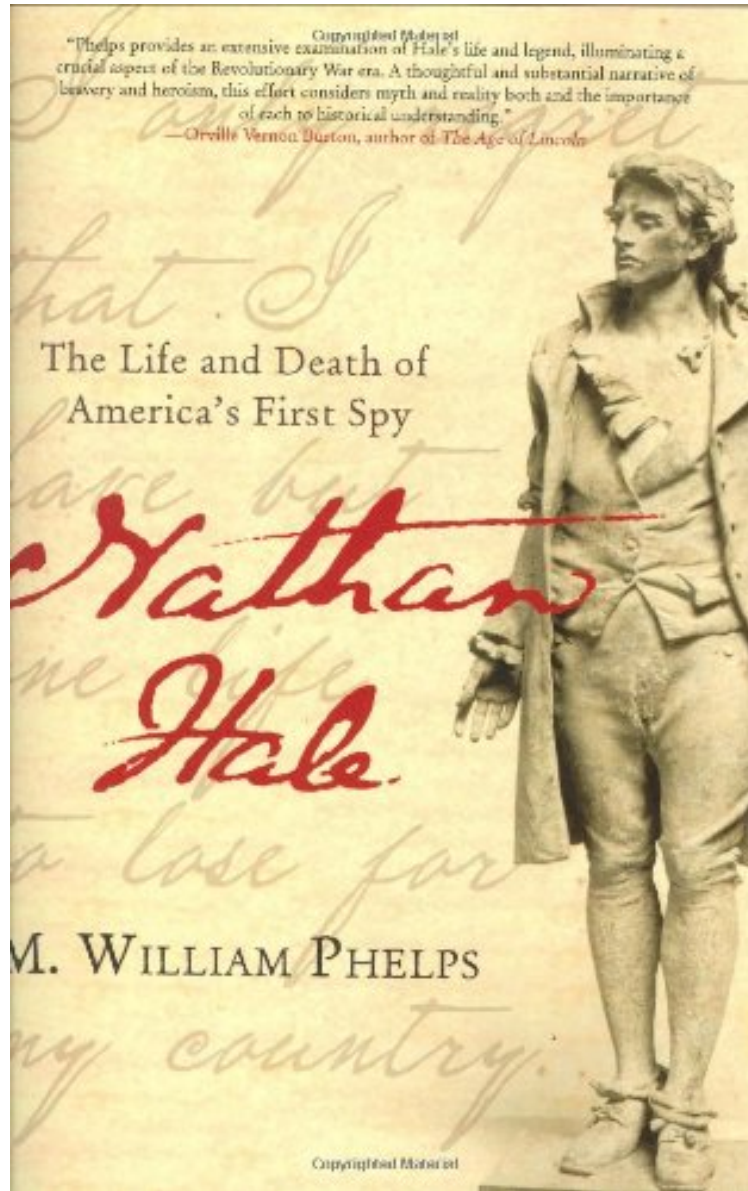


(Free) Nathan Hale: The Life and Death of America's First Spy

## Nathan Hale: The Life and Death of America's First Spy

M. William Phelps

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**M. William Phelps : Nathan Hale: The Life and Death of America's First Spy** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Nathan Hale: The Life and Death of America's First Spy:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The best biography of Nathan Hale I have ever read By Lifelong

Reader Nathan Hale is an ancestor of mine, and I own numerous old biographies of him, dated from 1855 to 1915. This new biography by Mr. Phelps is by far the best biography of Nathan Hale I have ever read. Mr. Phelps extensively documents everything he says, and he uses material (a Tory diary) discovered just a couple of decades ago to finally settle who it was that betrayed/uncovered Nathan's spy mission, and how he was captured. He has really filled out the story of Nathan Hale in a way none of the earlier biographies I have read do. Mr. Phelps writes in a positive way about Nathan's faith and upbringing and his Christian character, without trying to glorify him as many early biographies do. This allowed me to learn much more about his character than I have learned in all the other biographies put together. On the other hand, he does not overlook or sugar coat the mistakes Nathan made that led to his capture, which early biographies tend to do. I also learned a great deal about his family, his upbringing, his Yale days, and his friends that I did not know. This has brought him to life as a real person instead of just the hero of American legend. Three amazing (to me) things I learned from Mr. Phelps: 1) Nathan is probably the first teacher in colonial America to start a school for girls, at a time when it was not legal under British law for girls to go to school to learn to read and write (they could go to school for sewing, cooking and keeping house); 2) Five of Nathan's brothers also served in militias or the American army during the war; and 3) From his research Mr. Phelps believes Nathan is the first American to publicly declare that Americans should fight for their independence from Britain, in a speech he gave at a town meeting the night he resigned as town schoolmaster. Independence was a new word in the English language (who knew?) and not commonly used at that time. The only criticism of the book at all is that there are no maps in it to show us where the action was taking place. I found myself reading the book with my phone next to me with Google Maps up, so I could trace the routes the characters in the book were taking. I suspect that most people who do not live in New England do not know the relationships between Coventry, Moodus(!) (East Haddam), New London, New Haven, Bridgeport, Stamford, Hartford, Boston, New York City, Harlem Heights, the Battery, Staten Island, Long Island, and on and on. Google maps really helped me understand what was happening. (In my opinion, the gold standard for American histories that use maps is Barnett Schechter, "The Battle for New York: The City at the Heart of the American Revolution, 2003, which happens to be one of Mr. Phelps sources.) There are no photos or drawings in the book either, but I really missed not having maps to follow. This book is very well written, and is enjoyable just as a good biography. But for those who want to dig deeper the end notes and bibliography will point you to the original source documents in the US and in England. I highly recommend this book for all who are interested in the American Revolution. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. This book was helpful because I knew so little about ...By Strong tea lover This book was helpful because I knew so little about Nathan Hale except for his dying words, "I regret that I have but one life to lose for my country." In fact, those words are disputed. Nathan was the son of a prosperous Connecticut farmer who insisted that his sons and daughters be well educated. After finishing local schools, Nathan and his younger brother attended and graduated from Yale University. Nathan was a school teacher for a few years until rumors reached Connecticut about the revolution brewing in New England other states. He volunteered for the Army under General Washington then in Boston where he served for some months until he was chosen to be a spy among British troops in New York. He wasn't a very clever spy because he was caught reasonably early and executed. However, he did uncover some intelligence for General Washington and is considered a hero. The book is well researched and includes information about business activities in Colonial Connecticut. For instance, Nathan's father owned a large and successful farm and exported products to foreign countries. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great look at Colonial life and the early part of the revolution By Lehigh History Student M. William Phelps does an updated biography on the life of Nathan Hale America's first spy to be executed. Washington was well known for his desire to gather intelligence on the enemy and set up several spy rings throughout the revolution (See Washington's Spies: The Story of America's First Spy Ring for that history). Nathan Hale was the first attempt at spying on the British in the days leading up to the invasion of New York. Nathan was not a successful spy and was caught and hung by one of the great thugs of the American Revolution. From young farm boy in Connecticut to Yale Education to educator of colonial youth the reader gets to see a wonderful picture of life in colonial America leading up to the revolution. Nathan Hale is painted as a patriot who would give anything for the cause and comes off as a very idealistic hero here. The primary sources presented and his actions at Yale lend credence to this story and do make for a likely case that he uttered his famous phrase before being hung. Overall while there were one or two factual misprints that have already been noted by other reviewers there is still value in this book for those who really want to see more into the life of colonial America and how your average educated person became involved in the revolution instead of following the life of one of the major figures.

