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SAMUEL ADAMS AND JOHN HANCOCK: THE RELATIONSHIP
THAT DETERMINED THE FORMATION
OF AMERICA

A Thesis

by

BRUCE D. GRIFFITHS

Submitted to the Graduate College of
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2018

Major Subject: History

SAMUEL ADAMS AND JOHN HANCOCK: THE RELATIONSHIP
THAT DETERMINED THE FORMATION
OF AMERICA

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May 2018

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ABSTRACT

Griffiths, Bruce D., Samuel Adams and John Hancock: The Relationship that Determined the Formation of America. Master of Arts (MA), May 2018, 118 pp, 46 titles.

This paper argues that the relationship between Samuel Adams and John Hancock and their cooperation played critical/pivotal roles, especially in garnering New England support for the beginning of the American Revolution as well as the ratification of the Constitution.

DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to my wife, Ety without whom this paper would not have been written. Her tireless proof reading, encouragement when I needed it, and a little push now and then when I needed that too, got me here.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

While Samuel Adams and John Hancock have been studied extensively, a study specifically about their relationship does not appear to have been written. My paper will explore the motivations behind the actions of both men and their relationship with each other and will argue that the relationship between Samuel Adams and John Hancock and their cooperation played critical/pivotal roles, especially in garnering New England support for the beginning of the American Revolution as well as the ratification of the Constitution.

This paper argues that the Adams – Hancock team exerted influence in America in general and Massachusetts in particular during two crucial periods. While their relationship was at times excellent, at other times, it was not. It was during the pre-revolutionary period that the partnership exerted the most impact on American history.

Adams had been raised in a very religious home and it was expected that he would become a minister like his father, when he graduated from Harvard. He lived an austere life and thought that Massachusetts should return to its Puritan roots. He did not become a minister when he graduated and instead subsisted by working in his father's malt business.

Adams had harbored revolutionary tendencies at least since his days in Harvard. Adams probably read Thomas Hobbes, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and the Baron de Montesquieu while in college. He certainly read John Locke, as Adams quoted him at times.

Adams cared nothing for money or possessions and was a failure in everything until he found his true calling...politics. When John Hancock, one of the wealthiest men in America, entered politics, Adams saw a chance to cultivate him.

Hancock, like Adams was raised by a minister and was expected to follow his father's footsteps upon graduation from Harvard. Hancock's life took an unexpected turn when his father died, and Hancock was taken into his uncle's home. Hancock's uncle Thomas owned a shipping and retail empire and was very wealthy. Thomas had no children and he began grooming Hancock to take over his business. Thomas introduced young Hancock to the finer things in life and Hancock cultivated a lifelong taste for them. Hancock's uncle died when he was twenty-seven. Hancock inherited his uncle's business, mansion, and nearly everything else. Hancock became Boston's leading merchant and citizen. Hancock was also rather vain and sensitive.

In the early years of their relationship, Adams mentored Hancock and introduced him to people and organizations that had a great deal of political influence in Massachusetts. When Adams and Hancock entered the Massachusetts legislature the Stamp Act had just been passed. Adams was associated with the Liberty Party, a group of radicals who opposed the Stamp Act. Adams introduced Hancock to fellow rebels and made sure Hancock's political base rested there.

Why did Adams, who criticized people who consumed conspicuously court Hancock, the most conspicuous consumer in Boston? The answer is twofold. First, Hancock lent respectability to the rebel cause. If John Hancock, the foremost merchant in Boston associated with the Liberty Party, others might be lured to join as well. Second, Adams needed Hancock's money. Rebellions cost money and Adams had none, while Hancock had coin in abundance. Adams had priorities and could put aside his Puritan principles in favor of his political goals.

As time went on Hancock mastered politics and tried to extricate himself from Adams grip. While Adams was a rebel at heart, Hancock was not. Hancock's skill was at mediation and striking bargains. Adams and other rebel leaders had to cajole Hancock out of making accords with the British on several occasions. Hancock had become a symbol for the rebels and his defection would wound the cause deeply.

As time passed, the situation grew worse in Boston. The British seemed to never miss an opportunity to anger the colonists and impose harsher restrictions on them, which in turn angered the colonists and made them more inclined to adopt the sympathies of Adams.

On the eve of the American Revolution, Hancock tried one last time to get free of Adams, but Adams outmaneuvered him, and Hancock found himself labeled as “the leader of the revolution”, not only in the colonies, but in Britain as well.

The Adams – Hancock relationship was not always harmonious, and the two men were estranged for many years. The relationship soured when the Declaration of Independence was passed. The revolution Adams had dreamed of was finally a fact, and Adams did not need Hancock anymore. Adams now felt free to criticize Hancock and did so publicly. Their political and personal battle played out in newspapers and polling places for more than a decade.

If this estrangement had lasted, America would be very different today, perhaps perishing over two-hundred years ago under the fragmented structure of the Articles of Confederation. Therefore, my second strongest argument is that the Constitution might not have been ratified without the very public reconciliation between Adams and Hancock.

Many historians as well as people of that time felt that Massachusetts was the key to the ratification of the Constitution. When the Massachusetts Ratification Convention opened,

only five states had approved the Constitution. The thinking was that if Massachusetts ratified the Constitution, other states would follow and in Massachusetts, and no one had more influence in Massachusetts than Samuel Adams and John Hancock.

At the Massachusetts Ratification Convention, Adams publicly joined with Hancock in support of the Constitution and even addressed him with honorifics. This shocked many people and probably influenced some. James Madison thought this and felt the ratification would probably be successful when heard of their reconciliation.

Lastly, with regards to their relationship, this paper implies that when Adams allied himself with Hancock it was for political reasons, but the reason for the many years of estrangement were personal for Adams because Hancock offended Adams' Puritan ideals and standards. Adams could tolerate others who did not conform to his values, but Adams could not accept such deviation from a fellow Massachusetts man.

As to their reconciliation, historians have offered many reasons, and I have presented some of them towards the end of this paper. One thing is clear, the reunification was real. After the reconciliation, Hancock who had become the better politician, supported Adams, and Hancock and Adams ruled Massachusetts as Governor and Lieutenant Governor respectively for many years. They remained allied until Hancock's death.

While today, John Hancock is best known as an insurance company and Samuel Adams as a beer, in their time, they were two of the most influential people in America. Hancock was one of the wealthiest people in the thirteen colonies and Adams was a major organizing force of the early resistance movement that would eventually become the American Revolution. When John Adams, later the second President of the United States first landed in France he

recalls being asked if he was “le fameux Adams?” (the famous Adams). To his chagrin, he had to reply that he was not, the “famous Adams” was his cousin Samuel.¹

¹ Charles Francis Adams. *The Works of John Adams, second President of the United States, Vol III*. (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1851), p. 189.

CHAPTER II

HISTORIOGRAPHY

The Life and Public Services of Samuel Adams: Being a Narrative of His Acts and Opinions, and of His Agency in Producing and Forwarding the American Revolution, with Extracts from His Correspondence, State Papers, and Political Essays by William V. Wells was first published in 1865 and is the first complete biography of Samuel Adams. Wells, the great-grandson of Adams, had access to all the Adams papers in his family's possession. More have been discovered since, but Wells' work is the starting point for any Samuel Adams biographer. Wells also interviewed people who knew Adams. A great many primary materials are contained in the four volumes. He is widely cited in other books used in this paper.

Samuel Adams: Radical Puritan, published in 1997 and written by William M. Fowler Jr. and edited by Oscar Handlin, is concise (177 pages), but rich with detail. Fowler says he was inspired to write about Adams after he had written about Hancock.² Fowler presents Adams as a man informed by the Puritan past and sees the British threatening his "city on a hill".³ Unfortunately, he does not provide an extensive list of sources.

² William M. Fowler Jr. and Oscar Handlin ed., *Samuel Adams: Radical Puritan*. (New York: Longman, 1997) p. xi

³ Fowler and Handlin. p. xii

Published in 2006 and written by Mark Puls, *Samuel Adams: Father of the American Revolution* concentrates on Puls' view that Adams was consumed with the idea that the English would take away rights that the colonists already possessed.⁴ This book focuses on the pre-revolutionary lead up to the war and the war itself. Puls does not delve into the religious side of Adams a great deal. This is a small work (237 pages), but it has extensive end notes.

Ira Stoll's *Samuel Adams: a life* emphasizes the religious side of Adams that mixed with the political.⁵ It would be impossible to tell Adams story without including Hancock, and their relationship (good and bad) is discussed, but Hancock figures no more prominently than the other characters in Adams life. The is a realistic work that informs us Adams' accomplishments as well as detailing his faults such as religious intolerance.

First published in 1948, *John Hancock: Patriot in Purple*, by Herbert Sanford Allen rehabilitates the predominant characterization of Hancock. Allen details the political machinations, insinuations, and thinly veiled insults Hancock endured at the hands of Adams and his supporters. Allen tells us Mercy Otis Warren "zealously abetted her husband in hatred of Hancock."⁶ Allen also theorizes that the Adams-Hancock feud was more personal than political and was caused by Adams inability to accept Hancock's excessive lifestyle.⁷

The Baron of Beacon Hill: A Biography of John Hancock by William M. Fowler, Jr. was published in 1980. Fowler sees Hancock as a complex character and disputes the popular view at that time that "Hancock, the vain popinjay who is clay in the hands of a cunning and sly

⁴ Mark Puls. *Samuel Adams: Father of the American Revolution*. First Edition ed., (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006) p. 16

⁵ Ira Stoll. *Samuel Adams: a life*. (New York: Free Press. 2008) p. 11.

⁶ Herbert Sanford Allen. *John Hancock: Patriot in Purple*. New York: The Beechhurst Press, 1953. p. 303.

⁷ Allen. p. 304.

Adams.”⁸ The book is rich in detail and Fowler writes of the Adams-Hancock relationship in detail. Fowler acknowledges Hancock’s weaknesses, but treats him kindly.

John Hancock: Merchant King and American Patriot written by Harlow G. Unger and published in 2000 acknowledges Hancock’s flaws, painting him as a man who lusted for power and wealth, describing him as a “foppish aristocrat”.⁹ In general, this work portrays Hancock as a reluctant revolutionary, drawn into the fray out of self-interest. There is a wealth of descriptive detail covering everything from Hancock’s clothes to his coach, to the invoices for his luxuries. Unger treats Adams poorly, using phrases such as “the venomous tongue of Samuel Adams” and “Samuel Adams cackled”.¹⁰ This a large work (336 pages) and the endnotes are extensive.

David Hackett Fischer's work, *Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America* and published in 1989 is an excellent source for demographics about early American settlers. His book describes four waves from England emigrating first to Massachusetts, then to Virginia, next to the Delaware Valley and lastly to the Appalachian backcountry.¹¹ Fisher uses demographics to argue that each wave, coming from a different part on England carried their culture with them to their new home. He calls these cultural traits “folkways” and lists twenty-four of them.¹² These include “magic ways” (religion), “food ways”, “dress ways” and “rank ways” and “power ways”. The book contains many tables, graphs, illustrations, and maps. The footnotes in this work are extensive. His book was useful in documenting the early settlement of Massachusetts as well as the cultural hurdles the delegates needed to overcome when the met, especially in Philadelphia.

⁸ William M. Fowler, Jr. *The Baron of Beacon Hill*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980) p. 64.

⁹ Harlow G. Unger. *John Hancock: Merchant King and American Patriot*. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000) p. 5.

¹⁰ Unger. p. 259.

¹¹ Fischer. p. 6.

¹² Fisher. p. 8-9.

Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution by Woody Holton and published in 2007 is a roadmap to the causes that led up to the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Holton starts with the wretched state of affairs that Americans found themselves in after winning the Revolutionary war. Holton sums up his outlook with, “that the uneducated farmers who had seized the ship of state during the American Revolution had damn near driven it aground.”¹³ While biographies of Adams and Hancock will provide details of their involvement in the constitutional argument, Holton gives the whole picture but does not omit the details either. The book has extensive endnotes.

¹³ Woody Holton. *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution*. (New York: Hill and Wang. 2007) p. 16.

CHAPTER III

THE EARLY YEARS

To understand Adams and Hancock we need to also understand the society they lived in. Both men were descended from Puritans as nearly everyone in Massachusetts was.¹⁴ The English Puritans believed the hierarchal structure with bishops and cardinals was too “popish” and central authority would lead to corruption. They found the elaborate vestments and the proscribed liturgy evidence of the lack of God’s spirit in the Anglican church and so many fled for America. Before landing in Plymouth, Massachusetts the first American Puritans on board the *Mayflower* drafted a document to solve discord among the passengers. All adult males signed the *Mayflower Compact* and it laid out a model of democratic government for the new colony.¹⁵

The *Massachusetts Bay Charter* formally established what was to become another, larger expedition led by John Winthrop. These Puritans escaped royal influence by devising a agreement whereby all non-emigrating stockholders would sell their interest in the company to those leaving for the new colony.¹⁶

¹⁴ David Hackett Fischer. *Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America*. (New York: Oxford University Press. 1989), p. 16.

¹⁵ *Mayflower Compact*. Chronology of U.S. Historical Documents. University of Oklahoma Law Center. 28 March, 1999 <<http://www.law.ou.edu/hist/mayflow.html>>

¹⁶ *The Cambridge Agreement*. <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/agreement-of-the-massachusetts-bay-company-at-cambridge-england/>

The Massachusetts Bay Charter would become the de-facto constitution of Massachusetts and described a Republican government with a Governor, Deputy Governor, and Assistants all being elected to their offices.¹⁷

Winthrop was elected to be the new colony's Governor and shortly before landing near Salem he delivered a sermon entitled *A Modell of Christian Charity*, which read in part, "for wee must Consider that wee shall be as a Citty upon a Hill".¹⁸ This metaphor would be repeated often and by it Winthrop meant that the new colony would be an example of an ideal Christian society to the rest of the world. Although the Puritans had left England in large part because of persecution and religious intolerance, they were not particularly tolerant towards other religions. Catholics, Quakers, and others were not welcome in the colony and even Anglicans were considered "popish".

The early Puritans expressed piety by living modestly. Their clothes were plain, their food was simple, even though the forests and ocean around them abounded with rich food.¹⁹ The early Puritans struggled to create a Godly utopia that they would come to call "The New England Way." The citizens of Massachusetts lived in a state of self-government for over fifty years while they tried to perfect ideal society.

Ironically the same hard work that eventually brought prosperity to Massachusetts was likely one of the causes of the decline of Puritanism. Prosperity brought opportunity and many colonists desired to enjoy the pleasures and comforts that were available. By the time of Adams

¹⁷ *The Charter of Massachusetts Bay*: 1629. Yale Law School. Lillian Goldman Law Library. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/mass03.asp

¹⁸ John Winthrop. *A Modell of Christian Charity*, 1630. Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society (Boston: 1838), 3rd series 7:31-48.

¹⁹ Fischer p. 140 – 141 and p. 135 – 136.

and Hancock, the culture of Massachusetts had changed significantly. Boston was a bustling wealthy city and although religion was important, for most people it was not all-consuming as it had been for the early Puritans. The first charter had been revoked and replaced with one that specified a royally appointed Governor who could dismiss or prorogue the General Court (elected lower house) at will.²⁰

Samuel Adams was descended from Henry Adams, a Puritan farmer fleeing religious persecution in 1632 or 1633. Samuel Adams, one of the subjects of this paper and John Adams, the second President of the United States were both his great-great grandsons. He took up farming in Braintree and at age 23, Henry Adams married Edith Squire. After losing an infant daughter, a son, John was born.²¹

By the time John came of age, Boston was a thriving port town. Seeing greater opportunity in a life at sea than farming, “Captain” Adams went to sea and he did well. On 6 May 1689 a son Samuel was born and in 1692, Edith had another child. Both the child and Edith died in childbirth. He married Hannah Checkley, who came from a notable family and this improved Adams’ social standing slightly. They had five children, and one of the three who survived infancy was Samuel Adams the elder, the father of one of the subjects of this paper, Samuel Adams the younger.²²

Adams the elder might have been taught basic reading and writing by his stepmother, but he never went to college. After retiring from a life at sea, he bought a house on Purchase Street And went into business as a malter and was also active in politics. In 1711 he married

²⁰ King William and Queen Mary. *The charter granted by Their Majesties King William and Queen Mary, to the inhabitants of the province of the Massachusetts-Bay, in New-England.* (Boston: 1692)

²¹ William Fowler and Oscar Handlin. *Samuel Adams: Radical Puritan.* (New York: Longman. 1997), p. 3.

²² Fowler and Handlin. p. 3.

Mary Fitfeld, who has been described as a woman “of severe religious principles.”²³ Mary’s father married Maria Mather, who was the daughter of Increase Mather. This made Adams linked to one of the most prominent families in Massachusetts.

Adams the elder was a man of influence. He owed a great deal of this influence due to serving as a deacon of New South Church. He was known as Samuel the Elder or Samuel the Deacon. In the political realm Adams the elder caucused with a variety of groups and many came to his home to discuss the business of Boston. Adams the elder served as justice of the peace, selectman, and as a representative on the General Court.²⁴ At home, the Adams family “saw life through the prism of their Puritan traditions.”²⁵

Samuel, the youngest, was born into this exciting atmosphere on September 16, 1722 and baptized at the Old South Congregational Church the same day. Samuel the elder raised his children to be true to the values he held, including appreciating traditional Puritan beliefs and service to the community.²⁶ Samuel the younger was captivated by his father and described him as “a wise man, a good man.”²⁷ His sister, Mary was influential in young Samuel’s life. She transcribed sermons of notable clergy who passed through Boston. She would study the sermons and look up verse in the Bible. Later, as a grown man, Samuel observed “it is a happy young man who had an elder sister upon whom he could rely for advice and counsel in youth.”²⁸ He was also afflicted with a condition that caused his hands to tremble when he became excited.

²³ Ira Stoll. *Samuel Adams: a life*. (New York: Free Press. 2008), p. 16.

²⁴ Fowler and Handlin p. 14.

²⁵ Fowler and Handlin. p. 4

²⁶ Fowler and Handlin. p. 4 – 5.

²⁷ Mark Puls. *Samuel Adams: Father of the American Revolution*. First Edition ed., (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 23.

²⁸ John K. Alexander. *Samuel Adams: The Life of an American Revolutionary*. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011)

As a young child, Adams learned to read and write from his mother. When Adams was about six, he was sent to Boston Latin School. This the oldest school in America. Established on February 13, 1635 it was intended to be a feeder institution to Harvard which was founded one year later.²⁹ Boston Latin School produced a classical education that included essays and speeches in Latin and Greek. Five of the fifty-six signers of the Declaration of Independence attended Boston Latin School.”³⁰ These five were John Hancock, Samuel Adams, Robert Treat Paine, all from Massachusetts, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, and William Hooper from North Carolina.

Boston Latin School prepared Adams to qualify for Harvard, to which he was admitted in 1736 at the age of fourteen.³¹ At this time, Harvard students were ranked according to social position. Had the normal rules applied, Adams would have been ranked second, however he was ranked sixth.³² Many historians have conjectured this slight was due to Adams being the son of a sea captain. An Adams biographer who commented on this wrote, “Every kind of genealogy he affected to despise...as a thing which gives birth to family pride.”³³

Adams declared his intent to study for the ministry and his parents were pleased as the leaders in Boston were merchants and ministers.³⁴ Adams was reprimanded twice while in Harvard, once for oversleeping and missing morning prayers and later after caught drinking rum, which seems to have been a rite of passage for Harvard students.³⁵ After a while it became

²⁹ The Bay State Monthly - Volume 3 - Page 74. (Boston: 1885).

<https://books.google.com/books?id=sco5AQAAMAAJ>

³⁰ Stoll. p. 17.

³¹ Stoll. p. 18.

³² Pauline Maier. *The Old Revolutionaries: Political Lives in the Age of Samuel Adams*. (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, Inc, 1980). p. 34.

³³ Maier. p. 34.

³⁴ Puls. p. 23.

³⁵ Stroll. p. 18-19.

evident that Samuel did not have a calling for the ministry. Instead Adams began reading John Locke and other Age of Enlightenment philosophers, developed an interest in politics and organized a debate on “Liberty”.³⁶ Samuel Adams graduated from Harvard at the age of 18 in 1740.

Two years later Adams was a candidate for a Master’s Degree and the subject he chose was “*Whether it be lawful to resist the Supreme Magistrate, if the Commonwealth cannot otherwise be preserved.*”³⁷ He answered in the positive. His cousin John Adams is quoted as commenting on this episode with, “I pity Mr. Sam. Adams for he was born a Rebel.”³⁸

During Adams’ teenage years, his father became embroiled in a controversy involving the land-bank scheme. In the American colonies, English gold and silver coins were used as currency. As the population and economy grew in the colonies, English coins became rare. This set the rural, populist Whigs against the wealthier merchants who tended to be Tories. In 1639 Samuel the elder found a solution. He established the land-bank whereby rural farmers could pledge the value of their land and receive land-bank notes in return. The merchants were not pleased with Adams’ solution as they had been selling goods, seed, and livestock on credit and charging interest. Adams became heavily invested in the land-bank.

In 1741 Parliament ordered the Massachusetts Bay Company call in all its government notes due to high debt in England. The Governor, Jonathan Belcher, a Tory along with other wealthy merchants established a competing bank that was based on silver deposits. No member of the land-bank could do business with the silver-bank and the Governor vetoed land-bank

³⁶ Alexander. p. 5.

