

Who Burned the *Peggy Stewart*?

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Grade Level: Upper Elementary

Duration of lesson: 1 period

Overview:

In the lead-up to Maryland's independence from Britain, two factions arose to protest Britain's monopoly on trade and shipping: On the one side was the wealthy gentry, which sought to combat British economic policy through peaceful means like petitions. On the other side were the radical Patriots, who responded to Loyalists' pro-British activities with mob action and, at times, violence. Seeing the ineffectiveness of the gentry's peaceful protests, the radicals decided to take matters into their own hands during the 1770s. When Anthony Stewart anchored the *Peggy Stewart* in Annapolis Harbor in 1774, he hoped to make a large profit by selling his cargo of tea on the black market (a patriotic boycott against British tea was in effect at the time). A public meeting, led by conservative gentry, judged that Stewart should burn his cargo of tea and write a public apology for attempting to evade the boycott. The mob, on the other hand, was unsatisfied with that resolution and forced Stewart to burn his own ship. He did so, and fearing for his life, fled with his family to England.

This lesson explores the spectrum of opinion among Maryland colonists, and the different strategies used to protest British tax and trade policies. Students will begin to see the complexity of American patriotism and the role of "crowd action" during the revolutionary period.

Related National History Standards:

Content Standards:

Era 3 Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1820s)

Standard 1: The causes of the American Revolution, the ideas and interests involved in forging the revolutionary movement, and the reasons for the American victory

Historical Thinking Standards:

Standard 2: Historical Comprehension

- A.** Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage.
- G.** Draw upon visual, literary, and musical sources.

Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation

- D.** Consider multiple perspectives.
- E.** Analyze cause-and-effect relationships and multiple causation, including the importance of the individual, the influence of ideas, and the role of chance.

Standard 5: Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making

A. Identify issues and problems in the past.

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will analyze primary source documents
- Students will analyze secondary source documents
- Students will independently conclude various political and social influences involved in the burning of the *Peggy Stewart*.

Topic Background

The burning of the *Peggy Stewart* happened in response to the Tea Act of 1773 and the aftermath of the Boston Tea Party. The crowd action that sparked events like the Boston Massacre and Tea Party was the catalyst that triggered the outcome of *Peggy Stewart* incident. The mob scene that took place on the Annapolis dock had a direct impact on Anthony Stewart's decision to "voluntarily" burn his ship. The burning of the *Peggy Stewart* incident lets students explore not just a moment of protest on the road to Independence, but also examine some of the tensions between different groups of Patriots: On the one hand there was the gentry, which wanted to protest peacefully and legally, and on the other hand the crowds of ordinary Americans, who wanted to use direct action and even violence. The ineffectiveness of the gentry's peaceful method of protest turned the colonists' anger with Britain into violent actions.

The burning of the *Peggy Stewart* came at the end of nearly a decade of growing tensions between the colonies and Britain. The colonists had endured the king and Parliament's attempts to raise funds through taxation to pay the tremendous debt incurred from the French and Indian War. The Sugar Act (1764), Stamp Act (1765) and Townshend Acts (1767), laid the foundation from which the Patriot movement was created. The colonists saw the actions of Britain as tyrannical.

The immediate context of the *Peggy Stewart* incident was the Tea Act of 1773 and the Boston Tea Party which happened later that year. The Tea Act actually reduced the tax on tea imported by the British East India Company, allowing it to sell tea directly to the colonies at a lower price. Despite the fact that the act lowered the price of tea, colonists were upset because the act eliminated the role of the colonial merchants in the tea trade, in effect eliminating vital commerce. Colonists declared that the Tea Act gave the East India Company an unlawful and unethical monopoly over the tea trade, something they argued made the colonies more economically dependent upon Britain.

The colonists retaliated against the Tea Act in several ways. First, they revived the boycott of British tea they had started after passage of the Townshend Acts. Ships carrying British tea were refused entry at ports up and down the Atlantic coast. They also resorted to protests against those who refused to stand by the boycott. The first of these protests happened in Boston. When British ships containing tea arrived in Boston's harbor, the colonist refused to pay the tax. Men dressed as Indians dumped the crates of tea overboard into the harbor on December 16, 1773. This action became known as the Boston Tea Party. In response, Britain punished the colonist by enacting a series of laws the colonists came to call the "Intolerable Acts" or "Coercive Acts." Among other things, those acts closed the Boston port until the tea was paid for. The Intolerable Acts also served to unite Patriots throughout the colonies, leading to the creation of the First Continental Congress in 1775.

