

Paul Revere, *A View of the Obelisk erected under Liberty-Tree in Boston on the Rejoicings for the Repeal of the Stamp-Act*, engraving, 1766, detail

“Joy to America!”

COLONISTS RESPOND TO THE REPEAL OF THE STAMP ACT, 1766

A Selection from News Reports, Broadside, Sermons, Poetry, An Engraving, A Letter, and A History

“So sudden a calm recovered after so violent a storm, is without a parallel in history.”
—David Ramsay, *The History of the American Revolution*, 1789

- 1763 _____ French and Indian War ends with British victory and acquisition of all French territory in North America east of the Mississippi River.
- 1764 _____
April: SUGAR ACT & CURRENCY ACT are passed by Parliament.
- 1765 _____
March 22: STAMP ACT is passed by Parliament to raise funds for the maintenance of British troops in the colonies. The first direct tax imposed on the colonists, it requires the use of tax-stamped paper for all newspapers, magazines, legal documents, etc.
Summer/Fall: Public protests, legislative resolutions, and merchant boycotts of British goods occur throughout the colonies. Stamp Act Congress meets in New York with delegates from nine colonies.
Nov. 1: Stamp Act takes effect.
- 1766 _____
Feb. 13: Benjamin Franklin testifies to the British House of Commons in support of repealing the Stamp Act.
March 18: STAMP ACT is repealed. Celebrations occur throughout the colonies.
March 18: DECLARATORY Act is passed by Parliament to affirm its authority to “make laws . . . of sufficient force and validity to bind the colonies and people of America . . . in all cases whatsoever.”

CONTENTS

	PAGES
■ City Celebrations of the Stamp Act’s Repeal.....	2
News reports: Boston, New York, Savannah	
■ Paul Revere’s Engraving on Boston’s Celebration.....	3-4
<i>A View of the Obelisk</i> , 1766	
■ Broadside on the Repeal of the Stamp Act.....	5-7
New York, Philadelphia, Boston	
■ Sermons on the Repeal of the Stamp Act.....	8-9
Boston	
■ Poetry on the Repeal of the Stamp Act.....	10
Philadelphia: Thomas Plant, “Joyful News to America”	
■ British Merchants’ Warning to Boston Merchants.....	11
London: Letter from George Hayley et al., Feb. 1766	
■ An American Looks Back at 1766.....	12
David Ramsay, <i>The History of the American Revolution</i> , 1789	

CELEBRATING THE REPEAL OF THE STAMP ACT, 1766

- **“IMPOSSIBLE TO EXPRESS THE JOY,”** *The Boston Gazette*, 19 May 1766. EXCERPTS.

It is impossible to express the Joy the Inhabitants in general were in, on receiving the above great and glorious News — the Bells were immediately set a Ringing, and the Cannon fired under Liberty Tree and many other Parts of the Town. Colors [flags and banners] were displayed from the Merchants’ Vessels in the Harbor and the Tops of many Houses. Almost every Countenance [face] discovered an unaffected Gaiety on the Establishment of that Liberty which we were in the utmost Hazard of losing. . . .

This Day being set apart for the public Rejoicings on account of the Total Repeal of the Stamp Act, the Dawn was ushered in by the Ringing of all the Bells in Town, Guns Firing, Drums Beating, and all Sorts of Music. — Besides a Display of Colors on board the Shipping in the Harbor, and on the Tops of Houses, &c. — LIBERTY TREE is decorated in a splendid Manner. . . .

There has been a General Goal Delivery [jail release] of all poor Debtors this Day . . . on account of the Repeal of the Stamp Act.

- **“JOY ON THIS GRAND EVENT,”** on New York’s celebration of the Stamp Act repeal with its annual festivities for the king’s birthday, *The New-York Gazette*, 9 June 1766. EXCERPT.

☞ For want [lack] of Room we are obliged to omit many other accounts of the late [recent] rejoicings in this and the neighboring Provinces, and indeed, to insert the particulars of them all would be endless; — in general, the Repeal of the STAMP ACT has produced a universal jubilee throughout the continent of America, every Province, Town and Parish emulating each other in testifying their joy on this grand event: not from any ostentations or triumphal principle that they have gained an ascendancy over the British Parliament, but in gratitude to that august legislature for condescending to reconsider the operation of that most destructive ACT from a consciousness that it had a tendency to alienate the affections of many loyal subjects and eventually destroy the usefulness of these colonies to the British empire.

