

Samuel Adams: The Grand Incendiary of the Province  
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Samuel Adams is, for some, an admired Founding Father and the man who brought about the Revolution and for others, an instigator who was a master of manipulation. However, while his motives may have been questionable, his ability with a pen was not. Adams, considered a great writer in his own time, is still admired for his writing ability today. He wrote many essays, pamphlets, letters, petitions, and newspaper articles. He aided in the formation of the Declaration of Independence and Articles of Confederation. However, Samuel Adams' writings are best known for the part they played in convincing people to join the cause of the American Revolution. He successfully argued for the rights that he believed the people already possessed. Samuel Adams used his pen to ignite the people; he wrote persuasive essays aimed at forming a unified group to begin and sustain the colonial rebellion against oppressive British taxes and legislation. According to journalist Mark Puls, Adams, at the time that the rebellious colonists' argument with Britain erupted into armed conflict at Lexington, Massachusetts on April 19, 1775, "had already spent a decade working to convince colonists young and old alike that independence could only be secured with a break from England."<sup>1</sup> To keep the rebellion on track, even when there was a lull in the resistance activities, Adams still wrote. Many of his letters have been lost, but his published essays have been saved and republished many times in an effort to understand what drove him. While it may seem to some that Samuel Adams was simply following in his father's political footsteps or was just attempting to advance his personal interests, Adams had his own knack for politics. Eventually, he chose to return to local politics when the new nation

was fully formed.

Samuel Adams was born September 16, 1722, in Boston, Massachusetts. His ancestors had been part of the Puritan migration to the New World. They were searching for a return to a purer form of Protestant worship in the wake of the marriage of Charles I to a Catholic and the ensuing persecution of Protestants. Growing up, Adam's family life centered around the church, as was proper for a Puritan family. His father, Samuel the elder, was very active in his church and eventually became a deacon. Deacon, as Samuel the elder was sometimes called, also participated in local politics. He was a justice of the peace, member of the colonial legislature, and was involved in other politically relevant positions in Boston. Adams would be greatly influenced by his father's position in the city, his religious leanings, and his political activities.

Young Adams entered Harvard at the age of fourteen to study theology. His family had hopes that he would enter the ministry; however, that was not to be. Following Adam's graduation with the degree of master at the age of twenty, Deacon Adams set his son up in a countinghouse and later staked him to trade for himself, but "[t]emperament and the times conspired to steer Samuel away from commerce and into the political activity he really loved."<sup>2</sup> It appears that Adams did not have the head, or possibly the desire, to conduct business, for historian Jack Rakove noted that he "somehow pulled off the neat trick of ruining the family brewery" following his father's death. Adams seemed to have had an aversion to the collection of money; Puls noted that the brewery went bankrupt because Adams "failed to put pressure on those who owed him money," much as he failed to collect the taxes he was elected to collect during the 1750s.<sup>3</sup> Regardless of his family's desires for him to join the ministry or to become a businessman, Adam's true interests evolved during his time at Harvard. His in-

terests switched from the theology that he originally set out to study, to the political issues of the period. In fact, editor Ira Stoll, along with Puls, noted that to receive his master's degree, Adams argued affirmatively the question "Whether it be lawful to resist the supreme magistrate, if the commonwealth can not be otherwise preserved?"<sup>4</sup> He had grown up listening to his father and his father's associates discuss the issues of the day, and he was fascinated with their discourse. This may well be where his first ideas on politics were formed.

Therefore, Adam's temperament and interests were largely shaped by the combination of "his Calvinist upbringing, Harvard education, and early entrance into politics" as well the influence of his father.<sup>5</sup> This combination "placed him squarely within the tradition of opposition politics."<sup>6</sup> Adams' early life, family, education, and religion all worked together to make him into a politically astute man with a goal, many say, for eventually gaining the independence of the colonies. As early as 1748, Adams began his public, political writing career. Puls pointed to Adams and his friends' creation of a club in that year where they could hold debates and form a publication geared toward shaping public opinion. Adams first article of the publication, *The Public Advertiser*, was on loyalty. He argued "that allegiance should be given to laws rather than to government leaders."<sup>7</sup> Stoll noted that Adams' debut was focused on liberty as "the choicest gift that Heaven has lent to man," combining religious rhetoric with enlightenment theory.<sup>8</sup> This argument may have been directly influenced by the writings of John Locke, which Adams would have likely read in his efforts to find precedent for the limitation of increasing government intervention.