The different ways that colonists protested the Tea Act in Boston and elsewhere underscored an important division among American Patriots over how to respond to Britain. Generally speaking, colonists responded to Britain in two

different ways. The first way was preferred by many of the land-owning “gentlemen” or gentry. They thought the best way to respond was to work patiently and peacefully through the legal system. They advocated writing petitions to the King pleading with him to reconsider his course of action. They also organized boycotts, but did not develop ways to enforce them beyond voluntary compliance. Although they avoided trouble, there were clear limits to their methods of response. The petitions fell on deaf ears in Britain. The king was not interested in compromise with the colonists, which he viewed as his royal subjects. And without enforcement, the boycotts tended to fall apart. The second way of protesting was favored by many ordinary Americans and involved direct action, often involving violence or the threat of violence. Ordinary Americans were impatient with the lack of resolution to the taxation issues. They viewed the gentry’s methods as ineffective and realized that violent action often provoked a reaction from Britain. Eventually, the crowd actions of the colonists displayed their outrage with Britain in more forceful and violent ways. The homes of British tax collectors were vandalized and their property destroyed by angry crowds. Many of these officials were forced to leave town. Over time, crowd actions occurred more frequently and they became a strong political force for the Patriots’ cause. The street tactics were particularly successful: mass protests led to the repeal of the Stamp Act and the Townshend Acts and made the boycotts more effective.

The *Peggy Stewart* incident was an example of the tension between different Americans who fell into either the “patient nonviolence” camp or the “crowd action” camp. To understand how that tension unfolded in Maryland, we first have to take a closer look at the political divisions in Revolutionary Maryland. Maryland’s Revolutionary struggle was compounded by the fact that it was not just a struggle between Britain and the colony, but also among the colonists and the local Proprietor. Maryland was different from the other colonies in that it was a proprietorship. The proprietor of a colony had the right to parcel out land, enact laws, collect fees, and appoint officials as he saw fit. All government officials worked for the proprietor and earned a living from the fees paid by individuals conducting business. The citizens of Maryland had been besieged for years with the burden of over-taxation under the proprietorship structure. Marylanders viewed Britain’s action as an additional threat to their struggle for economic freedom and independence.

Maryland had two political “parties” at the time (these were not political parties as we now think of them; rather, they were loose groupings of people with similar values and opinions). The Court party and the Country party were both controlled by gentlemen landowners. The Court party was loyal to the proprietor and was represented by the colony’s Governor. The Country party was in theory representative of the public. The split of the Country party into two political factions, one conservative and the other radical, played a key role in the fate of the *Peggy Stewart*. The division of the Country Party led to a power struggle concerning Maryland’s response to British policy. The conservatives of the Country party, Samuel Chase, William Paca, Matthew Tilghman, and Barrister Charles Carroll, advocated a peaceful protest against Britain through the use of petitions and diplomacy. The radical faction, spearheaded by John Hall and Rezin and Matthias

Hammond, recognized crowd action as the political force needed to defend the people from the king's tyranny.

It was evident from the Stamp Act (1765) crisis in the colonies that the ordinary citizens were gaining political power through violent crowd action. On September 2, 1765 in Annapolis, a mob destroyed the house of stamp collector Zachariah Hood and forced him to flee the colony in fear for his life. It was becoming evident to the elite gentlemen of the Country party that the power of the crowd was a force to be reckoned with if their political and social status was to be maintained. The leaders of this party would find it increasingly difficult to balance their political agenda with that of the common man's agenda of equality and liberty for all free men.

During this period, the citizens of Maryland became more vocal in their protest of the proprietorship and Britain. When the Tobacco Inspection Act was due for renewal, the citizens openly demonstrated their dismay with the proclamation of Governor Eden. The Tobacco Act of 1747 had included a schedule of fees officials could charge for public service. The 1770 Act proposed to increase those fees. Maryland's lower house viewed the increase of the fees an excessive burden and sought to lower them. Governor Robert Eden overruled the delegates and published the higher fees by proclamation. In response, the Assembly and citizens of Maryland claimed they were being taxed without proper representation in the legal system. Compounded by the laws already enacted by the king, Eden's proclamation was viewed by the Assembly and Marylanders as another monetary burden to bear for the profit of the proprietor and local officials. The events surrounding the Tobacco Act would serve as yet another catalyst to involve many Marylanders in the Patriot cause.

Britain's retaliation for the Boston Tea Party, the passage of the Intolerable Acts, fueled the fire of the uprising in Maryland. In Annapolis, citizens met and adopted a policy in which lawyers could not bring suit against any Marylander who was in debt to the British until the port of Boston was reopened. This created a greater strain on an already floundering Maryland economy. Even with the conflict of Boston sparking Marylanders' rage, there were citizens who did not want a total break from their mother country.

