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Ruling Rebels: How the Sons of Liberty Became Colonial Powerbrokers



PREWAR POLITICS (<1775)

**May 29,
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**by
Daniel
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Also by
this**

On August 14, 1765, the town of Boston was in turmoil. At the entrance to the city, two large effigies were hanging from a great tree. The first effigy was that of John Stuart, the Earl of Bute, whilst the second was that of Andrew Oliver, a local stamp collector. Their two likenesses had been hung in widespread colonial opposition to the [Stamp Act](#) that had recently passed British parliament. The Stamp Act required

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that all legal and official papers throughout the colonies be taxed, with a stamp on said papers indicating that the tax had been paid. The act impacted a range of documents and goods, including newspapers, court documents, dice and playing cards. Colonial businessmen and merchants felt that the Stamp Act was a flagrant violation of their rights as Englishmen. Thousands of Bostonians gathered around the effigies to protest the unpopular decree.

As the day continued, resentment gradually simmered. Before long, the mob turned violent. Enraged Bostonians destroyed Andrew Oliver's workplace before ransacking his home.^[1] From there, they carried the effigies of both Oliver and Stuart to Fort Hill, burning and beheading them. The royal governor, Francis Bernard, had a full view of the demonstration from nearby Castle William. In a fearful letter to the Board of Trade, Bernard explained that "Whilst I am writing, looking towards Boston, I saw a bonfire burning on Fort Hill: by which I understand the mob is up."^[2] The demonstration was so fierce and widespread that it fundamentally overturned the power dynamics of the city. Bernard, sheltering in Castle William, confessed that the mob had turned him into a simple "nominal governor," believing that he was a "prisoner at large" to the furious Boston public.^[3]

Yet, this widespread civil unrest was by no means a spontaneous outburst. Rather, it was carefully cultivated by just nine men. The men, calling themselves the Loyal Nine, were a collection of Bostonian businessmen. The group consisted of two brass workers, two distillers, a merchant, a

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painter, a printer, a jeweler, and a shipmaster.^[4] Crucially, the Loyal Nine were the precursor group of the Sons of Liberty, the infamous paramilitary group that would engender opposition to British parliament and play a significant role in bringing about the War of Independence. In constructing the effigies of Scott and Oliver, as well as inciting the violence and anger of the Boston mob, the original Loyal Nine demonstrated some of the trademark behaviors that would make the Sons of Liberty so powerful in the years to come. But how did the Loyal Nine become the Sons of Liberty? More importantly, how did the Sons of Liberty become so powerful? The Sons of Liberty cultivated a three-pronged approach of violence, spectacle, and surveillance. Such an approach not only helped them undermine British imperial control in the colonies, in some cases, it even turned them into de facto rulers in their own right. ^[5]

Violence

If the Stamp Act riots were any indication, violence was the chief method through which the original Loyal Nine sought to achieve their goals. Violence was a powerful tool for the group, as it enabled them to intimidate their political opponents. For instance, the hanging, beheading, and finally burning of Oliver in effigy was a profoundly confronting act. It broadcast the group's intention to inflict similar suffering upon Oliver should he not resign. In fact, when protestors ransacked the man's home only to discover he was not there, they swore that they would find him and kill him. ^[6] Even the effigy itself was scrawled with violent language. An inscription on its arm read, "What greater Joy did ever New England see Than a Stampman hanging on

a Tree.”^[7] No wonder then, that Oliver would resign the next day. His resignation was a significant victory for the Loyal Nine, as it meant that there was no one in Boston legally capable of distributing stamps.^[8] In the space of two days, the Loyal Nine had used spectacular violence to not only remove the threat of the hated stamps, but also to cause Boston’s governor to seek refuge in Castle William.

Such a development opened up a power vacuum in Boston, and it was one that the Loyal Nine fully intended to fill. In orchestrating the initial protest against Andrew Oliver and John Stuart, the Loyal Nine had turned to a particularly unsavory source. They had employed none other than Ebenezer Mackintosh, a hardened patriot who held significant clout in Boston’s criminal underbelly. It was due to his efforts that the protest against Oliver and Stuart had been so successful. Mackintosh was a particularly significant figure for the Loyal Nine because he managed to broker a peace between rival North and South End gangs.^[9] This peace gave the Sons a united mob of underclass gang members, effectively providing them with an army, albeit a violent and undisciplined one, to lead their public protests.

