

SAMUEL ADAMS

To many people, Samuel Adams is known for leading the Sons of Liberty. (The beer that bears his name does remind us that Samuel's father was a successful brewer, although his son's sense of business was so poor that he went out of business.) A cousin of John Adams, Samuel Adams was the embodiment of opposition to "taxation without representation." Esther Forbes' depiction of him in Johnny Tremain is accurate indeed. He was the behind-the-scenes leader of much of the planning that went on to motivate the population of Boston to rise against the British during the 1760's and early 1770's. As our novel states, once the Boston Tea Party was actually under way, he was nowhere to be seen. As William Hallahan puts it, "To get the absolute power he wanted, Adams employed every terrorist tactic he could think of or copy from others – blackmail, intimidation, house burnings, barn burnings, beatings, tarring and feathering, premeditated riots, political stagecraft like the Boston Tea Party – combined with sophisticated political and legal stratagems."¹

What else did Samuel Adams accomplish? He was a member of the Continental Congress, signer of the Declaration of Independence, opposed the adoption of the Constitution (because it did not protect individual rights), and served both as lieutenant governor and governor of Massachusetts.

Samuel Adams, Article signed "Candidus," *Boston Gazette*, 12 April 1773

Messieurs Edes and Gill,

Perhaps no measure that has been taken by the Town of Boston during our present Struggles for Liberty, has thwarted the designs of our enemies more than their Votes and Proceedings on the 20th of November last. If we take a Retrospect of two or three Years past, we shall find that what our "*pretended patriots*", as they were stiled in the Court Gazette, so zealously forewarn'd us of, has since turn'd out to be a Fact ; that every art would be made use of to lull the people of this Province and Continent into Security, in order that the Conspirators against our Rights and Liberties might carry on their Schemes and compleat their system of Tyranny without Opposition or Molestation. The first part of their plan, they imagin'd they had finish'd ; that is, the Establishment of a Revenue : And though this was far from being sufficient to answer their whole purpose, they thought that if they could put the people to sleep, they might the more easily add to this revenue, at some future time, and plead the present submission for a precedent. They therefore began upon the second and equally important part of their plan, which was to appropriate the revenue they had rais'd, to set up an Executive, absolutely independent of the legislative, which is to say the least, the nearest approach to absolute Tyranny.

¹ William H. Hallahan, *The Day the American Revolution Began: 19 April 1775*, (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000), 242.

The Governor, who was the first American *Pensioner*, had now an exorbitant Salary allowed him out of the monies extorted from the people : And although this was directly repugnant to the obvious meaning, if not the very letter of the Charter, much was said by *Chronus* and the Tribe of ministerial Writers in Mr. *Draper's* paper, to reconcile it to the people. But the people, whom they generally in their incubations treated with an air of contempt, as an unthinking herd, had a better understanding of things than they imagined they had. They were almost universally disgusted with the Innovation, while the advocates for it were yet endeavoring to make the world believe, that the opposition to it arose from a few men only, of “no property” and “desperate fortunes,” who were “endeavoring to bring things into confusion, that they might have the advantage of bettering their fortunes by plunder.” Little did they think that it was then known, as it now appears in fact, that those who were assiduously watching for places, preferment and pensions, were in truth the very men of *no property*, and had no other way of mending their shattered fortunes, but by being the sharers in the spoils of their country.

Scarcely had the General Assembly the opportunity of expressing their full Sentiments of the mischievous tendency, of having a Governor absolutely dependent on the Crown for his being and support, before the alarming News arriv'd of the Judges of the Superior Court being placed in the same Situation. This Insolence of Administration was so quickly repeated, no doubt from a full perswasion of the truth of the accounts received from their infatuated tools on this side of the atlantick, that the temper of the people would now admit of the experiment. But the News was like Thunder in the ears of all but a detestable and detested few : Even those who had been inclin'd to think favorably of the Governor and the Judges were alarm'd at it. And indeed what honest and sensible man or woman could contemplate it without horror! We all began to shudder at the Prospect of the same tragical Scenes being acted in this Country, which are recorded in the English History as having been acted when their Judges were the meer Creatures, Dependents and tools of the Crown. Such an indignation was discover'd and express'd by almost every one, at so daring an Insult upon a free people, that it was difficult to keep our Resentment within its proper bounds. Many were ready to call for immediate Vengeance, perhaps with more zeal than discretion : How soon human Prudence and Fortitude, directed by the wise and righteous Governor of the world, may point out the time and the means of successfully revenging the wrongs of America, I leave to those who have been the Contrivers and Abbettors of these destructive Measures, seriously to consider. I hope and believe that I live in a Country, the People of which are too intelligent and too brave to submit to Tyrants : And let me remind the greatest of them all, “there is a degree of patience beyond which human Nature will not bear” !

