

First Hand Accounts of Loyalists

Document A

To the inhabitants of Great Britain: In Provincial Congress, Watertown, April 26, 1775:

Friends and fellow subjects: Hostilities are at length commenced in the Colony by the troops under command of General Gage; and it being of the greatest importance that an early, true and authentic account of this inhuman proceeding should be known to you, the Congress of this Colony have transmitted the same, and from want of a session of the honorable Continental Congress, think it proper to address you on the alarming occasion.

By the clearest depositions relative to the transaction, it will appear that on the night proceeding the nineteenth of April instant. . .the Town of Lexington. . .was alarmed, and a company of the inhabitants mustered on the occasion; that the Regular troops, on their way to Concord, marched into the said town of Lexington, and the said company, on their approach, began to disperse; that notwithstanding this, the regulars rushed on with great violence and first began hostilities by firing on said Lexington Company, whereby they killed eight and wounded several others; that the regulars continued their fire until those of said company, who were neither killed nor wounded, had made their escape.

These, brethren, are the marks of ministerial vengeance against this colony, for refusing, with her sister colonies, a submission to slavery. But they have not yet detached us from our Royal Sovereign. We profess to be his loyal and dutiful subjects, and so hardly dealt with as we have been, are still ready, with our lives and fortunes, to defend his person, family, crown and dignity. Nevertheless, to the persecution of tyranny of his cruel ministry we will not tamely submit; appealing to Heaven for the justice of our cause, we determine to die or be free.

Joseph Warren (President pro tem)

Document B

We Nathaniel Mulliken, Philip Russell, (Followed by the names of 32 other men present on Lexington Green on April 19, 1775). . .All of lawful age, and inhabitants of Lexington, in the County of Middlesex. . .do testify and declare, that on the nineteenth of April instant, about one or two o'clock in the morning, being informed that. . .a body of regulars were marching from Boston towards Concord. . .we were alarmed and having met at the place of our company's parade (Lexington Green), were dismissed by our Captain, John Parker, for the present, with orders to be ready to attend at the beat of the drum. We further testify and declare that about five o'clock in the morning, hearing our drum beat, we proceeded towards the parade, and soon found that a large body of troops were marching towards us, some of our company were coming to the parade, and others had reached it, at which time, the company began to disperse, whilst our backs were turned on the troops, we were fired on by them, and a number of our men were instantly killed and wounded, not a gun was fired by any person in our company on the regulars to our knowledge before they fired on us, and continued firing until we had all made our escape. Lexington, April 25, 1775.

Sworn by 34 minutemen on April 25 before three Justices of the Peace.