- **“PUBLIC REJOICING,”** *Georgia Gazette*, 16 July 1766.

The 22d of May, we hear, was observed at Antigua [British Caribbean sugar island] as a day of public rejoicing on the repeal of the Stamp Act. The people of several parishes in South Carolina have also had days of rejoicing on the same occasion.

- **“FRAYS BETWEEN the TOWN PEOPLE and the SOLDIERS,”** New York, 11 August 1766, as reported in *Connecticut Courant*, 18 August 1766.

On Sunday Night last, the Mast or Flag Staff [Liberty Pole] erected on the Common at the Time of public Rejoicing on his Majesty’s Birth Day for the Repeal of the Stamp Act, left standing inscribed with the Names of his Majesty, Mr. Pitt,¹ and Liberty, as a Monument of that happy Event and Gratitude to those by whom it was accomplished, was cut down by some of the Soldiers belonging to the 28th Regiment quartered in the Barracks; and as it appeared by several depositions [witnesses’ statements] to have been done by Way of Insult to the Town, it gave great Uneasiness, and next Day occasion’d two Frays between the Town People and the Soldiers, a small Number of each in which two or three were wounded and several hurt by the Soldiers. It appears by many affidavits that the Soldiers were entirely the Aggressors: and the people are in general very uneasy that such a Number of armed men, without any visible occasion [apparent reason] for them, are stationed among us and suffer’d [allowed] to patrol the Streets as in a Military or conquer’d Town. The Examinations relating to these Disorders, not being finish’d, we must refer our Readers to our next [issue] for further Particulars.

¹ British statesman who supported the repeal of the Stamp Act.

PAUL REVERE'S ENGRAVING ON THE STAMP ACT'S REPEAL: I

A VIEW of the OBELISK erected under LIBERTY-TREE in BOSTON on the Rejoicings for the Repeal of the — Stamp-Act [May] 1766 [13½" x 9½"] Sides 1 & 2

Library of Congress



To every Lover of LIBERTY, this Plate* is humbly dedicated, by her true born SONS in BOSTON, New England

SIDE 1:
America's distress apprehending
the total loss of LIBERTY

O thou whom next to Heav'n we most revere
Fair LIBERTY! Thou lovely Goddess hear!
Have we not woo'd thee, won thee, held thee long
Lain in thy Lap & melted on thy Tongue
Thro' Deaths & Dangers rugged paths pursu'd
And led thee smiling to this SOLITUDE
Hid thee within our hearts most golden Cell
And brav'd the Powers of Earth & Powers of Hell
GODDESS! we cannot part, thou must not fly;
Be SLAVES! we dare to scorn it — dare to die.

Lower image: America, depicted as an Indian chief, is protected by the angel of Liberty as Satan delivers the Stamp Act in view of Lord Bute, the British prime minister; George Grenville, the previous prime minister; and other British officials.

SIDE 2:
She employs the aid of her PATRONS

While clanking Chains & Curses shall salute
Thine Ears remorseless G—le, thine O B—e
To you blest PATRIOTS! we our Cause submit
Illustrious CAMDEN! Britains Guardian PITT:
Recede not, frown not, rather lett us be
Depriv'd of being, than of LIBERTY
Let fraud or malice blacken all our Crimes
No disaffection stains these peaceful Climes
O save us, shield us from impending Woes
The foes of Britain, only are our Foes

Lower image: America, on one knee, points to the British retreating under a storm cloud, and requests aid from other British statesmen supportive of the American position, whose leader, the Earl of Camden, is crowned by Fame.

* I.e., steel engraving plate. Below the dedication Revere lists the titles of the four sides of the obelisk.

PAUL REVERE'S ENGRAVING ON THE STAMP ACT'S REPEAL: II

A VIEW of the OBELISK erected under LIBERTY-TREE in BOSTON on the Rejoicings
for the Repeal of the —Stamp-Act [May] 1766 [13½" x 9½"] Sides 3 & 4

Library of Congress



To every Lover of LIBERTY, this Plate* is humbly dedicated, by her true born SONS in BOSTON, New England

SIDE 3:

She endures the Conflict for a short Season

*Boast foul Oppression! boast thy transient Reign
While honest FREEDOM struggles with her Chain
But know the Sons of Virtue hardy, brave
Disdain to lose thro' mean Despair to save
Arrouz'd in Thunder, awfull they appear
With proud deliverance stalking in their Rear
While Tyrant-Foes their pallid Fears betray
Shrunk from their Arms, & give their Vengeance way
See in th' unequal War OPPRESSORS fall
The hate, Contempt, and endless Curse of all.*

Lower image: An eagle feeds its young in the upper branches of the Liberty Tree while an angel delivers an aegis, a shield representing divine protection.