The first biography in nearly a century of the legendary Revolutionary War patriot and our country's first spy. Few Americans know much more about Nathan Hale than his famous last words: I only regret that I have one life left to give for my country. But who was the real Nathan Hale? M. William Phelps charts the life of this famed patriot and Connecticut's state hero, following Hale's rural childhood, his education at Yale, and his work as a schoolteacher. Even in his brief career, he distinguished himself by offering formal lessons to young women. Like many young Americans, he soon became drawn into the colonies war for independence, becoming a captain in Washington's army. When the

general was in need of a spy, Hale willingly rose to the challenge, bravely sacrificing his life for the sake of American liberty. Using Hales own journals and letters as well as testimonies from his friends and contemporaries, Phelps depicts the Revolution as it was seen from the ground. From the confrontation in Boston to the battle for New York City, readers experience what life was like for an ordinary soldier in the struggling Continental army. In this impressive, well-researched biography, Phelps separates historical fact from long-standing myth to reveal the life of Nathan Hale, a young man who deserves to be remembered as an original American patriot.

From Booklist Nathan Hale is a secular saint of American patriotism. Facing a British gallows for spying during the Revolutionary War, he supposedly uttered these immortal words: I only regret that I have but one life to give for my country. Phelps has written an informative, interesting biography of Hale that effectively reveals the flesh-and-blood human behind the iconic image. Clearly an admirer of Hale, he has written nothing that detracts from Hales reputation; instead, he has provided a nuanced portrait of a deeply religious, idealistic young man whose short life was dedicated to various forms of public service. Hale was raised in rural Connecticut, attended Yale at the age of 14, and graduated with honors. Upon graduation, he worked as a schoolteacher, and after Lexington and Concord, joined a Connecticut militia. He seemed to approach service to the Patriot cause as a passion, not merely a duty. Phelps, using Hales own correspondence, clears up some of the murky details surrounding Hales spying, arrest, and execution. This is a well-done, balanced account of a short but interesting life. --Jay Freeman Advance Praise for Nathan Hale: Revolutionary War spy Nathan Hales quote at his hanging by the British in 1776, I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country, is one of the most memorable in U.S. history. Here, M. William Phelps has written an absorbing, highly detailed biography of the patriotic Hale. He weaves each story together to create a very colorful, emotional, and enjoyable book. ---Bruce Chadwick, author of George Washingtons War With his new work on Nathan Hale, M. William Phelps has done a great service to the world of historical writing about the American Revolution. A Hale biography was certainly overdue, and Phelps has given us a good one; thorough, making fine use of primary sources, and, thankfully, a pleasure to read. ---James L. Nelson, author of Benedict Arnolds Navy Phelps provides an extensive examination of Hales life and legend, illuminating a crucial aspect of the Revolutionary War era. A thoughtful and substantial narrative of bravery and heroism, this effort considers myth and reality both and the importance of each to historical understanding. ---Orville Vernon Burton, author of The Age of Lincoln M. William Phelps has written a meticulously researched biography of Nathan Hale. Known mainly as the young man who regretted that he had but one life to give to his country, Hale represented the flower of New England society. Phelps has well captured the excitement of Hales joining the patriot cause in the American Revolution, giving us a fresh narrative of those tumultuous years. ---Joyce Appleby, author of Inheriting the Revolution Phelps has brilliantly taken Nathan Hale from the faded memory of history and reintroduced us to a vibrant young man, a scholar whom we witness as he transforms into a soldier and spy as a final act of moral conscience. Phelps has reintroduced Hale as the quintessential young American who steps across the line to act for his country. ---Joseph J. Trento, author of The Secret History of the CIA Nathan Hale went to his hanging with the famously paraphrased line, I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country. M. William Phelps gives a new, fully documented life to this romantic, long-neglected American revolutionary. ---R. A. Scotti, author of The Sudden Sea and Basilica