³⁷ E. L. Magoon. *Orators of the American Revolution*. (New York: C. Scribner, 1857), p. 98.

³⁸ Stoll. p. 23.

appointees to the upper legislature, as well as dismissing all justices of the peace and militia officers who served on the board for the land-bank. Samuel the elder was a justice and a soldier, was dismissed from both positions. Parliament then applied a 1719 law that held the directors of the land-bank personally responsible for the losses incurred by their shareholders. For the next two decades Samuel the elder and later his son would battle in the courts to avoid a total loss of everything the family owned. Political enemies were the most eager to sue for losses and while Samuel the elder lost most of his fortune, he did retain the house on Purchase Street and the maltery.³⁹

Now that Samuel the younger had left college, he became an apprentice in the counting house of the wealthy Boston merchant, Thomas Cushing. It soon became clear he was not interested in accounting. He was more interested in politics and literature and church. Attending church to hear sermons from Reverend Checkley, became enamored of his daughter, Elizabeth. Elizabeth was three years younger than young Samuel and they began to court.⁴⁰

Deacon Adams worried about Samuel's future. Not finding a calling for the pulpit and failing at the counting house left Samuel without a path that would finance his life. His father's example as businessman did not seem to inspire his son and knew politics could not supply a living. Deacon Adams loaned his son the weight amount of £1,000, hoping that his son might establish a business of his own, but Adams the younger was uninterested in money. He loaned half of it to a friend who was in debt and wasted the rest. The friend never repaid the loan.⁴¹

³⁹ Puls. p. 25-26.

⁴⁰ Puls. p. 27.

⁴¹ Puls. p. 28.

Samuel the elder took his son into a partnership in the malt business. He ended up living in his parent's home, subsisting on the income from their malt house."⁴² When his father died in 1748, Samuel drove it into near-ruin.⁴³

Adams did find success when he ventured into a new arena...political writing. He started with a weekly called the *Independent Advisor*, which published from 1748 to 1750. In *Loyalty and Sedition*, Adams wrote in part, "True loyalty in the sense just now explained is the beauty and perfection of a well-constituted state." and "He that despises his neighbor's happiness because he wears a worsted cap or leathern apron, he that struts immeasurably above the lower size of people, and pretends to adjust the rights of men by the distinctions of fortune, is not over loyal."⁴⁴ Here we see some themes that Adams will often repeat such as the idea that liberty can only exist in a well constituted state. Adams also speaks to social class and scolds those who look down upon others due to their wealth or position. In another article he wrote in part, "O Libertas! Dea certe! (Oh, Freedom! goddess at least!) — it is the choicest gift that Heaven has lent to man" and "But though in the present corrupt and degenerate times no such state of nature can with any regularity exist."⁴⁵ This essay also contains ideas that Adams would frequently replicate. He states that men are naturally free, and that freedom is given to them by God. Adams calls 1748 "the present corrupt and degenerate times" but is referring to men turning from God's will and pursuing material or social gain. Adams warns such people that they are "slaves".⁴⁶

⁴² Stoll. p.22.

⁴³ Norman K. Risjord. *The Revolutionary Generation*. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001). p.27.

⁴⁴ Samuel Adams. *Loyalty and Sedition. Independent Advisor*. (Boston: 1748), found in *The Life and Public Services of Samuel Adams*. William V. Wells. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1865), p. 16 – 17.

⁴⁵ Samuel Adams. *Untitled Essay. Independent Advisor*. (Boston: 1748), found in *The Life and Public Services of Samuel Adams*. William V. Wells. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company. 1865), p. 18 – 23.

⁴⁶ Samuel Adams. *Untitled Essay*.

In the realm of politics, Adams describes the English system as the best, but then declares that the charter contains more liberties than the English constitution.⁴⁷ This points to Adams' unique view that Puritan society and ethics were ideally suited for the free society he seemed to be imagining even at this early point in his life. He then reminds his readers of their heritage by way of the Puritan's early struggles and the success they earned. Adams sums up with a warning that if his readers are not virtuous they will be slaves.

Adams married Elizabeth Checkly in 1749. She was 24 years old. They had six children but only two, Samuel born in 1751 and Hannah born in 1756 made it to adulthood. The others died in infancy and the last was stillborn. Complications from the still birth are most likely the cause of Hannah's death three weeks later. Adams said of her, "run her Christian race with remarkable steadiness and finished in triumph" and "To her husband, she was as sincere a Friend as she was a faithful wife."⁴⁸ While alive she was probably the one who kept the family finances, such as they were, running. Now with two children, and absent any means of income the future seemed dim for Samuel.

After the failure of the beer malt business, Adams entered politics proper. Starting modestly as the clerk of the town market, he was elected as one of twelve town scavengers in 1753. In an ironic twist, Adams' emergence as a populist leader began when he was elected tax collector in 1756. He was very popular in this role because he neglected to collect the taxes. He would always wait until May (after the elections) to collect the taxes.⁴⁹ During this period Samuel Adams began cultivating the relationships that were necessary for a career in politics. Adams joined many lodges or clubs that were the key to political power in Boston. His detractors

⁴⁷ Samuel Adams. *Untitled Essay*.

⁴⁸ Alexander. p. 12.

⁴⁹ Stoll. p. 27.

called him “Sam the Publican” as the clubs usually met in taverns, but never drank.⁵⁰ The lodge meetings were truly the “smoke filled rooms” of legend where winners and losers were decided before general elections were ever held in the Boston Town Meeting and in 1760 Adams was admitted to the most powerful and prestigious club, the Boston Caucus.

Adams married Elizabeth Wells in December of 1764. He called her ‘Betsy’, and they had no children. Although she did not bring any wealth into the marriage, she was a good money manager. He was forty-two and she was twenty-four. In a letter to friend about to be engaged, Adams wrote, “Believe me, my friend-I wish could persuade all the agreeable bachelors to think so-there are social joys in honest wedlock which single life is a stranger to.”⁵¹

When Adams lost the tax collector job, accusations by Adams detractors alleged that he had been embezzling funds. Now in debt, with his house in dis-repair, he was dependent on his wife for food and clothes.⁵² We can find some of the contradictions that constitute Samuel Adams’ character by this time; the teetotaler who frequented taverns because that is where the road to political power was, and the ambitious politician who eschewed personal wealth and the trappings of power.

John Hancock’s family roots in New England begin in the 1630s and are a little foggier than those of Samuel Adams. Of Nathaniel “The Immigrant”, John Hancock’s great-great-grandfather, we are told “he came out of the nowhere into the here.”⁵³ Nathaniel was a farmer and modestly increased his holdings, leaving fourteen acres in Cambridge when he died at the early age of forty.

⁵⁰ Risjord. p. 28.

⁵¹ Puls. p. 45.

⁵² Risjord. p. 27.

⁵³ Herbert S. Allen. *John Hancock: Patriot in Purple*. (New York: The Beechhurst Press, 1953), p. 10.

Nathan, his only surviving son, inherited a small farm, but as he had thirteen children he also worked as a shoe maker and town constable. He also became a church deacon, and that offered him the chance to have his sons tutored by the minister and gain entrance into Harvard.”⁵⁴ When he died at the age of eighty he was Deacon Hancock and his most promising son, John was “already widely known as the Bishop of Lexington.”⁵⁵ The fact that he would be known by this title shows how far congregationalism had strayed from its roots. John, born in 1671, graduated from Harvard 1688 with both a Bachelor and Master of Arts. Harvard taught John theology, logic, argumentation, and rhetoric. Endowed with a thunderous voice and supreme self-confidence he was able to overpower those who opposed him.⁵⁶ Hancock ruled fairly but decisively. Two anecdotes illustrate Hancock’s leadership style.

Asked to resolve a long-standing dispute between two parishioners over property lines, the Bishop ordered each to cut some stakes and plant them in the ground several feet from each other. He drew a line in the earth and told them, “your line runs there, and let it run forever...And let us have no more quarreling about this matter. The issue was settled.”⁵⁷

And later when two church deacons protested his failure to consult them on church decisions, he told them that saddling his horse and holding his bridle was all “I ever can consent to let the ruling elders do for me.”⁵⁸

Hancock’s parishioners benefitted from his leadership. He made Lexington independent, freeing the town from the heavy Cambridge taxes. The town repaid him with fifty

⁵⁴ Harlow G. Unger. *John Hancock: Merchant King and American Patriot*. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2000), p. 10.

⁵⁵ Allen. p. 15.

⁵⁶ Unger. p. 10.

⁵⁷ Unger. p. 10-11.

⁵⁸ Unger. p. 11

acres of land and the right to harvest lumber from the common land. He remained in office for fifty-four years until he died in 1752 at the age of eighty-two.⁵⁹

The Bishop of Lexington married Elizabeth Clarke and they had five children. His iron rule at home destroyed his firstborn son, the second John Hancock's self-esteem, but his second son, Thomas, like his father was blessed with a strong personality and left home at age fourteen to become an indentured apprentice to a bookseller.⁶⁰

The second John Hancock has been described as, "a meek little chap who obediently followed his father's footsteps through Harvard and, eventually to the pulpit, although his lack of sparkle delayed his ordination by several years,"⁶¹ John was not able to find a job as a minister and so he worked as a librarian at Harvard. Meanwhile Thomas concluded his apprenticeship and became a trader where he became extremely wealthy.⁶²

The second John Hancock kept working in the library for three years until he was invited to the small North Parish in Braintree (now Quincy). Braintree was an affluent community with several large farms and families. The Adams family had fifty acres and the Quincy had real estate beyond that. The Braintree Adams family were cousins to Deacon Adams and the patriarch of the Quincys was Col. Josiah Quincy who was affiliated with the Governor. Both families were connected to the merchants of Boston.⁶³

Looking to the welfare of his first-born son, the Bishop delivered what has been described as a "thundering sermon", the parishioners were shamed into building him a new

⁵⁹ Unger. p. 11-12.

⁶⁰ Unger. p. 12.

⁶¹ Unger. p. 12.

⁶² Unger. p. 12.

⁶³ Unger. p. 12-13.

home, giving him a few acres of land and paying him £200 for resettlement, and paying him £110 a year.⁶⁴ The young Reverend Hancock married Mary Hawke December of 1733. She was nine years younger than him, the daughter of a prosperous Braintree farmer and was a widow.⁶⁵

Soon there were three children, Mary (1735), John (1737) and one of the subjects of this paper), and Ebenezer (1741). When the third John Hancock was born on January 23, 1737, Samuel Adams was 15 years old and in his second year at Harvard. Hancock enjoyed his life in Braintree. Away from his father's control, he "served more as a mediator than a governor." His income was enough to provide his family a comfortable life, the parishioners liked him, and he even had enough to buy a slave, Jeffrey who helped with household chores and farming. A little over a year before he baptized his own son, Hancock baptized John Adams, the future second president of the United States.⁶⁶

The third John Hancock played with John Adams, Edmund and Samuel Quincy and the other farm boys. Although he merited some amount of respect due to his father's position, the other boys did not really like him. As Adams later wrote of Hancock, "He inherited from his father, though one of the most amiable and beloved of men, a certain sensibility, a keenness of feeling, or-in more familiar language-a peevishness that sometimes disgusted and afflicted his friends."⁶⁷

It was assumed that Johnny was Harvard bound and so he was sent to the local dame school when he was five or six. The education provided there consisted of basic reading, writing,

⁶⁴ Unger. p. 13.

⁶⁵William M., Fowler Jr. *The Baron of Beacon Hill*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980), p. 8.

⁶⁶ Fowler. p. 8.

⁶⁷ Unger. p. 13.

and arithmetic.⁶⁸ After completing his basic education, Johnny would have attended Braintree's Latin school, where he would have studied Latin, Greek, history, geography, geometry, algebra, and trigonometry.⁶⁹ It seemed that John would follow in the family traditions, attending Harvard in preparation for a career in the clergy, but his father's death in 1744 left John and his mother as guests of the Bishop. The Bishop anticipated molding his grandson in his image and it seemed his fate was sealed."⁷⁰

Up to this point in their lives, Adams and Hancock had followed remarkable similar paths, but on the summer of 1744 Hancock's life took a turn that changed everything for him. Thomas Hancock, returning after twenty-seven years had come to claim his nephew. He had left the Bishop's home at fourteen years of age to apprentice to a bookseller but now returned as one of the wealthiest men in America. He and his wife, Lydia could buy anything they desired except for one...a son and an heir to his empire.

Before the Bishop could devour his grandson, however, another equally powerful Hancock appeared at the manse in Lexington in an English-built gilt-edged coach and four, attended by four liveries servants. A silver-and-ivory coat of arms emblazoned its doors-three fighting cocks, the topmost with a dragon's tail, above a raised hand of protest-which the owner believed was his due, if not his verifiable birthright. Beneath it heraldic gold script proclaimed, *Nul Plaisir Sans Peine* (no pleasure without pain). Thomas Hancock, the Bishop's second son, who had left home at the age of fourteen, had returned after twenty-seven years. He had left as an indentured apprentice and now reappeared as one of America's richest, most powerful merchants, owner of Boston's prestigious, world-renowned House of Hancock...Every bit as overwhelming as his father, the Bishop, Thomas Hancock could buy anything he wanted; and what he wanted more than anything else in the world when he strode into his father's house in Lexington in the summer of 1744-and what he intended to buy at any price-was a son and heir to the House of Hancock.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Fowler. 9-10.

⁶⁹ Unger. p. 15.

⁷⁰ Unger. p. 16.

⁷¹ Unger. p. 16.

The agreement reached was Thomas would support his father, his brother's widow, and all three children for the rest of their lives in exchange for allowing him to raise the eldest son, John as his own in Boston. He would receive the best education money could buy and would eventually enter Harvard to follow in his grandfather's and father's footsteps.⁷²

By the time John Hancock moved in with his Uncle Thomas and his Aunt Lydia, Thomas Hancock was the wealthiest merchant in Boston. He lived in a mansion on Beacon Hill and everywhere he looked he had interests. He had a shipping empire, retail shops, and real estate.⁷³

Although Thomas Hancock lacked the Harvard credentials of Boston's other aristocrats, he had impeccable personal taste, from his immaculate, carefully powdered wig to his silver shoe buckles. Embroidered ruffled shirt cuffs flared from the ends of his jacket sleeves and embraced his soft, puffy hands. The rest of his costume-the magnificent knee-length velvet coat and the shirt frills that peeked discreetly from the front of his jacket-showed the care he took to compensate for his academic deficiencies with well-displayed evidence of his wealth, power, and high standing. A gold chain held a magnificently fashioned watch. It was his most prized personal possession. To little John Hancock, even the great robes of the church that his father and grandfather wore on Sundays had never looked so grand as the clothes of his uncle the merchant king. He was simply splendid.⁷⁴

Now in the mansion, young John Hancock began a year of rigorous training with private tutor, who taught him the manners, speech, and comportment befitting the son of Boston's leading citizen. His Aunt Lydia dressed him in "velvet breeches, with a satin shirt richly embroidered with lace ruffles at the front and cuffs and his shoes bore the same sparkling silver buckles as his uncle's."⁷⁵ Young John Hancock became accustomed to socializing with the influential citizens of Boston and became used to the

⁷² Unger. p. 17.

⁷³ Fowler p. 14.

⁷⁴ Unger. 18-19.

⁷⁵ Unger. p. 23.

luxurious lifestyle enjoyed by his uncle. His Aunt Lydia's table was famous and Thomas's wine cellar was stocked with Madeira wines that his slave Cambridge served to his guests in "6 Quart decanters" and "2 doz. Handsom, new fash'd wine glasses," made of the finest rock crystal from London."⁷⁶ Thomas also became involved in politics. In 1739 he was elected as a selectman and continued to be re-elected for thirteen years.⁷⁷

While living with his uncle, Thomas, John Hancock became accustomed to a lifestyle more opulent than that of nearly anyone in New England. This is not to say that Thomas did not expect his nephew to be industrious.

John, the most well-known signer of the Declaration of Independence, like Samuel Adams, also attended Boston Latin School. It was at this institution that John Hancock perfected his famously elegant signature. Like Adams before him, Hancock received a classical education that included essays and speeches in Latin and Greek. James Bowdoin, later a Hancock ally and a future Governor attended Boston Latin School. The school's Web page describes its mission as "From its beginning, Boston Latin School has taught its scholars dissent with responsibility and has persistently encouraged such dissent."⁷⁸ At the age of thirteen, John entered Harvard and was ranked five in his class of twenty.⁷⁹

At the start of his second year at Harvard, Hancock moved into Massachusetts Hall in Harvard Yard. Unconstrained for the first time in his life he got drunk. Harvard required that students lead "sober, righteous & Godly lives."⁸⁰ Hancock was a regular drinker and he was

⁷⁶ Unger. p. 23.

⁷⁷ Fowler. p.14.

⁷⁸ Boston Latin School. BLS History. BLS.org https://www.bls.org/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=206116&type=d (accessed March 31, 2018).

⁷⁹ Fowler. p.26.

⁸⁰ Unger. p. 45.

joined by four other students, one of them his friend from Braintree, Sam Quincy. He was disciplined when they got the slave of a former Harvard president "drunk...to Such a Degree as greatly indanger'd his Life."⁸¹ Hancock was reduced by four ranks.⁸² Hancock continued drinking and although he was not degraded again he was fined for missing morning chapel.⁸³

John graduated with a bachelor's degree in 1754 at the age of seventeen. Thomas was elated. Although Thomas could claim equality in social standing with anyone, he did lack one thing all the other Boston aristocrats possessed...a Harvard degree. Now John had one and Thomas could dream that together they would build the House of Hancock into one of the planet's grandest empires.⁸⁴

Samuel Adams was 31 years old at the time of John Hancock's graduation, and he had been elected as one of twelve town scavengers the year before. John Hancock's life after graduation was very different than John Adams'. Hancock apprenticed for the next six years in Thomas's business and "After working for his uncle a year he was widely recognized as a model of industry as well as fashion."⁸⁵

In 1760, at the age of twenty-three John had earned his uncle's trust to the degree that it was decided to send him to London for a year to establish important business and social connections. While in London, John spent so much money on clothes his uncle (himself a spendthrift) became alarmed.

⁸¹ Unger. p. 45.

⁸² Unger. p. 45.

⁸³ Unger. p. 45.

⁸⁴ Unger. p.47.

⁸⁵ Herbert S. Allan. *John Hancock: Patriot in Purple*. (New York: The Beechhurst Press, 1953), p.59.

John wrote Thomas,

I observe in your letter, you mention a circumstance in regard to my dress. I hope it did not arise from your hearing I was too extravagant that way, which I think they can't tax me with. At same time I am not remarkable for the plainness of my dress. Upon proper occasions I dress as genteel as any one and can't say I am without lace. I endeavor, in all my conduct, not to exceed your expectations in regard to my expenses; but, to appear in character, I am obliged to be pretty expensive. I find money, some way or other, goes very fast but I think I can reflect it has been spent with satisfaction and to my own honor.⁸⁶

The death of King George II prompted John to write Thomas asking permission to stay longer to witness the coronation George III. There is an ironic note that John wrote Thomas, "The King is very popular much beloved."⁸⁷ Allan informs us of an "unverified account of his being given a snuffbox with the royal likeness by the sovereign who was to attempt to have him hanged fifteen years later."⁸⁸ The coronation was postponed while George searched for a wife, and so John returned home without witnessing the coronation of the king he would oppose for over a decade.

Upon John Hancock's return, his uncle judged that he had represented the company well. Young John had negotiated debts, payments, and contracts to the benefit of the Hancock empire and "On the first day of 1763 he declared, 'I have this day Taken my Nephew Mr. John Hancock into Partnership with me having had long Experience of his Uprightness [and] great abilities for Business'"⁸⁹

Thomas was not in good health and John assumed more responsibility in the business until Thomas collapsed and died on August 1, 1764. John was the major inheritor and at "twenty-

⁸⁶ Allan. p. 69.

⁸⁷ Allan. p. 69.

⁸⁸ Allan. p. 71.

⁸⁹ Fowler. p. 46.

seven John Hancock was now one of the richest men in America.”⁹⁰ His aunt Lydia signed the mansion over to John on the condition she could live in it for the rest of her life. Hancock now had the wealth of the House of Hancock and the symbol of it.⁹¹ At the time of the death of Thomas, Samuel Adams was 41 years old, a tax collector, and courting Elizabeth Wells.

This chapter describes the formation of Samuel Adams and John Hancock. There are many interesting parallels in the early lives of the two men. Both were sons of church leaders and both were expected to join the ministry after attending Boston Latin School and Harvard. Had they followed in their father’s footsteps history might be very different today.

Adams did not find a calling for the pulpit and drifted in and out of various occupations, failing at all of them until he found his true vocation...politics. We find Adams’ outlook early in his political writing. Mixing religion with politics, Adams felt a republic, based on the Massachusetts Charter was the best guarantee of liberty, but he also worried that his fellow citizens were not sufficiently virtuous to enjoy the blessings that he felt had been earned by his Puritan forefathers and bestowed by God.

Hancock’s life changed when his father died, and he was adopted by his uncle, Thomas. Thomas, the wealthiest man in Massachusetts introduced John to sumptuous living, business, and important contacts. When Thomas died, Hancock inherited a vast shipping and mercantile empire. Hancock was a competent manager, but he did not display any particular philosophical or political convictions in his early life. Rather, he enjoyed fine food, wine, and clothes.

