, Joseph Reade, announced that he intended to lease the Chapel Street house and a second house with “the same dimensions” as the former on Ann Street.¹⁴⁹ The decision to lease rather than sell the property was likely a strategic one. At the time, a scarcity of money made property sales difficult, as property taken by executors or creditors was sold at public

¹⁴⁶ Jay Cohen, “The History of Imprisonment for Debt and its Relation to the Development of Discharge in Bankruptcy,” *Journal of Legal History* 3, no. 2 (1982), 163.

¹⁴⁷ “The Ways to raise a Fortune,” *New-York Gazette, or Weekly Post-Boy*, June 25, 1750, pg. 1.

¹⁴⁸ “Advertisement,” *New-York Journal*, no. 1553, October 8, 1772: 747, Readex: America's Historical Newspapers.

¹⁴⁹ “Advertisement,” *New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury*, no. 1120, April 12, 1773: Supplement [1]. Readex: America's Historical Newspapers.

auction where cash was the only accepted form of payment rather than promissory notes.¹⁵⁰ The impatience and frustration of Hampton's creditors are evident in the language they used in the fourth auction advertisement, as they requested that anyone with outstanding debts "contracted before the 7th of September last" against the carpenter "bring in their accounts properly attested" to Reade, Lewis, and Dunscomb so that they "may make a dividend as soon as possible." The auction, which was scheduled for May 25, 1773, consisted of "Three small houses in Ann-street, belonging to the estate of Jonathan Hampton."¹⁵¹

Upon the ostensible liquidation of the majority of his assets by the spring of 1773, Hampton needed to devise a new strategy to restore his standing as a successful artisan and tradesman. The ongoing conflict between the colonists and the Crown proved the perfect opportunity. With meager, if any, financial resources, a return to life as a carpenter was untenable for Hampton. Credit was hard to come by even for successful merchants, let alone insolvent debtors like Hampton who proved to be incapable of repayment.¹⁵² As it was, nearly 2 percent of New York's inhabitants lived in the almshouse and an additional 3 percent "received outrelief."¹⁵³ Additionally, by the time of the Revolution the incomes of an estimated one third of all free men in America's cities fell below the poverty line.¹⁵⁴ Other members of the middling class in New York enlisted in British militias and supplied provisions and services to the Crown's troops to earn a living and worked as smiths, carpenters, carters, and conductors on behalf of the

¹⁵⁰ Bruce Mann, *Republic of Debtors: Bankruptcy in the Age of American Independence* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 30.

¹⁵¹ "Advertisement," *New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury*, no. 1124, May 10, 1773: [2]. Readex: America's Historical Newspapers.

¹⁵² Daniel Johnson, "'Nothing will satisfy you but money': Debt, Freedom, and the Mid-Atlantic Culture of Money, 1670–1764," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 19, no. 1 (2021), 130.

¹⁵³ Billy G. Smith, "Poverty and Economic Marginality in Eighteenth-Century America," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 132, no. 1 (1988), 95.

¹⁵⁴ Wolf, *As Various as Their Land*, 185.

loyalist cause.¹⁵⁵ Unfortunately for Hampton, the destruction of his workshop ruled out the possibility of contracting his carpentry services to the British, meaning he had to get creative to absolve himself of his financial challenges. Later that summer, Hampton took to monetizing his professional connections—namely, recruiting carpenters to assist the British in the war effort. Labor networks were highly social in eighteenth-century New York and even among the merchant class kinship ties persisted as the predominant method to secure new business.¹⁵⁶ Although the fire destroyed the workshop itself, the connections forged by Hampton within its wooden walls remained and proved to be extraordinarily profitable.

Laborers and tradesmen in Boston constituted the majority of the town's political clubs and organized against the British occupation.¹⁵⁷ Recognizing the essential nature of their trades to the success of the British offensive, the laboring classes throughout Massachusetts banded together to seal off the labor market. The committees of thirteen towns resolved that any inhabitant of Massachusetts or its neighboring provinces who provided “labour, lumber, joists, spars, pickets, straw, bricks, or any materials whatsoever” to the troops at Boston should be regarded as “most inveterate enemies.”¹⁵⁸ The strong opposition to the British cause among the working classes forced General Thomas Gage, a British officer tasked with the construction of war infrastructure in Boston, to import laborers from elsewhere in the colonies. In a letter to the Earl of Dartmouth dated November 15, 1774, Governor John Wentworth explained that he “sent [Gage] a party of able men” to Boston after Gage requested Wentworth “furnish some carpenters to build and prepare quarters for his Majesty's troops” since the “carpenters there [were]

¹⁵⁵ Ruma Chopra, *Unnatural Rebellion: Loyalists in New York City during the Revolution* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 53.