In the weeks that followed the initial protest, Mackintosh’s mob continued their violent acts in Boston at the behest of the Loyal Nine. Two weeks after hanging Oliver in effigy, the Nine had Thomas Hutchinson firmly in their sights. Hutchinson, already an unpopular figure, was not only the brother-in-law of Andrew Oliver, but was crucially the lieutenant governor of Massachusetts. On the night of August 26, Mackintosh and his followers marched to Hutchinson’s

house. Hutchinson described how the “hellish crew fell upon my house with the Rage of devils and in a moment with axes split down the door and entred [sic].”^[10] The mob tore down partition walls and the garden fence, looted the home of furniture and valuables, and even tore up Hutchinson’s personal library. A devastated Hutchinson would declare that “Such ruins were never seen in America.”^[11] Like Governor Bernard, Hutchinson was shaken by the sudden explosion of mob violence in the city he was supposed to govern.

The changing political dynamics of Boston were further symbolized by Mackintosh himself. Despite being a hired henchman acting on behalf of the Loyal Nine, Mackintosh took particular pride in his actions, and his opponents certainly took notice of his surging influence. The gang leader reportedly wore a blue and gold uniform with a gold-laced hat into “battle” and even used a speaking trumpet to give directions to his troops.^[12] Mackintosh soon came to be referred to as “Captain Mackintosh,” a title used by Bernard himself to refer to the gang leader. ^[13]

With an acute sense of political savvy, the Loyal Nine recognized that they risked wresting power away from Bernard and Hutchinson only to lose it to Mackintosh. As Historian Alan Taylor explains, patriot leaders worked “behind the scenes in ways that remain obscure,” ultimately discrediting and scapegoating Mackintosh.^[14] The gang leader would eventually find himself in prison over debt, and none of his former employers were inclined to help him. In cutthroat fashion, the Loyal Nine had used violence to undermine the rule of the colonial administrators, whilst

simultaneously disposing of the very man that helped them do it. Thus, the group was able to consolidate their power in Boston, but they also experienced a significant surge in public support.

As a result of the Stamp Act riots, the Loyal Nine grew rapidly in membership. Their provocative protest against parliament attracted countless members in Boston who were similarly angered by the legislation. Meanwhile, groups in New York and Connecticut also began to emerge. The surge in numbers meant that the Loyal Nine required a new moniker to reflect their increased membership, and the organization took inspiration from an ironic source. Only a few months earlier, Lt. Col. Isaac Barre, a British parliamentarian, not only criticized the introduction of the Stamp Act, but crucially defended the American colonists who resisted it. Barre powerfully labelled the colonists as “Sons of Liberty,”

whilst simultaneously dismissing any notion that such protests indicated disloyalty to the crown. Barre proclaimed that the colonists were “as truly loyal as any subjects the king has.”^[15] Thus, in taking on the “Sons of Liberty” moniker, the new group were wisely signaling their intent. At least prior to the War of Independence, the Sons of Liberty viewed themselves as loyal monarchists who were resisting a corrupt British parliament. Such a political stance was a shrewd one as, at least at first, they could take the position of colonial enforcers acting on behalf of King George III, and thus, justify their actions. Such a position, combined with their growing numbers and the fact that Bernard was now a “nominal governor,” would grant them considerable power in the years that followed.

Spectacle

Whilst the Stamp Act crisis came to a halt in March 1766 following the repeal of the act by parliament, it did not signal the end of a new political environment in which the Sons of Liberty were fast becoming serious power brokers. In Boston, the Sons of Liberty had established themselves as a quasi-governing power, and similar developments were taking place in New York with the group there. The repeal of the Stamp Act in New York was met with the tolling of church bells and the firing of guns. In a powerful assertion of their political sway, the Sons of Liberty even sent a committee to congratulate the governor on the repeal. The group eagerly published a number of broadsides and letters in New York celebrating the news. One such letter encouraged New Yorkers to “write Letters of Thanks to all those illustrious personages who have so zealously exerted themselves in both Houses of Parliament, in obtaining the Repeal of the Stamp Act.”^[16] In a further illustration of their newfound power, the New York Sons even forbade British soldiers from patrolling the streets following an incident in which members of the public were wounded during a protest meeting over liberty poles.^[17] Historian Herbert Morais goes so far as to declare that in New York, the Sons of Liberty “began to function as an extralegal body with all the powers and attributes of government.”^[18] One morose British officer would even declare them the “sole rulers” of the city.^[19]

Yet Britain was still reeling from a national debt following the French and Indian War, and the need for increased revenue would further embitter colonials who despised British taxes. In 1767, Senior Minister

Charles Townshend proposed a new series of taxation duties. The Townshend Acts, as they came to be known, were duties on goods such as paper, glass, paint, lead, and tea. The duties would eventually be repealed in 1770 save for the tax on tea. However, in 1773, parliament once again sought to increase revenue. The Tea Act ostensibly gave the East India Company a monopoly on tea in North America. Once again, colonists viewed the Tea Act as an attempt to force them to pay a hated British tax. Just like in 1765, the Sons of Liberty spearheaded colonial resistance.

