been of good Service, if those, in these Times, who have been publickly and outragiously reviled, had, by their Complaints, put it properly in the *Magistrates* Power, to restrain some Men's *Tongues* with *Bit* and *Bridle*.

Questions to Consider

1. Why did Charles Chauncy and other Old Lights find James Davenport's preaching and [illegible] have [illegible] of New Light ministers
2. Wha[illegible] Dav[illegible] mini[illegible] [illegible]es of people attracted to [illegible]stablished churches and
3. Wha[illegible] ity b[illegible] did [illegible] for t[illegible] [illegible]posed to colonial authorities James Davenport? How [illegible]nd how do you account
4. Wha[illegible] imp[illegible] nect[illegible] [illegible]t the Great Awakening's [illegible]ey reveal about the con-

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For F[illegible]

Patricia [illegible] *and Politics in Colonial Americ[illegible]* the connections between colonial religion and politics and the impact of the Great Awakening on the American Revolution.

Michael J. Crawford, *Seasons of Grace: Colonial New England's Revival Tradition in Its British Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), investigates the connection between revival in Great Britain and America in the eighteenth century.

Edward M. Griffin, *Old Brick: Charles Chauncy of Boston, 1705–1787* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), offers a sympathetic view of Chauncy as an opponent of the Great Awakening and an important eighteenth-century religious figure.

Frank Lambert, *Inventing the "Great Awakening"* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), attempts to understand the Great Awakening as observers at the time saw it.

David S. Lovejoy, *Religious Enthusiasm in the New World: Heresy to Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), is a sophisticated exploration of the connection between religious and revolutionary enthusiasm and the ways the Great Awakening subverted established institutions and ways of thinking.

Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), relates the Great Awakening and the popularity of James Davenport to the social and economic strains in eighteenth-century colonial cities.

CHAPTER 4

The Price of Patriotism: Jonathan Sewall and John Adams

As Jonathan Sewall strolled toward the hilltop overlooking Maine's sparkling Casco Bay, he had more on his mind than an early-morning view of the island-dotted Atlantic inlet. On this midsummer morning in 1774, he had asked John Adams to walk with him in a desperate attempt to save his friend from folly. Relations between Great Britain and the American colonies were approaching a dangerous point, and Adams had just been elected a delegate to the Continental Congress. Sewall was determined that Adams not serve. As they walked, Sewall reminded Adams that taking a seat in Philadelphia would be an act of rebellion against His Majesty's government. Adams's brilliant legal career would face certain ruin. "Great Britain is determined in her system," he declared. "Her power is irresistible and will be destructive to you if you persevere in opposition to her designs."

Adams considered Sewall his best friend but was unmoved by his pleas. "I will sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish with my country—that is my unalterable determination," he replied. When Sewall persisted, Adams declared, "I see we must part, and with bleeding heart I say, I fear forever." Adams was wrong. Thirteen years later, he met up with his old friend in London. By that time, the United States had won its independence from Britain and Adams had won the gratitude of the new nation for his service to it. He had sat in the First and Second Continental Congresses, negotiated the treaty ending the Revolution, and served as minister to Great Britain. The two men talked for several hours, and Sewall observed that their conversation was just what might be expected "at the meeting of two old sincere friends after a long separation."

Nonetheless, for Sewall the meeting could not have been easy. Adams had already secured an honored place as one of his country's founding fathers, while Sewall remained an outcast. He longed for his beloved Massachusetts, his brilliant legal career was over, and his mental state had deteriorated along with his fortunes. To be sure, Adams had made great personal sacrifices to serve his nation. Yet he also had led a full and rewarding life—a testament to the possibilities presented by his country's creation. Like Adams, Sewall had made an irrevocable commitment to *his* country. He chose to "sink or swim" with Great

The Boston Massacre: A trial for Jonathan Sewall

John Adams

Britain, becoming at once an articulate defender of the Loyalist position and a prominent target of patriot wrath. As a result, he enjoyed neither honor nor fame, and he stands today as a reminder of the hopes and fears that motivated the Loyalists and the enormous toll this position exacted.

"A Brilliant Imagination"

"The childhood shows that man, as morning shows the day," wrote the Puritan poet John Milton. Jonathan Sewall was not born a Loyalist, but his sympathies seemed to arise naturally from his early years. The product of an old and distinguished New England family, he would be well served by family and social connections. When his merchant father died bankrupt in 1731, three years after Jonathan was born, young Sewall would be provided for by more successful relatives. The pastor of Sewall's exclusive Brattle Street Church in Boston saw to it that his wealthy parishioners opened their pocketbooks to pay for the boy's schooling. His uncle Stephen Sewall, chief justice of the Massachusetts Superior (supreme) Court, also helped out. When Jonathan turned fifteen, Justice Sewall reached into his purse and sent Jonathan to Harvard. After he graduated and took up teaching, a distant relative opened his Salem home and library to the young schoolmaster, and there he studied law. Several years later, his benefactor introduced him to Chambers Russell, a judge and colleague of Stephen Sewall's. Russell took the young man into his Charlestown home and tutored him further in the law. Russell was wealthy and well connected, sat in the Massachusetts assembly, and commanded the deference and respect of his fellow citizens. Sewall could not have found a better mentor.

By the time Russell died in 1766, Sewall had already taken over his Charlestown law practice. The next year, he was sworn in before the Massachusetts bar

and set up his own practice. For much of the next decade, Sewall busied himself with petty squabbles over land, livestock, debts, and thefts. To secure additional cases, he followed the superior court as it sat in various counties throughout the year. The frequent travel was compensated by the opportunity to mix with other attorneys, including a fellow Harvard graduate named John Adams.