Amidst the general Anxiety the memorable Meeting was called, with Design that the Inhabitants might have the Opportunity, of expressing their Sense calmly and dispassionately ; for it is from such a Temper of Mind, that we are to expect a rational, manly and successful Opposition to the ruinous Plans of an abandoned Administration : And it is for this Reason alone, that the petty Tyrants of this Country have always dreaded and continue still to dread, a regular Assembly of the People.

The desirable Effects of this Meeting, contemptible as it was at first represented to be, together with the Prospect of what may be further expected from it, may possibly be the subject of a future Paper.

Your's,

CANDIDUS

Samuel Adams, "Article Signed 'Candidus,'" *The Writings of Samuel Adams*, Vol. III, ed. Harry Alonzo Cushing (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1907), 28-31.

Samuel Adams, Resolutions of the Town of Boston, 5 November 1773

Resolutions of the Town of Boston,
November 5, 1773

Whereas it appears by an Act of the British Parliament passed in the last Sessions, that the East India Company are by the said Act allowed to export their Teas into America, in such Quantities as the Lord of the Treasury shall Judge proper : And some People with an evil intent to amuse the People, and others thro' inattention to the true design of the Act, have so construed the same, as that the Tribute of three Pence on every Pound of Tea is not to be enacted by the detestable Task Masters there – Upon the due consideration thereof, *Resolved*, That the Sense of the Town cannot be better expressed on this Occasion, than in the words of certain Judicious Resolves lately entered into by our worthy Brethren the Citizens of Philadelphia – wherefore

Resolved, that the disposal of their own property is the Inherent Right of Freemen ; that there can be no property in that which another can of right take from us without our consent ; that the Claim of Parliament to tax America, is in other words a claim of Right to buy Contributions on us at pleasure –

2nd That the Duty imposed by Parliament upon Tea landed in America, is a tax on the Americans, or levying Contributions on them without their consent --

3rd That the express purpose for which the Tax is levied on the Americans, namely for the support of Government, the Administration of Justice, and the defence of His Majestys Dominions in America, has a direct tendency to render Assemblies useless, and to introduce Arbitrary Government and Slavery --

4th That a virtuous and steady opposition to the Ministerial Plan of governing America, is absolutely necessary to preserve even the shadow of Liberty, and is a duty which every Freeman in America owes to his Country to himself and to his Posterity –

5th That the Resolutions lately come by the East India Company, to send out their Teas to America Subject to the payment of Duties on its being landed here, is an open attempt to enforce the Ministerial Plan, and a violent attack upon the Liberties of America –

6th That it is the Duty of every American to oppose this attempt—

7th That whoever shall directly or indirectly countenance this attempt, or in any wise aid or abet in unloading receiving or vending the Tea sent or to be sent out by the East India Company while it remains subject to the payment of a duty here is an Enemy to America –

8th That a Committee be immediately chosen to wait on those Gentlemen, who it is reported are appointed by the East India Company to receive and sell said Tea, and to request them from a regard to their own characters and the peace and good order of this Town and Province immediately to resign their appointment.

Samuel Adams, "Resolutions of the Town of Boston," *The Writings of Samuel Adams*. Vol. III, ed. Harry Alonzo Cushing (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1907), 67-69.