Violence helped the Sons of Liberty gain traction and influence during the Stamp Act crisis. In opposing the Tea Act, they used similar methods, but in far more public ways in order to intimidate and humiliate their opponents. Certainly, the group's Stamp Act protests, especially the mock stamp office and the effigies of Oliver and Stuart, were spectacles in their own right. But the spectacles orchestrated by the Sons in the wake of the Tea Act would send reverberations across the Atlantic.

In a concerted effort to oppose the Tea Act, the Sons of Liberty enforced a boycott of British East India Company tea. Anyone who violated the boycott faced not only violence, but also the embarrassing spectacle of being disciplined by the Sons in public. The most common method of discipline was tarring and feathering. The punishment involved pouring hot tar over the offender before covering them with feathers. The tar not only gave the feathers an adhesive surface, but painfully blistered and, in some cases, even stripped the individual's skin. The painful punishment did not end there. On numerous occasions, the victim was

paraded around town, their tormentors taking them to numerous landmarks. The victim became an object of ridicule, as passersby insulted them and even threw objects at them. Some victims were whipped and forced to wear a placard outlining their wrongdoings. The spectacle of tarring and feathering powerfully combined both pain and shame to produce a coercive disciplinary implement. As such, the threat alone was often enough to convince colonists to abide by the Sons of Liberty's boycott. As one colonist remarked, "Tar and Feathers with their necessary appendages, Scoff and Shame, are popular Terrors and of great Influence."^[20] The Sons may have disposed of Ebenezer Mackintosh to consolidate their power, but their methods were often just as violent, if not moreso, than the gang leader's.

One particularly confronting example was the tarring and feathering of John Malcolm on January 25, 1774. Malcolm was a Boston customs official who just so happened to be a



"A New Method of Macarony Making, as practised at Boston," Carrington Bowles, London, October 12, 1774. (Museum of Fine Arts, Houston)

parliamentary loyalist. Having angered the Sons of Liberty following a brawl with one

of their members, Malcolm faced the group's full wrath. The Sons broke into Malcolm's house at night, dragging him into the icy street. Following a painful application of tar and feathers, Malcolm was led through Boston with his skin blistering and peeling in the winter air. When he refused to denounce the Crown, Malcolm was put on a gallows, and a noose was applied around his neck. Malcolm was beaten, whipped, and made to drink hot tea until he vomited it. One woman would note that Malcolm's flesh came "off his back in Stakes" during the whipping.^[21] More than a thousand people watched his painful humiliation.^[22] His ordeal was immortalized in political prints across the empire. No one could question the coercive control of the Sons of Liberty.

Easily the most striking spectacle performed by the Sons of Liberty was the [Boston Tea Party](#). The protest not only signaled the power of the group in Boston to enforce their boycott, but made parliament fundamentally question British control in the American colonies. On the night of December 16, 1773, approximately fifty members of the Sons of Liberty boarded three ships in Boston's harbor, broke open crates of tea and spilled the contents into the water. The protest sent shockwaves to the core of the empire. Parliamentarians vented their outrage, declaring that Boston "ought to be knocked about the ears," whilst others labelled the colonists "locusts" who lacked "proper obedience." In rather prophetic fashion, Lord Buckinghamshire argued that Americans needed to consider if they should be part of the empire or independent.^[23]

Such spectacles were significant because of what they represented. Instances of tarring and feathering were as much about disciplining political opponents as it was about demonstrating the far-reaching power of the Sons of Liberty. If Malcolm, a customs official, could not be safe in his own bed, then no one could be. Likewise, if the Sons of Liberty could openly defy parliament and enforce boycotts on their colonial peers, then they truly were de facto rulers of some urban centres, especially Boston. When Governor Bernard declared himself a “nominal governor” it was not an isolated incident. Rather, it was the first in a string of events that saw the Sons of Liberty wrestle power away from the colonial administration in the years building up to the War of Independence.