SIDE 4:

*And has her LIBERTY restord by
the Royal hand of GEORGE the Third*

*Our FAITH approvd, our LIBERTY restor'd
Our hearts bend grateful to our sov'r'gn Lord
Hail darling Monarch! by this act endeard
Our firm affections are thy best reward
Sh'd [should] Britains self, against her self divide
And hostile Armies frown on either Side
Sh'd Hosts rebellious, shake our Brunswick's Throne
And as they dar'd thy Parent, dare the Son
To this Asylum stretch thine happy Wing
And well [we'll] contend, who best shall love our KING.*

Lower image: King George III (center, dressed as a "Dutch widow," i.e., prostitute) introduces America (right) to the Goddess of Liberty (left).

* i.e., steel engraving plate. Below the dedication Revere lists the titles of the four sides of the obelisk.

BROADSIDES ON THE REPEAL OF THE STAMP ACT: NEW YORK

New-York, May 20, 1766.

Joy to AMERICA!

At 3 this Day arrived here an Express from *Boston* with the following most glorious News, on which *H. Gaine* congratulates the Friends of *America*.

Boston, Friday 11 o'Clock, 16th May, 1766.

This Day arrived here the Brig *Harrison*, belonging to *John Hancock*, Esq; Capt. *Shubael Coffin*, in 6 Weeks and 2 Days from *London*, with the following most agreeable Intelligence, viz.

From the *LONDON GAZETTE*.

Westminster, March 18.

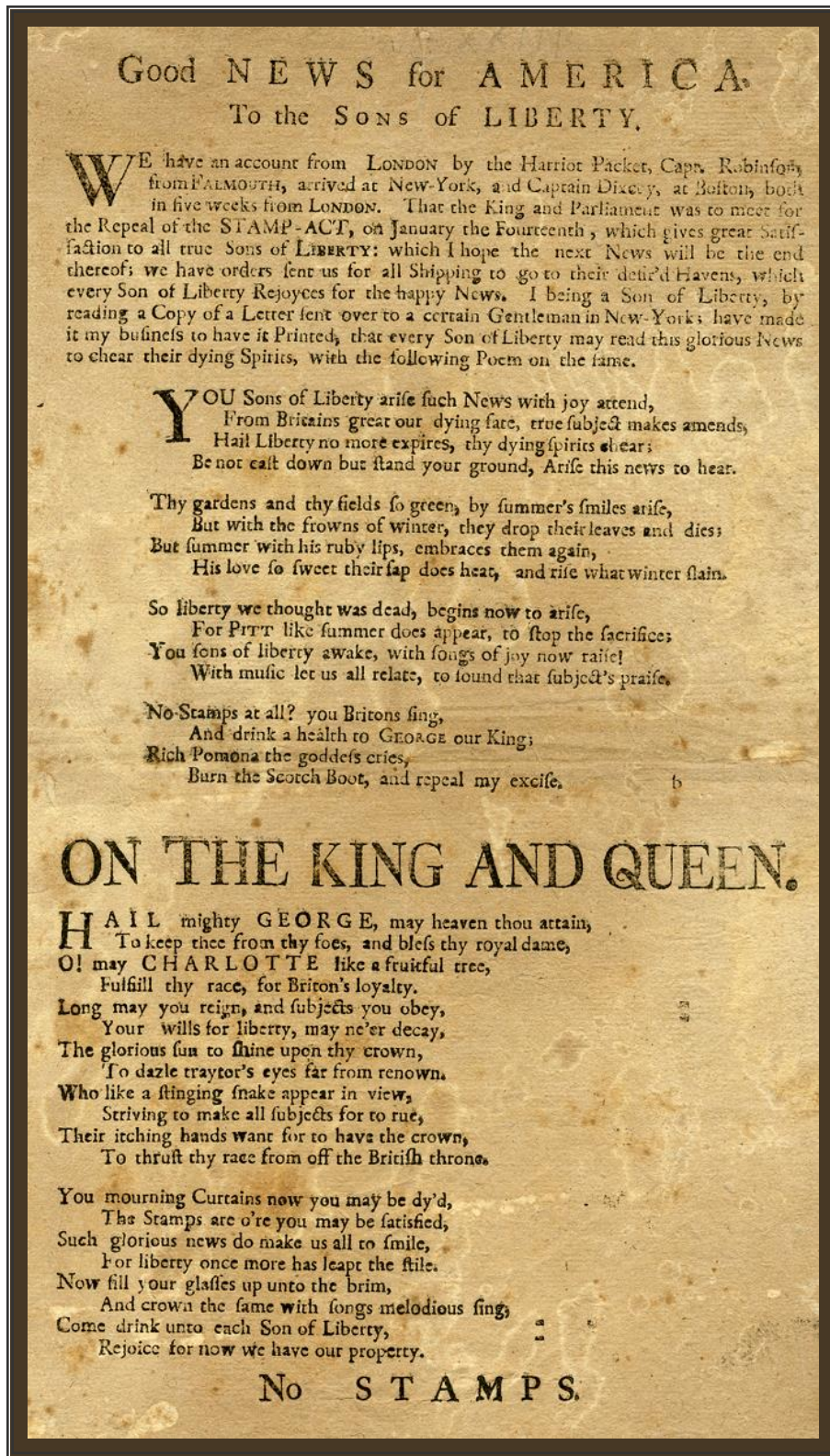
THIS day his Majesty came to the house of Peers, and being in his royal robes, seated on the throne, with the usual solemnity, Sir *Francis Molineaux*, Gentleman usher of the black rod was sent with a Message from his Majesty to the house of commons, commanding their attendance in the house of peers. The commons being come thither accordingly, his Majesty was pleased to give his Royal Assent to