¹⁵⁶ Naomi R. Lamoreaux, “Banks, Kinship, and Economic Development: The New England Case,” *Journal of Economic History* 46, no. 3 (1986), 653.

¹⁵⁷ Herbert M. Morais, “Artisan Democracy and the American Revolution,” *Science & Society* 6, no. 3 (1942), 228.

¹⁵⁸ Quoted in Arthur Meier Schlesinger, *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763-1776* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1918), 387.

withdrawn, and the service much distressed.”¹⁵⁹ The ire of Boston’s laboring classes towards loyalist sympathizers signified a social divide in the colonial populace, one which carpenters and other tradesmen who contracted with the British military sought to reinforce. Social ordering was a key function of fortifications and barracks, physically separating insiders and outsiders as well as creating distinctions between the soldiers’ status.¹⁶⁰

A handbill distributed throughout New York by “the free citizens” in the fall of 1774 sought to distinguish the honorable merchants from those who merely wanted to turn a quick profit at the expense of “the glorious cause of *American* freedom.”¹⁶¹ The authors decried the actions of several inhabitants who provided material support to the British troops. Whereas merchants who refused to lend their vessels “for the base purpose of transporting troops and military stores to *Boston*” were portrayed as “virtuous people,” those who shirked their patriotic duty to protest against tyrannical rule from above were “sordid miscreant[s]” who, in the pamphleteers view, were traitors. The handbill specifically condemned Francis Post for “inadvertently” engaging in the construction of “some chests for the transportation of arms” to Boston as well as Jonathan Hampton who “undertook to contract with house carpenters, for the purpose (as is supposed) of building barracks at *Boston*.” When confronted by fellow British-American colonists about “the tendency of their conduct,” Post and Hampton supposedly “declined the abominable service.” The charges levied against Hampton by other tradesmen were more than mere speculation—in October 1774, Major John Montresor ordered paymaster

¹⁵⁹ Quoted in Otis Grant Hammond, *Tories of New Hampshire in the War of the Revolution* (Concord: New Hampshire Historical Society, 1917), 38.

¹⁶⁰ James Coltrain, “Constructing Empires: Architecture, Power, and Provincial Identity in Early America,” PhD diss., Northwestern University, 2011, 19.

¹⁶¹ Handbill distributed in New York City, 14 September 1774, in *American Archives: Consisting of a Collection of Authentick Records, State Papers, Debates, and Letters and Other Notices of Publick Affairs, the Whole Forming a Documentary History of the Origin and Progress of the North American Colonies; of the Causes and Accomplishment of the American Revolution; And of the Constitution of Government for the United States, to the Final Ratification Thereof*, vol. 1, *From the King’s Message of March 7th, 1774 to the Declaration of Independence, by the United States, in 1776*, ed. Peter Force (Washington, D.C.: M. St. Clair Clarke and Peter Force, 1837), 782.

William Forman to pay Hampton £100 New York currency for the expenses he accrued “coming from Newyork [sic] to Boston, [and] returning again to Newyork [sic] and coming a second time [...] with Contracted Artificers for carrying on His Majesty’s Works.”¹⁶² It is possible to see why the bankrupt Hampton was drawn to the British—his compensation far exceeded the amount dispensed to his counterparts assisting the American side. In 1776, the “Director of Carpenters” Thomas Urann received £46 and ten shillings from the United States Army for “one months pay for himself & the Carpenters under his care.”¹⁶³ The account of Hampton contracting carpenters is confirmed by a petition sent to the Provincial Congress in August 1775, wherein a number of New York carpenters requested what amounted to amnesty for a young apprentice who was “seduced” by Hampton to travel to Boston.¹⁶⁴