As it was, Massachusetts had become a center of political activity throughout the 1760s and 1770s, unlike most other colonies where cooler heads prevailed after the initial anger over the Stamp

Act and other such actions of Parliament.<sup>9</sup> Historians Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen noted that Samuel Adams was the main person who was working to disturb the lull; he published more than forty articles in the two years following the March 5, 1770 Boston Massacre.<sup>10</sup> He is attributed with success in this venture due to his ability to write in “a clear and concise style that appealed to less-educated citizens.”<sup>11</sup> In contrast, Puls noted that the colonists who read Adams’ writings were “highly literate, and well versed in the allusions to ancient Latin and Greek writers and examples from antiquity from which he drew his analogies.”<sup>12</sup> Adams’ chances to write would increase upon his election to the Massachusetts House of Representatives and his continued publication in other papers, in particular the *Boston Gazette*. As Stoll noted, Adams wrote frequently, passionately, and elegantly throughout the early Revolution era.<sup>13</sup>

Adams was first elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1765. His multiple elections to the House, and his subsequent election to be its clerk, are evidence of his popularity within Boston. Puls noted that Adams’ early stint as a tax collector had put him in touch with a variety of inhabitants, which led to him being well known and may have aided in his knowledge of public opinion.<sup>14</sup> However, his time in the House, combined with his writings for the *Gazette* may have led to Governor Thomas Hutchinson’s dislike and opinion that Adams was the cause of the rebellion in Boston. Rakove noted that “Hutchinson’s two... great foes, [were] Samuel and John Adams.”<sup>15</sup> As clerk for the Massachusetts House of Representatives, and as a regular contributor to the *Boston Gazette* through the use of multiple pen names, Adams became a thorn in Hutchinson’s side. By the early 1770s Adams was a vocal political leader in the Bay Colony. He had emerged as the leader who was most suspicious of the British Parliament’s motives. He also proved

to be the most likely candidate for an active role in the resistance to what he saw as increasing government infringement of the people's rights.<sup>16</sup> Why Adams believed that the British government was attempting to do away with the rights of their subjects on the American continent seems to have stemmed from Britain's bungling of their North American policy.

As historian Barbara W. Tuchman noted, Great Britain's policy toward the American colonies prior to the American Revolution made little sense. Parliament made multiple decisions that were detrimental to their relationship with their American colonies, and "[i]n the end Britain made rebels where there had been none."<sup>17</sup> Samuel Adams and his friends were some of those rebels. Through the placement of a standing army in the colonies – for the colonists' protection – and the repeated attempts to tax the colonists – to pay for the previous wars on the continent, as well as for the funding of the army placed in the colonies – Parliament did not endear themselves to the American people. The argument that came from the people focused on the right to representation, which the colonies did not have in Parliament, and the principle that Englishmen had the right not to be taxed except by their own representatives.<sup>18</sup> These offensive moves from across the ocean were seen as tyrannical by many in the colonies; and the people feared that these threats to their liberties were intentional.<sup>19</sup> Samuel Adams in particular seemed to believe that "a raw lust for power was driving Britain's leaders to seek dominion over America."<sup>20</sup> He began working publically to undermine the decisions of Parliament shortly after the passage of the Sugar Act.

Initially, Adams was isolated in his beliefs and concerns over the acts of Parliament, at least in Boston. Puls noted that Adams "was shocked to find himself alone in speaking out at the Boston town meeting and at political clubs and the caucus." When he made in-

quires as to whether any complaints had been lodged, the answer was none.<sup>21</sup> As such, Adams determined that he would have to incite the people; he would need to find a way to unite them in a common cause. His first step was to trigger a boycott of goods imported from Britain.