Although Sewall was lighthearted and Adams serious and introspective, the two men struck up a friendship sustained by the frequent exchange of letters. Adams found much to like in his friend: "a lively wit, a pleasing humor, a brilliant imagination, [and] great subtlety of reasoning." The mundane cases in both the superior and lower courts also gave Sewall the opportunity to master the intricacies of the law and hone his courtroom manner. He had "a soft, smooth, insinuating eloquence," Adams noted, "which . . . gave him as much power over [a jury] as any lawyer ought ever to have." Sewall's talents were also noticed by Edmund Trowbridge, the attorney general of Massachusetts. Eventually, Trowbridge made Sewall his junior partner, passing along wealthy clients to his young protégé. Through him, Sewall gained entry into the highest circles in the colony.

In time, personal loyalty led to service for men in power. Sewall's attachments were evident when an influenza epidemic swept Boston in 1760, claiming the life of Stephen Sewall. A battle for the justice's empty court seat between Speaker of the assembly James Otis Jr. and Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson quickly ensued. When Governor Francis Bernard chose Hutchinson, prominent merchants saw the appointment as an attempt by Bernard to gain control of the court at a crucial time. Several years earlier, the royal governor had introduced writs of assistance, which allowed customs officials to board ships and enter buildings and merchants' houses to search for smuggled goods, even without evidence that contraband might be held there. Smuggling was widespread on Boston's wharves, but the writs gave customs officials sweeping power. Outraged Massachusetts merchants had hired Otis to defend them against rummaging officials. Otis denounced the warrants as an assault on the traditional rights of privacy guaranteed by the British constitution. Hutchinson's elevation to the superior court, however, ensured that the issue would be decided in favor of the administration.

Although many Massachusetts lawyers sided with Otis, Jonathan Sewall did not. Chambers Russell and Edmund Trowbridge were friends of Hutchinson and supporters of Governor Bernard, who had just named Sewall justice of the peace for Middlesex County. In addition, when Sewall turned to Otis for assistance in settling his uncle's debt-ridden estate, the legislature refused to help. When the divide between Governor Bernard and the legislature deepened after the superior court decided in favor of the writs, Sewall took up his pen in defense of the administration. In 1763, he blasted Otis in newspaper essays defending the governor's appropriation of provincial funds without the assembly's consent. Later, when the Otis faction launched an attack on Hutchinson for holding offices in all three branches of government, Sewall countered by declaring that citizens should not "give implicit credit to the turbulent harangues of every bold, disaffected, popular disclaimer." He could not have predicted how events in coming years would lead increasing numbers of Americans, including his friend John Adams, to do just that.

"Just Getting Under Sail"

John Adams was hardly an impetuous rebel but instead, like Sewall, exhibited an inbred conservatism. In fact, the two men may have been drawn to each other because they had so much in common. Both came from families of modest resources, graduated from Harvard, and pursued legal careers after unhappy stints as schoolteachers. Both developed a deep respect for British institutions and a reverence for the law. Both were ambitious and sought the recognition that each felt was his due.

Born in 1735, the son of a respectable Braintree farmer and shoemaker, Adams grew up on the family farm twelve miles south of Boston. His parents decided that their firstborn son would receive the best education their middling circumstances could provide. After progressing through two private academies, young Adams enrolled at Harvard. A reluctant student, he instead aspired to be a farmer, preferring hunting, fishing, and exploring the outdoors to the drudgery of study. At Harvard, however, he discovered a love of books. Upon graduation, he became a schoolmaster in Worcester, fifty miles west of Boston. Teaching "a large number of little runtlings" did not agree with him, so he turned to law. Here was a profession of growing importance in the colony's expanding commercial economy, one that could provide him the "Honor or Reputation" he sought. He was taken in by Worcester's leading attorney and two years later returned to Braintree to practice law.

Adams admired such prominent lawyers as James Otis and the up-and-coming Jonathan Sewall. Yet he had no family connections and lived at home to cut expenses. "[I]t is my Destiny to dig Treasures with my own fingers," he lamented. "No Body will lend me or Sell me an axe." Nor would polish or social graces pave the way. A lingering Puritan ethic had a deep impact on Adams, who was content to hole up in his study for hours on end. Reserved and serious, he was far too stiff to backslap his way to success. Instead, he imposed on himself a harsh discipline of study and hard work.

Gradually, his client list grew. In 1761, he was admitted to practice before the Massachusetts Superior Court. At about the same time, his personal life improved. He courted Hannah Quincy at the same time that Jonathan Sewall wooed her sister Esther, and the two lawyers frequently met at the Quincys' Braintree home. Hannah married another man, but Adams soon recovered after he met Abigail Smith, the daughter of a minister from nearby Weymouth. By 1763, John and the "prudent, modest, delicate, soft, [and] sensible" Abigail were inseparable, and the next year they were married. He was twenty-eight; she was nineteen. The couple moved into a cottage next door to the house where John had been born and raised. Although court cases frequently took him away from Abigail, it was a happy time, and the next summer Abigail gave birth to a daughter.

Events far from Adams's fireside, however, were about to disrupt his world. After the French and Indian War (1754–1763), the colonists entered a new relationship with Great Britain when Parliament sought additional revenue from them. In 1764, it passed the Sugar Act, which levied new duties on molasses and placed a heavy burden on New England shippers. The next year, Parliament passed the Stamp Act, which placed duties on various paper products already in the colonies. It was met with loud protests and riots up and down the colonies. In Massachusetts, John Adams's cousin Samuel Adams aroused popular sentiment by arguing that the act was part of a plot to destroy the colonists' liberties. Samuel had close contact with Boston's artisans and laborers, many of whom were facing diminished prospects. His ability to rally them was unsurpassed. Even John noticed that the "lowest ranks" had become "more attentive to their liberties . . . and more determined to defend them." If so, it was due in large part to the work of his cousin.

