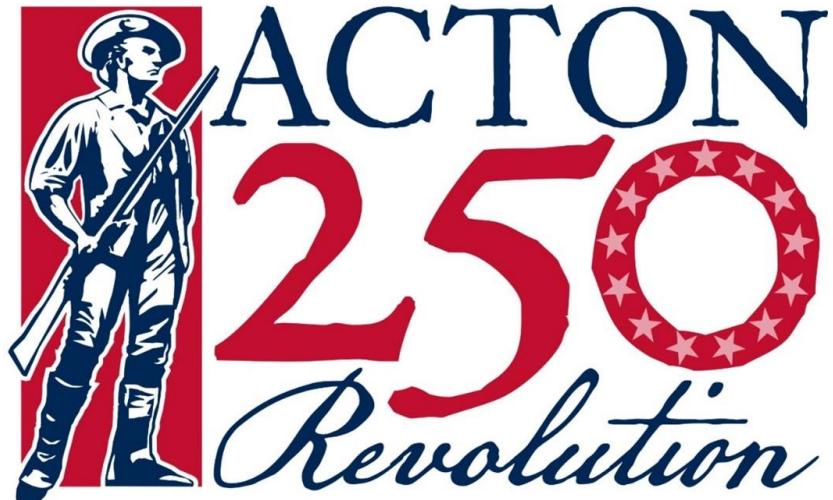


A Revolution in the News

With Professor Joseph Adelman

Author of *Revolutionary Networks: The Business and Politics of Printing the News, 1763-1789*

- Presented by the Acton 250 Committee
- More events of all kinds to follow well into 2025
- Acton has a lot of history to celebrate!

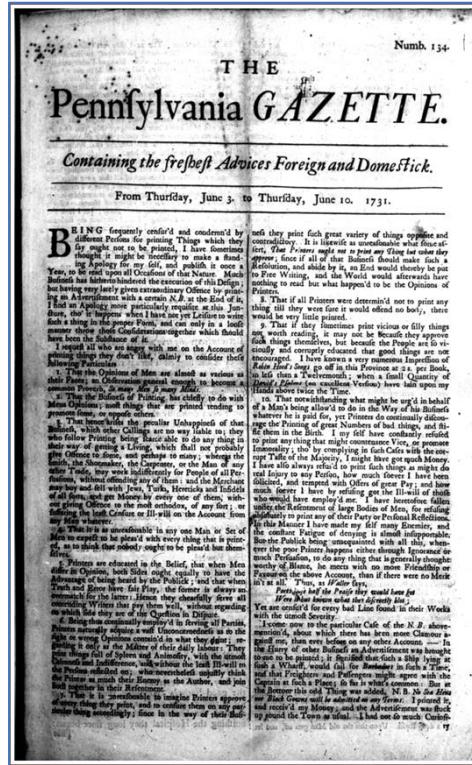


A Revolution in the News

Joseph M. Adelman, Ph.D.

Department of History
Framingham State University
January 30, 2024

Franklin and the “Apology for Printers”



Source: "Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) (Robert Feke), H47," Harvard Art Museums collections online, Jun 02, 2022, <https://hvrld.art/o/299815>; *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 10, 1731, America's Historical Newspapers.

Sources of Information



Oral Reports

- Visitors or travelers (Sailors, merchants, others)
- Public discussion (Tavern, coffee house, post office)
- Official proclamations/public meetings



Handwritten Reports

- Letters
- Diaries/journals
- Posted notices



Printed Reports

- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Books
- Pamphlets
- Almanacs
- Prints/Graphics



Pennsylvania Journal

May 26, 1763

Source: Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania Journal

May 26, 1763

Source: Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Stamp Act Duties – A Sampling