⁹⁰ Fowler. p. 49.

⁹¹ Fowler. p. 49.

CHAPTER IV

COLLABORATION AND REBELLION

1764 was an interesting year. Thomas Hancock died in August and Samuel Adams married Elizabeth Wells in December. But the passage of the American Revenue Act, commonly called the Sugar Act set into motion a series of events that would transform Adams, Hancock, and all of America. John Hancock was 28 years old at the beginning of the year and Samuel Adams was 41.

In February of 1763, the Seven Years War, known in America as the French and Indian War ended. The effect this had on New England in general and Hancock in particular, was economic inertia. New England merchants had supplied the British military with arms, ammunition, clothing, food and transportation. The frontier society they lived in dictated that ordinary citizens could produce or find most of what they needed from the wilderness. It was at this time of economic stagnation that Britain decided to raise taxes.⁹²

George Grenville became the First Lord of the Treasury, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Prime Minister in April of 1763. Grenville's tax plan included cutting the tariff on molasses, a byproduct sugar refining by half. The Sugar Act added new taxes and raised duties on some old with the intention of raising £50,000, much less than the cost of fending and administering the

⁹² Unger. p. 72.

empire. Grenville intended to vigorously enforce the new law and that was an unhappy industry and the Sugar Act would only exacerbate New England's economic woes.⁹³ Americans were used to taxes but largely ignored them. They smuggled in cheap sugar and molasses from the French West Indies undercutting their fellow colonists in the British West Indies. Hancock for instance smuggled an estimated 1.5 million tons of molasses annually and should have paid £37,500 in taxes, but corrupt customs men only collected £2,000.⁹⁴ New England's rough coastline and precarious waters produced some of the best smugglers in the world.

Carrying an enormous war debt of £140 million Parliament was ready to interfere in local affairs in ways they had never done so before.⁹⁵ With the American Revenue Act, Grenville was given the power to reform the customs service and he did this by changing many conventions. Prior to the law English customs appointees named deputies in America to do their jobs and the deputies were patronized by the merchants. Now the appointees could not remain in England. In addition, ship inspection and registration procedures were tightened, ship owners could not sue the customs service, and they now had the burden of proof for recovery of seized vessels and their cargo and he established a vice-admiralty court in Halifax, far from New York, Boston, and Philadelphia where the merchants had influence.⁹⁶

The Sugar Act cause dismay in Boston. The town meeting condemned it, the General Court called for a Committee of Correspondence to communicate their concern to the other colonies and James Otis wrote his pamphlet, *The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved* containing the principle of no taxation without representation.⁹⁷ Hancock was not happy

⁹³ Fowler. p. 53.

⁹⁴ Unger. p. 72-73.

⁹⁵ Fowler and Handlin. p. 48.

⁹⁶ Unger. p. 74.

⁹⁷ Fowler. P. 53.

about the new taxes, but his concerns were only in relation to money and trade. His business, like all the Boston businesses was in a slump and the situation was not getting better. Hancock spoke of “great uneasiness” and noted the complete failure of several Boston concerns.⁹⁸

Samuel Adams’ response differed greatly from that of John Hancock. In the Boston town meeting, Samuel Adams was given the task to write instructions to the representatives. This was the moment when Adams first became associated with the public opposition to the British government.⁹⁹ The instructions of 24 May 24, 1764 read in part:

But what still heightens our apprehensions is, that these unexpected Proceedings may be preparatory to new Taxations upon us: For if our Trade may be taxed why not our Lands? Why not the Produce of our Lands & every thing we possess or make use of? This we apprehend annihilates our Charter Right to govern & tax ourselves--It strikes at our Brittish Privileges, which as we have never forfeited them, we hold in common with our Fellow Subjects who are Natives of Brittain: If Taxes are laid upon us in any shape without our having a legal Representation where they are laid, are we not reduced from the Character of free Subjects to the miserable State of tributary Slaves?¹⁰⁰

Grenville had another tax scheme, designed by John Stuart, the Earl of Butte that quietly emerged at the same period as the Sugar Act, but would eventually be much more controversial. The Stamp Act required that the colonists had to obtain tax stamps on all legal documents and other items such as university degrees, newspapers, leaflets, playing cards and dice.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Fowler. p. 43.

⁹⁹ Stroll. p. 37.

¹⁰⁰ Samuel Adams. Harry Cushing ed.. *Instructions to Boston's Representatives. May, 1764.* found in *The Writings of Samuel Adams.* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons. 1904)

¹⁰¹ Unger. p. 74.

There was to be a one-year delay, so as to allow the colonies time for adjustment and so the Stamp Act would become effective on November 1, 1765. The delay did not help in any sort of adjustment. When word reached America, there was an almost immediate reaction.

For both Hancock and Adams, 1765 was a momentous year. John Hancock as well as Samuel Adams ran for the position selectman of the General Court of Boston and the Stamp Act was passed by the British Parliament. The end of the Seven Years War, strict enforcement of customs duties, and the Sugar Act had financially hurt the American colonies, New England, and Boston in particular. In Boston this direct tax infuriated many citizens and there was a climate of protest in the air.

Hancock and Adams had met before. In 1762, Adams, Hancock, James Otis, and some others formed a group to promote Congregationalist missions to the Indians. The real intent was to frustrate efforts by the Anglicans to do the same. The conversion of the Indians was a failure but at least the Anglicans were frustrated.¹⁰² James Otis was a well-known firebrand with views like Adams. If possible, Otis was more outspoken than Adams and Adams admired his oratory skills.

The road to political power ran through the same clubs of which so many counted Sam Adams as a member. Hancock had been a member of Masonic Lodge of Saint Andrew since 1762 and Samuel Adams was just one of many radicals who were also members. Samuel Adams took notice of Hancock's political aspirations and began cultivating him. In fact, it was Adams who nominated Hancock for the position in opposition to John Rowe and worked quietly for his

¹⁰² Fowler and Handlin. p. 47.

election.¹⁰³ There is a story that when the Liberty Party was considering a list of candidates for the election and John Rowes name came up, Adams “glanced toward Hancock’s Beacon hill mansion and asked, ‘Is there not another John that may do better?’¹⁰⁴

Adams began mentoring Hancock by taking him to his political clubs and introducing him to radicals who might become his political base.¹⁰⁵ Adams realized that Hancock’s standing in Boston would lend an air of respectability to the radical cause. With the respectable John Hancock as a member of the Liberty Party, as the radicals called themselves, others in the middle or upper strata of Boston society might consider joining as well.¹⁰⁶

Of course, Hancock’s wealth was an advantage to Adams and his detractors accused him of being Sam Adams’ “Milch Cow” and of supplying enormous funds to Boston’s Whigs.¹⁰⁷ As to why Hancock mixed with Adams, Hancock was in awe of Adams’ political brilliance.¹⁰⁸ Adams was a very persuasive man and exerted his influence on more persons than just Hancock. His cousin John wrote a friend of this.

Samuel Adams, to my certain knowledge, from 1758 to 1775, that is for seventeen years, made it his constant rule to watch the rise of every brilliant genius, to seek his acquaintance, to court his friendship, to cultivate his natural feelings in favor of his native country, to warn him against the hostile designs of Great Britain, and to fix his affections and reflections on the side of his native country. I could enumerate a list, but I will confine myself to a few. John Hancock, afterwards President of the Congress and Governor of the State; Dr. Joseph Warren, afterwards Major-General of the militia of Massachusetts, and the martyr of Bunker’s Hill; Benjamin Church, the poet and the orator, once a pretended if not a real patriot, but afterwards a monument of the frailty of human nature; Josiah

¹⁰³ William V. Wells. *The life and public services of Samuel Adams, being a narrative of his acts and opinions, and of his agency in producing and forwarding the American Revolution, with extracts from his correspondence, state papers, and political essays.* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company. 1865).

¹⁰⁴ Dennis B. Fraden. *Samuel Adams: the father of American Independence.* (New York: Clarion Books, 1998), P. 119.

¹⁰⁵ Fraden. p. 47.

¹⁰⁶ Fraden. p. 46.

¹⁰⁷ Fowler. p. 63.

¹⁰⁸ Fraden. p. 47.

Quincy, the Boston Cicero, the great orator in the body meetings, the author of the Observations on the Boston Port Bill and of many publications in the newspapers¹⁰⁹

Certainly, Hancock was opposed to a heavy hand from England as his business had suffered from the Sugar Act, the smuggling crack-down, and the Stamp Act. But there were more personal reasons why Hancock ran for office. Hancock was vain and had a need to be adored. He loved it when crowds yelled “King Hancock”.¹¹⁰ It would seem that Hancock was not the sort of man that Adams would associate with because of Hancock’s conspicuous consumption and obsessive vanity but Adams could feign friendship for the greater cause. He needed Hancock for his wealth and respectability.¹¹¹

A conversation between Samuel Adams and his cousin John Adams, concerning Hancock’s election enlightens us as to Samuel Adams view of Hancock’s future. As they were strolling past Hancock’s house, “Samuel Adams observed: ‘This town has done a wise thing today...They have made that’ young man’s fortune their own.’”¹¹² This statement could have at least two meanings.

First, Adams meant that to retain his huge personal popularity, Hancock needed to reflect the sentiments of an increasingly radicalized Boston. Samuel Adams led the Boston Caucus Club and associated with a committee of the club known as the “Loyal Nine”. The Nine were tradesmen who served the cause by printing pamphlets, make effigies, and do the sort of tasks needed to support popular demonstrations and communicate their ideas as well as supply

¹⁰⁹ Wells I, p. 32.

¹¹⁰ Fraden. p. 46.

¹¹¹ Fraden. p. 46.

¹¹² Risjord. p. 35.

the rum to fuel demonstrations.¹¹³ Second, these activities required money, which Hancock had in abundance.¹¹⁴

In any case, when John Hancock was elected in early 1766 at age twenty-eight, like Samuel Adams; he began a lifelong career in politics. Currently, Adams was 43 years old. Sir Francis Bernard, an English loyalist was the Governor of Massachusetts, and Thomas Hutchinson was the Lieutenant Governor. General Thomas Gage commanded all British forces in North America and was based in New York. Samuel Adams had cause to bear Hutchinson personal animosity, as Hutchinson had been one the key antagonists against the Land Bank and had been heard to brag about his role in dismantling it.

John Hancock's support for the rebel cause, like the sentiments in Boston, was not a linear growth, but rather was characterized by "fits and starts", doubts, and changes of opinion. Although Hancock publicly supported non-importation to battle the Stamp Act, he still unloaded his ships when they reached the docks. Hancock confided to a friend, "although the act might ruin America, 'we must submit'."¹¹⁵

In the colonies, the Stamp Act was widely disparaged. In church, ministers spoke against it, in town meetings, citizens objected, the General Court began drafting resolutions in opposition, and stamp collectors were menaced. Hancock and Adams supported a ban on British luxury goods.

When news of the colonial unrest reached London, Charles Townshend, a British politician and supporter of the Stamp Act, rose in Parliament to give a short speech concerning

¹¹³ Risjord. p. 32.

¹¹⁴ Risjord. p. 35.

¹¹⁵ Fowler. p. 56.

American opposition to the act which has been recorded as, “And now will these Americans, Children planted by our Care, nourished up by our Opulence, and protected by our Arms, will they grudge to contribute their mite to relieve us from heavy weight of the burden which we lie under?”¹¹⁶ Isaac Barre, a prominent Whig answered back.

They nourished by *your* indulgence? They grew by your neglect of them: as soon as you began to care about them, that Care was Exercised in sending persons to rule over them, in one Department and another, who were perhaps the Deputies of Deputies to some Member of this house-sent to Spy out their Liberty, to misrepresent their Actions and to prey upon Em; men whose behavior on many Occasions has caused the Blood of those **Sons of Liberty** (emphasis mine) to recoil within them; men promoted to the highest Seats of Justice, some, who to my knowledge were glad by going to a foreign Country to Escape being brought to the Bar of a Court of Justice in their own. They protected by *your* arms? they have nobly taken up Arms in your defence, have Exerted a Valour amidst their constant and Laborious industry for the defence of a Country, while drench’d in blood, its interior Parts have yielded all its little Savings to your Emolument. And believe me, remember I this Day told you so, that same Spirit of freedom which actuated that people at first, will accompany them still.-But prudence forbids me to explain myself further.”¹¹⁷

Samuel Adams met with the Loyal Nine and they decided more direct action than writing of their grievances was needed. They decided to hang an effigy of Andrew Oliver, the local stamp agent in what the Boston Gazette called “the most public part of town”.¹¹⁸ The effigy was coupled with a boot (representing the Earl of Butte) and protruding from the boot was a devil. Hanging from the effigy was a sign that read “He that takes this down is an enemy to his country.”¹¹⁹ Members of the Northside Boys stood guard over the effigy throughout the day. The tree would become known as the Liberty Tree.

¹¹⁶ Fowler and Handlin. p. 59.

¹¹⁷ Fowler and Handlin. p. 59-60.

¹¹⁸ Stoll. p. 41.

¹¹⁹ Stoll. p. 42.

Boston, like most seaports, had its share of rough men, sailors awaiting the next ship, day laborers, jobless men, the sort who could be hired or moved to acts of passion and violence, and there more of them than ever since the Sugar Act. Two of these gangs styled themselves the North Side Boys and the South Side Boys. Every November fifth, Guy Fawkes Day in England, known in Boston as Popes Day, they would stage anti-Catholic processions beginning at their respective sides of the town. Fueled by copious amounts of rum, each led by an effigy of the Pope, they would march until they met in the middle. Then a huge battle would break out, resulting in many injuries, and at least once a death.¹²⁰

A crowd, comprised mainly of the sort of men described in the last paragraph, grew steadily around the effigy. By nightfall, fueled by rum, and led by the Southside Boys, they paraded the effigy through town, beheaded, burned, and buried it. Next, they went to Oliver's stamp office, and destroyed it. The Loyal Nine left now. Oliver's house followed, the mob attempted to burn it but failed, and instead tore his fence down. Oliver resigned his stamp commission the next day.

On August 26, a mob targeted Thomas Hutchinson, the colony's Lieutenant Governor. Hiding in a neighbor's house he was powerless to stop the mob from ransacking and destroying major parts of his home. Hutchinson recalled the "hellish crew" finished at about four in the morning.¹²¹ Historians disagree about Adams' role in the events of August 9 and August 26. Some contend he orchestrated the both affairs, others argue he had no hand in it, while still others assert something in between.

¹²⁰ Fowler and Handlin. p. 63.

¹²¹ Alexander. p. 33.

Adams criticized the riots, but he seemed to take a different tone in an article in the Boston Gazette, written later, in 1771. Looking back, Adams wrote in part, "The Sons of Liberty on the 14th of August 1765, a Day which ought to be for ever remembers in America, animated with a zeal for their country then upon the brink of destruction, and resolved, at once to save her...", compared the Sons to Samson, and compared the British to the Philistines, who were "anticipating with joy of plundering this continent."¹²² This is classic Adams, mixing politics with religion and railing against his enemies in scripturally symbolic terms.

While someone had joined two Boston street gangs into the militant arm of the Sons of Liberty, Hancock had misgivings about mob violence and thought the only way to save America was for the 'whole continent' to exhibit the 'same spirit'.¹²³ Not wishing to have the mob turn against them, Hancock and the other selectmen declined to take any action against the rioters.¹²⁴ Hutchinson convened the Council (upper house) and they issued a warrant for Ebenezer Mackintosh, the leader of the South Side Gang. Mackintosh fled but was captured. At this point Samuel Adams, with others negotiated his release. A crowd broke into the jailer's house, stole his keys and set Mackintosh and some other prisoners free. Mackintosh and the others were never tried.¹²⁵

In September, in the Town Meeting, Adams was again called upon to draft instructions to the representatives. The instructions read in part, "The most essential Rights of British Subjects are those of being represented in the Body which exercises the Power of Levying Taxes

¹²² Samuel Adams. Harry Cushing ed.. *Article signed "Candidus"*, Boston Gazette, August 19, 1771 . found in *The Writings of Samuel Adams*. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons. 1904)

¹²³ Fowler. p. 58.

¹²⁴ Unger. p. 92.

¹²⁵ Unger. p. 93.

upon them and having their Property tryd by Juries."¹²⁶ Adams had laid out two themes very clearly, those being no taxation without representation, and the right to due process. The Town Meeting approved the instructions on September 18, 1765. Ironically, Adams was writing instructions to himself as he was elected to the General Court on September 27, 1765. Hancock was not elected this time. The people of Boston decided in favor of the more radical James Otis.

The hated stamps arrived in Boston on September 23, 1765 but there was not a stamp agent to receive them, so they went to Castle William.¹²⁷ Quickly, riots broke out all over the colonies and groups calling themselves the Sons of Liberty could be found in all states in America. In short order, there was not any person who was willing to be a stamp distributor in all the colonies. In addition, a general boycott on all English goods was being discussed.

Hancock was in a difficult spot. He did not want to anger the governor, but he did not wish to incur the wrath of the mob either. He could imagine the horde chasing him and burning his beloved Beacon Hill mansion to the ground. At the same time, Adams was increasing pressure on him to support the rebel cause. Hancock sent a letter to his London agent saying that if his ships from England arrived before November 1, he would unload them, and send them back, full of whale oil. If the ships arrived after that date, he would unload them, put them into drydock and cancel his spring orders. The letter was probably intended for Samuel Adams as much as it was for his London agent.¹²⁸

On November 1, the Stamp Act went into effect. In Boston thousands watched as effigies of Hutchinson and another member of Parliament were hung beneath the Liberty Tree.

¹²⁶ Samuel Adams. Harry Cushing ed.. *Instructions of the Town of Boston to its Representatives in the General Court. September, 1765.* found in *The Writings of Samuel Adams.* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons. 1904)

¹²⁷ Unger. p. 96.

¹²⁸ Unger. p. 98.

All activity came to a halt. Without stamps, businesses could not run, no transaction could be conducted, and the courts could not function. The Bostonians found a solution though, and after a few days, they ignored the new law.

On Pope's Day, November 5, John Hancock joined with other Boston merchants and signed an agreement for a total boycott of British goods. This stance was picked up by the other colonies and in short order, the new nonimportation boycott was nearly universal. Although Americans smarted, England suffered to a greater degree, with British exports dropping by 14 percent.¹²⁹ With his backing of the nonimportation agreement, Hancock's stature rose in the eyes of Bostonians. He also found himself drawn closer to the orbit of Samuel Adams and the radicals.

In mid-December, the Sons of Liberty dragged Andrew Oliver to the Liberty Tree where he was forced to apologize for his part in the Stamp Act. In front of a huge crowd he recited an oath never to impose any aspect of the Act.

As previously mentioned, the Stamp Act did not produce the effect some British politicians had hoped for. Not one stamp had been distributed and not one penny of income had come from it. On the contrary, English merchants were losing trade income and so those lost transactions represented other taxes the English government would not collect. In addition, Benjamin Franklin, in London as an agent of Pennsylvania, and a man renowned for his wit, argued passionately against it. The strain on Parliament grew until the Stamp Act was repealed on March 18, 1766.

¹²⁹ Unger. p. 100.

Unfortunately for future British-Colonial relations, on the same day the Stamp Act was rescinded, the Declaratory Act was passed. It said that the American colonies should be subordinate to English government and that any laws existing in America that denied British supremacy were to be "utterly null and void to all in purposes whatsoever."¹³⁰ This was an assertion of the absolute power England should have over the American colonies.

In February a fire broke out in Boston. Hancock supplied free firewood and rent to the most unfortunate citizens throughout the cold winter. He also made gifts of bibles and pews to local churches. Hancock was gaining the reputation of a great humanitarian and increasing his popularity.

While news of the Stamp Act's repeal had yet to cross the Atlantic, Adams was working to ensure Hancock's election. Using his political connections, especially the Boston Caucus, Adams lobbied on behalf of his new ally. Supporting the nonimportation plan, had convinced Adams of Hancock's loyalty. On May 6, 1766 both Adams, Otis, and Hancock were among the four candidates elected to the House of Representatives. Adams outpolled Hancock and although they were allies this began what would become a lifelong political contest between the two men. Adams was elected to be the clerk, which meant he would write for the house, his strongpoint.

Adams had been fighting his own battles in the form of articles in the newspapers. In an article published in the Boston Gazette on April 4, Adams wrote in part, "LIBERTY, LIBERTY, is the Cry" and "what we have above everything else to fear, is POPERY...I expect

¹³⁰ Great Britain. *The statutes at large ... [from 1225 to 1867]* by Danby Pickering. Cambridge : Printed by Benthem, for C. Bathhurst ; (London, 1762-1869), http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/declaratory_act_1766.asp. Accessed November 17, 2017.

to be treated with sneer and ridicule by those artful men who have come into our country to spy out our Liberties; and who are restless to bring us into Bondage..."¹³¹ While this seems like an anti-Catholic screed, to Adams, Anglicans were guilty of popery as much as Catholics. The Anglican practices were deeply offensive to him. And who were the Anglicans? They were the imported British officials and soldiers. American leaders who sympathized with the governor could also fall into this category.

