

AMERICA AWAKENS IN A TIME OF CRISIS

William Livingston, Alexander McDougall and the Committees of Correspondence

by Robert Ingraham

Oct. 28—There exists a pervasive view among those who have studied the American Revolution, that prior to 1775-1776, very few among the American colonists sought independence from Great Britain. They had grievances, assuredly, yet the overwhelming majority were loath to break the link to the mother country. There is certainly a great deal of empirical evidence to support that view, including copies of letters, speeches and other utterances from some who are remembered today as the founding fathers of the nation. It is asserted that only the intransigence of George III and the wild incompetence of Lord North, Charles Townshend and other British leaders drove the desperate colonists to the steps they ultimately took, and this only at a very late date—a “last ditch” resistance to tyranny, so to speak.

But is this really true? Or was there another process, another dynamic, underlying and catalyzing events? Did the colonists revolt simply against acts of oppression—as the saying goes, “No Taxation without Representation”—or was there a higher principled motivation which guided the actions of the leaders and a majority of the participants in that struggle? The answer to that question is of great significance in determining the quality of the fight which we must wage today. At the same time, a careful examination of the ideas and morality which motivated the leaders of that era will pose a challenge to each of us to rise to that same standard.

The 1620 Plymouth Colony and the 1630 settlement of Boston had established communities which were already semi-independent. Legally they were bound to Britain, but those pioneers had fled to the New World precisely to escape the chains of oligarchical rule which existed in Europe, and they were pledged

to create a new type of society, governed by the principle of the equality and nobility of the human individual. This is explicit in both the *Mayflower Compact* and John Winthrop’s *A Model of Christian Charity*. From the very unfolding of the colonization of North America, there existed a determination to create a society that was self-governing and guided by the *agapic* principle of “doing good.” This beacon—of the intrinsic value of every human individual; of the promise of a new culture within which all participants might be free from the chains of oligarchical rule and liberated to both advance their own conditions and contribute to the betterment of society as a whole—is the *vis viva*



Portrait by Joseph Siffred Duplessis, 1785
Benjamin Franklin

of the American Republic.

In this report we shall be discussing certain individuals—great individuals who have been written out of most history books—who played a determining role in the creation of America. These include, most emphatically, William Livingston and Alexander McDougall. We shall also examine specific topics, including the Committees of Correspondence and the Sons of Lib-

erty. This report is not intended, however, as simply a recitation of events.

The first, most relevant, question to ask is, “Why did people do what they did?” What spurred them to act, and what inner moral force guided their actions?

A second related question, and one which is seldom thought through in a rigorous way, is:—How did the American Revolution happen? What transpired and what quality of leadership was demonstrated between 1750 and 1776 which produced the result of the Declaration of Independence?

The answers to those questions are not to be found in the oligarchical nostrum of “pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain.” Rather, what must be grasped is that, from the earliest days of the colonization of America, right through to 1776, an ongoing process of discussion as to the nature and intention of civil society shaped the thinking and actions of many in the colonies. “What is it to be a Human Being?”—and “How must society be organized such that it is coherent with Human Potential?” These questions defined the serious deliberation which took place in the pre-Revolutionary years.

The primary location in which the events of this article take place is New York City. This is not purely arbitrary. New York was the key battleground. In the mid-18th century there were three geo-political headquarters of the British Empire in North America: Halifax, Nova Scotia; New York City; and Kingston, Jamaica. The Royal Governors of these Provinces were the primary representatives of the monarchy in North America. The elements of the British Navy deployed to the Americas were based in these three ports, as were regiments of the British Army; and New York City was the headquarters for General Thomas Gage, who commanded the British military forces for all of the 13 colonies. The American Anglican Church, which functioned as a religious and cultural enforcer of oligarchical rule, was also based in New York. This dominant position of a British Crown faction in New York created a situation where the events of 1763-1783 took on the character of a bitter civil war,

considerably different from what occurred in the other colonies.

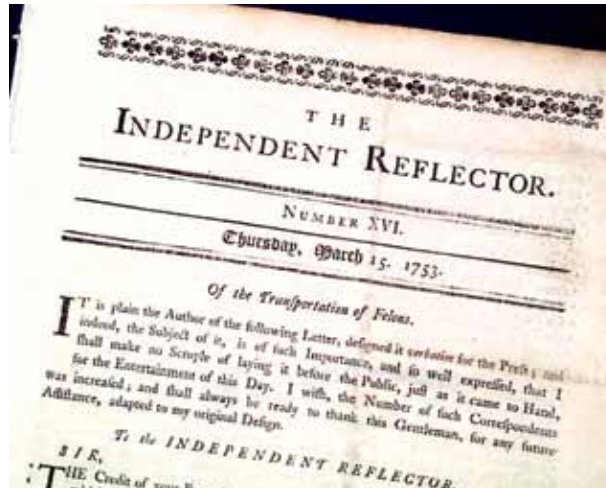
At the same time, it is out of the revolutionary leadership in New York, that the core figures of the 1789 Washington Administration would emerge, as well as the faction later allied with Alexander Hamilton in his economic and financial initiatives. All of the magnificent accomplishments which emerged later had been prepared ahead of time, through years of a principled fight, a fight which had at its core the question of the nature of Man and the purpose of human society.

I. William Livingston and the ‘Triumvirate’

On Nov. 30, 1752 a new publication appeared in New York City. *The Independent Reflector* was the brainchild of three men: William Livingston, John Morin Scott and William Smith, Jr., all lawyers and all members of the First Presbyterian Church.¹ During the 1750s and ‘60s the political influence of these three was so significant that they were dubbed “The Triumvirate” by their opponents. Appearing weekly, the *Reflector* was the only serialized non-newspaper publication in the thirteen colonies. It was published for exactly one year—52

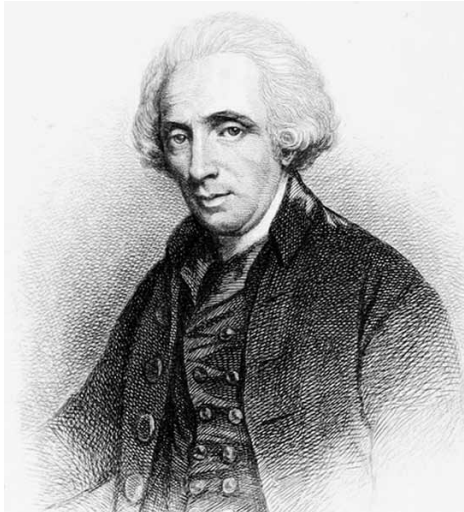
issues—before it was suppressed, with massive legal and financial pressure brought to bear on the printer by the Province’s Assembly and the Anglican Church.

Livingston (1723-1790) was of a generation between Benjamin Franklin and George Washington, nine years older than the latter and seventeen years younger than the former. Livingston’s chosen place of worship, the First Presbyterian Church on Wall Street, was



March 1753 issue of The Independent Reflector.

1. Livingston and Scott were both converts to Presbyterianism, the former from the Dutch Reformed Church and the latter a Huguenot. Both joined the First Presbyterian Church in opposition to the influence and teachings of the evangelical “Great Awakening,” which they abhorred. Both also fought the growing power of the Anglican Church in New York.



