

# My Neighbor, My Enemy: The American Revolution as a Civil War

## An Online Professional Development Seminar

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Teaching with Primary Sources  
Eastern Region Program,  
coordinated by Waynesburg University.

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## GOALS

- Shift your focus on the American Revolution from the founders to the ordinary men and women who fought and experienced it; to include ordinary people in the history of the American Revolution
- Introduce fresh primary documents
- Offer advice on how to use them with students

## FROM THE FORUM

What role did women, African Americans, and Native Americans play in the Revolution?

❖ See Forum for resources.

How is the "mainstream" narrative about the Revolutionary War challenged by new/recent scholarship?

What are the core themes in study of the Revolutionary War that must be examined by teachers and students, irrespective of their presence or absence in textbook content?

How was the "civil war" perspective on the Revolutionary War evident in New Jersey?

What effect did the religious experiences of the colonists have on the civil war that emerged?

Were Patriots compensated by the US for property requisitioned by the army? Were Loyalists?

What separates a civil war from a revolution? Do they not both pit countrymen against countrymen?

How did Loyalists view the Revolution?

What arguments did Loyalists make against rebellion?

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*Tobacco Culture: the Mentality of the Great  
Tidewater Planters on the Eve of Revolution*  
(T. Saloutos Prize)

*Imagining the Past: East Hampton Histories*  
(Historical Preservation Book Prize)

*Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer  
Politics Shaped American Independence*  
(Colonial War Society Prize)

## To Begin Our Discussion

- How do you teach the American Revolution?
- What is the prevailing image of the Revolution in your teaching?
- Did the seminar readings change that image? If so, how?

## Preliminary Questions

- Why do we bother with the American Revolution?
- How have historians interpreted the Revolution?
- What must be explained about the Revolution?

Period  
Participation  
Passion

## A Revolutionary Interpretation of the American Revolution

A revolutionary interpretation would attempt to restore ordinary men and women to the story we tell ourselves about national independence. It would move the interpretive focus away from the activities of the so-called Founding Fathers and ask questions about resistance to imperial power on the community level. Such an approach would concern itself with:

- the sources of popular mobilization (religion, for example),
- the creation of a revolutionary infrastructure (committees of safety and observation),
- the use of violence and intimidation as political tools,
- and the interaction between national congresses and local insurgent groups.

## Announcement of the Boston Tea Party, December 20, 1773

[The Boston Gazette]

Boston, December 20

On Tuesday last the body of the people of this and all the adjacent towns, and others from the distance of twenty miles, assembled at the old south meeting-house, to inquire the reason of the delay in sending the ship Dartmouth, with the East-India Tea back to London; and having found that the owner had not taken the necessary steps for that purpose, they enjoin'd him at his peril to demand of the collector of the customs a clearance for the ship, and appointed a committee of ten to see it perform'd; after which they adjourn'd to the Thursday following ten o'clock.

From the Library of Congress Timeline “The American Revolution, 1763-1783



## Announcement of the Boston Tea Party, December 20, 1773 (cont'd)

But, BEHOLD what followed! A number of brave & resolute men, determined to do all in their power to save their country from the ruin which their enemies had plotted, in less than four hours, emptied every chest of tea on board the three ships commanded by the captains Hall, Bruce, and Coffin, amounting to 342 chests, into the sea!! without the least damage done to the ships or any other property. The matters and owners are well pleas'd that their ships are thus clear'd; and the people are almost universally congratulating each other on this happy event.

...

We are positively informed that the patriotic inhabitants of Lexington, at a late meeting, unanimously resolved against the use of Bohea Tea of all sorts, Dutch or English importation; and to manifest the sincerity of their resolution, they bro't together every ounce contained in the town, and committed it to one common bonfire.

We are also informed, Charlestown is in motion to follow their illustrious example.

Quere. Would it not materially affect the bringing this detestable herb into disuse, if every town would enjoin their Selectmen to deny licences to all houses of entertainment who were known to afford tea to their guests?

