

A Summation of the Role of New York in the History of the Founding of the United States

An abridged version of this was presented at the June 16, 2009 Albany "Liberty Starts Here Again" rally and the July 4, 2009 Norwich (NY) Tea Party Patriots rally. References are from history books written between 1880 and 1935, Bancroft being the most prominent of historians of the time.

April 15, 2009, and other dates around that time, brought out a spontaneous outpouring of people we now call the Tea Party Patriots. Over One Million people across the Nation almost spontaneously came out and publicly voiced their concerns and objections to many of our government's policies. Though support was seen locally, media and government leaders at the State and Federal levels ignored and mocked our actions.

Why is it significant to have chosen the historical event of the Boston Tea Party for these protest and rallies? Many will ask how "taxation without representation" fits in with this movement. Just as today, it was the culmination of many years of grievances regarding the law, liberty, and property. I see how our four point platform - Uphold the Constitution of the United States of America, Free Markets, Limited Government, Fiscal Responsibility - reflects similarly to the historical record.

When I first heard of the theme for this protest/rally, "Liberty Starts Here Again," it greatly interested me as someone interested in history. "Liberty Starts Here Again." So when I got home I started reading. I originally learned in school about the Boston Tea Party, I have to admit, I knew only some of the events leading up to the Boston Tea Party. Plus, I had not learned much about New York's role in the events leading up to the Boston Tea Party and the events that resulted afterward.

I did some research from history books – history books that have been purged from libraries.

New York is a LEADER!

The historical record is full of facts that the grievances of the past are similar to ours of the present. But where do you start to tell the story? How do you compress many years of history into 5 minutes?

At the detriment of not giving justice to all groups and events of history, I will jump through and focus on key notes on Liberty and New York's role toward independence.

History is left to interpretation, that is, interpretation of facts. Here are some facts that I hope will not just encourage us, but will remind and teach us about how our nation overcame it's struggles to form a nation of guaranteed freedoms and liberties. It is ours to reclaim through the Constitution that created it.

Listen to the history.

Draw your own parallels to our present conditions.

From the beginning of the settlement of what would become New York, the people were constantly pressing the governing authorities for their rights under common law and the English constitution, for the purposes of assembly and protection of liberty and property. From 1670 to the mid-1700's, New York was the first meeting place to discuss union and protections of liberty and property. Taxation was considered an attack on property. The King and some of Parliament acted in conflicting and inconsistent ways. Petitions and protests grew common to the cry "Liberty and Property."

1670-

People of the Dutch and English settlements were constantly pressing the governing authorities for their rights under common law and the English constitution, for the purposes of assembly and protection of liberty and property. (Sullivan p1417)

1670

The Charter of Liberties and Privileges was passed, the King objecting to the first phrase, "People met in General Assembly," for the purpose of "resisting all attacks of the crown upon the purse of the people." Taxation was considered an attack on their property. (Sullivan p1417)

1670

Early on there was a call by governors to create an assembly of the people (by popular vote) because "authority and magistracy is grown so low that it can scarce maintain the public peace and quiet of the government." (Sullivan p1418)

1690 - Representatives from NY, CT, MA met at New York to discuss a Union and Independence. Letters were sent from VA, MD, and RI. (Andrews v2, p51-55)

Through the 1700's, petitions and protests grew common to the cry "Liberty and Property." (Sullivan 1417-1428)

1735

"The germ of American freedom – the morning star of that liberty which subsequently revolutionized America. (Sullivan p1427)

1754 - The Albany Convention was held to prepare for the French and Indian War. Franklin's plan for a Union was rejected by the people because it gave too much power to the King. (Andrews v2, p52)

1764 - During Parliamentary debate on a proposed Stamp Act, one member declared that "Americans are Sons of Liberty," not "children of England's planting."

