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The ’45 in ’75:
The Corruptions of Kinship, Jacobite Conspiracy, and the Origins of American Independence (1774–76)

By Tanner W. Ogle

Challenging the temporal and geographic divisions in American and British historiography, this article adopts a generational and Atlantic perspective to argue that colonial fears of Jacobitism (support for the dynastic claims of the House of Stuart) were central to the transition to war in the American Revolution between 1774 and 1776. Though it may be tempting to view these fears as merely rhetorical, or simply Scotophobic, they centered on memories of recent events, included real Jacobite rebels, and responded to actual alterations in imperial policy. Viewing imperial officials as corrupted by their connections to disloyal pasts and kin, colonists feared that Jacobites or their close relatives were altering the imperial constitution from within the British government. Fears of Jacobites also manifested locally as many Highland Scots in the colonies (including former Jacobites) became leading loyalists. Consequently, American patriots targeted those who appeared disloyal to the Revolution Settlement of 1689. Although racial fears of enslaved people and Native Americans also existed in the colonies in 1775, the menace of a Jacobite threat subsumed these regional anxieties into an imperial fear of a Jacobite conspiracy.