Some historians believe that Adams may have intentionally set out to begin a revolution. Rakove noted that “[w]ith the possible (and doubtful) exception of Samuel Adams, none of those who took leading roles in the struggle actively set out to foment rebellion or found a republic.”<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Schweikart and Allan noted that Adams was among the early advocates for a full separation from Great Britain.<sup>23</sup> Rakove also stated that Adams used the rebellion to “advance his own political ambitions” but further notes that “it is far from clear that Adams possessed ambition as we define that term, or that if he did, he could ever admit it to himself. . . His identity and his politics fused so completely that he probably did not know where one left off and the other began.”<sup>24</sup> He described Adams “As an ideologue, [who] already knew how events were destined to turn out. But [Adams] also believed that the exact timing of this decision [independence] was not critical.”<sup>25</sup> Therefore Adams could afford to be patient while working toward his ultimate goal; an independent American nation.

Historian Edmund Morgan, like Rakove, portrayed Adams in a negative manner. He stated that “Adams went after what he wanted with relentless and frightening singleness of purpose. He was a politician with a politician’s sense of timing, and ability to move men where he wanted them to go, and he wanted the people of Massachusetts to go in the direction of independence.”<sup>26</sup> Again Adams is painted as a master of manipulation with a single purpose. However, Adams used a rhetoric that his fellow colonists would understand. When advocating for independence in 1776, he asked “whether our

pious and generous ancestors bequeathed to us the miserable privilege of having the rewards of our honesty, industry, the fruits of those fields which they purchased and bled for, wrested from us at the will of men over whom we have no check.”<sup>27</sup> He argued that the colonists had a divine right to their liberty by saying that “[t]he hand of Heaven appears to have led us on to be, perhaps, humble instruments and means in the great providential dispensation which is completing. We have fled from the political Sodom; let us not look back lest we perish and become a monument of infamy and derision to the world.”<sup>28</sup> This religious reference was one of Adams’ recurring themes when writing for the cause of liberty and the peoples’ rights.

Adams’ writings focus on a couple of themes and had multiple influences. Rakove noted that “[w]hen Adams wrote for the press, he restated familiar themes and arch warnings that generations... on either side of the Atlantic had long pronounced.”<sup>29</sup> Adams used the writings of John Locke as inspiration for his beliefs on the civil rights of the American people. Locke argued that men were born with God given natural rights that could not be taken away. These included the rights to “life, liberty and property” that were listed in the Declaration of Independence, as well as being featured in many of Samuel Adams’ essays and declarations prior to the Declaration.

Essentially quoting Locke, Adams wrote that “[a]mong the natural rights of the Colonists are these: First, a right to life; Secondly, to liberty; Thirdly, to property; together with the right to support and defend them in the best manner they can. These are evident branches of, rather than deductions from, the duty of self-preservation, commonly called the first law of nature.”<sup>30</sup> He further noted that “[t]he absolute rights of Englishmen and all freemen, in or out of civil society, are principally personal security, personal liberty, and private property.”<sup>31</sup> In addition to referencing Locke’s writings, Ad-

ams used many ancient Roman references when writing his essays, in particular in his use of pen names.

Adams frequently wrote for the *Boston Gazette* using over a dozen different pen names. He commonly used names that brought to mind ancient Roman orators, senators, and Emperors. Adams would have learned much about the Roman world through the common education that colonists received; Stoll points out that at the Boston Latin School he read “letters, essays, and orations of the Roman politician Marcus Tullius Cicero” among others.<sup>32</sup> Adams’ main pen name was “Vindex,” the name of a Roman senator who first revolted against Nero. Others included “Cotton Mather” and “A Puritan,” which would refer to his Puritan roots. Also included in the range of Adams many pen names were “Candidus” (a Roman cognomen), “Valerius Poplicola” (a Roman aristocrat who lead a revolt), and “Determinatus” (a Latin word meaning defined). Stoll noted historian Douglass Adair’s assertion that “the number of names ‘created the impression of a host of Massachusetts opinions, all ‘patriotic,’ of course, and all squinting with suspicion toward England.’”<sup>33</sup> In an early essay published in the *Boston Gazette*, Adams, writing as “Determinatus” stated,

Where did you learn that in a state or society you have a right to do as you please? And that it was an infringement of that right to restrain you? ... Be pleased to be informed that you are bound to conduct yourselves as the Society with which you are joined, and pleased to have you conduct, or if you please, you may leave it. It is true that will and pleasure of the society is generally declared in its laws: But there may be exceptions, and the present case is without doubt one.<sup>34</sup>

Stoll describes each of Adams’ pen names as “a window into a different aspect of Adams’s personality and role in the Revolution.”



