

Kindling the Flame of Revolution: Communication and Committees of Correspondence in Colonial America

Michelle Miao

Talawanda High School, Oxford, OH

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No people will tamely surrender their Liberties, nor can any be easily subdued, when knowledge is diffused and virtue is preserved.¹

–Samuel Adams

ACCORDING TO JOHN ADAMS, the real American Revolution occurred “in the minds and hearts of the people” long before the armed conflict ever began.² This shared anti-British sentiment in prewar colonial America was largely fostered by committees of correspondence. Formed a decade before the revolution, the committees were the first institution of intercolonial communication. They were composed of radical, educated, mostly upper-class men who demonstrated the power of communication through pamphlets, letters, newspaper articles, and town hall meetings. The committees successfully kindled the flame of revolution among the colonists by creating an innovative system of mass communication that shared information and spread enlightening ideas.

For a century and a half since 1607, the American colonies maintained a tranquil relationship with their mother country. Great Britain granted relative autonomy to its territories, allowing the colonies to be governed chiefly by their own legislatures with free reign to manage their own affairs. This period of salutary neglect came to an end with the termination of the French and Indian War in 1763, when Britain turned to levying taxes in order to pay off war debt. Though Britain viewed taxation as obligatory and reasonable, the colonists soon rebelled. They eventually formed an organized opposition with committees of correspondence.

The earliest committee was founded in Boston in 1764 and called for resisting Britain’s rigid tax enforcement in the colonies. The New York committee was established the next year to boycott the Stamp Act, which required colonists to purchase an official stamp as a tax on nearly every type

of document. By 1774, hundreds of committees had formed in America. The committees informed colonists about everyday affairs, encouraged unity between colonies, and created the bridge to a civil, democratic government after the Revolutionary War. By appealing to shared values of liberty and the illustrious idea of natural rights, the committees played a crucial role in amplifying civilian voices and laying a foundation for American democracy.

Seeds of Revolution: Early Committees and Communication Among the Colonies

After the French and Indian War, Britain was saddled with a debt of 140 million pounds and attempted to shift the burden to their colonies.³ In April 1764, the Sugar Act was passed. This initiated strict British enforcement that prevented colonists from continuing their commonplace smuggling of molasses from the French or Dutch West Indies. The Act marked the first time that Britain had levied taxes on the colonies.⁴ In response, Samuel Adams, a Bostonian statesman, established the first formal committee of correspondence in Boston. In May, Adams drafted pointed instructions for Boston's representatives in the Massachusetts legislature.

He blamed Parliament for imposing taxes without input from the colonists, arguing: "If taxes are laid upon us in any shape without our having a legal representation where they are laid, are we not reduced from the character of free subjects to the miserable state of tributary slaves?"⁵ Adams's argument was both legal and moral. His heartfelt language and earnestness in defending the colonists' liberties galvanized the public. More committees were formed, stretching from the seacoast to rural inland towns in Massachusetts. Although the committees did not completely unite, their communication with Parliament and with one another helped formulate the colonists' burgeoning grievances against the British government.

Unfazed, the British Parliament passed the Stamp Act in 1765. The widespread impact of the Act resulted in organized resistance from the colonists once again. Virginia and Massachusetts took the lead. Their committees sought to establish unified outrage towards Parliament's overreaching, as individual appeals had proven ineffective. Urged by Massachusetts leaders, the Stamp Act Congress was held in New York City in October with nine colonies and 27 delegates attending.⁶ Through engaging discussion and debate, the colonial body signed the Stamp Act Resolves to dispute taxation. The Congress further asserted the principle of 'no taxation without representation' and, more importantly, demonstrated the first united colonial action against a British measure.

Britain, meanwhile, continuously underestimated the effectiveness of coordinated communication. The monarchy held no expectation that the Stamp Act Congress would begin the path to American independence.

“The Boston Pamphlet” Mobilizes the Colonies

Britain repealed the Stamp Act in 1766, but asserted their authority once again by passing the Townshend Acts of 1767. This imposed taxes on imported goods such as paint, glass, paper, and tea. These measures continued to push American colonies towards revolution, resulting in the formation of more committees and the signing of nonimportation agreements among the colonies.

