



Samuel Adams: Founding Father

Presented by The Westlake 9/12 Project

QUOTES

- “The Constitution shall never be construed... to prevent the people of the United States who are peaceable citizens from keeping their own arms.”
- “It does not take a majority to prevail... but rather an irate, tireless minority, keen on setting brushfires of freedom in the minds of men.”
- “If ye love wealth better than liberty, the tranquility of servitude better than the animating contest of freedom, go home from us in peace. We ask not your counsels or arms. Crouch down and lick the hands which feed you. May your chains set lightly upon you, and may posterity forget that ye were our countrymen.”

QUOTES

- “If ever a time should come, when vain and aspiring men shall possess the highest seats in Government, our country will stand in need of its experienced patriots to prevent its ruin.”
- “How strangely will the Tools of a Tyrant pervert the plain Meaning of Words!”
- "Religion and good morals are the only solid foundation of public liberty and happiness."
- "If virtue and knowledge are diffused among the people, they will never be enslaved. This will be their great security."
- "Let no man thirst for good beer."

QUOTES

- “It is in the interest of tyrants to reduce the people to ignorance and vice. For they cannot live in any country where virtue and knowledge prevail.”
- "The utopian schemes of leveling and a community of goods, are as visionary and impractical as those which vest all property in the crown. These ideas are arbitrary, despotic, and, in our government unconstitutional."

INTRODUCTION

- Samuel Adams (September 27, 1722 – October 2, 1803) was an American statesman, political philosopher, and one of the Founding Fathers of the United States.
- He was a politician in colonial Massachusetts, a leader of the movement that became the American Revolution, and one of the architects of the principles of American republicanism that shaped the political culture of the United States.
- He was a second cousin to his fellow Founding Father, President John Adams.

EARLY YEARS

- Samuel Adams was born in Boston, MA, and brought up in a religious and politically active family.



EARLY YEARS

- Adams was one of twelve children born to Samuel Adams, Sr., and Mary (Fifield) Adams in an age of high infant mortality; only three of these children lived past their third birthday.
- Samuel Adams, Sr. (1689–1748) was a prosperous merchant and church deacon.
- Deacon Adams became a leading figure in Boston politics through an organization that became known as the Boston Caucus, which promoted candidates who supported popular causes.

EARLY YEARS

- Samuel Adams attended Boston Latin School and then entered Harvard College in 1736.
- His parents hoped that his schooling would prepare him for the ministry, but Adams gradually shifted his interest to politics.
- After graduating in 1740, Adams continued his studies, earning a master's degree in 1743. In his thesis, he argued that it was "lawful to resist the Supreme Magistrate, if the Commonwealth cannot otherwise be preserved", which indicated that his political views, like his father's, were oriented towards colonial rights.

EARLY YEARS

- After leaving Harvard in 1743, Adams was unsure about his future. He considered becoming a lawyer, but instead decided to go into business.
- He worked at Thomas Cushing's counting house, but the job only lasted a few months because Cushing felt that Adams was too preoccupied with politics to become a good merchant.
- Adams's father then lent him £1,000 to go into business for himself, a substantial amount for that time.

EARLY YEARS

- Adams's lack of business instincts were confirmed; he lent half of this money to a friend who never repaid, and frittered away the other half.
- Adams always remained, in the words of historian Pauline Maier, "a man utterly uninterested in either making or possessing money".

EARLY YEARS

- After Adams had lost his money, his father made him a partner in the family's malt house, which was next to the family home on Purchase Street.
- Several generations of Adams were maltsters, who produced the malt necessary for brewing beer
- Adams has often been described as a brewer, but evidence suggests that he worked as a maltster and not a brewer.

EARLY YEARS

- When Deacon Adams died in 1748, Adams was given the responsibility of managing the family's affairs
- In October 1749, he married Elizabeth Checkley, his pastor's daughter
- Elizabeth gave birth to six children over the next seven years, but only two lived to adulthood: Samuel (born 1751) and Hannah (born 1756).
- In July 1757, Elizabeth died soon after giving birth to a stillborn son. Adams remarried in 1764 to Elizabeth Wells, but had no other children.

RELIGION

- Adams's parents were devout Puritans and members of the Old South Congregational Church.
- Adams was proud of his Puritan heritage, and emphasized Puritan values in his political career, especially virtue.

PUBLIC LIFE

- Like his father, Adams embarked on a political career with the support of the Boston Caucus. He was elected to his first political office in 1747, serving as one of the clerks of the Boston market.
- The Boston Caucus helped shape the agenda of the Boston Town Meeting. A New England town meeting is a form of local government with elected officials, and not just a gathering of citizens; according to historian William Fowler, it was "the most democratic institution in the British empire".