For example, “Candidus” was described as “satirical, wry, intellectually combative, acid, scathing toward the British and their allies” while “Vindex” was seen as “a logical defender of the rights of the colonists” and “Determinarus” was described as “defiant and stubborn.”<sup>35</sup> Yet, there are still common arguments throughout the writings under the various pen names used by Adams. For in addition to the use of ancient Rome, Adams used religious references often.

As with other colonists that wrote on the threats to their liberty prior to the start of the Revolutionary War, Adams used a common theme in his publications: God. Adams and others would frequently question Parliament’s rights, but they stopped short of questioning the King, unless it was to invoke a higher power. For example, Adams wrote for the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1765, “Resolved, that there are certain essential rights of the British Constitution of government, which are founded in the law of God and nature, and are the common rights of mankind... no law of society, can, consistent with the law of God and nature” take them away.<sup>36</sup> A year later, Adams wrote to the people of Plymouth stating that Plymouth’s support of Boston’s resistance was evidence that the people of Plymouth “still retain the truly noble Spirit of our renowned Ancestors.”<sup>37</sup> Stoll pointed to Adams’ preference of likening the American people to the Israelites or Jews. He cites as example an article signed by “A Puritan” in which Adams wrote “But who would have thought that the oblig’d and instructed Israelites would so soon after they were delivered from the Egyptian Task-masters, have fallen down before a *golden Calf!*”<sup>38</sup> The evident themes throughout most of Adams writings therefore, include multiple biblical references, Enlightenment ideas, and references to ancient Rome. Although focused on the natural, God-given rights of man to life, liberty, and property; Adams focused mostly on

property.

As Stoll noted, Adams cited property rights nearly as often as religious rights. In a letter for the Massachusetts House of Representatives, Adams wrote:

It is an essential, natural right, that a man shall quietly enjoy, and have the sole disposal of his own property... It is observable that though many have disregarded life, and contemned liberty, yet there are few men who do not agree that property is a valuable acquisition, which ought to be held sacred. Many have fought, bled, and died for this, who have been insensible to all other obligations.<sup>39</sup>

Yet, Adams felt the need to do more and write more to encourage a sense of unity among the colonies in order to achieve their independence.

As part of Samuel Adams' continued efforts, he worked hard to persuade his cousin John Adams to join him and his friends in their cause. However, initially, as historian John Ferling noted, John Adams was leery of joining the rebellion; he believed that Samuel Adams and his cohorts were seduced by power.<sup>40</sup> But by 1768, John Adams had learned that to gain important office, avoidance of politics and anonymity were not the routes to take; one had to be politically active if he hoped to achieve high office.<sup>41</sup> Ferling noted that Samuel Adams, in order to sway John Adams to the cause, "utilized every stratagem in his bag of tricks to allay his cousin's fears. Mostly, he adopted the persona of a political moderate."<sup>42</sup> Here again, Samuel Adams appears to be a manipulative politician, but he was working toward a goal that he believed to be the best solution. His attempts to gain his cousin's participation would serve him and his cause well, for John Adams was an accomplished writer who was knowledgeable about the law. Where Samuel Adams used his reoc-

curing themes, John Adams was more original and academic in his writing. He was also better equipped to track down the evidence to follow a legal argument.<sup>43</sup> Another prolific writer on the side of the Revolution was a good thing, but John Adams was also hard at work with political activities that were seen by some as incendiary.

The Boston Tea Party of December 16, 1773, at it came to be called, has been attributed to the work of Samuel Adams and his friends the Sons of Liberty. The events preceding the destruction of property included the institution of the Tea Act by Parliament and the refusal of Governor Hutchinson to allow the tea to be returned to England. When it was announced at the Old South Church that Hutchinson refused, “Samuel Adams, the driving force on the town’s Committee of Correspondence, arose to declare that ‘they had now done all they could for the Salvation of their Country.’”<sup>44</sup> Was this declaration a signal to head to the docks? Had Samuel Adams orchestrated the work of dumping the tea into the harbor? Some writers state that the Tea Party’s leading planner was possibly Samuel Adams, even if he was not an actual participant.<sup>45</sup> In addition to a perceived role in the Boston Tea Party, Adams was believed to have been a party to the events that led to the Boston Massacre of March 5, 1770.