In 1772, Britain decided that officials in Massachusetts previously paid by the province would henceforth be paid by the Crown. Colonial leaders feared that Crown salaries would encourage the appointment of corrupt officials. To protest, Samuel Adams proposed a 21-member committee of correspondence that would state the rights of the colonists and formulate a statement of grievances.⁷ Adams sent letters to other provinces to promote similar committees, believing that the self-constituted system would unite colonists and enable the execution of a practical plan.⁸ These efforts resulted in a list of grievances known as “The Boston Pamphlet.” The Boston Committee delivered over 600 copies of the Pamphlet to 260 towns and provinces throughout Massachusetts.⁹ The Pamphlet initiated creation of a colony-wide communication network to oppose British policies, fanning the flames of revolution (see **Appendix A**).

Written to directly appeal to the common people in simple, concise language, “The Boston Pamphlet” outlined three main themes—the inherent rights of colonists, the immediate British encroachment upon these liberties, and the power of correspondence in seeking redress of grievances. It began with enumerating the colonists’ natural rights to life, liberty, and property, underscoring government’s role as a protector of these rights. On the unfair treatment of colonists, it inquired powerfully: “The natural Liberty of Man is to be free from any superior Power on Earth and not to be under the legislative Authority of Man... What Liberty can there be where Property is taken away without Consent?”¹⁰ In addition, the Pamphlet placed heavy focus on taxation without representation, claiming the colonists would be enslaved by continued British dominance: “Our houses...are exposed to be ransacked, our chests & trunks broke open, ravaged and plundered by wretches.”¹¹

The fiery rhetoric of the Pamphlet not only matched the anger already expressed by colonists, but also justified calls for resisting the forces of tyranny before they could be applied. If the American Revolution was

“preeminently a revolution caused by ideas and pivoted on ideas,” then “The Boston Pamphlet” undoubtedly sowed the seeds of revolutionary ideas in America.¹² Requesting each Massachusetts town engage in “a free communication of their Sentiments on this Subject,” the Pamphlet inspired other towns to establish their own committees of correspondence and organize a resistance to tyranny.

King George III expressed his disapproval at the committees, but viewed them as a mere annoyance. Hutchinson derided the Pamphlet as “a foolish scheme” and the Boston committee as “ridiculous.”¹³ However, the Pamphlet acted as an important catalyst, galvanizing the colonists into expressing their common displeasure.¹⁴ By September 1773, 119 letters had been received by 144 towns. Town leaders established standing committees and formed the political infrastructure required for a revolutionary movement, an intercolonial chain of common willpower.¹⁵ The system of communication among colonies “meant that revolutionary language by 1773 was surrounding virtually every adult ear in Massachusetts.”¹⁶ Adams had predicted, “where there is a Spark of patriotic fire, we will enkindle it,” and enkindle it he did.¹⁷

The *Gaspee* Unites the Colonies

As Massachusetts became united, Rhode Island fell under harsher British rule. The *Gaspee* Affair of 1772 marked one of the first acts of violent rebellion against the British in America. Earlier that year, Britain commander Lieutenant William Dudingston sailed the naval vessel HMS *Gaspee* into Rhode Island’s Narragansett Bay to monitor trade and force inspection of cargo. On June 9, the *Gaspee* ran aground while chasing the sloop *Hannah*. Rhode Islanders, angry with British harassment, injured Dudingston and burned the *Gaspee* to the waterline (see **Appendix B**). Shortly afterward, a Royal Commission of Inquiry charged the perpetrators with treason, demanding that all suspects be transported to London for trial.¹⁸

Alarmed, Rhode Islanders sought support from the other colonies. In Massachusetts, Samuel Adams foresaw the power of intercolonial connection. In a letter, he denied the legitimacy of the royal commission, and raised a bitter query: “Is there an American, in whose breast there glows the smallest spark of public virtue, against a measure so replete with the ruin of our free constitution?”¹⁹ The letter, republished multiple times in colonial newspapers such as *Providence Gazette*, became widely read. The Virginia House of Burgesses shared Adams’s sentiments, and advocated the formation of permanent committees of correspondence in every colony.²⁰ Thomas Jefferson, a member of the House of Burgesses at the time, recalled the event:

We were all sensible that the most urgent of all measures was coming to an understanding with the other colonies to produce a unity of action, and for this purpose that a committee of correspondence in each colony would be the best instrument for intercommunication.²¹

The other colonies responded enthusiastically to Virginia's call. By spring of 1773, twelve colonies had unified by joining the network of committees. The Royal Commission's investigation was fruitless in the face of colonial resistance. After the *Gaspee* Affair, the committees continued to facilitate communication among sister colonies. Through exchanging opinions on the colonists' constitutional rights, disseminating arguments, and promoting democratic government in colonies, the committees created a common American identity based on principles of freedom. This unity of action further honed the instrument for the upcoming revolution.