PUBLIC LIFE

- In January 1748, Adams and some friends were inflamed by British impressment and launched *The Independent Advertiser*, a weekly newspaper that printed many political essays written by Adams.
- His essays drew heavily upon English political theorist John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*, and they emphasized many of the themes that characterized his subsequent career.

PUBLIC LIFE

- He argued that the people must resist any encroachment on their constitutional rights.
- He cited the decline of the Roman Empire as an example of what could happen to New England if it were to abandon its Puritan values.
- In 1756, the Boston Town Meeting elected him to the post of tax collector, which provided a small income.

PUBLIC LIFE

- He often failed to collect taxes from his fellow citizens, which increased his popularity among those who did not pay, but left him liable for the shortage.
- By 1765, his account was more than £8,000 in arrears. The town meeting was on the verge of bankruptcy, and Adams was compelled to file suit against delinquent taxpayers, but many taxes went uncollected.

PUBLIC LIFE

- In 1768, his political opponents used the situation to their advantage, obtaining a court judgment of £1,463 against him. Adams's friends paid off some of the deficit, and the town meeting wrote off the remainder. By then, he had emerged as a leader of the popular party, and the embarrassing situation did not lessen his influence.
- Samuel Adams emerged as an important public figure in Boston soon after the British Empire's victory in the French and Indian War (1754–1763).

PUBLIC LIFE

- The British Parliament found itself deep in debt and looking for new sources of revenue, and they sought to directly tax the colonies of British America for the first time.
- This tax dispute was part of a larger divergence between British and American interpretations of the British Constitution and the extent of Parliament's authority in the colonies.
- The first step in the new program was the Sugar Act of 1764, which Adams saw as an infringement of longstanding colonial rights.

PUBLIC LIFE

- Colonists were not represented in Parliament, he argued, and therefore they could not be taxed by that body; the colonists were represented by the colonial assemblies, and only they could levy taxes upon them.
- Adams expressed these views in May 1764, when the Boston Town Meeting elected its representatives to the Massachusetts House.
- Adams highlighted what he perceived to be the dangers of taxation without representation.

PUBLIC LIFE

- "When the Boston Town Meeting approved the Adams instructions on May 24, 1764," writes historian John K. Alexander, "it became the first political body in America to go on record stating Parliament could not constitutionally tax the colonists. The directives also contained the first official recommendation that the colonies present a unified defense of their rights."
- Adams's instructions were published in newspapers and pamphlets, and he soon became closely associated with James Otis, Jr., a member of the Massachusetts House famous for his defense of colonial rights.

PUBLIC LIFE

- In 1765, Parliament passed the Stamp Act which required colonists to pay a new tax on most printed materials.
- News of the passage of the Stamp Act produced an uproar in the colonies.
- The colonial response echoed Adams's 1764 instructions. In June 1765, Otis called for a Stamp Act Congress to coordinate colonial resistance.
- The Virginia House of Burgesses passed a widely reprinted set of resolves against the Stamp Act that resembled Adams's arguments against the Sugar Act.

PUBLIC LIFE

- Adams argued that the Stamp Act was unconstitutional; he also believed that it would hurt the economy of the British Empire. He supported calls for a boycott of British goods to put pressure on Parliament to repeal the tax.
- In Boston, a group called the Loyal Nine, a precursor to the Sons of Liberty, organized protests of the Stamp Act. Adams was friendly with the Loyal Nine but was not a member.

PUBLIC LIFE

- On August 14, stamp distributor Andrew Oliver was hanged in effigy from Boston's Liberty Tree; that night, his home was ransacked and his office demolished. On August 26, lieutenant governor Thomas Hutchinson's home was destroyed by an angry crowd.
- Officials such as Governor Francis Bernard believed that common people acted only under the direction of agitators and blamed the violence on Adams.

PUBLIC LIFE

- This interpretation was revived by scholars in the early 20th century, who viewed Adams as a master of propaganda who manipulated mobs into doing his bidding.
- According to the modern scholarly interpretation of Adams, however, he supported legal methods of resisting parliamentary taxation, such as petitions, boycotts, and nonviolent demonstrations, but he opposed mob violence which he saw as illegal, dangerous, and counter-productive.

PUBLIC LIFE

- On September 27, 1795, the Town Meeting selected Adams to replace the recently deceased Oxenbridge Thacher as one of Boston's four representatives in the assembly.
- As such, he was the primary author of a series of House resolutions against the Stamp Act, which were more radical than those passed by the Stamp Act Congress.
- Adams was one of the first colonial leaders to argue that mankind possessed certain natural rights that governments could not violate.

PUBLIC LIFE

- The Stamp Act was scheduled to go into effect on November 1, 1765, but it was not enforced because protestors throughout the colonies had compelled stamp distributors to resign.
- Eventually, British merchants were able to convince Parliament to repeal the tax.
- By May 16, 1766, news of the repeal had reached Boston. There was celebration throughout the city, and Adams made a public statement of thanks to British merchants for helping their cause.

