

Harbottle Dorr: The Musings of a Common Patriot in Revolutionary Boston, 1765-1770

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Honors Thesis
April 2015
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Table of Contents

Introduction

3

Chapter 1: The Stamp Act

15

Chapter 2: The Aftermath of the Stamp Act

40

Epilogue

62

Bibliography

66

Boston, 1770

In a small shop across from the cornfields in Union Street, Harbottle Dorr sat surrounded by his wares of nails, bolts, and the like. In front of him lay a stack of newspapers. Some smudged from the press, others singed perhaps from being read too close to candle light, he pored over them. Carriages rattled on the cobblestones outside, and the sounds of the nearby wharves no doubt blew into the shop with the wind from the harbor.¹ Dorr read over these papers, commenting with retrospect on events, paginating them, referencing each happening with regard to other papers in his collection, and filling in names and places not fully printed. Dorr's

¹ http://www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item_id=1733&mode=small&img_step=1&&br=1

annotations added an especially personal voice to the familiar narrative of revolutionary Boston, and served to illuminate the everyday perspective of an average angered American.

So who was this man with the giggle-inducing name and what enticed him to collect and annotate these newspapers? Harbottle Dorr was first and foremost a merchant of Boston, a peddler of everyday eighteenth-century hardware. His name comes up only sparingly in searches, and even these short mentions generally reference his presence in earlier articles. As the collection of his annotated newspapers is housed at the Massachusetts Historical Society, and the digitized collection is online under their domain, the majority of references to Dorr surface in pamphlets of collection listings for the Society. Even fewer scholarly pieces have been written on Dorr, the only real one of note penned by none other than Bernard Bailyn, the acclaimed historian and author of *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. Bailyn's piece, entitled "The Index and Commentaries of Harbottle Dorr," was written for the Massachusetts Historical Society, and the ideology comprising the topic of his seminal work aligned with Dorr's annotations.² Bailyn depicted Dorr as a fairly run-of-the-mill colonist, who is known today because he felt the need to catalogue his thoughts on power in the Revolutionary period. Dorr, according to Bailyn, sought to put forth his views for posterity so that the future might know his perspective, and why he felt that the American colonies should be free from tyrannical rule and should be subject to power in moderation. Bailyn went on to include a version of this chapter in a larger work entitled *Faces of Revolution: Personalities and Themes in the Struggle for American Independence*. This compilation used Dorr as an ordinary fourth figure, following the well known names of Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and Thomas Paine.

One of the only other sources that features Dorr as its main subject was written by

² Bernard Bailyn, "The Index and Commentaries of Harbottle Dorr," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Third Series, Vol. 85 (1973): 21-35.

Barbara Ripel Wilhelm for the West Georgia College journal *Studies in the Social Sciences*. Entitled “The American Revolution as a Leadership Crisis: The View of a Hardware Store Owner,” Wilhelm wrote on Dorr’s use of commentary to inform his readers of his ideas about and perceptions of power.³ She painstakingly pored through each newspaper and annotation to evaluate Dorr’s commitment to not only the Revolution as an American colonist but also to his fundamental thoughts about the right of leadership. She found that he gave great respect to those who shared his ideals, but rejected those who would impose too much force upon him and other Americans. Wilhelm did this in a creative way, and one which anyone working with Dorr’s newspapers should take into account. She traced his usage of terms and emotions toward specific people to determine Dorr’s political standing. For example, she found that he never once referred to George Washington as “President,” but only as “General,” meaning that Dorr was not still in the editing phase of his project when Washington became President. His negative comments on such colonial leaders as Thomas Hutchinson and Francis Bernard show them to be arbitrary and unacceptable leaders in Dorr’s mind.

Though the few sources to choose Dorr as primary subject matter give reason for his annotation, none are so helpful nor possibly as accurate as Dorr’s own reasoning. His appendices explain his motives for archiving the papers:

“In asmuch as News Papers in general contain, not only the News of the Day, but often Intelligence of the greatest moment, (and in general are look’d upon as authentic, being often resorted to as valuable Records, and perhaps are so, more than any other, saving legal Ones:___and as Persons in general are too negligent of preserving them,) and during the period of the Following Papers, Transactions of the utmost importance respecting Liberty in general have taken place, and are recorded in them:___ I have thought it worth while to collect them, tho’ at considerable expence, and very GREAT Trouble, in hopes that in Future, they may be of some service, towards forming a Political

³ Barbara Ripel Wilhelm, “The American Revolution as a Leadership Crisis: The View of a Hardware Store Owner,” *West Georgia College Studies in the Social Sciences*, Vol. XV, (June, 1976): 43-54.

History of this Country, during the shameful and abandoned administration of the despotic Ministers of George the 3rd.

Harbottle Dorr.”⁴

He intended for his efforts to be maintained for posterity, so that people could study the injustices committed upon America by Britain. He went on to clarify this exact point a few lines below, arguing that “Though the American Transactions may seem tedious at present; when every News Paper is full of them, yet they afford Materials for an Important part of the History of the present Times.”⁵ His recognition of the gravity of his circumstances was admirable, and even more commendable when considering the immense personal time and monetary expenses Dorr incurred to preserve this record.

Dorr was primarily a merchant, but he also held lower public offices. Though he was by no means on par with the founding fathers in terms of wealth and reputation, he was certainly no vagabond. As a Boston selectman and a member of the Sons of Liberty, he held a certain amount of influence in his city, particularly in his authority to comment upon the taxes imposed by British Parliament. His biography on the Massachusetts Historical Society’s website for the collection states that his life spanned from 1730 to 1794.⁶ Dorr’s business as a merchant was the modern-day equivalent of a hardware and metal goods store. Among the other sales and listings advertised in the papers, occasionally Dorr inserted his own marketing. His advertisements appeared in many different papers in the Boston area, all with different publishers, and many over different weeks and months. They list his shop’s location, and many of his wares, for example “a Fine Assortment of Brazieri, Ironmongery, and Cutlery Are, by Wholesale or Retail,

⁴ The Annotated Newspapers of Harbottle Dorr, Massachusetts Historical Society, Volume 3, p 38, *The Boston Evening-Post*, 18 February 1765, <http://www.masshist.org/dorr/volume/1/sequence/33>. Hereafter references from this collection will be referred to as ANHD, MHS, Vol. #, p #.

⁵ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 3, p 38.

⁶ “About the Collection,” *The Annotated Newspapers of Harbottle Dorr*, Massachusetts Historical Society, 2015.

cheap for Cash. . . .Nails, Brads & Tacks of all sorts, English & German Steel, Bar and sheet lead, Carpenters Tools, Joiners ditto, All sorts of Pewter Dishes Plates and Basons, Brass Kettles and Skillets of all sizes, Smiths Vices Anvils, Powder and Shot, Best French and English Flints, Tin Plates, Furniture for Desks, Mosts sorts of Locks, Brass & Iron Candlesticks, Warming & Frying Pans, With a great Variety of other Articles.”⁷ The visual of his goods helps the reader of his annotations to gain a clearer mental image of Dorr poring over and analyzing the newspapers in his shop.

The location of his shop was also given by the advertisements, and like the items up for sale the geography conveyed gives a more tangible experience to the reader of Dorr’s notes. According to the papers, his shop could be found “(adjoining to the House of Mr. Martin Cay) almost opposite the Cornfields in Union-Street, Boston.”⁸ Union Street was a close walk to the harbor and the Boston Common. In between his sales to townspeople and presumably sailors coming up from the harbor wharves, Dorr annotated his papers. He acknowledged this, and his frequently hurried nature in one of his appendices. He admitted that “On Reviewing this Volume, I find some Words in the Margins & Index misspelt, which I hope whoever peruses will excuse, especially as they were wrote at my Shop amidst my business, when I had not the leisure to be exact.”⁹ In this near apology to his readers, it is evident that Dorr presumed he would be read. This was proven again in one of his indices, when he wrote in regard to an advocate for the Stamp Act. According to Dorr “This being a fact of public notoriety, I should presume when it comes to be truly known amongst you, that the accounts which celebrate throughout America, the principal author and abettor of this Mushroom policy, as the person to whom the Colonies are

⁷ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 681.

⁸ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 681.

⁹ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 3, p 38.

indebted for the postponing of the Stamp duty, must be despised.”¹⁰ His writing and reference to “you” here suggested his expectation to be read. One can only speculate as to how far into the future Dorr may have looked for his hypothetical audience, but he left clues throughout his annotations that decidedly mark his assumption he would have readers.

Dorr’s papers span twelve years and four volumes, and including attached pamphlets, indices, and introductory handwritten pages, there are a total of 3,674 pages. The easy availability of these papers to the modern researcher allows incredibly comprehensive access to Dorr’s thoughts. Since their digitization in 2012, they have been accessible entirely online, and some parts of his indices have been transcribed for easier reading. Despite this availability, the papers are still a quarter of a century old. This produces the occasional frustration for the researcher, as burns, tears, and smudges easily obstruct the reader’s ability to see Dorr’s comments in the margins. Even so, these imperfections are an important piece of the image created by Dorr’s annotations overall. One can imagine him squinting through the darkness by candlelight to read just one more letter in a paper, and accidentally lighting the bottom corner of the page before stomping it out. Nevertheless Dorr had already written on some of the ruined pages, and it is sad to think those comments are lost forever.

Dorr’s methodology in annotation took many forms. Perhaps most important was his simple pagination. Each page in his four volumes has a number atop it. Though helpful when researching, Dorr placed these presumably for his many references back to past events and articles. His work consisted mainly of placing asterisks, stars, diamonds, crosses, and many other small shapes and swirls into passages on which he had a comment, and recreating the symbol below or to the side of the passage in the paper’s margins where he would scribble his thoughts.

¹⁰ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 791.

More often than not, his notes would be simply a page number, for example the Stamp Act's imposition took place on page 53 of the first volume, and so many references following it harken back to that same page. He did this most frequently when annotating in hindsight, meaning that often he compiled the papers but did not annotate certain ones until years later, or perhaps came back to ones he had already written upon. This is proven by his frequent references to future acts in papers before their passage. Sometimes he would fill in the names of government officials mentioned in the papers, but whose identities were censored for the reader. Dorr knew most of the goings-on and enlightened his reader when these passages cropped up. More interesting however, were his commentaries on the events of the day. Often impassioned by a speech he read or the mention of a person he hated, Dorr would insert scathing insults and admiring compliments, sometimes with one or many more exclamation points! These comments were by far the most interesting and the most useful, as they give the reader a real glimpse into the everyday mind of Dorr, a perspective so often lost in studies of the American Revolution.

The American Revolution is one of the most widely written-upon historical subjects. The debate about its causes, meaning, and impact between historians began immediately following the revolutionary events, and rages on to this day. Beginning with the Whig party in the early nineteenth century, the Revolution shone as a progressive endeavor that had forever altered the course of politics and individual rights. Myths of heroes popped up everywhere, with little factual bearing or basis. To this day some events, such as Paul Revere's midnight ride, remain misinterpreted and overglorified. About a century passed before more recognizable scholarship appeared.

The historiography of the American Revolution has spanned centuries and involved numerous schools of thought. Often history can feel too recent to discuss academically, and the

earliest notes of Revolutionary writings cannot be termed scholarly. First mentions of important figures and events were often apocryphal or at the very least doubtful. One of the best known and remembered myths of Revolutionary figures was the cautionary tale about George Washington and the cherry tree. This falsity was popularized by Parson Weems in his *The Life of Washington*.¹¹ This story and many others began the interest of the public in the recent events of their new nation. Similar glorification occurred with Paul Revere and his infamous ride. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote a poem effectively making Revere a hero, entitled simply “Paul Revere’s Ride.”¹² Heroics aside, few others attempted to tackle the recent events beyond simple recounting of the taxes imposed by Parliament and the battles of the Revolution.