Samuel encouraged John to play a more active role in the Stamp Act crisis, but John held back. It "is very unfortunate for me," he wrote, for "[I am] just getting under Sail." Writing newspaper essays under a pen name, he attacked the Stamp Act as misguided. He also wrote the town of Braintree's instructions regarding the crisis to its representative in the legislature. **[See Source 1.]** Yet his participation was limited and reluctant. He did not want to be seen as irresponsible, and he was skeptical about the motives of the "designing persons" who were leading the popular protests, including his cousin. John found mob action frightening and distasteful. "That way madness lies," he told James Otis, who had asked Adams to "harangue" colonists in 1765. Even a decade later, he declared that "breaking open Houses by rude and insolent Rabbles, must be discountenanced." For the time being, he stayed home with his family, "thinking, reading, searching, concerning Taxation without Consent."

"Rendered Himself Quite Subservient"

Jonathan Sewall's life was also going well. The same year the colonies entered their new relationship with Britain—and John Adams with Abigail—Sewall married Esther Quincy. According to Adams, Esther was "celebrated for her beauty, her vivacity, and spirit," and when Sewall first set eyes on her, he "viewed her with . . . unruffled pleasure." Other rewards soon followed, especially after Sewall voiced his views about the growing popular unrest. Like Adams, Sewall opposed the Stamp Act. But whereas Adams believed that royal officials were a "restless grasping turbulent Crew," Sewall feared turbulence from another quarter. To him, the great danger was not the tax, but Samuel Adams and other rabble-rousers who defied the British government's authority. Submission to a bad law was far better than unlawful resistance to it, he argued. In the growing colonial crisis, such arguments would not go unnoticed. When Samuel Adams and James Otis continued to challenge Governor Bernard's authority after the Stamp Act was repealed in 1766, Sewall defended the governor in newspaper essays. Those in power had to be obeyed, he insisted, as long as they "steadily pursue[d] the sole end of their creation, the good of the community." Bernard liked what he read and quickly named Sewall advocate general of the Massachusetts vice-admiralty court,* which had been established by Parliament to take smuggling cases out of the hands of sympathetic colonial juries. A short time later, Bernard named him attorney general of the colony. At age forty, he had arrived.

**Vice-admiralty court:* A special British court that heard cases involving shipping and maritime disputes.

Before long, however, Sewall found himself in the midst of a growing struggle between the Crown and Massachusetts's merchant class. His problems started with the Townshend Acts* of 1767, which imposed new import duties and set up an American Board of Customs Commissioners in Boston. As attorney general and advocate general of the vice-admiralty court, Sewall was responsible for enforcing the customs laws and prosecuting violators. He had no problem with the laws, but he often disagreed with their application by customs commissioners, who routinely engaged in racketeering. Nowhere was Sewall's conflict with the commissioners more evident than in their treatment of John Hancock, the colonies' richest merchant. When a customs man without a writ of assistance rummaged below deck on Hancock's ship *Lydia* in 1768, Hancock had him forcibly removed. Sewall believed that Hancock had acted within the law and refused to prosecute him. When Hancock's ship *Liberty* docked in Boston later that year, customs officials seized the ship, claiming that it had smuggled in wine. Hancock had already become a symbol of a growing struggle between imperial interests and colonial rights. Now the seizure of the *Liberty* set off a riot in which customs officers were attacked and driven from Boston. Undaunted, the commissioners proceeded with their case against Hancock, which was a reluctant Sewall's responsibility to prosecute. Hancock and five others faced fines of nine thousand pounds each for allegedly avoiding seven hundred pounds in duties. Hancock's lawyer was an equally reluctant John Adams. Concerned about the effect that political activism might have on his career, Adams looked with "disgust" at his duties in defending the imperial authorities' prime target. The commissioners' case was weak, however, and they had Sewall drop the charges the next year.

The case made Hancock a hero and sullied Sewall's reputation. Samuel Adams declared that Sewall was nothing more than a "little creature of the court" who had betrayed the colony's interests. Sewall had just been appointed to the Halifax vice-admiralty court at the considerable salary of six hundred pounds a year. He now held seats on the Massachusetts and Halifax vice-admiralty courts and as Massachusetts attorney general. Sewall, concluded Samuel Adams, had "rendered himself quite subservient" by accepting so many "favors" from the governor. Certainly, he had learned all about the perquisites of power. In response to these accusations, Sewall urged John Adams to succeed him as attorney general. Though still fearful of an association with radicals, Adams felt a growing disdain for royal officials such as Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson, whose death, he concluded, "would have been a Smile of Providence." Thus he quickly turned Sewall down.

Sewall's troubles only mounted. In 1770, guards outside the customshouse opened fire on an angry mob, killing five civilians. It was Sewall's job to prosecute the soldiers involved in what came to be known as the Boston Massacre. He believed that the troops were innocent. He was also convinced that James Otis and Samuel Adams had orchestrated the mob. Prosecuting the case vigorously would violate Sewall's sense of justice, but a weak prosecution would surely raise charges of conspiracy. Only one reasonable course seemed open to

*Townshend Acts: Laws passed by Parliament that placed taxes on certain colonial imports, including glass, paper, paint, and tea.

him. Sewall drew up the indictment against the soldiers and then returned to his country home in Middlesex, where he stayed in personal exile for a year.