Document C

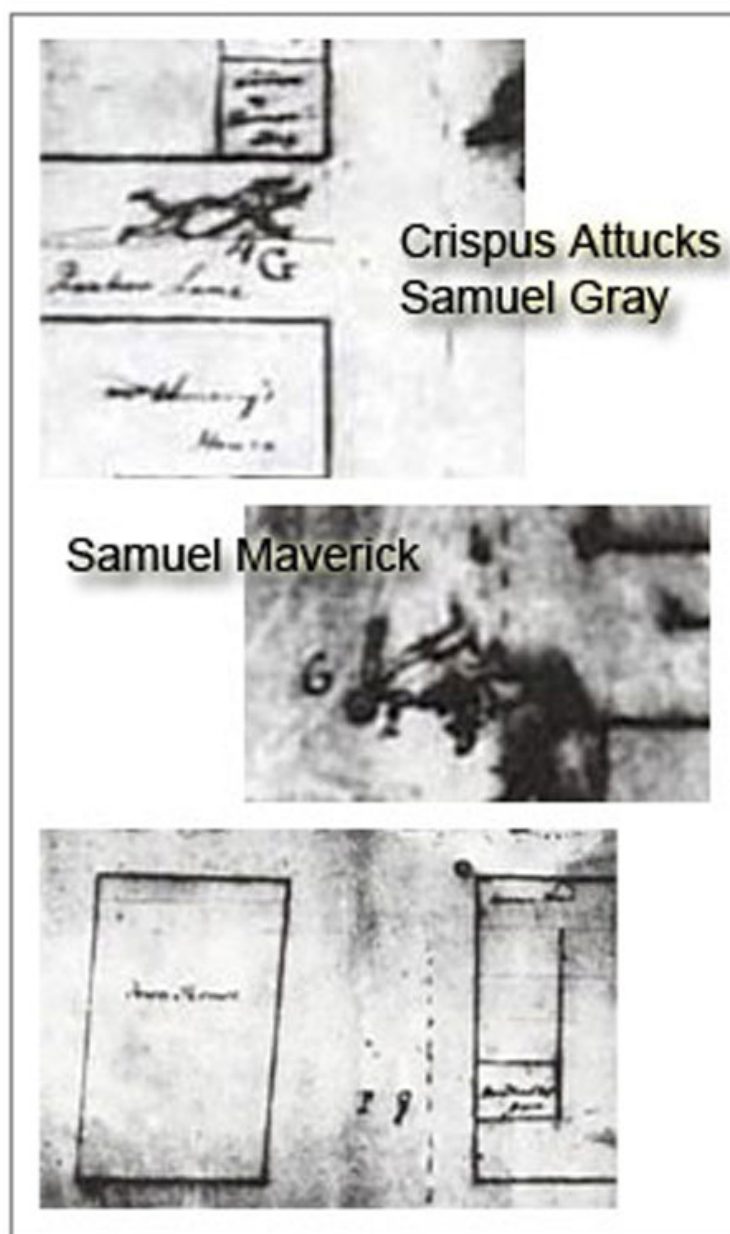
Major Pitcairn screamed at us "Lay down your arms, you lousy bastards! Disperse, you lousy peasant scum!". . .At least those were the words that I seem to remember. Others remembered differently: but the way he screamed, in his strange London accent, with the motion and excitement, with his horse rearing and kicking. . .with the drums beating again and the fixed bayonets glittering in the sunshine, it's a wonder that any of his words remain with us. . .We still stood in our two lines, our guns butt end on the ground or held loosely in our hands. Major Pitcairn spurred his horse and raced between the lines. Somewhere, away from us, a shot sounded. A redcoat soldier raised his musket, leveled it at Father, and fired. My father clutched at his breast, then crumpled to the ground like an empty sack. . .Then the whole British front burst into a roar of sound and flame and smoke.

Excerpt from the novel *April Morning* by Howard Fast, published in 1961.

Diagram by Paul Revere

Paul Revere created this diagram of the Boston Massacre scene for use as evidence in the trials. The two bodies laying together on the bottom left, marked 'A' and 'G' are Attucks and Gray, who died at the soldiers' feet. The boy, Maverick, was shot while standing in Quaker Lane. In the diagram his little figure is marked with a 'G', presumably for his master, Isaac Greenwood. James Caldwell is indicated correctly with a 'C'. Patrick Carr is not included in the drawing as it was made before he died.

Paul Revere Plan of the scene of the Boston Massacre (1770), (ms.v.ch.p.23.4 vault)
 Courtesy of the Trustee of the Boston Public Library/Rare Book.



First Hand Accounts of The Boston Massacre



Crispus Attucks is a name synonymous with the Boston Massacre. He was not only the first African American to die for the revolution, he was one of the first patriots to give his life for the cause.

American blood was shed on American soil.

The showdown between the British and the Americans was not simply a war of words. Blood was shed over this clash of ideals. Although large-scale fighting between American minutemen and the British redcoats did not begin until 1775, the 1770 BOSTON MASSACRE gave each side a taste of what was to come.

No colony was thrilled with the Townshend duties, but nowhere was there greater resentment than in Boston. British officials in Boston feared for their lives. When attempts were made to seize two of John Hancock's trading vessels, Boston was ready to riot. LORD HILLSBOROUGH, Parliament's minister on American affairs, finally ordered four regiments to be moved to Boston.

The British Make the Americans Skittish: U.S. Department of State



This print of Paul Revere's depiction of the Boston Massacre is on display in the Diplomatic Receptions Rooms of the Maine State Department building in Washington, D.C.

Samuel Adams and James Otis did not take this lightly. Less than three weeks prior to the arrival of British troops, Bostonians defiantly, but nervously, assembled in FANEUIL HALL. But when the redcoats marched boldly through the town streets on October 1, the only resistance seen was on the facial expressions of the townspeople. The people of Boston had decided to show restraint.