Letter from Samuel Adams to Arthur Lee, 31 December 1773

Boston, Dec. 31, 1773

My Dear Sir, — I am now to inform you of as remarkable an event as has yet happened since the commencement of our struggle for American liberty. The meeting of the town of Boston, an account of which I enclosed in my last, was succeeded by the arrival of the Falmouth, Captain Hall, with 114 chests of the East India Company's tea, on the 28th of November last. The next day the people met in Faneuil hall, without observing the rules prescribed by law for calling them together ; and although that hall is capable of holding 1200 or 1300 men, they were soon obliged for the want of room to adjourn to the Old South meeting-house; where were assembled upon this important occasion 5000, some say 6000 men, consisting of the respectable inhabitants of this and the adjacent towns. The business of the meeting was conducted with decency, unanimity, and spirit. Their resolutions you will observe in an enclosed printed paper. It naturally fell upon the correspondence for the town of Boston to see that these resolutions were carried into effect. This committee, finding that the owner of the ship after she was unloaded of all her cargo except the tea, was by no means disposed to take the necessary steps for her sailing back to London, thought it best to call in the committees of Charlestown, Cambridge, Brookline, Roxbury, and Dorchester, all of which towns are in the neighbourhood of this, for their advice and assistance. After a free conference and due consideration, they dispersed. The next day, being the 14th, inst. the people met again at the Old South church, and having ascertained the owner, they *compelled* him to apply at the custom house for a clearance for his ship to London with the tea on board, and appointed ten gentlemen to see it performed ; after which they adjourned till Thursday the 16th. The people then met, and Mr. Rotch informed them that he had according to their injunction applied to the collector of the customs for a clearance, and received in answer from the collector that he could not consistently with his duty grant him a clearance, until the ship should be discharged of the dutiable article on board. It must be here observed that Mr. Rotch had before made a tender of the tea to the consignees, being told by them that it was not practicable for them at that time to receive the tea, by reason of a constant guard kept upon it by armed men ; but that when it might be practicable, they would receive it. He demanded the captain's bill of lading and the freight, both which they refused him, against which he entered a regular protest. The people then required Mr. Rotch to protest the refusal of the collector to grant him a clearance under these circumstances, and thereupon to wait upon the governor for a permit to pass the castle in her voyage to London, and then adjourned till the afternoon.

They then met, and after waiting till sun-setting, Mr. Rotch returned, and acquainted them that the governor had refused to grant him a passport, thinking it inconsistent with the laws and his duty to the king, to do it until the ship should be qualified, notwithstanding Mr. Rotch had acquainted him with the circumstances above mentioned. You will observe by the printed proceedings, that the people were resolved that the tea should not be landed, but sent back to London in the same bottom ; and the property should be safe guarded while in port, which they punctually performed. It cannot therefore be fairly said that the destruction of the property was in their contemplation. It is proved that the consignees, together with the collector of the customs, and the governor of the province, prevented the safe return of the East India Company's property (the danger of the sea only excepted) to London. The people finding all their endeavours for this purpose thus totally frustrated, dissolved the meeting, which had consisted by common estimation of at least seven thousand men, many of whom had come from towns at the distance of twenty miles. In less than four hours every chest of tea on board three ships which had by this time arrived, *three hundred and forty-two* chests, or rather the contents of them, was thrown into the sea, without the least injury to the vessels or any other property. The only remaining vessel which was expected with this detested article, is by the act of righteous heaven cast on shore on the back of Cape Cod, which has often been the sad fate of many a more valuable cargo. For a more particular detail of facts, I refer you to our worthy friend, Dr. Hugh Williamson, who kindly takes the charge of this letter. We have had great pleasure in his company for a few weeks past; and he favoured the meeting with his presence.

You cannot imagine the height of joy that sparkles in the eyes and animates the countenances as well as the hearts of all we meet on this occasion; excepting the disappointed, disconcerted Hutchinson and his tools. I repeat what I wrote you in my last; if lord Dartmouth has prepared his plan let him produce it speedily; but his lordship must know that it must be such a plan as will not barely amuse, much less farther irritate but conciliate the affection of the inhabitants.

I had forgot to tell you that before the arrival of either of these ships, the tea commissioners had preferred a petition to the governor and council, praying "to resign themselves and the property in their care, to his excellency and the board as guardians and protectors of the people, and that measures may be directed for the landing and securing the tea," &c. I have enclosed you the result of the council on that petition. He (the governor) is now, I am told, consulting *his* lawyers and books to make out that the resolves of the meeting are treasonable. I duly received your favours of the 23d June, of the 21st July and 13th October, and shall make the best use I can of the important contents.

Believe me to be affectionately your friend,

P.S. — Your letter of the 28th August is but this moment come to hand. I hope to have leisure to write you by the next vessel. Our friend Dr. Warren has written to you by this; you will find him an agreeable and useful correspondent.