

**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
  - Sam Adams – “We are being treated like beats of burden by the crown”
  - Stamp Act 1765
- Boston had not been governed by Britain directly since 1630
  - 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)
  - 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
  - took job as tax collector in Boston to make money for his family
  - 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
  - wrote and spoke out against Britain, the British Government does a tax audit in retaliation and finds that he owes 7,000 pounds
  - 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- 1767 Stamp Act repealed but worse taxes were to follow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”
  - 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
  - Met upper class
  - From age 8, practiced that famous signature
  - 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”
  - water and milk weren’t safe some people drank hard cider, rum, or beer
- Hancock did a lot of smuggling
  - Ship was stopped by customs officials and searched but officials were “trapped” by dock workers and contraband disappeared
  - Hancock’s ship seized
- Samuel Adams gets a mob to retaliate and to destroy the officials office
- Hancock needs a lawyer
  - John Adams! Cousin of Samuel Adams
o Defended Hancock but hated every minute of it
o Hancock was acquitted but did not join cause and Sons of Liberty
o “Revolution was in the minds of the people”

**John Adams**
- lawyer, very high strung and obnoxious, Manic-Depressive
  o “would have needed Prozac in today’s world”
  o cantankerous, argumentative, very puritan, vain
  o very honest in memoirs, wrestles with personal demons
- marries Abigail Smith
  o 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
  o 5 die, called “Boston Massacre” by Samuel Adams (Paul Revere did picture etching for paper)
  o pure propaganda!
  o Soldiers put on trial and Adams defends troops for sake of justice
  o Soldiers convicted on minor charges
    ▪ Adams called group a “Mob” and even that word was too good for them
- Tea Act
  o 3 cent tax on a lb of tea, Boston organizes a boycott
  o 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
  o Held in Philadelphia because is was central geographically
  o 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……
  o 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., 2nd generation American son of a farmer
- at age 18, marries well………..in 1760 becomes lawyer
  o Jefferson will remark that he couldn’t believe the Va. Bar let him become a lawyer
  o 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 1st – take out munitions in Saratoga  
  o 2nd – 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 2nd Continental Congress  
    ▪ Hancock elected president of convention  

**Ben Franklin**  
- 1775 comes back from England  
  o was trying to mend Anglo-American relations  
- 15th 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 2nd Continental Convention  
  o Questions from 2nd 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
  - first wife died, he abandoned his second wife to seek job and more money
- met Franklin in London and helps him go to America
  - 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
  - no one would publish it so he agreed to give up 50% of profits to printer
  - "Common Sense"
  - sells 120,000 in first 3 months and 500,000 total
  - wanted profits to go to American militia that was fighting in Quebec
  - opened public debate, 1 in 5 in North America had read it
- John Adams disagreed with it and hated Paine
  - “Paine is better at destroying things than building them up”
  - still bought 2 copies of it
  - thought Paine was a derelict and an alcoholic