<p>6</p> <p><i>Anno Regni quinto Georgii III. Regis.</i></p> <p>tions, for or relating to the Removal of any Proceedings from before a single Justice of the Peace, a Stamp Duty of Ten Shillings.</p> <p>For every Skin or Piece of Vellum or Parchment, or Sheet or Piece of Paper, on which shall be ingrossed, written, or printed, any Writ of Covenant for levying of Fines, Writ of Entry for suffering a Common Recovery, or Attachment issuing out of, or returnable into, any Court within the said Colonies and Plantations, a Stamp Duty of Five Shillings.</p> <p>For every Skin or Piece of Vellum or Parchment, or Sheet or Piece of Paper, on which shall be ingrossed, written, or printed, any Judgment, Decree, Sentence, or Diffinition, or any Record of <i>Nisi Pris or Postea</i>, in any Court within the said Colonies and Plantations, a Stamp Duty of Four Shillings.</p> <p>For every Skin or Piece of Vellum or Parchment, or Sheet or Piece of Paper, on which shall be ingrossed, written, or printed, any Affidavit, Common Bail or Appearance, Interrogatory Deposition, Rule, Order, or Warrant of any Court, or any <i>Demidus Postfatum</i>, <i>Copias</i>, <i>Subpana</i>, Summons, Compulsory Citation, Commission, Recognizance, or any other Writ, Proces, or Mandate, issuing out of, or returnable into, any Court, or any Office belonging thereto, or any other Proceeding therein whatsoever, or any Copy thereof, or of any Record not herein before charged, within the said Colonies and Plantations (except Warrants relating to Criminal Matters, and Proceedings thereon or relating thereto) a Stamp Duty of One Shilling.</p> <p>For every Skin or Piece of Vellum or Parchment, or Sheet or Piece of Paper, on which shall be ingrossed, written, or printed, any Licence, Appointment, or Admission of any Counsellor, Solicitor, Attorney, Advocate or Proctor, to practise in any Court, or of any Notary within the said Colonies and Plantations, a Stamp Duty of Ten Pounds.</p> <p>Bills of lading Cocks, &c. 4 d. per Sheet</p> <p>For every Skin or Piece of Vellum or Parchment, or Sheet or Piece of Paper, on which shall be ingrossed, written, or printed, any Note or Bill of Lading, which shall</p>	<p><i>Anno Regni quinto Georgii III. Regis.