The real shift in thinking began with Charles Beard in the early twentieth century. Beard, a progressive historian who sought to determine the true causes of the events in history, took a decidedly economic approach to the Revolution and the founding of the new nation. His main idea centered around the use of the Constitution as a means to protect the interests of the landed elite of America, including in particular George Washington.¹³ Beard’s focus in *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* on the economic motives for nationhood was fundamental for future studies on the origins of the Revolution and nationhood.

As is often the case with history, one historian will refute another to make a new academic contribution. In the mid-twentieth century many historians came to view the American Revolution as the culmination of ideas that pushed leading men toward rebellion. Bailyn’s exploration of the foundations of the Revolutionary movement draws on a disagreement with the fundamental economic theory set forth by Charles Beard. Bailyn analyzes the origins of the

¹¹ Mason Locke (Parson) Weems, *The Life of Washington* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

¹² Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “Paul Revere’s Ride,” Academy of American Poets, <http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/paul-reveres-ride>.

¹³ Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1913).

Revolution by focusing on revolutionaries' religious, political, and philosophical views.¹⁴ In this same vein, Edmund S. Morgan compiled a collection of essays that traces the intellectual mindsets of the colonial people throughout the events of the Revolutionary period in *The Challenge of the American Revolution*.¹⁵ He and his wife, Helen Morgan, also wrote on the Stamp Act, and this volume likewise includes not only the factual history of the Act, but the ideologies and subsequent responses to its imposition.¹⁶

Historians continued to argue that ideas drove the Revolution with further works from Bailyn, as well as newcomers to the scene. Gordon Wood authored *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, and this time described the Revolution as the “most radical and far reaching event in American history.”¹⁷ He traces the nation's political development from its origins in mother country monarchy, to enlightenment-influenced republicanism, to the egalitarian democracy for which the people strove. Wood's radical take on the Revolution was a precursor to one of the latest and most interesting movements on the subject.

Most recently, the focus on Revolutionary studies has largely been upon the everyday common figures of the time, and how their actions, social positions, and lives led to the Revolution. Gary Nash, Woody Holton, Alfred Young, T.H. Breen, and Ray Raphael are among those who have taken individual stories and circumstances to weave a compelling narrative of Revolutionary fervor among the lowest social ranks. These historians, unlike Wood, focus largely on what was un-revolutionary and conservative in the Revolution.

In *The Unknown American Revolution*, Gary Nash touches upon slavery, Native interactions and religious conversions, as well as the lower ranks of white society to demonstrate

¹⁴ Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1992).

¹⁵ Edmund S. Morgan, *The Challenge of the American Revolution* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2013).

¹⁶ Edmund S. and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1953).

¹⁷ Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 8.

the rebellious tones of all levels in the colonies. An extremely well researched book, he uses letters, records, and documents to effectively argue his point.¹⁸ Woody Holton's works *Forced Founders* and *Unruly Americans* align well with Nash's. With convincing evidence from plantation records, county jails, and Native American encounters, Holton argues that rebellions in the backyards of well-known founding fathers shaped the responses of these great men to British impositions, and that the pressure they faced from the classes below them spurred the most influential action.¹⁹ T.H. Breen followed this trend, writing on the organized violence in the colonies, and the impact of colonists' collusion to create boycotts. Both *American Insurgents* and *American Patriots: The Revolution of the People* and *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* focused on the people as the impetus for rebellion.²⁰ The former details the understanding of mostly farmers and laborers that organized resistance against the state would relieve their plights. The latter explained the overwhelming impact of the boycott movement brought on by colonists who banded together in the face of unjust economic policies. The focus on the everyday citizen in these works has been an incredibly interesting take on the American Revolution, and gives an increasingly personal face to the historical moment of American liberty.

The trend continued with Ray Raphael, whose *A People's History of the American Revolution: How the Common People Shaped the Fight for Independence* uses accounts of the masses in Revolutionary America to illustrate their influence in the events that precipitated the

¹⁸ Gary Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (New York: Viking, 2005).

¹⁹ Woody Holton, *Forced Founders: Indians, Debtors, Slaves & the Making of the American Revolution in Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007).

²⁰ T. H. Breen, *American Insurgents American Patriots: The Revolution of the People* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2010); *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

War.²¹ Organized in period fashion with the chapter titles separated by ellipses, Raphael focuses only upon individuals during the Revolutionary period. Personal stories pulled from diaries, memoirs, and letters form the basis for his argument that commoners were crucial to the struggle for liberty. The lowest classes are often those most relatable, and in the telling of the Revolution through the lens of these less well-known founding fathers and mothers, it is refreshing to see personal narratives at the center of arguments. One such account in particular is that of Alfred Young, entitled *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party*.²² Young first focuses on the life and struggles of a poor Boston cobbler named George Robert Twelves Hewes who was at the forefront of many of the large events of the Revolutionary period before the warring years, including the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party. Second, he explains why we call it “The Boston Tea Party,” because it was not referred to as such for at least eighty years after the event took place. He questions the memory of the American Revolution, and how history has come to regard these huge events as more than what they were, in the sense of patriotism, independence, and defiance.

Each of these works has contributed greatly to the study of the American Revolution.²³ The most recent ones in particular shed an interesting light upon the man at hand: Harbottle Dorr. Though many of the works published in the last two decades revolve around accounts of the lowest in society and not the merchant class, they still reflect the notice of the common people below the founding fathers. Dorr provided a voice for those who were not of the highest or lowest repute in Revolutionary America. His comments prove him to be a well-educated

²¹ Raphael Ray, *A People's History of the American Revolution: How Common People Shaped the Fight for Independence* (New York: The New Press, 2001).

²² Alfred F. Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).

²³ Other works consulted in this brief study include: Bernard Bailyn, *The Origins of American Politics* (New York: Knopf, 1968); Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Americans: The Colonial Experience* (London: Phoenix Press, 1958); Arthur Meier Schlesinger, *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution 1763-1776*, (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1957).

political thinker, but by no means a founding father. Neither was he destitute and illiterate, but he fell somewhere in between the two. This thesis analyzes his commentary for the period from 1765 up to the Boston Massacre, a span of five years, but one of immense colonial tension.

Dorr's annotations served to illuminate the tensions in far more personal way. As the Revolution unfolded in Boston, Harbottle Dorr shared a unique narrative in comparison with all the rest.

The Stamp Act

“The Stamp Act has filled the whole Colony with the utmost Consternation and Astonishment.”

~The Annotated Newspapers of Harbottle Dorr

It was a fateful spring day in April when the colonies first received the news. Doubtless white sails billowed on the distant horizon, and the sound of shouting boatswains presumably echoed as the crews dropped anchors in the water nearby. Waves lapped against the wooden wharves of Boston Harbor. This could have been a normal day in this trade hub of the colonial world, yet one of those ships arriving on Wednesday, April 3rd, 1765, carried news of Parliamentary power in action: the Stamp Act. Passed only two months earlier, British Parliament passed the Stamp Act in order to assert influence over American colonists. It seemed an abomination to the colonists high and low in status, and felt to them like a blatant attack. Despite internal struggles in the colonies, reaction to the Stamp Act resulted more directly from anger at the government that had imposed it. British aggression lit the powder keg of domestic

tensions and started the colonies toward rebellion. Harbottle Dorr was one of many who abhorred the Act, and in opinions both published and scribbled illustrated the fervent hatred toward it in the colonies.

Though the colonies received notice of the Act and newspapers began publishing commentaries upon it in April of 1765, it was not to be implemented until November 1st of that year. In the interim, newspapers fanned the flames of colonial discontent. The Act's passage marked the historical moment in which newspapers and their printers entered the debate that led to American independence. Previous legislation such as the Sugar and Currency Acts of 1764 had been controversial, but the Stamp Act had an especially significant impact upon printers because it required printed material to be published on taxed and officially stamped paper. Playing cards, court documents, and marriage licenses, among other items of daily use, were taxed, preying upon more affluent businessmen and lawyers along with women and poor people in society. The number of marriages actually declined during the period of taxation, for women were wary of paying for the paper the licenses were printed on. Advertisements were also taxed, which further infuriated printers because then as now advertisements were a major source of their revenue.²⁴ These angered publishers used their newspapers to lead the charge in publicizing debates and sparking the political interest of the everyday citizen, thereby using the stamped and taxed paper for the very purpose of defaming the Act itself.

The April 8th, 1765, issue of *The Boston Post-Boy and Advertiser* shared the news of the Stamp Act in detail. Parliament's House of Commons passed 55 resolves imposing duties upon paper goods. Each resolve listed the amount due on taxable items. Anything not printed in the English language was to be taxed at twice the rate, and all duties were "to be paid into the receipt

²⁴ Janice Hume, *Popular Media and the American Revolution: Shaping Collective Memory* (New York: Routledge, 2014), x.

of his Majesty's Exchequer; and there reserved, to be, from time to time, disposed of by Parliament, towards defraying the necessary expences of defending, protecting, and securing the said colonies and plantations."²⁵ Dorr was not pleased by this proclamation of taxation, and with a double slash directed his reader's attention to the bottom margin. Here he wrote "The Resolves above pass'd into a Law, and made part of the Stamp Act, which was very Voluminous, and tended to enslave the Americans. In one Clause the Commissioners of the Treasury might of their own Accord raise the Stamp duty as they pleased!"²⁶ As a merchant, Dorr would have had to abide by and pay many of these duties, particularly the two shillings and six pence per bill of sale.

The Stamp Act was widely unpopular in the colonies. Parliament assessed the potential for the colonial reaction, but sought to justify it regardless by placing blame on the colonies for failing to adequately help Britain pay for the expenses of war and defense on American soil. These "imperial costs" should be shouldered by the colonists, thought the British government, as they most directly benefitted from the defense.²⁷ Most colonists viewed the proposed taxes as unprecedented and unreasonable, but the Act specifically incited a particularly vocal part of the population. Printers, lawyers, merchants, and the clergy were the most literate and visible in society, and used the paper and related products to be taxed under the Act frequently.²⁸ By inciting the most influential segment of society, the crown may have unwittingly sealed its fate in terms of opposition from its colonists. As a merchant, Dorr was firmly in the camp against the Stamp Act. His numerous angry annotations surrounding articles about the Act itself, its

²⁵ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 53.

²⁶ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 53.

²⁷ Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953), 54.

²⁸ Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Prelude to Independence: The Newspaper War on Britain, 1764-1776* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), 68.

enforcers, and its proponents prove this. His opinions serve to illuminate the everyday Boston resident's sentiments during the Revolutionary period, and show that the colonists' reception of the Act was key to the incitement of rebellion.

Reaction to the Stamp Act was immediate and intense. One of the first notices of Dorr's anger demonstrated not only this reaction but also his method when annotating. He was extremely knowledgeable and up to date with the politics of his time, as evidenced by an asterisk above a certain sentence. The front page of *The Boston Evening-Post* of February 18th, 1765, read: "We hear that -----Huske, Esq; Representative for Malden in Essex, will soon set out for France."²⁹ Dorr inserted above the dashes a small "Jn" shorthand for "John," to more fully reveal the identity of the sentence's subject. John Huske was born in America but moved to England and became a member of Parliament. A native of New Hampshire, but a staunch supporter of the British crown, Huske all but told Parliament to tax the Colonies, assuring the members that Americans were able to assume this obligation. His report *The Present State of North America* cited the need for the American economy to be at the disposal of Britain. If this happened, then the Colonies "will require neither Troops nor Money from this Country for their own Defence."³⁰

Dorr had also inserted an asterisk symbol above Huske's name in the paper, and in the margins on the bottom of the front page his note read "Although a New England Man Born: yet a great stickler for Taxing America!"³¹ His exasperation explains a critical issue in American society in that moment: even a representative with American roots could not be entrusted with the wellbeing of the Colonies. Despite a fairly common European heritage, a new and distinctly American perspective was emerging, and colonists increasingly believed they were not

²⁹ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 23.

³⁰ John Huske, *The Present State of North America, &c* (London: Dodsley, 1755), 82-83, The Open Library, Accessed 8 December 2014, https://archive.org/stream/cihm_35725#page/n5/mode/2up.

³¹ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 23.

represented in Parliament.