From a 1777 drawing by John Trumbull

The “Triumvirate”: William Smith, Jr. (left), John Morin Scott (center), and William Livingston (right).

known throughout New York as the “Patriot Church.” Although the origin of the Sons of Liberty is usually dated to 1763 or 1764, the seed-crystal for the Sons began at First Presbyterian a decade earlier. This is testified to by the loyalist Lt. Gov. Cadwallader Colden who later branded Livingston and his allies as “hornets of rebellion” and stated that the Sons of Liberty emanated from the First Presbyterian Church in the mid-1750s. It was a trustee of that church, Alexander McDougall, who, in 1763, organized the first official chapter of the Sons of Liberty in the 13 colonies. On January 14, 1776, while George Washington’s Army besieged Boston, the church’s pastor, Rev. John Rogers delivered a sermon, calling on the members of his congregation to “Let a spirit of patriotism fire your breath.”

The work of the Livingston-Scott-Smith Triumvirate is correctly viewed as a continuation of the decades-long initiatives of Benjamin Franklin. In 1748 this trio formed the “Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge,” and the similarity of that group to Franklin’s Philosophical Society—founded only five years prior—should be noted. By the mid-1750s, at the time of

the *Independent Reflector*, Franklin was the most famous and influential individual in America. His scientific experiments, his political initiatives and his “good works” in Philadelphia are all evidence of his intention to develop a non-oligarchical culture in the New World, one which nurtured both the well-being and the productive potential within the population.

It is precisely this same optimism as to the nature of the human condition, this same belief in a Free Citizenry and this same emphasis on human *beneficence* which characterizes the writings and initiatives of William Livingston.



The New York Society Library Building in 1893.

During the 1750s Livingston, Scott and Smith pursued many useful projects, including the founding of New York’s first medical society, the founding of the Moot, an organization dedicated to legal reform (to which John Jay and Gouverneur Morris later belonged) and the creation of the New York Society Library, the city’s first subscription library. But at the heart of all of this was not merely a desire for civic reform, but an uncompromising rejection of the mores and prescriptions of oligarchical rule. In 1752, with the appearance of the *Indepen-*

dent *Reflector*, Livingston, Scott and Smith declared war. The challenge posed by the *Reflector* to the residents of New York—to throw off subservience, not only to British diktats but to the axioms of oligarchical thinking and culture—created a political firestorm. By the time it ceased publication, ten percent of adult New Yorkers were subscribing to the *Reflector*, and given the fact that scarce printed materials were passed from hand to hand, a much larger percentage were readers. It circulated also outside of New York. Ben Franklin was a subscriber, as was John Adams.

The *Reflector* dealt with many varied matters, including essays devoted to civic improvement, on subjects such as road repair, fighting fires, prisons and jails, meat inspection, education, monetary and credit policy, and legal reform. The most extraordinary feature of the *Reflector*, however, was in the issuance of what can only be called moral or philosophical essays, almost all written by Livingston. Some were of a political nature—on the right of resistance, free speech, freedom of the press, taxation and representative government. Many of these were reprinted in other colonial newspapers. None of these essays, however, presented simple or pragmatic arguments. Always they approach their subjects from an unshakeable and bold assertion of the irrevocable rights of free citizens, grounded in the creative essence of the human identity.

Other essays went even further, exploring the nature of Man in society, his proper role, and the consequences of individual actions. There is an optimism which radiates from the pages in reading these essays, even now more than 250 years after they were penned. The intention is to draw out and encourage that which is best in each human being. On the one hand, Livingston is explicit on the responsibility of government to act on behalf of the General Welfare, but for him this can not possibly work without a desire within the breast of each person to act both for his or her own advancement and for the greater good. In essence, what is at work is a reflexive and a reflective minimum/maximum principle, where the moral incentive which motivates the individual is the same as that which governs society and culture, and the two reinforce each other, toward the improvement of both.

For the purpose of grasping the quality of intervention that took place, selected excerpts from these essays are printed *verbatim* in the next section.

II. The Reflector Speaks

In an essay titled “The Author’s Vindication of himself” (*Independent Reflector*, Feb. 8, 1753), Livingston draws a line in the sand between himself and his opponents:

The Reflector is determined to proceed unaw’d, and alike fearless of the humble Scoundrel and the eminent Villain. The Cause he is engaged in, is a glorious Cause. ‘Tis the Cause of Truth and Liberty. What he intends to oppose, is Superstition, Bigotry, Priestcraft, Tyranny, Servitude, public Mismanagement, and Dishonesty in office. The Things he proposes to teach, are the Nature and Excellency of our Constitution.—The inestimable Value of Liberty:—The disastrous Effects of Bigotry, and the Shame and Horror of Bondage.

In “Of Party Divisions” (Feb. 22, 1753), Livingston reflects on the qualities needed within the people to effect positive change:

From the Moment that Men give themselves wholly up to a Party, they abandon their *Reason*, and are led Captive by their *Passions*. The Cause they espouse, presents such bewitching Charms, as dazzle the Judgement; and the Side they oppose, such imaginary Deformity, that no Opposition appears too violent; nor any Arts to blacken and ruin it, incapable of a specious Varnish. They follow their Leaders with an implicit Faith, and, like a Company of Dragoons, obey the Word of Command without Hesitation. Tho’ perhaps they originally embark’d in the Cause with a view to the public Welfare, the calm Deliberations of Reason are imperceptibly fermented into Passion; and their Zeal for the common Good, gradually extinguished by the predominating Fervor of Faction.

In “On the Origin, Nature, Use and Abuse of Civil Government” (July 12, 1753), Livingston writes:

If we consider those different Springs from which good or bad Actions flow; the different Principles, Prejudices, Passions and Interests,

that variously influence every civil Event, it will appear undeniably evident, that the Force of Example can never teach a Ruler the Methods of just Administration. He must carry his Inquiries much higher, view Government in its first Rise, trace Communities back to their Original, and acquaint himself with the formal Reasons of Society. Such Investigations as these, will convince him, that Communities were formed not for the Advantage of one Man, but for the Good of the whole Body: That Government was instituted, not to give the Ruler a Power of reigning despotically over the Subject, but to preserve and promote the true Interest and Happiness of both.

In “Further Reflections on the Doctrines of Passive Obedience and Non-Resistance” (Aug. 23, 1753), Livingston delves into the heart of the matter:

The Study of human Nature will teach us, that Man in his original Structure and Constitution, was designed to act in a natural and moral Dependence on his Maker alone, and created solely for the Enjoyment of his own Happiness. His being a rational Creature necessarily implies in him a Freedom of Action, determinable by the Dictates of his own Reason, the self-resolving Exertions of his own Volition, and a Reverence to the Laws prescribed to him by his omnipotent Creator. From these three Heads, as from a copious Fountain, flow the whole Variety of moral Obligations. This Liberty of Action, however modified by human Policy, cannot in the Nature of Things be separated from his Existence. For by admitting the Rationality of Man, you necessarily suppose him a free Agent. And as no political Institutions can deprive him of his Reason, they cannot by any Means, destroy his native Privilege of acting freely.