</i></p> <p>shall be signed for any Kind of Goods, Wares, or Merchandise, to be exported from, or any Cocket or Clearance granted within the said Colonies or Plantations, a Stamp Duty of Four Pence.</p> <p>For every Skin or Piece of Vellum or Parchment, or Sheet or Piece of Paper, on which shall be ingrossed, written, or printed, Letters of Mart, &c. 20 s. per Sheet.</p> <p>for private Ships of War, within the said Colonies and Plantations, a Stamp Duty of Twenty Shillings.</p> <p>For every Skin or Piece of Vellum or Parchment, or Sheet or Piece of Paper, on which shall be ingrossed, written, or printed, any Grant, Appointment, or Admission of or to any publick beneficial Office or Employment, for the Space of One Year, or any lesser Time, or above the Value of Twenty Pounds <i>per Annum</i>, Sterling Money, in Salary, Fees, and Perquisites, within the said Colonies and Plantations (except Commissions and Appointments of Officers of the Army, Navy, Ordnance, or Militia, of Judges, and of Justices of the Peace) a Stamp Duty of Ten Shillings.</p> <p>For every Skin or Piece of Vellum or Parchment, or Sheet or Piece of Paper, on which any Grant of any Liberty, Privilege, or Franchise, under the Seal of any of the said Colonies or Plantations, or under the Seal or Sign Manual of any Governor, Proprietor, or publick Officer alone, or in Conjunction with any other Person or Persons, or with any Council, or any Council and Assembly, or any Exemplification of the same, shall be ingrossed, written, or printed, within the said Colonies and Plantations, a Stamp Duty of Six Pounds.</p> <p>For every Skin or Piece of Vellum or Parchment, or Sheet or Piece of Paper, on which shall be ingrossed, written, or printed, any Licence for retailing of Spirituous Liquors, to be granted to any Person who shall take out the same, within the said Colonies and Plantations, a Stamp Duty of Twenty Shillings.</p> <p>For every Skin or Piece of Vellum or Parchment, or Sheet or Piece of Paper, on which shall be ingrossed, written, or printed, any Licence for Retailing of Wine, only, 4 d. per Sheet.</p>
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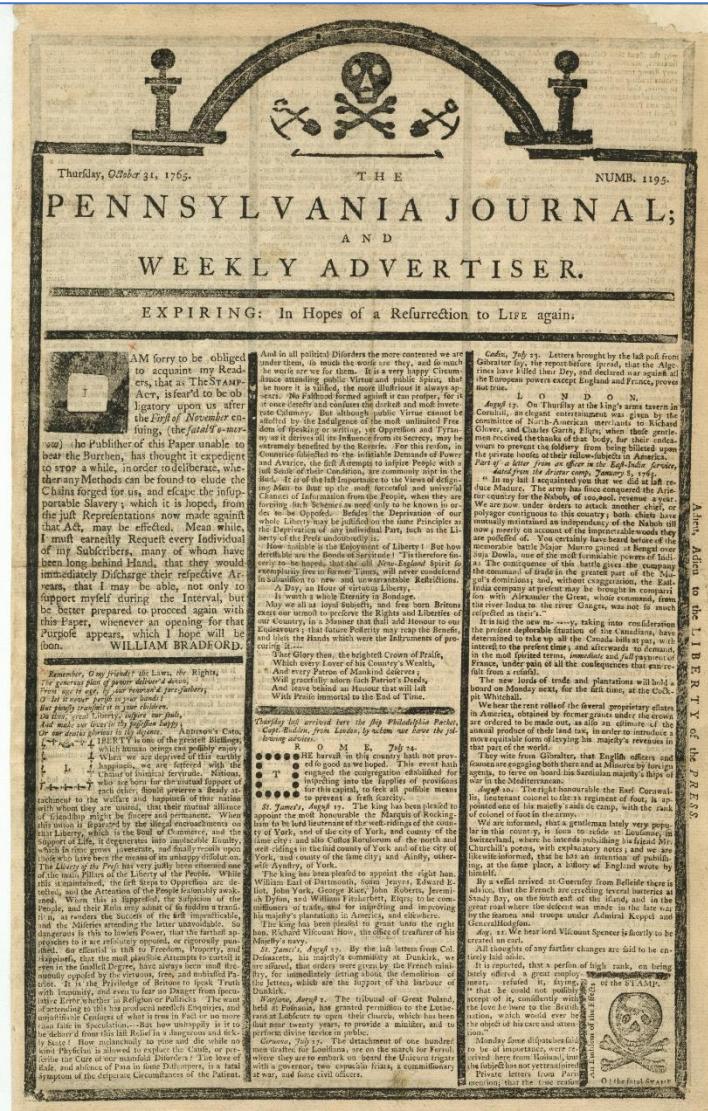
Source: *Anno Regni Georgii III ...* (London: Printed by Mark Baskett; [Woodbridge, N.J.]: Reprinted by James Parker, [1765]).