While Sewall ran, John Adams stepped into the fray by agreeing to defend the soldiers. Adams later claimed that he accepted their defense because he thought they deserved a fair trial. Yet Samuel Adams and other radicals may have pushed him into it, convinced that the propaganda value of a guilty verdict would be greater if one of the province's best lawyers defended the soldiers. The promise of a seat in the Massachusetts legislature may have been another inducement. Whatever his motives, John Adams waged a brilliant defense. He argued that the soldiers were following orders and had the right to shoot in self-defense against a "motley rab[b]le of saucy boys, Negroes and Mulattoes, Irish teagues and outlandish jacktars." The commander and six redcoats were acquitted, while two soldiers were convicted of manslaughter and punished lightly. Remarkably, Adams emerged unscathed from the controversy. In fact, the trial enhanced his reputation as a gifted lawyer, and within months he won a seat in the legislature. A couple of years later, John and Abigail moved into a handsome brick home in Boston. Adams could easily have concluded that he had followed a wiser course than the timid Sewall, whom he accused of "desertion."

At the same time, Sewall could believe that *he* had made the correct decision. As the hysteria surrounding the incident died down, Sewall looked optimistically to a stable future. Most Americans had no thought of revolution in 1771. Only a few radicals were thinking about independence. Like many colonists, Sewall felt secure in the assumption that the status quo would be preserved and that he would enjoy the rewards of a successful career. About this time, he moved his family into a large house on Cambridge's fashionable Brattle Street. There and at their country retreat outside Boston, the Sewalls enjoyed the perquisites of their position atop Massachusetts society: servants, an elegant coach, fine wine, and the company of others who shared their small and secure world. From that position, Sewall soon took up his pen in defense of the British government. **[See Source 2.]**

"Atlas of American Independence"

John Adams would not have disagreed with Sewall's assessment of the future. He also had good reason to believe that the colonial crisis was over. After Parliament repealed all but one of the Townshend duties—the tax on tea—in 1770, colonial protests had died down. Resigning his seat in the Massachusetts legislature after one term, Adams declared that he had served his country "at an immense Expense . . . of Time, Peace, Health, Money, and Preferment." He was determined to avoid "Politicks, Political Clubs, Town Meetings, [or] General Court," confessing that his "Heart" was "at Home." In fact, Adams had long been reluctant to commit himself fully to the colonial cause. As late as 1772, James Otis accused him of "moaping about the Streets of this Town" and caring about little more than money. Otis's "Rant" obviously stung Adams, who protested that he had sacrificed as much to "the public Cause" as had his accuser.

Soon, however, few would doubt Adams's commitment. In 1773, Parliament required that judges' salaries be paid by the Crown rather than the

colony's legislature, a move Adams believed was intended to destroy the independence of the judiciary. In addition, Thomas Hutchinson, who had replaced Bernard as governor, declared that Parliament's power over the colonies was unlimited. The legislature's reply, drafted by John and Samuel Adams, argued that colonial legislatures had sovereign power. When Parliament passed the Tea Act later in 1773, it was clear to John that the colonial crisis was not over. Many colonists saw the measure, which reduced the price of East India Company tea in the colonies, as a plot to make it easier to pay the remaining Townshend tax on it. When fifty men slipped onto the company's ships in Boston Harbor and threw overboard forty-five tons of tea, thousands cheered, including John Adams. The Boston Tea Party, he declared, was the "grandest event" since the beginning of the controversy with Britain.

Parliament quickly cracked down on Massachusetts with the Intolerable Acts. These drastic measures closed Boston's port, limited town meetings, strengthened the power of the royally appointed governor at the expense of the popularly elected legislature, and replaced Hutchinson with a military governor, General Thomas Gage. When the colonists responded to the growing crisis by calling the First Continental Congress,* the Massachusetts legislature selected four delegates. One of them was John Adams. Like other Whigs (opponents of Britain's policies) and Tories (supporters of the policies), Adams and Sewall were now divided as never before. Like many colonists, Adams believed that British actions reflected more than a desire to raise revenue from the colonies. Rather, he thought, Britain's government was engaged in a plot to rob colonists of their cherished liberties. If it succeeded, they would be reduced to abject slavery. Sewall, an appointee of the royal governor, saw no such danger, and he continued to defend the British government and its right to tax the colonies. By the summer of 1774, friends could no longer set aside their political differences. When Sewall and Adams met in Falmouth, Maine, in July to conduct business before the court, the two men bade each other farewell.

After Sewall returned home from Maine, his circumstances quickly deteriorated. A mob surrounded the Sewalls' Cambridge home, smashed the windows, and threatened the family. Jonathan was in Boston at the time, and a terrified Esther finally dispersed the attackers by offering up the contents of the wine cellar. When Sewall returned to Cambridge the next day, he and his family decided to join the growing number of Tories seeking refuge in Boston. Conditions in the besieged city were abysmal. Prices skyrocketed, food was scarce, and people died daily as a result of dysentery. Sewall continued as attorney general and also served as Gage's personal secretary and adviser. Although he found time to record his ideas on the rebellion **[see Source 3]**, mostly he despaired. "Everything I see is laughable, cursable, and damnable," he wrote. "My pew in church is converted into a pork tub; my house into a den of rebels, thieves, & lice; [and] my farm in possession of the very worst of all god's creations." By the summer of 1775, in the face of "musketry, bombs, great guns, . . . battles, sieges, murder, plague, pestilence, famine, rebellion, and the Devil," he

*First Continental Congress: A meeting of delegates from twelve colonies in Philadelphia held in the fall of 1774.

was ready to leave. Before the end of the summer, Sewall and his family boarded a ship bound for England. He would never see Boston again.

Adams, too, was quickly caught up in the rush of events. After attending the Philadelphia convention, he returned home to a loud counteroffensive launched by Tories in provincial newspapers. He responded in twelve essays in which he laid out the nature of the threat posed by the British government. **[See Source 4.]** He finished his last essay shortly before Gage dispatched troops to Concord in April 1775 to seize the colonists' weapons. Bloodshed at Lexington and Concord was on Adams's mind as he left for the Second Continental Congress the next month, still hopeful that peace could be restored. For the next two years, Adams sat in Congress, his influence growing as he gradually impressed the other delegates with his intellect and his immense capacity for work.