From the Library of Congress Timeline "The American Revolution, 1763-1783"

## A Fixed Plan to bring the Most Humiliating Bondage, June 8, 1774

Gentlemen,

THE evils which we have long foreseen are now come upon this town and province, the long meditated stroke is now given to the civil liberty of this country? How long we may be allowed the enjoyment of our religious liberty is a question of infinite moment. Religion can never be retained in it's purity where tyranny has usurped the place of reason and justice. The bill for blocking up the harbour of Boston is replete with injustice and cruelty, thousands of innocent men, besides women and infants, are by it reduced to indigence and distress; and though we in this town more immediately feel this distress, yet our brethren in the other towns of this province, and all the other colonies, must see that we suffer in the common cause, and that they themselves must soon realize the sufferings under which we now labour, if no means are discovered for our relief. But if any should think that this town alone is to groan under the weight of arbitrary power, we are now furnished by our enemies with a still more glaring evidence of a fixed plan of the British administration to bring the whole continent into the most humiliating bondage.

From the Library of Congress Timeline "The American Revolution, 1763-1783"

## **A Fixed Plan to bring the Most Humiliating Bondage, June 8, 1774 (cont'd)**

Surely if we suffer these things we are the most abject slaves. If a favorite of a perverse governor should pretend a title to our lands, or any other part of our property, we need not doubt but a very small degree of evidence in support of the claim, would be judged sufficient, especially as the bill makes provision, that upon the motion of either of the parties, it shall be lawful to try the cause in another county than that in which the action was brought, so that a man is to be carried into a distant part of the province, instead of having his cause tried in his own county, and to be tried by strangers with whom the good or bad characters of the parties or of the witnesses can have no weight, contrary to the very spirit of magna charta. Of what value are our lands or estates to us, if such an odious government should be established among us? Can we look with pleasure on the inheritance left by our ancestors, or on the fields cultivated by our industry? When we reflect that all our labours have made them only a more inviting prey to our enemies, will not the vine-yard of Naboth be ever in our minds?

From the Library of Congress Timeline “The American Revolution, 1763-1783

## The Association of the First Continental Congress, Philadelphia, Pa., October 20, 1774

Article 8: We will, in our several stations, encourage frugality, economy, and industry, and promote agriculture, arts, and the manufactures of this country, especially that of wool; and **will discountenance and discourage ever species of extravagance and dissipation**, especially all horse-racing, cock-fighting, exhibitions of shows, plays, and other expensive diversions and entertainments; and on the death of any relation or friend, none of us, or any of our families, will go into any further mourning-dress than a black crepe or ribbon on the arm or hat, for gentlemen, and a black ribbon and necklace for ladies, and we will discontinue the giving of gloves and scarves at funerals.

## The Association of the First Continental Congress, Philadelphia, Pa., October 20, 1774

Article 11: That a committee be chosen in every county, city, and town by those who are qualified to vote for representatives in the legislature, whose business it shall be attentively to observe the conduct of all persons touching this Association; and when it shall be made to appear to the satisfaction of a majority of any such committee that any person within the limits of their appointment has violated this Association, that such majority do forthwith cause the truth of the case to be published in the gazette; to the end that all such foes to the rights of British America may be publicly known, and universally condemned as the enemies of American liberty; and thenceforth we respectively will break off all dealings with him or her.

## David Wardrobe's letter to Archibald Provan, June 30, 1774

As the present situation of affairs in this country is alarming, I make no doubt that some account of them will be agreeable to you.

The Virginians (and indeed most of the colonies) look upon the late act of parliament for blocking up the harbour of Boston, and new modelling of their Charter, as a thing that may one day or other happen to themselves; they therefore resolved to stand the friends, and espouse the interests of the Bostonians, as far as lies in their power, and for that purpose they are forming associations not to import any commodities from Great Britain, nor to export any of their own, until such time as the said act is repealed. There is great clamour here against the ministry at home: In the county of Richmond, about ten days ago, I saw an elegant effigy of Lord North hanged and burned in the midst of a vast concourse of people. ...