Organized Protest Among the Colonies

The Tea Act of 1773 granted the British East India Company the right to ship tea directly to the colonies and gave commission agents the sole right to sell tea. Outraged, the committees of correspondence began a tireless effort to oppose these provisions.²² In late 1773, the Boston Committee agreed to "prevent the Landing and Sale of tea" arriving from Britain.²³ Following the rise of anti-British sentiment, it supplanted docile outrage with the necessity of more aggressive protest.²⁴ As a result, over a hundred men boarded three British merchant ships on December 16 and heaved 90,000 pounds of tea into Boston Harbor. Moreover, the Boston Committee's rhetoric had facilitated resistance in other colonies. Three days before the Boston Tea Party, a member from the New York committee signified the success of Boston's message: "the people has [*sic*] been rising to oppose the landing of tea in New York."²⁵

Britain was furious over the destruction of Crown property. Massachusetts governor Thomas Gage declared, "if we take the resolute part, [the colonists] will undoubtedly prove very meek."²⁶ Parliament subsequently passed the Intolerable Acts, which suspended Boston town meetings, appointed a military governor, and closed the Boston port to all trade. The Acts, however, only strengthened the colonists' resolve. Though town meetings became prohibited, the Boston Committee flouted restrictions. It became a chief connecting force for organizing resistance among the colonies and returned to the ideals of life, liberty, and property.²⁷ Britain, it warned, was reducing the colonists to "a more wretch'd state of slavery than ever before existed," and would "strip them of humanity."²⁸ When presented with this looming danger, committees around Boston quickly united and seized the reigns of autonomy and self-determination.

Individual committee members also promoted colonial unity. Josiah Quincy cultivated leaders from the Carolinas through Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York.²⁹ He emphasized a “mutual exchange of sentiments” that would “create esteem and camaraderie” between colonists.³⁰ From Massachusetts to Georgia, committees of correspondence stood in solidarity with Boston. James Wilson, a Pennsylvanian who would later sign the Declaration of Independence, proclaimed that the committees formed a “chain of freedom” where “every individual was willing to preserve his liberty.”³¹ Other colonies took similar action and agreed on two courses of action: each colony organized non-importation agreements against British goods and decided to found a firm union of colonies to preserve their liberties. The Maryland Committee called for a congress to meet in Philadelphia, and eventually, twelve colonies heeded the call, selecting delegates for what would become the First Continental Congress in 1774. The Congress would decide to use non-importation of British goods as leverage against British abuse and prepare the Continental Association.³²

The Road to Freedom: The Legacy of the Committees

John Adams claimed that “the history of the United States can never be written” until the committees of correspondence were studied in detail.³³ Without the communication among committees of correspondence, colonial America would not have become united against Britain as quickly or as strongly. As a new agency for American independence, the committees exemplified the importance of communication in fostering collective action and political expression. Through diverse and effective ways of communication such as circulating letters and pamphlets, forming alliances, and organizing protests, the committee leaders created an invaluable network to galvanize the common people into meaningful action. Moreover, their influence and ideas lived on in the new nation.

Members of the Massachusetts committees drafted Resolves to boycott British goods that were later adopted by the Second Continental Congress, which formally declared America’s independence from Britain in 1776. Following the example of the colonial committees, the Second Continental Congress also created a Committee of Secret Correspondence that corresponded with Great Britain, Ireland, and France to gauge the amount of sympathy for the American Revolution abroad. Headed by Benjamin Franklin, the Committee played a notable role in securing French support for the Americans.³⁴ Prominent domestic committee members such as Thomas Jefferson and John Jay played a formative role in forming the foundations of America. For example, Jay utilized the power of the written

word to help compose the *Federalist Papers*, which were disseminated to colonists to gather support for the new Constitution. Later, it was due to communication by pamphlet that citizens came to support the addition of the Bill of Rights.

Through the committees, the power of communication became synonymous to the power of collaboration and diversity of thought. This enabled them to successfully pave the road to American independence and create a powerful, lasting precedent for democratic values and freedoms of speech and expression. Their doctrine of self-governance eventually became codified into the political foundation of the United States. The flame of revolution kindled by the committees of correspondence continues to burn on, lighting a nation with the enduring messages of freedom and democracy.

Notes

1. Samuel Adams. "Samuel Adams to James Warren." Samuel Adams Heritage Society, <http://www.samuel-adams-heritage.com/documents/samuel-adams-to-james-warren-1775.html>.