An ACT to Repeal an Act, made the last Session of Parliament, entitled, An Act for granting and applying certain Stamp Duties, and other Duties in the *British Colonies and Plantations in America*, towards further defraying the Expences of defending, protecting, and securing the same; and for mending such Parts of the several Acts of Parliament relating to the Trade and Revenues of the said Colonies and Plantations, as direct the Manner of determining and recovering the Penalties and Forfeitures therein mentioned.

When his Majesty went to the House he was accompanied by greater Numbers of People than ever was known on the like Occasion; many Copies of the Repeal were sent to Falmouth, to be forwarded to America; and all the Vessels in the River Thames bound to America, had Orders to sail.

5 o'Clock, P. M. Since composing the Above an Express arrived from Philadelphia with a Confirmation of the Repeal, and that a printed Copy of it by the King's Printer lay in the Coffee-House for the Perusal of the Publick.

BROADSIDES ON THE REPEAL OF THE STAMP ACT: PHILADELPHIA



Anonymous, late 1765
Introductory paragraph

We have an account from LONDON by the Harriot Packet [mail ship], Capt. Robinfort, from FALMOUTH, arrived at New York, and Captain [], at Boston, [] in five weeks from LONDON. That the King and Parliament was to meet on the Repeal of the STAMP-ACT, on January the Fourteenth, which gives great satisfaction to all true Sons of LIBERTY: which I hope the next News will be the end thereof: we have orders sent us for all Shipping to go to their [], which every Son of Liberty Rejoyces for the Happy News. I being a Son of Liberty, by reading a Copy of a Letter sent over to a certain Gentleman in New-York, have made it my business to have it Printed, that every Son of Liberty may read this glorious News to cheer their dying Spirits, with the following Poem on the same.

BROADSIDES ON THE REPEAL OF THE STAMP ACT: BOSTON

Published as the traditional New Year's greeting distributed by news carriers to their customers,
this broadside was printed in late 1766 for distribution on January 1, 1767.

A New Year's Wish

from the Carrier of the
Post-Boy & Advertiser.

Suffer my Muse with soft address,
In humble Rhime,
To point the Time

Which crown'd AMERICA's happiness :

Kind Sirs, I greet you, in a Joviall Strain ;
And feel the blood flow quick thro' ev'ry Vein.

Joy to *New-England*, is the cry ;

The STAMPS are dead,

And we are freed

From threaten'd chains of Slavery ;

The Freeborn Sons of LIBERTY rejoyce,

Let All the Chorus join with Heart and Voice.

GOD blefs our Stanch, intrepid Friends,

Who in our Cause

Did interpose

And sav'd us with unwearied pains.

Blasting to those, who, with their Malice fell,

Our ruin sought, by Schemes as deep as Hell.

Postscript.