This representation issue appeared again not even a month later on the back page of a later *Evening-Post*. Inserted discretely between controversy regarding the Archbishop of Manilla and some notable obituaries is the italicized sentence “The most sanguine well wishers to the Colonies do not think the proposed scheme of sending Representatives to Parliament practicable, as it would be introducing a precedent which every Island and British Settlement in the West-Indies and Africa, would be ambitious to follow.”³² The logistical havoc that representatives would wreak for Britain was not worthwhile at that moment, though little did those “sanguine well-wishers” know that lack of representatives would wreak havoc of an entirely different and far more influential nature. Parliament had in fact thought through the need for colonial representatives to British government, and at one point had even outlined the men from each colony to be included in such a body. Still, representation was not granted, and colonists who desired it seethed with anger.³³ The imposition of the Stamp Act, therefore, served only to fuel this fire.

The Act was to take effect the first of November, 1765. This gave the colonies ample time to bristle at their lack of say in the matter. A *Boston-Gazette, and Country Journal* published later that April contained what Dorr called a “Burlesque on the late regulations of Trade or some other oppressions.”³⁴ The article compared the Stamp Act to an animal that had been in hiding but recently had lashed out. “We hear that a strange Beast of a most terrible Appearance has lately been seen by several Persons in divers parts of the British American Colonies, it seem’d extremely shy at first, was afraid of being seen and kept at a Distance; but by

³² ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 36.

³³ Morgan and Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis*, 17-18.

³⁴ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 64.

degrees is grown bolder and makes nearer approaches...He seems exceeding fierce, and the aspect of it is so terrible, that it is feared it will depopulate the Colonies more than the Savage Indians with which they have lately been infested.”³⁵ It was notable for anything in the colonial period to be more threatening than Native American presence, especially when the threat arose from the very government that gave birth to the colonies themselves.

In the months before the Act went into effect, the colonists debated and denounced it. Colonial newspapers often printed letters and news from other areas of the colonies, and a June article of *The Boston Evening-Post* printed a telling piece of indignation from Annapolis, Maryland. On “Friday evening last, between IX and X, we had a very smart thunder gust, which struck a house in one part of the town, and a tree in another. But we were more THUNDER-STRUCK last Monday, on the arrival of Capt. Richardson, in the ship Pitt, in 6 weeks from the Downs, with a certain account of the STAMP Act being absolutely passed. It received the royal assent on the 22d of March.”³⁶ The colonists’ surprise by the actual inevitability of the Act indicated their ever increasing discontent.

Some arguments in support of the Stamp Act were aired in the colonies. The *Evening-Post* in May of 1765 mentioned a pamphlet that had recently been published, which contained a paragraph arguing against the need for Parliamentary representation from the colonies. Though certain counties in Britain were without representatives, they still needed to pay the required taxes of their government. The question was posed thus: “Should the doctrine be adopted that, because the colonies have no representatives they ought not to be taxed by Parliament, might not Leeds, Halifax, Birmingham, Sheffield, that part of the dutchy of Lancaster which lies at the very gates of the royal palace, and many other places of great opulence, with equal justice say that

³⁵ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 64.

³⁶ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 108.

they are not bound to pay any taxes imposed by a British Parliament, because they have no representative in that body?”³⁷ The pamphlet’s author obviously would answer no, and would assert Parliament’s right to tax any part of the empire.

Indignation toward the Stamp Act continued in print, and a letter published first in the *New York Gazette*, later published in *The Boston Evening-Post*, took up the entirety of the front page and continued onto subsequent pages. Dorr noted it was “the First Spirited piece,” and wrote also that “This Peice first gave the greatest Alarm about the Stamp Act.”³⁸ The letter asked the pertinent questions of the time blatantly, particularly in regard to representation, which the author called “the sacred badge of liberty.” Upon hearing “That we have a right to be taxed only by our own consent, are we to understand this right in a sense that would effectually exclude all the advantage of it, and contradict the common meaning of the words? Can any man be represented without his own consent and choice?...But pray, where is the advantage of it [representation] if persons are appointed to represent us without our choice or consent? At this rate, might not the greatest enemies we have in the world---might not those whose interests are the most diametrically opposite to ours, be chosen to represent us?”³⁹ Though intended as rhetorical questions of force for the reader, the weight of these repeated queries shows how deeply the Stamp Act and its imposition without consent affected the inhabitants of the colonies.

As the summer of waiting continued, more colonists came to favor taking political action against the Act. Representation in Parliament became more hotly contested. Either representatives from the colonies would sit at Parliament, or the current members of Parliament would virtually “represent” and speak for any population under British rule. This virtual

³⁷ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 87.

³⁸ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 111.

³⁹ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 111.

representation would not do for the colonies, and serious consideration was given to completely breaking off. A letter from Virginia demonstrated this fervor, stating that that colony's General Assembly was pulled between loyalty to the King and to Parliament, and the idea of giving up English citizenship and all rights associated with being an English citizen for their own rights as independent, unaffiliated citizens. It continued that "Associations are forming, to which several Thousands have subscribed, in that Government, in New-Hampshire and Massachusetts, in Concert with the other American Governments, to draw up Remonstrances to his Majesty, &c. and to oppose this tremendous Act by all lawful Means."⁴⁰ The obvious disgust expressed by these powerful men of early American society demonstrated just how angered the colonies were by the tax.

Even loyalists and moderates made attempts to convey the problems with the duty to nobles in England. A "Letter to a Noble Lord," which was published over numerous weeks of *The Boston-Gazette and Country Journal* due to its length, was signed at its end "I am, my Lord, Your Lordship's most obedient, most devoted humble servant," connoting support for the crown and the Parliament of which this noble lord was most likely a part.⁴¹ At the outset of the letter Dorr scribbled in an asterisk to denote the author as James Otis Jr., who was actually opposed to the tax. This meant that it is unlikely that Otis wrote this extended letter in an effort to bring the attention of the nobility to the issue. Since he is faking his "obedience", the author's audience is not the lords, it is the American colonists. This also meant that his humble and devoted signature made fun of the crown, as its nature was entirely sarcastic. Otis, as this supposed loyalist, pleaded with the noble lord to understand the impact of such a tax. He wrote "I Could wish my Lord, that the Colonists were able to yield ten times the aid for the support of the common cause

⁴⁰ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 133.

⁴¹ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 177.

ever yet granted by or required of them. But to pay heavy provincial taxes in peace and in war, and also *external* and *internal* Parliamentary *assessments* is absolutely out of people's power. The burden of the *Stamp Act* will certainly fall chiefly on the middling more necessitous and labouring people."⁴² If even a moderate loyalist, albeit a false one, brought these concerns to his superior lord, then the Stamp Act was unquestionably troubling to the majority of the American people, regardless of their social or political status.

Otis told in his letter of the hardships of the everyday American, and in doing so argued indirectly for increased representation. Otis was known also for his grudge against the British appointed leadership. Massachusetts Governor Francis Bernard failed to appoint James Otis Sr. to the Superior Court, and the younger Otis did his best not to let Bernard forget his actions.⁴³ Otis also later wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Rights of the British Colonies*, for which a note was published in an October 1765 *Gazette*. Dorr, like many others in the colonies, supported and encouraged the ideals of Otis, and below this paper's mention of the pamphlet writer Dorr commended him. According to Dorr, "He gain'd the good Will of the Colonists of this Province and Town in particular not only for publishing the book above but for his truly Patriotic conduct in general."⁴⁴ Such praise not only evidenced Dorr's opinion on the prominent figure, but also that of many colonists. The use of the word patriotic also played a role in the formation of the increasingly revolutionary rhetoric used by the papers and Dorr alike.

Frustrated though the colonies were by the idea of the Stamp Act, its enforcement would inevitably deepen discontent. Perhaps most blatantly recognizable were the present enforcers themselves: the stamp masters. As part of the necessary provisions of the Stamp Act as a duty,

⁴² ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 162.

⁴³ Morgan and Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis*, 10.

⁴⁴ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p. 217.

Parliament stationed tax collectors throughout the colonies. Americans abhorred these tax collectors, taunting them, defaming them in print, and sometimes even tarring and feathering them, among other embarrassments. The men who collected duties were the on-the-ground reminder of the power of Parliament and the king, and Dorr unapologetically defamed them in his notes.

The famous image of the “liberty tree” in revolutionary history had its origins with the Stamp Act. Colonists were particularly fond of hanging their stamp masters in effigy to protest the duty, and there is no shortage of references to such effigies in Dorr’s collection of newspapers. An August issue of *The Boston-Gazette and Country Journal* printed “Early on Wednesday Morning last the Effigy of a Gentleman sustaining a very unpopular Office, viz. that of Stamp Master, was found hanging on a Tree in the most public Part of the Town, together with a Boot, wherein was concealed a young Imp of the Devil represented as peeping out of the Top. On the Breast of the Effigy was a Label, in Praise of Liberty, and denouncing Vengeance on the Subvertors of it--and underneath was the following Words, HE THAT TAKES THIS DOWN IS AN ENEMY TO HIS COUNTRY.”⁴⁵ Dorr’s annotations filled in some gaps and answered some questions about this passage, clarifying the words “Stamp” and “Devil,” as well as revealing the identity of the gentleman in effigy and providing a little history; the likeness was that of Andrew Oliver, a stamp collector for Massachusetts. Dorr also shed some light on the tree mentioned, writing “Thus the Famous Tree hereafter was called the Tree of Liberty.”⁴⁶

A month later another *Gazette* officially published what Dorr had jotted down before. The “Great Tree at the South End of the Town, upon which the Effigies of a Stamp Master was lately hung, was honour’d last Wednesday with the name of, THE TREE OF LIBERTY; a large

⁴⁵ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 166.

⁴⁶ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 166.

Plate of Copper, with that Inscription, in Letters of Gold, being fixed thereon.”⁴⁷ It was not only the *Gazette* publishing such news, but the *Evening-Post* printed the same message on September 16, 1765 as well: “At the South Part of the Town the Great Trees for which many have so great a Veneration, were decorated with the Ensigns of Loyalty, and the Colours embroidered with several Mottos. On the Body of one of the Trees was fixed with large deck Nails, that it might last, (as a Poet said, *like oaken Bench to Perpetuity*) a Copper Plate, with these Words *Stamped* thereon in Golden Letters, THE TREE OF LIBERTY, August 14, 1765.”⁴⁸

The blatant hatred and actions of the colonists against the stamp collectors was undeniable and widely publicized. Newspapers in this time consisted heavily of letters and excerpts from other papers in the colonies and in England, so presumably some of the published material in the Boston papers would be published in England. The publicity received by the Liberty Tree indicated colonists’ increased efforts to gain the attention of the British, and to hopefully have the Act repealed.

This kind of action certainly warranted the attention of the stamp collectors. They were not only subject to being burned in effigy, but often to mob activity and assault on their homes and persons. They resigned frequently from their posts, and felt it necessary for their lives and those of their families. A September *Evening-Post* printed that in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, “on Thursday last was exhibited there to public View, the Effigies of a Stamp-master, & the D---l, with a Boot between them: But as the Gentleman who was appointed Distributor of Stamps for that Province, immediately upon his arrival here last Week, freely resigned that disagreeable Office, and declared his Resolution never to act in that Capacity, we shall therefore forbear giving a particular account of the hasty proceedings of this Townsmen, upon the first Report of

⁴⁷ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 193.

⁴⁸ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 196.

his landing here.”⁴⁹ It appeared that the man had only just been granted the position and knew immediately of the danger it entailed, making resignation the only logical and safe option. Public reaction to the Stamp Act had made its imposition that much more difficult for the officials appointed to facilitate it.