By early 1776, a swift series of events made Adams realize that independence was inevitable. First, the crisis had descended into open warfare. The previous year, when Congress had expressed its hope for reconciliation with its Olive Branch Petition, King George III had rejected it outright. Then Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, a devastating attack on monarchy, had radicalized many colonists. When the delegates named Adams to a committee to draft a declaration of independence, he declined the task, leaving the job to Thomas Jefferson instead. It was Adams, though, who took to the floor in early July to defend the move for independence. His speech was so masterful that Jefferson called him "our Colossus on the Floor." Another awed delegate commented that "the man to whom the country is most indebted for the great measure of independency is Mr. John Adams of Boston. I call him the Atlas of American Independence."

"Ungrateful Sons of Bitches"

By July 1776, Jonathan Sewall had been in London for a year and had found much to encourage him. He was greeted by Thomas Hutchinson and other prominent Loyalists from Massachusetts who had already established a refugee colony in the British capital, and he looked to an appointment to high office. And then there was London itself. Everything in the city was on such a grand scale that Sewall was "lost and confounded." Surely, the colonies would not be able to withstand Britain's greatness.

As the war dragged on, however, his mood changed. Only a few refugees secured offices, and he was not among them. Although Sewall found Britain's wealth "truly astonishing," he discovered that his six-hundred-pound vice-admiralty court salary was now "as a Drop in the Ocean." "Everything I have seen in my own Country," he wrote, "is all Miniature, yankee-puppet-show." Britain's inability to crush the rebellious colonists made matters worse. Sewall yearned for Massachusetts, and his homesickness only increased his hatred of the rebels. He longed for "one peep at my house," but the "damned, fanatical, republican, New England, rebellious, ungenerous, ungrateful sons of bitches" had confiscated and sold his property and banned him from the state. News of the stunning British defeat at Saratoga in 1777 dashed Sewall's hopes for a speedy return home, and the following spring he left London for less expensive Bristol.

Even when Americans won their independence, Sewall consoled himself with the belief that they still faced certain ruin. "Poor Beasts," he wrote, "I pity

them from my soul." In fact, Sewall himself was defeated. Suffering from debt and depression, he moved into a room detached from his family's main house, where his only company was a cat and two goldfinches. Blaming Esther for his circumstances, he told a friend that he wished she was out of his life forever. Meanwhile, his financial difficulties mounted. The Royal Commission on Losses and Services of American Loyalists, established to settle Loyalists' claims for service and loss of property in the Revolution, awarded only a portion of his six-thousand-pound claim. He was forced to move again to more economical accommodations. Complaining of headaches, stomachaches, and dizziness, he retreated to his bedroom for eighteen months. "I was mad as the Devil the whole time," he later observed. Only the desire to be reunited with his son in Canada finally drew him out of his isolation. In 1787, Jonathan, Esther, and their other son departed Britain.

They settled in St. John, New Brunswick. Shortly after their arrival, the royal treasury abolished the Halifax vice-admiralty court, depriving Sewall of his remaining official position. He was left with a pension of only two hundred pounds. "I have sacrificed to my Duty, my property in America," he protested in a letter to treasury officials. It did no good, although within a couple of years, Sewall did receive a settlement from the Royal Commission on Losses, as well as another pension for his "loss of profession." By the standards of his new home, he was well off, but he never escaped the belief that he had been wronged. Sewall's bitterness found numerous targets, including the freed slaves he saw arriving in St. John after the Revolution. "I believe the Maker of all never intended Indians, Negroes or Monkeys, for Civilization," he told a friend. He never rid himself of his anger or melancholy. In the last six years of his life, he was confined to bed. Esther nursed him even as he complained that she denied him peace and solitude. He died in 1796. John Adams later concluded that the cause of death was a "broken heart."

By that time, Adams had also paid a price for his "unalterable" commitment to his country. Two years before the start of the Revolution, he had written Abigail that he longed for his Braintree farm, where his family again lived. There, he said, a "Hoe and Spade, would do for [his] Remaining Days." He could not know how long it would be before he was able to enjoy his farm and the uninterrupted pleasure of Abigail's company. In the meantime, he found life as a delegate to the Continental Congress "solitary" and "gloomy." He returned home in late 1777, but early the next year he accepted an assignment as emissary to France. He shared quarters with Benjamin Franklin, who Adams thought got by with guile and charm rather than substance. Adams was shocked by Franklin's extravagant tastes and excessive socializing. Franklin would "come home at all hours," noted a dismayed Adams, who found his own skills lacking for a diplomatic assignment "in highly polished society." He also realized that Abigail, back home in charge of the farm and family, was growing distant. Her letters now contained "a Strain of Unhappiness and Complaint."

Nonetheless, after Adams returned home from Paris in 1779, he soon departed again, this time as a delegate to the state constitutional convention. There he drafted the document that became the Massachusetts Constitution. Later that fall, Congress appointed him to negotiate an end to the war with Britain. He headed back to Paris with sons John Quincy and Charles in tow. Not

long after his arrival, he traveled to Amsterdam, where he spent nearly two years working to secure from the Dutch desperately needed financial support for the American cause. Then he was back in Paris to help negotiate the treaty ending the Revolution. Not until 1784 were John and Abigail reunited in London. For the next three years, he served as American minister to Britain, with Abigail at his side.

When they returned to Massachusetts in 1788, John and Abigail bought a new home in Quincy, near the Adams homestead. They had just gotten settled when he was elected the first vice president of the United States. In 1797, he succeeded George Washington as president. Finally, in 1801, he returned permanently to his farm and family.