Your Humble Slave

Does prostrate lie,

And Humbly crave

YOUR CHARITY.

SERMONS ON THE REPEAL OF THE STAMP ACT, 1766

- **REV. SAMUEL STILLMAN** (Baptist), “*Good News from a Far Country.*” A Sermon . . . Upon the Arrival of the Important News of the Repeal of the Stamp Act, First Baptist Church, Boston, 17 May 1766.

Proverbs 25:25. *As cold Waters to a thirsty Soul, So is good News from a far Country.*

. . . Has not a general joy diffused itself amongst us? Does not Boston and the country wear a face of pleasantness? You may read good news in every countenance. How great the alteration that has taken place amongst us in consequence of a late most interesting decision in our favor! When the news arrived, so as to be confidently believed, there was a universal shout. — It now became impossible for every lover of liberty and his country to conceal the gladness of his heart. . . .

MAY the British Parliament receive that deference from us that they deserve, and be convinced by our future conduct that we aim not at INDEPENDENCY, nor wish to destroy distinctions where distinctions are necessary: — That we rejoice in being governed according to the principles of that constitution of which we make our boast as Englishmen. . . .

May our expressions of joy on the day ensuing be kept without the bounds of decency — let us avoid excess and every unbecoming conduct, lest we hurt ourselves and offend the God of salvation.

- **REV. CHARLES CHAUNCY** (Congregational), A Discourse on “*the good News from a far Country,*” First Church, Boston, 24 July 1766.

Proverbs 25:25. *As cold Waters to a thirsty Soul, So is good News from a far Country.*

The first article in this “good news,” obviously presenting itself to consideration, is the kind and righteous regard the supreme authority in England, to which we inviolably owe submission, has paid to the “commercial good” of the Nation at home, and its dependent provinces and Islands. . . Happy are we in being under the government of a King and Parliament who can REPEAL, as well as enact a law, upon a view of it as tending to the public happiness! . . .

ANOTHER thing giving us singular pleasure, contained in this “good news,” is the total removal of a grievous burden we must have sunk under, had it been continued. Had the real [economic] state of the Colonies been as well known at home as it is here, it is not easily supposeable [that] any there would have thought the tax imposed on us by the STAMP ACT was suitably adjusted to our circumstances and abilities. . . .

ANOTHER thing in this “news” making it “good” is the hopeful prospect it gives us of being continued in the enjoyment of certain liberties and privileges valued by us next to life itself. Such are those of being “tried by our equals” and of “making grants for the support of government of that which is our own, either in person or by representatives we have chosen for the purpose.” . . .

THIS news is yet further welcome to us as it has made way for the return of our love, in all its genuine exercises, towards those on the other side of the Atlantic who, in common with ourselves, profess subjection to the same most gracious Sovereign. The affectionate regard of the American inhabitants for their Mother Country was never exceeded by any Colonists in any part or age of the world. . . .

We may now be easy in our minds, contented with our condition. We may be at peace and quiet among ourselves, everyone minding his own business. All ground of complaint that we are “sold for bond-men and bond-women” is removed away; and instead of being slaves to those who treat us with rigor, we are indulged the full exercise of those liberties which have been transmitted to us as the richest inheritance from our forefathers.

peace and quiet among ourselves

- **REV. JONATHAN MAYHEW** (Unitarian), *The Snare Broken. A Thanksgiving Discourse . . . Occasioned by the Repeal of the Stamp Act*, West Church, Boston, 23 May 1766, selections on the need and duty to restore harmonious relations among the colonists.

Psalm 124: 7-8. Our soul is escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

This Continent, from Canada to Florida, and the West-India Islands, most of them at least have exhibited a dismal mixed scene of murmuring, despondence, tumult and outrage; courts of justice shut up, with custom-houses and ports; private jealousies and animosities, evil furnishings, whisperings and back-bitings, mutual reproaches, open railing, and many other evils, since the time in which the grievous [stamp] act aforesaid was to have taken place. . . .

This diversity of humors, sentiments and opinions among the colonists, of which I have been speaking, naturally occasioned great animosities, mutual censures and reproaches, insomuch that it was hardly safe for any man to speak his thoughts on the times unless he could patiently bear to lie under the imputation of being a coward, an incendiary, rebel, or enemy to his country. or to have some other odium cast upon him. In the meantime, most of the courts were shut up, and almost all business brought to a stand; and, in some colonies, wide breaches were made between their several Governors and Houses of Assembly, those governors thinking it their duty to push the execution of the stamp-act, and some of them trying to prevent the assemblies petitioning in the joint manner proposed. In this state of general disorder, approaching so near to anarchy, some profligate people in different parts of the continent took an opportunity to gratify their private resentments and to get money in an easier and more expeditious way than that of labor, committing abominable excesses and outrages on the persons or property of others.