Other stamp masters likewise left their posts in August after the burning of effigies on the Liberty Tree. The *Gazette* reported that “Early on Monday Morning last departed this Town, after a short Stay, for his native Place the Colony of Connecticut, the *most reputable* STAMPMAN, attended by his Brother Functioner of this Province, amidst the Exclamations of the People--And we hear they were bewildered and lost their Way in going thro’ Roxbury; but by the Help of Sambo an innocent Negro Man, they were convey’d through Sheep-Alley into the great Road again, leading to Watertown.”⁵⁰ Dorr enlightened his reader to the identities of these two men, noting below the passage with an asterisk and a circled “x” that the most reputable stampman was Jared Ingersoll, and his brother functioner was the ever despised Andrew Oliver. These men were so affected by the public outrage toward them that they got lost while fleeing.

Colonist mob activity forced Oliver’s resignation. An article in another *Gazette* wrote of the entire incident as a phenomenon of weather and alchemy. The author described the mob itself as a black cloud moving slowly about, gaining speed and volume as it went. It started in the south part of town, and began to emit noise like thunder and sparks like lightning. The cloud came before the province house, and “Here it stopped a few minutes, swelled, looked excessively black and fierce, and suddenly discharged itself of three tremendous peals of thunder, which shook that lofty fabric, and all the little houses and hollow hearts near it.” A similar discharge of thunder took place down Kingstreet as it passed the Town House, according to a note from Dorr,

⁴⁹ ANHD, MHS, Vol, 1, p 196.

⁵⁰ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 160.

and did so again upon arrival at Governor Hutchinson's home. But "the cloud suddenly turned, took a rapid course down to Oliver's dock, and by a violent explosion in all directions shook and tore a newly erected building, said to be for a stamp office, into atoms." It shattered Oliver's windows, tore away his garden fence and the door of his coach house, threatening death and destruction to all around it before it dispersed. "Some very good people look on this as a singular judgment on Mr. Secretary, for the sin at least of accepting an office, the name which ever has been, is, and will be odious to all true North Americans when his own fortune and really honorable appointments, would have supported him according to his rank. This is certain the unpopular office is for the present resigned." Dorr noted below that this cloud "refers to the first Stir we made in Deed to oppose the Stamp Act, which Forced A Oliver to Resign."⁵¹ He prided himself on inclusion as a part of that cloud, and perhaps was even more proud to have made such a thunderous impact upon the circumstances of the Act in the colonies. The article along with Dorr's commentary showed the resilience of the colonists and their intent to continue their angry assaults on British power.

The papers which Dorr annotated consistently supported the resignation of stamp officers. An *Evening-Post* article congratulated the colonists on the withdrawal of certain collectors from their posts, and commended those who had left their appointments. The author of that article noted: "I would wish indeed to give some honour to all that have resign'd, whatever might be their motives.---We may charitably hope conviction, and the love of justice, had at least a considerable share in their determination, as well as fear of the consequences." He then warned "the Stamp-Officers who have not yet resign'd. You have now an opportunity put into your hands of shewing whether you are friends or enemies to your country. If we are enslaved, it will

⁵¹ Both quotes in above paragraph from: ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 163.

be thro' the helping hand you lend towards it; for if you do your duty to your country by a refusal, we shall undoubtedly preserve our rights and liberties.”⁵² After continued warnings, the author placed an example of the kind of treatment to which those yet to resign might be subject. He wrote of a mob scene surrounding the home of a stamp collector in Connecticut, who Dorr revealed in the margin to be Jared Ingersoll, and of the pestering questions and behaviors Ingersoll was subject to as a result of his indecision toward resignation. The threats made by colonists were often chilling enough to induce the resignation of some stamp collectors.

The man made an example in the threat, Jared Ingersoll, was an infamous stamp master to be sure. The collector of stamp duties for Connecticut, Ingersoll received innumerable mentions in the press and much attention also in the margins from Dorr. Dorr actually served to ensure his readers present and future were aware of just how much Ingersoll was shamed in print, as frequently he was not mentioned by name but rather referenced by a helpful asterisk or other symbol, which Dorr translated for his readers. On the second page of the same *Evening-Post* that told of the mob inquisition of Ingersoll was another reference to the stamp master, again not by name, but with help from Dorr. On “the morning of the 27th instant, a certain ever memorable and respectable gentleman, made his appearance in Effigie, suspended between the Heavens and the Earth, (as an emblem of his being fit for neither) he was cloathed in white and black, with a view to represent the great contrast of his character, he once indeed (to his praise be it spoken) when in public trust reflected honour upon himself and country, but now, O detestable change! has for the sake of a pitiful pension, barely undertaken to be the tool of oppression, and to spread misery and poverty among his friends and brethren of this colony, by collecting from

⁵² ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 184.

them the small remains of wealth they are now possessed of.”⁵³ Despite such polite language and admiration for previous character, the author of this letter appeared appalled by Ingersoll’s choice to become and remain a stamp master. This merely further proved the abhorrence faced by stamp masters from the colonists.

Ingersoll’s appearance in print was far from over. The very next page of the same *Evening-Post* in which he had already been twice mentioned granted the reader yet another description of his effigy. The likeness was “clad in a suit of white, trim’d with black, the gift of his native country, both as an emblem of this purity and innocence and his sorrow and tender concern for this unhappy people: On his right hand stood the restless father of mischief with the Stamp act in his hand, giving credentials to his all attentive pupil; the malignity of his heart was lively portray’d by the expressive cardinal knave at cards on his breast, accompanied with a cautious memento to all placemen that ‘When vice prevails and impious men bear sway, the post of honour is a private station.’”⁵⁴ The printers made three references to Ingersoll in one paper, and therefore wanted to ensure the public’s hatred of the stamp master and what he represented. Their usage of their trade, which was the very trade to be taxed, implied the unquestionable hatred of the Act.

Dorr managed to find even more damning references to Ingersoll, one which stood with particular force in comparison. Either the author of the piece had not an inkling regarding the correct spelling of Ingersoll’s name, or, more likely, the author intentionally and malevolently misspelled it to further shame him. “A certain Tally keeper of the Exchequer being asked by Gared Negrosoul what he should do if his Countrymen should knock him on the Head? answered, D--n them, if they say one wry Word, they shall be disarm’d from one End of the

⁵³ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 185.

⁵⁴ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 186.

Continent to the other.”⁵⁵ Massachusetts still had slavery in 1765, and the racism that undergirded it ensured that white colonists saw “Negrosoul” as a decidedly insulting play on Ingersoll’s name.

Ingersoll even wrote and published a letter to those from whom he would need to collect taxes. He wrote of his initial skepticism of the Act, and how he had tried to stop its passage because he knew the discontent it would cause in the colonies. He explained that he had taken his position as stamp collector due to peer pressure, then asked whether the people would rather he collect from them or a stranger do it. He believed the colonists would have blamed him had he refused the position. As written in September of 1765, Ingersoll promised “I never will exercise the Office against the general sense and inclination of the people.--This I shall doubtless be able fully to collect before November; and if I then find the people against conforming to the act of Parliament, I shall resign my Office with as much pleasure, I am sure, as ever I assumed it; and shall, at all events (as readily as any man in the colony) join in any reasonable measures to get rid of the act; for, you may rely upon it, I am far from being in love with it. In the mean time I must beg of you to consider seriously of the tendency of all rash and violent measures.”⁵⁶ He tried hard to convince the people that he was on their side, and did it in a very self-interested way to avoid any mob activity against him.

A few weeks later a parody of Ingersoll’s letter appeared in print, with the title “To the Publishers of the Boston Evening-Post. Please to insert the following Answer to the Address of a bold Nigersoll, as coming from him, and you’ll oblige your constant Reader.” The recurring misspelling of the name degraded Ingersoll further. The parody took every claim Ingersoll made and reversed it in an extremely sarcastic manner. Whereas in his original letter he tried to

⁵⁵ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 193.

⁵⁶ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 195.

appease the people in the hope they would not attack him, in the new version the author wrote “I cannot act so like an unreasonable creature, as to appeal to your judgment, when I am sensible I may be fairly condemned.--Whispers, like my reasons, are vain and fruitless, but the reports of my base insinuation for the ruin of my country, and the foolish promotion of my person are safely grounded.” Likewise when in the original Ingersoll stated his reluctance to take the position of stamp master, along with his hatred for the act, the author of the parody again reversed the sentiments. As “I assumed my office with sincere pleasure, so my resignation will be attended with sincere grief and reluctance, I shall at all events measure my reasons by my actions, which will witness my endeavors still to promote it, nor need I lie about it, for the love of this act is deeply riveted in my heart.”⁵⁷ Presumably the parody was more accurate than Ingersoll’s initial letter to the public. Though intended for a chuckle from like minded readers, the burlesque had far more truth about the mindset of one of the most despised stamp collectors.

It was well known and well publicized just how disliked Ingersoll was in the colonies. He was not safe from his countrymen, and in Connecticut where he was to collect the stamp duties there was mob action despite his pleading attempt at solidarity with the letter to the public. Ingersoll resigned on September 19th, 1765, but a *Gazette* from a few days later noted “We have advice from Connecticut, That some Thousands of Men, with ten Days Provisions, are gone out to hunt a voracious mad Creature, that has lately occasioned as much Horror in the Province, as the fierce Beast or Monster in France has caused in that Kingdom.”⁵⁸ Dorr helpfully placed an asterisk next to creature and denoted that it meant their stamp master, no other than Mr. Jared Ingersoll. The people welcomed his resignation, and in his official notice he stated “I do hereby notify all the Inhabitants of his Majesty’s Colony of Connecticut, (notwithstanding the said

⁵⁷ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 213.

⁵⁸ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 207.

Office or Trust has been committed to me) not to apply to me, ever hereafter, for any such stamped Papers, hereby declaring, that I do resign said Office, and execute these Presents of my own free Will and Accord, without any Equivocation, or mental Reservation.”⁵⁹ Ingersoll no doubt felt some relief with this resignation, at least in the sense that he no longer feared mob activity. He nonetheless had ruined his reputation.

In addition to tax collectors, other crown officers came under popular scrutiny. In these years colonial leaders with titles such as governor, men who were appointed by the crown to rule the colonies, were especially susceptible. Thomas Hutchinson and Francis Bernard were the governors of Massachusetts during the Revolutionary period, and they were strongly disliked by the average American. The governors as official leaders often had their speeches printed so that those unable to witness politics in person would be informed of the decisions of the time. Dorr scribbled numerous negative thoughts in the margins of his newspapers when Hutchinson, Bernard, or the like were mentioned or quoted.

Hutchinson and Bernard alike came to be known as proponents of taxation, presumably because of their elevated status as British colonial governors. They did, however, understand the consequences that would come about if taxation were to occur in the colonies. Hutchinson openly contested the Stamp Act, as evidenced by a note to the printers of the *Gazette* in August of 1765: “I Desire the Printers of the Thursday’s Paper to tell their Readers who those Gentlemen of *Integrity* and *Reputation* were, that informed the *Populace* that an honorable Gentleman had ‘*not only spoke, but wrote AGAINST laying on the Stamp Duties.*’”⁶⁰ Dorr revealed the identity of this honorable gentleman to be Thomas Hutchinson, indicating the tension faced by the governor. He was at the mercy of both the king and of the colonists.

⁵⁹ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 213.

⁶⁰ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 174.

Despite Hutchinson's struggle between loyalty to the crown who had given him his position and loyalty as a governor to the people of Massachusetts, Dorr for one remained unhappy with him. A letter published in the *Gazette* written by John Adams, at the time a Boston lawyer, gave Dorr cause to compare perspectives. The letter spoke of feudal law crafted and imposed by man, and the infringements upon human rights when such law was enforced. Adams argued "I say RIGHTS, for such they have, undoubtedly, antecedent to all earthly government--*Rights*, that cannot be repealed or restrained by human laws--*Rights* derived from the great legislator of the universe." Just beside this powerful sentence Dorr placed a small cross, which is referenced on the side margin with the exclamation "How different this from the opinion of Governor Hutchinson!"⁶¹ Clearly Dorr did not see eye to eye with Hutchinson, and as such felt the need to preserve their differences in opinion in print.