As a young man, Adams had feared that he would die in obscurity. Before he died on July 4, 1826—fifty years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence and within hours of Thomas Jefferson's death—he knew that his early fears would not be realized. Yet he was also convinced that Americans would never place him in the same category as Washington, Franklin, or even Jefferson. "I am not, never was, & never shall be a great man," he declared. Still, his long public service, often at tremendous personal sacrifice, had done much to launch the new nation.

"As Ardent an American . . . as I"

When the Revolution divided Whigs and Tories, both sides were quick to assign petty motives to the other. Although John Adams asserted that his old friend Jonathan Sewall was "as ardent an American . . . as I ever had been," Adams saw in Sewall a personal flaw. He believed that when James Otis had not supported Sewall's petition in the legislature regarding his deceased uncle's estate "with as much zeal as he wished," Sewall became bitter and resentful. "Hutchinson, Trowbridge, and Bernard soon perceived his ill humor, and immediately held out to him prospects of honor, promotion, and wealth," Adams concluded.

Sewall was unquestionably interested in "honor, promotion, and wealth," but Adams's explanation for his friend's loyalism was unfair. Sewall was not manipulated by powerful royal officials such as Bernard and Hutchinson. Rather, his sympathies sprang from a long pattern of experience. Sewall's life was a testament to the importance of paternalistic relationships. Older, well-connected patrons repeatedly took an interest in his education and career and helped him achieve a measure of wealth. He learned that status and comfort were to be found in loyalty to men who served established institutions. His desire to establish his rightful place through attachment to men in power led Sewall to value authority, deference, and order. Whig fears about the destruction of liberty at the hands of powerful and corrupt rulers never gripped him. Rather, he embraced an ideology that emphasized the fragility of established institutions and the inherent dangers of disobedience and disorder.

Adams was just as interested as Sewall in "honor, promotion, and wealth" and just as concerned about the effect of his political commitments on his career. In addition, he shared Sewall's concerns about social order and the rule of law. Forced to "dig Treasures with [his] own fingers," however, Adams never

hitched personal ambition to powerful men who served imperial interests. On the contrary, as the crisis with Britain deepened, service to the colonial cause became Adams's means to achieve recognition and honor. Even so, his patriotism sprang from more than his own ambition. He had grown up in a town of freeholders—independent and upright, if not rich. Government was conducted with their consent. Moreover, in his society, someone like himself could rise above his inherited station through hard work. Finally, as his Puritan forebears could have told him, America was to be a place of virtuous inhabitants ever vigilant against the enervating effects of luxury, corruption, and self-indulgence. As naturally as Sewall embraced royal administrators and loyalism, Adams accepted the Whig argument that Americans' liberties and very way of life were threatened by the policies of a tyrannical government in a corrupt mother country. Although these two sons of Massachusetts had much in common, their personal histories were different, and thus only one would risk his position to oppose the "conduct of Britain toward America."

PRIMARY SOURCES

SOURCE 1: *"Instructions of the Town of Braintree to the Representative"* (1765)

During the Stamp Act crisis in 1765, the town of Braintree turned to John Adams to draft instructions to its representative in the Massachusetts legislature. In this document, what does Adams see as the important issues raised by the British government's actions?

[Braintree, ante 24 September 1765]

To Ebenezer Thayer Esqr
Sir

In all the Calamities, which have ever befallen this our dear native Country, *[since our the first settlement]*[1] within the Memory of the oldest of Us all, We have never felt So *[great and]* sincere a Grief, and Concern or So many Allarming Fears and Apprehensions, as at the present Time. We have many of Us lived to see, both Pestilence and Scarcity, and the Encroachments And *[Depredations,]* Hostilities of *[French and Indian]* bitter, subtle and powerful Enemies, but We never yet apprehended, our Liberties and Fortunes and our very Being, in any real Danger, till now. It was the Saying of a great Statesman that "Britain, could never be undone but by a British Parliament." In the same Manner We may

SOURCE: Reprinted by permission of the publisher from *The Adams Papers: Papers of John Adams*, Volume 1, edited by Robert J. Taylor, pp. 132–134, Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. Copyright © 1977 by the Massachusetts Historical Society.

1. Words in brackets were crossed out in the original manuscript.

truly say, that such is our affectionate and dutiful Loyalty *[to our King]* and Devotion to our most gracious King, such our profound Reverence and Veneration for both Houses of Parliament, and such our Love, Esteem, and Friendship to all our fellow subjects in Britain, that it is that Country and that Parliament only, *[that and by means of our]* that could enslave and destroy us. And We can no longer forbear complaining, that, to our infinite astonishment We Apprehend we have Reason to fear, that [*Designs*] Plans have been formed in that Country, and Measures pursued with a direct and formal Intention to enslave Us. We apprehend that great Evidence of such a Design may be deduced from the late Acts of Parliament restricting, and burdening and embarrassing our Trade: but We shall confine ourselves at present chiefly to the Evidence that Results, from what is called the stamp Act.

By this Act a very burdensome, and in our apprehension, unconstitutional Tax is to be laid upon us all.—and by the same Act we are all of Us subjected to numerous and enormous Penalties and Forfeitures, for Violations of that Act, seventy shillings to fifty Pounds Sterlg. which are at the option of an Informer to be prosecuted, sued for and recovered in a Court of Admiralty, without a Jury. . . .

We further apprehend this Tax to be unconstitutional. . . .—And We have always understood it to be a grand and fundamental Principle of the British Constitution that no Freeman should be subjected to any Tax to which he has not given his own Consent in Person or by Proxy. And indeed, the Maxims of the Common Law, as we have hitherto received them, are to the same Effect that a Man and his Property cannot be seperated but by his own Act or fault.