What a dreadful scene was this! Who can take a cursory review of it even now, without horror, unless he is lost to all sense of religion, virtue and good order? These were some of the bitter, and in a good measure, the natural fruits of that unhappy measure which preceded them. Nor were we wholly unapprehensive of something still worse, of having a more dreadful scene, even a scene of blood and slaughter opened! I will not be particular here; but ask you what you think of British subjects making war upon British subjects on this continent! What might this have terminated in? Perhaps in nothing less than the ruin of the colonies and the downfall of a certain great kingdom, which has long been the support of other states, the terror of her enemies, and the envy and glory of Europe! . . .

The REPEAL, the REPEAL has at once, in a good measure, restored things to order and composed our minds by removing the chief ground of our fears. The course of justice between man and man is no longer obstructed; commerce lifts up her head, adorned with golden tresses, pearls and precious stones. All things that went on right before are returning gradually to their former course; those that did not, we have reason to hope, will go on better now. Almost every person you meet wears the smiles of contentment and joy; and even our slaves rejoice, as tho' they had received their manumission. Indeed, all the lovers of liberty in Europe, in the world, have reason to rejoice; the cause is in some measure common to them and us. Blessed revolution! glorious change! How great are our obligations for it to the supreme Governor of the world! . . . Let us all then rejoice in the Lord, and give honor to him; not forgetting to add the obedience of our lives, as the best sacrifice that we can offer to heaven; and which, if neglected, will prove all our other sacrifices have been but ostentation and hypocrisy, which are an abomination to the Lord. . . .

To me it really seems most prudent, most Christian, to bury in oblivion what is past; to begin our civil political life anew as it were, from this joyful and glorious era of restored and confirmed liberty; to be at union among ourselves; to abstain from all party names and national reflections, respecting any of our fellow subjects; and to exert ourselves, in our several stations, to promote the common good "by love serving one another."

What a dreadful scene was this !

POETRY CELEBRATING THE REPEAL OF THE STAMP ACT, 1766

- **THOMAS PLANT**, “Joyful News to AMERICA, &c. A POEM,” published as an eight-page pamphlet, Philadelphia, 1766. EXCERPTS.

In deep distress and sorrow drown'd,
These twelve months past we lay!
But thanks to GOD, we now arise
And see a brighter day!

Our dismal fears are vanished;
Confirm'd the tidings be,
The ill-planned act's repeal'd, the dread
Of every colony.

The news of its repeal, (of late
Some doubted the relation¹),
Authentic, but we find it's true
Nor wants more confirmation.

O LIBERTY! the joyful sound,
'Tis pleasure to our ears:
A sov'reign balm for every wound,
A cordial for our fears.

Oh! FREEDOM let the echo fly
The spacious shores around,
And let the SONS of LIBERTY
Repeat the joyful sound.

COME, now my countrymen rejoice,
No more indulge your fears;
No longer you'll have cause to weep,
Nor swell your eyes with tears.

Your dear-bought LIBERTY is safe,
Your properties also,
For which you'd part with ev'ry thing,
And life itself forego.

...
'Tis precious Liberty that crowns
Britannia's happy isle;
This makes her barren chalky rocks
And her bleak mountains smile.

It's Freedom, sacred Freedom we
AMERICANS esteem;
Bereav'd of this, to think us safe
Is but an empty dream.

O precious Freedom! thee to gain,
Our fathers hither came;
Their hardships great proclaim aloud,
Thy venerable name.

Who sorely vex'd by tyranny,
They left their native land,
And passing the Atlantic flood,
They gained our Canaan.

How oft our fathers and their sons,
In fields of Death have fought,
Thy presence LIBERTY nor deem'd
The prize too dearly bought?

How oft have we their sons of late,
Exhausted all our store
Of wealth, likewise our blood, which we
Do value ten times more?

Now what our fathers purchas'd dear,
We as our right proclaim,
O sacred Freedom! we adore
Thy venerable name.

And even while thy sacred crown
Adorns our heads, we dare
Face ev'ry danger; and if free
Nor death nor danger fear.