The Stamp Act Takes Effect

Source: American Antiquarian Society

Mourning the Newspaper

Source: *Pennsylvania Journal*, October 31, 1765, American Antiquarian Society.

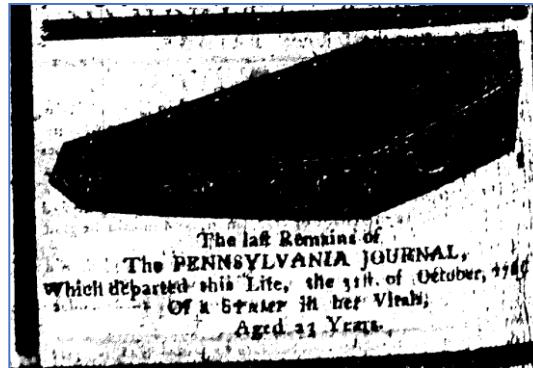


Pennsylvania Journal

October 31, 1765



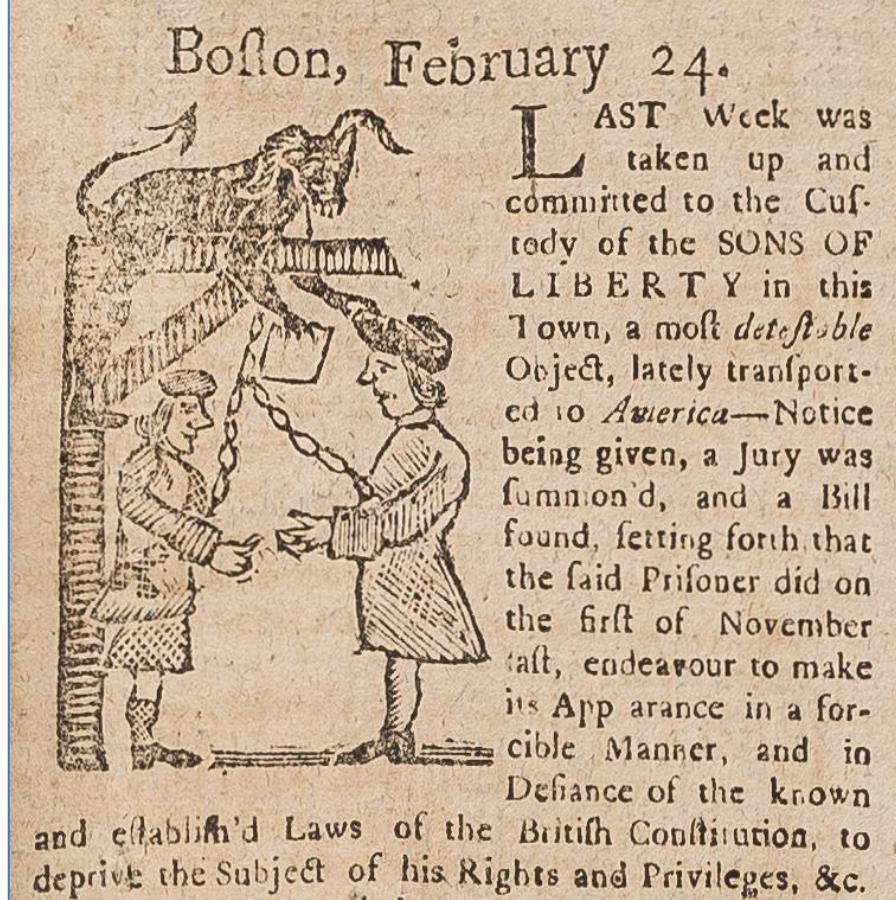
An Emblem of the Effects
of the STAMP.



The last Remains of
The PENNSYLVANIA JOURNAL,
Which departed this Life, the 31st. of
October, 1765
Of a STAMP in her Vitals,
Aged 23 Years.

The Power of the Stamp

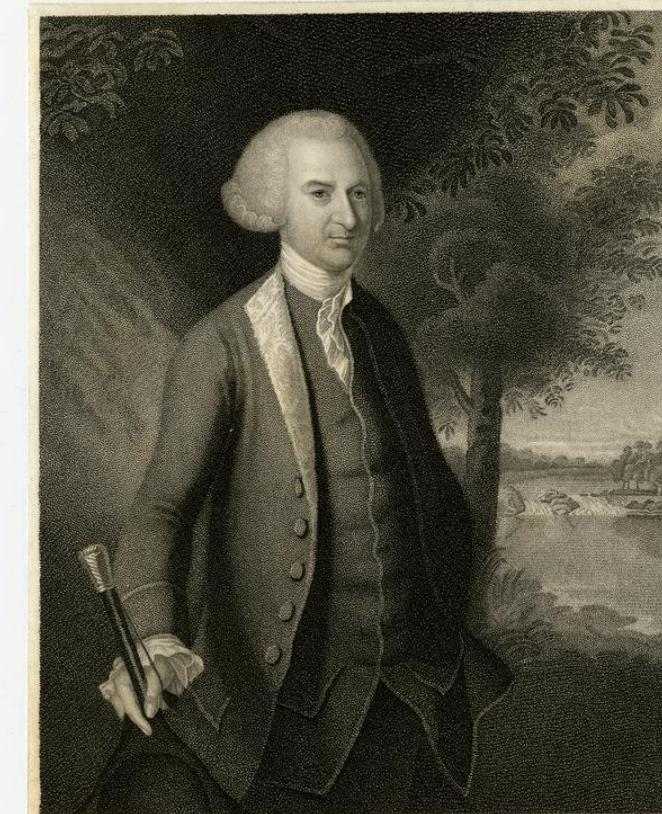
Source: *Boston Gazette*, February 24, 1766,
American Antiquarian Society.