Despite the horrific slaying of multiple people in Boston, Adams was not deterred in his zeal for the cause. He continued to write essays to encourage the people of Boston and other areas to come together in a united front against Britain’s tyranny. He was sent to the First Continental Congress by the Massachusetts House of Representatives, along with his cousin and two others, in 1774. There he would continue to push for opposition to the British policies that he perceived as onerous and eventually for full independence.

Historian Joseph Ellis noted that by the time of the First Conti-

mental Congress of 1774, Samuel Adams, along with his cousin John Adams, had become the “most conspicuous opponents of British authority in New England.”<sup>46</sup> The First Continental Congress voted on and set up the embargo of British goods unless the Coercive Acts were repealed. The Coercive Acts were an effort by the British to restore order in Massachusetts, as well as punish the colonists for the Tea Party. The Acts closed the port of Boston, restricted town meetings, gave British officials immunity, and required colonists to house British soldiers. Congress also made a resolution suggesting that the colonies begin preparations for war. The delegates went home in late October, but were scheduled to return the following May. By that time, events had already pushed the colonists and Great Britain into war.

A little less than a month before the delegates of the Continental Congress met for the second time, the first shots of the war were fired at Lexington and Concord on April 19, 1775. Thanks to the efforts of another well known patriot, Paul Revere, the militia was in place when the British Regulars filed onto Lexington Common. While the British were the aggressors in the shots at Lexington, the militiamen regrouped along the Concord road and began to ambush the Regulars on their march back to Boston. Adams has been quoted as stating “It is a fine day” when he heard the shots fired from a distance.<sup>47</sup> The shots would have been pleasing to Adams as they propelled the colonists even further toward the eventual independence of the colonies.

The Second Continental Congress met in May 1775. Once convened, Ferling noted that Samuel Adams began to play a more open role, but it was his cousin that came to be viewed as the leader of the radicals.<sup>48</sup> However, even after the string of events – the Boston Massacre, the Boston Tea Party, and the shots fired at Lexington and Concord – the delegates were still not prepared to declare inde-

pendence. It took more time, and the possibility of assistance from France before the delegates believed they could declare their independence. However, on July 1, 1776, just one day prior to the signing of the Declaration of Independence, Samuel Adams delivered a speech before the Continental Congress. In his speech, he stated “The hand of Heaven appears to have led us on to be, perhaps, humble instruments and means in the great providential dispensation, which is completing. We have fled from the political Sodom; let us not look back, lest we perish and become a monument of infamy and derision to the world.”<sup>49</sup> Even knowing that he had achieved his ultimate goal – that the Declaration of Independence would be signed shortly – Adams was still using his religious rhetoric to guide the soon to be new country.

When Paul Revere, William Dawes, and Samuel Prescott set out to warn that the British were coming to Lexington, Revere had another job to perform. He was also supposed to warn Samuel Adams and John Hancock, who were staying in Lexington at the time, that the troops had orders to arrest them.<sup>50</sup> Samuel Adams in particular was seen by certain circles to be the main antagonist of the rebellion in America. As Edmund S. Morgan noted “A noose around the neck of Samuel Adams and a few others, it was suggested would be wholesome medicine.”<sup>51</sup> In fact, it has been stated that Adams was the proverbial “public enemy number one” for the British Parliament. Had he been captured, or the Revolution failed, Samuel Adams and a few select others were to be the first hanged.

Long after American independence was declared, and the war led by George Washington finally won, the new nation would look to the leaders of the Revolution for their leaders of the new country. Some of the earliest prospective presidents included: Samuel Adams, Alexander Hamilton, Patrick Henry, and James Madison. However, these men were ousted by bigger names; great men such

as George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson.<sup>52</sup> As is well known, George Washington became the first president of the newly independent colonies. However, following Washington there were questions about who should or could follow Washington. Many believed that no one could do the job as well as Washington, and it was because of this belief that Washington served two terms instead of the one he had originally sworn to serve. Despite some belief that Samuel Adams may have made a good executive, he would never serve in that capacity. He had largely left national politics after the war ended and prior to George Washington's election to his first term.