Freedom with loyalty we join;
For both our blood we'll shed,
And leave th'example to our sons
To copy, when we're dead.

Now let the sons of LIBERTY,
In Paeans² loud proclaim,
The honors due to GEORGE our KING,
And P I T T's³ immortal NAME.

Thanks be to GEORGE our GRACIOUS KING,
To PITT, and every friend;
I'th'⁴ British Senate, who espous'd
Our cause, unto the end.

As for our *Foes*, we them forgive,
Great men's misguided Zeal,
Has oft-times prov'd a public loss,
Unto the public weal.

Kind Heav'n reward their labour hard
Our FREEDOM to restore;
May we and ours henceforth enjoy
The same for evermore.

¹ Relation: telling, news.

² Paeans: triumphal songs.

³ William Pitt, member of the House of Commons who supported the American position against the Stamp Act.

⁴ I'th': In the.

BRITISH MERCHANTS' WARNING TO BOSTON MERCHANTS, 1766

On the Eve of the Repeal of the Stamp Act

- **TWENTY-NINE LONDON MERCHANTS**, Letter to Boston merchants, 28 February 1766 (excerpts), encouraging them to repudiate intemperate and violent means of protest.¹

GENTLEMEN. — After much anxiety we have at length the pleasure to acquaint you that a bill is now in the House of Commons for repealing the Stamp Act . . .

It has been a constant argument against the repeal that, in case it should take place, the parliamentary vote of Right² will be waste paper, and that the Colonies will understand very well that what is pretended to be adopted on mere commercial principles of expedience is really yielded thro' fear, and amounts to a tacit but effectual surrender of its Right . . .

The event [repeal of the Stamp Act] will justify those arguments in the strongest manner if the Colonies should triumph on the repeal, and affect to seize the yielding of Parliament as a point gain'd over Parliamentary authority. The Opposition (from whom the Colonies have suffered so much) would then throw in the teeth of our friends. *See your work, it is as we said, it is but too well prov'd, what use the Colonies make of your weak and timid measures.*

GEO. HAYLEY
DANIEL VIALARS
NICHOLAS RAY
JOHN STRETTELL
JOHN CLARK
JOHN BUCHANAN
JOHN STEWART
ANTHONY MERRY
JONATHAN BARNARD
CHRISTOPHER CHAMBERS
CHARLES CROKATT
SAMUEL HANNAY
EDWARD ATHAWES
BARLOW TRECOTHICK
CAPEL HANBURY
DAVID BARCLAY, JR.
GILBERT FRANCKLYN
WILLIAM GREENWOOD
DANIEL MILDRED
WILLIAM NEATE
THOMAS LANE
T. HARRIS
EDWARD BRIDGEN
RICHARD NEAVE
GILBERT HARRISON
BROOK WATSON
GREGORY OLIVE
DENNIS DE BERDT
CHARLES OGILVIE

On the contrary, if duty, submission, and gratitude be the returns made by the Colonies, then our friends may exult, they may say, *We are in the right, is it not as we said? see the Colonies regained to this country by our moderation, regained with their loyalty, their affection, and their trade. . . .*

You must be sensible what friends the Colonies have had in the present Ministry,³ and are doubtless informed what pains they have taken to serve them. It is justice likewise to them to inform you that they had had great difficulties to encounter in the cause, the principal of which were unhappily thrown in by the Colonies themselves: we mean the intemperate proceedings of various ranks of people on your side of the water, and the difficulties of the repeal would have been much less if they had not, by their violence in word and action, awakened the honor of Parliament and thereby involved every friend of the repeal in the imputation of betraying the dignity of Parliament. . . . If, therefore, you would make the proper returns to your country, if you have a mind to do credit to your friends and strengthen the hands of your advocates, hasten, we beseech you, to express filial duty and gratitude to your parent country. . . .