Surveillance

The Sons of Liberty’s use of surveillance started as early as 1765. Like their use of violence and spectacle, the use of surveillance only intensified in the years building up to the War of Independence as the organization grew. Surveillance often worked hand in hand with violence and spectacle. Effective surveillance was essentially the integrating schema by which the Sons were able to both mete out violence and put on public spectacles. It was through surveillance that the Sons of Liberty knew who to target. Yet, surveillance was also significant because it helped the Sons of Liberty evolve from simply eliminating political enemies to exerting control over everyday men and women across the colonies. A sophisticated and widespread system of surveillance enabled the Sons to identify threats to their power and, crucially, gave them the ability to mobilize citizens to the cause by often

making them active participants in the surveillance process itself.

The earliest evidence of the Sons of Liberty using public surveillance to achieve their political goals can be traced back to the Stamp Act crisis and the demonization of Andrew Oliver. Oliver resigned as Stamp Collector the day after the riots occurred, but he continued to be a target of the group. In the months that followed, rumors began to percolate around Boston that Oliver would take up the position after all. As a result, the Sons publicly called him out, posting broadsides around the city demanding he confirm his resignation. Published on December 17, these broadsides announced that the Sons expected to “hear the public resignation, under Oath, of Andrew Oliver, Esq, Distributor of Stamps.”^[24] These papers essentially acted as a court summons, providing Oliver with a public ultimatum. Just as he might do in court, Oliver appeared under oath. More than two thousand Bostonians gathered to watch Oliver’s quasi-trial at the hands of the Sons of Liberty. Feeling the immense pressure applied by his summons, and no doubt fearing that the violence visited on his effigy might be visited on his person, Oliver publicly swore that he would not enforce an act “which is so grievous to the people.”^[25] In publishing these broadsides, the Sons were not only broadcasting their newfound political power, but demonstrating an acute awareness of surveillance. The broadsides effectively invited everyday Bostonians to partake in the policing of Oliver, thereby acting as agents on behalf of the Sons.

Furthermore, the group’s enforcement of boycotts against hated British stamps from

1765 to 1766 was fundamentally reliant on a system of surveillance. Members of the Sons of Liberty, especially those who worked in the docks or in customs houses, kept a close eye on all incoming goods. Any package or container found to be marked with a stamp was stolen or destroyed. As one particular article from *The Boston Gazette* reveals, the Sons of Liberty were particularly eager to confiscate offending imports. The writer explained that “a most detestable Object, lately transported to *America*” was “taken up and committed into the custody of the Sons of Liberty in this town.” Obviously, the unnamed object had been stamped, which the writer referred to as a symbol of “America’s oppression”. Significantly, in using the word “custody” to describe the *Sons of Liberty*, the writer was effectively portraying the group as a legal body, one with its own powers and jurisdiction over Boston.

In fact, the favorable coverage of the event shown by *The Boston Gazette* also demonstrates the extent to which the Sons of Liberty exerted a powerful system of surveillance over colonial urban centers. The masthead was owned by none other than Benjamin Edes, a founding member of the Loyal Nine. But the Sons of Liberty did not just publish their own propaganda in *The Boston Gazette* – they actively sought to shut down opposing views. In 1769, John Mein, a printer of the rival masthead *The Boston Chronicle*, published claims that the Sons of Liberty were covertly importing British goods despite their enforced boycott. As a result, an angry mob, stirred up by the Sons, chased him through town demanding he be killed.^[26] Mein would flee to London, and in his absence, John Hancock had the newspaper shut down. As

historian Alan Taylor surmises, the Sons of Liberty “believed only in the liberty of their press.”^[27] Anything to the contrary posed a threat to their control, and the Sons immediately tried to quash it.

In the aftermath of the Boston Massacre in 1770, the Sons of Liberty further relied on support from the public to enforce their political agenda, whilst also demonstrating the growth of their surveillance network. Across Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, the Sons conducted a number of public meetings, with thousands attending across the urban centers. Like they did with Oliver, the Sons frequently published the names of merchants who disobeyed the boycott of British goods in broadsides all around colonial cities. Such businessmen faced ridicule and ostracization alike from an enraged public. Patriot women began to play an important role in the network established by the Sons. The wives, mothers, and sisters of the Sons of Liberty exerted their own pressure on colonial Americans who defied the boycott or otherwise sympathized with Britain. Such men soon found that they faced a ban from parties, balls, and all sorts of social gatherings.^[28] In some instances, women even provided their feathered pillows for tarring and feathering.^[29]