The other 12 colonies watched the Boston proceedings with great interest. Perhaps their fears about British tyranny were true. Moderates found it difficult to argue that the Crown was not interested in stripping away American civil liberties by having a standing army stationed in Boston. Throughout the occupation, sentiment shifted further and further away from the London government.

The Boston Massacre

On March 5, 1770, the inevitable happened. A mob of about 60 angry townspeople descended upon the guard at the CUSTOMS HOUSE. When reinforcements were called, the crowd became more unruly, hurling rocks and snowballs at the guard and reinforcements.

In the heat of the confusing melee, the British fired without CAPTAIN THOMAS PRESTON's command. Imperial bullets took the lives of five men, including Crispus Attucks, a former slave. Others were injured.

Anonymous Account of the Boston Massacre, 1770

This party in proceeding from Exchange lane into King street, must pass the sentry posted at the westerly corner of the Custom House, which butts on that lane and fronts on that street. This is needful to be mentioned, as near that spot and in that street the bloody tragedy was acted, and the street actors in it were stationed: their station being but a few feet from the front side of the said Custom House. The outrageous behavior and the threats of the said party occasioned the ringing of the meeting-house bell near the head of King street, which bell ringing quick, as for fire, it presently brought out a number of inhabitants, who being soon sensible of the occasion of it, were naturally led to King street, where the said party had made a stop but a little while before, and where their stopping had drawn together a number of boys, round the sentry at the Custom House. Whether the boys mistook the sentry for one of the said party, and thence took occasion to differ with him, or whether he first affronted them, which is affirmed in several depositions, - however that may be, there was much foul language between them, and some of them, in consequence of his pushing at them with his bayonet, threw snowballs at him, which occasioned him to knock hastily at the door of the Custom House. From hence two persons thereupon proceeded immediately to the main-guard, which was posted opposite to the State House, at a small distance, near the head of the said street. The officer on guard was Capt. Preston, who with seven or eight soldiers, with fire-arms and charged bayonets, issued from the guardhouse, and in great haste posted himself and his soldiers in front of the Custom House, near the corner aforesaid.

-Anonymous, "An Account of the Boston Massacre," (1770)

Oration Commemorating the Anniversary of the Boston Massacre

THE FATAL FIFTH OF MARCH, 1770, CAN NEVER BE FORGOTTEN. The horrors of THAT DREADFUL NIGHT are but too deeply impressed on our hearts. Language is too feeble to paint the emotions of our souls, when our streets were stained with the BLOOD OF OUR BRETHERN; when our ears were wounded by the groans of the dying, and our eyes were tormented with the sight of the mangled bodies of the dead. When our alarmed imagination presented to our view our houses wrapt in flames, our children subjected to the barbarous caprice of the raging soldiery; our beauteous virgins exposed to all the insolence of unbridled passion; our virtuous wives, endeared to us by every tender tie, falling a sacrifice to worse than brutal violence, and perhaps, like the famed Lucretia, distracted with anguish and despair, ending their wretched lives by their own fair hands...