In June 1774, representatives of all the counties of Maryland met to discuss the status of Maryland-Britain relations. This meeting became known as the first Provincial Convention. The ninety-two members, representing all of Maryland's counties, voted to join the rest of the colonies in the economic retaliation against Britain. The group decided to ban imports from Britain until Boston's port was reopened. For economic reasons, a proposal to implement an immediate non-exportation policy of tobacco was opposed until after the harvest and sale of the current crop.

The Provincial Convention elected Thomas Johnson, Robert Goldsborough, William Paca, and Samuel Chase to be Maryland's delegates to the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia. The delegates (a conservative majority) were given strict instructions not to commit to a declaration of independence from Britain. The conservative leaders of Maryland were still hopeful an agreement with Britain could be found through peaceful channels.

On October 15, 1774, the brigantine *Peggy Stewart*, owned by Anthony Stewart and his father-in-law, James Dick, was anchored in the Annapolis Harbor. Aboard the ship was tea Stewart had imported for the Annapolis merchant Thomas C. Williams. Stewart paid the tax on the tea in violation of the non-importation resolution implemented in the colony. Stewart had recently experienced several financial setbacks and was deeply in debt. It was thought by some that Stewart paid the tax on the hope that the tea would be delivered. He stood to profit greatly if he could supply the scarce commodity. Stewart's actions led to a demonstration of the two competing philosophies in the Country party.

A public meeting to decide the fate of the tea was held on October 19, 1774. A committee of gentlemen, including Samuel Chase and Charles Carroll decided Anthony Stewart, Joseph Williams, and James Williams could redeem themselves by writing a public apology and burning the tea.

While the committee was seeking a peaceful resolution to the issue an angry crowd led by Rezin Hammond and Charles Ridgely had gathered at the harbor. They were unwilling to accept the resolution reached by the committee and considered tarring and feathering Stewart. The angry mob demanded that Stewart burn the *Peggy Stewart* with all of the cargo on board. Fearing for the safety of his family and property, Stewart agreed to set fire to his own ship. Stewart was escorted to his ship and the *Peggy Stewart* was set ablaze. The loss of the *Peggy Stewart* was devastating to Stewart and his business. Eventually, he and his family left Annapolis, moving back to England and then to Nova Scotia.

The crowd action incited by Hammonds and Ridgely was a victory for the radical faction of the Country party. Although both factions were trying to accomplish the same goal, reprimanding Stewart for his defiance of the tea boycott, the courses of action were very different. It was crowd action, such as that use against Stewart, which spurred Marylanders to be more supportive of the resistance movement. The *Peggy Stewart* incident made clear to the leadership and the people of Maryland that the persuasiveness of crowd action was a powerful political tool in America's resistance to British monopoly of trade.

Annotated Bibliography:

Countryman, Edward. *The American Revolution*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1985.

This book offers a well balanced view of how the Revolution was made by a variety of social groups. The impotence of crowd action in the birth of the American Revolution is examined.

Brugger, Robert J. *Maryland: A Middle Temperament*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.

This book offers a comprehensive history of Maryland from 1634-1980.

Hoffman, Ronald. *A Spirit of Dissension: Economics, Politics and the Revolution in Maryland*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975.

This book discusses Maryland's' economic and political influences to the American Revolution.

Scaggs, David Curtis. "Maryland's Impulse Toward Social Revolution: 1750-1776." *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (March 1968): 771-786.

This article examines Maryland's social revolution from 1750 to 1776.

Stresissguth, Thomas. *Maryland*. San Diego, California: Lucent Books Inc., 2002.

This book offers a complete and concise history of colonial Maryland.

Vocabulary

Broadside:	a large sheet of paper, printed on one side with political news or advertising
Detestable:	hated
Consigned:	to give or send
Said:	before mentioned
Forenoon:	before noon
Brig.:	abbreviation for <i>brigantine</i> , a ship
Provincial:	colonial
Unanimously:	everyone agrees
Adjourned:	stopped for a time
Concessions:	actions or changes by one group to please the opposing side
Acknowledgements:	credit
Pernicious:	destructive
Incurred:	brought upon oneself
Convened:	meeting
Infringe:	trespass
Amity:	friendliness

Teaching Procedures

Materials Needed:

- Chart Paper and Markers
 - Magnifying glasses (optional)
1. Display Resource Sheet #1, "Destruction of Tea in Boston Harbor." Allow students to examine the picture. Have them Think, Pair and Share their ideas about the picture briefly with a partner.