He then adds:

It is evident, that Man is a Being imbued with an unalienable Right to think and act freely, according to the Dictates of a self-determining Will. Nor can a Subordination to his omnipotent Maker, be supposed in the least to restrain his natural Liberty. For tho’ the Laws of his Reason, or the Will of his Creator, which in Effect are the same Things, as they influence his moral Actions,

inhibit him the Practice of Evil; our original State of Rectitude must properly be considered.

And from the same essay:

By reasoning in this Manner, we obtain the following determinate Idea of Government: It is an human Establishment, depending on the free Consent of Mankind, whereby one or more Individuals are elevated above the Rest, and clothed by them with their united Power, which is to be exercised in an invariable Pursuit of the Welfare of the Community, and in compelling the Practice of Justice, and prohibiting the Contrary. From this Definition of Government, the Truth of the subsequent Propositions may be fairly argued.

And again from the same essay:

Passive Obedience and Non-Resistance, are often arrogated as the Rights of Princes, and the Duty of Subjects, upon a Supposition that the former are the Viceregents of Heaven: But the Truth is, they receive not their Authority from God, but from the People, as has been shewn in my last. Let it, however, for the present be supposed, in the first Sense of the Word, that *the Powers that are, are ordained of God*. It will follow that they are bound, in Consequence of their pretended Commission, to do nothing that is inconsistent with, or contrary to the Will of that Being whose Rectitude is infinite and unerring; and therefore, that they are not warranted by such Delegation, in committing Acts of Cruelty, Violence and Oppression. And if they are distinguished from their Subjects by nothing but a Commission to do Good, as the Case must necessarily be upon the Supposition of a Viceregency, whenever they exceed the Bounds of that Commission, they are to be considered as perpetrating Evil, and therefore must be resisted.

There are many other essays. One of them, “A Vindication of the Moravians,” is a defense of the Moravian Brethren, the religious group that brought the music of Johann Sebastian Bach to America, who were suffering persecution in several colonies. Other titles include: “A Defense of Ridicule,” “Of Credulity,” “The Advantage of Education,” “Of Human Nature and the

Immortality of the Soul,” “On Patriotism” and “Of the Waste of Life.”

The Hammer Falls—the Fight Continues

By the autumn of 1753, New York’s provincial leadership was determined to silence Livingston and his allies. In September the Triumvirate launched a second weekly publication, *The Occasional Reverberator*, wherein their polemics intensified, now even naming the names of their political opponents. Massive pressure by the Province’s elite caused the publication to be shut down after only four issues. Sentiments such as the following excerpt from the *Reverberator* simply could not be allowed to circulate:

Therefore, when this Right of Liberty is infringed by Civil Government, such Government is degenerated into Usurpation and Tyranny; and the Right of Self-defence, in the Oppressed, is under no other Regulation, than that of Prudence.

Then, in November, Livingston’s publisher, James Parker, was threatened that he would lose his position as the Royal Printer in New York and suffer other consequences if he continued to print the *Independent Reflector*, and that publication was suppressed as well.

Undeterred, Livingston and Scott recruited a former publisher of the defunct *New-York Evening Post*—the Peter Zenger-trained Henry De Forest—to come out of retirement, and beginning in February 1754, Livingston, Scott and Smith issued a series of broadsides, leaflets and pamphlets, written under pseudonyms such as Joseph Plain Truth, Common Sense, and Publicola. They even managed to publish a serialized column in the *New-York Mercury*, titled “The Watch-Tower,” which ran for a year (November 1754 to November 1755). To understand why Cadwallader Colden labeled the Triumvirate as the “Hornets of Rebellion,” look no further than the Watch-Tower column of January 27, 1755, in which Livingston declares, “If a People can be presumed to have a Right to oppose the undue Measures of an arbitrary Ruler, when they strike at the very Vitals of the Constitution, they are certainly justifiable, in opposing them not only with the Pen, but even with Sword.”

Subsequently, Livingston would form a partnership with John Holt and co-found the *New-York Journal*, the newspaper which became the voice of the



Cartoon by Philip Dawe, 1775

The Alternative of Williams-Burg. *Williamsburg’s Liberty Men gave loyalists a choice of signing allegiance to their cause, or visiting the Liberty Tree for a tarring and feathering.*

Sons of Liberty.

By the 1760s the political situation in New York was characterized by a bitter rivalry between William Livingston and his allies versus the British Monarchy’s representatives. These included the Royal Governor and the political faction headed by the powerful De Lancey family. That battle would rage for more than 15 years, and it would also be a determining factor in the creation and changing character of the Sons of Liberty.

III. The Sons of Liberty

The 1763 Treaty of Paris, which ended the Seven Years (and French and Indian) War, was a watershed event for the human species. With the defeat of France in North America, India and elsewhere, Britain now possessed a global empire:—This was, in fact, the beginning of rapacious, oligarchical British world rule. This also marked the ominous turning-point for the

American colonies, as London acted to eradicate the spirit and intention which had characterized that culture from its origin. The colonies were to be crushed politically, looted economically and fully integrated into Britain's global imperial system.

In 1763, British Prime Minister George Grenville issued a [proclamation](#) prohibiting settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains, reserving the land for the Indians, and restricting commerce with the Indians to only those licensed in London. One British official stated that it was urgent to keep the colonists "as near as possible to the ocean," so that they would remain "subservient to the Commerce of their Mother Country."

Then, between 1763 and 1765 a series of taxes were levied on the colonies. First came the Molasses Tax. This was followed by taxes on Sugar, Coffee, Indigo and other commodities. At the same time, Parliament acted to take complete control of all trade both with and within the colonies. Prior to 1763 colonial trade was overseen by the Board of Trade. After the Treaty of Paris that arrangement was abolished, and Parliament dictated all trade issues.

On September 1, 1764 the Currency Act was adopted, prohibiting the colonies from printing paper currency or circulating paper notes. That same act required that all of the Royal taxes be paid in Sterling. With a scarcity of Sterling and other hard specie in the colonies, this Act was an economic death blow. Shortly thereafter, the Mutiny Act was passed. This mandated that the colonies pay for the stationing and upkeep of British troops in the colonies, essentially an Army of Occupation.

Defending God-Given Freedom

In December, 1763 the New York Sons of Liberty is founded by Alexander McDougall. Livingston's partner, John Morin Scott, attends the founding meet-

ing and becomes an active member. Their view is clear:—If the actions of Parliament and the Crown were allowed to stand—if they were greeted with what Livingston had earlier called "Passive Obedience and Non-Resistance"—this meant the death of the human experiment which had been initiated some 140 years earlier.

Then, on March 22, 1765 the Stamp Act was enacted. It required that every document in the colonies, including deeds, wills, sales-of-purchase, newspapers, letters, etc. must be printed on "stamped paper," all of which was printed in England and had to be imported and purchased with Sterling. This was not simply a tax;—it struck directly at the American colonist's ability to communicate, deliberate or conduct business.

