

# Founding Fathers DVD Notes

## Episode I: Rebels With A Cause

### **Background Info**

- all of them were human and not perfect
- royal governor far away.....taxes were low, colonists tried to be very British
- colonists could not move up in society, glass society for provincials
- 1763- 7 years War ended, colonists expected to pay for their own protection
  - o Sam Adams – “We are being treated like beats of burden by the crown”
  - o Stamp Act 1765
- Boston had not been governed by Britain directly since 1630
  - o Taxes unified colonists against British

### **Samuel Adams**

- the original radical, political agitation was his only skill
- he failed at everything, lost his inheritance, ruined brewery business
- obsessed with the cause, put his personal life on hold
- always wore the same crumpled red suit and old grey wig (not bad clothes, just looks like he slept in them)
- British ruined his father’s fortune (Illegal investing-profits confiscated)
  - o This created a personal animosity and hatred of the British
- lost 5 kids in childbirth, first wife died young, constantly sad
- very religious (Puritanical) and human relations very important to him
  - o took job as tax collector in Boston to make money for his family
  - o terrible tax collector, disorganized, mixed personal and tax money, didn’t press his friends for back taxes
- found he was good at writing essays and propaganda
  - o wrote and spoke out against Britain, the British Government does a tax audit in retaliation and finds that he owes 7,000 pounds
  - o John Hancock, rich shipping merchant (smuggler) comes to his aid
- 1767 Stamp Act repealed but worse taxes were to follow
- 1767 Adams organizes the “Sons of Liberty”
  - o working class mobs who burned houses down and tarred and feathered people as political weapons

### **John Hancock**

- rich shipbuilder, urbane, sophisticated, a “dandy”
- stood to lose more than anybody in Boston under the Stamp Act
- HUGE ego, knew he was important, used his money to gain fame and power
- Father died when he was 7 so he went to live in Boston with his rich Uncle Thomas that had no heir
  - o Met upper class
  - o From age 8, practiced that famous signature
  - o At 13 years old, went to Harvard
    - Fined for cutting chapel, getting servant dangerously drunk
- alcohol was huge part of colonial America, people drank “staggering amounts”
  - o water and milk weren’t safe some people drank hard cider, rum, or beer
- Hancock did a lot of smuggling
  - o Ship was stopped by customs officials and searched but officials were “trapped” by dock workers and contraband disappeared
  - o Hancock’s ship seized
- Samuel Adams gets a mob to retaliate and to destroy the officials office
- Hancock needs a lawyer
  - o John Adams! Cousin of Samuel Adams

- Defended Hancock but hated every minute of it
- Hancock was acquitted but did not join cause and Sons of Liberty
- “Revolution was in the minds of the people”

### ***John Adams***

- lawyer, very high strung and obnoxious, Manic-Depressive
  - “would have needed Prozac in today’s world”
  - cantankerous, argumentative, very puritan, vain
  - very honest in memoirs, wrestles with personal demons
- marries Abigail Smith
  - very smart and witty woman- very much a team in marriage, soul mates
- British troops sent to control Boston’s population
- Mob attacks soldiers at Customs House and soldiers fire on crowd
  - 5 die, called “Boston Massacre” by Samuel Adams (Paul Revere did picture etching for paper)
  - pure propaganda!
  - Soldiers put on trial and Adams defends troops for sake of justice
  - Soldiers convicted on minor charges
    - Adams called group a “Mob” and even that word was too good for them
- Tea Act
  - 3 cent tax on a lb of tea, Boston organizes a boycott
  - 3 ships come into Boston with 342 chests of Tea
    - Dartmouth, Beaver, and the Eleanor
      - Sons of Liberty dressed as Mohawk Indians (symbolic of Freedom) dump Tea into harbor
    - Brits crack down on Boston
      - Close Port of Boston
- Adams affected by British Actions and finally turns toward Revolutionary cause
- “The die must be cast, the colonies must submit or triumph”- George III
- “The die IS cast....I will live and die with my country”- John Adams
- General call for convention of colonies
  - Held in Philadelphia because is was central geographically
  - Sam Adams’ idea
    - People buy Sam new clothes for convention
- John Adams has low expectations for convention.....”We’re not educated enough, from good enough backgrounds,” etc.....
  - Meets George Washington
    - 6’4” , has definite presence