Adams, in the custom of the eighteenth century when publishing opinion pieces, used a pen name. He signed this article, "A Puritan".¹³² Adams wrote further articles as "A Puritan" on April 11 and April 18, both railing against his perceived threat of growing "popery" in Massachusetts. Samuel Adams would write under many different pen names and would change personalities with each different name. He wrote under the names "A Puritan", "Vindex", "Candidus", "Determinus", "Valerius Poplicola", "Cotton Mather", "A Chatterer", and "Alfred". Each pseudonym reflected some facet of Adams character and while Adams created the illusion that dozens of people were writing the newspaper, it was an open secret who the actual author was.¹³³

On May 16, one of Hancock's ships brought him news of the repeal. London merchants had decided to send the notification to Hancock as the leading citizen. Hancock delivered the news to the General Court and the celebrations began. Hancock had a stage built in front of his house and had fireworks shot from it. The notable citizens were entertained in his home, while

¹³² Samuel Adams. Harry Cushing ed.. *Article signed "A Puritan"*, Boston Gazette, April 4, 1768 . found in *The Writings of Samuel Adams*. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons. 1904)

¹³³ Stoll. p. 59.

the common people received a pipe of Madeira wine.¹³⁴ Hancock immediately began re-building his business. He built newer, faster ships and re-stocked his stores with merchandise. His work was fruitful, and his business thrived.

March of 1767 saw Hancock find an opportunity to repay Adams. Adams had been held personally responsible for the taxes he had failed to collect, and the town treasurer was suing him for £1,463.¹³⁵ Historians disagree but many say Hancock loaned Adams the money.¹³⁶ After electing Adams as clerk of the House, the body passed “a bill to allow a new tax collector, Robert Pierpoint, “to collect the Taxes uncollected by Samuel Adams”.¹³⁷ Adams and his allies in the government were so influential that no one took any further action on the suit.¹³⁸

The temporary lull that followed the repeal of the Stamp Act was replaced by outrage over the Townshend Revenue Acts, enacted in June of 1767. News of the laws reached America in August and would come into effect on December 30. Named after the Chancellor of the Exchequer Charles Townshend, the laws taxed glass, lead, paints, paper, and tea imported into the colonies. It also stipulated that writs of assistance could be issued by courts to search and seize smuggled goods anywhere and that Parliament would pay crown appointed governors and other officials rather than local governments. In addition, the vice admiralty courts were re-instated.

Hancock had initially argued for a boycott of British luxury goods, but later expanded his call to a near total non-importation policy. Adams also supported the later, but the effort was

¹³⁴ Wells I. p. 115.

¹³⁵ Allan.

¹³⁶ Allan. p. 101.

¹³⁷ Stoll. p. 74.

¹³⁸ Allan. p. 101.

not especially effective. Townshend's plan called for American based customs commissioners to enforce the laws. Their arrival was inauspicious. Arriving on November 5, Pope's Day they stepped onto Long Warf into the usual raucous celebrations. The mob was out in force, clubs in hand, but Adams had issued orders that the agents were not to be harmed. The message was a threat, but no action was taken. The Sons of Liberty were willing to wait.¹³⁹

Hancock refused to let the customs agents on his ships and would not shake hands with or even speak to them. As he was Boston's leading citizen, others followed his lead. The agents were socially isolated, and they blamed Hancock for it. All the while the agents were regularly hung in effigy by the mob.¹⁴⁰ Other merchants followed Hancock's lead, and the Americans, in the main, imported any and all goods without paying taxes.

On February 8, 1768, the General Court voted to send a circular letter to the other colonies. Adams was the author, and the tract laid out two main themes; that it was unconstitutional for England to tax America without any representation in Parliament and that the salaries paid to government officials should come from the people (colonists) they governed. The treatise was well received in the colonies, but the spectacle of the colonies uniting caused alarm in England. English authority ordered the Massachusetts House to revoke the letter and other colonial assemblies not to endorse the letter. When Massachusetts did not rescind the letter, the Governor removed the General Court from Boston to what would later become Cambridge, where they remained until 1772.

On April 8, Hancock's defiance was tested. Two customs commissioners attempted boarding the *Lydia*, a brig owned by Hancock and suspected of smuggling. A mob gathered and

¹³⁹ Fowler and Handlin. p. 75-76.

¹⁴⁰ Unger. p. 117.

obstructed the agents. That night, under the cover of darkness, one of the agents boarded the ship and went below-decks. Hancock was there with about eight to ten men. Hancock challenged the agent, asking for the agent's orders and the search warrant. Examination showed the orders were undated and he had no warrant. Hancock's men carried the agent topside and Hancock asked, "Do you want to search the vessel?" The agent replied that he did not, and Hancock said, "You may search the vessel, not shall not tarry below". A few days later, while rowing from Long Warf, a mob stoned the agents. They in turn blamed Hancock labeling him an "idol of the mob".¹⁴¹ This was the first physical attack on British officials in the colonies and it would not go unanswered.

Hancock's stock had risen immensely, and he was elected to the House of Representatives on May 4. They in turn elected him along with Adams and Otis to the upper house (Governor's Council). The governor rejected all three.

John Hancock ran afoul of the authorities when his ship the *Liberty* was boarded at sunset on May 9, by a customs inspector who suspected the vessel of containing smuggled goods. The customs official was locked below decks and reported he heard the ship being unloaded all night. When he was released the next morning, he was threatened with death if he spoke of the matter.

Britain's answer came on May 17, when the British warship, *Romney* entered Boston harbor to help enforce the anti-smuggling laws. While royal marines tied the *Liberty*, in preparation for hauling her to the *Romney*, a mob began pelting the marines with rocks.

¹⁴¹ Unger. p.118.

Hancock's ship was seized and cabled to the *Romney*, so the Sons of Liberty could not reclaim it for Hancock.¹⁴² Now the mob turned their attention to customs commissioners. One was beaten until his friends could rescue him, the commissioner's windows were broken, and their boat was taken to the Common, where it was burned. The commissioners fled to the Romney and Castle William.

The loss of the *Liberty* was a business calamity for Hancock and Hancock acted as business man looking out for his interests. He sent a lawyer to negotiate the ship's return promising his personnel bond that the ship would be available when the matter came to court. The offer was accepted but Hancock had not counted on the likes of Adams, Warren, and Otis.¹⁴³

They met in Hancock's mansion and convinced Hancock that acquiescence to the customs men inferred concession and it would be bad for the cause. Hancock should refuse any deal and in so doing, although he would lose money, he would gain great prestige for himself and the cause.¹⁴⁴ This is precisely what happened. John Hancock turned down the deal and became a hero and martyr to the radicals.¹⁴⁵ To Adams, the Liberty incident seemed like a stroke of luck. He hoped this would be the spark that would ignite the total rebellion. Adams had miscalculated. The citizens of Boston were not ready for war. Not yet.

The arrival of two regiments of regular British soldiers on October 1, 1768 made Bostonians understand theirs was a city under occupation. These regiments numbered around 1,200 men. Upon landing and mustering, the soldiers, in full combat dress and with bayonets

¹⁴² Fradin. p. 52.

¹⁴³ Fowler. p. 86.

¹⁴⁴ Fowler. p. 86.

¹⁴⁵ Fowler. p. 87.

fixed, marched up King Street and onto the Boston Common. One regiment would camp on the Common and the other would be temporarily quartered in Faneuil Hall.

The Bostonians were not enamored of the soldiers and looked down on them. Many of the soldiers had joined the army to avoid execution or prison. This attitude can be summed up with a saying of the day, “Messmate before a shipment, shipmate before a friend, friend before a dog, dog before a soldier.”¹⁴⁶

Although direct confrontation was out of the question, resistance could take other forms. Beginning in October of 1767, *A Journal of the Times* began printing anti-British propaganda. Published in New York, it was plain that the authorship was based in Boston. Although it has never been proven, many historians have been convinced that Samuel Adams hand can often be seen in the *Journal's* pages. The paper was full of stories concerning atrocities committed by British soldiers against innocent Bostonians and customs agents abusing their power.¹⁴⁷

The *Journal* was widely distributed in the colonies and generated outrage beyond Boston and Massachusetts. In November, Bernard and his allies in the vice admiralty court decided to defeat Hancock or least hurt his ability to finance their enemies. Hancock and Malcom were arrested and sued for triple damages for recovery of the *Liberty* and her cargo. Bail was posted by the following March charges were dropped due to insufficient evidence.¹⁴⁸

John Adams was Hancock's lawyer and was able to greatly injure the prosecution's case as the informer's testimony was so weak, the authorities spirited him out of Massachusetts

¹⁴⁶ Fowler and Handlin. p. 89.

¹⁴⁷ Fowler and Handlin. p. 91.

¹⁴⁸ Wells I. p. 224.

shortly before the trial ended. The triple damages were the tool Bernard and his friends hoped would cripple Hancock, but the plan backfired. One third of the damages would go to Bernard, one third to the informer, and one third to the crown. To many in Boston, this smelled of corruption and Hancock was again a popular hero.

In the town meeting of October 28, Adams argued for an old strategy, non-importation. It was not until March 14, 1768 that a merchant's meeting agreed to non-importation. The merchants were leery that other cities would undersell them and damage their businesses. The plan seemed to have a greater chance of success when it was learned that New York adopted the measures that summer and Philadelphia shortly thereafter.¹⁴⁹

Another problem was the personal consumption of the merchants and wealthy elites themselves. Adams needed to walk a tightrope concerning Hancock. While Thomas Hutchinson and other Tories did not pretend to practice nonimportation, others who professed loyalty to the cause secretly got enjoyment or profit from the forbidden goods. Adams knew who these naughty comrades were but could do nothing about it. If word got out that certain patriots were profiting from nonimportation Boston would be humiliated and the entire cause endangered. One of these errant patriots was John Hancock. As the leading symbol of the resistance Hancock could not be exposed. It was better for Adams to look the other way than to risk his "milch cow" and perhaps the entire cause.¹⁵⁰

Of course, to Adams, nonimportation had another blessing, a return to a simpler, self-reliant life. Shunning luxurious clothes, food, and possessions perfectly suited Adams' vision of re-establishing the righteous "city on a hill".

¹⁴⁹ Fowler and Handlin. p. 91.

¹⁵⁰ Fowler and Handlin. p. 96.

In August 1769, after having some questionable letters exposed and perhaps fearing for his safety, Francis Bernard sailed for London. Although he was officially “on leave”, no one expected him to return. This left Thomas Hutchinson in the unenviable position of being the foremost crown authority in Boston.

In the garrisoned city of Boston tensions were growing. In a city of 15,000 souls, nearly one in ten was a British soldier. They were everywhere, and conflicts increased. In early September 1769, Otis got into a fight with a customs official and suffered a severe blow to the head. A club may have been involved. Otis had been behaving erratically for some time, and many historians argue that this incident sent him into insanity. Adams of course, capitalized on the episode and exaggerated the account including a sword and a mob of customs men.

A Tory bookseller, who founded the *Boston Chronicle*, John Mein had been exposing the hypocrisy of wealthy patriots. With the help of an insider, he published lists of proscribed items they were reporting, including “that Hancock had just taken delivery on an ornate and elegant carriage, hardly a sign of simple living.”¹⁵¹ On October 28, 1769, a crowd spotted him and chased him, shouting “kill him, kill him”. Mein barely escaped by running into a British guard house. The mob then went after George Geyer, a suspected customs informer. Geyer was tarred and feathered, and then paraded through Boston followed by a huge crowd. Shortly after this incident, Mein left for London.

The attack on Mein was twofold. Because of Mein’s political sympathies, his bookstore did little business in Boston and he was deeply in debt to creditors in London. Hancock as a man with many contacts in London was approached by the creditors and asked to

¹⁵¹ Fowler and Handlin. p. 97.

help collect the debt. Hancock then offered to buy the debt at a fraction of its value. The offer was accepted and shortly after Mein departed, the *Chronicle* was dismantled.

The violence was escalating. On February 22, 1770 a mob of thousands congregated outside Theophilus Lille's shop. He was accused of breaking the nonimportation ban. While the mob arranged an effigy of Lille for burning, Lille's neighbor, Ebenezer Richardson appeared. Richardson, a customs enforcer soon became the focus of the mob's attention. Richardson ran into his house and fired through his window into the crowd, killing eleven-year-old Christopher Snider. This was made to order propaganda for Adams. A customs agent killing an innocent boy made for excellent press and Adams and the Sons of Liberty used it in full value.¹⁵²

The anger and antagonism had escalated to such an extent that an incident such as the "Boston Massacre" on March 5 of 1770 seems to have been inevitable. Eleven days after Christopher Snider was killed, a single British sentry, Private Hugh White, was stationed outside the Custom House on King Street. A group of boys gathered and began taunting him and throwing snowballs at him. By some accounts the snowballs contained sharp oyster shells and rocks or paving stones.

When White threatened them with his musket, the boys mocked him saying, "Fire and be damned" "The lobster dare not fire".¹⁵³ When the bell in the First Church rang out, scores of people rushed into the square believing there was a fire. Seeing the conflict between the soldier and the boys the crowd became angry. More objects were thrown at the unfortunate soldier who sent for help.

¹⁵² Fowler and Handlin. p. 99.

¹⁵³ Fowler and Handlin. p. 103.

It came in the form of Captain Thomas Preston and the rest of the guard. Preston arrived with his sword drawn and he ordered his men to load and prime their muskets. It has been debated from that time to this as to what occurred next. Some claim that a soldier accidentally fell and discharged his musket, while others argue that Preston ordered his men to fire.

What is not in dispute is that after the first shot, the soldiers believing they were under attack, fired into the crowd. Three people died instantly, another crawled away to die shortly thereafter, and another died a few days later. In addition to the five dead, the event wounded six people.

Hearing the bells and then the guns, Hutchinson ran to the scene. Hutchinson says he asked Preston, “How come you to fire without Orders from a Civil Magistrate?” and the answer was “imperfect”.¹⁵⁴ The word spread quickly, and while Preston and his detail returned to their post a mob gathered, “rumored to have reached five thousand”.¹⁵⁵ Governor Hutchinson knew he had to take immediate action. Running to the Town House he went to the second-floor balcony and asked the crowd to return to their homes and then told them, “The law shall have its course,” and “I will live and die by the law.”¹⁵⁶ During the entire incident Hancock remained inside Beacon Hill.

In the early hours of the morning, Hutchinson, acting as the chief justice of the Massachusetts Superior Court, had the sheriff arrest Preston. Adams, Hancock and others met and decided to send a delegation to Hutchinson. On March 6, they met, and the delegation demanded that the troops withdraw to Castle William. The demand was accompanied by a threat,

¹⁵⁴ Fowler and Handlin. p. 104.

¹⁵⁵ Unger. p. 144.

¹⁵⁶ Unger. p. 144.

that “there upwards of 4000 Men ready to take Arms...and many of them of the first Property, Character and Distinction in the Province.”¹⁵⁷ The delegation claimed another ten-thousand men were outside Boston awaiting a sign to take up the fight. All parties knew this was an exaggeration and a bluff, but Hutchinson after initially rejecting the demand, moved both regiments to Castle William. A few weeks later, one of the regiments was moved to New Jersey.

Immediately after the incident, the Adams propaganda machine went into overdrive. Letters appeared in the newspapers and were sent to the other colonies and sympathizers in Britain. Paul Revere sold prints made from his now famous engraving all over America. The engraving, like the letters portrayed the soldiers as brutes and the victims as martyrs. However, as the year wore on and the possibility of friction between the troops and citizens had been eliminated, the mood in Boston became much calmer.

On April 12, the Townshend Acts were repealed except for a penny a pound tax on tea. Lord Frederick North, Chancellor of the Exchequer declared that the miniscule tax needed to be kept, “as a mark of the supremacy of Parliament, and an efficient declaration of their right to govern the colonies.”¹⁵⁸ Once again, the good news reached Hancock on one of his ships. Upon the announcement, Hancock was again cheered and hailed as a hero. The remaining and insignificant tea tax was ignored by colonists.

On October 24, the trial began. To show that a fair trial was possible in Boston, two of its best lawyers, John Adams and Josiah Quincy defended Preston and after five days they won an acquittal for Preston. It came out in the trial that no person could testify as to who, if anyone had given the order to fire. The incident was revealed to have been a colossal mistake. Of the

¹⁵⁷ Unger. p. 144-145.

¹⁵⁸ Unger. p. 148.

eight soldiers involved, six were acquitted and two were branded on the thumb after being convicted of manslaughter.

By the late autumn of 1770, the mood in Boston had calmed down. The Townshend acts were repealed, the troops remained in Castle William, the Massacre had occurred over six months ago, and most citizens believed that justice had been done in the Massacre trials. By December the mood of the town had calmed. The commissioners of customs returned from Castle William, held their assemblies in Boston with “no complaints of Insults or any sort of Molestation.”¹⁵⁹

Non-importation was falling apart. The merchants saw no reason to deny themselves profits and the citizens saw no reason to deny themselves creature comforts. Samuel Adams tried in vain to keep the anger alive but failed. Resorting to one of his favorite tactics, Adams wrote a series of articles as “Vindex” that condemned the Preston and British soldiers of the Massacre. Because Adams overplayed his hand, and grossly overstated the soldier’s motives and guilt and the facts of the incident and trial were known, his articles had little effect. In fact, there was a resurgent support for Tories in Massachusetts. Adams watched helplessly as all of America abandoned nonimportation.¹⁶⁰

In January of 1771, Samuel Adams, John Hancock, and Paul Revere petitioned the town of Boston to build a new gunpowder magazine at a safer distance from the town (and the British troops).

In March of 1771, Hutchinson’s commission as Governor arrived. He wrote that Massachusetts exhibited a more “general appearance of Contentment” since the enactment of the

¹⁵⁹ Fowler and Handlin. p. 110.

¹⁶⁰ Fowler and Handlin. p. 111.

Stamp Act.¹⁶¹ Hutchinson was the first native born Massachusetts Governor in more than thirty years. A product of Harvard, he moved in the same social circles as Hancock, but was eleven years older than Adams. While Lieutenant Governor, Hutchinson had published *The history of the province of Massachusetts-Bay, from the charter of King William and Queen Mary, in 1691, until the year 1750*. Two other volumes would follow, with the last being published after his death. Until the problems of the 1760s, Hutchinson had engendered few controversies. He had served in the General Court, was promoted to the Council, and had become the Lieutenant Governor. Only his support of hard currency during the land bank crisis had earned him some detractors and Samuel Adams, never forgetting the losses his father had suffered, was certainly one of those. Hutchinson was a colonial elite and a gaining importance.¹⁶²

While Adams' influence was fading, Hancock's star was rising. Popular among the people, this period of peace gave him reason to optimism. His agents in London reported a serene spirit there regarding the American colonies. In fact, the report said in part,

The affairs of America are scarcely mention'd here and there is not at present the least prospect of the Duty on Tea being taken off...Tea is an article is an article we can most assuredly do without, and if we[']re honestly firm in a determination not to import it the Act must be repealed.¹⁶³ Hancock replenished his stocks which had grown thin during the non-importation period and business was booming. In March, both Adams and Hancock were elected to the General Court, but in a surprising turn of events, Adams lost the election for the Suffolk County registrar of deeds by a two to one margin to a Tory.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ Unger. p. 151.

¹⁶² Fowler. p. 126.

¹⁶³ Unger. p. 153.

¹⁶⁴ Unger. p. 154.

The General Court again elected Hancock to serve on the Governor's Council and Hutchinson again vetoed the idea. Moreover, feeling that convening the House of Representatives in Boston was dangerous, Hutchinson directed them to meet in Cambridge.

Hancock won the spring election, gaining 511 out of 513 votes, and in the typical norm of the time, Hancock did not vote for himself. So, there was one person who opposed Hancock being elected. Although Hancock had won an overwhelming victory, he was so accustomed to adoration that the smallest loss seemed impossible to bear. Hancock announced he would resign. Adams was shocked. He could not afford to lose Hancock, but he knew how to manipulate the younger man. For Hancock, the tool Adams would use was flattery. He wrote Hancock a letter that dripped with praise.

Your Resolution yesterday to resign your seat gave me very great Uneasiness. I could not think you had sufficient Ground to deprive the Town of one who I have a Right to say is a most valuable Member, since you had within three of the unanimous Suffrages of your Fellow Citizens & one of the negative votes was your own. You say you have been spoken ill of? What then? Can you think that while you are a good Man that *all* will speak well of you-If you knew the person who has defamd you nothing is more likely than that you would justly value your self upon that mans Censure as being the highest Applause. Those who were fond of continuing Mr. Otis on the seat, were I dare to say to a Man among your warmest friends: Will you then add to their Disappointment by a Resignation, merely because one contemptable person, who perhaps was hired for the purpose, has blessed you with his *reviling*-Need I add more than to intreat it as a favor that you would alter your Design.¹⁶⁵

Adams letter worked, and Hancock remained. But there were to be more departures. In the spring, John Adams announced his intention to retire from politics. He stated that he wanted to divide his time between his law office in Boston and his farm in Braintree. Samuel was unable to dissuade his cousin from his decision.

¹⁶⁵ Fowler. p. 131.