At the same time, correspondence committees were set up in urban centers to allow the different cells of the group to communicate across the colonies. Truthfully, whilst Sons of Liberty groups in different cities acted mostly independently from one another, there were instances of coordination in conducting surveillance and punishment of their enemies. For example, in 1770, Nathaniel Rogers, an opponent of

the group, fled New York after the Sons of Liberty hung him in effigy. When the Sons were informed that Rogers had set out for Philadelphia, the New York committee penned a letter to their Philadelphia colleagues instructing them to welcome him accordingly.^[30] Rogers suffered immense psychological distress at the hands of the group and their informants. Effigies followed him from city to city, whilst his windows were repeatedly smashed in, and his house coated with manure. He appeared trembling before a Justice of the Peace, pleading his case and fearing the “diabolical crew” that followed him.^[31] Rogers had only taken several steps from the office door of the justice when he suffered a fatal medical episode. It was seemingly impossible to escape the all-surveying eye of the Sons of Liberty, with any attempt resulting in acute psychological consequences.

In addition to correspondence committees, the Sons employed what they proudly referred to as committees for “tarring and feathering.” Whilst it is unclear whether such committees truly existed or were simply representative of the Sons’ ire, it is certainly clear that they were profoundly influential. As they so frequently did, the Sons published threats against those who dared to defy their edicts. Following the Boston Massacre, they declared that they would tar and feather any ship captain that unloaded East India Company tea in the city’s docks. In one notorious example, the Sons threatened Capt. Samuel Ayres of the *Polly*. The Sons enquired as to whether the captain would like “ten gallons of liquid decanted on your pate” with the “feathers of a dozen wild geese laid over that to enliven your appearance?”^[32] As expected, Ayres

refused to unload the tea. The threats of the tarring and feathering committee ostensibly halted the importation of East India Company tea altogether. Moreover, it demonstrated that individuals on both sides of the Atlantic had to submit to the surveillant power of the Sons of Liberty.

Conclusion

Any understanding of colonial resistance to Britain in the years preceding the American War of Independence would be incomplete without an examination of the Sons of Liberty. Yet, what makes the group so fascinating is that they simultaneously represent both grassroots political resistance and overarching ideological control. The growth of the group from the Loyal Nine to the Sons of Liberty was enabled by their ability to profoundly influence public opinion. Yet, such influence was not gained because the Sons necessarily represented the will of the colonial populace. On the contrary, the Sons of Liberty were acutely aware of the need to mobilise and empower colonists who shared their views, whilst simultaneously quashing, threatening, ridiculing, and disciplining those who did not.

The Sons' three-pronged approach of violence, spectacle, and surveillance was crucial in this regard. The use of violence by the Sons, especially in their employment of Ebenezer Mackintosh, enabled them to immediately flex their ideological muscle in Boston. The demolition of Thomas Hutchinson's home certainly demonstrated the speed and brutality in which the Sons could quash their opposition. Yet, their scapegoating of Mackintosh was indicative of the fact that the Sons also possessed significant political savvy. Such acumen is

particularly evident in the group's use of spectacle. Spectacles of public protest, such as the initial hanging in effigy of Andrew Oliver, served dual purposes. They invigorated colonial resistance to British Parliament, whilst simultaneously enabling the Sons to wield influence over those who might oppose them. The Boston Tea party sent reverberations across the Atlantic. At the same time, the admittedly violent spectacle that was the tarring and feathering of John Malcom sent a powerful message to those at home that dared to defy them.

If such instances of spectacle and violence helped establish the Sons of Liberty as quasi rulers, then surveillance helped consolidate their position. The use of public broadsides to summon Andrew Oliver to his faux court trial established the Sons as a type of legal body, as did their power of surveillance over imported goods. Additionally, correspondence committees gave them the ability to survey their colonial peers across the colonies, whilst the simple threat of the tarring and feathering committee enabled them to halt the importation of East India Company tea. In many cases, surveillance enabled the Sons of Liberty to identify the targets of their violence and spectacle. With this approach, the Sons were able to become quasi-rulers of colonial towns and cities. In doing so, they would ultimately help light the fire of Independence in the American colonies.

[1] Theodore Draper, *A Struggle for Power: The American Revolution* (New York: Times Books, 1996), 244.

[2] Francis Bernard to Board of Trade, August 16, 1765, cited in *The Stamp Act of 1765*, ed. Johnathan Mercantini (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2017), 89.