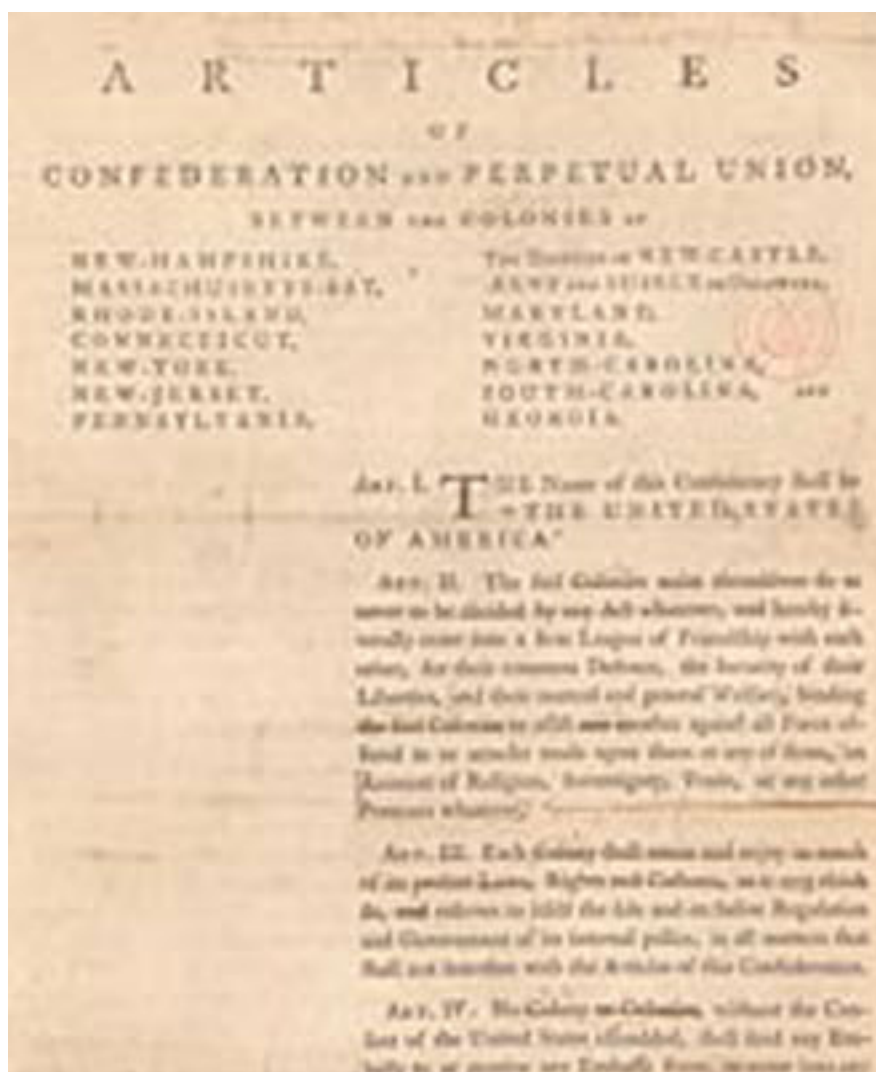
—Dr. Joseph Warren, "Oration commemorating the anniversary of the Boston Massacre," (March 5, 1772)

A plan of the city and environs of Philadelphia, survey'd by N. Scull and G.



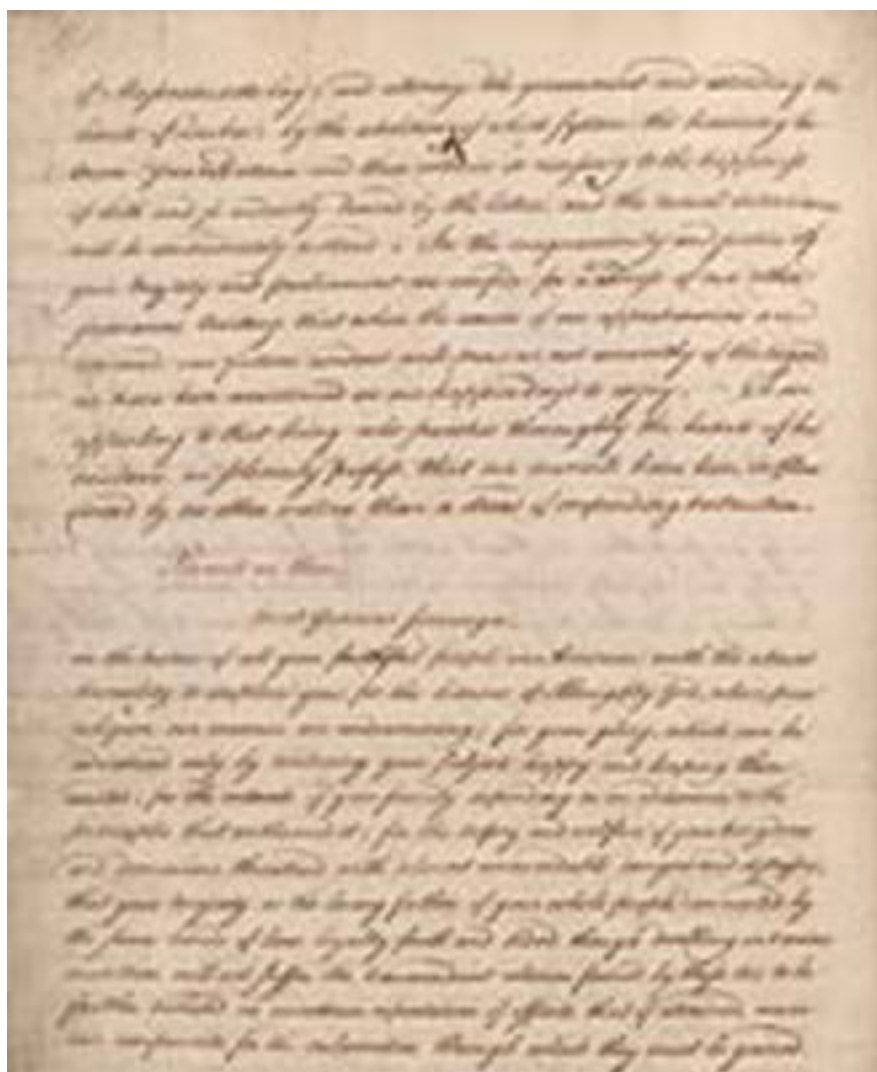
Philadelphia, site of both *Continental Congresses*, was one of the most urban, advanced cities in America in the eighteenth century. Drawn by George Heap, a surveyor and city coroner of Philadelphia, and Nicolas Scull, Surveyor General of the Province of Pennsylvania and a friend to Franklin, this map shows streams, roads, and names of the landowners in the vicinity of Philadelphia. The bottom of the map contains an illustration of the State-House or Independence Hall, home of the Federal Convention of 1787.