John Dickinson

The Farmer

Source: Engraving by J.B. Forrest after portrait by Charles Willson Peale, Historical Society of Pennsylvania,
<https://digallibrary.hsp.org/index.php/Detail/objects/5118>.



Engraved by J.B. Forrest from a portrait by C.W. Peale painted in 1770.

JOHN DICKINSON.

John Dickinson

Boston Committee of Correspondence and the Towns

Source: *Massachusetts Spy* (Boston), Jan. 28, 1773.

Besides the towns mentioned in our last, the committee of correspondence here, have received the proceedings of the following, viz. Abington, Stoneham, Scarborough, Acton, Templeton, Lenox, &c. All which, notwithstanding, "they are to be printed in a VOLUME," we shall publish as we are able.

The following paragraph is from a late London paper. "THE celebrated Choiseul, late Prime Minister of France, being a few weeks ago asked why he ceded so amazing a tract of country as all Canada to Great-Britain by the last peace, replied, "I ceded it on purpose to destroy the English nation: They were fond of American dominions, and I was resolved they should have enough; for I have given them not only a constant drain for their most valuable inhabitants, but a formidable rival, which in less than a century will find employment for the councils of that turbulent people." Choiseul's words are already prophetick: Our ministers begin to discover that America is a very problematick benefit to England, and Lord Hillsborough actually resigned because we were opening on the Ohio fresh graves for the inhabitants of this kingdom."

News of Dumping the Tea Reaches Philadelphia

Source: Rare Books & Manuscript Department, Boston Public Library.

Christmas-Box
FOR THE CUSTOMERS OF THE
PENNSYLVANIA JOURNAL.

FRIDAY Afternoon 5 o'Clock, Dec. 24, 1773.

PHILADELPHIA, Dec. 24. A Two o'Clock this Afternoon arrived in this City a Gentleman, who came Express from New-York, with the following interesting Advices from BOSTON, which were sent there by Express also.

BOSTON, DEC. 16.

IT being understood that Mr. Rotch, owner of the ship Dartmouth, rather loitered in Boston in preparation to return to London, and the East-India Company's Tea on board, there was on Monday last, P. M. a meeting of the Committee of Safety, and the neighbouring towns, in Boston, and it was resolved that the Committee, and other body assembled, at the Old-South Meeting-House, on Monday and Tuesday preceding, Mr. Rotch, and his crew, be sent to the coast of New-England, to a vessel bound for Boston, that in case he were on his own motion, to send that ship to sea in the condition, was then in, it must inevitably perish, and that the Committee, and other body assembled, that he had said at the said meeting, to be the effect of compulsion and unadvised, and in consequence that he was not holding himself bound to do as he was now advised that he must be entirely ruined in case he did.

Mr. Rotch was then asked whether he would demand a clearance for his ship in the Custom-House, and in case of a refusal, whether he would go to sea in the ship, and leave Boston, and order her to sea. To all which he answered in the negative, the Committee, doubting, informing their respecting condition, that he had given a very strong assurance of safety, as of a certain period, at the Old-South Meeting-House on Tuesday afternoon, and Mr. Rotch being again present, was enquired as before, and a motion was made that he be sent to the coast of New-England, to a vessel bound for Boston, to demand a clearance for his ship, and a Committee to be appointed to go to the Custom-House, and demand a clearance for his ship, and ten gentlemen were appointed to accompany him, and to be at the Custom-House, Boston, and to meet him with the Committee to Mr. Harrison's lodgings, and made the demand. Mr. Harrison observed, he could not give answer till he consulted with his Master, and he did not return, till morning, give a decisive answer. On the return of Mr. Rotch and the Committee to Boston with this report, the meeting was adjourned to Thursday morning at ten o'clock.