2. John Adams. *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States*, ed. Charles Francis Adams, vol. 10 (Boston: Harvard University, 1856), 282.

3. David F. Burg. *The American Revolution: An Eyewitness History* (New York: Facts on File, 2001), 4.

4. David F. Burg. *The American Revolution: An Eyewitness History* (New York: Facts on File, 2001), 5.

5. George Bancroft. *History of the United States of America*, vol. 3. (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1916), 77.

6. Massachusetts, House of Representatives. *Journal of the House of Representatives, 1764-1765* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1971), 137.

7. Boston Record Commissioners. *Boston Town Records, 1770-1777* (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1887), 93. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=bc.ark:/13960/t1xd1nv9c&view=1up&seq=7>.

8. John K. Alexander. *Samuel Adams: The Life of an American Revolutionary* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 139.

9. Boston Record Commissioners. *Boston Town Records, 1770-1777* (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1887), 94. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=bc.ark:/13960/t1xd1nv9c&view=1up&seq=7>.

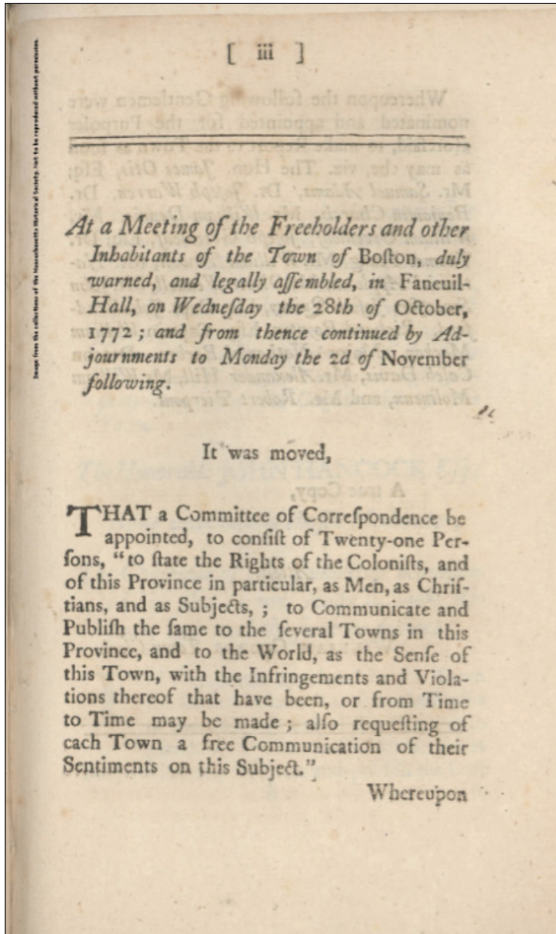
10. Boston Committee of Correspondence. "The Votes and Proceedings of the Freeholders and Other Inhabitants of the Town of Boston," 8. https://www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item_id=609&mode=large&img_step=3&pid=2&br=1#page3.

11. Ibid.

12. Moses Coit Tyler. *The Literary History of The American Revolution, 1763-1783* (New York, 1897), 8.

13. Boston Record Commissioners. *Boston Town Records, 1769-1775* (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1893), 150. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=pst.000008912428&view=1up&seq=7>.
14. Boston Record Commissioners. *Boston Town Records, 1769-1775* (Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1893), 150. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=pst.000008912428&view=1up&seq=7>.
15. Massachusetts, House of Representatives. *Journal of the House of Representatives, 1772-1773* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1980), 139-140.
16. Richard L. Bushman. "Massachusetts Farmers and the Revolution," published in Richard M. Jellison, ed., *Society, Freedom and Conscience: The American Revolution in Virginia, Massachusetts and New York* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976), 79.
17. Samuel Adams. "Letter to James Warren," 1772. <https://democraticthinker.wordpress.com/2010/07/16/samuel-adams-nil-desperandum/>.
18. John C. Fitzpatrick. *The Spirit of the Revolution* (Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928), 103.
19. Samuel Adams. "To Be, Or Not To Be..." *The Newport Mercury*, 21 December 1772.
20. Virginia House of Burgesses. *Journals of the House of Burgesses*, vol. 13 (Richmond: E. Wadley Co., 1905), 28.
21. Thomas Jefferson. *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1, ed. Henry Augustine Washington (J.B. Lippincott & Co. 1871), 5.
22. "The Tea Act of 1773," <https://digital.scetv.org/teachingAmerhistory/pdfs/TeaActTranscription.pdf>.
23. "Joint Meeting of the Boston, Brookline, Roxbury, Dorchester, and Cambridge Committees of Correspondence," <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/557fd5f0-c12e-0132-d597-58d385a7b928>.
24. American in Class, "That Worst of Plagues, the Detested Tea." <https://americainclass.org/sources/makingrevolution/crisis/text6/teaactresponse.pdf>.
25. Alexander McDougall. "Letter to Boston Committee of Correspondence." <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/f8870400-db04-0132-e261-58d385a7bbd0>.
26. George III, *The Correspondence of King George III with Lord North, 1768-1783* (London: J. Murray, 1867), 164. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo1.ark:/13960/t5m90t215&view=1up&seq=262&q1=lyons>
27. Richard D. Brown. *Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1970), 150.
28. Patrick Spero. *Frontier Rebels* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018), 176.
29. Richard D. Brown. *Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1970), 153.
30. Josiah Quincy. "Letter to George Clymer," Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1773. <https://www.colonialociety.org/node/2587>.
31. Patrick Spero. *Frontier Rebels* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018), 175.
32. "The Fairfax Resolves," <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-10-02-0080>. "The Suffolk Resolves," <https://www.nps.gov/mima/learn/education/upload/the%20suffolk%20resolves.pdf>.
33. John Adams. *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States*, 187.
34. Department of State. "Secret Committee of Correspondence." <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1776-1783/secret-committee>.