1764 May

The Stamp Act for the colonies was proposed. "It seemed a deliberate blow was about to be struck at their liberties." "Humble but earnest protests" were sent to Parliament from NY, MA, RI, and CT. (Andrews v2, p 35-36)

In 1765, after about a year of persistent, yet respectful opposition from the colonies, The Stamp Act taxation was passed. Violators would be tried without a jury trial. The people rose up in numbers and more boldly demonstrated their opposition. The “Sons of Liberty” started in New York and chapters quickly spread to almost all colonies. A New Hampshire newspaper printed an effigy of the Goddess of Liberty being carried to the grave. Connecticut legislature ordered prayer and fasting. New York held a bonfire of the stamps in the public square. South Carolina tolled bells and flew ships' flags at half mast. Business documents became illegal and void unless written on stamped paper, it had to be paid for in specie – solid coin - and violators will be tried without a jury trial by a judge whose pay “came from his own condemnations.” (Andrews v2, p36-39)

1765 October

The Stamp Act Congress met in New York adopted a declaration of rights. The people of New York cried out, “Let us see who will dare put the Act into execution...” By the end of the month, New York merchants agreed to send no new orders to England until the Stamp Act was repealed. “Friday, the first morning of November, broke upon a people unanimously resolved on nullifying the Stamp Act. From New Hampshire to the far south, the day was introduced by the tolling of muffled bells; minute-guns were fired, and pennants hoisted at half-staff; or a eulogy was pronounced on liberty, and its knell sounded; and then again the note changed, as if she were restored to life; and, while pleasure shone on every countenance, men shouted confusion to her enemies. Even the children at their games, though hardly able to speak, caught up the general chorus, and went along the streets, merrily caroling: “Liberty, Property, and no Stamps.” (Hawthorne p 168, Bancroft v5, p350-352)

1766

The British did not expect such resistance from the colonies, and after months of Parliamentary debate, the Stamp Act was repealed. In celebration, a Liberty Pole was erected in New York's City Hall Park. But it was short lived celebration and only momentary relief, as the Act was replaced by the Declaratory Act, by which Parliament claimed power over the colonies “in all cases whatsoever.” (Bancroft, Andrews v2, p40-44)

1767 brought more acts of oppression by imposing more duties and the Billeting Act, requiring the colonists to lodge and feed British troops, driving the colonies to rebellion. (Andrew v2, p44-45)

MAY 1767

“It became Parliament, not to engage in controversy with its Colonies, but to assert its sovereignty, without uniting them in a common cause. For this end he proposed to proceed against New-York, and against New-York alone. To levy a local tax would be to accept a penalty in lieu of obedience. He should, therefore, move that New-York, having disobeyed Parliament, should be restrained from any legislative act of its own, till it should comply.” The Parliament continued its debate because there was a difference of opinion as the “the mode of coercing New-York.”

AUGUST 1767

Boston pledged not to use anything imported from Great Britain. “An intimate correspondence grew up between New York and Boston. They would nullify Townshend's Revenue Act by consuming nothing on which he had laid a duty.” Colonists agreed to buy no goods from England until the Stamp Act was repealed. They would import nothing more from England. (Bancroft, Andrews p 39)

1768

When New York refused to obey the Billeting Act, Parliament suspended its legislative functions. (Andrews v2, p45)

March 1768

A summary: Parliament had “passed the Stamp Act, and it repealed the Stamp Act; it began to treat America with tenderness, then veered about, imposed new taxes, changed essentially American Constitutions, and showed a readiness to suspend and abolish the freedom of the American Legislative. It was corrupt, and it knew itself to be corrupt, and it made a jest of its own corruption.”

August 1769

“The agreement of non-importation originated in New-York, where it was rigidly carried into effect.” Boston at first followed the example of New York.

January 1770 - New York's “Liberty Pole had stood safely in the Park for nearly three years.” But the soldiers finally become “exasperated against the citizens” and succeeded in cutting it down after three days' attempts resisted by the crowds. Three thousand people who considered the soldiers as enemies to the Constitution, gathered in the fields and skirmished with the soldiers for two days. Newspapers reported a people's victory. The Sons of Liberty of New York then erected a new Liberty Pole on purchased land, protected it by iron bands and bars deeply sunk into the earth, and inscribed it with the words “Liberty and Property.” (Bancroft)

MARCH 1770

New York kept to its non-importation agreements, though Boston was lacking.