THURSDAY.

Having met on Thursday morning, ten o'clock, there first for Mr. Rotch, and fixed him in a boat bound to the Collector, and demanded a clearance, he said he had; but the Collector said, that he could not, confident with his duty, give him a clearance, till all the distasteful articles, were out of his ship; and he was directed to go to the Custom-House, Boston, and the Collector; he had said no; They ordered him upon his peril, to give immediate orders to the Captain, to get his ship ready to be sent to sea, and to be at the Custom-House, and then proceed directly to the Governor, (who was at his seat at Milton, seven miles off) and demand a pass for his ship to the Custom-House. They then adjourned to Friday, twelve o'clock P. M. to wait for Mr. Rotch, who, having met according to adjournment, there was the full tea meeting ever known, (it was reckoned, that there were two thousand persons present) when they found Mr. Rotch did not return, they began to be very uneasy, called for a division of the Committee, and the Master of the Dartmouth, and the remainder part of the meeting, fearing what would be the consequence, began that they would re-consider their vote, and do every thing in their power to send the Tea back, according to their resolves. They obtained a vote, to remain together one hour longer; in about three quarters of an hour Mr. Rotch returned, his answer was, that he

could not give a pass till the ship was cleared by the Custom House, the people immediately, as with one voice, called for a dissolution, which having obtained, they repaired to Griffin's wharf, where the tea vessels lay, proceeded to fix tackles, and hoisted the sea upon deck; cut the chotts to pieces, and threw overboard, and the tea, and the tea-caskets, and the tea-chests, Hall, Bruce, and Coffin, each vessel having 114 chotts of tea on board, they began upon the two ships first, as they had arrived first, and the tea-chests were the last to be thrown, which had hove to the wharf, but the day before and had but a small part of her cargo on. The Captain of the brig begged to be allowed to begin with his ship, as it was crowded with goods, belonging to different merchents in town, they took him the tea they wanted, and the tea they would have had, if he would go into his cabin, quietly, not one article was taken, and the tea was not damaged. The crew proceeded to remove the goods, and then to dispose of the tea.

It was expected that the men of war would have interfered, as all the Captains and other Officers, were ordered on board, and the men of war, eight of them, were then sent, with a dozen of lanterns sent on board the Admirals ship. The King-Fisher, and several armed schooners, were rigged and ready to be sent to Boston, the day following, but the day from Rhode-Island, that the men of war were determined, it is to be observed, that they were extremely careful, that not any of the tea should be taken, to keep a good look out, and to have his men ready to be sent to Boston, and to proceed very roughly, by tearing his coat off his back, and driving him up the wharf, through thousands of people, who could and kicked him as he did.

It was publicly informed, that the patriotic inhabitants of Lexington, at a late meeting, unanimously resolved against the use or batea of tea at all ports, Dutch or English importations; and to manifest the sincerity of their resolution, they brought together every ounce contained in the town, and sent it to the Boston Committee-bonfire.

We are also informed, Charlestown is in motion to follow these illustrious examples.

Would it not materially affect the buying this tea, if every town would enjoin their Selectmen to deny Licences to all houses of entertainment, who were known to afford tea to their guests?

Our reason for suggesting this, is the difficulty these people are under to avoid dishing out this poison, without such a provision in their favour.

We have this moment received intelligence that Mr. Clarke's tea-plantation, commanded by Captain Loring, bilged at the back of Cape Cod. The Captain has not landed his Tea there, of which he has 28 chests on board, belonging to the East-India Company.

NEW-YORK, DEC. 22.

Last night an express arrived here from Boston, who left it on Friday last, and brings sundry letters among which is the following, viz.

Boston, 19th December, 1773.