Philip Schurman was a carpenter in New York who “had but just ended his apprenticeship” in 1774 when Hampton approached him, along with other “unhappy persons,” with a proposition of contracting with the British. Schurman, son of New York carpenter Frederick Schureman, accepted the offer and traveled northward in the hopes of reaping the promised fortune Hampton described.¹⁶⁵ Instead, Schurman “was taken by the American Army at Boston” and detained on account of his loyalist sympathies. The petitioners explained that Schurman’s friends “wrote long ago pressing him to come home” but soon learned that although Schurman wished to return to New York “provided any opportunity cou’d [sic] have been got,” Hampton ostensibly prevented the young carpenter from doing so. Although there is no surviving

¹⁶² Major John Montresor to Paymaster William Forman, 1 October 1774, in *The Historical Magazine, and Notes and Queries, Concerning the Antiquities, History and Biography of America*, vol. 2, series 2 (Morrisania: Henry B. Dawson, 1869), 318.

¹⁶³ Artemas Ward to Ebenezer Hancock with orders to pay Director of the Carpenter Thomas Urann, 2 November 1776, Documents Relating to 1776, Gilder Lehrman Collection, 1493-1859, Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC01450.202.

¹⁶⁴ Petition of Philip Rhinelander and Others, 21 August 1775, in *Calendar of Historical Manuscripts Relating to the War of the Revolution, in the Office of the Secretary of State*, vol. 1 (Albany: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1868), 120.

¹⁶⁵ *Schuremans of New York*, ed. Richard Wynkoop (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1903), 17.

documentation in which the motivations behind Hampton's apparent willingness to serve the loyalist cause are explained, given the fractional nature of colonial allegiances among the middling classes, it seems likely that Hampton aligned himself with the metropole not out of ideological agreement, but rather economic opportunism. Rather than a stark divide between patriots and loyalists, there was significant conflict between tenants and landlords within each group that prevented a clear division of interests.¹⁶⁶ So-called 'passive' loyalists like Hampton did not necessarily align themselves with a desire for British rule but instead saw the continuation of the Crown's supremacy as beneficial to their self-interest.¹⁶⁷ Philip Schurman's brother John traveled north to Boston to plead his sibling's case and argued that he acted under the influence of Hampton rather than his own loyalist sympathies. It is not known whether the efforts of Schurman's brother and professional associates were successful in this instance, but Schurman was evidently freed eventually, as he married Sarah Elizabeth Rhineland and the pair relocated to St. John, New Brunswick in 1783.¹⁶⁸

While Hampton's recruit apparently absconded, Hampton himself continued on supplying the British troops in Boston. On July 31, 1775, upwards of "800 men [...] went from Roxbury" to the spot of the then-destroyed lighthouse where they found "the Enemy."¹⁶⁹ The enemy consisted of "the infamous Jonathan Hampton of New York" along with twenty-two royal marines—including "the Lieutenant who commanded the party belonged to the *Preston*," two serjeants, and two corporals—and eleven other "tory carpenters."¹⁷⁰ The prisoners were promptly

¹⁶⁶ Cho-Chien Feng, "Loyalist Minds: Cultural Loyalism in Revolutionary New York," PhD diss., Saint Louis University, 2020, 63.

¹⁶⁷ Sophie H. Jones, "Steadily Attached to His Majesty? Varieties of Loyalism in Revolutionary New York," *Journal of Early American History* 9, no. 2-3 (2019), 178.

¹⁶⁸ *Schuremans of New York*, 17.

¹⁶⁹ *New England Chronicle*, 3 August 1775, in *Naval Documents of the American Revolution*, vol. 1, *American Theatre: Dec. 1, 1774–Sept. 2, 1775; European Theatre: Dec. 6, 1774–Aug. 9, 1775*, ed. William Bell Clark (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Publishing Office, 1964), 1050.

¹⁷⁰ Franklin Rice, *The Worcester Book: A Diary of Noteworthy Events in Worcester, Massachusetts from 1657 to 1883* (Worcester: Putnam, Davis and Co., 1884), 96.

transported to “Head Quarters at Cambridge” and then to Worcester before being transferred to the gaol in Springfield six days later where he and two other carpenters were “obliged to lay on the floor.”¹⁷¹ On the way to Springfield, one of the prisoners “stole a blanket out of the country gaol where they halted one night” and carried it with him on the following march before the theft was discovered by an officer who promptly “ordered a ring to be made, and tried the fellow by a court-martial, found him guilty, and immediately he was tied to a tree, and whipped.”¹⁷² Hampton remained imprisoned in the Springfield gaol for just shy of two months, when on the second of October, he managed to escape.