Even though Dorr and Hutchinson were not exactly of the same political views, they were far less at odds than were Dorr and Bernard. Francis Bernard's speeches were published in the newspapers of Boston frequently, and one speech printed midway through his tenure as governor prompted a particularly violent response from Dorr. The speech itself was mostly about domestic business, including some ideas Bernard had wanted to implement with regard to trade. He admitted that "some Regulations...from their Novelty only, will appear disagreeable." Despite Bernard's recognition of the unpleasant consequences that would result from his ideas, he was determined to implement them. Dorr however thought otherwise. Under the speech he wrote "This Speech the House did not Answer, perhaps they did not understand. Who Could?" The speech was centered on Parliament and the connection of the colonies to Great Britain, and the men of the Massachusetts House of Representatives were presumably not pleased to hear it.

⁶¹ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 159.

Bernard, deaf to the tenor of the people's will, continued "In an Empire, extended and diversified as that of *Great-Britain*, there must be a Supreme Legislature, to which all other Powers must be subordinate. It is our Happiness that our Supreme Legislature, the Parliament of *Great-Britain*, is the Sanctuary of Liberty and Justice; and that the Prince, who presides over it, realizes the Idea of a Patriot King." Dorr grumbled that "Now the Wolf shews himself notwithstanding his Sheeps Cloathing."⁶² This familiar comparison of a disguised dangerous animal is indicative of the sentiments toward leadership of the time. Dorr certainly felt betrayed, presumably as did many American colonists.

Francis Bernard's undoubted lack of popularity stemmed from his pro-British sentiment, and mob violence and humiliation affected him in the same way as stamp collectors. The violence of the riots occurring in the streets of Boston was unprecedented, and its chief targets were officials of the crown. One night in late August "About Dusk a Number of rude Fellows were gather'd upon the Exchange--they quickly began to be very noisy, and their Number increas'd so fast, as to create Fears in the Minds of the Inhabitants, that the Consequence of their tumultuous assembling would be mischievous, tho' no one could guess at their Design." This large group was by no means out for a rollicking night of drunken pranks, they were out for destruction. They lit fires, broke into homes of officials, stole possessions, and barely spared the lives of those in their path. The recounting of this riot ends with a powerful point: "At some Times and in some extraordinary Cases, the Cause of Liberty requires an extraordinary Spirit to support it; but surely the pulling down Houses and robbing Persons of their substance, especially when any *suppos'd* Injuries can be redress'd *by Law*, is utterly inconsistent with the first

⁶² ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 95.

Principles of Government, and subversive of the glorious Cause.”⁶³ Despite the attention that such activities granted to the everyday citizen who desired changes in law and representation, the editors were still uncertain about the efficacy of force and violence in the colonies.

To this end, Bernard issued a proclamation shortly after the riot, promising rewards of large sums for any informants who revealed ringleaders of the violence against British officials. Bernard not only offered rewards for information, but also “thought fit, with the Advice of his Majesty’s Council, to issue this Proclamation, requiring all Justices of Peace, and all Officers, civil and military, to use their utmost Endeavours for discovering, apprehending and bringing to Justice, all and every Persons concerned in the unlawful Proceedings aforesaid; and also requiring them to use their utmost Endeavours for preventing all such tumultuous Assemblies and Outrages for the future.”⁶⁴ While royal officials and those loyal to the crown would have applauded this proclamation, it enflamed those against the Act even more. Bernard was only making it harder on himself to be a respected governor in Massachusetts.

When the officially stamped papers arrived in Boston, Bernard spoke to his Council with an update. He said that the papers would be stored away for two reasons: “to prevent impudent People committing an high insult upon the King, an indignity which would be sure to meet with particular Resentment; and to save the Town or Province, as it may happen, from being made answerable for so great a Sum as the Value of the Stamped Papers will amount to; as they certainly will be, if the Stamped Papers should be taken away.”⁶⁵ As if only to further degrade Bernard, a poetic parody of this speech was written some three weeks later and published. The poem explained the speech’s contents sardonically, again stating that the stamped papers would

⁶³ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 177.

⁶⁴ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 180.

⁶⁵ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 184.

be kept behind guarded walls, “Protecting them from all abuse / And keeping them unus’d for use. / In this I had intentions two, / That is to say, a double view, / T’ indemnify both town and people / From loss of cash, and loss of steeple. / And hence it was the voice of reason, / To guard against such costly treason, / However in their present temper, / Mobs burn in effigy, the Stamper.”⁶⁶ Political caricature was nothing new, but the disrespect for Bernard blatantly visible in print to all Bostonians demonstrated just how viciously the people viewed his governorship and influence.

Dorr’s hatred for Bernard often prompted scribbles, which can be presumed to have been written in the heat of the moment upon his first reading of a paper. In other circumstances, Dorr revisited his newspapers to make comments years after the publication date. In one instance a *Gazette* article decried the duties imposed as of late, and abhorred the idea of the revenue supporting corrupt men across the ocean. Dorr beneath noted “This piece seems calculated as well for the year 1768 as 1765,” indicating his frustrations with 1768 taxes. On this same page of the paper was published an image of a skull and crossbones, a nautically themed warning of what was to come across the sea. Its caption read “Hereabouts will be the place to affix the STAMP.”⁶⁷ Another image appeared shortly after in the papers, this time the “JOIN or DIE” snake representing each of the colonies as one part of the animal.⁶⁸ The symbolism and recent popularity of the image no doubt had great impact upon the readers. By these images it was not difficult to note the opinion of the printers, and by extension their readers. Dorr, by his notes, shows he was unquestionably aligned with idea that the infliction of this tax would be a horror to the colonies.

⁶⁶ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 210.

⁶⁷ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 216.

⁶⁸ ANHD, MHS. Vol. 1, p 224.

Dorr grew increasingly angry with crown officials. Bernard, upset at his treatment by members of the Boston government, stated in a speech to them that he should “avoid reasoning upon the unfair Arguments and groundless insinuations which have been made use of to misrepresent me: Time and their own insufficiency will effectually confute them: Time will make you, Gentlemen, sensible to how much you were deceived when you were prevailed upon to give a Sanction to so injurious a Treatment of me.” Dorr, ever the fan of arguing with Bernard, wrote next to the passage that this speech and letter later published “confute him and show him to be an implacable enemy to this province.”⁶⁹ Judging by the reaction of other men in power, Dorr was not alone in his sentiments. When this speech was published in a different paper, Dorr again wrote beneath it. This time he criticized Bernard further, noting near Bernard’s mention of time that “This is the reverse of truth, for Time continually brings forth new proofs of his Implacable enmity to this whole People and Constitution.”⁷⁰

His anger continued in mentions of other figures with sympathies against his own. A note from Parliament printed in a January 1766 *Gazette* stated that “It is recommended to Grenville and Charles Townsend, and the Rest, in their next speeches against North America, to bear in Mind this and a thousand such-like instances of parental, tender Love and Care of these Colonies in their infancy.” With no prompt beyond his name, Dorr scribbled below “Charles Townsend a Friend to Taxing America, and Father of the Curs_d Glass Act.”⁷¹ Not known to swear, Dorr obviously reacted more strongly to this mere mention of Townsend’s name than he had done with most others before. This was another instance of his annotations made years after publication, as Townsend’s name became abominable to most colonists after the passage of his

⁶⁹ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 265.

⁷⁰ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 269.

⁷¹ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 314.

namesake acts in 1767.

The same display of emotion came months later when Dorr reacted with emotive verbiage to denounce religious men for supporting and imposing the Stamp Act. In an April *Gazette* the repeal of the act was discussed in print, and one point read that “It is said, that Eleven Bishops out of Thirteen, are against the Bill for the Repeal.” Dorr lashed out: “One of the greatest Enemies to the Colonies is Bishop Warburton, who was among the above 11 against the Repeal and who greatly defamed the Colonies...Strange that Ministers of the Merciful Jesus should be for Carrying the Stamp Act with Fire and Sword!”⁷² In a world in which religion dictated and meant so much to daily life, it must have seemed innately unfair to the colonists that those in religious life would root against them.

As Dorr’s fulminations demonstrated, the Stamp Act had a shattering impact upon the colonies. Many who at one time felt loyalty and prosperity from the relationship with England changed their minds, as one predicted that “the Stamp Act will inevitably pump and extort from us all the remaining coin of the continent (which they might otherwise have had with our good will).”⁷³ The Stamp Act was opposed from its inception, before the ship reached Boston Harbor on that fateful April day. The discontent prior to its actual effect continued in action and in print, as when Benjamin Welch wrote to the printers “I therefore hereby give Notice to all Officers whatever, that may be appointed by Virtue of that most grievous and unconstitutional Act (to prevent them Trouble), That I will pay no Tax whatever.”⁷⁴ Until it was repealed in March of 1766, the joyous news of which reached the colonies on a ship owned by John Hancock in May of that year, the Stamp Act continued to be despised and resisted to all possible extents by

⁷² ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 393.

⁷³ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 188.

⁷⁴ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 206.

average Americans.⁷⁵ Its repeal was a small victory for the fledgling rebels, but the event overall was merely practice in frustration and violence for the events and injustices to come.

⁷⁵ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 411.

The Aftermath of the Stamp Act

“Submit! No! No! No!”

~The Annotated Newspapers of Harbottle Dorr

Printing presses continued to churn out weekly texts to inform the citizens of Boston of the goings-on near and far. Letters from London were often printed, as were pieces of news from Caribbean colonies and neighboring provinces in the New England and Mid-Atlantic regions of North America. But after the repeal of the Stamp Act and the immediate coverage thereof, for a time front page notices of government decisions and the angered letters of citizens gave way to advertisements and lottery announcements. Lists of letters remaining unclaimed in the post office took precedence above the front page folds.⁷⁶ Advertisements for sales of goods and services were interspersed among the pages, and reminders of daily life like obituaries and estate sales continued to appear with regularity. Harbottle Dorr even had his own advertisement in a July

⁷⁶ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 680.

Gazette. It referenced the location of his shop in Boston, and the recently imported wares that he sold.⁷⁷ Sometimes there would be mention of the events that had passed, with one advertisement referencing a location in relation to the Liberty Tree.⁷⁸ Notices of runaway slaves speckled the latter halves of the more often than not four-page papers, and international goings-on beyond those of England had the spotlight on occasion, presenting the public with a broader worldview.⁷⁹ Dorr's annotations (and frequent lack thereof) paralleled this return to normalcy, with Dorr often citing only references to past events in his appendices and filling in blanked out names regarding irrelevant and removed situations. Appeased by the small victory against Parliament, an economic stability and the reinvigoration of local colonial enterprise had seemingly set back in within the boundaries of Boston, at least for a little while.

All good times are measured by their relief from the bad, and this era in revolutionary Boston was no different. The Stamp Act had indeed been a blatant and direct infringement upon the colonists' rights, and its repeal was welcomed with much celebration and relief. But even with its repeal, the Declaratory Acts passed the same day in Parliament, among other factors, did little to ease tensions between the colonies and England. Revolutionary rhetoric and enlightenment thinking would spur the colonies to further discontent despite their win in the Stamp Act repeal, and during the next four years these tensions would escalate to the scale of tragedy. The Boston Massacre, as it so has been named, would be the culmination of these strains, and the media of the time would serve its purpose in inciting the reaction that became so pivotal to the American Revolution.

After so much unrest with the imposition of the Stamp Act, certain actions by the

⁷⁷ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 681.

⁷⁸ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 665.

⁷⁹ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 674.

colonists had repercussions in the years to follow. The riots upon the governor and others loyal to the royal government in August of 1765 had caused much damage to the property of those men, and they desired compensation. A calculation of damages owed appeared in a July 1766 *Gazette*, which served many purposes.⁸⁰ First, it informed the public of the repercussions for actions such as rioting. Second, it brought back the memory of those riots, perhaps reminding the offending parties of their insubordination. Third, the article may have served to remind the rioters that there might be future reasons to riot. Their violent and riotous tactics had successfully effected the repeal of the Stamp Act; these same tactics could be useful in further battles against unfair government practices.