On June 6, 1765 John Morin Scott authored an article for John Holt's *New-York Journal* declaring that if the rights of the colonies could not be protected, "then the Connection between them [Britain and the colonies] ought to cease—And sooner or later it must inevitably cease." Britain could not insist that the colonies be governed by "principles diametrically opposite to its own

without losing itself in the slavery it would impose upon the Colonies."²

In October the first British ship carrying stamped paper arrives in New York harbor. More than 200 merchants and other members of the colony convene at Burns' Coffee House and pass a resolution declaring non-importation of all British goods until the Stamp tax is repealed. They also deploy volunteers to nearby colonies such as New London, and letters are sent to Boston, Albany, Portsmouth, Newport and other colonies requesting coordinated actions and establishing a permanent communication network. This is the actual informal beginning of what would become the Committees of Correspondence.

2. Note that this is 11 years prior to the Declaration of Independence.



Alexander McDougall

On December 17 John Morin Scott, writing under the name “Freeman,” issues a new Broadside. It declares:

These sacred Rights we receive from God in our Nature, and for their Preservation we are accountable both to Him, and to Posterity, to whom it is our indispensable Duty to hand them down inviolate as we received them from our Ancestors.

The Laws and Constitution of the Government of England, our native Country, are founded upon these Laws of God and Nature, and on that Account, receive all their value.—On that Account, the People by Common Consent, exalt Men naturally their Equals, to be Magistrates and Rulers over them, and endow them with Riches and Honour; and with Power to enforce the Laws for the public Good,—to protect Individuals in the Enjoyment of their Rights, and to restrain or punish Oppressors. . . .

Who, that deserves the Name of an Englishman, would see an open Attempt made to destroy, and for ever root it out from America, without exerting all his Power, and hazarding his Life and Fortune for its Preservation?

On February 14, 1766, the New York Sons issue another circular letter calling on citizens “to assemble as many of the true Sons of Liberty as you possibly can.” Chapters are formed in many smaller cities such as Schenectady and Oyster Bay. Philadelphia responds that they are organizing a chapter, and responses are received from Maryland, New Jersey, Norfolk, Virginia, and South Carolina. Some of these chapters also join with New York in establishing the Military Association of the Sons of Liberty, i.e., armed militia units.

Republican Citizens or a Jacobin Mob?

In October of 1765 Oliver De Lancey, the god-father of the British Crown/Anglican Church party in New York, in an action that might at first perplex the

modern reader, publicly declared his undying loyalty to the Sons of Liberty. De Lancey went even further and organized a faction, led by Isaac Sears and John Lamb, which effectively took control of the Sons for a number of years. During that period, De Lancey’s followers were among the most militant and most violent of the Sons’ membership. De Lancey/Sears would battle Livingston/McDougall for four years for control of the New York Sons of Liberty.

Much more will be said about Alexander McDougall later in this report, but here it should be noted that he did not shy away from militant action. Nay, he often led it. It was McDougall who, in 1774, led a group of “Mohawks” that boarded the ship *London* and dumped its tea in New York harbor, and it was McDougall, who, when news of the Declaration of Independence reached New York on July 9, 1776, led a march of soldiers and citizens to the Bowling Green where the equestrian statue of King George III was pulled down from its pedestal. Yet, McDougall was not a “mob leader.” Despite his humble background he worked closely with William Livingston and was motivated by the principles enunciated in the *Independent Reflector*.



Oliver De Lancey

McDougall’s target was always the British oppressors. His message was always the urgent necessity to fight the destruction of the natural God-given liberties and rights of the inhabitants of the colonies. De Lancey’s forces on the other hand were deployed to provoke violence for violence’s sake, to carry out numerous provocations, all of which resulted in British reprisals. Meanwhile, De Lancey, his friends in the Anglican Church and the Royal Governor would ensure that British interests were never seriously threatened. Livingston, Morin Scott and McDougall were the real targets.

During the 1765-1769 period when the De Lancey faction held sway in the New York Sons, their message began to emphasize their “trust” in the King, and to portray him as a victim of those in Parliament who, it was alleged, were the true authors of the acts of oppression. This led to a deliberately impotent “petition campaign,” which spread to other colonies, with the submitting of



Painting by William Walcutt, 1854

Pulling down the statue of King George III in New York's Bowling Green on July 9, 1776.

numerous petitions to “our friend” King George (similar to what John Wilkes and his followers were doing in England). Others viewed the petitions as useless and degrading, and George Washington asked: Should the colonists “whine and cry for relief, when we have already tried it in vain”?

The problem of mob violence and *provocateurs* which De Lancey fostered in New York, also existed in other colonies. During this period, the majority of those who became active in the Sons of Liberty were drawn from the working classes (the “Mechanics”) or even the poor. Their actions were often irrational, and they were easily manipulated. This problem was manifested in New England, for example, with phenomena such as the anti-Catholic Pope’s Night movement, and the 1772 Gaspee Affair. The need to oppose such senseless violence was recognized by both John and Sam Adams at the time of the Boston Massacre.

The paramount challenge for the actual leaders in Boston, Virginia and elsewhere—as well as in New York—was to create Republican Citizens:—to recruit from among the ordinary blacksmiths, carpenters, seamen and farmers those who would grasp and embrace the higher principles, the higher purpose of the fight for liberty.

The Cauldron Bubbles

The Stamp Act was repealed on March 18, 1766, but that repeal was accompanied by the simultaneous passage of the Declaratory Act which claimed for Parliament the authority to legislate for the colonies “in all cases whatsoever.” Even the supposed “friend” of the colonies, Prime Minister William Pitt, declared that Parliament can “bind their trade, confine their manufactures, and exercise every power whatsoever.”³

In June of 1767, the new Prime Minister Charles Townshend introduced a bill for taxes on glass, lead, paint,

paper and tea. The same bill also authorized unlimited “writs of assistance,” whereby customs officials could enter businesses and homes to seize allegedly “smuggled” goods. Another bill, the Restraining Act, suspended the New York Assembly until it complied with the Quartering Act for housing the British Army of Occupation.

Then, on November 8, 1768 King George delivered a speech to Parliament, wherein he declared a “state of Disobedience to all Law and Government” in the colonies, and a “Disposition to throw off their Dependence to Great Britain.” This was shortly followed by calls in Parliament to arrest and punish those in the colonies involved in treason against the Crown.

In New York, De Lancey’s balancing act between the militant Sons and his British patrons began to crumble. The situation came to a head when, on Dec. 15, 1769, the New York Assembly passed a De Lancey/Colden-sponsored bill to provide revenue for the quartering and support of the British soldiers. At this point both Isaac Sears and John Lamb, who were the “street

3. It should be noted at this point that Benjamin Franklin spent almost the entirety of the 18 years from 1757 to 1775 in London as the representative of Pennsylvania and several other colonies. There he fought the Stamp Act and battled the policies of Grenville and Townshend, under conditions which became increasingly hostile—and dangerous to his life and liberty.