[3] Bernard to Board of Trade, August 22, 1765, cited in Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776* (New York: Random House, 1974), 96.

[4] Theodore Draper, *A Struggle for Power: The American Revolution* (New York: Times Books, 1996), 244.

[6] Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution.*, 3rd ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 50-51.

[7] Richard Archer, *As If an Enemy's Country: The British Occupation of Boston and the Origins of Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 24.

[8] Edward Countryman, "Social Protest and the Revolutionary Movement" in *A Companion to the American Revolution*, ed., Jack P. Greene and J.R. Pole (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 187.

[9] Alan Taylor, *American Revolutions: A Continental History 1750-1804* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016), 101.

[10] Thomas Hutchinson, *The Correspondence of Thomas Hutchinson*, ed. John W. Tyler and Elizabeth Dubrulle (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 2014), 291.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Richard R. Beeman, *The Varieties of Political Experience in Eighteenth Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 254.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Taylor, *American Revolutions*, 104.

[15] "Speech of Isaac Barré, Common Debates, February 6, 1765," *Parliamentary Diaries of Nathaniel Ryder*, ed., Peter David Garner Thomas (London: Royal Historical Society, 1969), 257

[16] *The New York Mercury*, May 26, 1766.

[17] *The Montessor Journals*, ed. G.D. Scull (New York: New York Historical Society, 1882), 382-3.

[18] Herbert Morais, "The Sons of Liberty in New York" in *The Era of the American Revolution*, ed. Richard Morris (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1939), 276.

[19] *The Montessor Journals*, 342.

[20] Cited in Taylor, *American Revolutions*, 217.

[21] Ann Hulton, *Letters of a Loyalist Lady* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), 71.

[22] Holger Hook, *Scars of Independence: America's Violent Birth* (New York: Crown, 2017), 23-27.

[23] Cited in Peter David Garner Thomas, *Tea Party to Independence: The Third Phase of the American Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 25-31.

[24] "St-p! St-p! St-p! No: Tuesday-Morning, December 17, 1765"
dp.la/item/3995305307bdb4866b9bc9c2a39d5336.

[25] Morgan and Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis*, 143-45.

[26] Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution*, 127.

[27] Taylor, *American Revolutions*, 109.

[28] Rosemarie Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 22-23.

[29] Alfred F. Young, "The Women of Boston: 'Persons of Consequence' in the Making of the American Revolution," in Harriet B. Applewhite and Darline G. Levy, eds., *Women and Politics in the Age of Democratic Revolution* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 206.

[30] Morais, "The Sons of Liberty in New York," 285.

[31] Thomas Hutchinson to Bernard, August 12, 1770,
www.colonialsociety.org/publications/death-nathaniel-rogers.

[32] *English Historical Documents, Vol. IX: American Colonial Documents to 1776* ed. Merrill Jensen (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1955), 775.

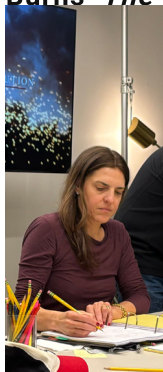
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2 Comments



Valerie Protopapas

May 29, 2025 at 12:50 pm

Reply

Frankly, I found this comment to be rather astonishing: "In rather prophetic fashion, Lord Buckinghamshire argued that Americans needed to consider if they should be part of the empire or independent.[23]"

Admittedly, I am not all that familiar with the period but, frankly, I have never heard the possibility of American independence, much less British acceptance of that option, voiced by anyone in the British parliament! And if it had been widely known (much less held!), I'm surprised that more was not said about the gentleman's statement both in Britain and America!

Obviously, if Buckinghamshire voiced that sentiment in Parliament he could not have been the only man in that assembly who entertained the concept of American independence! I would find it interesting to know how many in power in Britain considered that the "Mother Country" might have been better off minus her troublesome offspring! It must have soon become obvious that attempts to gain financial remuneration

from the colonies was hardly worth the cost of those attempts!



Jim Downey

August 24, 2025 at 6:56 pm

Reply

"Stamps" to be affixed to documents were NOT sent to the colonies, Stamped Paper was. Paper with an embossed stamp upon the paper was what was sent to the colonies for distribution, not individual stamps, such as a postage stamp. Most authors, even highly-educated ones, fail to make this distinction or are ignorant of the fact. When you read of "stamps," per se, think of stamped paper. See "Accounting for the Stamp Act Crisis" for an excellent detailed explanation and analysis of the would-be implementation of the Stamp Act.

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