While Samuel Adams was integral to beginning and sustaining the Revolution, he later became a much less important figure on the national scale. He chose to stop being involved in the national debates and set up of the new nation, and began to express an earnest desire to go back to Massachusetts as early as July 1778.<sup>53</sup> It was nearly a year after that before he finally returned to his home and family. Once ensconced back on his home turf, Adams worked in the same capacity he had previously; he began attending town meetings again. However, he did work with the Massachusetts Constitutional Convention as well as serving as president of the Massachusetts senate. He was later elected lieutenant governor of Massachusetts in 1789, and upon the death of John Hancock, became governor in 1793. He was elected to the office in his own right in 1794, but after only a few years decided it was time to retire.

Samuel Adams ended his time in politics completely in 1797. He even delivered a farewell address as the governor of Massachusetts in which he spoke on how "piety, religion, and morality have a happy influence on the minds of men, in their public as well as private transactions" as part of his encouragement to embrace the education of the younger generations.<sup>54</sup> Stoll notes that while Adams be-

came much less active following his retirement, possibly due to the increasing agitation of the palsy that had bothered him since the early 1770s, he was still attending church services and keeping in touch through letters with his old friends from the Continental Congress. In the end, it appears that the Revolution outgrew Adams. Jack Rakove noted that “Samuel Adams was ultimately eclipsed by the independence movement to which he once seemed indispensable.”<sup>55</sup> Where Samuel Adams was once the famous Adams, John Adams came to eclipse him and became better known through his continued activities on the national stage.

One interesting note about Samuel Adams’ writings is that unlike many other Founding Fathers, there are little of his writings left unless they were published or saved by the recipients. Puls noted that Adams, unlike other Founding Fathers, was “indifferent about his place in history.” Adams did not write memoirs, an autobiography, or choose to write letters simply for posterity’s sake. Furthermore, he did not make any attempts to collect his writings and letters, and in an effort to protect his friends and associates, destroyed many letters that could have established his part in shaping the American Revolution.<sup>56</sup> In fact, Ferling noted that John Adams saw Samuel Adams “burn many of his papers before fleeing Philadelphia in 1777.”<sup>57</sup> Whether his ultimate goal was the protection of himself and his friends or not is subject to speculation. Many other revolutionaries did not destroy their papers; most saved them and hoped for the best. It appears that Samuel may have been a pessimist in this regard. Fear of capture, his person or his correspondence; lead him to destroy many historical documents.

Because of Adams’ penchant to destroy papers, the main sources that are available to historians now are his essays in the *Boston Gazette*, his letters to other revolutionaries that were saved, his writings as clerk while in the Massachusetts House of Representa-

tives, and his contributions while serving in the Continental Congress. These can be interpreted to include some of his personal opinions, but they are typically written in the way of the times and focused as much as possible on the facts in such a way as to gain attention and supporters. Most of his writings prior to and during the Revolution do not appear to contain much in the way of describing Adams' personal feelings about how things were shaping up or if all was going according to his plan.

In general, Adams is loved, hated, or grudgingly admired. For instance, Ferling seemed to have a mixed view of Adams. He noted that Adams "was a tireless organizer. He was manipulative, an extrovert with an innate facility for discovering and appealing to what he called the 'Humours...Prejudices...Passions and Feelings, as well as [the] Reason and Understandings' of those he wished to lead." However, Ferling also noted that Adams had an "almost unerring political judgment. As if guided by some mysterious sixth sense, he seemed to know when to act, to pause, to move slowly, to accelerate."<sup>58</sup> Ferling falls into the grudging admiration category; he painted Adams as a manipulative genius who used whatever tools were available to him, but used them well.

Samuel Adams's cousin, John Adams, appeared to have believed him to be more responsible for the Revolution than many others. Ferling noted that John Adams "labeled Samuel Adams the greatest man of the era, the politician who has sculpted the protest movement in Massachusetts, influenced the resistance elsewhere, and both openly and covertly led the First Congress to embargo the mother country and the Second toward independence."<sup>59</sup> Other historians have mentioned John Adams' beliefs about Samuel Adams' leading role and through their own studies attributed him with an impressive leadership.