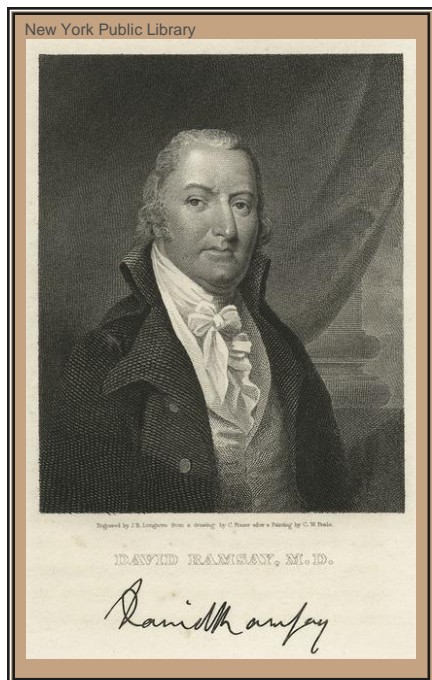
But if violent measures are continued and triumphs on the point gain'd, if it is talked of as a victory, if it is said the Parliament have yielded up the Right [to exercise its legitimate power], then indeed your enemies here will have a complete triumph. Your friends must certainly lose all power to serve you, your tax masters probably be restored and such a train of ill consequences follow as are easier for you to imagine than for us to describe . . . We have no doubt that you will adopt the contrary conduct and inculcate it to the utmost of your influence, to which we sincerely wish the most extensive regard may be paid, and that uninterrupted mutual affection may continue between Great Britain and her Colonies to the latest ages. We are with unfeigned regard, Gentlemen,

Your affectionate friends, and humble servants, [Signatures]

¹ *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, 2nd Series, Vol. XI (1896, 1897), 446-448. Acknowledgement is due Merrill Jensen, *The Founding of a Nation: A History of the American Revolution, 1763-1775* (Hackett, 1968, 2004), for reference to this document.

² I.e., Parliament's authority to legislate for the nation, free from the arbitrary power of the monarch.

³ King George III dismissed George Grenville as head of the government ministry in July 1765, replacing him with Charles Watson-Wentworth.



AN AMERICAN LOOKS BACK AT THE REPEAL OF THE STAMP ACT & THE PASSAGE OF THE DECLARATORY ACT

1766

- **DAVID RAMSAY**, *The History of the American Revolution*, 1789.

A South Carolina physician, Ramsay served as a surgeon in the Revolutionary Army. After the war, he served in the Continental Congress under the Articles of Confederation (1782-83, 1785-86), and wrote his Revolution history in the late 1780s, as the new nation was crafting its final Constitution.

... [The repeal] was no sooner known in America than the Colonists rescinded their [non-importation/boycott] resolutions and recommenced their mercantile intercourse with the Mother Country. They presented their homespun clothes to the poor and imported more largely than ever. The churches resounded with thanksgivings, and their public and private rejoicings knew no bounds. By letters, addresses, and other means, almost all the colonies showed

unequivocal marks of acknowledgment and gratitude. So sudden a calm recovered, after so violent a storm, is without a parallel in history. By the judicious sacrifice of one law, the Parliament of Great Britain procured an acquiescence in all that remained.

There were enlightened patriots fully impressed with an idea that the immoderate joy of the Colonists was disproportioned to the advantage they had gained.

The Stamp Act, though repealed, was not repealed on American principles. The preamble assigned as the reason thereof, "That the collecting the several duties and revenues, as by the said act was directed, would be attended with many inconveniencies, and productive of consequences, dangerous to the commercial interests of these kingdoms." Though this reason was a good one in England, it was by no means satisfactory in America. At the same time that the Stamp Act was repealed, the absolute, unlimited supremacy of Parliament was, in words, asserted. The opposers of the repeal contended for this as essential, the friends of that measure acquiesced in it to strengthen their party and make sure of their object. Many of both sides thought that the dignity of Great Britain required something of the kind to counterbalance the loss of authority that might result from her yielding to the clamors of the Colonists. The act for this purpose was called the Declaratory Act, and was in principle more hostile to American rights than the Stamp Act, for it annulled those resolutions and acts of the Provincial Assemblies in which they had asserted their right to exemption from all taxes not imposed by their own representatives, and also enacted "That the parliament had, and of right ought to have, power to bind the Colonies, in all cases whatsoever."

The bulk of the Americans, intoxicated with the advantage they had gained, overlooked this statute, which in one comprehensive sentence not only deprived them of liberty and property but of every right incident to humanity. They considered it as a salvo for the honor of Parliament, in repealing an act which had so lately received their sanction, and flattered themselves it would remain a dead letter and that, although the right of taxation was in words retained, it would never be exercised. Unwilling to contend about paper claims of ideal supremacy, they returned to their habits of good humor with the Parent State.

The repeal of the Stamp Act, in a relative connection with all its circumstances and consequences, was the first direct step to American independency. The claims of the two countries were not only left undecided, but a foundation was laid for their extending at a future period, to the impossibility of a compromise.