June 1770

Other colonies had increased imports, some reduced, but “New York alone had been perfectly true to its engagement; and its imports had fallen off more than five parts in six.” “...the non-importation agreement had been sacredly enforced by New York alone, and now trade between America and England was open in every thing but TEA.”

January 1773 Sheffield Massachusetts

The people proclaimed their grievances, the rights of the colonies and the right of self government. (Andrews v2, p63)

1773 Mendon Massachusetts

Resolutions were adopted stating all men have equal right to life and liberty, this right is inalienable, and government must originate in the free consent of the people. (Andrews v2, p63)

October 1773

The East India Company shipped tea to Charleston, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. (Bancroft, Andrews v2, p48)

December 16, 1773 arrived. This was close to the day when the tea had be be unloaded with duty or confiscated. The ship did not have a pass to leave the harbor. With New York, Philadelphia, and Charleston in ready resistance, men in Boston, disguised as Indians, dumped 340 chests of tea from three ships into Boston harbor. Tea shipped for the other cities either perished on land or was taken back to London. (Bancroft, Andrews v2, p48)

In 1774, The Sons of Liberty of New York were the fist to propose a general congress for unity on the side of Liberty. This was the beginning of the Continental Congress and the last, but probably the GREATEST (the “grand finale”), achievement of the Sons of Liberty of New York. (Bancroft v7, p 40,41)

1774 September 5, Philadelphia

“When a Nation, led to greatness by the hand of Liberty, and possessed of all the glory that heroism, munificence, and humanity can bestow, descends to the ungrateful task of forging chains for her Friends and Children, and instead of giving support to Freedom, turns advocate for Slavery and Oppression, there is reason to suspect she had either ceased to be virtuous, or have been extremely negligent in the appointment of her rulers.”

“In almost every age, in repeated conflicts, in long and bloody wars, as well civil as foreign, against many and powerful nations, against the open assaults of enemies, and the more dangerous treachery of friends, have the inhabitants of your island, your great and glorious ancestors, maintained their independence and transmitted the rights of men, and the blessings of liberty to you and their posterity.” (Journal of Continental Congress v1, p82)

During 1774-1775, separation and Independence was still not “desired of any thinking man in America.” - Washington (Andrews v2, p53)

Dr. James Thacher, in his 1775 Journal, wrote “All acts of Parliament... are unconstitutional and arbitrary laws, subversive of the liberties and privileges secured to us by royal charters.”

CONCLUSION: (next page)

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“The rest is history.” 1776 saw the colonies adopting independent constitutions with the power not surrendered to a limited government, but reserved solely and directly to a sovereign people. “The sole momentous novelty was that every one of the new constitutions proceeded upon the theory of popular sovereignty. The new governments derived their authority solely and directly from the people. And this authority, too, was not surrendered to the government, but simply - and this only in part - intrusted to it as a temporary agent of the sovereign people, who remained throughout the exclusive source of political power.” (Andrews v2, p66)

A side note - Just a few days ago, I read that more people are moving out of New York than every other state in the nation. “When more people are leaving than coming in, even politicians should recognize something is wrong.” I also read that New York is considered “The Least Free State.” But, when people think of New York, they think of the Statue of Liberty. When they look at the commemorative quarter, they read “Gateway to Freedom.” Yet, isn't it ironic that New York, probably the most active in securing our liberties and freedoms over 200 years ago, has the distinction of the least free state and the least favored state to live in? (Tom Golisano, Responsible New York Founder)

Jumping back to the history - Was it about "taxation without representation" alone? NO! History shows it definitely was not. The recurring call was for Liberty and Property, people's right to assemble and to govern themselves. This why we are here. New York led the Patriots! New York led the Union “of the people, by the people, and for the people!” "Liberty Starts Here Again!" Maybe our government will experience another “unexpected resistance” by Patriots because of the attacks on our Liberties and Property. For our children and our children's children! - The Patriots are Silent No More!

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