SOURCE 2: *Jonathan Sewall Offers a Defense of British Authority* (1771)

Sewall defended the British government in a series of newspaper essays published after the Boston Massacre verdict. On what important premises does he base his argument? What does he see as the real danger of recent events?

Man is a social Animal—a Being whose wants, whose natural powers of Reason and whole capacity of improving those powers continually demonstrate to him that he was made for a social life. . . . Reason and experience soon convince him that the advantages of society cannot be enjoyed without the establishment of certain rules, to which he and all of the community must conform[.] [T]hese rules, so long as he takes Reason for his guide, he will always hold sacred, notwithstanding they abridge him of a part of . . . unlimited freedom of action. . . . [B]ecause he sees the necessity of them, in order to his obtaining and enjoying the more valuable blessings and benefits of society[,] he no longer considers

SOURCE: *Boston Evening Post*, January 14, 1771. On occasion, minor changes have been made to spelling and punctuation for the convenience of modern readers.

himself as an individual, absolutely unaccountable and uncontrol[l]able, but as one of a community, every member of which is bound to consult and promote the general good. . . . [H]e sees that . . . the publick good and his own are so intimately connected and interwoven together that whatever is inconsistent with the former is equally incompatible with the latter; and therefore, from the most forceable principle in human nature, will be, at all times, a true Patriot[.] [H]ence 'the publick peace and happiness will be the principal object of his care and attention. . . . [H]e will hold his right of private judgment as subordinate to that of the public, and of those in whom the society have placed the right of judging; and of consequence he will be very cautious in charging with want of ability or integrity those to whom any of the powers of government are intrusted[.] [H]e will honor the King as supreme, and will upon no pretence, however plausible, presume to revile or speak evil of the Rulers of the people[.] [I]f it happens that from the enacting unpopular laws or from any untoward accident the minds of the multitude are disturbed and inflamed, he will consider their passions as a flood which knows no bounds when once the dikes are broken, and will carefully avoid every thing which may encourage them in breaking thro' that essential subordination upon which the well being and happiness of the whole absolutely depends. . . . [I]f he should judge that a wrong step has been taken in one department of government, he will by no means take occasion from thence to persuade himself or others that . . . all in authority are traiterously combined in plotting the slavery, misery and ruin of the society[.] [H]e will consider human fallibility and integrity of intention as being perfectly consistent and will therefore be disposed to conclude either that he himself is mistaken in his judgment, or that those whose conduct he disapproves will see their error and reform the grievance[.] [H]e will not weaken the pillars of the state by arraigning, accusing and condemning those in the important stations, whose inflexible virtue has been proved and confirmed by long experience. . . .

Slavery I detest, and would be foremost in execrating the sordid unnatural wretch, who, for a kingdom, could stoop to enslave the lowest peasant, in the meanest village of his country—but wide, infinitely wide is the difference between social liberty, and savage licentiousness. . . . [L]et us consider where is the danger of slavery[.] [T]hro' the favor of an indulgent providence, we have a good King, whom God Almighty bless & long preserve, who is, and who glories in being, the father of a free people[.] [W]e are his children and while George the third sits on the British throne, I never can be made to believe his American subjects can be slaves, unless by their own madness and folly they enslave themselves[.]

Source 3: *Jonathan Sewall on the Revolutionary Threat* (1775)

Shortly before Sewall departed for Britain, he analyzed the nature of the patriots' challenge to British authority. What threats to society does he see in their actions? What is his view of his fellow Americans? What is his solution to the crisis?

It is now become too plain to be any longer doubted, that a Union is formed by a great Majority, almost throughout this whole Continent, for opposing the Supremacy, and even the lowest Degree of legislative Jurisdiction, of the British Parliament, over the British Colonies—that an absolute unlimited Independence, is the Object in View—and that, to obtain this End preparations for War are made, and making, with a Vigor, which the most imminent Dangers from a foreign Enemy, could never inspire. It should seem astonishing, that a Country of Husbandmen, possessed every one, almost, of a sufficient Share of landed property, in one of the finest Climates in the World; living under the mildest Government, enjoying the highest portion of civil and religious Liberty that the Nature of human Society admits, and protected in the Enjoyment of these, and every other desirable Blessing in Life, upon the easiest Terms, by the only Power on Earth capable of affording that protection—that a people so scituated for Happiness, should throw off their rural Simplicity, quit the peaceful Sweets and Labours of Husbandry, bid open Defiance to the gentle Intreaties and the angry Threats of that powerful parent State which nursed their tender Years, and rush to Arms with the Ferocity of Savages, and with the fiery Zeal of Crusaders!—and all this, for the Redress of Chimerical Grievances—to oppose a claim of Parliament, made explicitly, exercised uniformly over, and quietly acquiesced in by, the Colonies from their earliest Origin! It is, I say, so truly astonishing . . . that we must search deeper for the grand and more hidden Spring. . . . [B]y the help of the single Word, *Liberty*, they conjured up the most horrid Phantoms in the Minds of the common people, ever, an easy prey to such specious Betrayers—the Merchants, from a Desire of a free and unrestrained Trade, the sure and easy Means of arriving at a Superiority in Wealth, joined in Bubbling the undiscerning Multitude—the Clergy . . . opined, as Leaders of the pack, upon those never failing Topics of Tyranny and Popery—the simple unmeaning Mechanics, peasants and Labourers, who had really no Interest in the Matters of Controversy, hoodwinked, inflamed and goaded on by their Spiritual Drivers, fancied they saw civil and religious Tyranny advancing with hasty Strides. . . .