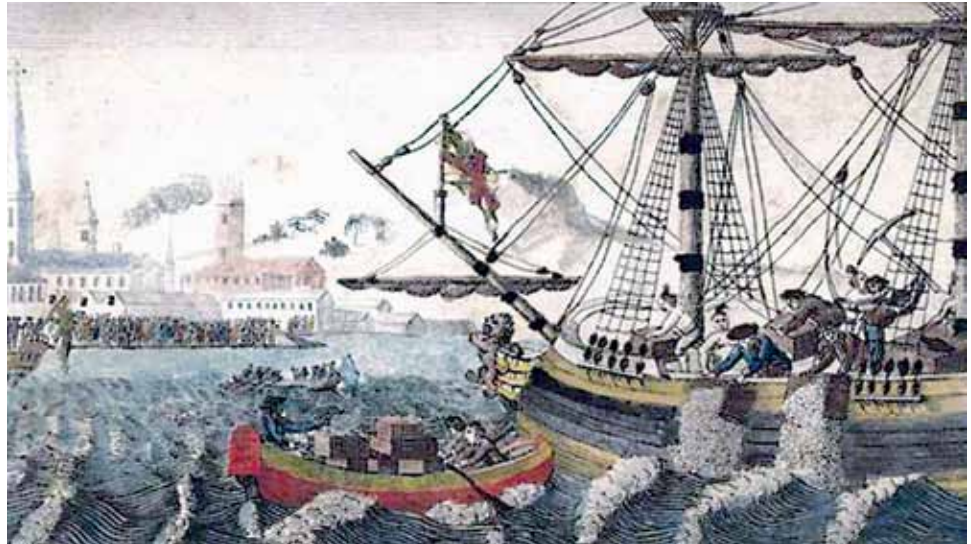
fighters” of the Sons, broke with De Lancey and went over to the Livingston party. At the same time McDougall took the lead in fighting against the Quartering Act, calling for a complete boycott—non-importation—of British goods until the Quartering Act was repealed. On December 16, 1769 McDougall anonymously authored a Broadside titled “To the Betrayed Inhabitants of the City and Colony of New York.” In it, McDougall proclaims that the British troops are “kept here, not to protect but, to enslave us.” And he continues:

Is this a state to be rested in, when all is at stake? No, my Countrymen, rouse!... Will you suffer your liberties to be torn from you, by your own representatives? Tell it not in Boston; publish it not in the streets of Charles-Town. The Royal soldiers are in the colonies to awe us into submission to the arbitrary and unconstitutional claims of the Commons of Great Britain, which if carried into execution will enslave us.

The December 16 Broadside creates a furor, and it is condemned by the New York Assembly by a vote of 20 to 1, the single vote of opposition being cast by Alexander Hamilton’s future father-in-law Philip Schuyler. Then, on December 18, a mass meeting is organized and the New York Sons of Liberty is reorganized under McDougall’s leadership.

McDougall’s authorship of the Broadside is discovered, and he is arrested on February 8, 1770. He refuses to pay the 2,000-pound bail and spends 80 days in jail. William Livingston’s partner John Morin Scott serves as his lawyer. McDougall is hailed as a martyr, not only in New York, but throughout the colonies. Livingston authors an article in John Holt’s newspaper condemning the presence and actions of the British Army.

McDougall would be arrested again, in December, on the same charge stemming from a Broadside of one year earlier. He spends another 82 days in jail (for a



Engraving by W.D. Cooper, circa 1789

Americans Throwing the Cargoes of the Tea Ships into the River, at Boston, *December 16, 1773.*

total of 162 days in a twelve month period).

Throughout 1770 and 1771 an intense ongoing battle rages between the De Lancey and Livingston parties in New York. With the backing of the Governor, the Church and the Army, as well as his still formidable political machine, De Lancey succeeds in lifting the non-importation boycott and forcing full compliance with the Quartering Act.

Tea

Due to the efforts of Benjamin Franklin, as well as the violent opposition to the Townshend duties in the colonies, the British Parliament voted to repeal all of the duties except the tax on Tea. Then, in April of 1773, the House of Commons passed the Tea Act, allowing the East India Company to sell tea directly in America. News of this reached New York on September 6.

On October 13 a mass meeting is organized against the tea shipments by McDougall. Together, with other members of the Sons, a “Committee of Vigilance” is formed, which distributes 1,500 copies of a leaflet (signed by “The Mohawks”) warning of consequences if tea is allowed to be unloaded. John Holt’s *Journal* publishes “Alarm #1,” authored by McDougall. Letters are sent to the other colonies requesting coordination of action, and on December 7—nine days before the Boston Tea Party—a reply is received from Boston, stating that they are ready to act.

These actions are followed on December 17, when another mass meeting issues a pledge to use force, if necessary, to resist the unloading of East India tea. They formally elect a Committee of Correspondence, consisting of Sears, Lamb, McDougall, and several other Liberty Boys, to establish official communications with patriots in other colonies. Four days later they receive word of the Boston Tea Party.

IV. Oligarchical Lunatics & Intolerable Actions

Between 1773 and 1775 Benjamin Franklin was engaged in non-stop political and intelligence warfare in London. All to no avail. Franklin's reasoned argument that the imperial course of British policy would result in catastrophe found no takers, except among a small minority, none of whom were in a position of power.

Between March and May of 1774 Parliament enacted a new series of bills, these sponsored by the new Prime Minister Lord North, which were quickly dubbed the "Coercive Acts"—renamed the "Intolerable Acts" in America. The Boston Port Act closed the Port of Boston, as punishment for destroying the tea of the East India Company; The Massachusetts Government Act abolished its 1691 Charter and placed the colonial government under top-down Royal control; a new more severe Quartering Act was passed, in order to accommodate the large number of troops now to be sent to Boston and other cities; and an Act for the Impartial Administration of Justice allowed for a change of venue, so that those accused of crimes against the Crown could be tried in another Royal Colony or even in London.

In May, 1774 news of the Intolerable Acts reaches New York. McDougall and Sears immediately activate the Committee of Correspondence. They send communications to Boston, Philadelphia, New Haven, Charleston, Newport, Georgia and North Carolina urging support for Boston, non-importation and joint economic action against Britain.

On May 16 a turbulent mass meeting is held. Despite the crisis, the De Lancey faction is able to postpone a decision on nonimportation, and the meeting nominates a fifty-member committee to direct the city's response to the Intolerable Acts. The De Lancey crowd has a majority on the Committee. Certain key

figures such as John Jay and John Morin Scott are elected, but (the eventual loyalist) Isaac Low is named Chairman, and the McDougall/Sears forces are in the minority.⁴

With the creation of the Committee of 50, a Dual Power reality emerged in New York. The official government institutions, such as the Assembly, still existed, but actual power began to shift to the structures created by the revolutionary ferment, none of which had any official sanction. A similar process unfolded in all of the colonies. De Lancey, Low and their allies did not attempt to stem this tide. Instead they joined the new organizations, fought to take control, and acted to prevent any further escalation.