GENTLEMEN,

YESTERDAY had a greater Meeting of the body than ever I have known, coming in from every milers end, and every ship was taken that was practicable for returning the Tea. The moment it was known out of doors, that Mr. Rotch, could not obtain a pass for his ship, by the call of a number of the Committee, and the Master of the Dartmouth, every ounce of the Tea on board of Capt. Hall, Bruce, and Coffin, was immersed in the Bay, without the least injury to any of the vessels.

The spirit of the people on this occasion surprised all parties, who viewed the scene.

We conceived it our duty to afford you the most early advice of this interesting event, by express, which, departing immediately, obliges us to conclude.

By Order of the Committee.

P. S. The other vessel, viz. Captain Loring, belonging to Mells Clark, with fifty-eight chests, by the Act of God, call on shore, on the back of Cape Cod.

The “Lexington Alarm”

Source: Van Gorden-Williams Library & Archives Digital Collections, *digitalVGW*, <https://digitalvgw.omeka.net/items/show/497>

Watertown Wednesday Morning near 10⁰ 'Clock.

To all the Friends of America Liberty, be it known that this Morning before break of Day a Brigade consisting of about 1000 or 1200 Men landed at Philip's Farm at Cambridge & marched to Lexington where they found a Company of our Colony Militia in Arms upon whom they fire without any Proclamation and killed 6 Men and wounded 4 others. By an Express from Boston this Moment we find another Brigade are now upon their March from Boston supposed to be about 1000. The bearer M^r Hoadly is charged to alarm the County quite to Connecticut and all Persons are desired to furnish him with Dray Horses as they may be needed. I have spoken with several Persons who have seen the Dead & Wounded. Early let the Delegates from this Colony to Connecticut see this they know

J. Palmer one of the
Committee of S^yg
Col Foster of Brookfield one of the Delegates. A True Copy
taken from the original paper of Committee of Correspondence for Worcester Attest. Nathan Baldwin S^t Clerk
Worcester April 19th 1775.

Brooklyne Thursday 10⁰ 'Clock. the above is a true
Copy as rec^d Worcester by Express forwarded from
Worcester S^t Daniel Tyler Jr.

Circulating the “Lexington Alarm”

TABLE 2. *Transmission of the “Lexington Alarm” Letter, April 19–24, 1775*

Date	Time	Location	Approximate Miles from Previous Stop
Wednesday, April 19	10:00 am	Watertown, MA	
	Unknown	Worcester, MA	37
Thursday, April 20	11:00 am	Brooklyn, CT	40
	4:00 pm	Norwich, CT	21
Friday, April 21	7:00 pm	New London, CT	13
	1:00 am	Lyme, CT	15
	4:00 am	Saybrook, CT	5
	7:00 am	Killingworth, CT	16
	9:00 am	East Guilford, CT	9
	10:00 am	Guilford, CT	5
	12:00 pm	Branford, CT	8
	Unknown	New Haven, CT	8
Saturday, April 22	8:00 am	Fairfield, CT	24
Sunday, April 23	4:00 pm	New York, NY	60
Monday, April 24	2:00 am	New Brunswick, NJ	36
	Unknown (am)	Princeton, NJ	15
	9:00 am	Trenton, NJ	13
	Unknown	Philadelphia, PA	33

Note: Data compiled from Joseph Palmer, “To all friends of American liberty,” April 19, 1775 [Am.606], HSP. Distance calculations are intended only as rough approximations. East Guilford is now Madison, Connecticut.

Circulating the “Lexington Alarm”