Puls noted many historians who studied Samuel Adams. Includ-



ed in his inventory is George Bancroft whose *History of the United States from the Discovery of the American Continent* demonstrated Bancroft's belief that Adams was the major figure of the rebellion leading up to the actual war. Also mentioned is James K. Hosmer's biography in which Samuel Adams is second only to George Washington as an important founding father. However, Puls also stated that Adams' reputation suffered due to some Revolutionary propaganda being attributed to him in error; most notably "The Horrid Massacre in Boston" by James Bowdoin, an essay signed "An American" that was included in Cushing's edited *The Writings of Samuel Adams*, and a speech from August 1, 1776 included in *The World Famous Orations* of William Jennings Bryan and Francis W. Halsey.<sup>60</sup> Puls notes that Adams' reputation further suffered at the hands of historians of the 1920s such as Ralph V. Harlow and John C. Miller, both of whom "portrayed Adams as a propagandist and zealot." More recently, writers such as Russell Kirk have cast Adams as a "well-born demagogue."<sup>61</sup> Adams' reputation may have suffered at the hands of various historians in the years since he first became politically active, however, this negative attention does not detract from the fact that he was one of the first colonists to so much as utter the word independence.

As a Founding Father, Samuel Adams ranks high. He started his political career as the little known son of a brewer and rose to the Continental Congress. He participated in the early events that lead to the founding of an independent United States and worked diligently to gain support for the rebellion that led to the complete break from Great Britain. Adams' writings were integral to the Revolutionary Era. His persuasive techniques aided him in gaining support for the rebellion. He additionally used religious rhetoric as well as ancient Roman and Latin references that were easily understandable to most of his target audience. Samuel further worked to estab-

lish the Revolution through his involvement in events that spurred the people of Boston as well as other colonies to question London's policies. Samuel had many influences, including: his father, a Harvard education, the Enlightenment writings of John Locke and others, ancient Roman and Latin orators, his Puritan ancestors, and his Calvinist upbringing. All of these combined to make him an able politician with a varied knowledge of political precedents to aid his writings.

While some question his motives, which are far from clear, the primary contribution from Adams was his writings. He managed to write a multitude of essays as well as work within the Massachusetts House of Representatives to encourage the people to work together against the perceived tyranny of the British Parliament. He continued his writing during his time in the First and Second Continental Congress, where as a delegate from Massachusetts he argued for independence. While his cousin John Adams later overshadowed him, Samuel Adams still proved to be an able politician who received the admiration of many of his contemporaries and the disapproval of the Royal governor in his home state.

Many historians have studied Samuel Adams' activities and writings during the Revolutionary Era. Some seem to view him in a positive light; as a great Founding Father, great orator, and great politician. Others have painted him as a propagandist who was bent on his own advancement and a manipulative writer who intentionally set out to incite a rebellion. He could not have achieved the Revolution alone however; he had the help of a bumbling British Parliament that pursued a policy that was not in their best interest. Had Great Britain not begun to pursue a course that could and did anger the colonists, Adams would have not had an audience for his writings, nor a growing group of people to push for the independence he so desired.

Throughout Samuel Adams' time in national politics, he gained many allies, including his cousin John Adams. John Adams must have had a high opinion of Samuel Adams at one time. John Adams has been quoted as saying "Without the character of Samuel Adams, the true history of the American Revolution can never be written. For fifty years his pen, his tongue, his activity, were constantly exerted for his country without fee or reward."<sup>62</sup> As John Adams points out, Samuel Adams was integral to the Revolutionary cause, and to the eventual independence of the colonies. Without men such as Samuel Adams, the history of the Revolution could not have been written, for there would not have been a Revolution at that time.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Mark Puls, *Samuel Adams: Father of the American Revolution* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2006), 13.

<sup>2</sup> Jack Rakove, *Revolutionaries: A New History of the Invention of America* (New York: Mariner Books, 2010), 39.

<sup>3</sup> Rakove, 86; Puls, 34.

<sup>4</sup> Ira Stoll, *Samuel Adams: A Life* (New York: Free Press, 2008), 22; Puls, 27.

<sup>5</sup> Rakove, 39.

<sup>6</sup> Rakove, 39.

<sup>7</sup> Puls, 29.

<sup>8</sup> Stoll, 24.

<sup>9</sup> Rakove, 26.

<sup>10</sup> Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen, *A Patriot's History of the United States: From Columbus's Great Discovery to the War on Terror* (New York: Penguin Group, 2004), 66.

<sup>11</sup> Schweikart and Allen, 66.

<sup>12</sup> Puls, 16.