Memoirs of those August 1765 days filled many issues of the *Gazette* for months following the Stamp Act's repeal. One such article remembered the men who met "under the deepest Impressions of Concern for their injured Country, and of righteous Indignation at its Oppressors, [who] came to a *generous* Resolution, that if the STAMP OFFICE should be on Fire, (and no other Buildings be in Danger) they would not assist in extinguishing it.Had it not been for *the* RESISTANCE of *that day*, this Continent would have been in a Situation, which no Person, who feels for his Country can think of without Horror.---*The* RESISTANCE of *that Day* roused the Spirit of America." The same article noted the fourteen toasts that the celebratory group drank to on that anniversary, one of which read "May America never *slumber* when her RIGHTS are in Danger." Dorr's annotations in these papers, while not nearly as passionate as those in past papers or those to come, often still displayed his keen interest in the events in his colonies. Underneath the articles Dorr directed his reader to a page where a

⁸⁰ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 454.

reference to pulling down the Stamp Office could be found.⁸¹ His creation of a record for future readers to view these events and to make it simple to follow the timeline demonstrated his notion of the importance of the events.

The colonists reveled in their victory over Parliament. One level-headed contributor to an August 1766 *Gazette* noted “The magnanimous and laudable stand this continent has lately made for the preservation of its just Rights, will make a shining page in the history of America.” Dorr clarified this below, ensuring the reader’s understanding that this “stand” was the opposition to the Stamp Act. The author wrote on to warn of impertinent and hasty actions by colonists in light of the repeal, in order that they remain loyal and not so rowdy as to have their rights completely taken away. He argued that as British citizens, American colonists in fact did have the rights of any Englishman, but that they should hesitate to overreact. He finished his letter with a request, “I beseech you, let posterity, when they shall read the history of these times, and your future resolutions, be able to say, the Americans, when in danger of Slavery, acted worthy the name of Freemen; and when their Liberties were secure, lived peaceable, contented and happy, conducting themselves in all respects as loyal British subjects.”⁸² Dorr seemingly appreciated this author’s contribution, as the entire passage is marked with references to more substantive passages elsewhere in his paper collection. Dorr did not visibly agree or disagree with the author, but his annotations suggest that he paid close attention to the author’s sentiments, chief among them the advice concerning discretion. Caution at this point seemed advisable given the tensions and reactions to actions by Parliament in the recent past. This sensible approach was not, however, the perspective of everyone in the American colonies at the time.

August of 1766 marked the one-year anniversary of the riots against proponents of the

⁸¹ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 474.

⁸² ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 476.

Stamp Act, and celebrations raged in Boston. One author noted of these celebrations that: “the noble Ardour of Liberty burst thro’ its long Concealment, o’erleape’d the Barriers of Oppression, and lifted it’s awful Crests amid the Group of cowering Dastards, haughty Tyrants and merciless Parricides.” The crowds celebrated by meeting at the Liberty Tree, “every Bosom dilating with Joy, and every Eye sparkling with Satisfaction.” Cannons saluted, huzzahs rung through the air, and toasts were raised both to liberty and to the patriots who perpetrated the violence, among them, “The American Hampden,” who Dorr revealed again to be James Otis.⁸³ This kind of revolutionary fervor increasingly gained traction as dates and celebrations became tradition.

Six months later the mid-March 1767 anniversary of the Stamp Act’s repeal was celebrated in a similar fashion. Wine, cannons, and toasts “saluted the glorious and memorable Patrons of America, particularly those who distinguished themselves in the Cause of Liberty, while we were groaning under the Iron Hand of Oppression.”⁸⁴ Here again the wording used by the reporters of the day signaled a fervor that was increasingly becoming ingrained into American consciousness. The Tree of Liberty likewise remained prominent in activities of this celebratory nature and in the writings of newspaper contributors, and the continued appreciation for the symbol served only to augment the already tangible revolutionary fervor, even nine years prior to the year of 1776. Dorr noted these events with references to pages with similar content, connecting the original events to their anniversary celebrations.⁸⁵

But beyond simple references, Dorr began his angered annotations anew when his seemingly eternal enemy, Francis Bernard, gave a speech. It referenced both the repeal of the Stamp Act and the imposition of the new Declaratory Acts, and asked that compensation be

⁸³ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 477.

⁸⁴ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 613.

⁸⁵ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, pp 166, 193, 258, 273, 302.

made for all the victims suffering at the hands of the rioters. Rightly so, Dorr noted that “This speech gave great offence,” as it claimed that the repeal of the Act had been an “indulgence” granted to the colonies by Parliament.⁸⁶

The offenses continued, notably among the merchant classes. A letter from London merchants addressed to John Hancock and the rest of the merchants in Boston chastised the celebratory actions and opinions of the colonists, in quite strong and frankly aggressive language for the time. They asked: “is it just, is it tolerable, that without Proof of Inconvenience, tumultuous Force shall be encouraged by a Part, to fly in the Face of Power established for the Good of the Whole? We are persuaded, Gentlemen, that you cannot be of that opinion, and that you will exert your utmost Endeavours to cancel the Remembrance of such flagrant Breaches of public Order, and to manifest your Gratitude and Affection to your Mother Country, which by the Repeal of this Act has given such incontestible Proof of her Moderation.” As a merchant himself, Dorr likewise abhorred this admonishment, and noted that “[t]his Dictatorial Letter gave great offence, it was not Answer’d by the Merchants, they thinking that it was below their notice.”⁸⁷

Debates in government had great impact upon specific populations both in America and the mother country. Merchants dealt most directly with the legislation and taxation put into place by Parliament. Merchants on both sides of the Atlantic became embroiled in a written battle of scathing letters like the ones above. The merchants would meet at coffeehouses to determine their course of action and compose letters to another group of disputing colleagues a few thousand miles away. In a *Gazette* from June of 1766 an advertisement requested that all merchants in Boston come to a specific coffeehouse to view and respond to the correspondence

⁸⁶ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 427.

⁸⁷ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 433.

of London merchants. It reads “The Merchants in *Boston* are desired to meet at the British Coffee House TO MORROW, at Six o’Clock in the Evening--where some Letters from *Great-Britain* will be laid before them for their Consideration relative to their Trade and Commerce; and they are requested to be punctual in their Attendance.”⁸⁸ This notice was the very first thing in the paper, at the top left column of the page. It followed only the name and date of the publication, and was as much a notice to the merchants of Boston as it was to the greater population that communication and discussion about injustices were taking place. No doubt Dorr saw and noted this meeting in his endless analysis of the newspapers, and perhaps he attended in his capacity as a Boston merchant.

Merchant complaints and disputes gained increasing traction both within society and in the papers, and Dorr could be counted upon to pay close attention to the goings-on of his class. He connected a letter published in the September 8, 1766, *Gazette* with earlier volleys between the merchants of London and Boston, and also inserted references to the original pages of the Stamp Act and its repeal. The September letter was addressed to John Hancock and the rest of the merchants of Boston, from a group of London tradesmen. The writers attempted to convey the benefits of continued economic interaction between the colonies and the mother country, writing “In a word, the system of Great Britain is to promote a mutual interest by supplying the colonies with her manufactures, by encouraging them to raise, and receiving from them all raw materials, and by granting the largest extension to every branch of their trade not interfering with her own.”⁸⁹ The merchants of England feared that American industry could at some point best the British, if the colonies ever expanded their manufacturing base. The size of the colonies, the resources available to them, and the workforce that they would be able to mobilize

⁸⁸ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 438.

⁸⁹ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 488.

understandably frightened the British, who had been dependent upon and benefitting from the American colonies substantially. To British merchants, the colonists best served as sources of raw materials that British manufacturers would then use to produce goods the colonists would use. This kind of attitude, by which the British attempted to stop the colonists' industrial progress, created pressure that Boston merchants in particular found unfavorable. It was yet another factor which spurred anti-British sentiment in the wake of pre-existing conflict.

Boston merchants, indicative of their city's reputation, were certainly quick to react to any offenses against their freedoms or fortunes, and were quick to single out their errant brethren. Dorr's notes identified those merchants, some of whom were sons of prominent men, who did not comply with the non-importation agreement. The names on lists that were published multiple times in numerous Boston papers were quite familiar; they had surnames of powerful government figures loyal to the crown. Next to the list Dorr ensured the reader knew the loyalties of the names following, writing "Profest Tories." Among the names were John Bernard, who Dorr noted was "Son to Govr. Barnard," and Thomas and Elisha Hutchinson, who Dorr clarified were "Sons to Lieutenant Govr' Hutchinson, who no doubt instructs them!"⁹⁰ It is certain that Dorr did not confine these observations to his annotated newspapers.

Dorr and his fellow merchants in favor of non-importation policies certainly made their point well, but they were not the only contingent on their side of the Atlantic that disagreed with British mercantile practices. In a published letter from the merchants of Canada, the response to news of change was certainly in line with Bostonian sentiment. According to the Canadians, "The repeal of the Stamp act is a public service, by which all share in the advantage arising from

⁹⁰ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 2, p 628.

the event.”⁹¹ This reaction by the historically more loyal colony of Canada was telling of the sense of widespread oppression felt as a result of British action.

Stamp collectors were the most reviled representatives of British Parliamentary power.. John Hughes, a friend of Benjamin Franklin, was urged to take the job of stamp distributor for the colony of Pennsylvania by Franklin, who was thinking of the lucrative nature of the position for his friend instead of its consequences. The people of the colony came to resent and detest Hughes for distributing stamps, and he did his best to regain the support of his people. As a Pennsylvania politician, he was unable to come back from his reputation as stamp master, despite multiple letters he wrote and had published in various newspapers across the colonies. Responses to his letters were published alongside his own writing, and one particular issue of the *Gazette* from September 22, 1766, filled its pages with letters both to and from Hughes. Hughes resigned his post, but this did not stop many from still resenting him. One letter in response to Hughes’s pleas for forgiveness read “YOU ARE AN ENEMY TO AMERICA AND OUGHT TO HAVE YOUR BRAINS BEAT OUT.”⁹² This kind of language demonstrated the mentality of the colonists against any manifestation of control over their welfare. Dorr’s close reading of the letters in this *Gazette* produced few verbose notes, but almost an excessive amount of reference annotations. The letter naming Hughes an “enemy to America” produced no fewer than seventeen small diamond shapes, all referring to the Stamp Act on page 53 of the newspaper collection. Dorr made certain his readers could reference the original events, and this painstaking approach to annotation demonstrated not only his wish that the passage be read, but the fact that he thought it worthy of noting.

As we have noted, the very day the Stamp Act was withdrawn in Parliament, the British

⁹¹ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 495.

⁹² ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 498.

government put into place the Declaratory Act. This chess-like action was intended to cover all bases, and to almost sneakily confuse the colonies by passing it the same day as the act the colonists had so desperately desired to be repealed. The Declaratory Act itself is worded in such a way so that Parliament would have complete authority in all times, in all circumstances. It read “That the King’s Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords spiritual and temporal and Commons of Great Britain in Parliament assembled, had, hath, and of right ought to have, full power and authority to make laws and statutes of sufficient force and validity to bind the colonies and people of America, subjects of the crown of Great Britain, in all cases whatsoever.”⁹³ Essentially the King reiterated his position that he and his Parliament had legislative authority over the colonies. Its passage was for the British a victory, as one London paper observed: “The distractions of the British Empire were composed by the repeal of the American Stamp Act. But the constitutional superiority of Great Britain was preserved, by the act for securing the dependence of the Colonies.”⁹⁴ This triumphant tone (the article was re-published in a Boston newspaper) only further incited the anger of the colonists against this exact kind of control they thought they had relieved themselves of.

Boston newspapers continued to publish accounts from London that indicated a lack of understanding of the colonists’ position. One letter explained how generous the British had been in repealing the Stamp Act, and declared that the colonies had no right to complain:

“By this time I hope tranquility and good Temper reigns thro’ the whole continent, and that the satisfaction of being released from Distress, prevails more in the minds of the Colonists, than ever the Gloom that the very distress at first occasioned; you should now surely be satisfied. You have now got into the Hands of a Ministry, who in Fact, did you the essential service of getting the Stamp Act repealed. The Union between the Mother Country and her Colonies being thus happily cemented, should not be interrupted by

⁹³ Edmund S. and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953), 277.