On May 17 Paul Revere returns to New York with the Boston Circular Letter, which advocates an immediate embargo on trade with Britain until Parliament repeals the Intolerable Acts. Emboldened by this news, and frustrated by the De Lancey stalling tactics, McDougall and Sears act independently and nominate a new 25-person Committee of Correspondence, composed almost entirely of Sons of Liberty and Livingston adherents. At McDougall's request, backed by John Jay, Revere is sent off with letters—from this *ad hoc* new Committee—for the patriots in Philadelphia and Boston, calling for the convening of a continental congress to deal with the crisis.⁵

Isaac Low's Committee of 50 denounces the McDougall/Sears action and declares their new committee illegitimate. A compromise is reached on May 19, and it is decided to create a new Committee of 51, with greater representation for the McDougall-allied Sons of Liberty and voting rights for the working class Mechanics. De Lancey, however, still maintains a slim majority. The Committee of 51 is also declared as the official New York branch of the Committees of Correspondence. A four-person sub-committee is named, including John Jay and McDougall, to handle communications with Boston.⁶ At McDougall's re-

4. Isaac Low served in New York's Committee of Correspondence, the Committee of 51, the Committee of 60 and was chosen as a delegate to the First Continental Congress in 1774. In 1776 he refused to support the Declaration of Independence. Later, he became an active British collaborator in occupied New York City, and his property was seized by the New York Assembly. He fled to England where he died in 1791.

5. Early in his career John Jay was loosely associated with the De Lancey interests, but by 1770 he was squarely in the Livingston camp. On April 28, 1774 he married William Livingston's daughter, Sarah.

6. It is somewhere during this period, or perhaps earlier, that McDou-

quest, a letter is sent to Sam Adams in Boston, calling for an inter-colonial meeting. The letter says, “that a Congress of Deputies from the principal colonies is of the utmost moment; that it ought to be assembled without delay, and some unanimous resolution formed in this fatal emergency, not only respecting your deplorable circumstances, but for the security of our common rights.” Privately, McDougall gives Revere a second letter, written by him, to deliver to Boston, urging Adams to immediately decide on a time and place for the proposed Congress to meet. The same proposal is also sent to Philadelphia.

On July 6 the Sons of Liberty, acting independent of the Committee of 51, organizes a public meeting in the Fields (Commons), near Kings College, to be chaired by McDougall. McDougall calls for a complete halt of all trade with Britain. He also proposes a slate of delegates to the expected Continental Congress. The meeting approves his slate, along with resolutions condemning the Boston Port Bill, endorsing non-importation, and instructing the five delegates, if elected, to support a nonimportation agreement in the new Congress. The next day John Holt prints the resolutions in his paper and they are posted throughout the city. It was at this July 6 meeting that a young King’s College student named Alexander Hamilton asked that he be allowed to speak.⁷ Hamilton condemns the closure of the Port of Boston, endorses the planned Continental Congress and strongly supports a complete boycott of trade with Britain. For the next twelve months Hamilton will serve as an active member of the Sons of Liberty.

The next day everything blows up. De Lancey and Low get the Committee of 51 to condemn McDougall’s “rump” meeting and censure McDougall and all those involved. Sears, McDougall and nine of their allies walk out of the meeting, resigning from the 51. Weeks



Philip Livingston

later another compromise is worked out, but only after McDougall secures a firm pledge that the delegates to the Congress will support a boycott of British goods and that the Committee of 51 will abide by the decisions of the new Congress.

The Next Step

The Continental Congress convenes on October 22, 1774. In one of its first actions it established the “Continental Association,” to enforce the trade boycott, and it directed each colony to set up local committees, for the purpose of enforcing the boycott.

On October 28 John Jay’s “Address to the People of Great Britain” is read to the Congress by William Livingston, with a wildly enthusiastic reception. Jay accuses Britain of instituting “a system of slavery” after 1763, and he declares, “We will never submit to be hewers of wood or drawers of water for any ministry or nation in the world.”

As the Continental Congress begins its deliberations, the Committees of Correspondence go into high gear. Riders crisscross the colonies, delivering news of the proceedings and accepting messages from Boston, Hartford, New York, Albany, Philadelphia, Charleston and many other cities.

In New York, as a result of the decisions taken in Philadelphia, the Committee of 51 is abolished and a new Committee of 60 is created. This is formed to function as the official branch of the Continental Association and it becomes known as the Committee of Inspection. In elections to the new Committee, the Livingston party, particularly members of the Sons of Liberty, achieve a majority, finally breaking the grip of the De Lancey faction.

On December 15 Alexander Hamilton’s “A Full Vindication of the Measures of the Continental Congress” is published, in reply to the loyalist Samuel Seabury (A.W. Farmer). In it, Hamilton argues that the issue is not about taxes, but “whether the inhabitants of Great Britain have a right to dispose of the lives and properties of the inhabitants of America or not?” This

gall and Jay become very close collaborators. This will continue through the war, with frequent letters passing between the two.

7. Hamilton’s first public speech.

dispute continues for three months, ending with Hamilton's "A Farmer refuted," in March 1775.

Through the early months of 1775, the Committee of Inspection takes de facto control of New York City. The boycott is enforced, and several British ships are turned away from the harbor. On March 22, delegates are chosen for a Second Continental Congress, including John Jay, Philip Livingston, James Duane, and from upstate, Philip Schuyler, Lewis Morris and George Clinton. Except for the fence-sitter Duane, none are associated with the De Lancey party.

War

On April 23 news arrives in New York of the fighting at Lexington and Concord, and is quickly forwarded to many cities to the south through the Committees of Correspondence.

McDougall proposes a reorganization of the city government and the creation of a Provincial Congress. A new Committee of 100 is created to replace the Committee of Inspection, and after a period of time, largely due to the efforts of Gouverneur Morris and John Jay, a Provincial Congress is created. McDougall is elected to both bodies. At the same time, he takes charge of military preparations for an expected British invasion, and he organizes the first Militia Unit (which Alexander Hamilton joins).

Leaders of the De Lancey faction, top Anglican officials and other loyalists begin to flee the city, with Oliver De Lancey slipping over to Staten Island, where, in July, he would be appointed an officer in General William Howe's invasion army. At the war's end, he fled to London.

On June 17 the Battle of Bunker Hill takes place. The war is on.

V. Mulligan, McDougall and Hamilton

When, in the autumn of 1772, the seventeen year old Alexander Hamilton arrived in New York, he knew not a soul in the place, but was armed only with several Letters of Introduction, supplied by his tutor on St. Croix, the Rev. Hugh Knox. It is revealing to consider the recipients of those letters. One was addressed to William Livingston, another was to Livingston's friend Elias Boudinot and a third was to John Rogers, pastor



Hercules Mulligan

of the First Presbyterian Church.

Before relocating to the Caribbean, in the mid-1750s, the Presbyterian Hugh Knox had studied at the College of New Jersey where he became closely acquainted with all three of these individuals, and he maintained a correspondence with Rogers and Boudinot for many years. Knox's 1750s association with Livingston and Rogers occurred precisely at the time that *The Independent Reflector* was being published, and it is inconceivable that he was not familiar with those essays, which were the sensation of New York at the time. In 1772, it was Knox who suggested to Hamilton that he enroll in Francis Barber's Elizabethtown Academy upon his arrival in America.