<sup>13</sup> Stoll, 9.

<sup>14</sup> Puls, 34.

<sup>15</sup> Rakove, 38.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>17</sup> Barbara Tuchman, *The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1984), 128.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>20</sup> Rakove, 101.

<sup>21</sup> Puls, 38.

<sup>22</sup> Rakove, 17, 101.

- <sup>23</sup> Schweikart and Allen, 66.
- <sup>24</sup> Rakove, 41.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., 99.
- <sup>26</sup> Edmund S. Morgan, *The Birth of the Republic, 1763-89* 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 56.
- <sup>27</sup> Samuel Adams, "Samuel Adams Advocates American Independence" August 1, 1776 <http://www.nationalcenter.org/SamuelAdams1776.html> (accessed May 18, 2012)
- <sup>28</sup> Samuel Adams, "Samuel Adams Advocated American Independence"
- <sup>29</sup> Rakove, 42.
- <sup>30</sup> Samuel Adams, "The Rights of the Colonists: The Report of the Committee of Correspondence to the Boston Town Meeting, Nov. 20, 1772" *Old South Leaflets* no. 173, (Boston: Directors of the Old South Work, 1906), 417 <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/adamss.html> (accessed May 15, 2012).
- <sup>31</sup> Samuel Adams, "The Rights of the Colonists," 420.
- <sup>32</sup> Stoll, 18.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid., 59.
- <sup>34</sup> Samuel Adams, *The Writings of Samuel Adams* ed. Harry Alonso Cushing vol. II (Middlesex: The Echo Library, 2006), 11. [http://books.google.com/books?id=4kwIFEY6QdkC&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](http://books.google.com/books?id=4kwIFEY6QdkC&source=gbs_navlinks_s) (accessed May 20, 2012).
- <sup>35</sup> Stoll, 59.
- <sup>36</sup> Samuel Adams, *The Writings of Samuel Adams* ed. Harry Alonso Cushing vol. I (New York: G. P. Putnum's Sons, 1904), 23-24 [http://books.google.com/books/about/The\\_Writings\\_of\\_Samuel\\_Adams\\_1764\\_1769.html?id=KIXKN2DNfWYC](http://books.google.com/books/about/The_Writings_of_Samuel_Adams_1764_1769.html?id=KIXKN2DNfWYC) (accessed May 20, 2012).
- <sup>37</sup> Adams, vol. I, 71.
- <sup>38</sup> Stoll, 65; Adams, vol. I, 202.
- <sup>39</sup> Stoll, 66; Adams, vol. I, 135-137.
- <sup>40</sup> John Ferling, *Setting the World Ablaze: Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 59.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., 73.
- <sup>42</sup> Ibid., 85.
- <sup>43</sup> Rakove, 42.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid., 30.
- <sup>45</sup> Rakove, 44; Schweikart and Allen, 67; Stoll, 115; Puls, 146.
- <sup>46</sup> Joseph J. Ellis, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 165.
- <sup>47</sup> John Ferling, *A Leap in the Dark: The Struggle to Create the American Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 129-135.
- <sup>48</sup> Ibid., 162.
- <sup>49</sup> Samuel Adams Heritage Society, "Speech About the Declaration of Independence, 1776" <http://www.samuel-adams-heritage.com/documents/speech-about-declaration-of-independence.html> (accessed May 22, 2012).
- <sup>50</sup> Rakove, 31.
- <sup>51</sup> Burke, 48.
- <sup>52</sup> Ellis, 163.
- <sup>53</sup> Stoll, 204.

<sup>54</sup> Samuel Adams, *The Writings of Samuel Adams* vol. 4, ed. Harry Alonso Cushing, (New York: G. P. Putnum's Sons, 1908), 401. [http://books.google.com/books/about/The\\_Writings\\_of\\_Samuel\\_Adams\\_1778\\_1802.html?id=6pILAAAAIAAJ](http://books.google.com/books/about/The_Writings_of_Samuel_Adams_1778_1802.html?id=6pILAAAAIAAJ) (accessed May 24, 2012).

<sup>55</sup> Rakove, 38.

<sup>56</sup> Puls, 15.

<sup>57</sup> Ferling, *Setting the World Ablaze*, 280.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

<sup>60</sup> Puls, 15.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>62</sup> Puls, following title page.

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