Appendix A



The first page of “The Boston Pamphlet” describes the Boston Committee’s role of communicating “Infringements and Violations.” It was widely distributed among the colonies and appealed to colonists’ anger towards Britain in order to create unity and encourage further formation of committees.

Boston Committee of Correspondence. “The Votes and Proceedings of the Freeholders and Other Inhabitants of the Town of Boston.” 1772, Massachusetts Historical Society, https://www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item_id=609&mode=large&img_step=3&pid=2&br=1#page3.

Appendix B



The burning of the British schooner HMS *Gaspee* at the hands of angry Rhode Islanders, depicted in *The Burning of the Gaspee* (1892). After Britain sought retribution, the colonies united for the first time to form a connected system of committees of correspondence.

Brownell, Charles De Wolf. *The Burning of the Gaspee*, 1982. (Rhode Island Historical Society). In *Gaspee Virtual Archives*, <http://www.gaspee.org/>.

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

Adams, John. *The Works of John Adams*, vol. 10 (1811-1825). *Online Library of Liberty*, ed. Charles Francis Adams. Accessed February 15, 2021. <https://oll.libertyfund.org/title/adams-the-works-of-john-adams-vol-10-letters-1811-1825-indexes>.

John Adams, one of the most high-profile Founding Fathers and the second president of the United States, articulated many of his thoughts about the revolutionary process and the role of various groups, including the committee of correspondence. This resource was used to illustrate the importance of the Committees and to show that colonial leaders recognized the value in the communication the Committees facilitated.

Adams, Samuel. "Samuel Adams to James Warren-1775." Samuel Adams Heritage Society. Samuel Adams Heritage Society. Accessed January 31, 2021. <http://www.samuel-adams-heritage.com/documents/samuel-adams-to-james-warren-1775.html>.

In this letter, Adams, a prominent committee leader, expresses his philosophy that knowledge and information can spur a previously docile public to revolution. He believes in the common person's longing for liberty and emphasizes the importance of knowledge among a republic. This resource aptly summed up a main point of the committees, and provided the opening quote to this paper.

Adams, Samuel. *The Writings of Samuel Adams, Volume II (1770-1773)*. Full Books Organization. Accessed January 30, 2021. <http://www.fullbooks.com/The-Writings-of-Samuel-Adams-volume-II-1770-4.html>.

This resource gave crucial insight into the ideas and ideologies of Adams, who repeatedly described his role within the committees and his obsession with preserving liberty before the colonists became truly "enslaved." These words thoroughly characterized Adams and identified his importance within the Boston Committee.

Samuel Adams. "To Be, Or Not To Be..." *The Newport Mercury*, 21 December 1772, <http://www.gaspee.org/SamAdams.html#ProvGazette>.

This letter was a plea from Adams that urged colonists to resist British oppression and claim their unalienable rights. It was directed to the citizens of Rhode Island, but was ultimately reprinted in multiple other colonial newspapers, which demonstrated one method of communication among colonies as well as the displeasure that was being ignited among colonists.

America in Class. "That Worst of Plagues, the Detested Tea," *National Humanities Center*. Accessed February 3, 2021. <https://americaninclass.org/sources/makingrevolution/crisis/text6/teaactresponse.pdf>.