Have students brainstorm what they know about the Boston Tea Party. Record their responses on chart paper or chalkboard.

2. Ask the students to compare the reactions of a Patriot and a Loyalist to the Boston Tea Party. Explain to the students that prior experiences and beliefs might cause people to have different points of view or opinions about an event.
3. Review with students the causes of the Boston Tea Party. (Colonist didn't want to pay the tea tax; they were being taxed without representation, no responses to their pleas of Britain).
4. Display a transparency of Resource Sheet #2 "The Burning of the Peggy Stewart." Have the students discuss the image with the following focus questions:

Who might be the gentlemen in the picture?

Why do you think he looks this way?

Who do you think owns the ship?

Why is it burning?

5. Explain to students that other "tea parties" happened after the Boston Tea Party of December 16, 1773. Have the students predict what they think might have happened in Annapolis in 1774 if a merchant tried to import tea. Instruct the students that they will be reading a broadside explaining what happened in Annapolis in 1774 when a merchant did try to import tea from Britain.
6. Divide students into four groups. Display a transparency of Resource Sheet #3, "Peggy Stewart Broadside" or have students view it on the internet at: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/rbpe.02800200>.

Read the first couple of lines of the excerpt to the students using a think aloud strategy as you model working with the document from the overhead. Distribute one copy of the Resource #3 and the magnifying glasses (optional) to each group. Instruct the students to work as a team to examine the document for about 5 minutes. Ask the students the following focus questions:

When was the document written? (1774)

What do you think the passage is about? (tea arriving on a ship)

Do you think the passage has a negative or positive tone? Support your answer. (negative, “detestable weed”)

7. Distribute Resource Sheet #4, “Transcript of *Peggy Stewart* Broadside.” Each group should only receive one part (1-4) with its representative focus questions. Each group should also receive a copy of Resource Sheet #5, “Helpful Vocabulary,” and Resource Sheet #6, “Chain of Events.”

Direct students to use the focus questions on Resource Sheet #4 and Resource Sheet #6 as guidelines for interpreting the document. Instruct the students to read the focus questions and organizer **before** they read the document. Each group will be responsible for sharing their part of the story with the whole class. Allow the students the time to read the document and prepare their summaries for presentation. Groups should be able to condense their chain of events into a sentence or two that can be added to a class summary. The teacher should circulate the room to assist students.

8. Display a blank transparency of Resource Sheet #6 for the class summary of the *Peggy Stewart* broadside. Have the groups report their findings and record their summaries on the overhead organizer. Review the summaries to check for student comprehension of the sequence of events.
9. Ask the students to explain, from their point of view, who or what was responsible for Anthony Stewart setting fire to the *Peggy Stewart*, the committee, the crowd, or British policy? Have them support their answers with details from the primary sources
10. Project Resource Sheet #2 again on the overhead. Have the students reinterpret the images using their knowledge from the document. Remind students that people can have different perspectives (points of view) about the same event.

11. To assess student understanding, have students complete Resource Sheet #7, "*Peggy Stewart* Assessment," expressing their perspective on who was responsible for the burning of the *Peggy Stewart*.

12. Potential extension activities include:

The students can create a re-enactment of the burning of the *Peggy Stewart* based on their comprehension of the primary and secondary sources of the lesson.

The students will create their own broadside depicting the burning of the *Peggy Stewart*.

Have students respond to the following prompt: You are a merchant in Annapolis in 1774. Write a letter to the editor of the *Gazette* describing the effect of the American boycott of British goods upon your business and family life.

Primary Source Annotation:

Destruction of Tea at Boston Harbor, 1773
NARA: 148-GW-439WAR & CONFLICT #: 3

Students will view this copy of an 1846 lithograph to determine points of views of the various players of the Boston Tea Party.

The Burning of Peggy Stewart by Francis Blackwell Mayer
Maryland Commission on Artistic Property, MSA SC 1545-1111
<http://www.mdarchives.state.md.us/msa/speccol/1545/html/1111.html>

Students will interpret a painting of the burning of the *Peggy Stewart* to determine the artist's point of view.

Peggy Stewart Broadside can be viewed at:
NARA: Printed Ephemera Collection; Portfolio 28, Folder 2.
<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.rbc/rbpe.02800200>

Students will examine excerpts from this document to determine various parties involved in the burning of the *Peggy Stewart*. If students use this document in a computer lab environment, use the JPEG-312K view for easier readability.