Plan of Confederation, 1775



Benjamin Franklin returned from London in May, 1775, and was quickly drafted as one of the Pennsylvania delegates to the second Continental Congress. Franklin's plan for a government for a united colonial confederation was read in Congress on July 21, 1775, but was not acted upon at that time. Thomas Jefferson, a fellow delegate, annotated this copy of Franklin's plan.

Petition of the Continental Congress to King George III, October 26, 1774



Benjamin Franklin delivered this Petition of the Continental Congress, dated October 26, 1774 and signed by fifty-one delegates to the Congress, to Britain's King George III. The petition, one of two copies sent to Franklin, stated the grievances of the American provinces and asked for the King's help in seeking solutions.

The Edge of the Precipice

I have the honour to forward to you
 and in address to the people of Great Brit
 I have in hopes by this opportunity
 Journal of the proceedings of the 1st
 Cong. I hope administration will see
 is not a little faction, but the whole body of
 Nova Scotia & Georgia that now complain
 who I am sure will reject rather than
 When I look back and consider
 the triumph had for Great Britain till the
 loyalty and ^{cheerful} unshaken fidelity that now
 were the present heartburnings, just
 ready to ask with the poet, 'Are there not
 ...

Charles Thomson, secretary of the First Continental Congress, sent the petition of Congress to the British King, George III, with this cover letter to Benjamin Franklin, one of America's agents in London. Thomson wrote that although there was still hope for peace, the colonies were on the "very edge of the precipice." The petition, which outlined a peaceful redress of grievances, was summarily rejected by the British government.

In Congress, July 19, 1776



In anticipation of an imminent attack by enemy forces gathering on Staten Island, Congress had ordered the formation of a flying camp of militiamen from Delaware, Maryland, and Pennsylvania to defend New Jersey. Franklin was appointed to a Congressional committee charged with conferring with political and military authorities on the best means of defense. This broadside signed by Franklin as president of the Pennsylvania Convention, urges the provincial militia to march with expedition, disregarding any reports to the contrary.

Common Sense and Independence

In January 1776, Thomas Paine, a political theorist and writer who had come to America from England in 1774, published a 50-page pamphlet, *Common Sense*. Within three months, 100,000 copies of the pamphlet were sold. Paine attacked the idea of hereditary monarchy, declaring that one honest man was worth more to society than “all the crowned ruffians that ever lived.” He presented the alternatives—continued submission to a tyrannical king and an outworn government, or liberty and happiness as a self-sufficient, independent republic. Circulated throughout the colonies, *Common Sense* helped to crystallize the desire for separation.