This document compiled a series of primary source writings from colonists during the initial protests of the Tea Act of 1773, as well as in the aftermath of the Boston Tea Party. These writings showed a clear progression of colonists' increasingly hostile sentiments towards Britain, and provided a copy of the Boston Committee's letter to other colonies that urged them to stand against Britain with Massachusetts.

Boston Committee of Correspondence. "The Votes and Proceedings of the Freeholders and Other Inhabitants of the Town of Boston." Massachusetts Historical Society.

Accessed January 3, 2021. https://www.masshist.org/database/viewer.php?item_id=609&mode=large&img_step=3&pid=2&br=1#page3.

The Massachusetts archive of “The Votes and Proceedings of the Freeholders and Other Inhabitants of the Town of Boston,” commonly referred to as the “Boston Pamphlet,” proved invaluable to this paper. Also included in Appendix B, the Pamphlet was one of the first motivating sources that joined colonists together, and proved the power of communication in forming a citizenry dedicated to collective action. The grievances outlined in this document were used to illustrate the colonists’ displeasures, as well as to provide evidence of the colloquial nature of Boston Committee communication.

Boston Merchants. “Recommendations to Representatives in the Massachusetts General Assembly,” published in the *Boston News-Letter* and the *New-England Chronicle*, 31 May 1764. <https://americainclass.org/sources/makingrevolution/crisis/text2/sugaractresponse1764.pdf>.

In this letter, Boston merchants joined forces to convey to the Massachusetts Assembly the unfairness of the Sugar Act and the implication of taxation on colonists who did not have adequate representation in the British Parliament. The first temporary Committees of Correspondence dedicated to securing colonists’ rights led to the merchants’ protests, an act of convincing communication.

Boston Record Commissioners. *Boston Town Records, 1770-1777*. Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1887. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=bc.ark:/13960/t1xdlnv9c&view=1up&sec=7>.

The Boston Record Commissioners kept a careful record of the political and social activities in Boston. The first volume of records gave detailed reports of the Boston Committee’s activities, and this document was used to provide specific statistics regarding committee outreach, which had been recorded by the Boston officials in 1772.

Boston Record Commissioners. *Boston Town Records, 1769-1775*. Boston: Rockwell and Churchill, 1893. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=bc.ark:/13960/t1xdlnv9c&view=1up&sec=7>.

This record of the Boston committee’s activities includes correspondence from Governor Hutchinson to his Massachusetts subjects after the initial establishment of committees of correspondence. The record of Hutchinson’s dismissal was included in this paper in order to show the initial British ignorance towards the power of outreach and communication among the colonists.

Frederick, George III, *Correspondence of King George III With Lord North, 1768-1783*. “Letter 204” (London: J. Murray, 1867). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo1.ark:/13960/t5m90t215&view=1up&seq=262&q1=lyons>.

This book gave a comprehensive account of the affairs in Britain by including a wide-ranging and detailed collection of King George III’s correspondence with British Prime Minister North. The advice for George III to be more aggressive was mentioned in this paper in order to prove that eventually, the power of the committees’ letters and pamphlets stirred enough discontent in the colonies for the committees to be taken seriously by the Crown.

Jefferson, Thomas. *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1, ed. Henry Augustine Washington (J.B. Lippincott & Co. 1871).

This volume contains the writings of Thomas Jefferson, many of which were relevant to the Revolutionary War and the period leading up to conflict. Jefferson expressed great support for Committees of Correspondence, and pointed to this colonial communication structure as a valuable resource for the distribution of ideas.

Massachusetts, House of Representatives. *Journal of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts, 1771-1772*, vol. 41 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1971). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015073215884&view=1up&seq=157>.

This resource documented the schedule and meetings of the newly formed Boston Committee of Correspondence, especially as the first town meeting and the Boston Pamphlet circulation went underway. Overall, the House of Representative records were an invaluable resource to my paper, with this volume setting the scene for the rise of committee power in Boston. I used this documentation to discuss the first Boston town meetings and the furor over the change in officials' salaries.

Massachusetts, House of Representatives. *Journal of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts, 1771-1772*, vol. 48 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1972). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015073215827&view=1up&seq=106&q1=committee%20of%20correspondence>.

In this volume of the House of Representatives records, various documents alluded to the intercolonial communication that resulted after the burning of the *Gaspee*, with the Boston Committee pledging to stand behind Rhode Islanders. It provided a sense of the solidarity that permeated the committee system and the ensuing wave of renewed communication that resulted from this unity.

