

# Maryland Society Sons of the American Revolution

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### The Voice of the Revolution

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When speaking about the American Revolution, John Adams once said that "Without the character of Samuel Adams, the true history of the American Revolution can never be written" (Puls 231). Thomas Jefferson claimed that Samuel Adams was "the patriarch of liberty" (Stoll 254). Despite these descriptions, many Americans overlook Samuel Adams or view him disapprovingly. He was a failed businessman who wasted away his inheritance and with nothing to gain became one of the most important founding fathers. Adams was one of the first to oppose British intervention in American lives and supported civil resistance early on. He helped unite the colonies, write the Declaration of Independence, and create a republican form of government based on democracy.

Following the French and Indian War, Great Britain was faced with staggering debt. In an attempt to raise revenue, First Lord of the Treasury George Grenville created the Sugar Act. Samuel Adams was one of the first to oppose the tax measures and called for his fellow colonists to boycott British goods. Adams warned the people of Boston that their freedom was a result of their power to self govern and tax. He believed if Great Britain could impose taxes, then their liberties were gone. He also thought economic and political freedoms were linked and questioned Parliament's authority in America. Using the Boston Gazette, Adams urged the colonies to unite and oppose British authority. Adam's instructions were read throughout the colonies and Americans, such as Patrick Henry, answered his call by participating in politics and the boycott of British goods.

Despite Adam's efforts, in 1765 Grenville created a larger tax plan called the Stamp Act. Benjamin Franklin believed that protesting the act was pointless and he claimed that "We might as well have hindered the suns setting." (Puls 46). Samuel Adams worked nonstop to oppose this measure by inspiring crowds and writing emotional articles in opposition. He proposed uniting the colonies by creating an American Congress, an attempt that Franklin previously tried with his Albany Plan. Within weeks of his proposal ten states accepted the invitation and the Stamp Act congress was created. The Stamp Act congress passed the first united petition to the King and Parliament in which they stated that taxation without representation violated their rights. Adams continued by writing the Massachusetts Resolves which denied

Parliament's authority over Massachusetts. Although they were popular in America, they were considered "ravings of a parcel of wild enthusiasts" (Puls 58) in London. With the help of Adams's constant use of the press, the colonists were refusing to obey the Stamp Act. Due to the boycott of British goods, English merchants began to suffer from the act and in 1766 the Stamp Act was repealed.

While the repeal of the Stamp Act was celebrated in America, King George III and Charles Townshend believed it had been a "fatal compliance" (Puls 67). Townshend claimed that "So long as I am in office, the authority of the laws shall not be trampled on" and in 1767 the Townshend Acts became law (Puls 67). Adams immediately became convinced that a puppet government was being created to rule America. By using speeches, letters, committees, and the printing press he set out to resist British intervention. In 1768 he wrote a letter called "The True Sentiments of America" in which he stressed that colonists were not represented and therefore could not be taxed, argued that property rights were essential, and encouraged unity among the colonies. This circular letter was published throughout America and made such an impression on the colonists that Great Britain viewed the letter as his most defiant act. In May of 1768 the British battleship, the *Romney*, entered Boston Harbor.

With England sending troops to contain the colonists, Adams became convinced that America must become independent. By means of the press he wrote that utilizing the military would destroy the colonies' form of republican self government and that the troops should be removed. By 1770 the colonists tired of having British troops in their city, and eventually on March 2<sup>nd</sup> the Boston Massacre broke out. With three Americans killed in the incident, Adams successfully removed the British regiments from the city. While considered a hero for removing the soldiers, he was also concerned about the British troops receiving a fair trial. Wanting Boston to appear commendable with its conduct of the situation, Adams played a part in convincing John Adams and Josiah Quincy to defend the British soldiers (Stoll 84). He used the incident against the British government and once wrote, "Let me observe, how fatal are the effects, the danger of which I long ago mentioned, of posting a standing army among a free people!" (Puls 111).

Tension in the colonies continued to increase and in 1773 the Boston Tea Party occurred. While Adams did not participate in the event, he supported the Sons of Liberty by arguing that the blame fell on the British government for not allowing tea to be returned. He later represented Massachusetts during the Continental Congress. There he participated in the creation of the Suffolk Resolves in which all of America supported Boston. Patrick Henry said that "the good that was to come from these congresses was due to the work of Samuel Adams" (Puls 164). By the time Adams returned to Massachusetts in 1774 the colonies were preparing for war.

Radical leaders including Samuel Adams and John Hancock created the Committee of Safety which coordinated efforts to train militia. Because the British troops were under surveillance by the Sons of Liberty and the Committee of Safety, Paul Revere and William Dawes were able to notify Adams and Hancock of the British patrols searching for them and they were able to escape. On this day in 1775 the battle of Lexington and Concord took place which initiated the war for American Independence.

Adams later proclaimed "O! What a glorious morning is this!"(Stoll 157) because of the progress toward American Independence.

A second Continental Congress was soon adjourned and Adams again went to Philadelphia. He became impatient with many of the moderate congressman who still wanted peace and claimed "Is not America already independent? Why then not declare it?"(Stoll 182). In 1776 Jefferson presented the Declaration of Independence which included many of Adams' writings. Samuel Adams signed the Declaration he worked so hard for and also helped form a new government called the Articles of Confederation.

Adams played an important role in initiating the war for American Independence and continued to serve his country after the war had been won. Soon after independence, the Articles of Confederation were failing to be an effective form of government. Many men supported creating a new Constitution that would strengthen the role of the federal government. While he was considered an anti federalist and opposed ratification, Adams later supported the Constitution with a Bill of Rights (*Debate on the Constitution* 923). His support of the Constitution helped Massachusetts and several other states ratify it.

Many people consider Samuel Adams as a man who encouraged violence and led mobs. However, he actually supported civil resistance, logical persuasion, and reason. He had no wealth to protect but was simply attempting to preserve rights he believed Americans already had. His efforts led to American Independence and made him the voice of the revolution.

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## Biography

Nick Thomas is a senior at Tuscarora High School in Frederick, Maryland. He is an honor roll student who participates in extracurricular activities such as the golf team, model UN, mock trial, National Honor Society, and chess club. Nick also does a lot of service with his church. He plans on going to college after high school and becoming an engineer.