PUBLIC LIFE

- After the repeal of the Stamp Act, Parliament took a different approach to raising revenue, passing the Townshend Acts in 1767 which established new duties on various goods imported into the colonies.
- These duties were relatively low because the British ministry wanted to establish the precedent that Parliament had the right to impose tariffs on the colonies before raising them.

PUBLIC LIFE

- Revenues from these duties were to be used to pay for governors and judges who would be independent of colonial control.
- To enforce compliance with the new laws, the Townshend Acts created a customs agency known as the American Board of Custom Commissioners, which was headquartered in Boston.
- Resistance to the Townshend Acts grew slowly.

PUBLIC LIFE

- Adams therefore used the Boston Town Meeting to organize an economic boycott, and called for other towns to do the same.
- By February 1768, towns in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut had joined the boycott.
- Opposition to the Townshend Acts was also encouraged by Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania, a series of popular essays by John Dickinson which started appearing in December 1767.

PUBLIC LIFE

- Dickinson's argument that the new taxes were unconstitutional had been made before by Adams, but never to such a wide audience.
- In January 1768, the Massachusetts House sent a petition to King George asking for his help.
- Adams and Otis requested that the House send the petition to the other colonies, along with what became known as the Massachusetts Circular Letter, which became "a significant milestone on the road to revolution".

PUBLIC LIFE

- The letter called on the colonies to join with Massachusetts in resisting the Townshend Acts.
- The House initially voted against sending the letter and petition to the other colonies but, after some politicking by Adams and Otis, it was approved on February 11.
- The letter written by Adams called on the colonies to join with Massachusetts in resisting the Townshend Acts.

PUBLIC LIFE

- The British colonial secretary demanded that Massachusetts Governor Francis Bernard have the letter be rescinded, but the House refused.
- Far from complying with the governor's order, Adams instead presented a new petition to the king asking that Governor Bernard be removed from office. Bernard responded by dissolving the legislature.
- The Customs Board requested military assistance; a warship and regiments of the British Army were dispatched to Boston.

PUBLIC LIFE

- According to some accounts, the occupation of Boston was a turning point for Adams, after which he gave up hope of reconciliation and secretly began to work towards American independence.
- Two regiments were removed from Boston in 1769, but the other two remained. Tensions between soldiers and civilians eventually resulted in the killing of five civilians in the Boston Massacre of March 1770.

PUBLIC LIFE

- After the Boston Massacre, politics in Massachusetts entered what is sometimes known as the "quiet period".
- In April 1770, Parliament repealed the Townshend duties, except for the tax on tea.
- Adams urged colonists to keep up the boycott of British goods, arguing that paying even one small tax allowed Parliament to establish the precedent of taxing the colonies, but the boycott faltered.

PUBLIC LIFE

- A struggle over the power of the purse brought Adams back into the political limelight. Traditionally, the Massachusetts House of Representatives paid the salaries of the governor, lieutenant governor, and superior court judges.
- In 1772, Massachusetts learned that those officials would henceforth be paid by the British government rather than by the province.

PUBLIC LIFE

- To protest this, Adams and his colleagues devised a system of committees of correspondence in November 1772; the towns of Massachusetts would consult with each other concerning political matters that recorded British activities and protested imperial policies.
- Governor Hutchinson became concerned that the committees of correspondence were growing into an independence movement.

PUBLIC LIFE

- Hutchinson argued that denying the supremacy of Parliament came dangerously close to rebellion. "I know of no line that can be drawn", he said, "between the supreme authority of Parliament and the total independence of the colonies."
- The quiet period in Massachusetts was over. Adams was easily re-elected to the Massachusetts House in May 1773, and was also elected as moderator of the Boston Town Meeting.

PUBLIC LIFE

- Adams took a leading role in the events that led up to the famous Boston Tea Party of December 16, 1773, although the precise nature of his involvement has been disputed.
- Whether or not he helped plan the event is unknown, but Adams immediately worked to publicize and defend it. He argued that the Tea Party was not the act of a lawless mob, but was instead a principled protest and the only remaining option that the people had to defend their constitutional rights.

PUBLIC LIFE

- Great Britain responded to the Boston Tea Party in 1774 with the Coercive Acts.
- The Administration of Justice Act allowed colonists charged with crimes to be transported to another colony or to Great Britain for trial.
- Adams worked to coordinate resistance to the Coercive Acts. In May 1774, the Boston Town Meeting (with Adams serving as moderator) organized an economic boycott of British goods.