Hamilton's first stop in New York is at Kortright and Cruger, the trading firm for which he had worked in St. Croix.⁸ Hamilton's emigration to New York had been financed by his aunt, Ann Lytton Venton, who had arranged for a regular allowance, to be paid through Kortright and Cruger. Hamilton meets the office manager of the firm, Hugh Mulligan, who introduces him to his brother Hercules Mulligan, who, in turn, offers to board the young Hamilton.

While making arrangements to enroll at the Elizabethtown Academy, Hamilton lives briefly with Mulligan, and later, while a student at King's College he would board with the Mulligan family for some time. Hercules, it turns out, is a leading member of the Sons

8. The Crugers were another New York family riven by the Revolution. Nicholas Cruger, who was Hamilton's employer in St. Croix, became an ardent patriot, was twice imprisoned by the British and, in 1783, accompanied General Washington on his triumphal entry into New York. Several other members of the family went over to the British.

of Liberty and closely associated with Alexander McDougall. It is possible that Hamilton met McDougall through Mulligan, even at this early date, but there is no record of it. Of that time, Mulligan later wrote, “Mr. H. used in the evenings to sit with my family and my brother’s family and write doggerel rhymes for their amusement; he was always amiable and cheerful and extremely attentive to his books.” Mulligan, of whom more will be said below, is a “street leader” of the Sons, one of the “Liberty Boys,” and had been involved in many fracas, including the 1770 Battle of Golden Hill.

Mulligan also knew William Livingston, and he accompanied Hamilton when he delivered his letter of introduction at Livingston Manor.⁹ After Hamilton’s acceptance at the Elizabethtown Academy, William Livingston invites Hamilton to board at the Manor.¹⁰ There, among other experiences, he meets John Jay, who was occupied with courting Livingston’s daughter. He is also befriended by Livingston’s brother-in-law William Alexander, better known as Lord Stirling, and later one of George Washington’s most trusted generals.

After about nine months of intensive study as the Academy, Hamilton is ready to enroll in college. He elects to study at King’s College, which is arranged by Lord Stirling, a member of the college’s governing board. Shortly after enrolling, Hamilton authors his first published political piece, “Defence and Destruction of the Tea,” published in John Holt’s *New-York Journal*, supporting the action of the Boston Tea Party. It is likely he met Holt through William Livingston, who was the co-founder of the *Journal*. Or, perhaps



A Young Alexander Hamilton, an Engraving by Frederick Thomas Reynolds.

Hercules Mulligan introduced them.

Today, Hamilton’s “A Full Vindication of the Measures of the Continental Congress” and his “A Farmer Refuted” enjoy justly-deserved fame, but what is less well known is that from 1773 to 1775, while a student at King’s College, Hamilton was a regular contributor to Holt’s *Journal*. Numerous articles and even some of the most trenchant editorials were anonymously authored by Hamilton. His friends and promoters were well aware of this and promoted his writings. On December 5, 1775 John Jay wrote to Alexander McDougall, “I hope Mr. Hamilton continues busy. I have not received Holt’s paper these three months and therefore cannot

judge of the progress he makes.” From November 9, 1775, to February 8, 1776, the *New-York Journal* ran fourteen installments of “The Monitor,” all authored by Hamilton. These were the longest and most prominently featured string of essays that Holt printed before the Revolution. Hamilton, in fact, became the leading propagandist for the Sons of Liberty.

Hercules Mulligan

Hercules Mulligan (1740-1825) was from a working-class background. Little is known of the intimacies of his life, but as a young adult he took up the occupation of tailor and by no later than 1764 he became a member of the Sons of Liberty. When he met the young Hamilton in 1772, he was 32 years old.

Mulligan took part in many of the battles waged by the Sons, and he would become active in the New York Committee of Correspondence. On July 9, 1776 when the Sons destroyed the statue of King George III on the Bowling Green, reportedly it was Mulligan who threw the first rope around George’s neck to drag him from the pedestal.

In 1775, Mulligan was the prime organizer of the first armed militia brigade in New York, the Corsicans (later renamed the Hearts of Oak). The company drilled in the graveyard of St. Paul’s Chapel, near King’s Col-

9. It seems highly unlikely that Hamilton’s seemingly chance meeting with Hercules Mulligan and his being in possession of a Letter of Introduction to William Livingston were just happenstance occurrences, but the ultimate truth of such matters will likely never be known for certain.

10. Livingston had moved to New Jersey in 1770. He would serve as that state’s Governor during the Revolutionary War, and in 1788 he became a signer of the U.S. Constitution.



Domenick D'Andrea

The Delaware Regiment at the Battle of Long Island, August 27, 1776.

lege. Composed almost entirely of members of the Sons of Liberty, the 20-year-old Hamilton joined this militia, trained with them, and took part in several military clashes. In August the Hearts of Oak, while under fire from *HMS Asia*, captured four British cannon in the Battery, after which they became an artillery unit, with Hamilton in charge of the cannon.

In February, 1776, when Hamilton was given a commission as a Captain in the regular Army and given the instruction to raise a Company of Artillery, his Sons of Liberty comrades from the Hearts of Oak formed the core of his Company. There was considerable opposition in the Provincial Congress to giving command of the main artillery unit to a 20-year-old college student, but Alexander McDougall and John Jay insisted, and the coveted commission went to Hamilton.

Later, while serving on George Washington's staff, Hamilton recommended Hercules Mulligan to Wash-



Drawing by D. Falls

Capt. Alexander Hamilton, Provincial Company of Artillery, in January, 1776.

ington as a potential patriot spy in New York City. Mulligan then became a member of the Culper spy ring, twice providing information which saved Washington's life. Since British officers in occupied New York frequented his tailor shop, at the war's end many New Yorker's viewed him as an ardent loyalist. To set the record straight, upon entering New York City on Evacuation Day, Washington made a point to publicly stop at Mulligan's shop and purchase a new suit of clothes. The next morning Mulligan put a sign in his window which read "Clothier to Genl. Washington," and he was never bothered again.

Alexander McDougall

What has been said so far about Alexander McDougall conveys only a part of what he accomplished.

As to background, McDougall came from an immigrant Scottish family, was the son of a farmer and grew up delivering milk in Manhattan. Later he went to sea, became a privateer during the French and Indian War, purchased several ships and traveled up and down the Atlantic seaboard buying and selling goods. By the 1770s he had sold off his shipping concerns and was primarily engaged in mercantile trade.

We pick up his story at the time of the Battle of Bunker Hill. A key leader in both New York City's Committee of 100 and the New York Provincial Congress, when the fighting broke out McDougall abandoned completely his political career and joined the Army. In March, 1776 he organized the first New York brigade in the Continental Army. On August 9, he was promoted to Brigadier General in the Army.

His brigade was on the front lines in both the Battle of Long Island and the Battle of Harlem Heights. At the subsequent Battle of White Plains, McDougall's force of 1,500 men bore the brunt of the British attack, and they were supported by Alexander Hamilton, commanding two field pieces (Battle of Chatterton Hill). McDougall's troops were the last to retreat from the field. Subsequently he would be put in charge of commanding troops in the Hudson Highlands, and it was McDougall who oversaw the laying of a chain across the Hudson River to block British warships. Already at an advanced age for a field commander and ill throughout those years, McDougall would remain in the Hudson River valley for the remainder of the war, except for his participation in the 1777 Battle of Germantown. McDougall's brigade fought heroically, and after the battle Washington personally wrote to Congress asking for McDougall's promotion to Major General, which was approved on October 20.