TABLE 3. *Publication of the “Lexington Alarm” Letter, April 1775*

Date	Publication Type	Publication Title	Printer	City
April 20	Newspaper	<i>Norwich Packet</i>	Robertsons and Trumbull	Norwich
April 22	Broadside	“INTERESTING INTELLIGENCE” (second express)	Robertsons and Trumbull	Norwich
April 23	Broadside	“The following interesting Advices”	unknown	New York
April 24	Newspaper	<i>New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury</i>	Hugh Gaine	New York
April 24	Newspaper	<i>Pennsylvania Packet</i>	John Dunlap	Philadelphia
April 24	Broadside	<i>Pennsylvania Evening Post</i>	W. & T. Bradford	Philadelphia
April 25	Newspaper	<i>Pennsylvania Evening Post</i>	Benjamin Towne	Philadelphia
April 25	Newspaper	<i>Wöchentliche Pennsylvanische Staatsbote</i>	John Henry Miller	Philadelphia
April 25	Broadside		Francis Bailey	Lancaster
April 26	Newspaper	<i>Pennsylvania Gazette</i>	Hall & Sellers	Philadelphia
April 26	Broadside		[Mary Katherine Goddard]	Baltimore
April 27	Newspaper	<i>Rivington's New-York Gazetteer</i>	James Rivington	New York
April 28	Newspaper	<i>Pennsylvania Mercury</i>	Enoch Story & Daniel Humphreys	Philadelphia
April 28	Newspaper	<i>Virginia Gazette</i>	John Pinckney	Williamsburg
April 29	Newspaper	<i>Virginia Gazette</i>	Dixon & Hunter	Williamsburg
April 29	Broadside		Alexander Purdie	Williamsburg

And on Thursday next will be Published,
and Sold by the Printer hereof, [Price
One Shilling single, or Eight shillings per
Dozen.]

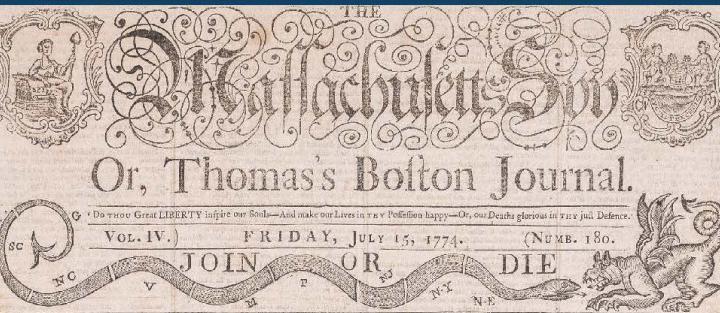
REVOLUTIONARY NETWORKS

WEEKLY ADVERTISER

JOSEPH M. ADELMAN

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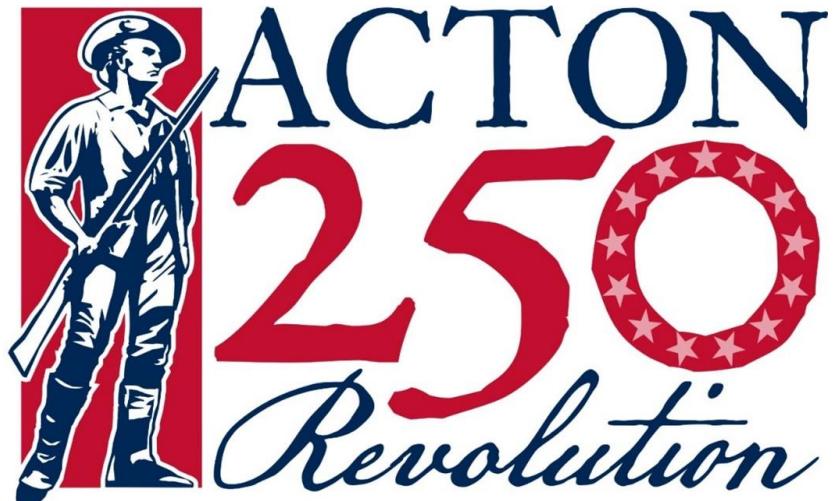


Contact Information

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- Mastodon: @jmadelman@historians.social

Question and Answer Time!

- Please wait until called upon
- Please be respectful and save time for others



Thank You! ... and More to Come!

Next Up:

March 19, 6:30PM
Acton Memorial Library Book Group
“Odyssey of Phillis Wheatley”

April date TBD
Acton Center Tour – Amy Cole

Tuesday, April 2 7PM

Historian John L. Bell, Author of “*The Road to Concord: How Four Stolen Cannon Ignited the Revolutionary War*”