## **Episode II: Taking Liberties**

### ***Patrick Henry***

- great orator, mother made him recite back sermons on carriage ride home from church
- “I am not a Virginian but an American”
- from back woods of Va., 2<sup>nd</sup> generation American son of a farmer
- at age 18, marries well.....in 1760 becomes lawyer
  - Jefferson will remark that he couldn’t believe the Va. Bar let him become a lawyer
  - Also says that he only cares for money and fame “Let’s pray for his death”
- Drew from the Bible and Shakespeare in his speeches (revivalist preacher style, started quietly in a low voice and worked himself up into a fury)
- “War is inevitable.....let it come.... I know not what course others will take, as for me, give me liberty, or give me death.”
- Wife had mental illness and deteriorated in front of his eyes for years
- British Gov. sends 6, 000 troops to quell rebellion in Boston (pop. 22, 000)

- Hancock funds a colonial militia called the “Boston Cadets”
  - o Hancock and Samuel Adams are considered top enemies of British Crown
- General Thomas Gage instructed to crush rebels
  - o 1<sup>st</sup> – take out munitions in Saratoga
  - o 2<sup>nd</sup> – arrest Hancock and Adams
    - warned by Paul Revere- “Midnight Ride”
- Hancock and Adams escape
  - o As they escape, first shots fired by minutemen at Saratoga (77 fire, 8 killed)
- Adams happy about skirmish, Hancock worried it would be blamed on him
  - o Greeted as heroes on trip to 2<sup>nd</sup> Continental Congress
    - Hancock elected president of convention

### ***Ben Franklin***

- 1775 comes back from England
  - o was trying to mend Anglo-American relations
- 15<sup>th</sup> son of a Bostonian soap boiler
  - o dad yanks him out of school, Ben rebels
  - o finally becomes a printer’s apprentice under his brother (and a vegetarian)
  - o too smart so he leaves for England at age 17 (after 7 yrs)
  - o goes a-whoring in England, has many relations with “low” women
- marries Debra Reed when he returns
  - o marriage lasts 44 years (until his wife’s death)
  - o “Keep your eyes wide open before marriage and half shut after”
  - o has illegitimate son, William
- journeyman printer, America’s first media mogul
  - o publishes the wildly popular “Poor Richard’s Almanac”
    - catchy sayings “Old boys have their toys such as young ones, the only difference is their price
- son becomes royal governor of New Jersey
- Franklin offered to pay England for the damages of the Boston Tea Party out of his own pocket
- 1775 wife dies and he returns to America
- elected to 2<sup>nd</sup> Continental Convention
  - o Questions from 2<sup>nd</sup> Continental Convention
    - Who would lead militia?
    - Ret. Colonel George Washington attends convention with his old military uniform on for 64 days but said he didn’t want the job.....whatever...
    - Washington DID NOT have wooden teeth, they were his own, other human, animal teeth, and metal
    - Washington considered cold, aloof, and arrogant

### ***George Washington***

- had a terrible temper, father died when he was 11
- poor compared to his neighbors, the Fairfax family
  - o had crush on Sally Fairfax
- always proposed to rich women, was always on the prowl
  - o finally married Martha Custis, wealthiest widow in Virginia
  - o didn’t just marry for money, but land, slaves, and stock portfolio, too!
  - o Wasn’t much fire between him and Martha
- fixed up Mt. Vernon based on London’s current fashions
- Hancock wanted job as commander of militia, too
  - o Hancock hurt by fact that the Adams’ cousins nominated Washington
  - o Hancock hated Washington, too

## ***Thomas Paine***

- born in England in 1737 and emigrated to Philadelphia
- failed at lots of jobs, terrible luck with women
  - o first wife died, he abandoned his second wife to seek job and more money
- met Franklin in London and helps him go to America
  - o 38 when he arrives in 1774
- discovers himself as a writer
- believes in political freedom and limitations on the power of the monarchy
- wrote pamphlet in 1775
  - o no one would publish it so he agreed to give up 50% of profits to printer
  - o "Common Sense"
  - o sells 120,000 in first 3 months and 500,000 total
  - o wanted profits to go to American militia that was fighting in Quebec
  - o opened public debate, 1 in 5 in North America had read it
- John Adams disagreed with it and hated Paine
  - o "Paine is better at destroying things than building them up"
  - o still bought 2 copies of it
  - o thought Paine was a derelict and an alcoholic