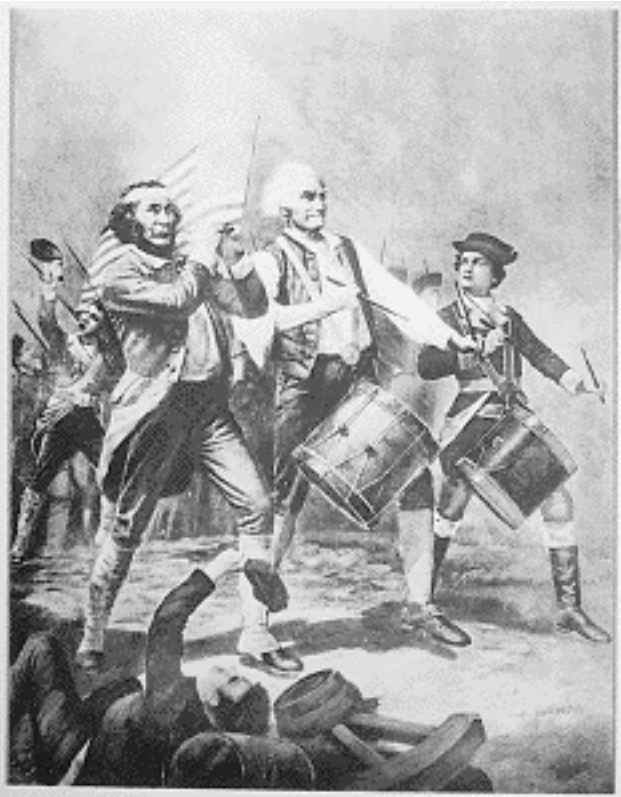


Sons of Liberty

An Interactive Activity



Join us on a journey back in time.

**Come with us to a time of
hardscrabble frontier, of taxes just
and unjust, and a growing sense of
stateside discontent.**

**Travel with us, sons and daughters of
liberty, back to 1765.**

**The decisions you make will directly
affect the future of your friendships,
your livelihood, and our family.**

**Our journey takes us to New York
City, in the Colony of New York, in the
wake of the Stamp Act.**

It is 1765. You are a merchant, an importer with a small business in Manhattan.

You sit in a coffee house with your business partner, Douglas Shea, on a warm August evening. Shea is furious.

"Blast that King George!" Shea screams, pounding the table. His face is red with anger. "Does he think we are made of money?"

You stare into your coffee. You're angry, too, but you're also worried. You and Shea ship molasses from the West Indies. The British have begun to tax the molasses. Your business is in jeopardy.

Oh, how you and your friends hate British taxes! You don't mind paying your fair share, but this is ridiculous. Soon, you'll need to put tax stamps on every bill you pay.

Even a deck of playing cards will need British tax stamps!

"They will squeeze us to death with these taxes," you groan.

Every day you hear more talk about rebellion.

"We ought to just shoulder some muskets and throw the British out," Shea says.

"I will not risk my livelihood," you say. "A bloody rebellion would harm us, not help."

"It's not right!" Shea yells. "It's not right that England should rule us. They are too far away. They know nothing of our problems!"

A group of merchants has gathered around you, listening to Shea as his voice continues to rise.

"The British just know how to tax us!" he screams. "Taxes, taxes, and still more taxes!"

"Hear, hear!" yells the small group of merchants. "Away with the British!"

"If they don't go willingly," says the neighborhood blacksmith, "we ought to toss them out to sea!"

"Listen," Shea says to the group. "There's a group of brave youth called the Sons of Liberty. They will teach those British a lesson they won't soon forget.