⁹⁴ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 507.

small peevish disputes upon matters of little or no moment. Wise and calm men should seize the happy opportunity of inculcating the greatest cordiality and kindness; should encourage People to meet the Wishes of a Mild Government, and not to cavil upon little insignificant Points, after having attained the very essence of liberty.”⁹⁵

The author was condescending and his demands for rational behavior and gratitude for so benevolent a mother country likely rang hollow for radicalized Bostonians. It is almost surprising that Dorr left this particular passage unnoted. Apart from a single diamond denoting the Stamp Act and where to find it in previous papers, Dorr made no angry comments. After many of his previous annotations, one might think this particularly demeaning passage would provoke at least some response.

The manner of the imposition of the Declaratory Act was understandably resented. It was covertly executed, and therefore seen as “a scheme on foot in this Province by designing and selfish men, to raise a revenue out of Duties on Trade, in order to make a military and civil Establishment in this colony, as in Ireland....If this vigilant assembly should meet and rise without instructing their agent on this head, as the Parliament sits for business in December, such Delay may be attended with fatal consequences.---It is easier to prevent, than remove an evil,” said an anonymous note to the printers of the *Gazette*.⁹⁶ Dorr asterisked this passage and in hindsight noted that the act “took effect in 1767 and occasioned as much difficulty as the Stamp Act.”⁹⁷ Though this particular *Gazette* was published in 1766, Dorr in his detailed manner came back to the passage and remembered the trouble with the Declaratory Act, even more than a year later. His acute memory of the event and its impact was demonstrative of the sentiment in Boston.

Articles and letters began to feature new concepts and arguments, expanding into new

⁹⁵ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 539.

⁹⁶ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 540.

⁹⁷ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 540.

realms of inquiry and exploring more fundamental concepts of human rights. Abolitionism was far from prominent in the political sphere at the time, but the corresponding ideas of slavery and liberty were at the forefront of revolutionary politics. An advertisement in a February 1767 *Gazette* read “CONSIDERATIONS on SLAVERY, in a LETTER to a Friend. The Design of this Pamphlet is to represent the pernicious Consequences of the Slave Trade, not only to those who are unhappily brought into Slavery, but to the Community into which they are introduced. And as we have Reason to suppose the Publick animated with the strongest Sentiments of Liberty, we think it cannot fail to engage universal Attention.”⁹⁸ The American slave trade in a way provided a convenient parallel to the struggles and burdens under which the political leaders and the common people of the colonies found themselves.

A reader of this pamphlet wrote in to the publishers of the advertising newspaper, ecstatic that the subject had been printed. Clearly an early abolitionist (he signed his note “Libertas”), the writer proudly gushed that Massachusetts would bring justice and humanity to the forefront of politics and global trade. He “can’t describe the Pleasure with which I heard that the honorable House of Representatives of this Province had taken this Matter into their serious Consideration, and that a Bill is now before the House for preventing any further Increase of that shameful and shocking Evil into which this People have been strangely led, I mean strangely for our civil and religious Character in all other Respects. But now we have a Prospect of being the first Province upon the Continent that can forego that imperious Character of being *Lords* and *Masters*, for that more amiable one of being *Just* and *Humane*.”⁹⁹ It is apparent that not only did the author strongly oppose the slave trade in general, but perhaps he also meant to critique those who believed England had behaved ethically with the colonies. In a display of sarcasm, Dorr noted

⁹⁸ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 597.

⁹⁹ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 610.

the aforementioned Bill in Libertas's note, below denoting with a corresponding asterisk "It passed the House, but stop'd at the Council. Shocking!"¹⁰⁰ Dorr was, in fact, not shocked at all that the Crown-appointed Council would thwart the will of the colonists' elected representatives in the House. It is also apparent that the struggle with Great Britain had indeed, for Dorr, caused him to reconsider whether human bondage could be justified. The "tyranny" of the Crown seemed too similar to the tyranny of slavery.

Many colonists began to reflect, as Dorr had, on enlightenment principles and their application to the colonial struggle. A continuing letter spanning a few *Gazettes* signed "A Freeborn American" provided a philosophical analysis of human government and natural rights, and possessed many words and phrases which appear in the later founding documents of America. He wrote that "Man, in a state of nature, has undoubtedly a right to speak and act without controul. In a state of civil society, that right is limited by the law. Political liberty consists in a freedom of speech and action, so far as the laws of a community will permit, and no farther: all beyond is criminal, and tends to the destruction of Liberty itself. That society whose laws least restrain the words and actions of its members is most free."¹⁰¹ Dorr certainly agreed, as the letter is riddled with his scribbled words. Evidently he took much from this passage, because nearly every three sentences is another asterisk-like marking directing the reader to the bottom of the page, where the margin is filled with scrawls. Though most notes are single words rather than lengthier rants often more characteristic of Dorr, the notes clarify important pieces of the letter, demonstrating just how significant Dorr found the ideas conveyed by the author to be.

Obviously the author of this letter had opinions of government and the people in it that aligned with Dorr's, who helpfully filled in the missing letters to the names cut up by dashes.

¹⁰⁰ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 610.

¹⁰¹ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 607.

The Freeborn American continued, giving current examples of his theory, “Unfortunate for mankind, in the present depraved state of human nature, a B[ernar]d will never meet with much difficulty to find a H[utchinso]n and a R[uggle]s to support him in all his measures; but that people who have an H[awle]y, O[ti]s & A[dam]s to counterwork their pernicious designs, should account themselves happy indeed.”¹⁰² His very mention of the names of those known to call for independence was telling, and though Dorr was helpful enough to fill in the blanks, it would not have taken much intelligence to decipher the author’s redactions. No doubt all in Boston who held similar viewpoints read and agreed with this piece, creating a further rift between the people and government.

Even though this Freeborn American created the rift, he followed his controversial naming of leaders with a call for the colonists to, ostensibly, obey. He advised “As my countrymen we always have been, so let us continue to be, a willing and obedient people, to every constitutional command of his majesty or his representative; but at the same time, let us preserve our rights as British subjects, being persuaded no one can take offence at a conduct so worthy of Englishmen, but such as we ought never to please.” The author clearly saw the Crown’s demands as unconstitutional, and believed the colonists had the duty to preserve their rights. The author urged: “Go on then my countrymen, to support and vindicate with decency, plainness and courage, your rights, liberties, and privileges.”¹⁰³ This address to the general public offered the logical conclusion of revolutionary thought. It explained the rationale of the independence-minded in light of the Enlightenment, and did so in a way that supported such sentiments. The Freeborn American doubtless successfully augmented the tense climate already brewing in Boston, and judging by his notes throughout the letter, Dorr agreed.

¹⁰² ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 607.

¹⁰³ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 607.

There were more outrages in these years. Perhaps one of the most egregious was the Quartering Act, which obligated certain colonists to provide lodging for British soldiers in the event that public houses and barracks were not sufficient for the troops dispatched to America. Passed in May of 1765, news of this further imposition upon American colonists tasted bitter to Boston especially, and even many months later in February of 1767, Francis Bernard was lambasted by the Massachusetts government for not dealing with the issues of lodging and food rations sooner.¹⁰⁴ In true Boston fashion, this latest imposition was again resisted.

The very fact that soldiers were quartered in the colonies was belittling enough on its own to Americans, but several incidents between the redcoats and the colonists made Bostonians even more irate. A little known fateful event leading up to full scale rebellion in the colonies was the death of a young boy at the hands of a quartered soldier. A letter to King George described the murder as “abetted, encouraged and rewarded,” which Dorr clarified in the left margin of the page to mean the “sending out of the way and pensioning the soldier who murder’d young Allen.”¹⁰⁵ The soldier who had shot Allen was given pay to return home.¹⁰⁶ Dorr also noted an earlier letter that the soldier had received, which seemed to sanction his bloody work. Dorr called it a “bloody letter...ordering him [the soldier], in case the riot was great, to give orders to the Troops to Fire, giving this as a Reason: that better such a number be killed to Day than more to Morrow.”¹⁰⁷ This was not the only instance of dishonorable conduct by the soldiers quartered in the colonies.

The murder of a child was only degrees worse than the disrespectful behavior towards women by the soldiers. On July 23, 1769, “as two women of unblemished reputation, one

¹⁰⁴ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 596.

¹⁰⁵ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 2, p 596.

¹⁰⁶ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 2, p 180.

¹⁰⁷ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 2, p 472.

married, the other single, were returning home about nine o'clock, from a visit, they were stopped in the street, near the brick meeting-house, by an officer, who insisted upon waiting upon them home, upon being told that they were near home, and had no occasion for company he began to use very foul language, and finally in a very courageous and soldierly manner, took his leave with about a dozen smart strokes of a rattan, upon the shoulders of the unmarried and defenceless lady." Dorr responded to this conduct by naming the soldier "a Cowardly Dog!"¹⁰⁸ His obvious disdain for the presence of British troops echoed that of many colonists at the time, and the public notice of disrespectful and harmful behavior proved that few Americans enjoyed the presence of the soldiers.

Some consequences of the soldiers' presence were unintended. Diseases during this time were often fatal, and one of the most notorious was small pox. Dorr, ever the enemy of Francis Bernard, noted below a passage warning against the spread of smallpox that "It was Brought in by the Soldiers__Another Article to be charged to the Account of Gov. Barnard, or whoever was the Instigator of the Introduction of Soldiers amongst us!"¹⁰⁹ Dorr later referred to Bernard as "a False vile Traytor," noting this below a letter published between the governor and an earl across the Atlantic.¹¹⁰

Even when confronted by the death of Bernard's politically equivalent figure in New York, Dorr managed to convey only hatred for the Massachusetts governor. When Governor Henry Moore passed away, there were celebrations of his life and achievements throughout New York. He was praised for his patriotic acts against British power, and at the conclusion of his

¹⁰⁸ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 2, p 681.

¹⁰⁹ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 2, p 577.

¹¹⁰ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 2, p 663.

printed eulogy, Dorr penned “What a contrast is this to Govr. Barnard’s Character!”¹¹¹ As if to add insult to injury, he made the same note again under a similar article published in a different Boston paper just days later.¹¹² Dorr made it impossible for his reader to think he had any shred of favor for the governor of his province, and solidified his disdain for Bernard especially through his comparisons of the late New York figure. In light of the recent controversies surrounding quartering of soldiers, Dorr’s praise of Moore and his hatred of Bernard stood out even clearer, particularly because of Moore’s pro-American anti-quartering policies. The ramifications of Moore’s policies would have far greater effects upon the colony of New York than would similar actions in Boston, as Dorr and his notes would soon point out.

An April *Gazette* published a February letter from London, stating that “Every one of the American Provinces have complied, without demur, with the orders of government, for quartering troops, and all other requisitions, except Boston and New York; who, however it is thought, will know their interest too well to oppose so trifling a circumstance, as finding the troops with salt and small beer.”¹¹³ This resistance, though indicative of the sentiment toward the British in Boston and New York, did not serve the colonies well in the short term.

The consequence for such resistance was the quartering of troops en route from Britain only in New York, Connecticut, and Boston. 5000 troops were to be housed on the colonists’ dime because of their initial resistance. A letter from England explained “if they behaved as they should have done, the duties on sugar and molasses would have been eased...they think the Americans want England to treat them as an equal power, by their pretending in their late remonstrance to Parliament to comply only with such laws and taxes as they pleased, and tho’t

¹¹¹ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 2, p 677.

¹¹² ANHD, MHS, Vol. 2, p 685.

¹¹³ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 634.

most convenient for the good of themselves.” The letter continued that one “Captain Davis was sorry to hear that the New Yorkers Friends was also against them in general; that they had behaved ungrateful to the Committee in not returning them Thanks for hat they did in getting the Stamp Act repealed.” As if to better illustrate the point against which the author of this letter argued, Dorr placed an asterisk next to “thanks” and below referenced the point with “They did not deserve any.”¹¹⁴ Dorr wrote what most of his readers would likely have agreed with: that just because the Stamp Act had been repealed, Britain was in no way forgiven for their unjust treatment of the colonists. Instead colonists only further resented the British for expecting them to be grateful an unjust act was repealed.