The main subject of discussion at the General Court in June was the removal of the assembly from Boston and this debate produced an unexpected result. Adams of course, was at the forefront of those in favor of demanding the governor reinstate them in Boston. Adams advocated doing no other work until Hutchinson capitulated and the Court was returned to Boston and couched his arguments in constitutional terms. James Otis had regained his sanity (for the time being), been elected to the house and now opposed Adams. Hutchinson had falsely claimed that the decision to move the General Court out of Boston was the King's. It was Hutchinson's, but Otis professed loyalty to the King and that "the Massachusetts General Court could be moved anywhere the Crown pleased-even to "Houssatonick" if it saw fit."¹⁶⁶ Hancock supported Otis and Adams lost the argument. Hutchinson, perhaps hearing of this small mutiny, wrote,

I can mention to you what will appear improper in a public letter. I was much pressed by many persons well affected in general to consent to the election of Mr. Hancock, his connections being large, which are strongly prejudiced against me for the frequent refusals to accept of him in office. They assured me he wished to be separated from Mr. Adams, another Representative of the town, an incendiary equal to any at present in London, and, if I would admit him to the Council, they had no doubt there could be an end to the influence he has by means of his property in the town of Boston. As there had been no advances on his part, I could not think it proper for me to follow their advice. I have now reason to think that, before another election, he will alter his conduct so far as to justify my acceptance of him, which certainly will take off that sourness of temper from many people which his negatives occasion; and unless you think it a step not advisable, I believe I shall accept of him. Having from year to year the general votes both of Council and House, the constant refusal is more disagreeable to the people.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ John C. Miller. *Sam Adams: Pioneer in Propaganda*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1936) p. 248.

¹⁶⁷ William V. Wells. *The Life and Public Services of Samuel Adams*. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company. 1865), p. 398.

For Adams, the tone of this communication is un-customarily conciliatory. Adams still needed Hancock and if a little humbling appeasement was in order, so be it. Hutchinson, perhaps seeing an opportunity to win over Hancock wrote,

...upon a change of sentiments in Mr. Hancock, everything past would be entirely forgotten, and it would be a pleasure to the Governor to consent to his election to the Council...This he declared to be neither his object nor inclination; but he intended to quit all active concern in public affairs, and to attend to his private business, which, by means of his attention to the public, had been too much neglected. The disunion, however, which lasted several months, checked the progress of measures in opposition to government¹⁶⁸

These conversations mark a period that many historians describe as “Hancock’s flirtation with Hutchinson”. This was not Hancock’s only flirtation as he had been courting Dorothy (Dolly) Quincy since the beginning of the year. Hutchinson hoped Otis might moderate the radicals, but that prospect was dashed when Otis’s insanity returned.¹⁶⁹ But Hutchinson still held hope for winning Hancock over, but he would need to be careful. Hutchinson did not think he could turn Hancock into a full loyalist, but he did hope to lead him on enough to cast doubt on his Whig credentials and break the Adams-Hancock alliance.¹⁷⁰

But what is the reason for Hancock’s defection from the Adams’ camp? Historians disagree on Hancock’s thinking. Some assert that Hancock completely agreed with Otis. Others argue that because Dolly came from a conservative family, Hancock adopted a less radical stance to ingratiate himself. Some historians say that hearing of his reputation as “Adams’ milch cow and tool”, Hancock wanted to assert his independence. A very likely explanation is that

¹⁶⁸ Wells. p. 399.

¹⁶⁹ Alexander. p. 125.

¹⁷⁰ Miller. p. 249-250.

Hancock, sensing the shifting political winds, reverted to his customary “fence sitting” and decided to hedge his bets by leaving his options open.

When the representatives returned to Boston in August, there were twelve British warships anchored in the harbor.¹⁷¹ Even this could not rouse the Bostonians, and this was actually an economic boon. House of Hancock sales were almost £4,000 for the last quarter of the year. In December of 1771, as the Christmas season began Hancock told Governor Hutchinson that he would “never again connect himself with the Adamses”.¹⁷² Hutchinson could barely contain his glee. In a letter to the late Governor Bernard dated December 3, 1771 Hutchinson wrote,

Hancock and Adams are at great variance. Some of my friends blow the coals, and I hope to see good effect. They follow the opposition in England in everything they are able to do. I compare this to the quarrel between Oliver and Wilkes. Otis was carried off to-day in a post-chaise, bound hand and foot. He has been as good as his word,-set the Province in a flame, and perished in the attempt.¹⁷³

It had been suspected that the Governor was receiving his salary from the Crown when he refused funds from the General Court in the spring and this was confirmed in late 1771 when it was announced that now the governor would receive his salary from the Crown. This had been whispered of before but when confirmed it had little traction.¹⁷⁴

Since the adjournment of the General Court in the summer of 1771, Adams had dashed off numerous articles under his various pseudonyms. Arguments included allusions to the Egyptians and slaves, Romans and their subjects, and the sanctity of the Massachusetts Charter.

¹⁷¹ Unger. p. 156.

¹⁷² Unger. p. 156-157.

¹⁷³ Wells. p. 439.

¹⁷⁴ Fowler and Handlin. p. 117.

The quantity of the writing was staggering, and the tone became more strident and venomous as time wore on, but the articles had little effect.

Adams won re-election even though almost one third of Boston voters did not vote for him. Hancock and Cushing won forty percent more votes than Adams and they joined forces to defeat the radicals by passing a moderate request for the General Court to return to Boston.¹⁷⁵ The new proposal dropped the constitutional arguments and instead pleaded that “Inconveniences” was the reason that the General Court should return to Boston.¹⁷⁶ This undercut Adams broader arguments about the rights of the colonists and the supremacy of the Charter.

In April the Governor appointed Hancock to be the commander of the Company of Cadets with the rank of Colonel. This was a ceremonial militia that participated in parades and escorted dignitaries on formal occasions. For Hancock, this was heaven sent. He could dress up in military uniform, play at being a commander and this would add to his claim to political and popular leadership.¹⁷⁷ Adams was furious, saying in part,

it is not in the power of the Governor to give a commission for that company to whom he pleases, as their officers are chosen by themselves. Mr. Hancock was elected by a unanimous vote; and a reluctance at the idea of giving offense to a hundred gentlemen might very well account for the Governor giving the commission to Mr. H., without taking into consideration that most powerful of all other motives, an instruction, especially at a time when he vainly hoped he could gain him over.¹⁷⁸

Hancock negotiated in May of 1772 with Governor Hutchinson over the terms. Hutchinson said, “I let them know if there was any thing in their address or message which tended to a denial of the king’s authority to give instructions to the governor, I would not consent

¹⁷⁵ Unger. p. 158.

¹⁷⁶ Fowler. p. 140.

¹⁷⁷ Unger. p. 158-159.

¹⁷⁸ Unger. p. 158.

to it.”¹⁷⁹ Hutchinson was warned that some, especially “would do everything he could to sabotage such an agreement that did not provide a clear-cut victory for the opposition.”¹⁸⁰ Hancock carried the day and a message “devoid of some of the rhetoric of past messages” was sent asking the governor to allow the legislature to convene in Boston again.¹⁸¹ In June, the governor agreed and Hancock had freed himself from Adams’ sway at least partially. He saw himself as the great mediator.¹⁸²

Also, in May, and still in Cambridge, the House again elected Hancock to be a Councilor and sent their recommendation to Hutchinson. This time Hutchinson assented, but it was Hancock who declined the appointment. Hutchinson had already bestowed multiple favors on Hancock and Hancock may have been aware of the danger of a perception of “being in the pocket” of Hutchinson and his reputation as a patriot being ruined.

In the summer of 1772, in an effort to reconcile with Adams, Hancock commissioned John Singleton Copley to paint portraits of both of them. This is a luxury Adams could never have afforded on his own. When finished, Copley’s portraits hung side by side in Hancock’s drawing room. Today they hang together in the Museum of Fine arts in Boston. A description of the contrast between the two portraits also illustrates the contrasts between the two men.

Adams wears a deep red suit with no ornamentation; Hancock a blue suit with elaborate gold trim and gold buttons and buckles. Adams’ hair is his own, thin, limp, natural, gray. Hancock wears a wig. Adams stands before a dark background. Hancock sits on a highly polished and elegantly carved chair. Adams looks firmly, insistently into the viewer’s eyes, pointing with his left index finger to the Charter of the province of Massachusetts. Hancock averts his gaze, perhaps absorbed in contemplation of the ledger book sitting on the fabric-draped table

¹⁷⁹ Fowler. p. 141.

¹⁸⁰ Fowler. p. 141.

¹⁸¹ Fowler. p. 141.

¹⁸² Fowler. p. 142.

before him. It is easy to tell who is the wealthier man, the businessman with twenty ships, and who the politician barely scraping by.¹⁸³

Hancock's flirtation with Hutchinson and the Tories was over but the tension between the two men would return at a later time. Throughout the spring and early summer, Hancock increased his popularity in Boston with donations. On the common he had a bandstand built, built walkways, and planted a row of trees. He gave £7,500 for rebuilding the Brattle Square Church and purchased the newest model fire engine for the town.¹⁸⁴ Hancock was doing what Adams could not...buying goodwill.

In late July, Hancock set on a month-long cruise with male friends aboard. Upon his return he found that his gifts had bought him immense popularity. The Boston Whigs who Adams thought he had invented voted Hancock to be the moderator rather than Adams. Adams was livid. He felt he had invented Hancock as well and now his creations had betrayed him.¹⁸⁵

In the early fall of 1772, it was learned that Judges of the Superior Court, like the Governor would receive their salary from the Crown. Immediately, Adams returned to writing newspaper articles and in mid-October, a petition was circulated, and a special town meeting was called. Hancock was the moderator and there was only one subject of discussion, the usurpation of the rights of colonists to pay the judges themselves. This was question of power and the allegiances of the judges. Hutchinson refused any explanation, saying that "town meetings had only limited authority and were not entitled to discuss matters beyond those relating to local governance."¹⁸⁶ Adams shared Hutchinson's answer and said, "the governor and king thought of

¹⁸³ Stroll. p. 88.

¹⁸⁴ Unger. p. 160.

¹⁸⁵ Unger. p. 161.

¹⁸⁶ Fowler and Handlin. p. 118.

them as slaves and expected them to abide all their decisions in silence.”¹⁸⁷ This at last brought the anger Adams desired.

Adams’ response was to form an underground organization. At a crowded Boston Town Meeting on November 2, he proposed that “Committees of Correspondence” be established. This innocuous term belied a more serious intent. The committees would be composed of revolutionary minded men. They would exchange stories and write in protest of indignities suffered at the hands of the British. They would establish a communications network not only within Massachusetts, but to extend to all thirteen colonies. What Adams created was a patriot political union in America. Wells tells us,” When the committee came to be appointed, it was found difficult to obtain members. Cushing, Hancock, and Phillips, three of the four Boston Representatives, pleaded private business and refused to serve.”¹⁸⁸ Still, Adams found the sufficient (twenty-one) members to proceed.

It was also agreed in the meeting that a statement concerning the rights of the colonists should be drafted and as one of Boston’s most energetic writers it was natural that Adams would be the primary writer. On November 20, the Boston Town Meeting approved the document. In many ways it presages the Declaration of Independence and begins with,

Among the natural rights of the Colonists are these: First, a right to life; Secondly, to liberty; Thirdly, to property; together with the right to support and defend them in the best manner they can. These are evident branches of, rather than deductions from, the duty of self-preservation, commonly called the first law of nature.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Puls. p. 127.

¹⁸⁸ Wells. p. 497.

¹⁸⁹ Samuel Adams. *The Rights of the Colonists, a List of Violations of Rights and a Letter of Correspondence. Adopted by the Town of Boston. November 20, 1772.* found in *The Writings of Samuel Adams.* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons. 1904)

Adams quotes Locke and speaks of freedom of religion (excluding Catholics) and contains a list of grievances. Quoting the everything from the Bible to the Massachusetts Charter, Adams shows the legal precedents he claims are being violated regarding the colonies. The manifesto ends with, “The Colonists have been branded with the odious names of traitors and rebels only for complaining of their grievances. How long such treatment will or ought to be borne, is submitted.”¹⁹⁰ *The Rights of the Colonists* was widely distributed in America. Benjamin Franklin, living as an agent in London, printed it there and distributed it in Europe. The Tory resurgence in Massachusetts was waning and their high point was already over.

Adams was able to ensnare Hancock once again. As moderator, Hancock could either sign the documents or resign. Resignation could be a very dangerous action for Hancock. A visitation from the Sons of Liberty could be hazardous to his health, property or both. So, Adams had Hancock in the position of signing documents that put him squarely in opposition to the Governor and made him appear to be solidly in the radical camp. Hancock had a dilemma. On the front page of Adams’ provocation to revolt was his name, JOHN HANCOCK, moderator. Suddenly, John Hancock was the leader of the American Revolution. The Gazette printed six hundred copied to be sent to selectmen all over Massachusetts. Hancock had no choice but align himself completely with Adams or defeat him and take the reins of the Whig party.¹⁹¹

The Rights of the Colonists was well received in Massachusetts and this alarmed Hutchinson enough that he called an emergency session of the General Court on January 6, 1773. At this meeting, Hutchinson said, “I know of no line that can be drawn between the supreme

¹⁹⁰ Samuel Adams. *The Rights of the Colonists, a List of Violations of Rights and a Letter of Correspondence. Adopted by the Town of Boston. November 20, 1772.* found in *The Writings of Samuel Adams.* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons. 1904)

¹⁹¹ Unger. p. 162-163.

authority of Parliament and the total independence of the colonies.”¹⁹² While Hutchinson believed his words would convince the colonists to abandon their insurgency, Adams and his sympathizers agreed with Hutchinson, but came to a very different conclusion.

In reply, Adams wrote of the previous charters, and even quoted Hutchinson’s *History of the Province of Massachusetts Bay* in a letter that was a series of constitutional arguments against the idea of the supremacy of Parliament. He pushed back at Hutchinson with,

If there be no such line, the consequence is, either that the colonies are the vassals of the Parliament, or that they are totally independent. As it cannot be supposed to have been the intention of the parties in the compact, that we should be reduced to a state of vassalage, the conclusion is, that was their sense that we were thus independent.¹⁹³

This is significant, as Adams, based on historical precedence, is advocating American independence. Hutchinson said the Charter had been intended to create a company and not a colony. Adams’ response was extensively distributed in the colonies by the Committees of Correspondence. Adams followed up with numerous letters to the other Committees of Correspondence and they in turn filled the revolutionary literary pipeline with letters of their own. The American relationship with Britain became a widely debated topic throughout the colonies. On May 5, 1773 both Adams and Hancock were re-elected. Of 419 votes cast, Hancock won 417 and Adams won 413.¹⁹⁴

On May 10, 1773 Parliament passed the Tea Act. The law was designed to bail out the British East India Company which was deeply in debt for various reasons. The British East India

¹⁹² Fowler and Handlin. p. 120.

¹⁹³ Samuel Adams. *The House of Representatives of Massachusetts to the Governor, January 26, 1773.* found in *The Writings of Samuel Adams.* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons. 1904)

¹⁹⁴ Stoll. p. 105-106.

Company harvested tea from a variety of locations in the east, mainly from India and China. There had been a tax on tea since the enactment of the Townshend Acts in 1767 and the penny a pound tax on tea had remained after the repeal. The British East India Company had been required to pay this tax to the British government. The Tea Act excused the company from these taxes and allowed it to sell the tea directly to consumers. This would undercut big merchants such as Hancock. Even smugglers would not be able to compete. In addition, the company would establish exclusive agents to sell the tea in the colonies. This would ruin thousands of small shopkeepers as tea was perhaps the most widely consumed beverage in America. The agents in Boston were Thomas and Elisha Hutchinson, the Governor's sons, Richard Clarke, Hutchinson's son in law and the firm of Faneuil and Winslow. The tax to the government would be payable upon unloading it by the tea agents.

In December of 1772, Benjamin Franklin, in London, had intercepted a packet of letters written by Hutchinson and his allies. He sent them to Adams under the condition they would not be published. Lieutenant Governor Oliver encouraged, "an abridgement of what are called English liberties."¹⁹⁵ He also called for the arrest of the "principal incendiaries."¹⁹⁶ In late May letters were read to the assembly. The house voted 101 to 5, that the "design and tendency of them is to subvert the constitution and introduce arbitrary power into the province."¹⁹⁷

News of the letters was spreading and Adams, claiming he had permission, advocated publishing the letters in the June 2 meeting of the house. The assembly voted in favor of publication and a petition to London for the removal the authors. The papers were distributed throughout the colonies by the Committees of Correspondence and many perceived in them a

¹⁹⁵ Unger. p. 165.

¹⁹⁶ Puls. p. 137.

¹⁹⁷ Puls. p. 135.

conspiracy to deprive them of their rights. Upon hearing of the petition to remove him, Hutchinson prorogued the assembly until September. Hancock warned Adams that the merchants would not support him unless his gangs stopped terrorizing citizens and interrupting town meetings. Needing the support of the merchants and middle class, Adams assented.¹⁹⁸ During the remainder of the summer, Hancock worked on his business affairs. Looking ahead to the Tea Act, Hancock increased his tea imports. In July, he was appointed to the position of Treasurer to Harvard College. They no doubt hoped he would be a benefactor as well.

During September many provocative articles were printed in the *Boston Gazette* opposing the Tea Act. On September 27, Adams took a momentous step. Published under the title *Observation* in the *Gazette*, he proposed, “that a CONGRESS OF AMERICAN STATES be assembled as soon as possible; to draw up a Bill of Rights, and publish it to the world; choose an Ambassador to dwell at the British Court to act for the united Colonies.”¹⁹⁹ Adams is proposing an extra-legal government and nationhood. A few days later, Adams wrote more explicitly, “How shall the colonies force their oppressors to proper terms?...Form an independent state, “AN AMERICAN COMMONWEALTH”²⁰⁰

In late October, the Massachusetts Bay Committee of Correspondence urged the other colonies to prevent the East India tea from landing in their ports. A letter from Philadelphia threatening “the Commissioners appointed by the East India Company for the sale of tea” with their lives unless they resigned.²⁰¹ In fact, in every colony except Massachusetts, the tea agents were forced to resign. On November 3, in a scene reminiscent of the Stamp Act protests, Adams,

¹⁹⁸ Unger. p. 165.

¹⁹⁹ Puls. p. 139.

²⁰⁰ Puls. p. 139.

²⁰¹ Unger. p. 167.

Hancock, and other patriot leaders held a large rally under the Liberty Tree where they demanded the tea agents resign. The agents refused. Being part of Hutchinson's family made it impossible for at least three of them. On November 18, the event was repeated and again, the agents refused to resign.

On November 28, the first of the tea ships, the *Dartmouth* put into Boston Harbor. The bells rang and a crowd of nearly five thousand gathered. Hutchinson's sons and Clarke escaped to Castle William. Within a few days, the *Beaver* and the *Eleanor*, also full of the hated tea were also in the harbor. The law required that the tax be paid on the tea within 20 days or it would be seized by customs officials. Since the customs officials were in league with Hutchinson, the tea would find its way into the hands of the tea consignees swiftly. The patriots were unwilling to let either unloading or seizure occur and so, a guard was posted on the wharf.

On December 16, one day before the seizure was to occur, at a meeting attended by thousands, Francis Rotch, part owner of one of the ships, was ordered to return his ship to England with the tea on board. When Rotch replied that the British warships would not let him pass without unloading the tea, the crowd sent him to entreat Hutchinson for safe passage. When Rotch returned, he reported that the Governor had refused his request. Adams stood and shouted, "This meeting can do nothing more to save the country."²⁰²

Some say this was a prearranged signal, but in any case, the crowd streamed towards the wharf. There they were met by a group of forty to fifty men dressed as Mohawk Indians, who boarded the ships and began breaking the tea crates open and then dumping the tea into the harbor. The "Indians" worked methodically until all the tea had been destroyed. No other

²⁰² Stoll, p. 115.

property, other than the tea was damaged. The 342 crates of tea were valued at £9,659 or \$1 million today.²⁰³

Historians have debated ever since, who was responsible and who participated in what has become known as the “Boston Tea Party”, but the consensus view is that neither Adams or Hancock participated. It seems very likely that the “Mohawks” were the Sons of Liberty. News of the Tea Party spread through the colonies and the various Committees of Correspondence stepped up local propaganda campaigns in their regions.

In London, Parliament was outraged by this latest act of defiance and in March of 1774 passed four laws that came to be known as the Coercive Acts or the Intolerable Acts and were designed to punish Boston and isolate it from the other colonies.

The first was the Boston Port Act that closed the port of Boston until the citizens of Boston paid restitution for the destroyed tea. The Port Act would become effective on June 1.

Next was the Massachusetts Government Act that stipulated that nearly all governmental positions were to be appointed by the Governor or the King and not elected by the citizens. Under this law town meetings could only be held once a year.

The third was the Administration of Justice Act that called for the Governor to assign trial venues for Crown officials accused of capital crimes to another colony or even to England. This act allowed those officials to escape local justice and Adams labelled it the “Murder’s Act.”²⁰⁴

²⁰³ Unger. p. 170.

²⁰⁴ Fowler and Handlin. p. 126.

The fourth was the Quartering Act. Previously the colonies had been required to find housing for British soldiers, but this law allowed the Governor to directly assign housing for troops. The housing could include private residences and applied to all the colonies. In late April, word of the new acts reached Boston.

On May 3, Adams was elected to the General Court winning 535 of the 536 votes cast. He was also elected the Moderator of the Town Meeting.²⁰⁵ Hancock declined to serve as he was suffering from gout, a condition that would plague him for the rest of his life. Hancock's rich diet and Madeira consumption no doubt contributed to his illness.