There still remained the task, however, of gaining each colony’s approval of a formal declaration. On May 10, 1776—one year to the day since the Second Continental Congress had first met—a resolution was adopted calling for separation. Now only a formal declaration was needed. On June 7, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia introduced a resolution declaring “That these United Colonies are, and of right ought to be, free and independent states...” Immediately, a committee of five, headed by Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, was appointed to prepare a formal declaration.

Largely Jefferson’s work, the Declaration of Independence, adopted July 4, 1776, not only announced the birth of a new nation, but also set forth a philosophy of human freedom that would become a dynamic force throughout the entire world. The Declaration draws upon French and English Enlightenment political philosophy, but one influence in particular stands out: John Locke’s *Second Treatise on Government*. Locke took conceptions of the traditional rights of Englishmen and universalized them into the natural rights of all humankind. The Declaration’s familiar opening passage echoes Locke’s social-contract theory of government:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new Government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

In the Declaration, Jefferson linked Locke’s principles directly to the situation in the colonies. To fight for American independence was to fight for a government based on popular consent in place of a government by a king who had “combined with others to subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution, and unacknowledged by our laws...” Only a government based on popular consent could secure natural rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Thus, to fight for American independence was to fight on behalf of one’s own natural rights.

Loyalists During the American Revolution

Americans today think of the War for Independence as a revolution, but in important respects it was also a civil war. American Loyalists, or "Tories" as their opponents called them, opposed the Revolution, and many took up arms against the rebels. Estimates of the number of Loyalists range as high as 500,000, or 20 percent of the white population of the colonies.

What motivated the Loyalists? Most educated Americans, whether Loyalist or Revolutionary, accepted John Locke's theory of natural rights and limited government. Thus, the Loyalists, like the rebels, criticized such British actions as the Stamp Act and the Coercive Acts. Loyalists wanted to pursue peaceful forms of protest because they believed that violence would give rise to mob rule or tyranny. They also believed that independence would mean the loss of economic benefits derived from membership in the British mercantile system.

Loyalists came from all walks of life. The majority were small farmers, artisans and shopkeepers. Not surprisingly, most British officials remained loyal to the Crown. Wealthy merchants tended to remain loyal, as did Anglican ministers, especially in Puritan New England. Loyalists also included some blacks (to whom the British promised freedom), Indians, indentured servants and some German immigrants, who supported the Crown mainly because George III was of German origin.

The number of Loyalists in each colony varied. Recent estimates suggest that half the population of New York was Loyalist; it had an aristocratic culture and was occupied throughout the Revolution by the British. In the Carolinas, back-country farmers were Loyalist, whereas the Tidewater planters tended to support the Revolution.

During the Revolution, most Loyalists suffered little from their views. However, a minority, about 19,000 Loyalists, armed and supplied by the British, fought in the conflict.

The Paris Peace Treaty required Congress to restore property confiscated from Loyalists. The heirs of William Penn in Pennsylvania, for example, and those of George Calvert in Maryland received generous settlements. In the Carolinas, where enmity between rebels and Loyalists was especially strong, few of the latter regained their property. In New York and the Carolinas, the confiscations from Loyalists resulted in something of a social revolution as large estates were parceled out to yeoman farmers.

About 100,000 Loyalists left the country, including William Franklin, the son of Benjamin, and John Singleton Copley, the greatest American painter of the period. Most settled in Canada. Some eventually returned, although several state governments excluded the Loyalists from holding public office. In the decades after the Revolution, Americans preferred to forget about the Loyalists. Apart from Copley, the Loyalists became nonpersons in American history.

The Loyalists

Thomas Hutchinson, a Supreme Court justice in Massachusetts, was the most hated man in America before Benedict Arnold, and was hung in effigy many times for being a loyalist.

The year is 1774. Whether you are a merchant in Massachusetts, a German-born farmer living in Pennsylvania, a tavern-owning woman of Maryland, or a slave-owner in the South, you share some things in common. For instance, you probably don't like paying taxes on such goods as tea that wind up going to support the royal coffers in London. At the same time you like the notion of being part of the British Empire, the most powerful in the world.

Chances are you speak English and have many British relatives or ancestors. Or, even if you're a German farmer with no ties to Britain, you are still grateful for the opportunity to farm peacefully in this British-ruled land. Yet, you hear murmurings—radical notions about separating from Britain are making the rounds. Those hotheads in Boston recently threw a load of tea in the harbor and the British retaliated with something called the INTOLERABLE ACTS. A confrontation is looming.