## David Wardrobe's letter to Archibald Provan, June 30, 1774

I was particularly attentive to the countenances of the spectators, and was really pleased to see so very few express any outward signs of approbation [approval] on the occasion; there were, indeed, a few gentlemen who seemed to enjoy an ill-natured satisfaction at it, which they expressed by a loud huzza, and plenty of d\_\_\_s. Then Parker, who is the king's attorney for the county of Westmoreland, mounted an eminence, and harangued the people, acquainting them of the efforts parliament had made to abridge them of their liberties, and many more that would be made if they were not now unanimous and steady in their resolves of breaking off all commercial connexions with Great Britain until said act of parliament be repealed, and the right they have assumed for taxing America be given up, and American freedom ascertained and settled upon a permanent and constitutional foundation. ...

## David Wardrobe's letter to Archibald Provan, June 30, 1774

Yesterday we had a meeting of the freeholders of this county at our courthouse, where there were some of the greatest men in the colony encouraging the common people to a like steady adherence to the aforesaid plan. *These late meetings have been only to feel how the pulse of the common people beat; the grand meetings for signing the association will not be until August, and then it will be four or five months more before the commencement of a discontinuation of exportation and importation.*

If every merchant in the colony would fall upon the same scheme that four eminent merchants of this county this day resolved upon, I do not know whether there would need be such a bustle about importing and exporting.

...



## David Wardrobe's letter to Archibald Provan, June 30, 1774

Their resolves are, that, as the courts of justice are discontinued, they think it prudent and necessary not to sell any thing but for ready money, or the ready produce of the country; they have therefore publicly advertised that no person need apply to them for any thing, without they come furnished with one or the other of these materials. Credit is a thing so very common here, that there is not one person in a hundred who pays the ready money for the goods he takes up to a store, and consequently they will be beginning to feel the ill effects before the day of signing. **I forgot to tell you they have put a stop to the courts of justice, in order that none need be under any apprehension of distress by the merchants during their non-importation.**

## David Wardrobe's letter to Archibald Provan, June 30, 1774

It is true they always had the good fortune as yet to have a repeal of any thing that has been against them, even upon the very first mention of their resolves; but you may believe me, if the present act should be continued, their resolution will soon fail them, for **I am convinced that the disadvantage they must labor under by adopting such a plan will be so great that had it been imposed upon them they would think it the greatest evil that ever befel [happened to] them since they were a colony.**

David Wardrobe

## David Wardrobe's **Confession**

Deeply affected with remorse for having traduced [insulted] the good people of Virginia, in a letter I wrote to Archibald Provan, of Glasgow, dated the 30 of June 1774, which has since been printed in the Glasgow Journal of the 18th August, in the same year, said to be written by a gentleman in Westmoreland county to his friend in Glasgow, containing falsehoods and misrepresentations, which may be of fatal consequences to the rights and liberty of America; in order to make every recompence to the community in my power for **so gross an offence**, I do, most heartily and willingly, on my knees, implore the forgiveness of this country for do ungrateful a return made for the advantages I have received from it, and the bread I have earned in it, and hope, from this contrition for my offence, I shall be at least admitted to subsist amongst the people I greatly esteem, and desire that this may be printed in the Virginia gazette.

David Wardrobe

## Proceedings of the Wilmington-New Hanover Committee of Safety, 1774-1776

Nov. 26, 1774

The committee finding that several gentlemen intended to start horses . . . thought proper to send the following admonitory . . . letter.

Sir—

[I]n our opinion, the avowed intention of running horses . . . will be subversive of the . . . association . . . and if the gentlemen . . . persist in running the race, we shall be under the disagreeable necessity of bearing public testimony against a proceeding which immediately strikes at the ground of the association and resolves by disuniting the people.

## Proceedings of the Wilmington-New Hanover Committee of Safety, 1774-1776

Dec. 17, 1774

The Committee being informed of a Public Ball to be given by Sundry persons . . . ordered that the following Letter be sent to Mrs. Austin to forewarn her from Suffering such Public Ball & dancing at her house.