PUBLIC LIFE

- In June, Adams headed a committee in the Massachusetts House—with the doors locked to prevent Gage from dissolving the legislature—which proposed that an inter-colonial congress meet in Philadelphia in September.
- He was one of five delegates chosen to attend the First Continental Congress. Adams was never fashionably dressed and had little money, so friends bought him new clothes and paid his expenses for the journey to Philadelphia.

PUBLIC LIFE

- In Philadelphia, Adams promoted colonial unity while using his political skills to lobby other delegates.
- Adams returned to Massachusetts in November 1774, where he served in the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, an extralegal legislative body independent of British control.
- Adams also served as moderator of the Boston Town Meeting, which convened despite the Massachusetts Government Act.

PUBLIC LIFE

- On April 14, 1775, General Gage received a letter from Lord Dartmouth advising him "to arrest the principal actors and abettors in the Provincial Congress whose proceedings appear in every light to be acts of treason and rebellion".
- As Hancock and Adams made their escape, the first shots of the war began at Lexington and Concord.

PUBLIC LIFE

- Adams was a cautious advocate for a declaration of independence, urging eager correspondents back in Massachusetts to wait for more moderate colonists to come around to supporting separation from Great Britain.
- He praised Thomas Paine's popular pamphlet *Common Sense*, writing as "Candidus" in early 1776, and supported the call for American independence.
- Congress approved the language of the United States Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, which Adams signed.

PUBLIC LIFE

- After the Declaration of Independence, Adams served on military committees, including an appointment to the Board of War in 1777.
- Adams was the Massachusetts delegate appointed to the committee to draft the Articles of Confederation, the plan for the colonial confederation.
- Adams returned to Boston in 1779 to attend a state constitutional convention.

PUBLIC LIFE

- In 1781, Adams retired from the Continental Congress. His health was one reason; he was approaching his sixtieth birthday and suffered from tremors that made writing difficult.
- Adams was concerned about the new Constitution and made an attempt to re-enter national politics. He allowed his name to be put forth as a candidate for the United States House of Representatives in the December 1788 election, but lost to Fisher Ames..

PUBLIC LIFE

- In 1789, Adams was elected Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts and served in that office until Governor Hancock's death in 1793, when he became acting governor.
- Samuel Adams took a cue from President Washington, who declined to run for reelection in 1796: he retired from politics at the end of his term as governor in 1797.

PUBLIC LIFE

- Samuel Adams died at the age of 81 on October 2, 1803, and was interred at the Granary Burying Ground in Boston.
- Boston's Republican newspaper the Independent Chronicle eulogized him as the "Father of the American Revolution".

ON SLAVERY

- Unlike many of the Founders, Adams was staunchly anti-slavery.

LEGACY

- Samuel Adams is a controversial figure in American history. Disagreement about his significance and reputation began before his death and continues to the present.
- Adams' contemporaries, both friends and foes, regarded him as one of the foremost leaders of the American Revolution. Thomas Jefferson, for example, characterized Adams as "truly the Man of the Revolution."
- Supporters of the Revolution praised Adams, but Loyalists viewed him as a sinister figure.

LEGACY

- In the early 19th century, Adams was often viewed as an old-fashioned Puritan, and was consequently neglected by historians.
- The first full biography of Adams appeared in 1865, a three-volume work written by William Wells, his great-grandson.
- In the late 19th century, many American historians were uncomfortable with contemporary revolutions and found it problematic to write approvingly about Adams.

LEGACY

- In 1923, Ralph V. Harlow used a "Freudian" approach to characterize Adams as a "neurotic crank" driven by an "inferiority complex".
- Harlow argued that, because the masses were easily misled, Adams "manufactured public opinion" to produce the Revolution, a view that became the thesis of John C. Miller's 1936 biography *Sam Adams: Pioneer in Propaganda*.

LEGACY

- Historian Pauline Maier argued that Adams, far from being a radical mob leader, took a moderate position based on the English revolutionary tradition that imposed strict constraints on resistance to authority.
- That belief justified force only against threats to the constitutional rights so grave that the "body of the people" recognized the danger, and only after all peaceful means of redress had failed.
- Within that revolutionary tradition, resistance was essentially conservative.

LEGACY

- In 2004, Ray Raphael's *Founding Myths* continued Maier's line by deconstructing several of the "Sam" Adams myths that are still repeated in many textbooks and popular histories.

LEGACY

- Samuel Adams's name has been appropriated by commercial and non-profit ventures since his death.
- The Boston Beer Company created Samuel Adams Boston Lager in 1985, drawing upon the tradition that Adams had been a brewer; it became a popular award-winning brand.
- Adams's name is also used by a pair of non-profit organizations, the Sam Adams Alliance and the Sam Adams Foundation.

LEGACY

- Adams appears in the video game Assassin's Creed III and is portrayed by Mark Lindsay Chapman.