Who will you support? The radical Americans or the British? Fact is, it's not an easy decision. Not only will your way of life be drastically affected, but whomever you choose to side with will make you instant enemies.

Lord Dunmore, the royal governor of Virginia at the start of the Revolutionary War, offered freedom to enslaved Africans and Indians for joining the British Army.

Any full assessment of the American Revolution must try to understand the place of LOYALISTS, those Americans who remained faithful to the British Empire during the war.

Although Loyalists were steadfast in their commitment to remain within the British Empire, it was a very hard decision to make and to stick to during the Revolution. Even before the war started, a group of Philadelphia QUAKERS were arrested and imprisoned in Virginia because of their perceived support of the British. The Patriots were not a tolerant group, and Loyalists suffered regular harassment, had their property seized, or were subject to personal attacks.

The process of "TAR AND FEATHERING," for example, was brutally violent. Stripped of clothes, covered with hot tar, and splattered with feathers, the victim was then forced to parade about in public. Unless the British Army was close at hand to protect Loyalists, they often suffered bad treatment from Patriots and often had to flee their own homes. About one-in-six Americans was an active Loyalist during the Revolution, and that number undoubtedly would have been higher if the Patriots hadn't been so successful in threatening and punishing people who made their Loyalist sympathies known in public.

One famous Loyalist is THOMAS HUTCHINSON, a leading Boston merchant from an old American family, who served as governor of Massachusetts. Viewed as pro-British by some citizens of Boston, Hutchinson's house was burned in 1765 by an angry crowd protesting the Crown's policies. In 1774, Hutchinson left America for London where he died in 1780 and always felt exiled from his American homeland. One of his letters suggested his sad end, for he, "had rather die in a little country farm-house in New England than in the best nobleman's seat in old England." Like his ancestor, ANNE HUTCHINSON who suffered religious persecution from Puritan authorities in the early 17th-century, the Hutchinson family suffered severe punishment for holding beliefs that other Americans rejected.

James Chalmers and Plain Truth

Along with earning Thomas Paine the respect of his fellow Patriots, his pamphlet *Common Sense* brought scorn from those loyal to the English Crown. James Chalmers, a Maryland planter, decided to counter Paine with his own work which he dubbed *Plain Truth*. Chalmers angrily denounced the American cause and called Paine a "political quack." View an ad announcing its first publishing, listen to a reading from *Plain Truth*, or read a fine essay on Chalmers and his Loyalist document.

Loyalist Institute

Complete coverage of the Loyalist presence in the Revolution is the focus of this site. Divided into many different sections, all packed with information. Read up on Loyalist regiments, genealogy, re-enactment groups, black Loyalists, uniforms, music and more, more, more. Just take a minute to get the hang of the navigation, and you'll be knee-deep in Loyalist info.

Thomas Hutchinson

From being the "most popular man in the colony" to his eventual exile back to England, Thomas Hutchinson's turbulent life is profiled on Bartleby.com's *Great Books Online* page. This bio covers Hutchinson's troubles with rebellious colonists, as well as providing some commentary on his *History of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay*. No images to see, just a quick overview of one of the more famous Loyalists.

Tar and Feathers in Revolutionary America

America at the time of the Revolution was a great place if your opinions matched those of the Patriots. Opponents to the popular uprising were often treated to the harshest forms of punishment. This in-depth essay on using tar and feathering to silence

Loyalists and others comes to you from Brandeis University. Sorry, no images of what some colonists referred to as "new-fashioned discipline."

The Birchtown Archaeology Project

When black Loyalists fled the colonies for Nova Scotia in 1783, they landed at Shelburne and were assigned land which became known as Birchtown. More than 2 centuries later an excavation took place at Birchtown; it continues to provide clues as to how life was for these 18th century refugees. Visit the dig and have a look at some of the artifacts at this Nova Scotia Museum site.

In 1775, Lord Dunsmore issued the first emancipation proclamation in American history—however qualified and motivated by military desperation: "I do hereby further declare all indented Servants, Negroes, or others, (appertaining to Rebels,) free that are able and willing to bear Arms."