On May 13, General Thomas Gage arrived in Boston harbor to replace Hutchinson as Governor. Hutchinson was to return to England on leave until Boston was pacified and Gage was no longer needed. Gage had come from England and had missed the Tea Party. Stopping first at Castle William to speak with Hutchinson for four days, he landed on Long Wharf on May 17. Gage revealed that four regiments of soldiers would shortly join him. This amounted to around 2,200 men. He also suspended the General Court until June and moved it to Salem. Gage had received orders to arrest Hancock, Adams, and other rebel leaders for treason, but after conferring with Hutchinson and others at Castle William, he decided to postpone any actions as he wanted to avoid riots in the streets.

Adams reacted by sending letters to the other colonies, saying in part, "The town of Boston is now suffering the stroke of vengeance in the common cause of America. I hope they will sustain the blow with becoming fortitude; and that the effects of this cruel act, intended to intimidate and subdue the spirits of all America, will by joint efforts of all be

²⁰⁵ Stoll. p. 121-122.

frustrated.”²⁰⁶ Adams was aware that other ports could potentially profit from the closure of Boston Harbor and only through unity could the cause move forward. Disunity was the hope of North and the British government.

A few days before the Boston Port Act was to take effect, Hancock sent his fleet, full of merchandise to London, with instructions to sell everything, merchandise and ships. All except one ship was sold, and the sale realized £13,000. A single captain, James Scott, did not sell his ship and wrote Hancock, “I hope you won’t give up on navigation. I am determined never to leave you while you please to employ me.”²⁰⁷ Hancock replied, asking Scott to fill the last ship with gunpowder and make for Salem. On the day the Act came into effect, Boston Harbor was empty.

The closing of the harbor caused food shortages and wide scale unemployment. During the summer, other nearby colonies countered by sending hundreds of sheep and thousands of bushels of grain to Boston. Other colonies saw Boston’s punishment and wondered if the same could be done to them. The unintended consequence of the Port Act was to unify the colonies for the first time and cause the First Continental congress to convene.

Gage had ordered the General Court moved to Salem and in their June 17 meeting, a committee consisting of Adams, Cushing Adams’ allies recommended that a meeting be held with representatives from all the colonies “to deliberate and determine upon wise and proper measures to be by them recommended to all the colonies, for the recovery and establishment of their just rights and liberties, civil and religious.”²⁰⁸ The House voted to approve the recommendation, and further proposed that the meeting be held on September 1 in Philadelphia.

²⁰⁶ Puls. p. 151.

²⁰⁷ Unger. p. 179.

²⁰⁸ Stoll. p. 127.

The House voted to send Samuel Adams, John Adams, James Bowdoin, Thomas Cushing, and Robert Treat Paine and allotted £500 for expenses.

In late July, Gage relieved Hancock of his duties as Cadet Commander. On August 10, as the representatives prepared to leave for Philadelphia, Adams was presented with a gift. The people of Boston bought their delegate “wont to converse with poverty” a new suit and shoes.

In early September, while the delegates were traveling to Pennsylvania, Gage ordered the General Court to meet in Salem on October 5. Tension was high in Boston with soldiers everywhere and thinking the better of his decision, Gage ordered the meeting canceled, but the word did not arrive in time. After waiting in vain for the Governor, the representatives formed a Provincial Congress and elected Hancock their president.

The Provincial Congress met throughout September, October, and into early December. Among other actions, they ordered that that taxes be withheld from royal tax collectors, and instead be paid to them. Hancock became a member of the influential Committee of Safety and on October 29 the Congress ordered “at least one quarter of the militia be form[ed]...into companies of fifty privates...who shall equip and hold themselves in readiness to march at the shortest notice...”²⁰⁹

Meanwhile in Philadelphia, Adams lobbied to have Peyton Randolph, a respected Virginia lawyer installed as the Chairman of this First Continental Congress. Adams let it be known that if South Carolina made the nomination, Massachusetts would support it. Not only would this gain South Carolina goodwill in the eyes of Virginians (and the South Carolinians

²⁰⁹ Stoll, p. 177.

would owe Adams a favor), but Adams wished to quell any reservations others had about New England dominating the Congress.²¹⁰

Adams had another hurdle to overcome...religion. The delegates wanted to begin meetings with a prayer, but the American colonies (and their representatives) had widely differing beliefs. In the South, were Anglicans, Pennsylvania was home to Quakers, and there were Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Anabaptists scattered everywhere. We have seen Adams previous pronouncements on other faiths and the religious intolerance of Massachusetts in general and Adams intolerance in particular was well known. Adams had anticipated this problem. While the issue was under discussion, Adams rose and said, “he was no Bigot, and could hear a Prayer from a Gentleman of Piety and Virtue, who was at the same Time a Friend to his Country.”²¹¹

Adams had someone in mind. He stated that although he was new to Philadelphia, he had met Jacob Duchè, an Anglican clergyman and nominated Duchè to lead the prayers. The assembly voted agreement and the matter was solved.²¹² This reveals the plastic nature of Adams character. In Massachusetts, Adams would have labeled Duchè “popish”, but in Philadelphia, political need outweighed personal conviction.

The Continental Congress voted to a boycott of all goods from Britain, but sentiments were far unanimous. The Province of Georgia did not vote in favor of the boycott. The representatives from Pennsylvania and New York had instructions not to pursue any breakaway from the mother country. Radicals such as Adams would need to wait as their more moderate

²¹⁰ Puls. p. 160.

²¹¹ Stoll. p. 134.

²¹² Puls. p. 160

brethren were not willing to go as far as separation. Before they adjourned, the First Continental Congress agreed to meet again on May 10 of 1775.²¹³

On November 9, Adams returned to Boston. Hearing Adams' news of the Continental Congress, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress voted to return all the same men as delegates to Philadelphia the following year and add John Hancock to the mission.²¹⁴

This chapter speaks to the evolution of the Adams-Hancock relationship. It also contains the arguments for the idea that Adams-Hancock partnership played a critical role in garnering New England support for the beginning of the American Revolution.

These two men are diametric opposites in many respects. Adams cared nothing for property, appearances, or titles. Hancock cared a great deal about material wealth, clothes, and acclimations. Adams lived a life of scarcity, while Hancock lived an extremely self-indulgent life that only a man of his great wealth could. Adams possessed two passions, his vision of a resurrected Puritan society and his vision of an independent America. The later he had been harboring as early as his master's thesis.²¹⁵ Adams was a deep thinker and influenced by philosophers such as Locke. Hancock was a business man, and while very competent in that realm, his interests outside of economic matters could be termed shallow.

It would seem that Hancock was exactly the sort of man that Adams would scorn, but Adams needed a relationship with Hancock. When Hancock entered politics, Adams began

²¹³ Stoll. p. 143

²¹⁴ Unger. p. 187

²¹⁵ Stoll. p. 23

cultivating him. Adams introduced Hancock to the Whig political clubs and campaigned for him.²¹⁶ Initially, Adams was the mentor and he moved Hancock slowly into the patriot camp.

The reason for this unlikely partnership is twofold. Adams needed Hancock's resources and his social stature. Pamphlets and rum for mobs cost money. Adams needed Hancock as his "milch cow". Hancock's position as the leading merchant in Boston gave the rebel cause an acceptability that allowed other merchants and middle-class people to consider Adams' viewpoints more favorably, than they would have if those viewpoints had only been advanced by Adams' thugs.

Hancock was not Adams' most loyal ally, but Adams was willing to overlook a little backsliding if it was minor. When Hancock was willing to negotiate with the Governor to recover the *Liberty*, it took Adams and his delegation to convince Hancock not to capitulate.²¹⁷ Hancock was too valuable as a figurehead to lose.

As time went on, Hancock became as good of a politician as Adams and even outpolled him. Hancock could buy things for people, such as firewood or free rent during hard times or gifts for the town such as a fire engine that Adams could not.

As his cousin John wrote, Adams knew how to influence people.²¹⁸ When Hancock threatened to resign from the General Court, Adams wrote him a letter full of flattery and Hancock remained.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ Fraden. p. 47

²¹⁷ Fowler. p. 86.

²¹⁸ Wells I. p. 32

²¹⁹ Fowler. p. 131.

But Hancock wished to free himself from Adams control. During the lull in 1771, Hancock supported Otis in undercutting Adams' constitutional arguments concerning the removal of the General Court and succeeded in returning the assembly to Boston.²²⁰

Hutchinson also recognized Hancock's importance and the period of "flirtation" began. Adams could only helplessly watch during this time and argue on behalf of Hancock that the Governor could not appoint him to his position with the cadets as his election had been unanimous.

When Hancock was voted as moderator of the town meeting, it seemed that he had achieved independence from Adams, but Adams outmaneuvered him. When the Whig-dominated Town Meeting voted to adopt Adams' controversial *Rights of the Colonists*, Hancock was forced to sign and was instantly catapulted into the role of rebel leader. There was no escape for Hancock now. By 1774, Hancock was smuggling gunpowder into Salem.

Adams had cultivated, mentored, and kept Hancock in the Whig fold for 10 years. His stature and wealth had advanced the rebel cause, especially in Boston. Without Adams' organization and tireless agitation and Hancock's stature and assets it is likely the resistance would have withered away at any number of points.

²²⁰ Miller. p. 248.

CHAPTER V

THE WAR YEARS

1775 marked the turning point in relations between Britain and the American colonies as well as a dramatic change in the relationship between Adams and Hancock. An air of imminent war was in the air. Late in 1774, Adams had received word of the establishment of the Provincial Congress in Massachusetts and Hancock was informed of events occurring at the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia. The chief carrier of this communication was Paul Revere, now dubbed “the courier”. General Gage was aware of these events as he had established an intelligence network to keep him informed of his enemy’s activities. Adams also had his network of spies. Paul Revere said he was one of about thirty men who met “for the purpose of watching the movements of British soldiers, and gaining every intelligence of the movements of the Tories.”²²¹

Just after the Massachusetts delegation had left for Philadelphia, Gage had ordered his troops to seize the militia’s arms, powder, and balls at Charlestown and Cambridge. His soldiers found nothing as the patriots had removed them.

Captain Scott arrived in Salem in late September with Hancock’s gunpower. The Provincial Congress had ordered a militia to be created and to equip each man with

an effective fire arm, bayonet, pouch, knapsack, thirty rounds of cartridges and balls as well as to the purchase of twenty pieces of field artillery, carriages for

²²¹ Stoll. p. 146.

twelve battering cannon, four mortars, twenty tons of grape and round shot, ten tons of bombshells, five tones of lead balls, one thousand barrels of powder, five thousand arms and bayonets, and seventy-five thousand flints.²²²

The total cost came to near £21, 000.²²³ The taxes the Provincial Congress had imposed in the countryside did not cover these costs and so, Hancock asked his merchant friends to help and as to the funds that were still lacking, Hancock paid them himself.²²⁴

In mid-December Rhode Island patriots sized forty-four artillery guns from Fort George in Newport, Rhode Island. The fort had been left unguarded. On December 14, 1774, New Hampshire rebels occupied Fort William and Mary, capturing one hundred barrels of gun powder. The fort had been guarded by six British troops.

On February 26, 1775 a small British force, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Leslie disembarked from a ship and marched on Salem as Gage's spies had informed him that the local militia had been stockpiling arms, including a cannon there. There followed a standoff between the militia and Leslie's soldiers. Eventually Leslie and his men left without the cannon or arms, but there had been some tense moments. If cooler heads had not prevailed, the American Revolution might have begun then.²²⁵

In Boston, Tories and soldiers from outlying areas were pouring into the city, as the countryside was too unsafe for them. If the countryside was not safe for British sympathizers, Boston was not a good environment for patriots. There were rumors of assassination plots that targeted Adams, Hancock, and other patriot leaders. There were also rumors of the imminent

²²² Unger. p. 185.

²²³ Unger. p. 185.

²²⁴ Unger. p. 185.

²²⁵ Derek W. Beck. *Igniting the American Revolution : 1773-1775*. (Naperville, Illinois: Sourcebooks, 2015), eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), EBSCOhost (accessed February 10, 2018). p. 82.

arrest of Hancock and Adams and most of these included the prisoners being shipped to London in chains for trial, after which they would certainly hang. In fact, Gage knew full well of the extra-legal activities of both men as well as the mobilization occurring in the countryside. As both Adams and Hancock were in Boston during the spring of 1775, many historians have wondered why Gage did not arrest them. Historians have also wondered how it is that Adams and Hancock were seemingly unaware of the danger they were in, and why they remained in Boston.

The mood in Boston can be summed up with this anecdote. In Early March of 1775, British soldiers tarred and feathered a rebel, and while displaying him in a cart through the town they sang a song.

*Yankee Doodle came to town
For to buy a flintlock;
We will tar and feather him,
And so we shall John Hancock.*²²⁶

That same day the president of Harvard insisted on an accounting of college funds from Hancock. Hancock had failed to pay the faculty salaries since the fall of 1774. Hancock promised to meet with the president later but did not.²²⁷

On March 5, during the annual commemoration of the Boston Massacre, Dr. Joseph Warren was the speaker, Adams was the moderator, and Hancock was present. The event was held in the Old South Meeting House and was attended by a few British officers. Some historians say this was to be the location of the “egg plot”, whereby an officer would throw an egg at Warren, and this would be the signal to fire upon the patriot leaders. According to this story, the

²²⁶ Unger. p. 187.

²²⁷ Unger. p. 187.

officer with the egg tripped and the egg broke on the floor and so the assassinations never occurred.²²⁸ Other accounts say that when the word “massacre” was spoken the officers yelled “Fie o fie!”, the Bostonians with their linguistic habit of dropping “r”s heard the word “fire”.²²⁹ In any case, the Bostonians thought they heard “Fire!” and a stampede for the exits ensued.

A few days later Hancock’s house was “attacked by a group of officers who, with their swords, cut and hacked the fence before his house”.²³⁰ Two days later eight soldiers visited Hancock saying “his house, his stables, etc. would soon be theirs, and they would do as they pleased.”²³¹

On March 22, Hancock and Adams departed Boston to join the other Provincial delegates in Concord, twenty miles distant and safely away from Gage and his army. The next day, Hancock was presiding over another session of the Provincial Congress where it was resolved “that the present dangerous and alarming situation of our public affairs renders it necessary for this colony to make preparations for their security and defense by raising and establishing an army.”²³²

And the day after that, Hancock took his coach at great speed, back to Boston, where he organized the theft of two British cannons. These cannons were named Hancock and Adams.²³³ Meanwhile back in Boston, on April 14, Gage received orders to end the rebellion

²²⁸ Fowler. p. 180.

²²⁹ Puls. p. 150.

²³⁰ Unger. p. 187.

²³¹ Unger. p. 187-188.

²³² Fowler. p. 181.

²³³ Unger p. 189.

immediately. Through his spies, Gage's learned where the rebel's arsenal was hidden in Concord.

There was another agenda. A Londoner, writing to a friend in Boston wrote,

...The...said that the administration, on Friday, received advices from General Gage to the 18th of March, wherein he acknowledges the receipt of the King's order to apprehend Messrs. Cushing, Adams, Hancock. &c...and send them over to England to be tried; but that the second orders, which were to hang them in Boston, he said, the General had not then received.²³⁴

Adams and Hancock knew they could not return to Boston and so they stayed in Reverend Jonas Clarke's home in Lexington, twelve miles from Boston. Clarke was Hancock's cousin and the home had belonged to Hancock's grandfather, Bishop John Hancock. Hancock had lived there briefly before his uncle Thomas had taken him. Hancock felt Aunt Lydia and Dolly Quincy were vulnerable now, and he sent for them to leave Boston and join him in Lexington.

Gage knew where Adams and Hancock were and so he devised a two-pronged plan. The main force would advance on Concord to capture the patriot arsenal, while a small detachment would head for Lexington to capture Adams and Hancock.

The rebels learned that Gage knew of the depot in Concord and felt a military attack was impending. How was this known? Some historians have postulated that Gage's wife was a secret patriot sympathizer, but this have never been definitively proven. In any case, this is certainly a case of "insider information" delivered by a high-level informant.

On April fifteenth many British companies were "taken off all duties until further orders"²³⁵ and the next day Paul Revere noted that "the boats belonging to the transports were all

²³⁴ Wells II. p. 289.

²³⁵ Fowler. p. 182.

launched and carried under the sterns of the men of war.”²³⁶ When on April nineteenth, soldiers gathered in the Common and began preparing for a march, it was apparent that the anticipated operation was about to begin.

The rides of Revere, Dawes, and later Prescott will not be re-told here. Neither will the story of the battles Lexington and Concord as all have been recounted adequately and endlessly elsewhere. Gage retreated to Boston, while every farmer with a musket (all of them) picked off the British soldiers from behind the area’s ubiquitous stone walls. Gage would never venture out of Boston again, except to abandon the city to the rebels.

Revere reached Clarke’s home in Lexington early in the morning and informed Adams and Hancock of the British advance. Dawes, who had taken a different route, arrived about thirty minutes later. When warned of the British plan by Paul Revere, both men went into hiding in the nearby village of Woburn. It was thought Aunt Lydia and Dolly would be safer with Clarke than with the two now-fugitives.

By some accounts when news of the battle at Lexington reached them, Hancock wanted to join in the fighting but was reluctantly persuaded from doing so by Adams saying, “That is not our business. We belong to the cabinet.”²³⁷ It is said that when Adams heard the same news he exclaimed “O! what a glorious morning is this!”²³⁸ The “shot heard round the world” had been fired, the American Revolution had begun, and the world would never be the same. Adams was 53 years old currently and Hancock was 38.

²³⁶ Unger. p. 192.

²³⁷ Stoll. p. 157.

²³⁸ Stoll. p. 157.

Adams and Hancock remained in the countryside for nearly a week before heading for Philadelphia to attend the Second Continental Congress. Adams and Hancock reached Hartford on April 29 and some historians say it was here in a meeting with Governor Trumbell that an attack on Fort Ticonderoga was conceived.²³⁹ Stoll essentially agrees with this account, but other historians attribute the planning for this attack to others.²⁴⁰

Risjord maintains it was during the journey to New York that Samuel Adams learned to ride on horseback, but his cousin John wrote that this occurred a year earlier while travelling to the First Continental Congress.²⁴¹ When the delegation reached New York on May 6, the delegates were welcomed as heroes and the streets were lined with people. Hancock was given the position of honor, leading the parade in his carriage.²⁴²

The procession received a similar welcome in all of New Jersey and climaxed on their entry into Philadelphia. The entrance into Philadelphia was just as large as the others, but more somber. The pace was slow and church bells rang throughout the city.²⁴³

One observer, a certain Curwin “also noted troublesome elements. The first was the envy he sensed among the delegates from other colonies, who ‘had to digest the distinction as easily as they could.’ The other was Hancock’s appearance. He looked, reported Curwin, “not well and the judge blamed his pallid complexion on the hard journey and his well known ‘high living’.”²⁴⁴

²³⁹ Allen. p. 185.

²⁴⁰ Stoll. p. 158.

²⁴¹ Risjord. P.46. John P. Kaminski. *The Founders on the Founders*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press. 2008.

²⁴² Fowler. p.188.

²⁴³ Stoll. p.158.

²⁴⁴ Fowler. p.188.

Initially the goal of Congress was settlement with England not a war.²⁴⁵ On May 10 the Second Continental Congress began its first session. Although there seemed to be a great deal of amiability between the delegates, much of it was affected. They were not yet Americans, but rather saw themselves as Georgians, Virginians, New Yorkers, etc. They were nearly as mistrustful of each other as they were of the English government. And they were not politically united either. Some had Tory leanings, and nearly none were as radical as the Massachusetts representatives.²⁴⁶

There were cultural differences as well. Massachusetts had been settled by the Puritans from the east of England. Virginia had been settled by a small royalist elite and large numbers of indentured servants from the south of England. The indentured servants had been replaced with African slaves. The Delaware Valley had been settled by people from the North Midland of England as well as people from Wales.²⁴⁷

One concern to the delegates was unifying the various factions in the congress. The first two choices for president had been southerners, but their first choice for a president (a southerner) left to preside at a local congress, the second (another southerner) declined, and so Congress was left seeking a president for the third time. Not want to seem as favoring the South over the North, the third vote would need to be a Northerner. And who was the best-known

²⁴⁵ John Ferling. *Almost a Miracle: The American Victory in the War for Independence*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2007), p.71.

²⁴⁶ Ferling. p.190.

²⁴⁷ David Hackett Fischer. *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America*. (New York, Oxford University Press. 1989), p.6.

Northerner? Hancock was elected unanimously.²⁴⁸ Hancock was actually a good choice. His skill was mediating between differing groups and maintain civility and the appearance of harmony.²⁴⁹

While Congress debated and formed committees, news of battles and other events reached Philadelphia. On June 12, Gage issued a proclamation.

In this exigency of complicated calamities I avail myself of the last effort...to spare the effusion of blood; to offer...in his majesty's name,...his most gracious pardon to all persons who shall forthwith lay down their arms and return to their duties of peaceable subjects; excepting only...Samuel Adams and John Hancock, whose offenses are of too a flagitious nature to admit any other consideration than that of condign punishment.²⁵⁰

This passage illustrates the importance Adams and Hancock had enjoyed up to this point. A quote attributed to many people reads, "'You can always judge a man by the quality of his enemies'" and the quality of Hancock's and Adams' enemies included King George III himself. King George seems to agree with the first argument in this paper, that is that Adams – Hancock partnership was pivotal to the American Revolution.