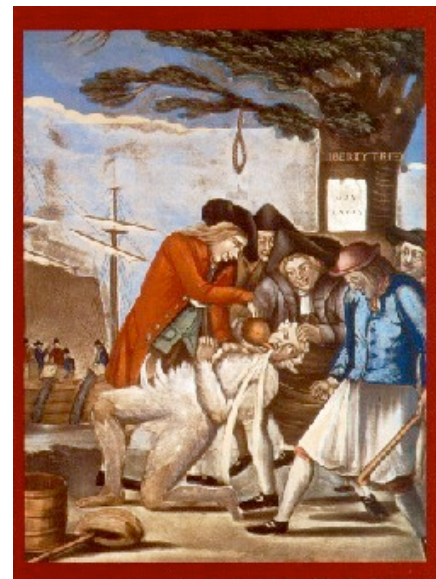
"They need fighters," he continues. "They need people to pass out propaganda leaflets and brochures, and spread the word of independence."

"But that's rebellion," you say. "That is treason toward the King! Need I remind you that we are British subjects in his service?"

"Service?" Shea scoffs. "His rule is tyranny! Let's join the Sons of Liberty, and burn our tax stamps in the middle of Wall Street!"



*King of Spades
Circa 1790 Playing Card*



*Sons of Liberty Tar
and Feather a
British Loyalist*

If you decide to help the Sons of Liberty, turn to page 2

If you decide not to help the Sons of Liberty, turn to page 3

You decide to help the Sons of Liberty...

You decide to attend a local meeting of the Sons of Liberty. It's in the dark back room of the Fraunces Tavern on Pearl Street. A man is making a fierce and angry speech.

"We shall teach Colonel Colden a lesson!" shouts Isaac Sears, a local shipmaster and Sons of Liberty organizer.

"Aye, we shall indeed!" another man yells in agreement.

The hair on the back of your neck stands up. This is it! You are making a fateful choice:

If you join the Sons of Liberty, you become a traitor to England. England is where you were born. England is, and has always been, your homeland. You've always been loyal to England.

Today, you stand on the edge of treason.

"Are you with me?" cries Sears. He is staring directly at you. Your friends' and neighbors' eyes are upon you.

"I am with you!" you shout. A group of merchants clap you on the back.

"Always knew you had courage," says Shea. "Knew it all along."

You are soon part of an angry mob. You march toward Colonel Colden's house. You have been warned, and flee on a British warship.

"The coward!" yells Sears. "He shall not escape our wrath!"

Led by a shouting, screaming Sears, you reach Colden's coach house. You hack his horse carriages into kindling. You force the British officers there to burn sheets of stamps.

You have mixed feelings. You want to teach Britain a lesson, but is this violence necessary? It is a new and unlawful activity for you, as you smash the belongings of another person. You feel like a criminal.

Isaac Sears jumps atop a smashed carriage. "Let's go to Chambers Street -- there's another British officer there. He has bragged that he will shove the Stamp Act down our throats. I'd like to see him try it!"

You don't want any more destruction. You just want to go home, but do you dare leave and be branded a coward?



*Home to numerous meetings
of the Sons of Liberty*

If you go on with the others, turn to page 4

If you go home, turn to page 5

You cannot see why all this can't be settled peacefully. When the British see how angry the colonists are, they will surely repeal the taxes.

"I will not stand against England," you declare. "She is our mother country. I am no traitor."

"Feh!" cries Shea. "You stand against your friends and neighbors, and all they hold dear!"

You must sell your half of the business, as Shea will no longer work with you. You start a new business, but you have lost many customers. You also are quickly losing friends.

It seems that everyone is taking sides: Either you're for the Sons of Liberty, or you're for England, and a traitor to the patriots' cause. It's impossible to remain friends if you're not on the same side.

You meet an old friend, Josiah Bolling, for dinner. He also wants to remain loyal to England.

"I want no part of this rebel chaos," Bolling says. "They are nothing but vandals and petty criminals. Our troubles with England will soon pass, and they will be disgraced."

"I am sure you are right," you tell your friend. "Beneficial times will return to the colonies."

"To King George!" Bolling says, and raises his glass.