The man responsible for ensuring Hampton was kept behind bars, Springfield gaoler Abner Smith, placed an advertisement in the *New-York Journal* roughly two weeks after Hampton’s escape offering a £4 reward to “whoever [...] [took] up said Jonathan Hampton and convey[ed] him in any gaol.”¹⁷³ Smith informed the public to be on the lookout for the fugitive and provided the only known physical description of Hampton. According to Smith, the master carpenter stood “about 5 feet 10 inches high” and had “short curl’d hair,” as well as being “something hard of hearing.” Unlike some convicts who wore standard transport-issue clothing, typically consisting of canvas frocks and trousers with cotton waistcoats, Hampton remained in his own clothes, most probably the same outfit he wore when intercepted by the American forces.¹⁷⁴ When he escaped from the Springfield Gaol he “had on a blue surtout” and a “darkish brown coat,” both typical articles of clothing in revolutionary America.¹⁷⁵ Hampton also wore a “green jacket” paired with “black breeches” and “a pair of mixed coloured ribbed stockings.”

¹⁷¹ "Extract of a Letter from New Milford, Dated August 8," *Constitutional Gazette* (New York, New York), no. 4, August 12, 1775: [1]. *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ "Advertisement," *New-York Journal*, no. 1712, October 26, 1775: [4]. *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.

¹⁷⁴ Frederick Hall Schmidt, “British Convict Servant Labor in Colonial Virginia,” PhD diss., College of William and Mary, 1976, 124.

¹⁷⁵ "Advertisement," *New-York Journal*, no. 1712, October 26, 1775: [4]. *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.

While runaways typically wore short jackets and trousers, Hampton also wore the more fashionable pairing of breeches with a coat, a style reserved for men of relative means.¹⁷⁶ Unlike the laborers and mechanics who wore long trousers, knee breeches such as the ones Hampton wore when he absconded signified gentility—the fashionable equivalent of a title of respect such as Gentleman, Esquire, or Mister.¹⁷⁷ Hampton’s clothing choices also differentiated him from other, less-fortunate runaways—he wore “Silver Knee and Shoe Buckles” and his coat had “Gold Sleeve Buttons of an oval Figure.”¹⁷⁸

Hampton evidently managed to avoid capture, as he continued to assist the British until at least 1778. Along with two other carpenters, Hampton received £110.15.1 for unspecified work. Between April 1 and June 30, 1778, Captain Montresor paid Hampton £1,100 “for 44 Contracted Carpenters sent to Philadelphia” during the aforementioned two-month period.¹⁷⁹ It appears as though this was Hampton’s final sojourn into the world of wartime privateering as there are no further references to him in the archival record. At some point after the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, Hampton traveled to England to presumably escape prosecution for his provision of material support to the British. He reaped the rewards of his risky enterprise and supposedly accumulated a sizable fortune of 50,000 guineas, or £52,500.¹⁸⁰ Beyond his earnings, nothing is known about Hampton’s life in England, although he likely lived comfortably. Despite his brush with poverty following the tragic destruction of his home and workshop, Hampton

¹⁷⁶ Jonathan Prude, “To Look upon the ‘Lower Sort’: Runaway Ads and the Appearance of Unfree Laborers in America, 1750-1800,” *Journal of American History* 78, no. 1 (1991), 132.

¹⁷⁷ Edward Countryman, *A People in Revolution: The American Revolution and Political Society in New York, 1760-1790* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1989), 11-2.

¹⁷⁸ “Advertisement,” *Connecticut Journal* (New Haven, Connecticut), no. 417, October 11, 1775: [2]. *Readex: America’s Historical Newspapers*.

¹⁷⁹ Items mentioned in Captain Montresor’s Memorial to which exception was taken by the Auditors of the Treasury, in *Collections of the New-York Historical Society for the Year 1881* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1882), 541-2.