Massachusetts, House of Representatives. *Journal of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts, 1772-1773*, vol. 49 (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1980). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015070563005&view=1up&seq=160>.

The House of Representative records compiled in this year documented the growth and spread of the committees and the wider outreach of communication cast. This volume provided statistics in the official record of the actions of the Boston committee and the new committees forming in Massachusetts.

Mason, George, and George Washington. "Fairfax County Resolves, 18 July 1774." Founders Online. National Archives and Records Administration. Accessed February 4, 2021. <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/02-10-02-0080>.

The Fairfax Resolves were penned by George Mason and George Washington at Mount Vernon and called for an association of colonists to reject British encroachment. It was a formal objection to Britain's authority, declaring that British jurisdiction was not unlimited. This source was used to discuss the Resolve's message and its adoption by the First Continental Congress.

McDougall, Alexander. "Letter to Boston Committee of Correspondence: December 13, 1773." *The New York Public Library Digital Collections*, 2015. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/f8870400-db04-0132-e261-58d385a7bbd0>.

This letter from New York Committee member McDougall expresses to the Boston Committee the outrage felt by New Yorkers over new restrictions on tea imposed by the British. McDougall's writing proved a valuable indicator of the colonists' shared sentiments against British taxation, a phenomenon achieved because of communication from the Committees.

Parliament of Great Britain. “Tea Act of 1773.” *SCET*. South Carolina Educational Television. Accessed February 10, 2021. <https://digital.scetv.org/teachingAmerhistory/pdfs/TeaActTranscription.pdf>.

The Tea Act of 1773 was levied by Parliament in an attempt to save the struggling British East India Company. It gave the Company exclusive selling rights in America and a monopoly that angered colonial merchants and citizens who viewed it as a trick designed to make the colonies accept taxation. This primary source document laid out all the tenets of the Tea Act included in the paper.

Quincy, Josiah. “Josiah Quincy to George Clymer: August 1773.” Colonial Society of Massachusetts. Accessed February 10, 2021. <https://www.colonialsociety.org/node/2587>.

In this letter, Josiah Quincy, a Massachusetts committee leader, wrote to Pennsylvanian leader George Clymer about the importance of knowledge in achieving colonial unity. His words emphasized the mission of the committees and one of their key messages—raising awareness in all colonists.

Virginia House of Burgesses. *Journals of the House of Burgesses of Virginia*, ed. John Pendleton Kennedy, vol. 13 (Richmond: E. Waddey Co., 1905).

This document featured a record of the Virginia House of Burgesses during the revolutionary period. It provided an insight into Virginia’s reaction to the *Gaspee* Affair, in which the House sought to connect the colonies in a chain of communication and therefore called upon the formation of Committees of Correspondence in each colony.

Warren, Joseph. “The Suffolk Resolves.” U.S. National Park Service, n.d. Accessed February 10, 2021. <https://www.nps.gov/mima/learn/education/upload/the%20suffolk%20resolves.pdf>.

The Suffolk Resolves were drawn up by Suffolk County leaders in Massachusetts and resolved on non-importation and a refusal to export goods until the repeal of the Intolerable Acts. This is mentioned in the paper, and the primary source document provides the clearest demonstration for the committee’s influence on the colonists, who passionately defended their liberty.

Secondary Sources

America in Class. “Crisis Renewed,” *National Humanities Center*, Accessed February 3, 2021. <https://americainclass.org/sources/makingrevolution/crisis/text6/text6.htm>.

The purpose of this source was to illustrate each event that prompted a response from a committee of correspondence, with the Boston committee heavily featured. This article helped structure the paper and aided in organizing each portion to reflect an important event in the committees’ trajectory.

Alexander, John K. *Samuel Adams: The Life of An American Revolutionary*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2011.

This book gave a comprehensive review of Samuel Adams’s life, including the major role he played in organizing and leading the Boston Committee. This book provided a valuable review of Adams’s background and allowed me to start outlining my paper. Additionally, the text clearly demonstrated Adams’s firm belief in the inspiring possibility of communication.

Bancroft, George. *History of the United States of America, from the Discovery of the Continent*, Vol. 3. New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1916.

Bancroft's book offers a thorough explanation of colonial affairs from 1763-1774. It places significant focus on the effect of the Stamp Act on the colonists, including the writings of many committee leaders, such as Patrick Henry and Samuel Adams, who rebelled against 'taxation without representation.' Adams's writing in particular gave insight to his anger and sense of righteousness on behalf of the colonies.