Madam—

The Committee . . . Acquaint you that the Ball intended to be given at your House this Evening is Contrary to the . . . Resolves, we therefore warn you to decline it & Acquaint the parties concerned that your house cannot be at their Service consistent with the good of your Country.

## Proceedings of the Wilmington-New Hanover Committee of Safety, 1774-1776

March 6, 1775

The Association was agreed on by the Committee & annexed to the Resolves of the General Congress to be handed to every person in this County & recommended to the Committee of the adjacent Counties, that those who acceded to the said Resolves may Subscribe their Names thereto—

We the **Subscribers** in testimony of our Sincere approbation of the proceedings of the late Continental Congress to this Annexed, have hereunto set our hands & **we do most solemnly engage by the most Sacred ties of Honour, Virtue & Love of our Country**, that we will ourselves Strictly Observe every part of the Association recommended by the Continental Congress as the most probable means to bring about a Reconciliation between Great Britain & her Colonies & we will use every Method in Our power to endeavor to Influence others to the observation of it by persuasion & such other Methods as Shall be consistent with the peace & Good Order & the Laws of this Province & we do hereby intend to Express our Utter detestation of all such as shall endeavor to defeat the purpose of the Said Congress & will Concur to hold forth such Characters to Public Contempt.

## Proceedings of the Wilmington-New Hanover Committee of Safety, 1774-1776

March 6, 1775

Resolved that **all Members of the Committee** now present go in a body & wait on all the Housekeepers in Town with the Association before mentioned & request their signing it, or declare their reasons for refusing, that such Enemies to their Country may be set forth to public View & treated with the Contempt they merit.

March 7, 1775

Doctor Thomas Cobham, Messrs. Jno McDonell . . .

Resolved & agreed that we will have no trade, Commerce, dealings, or Intercourse whatsoever with the above mentioned persons or any others Connected with them, or with any other person or persons who shall hereafter violate the said Association, or refuse to Subscribe thereto; but will hold them as unworthy of the rights of freemen & as Inimical to the Liberties of their country & we recommend it to the people of this Colony in particular & to the Americans in general, to pursue the same Conduct.

## Janet Schaw, *Journal of a Lady of Quality*

After the review . . . I went into the town, the entry of which I found closed up by a detachment of the soldiers; but as the officer immediately made way for me, I took no further notice of it, but advanced to the middle of the street, where I found a number of the first people in town standing together, who (to use Milton's phrase) seemed much impassioned. **As most of them were my acquaintances, I stopped to speak to them, but they with one voice begged me for heaven's sake to get off the street, making me observe they were prisoners, adding that every avenue of the town was shut up, and that in all human probability some scene would be acted very unfit for me to witness.** I could not take the friendly advice, for I became unable to move and absolutely petrified with horror.

Observing however an officer **with whom I had just dined**, I beckoned him to me. He came, but with no very agreeable look, and on my asking him what was the matter, he presented a paper he had folded in his hand. [Note the Wilmington Committee's resolution of March 6, 1775.] If you will persuade them to sign this they are at liberty, said he, but till then must remain under this guard, as they must suffer the penalties they have justly incurred. "And we will suffer every thing," replied one of them, "before we abjure our king, our country and our principles." "This, Ladies," said he turning to me, who was now joined by several Ladies, "is what they call their Test, but by what authority this Gentleman forces it on us, we are yet to learn." **"There is my Authority," [said the officer] pointing to the Soldiers with the most insolent air, "dispute it, if you can."**

**Oh Britannia, what are you doing, while your true obedient sons are thus insulted by their unlawful brethren; are they also forgot by their natural parents?**



## *The Diary of Matthew Patten, 1774-1776*

Sept. 19, 1774: James Orr mended my plow Shear that was broke in the wing he had a good deal of pains in the doing it the charge unknown and I went to a town meeting at Evening and the people intended to go to Amherst tomorrow to Visit Mr. Atherton who Insisted on my going with them and they told me I must and Should go and that if I did not they would Viset me on which I said I would go.