¹⁸⁰ Thomas Jones, *History of New York during the Revolutionary War, and of the Leading Events in the Other Colonies at that Period*, ed. Edward Floyd de Lancey, vol. 1 (New York: Trow’s Printing and Bookbinding Co., 1879), 336.

followed a parallel trajectory to that of King's College, which experienced a period of hardship during the Revolutionary War. The story of Jonathan Hampton's life is one of both struggle and triumph, a delicate balance between self-interest and service to others. While a dearth of sources make it impossible to parse Hampton's motive for joining the loyalist cause, he was, like nearly all tradesmen at the time, first and foremost an opportunist who strove to climb the social and occupational hierarchy. Unlike other tradesmen, however, Hampton managed to realize his dreams of wealth—ascending from a man of abject poverty to an English gentleman with an extraordinary fortune.

Unlike his associate Jonathan Hampton, Andrew Gautier never experienced financial ruin. In addition to working as a master carpenter for the colonial government, Gautier also contracted with members of New York's gentility to assist in the construction and furnishing of their tasteful residences. Even more so than Hampton, Gautier embedded himself within New York's elite circles, creating a social network of his own that provided him with a steady source of income while maintaining his connections with his fellow craftsmen. In his will, carpenter John Teveau noted that he received £160 from Gautier which he used to mortgage his house and lot, and directed his executors to sell the property if Gautier "sometime hereafter insist[ed] on the said money."¹⁸¹

In 1769, Andrew Gautier walked into King's College. This time, however, he was not there in a professional capacity. Gautier was at College Hall to enroll his fourteen-year-old son, also named Andrew, in the same college that he constructed nearly two decades prior.¹⁸²

Although the master carpenter was by that time a relatively prominent citizen and landholder, it

¹⁸¹ Will of John Teveau, 1 February 1759, in *Abstracts of Wills on File in the Surrogate's Office, City of New York*, vol. 6, 1760-1766 (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1897), 298.

¹⁸² King's College, *The Matricula or Register of Admissions & Graduations, & of Officers Employed in King's College at New-York*, 1754-1777, Digital Collections, Columbia University Library.

is difficult to overstate just how monumental of an achievement it was for someone outside of the hereditary landed class to be able to send their child to King's College. At the early age of fourteen, Andrew Gautier's son, also named Andrew, had enrolled in King's College as a student with the intention of entering the legal profession.¹⁸³ Although he never ended up practicing law, Andrew Gautier Jr.'s acceptance and matriculation to King's College signified the realization of the social mobility his father managed to achieve. Indeed, the social network which facilitated his father's rise to prominence grew largely out of the connections he made with both Trinity Church and King's College. His willingness to risk his own life to save a building he had no personal connection with spoke to Gautier's exemplary moral character which, in an economy that relied exclusively on reputation and recommendation, lent him an advantage and likely facilitated his later contract with Trinity Church to construct King's College and St. Paul's Chapel.

Conclusion

On September 21, 1776, a fire began somewhere near Whitehall slip along the East River, possibly at a tavern, a shed, or a blacksmith's shop.¹⁸⁴ It spread rapidly from building to building and "took its course up the west side of Broad-street, as far as Verlanenberg Hill," consuming nearly all structures between Whitehall slip and the corner of Barclay Street.¹⁸⁵ British troops

¹⁸³ Charles Hardenburg Winfield, *History of the County of Hudson, New Jersey: From Its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time* (New York: Kennard & Hay Stationary M'fg and Printing Co., 1874), 552.

¹⁸⁴ Benjamin L. Carp, "The Night the Yankees Burned Broadway: The New York City Fire of 1776," *Early American Studies* 4, no. 2 (2006), 473.