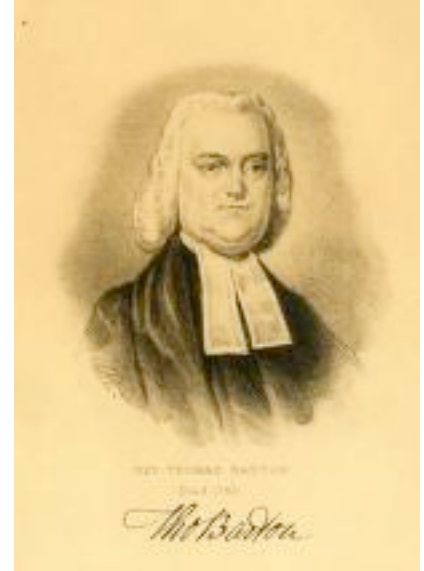
"To the King!" you counter, and your goblets clink. A second later, your window glass shatters. Someone has thrown a rock through your window!

"The Sons of Liberty!" Bolling says. "Those fools. They know our loyalties, my friend." You walk to the window.

"Low criminals!" you yell. A mob has formed on your lawn. "Get off my property!"

"Go back to England, you filthy Tory!" It's Douglas Shea, your old business partner. "We'll burn your house down if you don't leave!"

You are now frightened. The angry mob includes many former friends, many formerly friendly neighbors. Perhaps you should go to England until this blows over.



Thomas Barton
*American Pastor and
British loyalist*

If you go to England, turn to page 6

If you stay, turn to page 7

You decide to go on with the others...

You don't want to be called a coward. Besides, these Sons of Liberty may be right. Maybe the taxes will be lowered.

You near the house of the British officer. He has run away. Someone warned him that an angry mob was coming. Isaac Sears laughs. "Let's see how the British gentleman lives," he shouts.

You smash down the front door. Soon, the sounds of splintering wood and cracking glass surround you. One of your companions knocks down a grandfather clock. Seeing the vandalism pains you.

"Well, what do with this fine china?" asks Sears.

"The way they tax us, we can't afford such china!" Shea hollers, as he smashes cups and plates with his extinguished torch.

You think of your mother's treasured china, sitting in a cabinet in England, and you shudder. You hope these efforts do some good.

You smash a beautiful ladder-back chair.

Some of your companions are drinking liquor they found. The mob grows even rowdier, as they go out to the garden and begin pulling up shrubs. They tear books apart and throw the loose pages and empty covers into the street.

You are sickened by the ugliness of the scene. If only the British had been more reasonable in their taxation policies! Perhaps the events of this night will make them take notice.

But the troubles only grow worse. In 1770, a snowball fight escalates into a deadly act, as five civilians lie dead in the streets of Boston. You know now that war will come. The colonies must fight England for their independence.

You will join the fight.



*Colonial Era Ladder-
Back Chair
Circa 1760*

**You have chosen to risk your life and everything
you own for American Independence**

Go back to page one and choose a different path!

You decide to go home...

You slip away in the darkness. You cannot smash another home. The poor devil who owns it has done nothing to you personally, and your parents did not raise a vandal.

In the morning, Shea taunts you. "Don't have the stomach for what needs to be done, do you?"

"I refuse to believe," you counter, "that smashing a man's home will bring good to our cause."

"Our cause?" Shea asks. "You were afraid last night, scared to stand with the Sons of Liberty!"

"Lies!" you yell. "Foul lies!"

"Come with us tonight, then," Shea implores. "We'll teach another tax hound the same lesson."

"No," you mutter.

Soon your partnership dissolves. You move to Boston to make a fresh start. You just want peace and quiet, and an opportunity to live your life without judgment.

For a few years, it looks like there may be peace. The British relax the taxes, and you think they may have finally seen the light.

In March of 1770, you're walking near the customs house on King Street in Boston when you see a lone sentry crack a boy in the head with the butt of his rifle.

You turn to see a crowd of young people. They are throwing snowballs and yelling insults at the British guard. Other British soldiers come on the run.

In the crowd is a tall, articulate African-American standing about six-foot-two. You see carpenters and sailors, washerwomen and tailors.