April 20, 1775: I Reed the Melancholy news in the morning that General Gages troops had fired on our Countrymen at Concord yesterday and had killed a large number of them our town was notified last night that We Generay met at the meeting house about 9 of the Clock and the Number of twenty or more went Directly off from the Meeting house to assist them And I came to Sheds and James Orr made me a great wheel Spindle of my Steel and he mended the Ear of a little kittle and finished chain for my canoe he found iron for near a quarter of the chain the rest was mine And our John came home from being down to Pentucket and intended to Sett off for our army to morow morning and our Girls sit up all night bakeing bread and fitting things for him and John Dobbin.

April 21, 1775: our John and John Dobbins and my bror Samuell two oldest sons sett off and joyned Derryfield men and about six from Goffestown and two or 3 more from this town under the command of Capt. John Moor of Derryfield they amounted to the No of 45 in all Sunbrook men and two or three others that joined them marched in about an hour after they to 35 there was nine more went along after them belonging to Pennybrook or thereabouts and I went to McGregores and I got a pound of Coffie on Credit.

## *The Diary of Matthew Patten, 1774-1776*

April 22, 1775: I was wakened in the morning by Mrs Chandlers comeing with a letter from the Comitee of the Provincial Congress for calling another Congress of the Province immeadeately and I went with it as fast as could to john Bells but he was gone to our army and both the others allso and I went to Robert Alexanders and got 4 bushells of Rie on Credit and took it to Capt Moors mill and got it ground.

April 25, 1775: I went and notified on the River Road to meet at the meeting house in the afternoon on our publick Distress and I went to Col Goffes to ask his advice and met toward evening and acted on what we thot necessary and my Brors jos helped me with their 3 pair of Oxen to cross plow.

April 26, 1775: I went at the desire of the town to Col Goffes and Merrils and MacGregores and **Cautioned them to take Special care of Strangers and persons Suspected of being Torys Crossing the River to Examin and Search if they judge it needful** and I got a pound of Coffie and nine flints from MacGregore for which I paid him 11/8 Bay old tenor. [Paper money issued by the Massachusetts Bay Colony]

May 29, 1775: I went to Amherst and met the Rest of the Commitee and we took the care of the Goal [jail] and took from under his hand to Deliver it to us the first Tuesday in July next and I came home at Break of day next morning my Expences was 19/6 Bay old Tenor

## *The Diary of Matthew Patten, 1774-1776*

July 5, 1775: I came home in the morning nothing material untill the 11th when john sett off for the Army he Rid my horse down iu the time I made a pail and a washing tub and went to McGregores to See Lieut McCalley about comeing to assist as a commiteeman concerning Mr Houston but did not see him . . .

July 13, 1775: I went to Amherst to judge Esqur Whiting for his being a Tory . . .

July 17, 1775: **There was 4 of Goffestown Committee aud 4 of Merrymac and 2 from Derryfield met in Bedford by the desire of Bedford commitee to judge of Mr Houston being an Enemy to this country they judged him Guilty and confined him to the county without leave from the majr part of one of the commitees of the towns who judged him we broke up the next morning after day break**

July 20, 1775: Was the Continental Fast and Mr Cook preached with us in Bedford he preached with us last Sabath day which was the first preaching we have had since we shut the meeting house doors agt Mr Houston

## *The Diary of Matthew Patten, 1774-1776*

May 21, 1775: I came home and went to writing letters to Crown Point for on my journey down I got an account of my Johns Death of the Small Pox at Canada and when I came home my wife had got a letter from Bob which gave us a particular account it informed us that he was sick of them at Chambike and that they moved him to Saint Johns where they tarried but one night when they moved him to Isle of Noix where he died on the 20th day of June the Reason of moveing him was the Retreat of the army which was very preceipitate and he must either be moved or be left behind whether the moveing him hurt him he does not inform us but it seems probable to me that it did **He was shot through his left arm at Bunker Hill fight and now was lead after suffering much fategue to the place where he now lyes in defending the just Rights of America to whose end he came in the prime of life by means of that wicked Tyranical Brute (Nea worse than Brute) of Great Britan he was 24 years and 31 days old**

Final slide.

Thank You

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