¹⁸⁵ "Newark, September 28," *New-York Gazette, and the Weekly Mercury* (Newark, New Jersey), no. 1302, September 28, 1776: [3]. *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.

scrambled to contain the blaze and “pull[ed] down Houses to make breaks in the fire,” wrote Captain Andrew Hamond.¹⁸⁶ It was not until the following morning that troops, who were “exceedingly well supplied with Engines & Buckets,” managed to extinguish the flames entirely.¹⁸⁷ Two of Andrew Gautier’s masterpieces—College Hall and St. Paul’s Chapel—both stood “directly in the Line of Fire” and were at severe risk of being consumed, but, in a remarkable twist of fate, both were “saved with very great Difficulty” by men performing the same duty as Gautier himself did two decades earlier when he extinguished the flames in the spire of Trinity Church.¹⁸⁸ Had the fire continued a few feet further, King’s College and St. Paul’s Chapel would have met the same fate Jonathan Hampton’s house and workshop did five years earlier—the structure and its maker lost to time.¹⁸⁹ Fortunately, Gautier lived long enough to see his work providentially survive the fire but died a few weeks later at his estate in Acquackanonk, New Jersey.¹⁹⁰ He was buried in the family vault at Trinity Church which was gifted to him by the Vestry in 1764 “in Consideration of [his] being very Active and serviceable in Extinguishing the Fire in the Steeple of Trinity Church.”¹⁹¹

Although the life of Gautier came to a close, both St. Paul’s Chapel and King’s College retained their positions as important parts of both the built and social environments of New York City for at least four generations. After the end of the Revolutionary War and the British occupation of the city, King’s College, by that time renamed to Columbia College, resumed operations in College Hall, which had been converted into a military field hospital by the

¹⁸⁶ Quoted in Carp, “The Night the Yankees Burned Broadway,” 474.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ “New-York, Sept. 30,” *New-York Gazette, and the Weekly Mercury* (Newark, New Jersey), no. 1301, September 30, 1776: [2], *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.

¹⁸⁹ “Map of Great Fire 1776,” in Martha J. Lamb, *History of the City of New York: Its Origin, Rise and Progress*, vol. 2 (New York: Valentine’s Manual, 1921), 136.

¹⁹⁰ “Newark, October 19,” *New-York Gazette, and the Weekly Mercury* (Newark, New Jersey), no. 1305, October 19, 1776: [3]. *Readex: America's Historical Newspapers*.

¹⁹¹ 5 April 1764, Vestry Minutes, The Vestry Collection, 1694-1982, Archives Division, Trinity Church, New York.

Revolutionary Committee of Safety.¹⁹² Aside from two telescopes appropriated for the use of American troops by General George Washington, the remainder of the college's library and prized scientific apparatus disappeared in the chaos.¹⁹³ College Hall underwent two major renovations before its demolition—the addition of a west wing to the building in the 1790s was so poorly done that it had to be rebuilt completely less than two decades later.¹⁹⁴ The old college building was “entirely deserted” in 1857 when Columbia moved uptown to the new temporary campus, located in the former Deaf and Dumb Asylum between 49th and 50th Streets.¹⁹⁵ The morning after College Hall was officially vacated, the familiar pattern of demolition and construction began as “a strong force of workmen were employed in tearing off the roofing and undermining the walls.”¹⁹⁶ Shortly thereafter, the building was completely dismantled and all traces of its existence were erased from what had previously been the college grounds.

Today, the only physical evidence of King's College is a small, unassuming plaque installed along the outer fence of Trinity Church near the corner of what is now Rector Street and Trinity Place commemorating the the birthplace of Columbia University. Although long gone, College Hall and the men who built it remain a critical part of both the history of New York City and Columbia University, although their contributions have thus far gone unacknowledged. By reading the building fabric of College Hall through the surviving archival record, it becomes apparent that its creation did not solely benefit the elite young men set to attend the college. For Jonathan Hampton and Andrew Gautier, the building of the college also meant the building of connections—both with the craftsmen, apprentices, and slaves under their supervision and the upper-class men who employed them. Thus, not only did King's College alter the city as an

¹⁹² *Columbia College in the City of New York: Historical Sketch and Present Condition* (New York: Columbia College, 1893), 4.

¹⁹³ McCaughey, *Stand, Columbia*, 49.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁹⁵ “Columbia College,” *New-York Tribune* (New York, New York), 12 May 1857, 7.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

institution, the structure it was housed in shaped the trajectory of the individuals who interacted with it, functioning as a facilitator of social mobility for both matriculants and the middling-class men who built it. Indeed, Gautier became perhaps the first man of a middling-class background to send his son to King's College, due in no small part to the opportunities his relationship with the well-to-do Governors provided him.

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