The British soldiers fire, and the square is engulfed in thick smoke. The black man falls.

"Crispus Attucks lays dead!" someone shouts. Four other protesters fall to the ground, mortally wounded.

Samuel Adams and the Sons of Liberty calls this the Boston Massacre. Everybody is angry; war will surely break out, and you must fight for American independence.

You hoped for peace, but war has come to your town. You quickly join the local regiment of the Massachusetts.



Paul Revere's Engraving of the Boston Massacre, 1770

You have chosen to risk your life and everything you own for American Independence
Go back to page one and choose a different path!

You decide to go to England...

Sadly, you sell your property and holdings in the colonies and set sail for England. You feel bitter, but your family will be safe and peaceful.

Within a few years, war breaks out in the colonies. Your oldest son is in the British army, and is sent to the colonies to fight. He has risen to the rank of Major General, and is deployed at Bunker Hill.

He and a thousand other British troops, many of them officers, die in the Battle of Bunker Hill.

You are gripped with sorrow that will follow you to your grave.

Was it the son of an old friend who killed your boy? Did your son kill any of your old friends and neighbors?

You've never felt such sadness as you recall happier days in the colonies. How could it come to this?

You cannot make a new life in England, and you eventually return to the states. You visit your son's grave, then head west to establish a farm.

The farm is a success, and you once again feel part of the American land.

You only wish your son could enjoy it, too.



*Bunker Hill Memorial
Boston, MA*

**Your life has been forever changed due to the
Revolution**

Go back to page one and choose a different path!

You decide to stay...

You will not be run from this land! Just because you are loyal to England, you will not be chased across the Atlantic Ocean. You just won't commit treason!

As the bitterness against England grows, you find it harder to live in your city. Mobs attack your house. When war breaks out, they stone your carriage when you go to church.

You do your best to keep out of trouble.

A rumor begins to spread that you are a British spy. Some colonial soldiers are ambushed, and your neighbors blame you. A mob surrounds your house.

"Come out, Tory spy!" they demand.

You get your family out the back door. You leap onto a waiting horse to escape, but the mob blocks your passage. They drag you from your steed.

"I am no spy!" you shout.

"You are a Tory!" the leader of the mob cries. "You stand with the tyrant King George!"

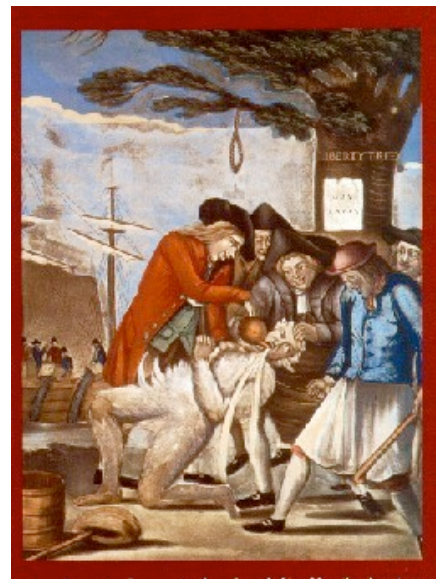
You are stripped of your clothing and hogtied. You are plunged into a barrel of hot molasses, which covers even your hair. The mob then rolls you in a heap of chicken feathers. You are a sticky, mortified mess! They load you into a wagon and take you into town. Everyone in town comes outside to laugh at the procession.

You finally shake free and clean yourself up, though the scent of molasses stays with you for weeks, a bitter reminder of your humiliation.

You flee with your family to Kentucky, where you hide out in the wilderness, living off the land.

After the war, you move to Philadelphia. You start a new business, a large hardware store, and make a good living. Everyone is too busy building the new country to discover your personal history. You are glad that the U.S. won its independence, even if you were on the other side.

You are mostly just happy to see that you are all Americans again.



OUCH!

**Your life has been forever changed due to the
Revolution**

Go back to page one and choose a different path!