It is in vain to think any longer of drawing them—to such a pitch is the Frenzy now raised, that the Colonists will never yield Obedience to the Laws of the parent State, till, by Experience, they are taught to fear her power. Such is the Infatuation, that, like madmen, they are totally incapable of attending to the Dictates of reason, and will remain so till the passion of Fear is awakened; this will never be effected by Threats, or by the Appearance of a Force with which they imagine themselves able to contend. . . . I am so well convinced that my Countrymen, at least a Majority of them, act under the power of mere Delusion, rather than from positive vicious Intentions, that I most ardently wish to see them brought back to a Sense of their Duty, with as little Havock and Bloodshed as may be; to this End, I wish to see Great Britain rise with a power that shall strike Terror through the Continent, and leave it no longer problematical whether she is in earnest or not.

Source: Reprinted in Jack P. Greene, *Colonies to Nation: 1763–1789* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), pp. 266–267; originally from Dartmouth Papers, William Salt Library, Stafford, England.

Source 4: John Adams, *"Novanglus"* (1775)

Writing as "Novanglus" (New England), John Adams responded to the Tory newspaper offensive in 1775. What does he see as the threat posed by Britain? What is his position on independence?

"The whigs were sensible that there was no oppression that could be seen or felt." The tories have so often said and wrote this to one another, that I sometimes suspect they believe it to be true. But it is quite otherwise. The castle of the province was taken out of their hands and garrisoned by regular soldiers; this they could see, and they thought it indicated an hostile intention and disposition towards them. They continually paid their money to collectors of duties, this they could both see and feel. An host of placemen, whose whole business it was to collect a revenue, were continually rolling before them in their chariots. These they saw. Their governor was no longer paid by themselves according to their charter, but out of the new revenue, in order to render their assemblies useless and indeed contemptible. The judges salaries were threat[e]ned every day to be paid in the same unconstitutional manner. The dullest eye-sight could not but see to what all this tended, viz. to prepare the way for greater innovations and oppressions. They knew a minister would never spend his money in this way, if he had not some end to answer by it. Another thing they both saw and felt. Every man, of every character, who by voting, writing, speaking, or otherwise, had favoured the stamp act, the tea act, and every other measure of a minister or governor, who they knew was aiming at the destruction of their form of government, and introducing parliamentary taxation, was uniformly, in some department or other, promoted to some place of honour and profit for ten years together; and on the other hand, every man who favoured the people in their opposition to those innovations, was depressed, degraded and persecuted as far as it was in the power of the government to do it.

This they considered as a systematical means of encouraging every man of abilities to espouse the cause of parliamentary taxation, and the plan of destroying their charter privileges, and to discourage all from exerting themselves, in opposition to them. This they thought a plan to enslave them, for they uniformly think that the destruction of their charter, making the council and judges wholly dependent on the crown, and the people subject to the unlimited power of parliament as their supreme legislative, is slavery. They were certainly rightly told then that the ministry and their governors together had formed a design to enslave them, and that when once this was done, they had the highest reason to expect window taxes, hearth taxes, land taxes and all others. And that these were only paving the way for reducing the country to lordships. . . .

America has all along consented, still consents, and ever will consent, that parliament being the most powerful legislature in the dominions, should regulate the trade of the dominions. This is founding the authority of parliament to

Source: Reprinted in Robert J. Taylor, ed., *The Adams Papers: Papers of John Adams* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), Volume 2, pp. 264–265, 307, 336; originally from *Boston Gazette*, February 13, 1775; March 6, 1775; March 13, 1775.

regulate our trade, upon *compact* and *consent* of the colonies, not upon any principle of common or statute law, not upon any original principle of the English constitution, not upon the principle that parliament is the supream and sovereign legislature over them in all cases whatsoever. . . .

That there are any who pant after "independence," (meaning by this word a new plan of government over all America, unconnected with the crown of England, or meaning by it an exemption from the power of parliament to regulate trade) is as great a slander upon the province as ever was committed to writing. The patriots of this province desire nothing new—they wish only to keep their old privileges. They were for 150 years allowed to tax themselves, and govern their internal concerns, as they tho't best. Parliament governed their trade as they tho't fit. This plan, they wish may continue forever. But it is honestly confessed, rather than become subject to the absolute authority of parliament, in all cases of taxation and internal polity, they will be driven to throw off that of regulating trade.

Questions to Consider

1. How would you compare Jonathan Sewall's defense of British policies and John Adams's argument against them? What threats did Sewall see in the colonial challenge to British authority? What threats did Adams see in that authority? What did each see as the cause of the crisis?
2. One historian has written that Loyalists reveal "the interrelationship of public and private experience" and that the key to understanding their commitment during the American Revolution may be found in their childhood experiences. How do Sewall's and Adams's positions in the revolutionary crisis reveal a link between "public and private experience"? Do you think the key to understanding their loyalties in the Revolution is to be found in their early lives or elsewhere?
3. Sewall's biographer concluded that he was "a man at odds with his times." Considering Sewall's and Adams's political and social views, do you agree? How were Adams's ideas in step with the times?
4. One exiled Loyalist complained about the "shameless partiality" of late-eighteenth-century historians of the Revolution toward the patriots. From your understanding of Sewall, Adams, and the colonial crisis, what defense can you offer for loyalism?
5. How do Sewall and Adams use images and wording to bolster their arguments? Cite examples in which you think the wording is intended to stir emotions.

For Further Reading

Bernard Bailyn, *Faces of Revolution: Personalities and Themes in the Struggle for American Independence* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), examines the central themes of the Revolution and the personalities and ideas of Loyalists and Whigs.

Carol Berkin, *Jonathan Sewall: Odyssey of an American Loyalist* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), is the only full-length biography of Sewall.

Joseph J. Ellis, *Passionate Sage: The Character and Legacy of John Adams* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1993), is a study of Adams in his later years, but it offers great insight into the way his ideas shaped his actions throughout his life.