On November 25, 1783, when the victorious Gen. Washington entered New York City, he left his Army at the city limits. McDougall organized an escort to accompany Washington down the length of the island, led by himself and composed primarily of the old guard from the Sons of Liberty.

When McDougall dies in 1786, he is hailed by Washington as a "Pillar of the Revolution."¹¹

Banking and Credit

As all of our readers are aware, Alexander Hamilton's primary fame stems from his genius in matters of economics and banking. When the war ended in 1783, the public and private finances of the new nation were in a precarious condition. The only reliable financial institution was Robert Morris' Bank of North America, and it had been greatly weakened by the eight years of war. In New York, businesses, farmers and merchants were desperate for credit, and the resources required to rebuild New York City, which had been greatly damaged by the war, were non-existent.

In New York several incompetent schemes were being floated, including Gov. George Clinton's plan to issue a state-backed paper currency, which was guaran-

teed to depreciate in value, and a proposal by Robert Livingston to create a Land Bank, which would greatly benefit the upstate large landowners, such as himself, but would have been of no use for mercantile or manufacturing interests. This plan also authorized the proposed bank to create essentially privately-issued paper money.

Into this mess, in early 1784, Hamilton, together with his brother-in-law John Church, decided to intervene. Privately, they came up with a plan to create a species-bank for New York, modeled somewhat on the Bank of North America.¹² They began discussions with potential subscribers and were planning to go ahead, when Hamilton learned that Alexander McDougall had, at a meeting held on February 24, 1784 at the Merchants Coffee House, publicly proposed an almost identical plan to create a bank along the lines of the Bank of North America. With this news, Hamilton decided to abandon his own initiative and throw in his lot with the group being organized by McDougall.

Some might insist that this remarkable coincidence was all part of the same operation, but in a letter that Hamilton wrote to John Church on March 10, he is explicit that the idea for the bank had independently been put forward by McDougall.

On February 26 a second meeting is held (McDougall chaired both meetings), and the Bank of New York is founded, with a capitalization of \$500,000 in gold and silver. It is very clear that Hamilton and McDougall were closely cooperating. Hamilton writes the constitution for the new institution, and he also becomes the bank's attorney. McDougall is voted the new bank's President and Hamilton and Isaac Roosevelt directors. Investors include both former members of the Sons of Liberty, as well as previous loyalists. McDougall serves for one year as President and then retires due to illness (he died shortly thereafter), and he is succeeded by Isaac Roosevelt who serves as President until 1791.

Until the founding of the Bank of the United States, the Bank of New York—in addition to its beneficial role in New York State—performed a vital function for the nation. One example is that the bank provided the United States government its first loan in 1789. That

11. I will also say here that several of the key individuals mentioned in this article, including Alexander McDougall, Hercules Mulligan and the Rev. John Rogers, joined with John Jay and Alexander Hamilton in founding the anti-slavery New York Manumission Society in 1785.

12. In fact, the idea of creating a New York bank modeled on the Bank of North America had first been proposed to Hamilton by Gouverneur Morris in 1783.

loan was orchestrated by Hamilton, then Secretary of the Treasury, and it paid the salaries of United States Congress and President George Washington.

VI. Committees of Correspondence and Today

Not everyone was transformed by the events of 1763-1783. The rabid hard-core loyalists to the Crown, by-and-large, remained loyalists. Most of them, such as Oliver De Lancey and his ilk, eventually fled to England. But for others, the decisions that were made and the intentions involved are not so clear. Many families were split by the Revolution, including those of Benjamin Franklin and Gouverneur Morris. Peter Van Schaack, one of John Jay's most intimate friends, refused to support the Declaration of Independence and fled to London. Some of Franklin's earlier collaborators in scientific investigations, such as Cadwallader Colden, became staunch supporters of the Crown. Even William Smith Jr., the third partner of the Livingston-Scott-Smith Triumvirate, broke with his friends in 1776, allying with the British occupying power and later fleeing to Canada, where he would eventually be appointed Chief Justice of that Royal Province.

And then there were those who fought for the revolution but never abandoned their pre-war prejudices. Isaac Sears and John Lamb are among these. Stalwart members of the Sons of Liberty, ready to fight anyone, anywhere, anytime, they never overcame their self-identities as provocateurs. After the war, Sears and Lamb continued to persecute and expropriate property from the former loyalists, in violation of the 1783 Treaty of Paris. McDougall and Hamilton jointly fought them on this.

But then,—Then there are the tens of thousands of others!—*those who were changed*, those who were touched by the revived ideals of 1620 and 1630. A new power entered their hearts. The vision of a better, more productive future, a more productive life, a human identity,—this is what was embraced and acted on by many, and this became the intention of the Revolution.

We see this already in William Livingston's optimism, as it flows from the pages of the *Independent Reflector*, wherein he discusses the nature of the human condition and the potential for good which exists within each human individual:—*Truthful Principles from the past shall govern the Present and the Future, and our*

willful actions Today shall fulfill the Promise of that Past. The moral impetus embedded in this outlook would define the successful outcome of the Revolution.

This is where the critical role of the Committees of Correspondence comes in. For several years, prior to the outbreak of actual warfare, hundreds of riders traveled day and night, tirelessly, up and down the Eastern Seaboard, stopping at hundreds, perhaps thousands, of cities, towns, villages—even places where there were just a smattering of farmhouses. They didn't just deliver "news." Speeches in Congress, articles from John Holt's newspaper, broadsides, important letters, resolutions and other material were passed from town to town. Often special meetings were called to discuss the communications that had been received. Sometimes speeches or broadsides would be read aloud, over and over again, to small groups of people. And everywhere the riders stopped, they were given new material to pass on to the next town or village.

This was organizing. Many of these people were from different religions and held differing political views and interests, but as issues and initiatives were discussed, and as the principles motivating the fight became ever more clear, people began to change.

Consider the question of the convening of the First Continental Congress in 1775. It is true that Ben Franklin had proposed his Albany Plan of Union in 1754, but even as late as 1770 the individual colonies viewed themselves as completely separate entities, and relations among the colonies were characterized by jealously and hostility. As a number of historians have documented, more mail and other communications passed between London and Philadelphia and London and Boston than between Boston and Philadelphia. *The Committees of Correspondence changed all of that.* Farmers in North Carolina eagerly awaited news from Boston, and tradesmen in Philadelphia studied the pronouncements from the New York Sons of Liberty. Gradually, the people were knit together in common cause and by universal principles, in one fight. It was this process which made the creation of a Continental Congress possible.

This was a dialogue of revolution. Key Concepts were debated, Motives were questioned, Consequences were considered, Actions were planned, coordinated and carried out. And everywhere the effect was the uplifting of the people to a higher moral and political purpose. Not a gimmick. Not a protest. The only way to effect true historic change.