There were also those of course who had always opposed the repeal of the Stamp Act in England, and who looked not for gratitude from the colonies but for increased subjugation of them. Bishop Warburton, or the Bishop of Gloucester, was one such man of influence who had always supported the continuation of the Stamp Act, and who Dorr very strongly and very loudly disliked. In a May 1767 *Gazette*, Dorr noted in the bottom margin that Warburton “appears to be a great enemy to the Colonies, especially to New England Chiefly because they are Dissenters! Oh Biggotry! He was one of the Lords that voted against the Repeal of the Stamp Act.” Even the letter that made the reference questioned the Bishop’s conscience.¹¹⁵ If Dorr and the author of the letter felt that strongly, one can only imagine how word of mouth spread these tensions to those who did not read as well. Such instances of tensions printed throughout the years following the Stamp Act and its repeal served only to further ignite the literate and political colonists who read the publications.

Rumblings of renewed trouble from Parliament began to appear in the late summer of

¹¹⁴ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 635.

¹¹⁵ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 640.

1767, and Dorr was once again on top of his annotation game. A note from a London based ship carried news of further taxation upon the colonies, this time not on only paper, but also on goods like tea, wine, fruit, glass, lead, tin, among others. The amount of tax per item had not yet been assigned, but Parliament would sit down to that task soon. This was the first notice of the Townshend Acts, and as Dorr noted in the lower margins of the paper, “Thus was the fatal Revenue Act past, which in all Likelihood will occasion as much Distress as the Stamp Act, if not more!”¹¹⁶ Dorr’s business as a merchant once more was affected by these taxes, this time even more directly. His comment demonstrated further resentment toward the decisions of Parliament, and a foreshadowing of the sentiments of those in the colonies who would react as he had, with a repeated disdain for British government.

The *Gazette* of August 31, 1767, published notes and resolves from Parliament’s House of Commons. Among them was a prohibition on meetings or assemblies, whether government-sponsored or bottom-up protests, in colonies that had yet to implement measures for the quartering of troops under the billeting act. Dorr elaborated upon each of the published resolves and noted that each was passed into law.¹¹⁷ The articles also included the exact amounts of taxes for such things as tea, rice, china, and sterling. This set of duties imposed by Parliament, also known as the Revenue Act, was for Britain an attempt to regain not only the losses incurred due to the repeal of the Stamp Act, but also an attempt to regain authority over the colonies, at the expense of simple goods like tea.

Dorr enthusiastically greeted yet another published iteration of the acts from Parliament, and he commented with no shortage of exclamations. His reference to the Revenue Act, specifically that which allowed duties to be placed on just about anything the crown wished, read

¹¹⁶ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 700.

¹¹⁷ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 710.

“An Act that perhaps will prove fatal to Great Britain, if not to the Col.!” In regard to the act granting the crown the ability to enforce those duties via specially appointed commissioners, Dorr exclaimed it was “An Act equally Obnoxious to Americans!” Finally, the law that prohibited the New York legislature to meet until such time as the Quartering Act was enforced in that province, caused the opinionated merchant to note: “a Terrible Act this!”¹¹⁸ Dorr’s exclamations could not have been solely his thinking. Doubtless many in the colonies felt the same, disrespected by their government, and seen as only a source of revenue by the mother country.

Indeed, the publications Dorr commented upon were more often than not in agreement with his sentiments. One letter published September 21, 1767, began “‘Tis a political maxim, that all government tends to despotism, and the human frame brings at its birth the latent seed which finally shall destroy the constitution. This is a melancholy truth--but such is the lot of humanity...This truth is founded in nature: Experience has, in every age, verified this maxim of politics, and the approaching fate of our Mother Country shall but confirm the observation.”¹¹⁹ This author and many like him believed in the fundamental laws of power and governance expressed by Enlightenment thinkers. They advocated for government that responded to the people’s will. People like Charles Townshend, after whom the various recent duties were named, were known to the colonists like Dorr to be “a great Friend to Taxing America.”¹²⁰

One set of essays by a Philadelphia lawyer purporting to be a simple farmer hoped to unite all the colonists, not only those with a vested economic interest in independence. These essays were titled “Letters from a Farmer,” but if Dorr is a bellwether, many knew the author’s

¹¹⁸ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 719.

¹¹⁹ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 726.

¹²⁰ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 747.

name. Dorr noted below one of them, “The above Letter, and those that follow call’d the Farmer’s Letters (were Wrote by John Dickinson Esqr of Philadephia) which opened the eyes of all America, and were printed throughout the country.”¹²¹ Dickinson, writing as a level-headed farmer with an education beyond the norm for his class, used this public space to muse upon political theories and rights, as well as to share his thoughts on the recent taxes. Dickinson’s essays spanned numerous papers over months, and once they ended, an anonymous author produced a comparable set of letters to refute most of “the farmer’s” points. But Dorr was far more in favor of the first set of letters and the points made by Dickinson, as evidenced by his response to the final letter in the series rebutting the farmer. Upon its close, Dorr wrote “Here ends the Answer to the Farmers Letters (if it may be called an answer) which upon the whole is a miserable production: __The principles tending to make us Slaves!”¹²²

Dorr’s notes and musings make it difficult for the reader to be confused regarding his sentiments. No matter the setting or context, Dorr managed to find ways to convey his opinion. Some of Dorr’s notations give the reader a chuckle. For instance, a letter from a Londoner to a friend in New York, published in an *Evening-Post*, advised the New Yorker that it would be in the interest of America to submit to the British insistence upon obedience. Dorr marked this portion at the mention of submission, writing “Submit! No No No!”¹²³ His triplicate exclamations continued after his reading of a letter from London merchants to the crown. They hoped in their letter that “good Providence will grant your Majesty a long & happy reign over a dutiful & loyal people, and bless your endeavours with success, in a firm and permanent establishment of our most excellent constitution, which is not only admired, but envied by all

¹²¹ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 1, p 781.

¹²² ANHD, MHS, Vol. 2, p 526A.

¹²³ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 2, p 425.

foreign nations.” To this Dorr replied a simple but telling “Hah! Hah! Hah!”¹²⁴ His methods of annotation by this point becoming familiar, the reader can almost hear his scoff in his scribble. Dorr’s progressively exasperated tone illustrates the increasing tensions in the colonies quite effectively.

From an analytic standpoint, these newspapers and Dorr’s varied notes on them serve to demonstrate the ever mounting nationalist sentiment and frustration with Parliament. In the years following the repeal of the Stamp Act and preceding the Boston Massacre, tensions obviously rose to their breaking point. Dorr’s comments helped to illustrate the events within the various letters, addresses, notices, and celebrations published in the newspapers. The tensions would come to a violent and vocal head on a cold March night in 1770, one which would come to be known as the Boston Massacre.

¹²⁴ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 2, p 486.

Epilogue

Any early March night in Boston is doubtlessly frigid. After long winters, entire cities can find themselves in tense, depressive states. The night of March 5, 1770, may have produced that mindset. Frustrations ran high from the recently imposed acts from Parliament, and presumably the population of Boston, colonists and British soldiers alike, had had enough of the winter weather. Tensions boiled over that night. At the old Custom House by the wharves of Boston Harbor, a brawl occurred, and the events of that freezing March night had a lasting impact, in what came to be known as the Boston Massacre.

In front of the old Custom House, quartered British soldiers mercilessly fire into an unarmed group of colonists. Clouds of smoke billow from their muskets around their faces, which show eyebrows furrowed and lips pursed. Some townsmen of Boston lay dead at the feet of the British soldiers. Onlookers from behind the fray wear concerned, saddened facial

expressions, and the snow on the ground provides a contrast to the line of black boots worn by the quartered redcoats. This familiar image of the Boston Massacre, which appeared in the days after the event, was an engraving by Paul Revere. Actually entitled “The Boston Massacre, perpetrated on March the 5th, 1770,” this simple but effective image made its way to newspapers across the American colonies, and eventually around the world. Media can spin just about anything, but this was a prime example of the power that print could have upon the minds and hearts of an already frustrated population.

Dorr inserted a copy of this image on top of the paper published a week after the massacre occurred, which contains an extremely specific account of the event.¹²⁵ Surprisingly he made no comments beyond references to other pages and volumes in his collection. But perhaps he thought that this event and its media coverage had been sufficient to warrant his relative silence. Or perhaps he, like so many others at the time, was simply too shocked to process the events. In all likelihood, though no one will know for sure, the so-called “massacre” began as little more than a scuffle. Angry words were exchanged, a couple chunks of ice were thrown, and frightened British soldiers fired into a crowd of seethingly irate and threatening colonists. And yet the aftermath thereof proved essential to the cause of the Revolutionary era precisely because already-angry colonists seized on the killings as yet more evidence of British perfidy, even atrocity. Eventually Dorr wrote more on the depositions of eyewitnesses published in the papers, and even criticized a military official for fleeing the colonies. Apparently this person was “Commissioner John Robinson, who embarked for England soon after murders committed by the soldiers,” and Dorr felt he needed to be singled out.¹²⁶

Dorr continued his annotations throughout the events of the Revolution in Boston,

¹²⁵ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 3, p 59.

¹²⁶ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 3, p 71.

remaining true to his merchant status and his hatred of specific officials. He managed to find ways to insult Hutchinson and Bernard as per usual, and to comment upon the non-importation policies of Boston merchants. His symbols, references, and pagination remained consistent as always.

In December of 1773, the Sons of Liberty organized what came to be known as the Boston Tea Party. When news of this hit the papers a few days after it had occurred, Dorr placed a large “x” above the passage. His symbols all increased in size substantially for this paper and article in particular, indicating that he was perhaps excited by the actions taken, and found them especially significant, hence the more distinctive markings.

Dorr was there too, and paying attention when the powder keg that was lit so long ago by British economic aggression finally exploded. The “shot heard round the world” beginning the American Revolution’s more formalized violence at Lexington and Concord warranted a scathing comment. In regard to people leaving their towns to avoid contact with the newly arriving troops, Dorr wrote “Thus at length the sword was drawn by the Ministerial Butchers--whereby G. Britain lost her Colonies.”¹²⁷ Dorr had pored over so many papers, made innumerable connections and references, that by the time Lexington and Concord happened, his authority on the attitude of the revolutionaries cannot be questioned.

In the papers leading up to and including the public announcement of the Declaration of Independence, Dorr’s notes are so numerous that they nearly become impossible to read as they are so cramped. He began making references to other pages and volumes, sometimes literally on every other word in a sentence. The paper which officially announced the Declaration had so many annotations that Dorr wrote even more on another piece of paper and attached it to the

¹²⁷ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 4, p 723.

newspaper itself.¹²⁸ His thoughts and comments displayed just how invested he was in his project to preserve this important history for posterity.

Dorr's voice throughout the hectic decade leading up to full scale rebellion did just that. He provided a unifying force for a study of the era, just as he intended. His consistency in pagination and annotation, his sarcastic and cynical humor, his obsession with denouncing officials he disliked, all contributed to his great achievement. But Dorr did far more than compile newspapers and write on them. He preserved a significant piece of American history for all those who came after him, should they want to study it. His papers do something even more important though. His papers preserved his voice. Harbottle Dorr was a simple merchant and occasional town selectman, yes. But in his writings any reader can get to know him for the person he was. He had a quick wit, a keen memory, impeccable handwriting, and most importantly a passion for his hobby. His dedication to this collection, which took over a decade to compile but that he worked on until his death, became a quarter century commitment. All that have access to a mind and a project like his should feel fortunate to experience a special piece of history and truly American culture, that may easily have never come to be. So thank you, Harbottle Dorr, for being insane enough to stick with this hobby, for preserving this story, and for having one of the most interesting names in American history.

¹²⁸ ANHD, MHS, Vol. 4, p 971.

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