Concerning the capture of Fort Ticonderoga, Congress was ecstatic to capture the cannon from the fort, but they realized the military operations needed centralized control.²⁵¹ During this time Hancock and the Adams' all lived in the same boarding house. Hancock held hope that he would be chosen as the American military commander, but it was not to be. Hancock's only military experience was commanding the ceremonial Corps of Cadets, but he had some initial political backing.²⁵²

²⁴⁸ Fowler. p.189.

²⁴⁹ Fowler. p.191.

²⁵⁰ Allen. p.193.

²⁵¹ Ferling. p.39.

²⁵² Allen. p. 195.

The Adams had become an almost inseparable political entity, and in the morning of June 15, 1775, John told John he planned to suggest George Washington for the post of General of the Armies. John Adams later wrote in autobiography, “Mr. Adams seemed to think very seriously of it but said Nothing”. Later that day, John Adams nominated Washington for the post and his cousin Samuel seconded the motion.²⁵³ John Adams reported a less than flattering portrait of Hancock.

But when I came to describe Washington for the commander I never remarked a more sudden and striking change of countenance. Mortification and resentment were expressed as forcibly as his face could exhibit them. Mr. Samuel Adams seconded the motion, and that did not soften the President’s physiognomy at all.²⁵⁴

Samuel Adams was beginning to resent Hancock’s extravagance and the effect his wealth had in Massachusetts election. John Adams said his cousin “had become very bitter against Mr. Hancock and spoke of him with great Asperity, in private Circles”²⁵⁵. This marks a change in the relationship between Hancock and Adams. Adams no longer concealed his dislike for Hancock and Hancock felt betrayed by Adams.

On August 1, the Continental Congress adjourned until September 5. Both Hancock and Adams headed toward Massachusetts, Adams for Cambridge and Hancock for Fairfield as the British still occupied Boston. Both men sounded out the local political situation, visited their families and Adams made his way back to Philadelphia once again on horseback. While in Fairfield, Hancock wedded his fiancé, Dorothy "Dolly" Quincy. Hancock had another gout attack

²⁵³ Stoll. p.168.

²⁵⁴ Allen. p.195.

²⁵⁵ Kaminski. p. 65.

and was unable to attend the opening session of Congress.²⁵⁶ Hancock's high living would make these attacks more frequent and serious as the years passed.

Back in Philadelphia, Massachusetts' politics intruded into the Congress in the form of a request for militias. The Adams coalition won out but there was residual hurt feelings. Hancock and Cushing were on one side and Adams was on the other. Cushing was seen as indecisive and scheming and Hancock as his ally was similarly painted. These feelings were communicated back to Boston, resulting in a split in the party. Cushing would pay the price when his new enemies joined forces preventing his re-election to Congress in December.²⁵⁷

Some historians have suggested that Hancock did little as President of the Congress, but actually he had many items to deal with. An example of this is a letter from George Washington to Hancock, dated December 31, 1775. In it Washington first says, "I am not honoured with any of your favours" and implores Hancock to send money that was promised to provide for the expenses of the army which Washington says amounts to \$275,000 monthly. Washington writes that the clothing is inadequate, then informs Hancock that he has enlisted some "free negroes" in the army, asking if that is acceptable to Congress, and lastly communicates news of the war.²⁵⁸ Hancock as an experienced executive is most likely the best person to deal with that onslaught of information and burden of multiple decisions to be made and actions that must be executed.

In November, Hancock planned a ball for Martha Washington, but Adams upon learning of it asked Mrs. Washington not to attend as Adams felt it struck the wrong tone for the

²⁵⁶ Fowler. p.198.

²⁵⁷ Fowler. p.201.

²⁵⁸ George Washington. From George Washington to John Hancock, 31 December 1775," Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-02-02-0579>, ver. 2014-05-09).

time. Perhaps Adams resented the fact that Hancock could afford to have his wife with him while Adams could not. Adams wrote to Elbridge Gerry on January 2, 1776, ““I hope our country will never see the time, when either riches or the want of them will be the leading consideration in the choice of our public officers.””²⁵⁹

The political climate changed with the publication of *Common Sense* by Thomas Paine. The pamphlet had popular appeal and by the end of the year, according to Paine biographer Thomas Nelson, more than 150,000 copies of the pamphlet had been sold.”²⁶⁰ Paine’s work promoted American independence and the advancement of that idea gained adherents rapidly.

In February, Adams wrote to a newspaper advocating total separation from the “absolute tyranny” of Great Britain. In May, Richard Lee introduced a resolution declaring the American government “free and independent states. Lee asked that a committee be appointed to draft a declaration. Adams was not appointed to the committee. In fact, most of the work was done by Thomas Jefferson.”²⁶¹ Another committee was formed to develop a plan of confederation, to set out the governance of a national government. One member from each colony would be chosen to sit on that committee. Samuel Adams was chosen as the Massachusetts representative.”²⁶² Henry Lee’s resolution was finally adopted by the representatives of all the colonies except New York (which had received no instructions) on July 2, 1776.

Both Allen and Fowler agree that even though Independence Day is celebrated as July 4, 1776”, the actual date was July 2, 1776.”²⁶³ Allan tells us, “in the afternoon of the 4th, the great

²⁵⁹ Stoll. p.175.

²⁶⁰ Stoll. p.177.

²⁶¹ Risjord. P.48.

²⁶² Stoll. p.181.

²⁶³ Allen. P.228. Fowler. p.212.

white paper (The Declaration of Independence) was reported out of the committee to the House with a recommendation for approval and was immediately ratified. Hancock and Secretary Charles Thomson then were ordered to authenticate it with their signatures, in the customary manner of handling all congressional measures. They were also directed to have copies printed for dispatching to the colonial assemblies and to the army.

The printing was done the next morning.”²⁶⁴ Fowler disputes the dates of signing and says, “Only one man signed on the 4th – John Hancock. The other fifty-three signatures were put to the document between then and November 4th.”²⁶⁵ This has been a subject of contention among historians for more than two centuries and could be the subject of an entire thesis by itself. The words John Hancock spoke, if he spoke them at all has also been argued for these centuries but the story is that when Hancock put that famously elegant signature to the document he said, “There! John Bull can read my name without spectacles and may double his reward of £500 on my head. That is my defiance.”²⁶⁶ Samuel Adams and his cousin John were also signers.

Hancock now had some had some pleasant letters to write. There are three examples of the letters Hancock would write on July 6, 1776. These went to George Washington, Governor Nicholas Cooke of Rhode Island, and the Convention of North Carolina. All three contain variations on the first paragraph in which Hancock informs them of the Declaration of Independence and instructs them to have it proclaimed, “in the Way you shall think most proper.” In the subsequent paragraphs, Hancock has the same business with Washington and Cooke. To Washington he sends a general directive to build ships on the Great Lakes.²⁶⁷ To

²⁶⁴ Allan. p.228.

²⁶⁵ Fowler.p.213.

²⁶⁶ Fowler. p.213.

²⁶⁷ John Hancock. John Hancock letter to George Washington July 6, 1776. <http://www.revolutionary-war-and-beyond.com/john-hancock-letter-to-george-washington-july-6-1776.html>.

Cooke he adds a specific request for fifty carpenters.²⁶⁸ To the Convention of North Carolina, Hancock adds nothing.²⁶⁹

Meanwhile back in Boston, George Washington had forced the British to evacuate. On March 17, General Clinton who was in command as Gage had left for England, awoke to see a very distressing sight. During the night, Washington had fortified Dorchester Heights and placed fifty-nine cannons captured from Fort Ticonderoga behind the fortifications. Clinton sent word to Washington that if he could remove his troops he would not burn the city. Washington agreed and the British left, never to return.

Adams took a brief break from Congress, leaving Philadelphia on August 12 for Boston. According to Fowler, returning to Philadelphia in October, Adams would have found that a daughter, Lydia Henchman Hancock was born to John and Dolly in the early fall.

General Howe was threatening Philadelphia and to avoid being captured, on December 12, Congress voted to leave the city and move to Baltimore. The trip was difficult for the Hancocks as the winter roads were deep mud and Dolly had a new baby, less than a month in age. The trip south was slow and uncomfortable.²⁷⁰ Howe did not invade, but stopped at the Delaware River, Washington took Trenton and Princeton, and on February 27, 1777 the delegates voted to meet on March 5 back in Philadelphia. Sometime between February and the summer Dolly left Philadelphia for Boston taking Lydia with her.

²⁶⁸ John Hancock. Letter, Signed, to Governor Nicholas Cooke of Rhode Island. Lilly Library U.S. History. [mss.http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/history/history4.html](http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/history/history4.html)

²⁶⁹ John Hancock. Letter from John Hancock to the Convention of North Carolina. <https://www.nytimes.com/1865/08/13/archives/a-relic-of-the-revolution-letter-from-john-hancock-to-the.html>

²⁷⁰ Fowler. p.214.

In the summer of 1777, Hancock received word that his child had died. On September 11, the defeat at Brandywine Creek led Congress to “adjourn” once again, this time to York. The British occupied Philadelphia on September 26. Hancock was not feeling well. He had been in Philadelphia for over two years and its president for nearly the entire time. The loss of his child left him in a weakened emotional state.²⁷¹

On October 15, Hancock asked for two months leave of absence and received leave until January 1, 1778. He also asked to make a farewell speech. No other delegate had ever asked this, and his detractors saw it as pomposity. At the end of the speech, one delegate moved that “the thanks of Congress be presented to John Hancock.” This was excessive to the New Englanders and they objected saying it is “improper to thank any president for the discharge of the duties of that office.”²⁷²

Hancock then wrote a letter to George Washington. The first paragraph was full of effusive praise, but next he asked for a mounted escort to protect him while travelling through Tory territory.²⁷³ Adams took the same route back to Boston that Hancock had, a few days later. He wrote in his diary, “The taverners all along are complaining of the guard of light horse which attended Mr. H_____. They did not pay and the taverners are obliged to go after them to demand their dues.”²⁷⁴

Hancock received a hero’s welcome when he returned to Boston. Ahead of his carriage were mounted Continental dragoons and he met the Company of Cadets among the cheering

²⁷¹ Fowler. p.218.

²⁷² Fowler. p.219.

²⁷³ Allan. p.260.

²⁷⁴ Puls. p. 200.

crowds.²⁷⁵ Samuel Adams received no such welcome when returned to Boston and John Adams when he returned to Braintree. The newspaper reported Hancock's return in radiant terms, but the Adams cousins received one sentence each.²⁷⁶

Upon his return, Hancock reviewed his books with William Bent who had become his chief clerk. They found the House of Hancock had changed. All but two ships in Hancock's fleet had been sold and the last sale recorded in a Hancock store had been in 1775. Hancock had some debts and he decided to sell the ships for £1000.²⁷⁷

Hancock was now out of the mercantile business. Most of his wealth was in real estate. Bent had been collecting old debts but had only been partially successful as the war strained everyone's finances. If Hancock's finances were strained it did not show. Living as opulently as ever, he also did not sell major amounts of real estate.²⁷⁸

While in Boston Hancock was re-elected to Congress, served as a moderator at a town meeting, while Adams resumed his job as secretary of the Council. Adams and his committee had finished the work on the Articles of Confederation and they had been sent to the states in November. The beginnings of two new parties were in infancy in Massachusetts. The Federalist and Anti-federalist grew from the breakup of the Whigs. Hancock sided with the Federalists while Adams espoused the Anti-federalist cause.²⁷⁹ This battle would play out nationally, but for Hancock and Adams the arena would mainly be in Massachusetts for some time to come.

²⁷⁵ Fowler. p.221.

²⁷⁶ Allan. P.265.

²⁷⁷ Fowler. p. 223.

²⁷⁸ Fowler. p. 224.

²⁷⁹ Allan. p.273.

Hancock and Adams both returned to Congress in 1778. There was a new president and Hancock's health was poor, so he returned after signing the Articles of Confederation in June of 1778. Samuel Adams also signed the document he had helped to write. Samuel Adams would continue to serve in Congress behind the scenes, on numerous committees until 1781. John Adams also drafted the Massachusetts Constitution in 1789 along with James Bowdoin.

In August Of 1778, Hancock thought he saw an opportunity to win military glory when as a General of the Militia he chased British troops to Newport. Fear of Howe showing up with additional troops and a hurricane that damaged the French fleet that was intended to support he operation left the plan in ruins. Hancock's detractors made much of the fact that he left the field before the other generals, but he was comforted when he returned to always cheering crowds.²⁸⁰

It was in Massachusetts politics that the adversaries would battle the longest. In early 1778 a rumor widely believed to have been started by Hancock or his allies circulated that Adams had been instrumental in the "Conway Cabal", a political plot to replace Washington as Commander in Chief with his rival, General Horatio Gates. Adams said of Hancock, "The man who fabricated that charge did not believe it himself."²⁸¹

The public split was troubling to many Massachusetts' Whigs, and among them was Samuel Phillips Savage, a friend of both men. Savage attempted a reconciliation, writing to Adams in the fall of 1778,

I most sincerely value you as my Friend, but as much as I value you my Country lies nearer my heart, and I greatly fear the differences now subsisting between you and your once [strong] friend Mr. H. may greatly hurt her interest: the Effects are already visible; the enemies of America triumph in the Strife and are taking every measure to encrease the Flame. The Friends of their Country cannot stand by idle Spectators; they see the increasing Contest with weeping eyes and aching hearts and wish a Reconciliation. Permit me my Friend to attempt (however inadequate

²⁸⁰ Allan. p. 285-286.

²⁸¹ Puls. p. 200.

to the Task) a Restoration of Friendship between two who were once dear to each other and now perhaps from mistakes and misapprehensions seem so distant.²⁸²

Adams' reply was icy,

You call upon me by all that is sacred to forgive him. Do you think he has injured me? If he has, should he not ask for forgiveness? No man ever found me inexorable. I do not wish him to ask me to forgive him.; this would be too humiliating. If he is conscious of having done wrong or designed me an injury, let him do so no more, and I will promise to forgive and forget him too; or, I would add, to do him all the service in my power. But this is needless; it is not in my power to serve him. *He* is above it.²⁸³

In 1779, John Adams wrote the majority of the Massachusetts Constitution and it went into effect on October 25, 1780. When the Massachusetts Constitution went into effect Hancock won the governorship by 90 percent. Adams seat of power was the Massachusetts Senate where he was often elected president. Adams proxy was Bowdoin and was distraught when the ever-popular Hancock easily won annual victories until his resignation in January of 1785. After Hancock won the first election, Adams said of the voters, "They have been influenced to this choice by the pure motives of public affection. A due attention to the administration of government, I fancy, will soon determine whether they have acted with wisdom or not."²⁸⁴ It is clear Adams thought the voters had not acted with wisdom.

This chapter speaks to a change in the relationship between Hancock and Adams. With the passage of the Declaration of Independence, the struggle had ceased to be a Massachusetts matter and had instead become a continental one. Adams no longer needed Hancock as his nearly life-long ambition of an American revolution had been realized. The estrangement between them was public and would play out primarily in newspapers and at polling places.

²⁸² Fowler. p. 240.

²⁸³ Puls. p. 240.

²⁸⁴ Puls. p. 107

The significance of this estrangement is in the reconciliation that would occur later, and that this paper argues played a prominent role in the ratification of the Constitution of the United states of American. There could not have been a reconciliation if there had not been an estrangement first.

CHAPTER VI

THE POST-WAR YEARS

As stated in the last Chapter, after John Adams wrote the Massachusetts Constitution, Hancock proceeded to occupy the Governorship all but two years. Adams had returned to the Continental Congress throughout the war years, while Hancock had remained in Boston.

On March 1, 1781 the Articles of Confederation that Adams had helped to draft were ratified and created a government for a new “The United States of America.”²⁸⁵ Shortly after, Adams returned to Boston. The British had damaged his house beyond repair. He was not only homeless, but insolvent as well. He had not been paid for his position as clerk of the Massachusetts House since 1774. In lieu of cash, the legislature permitted Adams to buy a house taken from an absent Tory 92 pounds and 7 shillings of the amount owed to him.²⁸⁶ Adams was also elected to the Senate and when the Senate met, they elected Adams as their president. This was more of a ceremonial position rather than a post of actual authority.²⁸⁷ When Adams returned, his friend, Edward Everett observed,

Hancock served the cause with his liberal opulence, Adams with incorruptible poverty. His family, at times, suffered almost for the comforts of life, when he might have sold his influence over the counsels of America for uncounted gold, when he might have emptied the royal treasury if he would have betrayed his country. Samuel Adams was the last of the Puritans.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁵ Second Continental Congress. *Articles of Confederation: March 1, 1781*. Government Printing Office, 1927. House Document No. 398. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/artconf.asp. Accessed March 4, 2018.

²⁸⁶ Puls. p. 210.

²⁸⁷ Fowler and Handlin. p. 162.

²⁸⁸ Puls. p. 211.

Numerous historians have repeated this characterization of Adams through the years. Although he had spent a fortune in support of the cause, Hancock remained a prosperous man. His salary as Governor was £1,000 a year, and he received multiples of that from rents from his holdings in Boston, as well as interest on £13,000 in bonds, and income from sales of logs and land in Connecticut, New Hampshire, Maine, and Massachusetts.²⁸⁹

As Governor, Hancock had two major responsibilities at the beginning of his term. The first was to help win the war. Washington had asked for more men and Hancock approved a conscription of 4,240 fresh soldiers. They would serve for three years, a departure from the previous system where the conscripts could choose their term of service.²⁹⁰

Hancock's second duty was much more difficult; paying for the war. When Hancock assumed office, Massachusetts was "£11 million in debt and had to raise £940,000 more to pay for the war."²⁹¹ The citizens of Massachusetts were already suffering under the highest taxes in the nation, and the hardest hit were farmers, mainly located in Western Massachusetts. In debt to merchants for cash, tools, and other goods, a general economic decline may repayment nearly impossible. To make matters worse the value of the paper money Congress had printed, known as Continentals, collapsed.

These problems were not unique to Massachusetts. The war had drained all the states, and all were in debt. Britain banned American imports and the traditional trade routes were closed. In response to this national crisis, on February 3, 1781 Congress passed a resolve that

²⁸⁹ Unger. p. 292.

²⁹⁰ Unger. p. 292.

²⁹¹ Unger. p. 292.

would impose a five percent tax on all imports. Under the Articles of Confederation, all thirteen states would have to approve the resolution for it to become law.

The surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown on October 17, 1781 marked the end of any British hope for a victory in the American Revolution, although peace talks in Paris would drag on for another three years. Now America would have to learn to govern herself.

January and February of 1782 saw an insurrection in Western Massachusetts. Led by Samuel Ely, the discontented farmers complained about high taxes and mortgages. Ely proposed overthrowing the Massachusetts government and replacing the Massachusetts' constitution.

In early March of 1782, the congressional resolve for a five percent import tax reached the General Court. Some approved and some did not. They ultimately approved it and sent it to Hancock's desk. Massachusetts' law dictated that the Governor had five days to consider the resolution. If he did not sign it or veto it, it became law. Hancock let the resolution sit on his desk and it became law without his signature. In August, a state excise bill came before Hancock and he repeated his "no signature" performance. Historians disagree about Hancock's tactics and leadership. Unger says,

His tactic was a clever political move that held together his coalition of moderates on both sides of the tax issue. He had not broken ranks with either group. As he had in 1781, he easily won reelection to the governorship in the May elections.²⁹²

Speaking of the unrest in Western Massachusetts, Fowler takes a different position with,

The situation called for strong action from the state government, but Governor Hancock, relying on his charm and his political managers to keep him in office, was not motivated to respond. Although the commonwealth was approaching financial ruin, the governor never once presented a plan to restore it to fiscal well-being. Hancock's indecision and feeble leadership were disturbing, and people

²⁹² Unger. p.297.

were beginning to express their dissatisfaction. From 1781 to 1784, Hancock scored fewer votes each time the freemen went to the polls.²⁹³

In April of 1782, Samuel Ely provoked a mob against local judges in Northampton. Ely threatened, “we’ll go to the woodpile and get clubs enough and knock their Grey Wiggs off and send them out of the World in an Instant.”²⁹⁴ Ely was arrested and convicted, but on June 13, a group of about 130 men broke him out of prison. Ely escaped to Vermont. He would later return to Massachusetts and serve a six-month term of confinement. None of those who helped him escape were ever prosecuted.

The legislature in Boston sent a committee consisting of Samuel Adams and Artemas Ward to investigate the grievances in Western Massachusetts. On August 7, they met with in Hatfield with representatives from forty-four towns. The delegates complained of high taxes and Adams returned to Boston recommending tax cuts and postponement of some of the back-taxes owed.

On June 13, 1783 Washington disbanded most of his Continental Army. Days later, hundreds of soldiers marched on Philadelphia, angry that they had been issued “worthless certificates” as pay for their service.²⁹⁵ Congress fled and did not stop until reaching Princeton, New Jersey.

The effects of America’s weak confederation were numerous. Each state printed their own currency and there was no central authority to establish exchange rates. Without a national government, each state was left to negotiate their own trade policies. Britain employed protectionist trade policies and Americans found themselves frozen out of previously lucrative

²⁹³ Fowler and Handlin. p. 163.

²⁹⁴ Stoll. p. 221.

²⁹⁵ Unger. p. 298.

markets, while cheap imports put many Americans out of work. Without a strong navy, American sailors were subject to impressment by foreign navies, most notably the British Navy.