Brown, Richard D. *Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts: The Boston Committee of Correspondence and the Towns, 1772-1774*. W. W. Norton & Company, 1976.

This resource provided an extremely detailed background of colonial politics in Massachusetts, with particular attention to Boston. Its heavy focus on one of the leading Committees offered great insight into the ideology and rhetoric of Boston leaders. Starting from the Stamp Act and progressing until the First Continental Congress, the descriptions of local opinion were useful and illuminating. Much of the information given in this book was helpful in describing the efforts at achieving intercolonial unity.

Brownell, Charles De Wolf. *The Burning of the Gaspee*, 1982 (Rhode Island Historical Society). In *Gaspee Virtual Archives*, <http://www.gaspee.org/>.

This painting shows Rhode Islanders burning the HMS *Gaspee* to the waterline after the British ship ran aground. The demolition of the *Gaspee* proved a powerful instigating event for the banding of colonies in the face of British attempts to alter the colonial legal system, and the painting captures the determination of colonists who were willing to destroy British property and hurt British officers in protest.

Burg, David F. *The American Revolution: An Eyewitness History*. Facts on File, 2001.

This book provided valuable information on the pre-war atmosphere among the colonists, chronologically ordering each event that brought the colonies closer to revolution. In particular, the book was used to identify primary documents, such as the writings of Josiah Quincy.

Bushman, Richard L. "Massachusetts Farmers and the Revolution," published in Richard M. Jellison, ed., *Society, Freedom and Conscience: The American Revolution in Virginia, Massachusetts and New York* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976).

This source analyzed the speed with which revolutionary fervor seized the common people of Massachusetts. In particular, he emphasized the importance of the formation of Committees of Correspondence in disseminating information and injecting ideas of revolution into common discourse, an argument that proves the Committees' usefulness.

Department of State. "Secret Committee of Correspondence/Committee for Foreign Affairs, 1775-1777," *Office of the Historian*. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1776-1783/secret-committee>.

This record provided information on the influence of committees of correspondence established for the purpose of foreign outreach. These arose after the success of mass communication within the colonies, with leaders seeking to use communication to open more avenues of collaboration. This indicates the precedent set by the first networks of committees, and also helped America secure allies during the Revolutionary War.

Editors. "Committees of Correspondence." History. A&E Networks, October 27, 2009. <https://www.history.com/topics/american-revolution/committees-of-correspondence>.

This website was where the research for this paper began. It simply and succinctly summarized the role of the committees, distilling the committees' accomplishments into their most notable and most lasting components.

Fitzpatrick, John C. *The Spirit of the Revolution*. Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924.

This book described the more philosophical aspects of the revolution and the sentiments of unity and simultaneous frustration that swept through colonists, largely due to the writings by committees of correspondence. In particular, I drew upon the book's descriptions of the *Gaspee* Affair and the resulting British response.

Tyler, Moses Coit. *The Literary History of the American Revolution, 1753-1783*. New York, 1897.

Coit's book provided comprehensive examples of first-hand communication relevant to the American Revolution by presenting the writings of prominent leaders both American and British. Coit placed heavy emphasis on the importance of "The Boston Pamphlet" as a motivating entity for intercolonial connection, a theme important to this paper.

Spero, Patrick. *Frontier Rebels: The Fight for Independence in the American West, 1765-1776*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2018.

The focus of this book was on the frontier, capturing a unique perspective of the revolution. However, it proved the wide-reach of the committees as even prominent frontiersmen were described as aiding in the intercolonial effort at unity that the committees began. This book provided individual testimonials from colonial leaders at the effectiveness of forming a chain of communication among all 13 colonies.

Treesh, Catherine. "Committees of Correspondence." George Washington's Mount Vernon. Mount Vernon Digital History. Accessed January 1, 2020. <https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/committees-of-correspondence/>.

Yale professor Catherine Treesh describes a simplified history of the committees of correspondence, from the logistics of their system to the connectedness they inspired between colonies. Her description of early systems of committees of correspondence were incorporated into the paper, alluding to the first committees who kept the colonies in communication with British officials.

Zinn, Howard. *A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present*. New York: HarpersCollins, 2003.

The preliminary chapters of this book described the situation surrounding the French and Indian War and the new taxes levied on colonies, as well as the social structure in many of the committees of correspondence. Leaders, such as James Otis and Samuel Adams, were wealthy and upper-class citizens who appealed to and educated the lower classes. This information is an important characteristic of the committees—they wanted to amplify the voices of the common people.