Under popular pressure thirteen legislatures enacted tax relief for the farmers. They allowed the farmers to pay their creditors with livestock and land, often worth far less than the debt owed. And to add to the financial problems, Congress and every state government had paid for the war by printing paper money. The result was predictable...runaway inflation.²⁹⁶

Although tax relief seemed like a compassionate act, the consequences were disastrous. Runaway inflation meant that a debtor could repay a £1,000 debt with currency that was actually worth £1...if they had cash. Most did not, and trade was often conducted with hard assets such as livestock, lumber, or land. Farmers in Western Massachusetts did not usually have the gold and silver mentioned above. Lack of funds meant that Congress was without means as well.

Hancock's health continued to deteriorate, and his gout attacks lasted longer and were more severe. By 1784, Hancock spent most of his time confined to Hancock House with his son Johnny. Although he was an inactive governor, and his stamina forced him to campaign passively, he easily won reelection.

That winter, a new controversy arose concerning a novel form of social club. The new club incorporated evening entertainments that included card playing and dancing. Although the participants viewed the entertainments as innocent, those of a more Puritanical bent labelled them "Sans Souci" (without care) and saw in them evidence of moral degeneration and a withdraw from republican righteousness. For some, this surrender to earthly pleasures was also

²⁹⁶ Woody Holton. *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution*. (New York: Hill and Wang. 2007), p.8.

associated with the lifestyle of Hancock. The controversy was played out mainly in newspaper articles.

This issue was tailor-made for Adams and he wrote to the citizens of Boston in the *Centinal*, "Why do you thus suffer all the intemperances of Great Britain to be fostered in our bosom, in all their vile luxuriance?" His friends from the Green Dragon mocked him as "a dictator of morals" and said he was habituated to rabble rousing and "reckless intrigues of disappointed ambition." In response, Adams quoted John Calvin, "I know by their roaring I have hit them right."²⁹⁷

On January 29, 1785, Hancock shocked everyone when he resigned. He cited bad health as his reason. This left Thomas Cushing, a Hancock ally as acting Governor. The spring election pitted Cushing against James Bowdoin, an Adams surrogate. Bowdoin ran on the issue of moral deterioration and the Sans Souci controversy. Bowdoin defeated Cushing, receiving twice as many votes as his rival. Adams wrote his cousin John,

You will have heard of the Change in our chief Magistrate, I confess it is what I have long wished for. Our new Governor has issued his Proclamation for the Encouragement of Piety, Virtue, Education and Manners and for the Suppression of Vice. This with the good Example of a first Magistrate and others may *perhaps* restore our Virtue."²⁹⁸

Cushing did win the Lieutenant Governor's position, beating Adams, but the barely restrained glee in Adams' letter to his cousin illustrates that the apparent end of Hancock's political domination was very important to him.

²⁹⁷ Unger. P. 304.

²⁹⁸ Samuel Adams. *Letter to John Adams, Boston, July 2, 1785*. found in *The Writings of Samuel Adams*. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons. 1904)

Hancock spent the summer and the fall at home, playing with Johnny who was now seven years old. In the spring of 1786, Hancock began making public appearances again. He was still beloved in Boston, and much to the dismay of his political foes was again elected to serve in the national Congress. Since there was not a quorum, Hancock stayed at home. On November 23, with a seven-state quorum present in New York, Hancock was elected to the presidency of United States Congress.

While today this sounds like an enormously powerful position, America and the Congress were in such a poor state that often states did not bother to send delegates, and so there could be no quorum. The most this government could do under the Articles of Confederation was to send the states advice, which was routinely ignored. The war debt remained unpaid and popular discontent throughout America was reaching a boiling point.

In early January of 1786, Hancock had a severe gout attack. After a carriage ride, “Servants had to carry him into the mansion, lay him on the sofa, and carefully cut the clothes off his swollen joints before they could carry him up to bed.”²⁹⁹ He would be unable to go to New York and after some months of apologies, he resigned his office.

The popular dissatisfaction rural Massachusetts was reaching a fever-pitch. Creditors took debtors to court for non-payment, and state tax cases also found their way there also. Debtors were jailed, their properties foreclosed and there were ever-present land speculators ready to take advantage of the situation. These difficulties were replicated across the new nation.

In view of these problems, a Meeting of Commissioners to Remedy Defects of the Federal Government, popularly known as Annapolis Convention was called for in Maryland on

²⁹⁹ Unger. p. 304.

September 11 – 14, 1786. The meeting did not produce any actionable results as only five states sent representatives. When it was learned that two more delegations were on the way, bringing the total to seven and producing a quorum, the delegates in attendance quickly wrote an “Address” and went home.³⁰⁰ The “Address” merely recommended another meeting to be held in Philadelphia in May of 1787.

In August, in a scene reminiscent of Samuel Ely, fifty towns organized a convention to resolve their problems. After three days of heated rhetoric, more than five hundred armed men, many former soldiers, occupied the court in Northampton to prevent it from continuing to harm them. Led by a farmer and former soldier, Daniel Shays, this was the beginning of the uprising known as Shays’ Rebellion.

The rebellion moved east, causing courts to flee before them. By early September, there were rumors of Shaysites storming Boston. On September 26, the rebels marched on Springfield, home of the state Supreme Court. There they were met by a state militia force of forty-four-hundred men sent by Governor Bowdoin. A bloodless standoff ensued, with both sides withdrawing after the court agreed to close. Massachusetts now lacked any means of collecting revenue and many citizens began to wish for the return of a Hancock governorship. It was felt that his mediation skills were sorely needed now.

In January of 1787, Shays’ forces were running low on ammunition and they decided to storm the arsenal in Springfield. A few days later, a force commanded by General Benjamin Lincoln arrived and defeated the Shaysites. This force was financed by private funds, garnered from anxious citizens who wanted the continuing chaos to end. Many mutineers fled and

³⁰⁰ Ferling, p. 277.

escaped, but many were captured. Shays, like Ely before him, ran to Vermont. Adams advocated execution for the mutineers saying, “The man who dares to rebel against the laws of a republic ought to suffer death.”³⁰¹

On January 27, John Hancock’s nine-year-old son, Johnny fell while ice skating, hit his head, and died. Johnny was buried on February first. This was the second only child Hancock had lost. Hancock was shattered and after days of prayer with his wife Dolly, he began making plans to escape Boston with her. The plans included a journey to New York and then Philadelphia.

Shays’ Rebellion had the effect of leaving the citizenry with a less favorable view of Bowdoin and the Adams clique than before. The idea of firing on fellow residents, in a rebellion inspired by what seemed to be punitive taxes, seemed distinctly un-revolutionary.

Hancock and Dolly did not take the trip to New York and Philadelphia. He did not actively seek it, but on April 2, Hancock was reelected to the governorship again, gaining triple the votes that Bowdoin did, and Adams was returned to the senate. Hancock immediately pardoned the all rebels and championed legislation for debt relief and ending the practice of seizing the property of debtors and jailing them. Adams was angered and called for the execution of Shays and the other rebel leaders, but Hancock did what his supporters wished. He restored a relative peace in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts calmed down, but the spectacle of Shays’ Rebellion had garnered the attention of the entire nation. It was clear that the Articles of Confederation were not working. In addition, many states enacted protectionist trade barriers between themselves and other states.

³⁰¹ Unger. P. 309.

There was a fear that some states would withdraw from the confederation, leaving America even more weakened. Many Europeans predicted the collapse of America and the experiment in self-government would end in failure.

The meeting advocated by the Annapolis Convention did take place in Philadelphia. We know it now as the Constitutional Convention. The proposed Constitution which would replace the Articles of Confederation was approved in Congress on September 17, 1787 and sent to the states for ratification.

Across America hotly contested disputes pitted “Federalists” against anti-Federalists” and it was no different in Massachusetts. In Massachusetts, 370 delegates were chosen, and Governor Hancock set January 9, 1788 as the first day of debate for the Massachusetts Ratifying Convention. Announcing the coming convention Hancock said in part,

It not being within the duties of my office to decide upon this momentous affair, I shall only say that that the Characters of the Gentlemen who have compiled this System, are so truly respectable, & the object of their deliberations so vastly important, that I conceive every mark of attention will be paid to the report.³⁰²,

and then remained silent on his opinion. Adams, who was a delegate, was still as well.

On January 9, 1788 the Massachusetts ratifying convention convened. Only five states, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Georgia had voted in favor of the Constitution at this point. Many people believed the vote in Massachusetts would decide the entire issue. James Madison wrote in a letter to George Washington the he believed that a no vote in Massachusetts would be imitated in New York. New Hampshire and Rhode Island sent

³⁰² John Hancock. *Address to the Massachusetts House and Senate. Boston. October 18, 1787.* Found in *John Hancock's Life and Speeches : a Personalized Vision of the American Revolution, 1763-1793.* Paul D. Brandes ed. (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1996), P. 300.

delegates to the Massachusetts convention and would follow the Bay State's lead. Madison believed that if Massachusetts rejected the Constitution, the entire project would fail.³⁰³

If the rest of America was watching Massachusetts, then the people of Massachusetts were watching their two most influential citizens, Adams and Hancock. The Federalist and anti-Federalist forces were nearly evenly divided, and so the outcome was not certain. This was a momentous decision, everyone knew it, and the process was long and arduous. The convention lasted from January 9 until February 5. During the debates there were nine amendments proposed. These later became part of the Bill of Rights, the first ten amendments to the Constitution.

Hancock, pleading gout, stayed home until January 31, but even so he was elected president. Adams kept his silence and the question where these men's sympathies lay weighed on people's minds in Boston and much farther away too.

Popular conjecture held that both men were inclined to oppose the Constitution, Adams because of his distrust of central authority, and Hancock because it would diminish his power as the leader of a sovereign state. In the case of Adams, the speculation was true. In a letter to Richard Henry Lee, dated December 5, 1787, Adams wrote in part,

I confess, as I enter the Building I stumble at the Threshold. I meet with a National Government instead of a Federal Union of Sovereign States. I am unable to conceive why the Wisdom of the Convention led them to give the Preference to the former before the latter. If several States in the Union are to become one entire Nation, under one Legislature, the Powers of which shall extend to every Subject of Legislation, and its Laws be supreme & control the whole, the Idea of Sovereignty in these States must be lost.³⁰⁴

³⁰³ Puls. p. 216.

³⁰⁴ Samuel Adams. *Letter to Richard Henry Lee. Boston. December 3, 1787.* found in *The Writings of Samuel Adams.* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons. 1904)

Hancock's critics said his gout would abate and he would return to the convention as soon as he could discern a majority. On January 31, Hancock returned, being carried in by his servants, and gave what many historians think was the best speech of his life. Hancock said in part,

I give my assent to the Constitution, in full confidence that the amendments proposed will soon become a part of the system. These amendments being in no wise local, but calculated to give security and ease alike in all the States, I think that all will agree to them.³⁰⁵

What happened next must have shocked everyone present. Samuel Adams stood up and seconded Hancock's motion and spoke briefly in support of the Constitution with the proposed amendments, labeling it his "Excellency's conciliatory proposition."³⁰⁶

Rufus King, a leading Massachusetts figure and delegate to the Ratification Convention, underscored the importance of Hancock and Adams to the Constitutional question at large when he wrote James Madison, "We flatter ourselves that the weight of these two characters will assure our success."³⁰⁷

But why did these two men, who had been in a very public political battle for more than a decade, reconcile at such a crucial moment? Historians offer different theories as to the cause of the reunion. Some historians ascribe pure motives to one or both men, arguing that they thought the nation would not survive without a stronger central government, but others attribute Federalist lobbying efforts to the change of opinion.

Fowler in *Samuel Adams: Radical Puritan* tells us that the Federalists, seeking to sway Adams, who tended to sympathize with tradesmen, enlisted the help of Paul Revere, acting as

³⁰⁵ Fowler. p. 271.

³⁰⁶ Fowler and Handlin. p. 172.

³⁰⁷ Stoll. p. 235.

spokesman for the mechanics to persuade Adams to support the Constitution. Revere reported on a mechanic's meeting in the Green Dragon where the consensus was in favor of ratification.

The exchange was said to be:

How many mechanics," asked Adams, were gathered at the Green Dragon when the resolutions were passed?

More sir," Revere replied, than the Green Dragon could hold

And where were the rest, Mr. Revere?" Adams inquired.

In the streets sir," said Revere.

And how many were in the streets?" Adams asked.

Answered Revere: "More, sir, than there are stars in the sky."³⁰⁸

Fowler gives another reason for Adams' change of heart,

On 17 January, Adams only son died in his father's house. The event transpired almost one year to the day of the death of Hancock's only son, 12-year-old John George Washington Hancock. Hancock sent a note of condolence to Adams. This personal reconciliation opened a pathway toward political rapprochement. As they talked, Hancock and Adams came to appreciate that they shared a common vision for the new nation and its constitution. They wanted a union of sovereign states. The states would protect the liberties of the people, and the nation would defend the whole. They worried that the document presented allowed too great an intrusion into matters belonging to the state. Closeted together in the younger man's Beacon Hill mansion, Adams and Hancock did again what they had done so well two decades before; they laid plans...To satisfy themselves as well as others who shared their concerns, Adams and Hancock agreed on a list of amendments designed to protect the rights of states and citizens against a powerful central government.³⁰⁹

According to this theory, the motion Hancock made, and the second Adams gave were political theatre, planned in advance and Stoll recounts a story that seems to support this hypothesis.

A group of delegates who favored ratification came to Hancock and found Adams at his bedside. The visitors asked the two revolutionary leaders of Boston what

³⁰⁸ Stoll. p. 234.

³⁰⁹ Fowler and Handlin. p. 171.

their objections were, and Adams and Hancock listed issues that, if handled with amendments, would win their support for the Constitution.³¹⁰

Unger sees Adams' speech very differently. and tells us,

Samuel Adams, still bathed in bitterness, could not allow the ailing governor his moment of glory. Just as a calm serenity and even joy had blanketed the delegates, Adams shot to his feet with demands for more amendments to the Constitution to further protect individual liberties.³¹¹

Another widely held theory is that the Federalists seduced Hancock with the promise of support for high national office; either President or Vice President. Sometimes this account includes an assurance that Virginia would not vote for ratification, and so, George Washington would not run for President. In that case, the Federalists would support Hancock.

John Ferling attributes local economics and much more organized and sometimes nefarious campaign on the part of the Federalists. He asserts the Federalists put a sympathizer into the position of secretary, suppressed publication of Anti-Federalist articles, and bribed delegates. He also points to the economic woes in Western Massachusetts which prevented many towns from sending delegates.³¹²

In any case, and for whatever reasons, on February 6, 1788, Massachusetts narrowly voted in favor of the Constitution by a margin of 187 to 169, five more states rapidly followed suit and the Constitution was ratified on June 21. Virginia did ratify the Constitution and George Washington became the first president. If anything can be conclusively proven from the preceding discussion, it is that a conversation between two historians will produce at least three opinions.

³¹⁰ Stoll. p. 234.

³¹¹ Unger. p. 316.

³¹² Ferling. p. 301.

The reconciliation between Hancock and Adams was real. A French visitor to Boston in June of 1788 said Adams was “the best supporter of the party of Governor Hancock.”³¹³

Thomas Cushing died on February 28 and the man who succeeded him was Benjamin Lincoln, the general who had put down Shays’ Rebellion. Hancock did not like him and supported Samuel Adams in his bid to become the Lieutenant Governor. In 1789, Adams won and together they ruled Massachusetts, Hancock as Governor and Adams as Lieutenant Governor until Hancock’s death on October 8, 1793. Adams took over as acting Governor and was the Governor of Massachusetts until he retired in 1797. When Adams died on October 2, 1803, He and Hancock had already faded from the national stage, replaced in the American imagination by others, such as George Washington.

This chapter speaks of another change in the relationship between Adams and Hancock. Their estrangement lasted until, or shortly before the Ratification Convention. This chapter also illustrates the importance Massachusetts held in the ratification of the Constitution. Many historians and contemporaries of Adams and Hancock also had the opinion that Massachusetts was pivotal in the debate. If Massachusetts was essential to the ratification, then the opinions of Adams and Hancock were critical to Massachusetts. The sight of them, united again must have swayed some delegates and so, their reconciliation was important in the ratification of the Constitution.

³¹³ Stoll. p. 237.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

As I asserted in the introduction, the Adams – Hancock team was critical in the early years of the rebellion, especially in enlisting the support of New England.

In the pre-revolutionary period, Samuel Adams needed John Hancock. When Hancock entered politics, Adams immediately recognized his value and began cultivating him. Adams began taking Hancock to the social clubs that determined political power in Boston and made sure that Hancock's political base rested with the patriots. Although Adams disdained personal wealth and conspicuous consumption, he needed Hancock's money and so was willing to overlook what he saw as severe deviations from Godly, Puritan principles. Since Adams was a pauper, Hancock was important because Hancock's affluence could finance the rebels.

Hancock was also important to Adams because of his social status. Hancock, as Boston's leading citizen and wealthiest merchant could influence and shape the acceptability of the patriot cause in circles that Adams could not. With Hancock as a patriot symbol, the middle class and prosperous merchants were more likely to find the cause acceptable. With Hancock's support, actions such as non-importation agreements were much more likely to succeed than without him. Adams could unite two street gangs into the militant arm of the Sons of Liberty, but they were unlikely to convince the upper strata of Boston to join the rebellion. Revolutions fail without broad support, and Hancock could sway the people Adams could not.

During the lull lasting from the autumn of 1770 until November of 1772 Hancock drifted away from Adams and the rebels. When Hancock thought he had liberated himself from Adams, Adams trapped him with the choice to sign or not sign *The Rights of the Colonists*. Now that Hancock had become “the leader of the revolution”, he had no choice but to adopt Adams’ perspectives and sympathies wholeheartedly and by 1774 Hancock was smuggling gunpowder into Salem. That King George was willing to pardon all the rebels except Hancock and Adams speaks to their influence in the years leading up to the Revolution.

As I argued in the introduction, the Adams – Hancock team was critical in the ratification of the Constitution. Massachusetts could have been the key to the ratification of the Constitution and no one had more influence in Massachusetts than Samuel Adams and John Hancock.

The estrangement of Adams and Hancock, lasting more than a decade, was common knowledge, not only in Massachusetts, but throughout the states. Federalists and Anti-Federalists waited tensely to see which position the men would support. When Hancock spoke in favor of the Constitution and Adams seconded Hancock’s position, even speaking to Hancock in terms of respect, everyone present was shocked. James Madison felt that this display would likely result in ratification.

With the Massachusetts vote being very close, it is possible that the reunion resulted in enough undecided votes being changed so that the result was the vote for ratification in Massachusetts. If we accept the view of many historians and contemporaries of Adams and Hancock, then their reconciliation pushed Massachusetts over to ratification, and thus the hold-out states too.

As to the nature of their relationship, they had different reasons for being together. The nature of the relationship between Hancock and Adams was complex and evolutionary. Adams was a true believer, whereas Hancock's devotion to the cause was initially one of convenience. Certainly, Hancock as a businessman, did not like the taxes and restrictions the British levied on the colonies and he enjoyed the adulation of the crowds, but his natural inclination was towards negotiation, mediation, and compromise. We can see this in his early reaction to the Sugar Act where his objections are purely economic. In contrast, Adams talks about taxation without representation. Hancock's tendencies are also displayed by his responses to the Liberty Affair, when Adams and the others persuaded him not to agree to the customs men's deal.

Hancock's entry into politics attracted Adams' attention. As a means of securing Hancock's alliance with the Liberty Party, Adams introduced Hancock to the Boston cliques that determined the outcome of elections, many of them with more than a few radicals. Initially, for Adams, steering Hancock in the direction he desired was straightforward. Hancock was vain and the public adoration that politics afforded him kept him bound to the base that kept him in a position of admiration.

They kept coming together despite their differences. It is almost certain that Adams, known as "the last of the Puritans" secretly despised Hancock because of Hancock's ostentatious life-style. During the pre-revolutionary period, Adams was careful to conceal his true feelings...most of the time as Hancock was a sensitive man. Adams would expend great effort to Hancock in the fold. When Hancock threatened to quit the General Court because one person had not voted for him, Adams sent a Hancock a flattery laden letter imploring him to stay. Adams, a master manipulator, very well knew Hancock's weakness.

Hancock, when he had come to master politics, tried to break away from Adams. When he supported Otis, in dropping constitutional arguments for returning the House to Boston, he was directly undercutting Adams' broader arguments. Hancock's "flirtation" with Hutchinson seems to have been an effort to hedge his bets and separate from Adams.

Hancock felt betrayed when Adams seconded his cousin's motion to appoint George Washington as American general, but this was most likely a matter of judgement as Washington was clearly more qualified than Hancock. When the Declaration of Independence was passed, Adams did not need Hancock anymore, and began publicly criticizing him. Adams felt free to give vent to his true feelings and so, a decade long estrangement began. The battles were fought in the newspapers and elections. Hancock was immensely popular and won the Governorship of Massachusetts every year that he ran. During this time, Adams attacked Hancock in the newspapers and in speech, but was unable to win executive office. For their part, the Hancock camp could also be vicious, as when they spread a rumor that Adams had been involved in the Gates Cabal.

The reconciliation brought the relationship full circle. It was real, and there is no evidence of disharmony in the re-established Hancock-Adams team. Beginning with the Massachusetts' Ratification Convention, the two men would together work for many years. This time, Hancock was the mentor, and with his support Adams won the Lieutenant Governorship, with Hancock at the helm until Hancock's death.

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